Arunachala! Thou dost root out the ego of those who meditate on Thee in the heart, Oh Arunachala!
Sweet fruit within my hands, let me be mad with ecstasy, drunk with the Bliss of Thy Essence, Oh Arunachala!
— The Marital Garland of Letters, verse 23.

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GRACE IN WORDS: The Verses (UPADESA SARAM) in Tamil reproduced on the fly-leaf facing the frontispiece is the facsimile of Sri Bhagavan's own handwriting. The translation is a new free rendering into English by Prof. K. Swaminathan.

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

4. This is certain:
   Worship, praise and meditation,
   Being work of body, speech and mind,
   Are steps for orderly ascent.

5. Ether, fire, air, water, earth,
   Sun, moon, and living beings
   Worship of these,
   Regarded all as forms of His,
   Is perfect worship of the Lord.

6. Better than hymns of praise
   Is repetition of the Name;
   Better low-voiced than loud;
   But best of all
   Is meditation in the mind.

—BHAGAVAN SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI
WE ask 'Who am I?'; but is there one? First we presume that there is an 'I', then we ask who or what it is. There just IS — not I, he, it or anything, but just IS. We try to divide up this simple IS by pronouns — I, he, you — and by 'this' and 'that', but is it really divisible? I feel being and use the word 'I' for it; but that does not mean that there is any separateness about it. You also feel being and use the same word 'I' for it; of course, because it is the same being.

Outwardly it takes form as a world of things and events. It cognizes this world by means of the faculties of me; of every 'me'. So there are three aspects of it: first, just IS; and this is the same whether the other two are or not, this always is. Second, what-is manifested. Third (or perhaps this should be put second) the focal point, that is the cluster of faculties called 'me', through which the manifested is cognized.

It is often remarked that I am an infinitesimal and evanescent fragment in this vast universe. True, but it is no less true that this vast universe is an infinitesimal and evanescent appearance within me. What-is is just the same whether manifested in a universe or not. The pure sense of being that I feel just is; it is the same as what-is. To say that there is no 'I' is the same as saying that there is nothing else.

To say that there is a subjective 'me' and an objective 'me' would open the door to misunderstanding, because all technical terms do that; but it might at the same time point the way to understanding. Technical terms do that too; that is why we find it so hard to renounce them. 'Me' as the focal point between what-is and what-is manifested could be called the subjective me. The me which appears as part of the manifested, on a par with you and Susan and James and John, could be called the objective me. The subjective me (when true to its nature) sees every objective me equally, that is to say loves its neighbour as itself. It is attracted exclusively, totally back towards what-is, that is to say loves God with all its heart and mind and strength.

When true to its nature, but in fact in fallen man it is not true to its nature. Some
considerable practice in meditation may be necessary before it even begins to feel the impersonal I-ness, the unity of being. Even when it does it is likely to continue also to feel the restricted individual I-sense. Every time I feel a thrill of pleasure at being praised or annoyance at being criticised, or take the corner seat in a train, leaving my companion a less comfortable place, or take a second cup of tea when there is not enough to go round, or imagine myself in some role or dread some eventuality, I am proclaiming the individual me in action. And actions speak louder than words. It is no use saying that there is not an ego and behaving as though there is. It is living on the assumption that there is an ego that prevents one from realizing that there is not, that is from attaining Liberation.

Many great Teachers, including the Maharshi, have said that we are not bound, so there can be no Liberation; and yet paradoxically they have also urged us to seek Liberation. We must be careful of the meaning of the words we use, so as not to get tangled up in them. Liberation from what? From the ego or our belief in an ego or illusion of an ego. If there is no ego then, of course, there can be no bondage to it and no need for Liberation from it. But so long as I live as though there were an ego and take offence at a slight or want a cake there is an ego for me and I am bound by it or the service I render to it. The true Self of me is not bound but my bondage to the (real or illusory) ego obscures the true Self of me. Realization of the Self is the same as Liberation from the ego.

What does it matter if I do believe in a separate, individual self, an ego? Why do spiritual teachers speak of it as a sort of crime? Because it is. It is 'original sin'. All technical terms mislead — Self, ego, sin, God, mind — all get personified like characters on a stage and need to be re-examined from time to time. I have a mental faculty which is used by what-is to correlate and report the apperceptions of what-is manifested submitted to it by my other faculties. But very early in life this mental faculty begins to find some of the reports made to it (by warm milk or laughter) pleasant and others (by a too hot drink or sudden loud noise) disturbing and it builds itself up into a fictitious person demanding the pleasant ones and rejecting, or trying to reject, the unpleasant. For this purpose it uses and disposes of the other faculties. This fictitious person it is that is called the 'mind' or 'ego'. They are the same. When it is said (and the Maharshi said it as well as other spiritual masters) that the mind of the Sage is dead, it does not mean that his mental faculty is in any way impaired. If he looks at a calendar he can tell the date like any one else. It only means that the mental faculty no longer acts as the ruler of the other faculties, and indeed of the life, planning the future, regretting the past, hoping, fearing, exulting.

The next question might be: "Suppose I like the ego-state, why shouldn't I be left at peace in it?" The answer is that you don't like it — nobody does; and it doesn't leave you at peace. Solomon listed "a servant when he ruleth" as one of the great calamities. The mental faculty is a servant; the mind makes itself the ruler. It is insatiable; however favourable one's circumstances it always craves more — more pleasure, more admiration, more success — and it is eternally insecure, vulnerable to sickness, bereavement, old age, destitution, and ultimately unavoidably, to death. Yet although plagued by this ego-self, although worried and insecure and driven to consider even death to escape from it, how few have tried to renounce it! That is the perpetual mystery.

The question may arise: how do I know that I shall be better off, more contented, less distressed, if I reject the ego? That who will? Who am I? The ego asks that question and likes to imagine himself engaging in a valiant war against himself and enjoying the rewards. The ego-free state is the natural state; it is what by nature I am. It is the care-free and deathless state. Without the ego, who is there to feel grieved or frustrated?
Are there positive gains also, new powers or experiences? Who for? The faculties, set free from the tyrant mind, are free to grow naturally, no longer warped and stunted, no longer shut off from the sunlight. And the mind, the usurper, gloats at the prospect of the powers and experiences that will accrue to him as a reward for his fictitious death, so he asks if there are positive gains. That is one of his strongest lines of defence or counter-attack.

Then suppose one does decide to abjure the seeming-self for the true? And spiritual aspirants are supposed to have already decided. How is one to set about it? The mere declaration won’t carry one far.

A useful preliminary is to understand what has here been explained about the reality of the Universal Self and the unreality of the apparent individual self. It can never be more than a preliminary, but still it is a useful one. In the Bhagavad Gita Lord Krishna gave it to Arjuna first, in the first half of Chapter Two, before speaking of the discipline he had to follow. But then he told him (v. 39): “What you have been told is the theory; now listen to the practice that can set you free from bondage to fate.”

The next essential would be to live each day as it comes on the assumption of the unreality of the individual self. That would imply complete renunciation of egoism, of boasting and craving and domineering and other encroachments. A technique is usually needed for it. The one that Krishna enjoined in the Gita is cool, efficient, impersonal activity, doing what is right because it is right, irrespective of gain or loss, or of pain or pleasure. That does not mean, of course, that there must be no profit and no pleasure. A merchant naturally sells at a profit because that is his living; a married man naturally expects pleasure from his marriage; only profit and pleasure should not override duty and become the dominating motive in life.

But even a discipline of disinterested activity seldom suffices to dissolve the ego-sense. It is an attempt to starve out the ego but needs a more violent campaign to destroy him. This can be surrender or enquiry. Sri Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita enjoins surrender and devotion; Vasishta in the Yoga Vasishta enjoins enquiry; the Maharshi said: “There are two ways; ask yourself ‘Who am I?’ or submit”. The mind acts as though it were the ruler of the faculties. It has to abdicate and surrender them and itself to pure Being which is the Self. Or to look inward and find out who it is, what it is, what really IS.

Calmness is a steady flow of the mind toward God.
Self-restraint is control of the organs of sense.
Patience is bearing the burden of life cheerfully.
Steadiness is overcoming the palate and the impulse of sex.
The highest charity is refraining from violence.
Austerity is the giving up of desire.
Valour is the conquest of one’s own self.

—— Srimad Bhagavatam.
THE TWO KINDS OF GURU

By ARTHUR OSBORNE

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FOR those who aspire to proceed beyond belief to experience in religion it has normally been held necessary to follow a guru or spiritual director. It is not really correct to translate the word ‘guru’ as ‘teacher’ because, although he may incidentally expound doctrine, his main function is the transmission of an influence which will fortify the disciple in his inner quest and his guidance of the disciple, verbally or in silence, on that quest. What, then, is the nature of the guru?

Ramana Maharshi said: “The Guru is the formless Self within each one of us. He may appear as a body to guide us, but that is only his disguise.” And the author of the article from which this is quoted goes on to say: “It appears from this that to be consciously the Self is to be consciously the Guru.”

This statement involves the following doctrinal position. The Supreme Spirit (Paramatma) is the true self (atma) of each person (jiva) and would naturally give right spiritual understanding and guidance, but in most cases the conscious mind is shut off from this by the ego-sense (ahankara), that is the belief in one’s existence as a separate individual entity. The impulse arises to return to one’s Source but the mind is too estranged to perceive and follow the path directly. Since one mistakes oneself for a separate human being, one can respond to the guidance only through a manifested Guru whom one mistakes for another human being, although he himself is aware of his universal nature. Therefore the Tamil poet-saint Thayumanavar compares the Guru to a deer being used as a decoy to capture another deer. The Maharshi said that the function of the outer Guru is only to awaken the inner Guru in the heart.

The above refers only to the ideal or perfect Guru who is in a state of constant, unwavering consciousness of his universal nature (and it will be observed that in writing it I have spelled the word ‘Guru’ with a capital letter). But this is a very rare thing. Usually a guru or spiritual director is a member of a spiritual hierarchy who has been vested with the authority and function of directing others without having himself broken free from the existential (as distinct from theoretical) illusion of his individual state. With regard to the guru in this sense I will limit myself to five observations.

1. The power that is conveyed is to be regarded as valid within its limits, just as is the power to perform sacraments that is conveyed to a priest by his ordination.

2. Nevertheless too great expectations are not to be placed on such direction, since a guide cannot normally lead others farther than he has gone himself.

3. A guru who has not transcended the individual state is liable to individual failings. Being revered as a guru may particularly, for instance, give rise to the faults of arrogance and hypocrisy. Such faults are infectious and liable to be caught by the disciples. The guru may be compared to a pipeline bringing the waters of life to thirsty men; if the pipe has not been well cleaned inside, the waters that quench their thirst may also carry the germs of typhoid or cholera.

4. This is an age when traditional forms are losing their rigidity. All the Hindu spiritual masters since Ramakrishna have

1 "The human status of the Maharshi” by Dr. T. N. Krishnaswami, The Mountain Path, April 1967, p. 132.
recognized this, including the Maharshi. It is a time when “the Spirit bloweth where it listeth” and many cases of spontaneous awakening to Truth without the mediation of a guru are reported. These, of course, need further effort and discipline to establish them firmly, but so also does the initiation given by a guru.

5. The Maharshi indicated before shedding the body that he would still be the Guru. Ample evidence has accrued (if any were needed) that this is so.

Perhaps this last point needs to be amplified, as it is not usual for a Guru to continue to function as such after physical death, though there have been cases.

According to the ancient traditional teaching reiterated by the Maharshi, a man does not become one with the Self by attaining Liberation (or Realization); he simply realizes his innate, pre-existing oneness. Also he does not merge in the Absolute at death (thus becoming, as some have supposed, incapable of performing an individual function) since he already was one with the Absolute. The Maharshi stated explicitly that there is no difference between the Jivan-Mukta (Liberated while embodied) and the Videha-Mukta (Liberated after death). Once when asked whether a Liberated Man (he always used the Sanskrit term ‘Jnani’ meaning ‘Man of Knowledge’ for this) still continued to perform a function after death he answered curtly, “Some may.” This assertion is also to be found in the Brahma Sutras, one of the three basic Hindu scriptures. When some of his followers asked him shortly before his own death what they could do for guidance after he left them he made the curt reply: “You attach too much importance to the body.” The implication obviously was that only the body was leaving them; he was not.

In saying that there is ample evidence that this is so, I put in the parenthesis “if any were needed” so as not to seem to be suggesting that the Maharshi’s words need any corroboration, they do not. The sort of evidence I have in mind is testimony of those many who have found guidance and support from the Maharshi either in dream or vision or formlessly since his death. Two examples that could be quoted are the verse ‘A Beacon Still’ by S. P. Mukherji in the January 1964 issue of The Mountain Path and the article ‘How the Maharshi came to me’ by G. N. Daley in that of January 1967.

Finally, reverting to the two types of guru it should be said that the distinction is important because it sometimes happens that the theoretical explanation of the first type, the Sad-Guru or Divine Guru, is used to justify one who is in fact of the second type, the appointed functionary. This can cause theoretical confusion and actual danger.

MEDITATION ON TRUTH

Meditation on the meaning of truth as it is taught in Vedanta leads to the highest illumination. By this means, the misery of worldly life is altogether destroyed.

Faith, devotion, and constant union with God through prayer—these are declared by the sacred scriptures to be the seeker’s direct means of liberation. To him who abides by them comes liberation from that bondage of physical consciousness which has been forged by ignorance.

—SHANKARA.
IN my boyhood I was of a contemplative nature. I could not stand any unhappy situation and always tried to find out the cause of it. As I grew older I observed that nobody around me was happy although everyone was hankering after happiness. Why this was so tormented me always.

I enquired from some poor persons and all of them complained that it was only due to their poverty; had they wealth they would certainly have been happy. But when I turned to wealthy persons I was surprised to find that they were also not happy owing to one thing or another and to their eternal craving for more and more.

Then I switched on my attention to those who followed some path of religion and some of them, when speaking frankly, admitted that they also were not happy. They of course enjoyed some sort of pleasure when performing ritual but as soon as they came to face the world they were unhappy because their chosen Gods did not grant their essential needs such as wealth, property, a son, good health, etc.

But by these enquiries and by studying the lives of some great Indian saints I could at least conclude that if happiness was to be found at all it could be found only by spiritual paths, properly followed, not in the material world. Acquisition of wealth and property totally fails for this purpose, having the eternal cravings for more behind it.

I then studied various books for spiritual guidance but the systems which appealed to me to some extent brought with them two great difficulties also. Firstly they dictated that to make any headway spiritually there must be a Siddha Guru (Realized Guide) and secondly the aspirant must thoroughly purify himself of all the lower tendencies before proceeding. "A leaky boat can never sail safe to harbour", was the stern warning.

The hindrances were overwhelming. How could I pick out a perfect and realized guru from among the dozens (both male and female) visiting our city every month, some performing miracles, some curing diseases, some showing feats of thought-reading—every one of them with the ambition of increasing the number of his disciples and every one claiming his path to be the best? Secondly, how could I be completely unattached and a strict celibate, being a family man in this modern age, when all my previous attempts had failed? Really these were herculean tasks, at least for me.
At this stage a doctor friend of mine one day enquired whether I had heard the name of Maharshi Ramana. I was so fed up with the search for Gurus by this time that I at once fired a volley of questions at him—

"What does this Maharshi of yours teach? What is his mantra? How many disciples does he want to initiate daily?" But I found that the doctor himself did not know much about the Maharshi. After that, in spite of my strongly developed anti-guru feelings, the name of Maharshi Ramana was somehow ringing in my mind for several days and, as if drawn by some invisible force, one day I went to Sri H. C. Khanna of Kanpur, an old devotee of Sri Bhagavan, who received me cordially and informed me that Maharshi Ramana always refused to initiate any disciple, and dictated no mantra. He simply asked an aspirant to enquire who he is. As these words entered my ears I was startled. A guru who did not want to initiate and increase the muster of his disciples — how strange! And WHO AM I? — what a marvellous hint! I at once caught the clue and soon discovered that the real "I" is not subject to sufferings, cravings for more and more, afflictions or frustrations, and if a man can reach that point he is naturally happy — what more can he want? Why then run here and there after gurus and mantras, why fantastic theories, and rituals? Why not take a headlong dive to reach the source of "I" here and now?

I then read most of Sri Ramanasramam publications and other writings on the philosophy of the great Maharshi and all my doubts and difficulties vanished like autumn clouds. Scrutinizing all his instructions with a very critical mind I was thoroughly convinced that the teachings of the Great Maharshi Sri Ramana are the most logical, scientific and suitable to the modern structure of society. An ascetic of the highest order, completely detached, with no paraphernalia, no matted hair, no posing, no touring, no lecturing, yet thousands of seekers flocking round him from all corners of the globe to Tiruvannamalai. When such a Maha Yogi says that a guru need not be in human form and initiation is not indispensable, my first hurdle was crossed.

As regards my second stumbling block of strict celibacy, the Maharshi's verdict is that celibacy is an aid on the path but not the goal and my reaction to this was enthusiastic. When the great Maharshi does not attach much weight to it why should I? The result of my aloof attitude was astounding. What I thought to be an unsurmountable difficulty disappeared altogether within a very short space of time and without great effort on my part.

It was surely my destiny that I did not know anything about Sri Ramana Maharshi when he was in human form, but nevertheless I feel his grace at every step. I am not in affluent circumstances but whatever I really need is never wanting. Even the smallest necessities are so promptly and unexpectedly furnished that there remains hardly anything to be asked for. His grace is unfathomable. But my personal view is that efforts invoke grace and expedite its action. Want of time, suitable circumstances, etc. are lame excuses. A man may start at any age with even faltering faith and fractional time and the opportunities will be automatically forthcoming. A man may arrive at the state of supreme peace and bliss next moment, for who knows that is one's preparation from the previous births? There is no social restriction on this bright, sunlit and direct path.

I do not at all claim to hold even the lowest position in the field of sadhana, but after all, the exact spot under which there is a gold mine has been located; the implements are there; it is now up to me to labour silently to dig it out and bring it to the surface!
SYMBOLISM IN VEDIC POETRY AND MYTHOLOGY

Two Modes of Speech

This (truth) has been sung by the Rishis in various ways and in different metres, and also (stated) definitely and logically through words of aphorisms on the nature of Brahman.

— Bhagavad Gita, xiii-4.

A clear distinction has been made here between two modes of speech — poetry of the Vedic Rishis who have sung in various ways and in different metres, and the prose of later sages who have made definite logical statements in their aphorisms on Brahman (the Supreme Being).

While in prose the ideas about the Supreme Being were set down in well defined terms, linked up by logical process of thinking, in poetry the inner visions of the sages found expression in language in which sound-images and sense-images merged in each other to make a highly significant form.

From Silence to Eloquence

A Vedic Rishi, referring to a deep spiritual experience, says — what to speak or even what to think' (Rig Veda, 6. 9. 6). The Supreme Being has been described in the Veda as 'far beyond expression' (Atharva Veda, 10.7.28). An Upanishad says: "From That words turn away baffled" (Taittiriya Upanishad, 2.4).

"For the finite, the eloquent man", says the Veda, "and for the infinite (ananta), the dumb" (Yajur Veda, 30.19). Dumbness or silence is, indeed, the natural reaction to an experience of the Infinite. It is said that the sage called 'Muni' had the name because he was 'mauni', the silent man, as a result of his experience of the Infinite which was inexpressible in the common language of man. If there was any communication, it was through silence itself. This silence is recognized in the Vedic tradition as a profoundly spiritual attitude. It is said in the Bhagavad Gita that the Divinity 'is the silence that wraps the mystic secrets.' (x. 38)

But what was ineffable for language with accepted logical definitions of words was expressed by the Rishi. He, as his name implies, was 'one who saw'. He is said to have 'seen the mantra', the complete poetic form comprising sound and sense. The Veda says of the sages that they 'see with their spirit (hrid) and their mind (manas)', (RV. 10. 177. 1). They also want to see with their eyes: "Give sight to our eyes... so that they can see." And they pray: "May we see the world together (sām) and see it separately (at pasyamā)" i.e. have a particular as well as a comprehensive vision (R.V. 10. 158. 4). This is the poetic vision in the embodiment of which what is seen with the eye becomes a symbol for what is seen with the spirit — the unmanifest Absolute manifested in creation as Deva or Being of Light. So the silence imposed by an experience of the Infinite is replaced by eloquence when the finite is made to symbolize the Infinite.

While following this method of symbolization, the Rishi speaks of the Deva (Pushan) as Poet, and describes his poetic vision by saying: "He who sees all separately (vi) and aces all creation together (sām) — may he, Pushan, be our Protector." (RV. 3. 62. 9). Elsewhere the sage speaks of the Deva (Varuna) as Poet in the following terms:

He... knows the secret, mysterious names of the morning beams. He, a Poet, cherishes by his poetic powers (kumās) manifold forms of beauty (rupa) like the sky.

(R.V. 8. 41. 5)
The Rishi says of the Veda that “it was the first and foremost speech (Vak) that the sages uttered, giving names (to the nameless) — speech that was their best and was stainless, and that revealed with love (preman) the (Divine) Secret within them” (RV. 10. 71. 1).

The Veda has called the formless, nameless, unmanifest Absolute by cryptic terms like 'That' (Tat), That Reality (Tat Sat), the Eternal (Aksharam) and other words in the neuter gender and singular number, and by the indeclinable Om. The sages found names for the Absolute manifested in creation in terms of the splendour of creation. These are symbolic names representing aspects of the splendour as Devas and Devis. Here not only is the neuter gender changed into the masculine and the feminine, but, in addition to the singular number, dual and plural numbers also are used. But it is frequently affirmed in various ways, including straight declarations, that the Absolute is manifested as Devas (RV. 3. 55. 1) and that “The sages have called the One Being by many names” (RV. 1. 194. 46). As a corollary to this with one Deva are identified another Deva or other Devas and Devis (e.g. with Agni, Rudra individually, RV. 3. 2. 5.), and Rudra and other Devas collectively are identified (RV. 2. 1). Similarly, Deva is spoken of as the Supreme Being, and as the Creator. Again, a Deva is addressed not only as Father, but as Father, Brother, Friend, etc., at the same time. A Deva has also been addressed as both 'Father and Mother'. (e.g. in RV. 8. 98. 11, SV. AV.), and a Devi is said to be 'Mother, Father and Son' (RV. 1. 68. 10, Vy. VS. AV.), and the same Deva has been called King, Sage, Poet, etc. So the names of Devas are symbolic descriptions of the One who, as Pure Being, is indescribable.

SYMBOLISM

A symbol has been defined as ‘a representation that does not aim at being a reproduction’. According to this definition, the blue colour in a map represents water, without water being actually displayed. Similarly the ideas of an object which cannot be logically defined, much less reproduced, is represented by something having no intrinsic relation with it, which is made to serve as a symbol for it for the purpose of expression. In poetry and art the symbol is a means of expressing the inexpressible.

Even secular poets who have not been considered to be mystics or symbolists are found to use the symbolic method, sometimes unconsciously, to express what they find inexpressible. Take, for instance, the following stanza:

| Break, break, break |
| On thy cold grey stones, O Sea! |
| And I would that my tongue could utter |
| The thoughts that arose in me. |

Here Tennyson, afflicted by grief at the death of his friend, says in the last two lines that he cannot utter his sad thoughts. But he has already uttered them in the first two lines, not as thoughts, but as a vision of the Sea (which he personifies). In these lines the words 'cold' and 'grey' do not just indicate the temperature and colour of the stones, but serve to build a bleak atmosphere reflecting the poet's mood, and the three repeated and halting 'break' seems, quite logically, to suggest a heart-break.

Let us turn to the Veda and consider a stanza that embodies a poetic vision:

| The beautiful-winged Bird (Suparna) which is One |
| has entered the sea of space. |
| He looks around this whole universe, |
| Him with a simple heart I have seen from near: |
| His Mother kisses him and he kisses his Mother (RV. 10. 114. 4). |

The next stanza continues: “Suparna who is One wise poets with their words figure in many ways.” Here what has been said about the One Absolute (‘The One Reality sages speak of in many ways’) is repeated in the case of Suparna making of Suparna a symbolic name for the former (One Suparna

W. N. Comte Gobet d'Alvella, quoted by A. Symons in The Symbolist Movement in Literature.
in the masculine singular replacing the Ekam Sat in the neuter singular; that is to say, the Manifest Absolute as Deva replaces the Unmanifest Absolute as Pure Being. Here the relation between the Deity and Earth is that of Child and Mother. (In literature it has been called vatsalya rasa, love of the mother for the child, as a form of devotion to God). In the Bhagavata Purana this idea is more humanized in the love of Yasoda for Child Krishna.

The same attitude of affection towards Suparna is found in another hymn, containing the following stanza which is addressed to Deva Soma:

The many voices of the loving ones
sought the Bird
(Suparna) who had flown to the heavens.
The hymns kiss the Child, so worthy
of praise,
the golden-hued Bird that sits on
the earth.
(RV. 9. 85. 11).

Hiranya (gold) in the Veda has been used to symbolize Divine splendour, (some have thought of the golden colour of the rising sun as the symbol. Here, however, the Bird is said to be sitting on the earth).

As a result of the sages' figuring the One in many ways to represent the splendour of the Manifest Divine, there is a galaxy of Devas and Devis in the Veda, bearing names symbolizing aspects of that splendour.

**HOW SYMBOLIC NAMES ARE FORMED**

Sometimes these symbolical names are personified ideas, as in Aditi, the Devi (aditi, infinity, personified). The Infinite or Absolute has been spoken of in the Veda in eloquent terms that are not symbolic but that supercede logic. After saying —

There was neither existence nor non-existence then....
The sage says:

The ONE (Ekam) breathed airless by self-impulse.
Other than That was nothing whatsoever.
(RV. 10. 129. 1-2).

The One in the latter passage is replaced by the vision of Devi Aditi in the following:

Aditi is the sky, Aditi the firmament,
Aditi the Mother, the Father, the Son;
Aditi is all the Devas, the five-clausted men,
Aditi is all that is born and all
that will be born.
(RV. 1. 30. 90. YV. Vs. AV).

Here, instead of contemplating the One Absolute without form and quality, the sage-poet expresses the idea in relation to the phenomenal world. (In later religious literature we are told of "the Devi who exists in all beings as Mother" (Markandeya Chandi). Other names of Devas and Devis as personified ideas include the Devi Yak (the sacred Speech), Sraddha (Faith) and Ha (Prayer) and the Devas Vena (Love), Mrityu (Death), Bhaga (Lustre) and Manyu (Wrath against aggression).

