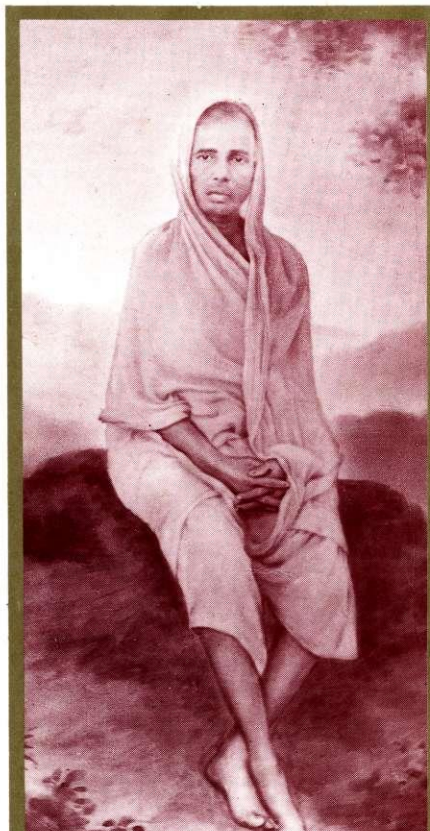


# THE MOUNTAIN PATH



Jayanthi  
Issue

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# THE MOUNTAIN PATH

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

— *The Marital Garland of Letters*, verse 1

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— Editor.

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## The Mountain Path

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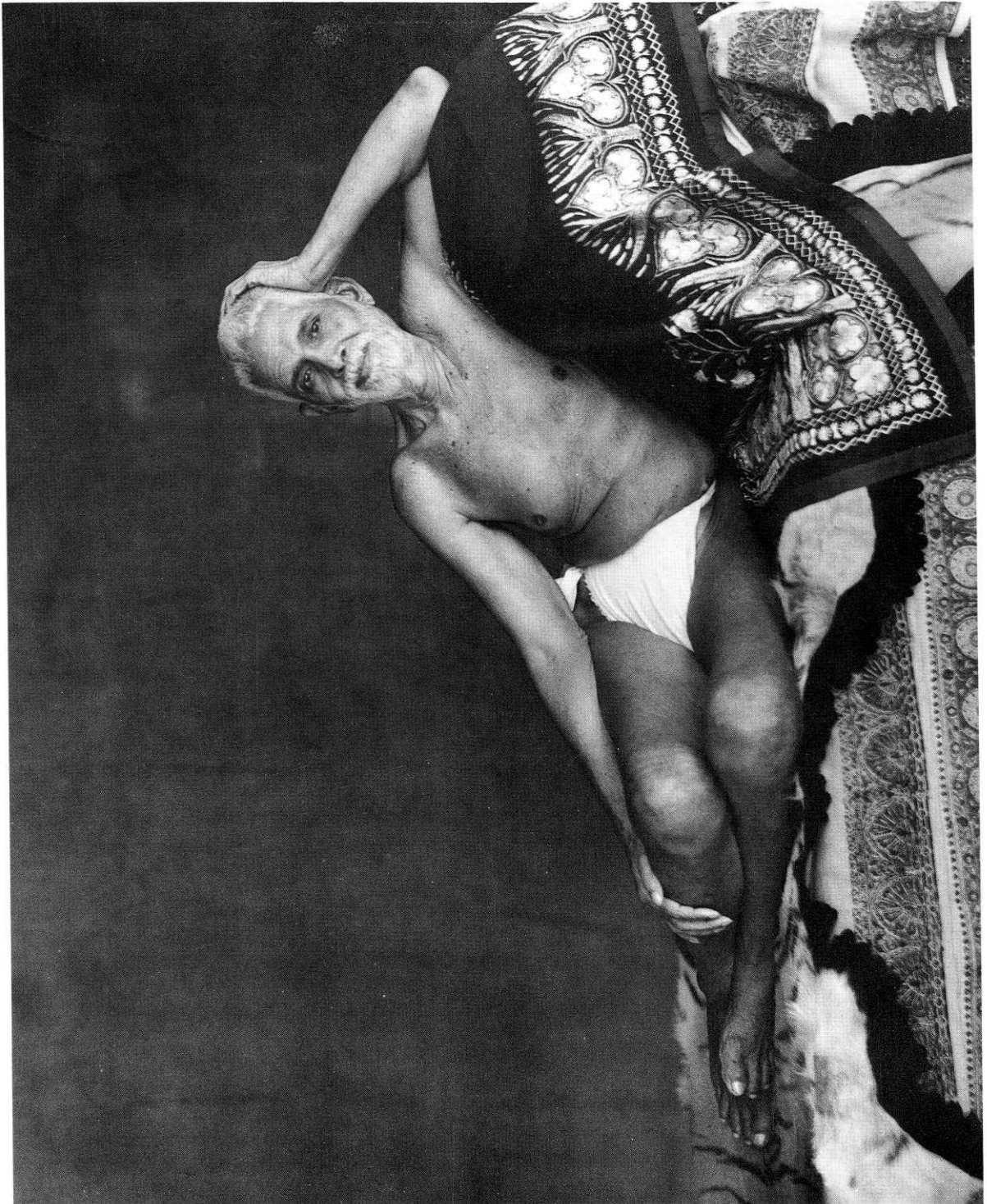
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### THE MOUNTAIN PATH

is dedicated to

**Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi**



EDITORIAL:

## THE NATURE OF NATURE

**N**ATURE is that which is -- that which exists. To elaborate, we may divide it into objective and subjective nature. That which perceives is subjective nature and that which is perceived is objective nature.

In the waking state the world exists, the world is perceived. Nature as the world is objective nature and the one who perceives that world is subjective nature. In the waking state both exist. In deep sleep both cease. In the dream state, both objective and subjective natures obtain, but in a totally different dimension.

We strive, perforce, largely in the waking state. However, as Immanuel Kant said, "When one knows the circumference of a circle, one has already transcended the limitations of the circle." By fully knowing the knowable, the unknown vanishes, just as light dispels darkness.

According to an oft-quoted Tamil saying, the essence of Nature is "the destruction of the old and the re-emergence of the new" (பழையன கழிதலும் புதியன புகுதலும்) Nature is always changing yet remains eternally the same. Like a river -- or time itself -- ever flowing yet undeniably present in the spaciousness of the moment.

The *Tirumandiram* says, "Nature is in flux; every moment, changes continue to take place." The author-saint of this ancient Tamil classic calls this modification *vibhuti* (sacred ashes). He likens the perceiver to Lord Shiva and the perceived to *vibhuti*. The Lord is the seer, smeared

all over with the seen -- *vibhuti*. Eternal changelessness hidden in the ever-changing!

If the perceived is an ever-changing flow, does it not imply that the perceiver is changeless?

Viewed from another perspective, Nature again has two aspects. One is static and the other is dynamic -- *achala* and *chala*. All that moves, moves in space which is unmoving, *sthira tattva*.

Arunachala is that absolute immovable principle, says Bhagavan, around which all movements (*chalana*) revolve and into which all finally merge. Agitation attains stillness in its very proximity, like iron filings which dance only to cling immovably to the magnet, itself actionless. Bhagavan says in *Arunachala Ashtakam*, "I was drawn to Arunachala and nearing it I saw it as the Unmoving!"

All creation is made up of the five elements -- earth, water, fire, air and ether, and all that moves and moves not are only various combinations of these five elements. Bhagavan, addressing Arunachala, says, "The five elements, all living beings and the vast expanse of the universe are nothing but You alone" (*Arunachala Pathikam*).

What is the basis, the ground of these five elements? The *Puranas* state that Shiva, the One, created Shakti, His Consort, the Second, and then all of creation was brought forth. Shiva, the static aspect, creating Shakti, the dynamic

aspect, followed by the entire process of evolution.

The process of involution, *vice versa*, is movement (Shakti) merging into stillness (Shiva). That is the story of the Mother Goddess, after arduous *tapas*, attaining union with her Lord Arunachaleswara related in the *Arunachala Mahatmyam*.

This process of evolution and involution is taking place every moment of the day. A mighty tree grown from a tiny seed gives fruit and dies, yet springs from seed again. The process goes on. This is the same for all living beings.

Why? Where exactly does all this begin? Where does it end? Objectively, scientifically, these questions remain unanswered. But spiritually, each one of us carries the answer within ourselves.

Nature's gifts to man, the basic experiences of everyday life -- the three states of waking, dream and deep sleep -- contain the clues to the mystery of Nature's operation. The root of the five elements, of static and dynamic principles, is known if these three states of being are carefully analysed and the truth experientially realised.

Sleep is blessed relief from the "slings and arrows of outrageous fortune." In deep sleep, the whole world along with the perceiver (that is, for every one of us, individually) is dissolved. There is nothing. Upon waking up, consciousness of being, then identification with one's body, followed by myriad circumstances and relationships arise.

Sages affirm that "as above, so below" -- "what is contained in the macrocosm is contained in the microcosm." In the act of experiencing the waking and sleep states man daily enacts the drama of evolution and involution.

The act of dreaming is indicative of the fact that each one of us is invested with this tremendous power of creation and dissolution. The whole gamut of activities, entities, joys and sorrows experienced in the dream state is the sole creation of the single dreamer. The waking perceiver, too, is *similarly* responsible for his waking world.

The scriptures further state that just as the content of dreams is unreal to the waking mind, objective nature as perceived in the waking state, together with the subjective perceiver, is unreal from the ultimate viewpoint of Self-Realisation.

So, the ground of Nature, both objective and subjective, is rooted in one's own "Awareness" which houses, projects, nourishes and swallows up all of creation. This Awareness is the substratum of the waking, dream and deep sleep states. Bhagavan calls this Awareness the "Self", the "Heart".

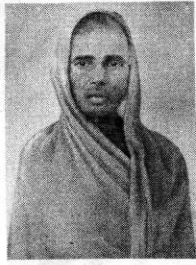
If one steps out of the grip of these various states and remains in Awareness *per se*, the truth of Nature is revealed. This revelation takes place in Silence, the innermost core of each being.

In this silence one realises that Nature is simply *ananda*, eternal joy, compassion, pure intelligence, "choiceless awareness". It shines as such everywhere.

### The Universe is Brahman

**"To him whose eightfold form is all this moving and unmoving universe, appearing as earth, water, fire, air, ether, the sun, the moon, and soul; beyond whom, supreme and all-pervading, there exists naught else for those who enquire -- to him, the gracious Guru Dakshinamurthi, may this obeisance be!"**

**-- Hymn to Dakshinamurthi by Sankara**



Mother's Temple

**FROM ASHRAM ARCHIVES - 4**

Sri Manavasi Ramaswami Iyer<sup>1</sup> reported in 1930 to Sri B.V. Narasimhaswamy the following:

**June, 1922: 8 p.m.**

**M**AHARSHI'S mother Alagamma died in Skandasram. During her last hours, Swami (Maharshi) was at her bedside. His right palm was on her heart and his left on her head... Swami loved his mother. Gratitude filled Him for her early care. Though she ailed for 3 or 4 years, He served her all the time -- how much worry, sleeplessness and constant attention!

As Alagamma was dying, we all joined together and prayed aloud -- went on with *Rama Nama*. There was no death agony. The face was calm. The question then was either cremation or burial. In *Sri Ramana Gita* Maharshi had said: '*Jnani's* body is a temple of God and it is improper to burn it' -- so, burial was decided.

**Effect of her death on Maharshi:**

Swami felt now so very jolly and all the night we were all singing. Probably the mother's care was a heavy bond and as she departed he felt more free. No need to stop at a fixed place. No need for being helped by others. No care. Free as a bird let off from a cage. I may be wrong. But I felt it to be so. After the supreme moment, Swami felt hungry and sat for a meal and wanted all to join saying that there is 'no pollution'. Some sat and ate.

Next morning, I was one of the bearers and at Palakottu we halted. I had a beautiful vision of Siva on the beautiful Nandi.

Swami's sister, her mate and his brother's son turned up in the morning. Brother-in-law was not for deviation from Brahmin custom. But we were too many for him to oppose. We tried to keep the burial ceremony quiet and secret. But crowds of townspeople came and it became a very big affair. A *samadhi* was built and the body lowered down, pouring over it lot of *vibhuti*, camphor, etc.

Ten days' regular worship went on at the *samadhi*. A small well was dug and good water was found in it. 12 feet higher than in the adjoining tank! This was styled '*Alagamma Tirtha*'.

Tenth-day ceremony was grand; and lot of feeding was undertaken by local good men. Kavyakantha Ganapati Muni composed a *charamakavi* and myself sang a Tamil song, composed by me.

<sup>1</sup> 'Supervisor Ramaswami Iyer' as he was then known, came to Sri Maharshi in 1908, when He was at Virupaksha Cave. In all tears he put the question: "Is there no hope for me?" The Maharshi graciously replied: "Yes! There is hope." In 1908-11 he was cured of his dyspepsia and insomnia by his faith in Maharshi; he was given *Ribhu Gita* by Maharshi to read and was told to pursue *Atma Vichara* - Who Am I?

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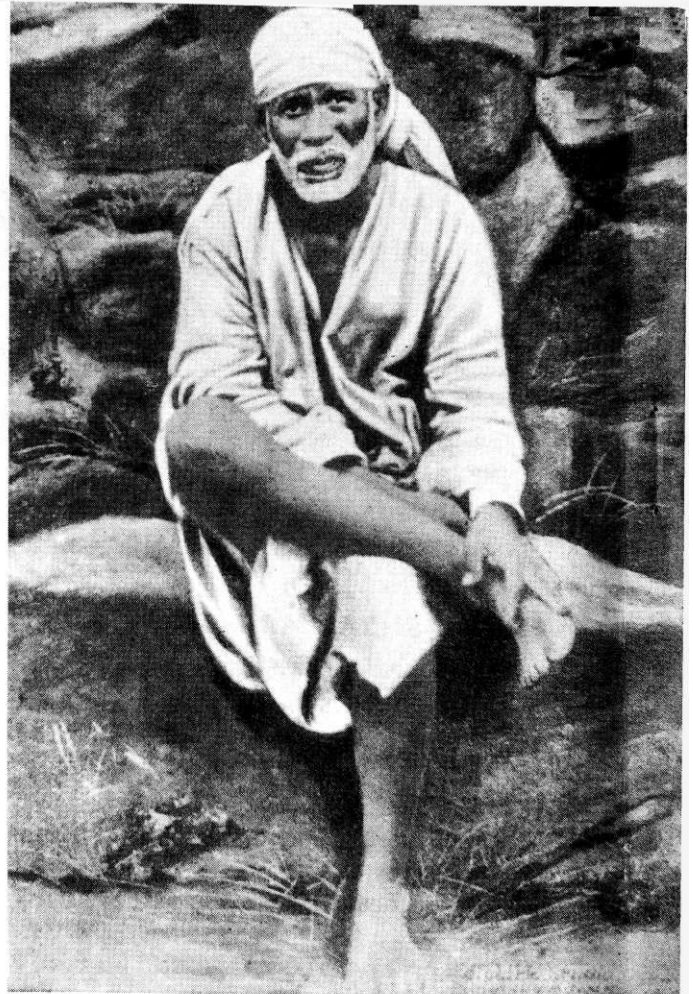
# “THE INCREDIBLE SAI BABA”<sup>1</sup>

By Arthur Osborne

Sai Baba never wrote a book. His behaviour was bizarre. And he flaunted his miracles with the reckless exuberance of a child. No easy saint to introduce to the modern reader.

Not only did he not write books; he did not read them either. He did occasionally instruct a devotee to read some religious or scriptural work, but for the most part he discouraged them from reading. ‘People hope to find Brahma<sup>2</sup> in these books, but it is *bhrama* [confusion], not Brahma [God], that they find there.’

There is nothing unorthodox in such a statement. Some basic theoretical understanding is necessary except in very rare cases, but continued accumulation of theoretical knowledge does not help towards spiritual understanding. Indeed, mental study can distract a man from the more arduous task of spiritual effort with the false allure of an easy alternative. Particularly in this age, when such floods of books are churned out, is it a danger. Shri Ramakrishna also neither practised nor enjoined scholarship. Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi, though enormously erudite, wrote in a derogatory way of book learning. ‘It is the unlearned who are saved rather than those whose ego has not subsided despite their learning. The unlearned are saved from the unrelenting grip of self-infatuation, from the malady of myriad whirling thoughts, from the endless pursuit of [mental] wealth; it is not from one ill alone that they are saved’. [*Supplement to Forty Verses on Reality*, v.36].



The unlearned state described here means, of course, not mere ignorance but the simplicity and integrity of mind which Taoism extols, which Christ designated as ‘like a little child’, which Islam implies in the illiteracy of the Prophet. It is not incompatible with learning; nevertheless learning cannot produce it and absorption in learning can destroy it.

For years it was doubted whether Sai Baba was even literate; certainly nobody supposed that he knew Sanskrit. Then one day he gave an exposition which showed learning as well as the perspicacity and rough humour natural to him.

A devotee was massaging his legs and feet, chanting to himself the while in an undertone.

<sup>1</sup> Extract from *The Incredible Sai Baba*, published by Orient Longmans.

<sup>2</sup> meaning *Brahman*.



Sai Baba asked him what he was muttering.

'A Sanskrit verse', he replied, not suspecting that Sai Baba knew enough of scripture to want a more precise answer. However, he asked what verse.

'A verse from the *Gita*'.

'Say it aloud'.

The devotee then recited in Sanskrit, verse 34 of Chapter IV: 'Know that by means of prostration, enquiry and service the *Jnanis* [Enlightened] who have realized the Truth will teach you *Jnana* [Knowledge]'.<sup>3</sup>

'Do you understand this, Nana?' Baba asked him.

'Yes'.

'Then tell me the meaning'.

Nana gave a free rendering in the vernacular but Sai Baba was not satisfied. 'I don't want a paraphrase; I want the strict grammatical meaning, with case, mood and tense'.

Nana gave a literal translation, wondering the while whether Baba knew anything of Sanskrit grammar. He soon found out.

'In *tatviddhi*, what does *tat* stand for?' Baba asked him.

'*Jnana* [knowledge]'.

'What knowledge? Knowledge of what?'

'The knowledge referred to in the previous stanzas'.

'What does *pranipat* mean?'

'Prostration',

'And *pat*?'

'The same'.

'If they meant the same would Vyasa<sup>4</sup> have added two unnecessary syllables?'

'I don't see any difference between them', Nana admitted.

Baba left that for a while and passed on to the next point. 'What does *prasma* mean?'

'Asking questions'.

'And *pariprasna*?'

'The same'.

'Then if they both mean the same was Vyasa off his head to use the longer?'

'I don't see any difference'.

'Next point. What does *seva* mean?'

'Service, such as I am doing now in massaging your feet'.

'Nothing more?'

'I don't see what more it can mean'.

'We'll leave that too. Next point. Krishna tells Arjuna to get *Jnana* [Knowledge] from *Jnanis* [the Enlightened]. Wasn't Krishna himself a *Jnani*?'

'Yes'.

'Then why does he send Arjuna to others instead of giving him *Jnana* himself?'

'I don't know'.

'Wasn't Arjuna a *jiva* [being] and therefore an emanation of *Chaitanya* [Universal Consciousness]?'

'Yes'.

'Then how can Knowledge be given to what is already an emanation of Consciousness or Knowledge?'

Sai Baba then interpreted the verse to mean that it is not *Jnana* [Knowledge] but *ajnana* [non-knowledge or ignorance] that the Guru gives.

Nana, now thoroughly bewildered over what had seemed to him a straightforward verse, asked Sai Baba to expound these points.

<sup>3</sup> तद् विद्धि प्रणिपातेन परिप्रश्नेन सेवया ।  
उपदेक्ष्यन्ति ते ज्ञानं ज्ञानिनस्तत्त्वदर्शिनः ॥

<sup>4</sup> The legendary author of the *Mahabharata*, the epic in which the *Bhagavad Gita* is an episode.

He explained. 'The verse tells us how a disciple is to approach his Guru in order to attain Realization. He must completely surrender body, mind, soul and possessions to the Guru<sup>5</sup>. That is the prostration referred to. The enquiry must be a constant quest for Truth, not questions asked out of mere curiosity or for a wrong motive, such as to trap the Guru. The motive must be pure desire for spiritual progress and Realization. Then the service is not mere physical service such as massaging. For it to be effective there must be no idea that you are free to give or withhold service; you must feel that your body no longer belongs to you since you have surrendered it to the Guru and it exists only to do him service'.

Then followed a catechism on the Guru giving ignorance.

'Isn't Brahma pure Knowledge or Being?'

'Yes'.

'And everything else non-Being or ignorance [non-Knowledge]?'

'Yes'.

'Don't the scriptures declare that Brahma is beyond the range of speech or mind?'

'Yes'.

'Then the speech of the Guru is not Brahma or Knowledge?'

'No'.

'Then you admit that what the Guru says is not Knowledge but ignorance?'

'It seems so'.

'Then the Guru's instruction is simply a piece of ignorance used to remove the disciple's ignorance, just as we use a thorn to remove another thorn from the foot, isn't it?'

'I suppose so'.

'The disciple is a *jiva* [being] whose essential nature is Knowledge, isn't he?'

'Yes'.

'Then there is obviously no need to give him

Knowledge but simply to remove the veil of ignorance that hides the existent Knowledge. This, of course, is not to be done at one stroke since the disciple is immersed in age-old ignorance and needs repeated instruction perhaps through life after life. And what is the nature of this instruction through speech about what is beyond speech? Isn't it like removing a cover? Ignorance conceals the pre-existent Knowledge just as water-plants cover over the surface of a pond. Clear away the plants and you have the water. You don't have to create it; it is there already. Or take another example – a cataract grows on the eye and prevents a man from seeing; remove the cataract and he sees. Ignorance is the cataract. The universe is the efflorescence of the indescribable *Maya*, which is ignorance; yet ignorance is needed to illuminate and dissolve this ignorance.

'Divine Knowledge is to be realized, not taught. Prostration, enquiry and service are the methods by which to obtain the Grace of the Guru.'

'It is an illusion to suppose that phenomena are real. That is the screen of ignorance which hides Knowledge. Tear it off and Brahma or Knowledge will shine forth.'

'Ignorance is the seed of *samsara* [birth and death]. Put the medicine of the Guru's Grace on the eye and the screen of *Maya* lifts, leaving only *Jnana* [Knowledge]. *Jnana* is not something to be attained, it is eternal and self-existent. On the other hand, ignorance has a cause and an end. The root of it is the idea that the devotee is a separate being from God. Remove this and what remains is *Jnana*.'

'Now the question why Krishna referred Arjuna to other Gurus instead of giving him *Jnana* himself. Did Krishna consider other *Jnanis* separate from himself or their teaching different from his? No. So their teaching is his and there is no difference'.

<sup>5</sup> Sai Baba himself did not demand the surrender of the property of his disciples; it is a question of attitude of mind; there must be complete readiness to surrender all.



## GUHAI NAMASIVAYA

By NADHIA SUTARA

**V**ISITORS to Virupaksha Cave, the place where Ramana Maharshi spent about fifteen years of his life, may have noticed a small walled compound a few hundred feet lower down the hill. This compound, which one enters through a small *gopuram* on the eastern side, contains a cave which was, several centuries ago, occupied for many years by a yogi called Guhai Namasivaya. The cave and the few buildings that surround it now bear his name.

Guhai Namasivaya is known to have been born around the year 1548 AD in Kamataka to a pious Saivite couple. His spiritual nature became evident at an early age: he was virtuous in his conduct, adept at his studies and evinced no attachment to worldly matters. Feeling a great longing to receive the grace of the Lord, he embarked at an early age upon a search which led him to Sivananda Desikar, a famous Guru

who lived at Sri Sailam. He became a disciple of this Guru and began to serve him with fervent and selfless devotion.

Sivananda Desikar belonged to the Virasaivite sect. Since Guhai Namasivaya immersed himself in this tradition for many years, a brief account of the beliefs and practices of this sect will throw a little light on the kind of life he led as a young man.

The origin of Virasaivism, an offshoot of Saivism, can be traced back to the twelfth century. Its philosophy has grown out of the twenty-eight *Saiva Agamas* and the writings of its early exponents. Virasaivites are also known as Lingayats on account of the immense importance they attach to their conception of the term '*Linga*'. For them, *Linga* is not merely a physical object, it is synonymous with *chaitanya*, or consciousness, and can be taken to be Siva

Himself. In their philosophy, the term *Linga* can be equated with the *Parabrahman* of the *Upanishads*, but it has other connotations as well. It is the cosmic principle which is the source of the universe and, in its physical form, it is the visible symbol of the consciousness that exists in all beings. In addition, and this is particularly interesting in view of the years Guhai Namasivaya spent at Arunachala, it is often conceived of as a mass of light or a column of blazing fire. Worship of the *Linga* in all its forms is central to Virasaivism.

The goal of Virasaivites is the attainment of oneness with Siva. To reach this exalted state, Virasaivites believe that one must submit to and serve a Guru who has already attained that oneness. Thus, in the Virasaivite tradition, the Guru is given immense importance, for it is he alone who can initiate the disciple, purify him, and lead him to unity with Siva.

For a devout Virasaivite, the spiritual path begins when he approaches a competent Guru and asks him for initiation. Usually, the Guru will first test him for a year to see how serious his spiritual inclinations are. When the Guru is satisfied that the disciple's desire is genuine, he agrees to initiate him and accept him as a disciple. The initiation given by the Guru activates the power of *Linga* in the three bodies, the causal, the subtle and the gross, and removes some or all of the taints or imperfections that reside in each of the three bodies. Virasaivites believe that these taints, called *mala*, prevent the disciple from becoming established in *Linga*, the supreme Siva-consciousness.

In the initiation ceremony the Guru first places his right palm on the head of the disciple, thereby awakening the supreme Self in the causal body in a form that is called *bhavalinga*. Simultaneously, through his power, the Guru attempts to eliminate any impurities that dwell there. Next, the Guru whispers the *mahamantra* 'Nama Sivaya' in the right ear of the disciple. All Saivites hold this to be the best and most potent *mantra*. The act of whispering establishes in the subtle body a form or aspect of the *Linga* which is called *pranalinga*. The power transmitted in

this *mantra diksha* also cleanses the subtle body and removes some of its imperfections. Then, in what is perhaps the most significant part of the ritual, the disciple is given a physical *Linga*. Virasaivites believe the *Linga* is a great light in the innermost heart which can be brought out and shaped into a physical form by the Guru. In the final part of the rite, the Guru draws out the power of *Linga* from the heart of the devotee, establishes it in a physical *Linga*, which is called *ishtalinga*, presents it to the disciple and commands him to worship it as if it were Siva Himself. The handing over of the *ishtalinga* removes the taints that are attached to the physical body.

The Guru then commands the devotee to wear the *ishtalinga* on his body at all times and to worship it three times each day. The Guru also tells him that the *Linga* must on no account be separated from the body since such a separation is the equivalent of spiritual death. In the Virasaivite tradition, it is not permitted to worship Siva in any other form except that of the *ishtalinga* or the *Linga* installed over one's Guru's *samadhi*. Virasaivites are therefore forbidden from worshipping forms of Siva which have been installed in temples.

We can assume that Guhai Namasivaya underwent this initiation ceremony since it is a compulsory rite of passage for all Virasaivites. He probably went through it quite early in his life for it was not uncommon for eight-year-olds to be initiated in this way.

Sivananda Desikar, Guhai Namasivaya's Guru, was an adept of a Virasaivite yoga system called Siva Yoga. When Sivananda Desikar noticed what a mature disciple Guhai Namasivaya was, he initiated him into its practices. From then on Guhai Namasivaya alternated his time between physical service to the Guru and the practice of Siva Yoga. In the course of time he too became an accomplished Siva yogi.

Siva Yoga emphasises *dhyana*, *dharana* and *samadhi*, the last three stages of Patanjali's Raja Yoga system, but it gives them a Virasaivite turn by emphasising meditation on the three *Lingas* which the Guru has established in the three

bodies. In the Siva Yoga system, worship of the *ishtalinga*, the *Linga* given by the Guru to the disciple, is called *dharana*, or uninterrupted concentration; worship of the *pranalinga* established in the subtle body is *dhyana*, or meditation; remembrance and awareness of the *bhavalinga* in the causal body is called *samadhi*. According to Maggeya Mayideva, a Virasaivite saint, "...*samadhi* is the action which includes both radiant worship and meditation on one's own *Linga*".

The yoga practice is performed in the following way: "Setting *ishtalinga* firmly in his left palm, restraining the traffic of his other limbs, restraining the movement of breath through breath control, or *pranayama*, controlling the modifications of the mind, focussing his physical eye on *ishtalinga*, his inner eye on *pranalinga* and his intuitional eye on *bhavalinga*, being one with *Linga* and unifying the triple *Linga* into one -- he lives his own Self."<sup>1</sup>

The goal of the yoga is to find Siva in everything and to discover the fundamental root of that immanent Siva manifestation in one's heart. Though Siva Yoga has a strong *bhakti* component, it must not be forgotten that it is also a variety of Kundalini Yoga. The Siva yogis aim to make contact with the power of the Lord. They believe that the contact finally takes place after the *prana*, rising through the *sushumna*, has passed through all the six *chakras* and moved on to the *brahmarandhra*, located at the top of the head. Accomplished Siva yogis, at the time of their death, voluntarily send all their *pranas* out of their bodies through this *brahmarandhra* and merge into the all-pervading consciousness of Siva.

Guhai Namasivaya practised this system of yoga for many years. When he had thoroughly mastered it, Lord Mallikarjuna, the presiding deity of Sri Sailam, appeared to Guhai Namasivaya in a dream and commanded him to go to Arunachala and remain there as a Guru, giving teachings to mature disciples who approached him. When he related this dream to his Guru, Sivananda Desikar gave him his blessings and told him to carry out the order. Shortly after-

wards, Guhai Namasivaya set out on horseback for Tiruvannamalai.

There is a tradition in Tiruvannamalai that Guhai Namasivaya was accompanied on his journey by Virupaksha Devar, the man who gave his name to Virupaksha Cave. Ramana Maharshi often told his devotees that the two of them were Virasaivites who came from Karnataka to Tiruvannamalai at the same time. It is reported that both of them had served Sivananda Desikar for twelve years. Almost nothing is known about the life of Virupaksha Devar except that he lived in Virupaksha Cave for a long time, and that when he died there his body transformed itself into *vibhuti* (sacred ash). That *vibhuti* is still kept in the cave and *puja* is done to it every day.

On his journey to Tiruvannamalai Guhai Namasivaya came one evening to a village where a wedding was in progress. The head of the house where the wedding was taking place greeted him respectfully, invited him into the house, gave him the place of honour and performed *puja* to him. At the conclusion of the *puja* everyone present received some *vibhuti* from the hand of Guhai Namasivaya. Shortly afterwards, the house was completely destroyed by a fire. Some people, associating the fire with Guhai Namasivaya's visit, poured scorn on him by saying, "The ash given by this yogi has turned the house itself into ash".

Guhai Namasivaya was deeply hurt by this taunt, not personally, but because of the ridicule to which the Lord's *vibhuti* had been subjected. He therefore meditated on Siva and through His grace he was able to restore the house to its former unburnt state. Subsequently, those in the village who had formerly reviled him began to praise and worship him as if he were Siva Himself. Guhai Namasivaya, perturbed by all the fuss his visit had caused, then took a vow that wherever he went in future, he would never again stay in any house.

On reaching Tiruvannamalai he stuck to his

<sup>1</sup> *The Virasaivite Saints -- A Study* by H. Thipperudra Swamy, p. 255



*Sri Arunachaleswarar Temple seen from Guhai Namasivaya shrine up on the Hill.*

vow and lived in public halls, temple flower gardens and occasionally in the surrounding forest. He devoted himself to the practice of Siva Yoga and became so accomplished in it that he was able to spend long periods in *samadhi*, immersed in his inner *Linga*. Each day he visited the entrance of the Arunachaleswarar Temple but went no further because, as a Virasivite, he was prohibited from worshipping there. It seems that Guhai Namasivaya either had a desire to worship in the Temple, or felt that he would benefit by doing so, for each day he would gesture with his hands in the direction of the shrine and think to himself, 'Are you well without worshipping Him?'

There was a *sadhu* called Sivakkira Yogi who noticed that Guhai Namasivaya never went through the Temple entrance, but merely made strange gestures there. He interpreted this strange behaviour as deliberate irreverence and decided to punish him by striking him on the back with his cane. Guhai Namasivaya made no attempt to retaliate, nor did he even reproach his attacker. He merely composed an extempore *venba* verse in Tamil to the effect that the Lord had struck him in order to drive out his evil propensities. When Sivakkira Yogi saw Guhai Namasivaya responding in such a humble way, he immediately realised that he had failed to re-

cognise the latter's greatness.

After this incident Guhai Namasivaya began to feel that it would be appropriate for him to enter the Temple and worship there. While he was contemplating this breach with tradition, his Guru, Sivananda Desikar, unexpectedly appeared, surrounded by a retinue of his devotees. Guhai Namasivaya greeted him with great love and devotion. In return, Sivananda Desikar spoke to him in a friendly and intimate way. Then, to Guhai Namasivaya's surprise, his Guru entered the Temple with his disciples, walked straight to the inner sanctum and began to worship Siva there. Guhai Namasivaya, who had accompanied his Guru into the Temple, followed his Guru's example. He threw himself full-length on the ground and, filled with ecstasy, mentally worshipped the image of Siva that was enshrined there. When he stood up he could see no sign either of his Guru or his fellow disciples, but when he looked at the *Linga* he had been worshipping, he saw only the form of his Guru. Spontaneously, the following verse came to his lips:

**Lord Arunagiri! Form of true knowledge! Guru to whom I call out 'Om Namasivaya'. Do not scorn me as one who is devoid of love for you, who is a**

**liar and without self-respect, who is mentally immature and deficient in intelligence, but take me to yourself and be my Lord!**<sup>2</sup>

Guhai Namasivaya, realising that the appearance of his Guru had been the play of the Lord, interpreted his vision to mean that he now had permission to enter the Temple and worship there. In Virasaivism, the authority of the Guru is paramount. If the Guru sanctions a practice, it immediately becomes acceptable even if it contravenes traditional rules and regulations.

After this incident Guhai Namasivaya decided to take up residence in the entrance to the Temple. Each day he was there, he composed a verse in praise of Arunachala-Siva and put together a flower garland. He would then offer both of them to the *Linga* of Lord Siva in the inner shrine. He described his activities in the following verse:

**Many times have I wreathed Him with flower garlands and adored Him with song garlands. My tongue has sung a thousand melodies in praise of Him. To see Him, the Lord Sonachala [Arunachala], famed all over the earth, I, worthless as I am, need a thousand eyes.**<sup>3</sup>

During this period of his life Guhai Namasivaya supported himself by begging for his food and seemed quite content with his spartan existence: "... to beg for food and eat it, and to come here and sleep at the sacred portals -- this alone is my happiness."<sup>4</sup>

After he had lived like this for some time, Lord Siva appeared in one of his dreams and commanded him: "Remain in a cave on the slopes of our Mountain and carry on your yoga practice there." Guhai Namasivaya accepted the order and moved into a cave on the lower slopes of the eastern side of the Hill. He spent the remainder of his life in this cave and thus acquired the title 'Guhai', which is the Tamil word for cave.

The Mountain soon became the main focus of his *sadhana*. To understand how this came

about, it will be instructive to compare certain aspects of Virasaivism, particularly the teachings on the nature of *Linga*, with the spiritual traditions that are associated with Arunachala. The Virasaivites conceive of *Linga*, in its unmanifest form, as a blazing mass or column of light in the heart of each devotee. At the time of initiation, the Guru draws out this power, installs it in a physical form, the *ishtalinga*, and instructs the disciple to worship it as if it were Siva Himself. In the case of Arunachala, Siva initially appeared as a dazzling, limitless column of light and then later transformed Himself into the physical *Linga* of Arunachala. As Ramana Maharshi remarked on several occasions, the Hill is not the abode of Siva or a symbolic representation of Him, it is, like the *ishtalinga* of Virasaivites, Siva manifesting in a *Linga*-shaped form.

**The whole Hill is sacred. It is Siva Himself. Just as we identify ourselves with a body, so Siva has chosen to identify Himself with the Hill. Arunachala is pure wisdom in the form of a Hill. It is out of compassion for those who seek Him that He has chosen to reveal Himself in the form of a Hill visible to the eye.**<sup>5</sup>

There is a tradition in Tiruvannamalai that the *Linga* in the Arunachaleswarar Temple and the Mountain *Linga* of Arunachala are one and the same. Thus, when Sivananda Desikar manifested and superimposed his image on the Temple *Linga*, Guhai Namasivaya, who had been worshipping that image, received the message that his Guru and Arunachala were identical. This understanding is mentioned in the verse he immediately composed. Furthermore, realising that the vision had authorised him to regard Arunachala as his Guru, he began to worship the Mountain as a Guru *Linga*. He described this new relationship and the effect it had on him in the following verse:

<sup>2</sup> Tiruvarunai Tanivenba v. 11

<sup>3</sup> Tiruvarunai Tanivenba v. 30

<sup>4</sup> Tiruvarunai Tanivenba v. 35

<sup>5</sup> Ramana Pictorial Souvenir p.7

## Selections from the *Arunagiri Antadi*

By Guhai Namasivaya

Lord who stands immanent as the Red Mountain, full of glory, unseen by the black cloud of Vishnu and the lotus-borne Brahma, who on this fair earth can grasp and speak Your greatness, if You, in compassion, deign not to bestow Your grace? (1)

All the worlds are His possession; that which moves all beings is His own movement. He is father to all, and protector of all living things, the Red Mountain Lord. The mental suffering of those who speak of Him will die away and disappear. (45)

When we reflect, neither good nor evil can befall us without the knowledge of the Great One, Who bears a thousand names, the unfathomable Beatitude, Lord Sonagiri. Be still then, my heart! Knowing that all is in Him. (78)

For those who worship His beautiful foot, the Red Mountain Lord, Bestower of Wisdom, will inspire devotion, impart true knowledge, and confer final liberation. Therefore, take to yourself and praise the Five Letters which dispel the evil effects of our deeds, so difficult to allay. (82)

**Taking into my heart as my Guru the Red Mountain Lord [Arunachala], who now stands formless before me, I have put to flight the unutterable arrogance of my good and evil deeds, my soul's indissoluble threefold impurity and my unparalleled accumulation of *karma*.<sup>6</sup>**

In Virasaivism it is the Guru's job to cleanse the devotee of the threefold impurities that cling to the three bodies. This process would have been initiated by Guhai Namasivaya's human Guru, but as the above verse clearly states, it was Arunachala-Siva who completed the job.

