Arunachala! Thou dost root out the ego of those who meditate on Thee in the heart, Oh Arunachala!
Fiery Gem, shining in all directions, do Thou burn up my dross, Oh Arunachala!

—The Marital Garland of Letters, verse 18

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THE MOUNTAIN PATH

(A QUARTERLY)

"Arunachala! Thou dost root out the ego of those who meditate on Thee in the heart, Oh Arunachala!"

—The Marital Garland of Letters, verse 1.

Vol. V APRIL 1968 No. 2

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GRACE IN WORDS: The Verse in Telugu and Tamil reproduced on the fly-leaf facing the frontispiece is the facsimile of Bhagavan’s own handwriting.

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THE MOUNTAIN PATH is dedicated to Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi.
Grace in Words

2. One who asks himself ‘Who am I?’ and ‘Where am I?’, though existing all the while as the Self, is like a drunken man who enquires about his own identity and whereabouts.

— Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi
SACRED poetry was the subject of the January 1968 issue of The Mountain Path. Its editorial covers therefore also the present issue which deals with a parallel subject. In worldly poetry the poet’s mind becomes pregnant with some intuitional feeling or understanding and this churns him up in such a way that his language becomes rhythmical and he utters forth an indication though never an exact account of what had moved him. In sacred poetry the poet-saint becomes a recipient, an instrument through which flow utterances of Truth of sublime beauty and purity. He does not have to fumble for words; they pour like a cascade from his heart. A simple line has the power to move those who understand to tears.

The Five Hymns to Sri Arunachala are a supreme example of it. Walking round the Hill, tears flowing from His eyes, Ramana Maharshi wrote it as it came to Him. Once one of the devotees asked for help by writing out some slokas from The Five Hymns and showing Him. How He understood! The smile and reassuring look from those luminous eyes full of Grace were sufficient reply. Who wrote those words? They come from our hearts. Did He write them for us identifying Himself with our struggles, He the Self, the living inner Guru then and now?

17. (Unmoving) Hill, melting into a Sea of Grace, have mercy, I pray. O Arunachala!
18. Fiery Gem, shining in all directions, burn up my dross, O Arunachala!
11. Even when the thieves of the five senses break in upon me, art Thou not still in my heart, O Arunachala?
27. Dazzling Sun that swallowest up all the universe in Thy light, open the lotus of my heart, I pray, O Arunachala!
31. There (in the heart) rest quiet! Let the seas of joy surge, speech and feeling cease, O Arunachala!

35. If spurned by Thee, alas! What rests for me but the torment of my prarabdha? What hope is left for me, O Arunachala!

49. Treasure of benign and holy Grace, found without seeking, steady my wandering mind, O Arunachala!

51. Unless thou extend Thy hand of Grace in mercy and embrace me, I am lost, O Arunachala!

53. Loveless though I be clothe me with Thy Grace and then regard me, O Arunachala!

57. When will waves of thought cease to rise? When shall I reach Thee, subtler than the ether, O Arunachala!

78. Guard me lest I flounder storm-tossed like a ship without helmsman, O Arunachala!

Also the following from the Necklet of Nine Gems

...O Love in the shape of Arunachala! how can the lotus blossom without sight of the sun? Thou art the Sun of suns; Thou causest Grace to well up and pour forth as a stream! . . . .

O Transcendent! . . . Ordain Thou that my burden be transferred to Thee and my free will effaced, for what indeed can be a burden to the Sustainer? Lord Supreme! I have had enough of carrying the burden of this world upon my head, parted from Thee, Arunachala, the Supreme Itself. . . . .

No form He has, no name, no quality;
Still there beside the Holy Hill He dwells
In human form, known by the comely name
Of Ramana, marked by the primal power
Of love; with moist eyes showering grace for all
To see; the ethereal Being whose brightness burns
To I-less nothingness obnoxious me.

THE POET’S VISION

By Prof. EKNATH EASWARAN

As I stood on the green lawn of the Palace of the Legion of Honour in San Francisco admiring the statue of the Thinker by Rodin, a young friend asked me the question, “What do you think the Thinker is thinking?”

“How to stop thinking,” I ventured to reply.

In the expressive words of a Sanskrit doggerel, the mind may be compared in its restlessness to a monkey that is drunk, stung by a scorpion, and possessed by a ghost, all at the same time. It is the nature of the mind to be restless, and if only we can bring this furious factory to a complete standstill, the Scriptures tell us that we pass here and now into a higher state of consciousness.

When my mind is stilled, my self-will is extinguished, I am no longer a separate fragment in a world of millions of separate fragments; I am not a bubble but have become the sea. In the poetic words of the Upanishads, “As when the drum is beaten, its various particular notes are not heard apart from the whole, but in the total sound all its notes are heard; as, when the conch-shell is blown, its various particular notes are not heard apart from the whole, but in the total sound all its notes are heard — so, through the knowledge of the Self, Pure Intelligence, all things and beings are known. There is no existence apart from the Self.”

This Self is called God — Sat, Chit, Ananda — Absolute Existence, Absolute Knowledge, Absolute Joy. Francis Thompson calls Him the hound of Heaven who is always on our trail. We may try our hardest to shake Him off by hiding ourselves in pleasure and profit, prestige and power, by running away as fast as we can from those strong Feet that followed, followed after.

“But with unhurrying chase, And unperturbed pace, Deliberate speed, majestic instancy, They beat — and a Voice beat More instant than the Feet — ‘All things betray thee, who betrayest Me.’”

When we try to find our centre of gravity outside ourselves, when we seek the Kingdom of Heaven without, we are moving in a world of duality, of pleasure and pain, success and failure, birth and death. But our deep driving need is not for five minutes or five hours of pleasure, not for a nickel’s or dime’s worth of security, not for a few years or decades more of life. Our deep driving need is for abiding joy, complete security, unending life. “There is no joy in the finite,” declare the Upanishads. “There is joy only in the Infinite.” There is no immortality in the finite, there is immortality only in the Infinite.

When we love the finite things of the world, go after money or material possessions, pleasure or power, we are running away from our real need and running into frustration, insecurity and ephemeral existence. On the other hand, when we seek the Kingdom of Heaven within, turn our face to the Lord of Love who is enshrined in our heart of hearts, we are turning our back upon frustration, insecurity, ephemeral existence. As Jesus said unto Peter and the other disciples, “But rather seek ye the Kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you. Fear not, little flock; for it is your father’s good pleasure to give you the Kingdom. Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”
Our treasure is usually in a hundred places; the bank, the stock exchange, the company president's chair, the man of the year award; and our heart, too, therefore, is in a hundred places. Two months ago I saw an exhibition of the paintings of the Belgian surrealist Magritte who brings out in a masterly fashion what happens to us when we follow a sense craving. I am referring to a still life study in which we see on a table an empty bottle, a glass and a plate with a round piece of ham on it. Right at the centre of the ham is depicted a human eye that has trapped itself there through its greed and gluttony.

Every time we yield to a sense craving, we have lost a little bit of our heart, a little bit of our capacity to desire which is the same as our capacity to love. Living as most of us are in the midst of a widespread network of mass communication media — television, radio, movies, magazine, newspaper — it is almost impossible to escape their siren song to seduce us to yield to the clamour of the senses, to place our centre of gravity in the changing without. Rise above it, and we find our centre in the changeless within. As the Bhagavad Gita points out,

"The winds turn a ship
From its course upon the waters:
The wandering winds of the senses
Cast man's mind adrift
And turn his better judgment from its course."

The practice of meditation enables us to develop the discrimination and the will to control the senses, and the practice of sense-control helps to deepen our meditation. Significantly enough, when we indulge the senses without discrimination, we are letting our Prana or vital energy ebb out; when we restrain the senses with discrimination, we are contributing to our physical and mental health. It is said in the Svetasvatara Upanishad: "The first signs of progress on the path of yoga are health, a sense of physical lightness, clearness of complexion, a beautiful voice, an agreeable odour of the person, and freedom from craving." Thus when we seek the Kingdom of God that lies within, the first benefits we receive are on the physical level, improving health and increasing energy.

As long as we are driven by sense craving, it is not possible for us to enjoy fully the beauty of the external world or derive from it the maximum benefit it can give us. In fact, we do not even perceive the world clearly or correctly as long as we continue to look at it through the distorting medium of our sense cravings and selfish urges. It is when we have subdued our sense cravings and selfish urges that we are able to see the world as Reality. In the words of the Renaissance English mystic Thomas Traherne, "But all things abide eternally as they were in their proper places. Eternity was manifested in the light of the day and something infinite behind everything appeared; which talked with my expectation and moved my desire. The city seemed to stand in Eden, or to be built in Heaven. The streets were mine, the temple was mine, the people were mine, their clothes and gold and silver were mine, as much as their sparkling eyes, fair skins and ruddy faces. The skies were mine, and so were the sun and moon and stars, and all the world was mine; and I the only spectator and enjoyer of it."

As we are enabled through the practice of meditation to find our centre of gravity within our own consciousness rather than in the flux of the world without, profound peace and deep security become our permanent possessions. No longer are we engaged in the futile task of extracting the last ounce of love that we can from everybody around us, but we now find ourselves immersed in the fruitful mission of giving rather than receiving, of loving those around us — father, mother, husband, wife, children, friends — much more than we love ourselves. This is the way to love the Lord — call him Christ, call him Krishna — who is enthroned in the consciousness of everyone, and this is, of course, the way to have a happy family, a happy community, a happy country, a happy world. "And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, 'Seest thou this? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she has washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs
of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss; but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint; but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment, Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven; the same loveth little."

Through the systematic practice of meditation we can develop a higher mode of knowing which rises above the duality of subject and object. It is beyond the senses, the mind and the intellect, and may be called the superconscious or the transcendental or the opening of the divine eye, as the Bhagavad Gita puts it. Through this direct, intuitive mode of knowing we are able to jump out of our skin, as it were, to become united in some measure with the object of our knowledge. This is the secret of all great scientific discovery and of all great artistic creation too. Albert Einstein has said: "The most beautiful and the most profound emotion we can experience is the sensation of the mystical. It is the sower of all true science. He to whom this emotion is a stranger, who can no longer wonder and stand rapt in awe, is as good as dead. To know that what is impenetrable to us really exists, manifesting itself as the highest wisdom and the most radiant beauty which our dull faculties can comprehend only in their most primitive forms — this knowledge, this feeling is at the centre of true religiousness."

Almost all of us have part of our vital energy trapped either in the past — in memories, regrets, remorse — or in the future — in hopes, fears, expectations. When we have only a very small part of our vital capital with which to live in the present, how can we give of our best, how can we live on the highest level of consciousness possible for us? One of the most enriching developments on the path of Meditation is our increasing capacity to recall our vital energy from the nostalgic memories or vain regrets of the past, and from the tense expectation or dark apprehension of the future. This enables us to live entirely in the present, in the here and now, with all our vital forces unified in our hands, and able to meet the challenge of life with calmness, courage and compassion. When we are able to face sorrow calmly, courageously and compassionately, say the illumined men and women, there is no more reason, no more need for sorrow to come into our life. "Yoga is the breaking of contact with pain," declares Sri Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita.

In the stupendous spiritual climax called Samadhi, we are freed from the tyranny of the past and the future; we are delivered from time into the Eternal Now. Sings the Sufi mystic Jalaluddin Rumi in one of his inspired songs:

"Past and future veil God from our sight;
Burn up both of them with fire. How long
Wilt thou be partitioned by these segments, like a reed?
So long as a reed is partitioned, it is not privy to secrets,
Nor is it vocal in response to lip and breathing."

The mind moves in time, but the Atman, the Self, the Christ within, is beyond time, When we are enabled in Samadhi to go beyond the mind we go beyond time, beyond change, beyond the last change called death to reach a higher state of consciousness which is immortal and infinite.

The evidence of Samadhi is in the complete transformation of character, conduct and consciousness. "Ye shall judge the tree by the fruit thereof." We are no longer I-minded. We have become Christ-conscious. St. Augustine describes the life of the Christ-conscious in beautiful language:

"Temperance is love surrendering itself wholly to Him who is its object; courage is love bearing all things gladly for the sake of Him who is its object; justice is love serving only Him who is its object, and therefore rightly ruling; prudence is love making wise distinctions between what hinders and what helps itself."

May the Lord grant us temperance to surrender our love wholly to Him, courage to bear all things gladly for the sake of Him, justice to serve only Him, and Prudence to make wise distinctions between what hinders and what helps us in becoming one with Him!
THE meditative soul engaged in sweet communion with the divine Presence, sings a unique love-long which has been handed down through the ages as the Song of Songs.

Solomon or Jedidiah whose name signifies 'Beloved of the Lord' is regarded as the author of this superlative work which was strongly defended by the Rabbi Aqiba at the Synod of Jamnia around 90 A.D. In the Mishnah (Yadayim iii. 5) we read the words spoken by Aqiba: 'Great indeed was the day on which the Song of Songs was given to Israel. All the Kethubim are sacred, but holiest of all is the Song of Songs.'

Saint Bernard, Abbot of Clairvaux, considered the work to be 'a sublime and sacred discourse which is to be heard by those ears and hearts which have been purified, for unless discipline has been imposed upon the flesh so that the spiritual is master, the heart being impure is not worthy of perusing the holy Canticle. Just as clear light falls in vain on blind eyes or upon closed eyelids, so the natural man fails to absorb the things of the spirit of God.'

Those who do not perceive the golden light of mysticism which illumines the Love-Poem, are unable to pierce the shadow earthly-love in order to apprehend the heavenly Love truly portrayed in the Song of Songs.

Origen understood the Shulamite bride to be the soul, and her Beloved the divine Logos. Origen taught that when the soul turns her gaze from the transitoriness of worldly things to seek her true love, then the Word of God moved by compassion comes to the yearning soul and makes His abode in her heart, as Christ the 'Living One' promised in John xiv. 23.

The Canticle of Canticles has inspired the noblest minds and stirred the purest hearts with its mystical song, among them — Chrysostom, Eusebius of Caesarea, Diadorus of Tarsus, Theodoret, Cyprian of Carthage, Basil the Great, the two Gregories and the Early Fathers.

At the second Trullan Council A.D. 692 the exegesis of the Fathers was ruled as binding, putting an end to further comment on the Poem in the Christian Church.

The literature of the East contains tales where the love of man and woman is used to teach how ardently the heart should crave for the divine Embrace.

Yusuf and Zuleikha, written by the Persian poet Jami tells how Yusuf or the Joseph of the Bible is loved by Zuleikha or Potiphar's wife. After the heroine has undergone many sufferings, the impure love which at first consumed her becomes ennobled and purified, finally leading Zuleikha to the peace of true Love.

The Gita Govinda of Jayadeva also weaves the heavenly Love-story with the shadow fabric of terrestrial love.

As the enlightened Nizami states: 'The mystic word veiled by poetry, is the shadow of that veiled by prophecy.'

In his Laila and Majnun Nizami lifts the veil of poetry to reveal glimpses of the mystic's language:

'O Khizar, thou by Fortune blessed, think not
That my praise of wine signifies the grape's juice.
For by wine I am raised beyond myself
And it is this wine that I would bring to my banquet,'
My 'cup-bearer' is to fulfill my duties to God:
My 'daily draught at the inn' is the wine of self-forgetfulness.
For in truth never hath wine passed my lips!

Sublime and poignantly beautiful is man's search for God, and the Canticle of Canticles gives utterance to the Quest as the bride sings of her ardent desire for unity with her Beloved. The poem is filled with the radiant language of Love which infuses fresh life into languid souls and leads them on to enjoy the enchantment of divine ecstasy.

Bernard of Clairvaux writes: 'Love is not uttered by the mouth, but springs joyously from the fountain of the heart. It is not a sound made by the lips, but the emotion and impulse of gladness stemming from within; not mere words but a fusion of harmonious wills.'

In Sacred Scripture the marriage ceremony is often used as a symbol of divine Love.

'As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee.' (Isa. 62:5).

(I have espoused you to one husband that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.' (II Cor. 11:2).

The Song of Songs
'The Song of Songs which is Solomon's.'

The Hebrew language not having the variety of terminations to set forth the different degrees of comparison generally repeats the same words to signify the superlative degree.

'Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth: for thy love is better than wine.'

The soul is filled with deep yearning for that Kiss of divine Love which symbolizes perfect unity. 'Mercy and truth are met together: righteousness and peace have kissed each other.' (Ps. 85:10). The soul's silence regarding the identity of her Beloved is eloquent testimony that He is intimately known to her, for her heart is penetrated and her thoughts wholly possessed by Him.

'Draw me, we will run after thee.'

Attracted by the alluring loveliness of the Bridegroom Word, the soul turns from error to seek Truth.

'The king hath brought me into his chambers.'

The spiritual bride enters into a secret dialogue with her royal Spouse; this intimate Love-Song consists of silent speech, for in the divine Court of Love the soul hears unspeakable words.

'I am black but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon.'

The soul is in the process of undergoing purification. The mind being impure, the inner spiritual perfection remains hidden.

'My skin is black upon me, and my bones are burned with heat.' (Job. 30:30).

'They made me the keeper of the vineyards, but mine own vineyard have I not kept.'

Purified vision reveals to the soul that her preoccupation with worldly matters has been detrimental to spiritual progress.

'Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon: for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions?'

The soul, wishing to belong exclusively to her divine Shepherd, prays that she will be led to the holy pasture where she may shelter from temptation, 'Nor the destruction that wasteth at noonday.' (Ps. 91:6).

'If thou knowest not, O thou fairest among women, go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents.'

The soul lacks Self-Knowledge; she must seek the spirit of truth, the 'divine com-
forter', in order that she may be guided to the Path she is to follow.

'A bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved unto me; he shall be all night betwixt my breasts.'

When the soul clasps the divine statutes to her heart she learns that the spiritual Path is arduous and covered with the thorns of bitter sorrow.

'My beloved is unto me, as a cluster of camphire in the vineyards of En-gedi'.

En-gedi near Jericho, was famed for its palm trees. Pursuing the anagogic Path, the soul receives her first lessons in humility; she is made to drink the wine of remorse.

'Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair; thou hast dove’s eyes.'

The contemplative bride is ravished by the loveliness of her heavenly Bridegroom; unconscious to self, she is lost in the enjoyment of the divine Logos.

'I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys.'

Purity of conscience allied to the sublime virtue of humility are the adornment of the soul, most pleasing to the Beloved; but beauty blooms in the soul only when the will and reason have been purified, making contemplation possible.

'He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love.'

Brought into the inner chamber of contemplation, the soul receives knowledge that Love embraces all virtues — it is beneath this brilliant standard that her Lord would have her stand.

'The voice of my beloved! behold, he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills. My beloved is like a roe or a young hart; behold, he standeth behind our wall, he looketh forth at the windows, shewing himself through the lattice.'

The Presence of the Beloved in the heart is experienced as a lilting joy, an inward surge of ecstatic enjoyment. The divine Lover walks with secret, silent footfall, but His entry is made known to the loving soul by an unmistakable exultation.

'My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.'

With tender insistence the mind is weaned from attachment to terrestrial objects.

'For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land. The fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.'

When the reason is illumined by the light of Wisdom, the winter of ignorance departs from the soul and Love’s springtime burgeons forth in ripples of joy. Responding to the inner awakening, the soul is filled with happiness.

'O my dove, thou art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely.'

Schooled in humility the soul is aware of her utter helplessness and total dependence on her Lord; she relies on His strength and guidance in all things.

'Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes.'

The wise soul is on her guard against the smallest defects which like thieves are hidden among the ripening virtues, for they deplete her spiritual store. 'They shall be a portion for foxes.' (Ps. 63:10).

'By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth; I sought him, but I found him not.'
Burning with a strong desire for her Beloved, the soul cannot experience the rapture of the Word on the phenomenal or even noumenal planes; she must therefore rely solely on the guidance of Grace to lead her beyond the senses.

'I will rise now, and go about the city in the streets, and in the broad ways I will seek him whom my soul loveth.'

The soul's love for the Bridegroom Word is all consuming and overpowering. Irresistibly drawn towards the object of her love, the soul displays undaunted courage in her determined search. This resolve to seek Truth is itself a gift of Grace.

'I found him whom my soul loveth: I held him, and would not let him go.'

The mind being in abeyance, communion takes place with the heavenly Lord.

'Behold, King Solomon with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart.'

When the ego-will is surrendered to the Divine Will, enlightened understanding enables the receptive soul to perceive the glorious nuptial Crown of Love's Unity.

'How much better is thy love than wine! and the smell of thine ointments than all spices!' The soul is ravished by a burning love which intensifies her yearning for union with the divine Essence. Within the palanquin of love the fragrant virtues of peace, kindness, mercy and other fruits of wisdom are to be found. The soul who hungered after Truth is presented with Love's palanquin and is refreshed thereby.

'I sleep, but my heart wakeeth: it is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying, Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled.'

The Higher Self 'never slumbereth', and it is He who awakens the sleeping heart from the night of illusion.

'Who is like the King of glory? who is like thee, O Jacob our hope?'

The Higher Self reveals his glory to his child.

'I opened to my beloved; but my beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone: my soul failed when he spake; I sought him, but I could not find him; I called, but he gave me no answer.'

The operations of Grace within the soul are mysterious. In pursuing the anagogic Path, the soul experiences a spiritual languor which is the sign of the Word's withdrawal. This causes intense sadness of spirit which is keen suffering to the love sick soul. In the words of St. John of the Cross: 'The sorrowful soul suffers great affliction when she thinks that God has abandoned her.'

'The watchmen that went about the city found me, they smote me, they wounded me; the keepers of the walls took away my veil from me.'

The sense of separation from God causes anguish to the soul, and she pursues her restless quest with wounded heart, enduring the scoffing gibes of unbelievers who scorn her love of God. 'My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, 'Where is thy God?'' (Ps. 42:3)

'I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem if ye find my beloved, that ye tell him, that I am sick of love.'

The soul's ardent yearning for her heavenly Bridegroom excludes all other desires; every fibre of her being is bent on possessing Him. 'My heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.' (Ps. 107:9).

'What is thy beloved more than another beloved, O thou fairest among women?'

The intellect seeks to receive understanding of Love's mysterious flame.

'My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand — I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine. His mouth is most sweet: yea, he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.'
Love transcends analytical reasoning, possessing a secret language all its own. Anchored to Love, the soul is endowed with a calm and sublime certainty which cannot be communicated to the intellect.

‘There are threescore queens, and four-score concubines, and virgins without number. My dove, my undefiled is but one.’

Impure vision beholds a multiplicity of souls in different stages of unfoldment. For the divine Bridegroom there is only One Radiant Bride.

‘I went down into the garden of nuts to see the fruits of the valley, and to see whether the vine flourished.’

Within the invisible kernel of the soul sanctifying grace is active; the divine Love makes known this activity to the soul who knew not where to search for him, ‘O God of hosts . . . behold, and visit this vine.’ (Ps. 80:14).

‘Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amni-nadib.’

Truth itself is the supreme object of mystical contemplation; it is on the wings of Grace that the willing soul is directed to her Lord. The word Amni-nadib signifies ‘my willing’ or ‘princely people’.

‘Return, return, O Shulamite; return, that we may look upon thee.’

Shulamite meaning ‘perfection’ and ‘peace’, the tranquil and perfected soul enjoys mystical union with her Beloved. The fruit of this spiritual marriage is to be distributed amongst those yet asleep in the spirit, that they too may awaken to Bliss.

‘How beautiful are thy feet . . . thy neck is as a tower of Ivory; thine eyes like the fish-pools in Heshbon.’

She in whom the Beloved is well pleased, is praised for her holy beauty. ‘The king’s daughter is all glorious within.’ (Ps. 45:13). ‘He maketh my feet like hind’s feet, and setteth me upon high places.’ (Ps. 18:30). ‘A strong tower from the enemy.’ (Ps. 61:3). Just as beauty plays a prominent role in physical courtship, so in the heavenly relationship spiritual loveliness is a source of delight. When the beautiful eyes of the understanding are opened, the soul reflects the clear depths of a calm and unruffled spirit.

‘I said, I will go up to the palm tree.’

Established in the divine Heart of Love, the soul blossoms forth into rare beauty. ‘The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree.’ (Ps. 92:12).

‘I am my beloved’s, and his desire is towards me.’

Grace has dispelled the illusion of ignorance which hindered and obstructed the soul in her Quest — she exults in the knowledge that she is now her Beloved’s chaste spouse ‘The desire of his eyes.’ (Ezek. 24:16. 18).

‘Come, my beloved let us go forth into the field; let us lodge in the villages. Let us get up early to the vineyards, let us see if the vine flourish.’

It is in the calm solitude of contemplation that the inner harvest ripens.

‘His left hand should be under my head, and his right hand should embrace me.’

The soul has given ear to the inner Call; in answer to that beloved Voice she has suffered deeply, cried bitterly, undergone severe trials. Yet despite everything she has emerged victorious and triumphant, testifying to the supreme and invincible Power of Love. Her reward is mystical union with the Absolute.

‘Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death; many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it.’

Love is not mere sentimentality but a dynamic energy. Under its manipulation the hard, flinty heart is moved, softened and...
brought to life. The weeds of bad habits are torn out; ignorance is dissipated by the light of Wisdom; the crooked paths are made straight; error recedes from reason, until the inner man shines with holy glory. The heart which is illumined by Wisdom recognises Love as the Sovereign Power.

