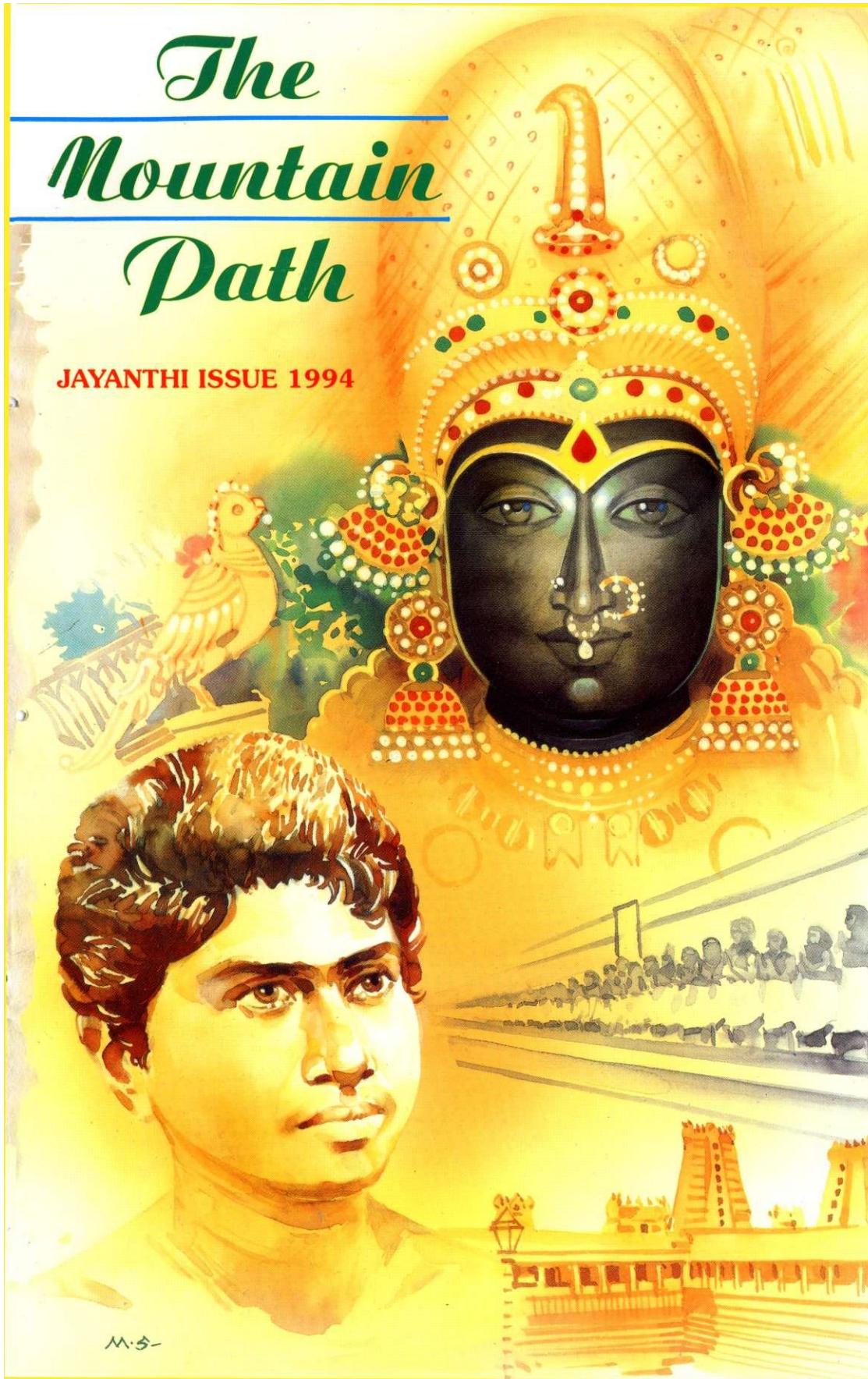


The Mountain Path

JAYANTHI ISSUE 1994



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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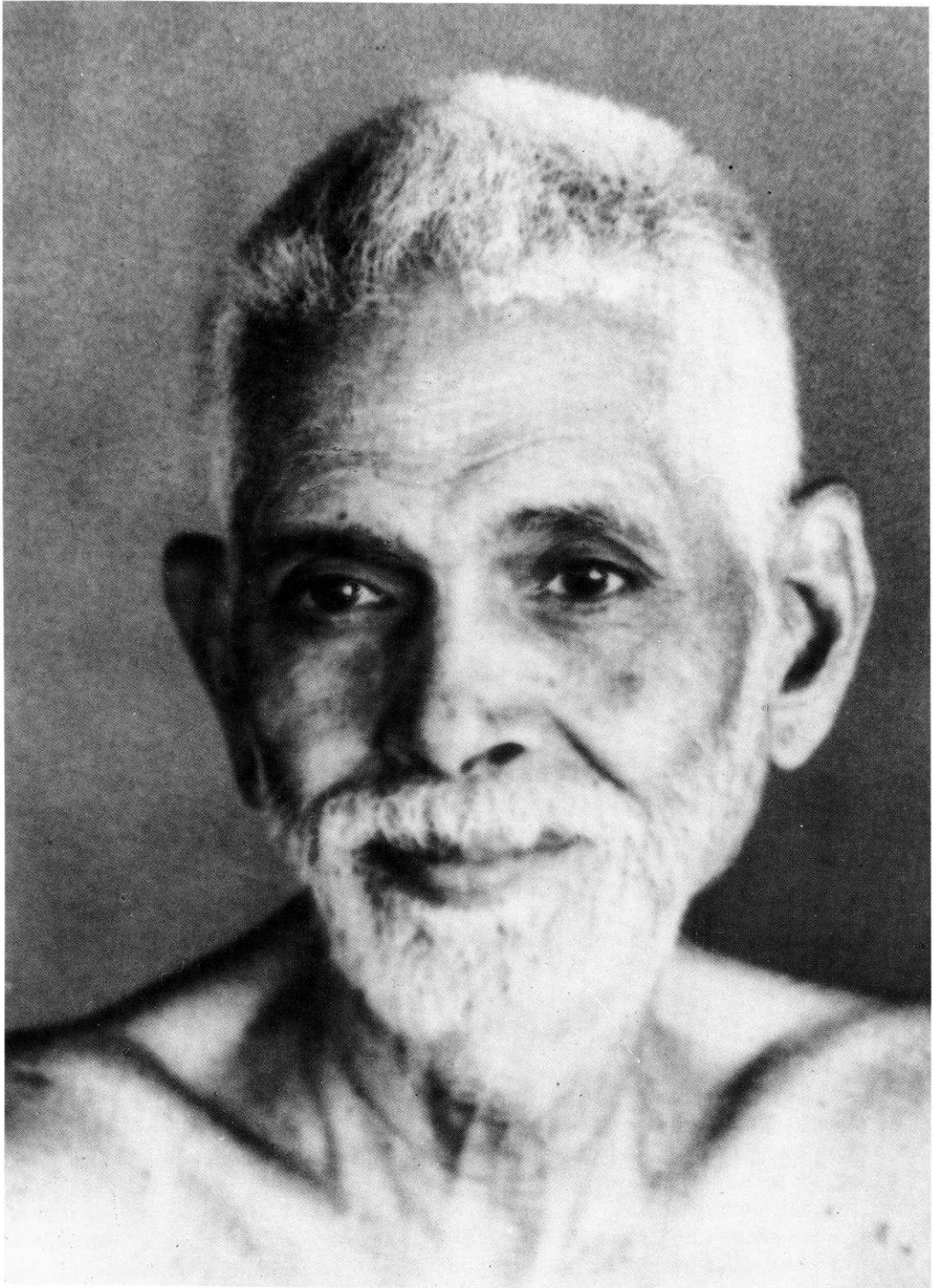
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THE MOUNTAIN PATH
is dedicated to
Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi



EDITORIAL

"Only Ramana"

To see God as apart from the seer is only a mental image,
 since God is not separate from the seer.
 To abide in the poise of the Self
 is the true vision of God.

— Ulladu Narpadu, v. 20

JUST as the summit of a mountain can be approached by many routes, people have always come to Bhagavan Ramana from many paths, religions and walks of life, all with varying notions, yet with the sole objective of knowing what Sri Ramana stands for. To know Bhagavan is to be Bhagavan. Did not Bhagavan repeatedly tell us, "There are no *jnanis*; there is only *jnanam*"? The one who knows has to disappear into that which is known.

One would think that our common esteem of Sri Bhagavan would bring us all closer together in a brotherhood of common ideals and goals. Yet sadly, the opposite is occurring. And the only thing that unites us all is the slogan: "Only Ramana". This decorative, fanciful "two-word idea" may appear to remove the superficial itch of our unenlightened minds, but it does not solve our problems. Should we not seek to go beyond our limited minds to the very Source, to the

"Centre without circumference," throwing away the chaff, only to enrich ourselves with the kernel? "Only Ramana" then appears as nothing more than a mental construct, whereas "everyone, everything is Ramana" is Sri Bhagavan's true message, vouchsafed by his own life and words of wisdom.

Yet this itch is, after all, only human nature and should not astonish or disturb us. There is not a world teacher around whom this has not happened. The Buddha taught the Total Nothingness from his own direct experience, but have not many factions such as Mahayana and Theravada Buddhism sprung up? Shiite Muslims fight with non-Shiites; Orthodox Jews disclaim non-orthodox ones; and Christianity, which began as a reform movement within the Jewish religion, quickly set itself apart with "Only Jesus" as *the Son of God and the Way to God*. It then rapidly fractured into countless splinter groups, each upholding "the one true faith" and "the one true God," giving birth to crusades and internecine wars over such crucial issues as how many fingers to use when crossing oneself and whether or not it pleases God to do so from left to right or right to left.

Why does this happen repeatedly, throughout the ages, and not in one particular religion but virtually all of them? Yet all Masters are genuine and their messages, based purely on their own experiences, are absolutely true and infallible. So where does this sabotage inevitably take place? Is it possible that while their messages are as genuine as they are themselves immaculately pure and perfect — "the moon" — the followers who try to proclaim them — "the finger" pointing to the moon — somehow falter and thus succeed in corrupting the very message they try to propagate? Perhaps organised religions are created by these "fingers" and, in the process, the very "moon" is obliterated and forgotten!

Thus, followers who begin with the best and sincerest intentions get caught in the unfortunate snare of trying to formulate "the one true faith." No doubt, the attempt at formulation

arises from a desire to understand. Yet invariably the efforts of faith organisers prove the *modus operandi* for the organisers themselves to become the new religion's Pope or priests. Thus, the ego, which was to be destroyed, has turned the tables and instead acquired pomp and glory, name and fame, while none of the qualifications of the hierophant — humility, simplicity, egolessness, as exemplified by their idol — are present. On the contrary, personal ambition, decoratively festooned with one's own ideas of how he alone is right, is consuming everything. Organisation of "true believers" inevitably leads to excommunication of all the rest. This is what sincere followers of Christ's teachings mean today when they sadly draw the distinction between Christianity and Churchianity.

Swami Vivekananda is widely quoted as saying, "It is a blessing to be born into a religion and a tragedy to die in one." The implications are, of course, that while a religion forms a wonderfully fertile kindergarten — a "finger" — its limitations — structure, concepts, dogmas, rituals, priests, hierarchy, lowerarchy and laity — can never bring one to the "moon", which is beyond all concepts, dogmas and points of view. Slogans, genuflections and rituals begin to pile up, all around the "finger", eventually obscuring the "moon" entirely. What a tragedy!

Should we allow this to happen to our Sat-Guru, *Purushottama* — "Purest among men" — Bhagavan Ramana, too? No!

Putting the Maharshi's teaching into practice in everyday life, by every one of us, is a good beginning, ensuring an unobscured clarity, the true dawn, sounding the death-knell to the darkness of a religion rising around the vainglorious slogan, "Only Ramana". The one unchanging nonvariable is only yourSelf, said the Master. Be true to yourSelf, find out who you are, and all else will be clear. Each one raising the fundamental question "Who am I?" in his own heart of hearts is the real beginning. It is easy to be true to an ideal, a cause, a concept, an institution, an organisation, a country; but it is really difficult to be true to oneSelf. Why? Because the

outward-going mind, our common plight, is forever straining to behold "others" in order to maintain its illusory existence, whereas being true to oneSelf requires us to turn within and face ourSelf — the Truth of our being and the death of both mind and separate identity, together with our whims, opinions and slogans. Ironically, facing "that which is" seems insurmountably difficult, while coping with "that which depends upon us for its existence" appears easier. Did not our Master define Self-knowledge as "giving up of the falsehood that has never been there and gaining of the Truth that has always been there?"

Another itch prevalent among us is to benightedly try to elevate Sri Ramana by seeing him not as man made perfect (*purna jnani*) through Self-realisation, but rather the opposite: God made man — an *avatar* of Siva or Subramania. The very notion of avatarhood is nothing more than an itch — a concept, yet one more thought in a menagerie of thoughts. Has not our Master categorically said that in the direct experience of the Self, all concepts and sense of otherness are forever annihilated? When pressed hard on the *avatar* issue, Bhagavan once answered, "Who is not an *avatar*? Everyone is an *avatar*. Is not the Self residing in everyone?" Did he not frequently refer to Jesus Christ's saying, "The Kingdom of God is within you"? On another occasion, when asked whether he was an *avatar* of Lord Subramania, Sri Ramana answered, "That, and all other Gods, is me." One is reminded of the devastating butchering of Christ's statements, "I am the way, the truth and the life" and "No man comes to the Father except through me." While he always identified himself with "I AM," saying "I and the Father are one," the Son-of-God or *avatar*-worshippers construe the "me" to be an historical figure, and the one and only one at that, thus closing the door to their own Self-realisation by locking themselves in the closet of their own ignorance. The tragedy of this particular itch is the fanaticism it breeds. This, again, cannot be said to mean lack of initial sincerity because it is based on ignorance. However, it culminates in the destruction of sincerity as cult wars against cult.

In *Self-Enquiry* (30), Sri Bhagavan quotes, "God, who is of the nature of the non-dual, plenary, conscious Self, manifests, sustains and resolves us all. It is a great sin to spoil that Reality by superimposing on it various names and forms such as Ganapati, Vishnu, Rudra, Mahesvara and Sadasiva.... All those are but imaginations of the mind." He then asserts, "If we who are endowed with various thoughts meditate on God, that is the Self, we will get rid of the plurality of thoughts by that one thought; and then even that one thought will vanish. This is what is meant by saying that knowing one's Self is knowing God. This knowledge is release."

Another far more subtle trap is a more intellectual one. Let us call it "The Only Greatest Master Syndrome." Based on a mere intellectual grasp of the teachings of some great one, but combined with the inability (or unwillingness?) to put these teachings into practice, it breeds a sort of tea-and-crumpets spirituality in which one can picture the would-be philosopher sipping tea and munching crumpets, discussing the finer points of his philosophy. The combination is deadly as the patient becomes ever more blinded and self-hypnotised through spiritual indigestion. The teachings stay stuck in the head and never touch the heart or soul of the individual, never annihilating the ego, only engorging it. The initially sincere seeker, having at last found a teacher who has shown him a glimpse of the truth that appeals to his own particular mentality, now becomes absorbed in slogans, propaganda and scholarship, leading to what Americans refer to as "chapter-and-verse combat". One undigested teaching or reference is cited and shot out after another to support their view that theirs is the one and only "greatest" master, with the one and only greatest teaching that ever appeared on earth: "His teaching alone is unique. No one else's words are as perfect, as sublime. Everyone else is a midget by comparison, every other Guru, every other teaching, every other seeker. And here are the chapters and verses to prove it." The jargon is legion, but the underlying theme is ever the same: "He brought to earth a new teaching, a new Path, never before revealed, and no one else has ever done so." Always the

"finger" gets bent out of shape until it points back at the hand. Always the "moon" is forgotten or lost in the process. We see this misfortune everywhere we look. It afflicts followers of all great ones, even such reformers as Sri Aurobindo and J. Krishnamurti. Tragically, it has not failed to overtake devotees of Sri Bhagavan as well. In response to one who was afflicted with this form of spiritual indigestion, did Sri Bhagavan not say, "Nothing is new. Truth is the same, yet ever fresh. It becomes fresh when one puts it into practice. There is no newness or oldness to Truth." We also have Bhagavan's refutation of putting *Brahmajnanis* into four categories: "Because of the grades in misery and happiness, the released ones... may be spoken of as belonging to four categories — *Brahmaavid*, *Brahmaavidvara*, *Brahmaavidvariyan* and *Brahmaavidvarishta*. But these distinctions are from the standpoint of the others who look at them; in reality, however, there are no distinction in ... *Jnana*." (*Self-Enquiry*, 40)

However much all these dangerous traps may appear to be true theoretically, they do vanish into thin air the moment one seriously raises within oneself the potent question, "to whom" all these "itches" arise that breed so much conflict in and around us. A confused, ignorant or undisciplined mind automatically builds up such defence mechanisms with the sole purpose of ensuring its own survival. If scorched by one-pointed introspection in the form of powerful Self-enquiry, can the externalised, false, non-existent mind ever hope to endure whatever act of bravado it may try to put on? "To be [Self] is truth; to be "this" or "that" [mind] is falsehood." "The real aim of all religions," said the Maharshi, "is to lead up to the awakening to the Truth of the Self. But the Truth of the Self is too simple for the generality of men; even though there is no one who is not aware of the Self, men do not care to be told of It; they think the Self to be of little worth; they want to hear of far-off things — heaven, hell, reincarnation and so on; they love mystery and not the plain truth; and the religions humour them, so that ultimately they may come back to the Self. But why not seek and

find and abide in the Self at once, without wandering? The heavens cannot be apart from him that sees or thinks of them; their reality is of the same degree as that of the ego that wants to go there; hence they do not exist apart from the Self, which is the real heaven... The Sage is never other than the real Self of the disciple." (*Maha Yoga*, pp. 189-92)

Thus, having successfully and joyously begun treading the direct path of 'diving within', and having carefully avoided falling an easy victim to the three impediments of ignorance (the religion-delusion), uncertainty (the avatar-seesaw) and wrong knowledge ("the only greatest and new path" syndrome), one is now free to have a direct perception of Bhagavan as he is. Sri Maharshi said clearly before His *Mahasamadhi*, "Where could I go? I AM here."

