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Ramana Ashtottaram

99. ओं शुभ्रकौपीनवसनाय नमः

om śubhrakaupīnavasanāya namaḥ

Prostration to the Wearer of a pure white *koupina*.

The water-jug and the clean white loincloth are marks of utmost simplicity. The barest necessities of human existence, they suggest what the renunciant can do without. This man, the wisest and the happiest man we know, possessed nothing beyond a physical body, a walking stick, a water-jug and a strip of cloth.

100. ओं गुहाय नमः

om guhāya namaḥ

Prostration to Subrahmanya, dweller in the heart-cave.

Compare verse 20 of the *Supplement to the Forty Verses*: The Lord who dwells and shines in the Heart-Lotus is worshipped as *Guhesa* (Guha, the Lord, or Lord of the Cave). When by continued effort, the conviction 'I am that *Guhesa*' becomes as firm as the sense of 'I' in your body, and you become that Lord, the false notion that one is the body will disappear as darkness in the face of the Sun.

Bhagavan, Now and to Come

One of the challenges those of us who are devotees of Sri Ramana Maharshi will face in the years to come, is the inevitable evolution of the accepted history of Bhagavan and the question of what is true and what is patently false. As the years pass those who were witness to Bhagavan's life during his physical sojourn on this earth are disappearing. One day there will be no one with direct experience of what it was like to be in Bhagavan's physical presence and therefore there will inevitably be no one with the authority to refute false impressions and stories, which inevitably circulate as people, for their own reasons, conjure up images of Bhagavan by creatively reworking stories about him according to their own bias or, however well meaning, explain what Bhagavan really meant.

In the previous editorial we discussed Bhagavan's written words as the final authority; in this editorial we deliberate on Sri Ramana Maharshi the physical man and his spiritual legacy and what history will make of it, for it will more than likely change and probably be misrepresented. The future will alter it and appropriate whatever is

convenient for its own purposes. It will also give well-meaning future commentators the chance to degrade the purity of the teaching and the person of Sri Ramana Maharshi, not out of malice but because they do not know any better and cannot see beyond their own limited horizon. The perception of Bhagavan will change with time according to the needs of the zeitgeist. There is the danger that Bhagavan will become so superhuman that it will make us feel it is impossible to walk in his footsteps.

Bhagavan was an avatar who came with a specific purpose. It was not to add yet another commentary to Vedanta but to show us a practical way to liberation. The experience in Madurai in 1896 demonstrated that it was possible for a normal human being to transcend death in a single leap. Bhagavan was an ordinary school boy and yet it happened. In other words, he proved that our age, sex, cultural proclivities, genetic disposition and historical background are no obstacle to this transcendental experience. We are all eligible.

There is a delicate balance between respecting Sri Ramana the man and venerating Sri Ramana the guru. He was in this world yet not of it. He was a very normal human being whose naturalness struck many who later wrote of their experiences. At the same time he was an uncommon individual who had transcended the boundaries of humanness. He demonstrated in his everyday life simplicity, clarity and compassion. It is hard to credit that the human form veiled a presence so radiant that none could dare approach it in its naked magnificence. Bhagavan was a raging fire of *jnana*.

To see him properly is a matter of our perception. We create our own history of Bhagavan and whether the official or the spurious versions coincide is irrelevant. The litmus test is if it works and we see Bhagavan not as a historical figure subject to the vagaries of fashion and opinion but an exhilarating and devastating force that takes us out of time. He was always transcendent for those who had the eyes to see and even if they didn't know exactly how, they recognised it but couldn't put it into words. This was apparent from the way he was venerated by everyone from the simple bullock cart driver to the sophisticated Sanskrit scholar.

Everyone worshipped him according to their own capacity and ability. One man worshipped Bhagavan by building with his bare hands a pathway up the hill so that Bhagavan's daily walk should be made easier while another wrote hymns to him in Sanskrit.

Bhagavan said how fortunate we are that Arunachala is so readily accessible and, by nature, unchangeable. Timeless, in fact. Just as the solid yet mysterious Arunachala can become the focus of our surrender, on a more personal level, devotion to the physical Bhagavan opens us up to divine grace. Much like the baby monkey in the bhakti tradition (*markata nyaya*) we hold onto him. It is important to realise that the form (*saguna*) of Bhagavan is identical with the formless (*nirguna*). We see the same profound realisation in the mystical tradition of Maharashtra where, for the saint Namdev, the Name of God is God.

Bhagavan time and again said that the Guru and Self are the same. Because we think we have a body we identify the Guru with a body. The Guru takes a form accessible to the sincere sadhaka to draw him or her into the Heart. If we truly believe that Bhagavan is the Guru then we should approach him, until we truly know for ourselves, that he is our Self. By taking Bhagavan as our real nature the sense of duality is removed. Through effort and grace we become one.¹

This is why our approach to Bhagavan is important. If we see him just as a man, albeit a wise old man, we miss the point. If by some nebulous conception we see him as beyond us we face a chasm we cannot hope to broach and in that case, Bhagavan may as well be a distant abstraction for all the good it will do us. We need to form an intimate bond with Bhagavan. In essence we create Bhagavan in our consciousness.

One can just as well say that Bhagavan creates 'himself' in our consciousness. This is the way of the kitten (*maarjala-nyaya*) where without any effort on our side Bhagavan enters and becomes one with our consciousness. How does this occur?

¹ Venkataramiah, M., (comp.), *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, 2013. Talk§282 "So long as duality persists in you the Guru is necessary. You are not the body, nor is the Guru. You are the Self and so is the Guru. This knowledge is gained by what you call Self-Realisation."

We can meditate upon his form or engage in the practice of *atma vichara* until it becomes effortless, much like breathing. We can read his teachings, we can read and listen to stories about his life and how he responded to the inevitable challenges of daily life. It is here that it is important to be clear and direct in our approach. At a certain level Bhagavan is a wish-fulfiller, though not necessarily the way we might suppose. More often the desire is seen for what it is worth in the greater scheme of things as paltry and not worthy of consideration; just as our insistent questions will die in the face of a greater reality. We learn, or rather, we become quiet, seemingly through no effort of our own. Until we do that we cannot hear what Bhagavan has to teach us.

With time Bhagavan will be surrounded by stories of miracles that eventually will bear little resemblance to the Bhagavan we know. He will also become a dry paragraph in an academic survey of Indian spirituality. For those of us to whom Bhagavan means something it is a living creative process. Our ideas and emotions about Bhagavan will change according to the developing subtlety and purity of our minds and hearts. The perceptions and attitudes of yesterday will become redundant today for Bhagavan is a living reality and not an object to examine and dissect.

It has quite often been the case that a new arrival would enter the Old Hall, see the benign photo on the couch and think “it is just like a museum.” If they persist and sit often, the realisation will come that there is a distinctive presence that responds. How this happens we do not know and we are left with a quandary our mind is unable to fathom. For a change we have no answer and nothing we think makes any difference. But we do accept it for what it is: a mystery. This truly is our first major step. We have given up trying to put our experience in a conceptual box. We have given up trying to manipulate experience to fit our own misguided and selfish advantage. We stop trying and learn to be.

This process could just as easily happen at the Samadhi of Sri Ramana Maharshi which radiates a glow towards which we spontaneously gravitate. It could also happen in a dream. It could be

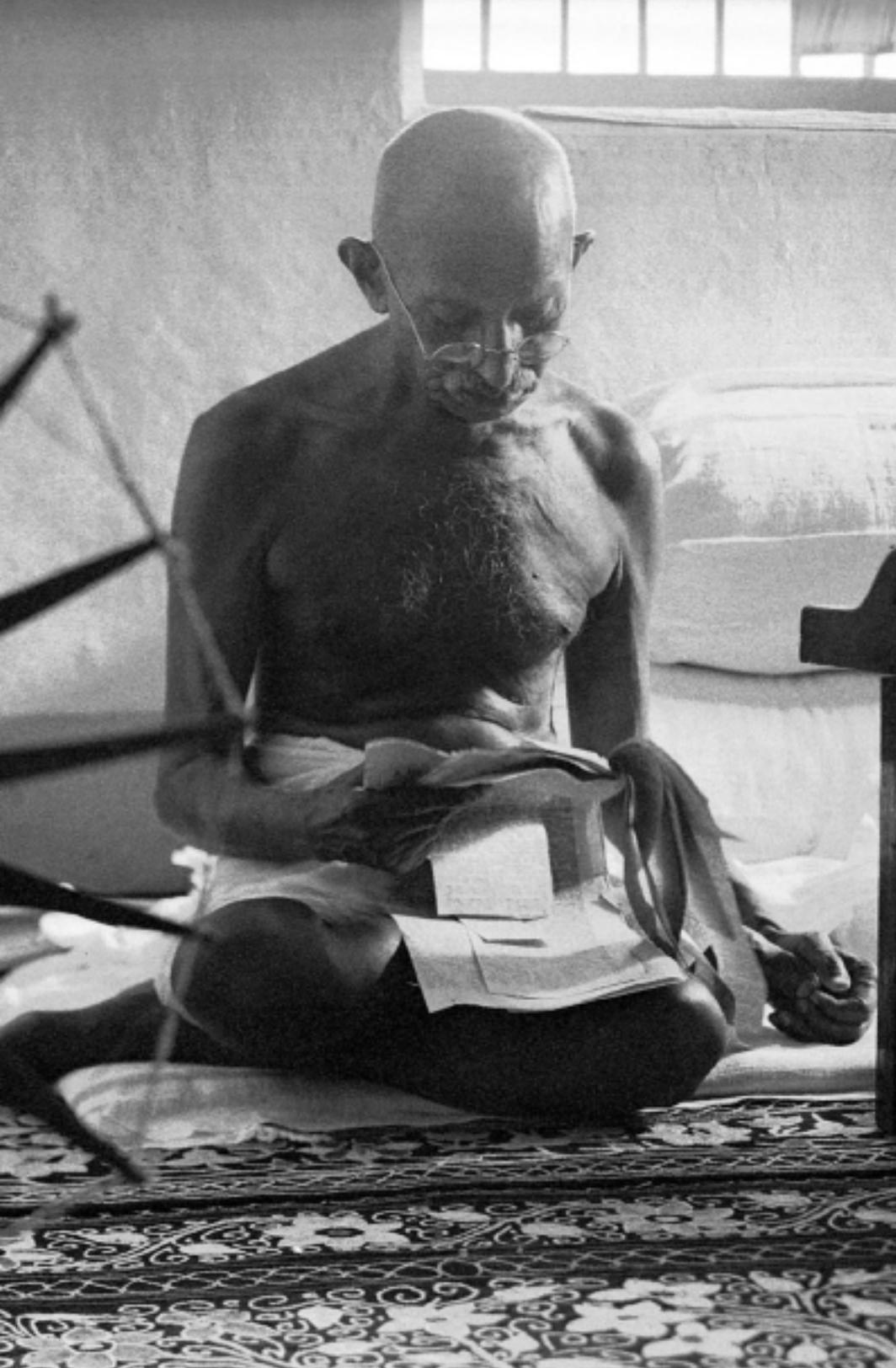
a sentence in a book that stops us in our tracks or a photograph of Bhagavan. That moment we just know something happened and we are never the same. As long as the history of Bhagavan in whatever shape or form has that capacity to transform us, it is legitimate.

Bhagavan did not encourage the belief in miracles nor the use of paranormal powers. He did not perform miracles yet difficulties were resolved as if by coincidence. We see today in our own relationship with Bhagavan that with a sincere heart, problems seem to disappear or become irrelevant albeit with no apparent outside intervention. Bhagavan called it 'automatic divine action' and took no credit for its activity. Bhagavan's life was a demonstration of this principle and if there are lessons for us to learn from it, it is this: develop a relation with our guru and allow his grace to guide us. This is the miracle.

Our existence is full of second thoughts, third thoughts *ad infinitum*. There is no such thing as mentally standing still. Most of our ideas and thoughts have only transient value. Bhagavan gave us some powerful thoughts that went straight to the heart of our predicament. These insights are like *bija* mantras. They stick in our mind and evolve. Our task is to allow them to alter and purify our thought patterns. To take us beyond habit, assumptions and ignorance.

When God promised a supplicant that he would win the lottery, the man was grateful and happy, until the numbers were drawn and he hadn't won. The man complained to God who answered that the man hadn't even bought a lottery ticket. In order to win one must at least take the trouble to buy a ticket. For us to merge with Bhagavan we must take that first crucial step. As Bhagavan has said, once that is done, he can take those nine steps towards us. This first single step calls for dedication, tears, toil and songs of love; the rest is out of our hands.² ▲

²*Talks* §647. "M.: Sadhanas are needed so long as one has not realised it. They are for putting an end to obstacles. Finally there comes a stage when a person feels helpless notwithstanding the sadhanas. He is unable to pursue the much-cherished sadhana also. It is then that God's Power is realised. The Self reveals itself."



The Essential Gandhi: *Swaraj*, *Satyagraha* and *Swadeshi*

MUKESH SRIVASTAVA

Introduction

Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy has remained largely enigmatic for many people in the West, not just for political thinkers but for new-age wisdom seekers too. The present article attempts to redress this grey area for *Mountain Path* readers in the light of some statements made by Sri Ramana Maharshi on Gandhi.

It is well known to old devotees of Sri Ramana how Gandhi tried to meet Bhagavan but without success. In fact, Gandhi came to Tiruvannamalai in the late 1930s to make a political speech. On the way to the appointed meeting ground, his car stopped for a few moments near the Sri Ramanasramam gate, but it started again when Rajagopalachari gestured to the car driver that he should drive on and not enter the ashram. After Gandhi's political meeting was over and he had left, Annamalai Swami, a resident of the Ashram, who had attended the political meeting, reported this matter to Bhagavan,

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describing how Rajagopalachari had made the driver go straight to the meeting, thus denying Gandhi a chance to make a brief visit to the ashram. Bhagavan had this to say:

“Gandhi would like to come here but Rajagopalachari was worried about the consequences. Because he knows that Gandhi is an advanced soul, he fears that he might go into samadhi here and forget all about politics. That is why he gestured to the driver to drive on.”¹

Later, in a conversation with Congress workers, who were ardent followers of Gandhi, and who worked tirelessly for India’s political independence, Bhagavan made the following remark:

“Gandhiji has surrendered himself to the Divine and works accordingly with no self-interest. He does not concern himself with the results but accepts them as they turn up. That must be the attitude of national workers. Follow the example of Gandhiji in the work for the national cause. ‘Surrender’ is the word.”²

A detailed analysis of Gandhian discourse would reveal that despite the appearance of leading a very busy and turbulent life, including being inevitably drawn into an incessant series of conflicts and controversies with his political and religious adversaries, Gandhi remained at heart a peaceful man. He was generally believed to have attained his high state through surrender to the Divine will. Once he was established in that state, the power of the Self took charge of his life and ‘used’ him to bring about a non-violent, relatively quiet revolution. Bhagavan once remarked, with reference to himself and Gandhi:

“Our business is to keep quiet. If we enter into all these [political activities], people will naturally ask, and justifiably, ‘Why is he interfering in all these instead of keeping quiet?’ Similarly if Mahatma Gandhi keeps quiet, leaving aside all his activities, they will ask, ‘Why is he keeping quiet instead of engaging in all these activities?’ He must do what he has come for: We must do what we have come for.”³

¹ Annamalai Swami, *Living by the Words of Bhagavan*, ed. D. Godman. p.96.

² Venkataramiah, M., (comp.), *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, 2013. Talk\$521, pp.523-4.

³ Mudaliar, Devaraja, *Day by Day with Bhagavan*, 2013. p.133-4. 02-02-1946.

Bhagavan taught that the concepts of both *kartavya* (which denotes the conviction that there are activities which have to be performed in all conditions as one's duty) and *kartrutva* (the feeling that one is the controller of the body's actions) are not only ultimately illusory, or non-existent, but also, in so far as they propel our actions, need to be eliminated as impediments on the way to realisation of truth. In Gandhi's case a similar realisation of the non-existence of *kartrutva* and *kartavya*, leading to the surrender of all the fruits of actions, dawned upon him. Therefore, I suggest, for Gandhi, *Swaraj*, *Swadeshi* and *Satyagraha* were not mere tools of politics or ethics. Rather, they emerged spontaneously from a deeper zone of silence in his pursuit of Truth. It is quite remarkable how Bhagavan reacted to the following passage of Gandhi published in the *Harijan*.

“How mysterious are the ways of God! This journey to Rajkot is a wonder even to me. Why am I going, whither am I going? What for? I have thought nothing about these things. And if God guides me, what should I think, why should I think? Even thought may be an obstacle in the way of His guidance... The fact is, it takes no effort to stop thinking. The thoughts do not come. Indeed there is no vacuum — but I mean to say that there is no thought about the mission.”⁴

“Sri Bhagavan remarked how true these words are and emphasized each statement in the extract. Then he cited Thayumanavar in support of the state which is free from thoughts.”⁵

In light of the above statements by Bhagavan about Gandhi, it is worth exploring in some detail the ‘quintessential’ Gandhi through an understanding of three key terms from Gandhian theory and practice. The purpose is to explore the underlying spiritual implications of the apparent dichotomy between the ‘secular’ and ‘political’ discourse directed at gaining political independence for India. We begin with Gandhi's observations on the ‘interpretation’ of religious scriptures.

⁴ *Talks*, Talk§646. p.629. 13th March 1939.

⁵ *Ibid*.

Part Two

“Who is the best interpreter? Not learned men surely. Learning there must be. But religion does not live by it. It lives in the experiences of its saints and seers, in their lives and sayings. When all the most learned commentators of the scriptures are utterly forgotten, the accumulated experience of the sages and saints will abide and be an inspiration for ages to come.”⁶

“The grim fact is that the terrorists have in absolute honesty, earnestness and with cogency used the Gita, which some of them know by heart, in defence of their doctrine and policy. Only they have no answer to my interpretation of the Gita, except to say that mine is wrong and theirs is right. Time alone will show whose is right. The Gita is not a theoretical treatise. It is a living but silent guide whose directions one has to understand by patient striving.”⁷

This section is a close reading of three key terms: *Swaraj*, *Swadeshi* and *Satyagraha* which are bound together by the common and most fundamental theme of Satya or commitment to the truth. What comes out of a close reading is the realisation that both Gandhian theory and practice take us beyond modernity and nationalism, into the domain of experiential politics and knowledge whose full range of meaning and ethical force we have yet to fully understand and acknowledge.

Let us begin by examining two very simple statements that Gandhi made well before India's political independence. He said: “We must become the change that we wish to see in the (external) world.”⁸ This is a loaded statement. We cannot wish it away by subjecting this statement to a psychological, symbolic or discourse analysis. It remains there, like a mirror before us, staring in the face of all our social activist zeal to transform the world. The implications of this statement are far reaching, but suffice it to say that the statement exhorts us to pay attention to the *primacy of the self* over ‘the world’; in other words, the ethical and subjective dimension of the self over an objective and empiricist self-description, or analysis of the world.

⁶ “Dr. Ambedkar's Indictment” – III, *Collected Works* (hereinafter C.W.), Vol. 63, p.153.

⁷ “The Law of our Being”, C.W., Vol. 63, p.339.

⁸ C.W., Vol. 69, p.72.

The second statement is even more startling in its cognitive and ethical depth. Gandhi wrote in *The Hind Swaraj* (1909): “The English have not taken India; we have given it to them. They are not in India because of their strength, but because we keep them.”⁹

Startling as it this may sound to a modern, nationalist sensibility, Gandhi was absolutely sure of what he wrote and was unwilling to change a single word in that very provocative historical document. Taken together, these two statements point to an urgent need for a re-consideration of our idea of who we are and as a result a radical shift of our mental, ethical and moral priorities before we can contribute to a meaningful transformation of the social and political world. The enemy, therefore, is not only within us; it is an intimate part of our self-definition.

This ‘enemy’ is identified in *The Hind Swaraj* as ‘modern Western Civilization’. It is important to stress the qualifier ‘modern’ with all its implications. By modern civilisation we mean the world view and political process which began with the European Renaissance in Italy with its emphasis on ‘man is the measure of all things’ and which spread throughout Europe. Gandhi’s fundamental struggle, therefore, is neither with the West, nor with the British people and government, as was the case with important Indian Nationalists of different persuasions. What Gandhi challenged was the scientific Enlightenment of Europe of the 18th Century with its emphasis on rationality and science, and on a progressive materialist vision of history. This concept of Truth and progress was largely accepted and absorbed by the cultural nationalists and social reformers of late nineteenth century India.

Thus reformers such as Dayananda, Vivekananda and Rammohan Roy argued in favour of ‘modernising’ India by reviving its past glory of the Vedic ages through the purification and revival of classical Sanskrit learning.¹⁰

⁹ *Hind Swaraj*, C.W., Vol. 10. pp. 22-23.

¹⁰ For a full elaboration of the statement see Ashis Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy* (Delhi: O.U.P, 1983). Nandy’s insightful analysis shows that most pre-Gandhian reform

Gandhi, however, was a maverick. He emerged as an original thinker on the Indian national scene and remained outside the cultural formulation of the modern Indian nation-state and its legal and industrial vision. He argued, on the contrary, for the dissolution of the nation-state in favour of concentric circles of village republics aspiring to live in a state of *enlightened anarchy*. This argument is supported by a critical explanation of three key terms from the Gandhian lexicon, namely *Swadeshi*, *Swaraj* and *Satyagraha* which are bound together by the common commitment to the search for truth.

Swaraj

In the Gandhian lexicon ‘Swaraj’ straddles two spaces, the inner and the outer, that is, from mastery over oneself to a republic of local self-government with its radical form of self-regulatory and participatory democracy. For Gandhi, however, the first meaning or the inner dimension of *Swaraj*, that is, *rule over oneself*, is not merely the vital component; it is the pre-requisite to the outer or institutional arrangements of *Swaraj*. The inner dimension demands an active and honest exploration of truth, or one’s own true nature. It is a mode of self-inquiry leading to a state of experiential knowledge:

“Devotion to this truth is the sole justification for our existence. All our activities should be the very breath of our being. When once this state in the pilgrim’s progress is reached all other rules of correct living will come without effort and obedience to them will be instructive... To a man who has realised this truth in its fullness, nothing else remains to be known because all knowledge is necessarily included in it.”¹¹

and protest movements ended up legitimizing the very model of masculinity (derived from Protestant Christianity and Vedic Hinduism) they sought to resist, because they accepted, rather than altered, the terms of colonial discourse. Gandhian interventions, however, undermined the civilisational and cultural basis of imperialist hyper-masculinity by delinking courage and activism from aggression and hyper-rationality, and making them compatible with certain forms of femininity, traditional Christianity and syncretic Hinduism.

¹¹ *Harijan*, Sept. 7, 1935. Gandhi is not aiming to realise truth in the sense in which it came to be used in the Renaissance model of science and colonial logic

Swaraj can arise only with the removal of *cognitive and ethical enslavement* brought on by forces far deeper than the repressive political and economic policies of the British regime. *Swaraj* can arise solely by a radical re-structuring of our idea of who we are, not based on external influences such as the modern British political, judicial and social elements, but a world-view founded on an experiential knowledge unique to traditional Indian goals of life unencumbered by modern western civilisation.

Thus Gandhi's vision of *Swaraj* is pitched at a level far beyond the constitutional, social or political. He does not accept the argument that effective combinations are formed among individuals and groups sharing mutual interests and that institutions of representative democracy will ensure that the government will act in ways, which are, on the whole, in the common interest of the entire collective of the nation known as India.

For Gandhi, the legal fiction of equality before the law and the supposed neutrality of state institutions have the effect of perpetuating the inequalities and divisions which already exist in society. Politics has no role in removing those inequalities or nullifying the divisions. In fact, this very process of law and politics creates a 'vested interest' among politicians, state officials, and 'legal practitioners' to perpetuate social divisions, and indeed to create new ones.

In contrast, it is only when politics is directly subordinated to a communal morality that the minority of exploiters in society can be isolated and inequalities and divisions removed. As a political leader, Gandhi counterposes against the imposed British system of representative government the concept of popular sovereignty, where the community is self-regulating and *political power is dissolved into the collective moral will*. In Gandhi's own words:

of progress, leading to 'the survival of the fittest'. Truth, for Gandhi, is not a linguistic proposition which can be verified and tested in the laboratory through empiricist methods of experimentation. It is beyond the enlightenment ideal of rationality. Truth is a form of experiential knowledge, unmediated by thought and the tools of language. For explorations of a new-science approach to truth, see Ravi Ravindra, *Science and the Sacred* (Madras: Theosophical Society, 2000).

“The power to control national life through national representatives is called political power. Representatives will become unnecessary if the national life becomes so perfect as to be self-controlled. It will then be a state of enlightened anarchy in which each person will become his own ruler. He will conduct himself in such a way that his behaviour will not hamper the well-being of his neighbours. In an ideal state there will be no political institution and therefore no political power.”¹²

Swadeshi

In Gandhi’s use of the term *Swadeshi* we discover a deep antagonism to not only foreign goods or foreign consumer products, but also, a deep distrust and outright rejection of all foreign institutional methods of governance, technology and politics. When Gandhi comments on modern western civilization’s violent and enslaving effect on its own people, that is, western people themselves, in addition to the people of India, he envisions a world which is free everywhere of the dominating frameworks of modern governance and politics.

Significantly, therefore, *Swadeshi* is not a form of parochialism, or a limited geographical landscape, like one’s own village. It is rather a universal state of mind and being, unencumbered by the world-view pioneered by Newtonian Science, and John Locke’s politics of the state. It is where the state is neither the final arbiter between individuals or groups, nor the giver of any value or largesse.

Seen in this light, the Gandhian conception of *Swadeshi* politics marks a truly radical departure from the liberal, as well as socialist and Marxian conception of politics. We can characterise the liberal conception of politics as an activity that uses the state to advance its objectives, be it solving social problems or legislating new laws or re-designing institutions, whereas in Gandhi’s conception of politics it is community based, collective and shared ethos, values, and spiritual goals that will determine the role of the state, if any.

