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# Divine Names of Arunachala

8. ओं सेवक वर्धकाय नमः  
om sevaka vardhakāya namaḥ  
He who is devoted to His votaries.

In *Śrī Aruṇācala Akṣaramaṇamālai*, verse 22, Bhagavan says, “Arunachala! You have enjoyed undying glory by knowing what your devotees want and giving it to them without their even asking.” The commentary by Muruganar explains, “Installed as the witness at the source of the minds of his devotees, He knows what they are going to desire even before they know themselves. The Lord’s compassion is greater than that of the mother who gave birth to them, and his glorious fame is one that can never die. Therefore [Bhagavan] says, ‘undying glory in which you give without even being asked.’”<sup>1</sup>

Sri Ramana included verse 9.22 of the *Bhagavad Gītā* in His *Gītā Sāram*. “Those who always worship Me meditating on Me alone with *ātmabhāva* to the exclusion of even an iota of any other thought and are ever united with Me, to them I vouchsafe to bear on my head their yoga (attainment of what they have not) and *kshema* (security in what they have)”.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>*Arunachala Aksharamanamalai*, commentary by Muhavai Kanna Muruganar, translated by Robert Butler. p.38.

<sup>2</sup> Verse 31 of the *Gītā Sāram* paraphrased by T.R. Kanakammal in *Commentary on Anuvada Nunmalai*, p.120.

# The Gift

It is easy enough, for those of us who have been exposed to Bhagavan's teachings, to read, think and dream about them, but it is altogether much harder when we are faced with an unpleasant situation in the mundane world that impinges on our attention so powerfully that we have no option but to confront it. A disagreeable condition simply won't go away however much we either rationalise or ignore it. It requires great resolution to withdraw from the agitation of mind and calmly see it in perspective and not be affected by it.

How then do we develop strength of mind in the form of detachment so that we are not rocked by the inevitable forces that can destroy our peace? Here we should note there is a major difference between detachment and complacency. The first is *sattvic*; the second *tamasic*. Our purpose in life is to live to the highest level of intelligence and sensitivity. It does not mean we retreat from the conflicts and try to acquire a hardened shell so that we are not troubled or hurt.

The purpose of *ātma-vicāra* is to disengage ourselves from identification with thoughts, feelings or objects. We attempt in our practice of self-enquiry to eliminate the mesmeric power of thought that traps our attention and consequently, endeavour to remember ourselves and recognize our lives as a dream. In short, we attempt to wake up from the dreams our minds endlessly spin.

## MOUNTAIN PATH

How do we wake up? What are the tools at our disposal? If we examine all the various thoughts that recur in our minds, is there any thought to which we return repeatedly, and which makes us feel whole? If so it must be the sense of 'I'. The gap between two thoughts is our gateway. But we need to be careful here because the mind is so subtle that it can assume any appearance and trick us into claiming it as for our advantage. That is why we need a guru, a guru is essential in order to allow us to be free of delusion.

When we survey all the literature, the instructions, the stories and then look at our own situation which is inevitably imperfect we wonder if it is possible to pursue our own quest and remain true to ourselves. We may have the money but not the time. We may have the desire but are consumed by family responsibilities. We may be at Arunachala but cannot support ourselves properly or are beset by health problems. No situation is faultless. And so it should be because without challenges we would go to sleep or become smug. In this world we are not meant to remain immobile with its inherent danger of stagnation. We should exert ourselves to the maximum for anything less would be to deny ourselves the opportunity to deepen our understanding and advance, however minimally, towards our goal.

The saints and sages inspire us. We know intuitively that a genuine sage can help us overcome our ignorance and we seek someone for this aid. When we are ill we seek a reliable doctor who is skilled in medicine. When we want to file a tax return we employ an accountant. In the same respect when we suffer from a deep anguish that no written words, advice by friends or longing can alleviate, we look further until we discover someone who has the panacea to resolve our inner torment. What we are suffering from is the disease of meaninglessness. Everything seems futile. We seek a master of the medicine that will heal us.

If we think we will never amount to anything worthwhile or that we are simply inadequate for the task ahead, consider the story of one of the most unusual of all of Ramakrishna Paramahansa's disciples, Swami Adbhutananda. He was the very first disciple to submit himself to the guidance of this extraordinary sage. His original name was Rakhturam<sup>1</sup> though Ramakrishna called him Leto or Noto while for all

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<sup>1</sup> Rakhturam, which means, "Rama, You are his protector," and is a name given to a child whose elder brother had died.

the other disciples of the great sage, he was Latu. Swami Vivekananda in later years would mischievously call him Plato.

He came from a poor family of shepherds in Bihar. Both his parents died when he was five years old and he was raised by an uncle. He had no formal education and roamed the fields with other boys. He would often wander off and spend long periods alone with nature. Eventually his uncle lost all his property and in desperation was forced to seek employment in Calcutta. The young Rakhturam went with him. He found employment as a servant in the house of Ramachandra Dutta who happened to be a devotee of Sri Ramakrishna. It quickly became apparent that Latu was honest, straightforward and outspoken. His words were rarely soft and though he could be rude as only a peasant can be, he never lied.

Ramachandra Dutta or Ram Babu as he was commonly known, had become convinced of Sri Ramakrishna's authenticity and his ardour affected the entire household. Latu heard from Ram Babu's lips words that remained with him for the rest of his life: "The Lord sees the mind of His devotee, not how he is employed and where he passes his days" and "The Lord comes to him who is consumed with the desire to see Him; Him alone and no one else." Latu soon become engaged in his own sadhana while in the house of his master.

Latu first met Sri Ramakrishna it is said around 1880-81. Sri Ramakrishna or Thakur<sup>2</sup> as he was usually known, when he saw Latu for the first time remarked that he had the characteristics of a sadhu. Ram Babu wrote that Latu prostrated and caught hold of Thakur's feet, who took no notice of this and spoke to Ram Babu about how there are eternally free souls who never lose sight of their true nature. While saying this Thakur all of a sudden touched Latu who then lost all consciousness of his body and the world. After sometime, Thakur again touched the boy who then regained normal consciousness. Latu returned to the house of Ram Babu but lost all interest in life and pleaded with his master to allow him to return to Dakshineswar. Life without Thakur was hollow. Latu was sent on errands to Dakshineswar and would spend the day with Thakur.

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<sup>2</sup>Thakur means 'The Lord', was the commonly used word by disciples when they addressed Sri Ramakrishna.

## MOUNTAIN PATH

One day Thakur reprimanded him by saying, “I know your intense desire to come here. But you should not neglect your master’s work... If you do not do his work you will be untrue to his salt. Beware, never be ungrateful.’

“Hearing the Master’s equivocation the simple boy cried out, and in a voice choked with emotion he laid bare his helpless condition and said, ‘I will no longer serve anyone. I will be here with you. I will do your work.’”<sup>3</sup>

There followed a series of vicissitudes that the disciple in any tradition invariably endures before, as in this instance, Latu was able to stay permanently with Thakur. Why we suffer from extreme longing, disconsolate separation, and apparently insurmountable obstacles before we find a stable place in the presence of the master, either physical or in our heart, is a recurrent theme for all who seek the truth and can never be adequately explained. The best one can say is that the suffering we endure sharpens our sense of humility and the realisation that solely by our own blind efforts we can never accomplish our heart’s fulfilment.

What strikes us when we read about the life of Swami Adbhutananda is that he implicitly followed all Thakur’s instructions. He was not interested in philosophical discussions and he avoided much of the social activities that surrounded Thakur at the Dakshineswar temple. In the morning he would get up early and attend to whatever Ramakrishna’s requirements were, from gathering pots of water from the Ganga for his bath, cleaning the room, taking messages to devotees in Calcutta. Because of his devotion, he soon began to serve the holy Mother Sarada Devi. His days were full and he soon got into the habit of sleeping in the afternoons and taking up his duties again later in the day. At night he would do his meditation and this routine continued right throughout his life as he would sleep intermittently during the day with a shawl that covered his face. Thakur demanded unswerving obedience to his instructions and made Latu promise that he would never forget his master. Latu remained for the rest of his life true to this promise.

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<sup>3</sup> Chattopadhyay, Chandrashekhar, *Swami Adbhutananda as We Saw Him*, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Chennai, p.29. The book is a translation from the Bengali, *Sri Sri Latu Maharajer Smritikatha* by Swami Satswarupananda.

There are many more stories of Swami Adbhutananda's relationship with Sri Ramakrishna but for the purpose of this editorial what needs to be emphasised is the clean slate that Latu presented to Sri Ramakrishna. He had no preconditions, he did not expect any special favours, he did not presume to know better. He knew all he had to give for *dakṣinā*<sup>4</sup> was his heart and to prove it, unstinting service. He did not argue or question Sri Ramakrishna and when admonished for some lapse, he was distraught to have fallen short in the estimation of his guru. He never stopped trying to fulfil all his duties to the best of his abilities. But above all he followed to the letter the instructions given to him without doubts or reservation. He gave his heart totally to his master.

There was a purpose in Latu's life that was all-consuming and satisfied him in every respect. When we do have a worthwhile higher purpose in life the obstacles we encounter no longer seem intractable. We have the confidence that they can be overcome despite appearances to the contrary. There is an aphorism that states that one can live with any number of hows if one knows the why. One simple and effective way of disengaging from the negative forces which torment us is to remain centred in the thought and image of the guru, which leads us to the pure sense of 'I', untouched, untrammelled by the vagaries of karma.

However, what some fail to realise is that the relationship with the guru is a two-way exchange. Some seem to think that you get something for nothing, that the guru's grace is free. It is in a sense, because grace can never be bought; yet we are obliged to offer something in return and this is symbolically arranged with the offering of a gift, be it fruit or something else. On the inner plane it is our sincere efforts or *tapas* to cleanse our minds. But most of all, the greatest gift we can offer is our heart's longing for the pure, undiluted love of oneness that asks for nothing else. And it is this inestimable gift that the poor and rustic Latu gave Thakur without reservation.

Can we do this?




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<sup>4</sup>A gift given in gratitude by the disciple to the master.



Sri Dakshinamurti Statue at Sri Ramana Granthalayam

D. Thiyagarajan

# *The Hymn to Sri Dakshinamurti*

## Word for Word and Commentary

B.K. CROISSANT

### **Introduction**

Swami Chinmayananda opens his commentary on the *Śrī Dakṣiṇāmūrti Stotram* (Hymn to Sri Dakshinamurti) with well-deserved praises.

*Of all the hymns of Śrī Śaṅkara, Śrī Dakṣiṇāmūrti Stotra is the shortest but, at the same time, in its philosophic import, subtlety of expression and confident assertion, it is one of the most inspired works of the advaita philosopher. On a small canvas, Śaṅkara has with unerring dexterity crammed all the arguments of the non-dualist against the preachers of dualism. Naturally, the stanzas are loaded with suggestions, and to dive into their rich depths, special training is necessary for the students.<sup>1</sup>*

So, there are many levels to this magnificent and undisputedly powerful poem. On the one hand, it explains concisely the essential

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1. Chinmayananda, Swami, *Hymn to Śrī Dakṣiṇāmūrti of Ādi Śaṅkara*, Introduction.

B.K. Croissant first encountered Bhagavan in 1993. She retired in 2006, after 24 years as a senior museum administrator at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington D.C. Since then *sādhana* has been her first priority.

message of the *Upaniṣads*. On the other, as stated by Swami Chinmayananda, it combats an array of philosophies that misconstrue or misinterpret them. In addition, it is a perfect expression of *advaita vedānta*, and in the realm of divinely-inspired poetry, it possesses a genuine magic that enraptures those who delve deeply. Hearing it, studying it and repeating it with devotion can take the sincere seeker directly to the *ātman*, the all-pervading One Reality, the Self alone without a second.

This garland of ten verses, as they are constructed, speaks to both the mind and the heart. The intellect is engaged and substantially challenged, to be sure. Even more significantly, however, our intuitive capacities are aroused, and an insistent refrain, ‘To Him the blessed *guru*, Sri Dakshinamurti, may this obeisance be,’ reminds us repeatedly that a true inner transformation is not possible without total submission. Otherwise, the exercise is only an intellectual one, hollow at best.

In the literature related to the life and teaching of Sri Ramana Maharshi, one can find many references to Sankara’s *Śrī Dakṣiṇāmūrti Stotram*. In *Talks* Bhagavan begins His explanation of it by setting the stage in His own words:

*Brahma, the creator, created four sons from his mind. They were Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanathkumara and Sanatsujata. They asked their creator why they were brought into existence. Brahma said: “I must create the universe. But I want to go to do tapas for realizing the Self. You are brought forth in order that you may create the universe. That will be by multiplying yourselves.” They did not like the idea. They wondered why they should take the trouble on themselves. It is natural for one to seek the source. They therefore wanted to regain their source and be happy. So they did not obey the commands of Brahma but left him. They desired guidance for realization of the Self. They were the best equipped individuals for Self-Realization. Guidance should be only from the best of Masters. Who could it be but Siva – the yogiraja. Siva appeared before them sitting under the sacred banyan tree. Being yogiraja should He practice yoga? He went into samadhi as He sat; He was in Perfect Repose. Silence*

## THE HYMN TO SRI DAKSHINAMURTI

*prevailed. They saw Him. The effect was immediate. They fell into samadhi and their doubts were at an end.*<sup>2</sup>

Suri Nagamma, in her inimitable way, prods the Master into sharing with us wonderful stories and words of wisdom related to Sri Sankara and the Primal Guru in her *Letters from Sri Ramanasramam*.<sup>3</sup> T.R. Kanakammal's commentary on Bhagavan's translation of the Sanskrit verses into Tamil extols the soul-stirring and inspiring relationship between Sri Ramana Maharshi and Sri Dakshinamurti. Essentially they are the same.

*That Ācārya (Guru) Ramana is but an avatār of the aspect of Lord Dakshinamurty can be proved by recalling many incidents from his life. Most of the time he would be found seated in the hall facing south. He always (excepting when questioned by devotees) abided in the natural state of absolute silence. His upadeśa was mainly through silence. The traditional invocatory couplet to this hymn in Sanskrit runs thus: "It is wonderful that under the yonder banyan tree, a youthful teacher (is sitting surrounded by) disciples who are aged. The Guru's exposition is in silence. Yet the disciples have their doubt dispelled." The beatific spectacle of Bhagavan at the age of sixteen as the king of youths and in silence settling on the slopes of Arunachala is but a proof of the term Gururyuvā (a young teacher). That many were the disciples venerable in age like B.V. Narasimhaswamy, Sivaprakasam Pillai and Gambhiram Seshayya, who by merely remaining in the powerful presence of this King of yogīs, gained sublime experiences is a fact widely known and recorded bearing testimony to the term Vriddhā Sishyā (disciples, advanced in years).*<sup>4</sup>

T.K. Sundaresa Iyer, an ardent devotee who first met Bhagavan in 1908, relates in his moving reminiscences an incident that underscores and proves Kanakammal's point.

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<sup>2</sup> Venkataramiah, M. (compl.), *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, Talk§569.

<sup>3</sup> For instance, see 'The Incarnation of Sri Dakshinamurthy' (7th February, 1947) and 'The Attitude of Silence' (3rd September, 1947).

<sup>4</sup> Kanakammal, Smt.T.R., *Commentary on Anuvāda Nūnmālai* (Translated Works of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi), Volume II, pp.177-178.

## MOUNTAIN PATH

*It was a Sivaratri Day. The evening worships at the Mother's shrine were over. The devotees had their dinner with Sri Bhagavan, who was now on His seat, the devotees at His feet sitting around Him. At 8 p.m. one of the sadhus stood up, did pranam (offered obeisance), and with folded hands prayed: "Today is the Sivaratri Day; we should be highly blessed by Sri Bhagavan expounding to us the meaning of the Hymn to Dakshinamurti (stotra)." Says Bhagavan: "Yes, sit down." The Sadhu sat, and all eagerly looked at Sri Bhagavan and Sri Bhagavan looked at them. Sri Bhagavan sat and sat in His usual pose, no, poise. No words, no movement, and all was stillness! He sat still, and all sat still, waiting. The clock went on striking, nine, ten, eleven, twelve, one, two and three. Sri Bhagavan sat and they sat. Stillness, calmness, motionlessness – not conscious of the body, of space or time. Thus eight hours were passed in Peace, in Silence, in Being, as It is. Thus was the Divine Reality taught through the speech of Silence by Bhagavan Sri Ramana-Dakshinamurthy. At the stroke of 4 a.m. Sri Bhagavan quietly said: "And now have you known the essence of the Dakshinamurti Hymn." All the devotees stood and made pranam to the holy Form of the Guru in the ecstasy of their Being.<sup>5</sup>*

This same awe-inspiring revelation of identity is meaningfully reinforced by Muruganar, one of Bhagavan's closest devotees, who heard the following story from the Master Himself.

*When the four aged Sanakadi rishis first saw the sixteen-year-old Sri Dakshinamurti sitting under the banyan tree, they were at once attracted by him, understanding him to be the real Sadguru. They approached him, did three pradakshinas around him, prostrated before him, sat at his feet and began to ask very shrewd and pertinent questions about the nature of Reality and the means of attaining it. Because of the great compassion and fatherly love (vātsalya) which he felt for his aged disciples, the young Sri Dakshinamurti was overjoyed to see their earnestness, wisdom and maturity, and hence he gave apt replies to each of their*

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<sup>5</sup> Sundaresa Iyer, T.K., *At the Feet of Bhagavan*, pp.29-30.

*questions. As he answered each consecutive question, further doubts rose in their minds and still they asked further questions. Thus they continued to question Sri Dakshinamurti, for one whole year, and he continued to clear their doubts through his compassionate answers. Finally, however, Sri Dakshinamurti understood that if he gave more answers to their questions more doubts would rise in their minds and hence there would never be an end to their ignorance (ajnana). Therefore, suppressing even the feeling of compassion and fatherly love which was welling up within him, he merged himself into the supreme silence. Because of their great maturity (which had been ripened to perfection through their year-long association with the Sadguru), as soon as Sri Dakshinamurti thus merged himself, they too were automatically merged within, into silence, the state of Self. Wonder-struck on hearing Sri Bhagavan narrating the story in this manner, Sri Muruganar remarked that in no book is it mentioned that Sri Dakshinamurti ever spoke anything. "But this is what actually happened," replied Sri Bhagavan. From the authoritative way in which Sri Bhagavan thus replied and from the clear and descriptive way in which he had told the story, Sri Muruganar understood that Sri Bhagavan was none other than Sri Dakshinamurti himself.<sup>6</sup>*

*The Maharshi, a publication of Arunachala Ashrama in New York, recently devoted an entire issue to Sri Dakshinamurti. Articles by the journal's editor, T.M.P. Mahadevan and Major A.W. Chadwick wax eloquently on the nature of the relationship linking Sri Ramana Maharshi, Sri Dakshinamurti and Adi Sankaracharya. In his Gurustutih, Kavyakantha Ganapati Muni proclaims: 'Obeisance to the line of preceptors with Dakṣiṇāmūrti in the beginning, Śāṅkara in the middle and Ramaṇa in the end!'.<sup>7</sup>*

**Note:** Word for word translations are given below for each verse in order to slow the reader down, quiet the mind and enhance concentration. If the reader does not go slowly, the power of certain key words will be lost. Knowing what each word means will

<sup>6</sup> *The Silent Power*, pp.48-49.

<sup>7</sup> September/October 2016, Vol.26, No.5, p.2.

make chanting the hymn much more meaningful. When various interpretations exist, this translation aligns as closely as possible to Ramana Maharshi's Tamil translation of the original Sanskrit. Recordings of Sankara's hymn and poems by Ramana Maharshi can be found on Sri Ramanasramam's website. Let the perfume and power of poetry come through to you as you read and chant the verses of these two mystical giants.

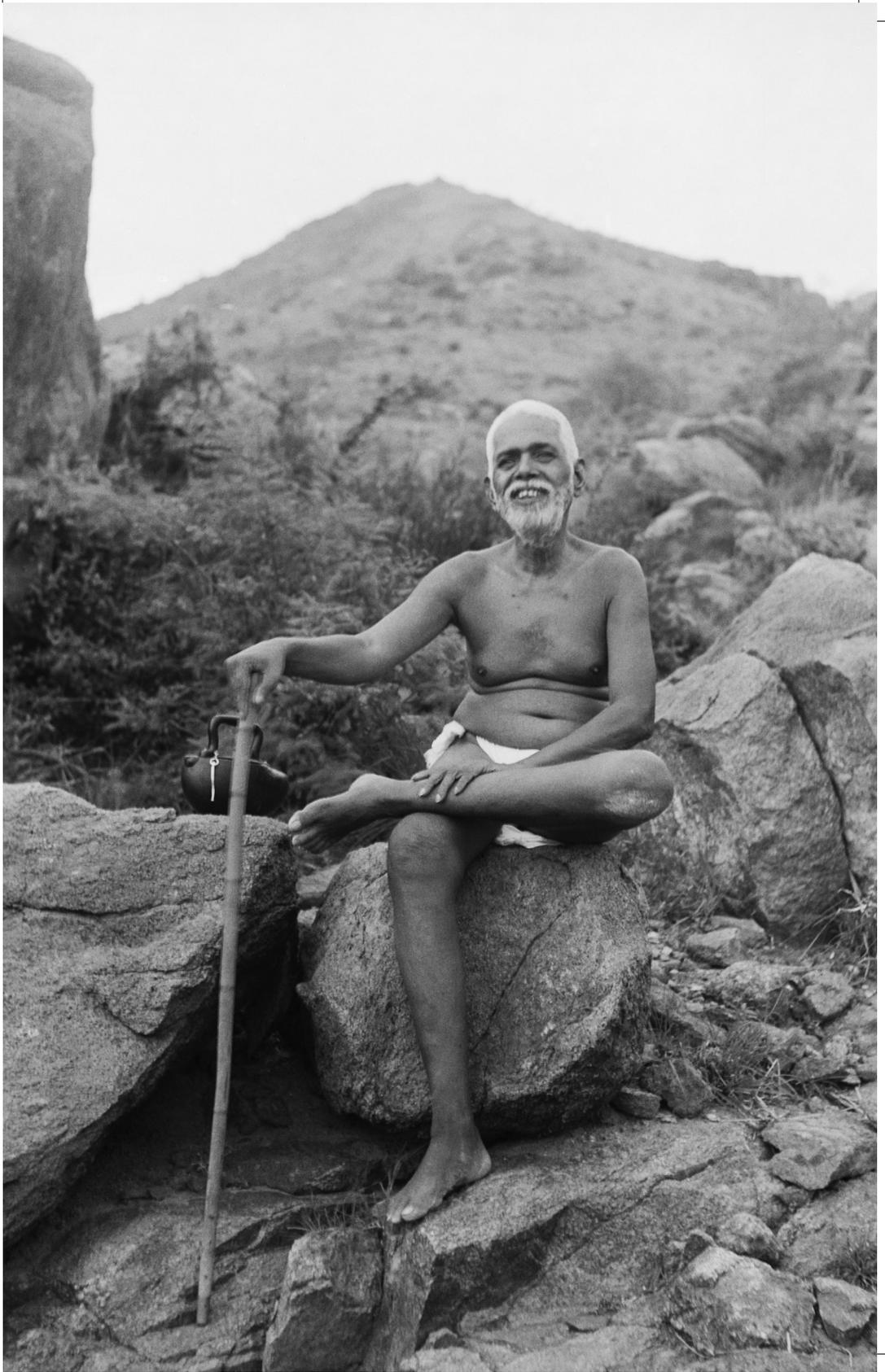
### Verse One

विश्वं दर्पणदृश्यमाननगरीतुल्यं निजान्तर्गतं  
पश्यन्नात्मनि मायया बहिरिवोद्भूतं यथा निद्रया ।  
यस्साक्षात्कुरुते प्रबोधसमये स्वात्मानमेवाद्वयं  
तस्मै श्रीगुरुमूर्तये नम इदं श्रीदक्षिणामूर्तये ॥

*viśvaṁ darpaṇa-dr̥śyamāna-nagarī-tulyaṁ nijāntar-gataṁ  
paśyann-ātmani māyayā bahirivod-bhūtaṁ yathā nidrayā |  
yaḥ sākṣāt-kurute prabodha-samaye svātmānam-evā-dvayaṁ  
tasmai śrī guru-mūrtaye nama idaṁ śrī dakṣiṇāmūrtaye ||*

*viśvaṁ*: the universe; *darpaṇa-dr̥śyamāna-nagarī-tulyaṁ*: like a city reflected in a mirror; *nijāntar-gataṁ*: existing inside; *paśyan*: perceiving; *ātmani*: in the self; *māyayā*: by *māyā*; *bahir iva udbhūtaṁ*: as though produced outside; *yathā nidrayā*: as in a dream; *yaḥ*: who; *sākṣāt-kurute*: experiences directly; *prabodha-samaye*: at the time of awakening; *svātmānam eva*: his Self alone; *advayaṁ*: non-dual, without a second; *tasmai*: to Him; *śrī guru-mūrtaye*: the blessed *guru*; *namaḥ idaṁ*: may this obeisance be; *śrī dakṣiṇāmūrtaye*: (to) Sri Dakshinamurti.

*To Him, the blessed guru Sri Dakshinamurti, who experiences directly at the time of awakening his Self alone without a second, (previously) perceiving the universe in the self, like a city reflected in a mirror, existing inside, (but) by māyā (seen) as though produced outside as in a dream, may this obeisance be.*



### Commentary

It is not uncommon for the breadth and depth of a sacred hymn to be expressed in the first stanza. That is the case here. The full import of the poem is given at the outset, making all subsequent stanzas commentary upon it.

Using a common metaphor, the meaning of this first verse could be simply stated in terms of the snake and the rope. All that exists is the Self, the rope, upon which is superimposed the idea of a terrifying snake. When awakening occurs, the mind or *māyā* disappears, and with it the imaginary snake. Otherwise stated, there is only One and you are THAT. When complete and total surrender is achieved, the Primal Guru removes all delusion out of His infinite grace and compassion.

There are two especially noteworthy concepts in this verse. One is the mirror, and the other the dream.

In Sankaracharya's *Hastāmalaka Gītā* the reflection in a mirror is compared to the mind. Here the emphasis is on the reflection's dependence on the object reflected and the totally unreal nature of the reflection itself. The inconstant mind is contrasted with the eternal, immovable Self, and That Thou Art ('I am that conscious Self') is emphatically asserted in the beautiful refrain.

mukhābhāsako darpaṇe dṛśyamāno / mukhatvātpṛthaktvena  
naivāsti vastu / cidābhāsako dhīṣu jīvo'pi tadvat / sa  
nityopalabdhisvarūpo'hamātmā || (*I am that conscious Self / of  
whom the ego is not independent, / as the image in a mirror is  
not independent / of the object reflected.*)

yathā darpaṇābhāva ābhāsahānau / mukhaṁ vidyate  
kalpanāhīnamekam / tathā dhīviyoge nirābhāsako yaḥ / sa  
nityopalabdhisvarūpo'hamātmā || (*I am the unqualified, conscious  
Self, / existing even after the extinction of the mind, / just as the  
object remains ever the same / even after the removal of the  
reflecting mirror.*)<sup>1</sup>

When Bhagavan explains the *Śrī Dakṣiṇāmūrti Stotram* in *Talks*, He gives the meaning of the mirror as mind.

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<sup>1</sup> Translation from *Parayana: The Poetic Works of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi*, verses 5 and 6, pp. 246-247.

*Which is the darpana (mirror) here? A mirror, as we know it, is an insentient object which reflects light. What corresponds to a mirror in an individual? The light of the self-luminous Self is reflected on the Mahatattva. The reflected light is the mind-ether or the pure mind. This illumines the vasanas (latencies) of the individual and hence the sense of 'I' and 'this' arises.<sup>2</sup>*

In His first set of written instructions to devotees given when He was twenty-one years old, Bhagavan also uses a mirror to represent the mind. In a simple but very profound diagram, He clarifies the relationship between the Self and the three states of mind (waking, dreaming and deep sleep) with their corresponding bodies (gross, subtle and causal). Between the inner chamber, where the Self is positioned, and the middle chamber and outer court is a door leading to a mirror identified as the ego. When the door is opened by 'the vital principle as conditioned by time, *karma*, etc.' the mirror's reflection produces the dream state and, when the windows or five cognitive sense-organs of the middle chamber are involved, the waking state. The Self is unmovable and shines of its own accord.<sup>3</sup>

While Sankara uses the mirror as a metaphor in his poems, Bhagavan often referred to a lens through which an image is projected on a screen, an updated idea that reflects the technology of our time. That is the case in verse six of the *Śrī Aruṇācala Aṣṭakam* (Eight Stanzas to Sri Arunachala), which in many ways recalls the first verse of the *Śrī Dakṣiṇāmūrti Stotram*. It contains many of the same themes, such as reflected light, the power of *māyā*, projection outside, and the Oneness of the Atman. In addition, as in the diagram of His youth, it includes the whirl of *prārabdha*. Underlying the same ideas, there is a devotion and passion that shines through and grips the soul, especially when singing it in the original version in Tamil with alliterations and rhythm intact.