'Ve have a little sister, and she hath no breasts: what shall we do for our sister in the day when she shall be spoken for?'

The soul having entered the mystical Cave of the Heart and there enjoyed union with the Word, out of compassion for mankind teaches that Knowledge which she has intuited. This fecundity is the result of mystical contemplation.

'If she be a wall, we will build upon her a palace of silver; and if she be a door we will enclose her with boards of cedar.'

It is with the 'words of the Lord' which are 'as silver', that the walls and 'everlasting doors' of the heavenly City are built. Those who hear the word of God and keep it 'shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.'

(Ps. 90 : 12).

'I am a wall, and my breasts like towers: then was I in his eyes as one that found favour.'

The soul perfected in Wisdom gives sweet sustenance to those who feed at her bosom. Fragrant and pure as the lily is the honeyed milk which flows from Mother Wisdom, unlike the pitiless mothers of Babylon who give to their babes the poisoned milk of ignorance.

'Make haste, my beloved, and be thou like unto a roe or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices.'

The language of Love fills the soul with melody; in vibrant, lilting, exuberant accents Love causes the heart to break out into ecstatic song. The ineffable experience of Blissful union takes place in Sacred Heart-Silence, for it is there that the Song of Love is born.

Saint Bernard writes:

'The soul embarks upon the spiritual Quest so that she may yield to the Word for correction; receive an enlightened understanding; be reliant upon it for virtue; possess beauty, and be wedded to it so that she may be fruitful—lastly, that she may enjoy everlasting Bliss.'

Gregory of Nyssa taught that Love's Ideal is reached when the Bride-soul soars beyond all things material to that state which he termed 'apathy', by which he meant complete withdrawal from the bodily senses. Such detachment leads to the highest enjoyment of Truth, when the heavenly Bridegroom bestows upon His bride the sacred Kiss of divine Unity.

Solomon's mighty Hymn of Love sings an ageless song:

'With an everlasting love have I loved thee: therefore have I drawn thee with loving kindness.' (Jer. xxxi : 3).

Christ may be born a thousand times in Bethlehem, but if he be not born anew within your own heart, you remain eternally forlorn.

—Angelus Silesius.
WHY did the ancient Greeks regard the Homeric poems as a religious authority? They could be considered religious in the sense that they recorded norms of conduct, even though they lacked the high ethical standards and the preoccupation with dharma of the Hindu epics. They were religious too in that they comprised allegories of the quest. They were composed in the language of symbolism.

The question how many of the ancients saw the symbolism would be as pointless as the question how many moderns see the allegory of Abraham’s sacrifice of Isaac. It was certainly there to see and some must have seen it or the epics would not have been regarded with such reverence.

The Odyssey, it will be remembered, starts near the end and then proceeds with a throw-back. Let us follow Homer in this. The final episode shows Penelope, the faithful wife of Odysseus, still ruling his rocky homeland of Ithaca after his years of enforced wandering through perilous adventures. But she is beset by unruly nobles who pester her to marry one of them and proclaim him ruler, giving Odysseus up as lost and disinherting their adolescent son Telemachus.

Penelope can be understood as the rightly directed human state, Odysseus as the active side of it struggling through the many vicissitudes of the quest, and Telemachus as the new man emerging out of it. The suitors are the still unsubdued tendencies which try to capture it and turn it to their own use and enjoyment. Finally they set a term for Penelope; they will wait only till she finishes weaving the tapestry she is engaged on, but no longer. However, she circumvents them; each night she unravels what she had woven the previous day. The tapestry is Maya, woven during the daytime of activity, unravelled during the night of meditation. Then Odysseus arrived. Having come safe through all the perils of the quest, he is ready to appear now as the bridegroom, the triumphant hero. He is ready to appear, but first the forces of disorder must be subdued. He appears as a desolate wanderer. Penelope recognizes him but the suitors do not. Precautions have to be taken lest they slay him before he has established himself — as the rebellious generations slew the prophets, as the blindly orthodox slew Christ. He remains disguised until he is manoeuvred into a position where he can overcome them.

That is the essence of the story but there are many wayside adventures, just as there are in the life of the wayfarer. Also there are changes in symbolism, one aspect or another being depicted as required. Only a few salient features are pointed out here. The story of Helen and Paris and the Trojan War would be the subject of another no less complex symbolical story.

There is one episode, it will be recalled, where the sirens, treacherous nymphs singing with irresistible beauty, try to lure Odysseus and his men on to the rocks where their ship will be dashed to pieces and they themselves drowned. Odysseus foils their scheme by making his men plug their ears with wax before reaching their haunt. Only he himself kept his ears open but took the precaution of getting lashed to a mast and forbidding his men to release him till he was out of the danger zone. The songs of the sirens obviously represent the lures of the subtle world which have led so many spiritual wayfarers to perdition. Odysseus is one of the few hardy ones who can experience
this dangerous beauty without getting destroyed by it.

Then there is the story of Circe. Some of the men go ashore on a beauteous isle to replenish their water supply and there encounter an enchantress who offers them food and wine, By partaking of it they give her power over them, and she uses it by dashing a cup of wine in their faces and turning them into swine. She represents Maya, and those who succumb to her allurements are turned into swine, forgetting their upright manhood.

A strange parallel is to be found in a story of Vishnu. He becomes infatuated with his own daughter — Divine Power with the beauty of creation. To make love to her would be incest, so he transforms both of them into swine, for whom, there is no such ban. Thus transformed, he wallows happily until reminded of his true nature.

And how does Odysseus escape? While he is on his way to Circe’s house Hermes, a youth represented in Greek mythology as the messenger of the gods, comes especially to warn him and teaches him a charm which will turn the tables on Circe, giving him power over her. The ‘messenger of the gods’ is divine intuition. Forewarned, the hero of mythology averts the snares of Maya, not only retaining his manhood but subjecting her to his will. As with the sirens, he is able to experience the allurements of the subtle world without becoming enslaved to them.

The story of Polyphemus is less obvious. The one-eyed giant who captures Odysseus and his men and shuts them up in his cave, intending to devour them, two a day, at first sight suggests the single eye of Siva, destructive of duality. But actually it must be only a dark simulacrum of this, such as must come from one-pointed concentration of a harmful, not a sublime nature, for Polyphemus is a danger to survival and it is Odysseus who triumphs and lives by putting out his eye. It is Odysseus too, it will be remembered, who attains symbolically the Nameless state by telling Polyphemus when asked his name, that it is Noman, so that, when the blinded giant’s companions ask who has done this to him he answers: “No man has done it”, thus enabling Odysseus and his men to escape.

These symbolical stories are indeed a sort of code, a reminder to those who have the key to them. There is a wealth of them in ancient Greek, as in Hindu and Norse mythology — the Golden Fleece, the Labours of Hercules and many more that have lasted through the ages and can still serve as a reminder if read aright.

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Pre-Existence

from the 18th Century English mystic WILLIAM LAW

The created soul is a creature of Time, and had its beginning on the 6th day of Creation, but the Essences of the soul, which were then formed into a creature and into a state of distinction from GOD had been in GOD from all eternity, or they could not have been breathed forth from GOD into the form of a living creature. That which thinks and wills in the soul is that very same unbeginning breath which thought and willed in GOD before it was breathed into the form of a human soul. Thou begannest as Time began, but as Time was in Eternity before it became days and years, so thou wast in GOD before thou wast brought out into creation, and as Time is neither a part of Eternity nor broken off from it, so thou art not a part of God, nor broken off from Him, yet born out of Him.”
CHUANG TZU (4th-3rd cent. B.C.) is in many respects the greatest and most spiritual of the Chinese philosophers. He is also the chief authentic historical spokesman for Taoism (Lao Tzu being legendary and known to a great extent through Chuang Tzu in any case.) Therefore Chuang Tzu stands in opposition to the traditional Confucian philosophy, and has been regarded by the orthodox Confucians as a rather dangerous thinker, the professional boat rocker of Chinese thought. The reason for this is that Chuang Tzu wanted to insist that there was something more to life than the piety, the order, the rites, and the humanitarian feelings which contributed to the social harmony preached by Confucius. Chuang Tzu looked on life as a whole—and as a mystery—that could not be grasped merely in a clear doctrine, with logical explanations for the way things are, implemented by orderly social customs and patterns of behaviour. He reached out to something more, something which could not be expressed, and yet could be lived: the ineffable Tao. Anything that falls short of Tao is limited and fallible. Yet Tao is not totally out of man’s reach. On the contrary, by humility, simplicity, childlikeness and what we would call a spirit of faith, one can live in union with Tao, even though one may not be able to understand just how this comes about, or give a clear explanation of the fact. It is this holy and sometimes humorous simplicity that is at the heart of Chuang Tzu, and strange to say, it has made his doctrine seem, to some people, terribly difficult.

The following versions of Chuang Tzu are the result of a meditative reading in various translations and they stick closely to the texts of these translations, with occasional glosses and simplifications, which are always very slight.

A Hat Salesman and A Capable Ruler

A man of Sung did business
In silk ceremonial hats.
He travelled with a load of hats
To the wild men of the south.
The wild men had shaved heads,
Tattooed bodies.
What did they want
With silk
Ceremonial hats?
Yao had wisely governed
All China.
He had brought the entire world
To a state of rest.
After that, he went to visit
The four Perfect Ones
In the distant mountains
Of Ku Shih.
When he came back
Across the border
Into his own city
His lost gaze
Saw no throne.

The Breath of Nature

When great Nature sighs, we hear the winds
Which, noiseless in themselves,
Awaken voices from other beings,
Blowing on them. From every opening
Loud voices sound. Have you not heard
This rush of tones?
There stands the overhanging wood
On the steep mountain:
Old trees with holes and cracks
Like snouts, maws and ears,
Like beam-sockets, like goblets
Grooves in the wood, hollows full of water:
You hear mooing and roaring, whistling
Shouts of command, grumblings,
Deep drones, sad flutes.
One call awakens another in dialogue.

By FATHER THOMAS MERTON

THE WAY OF CHUANG TZU
Gentle winds sing timidly
Strong ones blast on without restraint.
Then the wind dies down. The openings
Empty out their last sound.
Have you not observed how all then
trembles and subsides?

Yu replied: I understand:
The music of the world sings through a
thousand holes.
The music of man is made on flutes and
instruments.
What makes the music of heaven?

Master Ki said:
Something is blowing on a thousand
different holes,
Some power stands behind all this and
makes the sounds die down
What is this power?

Great Knowledge

Great knowledge sees all in one.
Small knowledge breaks down into the many.

When the body sleeps, the soul is enfolded
in One.
When the body wakes, the openings begin
to function.
They resound with every encounter,
With all the varied business of life, the
strivings of the heart;

Men are blocked, perplexed, lost in doubt.
Little fears eat away their peace of heart.
Great fears swallow them whole.
Arrows shot at a target: hit and miss:
right and wrong.
That is what men call judgement, decision.
Their pronouncements are as final.
As treaties between emperors:
O, they make their point!
Yet their arguments fall faster and feebleer
Than dead leaves in autumn and winter
Their talk, flows out like piss, it is
Never to be recovered.
They stand at last, blocked, bound and
gagged,
Choked up like old drain pipes,
The mind fails. It shall not see
light again.

Pleasure and rage
Sadness and joy
Hopes and regrets
Change and stability
Weakness and decision
Impatience and sloth:
All are sounds from the same flute,
All mushrooms from the same wet mould.
Day and night follow one another and come
upon us
Without our seeing how they sprout!

Enough! Enough!
Early and late we meet “That”
From which then all grow!

If there were no “That”
There would be no “I”.
If there were no “I”
There would be nothing for all these winds
to play on.
So far can we go,
But how shall we understand
What brings it about?

One may well suppose a True Governor
To be behind it all. That such a Power works
I can believe. I cannot see his form.

He acts, but has no form.

Three Friends

There were three friends
Discussing life.
One said:
“Can men live together
And know nothing of it?
Work together
And produce nothing?
Can they fly around in space
And forget to exist
World without end?”
The three friends looked at each other
And burst out laughing.
They had no explanation.
Thus they were better friends than before.

* * *

Then one friend died,
Confucius
Sent a disciple to help the other two
Chant his obsequies.
The Disciple found that one friend
Had composed a song.
While the other played a lute
They sang:

‘Hey, Sung Hu!
Where’d you go?
Hey, Sung Hu!
Where’d you go?
You have gone where
Where you really were.
And we are here —
Damn it! We are here!’

* * *

Then the Disciple of Confucius burst in on
them and exclaimed:

“May I inquire where you found this in the
rubrics for obsequies,
This frivolous carolling in the presence of
the departed?”
The two friends looked at each other and
laughed:

“Poor fellow” they said, “he doesn’t know
the new liturgy.”

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Lao Tse’s Wake

Lao Tan lay dead
Chin Shih attended the wake.
He let out three yells
And went home.

One of the disciples said:
Were you not the Master’s friend?
“Certainly.” He replied,

“Is it then sufficient for you
To mourn no better than you have just
done?”

“In the beginning,” (said Chin Shih)
“...I thought.
He was the greatest of men.
No longer! When I came to mourn
I found old men lamenting him as their son,
Young men sobbing as though for their
mother.
How did he bind them to himself so tight,
if not
By words he should never have said
And tears he should never have wept?

“He weakened his true being
He laid on load upon
Load of emotion, increased
The enormous reckoning:
He forgot the gift God had entrusted to him:
This the ancients called ‘punishment
For neglecting the True Self.’

“The Master came at his right time
Into the world. When his time was up
He left it again.
He who awaits his time, who submits
When his work is done,
In his life there is no room
For sorrow or for rejoicing.
Here is how the ancients said all this
In four words:

‘God cuts the thread!’

“We have seen a fire of sticks
Burn out. The fire now
Burns in some other place. Where?
Who knows? These brands
Are burned out.”

Confucius and the Madman

When Confucius was visiting the state
of Chu
Along came Kieh Yu
The madman of Chu
And sang outside the Master’s door:

“O Phoenix, Phoenix,
Where is your virtue gone?
It cannot reach the future
Or bring the past again!

When the world makes sense
The wise have work to do.
They can only hide
When the world’s askew.
Today if you can stay alive
Lucky are you:
Try to survive!

Joy is feather light
But who can carry it?
Sorrow falls like a landslide
Who can parry it?

Never, never
Teach virtue more.
LOOK at scenery — nature ——
The mind is at once suspended, so to say. ‘Suspended’ means: for the moment it is at a standstill: later thoughts, the non-stop machinery of thoughts, may set in whirring ——

So, perhaps, to take ‘advantage’ ( —— I am expressing it crudely —— ) of this (of such an opportunity —— of looking at nature —— )
or also when we are moved by a tear or a laugh —— if one can prolong this —— or ‘see’ —— how ‘the mind’ comes in (again), even in such a (golden) opportunity —— even there —— even in such circumstances ——

...... how ‘the mind’ comes, and says, “how beautiful it is, how charming —— ”; —— or ‘the mind’ names some particular flower or tree or bird; or it says: “how beautiful is the curve of the mountain, how violently, how noisily the cataract is falling, in what diffusion of colours the clouds are hanging, how sweet the birds are warbling——” or, “how soothing is the cadence of music ——”, or, (looking down a hill) “how extensively —— up to the horizon, the panorama stretches” —— and the thought: “it should be depicted or turned into a poem or a photograph or a painting,” and also the various ways of comparing the present experience to a like one—— etc., etc.

In this way the mind again ‘comes’...

POETRY

You walk in danger,
Beware! Beware!
Even ferns can cut your feet——
When I walk crazy
I walk right:
But am I a man
To imitate?"
The tree on the mountain height is its own enemy.

The grease that feeds the light devours itself.
The cinnamon tree is edible: so it is cut down!
The lacquer tree is profitable: they maim it!

Everyman knows how useful it is to be useful.

No one seems to know
How useful it is to be useless.

By ‘ALONE’

[though all this may look enchanting, even noble—— still it is ‘the mind’!]

Thus the mind again comes and ‘disturbs’ the state —— casually, without effort, established (so to say) —— though, perhaps, it may be ‘fleeting’.

Just be ‘aware’ —— how it all happens!!

The only advantage (‘advantage’ is just a word) to be taken of this ‘opportunity’ is: conditioning is not there at all at this ‘juncture’.

This should serve as a suggestion to poets (who are given to making, especially), or —— to all poets in general, I think!

The poets have not been made alive (I am afraid) to the Truth —— As they have (naturally) ‘perception’, they should stop there, and should not land in words (even mentally ——) —— when they are moved by a tear or a laugh.

They do not know that ‘perception’ (and stopping there) —— Is itself words —— real (living) words ——!

About ‘communication’ or say about ‘sharing’, —— (this is my concept —— I may be wrong) —— they need not bother.

It will take place, breaking through ‘silence’ —— ‘perception’ —— ‘his reticence’ —— in spite of themselves —— whenever there is ‘need’.
MILAREPA, TIBET'S GREAT POET-SAINT

MILAREPA was second in succession in the line of Gurus of the Kargyutpa or Mahamudra School of the Tibetan Vajrayana. This school, founded in the 11th Century A.D. by his Guru, Marpa the Translator, has maintained its succession unbroken down to the present day. His life spanned more than eighty years at a time when the flood of Islam was sweeping over India and threatening Hinduism and Buddhism alike. It is largely due to him and his Guru Marpa that much of Buddhism's spiritual heritage was preserved in that part of the world.

There has been no teacher in the history of Tibet to surpass Milarepa for the depth and purity of his vision or to rival the place he held and still holds in the minds and hearts of his people. He excelled no less as a poet than a saint. He is said to have had a fine singing voice, and the classic 'Hundred Thousand Songs' (recently translated into English in their entirety) is familiar to all Tibetans. Herdsmen still sang many of them in the high pastures of the Himalayas until the Chinese Communists silenced them. The block-printed 'Songs' with the 61 stories that frame them embody the whole gamut of Buddhist teachings. They are the outcome of the poetic genius and spiritual Enlightenment of Milarepa, matured in the silence and grandeur of the great Snow Mountains where he dwelt in caves, taught the people and meditated on the Illuminating Void. They carry a message still pertinent to-day, as it was when he sang them ("in a tuneful voice like that of the god Brahma," so the records say) to humble villagers and disciples, to Yogis, Pandits and scholars, to demons and subtle beings, and even to the animals, in the High Himalayas so many centuries ago.

Both India and China were highly civilized at this time, and Tibet had received an influx from the culture of both.

The outline of Milarepa's life-story is well known—how he and his mother and sister were deprived of their property and treated like beggars by relatives, how he learned sorcery in order to get his revenge on them and succeeded in doing so, how he had to undergo a terribly severe training in order to cleanse himself of the impurity of sorcery. One of his ordeals was to build a house single-handed and several times demolish and rebuild it. He came to see the symbolism of all his work and refers to it in the following lines:

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Faith is the firm foundation of my house,
Diligence forms the high walls,
Meditation makes the huge stones,
And Wisdom is the great cornerstone.
With these four I build my castle,
And it will last as long as Truth eternal.
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Milarepa taught the path of 'Yoga without form', the path of Liberation, known as Mahamudra, 'The Great Symbol', which is more or less equivalent to what in Hinduism would be called Jnana Marga. He himself describes it by saying:

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Buddha cannot be found by searching.
So contemplate your own Mind,
This is not the limited, mundane, individual mind; it is the Buddha-mind which is potentially in all of us, Milarepa says of it:
The mind is omnipresent like space;
It illumines all manifestations as the Dharma-kaya;
It knows all and illumines all.
I see it clearly like a crystal in my palm.
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DOROTHY DONATH

1 'The Hundred Thousand Songs of Milarepa' translated from the original Tibetan and annotated by Garma C. C. Chang, University Books, New York, 1962.

2 In that connection, see 'Tibet's Great Yogi Milarepa' by Evans-Wentz, Oxford University Press, and 'The Life of Milarepa' by Lobzang Jivaka, John Murray.
It does not correspond with subjective or objective, extrovert or introvert, conscious or unconscious mind in the terminology of modern psychology but transcends all such concepts.

In the Mind-Essence, the quintessential Light, there is no adulteration by distracting thoughts.
In the real nature of beings, the realm of Mind, there is no subject-object defilement.
In the natural state of Mind-Essence, there is no ground from which habitual-thought may rise.
The nature of the mind is Dharmakaya!
It is not defiled by forms and from attributes is free.

I will now quote from the commentary on this in Prof. Chang’s translation of the ‘Hundred Thousand Songs’. “The main concern in ‘Mahamudra’ therefore, is the unfolding of the true Essence of one’s own mind. To accomplish this the disciple may meditate alone, following the Guru’s instructions, or may be given the ‘pointing-out’ demonstration in an effort by the Guru to open his mind instantaneously. This can be done in different ways — by a smile, a blow, a push, a remark, a sudden exclamation, etc. This is strikingly similar to the tradition of Zen, although the style and process may differ.

“Again, most meditation practices are devised for the development of mental concentration — to hold on to a single object in the mind’s eye — and a mental effort is required in all of them; but in Mahamudra meditation is spontaneous, effortless and natural: in its practice, no object whatsoever is held in the meditator’s mind.” 3, 4

Those who are familiar with the methods and teaching of Zen will not find these ideas so very foreign or strange. Detachment, of course, is implicit in both teachings; and in Mahamudra, as in Zen, Dhyana (the pure concentrative state achieved in meditation) in its earlier stages (often mistakenly over-valued by the beginner) is only preliminary to a realization of the goal. However pleasant or blissful it may be, ecstatic dhyana should never be clung to, as it is liable to plunge one into what is known as the ‘dead-void’, where all awareness is lost. Milarepa warns of this in the following stanza:

When your body is rightly posed and your mind absorbed in deep meditation,
You may feel that thought and mind both disappear;
Yet this is but the surface experience of Dhyana.
By constant practice and mindfulness therein,
One feels a radiant Self-awareness shining like a brilliant lamp.
It is pure and bright as a flower,
It is like the feeling of staring into the vast and empty sky,
The Awareness of Void is limpid and transparent, yet vivid.
This non-thought, this radiant and transparent experience,
Is but the feeling of Dhyana.
With this good foundation
One should pray further to the Three Precious Ones 5
And penetrate to Reality by deep thought and contemplation. 6
One can thus tie the non-ego Wisdom with the beneficial life-rope of deep Dhyana,
With the power of kindness and compassion,
And with the altruistic vow of the Bodhi-Heart,
One can see direct and clear the truth of the Enlightened Path,
Of which nothing can be seen yet all is clearly visioned,
One sees how wrong were the fears and hopes of one’s own mind,
Without arrival, one reaches the place of Buddha;
Without seeing, one Beholds the Dharmakaya;
Without effort, one does all things naturally.

But Milarepa also warns the beginner:

Before you have realized Awareness in itself,
Chatter not about the View of Voidness!
All that which manifests 7

3 See Appendix to ‘The Hundred Thousand Songs of Milarepa’, vol. 11 p. 683 ff. and notes referring to Mahamudra throughout the book.
4 Compare also the Maharshi’s saying that: “The difference between meditation and Self-enquiry is that in meditation you have subject and object, whereas in Self-enquiry you have only the subject.” (Editor)
5 Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.
6 On sunyata or Voidness.
April

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Is unreal as an echo,
Yet it never fails to produce
An effect that corresponds.
Karmas and virtues, therefore,
Should never be neglected

Before the great Illumination
Shines forth in your mind, cling not
To sweet ecstasy and Voidness.
Though all things are Void-manifesting,
Never wallow in pleasures, nor expect
Your troubles to vanish without effort
Things in themselves are void;
So never cling to Voidness
Lest you stray into formalism.

I have limited myself to quotations bearing on Milarepa's teaching. I only wish there were space enough to illustrate also his humour, his love of the beautiful in nature and his compassion towards all living beings.

Apart from all this, his contacts and contests with 'demons' and other 'magic beings' were varied and numerous. Some modern readers find it hard to conceive of the objective reality of these, but the same applies also to our material world: in the realm of the Absolute, nothing (as we are capable of knowing or imagining it on this relative plane) exists. As Milarepa has said, in the light of Ultimate Reality our lives here and now are as illusory and dream-like as an echo.

I have tried to convey, as best I could, some impression of the spirit and stature of this great Buddhist, who arose at a time and in a setting very strange to us, yet whose breadth of vision, prophetic insight and love of Truth cross every barrier of time, space and cultural tradition. Knowing that mankind had already entered upon the kali yuga, the present spiritually dark age, Milarepa reiterated the following prophetic words spoken to him in his youth by his Guru, Marpa.

He said: 'At the time of defilement,
When the Buddha's teaching declines.
Lives will be short and merits poor
Evils and hindrances in myriad forms
Will overshadow the world;

Leisure and long life will become most rare;
Knowledge will expand to a point
Too stupendous to comprehend;
Proofs and conclusions will be hard to reach.
To understand the truth of Tantra will be most difficult.

Therefore, my son, try nothing else,
But work hard at the practice.

How true this is of our world to-day; and remember that it was said in a remote part of Asia nearly a thousand years ago; Here surely is food for thought!