There are Devas having names of personified objects like Surya (the sun), Vata (wind, air), Parjanya (rain) and periods of the day like Ushas (dawn), Ratri (night), etc. Certain symbolic names are formed through metonymy. For instance, Agni, fire, on which ritualistic offerings are made, is the name of a Deva (like 'crown' for the king, 'chair' for the chairman), and Soma, juice of the plant of the same name, offered as libation in the ritual, becomes a name for a Deva. Whatever the origin of the name, every Deva or Devi is spoken of in general terms as the Manifest absolute with attributes expressed in functions. For example, Vak says about herself:

It is I who like the wind breathe forth
and eat all existing things in motion,
Beyond the heavens and beyond the
earth am I,
and all this I have become in my
splendour.
(RV. 10. 125. 8).

Agni, for whom the symbol is fire, is addressed as follows:

A fountain in the desert art thou, O Agni!
to the worshipful man, O ancient
(eternal King)

Agni! thou hast made the sun,
the ageless star,
mount the sky, conferring light on men.
(RV. 10. 126. 4, SV).
To Soma symbolised by the juice of the plant of the name, the sage says:

Thou art vast (lit. the sea), O Sage (kavi), all-knowing.

Under thy law are the five regions of the world.

Thou transcendent heaven and earth.

O Purifying One! shine are the lights and shine the sun. (RV. 9. 96. 27).

And of Soma it is said: "He clothes all who are naked; doctors all who are sick. (Through his help) the blind man sees, the cripple goes about". (RV. 8. 79. 2)

There are descriptive terms used as names of Devas like Indra (subduer, ruler), Mitra (friend), Pushan (nourisher), Varuna (the all-pervading), Vishnu (all-pervader), Savitri (impeller — also implying the sun).

There are descriptive names of the universe, such as Visvakarman (architect, of the universe), Tvashtr (fashioner), Prajapati (Lord of Creation), Brahmanaspati, Brihaspati (Lord of sacred knowledge) etc.

There are dual Devas like Dyavaprithivi, Heaven and Earth, Asvins, 'double Charioteers' of the pre-dawn twilight, regarded as a symbol of union, and multiple Devas like Maruts (described as 'wonderful-looking like kings . . . like sinless gallants, leaders of the people . . . like children having handsome mothers' — RV. 10. 70), and Apan (waters spoken of as 'the most motherly physicians' and 'Mothers of all that stands and all that moves' — RV. 8. 50. 7). Similarly, two or more Devas or Devis are addressed together.

Certain personifications are on a wider scale, particularly in Hiranyakashipu, Source of Splendour (hiranya, literally gold, is in a secondary sense, splendour—AV. 10. 7. 28), and in Purusha, Universal Man or collective humanity of all times and places, personified as Deva. The vastness of Purusha is signified by describing him as a being of innumerable (lit. a thousand) heads, eyes, and feet, pervading the earth on all sides and as 'what has been and what will be.' He is called 'the Lord of immortality, transcending by mortal nurture' (symbolising man rising beyond his mortality to immortality).

The Absolute (with which Purusha is identified) is said to be only partially manifested. Purusha manifests himself in splendour (vira) which is also said to manifest Purusha. The transformation of the transcendental into the phenomenal is symbolically described as a grand cosmic yajna (fire ritual) in which Purusha offers himself as a sacrifice. Time, a category that produces a limitation to the Absolute, is particularised in that ritual as the three seasons—spring, summer and autumn, which become the molten butter, fuel and oblation—ingredients of the sacred rite. The phenomenal world comes into being as a result of the yajna.

There is dual Deva of Dyauryaprahivi, Heaven and Earth, Asvins, 'double Charioteers' of the pre-dawn twilight, regarded as a symbol of union, and multiple Devas like Maruts (described as 'wonderful-looking like kings . . . like sinless gallants, leaders of the people . . . like children having handsome mothers' — RV. 10. 70), and Apan (waters spoken of as 'the most motherly physicians' and 'Mothers of all that stands and all that moves' — RV. 8. 50. 7). Similarly, two or more Devas or Devis are addressed together.

The worship of Purusha is the worship of the Absolute Being who has, as it were, (partly) sacrificed himself in order to be manifested in the phenomenal world. But a Rishi of the Yajurveda, reproducing the Rigvedic hymn on Purusha (RV. 10. 90), penetrates the veil of phenomena and realises the Absolute in Purusha and tells of this in a stanza of his own:

I have known the great Purusha
who is refulgent as the sun beyond darkness.
By knowing him alone one transcends death.
There is no other way to go. (RV. Vs. 31. 10).

This implies looking beyond the finite manifestation of the Absolute to the Absolute as pure Being. The Veda declares "Only the lowest aspects of the Devas are seen, who exist on Supreme (para) and mystical (guhya) planes". (RV. 3 54. 5).
In keeping with the Vedic view of Devas a Rishi addresses them saying: "All your names, Devas! are venerable, laudable and adorable" (RV. 10. 63. 2). Even when contemplated separately, they are found to be united through Samjnana, unity and harmony resulting from the knowledge of their "Single Godhood." (This Vedic view has been shared by religious teachers of later ages in India and has marked the attitude of Indians towards God in other religions too).

EMBODIMENT OF VEDIC VALUES

The Devas and Devis of the Vedas embody the highest Vedic values, spoken of as Rita and Satya, which are said to have been the first to be manifested in creation (through Tapas, the blazing spiritual fire). Rita is Eternal Order transforming on the cosmic plane, chaos into cosmos which is marked by order, harmony and beauty and on the social plane all disorderliness and dissoluteness into order, harmony and goodness. On one side it establishes the law of nature and on the other the moral law, both signified by the Vedic term dharman, and by the later Vedic and post-Vedic word dharma (literally, 'form' aesthetic and moral). Satya is Truth, as integrity and as reality.

To the sceptic who says, "There is no Indra, who has ever seen him? whom shall we praise?" the sage gives Indra's reply: "Here I am, singer! See me here (pasya ma iha). In my splendour I am above all that exists. The commandments of Rita (Eternal Law) exalt me ... (RV. 8. 100. 3-4). It has been said elsewhere about Indra: "For every form (rupa) he has been the Model. That form of his is to be seen everywhere." (RV. 8. 47. 18). In a symbolic way making an incipient myth, a Rishi says: "Indra let young Virgins skilled in Rita (Law of Nature) flow, streaming forward, bubbling as rills." (RV. 4. 19. 7). Indra has also been called 'the Son of Truth' (RV. 8. 69. 4) and Savitr is said 'to have Truth as the law of being' (AV. 2. 24. 1). Sometimes Devas are identified with Rita and Satya. It is said of Deva Surya that "he is the Swan? seated in the midst of light ... the Priest seated by the altar, the Guest seated in the house. Dwelling in man and in Rita, dwelling in the infinite sky and ... born of Rita ... he is Rita" (RV. 4. 40. 5 YV. Vs.) Indra is said to be 'Truth and not untruth' (RV. 8. 62. 12). Devas Arvins are described as "true" and "facing the Truth" (RV. 8. 57. 2).

An Upanishad identifies Rita and Satya with That (Tat, the Absolute Reality, Mahanarayana I. 6). In the Atharva Veda Rita and Satya along with Tapas, Sraddha (reverence, faith) and Vrata (self-dedication) are said to be lodged within Deva Skambha (the name meaning, 'Support of the universe, 10. 7. 1). So the Veda makes a categorical statement: "The Devas are always pure" (SV. 442).

Being perfect in terms of Rita and Satya and other values, the Devas are Models for men who, though manifested with Devas, and so entitled to claim kinship with them, are deficient in two respects — their physical mortality and their imperfect adherence to the highest values of life, including Rita and Satya. So a sage says: "I have risen with life, risen with good life (su ayus) following the example of the Immortals. (RV. Vs. 4. 28). Samjnana, the loving union through knowledge (of their common Divinity) existing among the Devas has been set in the Veda as an example before men (RV. 10. 191. AV. 330).

There is a very significant Vedic stanza in which the Rishi's vision of the Absolute (Tat Sat, in the neuter singular) and of the Deva (in the masculine singular) is embodied in the same stanza:

Vena (the loving sage) sees That Being (Tat Sat) hidden in mystery, in which all find one single home. In that all this unifies, from that all issues forth. He (for Tat) the omnipresent One (Vibhuh, in the masculine gender) is the warp and woof in created things." (YV. Vs. 52. 8).

DIVINITY MANIFESTED IN MAN

As the passage quoted above shows, the Veda speaks of the Absolute Being not only

The word (Hamsa) has been used for the Ultimate Reality in later times.
as transcendent but also as immanent. In the
latter sense the word Atman (Soul, in the
masculine gender) and, at times, Yaksham
(Spirit, in the neuter gender), have been
used in the Veda. They have been
used both in the universal sense (as para-
matman, Oversoul) and in the individ-
ual sense (as jivatman). In the Rigveda Surya
(the sun) symbolising the transcendent
Reality, has been identified with Atman:
“Surya, pervading the heavens, the earth
and the mid-region, is the soul of all that
moves or stands still” (RV. 1. 115. 1). The
Veda also speaks of “the peerless Spirit
(Yaksham) that lies in all created things”
(YV. Vs. 34. 2). Sometimes the word Manas,
usually meaning ‘mind’, has been used in
the sense of Spirit, as in: “May we not fight
against the Divine Spirit (daivyam manah)
within us” (AV. 7. 52).

The deepest spiritual awareness is found
to be achieved through Rajayoga, the reali-
zation by man of the Divinity within him.
The Rigveda speaks of “two birds (supar-
nas) friends bound together (by love),
that have embraced the same tree of which
one eats the sweet fruit, the other not eating,
looks around” (RV. 1. 164. 20). This has
been understood as an allegory of Jivatman
and Paramatman abiding within the body
of man. The Atharva Veda speaks of the
body of man as ‘a lotus flower, covered by
three bands (gunas), in which abides the
spirit (yaksham) with Atman, which is
known to those who know Brahman”
(AV. 10. 8. 43). Here ‘Yaksham’ is
Jivatman and ‘Atman’ Paramatman. The
lotus has come down as a symbol of Divine
presence, in Indian architecture, sculpture
and painting (at home and abroad) as well
as in poetry. It is said that in the final,
superconscious stage of realization, Jivatman,
with the illusions of mortal life cast off, rea-
lizes its identity with Paramatman. Else-
where the Veda speaks of the sage who dis-
covers his identity with ‘Purusha that is in
the sun, and everywhere’, and asserts, ‘I
am That’ (Soham — YV. Vs. 40. 17).

WHY VIBHUTIYOGA (PATH OF SPLENDOUR) ?
The question may be asked: why should
not one strive for a direct realization of the

The Winding Stair.
of expression of the Vedic Rishis, as the following lines taken out from the English translation of his poems in Tamil will show:

Reveal Thyself! Thou only art Reality, O Arunachala! 
(In this and other lines a hill symbolises the Deity)

Transcendental Self, O Arunachala!
Fearless I ask Thee, Fearlessness Itself.
Grant me the essence of the Vedas, which shine in the Vedanta.
One without a second, O Arunachala! Annamalai (Arunachala)!
... Do not fail me, Lord, who art Consciousness itself, neither male nor female.
Abide Thou in my heart.

As the string in (a necklet of) gems, it is Thou in Thy unity who penetratest all the diversity of beings and religions... O benign and dazzling Aruna Hill! is there anything apart from Thee?

DIFFICULTY WITH SYMBOLS

There are people, wholly committed to logic, who fail to understand symbolic language. What is more surprising, they proceed to take the poetry of the Veda as material for logical inference about history and social events even though the words have no accepted logical definition (e.g. Varuna is found to be an ethical Deva because his emissaries detect and punish evil men, and Indra to be non-ethical because he, a Champion of Rita, Moral Law fights and destroys Vritra, the sworn enemy of Rita, who is soon alive again).

There are people of whom the Vedic sages say that they are temperamentally incapable of understanding Vak, the sacred Speech, (and need systematic training), while others do so instantly:

There is the man who sees but has not seen Vak.
there is the man who hears but has not heard her.
but to another she reveals her lovely form...

All genuine poetry makes an appeal to the poet in us, and in Vedic poetry the sage speaks to those who can comprehend. A Vedic sage stresses this idea when he says:

All these musical and secret words, these speeches of a seer for a seer
I, a poet, have uttered in hymns and praises.
(RV. 4. 3. 16)

But the Rishi's hymns may arouse wisdom in those in whom it lies dormant.

"All that is required to realise the Self is to BE STILL. What can be easier than that? Hence Atma-vidya (Self-knowledge) is the easiest to attain."

— SRI RAMANA.

* * * *

Remove our evil dream of duality.
Wipe out all sins that obstruct the path to right knowledge.
Grant us that knowledge of the Truth which is beyond all doubts and misconceptions.

— Yajur Veda.
HAVING briefly discussed the importance of moral and mental requisites for a complete spiritual unfolding we now come to the main subject—a subject momentarily significant—of spiritual contemplation, the purpose of which is to take us beyond the mind to the direct supramental vision of the Divine. The process of perfected contemplation leads to relaxation in the Divine Spirit without stress or strain or to an absorption in the seer who shines in its pure light in the deep silence, where the mental activities of thinking and feeling are entirely abolished.

This process implies the contraction, through spiritual concentration, of the polar triangle of experience, that is the knower, knowing and what is known, into the 'Point' which further dissolves in the boundless sea of the ether of consciousness. This state is the highest possible spiritual experience to which proper contemplation leads. What happens next? A greater and wider consciousness is worked out by the Divine of its own accord. Theory is not practice and words are not the things for which they stand. Therefore, whatever be the spiritual width and felicity of this state we leave it to the reader to experience for himself or herself in his or her soul through proper practice.

What does spiritual concentration mean and what is its practical method or technique? By spiritual concentration is meant the gathering together of all the dispersed capacities of the being and centralising them on the Divine for the sole purpose of realizing the Divine. It is nothing short of this. All the methods of spiritual concentration may be classified into two groups—the positive and negative. Each of these two methods involves the inner movements, one passive and the other active, to be simultaneously followed. In the positive method these two movements are 'fixing' and 'watching'; in the negative method they are 'stopping' or 'rejecting' and 'watching'. In other words, in both methods the consciousness has to be divided, as it were, into two parts, passive and active; the active part doing something and the passive part doing nothing but vigilantly observing the work being performed by the active part. We shall make these two methods more clear.

**THE NEGATIVE METHOD**

The negative method of spiritual concentration is quite simple to understand. All kinds of emotions, moods and ideations that arise from within, or impacts of thoughts and suggestions which come from without, are to be rejected and discarded as soon as they arise or come. And simultaneously it is to be keenly observed that this 'stopping' or 'rejecting' is going on uninterruptedly and that the active part has not become engaged in thinking, willing or feeling something else than mere 'rejecting'. Slowly and gradually, when this practice progresses, the 'attacks' from within or without begin to get mild and ultimately are reduced to nil. In the final step even the notion of discarding and rejecting is dismissed and cast off. Thus a point of unenforced concentration is reached where all the activities of the mind are annihilated, all its modifications stopped and only awareness remains in its pristine purity. The seer is then said to be established in the Self, there being no inner or outer object left before it, not even the blankness of mind. This is a state of peace and nothing but peace; there is no feeling of pain or pleasure and tranquillity reigns supreme. The Self or Atman is experienced in this state in its pure nature, the eternal existing by its own right, not

From his book *The Practical Approach to Divinity*.
depending for awareness on anything, free from all pairs of opposites because they are no longer there, inactive because all activity which made the Purusha to be identified with it has ceased. This experience, it may be said here in passing, is not the only experience, not even the highest, in the realm of spiritual experiences.

The Positive Method

In the case of the positive method of concentration in which 'fixing' is to be practised it may be asked, "On what object should the mind be fixed? How can we fix our mind on the Divine whom we have not seen or whom we do not know?"

Yes, some divine symbols or images are necessary in this method in order to give a support to the mind. For concentration every one has to take some image or other. The practice of 'fixing' is not possible without it. These symbols or images can be placed under three categories of form, name and idea (including feelings).

It is needless to say that this positive method of 'fixing' is easier than the negative method of 'rejecting'. This can be understood from the analogy of the spider. The spider which comes down by means of a thread which it has projected out of itself goes up to its place through the same thread and then absorbs the thread within itself. Similarly the individual who is, through idea, name and form, externalised from his state of essential peace and poise, can most easily return to his essential state with the help of these very things. Moreover the mind of men in all its day-to-day affairs is always occupied with the world of name, form and ideas and it is not possible or practicable to get rid of these things all at once. The proper way is to practice fixing the mind on one form, or name or idea which in the final plunge of contemplation drops of itself, revealing that of which it is the symbol.

Divine Form as the Support:

In this method of concentration a form or object with a form such as the sun or moon or fire or sky or the divine form of some personal deity or a saint or a prophet or an incarnation of God is chosen as a support for the mind for concentration. For one who is of a devotional temperament it is easier to achieve concentration on the form of his or her Ishta (deity for whom one has a special attachment). This is also most fruitful in its results as the Ishta itself helps and looks after the devotee's work. Others who do not have sufficient faith and devotion may choose the sun or moon or any other object, preferably a luminous one, as a support for the mind. Thus the chosen object is seen within in imagination and the mind is made to hold on steadily to that object for longer and longer periods. The proper place or centre within the body where the image has to be imagined and held is the point between the eyebrows—the centre of command called the 'ajna chakra' in Yoga terminology.

Divine Name as the Support:

Now we come to the word or name as a support for concentration. Some name of God or mantra or phrase is selected according to one's faith and conviction. It is mentally or vocally repeated gently and calmly and the consciousness is centralised on the hearing of this name or mantra. The mantra is a phrase or a formula with a meaning which affirms the existence of God and embodies a certain idea or feeling in relation to God such as surrender to Him or feeling His presence or devotion with a certain prayer in adoration of Him. This practice is called 'japa'. Science may not prove it today, logic may also fail to do it, but experience has shown that such intonation and repetition of the Lord's name has a marvellous effect in tuning the mind with the Self—the Spirit which is all and beyond all.

That there is a tremendous power in the name of the Lord and that the Lord's grace descends through His name on one who faithfully and whole-heartedly repeats it, is a fact confirmed and reconfirmed by the holy saints of all religious denominations without distinction.

The proper place for concentration of God's name is the 'Heart centre' which cor-
responds to the cardiac centre of physiology, the 'anahata chakra' in Yogic parlance. Let it here be pointed out that the shorter the mantra or the word the better it is; because it becomes easier to concentrate on it. This practice of japa can lead — when performed to the exclusion of all the other methods of concentration — to the highest spiritual experience. There have been many saints who devoted themselves to this method and realized the Lord.

An Idea as the Support:

The third kind of support is 'avalam-bana' that can be given to the mind for concentration is a certain single idea in relation to God such as the idea of God as the only power or existence, or of the distinctness of the pure Self from the body or the idea of dependence on God or the idea of God as the supreme peace in which one feels oneself to be rapt in ecstasy.

Any such single idea which accords most with one's religious or spiritual faith and conviction is taken and used for fixation. This chosen idea is upheld, to the exclusion of all the rest in the mind and entertained unbrokenly. If this idea is devotional the proper place for concentration is the 'anahata chakra', but if it is pre-eminently intellectual or metaphysical the proper place is the 'ajna chakra'.

A Third Method

Apart from the above mentioned positive and negative methods there is a third method also, one in which there is neither fixing nor rejecting to be practised and in which one has to stand aside from thoughts, taking them to be a part of nature and not of Self, and simply watch them like a witness. The thoughts thus arise and subside unheeded and unidentified with him by the Purusha who observes, as it were, from above. For some time the mind thinks mechanically, but having lost its conscious centre of support ultimately falls silent and passive. Thus a state of alert passivity is reached. It is in this state of deep silence that the true nature of the Purusha is revealed, or the Lord manifests himself.

All these three methods are the most efficient ones to still the mind and lead to the supramental and spiritual vision. Of course they are difficult, for an extravert particularly, and need long and sincere striving for success.

Meditation

There is a difference between contemplation and meditation. In the former the mind is to be fixed on a single object or idea; in the latter the mind is to be concentrated on a correlated train of ideas thinking out a single subject. The former means the staying of the mind on one particular object or idea, the latter implies the flowing of the mind on a set of ideas which are interwoven while working out a single subject. Meditation denotes sequential thinking. For example, some elevating scene from the life of an avatar or a great saint or the transcience of the world may be put as the matter or subject before the mind for meditation. It is clear that this process of meditation is easier than contemplation. As a matter of fact meditation is the first stage of concentration leading to a second stage called contemplation.

Would the mere intellectual knowledge of the methods of swimming enable you to swim? Certainly not. In order to learn the art of swimming you must get into the water and use head, hands and feet. The instructions about, and the knowledge of, the method can help you and can make it easier for you to swim, but you must exercise and practice. Similar is the case with concentration in which you must sit and exert your heart and brain to bring a consummate mastery over your tumultuous mind.

A Few Dangers

It will not be out of place to mention here certain dangers which the over-eager aspirant must guard himself against.

The normal course of our ordinary mind is mostly to run and work outwardly in the objective world; but inner contemplation, as has already been explained, implies the
reverse movement. This being so, the
beginner who tries to fix his mind in inner
corcentration all at once for a long
period, especially on the ‘ajna chakra‘ will
feel a strain on his brain. It is on account
of the tension produced by the inward
movement of the mind which is deeply con­
nected with the brain. If the sadhaka works
beyond his capacity and makes violent
efforts to fix his attention in the middle of
the eyebrows he runs the risk of damaging
the nerve cells of his brain. Acute head­
ache and dullness in the brain, prolonged
cooling sensation in the middle of the eye­
brows, excessive heat or intense irritation
in the forehead are signals of this danger.

Besides, those who, not aware of the
coming turns in the spiritual path at which,
a more expedient and hard work is needed,
go too fast in the beginning and work
beyond their capacities, get generally tired
and exhausted soon and then they give up
their sadhana. To avoid these perils the
student should start practising concentr­
ation for only a few minutes at a time and
then slowly increase the duration. If the
brain gets fatigued and there is headache
during contemplation, break the exercise
and let your mind relax. Repeat calmly
the Lord’s name or simply entertain in your
mind the attribute of the Lord’s benignity.
Start the sadhana again when you have re­
gained mental equipoise and physical fitness.

The spiritual journey is not a journey of
a day but months and years. Who knows
how many lives it will take to reach the
final destination! Therefore do not be
impatient. Work steadily and calmly. Not a
rush, but a steady and regular practice is
what is required for success.

MAIN OBSTACLES AND AIDS TO
CONTEMPLATION

There are certain factors that hinder
inner contemplation and there are others
which help and promote it. The most pro­
minent of them are given below in the hope
that an adequate knowledge of them will
help the sadhaka in his contemplation.

OBSTACLES

(a) Wandering of the mind.

Wandering is a common disease of the
mind. Like a monkey who tirelessly con­
tinues to jump from one branch of a tree to
another or from one tree to another, the
mind of an ordinary man keeps oscillating
and moving always. Purposelessly or pur­
poselessly it runs from one idea to another,
from one place to another and from one
object to another, finding no rest anywhere.
Unlike physical diseases which come to, or,
leave the body at a certain age this disease
of the mind comes to a man from his very
birth and accompanies him to the grave.
Is there any cure for this disease? Yes, for
every disease there is a medicine. This is a
truth which applies here also. This mental
disease of wandering is not at all incurable.
Although it is very hard to curb the
wandering of the mind, yet it is not
impossible to do so. Have there not been
saints and holy men who controlled their
minds? Are not such self-controlled men,
though few, still amongst us?

By a life of discipline accompanied by
detachment and other qualities and regular
practice of contemplation the mind can cer­
tainly be made one-pointed. A sincere
effort with right guidance brings success in
the end.

(b) Sleep.

The second obstacle which obstructs the
sadhaka in his work of attaining complete
silence is sleep. Ordinarily the mind has
experience of only two states. The first is
the one in which it deals with inwardly or
outwardly (thinks, wills, feels, imagines or
knows) the external gross objects and
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into the second state, namely sleep.

The removal of the first obstacle, namely
the wandering of the mind, makes the stu­
dent automatically face the second obstacle,
namely sleep, which generally overcomes
one when the wandering of the mind is stopped. In the negative method of contemplation this obstacle appears soon after one sits for inner concentration, but it is not so in the positive methods where the mind has to be made passive not all at once.

There may be other reasons also for falling asleep while contemplating, such as heavy meals, physical or mental fatigue, certain diseases of the body or insufficient sleep during the previous day.

The hindrance of sleep is harder to overcome than the wandering of the mind. Nevertheless this obstacle can be overcome through proper food, breathing exercises and watchfulness. If all these precautions fail the sadhaka should get up from the asana and walk for a while or do active breathing or wash his face with cold water and then sit down again.

(c) Temptation from Subtle Planes.

When the barrier of the mind is crossed by the withdrawal of consciousness from external objects and when the sadhaka does not fall asleep he generally gets in touch with the astral and psychic worlds on the subtle-physical plane. On account of this he begins to have a multitude of subtle experiences of these worlds. None of these experiences is constant; they are just flashes which repeat themselves sometimes very rapidly. Some of them are so seductive that the sadhaka falls into a delusion and becomes complacent. He occupies himself with these experiences for the sake of the temporary thrills they provide. Besides these fleeting visions extraordinary powers like clairvoyance come to him from the higher plane. But these too are not permanent. All these are serious distractions which make contemplation pseudo-contemplation and lead the student astray from the path of Self-realization.

Only those who are spiritually very sincere and highly discriminating can save themselves from such temptations. Occasionally the spiritual guide takes the sadhaka beyond this critical stage of sadhana where many succumb to the temptations. For sadhakas who are advanced in devotion and who perform sadhana under the shelter of surrender to the Lord such obstacles are removed by the Lord Himself.

(d) The Extremist Attitude.

There are obstacles which intervene or come of their own accord and there are obstacles which the aspirant sometimes creates for himself by his blind and obstinate excesses, in the matter of some practices which appear to him useful but which are really hindrances. Practices such as prolonged fasting, insufficient sleep, standing continually on one leg, remaining in the chilly cold weather, etc., though regarded as austerities, actually hinder the sadhaka instead of helping him. Some sadhakas resort to such practices on the pretext of showing their power of endurance or merely for displaying their power for the admiration of people. They do not gain inner peace.

To place oneself deliberately in the way of such disturbing influences would be tempting God, as it were, and inviting obstacles. Why dissipate one's energy which can be more usefully spent in fixing one's mind on the Divine, in order to overcome obstacles created by oneself? For learning endurance there are many opportunities for the aspirant provided he is eager to use them. The simple rule in this matter to be followed by students of spiritual contemplation is to seek nothing which interrupts or dissipates but to bear quietly and courageously everything that comes or is sent by God.