Yes, He is here as "I AM" in every one of us.

What, then can be the real meaning of "Only Ramana"? Bhagavan himself has supplied the key in his famous assertion, "*There are no others*."

Once, when the devotees were sitting around him singing "Ramana Sat-guru," they found to their surprise that he, too, was clapping his hands and singing along. "Why are you praising yourself?" asked one. Quick came the reply: "Ramana Sat-guru is everywhere and everything. Why do you limit it to this form?" Did he not call himself "Ramana, the Self of all." Did he not assert that "he alone knows me who knows me as I truly am."

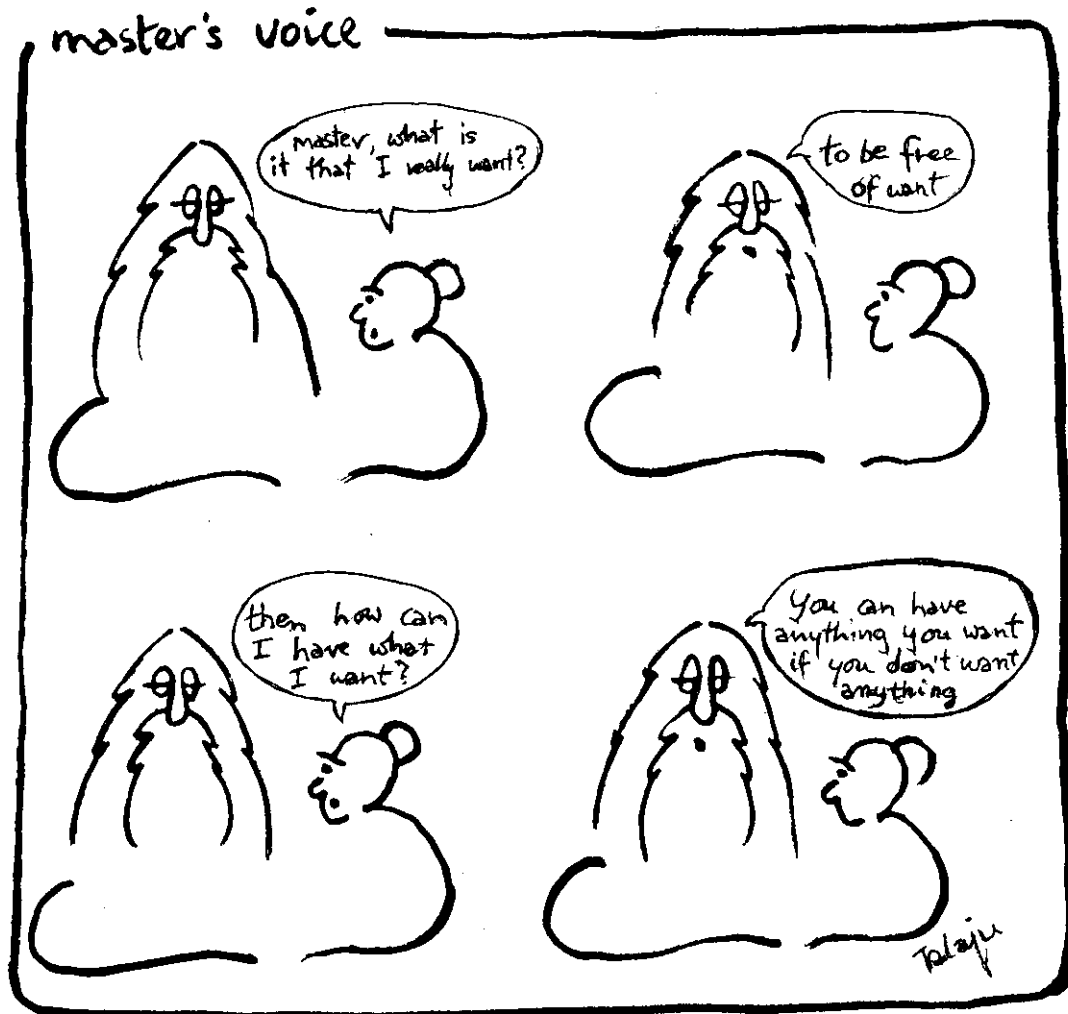
Bhagavan was very fond of *Kaivalya Navaneeta*, which culminates in the disciple's Self-realisation and exclamation, "O Lord, you are the Reality remaining as my inmost Self in all my countless births! Glory to you who put on this human form only to redeem me. How can I repay you except by worshipping your holy feet!" To which the Guru replies: "To stay fixed thus as the Self, without the three obstacles [ignorance, uncertainty and wrong knowledge] impeding that True State of yours is the highest recompense you can render me."

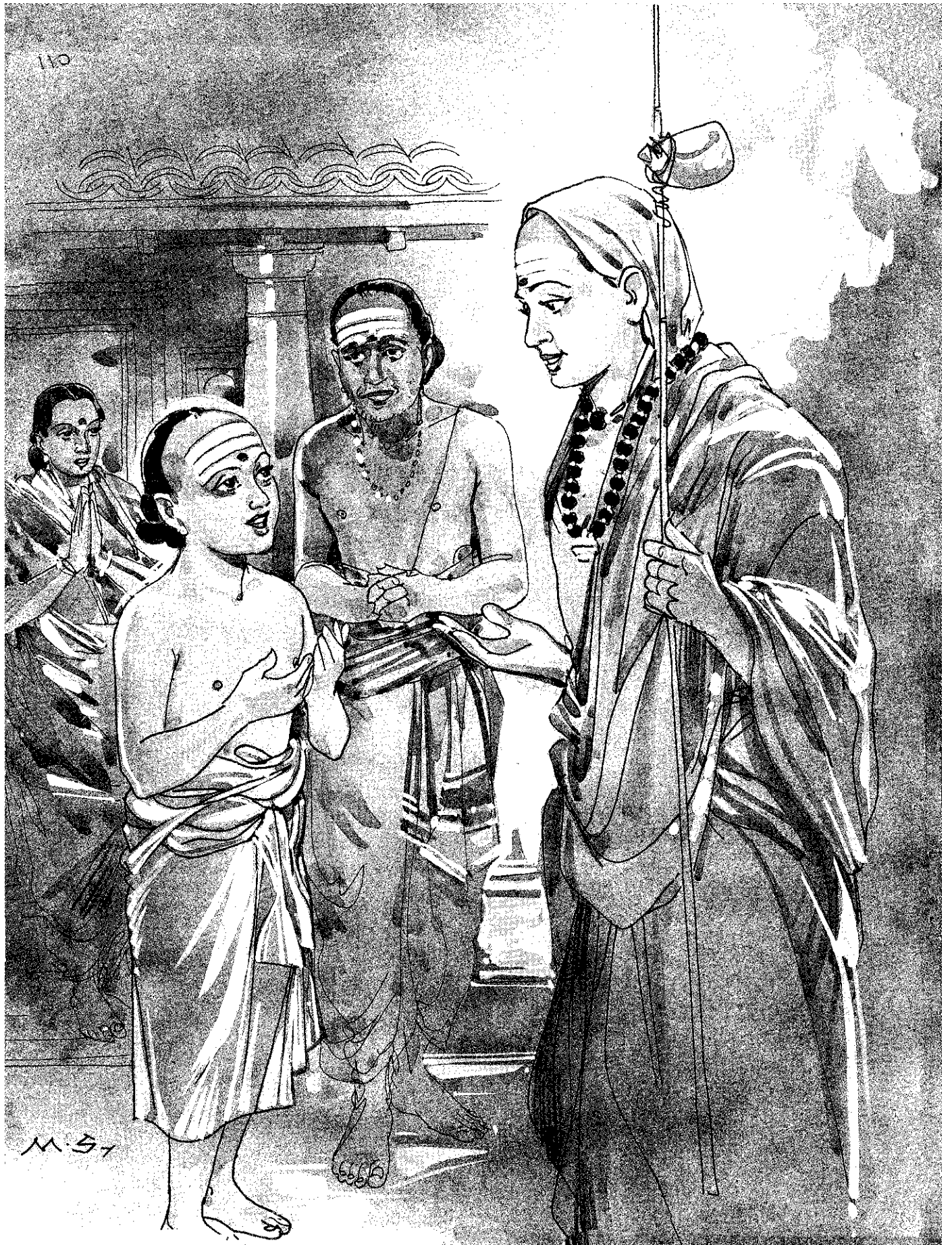
When a devotee came to Bhagavan asking that he give him Self-realisation, Sri Ramana replied, "Even if Siva Himself comes, He cannot give it to you. Nor can I give it to you." After a pause, he said smiling, "Because you are already That!"

Did he not wipe out *in toto* all of our possible doubts as to his real identity when he assured one devotee, "Bhagavan is always with you, in you, and in fact, you are yourself Bhagavan." To another he simply asserted,

"நீயே தான் பகவான்" — "You, indeed, are Bhagavan."

He exhorted us in so many ways, by word, example, silence, to remember that each one of us is nothing but the Self. If Ramana is the Self of all, and all are the Self, then all are "Only Ramana". Is it not, then, an act of betrayal and gross ingratitude to the Beloved Master if one refuses to awaken to the Truth that one is always never "any other" than "Only Ramana?"





MS

Hastamalaka Stotra

Translated into Tamil by Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi

The following famous Sanskrit stotra was translated by Sri Bhagavan into Tamil. He also composed for this piece a Tamil introduction, together with the 15th or concluding verse.

— Editor

Introduction

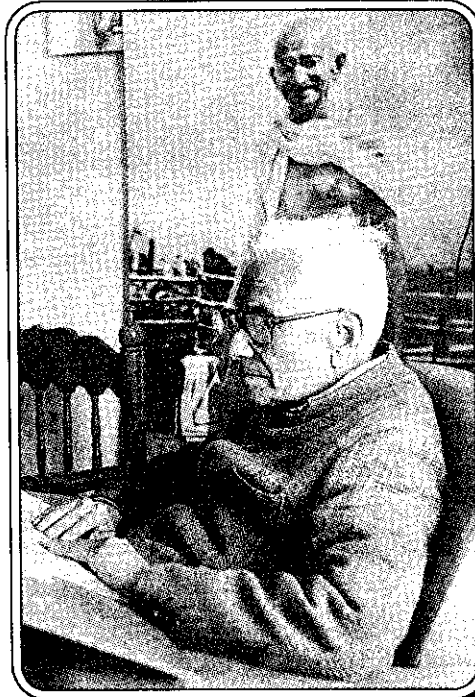
A Brahmin woman went to the Jamuna to bathe. Finding a yogi sitting in meditation on the bank she left her only child, a boy of two years, near him, asking him to take care of it until she returned from bathing. On returning she found to her dismay that the child had drowned while the yogi was absorbed in meditation. The bereaved mother lamented his death so loudly that the yogi awoke. On understanding what had happened he was moved to pity and, in order to console the poor woman, gave up his own body by yogic power and entered that of the dead child. Seeing the child revive the mother was overjoyed, took him up and returned home without troubling to find out the secret of his miraculous recovery.

The boy did not grow up as a normal child. He was too contemplative to learn, lisp, play or entertain his parents in any way, so they thought he must be deaf and dumb.

A few years later Adi Shankaracharya was travelling in the neighbourhood. The parents took their child to him and prayed that he might be pleased to restore it to normal health by means of his divine powers. The Acharya took in the situation at a glance and addressed a number of questions to the boy; the boy in his turn replied immediately, astonishing the audience with the sublimity of his wisdom.

When the parents learnt the truth about their son, they left him with Adi Shankara. He was known from that time as *Hastamalaka* and became one of the four leading disciples of the great master.

1. "Who are you? Whose child are you? Whither are you bound? What is your name? Whence have you come? O child! I should like to hear your reply to these questions". Thus spoke Sri Shankaracharya to the boy, and Hastamalaka replied as follows:
2. "I am neither man, god, *yaksha*, Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaisya, Sudra, *brahmachari*, householder, forest-dweller, nor *sannyasin*; I am pure Awareness alone.
3. "Just as the sun causes all worldly movements, so do I, the ever-present conscious Self, cause the mind to be active and the senses to function. Again, just as the ether is all-pervading yet devoid of any specific qualities, so am I free from all qualities.
4. "I am the conscious Self, ever-present and associated with everything in the same manner as heat is always associated with fire. I am that eternal, undifferentiated, unshaken Consciousness, on account of which the insentient mind and senses function, each in its own manner.
5. "I am that conscious Self of whom the ego is not independent as the image in a mirror is not independent of the object reflected.
6. "I am the unqualified, conscious Self, existing even after the extinction of *buddhi*; just as an object remains ever the same even after the removal of the reflecting mirror.
7. "I am eternal Consciousness, dissociated from the mind and senses. I am the mind of the mind, the eye of the eye, ear of the ear and so on. I am not cognizable by the mind and senses.
8. "I am the eternal, single, conscious Self, reflected in various intellects, just as the sun is reflected on the surface of various sheets of water.
9. "I am the single, conscious Self illumining all intellects, just as the sun simultaneously illumines all eyes so that they perceive objects.
10. "Eyes can see objects only if they are enabled to do so by the [light of] the sun. The Source from which the sun derives its power is myself.
11. "Just as the reflection of the sun on agitated water seems to be broken up, but remains perfect on a calm surface, so also am I, the conscious Self, unrecognizable in agitated intellects though I clearly shine in those which are calm.
12. "Just as a fool thinks that the sun is entirely lost when it is hidden by dense clouds, so do people think that the ever-free Self is bound.
13. "Just as the ether is all-pervading and unaffected by contact, so also does the ever-conscious Self pervade everything without being affected in any way. I am that Self.
14. "Just as a transparent crystal takes on the lines of its background, but is in no way changed thereby, and just as the unchanging moon on being reflected on undulating surfaces appears agitated, so has this doubt come to you [O Sankara]!
15. Since this hymn reveals the Reality of the Self as clearly as an *amalaka* fruit (similar to a gooseberry) in one's hand (*hasta*), it became known "Hastamalaka Stotra". This boy, a fully ripened fruit of *Jnana* (Wisdom) even from his boyhood, has himself come to be known as "Hastamalakan", revered by all.



"Bhagavan's grace it was that gave me length of life, strength of body, and room to render humble service."

— Prof. K. Swaminathan (1896 - 1994)

Prof. K. Swaminathan: Gem of a Gentle Man

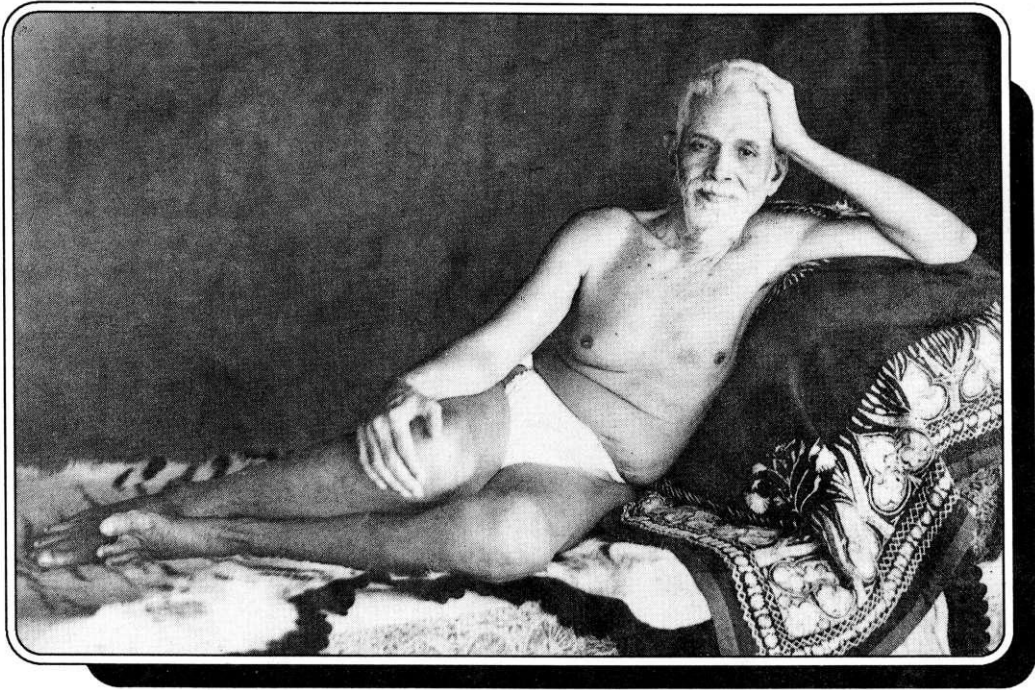
By La. Su. Rengarajan

A GRAND OLD Gandhian scholar and rare exponent of Ramana Maharshi's philosophy, Professor K. Swaminathan passed away peacefully at the ripe young age of 97 at Madras on May 19, 1994. He was a father-figure in intellectual circles in India and abroad for more than six decades.