Milarepa taught, as he practised, the Vajrayana form of Buddhism (i.e. the Diamond or Adamantine Way) both as the 'Path of Means' (the six yogas of Naropa) and the 'Path of Liberation' (the Mahamudra), which converge in their higher stages. But this was not all; he never forgot the foundations upon which all schools of Buddhism rest: — reverence for Gautama the Buddha, recitation and understanding of the Three Refuges (actually, four in the Tibetan form, for refuge in the Guru is added to refuge in the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha), the Four Noble Truths, the Eightfold Path, the Twelvefold Chain of Dependent Origination, the Precepts and Paramitas, the non-existence of ego, and above all the essential unity of Wisdom and Compassion. He stressed also the Bodhisattva Vow, the gist of which is to attain the highest possible perfection for the benefit of all living beings.

What he taught was a synthesis of the essentials of all Buddhist Schools.

Above all, he counselled practice; and indeed, the Kargyutpa School is known also as the 'Tradition of Practice'. Without practice of what we know, he tells us, however little that may be, without destruction of ego-clinging and the seeds of 'habitual—thinking' in the alaya or 'Store Consciousness', without cultivation of our deeper intuitive faculties and spiritual awareness, without the active use of understanding and compassion towards all our fellow beings, animal as well as human, intellectual know-
ledge alone will avail us little on the Path, so that Liberation from the Wheel of birth-and-death becomes impossible. This does not mean that thought and study should be neglected — far from it; reflection and knowledge are very necessary parts of our foundation; only the primary emphasis after one has passed the stage of initial enquiry should be placed upon insight and enlightenment (that is Bodhichitta, the Wisdom Heart, the Enlightened Consciousness) which is to be attained through some form of daily practice and meditation, wherever and on whatever level we find ourselves today. The benefits derived therefrom will make themselves felt in a wonderful way and lead to greater ones, even in the busiest of everyday human lives.

Milarepa stressed the need for self-discipline, for a humble and loving heart, for a constant awareness of the transiency of all compound things and the ultimate Reality of the Buddhahood within us and the possibility of its Realization in this very life. He bade us remember the Illuminating Void of Mind itself, the origin and matrix of all manifested things, where giver and receiver, subject and object, high and low, this and that, meditation and meditator, all dichotomies and dualities, interfuse and are dissolved in transcendent Light. Buddhahood is not attained but unfolded — if need be, step by step — starting now, with the means we have at hand and growing through practice to the point where all means may be discarded, like the raft in which we have crossed to the other shore.

The ultimate step, and for some fortunate ones the entire path, does indeed by-pass all means and stages. This is Mahamudra — direct awareness of the Essence of Mind itself. This is the summit or essence of the Kargyutpa Way.

Finally, I would like to close by quoting another stanza by Milarepa and one by his disciple Rachungpa.

By MILAREPA

To give alms to the needy with compassion
Is equal to serving Buddha in the three times.9
To give with sympathy to beggars is
To make offerings to Milarepa.
Sentient beings are one's parents; to
Discriminate between them is harmful and
Ignorant. True sages and scholars
Are always in accord;
Clinging to one's own school and condemning
others
Is the certain way to waste one's learning.
Since all Dharmas are equally good,
Those who cling to sectarianism
Degraded Buddhism and sever
Themselves from Liberation.
All the happiness one has
Is derived from others;
All the help one gives to them
In return brings happiness,
One's pernicious deeds
Only harm oneself.

By RACHUNGPA

The rivers of India and Nepal,
Divided by different valleys,
Flow in different directions.
Yet, as rivers, they are all alike—
In the great ocean they will meet again.

Divided by the four continents,
The sun rises in the east, the moon
Sets in the west; as light-bearers
They are both alike: on a cloudless
Autumn evening they sometimes see each
other.

Veiled by ignorance,
The minds of man and Buddha
Appear to be different;
Yet in the realm of Mind-Essence
They are both of one taste. Sometime
They will meet each other
In the great Dharmadhatu.

9 Past, present and future.

—ST. PAUL (Corinthians).
Mr. Wang is one of the older generation still imbued with traditional Chinese culture. He was permanent representative of several important Chinese papers at the U.N. until the Communist Government took over and Chinese culture was negated.

There are many styles of Ch'an poetry. One is the quatrain which must "Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand." Consider, for instance, the two famous ones connected with the succession to the Fifth Patriarch. As his end approached, Hung Jen declared that he would transmit his authority to whichever disciple could write the best quatrain. Only Shen Hsiu, the senior disciple among the monks, presumed to try. He wrote on the monastery wall:

The body is a Bodhi-tree,
The heart a shining mirror,
Clean it unceasingly
So that no dust may gather.

An illiterate provincial labourer asked the meaning and, on being told, got a monk to write underneath it for him:

There is no Bodhi-tree,
No shining mirror;
There is nothing.
Where then could the dust gather?

Both are true but on different levels. The author of the latter, which represents the higher, the non-dual level of truth, was appointed successor and became the Sixth Patriarch, the famous Hui Neng.1

This higher viewpoint is perfectly orthodox. There is justification for it in many of Buddha's sayings. For instance: "Listen, monks! The body is not the Self. If the body was the Self it could not fall ill." 2 And again: "Listen, monks! All that is physical, whether in us or in the outer world, all that is physical is the non-Self. I am not it; it is not my self." 2

As another Chinese Sage put it: "To seek for the Buddha in the Scriptures instead of in yourself is like seeking for Nirvana in the sands of the sea-shore." 3

Then again, some Ch'an poems make use of the humorous or mocking style known as 'Ts Yo' which was practised in China even before the introduction of Buddhism. This is what might be called 'shock tactics' and has something in common with the well known Ch'an and Zen technique of shocking the disciple into realization by a blow with a stick. It must be remembered that there are two Ch'an traditions of spiritual training, one leading to gradual Enlightenment and the other to sudden.4 In the latter tradition the Lin Chi school is said to have employed the stick to great effect. It is the same result that Ch'an poets aim at with their 'shock tactics'. They find countless occasions for surprise, using anything that can bewilder or defy the reason and common sense, anything paradoxical or incredible, any form of mockery or humour. The following is an anonymous example, said to be Ch'an.

"Be a glass polished bright To reflect the light. But Hui Neng said There is no glass. Let the ego-self be dead, This will come to pass. Then all Fate's teeth are drawn In that glad dawn." (Editor)

1 Our contributor A. Rao, refers to these two stanzas in his poem published in our issue of October 1964, p. 209, when he writes: Be a glass polished bright To reflect the light, But Hui Neng said There is no glass. Let the ego-self be dead, This will come to pass. Then all Fate's teeth are drawn In that glad dawn. (Editor)

2 Samyutta Nikaya.
3 Sayings of Hui Chao.
4 However, it must be remembered that, however gradual the approach may be, the actual Enlightenment, through whatever religion it may be approached, is always a sudden change of state, like physical birth or physical death; and however sudden the change of state may be, the person must always have become ripe for it, as with physical birth or physical death. (Editor)
No one in the world can understand
This poem of mine,
They ask me about it—
I don't understand it myself.

This poem of mine is myself. But the apparent 'me' is illusory and does not really exist. Who, then, can explain what does not exist? I also, being a man, cannot understand what does not exist.

Suffice it to deal briefly here with two of the greatest Masters of Ch'an poetry, Wang Fan Tse and Han Shan. Of the former very little is known, though he has had a considerable influence. He lived in the latter part of the sixth century and the influence of his style was still felt three centuries later. He was not a monk but a Ch'an lay scholar. Many of his poems are in the 'Ta Yo' tradition. In the following quatrain he plays on the sound of words to baffle the reader:

The eyes of wisdom are an empty heart;
They have nothing to do with these holes in the skull.
You say you don't recognize them?
Then you don't deserve the name of Tong
that your mother gave you.

The first two lines reiterate once more the familiar teaching that for the Sage thought and the Physical world (symbolised by the skull and duality of two eyes) are only an illusion, whereas true vision is unitive. He who is taken in by the duality is not Enlightened and has no right to the name of 'Tong', which means 'understanding' but which was also a commonly used name at that time. Furthermore, the word for 'mother' also signifies 'universal origin'. The last two lines, therefore imply that if you don't understand this you are nothing but a fool, even though understanding were your very nature.

Such a play of words is often used to hide a deeper meaning. For instance:

I Fan Tse, have put my stockings inside-out?
Wrong! A mistake! Everyone will tell
you so.

Good heavens! I would rather put your
eyes out
Then hide my feet.+

The feet symbolise one’s progress towards Enlightenment and thereby the Path, while at the same time they also symbolise the lower possibilities of a man and are to be kept hidden. This dual symbolism gives its provocative nature to the last line. Here Wang Fan Tse is declaring in a facetious way that he would rather deprive his interlocutor of dualistic vision than conceal the Path from him.

In much of his work there is what looks like pessimism and fear of death, despite his writing at other times like a Sage. For instance:

To see your carrion, dead rat!
Red steel across my belly!
Not that I am mourning you, you rat!—
But the fear:—when will my turn come?+

There is the same air of pessimism in the following verses, which show the influence of Taoist naturalism: 8

Every one has a body:—illusion.
Red steel across my belly!
One is reborn after death? Yet,
But when I come back I shall have forgotten everything!
Just to think of that
Makes life bleached and drab!
Better, my heart, to console yourself, Ignobly,
Fall often dead drunk!

The following four lines, in much the same strain, have become famous and given rise to a number of commentaries:

These clay loaves outside the town—
Their stuffing of grass is in the town.
You ought to eat one.
Don't scoff at those who are put off by them.

The 'clay loaves' are the tumuli along the sides of the road outside the town. The

6 On the basis of the 'T'ai Ping Kwang Chi'.
7 The fear? All right if it is only a poet writing, but a Sage? (Editor)
8 The clinging to ego-sense of a poet who knows the theory but fears to become a Sage? (Editor)
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The poet Huang Shan-Kun of the Sung Dynasty pointed out the illogicality of the last two lines — to be at the same time the stuffing and the diner, the eater and the eaten; but illogicality doesn't matter since it is a question of awakening, and therefore he entered into the spirit of the game with the following commentary:

These clay loaves outside the town,
With their stuffing in the town:
That's the way to get up an appetite for them.9

This poem was again taken up for treatment by the monk Ko Chin, a great Ch'an Master of the Southern Sung Dynasty.

These clay loaves outside the town,
With their stuffing in the town:
Water them well with wine —
That's the way to get up an appetite for them.9

Again the evanescence of life. The 'sound' is life. To seek to prolong it a thousand years is compared to the stupidity of trying to shut demons out of your house with an iron door-bolt.

The other poet that I want to speak about is Han Shan of the T'ang Dynasty, believed to have been born between 766 and 799. He was the most esteemed of the followers of Wang Fan Tse, even though he sometimes made fun of him. Tradition has it that he retired to Mt. Tien T'ai in the south of Chekiang. He acquired his name, 'master of the Gold Mountain', in reference to the eternal snow of his retreat.

It is said that he used to tramp the forests, writing poems on the rocks and tree trunks. Many of them were pastoral poems, showing an ironic contempt for the learned and for towns. He is said to have been accompanied by She De, another vagabond monk of the same ilk. The two friends are said to have met at Kuo-Chin temple on the summit of Tien T'ai.

The Master Chang Nien once went to this temple to visit the two friends, and this is what he has to say about them: For a long time I had admired Han Shan and She De, but when I went to see them I found a couple of buffaloes. They were amusing themselves attacking each other like two bulls. I told them to stop it, but they continued snarling at each other."

In many of Wang Fan Tse's poems either the obscurity is deliberate or the symbolism too far-fetched for modern readers. For instance:

No one lives for a hundred years;
Why then dream of a sound that lasts a thousand years?
The demons, forging an iron door-bolt,
Cheer derisively.

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9 Wine as a symbol of ecstasy, as in all religions? (Editor)
10 What Sage counsel? To take life easy? Yes. To face the thought of death? Yes. But to feel a pang in the heart from the fear of death? (Editor)
This is indeed typical of the attitude of Ch'an poets to one another. Actually, nearly all the poems of these two have disappeared, but such fragments as survive show, on the one hand, a constant desire to surprise and offend so-called human dignity. The following shows how Han Shan could deride the learned and subtle Wang Fan Tse:

After his death, Fan Tse
Went to see the old king of hell;
He had read the books of a hundred royal sages,
But he was roasted and well roasted.
Just to have called once on the Name of Buddha
Would have sufficed: You are on the path of Buddha.

Mingled with this element of sarcasm is another strain also, the love of nature. For instance:

I seek a quiet retreat
And Han Shan alone offers me peace.
The light breeze rustles the ancient pines;
The nearer you draw the gentler is the sound.

On the tree-top a white-haired man
Murmurs that he reads Chuang-Tse and Lao-Tse.
For ten years now he has been unable to return;
He has forgotten the path that brought him here.

The 'white-haired man' can stand for any scholar, any student of the scriptures. Books have led him to a fictitious wisdom and so warped his mind that he has forgotten the true path and will not be able to get back to naturalness.

Let us end with another quotation in the same vein, though perhaps more profound:

If you meet the devil
The best thing is not to be afraid,
Courage! Don't look at this devil,
Just call him by name and he will flee of his own accord.
To burn incense
Or ask help of the Buddha
Or make gestures seeking the aid of some old monk
Is like a mosquito biting a bronze bull —
Where will it plunge its proboscis?

This refers to the unreality of evil. Call it by its own name, see it as unreal, and it disappears. But seek to pit good against it and you are accepting its own level, that of duality, of two opposite powers, and on this level you cannot defeat it. You cannot at the same time acknowledge its reality and destroy its power.11

Readers are reminded that this is one of the basic principles of Joel Goldsmith, that evil is unreal and is not to be defeated on the level of 'two powers' but dissolved by rising above it to the level of One Power and seeing it for the unreality that it is, i.e. by calling it by its true name.

(Editor)

At the moment when one is able to concentrate his mind to the extreme of emptiness and is able to hold it there in serene tranquillity, then his spirit is unified with the spirit of the universe and it has returned to its original state from which his mind and all things in the universe have emerged as appearance.

All things are in a recurring process of appearing and disappearing, only to return to their original state. This may be called a kind of inertia, a drag on activity and manifestation, that brings all things back to their original state of composure. The original state is eternal. To understand this eternity of emptiness is enlightenment; without this enlightenment one's mind is engrossed in confusion and evil activity.

— Tao-te-King (Trans. Goddard).
Prof. Stryk has made a mark for himself as an authority both on poetry and Zen, apart from being himself a poet of some standing. He has experience of lecturing in Japan and is at present teaching poetry, creative writing and Oriental literature at Northern Illinois University, De Kalb, Illinois 60115. His collection of Buddhist readings entitled 'World of the Buddha' published by Doubleday, New York, is due out this spring; so is his book 'The Pit and other Poems', which contain some Zen poetry, published by Swallow Press, Chicago. His book: 'Zen: Poems, Prayers, Sermons, Anecdotes, Interviews', co-authored with Takashi Ikemoto was published by Doubleday Anchor in 1965.

EVEN in translation, or such at least is my hope, Zen poetry is so suggestive in itself that explication is for the most part unnecessary. Japanese Zennists rarely theorised about the poems they would write from time to time, and for good reason: to them poetry was not, as so often in the West, an art to be cultivated but a means by which an attempt at the nearly inexpressible could be made. Though some of their poems are called 'satori Poems' others death poems, in a sense all Zen poems deal with momentous experiences. There are, in other words, no 'finger exercises', and though some Zen poems seem comparatively light-hearted, there is no one that isn't totally in earnest, fully inspired.

Indeed, when you consider the Zennist's traditional goal, the all-or-nothing quality of his striving after illumination, this is scarcely to be wondered at.

Poets of the Chinese Ch'an School ('Zen' is the Japanese transliteration of 'Ch'an'), on whose works Japanese Zennists modeled their own, were far less reluctant to theorise, and fortunately there exist some very important documents, most of which have been excellently translated by Mr. James J. Y. Liu in his 'The Art of Chinese Poetry', describing their approach and attitude. There is the need, for example, to attain a state of calm, making it possible for the poet to get the spirit of nature into his poems.

This feeling is surely what Wang Wei, the great 5th Century painter, had in mind when he said (I quote from Mai-Mai Sze's 'The Tao of Painting') : "The form of the object must first fuse with the spirit, after which the mind transforms it in various ways. The spirit, to be sure, has no form; yet that which moves and transforms the form of an object is the spirit."

Even those Zennists who are not artists seem to understand this most important principle. For example, when in the course of interviewing for our Anchor Zen one of the masters of Yamaguchi, Takashi Ikemoto, and I asked how he would describe the state of mind in which an artist might produce something appealing to a Zennist, the master said: "It is a state of mind in which one is identified with an object without any sense of restraint."

Zen anecdotes concerning artists (and there are many) are usually very telling about that sort of thing: Spend ten years observing bamboos, become a bamboo yourself, then forget everything—and paint. Another way of thinking about this most significant principle of Zen aesthetics, and a convenient one for Westerners, is to recall Keats's 'Negative Capability', by which the poet means to suggest that the true artist does not assert his own personality, even if he fancies himself possessed of one; rather he identifies himself as far as possible with
the object of his contemplation, its personality without feeling that he has to understand it.

The Rinzai Zennist Bunan (1602-76) puts it this way:

The moon's the same old moon,
The flowers exactly as they were,
Yet I've become the thingness
Of all the things I see!

Zen poetry is highly symbolic and the moon, as in Bunan's poem, is a common symbol. It should be remembered, in relation to the use of such symbols, that as religion Zen is rooted in Mahayana Buddhism and that the Zennist searches, always within himself, for the indivisible moon reflected not only on the sea but on each dew drop as well. To discover this, the Dharmakaya, in all things, whether while sitting in meditation or writing a poem expressive of illumination, is for the Zennist to discover his own Buddha-nature.

Perhaps most Zen poems, whether designated as such or not, are satori poems composed immediately after an awakening and presented to a master for approval. Such poems delineate, usually very graphically, what the spiritual eye has been awakened to, a view of things seen as for the first time, in their eternal aspect. The following are typical satori poems:

Daito (1282-1337)

At last I've broken Ummon's barrier:
There's exit everywhere—east, west, north, south,
In at morning, out at evening; neither host nor guest.
My every step stirs up a little breeze.

Eichu (1340-1416)

My eyes eavesdrop on their lashes:
I'm finished with the ordinary!
What use has halter, bridle
To one who's shaken off contrivance?

Kokai (1403-69)

Taking hold, one's astray in nothingness;
Letting go, the Origin's regained.
Since the music stopped, no shadow's touched
My door: again the village moon's above the river.

The last poem illustrates another most important principle of Zen, and one that seems to appeal especially to those Westerners interested in Zen; that is 'letting go'. Briefly, this is the idea that one never gets what one grasps at. Seek not, in other words, and ye shall find. Here is another poem, by Kanemitsu-Kogun (18th Century) based on the same Zen idea:

My hands released at last, the cliff soars
Ten thousand metres, the ploughshare sparks,
All's consumed with my body. Burn again,
The lanes run straight, the rice well in the ear.

Traditionally death poems are written or dictated by Zennists just before dying. The author looks back upon his life and, in a few highly compressed lines, expresses his state of mind at the inevitable hour. The following are typical:

Fumon (1302-69)

Magnificent! Magnificent!
No one knows the final word,
The ocean bed's alight.
Out of the Void leap wooden lambs.

Kukoku (1328-1407)

Riding this wooden upside-down horse,
I'm about to gallop through the Void.
Would you seek to trace me?
Ha! Try catching the tempest in a net.

Zekkai (1336-1405)

The Void has collapsed upon the earth,
Stars, burning, sheath across Iron Mountain.
Turning a somersault, I brush past.

The Void mentioned in all three of these death poems is the great Penetration of Zen. The mind, it is thought, is a void or empty space in which objects are stripped of their objectivity, reduced to their essence, their common and cosmic essence.

In the following death poem by Bokuo (1384-1455) there is an important Zen symbol, the ox, which here serves as an object of discipline. The poet, in his calm acceptance of death, proves himself a true Zen-man:

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For seventy-two years
I've kept the ox well under.
Today, the plum in bloom again,
I let him wander in the snow.

It would be misleading to claim that only Zennists exhibit such stoicism at the final hour. In his brilliant essay 'Artists and Old Age' Gottfried Benn tells of the diamond dealer Solomon Rosbach who, just before leaping to his death from the top of the Empire State Building scrawled this note:

No more above,
No more below —
So I leap off.

Which, by any standards, is a fine Zen poem.

Though satori and death figure heavily in Zen poetry, most of the poems deal with nature and man's place in it. Simply put, the Buddha-Nature is by no means peculiar to man. It is discoverable in all that exists, animate or inanimate. As Arthur Waley puts it in his 'Zen Buddhism and its Relation to Art': "Stone, river and tree are alike parts of the great hidden Unity. Thus man, through his Buddha-nature or universalized consciousness, possesses an intimate means of contact with nature. The songs of birds, the noise of waterfalls, the rolling of thunder, the whispering of wind in the pines — all these are utterances of the Absolute."

Perhaps in this poem by Ryokan (1757-1831) the Zen spirit is perfectly caught:

Without a jot of ambition left
I let my nature flow where it will.
There are ten days of rice in my bag
And, by the hearth, a bundle of firewood.
Who prattles of illusion or nirvana?
Forgetting the equal dusts of name and fortune,
Listening to the night rain on the roof of my hut,
I sit at ease, both legs stretched out.

The Vision of God — Your Original Face before you were born

Disciple: How may I come to the supersensual life, that I may see God, and hear Him speak?
Master: When thou canst throw thyself but for a moment into THAT where no creature dwelleth, then thou hearest what God speaketh.
D.: Is that near at hand, or far off ?
M.: It is in thee, and if thou canst for a while cease from all thy thinking and willing, thou shalt hear unspeakable words of God.
D.: How can I hear, when I stand still from thinking and willing.
M.: When thou standest still from the thinking and willing of self, then the eternal Hearing, Seeing and Speaking will be revealed in thee; and so God heareth and seeth through thee: thine own hearing, willing and seeing hindreth thee, that thou dost not see nor hear God.
D.: Wherewithal shall I hear and see God, being He is above nature and creature?
M.: When thou art quiet or silent, then thou art that which God was before nature and creature, and whereof He made thy nature and creature: then thou hearest and seest with that wherewith God saw and heard in thee, before thy own willing, seeing and hearing began.
D.: What hindereth or keepeth me back that I cannot come to that?
M.: Thy own willing, hearing and seeing: And because thou strivest against that out of which thou art come, thou breakest thyself off with thy own willing from God's willing.

— (Boehme 1575-1624
Of the Supersensual Life, 1-5).
Mohammad did not work miracles. Instead, the Divine Grace flowing through him created the Quran. It is, indeed, stated therein, in reply to demands for miracles, that its verses were the signs that he brought, which is the more pointed as their name, ‘ayat’, means ‘sign’ and therefore ‘miracle’. Towards the beginning of his testimony, before he had yet been expelled from Mecca for bearing it, he hung up ten verses from the Quran in the Kaaba, where it was the custom of poets to exhibit their works, with a challenge to any who doubted their divine inspiration to produce others the like of them; and that in a language and a race famed for its poetry.

The impact of this book composed through the Instrumentality of a man who was already forty years of age when it began, was illiterate and had never composed a thing, was stupendous. It was a new literary form, a kind of rhythmical rhymed prose. Already in Mohammed’s lifetime there were people who could recite the whole of it by heart and could have replaced it if all the texts had been destroyed; and there have been ever since. Hafiz or ‘guardian’ such a one is called. Therefore the claim of some hostile Western critics that the original texts were in a scattered and fragmentary condition means little.

Through the influence of this book composed the Arabic of the time of King Alfred and Charlemagne, before any of the languages of present-day Europe had evolved, is still the classical language of Arabic lands today. Local dialects have, of course, diverged from it, but not enough to prevent it being spoken, read and understood. And throughout the whole Islamic world portions of the Quran are recited five times a day by those who fulfil their obligations.

It is emphatically stated in the Quran that it is not poetry, and those who speak of it as such are denounced. In order to understand this it is necessary to see what the term ‘poetry’ conveyed to the Arabs of Mohammad’s time. It did not imply, on the one hand, divine revelation, nor, on the other, the tepid imagination and banal observation of life and nature that so often goes by the name today. Lyric and narrative poetry were flourishing and its creators were apt to be ecstatics. As among various other ancient peoples, they were something like present-day mediums, possessed by familiar spirits, similar to the ‘controls’ of the mediums. These might even overpower them and speak through them. When, therefore, it was known that Mohammad fell into a trance in which portions of the Quran were revealed to him, which he recited on coming round, it was natural that some should declare that this was the same thing. It was in fact quite different because it was no familiar spirit that revealed the verses to Mohammad but the Angel Gabriel, that is the Spirit of Divine Revelation. And their form and content differed accordingly.

Incidentally, the malicious suggestion of some Western critics that Mohammad ‘fraudulently’ concocted the Quran or some parts of it, only pretending to have heard them in trance, is, from a purely literary point of view (apart from all other considerations) rather like accusing Milton of ‘fraudulently’ concocting ‘Paradise Lost’. There is a difference, of course, because Milton was a poet, whereas Mohammad was not.