Gandhi’s stress on *Swadeshi* arises from a total rejection of the norms that are set up by modern law, religion, medicine, politics

¹² ‘Enlightened Anarchy – A Political Ideal’ in *Sarvodaya*, Jan, 1939.

and history, all of which serve to obstruct, rather than deepen, the enquiring mind and heart that are directed towards the search for Truth. Gandhi gained this insight through a variety of traditional sources, including historical Christianity, syncretic Hinduism, Jainism, Sufism, and the thought of Tolstoy and Thoreau, all of which he fused into his unique view that deserves special attention and understanding.

It is Gandhi's concept of *Swadeshi* as a form of 'cultural power' which has largely escaped the attention of contemporary social science, based as it is on tools of analysis that are derived from the classical natural sciences and their accompanying sets of logic. Indeed a stubbornly 'rational inquiry' which reduces culture to a set of objective linguistic propositions, or worse, to ideological forms of politics, has all too often missed the point about *Swadeshi* and its ability to fashion weapons of political struggle out of unorthodox materials.

Gandhi's politics were formed on the vital axiom that what you do and the way you do it are inextricably linked. Resolved into its parts, Gandhi's politics appeared laughable and simplistic, but as a totality it was the most effective form of power which not only wrong-footed the British, but also posed a fundamental challenge to British rule in cultural and civilisational terms.¹³

The source materials out of which this effective machinery was drawn belonged to both the popular and syncretic elements of Hinduism and popular Islam in India. The elaborate theatre of simplicity, the *charkha*, *khadi* and local herbs used as medicine, constituted a culture of finely graded nuances with a wide repertoire of gestures symbolising intentions and actions that ranged from understatements of humour to gross insults as well as outright defiance. *Swadeshi* politics was a subtly indigenous style *that did not justify itself in terms of the other*, namely in direct opposition to the British rulers. Instead it broke down the barrier between the political

¹³ For a comprehensive argument on the 'symbolism' of Gandhi see, Sudipta Kaviraj, 'The Heteronomous Discourse of M.N. Roy' in *Political Thought in Modern India*, ed. by Thomas Pantham and K.L. Deutsch (Sage: N. Delhi, 1986).

speaker, intent on political freedom for all, and his audience. Gandhi succeeded in fashioning through trial and error, both in South Africa and India, a recognised platform of symbols and gestures which already said a great deal to his audience before the actual speaking began. The elaborate theatre of simplicity was not a matter of personal idiosyncrasy. It constituted a small but wholly credible everyday gesture of belonging. It formed a deeply anti-colonial political act in intellectual as well as cultural terms. Gandhiji, through a personal symbolic style, did what a purely rationalist discourse could never accomplish. That said, *Swadeshi* deserves a far greater appreciation in contemporary Indian cultural politics!

Satyagraha

Gandhi's committed pursuit of Truth (*Sat*) implied an unconditional confidence in all human beings unlike the negative and suspicious thinking of many other systems of thought with their ideologies of violent confrontation and their artificial logic of progress. He could, in fact, call himself a 'socialist' and even a 'communist' though his reading of Indian culture and religion and his uniquely fashioned style of symbolic politics caused him to reject many of their central assumptions. Towards the end of his life-odyssey, he enshrined his message in a single statement:

"I will give you a talisman. Whenever you are in doubt or when the self becomes too much for you, apply the following test. Recall the face of the poorest and weakest man whom you may have seen, and ask yourself if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him. Will he gain anything by it? Will it restore him to a control over his own life and destiny? In other words, will it lead to Swaraj for the hungry and spiritually starving millions? Then you will find your doubts and yourself melting away."¹⁴

The term *Satyagraha* has an interesting origin. When Gandhi began his movement in South Africa, he first used the term 'passive resistance'. As the struggle advanced Gandhi found the term to be

¹⁴ 'A Note', Mahatma, Vol. VIII, p.89.

inadequate to express the spirit of his movement. It also seemed 'shameful' that the Indian struggle should be known by an English name. A small prize was announced, therefore, in the journal *Indian Opinion* to be awarded to the reader who invented the best designation for this new kind of struggle. Maganlal Gandhi suggested the word *Sadagraha* meaning 'firmness in a good cause'. Gandhi liked the word but as it did not carry the full import of his idea, he changed it to 'Satyagraha', '*the force which is born of truth and love with total non-violence*'.¹⁵

Etymologically the Sanskrit word *Satyagraha* is made up of the root word 'Sat' and 'Agraha' combined to form a term implying active resistance to injustice, where the power of resistance is derived from the relentless pursuit of *Sat* in a state of mind which is absolutely fearless. For the sake of truth it is willing to stake all, including one's job, family, reputation, security, and life itself. It would be a gross error to interpret *Satyagraha* as a self-indulgent political tactic or strategy that is used to achieve a narrow or selfish goal. Even during his lifetime, let alone after his death, some might have used the term '*Satyagraha*' to achieve their self-interested goals; but this misuse of the term has nothing to do with the original Gandhian weapon of struggle.

Similarly, the terms 'non-cooperation', or 'civil disobedience', though often used in modern political and social theory, fall short of the creative power of the original Sanskrit '*Satyagraha*'. This is because the experiential domain of *Satyagraha* is the realm of spirituality, particularly the way of self-inquiry, or in Gandhian parlance, the 'experiment' with experiential truth, which cannot be translated into a secularised world-view. This untranslatability arises from the incompatibility between the two opposite worlds: the spiritual and the secular.

Little wonder that the chief architect of the modern Indian nation-state, Jawaharlal Nehru, found it so exasperating to see the Gandhian

¹⁵ Cited in Tendulkar, *Mahatma: Life of M.K. Gandhi*, 8 Vols. (Bombay, 1951), Vol. 1, p.103.

philosophy of life in action; particularly the application and the withdrawal of Satyagraha at will on many occasions! For Nehru, as for many others like him in the Indian National Congress, the re-evaluation or, shall we say, *re-enchantment of the secular world* as an opportunity to seek and find the Truth was just as obscure as were Gandhi's experiments with *Satyagraha* for the emergence of the true meaning of *Swaraj*, inner as well as outer self-mastery.

Gandhi explicitly said that the *Bhagavad Gita* inspired him in his fashioning of *Satyagraha* as a weapon of political struggle against the injustice of the British Raj.¹⁶ Here he found a perfect theory of action which is intentionless and therefore *beyond good and evil*. The actions of a true *Satyagrahi*, therefore, are actions without the conception of good and evil, reward or punishment, because they arise from the experiential domain of *Sat*.

This enables us to understand the marvellous sense of integration that Gandhi brings to a whole range of events and phenomena which flowed from this unity of reflection and action: family, economy, politics, ethics and the natural world. He was inspired by the *Bhagavad Gita* and saw the social world as an opportunity for the true *satyagrahi* to infuse experience with the state of mind of *sthitapragnya*.

He therefore declared unequivocally:

"It is a charge against India that her people are so uncivilized, ignorant and stolid, that it is not possible to induce them to adopt any changes. It is a charge really against our merit. What we have tested and found true on the anvil of experience, we dare not change."¹⁷

After this consideration of the three keywords of the Gandhian lexicon, namely *Swaraj*, *Swadeshi* and *Satyagraha*, one is obliged to ask: What is one to make of Gandhi today? Is his concept of *Swaraj*

¹⁶ "At the present moment, though I am reading many things, *Bhagavad Gita* is becoming more and more the only infallible guide, the only dictionary of reference, in which I find all the sorrows... with exquisite solutions... And if it is a record of anybody's experience, it must not be beyond us to be able to test the truth of it by repeating the experience. I am testing the truth almost every day in my life and find it never failing..." CW, Vol.39, p.450.

¹⁷ *Hind Swaraj*, CW, Vol.10, p. 36.

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and the method to obtain it, part of a glorious heritage we may choose to admire from a distant horizon? Perhaps, being pragmatic, we feel that it is not modernity or modern civilisation per se that should be rejected but only the state of mind and the society that it engenders. Further, perhaps it is not modern technology or civil society we should reject but the wrong uses of modern technology.

However, Gandhi's own position on these matters is absolutely clear. When asked twenty five years after the writing of *Hind Swaraj* whether he would like to change anything in that book his reply was an emphatic 'no'. He remained fully convinced that evil tendencies were deeply embedded in modern civilisation, its political structure and its technology. One cannot separate modern technology from its evil effects, or use it as a neutral tool for growth and prosperity. The task before the cultural critic is to meditate on and learn from this Gandhian insight. ▲

The Names of Lalitha

Ramesh Menon

Pavanaakriti,
who have the form of the wind:
sacred, starlit breath;
you are the howling simoom
of unquited memories.

Anekakoti-
brahmandajanani, who,
from your mother-mind,
have spawned the universes,
parallel and unbounded.

The poems are loosely based on the Japanese tanka form of five lines. A tanka is a haiku with two extra seven-syllabled lines. The lines have 5/7/5/7/7 syllables, in that order.



Bhagavan and Kitty Osborne

When I Was a Little Girl

KITTY OSBORNE

When I was a little girl our lives, in fact our whole world centred around the old hall. The Samadhi hall of course had not been built yet...it was a dusty piece of ground with a few sleeping dogs and strutting peacocks; what is now a window opposite Bhagavan's couch was another door and we all gathered in the hall to be with Bhagavan. Sometimes, in fact often, there were long periods of silence but often too there was talk...just chat and lots of laughter. Bhagavan loved a good joke and was at times very funny. The thing I remember most vividly is how we all came to Bhagavan with our stories, our problems and our bits of gossip from home. Mostly the conversation was in Tamil which my brother and sister and I spoke pretty well as we had learned it the way children do...with ease and speed. However in kindness to the foreigners everyone sometimes spoke English. There was David McIver...my uncle David, Major Chadwick whom I liked because he always treated us children with respect and kindness, there was Miss Merston whom to be honest I did not like, but in fairness

I have to say that was entirely mutual and she positively loathed me, and then there were my parents, Mr. Cohen from Baghdad and also the mysterious Czech Mr. Mazach (no idea of the correct spelling) but we lived in his house for a couple of years and now it is a bakery and restaurant. And there was Uma Devi the Polish lady as well as the American Rappolds and any number of others. Of course the regulars in the hall included Viswanathan, Venkatramiah, Devaraj Mudaliar, Dr. TNK., who took almost all the photos as he was the only person allowed by ChinnaSwami to use a camera in the ashram, and any number of others. As children, in spite of being the only English ones around, we were not a bit conscious of being in any way different to any other children as by and large I think children are far less colour or background conscious than adults and anyway most of us were sand or dust coloured most of the time.

Everyone showed Bhagavan their letters, either from home about family or if they were of significance in any other way, and Bhagavan took a keen interest in it all. He knew who was related to whom and would explain obscure connections to others who were perhaps not so well up in family associations. He had a light voice, which runs in his family I think, but it was quite distinctive. That is the time when my mother brought to Bhagavan a letter from me in school when at the end I asked to be remembered to Bhagavan and he memorably said, "If Kitty remembers Bhagavan then Bhagavan will remember Kitty." That remark of his has helped me through many of life's vicissitudes in times to come.

Every morning he read the newspapers and Mouni Swami would bring in the post. Some letters were obviously private but some would be discussed with everyone. We all liked to get into the act when things of general interest were on the agenda. If the conversation turned to matters of philosophy or someone's personal problems Bhagavan would sometimes refer to some book from His revolving bookcase which is now kept in His Samadhi room. At 9 or 10 o'clock Bhagavan would go for a walk up the hill for about $\frac{3}{4}$ of an hour or so. Once apparently He and His attendant decided to walk on to Skandashram so they were late back. The monkeys around the hall

went crazy! There was screaming and anxiety and worry until he got back and they could relax. Bhagavan also went for a walk on the hill at about 3 or 4 in the afternoon. The rest of the time he sat on His couch and the hall was either full of chat as I have said, or filled with the impenetrable special silence that could surround Him and make him as aloof as the sun.

Bhagavan loved to hear the Vedas and when the pujaris came in and sat near his couch and started to sing, then he sat up straight and listened with intense concentration.

Our relationship with Bhagavan was unusual in many ways. Although we told him news and gossip and felt he was our friend, indeed our best friend; yet still there was a feeling of deepest respect and awe in his presence, we weren't scared but we were definitely wary. Every word he uttered, however lightly, was sacred and freighted with meaning. Sometimes when he spoke to one person, someone else sitting in the hall and having no part in the conversation would hear the same words and sense a message in them for himself. If he gave anyone a hint, however light about what to do or how to be, then they would be well advised to listen and obey. Even then his touch was so light and subtle that one person in a room full of people might get a message and know it was for him, while the rest just carried on with whatever they were discussing and not realise that anything momentous had happened.

I never heard of Him repeating advice or instructions. Only all of us whose lives revolved around Bhagavan and the old hall knew that his least word was important and could be ignored only at peril. Nothing that Bhagavan said or did was trivial and we were all aware of this at all times. I think we all felt that if he knew what was happening in our lives then we were blessed somehow.

That is why perhaps I am so uncomfortable now when I hear people obviously making up things that Bhagavan purportedly said. After all either he is our Sadt Guru whose every word is sacrosanct or he was an elderly gentleman sitting on a couch who can be misquoted at will and we are all wasting our time. When someone makes up a Bhagavan statement and then someone else repeats it as fact and

eventually it finds its way into print and becomes gospel, I feel that is not just wrong, but also stupid and dangerous. To use Bhagavan as a way of bolstering one's own beliefs is completely the opposite of what Bhagavan taught about denying the ego.

But back to the old hall.

We would tell Bhagavan if we repainted the front door, if someone's sister bought a new mat, if someone got a job he had been hoping for...just everything. We took leave of him before going anywhere and greeted him when we got back. To this day I take leave of Bhagavan before going on a trip and try to go to the old hall first thing when I get back. Once a man came to tell Bhagavan he was going for a job interview to Trichy or somewhere. Bhagavan said "So far" but in a negative sort of way. The man went and found that the meeting had been changed to another town and when he got there it was cancelled. He came back and told Bhagavan...and all of us all about it. Bhagavan didn't say anything but everyone thought why hadn't the man listened to Bhagavan in the first place?

Bhagavan never performed miracles, but every word he spoke had meaning. I have told this story before but it seems apposite to mention again the bullock cart driver who came to see Bhagavan when his wife died and it was in the middle of the monsoon season and every day was one where the rain poured down. He couldn't afford to have her cremated under cover and he was at a loss, not knowing what to do except come to Bhagavan with his trouble. Bhagavan looked out of the window and said...just as anyone might... "It may clear up this afternoon." It was enough for the bullock cart driver who went home and made preparations and sure enough the weather cleared up. He cremated his wife and then the rain bucketed down again.

This story made such a deep impression on me because even then we had heard of dramatic gurus who would shout at the weather in order to loudly control the rain or the sun as the case might be. Our Bhagavan never did anything like that...every time anything supernatural happened it might just as well have been any ordinary comment by any ordinary person. But even as children, without being told and without, as far as I remember, ever discussing it, we knew

that one word from Bhagavan could change the world...just as we knew he would never speak that word.

These quite noisy and happy times in the hall were great fun. My brother and sister and I would show Bhagavan our toys and he would inspect them gravely, giving as much attention to a doll which could open its eyes as he did to a question of deep philosophical meaning; but when the story and chat time were over we knew at once. Bhagavan would turn away and into himself and an immediate quiet descended in the hall. When Bhagavan was quiet like that *no one* spoke.

We were not the only ones who loved to sit in the hall to be in Bhagavan's company. There were all the animals as well, coming and going in between the people. The dusty dogs came in and did namaskaram before Bhagavan's couch. They all did it but I can't remember ever thinking that was unusual, which actually I suppose it was. The monkeys rarely came inside, they mainly chattered to him through the window but the peacocks would come and dance for him...it was so beautiful. The squirrels would come to the door and look around nervously, then make a dash for his lap to get some puffed rice or peanuts. Lakshmi the cow came sometimes as Bhagavan was her special friend, but usually he went to visit her in the cowshed. A rabbit came once I was told but I never saw it, neither did I see the visiting crow but one way and another we all...human and non... loved his company and to be in his presence and be blessed. Perhaps even the mosquitoes, spiders and beetles were blessed!

I never really learned to meditate properly although I deeply admire people who can do it. My parents could meditate for hours but I always thought of something I just had to tell Bhagavan. Nowadays what I tend to do is go and sit in the hall and silently tell Bhagavan everything I think he would care to know. I tell him the news of my home and family and ask His advice on various matters where I need help. Often the answers pop into my head as I sit there and I am so grateful for His wisdom and counsel. Of course I could be deluding myself but I truly hope and think not. ▲



View from Summit of Arunachala

Martin Wolff

Parallelism between Scientific and Spiritual Reality

Part Two: Logical Similitude of Spiritual Reality

N. A. MOHAN RAO & D. SAMARENDER REDDY

Advaita offers scope for varied arguments to justify the plausibility of the truth it posits at various levels. A different argument appeals to us and works best at different times, depending on the prevailing state of our mind. A form of argument that is particularly potent is the analogy between spiritual and scientific reality. It holds appeal to us due to the great faith we generally place in science in the present age of technology. Part One of the article traces the scientific background typically suited to establish this analogy.

We shall now pursue our main object of study, namely the actual analogy of spiritual reality with scientific reality in some detail. We shall proceed topic-wise mostly in the order followed in Part One, and then briefly touch upon a few supplementary points.

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Constancy or Changelessness of Spiritual Reality

Science attempts to explain the various phenomena in the world in terms of its laws and theories. These principles depict the unchanging element in the otherwise ever-changing world, and are taken to be the 'reality' according to science. Ohm's law of electricity cited in Part One provides an example. It represents the constant principle that relates the three parameters, voltage, current and resistance, which are variable in an electrical system.

Spirituality, as we know, concerns the investigation of the meaning of our existence, and the practical means of realising it. The unchanging principles that go to interpret this meaning and its realisation are taken to constitute spiritual reality. The law of karma is a familiar example. Let us suppose that two twins are travelling by bus, and that the bus meets with an accident. One of the twins sustains a grievous injury and is maimed for life, while the other escapes with minor bruises. There could be apparently nothing in the lives of the two till then that explains the profound difference in the quality of their lives thereafter. The law of karma attributes this to the evil committed by the maimed twin in a previous birth. It explains similarly varied other situations.

Constancy is thus seen to characterize both spiritual and scientific reality. This is but expected since we intuitively associate the idea of changelessness with 'reality'.

Gradation in Spiritual Reality

Science admits of gradation in reality. For example, Newton's law of gravitation was once thought to represent the reality concerning gravitation. But, it was later found inadequate to explain certain phenomena, and the general theory of relativity had to be resorted to to take them also into account. But Newton's law is not discarded, as it is found to suffice for many routine applications, and is by far the simpler to use. It is considered as the 'lower' level of reality, and relativity theory as the 'higher'.

Spirituality, similarly, admits of different levels of reality. In regard to creation, for example, it puts forward three standpoints: *srishti-*

drishti, *drishti-srishti* and *ajata-vada*. Each succeeding level is higher than the preceding one. The *srishti-drishti vada* says that God created the world and the individual, and administers them in accordance with certain laws. The law of karma is an important one among them. It seems to offer a ready and plausible explanation for unexpected outcomes in life. But it leaves certain questions unanswered, such as how karma originated at the very beginning of creation, and why in spite of being created by God, we are impelled to commit evil and suffer thereby.¹

The *drishti-srishti vada* is proposed to overcome these difficulties. It holds that the world that we 'see' (i.e., cognise) in waking is only a projection of our mind, like the world we see in dreams. It comes into being at the time of our seeing it, and ceases to be when we do not see it. The impression that we get of the world being continuous in existence across proximate waking states is also a result of our projection, and not real.² In such an unreal world, there can be no real doer, nor any karma needing retribution.

Yet, the law of karma continues to be upheld as a spiritual truth by scriptures and sages. This is because we are habituated to taking the world as real, and as long as we do so, the tenets of *srishti-drishti* would appear to be real. The law of karma then very well fits in. It is in such a context that Bhagavan adverted to Major Chadwick 'being one of us' in a past birth. The statement is to be taken at the *srishti-drishti* level.

We thus do not reject *srishti-drishti* as strictly unreal, but accept it as a lower level of spiritual reality, and *drishti-srishti* as the higher. Gradation in reality is admitted in spirituality on the same footing as it is in science.

¹To say that ignorance is the cause of our suffering and that the world is actually unreal, would not do, when we accept the reality of God having created the world as claimed in this *vada*.

²"The sensations you ... have, get coordinated to give you the impression that the world is real [i.e., continuous in existence]." *Maharshi's Gospel*, Book II, Ch. III, p.50, (14/ed., 2007).

Inconclusiveness/Conclusiveness of Spiritual Reality

Science goes about establishing reality based on the method of induction, as detailed in Part One. The method entails one level of reality to be superseded by another as knowledge grows, indefinitely. The reality inferred by science is hence inherently inconclusive.

The case of spiritual reality would look somewhat analogous. As stated above, we at first accept the *srishti-drishti vada*; but after a closer examination, find *drishti-srishti* to be the superior. Upon further pondering, we notice even *drishti-srishti* to be not free from defect. For instance, it does not tell how it is that the unreal is projected from the real.³ The *ajata-vada* (non-origination theory) is then pressed into service. It says there is no creation, no creator, no ignorance, no seeker, none who realized, and so on. What is, is. That is the whole truth. It cannot be negated, since in order that one negate it, one should admit that one is, thereby nullifying one's original negation.

What *ajata-vada* proclaims is an 'absolute' Reality, beyond which it is impossible to conceive anything. In this respect, spirituality stands superior to science. While scientific reality is inherently inconclusive, spirituality points to a Reality that is conclusive and final.

Abstractness of Spiritual Reality

The reality put forward by modern science is far removed from our common-sense notions of the world. For instance, we normally believe that space and time are the same to all beings. Science, however, reveals that space and time are different to different 'observers'.⁴ Interestingly, this runs parallel to the postulate in *drishti-srishti vada* that the world perceived by an individual is a projection of his own mind, and so is exclusive to him alone.⁵ While the postulate in itself may look rather

³ Analytical knowledge is like a sphere, and ignorance like the space around it. When the sphere of knowledge grows, the ignorance (the space around) decreases. But, this is only conceptual. When the sphere grows, its surface increases, and so there is increased contact with (i.e., awareness of) ignorance.

⁴ The term 'observer' means a person belonging to an inertial space. See Part One.

⁵ The 'others' seen by him in the world, being part of that projection, are to be considered mere insentient images, just as are the 'others' seen in a dream. This principle is sometimes referred to as *eka-jiva-vada*. From a philosophic angle, it may be taken to apply to each individual in turn.

preposterous, the parallelism with science shows that it cannot be labelled implausible or inadmissible.

At a yet higher level, science holds that space and time do not exist as two independent entities, but are components of a single four-dimensional matrix called spacetime. Our minds are, however, attuned to grasping the external world in terms of space and time alone, and spacetime lies beyond their sensible reach. In spirituality, the highest reality, the Self, is held to be 'ungraspable' by the mind. The analogy with science shows that such a principle is not necessarily absurd or inadmissible, as long as it is justified by other criteria.

In the microcosm, science observes that matter behaves sometimes as particles, and at other times as waves. Never do the two natures show up simultaneously. Spirituality teaches that although the world is not apart from the supreme Self, when the world is seen, the Self is not seen, and when the Self is seen, the world is not. The analogy with science is striking, and should make the spiritual premise readily meaningful.

Normally, any wave in the physical world is interpreted as oscillation of something physical. But, in respect of matter-waves, it is impossible to identify what the oscillating entity is. This is because its mathematical form includes a part that is imaginary.⁶ Science is thus prepared to explain 'reality' in terms that are, paradoxically enough, imaginary! Spirituality depicts the highest reality in unintelligible terms such as 'beyond existence and non-existence, beyond consciousness and unconsciousness'. The abstractions merit acceptance just as in science.

Science recognizes that higher reality need not necessarily be graspable by the mind in physical terms. We must therefore be prepared to admit, analogously, a spiritual reality not expressed in terms directly intelligible to the mind.

Analogies drawn from the Origin and Nature of the Universe

Science tells us that the universe was at first confined to a very small space, and that it underwent a cataclysmic explosion, called the 'big

⁶ The square of any number, positive or negative, is positive. So, a negative number cannot have a square-root. Yet, mathematics posits a square root of -1 , treating it as imaginary. Matter-waves are explained in terms of this imaginary number.

bang'. Its mass then started flying out in all directions at unimaginable speeds. In those initial stages, the universe did not have the vast diversity that we see in it today, and was largely homogeneous. Spirituality similarly holds that *Brahman* (or the Self), from which is evolved this multifarious universe,⁷ is by itself homogeneous (*ekarasa*).⁸

Science is based on causality. It should therefore follow that the entire course of events after the big bang were shaped by the initial momentum created by the big-bang, there being no scope for any other cause to operate.⁹ Evolution is expected to continue indefinitely. The lower rungs of spirituality assert analogously that the entire phenomena in the world, including the subjective feelings, are predetermined.

Science shows that pure energy can exist in absence of matter. The existence of the photon, which has no mass in its state of rest, proves the point.¹⁰ Spirituality analogously holds that pure consciousness can exist in absence of a material being. The Self is envisioned to embody this principle. Spiritual practitioners have a foretaste of this experience as *sphurana* during Self-enquiry.¹¹

Science shows that matter can be converted into energy, and energy back into matter. This may be looked upon as interchange of the manifest into unmanifest, and vice versa. Such transformations are believed to have occurred numerous times in the early phases of the 'big-bang'.¹² Spirituality holds analogously that pure consciousness evolves into the manifest world, and upon Realisation the world merges back into unmanifest consciousness.

⁷ *Brahma-sutras*, I.1.2; *Taittiriya Up.*, III.1.1; *Aitareya Up.*, I.1.1.

⁸ *Viveka-chudamani*, v.390.