By channelling his devotional fervour towards the Mountain, he was able to generate a level of love that he had never experienced from worshipping his *ishtalinga* and practising Siva Yoga:

**Except for the ineffable Lord Annamalai and His consort Unnamulai who sits at His Lordship's side, I have known no other Gods. Or, if I have known them, I have never cherished them in my heart of hearts... Monarch who dwells as the Red Mountain! When I lauded you as the Supreme One, worshipping and praising you with melting heart, when I sought you with hands clasped and with tears running down from my eyes, you granted me my boon, according to my desire. O King of compassion! I find nothing which I can adequately offer in return.<sup>7</sup>**

The boon he sought was nothing less than freedom from the cycle of birth and death:

**My heart! By praising the bounteous one who drives away the effects of evil deeds which torment perpetually the hearts of those in whose mind there is attachment, we have received our boon. We have received the fruit which is proper for this human birth: we have ceased to be reborn.<sup>8</sup>**

In one of his other verses he indicates indirectly that he obtained this boon by thinking continuously and lovingly of the Red Mountain Lord:

**Those who desire the boons of fame, long life and children, all praise the Red Mountain Lord. For those who praise Him continually, incapable of forgetting Him even when asleep, there is no further rebirth.<sup>9</sup>**

<sup>6</sup> *Arunagiri Antadi* v.85

<sup>7</sup> *Arunagiri Antadi* v.87 and 8

<sup>8</sup> *Arunagiri Antadi* v.13

<sup>9</sup> *Arunagiri Antadi* v.27



Guhai Namasivaya makes no mention in his verses of the Siva Yoga that he had perfected in his early life. He may have given it up sometime after his arrival in Tiruvannamalai for he frequently asserts in his poetry that devotion to Siva and a complete surrender to Him are quite sufficient to attain liberation. His own devotional practices were simple and direct. We know, for example, from the writings of his best-known disciple, Guru Namasivaya, that Guhai Namasivaya composed a four-line verse each day in praise of Arunachala: "Mountain to which Guhai Namasivaya, performer of immensely great austerities, makes obeisance, daily adorning Him with a garland of one *venba* verse."<sup>10</sup>

He had begun the practice while he was still living in the Temple entrance, and he seems to have continued it when he moved into the cave on the Hill. He must have composed thousands of verses in praise of the Mountain, but very few of them have been preserved. Only two of his poems have survived: *Arunagiri Antadi* (100 verses) and *Tiruvurunai* 'Tanivenba' (36 verses). A few other stray verses of his can be found in quotations in the writings of other people, but it would seem that the bulk of his poetic output has been irretrievably lost.

Although he was born in Kamataka and spoke Kannada as his mother tongue, he thoroughly mastered the Tamil language. His principal extant poem, *Arunagiri Antadi* is often used as a text in Tamil schools to illustrate the intricacies of the *venba* metre. Ramana Maharshi remarked on several occasions that this metre was reputed to be the most difficult form to compose in; and Ganapati Muni, a superb extempore poet, once confessed that the *venba* metre was so difficult, he was unable to utilise it. Dandapani Swami, a famous 19th century poet and scholar, felt that Guhai Namasivaya's poetry was so good it could only have been composed as a result of divine inspiration. In his verse biography of Guhai Namasivaya he wrote: "Although learned in no language other than Kannada, my Lord Siva caused him to compose *venba* verse of an excellence which only the most eminent of Tamil poets could equal. He could not have done it had he relied on his own inspiration alone."<sup>11</sup>



Guhai Namasivaya Temple

In addition to composing verses, Guhai Namasivaya also performed *pradakshina* of the Mountain and repeated the great *mantra* of Saivism, *Nama Sivaya*. In several of his verses he encourages other people to take up these practices and, in addition, to think continuously of Arunachala.

**Be they of lowly birth, without the advantage of learning, unable to practise the virtue of liberality, it is of no account. Those who perform *pradakshina* of holy Aruna, the Supreme, submit to His rule and become His devotee, will excel even amongst the most excellent... Recite the five-lettered name of the First One, the Red Mountain Lord, and meditate upon it. Thus will the straight path, the steadfast condition and the marks of true knowledge become manifest to you. Your every wish will be granted, and fulfillment will be yours... Taking a necklace of**

<sup>10</sup> *Annamalai Venba* v.7

<sup>11</sup> *Pulavar Puranam*, 'Guhai Namasivayar Sarukkam', v. 14

**rudraksha beads, whose nature is suited to solitude, recite the five letters [Na ma Si va ya] with full voice, one by one, mindful of their meaning. Thus, earnestly seeking the feet of the Lord Sonagiri [Arunachala], whose ornament is the snake, we shall obtain the boon of freedom from death for all eternity... My Heart! Fix your thoughts on the Red Mountain Teacher, who, if you believe in His grace and praise Him daily, will take hold of you, desirous of your good, saying, "Behold, I am here!" If you think of Him in this way, all the painful effects of your actions will subside and go away.<sup>12</sup>**

There is a famous story concerning Guhai Namasivaya which seems to show that although he had great devotion to Arunachala, he was still capable of displaying bursts of extreme anger. One day, according to this story, he took pity on a poor man whose only goat had been killed by a snake just before it was about to give birth. Guhai Namasivaya asked the man to leave the goat's body with him and to collect it the next day. When the man returned to pick up the corpse, he found that not only had the goat been restored to life, it had also given birth to two kids. As news of this miracle spread around the town, some boys from the local weaving community decided to play a joke on him. One boy, pretending to be dead, was carried into the presence of Guhai Namasivaya by his friends. The boys claimed that their friend had died of a snake bite and asked the saint to restore him to life. Guhai Namasivaya, who could see that they were merely making fun of him, cursed them with such vehemence that the boy who was pretending to be dead actually did die. Then Guhai Namasivaya cursed the whole weaving community, saying that they would never prosper or flourish in Tiruvannamalai again. The curse took effect: all the weavers were forced to leave town or take up other occupations because none of them could make a living by weaving in Tiruvannamalai. In the years that followed, all attempts to re-establish weaving businesses in the town failed.

Guhai Namasivaya made better use of his power and his anger on another occasion, with equally devastating results. A barbarian king called Agittu once invaded and looted the town. He murdered many of the inhabitants, abducted a large number of the town's young women and, in an act of deliberate desecration, he set up camp in one of the Temple courtyards and roasted an ox there. When news of this reached Guhai Namasivaya, he became angry and rebuked Lord Arunachaleswarar in the following manner:

**Lord Sonesan! Are Your three eyes, including the eye on Your forehead, fast asleep? Has someone stolen away the battle-axe and trident You wield? Haven't You any self-respect? Shall all Your devotees be abandoned to an accursed death?<sup>13</sup>**

Arunachaleswarar accepted the justness of the complaint and, for the sake of Guhai Namasivaya, decided to intervene in the matter. That night the Lord appeared to Agittu in a dream in the form of a *sadhu* and struck him on the back with his stick. Agittu woke up immediately and noticed that on the spot where he had been beaten there was a rash which soon grew and developed into a large swollen abscess. He consulted some of the elders of the town, recounting his dream to them. They all advised him that he could only save his life by leaving the Temple. Agittu, not wanting any further punishment, abandoned the Temple to the *pujaris* and the town's devotees, who cleared up his mess and reconsecrated the holy shrine. However, Agittu could not escape the wrath of Guhai Namasivaya and Lord Arunachaleswarar. His abscess grew and worms appeared in it which gnawed away at his healthy flesh. All remedies failed; including one horrific experiment in which he applied foetuses, taken from pregnant women he had slaughtered for the purpose, to the wound. When he eventually died in great agony, his death was celebrated throughout

<sup>12</sup> *Arunagiri Antadi* v. 26, 53, 42, 22

<sup>13</sup> *Tiruvannamalai Tanivenba* v. 25

Tiruvannamalai. The local people anointed themselves with oil, put on new clothes, ate a special meal and danced in exaltation.

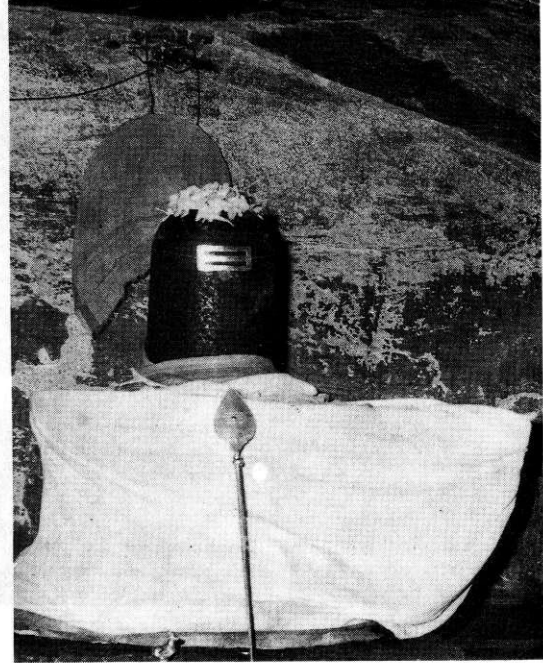
When Guhai Namasivaya reached 100 years of age, the thought occurred to him: "The span allotted to man by Brahma is 100 years. That is enough for this worldly life." He had his disciples prepare a *samadhi* pit for him, intending to enter it and give up his life there. But, as he was lowering himself into the hole, Lord Siva spoke to him, ordering him to stay a further 100 years on earth. His resigned response to the Lord's intervention is recorded in one of his verses:

**To me, a devotee of blissful Lord Arunagiri, who is kinder to me than any mother or wise father, it matters little whether He ordains that I should die, or that I should suffer on in this delusive body, in spite of my 100 years.<sup>14</sup>**

One hundred years later he had another *samadhi* pit prepared in the cave that now bears his name. Before lowering himself into it, he composed his final two verses:

**I will no longer bear this delusive body, which is the dwelling place of all the 360 diseases known to our science. Lord Arunesan, who wears in His locks the holy waters and the waning moon! May you wipe out at once this birth for the sake of your solitary devotee... We have found refuge at the feet of our father, Lord Sonagiri. We have crossed the threefold waters of our final birth. Behold! No longer do we bow down to the lotus-born Brahma, the creator, nor to Yama [the god of death] who rides the powerful buffalo.<sup>15</sup>**

After saying these words, he descended into the *samadhi* pit and seated himself in the full-lotus position. Then, utilising a practice he had mastered during his days as a Siva yogi, he gave up his life by sending the *pranas* out of his body via the *brahmarandhra* at the top of his head. His disciples erected a *Linga* on the spot and instituted worship of it. Daily *puja* has been conducted there right down to the present day.



*Guhai Namasivaya Linga*

Thus ended the life of a great Arunachala *bhakta*. His long stay on the Mountain had taught him the simple truth that those who surrender lovingly and completely to the Red Mountain Lord have all their sins and *karma* washed away:

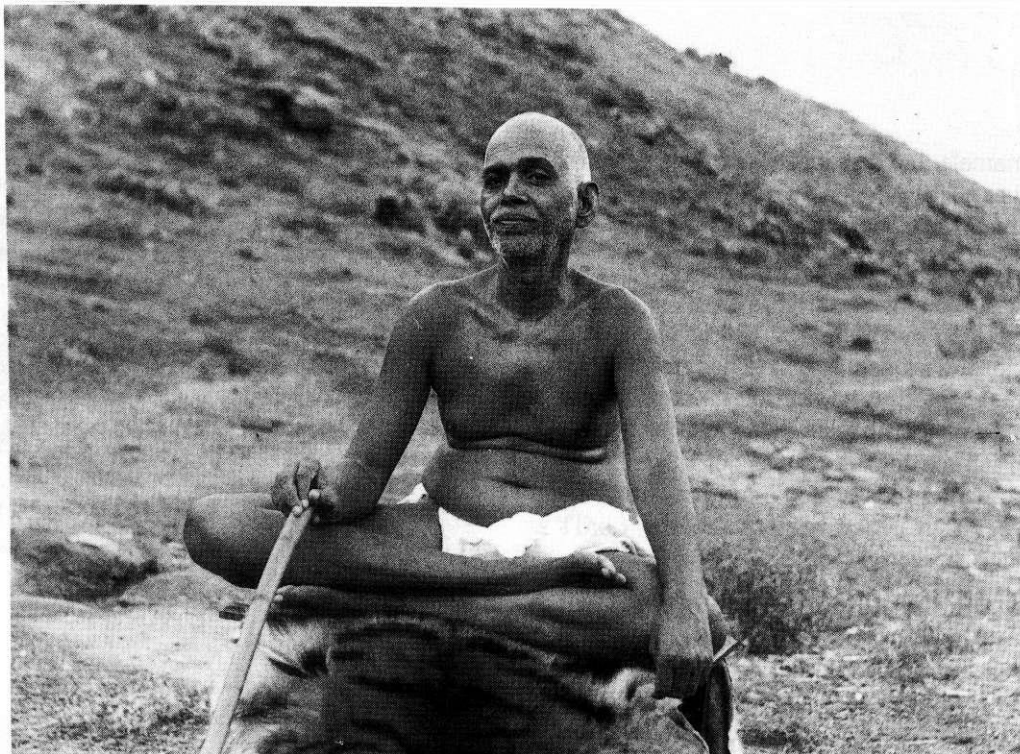
**I have perceived the means of dissolving away all the manifold maladies which beset my life and crush me down. I have taken into my heart the lotus feet of the Red Mountain Lord. What then do I lack? ... For those who are without love for the Red Mountain Lord, who cleaves away falsehood and subjects us to His rule, will it be of any benefit to mortify the body? ... Whether He brings ruin upon our heads, or whether He lifts us up through His grace, repeat the name of Lord Sonesan and believe in His word.<sup>16</sup>**

<sup>14</sup> *Tiruvurunai Tanivenba* v. 33

<sup>15</sup> *Tiruvurunai Tanivenba* vv. 20, 18

<sup>16</sup> *Arunagiri Antadi* vv. 67, 89, 40

(All translations into English are by Robert Butler.)



## CONSCIOUSNESS, MIND AND MATTER

By Sqn. Ldr. N. VASUDEVAN

A sequel to: "Whither Modern Science? -- What Is Consciousness?" published in *The Mountain Path.*, October 1988 issue.

**I**N my article "Whither Modern Science? -- What is Consciousness?" I stated: "It turns out that we can no longer talk of the behaviour of the particle apart from the process of observation."<sup>1</sup> *In other words, the observer affects his observation.* In a letter to me, John Archibald Wheeler (a colleague of Einstein and the co-inventor of the hydrogen bomb) wrote: "Yes, how the brain or the observer or, perhaps better, *observer-participancy* comes into the story is central -- when we finally learn how to take it into account".

This observer-participancy is not limited to the world of particle physics. It extends to the external world, including the human body. In my article quoted above, I have taken the case of Sirius. Suppose Sirius ceased to exist before my birth. Yet in effect, I am seeing Sirius, for the

light waves which travel from the star at its extinction will take a few light years to reach us and the "centre" from which the light radiation emanated will continue for some time, giving a false *imaging* of Sirius. Similarly the Sun will take 8 minutes of false imaging and the body a few nano/milli-seconds. Two events occur:

1. The time at which all these inputs reach the brain can be called the "now" of the brain. For instance, you see Sirius at 208031 GMT and Arcturus at 208032 GMT. Although they are many light years away, our seeing the imagings of these stars for all practical purposes is so short, that they can fall into a tiny centre called the "now" of the brain.

<sup>1</sup> Werner Heisenberg, *The Representation of Nature in Contemporary Physics*, Daedalus, Vol. 95 87 No.3 (1958) pp.95-108.

2. The "now" of the brain acknowledges cognition after the events have already happened. The events happen in the *subjective past*. And these events which the brain cognises are imagings of real happenings. The enormity of them can be staggering. Recently, I think in September 1986, scientists have discovered a heavenly body, a quasar, which they say is between 9000 million and 18,000 million light-years away (i.e., the imagings).

The margin of error works out at 52,775,496 followed by no fewer than fifteen zeros, in miles, ignoring leap years. The light from it has taken most of the age of the universe to arrive (what an error in subjective pastness!) to the observer.

This leads us to the situation: *We only know the processed output of the brain and not the intrinsic nature of events as they are at the real source.* The world (including the human body) we see is a processed imaging. This can be easily proved by stimulating the functional arrangement of the brain by appropriate energy states, and you will experience the sensation of seeing Sirius or scratching your head. It conclusively proves that the world we perceive is interpenetrating co-existing images in the subjective past. In this context, I would like to define matter as imagings processed by the brain out of inputs from *compresent* (a word used by Russell meaning co-existence of events presenting a single entity to the brain) energy states referenced and ranged about the "now" of the brain.

### World Cognition

It needs no scientific or mathematical proof that we are aware of the physical body and the physical universe. Hereafter, I shall call the awareness of the world of matter (imaging in the subjective past), which includes the human body, *world cognition*. World cognition is not intrinsic with the physical world. It is common knowledge that a drunken man may not know when his bodily garments are removed while a sober man does. When in deep sleep (i.e., no brain processing of sense inputs and no memory mode func-

3

## God, The Unknown I

By Martin Leo

How is it that I, God, remain unknown? Why is it that I, the eternal One, I, the Omnipresent, Omnipotent, Omniscient One remain unrecognized?

"In My undivided wholeness I am known only to Myself: there is no other."

In my Self-expression I, the alone One, remain unrecognized. Why?

"Does not recognition imply separation? Division? Creation? And am I not the Unborn, the Undivided, the Complete? And what is Man that he could be mindful of Me? Is not man part of My Self-expression, and is he not essentially My own Spirit manifest? And Yet he asks for recognition of My Being, forgetting that he is already my Being.

What foolishness is this? Who is it but Man that questions My undivided Being?"

I, God the Unknown,  
will remain Unknown  
just so long as Man  
remains Known.

In the absence of the Known  
there AM I,  
GOD  
THE UNKNOWN.

tion) the universe of matter, although there, is not cognised. It is therefore quite clear that world cognition is not intrinsic to the universe of matter. Since the sense inputs are not the source of cognition, and since the functioning by itself (in deep sleep, the brain is functioning and the brain waves can be detected by scientific instrumentation) is not producing cognition, there must be awareness coincidental with the brain processing. This is I-AM-NESS.

### I-AM-NESS and Mental Awareness

The first thought that rises in the mind is I-AM-NESS. Here, I would like to treat the brain as a "black box", an awareness processor, without getting involved in its manifold functions or its organic complexity. The brain in this sense is a set of logic circuits, the central and key activating input being I-AM-NESS. This is the subtle mind or the pure mind. Hereditary information content, plus acquired tendencies in this life, plus memory are input to brain processing, forming the *gross mind*. Since sense-inputs are channeled through the body, the *gross mind* develops the I-am-the-body notion. It is this notion that a man of imaging living in the subjective past, what we call common man or ordinary man (in fact, the ignorant man), calls as 'I'. This 'I' subsists in subjective pastness and drifts into "mine mode". He begins to call my wife, my children, my home, my car, my garden, my property etc. He creates a "mine enclosure", and compares this "mine enclosure" with those of the Joneses. Competition, distrust, envy, hatred and strife occur. This is the world we live in.

In a "mine-mode", relationships with "beings" and "things" in a world of imaging and living in the subjective past, real peace and happiness are impossible. This is because a *shadow mind* (the mind with the "I-am-the-body" notion) is chasing a shadow entity called a "being" or "thing". The shadow mind derives

pleasure by making "beings" and "things" mine. Thus sex and sense-gratification, greed and craving for material possession, exploitation of man by man for egotistic gains become the aim of life – shadow mind entangled in a shadow world. A Sanskrit word describes the situation: *maya*, or *that which is not*. Transient pleasures and pain, hope and despair, health and illness are characteristic of this situation. What is the way out?

Sri Ramana Maharshi says: "By a steady and continuous investigation into the nature of the mind, the mind is transformed into *that* to which the 'I' refers and that is, in fact, the Self or pure consciousness. Since every other thought can occur only after the rise of the 'I'-thought, and since the mind is nothing but a bundle of thoughts, it is only through the enquiry "*Who am I?*" that the mind subsides. Moreover, the integral 'I'-thought, implicit in such enquiry, having destroyed all other thoughts is itself finally destroyed or consumed, just as the stick used for stirring the burning funeral pyre is consumed. If, in this manner, the mind becomes absorbed in the Heart, the ego or 'I', which is the centre of the multitude of thoughts, finally vanishes and pure consciousness or Self, which subsists during all the states of the mind, alone remains resplendent. It is this state, in which there is not the slightest trace of the 'I'-thought, that is the true Being of One Self."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> *Words of Grace*, published by Sri Ramanasramam.

### On Unity

**What is here is also there;  
What is there, also here.  
Who sees multiplicity but not  
the indivisible Self in all  
Wanders on and on from death to death.**

**-- From the Katha Upanisad**

# ISANYA DESIKAR

By EDUARDO LINDER

**I**SANYA Desikar, whose *math* is located just outside Tiruvannamalai on the old *pradakshina* road, was a distinguished yogi who, like many before and after him, have felt the spiritual call of Arunachala. He came and settled at the foot of the Mountain quite late in his life, but nevertheless, by virtue of his intense and personal relationship with Arunachaleswarar, he can still be regarded as one of the major saints of Arunachala.

He was born in 1750 in a small village called Rayavelur which is located near the River Palar in northern Tamil Nadu. His parents, Tiruneelakantha Desikar and Uma Parvathy, belonged to the local farming community. Prior to Isanya Desikar's birth his parents had been unable to produce a son for many years. To solve the problem they had prayed to Lord Murugan at Arunachala and had asked him to bless them with a son. When their prayers were answered the child was given the name of Kandappan, one of the many names of Lord Murugan.

It soon became clear that he was a precocious child both spiritually and intellectually. When he was first sent to school he astounded his teachers by reciting the lessons before they had even been taught. Then, while the other boys struggled to catch up, he would sit quietly in meditation. His father gave him Siva *diksha* at the age of seven and then bestowed the title of 'Desikar' on him.

The title, which may have been a hereditary one, entitled and empowered the son to carry out the duties and functions of a guru.

Isanya Desikar (a name he acquired much later in life) spent most of his childhood uneventfully, mostly sitting in meditation in his family house. When he reached the age of sixteen, his father decided that it was time for him to get married. While Tiruneelakantha was looking for a bride from amongst his own relatives, Isanya Desikar, who had no inclination to get married, appealed to his mother; "I don't want to become a *samsari*. We have been the slaves of Lord Siva since the days of our distant ancestors. My mind longs to see all the holy places associated with Him. Instead of marrying me off, give me permission to go on a pilgrimage." His mother granted his request and soon afterwards he set off on an extensive South Indian *yatra*.

A major turning point in his life occurred at Chidambaram. After he had visited the temple there and had *darshan* of Lord Nataraja, he went to visit Sri Mouna Swami, a local saint who was reputed to be a *siddha purusha*. Mouna Swami lived on the northern bank of the Ayi tank in Chidambaram and appeared to be immersed in *samadhi* for most of the time. Isanya Desikar felt an immediate attraction to him, so much so that he decided to stay on in Chidambaram in the hope of getting both *sannyasa diksha* and

*upadesa* from him. For some time Isanya Desikar begged for his food and had *darshan* of Mouna Swami twice a day, but the Swami himself appeared to pay little attention to him. Feeling that the Swami was ignoring him because he was not yet a mature enough devotee, Isanya Desikar decided that he would try to compensate for this lack by giving Mouna Swami a display of his earnestness. He took off all his clothes except for his loincloth and went and stood before Mouna Swami during one of the heavy winter rains. When Mouna Swami saw him standing there, undaunted by the heavy rain and without the least trace of a shiver on his bare body, he took the blanket which was covering his own body and wrapped it around the shoulders of Isanya Desikar. Then, to Isanya Desikar's delight, he gave him the desired initiation and *upadesa* and then put him into a state of deep meditation. To celebrate his acceptance, Isanya Desikar composed a five-verse poem in praise of Mouna Swami. In the first verse he extolled the greatness of his new teacher:

**Ever perfect one! You have manifested in the world as the one who is steeped in the pure bliss of the experience of the expansive infinity which has no attributes. [You have manifested] as the Self-realised silence and as the embodiment of truth and grace to bring harmony among various beliefs. I, keeping my head at the feet of your devotees, regard you as the Lord Himself who dances in space at Chidambaram and who is worshipped by the three worlds....**

In the fifth and final verse, Isanya Desikar acknowledges that he cannot attain liberation through his own efforts or through his religious knowledge. He therefore requests Mouna Swami to bestow his grace on him and grant him absorption in the Self:

**O Guru possessing Supreme Knowledge, known as the silent Guru living on the banks of the Ayi tank, what is the use of studying the scriptures and the many different arts? Of what avail is an extensive study of Vedanta and Siddhanta, expounding their meaning, or following**

**the ways of various religions? Is it easy to transcend samsara? Bless me with a supremely blissful absorption in the Self, in which one can see the emergence of your effulgent grace.**

It is not recorded how long Isanya Desikar spent with Mouna Swami. It may well have been several years because, when he finally decided to leave Chidambaram and carry on with his pilgrimage, he had the long matted hair of an ascetic yogi and the reputation for being a *siddha*, a yogi with great powers. His biographer<sup>1</sup> reports that he travelled stark naked and carried only a few insignia which marked him out as being a member of the South Indian order of *siddha sannyasins*.

After leaving Chidambaram he wandered around for some time and met at least two famous saints: a fellow *siddha* called Dakshinamurti Swami who lived at Tiruvarur and a man called Ugandalinga Jnana Desikar, a Guru and a *brahmanishta* who lived in a village called Sikkal near Nagappattinam. When his wanderlust had abated he decided to settle down and undergo a long period of solitary meditation. He soon found a suitable place – a large uninhabited cave on a small hill. The nearest town was Vettaalam, which is only a few miles from Tiruvannamalai, and the nearest village, a settlement called Pakkam, supplied him with his few bodily needs. He spent many years in this cave, apparently trying to immerse himself in the state of *nirvikalpa samadhi*.

During his stay there he was partially supported by a local farmer called Muthuswami Udaiyar. This man visited the cave every day to offer milk from his cows. After several years of devoted service Muthuswami Udaiyar's labours were indirectly rewarded when he found a hoard of treasure while he was digging the foundations of a house he was planning to build for himself.

<sup>1</sup> The information in this article has been gleaned from a Tamil work, *The Life History of Tiruvannamalai Sri Isanya Jnana Desikar and his Garland of Hymns on Sri Annamalai* by C. Subbiah Swamikal. It was published in Madras in 1921 and seems to be the only reliable source of information on the saint's life.



His neighbours refused to believe that he had come across the treasure accidentally. Instead, they decided that Isanya Desikar had used his *siddhis* to manufacture gold coins so that he could pay Muthuswami Udaiyar for his milk. The villagers who believed in this version of events went en masse to Isanya Desikar's cave and, after singing his praises in many ways, requested that he produce some gold coins for them as well. Isanya Desikar realised that he would no longer be able to meditate peacefully in an area where he had a reputation for manufacturing gold. So, when the importuning crowds had dispersed, he quietly slipped away and walked continuously until he reached Arunachala. He found a quiet place on the banks of the Goraknath tank in the western part of Tiruvannamalai and began to resume his meditation.

It was not long before someone else came forward to support him. A local man called Arunachala Chettiar had become depressed because he had been unable to produce a son even after many years of marriage. Many people had told him that his luck would change if he could only receive the grace of a holy man. He set out in search of such a person, encountered Isanya Desikar sitting in *samadhi* by the side of the Goraknath tank and began to serve him with great devotion.

Shortly afterwards, some *siddhas*, who resided at Arunachala but who were invisible to ordinary men, came to Isanya Desikar and escorted him to an uninhabited mountain cave. Inside there was a large mound of ripe fruits. The thought occurred to him that if one of these fruits was given to Arunachala Chettiar, he would beget a son. One of the *siddhas* read his mind and responded by saying, "You may fulfil his desire accordingly". The *siddhas* escorted Isanya Desikar back to his place by the tank after first giving him many of the fruits that he had seen in the cave. The fruit which was given to Arunachala Chettiar produced the desired result. Arunachala Chettiar was later given a bag of *vibhuti* by Isanya Desikar. It became a family heirloom and several generations of his family found that they could overcome any worldly problems by worshipping it.

Muthuswami Udaiyar, the man who had served Isanya Desikar for many years while he had been meditating near Vettavalam, had become very unhappy when his holy man had suddenly and mysteriously disappeared without giving him any explanation. However, he was not left in this state of dejection for very long. One night Lord Arunachaleswarar Himself appeared in one of his dreams in the guise of Isanya Desikar and said, "Dear son, don't feel sad. I am staying at the northeastern part of Arunachala. You can come and see me there."

Then Arunachaleswarar appeared in His own divine form to Isanya Desikar and told him, "Dear son, I have asked a devotee to come to the northeastern part of Arunachala to see you. Go there and meet him."

As Isanya Desikar was walking towards the appointed rendezvous he began to compose some verses which were later known as *Svanubhava Stotra Pamalai (Garland of Hymns of Self-Experience)*. These eventually numbered 117, all of which were addressed to Lord Arunachala. From the second verse onwards it becomes clear that in discovering Arunachala he had found both his true Guru and his God.

**(2) O Arunachala! Your devotees, recognising You as the infinite reality who is grace embodied in the form of fire, beyond the reach of Brahma and Vishnu, sang in praise of Your greatness. I, who have in a miraculous way found You and adopted You as my Guru, may say many things about You, but all I really know is that You are the great and adored Lord Arunagiri. I am unable to say anything more.**

In another of his verses he explains that it was Arunachala's power which stilled his mind and enabled him to discern the real nature of the Mountain.

**(57) O Sat-chit-ananda, who stands as 'The Self is He', by the power of the Guru's love I recognised You as God. I praise and bow to the blissful form, vast as the sky. You made me silent; now grant me liberation.**

The poem is a mixture of different metres and the mood of the verses varies from self-deprecation to ecstasy. It may well be that they were composed on many different occasions, for the author sometimes complains about his faults and laments over his spiritual bondage, whereas at other times he exalts in the liberation which the grace of the Lord has granted him. Since it is traditional in Tamil literature for *jnanis* to write verses in which they take a devotee's standpoint and claim to be ignorant, deluded, suffering, etc., one cannot state authoritatively that one verse was written during his *sadhana* and another after his liberation. However, although the chronology of the verses will always remain problematic, there seems to be little doubt that Isanya Desikar eventually attained liberation through the redeeming grace of Arunachala. In one verse, for example, he sings:

**(45) In my identity with the body I had the sense of 'I' and 'mine' in the three states of waking, dream and sleep. By Your gracious love this sense has vanished like a dream. You made me turn to You. O Arunachala, You who burn like a flame, You burnt away my Self-forgetfulness.**

The style reveals a familiarity with some of the great works of the Tamil *bhakti* tradition, but the style is distinctively his own. Also, it is interesting to note that the language and philosophy of the verses are uncompromisingly *advaitic*. Many of the great Arunachala saints who have written about the Mountain were Saivite in orientation and this is clearly reflected in the language of their poetry. Isanya Desikar was brought up and educated in the Saivite tradition but his verses show that he felt more at home with the language and concepts of *Vedanta*:

**(81) Is there any truth apart from the Self? Great men live without the illusory mind-screen, rooted in the reality of blissful no-thought. Abiding in the Self, totally free, they are the wise ones, free from karma.**

He is enough of a Saivite to revere the Mountain as Siva Himself and its power as *sakti* but none of the standard ideas of *Siddhanta* can be found

in his verses. When he talks of Siva, he is not conceiving of Him in a mythic or even an anthropomorphic form. He instead seems to regard Siva as being simultaneously pure awareness, the energy which created the manifest world, and the substance out of which the world was created.

**(87) In the past, present and future, You, the form of grace, abide as the lofty Siva-bliss which is the one life in all life...**

**(66) You are the Lord, the Guru, intelligence, the law, our goal. You are absorbed in the Self and You abide as the Self which is everything, with nothing separate from it. In a myriad ways You engage in sport in the world of forms: I as You, You as I. O Supreme Infinite Siva! You shine within the devout as the Self that is awareness.**

Scattered throughout the verses there are occasional hints of the path that Isanya Desikar himself followed. Believing that the best and highest form of devotion to Arunachala could be practised by abiding in a thought-free state, he directed his efforts towards cultivating an inner silence.

**(58) If you think without thoughts of that eternally blissful One who shines everywhere as the Divine, as Sakti, as Siva -- that bhakti itself is mukti. Thus proclaim the scriptures...**

**(72) Realising that all we have learned is but the work of God, and knowing that we cannot know anything by ourselves, to be in silence is the jnana which vouches freedom from rebirth. Speak not. See the unborn Self as Chit, as Siva. That seeing is illumination.**

When we left Isanya Desikar, he was walking towards the northeastern corner of the Mountain to keep his appointment with the devotee who had kept him supplied with milk for so many years. They soon found each other and resumed their former relationship. Isanya Desikar then chose a spot under a banyan tree on the southern side of the Isanya tank and was soon spending most of his time immersed in *samadhi*.



Sri Isanya Desikar, with tigers

Muthuswami Udaiyar often visited him there and each time he came he would bring food for Isanya Desikar and for any other devotees who happened to be with him.

When no devotees were near him, Isanya Desikar, who was then about sixty years of age, liked to sit naked, absorbed in *samadhi*. On such occasions Lord Arunachaleswarar Himself sometimes used to manifest in the form of a tiger to guard him and to prevent anyone from disturbing him. Isanya Desikar knew this was happening. Each time he came out of *samadhi* he would fondly run his fingers through the fur of the tiger and address him lovingly as "Arunachala, my Lord." Occasionally other tigers from the forest would come along and help Arunachaleswarar with His guard duties. Isanya Desikar knew that the presence of the tigers would intimidate other people, so whenever he saw that devotees were about to visit him he would send the tigers away by saying, "My devotees may get frightened if they see you. Please keep away."

After some time Isanya Desikar moved to a nearby flower garden and took up residence there. Muthuswami Udaiyar, the man who had been feeding him for many years, persuaded the owners of the flower garden to donate a small portion of it so that Isanya Desikar could remain undisturbed there. The owners agreed and handed over about a third of the flower garden. Sri C. Subbiah, who wrote a biography of Isanya Desikar, states that from the day he took up residence in the north-eastern corner of the flower garden he became known to the world as 'Isanya Desikar', for *isanya* in Tamil means 'northeast'. This may well be true but it seems just as likely that he acquired his name either by sitting by the side of the Isanya tank or merely by living for so many years on the northeastern side of the Mountain.

As Isanya Desikar's fame began to spread, he began to attract devotees and disciples. One of them was a man called Pandy Arunachala Swamy, who is chiefly remembered for coming to a macabre end after going against his Guru's

wishes. He was brought up in Pondicherry but after he came under the influence of Isanya Desikar he took *sannyasa* and moved to Tiruvannamalai. Since he had no family, his property was lying unclaimed in Pondicherry. It should be remembered that as a *sannyasin* he had no rights to it. Under Hindu law, the taking of *sannyasa* has the same legal implications as physical death. The *sannyasin's* relatives take over his property, and if there are no relatives, his former possessions become the property of the State. Pondy Arunachala Swamy knew all this, so one day he suggested to Isanya Desikar, "Why don't I go back to Pondicherry dressed as a householder and claim all my former property from the French government. Then I could sell it all and give all the proceeds to you."

Isanya Desikar strongly disapproved of his disciple's plan. "We don't want any money," he said. "And furthermore, the *sannyasin's* robe, once donned, should never be removed. If you are still intent on going, I must warn you. You will not return!"

Pondy Arunachala Swamy, who was aggrieved that the government had ended up with all his property, ignored the warning and went to Pondicherry to carry out the plan. He convinced the French government that he was the rightful owner of his ancestral property, took possession of it and auctioned it off. He converted the proceeds into gold, which he loaded on the back of a bullock. His intention was to drive the bullock all the way to Tiruvannamalai with its valuable cargo strapped to its back. However at the moment of his departure, when he struck the bullock with a stick to make it start, the bullock, normally a very placid animal, turned on him and gored him to death. The cargo then became the property of the Pondicherry government, but instead of hiding it in their treasury they decided to use some of it to commemorate the strange and unfortunate accident. They made a statue of Pondy Arunachala Swamy being gored by the bullock and installed it on the western side of Karuvadaikuppam near Muthialpet. The statue can still be seen there today.

A suitable epitaph for Pondy Arunachala

Swami can be found in one of Isanya Desikar's verses to Arunachala:

**(48) Those who ceaselessly seek to find their treasure in gold do not find anything in it. Not knowing themselves, they vainly talk about this and that. Spiritual seekers realise that You alone are the treasure, You are the world, the creation, the Lord, the Mother. They [the spiritual seekers] know no one else but You, O Lord of Arunachala.**

Isanya Desikar must have been one of the first Gurus in India to have a Western devotee. His name was Ayton<sup>2</sup> and he was the district collector for the region which extended from Tiruvannamalai to Vriddhachalam. He had heard about the greatness of Isanya Desikar and approached him in the hope of getting a cure for a chronic complaint. When Isanya Desikar saw him coming he issued his standard warning to the tiger who had been keeping guard over him: "Lord Arunachala! A European is coming. He may get frightened on seeing you. You had better stay away." The tiger promptly withdrew.

Ayton came near and prayed to Isanya Desikar to cure him of the tuberculosis from which he had been suffering for many years. Isanya Desikar smiled and after a brief pause spat on the ground. The moment he spat, Ayton was cured of the disease. Ayton then spoke to the holy man with both trepidation and devotion. "Swami, I have recently acquired a large amount of land. I would like to offer Your Holiness as much as you need. It can be a permanent endowment in your name."

Isanya Desikar smiled and asked tauntingly, "Will your land yield crops even during a drought?" Then, pointing his finger towards Arunchaleswarar and Apeetakuchamba, he added, "Here is a householder with two children and a large family. It is proper to give him any amount of land, but it is not proper to gift it to me, a *sannyasin*."

<sup>2</sup> I have selected the name Ayton as a plausible British rendering of the Tamil letters ஐடன். The correct name may well have been something phonetically similar such as Eton or Heighton.

Ayton took leave of him but returned on many occasions. He got into the habit of addressing him reverentially and affectionately as 'Tata', which means 'grandfather'. It is said that before he began any new project he would always meditate on Isanya Desikar and invoke his blessing by saying, "Tata, please lead me in this work. It is your work." At the annual *Deepam* festival Ayton would take the lead in dragging the huge Temple chariot through the streets of Tiruvannamalai. However, before moving the chariot for the first time he would pick up one of the ropes and exclaim loudly: "Tata, you hold the rope and lead us all!" The local people were all astounded that such a prominent British official should have such devotion towards a naked *sannyasin*.

Ayton made it a point always to attend and lead this annual festival, but one year he found himself stranded by floods on the southern side of the river Pennar just before the beginning of the festival. Knowing that he was expected to be at Arunachala to start the chariot on its journey, he called out to his mount: "Horse, I must see Tata and I must also get the Car Festival started. Think of Tata and cross the river!" Without a moment's delay or hesitation, the horse leaped into the raging torrent of water and effortlessly waded to the other side. None of the other people who were stranded dared to follow for they were all convinced that it would be suicidal to enter the surging waters.