Aids

(a) Proper Diet

The food which the spiritual student consumes plays a significant part in his progress in the sadhana. That food is essential not only for the sustenance of the physical body, which is for the sadhaka a means of God-realization, but that it influences also the mental modifications is well-known. What diet should then an aspirant take in order to gain the physical and mental strength which is indispensable for contemplation? There is no inflexible rule in this matter. You must discover for yourself what food
suits you and keeps your body fit and your mind calm and pure. A diet which creates constipation or wind in the stomach or produces a feeling of dullness on the one hand or too much restlessness on the other must be avoided. As a general rule, milk, green vegetables, butter, coarse wheat flour and fresh fruits are good, while meat, eggs, excess of spices, etc. are harmful. One thing that needs special mention here is that the use of all narcotic drugs like opium, charas, bhang, tobacco, on the pretext of their being aids to concentration, is harmful. The same is the case with alcoholic liquors, which must be avoided totally. These intoxicants weaken and poison the finer cells in the brain making the sadhaka unfit for the finer and higher spiritual experiences. Sometimes they bring disorders and even insanity.

(b) Pranayama, or Conscious Breathing.

The literal meaning of Pranayama is control of Prana. Prana is not breath, as generally understood. It is the life-force — one of the powers of the soul — which makes the body move through the movement of the nervous and physiological systems.

Breath (Prana) and mind are deeply interconnected. The control of breath leads to the control of the Prana and the control of the Prana leads to the control of the mind. In Hatha Yoga Pranayama is given the highest place and has to be mastered first. But in the yoga of contemplation it is given only a secondary place and regarded as a means of bringing the rhythmic and regular movement of breath which is essential for inner concentration. Pranayama also cleanses the nerves and keeps the body fit.

(c) Proper Place and Time.

The sadhaka is required to feel the presence of the Lord all through his day-to-day activities at all places and at all times, but for one-pointed contemplation which requires the entire attention to be exclusively fixed on God he must retreat to a calm and quiet place which is free from the disturbing noises of the world.

The proper time for one-pointed contemplation is the Brahm Muhurt, the period beginning about three hours before the sun rises. The body and the mind are quite fresh at that time and it will be easier to sit in one posture for a longer time with a steady mind. This suits almost all persons except those who are lethargic and insincere. Early rising is very important and is a healthy habit to be inculcated in the sadhaka. So one or two hours in the Brahm Muhurt should be set apart for contemplation.

Besides, before going to sleep at night, some time ought to be devoted to japa and contemplation. Going to sleep with the remembrance of the Lord is good because the subconsciousness keeps on doing japa by itself during sleep. Thus even sleep can be used for a noble purpose. During daytime also one can relax in one's chair in the office or even in the workshop or home for three or four minutes and reflect on the true purport of human life. Half-closing one's eyes one can whisper silently in the heart: "Lord, I am thine; pray take me in Thy fold." This may be repeated every three or four hours during the day — a very simple thing to do but very efficacious. It keeps one recollected in regard to the Supreme Master even in the turmoil of worldly affairs.

(d) Regularity.

If you want sure and quick spiritual illumination be sincere and regular in your contemplation. By the break of even a day or two you lose much of what you have gained through months of practice. It is through long and very regular practice that one reaches unenforced contemplation. Do not fail to sit for prayers and meditation even for a day at the time fixed. The break of even one day will do much harm to your sadhana, because the break of one day will lead to breaks of many days easily.

A FEW INNER EXPERIENCES

An introvert mind which plunges deep within the inner recesses of the mind will have a number of visions and experiences...
which lie beyond the pale of an ordinary man busy with the external activities of life. These visions and experiences come to different sadhakas in different ways. They may vary even in quality according to the stage, mode of sadhana, personal inclinations and physiological make-up. This statement may induce some people to say: "Are not these experiences mere hallucinations created by the minds of the sadhakas?"

No, these are not hallucinations. An example will make this clear. Suppose you send some men to the bazaar just to look at the things in it. On their return you ask each one separately what he has seen and each one will reply differently. Why is this so? Because their answers vary you cannot say that what they saw were mere hallucinations. Every one has his private and peculiar samskara; therefore, while one is attracted by one thing another is attracted by another thing. Consequently many things that are there are not noticed by each of them. But in spite of this variation there are certain prominent things or spots which arrest the attention of every one, even though for a short time. Similarly even though the inner experience of sadhakas may vary there are several common experiences. Some of them are given below.

1. In the preliminary stage of inwardness certain sounds resembling the beating of a drum loudly or gently, the flowing of a river, thunder, humming of bees, etc. will be heard in the right ear. Certain colours also appear between the eyebrows. These sounds and colours come and go and are constituted of the five elements. On experiencing these sounds and colours in the course of their sadhana some sadhakas imagine that they have made great advance. This shows their ignorance. There is nothing spiritual in these sounds and colours; they are merely reflections in the sound consciousness caused by the contact of the mind with the subtle physical plane. These sounds and colours distort consciousness and one-pointedness. An adept will treat them as mere sounds and colours.

2. A little more inwardness takes one into the astral plane where also a number of things are seen and experienced. Very often voices whisper in the ears. Sometimes messages are heard clearly, but only a few of them are genuine and many are misleading. Against the latter the sadhaka must be on his guard. He should not blindly follow any message or voice or suggestion. At this stage of contemplation numerous visions are seen. Many of them are symbolic representations of things, states and forces of the astral plane, but some represent actual happenings in that plane. It is better not to entangle oneself with such visions and voices which come and go. One must look at them with indifference and try to be one-pointed. In fact sincere and fervent sadhakas do not stay in this stage for long but pass it by quickly.

3. (a) After passing out of the astral plane one-pointedness of concentration gains momentum and soon becomes mature. One begins to have the elevating and blissful experiences of the higher planes. Saints of a high order, living or dead, often appear. They come to help the sadhaka. They should be saluted and adored. Sometimes they talk on spiritual matters and guide the sadhaka.

(b) Visions of gods and goddesses also appear at this stage. The god of one's choice appears frequently. He even gives darshan when the sadhaka is sitting or lying in a relaxed mood with his eyes open. Such experiences produce great bliss and uplift the mind. The sweet and soothing influence of these visions lasts many days.

(c) Sometimes events happening in distant places and those which are going to happen at a future date are reflected in the consciousness in full detail. The power of mind-reading also manifests itself. At this stage the sadhaka can, if he likes, develop the powers of clairvoyance, clairaudience and telepathy very easily, but if he does so his spiritual progress will be hindered. The adept therefore always warns the sadhaka not to waste his time in developing these powers or 'vibhutis'.

(d) Flashes of light of a more dynamic character occur frequently. An effulgent golden light sometimes appears before the
eyes when one is sitting quietly and all things disappear in it. This lasts only for a few minutes. Such flashes are indications of the dawning of spiritual realization.

One hears a peculiar thrilling sound issuing from the real Heart centre in the middle of the chest and this quickly permeates the entire body like an electric current. It makes the sadhakas completely oblivious of the external world. After about fifteen minutes this sound is centralized in the ‘ajna chakra’ and turns into a dazzling light. This is a very blissful experience. Some words also appear as if written by lightning on the forehead. They are at times so clear that one can read them, word by word. These two experiences come generally to those who practise mantra japa for long periods.

4. When consciousness becomes sufficiently deep these passing visions and flashes cease and one begins to feel an inner spiritual ecstasy which goes on increasing regularly. There is so great an ecstasy that one is irresistibly pulled within. At this stage all the worldly temptations have no power to lure the sadhaka. He feels himself drawn again and again to solitary places, where he can sit alone and enjoy the inner delight. The sadhana now takes a new turn and becomes more and more spontaneous. The sense of personal effort fades away, but the sadhana becomes more vigorous and quicker. Having moved further this spiritual ecstasy becomes merged in an ineffable deep peace. All the outer and inner world is completely obliterated and the consciousness is replunged in its static repose. Here bondage and freedom, pain and pleasure, with all other pairs of opposites, cease to exist. Simple awareness, silent, attributeless and immutable, alone abides. This is according to the ‘New Vedantins’ the merging with the Brahman. To this very state the Buddhists give the name of ‘nirvana’, the extinction of the world of name and form.

This experience of the immutable and relationless Self gives one perfect release from the changes of the gunas. On coming down a little from this experience (when the mind emerges again) the world seems a mere shadow with no substance in it — an unreal, vain and useless play of the unreal qualities.

This experience of the silent Self and the concomitant view of the world as a shallow, useless and purposeless appearance, though a very high experience in the spiritual field, is not the ultimate or perfect spiritual experience. Further, on Consciousness, ever remaining established in its immovable poise, again looks, as it were, outside and begins to assimilate the ‘All’ in itself and to gradually realize its essential oneself with the ‘All’.

There are two more intermediary experiences (which are not dealt with here) before one reaches the perfect experience in which the gulf between the nirguna and saguna, personal and impersonal, Nature and God, is completely bridged, or, more properly, they merge and mingle without any logic or reason, in the Spiritual Absolute.

Had He a thousand sons they must needs be the same son.
— ECKHART.

God is the mirror in which you see yourself, as you are His mirror in which He contemplates His Names and their principles. Now His Names are not other than Himself, so that the reality is an inversion.
— IBN ARABI.
HOW often have I heard it stated even by educated people that religion is based on superstitions and philosophy demands unquestioning faith on the part of the seekers? I had no ready answer to these questions until I came to Sri Ramana Maharshi and got acquainted with his teachings. There was no need of rituals; no place for dogmas and nothing had to be taken for granted. All that was required was a steady quest to know the truth—a scientific research to find out the secret of one's own self. In this process the contact with others who have realized the truth and have experience in the field of similar research would obviously be of help; for wasn't it Isaac Newton who said "If I have seen further it is by standing on the shoulders of giants"? Sat-sang, or contact with spiritual giants, will certainly help cut short the long and tedious process of investigations.

Scientific investigations have all along been to discover the truths of external nature, though in recent times science has tended to become somewhat transcendental. The understanding of the process of the mighty atom and thereby of relativity are beyond the range of the average intellect, yet these are accepted as truths because their effects can be demonstrated and can be experienced by one and all. An understanding of the inner self of man being naturally much more difficult is beyond the comprehension of most human beings. The exceptions are those few realized souls like Sri Ramakrishna and Sri Ramana, who having had direct perception of the truth, could guide others in their path towards realization.

In this context I am reminded of a conversation I had thirty years ago with Mr. Grant Duff during one of his visits to Ramanasramam of Tiruvannamalai. After an interview with Sri Bhagavan he was sitting on a chair outside the thatched shed where now stands the Mathrubhutheswara temple. Dressed in a silk suit and wearing a bow-tie he looked an image of peace and good will. Why had he come all the way to this far off place? I was anxious to start a conversation with him and so introduced myself to him as an engineer in Government service. In the short conversation that ensued he stated that he had spent the best part of his life in the study of comparative religions and philosophies and that he had come to the conclusion that the only philosophy that could stand the test of science was Sankara's Advaita, which is the same philosophy taught by Sri Bhagavan, in his unique way. Mr. Grant Duff added that we should consider ourselves fortunate to have been born in this era and been able to see Sri Bhagavan in flesh and blood. Such a testimony from a man like him added to my deep-rooted conviction that I was fortunate to have been drawn to Sri Ramana and that I need not go
beyond the precincts of Ramanasramam to seek enlightenment.

What exactly is the path to follow? In the words of Justice Sundaram Chettiar in his Foreword to Self-Realization, the method is:— "Retreat ever within thine own self; seek the source whence the restless mind spins out an unceasing web of thoughts; brush aside the springing thoughts; concentrate at the root of the thought, and into repose in that stillness and quietude. So much is thy effort, and what next is one for experience and inner realization and does not admit of exposition in words." If we try to seek further elucidation of this ultimate state and understand it, it will only be a knowledge or 'information'. What is required is 'realization' of one's true state.

Why Toil for Knowledge?

EVERYONE is working for some desired result. The scientist spends day and night at the laboratory unravelling the mysteries of external nature. Amenities, comforts and destructive weapons are discovered. But all this is endless toil. Nature is boundless. The fruits and pleasures we derive are transitory. Besides, Sri Bhagavan asks, of what use is knowing so many things, without knowing the Self, the knower? When once the Self is known, one realises that all is one, the Self. Then what is there further to be known?

There is also the lure that Jnana is our natural state, a state of poise in which one is unaffected by the dualities of pleasure and pain, etc. This state of eternal bliss is attainable only by knowledge of the Self. This is what distinguishes a jnani from an ajnani. An ajnani's mind is centred on the transcendental world.

The rise and extinction of the ego is an eternal plight of the jivas. The waters of the ocean rise up as clouds, condense, fall as rain and return to their source, the sea, without stopping, in spite of obstacles. The bird after soaring high and flying long in the limitless sky finds no resting place there and is bound to retrace its course. Similarly the jiva that rises from the Self, though it may toil on many paths, does not stop till it reaches the Self, its source and eternal resting place.

Who does not like to clean his spectacles before using them! No one says it is an act of ignorance. It is done to obtain the clearest vision. Similarly, Atma vichara is cleansing the mind. Sri Bhagavan says dhyana is harmonious with worldly activity and never a hindrance to it. Akhandakara vritti is the state of the purified mind, wherein Self-effulgence shines of itself. The basic impurity is forgetfulness of Self and identification with the body. Jnana is removal of the same, by becoming Self, after knowing Self. This is Sri Ramana's Grace.
Gonzalo de Yepes married Catalina Alvarez in the small Spanish town of Fontiveros in the year 1529.

Their union was blessed with three sons, the youngest of whom, Juan de Yepes y Alvarez, was born in 1542. A short time later, the head of the household died, leaving his poverty-stricken widow to earn a livelihood. She did this by plying her trade of weaving.

When John Alvarez was twenty years of age he entered the Carmelite Order. He was ordained priest in 1567 and met Madre Teresa of Avila to whom he became spiritual counsellor five years later.

Participants of an intense spiritual life, Madre Teresa and Fray John felt impelled to reform the Carmelite Order which had lost its initial vigour and discipline. To this end, they devoted their energies and became known as the Discalced Carmelites because they went about barefoot.

During the years that followed, the attitude of the Calced toward the Reform became hostile. Fray John was imprisoned.

Fed on a frugal fare of bread, sardines and water, John of the Cross was scourged thrice a week before being led back to his windowless cell. One night in 1578 Fray John escaped, and found refuge in the South of Spain.

When the opposition to the Reform had abated, John of the Cross was sent to solitary La Peñuela. From thence he went to Ubeda for medical care. It was there that he died on the night of December 13, 1591.

Canonized by Pope Benedict XIII, St. John of the Cross was declared Doctor of the Church in 1926.

St. John of the Cross was ever stirred to compassion by the plight of the sick and sorrowful, but those undergoing interior trials were his special concern. It was in order to guide souls on their spiritual pilgrimage that this gentle Carmelite took up the pen.

His teachings are clear and concise, revealing astonishing analytical ability and deep psychological insight. They exerted a profound influence on Saint Therese of Lisieux who wrote: 'The works of St. John of the Cross have been a beacon of light to me.'

The Way which St. John of the Cross depicts leads to the loftiest spiritual heights. It is therefore not an 'easy' path but one to be undertaken only by the stouthearted.

The stages of the journey are described in 'The Ascent of Mount Carmel' and 'Dark Night'.

These works deal with the two dark nights or two phases of the Night which have to be borne before divine union may take place. The first phase concerns the purification of the sensory part of the soul; the second affects the spiritual faculties of the soul i.e. memory, will, intellect. Of the two, the latter entails the greater suffering.

St. John of the Cross stresses the need for the soul to relinquish inordinate attachments, and to maintain a vigilant watchfulness over the appetites. This struggle is an 'active' one in which the soul seeks to detach herself from everything not pertaining to her heavenly treasure. Further, the soul is bidden venture beyond intellect-knowledge into the 'night' of Faith.

The 'secret ladder' which is discovered by the soul when the clamour of sense-attachments have been stilled, is Faith, and it is in this sure guide that the soul must trust implicitly. The light of Faith is so brilliant that it transcends the dimmer ray
of the intellect which is blinded by the intense glory. The journey therefore takes place in a darkness which is in truth an excess of divine light.

The Way is straight and narrow. Images conjured up by the imagination are pitfalls to be avoided by the wary soul. The mind is an aid up to a point. But when discursive meditation ceases the soul must play a ‘passive’ role and await the divine inflow.

When the soul has undergone the trials and tribulations of the dark night of Faith, she gives expression to her joy in sacred song. In these stanzas she recounts how she passed through the darkness to ascend the ‘secret ladder’ where, mantled in Quiet she was led by the light of Love within her into the Presence of her Beloved where:

‘His gentle caress
Banished my senses.
Forgetting all, I lost myself,
I lay my face against Him.
My cares were discarded
To lie forsaken midst the lilies.’

Writings from
‘The Ascent of Mount Carmel’ and ‘Dark Night’

‘In order to draw closer to God it is needful to trust in dark faith for guidance and light, and no reliance must be placed on understanding, taste, feelings or imagination.’

(Ascent 2).

‘Desire to be led always —
Towards that which is arduous, not easy.
Towards that which is unpleasant, not agreeable.
Towards that which is unrewarding, not gratifying.
Towards that which is humble and lovely, not high and most valuable.
Do not desire anything — long for nothing.
Seek the least in worldly possessions instead of desiring the best.
Yearn to possess poverty in all things.
(Ascent 13).

‘Those who seek to draw closer to God by means of forms and images, delude themselves if they do not desist from such methods which are suitable only for beginners. Clinging to these exercises they endeavour to meditate, but without success, they experience listlessness, weariness and aridity. It is not by the toil of the imagination that such will receive spiritual fare, but by surrendering to the spiritual peace and interior stillness. Locking in understanding they consider themselves to be idle. They therefore disturb their inner quiet with mental activity. Persisting thus, they draw further away from spiritual repose.’

(Ascent 2-12).

‘It is when pleasure and joy are experienced by beginners in their holy exercises, and they consider that the light of divine grace shines full upon them that God obscures this light and prevents entry to and participation in the pleasant spiritual water which they had tasted as often as they had wished. They are now left in such obscurity that they know not which way to turn in their mental activities; the inner sensory parts having been plunged into this darkness, they seem to make no progress in meditation. They are left in such spiritual aridity that not only do they derive neither pleasure nor joy in their holy exercises, but experience a strong aversion and dislike for them.

As already mentioned, God beholds their growth and puts them away from the honeyed Bosom in order that they may be strengthened. He discards the swaddling clothes and lowers them from His arms so that they may learn how to walk.’

(Night 8-3).

‘In order that the intellect may merge with the divine light and become perfected, the night of contemplation must purify and extinguish the intellect’s natural light and cast it into obscurity. This obscurity will continue until the intellect’s usual mode of understanding has been replaced by divine knowledge. Because the intellect has been deprived of that which was familiar to it, the night into which it is plunged causes
bitter and intense anguish. It appears to be a substantial obscurity because it is felt in the inmost being of the spirit.

Since the bestowal of love in the divine union is a heavenly affection, it is sublime, impalpable, fragile, and an inner experience, transcending every desire, attachment and impulse of the will. Consequently, the will must first undergo purification and be rid of all the desires and attachments within it before it may participate in love's divine union of rapture and joy, which in its sublimity transcends the natural inclinations of the will. (Night 9-3).

'... At the outset of the spiritual night the burning of love is not experienced because love's flame has not yet caught. However, love of God is kindled so fervently within the soul from the beginning, that the soul's greatest sorrow and anguish during these tribulations of the night is that it has been abandoned by God.

This apprehension, then, is the keenest suffering which assails the afflicted soul. If a man could be confident that all is not lost but that what he endures is for his good — and this is so — that God is not wrathful towards him, he would be unaffected by these adversities — instead he would feel an upliftment of spirit to know that God looks graciously upon him.' (Night 13-5).

'I must not fail to enlarge upon why the divine light which always illumines the soul does not illumine it at once, as it does later, but instead is the cause of tribulations and darkness...

The evils and darknesses which the soul undergoes when assailed by this light are not darknesses and evils inherent in the light but inhere in the soul itself. Illumined by this light the soul beholds these evils. Although the soul is illumined from the very beginning, it is able at first to perceive only that light which is closest — it beholds then the sorrows and darknesses within itself. It is divine compassion which enables the soul to view itself; before the advent of this supernatural light it had been unable to do so.' (Night 13-10).

In his 'Spiritual Canticle' St. John of the Cross describes in lyric verse the progressive stages of the purgative, illuminative, unitive and Beatific states. These stanzas, emerging from the author's mystical understanding, glow with exquisite beauty, tenderness and warmth. They record the soul's quest for her Beloved.

Where are You hiding Beloved, while I languish?
Like the stag You bounded away
After having caused me anguish.
I called to You, but You were not there.
(The soul sets out on her spiritual journey).

(The soul delivers herself with rapture into the divine embrace).

The air's living breath,
The nightingale's pure melody,
The beauteous, vibrant grove,
The night's still ecstasy,
Merge into the tender Flame.'

(The ineffable state of God-Union is achieved).

The 'Living Flame of Love' was composed in Granada between the years 1585-1587. In this work St. John of the
Cross teaches how the soul attains to the Beatific Vision when the three veils separating her from the Beloved have been rent.

When attachment to worldly things, gratification of sense-appetites, have been set aside, there remains the thin veil of the natural life to be removed. With the removal of this last veil the Beatific state is realized.

A SELECTION FROM
'THE LIVING FLAME OF LOVE'

'It seems to the soul that it is ablaze in the divine union, that it partakes of splendour and love, that in its inmost being overflow rivers of joyous, resplendent light, and that vivifying waters rise from its centre, those waters which the Son of God promised would gush forth in like souls.

The soul witnesses further that each time the fragile flame of love, alight within the soul besets it, its action bestows a resplendence at once tender and strong. The glory bestowed upon the soul by the flame of love when it assails it, appears to confer upon the soul everlasting life and to rend the veil of mortality, that it lacks little, yet due to this lack the soul is unable to receive perfect and everlasting glory. So it is with fervent longing that the soul prays that the flame of the Holy Spirit will now tear asunder the veil of mortality by that tender communion in which that Beatitude which is withheld at every meeting, will now be conferred.' (Commentary).

'To use spiritual terms — to be in darkness signifies one thing; to be in obscurity signifies another. We have mentioned already that to be in darkness signifies being blinded by sin. However, one can be in obscurity without being a sinner and this in a twofold manner —

In regard to the natural, being deprived of light or understanding of those things pertaining to the natural; in regard to the supernatural, being deprived of light or understanding pertaining to the supernatural.' (Stanza 3-71)

'. . . Because the soul of its own accord could not waken by itself, and God alone could waken it, this awakening is very rightly called a divine awakening.' (Stanza 4-9).

'The knowledge and experience acquired of the Divine in the spiritual awakening is beyond the limitations of words. Because this awakening is the Divine Perfection enlightening the inmost being of the soul, that is, the heart, a vast and mighty sound is heard within it, that of many excellences — of a limitless number of divine virtues. The soul is rooted in these virtues, firmly embedded in them, and may be likened to the awesome strength of an army in battle-array — these virtues render the soul tender and pleasing . . .' (Stanza 4-10).

'The soul neither experiences weakness nor fear when the awakening takes place, for two reasons.

Firstly, the soul exalted to this state, whose sensory part has undergone intense purification and is therefore in harmony with the spirit, does not experience the suffering and harm which do those souls who, unpurged in their sensory and spiritual parts, do not qualify for spiritual intimations. This does not suffice however, to avert the pain of such harm in the light of such majesty and splendour.

Secondly, and this is the important reason, as the soul mentions in the first verse, God makes His Presence felt in the soul with great gentleness. Bestowing majesty and splendour upon it in order to exalt it, God sees to it that no harm befalls the soul. He strengthens the sensory and manifests His Majesty in tender and loving fashion, making no use whatever of the senses, with the result that he who experiences this has no knowledge whether it takes place in or out of the body.

The soul is therefore aware of tenderness and love, of strength, sovereignty and majesty, for in God everything is One. Strength accompanies rapture, and the
might of tender love safeguards the soul in order that it may be strengthened while being caught up in rapture, and instead of succumbing to weakness remain steadfast . . .‘

The soul describes God as residing secretly within its heart, the reason being that the divine meeting takes place in its innermost being.

The soul which is no longer attached to worldly objects, in which there exists neither desires nor conceptual forms, and who is perfected in purity, is conscious of the secret and intimate embrace of the Beloved residing within it.'

When the perfected soul experiences this divine awakening within it, everything which takes place is perfect, since the heavenly Bridegroom is the cause of these happenings. The soul therefore uses these words in the following verses:

'Beloved, Your fragrant breath
Is laden with sublime goodness.
You expand my heart with tender love.'

In unique and masterly fashion St. John of the Cross instructs the soul on her inward journey.

If the Way is strewn with the thorns of negation, it is to reveal to the soul in travail that crucifixion of spirit is necessary so that the Immortal Bloom of Glory may rise from sorrow’s dark tomb.

Breathing the rarefied air of sublime mystical heights, St. John of the Cross sings how the sacred tears of the ‘Dark Night’ form the serene loveliness of the Celestial Pearl.

To Heart’s Content

ONE, Sri T. Viswanatham, was posted as Joint Sub Registrar of Tiruvannamalai. He wrote to me about his good fortune to spend the closing period of about six months of his official career at this holy place and of the much yearned for opportunity he hoped to have the darshan of Sri Bhagavan and intimated to me that he would take up duty in about a week. I showed this letter to Sri Bhagavan and the subject went out of my thoughts.

About a week or so afterwards at about 7-30 p.m. a person who looked orthodox was prostrating before Sri Bhagavan. Evidently he had read the Notice Board put up by the Ashram management forbidding the devotees to touch Sri Bhagavan’s feet. This person, obviously wishing to avoid being objected to, but unwilling to forego his heart’s desire, observed the letter of the rules by clasping his hands behind him, away from Sri Bhagavan while he prostrated like a gymnast, and rubbed his head over the feet of Sri Bhagavan, as a calf would do when fondled, and Sri Bhagavan allowed full scope for this indulgence!

Then he turned towards me and said: “Sri T. Viswanatham.” Who had told him so? The newcomer hadn’t spoken a word! Perhaps Sri Bhagavan had a sixth sense to scent a devotee!!

By ‘Vishnu’
CONTRIBUTION OF SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI TO THE VEDANTIC MYSTICISM

By Prof. G. V. KULKARNI

I

INTRODUCTION

SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI, the great modern sage of Tiruvannamalai, did not bother about his contribution to any branch of mysticism. He lived the pure life of a jnanin ever since he attained realization as a boy of sixteen. He was not interested in any philosophy or metaphysics nor in book learning. What he realized he gave in simple words to those who were needy. He also gave the path that led to his realization. Intensely practical as he was in spiritual matters like the Buddha, he did not bother about the nonessentials and concentrated only on the essential — absolutely essential. He did not write much, nor speak much; whatever he wrote or spoke was in response to the questions of the disciples or the seekers with the exception of the Five Hymns to Sri Arunachala. He did not found any new religion or establish any new branch or system of philosophy. Whatever he gave was his own, corroborated by the utterances of the sages of the past, the glorious tradition of mysticism — Vedantic and others. He presented the old mystical philosophy of the Vedanta from a fresh angle. Thus we can't speak of his mystical philosophy as we speak of Kant's or Hegel's philosophy. Anyway, it was a new way, a new approach to life and yet it was old. The path he taught was twofold — (1) the path of enquiry and (2) the path of surrender; the aim being complete annihilation of the ego, the 'chit-jada-granthi'. In his own words, the 'marga marga' and the 'majjana marga'. In the Ramana Gita a third path, viz. control of breath (prana nirodha) is also mentioned, but this is a part of the

2 Ibid.
3 Ibid.,
quoted them. He said that the Gita and the Bible are the same and the word ‘Islam’ means surrender.

II

AFFINITY WITH THE VEDANTIC MYSTIC THOUGHT

Before we proceed to point out his contribution to the Vedantic mysticism or the uniqueness of his teaching, let us refer to the salient features of the Vedantic mystical thought.