⁹ We usually believe that we have free-will, and that we shape the course of events in the world to some extent by its exercise. But, since every effect has a cause as per science, it follows that our free-will also is dependent on a pre-existing cause, and is not really 'free'. For an interesting discussion on this theme, see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Compatibilism>.

¹⁰ In the absence of mass, the photon cannot be said to be 'matter'. *University Physics*, op. cit., p.1510.

¹¹ *Talks*, §62 of 06.07.1935.

¹² *University Physics*, op.cit., p.1541.

Science infers that the universe consists of a number of disparate 'worlds', separated by the so-called 'particle horizon'. It means it is impossible for a person belonging to one world to know anything whatever of another world. In spirituality, the *srishti-drishhti-vada* holds similarly that there are other worlds¹³ such as hell and heaven, which are beyond our ken, and where departed souls are said to reap part of their karma. Science says the universe is infinite in the sense that we can find no 'edges' to it. Spirituality similarly holds that the Self is infinite in the sense that we can find nothing beyond it.

Science tells us that of the total energy in the universe, about 32 percent manifests as matter of the 'luminous' and 'dark' varieties, and the rest remains unmanifest as energy itself. Spirituality holds, analogously, that of the total Reality (or *Brahman*), 25 percent is manifest as the world, and the balance 75 percent remains as unmanifest consciousness.¹⁴

Uncertainty/Certainty in Spiritual Reality

Elementary science takes it for granted that when a system is continuously changing, it is possible to know its state at any given time by making all the necessary measurements simultaneously, precisely enough. Modern science does not subscribe to this view. For instance, it says that we cannot measure both the position and motion of an electron at the same time without a certain minimum degree of uncertainty. The uncertainty is unavoidable, not because of practical limitations, but due to inherent theoretical constraints.¹⁵

A somewhat analogous 'theoretical' limitation occurs in respect of spiritual reality. We have seen how the creation theories *srishti-drishhti* and *drishhti-srishti* fail to give foolproof depictions of spiritual reality.

¹³ "If one believes in the existence of this world, one should also believe in the existence of other worlds." *Day by Day with Bhagavan*, A.D. Mudaliar, 18.11.1946, p.295, (1989).

¹⁴ *Rig-veda*, X.90.3-4. It may be accessed at <http://www.sanskritweb.net/rigveda/griffith.pdf>.

¹⁵ The principle involved is known as the 'Principle of Uncertainty'. The details may be seen in Part One.

On the face of it, this failure would seem to be due to inadequacy of analysis, and lends hope that it may be got over with a more comprehensive analysis. Such a supposition, however, is not true. Logic, the tool of analysis, is a product of the mind, and mind is a product of maya, the power of delusion. So, however high the logic we apply, we will yet be under the spell of delusion, and cannot arrive at the truth free of distortion. As in the case of science, the limitation is fundamental and existential, and not a 'practical' one that we can hope to possibly circumvent some time.¹⁶

As against the lower levels of spiritual reality we considered above, the absolute reality presents an interesting contrast. When it is realised, the sages say, there is no scope for the least uncertainty about it. There is said to be absolute clarity of vision. In this respect, spirituality scores a point over science, which has no scope to arrive at the ultimate reality in its own sphere without uncertainty.

Verifiability/Credibility of Absolute Reality

Science inspires our confidence because the reality put forward by it is open to verification by anybody any time. Spiritual reality in the absolute is similarly open to verification by anyone, though not as readily as in science. This is because the reality transcends subject and object, and is realisable only after appropriate sadhana. The sadhana normally stretches over several years, and involves transformation of the inner personality of the seeker. Due to its transcendent nature, the final reality cannot be shared in the open with others, unlike in science. This cannot be held to invalidate the method of verification.¹⁷

Short of direct proof, there are other indirect ways of ascertaining the credibility of spiritual reality. To take an analogy, most of us

¹⁶ It may seem that *ajata-vada* gives a complete and correct analytical formulation of spiritual reality, contradicting this statement. But then, the *vada* is originated from the transcendental experience of sages, and not analytically. Further, its analytical expression is only about what reality is not, and not what reality is.

¹⁷ Our dreams are not shared by others of our waking state. For this reason, they cannot deny our dream experience. So also, the absolute reality experienced by us cannot be denied by those who do not share it.

subscribe to the theory of relativity, not because we understand it through and through and have got convinced by it, but because it is supported by those who are well positioned to judge it. In the same way, we learn to place our trust in the highest spiritual teaching given by a sage, by relying on the opinion of others who in our opinion are of reasonable attainment to judge the issue.

The lives of acknowledged sages bear many similarities, besides their common teaching. Very often, it is these traits that contribute to our strong faith in their genuineness.¹⁸ At the higher end, these traits include their capacity to interpret scriptures and guide spiritual aspirants of every denomination, to communicate through silence and influence others' conduct to the better, and to impart the plenary experience to deserving disciples by mere will. Other discernible qualities are the utter peace that they exude, total unconcern for the body and for anything that the world can offer, absence of fear, humility, universal love extending to even plant life, extra-sensory knowledge, various siddhis, etc.

Sages are found in every age. The life stories of medieval and ancient sages could be open to some doubt as they might be conglomerations of fact and fiction. The biographies of some of the modern sages are, however, available in authentic form. To one looking for the credibility of absolute reality, their study possibly provides the best option.

Science and Spirituality; Symbolism

Spirituality is not at loggerheads with science, contrary to what is commonly believed. Science depicts the partial truth, while spirituality looks at the Whole.¹⁹ Science gives pride of place to the waking state, and considers the dream and sleep states to be of no significance except in relation to the waking state. Spirituality avoids such a biased view, and looks for the reality underlying all three states. In so doing, spirituality at first focuses on the subjective element of reality, but later

¹⁸ This is the objective viewpoint. Actually, a sage's grace is believed to be operative in sustaining the faith.

¹⁹ "Natural laws are manifestations of God's will and they have been laid down." *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, §28, p.30, (9/ed., 1994).

finds the same to transcend subject and object. The reality projected by spirituality is thus comprehensive and fundamental, while what science gives is superficial and confined to the objective sphere.

Science banks solely on the mind to investigate reality. The mind is a product of maya, the delusive power, and hence the reality so projected is also within the purview of maya. The fact that science is considered highly utilitarian, is due to our being subject to maya, and judging the utility of science within its restricted sphere. The delusion makes us relegate the larger issues of life, such as the inevitability of death, and the shallowness and impermanence of the happiness obtained in life, to relative unimportance. Spirituality has as its concern these larger issues of our existence, and hence banks on transcending the mind to go beyond maya in arriving at the ultimate reality.

Our ancients tried to see a meaning in the signs of the zodiac in relation to our life on earth. It was their primitive way of acknowledging that the physical universe is a symbolic representation of the divine scheme. Practically all major religions subscribe to this view. The Quran, for instance, contains a very eloquent passage declaring such correspondence.²⁰ It should therefore come to us as no surprise that modern science, probing into the reality of the universe, comes up with discoveries that bear a close analogy to spiritual reality, as typified in the present article.



²⁰ *The Noble Quran*, Ch. II, v.164, Dar-us-Salam Publications, www.dar-us-salam.com, accessible at <http://www.noblequran.com/translation/>. An excerpt of the same may be found in *The Incredible Sai Baba*, Arthur Osborne, Orient Black Swan, Ch. IV, p.57, (2013 Reprint).

The Paramount Importance of Self Attention

Part Fourteen

SADHU OM

AS RECORDED BY MICHAEL JAMES

4th March 1978

Sadhu Om (in reply to someone who asked about a statement made by J Krishnamurti in chapter 10 of the third part of his *Commentaries on Living*: ‘Thought creates the thinker; it is the thinking process that brings the thinker into being. Thought comes first, and later the thinker; it is not the other way round’). The thinker and its thoughts arise simultaneously. They are mutually dependant. Therefore it is true to say that in a certain sense thought does bring the thinker into being, but it is equally true to say that the thinker brings thought into being. Neither can rise or stand without the other. Therefore it is absurd to say that thought comes first. To whom does

Michael James assisted Sri Sadhu Om in translating Bhagavan’s Tamil writings and *Guru Vacaka Kovai*. Many of his writings and translations have been published, and some of them are also available on his website, happinessofbeing.com.

it come? Who knows it? The thinker of thoughts is also the knower of thoughts. Who else but I, the thinker, knows thoughts?

As Bhagavan says in *Nan Yar?* (Who am I?):

Of all the thoughts that appear in the mind, the thought called 'I' alone is the first [original, basic or principal] thought. Only after this rises do other thoughts rise. Only after the first person appears do the second and third persons appear; without the first person the second and third persons do not exist.

If the thinker subsides, so will its thoughts, and vice versa. Thoughts nourish and sustain the thinker, so the thinker (the first person, the thought called 'I') will never subside by attending to thoughts (second and third persons). However if the thinker attends to itself, other thoughts are thereby ignored and hence they subside. Along with them, the thinker also subsides, because in the absence of thought, the thinker loses its nature as thinker and remains merely as 'I am', which is neither a thinker nor a thought.

This is why Bhagavan says in verse 25 of *Ulladu Narpadu*:

Grasping form, the formless phantom-ego rises into being; grasping form it stands; grasping and feeding on form it grows abundantly; leaving [one] form, it grasps [another] form. If sought [examined or investigated], it will take flight. Investigate [or know thus].

The thinker is the ego, the first thought called 'I', and the forms that it grasps are all other thoughts. Therefore when it stops grasping any thought by trying to grasp itself alone, it will take flight – that is, it will subside and disappear. This is the important secret that Bhagavan has revealed to us, because it is the only way to root out our ego, the root of all other thoughts.

To talk of 'witnessing thoughts' as if that were a sadhana (spiritual practice) is meaningless, because we are always witnessing our thoughts. It is the nature of the thinker to witness or be aware of its thoughts. No thought can arise unless it is experienced or witnessed by the thinker. Therefore the activity of 'witnessing' the mind is going on whenever there are any thoughts.

However, if we are told ‘to remain as the witness’, that means we should withdraw our attention from whatever is witnessed and from the act of witnessing it (both of which are second and third person thoughts) and should fix it only on the witness (the first person thought, ‘I’). Then thinking and witnessing will both cease, and the thinker or witness will merge into its source.

There is a fundamental difference between Bhagavan and us. In our view ‘knowing’ is an action (kriya), whereas in his view knowing is just being. It was to emphasise this that he once said:

Not only is self (atman) that which does not know other things, it is that which does not know even itself as ‘I am this’.

Sri Muruganar expressed this in verse 831 of *Meyttava Vilakkam* (the first volume of *Sri Ramana Jnana Bodham*):

Self does not know not only its own nature but also anything else. Such a knowledge alone is the real ‘I’.

And in verse 12 of *Ulladu Narpadu* Bhagavan said:

That which is devoid of knowledge and ignorance is [true] knowledge. That which knows is not true knowledge. Since it shines without anything that is other [than itself] to know or to make known, self is [true] knowledge. Know it is not a void.

What is implied by the sentence ‘That which knows is not true knowledge’ is not only that the mind, which knows things other than itself, is not true knowledge, but also that knowing as an action is not true knowing, because self knows itself just by being itself and not by any act of knowing, since its very nature or being is self-awareness. Knowing (as an action) is not the nature of self. Its nature is being, and only being is true knowing. This is why Bhagavan said (as recorded in *Maharshi’s Gospel*, Book 1, chapter 7 [2002 edition, p.40], and in *Maha Yoga*, chapter 12 [2002 edition, p.191]) that even the jnani is ignorant, because there is nothing other than himself for him to know.

It is because we are accustomed to considering knowing to be an action that we feel that we know nothing in sleep, whereas in fact in sleep we know ‘I am’ just as clearly as we do in waking and dream.

Bhagavan expressed it aptly when he said that consciousness plus body and world is waking or dream, whereas consciousness plus nothing is sleep. Consciousness alone persists throughout all the three states, so it alone is real.

5th March 1978

Sadhu Om: In *Who am I?* Bhagavan says:

Since in every [spiritual] text it is said that for attaining mukti [liberation] it is necessary to restrain the mind, after knowing that *manonigraha* [mind-restraint] is the ultimate intention of [such] texts, there is no benefit [to be gained] by studying texts without limit.

However, though we should not read too many books, we should not think we can throw away all books before we are able to restrain the mind. When we are able to abide as self, books are unnecessary, but if our minds are still drawn outwards due to the power of our *vishaya-vasanas* [inclinations or desires to experience things other than ourself], then Bhagavan's teachings are necessary. Reading his works is *sat-sanga* [associating with what is real]. There is a Tamil saying that Bhagavan, his teachings and his devotees are one.

Ramakrishna told a story of a poor woodcutter who earned one or two rupees a day by going to the edge of the forest to cut firewood. One day he met a sadhu who told him, 'Go further within', so he went further into the forest and found better quality wood to cut, so he was able to earn more. After a few weeks he met the sadhu again and thanked him profusely for his good advice, but the sadhu just replied, 'Go further within'. Each time he met the sadhu he repeated the same advice, 'Go further within', and every time he followed this advice he found something more valuable, such as sandalwood, until eventually he found a goldmine. Likewise, whenever our mind goes outwards, *sat-sanga*, *sravana* [hearing, reading or studying Bhagavan's teachings] and *manana* [reflecting on them] encourage us, 'Go further within'.

When a fisherman throws his net into the water, the net may feel, 'What can I do? I am doomed. My nature is to be weighed down by



stones, so I have to sink', but the fisherman will draw it out again with the single rope he has attached to it. Similarly, whenever our minds go outwards, Bhagavan draws us back to the shore by the single rope of his teachings, the study of which is *sat-sanga*, *sravana* and *manana*.

6th March 1978

Sadhu Om: We are not just told to seek self, but rather to seek the truth of the ego. The truth of the ego is that it does not exist, so if we try to attend to it, it will subside and disappear, and along with it all other thoughts will also cease. If we try to think of the first person (which is 'here') or the present moment (which is 'now'), the mind will certainly subside and eventually merge back into ourself, its source, because no such thing as the first person or present moment actually exists.

Time and place are each like a triangular prison. The three walls of the time prison are the past, present and future, whereas the three walls of the place prison are the first, second and third persons (which in Tamil are called *mu-v-idam*, the three places). We seem to be bound within these triangular prisons because we are always attending only to the past or future or to second or third persons, but never try to attend either to the precise present moment or to the first person alone. This is like trying to escape through the two solid walls of the prison without ever turning to see the third wall. If we turn to see the third wall, the first person or precise present moment, we will find that no such wall exists, and that we were therefore never actually imprisoned. Therefore to 'escape' from the triangular prison of time and place, all we need do is to turn our attention back towards the non-existent first person or present moment, because we will then find that we have always been only in the vast open space of pure self-awareness.

17th March 1978

Sadhu Om: When our *sravana* and *manana* are complete, then our *nididhyasana* [self-contemplation] or *atma-vicara* [self-investigation] will also be complete, and we will never again leave our natural state

of self-abidance. If one leaves the shade and goes out into the sun, then one has not yet adequately understood what heat is, so more *sravana* and *manana* on heat are required.

However, unlike other arts and sciences, which each require a vast amount of study (*sravana*), in the spiritual path the amount we need to study is very little. All we need to understand is that whatever we see outside is only our own being-consciousness projected through the lens of our mind and senses. But for us to grasp this, repeated *sravana*, *manana* and *nididhyasana* are required. Those who are fortunate to come to Bhagavan and to study his teachings deeply will learn more from them than they could learn from studying all other sacred texts. What is important is not to attempt to practise *nididhyasana* for a long duration, but to make many short but frequent attempts. If we try for a long time our attempt will merely become feebler and feebler. What is required is strong and fresh attempts, and for that we need not sit continuously for a long time. We can make frequent attempts while doing *sravana* and *manana*.

When Bhagavan tells us repeatedly that the problem is our wrong outlook, our delusive experience 'I am the body', how is sitting all day going to change that outlook? The strength of conviction we gain from *sravana*, *manana* and *nididhyasana* is what gives us love for self-abidance. If our love for self-abidance is weak, that is because our love for other things is strong, and therefore we need more *sravana*, *manana* and *nididhyasana*. *Sravana* must go on till the end – that is, until self-abidance becomes natural. ▲

(To be continued)



Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj

The Navnath Sampradaya and Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj

Part Four

CATHERINE WEISS BOUCHER

Sri Siddharameshwar Maharaj was a seminal figure in the modern Navnath tradition of Maharashtra. He revitalised the tradition and set it on a new course consonant with the rapid changes in modern Indian society, both cultural and religious. He pushed the possibilities of what the tradition was capable of doing for its young adherents and created a new wave of gurus who disseminated the teachings beyond the boundaries of Maharashtra and Karnataka.

He was born in 1888 in a village near Solapur in Maharashtra, which is the largest city of southern Maharashtra known for its textile industries. The chief deity of the city is Shri Siddheshwar. He had little schooling probably due to poverty and lack of facilities. The Preface to Sri Siddharameshwar's *Master Key to Self-Realisation* affirms that he

In 1971, a transcendental experience launched the author's spiritual practice and she was introduced to the teachings of Sri Ramana Maharshi. In January 1978, she was graced to sit at the feet of Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj. In 2002, she did a study of *Navnath Sampradaya*. Sri Nisargadatta still guides her life.

was a bright young man. “He did not study much at the school level but he was very intelligent, clever and smart in all his behaviour. He was always very straightforward and spoke with a thoughtful idea. He retorted his answers to every question with a full meaning.”¹ At the age of 16 due to his bright disposition he became a clerk in Bijapur at the office of a wealthy merchant.

In 1906 he met the Saint of Umadi, Sadguru Sri Bhausaheb Maharaj and was initiated into the Navnath tradition. Sri Bhausaheb Maharaj had established the Inchegeri Samprayada in 1903 and emphasised devotion to the guru and mantra meditation as the way to purify the mind and experience atma saksatkara, that is, ‘direct sight of the Self’. It was Siddharameshwar Maharaj who took the path one radical step further and set in place the principles on which the Inchegeri Sampradaya is best known today.

Later, when he became established as a guru in his own right, Siddharameshwar Maharaj travelled widely giving lectures. He was a powerful speaker and such was his impact that a circle of disciples soon gathered around him. He is said to have initiated many people. He knew Marathi, Hindi, Gujarati, and Kannada. He attained mahasamadhi at Bombay in 1936.²

Returning to our story, Sri Bhausaheb Maharaj died at Inchegeri in 1914 and in 1918, Sri Siddharameshwar Maharaj, along with four other disciples of Sri Bhausaheb decided to renounce the world. He joined his brother disciples and went on tour popularising their guru’s teaching.³ He then got the idea “that one should go beyond meditation, because meditation is an initial stage to Final Reality. Brother disciples disagreed with Shri Siddharameshwar Maharaj saying that their Master Shri Bhausaheb Maharaj has not told them so. He agreed with them, but reiterated, ‘Okay! Can one not go beyond that?’”⁴

¹ Maharaj, S. Shri Sadguru Siddharameshwar Maharaj’s *Master Key to Self-Realisation*. 1994. Bombay: Shri Sadguru Siddharameshwar Adhyatma Kendra. p.v.

² Dabade, K.B., *The Sociology of Religion: a Case Study of Nimbargi Sampradaya*, Mangala Publications, 1998. p.98.

³ op.cit., Dabade p.vi.

⁴ Ibid.

He made the decision to embark on the path he had envisaged alone and returned to his home at Bijapur. He constructed a raised platform like a minaret (*buruj*) and performed intense continuous tapas for nine months. “Since his Master had taught him only meditation there was no alternative for him to find out the way to attain the Final Reality without meditation. His efforts were finally rewarded and his Master blessed him. He then explained that one can achieve the Final Reality via *vihangam marg* (the bird’s way) which is by thinking.”⁵ This ‘thinking’ is the fine discernment and discrimination of the real from the unreal, which will take a sincere aspirant to the realisation of their true Self-nature. The sampradaya was evolving again.

Even though within the sampradaya, all castes and *jatis* (those whose occupations are traditional to that group) were accepted, it was not always that way outside of it. The fact that Sri Siddharameshwar was a Kunbi⁶ disturbed some Lingayats. K. B. Dabade reports that, “Shivappa, a disciple of Siddharameshwar Maharaj, once paid a visit to Siddhagiri Math. He went to Siddhagiri without wearing a ‘Linga’ even though he was a Lingayat. The present pontiff asked Shivappa regarding this. Shivappa replied that his spiritual teacher has given him Sukshama Linga and that has to be worn by him internally. On hearing this reply, the present pontiff made an inquiry about Sri Siddharameshwar Maharaj and met him at Inchehiri.

“In the course of argument and discussion with Sri Siddharameshwar all the doubts of the present pontiff were clarified and the present pontiff, a *Lingayat Jangam*⁷ accepted Sri Siddharameshwar — a Kunbi by caste — as his spiritual teacher.

“Once a procession was taken out in which Sri Siddharameshwar Maharaj was made to sit in a *palaki* (palanquin). A Siddhagiri *Lingayat Jangam Mathadipati* acceptance of a Kunbi as his spiritual teacher

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ The great Marathi saint and poet Tukaram was also one too, and referred to himself as a *shudra*.

⁷ The *Jangam* or *Jangama* are a Saivite order of wandering religious monks. They are the priests or gurus of the Lingayats.

and his procession in Palaki were strongly opposed by some orthodox people. The present pontiff at one stage was prepared to even to quit the Kaneri Math and the position of the *Mathadhipati*.⁸ Later, he was able to convince his opponents that in real spiritual world, there was no discrimination in the name of caste, class, sex, age etc.”⁹

Sri Siddharameshwar believed that the Truth should be transmitted in simple, straightforward language. He used examples from daily life. He went beyond the teachings of his own guru, in order to make it ever more accessible to the common man. From 1920 to 1936 he shared his way with disciples. He encouraged inner renunciation and took a non-dual approach:

“This world is like a dream and hence in this dreamworld, whatever is good or bad, Dharma or Adharma, merit or sin, morality — are of no consequence for the awakening of the Self. And therefore renunciation of both auspicious and inauspicious, good and bad, is necessary to get the knowledge of Self.”¹⁰

In taking Shri Bhausaheb’s teaching, what Sri Siddharameshwar called ‘The Ant’s Path’ or the slow way, and making it the more efficacious ‘The Bird’s Way’, he began to use forms of enquiry, somewhat akin to Sri Ramana Maharshi’s Self-enquiry (*atma vichara*). Sri Siddharameshwar Maharaj, in *Master Key to Realisation*, he says:

“Everyone should begin the search for this ‘I’ at his own centre if he is keen to search it out. This ‘I’ will never be found outside of us. In every human being this ‘I’ or ‘ego’ sense of ‘mine’ and possessions is filled up to the brim. All the action in the world is carried out on the strength of this ‘ego’ and sense of ‘mine’. The theorem is taken for granted by all human beings, but the totality of action can be carried out even without this ‘ego’ or this sense of ‘mineness’.”¹¹

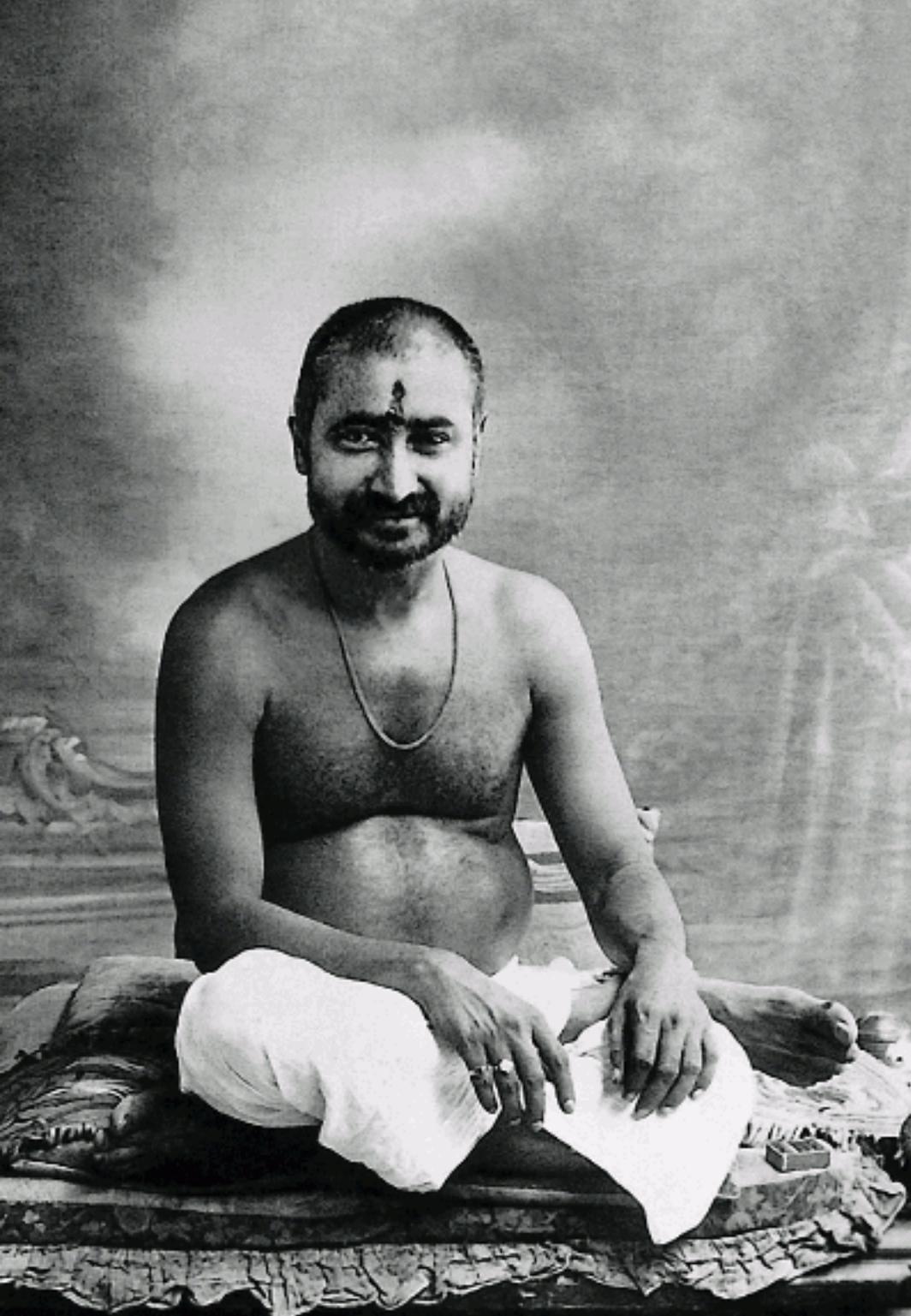
In this chapter, Sri Siddharameshwar makes a systematic search for the ‘I’, enquiring into whether we are the body or not, with great

⁸ *Mathadhipati* literally means ‘a ruler of a monastery’.