At the moment when Ayton put his faith in Tata and leaped into the water, Isanya Desikar opened his eyes after a long meditation and stretched out his hand in a southerly direction. When one of his disciples asked what he was doing, he replied, "If someone falls into a river, should we not save him?"

Ayton arrived safely and took Isanya Desikar's blessings to start the festival. When the news of Ayton's spectacular river crossing and Isanya Desikar's role in it spread among the *Deepam* crowds, many of them came to the northeastern side of the hill to see the man who had been responsible for the miracle. The guardian tigers had to withdraw for several days until

**I asked a child, walking with a candle,  
"From where comes that light?"  
Instantly he blew it out.  
"Tell me where  
It is gone -- then I will tell you  
Where it came from."**

**-- Hasan of Basra**

the crowds subsided. Several of the new visitors turned out to be mature seekers who were looking for guidance from a Guru. Isanya Desikar accepted some of them as disciples, had a small thatched shed built to accommodate them and instructed them by writing a guide to liberation entitled *Jnana Kattalai*.

In 1829, when Isanya Desikar was seventy-nine years old, he realised that death would soon come to him. He foresaw the time and date of his passing and wrote the information on a palm-leaf which he then concealed under his seat. On the 26th day of the Tamil month of *Margazhi* he told his oldest disciple somewhat cryptically, "Lord Nataraja is going to the thousand-pillared *mantapam*. We too should go there." Then he sat in meditation, facing north, with a slight smile on his face. Muthuswami Udaiyar, realising that his master was about to give up his body, asked him, "What now will be the fate of us devotees?"

Isanya Desikar replied, "Has not your family already ripened as a bunch?" and promptly abandoned his body. His devotees chose a *samadhi* site under a *bilva* tree nearby because they recollected that Isanya Desikar had occasionally stood there and gazed lovingly at the Mountain. When the palm-leaf which predicted his death was found shortly after his burial, the devotees had one last proof of their master's powers.

# J. KRISHNAMURTI AND THE DIRECT PERCEPTION OF TRUTH

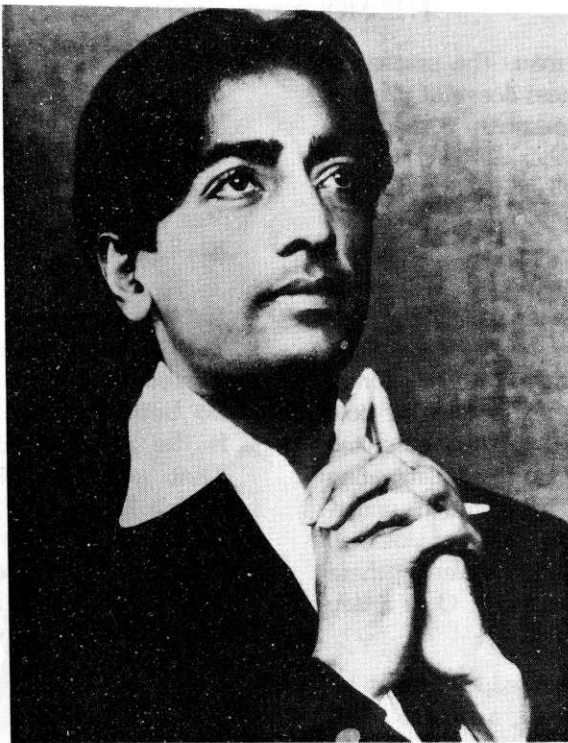
By Professor P. KRISHNA

**K**RISHNAMURTI was one of the most original thinkers of our time who investigated fundamental questions about the purpose of life, the true meaning of love, religion, time and death without seeking answers in any books or scriptures and without accepting any belief, organized religion or system of thought. Like the Buddha, he sought the answers to these questions through observation, inquiry and self-knowledge and arrived at a direct perception of truth which lies beyond intellectual concepts, theories and descriptions. He was not a scholar or an intellectual; he did not deal with theories and concepts, he spoke only from his own investigations and observations. What he has said may have been said earlier by others but he came upon the truth of it for himself. In an age dominated by science and the intellect, he has pointed out the fundamental limitations of thought and knowledge as a means of real change. In this article I propose to reflect on some of the essential aspects of his teaching and some of the great truths he has expounded.

## **The Source of All Human Problems Lies in the Psyche of the Individual**

Over the million years or more that man has existed on this planet his knowledge of the external world has evolved greatly and increased

his power over it. Inwardly, in his consciousness, man has not evolved very much. Psychologically he is still very much like the primitive man -- fearful and insecure, forming groups (religious and national), fighting and preparing for war, seeking advantages for himself and hating others. He is now able to travel to the moon and communicate around the globe in a matter of minutes but he still finds it difficult to love his neighbour and live in peace. Modern man is as brutal, selfish, violent, greedy and possessive as the primitive man of a million years ago, though he may now be able to hide himself behind a lot of noble-sounding words and thoughts. This lopsided development of the human being has brought him close to self-annihilation. He stands now on the brink of nuclear war, just a hair's breadth away from total extinction. The power that his increased knowledge has given him has not been coupled with the right kind of intelligence and vision that are necessary. Why? Why have we not evolved psychologically? Is it because we have never directed our attention inwards to understand our own mind, thoughts and feelings? We are so satisfied, so dazzled by our achievements, our 'progress' in the outer world, that we have completely neglected the inner world of our consciousness. Hatred in the primitive man could do only little damage; in



*J. Krishnamurti*

modern man with all his power it is much more devastating and we see it every day all around us.

It seems to us that we can resolve this problem if we can organize things better in society. This is a deep-rooted illusion. One is, of course, not against efficient organization of daily life; but you cannot produce a non-violent and peaceful society with a million violent aggressive, self-seeking individuals, in whatever manner you may organize them. If you have a communist society, you will have the violence of the communist ideology; if you have a capitalist society, you will have the violence of the capitalist ideology. If you contain the violence in some areas, it will erupt in others. Revolutions have come and gone but man's tyranny over man has not ended -- it has only assumed other forms.

A truly peaceful, non-violent society is only possible if the individual is transformed psychologically, fundamentally. Any other change is trivial, temporary -- it will never resolve the problems; it will only enable us to cope with

them for a while. Society is what the individual is. Just as the characteristics of a bar of copper are determined by the characteristics of the atoms constituting it, the characteristics of a society are determined by those of its individuals. All the problems that we see in society today are reflections of the problems in the psyche of the individual. Therefore we must concern ourselves with the inner transformation of man and not just the outer organization of society.

**The Individual Changes Only  
When His Consciousness Changes**

All religions have tried to change man, but they have failed. Had they succeeded, we would not have today so much cruelty, war and hatred. We must examine why religions have failed to change man and learn from this. Essentially, every religion has prescribed a path, a set of virtues to be practised and vices to be eschewed. And man has struggled for thousands of years to do what they prescribe, but it has not worked. The practice of virtuous acts does not in itself

alter the consciousness of man. The practice of pre-meditated acts of kindness does not produce kindness in one's consciousness. It becomes another achievement, another aim in life, another method of seeking self-satisfaction. On the other hand, if there is kindness in the heart, it will express itself in every action, every thought, word and deed. Then it does not have to be 'practised'. Similarly, one cannot practise non-violence so long as one is aggressive, hateful and violent inwardly. Then non-violence becomes only a facade, a hypocritical exterior, a cold calculated performance. It is only by observing the causes of violence in oneself and eliminating them (not through effort but through understanding) that there can be an ending of violence. And when there is the ending of violence, there is no need to practise non-violence. Only a lazy mind needs to discipline itself!

So, virtue cannot be practised; it cannot be cultivated. It is a state of mind, a state of consciousness, which arises when there is self-knowledge, understanding, clarity and vision. It cannot be achieved through willful effort, it requires insight. And insight comes through observation, through reflection, through sensitive awareness. It is the perception of truth that liberates consciousness from its ignorance and illusions; and it is ignorance that generates disorder in the psyche. Goodness must be spontaneous, otherwise it is not goodness. Any change in the outward conduct of man brought about through fear, coercion, discipline, conformity, imitation or propaganda does not represent a true change in consciousness and is therefore both superficial and contradictory.

#### **Truth, Liberation, Illumination cannot Be Secured Through Another**

Man has from time immemorial depended on a Guru, a religion or a book to show him the way. Krishnamurti has pointed out that truth is a pathless land and no Guru, no path, no belief, no book can lead you to it. You have to be a light unto yourself and not seek light from another. The role of the Guru is only to point out; it is the individual himself who has to learn. And the

**Reason is the treasure of the mind,  
Love is the perfume of the heart;  
Yet both are of one substance,  
Though cast in different molds.**

**As a golden coin  
Bears two images  
Parted by a thin wall of metal,  
So between love and reason  
Is the poise of understanding,  
That understanding  
Which is of both mind and heart.**

**O Life, O Beloved,  
In Thee alone is eternal love,  
In Thee alone is everlasting thought.**

**-- J. Krishnamurti**

ability to learn is far more important than the ability to teach. In this field, no one can really teach anything to anyone else. Each one has to come upon the truth for himself, and one must begin with knowing oneself. Without understanding the workings of one's own thought-processes and the conditioning one has acquired from one's own experiences, tradition, culture, religion etc., one cannot find the true answer to any serious question. Our beliefs, our opinions, conclusions and prejudices prevent us from seeing things in their true perspective because they colour our vision. One must be aware of this fact and doubt every opinion, every conclusion that comes to the mind for it may not represent the truth. When one inquires into oneself in that way, with the intention of seeking the truth and not merely seeking satisfaction, learning takes place. And one must live with that state of inquiry, questioning and doubting, without seeking to arrive.

What one can receive from another is a thought, a question; but the exploration has to be one's own. Unless you come upon the truth



for yourself it is not the truth for you – it is only a description of the truth. That is the difference between the Buddha and the Professor of Buddhist philosophy. The former has the actual insight, the consciousness; the latter has only a description of it.

Man has often confused the symbol, the word, the concept for the real thing. A true Christian is one who lives by the *Sermon on the Mount* (and you can only do that if you have the consciousness of Christ), not the man who joins a church and performs all its rituals. A true Buddhist is one who partakes of the consciousness of the Buddha, not one who obeys the Buddhist church. All churches, all organized religions have only succeeded in reducing the great truth to a mere system, a symbol, a ritual. What matters is not the garment, the label, but the content of the consciousness within.

The role of a teacher (the guru) is that of the lamp on the roadside. One must not sit and worship the lamp, one must walk the way. Krishnamurti repeatedly emphasised that it had very little significance if we either accepted or rejected what he said. It is only when we consider it, question it, examine it and find out for ourselves if it is true that it has value. Since truth and liberation are something the individual has to come upon by himself, through his own inquiry, any organization that tries to propagate "truth" through belief, conformity or propaganda only serves to further condition the mind of the individual and enslave him. A meaningful inquiry requires freedom from all belief, prejudices, conclusions and conditioning. It requires a deep awareness of oneself as one is. Since truth cannot be organized and spread, spiritual organizations which try to do this have no value.

### **Intellectual Understanding Is Not Real Understanding**

We are often satisfied with an intellectual answer to a question and that puts an end to our inquiry. When that happens, intellectual understanding is a hindrance to the discovery of the truth. It is easy to see intellectually that one must

not worry when one's child is ill. The worrying does not help the child. What helps him is our fetching a doctor and giving the patient the medicine. Of course we do that, but does this logical conclusion prevent us from worrying? Does the knowledge that anger is evil prevent anger? The truth is much deeper than mere logic and reason; and the intellectual answer is not a complete answer. So, when one has understood something only intellectually one has understood but little. Intellectual understanding may be useful in some matters but it is trivial. It can be secured through a book or through another but is only a thought-pattern held in memory; it should not be mistaken for the realization of the truth of something.

So, if intellectual understanding is a limited thing, then what reveals the truth? For this, one must observe oneself and one's thought process like a true scientist observes a phenomenon in which he is interested. He doesn't want to change it: he observes it without choice, without letting his own desires interfere with his observation. When one observes oneself in that way, with choiceless and passive awareness, without a desire to quickly form an opinion or come to a conclusion, hesitantly, patiently and with scepticism, for the sake of understanding oneself and life, only then can one discover what is true and what is false; and the false drops away by itself without any effort of will. Ignorance then dissolves in the light of understanding. Without such an objective and yet passionate investigation of oneself, of all one's conclusions, beliefs, attachments, desires and motivations, it has very little meaning to intellectually identify oneself with some group, some theory, some belief and plead for it like a lawyer for the rest of one's life. It is as absurd as saying, "My country is the best country because I was born in it". Yet, that is what nationalism implies.

It is the tragedy of our life that we are never educated to look at ourselves in the right manner. We are only educated to learn about the external world and to somehow cope with its problems. Therefore one grows up knowing so much about the external world and yet being

totally ignorant of oneself, one's desires, ambitions, values and outlook on life. We may be very skilled at our jobs but we are totally confused about whether pleasure brings happiness, whether desire and attachment are the same thing as love, and why differences between men turn into inequalities. Happiness, love, non-violence, humility are not something one can work for directly. They come as a by-product of inquiry, self-knowledge and understanding, which inwardly cleanse our consciousness without imposing on it any fixed opinions, beliefs or patterns of thought. If one sees very clearly through close and careful examination that the pursuit of pleasure does not lead to happiness, then one's outlook towards pleasure in life alters at the source and the pursuit of pleasure drops away without any effort, sacrifice or suppression. Then there is a natural austerity which is totally different from the self-imposed practice of austerities. Similarly if one actually realized, through one's own observation and investigation, that one is not essentially different from other human beings because one shares with them the same problems -- of fear, insecurity, desire, greed, violence, loneliness, sorrow, self-interest -- then one would approach the state of oneness with others. Through our ignorance we give tremendous importance to the relatively superficial differences between us, like the differences in belief, in prosperity, in knowledge, in ability, which are all only acquisitions. We have not asked ourselves why we give such tremendous importance to our acquisitions, why we let them divide us from others when in reality we share the same human consciousness. If you mentally strip a man of all his wealth, possessions, status, beliefs and knowledge and look into his consciousness, is it really very different from that of any other human being? Just as the caste, colour or creed of a human being does not change the composition of his blood, our acquisitions whether mental or material do not alter the content of our consciousness. If we do not prevent ourselves from seeking the truth of this, we will actually realize the underlying unity of all mankind. It is ignorance that divides us, not the differences between us.

**You never will know the  
world aright  
'Til the sea itself floweth  
in your veins,  
'Til you are clothed with the heavens  
And crowned with the stars.**

**-- Thomas Traherne**



**Sometimes I know that I am  
everything, and I call that Love.  
Sometimes I know that I am nothing,  
and I call that Wisdom.  
Between Love and Wisdom my life  
continually flows.**

**-- Nisargadatta Maharaj**

### **Conclusion**

Mankind is caught in a great illusion. It thinks it can solve its problems through legislation, through political and social reform, through scientific and technological progress, through greater knowledge, greater wealth, greater power and greater control. It may solve some problems with all this; but they are all trivial problems and temporary palliatives. They will have the effect of aspirin but they will not cure the disease. We shall go on creating new problems on the one hand, and trying to solve them on the other in order to maintain the illusion of "progress". And not much time is left now, for the disease is growing at a wild pace and is about to consume us. If man does not transform himself inwardly, through conscious redirection of his psyche, he will soon join the list of those predecessors who lived a million years or so on this planet and then became extinct for they could not adapt themselves. It is not certain yet if the evolution of man from the ape was really a step in the direction of survival or a retrograde step. Only time will tell.

# PAVHARI BABA OF GHAZIPUR

By V.G.

**A**BOUT five kilometers from Ghazipur in U.P. (its original name was Ghadipur, after an ancient *rishi* called 'Ghadi') there is a village called Kurtha. Here, in the latter half of the 19th century, lived a saint called Pavhari Baba (meaning 'air-eating swami'). Like Bengal's Giribala, who came later, Pavhari Baba was reputed to have lived without eating any food. Swami Vivekananda, in his autobiography, devotes a whole chapter to this 'Saint of Ghazipur'.

It is said that the Baba hailed from the South and had started on a *Gangapradakshina*. Many saints are supposed to be constantly on this river-circuit pilgrimage. One begins the trek at Gangotri, the source of the river in the Himalayas, follows the river to Calcutta, where the Ganga has her confluence with the sea, crosses over to the other bank, and then walks back to Gangotri, thus ending the circumambulation. However, some saints are said to settle down at some points along the banks of the Ganga, owing to the influence of overpowering spiritual forces. It fell to the happy lot of Kurtha that our Baba stayed put in that little village.

Recently, I visited Kurtha. The Baba's ashram is now a small house where the family guard the tiny, beautiful deities which he worshipped. There is a cave, now almost closed except for a little opening, and a slab on which the Baba, who lived on one element -- air -- one day sat in *padmasana*, poured ghee over himself and was consumed by another element -- fire. There is an undoubted power about the place.

Pavhari Baba spent most of his time inside the cave, but he would stick his head out whenever

his counsel was sought. He was said to have been endowed with tremendous *siddhis* which he used only frugally.

A stream of the Ganga flows in front of the Baba's ashram. Mother Ganga herself flows at a distance of about three kilometres from Kurtha. Legend has it that once there was a sudden necessity for a copious supply of water at the ashram. About ten thousand people had gathered in the little village to participate in the birthday celebrations of the Baba, but there was little water around. The Baba told the thirsting villagers to go to the Ganga and invite her with due ceremony. The puzzled villagers took a boat to the middle of the Ganga, offered her clothes, jewels, food, and also dropped a written prayer begging her to come to their village. The next morning (it was the height of summer), the Ganga streamed into Kurtha!

Swami Vivekananda met Pavhari Baba in 1890, four years after the *mahasamadhi* of his master Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa. It was to learn the yoga that would make it possible for him to remain serene in all circumstances and concentrate on Brahman that he went to Pavhari Baba.

An elderly friend of Swamiji was then working at Ghazipur, in India's only opium factory, started there in 1820 by the British. Aware that Narendra (Swami Vivekananda) was seeking special spiritual help, he wrote to him suggesting he come and see the Baba. He himself was not a disciple, but communicated to his young friend what he had heard about the spiritual prowess of the Baba.

When Narendra came to Ghazipur, his friend took him daily to Kurtha. The Baba, however, was Sphinx-like. Days rolled by and not a word was spoken. Nor did Swamiji find anything in the Baba which struck him as great. He was disappointed and, after twenty-one days of fruitless visits, decided to return to Calcutta.

Finally, when Narendra went to the cave along with his friend to take leave of the Baba, the Baba stuck out his head and told the friend, "This boy is disappointed and wants to leave. Leave him with me this night." He then took Narendra inside the cave, a big hole beneath the ground, provided with a dozen steps, dug out by the Baba himself.

The next morning young Narendra emerged beaming with joy. His search had, perhaps, ended at last. But the Baba told him, "I am not your Guru. Your Guru is Sri Ramakrishna. Cling to him and he will quench your spiritual thirst fully." The Baba blessed him profusely.

Swamiji's biographers add: "Babaji showed no disposition to pass on to Naren the knowledge he craved. To all Naren's importunities he was deaf. At last the Swami decided that if it were necessary in order to learn the Yoga he desired, he would be initiated by Pavhari Baba. To such lengths would he have gone in his determination to attain the thing he sought. No sooner had his decision been made than Sri Ramakrishna appeared before him and looked intensely into his eyes, without a word.

"Through a mist of tears Naren saw words of power, divinity, love and insight. He was abashed, overcome by self-reproach.

"And yet the struggle continued for days thereafter. Many times he resolved to become the disciple of Pavhari Baba in spite of his vision, but the vision of Sri Ramakrishna recurred, and other things happened, of which the Swami never spoke. So he gave up the idea. In the end it was Sri Ramakrishna who was triumphant."

The *upaguru* had returned the disciple to the *sadguru*.

Swamiji said he owed a great debt of gratitude to Pavhari Baba, whom he considered a very great saint. In a letter to Swami Akhandananda, a *gurubhai*, Swamiji wrote: "My motto is to learn to recognise good, no matter where I may come across it. This leads my friends to think that I may lose my devotion to the Guru. All Gurus are one, fragments and radiations of God, the Universal Guru."

The Baba would address every male as "Baba", every female as "Mataji", and he referred to himself as "Dasa", the servant. *Sarvam Vishnumayam* ("Everything is permeated by the Lord") was a direct and constant experience for the Baba.

In his cave, rats and poisonous serpents kept him company. He was once bitten by a cobra and was unconscious for several hours. When he revived, he said: "The 'cobra baba' was a messenger from the Beloved. A 'rat baba' fell on my lap and was given shelter under a cloth. The 'cobra baba' who was chasing him got angry and bit me on my shoulder!"

On another occasion, thieves came, picked up all his idols and were bundling them up. Seeing the Baba coming, they dropped the bundle and ran. The Baba ran after them, overtook them and putting the bundle in front of them, said: "You Babas! If you need these things, they are yours. Why do you abandon them? What wrong has this *dasa* committed? Please take them with you. They are yours!"

The above-mentioned incidents remind us of Sri Ramana's kinship with all creatures, including cobras and panthers, and his mercy even towards thieves. When thieves broke into Sri Ramanasramam one night and found nothing, they beat Sri Ramana instead. When they were about to leave, he invited them to have food in the Ashram kitchen!

<sup>1</sup> Much later, at Rishikesh, Swami Vivekananda met a *sannyasi* of luminous realisation. "I suppose," said the monk, "you have heard of the thief who robbed Pavhari Baba of his few belongings." "Oh, yes," Swami replied. "Well," said the *sannyasi*, overcome with feeling, "I was that thief!"

Swami Vivekananda asked the Baba why he did not go out into the world and preach to suffering mankind. The Baba replied: "Do you think that physical help is the only help possible? Is it not possible that one mind can help other minds, even without the activity of the body?"

Here again, one recalls Sri Ramana's reply to the question: "Why do not *mahatmas* help?" Bhagavan said: "How do you know that they do

not help? Public speeches, physical activity and material help are all outweighed by the silence of the *mahatmas*. They accomplish more than others."

I felt enthralled and purified by my visit to this holy place, hallowed by Pavhari Baba. Truly, *satsang* means not only association with living holy men but also with those who have left their bodies. After all, they are not their bodies, but the deathless Self. Salutations to Pavhari Baba!

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## AN EXPERIENCE OF KUNDALINI

By LUCIA OSBORNE

I WAS in the midst of packing to return to Tiruvannamalai after spending the hottest months in the hills. My children couldn't stand the heat of the plains. The house which had been found for me was right out of town, facing a magnificent mountain and had not been inhabited for some years, so it was barely furnished. I had to bring even kitchen utensils, so it can be imagined what packing there was. It was a terrific rush and with very little help.

It was in the thick of this that it happened. A sort of lassitude came over me, but a most pleasant lassitude. From the base of my spine a tingling feeling arose as if a thousand ants were climbing up. "I must have fever, I thought; but a most delightful fever, so let it be." All thought of packing or going or any urgent work just vanished. I simply rested, whether sitting or lying down, I don't remember. The ascent continued, stopping at various points along my spine. I particularly remember at the base of my neck. Then it burst through the crown of my head with the blaze of a million suns -- the splendour of it! Ecstasy which no words could describe! There was nothing to be perceived -- nothing now to describe. Only this unimaginable feeling of indescribably blissful well-being. There was nobody else. There was nothing else. So that's it!

How long it lasted -- a second, an eternity -- I cannot tell. Then I returned to normal body-

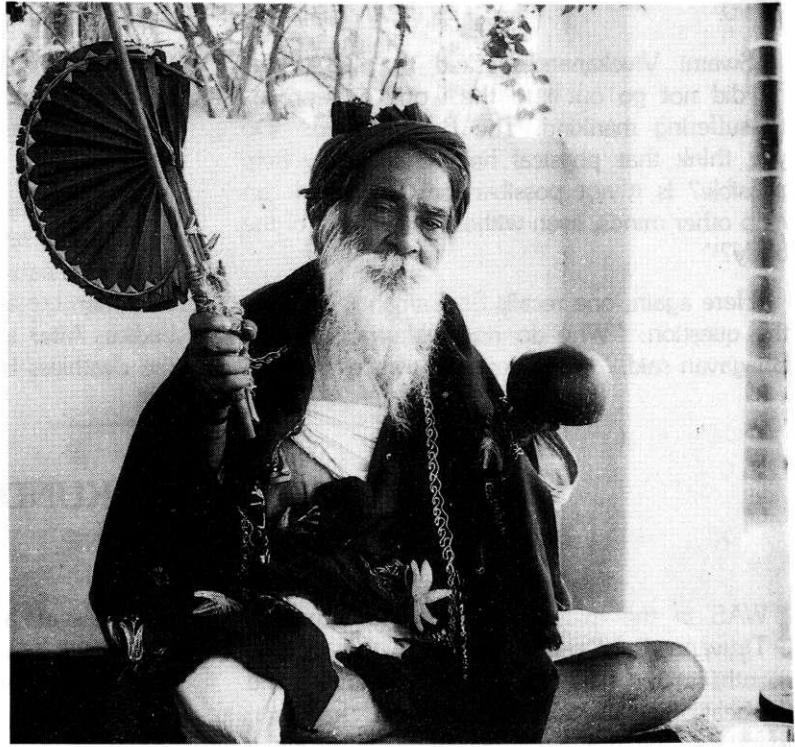
consciousness and the world emerged again - but how drab! It was like being thrust back into a cage, in spite of the afterglow of the experience.

At that time I knew nothing of Kundalini and I have never practised it.

On my return to Tiruvannamalai I came across Sir John Woodroffe's *The Serpent Power* and there read about the *chakras* and verified my experience. I did not mention it to Sri Maharshi until some time later when I was asked to go through Heinrich Zimmer's German work, *Der Weg Zum Selbst* in which he speaks about Kundalini from a theoretical standpoint. In this connection I told Sri Maharshi that my experience was different and wrote out an account of it. He perused this very attentively and did not return it to me but gave it to the attendant to file.

Some years later I heard a certain Swami tell his disciples that when Kundalini bursts through the *sahasrara* in the crown of the head, the person is realized. I did not want to raise this question in front of everybody, so I spoke with him privately about it later, when I begged to differ. I told him about my experience and said that it was only sporadic and not a permanent change of state. He asked me about it in great detail and was surprised but obviously convinced because he said: "You are moving in Grace; just persevere."

*The God-child of  
Tiruvannamalai*



## **SRI YOGI RAMSURATKUMAR: A FORCEFUL PERSONALITY**

By **ILAYA RAAJA**

“**M**ore publicity for this beggar!” he is certain to exclaim in delight, when he sees this in print. His flashing eyes will crinkle and he will put his hand to his mouth, hidden behind a generous white beard, as if to hold back the peals of laughter. His joy is infectious, sweeping everyone and everything into its blissful fold. His laughter is potent wine (medicine, if you prefer), enough to banish the cares of life, to refresh both body and spirit.

Sri Yogi Ramsuratkumar is no different from

the scores of beggars who hang around the magnificent Arunachaleswarar Temple in Tiruvannamalai (Tamil Nadu). The casual passerby is unlikely to give him a second glance. Neither the distinctive ochre robes of the *sannyasi* nor the spotless white of the saint, the earthy hues of his unassuming attire blend with the surroundings.

The house which he now occupies, a stone's throw from the main entrance to the temple, is equally unpretentious. Its sloping red-tiled roof

and iron-barred verandah contrasts with the multi-storeyed modernity of the other buildings which stand cheek-by-jowl on the same street. The open sewer in front of the house serves as a public convenience.

For thirty-eight years the Yogi has lived and played the role of a homeless beggar with the panache of a carefree millionaire. Asking nothing of anybody, and accepting no credit for himself, one can only guess at the enormous influence and timely aid he has quietly brought into the lives of innumerable persons.

"Swami", as he is affectionately called, is well-known, not only in Tamil Nadu but also farther afield in India and abroad, sometimes in quite unexpected quarters. Though there are brief periods of privacy, he is usually engaged in fielding a seemingly endless stream of visitors who catch him at 'home' or, sometimes, in the spacious flagstoned courtyards of the temple.

The *darshan* is always an informal affair. Clutching a worn, coconut-shell begging bowl and palm-leaf fan in one hand, the other raised high in benediction, the Yogi is brisk, even businesslike. The deep sensitivity, empathy and compassion radiating from this angelic figure is matched only by the trust, admiration, even sheer reverence of the supplicants: families, mendicants, farmers, professionals, children, businessmen. While some are content with paying their respects, others relate their problems and wait for answers.

The cumulative effect of the spectacle, observed at regular intervals over several months, is one of surrender to sanctity. Here is a phenomenon beyond one's ken. No individual frame of flesh and bone can carry the burden of so much common woe and collective aspiration, nor personify extra-dimensional qualities usually attributed to images of stone, without the marrow of divine principle.

In a flash, Yogi Ramsuratkumar pre-empts idolatry. "My Father alone exists. Nothing else, nobody else. Past, present, future, only my Father, all-pervasive, everywhere. In Him, every thing is included. Every object -- man, animal,

bird, tree, stone -- all is nothing but my Father."

The gentleness of his speech -- English, Tamil and Hindi -- belies the force of his personality. "Many drill this beggar with questions: 'Do you have visions?' 'Do you have spiritual experiences?' 'Have you seen God?' For all these, his reply is: "All I know is *Ram Nam*." For him there is no need for realisation, visions, experiences, or anything else. *Ram Nam* is everything. "Chant the name all 24 hours! I do as ordained by my master. That's enough for this beggar!"

And he gives freely of his life essence. If the gift is under-valued by the sophisticate, it is only because the Yogi is offering the fruit of hard-earned experience for a price far less than what he himself has paid. For the unlettered soul, on the other hand, this process of give-and-take is an uncomplicated exchange.

Sitting near the *magizha* trees inside the big temple (the *sthala vriksha* of Arunachala), the Swami is approached by a young couple with their year-old baby. His face lights up as he blesses the child. The parents say, "Swami! A few months ago we brought our baby to you, and begged you to cure its bent and contorted leg. You blessed it, saying that the baby's leg would become all right. Now, we ourselves do not remember which leg was bent. The cure is so perfect!" Raising his hands to the sky, the Yogi says, "This beggar does nothing, *Amma!* It's all Father's glory. Father alone blesses, Father alone cures. It is Father alone who protects all!"

In his house, the floors are unswept. Odds and ends litter the area. The iron grill of the verandah is completely obscured by a solid wall of accumulated flower garlands. A sandpile fills one corner. The sounds of a busy marketplace intrude upon the stuffy atmosphere, laced with the pungent odour emanating from the drain outside. Amidst this apparent disorder, a street dog finds the space to take an undisturbed nap.

A group of westerners visiting Sri Ramanasramam call on the Yogi with a list of questions. He receives them warmly but requests them to return the next day, pleading time for formulating replies. They are back the following

day. The questionnaire in hand, the Yogi reads out their first question: "We want to be initiated into a *mantra* by a competent person. Will you please suggest whom we should turn to?" He replies, "This beggar feels that you should be initiated by Sri Swami Vireswarananda, President of Ramakrishna Mutt in Calcutta." Before he can continue, the group prostrate before the Yogi and confess, "Swami! Please forgive us. We heard from others that you were a great *siddha purusha*. We wanted to test the genuineness of your greatness. We have just come from Calcutta after being initiated by our guru, Swami Vireswarananda."

The Yogi's face shines with understanding as he graciously replies, "No! Don't feel remorseful. You are perfectly right in testing this beggar. Has not the great master, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, said that one should test a *mahatma* thoroughly, from all angles, before accepting him as the *guru*?"

Born in a village near the holy city of Varanasi, Yogi Ramsuratkumar had a happy boyhood, playing along the banks of the Ganga. Later, overcome by a sense of intense dispassion, he began frequenting the Visvanatha temple and sought the company of *sadhus* and *sannyasis*. His life changed. Instead of empty wanderings in the world, he longed for God. A monk guided him to Ramana Maharshi and Sri Aurobindo.

It was 1949. As if swept along by a benevolent destiny, he met Sri Aurobindo in Pondicherry, Ramana Maharshi in Tiruvannamalai and Swami Ramdas in Kanhangad. Whatever he imbibed then was to bear rich fruit later. In 1950, both Sri Aurobindo and Ramana Maharshi passed away. This drove him back to "Papa" Ramdas who initiated him into *Ram Nam*. The Yogi sighs, "It was in 1952 that my Father, Swami Ramdas, gave this madness to this beggar."

Since then, Yogi Ramsuratkumar has been inseparable from Arunachala, the beautiful sacred mountain which rises to a height of over 780 metres, with the pilgrim-town of Tiruvanna-

malai nestling at its base. "For ages, sages have come here," he explains, "for shelter." It is a distinguished living tradition, a lineage which includes Jnanasambandhar, Arunagirinathar, Virupaksha Devar, Guhainamasivaya, Easanya Jnana Desikar, Seshadri Swamigal and Ramana Maharshi.

Here is a man who could, perhaps, have wallowed in the luxury of a big ashram or lived like a king. Instead, he lives as a beggar, dressed in unwashed clothes, eating a little of whatever comes his way, and chain-smoking 'Charminar' cigarettes! Nevertheless, people seek his company, invoke his blessings and solicit his advice.

Once again, the Yogi reels off a disclaimer, "Father distributes duties. All of us do only His work. To Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi, Swami Ramdas and Sri Aurobindo, He gave the duty of teaching. To this beggar He has not given that duty. To have faith in the words of these masters alone, that is the duty allotted to this beggar. Thus, I have faith in the scriptures, in the words of these masters. That's enough for this beggar!"

An earnest devotee pleads, "If this is the condition of such an elevated soul like you, Swami, what about us?" Swami roars, "Where there is faith, there is no fate!" His words ring out like pistol shots, "Have faith. Fate will become inoperative."

All the pious words in the world remain dead letters unless practised in everyday life. Is it difficult? Executing a masterly gesture, the Yogi says, "Those who live centred on God, their lives are different." Simple, isn't it?

And I have heard him sing. *Sri Rama, Jaya Rama, Jaya Jaya Rama, Jaya Jaya Rama, Jaya Jaya Rama*. In a mellifluous voice which makes time stand still, this haunting song of love brings tears to my eyes.

Once, sitting by the side of the Yogi, a Tamil verse came to me spontaneously. In it the sacred names of my heart's cherished deities are strung together. The Yogi looked embarrassed, as his name appeared along with great saints.



"Oh, how blessed is this life!  
How privileged am I to remember,  
Even if for a fleeting moment,  
Grandpa Koti Swami, Mother Mayee Ma,

That Splendid Sun of Jnana, Ramana  
And Yogi Ramsuratkumar.  
Life's purpose gained, what more do I need?"

Courtesy: *The Hindu*, Madras, 8.7.90

### The Tale of the Sands

A bubbling stream, having traversed all manner of countryside, mountain and valley, finally found itself at a desert. No matter how hard it tried, it was unable to cross it. As quickly as it rushed on, its waters disappeared into the fine sand. "My destiny is to cross this desert, I am sure," said the Stream, "but I can see no way."

The voice of the Desert answered, in the hidden tongue of nature, "The Wind crosses the desert, and so can you."

"But no matter how hard I try, I am absorbed into the sand. Even if I throw myself with all my force, I can go only a little distance."

"The Wind does not dash itself against the desert sands."

"But the Wind can fly, and I cannot."

"You are thinking in the wrong way; allow the Wind to carry you over the sand."

"But that is impossible," insisted the Stream.

"It is not impossible," answered the Voice. "Allow yourself to be absorbed into the Wind."

The Stream protested that this would be its death. It would cease to be, or, just as bad, it would lose its individuality.

"It is simply a change, a transition," answered the Sand. "You will find your true form at the end of the journey."

"But how," asked the Stream, "can I

know that this is true?"

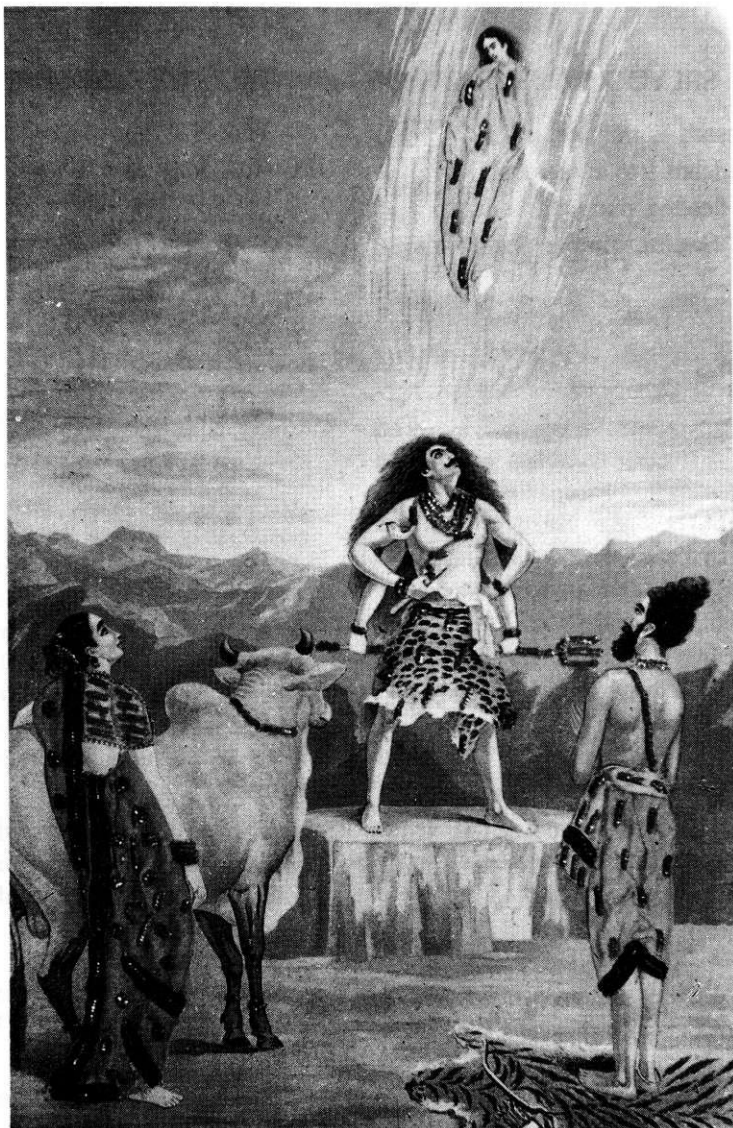
"It is so, and you must believe it, for at best, in your present condition, your only future is to become, after many years, a quagmire or swamp. You cannot, in any case, remain the same stream that you are today. Today you call yourself such and such a stream only because you do not know which part of you is your true, essential nature, and which is only outward form."

So the Stream surrendered itself into the arms of the welcoming Wind, which gathered it slowly and carefully upward, and then let it down gently atop the mountains of a far-off land. "Now," said the Stream as it found itself falling as rain, "I have learned my true identity."