With a pleasing personality and winsome smile, the unassuming professor consistently shunned power and publicity. He was a great educationist, erudite scholar, able journalist, profound philosopher, ardent humanist and Gandhian, all rolled into one, his every quality matched by his humility.

From 1940 to 1950, when Prof. Swaminathan was a well-known teacher of English at Presidency College, Madras, he spent weekends and vacations at Sri Ramanasramam, basking in the grace of the Maharshi.

"It was not all silent meditation or profound metaphysics," he recalled. "People spoke to one another freely and frankly in his presence, as if the figure on the couch were a statue, not a listener. Thus, every conversation in the old hall turned out to be a truly Socratic dialogue; every statement was tentative and therefore poetic; no statement was dogmatic, eristic or polemical. The impersonal being would suddenly become a



person full of *sattvic* power, highly human, charming, mother-like, who could communicate with sharp precision his own awareness-bliss to other persons according to their needs and moods. The sun now came down and played with us as the light of the moon to illuminate the mind, or as the fire in the home to cook our food."¹

The professor confessed: "Shakespeare, Keats, Wordsworth and the *Bible* meant much more to me when illumined by the light he shed on all he saw. His grace it was that gave me length of life, strength of body and ample room to render humble service to Rajaji, Vinoba and Gandhi, all reflections in our own time of the eternal goodness of which he was the full embodiment."²

Professor Swaminathan started the Ramana Bhakta Sabha in Madras in 1950, soon after Bhagavan's *mahasamadhi*. Till 1977 the weekly *satsangs* were held in "Dharmalayam", his residence in Madras. Later it was renamed Ramana Kendra, Madras, and continues to function till today. This initiative was typically a forerunner of numerous other Ramana centres established in India and abroad.

Even a brief, mundane resume of Prof.

Swaminathan's life (1896 - 1994) is most impressive: first class honours in English from Presidency College, Madras; Bachelor of Law; apprenticeship under the legal luminary and Congress leader S. Srinivasa Ayyangar; travelled to England for higher studies in English; professor and vice-principal at Meenakshi College, Chidambaram (today Annamalai University); additional professor of English at Presidency College for 20 years; played a substantial part in the Tamil renaissance movement in the 30s and 40s; author-playwright of *Kattai Vandī*, a parody in Tamil; retired from Madras Educational Service in 1953 as principal of Government Arts College; associate editor of the *Indian Express* (1953-59); chief editor of the Government of India *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* project (1960-91); awarded *Padma Bhushan* in 1972 and honorary doctorate in philosophy by Gandhigram Rural University (1987); founded the New Delhi Ramana Kendra (1974); founded Gandhi Mission in Madras (1990); general editor of the national biography series of the National Book Trust

¹ "In His Presence," *The Mountain Path*, April 1988, p. 104.

² "First Darshan," *The Mountain Path*, January 1988, p. 10.



"Dedication expected of a follower of Ramana Maharshi and Mahatma Gandhi": Prime Minister Indira Gandhi releasing the final volumes (No. 89 & 90) of the Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi in 1984. (Right) Prof. K. Swaminathan, Chief Editor of the Project

(1960s); chairman of the All-India Subramania Bharati Centenary Sub-committee for Publications (1982-84); and so on.

Prof. Swaminathan had long sessions with Vinoba Bhave in the mid-fifties when the latter was on a *bhudan* tour of the South. It was during that time that the professor translated into English Vinoba's *Talks on the Gita* and serialised it in the *Indian Express*. Rajaji's *Ramayana* in Tamil was also translated into English by Prof. Swaminathan.

As president of the Madras Social Service League, he took the lead in Harijan work, for which he was awarded the state government's gold medal in 1957.

During 1958-59, the professor led a Government of India sponsored delegation to Russia, Poland, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia.

An ardent nationalist proud of his country's classical heritage, Prof. Swaminathan even as a young man fell under the powerful spell of Gandhiji. When the Mahatma came to Pudukkottai during his "*Khadi* tour" of South India, he stayed as a guest of the Professor's father-in-law.

Though temperamentally averse to active politics, the Gandhian spirit became a part of his being. He was a life-long wearer of *khadi*. The

opportunity to serve the Mahatma came only years later when in 1960 the Government of India, on the advice of Vinoba Bhave and Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, prevailed upon him to become the chief editor of the *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, a monumental project conceived by the then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, to compile and bring out in a series of volumes all that the Father of the Nation said and wrote.

Before leaving for Delhi in January 1960 to take over as chief editor of the *Collected Works*, Prof. Swaminathan met Rajaji to seek his blessings. "You are going there to serve Gandhi alright," Rajaji nodded, and then quipped, "but you are irredeemably bonded to Ramana Maharshi also! How will you tackle both heavyweights in the far-off capital?"

The grand professor admirably tackled both.

Scorning a life of leisure after retirement and shunning publicity, spending laborious days with a small band of editors and researchers, Prof. Swaminathan devoted himself to the stupendous task of compiling and editing Gandhiana for a full 26 years (1960-86), till the ninetieth and the last volume of the main series in English was completed.

It was no formal compliment, therefore, when the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi while

releasing the last two English volumes of the *Collected Works*, remarked: "Above all, our thanks are due to Professor Swaminathan who worked with the dedication expected of a follower of Ramana Maharshi and Mahatma Gandhi."

While in Delhi, the professor also initiated a seminal Ramana *satsang* with weekly lectures and devotional songs held in devotees' houses (and often in his own residence). This steadily grew to later become the Ramana Kendra with its own building in Lodi Institutional Complex in New Delhi. It was inaugurated on September 1, 1974, by the Vice-President of India. The then Union Cabinet Minister C. Subramanian was the president of the Kendra. Prof. Swaminathan nurtured it as one of the important centres of spiritual inquiry in the capital.

Prof. Swaminathan was instrumental in effecting the issue of the Ramana Maharshi commemorative postage stamp in 1971. The week-long Ramana Maharshi centenary celebrations and conference owed their success to the joint efforts of Professor Swaminathan and Sri A.R. Natarajan.

Prof. Swaminathan was long associated with the editing of *The Mountain Path*. His English translations of Muruganar's *Guru Vachaka Kovai*, consisting of 1253 stanzas, was serialized in the magazine. He was the chief editor of the journal for many years during the eighties.

The professor wrote a little book on Ramana Maharshi which was first published by the National Book Trust in 1976. (It is currently in its sixth edition.) A copy of the book was handed over to Sri Morarji Desai through the good offices of a senior police officer while Sri Desai was under detention at an undisclosed location in Haryana during the Emergency. After a week, the professor received a postcard handwritten by Desai: "Read your book thrice. Highly illuminating. But why the comparison of the Maharshi with others (last chapter)? He is beyond compare."

Prior to its publication, Professor

Swaminathan had sent the manuscript of the book to a select few for their suggestions. One of them (A.R. Natarajan) seemed to have found some passages difficult to grasp. The following excerpts from Prof. Swaminathan's letter of reply (April 5, 1975) reveals his dilemma as also the enigma that was Bhagavan:

It was very kind of you to have taken so much trouble over the manuscript and to have offered your thoughtful suggestions. Earlier, the draft had been revised in many parts in the light of criticism by a number of friends. It passes smoothly through acid, but develops grit in honey! The paragraphs which you find most difficult to grasp conclude a chapter carefully revised and finally approved by Viswanatha Swami.

The real problem is: how to explain in ordinary prose the preternatural and practical wisdom of a normal human being who lived in a continuous state of transcendental awareness. The unity of the visible and invisible worlds (இம்மை, மறுமை) is essentially preverbal and can only be mutilated by being conceptualised. Nevertheless, this unity is real because good people, like plants, birds and animals, *live* by it though they cannot explain it. Bhagavan is a blend of Shiva (pure awareness) and of Rama (the perfect human embodiment of sound, normal, commonsense morality). The trouble arises when we try to understand Bhagavan's words and judge his actions, instead of accepting and enjoying both as events at once natural and supernatural.

All your doubts will be resolved if you read *Narada Bhakti Sutra* where the *prema* [love] of the *gopis* is held up for our emulation. Krishna and Bhagavan bridge absolute or transcendental being and relative becoming. We should be content to love him with *prema*, each one accepting him as one's own special, visible, beloved *bahiratman*.

It may be well that my Bhagavan approximates to Sri Rama, Muruga and other mythical heroes, while another's image is closer to

Garland of Guru's Sayings

Why do people call me learned?
 What is the mark of real learning?
 Learning that all garnered knowledge
 Of things is empty ignorance
 And that true knowledge is the search
 For the knower. v. 132

The guru who tells his disciple
 "Do this or that" becomes for him
 Yama, Lord of Death, or Brahma,
 Lord of Birth. He who declares
 "You have done enough" is the true guru
 Bringing grace divine. v. 271

Majestic like a mountain rises
 The splendour of the sin-destroying
 Guru who holds royal court
 In the devotee's heart of love.
 Ineffable is this mounting bliss.
 Those who have known it do not speak.
 Those who have spoken of it have not known it. v. 325

The only true and full awareness
 Is awareness of awareness.
 Till awareness is awareness
 Of itself, it knows no peace at all. v. 418

*Sri Bhagavan's sayings, recorded in Tamil verse by Muruganar
 (and checked by Bhagavan). Translated by Prof. K. Swaminathan.*

the austere, immobile and colourless awareness of J. Krishnamurti.

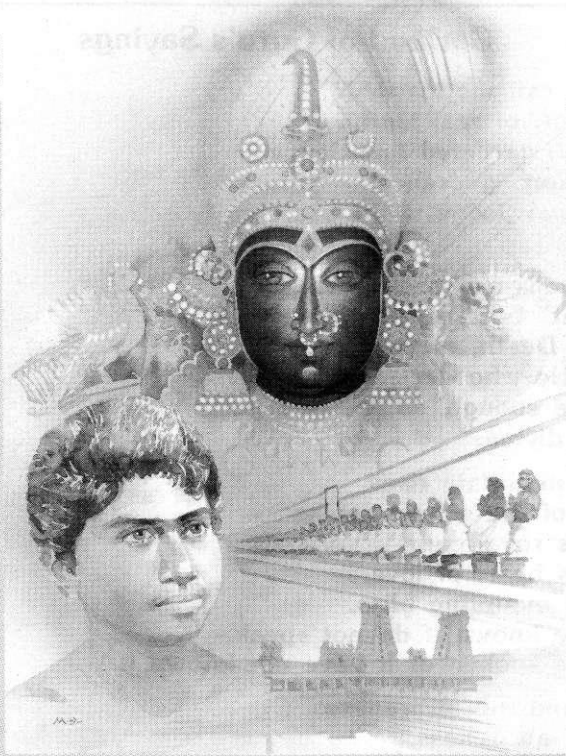
We should be content to accept such differences in our view of the mountain we are climbing from different directions. Once we reach the top we shall see that what once blinded our vision also supported our upward movement.

Here is a classic example of how the professor makes one aware, however dimly, of the pure light of awareness through many colours, even in a casual letter. Such glimpses of soothing advice on varied topics emanated from the pen of Prof. Swaminathan in hundreds of letters and articles.

Those who did not meet him, or even hear of him, may now well imagine a starry-eyed old

man with saintly gaze and sermonising words haltingly whispered to special visitors. Not so. He was a most lovable and lively father-figure who put you utterly at ease, while inspiring awe by his wit and plain wisdom. Many a time he would go off the track and make everyone around him laugh, merging himself in the hilarity. Recognising no barriers of age, he treated old and young alike with enduring courtesy and grace. Anyone who met him returned satisfied and perhaps a little wiser. He had the gift of making people discover the fresh in the familiar.

In the passing away of the professor, thousands of his admirers, students, friends and Ramana-devotees have lost a versatile philosopher and guide, and the nation of a precious gem of an earlier generation.

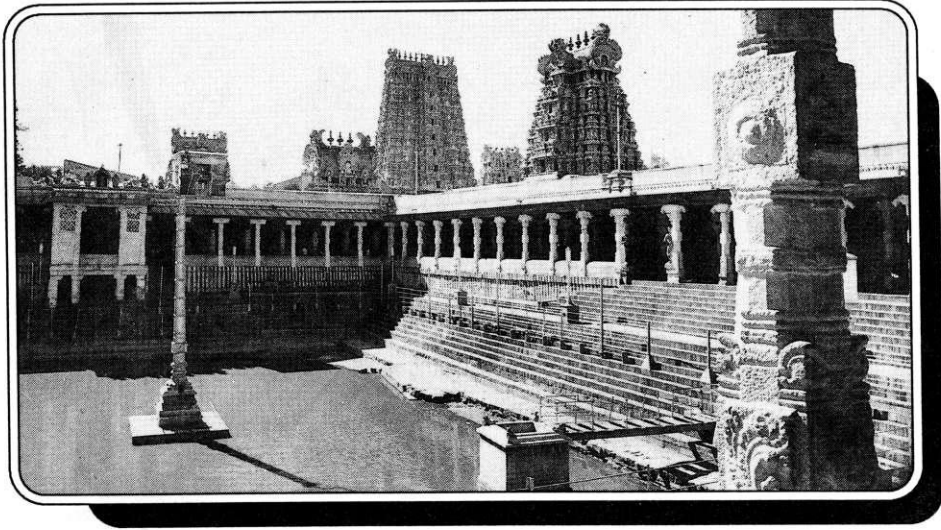


In South India, Madurai is the most sacred and powerful pilgrimage centre dedicated to the Mother Goddess. The presiding Mother Deity there is called "*Meenakshi*", meaning "She who bestows blessings through Her beautiful fish-like eyes." It is said that the mother fish hatches her eggs merely by looking at them. Just so does Mother Meenakshi bless Her children.

Likewise, the "glance of Grace," the sacred look of Bhagavan Ramana, spiritually transforms *jivas* into Siva.

The cover page of this issue brings out this symbolic spiritual splendour in a most beautiful and powerful way. The artist, Sri Maniam Selvan, has superlatively portrayed it.

— Editor



Death in Madurai

By Dr. Ramachandra Gandhi

Two years less than a hundred years ago in Madurai, probably during the middle of the month of July, Yama pays an unexpected visit to the boy Venkataraman. I picture Yama in the guise of a *sannyasin*, perhaps the same *sannyasin* who, generations before, had been refused alms by Venkataraman's ancestors and who had placed a curse upon the family to the effect that a male member from every generation of the family would have to beg for alms as a *sannyasin*. Yama as that very *sannyasin* appears before Venkataraman and says, "You have stolen property in your possession. That body and breath of yours, that mind and life of yours, are mine and not really yours; give them back to me!" "Certainly, Revered Sir," says Venkataraman most courteously, "take them now, they are yours. But am I yours? Whose am I? Who am I?" Death disappears forever, the ancient curse is broken, the family of man is set free from the dualism of *samsara* and *sannyasa*, birth and death. Timeless Self-realisation dawns in Venkataraman's heart and Maharshi Ramana arrives on the stage of world history.

A representative human being is tested by

Goddess Meenakshi of Madurai and not found wanting. She, *Shakti* of the Universe, anticipated a hundred years ago the crisis all life on Earth faces today. She may have summoned Yama and warned him that in a hundred years he may have to perform the task of annihilating all life on earth because the human race in its unregenerateness was likely in the near future to hurl itself upon the resources of life and civilisation like a murder-cum-suicide terrorist squad. Unless, She might have added, a representative young human being like Venkataraman was capable of staring Yama in the face and attaining Self-realisation through untutored inquiry and attention alone. For most human beings, like Venkataraman, were untutored in spiritual traditions, although they were born into them; and because the quality of inquiry and pre-suppositionless attention essential to Self-realisation was unspoilt only in the young. Yama does not have to travel far to test the spiritual capability and survival-worthiness of the human species, for Venkataraman is waiting in the upstairs room of his uncle's house around the corner from the Meenakshi temple. The fateful interview takes place; and the rest is history!



One of the doctors who attended on Ramana Maharshi during his last illness, Dr. Anantanarayana Rao, told me that the boy who later became known as the famed Swami Nityananda came to the Maharshi in an ecstatic state. Decades before, at Dharmapuri, where Dr. Rao was the then government veterinary doctor, he took this enraptured youth to his home, gave him a bath and food, and tenderly attended on him for a day or two; then the youth disappeared as suddenly as he was found.

Smt. Madhavi Amma told me another story. While at Kasargod, she heard of the Swami who was then living in a dilapidated fort outside the town. People dreaded to go there, for he would discourage visitors with hurled stones and frightening sounds. She went to see him. He was up a tree, and tried to frighten her away by shouting and throwing dead branches from the tree. She approached undaunted. Swamiji came down, looked at her with compassion, and asked her where she came from. "From Ramana Maharshi's ashram," she replied. He smiled and said, "That's why you have no fear," and enquired about the Maharshi.

Sri T.R. Ramachandra Aiyer, a lawyer-devotee who also attended on Bhagavan, told me of another incident. After Bhagavan's *Mahanirvana*, he went with a group of Ramana devotees to have *darshan* of Swami Nityananda at Vajreshwari. Swamiji had locked himself in a building and had not come out for months. The group got permission to sit outside the door, where they began chanting Bhagavan's *Upadesa Saram*. Suddenly, the door opened and Swami Nityananda appeared. He sat on the threshold, beating time with the singing, the very picture of bliss. A large number of his own devotees, who had not seen him for a long time, rejoiced at seeing him again, albeit from a distance. After the chanting, Swamiji touched the offerings brought by the group, and made indecipherable sounds and signs. Then Swamiji went inside and bolted the door. His devotees told the group that they had been instructed by Swamiji to offer them food before seeing them off.