Sri Ramana belongs to the Indian tradition of Rishis and, as remarked by Dr. Radhakrishnan, ‘adopts the metaphysical position of the Advaita Vedanta.’ He is said to have renewed the Advaitic tradition of Sri Sankara and resuscitated the primacy of the path of knowledge after a long ascendancy of the Bhakti cult.

Even though, in general, the Upanishads have a common trend of mystical thought, there are three different approaches to the Ultimate Reality, namely the cosmological, the theological and the psychological ways. The first two ultimately lead to the third, the psychological way, being the crucial one. It consists in stating that what we call the experience of ‘I’ is the nucleus of our whole field of experience in life. This is the approach to attaining Ultimate Reality through one’s self designated as ‘I’. In his commentary on Brahma Sutra I. 1. 1, Sankara says this very clearly. He says that our experience of ‘I’, pure and simple, is the same as Brahman. The great Vedantic statements such as ‘This Atman is Brahman’, ‘Consciousness is Brahman’, ‘That thou art’ express in simple language this identity between pure consciousness as ‘I’ and the Ultimate Reality. The Vedanta further states that the nature of the Atman or Brahman is existence, consciousness and bliss. It is symbolised by what is known as Omkara. The Mandukya Upanishad and the Karikas of Gaudapada state elaborately that it consists of three and a half matras—A+U+M. ‘A’ stands for the Self residing in the waking state, ‘U’ for the same residing in the dream state and ‘M’ stands for the same in sound sleep. The fourth (turiga) transcends them all. Names and forms in the whole universe are the passing phases, as manifestations of this Om which is their substratum. In other words ‘Brahman is real, while the phenomenal world is unreal’. This is traditionally termed ‘pravada’ (in its philosophical sense). The world apart from Brahman is unreal, while the world as Brahman is real.

This doctrine is explained in the Vedanta in two ways: (1) the positive (avyaya) and (2) the negative (vyatireka). ‘All this is Brahman’, ‘All this is Atman’, ‘Brahman is all this’, ‘Atman is all this’, are the typical expressions of the former, while ‘not this, not this’ and the like express the latter.

The Vedantic tradition lays down two ways of realizing the Reality—(1) the theistic (saguna upasana) and (2) the non-theistic (nirguna upasana) worship. The former is for the less astute, the latter for the more astute, the higher evolved seekers. These ways are, however, not mutually exclusive or opposed to each other. Both of them lead to the same goal.

In the dialogue between Yajnavalkya and Maitreyi and elsewhere in the Upanishads we come across the path of Self-enquiry.
Yajnavalkya says: "The Self should be seen, heard, reflected and meditated upon." Sankara calls this path 'vichara' or 'viveka' and glorifies it in his prakarana granthas. Later writers like Vidyaranya refer to it and discuss it. Sankara refers to meditation based on following the sound (nadanusandhana), which is also referred to in the Upanishadic literature. The Bhagavad Gita refers to this path of enquiry in a verse in the XV Chapter.

The Vedanta also refers to the Dahara Vidyā or Hardavidya. Heart is the seat of the Atman, it states, and one should concentrate there, to attain Self-realization; even the Bhagavad Gita refers to it.

Side by side with Self-knowledge the Vedanta glorifies the doctrine of Bhakti too. We find references to this doctrine in the Katha and the Svetasvatara Upanishads in particular. Sankara in his stotras glorifies it and Ramanuja in his commentary on the Brahma Sutras refers to it as 'prapatti'. The Bhagavad Gita and the Bhagavata are well-known for eulogising it.

Though Vedanta mentions action as necessary, it prefers renunciation to action. Sankara states that action is an antithesis to wisdom (jnana). In the Bhagavad Gita, however, there is synthesis.

Lastly the Vedanta emphasises the importance of a Guru for realization. The Guru should be a worthy Brahmanishtha, capable of guiding the seeker. He gives initiation to the disciples by a mantra, by look, by touch or by silence. His grace is essential for realization. The Bhagavad Gita extols 'service to the Guru' as one of the virtues that constitute jnana and recommends service to, and contact with the jnatin. The Vedanta accepts the authority of Sruti and the four Mahavakyas as its pillars.

III

UNIQUENESS OF RAMANA MAHARSHI AND HIS TEACHINGS

So far as Realization is concerned, there is no difference whatever between the traditional Advaitic Vedanta and the teachings of Maharshi. Most of the salient features of the Vedanta referred to above find their place in Maharshi's works. Reality and the paths leading to it are dealt with by both. The psychological way to it is accepted and preferred, the identity between the Self and Brahman (Brahmatmaikya bhāsa) is taken for granted, both the positive and the negative ways of expression are approved, both the theistic (sometimes) and non-theistic (always) ways are pointed out as guidance, the method of enquiry and surrender prescribed and the Self is said to reside in the 'Heart'. A worthy Guru and his grace are considered essential for realization. But granting all this affinity, the expression or the methodology of both differs in certain respects. There are certain distinctions and prominent features of Ramana Maharshi's message which is in a way unique. As expressed by Him replying to a question — "Can it be put in other ways to express the same realization?", "A realized person will use his own language."

Not only was his language unique, but his personality was also unique; or perhaps because of his personality his language was also unique. When we read his biography or the account as given by himself, we find that he became a jnatin, a perfectly realized soul, when he was face to face with death at the age of sixteen. Then he enquired within, "Who is dying?", "Who am I?" and discovered once for all that his body might be dying but not the 'I'. This brought about a complete transformation in him. Death no longer scared him and life attained a new meaning. All this was thus not the result of the study of scriptures, nor

17 Vivekachudamani, 124.
18 Ibid.
19 Prabodha Sudharakara, 13.
20 Bh. Gita, XV, 4.
21 Chand. Up., VIII, 1, 2, 3.
22 Bh. Gita, XVIII, 61.
23 Katha Up., II, 23.
24 Svetasvatara Up., VI, 33 ; 18, 14.
26 Sankara on Kena Up.
28 Bh. Gita, X, 33. (etc.)
29 Ibid., XIII, 7.
30 Ibid. IV.
31 Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi, (1956) p. 182.
of any discipline and sadhana at the feet of a Guru. Whenever any question was asked, he would say in reply what came to him naturally from within, on the authority of his own experience. That is why in his replies to questions and in his works he always emphasises the real nature of 'I'. It is the key-word of his message. To one who is really interested in his spiritual well-being, this message is simplicity itself. It does not lead into the thorny jungle of metaphysics, technical terms, heavy discussions, debates and book learning. As a matter of fact, one has to unlearn what one has learnt. Nor does it stand on the four requisites (sadhana chatushtaya) mentioned in Vedantic works for the enquiry into Brahman. What is required is a burning aspiration to know 'who I am'. As a matter of fact, every one, even a child knows 'I'. It is the centre of all our activities and our knowledge. But the knowledge that we have of 'I' is superficial. If this is superficial what is real knowledge? If this superficial 'I' drops off and an awareness of 'I-I' all-pervading within us in the Heart is felt. This is the real 'I', known as God or Atman or Brahman or whatever name one may use. Thus one has not to go far away in search of Reality or God. It is so very near and dear to us, residing in our very hearts. Maharshi, in this connection, warns that there are not two 'I's; the 'I' is one only. Due to wrong association with the body the real 'I' is felt as the superficial or the pseudo-I, known as ahamkara. 1-am is God, the Real Atman, while ahomkara is artificial, as the appendix 'kara' denotes. Maharshi asks us to enquire into this 'I', concentrate on it and transcend it. As an aid to this enquiry, in order to still the mind, he recommends control of breath or watching of breath. This path is called by him 'The Path of Enquiry', vichara or marjana marga. He calls it also a 'direct path' as it leads us straight to Reality. All other paths lead ultimately to this one.

Maharshi points out the distinction between meditation advised in the Vedantic literature, and the vichara thus: "Meditation requires an object to meditate upon, whereas in vichara or introspection, there is only the subject without the object. Meditation differs from vichara in this way. Vichara is the process and the goal also. 'I AM' is the goal and the final Reality. To hold on to this Pure Being with effort is vichara. When it is spontaneous and natural it is realization."

Similarly vichara is different from meditation —'I am Brahman' or 'I am Atman'. The latter is only mental or intellectual. Maharshi explains the Upanishadic saying 'I am Brahman' by stating that it means that Brahman exists as 'I' and not 'I am Brahman', that it is not to be supposed that a man is advised to contemplate 'I am Brahman', 'I am Brahman'.

The Upanishadic statement 'The Atman should be seen, etc!' is not properly understood by men, says Sri Ramana. He explains —"It means being completely devoured by the Atman, by the real awareness of 'I'."

He further points out that mere viveka mentioned in the Vedanta is not enough for Self-realization. It is valuable as it gives rise to dispassion (vairagya); but what is most essential for Liberation is 'Atmanishtha' — abiding in the Self. Discrimination (viveka) can lead us only one step forward by making us renouncers, by goading us to discard the seeming (abhava) as transitory and to hold fast to the eternal Truth and Presence alone.

The much-quoted statement in the Vedanta, ascribed to Sankara 'Brahman is real, while the world is unreal' is misinterpreted very often. Sri Ramana in this connection says: "It is not at all correct to
say that Advaitins or the Sankara school
deny the existence of the world or that they
call it unreal. On the other hand, it is more
real to them than to others. Their world
will always exist, whereas the world of the
other schools will have origin, growth and
decay and as such cannot be real. They say
only that the world as world is not real, but
the world as Brahman is real. All is Brah­
man, nothing exists but Brahman, and the
world as Brahman is real. Sankara says
'maya' does not exist. He who denies the
existence of 'maya' and calls it 'mithya'
or non-existent cannot be called a 'maya-
vadi'.

All this clearly shows that what is implicit
in the Vedanta is made explicit and elabo­
rated by him in the light of his own reali­
zation. He has also pointed out boldly the
distinction between old concepts or terms in
the Vedanta and the new concepts or terms
he has used.

The word 'Hrdayam' for example, that he
has used in connection with Self-enquiry is
different from the (anahata) Chakra in the
heart used in the old yogic literature. It
is also different from the physical heart on
the left side. He explains: 'Hrdayam'
(Heart) is different from the physical organ
called the heart. 'Hrdayam' is composed
of two words 'Ayam' and 'Hrit' meaning,'This is the centre'. So Hrdayam or the
Heart is said to be the expression of the Self.
Its place in the chest is on the right side and
not on the left." Though it can be said to
be the seat of the Self, this is said only for
the sake of understanding. The Self is every­
where and it is not correct to locate it; but
only because we are body conscious we have
to explain it so. This 'Hrdayam' is dis­
tinct from 'Hrdakasa' of old Vedantic and
Tantric literature. Reference has already
been made to Daharavidya or Hardavidya,
Kapali Sastri, in his introduction to Sad
Darsana Bhashya, has pointed out the dis­
tinction between Dahara vidya and the
'Sadvidya' of Sri Ramana.40 He says that
in the former "for purposes of meditation
one has to form, by the imaginative mind, a
concept of the Saguna Brahman or Personal
God, and fixing it in the place called Hrid
Guha, the cavity of the Heart, meditate upon
it. In the Sadvidya it is not indispensable
to have an intellectual knowledge either of
the personal or the impersonal Brahman.
Nor is it necessary to conceive a special
symbol of the Purusha, or any cavity as the
dwelling place of the Purusha. Non is it
suggested that the Saguna Brahman should
be fixed in the imagined Dahara Akasha, the
cavity of the Heart-Centre and there medi­
tated upon. As Brahman the all-pervading
is the Self in every one's heart, effulgent as
the imperishable I-consciousness, a serious
quest for the origin and support of one's
own being naturally impels the life-breath
or inspires the mind to move towards the
origin of its own movement. And in this
search for the Self the knot of ignorance in
the heart (Hrdaya-granthi) is loosened, and
ultimately cut asunder; the soul is liberated
from the bodily entanglement and restored
to its true state. The origin and support of
the 'I-thought' or ego-sense is thus realiz­
ed in the Heart as one's own Self."

Another thing that Sri Ramana emphasis­
ess, as is also mentioned in Vedantic works
and by Sankara,41 is that one unconsciously
enjoys the bliss of one's true nature in sound
sleep. There is neither you, nor I, nor the
world with its problems, nor death. The
ego is merged in the Self. People say that
sleep is ignorance, but it is not so. We
should learn this lesson from sound sleep.
Search for our true nature should start with
this experience of ours in sound sleep.
Sri Ramana calls this path Maha Yoga. In
other yogas viyoga, i.e. separation from God
or Self, is implied; first separation is taken
for granted and then means are recommend­
ed for the union. But in this direct path
there is already union with the Self, since
we are already the Self. We have simply to
know that we are the Self. Hence this path
is superior to all other yogas. It combines
them all.42 In this Maha Yoga, as already

40 Thus Spake Ramana, (1967) pp. 75-76.
42 Sad Darsana Bhashya: Introduction, p. 27.
43 Sankara on Brahma Sutra, II. 1. 6.
44 Upadesa Sreni, (1963) 10,
elaborated, there is the search for the source of the ego, resulting in its annihilation. Maharshi emphasises that we are already realized. What is important is to remove the untruth that we are not realized. Realization is not anything new to be acquired. If it were so, it would not be worth while. The idea is Vedantic, but Maharshi has developed it very explicitly.

The traditional Vedanta has firm faith in the Sruti and considers it authoritative. Sankara is very emphatic on this point and asks us to reflect on these fine great utterances in the Upanishads. This he did with the object of reviving Hinduism. But Sri Ramana, in spite of his firm faith in the Vedas and the Vedanta, does not ask us to rely on them and reflect on them. For modern man, who may or may not have any religion, he prescribes the enquiry, ‘Who am I?’ which does not require book learning, nor performing rituals and can be such a vital and immediate quest. “One should know one’s Self with the eye of wisdom. The Self is within the five sheaths; but books are outside them,” he said.

This path appeals to the modern man because it does not ask him to have blind faith in it. One has to experiment, verify and find out the truth for oneself. Thus it is perfectly scientific and rational; because science demands that nothing should be accepted only because so and so says it. One’s infallible experience is the true guide here. It is universal and meant for all, as it is free from any dogma or doctrine, not hampered by fossilised tradition, not restricted to any caste, creed or colour.

Sri Ramana prescribes the path of surrender to those who cannot follow the path of enquiry. In this path one has to surrender every thing including one’s thoughts, worries, etc. to one’s real Self, not to any outside agency. Maharshi states that both these paths are at bottom one, because ‘being devoured by the Self’ is common to both.

Difficulties in these paths are removed by the guidance and grace of a worthy Guru, who need not take a human form. The real Guru is within and out of compassion he takes a human form to guide the seeker. Guru is not a body. From the point of view of the Guru, there is no Master-disciple relationship, but from the point of view of the disciple, such a relationship does exist. Inner contact with the Guru is more valuable than the physical contact.

With regard to action and knowledge (jnana) Sri Ramana’s thoughts appear to be different from Sankara’s. He recommended selfless action without desire for its fruit and surrender to God; such action leads to salvation. Action and knowledge are not opposed to each other. One’s hands might be busy, while the head is calm and cool. Engrossed in the Self, Action cannot bind or free, as it is non-sentient. The notion ‘I am doing’ is binding. One need not be a recluse for attaining Self-realization; nor is it necessary to leave the family life and retire into a forest. The thought ‘I am a sannyasin’ is equally harmful. Wherever we are we can try to still the mind and attain to Self-knowledge. To men of this age such instruction is highly suitable and valuable.

He gave some new definitions of old terms often used in the Vedantic and yogic literature, in the light of his realization, e.g.

**Dhyana** — That natural no-mind state of the Self where there is no triad of meditator, meditation and object of meditation.

**Upasana** — The natural (effortless) state (of the Self) during practice.

**Sravana** — Hearing the Vedantic texts or the Guru’s own words or knowing intuitively that the source of the I-thought is different from the body, etc.

**Manana** — Search for the Self.

**Nididhyasana** — Inherence in the Self.

**Pranayama** — Watching the breath with the mind.

Outbreathing = I am not this (naaham).

Inbreathing = Who am I? (koham).

Retention of Breath = I am He (soham).

**Solitude** — Making the mind still.

* * *

To sum up: His penetrating elaborate treatment of the twofold path, His reinterpretation and expansion of the Vedic truths, His exclusive and all-embracing emphasis on Self-knowledge (jnana) and understanding of the needs of modern man along with His rational and scientific approach—all this stemming from His highest spiritual enlightenment constitute his unique contribution to the Vedic mysticism.44

Not only this much, but the method he adopted in bringing home these truths was equally unique. He spoke eloquently through silence. “Silence is uninterrupted speech”, he said. Whenever he spoke, his replies were short, matter of fact, often humorous and calculated to make the questioner turn inwards. They had direct approach. His unique personality, his penetrating divine look full of compassion, above all his silence, had a calming influence on seekers and dissipated their doubts and problems.

To those who study His life and works, his rich contribution not only to the Vedic mysticism but the mysticism of the world, will appear unique.

44 The Mountain Path, January 1966, See Editorial.

Speak Arunachala

By Ananda

Speak to me, lofty Arunachala
Of what I cannot see
Yet dimly feel myself to be.

Speak to me wise Arunachala
Look past my ugly blight.
Mix my painful darkness with Thy living Light.

Speak to me grey Arunachala
A song or but a word will do,
And I upon my knees shall hand it back to you.

Speak to me distant Arunachala,
Flail out what isn’t Thee in me,
And let Thy Peace forever after be.

Speak to me beloved Arunachala
Draw me once more within Thy cavern’s raging Silence
Head to floor.

Speak to me mother Arunachala,
I’ve walked and walked about Thy skirts,
Let me not now thus die of thirst.

Speak to me ageless Arunachala
Don’t think I will not come again . . .
No matter what the cost or time or pain.

Speak to me sweet Arunachala
Dance madly to my soul’s delight —
As well by day as through the livelong night.
Tenko San is a religious teacher of modern Japan. At the beginning of the century he became the unconscious founder of the community of Ittoen, the Garden of the One Light. His teaching is essentially practical and it has many sides. One aspect of it is the need to give in to others and do what they ask. Another aspect is the need for 'moving with the Formless Light' (or God). These two aspects are considered in the following article.

There is an amusing episode told by Tenko San of Japan of when he met the friend who asked him to examine the books of a certain firm in Daitokuji whose business he wanted to buy. Tenko San had himself given up a business career and had no desire to enter the business world again. The friend reminded him that his new way of life made it incumbent on him to do whatever anyone asked him to do. For example, at the request of certain ladies he had taken them sight-seeing round various temples. While not altogether agreeing with his friend that his request was right he tacitly did agree, but stipulated that if he did examine the accounts of the firm it would be without favouring either side. The friend was happy with this, but next insisted that he should go properly clad in European clothes. Tenko San did not like this stipulation at all; his dilapidated short black kimono was for him like clerical dress for a priest. The friend teased him but he did not agree. They parted. The friend collected the necessary clothes down to a walking stick, and next day drove back, flung down the clothes and walking stick, gave the time of the appointment, thanked him and drove off.

Tenko San had dismissed the matter from mind. He now realized that the time of the appointed hour was approaching. He took up the bundle and still in two minds started walking towards Daitokuji, saying to himself that he could change into the European clothes in the temple there which his family patronized.

But it turned out that the family temple was at the further end of Daitokuji temple compound and the premises of the firm's business at the beginning of it. His doubts ended; he would go in dressed as he was. After some preliminary suspicion his frankness won the directors' hearts and he made the investigation without difficulty. This story illustrates the dividing line between holy and unholy obedience. Obedience to another's request when it does not conflict with the Inner Light is part of the Ittoen life, the new Life as Tenko San conceived it. And one recalls The Little Plays of St. Francis, in which the Saint is depicted as getting another monk to do as he requested 'in the name of holy obedience'. Father Thomas Merton, a Trappist monk, defines Roman Catholic holy obedience thus—'To become free from the need to assert your ego, to be liberated from the desire to dominate others, to remove your selfish desires and so on. Ultimately the idea is that if you remove your own will, you will be directly guided by God, moved by Him in everything. Here is the rule of St. Benedict — it is said that a monk will obey not only his abbot, but also his brethren in so far as this does not conflict with obedience to the abbot and God. The real purpose of obedience is to obey God and give one's will to Him.'

I think that for Tenko San the idea was basically the same, for in both it means self-effacement. But for Ittoen today I am by no means sure that it means more than obedience to the rulers. When a
child leaves school he does the work which the elders determine. He is not asked; still less is it suggested that he spend a quiet time waiting for the guidance of Light. Perhaps he is too young for this. But in any case it means that if he is determined he will follow his own desires, and get his own way regardless of both the Light and the Elders, and this is certainly not holy obedience. There was the case of the young man who left, got trained in making a special kind of roofing material and ultimately returned on his own terms and continued with his chosen work. There was also the case of the young man to whom had been assigned the work of photographer and who badly wanted to study English instead. He was allowed to take a correspondence course, but ultimately he got his own way and gave up photography completely. I did not hear of quiet seeking for the will of Light, but I doubt very much whether there was any holy obedience either to the Elders or to Light.

When I left hospital a very kind friend let me spend the first period of convalescence in her immaculate home. The stay was unexpected by both of us and I was devoutly thankful to her for coming to the rescue of a friend with no one to look after her. But I had always been a sufferer from claustrophobia. Imagine therefore my horror when I was taken into a room with a large window but with a curtain from side to side so that I could not see out, and with only a tiny part of the window that could be opened and that behind a wardrobe and covered with a blind and fly screen, and this was the middle of a hot summer! My hostess was extraordinarily kind, but I realized that the only condition upon which I could benefit from her kindness was implicit obedience in every detail for she was very house-proud. Here was a valuable lesson that life and Light were sending and I would be foolish not to learn it. After a day or so of secret rebellion the claustrophobia complex disappeared and I spent two months of painful but happy relaxation. Indeed the stay there was one of the major factors in convalescence.

That was holy obedience, submission to the will of another when it was not contrary to Light and one's higher Self. Self effacement or ending of antagonism is good because it means control of one's lower self or one's ego and effacement of self will. But submission to the wishes of another stands as usual on a razor's edge, for it can well become blind obedience and submission to authority regardless of the inner guiding Light. To disregard one's own desires is self-renunciation, but disregard of the desireless Self or Inner Light is exactly the opposite, and it is often hard to draw the line, especially in the beginning of the spiritual pilgrimage.

Blind obedience runs contrary to individuality and individual talent which are the flowers of man's elevation. So perhaps the razor's edge is really between giving up the desires of egoism on the one hand and the need for individuality on the other. But it does leave room for the development of individual talent, and even within the Christian monastic orders with their demand for obedience there has been room for philosophical and scientific genius to grow.

There is no doubt that Tenko San's devotees blindly followed his guidance and that today they seek the direction of the Toban, while the lay disciples look to the guidance of the local secretary as they would to Tenko San. But Tenko San himself would not make a decision for anyone. This is a reported conversation with him in the days of World War II, and let us remember that it took place in Japan whose laws admitted of no conscientious objection to military service. If you refused to join the forces you were shot. A young man who had read deeply of Tolstoy and Gandhi came to Tenko San and said—

"The time has come when I must join the army."

"And what do you think about this?"

"That is what I am asking you to tell me, I suppose Tolstoy would say I should not join."
'Have you given thought as to why Tolstoy said people should not join the army?'

'Well, he says we should not kill people.'

'When Tolstoy said this I wonder whether he was actuated by a motive of self or of not-self. If you are merely linking together your own feelings of self with that of the nations, you are not decreasing evil by not joining. Indeed you are adding one evil to another and increasing evil. Reconsider the matter carefully. Can you honestly say you are never guided by the motives of self? If you are not so guided you should refuse to join; then according to the law of our land you would be shot; but that would be good; it would be the result of selflessness. On the other hand, if you merely condemn the government for its motive of self interest while cherishing the same motive yourself, then by refusing to join you are a wrong-doer, for you are merely seeking to justify yourself. Then unless you are convinced of your own innocent selflessness, you should obey the law and enter the barracks.'

Some of Itthien's members did in fact join the army in the Second World War. But the point I want to make is that Tenko San did not insist upon blind obedience. Another example of this was his attitude towards marriage of members. He always tried to arrange that Itthien members should marry, but I know of two who did not feel called upon to marry and he did not insist. But whether he would have gone as far as Gandhi in refusing blind obedience, I doubt.

Holy obedience means, moreover, far more than submission to the wishes of others and doing as they want. It means also submission to life itself and all that life sends, the apparently unpleasant events as well as the unpleasant demands of others. This means the gracious acceptance of suffering, for suffering is part of life and the natural attitude to it is one of antipathy, or in other words assertion of the ego's desire for pleasure and hatred of pain. Nearly all live their lives hating suffering and trying to avoid it and with this objective they spend millions on pills and doctors. And learned people write treatises on suffering and the ending of suffering without either abating their own or helping others to abate theirs. They do not say, 'thank you; now what can I learn from this pain.' And yet that is the only way of wholly transcending it.

Buddha said to Baddiya, the former Sakyan Lord. 'If you do not mind if things are thus and not thus and have no harsh thoughts, then you are truly happy.' The attitude of the ordinary person is exactly the opposite; it is a desire —

To smile this sorry scheme of things entire . . .

And then to rebuild it nearer to the heart's vision.

That is, he refuses to be obedient to life and the laws of life. If he cuts his finger, he says, 'Blast!' (or something stronger). Or if the wife falls for another man or he contracts a fatal disease or his son disgraces him, his reaction is no different. His mind, emotions and feelings are hurt. Even the Buddhist will forget that the Buddha told the sick and aged Nakulapitar that as long as we look to our bodies for happiness we are looking to what is always changing and decaying, that only the Self provides a refuge, an island amid the stormy waves of life's suffering. Later when Nakulapitar met Sariputta he said he felt as if he had been sprinkled with ambrosia. He had accepted suffering, become obedient to life and taken refuge in Light or what is Beyond.

To meet unpleasant happenings by saying, 'Thank you' means a radical reorientation to life. Yet all the spiritual teachers have inculcated the transcending of all desires. And these include hope as well as fear. How easy it is to write this and how difficult to reorientate our thinking so that it becomes second nature.