But it still had a question, which it bubbled up as it sped along in the form of a new river. "Why could I not reason this out for myself? Why did the Sands have to tell me?"

A small voice spoke to the Stream. It came from a grain of sand. "Only the Sands know, for they have seen it happen age upon age. Moreover, they extend from the river to the mountain. They form the link, and they have their function to perform."

This is why it is said that the way in which the Stream of Life is to carry itself on its Journey is written in the sands.

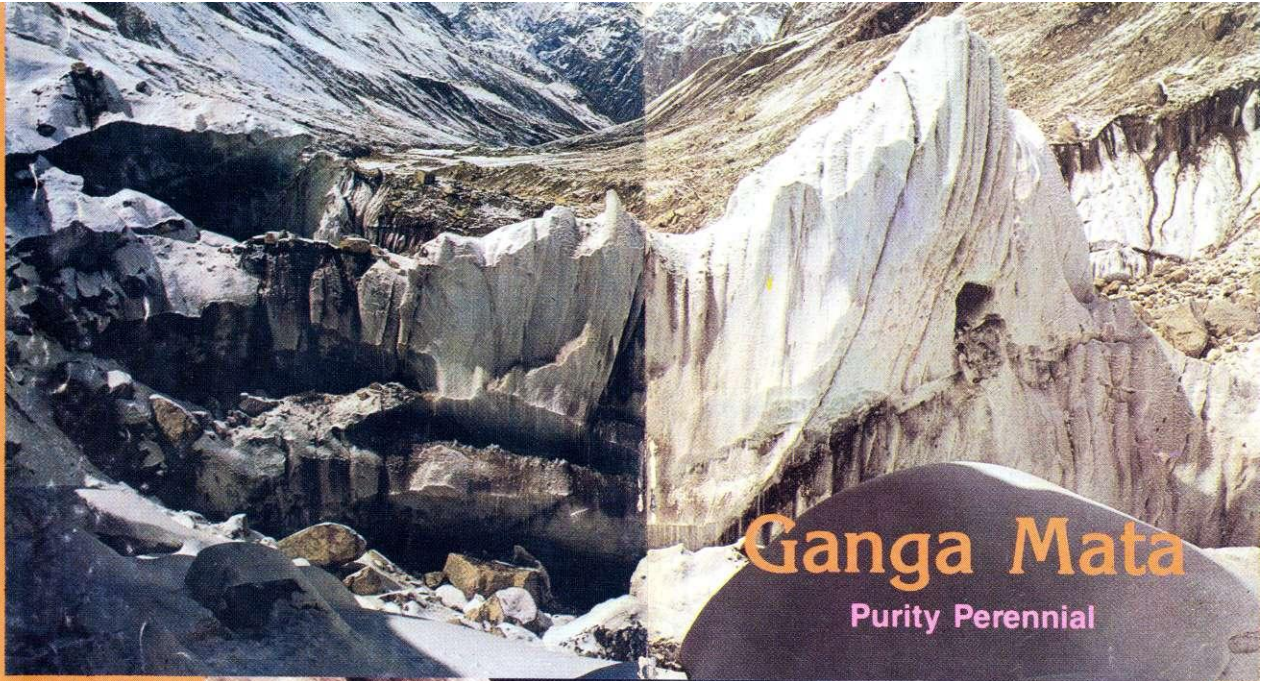


*Lord Shiva receiving Ganga in His matted hair - to His left is Bhagiratha, on His right is Mother Parvathi*

## GANGA MATA

By V. GANESAN

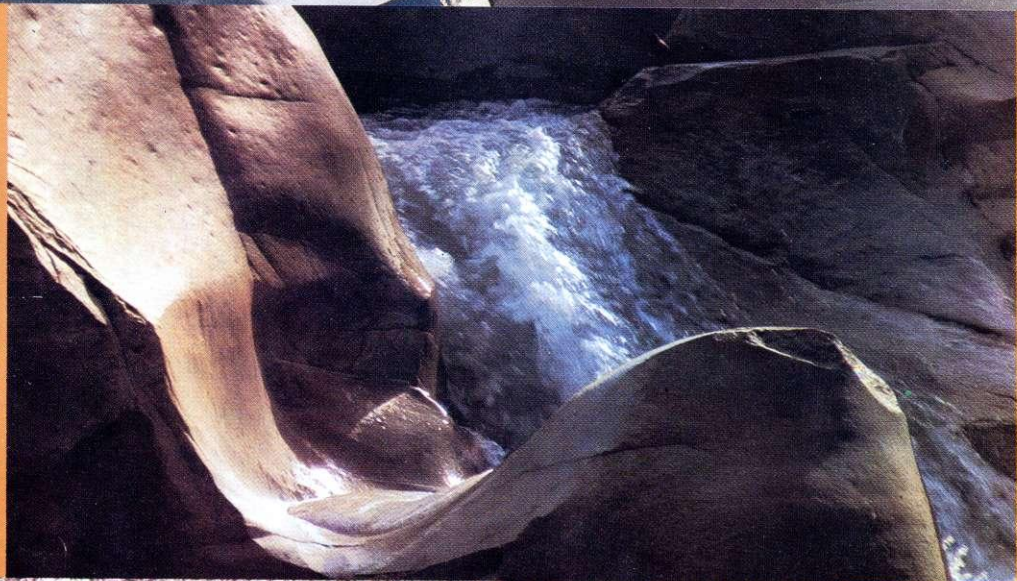
“**H**igh up in the mountains, among the barren rocks with not a tree or bush, was a little stream, coming out of massive, unapproachable rock; it was hardly a stream, it was a trickle. As it came down it made a waterfall, just a murmur, and it came down, down to the valley, and it was already shouting of its strength, the long way it would go, through towns, valleys, woods and open spaces. It was going to be an irresistible river,



# Ganga Mata

Purity Perennial

Near the source of Ganga Mata, a panoramic view of ice and snow.



Below Gangotri Peak the Holy River begins as a mountain stream, soon to become a fast-flowing river.



At this confluence of rivers — Bhagirathi and Alakananda — the Sacred Ganga is born.

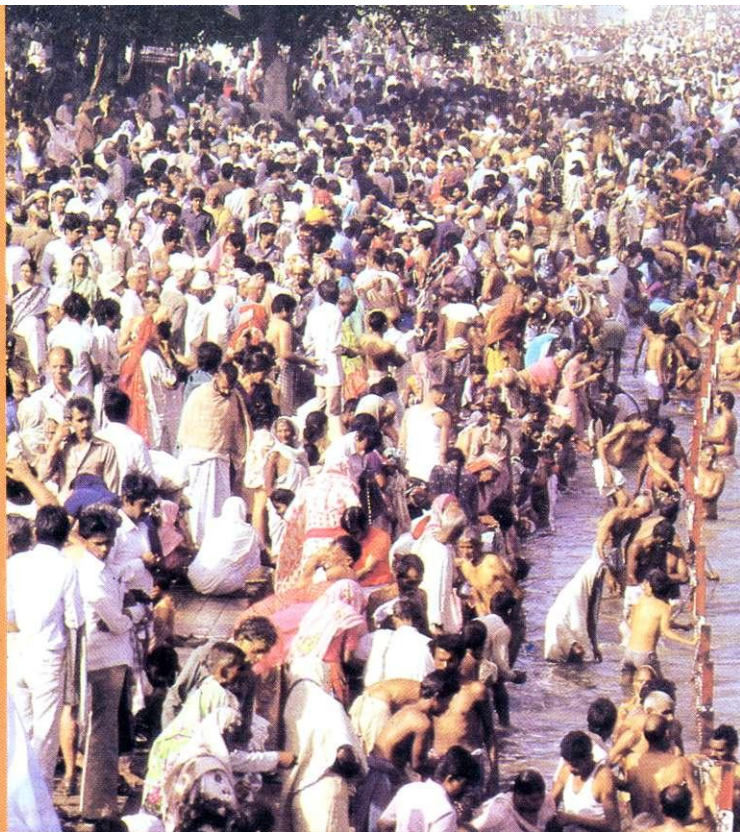


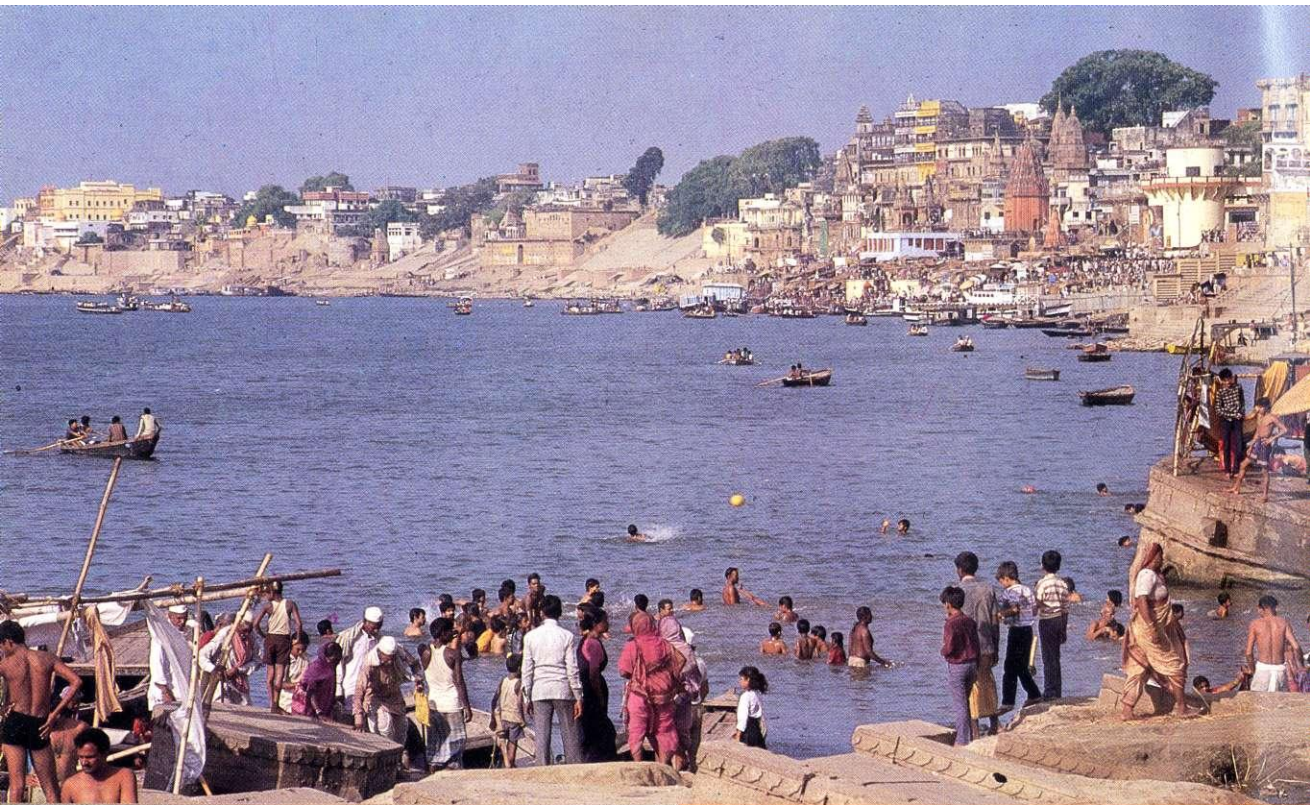
Ganga Mata is revered with devotional fervour.

Glorious night at Rishikesh--  
ladies adoring Ganga Mata with lights.



*Kumbhamela* at  
Hardwar: Day and  
night become  
immaterial when  
worshipping the  
Heavenly River!

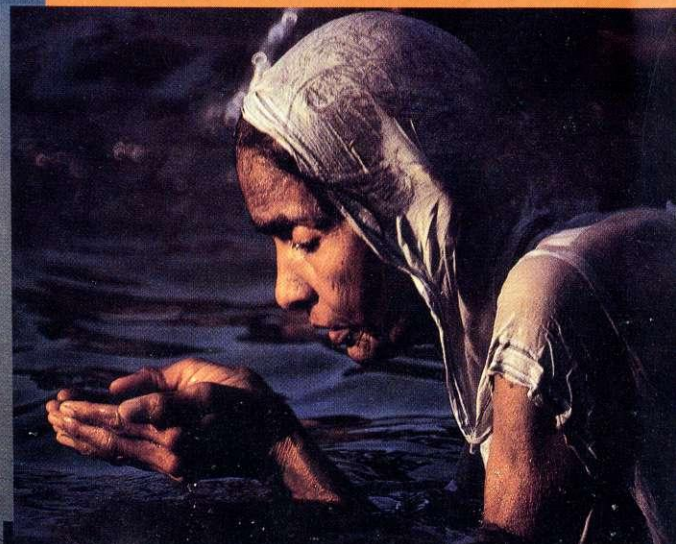




*Uttaravahini* at Varanasi: It is considered religiously sacred and geologically significant if a river takes a turn in the direction of its source. At Kashi, Ganga curves towards the north!

Sun and Ganga  
glorifying Mother  
Earth!

Devotion from the  
heart flows through  
prayers and  
salutations to Ganga  
Mata.



sweeping over its banks, purifying itself as it went along, crashing over rocks, flowing into far places, endlessly flowing to the sea."

The words flow from J.Krishnamurti's pencil, writing in his *Notebook*<sup>1</sup> as he gazes upon the Ganga at Rajghat, Varanasi. Recalling the source of the river which he had once visited, his description continues:

"It wasn't getting to the sea that mattered, but being a river, so wide, so deep, rich and splendid; it would enter the sea and disappear into the vast, bottomless waters but the sea was far away, many a thousand miles, but from now until then it was life, beauty and ceaseless merriment; none could stop that, not even the factories and dams. It was really a marvellous river, wide, deep, with so many cities on its banks, so carelessly free and never abandoning itself. All life was there upon its banks, green fields, forests, solitary houses, death, love and destruction; there were long, wide bridges over it, graceful and well-used. Other streams and rivers joined it but she was the mother of all rivers, the little ones and the big ones. She was always full, ever purifying herself, and of an evening it was a blessing to watch her, with deepening colour in the clouds and her waters golden. But the little trickle so far away, amongst those gigantic rocks which seemed so concentrated in producing it, was the beginning of life and its ending was beyond its banks and the seas."

Indeed, to contemplate the Ganga is to gaze upon divinity Herself. One can attempt only to trace a strand or two of a dazzling tapestry woven upon the warp and weft of earth and sky, wherein geography, history, mythology and religion coalesce into a faith as vibrant as it is eternal.

A mere handful of facts are apt to assume epic proportions. The Ganga is over 2,500 km long. It issues from an ice cave 10,000 feet above sea level at Gangotri in the Himalayas, and empties into the Bay of Bengal through innumerable channels that form a delta 320 km wide. Its total drainage basin, which includes the largest river system on the subcontinent, covers an area of about 975,900 sq km, or roughly a quarter of the territory of India. One of the most fertile and densely populated regions in the world, it supports a concentration of about 300,000,000 people, a population larger than that of any state on earth with the exceptions of China and India.<sup>2</sup>

The rich, alluvial Gangetic Plain, heartland of Hindustan, has cradled successive civilisations, among the most ancient and influential in the world, from the earliest Vedic period *circa* 1500 BC and the kingdom of Ashoka in the 3rd century BC, down to the Moghal Empire and the British Raj. Not only did the waters of the Ganga provide for life itself but also directed the lines of exploration, conquest, circulation and settlement -- Aryan and Muslim invaders followed the river's southeasterly course while the British gradually crept up the Ganga, from Calcutta to Delhi.

The oldest histories, more readily acceptable today in the guise of legend,

<sup>1</sup> *Krishnamurti's Notebook*, by J. Krishnamurti, Victor Gollancz, London, 1976.

<sup>2</sup> *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 15th edition, 1987.



*The gentle rhythmic undulations of Mother Ganga near Uttar Kashi.*

the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* both unfold against the geographical backdrop of the Ganges Valley. The river Ganga finds mention, too, in that most ancient record – the *Rig Veda*.

The Ganga is not simply a river. She has been revered since earliest times as the Goddess-Mother, and the religious importance of the river exceeds, perhaps, that of any other river in the world. She is the supreme *tirtha*, place of pilgrimage, ford, crossing place, where heaven and earth meet, where one crosses over the river of *samsara*, the cycle of birth and death, to reach the other shore of liberation, *moksha*.

The Ganga is sacred throughout her course. The place-names along her banks sound a litany of hallowed grounds: Gangotri-Gowmukh her source; Rishikesh, where she breaks out of the mountains; Hardwar, also known as *Gangadwara*, "Gate of the Ganga", where she emerges into the plains; Prayag (Allahabad) where she is joined by the Jamuna and the mythical Saraswati; Kashi (Varanasi) where she takes a long northward sweep as if pointing towards her Himalayan source; and Ganga-Sagar, where she finally merges into the sea.



*Ganga pradakshina*, circumambulation of the river, challenges the imagination of the ardent seeker and surely transforms anybody who undertakes the pilgrimage. Who knows what wonders may befall the barefoot adventurer upon a sacred journey, every step powdered with the dust of centuries, a road which traverses in a panoramic sweep the energetic, life-sustaining, liquid essence of a nation.

Any culture worth its salt will mythologise its landscape. Not because it is the refined thing to do. Reverence, born of survival, records its intelligence which lives on in legend, to inform as well as entertain succeeding generations.

This enchanted river, whose waters destroy all sin, traverses the three paths: heaven, earth and the netherworld. For the story of her descent, which also circumscribes every aspect of her living reality down to the present day, rishi Valmiki's original is unsurpassable, a cosmic vision of a stellar event, setting off star-spangled showers of wonderment. Here, the sage Vishvamitra, whose only wealth is truth and austerity, is recounting the tale to Sri Rama, the incarnation of Lord Vishnu<sup>3</sup>:

O Rama, Bhagiratha was a virtuous and royal sage, but he had no heir and was desirous of obtaining a son. O Raghava, he proceeded to the holy place, named Gokarna, where he practised yogic penances to attract the descent of the holy Ganga. With arms uplifted and senses controlled, he stood in the midst of five fires in the hottest season, partaking of food once a month only, and continued thus for five thousand years.

O Mighty Prince, after a thousand years, Brahma, the Lord and Ruler of the World, was pleased with Bhagiratha and said:

"O Bhagiratha, thy great penance has gratified me! O Great King, ask for a boon, thou, who art faithful to thy vows!"

Then the highly resplendent Bhagiratha, with joined palms, humbly addressed the Grandsire of the Worlds and said:

"O Blessed Lord, if thou art pleased with me, if my austerities are worthy of recompense, then grant me this favour and suffer me to deliver the souls of the sons of King Sagara, by offering them water from the sacred stream at their funeral rites. O Lord, do thou also grant as a further boon, that the dynasty of Ikshvaku may be preserved and I may have an heir."

On this, the grandsire of the whole world answered Bhagiratha, that warrior of the great car, in gentle and harmonious accents, saying:

"O Mighty King Bhagiratha, may thine ardent desire be fulfilled! Be happy! O Monarch, it is Hara who will bring and bear the descent of the elder daughter of Himavat, Ganga! The earth would not be able to sustain the descent of the Ganga; I see none other able to do so, save the God armed with the trident."

<sup>3</sup> *The Ramayana of Valmiki* translated in three volumes by Hari Prasad Shastri, Shanti Sadan, London, 1962.

Bhagiratha, O Rama, standing on the tip of one toe, adored Sri Shiva for a full year. With arms upraised, living on air, unsupported, fixed like a pillar, day and night, the king offered his adoration to that God.

A full year having passed, the Lord of Uma, Mahadeva, who is adored by the whole world, addressed King Bhagiratha, saying:

“O Mighty One, I am pleased with thee, I will accomplish what thou desirest; I will receive the descent of the Ganga on my head!”

Then the holy Ganga, eldest daughter of the Himalaya, the object of reverence to the worlds, assuming the form of a mighty river, descended with torrential force on the head of Shiva. “I shall bear down the God Mahadeva to the lower regions,” she reflected, but Shiva, reading her thoughts, grew wrath, and determined to detain the mighty stream in his hair. Resembling the majestic Himalayas, the locks of Shiva imprisoned the falling Ganga, holding her fast for innumerable years, so that Ganga wandered round and round amidst his locks and could find no egress.

O Rama, when Bhagiratha failed to discern the sacred stream descending on earth, he began a fresh course of penance in order to propitiate that God. Then, O Descendant of Raghu, Hara was gratified and he let loose the Ganga.

That royal rishi, Bhagiratha, standing in his divine vehicle, went forward and the sacred river Ganga followed him. Thus did that holy stream descend from heaven on the head of Mahadeva and from thence to the earth.

The fall of that mighty river created a vast reverberation, and shoals of fish, turtle and multitudes of sea monsters, fallen and falling from heaven, decorated the earth. Then devas, rishis, gandharvas, yakshas and hosts of siddhas beheld the Ganga descending on earth; and all the celestial beings, in their aerial chariots as large as cities or on horses and elephants, hastened there to witness the marvellous and auspicious descent of the Ganga to the world. And the gods, as they alighted from the sky, irradiated that cloudless canopy of heaven with the splendour of their divine ornaments, so that it seemed a thousand suns had risen there.

Swarms of mercurial fish and aquatic creatures leaping from the stream, thrown up by the momentum of the current, flashed like lightning in the air, whilst the foam and spray, scattered on every side, resembled flocks of swans in flight or clouds in autumn. Sometimes the waters of the Ganga rose high into the air, sometimes they flowed tortuously, sometimes they broadened out or dashed against the rocks, shooting upwards and thereafter falling to the ground; thus, that pure stream, capable of removing sin, looked delightful flowing on the surface of the earth!

Then the celestial sages and heavenly musicians, as also the denizens of the earth, reverently sprinkled themselves with the sacred waters, saying, “That which falls from the body of Shiva is holy,” and those beings, who, through a curse, had fallen from heaven and been compelled to live on earth, were cleansed of their transgressions by bathing in the holy Ganga. Purified

and freed from their sins, those resplendent beings returned to the celestial regions, passing through the sky, and wherever those limpid waters flowed, people rejoiced and were delivered from all taint.

King Bhagiratha, meanwhile, riding his chariot, drove on and on, the Ganga flowing behind him, and, O Rama, all the gods, and hosts of rishis, the daityas, danavas, rakshasas, leading gandharvas, and the kinnaras, mahoragas, serpents and apsaras accompanied the chariot of Bhagiratha, with all the aquatic beings, attended by the mighty river Ganga.

Finally, reaching the sea, the best of rivers entered the lower regions to fulfil her purpose.

Bhagiratha, that royal rishi, distracted with grief, held back the Ganga with supreme effort, while he looked on the ashes of his great-uncles; and that sacred stream covered those heaps of ashes with her purifying waters. Whereupon, freed from their sins, the sons of Sagara ascended to heaven, O illustrious Raghava.

As the water of the Ganga flowed over them, O Rama, Brahma, the Lord of the Worlds, said to the king:

"The sixty thousand illustrious sons of Sagara are liberated and have gone to the celestial regions, O Tiger Among Men! As long as the waters of the sea continue on earth, so long shall the sons of Sagara remain in heaven with the gods. Henceforth, O Great Sovereign, Ganga will become your eldest daughter and be known in the world under thy name. This sacred river shall be called the divine Bhagirathi.

"This great design has been accomplished by thee alone. Thou hast acquired undying renown throughout the world. By achieving this, thou art possessed of the highest dharma. O Great Sovereign, now do thou bathe in the holy stream also. O Lion Among Men, purify thyself and acquire merit, then perform the funeral rites of thine ancestors. O King, may prosperity attend thee, return to the capital!"

Then King Bhagiratha performed the funeral rites with the sacred water in accord with the tradition. Purifying himself, that sinless monarch returned to the city, his purpose fulfilled, O Chief of Men, and took up the reins of government of his empire once again. The people rejoiced at the presence of their king, O Raghava, and their sorrows dispelled, released from their anxieties, and their property restored, dwelt in peace.

This, O Rama, is the story of the Ganga; now farewell and be happy, the hour of dusk has passed. This narrative, which is sacred, brings fame, longevity, offspring and salvation to those who recite it. He who listens to this spiritual history of the descent of the Ganga will see all his desires fulfilled, all his sins effaced, and will obtain long life and renown.

\* \* \*

And so, from age to age, countless millions have lived to draw sustenance and to worship this sacred river *par excellence*. River, legend, and devotee

have fused into an indestructible triad: a simple, direct faith which is a matter of everyday fact. This faith assures the devotee that the Ganga is everywhere, ever-present and omnipotent. As Diana L. Eck observes in her brilliant study, *Banaras: City of Light*<sup>4</sup>:

"The land where the Ganges does not flow is likened in one hymn to the sky without the sun, a home without a lamp, a brahmin without the Vedas. Significantly, the Ganges is seen to flow in many lands, not only through the plains of North India, but symbolically in the sacred waters of all India. For example, a Tamil woman, unable to go to the Ganges, might go to the Kaveri River. If even that is too far, she might go to a nearby stream or temple tank. In her home, the Ganges is regularly called to be present in all the waters used in ritual, either by mixing those waters with a few drops of Ganges water or by uttering the name and prayers of the Ganges to invoke her presence. The Ganges is the essence and the source of all sacred waters. So widely is her presence perceived that an Indian visiting professor, having arrived in Boston, is said to have exclaimed on first sight of the Charles, 'Ah! So the Ganges is here in Cambridge too!'"

And why not? Here is a river bright on festive occasions with fleets of floating oil-lamps, garlanded with flowers from bank to bank, a river which springs from heaven to water all of earth. Adi Shankaracharya, *advaitin extraordinaire*, himself wrote in praise of the Goddess<sup>5</sup>:

O Devi Sureswari! O Bhagvati Ganga!  
Saviour of the three worlds of restless waves,  
Clear is thy water circling upon the head of Shiva,  
May my mind ever repose at thy lotus feet.

O Ganga! sprung from the feet of Vishnu,  
Whose waves are white as snow, as moon, as pearl,  
Remove from me my weight of sin,  
Help me to cross the ocean of the world.

They say that him, O Ganga! who is devoted to thee,  
Yama can never behold.  
He who has drunk of thy clear water  
Attains of a surety the supreme abode.

He who bathes in thy current, O Mother!  
Is never again reborn in woman's womb.  
O Protectress from hell! O Jahnvi! O Ganga!  
O Destructress of sins! Lofty art thou by thy greatness.

O Bhagirathi! dispel my illness, my melancholy and pain,  
As also my sins and all my follies.  
Essence of the three regions, necklace of Earth,  
Of a surety thou art my refuge in the world.

<sup>4</sup>*Banaras: City of Light*, by Diana L. Eck, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1983.

<sup>5</sup>*Ganga Stotra* translation by Sir John Woodroffe, from *Vivekananda Kendra Patrika*, February, 1984.

And Jawaharlal Nehru, who desired that a handful of his ashes be thrown into the Ganga after his death, recorded in his last will and testament:

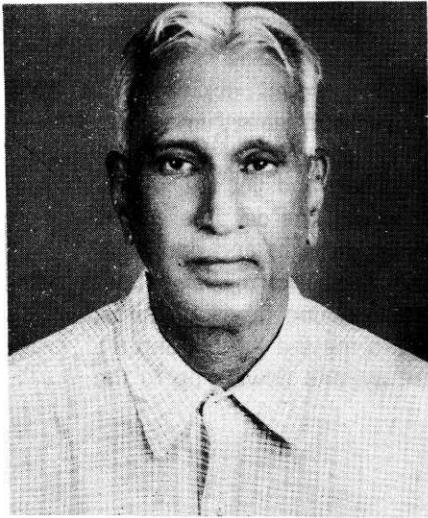
"The Ganga especially is the river of India, beloved of her people, around which are intertwined her racial memories, her hopes and fears; her songs of triumph, her victories and her defeats. She has been a symbol of India's age-long culture and civilisation, ever-changing, ever-flowing and yet the same Ganga. She reminds me of the snow-covered peaks and the deep valleys of the Himalayas... smiling and dancing in the morning sunlight and dark and gloomy and full of mystery as the evening shadows fall. A narrow slow and graceful river in winter, and a vast and roaring thing during monsoon, broad-bosomed almost as the sea... the Ganga has been to me the symbol and a memory of the past of India, running into the present and flowing on to the great ocean of the future."

### The Plunge

Once Parvathi asked Lord Shiva whether Ganga would remove the sins of all. Shiva disguised as an old man took Parvathi in the garb of His wife with Him to the banks of Ganga. He told Her that He would pretend to be drowning and that She should raise an alarm that He be saved. Accordingly, She screamed to attract the attention of the passersby to rescue Her husband. The people around rushed to His rescue. The disguised Parvathi stopped them and laid down this condition, as earlier instructed by Shiva: "Only that person who has not the slightest trace of sin should touch my husband!"

Only one among them, without the least hesitation, jumped into the river and rescued Him. Surprised, Parvathi asked the rescuer if he was free from all sins. The man replied: "Did I not have a dip in the Ganga before saving your husband? My sins had vanished even at that instant". About this incident, Shiva asked Parvathi: "What doubt need be there that all sins are washed away if one has faith like that of this person?" Such is the greatness of the Ganga!

– His Holiness Abhinava Thirtha Swami,  
*Shankaracharya of Sringeri.*



A. Devaraja Mudaliar

## RAMANA'S CHILD: DEVARAJA MUDALIAR

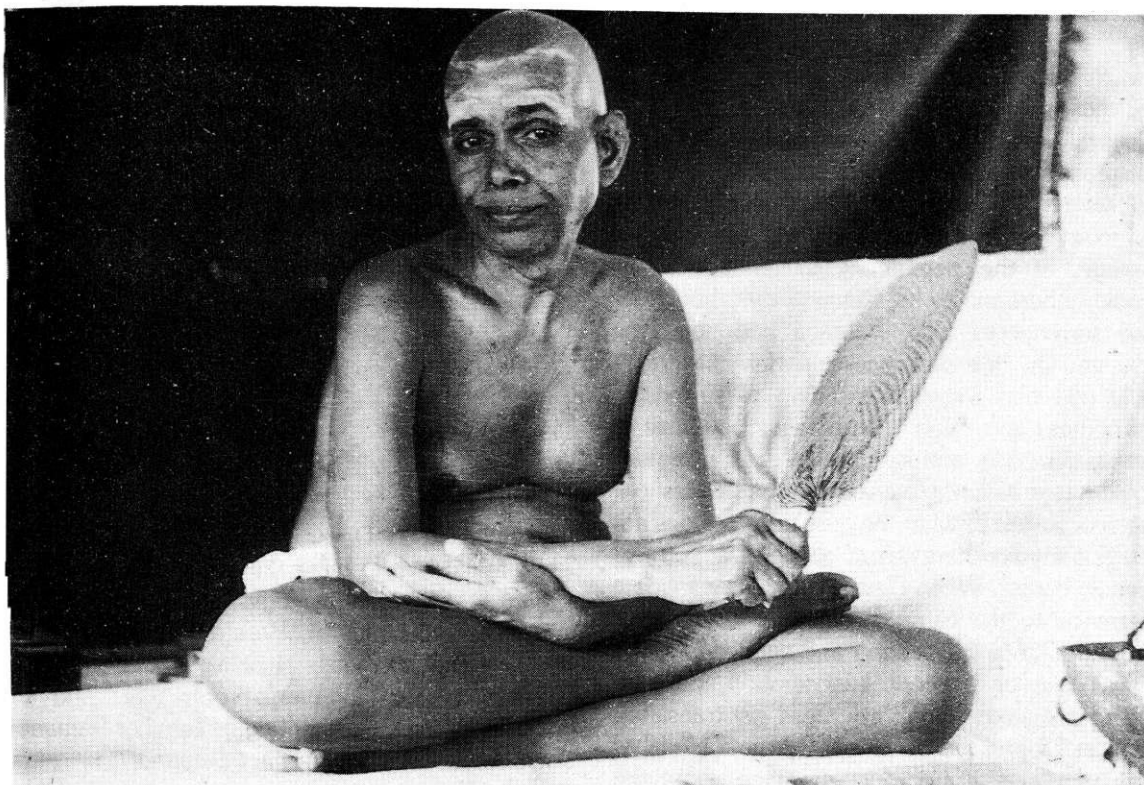
By A.R. NATARAJAN

**D**EVARAJA MUDALIAR would address Ramana as 'my father and mother' and sign as Ramana's child - '*Ramana Chei*'. This symbolised his approach to Ramana. He would fearlessly and unashamedly talk to Ramana about his personal problems and doubts in *sadhana* in the same way as a child would to its parents. This permitted a degree of freedom in his relationship with Ramana which is hard to believe. He would promptly bring all matters to Ramana's notice be they important or trivial. His chronic digestive problem, his daughter's marriage, his second daughter's confinement, his worries as the Official Receiver in the Chittoor Court, the diversion of the amount intended for a pilgrimage to Tirupati for a visit to Sri Ramanasramam with family, would all be mentioned and discussed. For, Ramana was to him father-confessor, *Satguru* and great God all rolled into one. He had a child-like confidence that the problem, whatever it be, would be solved by Ramana.

Ramana's response was also typical. Whatever was the attitude of the particular devotee towards him Ramana would respond likewise. Ramana was mother to Chadwick, father to Subbaramayya, co-worker to the kitchen-staff, peerless scholar to Jagadeeswara Sastri, 'father and mother' to Devaraja Mudaliar, for that was

the way they wanted it. Once Sri Sadhu Om was reciting some of his compositions of Ramana in which he used the expression '*Ammal Appa*' (father and mother). Devaraja Mudaliar was not present in the Hall at that time. The following day as soon as he entered the Hall Bhagavan told him about the recitation and added, "As you are fond of that term I turned round to see if you were here".

Devaraja Mudaliar's association with Ramana commenced even at the turn of the century. Thereafter he would not miss visiting him at least once in a couple of years. Two misfortunes in quick succession resulted in this long relationship becoming an intimate one. In 1933 his wife died and he lost his assignment as Government Pleader which he had held for fifteen years. At this juncture, Bhagavan literally poured his grace on him in abundance. Ramana provided him with an opportunity to serve the Ashram. This brought him close to the Ashram management. Some disgruntled elements filed a case against



the Ashram in the court of a local magistrate. The Ashram authorities could have had the pick of lawyers, for there were quite a few of them among the devotees, but their choice fell on Devaraja Mudaliar, even though they did not know much about his professional skills. What explanation could there be except that it was the mysterious hand of Ramana which made it possible? When he succeeded he went up considerably in their esteem. They readily acceded to his request to build a room for himself within the Ashram area. Earlier such a permission had been given only to two others, to Major Chadwick and to Yogi Ramiah. When he moved in as a permanent inmate in 1942, a new chapter opened for him and for us. For the next four years he was, so to speak, the official interpreter of Ramana's court. On the 1st of January 1945 within the space of an hour, three different persons urged him to maintain a record of conversations and events in the Hall. This appeal from diverse sources at the beginning of the year had

the desired effect. Soon thereafter he decided that it was time he started writing a diary as requested. It was then that the divine took a hand for the second time. Earlier, in 1939, the management had requested Munagala Venkatarajah, the recorder of the *Talks* to stop maintaining his diary. Would the management change its mind now? This was the doubt and fear of many. Surprise of surprises, the permission was granted and that all too readily. Thus began *Day by Day with Bhagavan*, a record of happenings every day from March 1945 to January 1947, literally taking us back to the Master's physical presence. The diary enables us to relive that period with all its richness and beauty. How many have been drawn irresistibly to Ramana just by this book, as others were by Brunton's *Search in Secret India*, Osborne's *Path of Self Knowledge* and Munagala's record, *Talks*.

Doctrine-wise Devaraja Mudaliar's distinct contribution is to bring out the importance of

'surrender' to Ramana. He liked to label himself as a 'lazy' person and plead with Ramana that the direct path of self-enquiry was not suitable for those like him. He would keep quoting from Sivaprakasam Pillai and Tayumanavar and plead for grace without any preconditions of having to do his bit, his *sadhana*. When despondent or overcome with depression at the slowness of change, at the persistence of tendencies, he would unhesitatingly tell Ramana that though he had surrendered fully, Ramana had not done enough. On one such occasion Ramana cryptically told him the true meaning of surrender. "Whether I do or don't do anything, you have to simply surrender and keep quiet". For surrender could never be complete without the unquestioning acceptance of what the guru does or does not do. Sometimes there would also be the spirit of friendly banter. When Devaraja Mudaliar made a reference to the *Supplement to Forty Verses* about the value of *sat-sang* and queried whether it was true or a poetic exaggeration, Ramana smiled and said, "Don't ask me. I just translated them as I found them". It was Devaraja Mudaliar who persistently questioned Ramana about the role of destiny and free-will and nearly all the important statements of Ramana on the subject have been made in response to these questions.

Devaraja Mudaliar was one of the most colourful personalities in the Ramana galaxy. His great suffering from his skin-ailments and his age would not dampen his enthusiasm or liveliness. He would often be found reciting with student-like eagerness and emotional fervour some songs from the sacred Tamil works. To the new devotees he was a veritable father figure ever ready to help and make them feel at home by orienting them to Ashram needs and giving sound counsel. He would say that he was lazy but he was in fact an exemplary and tireless worker. Being the official interpreter in Bhagavan's court required total attention, for Ramana would listen carefully and pull him up if the translation did not correctly convey the meaning of his Tamil reply to questions in English. Devaraja Mudaliar would also translate some songs or passages from Tamil books into English. Such was Ramana's

**"From the viewpoint of the body,  
I am Thy servant;  
From the viewpoint of the jiva,  
I am a portion of Thee;  
From the view point of the Atman,  
I am Thy Self.  
This is my conviction."**

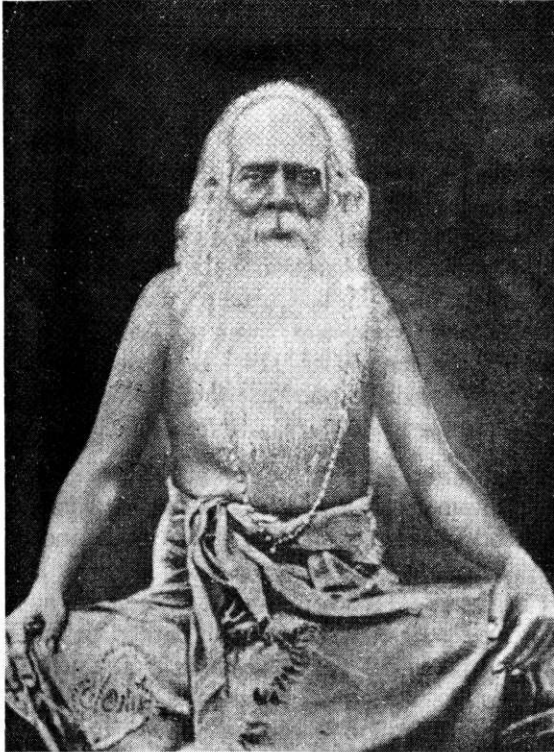
**- Hanuman**

confidence in Devaraja Mudaliar's English that he asked him to write the preface to Sivaprakasam Pillai's works in English and then translated it into Tamil himself. Besides his duties as the interpreter, Devaraja Mudaliar would act sometimes as the librarian, proofreader, and the leader of the daily chanting in Tamil of Ramana's *Collected Works* (Tamil *Parayana*).