— Editor

Swami Nityananda: The Eternally Blissful

By Swami Muktananda

TIME and again, saints and enlightened ones come into our midst to uplift humanity. Their ways are apparently eccentric but the sick, the afflicted, the poor and the helpless derive complete peace, solace and contentment from them. It is for this purpose that the compassionate Lord incarnates Himself in the form of sages and seers from time to time. One such divine embodiment descended on Ganeshpuri to fulfil an extraordinary spiritual mission. Devotees knew him as Swami Nityananda.

There is nothing on record to show where Gurudev Sri Nityananda was born and brought up, or where he practised *yoga-sadhana*. There is no clue as to his genealogy or family background. It seems that he quietly left home and went to the Himalayas for about six years.

It is believed that Sri Nityananda revealed himself as a young lad in South Kannara District, near Kanhangad. Deep in the mountains there is a cave surrounded by a small dense forest infested with wild animals, venomous snakes and poisonous shrubs. He lived in this cave for quite a long time in the supreme state — *nirvikalpa samadhi*. This cave and the area around it is called 'Guruvan' and considered to be Sri Gurudev's seat of penance — *tapobhumi*.

As there was no natural water supply nearby, Sri Gurudev created a stream within the cave, which has been flowing ever since. This holy stream is called 'Papanashini', suggesting that to drink or bathe in it destroys one's sins.

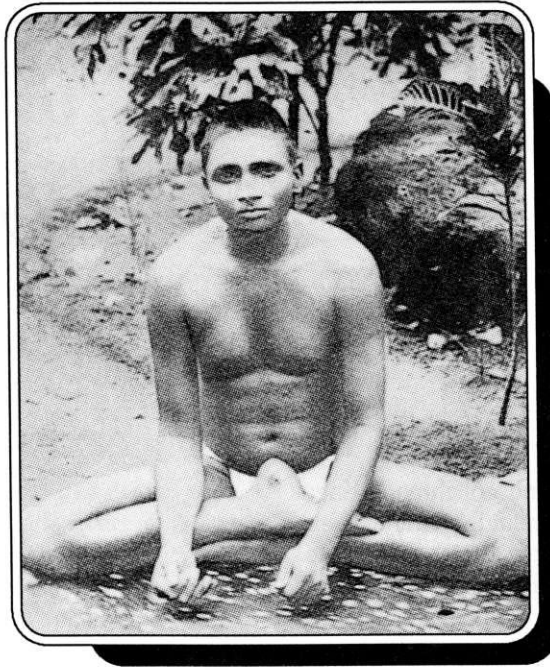
He was very fond of beautiful gardens and orchards. He himself planted several coconut palms, mango and jackfruit trees around the

cave, which can still be seen today. The natural, beautiful atmosphere of this place is both enchanting and peaceful, so it is very conducive for *tapasya*. This holy spot, charged with the divine energy of Swami's intense penance, attracts a great many devotees even today.

About four miles from Guruvan, towards the coast, on the outskirts of Kanhangad, there is a large ashram built by Sri Gurudev. Called 'Nityananda Ashram', it is fairly big, with many large rooms. It stands amidst green fields, groves of coconut trees, and a mountain range extending over quite a distance. No wonder the scene refreshes the mind and cheers the spirit. The fort of Hosdurg once stood here. Nearby there is a cliff under which there were more than forty recesses used by soldiers as hiding places. Gurudev converted these into meditation caves. He used to sit there when devotees came for his *darshan*. *Sadhaks* who go there for meditation feel graced by the divine vibrations, and some even pass into *samadhi*.

A mile further from the caves, near the seashore, is Khusalnagar where Sri Gurudev stayed for some time. Surrounded by coconut trees, the area is extremely attractive. Sri Nityananda had a well constructed there for the benefit of the villagers.

Kerala and Mangalore can rightly be called Swami Nityananda's *lila-bhumi* — the place where he played his divine sport. He travelled extensively through Dharmasthala, Kapu, Mulki, Udipi, Padubidri, Kanhangad, Kasargod, Bantwal, Gokarna and other places on foot, in an absolutely free *avadhoot*-like state, relieving



A very early photo of Swami Nityananda

many people of their illnesses, miseries, anxieties and poverty.

Avadhoot Nityananda liked solitude and roamed about in a state of aloofness and child-like innocence. His field of wandering extended over forests and hills, through which he travelled with lightning swiftness.

One day he asked a bus driver to let him on the bus, but the arrogant driver ignored him and drove away. When the driver stopped at the next stop, about six miles down the road, there was Nityananda again, requesting to be let on the bus. Again the driver ignored him. It happened this way about three times. By the fourth time, the driver was completely in awe of Swami Nityananda. He requested Nityananda to get on the bus, saying that he would take him anywhere he wanted to go. Nityananda refused and disappeared.

He sometimes used to lie down in a solitary place in an intoxicated state of bliss. He never stayed anywhere for long and accepted food and water only if offered, since he never felt their need.

There are many stories of miracles accredited to Sri Gurudev. When people came to know about his divine powers, they started following

him in ever-increasing numbers. Sometimes, when harassed by crowds clamouring for miracles, he shunned them by swiftly moving to a different spot. On occasion, he even perched on a tree, casually throwing leaves which, as it happened, served as a cure to the ailing.

There are several astonishing instances in connection with Sri Gurudev's powers. He built many caves and *dharmashalas* (rest houses) without taking money from anyone. He would tell the workers to take their wages from under any stone in the jungle, and they used to get the right amount. Or he would put his hands in his loincloth and take out the right amount without even counting.

When the Nityananda Ashram was being constructed in Kanhangad, the police came to investigate where he got his money. They thought he had a secret press and was minting counterfeit money. Sri Gurudev took the police party to a deep lake infested with crocodiles in a wild jungle. He plunged into the water and emerged with bundles of new money which he threw at the policemen, saying, "This is where I keep my press. Come in and see it!" The police were so frightened that they could only bow down and run away.

Sri Gurudev sometimes travelled by train. When asked to show his ticket, he would produce thousands of them from his loincloth. If he was forcibly detained, the train used to come to a sudden halt.

Sri Gurudev had his mortal share of ignorant people's calumny, jealousy and harassment. Not recognising his *avadhoot*-like state, some people mistook him for a lazy crank. Not only did they insult and ridicule him, but they also threw mud, cowdung and stones at his naked body. Yet he remained unperturbed. The all-pervading divinity was fully unfolded in Sri Gurudev. He was a saint of rare spiritual attainment who could achieve anything merely by his wish or resolute will (*sankalpa siddha*).

After years of peregrination — Sri Gurudev covered practically the entire length and breadth of India on foot — Swami finally came to the famous sacred place of Vajreshwari in Thane District, Maharashtra. There the idol of Vajreshwari looks alive and possesses great power. Here Sri Gurudev built two rest houses, a small restaurant, a well, a dispensary, a maternity home, and a high school for the benefit of the local people. A short distance from Vajreshwari, in the village of Akloli, there is a sacred spot with hot springs, named Ramkunda. There Sri Gurudev had the hot springs renovated, and a well and rest house constructed.

In the beginning, Sri Gurudev was often seen living at Akloli or Vajreshwari. Later, he settled down permanently at Ganeshpuri, near the hot springs of the Bhimeshwar Mahadev temple, a mile and a half from the Vajreshwari temple. He spent the last thirty-odd years of his life there.

Previously, Ganeshpuri was just a jungle full of snakes, scorpions, and wild beasts. Except for the dilapidated Shiva temple and a hot spring beside it (almost submerged in the thick undergrowth), there were no buildings in Ganeshpuri at that time. When Sri Gurudev came to live in a simple hut near that hot spring, the desolate jungle was transformed into a busy town. Some close devotees built 'Kailas Nivas' and requested him to move there. Then it became easier for

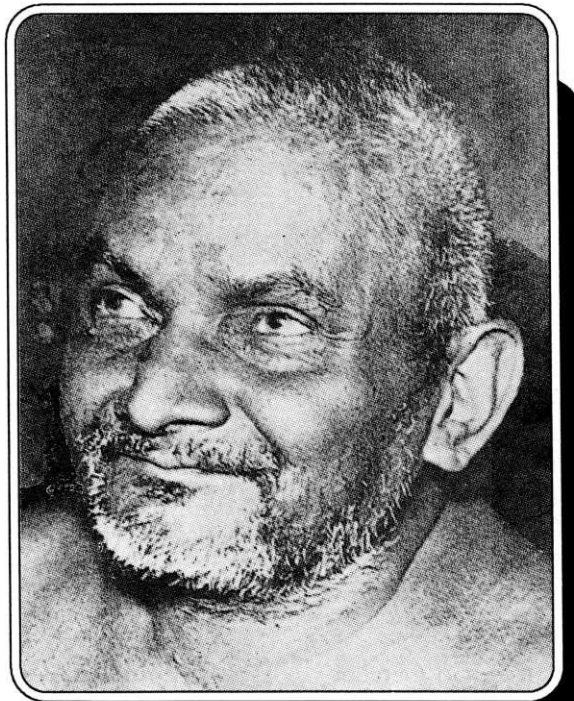
visitors, regular devotees and earnest spiritual aspirants to have his *darshan* and sit for *satsang*. Today, by Sri Gurudev's grace, all modern facilities are available in Ganeshpuri.

Sri Gurudev had a pure complexion and the radiance of a dark jewel (*Krishnamani*). His face had a divine charm. A stream of pure love flowed from his bright eyes. His ears were shaped like conches. He was generally seated in a spacious armchair in a state of complete detachment, with a gently smiling face — a sight which, once seen, indelibly impressed itself in the visitor's mind. As a result, one did not have to make an effort to remember him.

Swami Nityananda was literally ever-blissful, his face always adorned with a beatific expression. He was a perfect renunciate, free from desire, Self-satiated, experiencing the fullness of his soul in every moment. His occasional loud laughter still rings in the ears of those who were privileged to hear it. He took his bath before dawn and ate very little. All three seasons are rather extreme in Ganeshpuri: the summer is very hot, the monsoon very wet, and the winter very cold. Even so, Gurudev used to live in the same way throughout the year.

Sri Gurudev preferred to remain silent, observing silence (*mauna*) for long periods. This had a more powerful impact than words and whoever sat with him experienced great peace and stillness of mind. However, if someone asked him a question, he would expound the most abstruse philosophy in a few simple words that went home. He had a good working knowledge of Hindi, Marathi, Kannada, Telugu, Tamil, Malayalam and English, even throwing in an occasional Sanskrit quotation in the course of his conversation. He would recommend different paths to different seekers according to their capacities.

He used to sit calm and silent in his room and everyone sat quietly in his presence. A picture of perfect peace, he was wide awake during the day and never slept at night. No one ever saw him sleep. At times, I stayed with him for several days, but I never saw him asleep.



Sri Gurudev was one with God. To be in his presence was to be directly aware of God. Anyone who had his *darshan* once, felt that he belonged to him. All the cares and miseries of the world vanished at his sight. In his presence, all doubts were resolved, all knots untied, and a deep-seated sense of satisfaction and equanimity settled on aspirants.

Devotees lovingly addressed him as 'Baba' and they never tired of standing in interminable queues for hours — in sun or rain — for the privilege of having his *darshan*. Even after waiting for hours, if they just had a glimpse of him, or if he happened to cast a mere glance at them, they would feel blessed. Whoever saw him had the feeling that Baba was his and that he knew all his difficulties. Suffering and affliction vanished through love and reverence for Sri Gurudev.

Those who had questions were rendered mute in Gurudev's august presence. Sometimes the question was answered even before it was asked, through a symbolic gesture or a cryptic word. Mostly he preferred to communicate with his eyes. At times, however, he made loving inquiries after the devotees' comforts. Gurudev occa-

sionally gave sweets or fruits to the devotees, who felt blessed by receiving his *prasad*.

Sri Gurudev had immense love for children. "Children are almost free from attachment and aversion," he used to say. "A child is a reflection of God." He always rejoiced in giving them sweets, biscuits, clothes and other gifts. Almost all the children of the neighbourhood used to hover around him and the place was full of their noises throughout the day. About 1,000 to 1,500 children had their morning meal in the Bal Bhojanshala every day, a free service which continues to this day. Periodically, clothes were also distributed among them. Similarly, *sadhus*, *sannyasins*, ascetics, monks and mendicants were always treated as guests and served with food. "Consider food as the Supreme Lord," was Sri Gurudev's injunction.

Devotees came with various gifts for Gurudev, and thus there were heaps of offerings around him; sweets, fruits, biscuits and other edibles; bales of dhotis and saris, caps, shorts, shirts; slates, pens and books for children; umbrellas, blankets, and a thousand other articles. All these offerings were arranged in piles. It looked as if a small market had come up all of a sudden.

These things were of no use to Gurudev. He was content with his loincloth and a blanket. The gifts were distributed among the needy according to his wishes.

The audience hall was always packed with devotees. Someone would ask for knowledge, another for wealth, a third for a house, and a fourth for a job. Women would ask for his blessings for a child, or son. Gurudev would say "Yes" to all of them. "Have faith and everything will be granted unto you," he would add. On one occasion he said: "There is no greater God than faith."

It is hard to attain inner Self-awareness without the help of a Guru. A perfect Guru is able to bestow the blessing of divine life on a human being. Thus, it is not a matter of surprise that one attains Self-realisation in the divine company of a Self-realised Guru. God himself appears in the form of a *siddha* to raise man to the blissful *turiya* state. Swami Nityananda was such a Guru. He was a great *yogi*. He was perfect. He was capable of granting whatever his devotees desired.

Sri Gurudev would instantly awaken the inner *shakti* of any sincere seeker who remembered him with a heart full of faith and love. He would then transmit an inner state like his own. Thus Gurudev Nityananda, great saint that he was, by transmitting his *Atma-shakti* (Self-power) into the disciples, made them like his own Self.

Sri Gurudev had started preparing for the final journey two months earlier. He practically stopped eating. He just drank water or occasionally ate a little fruit. His body became very thin. Even the imploring of his closest devotees could not persuade him to take any food. They sent for doctors to examine him, but he was completely absorbed in himself. He was not interested in doctors or drugs. He did not wish to keep the body any longer and no one could compel him to do so.

No one had imagined that Gurudev Nityananda's physical life would come to an end so soon. On *Guru Purnima* day, he remained

Says Swami Nityananda

A person remains ordinary as long as he is led by the mind; but freed from the mind, he becomes a great saint.

* * *

What is the use of many words? Meditate. You will get everything through meditation.

* * *

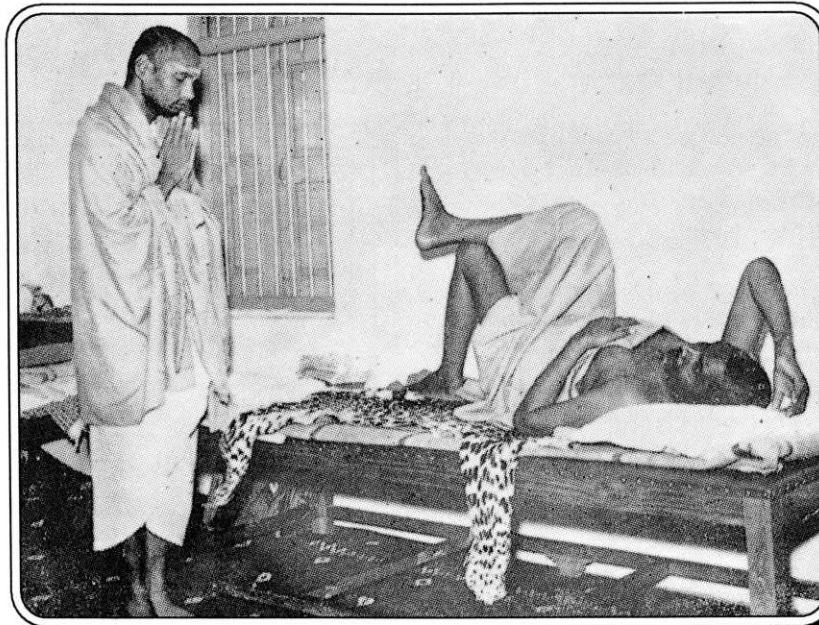
Acquire knowledge. And what is knowledge? For the *Jivatman* to know the mystery of *Paramatman*. The *Paramatman* is within the *Jivatman*. To perceive the subtle within the gross is the real liberation.

* * *

A big drama is first rehearsed behind the curtain and then shown to the public. Similarly, *yoga-sadhana* is practised in secret and as it gets established it reveals itself. One does not get the experience at the very beginning of a practice. It comes by and by as the practice progresses.

* * *

There is fear when you walk in the dark, but not so in the light. The dark is ignorance. Knowledge is light. The Guru is light. The light is the Guru.



Swami Mukthananda at the feet of Sadguru

lying down while devotees paid their respects. Twelve days later, on August 8, 1961, he passed away.

A few loving devotees were present. Till the end, Sri Gurudev looked the same as before. He had the same radiance, calmness and serenity. There was no sign of change or deterioration. Gurudev sent for coffee to be distributed as *prasad* to all present. A few moments before the end, Sri Gurudev's hands and feet became straight. For some years the joints of his hands and feet had been stiff owing to rheumatism. They now became absolutely free. The destined suffering had come to an end. I rubbed his feet. Suddenly the feet became lifeless. The time for departure had come. Gurudev's breath was ebbing. His *prana* was rising upwards. I grasped his hands.