⁹ Op. cit., Dabade, K.B., p.100.

¹⁰ *Master Key to Realisation*, p.9.

¹¹ Ibid., Chapter II, ‘Investigation of the Four Bodies in Search of the ‘I’,’ p.18.



Sri Siddharameshwar Maharaj

logic and experiential verification. Step by step he helps the reader to examine his or her direct experience, “...thus ‘I’ am not part or limb of the gross body, they are all ‘mine’. But the maxim goes, where ‘I’ does not exist, there does not anything [exist] which can be called ‘mine’.”¹²

Having had this experiential grounding in inquiry, the disciple of Sri Siddharameshwar had questions about how to go about one’s apparent life. Sri Siddharameshwar goes on to show his disciples how they can carry on their life, take care of their duty without a sense of ‘I’ and ‘mine’, saying:

“However, if the aspirant understands (intellectually), which is easier than experiencing the self, he [then] raises a question: ‘After the knowledge of the self is attained and the possessive pride of the body and mind is left behind, could the worldly duties be performed?’, the Sadguru, to console him answers, ‘Dear one, even after realising the utter uselessness of body and mind, one can establish a household and have children, without bringing in the pride of the body and the mind. These both can be looked after very well. All the relevant duties one did earlier, could be diligently performed.’”¹³

He then goes on and illustrates how a nurse will lovingly but dispassionately take care of her charge, or a manager the property of which he is responsible.¹⁴ Household life then can be an opportunity to become firmly selfless and detached.

In the end one cannot be separate from the Absolute. Sri Siddharameshwar says:

“Whichever actions are being done by your gross body, whatever dreams or desires, ideas or doubts have crossed your mind, all these happen for the sake of this God and in order to please Him. If you recognise this much your work is done. All of you are doing something through your body or mind. If you say, ‘We do not want to do it’, you cannot stop from doing it; but whatever you do, the doer and enjoyer

¹² Ibid., p.19.

¹³ Ibid., p.25.

¹⁴ Ibid., p.25.

of all your deeds is only Hari. This fact alone must be recognised in every movement.”¹⁵

This becomes a practice in itself, without separating from life, without controlling it, but proceeding with the understanding that every dream and action happens in and for the Absolute. By opening to this practice, one does not have to physically renounce to stand in the Absolute. There is no place in mind, or body where the Absolute does not prevail.

Sri Siddharameshwar says: “When an aspirant has no doubt of any kind left in him and he achieves knowledge of the Self, he becomes free. Though true, as yet he cannot experience the glory of real liberation. Richness is one thing, but the joy of the status after getting rich is another thing. In the same way, unless a feeling of Oneness of All comes to the *Dnyani* [*jnani*], his knowledge does not develop or spread out, like a stingy rich man’s wealth, and he cannot get the bliss of Liberation while alive...Even if one achieves the knowledge of Self, unless one experiences a feeling of oneness with all, fearlessness does not come his way while ‘Full bliss’ is only ‘Fearlessness’. In quality, Fear is a concomitant of Duality. Fear is a very great impediment in the way of bliss arising out of liberation. So after achieving Self Knowledge, the aspirant should worship the *Paramatman* in the way explained above. Thus, dry knowledge gets moistened with devotion. A *jalebi* (kind of sweet) which has been fried in ghee, becomes juicy and sweet when it is fried and put in the syrup of sugar. In the same way, the *Dnyani* gets fullness of life through devotion after the knowledge.”¹⁶

His own transmission of Truth was simple and systematic. He was able to transmit to his disciples how to discern the Absolute from the body and the mind. We can gauge to some extent the greatness of a teacher by his or her *sishtyas* (disciples). By this measure Siddharameshwar was a giant to have produced gurus such as Sri Ganapatrao Maharaj Kannur, Sri Muppin Kaadsiddheshwar Maharaj,

¹⁵ Ibid., p.54.

¹⁶ Ibid., p.62.

Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj and Sri Ranjit Maharaj, all of whom made an impact that is still felt today both in India and the rest of the world.

Master Key to Self-Realization is a collection of teachings of Siddharameshwar which were collected by a disciple. The *Master Key* contains teachings derived from Siddharameshwar and Ramdas and approved by Siddharameshwar himself. Recently, *Master Key* and *Master of Self-Realization* have been combined in a single book. *Master of Self-Realization*, a collection in two volumes of his talks, was taken down by Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj, when he was an aspirant himself. A third book, *Amrut Laya: The Stateless State* is a collection in two volumes of other talks given in satsang. A disciple, Mrs. Dungaji, was able to translate these important books into English. These books preserved Siddharameshwar's wisdom which was imbibed by his disciples, passing this beautiful Truth on to future generations of sincere seekers.

There is a good description of what it was like to be around Siddharameshwar at that time in an interview of Ranjit Maharaj in 'Meeting Siddharameshwar' on the Inner Quest website: ¹⁷

“He was giving daily sermons for one hour. He was not going to many places, because he never wanted fame. So, he was coming to Bombay, going to Bijapur and Sholapur, and nearby there is another place called Bagewadi. In these four places he was giving his sermon from the books of Knowledge. In Marathi, there is Dasbodh, written 400 years ago by Ramdas Maharaj. That is a book in our lineage and on that book he was giving lectures when he was in Bombay, for one and a half months or two months of the year. The sermons were everyday in the evening, from quarter to seven to quarter to eight. And then, the bhajans followed, which we did at night. After singing bhajans, we returned home. So, for about one and a half months, or two months he was staying in Bombay. He was also spending the same amount of time in Sholapur. The same knowledge was taught everywhere. He was speaking in a very simple Marathi language. His motto was, ‘Complicated words are not required, as it is beyond the

¹⁷ http://www.inner-quest.org/Ranjit_interview.htm

reach of the human mind.’ So, he was giving very simple examples of daily life so that we could easily understand.

“He used four books to teach us. One book was *Dasbodh*, another was *Yoga Vasishtha*, another was Eknath’s *Sri Eknathi Bhagwat* (based on a section of the *Bhagavata Purana*) and the fourth was *Sadachara Anusandhana*, written by Shankaracharya. He began with the knowledge from Ramdas Swami’s book, *Dasbodh*. Then, for renunciation, he used the *Yoga Vasishtha*, in which Rama was in a state of humiliation and then his Master, Vasishtha gave him knowledge so that he became Lord Rama. Otherwise, he was a son of a king. Then, he used the *Gita*, which describes the whole life of Krishna and what he taught to his disciples. That was written by Eknath Swami, who was a great realised person. ‘Eknath’ means ‘Lord is One only’. So, Eknath is the Master who is One.

“He has written many historic stories about Krishna, and there are so many fights as well. Siddharameshwar Maharaj told us to try and understand the deeper meaning of fighting. What is fighting? What is the meaning of fighting? What is karma? What are reactions? All this is contained in the *Bhagavad Gita*. And, finally he used Shankaracharya’s book. It describes how a person stays in his life after understanding and renouncing. He has so nicely used Shankaracharya’s *Sadachara Anusandhana*, which shows how a realised person lives, how he takes his life and how he understands what Final Reality is, what thoughtless Reality is. All these topics are covered.”

When I came to visit Nisargadatta Maharaj, after a few days there, he took me downstairs to his kitchen and gave me a copy of the *Master Key to Self-Realization*. At that time I was not focused on the teachings of Siddharameshwar, and didn’t understand how important this gift was although his influence was all around me: in Nisargadatta’s reading of *Dasbodh*, in the complete devotion to his Guru Siddharameshwar, in Nisargadatta’s powerful emphasis on our questioning our own direct experience while in discourse with the guru, at his insistence that we ask him questions.

Yes, I saw the large silver altar, and picture of Siddharameshwar but didn’t realise that Siddharameshwar was the foundation of the exquisite

elucidation of the Truth which I was hearing from Nisargadatta. Nisargadatta's transmission sprang from Siddharameshwar. In the introduction of Vol II *Master of Self-Realization*, Nisargadatta writes: "Blessed are those who were lucky enough to listen to the discourses which were like showers of nectar from the mouth of the Sadguru Shri Siddharameshwar Maharaj, who was the embodiment of this Supreme Knowledge, *Vijnana*."¹⁸

Siddharameshwar transmitted the truth to other disciples who awakened too. Some became gurus, established ashrams and spiritual centres of their own, some abided in the Absolute and did not choose to function as gurus.

I have seen photographs of gatherings of Siddharameshwar's devotees, looked upon disciples with beatific countenances, and never knew their names. However, I have been graced to have met three of Siddharameshwar's disciples, Nisargadatta Maharaj, Bhainath Maharaj and Ranjit Maharaj. In Part V, I will go into greater detail regarding their association with Siddharameshwar and Navnath Sampradaya. ▲

¹⁸ *Master of Self-Realisation*, p.232.

Communication and Attention

VIDYA SRIDHAR

In this era of wireless communication the human race seems to be communicating more, with the advent of iPhones, video conferencing, internet radio, internet television and the increasing number of TV channels. Adults and even children carry around an iPad or tablet and play games, listen to music, chat over internet, Facebook and Google. It is true that the world has become smaller and people across the globe communicate many times more than they did two decades ago. Most jobs are even taking place over the internet. Our ancestors communicated face to face before the advent of the telephone, they had to walk to the houses of their friends or family to have a chat. In the current trend direct face to face communication is

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gone and people access their phones, talk through video techniques, and send text messages to even people living with them. College going students say that their iPhone is a part of them and they cannot stay without it even for a minute. Children also have adapted to these gadgets, they become addicted at the young age of 5 or 6 and take them to be part of themselves. They use the computer to listen to stories or rhymes, read books and even do homework. In earlier days, the grandparents told stories from mythology and from the epics *Ramayana* and *Mahabharatha* to their grandchildren and sang songs and rhymes. Other than the parents, the children also had the attention of grandparents and other family members in a joint family system, elders were also taken care of by the younger generation in their own home. Nowadays people put their parents in a home and pay for them to be taken care of. Children are being sent away to day care centres at a very young age where they are looked after by someone other than the mother or father. Parents have hardly any time to listen to their children, understand their problems and offer solutions.

What is lacking in the current forms of communication, is the very essence of communication, which is attention. One may listen to people talking on the radio, TV or the internet, but can we say that the speaker is talking to us directly and paying attention to the listener or does the listener have their full attention on them? The pictures on TV are just a display of electromagnetic waves and bits and bytes in the computer. Direct communication and attention is what Bhagavan demonstrated all his life. His very presence was full of attention, he listened to the needs of the people who came to him and silently gave them the help and guidance they needed. His gaze was sufficient to give confidence and courage for the devotee to carry on with his life's duties and spiritual practices. Bhagavan cleared the doubts and fears of his devotees with his very glance, elevating them to heights of spiritual attainment. He could 'see' directly into the heart of the person and remove all the dross accumulated in it. From Bhagavan's example we learn that attention is love and attention is compassion.

What the next generation needs is this attention from their parents and family. Children test their parents' limits by committing mistakes and the parents should be there to correct them and put them on the right track. One cannot expect the TV, computer or iPhone to do this for them. Internally children long for this attention. So also, elders want someone to listen to their emotions and feelings. Giving attention to their needs and wants is care. In today's world, what is more needed than ever before is face-to-face communication and attention. If children don't learn to communicate directly with others, when grown up they have difficulties or instability in their family, jobs and in society due to their lack of this capacity.

There is a saying in Tamil '*Aindhil vilaiyaadhadhu aimbadhil vilayaadhu*', namely, 'what a child does not learn when he/she is five years old cannot be taught at fifty years of age.' Modern science has found that the brain is nothing but a bunch of computer programmes learnt during childhood. The emotional reactions that a child experiences get registered in the brain as a program, and a similar situation in adulthood makes the person react in the same way as when a child.

There is another proverb in Tamil that says '*Thottil pazhakkam sudukaadu mattum*', which says, 'What habits are formed in the cradle stay till the cremation ground.' Can one expect the TV and computer to give positive guidance and experiences that will stay with children throughout their lives? Hence today's generation has much at stake and it is important that it raises children with positive attitudes and tendencies. Positive reactions and habits can be inculcated by paying full attention through eye to eye contact. Children will grow up feeling secure, contented and peaceful when given the attention they need.

In the modern world, people have found no limit to their desire to acquire gadgets from the ever increasing temptations that the world market puts forth. Although there is an increase in the number of tools, appliances and goods that have outwardly raised the standard of living, this has only caused physical health and mental peace to deteriorate. Hence more and more people in this world suffer from depression and anxiety and have to take to medication.

MOUNTAIN PATH

In this era of decaying values and traditions, Bhagavan's presence provides the restraint in keeping the mind safe from chaos in the world full of harmful distractions. Eye to eye contact is what we should learn from Bhagavan. He showed us how the Self speaks through the eyes. His eyes were most powerful, clearing all the doubts of the devotee's mind. He taught us how by self-attention or self-enquiry we can conquer our fears, negative tendencies of anger, jealousy, etc. He showed us how to make the Heart the source of our existence, and how to make it bloom with love and compassion through the method of self-attention. Self attention releases the brain from the vicious cycle of negative thoughts. It cools the brain, cures it of mental illnesses and enhances physical health. Whenever one has a difficult situation and the mind is troubled with negative feelings and emotions, one should take Bhagavan's picture and gaze at it for as long as necessary. This dispels all thoughts and after several moments of silence, the mind will be quietened. Though Bhagavan is not physically present among his devotees, through satsang prayers and meditation one can invoke his presence and guidance.

Let us adopt the method of attention that Bhagavan taught us to help our children grow into healthy adults. Attention helps one to live in the present, it keeps the mind from wandering into past experiences or future expectations. The duties done every day with full attention are jobs well done in the spirit of complete surrender without expectation of any fruits gives inner fulfillment and satisfaction. This attention helps us to grow inward, and it helps our children by giving them love, and our elders by giving them the care they need. Attention makes plants grow into strong trees providing shade and beautiful flowers, it makes the heart blossom and enables it to see the light within. ▲

KEYWORD

Adhithana

JOHN GRIMES

The foundational Sanskrit word ‘adhithana’ means: ‘substratum, support, source, base’. Bhagavan Ramana spoke of the Self, Sat-Cit-Ananda, the Heart, Jnana, *Svarupa*, *Sahaja Sthiti*, and *adhithana* all as synonyms designating the One Supreme Reality. Without the source, the foundation, all else would cease to exist, whether one labels all else as a mere appearance or real. “The world does not exist without the body, the body never ceases without the mind, the mind never exists without consciousness, and consciousness never exists without the Reality.”¹

Bhagavan Ramana has given us a number of examples to elucidate, make crystal clear, the exact denotation of the term ‘substratum’ (*adhithana*). It may also be noted that, for Advaitins and Sri Ramana, words, concepts, can only point towards, indicate that which is transcendent, formless, solely One, by employing

¹ Muruganar, *Guru Vachaka Kovai*, v.99. Trans. by TV Venkatasubramanian, R. Butler & D. Godman. Ed. D. Godman. 2008, p.48.

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examples from worldly (*vyavaharika*) phenomena. From the Absolute (*paramarthika*) perspective, the Self, *Atman-Brahman*, Consciousness is the *adhithana*, the Reality or Source and Substratum of anything that appears. He said, “You won’t find any of the names and forms of the world separate from the substratum. When you try to get at name and form, you will find Consciousness only.”²

In answer to a questioner, Sri Ramana employed the procedure known as *pancakosa viveka* or ‘an enquiry into the five sheaths’ to elucidate the meaning of *adhithana*. He said, “Ask yourself the question. The body (*annamaya kosa*) and its functions are not ‘I’. Going deeper, the mind (*manomaya kosa*) and its functions are not ‘I’.”³ Continuing deeper, Bhagavan says the intellect (*vijnanamaya kosa*) that perceives thoughts is only the sheath of ‘I’ and not the ‘I’ itself. Finally he concludes, “‘I’ am beyond even sleep; ‘I’ must be now and here and what I was all along in sleep and dreams also, without the qualities of such states. ‘I’ must therefore be the unqualified substratum underlying these three states (*anandamaya kosa* transcended). ‘I’ is, in brief, beyond the five sheaths. Next, the residuum left over after discarding all that is not-self is the Self, *Sat-Cit-Ananda*.”⁴

Another questioner asked about the *sahaja* state and Bhagavan answers employing the analogy of a reflection in a mirror and of a movie screen. When one sees pictures on the screen one does not see the screen. But without the screen no pictures will be seen. As an analogy, the screen is eternal while pictures come and go.

“For instance you see a reflection in the mirror and the mirror. You know the mirror to be the reality and the picture in it a mere reflection. Is it necessary that to see the mirror we should cease to see the reflection in it? Or again take the screen illustration. There is a screen. On that screen first a figure appears. Before that figure on the same screen other pictures appear and the first figure goes on watching the other pictures. If you are the screen and know yourself to be the

² Godman, David, *The Power of the Presence*, Vol.1, 2000, pp. 251-2.

³ Venkataramiah, M., (comp.), *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, 2013. Talk§25 p.23.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p.24.

screen, is it necessary not to see the first figure and the subsequent pictures? When you don't know the screen you think the figure and pictures to be real. But when you know the screen and realize it is the only reality on which as substratum the shadows of the figure and pictures have been cast, you know these to be mere shadows. You may see the shadows, knowing them to be such and knowing yourself to be the screen that is the basis for them all.”⁵

In talking about how the sage sees the illusory world (*mithya*) as Real (*satyam*), Bhagavan explains, “He who sees the Self, sees only the Self in the world also. To the jnani it is immaterial whether the world appears or not. Whether it appears or not, his attention is always on the Self. It is like the letters and the paper on which the letters are printed. You are wholly engrossed with the letters and have no attention left for the paper. But the jnani thinks only of the paper as the real substratum, whether the letters appear on it or not.”⁶

Further, he said, “When one realizes the truth and knows that there is neither the seer nor the seen, but only the Self that transcends both, that the Self alone is the screen or the substratum on which the shadow both of the ego and all that it sees, come and go, the feeling that one has not got eyesight, and that therefore one misses the sight of various things, will vanish. The realized being, though he has normal eyesight, does not see all these things. He sees only the Self and nothing but the Self.”⁷

It was said of Ramana, “This sage of Arunagiri was one who burned his boats even at the age of seventeen, while He was a student in Madurai. This was so that He might be drowned in the Ocean of Arunachala and dissolved in It, so that there might be no trace of His little ‘self’ and He be only the One Self that is, was, and shall ever be. This to Him ‘Arunachala’ — the one resplendent and immutable Truth, that is the substratum of all that is, was and shall be.”⁸

What is the *adhithana* like? Bhagavan compared it to the Final Goal, Turiya (the Fourth State). He said, “I am the Final Goal of the

⁵ *Day by Day with Bhagavan*, pp.167-8. 6-3-46, afternoon.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.307-8. 12-9-46.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p.331. 17-10-46.

⁸ Iyer, T. K. Sundaresa, *At The Feet of Bhagavan*, Section 3. 1988. p.11

path. The Reality that I AM appears to be hidden by confusion and a veil. But by the Grace of the Guru, I being fixed firmly in my own reality, the veils have fallen away, both inside and out; so I am the One Indivisible, the Turiya (Fourth State). Yet though it be termed the 'fourth' with reference to the changing three states, yet this 'fourth' is the substratum and the primal state of Being. When this 'fourth' is in contact with the Guru's real nature, then is established Being, and then is the One Whole."⁹

Whether seeing the world or 'seeing' the Self, what is it that the Sage sees? Sri Ramana said: "Seeing the world, the Sage sees the Self which is the substratum of all that is seen; the ignorant person, whether he perceives the world or not, is ignorant of his true being, the Self . . . the ordinary man lives in the brain unaware of himself in the Heart. The Sage lives in the Heart. When he moves about and deals with men and things, he knows that what he sees is not separate from the one Supreme Reality."¹⁰

Comparing the *adhithana* to a cinema screen, Bhagavan remarked, "The ajnani sees the jnani active and is confounded. The world (*jagat*) is perceived by both; but their outlooks differ. Take the instance of the cinema. There are pictures moving on the screen. Go and hold them. What do you hold? It is only the screen. Let the pictures disappear. What remains over? The screen again. So also here. Even when the world appears, see to whom it appears. Hold the substratum of the 'I'. After the substratum is held what does it matter if the world appears or disappears?"¹¹

Comparing the *adhithana* to the paper on which print is superimposed, He said, "We read a newspaper and all the articles therein, but do not care to know anything about the paper itself. We take the chaff but not the substance. The substratum on which all this is printed is the paper and if we know the substratum all else will be known."¹²

⁹ Ibid., Section 30.

¹⁰ *Maharshi's Gospel*, Bk II, Ch.3., 'The *Jnani* and the World', pp.60-1.

¹¹ *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, 2013. Talk§65 13th July, 1935.

¹² Ibid., Talk§186, 13th March 1936.

“A visitor said, ‘All are is said to be *Brahman*.’ Bhagavan replied, ‘Yes, they are. But so long as you think that they are apart they are to be avoided. If on the other hand they are found to be Self there is no need to say “all”. For all that exists is only Brahman. There is nothing besides Brahman. . . . When you see them as so many they are *asat*, i.e., unreal. Whereas, when you see them as Brahman they are real, deriving their reality from their substratum, Brahman.’”¹³

Regarding sleep and what it reveals, Bhagavan said, “Do you deny your existence? Do you not remain even in sleep where the body is not perceived? The same ‘I’ continues to be now; so we admit our existence, whether there is the body or not. The senses work periodically. Their work begins and ends. There must be a substratum on which their activities depend. Where do they appear and merge? There must be a single substratum. Were you to say that the single unit is not perceived, it is an admission of its being single: for you to say that there is no second one to know it.”¹⁴

In the *Mandukya Upanisad* with Gaudapada’s *Karika*, one is reminded that there is a foundation, a substratum, a basis for the empirical world and that *Brahman* is that substratum. Whatever undergoes change can only do so upon a changeless, immutable substratum.¹⁵

In the *Bṛhadaranyaka Upanisad*, Yajnavalkya tells Gargi that there is a principle that lies behind all things, cosmic and individual, that cannot be known as an object of knowledge but which is the inner ruler, one’s own immortal Self. Gargi then asks ‘across what is that woven warp and woof,’ and Yajnavalkya answers her with the famous ‘not-this’, ‘not-this’. The immutable across which space is woven is neither an object nor a subject of experience. It is not a void or a nothing. It is the basis (substratum) of all things. It is the support of all that is.¹⁶



¹³ Ibid., Talk §310, 1st January, 1937. p.281.

¹⁴ Ibid., Talk §363 20th February, 1937.

¹⁵ See *Mandukya Upanisad Karika* I.6

¹⁶ See *Bṛhadaranyaka Upanisad*, Ch.3.



Statue in Sri Arunachaleswarar Temple

Ulladu Narpadu Anubandham

Based on Lakshmana Sarma's
Commentary

Verse Fourteen

S. RAM MOHAN

For the sadhaka who seeks the truth of his/her own Self through the path of enquiry, the four popular paths to liberation: karma, bhakti, jnana and yoga are not necessary, thus says Bhagavan here.

Verse 14

The vichara or self-enquiry as to who performs actions, who lacks devotion (to the Self), who is separated (from the Self) or who is ignorant (of the Self) itself constitutes the four traditional paths of action, devotion, yogic union and right knowledge. The true state is the state of being the Real Self, which is attained by enquiry – wherein there is no ego and therefore none of these paths is necessary thereafter.

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Commentary

There are four hindrances to Self-Realisation, and for the removal of each, one of the four celebrated paths of sadhana is followed — *karma yoga*, *bhakti yoga*, *raja yoga* and *jnana yoga*. The follower of the path of action (*karma yoga*) believes that the self is hindered from reaching the Self by his selfish actions. The follower of the path of devotion (*bhakti yoga*) thinks that there is actual separation between her or him and her or his chosen God and for re-union she follows the path of devotion. The *raja yogi* or the follower of *ashtanga yoga* believes that there is division between the self and the Absolute and seeks to reintegrate with Him through the eightfold-yoga of mind control and meditation, leading to *nirvikalpa samadhi*. The *jnana yogi* thinks that there is *ajnana* (ignorance) and strives to replace it by *jnana* (right awareness) to obtain deliverance.

These assumptions are, however, not true because the ego-self is never separated from the Absolute, the two being one and the same. The cause for the erroneous assumptions in the four paths is the ego-sense. The jiva or the limited self is merely a creation of *chit-jada-grantha*, the knot of the conscious and the unconscious. Assuming himself to be real he strives, using the diverse paths for release from bondage. The cause of these false notions is the ego-sense, which creates a false limited self, the individual soul, which, not being real, cannot actually have any of these flaws.

The enquiry, ‘Who am I’ or ‘Wherefrom am I’, as taught by Bhagavan, is free from these false assumptions. The enquiry starts with the question: “To whom is this karma, or dissociation (from devotion), or separation (or division), or ignorance occurring?” The answer is: “To me”. This leads to the question: “Who am I?” or “Wherefrom am I?” (or “Wherefrom does this I-sense arise?”) which is the mode of enquiry taught by Bhagavan. This *atma vichara* leads to the Awareness of the Self that is not other than Absolute or Supreme Being; and that is therefore never subject to any shortcomings. The ego, the cause of these misconceptions dies and so these misconceptions also leave and there is no one for whom any of these paths will be needed.