Uṇḍoru poru-ḷari voḷi-yuḷa mēnī / uḷa-dunil ala-dilā adisaya sakti  
/ Nin-ḍraṇu nizhal-nirai ninai-vaḷi vōḍē / nikazh-vinai chuzha-lilan

<sup>2</sup> Venkataramiah, M. (compl.), *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, Talk§569.

<sup>3</sup> *Self-Enquiry: Vichara Sangraham of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi*, Translated by Dr. T.M.P. Mahadevan, 2008, pp.14-16. The diagram in question 18 is a very helpful visual depiction of profound philosophical concepts.

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ninai-voḷi yāḍi / Kaṅ-ḍana nizhaṅ-jaga vichit-tira muḷḷuṅ / kaṅ-mudal porī-vazhi puṛat-tumor chillā / Nin-ḍṛiḍu nizhal-paḍa niga-raruṅ kundṛē / nin-ḍṛiḍa chen-ḍṛiḍa ninai-viḍa vindṛē (*You alone exist, O Heart, the radiance of Awareness. In You a power mysterious dwells, a power which without You is nothing. From It (this power of manifestation) there proceeds, along with a perceiver, a series of subtle shadowy thoughts which, lit by the reflected light of mind amid the whirl of prarabdha, appear within as a shadowy spectacle of the world and appear without as the world perceived by the five senses as a film is projected through a lens. Whether perceived or unperceived, these (thoughts) are nothing apart from you, O Hill of Grace.*)<sup>4</sup>

The second concept, the dream, first appears with the words ‘*yathā nidrā*’. Commonly ‘like a dream’ is interpreted as a comparison between the dream state, when the dreamer sees a world that appears outside of the dream body, although clearly it is coming from the inside or the mind, and the waking state, when what is inside also appears as outside.

A far deeper meaning of the concept, however, is signaled by the words ‘*prabodha samaye*’, meaning ‘at the time of awakening’. In this case, attaining enlightenment is compared to waking up from a dream. T.R. Kanakammal seizes that parallel and gives it prominence in her paraphrase of Bhagavan’s Tamil translation.

Ulagu kaṅṅāḍi yūrnēr uṛat-tanuḷ aṅjñā nattāl / Velīyi-niṛ tuyiṛ kaṅāppōḷ viḷan-giḍak kaṅḍu jñāna / Nilaiyuṛu nēran tannai oruvanā evanēr kāṅban / Talai-yuṛu guru-vām anda dakṣhiṇā mūrṭti pōṭṭi (*May our obeisance be to that Primal guru Sri Dakshinamurthy, who, at the time of spiritual awakening, experiences directly [without the aid of any medium] his true form as one without a second even as a dreamer on waking up sees only himself but who, hitherto out of ignorance, perceived the world existing within [the mind] as if manifested without [or outside of him] like the reflected image of a city seen to exist within a mirror.*)<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> *Five Hymns to Arunachala and Other Poems of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi*, Translated by Prof. K. Swaminathan, p.123.

<sup>5</sup> Kanakammal, Smt.T.R., *Commentary on Anuvāda Nūnmālai*, Volume II, p.185.

## THE HYMN TO SRI DAKSHINAMURTI

The world of the waking state is as much a dream as the world of the dream state. This simple and profound message, extremely difficult to grasp as long as the Self is identified with the body, was often stated by Bhagavan in His responses to questions from devotees over the years. Here it is in the first verse of *Ēkānma Pañcakam* (Five Verses on the Self), a masterpiece of inspired mystical poetry.

Tannai maṇandu tanuvē tānā-eṇṇi / Eṇṇil piṛavi eḍut-tiṛudi –  
tannai / Uṇarndu tānā-dal ulagasañ charak / Kanavin vizhit-talē  
kānga-anavara dam (*When, forgetting the Self, one thinks / That  
the body is oneself and goes / Through innumerable births / And  
in the end remembers and becomes / The Self, know this is only  
like / Awakening from a dream wherein / One has wandered over  
all the world.*)<sup>6</sup>

In verse 3 of the same poem, He uses the image of film projected on a screen and speaks of the mistaken notion, extremely difficult to overcome, that we are in the world and not that the world is within us (as Self), projected outside by *māyā*.

Tannuḷ tanu-virukkat tānach jaḍa-vuḍalan / Tannuḷ irup-padāt  
tānnum – anna-van / Chitti-rattin uḷḷuḷada chitti-rattuk kādāra  
/ Vastira menḍreṇ-ṇuvān pōlvān – vastu-vām (*The body is within  
the Self. And yet / One thinks one is inside the inert body, / Like  
some spectator who supposes / That the screen on which the film  
is thrown / Is within the picture.*)<sup>7</sup>

So, we have seen that many of Bhagavan's verses echo the opening stanza of Sankaracharya's *Śrī Dakṣiṇāmūrti Stotram*. Its import can also be found stated with great simplicity and elegance in verse 25 of *Upadeśa Sāram* (The Essence of Instruction). The *upādis* correspond to unreal reflections in a mirror or the mind.

veṣa-hānataḥ svātma-darśanam / īśa-darśanaṁ svātma-rūpataḥ  
(*Knowing the true nature of our Being, eliminating all attributes  
like name and form that remain as obstacles to know Him is*

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<sup>6</sup> *Five Hymns to Arunachala and Other Poems of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi*,  
Translated by Prof. K. Swaminathan, p.129.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p.129.

*knowing God, as He shines within us as our real Being. When the upadis are jettisoned, He shines as the truth of our Being, as the form of infinite Wisdom.)*<sup>8</sup>

The opening verse of *Ānma Viddai* (Self-Knowledge) expresses the ideas of verse one in a more elaborate fashion, like verse six of the *Śrī Aruṇācala Aṣṭakam*. The beauty and majesty of this stanza is undeniable. It's power, too, to take one directly to the Self, on gossamer wings, when chanted with love and devotion.

Meiyāi niran-taran tānaiyā dirun-diḍavum / Poiyā muḍam-bulaga  
meiyāy muḷait-tezhumpoi / Maiyār ninaiva-ṇuvu muiyā doḍuk-  
kiḍavē / Meiyār idaya-veḷi veiyōn suyam-ānmā / Viḷaṅ-gumē;  
iruḷ-aḍaṅ-gumē; iḍaroḍuṅ-gumē; /Inbam poṅ-gumē / Aiyē! ati-  
sulabam – ānma-viddai / Aiyē! ati-sulabam (*True, strong, fresh  
for ever stands / The Self. From this in truth spring forth / The  
phantom body and the phantom world. / When this delusion is  
destroyed / And not a speck remains, / The Sun of Self shines  
bright and real / In the vast heart-expanse. / Darkness dies;  
afflictions end; / And Bliss wells up.*)<sup>9</sup>

### Verse Two

बीजस्यान्तरिवाङ्कुरो जगदिदं प्राङ्निर्विकल्पं पुनः  
मायाकल्पितदेशकालकलनावैचित्र्यचित्रीकृतम् ।  
मायावीव विजृम्भयत्यपि महायोगीव यः स्वेच्छया  
तस्मै श्रीगुरुमूर्तये नम इदं श्रीदक्षिणामूर्तये ॥

*bījasyān-tarivāṅ-kuro jagad-idam prāṅ-nirvikalpaṁ punaḥ  
māyā kalpita-deśa-kāla-kalanā-vaicitrya-citrī-kṛtam |  
māyāvīva vijṛm-bhayaty-api mahā-yogīva yaḥ svecchayā  
tasmai śrī guru-mūrtaye nama idam śrī dakṣiṇāmūrtaye ||*

<sup>8</sup> Kanakammal, Smt. T.R., *Commentary on Aruṇāchala Stuti Pañchakam and Upadēsa Nūn Malai*, p.341.

<sup>9</sup> *Five Hymns to Arunachala and Other Poems of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi*, Translated by Prof. K. Swaminathan, p.133.

*bījasya antaḥ iva aṅkuraḥ*: like the sprout inside of a seed; *jagat idam*: this universe; *prāk*: previously; *nirvikalpam*: unmanifest; *punaḥ*: later; *māyā kalpita-deśa-kāla-kalanā-vaicitrya-citrī-kṛtam*: due to the play of time and space created by *māyā*, projected out as a world of endless variety; *māyāvī iva*: like a magician; *vijṛm-bhayati*: unrolls; *api mahā-yogīva*: or even like a great yogi; *yaḥ*: who; *svecchayā*: out of His own will; *tasmai*: to Him; *śrī guru mūrtaye*; the blessed guru; *namaḥ idam*: may this obeisance be; *śrī dakṣiṇāmūrtaye*: (to) Sri Dakshinamurti.

*To Him, the blessed guru Sri Dakshinamurti, who, out of His own will, unrolls this universe like a magician or even a great yogi, (which universe) previously (was) unmanifest like the sprout inside of a seed, (but) later, due to the play of time and space created by māyā, projected out as a world of endless variety, may this obeisance be.*

### Commentary

T.M.P.Mahadevan's commentary on the *Śrī Dakṣiṇāmūrti Stotram* gives a detailed explanation of the various schools of thought that attempted to explain creation during Sankaracharya's time and that generally opposed *advaita vedānta*.

*One of the persistent problems of philosophy and religion is about the causality of the universe. Is there a cause for the world or not? Is the world-cause some blind force, or an intelligent principle? Is that cause one or many? The different schools of thought give different answers, yadṛcchāvāda (accidentalism) contends that there is no need for a cause of the world; for, according to it, whatever order there is in the world is due to mere chance. Svabhāvavāda (naturalism) recognizes the law of causation, but holds that the world is self-caused. Cārvāka (materialism) traces all things to the four elements, earth, water, fire and air. Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika believes that the constituents of the natural world are composed of material atoms, and that the Prime Mover of these atoms is God. The Sāṅkhya finds no use for a God, invests Primal Matter (Prakṛti) with perpetual movement, and regards the presence of the sentient soul (Puruṣa) only as the occasioning cause for*

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*evolution to start. Some schools of Vedānta think that God is the efficient cause of the universe, and that Prakṛiti is the material cause. Some others maintain that God is the sole and whole cause of the world, and that the world is a real transformation (pariṇāma) of a part of Him.*

After giving reasons for disproving each of the various schools, he states:

*So, Advaita concludes that the universe is an illusory appearance (vivarta) of the absolute spirit. The world is a play of māyā (māyā-vilāsa). That is why Śaṅkara, in the present verse, compares God to the magician and the Yogin. In the illusions created by these, nothing really happens. It is this truth that Guru Dakṣiṇāmūrti teaches.<sup>1</sup>*

Kanakammal, in her commentary on the Śrī Dakṣiṇāmūrti Stotram, includes a discussion of ajāta, which Muruganar claims is the Master's true teaching, based on His own experience.

*Ajāti vāda* can be defined thus:

*The Advaita Vedānta theory, especially associated with Gauḍapāda, denies any causal change. That which is nonexistent in the beginning and nonexistent at the end is also nonexistent in the middle and therefore completely nonexistent.<sup>2</sup>*

According to Kanakammal, Bhagavan used to often quote the Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad Karika with regard to creation.

*There is neither dissolution, nor birth, neither anyone in bondage nor any aspirant for wisdom; neither can there be anyone who hankers after wisdom nor any liberated as such. This alone is the Supreme Truth.<sup>3</sup>*

A. Devaraja Mudaliar, a close devotee and important chronicler of life with the Master, recorded this simple but very profound exchange between Bhagavan and a devotee.

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<sup>1</sup> Mahadevan, T.M.P., *The Hymns of Śaṅkara*, pp.6-7.

<sup>2</sup> Grimes, John, *A Concise Dictionary of Indian Philosophy: Sanskrit Terms Defined in English*, p.22.

<sup>3</sup> Chapter II, verse 32.

*A visitor asked Bhagavan, "How has srishti (creation) come about? Some say it is due to karma. Others say it is the Lord's lila or sport. What is the truth?"*

*Bhagavan: Various accounts are given in books. But is there creation? Only if there is creation, we have to explain how it came about. All that, we may not know. But that we exist now is certain. Why not know the 'I' and the present and then see if there is a creation?<sup>4</sup>*

In *Talks* Bhagavan discusses creation at great length, again bringing the discussion to self-enquiry.

*Mrs. Dhar: I form part of the creation and so remain dependent. I cannot solve the riddle until I become independent. Yet I ask Sri Bhagavan, should He not answer the question for me?*

*M: Yes. It is Bhagavan that says, "Become independent and solve the riddle yourself. It is for you to do it." Again: where are you now that you ask this question? Are you in the world, or is the world within you? You must admit that the world is not perceived in your sleep although you cannot deny your existence then. The world appears when you wake up. So where is it? Clearly the world is your thought. Thoughts are your projections. The 'I' is first created and then the world. The world is created by the 'I' which in its turn rises up from the Self. The riddle of the creation of the world is thus solved if you solve the creation of the 'I'. So I say, find your Self.*

*Again, does the world come and ask you "Why do 'I' exist? How was 'I' created?" It is you who ask the question. The questioner must establish the relationship between the world and himself. He must admit that the world is his own imagination. Who imagines it? Let him again find the 'I' and then the Self.*

*Moreover, all the scientific and theological explanations do not harmonize. The diversities in such theories clearly show the uselessness of seeking such explanations. Such explanations are purely mental or intellectual and nothing more. Still, all of them are true according to the standpoint of the individual. There is*

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<sup>4</sup> Mudaliar, Devaraja, *Day by Day with Bhagavan*, 17-2-46.

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*no creation in the state of realization. When one sees the world, one does not see oneself. When one sees the Self, the world is not seen. So see the Self and realize that there has been no creation.*<sup>5</sup>

Bhagavan adds *karma* to ‘the play of time and space created by *māyā*’ in His Tamil translation of verse two, as an elaboration on the Sanskrit text. *Karma* cannot lead to Liberation, and that He states unambiguously in the first two verses of *Upadeśa Sāram*.

kartur-ājñayā prāpyate phalam / karma kiṃ paraṃ karma  
tajjaḍam (*Karma must ever yield its proper fruit, / For thus it is  
ordained by God, Himself, / the Supreme Creator. Then is Karma  
God? / No, for it is itself insentient.*)

kṛti-mahodadhau patana-kāraṇam / phalam-aśāsvataṃ gati-  
nirodhakam (*Of Karma the results must pass away, / Yet it leaves  
seeds which in their turn will sprout / And throw the actor back  
into the flood / Of Karma’s ocean. Karma cannot save.*)<sup>6</sup>

Finally, the unmanifest universe, ‘like the sprout inside of a seed’, is none other than Arunachala. This the Master proclaims triumphantly in the stirringly beautiful first verse of *Nava Mani Malai* (The Necklet of Nine Gems).

Achalanē yāyi-num accha-vai tan-nil / Achalai-yām ammai-yedi  
rāḍum – achala / Uru-vilach sakti oḍuṅ-giḍa vōṅ-gum / Aruṇā  
chala-men ḍṛarī (*Though He is the ever unmoving One, yet in  
the temple hall (of Thillai) He dances His dance of bliss before  
the Mother moveless there. Now that Power withdrawn within,  
His form here moveless, still, He soars as Aruna Hill.*)<sup>7</sup> ▲

(To be continued)

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<sup>5</sup>Talk§455.

<sup>6</sup>Arunachala, Sadhu (Major A.W. Chadwick), *The Poems of Sri Ramana Maharshi, Rendered into English Verse*, p.13.

<sup>7</sup>*Five Hymns to Arunachala and Other Poems of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi*, Translated by Prof. K. Swaminathan, p.107.

# The Paramount Importance of Self Attention

## Part Twenty Three

SADHU OM  
AS RECORDED BY MICHAEL JAMES

1st September 1978

**Sadhu Om:** So long as we ask for a path to follow, the guru can only point us to the path of awareness (*cit*), ‘Attend to yourself’, or the path of happiness (*ānanda*) or love (*priya*), ‘Love God or guru, who is yourself’. What all *jñānis* have taught through words is only these two paths, *jñāna* and *bhakti*, self-enquiry and self-surrender.

Even Dakshinamurti taught only these two paths so long as he was answering the questions of the four Sanakadi sages, but finally he had to merge back into himself in order to teach them how to merge within and just be, which is the path of being (*sat*), and which can be taught only through silence and not through words. This is why Bhagavan

Michael James assisted Sri Sadhu Om in translating Bhagavan’s Tamil writings and *Guru Vācakak Kōvai*. Many of his writings and translations have been published, and some of them are also available on his website, [happinessofbeing.com](http://happinessofbeing.com).

often said that silence is the highest teaching, and it is ever going on in our heart, because it is our real nature.

To learn what silence is always teaching us, we must turn our entire attention within, for which intense and all-consuming love is required. That is, without love (*bhakti*) we cannot follow the path of *jñāna*, which is the practice of attending only to oneself, and without attending keenly and persistently to oneself, we cannot learn what silence is always teaching us in our heart, which is just to be. Therefore the path of love (*priya* or *ānanda*) culminates in self-attention, which is the path of *cit*, and self-attention results in just silently being, which is the path of *sat*.

It is only through silence that our real nature can be made known to us, as Bhagavan implies in verse five of *Ēkāṅma Pañcakam* (*kalivenḅā* version):

What always exists by its own light is only that *ēkāṭma-vastu* [one self-substance]. If at that time the *ādi-guru* [the original guru, Dakshinamurti] made that *vastu* known [by] speaking without speaking, say, who can make it known [by] speaking?

Likewise, it is only to reveal itself through silence that our real nature is manifested outwardly in the motionless form of Arunachala, as Bhagavan explains in verse two of *Śrī Aruṅācala Aṣṭakam*:

When [the seer] investigated within the mind who the seer is, I saw what remained when the seer [thereby] became non-existent. The mind did not rise to say ‘I saw’, [so] in what way could the mind rise to say ‘I did not see’? Who has the power to elucidate this [by] speaking, when in ancient times [even] you [as Dakshinamurti] elucidated [it] without speaking? Only to elucidate your state without speaking, you stood as a hill [or motionlessly] shining [from] earth [to] sky.

And what Arunachala teaches us through silence is just to be — to stand still without rising as an ego to do anything by mind, speech or body — as Bhagavan says in verse 36 of *Śrī Aruṅācala Akṣaramaṇamālai*:

Arunachala, saying without saying, ‘Stand [stop, stay or remain] without speech’, you just were [without doing anything].

## THE PARAMOUNT IMPORTANCE OF SELF ATTENTION

The path of being (*sat*) cannot be taught in words, because the nature of this path is no different to the nature of its goal, and since the goal is absolute silence, untainted by the rising of the ego, it can be made known only by silence. In other words, in this path there is nothing to be done, so there are no exercises that can be prescribed. In order just to be, the ego does not need to do anything, and must not do anything. All that is required of it is just to die: that is, to subside and disappear forever.

In verse 27 of *Tiruttellēnam* (*Śrī Ramaṇa Sannidhimurai*, 3rd edn, 1974, verse 1578) Muruganar sings that as soon as he came to the presence of Bhagavan, who is *sat-tattva* (that which actually exists), he died without dying. That is what we must do in order to just be.

How then are we to die without dying? Since we rise and stand as this ego only by attending to things other than ourself, we can forever cease rising only by attending to ourself alone, and for that we must have all-consuming love to surrender ourself completely to him. Therefore the only means to achieve our natural state of just being (*sat-bhāva*) is to follow the twin paths of *cit* and *ānanda*: *jñāna* and *bhakti*, self-enquiry and self-surrender.

This is what Bhagavan implied in verses eight and nine of *Upadēsa Undiyār*, in which he says that *ananya-bhāva* (attending to nothing other than oneself) is the best of all practices of *bhakti*, and that by the intensity of such self-attention we will be established in *sat-bhāva* (the state of being), which is beyond all mental activity:

Rather than *anya-bhāva* [meditation in which God is considered to be other than I], *ananya-bhāva*, in which he is [considered to be none other than] I, is certainly the best among all [practices of *bhakti* and varieties of meditation].

By the strength [intensity, firmness or stability] of [such] meditation [*ananya-bhāva* or self-attention], being in *sat-bhāva* [one's 'state of being' or 'real being'], which transcends [all] *bhāvana* [thinking, imagination or meditation], alone is *para-bhakti tattva* [the real essence or true state of supreme devotion].

Through words the ego can be instructed to attend, look, seek, investigate, see, know, be aware, love, surrender and so on, but it is only through silence that it can effectively be taught just to be.

\* \* \* \* \*

**Sadhu Om:** All that is required is to find out how any world-picture comes into existence and is dissolved. In waking and dream we have the power to see oneself as many, whereas in sleep we lose this power and therefore see nothing other than oneself. This power is what we call mind, and it is what produces the appearance of multiplicity in waking and dream. Trying to find out what this power is and how it arises to produce one dream world after another is what is called *ātma-vicāra* (self-investigation or self-enquiry), because we can find out what it is and how it rises only by keenly attending to oneself, who now seems to be this mind, the one who sees all this multiplicity.

This practice of self-attention is so simple, and it is the only means to find how any world or anything other than oneself seems to exist, but in the name of *sādhana* or spiritual practice so many other exercises are taught. All other spiritual practices entail attending to something other than oneself, whereas *ātma-vicāra* entails attending to oneself alone, so by definition it is the simplest of all spiritual practices, and hence it does not require any aid. In fact any aid would be something other than oneself, so it would distract our attention away from oneself, thereby defeating its very purpose. Therefore what Bhagavan has taught us is the simple, direct and only effective means for us to know oneself as we really are and thereby eradicate our ego or mind, which is just a false knowledge of oneself.

### 6th September 1978

**Sadhu Om** [in reply to someone who referred to section 49 of *Talks*, in which it is recorded that Bhagavan said, ‘An ‘I’ rises forth with every thought and with its disappearance that ‘I’ disappears too. Many ‘I’s are born and die every moment’, and also to Chadwick’s statement that ‘the egos with which we associate ourselves change’, and asked whether there are actually many egos or just one]: The ‘I’ that rises is the ego, and there is only one ego. When Bhagavan said that it rises and subsides with each other thought, he did not mean that a different ego rises with each thought, but only that the same ego rises and subsides along with each of its thoughts.

When Chadwick wrote that ‘the egos with which we associate ourselves change’ (*A Sadhu’s Reminiscences*, 3rd edn, 1976, p.9), what he should have said is that the adjuncts with which the ego

associates itself change, because whatever we associate or identify ourself with is an adjunct (*upādhi*), and the ‘we’ who associate ourself with any adjunct is the ego, because our real self (*ātma-svarūpa*) never associates or identifies itself with anything other than itself, since in its clear view nothing other than itself exists.

That is, as Bhagavan often explained, *ātma-svarūpa* is always aware of itself only as ‘I am’, whereas the ego is what is always aware of itself as ‘I am this’ or ‘I am that’, in which ‘this’ and ‘that’ refer to whatever adjuncts the ego currently takes itself to be. In other words, the pure self-awareness ‘I am’ is what we really are, which is what is called *ātma-svarūpa* (the ‘own form’ or real nature of oneself), whereas the adjunct-mixed self-awareness ‘I am this’ or ‘I am that’ is the ego.

This is why the ego is described as *cit-jaḍa-granṭhi*, the knot (*granṭhi*) formed by the entanglement of awareness (*cit*) with adjuncts, which are all insentient (*jaḍa*). The ego is the false ‘I’ that is always aware of itself as ‘I am this body’, which is a mixture that consists of a real element and an unreal element. The real element is ‘I’ or ‘I am’, which is pure self-awareness (*cit*), and the unreal element is ‘this body’, which is non-aware (*jaḍa*).

The fact that the ego is one and not many is made clear by Bhagavan in verses 23 and 24 of *Uḷḷadu Nārpadu* by his referring to it as ‘□□□□ □□□□’ (*nān onḍru*), which means ‘the one [called] I’ or ‘one [that rises as] I’:

This body does not say ‘I’ [that is, it is not aware of itself as ‘I’]. No one says ‘In sleep I do not exist’ [even though one was not aware of any body then]. After the one [called] ‘I’ rises, everything rises. Investigate [consider, determine or find out] with a subtle mind where this ‘I’ rises.

The *jaḍa* body does not say ‘I’; *sat-cit* does not rise; [but] in between [these two] one [spurious entity] rises [as] ‘I’ [limited] as the extent of the body. Know that this [one limited self-awareness that rises as ‘I am this body’] is *cit-jaḍa-granṭhi* [the knot that binds the conscious and the non-conscious together as if they were one], *bandha* [bondage], *jīva* [life or soul], the subtle body, the ego, this *samsāra* [wandering, perpetual movement, restless

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activity, worldly existence or the cycle of birth and death] and *manam* [the mind].

As he says in verse 33 of *Uḷḷadu Nārpadu*: ‘Being one is the truth, [as is known by] the experience of everyone’. Therefore, since we are always one, there can only ever be one ‘I’, so the ego is always the same ego, even though the adjuncts with which it identifies itself are constantly changing.

If the ego were not always one and the same ego, but was instead a different ego at each moment, the karma theory would not be valid, because the ego that experiences the fruit of a past action would not be the same ego that did that action. However this is not the case, as Bhagavan clearly implies in verse 38 of *Uḷḷadu Nārpadu*:

If we are the doer of action, we will experience the resulting fruit. [However] when one knows oneself by investigating who is the doer of action, doership will depart and all the three karmas [*āgāmya*, *sañcita* and *prārabdha*] will slip off. [This is] the state of liberation, which is eternal.

The ‘we’ who does action and the ‘we’ who experiences the resulting fruit are one and the same ego. Though the karma theory is not the ultimate truth, it holds true so long as we appear to be the ego, the one who experiences both the sense of doership (*karṭṛtva*), ‘I am doing this’, and the sense of experiencership (*bhōkṛtva*), ‘I am experiencing this’. Therefore, since the ego is not what we really are but only what we appear to be, if we investigate ourselves, who now seem to be this one ego, and thereby know what we really are, this ego along with its *karṭṛtva*, its *bhōkṛtva* and all its karmas will cease to exist, and what will then remain is only our natural state, which is eternally free from the bondage of karma. ▲

*(To be continued)*

## KEYWORD

# Chaitanya

## Consciousness-of and Consciousness-as

JOHN GRIMES

For ordinary individuals as well as for spiritual aspirants terms like Brahman, the Absolute, God, *Ísvara*, are elusive because, though each person most likely has a limited intellectual understanding of what these words mean, a direct personal experience is invariably lacking. Thus, such terms are only ideas/concepts in one's mind. Without an actual personal experience, such words are, at best, mentally misleading and at worst meaningless. A map is not territory and one cannot drink the word 'milk.'

However, the classical Upaniṣadic definition of *Brahman* as '*sat-cit-ananda*' differs from the above terms in that individuals have a direct personal experience of what these three terms allude to, even if they are not completely understood. Every living human being has experienced something of what it means to exist, what it means to be conscious or aware, and what it means to be happy.

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The word 'consciousness' differs from the prior terms in that every human being knows what (reflected) consciousness is and employs it with each and every thought. Everyone remarks, "I know and I know that I know." Consciousness (with a small 'c') is defined as: "an alert cognitive state in which you are aware of yourself and your situation; having knowledge of; immediate knowledge of the presence of any object, state, or sensation."<sup>1</sup> In Sanskrit '*cit*' means "to be conscious."

Further, Sri Ramana made a distinction between pure Consciousness (*cit*) and reflected consciousness (*cidābhāsa*). He said, "Through ignorance the 'I' projects a world onto the screen of pure Consciousness and then perceives it as a separate and external entity."<sup>2</sup> This reflected consciousness is employed for all conceptions and perceptions of any and every appearance of any object of the world that are projected and witnessed through an individual's mind. First comes Consciousness that then becomes consciousness when it is reflected by awareness as an object. Objects are changing constantly. In Consciousness there is no movement being by Itself motionless and timeless, here and now.

Pure Consciousness is the Absolute,<sup>3</sup> the Real, without beginning or end, without parts or change. It is the Self. It is not an attribute of the Self, but Its very essence. On the other hand, ordinary or reflected consciousness is to be conscious/aware of the difference between things and of taking such difference to be ultimate and believing that such multitude and variety of things is real.

The physical human body is insentient. The Self (Consciousness) is eternal and self-luminous.<sup>4</sup> In between these two a reflected consciousness shines. According to Sri Ramana, the internal organ (*antaḥkaraṇa*) reflects the light of Consciousness that is the Self and is illumined by it. With no light of its own, it appears luminous and seems to cognize, though it is not a cognizer but only an instrument of cognition. A crystal appears bright because of the light it absorbs. Similarly, the mind that seems to be the centre of one's consciousness, shines with the borrowed light of Consciousness.