Translation of great work of literature is always difficult but perhaps more so with the Quran than any other. In the first place, it is not divided systematically according to subject, as a thesis or exposition in the Western sense of the word would be. A legal injunction such as to draw up a document testified to by two witnesses when taking a
loan may be followed by an affirmation of Divine Omniscience, then by an encouragement to the faithful and a warning to unbelievers and evil-doers; this again by a reference to one of the prophets. In fact it has to be read and pondered passage by passage and often verse by verse. Then again, there are many topical allusions which would be lost on the modern reader without footnotes. And it is both cryptic and symbolical. For instance, an ejaculation such as “And the stars!” Is it to be translated: “And behold the stars!” or “Consider the stars!” or “What of the stars?” or “I swear by the stars!”? But the greatest difficulty is purely linguistic. That, however, means more than semantic, since turns of phrase cover and mould turns of thought. For instance, the saying “To God do we belong and to Him do we return” does not strike one as particularly noteworthy; and yet the power and beauty of the original Arabic and its suggestion of utter surrender are such that it is often used as an incantation.

Muslims do not forbid or discourage translation, but for worship and ritual the original Arabic has to be used. In fact the only way of reading the Qur'an satisfactorily is to master at least enough Arabic to read the original text side by side with a fairly literal translation.

**Garlands of Guru’s Sayings**

57. Experiencing the unbroken oneness of pure space, One sees no separate pot at all. From seeming movement of the seeming pot What folly to infer Movement of the space within the pot!

58. In the plenitude of Self-awareness Body and world are seen no more; Because of their apparent changes How foolish to conclude That the Self is mutable!

59. Vast, whole, immutable, the Self, Reflected in the mind’s distorting mirror. May seem to move. Know it is the image moving, Never the Self.

60. How can delusive darkness ever touch The Self, the One without a second? This the mind’s divisive vision brings. Nothing but bright Awareness is the Self.

61. Only the mind deluded and drawn outward By maya’s might beholds the body. The true Self knows it not. How may this Pure Awareness Be called the body’s owner?

62. Only to the ego in the body The world of moving and unmoving things Appears as the other. Where there is no world, no God, In this absence of another, How and whereof Can the Self be called the witness?

63. Without the body, the world is not. Without mind, the body is not. Without awareness, mind is not, And without being there is no Awareness.
THE MESSAGE OF THE
RUBAIYAT OF OMAR KHAYYAM

By
Sir GEORGE TREVELYAN

Acknowledgment: I gladly give credit for the original inspiration for this essay in a pamphlet by my friend Ernest Gabrielson, called "Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam with interpretation."

SOME KEY VERSES

1. Awake! for Morning in the Bowl of Night
   Has flung the Stone that puts the Stars to Flight
   And lo! the Hunter of the East has caught
   The Sultan's turret in a Noose of Light.

2. Dreaming when Dawn's Left Hand was in the Sky
   I heard a Voice within the Tavern cry,
   'Awake my little ones, and fill the cup
   Before Life's Liquor in its Cup be dry'.

3. And as the cock crew, those who stood before
   The Tavern shouted 'Open then the Door!'
   You know how little while we have to stay,
   And once departed may return no more.

7. Come, fill the cup, and in the Fire of Spring
   The Winter Garment of Repentance fling;
   The Bird of Time has but a little way
   To fly — and lo! the Bird is on the Wing.

13. Look to the Rose that blows about us — 'Lo',
    'Laughing' she says, 'into the World I blow;
    At once the silken Tassel of my Purse
    Tear, and its Treasure on the Garden throw.'

16. Think — in this batter'd Caravanserai
    Whose Doorways are alternate Night and Day,
    How Sultan after Sultan with his pomp
    Abode his Hour or two, and went his way.

20. Ah, my Beloved, fill the Cup that clears
    To-Day of past Regrets and future Fears —
    Tomorrow? why, Tomorrow I may be
    Myself with Yesterday's Sev'n Thousand Years.

28. With them the Seed of Wisdom I did sow,
    And with my own hand labour'd it to grow;
    And this was all the Harvest that I reap'd
    'I came like Water, and like Wind I go'.
37. Ah, fill the Cup — what boots it to repeat
How Time is slipping underneath our Feet:
Unborn To-Morrow, and dead Yesterday,
Why fret about them if To-Day be sweet!

38. One Moment in Annihilation's Waste,
One Moment, of the Well of Life to taste —
The Stars are setting and the Caravan
Starts for the Dawn of Nothing — Oh, make haste!

40. You know, my Friends, how long since in my House
For a new Marriage I did make Carouse:
Divorced old barren Reason from my Bed,
And took the Daughter of the Vine to Spouse.

41. For 'Is' and 'Is-Not' though with Rule and Line,
And 'Up-and-Down' without, I could define,
I yet in all I only cared to know
Was never deep in anything but — Wine.

43. The Grape that can with Logic absolute
The Two-and-Seventy jarring Sects confute:
The subtle Alchemist that in a Trice
Life's leaden Metal into Gold transmute.

44. The mighty Mahmud, the Victorious Lord,
That all the misbelieving and black Horde
Of Fears and Sorrows that infect the Soul
Scatters and slays with his enchanted Sword.

47. And if the Wine you drink, the Lip you press,
End in the Nothing all Things end in — Yes —
Then fancy while thou art, Thou art but what
Thou shalt be — Nothing — Thou shall not be less.

50. The Ball no Question makes of Ayes and Noes,
But Right or Left as strikes the Player goes;
And He that toss'd Thee down into the Field,
He knows about it all — He knows — HE knows!

73. Ah Love! could thou and I with Fate conspire
To grasp this sorry Scheme of Things entire,
Would not we shatter it to bits — and then
Remould it nearer to the Heart's Desire!

74. Ah Moon of my Delight who know'st no wane,
The Moon of Heaven is rising once again;
How oft hereafter rising shall she look
Through this same Garden after me — in vain!

75. And when Thyself with shining Foot shall pass
Among the Guests Star-scatter'd on the Grass,
And in thy joyous Errand reach the Spot
Where I made one — turn down an empty Glass!
Great mythology and poetry enshrines eternal truths about the nature of man and the allegorical journey of the human soul through the dark forests or stormy seas of life on earth. The basic allegory is always the same. All poetic inspiration, all great legends, every fairy story, tell in some form the tale of the eternal being of man, belonging to a timeless realm of light, descending into the temporal sphere of earth, taking to itself a body, forgetting whence and why it came, undergoing soul trials and ordeals and returning through the gateway of so-called death, enriched by experience, to the realm of spirit from which it descended. In a thousand forms this tale is told and it is the truth that our materialistic age most needs to recover. Hence the immense importance of reinterpretation of myths and of poetry, made possible for our intellectual age by our modern psychological and spiritual knowledge.

This essay is an attempt at such interpretation of Fitzgerald's Rubaiyat. It is based on a lecture and is much condensed. Every verse can be analysed to reveal its hidden meaning, but here I must be content with but a brief indication referring the reader back to the text itself. Indeed each verse can be taken as a kind of meditation which goes on revealing rich truths. We must recognize that if spiritual truth speaks in the symbols of poetry, it is even possible that the poet himself is not fully aware of the depth of what he has said. This may well have been so with Fitzgerald.

I will assume that the reader has beside him his copy of the Rubaiyat (or has it by heart) and shall not waste space by full quotations. "By heart" indeed. It is with the thinking of the heart, rather than logical intellect that we apprehend poetical truth. Allegory is invariably hidden by double meaning. The deep spiritual truths never constrain belief. There must be no compulsion to acceptance and therefore we find that the esoteric teachings always have to be uncovered and unravelled. The Rubaiyat is a wonderful example of this, so much so that it is usually treated as the creed of a wine bibber. Often enough teachers in schools have said in effect: "What wonderful poetry it contains but what bad philosophy to teach the young!" Superficially it seems to say that all life is without meaning, death is annihilation, and therefore let us drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die. It does say all this and any who wish to stop there are welcome to do so. "While you live, drink—for once dead you never shall return". That seems explicit enough.

But "Come with old Khayyam", the philosopher, those who are unsatisfied with wine alone. Look deeper and you will see that the whole poem is about life. It is the story of the eternal soul, descending at birth on to the earth plane, living out its life through its spring, summer and autumn until "the angel with his darker draught draws up on thee". Then "take that and do not shrink".

Awake; Look; Think; Listen: These are the four magnificent injunctions which span the poem in verses 1, 8, 16 & 59. Lack of space makes it necessary for me to content myself with interpreting only a few verses and to make categorical statements as to what the symbols mean to me. Remember that every symbol is capable of several interpretations, often apparently contradictory, but if your interpretation brings life-enhancing meaning to you, who dare say that for you it is other than true merely on the ground that he has found a different meaning.

(Marginal Numbers refer to Verses)

1. Let us then bravely look at the opening stanzas in their wider meaning. They picture the descent of souls into birth. The Tavern represents life on earth. The soul is called on to awaken in the dawn of earth consciousness and the stone flung into the bowl of night represents the descent into the realm of the material from the spiritual world. Leaving the "astral" realm is indeed equivalent to "putting the stars to flight".

This is the substance of a lecture given to the Iran Society on Feb. 9th, 1966.
Note that pre-existence is assumed. This postulate is of absolute importance to our understanding and would have been naturally accepted, together with plurality of lives, or re-incarnation, by the oriental sage. I use the word 'soul' rather loosely to include the concept of the 'entity' the eternal being of man, the 'ego' in each one of us, which takes upon itself the sheath of a living body in order to experience life on earth. This entity, being eternal, was there before birth, and is released at death to return to the light filled planes from which it descended. There is no such thing as death in the sense of extinction of the entity.

2. At the moon gate of birth a voice within the tavern invites the young souls to enter and awaken and fill the cup of their body with the wine of consciousness “before life’s liquor in its cup be dry”. There will be no awakening or birth unless we allow the etheric forces of life to flood into our being. Throughout the poem Omar is speaking of the Wine of Life, and the cup is the ensouled body to be filled with this consciousness. It is what Jesus meant in saying “I am the true vine, ye are the branches. He that drinketh of my Wine shall never thirst”.

3. The souls, urged to plunge into earth consciousness, cluster round the tavern door calling for entry.

“You know how little while we have to stay
And once departed may return no more.”

It is so often assumed that this couplet shows Omar’s disbelief in survival. Not at all! It is spoken by the personalities, which as earth vehicles do not as such survive. The true individuality is eternal and Omar of course knew this, though we forget it in our descent to earth and entry into the Tavern. There is much that we must experience during our short sojourn on earth and already there is a sense of urgency.

7. “The Bird of Time has but a little way
To fly — and lo the bird is on the wing”.

16. Life on earth is likened to a battered caravanserai with two doors, the birth portal of entry and the gate of departure at death. Here enter all kinds of men. Note the personalities are already developed through earlier lives and planes of consciousness. Some already therefore enter as sultans.

Now we come to the crux of the whole poem and its basic teaching.

“Ah, my Beloved, fill the cup that clears
Today of past regrets and future fears”.

Once we have lifted our thinking above the preconception that this is merely an invitation to drink, we recognise that it is the central problem for us all in developing a courageous and creative attitude to our lives in a difficult age. What is it that disturbs us all with negative emotion other than remorse and regret over past opportunities missed and deeds ill done, or anxiety about an unknowable future? The Cup offered is the ‘Eternal Now’, the present moment. Fill that, learn to live only in that, and we lift ourselves through our own initiative into the positive emotions of love, joy and courage.

We can at will jettison negative thinking and emotion and “sacrifice our sorrows.” If we could really live only in the present time, freed from self and its clutter of ‘past regrets and future fears’, we could really make changes and free choices. It is the great challenge for creative development and modern psychology. It is also the way to surrendering the will to the guidance of higher beings, which in our culture means the entry of the Christ power into our lives.

Why fret about “unborn tomorrow and dead yesterday” when we have this splendid hope and joyful task in the living moment.
23. "Ah, make the most of what we yet may spend" before we abandon our bodies (not our souls) to the dust —

"Dust into dust and under dust, to lie Sans wine, sans song, sans singer and — sans end ".

This appears to say that everything ends with death. In truth it urges us to develop our talents before we lose the body, that instrument for sense experience, but when that worn-out tool is cast away to dust the eternal core of man moves on to that plane of consciousness to which truly there is no end.

27. Omar "when young did eagerly frequent Doctor and Saint and heard great argument". But he has found a truth which he attempts to teach them, and the harvest of wisdom he reaps is contained in a marvellously enigmatic sentence "I came like water and like wind I go". Read this in the sense that "the spirit bloweth where it listeth", and that Water is always the symbol of Life.

29. The soul, cast on the waters of life on earth, is blown around, "the why not knowing", and "without asking whither hurried hence". It has forgotten the high purpose which it chose, with Divine guidance, before its descent to earth. The vagaries of life may appear to be an impertinence on the part of the fates. After a number of lives ("another and another Cup") it will reach the stage of seeing how Destiny is working and will learn to accept fate, seeing meaning in all that happens — "drown the memory of that (fancied) Impertinence".

31. Then Omar describes his quest for the eternal truths. All hero legends are concerned with the soul which takes upon itself the task of exploring up into the ethereal realms of eternal spirit to bring back to his fellow men some elixir of life (Golden Fleece, precious diadem, Holy Grail) which may prove the truth of the Higher Worlds. So in meditation he rises through the gates of Knowledge into planetary wisdom, but still finds that there is a veil beyond which he cannot yet see. As yet he has not found the key (but see verse 35 — "of my base metal may be filed a key"). While the soul is on earth, seeing through a glass darkly, the heavens exhort it to use its understanding, albeit blinded by the obscuration of matter (Awake! Think! Listen again!)

We taste of the well of earth consciousness only for a little minute out of the wider life on the eternal planes.

38. "The stars are setting and the caravan Starts for the Dawn of Nothing — Oh make haste".

A sense of urgency is creeping into the poem. Our time in the battered Caravanserai is coming to an end. We with our soul companions must start for the journey to that realm beyond Things, that realm of pure Being entered after death. We start for the Dawn of No-Thing, and many of us are going to do this quite unprepared. Oh make haste! This is a verse of tremendous impact once we have seen what the poem is really saying — and it applies to the lot of us, now. This is the marvel of the allegorical symbols. Being timeless they appeal directly to our modern consciousness and to each of us personally.

Link this verse with the wonderful verse 47, which at first glance appears to be pure negation and then on a deeper level is revealed as a magnificent life affirmation. Note the exultant impact that comes from the mysterious interpolation of the word YES. Your love and life here culminates in the return to the eternal realm of pure being, which is "the No-Thing all things end in", the transmutation of matter into the world of spirit and creative Idea from which all 'things' descended. While
earth-bound, use your Imagination (fancy) to understand that in essence "thou art but what thou shalt be — nothing (but pure Being). Thou shalt not be less". It is the gravest mistake to think 'death' means extinction of individual consciousness or entity. To quote the Duke in Shakespeare's "Measure for Measure", modern man is "most ignorant of what he's most assured — his glassy essence" — that is his spiritual, supersensible, ethereal core. This, the Individuality, survives and is eternal.

32. The talk of "me and thee" in verse 32 refers of course to the earthly personalities which do indeed fade.

Of course Love is the key, open-hearted unfocussed love of all life and 13. 18. with it the joy of free giving of the self. This is the repeated symbol of the Rose in spring which runs like a golden thread through the poem. 'Look to the Rose' and give your love with the same selfless abandon; (13) and the nightingale cries "Wine, Wine, red wine" to the rose (6).

By now we can grasp the real meaning of the two 'repentance' verses, 7 and 70. The first

7. "In the fire of spring
   The winter garment of repentance fling",
70. and its autumnal counterpart —

"was I sober when I swore repentance?"

"And then came spring and Rose
   in Hand
   My Threadbare penitence apieces tore".

Here we have another double meaning, outwardly the sensual cavalier rejecting the puritan in his nature and more deeply the joyous rising in the heart of the love which enables us to live in the moment, freed from all craven or pious regrets about the past or melancholy orthodoxy. Then, in total absence of negative emotion, we can create love and joy and courage in the heart.

Now look at the series of verses 39—44, reading Wine and the Grapes our symbol for Life and Light and Love. Instead of getting embroiled in earth affairs or sterile philosophy, Omar strives to open the soul to the real beauty of life and the joy of direct and immediate contact with the spirit, drinking the wine from the cup God has given him, with thankfulness and joy.

40. The soul has rejected "barren reason" and has entered into a more fruitful marriage — with the Daughter of the Vine in the sense used by Christ and the great Masters of all religions. The longing is expressed in St. Thomas Aquinas' prayer, "Load me with the gifts of the Spirit during my exile here and inebriate my soul with Thy Joy". Radhakrishnan writes "The oldest wisdom in the world tells us that we can consciously unite with the divine while in the body; for this is man really born".

It is very interesting to count the small number of verses actually about drinking and wine. An enormous proportion of the 75 verses are about matters which would be very tedious for the toper. The major part of the poem simply is not about quaffing earthly wine. The group of drinking verses 39-44 are of extraordinary importance in our reading of the poem. The Grape and Wine is taken always as the pure contact with the spiritual sources of life available to every seeking soul in the immediate moment, if the will can be freely opened to the higher guidance. This is the joy offered by Jesus the Christ, but we need not be disturbed that our poem is written by a Persian sage. The Christ, the Christos, is the same exalted Being, recognised by all the religions as the Lord of the Spiritual Sun behind the physical sun, whom the Persians knew as Ahura
Mazda. “I am the light of the world. I am the true bread and wine of Life.” The aim of our sojourn here is to surrender the self in freedom to His Love.

41. Intellect and logic could weigh and measure things but the only knowledge which Omar really minded about was that which pointed the way, with joy, to direct contact with the spiritual sources. He was “never deep in anything but Wine”. This line is a splendid example of the double meanings.

42. Late in life, having matured through the allegory of Spring and Summer, Omar understands more deeply the meaning of this true Wine and his guardian angel, preparing him for the transition called death, brings him the vintage of his life. This light of Divine Love, this true Wine, can transmute life’s leaden metal into Gold, confuting all sectarian disputes and arguments about religious matters. Remember that the Alchemists were only in outward seeming concerned with making the physical metal gold. This was a symbolical process covering their real purpose of transmuting the soul, bringing about the mystical marriage between the personality and its higher spiritual self. This is the lesson of the great myths and allegories. This is Omar’s passionate quest through life with an ardour which, as he reveals in verses 69 and 71, has often damaged his worldly reputation. He has discovered, however, that one glimpse of the True Light caught, by direct contact with the spirit, in the midst of ordinary life, is better than all the rituals he found deadening in orthodox religion.

50. With great earnestness Omar urges us to recognise that the apparent harshness of destiny is only an illusion while we are experiencing the limitations of the earth plane. The Divine Master of our Destiny (for us the Christ) has apparently tossed us down to be struck around like a polo ball. But note with what urgency the final line is stressed—“He knows about it all—He knows—HE knows”. We must for lack of space, leave the magnificent meditation on the cosmic destiny of man, his fall and redemption, suggested in verses 51—53.

The Epilogue ‘Kuza-Nama’ gives a profound allegory on life through the symbol of pottery. Omar, before his death, “one morning at the close of Ramazan, ere the better moon arose”, looks back as an old man and contemplates the way in which the bodies and personalities are shaped in earth substance:

“Who is the Potter pray, and who the Pot?”

How far are we all responsible on a deeper Karmic level for the differences and even the deformities of our bodies? The pots (bodies) talk together discussing why they have developed such varied forms. Surely there must be purpose behind it all? Then in excitement they hear that the Porter is coming and see the crescent new moon through the opening door. They are to be ensouled again and the wine of life is to fill them.

55. Verse 44 is a tremendous statement relevant to our time in our Christian world, if we change Mahmud into Michael, the archangel standard bearer of the Christ, wielder of the sword of light. It is he whom we can invoke to scatter the “misbelieving and black horde of fears and sorrows that infest the soul”.

68. Omar must now leave the beauties and experiences of earth life. His search for the spiritual has so refined his coarser being through subtler influences of soul that the true believer passing by the place where his ashes are buried will be caught by a “snare of perfume”. This verse should give pause to any who think Omar is a mere sensualist!

74. The final two verses are deeply moving. With the coming of ‘death’, the true
Moon of Heaven is rising once again and the soul is to be released to the world of ethereal light. I am, says Omar, leaving the delights of the earth garden and my friends and fellow guests in the Caravanserai.

75. And it is a joyous, not melancholy, errand for the Being who “with shining-foot shall pass among the guests star-scattered on the grass”. Here in memory of me, turn down an empty glass to show I have drunk to the dregs that which earth consciousness can offer.

* * *

I make no claim whatever to Omar scholarship nor have I any idea how widely such interpretation is already accepted.

Not for a moment would I argue with those who find this form of interpretation unacceptable, but to those to whom it appeals I say: Live with these verses, meditate upon them, let them work on you and their beauty and wisdom will reveal itself to you. Each will then discover his own interpretations. Fitzgerald’s re-creation of the 12th Century poet philosopher has given us a work of art of deep meaning for our own time.

The real philosophy in the Rubaiyat, not the superficial, matters more now than ever, in these years of important human destiny.

It is not enough merely to re-read the poem. We must make it alive in us and then it will actually bring about a spiritual change. You cannot ‘live’ the Rubaiyat and remain the same person, since it is a mantram that releases the imprisoned splendour from within the heart. The Master on his “joyous errand”, offers us the “ruby vintage”.

“Ah, my Beloved, fill the Cup that clears
Today of past regrets and future fears”

This is not merely for our personal irresponsible enjoyment. It is the major psychological step that each of us can consciously take in becoming fully mature and responsible adults. It is this attitude of positive emotion, of “risen thinking”, that makes it possible for us really to co-operate with the spiritual world. In our crumbling world this is the urgent task which each of us is called on to achieve. After we have “shattered it to bits” it is in very truth through the power of love that the awakened souls, acknowledging the living whole, will

“grasp the sorry scheme of things entire” and

“remould it nearer to the heart’s desire”.

Love is the gravity force of the New Age — but make haste.

“What boots it to repeat
That time is slipping underneath our feet”

AWAKE! — THINK! — LOOK!
LISTEN AGAIN!

Every time you establish by proof the negation of a thing in reference to God you become more perfect, while with every additional positive assertion you follow your imagination and recede from true knowledge of God.

— MAIMONIDES on The Negative Theology.
DANTE ALIGHIERI was born in Florence in May 1265. Of his youth we know little except what is recorded in 'Vita Nuova' where Dante tells of his love for Beatrice, daughter of Folco Portinari. After her death in June 1290, Dante immersed himself in philosophy.

'A poet of rectitude', as he himself declared in 'De Vulgari Eloquentia', Dante opposed the intrigue and depravity prevalent in Italy at the time, with the result that he was exiled on the trumped-up charge of barratry. He never returned to his native Florence, and his ashes repose at Ravenna.

Outstanding among Dante's works is the 'Divine Comedy' which is composed of one hundred cantos, divided into three canticles — Inferno, Purgatorio and Paradiso.

In 'Convito' Dante states that the Scriptures should be expounded anagogically, that is, spiritually. Dante explains that when Scripture is understood in its literal sense it must also be accorded its mystical interpretation. He cites an example — when the Israelites left Egypt, the land of Judea was said to have been made free and pure. This is literally true, but it also possesses a spiritual meaning, namely, that when the soul departs from bondage, it is liberated from ignorance and rendered holy. In this way sacred Scripture reveals the 'spirit' within the 'letter' of the lesson.

Regarding his work the 'Divine Comedy' Dante records in a missive to Can Grande 'Relinquishing all subtle investigation, we may sum up the whole of my 'Comedy' by naming as its object the liberation of souls from sorrow in this life, in order to raise them towards the heights of heavenly Bliss.'

Dante conceived of divine Truth as being inherent in the consciousness of man, but the letter through error, participates only partly in divine Being; man's destiny is therefore ordained to be a return to Eden aided by the loving guidance of Grace. In the 'Comedy' the soul's inner powers are summoned as guides to lead the pilgrim to the supreme wisdom of Self-Knowledge.

Those who view the 'Divine Comedy' solely from its poetic viewpoint deprive the work of its very life-vein; for it is infused with a radiant spiritual vision which illumines the whole structure of the poem. To deny it this spiritual luminosity would be to expose only the shell of the masterpiece. Dante perceives Being not only in its imperceptibility, but also clothed with the vesture of matter; thus matter and spirit form an indivisible Unity which is rooted in Universal Order and Harmony.

In the 'Comedy's' cosmology the earth is situated at the centre of the universe, and Lucifer's abode is deep inside the earth; that part of land which was pushed upwards by Satan's tunnelling, forms the mountain of Purgatory at the summit of which lies the earthly paradise. The true Paradises or Celestial Spheres are placed according to the heavenly bodies contained within them; they are, the seven planets, followed by the sphere of Fixed Stars, the Crystalline heaven and the Empyrean.

The concentric motion of the spheres stems from an intense craving to be united with God, and it is the angelic Intelligences which relay this motion to the lower spheres, while the all-embracing Empyrean where the 'Eternal Light' is revealed in its clear shining, remains ever motionless.

The whole story of the Inferno takes place between the Crucifixion and the Resurrection, when Christ Himself 'descended into Hell.' The canto begins with the solemn
alonesness of Dante the ‘living soul’ in a dark wood when he prepares to embark upon his solitary and arduous journey. As Dante sets out the ‘sun was rising with those stars which were with it when Love Divine first set those beauteous things in motion.’ So does the soul waken at the first light of the spiritual dawn.