After *Day by Day*, *Gems* and *Recollections* were published, he wrote a short biography of Bhagavan. It was his wish that the same should be published. Years later in the *Birth Centenary Souvenir*, this came to be printed. It was picked up 'somehow', for Ramana could not leave unfulfilled any wish of this great servant of his.

Once Ramana remarked: "They may say anything, but I know the purpose for which they have come the moment they enter". For Ramana everyone was an open book. Only, he chose to hide this power in the later years. Even so, our common failing is that we would like to put our best foot forward, cover up our failings and our desires so that the *Satguru* should think well of us. In this, Devaraja Mudaliar was wholly different. There was an absolute lack of pretence, a readiness to let the Master see his desires and thoughts in all their nakedness. It is this which endears him to all for he is so human, so much like one of us, and yet what indeed was the spiritual grandeur of this child of Ramana!





Sri Chattambi Swamikal

## SRI CHATTAMBI SWAMIGAL

By T.P.C. NAYAR

**S**RI PARAMA Bhattaraka Vidyadhiraja Chattambi Swamikal, popularly known as Chattambi Swamikal of Kerala, was a contemporary of the better known savant Sri Narayana Guru, also of Kerala. Born in 1853 at Kollur, a village on the outskirts of Trivandrum, he was the son of Nangadevi, a Nair woman, and Vasudeva Sarma, a Brahmin. Theirs was a highly cultured family of Nairs which had produced scholars, siddhas and yogis. Though named Ayyappan after the Lord of Sabarimala, the boy was called 'Kunjan' (Malayalam for 'little one').

Kunjan could not afford the cost of formal education and learned the elements of Malayalam and Tamil from his father and other children who went to school. He was eager to learn Sanskrit and did this by listening in from a hide-out near the school. Kunjan picked up quite a bit

of Sanskrit. It was after about a year that the teacher discovered the sly little student's earnestness and allowed him to attend the classes. Within a short time, Chattambi mastered texts like *Siddharoopam*, *Amarakosam*, etc. Later, Kunjan learnt music and the rudiments of Tamil from Raman Pillai Asan. He soon became the foremost among the students of Asan, who used to ask the bright boy to supervise the school in his absence. Thus Kunjan became the *Chattambi* (monitor) of the school and he was known for the rest of his life by this appellation.

It was in those days that Chattambi came in touch with Thycaud Ayyavu Swami, a Tamilian who lived in Kerala and gave lectures on religious subjects. From the Swami Chattambi learnt Tamil songs and Hatha Yoga and was also initiated into the *Balasubrahmanya mantra*. He

became an *upasaka* (worshipper) of Lord Subrahmanya and later earned the name of *Shanmukhadasa* (servant of Shanmukha, six-faced Lord Subrahmanya).

Chattambi was introduced to a great religious scholar from Tamil Nadu, named Subbajata Vallabhar, who was taken up with the young man's rare brilliance. He took him to his place in Tamil Nadu, a small town called Kallidaikurichi, where Chattambi spent nearly four years, became proficient in several Tamil religious and philosophical texts, *sastras*, *puranas* and *Vedanta*. From Kallidaikurichi, Chattambi left on a tour of South India. He met many great men and came by some rare books in Tamil and Sanskrit. He met a Muslim *siddha* and scholar named Thangal, from whom he learnt Islamic philosophy and the meditation of the Holy *Koran*. Later, Chattambi's Koranic scholarship became well known and many Muslims went to him to have their doubts cleared. Chattambi also met and spent some time with Atmananda Swamy, a Tamilian and well known yogi, and learnt from him valuable lessons on the yoga of the Agastya tradition.

Chattambi evinced from his early boyhood a fascination for gymnastics and wrestling and a keen interest in music, Kathakali and recitation of verses. He had a fine spirit of inquiry. Behind the objects of nature, he felt, there was a very deep, beautiful though subtle and mysterious force which controlled everything and he was eager to discover it. This quest gradually weaned him away from outdoor activities like gymnastics and he became more an introvert, looking inward for an answer to the myriad puzzles of life. He started delving into the classics; he studied epics like the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* written in Malayalam by the great poet Ezhuthachan, and became an expert in reciting them, and he mastered *Kaivalya Navaneetam*, a Vedantic text in Tamil. He also studied *Ozhivil Odukkam* (*Withdrawal as Pure Being*), a Tamil classic on Vedanta.

Despite his formidable erudition and vast repertoire of skills, Chattambi suffered from a sense of incompleteness. He needed a catalyst to

complete the spiritual process which had begun from his boyhood. One day he chanced to meet an *avadhuta* called Balahva Swami. He followed him but the latter ran away. In the chase, Chattambi fell down unconscious. The *avadhuta* promptly returned, lifted up Chattambi and initiated him in the *Pranava* mantra. It is said that the *avadhuta* helped him attain Self-realisation. In his work *Bhattarasatakam*, published a few years after his demise, Chattambi Swami pays high tribute to Balahva Swami: "As if Lord Paramesvara manifested Himself to personally bless me, that day a good *avadhuta* came, gave me spiritual knowledge and vanished."

Chattambi spent some days in Maruthuvamala (Medicinal Hill) in Nagercoil, south of Trivandrum, famous for its abundance of medicinal herbs. There is a belief that this is the hill which Hanuman, unable to identify the resuscitating herb, pulled up and carried to the scene of the battle in Lanka where Lakshmana lay mortally wounded. Chattambi spent time mostly in meditation, subsisting on leaves, fruits and the water of rivulets, much like Narayana Guru did later. At Maruthuvamala, Chattambi met various *siddhas* and learned from them *Marmavidya*, the science of the nerve centres in the body. What a life-long learner he was!

Chattambi flowered into a great yogi and *siddha*. He had developed supernatural powers but was generally reluctant to use them. However, he did use his powers on occasions. When for instance, the wife of a relative of his was brought to him with a complaint of epilepsy and stomach disorder, Chattambi Swami cured her with a simple rite. It is said that the Swami once humbled a conceited officer who had invited him to dinner. He brought with him some dogs instead of his disciples, and the animals behaved very intelligently, ate the meal in a very neat, orderly way and quietly departed. The Swami told the stupefied officer that the dogs were corrupt and arrogant officers in an earlier life and so had to be reborn as dogs! The officer was chastened, as the story goes.

The year 1882 was very important because it was then that two great men, Chattambi Swami

and the slightly younger Nanu, who later became famous as Sri Narayana Guru, met. Both were spiritual masters of a very high calibre but Sri Narayana Guru also became one of the greatest social reformers of the country in this century, lauded by such great men as Mahatma Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore. Chattambi Swami introduced Nanu to Thycaud Ayyavu Swami who was highly impressed by Nanu's high intelligence and right aspirations. Nanu learnt yoga from Ayyavu Swami, and Chattambi taught him some lessons he had already learnt from the Thycaud sage, and also initiated him into the *Balasubramania mantram*. They became very close friends. They spent several days on sublime mountain heights and in impenetrable forests, subsisting on roots, fruits, shoots and water from brooks. They lived in caves and practised severe penance, meditation and yoga.

During his stay at Ernakulam in 1892, Chattambi Swami met Swami Vivekananda. They conversed in Sanskrit. Vivekananda was so impressed by Chattambi Swami's explanation of the significance of *Chinmudra* that he later said, "I have met a remarkable man".

Chattambi Swami was a very well-built man with long, strong limbs, a wide forehead, a broad muscular chest and radiant eyes emitting love and compassion. He never wore the formal saffron robes of a *sannyasin* but was always clad in a white dhoti and often carried an umbrella. He had no home. He treated all alike and mingled freely with people irrespective of their caste, colour or other status. At a time when caste prejudices were high, especially in Kerala, he moved freely and shared food with people of the despised and boycotted classes. Often sharing a meal with him were citizens of the animal kingdom like dogs and cats. He roamed about

freely as a bird, and birds and beasts understood him in the same way as he understood them.

No field of knowledge, temporal or spiritual, was outside the ken of Chattambi. To mention but a few: gymnastics, vocal and instrumental music, playing on percussion instruments, astrology, Tantra sastras, Thachusastra (architecture), naturopathy and Kathakali. It is not surprising that the titles of *Vidyadhiraja* (King of Knowledge) and *Sarva Kala Vallabha* (expert in all arts) were conferred on him. He did a lot of research on ancient spiritual lore and rare manuscripts. The Swami had a phenomenal memory and during his talks and discussions, apt quotations flowed from him freely. His critical works - all in Malayalam - are *Vedadhikara Nirupanam*, a treatise on eligibility for the study of the Vedas irrespective of caste or creed; *Christumatha Nirupanam*, a treatise on Christianity, and *Pracheena Keralam*, a social history of ancient Kerala. His Vedantic work is *Advaita Chinta Paddhati*, a course on Advaitic thought. Scholars, astrologers, *vaidyas* and others continue to find something or other in their own field to learn from him. Swami was averse to publicity and never cared to preserve his writings or get them published.

Chattambi Swami was a true *parivrajaka* throughout his life, an *aniketa* (homeless). Free from attachment and egoism, he was always peaceful and poised. Though in the world, he was not of the world. He was ever happy and centred in the Self. He was, indeed, a *sthita prajna*, a realised soul.

Chattambi Swami attained *Mahasamadhi* in May 1924. At the last moment he sat up on his sick-bed and closed his eyes. Ever free in life from all attachments he was now free from the body as well.

**"Behold but one in all things; it is the second that leads you astray."**

**-- Kabir**

# FATHER MAXIMILIEN KOLBE – KNIGHT OF THE IMMACULATA

By GLADYS DE MEUTER

**H**UMANITY has at close hand, within the very core of its heart, a radiant source, a living Well of Grace in the person of Our Lady, ever ready to confer healing and sanctifying grace upon the one who turns to Her.

Father Maximilien Kolbe when still a child, experienced in his soul the love of the Mother of God in a very special way, one which would lead him to live out a glorious Song of Love for Her. The sacred interchange between Maximilien Kolbe and his beloved Immaculata remains a secret as do all the interior movements of the soul when communing with the Beloved. His brilliant intellect sought to sift out, analyse, polish and bring forth new revelations which he had received about the Immaculata. These revelations he published with enthusiasm and tireless vigour to as many as he could, bringing fresh light on the all-important subject of the role of the Virgin Mary in the inner life.

Raymond, later known as Maximilien Kolbe, was born at Zdunska Wola near Lodz in Poland, on January 8th, 1894. His parents were poor, working hard to earn a living for their three sons, Francois, Raymond and Joseph. Two other sons had died at an early age. Jules Kolbe, the father, possessed a quiet temperament, and was a religious man. The mother, Marie, was also of a pious nature but brought up her sons energetically, demanding of them above all, obedience.

Because there was little money in the house, Francois, the eldest, was sent to school whilst Raymond stayed at home, helping his mother in the small shop she had opened where she sold candles, cabbages, garlic, etc. She was also often called away to act as midwife, leaving Raymond to cope with both the shop and household duties. Although very intelligent, Raymond accepted his lot without voicing complaint. The local pharmacist, noting the keen mind of the boy, offered to give him free tuition. This gave Raymond the chance to pass brilliantly all the examinations for which he sat. As a result of this, his parents were determined to make a great effort and sent him also to school.

When Raymond was sixteen, his father entered the Franciscan Order at Cracow, whilst the mother joined the Benedictines at Lwow.

After this, Raymond, having taken the name of Maximilien when he became a Brother, was sent to Rome by his superiors to study, in the autumn of 1912, because they had been made aware of his exceptional intellectual prowess. In one of his letters to his mother, Maximilien writes how there developed an ugly ulcer on the thumb of his right hand. The doctors were of the opinion that the thumb should be amputated. Maximilien asked that a dressing, soaked in water from Lourdes, be applied to his thumb. This request was complied with, and to the

doctor's amazement the thumb healed beautifully. Maximilien was overjoyed.

On the 1st November, 1914, Maximilien took his final vows just as the war was declared. He wrapped himself in prayer, determined to find a way to wage war against ignorance. He was the champion of Mary the Immaculate, the Mother of God, the Vessel of Grace, Queen of Heaven, and he wished to go to war against the powers of darkness, so that he could win over in Her Name, and with Her Aid, all those souls who had turned away from the Light.

Maximilien plunged into the Mystery of the Immaculate Conception as had been disclosed to Bernadette at Lourdes. The Dogma of the Immaculate Conception had been one which the Franciscans had always stoutly upheld and defended when the Dogma was still newly declared. Maximilien's love for the Immaculata was such that he embraced everything which came to him as being the will of his Beloved Mother, who took him by the hand to lead only where sanctity awaited him. He was so convinced of this that later, when confronted with man's inhumanity to man, he was able to 'love beyond human love', and soar above the brutalities and cruelties of his captors. Maximilien wanted to make as many people as he could aware of this perennial source of divine mercy in the Person of our Lady, which everyone possessed without being aware of it. Jesus the Christ was the Incarnation of the Word; Mary brought the Grace of the Holy Spirit to mankind. This was no abstract, metaphysical truth, nebulous and difficult to grasp. The love of the Heavenly Mother was a real, dynamic, sanctifying and accessible Force.

Like a knight riding out for his lady, Kolbe set out upon his 'Great Adventure', one which would light up the skies within many a soul long after he had departed this life.

In 1917 Maximilien was to experience what saints have whispered in mystical parlance: 'TO LOVE IS TO SUFFER'. In that year, his health was shattered by severe hemorrhaging and the spitting of blood, but he continued his studies in Rome with characteristic stoicism.

It was also in that city that he conceived of a 'Way' to fulfil his promise to our Lady to wage war against the enemy. He saw how the enemy displayed himself with contemptuous arrogance in the open when banners were boldly unfurled showing Lucifer trampling Michael the Archangel underfoot in the streets of the Vatican. On these banners were outlined the words: "Satan must reign in the Vatican. The Pope will be his slave".

Suddenly the 'Way' became very simple. If Lucifer, the epitome of Hate, could host an army of darkness, then the Immaculata, the epitome of Love, would have Her own army. This army would be armed with but one weapon – the invincible Power of LOVE: a Love which would conquer, transform and sanctify souls. While still a student, he founded the 'MILITIA IMMACULATA', which was to become an army of dedicated souls who would spread the love of the Immaculata throughout the world. This army would wage ceaseless and tireless battles against the enemy. With quiet determination, Maximilien continued to plan his campaign.

After his ordination in Poland on April 28th, 1918, Father Kolbe launched the monthly review, *The Knights of the Immaculata*, which achieved a circulation of nearly one million by 1938.

Nine years after the publication of his monthly review Maximilien founded 'The City of the Immaculata' (Niepokalonow) which was a centre for religious life. The Army of the Immaculata was on the march!

In 1930 a similar centre was established in Japan, proving very successful. Returning to Poland, Father Kolbe threw himself with undiminished enthusiasm into the publication of religious periodicals and the fashioning of thousands upon thousands of 'Miraculous Medals' which had already become well known after the vision of Catherine de Laboure.

Father Kolbe's extraordinary talent for organization manifested itself in the manifold works he undertook to make more widely known the glory of the Immaculata. The core of his

teachings was the role of the Virgin Mary as Theotokos, the God-Bearer, and the Immaculate Conception, the Name by which she made herself known at Lourdes. Maximilien's clear, precise mind sought to take his reader step by step from the thrilling moment when the Angel greeted Mary with the words: "Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee... Blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus", to the sublime *Magnificat*, the Virgin Mary's humble acceptance of the divine *fiat*. Clothed in vivid language, the mystery and grandeur of Our Lady's role in the Blessed Trinity became disclosed, amplified and expounded. Father Kolbe's radiant inner vision illumined his Marian teachings, highlighting the "espousing of Mary with the Holy Spirit", the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity.

By the time the second World War had broken out Father Kolbe's publishing concern was the biggest in Poland. He was arrested in September 1939 by the Gestapo (the Nazi Government's Secret Police). Deported first to Lamdorf in Germany, he was then taken to the concentration camp at Amtitz. In December 1939, he was able to return to Niepokalonow where he continued with his publishing, but in 1941 he was arrested again. He took a last look at his stricken flock at Niepokalonow before leaving, first for the prison of Pawiak at Warsaw, then to be incarcerated at Osweicim (Auschwitz).

The *Via Dolorosa* (the Path of Suffering - the Path of the Cross) had begun.

Father Kolbe was the brunt of merciless beatings as the weeks went by, but he submitted to them with docility and in a spirit of quiet acceptance. He was made to carry heavy logs of wood day after day, receiving blows so violent that he collapsed under the inhuman treatment more than once. After two weeks of this, the priest was very weak, but nothing could alter his inner serenity and poise. His fellow prisoners were amazed at him.

One day in July, it was noticed that a man had escaped from the block in which Father Kolbe was incarcerated. The punishment for an escape was well known. Ten hostages would be chosen

## Divine Alchemy

By Anna C. Lewis

**Thou art the Cross,  
Thou my Soul upon it.  
Thou art the nails that pinion me,  
Thou the Priest who drives them  
through.  
Supplicant and Saviour --  
I see only Thee.**

from the block to be consigned to the dreaded Death Block. There the ten men were to be left, to die of thirst and starvation. As the hostages were being chosen, one man, Francois Gajonniczek cried out: "Oh my poor wife and children, whom I shall never see again!"

Father Kolbe stepped forward, and in a quiet voice asked to take this man's place.

"Who are you?" he was asked.

"A Catholic priest", was the simple reply.

His offer was accepted, and he, together with the nine other men, was led away. He took charge of his flock, and when the guards heard the hymn-singing and the sound of praying, they said amongst themselves, "*So haben wir nie gesehen*" (We have never seen the like).

The guards also told Father Kolbe to avert his gaze. They could not face his loving look upon them.

Within a short time, Father Kolbe was the sole survivor. It was decided to end his life with an injection of phenol. When his executioner came towards him, Father Kolbe extended his emaciated arm with a smile.

Father Kolbe, the Knight of the Immaculata, was gallant to the last.

# ANIMAL METAPHYSICS

Selections from LEWIS CARROL

THE Caterpillar and Alice looked at each other for some time in silence; at last the Caterpillar took the hookah out of its mouth and addressed her in a languid, sleepy voice.

"Who are you?" said the Caterpillar.

This was not an encouraging opening for a conversation. Alice replied rather shyly, "I - I hardly know, Sir, just at present - at least I know who I *was* when I got up this morning, but I think I must have been changed several times since then".

"What do you mean by that?" said the Caterpillar, sternly. "Explain yourself!"

"I can't explain *myself*, I'm afraid, Sir," said Alice, "because I'm not myself, you see."

"I don't see," said the Caterpillar.

"I'm afraid I can't put it more clearly," Alice replied, very politely, "for I can't understand it myself, to begin with; and being so many different sizes in a day is very confusing."

"It isn't," said the Caterpillar.....

"Well, perhaps *your* feelings may be different," said Alice: "all I know is, it would feel very queer to *me*."

"You!" said the Caterpillar contemptuously. "Who are you?"

Which brought them back again to the beginning of the conversation.....

"I think you ought to tell me who you are first," said Alice.

"Why?" said the Caterpillar.... "So you think you're changed, do you?"

"I'm afraid I am, Sir," said Alice. "I can't remember things as I used - and I don't keep the same size for ten minutes together!".....

"What size do you want to be?" it asked.

"Oh! I'm not particular as to the size," Alice hastily replied; "only one doesn't like changing so often, you know."

"I *don't* know," said the Caterpillar.....

"Well, I should like to be a *little* larger, Sir, if you wouldn't mind," said Alice: "Three inches is such a wretched height to be."

"It is a very good height indeed!" said the Caterpillar....

"But I'm not used to it!" pleaded poor Alice in a piteous tone....



"You'll get used to it in time," said the Caterpillar, and it put the hookah into its mouth, and began smoking again.

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For over a hundred years now, Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass* have amused and delighted millions of readers. Although these books have generally been regarded as children's literature because of their special and tremendous appeal to the young - both in age and at heart - there is clearly a deep metaphysical meaning to the stories told in these books. For instance, in *Alice in Wonderland*, from which the above episode is reproduced, little Alice, the main character in the story, undergoes a series of strange and even nightmarish experiences, including alterations in her memory and vast changes in the size of her body. In this episode, Alice in all innocence and bewilderment pleads that the changes in her memory and the size of her body are very disconcerting. However, the Caterpillar, taking its hookah and time off, sternly rejects the idea and repeats the question, "Who are you?", driving home the point that neither the mind nor the body, nor any changes that occur to them, really matter. What really matters is the core of one's being: "Who are you?"

\*\*\*

In an earlier episode in the book, after falling down the rabbit hole, Alice begins to notice the various changes in her mind and body. She wonders:

"Dear, dear! How queer everything is today!...I wonder if I've been changed in the night? Let me think: was I the same when I got up this morning?... But if I'm not the same, the next question is 'Who in the world am I?' Ah, that's the great puzzle!" And she began thinking over all the children she knew, that were of the same age as herself, to see if she could have been changed for any of them.

"I'm sure I'm not Ada," she said, "for her hair goes in such long ringlets, and mine doesn't go in ringlets at all; and I'm sure I can't be Mabel, for I know all sorts of things, and she, oh, she knows so very little! Besides she's she, and I'm I, and oh dear, how puzzling it all is. I'll try if I know all the things I used to know. Let me see: four times five is twelve, and four times six is thirteen, and four times seven is - oh dear! I shall never get to twenty at that rate!...I must have been changed for Mabel!" ... and her eyes filled with tears again as she went on. "I must be Mabel after all, and I shall have to go and live in that pokey little house, and have next to no toys to play with, and oh, ever so many lessons to learn! No! I've made up my mind about it: if I'm Mabel, I'll stay down here! It'll be no use their putting their heads



down and saying, 'Come up again, dear!' I shall only look up and say 'Who am I, then? Tell me that first, and then, if I like being that person, I'll come up: if not, I'll stay down here till I'm someone else' ...

\* \* \*

*The vagaries of the mind, invariably evading the one ultimate and truly important question for ceaseless and pointless digressions, are parodied repeatedly in the book:*

"Cheshire-puss," [Alice asks the magical, ever-grinning Cheshire-Cat], "would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?"

"That depends a great deal on where you want to get to," said the Cat.

"I don't much care where---" said Alice.

"Then it doesn't matter which way you go," said the Cat.

"---so long as I get *somewhere*," Alice added as an explanation.

"Oh, you're sure to do that," said the Cat, "if you only walk long enough."....

*Carrol does not stop with ridiculing our sense of direction. He caricatures our very notion of sanity, exposing it to be not only relative but totally irrelevant:*

"What sort of people live here?" asked Alice.

"In *that* direction," the Cat said... "lives a Hatter: and in *that* direction... lives a March Hare. Visit either you like: they're both mad."

"But I don't want to go among mad people," Alice remarked.

"Oh, you can't help that," said the Cat, "we're all mad here. I'm mad. You're mad."

"How do you know I'm mad?" said Alice.

"You must be," said the Cat, "or you wouldn't come here.".....

\* \* \*

*In the chapter, "The Mad Tea Party", Lewis Carrol, who was one of the foremost mathe-*

*maticians of his time, again uses subtle satire, with perhaps more telling effect than equations, to point out the elusiveness of Time as a concept and its relativity.*

Alice sighed wearily, "I think you might do something better with the time," she said, "than wasting it in asking riddles that have no answers."

"If you knew Time as well as I do," said the Hatter, "You wouldn't talk about wasting it. It's *him*."

"I don't know what you mean," said Alice.

"Of course you don't!" the Hatter said, tossing his head contemptuously. "I dare say you never even spoke to Time!"

"Perhaps not," Alice cautiously replied, "but I know I have to beat time when I learn music."

"Ah! That accounts for it," said the Hatter. "He won't stand beating. Now, if you only kept on good terms with him, he'd do almost anything you liked with the clock...."

"Is that the way you manage?" Alice asked.

The Hatter shook his head mournfully. "Not I!" he replied. "We quarrelled last March - just before *he* went mad, you know -" (pointing with his teaspoon at the March Hare), "it was at the concert given by the Queen of Hearts, and I had to sing.... Well, I'd hardly finished the first verse... when the Queen bawled out, 'He's murdering the time! Off with his head!'... And ever since that... he won't do a thing I ask! It's always six o'clock now... it's always tea-time, and we've no time to wash the things between whiles."

"Then you keep moving round [the big tea table], I suppose?" said Alice.

"Exactly so," said the Hatter, "as the things get used up."

"But what happens when you come to the beginning again?" Alice ventured to ask....

"Take some more tea," the March Hare said to Alice, very earnestly.

\* \* \*

Lewis Carroll also never misses an opportunity to ridicule the futility of conventional learning for dealing with the essential questions of life which confront Alice continuously. One example is Alice's recitation of "You are old, Father William." But the most striking example is in the chapter entitled, "The Mock Turtle's Story," where the Mock Turtle describes the lessons learnt by the fishes in their schools:

"Reeling and Writhing, of course, to begin with, ... and then the different branches of Arithmetic -- Ambition, Distraction, Uglification, and Derision. ... There was [also] ... Mystery, ancient and modern, with Seaography; then Drawling, ... Stretching, and Fainting in Coils. ... The Classical Master... taught Laughing and Grief.".....

It also turns out that they actually learn less and less on each day: hence they are called "lessons." Carroll leaves it to the acumen of the adult reader to infer that if one learns more and more of such "less and less", one becomes a "moron."

\* \* \*

When Queen Victoria read Carroll's Alice in Wonderland, she was so impressed with the book that she ordered all of the author's works to be brought to her. In retrospect one can only be amused and can very well understand her consternation when, at the end of the search, she was handed a huge stack of mathematical treatises.

In the guise of a children's story, Oxford professor Charles Dodgson, alias Lewis Carroll, had clothed ideas that have been the concern of philosophers and mystics of all times.

It should be added that Alice's entire adventure in Wonderland ultimately turns out to be a dream, a very real sort of dream that raises very real and important questions. So, which is real -- the waking state or the dream state? Or are neither real?.....

Which brings us back to the question that underlies the whole adventure, put forth by the Caterpillar: Which is the reality? "And who are you?"

## By Ceasing to Imagine

By Martin Leo

**The Substance that we are determines its own being. We do not have to do anything about it except let it be. By letting it be, it simply is. Simplicity is understanding that Being is enough. Complexity arises from not-being, not-understanding and trying to 'do' something. By trying to do something it is already undone. By letting it Be, it is already accomplished!**

**Doing implies division, something to be done to something else. Being implies wholeness, nothing to be done and no one to do anything. Doing is in total opposition to Being. Trying to do implies that it is not already done!**

**To realize Reality it is only necessary to cease imagining that one is not it! By ceasing to imagine that one is not it, one realizes that One already is. There is no it. It is what One IS. The two can never become One. When One ceases, neither is there two.**

# VEDANTA, SIDDHANTA AND THEIR ADVAITA

By J. JAYARAMAN

THE head of the Easanya Math at the north-eastern corner of holy Arunachala, along with his mentor, the renowned Vedantin, Chinna Subbaiah Swami, often called on the Maharshi. This was during the 1920s, after Ramana had moved down to reside in the present Sri Ramanasramam. They would converse occasionally on diverse topics of religion and philosophy amidst a friendly atmosphere. Once, in reply, the Maharshi pointed out a related reference in Manickavasagar's *Tiruvachakam*. Sri Chinna Subbaiah Swami interjected saying, "Adu Sittaanta Krantam Allavo?" meaning, "But, isn't that part of the Siddhanta canon?" In an unusual repartee the Maharshi flashed a reply, "Siddhaantamaavadu, Vedaantamaavadu; Anubhavam Aiyaa!" meaning, "Let Siddhanta or Vedanta be; this, Sir, is experience!"

That about sums up Ramana's 'position' with regard to the two most ancient, all-encompassing and complementary philosophies. Though

in perfect harmony with each other, the two have had to suffer the fate of the elephant at the 'hands' of the blind describers!

The end of Vedanta, *Advaita*, states that the world of experience, as seen, is an illusion, *Maya*, and that the *Jiva*, the embodied Seer, is in essence identical with Brahman, the basis of the world-appearance. The limitation of the *Jiva*, and the binding world, are both *Maya*. *Advaita* means 'not two' and therefore, says Vedanta, it implies 'one only'.

The end of Siddhanta, Saiva Siddhanta states that *Advaita* meaning 'not two' implies 'inseparable', and certainly not total absence of duality. The embodied *Jiva* (*Pasu*), and the world (*Paasam*), are inseparable from their basis, Siva (*Pati*). The *Pasu* is like the eye which can see but still needs the light source (*Pati*) to perceive objects. Dependent, the *Pasu* holds on either to *Paasam* or to *Pati*. They are real and eternal principles. Liberation means that the *Jiva*, the Seer, rid of its *ahankara* (doership), merges in

Siva, like star and heavens merge in the Sun's day-time brilliance. The calf tied to a post finds itself free to graze around, of its own volition. It also has the ability to gain some knowledge about its surroundings. These constitute the *iccha*, *Kriya* and *Jnana Saktis* of the *Jiva* (*Pasu*). The Master, *Pati*, limits the powers of the calf, *Pasu*, out of compassion in order that it may not come to total grief through ill-guided volition. When thus tamed through its own efforts, the calf, *Pasu*, is granted release by the Master, *Pati*.

The Siddhantin is therefore perfectly logical when he refuses to accept the 'one only' of the Vedantin, at the level of dialogue and assertion. The Saivite Nayanmars, so dear to the young Ramana, were all staunch Saiva Siddhantins. That is, they rather kept silent than say, "I am He". They asserted full-throatedly, "He is all; His grace alone enables one to bow to Him!" They lived a life of surrender, merged in Siva, a perfect tool in His hands, seeing Siva as the world-experience and beyond. Individual effort, though necessary, was not sufficient for *Jnana*. The *Jnana* got when the 'taste' for the world wears off is, as Sri Ramakrishna observes, like searching for a stranger in a dark room and contacting him after a bit of groping around. One is rid of doubt and *experiences* the other's presence. But the fullness of it, the recognition (*pratyabhijna*), occurs only when light floods the room. The final absorption into Sivahood, the removal of the darkness of ego, is a destruction only Siva, the *Pati*, can effect.

Vedantic *Advaita*, like a numbered account, is a personal matter beyond speech and thought. It is the *sutra*, the cyanide capsule of the final reckoning with 'oneness'. A reckoning which must be, but can never be verified. Asserted in dialogue, it stands abused. The *Advaitic* flavour in the depths of the Siddhantin's heart can never be plumbed, much less uttered. He merely utters praise of his Lord and Master from whom he, as utterer, finds himself inseparable. Even the most vociferous assertion of the 'one only' of Vedantic *Advaita* (as, for example: "I am the unconditioned Brahman") does not save the speaker

from the very punctual visitations of hunger and thirst. Even the *Jnani*, freed from ego's like, dislike and doership, which is all of the battle won, still has a slender connection with the body for its bare minimum maintenance. It is the limitation, the burden of the coolie, as Maharshi put it, which he is only too glad to drop off at the journey's end. Of course, with or without this burden it makes little difference to the inner life. The river at its roaring confluence with the ocean has no going back. It is the ocean, guaranteed.

*Advaita* Vedanta is the 'acronym,' of which *Advaita* Siddhanta is the expansion. *Advaita* of Vedanta is only an inferred fact, for all expression of it only proceeds in a plane of duality. *Advaita* of Siddhanta is the science of this expression; it is a practical and profound statement of one's *sadhana* of purification. *Jnana*, first obtained through one's efforts (which the Siddhantin calls *Pasu Jnana*), ripens, in the limiting case of such efforts, into *Pati Jnana* through the sun-like arising of Siva's grace, thus flooding, with all-submerging Light, the *Jiva* in the heart firmament.

The *Advaita* of Vedanta is the 'mnemonic', the Morse-coded *Mukti* that does away with God, Guru or any mediator between *Jiva* and *Brahman*. It is the irrefutable but dry 'grammar' of the *Jnana* game. *Advaita* of Siddhanta is the game itself in flesh and blood. It is the *Jnana* with the complement of *Bhakti* spelt out forcefully. Even *Mauna* falls short of the 'original'. Even Dakshinamurti's *Mauna* was not a restatement of the 'original Word', but only a *Vyaakhya*, a continuous commentary for broadcasting *Brahma-tattva*.

Through his brilliant verses on Self-knowledge, and his hymns to Siva-Sakti, Sri Sankara has really shown us the inseparability of Vedanta and Siddhanta. Sri Ramana drives home this very point throughout his stirring hymns to Arunachala. Consider his 'self-illuminated' *Jnana* in the absence of a visible God or Guru; and his unique love for Arunachala Siva, as his Lord and Master, becomes significant. In the *Upadesa Saram* he refers to the ego which, upon enquir-

ing into its source, is swallowed up by That which rises therein (v.20). In the *Forty Verses On Reality* (v.21), he declares the impossibility of seeing one's Self (there being not two), and the impossibility of seeing one's Lord (as one becomes His food in the process). In the two invocatory verses to the *Forty Verses*, Ramana states the 'case' of *Advaita* Vedanta and that of *Advaita* Siddhanta respectively.

**"Being presides, preceding all perception and resides in the Heart. How is one to become this? By being in the Heart as one already is!"**

**"Those frightened of death, seek the Feet of the Supreme Lord beyond death and birth. Merged in surrender, they gain their death. Can thought of death plague these who are beyond death?"**

Having thus presented the 'case', Sri Ramana through the first two verses of the *Forty Verses*,

and verse 40 of the *Supplement to Forty Verses*, himself passes 'judgement', unifying the "one only" of Vedanta and the "three only" of Siddhanta.

**"We perceive the world and so have to infer a multi-potent Prime Basis. The world-cinema of name-form, the Seer of this Show, and the Screen and Light supporting these, are all just He."**

**"The Seer, the Scene and the Transcendent are accepted by all. Assertions such as 'one only' or 'three only' are all during the Seer's currency only. Fixed in its Source, rid of this ego, is alone salutary."**

**"I shall declare the essence of all Vedanta and Siddhanta: 'The I dying, and becoming that, that I, being, aware, alone, resides. Realise!'"**

The *Advaita* of Vedanta and the *Advaita* of Siddhanta are not two, but inseparably one!

**"Life we look upon as the One Form of Existence, manifesting in what we call Matter; or what, incorrectly separating them, we name Spirit, Soul and Matter in man. Matter is the vehicle for the manifestation of Soul on this plane of existence, and Soul is the vehicle on a higher plane for the manifestation of Spirit, and these three are a Trinity synthesized by Life, which pervades them all."**

-- H.P. Blavatsky

. . .

**"Every moment contains within itself all that is needed for fulfilling the necessity of that moment. Be attentive to the moment. Surrender to the moment and its requirements. Be attentive to the moment."**

-- Anna C. Lewis

. . .

**"The Universe is real enough to the conscious beings in it, which are as unreal as it is itself."**

-- H.P. Blavatsky

# THE MAHARSHI AND THE GOLDEN CASTLE

By ROSALIND CHRISTIAN

YOU will, I hope, remember the *sadhana* of the two 'brothers' from the old Celtic story I have been recounting. Theirs was the path of *karma marga* and *jnana marga*. But there was another brother, the youngest, usually called the Simple Son, who was Spirit, and his *sadhana* was very different.

## Story

When the three lads parted, the Simple Son's road did not lead to a royal kitchen or cow byre, but away into a very lonely country -- so lonely that the lad was somewhat afraid. But he pressed on through a vast forest until, as dusk was falling, he found himself before a great and silent castle behind a mighty rampart. Mustering all his courage he circled the rampart and, finding an open door, entered and sat down within beside a fire and an empty table and waited. As he waited a candle came silently through the air towards him and set itself down upon the table, and the whole house was filled with its light.

## Comment

The Simple Son's journey is into a lonely introvert world. His courage has to be great and his reward is great also -- no less than the

Princess of the Golden Castle as his bride, for, as he learns later, 'Hers' is the 'house' to which he has come. 'She' is the candle which fills the room with its effulgence. This effulgence is the harbinger of 'Her' presence. Not seldom, when there is a deep spiritual awakening, manifestations of 'light' come to the *sadhaka*. Bhagavan himself, when talking to Dilip Kumar Roy, calls this 'threshold' the Golden Gate (see *The Ramana Way*, December 1988, p.14). Certain it is that close to a Maharshi manifestations of light abound. In one issue alone of *The Mountain Path* (January 1969) I have found several wonderful examples of this. Let me quote. "In *Grace from a Distance*, Elizabeth Lok chided herself for the envy she had felt when her sister was enabled to visit Sri Ramanasramam. 'For you', she said to herself, 'and for anybody, if Arunachala exists anywhere it must exist most truly in the hearts of those who are open to it.' At this the field of vision was lit by a great glow of golden light and my heart expanded with an almost unbelievable joy. The joy deepened and glowed into an incredible depth of peace."

The other quotation comes from "How I came to the Maharshi" and "The Golden Flame." The anonymous author tells how he was



granted a vision of Sri Maharshi and Holy Arunachala as he was standing one dark night in the courtyard of his home. "After a few minutes," he writes, "a small flame leapt out of the apex of the hill. In the beginning it was just like an eye in a vertical position, but very swiftly it grew and grew until it became a pillar of light, with extraordinary brightness, having the hilltop as its base and origin. Its height touched the very heavens. Its splendour was beyond description. It was just the shape of the flame of a lamp when it burns steadily golden-coloured, shining as if a thousand suns had arisen together..... I stood there totally hypnotized, oblivious of anything else but the golden flame."

This whole description is of extraordinary interest when set against the ancient story. The small flame which becomes sun-like in grandeur perhaps explains why, in certain variants, the Entity of the Castle is called Sister to the Sun.

In this vision of the Golden Flame, Ramana spoke to his devotee and said, "Child, do you understand what this *jyothi* (effulgence) is? It is the real Karthigai Deepam" (i.e., the Festival of the Beacon on Arunachala Hill). The Maharshi

also, as a mere youth, had experienced this brilliant effulgence when he rested in the Temple of Arayaninallur on his famous journey to Arunachala. Very often, rituals, having their origins in ancient times, reflect experiences that may come to the aspirant. Rituals of light abound -- candles, lamps, flames, moving lights are all to be found. Very often in temples and churches gold is used to make this light more effulgent. The coronation of a ruler and consort, for example, in the Russian Orthodox Church (which has its roots in Byzantium) was one great symphony of gold, with golden robes, crowns, and icons, all bathed in the glow of a myriad candles. Also, we must remember that gold itself was held to be a symbolic metal: "Gold tried in the fire comes out brighter and purer still", it is said.