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<sup>1</sup> Webster's Revised Unabridged Dictionary.

<sup>2</sup> *Guru Vachaka Kovai* §16. Trans. T.V. Venkatasubramanian, Robert Butler and David Godman, 2008.

<sup>3</sup> *Aitareya Upaniṣad*, III.3

<sup>4</sup> *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, IV.iii.6,9,14.

The *antaḥkaraṇa* is said to have four states or functions: the sense mind (*manas*), the intellect (*buddhi*), the ‘I’-maker (*ahāṅkāra*), and cognitions/memories (*citta*).<sup>5</sup> In every perception, these four are involved, though so rapidly that they invariably escape one’s detection as being four distinct functions. The *manas* represents the indecisive state of the mind as found when one cannot ascertain whether an object is ‘this’ or ‘that’. The *buddhi* stands for the state of decision, as when one decisively knows a thing as ‘this’. The *ahāṅkāra* is the state having a reference to the empirical self as in ‘I am X’ or ‘I did Y’. The *citta* is the state of cognitions, awareness of ‘this’ or ‘that’.

Before any cognition, any piece of knowledge can arise, the darkness of ignorance must be lit up. This light comes from the light of Consciousness that is reflected in the mind when coming into contact with an object. The light of a person’s consciousness, reflected in one’s mind and senses, lights up an area, thereby disclosing an object therein. Sri Ramana said, “The Self is the Heart. The Heart is Self-luminous. Light arises from the Heart and reaches the brain, which is the seat of the mind. The world is perceived using the mind, that is, by the light of the Self reflected in the mind. It is perceived with the aid of the mind. When the mind is illumined by this reflected light it is aware of the world. When it is not itself so illumined, it is not aware of the world.”<sup>6</sup>

Quoting from the *Kaivalya*, Sri Ramana remarked: The modes of the mind take shape as external objects and the light reflected on the modes illumines the objects. Now neglecting the modes of the mind, look for the light illumining them. The mind becomes still and the light remains Self-shining.<sup>7</sup>

The *antaḥkaraṇa* in conjunction with the sense-organs, perceives sense-objects. It is impelled by its outgoing tendencies as induced by the impressions of previous actions. Both the mind and a sense-organ are necessary to complete the connection between the subject and the object in external perception. This is obvious from examples where the

<sup>5</sup> *Vedantaparibhasa*, 5.32; *Vivekacudamani* 95. Also see *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, Talk§392 where he says that some people say the *antaḥkaranas* are five (*jnana*, *manas*, *buddhi*, *citta*, *ahamkara*), some four (all but *jnana*), some two (*manas* and *ahamkara*), and some one (*manas*); also see Talk§473 and Talk§510.

<sup>6</sup> Venkataramiah, M. (compl.), *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, Talk§98.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, Talk§99.

connection is lacking, i.e. where the sense-organ is defective or where the object is too near or far away and thus no perception is possible.

The process may be summarised: i) The mind of the knower, in conjunction with a sense-organ, reaches out to an object, identifies with it, and assumes its form. ii) The modification of the mind removes the veil of ignorance that was hiding the object from the knower. iii) The conscious-ness underlying the object, which is being manifest through the mental modification, illumines the object; iv) The mental modification associates the object-consciousness with the subject-consciousness; v) The knower perceives the object.

Bhagavan said, “The experience of deep sleep is clear evidence to show that the Self is pure Consciousness without involving a split into a seer and a seen. In sleep there is loss only of objective consciousness. Consciousness *per se* neither rises nor sets. In the waking state or dream state, in which things appear, and in the sleep state, in which one perceives nothing, there is always the light of Consciousness or Self, like the hall-lamp always burning or the sun always shining. The thing to do is to concentrate on the Seer and not on the seen, not on the objects, but on the Light that reveals them.”<sup>8</sup>

Bhagavan said, “There is only one state, that of (pure) Consciousness or Awareness or (pure) Existence.”<sup>9</sup> With a little reflection it should be obvious that the three states of waking, dreaming, and deep sleep cannot be Real because they simply come and go while the Real always exists without any sublation ever. The ‘I’ or pure Consciousness that alone persists in all the three states is Real. Lord Ramana said, “We may roughly put it like this. Existence or Consciousness is the only Reality. Consciousness plus waking, we call waking. Consciousness plus sleep, we call sleep. Consciousness plus dream, we call dream. Consciousness is the screen on which all the pictures come and go. The screen is Real. The pictures are mere shadows on it.”<sup>10</sup>

“Following the destruction of the mind that is the limited consciousness, the *jīvanmukta* shines and abides wholly as Sivam, unlimited Consciousness.”<sup>11</sup> ▲

<sup>8</sup> Mudaliar, Devaraja, *Day by Day with Bhagavan*, 16-9-45 Afternoon.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 11-1-46 Afternoon.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> *op.cit.*, *Guru Vachaka Kovai*§1126.

# Sri Bhagavanta Swami, Dayananda Swami *Matalayam*

## A Temple for Two Saints at Cuddalore

P. RAMASAMY

Cuddalore, on the Bay of Bengal, is a district headquarters town 160 kms south of Chennai. From the major road junction at the bustling bazaar area of the town's Pudupalayam segment, if one takes the road east, one reaches a dead end within 300 metres in front of an arch that marks the entrance to the *samādhī* shrines of Sri Bhagavanta Swami and Sri Dayananda Swami.

As one enters, the ambience of peace is pervasive and seems to draw one in; the silence too, is absolute, and all the more striking, as it is so close to the noisy market centre. I find myself facing the back wall of the various shrines. It is as though I had entered a temple complex through its back gate. So I am obliged to walk round each shrine and then make an about turn to face its sanctum for *darśan* of the deity inside.

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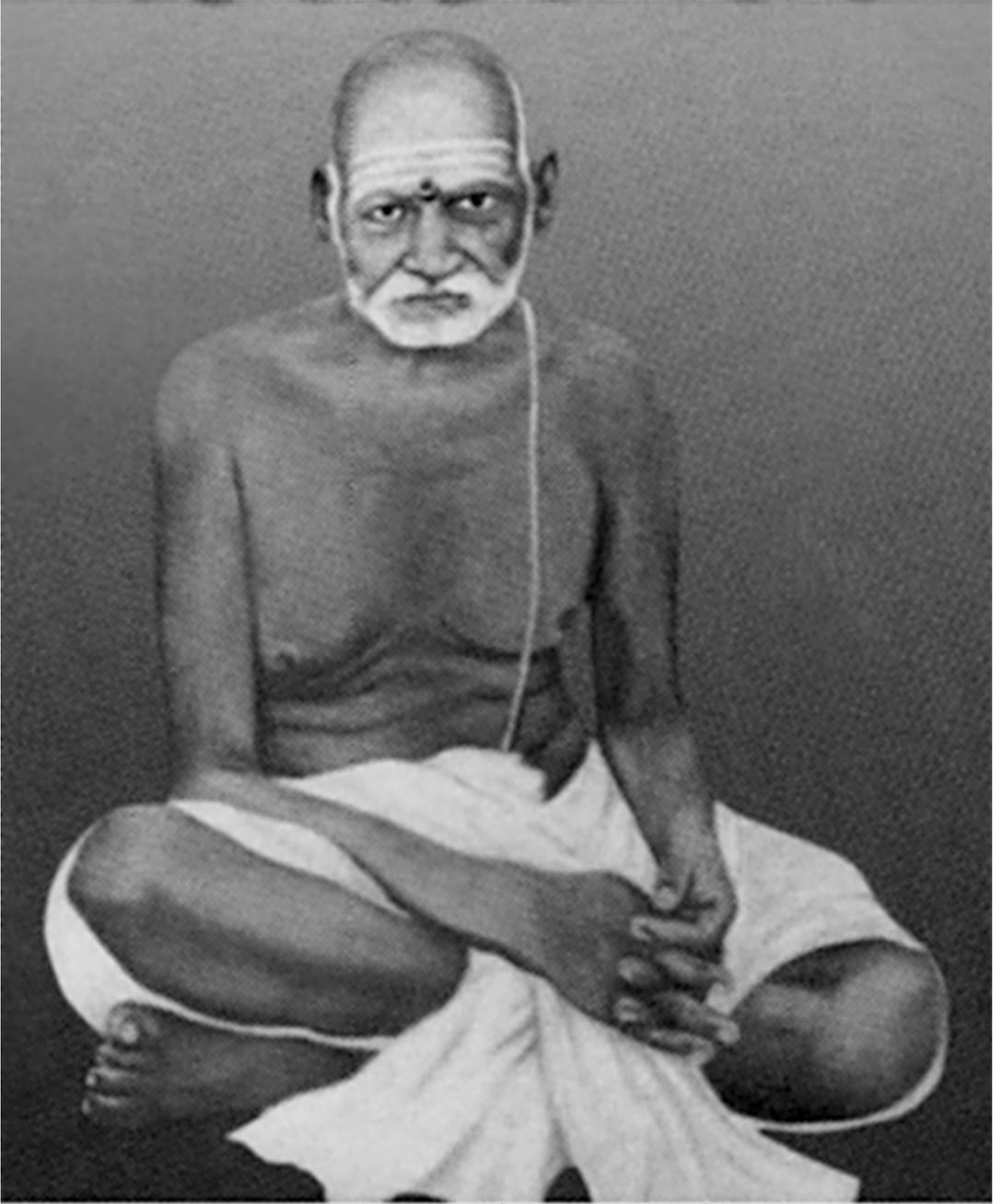
Later I learnt the reason for this unusual turn-around layout. One is actually entering the temple from the back. The temple, which sits on the bank of the River Gadilam that runs through the town, was built facing the river, and the present street approach from the main market road linking the back of the temple must have been a later addition. The river, running adjacent to the east of the temple, is now hidden from view by its high compound wall and those of the neighbouring houses. The temple must have been, in earlier times, a solitary riverside hermitage in the midst of a large grove.

As I go near the main shrine, which is the *samādhi* of Swami Bhagavanta that faces south, I am puzzled to find right behind his *samādhi* altar an idol of Goddess Rajarajeswari (an aspect of Sakti), instead of the *lingam* customarily installed over *samādhis* of saints. To the right of this *samādhi* and facing east is the *samādhi* shrine of Swami Dayananda. Here too, instead of a *lingam*, one finds an idol of Lord Bala Murugan [Lord Subramanya as a boy-child]. There are also the peripheral deities within the temple, Ganesha, Dakshinamurti and others.

It was early noon on a Sunday and I saw a handful of devotees doing the circuits of the shrines, with one or two sitting in meditation at the entry *mantapams* [fore-courts] of the two main shrines. The whole place is clean, quiet and simple. Seated inside a small hall adjoining the temple priest's quarters, which is also within the complex, there was a group of about ten men and women, seated in a circle, some on chairs, others on the floor, holding texts of the *Tiruvachakam* and doing a relay chanting of it, verse by verse. I joined them for about fifteen minutes, and then departed, leaving the calm, devotion-filled atmosphere of the place, which enshrines the tomb of two saints who neither lived together nor even knew each other, but what they had in common was that each one was brought there, cared for, worshipped and lastly entombed by Deivasigamani Mudaliar.

### **Bhagavanta Swami's 'History' (? -1889)**

Our main source of information about Bhagavanta Swami is Deivasigamani Mudaliar who reports that there was no information about the Swami prior to his first meeting with him. Some of the oral stories that gained currency about the Swami are:



Sri Bhagavanta Swami

i) Varadayyar, who had been a government treasury officer in Cuddalore town, had claimed that the Swami was his grandfather who, having taken *sannyas*, had left home many years ago. The descendants of Varadayyar still worship Bhagavanta Swami as the family's protective deity, and offer at Bhagavanta's shrine the first tonsure of every child born in the family. Some members of Varadayyar's family bear a facial resemblance to the Swami.

ii) Some claim that the Swami is a native of the Tirunelveli territory of southern Tamil Nadu. The claim is based on the reasoning that the Swami often used the colloquial exclamation, "*kalavani payale!*" (literally meaning 'you thieving scoundrel!') Characteristic of the Tamil dialect of the Tirunelveli region, this is a commonly used exclamatory phrase as an expression of reprobation or, sometimes, grudging admiration, of the person addressed.

iii) Kavarapattu Ramaswami Iyer was an advocate living prior to 1915 in the Pudupalayam area. His grandfather, also named Ramaswami Iyer, a District *Munsif* [Presiding Officer in a subordinate Court of Justice], is said to have sheltered Bhagavanta Swami in his home and worshipped him. After the demise of Ramaswami Iyer the Swami left. At that time he was known as Ganapati Swami, and was in the same physical condition as he was at the time of his discovery by Mudaliar. A rough calculation reveals that the Swami must have been a hundred and fifty years old at this point.

It is also reported that the Swami used to explain doubts on Sanskrit *slokas* raised by Munsif Ramaswami Iyer, the grandfather. The report had been made by one Fakhrudeen Sahib, who had worked under Ramaswami Iyer as a court summoner in the Villupuram Munsif Court. This report was made by Fakhrudeen when he was 90, when he visited Pudupalayam to meet the Swami in person. Advocate Ramaswami Iyer's mother too seemed to have recognized him as the very same Ganapati Swami who had left their household decades ago. She now (after his 'rediscovery') began sending him milk and fruit every day.

Interestingly, Govindappa Chettiar, the well-known astrologer of Valangaiman village near Kumbakonam, was consulted to assess the Swami's age. The astrologer was awestruck and said that his consulting-deity confessed her inability to reckon events that occurred more than a hundred and twenty years ago. So the astrologer said

that he would swear that the Swami was certainly past 120 years. This consultation was made while the Swami was living, and adds strength to the inference of his age from the various reports being pegged at 150.

It is also supposed that the Swami belonged to the Brahmin caste as he was seen wearing the sacred thread. And he used to agree readily to the Brahmin ritual of change of thread every year on the *Avittam* asterism of the Tamil month of *Avani* (July-August). One evening, while living in Pudupalayam, he chanted a very abstruse portion of the Veda for some ten minutes, with metrical precision. From this, one is led to conclude that he had learnt Veda chanting as a boy, which is taught only to Brahmin children.

The Swami looked majestic and healthy and was variously referred to as Ganapati Swami, Gurunatha Swami, Swaminatha Swami etc. But the name Bhagavanta Swami stuck, on account of his habit of frequently calling out, “Bhagavanta! Bhagavanta!” as an exclamation, as well as while blessing devotees. He apparently often used to tell devotees, “Go without fear, placing your burden on Bhagavanta!”

A mannerism of his was to keep tugging off the yarn from the weave of his *dhoti* so it would end up full of ladders, and look like a cloth sieve. He would eat just a small quantity of food, that too only when fed by others. While eating, if even a single grain of rice spilt, he would at once stand up, jerk the spilled grain off his garment, pick it up and eat it. He would be speaking as if to himself and one had to decode the sense of what he was saying. His overall behaviour was like a child’s; he bathed and changed clothes only when others did it for him.

### **Deiva Sigamani Mudaliar Receives *Darśan* of the Swami**

Deiva Sigamani Mudaliar (1847-1915), an Assistant Inspector of Schools, first had *darśan* of the Swami at Vriddachalam (some 60 kms west of Cuddalore), when he was posted there on transfer from Salem. It was in 1879 and he was thirty three years old. He saw an elderly *sādhu* standing in front of his house and intuitively knew that this was the very master who would take him as his disciple, or slave, as predicted by one Pattukottai Swami, whom he had been visiting years earlier.

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People around said that the Swami was first discovered while clearing a bush of thorny aloe, inside which he was found seated in yoga. Nothing was known of his antecedents and he never asked for food or clothing, but he gained a reputation as an omniscient *jñāni*. Mudaliar thereafter had his *darśan* frequently and used to serve him. He then appointed an attendant and paid him to bathe and feed the Swami. A few years passed and Mudaliar records several instances where he was miraculously saved from distress, slander and dangers by the Swami's grace.

One day the Swami called him and said that there are portents of dark days ahead for Mudaliar and that a change of domicile for some period would minimize their impact. At once Mudaliar applied for six months of half-pay leave and moved to his native Pudupalayam, taking the Swami with him. He spent this leave period in serving the Swami. As months passed Mudaliar ran short of money due to his reduced salary. Moreover he had applied for leave on the grounds of study to appear for a B.A exam, and so had to prepare for that too. As predicted by the Swami, he was beset by tragedies and mishaps. In the midst of this he had to go to Chennai to sit for his examination which he could not pass. At the end of the leave period he returned to Vriddachalam and rejoined duty, leaving the Swami at his home in Pudupalayam.

The Swami did not like staying in Mudaliar's house which was in the middle of the busy Pudupalayam township and frequented by visitors and so went to live in a hut in the midst of a grove near the Cuddalore beach, an isolated spot which was a mile away. When Mudaliar came to know of it, he built a small hut in a garden belonging to him on the bank of the Gadilam, closer to Pudupalayam. The Swami moved in. A bungalow-like shrine was then constructed, which has grown into the present ashram. It was here that Bhagavanta Swami became well known as a Master.

It deserves mention here that before the construction of the final solid building, while the Swami was still living in the thatched hut, the Gadilam River was in spate one December month. People urged the Swami to move to a place of safety but he refused saying, "Whatever may befall as Bhagavanta would also go away as Bhagavanta." A few devotees, unwilling to leave him alone, stayed on. When the floods



Sri Dayananda Swami

receded the Swami's hut alone remained intact, undamaged by the flood waters, while bigger, stronger buildings around it were washed away.

When Swami Bhagavanta decided to merge in the Supreme, he went on a fast for forty days. The destined day was approaching. Mudaliar, who had been away on duty visiting various towns, returned at 10 pm. one night. As usual the first thing he did on entering home was to have darshan of the Swami. He learnt that the Swami had stopped taking food. He lit a lump of camphor, placed it before the Swami, and began singing the *Pancha Ratna* devotional hymns he had earlier composed on the Swami. (Several hymns were composed on him by Mudaliar and his son's daughter Uma, the wife of Cuddalore Somasundaram Pillai.)

The Swami then sat up and said, "Various paths are of no avail. One has to stay at the court-house portals. No fellow seems to want salvation." When Mudaliar despaired on hearing these words, the Swami reassured him, "Do not despair, the Swami's grace is there. You will do well under the Chettiar's headship. Hereafter Devi (Goddess) would have her presence here. A miracle will happen here after some time. Then this place would become a famous Devi shrine." With these words, at 11p.m., Swami Bhagavanta merged in the Supreme. It was on 18.12.1889.

Every year thereafter on this day, the Swami's *Guru puja* is celebrated and over a thousand people are served food. While the Swami was in the body and also after his *samādhi*, a number of devotees, afflicted by physical, mental, financial and social distresses, came to him seeking succour and had their prayers answered. These ameliorations seemed to happen on their own and not due to the performance of any ritual or *mantra* by the Swami. They have all been recorded by Mudaliar in detail. His way was to assure them often with the phrase, "Have no fear, go with Bhagavanta!" The Swami seems to have taught no system of worship nor favoured any scripture or sacred hymn.

### **Swami Dayananda (? -1905)**

The other Swami who was enshrined at Pudupalayam was Swami Dayananda, and not much is known about his life either. What is

known for certain is that he had been living in Tirunelveli, then moved to Salem before his arrival at Pudupalayam in Cuddalore.

Earlier he appears to have been a staff officer in the army in northern India. He apparently left both the army and his family in order to become a renunciate. He seems to have attracted some followers after that. When the ‘*Saanaar* riots’<sup>1</sup> broke out in Tirunelveli district in the later part of the 19th century the army had to be called in to maintain law and order, and they are said to have brought Dayananda with them and kept him in their care. With the riots quelled, the army men were posted to Rangoon and they left him behind at Tirunelveli. He had been heard speaking Hindustani which lends credibility to the claim that he had come from the northern parts of the country. Some Muslim followers of his staked their claim to him by saying that the Swami’s name was ‘Mastan,’ and they were also in the habit of serving him.

Sometime after Dayananda's Swami's demise in Cuddalore, a group of Brahmin pilgrims from Varanasi, on their pilgrimage to South India, happened to visit his shrine at Cuddalore. Seeing his portrait there, they exclaimed, “Hey, Dayanand! Are you entombed here?” and explained to the people around:

“This Swami had been working for the military establishment at Allahabad for a monthly pay of Rupees 150. [A princely sum in those times] On receiving spiritual initiation from a proper guru he left his job and became an ascetic. We then heard reports that he had migrated south. His name is Dayanand and he is one of our caste of Kasi Brahmins. During our present pilgrimage south we were making enquiries about him. While in this town, we were informed that there was a *samādhi* here of one Dayananda Swami. From the portrait here we now know that it is our Dayanand.”

While in Tirunelveli, this Dayananda had been living in a dilapidated *mantapam* by the bank of the River Thamirabarani

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<sup>1</sup> The *Saanaar* (now known as Nadar) community belonged to the lower-castes in southern Tamil Nadu and Kerala. They were traditionally toddy-tappers. In Travancore region their men and women went about bare-chested. They were not permitted by the upper castes to wear upper-body clothing, as a mark of their social inferiority. When the *Saanars* rose in protest against this social injustice, the upper castes reacted against their demand. In the Tirunelveli district there was civil strife between *Saanars* and the upper-caste Maravars that required army deployment.

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in Palayamkottai (now part of the twin township of Tirunelveli-Palayamkottai). Children used to call him out and play with him in the streets while holding his hands. With jubilation he would laugh out like a child, talk to himself and continue to remain in the street all alone even after the children were gone. Passersby would then lead him back to his dwelling. A few Muslims used to worship him as well, claiming that he was a Muslim. They used to feed him at times and drape him in a long gown. After they left, those in the vicinity would disrobe him, tie a towel around his waist instead and take the robe away.

During that period, there was a police head-constable who was posted in Palayamkottai, on transfer from Salem. He belonged to Salem and was of the Naidu caste. He used to observe with interest the Swami's child-like behaviour, who not even begged for food. Once the Thamirabarani river was in spate, and the water level began steadily rising in the *mantapam* where he was still lodged. Naidu saved him from being swept away, took him home and continued to keep him there. That night the old *mantapam* collapsed from the force of the flood.

Both Head Constable Naidu and his wife took devoted care of the Swami. His Muslim devotees, on learning of this, staked their claim to the Swami, on the grounds that his name was Mastan, and that he was of their community. People in the neighbourhood interceded, reminded them that Naidu was taking excellent care of the Swami and that he was better off with Naidu. They also assured the Muslims that whenever they wanted they were welcome to take the Swami with them, offer him food, bring him back and leave him to the care of Naidu. The Muslim devotees agreed to this compromise. Some Muslims living in the neighbourhood started offering worship to his feet, served him food, and ate the morsels dropping from his mouth as *prasad* (sanctified food).

On religious and festive days, one Masilamani Mudaliar, an engineer of that neighbourhood, would take the Swami to his home, give him a shave and a bath, adorn him with a garland, offer camphor *āratī* (ritualistic waving of flame), and then consume the remnants of the food offered to him as holy *prāsad*. On his retirement from service after some years Naidu returned to his native Salem taking



Entrance to the *Matalayalam*, Cuddalore

the Swami with him. Some years later Head Constable Naidu passed away.

Deivasigamani Mudaliar of Pudupalayam, Cuddalore, had known Dayananda from the Swami's Palayamkottai days, where Mudaliar used to go on official visits. When he learnt of the demise of Naidu, he had the Swami brought to his home in Pudupalayam with the help of his son, Umapati Mudaliar, who then happened to be working in Salem. Swami Dayananda lived in Pudupalayam from then on and continued to shower grace on devotees, which continues even after his demise, as his devotees attest.

The Swami was a well-built, impressive personality with a sweet disposition. People would offer him *vibhūti* or *nāmam*, and he accepted both the Saivite and Vaishnavite marks with equanimity, and uttered words of kindness to the supplicant. He used to be fond of little children, and in many ways, was himself like one. Anyone could hold his hand and he would readily be led, like a child. Women would hand over their little infants to him for his blessings. He would seat them on his belly and gaze at them smiling. The child would then refuse to go back to its parent. "Do you see Siva and Parvati travelling in the sky? There goes Vishnu! Do you see him?" he would ask the child.

He had the habit of giving people a blow, which in fact was his gesture of compassion, a blessing! The person receiving the blow would be relieved of some ailment which had been afflicting him or get a wish fulfilled. Even when appearing to be asleep he was always in *cinmudrā* posture. He had a bath, or change of clothing or took food only when others gave them to him. And he ate very little. A number of miracles, mostly cures from chronic illnesses, childlessness, securing of jobs and promotions have been reported by the beneficiaries. They had happened mostly on receiving the food remnant which the Swami had been chewing on or receiving a blow from the Swami. Often, he used to wipe morsels of food fed by others off his lips and himself feed it or hand it over as *prasād* to a devotee who approached him with a plea. He claimed no supernatural powers on that account and did it with all innocence.

On 16-5-1905 at 11 am., the Swami had as usual been bathed. When feeding was attempted with a plate of food offering in front of him, the Swami pointed out at the food and said, "He will not

consume this hereafter,” and then pointing out the camphor flame, said, “He will turn into an effulgence like this lit camphor.” After that he stopped accepting any food. Forty days later, on 25-6-1905 Sunday around 11 am., he said to his attendant-devotees, “He is going to turn into this effulgent flame! All are mere paper gourds.<sup>2</sup> Surrender alone will bring about succor.” Several times he repeated the statement, “He will turn into an effulgence like this lit camphor.” While gazing at the camphor flame, held in front of him by a devotee named Lakshmana Swami Naidu, his life merged in the effulgence, and he was no more. At the moment of his demise at least two devotees of his in distant places had a vision of him. One of them, a well-to-do businessman from Madagascar, who had come to the Swami on several occasions, sent a wire to Cuddalore, reporting that he had had a vision of the Swami, and was wondering what had occasioned it. From the contents of the reply to his telegram he understood that the vision had occurred exactly at the time of the Swami’s demise. The other one was Yazhpana Swami, who had earlier received initiation from Dayananda. This Yazhpana Swami, at the time of Dayananda’s demise, had been in *yoga samadhi*, remaining inside a bolted room for several days, without coming out even to take food. All on a sudden, opening the door, he came rushing out saying that he had a *jyoti darśan* and that Dayananda must have merged into the effulgence. This happened at the moment of Dayananda’s demise.

The spiritual presence of the Swami continues to confer benefits to devotees who fervently visit his *samādhi* shrine.

### **A Connection with Sri Ramana Maharshi**

There is a connection between these two saints and Bhagavan. In 1932 C. Somasundaram Pillai and his wife Uma first came to Bhagavan from Cuddalore. They came of a family who were all devoted to Bhagavan. This family was blessed due to their service to several *sādhus*.

Deivasigamani Pillai was Somasundaram Pillai’s maternal grandfather, as well as Umayammal’s paternal grandfather. [i.e., Pillai and his wife were cousins]. Even as a young man, Deivasigamani

<sup>2</sup> A colloquialism referring to mere bookish knowledge and of no real value. Literally, it means that the shape of a gourd drawn on paper is of no use as a vegetable.

Pillai had been serving saintly persons. A high-ranking government official though he was, wherever he happened to go he would seek out *jñānis* and get their blessings. In his home he accommodated two *jñānis*, Swami Bhagavanta and Swami Dayananda, in their last years, built *samādhis* for them after their demise, established twin shrines and arranged for daily worship there by Brahmin priests. Even today this mutt continues to be maintained by descendants of Pillai's family. Many devotees from Sri Ramanasramam including Muruganar, Viswanatha Swami, Ramana Padananda and others used to occasionally visit Pillai at Cuddalore and would stay there for some days.

Bhagavan once reminisced about his first experience of *bhikṣa* [food obtained by begging] in Tiruvannamalai:

“ On seeing me a man among those playing cards on the *thinnai* [the raised verandah at the entrance of the house] went in, mixed some cooked rice and curry on a leaf and dropped it into my cupped palms. Only later I came to know that this person was Gambeeram Seshaiyer. His family too were disciples of Swami Bhagavanta of Cuddalore. That is why, among the group of card players it occurred to him alone to offer me bhiksha.”<sup>3</sup>

Suri Nagamma records that Bhagavan also commented:

“You know there is the tomb of Bhagavantaswami in Cuddalore. That Bhagavantaswami belonged to this [Gambhiram Seshayya's] family....When he [Bhagavantaswami] was lying somewhere near Cuddalore unmindful of his body, the maternal grandfather of Somasundaram Pillai who happened to be in Cuddalore brought him home and kept him until he breathed his last. [Gambhiram Seshayya's] ... family were with that Swami all the time. It is only after that Swami passed away that they came to be here with me.”<sup>4</sup> ▲

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<sup>3</sup> Kunju Swami, *Enadu Ninaivugal* (My Reminiscences). Trans. by P. Ramasamy. p.197-99. There is a detailed account, running to some twenty pages, of the life of Pillai's family in Tiruvannamalai, which can be found in the reminiscences,

<sup>4</sup> Nagamma, Suri, *Letters From Sri Ramanasramam Letter No.209 'Bhiksha in Agrapharam'*, 20th Nov, 1948.