Making his way over a barren slope Dante is suddenly held in the grip of fear as the leopard of lust, the lion of pride and the she-wolf of envy prepare to attack him. Dante calls for aid, and Reason in the form of Virgil appears at his side, addressing him in a voice which appears ‘faint from long silence.’ Dante’s acceptance of Virgil as Guide indicates his inner submission to a higher power.

As Dante proceeds along the mystical journey, Virgil relates how Beatrice, the embodiment of heavenly Truth and Love, asked him to lead Dante away from error. Throughout the perilous odyssey it is this inner Light of Grace which enables Dante to carry on.

Among those ‘shades’ encountered in the Netherworld are the lukewarm who wax neither hot nor cold; those in whom natural passion over-rode self-restraint; the gluttonous, the prodigals and the wrathful. Within the devil-garrison of the City of Dis dwell those souls who have wilfully rejected Grace; and here Dante is powerless before the dark hosts. Aware of their peril Virgil shelters his charge, but he, like Dante, awaits divine aid. Then comes ‘one from Heaven sent,’ and before this angelic emissary, the diabolical ones are rendered mute with fear, offering no further resistance to the passage of Reason and the soul. Before the Omnipotence of Reality the shadow-power of ignorance melts away. Dante now encounters the Minotaur, symbol of unrestrained violence, who presides over that sphere where suffer those who have employed brute force. Their torment is dreadful, but their plight does not move Dante as do the suicides who have cut short their terrestrial life thread. These unfortunates have allowed the harpies of fear to rend and tear at Hope, leaving despair the victor.

The lower depths must be plumbed before the heights may be scaled, and the pilgrim expresses his understanding of this when he says: ‘I leave the bitter and hasten to the succulent fruits promised me by my truthful guide; but first it is expedient that I descend to the Centre.’

Whenever fear assails him, Dante invokes the aid of the Master, who tells him: ‘I will not have thee afraid.’ This admonition imparts fortitude to Dante who casts fear from him. Proceeding on his way the Truth-seeker meets up with the hypocrites, those ‘phantoms’ weighed down by that ‘wearisome cloak’, among whom is Caiaphas the High Priest. Here the Master takes his pupil up in his arms and carries him away from such dire peril, and Dante expresses his love for the Sage by relating how he closely followed the ‘imprints of those beloved feet.’

Experiencing the leaden burden of weariness Dante wishes to interrupt his journey, but his wise Master bids him bestir himself: ‘Now must thou put indolence away from thee.’ Dante learns that spiritual effort is necessary, for ‘there is yet a longer stair which awaits ascending. Despondency is also to be avoided, and the reassuring words of the Guide fall sweetly on the heart’s ear: ‘Banish sadness, and bear in mind that I am ever with thee.’

During the course of their journeying, Dante allows his attention to be caught by clamorous conversation, whereupon he is told by Virgil that ‘the craving to listen is a base craving.’ Thus rebuked, Dante is made aware of the strict necessity of concentrating fully on Reality, and not allowing the mind to be distracted by phantasies.

Upon entering the realm of Treachery, Dante beholds its icy grip on the souls there, for cold-blooded treachery robs the soul of heart-warmth rendering it reptilian in nature.

Finally in the deepest dungeon, Dante stands in the chained and ice-bound presence
of Satan himself. The pilgrim is terrified by this awesome experience, as tears and bloody foam indicative of anguished wrath, proceed from the Prince of Darkness. Satan the embodiment of Ignorance possesses three faces which testify to his blasphemy against the Holy Trinity of Power — Wisdom — Love. The evil countenances are dyed with the varying shades of hatred, impotence and anger. Face to face with Lucifer, Dante feels 'chilled and weakened', but he winds his arms about Virgil's neck, signifying his total reliance on Reason, and making use of Satan as a ladder in compliance with the Sage's words: 'by these steps must we depart from so much wickedness,' Master and pupil leave Inferno.

'He preceding, and I following,' Dante is led by Reason away from the abyss of ignorance. Made aware of Sin's impotence Dante fears it no more; he is now ready for the ascent towards purification and heavenly delights. As Virgil and Dante leave the den of iniquity they behold the radiant light of the stars.

Purgatorio

It is Easter morning when Dante follows Virgil to the shore of Mount Purgatorio where the Master tenderly removes the tears from Dante's face, and girds him with a rush. This ritual symbolises the heavenly cleansing which descends upon the soul when it is girt with humble self-surrender.

Here in Purgatory, Reason is no longer the sure guide he was in Inferno, and it is by the Light of the spiritual Sun that Virgil and Dante now proceed.

Emerging in full sunshine Dante becomes conscious of his ego-shadow for the first time; he learns that 'the human frame' is the cause for 'the sunshine being divided,' and Reason discloses to him that the ego-consciousness is merely a reflection — an error which cleaves in two the shining unity of Truth.

The ascent of Master and pupil is bathed in sunlight, a foreshadowing of that Eternal Light of which the prophet Isaiah wrote:

'Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the Lord shall be thine everlasting Light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended.'

But Dante, undergoing purification, experiences for a while the withdrawal of Grace's Light; during this 'dark night of the soul' the pilgrim learns how to possess his soul in patience, and to hope for the clear shining of the new dawn.

Intent on following his Guide, Dante is suddenly assailed by a subtle form of ignorance in the shape of a serpent which comes upon him in the region of dreams. Conscious of his helplessness Dante places his trust in divine deliverance and his faith is promptly rewarded as two angels armed with blunt swords put the enemy to flight. Through this experience Dante learns that those forces which lie latent deep in the subconscious, must be faced with implicit faith in God.

Presently Saint Lucy, symbol of the clear light of spiritual understanding, makes her appearance and leads the way to the gate of the true Purgatory, where the warder clad in penitential ashes and carrying the 'sword of wisdom', allows entry only to those pilgrims who possess the gold and silver keys of spiritual knowledge and heavenly forgiveness. Before arriving at the gate Dante ascends the three steps of Power, Wisdom, Love, which are the attributes of the Blessed Trinity.

Pursuing his way through Purgatory the light of understanding gradually dawns on Dante and he is shown that the root of disharmony lies in 'unwise loving.' He learns that the cause of inharmony is to be sought within, not externally. One penitent tells him: 'If the world at present appears to go awry, the cause is to be found in you; seek it therefore within yourself. . . . From the Divine Hand whose paternal glance is upon it before it issues forth . . . the young soul, knowing nothing turns towards that which affords it pleasure. At first it partakes of a little good, then it is lured in another direction and strays after it unless its love is restrained and curbed . . . true observation
will reveal to you that the cause of error lies in being misguided.

Passing from one schoolroom of Purgatory to another, Dante is severely tested as the temptations of the flesh come to him in the guise of an alluring Siren before whose lovely aspect Dante is entranced. But Wisdom's 'pure' and true vision comes to the pilgrim's aid, and reveals to him the Siren's genuine hideous aspect before which Dante recoils in horrified disgust.

Having traversed the terraces of the proud, the envious, the avaricious and the gluttonous, Dante finds that his path is obstructed by a wall of flames besides which stands an angel singing: 'Blessed be the pure in heart.' Conscious of the torrid heat of the fire which purges lust, Dante refuses to enter it, but Virgil gently explains to him that Beatrice awaits him beyond the flames. At this, Dante's consent is won and he follows the lead of his faithful Guide who has already preceded him into the fire. Answering Beatrice's Love-call, Dante willingly offers himself to the purificatory flames; where Reason fails to persuade, Love ever conquers. Once within the fire, Dante experiences great suffering, but he is comforted by a 'voice which sings beyond.' After the ordeal, when Dante is granted repose, he has a dream in which a beauteous maiden named Leah sings of herself and her fair sister Rachel, who is content with 'seeing' instead of 'doing'. This dream is a foreshadowing of that revelation which will come to the pilgrim of the beauty of both the 'active' and 'contemplative' life.

And now the time is at hand when Virgil, exemplifying the Light of Reason, must take leave of Dante who is now a purified soul. Solemnly Virgil says: 'Over thyself do I crown and mitre thee.' Henceforth Dante must follow the dictates of a higher power.

Entering the forest of the earthly paradise Dante is enraptured by a vision in which he beholds the soul's pristine and chaste loveliness. This bewitching lady accompanies him as he faces the sacred East, and together they view a splendid pageantry in which are the symbolic forms whereby divine revelation comes to the soul. The highlight of the pageant is when Beatrice appears before Dante; she who represents the gracious spirit of heavenly Truth. Fulfilling her role, Beatrice provides Dante with deeper insight into his own heart, and this self-revelation aids his inner unfoldment. Dante then receives intimation of how chaos and disharmony come about. When the 'spiritual' symbolised by the Church, covets the things of the world represented by Imperial Rome, the harmony which should reign between the spiritual and material worlds is disrupted. Dante is shown the mystical chariot of the Church taken over by the harlot of covetousness. She mates with the giant of undisciplined power, who, in order to possess her completely, detaches the chariot from the tree which signifies terrestrial world order, and bears the chariot away with him into the wood. In this way Dante learns that lust for earthly power is the downfall of the spiritual in man, for the pure soul is defiled by the unclean craving for 'outer things'. Thus, man transgresses the divine command: 'Render to God the things that are God's, and to Caesar that which is Caesar's.'

Accompanying Beatrice beyond the shadows of the forest at noon, Dante rejoices in his completed purgation. He leaves the earth led by the heavenly spirit of Truth, to wend his way towards those celestial spheres which lie beyond time and space. Having toiled upwards from the depths of Hell, through the bleak and arduous road of Purgatory, Dante now experiences a singing in his heart as wings of divine Grace bear him towards the radiant stars.

Paradiso

Natural Reason having led Dante to enjoy the loving guidance of Beatrice, the mystical journey of 'mind and heart' is continued, illumined by the Light of Grace.

The yearning for heavenly truths quickens Dante's inner being, and as his absorption in Beatrice's loveliness deepens, he is elevated to greater heights of spiritual awareness, and
welcomed into the ‘Pearl of Eternity’ which is the Sphere of the Moon. In this heaven Beatrice expounds to Dante the Divine Order which rules the Universe; he learns that the intellect’s striving after Truth is good so long as the intellect recognises its limitations. In Truth’s dazzling, mystical smile Dante understands that her true aspect is ever veiled from human reason. Because those souls of the blessed who appear to Dante in the Moon-sphere possess nebulous forms, he mistakes them for shadows, for which error he is rebuked. Dante, like Narcissus who took the shadow for substance, is misled by appearances through lack of spiritual perception.

Entranced by that Light which ‘vivifies’ love, Dante is translated to the Sphere of Mercury where he is instructed in the sacredness of vows and how actions may be marred by self-seeking.

Guided ever inwards to the radiant Core of Being, Dante realizes that the souls which he encounters in these heavenly Spheres are not sojourners there, but are themselves being drawn towards their ultimate destiny — that of at-one-ment with their Source.

Among those who hold converse with Dante is the Emperor Justinian who represents that Roman Law which had as its origin ‘not force but divine reason.’

As Dante becomes increasingly aware of Truth’s fair countenance, he is drawn ever closer to the Heart Divine. The next Sphere to enfold him in iridescent splendour is Venus, Star of Love where temperance reigns. Here, those lovers who once directed their love-beams imperfectly now eagerly place their angelic hearts upon the sacred altar of Perfect Love.

From Venus Dante is elevated to the Sphere of the Sun where ‘they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament.’ Mantled with the golden rays of divine Knowledge the Church Fathers and Theologians make themselves known to Dante. In their presence he experiences wonderful calm and elevation of spirit, and as the celestial music of the spheres vibrate in his soul, Dante is rapt in inner absorption. When he emerges from his ecstatic state it is to receive further revelations from Truth. He is taught that Saint Francis symbolising the Path of Love, and Saint Dominic the Path of Knowledge, are the seraphic and cherubic spirits which form a perfect unity. The loving heart of Il Poverello blends harmoniously with the brilliant intellect of Saint Dominic, for Truth discloses that true Love is wise, just as true Wisdom is love.

Encompassed by dazzling Light, Dante receives initiation into the Sphere of Mars, vivid symbol of fortitude where the hero-saints who have been the martyrs and knights of the Church Militant are seen by Dante. In the heavenly Mars the true soldiers of Christ emerge as those who have valiantly striven for things divine, and not for earthly place and power.

The brilliant glory of Beatrice’s eyes bestows upon the lover of Truth a clearer vision of the reality of things, and now Dante finds himself in the Sphere of Jupiter where wise and Just Rulership is exemplified by the Roman Eagle. Here, Dante’s thought dwells on the righteousness of those upright souls in whom the Light of divine Justice burns with ardent flame.

Dante is next translated to the Sphere of Saturn where he meets those ascetics whose lives have been dedicated to the calm and divine pursuit of ‘interior converse’ with their Maker. Wrapped in holy Silence, Dante is withdrawn from thought and plunged into the depths of meditation — having left the ‘active’ behind, the soul is ready to embrace the ‘contemplative’ life, in the Heart of which lies the ultimate Vision. From Beatrice, Dante learns that they have reached the ‘seventh glory’, and he beholds a ladder of gold reaching upwards to the Empyrean beyond. ‘Behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven, and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it.’

Holy contemplation enables great souls to ascend this sacred stairway, but out of com-

1Gen. xxviii, 12.
passion for mankind these wise ones descend from the heights of Bliss to instruct wayward humanity.

Approaching the highest Heaven Dante receives instruction on the ‘vita contemplativa’ and meets Saint Benedict who symbolizes the lustrous and serene glow of contemplation which reflects inner peace. From Saint Benedict, Dante acquires knowledge of the Eternal Now which reigns in the Empyrean where past and future are non-existent.

On wings of ecstasy Dante is drawn to the Sphere of the Fixed Stars where he receives awareness of the soul's destiny in following the guidance of the divine Light within. From the great height of this Sphere Dante's clear vision pierces the seven planetary heavens below to view the depths which he has left behind, and he is conscious of the insignificance of that transitory self or ego which he once considered so important. With the single eye of Wisdom Dante perceives that heaven and earth bear the seal of divine Goodness, for it is ‘la divina bonta che 'l mondo imprenta.’

In the eighth heaven Dante is blessed with a vision of the brilliant glory and majesty of Christ, He of whom it is written: ‘Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.’ Dante is also shown Mary, beloved mystic Rose in whose chaste and fragrant Heart-Palace the Word made Its abode.

Raised to greater spiritual heights by the Smile of Grace, Dante is questioned by Peter on matters of Faith, and by Saint Thomas on Hope. Beatrice speaks to him of the ego's death: ‘It is the gracious Will of our King that you should behold your death face to face in the secret inner Chamber.’ Dante is also taught that the task of establishing order in the Universe is entrusted to the Angels, those Messengers of Love who perfume creation with their heavenly breath.

Conscious of an expansion in ‘awareness’, Dante is enraptured by a vision. He beholds the serene flowing of the River of Grace, and he is hidden by Beatrice to drink of its vivifying waters. As he willingly obeys he receives enlightenment whereby spiritual truths are unveiled and shown in their pristine light. As Dante's vision unfolds, a luminous circle appears, representing the Eternal Glory of the divine Presence. Before the pilgrim's entranced inner gaze the Empyrean reveals itself in all its supernal splendour under the guise of a perfect white Rose — symbol of Divine Love. Mute with wonder, Dante is led by Beatrice into the joyous Heart of the heavenly Flower where beautiful souls appear like sparkling lamps of Love, their life and motion derived from Light Eternal. For the pilgrim the Goal is now in sight; having followed Truth with ardent heart and implicit trust, Dante's soul is about to blossom forth into full maturity under the mystic influence of Saint Bernard, symbol of supreme ecstasy.

Beatrice the beloved, has brought Dante to an understanding of love, and obedience to Truth; now the spiritual wings are grown, and the soul is about to fly towards that wondrous Beyond where the human tongue and mind cannot follow.

A reverent hush envelops the soul as it is raised by Love Itself to enjoy the Beatific Vision. From within the Heart of Silence, Saint Bernard sends forth a Hymn in praise of the Holy Mother, incomparable Vehicle of Grace; and this Blissful Canticle discloses to Dante the perfection of that immaculate Womb, in which reposed the Christ-Pearl of the Most High.

As Dante's will fuses with Universal Love, a paean of thanksgiving peals forth from his singing heart: ‘like a wheel that steadily whirls, so my will and desire are kept in even motion by that Love Eternal which maintains in divine harmony the sun and the stars.’

Dante's heavenly Song returns to that Starry Realm of Love from whence it came — but the refrain of this celestial Hymn will echo forever in the hearts of the devout, ‘O Beauteous One, in Thy Will alone lies our peace.’
"Is there anybody there?" said the Traveler,
Knocking on the moonlit door;
And his horse in the silence champed the grasses
Of the forest's ferny floor,
And a bird flew up out of the turret,
Above the Traveler's head:
And he smote upon the door again a second time;
"Is there anybody there?" he said.
But no one descended to the Traveler;
No head from the leaf-fringed sill
Leaned over and looked into his gray eyes,
Where he stood perplexed and still.
But only a host of phantom listeners
That dwelt in the lone house then
Stood listening in the quiet of the moonlight
To that voice from the world of men:
Stood thronging the faint moonbeams on the dark stair
That goes down to the empty half,
Hearkening in an air stirred and shaken
By the lonely Traveler's call.
And he felt in his heart their strangeness,
Their stillness answering his cry,
While his horse moved, cropping the dark turf,
'Neath the starred and leafy sky;
For he suddenly smote on the door, even
Louder, and lifted his head:
"Tell them I came, and no one answered,
That I kept my word," he said.
Never the least stir made the listeners,
Though every word he spake
Fell echoing through the shadowiness of the still house
From the one man left awake:
Aye, they heard his foot upon the stirrup,
And the sound of iron on stone,
And how the silence surged softly backward,
When the plunging hoofs were gone.

(1912)
—WALTER DE LA MARE.

The horse in this poem is like a dull student, chewing gum. All kinds of strange things are going on around him, but he is oblivious; he just moves about, champing the grass, walking on stones and so forth. He is something like the popular idea of the phlegmatic Englishman who goes about his daily affairs in the old way, indifferent to whatever happens in the world outside his own. He represents all those beings who, pushed ahead by a huge inertia, do not bother to "respond."

The Traveler is one of those anonymous figures who could be anybody. He could be anyone in his journeying life who has start-
ed to ask questions and knock on doors; who has dropped his usual world and finds himself wandering around in a new environment. But he is only a beginner, too. He knocks, but apparently more in duty than preference. He does not stay long and seems relieved, almost, that on one answers his call.

Maybe he feels alarmed to come on so much silence all at once, for silence is the peculiar characteristic of the world of this poem, as noise is of the "normal" world most of us inhabit daily. The silence of the poem is not "dead" silence. It has penetrating power.

The stillness!
Sinking into the rocks,
The voice of the cicada.

We could say that the subject of "The Listeners" is the intersection of sound and silence and of the meaning that each gives to the other. When we are very silent, and a sound comes, it come with meaning in it. Also, silence comes to life when a sound breaks it. In the morning, a crow calls and we feel the peace of that world of air. We understand the purity of the water when we see the fish floating in it.

An old pond.
A frog jumps in.
The sound of the water!

Silence and sound, emptiness and form. If there is no silence, there is no sound. If there is no emptiness, there is no form. A room full of things has not much meaning in it for us, but a room with only one thing, or a few things, does have meaning. The tea ceremony room is not cluttered; each object has meaning because there are only a few objects and each has a purpose; each object has meaning, also, because the people attending the ceremony are quiet and so allow the room to come to its own life. Thus, the Traveler's "lonely" cry has a peculiar strength because it comes in an envelope of silence. Thus also, the "sound of iron on stone" at the end of the poem. Every poem about silence is also a poem about sound, every creative response to form is a response to emptiness.

This world of significance is always present within our world of banalities waiting for us to recognize it. In fact, the world of banalities is the world of significance, but we are usually like the horse of the poem, automatically busy with our fodder, heads bent, consciousness asleep, "champing" away beneath a "starred and leafy sky."

But since we are human beings, we have an obligation to explore the fields of being, to knock on strange, old doors, in the middle of nowhere. "Tell them. I came—that I kept my word."

The Traveler does not receive an answer in words to his knocking; the answer is in the experience of the stillness of waiting for an answer. The answer is the stillness. And, for us, the meaning of the poem is hereabouts. We must knock and the answer to our knocking may be only silence, but such a silence as we never "heard" before. Perhaps something else in the poem is the way in which silence and sound are unified. Does it matter so much whether we center ourselves on "form" or on "emptiness," on the "I-I" in the heart or on "clear awareness?" They are not so far apart. Maybe it matters more that we give ourselves wholeheartedly to "listening", listening either to the sound or the silence, but listening, attending minutely to the sounds of our lives as they pass through our clear consciousness, or attending to the ocean of stillness in which all forms are always swimming.

The Father uttered one Word; that Word is His Son, and he utters Him for ever in everlasting silence; and in silence the soul has to hear it.

—St. John of the Cross.

We could hope that the Traveler will keep coming back to that door to knock on it again and again, and each time he will understand better who is knocking and what kind of an answer is coming back to him.
It is remarkable for how short a period Renaissance drama flourished in England. Its rise, climax and decline all fall within Shakespeare's lifetime. In his youth Mediaeval morality plays were still being acted, while by the end of his life Renaissance drama was decadent already and the theatres were soon to be closed by the Puritans. Shakespeare, in fact, was himself the chief architect of English Renaissance drama. What is seldom realized is that he was, at the same time, the perpetuator of Mediaeval drama, or perhaps it would be better to say its last and supreme exponent.

Let us take a look at the two types of drama.

A morality play was the drama of a man's inner spiritual warfare, leading to his victory or defeat. The characters on the stage quite explicitly represented the warring ingredients in him—greed, pride, humility, fortitude and so forth, with the intervention of angels on one side and devils on the other. That is to say that attention was focussed on what is, for each man, the essential problem of his life, whether he knows it or not: not on any question of social adjustment, but on the use or misuse of his human life, the development or waste of his faculties, the order or chaos of his inner economy, leading to harmonisation or corruption.

Renaissance drama, on the other hand, dealt with purely mundane topics, that is with questions of social adjustment, of the relations between men and women, friends and foes, superiors and inferiors, and so on. This tradition, sometimes called 'humanistic', has been continued ever since. In literature, as in every other department of life, the Renaissance was a turning away from a God-centred to a world-centred attitude to life. In drama, therefore, it was henceforth a man's human relationships and worldly position that interested people, no longer his inner state. There have been a few exceptions among the greatest poets or dramatists, but very few—Ibsen in his 'Peer Gynt', Goethe in his 'Faust', Tagore in his 'King of the Dark Chamber'. There is no doubt that the Mediaeval drama is more profound, but for modern man it is less interesting. In fact it is only acceptable to him if it is disguised under the form of humanistic drama. That is what Shakespeare did.

Shakespeare was in a unique position. He was captivated by the brilliance of the Renaissance, as every writer is by the spirit of his age. He helped to mould the new age, as every great writer does. And yet at the same time he was imbued with the high seriousness which animated the Mediaeval mind and its interest in the ultimate question, the only ultimate question, of what a man makes of his life. Subject to this dual current of influence, he wrote Mediaeval plays in the Renaissance style, morality plays with real live individuals as the characters in them instead of the conventional types of Mediaeval drama, but morality plays none the less. In doing this, it must be remembered, he was not attempting to revive an abandoned style (no such attempt ever has real life in it, ever really succeeds) but continuing a type of drama which was still current, only clothing it in the style of the new age. And the measure of his success is that, even though deprived of their true profundity by ignorance of symbolism among critics, readers and audiences from his age down to ours, his plays have still remained great.

Actually, they go beyond the ordinary morality plays current in his youth. These deal with the battle of life which every man must willy-nilly fight in himself, whereas Shakespeare is dealing with the great spiritual warfare deliberately entered upon by
those who take up the Quest. The tragedies are dramas of failure in the Quest, the comedies of success.

Some Shakespearean critics have opined that in the period when he was writing the great tragedies Shakespeare was so oppressed with the thought of human inner failure and tragedy that it brought him close to madness. This is probably a great exaggeration, especially as some of his comedies also were written at the same time. Nevertheless, the symbolical interpretation of the tragedies does show how they must have weighed on him. Very few of those who take up the Quest bring it to a successful conclusion. Christ said that many are called but few are chosen. The Bhagavad Gita says that out of thousands perhaps one is called and out of thousands who are called perhaps one is chosen. That is not even one in a million. Symbolical stories of the Quest such as Mallory’s *Morte d’Arthur* show many defeated or captured along the way or abandoning the Quest and very few reaching the goal. To a young man setting forth as one of a fellowship of aspirants in courage and high hope, as Shakespeare must have done, how can it not be depressing to see so many failures along the way, so few holding firmly to the path? But no one with the flame still burning in his heart can allow himself to be discouraged. Shakespeare did not. He perceived the radiance of the goal and his later comedies wrote again of its achievement.

Such statements must be illustrated by examples. Actually, a good deal has been written already about Shakespearean symbolism in *The Mountain Path*. Since some readers may not have the back numbers to hand, I may be forgiven for quoting. In July last year (the issue to which I first became a contributor) there is a beautiful analysis of the symbolism of *Hamlet* by Sir George Trevelyan. In the following issue, Sir George returns with a profound study of ‘The Merchant of Venice’. “In ‘The Merchant’ we see the rich city of Venice representing the mundane level and the ‘beautiful mountain’ of Belmont representing the higher plane of awareness where the princess Portia lives. The personality, Bassanio, has to journey there to win and unite with the higher being in himself symbolised by Portia.” Particularly telling is the comment on Portia’s parting remark after she has played the judge in the lawsuit, “Portia, in disguise, departs with the words: ‘I pray you know me when we meet again.’ Thus speaks the higher Self to each one of us.”