### Story

When the Simple Son felt hungry the board before him was spread with choice food and, later, when he began to wish for sleep the candle led him past two locked doors and into a splendid bed-chamber. The lad was bemused and wondered what he should rightly do, but, at last, he threw off his clothes and lay down to rest. When

the dawn came and he wished to rise, imagine his amazement when there was not a rag of his own clothing to be found, but, instead, the most beautiful raiment lay spread out. Since he had no choice he put this on. Thus it was that the Simple Son slept night after night in the Golden Castle and each morning found finer and finer raiment for his use – but as to whence all this came he had no idea.

### Comment

“The world was my *guru*,” said Ramana Maharshi, and the one who steps into Enlightenment is always provided for. Such a one was the Simple Son, and food, raiment and counsel were given him. I believe that the fair robes which he finds day after day are a growing awareness of an inner wisdom that is an enrichment of his whole being. Like the ‘farmer’ of Jesus’s parable (Mark’s *Gospel*, Chapter 4) he reaps a mysterious harvest. However, here I intend to consider the relationship of this ‘raiment’ with light and gold.

Certainly the ancient Celtic tellers of the tale envisaged these robes as rich with gold ornament and precious stones, and ritual apparel down the ages bears out their view. But why was this? We have to turn once more to the proximity of a Maharshi to find out. It was not infrequent for followers of Sri Ramana, in intense moments of devotion, to see his body bathed or haloed in golden light. For them he was ‘clothed’ in ‘gold’. This type of subjective spiritual experience found its way into ritual and iconography. For example, the aim of conveying this effulgent quality is a strong ingredient in early Christian art.

The Simple Son’s raiment was very rich and fine. Though the story as we have it is in Gaelic, I wonder if the English word ‘fine’ does not give us a hint of a secondary meaning. Perhaps we are meant to understand that this raiment was finer in texture than ordinary clothing and thus lighter to wear. His own clothes, which so mysteriously disappeared, would have been, of course, rough cloth, for he was the son of a poor man. Fine material, being harder to spin and weave, was for the wealthy. Nor is this thought

without inner meaning. Not only may the devotee experience visions of ‘light’ or the figure of the beloved *guru* enveloped in ‘light’ he may also experience a sense of blissful lightness as though all weight and encumbrance had been cast off. Arthur Osborne tells of this experience in *Ramana Arunachala*. Here the author expresses the quietness, the peace, the “indescribable lightness” and happiness that came to him beneath Bhagavan’s gaze. Ganapathi Muni in a letter sent to the Maharshi in 1931 also speaks of his experience of “a flow of light giving a sense of utmost lightness” (*The Mountain Path*, April 1969).

A sense of light and lightness are two verifiable experiences on the spiritual path which help to explain the Celtic tale. *The Mountain Path* has proved this to me over the years, and the iconography of Hinduism, Buddhism and Christianity bears it out. Is not Siva often shown almost airborne, or should we say flame-borne, as he crushes down the ugly dwarf beneath his foot? In Mahayana art various Bodhisattvas appear seated on clouds, the whole portraying light and lightness in every sense of these words, while in the iconography of the Orthodox Church the Christ, transfigured, floats in a bubble of heavenly blue.

### Story

After a while the Simple Son and the entity of the Golden Castle speak together. She tells him that she is invisible to him on account of an enchantment (*maya*) but that if he will wait for her with perfect quiet and contentment, never straying from her silent realm, at the end of the appointed time the enchantment will be broken and she will be his bride. And thus, at last, it turns out. Thus the Strong Brother, Body, the Clever Brother, Mind, and the youngest brother, Spirit, each weds his own Princess.

### Comment

As Arthur Osborne points out, body, mind and spirit all share in Realization, or, as we might say, the total man finds completion and fulfillment. If *karma marga* and *jnana marga* are the



paths of the two elder 'brothers' then *bhakti*, I suggest, is the path of the Simple Son. He is the *bhakta* who surrenders to divine guidance. 'She' is the Atman with whom, by Grace, he will be united. Love is the driving force of his *sadhana*.

"Love has perfect patience, perfect faith, perfect hope and flawless endurance," wrote St. Paul, who sometimes, writes one of your contributors, "speaks almost word for word the language of the *bhakti marga* of the *Gita*" (Michael N. Nagler, *The Mountain Path*, July 1970).

The path of the *bhakta* is one of absolute surrender. "I am your abject slave; do with me what you will," says Prince Ahmed to the Princess whom he weds in an *Arabian Nights* version of the Three Brothers. And she saves Ahmed from every danger and magically performs for him impossible tasks -- a slightly improbable situation to say the least, in the light of the world's realities, but quite explicable if the Princess is accepted as the Atman or Self!

"Attain *prapatti* [the state of self-surrender] and entrust your entire burden to the Lord, who will then take the burden off your back and give

you the feeling that you are in Him and one with Him" (*The Mountain Path*, January 1983).

Ramana used a male symbol for the Atman or Self, the Celtic storyteller used a female symbol. Both are apt in different ways, but I guess that the female symbol is the more ancient, going back to the days before the gods -- and in folktale it seems to have held its own. And when we remember the cherishing/love/bliss/light/lightness elements of Realization we see how well it fits. What could be "nearer, gentler, more beautiful or more loving than the true Self?" asks Lucia Osborne in her Editorial: "What is Death if Scrutinized?" (*The Mountain Path*, October 1970).

Ramana Maharshi taught that all true paths meet at the summit. Here *nishkama karma*, *jnana* and *bhakti* merge -- as we see in his own example, for he was the perfect *bhakta*, faithful to death to the path of surrender. No wonder that in my story from the Scottish islands the 'three brothers' gain stupendous meaning if we put them inside one true seeker. They are three aspects of the total man, three paths to the summit, three modes of fulfilment.

**"My Me is God, nor do I recognize any other Me except my God Himself."**

**-- St. Catherine of Genoa**

\* \* \*

**"The knower and the known are one. Simple people imagine that they should see God as if he stood there and they here. This is not so. God and I, we are one in knowledge."**

**-- Meister Eckhart**

\* \* \*

**"Every clique has a theory about Me -- I am Mine; what I am, I am."**

**-- Omar Khayyam**

\* \* \*

**"What you are looking for is what is looking."**

**-- St. Francis of Assisi**

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# MAYA CAN NEVER EMBRACE BRAHMAN

By ROBERT POWELL

ONE of our main problems is that we find it nearly impossible to reconcile the insights of the *Upanishads* and their more recent proponents, the *Advaita Vedanta* masters, with our actual, everyday-life experience. And, I feel, this might well be the only problem from which all other problems derive. The teachings state that everything is really one Whole (non-dual), that there are no individual entities such as "you" and "me", and that any differences we perceive are illusory. In fact, the entire manifest world is *Maya* (illusory); the Unmanifest or the Noumenon only is real but, as indicated by the definition of these terms, "unknowable". Thus, since there are no differences, there is nothing to strive for, not even realization since we are the Real already. We must just stop "pretending" we are not That (the Real) -- something we have done for so long that in the end we have hypnotized ourselves into believing in our own ignorance. Thus, all we need to do to is to wake up from our dream state and be true to our (non-dual) Self.

Such an attitude to life runs completely counter to our everyday experience of a tangible world, in which we are highly conscious of our separate self-identities, and of the differences between one individual and another. After all, it is these differences that underlie the motivation

for all action on the psychological level -- to "better ourselves," and, ultimately, "survive" as that independent entity, the "me".

So our difficulty is: how do we deal with this antithesis of diametrically opposite world views, especially when one of these is based on actual life experience and the other, to us, from hearsay? Here it must first be pointed out that all experience is based on the senses, and these often deceive us. For centuries man believed that the sun revolves around the earth, since it had been our daily experience that the sun rises and sets on a stationary earth, which was considered to be the center of the Universe. When subsequently the knowledge of our solar system began to broaden, man began to realize the error of his world-view and the limits of intuitive perception.

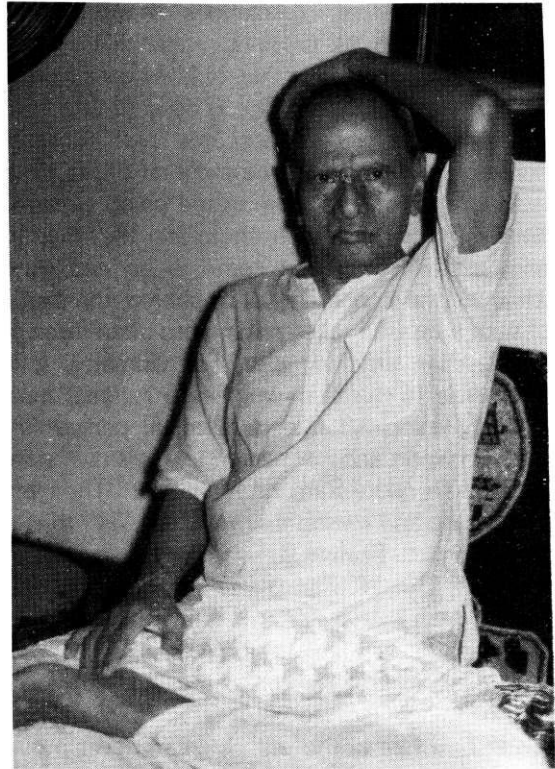
However, worse was to come with the findings of the so-called "new physics" which allowed even less scope for intuitive perception or comprehension. As examples, we might mention the concept of light being both particles and waves, and "matter" being a curvature of space. Those concepts are not only wholly alien to our intuition but are also in direct contradiction to common sense and even beyond the reach of linear thought.

In the spiritual area, the great masters of all

wisdom traditions have always challenged deeply rooted assumptions and habitual ways of perceiving and conceptualizing. They never tired of pointing out certain undeniable facts, generally unrealized because of being contrary to intuitive perception, which may bring one closer to an understanding of *advaita* or non-duality. To some aspirants, such pointers have proved extremely helpful, in their role of "hints", although falling short of providing definite "proof", if there be such a thing; to others, possibly less advanced, they seem to have merely added to the confusion in their minds. Now I do not think one can ever produce an absolute proof for the truth of *advaita* as one does with a mathematical or scientific proposition. And even if such a "proof" were to be forthcoming, it would still be on the intellectual plane and not be transcendental apperception or realization leading to the liberation of consciousness. I do not believe the latter can be communicated from one person to another, and I will later state why.

One such hint that the *advaita* masters have given us is that were it not for identification with the body, the idea of being a separate individual would not have arisen; in fact, such a concept simply could not be. From this the following ensues logically: in the absence of an observer, distinct in space and time, there are no objects distinct in space and time. In other words, if the observer sees himself as a separate entity, then the world appears before him as separate entities. And if the observer regards himself as the Totality, then the world is similarly observed -- as one indivisible Whole. Another way to understand this is to state that since fundamentally the observer is the observed<sup>1</sup>, both must be of a like nature.

Now some persons on hearing that the mind is wrongly identified with the body will interpret *advaita* by positing that a multiplicity of bodies exist as separate entities, but that psychologically we are one; that is, our minds are not separate but one. This, roughly speaking, has been Krishnamurti's essential point of view and teaching. (K never accepted the concept of *Maya*.) But such a world-view brings with it its



*Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj*

own difficulties, since it primarily retains and strengthens the false split between body and mind. For if our bodies exist as multiple entities and the mind as a unicity, they must necessarily be of fundamentally different natures and then we have only reasserted the false duality of body-mind or matter-consciousness. Another possible consequence is that the mind starts to rationalize and project various concepts, such as by saying to itself: "All these separate minds are empowered by one energy; I am energy and so feel myself as being part of the universal energy," which is merely another explanation, a purely intellectual one for that matter, and ultimately meaningless: it does not touch me in the core of my being and I still have not reached *advaita*.

<sup>1</sup> In this connection, Sri Ramana Maharshi stated: "All that you see depends on the seer. Apart from the seer, there is no seen." -- A. Devaraja Mudaliar, *Day by Day with Bhagavan*, p.149; and "Without the seer there are no objects seen." -- *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, Seventh Edition, 1984, p. 345.

My view is that explanations of any kind do not really help us much in understanding our own nature; in a sense they hold us back from a total, direct realization. This is because any form of explanation entails concepts, and concepts necessarily maintain the momentum of the intellectual process. And more to the point: explanations refer only to *Maya*; therefore, for *Maya* to end, explanations must come to an end. And while insights can and must be shared, the magic of such a transfer takes place more often through silence than anything else. For ultimately it is impossible to make anyone see a spiritual truth through ratiocination or intellectual persuasion, or to transport another person to one's own state of bliss. To quote Ramana Maharshi: "Thoughts must cease and reason disappear for "I-I" to rise up and be felt. Feeling is the prime factor and not reason"<sup>2</sup>. (By "I-I" Ramana refers to the true Self or Brahman.) Also relevant is a remark by Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj to the effect that "your facts may be imagination to me, and my facts may be imagination to you." Thus, explanations can at best hint at the truth but can never prove or convey that truth to another. Truth must be realized by oneself for oneself. Thus, the real utility of explanations may well lie in silencing the mind through showing its impotence, and thereby prepare a condition or susceptibility for Grace to operate. For realization is essentially acausal: it can be neither induced nor impeded. And, in last resort, everything is Grace.

There is another, much more compelling reason why the truth of *advaita* -- our self-nature -- cannot be formulated and thereby "known" in any way. The very process of "knowing", our entire intellectual-emotional cognitive activity, takes place strictly in and as the realm of *Maya*; it is a *Mayaic* activity. The seeker himself is nothing but *Maya*, and this seeker wants to establish the truth about the non-dual -- that is, the pure, objectless, attributeless consciousness which is called Brahman.

The important thing to see is that whatever that body-mind entity concludes can only describe how things appear to that empirical entity which finds its being in the realm of *Maya*. And,

## On Silence

By Sureshwar

**Silence so deep no thoughts can remain  
When Divine Silence unfolds its grace;  
Silence will heal the fevered brain  
All disquiet it will efface.**

**Silence dense on the mountain height  
Penetrates the abyss of night;  
Silence swells unheard, hid from sight,  
Shedding forth the needed Light.**

**To Silence wed, I remain unbound  
By all that might fetter or hold me down;  
In Silence are all solutions found,  
In Silence find I my Crown.**

**I won't wait anymore for anyone's bounty,  
In Silence I've found the Horn of Plenty.  
Prince am I of Love and Light;  
Freedom I enjoy, my Sovereign Right.**

as we have already seen, since the observer is the observed, the body-mind entity can only find out and make statements about *Maya*, never about Brahman. A fragment can only describe the fragmentary, the finite can only define the finite, never the infinite. To use a simple analogy, a water droplet thrown up in the foam above the ocean surface theoretically could say something about itself, since it has borders; that is, it interfaces with a milieu other than itself. But the same droplet as part of the body of the ocean could do no such thing; it cannot know itself, in the traditional meaning of the term. Where is the "droplet" and where is the ocean? It would be the Wholeness, beyond any subject-object relationship. Just so, we must view our psychosomatic being, our falsely assumed and experienced "ego"; it is no other than the ocean of Consciousness, beyond space-time, beyond knowing and not-knowing, beyond existing and not-existing. Such realization can only take place when the mental process has been silenced and knowledge as cognition is transcended.

<sup>2</sup> *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, 7th Edition, 1984, p.21.

## INQUIRY INTO THE 'I'

A Garland of Sonnets<sup>1</sup>

By OM (OLEG MOGILEVER, Leningrad, U.S.S.R)

(Translated from the Russian by NADHIA SUTARA)

### V

Brahman is the sole Reality - THAT is the Truth Itself,  
Bottomless abysses beyond all sounding,  
The countless names and forms of creation,  
Are but a mere deception in the universal Mist.

"Everything is THAT, everything is THAT" -- here is the passage  
across the Fog.

"Who am I? Who am I?" -- here is the sword that cuts through  
the shadows.

And "THAT - WHICH - IS" shall arise and consume thee,  
Alone, without another, without a mind ....

O, Radiance! Eternally youthful moment!  
O, Ocean that knows no shore!  
One and one only!  
Into which all the rivers shall merge!

And the rest - is it a grand Joke or a Game?  
Enough of theories! It is time to realise:  
The world of duality is the magic of the Source.

### VI

The world of duality is the magic of the Source,  
The fruit of miraculous Maya, its mysterious power:  
No sooner does *tamas* conceal Reality,  
Than *rajas* gives rise to name and form.

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<sup>1</sup>(continued from June, 1990 issue)

And the I-sense forsakes its Source,  
 Forgetting THAT – the Ground of all Being --  
 And thus giving birth to "I", "my", "they", and the rest --  
 Good and evil, diversity, distinctions and judgements of all kinds.

Here self-sense celebrates the banquet macabre of personality:  
 Armed with the scourge of logic,  
 This vampire, a master of deceit, accustoms himself to the  
     realm of space and time.

All the contents of innumerable vessels  
 Can't quench his unslakable thirst,  
 The object of the ego, longing for blood.

### VII

The object of the ego, athirst for blood,  
 Through layer upon layer in the onion of sheaths,  
 Where the life-streams converge  
 That drag the helpless *jiva* into incarnation.

There the five-headed hungers suffer cruelly,  
 Suckling madly at the body of the world:  
 Taste, sight, touch, smell, and hearing --  
 Not only *jnanendriyas* but also *karmendriyas*:

Speech, hands, feet, generation and excretion --  
 The five-fold *pranas* complete the scene;  
 Alas, not only with flowers is my begging bowl full ....

Yet within sits the *antaryami*,  
 And the entire Universe is only its bauble, its toy,  
 The plaything of the restless mind.

### VIII

The plaything of the restless mind  
 Is this whole forest of creation: the vast multitude of forms,  
 Unquenchable desires, eternally arising yearnings,  
 Are all drawn together by the action of the reasoning mind.

Like the prodigal son, who has forgotten his Home,  
 Which he neither can forsake, nor yet find another place to  
     rest his head,  
 The I-sense wanders lost and forlorn, though born out of  
     the Heart of Brahman,  
 And heir to the Immutable, the Omnipresent and Eternal.

Thus the poor *jiva*, whose essence is the True I,  
Suffers the restrictions of the cycle of rebirth  
In the ego's incarnations from life to life.

It does not see that there is a Pathway Home  
To its original Freedom, a Return to its own True Self ....  
A direct path to one's immutable Nature.

## IX

There is a direct path to one's immutable Nature,  
That is beyond all causes and beginnings.  
The limitlessness of the Absolute is that Mooring,  
To which cling the souls who call out for their birthright.

This mystic Pole-Star of the ages  
That dissolves the imprint of *samsara*  
Beckons true seekers, the efflorescence of the race,  
Extolled alike by scriptures and sages.

Of all religions, of all the spiritual paths,  
It is the ultimate Goal from the very genesis of Time,  
Though each must find his own way there.

Among the many paths that lead to Brahman,  
The most direct, like an arrow, is the one straight route  
Laid open by Sri Ramana, the omnipresent Guru.

## X

Laid open by Sri Ramana, the omnipresent Guru,  
Who, when but 17, vanquished the fear of Death  
By realising that the body is not I, but only fuel for the funeral pyre:  
With this knowledge He attained Enlightenment.

He forsook the place of His birth  
For Arunachala, His true native place ...  
The earthly embodiment of the Light of the Heart,  
Issuing a silent call to the Quest for the I.

In cave and in ashram, at the summit of Being,  
He is everywhere, formless and One --  
The affirmation and witness of the scriptures.

Satguru, instructing the adepts through Silence,  
He teaches from all eternity the direct path to Brahman:  
Only realize that the ego is a phantom without substance.

(To be continued)

# VEDANTIC METAPHORS

By DAVID FRAWLEY

ACCORDING to the teaching of Advaita or non-dualistic Vedanta, the world is false and unreal like the snake seen in a rope (*rajjusarpa*) or the silver seen in a mother-of-pearl shell (*shuktirajata*).

This doctrine of superimposition (*adhyasa*) appears at first quite radical and has aroused much debate. How could this vast creation be nothing but a delusion of thought? Is it not a creation of the Divine, full of beauty and wonder? Can we not all see and touch it objectively and find it to be actually there?

Such thinking, however, misses the point. The point is not so much cosmological or philosophical as a matter of practical psychology. It is not so much challenging the reality of the world as questioning the process of our perception. Rather than examining it from a metaphysical standpoint as an ontological assertion, it is much easier to understand it if we examine how this process operates in our own life and thought. Whether it is the ultimate truth or not, it certainly is part of the way our minds work and gives us the key to the process of thought that keeps us in ignorance and sorrow.

Just as a man walking down a dark road at night may mistake a coiled rope for a snake and be stricken unnecessarily with fear, so are our feelings of fear, frustration and sorrow in life. Or just as a man walking near the sea may see a piece of sea shell and imagine that it is silver, so are our feelings of desire, attraction and attachment in the world.

Most of our sorrows in life come from projecting some ultimate fulfillment in the acquisition of

various objects of experience -- a beautiful woman, a new car or home, a better job or title and so on. Yet none of these things gives us ultimate happiness, though we achieve them. They glitter, like the sea shell, but do not have ultimate value like silver.

Or, conversely, our unhappiness comes from projecting some real or final sorrow in the sufferings of the world, like our failure, poverty, dishonour, disease or death or that of those we are attached to. These disturb us but we continue and forget them, life goes on, or we are born again.

It is a fact that we have positive and negative experiences in life. It is a fact that some objects are attractive and pleasurable, others are unattractive or painful. But how real and lasting is the joy or sorrow we derive from them and how much do we really have to react to these experiences? What is actually taking place in these experiences in which we see our happiness or sorrow? Are they objective or are they colored by some subjective factor, a bias of our own mind that clouds our perception, as in these two metaphors, the snake in the rope or the silver in the sea shell?

We imagine that something objective, gaining or becoming something, will afford us happiness, peace, security or so on. Yet, though it may have a certain fascination for us or hold our attention for a time, it does not give us the lasting result we are seeking. Otherwise, with attainment of the object of our seeking, our seeking would come to an end. Instead, as soon as we gain something, we find it insufficient and must



go on to desire something more. The glitter of the sea shell entrances us for a moment but it does not give us anything of real value. We put that object down and go after something else that glitters. And all that is outside us can only glitter as the light comes from within. As long as we are projecting that light outside ourselves we must seek it externally and to no real avail.

And if we should lose an object we are attached to, it gives us sorrow. Whatever we put our sense of happiness into must fail us as all objects must pass. We feel that without these glittering things that distract us we do not exist or life has no meaning. This imagination we superimpose upon the object is delusion. Such experiences make up our goals in life and are behind the process of being in the world. They define ourselves and our world, which is through this process inherently a world of wandering, suffering and illusion (*samsara*).

How many of us have lived for a moment without wanting something or trying to avoid something?

No object is inherently desirable. If so, all beings would equally desire that object. What causes us to desire something is not inherent in the object itself. That something is attractive does not mean that we must automatically want it, seek our happiness through it, nor be bereaved if we do not get it. Attractive objects are innumerable and yet it is only a few that we become really attached to. Desire depends on an emotional factor that we superimpose upon the object. This process, however, is unconscious and we usually do not discriminate the object from the coloring of our minds about it.

For example, one man will find one woman to be most beautiful and the main means to happiness. Another man may prefer another woman, or seek power or money, or something else. Or what most attracts us one moment will be forgotten the next. Hence, what is the supreme object of happiness for one mind may be a thing of no worth for another. This could not be the case if anything had any real capacity to give fulfillment to us. We may try to be content with such limited

happineses but something inside ourselves always wants more, thus showing that a complete or total happiness is required by us, is our very nature.

The desirable objects in the world possess no intrinsic worth or value. This is not to say that they are bad or have no purpose. They simply cannot provide us any lasting happiness. They may have a certain beauty or fascination about them, but if we do not supply a subjective emotional need they cannot attract us. They are like the mother-of-pearl shell. We will not see it as silver unless we are already looking for silver because we have a desire for it. Only to the extent that we feel we need them do outer objects attract us. Hence, they are a manifestation of inner poverty or want, and cannot lead us out of the seeking state.

As long as we are seeking anything, as long as we want something, as long as our minds are colored by desire, we create misperception. We create illusion and allow ourselves to be deceived. We cannot blame anyone when this leads us into sorrow, as it must. We cannot blame the sea shell, when we find it is not really silver. Nor can we blame someone who sells us something as providing happiness when that object fails. We must take responsibility for projecting our happiness outside ourselves in the first place and see the danger and falseness of this entire process.

The problem with the modern world and mass media culture is that it is constantly filling our minds with images, attractive or fearful, designed to keep us under external influences. Beautiful women appear, to sell us this or that. An imaginary world of pure superimposition is paraded before us daily. Some of us now, particularly in the West, have more association with the media world of images than the actual world. In this case, direct and objective perception is rendered yet more difficult.

Thus there are two factors in our perception, one objective and the other subjective. The objective factor is the object itself, whatever it may be, a tree, a house, a man. The subjective

factor is our like and dislike, love and hate, fear or desire, attraction or repulsion. This subjective factor is a factor of non-perception, false imagination or delusion. It colors the perception of the object and causes us to judge it falsely. This in turn leads to wrong action which causes suffering. If we do not perceive the nature of fire, for example, we will not handle it correctly and may be hurt.

As long as we are seeking something we are bound to project it onto things. A man who is hungry is going to see food, a man who is lustful will imagine beautiful women. As long as we are trying to avoid something, we are also bound to project it. A man who fears pain or enmity is going to suspect it everywhere.

Desire is a kind of preconception, as is fear, and these prevent us from seeing things as they are. It is not that desire is wrong or that the objects we desire are false. It is that the process of desire prevents direct perception, right relationship and correct action, which can only arise through coming into contact with the thing itself. It is not that we should suppress our desires but that we should understand how we delude ourselves and lead ourselves into frustration by not being able to separate what we would like things to be from what they are.

Things are what they are. They are nothing in particular, appearances of names and forms in which the Divine light is playing. They are like a pattern of colors that our mind makes into different forms according to its bias. It is our own particular mindset that gives them a particular value, that causes us to distinguish them as providing happiness or sorrow, to be sought or avoided. These values may arise from instinct, like sex, projecting the woman as the ultimate object, or from social conditioning, like wanting to be a great scientist in the modern world. But they do not come from the object, which is essentially inert and empty.

Vedanta says that truth is in things as they are. Right action comes from seeing things as they are. As long as we have any coloring of attraction

or repulsion in the mind, we cannot find truth or act rightly.

What we call the world is our mindset. It is our subjective accumulation of fear and desire. What the world is in itself we do not know and cannot know until all these subjective biases are eliminated. What we call the world is our mind's idea of a realm of happiness or sorrow in which it operates. We have no real or pure perception of the world as it is, as long as this process of superimposition continues.

When we dissolve that bias of the mind, there is no world as a separate entity, no realm of happiness or sorrow outside of ourselves. There are appearances but there is no reality to them that can disturb us. There is the appearance of sorrow but no one who really suffers. There is death but no one who really dies.

Just as the breaking of a cup we observe does not cause us to think we are broken, or the death of another person does not cause us to think we have died, so it is with our own (the "I-am-the-body" idea's) suffering and death. Just as the wealth gained by another does not give us happiness, neither does the wealth gained by ourselves (the "I-am-the-body" idea).

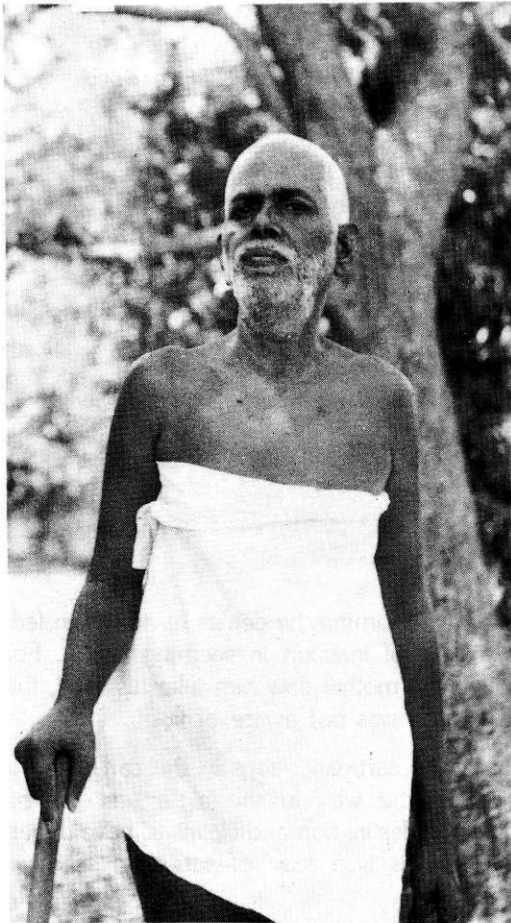
To end this illusion, true knowledge is required. This comes only through observation, inquiry and meditation. Or this process of seeking can be directed to the Divine in devotion, for it is only the image of the Divine that is truly perfect. Through concentration on that Divine image the mind also eventually gets dissolved.

So let us first remove our projections of what we want or don't want from our perception and then see what world is left over. This is not to deny those we love or reject the beauty of life. It is to cease to cloud these things with our own subjective manipulations. It is to liberate the object to be what it is, which is Being itself, not a thing to accept or discard.

Then we can discuss philosophically whether the world is real or unreal, or whatever. Then we can do whatever we wish, because we will see things as they are, and be able to act in that truth.

## ECHOES FROM ARUNACHALA

By N.N. RAJAN



AS I had tight work in the office daily, I felt depressed very much. Added to this, there was much difficulty in getting leave to enable me to continue my periodic visits to the Ashram for Bhagavan's *darshan*. So, in a desperate mood, I wrote a moving letter to the Ashram explaining my position, with a prayer to Bhagavan for relief, seeking His grace and blessings.

Pat came the reply from the Ashram pinpointing the following *Gita* verse, as suggested by Bhagavan, with some words of consolation and encouragement.

"He who discerns action in inaction and inaction in action is the truly wise among men. He is a true Yogi and will have the benefit of fully discharging all lawful duties".  
*Bhagavad Gita* - IV, 18.

In this connection, a gist of Bhagavan's teachings along with some other general instructions may be summed up here as follows:

You came in a train and then by a cart to the Ashram. You have not actually travelled. While you remained as you were, your conveyance moved. You are the Self which is all-pervading. You think you are a body, look on Bhagavan also as a body and expect relationship as between two bodies. Bhagavan, who is God or the Self, cannot be identified with the body.

You are not away from Bhagavan as you imagine. Only the body moves from place to place; it does not leave Bhagavan, the Self, at any time. When you leave the Ashram after His *darshan*, you are not really going away from the holy presence of Bhagavan. It is the identification with the body which creates the imaginary problem of separation.

You are an instrument in the hands of the Supreme Self. What difference does it make, whether to be in His close proximity or at a considerable distance? Bhagavan is the Self and the Self is Bhagavan, the Maharshi. If you remember this simple fact, you can recognise that you are not leaving Him. This spiritual truth should be sought within yourself. Apply to yourself this supreme Truth and go ahead. Uninterrupted remembrance of Bhagavan can be maintained in the midst of worldly din and your busy professional activities. With your thoughts attached to Bhagavan (Self), the normal activities will go on automatically. Only the body is working, while the Self remains as a mere silent witness. Out of ignorance one deludes oneself that one is the doer. Thus the activity of the body is incorrectly transferred to the Self, which is not actually acting. The Self only energises the organs for action by its mere proximity. To understand this subtle difference is to recognise action in inaction and *vice versa*. He who understands this is a wise man. He proceeds with his legitimate duties, treating them as those ordained by God.

All worldly actions that fall to one's lot should be discharged with a sense of dedication and as an offering to God.

The actions of one who has surrendered oneself to the Higher Power and whose mind is held in a state of equipoise can be termed as non-action. Nothing can move away from the Self and nothing can escape from the presence of the Self (*guru*). His grace is inseparable from Him. Surrender to the Lord who sees to your works going on unhampered. You should not think you are the doer.

1. A child is fed while asleep. On waking

## Sun RA and Dark NUNE

By Noona Osborne

Ra Ra Ra Ra  
 Ra Ra Ra Ra  
 Of healing love and colour, gently  
 Healing all the world, my Lord,  
 Heal my mind of darkness, let me  
 See the light  
 Of infinite  
 Holy holy Ra.  
 Holy holy holy holy  
 Holy holy holy holy  
 Arunachala Siva.

Nune was primordial darkness,  
 There was light of dawn  
 Which out of dark, itself, arose,  
 Egyptian mythology told,  
 The dawn was Ra, was midday sun,  
 And still was Ra when he was old.  
 I like the story and I told --  
 That all of heaven was this life,  
 To be my sun, and mine to be  
 And touch me with your light  
 Of wondrous vision, Lord!  
 Holy holy holy Ra  
 Holy holy holy Ma  
 Holy holy holy Na  
 Arunachala Siva.

up the next morning, he denies having been fed. It is a case of inaction in seeming action. For although the mother saw him take his food, the child himself was not aware of it.

2. The cartman sleeps in the cart when it jogs along the way in the night and yet he reaches the destination and claims to have driven the cart. This is a case of action in seeming inaction.

-- (Talks - No. 607)

# THE INCOMPARABLE MULLA NASRUDIN<sup>1</sup>

By SHEHNAZ RAHMAN

WHILE we are on the subject of saints, let us not fail to pay homage to that paragon of excellence, the Incomparable Mulla (Master) Nasrudin, one of the greatest of all Sufi saints.

Legend has it that the young Nasrudin, compulsorily enrolled in the school of the "Old Villain" (who represents the imprisoning, formative and conditioned way of thinking in which all of us are enmeshed), had once again roused the ire of his "teacher" by telling jokes.

"Nasrudin!" thundered the Old Villain, "for your irreverent attitude I condemn you to universal ridicule. Henceforth, when one of your absurd stories is told, six more will have to be heard in succession, until you are clearly seen to be a figure of fun."

Indeed, it is held by Sufis that the mystical effect of seven Nasrudin stories studied in succession is enough to prepare a student for enlightenment.

The great Sufi master Hussein was at that time passing by the school in his ceaseless, seemingly futile search for an individual with the capacity to convey his message from generation to generation, despite the never-ending onslaughts of the immortal Old Villain. Hussein was at the point of despair when he overheard Nasrudin being thus upbraided. Joy began to fill his heart as he realized the truth of the Sufi statement that every situation contains its own remedy: through Nasrudin, the evils of the ubiquitous Old Villain could be exposed and brought into their true perspective: he would preserve truth through Nasrudin. Hussein thus called the boy to him in a dream and imparted a portion of his *baraka* (*sakti*). Henceforth, the mere repetition of a Nasrudin joke would carry with it some

of this *baraka*, pondering on it bring more, and experiencing its truth even more. While on the surface merely jokes, the stories are infinitely complex and can assist the readied perception of the hearer/reader to retrieve what has been lost from his consciousness through the crippling activities of the Old Villain. Nasrudin can thus be said to belong to the Malamati Order of Dervishes, those who follow the "Path of Blame," since he taught by playing the role of the fool, the idiot, the madman, the object of ridicule and contempt – that is, the average human being in his unregenerate state. Nasrudin has thus offered himself up as the mirror in which we may see ourselves.

It is not, therefore, surprising that few certainties obtain regarding the Saint's life and background. It is not clear who he was, where he lived, or even when – which is in tune with the timelessness of the character he portrays in his stories: unregenerate man has changed little over the centuries. One "fact", however, is available to us which characterizes not only Nasrudin, but Sufi teaching methods in general. As the Mulla had once said that he considered himself upside down in the world, some scholars (the age-old, literal-minded plague of the Sufis) have averred that the date of the Saint's death, as inscribed on his tombstone, should read not as 386, but as 683. However, using a common Sufi cipher technique, the original numbers decode to reveal the Arabic word, *shawaf*: "to cause someone to see; to show a thing." Nasrudin again reveals himself as the mirror.

<sup>1</sup> All materials for this article have been drawn from the various writings of Idries Shah on the subject of Sufism, in particular his *The Sufis*, W.H. Allen, London, 1964.



**The Islanders.** Sufi illustrative calligraphy, by Mohamed ibn Shafiq, 1291, of the Mevlevi ("Whirling") Dervishes.

One of the most vital forms for the transmission of Sufic Knowledge (which demands a knowing-experiencing perception rather than the mere reception of information) is the teaching story. A Sufi teaching story is not merely a piece of artistic entertainment, rhetoric, didactic instruction, parable or allegory -- although it may, and often does, possess all these things. Rather, it is designed to *induce* in the reader/hearer a condition or state of awareness in which the many levels of meaning contained within the narrative may be *experienced*. All genuine Sufi teaching stories possess this multi-dimensional feature, and students in Sufi schools are taught how to approach these stories in order to receive the transmission of Knowledge hidden within them. The Nasrudin corpus takes the unique form of the jest in order to achieve its purpose. Thus, "by this method, the teachings of Nasrudin, in the line of Hussein, were impressed forever within a vehicle which could not be utterly distorted beyond repair. Just as all water is essentially water, so within the Nasrudin experiences there is an irreducible minimum which answers a call, and which grows when it is invoked."<sup>2</sup> This irreducible minimum is the truth about our real selves and the real world, of which we see only the shadow.

In the following tales from the vast Nasrudin corpus, only a cursory attempt is made to indicate the scope and breadth of meaning hidden

within them. To give more would deprive the reader of the opportunity to *experience* the inner meaning for himself.

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*The uselessness of a merely scholastic rather than experiential approach to the mysteries of life is one level of meaning in the following story:*

**Nasrudin was ferrying a pedant across a river. In the course of conversation he said something ungrammatical.**

**"Have you never studied grammar?" asked the scholar.**

**"No," said Nasrudin.**

**"Then half of your life has been wasted," sneered the pedant arrogantly.**

**A few minutes later a fierce wind came up and the water rolled in great waves. Nasrudin turned to his passenger. "Have you ever learned how to swim?" he asked.**

**"No. Why?"**

**"Then *all* of your life is wasted -- we're sinking!"**

\*\*\*

*Our inherently superficial perception of life*

<sup>2</sup> From *The Legend of Nasrudin*, quoted in Shah, *The Sufis*, p. 66.

and its meaning, caused by our preconceptions and conditioning, is one level illustrated in the story of the smuggler:

Nasrudin used to take his donkey across the border to a neighbouring country every day with its paniers loaded with straw. Since he admitted to being a smuggler when he returned home every night, the customs officers searched him again and again. They searched his person, sifted the straw, steeped it in water, even burned it from time to time, but could never find anything. Meanwhile Nasrudin was becoming visibly richer and richer.

Finally he retired and went to live in another country. There, after many years, one of the customs officers met him.

"Now that we are on neutral territory, Nasrudin, please tell me: whatever was it that you were smuggling all those years?"

"Donkeys", said the Mulla.