# Harnessing the Gunas for Self Realisation

VISHALAKSHI VISVESVARAYA

One wonders at the great diversity in thinking, behaviour and action of people. At one end of the spectrum are people who are large hearted, sympathetic and generous. At the other are those who are ill motivated, revengeful and covetous to such an extent that they would not hesitate to harm or even kill people. The reason for this is the different ways in which their minds work. The working of their minds differ because of their '*svabhāva*' (nature) . The *svabhāvas* vary because the constituents of *prakṛti* in each individual vary. These constituents or ingredients of *prakṛti* are called '*Guṇas*'. There are three of them, namely, '*Sattva*', '*Rajas*', and '*Tamas*'. They are the basis of all substances but cannot be said to be the attributes or qualities inhering in them.

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The operation of *guṇas* takes place in this manner. *Prakṛti* is also called as ‘*avyakta*’ (unmanifest) or ‘*maya*’. Maya has three powers ‘*jñāna śakti*’ (power of knowledge), ‘*vikṣepa śakti*’ (power of ignorance), and ‘*āvāraka śakti*’ (power of concealment). In *Prakṛti*, ‘*jñāna śakti*’ causes the ‘*chit*’ aspect of consciousness to reflect in the intellect, thus resulting in knowledge, bringing *sattva guṇa* into the forefront. *Rajo guṇa* comes to play when *vikṣepa śakti* operates, which projects forms. *Tamo guṇa* comes to play when *āvāraka śakti* operates, which veils the Reality and causes misapprehension.

The fact that *guṇas* are important in human life is evident from Lord Krishna devoting so much attention to them in his advice to Arjuna in the *Bhagavad Gītā*. He touches upon the *guṇas* in many chapters in the *Bhagavad Gītā* and also one whole chapter (14<sup>th</sup> Chapter) concerns this subject. Therefore it is worth studying the *guṇas* in some details. The *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi* by Sri Adi Sankara gives a very clear picture of them.

Speaking of *sattva guṇa*, Sankara says *sattva guṇa* when unmixed with *rajo guṇa* and *tamo guṇa* has these features.

viśuddha satvasya guṇāḥ prasādaḥ  
svātmānubhūtiḥ paramā praśāntiḥ |  
tr̥ptiḥ praharṣaḥ paramātmaniṣṭhā  
yayā sadānandarasaṁ samr̥cchati ||

[The traits of pure *sattva* are cheerfulness, the realisation of one’s own Self, supreme peace, contentment, bliss and steady devotion to the Atman by which the aspirant enjoys bliss everlasting.]

*Vivekacūḍāmaṇi* 119

*Rajo guṇa* is described thus,

vikṣepaśaktī rajasaḥ kriyātmikā  
yataḥ pravṛttiḥ prasṛtā purāṇī |  
rāgādayo'syāḥ prabhavanti nityaṁ  
duḥkhādayo ye manaso vikārāḥ ||

[*Rajas* has its *vikṣepa śakti* or projecting power which is of the nature of activity, from which this primeval flow of activity has emanated. From this, mental modifications such as attachment and grief etc. are continually produced.]

*Vivekacūḍāmaṇi* 111

HARNESSING THE GUNAS FOR SELF REALISATION

kāmaḥ krodho lobhadambhābhyasūyā  
ahānkāreṣyā matsarādyāstu ghorāḥ |  
dharmā ete rājasāḥ pumpravṛtti-  
ryasmādeṣā tadrajo bandhahetuḥ ||

[Lust, anger, avarice, arrogance, spite, egoism, envy, jealousy, etc. – these are the dire attributes of *rajas*, from which the worldly tendency of man is produced. Therefore *rajas* is the cause of bondage.]

*Vivekacūḍāmaṇi* 112

*Tamoguna*'s traits are:

ajñānamālasyajadatvanidrā-  
pramādamūḍhatvamukhāstamogunāḥ |  
etaiḥ prayukto nahi vetti kiñcit  
nidrāluvatstambhavadeva tiṣṭhati ||

[Ignorance, lassitude, dullness, sleep, inadvertence, stupidity, etc. are attributes of *tamas*. One tied to these does not comprehend anything, but remains like one asleep or like a block of stone.]

*Vivekacūḍāmaṇi* 116

One important thing about *gunas* is that they are not directly perceived as black and white. They can be inferred only from their effects. Also in everything all the three *gunas* are always present though in varying proportions. When *rajas* and *tamas* are in small proportion then the entity is said to be *sāttvic*. When *rajas* predominates supressing *sattva* and *tamas* then the entity is *rājasik*. Similarly when *sattva* and *rajas* are subdued and *tamas* is dominating then the entity becomes *tāmasic*.

Speaking of *guṇa*, the Lord says in the *Bhagavad Gītā*,

tribhir guṇamayair bhāvair  
ebhiḥ sarvam idaṁ jagat |  
mohitaṁ nā bhijānāti  
mām ebhyaḥ param avyayam ||

[Deluded by these three states, the modifications of the three *gunas* of Prakṛti, all this world does not know Me who am beyond them, and immutable.]

*Bhagavad Gītā*, VII.13

The *gunas* have the power to bind the *ātma* to the body “*nibadhnanti mahābāho dehe dehināvyayam*” (*Bhagavad Gītā* 14.5).

The effect of *guṇa* is that one gets completely involved in activities pertaining to the predominant *guṇa* and one does not come to know the presence of the Self which is beyond the three *guṇas*, thus taking one far away from the goal of realisation. Such being the case, one has to make deliberate efforts to watch and try to improve the way one functions by harnessing them in the right way.

A man engages himself in some activity or the other throughout his life. The motives, the thoughts and actual performances of the various activities are all guided by predominance of that particular *guṇa* then. The activities relevant to our subject are:

1) *Tyāga* (sacrifice); 2) *Yajña* (sacrificial rites); 3) *Dāna* (gift); 4) *Tapas* (austerity of speech, mind and body); 5) *Kartā* (doer, agent); 6) *Āhāra* (food); 7) *Jñāna* (knowledge); 8) *Jñeyam* (object of knowledge); 9) *Jñātā* (knower); 10) *Upāsana* (worship); 11a) *Karma* (ritual rights); 11b) *Karma* (action); 12) *Buddhi* (intellect); 13) *Dhṛti* (fortitude, determination); 14) *Sukham* (happiness).

We will see how one's activities are performed due to the play of *guṇa*. For example:

*Dāna*: a *sāttvik* person will give gift to deserving persons without any expectation of reciprocity. Whereas a *rajasik* person will not show munificence and will give rather unwillingly, feeling the pinch. The tamasic person will give to undeserving person, that too with disdain.

*Āhāra*: a *sāttvik* person prefers to eat food which are agreeable and good for health, whereas a *rājasik* person will choose to have pungent and oily food not caring for the effect of it. A *tāmasik* person will like to have food cooked the previous day or any food, even if it is not pure.

*Tyāga*: Renouncing ordained activities out of delusion is *tāmasik*. Giving up for fear of trouble and pain to the body is *rājasika*. Giving up the fruits of obligatory actions but doing them because they ought to be done is *sāttvikā*. The real *tyāga* is when one gives up the fruits of all actions.

*Kartā*: He who does whatever actions have to be done, whether they are pleasant or unpleasant is a *sāttvikā* and doers of action with baser motives belong to *rājasika* or *tāmasika* category.

*Jñānam*: That knowledge which enables one to see the indestructible (*avyaya bhāvam*) substance in all beings is *sāttvik*.

That knowledge which makes one understand all the various things as just different entities without any common thread is *rājasik*. That knowledge by which one indestructible substance is seen in all beings, inseparable in the separated, is *sāttvik*. Lord Krishna says “Beyond ME, O Dhananjaya, there is naught. All this is strung in Me, as a row of precious stones on a thread.” (*Bhagavad Gītā*, 7.07)

*Jñeyam*: When someone holds the view that Self is nothing but body only or as some think that Self is limited to the size of the body, then that knowledge is *tāmasik*. The knowledge that God is limited to only image or icon in the temple is also *tāmasik*.

*Buddhi*: That intellect which can discern what is right and what is wrong action and also the cause of bondage and the way to attain liberation is *sāttvik*. When the intellect is incapable of distinguishing between righteous actions and unrighteous actions and not conscious of duties, then it is *rājasik*. The *tāmasik* person will mistake *adharmā* for *dharma* and views everything contrarily to what it really is.

*Dhṛti*: A *sāttvik* person resolves to control breath, mind and senses in order to concentrate on the Self. That fortitude (*dhṛti*) by which one regulates one’s mind towards actions with desire for wealth or other benefits indicating attachment is *rājasik*. When a person has strong determination not to give up the habits of excessive sleep, despondency and overweening conceit then he has *tāmasik dhṛti*.

*Sukham*: In certain instances a person may find performing certain actions very unwelcome involving great effort but in the end he reaps pleasant outcome. For instance getting up very early in the morning for doing meditation. This later results in happiness in a *sāttvik* person. The happiness arising from the contact of object with the senses are *rājasik* because in the end one experiences decline of vigour, wealth etc., which causes unhappiness. The pleasures which a person pursues in spite of the evil effects due to indolence and lack of understanding are *tāmasik* and ultimately end in disaster.

Since *guṇas* affect every activity of a person, in this manner the very character of a person depends on them. Thus the quality of life one leads is a consequence of the play of *guṇas*. Such being the case one has to strive and make efforts to cultivate the features of *sattva guṇa* and subdue the lower *guṇas*. Therefore, watching the *guṇas* and moulding the character accordingly is of great benefit.

## MOUNTAIN PATH

These *guṇas* exert influence not only during one's lifetime but also after one dies. To quote the *Bhagavad Gītā*:

yadā sattve pravṛddhe tu  
pralayaṁ yāti dehabhṛt |  
tadottamavidāṁ lokān  
amalānpratipadyate ||

[If the embodied one meets death when *sattva* is predominant, then he attains to the spotless regions of the worshippers of the Highest.]

*Bhagavad Gītā*, XIV.14

Similarly if one dies when *tamo guṇa* is dominating one goes down in the scale of evolution and may be born as a fierce animal or a tree.

ūrdhvaṁ gacchanti sattvasthā  
madhye tiṣṭhanti rājasāḥ |  
jaghanyaguṇavṛttisthā  
adho gacchanti tāmasāḥ ||

[The *sattva*-abiding go upwards; the *rājasika* dwell in the middle; and the *tāmasika*, abiding in the function of the lowest *guṇa*, go downwards.]

*Bhagavad Gītā*, XIV. 18

Further, an important fact spoken by the Lord regarding these *guṇas* is:

na tad asti pṛthivyāṁ vā  
divi deveṣu vā punaḥ |  
sattvaṁ prakṛtijair muktaṁ  
yad ebhiḥ syāt tribhir guṇaiḥ ||

[There is no entity on earth, or again in heaven among the *devas*, that is devoid of these three *guṇas* born of *Prakṛti*.]

*Bhagavad Gītā*, XVIII.40

What this amounts to is that there is no escape from the clutches of these *guṇas* for all beings. This being so one has to do *sādhana* to get away from the hold of *guṇas*. The first objective is to move from predominantly *tāmasik* to predominantly *rājasik* state and then to predominantly *sāttvik* state. For this, one has to strive to cultivate the features of *sattva guṇa* and subdue the lower *guṇas*.

This doesn't mean that being in *sattva guṇa* always will lead to the attainment of the goal. *Sattva guṇa* is also binding even though

it may be by a golden chain. One has to transcend all the three *guṇas* to reach the goal. One has to become “*Triguṇateeta*”. When a person transcends the three *guṇas*, becomes a *Triguṇateeta*, then his very attitude to life will change as depicted in the following verse:

samaduḥkhasukhaḥ svasthaḥ  
 samaloṣṭāśmakāñcanaḥ |  
 tulyapriyāpriyo dhīras  
 tulyanindātmasamstutiḥ ||  
 mānāpamānayos tulyas  
 tulyo mitrāripakṣayoḥ |  
 sarvārambhaparitāgī  
 guṇātītaḥ sa ucyate ||

[Alike in pleasure and pain, Self-abiding, regarding a clod of earth, a stone and gold alike; the same to agreeable and disagreeable, firm, the same in censure and praise; the same in honour and disgrace, the same to friend and foe; relinquishing all undertakings – he is said to have gone beyond the *guṇas*.] *Bhagavad Gītā*, XIV. 24, 25

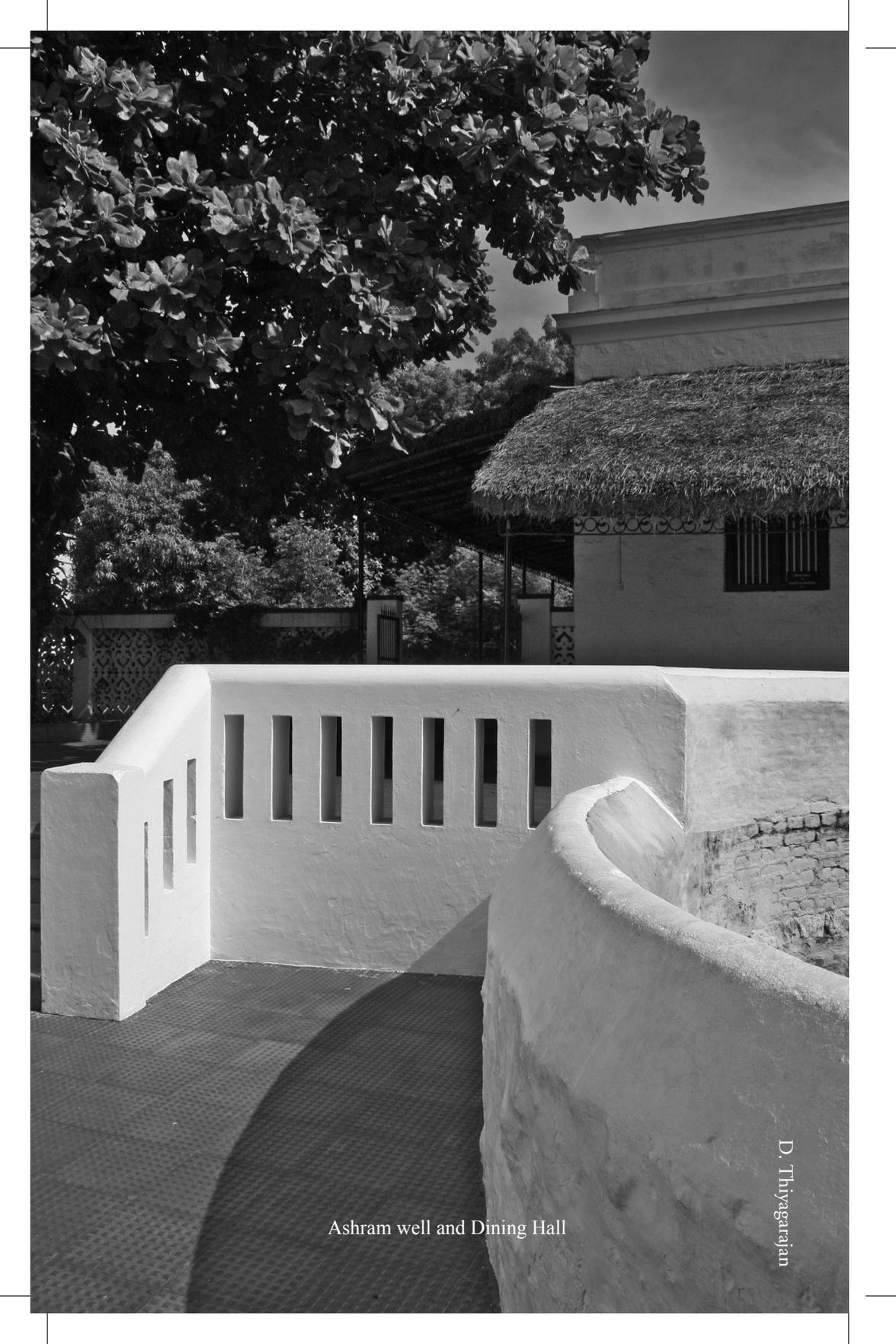
To succeed one has to be watchful of the play of the *guṇas* and mould the character accordingly so that ultimately one becomes *triguṇateeta*.

However, reaching that state is well-nigh impossible without God’s grace, which can only be secured by complete and unstinting devotion to Him. To conclude with what Lord Krishna says to Arjuna:

mām ca yo’vyabhicāreṇa  
 bhaktiyogena sevate |  
 sa guṇān samatītyai tām  
 brahmabhūyāya kalpate ||

[And he who serves Me with unswerving devotion, he, going beyond the *guṇas*, is fit for becoming *Brahman*.] *Bhagavad Gītā*, XIV.26





Ashram well and Dining Hall

D. Thiyagarajan

# Quantum Physics, Consciousness and Sunya

## Part One

S. RAM MOHAN

The 'Quantum Model of Universe' is based on the observations of quantum (subatomic) physics. To the quantum physicist, the universe is an inseparable web of vibrating energy patterns in which no single particle has reality independently of the entirety; and included in the entirety is the observer.

The particle behaviour is so strange that one gets a doubt as to whether two particles are communicating and co-operating with each other by telepathy. The underlying fields of the particles in the standard model are classified as matter-fields and force-fields. The matter-fields package energy to produce the building blocks of the matter, the fermions. The force-fields, through their carrier particles – the bosons – govern the inner action of matter, producing the basis for physical activity.

At the foundation of things, elementary particles exist in a kind of reality that is different than ordinary reality; they have rudimentary

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mind-like properties, they can exert instantaneous, long-distance influences on each other, and they can exist in super-positions of states which are not quite real but, as Heisenberg wrote, “between the idea of a thing and real thing.”

Like a mind, quantum systems can react to changes in information and act spontaneously. The visible order of reality is determined by non-material probability fields whose nature is closer to that of a ‘thought’ than a ‘thing’. The existence of the periodic table of the elements is the result of the symmetry of the wave functions of elementary particles. Physical reality is not what it looks like and elementary particles are not just miniaturized editions of the ordinary objects of our conscious experience, but they are different in essence.

“Modern atomic theory”, Heisenberg wrote, “is essentially different from that of antiquity in that it no longer allows any reinterpretation or elaboration to make it fit into a naïve materialistic concept of the universe.”<sup>1</sup>

Newton’s physics is materialism, i.e. the doctrine that “to be is to be material.”<sup>2</sup> In classical mechanics, all reality was reduced to the motion of particles obeying Newton’s laws. The universe was clockwork, closed, and nature was a machine. There was no room for the spiritual and mental, and the nature of mind, non-material and not subject to determinism, was a violation of its premises. In Newtonian physics, there was no room for the spiritual and mental, and the nature of mind, non-material and not subject to determinism, was a violation of its premises.

In contrast, quantum physics has opened a window to a different kind of reality similar to Indian philosophy. Elementary particles are not real in the same way as the things they form. The three aspects of quantum physics can be highlighted as:

- i. The basis of the material world is non-material.
- ii. Quantum systems can exert instantaneous, long distance influences on each other.
- iii. Quantum systems have mind-like properties.

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<sup>1</sup> Hiesenberg, W., *Philosophical Problems of Quantum Physics*, Ox Bow Press, 1952.

<sup>2</sup> Margenau, Henry, *Open Vistas*, Oxbow Press, 1983. p.47.

The wave properties of elementary particles are a manifestation of the wave-particle duality; when observed, elementary entities always appear as particles; when not observed, they act like waves. In atoms and molecules, for example, electrons are standing waves, wave patterns, or mathematical forms. Close analysis has shown that the nature of these waves is that of probability waves or probability fields, because they provide probabilities for finding an electron in space. Since probabilities are dimensionless numbers, probability waves are empty, (*śunya*), carry no mass or energy, just information on numerical relations.

Yet all visible order in the universe is determined by the rules of their interference. The waves of molecules determine the intermolecular interactions which are at the roots of chemistry. In contrast, quantum physics has opened a window to a different kind of reality. A crack has evolved in the materialist world of classical physics and elementary particles are not real in the same way as the things that they form.

This is how quantum physics shows that we cannot decompose the world into independently existing elementary units. “As we shift our attention from macroscopic objects to atoms and subatomic parcels, nature does not show us any isolated building-blocks, but rather appears a complex web of relationship between the various parts of a Unified Whole.”<sup>3</sup>

The various Hymns of Creations in Vedic writings dwell on this *Brahman-Jīvan* dichotomy in a variety of ways – it is like a matrix of metaphysical concepts. The authors tip-toe through ontological and conceptual difficulties with the help of myths and metaphors. Dr. Paul Deussen gives an extensive review of the Vedic literature and says, “The motive of the conception that dominates all these passages may be described to be the recognition of the first principle of the universe as embodied in nature is a whole, but especially and most of all, it is in the soul (the universal and the individual). Hence the idea arose that the primeval being created the universe, and then as the first born of the creation entered into it.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Capra, Fritjoff, *Tao of Physics*, Shambhala Publications Inc., Boston 1999, p.9.

<sup>4</sup> Deussen, Paul, *The Philosophy of Upanishads*, Edinburgh, 1993, p.183.

## MOUNTAIN PATH

The world exists because of the individual consciousness 'I am' which is there to observe it.

So long as big and small are merely relative concepts, it is no help to explain the big in terms of the small. "At this stage it becomes important to remember that science is concerned only with observable things and that we can observe an object only by letting it interact with some outside influence... The concepts of big and small are then purely relative and refer to the gentleness of our means of observations as well as to the object being described. In order to give an absolute meaning to size, such as is required for any theory of the ultimate structure of matter, we have to assume that there is a limit to the fineness of our powers of observation – a limit which is inherent in the nature of things and can never be surpassed by improved technique or increased skill on the part of the scientist."<sup>5</sup>

The wave-particle duality means that reality is created by two processes. In the first process, between observations, elementary entities constantly evolve into super-positions of possibilities or tendencies for actual events to occur. This is the wave-like state of reality.

In the second process, the transition from the possible to the actual takes place when an observation is made. One of the states contained in the super-positions of possibilities becomes the actual one. This is the particle-like state of reality. Heisenberg compared the super-positions of possibilities to Aristotelian potential. In super-position states, the quantum entities are not quite real, but have the potential of becoming real.

In contrast, in the quantum world, influences can act instantaneously over arbitrarily long distances. Experiments involving Bell's theorem have shown that, under certain conditions, decision made by an experimenter in one laboratory can have an instantaneous effect on the results of an experiment in another laboratory a long distance away. In experiments of this kind, two particles which at one time interact and then move away from one another are found to stay connected, as though they are one thing, no matter how far apart in space they are. This is the non-locality of the quantum world. Quantum non-locality implies a holographic universe that necessitates a holistic approach.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Diarac, P.A., *Principle of Quantum Mechanics*, OUP, 1947, pp.3-4.

<sup>6</sup> Op. cit., Margenau, p.47.



D. Thyagarajan

Banyan tree near Kanissham Gate

Since our Consciousness has emerged from the Universal Wholeness and is part of it, it is possible to infer that there is a Cosmic Consciousness.

At the quantum level of Reality, the line of demarcation is blurred between realms of phenomena, which are characteristically disconnected at the level of consciousness, such as the Natural and the Supernatural. The two realms are seen to merge, like the physical and the metaphysical, the mental and the material, and the mechanistic and the teleological. At the foundations of physical reality, the nature of material things reveals itself as non-material. Deterministic processes alternate with expressions of choices in creating the visible order. Entities with mind-like properties are found.

Till Einstein, everybody thought ‘absolute space’ is the arena (mathematically, a ‘manifold’) on which things change with ‘absolute time’. In the special theory of relativity, he redefined the manifold to be flat space-time by making both space and time relative with respect to inertial observers but keeping space-time absolute.

In the General Theory of Relativity, he propounded this manifold to be curved space-time that can act on matter unlike the flat space-time. Then the Quantum Theory pointed-out this manifold to be an abstract mathematical space called Hilbert space, since the space-time description of quantum processes is not available.

It is the Quantum Field Theory that originated in a successful merge of Quantum Theory and the Special Theory of Relativity which requires this manifold to be the Quantum Vacuum. Unlike the ordinary vacuum, Quantum Vacuum contains infinite number of ‘virtual’ particles that give rise to all matter and interactions.

With the advent of quantum mechanics, these seemingly contradictory differences between particle and wave lost their sharpness in the quantum world. A quantum object can simultaneously ‘be’ a particle and a wave, until a measurement is made on it. According to the Quantum Field Theory all fundamental entities are quantum fields (not material in the conventional sense) that are neither particle nor wave in the classical sense.

The concept of symmetry (invariance) with its rigorous mathematical formulation and generalization has guided us to know the most fundamental of physical laws. Symmetry as a concept has

helped mankind not only to define ‘beauty’ but also to express the ‘truth’. Physical laws try to quantify the truth that appears to be ‘transient’ at the level of phenomena but symmetry promotes that truth to the level of ‘eternity’.

“One overarching lesson we have learnt in the last 50 years is that all forces are associated with nature’s symmetry principles”, as observed by Prof. Greene.<sup>7</sup> Forces exhibit their separate identity when nature’s symmetry is spontaneously disturbed. The manifestation of one more symmetry of the loss of nature, known as super-symmetry, is indicated, even though circumstantially. Super-symmetry is surmised to facilitate unification of bosons and fermions at the Planck scale, where the fields behave as just different aspects of one field, the super unified field.

According to the Quantum Field Theory, the basic matter-fields interact by exchanging messenger fields (technically called gauge fields) that define the most fundamental level of communication in nature. Both matter fields and gauge fields originate in the fluctuations of Quantum Vacuum and in this sense everything in the universe, including consciousness is, in principle, reducible to Quantum Vacuum and its fluctuations.

Seeing the tremendous success of physical sciences in the external-world, one would think its methodology may work for understanding the inner-world. It is not obvious ‘a priori’; why should not Quantum Theory work in this third ontology when it has worked so successfully with two different ontologies? A physical space-time description of mind is not possible because thoughts that constitute the mind are acausal. T-space (thought-space) is identical with mind but it need not be so if mind can exist in a thoughtless but awake state, often called ‘*turiya*’.

Unlike the Cartesian dichotomy of mind and body, some schools of Indian philosophy like Vaisheshika and Yoga treat both mind and body in a unified manner. Since (western) science is based on Cartesian paradigm, it cannot synthesize mind and body unless it takes the clue from oriental philosophies and then blends it with its own rigorous methodology.

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<sup>7</sup> Greene B., *The Elegant Universe*, Norton & Co, New York, 1999, pp.357-58.

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A great conceptual step taken by Indian philosophy in this regard is to introduce a fourth state of mind called ‘*turiya*’ that is defined to be none of the above but a combination of all of the above states. This state is claimed to be the super-conscious state where one transcends the limitations of perceptions constrained by space-time.

Patanjali has provided very scientific and step-by-step instructions to reach this fourth state through *saṁyama*; *dhāraṇā*, *dhyaṇa* and *samādhi* are different levels of *saṁyama*. Sometimes the possibility of having a universal language (like *sandhya bhāṣā* etc.) to communicate with everything in the universe is also mentioned. Modern physics tells us that the only universal language is at the level of gauge bosons and Quantum Vacuum. Is there any connection between these two? Can a (human) mind be trained to transmit and receive at the level of Quantum Vacuum?

Nature manifests itself not only at the gross level of phenomena (accessible to direct senses) but also at the subtle level of natural laws (accessible to ‘refined’ senses). Consciousness is the ability to access nature at both these levels. Hence everything in nature is conscious. ▲

## The Names of Lalitha

Ramesh Menon

*Merunilayaa,*  
who dwells at the corona  
of the great lotus;  
upon the golden mountain  
from where continents unfurl.

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.

# The Ending of the Mind's Conditioning

M.R. KODHANDRAM

The mind engaged in the world process becomes conditioned. This conditioning takes place over every birth and what we are today, our nature, is the result of such a conditioning. All our actions, thinking, speaking and behaviour are based on our past conditioning. The original mind is unconditioned and pure. We are conditioned by many factors — the society we live in, the people we move with, our family, our teachers, our gurus, books, newspapers, TV, movies etc. — all are responsible for conditioning our mind. Thus we get used to doing so many things, again and again, birth after birth. At a certain stage in our lifecycle, as a result of our *punya karmas*, knowledge comes to us by Divine Grace so that we may evolve to perfection. Such knowledge may come to us through books, Gurus, listening, observation, experience, etc. The knowledge we gain shakes our

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conditioned existence and awakens us to the purpose of life and the way we attain this purpose. Based on the knowledge we have gained, we suddenly realise the mistakes we are doing. An earnest seeker wants to correct his mistakes and that is the function of our 6th sense — to examine our own life and make suitable corrections so that we may evolve and become perfect human beings and attain the supreme goal of life which is Liberation from this chain of repeated births.