Hence what is sought to be achieved over time by any one of these paths is achieved immediately by enquiry. Bhagavan therefore says that enquiry contains all the four paths. For this reason, the yoga taught by Bhagavan was called *Maha Yoga*, the greatest of all yogas. *Mahayoga* grants integration with Absolute Being by destroying the one who is practising the yoga (the ego) with a view to attaining union with the Absolute. This *mahayoga* makes the seeker finally a zero, but the place of his elimination is not a void, it is *poornam* or 'fullness'. He is not a 'zero' but a 'hero' who has conquered all impediments.

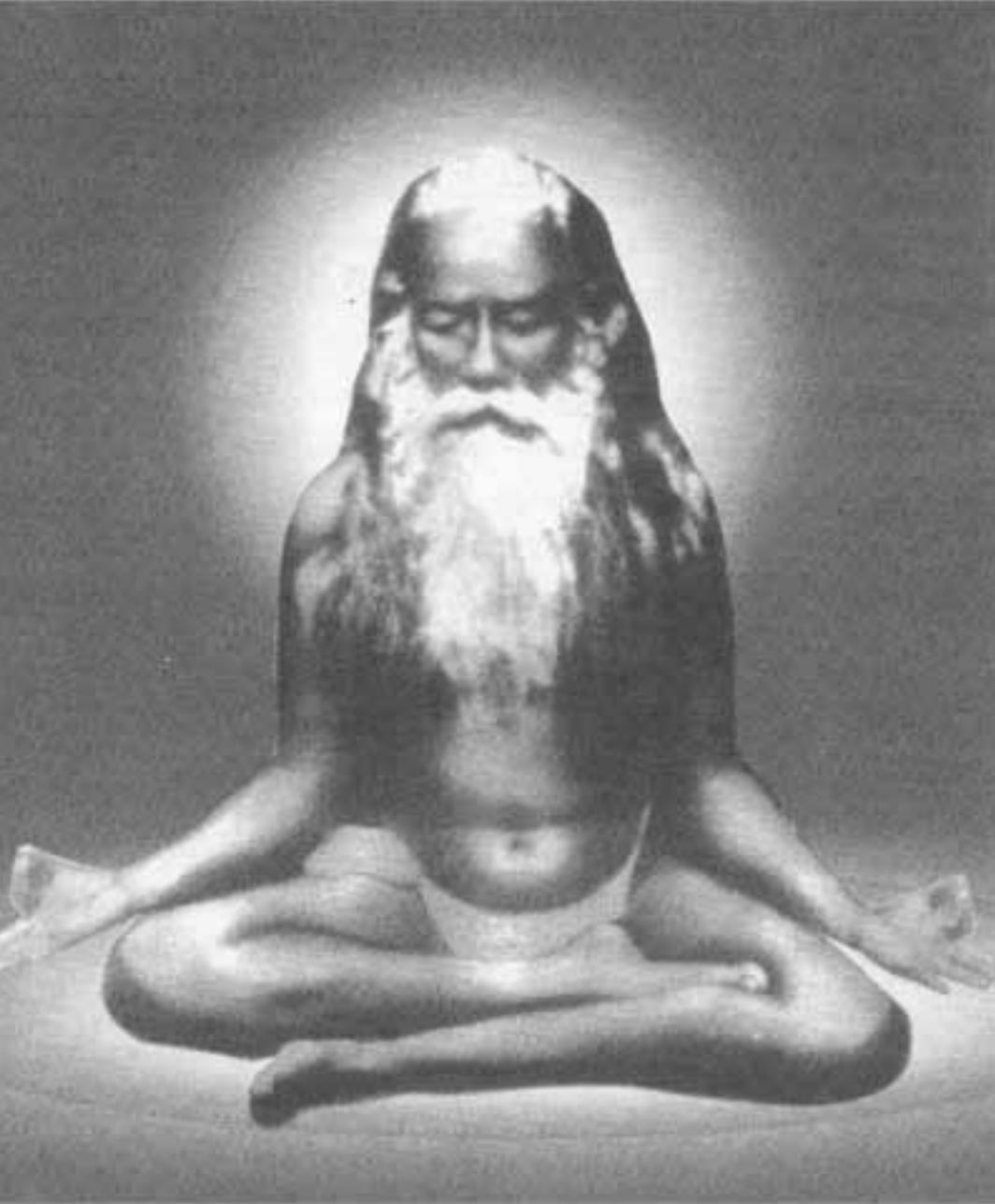
In *Ozhivil Odukkam*, verse 8, Kannudaiya Vallalar says, "In divine silence, overflowing with the bliss of Sivam, the guru speaks [without speaking], like a honeybee regurgitating the nectar it has consumed into the honeycomb. For those [disciples] who at that time wait in attendance without any thought in their minds, like the seasons which appear in due course, his words will constitute lofty tapas, or the import of the Vedas."

One who seeks to get sleep, has to simply desist from action and lie down. Karma and ignorance spring from and grow with ego. If we, through the path of enquiry, seek the root of the ego, the ego dies and with it all activities also perish, as indicated by Bhagavan in *Upadesa Undiyar*, verse 10.

"Being [firmly established as our real self or *sat-bhava*] having subsided in [our] rising-place [our 'heart' or the core of our being, which is the source from which we had risen as our mind], that is, [*niskamyā*] *karma* [desireless action] and *bhakti* [devotion], that is *yoga* [union with God] and *jnana* [true knowledge]."

The condition for the successful pursuit of enquiry (*vichara*) is the giving up of all ambitions and desires and the means for this is the giving up of the ego. While this is the right path, there are those who feed the ego by becoming subject to many desires, which are subversive of all spiritual progress. This is explained in the next three verses.

(To be continued) ▲



Sri Achuthanantha Adigal

Sri Achuthanantha Adigal

K. ACHUDANANDA

TRANSLATED BY S.VENKATARAMAN

The following article is based on the Tamil biography Advaita Kirtana Anandlahiri, published in 1956. A second edition in 2006 was published by the Achuthanantha Math. The book has some twelve pages of biography followed by some 327 poetical songs on Advaita by Swami Achuthanantha.

Sri Achuthanantha Adigal, the noted musician saint visited Bhagavan, or Brahmana Swamigal as he was then known, while Bhagavan was in Gurumoortham. He was a well-known spiritual teacher at the time and it was said that he had more than a thousand disciples in the Polur area just north of Tiruvannamalai, when he came to offer his respects to Bhagavan. Though an important and respected swami, he personally massaged Bhagavan's legs. When the disciples accompanying him attempted to touch Bhagavan, he warned them not to: "Beware this is a Hill of Fire (the fire of eternal wisdom)".¹

¹ Kunju, Swami, *Living with the Master*, 2010. 'Doubts Dispelled', p.22.

SampathGiri BrahmaPeedam Saint Achuthanantha Adigal was born in a Balija Naidu family of Polur in North Arcot District. Abbai Naidu was his childhood name. Although details of his birth or his parent's name could not be traced, at the time of the *Nirvana* or *Videha Kaivalyam* of Swamigal in 1903, one of his relatives reported his age to be 53. We may therefore conclude that he was born around 1850.

Abbai lost his revered father during his boyhood and was brought up by his mother. When he was put to school, he was older than the other boys in the class. He was a bright child and surprised his teachers by learning two languages, Tamil and Telugu, exceptionally well to the level of an expert. He grew to be a young man of good conduct, upright behaviour and uninterrupted devotion to Lord Rama. On seeing these qualities of her son, his mother was very pleased but did not live to see him flower into a blissful Saint. She died when he was still fairly young. Being deeply attached to his mother, Abbaju found her loss unbearable. However, time healed this loss, and he eventually became a school teacher in Polur, living a frugal life on a meagre salary.

During this period he reached out to various poets and pundits, learned about literature and grammar and developed his poetic skills. He also acquired some knowledge of Sanskrit. He became an expert in music too, and left his position as a school teacher to start a Bhajan Mandir where he installed a small idol of Lord Rama, and started to worship the Lord. He wrote hundreds of *keerthanas* and *stotras* on Lord Rama. He also wrote the *Prabhadha Charithram*, *Dhruva Charithram* and *Sakkubai Charithram*; and gave musical discourses that won the hearts of his listeners.

In those days, at Kaspā near Vellore, there lived a learned Vaishnavite Saint called Venkatakrishna Dasar who was poetically skilled and blessed, through his deep devotion, with the grace of the Lord. Abbai, who was eager to have the darshan of Sri Venkatakrishna Dasar, went to see him. Dasar was very pleased to see Abbaju and welcomed him warmly with a pleasant face. Abbaju spent a few days with him.

During their discussions, Dasar was impressed by Abbai's pure heart, bright appearance, clear knowledge, poetic gifts, refined intellect, and also his expertise in music and devotion to Lord Rama. Dasar told him, "Dear Sir, the Lord of Sri Lakshmi, always residing in my heart, gracefully commands that from today you shall be called by the wonderful name 'Achutha Dasar'. Having received that graceful name, Abbai reluctantly left Venkatakrishna Dasar with his blessings and returned to Polur to continue his normal life.

After a few years, at the request of some of his respectable relatives, he married Thayammal of Kasthampadi, a virtuous and beautiful young girl belonging to a good family of the same caste and started living in her family house.

One day, having heard of Vengammaiyar, a reputed saint in the near-by village of Poththarai, in Polur district, Achutha Dasar went to see her. The distinguished Ammaiyar welcomed Dasar with a motherly affection and delighted in their discussions about spiritual matters. Dasar stayed with Ammaiyar for little over a year, and was thoroughly instructed in great yoga practices before he returned to the house of his in-laws. He stayed in a separate room and continued his yoga practices. It was said that after continuing these yogic practices without interruption he gained several *siddhis* (powers) notably the power of levitation.

During this period of intense practice Achutha Dasar's young wife reached puberty. Her parents performed all the obligatory social and religious ceremonies every day, and on the ninth day, the *ManjalNeerattu*, a special purificatory bathing ceremony was performed and that evening further ceremonies were performed preparatory to the nuptial night. Meanwhile Dasar went into his room bolting it from the inside and did his usual yogic exercises. When all the ceremonies were completed, in order to leave his young bride with Achutha Dasar, they went to his room and asked him to open the door. But Dasar had levitated and was slowly coming down, doing his yogic practice, and hence could not respond to their calls. Getting no response after repeated knocking and shouting, his

worried in-laws and others broke down the wall near the door. This commotion unsettled the single pointed mind of Achutha Dasar who at that moment was still descending to the ground, causing him to fall with a thud instead of landing smoothly. Due to this, the breath, which he had held while doing the exercise and which should have been exhaled, settled in his system and became too heavy for him to bear. His suffering was colourfully described by his biographer as like that of a worm in the hot sun. In unbearable pain he cried loudly.

His relatives were at a total loss, not knowing how to help Dasar in his predicament. Dasar told them that unless someone rushed to Pottharai and brought his yoga guru Ammaiyar, he would get no relief. A suitable person, 'who went like the wind', found Ammaiyar and reported the situation. Ammaiyar immediately came to Kasthampadi and ordered everyone out of Dasar's room. She commanded Dasar to re-start his yogic exercise and to levitate as usual and then come down. When Dasar did so, all the breath, which had been locked in a tight knot, got released and he was relieved of all the discomfort. Dasar prostrated at Ammaiyar's feet in gratitude. She advised him, "Dear son! May you live long! Henceforth be alert and don't let such disturbances happen again," and then left for her village immediately. So the day ended without the planned conclusion of the *Shanthimuhoortham* (nuptial night) ceremony. On the same day, Dasar completely gave up the yogic levitation practice.

After a few days, when alone, as a result of his association with saints and the good deeds done selflessly in the past, he started enquiring thus, "Who am I? Who is my Lord? Why does one get entangled with the chain of births and deaths? How can one get released?" From the study of the scriptures, he realised that karmic actions are the seeds of birth and that the karmic cycle can end only with Self-knowledge, and not by any other means. He also realised that this Self-knowledge can come only through the grace of a Satguru, and he then approached several teachers, but was turned down by them all. He became sad and despondent.

He then heard of a saint on a hillock called Kailasagiri near the village of Kadaamoor, near Polur. The Kailasagiri swami was very



Samadhi of Sri Achuthanantha Adigal

ascetic in appearance, full of compassion and firm in Self-abidance. On hearing about the qualities of this saint, Dasar immediately went to Kadaamoor and saw the saint surrounded by a number of disciples. Filled with joy he prostrated at his feet. Then rising, he pleaded, "My father! Give refuge to this poor one and uplift him." On seeing his dispassion and spiritual ripeness, the saint gave him a gracious look and asked him to be seated.

It was a full moon day on which Dasar came to see the satguru. The disciples who had gathered there for prayer, on seeing the Sri Vaishnava markings on Dasar's forehead, were annoyed. Sensing that the satguru wanted him to leave, he walked down from the Kailasagiri hill and waited. Within a short while, the satguru came to him and took him to a hidden Vinayaka Temple at the foot of the hill. There he asked, "My child, who are you? Where are you from? What brought you here?" Dasar replied, "Dear father, I am from near Polur. My name is Achuthan. Desirous of Self-knowledge, I have approached fifteen teachers, but no one has accepted me. I was perplexed and did not know what to do. So when I came to know of you I came immediately and when I saw how happy you are, I was relieved of all my worries." He stood with his palms joined and prayed, "Please disclose my true Self to me and ferry me across the ocean of re-birth."

His words melted the heart of the gracious satguru, who spoke lovingly to Dasar. He then made him sit before him, gave the requisite *deeksha* (initiation) by means of one of the four great statements of Vedanta (*mahavakyas*). He also explained the real nature of the Self as being beyond all qualities and as therefore not one of the five types of sheaths (*panchakosa*), but that which witnesses the three states of awareness, namely waking, dream and deep sleep, and as of the nature of Existence, Consciousness and Bliss. On receiving this initiation from the satguru, it is said that Dasar, being blessed with a pure heart and with intense longing for the Self, instantly attained the state of *nirvikalpa nishtha* (total absorption without any mental focus) and was anchored fast on the path towards Self-knowledge.

The astonished satguru also went into *nirvikalpa nishtha*. Both slowly came out of that inner absorption the next day, one after the

other. Dasar,² who had had the direct experience of the Self which had immersed him in the ocean of Bliss, exclaimed, “Oh, Father, I have attained it; I have reached life’s goal. You have revealed my real Self so easily, like a gooseberry in the palm of my hand, as no one else has done till now. So, from this date, you shall be called ‘Nijanandar’ (one who revels in the Bliss of Self).” Dasar then composed a *pathikam* (decad) incorporating that name in it, placed it at the feet of the Sathguru Nijanandar and stood with clasped hands.

Nijanandar, the satguru, on seeing Dasar’s overwhelming love and his ability to spontaneously compose a poem, was extremely pleased and said, “Illumined son! *Nirvikalpa nishta*, which cannot be attained except by long, rigorous practice, has been attained by you so easily, and you are also abiding firmly in that state, focused on attaining Selfhood. Henceforth you shall be called ‘Achuthanandan’ (one who revels in joy without swerving).” He blessed Adigalar saying, “The state of *nirvikalpa* will become steady and you will delight in Self-Realisation.”³

Achuthananda took his leave from Nijanandar with a heavy heart and returned to Sampathgiri. It is said that he remained in a heightened state of consciousness for six months. Then he went to Kasthambadi and stayed in a beautiful garden where for another six months he continued to be in this *nishta* (state). Nijanandar, the satguru, would join him at times and clear his doubts. He declared to Achuthanandar, “Oh, gem of a student! You have crossed the ocean of *samsara*. You now shine as a *jivan mukta* having nothing more to attain.” Saying this Nijanandar returned to Kailasagiri.

² It is worth noting here that just as Bhagavan’s disciple Kavyakanta Ganapati Muni, gave the name ‘Ramana Maharshi’ to Bhagavan, here too the disciple gave his own guru the name ‘Nijanandar’.

³ Adigal and Adiglar are term of respect in Tamil. ‘Adi’ means feet. ‘Gal’ means respect, similar to the Hindi word ‘ji’ as in gurji or Gandhiji. Adigalar is the more respectful form of Adigal. For purposes of this article we have used the term ‘Swamigal’ as it would be more familiar to readers. Swami Achuthanantha was also known as Achyuta Dasar, Dasar, Achuthan and Swami Achuthanandan according to the individual predisposition of the Tamil writer.

Having attained the substratum, namely the *akandakara Siva svaroopam* (the one infinite form of Lord Siva), Adigalar stayed in a forest in the vicinity of Padaiveedu⁴ for some time. Then he travelled through North and South Arcot, Salem, Chittoor and Chengalpet, expounding the incomparable Advaitic truth to seekers. During this period he offered spiritual knowledge it is said to more than two thousand students.

Achyuta Dasar composed more than three hundred songs set to the *ragas* (musical metres) of Carnatic music. He was not only a composer but also was an exceptionally gifted singer. Once when he sat on a hill in a village called Chatrawadi and sang one of his compositions, the cows that were scattered on the grassy slopes of the hill gathered together and listened spellbound to his singing. While all his songs are available to us, there is no recording of his mesmerizing voice.

Achyuta Dasar's songs, which are marked by literary charm, written in the style and language of that time, and full of devotional fervour, bear witness to his profound spiritual maturity. In his songs, he pleads for the mercy and grace of infinite, non-dual bliss to redeem him who is perplexed and agitated in the darkness of samsara. In many songs he asks for the joy of inwardness. He asks for the end of the *triputi* (triad) of the knower, the object and the act of knowing so that he can focus inwardly and revel in the transcendental *turiyatita* (fourth) state beyond wakefulness, dream and deep sleep. He exhorts his mind to ardently worship the feet of the Lord who dispels the darkness of constant toil for worldly pleasures and gives inner bliss. He says he is rid of the delusion of religious creeds and their differences and incessantly worships the Self, the inner seer.

In one song he warns against the trouble which would follow if one delights in the company of unawakened *tamasic* people but reassures us that the suffering will be over if one listens to the words of the awakened ones. He seeks refuge in the Lord so that the mind's mischief may end. He laments that he has not yet attained the ability to see the Light

⁴ It was at Padaiveedu that Ganapati Muni performed penance in the vicinity of the Renuka Devi Temple.

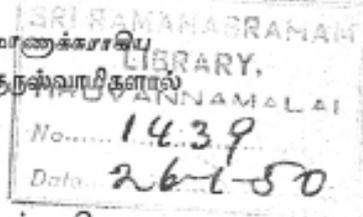
உ.
ஓம்
தத் தத்
பாப்பிராந்தேணே கமஃ.

ஸ்ரீ கைலாயகிரி பிரமபீடம்
சிஜானந்தயோகிந்திரர் மாபித்ருரிய
ஸ்ரீமத், சம்பத்கிரி ஸ்ரீ அச்சுதானந்த ஸ்வாமிகளால்
இயற்றப்பட்ட

சன்மார்க்க தர்ப்பணம்.

(மு ல மு ம்.)

ஷை. ஸ்வாமிகளின் பிரதம மாணுக்கராகிய
ஸ்ரீமத், சதனபுரி-இராமசத்திர குருஸ்வாமிகளால்
இயற்றப்பட்ட
(உரைமும்.)



ஷை. ஸ்வாமிகளின் மாணுக்கராகிய
பு. நங்கிமை, ஆதமநகர் - ஆ. எ. விஜயராகவரேட்டியார்
அவர்களால்,

திருவண்ணாமலை

ஸ்ரீரமண மஹரிஷியவர்களின்

உ த் த ர வு ப டி.

திருவல்லிக்கேணி, தேரையில் அச்சுக்கூடத்தில்
பதிப்பிக்கப்பட்டன.

காபிரைட்]

1926.

[விலை அளவு 3.

The above title page can be roughly translated as follows:

Sanmarga Darpanam

by Sri Kailayagiri Brahma Peetam Nijanandha Yogeendrar's lineage holder Srimad Sampathgiri Sri Achuthanantha Swamigal. Commentary by Srimad Sadanapuri Ramachandra Guruswamigal, prime disciple of Sri Achuthanantha Swamigal. Published at the command of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi by Vijayaraghava Reddiar.

It is interesting to note that Bhagavan specifically wanted this book published for the benefit of spiritual seekers. Readers may also note the Ramanasramam Library Stamp dated 26-01-1950. All the books in Bhagavan's personal library which were kept in the revolving book case in the Old Hall were transferred to the main Ashram Library. This happened three months before his *Maha Nirvana*. All the books from his personal library are now in the Ashram Archives Building.

which manifests as the phenomenal world. He asks if it is due to his past misdeeds that the free state of inner silence is yet denied to him. He sings about the state of sleeping without sleep. Elsewhere he asks the Lord: “Is there any support except You to cause the play of ignorance to cease, and to cause me to fade away little by little and abide in *Siva yoga samadhi*, obtain Your grace and reach the goal of life?”

Achuthananda, in yet another of his songs, asks the Lord if he can only see Him through His strength and if this means that he can never see Him by his own ability. He sings the praise of the all-pervasive Perfect One, Who is the Sound of Pure Space, in the Vedic mantras, in the great Advaitic teaching and in the transcendental turiya state and Who is the First Cause of everything. He wonders when he will receive in solitude the *darshan* (vision) of the all-pervasive, blissful Lord and bathe in the surging flood of transcendental, supreme silence of *jnana*.

Achuthananda’s book of songs is aptly titled *Advaita Kirtana-Ananda-Lahiri* (The Blissful Wave of Advaitic Songs). His songs are well known even today among Tamil *bhaktas*.

He spent several years travelling and giving lectures until 1902. In that year, the year called Subhakrithu, from the Tamil month of Aavani until the month of Aippasi, he visited his disciples and advised them, “Oh, most loved sons! Don’t waste precious time. Seek *atmanubhava* (direct experience of the Self) and attain eternal bliss.” He also added, “This is my final visit.”

In the second day of Karthika month, he came to the house of his disciple Sri Arangasami Mudaliyar, in Vallam village in Vellore district and started writing a book on *jnana sastra* titled *Sanmarkka Darpanam* (The Mirror Revealing the Direct Methods of Attaining the Eternal Self).⁵

⁵ It was at Bhagavan Ramana’s explicit command that the book was published with a commentary by Swamigal’s disciple, Sadhanapuri Ramachandra Guruswamigal. The book was published in 1926. A copy was kept in Bhagavan’s revolving bookcase in the Old Hall and is now kept in the Ashram Archives. See page 79. Just as a mirror reveals clearly one’s physical face which by no other means could be done so well, this book clearly reveals the Eternal Self to Oneself by direct methods in 78 songs, hence the name *Sanmarga Darpanam*.

On the eleventh day, a Wednesday afternoon at three o'clock, he called another disciple, Sri Mandiramoorthi Pillai, a Siddha doctor, and told him about some rare medicinal systems. He completed the *Sanmarkka Darpanam* that same day late in the night at three am and commanded his disciple Sri Vaithiyalingam Pillai, "Sir! Print this book and distribute it". Soon after four a.m. he felt unwell and Sri Mandiramoorthi Pillai, who was among those nearby, said that he would provide the necessary treatment. Achuthananda Swamigal smiled and said, "Dhanvanthri! My time is up. The body is waiting to fall off. What can you do?" Then he went to the nearby river Naganadhi and took his bath. On his way back he stopped for a while at an open space near where he was staying and told himself, "It seems, all that is to happen further will happen here," and returned home.

Later, Achuthananda Swamigal drank some liquid food, made all his disciples sit before him and explained clearly to them the ephemeral nature of the body, advising them not to waste life but to utilise it for practising samadhi. At that time one of his very close disciples and his sister-in-law's son, named Muthukrishna Naidu, came, prostrated and requested him to come back to Kasthanbadi.

The Swamigal replied, "The condition of this body is not good; all will be well soon and travel can be considered." On hearing this Muthukrishna Naidu stepped outside wondering what could be the meaning of Swamigal's cryptic words. Sometime after, in Karthikai month, on the twelfth day, a Thursday, under the auspicious date of Swathi star, at ten a.m., Achuthanandar, sitting in the padmasana posture, asked all his disciples to keep looking at him. He then left the mortal coil and attained *videha kaivalya*, the state of total freedom.

On seeing this all his disciples were shocked and stunned, but they soon recovered and thought about further action. They could not see any change in the condition of Swamigal's body and were unable to decide whether Adigalar was still alive in *nirvikalpa samadhi* or had attained *videha kaivalyam* (had left the physical body).

In the meantime, on hearing of Achuthanandar's *videha kaivalyam* many people started arriving to pay homage to this mahatma.

Messages were sent to Kasthampadi and to all his disciples. The same evening, Swamigal's wife, many disciples from nearby places, and the relatives of Swamigal gathered in huge numbers to pay homage with a heavy heart. A few experienced disciples assured them that Swamigal had indeed entered *videha kaivalya*.

The next day before noon a samadhi pit was dug in the same open place where Swamigal had stood and spoken to himself earlier in the morning. Swamigal's body was given a *thirumanjanam* bath, with water from the holy Ganges which someone has brought by chance, it was decorated, worshipped and was placed on pearl plank. To the accompaniment of auspicious music, surrounded by thousands of people, Swamigal's body was taken to the site of the samadhi pit and was placed in it at five p.m.

All that had to be done was done properly and every day prayer was also done according to the traditions for a *jeevanmukta* (liberated soul). Before the first anniversary function, many of the disciples were very eager to see Swamigal's gracious form. Some nine devotees opened the samadhi pit one day and saw the divine form. To their surprise Swamigal's body had not undergone any change and, not only that, there were sweat drops oozing out from the forehead. One of the disciples wiped off some sweat from the body and to the bafflement of everyone it kept oozing out. The action was repeated several times with the same effect. This extraordinary sight was witnessed by some twenty one blessed ones including the nine referred to above. Having performed the decoration and prayers for that day the samadhi pit was closed.