Symbolism varies. There is no hard and fast rule. In ‘Hamlet’ the higher faculty of love and intuition is symbolised by Ophelia (and Sir George Trevelyan reminds us that her very name in Greek means ‘aid’); in *Lear* it is symbolised by Cornelia, rejected by Lear, as Ophelia was by Hamlet. In the October 1966 editorial the editor alludes briefly to this tragedy. “But the quest is not always successful. A man may banish the simple truth of intuition, preferring instead the diversity and flattery of the mind— the two sisters. Then the mind itself turns against him, but he finds that intuition has
perished and cannot be revived. Then grief andmadness drive him to his death. That is the tragedy of Lear."

Further back, (having been fortunate enough to acquire the back numbers) I found a fine account of the astrological symbolism of 'Twelfth Night' by 'Sagittarius' in April 1965. "The Duke and Olivia are the sun and moon. The Duke is lovesick for Olivia, but a sickly, romantic love for a beauty he has never seen. This represents the man who pines nostalgically for the ideal state of a lost childhood or imagined perfection. No such state can be recaptured. The virtual or ideal perfection of childhood cannot be recovered; it must be actualised....Attainment of actualised perfection is brought about by the 'Hermetic marriage', that is by the interposition of Mercury....between sun and moon. Mercury is the Messenger of the gods. He is equated with intellectual intuition...Mercury appears as the twin sister and brother, Viola and Sebastian, who intervene between sun and moon, Duke and Olivia. Olivia, the 'moon', the human nature or temperament according to astrology, is the person needing treatment. Her household (horoscope) is in a terrible state of disarray. Sir Toby Belch is the very picture of a degenerate Jupiter—his expansiveness degenerated into gluttony, his magnanimity into boastfulness, his grandeur into riotousness. He is in conjunction with Mars, Sir Andrew Aguecheek, in Taurus (as he himself says). Taurus, it will be remembered, is the 'detriment' of Mars, where he is apt to be quarrelsome but cowardly, which is just what Sir Andrew was. Malvolio, a hypocrical Puritan, scheming and coldly ambitious, is just as much a caricature of Saturn as Sir Toby is of Jupiter or Sir Andrew of Mars. With brilliant wit and technique the twins are introduced into this menage and restore order into it by accomplishing the 'Hermetic Marriage', the male twin wedding Olivia and the female the Duke, while the disordered 'planets' are disciplined and brought to order.".

Let us now look at another of Shakespeare's plays, 'Julius Caesar'. Rome itself must be regarded as the person being studied. It has fallen into a state of confusion. Caesar takes over control, but he represents rather the overweening ego than the enlightened soul. This is made clear at the very beginning when he laments his childlessness. The son is the natural symbol of the regenerate self; but it is only the purified soul that has a son in this sense, not the ego. Furthermore Caesar, before his assassination, shows himself easily swayed, first one way by his wife and then the other by a flatterer; and yet at the same time he boasts of being as immovable as the pole star (as the true Self would be).

I could be well moved if I were as you;
If I could pray to move, prayers would move me;
But I am constant as the northern star.
Of whose true fix'd and resting quality
There is no fellow in the firmament.
The skies are painted with unnumber'd sparks,
They are all fire and every one doth shine,
But there's but one in all doth hold his place:
So in the world; 'tis furnished well with men,
And men are flesh and blood, and apprehensive;
Yet in the number I do know but one
That unassailable holds on his rank,
Unshak'd of motion: and that I am he.

This is the worst tyranny: the ego claiming to be the Self. A man's faculties revolt against it, reject the discipline unjustifiably imposed upon them—assassinate Caesar.

Brutus is the rational mind, honest but easily duped. Caesar has two main dependents—Antony, the roisterous, passionate, self-indulgent nature, and Brutus, the rational mind; and when the artificial rigour of the ego is rejected it is Antony who wins. Brutus speaks to the people in prose and makes no impression; Antony inflames them against him.

Had Caesar been the true ruler, not a usurper, Brutus would have served him and all been well; but the mind cannot stand alone. Having disapproved of Caesar, Brutus lets himself be swayed by the jealous, malicious, resentful tendency that is Cassius. Thus he loses his integrity. Although he refuses to acquire funds by dishonest means,
he has to acquiesce in Cassius doing so, since otherwise the army could not be held together. The mind may disapprove of the ego but cannot rule without it, cannot replace it. The failure of Brutus is summed up in a wise saying which is unwise because untimely:

There is a tide in the affairs of men,
    Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;
Omitted, all the voyage of their life
Is bound in shallows and in miseries.

When Brutus spoke so wisely he had already missed the tide. That, the point of high tide, was when he addressed the Romans after Caesar's death and allowed Antony to capture them from him. Caesar could not stand without him, the rebels could not rebel without him, but neither could he stand alone. The mind must be grounded in intuition.

At the end of the play, in place of the grandiose Caesar and the honourable idealistic Brutus we have the self-indulgent Antony allied with the cold, scheming Octavius—a descent from aspiring though unenlightened youth to caution but egoistic middle age. When the young man who thought he could shake the world and did not know he was an egoist renounces his ambitions, the next casualty is his idealism and mental integrity.

In point of fact a knowledge of the theory or principles of zazen is not a prerequisite to practice. One who trains under an accomplished teacher will undoubtedly grasp this theory as his practice ripens. Modern students, however, being intellectually more sophisticated than their predecessors in Zen, will not follow instructions unreservedly; they must know the reason behind them. Hence I feel obliged to deal with theoretical matters. The difficulty with theory, however, is that it is endless. Buddhist scriptures, Buddhist doctrine and Buddhist philosophy are no more than intellectual formulations of zazen, and zazen is their practical demonstration.

— YASUTANI ROSHI quoted by Philip Kapleau in The Three Pillars of Zen, p. 27.

As rivers have their source in some far off fountain, so the human spirit has its source. To find this fountain of spirit is to learn the secret of heaven and earth. In this fountain of mystery spirit is eternally present in endless supply. Any one can avail himself of it for the refreshment and unfolding greatness of his own spirit by the earnest practice of concentration, but to do so he must devote himself to the effort with a stilled mind and sensitive expectancy.

— TAO-TE-KING.
Gary Snyder

REGARDING WAVE

The voice of the Dharma
the voice
now
A shimmering bell
through all.

Every hill, still.
Every tree alive. Every leaf.
All the slopes flow.
old woods, new seedlings,
tall grasses plumes.

Dark hollows; peaks of light.
wind stirs the cool side
Each leaf living.
All the hills.

The Voice
is a wife
to
him still.
THE YAKSHA PRASNA

From THE MAHABHARATA (contd. from the last issue)

(Based largely on the annotated edition of K. Balasubramania Iyer published by Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan.)

Yaksha

38. Who is the guest of all beings?
39. What is the eternal dharma?
40. What is amrita, Great King?
41. What is this whole universe?

This is one of the most difficult set of questions. It is not included in the text of the Mahabharata published by the Bhandarkar Institute, Poona, but only referred to in a note as being given in other editions. Various interpretations have been suggested.

Yudhishtira

38. Agni (fire) is the guest of all beings.
39. Soma is the eternal dharma.
40. Cow's milk is amrita.
41. Vayu (air or wind) is this whole universe.

Fire was the guest of all in that a sacrificial fire had to be maintained in every household for the performance of sacrifice. Symbolically, fire is the aspiration in the heart of man and therefore the divine guest.

The sacrifice demanded by dharma required oblation of soma into the sacred fire. Symbolically, soma was the intuition or ecstasy offered to the fire of aspiration.

Amrita or nectar stands for ecstasy; the true ecstasy is not inebriation but the sober, substantial wisdom symbolised by milk.

Vayu is referred to in the Upanishads as the outer form of Brahman, since it pervades everything.
Yaksha
42. What is it that travels alone?
43. What is born again?
44. What is the antidote to snow or fog?
45. What is the great receptacle?

Yudhishtira
42. The sun travels alone.
43. The moon is born again.
44. Fire is the antidote to snow or fog.
45. The earth is the great receptacle.

When the phenomenal world composed of Vayu (in the last of the previous set of questions) disappears, Atma (the sun) remains. Atma (the sun) remains alone, while the mind (the moon) is born again, as the world is projected forth by it. The world thus projected is enveloped in the fog or snow of avidya (ignorance). This is dispersed by the fire of knowledge. The earth stands for nature.

Yaksha
46. What is the sole way to dharma?
47. What is the sole means to fame?
48. What alone leads to heaven?
49. What is the one source of happiness?

Yudhishtira
46. Integrity is the sole way of dharma.
47. Giving is the sole means to fame.
48. Truth alone leads to heaven.
49. Character is the only source of happiness.

Yaksha
50. Who is the self of a man?
51. Who is the friend bestowed on him by destiny?
52. What helps to sustain him?
53. What is his best resort?

Yudhishtira
50. A man's son is his self.
51. His wife is the friend bestowed on him by destiny.
52. Rain helps to sustain him.
53. Giving is his best resort.

A son performed the ritual for a man's posthumous welfare. Symbolically the son stands for the new life in one who has been 'born again of the Spirit'.

Yaksha
54. What is the best of things praiseworthy?
55. What is the greatest wealth?
56. What is the greatest gain?
57. What is the greatest happiness?

Yudhishtira
54. Integrity is the best of things praiseworthy.
55. Learning is the greatest wealth.
56. Health is the greatest gain.
57. Contentment is the greatest happiness.

Yaksha
58. What is the highest dharma in the world?
59. What is the dharma which always bears fruit?
60. Control of what secures one from grief?
61. With whom does association not come to an end?

Yudhishtira
58. Universal benevolence is the highest dharma.
59. Vedic dharma always bears fruit.
60. Control of mind secures one from grief.
61. Association with the good never comes to an end.

Neelakantha, the traditional commentator, suggests that the first of these questions implies that the highest dharma is that of the sannyasin, since he is not required to do harm to any.

He holds the second reply to mean pranava, the use of the mantra OM.

Control of the mind, he says, leads to the Atma, which is beyond grief.

By 'association with the good' he understands Sat Sangh, the association with the Enlightened, which even death does not terminate.

(This dialogue will be continued in our next issue)
HOW I CAME TO BHAGAVAN

IT was in the year 1928 or may be 1929.

I was employed at Chetput, a township 30 miles from Tiruvannamalai. My only friend and constant companion there was Dr. V. Ramakrishna Iyer, a versatile man of parts, rather religious but not of the orthodox type, very genial and entertaining, one whom I would now deem a ‘puru-shottama’ (best of men), a friend, philosopher and guide as he subsequently proved to be. I was just the opposite in my make-up, an out and out sceptic with no religion in me, scoffing in my references to Sadhus, Sannyasis and Swamis whom I considered impostors and parasites on society, who exploited the credulous folk for personal ends, and accepted their homage and hero-worship as though they were superior to ordinary men. Dr. Ramakrishna Iyer is the son of the late Lakshmi Ammal, a friend and playmate of Sri Bhagavan in his boyhood days at Tiruchuzhi to which place she also belonged. He was therefore well acquainted with Bhagavan and was an occasional visitor to Sri Ramanasramam. He once asked me to go to Tiruvannamalai with him during the festival of Karthigai Deepam. Although I disliked the crowds and the insanitary condition of the town and the pomp and pageantry of the temple festival had no attraction for me, I agreed, not wishing to hurt his feelings, but requested to be left with my parents who had gone for the festival and were staying in the town, while he went to the Asramam in search of his favourite pursuits. He agreed and took me to the place where they were staying, but on seeing the number of families huddled in a small house I told my friend: “Doctor, I cannot stay here. There is not even breathing space. Your Asramam will have plenty of open air and sunshine and shade of trees. I would rather go there and stay outside while you go in and have your way.” He said, ‘yes’ and took me to the Asramam a mile or so from the town. On the way I repeated my opinion of the so-called holy men and said to him: “I will not come in or join in any of your ‘tomfoolery’. If by chance I meet your ‘Swami’ I will not prostrate before him. I mean no insult but cannot do what is against my conviction. I don’t believe that any man, however great, has a right to accept the homage of others, just because he has learned to memorise and quote scriptures or sacred lore.” With this warning to my friend we came to the Asramam. It then comprised just three thatched sheds, a little away from the road, which one could reach by a narrow foot-path amongst thorns and bushes.

We walked in. A man in a white loin-cloth, a towel suspended on his shoulder, a kamandalu (water pot) in one hand and a walking stick in another, stopped in his walk in the opposite direction on seeing us.
Doctor hastened his steps and I slowly followed. The doctor was greeted very kindly and was asked about the welfare of his mother and brother. It must be the Maharshi, thought I, but I didn't look up as he was a complete stranger to me. Then I heard my friend saying: "This is the Sub-Registrar of Chitpur." Out of courtesy I looked at him. What a wonderful face and what a welcoming smile! Bewitching, fascinating and a powerful look too!

In a moment I was at his feet on the gravel ground! I soon regained my self-possession and felt ashamed. "I should not have been so hasty in expressing my views to the Doctor", thought I. Two persons whom I had seen before had impressed me with their powerful personality — Mahatma Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore. "This person surpasses them", said I to myself, "no bogus, looks genuine. Yet I must find out from him about his greatness and how he is entitled to the homage of others and how he accepts it. Has he solved the mystery of life, the universe that we see around? If not I withdraw my homage and go my way." With a pleasing smile he said: "You have a couple of days' leave, is it not so? You can stay in the Ashramam. I will be there in a few minutes." I dared not say anything. I was dazed. Soon I recovered and wanted to find out if he had written any book. I got a copy of 'Reality in Forty Verses' in Tamil, just published. I tried to read the first stanza. I could not follow. The words ulladu seemed too closely packed and somehow jumbled together to form a stanza. I was flabbergasted. "What", thought I. "can he not say what he has to say in some intelligible language?". Some one nearby said that it had been arranged that the Maharshi himself would explain to us the Forty Verses that night. I prevailed upon my friend to prolong our visit. This time it was his turn to be flabbergasted.

In anxious and eager suspense I waited for the night. The Maharshi sat on a raised pial or dais inside a shed containing his mother's samadhi (grave). Apparently he used to remain most of the time there. Night came. About half a dozen of us were seated on the ground before him. A solemn stillness pervaded the air. There was absolute silence, except for an occasional chirping of a bird or the hooting of an owl. The Maharshi read the first stanza. The mere reading of the stanza made the meaning as simple as simplicity itself! The word ulladu was just used in the sense of Being or Reality, as noun, verb and adjective. Stanza by stanza he read and explained in a voice that was so sweet and melodious and coming as though from 'somewhere'. The climax came. Explaining one verse he said: "God cannot be seen with our eyes or known by our sense perceptions. This is what is meant by saying: TO SEE GOD IS TO BECOME GOD."

One man from the small audience, a stalwart person with a severe expression named Dandapaniswami, interposed: "Is Bhagavan saying this out of personal experience?"

The question asked bluntly with such naïveté was answered with equal candour: "Else would I dare to say so?" Enough. It set me furiously thinking and putting two and two together; what takes so much time to think flashed upon me in a moment. To see God is to become God. God cannot be known by our sense faculties. The only way was to become God. If He whom all religions acclaim to be God were to appear before one in flesh and blood, HERE HE IS. My body experienced a thrill from somewhere deep down in me. Yet another — again and again, thrill after thrill quivered and shook my frame. I went out to compose myself. I CAME, HE SAW, HE CONQUERED.

That which is called the Christian religion existed among the ancients and has never not existed from the beginning of the human race until Christ came in the flesh, at which time the true religion, which already existed, began to be called Christianity.

— St. Augustine.
Arjuna said:

Of those devotees who steadily meditate upon you in this manner (i.e. with forms and attributes) and those who meditate upon the Imperishable, the Unmanifest, who are better versed in yoga?

Bhagavan replied:

Those who fixing their minds on Me meditate on Me with steadfastness and who have supreme faith, I deem to be the highest among yogins.

Those who steadfastly meditate on the Imperishable, the Indescribable, the Unmanifest, Immutable, Omnipresent, the Unthinkable, stable and Immovable, Eternal, — having their senses under control, even-minded under all circumstances, engaged in the welfare of all beings — they reach only Me.

More difficult is the task of those whose minds are set on the Unmanifest; the Goal, the Unmanifest, is hard to attain for the embodied beings.
6-7

But those who surrendering all actions to Me, meditate upon Me and worship Me with single-minded devotion, whose hearts are fixed on Me, I speedily rescue from the ocean of death-bounded samsara.

8

Fix your thought on Me alone, center your mind and reason on Me. Then, without doubt, you will abide in Me.

9

If you cannot fix your mind steadily on Me, Oh Dhananjaya, then seek to reach Me by the yoga of constant practice (Abhyasa-yoga).

10

If you are unable to practice that yoga either, then practice performing actions for My sake. This will help you to attain perfection.

11

If you are unable to do even this, then taking refuge in Me, self-controlled, abandon the fruit of all actions.

(Performed entirely without selfish motives as service to God)

12

Better indeed is knowledge than practice; meditation better than knowledge; the abandonment of the fruit of action better than meditation. Peace results from this abandonment.

13

He who hates no single being, who is friendly and compassionate to all, who has no attachments and is free of egoism, equal in pain and pleasure and forbearing, who is ever content and balanced in mind, self-controlled and firm in his conviction, with mind and intellect fixed on Me, he My devotee, is dear to Me.

14

He by whom the world is not afflicted and who is not afflicted by the world, who is free from pleasure, anger, fear and anxiety — he is dear to Me.

15

He who has no wants, who is pure, prompt, unconcerned, free from anxiety, renouncing all undertakings, he My devotee, is dear to Me.

16

He who neither rejoices nor hates, nor grieves, nor desires, renouncing good and evil, full of devotion, he is dear to Me.

17

He who is the same to foe and friend and also in honour and dishonour; the same in cold and heat, in pleasure and pain; free from attachment; to whom censure and praise are equal, who is silent, contented with whatever comes to him, homeless, steady-minded and full of devotion — that man is dear to Me.

18-19

They who follow this immortal dharma described here, endued with faith and devotion and to whom I am Supreme (regarding Me as their supreme Goal), are exceedingly dear to Me.

This is the twelfth chapter called the YOGA OF DEVOTION.

The body is the cross. Jesus, the son of man, is the ego or 'I-am-the-body’-idea. When the son of man is crucified on the cross, the ego perishes, and what survives is the Absolute Being. It is the resurrection of the Glorious Self, of the Christ — the Son of God.

— SRI MAHARSHI.
1. The world has now found a protector in Ramana, the ocean of compassion who has made the hill of Arunachala his abode, the true story of whose life destroys ignorance; who knows the truth uttered by him (Vishnu) who rides the bird (Garuda); who keeps within himself the secret of the silence of (Dakshinamurti or Siva) the rider of the bull;

2. Who is the Guru of the assembly of learned scholars including the king of the Ganas; who is an ocean of noble qualities; whose great effulgence is hidden by the sheath of the body, like the blazing sun by dense clouds;

3. Who is perfect in the control of the restless senses; who is expert at recognizing the merits of others; who abides in the natural samadhi of silence; who has firmly subdued the fearful lusts;

4. Who eats only when necessary; who performs severe austerities on the slopes of the hill; whose heart is not touched by the arrows (of the god of love) who bears the fish on his banner; who has cultivated the path of knowing the Self;

5. Who has crossed the fearful ocean of samsara; who uses his lotus hands to serve him as a (begging) bowl; who, by his bright and exceedingly refreshing gaze, removes the fear of those who take refuge at his lotus feet;

6. Who is like a treasure to the true devotees who bow down before him; whose presence disperses their great miseries like dust; who maintains the rules (dharma) of ascetics; who dispels ignorance all round;

* Continued from our last issue. For an explanatory introduction see our Jan. '68 issue, p. 71.
7. Who is the possessor of virtues enough to be described by the King of the Serpents (Adishesha); who speaks words which are sweet, true and beneficent; who is neither pleased by honour nor distressed by insults;

8. Who is the king of ascetics; who has destroyed the ego with his steady, bright and keen intellect; who is immersed in the flood of eternal bliss; who has exterminated the inner hordes of enemies (like greed, anger, etc.);

9. Who has, through his own abilities, achieved the Supreme Divine state not easily attained; who is free from the sense of ‘mine’; who has the welfare of the good at heart; who is cherished in the heart of the Lord of the Ganas (Ganapati);

10. Who abandoned even the lap of the daughter of the mountain (Parvati) in order to remove the ignorance enveloping mankind and who is the piercer of the hill (named Krowncha) in human form.

11. May the Supreme Guru, the ascetic wearing only a loin-cloth, the God who rides the peacock (Kartikeya), come on earth as a man, alone rule the world.

12. Salutations to thee, O Guru who has transcended all qualities, life-long celibate who hast assumed, through maya, the form of a man, slayer of Taraka.

13. Here is no peacock to carry you, no celestial river (the Ganges) for bathing, no nectar of mother’s milk from the breasts of Parvati, no lords of Pramathas with veenas to sing to you. Why, then, O piercer of the Krowncha Hill, have you taken up your abode on the red hill (of Arunagiri)?

14. O Enemy of Taraka, You have only one face, you do not have a place on Uma’s (Parvati’s) lap, you do not carry the weapon known as Sakti in your hand, you are in human form, there are no celestial armies with flags on either side of you. This disguise is enough to cloud the eyes of the simple, but how can you escape the vigilance of your own brother (Ganapati)?

15. Some worship your lotus feet considering you the foremost among the yogis, some as a great Sage (jnani), others as an ascetic, and others as their Guru; only two or three recognize him who is known as Ramana as the divine Guha sitting on the lap of Uma, born on earth for the welfare of mankind.

16. You expounded the significance of Om (to Brahma) the Lord of Sarasvati (Goddess of learning). Your mouth opened a little to instruct even your father (Siva). You have now, by virtue of your wisdom, come out as the Guru of your elder brother (Ganapati). Though young, O Subrahmanya, you have, by your merits, become greater than all.

17. The throne reserved for the foremost among the Acharyas which was first ascend-
ed by Dvaipayana (Veda Vyasa) who had seen the further shore of the Vedas and later by Sankara of high wisdom who dispelled the darkness of ignorance and doubt, now awaits you, incarnate as a man, O Commander of the celestial host.

18. Now, when dharma is at an end, when the three worlds are distressed by evil deeds, when scholars, having lost sight of Truth, learnedly discuss polemics to no end, and when the very existence of God, the Father, is doubted, who but you, in the guise of man, is the refuge of the good, O Lord, Rider of the Peacock?

19. Dispassion may be valuable for you, but how can you refuse to show mercy? Activity may be a defect for you, but is meditation on the feet of the Father (God) a defect? Desires may be contemptible to you, but is the protection of those who submit contemptible? O Skanda in the disguise of a mortal, are you waiting for some particular occasion?

20. Hence sophistry! O Bull of Dharma, you need no longer limp. Away with bewilderment! May the good flourish everywhere. Our Lord, the son of Bhavani (Parvati), the destroyer of the delusion of Soora's inner eye has now appeared on earth with his brother (Ganapati).

21. O Men, revere this brother of Lambodara in the form of a Guru who, by his power, pervades this body and the entire world and who, though one, manifests as the Self of the multifarious moving beings, having already reached his primary secret Source and destroyed the separateness of the ego.

22. Salutations to Sri Ramana, the Universal Guru, the destroyer of misery, who has reached the eternal state full of light and free from darkness without and within, who removes the ignorance of those who submit to him and who, though seeing the world, exists beyond the world.

23. O Ramana! May your gracious glance he turned just once on me, that I may be blessed.

24. O Ramana! You are the Guru of men. Great is your heart which knows no otherness.

25. Through your teaching, the world, ego and God all appear to me as the one undifferentiated being beyond all doubt.

26. Through your teaching the Existence, which is different from the ego, flows in the form of consciousness; not separate from me.

27. We shall realize in our heart the pure (Self) which is subtler than the ego, if we have your grace.

28. O King of Sages! Compassion is not merely a quality of yours but is natural to the effulgent heart which you are.

29. O Sinless one! Your form blazes with pure light. Infinite is your effulgent look.

30. O Lord, your mind has been swallowed by your heart and you shine with eternal bliss.

1 In this as well as in a number of the subsequent stanzas the author looks upon himself as an incarnation (avatar) of Ganapati, the elder son of Siva and Parvati, and the Maharshi as an avatar of Ganapati’s younger brother Skanda whose two other names are Kartikeya and Subrahmanya. Ganas are celestial beings who wait upon Ganapati, their lord and master.

2 This refers to a period in the life of Bhagavan when he did indeed beg for food. He used no begging bowl but only accepted as much as he could take in his hands. He never asked but only stood silently in front of a house and accepted what was given. If he was not given anything he just walked on. He never went twice to the same house.

3 Adisesha, the king of the serpents, upon whose coils Vishnu reposes in the milky ocean, has a thousand heads and therefore a thousand tongues. The idea is that so many tongues are required to describe the Maharshi’s qualities.