In the light of the knowledge gained, as we try to make corrections, we find that we are not able to readily make these changes due to the heavy conditionings of the past wherein we are habituated to doing things in a particular way. Now there is a conflict within our mind when we realise that we are unable to implement our knowledge into practice which sometimes occur due to lack of cooperation and understanding from family members who will resist change on account of ignorance and their own conditioning. This results in grief.

For example, we would like to avoid going to parties where there will be drinking and non-vegetarian food served. We may have been doing so in the past. But having come to the spiritual path, we would not like to do such things anymore. Also, we would not like anyone to drink or eat non-vegetarian food in our house as we would like to have a *sattvic* atmosphere in the house. But our family members may not take kindly to our new thinking and may not cooperate with our wishes. This will lead to grief and conflict as we will not be able to implement our feelings.

Bhagavan teaches us the method to overcome this conflict and grief: We should surrender to Him with faith and devotion and keep our prayers strong. This is what we should always do whenever we don't have control over the implementation of our wishes as others are also involved. We need to be patient and not expect things to change immediately. We should not become crestfallen when people don't understand our feelings. Over a period of time, things will surely change by Bhagavan's Grace when our family members will become more appreciative of our desired changes to lifestyle. Till then, we should be patient and hold onto Bhagavan with faith and devotion in the spirit of surrender and keep striving on the path. This means, we should continue to go along with the family, even though it is against our wishes. Whenever we are affected, we should pray

to Bhagavan and leave the matter to Him in surrender. Then the mind will gain peace. If we, however, try to force the issue in the family, it will only create discord and conflict in the family which will be counterproductive. Thus patience, prayer and surrender are very important to succeed on the path.

Sometimes, due to new knowledge acquired, the mind 'suddenly' wants to practise, but the situation does not permit us do so. For example, we would have heard from our Guru that detachment is very important for spiritual progress. We would have also come across this while reading scriptures like *Tirukkural* wherein it is said that from whatever things you get detached and leave off, through them you will certainly not suffer (*Kural* 341).

Based on this, we may want to get detached from everyone in the family and go off somewhere to be alone and pursue our spiritual practice. We may not feel like seeing anyone nor do any work. This new knowledge on detachment has brought about this feeling in me. But I can't implement it all of a sudden as I have to run away from home if I have to avoid my family or work. I would also remember how Bhagavan left his home due to a similar feeling when he was just 16 years old. Can I also do it? Karmas or duties are still there for me at my home and they will not let me go off like this. Thus, there is a conflict between the knowledge I have acquired and the realities of life I have to face willy-nilly. At this juncture, Bhagavan asks us not to allow the mind to become gloomy but to go on telling our mind that —

i) All karmas have to be faced and duties completed before we can go off somewhere or totally devote ourselves to spiritual practices.

ii) All karmas are temporary and we cannot escape from them. If we try to avoid them, they would come back to us later on in life with greater intensity and give us much suffering. Therefore, it is best to finish off our karmas and duties smoothly by holding onto Bhagavan.

iii). So long as karmas are there through family members, attachments are difficult to end. This means, we can detach ourselves only slowly, slowly, by constantly remembering that attachments bring misery. By such constant remembrance, the mind gets detached over a period of time by Bhagavan's Grace through surrender with faith and devotion.

iv) We should also constantly remember that we have to see through life as a film-show in *sākṣi bhāvam* (witness state). This aspect is possible only after detachment is developed when involvements will cease.

Thus, each time conflict arises in our mind, we have to go on telling the mind these above-mentioned truths and wait patiently with the conviction that ‘this too shall pass away’. We should also keep striving to make corrections to our life and keep our prayers strong.

Let us take one more example: Having come to the spiritual path, we would like to give up bad habits like smoking and drinking which we are habituated to for long. Our Guru would have advised us against these bad habits because they are detrimental to our physical and mental health and are a hindrance to our spiritual development. But we may find it difficult to immediately give up these habits as the mind will not cooperate with any changes in this regard. Though we may have the understanding, we won’t have the mental strength to quit these bad habits.

Initially, we will succumb to our old habits or we yield to the temptation of our friends who are also similarly habituated. Every time we succumb to our habit, we will feel bad about it due to guilt-feeling. How can we overcome this problem? We should constantly remember the corrections we have to make and pray to Bhagavan strongly to give us the strength of mind to give up these habits.

We should also think of our resolve whenever the mind tries to tempt us and pray to Bhagavan to give us the strength not to succumb to the cravings of the mind and the influences of others. In this manner, we should try to control the mind as and when it tries to go on the beaten path. Gradually, with our self-effort and by the Grace of Bhagavan, we would be able to overcome our bad habits. We should try thus to overcome all our faults and bad habits and make our life pure and perfect.

Thus we need to be patient and persevere relentlessly and also pray to Bhagavan with faith and devotion. Over a period of time, the mind will gain strength and be in a position to shake off its age-old conditionings and evolve to perfection. Also, we will be in a position to see through our life in *sākṣi bhāvam* like watching a film show and be able to play our allotted roles perfectly like an actor on stage.

## THE ENDING OF THE MIND'S CONDITIONING

Gradually, perfect detachment will come in our life and we will be in a position to do our daily duties as *niṣkāma karma* (desireless action), keeping our mind on Bhagavan and allowing our hands to work. Once Bhagavan taught the way to perform *niṣkāma karma* to a small boy. He gave him a number of *dosas* ( a type of pancake) and asked him to go on eating them till he asked him to stop. The only condition was that the boy should always keep his eyes on Bhagavan while eating. This the boy did perfectly while going on eating his *dosas*. Suddenly Bhagavan asked him to stop eating and thus taught him the art of doing his work keeping his mind on Him.

Let us take an example of how we can overcome our greed for tasty food: I am eating *vadas* (fried gram bun) at home as it is some festival. The *vadas* are tasty and I consume three of them. There is one more left. The intellect tells me to spare the fourth one for some poor person who cannot have access to such a delicacy. But the greedy conditioned mind is stronger than wisdom and I quickly gobble up the fourth one also saying that there are other items for the poor like *payasam* (a sweet). But after eating all the *vadas*, my conscience pricks me and I remember the recent teaching of Bhagavan on ending of the mind's conditionings. I realise how difficult it is to end the greed in my mind.

I analyse my actions thanks to Bhagavan's Grace and take a firm decision that I will be more alert in the future so as not to be greedy for tasty dishes. I also pray to Bhagavan to help overcome this defect. All these days I had been allowing such actions to go uncorrected due of lack of wisdom. But with the seed of wisdom now planted in my mind through the teachings of Bhagavan, I am sure to conquer all my defects in the days to come and become perfect worthy of my Master.

In this manner, we should strive to overcome all our faults and bad habits and uncondition our mind and become perfect. Unless we purify the mind and make our life perfect, we will not be able to achieve the goal of life. Thus we need to put in earnest efforts and hold onto Bhagavan in all aspects of life. As we put in efforts to make corrections in our lives, we will find that over a period of time many of our tendencies will begin to change. Our tendency to get involved, ill-will, hatred, attachment, passion, anger, greed, pride, jealousy and other habits like drinking, gorging tasty foods, etc. will all be resolved

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through constant vigilance, analysis, remembrance of His teachings, prayers and the earnestness to evolve.

The Grace of Bhagavan is the key factor to one's progress in life. Grace comes only to those who strive to practise His teachings earnestly. The most important aspect of Bhagavan's Grace is that he would grant us a Guru through whom he would guide us on the path. A Guru is unbiased and knowledgeable and thus his guidance at every stage is required for our evolution. Without the support and constant guidance of an able Guru, our progress will be only slow. We need somebody to motivate us and give us constant guidance, strength and moral support when we are striving on the path and facing bad karmas. When we are trying to practise the teachings and correct ourselves, we will get so many doubts which only an able Guru can clear. If our doubts are not cleared properly, we will get stuck on the path.

The most important teaching the Guru will give us is the *karma siddhānta* or the *law of karma* and how it works in life. Only with the proper understanding of this law, we will be able to check our ego and strive to make corrections to our life so that we don't add fresh karmas to our life. And the Guru will help us to face our bad karmas smoothly so that we don't sink while facing them. His teachings will help us to lead a virtuous life and progress on the spiritual path steadily.

Thus we need the help of the Guru to constantly guide us on the path as each person has his own specific problems while facing life. The conditionings and required corrections are different for every person and only a Guru can help us to correctly practise the teachings so that we will be able to purify ourselves and evolve. Thus, by holding onto the Guru and Sadguru Bhagavan, we will be able to speedily uncondition our mind and evolve in life and achieve the Supreme Goal of life which is Liberation.

May Bhagavan grant us His Grace so that we may hold onto the path and make all the corrections in life and reach His lotus feet and end our lifecycle! ▲

# Is Pratyabhijna Easy?

ATREYA

The Sanskrit word *Pratyabhijñā* literally means Recognition. In *Vedānta* and Kashmiri Saivism it means recognition of one's own true nature. It is a synonym for *ātma-jñāna*, *ātma bodha*, and *prabodha* which mean, respectively, Self-Knowledge, Self-Awareness, Awakening and Enlightenment. What is enlightenment? Explicitly it is illumination, the dispelling of darkness, that darkness which encompasses ignorance about oneself. A man may be very learned but if he does not have Self-Knowledge, he is unenlightened, unawakened. The Sanskrit and Pali word 'Buddha' is translated as 'the Enlightened One', 'the Awakened One'.

The science of Self-knowledge or *ātma vidyā* which is *Vedānta*, is an extraordinary science of a totally different dimension from the worldly sciences. In the words of Bhagavan Ramana, it is the greatest science. It is a science which seeks to liberate by leading

Atreya has spent more than 47 years in a few *āśrams* and occasional social work. In 1988 he found his *Satguru* in Bhagavan Ramana and is now a resident of Sri Ramanasramam.

one away from one's sense of identity with one's body and mind to the recognition of one's true nature as the eternal, non-dual, blissful Consciousness, the *ātman*, *Brahman*, *chaitanya*. The scriptures define Knowledge (*vidyā*) as 'that which serves to liberate' (*Sa vidyā ya vimuktaye*).<sup>1</sup> It leads one away from one's sense of personal identity to the recognition of one's true nature as the eternal, non-dual, blissful Consciousness, the *Atman*, *Brahman*, *Chaitanya* which is *Satchidananda*, Being-Awareness-Bliss. Bhagavan Ramana's teaching of *ātma-vicāra* or Self-enquiry makes Self-knowledge simple, direct and within the reach of everyone. In his Song of Self-knowledge (*Ānma Viddai*) he says, "Sir, it is very easy, Self-knowledge is indeed very easy." He also said, "It is so easy that you will laugh when you realize it."

True, one or two, perhaps only one, namely Mastan the Muslim weaver from Desur near Tiruvannamalai got it the moment Bhagavan looked at him when he first visited him at Virupaksha Cave on Arunachala. He later said, "Bhagavan is one who can give his state to others." Bhagavan, who never compared or contrasted, long afterwards said, "Among those who show up... there is a huge range of spiritual attainment. Complete beginners mix with highly advanced souls. The most advanced are ripe fruits which are waiting to fall... One such devotee was Mastan...Mastan was in an entirely different category to most of the people who came..."<sup>2</sup>

The poet Sri Muruganar got it soon. He did not stand transfixed or transfigured in samadhi for hours like the wordless weaver Mastan Saheb, but amazing poetry on Bhagavan and his teaching flowed from him till he was absorbed in Bhagavan in 1973. His name became a synonym for undivided, uninterrupted devotion.

Young Lakshmana from Gudur in Andhra sat before Ramana and practiced Self-enquiry for a few days. When he told Bhagavan in writing in Telugu that he got it by doing his *ātma-vicāra*, the Master nodded his head and smiled in approval and asked the attendant Venkataratnam to keep the note carefully.

Professor Banning Richardson, Professor of English, St. Stephens

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<sup>1</sup> *Sri Vishnu Puranam* 1.19.41.

<sup>2</sup> Godman, David, *Power of the Presence*, Vol.3, p.25.

College, New Delhi, and Education Adviser to the Holkar State in Gwalior, was a very widely read scholar who came visiting Bhagavan in the 1930's. After spending a relatively short time in his silent, serene presence, the professor went away. He later wrote in Bhagavan's Advent Golden Jubilee Souvenir in 1946: "After being with the Maharshi for a day and a half, I felt no more need to read any book, not even his books. So I didn't stop at the Ashram bookshop."

Seven year old, extremely precocious daughter of Professor G.V. Subbaramaiah, Indira got it and life's highest purpose achieved, she was absorbed in Bhagavan with the words '*Deham Naham Koham Soham*' (The body I am not, Who am I? I am That.)

It is said that, bidden by his Guru Siddharameswara Maharaj to look at himself, Nisargadatta Maharaj, as he later became well-known, kept looking within himself for three years and attained *Pratyabhijñā*. He became a great spiritual Master. He was a married man with children and had three shops selling beedies.

*Satori* has occurred to devotees in Bhagavan Ramana's presence even without a *koan*. Many were the people who went into samadhi when he fixed his gaze on them.

What is intrinsically simple can also be difficult, seemingly impossible. The human mind, busy as it tends to be with complex existential issues and the problems of the world of appearances can miss the simple, the obvious. It can find the God Particle and skip God. Or it can worship God, formless or with many forms and yet miss God-Realisation. The human mind can accomplish incredible feats in every field. But do we pause to ask ourselves, "Is the mind infallible or fallible, flawless or flawed? Where does it take us? Can it help us reach our goal? What is the goal of human life? Is there a meaning to life or is it, as the Bard says, 'a tale told by an idiot full of sound and fury signifying nothing'?"

Viktor Frankl, the Austrian Jewish psychoanalyst who survived the concentration camp was the exponent of what he called Logotherapy, which later came to be known as the Fourth Viennese School of Psychology. The term Logotherapy literally means 'Meaning Cure'. Frankl believed that man will be happy if he finds a meaning to life and that the cause of various conflicts, neuroses etc., is man's failure to do so. He pointed to his own life as proof of his theory. Despite the

horrors of life in the concentration camp and the constant prospect of imminent death, he wanted to survive the camp and announce his theory to the world. Before his turn came for the gas chamber the war was over and the Allied Armies arrived.

There are many such ideas, ideals and dreams which give some meaning to life. However, the ancient Indians, the authors of the Vedic hymns and Upanishadic *mantras*, busied themselves with the ultimate goal of life and asked themselves if it was attainable in one's present life. The Vedas and the Upanishads, which constitute the *Vedānta*, the conclusion of the Vedas, are a testimony to their having succeeded in identifying not only the goal but the sure means to reach that goal.

When you come to think of it, *Vedānta* is pure common sense. It is the great art and science of Reality. First of all one should define reality. It is *res ipsum* (the thing itself). You are a Vedantin if you see things as they are without hallucinating, complicating, distorting. *Vedānta* is the supreme art and science, simple and easy, of being oneself. If one has an utterly simple mind, a pure, loving heart, a selfless nature and a clear and direct vision, if we are completely ourselves, instead of aspiring to achieve an image, Bhagavan says we will inevitably be happy; for it has been established that happiness is the ocean of fullness and the pleasures and pains which occur to us are the bubbles that appear on its surface with which we identify ourselves. It is pointed out by the wise ones that in deep sleep there are no such bubbles and hence we experience happiness and all that we have to do to realize life's ultimate aim is to be in a state of deep sleep and yet be awake at the same time.

To be a Vedantin means to know that the ego is our false identity and the atman, the Self is our true identity and therefore the individual soul is an illusion and the Self, which *Vedānta* designates as the *Brahman*, is the Reality. Pure Consciousness, bliss and non-duality, an awareness that the phenomenal world is but a projection of the mind which itself is only a shadow, are factors in this pursuit.

One does not have to know Sanskrit well, nor go through years of study of the *Prasthāna Traya* comprising the *Brahmā Sutras* which are the Vedantic aphorisms of Veda Vyasa, the *Upaniṣads*, the *Bhagavad Gītā* and Adi Sankara's commentaries on the three texts. Sankara himself declared in his *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi* that to one who knows the Supreme

Truth and to one who does not, study of the Scriptures has no purpose.

Socrates, Lao-tse, Buddha, Mahavira, Sri Ramakrishna and Ramana Maharshi, Ma Anandamoyee and other great sages did not make a systematic study of *Vedānta*. Why, the authors of the *Upaniṣads* themselves, the great seers, wrote from their own inner experiences. Bhagavan Ramana says that atman is inside you, books are outside, why do you look for atman in the books. In his *Śrī Aruṅācala Akṣaramaṇamālai* (Marital Garland of Letters to Arunachala) Bhagavan Ramana says, that one should look constantly within oneself in order to see. He asks when *satchidananda* is your very nature, why do you project the world of names and forms and get lost in it and suffer? However, he says when one abides steadily as the Self, one can be happy anywhere.

Adi Sankara, who stuns us by his incredibly brilliant, exhaustive *bhāṣyas*, gave a simple, easy *upadeśa* (instruction) to his disciples and to everyone: Dwell always in the *mahāvākyas*, be satisfied with the food received as alms. The *mahāvākyas* are: I am *Brahman*, You are That, This Self is *Brahman* and Consciousness is *Brahman*. The word ‘always’ is most important. He did not ask us to toil through his commentaries which are not for all, definitely not for me.

While *Vedānta* is doubtless a perfect science of Self-Knowledge, many of its insights are discernible in the lives and utterances of wise men and women of the past and the present all over the world. Socrates (469-399 B.C.) went round Athens saying ‘*Gnothi seufthon*’ (Know yourself). Jesus said, “Of what avail is your gaining the whole world if you lose your soul?” In the Old Testament it is said, “Be still and know that I am God.”

The German poet Rilke wrote, “The only real journey is the journey within.” American poet e e cummings (that is how he wrote his name!) wrote: “seeker of truth/follow no path/all paths lead/where truth is here” Young French poet, Arthur Rimbaud, who stopped writing when he was 19, wrote: “My God, this is not the real world/The real world is elsewhere.” The English poet William Blake wrote: “When the doors of perception are cleansed/You see things as they are.” Blake’s compatriot P. B. Shelley wrote when his young friend John Keats died, “Physical life is spiritual death.” The Bard of all climes wrote in his *As You Like It*: “Above all to thy own

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self be true/For thou canst not then be false to any man.”

The following lines from Shelley were read out and Bhagavan was asked if Shelley was not a realized soul:

Within a cavern of man's trackless spirit  
Is throned an image intensely fair  
That the adventurous thoughts that wander near it  
Worship and as they kneel, tremble and fear  
The splendour of its presence, and the light  
Penetrates their dreamlike frame  
Till they become charged with the strength of flame.

Bhagavan said, “The lines are excellent. He must have realized what he wrote.”<sup>3</sup> When the following extract from a letter written to B.P. Blood by the English poet Alfred Tennyson was read out in Bhagavan's presence:

“...a kind of waking trance I have frequently had, quite up from boyhood, when I have been all alone. This has generally come upon me through repeating my own name, two or three times to myself, silently, till all at once, as it were out of the intensity of consciousness of individuality, the individuality itself seemed to dissolve and fade away into boundless being, and this is not a confused state but the clearest of the clearest, the surest of the surest, the weirdest of the weirdest, utterly beyond words, where death was an almost laughable impossibility, the loss of personality (if so it were) seeming no extinction but the only true life.” Bhagavan said, “That state is called abidance in the Self.”<sup>4</sup>

Of the Bard of Avon Bhagavan said, “The Self as joy alone exists. As Shakespeare it enjoyed writing this and now, as you, it enjoys reading it.”<sup>5</sup>

Bhagavan has often said that realization is so simple that even if one kept saying ‘I’, ‘I’, one can arrive at the Self. He said that the thought that one has not got it is the real obstacle to Self-Realisation. In the science of economics, Gresham's Law has it that the bad (counterfeit) coin drives the good coin out of circulation. Whereas in the world of

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<sup>3</sup> Venkataramiah, M. (compl.), *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, Talk§341.

<sup>4</sup> Mudaliar, Devaraja, *Gems from Bhagavan*, p.33

<sup>5</sup> Swaminathan, Prof.K., ‘In His Presence’ in *The Mountain Path*, July 1988, p.163.

ajnanis, the bad coin (the ego) hides the genuine coin (the Self), to the jnani that Bhagavan is, there is no bad coin at all. He never saw anyone's ego.

Saint Kabirdas sang, "The fish in the water feels thirsty. The more I hear of it, the more do I laugh." Bhagavan said, "The water itself is thirsty." We are the limitless, blissful, non-dual Self but we find ourselves bound by the non-self — the body, mind, countless thoughts and vasanas (latent tendencies) and prana itself.

Bhagavan says in his *Upadēśa Sāra*, "I am not all these as these are inanimate and I am the *Sat*, the Reality." When we are free from the burden of non-Self, we can fly but we are content to be caged in individuality.

The Persian Sufi poet Rumi wrote, "Love is to fly in the sky." How can we fly when we are not free? The human mind cannot know love. Attachment is one thing and love is another, totally different. The one binds, the other liberates. As J. Krishnamurti said, "Attachment to one denies love for all." Bhagavan was an embodiment of love for he was ever free and whole abiding as the Self.

Bhagavan's devotee Balarama Reddiar used to say, "Bhagavan was always in Brahman." Bhagavan, free as freedom itself, was ever in flight in *cidākāśa*, the Consciousness-Space. He was steadily in the turiya state, in *sahaja nishtha*, in steady abidance as the Self, the boundless Consciousness-Space which, as the Upanishad says, cannot be reached by the mind. Mind, which is a bundle of thoughts, can reach the Self only to perish. "Thinking is not your true nature", says Bhagavan. But thinking has become as dear to us as our life itself. Not to think means to us dementia and not a state of freedom, the state of *amanibhāva*, the state of no-mind.

We admire or envy great thinkers who speak and write thought-provokingly. French philosopher René Descartes said '*Cogito ergo sum*' (I think, therefore I am). Scholars write heavy, learned tomes on Self-knowledge, on erasing the ego, on silence, on being free from thoughts. They use words like epistemology, ontology, teleology, soteriology and append very impressive footnotes and bibliographies to their articles or books. They do enrich human knowledge and can inspire in the reader a yearning for spiritual knowledge or even for liberation. But such books are not for all and God knows how sure

and quick the result will be.

The Ramana Way is for all. When Kunju Swami from Kerala, – who came to Bhagavan in 1920 when he was in Skandasramam, – one day told Bhagavan that he felt very small in the midst of people who were so learned in Sanskrit and *Vedānta* and sought his permission to go away for a while to learn Sanskrit and *Vedānta* from a teacher. Bhagavan told him, “Now you want to learn *Vedānta*. After that it will be *Siddhānta*. Then you will want to learn Sanskrit. And then dialectics... If you learn to be in the Self, you would have learnt everything. ... If you abide in It, the vibrations emanating from the Heart will give you direct experiential knowledge....”<sup>6</sup>

This was just what happened to Kunju Swami. The only book which he knew was *The Collected Works of Ramana Maharshi* and he knew it by heart and was known as the Walking *Noolthirattu* (Collected Works) among the devotees. When one put a question to Kunju Swami, one was sure to be fully satisfied with his answer.

Sometime after his arrival at Sri Ramanasramam from England in 1938, Major Chadwick asked Bhagavan if he would advise him to learn Tamil in order to be able to study Bhagavan’s works. Bhagavan told him that it was an avoidable distraction from Self-enquiry. What an exemplary devotee Chadwick proved himself to be and how deep his knowledge of Bhagavan’s teaching was. He spoke and wrote little and lived his life entirely by Bhagavan’s words. This is also true of S.S. Cohen and Arthur Osborne.

Today too, there are some ardent Western devotees of Bhagavan, inside the Ashram and outside, who are deeply imbued with the teachings of Bhagavan and write about them with great perception without knowing Tamil. There are also a few staunch Western devotees who have excellent Tamil and have come out with highly precise and elegant translations and books on Bhagavan’s teachings.

When we are deep asleep, not a single thought arises in us. Etymologically, the Sanskrit word ‘*svapiti*’ (he/she/it sleeps) means ‘*svam apeeto bhavati*’ (The Self is in repose.). If only we can be as though deeply asleep when we are awake, we have arrived at our true

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<sup>6</sup> Reminiscences of Kunju Swami (*Enadu Ninaivugal*), tr P. Ramasamy. p.131 (to be published)

nature. This is the state of Bhagavan Ramana and it is this he calls 'easy, indeed easy' in his *Ātma Vidyā* (Song of Self-Knowledge). His is a state of deep sleep whilst awake, and in this state there is no mind and hence no world of appearances, no sense of identity with the body, for there is no ego, this is the state of a liberated one. To Bhagavan this is the natural state of one and all and bondage is but an illusion.

In this Song, Bhagavan tells us that the Self alone is real and stands forever while the unreal world and body seem real. When the ego with all its thoughts is rendered naught, the Sun of Jnana, the Self-effulgent Atman shines of its own accord in all its Fullness. On sinking deep within the heart and enquiring 'Who am I?' 'Whence am I?' all thoughts perish and within the Heart-cave shines the Self, the form of Awareness.

Bhagavan concludes the Song with the following verse:

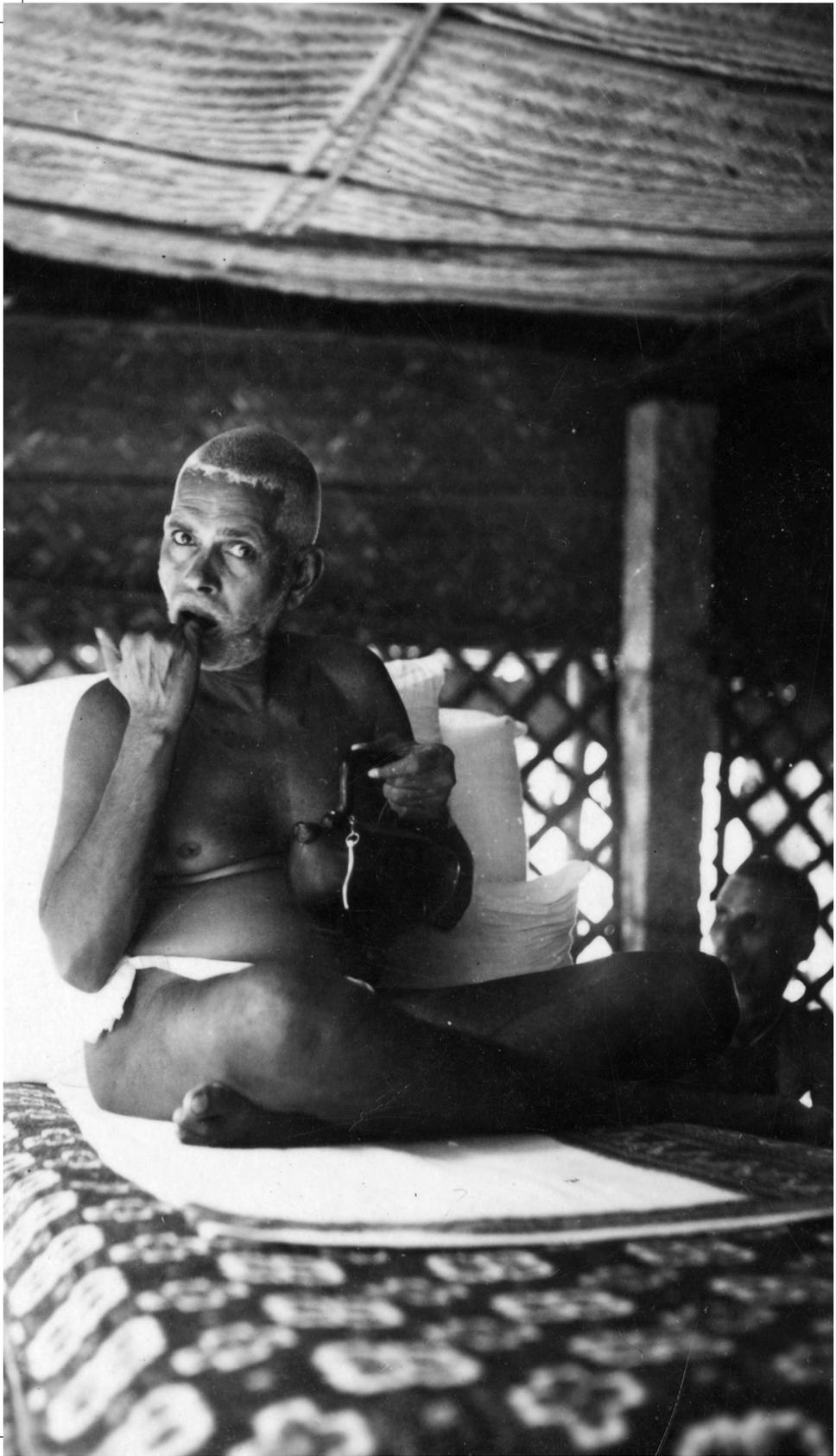
Annamalai the Self, the eye behind the eye of mind,  
Which sees the eye and all the other senses,  
Which knows the sky and other elements,  
The Being which contains, reveals, perceives the inner sky  
That shines within the Heart. When the mind free of thought  
Turns inward, Annamalai appears as my own Self.  
True grace is needed; love is added. Bliss wells up.