When the erection of *panchakshara medai* (the platform on which the chanting of *na-ma si-va-ya* is done) began, people who had heard of the state of the gracious form and the sweat on the forehead of Swamigal's body, came in large numbers, requesting ardently that the samadhi pit be opened again for their darshan and prayer. When the disciples gently refused to open it as it was late in the evening and the construction activity had to be completed, the crowd which had gathered became agitated and tried to force open the samadhi pit. The disciples were stunned and did not know what to do, when suddenly

there was a heavy downpour and the crowd dispersed as there was no shelter from the rain. The construction was thus completed in the prescribed time period.

Though the reason for the condition of Swamigal's gracious physical form was discussed amongst the wise ones no one could explain it. Later on, at one of the *aradhana* festivals of Swamigal, K. Vadivelu Chettiyar, a Vedanta guru who had the darshan of Bhagavan, was the guest of honour. When he was informed of the condition of Swamigal's body, he explained that one who is well versed in yogic practices can hold the breath and stay in the state of *akanda samadhi*, that is, stay for a very long time in a thoughtless breathless state. Adigal being a *jnana siddha*, one who has reached the summit of *jnana* (knowledge), as well as a *yoga siddha*, one who has reached the summit of yogic practices, is in the state of *jeeva samadhi* and hence there is no change in the condition of the body.

Later, two brothers who were disciples of Swamigal, Sri Mandiramorthy Pillai and Sri Vathiyalingam Pillai, took great pains and at great expense built a temple and Mutt, and arranged the *Kumbhabishekam* and oversaw the general activities of the new temple and Mutt. In time, the Mutt was rebuilt and renamed Achutta Nilayam. The Mutt is still active today and may be visited on the Tiruvannamalai-Polur-Vellore highway (National Highway 234). It is some 30 kilometres from Polur or some 67 kilometres from Tiruvannamalai on the road to Vellore. It is located at Kizhvallam which is about a kilometre before Kannamangalam. There is a bridge there and one immediately turns left. ▲



The Mahabharata

Drona Parva

The Killing of Abhimanyu

The Complete Mahabharata: Drona Parva (Volume 6) 1st Edition (ISBN: 9788129132611) published by Rupa Publications India, July 2014, in both hardcover and paperback. pp.737; Rs.1200 (HB) and Rs.995 (PB).

The Mahabharata of Veda Vyasa is the longest recorded epic in the world. A full Indian translation of The Mahabharata into English is the 19th century one by Kisari Mohan Ganguli. This new 12 volume series published by Rupa, and edited by Ramesh Menon, retells the Great Epic line by line from the archaic Ganguli text in fresh, exciting English prose. The excerpt of the death of Abhimanyu is from volume 6, the Drona Parva, as retold by SB Pillay.

Introduction

The story of Abhimanyu and his valour in the battle of Kurukshetra is one of the soul-stirring highlights of the war between the Pandavas and the Kauravas. He was the grandson of the Vedic god Indra, son of Arjuna and Subhadra and the nephew of Lord Krishna. He was married to Uttara, the princess of Matsya. Her father was King Virata, in whose kingdom the Pandavas hid for a year during their exile. Abhimanyu was killed on the thirteenth day of the Kurukshetra War, after wreaking untold havoc on the enemy army. He was sixteen years old and already considered his great father's equal as a warrior.

Aside from his epic battle he is known as the progenitor of the Pandava lineage, for his son Parikshit, who was born after his death in the war, was the last remaining male of the Kuru line and thus sole heir to the Pandava empire, when Yudhishthira died.

On that fateful day of the battle, Abhimanyu led the attack on the apparently invincible *Chakravyuha* battle formation created by Drona to trap Yudhishthira. Only three Kshatriya warriors on the Pandava side – Pradyumna, Krishna, and Arjuna – knew how to break into this seven-tier defensive spiral. Because Arjuna was away due to a subterfuge by the Kauravas, Yudhishthira asks Abhimanyu to break the *Chakravyuha*. He accepts the order but tells Yudhishthira his knowledge is limited to breaking into the spinning circle and he does not know how to break out of it.

The *Chakravyuha* or *Padmavyuha* is a multi-layered defensive formation that resembles a disc or *chakra*, and much like a maze has but one entrance. Abhimanyu audaciously storms into the *Chakravyuha* but his kinsmen are prevented from entering after him and Abhimanyu is trapped alone inside.

Paramahansa Yogananda in his *God Talks with Arjuna: The Bhagavad Gita*, Chapter One, Verse Seven, writes, “The name Abhimanyu comes from *abhi* meaning ‘with intensity; towards, into’, and *manyu*, ‘spirit, mood, ardour’. Abhimanyu represents the intense mental state (one’s spiritual mood or *bhava*) in which the consciousness is drawn ‘toward’ or ‘into’ union with the object of its concentration or ardour, giving perfect self-control or self-mastery. It is referred to by Patanjali in his *Yoga Sutras* III:1-4 as *samyama*, a collective term under which the last three steps of the Eightfold Path are grouped together..... Abhimanyu is that self-mastery which bestows light or illumination. ...[He is] that great Pandava warrior whose victories enable the yogi to hold back the onslaught of the restless, delusive consciousness of ego, senses and habits and thus to remain longer and longer in the state of divine soul consciousness — both during and after meditation.”

The story of Abhimanyu is a compelling lesson illustrating how a yogi who has not methodically learnt the way into a deep state

of consciousness under the guidance of a guru, can be dangerously trapped. We can see this on a more gross level with those who take drugs without understanding the states they have induced chemically; people who are not ready or who by circumstances out of their control, such as a severe shock, find themselves in an altered state of consciousness, can be badly traumatised and discover they are powerless to exit the state. In extreme circumstances, they can even go mad.

Canto 44

“Dhritarashtra says, ‘What you tell me, O Suta, about the battle between the lustrous Abhimanyu fighting alone against so many enemies, seems wonderful, why, incredible. However, I do not regard such feats as unbelievable marvels in those who have dharma for their refuge. After Duryodhana is beaten back and a hundred princes are slain, what do the warriors of my army do next against Abhimanyu?’ Sanjaya says, ‘Their mouths become dry, their eyes restless; sweat covers their bodies, their hair stands on end and they are ready to quit the field in despair. Abandoning their wounded brothers, fathers, sons, friends and kinsmen, they flee, urging their horses and elephants to their utmost speed. Seeing them broken and in full flight, Drona, Aswatthaman, Brihadbala, Kripa, Duryodhana, Karna, Kritavarman and Subala’s son Sakuni come swarming to quell the invincible Abhimanyu. But your grandson, Rajan, routs all of them and only one warrior, Duryodhana’s son, the noble Lakshmana, accomplished tejasvin, fearless now because he is both proud and callow, takes the field against Abhimanyu. Anxious for his son, Duryodhana turns back to follow him, as do other maharathas.

Like dark thunderheads inundating a mountain-breast with rain, all of them lash arrow showers over Abhimanyu. Abhimanyu sweeps over them, the dry wind in the sky that blows in every direction scattering cloud masses. Then, like one infuriated elephant fighting another, he engages your grandson, the handsome, brave and strapping Lakshmana, who stands near his father with his bow stretched, like a

prince of the Yakshas, Lakshmana who strikes Abhimanyu through his arms and his chest with virile shafts that drink his blood.

Abhimanyu Mahabaho is like a snake beaten with a stick. He cries to Lakshmana, ‘Look well on this world, for you will soon go to the other one. In front of all your kinsmen, I will dispatch you to Yama’s realm.’

He looses a broad-headed astra that resembles a snake just emerged from its slough, and dissevers Lakshmana’s beautiful head, graced with a strong and noble nose, fine eye-brows and handsome curls, and with sparkling kundalas. Seeing Lakshmana killed, your troops cry out in shock and grief.

Blood leaping into his eyes to see his precious son die, Duryodhana howls long and echoingly truly like some dreadful demon, and screams at his Kshatriyas, ‘Kill him!’

Six maharathas – Drona, Kripa, Karna, Aswatthaman, Brihadbala and Kritavarman, son of Hridika, surround Abhimanyu. He drills each of them with his burning arrows, and beats them off like a lion might a pack of dogs. The incandescent son of Arjuna falls upon the vast forces of Jayadratha with redoubled ferocity. With their elephant-division, the Kalingas, the Nishadas and the valiant son of Kratha, all clad in gleaming mail, encircle him and block his way ahead. Another pitched battle breaks out and tameless, invincible Abhimanyu quickly melts those forces; he is at them like a hurricane.

Kratha’s son showers him with deadly fire, while many other rathikas led by Drona, who returns to the field, rush at him, discharging their violent fusillades at the meridian prince. Containing their assault with some disdain, Abhimanyu looses a flash flood of arrows at Kratha’s son, cutting down all his barbs, breaking his bow, severing his arms and then his head with its golden coronet. Seeing Kratha’s noble, mighty and famed son, master of astras, die in the incarnadine blasts of Abhimanyu’s unworldly shafts, your other maharathas quickly ride away from this terrible prince of tender years.”

Canto 45

“Dhritarashtra asks, ‘While the young and invincible Abhimanyu, who never flees a battle, strikes deep into our vyuha, so effortlessly,

and achieves feats more than worthy of his lineage, which of my heroes stand up to him?’

Sanjaya answers, ‘Once he breaks into the chakravyuha, Abhimanyu brings bloody mayhem to your forces and all your heroes and the kings that fight for your son turn away from Arjuna’s prince, for he fights like a god and they cannot bear him. Then it is that the six maharathas surround him again – Drona, Kripa, Karna, Aswatthaman, Brihadbala and Hridika’s son Kritavarman of the Yadavas.

The other warriors harry Yudhishtira, to support Jayadratha who single-handedly holds up the Pandavas; many powerful Kshatriyas draw their six cubit long bows and shower arrows on him like rain. Abhimanyu paralyses all these great archers. He strikes Drona with fifty arrows, Brihadbala with twenty, Kritavarman with eighty, and Kripa with sixty shafts. Abhimanyu draws his bow into a circle and stabs Aswatthaman with ten gold fledged barbs, and Karna with a keen, bright, bearded arrow shot with great force.

Cutting down Kripa’s horses and both his Parshni charioteers, mighty Abhimanyu bloodies Kripa’s chest with ten searing shafts. In the very sight of your heroic sons, he overwhelms the brave Vrindaraka, the pride of the Kurus. While Arjuna’s incredible son mows down your greatest warriors, one after another, Aswatthaman strikes him with twenty-five small and cunning barbs. Abhimanyu turns on Drona’s son with a sizzling volley and Aswatthaman responds with sixty fierce darts. But Abhimanyu stands immovable as the Mainaka mountain.

Mahatejasvin Abhimanyu looses seventy-three gold-winged shafts in a wink at Aswatthaman so he staggers in his ratha. Drona rides to his son’s rescue, striking Abhimanyu with a hundred arrows, while Aswatthaman also pierces him with sixty. From another side, Karna strikes him with twenty-two broad-headed shafts, Kritavarman with fourteen, Brihadbala with fifty and Saradwata’s son, Kripa, with ten. Abhimanyu, majestic dancer in his chariot, makes each of them a home for ten missiles from his implacable bow.

Brihadbala, king of the Kosalas, drills a slender barbed shaft into Abhimanyu’s chest; in a flash, that superlative prince cuts down his

antagonist's horses, standard, bow and charioteer. Brihadbala seizes up a great sword and, leaping down from his ruined chariot, runs at Abhimanyu to hew his head off. With one inexorable shining shaft, Abhimanyu finds Brihadbala's heart, and that great Kshatriya falls dead without a sound. Seeing this, ten thousand illustrious Kshatriyas break away from the fray and flee, cursing Duryodhana.

Having killed Brihadbala, Abhimanyu courses across the field, sowing death all around him.”

Canto 46

“Sanjaya says, ‘Arjuna's dazzling son again strikes Karna with a heavy barbed thunderbolt, then quick as the mind with fifty more. Now Duryodhana pierces Abhimanyu with a relucant clutch of shafts. Covered all over by now with arrows, Abhimanyu presents a striking appearance; mad with rage, he bathes Karna in blood so that he, too, mangled by that prince's astounding archery, wears a burnished appearance; and both of them resemble a couple of flowering kinsukas. Without a moment's pause, amazing Abhimanyu kills six of Karna's bravest warriors, with their horses and charioteers, and shatters their chariots.

Fear lays no hand on that luminous sixteen-year-old god among men and, never pausing, he shoots the six maharathas with ten more shafts each. With six unerring barbs, he strikes off the head of the youthful Aswaketu, son of the Magadha king, in the same moment killing his four horses and charioteer; no, never pausing, he despatches the Bhoja prince of Martikavata, whose banner has an elephant emblazoned on it. Roaring like several lions, so the field echoes with his reverberant and youthful voice, Abhimanyu blows like a desert storm of death on Kurukshetra; like a lion in a cattle pen is he.

Dusasana's son scathes Abhimanyu's horses with four shafts, his sarathy with one and Abhimanyu himself with ten; Abhimanyu plunges two smoking barbs into his enemy's body. Red-eyed, he cries, “Your father has fled battle like a coward. It is well that you are not like him. But you will not escape me alive today.”

And Abhimanyu looses a long polished arrow at his enemy, but Drona's son cuts it down from a side with three light like bolts.

Letting Aswatthama alone, Abhimanyu turns on Salya and shreds his chest with nine fierce barbs, vulture-feathered. The riverine arrows from his uncanny weapon break Salya's bow, kill both his rearguard (*parshni*) charioteers, and bloody Salya himself, forcing him to quit his chariot and mount another. Tireless Abhimanyu unchained kills five maharathas in a blur – Satrunjaya, Chandraketu, Mahamegba, Suvarchas and Suryabhasa; he strikes Sakuni hard making him lurch in his chariot. Subala's evil son drills Abhimanyu with three barbs and says to Duryodhana, "We must attack him unitedly, or this boy will kill us all today. Rajan, take counsel with Drona and Kripa and think of how this terrible prince can be killed."

Karna asks Drona, "Abhimanyu crushes us all as he pleases. Tell us how we can stop him."

Drona says to all his maharathas, "You have all seen him close, this magnificent youth. Have you found any weakness in him? He careens everywhere among us all, but have any of us seen the faintest frailty in him? Ah, we can only gaze at the unearthly swiftness of this incomparable young lion, while he slaughters us, and gaze on in wonder.

We see his chariot fly among us like a streak of lightning; we see his bow always drawn in a circle; but so quickly does he aim his arrows and shoot them that it seems time is his servant. Ah, this dreadful son of Subhadra delights me, even while he razes our army, and afflicts my very prana, for he is so entirely wonderful. Our greatest maharathas are flabbergasted and I myself enchanted by the skills of Abhimanyu. Truly, I see no flaw in him, no chink to pierce so we might bring him down.

There is no difference between this youth and his father; if anything his son exceeds Arjuna! Look how he fills all the points of the horizon with his mighty shafts."

Still bleeding from Abhimanyu's arrows, Karna says between clenched teeth, "I am sorely wounded by this boy, and I fight on only because I am a true warrior. I fear that my injuries are grave, for the force of his arrows is like none that I have ever known, and I fear my wounds weaken my heart."

The Acharya tells Karna, with a smile, “Abhimanyu is young, his prowess is great. His kavacha is impenetrable because I myself taught his father how to wear his coat of mail. This young parantapa (conqueror) surely knows that subtle science completely. Yet with shafts well shot, you can destroy his bow, bowstring, the reins of his horses, the steeds themselves and his two Parshni charioteers.

O Karna, mighty archer, do this if you can and make him turn his back on the fight; and then strike at him from behind. With his bow in hand, the very Devas and the Asuras together cannot conquer Abhimanyu. If you want to kill him, first deprive him of his chariot and divest him of his bow.”

Not hesitating a moment, Karna cleaves Abhimanyu’s bow in his hands, even as that prince continues to vigorously burn his enemies; Kritavarman of the Bhojas kills his horses and Kripa his two Parshni charioteers. After breaking his bow, the six maharathas fall ruthlessly on the now chariotless youth, unleashing a black storm of arrows at him. Bowless and his chariot useless, but always the pure Kshatriya who never knows fear, Abhimanyu takes up a sword and shield and leaps high into the air. He hangs there, using the arcane Kausika way, going freely through the sky like Garuda, prince of all birds!

With thoughts like ‘He will fall upon my sword!’ the maharathas, their gazes now turned upwards, continue to loose their arrows at the suspended prince, always wary of him striking down at them. They draw blood from Arjuna’s son turned into the ultimate embodiment of a warrior.

Then, with a perfect shaft, mighty Drona breaks Abhimanyu’s sword at its jewelled hilt; at the same moment, Karna shatters his shield into shards. Abhimanyu falls from on high but lands unhurt on his feet. Undaunted, with never a thought for his life, he pulls a wheel free from his ratha and holding it aloft, runs roaring at the Acharya.

Ah, this world has hardly ever seen any sight to equal Abhimanyu at that moment, covered in dust, but his body shining so brightly through it, with the chariot-wheel in his hands like Krishna’s very Sudarshana, and still full of fierce valour. His clothes dyed red with the blood flowing from his countless wounds, his brow knit and

formidable with deep furrows, still roaring like a pride of young lions, lord Abhimanyu of immeasurable tejas, is magnificent, splendid, my king, glorious past telling or imagining on heartless Kurukshetra.”

Canto 47

“Sanjaya says, ‘Abhimanyu, the joy of Krishna’s sister, Abhimanyu the Atiratha (one unrivalled in fighting from a chariot), flaunting his wheel like the Sudarshana, is so beautiful; he is like a second Janardana. With his lambent locks flying in the wind, his body alight, and that strangest weapon, so dazzling now in his hands, the very Devas are blinded by that prince and cannot look at his splendour.

Seeing him with the chariot wheel, the unnerved maharathas tremble and, somehow, all together, cut that wheel into a hundred pieces. Peerless Abhimanyu takes up a great mace and runs at Aswatthaman. Seeing the gada aloft, and looking like Indra’s Vajra, Aswatthaman, tiger among men, jumps out of his chariot and runs three loping strides to escape that blazing prince. Abhimanyu, like a flame burning brightest just before it is put out, kills Aswatthaman’s horses and Parshni charioteers with dreadful strokes of his mace.

Pierced all over with arrows, looking like some ethereal porcupine, he smashes Subala’s son Kalikeya’s head like a red melon; never stopping, never doubting himself, he fells Kalikeya’s seventy-seven Gandhara followers with his supernatural mace. Next, he slaughters ten rathikas of the Brahma-Vasatiya vamsa, and then ten massive elephants. Flying then at Dussasana’s son, he smashes his chariot along with its horses and pounds them down into the earth.

The indomitable son of Dussasana takes up his own gada and rushes at Abhimanyu, roaring, Stop! Wait! The cousins, the two young Kshatriya heroes, begin to swing their maces at each other wildly, landing sickening blows. Both have a single thought; both are a single thought – to kill the other. They fight like the three-eyed Mahadeva and the Asura Andhaka in days of old. Finally, at the same instant, both land thunderous blows on each other and both fall at once onto the earth, like two uprooted yupastambas, sacrificial stakes raised in honour of Indra.

But it has been a day as long as several lives for Arjuna's matchless son. Dushasana's son, enhancer of the fame of the Kurus, is first to rise. Even as Abhimanyu begins to haul himself onto his feet, Dushasana's son swings an awful blow of his mace down squarely on the crown of noble Abhimanyu's head, shattering it. With a soft sigh, Parantapa Abhimanyu, sixteen years old, who has killed so many thousands of your greatest warriors by himself, falls dead on sacred Kurukshetra, the hint of a smile still on his bloody lips.

Thus, Rajan, many join together to finally kill this one hero, who by himself razes a vast portion of your army, like an elephant trampling lotus-stalks in a lake. And as he lies dead on the field, Abhimanyu looks like a wild elephant slain by hunters. Your troops surround the fallen Kshatriya who now resembles a raging summer conflagration extinguished after consuming a whole forest; or like a tempest divested of its fury after devastating mountain crests; like the Sun arriving at the western hills after having consumed the Bharata army; or like Soma swallowed by Rahu; or like the Ocean dried of water.

The maharathas of your army gaze at Abhimanyu whose face still has the splendour of the full moon and whose lashes black as the feathers of the raven made his eyes luminous and beautiful, Abhimanyu now lying prone on the bare earth. They are filled with joy and roar in relief and triumph again and again.

Indeed, Rajan, your troops are in transports of joy, while tears fall thick and fast from the eyes of the Pandava heroes. Seeing Abhimanyu lying on the field of battle, like the moon fallen from the sky, diverse beings of the air lament, "Alas, he who fought alone, like an army himself, lies dead on the battlefield, murdered by six mighty maharathas of the Dhartarashtra army, led by Drona and Karna. This killing was not a deed of dharma."

Upon the fall of that transplendent prince among the countless corpses he has strewn her with, the earth looks like the star-filled sky with the moon now among the fainter lights. Bhumi assumes a beautiful aspect, covered with wavelets of blood, scattered with innumerable arrows with wings of gold and spread over with the noble heads of Kshatriyas, wearing ear-rings, variegated turbans of

great value, with banners, yak-tails, beautiful cloths, priceless jewel-encrusted weapons, with the bright ornaments of chariots, horses, men, elephants; sharp and well-tempered swords looking like snakes freed from their sloughs, bows, broken arrows, spears, swords, kampanas and all kinds of weapons.

The ground in many places is impassable because of the horses that lie upon her dead or dying, all weltering in blood, with their riders lying near them, felled by Subhadra's son. Kurukshetra wears a grim and terrible aspect, with iron hooks and elephants big as hillocks, with shields, swords and standards, lying everywhere, all cut down by Abhimanyu. Superb chariots deprived of their horses, charioteers and maharathas lie all around in death's final attitudes, some crushed flat by elephants. Ample corpses of foot-soldiers with diverse weapons lie on the bloody ground and the indescribable sight fills all faint hearts with terror.

Seeing Abhimanyu, splendid as the sun or the moon, fallen on the ground, your troops rejoice, while the Pandavas are grief-stricken. When youthful Abhimanyu of sixteen summers falls, the Pandava legions all flee in shock from the very presence of Yudhishtira. Seeing his army breaking up, Yudhishtira addresses his warriors, "The heroic Abhimanyu was killed without retreating from battle, and he has certainly risen into swarga. So stand and fear not, for we shall yet vanquish our enemies."

Endowed with great energy and lustre, Dharmaraja Yudhishtira, the best of Kshatriyas, attempts to put heart into his stricken men. He says, "Arjuna's son has given up his life after killing countless enemy princes who were like snakes of virulent poison in battle. Razing ten thousand warriors, Abhimanyu who was like Krishna or Arjuna himself, has assuredly gained the realm of Indra. He destroyed chariots, horses, men and elephants, thousands of them, and was not content with what he did. He fought as no other Kshatriya ever has, and died in battle. We should not grieve so for him for he has attained the bright regions of the righteous, realms that men acquire only through great punya karma."





Guardian deities at Pachaiamman Temple

Yoga: The Science of Liberation

G.SANKARRAMAN

Yoga is one of the six orthodox systems of Hindu Philosophy, delineating the teleological purpose of life, that is, the freedom from the thralldom of the material process of individual existence. The yoga system is based on the epistemology of the famous Samkhya metaphysics, according to which the whole of existence is reduced to two basic fundamentals, the impassive *Purusa*, answering to the intelligent being of existence, and the impetuous *Prakriti*, the unmanifest, undifferentiated objectivity, being the potentiality of all names and forms, the entire spectrum of existence, sentient and the insentient, organic and inorganic. This is termed as *avyakta*, *akshara*, *pradhana*, being the primary substance, the prime mover of Aristotle,

Immediately after leaving university, I was in a state of turmoil not knowing the meaning of life. I chanced upon a Tamil magazine describing the greatness of Arunachala and a vivid account of Bhagavan's life which awakened my dormant inner potentialities. Later I came across *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi* which created a powerful spiritual impetus. I knew that I had found the true teacher.

of which the variegated existence of the phenomenal beings represents all possible configurations. This is identifiable with the, '*alayavijnana*,' or the '*tathagata-dhatu*', of the Buddhists.

While *Prakriti* is only a material and mechanical force, void of intelligence, and *Purusa* is a passionless non-objective awareness unmediated by the externals, that is existing for itself, the question arises as to the why, how and whence of creation in which all beings are implicated. The metaphysical solution of Samkhya, the father of Yoga, for this mind-boggling question, is that by the power of the *Purusa*, the energy of intelligence, *Prakriti*, which is in a state of equipoise, all the three primary qualities of light, action and dullness not being opposed to each other, is set into movement. That is, the light of the energy of intelligence falling on undifferentiated matter, the Form of Plato, all potentialities of individual existence manifest from the *Mahat*, the first born Cosmic Intelligence.

The entire metaphysics of existence is explained in four chapters known as i) *Samadhi Pada*; ii) *Sadhana Pada*; iii) *Vibhuti Pada*; and iv) *Kaivalya Pada*. The *Samadhi Pada* extensively dilates on the gnostic knowledge which enables one to sunder the spirit from matter. The *Sadhana Pada* talks about the practical implications. The very first *sutra* of Patanjali in *Samadhi Pada* defines Yoga as pure attention or awareness inhibiting the fluctuations of the mind, which are fivefold. When the fluctuations come to a stop, the Seer, that is the *Purusa*, abides in himself, taking the form of these fluctuations otherwise, which are either hindered or unhindered, being grouped under the following: right knowledge, wrong knowledge, predicate relations, sleep, and finally memory.

The right knowledge constitutes perception, inference and verbal communication. Wrong knowledge is an erroneous idea about some thing. The predicate relation, which can be equated with fancy or being in a brown study, is devoid of any objective content. Sleep is that state of inner being totally bereft of any mental content, the bare light of *Purusa* illumining the undifferentiated matter, known as *avidya*, the metaphysical ignorance of the nature of the Self. Memory is that faculty of the thought process having the capacity to recollect the

past, either a reality or a delusion. According to Vyasa and Vacaspati Misra, the commentators of the *Yoga Sutra*, the reason for memory being placed as the last mental state is that it is the resultant of the earlier mental states, being generated from them.