And to whom or what do we say 'Thank you'? When I was in hospital being pain-

fully dragged back from the door of death, I was conscious only of the very-nature-of-things-as-they-are, the Cosmic Order of action and reaction. Ramana Maharshi, the Buddha, Christ, Tenko San and many others who have had consciousness of this Cosmic Order have borne witness to the love which enfolds it. But for the majority of us there can be only blind faith in the very-nature-of-things-as-they-are, about which we know very little. But whether blind or not the interesting things that this attitude of obedience to life works very well indeed.

Behind our lives forever
Our karmas stand sublime,
Regardless of our wishes,
Indifferent to time.
And if we kick against them,
Refusing what they bring,
We find the very devil.
A vicious cruel thing.
But if we yield us to them
We find a perfect order.
A wise and loving friend.

The trouble is that this standard attitude to so-called disagreeable happenings is one of strong dislike so that the perfect order cannot be perceived and the loving Friend remains unknown. But the fact is that if we do say, 'Thank you', we find both. If we postulate a Loving Father we can say, 'Thank you' to Him, but this is not necessary for it is a law of life.

But the assertion of self and refusal to obey comes to life again and again and makes us kick against the pricks both of persons and of things. It has far more lives than the proverbial cat. I think the cat because of its nine lives must be one of those archetypal symbols of which Jung speaks, for we meet it in dreams as requiring to be slain. This is horrible for a cat-lover to do, just as horrible as it seemed to Arjuna in the Bhagavad Gita to slay his relatives. But getting rid of selfishness and the sense of 'I', 'mine' and 'me' is horrible. Holy obedience may be a better way of getting rid of it than Tenko San's insistence on toilet-cleaning, but the difficulty remains and we need not be surprised when it appears to have more than nine lives.

Endo San, a spiritual healer who used to treat Tenko San, insisted that concentration of thought preparatory to healing must commence with thankfulness for the mere gift of life and all that life brings including pain, in other words holy and grateful obedience. Without this attitude there is an antagonism which prevents the Life Force from flowing freely. This is an aspect of Holy obedience that is obvious but it is not recognized by many.

The reason cannot attain to Him or name Him or know Him... nor can any affirmation or negation be applied to Him... He transcends all affirmation as the perfect and unique Cause of all things, and all negation by the pre-eminence of his simple and absolute nature, free from every limitation and beyond them all.

— PSEUDO-DIONYSIUS, The Mystical Theology.

* * *

I did not go to the Maggid of Meseritz to learn Torah of him but watch him tie his shoe-laces.

— Hasidic saying.

* * *

There is no writing of mine on this subject, nor ever shall be. It is not capable of expression like other branches of study.

— PLATO, 7th Epistle.
By

DILIP KUMAR ROY

The rainbow-lilts of eternal Brindaban
I still recall, I still recall again:
O Prince of loveliness, Light's darling Son,
Touching to radiant joy our nights of pain!—
I still recall and call to thee again.

Oh, how we ran to the blue Jamuna's brim
To bathe in her crystal waters day by day,
Singing in ecstasy our paeans to Him
Who would outflameth His lightning-pranks to play!—
I still recall and call to thee again.

The carnivals of joy from grove to grove,
When under a star-spangled velvet sky,
The world's Beloved called us to His Ras of love
To savour with Him in an hour eternity!—
I still recall and call to thee again.

Or the moonlight masques and songs in blissful bowers,
When passion born of His beauty, athrob and tender,
Changed all the thorns of life into blessed flowers
And we won from thee all by our all-surrender.
I still recall and call to thee again.

"Krishna is a fool's fairy tale," they say,
"A legend — His song and dance and revelry."
To them thy Flute of Flame is a myth today
And the drab world's din the last reality!
But I still recall and call to thee again.

How can they know who never have known in love
The bliss the soul feels when thou leanest to bless?
To the blind can one who has seen his vision prove
Or speak to the heart of stone of thy caress?
But I still recall and call to thee again.

They scoff and laugh at all I see
And say, "He never came;
'Tis all a myth — how can it be?
Krishna is but a name,
THE MOUNTAIN PATH

An irised bubble, a vapour, sweet
Imagination's gleam:
Could earth and the ethereal meet
Or stars our dust redeem?

Still comst as rapture in pain's night,
As beauty flowering
In yearning rocks thy troth to plight,
To Abyss of Heaven to sing.

But I have heard thy Flute of Grace,
Beloved, in my lone heart
And thrilled to the deep blessedness
Of knowing that thou art

My life's one friend and stay and guide,
My cradle and my goal:
And so I smile when they deride
What floods with bliss my soul.

To the one who has Attained: Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi

By

William H. Bates

The Light which lies within us all
Is here for all to see:
Within this frail and changing shell,
We find th' eternal Thee.

Not to be sought by outward aids,
By prayers, nor gifts, nor rites;
But by the search, intense and real
Into the source of mind.

A search which cannot rest or stay
Until the task is done,
And ego routed from its throne
Where it has reigned too long.

May we, who in this task engage,
Find help in Thy kind smile,
And soon with Thee in peace abide:
Not 'I'; not 'Thee'; but ONE.
KRISHNA ON KARMA

By DILIP KUMAR ROY

(Sanjaya, Dhritarashtra's emissary, comes to the Pandavas who are staying with King Virata and lectures them on the advisability of peace against war, stressing what is expected of spiritual aspirants. He admonishes Yudhishthira that karma (action) is a maya and leads one away from the Goal which can only be attained through jnana (knowledge). Thereupon Krishna flares up and corrects him).

You hymned inaction as the end of wisdom.
But tell me: would not such a perilous gospel
Lead to a stagnation? Who would find on earth
The last clue to life's goal through mere inaction?
Teaches not all experience that action yields
Fruitful harvests which could never accrue
Were we all to sink in deep inaction's slough?
Some claim, indeed, that man can only arrive
When, shunning all activity, he treads the path
Of knowledge alone. But have you ever met
A man, however wise, whose thirst on earth
Was appeased through the perfect stillness of inaction?
Nay, my dear friend, and so we find in our world
That even the Illuminates are urged to action.

And then reflect: why have the sages praised
Learning? Because it leads to a deep fulfilment
Through action and so we laugh at pedantry
That, quoting scriptures, stays ever in its prison
Of shibboleths. Know: only action can
Supply our urgent hungers which must dog
Even the man of knowledge. And so we find
That the highest sages all enjoin right action
Guided by knowledge, and discerning men
Condemn that barren gospel which extols
Pale knowledge divorced from dynamic action.

Friend, read the Book of Life for the lesson it teaches:
Winds spread their message of joy because they blow.
The sun brings day, alternating with night,
Because of sleepless movement. So the moon
And stars and planets bring to bear their deep,
Beneficent influence because of motion.
Could fire ever fulfil its godlike function
Were it to cease to will to glow and shed
Delightful warmth? Behold: our mother earth
Yields fruits and flowers and corns and sustains life,
Moved by the unflagging energy of her love.
Rivers appease the thirst of sentient creatures,
Transforming arid tracts into fertile fields,
Because they flow on ever pauselessly.
The clouds dissolve in healing, fecund showers
To fulfil their mission of mercy. And lastly, know
Even the high Gods earned the title to reign
In the radiant Heaven because they had first attained
Their envied Godhood through an arduous
Discipline of stupendous aspiration

— Mahabharata, Udyoga Parva, Canto 29 P.

A Voyager

By
Harindranath Chatopadhyaya

A weariness hath come into mine oar,
The ruddy day is deepening round my sail;
Black storm-clouds in my heavens brood no more,
No more the thunder-crack and lashing gale.

My lonely boat is resting on the deep
Laden with one high dream of coming dawn:
Under its keel the waters lie like sleep,
Their restless and dishevelled waves withdrawn.

O Mystery of peace! no sense of stir,
No foolish haste, nor need for hollow speech;
All suddenly the anxious voyager
Seems to have reached a shore beyond his reach!

The darkness comes self-kindled, star by star,
Leaving for him nor sense of Near nor Far.
THE MAHARSHI AND THE MAHATMA

By

K. ARUNACHALAM

This happened in the summer of 1932.

I was working in those days with a group of young men in the slums of Bangalore under the leadership of Brahmachari Ramachandra. He suggested that I should visit Sri Ramana Maharshi on my way back from Madurai. I had been to my village in Madurai district for a brief visit and I was returning to Bangalore to resume my work in the Gandhi School run by the Deena Seva Sangh, Tiruvannamalai — the abode of the Maharshi is not on my regular route. So I had to go to Villupuram and change trains. Tiruvannamalai is a midway station on the Villupuram-Katpadi line. I got down at the Tiruvannamalai station and went to the famous Arunachaleswarar Temple.

To my surprise I found there a Sanyasi spinning on the charkha in one of the mandapams within the precincts of the temple. I stood in front of him for a considerable long time. Spinning was common in those days. Anyone who was politically conscious spun either with a charkha or with a takli. But for one who has renounced the joys and sorrows of the world in favour of God realization to be spinning was something beyond my comprehension. Further, this sanyasi dressed in khadi gerua cloth was using a pedal-charkha. And that was why I stood in front of him in great amazement. Later on I came to know that this sanyasi was one of the disciples of the Maharshi.

After a while I made enquiry about Ramana Ashram. This institution solely built around the Maharshi was not as famous then as it grew to be in the forties and thereafter. I was shown the way. I walked along the road under the shadow of the hill — Arunachaliam.

I reached the Ashram and met the person in charge of arrangements. He showed me a place where I could keep my things and stay. After the necessary formalities and they were simple enough, I entered the hall in which the Maharshi was seated on a sofa. In another corner of the hall there was a cupboard on top of which I saw an eighteen inch high statue of Mahatma Gandhi (with a khadi yarn garland). I sat in front of the Maharshi along with several others. Some of the devotees were seated in ardha-padamasa in meditation. A few were reading silently some religious literature. The Maharshi himself was in samadhi. Some were reciting slokas in a soft melodious tone. On the whole the atmosphere was an elevating one.

I sat in silence for hours together. When it was time for the night meal all the devotees got up and walked towards the adjoining dining hall. I also went with them. The hall was divided by a cloth curtain.
the other side of the curtain some of the orthodox devotees sat for their meal. On this side were all the non-orthodox. The Maharshi sat in a place visible to one and all. For he did not differentiate between man and man. This was a great lesson to me. After the meal some of us went back to the hall and sat there. Occasionally the Maharshi would say something which was not quite audible and the scribe sitting by his side would write it down. I decided to sleep in the hall as some others did. I could not sleep because I was inquisitive to know what the Maharshi would do. He got up from the sofa at 3 O'clock in the morning and walked towards the tank. After ablutions he had a dip in the pond. He changed his khadi kaupeenam (loincloth) and washing the used one let it dry outside. After doing all this, he walked back into the hall and sat as usual on the sofa. Sometimes he reclined on the sofa and dosed off. Early in the morning the Maharshi got up, went into the kitchen and joined the group that was cutting up vegetables. He supervised the breakfast and ate with the visitors and ashramites.

During the day time there was a stream of visitors who went near the Maharshi and prostrated before him. Sometimes he opened his eyes and blessed them with a smile. Occasionally he spoke a few words. When the daily newspaper arrived it was placed near him. He glanced through the pages and put it aside. Most of the time his eyes remained half closed. There was a calm peace in the whole environment that surpassed all understanding. I sat silently watching and enjoying the holy presence of the Maharshi. After spending full three days like this, I wanted to take leave of the Maharshi and go to Bangalore. I was waiting for an opportunity.

The Maharshi opened his eyes. I got up and prostrated myself before him and requested him to clear a doubt of mine. He showed his willingness by a broad smile. Taking courage I posed the following problem: "The Maharshi by his example directs his followers to keep quiet, but Mahatma Gandhi whose statue is here, by his own example, goads everyone to be continuously active. I am puzzled as to whom to follow." The Maharshi's face broadened with an unparalleled smile. He asked, "Who told you that I am sitting quiet?" I replied in all humility that I had seen with my own eyes. He said, "Why do you think that what you are seeing with your physical eyes is the truth?" I had no answer for this question.

Once again I repeated the question as to whom to follow? Then he enquired about what I was doing. I gave him an idea of the slum-settlement work in Bangalore and told him how we were intensively engaged in Harijan uplift and prohibition work. He blessed the work and asked me to continue the work in the manner in which Mahatma Gandhi wanted such work done, i.e. with great devotion and detachment. I was given a set of Ashram publications to be used by the workers. I asked the Maharshi for his autograph. He did not agree but he wanted the Sarvadhipathi who was standing near by to write my name. When I gave him my name without initial, he asked for my father's name. The Maharshi immediately said, "How can Arunachalam have a father?" and he laughed.

I stood in his presence for how long I don't know. When I regained my conscious-
ness I took leave of him and left for Ban­
galore.

In 1951-52 I was in the U.S.A. In my
Tour of the Southern States I came into
touch with a group of whites who were
deeply involved in the desegregation move­
ment. They did not differentiate between
man and man, whether black or white.
I found in the study of the leader of this
group a photo of Sri Ramana Maharshi
whom he had never seen. He revealed that
it was Maharshi’s teaching that was a driv­
ing force in all his activities undertaken for
bringing about equality between the two
races—the Whites and the Negroes. He
evinced a deep interest in the Maharshi’s
mode of self-enquiry for self-realization.
Now I understood the true import of the
Gita Teaching: “He who sees inaction in
action and action in inaction is wise among
men; he is a yogi, who has accomplished all
action.”

Garland of Guru’s Sayings

90. When one quests inward for the
Knower,
The knowing ego and the knowledge
 gained
Are both erased and one abides
As pure being.
One who has an ego still
Because he has not seen the Self,
How can he be called an adept?

91. Learning to forget completely
All knowledge gained of objects,
Turn firmly inward and behold
Clearly the truth and stay serene.
Those who recollect forgotten things
Pine bewildered, fretting over
False phenomena.

92. Poor fellow, proud of your omniscience,
When questioned, “you who know all
things,
Do you know who You are?”
You tremble and collapse discomfited.
Let this your ego-mind,
O man of genius,
Turn to dust and perish utterly.

93. He who, his ego gone, knows through
and through
“I”, the First Person, subject sub­
stanive,
Combined with “AM”, the predicate of
being,
He indeed and he alone is the true
knower.

94. Books of guidance all prescribe
Freedom from thought as the best way
To final freedom. This being known,
The heart of every art, of what avail
Are all the arts?

95. The burden of the arts upborne
By folk who dally in fleeting flesh
Fails to bring grace, tire out the ego
Or draw one inward to the Heart.
What better purpose does it serve
Than the goat’s ever-restless beard?

96. Unless by one means or another
Mind dies out and certitude
From true self-recognition comes,
The knowledge which mere learning
brings
Is no more real than a horse’s horn.
"Can you give me the secret of your life in three words?", a distinguished American journalist is said to have asked Mahatma Gandhi.

"Yes," came the smiling reply. "Renounce and enjoy!"

Gandhi was quoting from the Isha Upanishad which gives us in three Sanskrit words, tena tyaktena bhunjetha, the supreme secret of how to live in abiding joy and unshaken security. The same answer was given by Sri Ramakrishna when he was asked by his disciple to sum up the central teaching of the Bhagavad Gita. "Try repeating gita, gita, gita over and over again and it becomes tagi, tagi, tagi." Tagi is a form of the Sanskrit word tyagi, which is derived from the root tyaj meaning to renounce.

The English word renounce has a cold, callous sound about it, and it is not very surprising if most of us tend to look with suspicion upon anyone who counsels us to renounce. We immediately jump to the conclusion that these great mystics who advocate renunciation are asking us to renounce life, comfort and culture, love and light. This is entirely due to a misunderstanding of the mystic's message. We are so enmeshed in selfish attachments that we have lost the right perspective towards life.

Jesus tells us in words that cannot be misunderstood. Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it. (Luke 17:33). Living on the ego level as a feverish little fragment is, to Jesus, losing one's life: and going beyond all fragmentation to reach oneself is, to Jesus, preserving one's life. In the first case we are clinging to appearance; in the second, we are established in Reality. It is the shadow we renounce to enjoy the substance. The Isha Upanishad points out, In the heart of all things, of whatsoever there is in the universe, duels the Lord. He alone is the Reality. Wherefore, renouncing vain appearances, rejoice in Him. It is appearance we renounce for the sake of attaining Reality.

None of us see life as it is, the world as it is. We all see life as we are. I am looking at others through my own likes and dislikes, prejudices and prepossessions, desires and interests. It is this separatist outlook that fragments life for us—man against man, community against community, country against country. If only we could throw away this fragmenting instrument of observation called the ego, the great mystics assure us, on the strength of their own experience, we shall see all life as an indivisible whole.

Clinging to our I-ness and my-ness prevents us from revealing our true state. The word personality, as we know, comes from the Latin persona meaning a mask, and all that we have to do in life to find abiding joy and unshakable security is to throw away this ego mask called ahankara in Sanskrit.

Sri Ramakrishna was fond of relating the story of the man who was hugging a thorny cactus with all his might, bleeding profusely and crying out in agony, "Help me. Help me."

"Stop hugging the cactus." Sri Ramakrishna would advise him, "and you are free."

It is all very easy to say, "Stop hugging the cactus," but how is it possible for us to do it when we are conditioned on the material, physical, mental and intellectual levels to believe that the cactus is our most precious possession? This is the hypnotic
spell called \textit{maya} in Sanskrit, and the fall in the Judeo-Christian tradition. As declared in the \textit{Svetasvatara Upanishad},

\begin{quote}
Thou, Brahman Immortal,
And thou, woven of clay
(Two beings, yet one) —
Like two beautiful birds,
Golden of plumage,
Companions inseparable,
Perched high upon the branches
Of the selfsame tree —
As man thou tastest
The sweet fruits of the tree,
The sweet and bitter fruits;
But as Brahman, master of Maya,
Thou remainest unseen,
Immobile,
Calmly observing,
Forgetting his oneness with Thee
Bewildered by his weakness,
Full of sorrow is man;
But let him look close on thee
Know thee as himself,
O Lord, most worshipful,
And behold thy glory —
Lo, all his heavy sorrow
Is turned to joy.
\end{quote}

In other words, it is only by renouncing our ego that we can live life at its richest and fullest. This renunciation can be learned slowly and skillfully on all levels, drawing upon the spiritual power released every day through the practice of meditation. Meditation clears the eyes and strengthens the will to discover the indivisible unity of life and live in complete harmony with it. It is one thing to repeat like a parrot, “All life is one, all life is one,” and it is an entirely different thing to perceive it and practise it in daily living. This is beyond the capacity of our normal modes of knowing, but through meditation we can slowly but surely bring about the total unification of consciousness. When we are united within we are able to see everywhere the indivisible unity that is the Divine Ground of existence.

Nearly two thousand years ago Jesus the Christ taught us that the Kingdom of Heaven lies within — that the source of all joy, of all security, of all fulfilment is ever-present in the depths of our consciousness. Forgetful of this timeless truth given to us by Jesus we have let ourselves be hypnotised by sales slogans of the anonymous advertising copywriters whom the late Aldous Huxley called the apostles of modern civilization. They keep on dinning into our ears through television and radio, newspapers and billboards, that the Kingdom of Heaven lies outside us:

\begin{itemize}
\item “Get more funds out of life.”
\item “Happiness is a split-level home.”
\item “One taste and you are ours for keeps.”
\item “A diamond is forever.”
\item “Life at sea is like nothing on earth.”
\end{itemize}

Thus we become dependent on things for our security and status, and every dependency brings with it an element of anxiety and apprehension of losing it. Our cars, homes and clothes may come to own us if we depend upon them for status and security. Without a certain amount of detachment it is not possible to use material possessions wisely. Many people who would otherwise walk have become lethargic and use their cars to go to the corner drugstore or the mailbox, thus depriving their bodies of exercise necessary for maintaining good health. Commuters travelling at a mile a minute, morning and evening, do not realize for a long period the toll that speed is taking on our nervous systems. Holiday crowds helplessly driven by high-powered cars cause more deaths on the freeways than are caused on the battlefield. The automobile, which is a valuable servant of mankind when used wisely, has become a violent master.

Our body, too, is a compact car, delicate and complex, which needs to be treated with great respect and intelligence so that it will give us long and loving service, not only in the prime of life but even in what are called the declining years. As a young man walking with Mahatma Gandhi, then in his seventies, I had a hard time keeping pace with him. He has said that his capacity for work was three times as much at this stage as in the days of his youth before he had learned to treat his body with great respect and intelligence. The pressure of constant and colossal responsibility did not prevent
him from falling asleep like a baby repeating the Holy Name of Rama. He showed respect for his body by giving it only nourishing and necessary diet, regular exercise in the form of walking and early bedtime. He always chose what was beneficial to his body rather than what was pleasing to his palate.

Just as the body is our external instrument which has to be treated with great respect and intelligence for efficient use, similarly the mind is our internal instrument which calls for even more tender and skilful care because it is much more powerful and much less tangible. It, too, receives food through the eyes and ears in the form of literature, art, music and the spoken word. Even those who are so careful about ensuring the proper supply of proteins and vitamins in the diet, and pasteurizing milk, often fail to take elementary precautions against the consumption of poisonous mental food. We are told by a prominent educationist that much of the violence we witness around us today can be directly traced to twenty thousand hours of TV violence to which most young people have been exposed in the last twenty years. If only these twenty thousand hours had been utilized for bringing home the truth that violence is the negation of the indivisible unity of life and of individual fulfillment, they would today be making a rich and lasting contribution to their family, country and the world.

Furthermore, we need to detach ourselves from our opinion even to evaluate them and present them effectively. If our opinions cannot stand the impartial scrutiny of others, it is good for us to reconsider them. Too often our 'convictions' are the rationalization of childhood associations which do not permit us to see the situations clearly or act maturely because of intense emotional involvement. If we can detach ourselves in good measure from our pet opinions, we shall be able to bridge the widening communication gap between parents and children, husband and wife, employer and employee, community and community, nation and nation.

What the Isha Upanishad asks us to renounce is our self-will, our separateness, our my-ness, which is the cause of all our suffering. The Buddha calls it tana, the fierce thirst of the ego.

Whosoever this fierce poisonous thirst overcomes in the world his sufferings increase like the abounding Bhringa grass. But from him who overcomes this fierce thirst, difficult to be conquered in this world, sufferings fall off, like water-drops from a lotus leaf.

Too often commentators have misplaced the emphasis on renounce rather than on enjoy. Renunciation opens the door to Perfect Joy. Listen to the song of the Taittiriya Upanishad, Who could live, who could breathe, if that blissful Self dwelt not within the lotus of the heart? He it is that gives joy.

The Self is all. Are you apart from the Self? Or can the work go on without the Self? The Self is universal: so, all actions will go on whether you strain yourself to be engaged in them or not. The work will go on of itself. Thus Krishna told Arjuna that he need not trouble to kill the Kouravas; they were already slain by God. It was not for him to resolve to work and worry himself about it, but to allow his own nature to carry out the will of the Higher Power.

— Sri Maharshe
THE GREAT EVENT

By

R. NARAYANA IYER

The following script was written by the author just a few months after the Nirvana of Sri Bhagavan and has been with us for a long unpublished. Though written years back, we hope it would interest readers as an outpouring of an old devotee containing fresh memories and a vivid portrayal of his emotions. The 19th Aradhana of the Brahmanirvana of our Master was celebrated on the 14th April 1969.

"BEFORE some stars appear, light appears. After they vanish from vision light alone remains. That is the state of a jnani — his birth and death." These were the words of Sri Bhagavan in a talk about Jnanis. The exact import of the words is as puzzling as the strange phenomena that occurred on the 14th April, 1930 and passed vividly before our eyes. It was about a quarter to nine at night. I was sitting in the open space in front of my house facing east. The sky was clear, the air still. A grave and subdued solemnity pervaded the atmosphere as though reflecting the anxiety of so many sincere devotees of the Maharshi who had come to Tiruvannamalai on account of his illness.

Suddenly a bright and luminous body arose from the southern horizon, slowly went up and descended in the north somewhere on Arunachala Hill. It was not a meteor as it was bigger than what Venus looks to our vision, and its movement was slow. It was so lustrous that as it was at the zenith the light shed by its trail stretched as far as the horizon like an arc. The sight dazzled me. Instinctively as it were I jumped to my feet and ran as fast as I could to the Ashram a hundred yards off. There was a crowd of people moving about and quite a hustle and bustle. It didn't strike me to enquire of anyone what it was about. Access to the Maharshi was naturally then select and restricted to a few. I cared not for the Ashram rules and regulations, but like a tethered calf let loose and running to its mother, I took a short cut, jumped into the garden, scaled the parapet and rushed into the room where the Maharshi, Bhagavan, my Ramana, Guru, Father, God in flesh and blood was lying.

Lo! My heart thumped. Breath choked. He was no longer in the flesh and blood. He had just breathed his last. As the star descended on the Hill, he had left the body. It was held in Padmasan position by the attendants. I touched the body. There was no warmth. I clasped in frenzied hold the hand, the mere touch of which used to give the thrill of eternity. Coldness of death frenzied my nerves. All was over like a dream. Sobs and hymns and chantings filled the air, and my head reeled with dizzy thoughts. We will no longer see our dear Bhagavan in that beautiful form of molten gold, in which he charmed and enchanted us for decades! We will no longer see those compassionate eyes that gleamed like twin stars and peered into our innermost depths and dispelled the shadows that blurred our vision and understanding! No more that kind and godly look of Grace that soothed our wearied souls and inspired our depressed hearts in speechless silence with peace unbounded, or that bewitching and enchanting radiant smile that fascinated us and drew us to him to heights of bliss, far far above this world. No more could we hear that sweet and ringing voice, the talks of sparkling wit and humour, or those words of profound wisdom from the depths of deep realization which intellect could not

1Introduced to our readers in The Mountain Path, Jan, 1968 issue, p. 63.
Ten days before the "Great Event".

fathom! Tears gushed forth from my eyes as from a fountain. "Roll! Roll! You beads of Love, from the fountain of Love to the Ocean of Love!" It is not fruit and flowers, nor sweets and savoury dishes that can be offered at Thy feet any more. The only oblation that would reach Thee are tears of love from that perennial spring that is the core of our Being of which you are the source in your disembodied fullness. The Divine Leela is over.

So His Leela (play) was really over on that momentous fourteenth day of April, 1950. No one was kept in doubt or suspense or taken by surprise. It was a prolonged ailment, and abundant opportunity was afforded to one and all from far and near to come and see him. It was one of the worst maladies that could afflict the human frame, and the way he bore it was an object lesson to all. Not once did his face reveal agony or suffering, but he carried on the normal routine with his majestic smile of supreme bliss in his face, and the mirthful repartees and sallies of wit. It was also plain that he used no mysterious yogic or superhuman powers to alleviate or conquer pain as the following remark he made about the disease would show: "Appah! Who could conceive that such a disease as this, could be in this world? When a hiccough comes the whole body splits like the flashes of lightning in a cloud!" This remark was made by him in such a cool and composed way as though it was not his body that was suffering.