When *Pratyabhijna* dawns on us, we shall see Arunachala as Bhagavan saw it. Let us, therefore, really turn inward. ▲

## Not In Control

D.Samarendar Reddy

I never know  
At what moment  
What thought may arise  
So why talk of free will.



## HOW WE CAME TO BHAGAVAN

# Jailhouse Ramana Satsang

ART BAKER

This is a true dharma story about a friend I initially met almost 20 years ago in America, and about our being unexpectedly reunited again in Tiruvannamalai. The drama starts in 1994. I'm sitting in my apartment in Austin, Texas, channel surfing TV one weekend afternoon. Having been a devout Transcendental Meditator since my teenage years going back to the late 1970's, anything with a spiritual bent usually caught my eye.

So I come upon a Public Access channel with an attractive southern sounding woman giving Satsang. Little did I know that my spiritual life was soon to be rocked to its core. Thus began my introduction to Sri Ramana Maharishi. The woman, whom I had never heard of before, spoke about "finding the meditator." She said "Stop being identified with the meditator. Drop your strategies. Call off the search. Be who you are as that unbounded awareness that you already know through your meditation practices."

At first I was skeptical, but at the time, this was new fresh territory for me. I was fascinated. I pondered "Was this possible? Does she

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know what she is talking about? Is this message trustworthy?" So I checked it out. I learned all I could of her and her teacher, Ramana Maharishi. I couldn't get enough. I ordered from her organization numerous cassettes of her Satsangs and would fall asleep each night listening again and again. I started working for her, transcribing her new Satsangs so the organization could further edit them into books on various topics.

When my employment in Austin as Dean of Students at Life Science Institute came to an end, I returned to teaching in the Los Angeles public schools. My interest in meditation, nutrition, and Satsang was still on fire. I was pursuing them when an opportunity to teach these topics arose in Portland Oregon. So I relocated, gave classes, and was trained in a National Prison Project Program to share video satsang with inmates, to sit in meditation with them, and answer questions after viewing video satsang.

At least twice a month, various members of our local Prison Project team would volunteer, and car pool to Sheridan Oregon, a few hours from Portland. For over two years, I met with an enthusiastic bunch of inmates, sometimes a handful but often over a dozen who soaked up every minute of the videos, the group silence, and our discussions.

The organizer of the Prison Satsang group was Donny, a really intense guy who was almost an expert in satsang himself, having spent the lion's share of his time during incarceration in deep meditation, at least five hours a day while also reading whatever he could get his hands on regarding Ramana Maharishi. He initiated contact with the Prison Project Program to have a group visit them on a regular basis. Prior to this, he demanded from the warden that Buddhist teachings be offered in the course of worship that is a guaranteed right of the prison population. It was great to get to know him and it was immediately obvious how keen he was to wake up out of this nightmare of ignorance.

As the weeks, months, and years went by, I'd look forward to my trips to Sheridan. However, as life would have it, I eventually could no longer spend so much time as a volunteer at the prison having landed a new job in medical equipment sales, and having gotten married to a fellow Ramana devotee. I naturally lost contact with the prison sangha, but fast forward almost 20 years later, and the story really gets interesting.

Here I am in Tiruvannmalai headed to the Old Hall. I see this aggressive looking tattoo covered guy, looking like a member of the Hell's Angels motorcycle gang and totally out of place on Chengam Road heading toward Ramanashramam. I'm wondering to myself "How'd he end up here in the center of Ramana's universe?" Over the next several days, I'd see him sitting intensely in the Old Hall as is my usual practice. Upon exiting the ashram one afternoon, I finally have the opportunity to ask how he discovered Bhagavan.

Neither of us recognized each other. We now had shaved heads, rather than the long hair from 18 years prior. I asked "How'd you discover this place?" He said "in prison." I asked "Where?" He said "Oregon." I said "No way, I used to share Video Satsang in Sheridan with the inmates there." We stared at one another. He recognized my voice and said "I'm Donny!" I said "I'm Art!" and we laughed and hugged each other like long lost brothers who hadn't seen one another in...well...almost 20 years!

We now spend the lion's share of our time in Tiruvannamalai. Donny has adopted a local orphanage and has taught all the children there to meditate and to do Bhagavan's self-enquiry. He meditates with them daily. About this experience, Donny says "The radiance pouring out of these kids, the love pouring out for Ramana is palpable. One girl in particular, Revathi, does enquiry and has direct visitations from Ramana and a goddess during her meditation. At first, she was struggling with her enquiry, and then it clicked. The look in her eyes now is completely different. There is a radiant clarity, a gleam in this 12 year old girl whose spiritual heart has opened."

"Some of the other kids since starting enquiry, you can feel the stillness in them. Two of my friends who joined me there in meditation, one from Hawaii, another from Zimbabwe, they report that the power of silence there is as strong as in the Samadhi shrine at the ashram. The magnitude of what has occurred at the orphanage is astounding according to the owners of the place. The change in the kids is huge. Their schooling has improved, they are more disciplined. Their attitude is more satvic."

Donny's first visit to Ramana Ashram was in January 2013. It was a climax of a much anticipated journey that he had thought about for

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years while being an inmate. He first saw Ramana's image on video footage while serving his sentence but it was Bhagavan's photo on the cover of *The Spiritual Teachings of Ramana Maharishi* that initially grabbed him.

Donny's description of looking at that picture is: "It was like throwing gasoline on a fire. That photo instantly shut my mind down, then and there. I was already standing in the fire from the Prison Satang Program and this photo supercharged it. My mind went absolutely still. The whole thing was very intense. Once I understood what enquiry was all about, I could not leave it. It engrossed me."

"I would sit around for years, thinking of how I will someday come to Ramana Ashram and kiss the ground on which he walked. And I did just that when I arrived here because he literally saved my life. When I walked into the ashram, I marched into the Main Hall and into the Darshan Hall at his couch and did my prostrations. It was very emotional. There is no way to describe it."

"Then a few weeks later I finally figured out where Bhagavan's Maha Samadhi room is. It is my favorite place. It feels like Ramana is with me when I meditate there. I also love the Mother's Shrine and Skandasramam. The effect of her motherly energy is very nurturing, as I never received that in my own life. It has a loving effect on me and I sit in her shrine every day, as well as in her room where she passed at Skandasramam."

Back to the story of how my wife first came to Bhagavan. My wife Catherine and I feel that Sri Bhagavan arranged our marriage in 2002. We met that year at a Raw Food Festival in Portland where I was giving a talk on the raw food diet and its effect on one's spiritual path and meditation practice. I was living in south Texas at the time. While doing seva at the festival in the kitchen, a woman named Barbara expressed interest in my talk and I asked her if there was a Ramana Sangha in Portland. She said "Yes, we sometimes meet at my house and listen to various satsang teachers." So I decided to move to Portland and opened a Raw Food school.

At the Raw Food Festival, Barbara insisted that I meet a friend of hers who eventually became my wife. She heard of Bhagavan in the early 1990's from her first spiritual teacher, Tara Singh whose teacher

was J. Krishnamurti. Tara Singh taught The Course in Miracles (CIM) which is a non-dual Christian mystical Jnana Marga path. He had a vision of Sri Bhagavan in the 1950's after Bhagavan's Mahasamadhi. He visited the ashram at that time and several times thereafter, bringing students with him to Arunachala and to the ashram over the years. At his CIM courses, he had a meditation room with pictures and books of various saints and Highly Evolved Beings including our Sri Bhagavan, Jesus, Ramakrishna, Holy Mother, Moses, Krishna, Buddha, J. Krishnamurti, Helen Schucman (the scribe of the CIM), and Laotzu. Through Bhagavan's books brought from the ashram, Catherine learned of Ramana Maharishi.

Catherine and I would escape from our busy work schedules whenever possible to go to the beautiful Oregon coast for meditation retreats. Our meditation group at that time was led by a man who claimed to channel the energy of Arunachala. The silence of the meditation group was great but personally I did not care much for his verbal satsangs. However, one day Catherine checked his website and to our surprise, he was taking people to Arunachala! I said "Sign me up!"

At the time, she was a nurse working weekends, and I was selling medical equipment throughout Oregon and Washington State, slaving away seven days a week. The meditation retreats and the trips to Arunachala occurred annually from 2005 onwards. Our first trip to Arunachala truly felt like coming home. I recall being on the bus to Tiruvannamalai from the Chennai airport and feeling a strong sensation as if being drawn towards the hill, it was similar to being swallowed by a huge whirlpool. It was an amazing experience. I also felt the same emotions strongly around Bhagavan's Old Hall and still do to this day, like a massive vortex of silence that engulfs me when I surrender to it.

Currently in Tiruvannamalai, I continue studying how a satvic diet and lifestyle contributes to the clearing of deeply embedded samskaras and vasanas in the light of Bhagavan's teaching. Every seeker is eventually confronted with a pandora's box of suppressed thoughts and emotions from the dawn of their egoic fixation. Unless these pent-up perceptions are consciously met, they will continue to recycle and present obstacles to one's sadhana. By learning to be

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absolutely present with these feelings by directing awareness to them with a focused and open heart, they slowly dissolve forever.

We also listen daily and relish Sri Nochur Venkataraman's talks on Bhagavan's *Śrī Aruṇācala Akṣaramaṇamālai*. Bhagavan's teaching has guided us all these years and continues to do so. His presence is our guiding light, having taught us the value of a human birth, and the preciousness of what this life is all about in such a way that can be directly experienced and not merely philosophized. We are truly blessed to be here at the feet of Bhagavan's guru, and there's no other place we'd rather be. ▲

## I'm Lost In You

Suresh Kailash

I was running, all the time,  
Chasing shadows, all my life,  
Building castles, in the air,  
With no way of getting there.

Trying to get out of the maze of my mind,  
At every twist and turn, I was running blind,  
Traded my days for nights,  
All was darkness, no end in sight.

Struggling in the net of my illusion,  
Bitten by the sharks of my delusion,  
Searching for a strand of hope,  
But seeing a snake in the rope.

Then you came along and said, "Be still."  
I saw your eyes and drank my fill,  
Now, there is nothing more for me to do,  
Ramana, I'm lost in you.

## BOOK EXCERPT

# India From Within

ALVARO ENTERRIA

### **Introduction**

*The author of this fine book, Alvaro Enterría has lived in India for the past 28 years, has an Indian family and is fully integrated into Indian society. He is a co-founder of Indica Books, Varanasi and he himself has written this book based on his deep love and knowledge of India and its traditions. For NRIs this is the perfect book for their children which will give them a balanced idea of their Indian inheritance.*

*Indian society is vast and varied in its expression. The extremely complex amalgam of religion, social behaviour, ritual, philosophy and customs cannot be judged by western standards. Alvaro is uniquely placed with his roots in Spain to straddle the divide between the cultures and gives us some sense of the true India. He does not hide the negative side but endeavours to show us the glory.*

*The book is divided into six sections: History; Religion; Society; Art, Literature and Science; The State; and Travel. Those who wish to delve below the surface and see India from the inside in all its richness and diversity need go no further than this exploration.*

*The following excerpt is from the chapter on marriage from the section 'Society'. For those who are interested: India From Within. Indica Books, pp.586. Rs.750. ISBN: 81-86569-91-X [www.indicabooks.com](http://www.indicabooks.com) The email address is: [indicabooksindia@gmail.com](mailto:indicabooksindia@gmail.com) The book may also be found on Amazon.*

### **The Hindu Marriage**

In Hinduism marriage is considered a religious obligation. In principle, only certain individuals with a strong religious vocation, who become monks (*sannyāsis*) can get out of this social duty. Marriage is the means of being integrated into the chain of the ancestors, through producing children who continue the lineage (*vamśa*). For the woman it is even more important. The woman is realized in India as mother; thus it is often tragic for a woman not to be able to have children. Among the higher castes, marriage is the equivalent of the *upanayana*, or initiation that renders male adolescents ‘twice-born’, integrating them thus into the caste and the lineage. A single man, like a single woman, cannot perform the rites that govern religious, social, and family life: they are only valid when performed by both spouses.

Hindu marriage cannot be dissolved. In cases of utter incompatibility, the woman will often return to her parents’ house, but normally will never re-marry. Nor can widows remarry, though widowers can. These are the traditional norms; legally divorce and civil marriage exist even much earlier than they became legal in many Catholic countries in the West. In the event of sterility, the man could re-marry, though today bigamy is prohibited by law for Hindus (Muslims can have up to four wives according to Islamic law, which is recognized by Indian law). However, among the lower castes these rules, like many others, are much less strict. Marriages are made and un-made without major problems, widows can re-marry and there is much greater sexual liberty than among the higher castes.

Many westerners think this is a terrible kind of marriage. Because it is completely opposite to what they are familiar with, it appears as an intolerable lack of freedom. At the same time, Indians view the family instability and sexual promiscuity that reign in the West as terrible things. However, anyone who has lived for awhile in a different culture knows that the concepts and judgements used in one culture cannot be used to judge another.

For Indians, the priority is the family; for the westerner, it is the couple. When I return to Spain, my country of birth, after spending a long time in India, I am always surprised by the great emphasis placed on the ‘couple’, a concept that hardly exists in India. In India, the relationship between husband and wife is one more among many

family relations, and is not even the most important one. In fact, an Indian sociologist qualified this relationship as among the weakest, whereas much stronger were those of mother/son, mother-in-law/daughter-in-law, sister-brother, etc.

Marriage in Indian society rests on a strong foundation: the integration of a woman into an already established family. To this end, factors are taken into consideration such as the family from whence she comes, her character, level of study or work, etc. Factors such as physical beauty move to second place. In the arranged marriage, expectations are usually realistic. Many Indians say that in the West first comes love and then marriage, while in India first comes the wedding and then love; after getting to know many Indian families, and through my own experience, I can say that this is generally correct.

In India it is considered that a marriage that springs from the sentiment, from passion, as is nearly always the case in the West, has a very weak base. Passion is by its very nature transient, and is not a sufficient foundation for a marriage, except if it becomes converted over time into something else. In India the so-called 'love marriages' also exist, in addition to the 'arranged marriages' (these English terms are used within Indian languages). Modern life, working women, university, all these contribute to the daily growth of love marriages, where factors such as caste, etc. are not taken into account. In villages also, two lovers occasionally elope to get married and settle down in a different city. However, the love marriages have a bad name, and are thought to be more fragile and less durable compared to arranged marriages. Normally society is opposed to these marriages, but as there is neither dowry nor great expense involved, more than one father agrees to accept the situation without undue difficulty.

### **After the Wedding**

When the *barat* (wedding party) returns home with the bride, a new phase of life begins for her. Separated from her own family and her many relatives, she must integrate herself into another already established family to which she is a stranger, and to whose ways of living and customs she must adapt as quickly as possible. In this new situation the key person for her is the mother of her husband: her mother-in-law. The husband's mother, or *mataji*, is the one who directs

and manages the house. It is she who organizes the work for all the women of the household, and the new arrival must win her affection and approval. In large families the women of the house make up an entire society, with a large network of friendships and animosities, plots and jealousies, and there is never a dull moment. The newly-wed thus carves out a place among the wives of her husband's brothers, his unmarried sisters, the mother-in-law, spinster aunts or widows, etc. The small children stay with the women, and are passed from one to the other. This female society, which is much more informal and uninhibited than that of the men, also has a hierarchy headed by the mataji. In this world apart men have very restricted access. The newly-wed rises in status when she has children, above all if there are male offspring, and one day reaches the summit of her power when she becomes, in her turn, a mother-in-law.

In these large families husband and wife only meet each other alone at night, in the intimacy of their bedroom. That is, if they have their own bedroom, for in many poor families the house is not big enough to provide every married couple with their own room. It is a mystery how many children are conceived in India. If the mother-in-law/daughter-in-law relationship is not good, the latter will often try to convince her husband to split off from the joint family and set up house apart. But the husband usually stays out of the small domestic quarrels; in the event he must take a side, society often expects him to take the side of his mother rather than that of his wife.

Married women normally spend more or less long intervals at their parents' house (*mayka*: the mother's house). It is the custom for her to go there shortly after the wedding, and when she is pregnant; she may often give birth there as well.

### **Woman and Man**

The position of woman in India has always been ambiguous and contradictory. On the one hand, woman is considered unworthy of confidence and freedom; on the other hand, she is exalted as a manifestation of the Goddess, symbol of energy and prosperity. The following norms of Manu are frequently cited, being codes of law that were often sources of inspiration, although they were not always followed: "Liberty is not fitting for the woman", but also, "Where

women are honoured, there the gods are content; where they are not honoured, all religious acts are useless". Without rights of inheritance and subject *de jure* to the authority of her father, her husband or her sons in traditional Hindu code, her power within the family (and let us not forget that the family has enormous importance in India) and Hindu society has nevertheless always been considerable.

When the subject of man and woman is considered, just as it occurs with the castes, the Hindu point of view gives priority to their differences rather than to what they have in common. Indeed, Hinduism considers that the natures of man and woman are fundamentally different, and so likewise is their *dharma*. Equality would also be a source of rivalry, thus of conflict: the ideal is complementary roles. The current western point of view with its demands for equality between the sexes derives from the conditions of life in a post-industrial society, with very low birth-rates, interchangeable work positions, etc., conditions that are far removed from those of India and many other countries. To judge the situation of men and women in India by means of a contemporary feminist vision, as is so often done, is to risk understanding nothing at all.

God is as much or more Mother as Father in India. The Mother Goddess, who manifests as the many and diverse goddesses, is shakti, or energy. The gods are the consciousness that places in movement this energy, but without their feminine aspects they are impotent corpses. In this way the Indian woman is also considered shakti. Philosophically, Prakriti, the nature within and outside of man, is feminine. The masculine principle, Purusha, is inactive and distant, and in the popular perspective is rather secondary. The practical and day-to-day religion of the masses is more focussed on the goddesses than on their male counterparts. It is the goddesses who must be called upon for a good harvest, for the health of the children, for the well-being of the family. For the goddesses, just as women, are the ones responsible for the practical functioning of the world.

Traditional society values woman first as mother, and not so much as wife or daughter. The most important relationship for the mother is the relationship with her children, particularly her sons. The relationship mother-son is very strong, much more than that of father-son. Even after their marriage, men continue to have a great

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attachment to their mothers, often above the love for their wives; this is often a source of conflict. During childhood, the children live with the women. The mother, who alternately bestows her love and punishes (just as the Goddess has both loving and terrible aspects), is often the only authority to which the child is exposed; the father is a much more distant figure.

Another very important relationship is that of the woman with her brothers. There is a festival called *Raksha Bandhan*, where sisters tie a cord around their brothers' wrist as a reminder that they must protect them. If, for example, a husband beats his wife or treats her badly, her brothers are the ones responsible for protecting her: they can threaten the husband with grave consequences if he continues in his behaviour.

Man has the responsibility to provide for his family. If a man does not fulfil his responsibility, his wife has every right to reproach him for this, and she is usually not slow to do so. Woman is the home, the base of the family; she has the children and takes care of them physically and spiritually, especially when they are little. The goings on of the family and the decisions entailed (weddings, etc.) are above all the women's responsibility. The woman's territory is the house; the man's is the outside world. Only in the modern world is the outside world considered superior to that of the family. It is also important to understand that in India a great number of social relations are made at home, between families. Indian women thus have an intense social life, whereas in the West to stay at home often implies isolation from the world.

The Indian ideal for a married woman is that of the woman devoted to her husband above everything: in the *Ramayana*, Sita, abandoning the comfort of palace life, accompanies Rama in his exile to the forest, and thinks of nothing other than him. This is the theoretical ideal, but is often a far cry from being thus! Man, for his part, should protect her and satisfy her sexually: in India it is believed that sexual desire and pleasure are stronger in women than in men. The woman, thus satisfied, produces many children, just as the earth produces abundant harvests.

However, sex roles in India do not coincide exactly with those of the West. We may often see men of gentle manners, and women who show great determination and authority. Power and aggressivity are

not, in India, so much associated with masculinity as they are in the West. On the other hand, masculinity is not so much associated with brute force and aggression, except perhaps in some warrior castes, as with the power of self-control and inner strength. Indian men are often softer, less aggressive, more humble, more given to compromise than in the West. In India western men are often seen as rough, aggressive and irascible. It is only recently, as a result of the intense competition in the labour market and imported western prototypes, that publicity has begun to show an aggressive and assertive image of man, ready to 'conquer the world'.

It is quite common to see women exercise positions of great authority; this is so not only within the family, but also in society. There is thus a certain tradition in India of women who rise to positions of importance in various fields. Although not prevalent, when it does occur society respects it as something natural. Among the rishis of the Vedic period were women who engaged in deep discussions with learned men; in classical India also there were many women respected for their high degree of culture and learning. In contrast to the Greek epics in which women play a passive and secondary role, in the *Mahabharata* they appear strong, determined and with clear ideas, and their actions greatly impact the development of events. It appears that the outward role of women progressively diminished, especially after the influence of many centuries of Muslim domination.

...Ashish Nandy, an intellectual who is among the few who has managed to unite modernity with tradition, asks himself: "Why do some women in India reach the pinnacles of public power and recognition while women in general have kept out of large areas of public life?" and answers: "I have already said that, in India, competition, aggression, power, activism, and intrusiveness are not so clearly associated with masculinity. In fact, in mythology and folklore, from which norms often come for traditionally undefined situations, many of these qualities are as frequently associated with women. ... That is why in some areas in life, disjunctive with the traditional life style and not having clearly defined or well-developed norms, women do not start with as great a handicap as they do in many other societies. Obvious examples of such areas are politics and public affairs and some scientific and religious activities. Here public success does not

seem to detract from private womanliness. In other words, in such instances the Indian woman can more easily integrate within her feminine identity the participation in what by Western standards are manly activities but in India are either not defined in terms of sex roles or are tinged with transsexual or bisexual connotations.”

With all this, I do not wish to deny that the situation of many women in India may be very harsh. They are expected to exhibit strict behaviour, and must adapt to more rules than men. In traditional Indian society more emphasis is placed on duties than on rights. The modern concept of ‘personal freedom’ is considered egotistical and empty. If there is happiness in India, it belongs to the family, never to the individual. After the wedding, it is the woman who must leave her family and her safe environment to integrate herself into another family, while the man continues living in the environment he has always known. Woman has the qualities of devotion, self-sacrifice, and capacity for disinterested love more highly-developed than does the man. As the goddess Lakshmi, as Nature, she brings prosperity and bestows goods through self-sacrifice. She does not think of herself, but of the well-being of her family. For this very reason, much more is expected of her in these domains. This can result at times in abuse and oppression, at others great happiness in the family. In any case, the self-discipline of Indian women often confers on them a dignity and strength not found in many men. At times Indian men appear weak, fragile and childish, while many women will impress us by their personality, their inner strength and the responsibilities they assume.

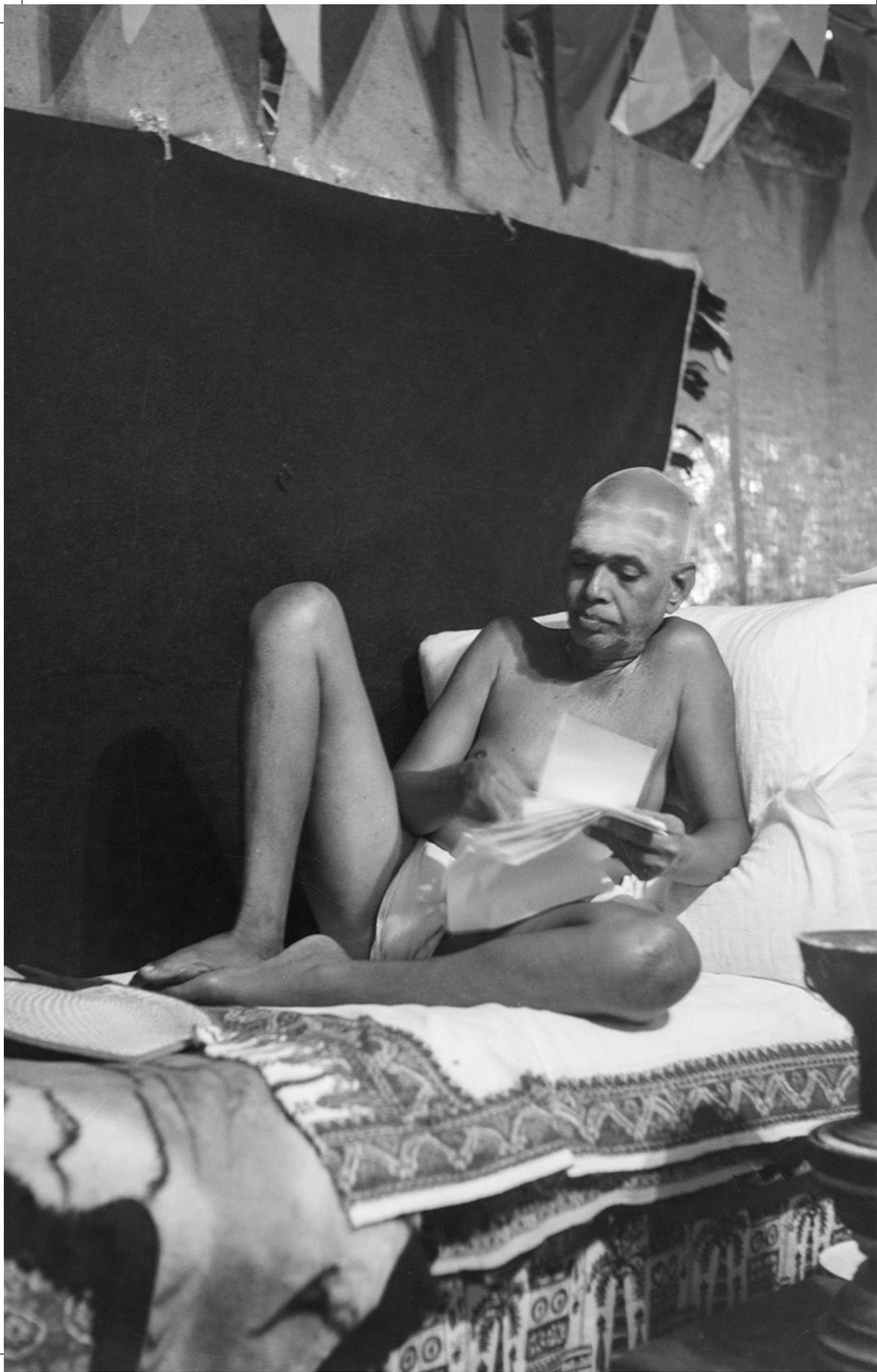
Although their role may often be confined to the world of the family, their behaviour is far from conforming to the western cliché of ‘the submissive Indian woman’. If she appears submissive, it is above all in front of her mother-in-law, who holds the power within the family; towards the older men she will behave with reserved respect. She is very conscious of her place in the family hierarchy, and is well aware of her rights. A newly-wed, quiet and humble at the beginning, will behave very differently some years later when she is a mother of several children.

In spite of the formally patriarchal structure of the family, woman has always been highly thought of in India, and has never been underestimated as was the case in the West a few centuries ago, when she

was considered an unintelligent and weak being. Everyone in India knows that women are stronger than men. There are many cases of women being oppressed in India, but I dare to venture that the Indian woman is often happy and feels 'realized'. My wife, who has visited Europe on several occasions where she often hears opinions about the appalling condition of Indian women (and those of other cultures) being broadcast indiscriminately by the media, has sometimes asked me: "But, why do they think here that we Indian women are oppressed?"

Though the men dispose of formal power, women are never ignored when making important decisions. I once read the following anecdote: the directors of an agricultural products company called a meeting in a village to try to convince the farmers to use some new seeds. Only the men of the village were present at the meeting. After setting forth the matter, the executives of the agricultural company asked the villagers what their decision was regarding the matter. They answered: "Tomorrow we will tell you what we have decided. Now we will go home and ask our wives."