His body acquired the same *shambhavi mudra* in which he used to look at us during the early days. It was a thrill to see him like that. He cast a look, full of compassion, at the loving devotees all around, and then his eyes turned upwards. The *sushumna* nerve throbbled in the middle of his eyebrows. A melodious sound of *Om* was heard and his life-breath merged in the cosmos. I cried out, "Gurudev!" and my head bowed down on his breast.

I got up. Those present took some time to realise what had happened. Before their very eyes Sri Gurudev had passed away. His body lay still and resplendent. His departure deprived the world of the physical presence of a great saint who had risen to the divine. He was a visible form of the invisible God.

It was a serene, beautiful morning when Sri Gurudev merged into the inner Self. His body was placed in the lotus posture, on the same easy chair in which he generally used to sit. It was decided to keep it there for forty-eight hours to enable the devotees to pay homage. In his usual pose, Gurudev's face was lit with the same divine smile as was seen during his life. His body did not look shrunken, nor did its glow diminish. That body, pure and flawless through yoga, underwent no change or decay at all. Many felt that it was still alive. Struck by its radiance and natural glow, an eminent Ayurvedic physician felt doubtful about its state and asked me if he could feel the pulse. However, what was to happen had already happened.

Sri Gurudev is here. He is still as he was. He was perfect and will ever remain perfect. He has not left us. Gurudev himself makes us experience this. In spite of his physical departure, his presence is as real as before.

Swami Nityananda's original hut in Ganeshpuri — 'Vaikunth' — is now his majestic *samadhi* shrine. Here devotees offer worship and prayer three times a day. Some meditate on the Guru, others sing devotional songs according to their faith. Sri Gurudev's influence is permanent. It is not limited by space or time. In fact, it is now active with even more vigour.

Much larger numbers come to Ganeshpuri now than ever before. Surrounded by great natu-

ral beauty, Ganeshpuri looks like heaven on earth. Here the harmonious blend of nature and divinity flows perpetually. Seekers will not come across another place like this. Here they will surely find what they are looking for.

Adapted from *Bhagawan Nityananda: His Life And Mission*, by Swami Muktananda Paramahansa; translated from the original Hindi; pub. Gurudev Siddha Peeth, Ganeshpuri, Maharashtra. 2nd edition, 1974.

Says Swami Nityananda

Peace is difficult to attain for those whose mind is centred on the body. It is very difficult for them to see the glory of the *Atman*. Attention should lessen on what is seen; interest must grow in what is unseen. In the seen, both pleasure and pain are perceived; but in the unseen, neither.

* * *

Bhakti is love. To give up duality and look on all with equality, that is *bhakti*.

* * *

The body is a cave. In the cave dwells the *Atman*. This dwelling shall lead to fulfilment.

Do not eat what is served for some else. Serve yourself on another plate.

* * *

Ekadasi is the adoration of the One. There are men who observe *ekadasi* every day. Spend an hour in higher thought; not more than a moment in the gross.

* * *

He is the real Guru who gives up the body-sense as sapless. There is none superior to the Guru, no good higher than the Guru. The Guru is God. God is the Guru.



Sri Swami Siddheswarananda, a direct disciple of Swami Brahmananda, studied Vedanta deeply, turning inward in search of the Truth. A serious *mumukshu* (seeker), he was inevitably drawn, like an iron filing to a magnet, to Bhagavan Ramana in the 1930s.

T.K. Sundaresa Iyer has recorded that "Sri Bhagavan gave Swamiji a dish cooked with His own hand" — an illustration of the special grace that Sri Maharshi showered on Swamiji. Ramana-*bhaktas* well know how rare this was.

Swami Siddheswarananda was instrumental in bringing many Ramakrishna Mission *sannyasins* to the presence of Sri Maharshi.

— Editor

Swami Siddheswarananda

"I am not a guru; we are all gurubais"

THIS bright light of the Ramakrishna Order of *sannyasins*, who did so much to spread the philosophy of Vedanta in France, was born into an aristocratic family in the state of Cochin on October 29, 1897. He was given an English-based education and eventually sent to study history at the University of Madras. While there, in 1916, he came under the influence of Swami Brahmananda, Sri Ramakrishna's spiritual son, and received initiation from him. In 1925 he was given the name Siddheswarananda and was accepted into the monastic order of Ramakrishna. His spiritual and administrative capacities already being much trusted, he was sent immediately to Mysore to start an ashram there. He pursued the *karma yoga* of running the ashram side-by-side with a deep study of Vedanta. This study, far from theoretical, eventually led him to seek out Sri Bhagavan. When, in 1933, the Mysore ashram was well established, he returned to Madras where, for the next two years, he was in charge of the Mylapore Math. Being now so close to the Maharshi, he seized every possible opportunity to have His *darshan* and have all his doubts cleared.

His first *darshan* occurred in 1933. Sri Kunju Swami, who was a witness to this great moment in the Swami's life, recalls the occasion vividly:

"Swami Siddheswarananda was well built and of robust appearance, with cheerful countenance displaying both his noble background and great learnedness.

"He entered Bhagavan's Old Hall and prostrated before the Maharshi. Standing up and gazing at the figure of Sri Bhagavan, the Swami began weeping in ecstasy. Bhagavan gazed at

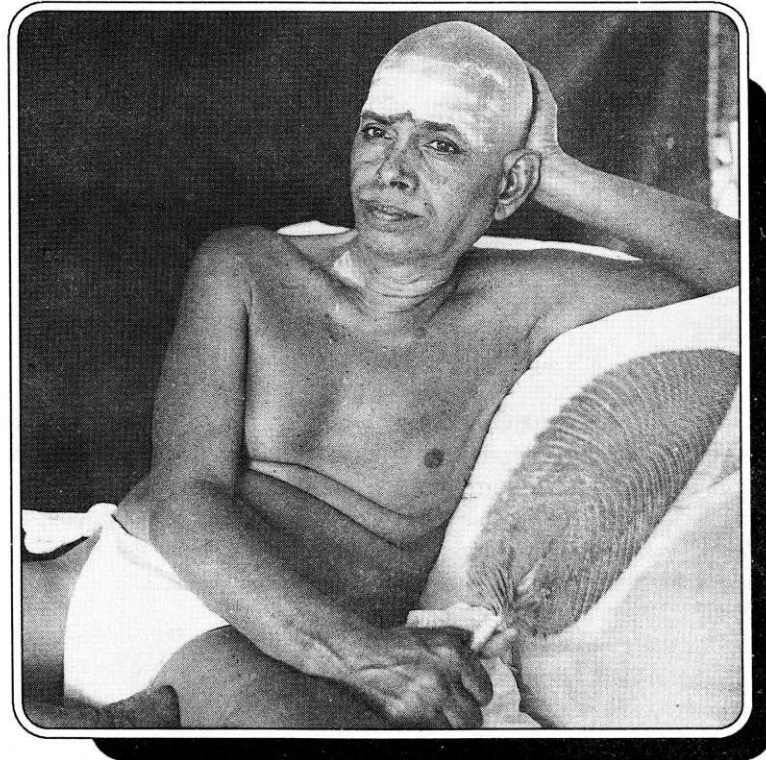
him with His sublime look of all-pervasive Silence. The Swami later told me that at that moment he was totally caught up and merged in Sri Bhagavan, experiencing for the first time the purport of '*Tat tuam asi*' — 'That thou art' — of the *sastras*.

"He also said: 'I have always had a great feeling of sorrow that I was not born in the days of my Gurudev Sri Ramakrishna, and have been praying to Him intensely not only for a *darshan* of His form, but also realisation of the *Upanishadic* truth. That prayer has been fulfilled today in the *darshan* of Sri Bhagavan and the experience of the Self which Bhagavan blessed me with. I have found Sri Ramakrishna in Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi. Therefore I say that Bhagavan blessed me with steadfast abidance in the Self.'"

From then on Swamiji knew that he had found the *Sadguru* in Sri Bhagavan and always encouraged earnest seekers, both within the Ramakrishna Order and outside it, to go to the Maharshi to bask in His presence and have their doubts replaced by certainties.

"A man like the Maharshi," he would say, "who has transcended the ego, is considered by the *Upanishads* to be the Self of all. If we could but spend some time by His side, we should then be able to understand better...that life of Illumination which, like the great fire which burns on the Hill Arunachala, is a veritable Lighthouse for those who wish to find in modern India the revivifying effects of the teachings of the *Upanishads*."

Having found in Sri Bhagavan the living embodiment of *atmajnana*, Swami



Siddheswarananda often referred to Him to illustrate the Truth expounded by the *Vedas* and *Upanishads*.

“Whoever has occasion to examine the Maharshi at first-hand knows full well that...he is the most normal man that one could ever find. He is...a *sthitaprajna*, a man whose intelligence is solidly founded. I have seen Him apparently plunged in Himself, when everybody believed Him to be absorbed in His own Self, but when at this moment old Tennamma at the back of the Hall made a mistake in the recitation of certain Tamil verses, the Maharshi opened His eyes, corrected the mistake, then again closed His eyes.... One cannot say that the so-called exterior world does not interest Him. He perpetually rests in the fulness of *jnana* — *sahajasthiti*, as He calls it — neither introverted nor extroverted. He simply IS. And by His knowledge of the ultimate Reality, He is one with That in its expression of multiplicity of manifestation. He is one with the Universe as a whole.

“When I saw Him, I found Him the perfect example of the description of a *jivanmukta*

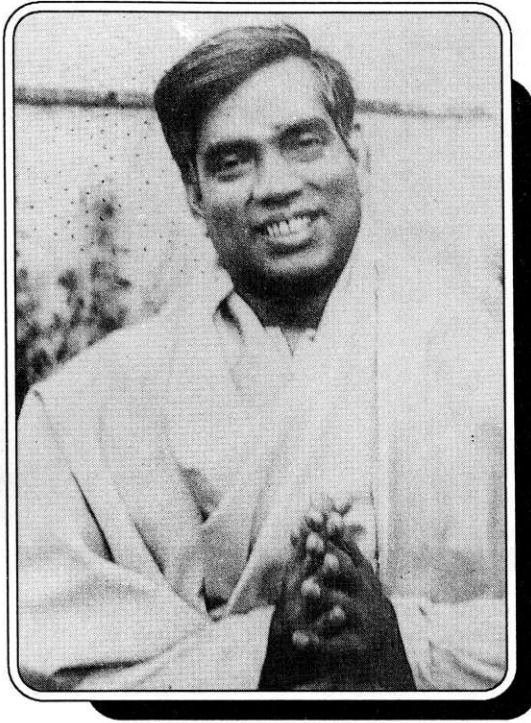
which Sri Sankaracharya gives in his *Vivekachudamani*:

“ ‘He who, even when his mind is merged in *Brahman*, is nevertheless entirely awake, but at the same time free from the characteristics of the waking state, and whose realisation is free from all desire, is verily a *jivanmukta* [one liberated while still alive].’ ”

Swami Siddheswarananda paid a number of visits to the Maharshi between 1933 and 1936, the year he was selected to go to France to start an ashram there. His own visits to Sri Bhagavan paved the way for other devotees of Sri Ramakrishna to experience the embodiment of their ideal in the Maharshi. They came in groups or alone, with the Swami or at his behest. Some he even directed to remain with the Maharshi, so thoroughly did he accept Sri Bhagavan’s spiritual eminence.

Swami vividly describes one of his last visits to the Maharshi in his introduction to the French translation of the *Mandukya Upanishad*:

“In 1936 we undertook a pilgrimage to



Swami Siddheswarananda

Tiruvannamalai for the sole purpose of consulting Sri Ramana Maharshi on the subject of the illustration of the cow and the coin in Adi Sankara's commentary on the second *mantra* of the *Mandukya Upanishad*. [In it] Sankara furnishes us with the key to the whole *Upanishad*. This *mantra* contains one of the great *mahavakyas*, "*ayam atma brahma*" — "that *atman* is *Brahman*". Sankara uses the illustration of the cow and the coin to explain the illusoriness of the three states of waking, dream, and deep sleep, which are as imaginary as the division of space into parts.

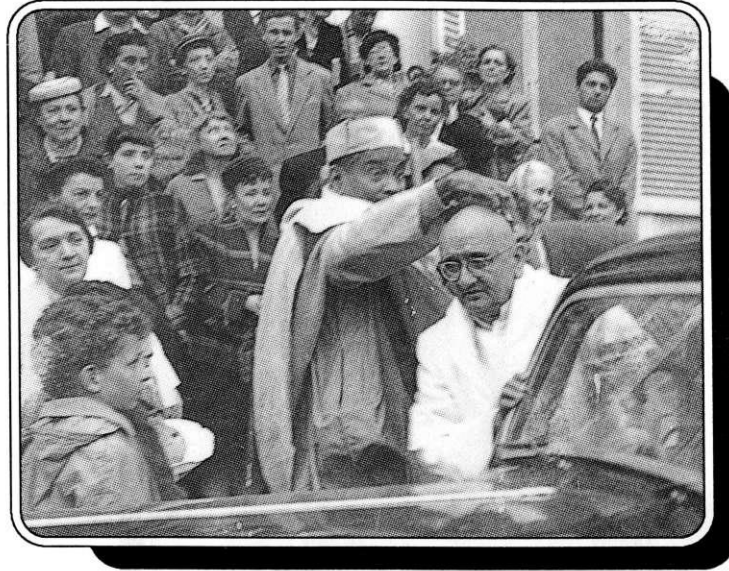
"Reality, says Sankara, is not like the four legs of a cow [joined together at the torso], but rather like a square coin divided into four parts, of which one quarter melts into a half, the half into three quarters, and the three quarters into the whole coin. The whole, the number 'one', is indivisible and constantly present. It cannot be eliminated, and yet its image is ungraspable. The idea of fragmenting 'one' is purely imaginary, corresponding to nothing in reality. In melting the quarter into a half, the half into three quarters, and three quarters into the totality, the ONE has never been suppressed. That is the mathematical meaning of the *Upanishadic mantram*:

'Purnam adah purnam idam udacate. Purnasya purnam adaya purnam evavashsyate' — 'That [*Brahman*] is infinite. This [the universe] is infinite. The infinite proceeds from the Infinite. Take away the Infinite from the Infinite, there remains still the Infinite and nothing else but the Infinite.'

"In replying to our question about this point, Sri Bhagavan said, 'According to the enumeration, four follows three'.

"When we objected that after three comes not only four but all the following numbers, He explained: 'If we consider the totality of our experiences, we can classify them into only three categories: the waking state (corresponding to figure one, the dream state, two, and the state of deep sleep, three. Moreover, since the mind, working under a system of causality, makes the enumeration, we must inevitably add a transcendent state, which we call the fourth [*turiya*]. All further enumeration cannot represent anything other than the transcendent. They can thus be all brought under the same category. This process will spare us the burden of an indefinite enumeration.'

"This explanation appeared very original to



Swami Siddheswarananda welcoming Swami Ramdas in front of Sri Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre, Gretz, France, during the latter's world tour in 1954

us. The Maharshi then added, 'When, thanks to realisation, knowledge of causality is obtained, the mind no longer pursues enumerations because we know that the mind itself is *Brahman*. That realisation beyond all causal seeking is *turiya*. From this point of view, *turiya* is not a transcendent state but rather the equivalent of Reality.'

"Through Maharshi's explanation, we understood that Reality is not made up of stages and cannot be fragmented. The realisation of Reality is the experience of *turiya*, the 'one' or whole coin referred to in the coin analogy. This further enabled us properly to understand time (that is, not as a division into past, present, future, and transcendent), and all other mind-created divisions, as superimpositions by the mind upon the one *turiya*."

One of the things about Sri Bhagavan that particularly engaged Swami Siddheswarananda was the play of *jnana* and *bhakti* in Him. Whereas Sri Ramakrishna was, as Swami Vivekananda had said, "a *bhakta* on the outside and a *jnani* on the inside," in Sri Bhagavan it was entirely different.

"One does not find in Maharshi that type of *bhakti* associated with devotional forms; but it can be said that if the way of *bhakti* brings one to an expression of bounty and love towards all,

He is that. His very nature is imbued with *prema*, divine love. I should not omit here to mention a scene that I myself witnessed. At my request, He recited certain lines from the composition of Saint Manikkavachakar, where the poet speaks of the condition of the soul melted in love. Hardly had the Maharshi pronounced a few lines when there was a brilliance in His face. He who rarely expresses in any outward form His inner emotion could not restrain a few silent tears. A slanting ray of the morning sun from the hillside made the scene still more vivid. A peace that passeth all understanding pervaded the whole atmosphere. For more than an hour there was perfect silence. It looked as if one of the fresco paintings of Ajanta had come to life!"

Swami Siddheswarananda was extremely influenced by Maharshi's famous "Death Experience" and how a single one-pointed enquiry had brought Him permanent Self-realisation.

"Maharshi told me that what He realised on the first day when He made the maiden *vichara*, has ever remained with Him. It has neither increased nor decreased. When I asked Him why He came all the way to Tiruvannamalai, and why He underwent so many hardships which we would characterise as *sadhana*, He only waved His hand, implying, 'I do not know why all that happened'. Our inquiring minds want explana-

tions and are easily satisfied with some such fiction as destiny or *prarabdha*, which do not exist for the *jnani*. For it is said that the *karmas* of a person who realises *Brahmajnana* are all dissolved at one stroke. From the point of view of Maharshi it must be so.