We must go out of ourselves entirely to God, for it is better to belong to Him than to ourselves, and thus God can give Himself to those who abandon themselves to Him.

— Pseudo-Dionysius, 'The Divine Names'
SYMBOLISM IN THE LIFE OF SRI KRISHNA—2

By Dr. W. Radhakrishnayya

(The first part in this series was published in our July 1968 issue)

The next day Kamsa convened a meeting of the council of his ministers and reported to them what Maya had told him, namely that his enemy had escaped their vigilance. The ministers thereupon undertook to destroy without any discrimination brahmins, sages, Vedas, sacrifices and cows and stop the practice of truthfulness, austerities, control of the senses and the mind, sincerity, kindness, etc., since these formed the body of the Supreme Being. They thought that if these were destroyed the Supreme Being would be destroyed. Little did they know that by this decision they were inviting their own downfall.

Now at the Gokula all the festivities connected with the birth of the child had ended. Nanda, therefore, went to Mathura to pay the annual taxes due to Kamsa. At this time Pootana, a demoness and agent of Kamsa, was visiting village after village and killing all newborn children, hoping that among these might be the would-be destructor of Kamsa. Assuming the form of a beautiful woman she entered the house of Nanda and, without so much as a formal request to anybody, took the divine child upon her lap and gave it her breast which had been smeared with poison. The child understood at a glance her vile intentions and in an instant sucked out not only the poisoned milk but also her life. The demoness fell down dead, stretching herself out in her real form which was almost as long as a street. Yasoda and Rohini who were looking on helplessly all the time now took the child away from that body and performed some propitiatory rites over it. Although her intentions were vile she had acted as a mother to the Lord. Therefore she attained liberation. For the Lord had declared that he would give shelter to all beings, especially those who surrender themselves to him, saying, ‘I am yours’. Kamsa symbolises the rajasic ego, his ministers the old record of vasanas, culminating in their evil advice. Pootana means purified body. The body of the demoness was pure though her mind had been poisoned by Kamsa. Her body became purified by the touch of the divine child.

The Pootana incident occurred when Nanda was away from the Gokula. Nanda returned and there was joy everywhere. To slay...
from the seat of ananda (joy) is samsara or pain.

In a few months the divine child began to crawl. Yasoda’s joy knew no bounds. She arranged for a feast to celebrate the event. In the midst of the festivities the child, felt hungry and kicked out his legs and thereby struck a cart laden with milk, curds, butter and many other things, which was standing nearby. The cart flew up into the air and then came down with a crash. At this Yasoda ran up and took the child to a safe place. She performed more acts of propitiation. Young children who were playing about told the elders that the cart had flown up kicked by the child, but they would not believe. This shows that the Supreme is not conditioned by limitations. It is omnipotent and capable of doing things which the mind cannot easily comprehend.

One day, as Yasoda was suckling the child, she felt it to be unusually heavy, as heavy as a mountain, and so placed it on the ground. She did not know that the weight of the three worlds was in its stomach. Another day a whirlwind swept over Gokula, blinding everybody with dust and sand. When the wind had blown over Yasoda looked for the child, but could not find it where she had left it. She became frantic, and swooned. The wind was the work of a demon named Trinavarta who had been sent by Kamsa to kill the child. He took the child up into the sky, but was unable to bear its weight. At the same time the child throttled him with its hands and the demon fell down dead with eyes protruding. The panic-stricken women again retrieved the child and took it to a place of safety. The divine child showed by this act that evil-doers would eventually be suitably punished.

On another occasion, when the divine child was sitting on Yasoda’s lap, it yawned, and then Yasoda saw in its little mouth the sky, the stars, the sun, the moon, the mountains, forests, rivers, seas and islands with living beings. She was naturally amazed. The vision, however, was momentary and soon she forgot all about it. The Lord was giving her a vision of the universe the weight of which she had experienced earlier. The world is Brahman. Having come out of Brahman it is no other than Brahman.

When the time for giving names to the children arrived, Garga, the family priest of the Yadavas, arrived at the Gokula. He had been specially sent by Vasudeva for giving names to them. Rohini’s son was named Balarama because of his immense physical strength (bala) and because he was very pleasing to the people (rama). He also came to be known as Sankarshana because he had been transferred from the womb of Devaki to that of Rohini. Yasoda’s son was named Krishna as he was of a bluish complexion, the colour of a dark rain-cloud. He was also known as Vasudeva because he was the
son of Vasudeva. Garga divulged the secret of the two children, namely that Krishna was really the Supreme Being and Balarama the symbol of the satvic ahankar (ego). The immense strength of the latter was not exhibited fully except occasionally. He was always in the background. The ego is powerless when the Self is shining as in the case of Krishna. Here it is not merely the physical strength that is implied. It is that inner strength through which physical strength becomes manifest. The satvic ego is both sweet (raraa) and powerful (bala).

A great man once said that it has the strength of four men because, when a man dies, it requires four or more men to carry him to the burning ground, while alive it can carry the entire weight by itself.

Krishna's complexion is blue like the blue of the endless sky or the boundless ocean. The Infinite is described as blue, because it cannot be fathomed by the senses and the mind. Krishna's complexion is thus symbolic of the Infinite. He is sometimes described as 'the blue boy of Brindavan'. The word Krishna comes from the root 'krish' which means to steal, and so Krishna may be called a thief. The Supreme Being is sometimes described in the Vedas as 'taskaranam pati' or the chief of thieves. A thief, while stealing, sees others but takes care that others do not see him. A thief may sometimes get caught, but the chief never. Krishna is famous for his boyish thefts. He is described as the butter-thief (makkan chor). He is also described as the stealer of the hearts of the Gopis, the simple women of Gokula (Gopi chitta chor). Butter is the mass of vasanas (latent impressions) collected by the Gopis every day. It is white, pure, soft, sweet and oily. It cannot be easily separated from the milk. It represents the hearts of the devotees where all the vasanas are stored. Every day Krishna steals this butter and makes the devotees free from vasanas and thus leads them to liberation or mukti. He steals from them against their will and this is symbolised by the breaking of the pots in which the butter is kept or emptying them. This is nothing but His grace. He does this only for the sake of his devotees. He steals the vasanas or sins and so destroys their chain of birth and death.

Vasudeva means more than the son of Vasudeva. The three worlds of waking, dreaming and deep sleep are permeated by His fragrance (vasana). He is the indweller of everything. Without His fragrance the three worlds of experience cannot become manifest. The fragrance is that of the Infinite.

Krishna and Balarama soon began to walk about. They were the attraction of the entire Gokula and were loved by everybody. They used to play with the calves, letting them loose out of milking-time and watching them with joy to the discomfiture of the elders. They and their friends would enter the houses in the Gokula in the absence of the inmates, steal the butter kept high up in pots and break the pots if they were not easy to reach. When the women tried to catch them they eluded them easily. When they went to Yasoda to complain about Krishna they found him sitting on her lap as if nothing had happened and the women had to return without making a complaint, unsure of their evidence. He used to show His omnipresence in this manner. The Gopis could not understand His grace in the form of stealing their accumulations and making them empty, thus giving Him a chance to fill in.

One day Balarama and the other boys came to Yasoda complaining that Krishna had eaten mud. When Yasoda asked him if it was true he calmly replied: 'Mother, am I a child to eat mud? These boys are lying. You can see for yourself by looking into my mouth.' Saying this he opened his mouth in which Yasoda saw the entire universe and even the Gokula containing herself and all other persons. She began to wonder, 'Is this a dream or a delusion of my mind or is it the divine maya? ' She then mentally surrendered herself to the Supreme Being admitting her inability to understand the vision. Thereupon Krishna caused her to forget completely everything
she had seen. He pitied her for looking upon Him as her child. Even the Vedas and the Upanishads are not able to say definitely who He is.

One day, while Krishna was suckling, Yasoda had to suddenly leave him and run up to remove the milk-pot from the stove as the milk was boiling over. At this Krishna got angry. He took a churning stick and broke with it the pot of curds that stood nearby and then went to take the butter kept in another pot. When Yasoda returned and saw all the mischief she wanted to punish him by tying him with a rope. One rope was just an inch short to go round his body. She tied it to another, but that was also as much too short. All the ropes she brought were all together too short to go round his body. At last Krishna took pity upon her and allowed himself to be bound. Yasoda tied him to a large wooden mortar and left him. But he slowly dragged the mortar into the garden and got it entangled between two tall trees which stood close to each other. He pulled and the trees fell down. From the fallen trees emerged two celestial beings who had been cursed by the sage Narada to become trees on account of their unashamed conduct in his presence and had now regained their old forms by coming into contact with Krishna. It was foolish of Yasoda to think of catching Him who is formless and binding Him who is boundless. Even the sages have rarely succeeded in perceiving Him in their hearts.

(To be continued)

Path to Flame Celestial

**THE Maharshi was never tired of stressing the direct steep mode of Self-Realization.**

"Brahman is shining lustrously in the middle of the cave of the Heart in the shape of the Self always proclaiming 'I Am', 'I Am'. Become an Atmanishtha, a Self-realized person, either by making the mind absorbed in the search of the Self or by making the mind drown itself through control of the breath."

It may be asked if this can help all. It has been answered in all religions that there are many paths: "All paths are Thine."

The old, orthodox Hindu pilgrim still ascends the Seven Hills at Tirupathi by the roughest track. Others drive straight to the front of Lord Venkateswara's shrine.

The ultimate end is the same. The track lit by the Maharshi after his experience of death of the body is a unique one. It can be followed by people of all religions.

The thousands who came to the Maharshi to resolve their doubts, difficulties and almost despair, he would tell to look into their own selves, the true Self, and so be themselves. To the Maharshi there is no becoming, it is only a removal of the many curtains hiding the Flame Celestial, the Real Self.
IS there any significance in a dream or is it a mere phenomenon? was the question I addressed to Sri Bhagavan in writing, in my earlier days. In those times the subjects of 'guru and sishya', of 'initiation and diksha' were the foremost topics of general discussion. Does Sri Bhagavan give diksha to us and if not, why not? In earlier days the presence of Sri Bhagavan was sought above all by people who desired liberation. Our ambitious aspirations saw no bounds in the grace of his presence. My intense feeling was, that whether there was significance or not in all these dikshas and initiations, if Sri Bhagavan was to do it, it would be a blessing for me in any case. His pithy utterances then were very cryptic and yet have ever been pregnant with meaning, and power. "Who is the Guru? Who is the sishya? Who is to give and to whom? What is there to give? You think the 'Self' to be the body and take yet another body for the 'Guru' and demand of the one to bless the other. Is the 'Guru' regarding the body as the 'Self'? There is neither Guru nor disciple other than the 'Self'. Guru is Self."

Though convinced by his presence and utterances, there yet remained a lurking sense of something missing and unfulfilled. It was at that time that I had an extraordinary experience which left an impress on my whole being. It was neither a dream nor a waking state when this happened. I was perfectly alive to it and aware of the pervasion which was consuming and overpowering me. I described the following immediately in my note-book and later went to the Ashram. Reaching Sri Bhagavan's presence before dusk I left my note-book with him for his perusal. This was the record:

"18th November, 1936, 3-00 a.m."

It was an apparent dream. I was in a huge quadrangle of some college buildings. I was studying and suddenly I saw Sri Bhagavan had come down, youthful and vigorous in appearance, and had the impression that he was going to manifest himself and speak. Oh it was a wonderful sight, thousands of people gathered round at a distance encircling Bhagavan and perched on all walls, upper floors and any available space around. I saw Dandapani sitting at a distance echoing Sri Bhagavan's speech which was in turn echoed by another. It had never occurred to me that this would happen or that Sri Bhagavan would ever come here and I who was at a distance could not stand the separation. I darted forward to Sri Bhagavan and embraced him with so firm a grip the like of which I have not the strength to do or achieve in physical consciousness. And Sri Bhagavan embraced me. In each others' embrace, we left the place. At once I found him in my house, I saw my mother more robust than she ever was in life, first welcoming Sri Bhagavan, 1

1Introduced to our readers in the issue of July, 1966, p. 299.
my father calm and unperturbed as he always was in physical life and my sister the same. Sri Bhagavan had a cold bath, myself pouring pots and pots of water over him. Then in a few moments he went up and down our house throwing us all in confusion, and asked me, pointing to my sacred thread and other things: 'What is all this! Now I say, throw, throw them away and I shall give you this' — He was holding in his hands a bunch of darba (kusa grass) and I did not perceive how it came into his hands. At first I hesitated for a moment to discard my sacred thread for 'kusa grass', but a moment's reflection made me surrender to his will and with all vehemence I tore off the sacred thread and flung it on the ground, to the dismay of my mother and perplexity of my father. Immediately Sri Bhagavan gave me two handfuls of kusa grass in 'horse-shoe' shape, and the moment I touched and received them a great serenity pervaded my entire being.

With courage and determination I looked up at Sri Bhagavan to ask him what all this was about? There was no answer but I saw Sri Bhagavan's form change into the shape of Sri Rama or Hanuman and tell me something that I could not catch. So I asked, 'who are you?' and the reply was 'I am Sri Rama, Sri Rama,' whereupon this vision disappeared and I saw Sri Bhagavan in its place. My mother began to cry aloud having lost her balance of mind by this time, and said: 'I will die, I will die, thinking I fell a prey to Sri Bhagavan's lures.' The mention of death caused irpressible laughter in me and Sri Bhagavan said at once: 'Yes, die; you should die.' When Sri Bhagavan said so, I turned round to my mother and with ferocity cried out, 'Yes, die, die.' She was rolling on the ground when Sri Bhagavan asked me: 'What is the earliest train to Bombay and the cheapest route?' He said he had to go there and to one or two more places and then go on a tour in the north. I was thinking how best to take Sri Bhagavan and go with him, when I felt completely awake and began to reflect on the event. Is there any significance or is it merely a phenomenon of Dream?

The following morning as usual I entered the Hall. Sri Bhagavan's welcome nod and penetrating look overwhelmed me, and even as I was half doing my obeisance he turned to the shelf beside him, took out the notebook and handed it to me. Immediately he began, 'Don't you know what Madhavan did? One day he was massaging my limbs. Leaving him to his job I reclined, closing my eyes. After some time I felt some variation in the friction, so I opened my eyes and saw him with head bent down clutching my feet in his hands. What are you doing? Nothing, nothing, he replied, resuming his task. He took it as diksha by the feet.' Immediately I said that I had had an unusual experience by Sri Bhagavan's touch, which stirred my being though in a dreamy condition and asked if initiation or diksha could be had this way also and whether these were real and effective regardless of the swarga state? Sri Bhagavan slowly spoke with short intervals of silent gaze: 'Jagrat and swarga are states that come and go. If these states are real they must be unchanging, permanent.'

Our real nature is constant being. It never changes. Be it 'upadesa' or 'diksha' the efficacy of the guru's influence or God's grace is not conditioned by the different states. The influence is an experience of being itself. Guru, God and Self are one and the same. So long as the Guru, God or the Self are deemed external, all upadesa, initiation and several dikhas mentioned have a relative meaning and significance. But 'Guru' is external and internal, and is the very 'Self'. Such influence is efficacious whether the experience is in the jagrat or swarga.

I experienced a descent of dynamic force into my being, flowing as it were from and through the sahasrara permeating downwards and downwards slowly to the heart-centre, and reaching the same, at which moment I felt apprehensive that my physical frame could not stand this penetration and impact any more, without jeopardy,
SPIRITUAL AND MORAL IMPERATIVES CONCERNING ACTION IN THE GITA

By
Dr. P. NAGARAJA RAO

The Bhagavad Gita is one of the great scriptures of the world and is translated into many Indian and European languages. It is one of the three source books for all the schools of Vedanta Philosophy. All the ancient acharyas, Sankara, Ramanuja and Madhwa and others, have commented on it. Many contemporary Indian savants have been inspired by this scripture. The Gita is a "little shrine" in that vast temple the Mahabharata, the great epic which depicts the theatre of the world. The valiant warrior Arjuna, convinced of the righteousness of his cause, as a last resort, gets ready for a war with his wicked cousins. He goes to the battlefield, in a chariot driven by his friend Krishna. On the battle field, he is overcome by sentimental pity and a strong reluctance to fight, so he refuses to do so. The Lord delivers the message of the Gita to him, to make him understand the righteousness of his cause, drive away his ignorance and despondency and makes him fight.

The message of the Gita is universal and not merely for Arjuna on the battle field. Arjuna is "the representative man, close friend and chosen instrument" of the Lord. It is a book teaching in a world of science and reason the art of spiritual life. It is universal in its scope, catholic in its outlook, and precise in its message; a layman's scripture. It is a book of exoteric and esoteric religion answering to the needs of all at their own level. The Gita does not expect the impossible from us. Its teaching is psychological and feasible as a way of life, making allowances for our human shortcomings and emotions. The Gita gives us the assurance of our freedom and possibility to rise above circumstances if we use our will and of the magnificent aid the Lord gives us in the form of His Grace. With these two factors, we are asked to battle with cruelty, injustice, mean motives and humiliating weaknesses.

Acharya Vinobha Bhave puts it in a verse:
"Brahman satyam jagat spurti jivanam satya sadhanam"

"Brahman is real, the world is a manifestation. Life is an experiment with truth." We are asked not to compromise with evil, nor give it quarter, or take flight from it, but face it in the spirit of a soldier-saint. The fundamental imperative of the Gita is:
"Yield not to this unmanliness, O Arjuna, for it does not become thee. Cast off this faint-heartedness." This imperative is the most important one among the sixty commands in the Gita which the Lord gives his disciples, not as a dictator but as an omniscient benefactor interested in setting right faltering humanity. The first injunction is a strong rebuke for all of us who falter out of weakness trying to excuse the neglect of our duty by pseudo detachment and feigned arguments in favour of inaction.

One has to fight to the utmost for the right cause, with a pure motive, in a right manner and hold firm to righteousness. In the hour of crisis, one must not sit with folded hands, and masquerade one's weakness and sentimentality as piety and love of peace. We must face the crisis in our life not by avoiding its issues or adopting another way of life. We must encounter evil without doing violence to our nature and yet transform life. The Gita insists on our giving battle to evil from where we are. Arjuna is the man who is deeply confused by his sentimental emotions. To him the Lord imparts clarity and light in the hour of darkness. The Gita's stress on svadharma is unequivocal in its appreciation and in the denunciation of those who go against their nature and adopt other's dharma (para dharma).

1. Parva VI, Ch. 25 to 42.
2. Ch. II, 3.
The first imperative is dedicated to strengthening man from within and in bringing clarity, vigour and understanding to confused minds. The late Lokamanya Tilak saw in this the essence of the Gita. All subsequent argumentation in the Gita proves it. In the eleventh chapter again Krishna exhorts Arjuna: “Therefore arise and gain glory, conquering the foes, enjoy a prosperous kingdom.” Again he exhorts: “Fight delivered from this fever (yudhyasva vigata jvarah).” The author of the Gita asks us not to become victims of our weakness, doubts, indecisions and cowardice. Krishna’s imperative has a tremendous redeeming power. The precise command of the Lord asks us to banish ‘weakness’. Swami Vivekananda exclaimed: “Know that all sins and all evils can be summed up in that one word ‘weakness’.” It is weakness that is the motive power in all evil-doing.

Religion is a force and a power, not mere form. It helps man in his effort to fight: his lower tendencies (vasanas) and bring to the fore his potential goodness. The author of the Gita asks us to live an active moral life. There is no “freedom from action”, but there is only “freedom in action”. Action done in a spirit of dedication to the Lord, without desire for its fruit, according to the behests of the scriptures, can liberate us. If we feel that the task of controlling the senses and following the path of jnana (knowledge) is too difficult we are counselled to practise the art slowly step by step. It is not impossible. Where there is a will there is a way. We are asked to emulate the mystics of the past. The author of the Gita asks us to live in the presence of God and dedicate all our activities to Him.

In the twelfth chapter Krishna admits the difficulties men experience in their sadhana. He says: “If a man is unable to restrain the mind and fix it on the Self alone, let him try to attain it gradually through practice; if that too is impossible, let him perform action in the spirit of service to the Lord; if that too is impossible then “Surrender to me” is the path. That is the final com-passionate message of the Gita. It is its crowning word and the sthulya (last) stotra, e.g. “Abandoning all duties, come unto me alone for shelter. Be not grieved, for I shall release thee from all evils.” This assurance is repeated in no uncertain terms. We have consciously to make ourselves a pliable instrument in the hands of the Lord. Vinobhaji in his Talks on Gita observes: “How does one become a flute in Krishna’s hand? ... To be a flute means to become hollow. But I am stuffed full with passions and desires. How then can music come through me? My tone is gruff. I am gross. I am filled with ahankara, the sense of ‘I’. I must empty myself of the ego. Only when I become free, altogether empty, will the Lord breathe through me. It is the bhakta that has the vision of God. The Lord says out of compassion for him; he gives the bhakta jnana, and destroys the darkness born of ignorance by the shining lamp of wisdom remaining within him.” The bhakta is protected on all planes: if there are difficulties they are warded off, if it is indigence, prosperity is ushered in, if ignorance, knowledge is imparted, if he seeks release from bondage, he is given moksha. To attain the Lord we are asked to practise the presence of God in all that we do and dedicate all our activities unreservedly to Him; That is the “strategic imperative”: “whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever you offer in sacrifice, whatever you give away and whatever you practise in the form of austerities, do it all as an offering to Me.” At all times remember me and fight.” Above all is the consoling assurance given to us by the author of the Gita: “Proclaim it boldly, O Son of Kunti, know for certain (pratijanihi na me bhakta prana~ syati). Nor is there any return for them to the world of samsara.”
ALL the sages of all the ages have told us, in a dozen different ways, both clearly and obscurely, that phenomenal (apparent) entities cannot attain or achieve 'enlightenment' for there is no such state or condition which is other than what such phenomena nominally ARE. Nor has any sage stated this obvious fact so simply and lucidly as Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi, nor perhaps more often.

But there seems to be an aspect of this eternal verity which has been left to us to clarify, a work which has been undertaken by none so patiently as by Douglas Harding, which is to point out that nothing can keep us in imaginary 'bondage' so firmly as our conditioned faculty of objectifying our phenomenal 'selves' and thereby obscuring our vision of what we are. In illustration let me simply refer to the professional or amateur extrapolaters represented by perfectly worthy young ladies whose personal ambition leads them to devote their youth to visualizing themselves as they imagine others see them, by becoming mannequins or film-stars, in which process there are relatively few hours of a day during which their minds are engaged otherwise than in making images of themselves as seen from outside. But men do it also, both young and old, in fact do not we all do it, if less continually; indeed are we not all conditioned to do it, even trained (or mistrained) to do it from infancy to old age?

Let us now glance from one extreme to the other: it is recorded of St. John that a devotee commissioned an artist to paint his portrait, and when it was executed the Saint asked permission to see it. He looked at it
in amazement and exclaimed, "Do you really mean that what you see when you look at me is like that?" He lived noumenally, i.e. from within, and had never bothered to think of how his persona, or 'mask', appeared to others. To-day, with all our mirrors, shaving, hair-doing, etc., we cannot live quite like St. John, nor should it be necessary, however desirable, but we can perceive the problem, realize its importance, and readjust our habitual angle of vision; which is to say that we can abandon, gradually or suddenly, our conditioned habit of looking — and so of living — from the wrong direction.

This is, of course, very simple — as the truth must be and so always is, since it is what we are and therefore ' nearer' than conditioned falsehood. Instead of habitually extrapolating (making a fanciful picture seen from outside) of what we suppose to be ourselves, we need only desist and so be free to re-integrate what, absolutely, we must be and are. This implies, superficially, ceasing to go out of ourselves psychically in order to make an object of what we think we are, and, instead, to be satisfied to perceive from within, which is, after all, where whatever-we-may-be must be our centre.

Then, from 'here', and not from 'there', we can 'appercieve', which means 'mind looking at itself'; and this is noumenal living and opens the door to the state of grace in which the saints and sages found that they were not different from Godhead.

To saints and sages, of course, these things could not matter, which is to say that then they no longer matter, for from whole or noumenal mind no thing matters, since no 'thing' can be other than an image in a mind divided into subject-and-object, neither of which dual elements has any being as such. 'Things' are concepts extended conceptually in 'space-time', and each has its interdependent counterpart, forever positively apart, and forever negatively undivided in mind which is 'whole', which means 'healed' as well as 'holy' (wholly having lost its 'w' in the wash).

But for us who have not yet realised, or even perhaps understood, that potentially we are, because we must be, saints-and-sages, may it not be a good idea to stop eternally extrapolating our supposed 'selves' and, instead, to re-integrate what quite certainly, and also quite obviously, we then remain, and which is, with equal certainty, what we ARE?

You must look after and guide yourself, as in the future there will be no more teachers. A new era has begun in which the pure doctrine of the Lord Buddha lies in the hands of individuals; each one is separately responsible, for I do not think we can carry on in the way we have done up till now. We can no longer rely on groups and communities.


O Lord God, when shall I be made one with Thee and be molten into Thy love, so that I wholly forget myself? Be Thou in me and I in Thee, and grant that we may so abide, always together in one.

— Thomas a Kempis, The Imitation of Christ.
1. The knowledge of the Self is the fire that burns up the dry grass of desire. This indeed is what is called samadhi, not mere abstention from speech.

2. He who realizes that the whole universe is really nothing but consciousness and remains quite calm is protected by the armour of Brahman; he is happy.

3. The yogi who has attained the state which is beyond everything and remains always cool as the full moon is truly the Supreme Lord.

4. He who reflects in his innermost heart upon the purport of the Upanishads dealing with Brahman and is not moved by joy and sorrow, is not tormented by samsara.

5. Just as birds and beasts do not take shelter on a mountain of fire so also evil (thoughts) never occur to a knower of Brahman.

6. Wise men also, like foolish men, (occasionally) make others angry, (but they do so only) in order to test their ability to control their innate feelings (that is to say to see how far the anger of other person will affect on them).

7. Just as the trembling (of the body) caused by the (imaginary) snake persists (for some time) even after realizing that there is no snake, so also the effect of delusion persists (for some time) even after getting rid of all delusions.

8. Just as the crystal is not stained by what is reflected in it, so also a knower of truth is not really affected by the result of his acts.

9. Even while he is intent on outward actions (the knower of Truth) always remains introverted and extremely calm like one asleep.

10. Firmly convinced of non-duality and enjoying perfect mental peace, yogis go about their work seeing the world as if it were a dream.

1. Continued from our last issue.
11. Let death come to him (the knower of truth) today or at the end of aeons; he remains unblemished like gold buried in mire.

12. He may cast off his body at Kashi or in the house of an outcaste (lit. one who cooks dog's flesh). He, the desireless one, is liberated at the very moment he attains knowledge (of Brahman).