\* \* \*

*Nisargadatta Maharaj is once said to have remarked that either there is no cause and effect, or else everything is the cause of everything else, thus indicating that our superficial notions of karma are far from the actual truth of the enormity of its operation, which involves not only apparent cause and apparent effect, but underlying cause (which is multi-dimensional) and its inter-relation with time and space as a continuum rather than as the supposedly separate factors commonly perceived by us. Two stories illustrate our failure to grasp this, and the absurdity of the way we interlink them in our primitive preconceptions.*

Mulla Nasrudin was walking along an alleyway one day when a man fell from a roof and landed on top of him. The other man was uninjured, but the Mulla had to be taken to the hospital.

"What teaching do you infer from this event, Master?" one of his disciples asked him.

"Avoid belief in inevitability, even if cause and effect seem inevitable! Shun theoretical questions such as: 'If a man falls off the roof, will his neck be broken?' He fell, but my neck is broken!"

\* \* \*

Nasrudin visited a Turkish bath. Because he was dressed in rags, he was poorly treated by the attendants, who gave him an old towel and a scrap of soap. When he left, he handed the amazed bath-men a gold coin. The next day he appeared again, magnificently dressed, and was naturally given the best possible attention and deference.

When the bath was over, he presented the bath-keepers with the smallest copper coin in mint.

"This," he said, "is for the attendance last time. The gold coin is for your treatment of me this time."

\* \* \*

A kinsman came to visit the Mulla from a far-off town, bringing with him a duck as a present. Delighted, Nasrudin had the bird cooked and shared it with his guest. The following day, a man arrived and presented himself as a friend of the kinsman who had brought the duck. As there were some leftovers of the previous day's meal, Nasrudin had these prepared as a stew and shared the meal with his guest. The following day, yet another man arrived, presenting himself as "the friend of the friend of the man who brought you the duck." As the bones still remained of the original carcass, Nasrudin had his wife prepare a duck soup which he then shared with his guest.

Presently, one country-man after another started to call upon the Mulla, each one "the friend of the friend of the man who brought you the duck." No further presents were forthcoming, however.

At last the Mulla was exasperated. One day yet another stranger appeared. "I am the friend of the friend of the friend of the relative who brought you the duck."

He sat down, like all the rest, expecting

a meal. Nasrudin placed before him a bowl of hot water.

"What is this?" asked the perplexed visitor.

"This is the soup of the soup of the soup of the duck that was brought by my relative."

*One level of meaning of this apparent parody of hospitality is that the internal experiences embodied in the scriptures or any written teaching cannot be transmitted through mere repetitiousness, but must be directly experienced. This usually falls to the role of the guru, who imparts the essence of the scriptures in a dynamic form which nurtures the inner being of the disciple according to his needs and the dictates of time, place, and culture. Schools or incompetent teachers who continue to "teach", and students who try to "learn", through repetition of old formulae and dogma, without contacting the essential dynamic which had been originally embodied in the formulation of the teaching, are contacting a progressively diluted and thus weakened doctrine whose teaching may not only have no value at all, but may even be a travesty of the original one.*

\* \* \*

*Sufis maintain that due to our erroneous belief that we know what is best for ourselves, we persistently seek enlightenment in the wrong places. Due to our ignorance, complacency, and love of comfort we are guided, more often than not, by our fancies, predilections and preconceived superficial notions, again based upon our rudimentary level of awakening. Nasrudin taught this, among other things, in the following story:*

Once a neighbor found him down on his knees in the village square, scrupulously looking for something.

"What have you lost, Mulla?" he asked.

"My key," answered Nasrudin.

The friend joined him, but after several minutes' careful search, he asked, "Where did you drop it, by the way?"

## Voice of the Saints

"Spiritual life is therefore a matter of bridging the gap between the mind's present tendency to be constantly on the move, to be constantly hunting for pleasure, and its natural repose of unmoving inwardness."

\* \* \*

A nest of squirrels was above Bhagavan Ramana's couch. A cat had eaten the mother of the young squirrels and the responsibility of looking after them was taken over by Bhagavan. He remarked: "These little ones do not know that wisdom lies in remaining in their nest. All trouble lies outside, yet they cannot remain within. Similarly, if the mind is not externalised, but remains sunk in the heart, there would be happiness." When Ramana was questioned about the way for doing so, He replied: "It is exactly the same as I am doing now. Each time a young squirrel comes out, I keep putting it back into its nest till it realises that happiness lies in sitting in the nest."

\* \* \*

"Who is the meditator? Ask the question first. Remain as the meditator. There is no need for meditation."

\* \* \*

"The 'I AM' portion of the I-thought is a pure reflection of Consciousness from which it springs. As such it illumines whatever it pays attention to."



**"In the house."**

**"Then why, for heaven's sake, are you looking for it here?"**

**"There's more light here," answered the Mulla.**

*Another level of meaning of this story is to illustrate the common human failing of seeking exotic sources for enlightenment when the real source is in their "own home" - the Heart.*

\* \* \*

**Nasrudin was sitting among a circle of disciples when one of them asked him the relationship between things of this world and those of the ultimate Reality. Nasrudin said, "You must first understand allegory."**

**"Show me something practical," insisted the disciple, "-- an apple from Paradise, for instance."**

**Nasrudin picked up an apple and handed it to the student.**

**"But this apple is rotten on one side. Surely a celestial apple would be perfect."**

**"A divine apple would be perfect," said the Mulla, "but as far as you are able to judge it, situated as we are in this abode of corruption, and with your present faculties, this is as near to a heavenly apple as you are ever going to get."**

*This story has many levels of interpretation. Besides illustrating the difference between relative and absolute knowledge, it also indicates the need for the student to develop within himself a "bridge" through which consciousness of the higher levels of reality may cross to his physical consciousness. This gradual building up of the inner consciousness - the "bridge" - is characteristic of the methodology of the Sufi teaching story. The flash of illumination that can come as a result of the stories*

*is partly a minor enlightenment in itself, not merely an intellectual exercise. It helps to establish mystical perception in a mind held captive by conditioning and age-old vasanas - i.e., the Old Villain.*

\* \* \*

The very fact that the Nasrudin stories have found their way into diverse traditions and cultures, from Zen to Shakespeare, from Chaucer to atheist Soviet Union, where a film was actually made under the title, *The Adventures of Nasrudin*, clearly indicates his indomitability in succeeding, century after century, to defeat the machinations of the Old Villain, and prove the Sufic assertion that "from every situation comes forth its own remedy": from the curse of the Old Villain came forth the antidote of the Incomparable Mulla Nasrudin.

Some aphorisms of the redoubtable Mulla are given hereunder for the contemplation of the earnest student:

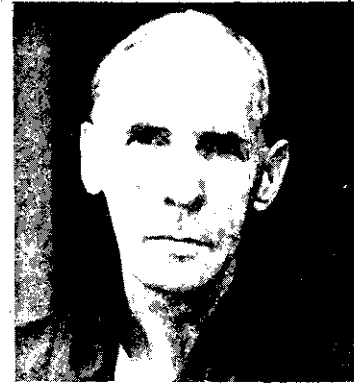
1. **"It is not, in fact, so."**
2. **"Truth is something which I never speak."**
3. **"If your donkey allows someone to steal your coat, steal its saddle."**
4. **"A sample is a sample. Yet nobody would buy my house when I showed them a brick from it."**
5. **"People clamour to taste my vintage vinegar. But it wouldn't be forty years old if I let them, would it?"**
6. **"To save money, I trained my donkey to go with less and less food every day. Unfortunately, the experiment was interrupted by its death."**
7. **"People sell talking parrots for huge sums. They never pause to compare the possible value of a *thinking* parrot."**

**".....anywhere  
is the centre of the world.**

**-- Black Elk, Sioux Medicine Man**

## Arthur Osborne's Answers

(Selected Questions and Answers  
from "THE MOUNTAIN PATH"  
1967 volume)



**T**o some of your ignorant readers your insistence on the inevitability of a guru seems to need explaining. May we ask for enlightenment?

When a *sadhu* looks into the eyes of his guru, what he sees (or does not see) is what is looking: which is the guru 'within'?

When he hears his guru's voice, what he hears (or does not hear) is what is listening: which is the guru 'within'?

When his guru touches him, what he feels (or does not feel) is what is sensorially experiencing: which is the guru 'within'?

When his guru speaks, what he cognises (or does not cognise) is what is cognising: which is the guru 'within'?

Is not this why there is no see-er, hearer, toucher, cogniser, no 'thing' seen, heard, felt, cognised, but I or 'I' manifesting? Which is the guru 'within'?

But where is the guru? I find all this when I look into the eyes of my cat. I would surely find it if I looked into your eyes or those of the Maharshi.

One of the greatest sages of China - Shen Hui, seventh Patriarch of Ch'an - said: "Inseeing does not need a teacher. Based on such inseeing, a living being can attain buddhahood".

Wherein lies the discrepancy?

-- WEI WU WEI

*As the Maharshi often said, the Guru is the Self in the Heart, and it is possible for one who is sufficiently pure and concentrated to contact this inner Guru directly, without the help of an outer Guru. In most cases, however, the influence of an outer Guru is necessary to lead one back to the Guru in the Heart. Even Wei Wu Wei, if he had the opportunity of looking into the eyes of the Maharshi, might have found it different from looking into the eyes of a cat.*

-- Arthur Osborne

• • •

I have a very intense desire to come to Tiruvannamalai and meet Bhagavan's disciples. Who is in charge now that Bhagavan is gone? My great wish is to receive initiation in the teachings. How can I be helped in this way, seeing that I was not so fortunate as to meet the Great Sage? I am

carrying on the *vichara* meditation as explained in the books, but there is one thing that troubles me: it is this, can I, who have never met Bhagavan, succeed alone in conquering the mind and attain the higher state of consciousness in me? How can this be possible without having been initiated by the Master? Please enlighten me. Is it possible for me to make actual contact with Bhagavan Himself during my meditation, since He Himself said that God, Guru and disciple are One?

-- Yusuf Nazeer, Johannesburg, South Africa.

*Bhagavan has not gone away and you are not alone. One of the last things He said before shedding the body was: "People say that I am going away, but where could I go? I am here". It is not to meet His disciples that people come to Tiruvannamalai but to feel the radiance of His presence; and many notes in the Ashram Bulletin and Letters to the Editor show how powerfully they feel it. Perhaps the majority of those who are drawn to Him here and guided by Him are people who never met Him in His lifetime. The feeling of His presence here was beautifully expressed by S.P. Mukherji, a Bengali engineer, in a small poem in our inaugural issue, that of January, 1964. Since that issue is now out of print, I quote it here:*

### A Beacon Still

**We have not seen you, Bhagavan:  
We have not approached your lotus-feet.  
Yet do we find  
The now and the then are the same for us,  
The Body-presence, the presence in the Heart,  
These are the same.  
One thing only do we know --  
Ramanashram is a beacon still.**

*Although Ramanashram is a beacon still, it also remains true that (as happened in His lifetime too) His Grace and guidance descend on people who turn to Him wherever they may be.*

-- Arthur Osborne

• • •

You say that "it may be possible for a man's next birth to be situated at any time, earlier or later, just as his next dream can be concerned with any period of his life. A man who dies in England today may be reborn in Rome at the time of Caesar." Would you be so kind as to enlarge on

that last sentence for me, for it is the very first time I have heard of that possibility. Does that mean that the past hasn't really gone? Is there not some evolution taking place all the time, even for those not aware of the spiritual path? Does that mean that we can be born in some sort of future condition or civilization that hasn't yet come about?

-- Mrs. E. Kleinjan, Buenos Aires, S. America.

*How can you be bound by the physical time-scale when you are out of the physical body? Even in dreams you are not. And what is this evolution you talk of? Do you really think our modern writers understand more than the contemporaries of Christ and Buddha and Confucius? Or that our rulers show more nobility of character? There were noble souls and debased ones in Ancient Rome (a Marcus Aurelius and a Caligula) and there are now too. The subtle state is not before or after this epoch of history but outside the physical time-scale. God is not in time but time in God - all time with all civilizations, past, present and future. The sequence of lives through which a man goes in order to perfect himself is a causal, not a temporal sequence. And above all sequence, in God or Nirvana, becoming merges in Being and there is only Now.*

-- Arthur Osborne

I am a novice in the practice of meditation and Yoga who wishes to pursue more serious practice and hopes to find instruction and a conducive environment for it. I am addressing this general enquiry to a number of authorities, hoping to get an extensive, varied and deep idea of the possibilities for guidance and direction in these things.

I turned from the study of psychology (at Reed College) to philosophy and religion, and for the last four years since then, have pursued on my own the study of Eastern and Western religions and the practice of Yoga.

I would very much appreciate some information on instruction courses and practices in which you are involved and any other bits of information, ideas or direction you feel appropriate, and am open to every point of view, faith or belief.

-- Robert Steward, Evanston, Illinois, U.S.A.

*It is quite sensible to examine various paths, as you are doing, before deciding on one; but having decided, it is best to stick to one (though there is no harm in reading about others). The path instituted by the Maharshi and still followed under His guidance is the simplest and most direct, with no need for ritual or meetings or outer aids. The Self-enquiry that He taught is not meditation in the usual sense of the word. As He put it: "In meditation you have subject and object, whereas in Self-enquiry there is only the subject." It is not rational or psychological enquiry. Rather it means to concentrate on the pure sense of being or of 'I am'*

*(which is the same as pure undifferentiated consciousness) without thoughts. Whenever thoughts come, dismiss them, ask to whom they come, and thus return to the 'I' to whom thoughts come. This should be practised regularly, daily, even if only for a short time, for instance first thing in the morning and last thing at night.*

-- Arthur Osborne

How am I to meditate? First I pray to Bhagavan and then I ask myself: "Who am I? Who is sitting here?" etc. Should I keep on asking these questions or just once and then after a certain time repeat them? Or should I repeat them a few times and then sit quietly thinking about them? Should I say the prayer and these questions aloud or only silently in my mind? Sometimes when I am meditating, or trying to meditate, I speak to myself and receive advice what to do regarding certain problems, but when I can check it up afterwards I generally find that it was wrong, so I must be deluding myself. How can I differentiate between my personal 'I am' and the Divine 'I AM'? How can I know whether it is God (the Inner Guru) who is talking to me or my own mind? Ought I to hear an answer to 'Who am I?' and such questions? or to see something? If so, how can I be sure whether it is my Inner Guru or my ego? When I am honest I think that I am bluffing myself. When I close my eyes and try to meditate I cannot hear or see anything which I can be quite certain is my Inner Guru. I cannot see anything at all but from time to time I hear what is probably my ego, although I think at the time that it isn't. I find out afterwards that it must have been because what I heard was not true or not right. Please answer these questions because I am in great difficulty and want to follow this path.

-- Paliwoda, Zurich, Switzerland.

*You are quite wrong in your idea of Self-enquiry. You cannot expect to see anything or hear anything, because there is only one self in you, not two; so who is to see whom or to hear whom? It is not a mental enquiry but a spiritual exercise, and therefore Bhagavan said that no answer that the mind can give is right. You do not have to frame a question either aloud or silently but simply concentrate on the pure sense of being, of 'I am' in you, with a still mind and without thinking. Just focus on that, on being conscious and feeling your I-ness without thinking.*

*One useful hint which Bhagavan gave is that it is best while doing this to concentrate not on the head but on the spiritual heart, that is to say the heart at the right side. Not to think about the heart but to feel conscious in and with the heart. The answer, when it begins to come will come not in the form of words or an idea but as a vibration of consciousness which can actually be felt physically, although it is, of course, far more than physical.*

-- Arthur Osborne

## BOOK REVIEWS

**A GREAT INDIAN JESUIT -- Fr. JEROME D'SOUZA:** by Fr. V. Lawrence Sundaram S.J. Pub: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, Anand 388001. pp.375+8, Rs.45 (pb), Rs.48 (hb).

This is the biography of Fr. Jerome D' Souza, a great Christian Savant of India, who taught what he believed and lived it besides. His devotion to Social Education and to Christian doctrine and discipline was total. The heights he scaled in his mission may be inferred from the way he achieved the Papal visit to India and his own eleven-year stint in Rome as the Jesuit General's first Assistant in charge of Indian and Asian affairs.

Yet as late as 1949, Fr. Jerome is known to have avowed his utter Indianness. His talent as master of several languages and as a persuasive orator helped him play a significant role as member of Indian Constituent Assembly (1946-50), a four-time Indian delegate to the U.N., and the successful negotiation of the transfer of French Indian territories to Independent India.

All his credentials notwithstanding, Fr. Lawrence should find it highly demanding vividly and truly to portray the life of such rich and variegated attainments as Fr. Jerome's. But Fr. Jerome himself had made it easy for him. On his retirement from all public offices on 31-12-1971 he had given more time to prayer and some useful composition in the form of Reminiscences, if not an Autobiography. This was done even to the point of chapterisation before death snatched him away in 1977. Fr. Lawrence's work is thus a happy blend of a biography and an autobiography of Fr. Jerome.

Fr. Jerome wrote: "Life is like a dream. In a few years I shall be forgotten... only my internal disposition, my love and service of God will matter. Hence... throw to winds every human calculation. I must do my duty and not stop to think of 'success' or popularity."

But this biography by Fr. Lawrence ensures that he is not forgotten.

-- Dr. O. Ramachandra Kaundinya

**HISTORY OF HINDU-CHRISTIAN ENCOUNTERS:** By Sita Ram Goel. Pub: Voice of India, 2/18 Ansari Road, New Delhi 110 002, pp.386+20, Rs.250.

The author Sita Ram Goel is deeply read in Christian lore, its origin, doctrine and spread by methods often far from straight.

"Encounters" in the title may suggest a bias, but supported by authentic facts beyond dispute, the word should lose any such odour.

From the Christian onslaught on Hinduism within the Roman empire (the first Christian 'monologue'), through

the decline of Portuguese power in India (Catholic 'monologue' in India yielding to Protestant 'dialogue'), and upto the present day, the book details various 'encounters'.

It is also an account of how Hindu thinkers viewed Christianity and the exclusive claims of its proponents -- "ordinary people making extraordinary claims" as described by S. Radhakrishnan. The early violence and aggression of its propagation, professedly were given an honourable gloss some two thousand years after the inception of the Christian Church. The missionaries were advised to enter with prudence and charity into discussions and collaboration with non Christians, acknowledging, preserving and even encouraging their spiritual and moral truth, social life and culture. In practice, however, inter-religious collaboration and any unique claim of the Nazarene Christ as the only Son of God go ill together.

Gandhiji held conversion as poison but conversion was and remains, the author maintains, the ulterior purpose of all the good works of the Christian missionaries in India.

When in the Constituent Assembly (which framed the Indian Constitution in 1947), Frank Anthony and Rev. Fr. Jerome D'Souza, much against the most enlightened opposition, sought and won for the Christians, the fundamental right "to profess, practise and propagate" their faith, they were courageously supported by T.T. Krishnamachari and L. Krishnaswamy Bharati. Those two did not know what they were bargaining for Hinduism. Presumably theirs was more a tribute to and admiration for Frank Anthony and the Rev. Jerome D'Souza personally rather than an approval of their cause or that particular clause in the Constitution.

If Sita Ram Goel's purpose were to put the Hindus wise to their encounters with Christianity, the stiff price of the book serves it ill.

-- Dr. O. Ramachandra Kaundinya

**INNER YOGA (ANTAR YOGA):** By Anirvan. Pub: Voice of India, New Delhi 110 002. pp.79, Rs.40.

Anirvan's is an unconventional approach to Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* and should therefore be of considerable interest from the point of view of its relevance to the stress and strain of living in the technological world of today.

Born on 8-7-1896 in Mymensingh in East Bengal, Sri Anirvan "by the age of eleven knew Panini by heart and daily recited a chapter from the Gita". It was all a part of the traditional teaching then in vogue in India. At the most formative period of his life he was exposed to western culture. He stood first in Sanskrit in the University of Calcutta. He took to sannyas at the age of 22 and in 1930 at age 34, on his own volition, dropped his ochre robes and led the rest of his life as a secular teacher, scholar and

philosophical exegetist. In 1944 he translated Sri Aurobindo's *Life Divine* into Bengali.

In this book under review (extremely well translated from Bengali by Simanto Narayan Chatterji), we see a happy confluence of the traditional and the modern in his approach to the whole Indian system of Yoga. A typical example: "This type of conceptualisation and contemplation (i.e. fixing the mind and breath between the eye-brows) is most suitable to women, owing to their mental and physical constitution. The woman in whom the delight of a love transcending physicality has been awakened can easily concentrate at the eyebrow centre and experience these two felicities (*rasas*): the love of a mother in the Heart Centre and the bliss of communion with Shiva in the Crown Centre. The world is then like a child cradled upon her breast; from above Shiva pours down his serene delight into all her being, even as her consciousness rises up and dissolves in the Void".

On japa, Sri Anirvan has this to say: "Let us take a less subtle example -- the love of a man and a woman who long for each other. At first the yearning is nothing but a passionate craving of body and mind, a craving expressed through various efforts to get physically close to each other. But once the union of these lovers is consummated, the passion fades, there is no longer any restlessness or disquietude. Each dissolves into the other, and all that remains is a sublime feeling like 'the delicate tremor in the heart of a tuberosa'. When we are absorbed in japa, this is the kind of feeling we experience".

Coming from one who, from all accounts, led a celibate life even after discarding the ochre robes of the sannyasi, these words indicate a profundity of experience which is as controversial as it appears to be authentic. What holds one throughout the reading of the book is the author's intellectual daring in breaking new ground on a subject which across so many centuries has been held bound to certain rigid formulae as laid down by over-zealous traditionalists.

-- S. Jayaraman

**THE ESSENTIAL TEACHINGS OF BUDDHISM:** Daily Readings from the Sacred Texts: Edited by Kerry Brown and Joanne O'Brien. Pub: Century Hutchinson, London WC2N 4NW, pp.302, £8.95.

This magnificent anthology of the various recensions of the Buddha's teaching as they blossomed in India and Tibet and later spread over Thailand, Sri Lanka, China, Korea and Japan; has been arranged under the two broad heads of Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism. It is a treasure house of 365 perfect pearls of daily wisdom.

The beauty of the arrangement of these 365 of the Buddha-word taken from the three baskets (tripitaka) -- namely, 'discourse' (sutra), 'rules of discipline' (vinaya) and 'further knowledge' (abhidharma) -- is embellished with passages from Zen towards the end of the book.

To one who treats both the Hinayana and Mahayana

with equal reverence and takes the journey with this anthology to Buddhist Tibet, Thailand, Sri Lanka, China and Korea, the Zen school appears like a flash of lightning in the sky. Zen Buddhism is a great leap to a new mystique, albeit within the Buddhist tradition; the technique behind which does not seem to have been even hinted at by the Buddha in his long ministry spread over 45 years which he devoted entirely to redeem simple unlettered folk from the thrall of suffering.

The Buddha was the first 'Communist' in history who questioned the existing order of caste, creed and community. He was also the first 'protestant' Hindu to free Hinduism from the shackles of rites and rituals. He brushed aside the subtle tyranny of words, of ornamental verbiage. He scrupulously avoided controversy, refused to take sides for or against any view or opinion. His method was simple but arduous.

"No glimpses of his inner life are to be caught, for he goes on his way without following the steps of the ancient sages. Carrying a gourd (symbol of emptiness) he goes out into the market, leaning against a staff, he comes home. No extra property he has, for he knows that the desire to possess is the curse of human life. He is found in company with wine-bibbers and butchers, he and they are all converted into Buddhas".

-- S. Jayaraman

**ZEN: TRADITION AND TRANSITION:** Edited by Kenneth Kraft. Pub: Century Hutchinson, London WC2N 4NW, pp.208+2, £5.95.

Zen tradition dates back to the sixth century of the Christian era and was first introduced to China by the Indian Buddhist, Bodhidharma. Persecuted and almost driven out of India, Bodhidharma bore on his person and transmitted to his philosophy the stigmata inflicted on him both in India and China. Zen, quintessentially speaking, was ever thereafter coloured by Bodhidharma's teaching, excruciatingly drawn as it was from his seated meditation (*zazen*) for nine long years facing a wall in China, unmoved and unfazed by slight, slander or mockery.

The transition of Zen Buddhism from the 6th century C.E. to our own times is the main theme around which the scholarly contributions to this volume are built. The book rekindles and sustains the intellectual interest of even those who, having come to Zen through one school or the other, are repelled by some of its mind-boggling methods.

"A great root of faith, a great ball of doubt, and a fierce tenacity of purpose," Zen, with its koan and its poetry, according to the authors, is "the still centre which is still the centre of the things that move". The Zen teacher, let it be remembered, asks the student to master the lineage text, lights the candle for him to go out into the darkness with the text as the light and even as the student is about to step into the darkness the teacher blows out the candle. Zen is not Zen if it is not heuristic.

-- S. Jayaraman

LAO TZU: TAO TE CHING: (Richard Wilhelm edn.)  
Pub: Arkana Penguin, London W8 5TZ, pp.145,  
£4.99.

Lao Tzu (nowadays transliterated Lao Zi), author of the *Tao Te Ching (Dao De Jing)* is one of the two greatest Chinese philosophers, the other being Confucius who was fifty years younger to him. His date might have been anything between the 6th and the 4th century B.C. *Tao Te Ching* a 5000 word classic translated as "Meaning and Life" consists of two parts, the first containing 37 sections and the second of 44. These two are a series of aphorisms notably alike for their profound wisdom and their awareness of actualities. Two or three specimens will prove far more useful than any commentary on them.

Heaven is eternal and Earth lasting.

They are lasting and eternal  
because they do not live for themselves.  
Therefore can they live for ever.

Thus also is the man of calling:  
He disregards himself,  
and his self is increased.  
He gives himself away  
and his self is preserved.  
Is it not thus:  
because he desires nothing as his own  
his own is completed?

When DAO rules on earth

one uses the racehorses to pull dung carts.  
When DAO has been lost on earth  
warhorses are raised on the green fields.  
There is no greater sin than many desires.  
There is no greater evil than not to know sufficiency  
There is no greater defect than wanting to possess.

Therefore the sufficiency of sufficiency is  
lasting sufficiency.

When the people go hungry

this comes from too much tax  
being devoured by the high and mighty:  
therefore the people go hungry.  
When the people are hard to lead  
this comes from too much meddling  
by the high and mighty:  
therefore are they difficult to lead.  
When the people take death too lightly  
this comes from life's abundance being  
sought too greedily  
by the high and mighty:  
therefore do they take death too lightly.  
However, he who does not act for the sake of life,  
he is better than the other to whom life is precious.

The present translation into English by H.G. Ostwald published in 1985 is really the translation of one in German, with an accompanying commentary, by Richard Wilhelm made as far back as 1910. The book is not only a beautiful production externally, but within its covers, a pretty shell, is a pearl of great price.

- P.S. Sundaram

HOLY SCRIPTURES: Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore,  
Madras 600 004. pp.312. Rs.12.

That one half of the world does not know how the other half lives, so true in the past as regards economic conditions, is now increasingly less true, thanks to the cinema and television. Religion, meant to unite mankind, has only too frequently proved in the minds of ignorant men a way to divide it, and in the hands of violent self-seekers, whether musclemen or politicians, a sword with which to cut, not a balm with which to heal. To men with open minds, a book like this is a revelation, and can do nothing but incalculable good.

What does the average Hindu know about the Gathas of Zarathustra, the Acaranga of the Jains, the Koran or the Granth Sahib? All these are set out in this excellent symposium, truly a flow of reason and a feast of soul, in simple and factual terms.

The *Philokalia*, something new, which finds no place either in Aldous Huxley's *Perennial Philosophy*, John Ferguson's *Encyclopaedia of Mysticism* or my 1965 edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, is a great eye-opener. *The Way of a Pilgrim*, an autobiographical account by an anonymous Russian Pilgrim written sometime between 1855 and 1861 draws attention to the importance of the prayer of the heart, a chanting of the name of Jesus in the manner of our *Japas* and the way it can take one directly to God.

- P.S. Sundaram

THE DHAMMAPADA: Translated by Eknath Easwaran,  
Pub: Nilgiri Press, CA 94953, U.S.A., pp.208,  
£.6.95.

There is a translation of the Dhammapada by Dr. Radhakrishnan (O.U.P. first edition, 1950). The present one "for the modern reader" by Mr. Easwaran is superior to it in every way, introduction, translation and get-up, except only that it does not have the original verses which the Radhakrishnan edition has in roman script.

Easwaran who has several other translations to his credit seems to be as up to date in his knowledge of Physics and all the scientific speculations of our day as he is well versed not only in Sanskrit and Pali but also English literature.

It is amazing how he is able to relate the findings of Niels Bohr, Einstein, Heisenberg, Quantum Physics with the teachings of the Buddha. He writes of mysticism not from the outside but as one who seems himself to have undergone the experience through profound rather than transcendental meditation. In his introduction he is less a guide post than a guide offering himself as a companion to the reader, and inviting him to take the plunge into the depths of being hand in hand.

The introductions to the twenty six individual chapters by Stephen Ruppenthal serve the purpose of notes wherever necessary to the verses inside and the terms carrying special meanings, like *skanda*, *ujjana*, *samskara*.

As for the excellence of the translation, we may set Radhakrishnan's of the very first verse,

(The mental) natures are the result of what we have thought, are chieftained by our thoughts, are made up of our thoughts. If a man speaks or acts with an evil thought, sorrow follows him (as a consequence) even as the wheel follows the foot of the drawer (i.e. the ox which draws the cart)

beside Easwaran's

Our life is shaped by our mind; we become what we think. Suffering follows an evil thought as the wheels of a cart follow the oxen that draw it.

The difference is the difference between a crib and a piece of literature, which is not the less faithful to the original for being a piece of literature.

The paper and binding leave nothing to be desired, This is the Golden Book of the Buddha worth its weight in gold.

- P.S. Sundaram

GAMES OF THE GODS: By Nigel Pennick, Pub: Rider, London, WC2N 4NW, pp.244, £7.95.

ZEN BUDDHISM: By L.P. Singh and B.M. Sirisena. Sterling Publishers, New Delhi, 110 007, pp.155, Rs.150.

BHIKSHUGITA: By Justin E. Abbot. Samata Books, Madras, pp.113+42, Rs.45.

The first book under review is a rare one, a precise, almost laconic piece of scholarship. Nigel Pennick's expert knowledge of board games in magic and divination, the sub-title of the book, may appear to the layman to border on the miraculous. In untutored primitive societies certain technologies and abilities were indistinguishable from magic and witchcraft. What science dismisses as chance or randomness is to the ancients a form of well-defined structure inherent in the universe. The author ably brings about a synchronous interpretation of the world that all things by their very existence in space and time, are linked to each other; and thus in a way he builds a bridge between the modern scientific materialism and the older magical view of the universe. The major underlying theme of the book is the divinatory method of interpreting an object according to a predetermined cosmological scheme which ranges over the whole gamut of augury and divinatory geomancy to the games like chess, draughts, ludo and many other old board games surviving even today in every part of the world.

The concluding chapters are significant, as they point out that the spiritual view of reality has been held as the orthodox world view for the greater part of human history, till science came. With a fragmented, pluralistic view of the world, came the twilight of the gods and almost all shamanic traditions lost their vital importance. This fascinating in-depth study of the games of the gods collected from

many countries and cultures, based on a vision of the universe in which the will of the gods is stated to be known through ritual practices, is sure to be of interest to the layman and the expert alike.

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All approaches to the truth are like the moth trying to alight on a candle flame. This seems to be the gist of Zen Buddhism. This is an aspect of realisation that negative -- not positive -- is fundamental. It is a way of life, age-old in its tradition, combining in itself the elements of meditation, cosmology, esotericism, yoga, aesthetics, quietist philosophy and profound mysticism.

Like Advaita which stresses that the concept of Reality is *anirvachaniya*, indescribable, Zen Buddhism is fully aware that thought and word are incapable of expressing the reality. The author rightly points out that Zen is neither a concept nor a category of understanding. It is neither a doctrine, nor a philosophy but just experience of *Satori*, transcending thought and language. But how is that teaching to be taught except in words, wonders the aspirant. The Masters have devised a language of mysticism to convey the inner meaning and esoteric message in terms of *koans*, a kind of language game used to prove the utter uselessness of intellect to comprehend the reality. For everything, that we seem to know, is the without of a within, the external appearance of something real and unseen within. The Tamil word *Kadauvil* for God seems to express this beautifully for the more you go *within*, the more veils seem yet to be removed. The authors have taken pains to explain the concepts of Zen Buddhism, *Koan*, *Satori* and the relationship of Zen to Taoism and Confucianism in the various chapters of the book.

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The *Bhikshugita* (i.e. The Song of the Mendicant) is the twenty-third chapter in the eleventh Skanda of the great epic *Srimad Bhagavatham*. It consists only of 62 verses and Eknath, one of the doyens of Marathi saints, has commented on it in 1004 stanzas, even as the 700 verses of the *Bhagavad Gita* had been rendered into 9000 stanzas in Marathi by the saint Jnaneshwar. The *Bhagavatha Purana* is a high authority on *bhakti*. Devotion to the lord is not divorced from *Jnana*. Lord Krishna, on the eve of his exit from the arena of the world, gives his parting instructions to his beloved disciple Uddhava, on a variety of subjects, and the *Bhikshugita* is part of these teachings. These gems of wisdom were described by Ramakrishna Paramahansa as "fried in the butter of *Jnana* and soaked in the syrup of *Bhakti*."

Rev. James E. Abbot who had translated this Song of the Mendicant, was a scholar of the literature of the saints of Maharashtra and published a series of volumes on the poet-saints of the land. The Saint Eknath, in expanding the 62 verses of the Sanskrit text into 1004 verses, has described in detail the life of the miser, his methods of gaining wealth, his penury and loss of all, his disgrace and persecution after his conversion, during all of which he had preserved his peace of mind and attained salvation.

The emphasis laid throughout the poem is on the evil results of the lust for wealth and how through a sincere devotion to God, the heart can become pure.

- (late) Argus

SRI MATRIKA CHAKRA VIVEKA: Tr., P.S. Sastri: Pub: Sadhana Grantha Mandall, Tenali 522 201. pp.178, Rs.45.

The author Svatantrananda Natha, in an interesting exposition of the *Sri Chakra* relates it to the fifty letters of the Sanskrit alphabet, the 36 *tattvas*, and to the four *avasthas*. The English translation is based on the commentary of Sivananda Natha. The original Nagari text is included.

- J. Jayaraman

POWER IN TEMPLES: (enlarged and revised edition) by Srikant, Integral Books, Payyanur, Kerala, 607 307. pp.156, Rs.50.

How far are temples centres of divine Power? Is not the efficacy of the Deity proportionate to the faith of the devotee? If there is a Power in these places of worship, what is its nature? The author of this convincing treatise discusses the question in the light of the findings of modern science. He quotes from Max Planck, the eminent physicist: "There is no such thing as matter *per se*. All matter originated from and consists of a force which sets the atomic particles in oscillation and concentrates them into minute solar systems of the atom. But as there is neither an intelligence nor an internal force in the universe we must assume a conscious intelligent spirit behind the force. This spirit is the basic principle of all matter." (pp.27)

It is this 'Force of the Spirit' that is concentrated in certain focal points by mystics for the benefit of mankind. The author treats of a number of important temples in South India e.g. Sri Mookambika in South Kanara, Tirupati, Dharmasthala, and narrates their historical background and the spiritual and occult potential in these temples. He describes in minute detail the principles of construction of the temple, the procedure of installing the idol, the process of infusion of Power, and withdrawal of the same etc. Bringing home to the reader the intricacies of the Science of the formation and maintenance of these places of worship. He cites certain discoveries of modern science e.g. Kirlian photography, which corroborate the ancient faith in the existence of non-physical Power.

It is interesting to learn from these pages the results of the explorations in the Sri Chakra Diagram by Russian scientists, Ivan Kovalchenko, for instance, (historian and member of USSR Academy of Sciences): "The Sri Chakra represents the grand evolutionary theme behind the universe and reveals the stages through which man can uncondition himself and expand to higher stages of consciousness and freedom. The triangles, the petals, the circles, the squares and the colours of Sri Chakra sym-

bolise the deeper facts of the evolutionary scheme of the universe." (pp.48-52)

With plenty of illustrations (some in colour) and diagrams, the author presents an entire scheme provided by Providence for the return of Man to his Source in the One Reality. He describes certain experiments conducted by physicists in Czechoslovakia to store energy in pebbles, steel, bronze, copper, iron, gold etc, and draws parallels with the occult methodology employed by adepts in our land. Mention of tests on pyramid formations arresting decay is another point of interest in this thesis which is truly a model for researchers seeking meeting points in Science and Religion. Srikant (K.B. Nayar) is to be congratulated on his successful effort in this direction.

- M.P. Pandit

THE PRESENCE OF SIVA: By Stella Kramrisch, Pub: Motilal Banarsidass, New Delhi 110 007. pp.468+47+32 plates; Rs.225 (hb).

The author is well-known for her deep identification with the spirit of Indian Religion. Her treatise on the Hindu Temple is a masterpiece on Indian Sacred architecture. The present study is an inspired and inspiring meditation in poetic prose on the eternal presence of Siva on the Indian scene right from the pre-Vedic ages. She traces the high role he has played, in different forms and in different settings, in the evolution of the Indian Mind.

He is Rudra and Rudra is Agni's name too. "Rudra in the Vedic myth of the primordial hunter and avenger showed himself in his yoga power.... Rudra, the fierce god, is an avenger whose arrow never misses its target. Creation as procreation destroys the integrity, the wholeness, that was before the beginning of life. The Wild archer stalks his prey. As the Great Yogi, he is the consciousness and conscience of the Uncreate whole. Thus he is cruel and wild - Rudra; at peace within himself and kind-Siva.... Siva, the Great Yogi tames and subdues the animals that are the passions. On the Mohenjo-daro seal the Lord of Yoga is enthroned. Peacefully and calmly the forest animals are stationed around him." (pp.21)

Speaking of Siva himself, she writes: "From the primordial dawn to this day, Siva is present in the cosmos. From that morning time (kala) came to be. What happened then left its image in the sky. Rudra overcame time as Mahakala, he became Bhairava in his breakthrough from Time into Timelessness. If Siva of a thousand and more names and forms is evoked as one of them, he necessarily is also its opposite, the cruel kind God. He encompasses the orbit of the mind, which thinks in pairs of opposites. All of them are his in manifestation and even beyond, for he includes the ultimate pair: Creation and the Uncreate. He is their Consciousness." (pp.435)

At the end of time, he dances the awesome Tandava as Kala-Mahakala, the Destroyer, Destroyer of destruction. The Ananda Tandava, Siva's dance of bliss in the hall



of consciousness, is Siva's dance within the heart of man. There Nataraja, the lord of dancers, dancing, shows his fivefold activity, the expression of his divine totality...

Siva as the Archer Krsanu, Vatospati, the Lord of the Dwelling, Ardhanareeswara, Bhairava, the Demons who serve him, Linga and the Face of Siva are some of the other important themes developed with citations from authentic texts. The appendix contains 32 full-page plates of scenes from the Cave temple of Siva on the island of Elephanta, with elaborate explanations. If some portions are mind-intoxicating, some are soul-elevating. The volume calls for concentrated reading with pauses for assimilation.