"To us who follow Vedanta, the highest aspect of Maharshi's realisation is revealed in His great message of Silence. It is not that He remains without speaking a word, as He did for some years. He is now more communicative. But with regard to the things in life, His attitude is best described in the words of *Gita*: 'When thy *buddhi* crosses beyond the taint of illusion, then shalt thou attain to indifference regarding things heard and things worthy to be heard.' The Maharshi is 'one who is satisfied in the Self by the Self'. (II:52)

"We find in the life and realisation of the Maharshi the fullest confirmation of the fact that the Truth Eternal is an attainable reality, and it is none other than the Self, the core of one's own being. Maharshi declares that realisation is not only possible, but is the easiest thing to achieve, provided one has the right understanding and the true spirit of dedication."

Swami had expressed his doubt about the easiness of realisation, citing the verse in the *Gita* which says "Even a wise man acts in accordance with his own nature; beings follow nature; what can restraint do?" Maharshi clarified this apparently disheartening verse by making a distinction between knowledge and *Jnana*. Bare knowledge, He said, is an intellectual attainment and will not change character or give realisation. It may give a lot of information, but will not bring about any transformation, which is the automatic result of a properly conducted *vichara*. Without proper enquiry, if one dares to confront nature, only suppressing all the animal appetites that flesh is heir to, the result will be catastrophic for the *sadhak*. Self-enquiry, Maharshi reiterated, is the only direct method: bypassing any need for restraint, it is both the path and the ultimate goal.

Swami Siddheswarananda arrived in France on August 1, 1937. He lectured and taught throughout the south of France, even during the war years. In 1948, a large house with ample grounds not far from Paris was given to him by a devotee, and an ashram was established under the name "Centre Védantique Ramakrishna". Although far away in miles from the Maharshi, Swami continued to spread His teaching in France, sending students to Him, and keeping in touch with His ashram after Bhagavan's *mahasamadhi*. Swami contributed articles on Sri Bhagavan and His teachings to various French journals as well as Ramanasramam publications such as the *Golden Jubilee Souvenir*.

The hardships Swami endured during the war years, together with increasing demands upon him afterwards, told on his health. On April 2, 1957, he suffered a massive heart attack and was absorbed into the Lotus Feet of the One Master.

Swami's great humility was one of his most endearing traits. A disciple whom he himself directed to Tiruvannamalai recalls that he would never allow himself to be regarded as a Guru. "We are all *gurubais*," he would say — *gurubais* of the one *satchitananda*, the Guru of all.

In that connection, he never withheld his great regard for Sri Bhagavan, *Sadguru* incarnate, to whom he continued to direct his *gurubais* till the very last.

"According to Sankara in his *Nirvanashtakam*," Swami wrote, "only a *jnani* of the eminence of Sri Bhagavan can say,

'I have no death nor fear, no distinction of rank or class.

I have no father, no mother, no friend, no master or disciple.

I am absolute knowledge and bliss,

The all-pervading Self.

Sivananda svarupa, Sivaoham, Sivoham!' "



Here is an outstanding example of a keen intellect instantly melting into a fully blossomed *bhakta*, the acme of the dawning of Guru's grace — Prof. Nixon turning into 'Krishnaprem' (Lover of Krishna) in the presence of his Guru, Yashoda Ma.

When he basked in the presence of Sri Bhagavan, in the 1940s, Sri Maharshi wanted to see the image of Bala Krishna that Krishnaprem was hugging all the time to his bosom. Perhaps, the only instance when Sri Bhagavan sought to hold an idol in his hands. Later, after Krishnaprem had left the Ashram, Bhagavan said: "A fully ripened *bhaktikkani* (fruit of devotion)."

After the *mahasamadhi* of Sri Bhagavan, Krishnaprem remarked, showing a photo of himself with the Maharshi: "Look at me. I look like a clown, with all the dress, beads and make-up. And, look at Him. He is only in his loincloth Lo! He stands as the Emperor of the entire universe!"

— Editor

Krishnaprem: Beloved of Krishna

By Dr. Sarada

KRISHNAPREM and Jashoda Ghosh climbed into a railway carriage. Ghosh had come to see him off at the station. As they conversed, the English lady on the opposite berth surmised that Krishnaprem was of English origin. She exploded with rage, calling him a renegade, a superstitious fool and a deserter from the true faith. After much raving and ranting, during which time Krishnaprem merely heightened her chagrin with his amused smile, she hurled her final weapon: "What have you gained after throwing away everything — your culture, religion and country?"

Krishnaprem produced an image of Krishna which he always carried with him and worshipped daily. With a smile brimming with love, he told the lady: "I have got Him, madam, my Krishna."

Did he get Krishna or did Krishna transform Professor Nixon into Krishnaprem and entrap him forever? True, Professor Ronald Nixon was tired with the life that he knew. Himself a pilot in the First World War, he had witnessed the worst of human degeneration. He searched for an answer, a solution to the human predicament in India, and she gave it to him.

Professor Nixon's life was miraculously saved even before he had dreamt of Krishna. One day during the war, while on a reconnaissance, he wanted to turn right towards a number of planes he had spotted. But some great force which could not be resisted made him turn left instead and return to base. There he learned that the planes which he had planned to join actually belonged to the enemy, who had launched a surprise attack.

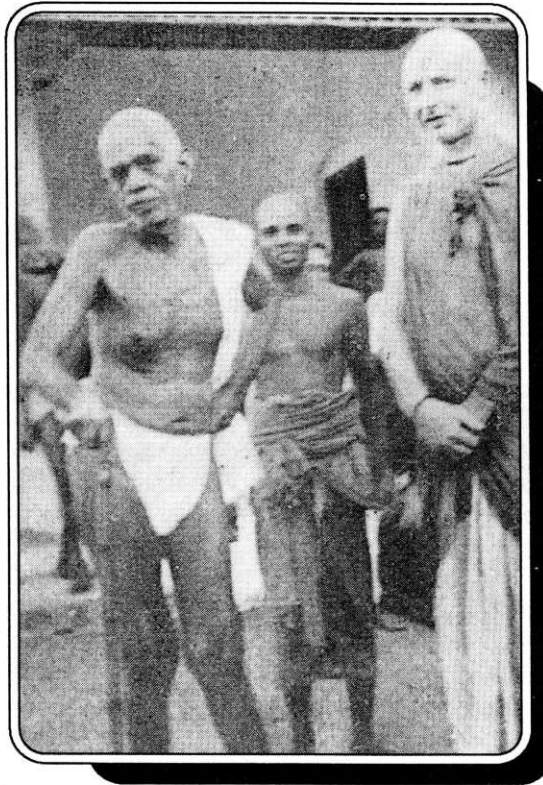
The same force which saved him then must have drawn him to Lucknow, to teach at the University and be a guest in the home of the Vice-Chancellor. There his Guru awaited him. That she recognised Krishnaprem in Professor Nixon may not be a matter of surprise. That Professor Nixon discovered Yashoda Ma in Monika Devi, the vice-chancellor's wife, whom all friends and acquaintances considered merely a successful socialite, did come as a surprise.

It took Dilip Kumar Roy a year of staying with them to observe the spiritual depth in his hostess. The relationship between his friend Nixon and Monika Devi was something special. She greeted him as her Gopal, even as Yashoda would tenderly call Krishna, and he responded with the adoration offered to one's Guru.

Dilip did not know that she was already Krishnaprem's Guru when he confided in him: "I remarked to Krishnaprem about her being two personalities. When I see her in a social mood, I do indeed admire her native talent to make a party go, but then as soon as I sing a song on Krishna before her — well, doesn't she look completely transfigured in her ecstatic tears? I cannot help feeling that she is a denizen of the deep, citizen of an utterly different world, if you know what I mean."

Krishnaprem's answer was, "I do, Dilip".

Was "getting Krishna" an escape from the growing problems of a war-torn world into an idyllic mountain hermitage? No. Choosing Krishna was by no means the easy choice as many might have believed. For one thing, writes a friend, life at Uttar Brindavan, the ashram at



Sri Krishnaprem with Sri Bhagavan

Mirtola where Krishnaprem lived with his Guru Yashoda Ma and a few other devotees, was certainly not one of comfort and leisure.

Of the many attracted to this ashram, "a few also arrived with a romantic notion of joining 'an ashram in the remote Himalayas,' primarily to escape disagreeable responsibilities nearer home. The unfit, fortunately, have always quickly weeded themselves out. Sleeping on the floor, a breakfast consisting of only a glass of cold water and lump of *gur*, only one solid meal in the day, the *prasad* at noon, do not seem so romantic after all."

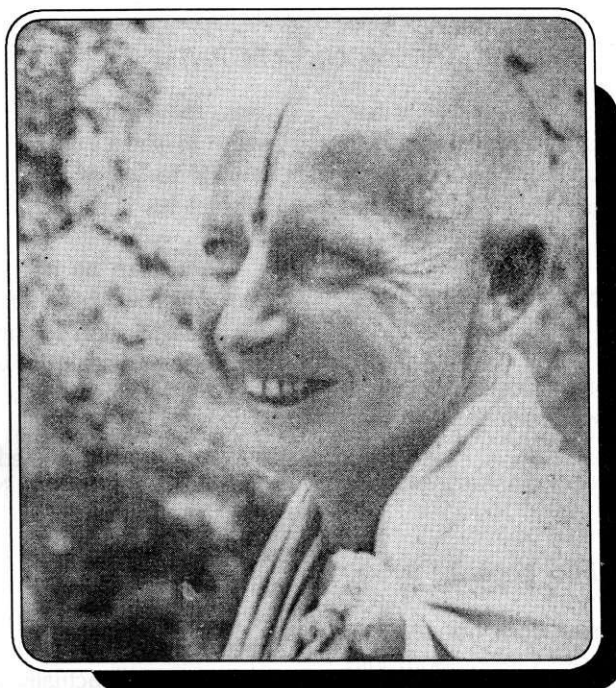
Every ashramite had his share of work: cooking for the *bhog* that was offered to the Lord, and for the inmates and visitors; tending the garden and helping in the fields; or running the dispensary and school for the villagers who lived around the ashram. Neither was the work looked upon as a burden nor something that disturbed their spiritual pursuit. Quite the contrary. Work was accepted as Krishna's gift, just as every aspect of life was accepted.

In another letter to Dilip Kumar Roy we have Krishnaprem's criticism of those who brand *sadhaks* as selfish. Detractors often claim that spiritual people are only seeking a personal bliss, moving away from filial ties and shirking social responsibilities. Wouldn't it be far more noble, they argue, if the persons were to devote themselves to serving humanity?

Krishnaprem's riposte:

"No one who hasn't experienced for himself at least something of the nature and joys of the spiritual life can have any valid opinion on the subject. And then there is all the stale nonsense about seeking a purely selfish bliss etc. Such people know nothing about it and it is a sheer waste of time to argue with them, beyond throwing them the statement that where there is a self there is no Krishna, and where Krishna is there can be no self."

To lose the self and find Krishna was Krishnaprem's *sadhana*. When he wrote of throwing such statements to non-believers, he



also lived by those words. Thus his acceptance of great physical suffering and bodily decay: “*Thakur* [Krishna] has two strings to pull, an up-string and a down-string. Today he is pulling the down-string.” Or, very softly: “It is all right. Everything is all right.”

If there was anything that meant more to Krishnaprem than loving Krishna, it was devotion to the Guru. To him, Yashoda Ma was no different from Krishna, a fact which often surprised Dilip Kumar Roy. Roy found it difficult to believe that one could identify the Guru with the *Ishta*, yet there was no difference for Krishnaprem, as is evident in his letter to Dilip.

“I will tell you what is written in burning letters of fire in my heart that carry their own guarantee of truth. Krishna and the Guru are one. If I leave Him, Krishna may leave me, but my Guru will never leave me. I may fall from the path, return to the fleshpots. I may blaspheme and die cursing God and men. All those and more I may do, but she will never leave my side nor cease to guide my steps until I stand in that eternal *vraja* where she stands now. God-forsaken and man-forsaken I may be, but Guru-forsaken—never.”

He exhorted Dilip time and again to have full faith in his Guru, to serve the Guru in every possible manner. Each time Krishnaprem made any suggestions about the spiritual life to Dilip Kumar Roy, he asked him to obtain his Guru’s approval. As for himself, his surrender to Yashoda Ma was complete from the moment he accepted her as his Guru. She herself said:

“When Gopal first wanted to accept me as his Guru I told him: ‘I can accept you only if you promise me that even if you don’t have any more spiritual experiences for the rest of your life, you won’t give up.’

“I knew, of course, that there was no chance of risk or failure if he gave the pledge. I only wanted him to bear in mind that there must be no half-hearted acceptance, no conditions, no bargaining that he must have this or that. He gave me the pledge and accepted me *in toto* as a baby accepts its mother in spontaneous trust.”

Ma went on to explain that when his foot had to be amputated due to an uncontrollable infection, Krishnaprem accepted her remedy of taking only water touched by her feet and eschew-

ing all medicines. The fact that he was cured, she pointed out, indicated his absolute faith in her and "he could not have had this faith in my word had I been to him only a mother and nothing else".

Yet, when Dilip Kumar Roy envied his *Guru-bhakti*, Krishnaprem was quick to demur.

"My dear Dilip, it is not so easy as all that. It is true, one can rise to sudden heights in moments of insight or *bhakti*. But it is far from easy to stay on there, defying the earth's down-pull."

In his book *Initiation Into Yoga*, he wrote:

"The finest timber comes from the slowest-growing trees. He who expects to blossom into a yogi in a few months or even in a few years of practice is bound to be disappointed and had better leave the whole subject alone. He, however, who has the sincerity and courage to face whatever is in him, and the persistence to go on with his struggle in the face of obstacles within and without, and the humility to recognise that all that he has done is to take the first few steps on a tremendous journey, is certain to achieve something which he would not give away in exchange even for the whole world."

These are heartening words for those who despair of ever reaching the goal while others seem to bask in the glorious experience of truth. There is a poignant note (to Govindagopal) in this context where Krishnaprem confessed his desire to melt with love in devotional song:

"I wish I had the gifts of Dilip. I would use them to lose myself. But then perhaps I should not. He seems to envy those of others. We are all fools." Roy seemed to possess the gift, yet he wished for Krishnaprem's *Guru-bhakti*.

Perhaps it was his own inner turmoil on the chosen path which made Krishnaprem so gentle with fellow travellers, ever sharing their problems and always giving encouragement and much needed support. The choice itself was

clear: there could be no other way of life. As he wrote in yet another letter, exhorting Dilip not to yield to forces within himself that seemed to tell him his spiritual pursuit was in vain:

"There can be no going back for us, Dilip. That which we have left behind us perished and it is sheer illusion to think we can recover it. It has gone and whether we like it or not, in sorrow or in joy, we must go ever on."

When someone asked Krishnaprem about the whereabouts of Ronald Nixon, he answered with the same certainty: "He died long ago." There were certainly moments of joy and even ecstasy in his new 'birth', moments of fulfilment when he lovingly prepared *bhog* to offer Krishna, and leaving the offering in the closed shrine returned to find it had actually been partaken of! Moments of serving his Guru-mother, Yashoda Ma, and witnessing her glorious experiences. Moments of joyous song and shared devotion with fellow devotees and dear friends.

There was also sorrow. The physical separation from his Guru after her passing. "I know she is ever with us and even nearer than before, but yet the physical loss is more than I can write of," he noted.

And doubts and uncertainties:

"At one time everything seemed to get clearer day by day and I felt I understood things I had not understood before, but now there seems to be a change. In that light there appears a darkness which gets blacker and blacker as the light gets brighter, so that the more I see the less I understand. Men have described a hundred paths but none of them seems to be the true path.

"The true path is through the sky and so has no landmarks and no description. All described paths are but tracing on the earth the shadow of one who has gone in the sky. No one can follow him by following them. But how to grow wings and fly? Is it perhaps that wings begin to sprout when all else is despaired of?"

"There is something in us that says 'trust and leap'. I think we shall not regret it if we follow. I have seen it a hundred times and yet I think I fear. A curse on all our knowledge. It makes it so much harder to unknow."

Perhaps this inner questioning led Krishnaprem to ask Ramana Maharshi: "*Sarvam Vasudevamayam jagat* — everything is pervaded by Lord Vasudeva. Is this not the highest ideal?"

Bhagavan nodded his head in agreement and said: "Yes, yes! It is an exalted state of consciousness." Then Bhagavan gently added:

"Yet, who is it that thinks 'all that is perceived is Vasudeva'? Is it not you, yourself? Do any of the things perceived come forward announcing themselves as Vasudeva? While seeing the earth, trees and plants as Vasudeva, don't you wish to see yourself as Him? If you who sees everything learn to see yourself as Vasudeva, you will become Vasudeva Himself. After that there will be no need to specially perceive each and every thing as His form. If he who sees is transformed into Vasudeva, then that which is seen automatically becomes Vasudeva."

Krishnaprem came to Ramana with an open heart, not with the inhibitions with which a 'bhakta' would come to see a "dry jnani", as Dilip Kumar Roy confessed. Krishnaprem came with "profound admiration and veneration" to Sri Ramana's presence.

No sooner did he sit there to meditate than he was pestered by an inner voice: "Who are you? Who are you? Who are you?" When he answered "Krishna's servant", the relentless question changed to: "Who is Krishna?" When at last he sought Radha's help, she 'revealed' the answer. What this answer was, he did not say. Yet the two questions seem to perfectly complement Bhagavan's answer to his query: "If you wish to see everything as Vasudeva, learn to see yourself as Vasudeva. You will become Vasudeva Himself."