13. To one who is desireless the earth, O Rama, is (as insignificant as) the hoof-print of a cow, Mount Meru a mound, space as much as contained in a casket and the three worlds a blade of grass.

14. Like an empty vessel in space (the knower of Truth) is empty both within and without while at the same time he is full within and without like a vessel immersed in the ocean.

15. He who neither likes nor dislikes the objects seen by him and who acts (in the world) like one asleep, is said to be a liberated person.

16. He who is free from the knots (of desires) and whose doubts have been set at rest is liberated even when he is in the body (jivan mukta). Although he may seem to be bound he is free. He remains like a lamp in a picture.

17. He who has easily (lit. as if in sport) cast off all his egoistic tendencies and has abandoned even the object of meditation, is said to be liberated even when he is in the body.

18. He who does not, like one blind, recognize (lit. leaves far behind) his relatives, who dreads attachment as he would a serpent, who looks upon, sense-enjoyments and diseases alike, who disregards the company of women as he would a blade of grass and who finds no distinction between a friend and foe, experiences happiness in this world and the next.

19. He who casts away from his mind all objects of perception and, attaining perfect quiescence, remains still as space, unaffected by sorrow, is a liberated man; he is the Supreme Lord.

20. The noble-hearted man whose desires of the heart have come to an end is a liberated man; it does not matter whether he does or does not practise meditation or perform action.

21. The idea of Self in the non-Self is bondage. Abandonment of it is liberation. There is neither bondage nor liberation for the ever-free Self.

22. If, by perceiving that the objects of perception do not really exist, the mind is completely freed (from those objects), there ensues the supreme bliss of liberation.

23. Abandonment of all latent tendencies is said to be the best (i.e. real) liberation by the wise; that is also the faultless method (of attaining Liberation).

24. Liberation is not on the other side of the sky, nor is it in the nether world, nor on the earth; the extinction of the mind resulting from the eradication of all desires is regarded as liberation.

25. O Rama, there is no intellect, no nescience, no mind and no individual soul (jiva). They are all imagined in Brahman.

26. To one who is established in what is infinite, pure consciousness, bliss and unqualified non-duality, where is the question of bondage or liberation, seeing that there is no second entity?

27. O Rama, the mind has, by its own activity, bound itself; when it is calm it is free.

When all the senses are stilled, when the mind is at rest, when the intellect wavers not — then is known, say the wise, the highest state.

— Katha Upanishad.
1969

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Translated by Prof. G. V. KULKARNI and ARTHUR OSBORNE

Arjuna said:

What is the nature—pure or passionate or dull (sattvic, rajasic or tamasic)—of those, O Krishna, who giving up the ordinances of the scriptures worship (offering sacrifices, giving gifts, etc.) with faith?

(This question arises out of the statement of the Lord in verse 24 of Chapter XVI.)

2

Sri Bhagavan said:

Faith, which is inborn in embodied beings, is three-fold: pure, passionate and dull. Hear now about it.

3

The faith of everyone is according to his nature, O Bharata. Man is essentially endowed with faith. What his faith is, that indeed is he.

4

Those endowed with purity (or goodness) worship the gods; those (endowed) with passion worship Yakshas and Rakshasas.
(i.e. demons); and the dull ones full of ignorance worship corpses and hosts of spirits.

5-6 Those men who practise severe austerities not enjoined by the ordinances of the scriptures, being full of hypocrisy, egoism, desire and passion, tormenting all the senses in their bodies and ME as well presiding over their inner being, know them to be of demonic resolve.

7 The food as well, which is dear to all, is three-fold. So also is sacrifice, austerity and charity. Hear now their distinctions.

8 Food, which promotes longevity, vitality (or intelligence), energy, health, happiness and delight, which is delicious, bland, nourishing and agreeable is dear to the pure.

9 Food which is bitter, sour, saline, very hot, pungent, dry and burning and which gives pain, grief and disease is dear to men of passion.

10 Food, which is stale (or spoiled) and insipid, putrid, and polluted, left off by others and impure is dear to the dull.

11 The sacrifice, performed with rites ordained by the scriptures by persons who do not expect any fruit therefrom and performed with a sense of duty, with mind equipoised, is said to be pure.

12 Know that sacrifice to be of a passionate type which is performed, O best of the Bharatas, with a fruit in view and with a sense of self-importance (or for the sake of display).

13 That sacrifice which is performed with rites ordained by the scriptures, in which food is not distributed, no hymns chanted, no sacrificial fees offered and which is done without faith, is known to be of the dull type.

14 Worship of the gods, Brahmans, teachers (or elderly persons) and the wise, purity, straight-forwardness, continence and non-violence—this is called austerity of the body.

15 Truthful, agreeable and beneficial words which do not annoy and the study of the scriptures are said to be austerity of speech.

16 Serenity, gentleness, silence, self-control and purity are said to be austerity of mind.

17 This three-fold austerity performed with utmost faith by persons harbouring no desire for its fruit is said to be pure (sattvic).

18 The austerity that is practised for glorification, honour and to gain respect and with ostentation, which is unstable and insecure is said to be passionate (rajasic).

19 The austerity that is performed with self-torture, out of a deluded understanding or for the purpose of injuring others is said to be of a dull type (tamasic).

20 The gift that is made without expectation of return, considering it as a duty, given at the proper place, at the right time and to a worthy person is known as pure (sattvic).
21

The gift that is made begrudgingly, with expectation of return or reward is known to be of a passionate type (rajasic).

22

The gift that is made to unworthy persons at an improper place and at the wrong time, with a feeling of contempt (or without proper ceremony) and without regard is declared dull (tamasic).

23

Brahman is declared to be three-fold—Aum—Tat—Sat. By this at the beginning were created the Brahmanas, the Vedas and the sacrifices.

('Aum' is the verbal symbol of Reality it is the highest Mantra and is the essence of the Vedas. 'Tat' is that transcendental Being which is beyond the world, the witness of all. It is Reality, Brahman. 'Sat' is defined in verses 26 and 27).

24

Hence the acts of sacrifice, gift and austerity as ordained by the scriptures start with the utterance of 'Aum' by the followers of the Vedas.

25

With the utterance of the word 'Tat' the various acts of sacrifice, austerity and gift by the seekers of liberation are performed without seeking recompense.

26

The word 'Sat' is used in the sense of reality and goodness. So also, O Son of Pritha, the word 'Sat' is used for a praiseworthy act.

Such as a marriage ceremony according to Brahma or any pure act according to Jnaneshwara.

27

Steadfastness in sacrifice, penance and gift is also expressed by the word 'Sat' and so is action done for its sake 'Sat'.

28

That which is offered in sacrifice, given in charity, performed as a penance and whatever is done (such as praise, homage, etc.), without faith is known as 'asat': O Son of Pritha; it is counted for naught in this as also in the next world.

Here ends the seventeenth chapter of the Bhagavad Gita entitled "The Yoga of the Division of the Threefold Faith".

"MAY MY SPEECH BE ONE . . ."

May my speech be one with my mind, and may my mind be one with my speech.

O thou self-luminous Brahman, remove the veil of ignorance from before me, that I may behold thy light.

Do thou reveal to me the spirit of the scriptures.

May the truth of the scriptures be ever present to me.

May I seek day and night to realize what I learn from the sages.

— Aitareya Upanishad.
THEVEDAPARAYANA

SRI SOOKTAM
(Hymn to SRI or the Goddess of Prosperity)

1. O Jataveda (Agni, Fire-god)! Bring unto me Lakshmi who resembles a doe of golden colour, who is adorned with garlands of silver and gold, delightful like the moon and abounding in riches.

2. O Jataveda! Bring unto me that Lakshmi who will not desert me so that I may obtain the gold, cows, horses and followers bestowed by her.

3. I invoke that Goddess of Prosperity who comes with horses in front and chariots in the middle and whose coming is announced by the trumpeting of elephants. May that Goddess of Prosperity come and bless me.

4. I invoke that Goddess of Prosperity whose nature is bliss, who wears a gentle smile, who is surrounded by gold on all sides, who is extremely benignant, lustrous and always contented. She makes (those who worship her) contented and is of the colour of a lotus and seated on a lotus.

5. I seek refuge (at the feet of) the Goddess of Prosperity who is bright as the moon, whose fame blazes like a fire in the world, who is adorned by the Devas and who is extremely generous. May my poverty disappear. I invoke you again.

6. O Goddess that art bright as the sun! That noble tree of thine known as bilva came into existence as a result of your austerities (tapas). May its fruits destroy my impurities of mind and outer features of poverty with thy grace.

7. May the friend of the Devas (Kubera, the Lord of Wealth who is a friend of Mahadeva or Siva) come to me with fame and wealth (lit. jewels). May he grant me who am living in this kingdom, fame and riches!

8. I shall (by your grace) destroy that distressing poverty, the first born in the form of hunger and thirst, (i.e. which prevents the advent of prosperity). Dispel from my house every form of want and insufficiency.
9. I invoke that Goddess of Prosperity, the controller of all beings, who is known by her fragrance, who is invincible, who is always full of wealth and fertility.

10. O Goddess of Prosperity! May we obtain the desires of our heart, our longings for food and milk products, and may we utter only truthful words. Let us attain glory.

11. O Kardama! Make her who was born to Kardama (i.e. to you) abide with me. Make the Goddess of Prosperity who is the mother (of the universe) and wears garlands of lotuses, dwell in our family.

12. Let the waters produce oily products (like butter) in my house. O Chiklita, dwell in my house and make the Goddess of Prosperity, the Divine Mother, also dwell in my family.

13. O Jataveda! Bring to me the extremely benign Lakshmi (another name for the goddess of Prosperity), red in complexion, who dwells in lakes and who possesses the moon's brilliance and gold in abundance.

14. O Jataveda! Bring to me the extremely benign Lakshmi of a golden complexion who dwells in lakes and who is resplendent like the sun and abounds in wealth.

15. O Jataveda! Bring to me that Lakshmi who will not forsake me and by whose grace I may obtain in plenty, gold, cows, women servants, horses and men servants.

16. He who is desirous of becoming prosperous should, after making himself pure and controlling his senses, make daily offerings of melted butter (in the fire). He should also repeat always the (above) fifteen stanzas.

17. O Thou whose face is like a lotus, whose thighs resemble the lotus, whose eyes are like a lotus and who is born of a lotus! Bless me. O Goddess with lotus eyes, so that I may attain happiness.

18. Thou who art extremely rich givest horses, givest cows, givest riches. May riches come to me O Goddess, who grantest all prayers.

19. O Mother of all beings, grant me sons, grandsons, wealth, grains, elephants, horses, goats, sheep, cows, chariots and long life.

19. We meditate upon Lakshmi, the supreme Goddess, the controller of all, brilliant as the sun and moon and fire.

20. By your grace may Agni grant us riches, may Vayu (the wind-god) grant us riches, may Surya (the sun god) grant us riches, may the Vasus grant us riches, may Indra and Brihaspati grant us riches, may Varuna grant us riches.

21. O Vainateya, drink the soma. Let the Destroyer of Vritra (Indra) drink the soma. Let the (other) gods who drink soma grant me riches (required for conducting the soma (sacrifice)).

22. The devotees (of the Goddess of Prosperity) who have earned religious merit are not affected by anger, envy, avarice or evil thoughts.

23. O Night covering the light, May the lightnings of the cloud in thy Heaven pour down! Let all seeds grow! Protect! Kill the Brahman-haters.

24. O Goddess who art fond of lotus, who belongeth to the highest order of women known as Padminis, who holdest a lotus in thy hand, who art seated on a lotus, whose eyes resemble the petals of a lotus, who art loved by the whole world and who pleasest the minds of all beings! Be pleased to place your lotus feet upon me.

25. May that Lakshmi born of a lotus and seated on a lotus, with full hips, eyes like the petals of a lotus, deep and round navel, bent with the fulness of her breasts, wearing bright upper and lower garments, bathed every day with water in golden and bejewelled pots by celestial elephants, with a lotus in her hand, ever dwell in my house with all auspicious qualities.
28. I worship Lakshmi, the daughter of the ocean of milk, the queen of Sriranga, whom all the celestial damsels serve, the sole seed and sprout (source) of the world, whose slightest look has endowed Brahma, Indra and he who wears Ganga (Siva) with the powers they now possess, the mother of the three worlds, she who was born of a lotus and is the consort of Mukunda (Vishnu).

27. May Lakshmi the possessor of Siddhis (supernatural powers), Lakshmi, the bestower of liberation, Lakshmi who grants victory and is Sarasvati, Lakshmi the Goddess of Prosperity, Lakshmi the grantor of boons, be always gracious to me.

26. I worship the Goddess of the world who holds in her hands the, noble ankusa (a weapon generally used by elephant-drivers) and a rope, whose hand has the pose of protection against fear, who is seated on a lotus, who is lustrous like ten million rising suns and who is the primal being.

29. Obeisance to Thee, O Goddess Narayani, Tryambika, who art the abode of all auspicious qualities, who art auspiciousness itself, who fulfilllest all the desires (of her devotees), who art the only refuge of every one.

30. We shall try to know the great Goddess. We shall meditate on the consort of Vishnu. May Lakshmi guide us!

31. May the Goddess of Prosperity grant me, her devotee, lustrous looks, longevity, good health, grains, wealth, cattle, many sons and a long life of a hundred years.
Posthumous Pieces: By Wei Wu Wei. Published by Hong Kong University Press, Hong Kong. Pages: xiv+232. Price: HK $ 25.

Wei Wu Wei is an adept in using the English language to carry the reader beyond the meaning of words, towards a direct understanding of Truth. "Posthumous Pieces" described by him as 'dead' are indeed very much alive so far as the student of vichara (enquiry) is concerned. They are sign-posts which encourage the pilgrim to take heart and proceed on this path. These pieces are not meant to be merely read but to be meditated upon, as part of one's sadhana.

Time and space are taken up for scrutiny and are found to have no objective reality. It is therefore concluded that the world of objects assumed to exist in space can have no objective reality either.

"The 'past' is a memory. The 'future' is a supposition. The 'present' is pasted before we can apprehend it." (p. 4)

What actual event can take place in such an imagined duration?

"The only 'present' therefore is presence and must necessarily be what we are. Such presence, then, is inevitably outside time and must be 'intemporality'." (p. 4)

"Nothing could be more obviously imagined than 'space' and 'time', yet people assume them to be permanent objective realities. Basic they may indeed be, but as the basis of an elaborate dimensional fiction." (p. 11)

This proves the Zen truth that there is not a thing from the beginning. How then is there to explain the existence of sentient beings and the world of their experience? These are mere concepts. The objective world and the subjects in it are all imaginations of the mind. The author tells us that space and time represent the primary or basic concepts. Space-Time holds in its bosom the entire cosmic phenomena.

"Why should we wage a war against objectivity? Because, it is the master-illusion of all mankind, called reason or ignorance, and has to be removed before Truth can emerge.

"Positivity is temporal and finite. Negativity is timeless and infinite. But neither exists otherwise than conceptually." (p. 41)

"Phenomena ARE 'mind'. All that is sensorially-perceived IS 'mind'; And we are the perceiving sentience. Sentence as such is phenomenal experience of 'mind'; And 'mind' means, and is, noumenon. The apparent existence of phenomena is the apparent existence of 'mind'. But we can only be conscious of 'mind'. When we become aware of our mental presence. Using the word 'I' to indicate our phenomenal absence." (p. 55)

Once objectivity is wiped out; Absolute Mind or Brahman comes into being. This is the mind of the jivan-mukta (one who is Liberated even while he is in the body). This state of Whole Mind is unknown to the ordinary man who always lives with a split mind, a mind which is accustomed to split experiences into subjects and objects.

"We have to split mind in order to dream. We have to split mind in order to live and to die. Let us stop splitting mind—and stay whole. One might be lonely in the absence of 'other'.

Unless 'one' were 'all' there could be no 'one'. Unless 'all' were 'one' there could be no 'all'." (p. 16)

The concepts of the mind are perceived by it as objective reality. Dreams bear testimony to this. But for this mysterious faculty of the mind, there will be no sentient beings, nor the world of their experience.

All metaphysical writings are only for making it clear that 'objectivity' is a fragment of the mind. Objectivity is only a concept of the mind.
The Mountain Path

July

and is therefore part and parcel of the mind and the mind is one, indivisible and Whole.

"We are conditioned to suppose that what we are is the presence of what is present, which is the absence of what is absent.

But when we apprehend what we are we find that what we are is the absence of what is present and the presence of what is absent." (p. 101)

"Absence of an entity to be enlightened or not to be enlightened is the double negative, of Shun Hui and all the Great Masters." (p. 159)

These intuitions of Wei Wu Wei strongly remind us of Zen Masters and Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi. The Maharshi said: "Ask yourself 'Who Am I?'". Wei Wu Wei puts it characteristically:

"There is only one question — and the asking is the answer." (p. 159)

The book bears the stamp of a writer who has a strong urge to express himself. This is what gives his writings a style, all his own.

Dr. T. N. KEBHADHWANI


This is an exposition of three Upanishads, i.e., Kena and Katha, by a senior monk of the Rama Krishna Order, Swami Ranganathananda, who is a profound scholar and an effective and persuasive speaker. The Sunday discourses he gave to crowded audiences at the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Calcutta, in 1962-63 are now published. Ganapati Muni claims that these were found by him to be Vedic metrical expressions. The English translation, which does justice to the original, makes the book accessible to a large circle of readers.

We are told in the introduction of Daivarata's mastery over the four Vedas. The commentator, Ganapati Muni (the Guru of Daivarata), says that in 1917, at the age of twenty five, Daivarata in a state of Samadhi began to utter words which he had to wait for fifty years before it "could be published". Ganapati Muni claims that these mantras (450 in all) were revealed to Daivarata on account of his 'having attained the supersight of a Rishi through Tapas' in Indian spiritual tradition, claims of Divine inspiration as well as God-realization are entertained and examined by qualified people.

The idea of a fresh revelation is as old as the Atharva Veda in the opening hymn of which there is a prayer to Vachaspati (Lord of Words) to come again with the revealed Word to 'come again with the Divine mind and bring joy'. "I may there be the sacred Vedic knowledge (sruta) in me — yes in me." (I, I, 2). We are reminded of the spiritual preparation through Tapas by the following: 'Strain my powers even here, as the string is strained between two ends of the bow.' (ibid.).
Apart from the religious, there may also be an intellectual approach to the book. From this point of view the most outstanding impression left by Chhandodhara is the firm hold of the author on the fundamentals of the Vedic concept of the Divine. These include the acceptance of the Divine both as the Unmanifest Absolute — formless, attributeless and sexless, and as Deva, a being of splendour, having form, attribute and sex, who manifests the Absolute on the relative plane through the glory of the phenomenal world. This has led to the identification in the Rgveda of a Deva with the Absolute (That—That —is Agni, is Aditya, is Vayu,' etc. YV.3.31), the identification of one Deva with all others (like Agni in RV. 3.1.), and the assertion that all Devas being identified with one Deva, become One in Him (as in AV. 1.34 where Savita is spoken of as the One and One alone, in whom 'all Devas become one').

As Daivarata fully accepts this Vedic concept in his hymns, his book may be taken as a creative commentary on the spirit of the Rg Veda, as it happens in the case of mantras in later Vedas which are repetitions of Rg Vedic mantras with a difference that explains the meaning intended by the earlier Veda. For example, the expression 'stand erect' (uttishthata) in the Rgveda (10.53.4) is changed into ‘be heroic’ (srigaaddhakam) in the Atharvaveda (12.2.29). Similarly in Daivarata's book, a half-line from the Rgveda, ‘inspires with her light’ (1.3.12), where light is a physical phenomenon with a symbolic significance, appears with the word ‘light’ substituted by ‘intelligence’ (Ch. Dars. 1.1.2). Further, in describing Savita he speaks of him as the immortal (amrita), indwelling One (antarnihita). And he calls Agni Purusha and Atman, and Sarasvati the Manifest Absolute (pratyaksham Brahma) in the language of the Upanishads. In the same manner Brahmanaspati (Lord of the revealed Word) is addressed as Brahma, Atman, Purusha and Indra.

It is pleasing to find that Daivarata has retrieved Vedic Indra from the degradation to which he has been subjected in the later mythology of the Puranas. Prayers like the following are very significant: 'I follow Him in practising Tapas with the help of OM. I seek Indra alone to obtain bliss' (same; Ch. Dar. 4.5). Except for his use of Upanishadic terms and occasional substitution of mythology for Vedic symbolism, the book is composed generally in Rgvedic language and imagery. He uses accented words and handles the Vedic Gayatri, Amruthubh, Trishthubh and Jagati metres fairly well. What strikes us in reading the stanzas is that there is no diminution in the intensity of his poetic capture from the beginning to the end. In terms of the analogy in the prayer of the Atharva Veda (‘I seek Indra alone’), his powers are fully strained like the strings between the ends of a bow.

We congratulate the sponsors of the publication of this rare modern book of sacred poetry on the success of their efforts. We are glad to know that Daivarata at 77 is quite active and two more of his books are in the press. We shall await their publication with interest.

A. C. Bose


According to the author who has already earned a name for himself by his first book 'Zen and Reality', which was a significant contribution to the present day philosophic thought, the confusion and conflict which one sees everywhere are merely the refection of the confusion and turmoil in the mind of the individual. Hence he appropriately given the sub-title to this book: 'The Battle within the mind'. Naturally, the first requirement in the world today, emphasises Robert Powell, is to tackle, not the many problems, but the problem maker. The book is a strong appeal to the conscience of the world—not to formulate the world—but to give up all the 'illusions' about the world, life and the society which we have all helped to build—in short, all the ideas which we have invented and to which we cling for the emotional security that has provided us for escape from the truth about ourselves. So, really nothing more is necessary for man to find peace within himself than that he surrender wholeheartedly to this truth—that he is mortal, vulnerable and totally nothing in the scheme of things. This does not mean mere resignation, but that we live it every moment of the day.

Having explained in his earlier book how Reality can only be discovered through self-knowledge, the author indicates certain pointers to the same truth in this work which, according to him, are to be found in J. Krishnamurti—whose approach to life is not only clear, simple and unambiguous, but admirably suited to the needs of the modern man.

Time and again, while pursuing the book, the reader is reminded of H. P. Blavatsky's famous injunction—"The mind is the great slayer of the Real; let the disciple slay the slayer." Particularly significant is the chapter on "Window on non-duality" where, dissecting the various modifications of the mind, Powell explains how a
mind that desires the more and more or the less and the less, a mind whose simple needs have become mixed up and given rise to desire, a mind which craves continuity for stronger sensations, must inevitably lead to pain and sorrow. The whole work seems to be primarily concerned with the question of how to end thought and to answer the age-old query from the days of the Delphic Oracle: “Who am I?” and answered to the present day by the Sage of Tiruvannamalai. This self-enquiry is done by exploring the various aspects of the mind exhaustively, and leaving all teachings behind, the reader is taken on a journey into the depths of meditation — probing ever further into the Unknown. The insight is clear during this investigation into the fundamentals and a new light is thrown on certain specialised problems such as the nature of the Universe — whether finite or infinite; properties of the fundamental particles, the body-mind relationship; as also the question of freedom and causality.

The writer warns the reader in the true Krishnamurti style against accepting any statement made in this book on any subject: “for if he does, he acts against the whole spirit of the work.” In that case, he would merely add another idea to his existing store — and ideas can always be countered by other ideas. “To this process there is no end and it has absolutely nothing to do with the perception of Truth, which only comes when the mind is empty of all ideas. It does not matter which particular problem the reader tackles; as long as there is vigorous inquiry, he is opening himself to the Truth, and that will bring its own action. But merely to agree or disagree is to throw away a spiritual opportunity.”


“Nothing is absolute except relationship.” has been maintained by useful adaptations of this older form of logic; as also the question of freedom and causality.

As Johnston rightly discusses the psychological implications of this older form of logic:

“No matter how logical our Inference, if we cannot relate opposing feelings in our conscious minds our thoughts will be unrealistic. Because Inference has caused our intellect to accept contradictory feelings. Neither possible feeling is absolute but is instead inclusive of the other to some degree.

“We cannot hate absolutely, consequently there must be some degree of love in our hate. Nor can we love absolutely, consequently there must be some degree of hate in our love. Because the relationship between love and hate is absolute either will maintain its relationship with the other regardless of either’s exclusion from the conscious mind into the repressed state of the subconscious mind. The tragedy is that this denied feeling will continue to influence our behaviour and judgment, but in a way over which we have little or no control.”

In this interesting book he has postulated that nothing is absolute except relationship. According to him with the addition of Reference to Inference to form the logic of relationship, we can succeed in solving most of our problems. Johnston has thus offered a new instrument for logic to make man more civilized in his behaviour.


None has discussed in more threadbare a fashion the fundamental questions of “Universals” and the “Science of physical things” than John Locke: Empiricist, Atomist, Conceptualist and Agnostic, of the Seventeenth Century. This four-fold interest of the noble thinker has been ably analysed by Dr. Louis Kraus in his Critique of Locke. The order of presentation found in that great writer’s “Essay Concerning Human Understanding” has been maintained by useful adaptation in the various sections of this book.

While the first section has as its primary aim the examination of Locke’s empiricist perspective on the origin of the primary contents of the human mind, the next examining the atomic perspective.
on the real essence of physical things. The third section deals with the relation of the Conceptuatistic perspective on universal ideas which is followed by the examination of the relation between Locke's conceptual perspective of universal ideas of physical things and the agnostic perspective of physical things as far as a science of physical things is concerned.

According to the author it is proved that in Locke's view there is nothing like a "Science of bodies". Not only are Locke's tenets difficult of understanding but are disturbing in their context and it is Dr. Kraus's thesis that Locke was not interested in throwing out speculative or practical truths. His purpose was to inquire into the origin of human knowledge and his enquiry ended in a conviction that experience is the origin of all human knowledge.


If, according to Patanjali, Yoga is the stilling of the modifications of the thinking principle, the various kinds of efforts that have been made to adjust and overcome the agitation that constantly assail man are described in this book by Frederick Lyman on Contemplation. Being a professional painter since his graduation from Yale University in 1949, the author gives detailed instructions in Physical postures, breathing, concentration and diet, and describes many other associated phenomena relating to contemplation (dharana) which is one of the several steps leading to meditation (samadhi).

The reader will find many new explanations of the conditions which make contemplation possible and this book can be better appreciated by the layman who is not himself involved in this practice but is always craving for it.


This booklet by Swami Atmananda, the author of Sankara's Teachings in His Own Words, is an attempt to prove that religious rites and practices motivated by the desire for material welfare in this world or the next are no better than acts which are purely worldly. In support of this view the Swami has quoted several passages not only from Manu and Sankara but also from Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi, whose small work Upadesa Saram (Quintessence of Wisdom), with a translation and commentary, forms the concluding portion of the book. The price of one rupee appears to be too high.