According to the scriptures, the mother is the first guru (master) of the children; she is followed by the father, the teacher who will transmit education, and finally, the spiritual master. According to the laws of Manu, a mother is equal to a thousand fathers. The role of women is also indispensable in the transmission of the tradition. It is they who narrate for their children mythological stories, they who normally perform the family rituals. It is the permission of the mother, not that of the father, that is required to take the vows of *sannyasa*, the vows of a monk who renounces the world. As wife, she is the *sahadharmani* of her husband, her spiritual companion. ▲



## BHAGAVAN'S HANDWRITING

# Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi's Ashramam

### **Introduction**

Among the extensive collection of papers with Bhagavan's handwriting in Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam and Sanskrit there are a few papers with Bhagavan's English writings mostly corrections of proofs, poems by devotees that he deemed noteworthy. We will be publishing some more over time of these rare but fascinating glimpses into Bhagavan's relationship with language. As one can see his writing style was distinctive in its meticulous, precise presentation.

Bhagavan would spend hours sitting on his couch in the Old Hall writing on a board as support, songs, verses, and translations from various religious, spiritual and philosophical texts.

The following typed pages were discovered in the archives. They are an English translation of an article in Marathi from a magazine titled..... We have no idea of the identity of 'A Tourist'. Though we know much of what the writer has expressed in his magazine article, nonetheless it is a fascinating historical document that is worth reading.

(Translated from the Marhatti journal "समय" (March 1938))

BHAGAVAN SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI'S

ASHRAMAM

-X-

( By a Tourist.)

India is the home of the knowledge of the Self. God has always produced in India from time ~~immorial~~ immemorial Yogis, wise and Self-realised men. Some Western seekers after Knowledge have made great efforts to study the Aryan culture, Philosophy, Yoga and Self-Knowledge: but very few of these have come out to India to seek the Jnani and Yogis, and to acquire this Knowledge by living in close contact with them. They may think that in this present mechanical and materialistic age, it is not easy to come across real Mahatmas and great Yogis; but Mr. Paul Brunton is an exception to this.

Even to-day we believe that great Yogis live in the caves of the Himalayas and <sup>The</sup> uninhabited holy hermitages. With this belief Mr. Paul Brunton came to India - a treasure trove of Yoga - in the hope of meeting such personages.

Mr. Paul Brunton was so taken up with this idea that he laboured day in and day out for months together and toured over the whole of India without respite and collected information about the ~~retreats~~ <sup>retreats</sup> of the Yogis and Mahatmas, ~~xxxxxxx~~ with the help of Europeans and Govt. servants, big and small. He also personally went and lived with those personages. Either as a result of his great efforts, or as a fruit of his mental Sradha, or, say, by God's Grace, he met with a King of Yogis near Pondicherry. An Article appeared in the Bombay Times about the meeting with this Yogi.

Mr. Paul Brunton has written in his book, "A Search in Secret India", how he travelled in Hindustan in search of Yogis and got all the information about them, the different Yogic miracles he saw, ~~his~~ his wonderful experience about them and finally how he met this great King of Yogis.

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Mr. Paul Brunton is a famous English writer and journalist. His knowledge of Yoga and Adhyathma Vidya is great. He possesses all the discursive and enquiring qualities of the learned in the Sas-tras without their shortcomings. He is a keen observer of persons with whom he associates. He looks only at their humane and liberal aspects without an eye to their ~~heartless~~ heartless and ~~zealous~~ zealous cavilling faults, therefore, in all his publications he has avoided all high flown descriptions of authors, the ~~criticisms~~ sophisticated attitude of the Sasthras and the great enthusiasm of the seekers of Knowledge, but he has made a combination of the desirable portion of these three qualities. As a result, his book is very interesting and absorbing to an ordinary reader. Any one interested in knowing whether there are persons in India, who can prove the greatness of Adhya-thma Vidya and Yoga or not, must read this book without fail.

After reading the article in the Bombay Times and reading Mr. Brunton's Book, "A Search in Secret India", a great desire rose in me to visit this King of Yogis described by Mr. Brunton. This desire was working in me for the last two or three years. At last it took a firm root and I was enabled to visit the Maharshi ~~ixxxx~~ during the last Deepavali holidays. Sri Ramanasramam is at Tiruvannamalai near Madras. I left for that place on Friday, the 31st. of Oct. 1937. Our train reached Sholapur at 7 A.M., and at 11 it arrived at Wadi in the Nizam's Dominions. Wadi is a big Junction and people have to change here for Hyderabad, and Secunderabad &c. In the Station there is a good Ry. Refreshment Room for the Brahmins. The train from Wadi reaches Raichur at 2-15 P.M. This is the terminus of the G.I.P. Ry. I had the zone ticket of the G.I.P. with me. From there to Madras I took a return-ticket. About 5-15 P.M. our train reached Guntakal Junction.

Guntakal is a big ~~junction~~ Junction on the M.S.M section. Passengers to Mysore and Bangalore have to change here. I was under the impression that Tiruvannamalai was very near Madras, so I had bought the ticket to Madras. I had the map of India with me. From that I had come to the above conclusion. As I had not the

S. I. R. Time Tables with me, I had not the idea as to the shortest route to Tiruvannamalai.

Till Guntakal I did not meet any passenger in the train who was conversant with South India. But from Guntakal the compartment being full of Madrasis, I made enquires about Ramanasramam from them in English. My mother tongue being Marathi and theirs' Tamil, I could converse with them only either in English or in Hindi. Hindi prachar has just commenced in Madras. But those people know more English than Hindi. Shop-keepers, hotel-keepers, tongavallas, rikshavallas down to the coolies, there ~~was~~<sup>is</sup> not a single one who does not know something of English.

Our train was to have reached Madras ~~at~~ next morning at 6, but after reaching Guntakal, from enquiries I learnt that if I get down at Arkonam and travelled by the S.I.R., by the Katpadi-Villupuram Line, I could reach Tiruvannamalai sooner than by going to Madras.

That day happened to be Naraka ~~Chaturdasi~~. People on that side observe that festival in the same way as we do on this side and take oil bath ~~in~~ on the morning. So, as soon as I got down, the porter took my luggage to the Rt. Refreshment room and arranged for my bath etc. After bath and refreshments, I took a stroll into the town close by, as my train was due to leave at 8 A.M. In the bazar I saw heaps of Shanathi flowers and garlands of the same. People were buying them. It seemed to me that during festivals these people bought flowers, made their decorations and also wore them. ~~xxxx~~ I too purchased a flower garland and some fruits for presentation to the Maharshi and returned to the Station thinking that it would be time for the train.

From Arkonam the train arrives at Katpadi at 10, and from there the train to Villupuram starts at 2 P.M. and reaches Tiruvannamalai at 4 P.M.

On the Madras side, September, October and November are

Verdant

~~are~~ rainy months and there is water on all sides and green ~~verger~~ too. Paddy had been transplanted in the fields, and hence Nature was smiling. As there were cool winds there was no trouble from heat and since water was available everywhere, we were also free from ~~the~~ trouble from the road dust. Hence the whole journey was quite comfortable.

Tiruvannamalai means Tiruvat plus Malai, equals Three Peaked Hill. Its name is Arunachala. This is, from time immemorial, a place of Taps. On one side there is the Siva temple with its sky-reaching towers, and on the other is the quiet and holy Asramam of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi. The latter is about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles from the town. A number of Tongas are available to reach the Asramam. All round the town along the foot of the Hill there are a number of Samadhis or Brindavans, Dharmasalas and small Siva temples. After seeing all these, one is ~~is~~ inclined to think as if one is in a Tapovan. The Maharshi first did penance in the temple of Arunachala for several years and afterwards on the Hill for three or four years. Now he is residing at the foot of Arunachala for several years. There the present Asramam grew up. Close behind the Asramam, rises the Hill. As ~~we~~ <sup>you</sup> enter the Asramam, the Office building is seen first. Close to the south of the Office there is a big well full of water. Next to this, there is a big hall, where the Maharshi sits. When I reached the Asramam at about 5 P.M. the Office people took charge of my luggage and showed me where the Maharshi is seated. On one side of the Hall there is a big sofa and on it a tiger skin was spread. On this, the Maharshi, the Enlightened One, was sitting, wearing only a koupeenam. His eyes were brilliant and expressive, as if they were the very embodiment of Kindness and Love. His facial expression was full of peace and serenity, and this ~~spread over~~ <sup>pervaded</sup> the entire hall. In front of the Maharshi, one very old Sannyasi was sitting. When I entered the hall a conversation was going on between the Sannyasi and the Maharshi. At a short distance, <sup>about</sup> ten to twenty devotees were sitting. The hall was ~~pervaded~~ <sup>pervaded</sup> with the fragrance of frankincense and agarbathis. On entering I prostrated before the Maharshi, and ~~went~~ and sat among the rest. I could not understand the conversation taking place in Tamil. But I heard the Maharshi uttering the name of

Thembe swamy and <sup>he</sup> ~~he~~ showed to the Sannyasi the photo of Theme Swamy alias Sri Vasud<sup>deva</sup> ~~devanand~~ Saraswathi in the issue of 'Kalyan' of Gorakpur. From that, I was convinced that he was speaking about ~~the~~ Sri Vasu<sup>deva</sup> ~~devanand~~ Saraswathi, the great Maharatra Yogi.

If any one questions the Maharshi about any doubts, he clears them. He understands English and Hindi, and he is able to explain in English. But instead of asking questions, his very association suggests the necessary answers ~~xx~~ to one's queries, and the person's doubts are automatically cleared. The ~~usual~~ practice in the Asramam is to sit quietly in the presence of the Maharshi; or be engaged in meditation. In the evenings at 6, the prayer begins. At first, the boys of the Sanskrit Pathasala chant Rudra Sukthas in clear intonation. Then Purusha Suktha or some Tamil songs are followed by Vedic Mantras. Then the whole audience stands up and that completes the prayer. By this time it will be about 6-45 P.M. Exactly at 7 P.M. the bell rings for the evening dinner. To the <sup>south</sup> east of Maharshi's hall there is a broad thatched shed for cooking and dining. The Maharshi sits at dinner along with the rest. After seeing that every body has been served, he makes ~~hisx~~ a sign with his eyes and every body commences the meals. The dinner does not take more than about 10 to 15 minutes. The meal is a simple one consisting of rice, rasam and cow's butter-milk; Sometimes also some curry. Still, that being the prasad of Maharshi's Asramam, it tastes very delicious and <sup>is</sup> sacred. Whatever is served to others is also served to the Maharshi. There is nothing special for him. Like others he removes his own leaf. There will be about 75 to 100 persons to partake this dinner at a time. Everything passes off smoothly as in a household without any fuss and with a reverent attitude of service. It is a cosmopolitan dinner but Brahmins sit ~~together sit together~~ together separately a little away from others, and the Maharshi, though he was a Brahmin in his Purvashram~~is~~, sits along with the rest.

After dinner, the Maharshi goes and takes his usual seat in the hall; and the rest also gather together there. Till late ~~xxxx~~ in the night I was sitting in the hall. Each one takes in his Asan

and sits on it meditatively, closing his eyes. The lights in the Hall are lowered at about 9. Each one sits in meditation as long as he is able to do so. I observed several devotees sitting at meditation ~~for~~ for about three hours at a stretch. At about 8 or 8-30 P.M., a European came into the hall. He wore pyjamas and a shirt covered over with a shawl. Leaving his sandals outside, he ~~went~~ <sup>uses a</sup> in, and humbly bowed before the Maharshi. Then going to his usual place, he spread his Asan and sat on it for meditation. As he is not able to squat properly, he <sup>uses a</sup> canvas belt, which goes around his waist and his knees and keeps him in a steady posture during meditation.

On enquiry the next day, I learnt that he was formerly a Major in the army. But on reading Mr. Brunton's book, he gave up his job and came to the Asramam several months back to be in company of the Maharshi. He is living in a cottage on the premises. The Maharshi ~~sit~~ ~~see~~ sleeps on the same couch on which he sits during day time and many persons also either sit or sleep in the hall, for, there is no restriction for anybody to enter the hall. The Asramites get up at about 4 A.M., and after morning ablutions, go and sit in the hall for meditation. Morning prayers take place at 5 A.M. Exactly at 7 A.M. the bell rings for morning tiffin. Then the whole congregation along with the Maharshi goes into the dining hall for breakfast. Iddli and coffee are served for <sup>the</sup> tiffin, and every one removes his own leaf.

I took my tiffin along with the rest and shortly afterwards went round to see the Asramam premises. The arrangements in the Asramam are neat and clean, ~~and~~ well-managed, and worthy of all praise. The beautiful garden, the Anunachala Hill behind and the clean and sacred surroundings produce a marvellous and peaceful affect on the mind of anyone who turns it inward.

To the <sup>east</sup> north of the Asramam, there is a Goshala, and close to it there is <sup>n</sup> garden of ~~pl~~ <sup>pl</sup>ain trees and <sup>v</sup> ~~veg~~ <sup>v</sup>getables. From a distance, the Goshala does not look like a cow-shed, but has the appearance of a <sup>b</sup> ~~bu~~ <sup>b</sup>nglow. The Goshala has been constructed in <sup>the</sup> modern style,

with plenty of light and air. Inside, the flooring has been neatly done, the urine of the cows being carried outside by a drain into the neighbouring garden. The cow dung is collected in a pond outside, and later on converted into cakes for fuel. The fodder is stored in a shed close by. The Goshala accommodated both cows and bullocks.

To the south of the Maharshi's hall there is a big garden. There are a good many flower and other trees in it. To the <sup>north</sup> west of ~~there~~ this garden there are quarters <sup>for</sup> ~~xx~~ visitors and each cottage can accommodate one ~~xxx~~ or two. Each cottage has got a door with a lock and ~~xxx~~ key, while a lattice work gives free access to air. The bath room is located on the <sup>south</sup> eastern side of the kitchen.

On the day of my arrival at the Asramam, there were a Bengali gentleman from the Calcutta Ramakrishna Asram, a Khoja Engineer from Bombay and a Jagirdar from Madras. The last named had come with his family and was staying outside the Asramam, as there <sup>are</sup> ~~are~~ no arrangements for ladies to stay on the Asramam premises. After bath, the Bengali, the Khoja and myself went round the Asramam. In the Asramam office, there are several photos of Sri Ramana Maharshi and books for sale. Some books are in English and some in Tamil. By the time we ~~have~~ finished purchasing books &c. it was 11 A.M. Just as it struck 11, the bell rang for dinner, and this dinner was over in a few minutes as on the previous night. Being the <sup>Ann</sup> Anniversary, many persons had come and so the dinner had to be served in two batches. The menu was the same as on the previous night, except that there was an additional curry.

Daily the Asramam received tapal from various parts of Europe, America and India. The Maharshi goes <sup>o</sup> through all the tapal. The replies to all the correspondents are given on referring the matter to the Maharshi. The outgoing tapal is placed before the Maharshi, and after the latter has gone through every <sup>one of</sup> the letters, it is posted. This does not take much time for the Maharshi. He opens every letter, glances over it <sup>for</sup> a minute or two and then returns it. His correspondence is handled by one Mr. V. Srinivasa Rao of the Asramam. This

gentleman is about 30 to 35 years of age and is an M.A., B.L. of the Madras University. For some years he was practising as a Vakil. He used to visit the Asramam frequently, but for the last one and half years he has taken a vow of silence and is going out for Bhiksha in the town sometimes, and takes meals in the Asramam on other occasions. The internal affairs of the Asramam are looked after by him. His dress consists ~~in~~<sup>of</sup> a langoti and an upper cloth thrown round his body. He has grown a "jata" on his head, <sup>and</sup> also a beard. This Mr. V. Srinivasa Rao, by his humble and sweet manners and smile makes the visitors quite at home and helps them in whatever way he can. Another ~~person~~<sup>41a</sup> personage worth-while knowing is Yogi Ramayya. He will be about 61 years of age, slightly dark in colour, tall and lean in stature. There is something extraordinary in his eyes and his face is peaceful and quiet. Yogi Ramayya is an old Sishya of the Maharshi Maharshi and himself has many disciples of his own. Being far advanced on the path of Yoga, he can put anybody into a trance, he can control the cruel animals and can read the minds of others easily. Mr. Paul Brunton has given many examples of this, ~~in~~ as his personal experience, in his book. Ramayya loves solitude and does not mix with others. He lives in a cottage in the Asramama and spends most of his time in meditation. He goes to the Maharshi's hall ~~morning~~ morning and evening regularly, and spends a long time there.

There is another European gentleman, who has been ~~living~~ living in another hut of the Asramam for a long time. He also sits near the Maharshi both morning and evening, but I am not much acquainted with him.

After the mid-day meal, having spent sometime in the hall, I went and saw the Arunachala Temple. The Temple is very big with many high towers, and there are enclosures within enclosures, which can accommodate about 5,000 people. Inside the Temple, it is very dark, and people are afraid to go singly or two at a time. Inside there is a Lingam about three or four feet high. It is shining and lustrous. There is good illumination in-side the Sabha Mantap. The flooring inside is <sup>a</sup> oily and sticky. There is beautiful and well built tank

with good water. Seeing the lofty Gopurams, I was overcome with wonder and reverence towards the architectural attainments of our ancestors. But I never felt the same peace here which I experienced in the Maharshi's Asramam. After returning to the Asramam in the evening, the evening prayers were conducted and the supper was served as on the previous night. After packing my things, I went to the Maharshi's hall with a heavy heart, it was about 9 P.M. The lights in the hall were dimmed. The Maharshi was taking rest on the sofa. As soon as he heard my footsteps he made a slight movement. I ~~prostrated~~ I prostrated before him and sought ~~his~~ his blessings, He said 'yes'. I came out of the Asramam with a heavy heart, and got into the tonga <sup>mat was</sup> waiting outside. I had the Bengali <sup>and Khoja</sup> friends ~~and the Khoja~~ with me. ~~We~~, <sup>All of us</sup>, went to the Tiruvannamalai station; and catching the 10 '0 clock train I reached Madras at 5 A.M. next morning, and there catching the 9 '0 clock Bombay Express, I arrived at Bombay next morning at 10 '0 clock.

## The Middle Way

Rahul Lama

Taming the mind is like taming a mad bull.  
 If you loosen it's rope too much,  
 the bull may wander off far away.  
 If you tighten the rope too much,  
 it may suffocate.

The Source knows us better  
 than we know ourselves,  
 Gently It keeps working in us.

# Maha Bhakta Vijayam

## Chapter Six

### Swami Ramananda Bestows His Grace on Kabir

NABAJI SIDDHA

After a few days, Kabir felt aggrieved about wasting his precious time and started weeping over his misfortune, he thought, “No knowledge can lead to fruition without Guru’s blessings. Having accepted him as my Guru, I should not go after anyone else. Guru does not get fed up with a loyal disciple or his persistence. This body is short-lived like the bubble on water; my days are fleeing past. Wise ones will be overtaken by grief at wasting precious time. What enormous merits in my past lives must have given me this precious human body! After passing through countless wombs in lower forms of life, this prized life as human being, which alone helps one to get out of the merry-go-round of transmigration, has been gifted to me. While so, I am a dimwit to remain enmeshed in bondage. My attachment to home and parents will not rescue me from the malady of repeated birth and death.

“Which spiritual discipline should I follow to get out of this revolving cycle? I cannot practise any external discipline, as I

know God has to be realized within first and then to be experienced everywhere around. For that, I need the guidance of a Sadguru. If it is karma or action based worship, one should be well based in rituals, which the brahmins of Vedic learning alone can teach. Should I practice yoga whereby one follows breath-control and hears the inner sound? Or do I pursue the non-dual practice of 'I am Brahman'? Everything requires the guidance of a true teacher!

“There are different views held by wise people as to which path – action, devotion or knowledge – is superior. It is said, those who adhere sincerely to ritualistic karmas reach Satyaloka, those devoted to Lord Vishnu go to Vaikunta, those adoring Lord Siva to Kailash and followers of non-dualism attain moksha. How can I single out the path, which is superlative and bestows eternal bliss? It is not possible to recognize what is good for me without the help of a Guru. It is said, life of a woman without husband and learning without a Guru are barren. I am baffled, how to work out this situation. Let me go to the Swami and present my pathetic situation before him.”

Next day, in the early hours, Kabir reached the ashram. Standing at the entrance, he praised the disciples, humbling himself. On hearing the Vedic chants, he shed tears of ecstasy. At that moment, Swami Ramananda, accompanied by his disciples, set out towards river Ganga for his morning bath. Thrilled with joy, Kabir approaching the group fast, paid his respects to the disciples and fell prostrate at the feet of the Swami. In great bliss, he prostrated at his lotus feet repeatedly and kissed them lovingly. He remained unconscious of himself and his surroundings for a while.

Startled by this, Swami Ramananda stepped back and asked, “Who is at my feet? Get up. Only thieves come at this hour! Groping in the dark like a blind man, you have stumbled on to my feet. May all blessings be upon you!”

Drowning in a sea of bliss, Kabir falteringly spoke, “What an auspicious day for me! I have earned your blessings, my wretched life is salvaged from the wheel of transmigration. You have redeemed me from the ocean of worldliness. Ah...Ah..., shackles binding me to the world are broken!

O exalted Teacher! Lord of the universe, Crown of Knowledge, Embodiment of Vedas and beyond Vedas, Playful One, Purity itself,

Undifferentiated and beyond the pairs of opposites, Transcendental One!”

The Swami enquired from the disciples about the identity of the visitor. Then the incensed disciples said, “He is the same Muslim boy. And you have carelessly conferred your blessings on such a wicked fellow. You have showered him with grace. What an irony? You have spoiled your code of purity and polluted us also by interacting with this wretch.”

When the disciples gave free vent to their vile tongues, the Swami’s temper was provoked and he slapped Kabir. Then he said to them, “He is still hanging on to my feet. Grab him, don’t let him escape. Bind him hand and foot, thrash him mercilessly and break his bones.” With this crisp command, the Swami hastened to the river. Needless to say, disciples waiting to get even with Kabir, carried out Swami’s instructions to the letter. They bound him, beat him till he bled, gagged his mouth and shut him up in the cowshed to take him to the king after the daybreak.

Pained by the torture, Kabir cried piteously and implored upon the Lord, “O Hari, Supreme Lord, Lover of devotees, Primordial Source, Friend of the sages, Self-effulgent, Destroyer of sins! Why does the revered Swami abhor me? Will his loathing for me ever disappear? Will I get clarity? What did I do to deserve this punishment? Do You take pleasure in my travails? Is it all written irrevocably in my destiny?”

While he was bemoaning his fate inconsolably, the gracious Lord appeared, freed him from fetters, took him in His embrace and said, “My beloved one, did you suffer terribly at the hands of Swami Ramananda’s disciples? Don’t give up courage. My child, you have suffered a harsh punishment and unjust confinement in this shed.” With endearing words, the Lord caressed his wounds, comforted him, then shifted him back to his home by his power of illusion and vanished.

Kabir struck with wonder at the events, broke into praises, “O amazing Grace! Why did You go away so soon and deprive me of Your nectar-like words. The very moment Your sweet voice reached my ears, all my pains disappeared, my evils were reduced to ashes.”

Hearing this, Tamal asked in surprise, “What! The Lord visited here? He is so partial as to give the vision only to you, drawing a

## MOUNTAIN PATH

veil across my eyes. Does he consider me a hideous sinner, beyond redemption? The burden of my sins must be heavy. Your merits must be highly laudable, my son. You are blessed indeed! Will His compassion reach out to me and rescue me? Alas! What happened to you, my dear child? Who has laid his fingers on you again and turned you black and blue?"

Kabir kept silent, not wanting to bring the whole incident to light. Just then, Jijabibi observed the deep wounds and also the deep impression left by the cord on his body and shrieked in alarm, "Why this horrible condition? How did you manage to walk home in such a state? You are my dearest, more precious than my life. How can you put your life to risk time and again?" Kabir maintained a stoic silence.



## Revival

Upahar

Begin again the song, some graceful day;  
cry to the gods of water, wind and fire.  
Set out once more, beloved, on your way.

Dark elements within, around, above,  
move on; your burning wound, your deepest loss,  
shrines of an unimaginable love.

The ancient gift of heartbreak, hold it dear;  
nothing we are, to nothing we return,  
yet, secret joy: we are forever Here.

All passes as a dream, nothing can stay.  
Lay gently at His feet your true desire.  
Set out once more, beloved, on your way.

TRANSLATION

# Ozhivil Odukkam

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

Just as people who are mentally deranged or are suffering from a painful disease naturally assume that others see things exactly as they do, those whose perception is masked by primal ignorance will say to those whose consciousness is informed by divine grace, ‘What kind of behaviour is this?’ (207)

The text say, *pēy piṭittu – a devil, fiend, ghost having seized [them]*. In the translation some license has been used in taking it as the equivalent of *mental illness*. What today we would class as schizophrenia or some other form of mental illness would regularly be ascribed in earlier centuries to demonic possession.

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

## MOUNTAIN PATH

*Cūlai*, here translated as *painful disease* is a term applied to a class of diseases covering a wide range of conditions from arthritis and rheumatism to gout and colic. *cūlai nōy* was famously the disease which afflicted the *Tēvāram* poet-saint Appar before his conversion to Saivism. In Appar's case the disease was clearly some form of intestinal colic, as evidenced in the first *padikam* of volume 4 of *Tirumurai*: '[My malady] hides within me knotting up my intestines, twisting my innards till my limbs are convulsed, so that I, your devotee, can find no repose.' (4.1.1)

The *primal ignorance* referred to in this verse is *āṇava malam*, which in Siddhānta terms is the principle of egoity which is inherent in the soul, as verdigris is in copper. The nature of normal consciousness is one of forgetting its true nature as the Self and becoming enmired in the activity of the mind and senses.

Are those who are insane and incapable of speech somehow able to accept good advice? Worldly people will remain convinced that the very darkness of delusion is the light of true knowledge. Will they not say that those who are possessed only by the power of grace are the very devil? Milk is anathema to the tongue of the bilious, as is the sun to creatures that see only in the dark. (208)

The words tongue of the bilious translate the Tamil words *pitta nā – a tongue [affected by] bile*. *pittam – bile* is one of the four humours. It is secreted by the liver into the intestines for the purpose of digesting fat. It is therefore likely that someone suffering from a disorder related to bile will be averse to foods with a high fat content, like milk. The condition of being averse to food is called *aruci-p-pittam* in Tamil, *aruci* having the meaning of *aversion to, absence of relish for*. Just as milk only appears unpleasant to those who suffer from some disorder of the body, the quest for the Self will cause aversion in worldly people, who are only interested in ego-driven worldly pursuits.

Clad only in the four directions they wander at large; they are like a bird sitting on her eggs, or a tortoise when someone comes near. Who are their countrymen? Like walking corpses, or madmen bereft of speech they may be, yet even the hosts of

the gods raise a cry to invoke their help, and Indras accompany them, wielding sceptres of protection. (209)

The comparison with *a bird sitting on her eggs* could be taken to refer to the manner in which the *jñāni* is firmly established in the state of the Self, as the bird settled on the nest, intent on hatching her brood, or to the manner in which the *jñāni* embraces all the worlds, just as the hen embraces her brood in the protective cover of her feathers.

Just as the tortoise or turtle will draw back its limbs into its shell as a mechanism of protection, the *jñāni* keeps his senses withdrawn, so as to remain unaffected by the objects of sense.

The words *sceptres of protection* translate the Tamil words *cēma kōl*. *cēmam* can mean *protection, safety, preservation* or *happiness, well-being, welfare*, and a *kōl* is a *staff* or *sceptre*. A *cēma kōl* is either a sceptre or staff which confers protection, or, as Tirupporur Chidambara Swamigal (TCS) thinks, a sceptre which is glorious on account of its being used in the service of a *jñāni*.

Some liberated ones will leave the place they are in never to return, just as life never returns to a dead body; others will remain where they are, regarding all places as only one. All they know is that the body is but a temporary dwelling place for the soul, and the world, the stage upon which they act. (210)

The words *just as life never returns to a dead body* are an expansion of the text, which simply says *cettavarai pōla – like those who have died*. TCS explains this in his commentary as follows: ‘just as the life which has departed from a body does not return and enter it again.’

The words *muttar tamakku* – for the liberated, occurring in the middle of the verse, form both the last two words of the first statement in the verse and the first two of the second. This literary device is called *tāppicai*; the word *tāpp(u)* represents the word *tāmpu* – *swing*, used in combination; *tāppicai* is one of eight *poruḷ kōḷ* – *modes of constructing a verse*.