Jiva Sambhudane

(sung in *Raga Hindola*)

by A.S. Venugopala Rao

"Waking up of the Soul"

translated by the author
from the Kannada original

**Do you know, dear Soul,
who it is that has come,
At whose knock your door
flew open?**

**He swept in a flash the
darkness away,
And spread the light
effulgent.**

**With compassion He
cleansed your eyes
And tenderly carressed your
cheek.**

**Then placed the sacred tilak
on your forehead,
As though you were a child
in His lap.**

**Do you know, dear Soul,
who it is that has come?
The debris of tendencies
accumulated from life to
life**

**Dissolved as if by magic.
At His entrance, all attach-
ments burst into flame
And burned till cold ashes
remained.**

**Do you know, dear Soul,
who it is that has come?
Who is this magician
Ramana**

**And what is His marvellous
magic?**

**He knocked at your door,
And through that sacred
touch,**

**He snatched your mind
away.**

The following day the experience was affirmed when Krishnaprem turned the question upon Ramana while meditating again before him: "And who are you, may I humbly ask?" He felt compelled to open his eyes and found Bhagavan's couch empty. Bhagavan had disappeared. He closed and re-opened his eyes and there he was again, "beneficent like Lord Shiva Himself" with a momentary smile flickering on his lips and a meaningful glance directed towards Krishnaprem before turning away.

It revealed to him that here was the "one beyond all *maya*, the star beyond the phantoms, the silence beyond the songs — you may make use of any simile you fancy," as he said to Dilip Kumar Roy. What he says in summary is typically Krishnaprem in its simplicity: "Personally, I look upon it as a sign of his grace."

Krishnaprem was not unaware of the unity of Vasudeva with the Self. He wrote to Dilip, answering his doubts about the authenticity of Krishna as a historical figure:

"Even if he did all that he is related to have done, it is not anyone or anything outside yourself that can give you the goal you desire. Nothing that is outside yourself can give you that which is within you, though things outside can and do synthesise the reality within. It is not any historical figure who can say as Krishna did: 'I will liberate you from all sins.' Nor as Christ said: 'No man cometh to the Father save through me.' Both these statements are true but we must know that the 'I' who is speaking is not any person however beautiful and lovable but the *Atman* itself, buried in the hearts of all beings. And that *Atman* is real and certain. It alone can be the basis of our lives."

He continued with powerful emphasis:

"Nowhere in all the world is there anything solid and real. We tread on thought, our bodies are made of thought, and the whole world is but thought. The 'solid' street you tread is but a

cobweb spun by the mind but you need not fear to fall, for your body which treads is but a similar cobweb. Alone the thinker of the thought is immortal. But that thinker is in you — rather, he is you. Could you but see yourself as in truth you are. Seek therefore the thinker in your heart, for only there will you find the Immortal One."

Krishnaprem's keen intellect also pre-empted Dilip's question: "What then is the need for a human figure?" A human symbol of that reality is essential, explained Krishnaprem, because only the great force of love can take one beyond the "dead centres" of ego to immortal shores. For most people, it is impossible to feel intense love except for a human figure.

"Christ, Buddha, Krishna are all the one *Atman* in your heart but, if they existed historically (as in point of fact I believe they did), they were, as historical figures, men in whom that *Atman* was able to manifest in its full power and beauty. Hence those characters and their actions have a power to symbolise that *Atman*."

Krishnaprem was a rare combination of *bhakti* and *jnana*. What stands out is that overwhelming love, that flood of *Krishna-bhakti* which drowned him, as it were. "Remember," he wrote to Govinda Gopal, "that nothing mechanical is of any use, since that which is mechanical is dead and this path is the path of life."

"It is a difficult, a heart-breaking path. None can tread it to the end who does not want it more than he wants any other thing. Be sure that you really do want it before you try to go further. Current sentimentalism about God and so forth is about as much use as a hedge of flowers when the sea wall is broken and the tide rushes in."

The tidal wave of Krishna sometimes frightened him too. Yet he finally took the leap into the ocean of nectar that is Krishna, and as he departed said: "The ship has set sail."

Letters to the Editor

Dear Ganesan,

I read with amusement Kitty Osborne's comments on the magazine becoming "a cross between a film magazine and a comic book."

What came to mind was Sri Ramana's perceptive comment about: whether it would be better for a person to attend an erudite lecture for an hour and come away unaffected or to visit a silent saint for an hour and leave with his life permanently uplifted?

This, I feel, is a clue to the direction that The Mountain Path is taking. Does it alter lives for the better? Unless people read the magazine, as I do now, rather than just flip through it, as I did before, they cannot possibly get the full benefit.

We must remember that our Master's teaching was very, very simple. So simple that it can be captured in a question: "Who am I?" Or a phrase: "Be still." Or a word: "Be." Or even a single photo or drawing.

Ramana did not simplify Vedanta and make it more accessible to appeal to the lowest common denominator. I feel that the less intimidating the presentation of Ramana's teachings become, the more accessible they are. So the magazine serves its central function when it makes itself more readable.

— A. Haji, Durham, USA

* * *

I write to say how shocked I am by the letter that criticises the journal.

I am a reader of The Mountain Path since 1967. I have kept all the issues since then, bound and at hand for 27 years, faithful companions of my sadhana. The magazine and other Ashram publications have been very important for me. Thanks to them, Ramanasramam is present in my day-to-day life, far in geographic terms but within my heart, my true family.

Since the beginning, The Mountain Path has kept to the right way, as opened up by Arthur Osborne. The quality of the text is the same and I think the quality of the printing, especially of the cover, has improved over the last few years. I much appreciate its variety and pictorial quality. Moreover, one can convey in a picture a power of symbolism that cannot be communicated by any writing. For instance, I keep permanently at hand your cover of October 1985. The Aradhana 1993 issue (Hill of Fire) was another cover of rich symbolism.

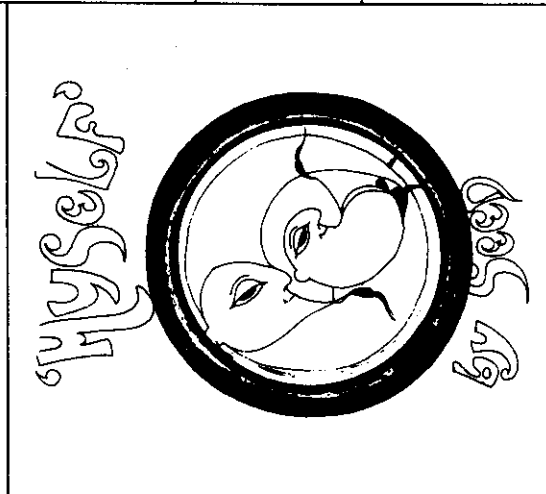
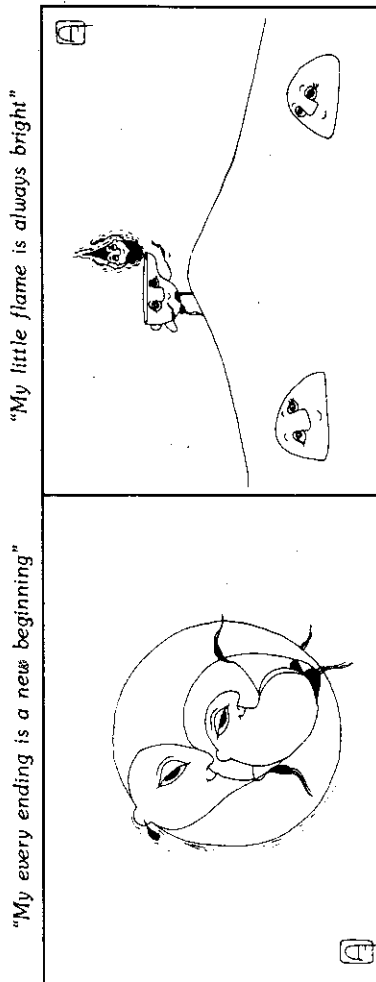
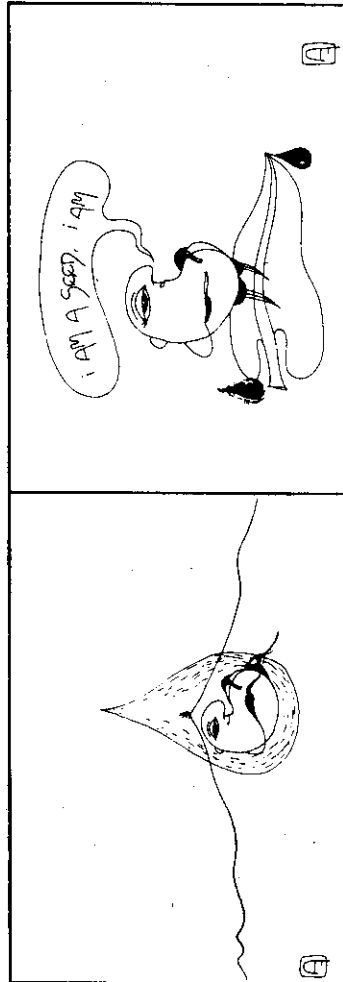
To sum up, The Mountain Path is an excellent review, so precious to us. I want to testify to its worth and take this opportunity to send you, dear Ganesan, my gratitude for your work.

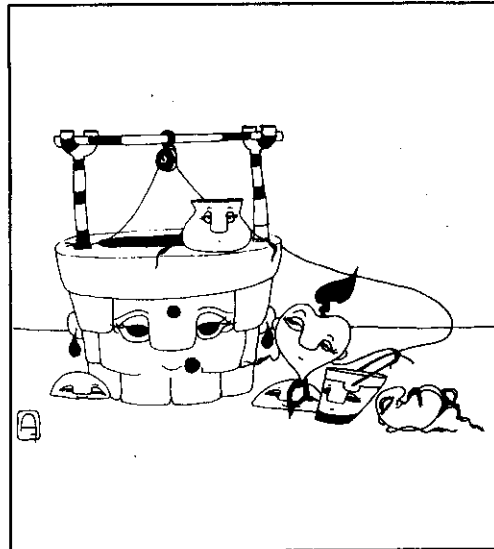
— Pierre Frédou,
Saint-Mande, France

* * *

Myself

By Seed

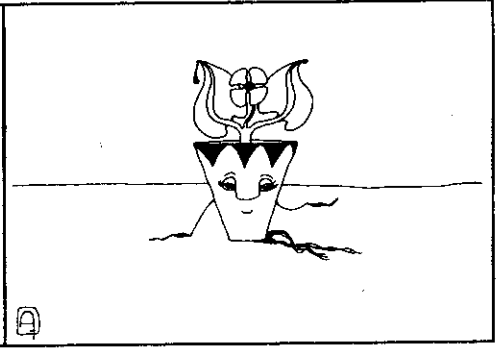




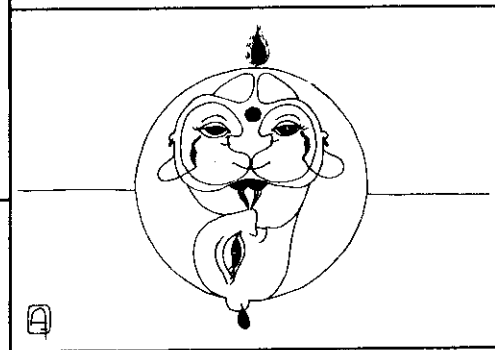
"My heart listens for a voice deep inside"



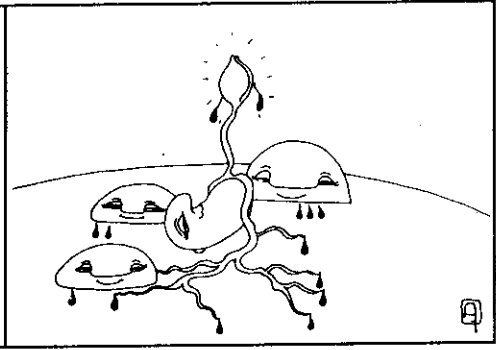
"I bide my time"



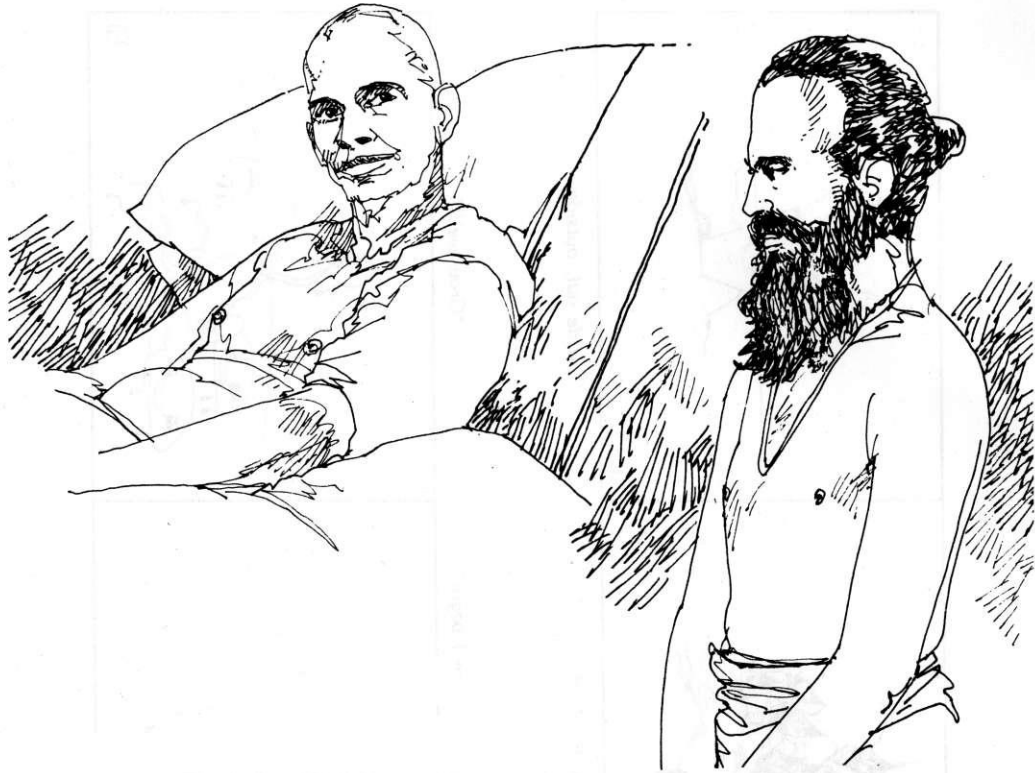
"Inside out, outside in..."



"There is no place where I begin"



"Grow well!"



The *diksha guru* (the master who gives ritualistic initiation) directed him to the Sat-Guru, Sri Ramana. Thus, following the path of *Atma Vichara* under the direct gaze of Bhagavan Ramana for a *mandala* (40 days) Swami Ramanagiri, a young relative of the King of Sweden, on holy *Maha Sivaratri* day, became "a fool" — enlightened. Standing in the long queue, all attention focussed on Sri Maharshi, he approached the "Great Magnet." A piercing yet moon-like look from the sun-like eyes of Maharshi established him in permanent realisation, he used to say.

Swami Ramanagiri's surrender to Sri Ramana was total and utterly complete. He often said that even the breath he breathed was ordained by Bhagavan.

After Bhagavan's *Mahanirvana* in 1950, Swami had a vision in which he was directed by Bhagavan to stay in the Sirumalai Hills near Madurai, where he spent the rest of his life in Bliss and Peace, in perpetual remembrance of his *Sat-Guru*, Bhagavan Ramana.

— Editor

Swami Ramanagiri

SWAMI Ramanagiri was born into an aristocratic Swedish family in 1921. Though he was related to the King of Sweden, it was the 'royal' yoga of Patanjali that finally claimed him. In his youth he came across Swami Vivekananda's *Raja Yoga* and found he had an immediate affinity with the subject matter. He studied the book and began to practise the techniques it prescribed. Realising that he needed a teacher to guide him, he came to India in 1945 and began to study philosophy at Benares Hindu University. He soon discovered, though, that academic philosophy held little attraction for him. Feeling a strong urge to pursue his yoga full time, he gave up his studies, renounced property worth more than eight million dollars and took *sannyasa*.

At the time of his initiation his *diksha guru* stipulated that he should never ask for anything himself, and only accept what was offered to him. On the day following his initiation he passed by a friend's house, but his friend failed to recognise him because of his shaved head and orange robes.

When he saw the *sannyasin* he shouted to his wife, 'A mendicant is going by! Give him the rotten bananas!' This was his first *bhiksha*.

On the following day he was walking in front of the palace of the Raja of Benares when a soldier accosted him and asked him to step inside.

'Why?' asked the swami.

The soldier replied that it was the practice of the raja to offer food daily to the first *sannyasin* he saw walking in front of the palace gates. So, on that day, he was taken in, accorded a royal

reception, and given a feast, personally served by the raja himself.