- M.P. Pandit

**NARADA'S APHORISMS ON BHAKTI:** By Nagesh D. Sonde. Pub: Vasanti D. Sonde. 10, Vatsala Niwas, 65-B Linking Rd. Bombay 400 054. pp.209, Rs.50

Presenting the Narada Bhakti Sutras in the background of the Indian spiritual tradition, beginning with the vedas, the author underlines the truth that disciplines leading to God are many and each one chooses that which is relevant to his nature. Of these Bhakti has a more general appeal and in times like the present dominated by the spirit of Kaliyuga, its importance cannot be exaggerated. And what is Bhakti?

Writes the author: "In Narada Bhakti Sutra, Bhakti is said to have a form of intense commitment towards Him - Premaswarupa. Here Prema is not to be connoted with carnal desire - kama - of the senses but 'desire which is not contrary to dharma'...one should cultivate desire for the lord supreme, desire ruled by eternal values." (pp.13)

What is special about this publication is that each rendering from the Sanskrit original is followed by extensive supporting passages from the Veda, Upanishads, Gita, Bhagvat etc. Explanations of *nama*, *japa*; sound in the Vedic sense and other relevant topics are satisfying. Speaking of Vraja, Sri Sonde notes: "Vraja is not a geographical or a physical centre. It is the field where the lord in infinite compassion creates conditions for communion of the individual soul with the Divine Soul. In Radha Upanishad the one god is eternally at play in the varied activities of the world. In such suprasensuous communion, 'the Supreme Lord is the only Man; all others from Brahma downwards are like women (who long to be united with him)." (pp.65)

The translations are precise and the notes most helpful. A welcome addition to the extant literature on Bhakti.

- M.P. Pandit

**THE FLOWER AND THE HONEYBEE:** By W. Norman Cooper. Pub: De Vorss & Co., P.O. Box 550. Marina Del Rey, California. 90291, pp.301. No price.

In these 37 talks given to the Truth Centre, a Universal Fellowship, the author dwells upon a good number of

themes promoting a higher and broader consciousness. He takes up many of the sayings of Jesus Christ as they have come down and presents them in an extended sense. Explaining the title he has chosen, Dr. Cooper says: "All spiritual development is dependent upon the inter-relationship between oneself and other entities, much as the flower is dependent upon the bee and the bee on the flower."

The mystery of God, his Grace, spiritual nothingness, submission to hardship, faith, religion, adventure, love, concern for fellowmen, prayer, are some of the topics that are developed in a colloquial style. To quote a few of his high points:

You must wipe the blackboard clean before you can really understand... Then God will be able to write upon your heart, upon your mind.

You cannot really love the God whom you cannot see unless you have already loved your neighbour whom you can see.

Religion is that which calls for the putting of love into action.

- M.P. Pandit

**HOW CAN I HELP?:** By Ram Dass and Paul Gorman, Pub: Century Hutchinson, London WC2N 4NW, pp.243, £.4.95.

This book addresses the issues which face us when we are called upon to help another person. The question in the title of the book sets the tone, for the book is not only a survey of how to tune oneself into the needs of others, but also an exploration of the attitudes within oneself when the question of help arises. There is a consideration of the deeper values in our helping work. Questions such as "How do we help?" "What really helps?" are explored both in the authors' exploration of these questions as well as in the various stories of individuals which highlight some facet.

A short excerpt helps illustrate the point of this book: "She thanked me for helping. I thanked her for letting me. She said, 'You helped me see who I really was'. I said, 'You showed me to begin with'."

For those who wish to expand the reaches of their heart by the commitment to care for others, this book is required reading. It is more than a book, it is a way of life which can lead a person to the sense of oneness.

- A.M.

**THE ART OF POSITIVE THINKING:** By Swami Jyotirmayananda; Pub: Yoga Research Foundation, Miami, Florida, 33143, U.S.A. pp.145.

Eastern teachers of Yoga living in the West like the author have a definite and useful role to play in modern times. However, in catering to a predominantly materia-

listic society they are prone to dilute the significance of traditional Vedantic concepts and expressions with 'popular' terminology. For example "the great Shankaracharya..... became the most dynamic exponent of Vedanta philosophy due to his positive thinking". The author, however, defines the highest form of positive thinking as "allowing the mind to flow towards the Absolute or Brahman."

The chapter on "the technique of developing will power" is interesting. In the chapter "the glory of will power" the author argues: "since every individual is essentially one with God, he may allow this will to operate by moving towards God through the process of self-effacement devotion and enlightenment.... he can accomplish things that are beyond human imagination." (p.78) This perhaps falls short of the aim of Vedanta.

A collection of spiritual thoughts, rather varied and diffused, are presented in this volume.

— Ramamani

THE FINDHORN GARDEN — PIONEERING A NEW VISION OF HUMANITY AND NATURE IN CO-OPERATION: By The Findhorn Community, pp.196, price not stated.

OPENING DOORS WITHIN: By Eileen Caddy, unpaginated, £.9.50. both published by The Findhorn Press, The Park, Forres IV36 OTZ, Scotland.

Findhorn. Cold, windswept north coast of Scotland. Early sixties. Eileen and Peter Caddy surrendered to the voice of God within. What manifested without, as a result, was a veritable Garden of Eden, growing the most wonderful plants, flowers, trees and vegetables of astonishing size, colour and vigour, confounding conventional wisdom and sparking ley-lines of inspiration around the planet.

Drawing people from various parts of the world, the community has since endured as a thriving work-cum-educational centre, encompassing a wide range of "new age" concerns. *The Findhorn Garden* tells the story in the words of the community itself, with this beautifully produced second edition bringing us *au courant* with developments till the latter half of the eighties (see *The Mountain Path*, April, 1977, for earlier review).

Peter says, "If I had stopped to question what we were doing or where we were going rather than proceeding in faith, step-by-step, the Findhorn Garden could not have come into being." And Eileen: "I do not claim to understand many of the things that happened to us during the growth of the garden and of the Findhorn community. Nor do I have any particular advice to give, except that the most important thing is for each individual to look within for his or her own answers."

As with any dynamic entity, there has been growth and change; joyful, yet not entirely free of pain. Many of the founding members have moved on, while physically the community covers a much larger area. Spectacular as-

pects of the early years have vanished. The size and weight of vegetables and plants are back to normal, while nobody at present is seeing or talking to devas and nature spirits.

Evidently, the essential spirit survives. The garden continues to be Findhorn's *raison d'etre*, providing the focus for an on-going search towards a harmonious work-relationship with nature and the transformation of human consciousness. Exquisitely observed photographs of the garden and environs add a special touch to this account.

The first time Eileen Caddy heard the "still small voice within" was in 1953, while on a visit to Glastonbury. "I was sitting in the stillness of a small private sanctuary there, when I heard a voice -- a very clear voice -- within me. I had never experienced anything like that before. It simply said, *Be still and know that I am God*. What is this? I thought. Am I going mad? I was really quite shocked, because it was so clear."

Since then, for over thirty years, she has recorded thousands of pages of guidance, informing both herself and the community at large. *Opening Doors Within* offers inspirational selections in the form of a perennial diary; a short paragraph for each day of the year.

Here are timeless messages of faith, hope and love, powerful in their simplicity. A handy pocket-size and hard-bound, this volume speaks whether opened at random or at a specific date — food for meditation and action.

"All you need is deep within you waiting to unfold and reveal itself. All you have to do is to be still and take time to seek for what is within, and you will surely find it."

— Dev Gogoi

VALMIKI RAMAYANA: Tr. by Makhanlal Sen. Pub: Rupa & Co., N. Delhi 110 002, pp.711, Rs.95.

The first edition of this English translation was published over sixty odd years ago. The translator, Makhanlal Sen was a patriot and a revolutionary who spent several years of his life in conditions of measureless privation in one of the then numerous prisons of Bengal. Like Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, this work of translation helped to keep young Sen reasonably healthy in mind and heart amid all the trials and excruciating tribulations of prison life, intensified by the galling frustrations wrought in one's mind by the failure of one's ruthless endurance of severe ordeals to evoke and sustain a natural determination to get rid of the humiliations of foreign rule. The Ramayana as was only to be expected of so noble and inspiring a classic helped Makhanlal Sen, as it has helped millions of Indians to face the trials of life with a firm confidence that virtue is its own reward and unmerited suffering a necessary purificatory, purgation of the soul.

The translation is based largely on the Varanasi or Northern Recension of the great classic. Makhanlal has given shrewd, meticulous attention to various crucial prob-

lems in dealing with the text, making a fine choice both of episode and diction. He for example does not dismiss the *Aditya Hridayam* in the *Yuddha Khanda* on the ground that there was no possibility of Agastya's intervention at such a crucial moment in the battle against Ravana or even, as sometimes happens with scholars of a ritualistic turn of mind, on the ground that there was no water for the *Achamana* (to be done thrice) before meditation and praying to Aditya as bidden by Sage Agastya.

Makhanlal treats both the *Balakanda* and the *Uttarakanda* as authentic Valmiki and in this he is not merely faithful to the tradition but to the tested results of rigorous research in the textual problems arising out of the epic. Makhanlal's footnotes are extremely relevant and informative and deal crisply and convincingly on issues which have provoked a measure of controversy.

Having said so much in praise of this gallant and on the whole successful exercise in translation one must take leave of the reader to indulge in a few minor shrugs of one's shoulder. Here and there one is jolted by deviation from idiomatic English. Translation is doubtless a tricky business and Sanskrit is nearly as intractable and difficult to manage as the Gods on Olympus. Makhanlal has done a fine job. Should not this posthumous, paper-back reprint of his work have had the benefit of close, systematic revision of its English by a tolerably competent scholar, well versed both in Sanskrit and in English?

— Prof. S. Ramaswamy

FROM BAPU TO BABA: By V.K. Narasimhan. Pub.: Kalakshetra Publication, Madras 600 041. pp.130, Rs.10.

VKN, a seasoned journalist and one-time editor of a popular English daily, says on p.14 of the book, "to move from Gandhi to Marx, then return to Gandhi and later turn to Satya Sai Baba as an authentic spiritual leader whose avowed mission is to restore the Dharmic way of living in India and elsewhere, is a process of evolution which seems to have been contrived by an unseen power". This is in essence the theme of this slim little booklet. VKN as was natural to young men in the days of Gandhian non-cooperation – VKN was eight years old at the start of this unique experiment in striving for national freedom – fell under the near universal spell of Gandhi, gave up of all the foreign clothes he had, to be an offering in a bonfire, took to the charka and the learning of Hindi and the singing of national songs with the innocence and enthusiasm which then characterised young men. He soon discovered after a study of Marx and Engels' *The Communist Manifesto* that Gandhiji was a social reactionary. VKN felt betrayed when Stalinism took over. When another dictator Hitler attacked Stalin's Russia, he returned to Gandhi 'whose approach to national and international problems' seemed a more enduring answer to the problems of mankind than Marxism as interpreted by Lenin and Stalin. Independence under Nehru brought in another face of anguished disenchantment. Now begins – after a very brief Jayaprakash interregnum – the Baba phase in VKN's

odyssey. "The endless stream of judges, administrators, scientists, businessmen, workers and political leaders from all parts of India, who have been coming to Sai Baba is an index of the growing feeling among people of different walks of life that this country requires a powerful and widely accepted spiritual leadership to rescue it from the morass into which it has sunk."

VKN's journey from Bapu to Baba is marked by world events which had a personal as well as world significance. Bapu's roots were in the ageless spiritual heritage of the Gita, the Vedas and the Vedanta. The Nation has had since the Seers of the Upanishads, a continual succession of spiritual guides, like the Buddha, Sankara, Ramanuja, Ramakrishna, the Maharshi, the Sage of Kanchi and Satya Sai Baba. The tragedy is that their guidance is regarded by the political and economic czars of this hapless land as a tiresome irrelevance and a nuisance. The growth of corruption, incompetence and political immorality since Independence seems ready to attain new peaks although, innocents may still believe that the Mt. Everest of this growth has already been reached.

— Prof. S. Ramaswamy

## Books Received

- MEDITATIONS: The Ramana Way: By A.R. Natarajan. Pub: RMCL, Bangalore 560003, pp.107, Rs.15.
- KANAKADHARA STOTRA (text, tr. & notes): By S. Kameswaran. 7, Sector 4, Chheda Nagar, Bombay 400 083. pp.33, Rs.9.
- THE SONG DIVINE (Bh. Gita): By M.N. Balakrishnan Nair. Sri Krishna Publ., Trivandrum 695 010. pp.834, Rs.140.
- TALES OF OLD AND NEW MADRAS: By S. Muthiah. Pub: Affiliated East West Press, Madras 600 010. pp.207, Rs.30.
- PRINCIPAL SYMBOLS OF WORLD RELIGIONS: pp.47, Rs.4. and
- SOME SELECTIONS FROM THE SCRIPTURES OF THE WORLD: both by Swami Harshananda, Pub: R.K. Math, Madras 600 004.
- YOGA IN EDUCATION: By Dr. H.R. Nagendra & Others. Pub: V.K. Yoga Research Foundation, Bangalore 560 003. pp.147+15, No price.
- IN SEARCH OF THE GODDESS OF COMPASSION: By John Blofeld. Pub: Unwin & Hyman, London W1V 1FP, pp.155, £.6.99. (Reviewed in M.P. 1979, p.187)
- GATEWAY TO WISDOM: By John Blofeld. Pub: Unwin & Hyman, London W1V 1FP, pp.218, £.5.99. (Reviewed in the M.P. 1980. p.236)

**Kudos,**  
**Kudos,**  
**Kudos,**  
**Kudos...**

Just received *The Mountain Path* Aradhana issue -- June 1990. Get-up is superb!

-- Professor K. Swaminathan, Madras.

. . .

This, I think, is the first issue after you have taken over as editor. It is an issue any editor would be proud of. Hearty congrats! It is a real *Aradhana* issue -- every article, every line, every illustration. The get-up and contents vie with each other. Exquisite *Ramana-seva*, *Ramana-bhakta-seva!* *Namaskarams* to Kanakammal and Pujya Kunju Swamigal for their contributions. There are many Sage-of-Kanchi-like minute observations in the former's article. The wonder-piece in the issue is the poem of the 7-year-old, "To Know or not to Know".

The most heart-warming news is that a reforestation society has come up to clothe the Crimson Hill in green; and that it has such scholarly writers among its members.

It's doubtful if even orthodox Hindus would have that rapport with the rather bizarre theme of Vallalan, which Marye Tonnaire has! It is a well-written article; but Ellappa Nayinar (p.64) must be Ellappa Navalar.

Also, on p.8 it is stated that Thanjavur Brahadeeswarar Temple being the *samadhi* of Paampaatti Siddhar. It is Karuvooraar Siddhar's *Samadhi*. The Vriddhachalam Temple is that of the Paampaatti Siddhar.

-- Ra. Ganapati, Madras.

. . .

I congratulate you for bringing out such a beautiful issue containing all about Arunachala. In spite of my eye-problems, I read every article and found it a source of joy. It is made possible only because the Divine Grace, Sri Bhagavan's Grace is fully on you!

-- Prof. G.V. Kulkarni, Sangli.

. . .

I was very happy to receive *The Mountain Path* Aradhana issue. It is sublime! The articles, the pictures... an immersion in the holy presence of Sri Arunachala. I'm touched that you also included my translation of the story

The cover page of the journal as also the colour-supplements, made me, so to say, jump with joy. Yes, this issue is a superb production! And what a bewitching photograph of Sri Ramana as frontispiece! His captivating countenance is indescribable to be sure.

One more most welcome fact is that our dear brother, V. Ganesan, has taken over as the Editor. May the Lord bless him!

-- Swami Ekatmananda,  
Ramakrishna Math, Kankhal, U.P.

of King Vallalan. It brought back pleasant memories of my visit to the Ashram with my husband, David, in 1984.

-- Marye Tonnaire, Janville, France.

. . .

*The Mountain Path* received. Special congratulations. Hats off!

-- a telegram from

A.R. Natarajan, Sulochana and Sarada, Bangalore.

. . .

Hearty congratulations to the new Editor of the Aradhana number of *The Mountain Path* - 1990.

-- Prof. N. R. Krishnamoorthi Aiyer.

. . .

Devaraja Mudaliar's article, "A Cow's Mukti" reveals the oneness of Bhagavan's vision. Bhagavan's explanation on *vimukthi* is unique. Such an exposition has not been heard from any *avatar*. Congrats for your effort. Keep it up!

-- S.G. Raman.

. . .

Congratulations! This is a grand collection of "Deepavali Sweets" handed over in an attractive wrapper. Each of the 108 pp is sweet. The sweetest is that of the Editor's *Deham*, *Naham*, *Koham*, *Soham*. It is such a journal that will brighten the thoughts of the public. Pranams to Bhagavan Maharshigal.

-- K.V. Subbarathnam, Editor, *Sankara Krupa*.

. . .

Aradhana issue 1990 brought out worthy articles on many topics though pointing to the ONE.

-- M.S. Natarajan, Madras.

\* \* \*

The photograph of "The Sacred Son and the Holy Mother" appearing in the Aradhana issue of *The Mountain Path* is very good. The blending of two photographs, retouching and colouring are flawless and show the deep devotion and mastery of the photographer. Please convey my congratulations to Mr. Matthew Greenblatt!

-- Satish Chandra Saxena, Lashkar.

\* \* \*

The photograph of Sri Bhagavan which you published with my article is the face of Maharshi which draws me nearest to Him every time I see it. The child-like, innocent face of Sri Bhagavan coupled with His awe-inspiring and penetrating eyes pull you towards Him. As for me, it was a happy coincidence that you selected this photograph of Maharshi. I am beholden to you.

-- M.A. Menon, New Delhi.

\* \* \*

"True knowledge" -- in two pages full of Vedanta you have helped true *sadhakas* to plunge within and see clearly the veils of *triputi*, *avasthatraya* and *dvandvas* obstructing one's own Truth, which is within each one of us.

-- K. Prasada Rao, Hyderabad.

\* \* \*

Your article, "Pilgrimage to Arunachala" and those by Osborne, Godman and Krishnamoorthy Aiyar were illuminating, perceptive and thought-provoking. Also, the get-up is excellent.

-- P.R. Kaikini, Bombay.

\* \* \*

I am writing this to say that *Moments Remembered* is immensely liked by devotees here at Ramana Kendra, Hyderabad. You have done a good job. Keep it up!

--Dr. K. Subrahmanian, Hyderabad.

\* \* \*

I have received your lovely gift, your beautifully produced book *Moments Remembered*. Some of the chapters are already familiar, for I much enjoyed reading them in *The Mountain Path*, where they were originally published. They are absolutely fascinating. It is like being in the presence of Ramana Maharshi himself. I think the Americans would call some of these accounts "oral history".

I have read all the major biographies of Ramana Maharshi but no single biography manages to capture the

## Paradox In Living

Into the troubled Chinese countryside strode a philosopher known today as Confucius, a contemporary of Lao Tzu. Confucius believed that there should be rules and regulations for handling everything: procedures for dealing with conflict, rituals for honoring the dead and the family, rules for this, laws for that; so he created a set of codes and regulations by which the proper man, the honest man, the righteous man could live. Just follow these rules, he said, and evil and wrongdoing will be unable to flourish. Confucius attracted a lot of followers among people who found it comfortable to measure right and wrong by clearly defined codes.

Lao Tzu would have none of this. To him, all the rules, all the ceremonies, all the rituals, were merely creations of man, not of nature, not of life. For Life, he said, has no requirement other than "to be", and if you partake of these rituals then it means, in effect, that you are accepting the conflict with nature which people have created and which requires rituals to try to smooth over and keep things under control. He claimed that whether living as an individual or ruling a kingdom, the less you try to control what's happening, the more you will be in control. The less you try to do, the more you end up doing. This may seem paradoxical but it really says that a slight effort expended with *Tao* will produce greater and more beneficial results than a great effort expended without considering *Tao*. It's like floating downstream versus swimming upstream.

various facets of Bhagavan's personality in the way that your new book does. All admirers of Bhagavan will surely be grateful to you for the service you have rendered. This book should be translated into as many languages as possible. I must also commend your very clear style of writing which makes the reading of this book a sheer delight.

I would like to make just one suggestion. Why not produce a hardback edition for libraries?

-- Dr. Susunaga Weeraperuma, Agde, France.



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*Arunachala Ashrama,  
Nova Scotia, Canada:  
Sri Dennis Hartel,  
with a 230-pound pumpkin  
and Shep, the Ashrama dog*

## ASHRAM BULLETIN

### A Letter from ARUNACHALA ASHRAMA, New York...

On November 1, 1989, **John Flynn, Dennis Hartel** and his brother **Jim Hartel**, left the *Arunachala Ashrama* in Queens, New York on their pilgrimage to Arunachala and Sri Ramanasramam in Tiruvannamalai with the blessings of **Sri Arunachala Bhakta Bhagawat**. This was a pilgrimage with a purpose, and each member carried with him not only his devotion and aspirations, but also talents and resources they intended to put to use in the service of Sri Bhagavan and His devotees: the production of a broadcast-quality documentary film on the life and teachings of Sri Ramana Maharshi.

John, a buoyant 75-year-old actor and narrator, was eager to set foot upon the ground where the Sage of Arunachala radiates His presence. After three unforgettable weeks, John was able to say, "One is never the same after visiting here. At Ramanasramam, Ramana's presence is felt everywhere!"

Dennis has been a dedicated full-time inmate of *Arunachala Ashrama*, in New York and Nova Scotia, for 19 years. Though this was not his first visit to Sri Ramanasramam, it was his longest (13 weeks) and, indeed, his most fulfilling: "Whenever I return here this strange, overwhelming feeling envelops me. It has been two and a half years since my last visit. Where are those years now? I have been here only a day and all memory of those years has evaporated, leaving the inexplicable feeling that I have always been *here only*, everything else vanishing from my mind."

Jim Hartel, gifted in the arts, energetically employs himself as a sculptor, teacher, video artist, curator and art administrator. For many years he has studied Indian art and has actively served *Arunachala Ashrama*.

Arriving in Tiruvannamalai, the group threw themselves into the reservoir of Sri Bhagavan's presence and went to work. The film project began with able assistance from **Dr. Lingeswara Rao** of Andhra Pradesh. The pilgrims set out from Madras to Madurai on November 27, taking with them **Sri P.V. Somasundaram**, a blood relative of Bhagavan. Every place known to have the slightest connection with the early life of the Maharshi was extensively filmed. A full day was spent at Tiruchuzhi, Ramana's birthplace. The pilgrims moved on to Dindigul

and then back to Madurai to retrace the exact route young Venkataraman had taken on August 29, 1896, the fateful day when He left Madurai for good in His quest for His Father at Arunachala.

After a week on the road, the film crew returned to Ramanasramam. With the full cooperation of the management, the ashram and all its activities were filmed. Many old devotees, whose lives were transformed by the gracious glance of the Maharshi, still reside in or near the ashram. They were sought out and importuned to tell their stories for posterity.

Jim was eager to take up one more project: casting a mould in order to duplicate the life-sized stone sculpture of Bhagavan in the New Hall. When the five-day job was completed, the unusual mould consisted of 33 separate parts cast in fiberglass. These were carefully packed into a large suitcase and taken to America by Jim.

Dennis was able to attend his first *Jayanti* celebrations at Arunachala on January 11, and stayed on until February 17th. The ashram had asked Dennis to look through all the old films of Bhagavan taken during the 1930's and '40's, with the object of having them restored. Dennis obligingly packed up all the reels and took them to America for restoration and preservation.

The President of Sri Ramanasramam, **Sri T.N. Venkataraman**, has sent out letters of appeal to devotees in the West for assistance in this costly and time-consuming project.

John Flynn is now developing a narration for the film documentary, while Jim is editing the film and assembling those 33 parts of "Bhagavan's body" into the form of the original statue. Once completed, a permanent mould will be made so that the sculpture can be cast, one copy for installation in the **Arunachala Ramana Mandiram** in Nova Scotia and another in the proposed temple in New York. Dennis is assisting both John and Jim, besides attending to other Ashrama responsibilities.

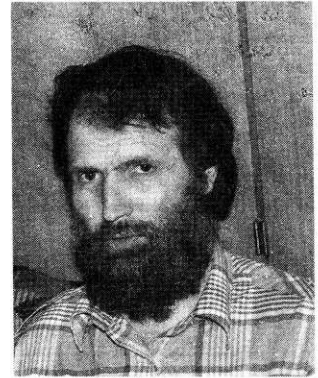
All these activities serve to fix the minds of devotees on the name, form and message of the Maharshi. That being done, there is nothing else to achieve.

### Perestroika Shakes Hands With Sri Ramanasramam

The grace of Sri Bhagavan knows no boundaries, needs no passport, and pays no taxes, but with the new *perestroika* policy in Eastern Europe, the grace is able to take on a more tangible form.

Readers of *The Mountain Path* will have noticed the serialized translation of the *Garland of Sonnets*, entitled "Inquiry into the I", by O M -- Oleg Markovich Mogilever -- of Leningrad, U.S.S.R. This ardent Ramana-*bhakta* is a Senior Research Assistant and Candidate of Science at the Leningrad Scientific Research Institute of Forestry.

Since coming upon the teachings of Sri Bhagavan several years ago in the form of Arthur Osborne's *Collected Works*, O M has studied and absorbed the Maharshi's teachings to a remarkable extent. This has been expressed not only in his outpouring of poetry using an *antadi* format, totally unique to Western literature, but also in his dedication to translating Sri Bhagavan's works into Russian. O M is also eagerly spreading the gospel by giving talks on Bhagavan's life and teachings. These lectures have been very suc-



Oleg Mogilever  
- OM -  
Leningrad, U.S.S.R.

cessful, each one bringing in an audience of over a hundred people, who listen to O M while they gaze at a large photo of Bhagavan that he places before him.

"There is already knowledge of Patanjaliyoga and Sri Aurobindo here," writes O M, "but very little is known about Ramana Maharshi." However, interest is keen, as the turn-out indicates, and already a small group of Ramana-*bhaktas* is forming on the banks of the Neva.

Sri Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai, enthusiastically extends its arms in welcome to the budding Ramana Kendra in Leningrad.

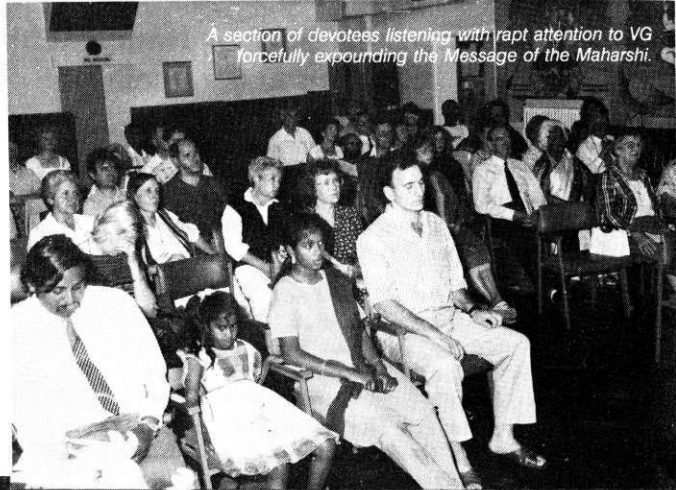


**TADPATRI:**  
Sri T.N.  
Venkataraman,  
President,  
Sri Ramanasramam,  
declared open a  
'*Ramana  
Meditation Hall*'  
at Tadpatri on  
21.1.90

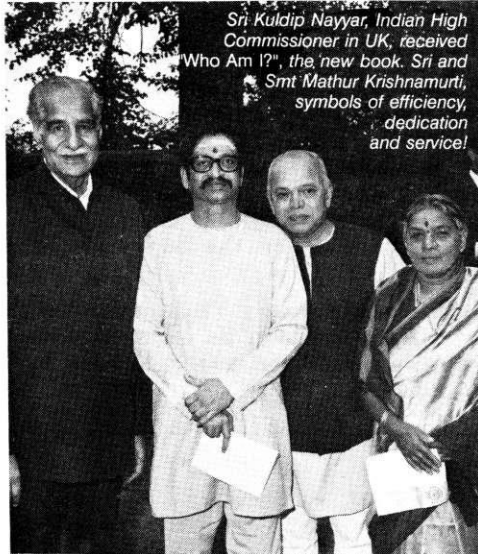
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# Editor's Pilgrimage to UK, Canada & USA.

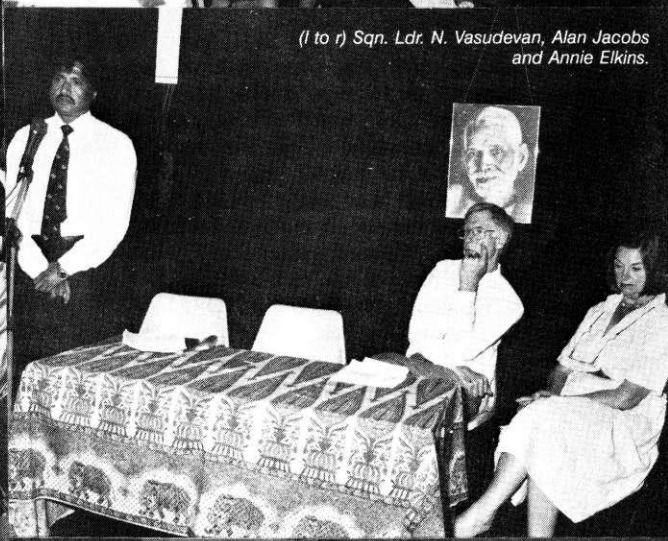
## London, England



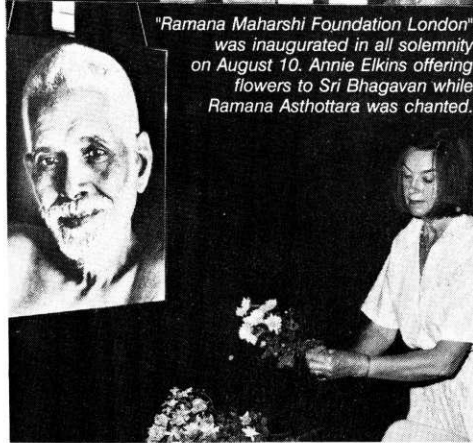
A section of devotees listening with rapt attention to VG forcefully expounding the Message of the Maharshi.



Sri Kuldip Nayyar, Indian High Commissioner in UK, received "Who Am I?", the new book. Sri and Smt Mathur Krishnamurti, symbols of efficiency, dedication and service!



(l to r) Sqn. Ldr. N. Vasudevan, Alan Jacobs and Annie Elkins.



"Ramana Maharshi Foundation London" was inaugurated in all solemnity on August 10. Annie Elkins offering flowers to Sri Bhagavan while Ramana Asthottara was chanted.



Devotees from France expressing joy.

Our editor visited a number of devotees at their homes including Douglas Harding at Ipswich, the J. Krishnamurti Foundation at Brockwood Park and The Christ Church College at Oxford where Arthur Osborne studied.





"Bhagavan's Advent at Arunachala Day" was celebrated on September 2 at Sri Arunachala Ramana Mandiram, Arunachala Ashrama, Nova Scotia, Canada



Near the Atlantic Ocean in Nova Scotia: (l to r) Dennis Hartel, Dr. Anil Sharma, VG, Arunachala Bhakta Bhagawat and John Flynn.



In front of Niagara Falls along with Sekhar Raman.

*Canada*



"Ramana Satsang" inaugurated at Toronto on September 12.

# Florida

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"Ramana Maharshi Foundation of America" got a flying start in Florida. RMFA's first meeting was organized by Abhinav Dwivedi in Orlando, on September 15. With an appreciative gathering of devotees at a devotees's residence.



The principal talk given in Orlando on the Maharshi's teachings.



Children in all smiles!



On September 22, VG gave a talk on the life and teachings of the Maharshi at Sarasota.



At Tampa, on October 2, the Maharshi's message being received with avowed interest.



North  
Carolina

*RMFA spreads to Durham where Riaz and Behroz Padamsee arranged for three talks.*



*At Durham, North Carolina, ninety-year old Jehanghir Chubb who has had six meetings with Sri Bhagavan enthuses young devotees: VG and Mrs. Behroz Padamsee.*

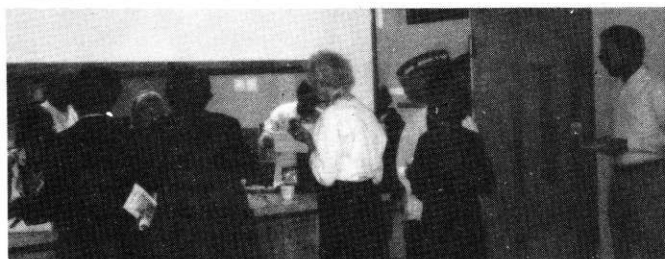


*Vaidyanathan's obeisance to the Master.*



*Between October 7 and 12 five talks on Sri Bhagavan were arranged in Seattle, under the auspices of RMFA by T.S. Vaidyanathan.*

Seattle



*Sharing Ramana-prasad, arranged by Michael and Marcie Allen.*



*While at Mount Rainer in Washington State VG felt as if he was at Kedarnath.*

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A section of the audience at the University of California program. Over 65 people, many from various parts of the country, attended.



Matthew Greenblatt, the moderator, with daughter Ramani.



The first speaker and prominent author Robert Powell



Our Editor talking on "Action and Non-Action".



Swami Bhaveshananda of the Vedanta Society of Southern California.



Robert Ellwood, Prof. of Religion at the Univ. of S. California, LA.



Ramana Publications bookstall manned by Riaz Padamsee. "For Those with Little Dust - Selected Writings of Arthur Osborne" the new book from Ramana Publications was released at the program.



Adam Osborne, son of Arthur Osborne, sharing his reminiscences.



Dr. Jim Dreaver's talk was on spiritual practice.

## San Diego

A program on the life and teachings of Sri Ramana was held on October 20 at the University of California in San Diego, CA, organized by RMFA. This was the first national program on Bhagavan held in the US.



Childhood friends - VG and Adam Osborne - a moment of joy!



(l to r - back row) Matthew and Joan Greenblatt, Riaz and Behroz Padamsee, Ramani Greenblatt, VG, Robert Powell, Adam Osborne, Cherrie and Jack Dawson.



VG's talk "Not There, It's Here" at D.G. Wills Books in La Jolla, on October 21.

Mark Lee, the Executive Director, VG, Asha Lee, Indra and Saroj Somani, at the Krishnamurti Foundation of America in Ojai, California.

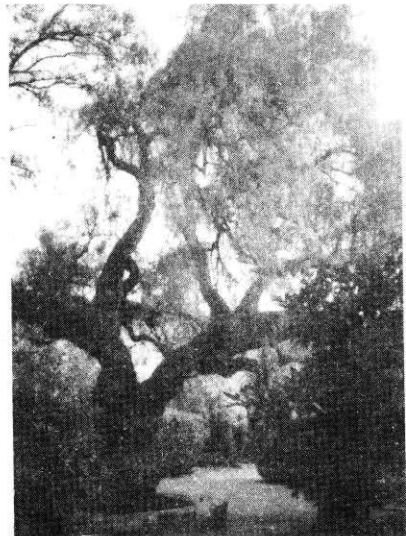
*Ojai*



A view of the mountains near Krishnamurti's cottage, reminiscent of Arunachala.



Ramani Greenblatt sitting by the statue of Nandi, next to Krishnamurti's Pine Cottage.

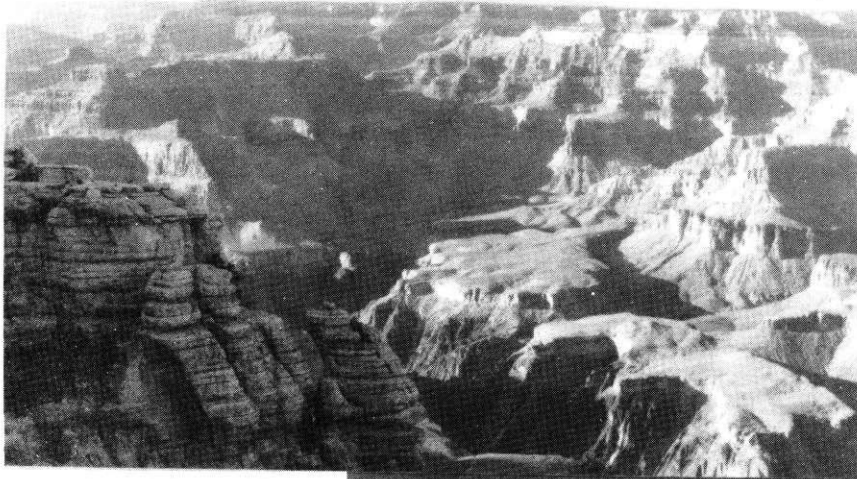


The Pepper Tree where Krishnamurti had his unique experiences.

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*An all-American audience attended VG's four talks at "Shanti", on the Hill-town, Jerome. Many of them bestowed keen interest in the teachings of "Who Am I?" John Loewenstein, who arranged for these talks. —>*

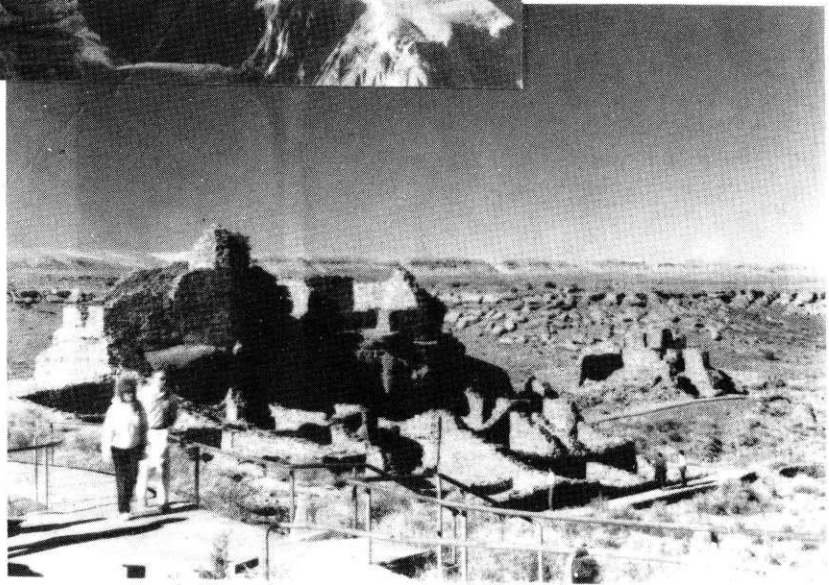


*The breath-taking grandeur that "The Grand Canyon" really is!*

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## Arizona

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*The remnants of ancients American Indians' houses, portending their glorious, rich culture.*

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(Including 16-page book reviews supplement)

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