When the pleasures of the body [are seen to be unreal and] fall away, the enemy of the soul (the ego, *āṇava malam*) dies. Then, as bliss itself dies away, discriminating awareness, along with

the idea of a personal self disappears. For those who are thus established in the all-embracing fullness of reality, moving about will be like measuring the ether. Will there be any place where they may not go? (211)

The word translated as bliss here is the Tamil word *pēru*, which means *good or benefit*, that is to say, the good gained from the loss of *āṇava malam*, which, whilst in operation, causes the individual to perceive worldly experience as pleasure, whilst in reality its nature is suffering. Bliss, has been identified in previous verses as the state which immediately precedes final liberation, but this is not the final state, as Bhagavan himself makes clear:

"...*ananda* (bliss), is also called an obstacle, because in that state a feeling of separation from the source of *ananda*, enabling the enjoyer to say 'I am enjoying *ananda*' is present. Even this has to be surmounted. The final stage of *samadhana* or *samadhi* has to be reached in which one becomes *ananda* or one with reality, and the duality of enjoyer and enjoyment ceases in the ocean of sat-chit-ananda or the Self."<sup>1</sup>

The word *measuring* translates the Tamil expression *cāṇ iṭal* – [*the act of*] *measuring*, literally, *applying the cāṇ*, a measure of 9 inches. 'A span of twelve fingers' breadth, or from the end of the thumb to the end of the little finger extended.' (Winslow's dictionary). Since the ether is infinite and the same everywhere, to measure it, or to cease to measure it, has no effect on it whatsoever. Whether *jñānis* go to one place or another, or stay where they are, it has no significance, just as to go about measuring the sky with a ruler would be a meaningless, random activity.

What does it matter if they live in a dense forest, or a place inhabited by men with royal palanquins, umbrellas and fans? What does it matter if their dwelling place is high, low or middling? They are like Lord Siva himself, having no contact with anything whatsoever, or like his grace, which does not [leave Him to perform the divine operations and then] return to Him again. For them, all places are one and the same. (212)

<sup>1</sup> Mudaliar, Devaraja, *Day by Day with Bhagavan*, 25-4-46, Morning.

The Tamil word translated as *palanquin* is *taṇṭu* – *stick, cudgel, bludgeon, staff*, but it can also mean *the pole of a palanquin*, and therefore by synecdoche, a palanquin. (Synecdoche is the figure of speech in which the part is put to describe the whole; in Tamil this figure of speech is called *ciṇai ākupeyar*.)

In the latter part of the verse, the *jñāni* is compared first to Lord Śiva, in the sense that, although all phenomena exist in and through Him, he is entirely separate from them. Then he is compared to *aruḷ* – *grace*, the creative energy of Lord Siva, which, though causing all things to occur, does not in itself interact with anything else, nor become separate from the reality which is Śivam.

To those who have known themselves through grace, and then transcended entirely even that knowledge, attaining thus to the greater life of realisation in this lifetime, the very destruction of that consciousness, in which they acted in and experienced [the world objectively], is their dwelling place. For them there is no saying, ‘this is a cremation ground,’ [or ‘this place is pure’].

(213)

To those who have abandoned lust and all the rest, whose hands are their only food vessel, who sleep on the bare ground with only their arms and legs as a cover, who are untouched by even the idea of name, reputation, caste or occupation, what religion might we ascribe?

(214)

*Lust and all the rest* references what are known in Tamil as the *uḷ pakai* – *the [six] inner enemies: kāmam – lust; kurōtam – anger; ulōpam – avarice; mōkam – sensuality; matam – pride and māccariyam – envy, malice.*

The Tamil word translated in the last line by *idea* is *vātaṇai* also written *vācaṇai*, Sanskrit *vāsanā*. It is defined in Monier-Williams’ dictionary as ‘The impression of anything remaining unconsciously in the mind, the present consciousness of past perceptions.’ All actions performed with the sense of doership, the ego, either in this life or previous ones, leave traces in consciousness which bind the *jīva* and precondition its subsequent behaviour. This is the mechanism by which it is bound to an indefinitely extended series of incarnations,

until it can free itself and attain liberation. The point here is that the *jñāni* has freed himself from all such conditioning and therefore not only is he not concerned with social status, caste and so on, but he is quite unaware of their existence, even as concepts.

This verse carries with it strong echoes of Sri Ramana's own life after his arrival at Aruṇācala. He himself describes how he abandoned name, caste and any specific religious adherence, throwing his sacred thread into a tank; how, when begging for food, he was content to use only his cupped hands for a plate, and how in winter he would be content merely to cross his arms over his bare chest to keep warm.

If we compare the life of the *jñāni* to that of the world in general, the former will be like a lamp [which is the source of illumination], and the latter, a pair of glasses [which require illumination to be of any use]. To the rest of the world he will appear to have strayed from the path. But does that world affect him? He knows only that forgetfulness [in which one forgets the world]. He does not know [that forgetfulness in which one forgets the Self]. (215)

The Tamil word *cīṇa-k-kaṇṇādi* is taken here to mean *pair of glasses, spectacles*; it also has the meaning *looking glass*, as from China. Someone looking for an object in total darkness will easily find it with a lamp, as opposed to someone looking for it with a pair of glasses, who will not be able to see anything but darkness. Similarly the *jñāni*, who partakes of the self-luminous quality of the Self, will be able to dispel the darkness of ignorance and know the truth. Conversely, for the worldly person, the only aid against ignorance is the mind, which, without the illumination of the Self, can see only that ignorance. Just as a pair of glasses is useless in the dark, so the mind is useless as an aid to seek the Real in the state of ignorance, without the illumination of the Self.

The word *vipiraṭṭam*, here translated as *straying from the path*, is the Tamil form of Sanskrit *vibhraṣṭa*; it occurred previously in v. 51. It has the sense of *that which is fallen, cast away, or should be cast away*. The *jñāni*, in failing to comply with the shastraic injunctions relating to worship, personal conduct, ritual cleanliness and so on, is

likely to appear quite reprehensible to the orthodox Hindu, whether householder or renunciant.

The words ‘But does that world affect him?’ translate the word *vikāriyō* – *Is he one who is subject to change (i.e. affected by the world)?* Sanskrit *vikārin* means *a thing or person that is liable to change, variable*. The *jñāni*, having realised his oneness with the unchanging non-dual background of the Self, upon which all worldly phenomena appear to play themselves out, perceives nothing as other than the Self. He is therefore a *nirvikāri*, as opposed to the worldly person, who is a *vikāri*.

The last two sentences are a translation of just three Tamil words, *a-p-parākku anri ariyān* – *he knows nothing other than that forgetfulness (i.e. that of the world)*. The word translated as forgetfulness is *parākku*, the Tamil form of Sanskrit *parāk*, which in Tamil has the meanings *inattention, heedlessness, forgetfulness, absent-mindedness*. This translation follows the *urai* of TCS who glosses as follows: ‘They know only the forgetfulness of the unchanging condition. They know nothing of the forgetfulness of this changeful [worldly] state.’ In other words the *jñāni* is aware only of the unchanging condition of the Self, in which he ‘forgets’ the world, whereas the worldly person is aware only of the changing condition of the world, in which he ‘forgets’ the Self.

Some will say of the *jñāni* that he is a fool, one who is improper in his conduct, or a complete ignoramus; others will call him a great scholar, the scion of a noble family, or the seed from which virtuous conduct springs. However, when we think about it, the clear understanding of the *jñāni* cannot be comprehended, for he is the very measure of that which is set as a measure [by the holy scriptures], and even beyond all that. How wonderful is this!

(216)

The words *one who is improper in his conduct* translate the word *anācāri*. *Ācāram* has the sense of *conduct, manner of action, behaviour* in the general sense, and in the specific sense, *of adherence to custom, practice, usage, adherence to prescribed rites and sacred rules etc.*; conversely the word *anācāram* has the opposite sense. An

*anācāri*, Sanskrit *anācārin* is therefore one whose conduct is improper, or who does not adhere to established social or religious codes.

The goal of the holy scriptures is only to convey the state of enlightenment, the state enjoyed by the *jñāni*. However, since his state cannot be conveyed in words but can only be known through actual experience, he is truly beyond all such attempts to measure or describe his state. He is the measure, itself unmeasurable, that is set up as the measure of reality by the holy scriptures, which themselves can give only the merest hint of his state.

When grace overwhelms him, the *jñāni* will be like someone who has rubbed magic ointment into his eyes and is able to see hidden treasure; or like someone who now feels ashamed of what he did under the influence of poison or demonic possession; or like someone who has been released from a cruel curse. However, to those [whose vision is limited] like frogs in a well, his conduct will appear fraudulent. (217)

*añcaṇam* is black pigment for the eyelashes, collyrium. It is also used in combination to mean magic black pigment, which is of three kinds: *pātālāñcaṇam* – magical black pigment or collyrium used in discovering treasures buried underground, (which is the meaning here); *pūtāñcaṇam* – magical ointment for discovering whether a person is possessed or not, and *cōrāñcaṇam* – magic pigment used for tracing stolen property. Just as the magic ointment renders the earth transparent, so that the treasure hidden under it becomes visible, the power of grace dissipates the obscuration of *āṇava malam* to reveal the bliss of the Self.

The *jñāni* who remains a householder will be like one who has renounced the world as far as his spiritual knowledge is concerned, but will differ from him in his outward conduct. Conversely the householder who is not a *jñāni* will resemble the householder who is a *jñāni* in his conduct only but not in his spiritual knowledge. If we must draw a comparison, the *jñāni* who is a householder is like a whore; like wealth; like the sun; like a *vina*; like the ether; like a fan, and like someone who gives blessings [to people without judging them]. (218)

The interpretation of the first two lines of this verse offered in the translation is based on the *urai* of TCS. The general idea is that it is not possible to recognise a *jñāni* based on his conduct, as he may appear outwardly to be fully involved in the affairs of the world whilst inwardly he is as much a renunciant as one who has totally renounced the world.

Some of the terms of comparison used to describe the householder *jñāni* will be familiar from earlier verses: *veyyōṇ* – *the sun*, as fostering all activities but taking no part in any of them; *veḷi* – *the ether, space*, as containing all phenomena but remaining untouched by them. These terms could equally apply to the *jñāni* who has renounced the world.

The remaining terms apply specifically to the householder *jñāni*, as one who masks his enlightened state with the persona of the householder.

A *vēci*, Sanskrit *veśya* – *whore, prostitute* is compared to the *jñāni* in that the prostitute appears to be fond of her client, but in reality desires only his wealth, just as the householder *jñāni* appears to be attached to his householder life, but in reality desires only the riches of the Self.

*paṇam* – *wealth, money* has no feelings towards the people who desire it, just as the householder *jñāni* has no attachment to the wife and family who lavish their affection on him.

The *vīnai* – *Indian lute*, like all musical instruments, remains inert until it is played, and when it is played, produces sounds only as elicited by the person playing it. Similarly the householder *jñāni* will respond appropriately but without attachment in his dealings with others, and when the interaction is over, will subside again into his former state of detachment.

Like the *vicīri* – *fan*, which performs a service to others but confers no benefit upon itself, the *jñāni* serves others with no desire for, or expectation of reward.

*āciyār*, Sanskrit *āśis* – *blessing, benediction*, are people who give blessings, such as priests, who deliver their blessings regardless of the worth, or lack of it, of the people upon whom they confer them, just as the *jñāni* householder acts with total equanimity and freedom from bias in his dealings with his household.

## MOUNTAIN PATH

Though they prosper as great kings, leading an army with its four divisions, possessing [the trappings of royalty such as] palanquins and royal parasols, and praised by a host of servants and retainers, do the pure ones feel any pleasure in experiencing those things? They are like the flame of a lamp [that transforms oil into radiant light], transmuting false pleasures into the welling-up of the Real, or like someone who is about to die accepting repayment of debt, [accepting the fruits of his karma without attachment]. (219)

The word for army used in this verse is *cāturāṅkam*, Sanskrit *caturāṅga*. Literally it means *four parts* or *limbs*, referring to the four elements that make up an army, elephants, horses, chariots and infantry.

Just as the flame of a lamp transforms the oil that feeds it into radiant light, the *jñāni*, by remaining detached and offering up the dross of everyday experience up to the Self, transforms that experience into the reality that is the pure light of the Self.

The *jñāni* accepts the fruits of his past karma with equanimity, knowing it to be inevitable, but taking no pleasure in it, rather as someone who is about to die might accept what is due to him out of duty, knowing that he will not live to enjoy it. The *jñāni's karma*, continually being amassed up to the point of his realisation, is likely to have been very good, and therefore liable to bring him a pleasurable return. Although he takes no pleasure in these things, he cannot refuse what *karma* brings, just as the dying man cannot refuse to accept the discharge of a debt which is due to him from his kinsmen and others, even though, being about to die, he has no interest in it, or use for it.

Since it is the case that the body is the source of great ills, indulging in its pleasures will cause them (the non-*jñānis*) to experience the torments of the seven hells. Their *karma* will not bring them enjoyment unless the ego dies and they remain in the body simply as the Self. As for the *karma* of the devotees of the holy feet, it will be like a prison guard or a set of manacles to them. (220)

In verse 190 the verb *uṇ* – *to eat, consume* was used in a ‘technical’ sense to describe the process of how we *consume, experience* the

fruits of our former actions. In this verse the causative form of the verb *ūṭṭu* – *to cause to eat, feed* is used to describe how those actions *feed us with, cause us to experience those fruits*.

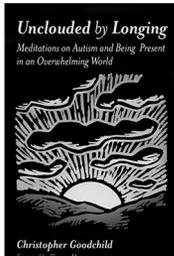
This verse illustrates the difference in the manner in which *karma* is deemed to operate in the non-*jñāni* and *jñāni* respectively. The term *prārabdha* refers specifically to the part of one's *karma* which is to be worked out in the current birth. For the *ajñānis* their *karma* can be taken to include all *karma*, including that from previous lives waiting to be worked out – *saṁcita*, and any new *karma* created by actions in the current life, the cause of continuing births – *āgamyā*. For the *jñāni*, however, there is only *prārabdha*, since, upon realisation all *saṁcita karma* is annulled and *āgamyā karma* ceases to be created. This *prārabdha karma* does not bind him in any way, but it must be lived out before the final incarnation can be ended and the body dropped.

The verse goes on to say that the only true pleasure is the bliss of the Self. If the experiences that come through one's past *karma* are accepted with equanimity, without any idea of 'I' or 'mine', and thus offered up to the Self, then the bliss of the Self may be enjoyed. Otherwise *karma* can only bring the rollercoaster of pleasure and pain, ending inevitably in suffering, disease and death.

Finally the verse describes *karma* as it relates to the *jñāni*. It is only the *prārabdha karma* of the *jñāni* that is being referred to. Since, as stated above, all his previous *karma* has been expended and no *karma* for the future has accumulated, there will be no future birth for him. However he has to wait until the *karma* of his current birth, now inoperative due to his realised state, has been expended, in order to attain final liberation. He is therefore compared to a prisoner in chains, awaiting the expiry of his sentence in order to be free. ▲

*(To be continued)*

## BOOK REVIEWS



**UNCLOUDED BY LONGING** by Christopher Goodchild. Jessica Kingsley Publishers. £9.99, pp 157 plus a foreword, introduction and appendix. Illustrations by Julie Lonneman.

This is an anthology of 60 quotations, each one followed by a reflection in the form of a prose poem. The author addresses himself as ‘you’, and apart from reflecting on the quotations themselves, the poems form a narrative in which you (the reader) learn about the author’s own life. It emerges that he had an exceptionally difficult childhood in which he assumed various apparently weird behavioural strategies to deal with the relentlessly traumatic situations he found himself in, behaviour which often seemed to be a kind of madness to those who did not know or understand. He describes the relief and healing that came with eventually being diagnosed as being somewhere in the autistic spectrum; whereas the simple truth seems to have been that he was an exceptionally gifted, sensitive and creative child who was misunderstood. The poems also reveal that the author is a Quaker Elder and that being a Quaker has provided him with a sanctuary and focus for his deeply spiritual way of life. He is a modern mystic. Apart from the early influence of being brought up as a Roman Catholic, some of the other important influences in his life have come from Ramana Maharshi and the world of Nature.

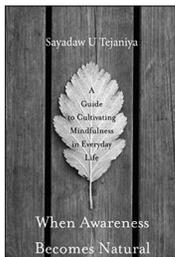
To try to give a flavour of one of these reflections (No 12), it begins with a quotation from Rumi: ‘The cure for pain is in the pain’, and, addressing himself as ‘you’, the author says that ‘you had experienced two kinds of suffering. The first resulted in running away from your pain, and the second from embracing it. The first imprisoned you while the second laid the conditions to set you free. The extent to which you can hold your suffering without undue attachment to it becomes the extent to which you can move beyond it and the identification of being its victim ... this is a lifelong process ... Embracing your suffering has expanded your heart, and in so doing given you eyes to see the suffering of humanity with love and compassion ... This work is soul work ... pain becomes gift whenever you are able to use it as an agent to move beyond your small self and into a deeper

sense of who you really are. Transforming pain into gift is a process, and contemplative practice is the path you have embraced in order to undertake this work.

As the Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh says, “Suffering is the kind of mud we must use in order to grow the flower of understanding and love” ... You have come to see that your life has been all about holding opposites, only to then wake up and see these very opposites as simply different expressions of the oneness that permeates everything. This is the ‘painful gift’ that is your life’.

And to quote from Thomas Moore’s perceptive foreword: “No doubt you’ve read many books in your lifetime. This one stands out. You’ll want to put it on a special shelf ... it is written skillfully and thoughtfully. It has a remarkable feel of originality and speaks to you with a voice that is genuine ... the prose is sparkling in its clarity. Christopher’s years of reflection have given him an intelligence that he shares in this blend of perennial wisdom and personal insight ... no platitudes or pious restatement of popular wisdom ... his memories of growing up with autism will stir your heart and make you wince, but they turn the whole experience inside out, showing the many paradoxes and reversals that are signs of deep understanding ... We are in a world in which most of us live on the surface, while the great teachers are always seeing a mirror land of opposite and transcendental values. This extraordinary book gives you trustworthy and comprehensive guidelines.” I can only add my own thanks for this unique and beautifully written addition to the world’s spiritual literature.

— Alasdair Black



**WHEN AWARENESS BECOMES NATURAL.**  
A Guide to Cultivating Mindfulness in Daily Life  
by Sayadaw U Tejaniya. Edited by Robert French.  
Shambhala, Boulder 2016. PB. US\$17.95 pp.186.  
ISBN: 9781611803075 [www.shambhala.com](http://www.shambhala.com)

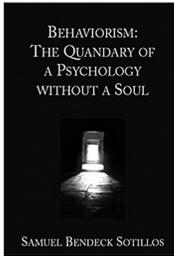
There are many, many books now available on Vipassana practice from the various schools in Myanmar, Thailand, India and Sri Lanka. I was pleasantly surprised by this present book under review.

Firstly, the book is a pleasure to read. It is not a dry recital unlike many vipassana books. It is fresh and alive. The book is composed of different sources: interviews with Sayadaw himself plus translations

from Burmese and transcriptions from the various talks Sayadaw gave at many retreats he conducted. The editor has done a superb job and made the text into a first-person narrative to give the reader a better understanding of Sayadaw's background and his own journey in vipassana meditation practice. I had not heard of Sayadaw U Tejaniya prior to reviewing this book but what I do know now is that he is an inspiring teacher and a force to be reckoned with! He was born in Yangon and his father and family were close to a Buddhist teacher, Shwe Oo Min Sayadaw ("Gold Cave Hermitage Monastic Teacher"). He was a difficult child and was sent often to the monastery as the family teacher was the only one who had a calming influence on him. The rest as they say is history. He is now a respected vipassana teacher and it is not a surprise as to why his words contain wisdom because Sayadaw's life was full of challenges from juvenile delinquency, drugs, alcohol, and depression. It is not the story of someone born with golden gifts and effortless accomplishments but of someone who has tasted the defilements and negativities as a householder and textile businessman. He has been in the furnace of mindlessness and suffering and come through a new being. The value of this book lies in the fact that Sayadaw shows every experience or challenge without exception is an opportunity to develop mindfulness and not just when formally sitting. We all can relate and learn with his journey.

The book is divided into three parts: 1) *Recognition of Wisdom*. i. Getting Started; ii. Knowing the Mind; iii. The Defilements. 2) *Wise Investigation of the Mind*. i. Causes and Conditions; ii. Depression. 3) *A Commitment to Wisdom*. i. The Spirit of Practice; ii. The Meditating Mind; iii. Bringing Practice into Daily Life.

A short excerpt: "Experiencing reality through the lens of insight will have a profound effect on your life and practice and the way you view the world. The wisdom that is acquired in this way will immediately alter the way in which you relate to things. However, a word of warning: an insight is not permanent; it only lasts for the moment that it arises. What does remain alive is its potential and its quality; its imprint on our minds is its legacy. Unless we keep nurturing this quality, it can recede. Only continued diligence, faith in the practice, and sustained awareness will keep it alive. Recalling the insight and the events leading to it will make sure the wisdom you have acquired from it will keep working and growing for you."



**BEHAVIORISM: THE QUANDARY OF A PSYCHOLOGY WITHOUT A SOUL** by Samuel Bendeck Sotillos. The Institute of Traditional Psychology, Kazi Publications, Chicago, 2017. PB. Price not mentioned, pp.84. ISBN: 13:978-1-56744-611-1 info@kazi.org and www.kazi.org

This is a brief, succinct exposition of Behaviorism, a psychology created by an American John Watson in the early 20th Century which has had a profound impact on Western thinking and has now become increasingly influential right through out the world to the extent that it is no longer questioned. India is one of the few cultures left which actively affirms the transcendental nature of reality and in the coming decades we shall see behaviourism and its adjunct consumerism threaten the sacred tenets of the *sanatana dharma*. The author analyses this school of psychology in the light of the perennial philosophy. There are ‘four forces’ in psychology today namely, behaviourism, psychoanalysis, humanistic and transpersonal. Though behaviourism has been supplanted it nevertheless influences modern thought with its reductionist thinking. It is based on two suppositions: scientism which denies anything that cannot be verified by the five senses and psychologism which reduces an understanding of what is reality to psychological criteria. Mechanised man is reduced to numbers, uniformity, and indistinction from the ‘masses’. Our worth is according to financial currency which is the modern day criterion of what is valuable. It is the triumph of quantity over quality. Guenon called it the ‘Reign of Quantity’ and denotes the degeneration of human values and negates the opportunity of divinity, for Behaviorism denies the reality of the soul and states that humankind is simply a machine that responds to positive and negative stimuli. The behaviourist denies that there is anything more to a human being than behaviour. The traditionalist affirms that the human being has a soul who participates in the Divine and has an inherent essence which can transcend the limitations of the human body and mind.

The author has with profuse citations delved into this malaise and the influence it holds on the modern mind. Though it would mainly interest those in the field of psychology, for the general reader this is a sobering and intelligent exposé. — Christopher Quilkey ▲

# ASHRAM BULLETIN

## **The Girivalam Road**

The Girivalam has been under threat since the proposed changes to the Girivalam road, especially the planned removal of large trees to make room for the Highway Department expansion plans. The National Green Tribunal announced a favourable decision on May 30th, 2017, after an injunction in the courts against the planned work. The result is that not a single tree along the Girivalam road is to be removed. The Sonagiri Forest is to remain intact and no temple, shrine, historical marker or paadam is to be moved or disturbed in any way. All tirthams, kulams and water channels are protected, and the pedestrian-only walkway along the pradakshina path is to be narrower at 2 metres wide, instead of 12 metres, which means trees and shrines along the path can be maintained. In short, every point raised by the petitioners has been favourably addressed. Justice P. Jyothimani even took the trouble to explicitly observe: “We must realise that there is no substitute to the trees which provide invaluable ecological services to the human beings. Therefore, it is our sacred duty not only to grow more number of trees but also to maintain the same.”

To view the order in detail, please go to the following link: <[http://www.greentribunal.gov.in/south\\_jud.aspx](http://www.greentribunal.gov.in/south_jud.aspx)>. Click on “Bench Judgment”, enter verification code and then click “Display”.

## **Pandava Tirtham Renovations**

On 28th June, with permission from local authorities, the Ashram initiated the renovation of Pandava Tirtham, situated just a few hundred metres northeast uphill from Ramanasramam. Flanked by Arjuna and Bhima Tirthas, Pandava Tirtha will be cleaned, excavated and restored over the next two months. The Arunachala Mahatmyam tells us the Pandavas once bathed here and speaks of the tirtham’s auspicious power to fulfil desires and bestow liberation. In the old days, Bhagavan and Nayana used to swim in the Pandava Tank and it is narrated how Bhagavan once led devotees there each day in the early morning hours for swimming and floating in padmasana. In his boyhood, Bhagavan was known for his swimming ability and devotees would later confirm when they raced Bhagavan at Pandava Tirtham.

### **The Drought in Tamil Nadu**

Tamil Nadu suffered from a twenty month drought and in Tiruvannamalai the water table was exceptionally low. The ashram was forced to turn away ashram devotees who wished to stay. The ashram facilities were stretched to the limit with several lorry loads of water brought in daily just to maintain basic services. Varuna japam and yagyam was performed at the Ashram each morning from the 3rd through to the 5th of July followed each day by an offering at the Ashram Well. Special abhishekam followed each day at Bhagavan's and Mother's Shrines. Varuna whose vehicle is Makara, the fish, is Lord of water, and controls the rain. When drought strikes, Lord Varuna is appeased through various forms of prayer and liturgy.

The days and weeks following the three days of rites did see some change in the weather with cloudy days and occasional light rains, which, while not bearing any appreciable volume of water, did arouse hope that the protracted period of drought may be drawing to a close.

### **Heavy Rain in Tiruvannamalai**

Lord Varuna did finally give his blessing. Early on the 13th August a fierce thunderstorm broke out on the Ashram and the heavy downpour started about 2.40 am. People reported about 14 inches of water inside the Samadhi Hall by 4 am. This was the second flood of Bhagavan's Shrine in seven days. Water hurled down the Hill at a terrific rate and collected in several places, namely, at the rear of the Ashram near the corner adjacent to Seshadri Ashram where the boundary wall separating the two Ashrams, broke down about 50 to 60 feet of the seven foot high retaining wall due to the torrential rain. Subsequently this discharge eventually broke the Archives gate near the Dakshinamurti Temple. Luckily no one was injured during the tumult. Lighter rains continued afterwards and the Ashram Well is completely full and overflowing as is Pali Tirtham and many tanks around Arunachala. The Samudram lake is also almost full.

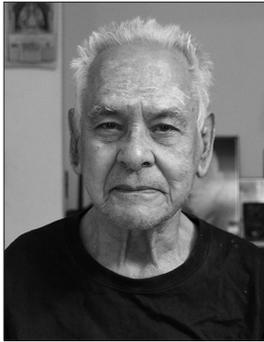
### **Obituaries**

**Dr. Manjunath Devappa Naik** was born in Kumtha, Karnataka in March 1935. He excelled as a young student and completed his medical studies in Bombay. He was a devotee of Bhagavan since his youth and the medical facility he established in Kumta was named 'Ramana Clinic'. A community leader who earned the respect of all

around him, Dr. Naik built up the Ramana Satsanga at Kumtha where he was often invited to give discourses on Bhagavan. Dr. Naik visited Ramanasramam every year for 45 years and often brought Ramana devotees with him from Kumta, leading them in pradakshina around the Holy Hill. He translated Arthur Osbourne's *Ramana Maharshi and the Path of Self Knowledge* into Kannada and founded the Kannada magazine *Ramana Sandesa*. Later in life, he bought land in Kumta and constructed the Ramana Mandiram. His last visit to Ramanasramam was Deepam Day last December and his last celebration at the Mandiram in Kumta was April 4th 2017. Shortly after he fell sick and on the 7th May, Dr. Naik merged at the Feet of Bhagavan. He is survived by his wife, Kusuma, his two sons, Prabhakar and Prakasha, and his two daughters, Vijaya and Ranjani, and is fondly remembered by all who had the honour of knowing him.



**Dr. A. S. Venugopal Rao**, professor and poet was drawn by Bhagavan's Grace during the Birth Centenary Celebrations in 1980 when he participated in the International Seminar conducted at Bangalore. Subsequently, he spoke at practically every annual National Seminar of RMCL in his pure Kannada, though sometimes in English as well. He was a lecturer by profession and communicated



in a simple manner a clear understanding of Bhagavan's teachings that sprang from his own sincere practice. He became a resident of Arunachala for a few years and wrote in one of his poems 'At last you have captured me who was ever fleeing. You did not hunt me getting astride a horse, wielding bow and arrow. But how amazing was your hunt and now you hold me captive.' His numerous poems in chaste and lilting Kannada have poetic depth and the

intensity of spiritual seeking combined with overflowing devotion. His translation of *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi* into Kannada won a prestigious award for Kannada translations and went into several editions. He was absorbed at the Master's feet on 30th December 2016. ▲