4 This refers to Skanda.

5 This also refers to Skanda.

6 These are celestial beings who wait upon Siva. The veena is a stringed musical instrument.

7 This refers to Skanda.

8 The name of a demon killed by Skanda.

9 A name of Ganapati.
31. O Chief of those who are self-controlled, you have been made the cook of the Lord of the universe.

32. For you slaughter the egos of these human cattle and cook them as food for the Supreme Siva.

33. I bow down before Bhagavan Ramana who destroys the ignorance in the hearts of human beings not only by his words but also by his compassionate look.

34. Sinking again and again in the ocean of samsara we now clutch at the island of your lotus feet. O Bhagavan Ramana! You are the abode of all auspiciousness. O Compassionate one, cast your gracious glance upon us, your supplicants.

35. What will be the fate of the babe if the mother does not suckle it? If the cowherd becomes angry how will the cows be protected? If you who are the Acharya of those who seek refuge at your feet do not destroy their doubts how can they who are overcome by countless delusions cross the ocean of samsara?

36. There is perfect peace in your benevolent, gracious smile, great power in the unequalled radiant glance of your clear, steady eyes; you abide always in the lotus of the heart; outwardly you shine like a calm lake; O Bhagavan Ramana, what parallel is there in all the world to your silence?

37. This power in your eyes which dispels the ignorance of your devotees is divine. This beauty in your face like that of the spouse (Lakshmi) of the Lotus-Eyed (Vishnu) is divine. These words which are transcendental and secret are divine. Great Ramana, Acharya of the world, how can a mere mortal praise you?

38. O Ramana, though I am now far away from your feet, a great power acts upon me. Like the blazing light of the sun your power, supreme in all the world, works from a distance, making my mind free from grief.

39. Your blessedness, O Red Hill (Arunachala), derived from the residence of many sages, is now unrivalled, since Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi chose you from many places.

40. This Ramana Maharshi is an ideal held out for men because of his depth of peace, his transcendent power, his wonderful dispassion, his immense mercy, his wisdom which dispels illusion and his gracious conduct.

Ganapati, the son of Narasimha, of the lineage of Vasishta, has thus in these forty verses worshipped briefly the Rishi Ramana, an incarnation of Skanda.

(To be continued in our next issue).

There are bhikkhus in this company who are Arahants: having extinguished the corruptions, completed the ascetic life, done what was to be done, laid down the burden, attained their goal, utterly destroyed the fetters of existence, and who are delivered by right insight.

— BUDDHA — Kandaraka Sutta et alia.

Among the younger generation of Tibetologists, Dr. Snellgrove (who is now Reader in Tibetan at the London School of Oriental and African Studies, and Director of the Institute of Tibetan Studies) has the unique distinction of having worked and studied among Tibetans in one of the last untouched enclaves of medieval Tibetan life in the borderland of Nepal and Western Tibet. He lived like a simple Tibetan under very primitive conditions in a far-away, practically unexplored highland-valley, which originally formed part of the Tibetan kingdom of Purang (sPur-brang). About his travels in this region and other little known parts of northern Nepal, Snellgrove has published already two highly informative books under the titles "Buddhist Himalaya" (1957) and "Himalayan Pilgrimage" (1961), in which he combines a very readable travelogue with a detailed and scholarly description of the religious life and tradition of the people.

The present volume, which is the outcome of the last journey of exploration, is a good example of what Tibetology should be—and could have been from its beginning, if most of the earlier pioneers in this field had had the humility of putting aside their own preconceived ideas and feelings of intellectual superiority. No amount of philological knowledge is sufficient for a real understanding of Tibetan mentality and religious experience. It requires, in addition to the linguistic knowledge, the capacity to enter into the spirit of Tibetan culture and religion, and this is only possible by living with the people on a basis of equality and mutual respect, sharing their hopes and fears, their joys and sorrows, and—what is more—sharing their religious life. This does not mean that a scholar has to be or to become a Buddhist, but at least, that he should be capable of appreciating the fundamental values of religious tradition—however alien it may appear in its forms—and recognize it as a genuine expression of spiritual experience and the desire for perfection and enlightenment.

In these biographies of Four Lamas of Dolpo we get a life-like picture of four saintly religious teachers, which is both touching and deeply significant, as it reveals the struggle between the highest ideals and the adversities of ordinary human existence under often extremely difficult circumstances. The Lamas concerned represent four very different characters: Sonam Loto (bSod-nams blo-gros: "Merit Intellect"), who lived from 1456-1521, was inclined towards a hermit-life. Cho-kyab Palzang (Chos-skyabs dpal-bzang: "Religious Protector Glorious and Good"); who lived from 1476-1565 and was the former's pupil, was a teacher and organizer. Pal-den Loto (dPal-lden blo-gros: "Glorious Intellect") was more of a mystic: a dreamer and exorcist. He lived from 1467-1531. The fourth Lama, Sonam Wang-chug (bSod-nams dbang-phyug: "Lord of Merit"); 1660-1731, was a scholar and traveller.

Except for their final sections, describing the death and the funeral rites, these biographies
were compiled during the lifetime of the Lamas concerned, according to their own words as well as to the observations of their contemporaries. They are, therefore, to a great extent autobiographical and historically as well as spiritually highly significant. Even where certain magical powers and miraculous experiences are described, we cannot simply dismiss them as products of mere imagination or attributions of credulous followers, and the translator himself, after careful consideration of all evidence (and with his own experience among religious people of this type), does not think that such an assumption is justified, and says: "There certainly is a marked difference between these lamas' opinions of themselves and their disciples reinterpretation of their lives, but it seems that the possession of magical powers is one of the few attributes on which all are agreed," (p. 12). In fact, the Lamas themselves speak very modestly about their spiritual attainments and do not claim supernatural powers or knowledge, but emphasize that salvation cannot be attained without great exertion, as their own struggles for perfection have shown. "Religious Protector" was once asked by one of his faithful attendants, who was on the point of death, to promise that they would always be born together in future lives. He replied: "Since there was some connection from our former lives, we have met in this one. So by the combination of these circumstances it would seem certain that we shall meet in other lives. Apart from this I am not a sage who can promise such things, but it would be all right to say a prayer." (p. 169)

As already demonstrated in the above-mentioned four names of the Lamas with which the biographies of this book are concerned, Tibetan names are generally composed of various religious concepts or virtues, so that it is possible to render them in translation. While most writers on Tibetan subjects have rendered such names, as well as the better known technical terms either phonetically or according to their original spelling, or both side by side, Snellgrove has translated most of the names and terms into English, in order to make it easier for his readers to remember them. In general he has succeeded well in this, though some of the names which sound quite easy in Tibetan, like 'Dorje Gyalta' or 'Chokkyab Palzang' become rather cumbersome in English, when rendered as "Powerbolt Victorious Banner" and "Religious Protector Glorious and Good". The translation of 'Dorje' as "Powerbolt" (though better than "Thunderbolt", as used by some writers) neither corresponds to the meaning of the Tibetan word "rdo-rje" — which means the Lord of Stones", i.e. the diamond, — nor to the meaning of vajra in Buddhist Sanskrit, as explained in the Vajracchedika-Prajna-Paramita-Sutra, in which likewise the nature of the vajra is described as that of a diamond. The Vajrayana has, therefore, rightly been called the "Diamond Vehicle" — and not the "Thunderbolt" or "Powerbolt Vehicle". As a visible symbol the vajra or 'Dorje' takes the shape of a scepter, so that it would be correct to call it "Diamond Scepter", in which the symbols of power and of indestructibility, as well as of supreme value are united. Unless a translation brings about the right associations (mentally as well as emotionally), it is better to leave such a term untranslated.

This applies in an even greater measure to the interpretation of the well-known Dhyani-Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara (Tib.: spyan-ras-gcod, pron. "Chenresie"), rendered as the would-be buddha Glancing Eye': This is not only ugly, but outright misleading, because Avalokitesvara is not a "Buddha in the making", an incomplete Buddha or one who is on his way to Buddhahood, but on the contrary, the active emanation of the highest state of Buddhahood, symbolized in Amitabha, the Buddha of Infinite Light.

Though the term Bodhisattva can also be used in the sense of one in whom the consciousness of enlightenment (bodhi-citta) has become the driving force of his life, as in Prince Siddhartha, before he attained enlightenment (or even after his first vow in the presence of Buddha Dipankara), — yet, the very expression "would-be buddha" has such a derogative undertone (like a "would-be gentleman") that it can never be an adequate substitute for the very positive term 'bodhisattva' or its Tibetan equivalent 'byang-chub-serm-sgyal', in which the accent is not on any kind of incompleteness of attainments, but on the overwhelmingly active quality of Enlightenment.

Another word which is likely to cause misunderstanding in the present translation, is one of the key-concepts of Buddhism, namely the root of all suffering: avidya (Tib.: ma-rgyad) "ignorance", or moha (Tib.: gTi-mug) "delusion", "mental darkness", which Snellgrove renders with "stupidity", gTi-mug, according to Tibetan definition, is the characteristic of the animal realm. Animals may lack the faculty of reasoning, but one certainly cannot call them "stupid"! Already Ananda Coomaraswami criticised the superficial way in which these important con-
cepts of Buddhist as well as Hindu philosophy were interpreted: "In making ignorance the root of all evil"; he said, in his well-known work "Hinduism and Buddhism", "we must guard ourselves from supposing that an ignorance of any particular thing is meant, and especially against a confusion of the traditional 'ignorance' with what we mean by 'illiteracy'; so far from this, our empirical knowledge of facts is an essential part of the very ignorance that makes desire possible," (p. 59).

The delusion of which the Buddha speaks is not stupidity (in fact, the cleverest are the most likely to fall into the traps of delusion) but the ignorance of ultimate Reality, which is revealed in the experience of Enlightenment.

However, these are minor blemishes in a work which is not primarily concerned with philosophical and metaphysical ideas but with the actual life of people who tried to realize the highest aspirations of their religion. These biographies are not only near to life, but have an unmistakable ring of truth, which makes them valuable even in the outlying regions of Tibet used to ignorances of Buddhist as well as Hindu philosophy. Snellgrove has created a masterpiece that will be worthy of beautiful temple-banners (tharvg-ka), painted in Dolpo. Fourteen of these plates are reproductions of all lovers of Tibet and its sacred tradition.

The book is illustrated with excellent photographs, taken by the author during his stay in Dolpo. Fourteen of these plates are reproductions of beautiful temple-banners (thang-ka), painted by the Lama of the Residence of Great Happiness (bDe-chen bLa-brang) in Dolpo, in whose hermitage the author was staying and working. That such works of art could be produced up to the present day, shows that this tradition is still alive. It would have been good if a detailed description of the iconographical details of these Thangkas would have been added. But perhaps this will be included in the second volume, which is to contain the original Tibetan texts, Commentary and Glossary.

LAMA ANGARIK Govinda.


Mr. Gregg shows the world envisaged by the nuclear scientist to be so different from that reported by our senses that the word 'maya' might very well be used for the latter, although he does not in fact use it. He then turns from the observed to the observer in search of some individual entity ('soul' or 'self') in each human being, and finds no evidence for any. In fact what seems to him the most plausible in the Buddhist doctrine of anatta is a state of permanent flux. It is not being or intelligence that he repudiates but only their physical vehicles and individual limitations.

Mr. Gregg is concerned also with corporate life (that is with 'culture' or 'civilization'). He finds this to be largely based in pre-logical assumptions, individual or corporate, which are neither proved nor disproved but taken for granted as a basis for life. He holds that the main cause of the malaise of the modern world is that its basic assumptions can be true or false and that it is false assumptions which have brought the modern world to its present plight. Even so this is a most stimulating book and penetrates deeply into the problems of life and reality.

THINKING WITH THE YAJURVEDA: By Gandhabai G. Desai (Asia Publishing House, Bombay-1, Pp. 178, Rs. 20).

It is an old tradition that the Vedas embody a Knowledge which lends itself to a number of interpretations, ritualistic, theological, spiritual, astronomical and so on. The author of the present exposition brings out the spiritual content of the Yajur Veda with special emphasis on its bearings on the social and collective development of humanity. He has been fortunate in having a ‘new dimension’ added to his vision as a result of the Grace and Teaching of Bhagavan Maharshi and his writing is consequently lit with the glow of Agni, the premier Deity of the Veda.

In the first few chapters, Sri Desai gives a synoptic view of the role assigned to Agni (in the Veda) in the building up and manifestation of the Cosmos. He describes how Agni reveals himself in different forms on different planes of
existence and presides over the evolutionary progress of the Universe. He cites the conclusions of the leaders of modern Science in vindication of the insight of the ancient Seers regarding the Oneness of Creation at all basic levels.

The individual awakes to the truth of his own existence as a result of the pressure of Agni which translates itself as an unceasing aspiration for the Divine. But the spiritual development envisaged by the Yajur Veda, points out the author, is not individualistic alone; at every step, the seeker relates himself to the society, to the larger world around and by a willed process of self-consecration and self-giving, termed Yajna in its symbolic figure, he contributes to the higher evolution of the race. Chapters on the Purusha and Sarva Medha Yajnas are noteworthy contributions.

Progress is made through reconciliation of opposites and Sri Desai focusses our attention on the harmonisation in the Veda of the claims of kshatra (power) and brahma (knowledge).


The author of this commendable study approaches the Upanishads as an enlightened Christian and finds much in them that is paralleled by the utterances of the ancient Hebrew Prophets. She examines the major texts with a view to determine what the Seers experienced of the Reality and how much of it they expressed. God as the Absolute, God as Person, God and Nature, Ethics in the Upanishads, Grace — these are some of the topics discussed within the framework provided by the New Testament. The author is evidently handicapped by the tenets of her religion regarding Grace, Sin, etc., and is unable to appreciate the full significance of the Doctrine of Grace in the Upanishads.

There is a remark that the Upanishads nowhere refer to God as love. The texts speak of Brahman, again and again, as Ananda Bliss; and Love is a term of that Bliss.

A sincere and readable book.

M. P. Panot.


Although writing about Judaism, Erich Fromm refuses to call himself a theist. One suspects, however, that the 'God' he rejects is rather the 'concept of God' which he refers to elsewhere as 'idolatry'. It is very interesting to see how he finds the Hindu and Buddhist 'negative theology' paralleled, for instance in Maimonides, in the Judaic understanding which will postulate only negative attributes of God, since every affirmation is a limitation.

As one would expect in a Judaic work, much attention is paid to the mystique of history and the Jewish concept of the Messiah.

The book is well spiced with anecdotes from the rabbis and hazzanim which rival those from Zen in their trenchancy. It is altogether the work of a vigorous mind.

H. S. G.

SRI LALITA TRISATI BHASHYA of Sri Sankara Bhagavatpada : English Translation by Dr. Chaganti Suryanarayana Murthy. (Ganesh & Co., Madras-17, Pp. 148. Price: Rs. 5.)

Sri Lalita-trisati-stotra forms part of "Sri Lalitopakhyana" of the Brahmanda-purana. The story connected with its composition is as follows: The sage Agastya who was an adept in the worship of Sri Lalita, the Divine Mother, felt distressed because he had not gained Her grace in spite of great austerity and acts of devotion. He clung to the feet of his Guru, Hayagriva, imploring him to intercede with the Mother on his behalf. Three years passed, and Agastya did not leave off holding on to his Guru's feet. Sri Lalita, greatly pleased with the ardour of the disciple, appeared along with Her consort Sri Kamesvara before Hayagriva, and commanded him to impart to Agastya the most sacred Trisati-stotra composed by Herself and Her Lord. Hayagriva was profoundly moved by this special act of the Mother's grace, and obeyed Her Command. Thus it was that Agastya received the stotra which contains three hundred Names of the Mother. The Names have a unique sanctity because their initial letters, in groups of twenty, are the letters of the fifteen-lettered Mantra (panchadasi-mantra) of the Devi.

Sri Sankaracharya has written a lucid commentary on the Trisati. The main purport of this commentary is to show that the cult of the Devi is in perfect consonance with Advaita. The present translator of the commentary, Dr. Chaganti Suryanarayana Murthy, shows that there is not the slightest support in the commentary for the Vama or Kaula-achara (left-handed practices). A valuable addition to the Introduction is a free translation of the Sri-Vidya-dipika of Agastya which expounds the significance of the
fifteen-lettered Mantra in its three parts, viz. vāgbhava-kūta, kamarāja-kūta, and sakti-kūta.

The translation of Sankara's commentary is only by those who are interested in Sri-Vidya but also by students of Advaita. It is to be hoped that when this book is reprinted, the mistakes in printing, which are far too many, will be avoided.

Prof. T. M. P. Mahadevan.

THE PRACTICAL APPROACH TO DIVINITY: By Chandra Swami. (Available from Sri D. R. Monga, Manager, United Commercial Bank Ltd., Chandni Chowk, Delhi.)

Amid the welter of claims made nowadays this little book stands out with delightful clarity. The author speaks with equal authority on theory and practice and shows both understanding and common sense, condemning alike those who make the path a mere topic for discussion and those who drive themselves unwisely and too hard. He obviously has a great deal of experience and is able to differentiate between what is to be shunned and what sought after.

We are told that Chandra Swami gave up his studies and took sannyas at the age of 21, when a student of M.Sc. in 1952. He is now staying at Hardwar at the foot of the Himalayas where he observes complete silence for six months out of every year.

A MODERN PRELUDE: By Hugh l’Anson Fausset. This book was published by Jonathan Cape, London, as far back as 1933, but the author passed away recently and our occasional contributor, G. F. Allen, has sent us the following appreciation of it. — (Editor)

It is now several years since the Russian philosopher Nicholai Berdyaev made his famous but unheeded observation: In order to understand Christianity one must first study Hinduism. Of recent years an increasing number of Westerners, including a few Christian missionaries, have discovered the truth of Berdyaev's statement. But none can have described it in more pertinent and detailed terms than has Hugh l’Anson Fausset in Part II of his autobiography.

Part I, 'The Outer Journey', describes his childhood and youth in England; it is noteworthy only for the account of his father’s pathologically raw intolerance. His father was a Church of England clergyman; his mother (who dies at his birth) a Quaker. Part II, 'The Inner Journey', will prove of greater interest to the readers of The Mountain Path, for in it is contained an account of the reasons for the author's choice of Advaita Vedanta which no Westerner treading the mountain path towards self-realization should miss reading.

Fausset studied St. Paul and the early Christian Fathers, as well as Augustine, Aquinas, John of Ruysbroek, Eckhart, Hooker Newman, Rashdall, Inge, and Von Hugel before feeling himself conscientiously free to dismiss the organized Christian Church as being but the empty shell of the original teaching of the Founder. His studies extended to the textual irrelevancies of the New Testament, the results of which research are devastatingly revealing. He was then impelled to interpret the mystical origins of the Christian sacraments themselves. ‘But I did not need’, he wrote (p. 264), 'any esoteric knowledge to recognize in the mystery of the Incarnation the descent of the divine spirit into man; in that of Gethsemane and Calvary the crucifixion of the spiritual being on the cross of matter and the death pangs of the personal self; in the ‘Resurrection’ the rebirth into creative life; and in the ‘Ascension’ the ascent of the true self to a full realization of its divine nature.'

THE STORY OF MELTING, SACHAL SARMAT'S PERSIAN MASNAVI GUDAZ-NAMA: By Tirthdas Hotchand. (Pradeep Publications, Hirabad, Bhurgri Road, Hyderabad, West Pakistan, Pp. 43, Price: Re. 1.)

Until the separation of India and Pakistan Sindh was a province of poets, saints and mystics where Sufi and Vedantist lived together in blissful amity. Now the old traditions are vanishing and being replaced by politics. Sachal Sarmast was one of the great Sufi poet-saints of Sindh. He lived in the 18th and early 19th Century. The Masnavi Gudaz-nama is a Persian poem about the melting of man's seeming-separate self through the power of Divine Love. It is a proclamation of the ultimate Oneness and overrides the barriers between the religions. Even though the translation is not felicitous, we can be grateful for having something salvaged from the former wealth of Sindhi poetry.

A. QUTBUDDIN.


This book represents the author's contribution towards the fulfilment of the aims and aspirations of the Institute of Psychic and Spiritual Research in New Delhi. The autobiographical notes reveal the background which leads the author who is also a successful business man to his mystical experience and the unfoldment of his inner
journey in search of Truth. As the author so aptly expresses it, "Many of us feel that there is a plan or purpose underlying existence. As we grow old it becomes clearer that what appeared to be quite insignificant events were responsible for directing our lives towards a fulfillment beyond death." Life becomes the Guru even for those who do not seek, giving them the necessary knocks and experiences to open their eyes to the true purpose of it, or to make them seek certainty in an uncertain world of ever changing values and such transient and elusive happiness. Happiness, as Sri Ramana Maharshi said, is our birthright, so it is being sought always, not always in the right way. A thief and drunkard are also pursuing happiness.

This spiritual autobiography will be of special interest to students of Jung, who was the teacher of the author for several years, and to those interested in psychology and mysticism. The author seems to be greatly influenced by him. Their phraseology is not always quite consistent with true mysticism. How can a "journey into the unconscious" lead to awareness or integration? In the author's opinion the greatest contribution to modern medicine is the discovery by Jung that in many cases men fall ill because they have lost contact with their spiritual roots. Their cure depended on re-establishing that contact and having access to the autochthonous religious function of their psyche.

ARTHUR OSBORNE.


This is indeed a magnum opus of Shri J. M. Chatterji. It is obviously the product of a lifetime of devoted study of the Gathas and the religion of Zarathustra. It carries an appreciative message by Dr. Radhakrishnan.

As the publisher's note says, scholars may disagree with a particular view taken by Shri Chatterji but this does not, in any way, detract from the value of the publication. Shri Chatterji is to be congratulated for this monumental labour of love and the time and care and energy that he has bestowed on his work.

The Avesta texts with their prose-order and literal translation and word-notes are given in detail. All in all, this is not a handy book for the layman, but a reference work for libraries and the scholars.

Shri Chatterji's book serves a dire need, but due to its size and price, it limits its scope to scholars, and school, college and university libraries and most certainly is a must for research libraries.

VINODINI M. GHARAT.


The best thing in this book is the description of a remarkable personal experience by the author, a pre-glimpse of realization: "There arose no question, no reference beyond the experience itself, but only peace and a quiet joy and the sensation of having dropped an intolerable burden. It felt like a sudden waking from the sleep of ordinary life, an end to dreaming. It was self-luminous Reality . . . " It is very hard to describe a glimpse of a state from which "words turn away baffled". Whatever one may say, however near, fails to describe the Undescribable. That is why the Scriptures take recourse to "Neti, Neti" (not this, not this).

The author succeeds remarkably well to make this experience alive as far as possible to the readers so that they may also try to get it. If by the "head" he means mind, well and good. This reviewer is wondering why he leaves the rest of the body. Is it not as much or as little a part of the illusion or superimposition as the rest? This glimpse may be experienced by some as only HEAD or MIND or pure Awareness or I-am-ness without any otherness whatsoever. "... nay himself was not present to himself. Even of beauty he is no longer aware, for now he has travelled beyond the beautiful . . . ." (Plotinus).

The motive for writing this book is the author's urge to communicate and to help others get out of the morass of their own making. An excellent motive indeed and a very good ending after proving that our case is absolutely hopeless: "However this need cause no alarm. It is all peripheral, elsewhere. Here the Sovereign of the Centre reigns. Here is one that exists Alone, and alone exists, though infinitely beyond aloneness and existence. Who could attain to This except it Self and what need to attain?"

LUCIA OSBORNE.

A NEW PUBLICATION

SRI RAMANA VAZHI (The Path of Ramana), in Tamil: By Sadhu Om. Copies available at Sri Ramanasramam Book Depot, Sri Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai, South India, Price: Rs. 2.50.
DEVOtees of Bhagavan know that there has always been complete freedom for them to follow their own methods of sadhana inside the Ashram for which they get powerful support from Bhagavan. Everyone is taken up at his own level of development. There is no compulsion of any kind to partake in religious or spiritual activities. The inmates have rarely been in the habit of gathering for meditation or spiritual discussion at prescribed hours or on fixed days. This complete absence of regimentation has been appreciated by inmates and visitors alike and has been acclaimed as the unique and refreshing feature of the Ashram. Latterly, however, a few of the devotees began to feel that it would be desirable to assemble once in a week in some place inside the Ashram and conduct discussions or discourses on spiritual subjects, especially Bhagavan's teachings. Accordingly from the middle of January Sat Sanghs (gatherings of devotees) are being held for about an hour on all Sunday evenings in the New Hall. The Sangh starts with the recitation of some Tamil verses from Bhagavan's works and the exposition of a verse or two. This is followed by a short talk on spiritual subjects, especially Bhagavan's teachings, by one of the devotees present. The Sangh comes to an end with silent meditation.

Prof. R. K. Viswanathan, who is now settled, after his retirement, in Ramana Nagar, and on whose persuasion the Sat Sangh was formed, is made the Secretary of it. He is very earnest and has already proved to be really capable of conducting these meetings successfully.

Apart from the weekly Sat Sanghs there were also some special Sanghs during the last quarter. These were addressed by Dr. T. M. P. Mahadevan, Director for Advanced Studies in Philosophy, Madras, Prof. M. M. Verma, retired Professor of the Rajasthan University, Prof. N. R. Krishnamurthi Aiyar, and Major Abdul Gaffur.