The *raison d'être* of Yoga is the direct intuition of the Self unmediated by all the objective categories, belonging to the realm of the *Prakriti*. The first two steps of Yoga, *yama*, *niyama*, refer to the ethical qualities demanded of the aspirant. The third one, *asana*, is as regards the perfection of the body. The fourth, *pranayama*, is by way of stabilising the psychic energy, which in concert with relative consciousness, perceives the manifest world. The fifth step, that is *pratyahara*, refers to the idea of stopping the objective knowledge flowing through the senses, the senses being resolved back to the mind, taking the form of the mind, only the past impressions remaining.

The subsequent stages, which are proximate to the inner being, are the following a) *dharana* — this is by way of the isolation of the mind to a seamless whole from the present discrete objects; b) *dhyana* — this refers to the stage of abidance in this, not by way of time process, but as pure knowledge. Finally, c) *samadhi*, the grand finale, refers to a state of mind in which the object alone shines in its purity without the notions of observer being foisted on it. In the last three processes the linear flow of the mind, the discursive way of thinking through the mediation of the senses, all these are no longer there. There is a direct perception of the object, which Patanjali calls *ritambhara*, which can be termed as truth-bearing consciousness in the English language.

Dharana, *dhyana* and *samadhi* constitute a unitary process, the consummation termed as *samyama* in yoga, and *prajna* by the Buddhist, revealing the essence of the objects, through a direct perception. The knowledge obtained through *samadhi*, that is truth-bearing consciousness, which is a balanced state, '*swarupa sunya*' (empty of selfhood as it were), reveals the very thing itself, with the memory of the past not insinuating itself into the being. This knowledge is beyond the five fluctuations. *Samadhi* is the disjoining

the union of the matter and spirit, leaving the individual all alone. It is not even becoming one with the Cosmos, but refers to something beyond time and space.

The various stages of *samadhi*, described in the *Yoga sutras*, are as follows. First, Patanjali makes a distinction of it as one of *samprajna* and *asamprajna*, the former having an objective prop, and the latter being devoid of any such prop, the intermediate stages being like this: There is first, the *savitarka*, based on deliberation on gross objects, wherein the yogi's attention is conveyed to a single object with the exclusion of all the others, which is not so much as objective concentration, but is one of seeing the essential ingredient of thought. The deliberative stage leads to the non-deliberative stage, wherein there is no censor, but only the impressions. This is a state of void, 'a cloud of unknowing' as it were rendering the censor immobile, a transition from the *samprajna* to the *asamprajna*. From this void the yogi proceeds to see the Universe in its essential form of the *tanmatras* (meaning suchness of things) a state of idealism of things the descent of which is the gross world. This is known as *savichara samadhi*, involving analysis, the observer-observed dichotomy still being there in a subtle form, the objects involved being the subtle essence of the gross world.

There is transition from the *savichara* to the *nirvichara*, the latter being a perception without the perceiver in a similar manner, the further subtle impressions alone remaining, constituting the next stage of *asamprajna*. This state of void for utter want of objects leads to the *samadhi* of objectless bliss. An abidance here results in the abandonment of bliss even in view of its involving duality still, albeit in a very subtle way, this being the precursor to the meditation on the very fundamental substratum of the mind itself, this being known as *asmita* in yoga parlance. The term *asmita* refers to the bare ego, the nearest approximation to the spirit, being the matrix of all phenomena. Here there are no objects to be meditated upon, but only a discriminative knowledge, involving the unbroken awareness of the distinction between *buddhi*, the finest essence of objective knowledge, and the *Purusa* which is beyond all phenomena, being the

sanctum sanctorum of existence, which is an illimitable void, devoid of the distinctions of subject and object, existence and non-existence, matter and spirit.

Patanjali says that in the higher states of *samadhi* there is no overlapping of the word, the thought behind the word and the intended object, which enables the yogi to understand essence of everything without the intermediary of language. This can be equated with the statement of the modern spiritual teacher, J.Krishnamurti, that in the total emptiness of the mind one can hear the very sound of the Universe, and can have a total insight into it. In the state of *samadhi*, involving the removal of the yoke between the *buddhi* and the Self, the entire existence, involving the identification of the pure spirit with the material process, comes to a grinding halt, with the energy of intelligence no longer informing the undifferentiated matter.

The *Prakriti*, which according to Samkhya world-view exists only for the liberation of the shadowy incarcerated reflection of the *Purusa* in the *buddhi*, is restored back to its balance, only the undifferentiated void remaining with no spectator to contemplate upon it, the unhappy wedlock of the two primal entities being broken, and the individual being immersed in the Silence of Aloneness.

There are cases of Yogis who have merely merged their differentiated being in the unmanifest void. They have the potentiality of being reborn, as they have not removed the skein of the tangled knot. Such personalities are known as *Prakriti leena Purusas* in Yoga parlance. The progressive ascent involved in the various stages of *samadhi* is a subtle transition from the gross to the subtle, it being realised that the subtle pervades the entire gamut of manifest and unmanifest existence, the gross layers covering up the transcendental truth beyond name and form like a cloud. The final stage of objectivity is that of the intellect the most rarefied component of the *Prakriti*.

All experiences of life only pertain to the reflection of the impassive *Purusa* in the mirror of the *buddhi*, resulting in the confusion of the true being himself being subject to the trammels of existence. The

Samkhya teleology at the summit takes the ontological position of the individual being always free, and the phenomenal existence being only an illusory contact of the true Person with the *buddhi*.

Patanjali defines the state of the mind in meditation as follows; Firstly, there is the awareness of the arrested and emergent states of mind arising and disappearing, there being no identification with them, which is known as *nirodha parinama*. Initially, the yogi is not aware of this emptiness by virtue of his mind being bent on acquiring the sameness of thought which is known as *samadhi parinama*. When the sameness of thought process is come upon, it looks as though the present and previous thoughts are one and the same. This is known as *ekagraha parinama*.

Actually, this is a state leading to the stoppage of the flow of time, having nothing to do with thought, the mind alternating between the arrested state of no-mind and the object of meditation, the distinction between concentration and distraction having been overcome by the background of emptiness of the no-mind, this being termed as, 'choiceless awareness', or, 'attention', by the great religious teacher Jiddu Krishnamurti. Actually, in the higher stage of attention there are no thoughts, neither the thinker, nor even the thinking process, all actions relating to the empirical world being tinged with the truth-bearing consciousness, the observer being lost in the blaze of silence of the no-mind.

The abidance in this luminous natural state of emptiness takes the yogi to the natural awareness of that which is behind the phenomenal existence. This is not a thought, but the gateway to the discriminating knowledge, which gets dissolved for want of any prop objective or subjective, the yogi remaining in the Solitary Grandeur of the Transcendental Aloneness named as *kaivalya*. The function of nature has become, 'functus officio', that is, having performed its function, the *Purusa* is released from the tentacles of matter. This is termed further as *maha videha* by Patanjali, meaning the great, grand disembodiment. Here there is no time or space interval between the *buddhi satva* (thinking mind), and that which is behind the phenomenal world.

Further, the overlapping of the words, the ideas, and the intended object, are no longer there, the trio of the observer, observation, and the observed, being simultaneously lit up by the light of the *Purusa*, whereby one is able to understand everything in the phenomenal world, seeing in one stroke the past, present and the future. Since here the duality or the interval between the *buddhi* and the self is also removed, no discrete experience of the senses is possible.

The subsequent chapter, known as *Vibhuti Pada* expatiates upon the various thamaturgical powers that the yogi comes upon, which albeit not relevant to enlightenment, are a pointer towards the mastery obtained by the Yogi over the entire existence. These are not to be equated with the cheap tricks pursued only by some *soi-disant* or self-styled swamis to gull the unwary public.

The last chapter *Kaivalya Pada* contains a vivid description of the state of freedom of the spirit, which is not adventitious, but essential. Thus Yoga is reading the book of life, to borrow an expression from J.Krishnamurti, here there being no reader, the reading also not being one of page after page, but in one stroke free from time. ▲

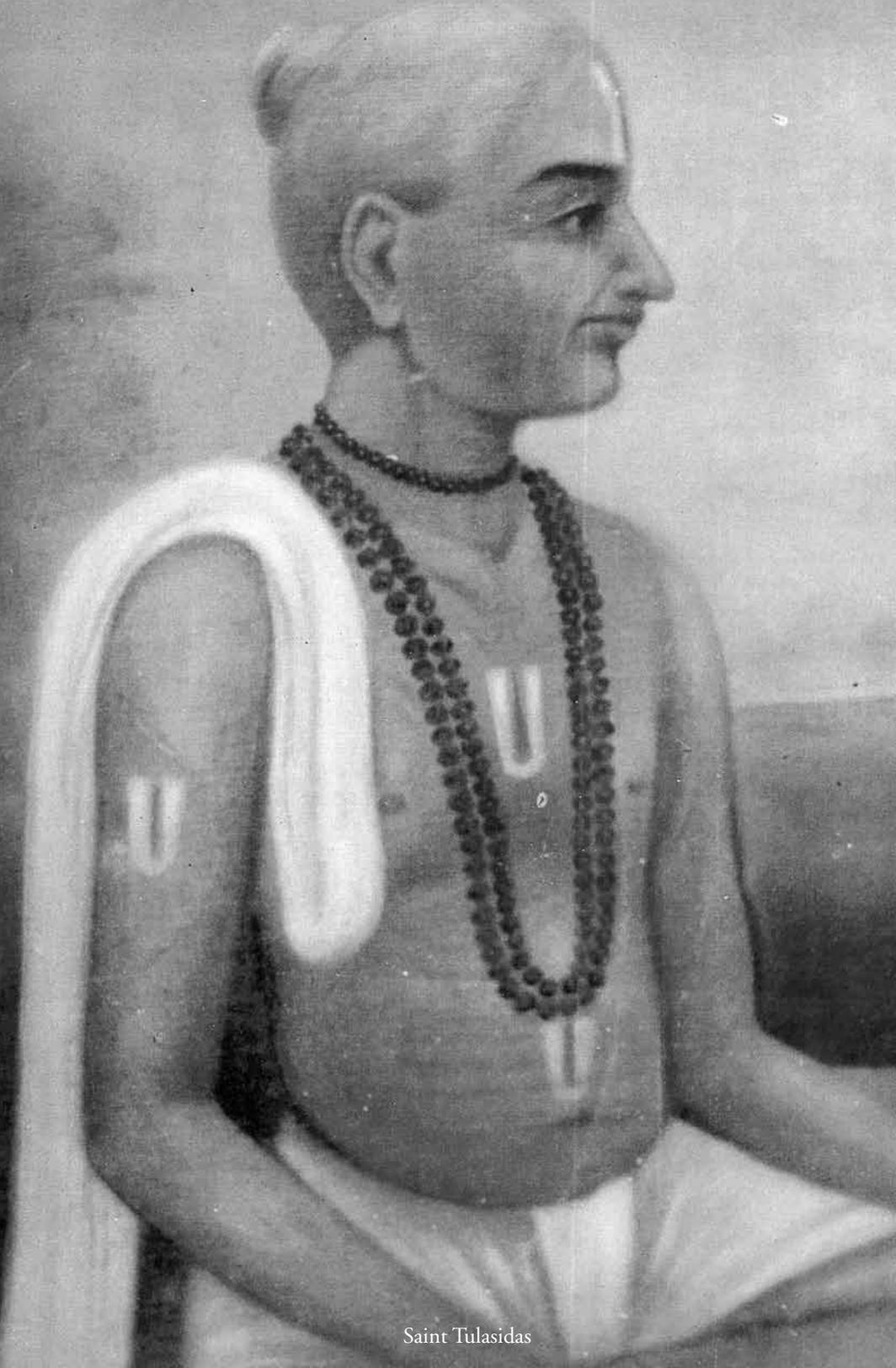
Haikus

Cheenu Srinivasan

Restlessness is mind
 What folly to becalm it.
 Elusive is peace.

Our inner peace Is
 Not the absence of disturbance.
 Is this too troubling?

Gaps in consciousness
 Between remembered moments
 Is eye of the I.



Saint Tulasidas

Maha Bhakta Vijayam

Chapter Thirteen

Sri Hanuman's Army of Monkeys Invades Delhi

NABAJI SIDDHA

Akbar of unsullied fame, who had realized his long cherished desire of bringing Tulasidas to Delhi, was full of valour, heroism, majesty, humility, and devotion and frequently sought the holy company of saint Tulasidas, who remained always absorbed in uttering the two-syllabled name 'Rama', derived from the divine names of Narayana and Namasivaya; and was firmly fixed in the state of Transcendence and direct experience of the Self, having cut asunder all earthly bonds and crossed the ocean of transmigration. He embodied all the auspicious virtues such as peace, patience, contentment and joy. Dwelling in *sahaja samadhi*, his attention was always turned inward immersing himself in the infinite bliss, while carrying on the normal activities in the external world.

The emperor glorified Tulasidas and chanted the holy name of Hari much to the annoyance of people of his own faith. His noble and charitable activities such as restoration of temples of Siva and Vishnu, digging tanks, building inns for sadhus, prohibiting cow-

slaughter, hoisting flags with the insignia of Sri Hanuman, Garuda etc. further incensed their jealousy. The courtiers belonging to his faith disapproved of the emperor's conduct and conspired together to reverse the situation in their favour. However, to please the emperor, they flattered him and joined him in singing the glory of Tulasidas and pretended to have faith in Vishnu.

In order to expose Tulasidas and trick him into a situation that would displease the emperor and strip him of royal patronage, they waxed eloquent before the emperor, "O your majesty! Mightiest among the kings! Though we have been worshipping Lord Vishnu earnestly, we remain deprived of His darshan. Our life remains barren. If God has not blessed an exalted devotee like you with His vision, where is the chance for sinners like us? The saint Tulasidas cherishes great love for you. If he wishes, he can facilitate the Lord's vision for you in a flash. You must approach him today itself and pray to him to secure you the Lord's favour within three days. You plead with him for his compassion and help, to win you the Lord's grace. We will also sweetly talk to him and make his heart melt for you."

Gradually, this insidious talk fanned the emperor's ardour for darshan of the Lord. Goaded by the self-seeking men, the emperor approached the saint. Making Tulasidas sit on his throne and revering him, he said, "What use are these eyes of mine which have not beheld the Lord, hands that have not touched His holy feet, and head that has not bowed to the Lord?" He pleaded further, "O great being! May you be moved to pity to help me get darshan of the Lord!"

"O noble emperor!" said the lover of God, "even after twelve years of austerities, it was not easy for me to get His divine darshan. There are ascetics who have spent years in rigorous penance, eschewing even the basic wants and restraining the movements of the body, just for a glimpse of the Lord, but their *tapas* has not mellowed His heart! While it is so, will He come running to give you darshan if I plead with Him? Will He ever deign to step into this city afflicted by cow-slaughter? Is it that easy to behold His divine form? Can a puny mortal try to force Him with his feeble prowess? I will never assure you of something which is beyond me. I cannot speak empty words.

Right now, there is no chance. He may be moved to compassion after some time if you continue to nourish your longing.”

“O Swami,” importuned Akbar, “I have been worshipping him earnestly for a long time. He should have no objection to appear before me. It will take only a word from you and I am sure He will acquiesce. The Lord who appeared before the entire population of Varanasi, will He hesitate to grant me His darshan, if you put in a word for me? Just as Brahma, the creator, can bestow long life on someone if he so wishes, Lord Hari will bestow His grace if you plead my case before Him. Please be kind enough to secure me His darshan within three days and thus cut asunder my earthly bondage and save me from the peril of birth and death.”

With great confidence that the saint would succeed in pleading his case, the emperor returned to his abode. He sent his ministers to Tulasidas to persuade him with praises and mellow his heart to supplicate to the Lord on his behalf. He said, “Let my lineage – ancestors and descendants – be purified by the vision of Lord Narayana!”

The courtiers and priests, reaching Tulasidas told him bluntly, “O saint, if you fail to get the divine vision soon for the emperor, it would only prove that all the talk of your visions of the Lord, conversing with Him, His blessings on you, etc. are merely tall tales.” They hassled him at all hours with this kind of talk.

“O foolish fellows!” said Tulasidas laughingly, “We can never force the Lord to give His darshan. Moved by compassion He appears before us of His own accord. You must make the emperor understand this. Your aggressive behaviour will not bear fruit.”

“O Swami, we will not advise the emperor contrary to his wish and earn his wrath and punishment. Do you think we will let you go scot free? We will not leave this place unless you arrange for the Lord’s darshan. Because of you, we have been made to turn our back on our own faith, give up our worship and tread the unrighteous path. You can hoodwink the emperor with all your pretences, but you cannot fool us.” The courtiers arrogantly spoke thus to Tulasidas.

Tulasidas said, “Is it possible for people who resort to unrighteous ways and intimidation to have the Divine vision? Are you mad to

bully me and keep me here under coercion?" He tried to get up and leave the place.

Preventing him from rising from the seat, the courtiers said, "We will not let you move from here unless you enable the emperor to get the Lord's darshan. Even if we have to die in the process, we won't let you go." Such was the height of their audacity!

Tulasidas said, "Stupid fools! If you harbour the idea that by such threats you can obtain the vision of the Lord and be absolved of your sins, it will backfire on you. Will the Lord appear before wicked people like you? Can you really subdue a sadhu with your malevolence? Now leave me alone. Don't bring up the subject before me again. Leave this place at once."

Infuriated by Tulasidas' dauntlessness, the courtiers said, "You are a wicked man posing as a sadhu. Don't play your games with us. Don't make a fuss. We have the emperor's orders not to let you out of sight until you comply with his wishes." For three days, they held him to the seat with threats and abuses. He was not allowed to answer the calls of nature, nor was he given any food.

Tulasidas was helpless in this situation. He became weak with thirst and hunger. He expressed his wish to meet the emperor to convince him of the futility of their attempt.

But the enemies said, "Unless you make the Lord appear first, we cannot send word to the emperor." They continued to harass him, hoping that Tulasidas would finally submit.

Meanwhile, the emperor who was completely unaware of Tulasidas' torture at the hands of his ministers asked them, "Three days have passed. What is the progress?"

"It seems our perseverance has borne fruit. Yielding to our persuasion, he has agreed to arrange for the Lord's darshan by morning," the manipulators lied to the emperor.

The emperor was excited to hear this. He remained awake the whole night in eager anticipation.

In the confines of the palace, Tulasidas thought that Sri Hanuman alone could deal such knocks to the fools' ego as to shatter their ignorance and arrogance and teach them a fitting lesson.

He called upon Sri Hanuman and beseeched him to relieve his distress, "O Maruti I supplicate to you! O hero of amiable speech, strong shoulders and broad chest! O valourous one, please hasten to my rescue! O primordial Being without beginning and end! O son of the wind-god, please rush to free me. O meritorious one, beloved of Anjana, O forbearing Lord! Don't you hear my cries? Please make haste! My mind dwells on you day and night. Free me from the enemies. O beloved Maruti, whose eyes are filled with compassion! Protect me with your grace! O merciful one who secured me the grace of the Lord! Please dispel my fear! O Maruti who shamed Narada and Tumburu who were overcome by pride of their musical talent! O supreme Deity whose renown is spread in all the three worlds! O Lord! Protect me from the cruel destiny that stalks my steps! O supreme among the learned, O Lord glorified by the ancients, I take refuge in You! O one who assumes the cosmic form, I clasp your feet for refuge! O my Master, dawn of Knowledge, put my mind at rest! I take refuge in you, O Maruti!"

"O, embodiment of wisdom! You are all auspiciousness, you are the fruit of austerities, you are the eternal bliss, you are the supreme God-head! You are the Absolute! Whatever be my faults or attainments, I hold on to your feet like a child catching hold of its mother's feet! Release me from these confines and end my sufferings, at once!" A heart-rending prayer went forth from Tulasidas.

Understanding his miserable plight, Sri Hanuman decided to teach the evil doers an unforgettable lesson. He issued a command to the army of monkeys, "O hordes of monkeys! I want a large army to enter the city of Delhi from all directions and cause such commotion and terror that the evil doers should tremble and run for their lives and fall at the feet of Tulasidas. Invading all corners of the city and palace, let shivers run through the emperor and his sycophants; plunder the city and bring the balm of peace to the heart of Tulasidas."

Instantly, a large multitude of powerful monkeys thronged the entire city of Delhi including the palace. They ransacked the beautiful parks and groves and shattered the splendid structures. On entering

the interior of the city, they clapped their hands and joyfully told each other, “Just as our ancestor Sri Hanuman had destroyed the city of Lanka, let us also bring down this city, trample on the evil-minded till life departs from them, leaving none of the people behind alive. We will create a holocaust.”

True to their words, on their way to the palace, they tore down all the magnificent buildings and fell upon the people ferociously, crushing some, choking some and torturing some till they fainted out of fear and pain. They flung some in the air, turned some round and round so fast that everything whirled around for them and tore them with their teeth and claws. The monkeys announced their victory with joyous shouts, which reverberated in the city making everyone shudder.

Crossing the courtyard of the palace they rushed into the women’s quarters and caused havoc there. Approaching the queens, they pulled their hair and teased and terrorized them by baring their teeth menacingly and dealing deafening slaps on their cheeks. They caused nuisance in the zenana. Laughing mockingly at the emperor, the monkeys said, “O! You are that foolish king!” Then pushing him down, they sat on his chest and showered severe blows and invectives.

Upon reaching Tulasidas, the monkeys attacked the courtiers who had surrounded and tortured him and chased them when they tried to get away. The monkeys trapped them all one by one and dealt them resounding blows. They scratched their faces with nails, plucked the hair on their heads, trampled some afoot. Running for their lives, some men crouched in the nooks, some fainted on the way, some fell down, their knees giving way. But the monkeys hounded them out of their hideouts and killed them in an instant. Some were hurled in the sky. Some had lost their hands, some their eyes, some their shoulders; some were badly mutilated, some mortally wounded and entrails were hanging out of some. There was total devastation to men and materials. It was a frightening and macabre scene.

In terror, some of the evil courtiers raced away trying to leave the city. But, they were horrified to be accosted by bands of monkeys at the outskirts also. Screaming in terror, some kneeled and craved pardon,

some quaked in fear, some fell flat at the feet of monkeys and sought refuge. The evil doers losing their guts were at their wit's end to find a way out. The monkeys made loud fun of their miserable condition.

Noticing the havoc played by the monkeys, Tulasidas became concerned about the emperor, whom he was fond of and rushed to his quarters. He was pained to see the condition of the emperor as well as the queens. He addressed the emperor and said, "O king! What a terrible mess your own courtiers, supposedly under your control, have caused!"

Prostrating to Tulasidas repeatedly, Akbar asked the saint in great agony, "O Swami! Please tell me quickly from where these hordes of monkeys have descended on us?"

Tulasidas replied, "O king, this is only a small fraction, a millionth part of monkey troops that has come in advance to herald the arrival of the Almighty Lord! The remaining part of millions of regiments will soon march into the capital. Then will come the mighty Sri Hanuman himself. In the end, the Lord will grace the city with his arrival!"

The emperor got thoroughly frightened. Realising his mistake, he urged in a tremulous voice, "I don't want the Lord's darshan. Be gracious and tell the monkey armies to withdraw from here at once and return to their home."

Conceding to his entreaty, Tulasidas prayed to Sri Hanuman to withdraw the monkeys from the city. Remaining invisible, Sri Hanuman declared in ethereal voice, "O beloved Tulasidas! Whoever recites with love the hymns of praise that you composed on me, appealing to me for help, will be rid of all obstacles in life and be blessed with all auspiciousness in life." The huge army of monkeys vanished in no time.

Those sycophants who had survived the fatal attacks approached Tulasidas and begged forgiveness saying, "We are ignorant lay people. Please forgive us our offences and keep us under your protective wings."

The all-merciful saint dispelled their fears with words of comfort and forgiveness. Then turning to the emperor, the saint said, "The people of Varanasi have been put to a lot of trouble on account of

these wicked ministers. Saturn, the malefic planet, while afflicting, as is its wont, a banyan tree, troubles also Sri Hanuman (the idol) sitting under that tree. Likewise, the sins committed by the citizens leave their stain on the king also. So, you too had to undergo suffering owing to the immature acts of the courtiers. Evil company drags one to his downfall.”

Consoling the emperor, Tulasidas, who was released from his detention, returned home. Overwhelmed by God’s grace, his heart became mellowed with gratitude and love. The glorious saint of Varanasi became absorbed in the natural state. ▲

(To be continued)

Sadhakas of Tiruvannamalai

Suchitra Sathyaranayan

A unique species of
Burnt ropes
Who carry their bodies around
Simply and lightly
Sometimes very heavily
On hired bicycles tiny scooters or foot
In and out of ramanasramam
In and out of old hall mothers temple samadhi hall
dining hall skandasram virupaksha
Round and the round the mountain,
round and round His samadhi,
With their own singular brand
Of grim or benign silences
And secret sustaining humour
Each working with the single lethal aim
And under tight Inner-commanded schedules
Of performing His or her own funeral rites
At Ramana’s Feet
Before the body falls.