This small book consists of a large number of verses selected from the Bhagavad Gita and arranged under several heads like Karma Yoga, Jnana Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Shiva Prapa, Moksha and Dhan Mukta. The slokas are printed in Devanagari and Roman characters and are accompanied by translations in English. It is stated that copies of the book were distributed to the new graduates of the Sri Venkateswara University in 1967 by His Holiness the Sankara-charya of Ramakoti Peetham, Kancheepuram.


This small book on advaita vedanta with a not-very-happy title contains a good deal of useful information, but reads like a collection of extempore talks and has some of the defects of such talks when they are published without adequate revision and editing. However, these defects are not likely to be noticed by beginners who are not very critical and for whose benefit it has obviously been produced.

M. C. SUBRAMANIAN.


This is a happy compilation of Papers on the many-sided personality of Swami Vivekananda contributed on the occasion of the Centenary celebrations of his birth. The writers are from both the East and the West and bring to bear on their subject their characteristic approach highlighting the qualities and services of Swamiji that have appealed to them most.

Swami Ghanananda draws attention to the fact that the 'humanism' of Vivekananda that is so much admired by the Western friends is not of the modern ethical type but based upon his perception and intimate realization of the oneness of all beings in the One Divine. It is essentially spiritual in basis.

Dr. Marozzi dwells upon the relations of Vivekananda with his Master and describes how Sri...
Ramakrishna appeared to him in his subtle form on several occasions, at critical junctures, and guided him in his career.

Dr. Ninian Smart warns against the tendency to separate Vivekananda's philosophy from his spiritual teachings. For all that he spoke and preached arose directly from his inner soul-experience.

Writing on 'Vivekananda in Europe' Dr. Marlow records an interesting incident typical of the spirit of Swamiji. A well known philosopher, at the conclusion of one of Vivekananda's addresses at this time, said, "You have spoken splendidly, Sir, and I thank you heartily, but you have told us nothing new." The Swami's reply was immediate: "Sir, I have told you the Truth, That, the Truth, is as old as the immemorial hills, as old as humanity, as old as creation, as old as the Great God. If I have told it in such words as will make you think, make you live up to your thinking, do I not do well in telling it?"

M. P. Pandit.

The only obstacle is the mind; it must be got over whether you are in the home or in the forest. If you can do it in the forest, why not in the home? Therefore, why change the environment? Your efforts can be made even now, whatever be the environment.

— Sri Maharshi
The nineteenth Aradhana or anniversary of the Brahma Nirvana of Sri Bhagavan was celebrated at his shrine in the Ashram on 14th April 1969. The celebrations began, as usual, with Ekadasa Rudram and Mahanyasa and the chanting of the Taittiriya and Mahanarayana Upanishads. This was followed by elaborate puja at the beautifully decorated shrine. Arati or the waving of lighted lamps and camphor which formed the concluding part of the puja was watched by a large crowd with great devotion. This was followed by the special lunch provided for the devotees. A large number of poor persons were also given food. Messages of good wishes were received from many ministers, officials and prominent leaders. Among those present were Dr. T. M. P. Mahadevan, Dr. T. N. Krishnaswamy, Sri K. K. Nambiar, Sri Framji Dorabji, Professor R. K. Vivananath, Dr. Bhaskaran of Pondicherry, Dr. S. E. Demetrian, Dr. and Mrs. Maria Bargi, Sri J. V. Somayajulu, Sri S. R. Y. Ramakrishna Prasad and the members of the Prem Sangh, Palghat.

At Madras
Guru puja was celebrated on 20th April 1969 at 94, Mowbray’s Road, Alwarpet. Vedaparayana was followed by music provided by Smt. Lakshmi Sivarasan and Smt. Jasaabbit Natesan, Sri P. Sri Acharya, author of “Ramanujacharya”, spoke on the mingling of poetry and religion in the Tamil tradition.

At Belgaum
The nineteenth anniversary of Bhagavan’s mahanirvana was observed at Sanmru, Belgaum, on 13th April 1969. After Vedaparayana by Sri K. Natesan and others and ashtottara puja by Sri P. R. Suryanandan, the audience took part in an elaborate programme of recitation and music based on the compositions of Bhagavan, Kavyakantha Ganapati Muni, Murugunar, Suddhananda Bharati and Sadhu Om. The celebrations concluded with arati and distribution of prasad.

At Kolhapur
The Dharma Tattvajnana Mandal, Kolhapur, celebrated the 19th Brahma Nirvana of Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi on 14th April 1969 in an informal setting, when the translation of Aksharamanamalai (in Marathi) was formally published by Pandit Balacharya Khupperkar, Sri Pandit Jade Shastri, Padmabhushan V. S. Khundekar (well-known Marathi writer) and Sri G. V. Kulkarni spoke about Maharshi and His Work. At the end devotional songs and arati were sung and prasad was distributed to the audience.

At Poona
The Brahma Nirvana day of Sri Maharshi was celebrated by Sri Bausheb Athavale of Poona in
a fitting manner, Pandit Ananadastri Pandharipure, who had had the good fortune of seeing Bhagavan, gave an illuminating talk on Bhagavan’s life and teachings. Earlier in the morning there was Rudrabhisheka, Vedaparayana, etc. The function was attended by a select audience of about three hundred men and women.

At Delhi

On 16th May 1969 at M. 11, Observatory Quarters, Brahmasri Vazhuthur Rajagopal Sarma spoke on Dakshinamurti. Quoting profusely from the Upanishads and Sankara, he explained the significance of chinmudra, the dissociation of the jivatma from all triads and its union with the paramatma. The meeting ended with the singing of “Arunachala Siva” and Arati.

Besides the weekly satsangs held on all Sundays in various parts of Delhi from Nanakpura to Karol Bagh, the Kendra held the following special meetings:

Sankara Jayanti was celebrated on 27th April at M. 9, Netaji Nagar. Shri K. C. Subbiah and others spoke on the life and philosophy of the Bhagavadpada. On 16th May 1969, at M. 11, Observatory Quarters, Brahmasri Vazhuthur Rajagopal Sarma spoke on Dakshinamurti. Quoting profusely from the Upanishads and Sankara, he explained the significance of chinmudra, the dissociation of the jivatma from all triads and its union with the paramatma. The meeting ended with the singing of “Arunachala Siva” and Arati.

Mahapuja

At the Ashram

Mahapuja or the anniversary of the passing away of Sri Bhagavan’s mother was celebrated on 8th June 1969. Special pujas were conducted at the shrine of Sri Matrubhuteswara, as usual, and the devotees were treated to a special lunch.
or crown to be placed on the linga over Sri Bhagavan's Samadhi on important occasions. It was used for the first time on 2nd May, 1969, in the presence of the donor and her husband and a large number of devotees. The Ashram is grateful to Srimati Varalakshmi for her magnificent gift.

HAPPY MOMENTS

Sri A. Devaraja Mudaliar, an old devotee of Sri Bhagavan about whom we published a brief note in our January 1966 issue, paid a short visit to the Ashram toward the end of April. He addressed the inmates and visitors on two days and explained the significance of certain events in Sri Bhagavan's life.

VISITORS

Mrs. Barbara Rose was again in our midst for a fortnight before leaving for U.S.A. to join her husband after completing her work at Kathmandu. The Ashram has agreed, at her request, to construct a house behind the Morvi Guest House in which she can live whenever she wishes to do so. The house which is to be named RAMANA SHANTI will at all other times be available for the accommodation of the devotees of Sri Bhagavan. We wish her bon voyage and a speedy return.

Miss Jane Hiroko Nishi to whom a reference was made in our April issue came again and stayed with us for a fortnight. She writes:

"After my first 'Pradakshina' it occurred to me that Arunachala was like God's own rock-garden. Every angle revealing another aspect of Its Reality and retaining that same Reality, whether Its rocks should be bared to the winds or clothed in grass. And as a rock garden in the Zen tradition can be seen as a personal 'ko-an' which is both an embodiment and a revealer of Truth as conceived by its designer, so also the Hill could be regarded as an embodiment of Siva, Its 'ko-an' being, of course, the insurpassable, 'Who am I?'

But as my mind rambled on in its ever-rambling fashion, I knew that this was only my way of trying to describe something very special which one can only experience. Truly God has been called the 'Master Physician': for here He draws out the tocsins of the spirit and releases them into the accepting, the healing and the loving arms of Arunachala, Spiritually Bhagavan's grace is limited only by the size of the believer's cup . . . .

I first came to Arunachala several months ago, prepared in my own small way by reading some of Bhagavan's teachings, but largely through the enthusiastic promptings of a dear friend in Japan. It is only now, after many more 'promptings', both inner and outer, (for I tend to be rather hard of hearing at times) that I realize my incredible good fortune. Who can say when the subtle atmosphere of Arunachala takes hold of one's heart and instantly one begins to associate with a name, a place, the Blessings of God."

Mr. Horst Rutkowski, Mr. John Dawson, Miss Jacqueline Le Prince, and Miss Yvonne Dauguet continue to stay with us and attend to their spiritual sadhana.

There were a number of new visitors from abroad, but most of them stayed only for very short periods. Those who made somewhat longer stays are mentioned below.

Miss Julia L. Willings (U.S.A.) 2 weeks.
Mr. Aditya Rider (U.S.A.) 20 days.
Mrs. Sarama Rider (U.S.A.) 20 days.
Mr. John Kooyman (U.K.) 6 weeks.
Miss Valerie Freeman (U.S.A.) 3 months.

We publish below a letter of Miss Valerie Freeman who came here at the instance of Mrs. Barbara Rose, and stayed here for nearly three months, as it might be of interest to our readers.

"My introduction to Bhagavan came while living in Nepal and working as a Peace Corps Volunteer. After finishing my work there I came to the Ashram. The last few weeks in Nepal were anxious as I looked forward to visiting His abode and not knowing what to expect. The plan was to stay a couple of weeks and then to continue to travel slowly back to America. After being here only a short time my desire to 'see the world' disappeared and was replaced with the desire to stay here and be quiet."

"By Bhagavan's grace, which is endless, my stay at the Ashram has been lovely and with fulfilment beyond expectation. Unaware as I was
It is now clear that Arunachala is what I've been in search of for some time. It is a place like no other! There are feelings that cannot be spoken of or expressed; this is the place of those feelings."

Sri Swami Atmananda of Jnanashram, Parlikad, Kerala, accompanied by a party of students from abroad practicing yoga at Ananda Ashrama, Pondicherry, visited the Ashram on their way back from Parlikad after attending a 'Spiritual Retreat' there.

Sri Janaki Mata, a well-known mystic and devotee of Sri Bhagavan, passed away on 27th April 1969 at Janaky Nilayam, her residence at Tanjore. She had been ailing for some time, but we did not know that her end was so near. She was born in 1906 in a small village near Palghat in Kerala and was married to Dr. C. S. Ganapathy Iyer, a Medical Officer under the Government of Madras. From her childhood she was attracted to a religious way of life and, as she grew up, began to have ecstatic visions of the various gods and goddesses whom she worshipped. Persons who were drawn to her by her mystic qualities often saw in her the gods whom they worshipped. In spite of her visions and mystic experiences Sri Janaki Mata was not quite satisfied. She felt that she should have a living Guru before she could attain Liberation. She was in due course mysteriously directed to Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi whom she met for the first time in 1935. The moment she saw Him she felt that He was the Guru whom she was seeking. Thereafter she continued to visit the Ashram frequently until Sri Bhagavan attained Mahanirvana. Although she desired to come and stay permanently with Sri Bhagavan, He did not encourage her to do so and therefore she continued to live with her husband and children. A small band of devotees gradually gathered round her and most of them looked upon her as their Guru.

Mr. Richard Clancy, Englishman and author, was attracted to Sri Bhagavan by reading some books containing His teachings. He had an irresistible urge to come to India and visit the Ashram. Although he was very old and suffering from advanced cancer of the spine he undertook a journey from London to Madras. He could not ordinarily sit up even for half an hour at a time, but, to his great surprise, he was not only able to fly such a long distance, but was also able to drive in a taxi from Madras to Tiruvannamalai, a distance of nearly one hundred and twenty miles. He attributed this to Sri Bhagavan's grace,
He stayed at the Ashram for nearly five months. He once said that here he got the confirmation of the Advaitic experience about which he had read. He was thoroughly reluctant to leave the Ashram, but his illness made it absolutely necessary for him to return to England. He was therefore put on a plane for London from Madras by our well-known devotee Hugo Meier. After an unexpectedly comfortable journey he arrived in London and was immediately admitted into the Chelsea Hospital, where, unfortunately, he passed away on 27th May 1969, two days after his arrival. As one of his friends wrote, he had done what he had always wanted to do and therefore 'relaxed and, let himself go, having no more to struggle for.' The following note left by him before his departure shows his devotion to Sri Bhagavan and the Ashram.

"I first came to know of Sri Bhagavan through the publication in England of his works. Paul Brunton’s account of the Ashram helped. This was about 1963. At that time I had been influenced by Mahatma Gandhi to direct my life on the basis of the Sermon on the Mount which he taught me to take literally as truth."

It was not until later that the absolute necessity of coming to the Ashram became apparent. I wrote to Arthur Osborne accordingly in 1967. He gave me very helpful advice, but explained that it was ultimately for Sri Bhagavan to decide whether I should visit the Ashram or not, and he left this for me to make sure of.

It is not possible to convey in words the spiritual experience of a visit to the Ashram. Apart from this difficulty of words, each visitor will form his individual impression. All I can do here is to record that no previous conception from books or other accounts can give a shadow of an idea of the strong spiritual force which pervades everywhere around me. It must be experienced by each one.

Everything possible is done by those responsible for the management to preserve the founder’s spirit. That spirit of love is daily in evidence among the devotees and European visitors. It must be understood this involves discarding Western customs and the acceptance of the spirit which animates the Ashram and all who come here. Western people must be prepared to give up their accustomed standards of all kinds. There is no attempt to provide anything in the nature of a Western hotel with its physical amenities. A few concessions are made to help Western people in the matter of diet, but vegetarian diet is maintained."

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THE MOUNTAIN PATH LIBRARY

New Additions

Light on Religious Practices by Swami Atmananda.
Conversations on Spirit Divine by Swami Vishwananda.
Swami Vivekananda in East and West, Edited by Swami Chanananda and Dr. Geoffrey Parrinder.
Sapurna—A Symbol and Suggestion by E. Anantacharya.
Men by Swami Ramananda.
The Buddhist Way of Life by Christmas Humphreys.
Zoroaster’s Influence on Anaxagoras, The Greek Tragedians and Socrates by R sh Afnan.
The Era of the System by Gerald Rabow.
The Book of Signs by C. H. Mees.
The Book of Staves by C. H. Mees.
The Book of Battles by C. H. Mees.
The Life of Buddha in His own Words by Narada Thera.
Essays and Poems by Paul Dahlke.
The Blessings of Pindapata by Bhikku Khantipalo.
Kalama Sutta by Soma Thera.
Path Fruit and Nibbana by Kheminda Thera.
The World As Power by Sir John Woodroffe.
The Logic of Relationship by Frederick S. Johnson, Jr.
John Locke: Empiricist, Atomist, Conceptualist and Agnostic by John Louis Kraus.
The Posture of Contemplation by Frederick C. Lymans, Jr.
Presented by Sri K. Paramanaban
Bases of Yoga by Sri Aurobindo.
Pathology to God in Ramada Literature by R. D. Ranade.
The Foundations of Spiritual Development by Swami Omkarananda.
The Little Flowers of St. Francis translated by L. Sheeler-Price.
Let God Be True by Watchtower Bible and Tract Society.
Thinker or Believer by W. H. Williamson.
St. John of the Cross Poems translated by Roy Campbell.
Neo-Upanishadic Philosophy by K. V. Gajendragadkar.
The Existence of God by Joseph McCabe.
Simple Meditation Postures by Sri Yogendra.
Buddha—Beloved of the World by Chaman Lal, Translation and Modern Thought by B. V. Ramen.
A Guide to Zen Practice by Sobaku Oyama.
The Science of Larger Life by Ursula N. Gestefeld.

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ONE of the oldest devotees of Sri Bhagavan, who is still happily with us, is Sri S. DORAI-SWAMY AIYAR, whom we know from the early days of Sri Bhagavan’s abode on the Hill, Arunachala. He was one of a band of aspiring young men who had the good fortune to be introduced into Sri Bhagavan’s presence, by association with the great poet and savant, Sri Kavyakanta Ganapathi Sastrigal, around whom they were gathered.

Born in poor circumstances, he evidently inherited the noble traditions of his ancestors, in particular their love of music and aspirations for great achievements, as became manifest even in his early life. After a brilliant scholastic career, despite great odds, he entered into the legal profession, made his mark very soon, and later rose to great eminence by virtue of his sterling qualities of heart and mind. His innate nationalism and intense interest in matters political, social and religious, brought him into close and greatly cherished association with such dynamic personalities as Sri Kavyakanta Ganapathi Sastrigal and Sri Aurobindo. The historic association of Sri Ganapathi Sastrigal with Sri Bhagavan in those early days on the Hill and the grace gained, drew him and those with him, ever more and more to Sri Bhagavan’s presence. Thereafter Sri Doraiswamy Aiyar had many opportunities of visiting Sri Bhagavan with devotional freedom and ease, gaining much by His uplifting influence.

In his endeavour to gain the association and guidance of the great he shirked no difficulty or sacrifice and has thus known and moved with many spiritual personages and eminent personalities known in our times. His dominant interest amidst all pre-occupations seemed to be the search for Truth underlying spiritual life.

During the period 1931 and 1938 he had in this regard, still more opportunities of frequently visiting Sri Bhagavan, whose life and example was in itself a permeating influence, inculcating the essence of all Vedantic teaching in practice. That was the time when some persons chose to cause annoyance to the Ashram by indulging in speculative litigation and Sri Doraiswamy Aiyar as an act of devoted service attended to the same till its successful conclusion, doing everything needed to prevent such recurrence. To him and to those with whom he worked, this activity afforded valued opportunities of meeting Sri Bhagavan frequently and at the same time...
receiving guidance and grace in their spiritual struggles.

Over the years the desire grew in him to give up all active work so as to devote all his time to sadhana. Thus he retired from his profession in 1938 without a second thought and settled down in the Ashram at Pondicherry, visiting Sri Bhagavan as often as he could.

Perhaps the most intimate period of his close associations with Sri Bhagavan was in 1948 and onward. An illness that started as a small negligible tumour ultimately turned fatal resulting in Sri Bhagavan’s Mahanirvana in April, 1950. During these two years Sri Doraiswamy Aiyar remained permanently with Sri Bhagavan, rendering personal service. During those days of stress and anxiety to one and all, he stood close to Sri Bhagavan, vigilantly endeavoring to know what was needed and helping the work of the team of devoted medical men who to the last did all they could to alleviate the affliction. This opportune period of service and close association with Sri Bhagavan is treasured by him as a sign of Grace for all the practical knowledge and spiritual gain the events afforded him.

Having achieved and completely surrendered all that is coveted in the way of this world, Sri Doraiswamy Aiyar remains today totally detached from worldly concerns, his spiritual evolution alone marking any difference. Many consider it a privilege to know and associate with him.

He is now eighty-nine years old. Our affectionate thoughts and best wishes go to him, in Sri Bhagavan’s Grace!

TO FREE ONESELF

Liberation is not to be achieved through endless cycles of time by reading the scriptures or worshipping the gods or by anything else than knowledge of the unity of Brahman and Atman. Wealth or actions made possible by wealth cannot produce the yearning for Liberation. Therefore the scriptures have rightly declared that action can never produce Liberation. In order to obtain Liberation one must heroically renounce even the very desire for the pleasures of this world. Then one must seek the Perfect Guru who is the embodiment of Peace and must concentrate one’s mind and meditate ceaselessly on that into which one is initiated. Such meditation leads to abidance in the wisdom of the experience obtained. Embarking in that ship of wisdom, one must ferry over to the shore of Liberation that self which is immersed in the ocean of samsara. Therefore the courageous aspirant should give up attachment to wife, sons and property and give up all activity. By so doing he should free himself from bondage to the cycle of birth and death and seek Liberation. Actions are prescribed only for purification of the mind, not for realization of the Self. Knowledge of the truth of the Self is obtained only by Self-enquiry and not by any number of actions.

—SANKARA in Vivekachudamani.
I am very interested in the Maharshi's teachings; how very fortunate those people were who could actually meet him! I have been reading your book 'The Path of Self-Knowledge' and found it very enlightening. Do you know if there is anyone in the Melbourne area who is conversant with the Maharshi's teachings? I am a member of the Theosophical Society, but have not met up with anyone yet who knows much about his teachings. Do you think one should just try and follow his path of self-enquiry on one's own? There are various yoga classes here but it is difficult to know which is the right one for you. I have been a seeker after Truth for many years and I think so far that the highest teachings I have come across have been Ramana Maharshi's. I was introduced to his works by someone I met in England, before I left there. He had been studying various Paths for years, and maintained that it was best to study the following before knowing the right one for yourself: Yoga, Mysticism, Krishnamurti and Zen. If you can give me any advice, I shall be grateful.

MRS. SYLVIA J. BURTON,
Melbourne.

We do not know of anybody in Melbourne conversant with the Maharshi's teachings. How to follow the path of self-enquiry is clearly stated in the books about his teachings such as, for instance, THE COLLECTED WORKS OF RAMANA MAHARSHI, THE TALKS WITH SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI, SELF-ENQUIRY and others. If one persists with the self-enquiry of Who am I? without anticipating any reply the mind can give, a sort of vibration may come which will leave no doubt. One can also use self-enquiry to eliminate thoughts by asking oneself: "To whom has this thought arisen?". Do not hesitate to ask us for explanation if in doubt. One can always ask Bhagavan for help. He is the living inner Guru. He will never let you down.

EDITOR.

Bhagavan Ramana is stated to have said that it took Him only 20 minutes to reach the absolute state by visualising the process of death. This became His permanent state. It appears to be that one important aspect is forgotten. In this birth He has attained the "SELF". This must be the result of strenuous efforts of past births culminating in the bliss Eternal NOW. Otherwise it should be possible for most people, but this is far from the Truth. It is impossible even with the best of sadhanas to achieve the goal in one birth.

Bhagavan Ramana has said in the Instructions to Natanananda that 'Self-enquiry' is suitable for ripe souls only. This itself makes it clear that He had reached a highly advanced stage of realization. As you are advocating the method of self-enquiry even for a beginner as enunciated by Bhagavan, it seems to me however that we have to follow any one of the conventional methods like Japa etc. before one is ready to enter the path of Self-enquiry. A novice or a raw student therefore does not qualify for this instruction from the start. I do not know if I am correct. Could you explain?

S. ANANTHALWAR,
Mumbai.

Yes, attaining realization in a very short time in this birth may be the result of strenuous efforts in past births. Prolonged sadhana ripens the soul for self-realization. In this Kali Yuga the highest and most secret teaching has been thrown...
open to all. You could quote Krishna who said when dying, that from now on adharma will prevail, but for those striving to attain God it will be much easier. A beginner can use Self-enquiry together with other conventional methods which he finds helpful such as Japa etc.

EDITOR.

THE SPIRITUAL HEART

One day, when I was relaxing in a chair, I casually felt that I was not the body. Later, this awareness got deeply rooted in me. The aforementioned statement is not of a theoretical nature, but a real fact experienced by me. It so happens that whenever I contemplate on the 'I' of the working state, the 'I' gets automatically detached from the ' casing' and I am fully aware of it. Further when my mind is inwardly directed the 'I' referred to earlier tends to sink into the spiritual heart in me. When I go to bed it was often experienced that the 'I' gradually slips into the heart — of course with a balmy feeling — and soon I am well on my way to deep sleep; and thereafter nothing is known to me until I wake up again. A further development is noticed in me. That is, the area to the right side of my chest (in the region of the Heart) is always flushed with a certain feeling. I am unable to describe it. What would have been Bhagavan’s remark if this letter was placed before Him?

D. SIVAPRAGAJ, COLOMBO.

If your letter was placed before Bhagavan he most probably would have replied that so long as there is someone to be aware of something however sublime it may be it is not the true Self which is pure awareness. Sri Bhagavan said that the spiritual heart is on the right.

EDITOR.

ON MEDITATION

I would be extremely grateful if you could answer the following questions on behalf of a friend and myself.

(1) Asking the question of “Who am I?” is not a reasoning process, nor does one anticipate a mental reply. If one ponders with this question with an intense concentration the reply may come as a sort of awareness dispelling all doubt. The source of the ‘I’ thought is the Self.

(2) One should meditate as much as one can without strain. Regular hours are helpful in the beginning. With time one can meditate even while working. The length of time without undue strain is up to you.

H. G. BRAITHWAITE, LONDON.

Masters’ Living Presence

I have read most of the works Sri Ramana Maharshi authorized while alive, plus several articles in the Mountain Path journal, but am still puzzled over a few questions that come to mind. Is it true that Sri Ramana Maharshi’s presence can still be felt at his ashram? Can he still meet and help others on a spiritual path, even though dead? I have for several years been searching for the answer to who I am, (although it was not until this last year that I have actually formulated this question). In this regard I have been looking for an enlightened master to seek guidance, and, since I find Self Enquiry is so close to my natural inner searching, I would like to know if a trip to the ashram would be beneficial to me, i.e., can the Maharshi guide a newcomer? Also, is it necessary to go to the ashram itself or can I in some way evoke his help where I live (near Los Angeles, California).

In the last few weeks I have found several people who have been to the ashram, and have also seen Sathya Sai Baba, who seemed to impress them as the spiritual Master of this age. Since I know you too have met with him would you suggest that I seek Sai Baba as a spiritual guide to my inner journey. Please forgive my naivete on these matters. I hope I have not offended you.
THE MOUNTAIN PATH

by my straightforwardness, but I feel that this is
the only way to ask. I would very much appre­
ciate your counsel in these matters.

RONALD B. MUIR,
U.S.A.

Yes, Sri Ramana Maharshi’s presence can still
be felt here at Arunachala and he still guides
and helps devotees in various ways according to
their needs as before.

“I am not going away, I am here”, he said
shortly before his Mahasamadhi and there are
few who do not feel the radiance emanating
from his presence here. A trip to the Ashram is
always beneficial and nobody is a “newcomer”
to the Maharshi. You can also evoke his help
wherever you are. He will not fail a sincere
sadhaka.

Since you are drawn to the path of self-enquiry
which not many can follow, this in itself is a
sign of his grace and it would be best for you to
come to the Ashram, if you can manage it. This
is the path of JNANA, the simplest, the most direct
and also the highest. In this age only Sri Ramana
Maharshi teaches explicitly Self-enquiry.

It is best to ask a question in a straight­
forward way, as you do.

EDITOR.

"Either see the mind’s source so that it may disappear, or surrender
yourself so that it may be struck down. Self-surrender is the same
as Self-knowledge, and either of them necessarily implies self-control.
The ego submits only when it recognises the Higher Power."

— SRI MAHARSHI.

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