GOVERNOR'S VISIT

Sardar Ujjal Singh, the Governor of Madras, paid a visit to the Ashram at the end of December last. He was accompanied by the Collector of the District, Mr. B. K. Belliappa. They were shown round the Ashram by the President and the Trustees. The Governor showed considerable interest in everything that he saw. Priests chant-
Sardar Ujjal Singh, the Governor of Madras, is seen absorbed inside the ‘Nirvana’ room. Next to him are: Sri K. Padmanabhan, Trustee, Sri Swami Sathyananda and the Ashram President. He offered read Vedas before him and offered garlands of flowers and sacred prasadam at the end. Before leaving the Ashram the Governor made a handsome donation to the Ashram.

**SRI RAMANA JAYANTHI IN BOMBAY**

The 88th Jayanti of Sri Bhagavan was celebrated at the Birla Kreeda Kendra, Chowpaty, Bombay, on 1st January 1968. Sri S. K. Patil, a former minister of the Government of India, presided over the function. The chief guest of the evening was Kum. Savitaben Nanji Kalidas Mehta, Acharya of the Shree Aryakanya Gurukul, Porbander. Swami Poornananda Tirtha of the Jnana Ashram, Parlikad, the well-known exponent of Advaita, addressed the gathering.

Justice K. S. Venkataraman, High Court Judge, Madras, addressed the ‘Ramana Bhakta Sabha’ members, in Madras.

**RAMANA BHAKTA SABHA, MADRAS**

The Jayanti was celebrated on December 24, 1967 at Dharmalayam, 94, Mowbrays Road, Alwarpet, Madras. After Veda parayana, Mr. Justice K. S. Venkataraman spoke of the inescapable
Delhi: Sri M. L. Sondhi, M.P., offering flowers to the beautiful portrait of Sri Bhagavan, during the Jayanthi celebration. Next to him is Prof. K. Swaminathan.

Spiritual reality in which we have our being, whether or no we recognize it. After a series of songs by Shri R. M. Sundaram, Mrs. Sulochana Natarajan, Mrs. Sarada Chinnawatami and Mrs. Lakshmi Sivaraman, the meeting ended with arati and distribution of prasadam.

RAMANA KENDRA, DELHI

The Jayanthi meeting was held on December 18, 1967 in Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Curzon Road, New Delhi. After a welcome speech in Sanskrit and Veda Parayana, Shri M. L. Sondhi, M.P., spoke on the relevance of Sri Bhagavan to modern man, who badly needed the "still centre" of advaita jnana to enable him to orientate and balance himself in the whirl of contemporary life. He said, "Human life, both individual and social, is a continuous growth and there is no growth, without tension. Shakti, which impels growth, should hold perpetual dialogue with Shanti, which is the root of our being and the heart of the universe."

Mrs. Mahalingam rendered songs by Sri Bhagavan and Sri Muruganar. Professor K. Swaminathan described the Sunday meetings of the Kendra and its efforts to establish a permanent home in the Capital.

VISITORS AND PILGRIMS FROM ABDROAD

M. Jean Herbert, the well-known French author and publisher, an old devotee of Bhagavan, and his wife paid a visit to the Ashram. M. Herbert was interested to see all the places in the Ashram including the kitchen where he was in Sri Bhagavan's company during his visit long ago. In fact his old associations with Sri Bhagavan were quite fresh in his mind. He said on leaving, that he and his wife would like to return one day for a longer stay.

Besides the visitors from abroad mentioned in our 1st issue there were quite a number of other visitors for shorter or longer stays during the last quarter. The circumstances in which some of the visitors became interested in Bhagavan's life and teaching have been described in their letters which we give below as they might be of interest to readers of the Mountain Path.

* * *

Some Years ago, when I was still a member of the 'S.R.F.', a co-brother gave me the book "Talks with Ramana Maharshi Vol. I". The teachings contained in this book appealed immediately to my innermost being. I, however, continued my spiritual practice on the lines of the 'S.R.F.' for several years. It was in 1966 that it occurred to me that I should thereafter follow the path of Sri Ramana. I also felt a desire to live at Bhagavan's ashram for some time so that I might benefit by the spiritual atmosphere of the place. It is now three months since I arrived

*Mark Antrobus, United Kingdom.
Vaclav Cech, Chechoslovakia.
Betty Muriel Austin, United Kingdom.
Van der Linde Hermine, Dutch.
Rina Vredenbregt, Belgium.
Nadesha Mackman, Sweden.
Lucy Cornelsen, W. Germany.
Marlies Hibschenberger, Germany.
Bairo Regina Sendras, Portugal.
Carmen Orosz, U.K.
Leonard Oswald Bowen, Australia.
Victoria Orfaly, American, U.S.A.
Edgar Johannes Krayss, Switzerland.
Le Prince Jacqueline, France.
Dauguet Yvonne, France.
John Hislop, U.S.A.
Magdalena Hislop, U.S.A.
Giles Francis Dubuis, U.K.
Lewis Henry Warren, Australia.
Roger Henninger, France.
George Ernest Oakenfold, U.K.
Alain Chapeller, France.
Ronald Lee, U.S.A.
Ena Feig, W. Germany.
Voytech Kurka, Chechoslovakia.
Irene E. Wolflington, U.S.A.
Horst Rutkowsk i
West Germany

It was through the Cambridge University Buddhist Society that a couple of copies of *The Mountain Path* came my way. I read some of the articles about the ashram, the life of Sri Bhagavan and some of His sayings. One article by Christmas Humphreys in which he said that he knew that on meeting Sri Bhagavan he had contacted that which is "unborn, unconditioned, unmade", to use the words of the Buddha speaking on the state of nirvana, particularly made me want to find out more. This desire was made even stronger when I saw the photograph of him.

Months later, when I was staying at the newly founded Tibetan monastery in Scotland, I came across the booklet "The Gospel of Ramana Maharshi", and met also a French couple who had been to this ashram and who told me of the sense of peace and spirituality that pervades the atmosphere here.

I was intending to come to India in any case to follow up my interest in Indian spirituality, and what I had heard and read made me make the Sri Ramanasramam one of my main objectives.

I was not disappointed when I arrived. There is something indefinable in the air—something that helps you realize what Indian religion is all about, and definitely something that makes for fruitful meditation. Perhaps one could say that it is the feeling that Sri Bhagavan is not dead, but is still guiding the steps of the meditator from within.

James Whelan, United Kingdom.

Some three or four years ago I gradually became aware of an inner urge to know more about India. There was no outer reason for this, nor had I ever had any particular interest in India before. It was something like a vague nostalgia. I felt as if India possessed some hidden mystery which I wanted to discover. I began to read books about India, and one of the first books I came across was H. H. Von Veltheim's "Der Atem Indiens" (The Breath of India). The author gives a long and detailed account of his visit to Sri Ramanasramam, which took place in 1937 or 1938. This is how Bhagavan revealed Himself to me.

At that time I was not even aware of the existence of Vedanta philosophy, nor did I understand anything of Bhagavan's teachings. But I was so deeply impressed by His divine glory, that I began to read all I could find about Vedanta. Eight months afterwards I discovered a book on Bhagavan and His teachings. This was "Der Weg zum Selbst" by Heinrich Zimmer. After reading it I became a convinced devotee.

From the day I first came to know about Bhagavan I have never forgotten Him. The thought of Him has haunted me ever since. Although He was no more physically present I felt that I had to go to Tiruvannamalai, and that nothing on earth could prevent me.

Now Bhagavan's Grace has enabled me to come here. During my whole stay in India He has guided and blessed me in a marvellous way.

Rina Vredenburg, Belgium.

Towards the end of 1961 I was carelessly looking through the books in a bookshop in Constance, a town in Southern Germany, when I came across a German translation of Mouni Sadhu's book "In Days of Great Peace". The frontispiece of the book was a photograph of Ramana Maharshi. The immediate effect of this photograph upon me was one of great attraction. At the same time I felt a great familiarity, as though I had known Bhagavan's face for ages. From this time onward for a period of about three years, Bhagavan's face often appeared before my
mind in the course of my daily activities. Although I was not practising meditation at that time, I shortly afterwards started to meditate now and then and, quite automatically, turned to Bhagavan's face as an object of meditation.

A period of two or three years must have elapsed after this before I wrote to Ramanasram. My hesitation to write was mainly due to my uncertainty and ignorance, as to what facilities and opportunities existed for a Westerner to visit an Indian ashram. I knew no person who had ever contemplated or made such a visit. The Ashram's prompt reply to my letter with an invitation to come came as a welcome and thrilling surprise. Thus I left for India by sea in October 1964, but went to the north of India first, visiting several holy places which I had read about. However during this time I was constantly aware of being pulled towards the South and felt Bhagavan's presence very strongly whilst in the Himalayas, as if calling me to Arunachala. At times this call became so strong that it became almost physical in its intensity and an urgency to fulfill the real purpose of my visit to India, began to possess me.

When I finally started southward for Ramanasram it was with a feeling of relief, and my final arrival at Arunachala seemed to be almost a home-coming, away from the trials and tribulations of the outside world.

My stay at Arunachala confirmed the opening in my life of a spiritual awareness which I had always been seeking, but its appearance and continued presence since that time, has been a process of rediscovery of "the old" rather than a disclosure of "the new". I feel that I have received Bhagavan's Grace and this feeling of familiarity of which I speak seems to be common to many devotees who have already experienced this Grace. Here, I am now for the second time, I am happy I am at my 'home'.

Mrs. Marlies Hibschenberger, West Germany.

It was in 1950, in France, that, on opening at random a magazine, I was attracted by Sri Bhagavan's last photograph. There were only some words about His life and His Mahasamadhi. Immediately a kind of prayer rose within me that I might have the darshan of a realized soul. Such was the power which His look in that small photograph had on me for a few seconds.

He fulfilled my prayer in a strange way: In 1954 Swami Ramdas came to Geneva and there I was blessed by His brief darshan. In 1958 in an almost miraculous way, I got an opportunity to come to India and to spend some weeks in Anandashram, Sri Ramdas (who had his realization after having the blessing of Sri Bhagavan) advised me to visit Sri Ramanasramam.

I arrived at the Ramanasramam in June 1958 on the anniversary of the Mahasamadhi of Bhagavan's mother. As soon as I arrived I was taken for a 'pradakshina' around the sacred Hill. Later, when I was shown the small room in which Sri Bhagavan attained Maha Samadhi my breath stopped short on reading "April 14th". For that was the date of my first landing on the blessed Indian soil. Everything was His Grace and answer to my prayer.

Now after some years Bhagavan again opens His wonderful Ashram to this pilgrim. His grace is here. He makes us feel quite at home. We can meet Him everywhere; in the Meditation Hall we sit at His feet; in Skandasramam He opens an oasis of beauty and silence; in the big Temple of the town His welcome took the form of unforgettable and beautiful celebrations. Even in the dining hall His loving care is felt in the kind service and perfect food. Is there any word to express our gratitude to Him? And to Him through you all who are ever at His service?

Marie Lanvin, France.

There was a light in a German boy's eyes and now when thinking back I am sure it is this light which originally drove me to Tiruvannamalai. This light was quite a fascinating one, making me suddenly aware that there must be "something beyond" of great interest as all which composed my life before meeting with this light appeared suddenly grey, dull, dead.

On a French ship bound for Tahiti, New Zealand and Australia, that German boy, Wilhelm, was moving around quietly among the agitated crowd of youngsters around him but nevertheless there was somehow a more active power in him
which struck us, my cousin Roland and myself, and awoke in us the desire to find out what it was. Before landing in Tahiti we had time to find out that he had spent quite a number of years in India and had become one of its warmest lovers, and also that Tiruvannamalai seemed to have played quite a big part in his stay there which gave me the strong desire to go myself to this very particular place and find out what could be seen or hidden there.

Since my youth India had always been of great fascination to me but somehow for my first big trip abroad fate had driven me in quite another direction. I knew anyway that some day I would reach India and finally that day arrived, two months ago, when my girl friend Yvonne and myself landed at Bombay, ready to start the discovery of this "promised land" which has been so much talked and written about.

When we reached Tiruvannamalai, a few weeks after our arrival in India, we knew that already these two girls were not any more what they had been years ago, as India with all its trials, its shocks, its contradictions, had awakened a part of our being which had been asleep all these years. And how not to feel passionately attached to a country which has such power to awaken in our being a sensitivity neglected for so long.

From all the places we have been till now, Tiruvannamalai has proved to be the best "sensitivity awakener" for us both. Now please don't force me to give the exact causes. For surely there is a "special" atmosphere here. Is it due to Bhagavan's body which has been here before? Is it Bhagavan's spirit floating all around? Is it Arunachala? Is it the light I see in some people's eyes (the same light which has been originally our leader to Tiruvannamalai)? Please don't ask me to determine exactly what it is, finally, when thinking more and more about it all I can only come to the conclusion that it is just one and the same thing. And, whatever, I could name it, as a living experience, it is the most wonderful thing I could ever have dreamt of.

Jacqueline Leprince & Yvonne Dauguet

France.

I first heard of Bhagavan from a friend in a Zen Meditation group in London. He lent me some books on Bhagavan and his sayings and after reading them plus some copies of The Mountain Path I saw the same truths and practice to which I had been led by my Buddhist enquiries. In particular I felt an affinity with the practice recommended.

I decided to leave London and head for Japan for some training in Zazen and a stay at Ramanasramam in Bhagavan's Presence seemed an essential stop on route. The general atmosphere around Arunachala and the Ashram life in general have been very conducive to my sadhana and I consider myself very fortunate to have been led to such a beautiful spot.

Lewis Warren

Australia.

From my first view of the ashram I rejoiced in the right decision to have come, and in the peace which pervaded the grove and now filled me. Looking a little further into the ashram and its activities and the short explorations on Arunachala confirmed my original impressions. The following day I went on a pradakshina which also thrilled me.

Then, a couple of days later, after breakfast, leaving for a second walk around the hill, I felt a slight pain in the stomach which at that time I disregarded as mild indigestion. However, it lingered, but by the time I took it seriously I had already passed the point of no return. Near the town I had to sit down for relief and gradually these stops became more frequent and of longer duration till I finally came to a halt on a kerb in town, with no will to go further. Luckily a jatka came into view which brought me to ashram (although I was debating whether to go to the hospital in the town), and, as I was now convinced I was a victim of food-poisoning, I was mildly surprised to see life in the ashram continuing as normal (my apologies to the kitchen for ever doubting them!).

It transpired that I had had a minor heart attack and a couple of hours later, the pain re-
tributions in the Golden Jubilee Souvenir (1946) and in the July '64 and January '65 issues of the Mountain Path.

His first visit to the ashram, which took place in September 1940, is vividly described by him in the Jayanthi (January 1966) number of the Mountain Path. Since then he visited the ashram many times, renewed contact with the resident devotees and helped the management with valuable suggestions. We offer our sympathy to his family and the large circle of his loving and beloved old boys.

THE MOUNTAIN PATH

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Signature of the Publisher,
(Sd.) T. N. VENKATARAMAN.
SRI FRAMJI DORABJI, a Parsi businessman originally belonging to Bombay, but now settled in Madras, is an old devotee of Sri Bhagavan. He comes of an orthodox family strictly following the religious practices of the Zoroastrians. From his boyhood he was interested in saints and holy men and he met a number of them. The association with one of them near Bombay was, however, far from happy. The latter began to exercise an unwholesome control over his devotee who tried in vain to overcome his evil influence. But happily for him he heard of Sri Bhagavan from his late brother, Sri Dadiba, who had read a review of Paul Brunton’s book, “A Search in Secret India” in The Sunday Times. And his brother strongly advised him to go and see Sri Bhagavan.

It was, however, some months before he could come down to Tiruvannamalai. At last in 1937 he and a party of four others paid a visit to Sri Ramanasramam and had darshan of Sri Bhagavan. The moment he saw Sri Bhagavan he began to feel an extraordinary veneration for Him. In Sri Bhagavan’s presence he experienced intense peace and happiness. He became convinced that here at last was the Master, the Sadguru, for whom he had been searching. He therefore repeated his visits as often as he could. Soon his fear of the ‘holy man’ in Bombay grew less and less until it totally disappeared.

Living at such a great distance he could not come to Tiruvannamalai as often as he wished. But in 1942 his business activities were, to his great delight, shifted from Bombay to Madras and this enabled him to visit the Ashram more often. He looked upon this change as a mark of Sri Bhagavan’s Grace. During his visits he never put any questions to Sri Bhagavan but was quite content to sit silently in His presence. Nor did Sri Bhagavan ask him anything about his sadhana. But somehow the questions which he would have
liked to ask were answered by Sri Bhagavan in the course of His talks with some of the other persons who were present. He found that the path of enquiry was not suitable for him and that the alternative path shown by Sri Bhagavan, namely surrender was the path he should follow. At the same time he began to realize the inner significance of his own religion. He therefore, continued to remain a staunch Zoroastrian without losing his devotion to Sri Bhagavan.

Although Sri Framji neither put any questions to Sri Bhagavan nor talked to Him freely Sri Bhagavan was quite aware of his devotion. A small incident shows this clearly. Sri Framji used always to come into Sri Bhagavan's presence wearing the traditional dress of Zoroastrians, including a black conical cap. One day, however, he came without his cap. Sri Bhagavan noticed this and later told one of his attendants about it. Evidently Sri Bhagavan had no objection to any one wearing the dress he was accustomed to and it was not at all necessary that the cap should be removed out of respect to Him. When this came to the ears of Sri Framji he wondered at the broad outlook of Sri Bhagavan and thereafter put on his cap as usual!

Sri Framji, his wife, daughter and son, are all staunch devotees of Sri Bhagavan and still continue to visit the Ashram frequently. They have built a small cottage for themselves, not far from the Ashram, with the object of making longer stays near Sri Bhagavan's Ashram. All of them regard Sri Bhagavan as their Guide and Guru and the Ashram as their 'home'.

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JANUARY 1968

I see no reason to doubt that "Jan" is the most valuable number you have hitherto produced, as it is the best typographically also. You might have some protests from Europe on the ground of the standing promise of universality, but none on any ground from me.

Congratulations,

TENENCE GRAY,
Monte Carlo.

The next issue will clarify the position regarding protests, if any, since it deals with Bhagavan's poetry.

EDITOR.

I have just received the January issue of The Mountain Path and we have found it not only very interesting but also very beautifully illustrated. Congratulations! Mr. Osborne, your editorial is a joy to read. Once again, congratulations!

GLADYS DE MEUTES,
Johannesburg.

The arrival of The Mountain Path is eagerly anticipated every quarter. This time's issue is specially fine and the Grace on the fly leaf facing the frontispiece is indeed much to be appreciated. It is a humble request that this practice may kindly be continued in subsequent issues and some words spoken or written by the Great Soul may be quoted on the fly leaf as a regular feature.

The Mountain Path forms an important aid to acquisition of full knowledge of the Self. There is a long way to go yet, but His silent Grace is there and while it is there, there is hope in this life. . . .

Please accept these few words of appreciation for good work well done.

DR. ARUN K. MITRA.

I have meanwhile received the Jan. 1968 issue of The Mountain Path. It is a delightful experience for me to go through articles, including yours, in this and other numbers of this remarkable magazine. . . .

I note with much interest your opinion that Greek civilization was originally in line with the Vedic. In my investigation into mysticism in poetry I myself felt like believing that from the Neo-Platonists back to Plato and Pythagoras and further back there was an unexplored region where the Greek spirit was quite akin to the Vedic. . . .

A. C. Bose.
New Delhi.

I am just an ordinary individual, thoroughly entangled in samsara and my only virtue is that I constantly think of Bhagavan. My struggles are
not yet over and on the night of Tuesday I wept in my sleep sorely asking for Bhagavan's grace. I was awakened by my son, sleeping beside me, and I could feel my chest aching even then. The next day, as though in answer to my prayers, I received The Mountain Path (January issue) and this has offered me great consolation. I am writing to you as there is a great desire to divulge this experience to a person who will understand the significance.

R. RAJAGOPALAN, New Delhi.

BHAGAVAN IN UNIVERSITIES

I have before me your correspondence to Studies in Comparative Religion, page 96, Vol. I No. 2, Spring 1967. I have owned your two edited volumes on Sri Ramana Maharshi for a few months and value them greatly. I completed my doctor's dissertation on a comparative study of Sri Ramana and Martin Heidegger in 1964 and received the Ph.D. from the American Academy of Asian Studies, San Francisco. As you may or may not know three other doctorates have been granted there for Maharshi study and a course in his teachings is offered regularly there by a faculty member. I know of no group of students of the writings of Sri Ramana in San Francisco, although he is a favourite with students at the Academy and his works and literature about him are available at the Cultural Integration Fellowship's San Francisco Ashram.

PAUL E. HERMAN, U.S.A.

GUIDE TO EXPERIENCE

May I say what a joy it is to read articles like that by the musician Kovai-Mani which describes how his father Nilakanta came to the Maharshi. The effect is such that one seems to pass through the gateway of the words into the living experience with the devotee as the blazing eyes of the Master pour forth their grace. One is then overwhelmed with love for and gratitude to this Master by whose Grace we have found the Supreme Teaching in this lifetime.

Pieces like this are far more than mere words printed on a page; one cannot help feeling that something like spiritual power communicates itself to the sensitive reader causing an immediate uplifting of consciousness. This perhaps is the test which separates truly inspired writing from that which results from mental knowledge and it seems that as one progresses in sadhana it is possible to know instantaneously whether one is reading something produced by the former or the latter.

I should like to add that even small articles of this nature more than justify the existence of The Mountain Path for devotees of Bhagavan. Thank you...... Japa, it would mean—irrespective of the qualifications of teacher and pupil, is by its very nature bound to succeed in lifting the mind to a higher plane of consciousness, when practised earnestly. Any comments from the Editor?

SARAH FARRAND, London.

CELIBACY?

What was the Maharshi's teaching about sex life for married sadhakas who seek Liberation?

GERARD GRIMARDIA, Elizabethville, France.

The Maharshi did not demand celibacy, as some spiritual Masters have. He expected his followers to lead a normal family life, except those of them who were sadhus, and he showed interest in reports of marriages and births among them.

If asked whether celibacy was necessary he would sometimes say that it is one help among others and sometimes draw the attention of the questioner to the real meaning of 'brahmacharya', the Sanskrit word for 'celibacy', meaning inherence in Brahman. In general he taught inner rather than outer discipline. This meant that the aspirant should aim at a state in which all joy and happiness is found in Brahman, not in the apparent realities of the physical world.

SLEEP

On page 331 of 'Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi' it is stated that Bhagavan said "The Self is pure consciousness in sleep." I have been trying
and trying to understand this but have failed. If you mean that sleep is 'nidra', how can 'nidra' be pure consciousness when one is not conscious at all in it? Again, it is said that the Self is the Witness of the three states of waking, dreaming and deep sleep. Sri Bhagavan has graciously consented to explain all this on pp. 331-334 but still I fail to understand it. I shall thank you if you will throw some light on it in the 'Letters to the Editor' in The Mountain Path.

M. E. Amrolia.
Devlali.

It is best to concentrate on the practical not the theoretical meaning of such sayings, Bhagavan says: "The Self is pure Consciousness in sleep; it evolves as AHAM ('I') without the IDAM (this) in the transition stage, and manifests as AHAM and IDAM in the waking state. The individual's experience is by means of the aharm only. So he must aim at realization in the way indicated (by means of the transitional 'I'). Otherwise the sleep-experience does not matter to him. If the transitional 'I' be realized the substratum is found and that leads to the goal."

Sometimes when you first wake up from sleep consciousness returns before it is focussed as definite consciousness of anything. This is what Bhagavan means by the 'transition stage'. In this stage you just are, so he calls it aharn or 'I'. As soon as it focusses you are this or that, so he calls it IDAM, 'this'. What he means is that you should prolong the experience of pure unfocussed 'I'-ness. You will find that it can continue as a substratum underlying the I-am-this consciousness even after that returns and that it is perfect bliss. It is not to be confused with day-dreaming. Day-dreaming ('I might be that') comes after AHAM (I-am-this), whereas I-am comes before it. What is needed is to try to have this experience not to theorise about it.

EDITOR.

I AND SELF - ENQUIRY

I began doing meditation every day in the Old Hall in the Ashram just a year ago, I admit that I had not so far attempted Self-enquiry and I was wondering how it was possible for a man to keep asking himself this simple question "Who am I?". For it is a simple question and no one can keep his mind engaged by this kind of investigation, I thought. Hence I was following a different technique to control my mind.

Quite recently a very interesting thing happened. I was much agitated over a personal problem. It was a simple one, but it held my attention for nearly a week. A man who is worried does not usually sleep well, but during the period of my worry I quite often pondered on the problem which worried me and fell into a state of stupor.

It is clear from this that one-pointedness is akin to a state of thoughtlessness which is usually associated with sleep. In other words a simple question could enable me to eliminate most of my thoughts from my mind. I asked myself the question "Why then is Self-enquiry impossible?" The answer is I don't consider the question "Who am I?" a personal and important problem. I then went to the Old Hall and started Self-enquiry treating it as my most personal problem and found it really successful.

Bhagavan has taught us the way. I write these lines in the hope that some of your readers may be similarly benefited if they are in my position.

P. V. Sivaprasad,
Tiruvannamalai.