TRANSLATION

Ozhivil Odukkam

KANNUDAIYA VALLALAR
TRANSLATED BY ROBERT BUTLER
COMMENTARY BY S. RAM MOHAN
AND ROBERT BUTLER

Chapter 3: Transcending [the path of] yoga

Dismissing *cariyai* and *kiriyai* as worthless, the *yogis* perform *kriya yoga* to ward off physical death. It is difficult indeed to dissuade them from it. They do not realise that what appears to them as real whilst they are experiencing it is actually false. Will they ever escape from this fixed mindset? (92)

Although the text speaks of *karuma yogam*, Sanskrit *karma yoga*, which is the discipline of acting in the world without attachment, it is clearly

Robert Butler devotes his time to the translation of Tamil classical and spiritual texts. He has published a grammatical commentary on *Ulladu Narpadu*, and a translation of the biography of Manikkavacagar. These are available for online preview, purchase or download at the following link: <http://stores.lulu.com/store.php?fAcctID=1212666>.

kriya yoga that the author is referring to, as evinced by the commentary of Chidambara swamigal. The practices of yoga are many and varied, both in principle and detail. However to give the reader some idea of what kind of practices are at issue in this chapter, we can quote a brief summary of *kriya yoga*, as described by Paramahansa Yogananda in Chapter 26 of his book *Autobiography of a Yogi*:

“The Kriya Yogi mentally directs his life energy to revolve, upward and downward, around the six spinal centres (medullary, cervical, dorsal, lumbar, sacral, and coccygeal plexuses) which correspond to the twelve astral signs of the zodiac, the symbolic Cosmic Man. One half-minute of revolution of energy around the sensitive spinal cord of man effects subtle progress in his evolution; that half-minute of Kriya equals one year of natural spiritual unfoldment.”

This directing of the life energy is achieved by a number of means including meditation and concentration exercises, breath control, yogic exercises, mantras and so forth.

The point being made in this and the following verse is that the *yogi*, as he meditates upon each *chakra* – *energy centre* and its resident deity – takes them to be real at that point, yet when he proceeds to the next centre and its deity, he also takes that to be real, without realising that the previous object of his meditation must necessarily now be deemed unreal. Thus each new level of ‘reality’ is actually as unreal as the one which preceded it. All his attempts at transcending a given level and passing to the next higher one are based on the personal, discriminating ego consciousness, and can give him only the temporary illusion of liberation as he explores these various levels of ‘truth’.

They may gain the eight *siddhis*, and have the gods of the six paths manifest before them [in the six energy centres of the body], but in achieving that, a great sin will be committed, as they move up and down from one centre to another, going on and on, suffering and dying. (93)

The eight siddhis are the powers ascribed to Lord Siva which the ascetic is supposed to be able to acquire through his austerities. They are *anima* – the ability to shrink oneself, or anything else, to the size of an atom; *makima* – the ability to increase one’s bulk without limit; *ilakima* – the power to make oneself or other things light, overcoming gravity; *karima* – the faculty of increasing weight, solidity; *piratti* (Skt. *prapti*) – the power of attaining everything desired; *pirakamiyam* – the power to overcome natural obstacles and go anywhere; *icattuvam* or *icitai* (Skt. *ishatva*) – supreme domination over animate or inanimate nature; *vacittuvam* or *vicitai* (Skt. *vashitva*) – the power of enchanting, changing the course of nature or assuming any form.

The six paths to liberation were mentioned earlier, in v. 43. Each of the paths has its own presiding deity, located in one of the *chakras* – energy centres of the body – upon whom the disciple meditates. When he has practised one path to the guru’s satisfaction, he is initiated into the next path and so on.

The true *jnani* understands that in the unenlightened individual the ego dies and is reborn from moment to moment, and that the true death is the death of the ego, not the physical body. The failure to understand this continual process of dying and being reborn is seen by the *jnani* as the cause of all suffering, and his goal is to eradicate the mechanism of the discriminating consciousness which is at the root of it. By contrast the *kriya yogi*, by deliberately engaging with the mind, and even expanding its illusory powers to the utmost through the development of supernatural abilities, condemns himself to this continuous round of suffering, as the ego continually dies and is reborn in a new guise, each as unsatisfactory, incomplete and unreal as the last. In sharp contrast the approach to spiritual practice, *sadhana*, described in this book is that pointed to by Nisargdatta Maharaj in *I am That*, Talk 33:

“Both mind and body are intermittent states. The sum total of these flashes creates the illusion of existence. Enquire what is permanent in the transient, real in the unreal. This is *sadhana*.”

Conversely, the *sadhana* of the *yogi*, being principally focussed on the body-mind complex, does not afford the aspirant the opportunity

to focus on the unitive, underlying background of Sivam, the Self, which underlies his entire being.

To attain the state of *samadhi*, remaining motionless like a wooden post through control of the breath, which is not [naturally] under conscious control, is comparable to the fate of a dumb blind man who has consumed poison, and who, in walking to a certain place, stumbles into a deep pit in a desolate area. (94)

The word *samadhi* is here to be understood as the state in which the sadhaka becomes one with the object of meditation, as all mental activity is repressed. It does not refer to the final state of non-dual realisation. The first state is known as *manolaya* – *subsiding of the mind*, and the second as *manonasa* – *destruction of the mind*. Sri Ramana Maharshi describes the difference between the two states in v. 13 of *Upadesha Unthiyar*:

“Cessation [of the mind] is of two kinds: in *manolaya* the mind is in abeyance, but in *manonasa* the mind has died. A mind that is in abeyance, but still exists, can spring forth again, but if its form has been annihilated, it cannot arise again.”

The phrase *arivu adanga* – *which should not or does not subside through conscious control* may also be taken to refer to the *yogi* himself rather to his breath, in which case it would mean *not subsiding consciously*, i.e. the *yogi* is not consciously entering the Heart, rather is he subsiding into the temporary state of *laya*. Thus he is undergoing a diminution in consciousness, not the ultimate expansion of it, as in realisation.

In the latter part of the verse the yogic aspirant is called *blind* and *dumb* because he cannot see or communicate the real truth. He wanders into a desolate area, far from his true home in the Self, having consumed the poison, which are his yogic breathing techniques, and falls into a pit, which represents the state of *manolaya*, subsidence of the mind, which is the fruit of those yogic practices. Since he entered into this course of action voluntarily, his plight is even more

to be deplored than that of the dumb, blind man, which is not of his choosing.

With your spiritual jargon, yogic postures and staring gaze, you act out a ludicrous pantomime of spiritual practice. Give up these worthless habits and remain motionless, as the pure consciousness which is all-embracing like the heavens, and in which there is neither knowing nor absence of knowing. (95)

Chidambara swamigal says in his commentary that *staring gaze* refers to the yogi fixing his gaze firmly on the tip of his nose or between his eyebrows. To do all this, the author says, is to act out a ludicrous travesty of spiritual austerities .

The yogi practises *samadhi*, burying himself beneath the *tattvas*. Could we blame anyone for calling him an ego-obsessed fool? Devoid of all common sense he is like someone who proposes to strip the bark off a stone to tie up an elephant, which even a tethering post cannot restrain, or someone who runs about trying to grasp the ether. (96)

The *kriya yogi* employs breathing techniques devised by the mind to control the breath, a process which in turn causes the mind to subside. It is this state of *manolaya* – *subsiding of the mind*, referred to previously in the notes to v. 94, that he mistakes for realisation. Thus in using the *tattvas* to create this illusion of realisation, he is using them as a *mattangu* – *cloak* to mask his real, underlying state, which is one of ignorance, thus perpetuating that ignorance.

The yogi is termed *car potha piththan* – *a madman [who relies on] objective consciousness*. The discriminating, objectivising consciousness is synonymous with the ego, the *jiva*, since in the Self there is no ‘self’ and ‘other’. The division of ‘knower’ and ‘thing known’ can only exist in this limited and illusory form of awareness. The verb *car* means *to depend on, repose on, adhere to*, therefore *car potham* is the objective, discriminating awareness that is characteristic of the ego, and which

exists only by grasping onto that which it perceives as exterior to itself. The *yogi* is called a madman because not only does he employ this form of consciousness, but in taking it to be real, he develops it to the point where he convinces himself that this illusion is in fact the reality of the Self, just as the madman has no idea that he is mad.

To attempt to realise the Self using the mind is doubly ridiculous; in the first place it is impossible, like trying to strip the bark of a stone, which does not have bark, and secondly, even if it were possible, it would be totally inadequate for the purpose, just as a strip of bark would be useless to restrain a full-grown elephant.

To undergo modifications of consciousness in the false world, which is like seeing one's reflection in ghee, or like seeing a person in the sky in the form of that reflection; to become one with lights or sounds and then to withdraw from those states – these are the activities of those who do not know their true Self. (97)

The world of the *tattvas* is compared to ghee. The image one sees in it is simply a distorted reflection of one's own personal consciousness, just as the face one sees in ghee is a distorted reflection of one's own face.

The technique of meditation on the shadow person is described in the notes to v.10. Having seen his own reflection in the *ghee* of the *tattvas*, the *yogi* then projects that reflection in the form of the deity on which he is meditating, just as the person performing the 'shadow person' meditation projects his own image onto the heavens.

Light is associated with *shakti tattva*, also known as *vinthu*, Sanskrit *bindu*, and sound with *siva tattva*, also known as *natha*, Sanskrit *nada*. These are the highest of the five pure *tattvas*, the source of all the other *tattvas*. The *yogi* is here described as reaching these lofty regions of consciousness through his concentration and meditation practices, only to fall back again into the lower states of consciousness.

The *jnani* rejects and eradicates the *tattvas* in order to merge into the absolute even in the waking state; the *kriya yogi* attempts to emulate him by enveloping himself in the *tattvas*, taking his perceptions to be real, just as the monkey who looks into a mirror sees his reflection as another real-life monkey. Since he has eliminated the *tattvas* and knows the true state, the *jnani* will reject the *kriya yogi's* practices as worthless. (98)

The idea is that the *kriya yogi* is like the *jnani* in what he is attempting to do, which is to transcend the *tattvas* and attain the state of liberation, but quite unlike him in his methodology, which leads him to get ever more entangled in the *tattvas* through his very attempts to transcend them.

Like the monkey who, when he looks into a mirror, thinks he is seeing another real monkey rather than his own reflection, the *kriya yogi* takes the results of his mind-based practices to be real, whilst they are in truth mere reflections of his own discriminating consciousness.

You so-called *tapasvin!* You are a fool whose thinking is like that of someone who seeks a cover to mask the heavens, rather than just closing his eyes! Is this madness due to the way you have been taught, or to illustrations drawn from the *shastras*, or to your own perversity of mind, or to your habitual mode of thinking, or to something else altogether? What kind of yoga is this? (99)

In the simile employed in this verse the *eye* is the *discriminating consciousness*, the *cover* is the *mind-based yogic practices*, and the *sky* is the *objective world of the tattvas*. Not realising that this discriminating mind, the ego-self, is itself a part of that perceived external world, he attempts to use it to blot out that world, expecting thus to merge with the Real, whilst all he needs to do is to close that eye, by turning his attention away from the world and dwelling upon the Self. In attempting to blot out the world he is merely trying to mask one unreality with another.

MOUNTAIN PATH

Like someone who mounts an elephant facing its tail in order to travel to his destination, will your ego consciousness ever be able to reach [the Self]? This (your attempt to know the Self as separate from yourself) is an occasion for much hilarity, like someone who attempts to seek out the demon which possesses and animates him, even though it is already clearly known to him. (100)

Someone who mounts an elephant facing its tail will never reach the desired destination, just as someone who tries to reach the Self using his personal, ego awareness will never reach it, since he will be travelling in the opposite direction, towards the world of the mind and senses.

Building on the sentiment of the first part of the verse, in the last part of the verse the very idea of 'reaching' the Self is dismissed as ridiculous. We are always the Self, whether we realise it or not, so it is ludicrous to attempt to communicate with it objectively, just as it would be ludicrous for a man possessed by a demon to attempt to seek out that demon, since the demon, possessing him and controlling his actions, is necessarily already clearly known to him.

Will sleep come to you if you summon it, rubbing your thighs, making snoring noises, and pretending to be unaware of your body? You complete good-for-nothings, if you try to mentally grasp the being-consciousness-bliss that manifests only after destroying your ego consciousness, will it not conceal itself from you? (101)

If one actively attempts to induce sleep by thinking about it, it will not come. In order for sleep to come, one needs to be in a relaxed state in which thoughts can subside and the state of sleep can supervene. Similarly, the state of the Self can only supervene when all objective thought ceases and one subsides into that Self.

Since oneself is not alone [as a primal entity in one's own right], and since the Absolute is the all-embracing perfection, which is not different from oneself, then what good does it do to torment oneself in mind, word and deed, loudly proclaiming, 'The Self is beyond all measure!' (102)

Individual consciousness is not some primal entity, possessing an inherent reality of its own. Therefore reality must be sought by looking within, to discover the real primal entity, the Self, from which one can never be separate, described here as *neekam arra puranam* – *the all-embracing perfection which is not separate from oneself*. The words *loudly proclaiming* translate, albeit rather weakly, the Tamil words *vaay paraiyaraiyil [en aam]* – *[what good is there] in proclaiming with the drum of the mouth*. Literally the verb *paraiyarai* means to publish by beat of the drum. The *parai* is a drum beaten to gain the attention of the populace in preparation for a public proclamation. The verb is prefaced with the word *vaay* – *mouth* in order to suggest the self-important and portentous utterances of those who falsely ascribe to themselves the most lofty spiritual attainments, having merely deluded themselves through their yogic practices. Since the Self is beyond the mind and senses, it is idle to pontificate about it in a way which subtly implies that one can convey the very knowledge of the Self, which one has just said, is impossible to communicate verbally.

Can it be reasonable that, having controlled your breath, mind and sight, so that they are entirely still, and buried yourself in that state so that you are entirely submerged in it, you should expect to be able to merge with That which exists both within and without your body as your very Self, as being and non-being, and that which is beyond both of these? (103)

All categories known or imagined by the mind, even being and non-being, are entirely transcended by the Self. Mere suppression of the activity of the mind and senses is worse than useless for the task of seeking the Self that lies beyond them. See also v. 94, where this point

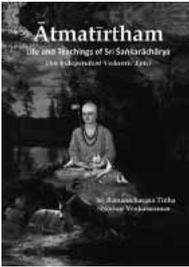
is forcefully expressed. In the latter part of the verse we are reminded of the line from the *Kandar Anubhuti* of Arunagirinathar, describing the nature of Lord Murugan: *uruvaay aruvaay; ulathaay ilathaay – as that which has form, as that which is without form; as that which is, as that which is not*. In the state of realisation all things have no existence in themselves but they do have an existence in the Self; therefore they partake, in a sense, of the nature of both being and non-being, appearing within the Self, which is beyond both.

Should you propose to remain free [of all the mental faculties], you will find that it is not possible, and that a sleep-like state supervenes; and should you attempt to remain [aware but] without any objective perception, you will experience [such phenomena as] flashing lights. Your aim is to establish the vital breath along with the errant mind in the *brahmarandhra chakra* within the skull! What kind of state is this! (104)

If the mind is suppressed completely the result is *manolaya – the subsiding of the mind*. See v. 94 and notes. This state is here called *urakkam – sleep* because in essence it is no different from dreamless sleep. Once it ends the mind springs forth again as before. Alternatively, if one allows the mind to remain active but free of any object, it will simply create its own phenomena, such as flashing lights, sounds, bodily sensations, and so on. The word *mantai – skull* is here used to refer to the *brahmarandhra* centre, which is said to be located in the hollow space between the two hemispheres of the brain; *pirama-rantiram*, Sanskrit *brahma randhra* means *fontanelle, the aperture in the crown of the head*; it is closely associated with the highest of the *chakras, the sahasrara, the thousand-petalled lotus*. It is a major goal of yogic practice to raise the energy of the physical and subtle bodies through the lower *chakras* and concentrate it in this region. Vallalar ends the verse with a contemptuous dismissal of such practices, with the words *itu enna nilai – What kind of state is this!* In other words such a state is anything but liberation. ▲

(To be continued)

BOOK REVIEWS



ATMATIRTHAM: LIFE AND TEACHINGS OF SRI SANKARACHARYA. Sri Ramanacharana Tirtha Nochur Venkataraman. Rishi Prakasana Sabha, Nikaya Trust, 4/8 Lady Desikachari St, Chennai - 4. 2014. pp.471, HB Rs400. ISBN: 978-0-9909239-1-6

Atmatirtham tells the life story of Adi Sankaracarya by drawing upon material gathered from all the *Sankaravijayas* (life stories about Sankara), the Sankara *bhasyas*, *prakarana granthas*, *stotras*, works of his disciples and various other references along with the fertile imagination of the author. Dialogues between Sankara and others, details of situations, and various other descriptions are freely interspersed along with traditionally known details regarding Sankara's life and teachings. Strangely, in my opinion, the author decided to avoid conjecturing about Sankara's birth/death, his establishing the mutts, and various miracles. As no book on Sankara can ever be said to be historically accurate, why not go ahead and deal with every story, every legend if legend they are, on Sankara's life? That being said, this book is certainly the most detailed life history of Adi Sankara that currently exists.

There exists a plethora of source material on Sankara. He is considered by many to be a giant among giants, the most venerated sage of Indian philosophy. Unbelievably multi-faceted, Sankara was a teacher, reformer, commentator, philosopher, poet, theologian, missionary, mystic, *mukta*, a divine-incarnation, a living legend.

This being acknowledged, very little may be said with any real precision on anything said about him. What is available is comprised of bits and pieces, speculations, legends, all of which were written between the 14th and 18th centuries and thus are posterior to Sankara by anywhere from six hundred to a thousand years. These works contain a profusion of prophecies, signs, and wonders. They are filled with incredible, miraculous accounts. Likely they also

contain (perhaps?) exaggerations, distortions, contradictions, and inconsistencies. However, whatever the historical truths contained therein, stories about the life of Sankara have and continue to inspire, guide, and strengthen the lives of devotees who have faith in, and believe these stories. That is their great value. Scholars and skeptics can raise their doubts but devotees and believers in Sankara's Advaita are interested in the teachings and how to achieve liberation.

This book presents the life of Sankara. It is not merely a simple biography. Interspersed with biographical details, the author has inserted quotes from Sankara's works as well as imaginary dialogues he could have had with others. This makes the story 'come alive'.

The book's format is similar to a lengthy *Hari Katha* in that the reader encounters an Upanisadic passage, then a relevant teaching of Sankara and/or *stotra*, and then on to a relevant detail from an incident in the life of Sankara. Back and forth, the reader is gently led between the heights of scripture, songs, and instantiations in his life.

This is a book for devotees of Sankara and Advaita Vedanta. It provides inspiration to seekers to reflect, discriminate, and contemplate the Truth that Advaita stands for. Not only is this a biography of Sankara, but perhaps for the first time, it profusely presents his teachings alongside incidents in his life. Obviously written with great devotion and with spiritual insights, the author has managed to write in a simple style that renders the book open to all and not just scholars.

There is one aspect which mars this otherwise charming book and that is the awkward use of various fonts with differing leadings which gives the book an amateurish look. One hopes that the next edition will rectify this shortcoming. — John Grimes

ADVAITIC MYSTICISM OF SANKARA by A.Ramamurty.
DKPrintworld, VedaSri, F-395, Sudarshan Park, New Delhi, 110015.
First ed. 1974, 2nd ed. 2013. pp.294 HB Rs.700 ISBN: 13:978-81-246-0679-7 www.dkprintworld.com

This book is both illuminating and comprehensive. It is an attempt to understand, in depth, the meaning and significance of *mukti*,

sahaja samadhi, brahmanubhava, Self-realisation, as defined in Advaita Vedanta. The author bases his analysis solely on the works of Sankara, both his commentaries on the *prasthanaya traya* (*Upanisads, Bhagavad-gita, Brahma-sutras*) and some of his *prakarana* (independent) works.

This is a unique book in that its subject matter is entirely the concept of *brahmanubhava* or *mukti* in Advaita Vedanta. It is comprehensive in that chapter one looks at *mukti* from the point of sense perception, inference, reasoning, *smrti*, and *sruti*. Chapter two describes *mukti vis a vis* its transcendent nature, its immediate and direct nature, its ineffability, compares it to the yogic experience, soon, deep sleep, and death. Chapter three describes the behaviour of a *brahmajnani*. Chapter four speaks of the path or way to *brahmanubhava*. Chapter five describes the place of faith, the emotions, and reasoning in *brahmanubhava*. Chapter six explores whether *brahmanubhava* is an object and gives a number of Upanisadic illustrations. Chapter seven deals with the validity of *brahmanubhava*. Chapter eight relates empirical experience with *brahmanubhava*. Finally, chapter nine gives a comparison between the mystics Jalalu'd-Din Rumi and St John of the Cross with *brahmanubhava*.

The book is full of relevant quotations of Sankara in support of the author's analysis. For anyone who is deeply interested in Self-realisation, *brahmanubhava* and *mukti*, as defined by Adi Sankara's Advaita Vedanta philosophy, this book is a treasure house of information and insights. Unlike many books on Advaita philosophy, this book places an emphasis on personal experience. Philosophy as a theory will not take one very far. So long as one remains within the domain of *avidya/maya*, there is little difference between the accomplished scholar and an unlearned individual. What is of crucial importance is *anubhava*, personal experience. Again and again the author points out this fact and for this alone, the book is invaluable.

As the author says, "The greatness of Sankara does not lie in his ability to construct a sound system of metaphysics only, but also in his realization that no system of metaphysics can penetrate into the depths of Reality. His thought is not so much metaphysical as mystical. It is direct experience."

— John Grimes ▲

ASHRAM BULLETIN



Bhagavan's 65th Aradhana Celebrations

On the evening of the Tamil New Year (14th April), devotees gathered before the Nirvana Room following Sri Chakra puja in order to recite *Aksharamanamalai* and to pass in procession before Bhagavan's final earthly dwelling place.

Two days later on Thursday

morning the 16th April, the main Aradhana celebrations commenced with recitation of Bhagavan's works in the Shrine, decorated with fragrant vetiver fibres, followed by abhishekam and puja. Both events were live-streamed allowing devotees around the globe to participate online. More than 1500 devotees received Bhagavan's prasadam from six buffet stations. In the evening devotees heard a musical feature on Bhagavan presented by Smt. Ambika Kameshwar. The following day, RMCL hosted the *Ramana Pada Pancha Ratnam* with verses from Sivaprakasam Pillai set to the five ghana ragas of Saint Thyagaraja's famous *Pancharatna Kritis*.

Chitra Purnima

This year's Chitra Purnima fell on the 3rd May and drew an estimated fifteen lakhs. The Ashram took the opportunity to offer Bhagavan's prasadam to passing pilgrims. Starting in the morning up till lunchtime, pongal, sweet pongal, tomato rice, tamarind rice, sambar rice and curd rice were served to some 5,000 pilgrims. After dinner that evening, an additional 1,000 pilgrims received *upma* at the Ashram's front gate.

Chinmaya Sisters

Radhika-Uma, popularly known as the *Chinmaya Sisters*, presented a Carnatic vocal music recital on Monday 27th April in the



Library Auditorium. Being Sadasiva Brahmendra's Day, they sang two of the sage's Sanskrit compositions. They also offered a heartfelt rendering of Bhagavan's *Atmavidya*. Endowed with mellifluous voices, musical acumen and deep devotion, a bright

future awaits these two sisters from Chennai.

Mahapuja

Early morning Wednesday 10th June began with *mahanyasa* japa in the Mother's Shrine as flower festoons were strung, and culminated in Deeparadhana around 10.30am. In the Library Auditorium, RMCL sponsored a devotional music programme.

Obituary—Smt. Rhoda Tata

Born Rhoda Shroff in Solapur, Maharashtra in 1932, Rhoda came to Bhagavan at the tender age of thirteen when the family moved to Tiruvannamalai and stayed for twenty months in the mid-1940s.

Of the numerous experiences Rhoda had in Bhagavan's presence, one in particular stood out. Once as a child, while playing at Palakotthu together with her friend Kalyani (Narayana Iyer's daughter), Rhoda slipped on a large moss-covered rock and fell into the water. In an effort to come to her aid, Kalyani also fell in. In danger of drowning, the two screamed at the top of their lungs. Rhoda began calling out in great desperation, "Bhagavan, help us! Bhagavan, help us!" The sadhus who occupied the huts at Palakotthu were away at the time but one disabled sadhu heard them and though unable to render direct assistance, joined in sounding the alarm. Annamalai Swami whose hut was nearby heard the commotion and rushed to the scene. By casting forth his shoulder dhoti into the water, Kalyani was able to take hold of it while Rhoda clung fast to her arm. By this means both emerged from the waters unscathed, in spite of swallowing mouthfuls of Palakotthu's tirtha. But in the panicked confusion that ensued, Professor Venkataram Iyer got the jumbled message that the Shroff



girls had drowned in Palakotthu! He ran with all speed to the Hall to inform Bhagavan and his excited shouts through the window in Tamil raised a huge cry in the Hall. Dhun, Rhoda's mother, was seated before Bhagavan just next to Lucia Osborne. Not conversant in Tamil, she was uncertain what had been said, but knew it concerned her children and sensed it was serious. Bhagavan, however, consoled her and told her not to worry, that

everything would be all right. Meanwhile Rhoda and Kalyani, not aware of the false alarm, took the decision to go home and change into dry clothes before coming to the Hall. But when sighted on the road, it was insisted they go directly to Bhagavan without delay. Presenting themselves dripping-wet before Bhagavan, they began to weep. In a voice choked with emotion, Rhoda made her petition, "Bhagavan, you heard my cries didn't you, you heard me calling out to you from the water?" and then broke down in uncontrollable sobs. Bhagavan eased their distress by making light of the whole incident. Inquiring cheerily of Kalyani in Tamil, he said, "What? You thought you would measure the depth of Palakotthu Tirtham?" Finally Bhagavan's loving smile soothed the panic in the Hall—the panic in the hearts of the two girls—and soon all was made well again.

Such memories remained with Rhoda all her life and she continued to visit the Ashram after her marriage to Feroze Tata in 1959 when the two moved to England where they raised their three children and she enjoyed work as a secretary for charitable organisations. Rhodamma continued to visit the Ashram even in recent years when her health began to decline, and remained an active member of the London-based *Ramana Foundation*.

Merging peacefully at the feet of her Master on 11th February 2015, she held close a precious photo of Sri Bhagavan. Survived by her husband, her sister Hilda and three children, Rhoda Tata will be remembered as one who exuded compassion, generosity, charm, sociability and, above all, kindness. ▲