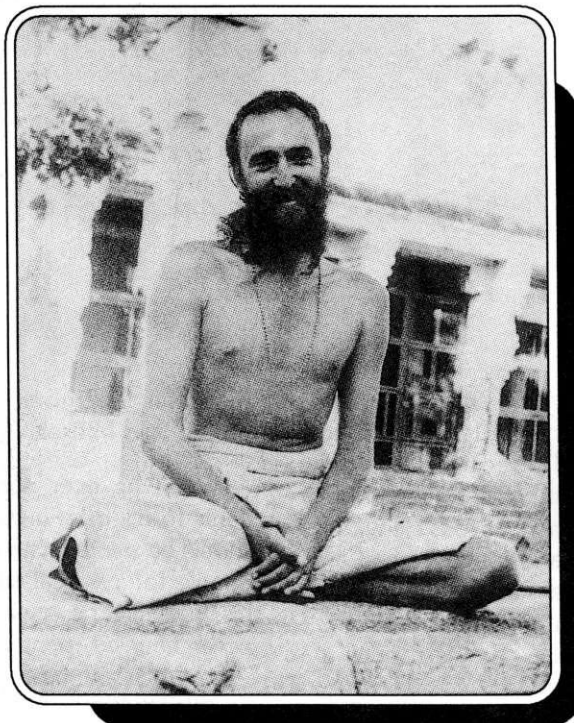
When he later narrated both of these incidents to his *diksha guru*, he was told that both should be treated with equal indifference, as food is only for physical sustenance. For the rest of his brief life he never asked for anything and never handled money.

Shortly afterwards he set off on a pilgrimage to visit some of India's holy places. With the fire of liberation burning inside him it was perhaps inevitable that sooner or later he would end up at the feet of Sri Ramana Maharshi.

Though he had a natural inclination for *Raja Yoga*, Swami Ramanagiri felt an immediate attraction to *Atma vichara*, the path of Sri Ramana. He practised intensively for forty days in Bhagavan's presence and was rewarded, on Sivaratri day 1949, with a direct experience of the Self. When asked later about what happened on that momentous day, he would usually say, 'On that day I became a fool'. For the rest of his life he referred to himself in the third person as 'this fool'. Speaking of the effect this experience had on him, he wrote in one of his notebooks:

I don't know anything,
And that 'I' which knows is
Nothing but an ignorant fool.
I think, when I don't think,
That I have no end and no beginning.
That which thinks has to take thousands of
births.
When there is 'I',
He is not;
When He is, I am not.

How did he practise *Atma vichara*? It was his



Swami Ramanagiri

own method, combining classical *vichara*, *pranayama*, a little *neti-neti*, and some imaginative visualisations. Some interesting insights into his method can be gleaned from the following long letter which he wrote to a devotee who was seeking guidance on the path:

"In the course of *sadhana*, *maya* comes to a sincere soul first in the form of worldly troubles, second in the form of desires, and third in the form of dear friends who keep him away from the quest.¹ Our own mind is the greatest cheater in the world. It will make thousands of different excuses to go its own way. There are three ways of handling this cheat, who is nothing but a bundle of thoughts creeping in the conscious mind.

"First, to treat him as a friend and give him full satisfaction. This is a very long and tiresome way because he is never satisfied.

"Second, to treat him as an enemy and with all force try to get rid of him. This is only possible by the grace of the divine because the mind has got two very powerful weapons — the discriminating intellect and the imaginative faculty. These two fellows can convince even God Himself that black is white.

"The third way is the way taught by Sri Ramana in the days of silence at the foot of sacred Arunachala. This way, which has been adopted by this fool, is to treat the mind as a patient, or rather several patients who are coming to a doctor to complain about their various ailments. Just as a doctor sits in his room receiving different kinds of patients, this fool imagines himself sitting in the sacred cave of the Heart and receiving the different thought patients. You know that a sick person likes to babble for hours about his complaint. In the same way, a thought likes to multiply itself, but the doctor always cuts it short, saying, 'Very good. Take this medicine. Thank you very much.' And then he calls for another patient.

"This is how this fool decided to meditate. First the fool slows down the breath as much as possible, but only to the point where there is no discomfort. To this fool, two breaths per minute

¹ He had trouble with this himself. Elsewhere he wrote: "Three years ago I found that letters from my previous family became an obstacle on the spiritual quest, so when any letter came I never opened it or read it, and I experienced that the divine was on my side in spite of my improper action".

is the proper speed, but that may not be possible for you because this fool has practised for a long time. You may be able to decrease your breathing to 8-10 per minute in the beginning. Don't get to a level where you are uncomfortable, because that discomfort will give rise to thoughts.

"This fool then decided to receive twenty patients before closing the dispensary of the Heart. He calls out 'Number one!' and he waits for thought patient number one to come. The thought patient may say, 'Smt such-and-such is not well. Sri so-and-so is worried.'

"Then this foolish doctor says, 'Oh, you are number one. Very good. The name of Lord Murugan will cure you. Thank you very much.'

"Then he calls for number two, and he waits till the second patient is entering the room. 'Mr So-and-so may get *mukti* this life,' he says.

"Very good. You are number two. The whole world is benefited if one soul gets liberated. Thank you very much.' Numbers three, four, five, etc. are dealt with in the same way.

"When all the twenty thought patients have come and gone, the doctor closes the room to the Heart and no one else is allowed to come inside. Now he is alone. Now there is time for *Atma vichara*. He asks himself, 'To whom have all these thoughts come?' Three times he slowly repeats the same question, along with the outgoing breaths. Then he, in that same slow manner, answers, 'To me, to me, to me'. 'Then who am I? Then who am I? Then who am I?' All questions and answers are repeated twice, very, very slowly.

"This "I" is not a thought. This "I" is not a thought. This "I" is not a thought.'

"Then who is the receiver of the thought? Then who is the receiver of the thought? Then who is the receiver of the thought?"

" "I" - "I" - "I". Now the mind is centralised in the source itself.

"Then who am I? Then who am I? Then who am I?"

"Now the breath comes to an end and the attention is concentrated 100% on the sound caused by the palpitation of the heart, as if the sound would give the answer to our questions. This is nothing but the *pranava* itself. If, during this time, the *sakti* which was static is converted to movements or becomes dynamic, then trance will occur. If the primal energy reaches the space between the eyebrows, *savikalpa samadhi* will occur. That is, God with form will be seen. If the energy rises up to the top of the head, *nirvikalpa samadhi* will occur, which is nothing but the Self itself.

"But you should also know that even if the doctor has closed the dispensary door, some patients may come and peep in through the window to complain about their ailments. At the beginning of *Atma vichara* the patients at the window are many. In the same way, although the door to the cave of the Heart is closed, some thoughts may occur at the time of *dhyana*. For example a thought may come: 'Mr Iyer's *sushumna nadi* has opened up.' Since the patient has not come at the proper time, the doctor doesn't attend to him. Instead, he continues the quest: 'To whom has the thought of Mr Iyer come?'

"To me, to me, to me.'

"Then who am I? - who am I? - who am I?"

"Dearest 'S'. In all humility this fool has babbled something about how he tries to establish himself in the experience of *ananda*, which is no different from the Self itself.

"With all my love to you,
Ramanagiri in Him
Om"

After Bhagavan's *Mahanirvana* in April 1950, Bhagavan appeared before Swami Ramanagiri in a vision and directed him to go

and stay in the Sirumulai Hills, about twenty miles from Madurai. He spent most of his time there, continuing his practice of *yoga* and *enquiry*, and frequently became absorbed in ecstatic or blissful states, so much so that he had little awareness of his body or its needs. Of one experience he wrote:

The whole night
Nothing but Fire, Light, Bliss and *Pranava*.
O Father! O Father! What happiness!
No thoughts, only the enjoyment and the enjoyer.
O Father! How near I was to losing myself completely in Your embrace.
O Father, why do You turn me back to the state of mind
Where I suffer from thoughts and where I am tormented by an ego?

In a more sober and reflective mood he made the following assessment of the blissful states he was experiencing through his *pranayama* and *Atma vichara*:

Bliss is not a product of fantasy, but the most convincing experience we are capable of. If this experience would be a product of the imagination, the hair would not stand on end, nor would tears of happiness come in streams from the eyes, nor would the nose start flowing, nor would there be any shivering of the body, the skin would not turn red-hot, and there would be no levitation of the body. How many times I have found the body at another place in the room after having enjoyed Mother's bliss? In *padmasana* the body is not capable of moving.

Swami Ramanagiri eventually contracted tu-

berculosis, a disease which claimed him at the young age of thirty-four, in 1955. He spent his final days in the Perundurai Sanatorium. Though his body was lean and emaciated, his spirits were high.

"It is the body which suffers," he told his visitors. "I am alright. *Sakti* is now stronger than ever before, and it is here [indicating the spot between the eyebrows]."

It was summer and mangoes were just beginning to appear. Accepting some as an offering, he alluded to his forthcoming death by saying, "I will eat a nice mango now, but it will become garbage tomorrow morning".

For more than an hour before his death he was completely withdrawn in a deep meditative state, with his hair standing on end. At the last moment he whispered, "Let us go," and he left his body, in true *yogic* fashion, through the fontanelle in the top of his head. Blood was seen to ooze out of a hole there.

During his brief stay in the Sirumulai Hills, Swami Ramanagiri had attracted a substantial following, although he always refused to take on a teaching role, saying that no such mission had been given to him by Bhagavan. His body was interred at the foot of the Sirumulai Hills at the place he had named *Ramana Padam*, and a *Siva lingam* was installed over his *samadhi*. Twice a year there are gatherings there to commemorate the day of his great experience with Bhagavan and the date of his final passing away. A poor feeding is conducted and crowds of over 2,000 assemble to pay homage to this foreign son of India.

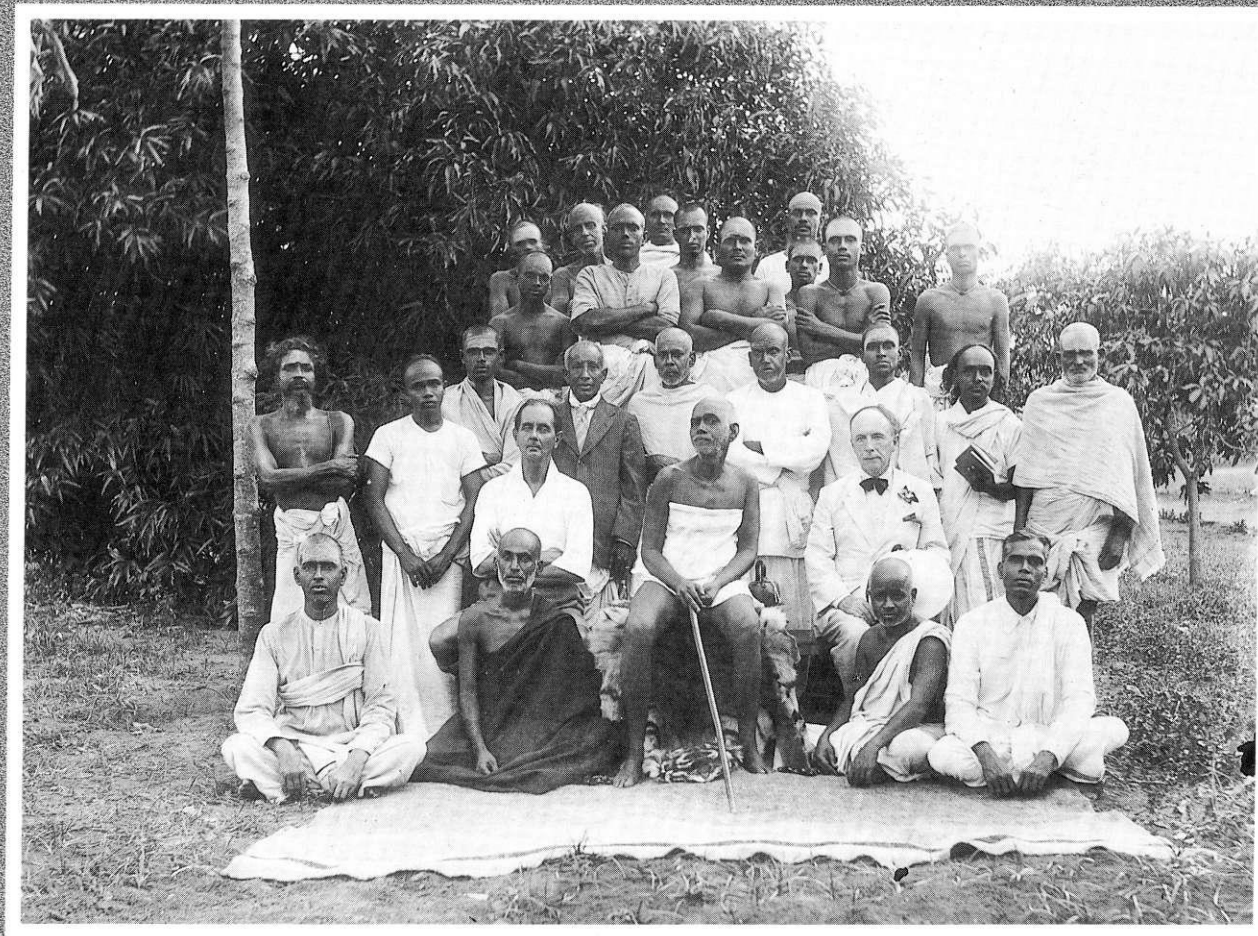
Sri Bhagavan has told with characteristic simplicity how this awareness began to awaken in him during his visits to the Meenakshi Temple. He said, "At first I thought it was some kind of fever but I decided, it is a pleasant fever, so let it stay."

From our **Photographic Archives**
(Renovations by DEV GOGOI)



Circa early 1930s. Left to right: 1. unidentified, 2. (behind) Tiruchuzi Lakshmi Amma, 3 & 4. Smt. Manavasi Ramaswami Iyer with Venkatakrishnan (Jayashree), 5. Ramana Maharshi, 6 & 7. unidentified, 8. (behind) Shantamma, 9. unidentified.

Contact print from original glass negative exposed in sunlight on gelatin chloride printing-out paper and toned in gold chloride. Materials given by Dennis Hartel, Arunachala Ashrama, New York/Nova Scotia.

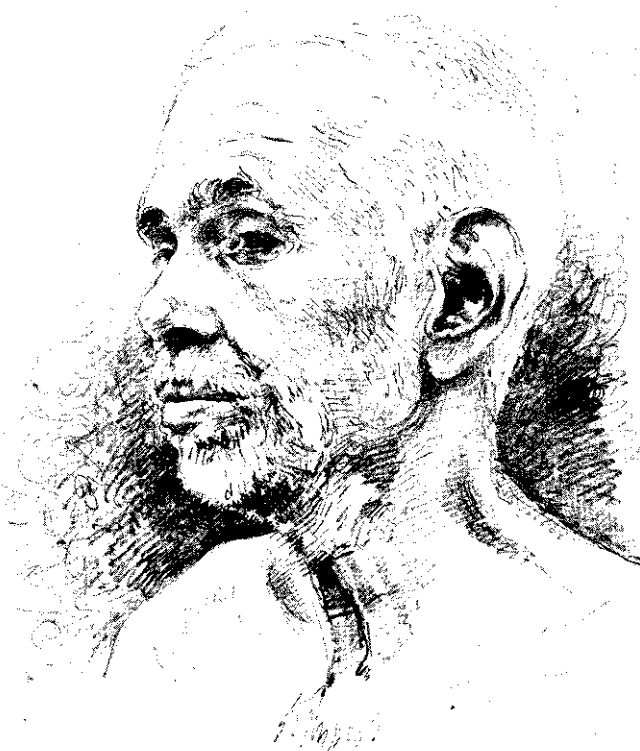


At Ramanasramam in 1934.

Left to right (seated): 1. Chinnaswami, 2. (in front) Yogi Ramiah, 3. (behind) Dr. W.Y. Evans-Wentz, 4. Ramana Maharshi, 5. (behind) Grant Duff (Douglas Ainslie), 6. (in front) Munagala Venkataramiah (compiler of *Talks*), 7. Sub-registrar Narayana Iyer.

Standing, middle row: 1. Nondi Srinivasa Iyer, 2. Krishnamurti (office attendant), 3. Somasundara Swami (book-depot), 4. K.R.V. Iyer (Calcutta), 5. Sama Iyer, 6. Ganapati Shastri (Head accountant, Taluk Office), 7. Vishwanatha Swami, 8. T.K. Sundaresa Iyer, 9. father of Ranga Rao.

Standing, back row: 1. Rangaswami (attendant), 2. (behind) & 3. unidentified, 4. Ramaswami Pillai, 5. Ramakrishnaswami, 6. Suoramaniam Swami, 7. Kumaraswami (stores), 8. (behind) Ranga Rao (cook), 9. (in front) unidentified, 10. Annamalai Swami, 11. Madhava Swami.



You Are That

By V. Ganesan

"To tread the path of Self-knowledge is like walking on a razor's edge." This famous statement of the scriptures is often quoted by those who give religious discourses in order to warn and frighten seekers who long to turn to the practice of spirituality.

But Sri Bhagavan emphatically asserts:

"Self-knowledge is an easy thing,
The easiest thing there is."

(Atma Vidya, v. 1)

Is it easy or difficult?

It is both!

The above beautiful sketch of Sri Bhagavan was drawn by JANE ADAMS, specially for this issue.

It is most difficult as long as you cling to your mind and its dictates. Or, rather, if you depend on the mind to help take you to the region of Self-knowledge: it is incapable of doing it!

Rather, we must reject the mind, ignore its multifaceted voice and transcend its limits by turning within: then Self-knowledge is the easiest thing there is.

With mind you are far, far away from Self-knowledge, unreachable by the mind.

Without mind, you are already THAT!

So its easiness or "most difficult-ness" depends on "You". By itself spirituality is neither easy nor difficult. Or, to put it another way, it is both easy and difficult.

How?

There are five elements: earth, water, fire, air and ether. Of these, earth is the grossest element: you can see it, touch it, taste it, feel it, hold it and smell it. Next is water; it is subtler than earth. Fire is still subtler than water. Air is much subtler — so subtle that you can only feel it on your body; you can neither see nor hold it. Ether is the most subtle of all: you can neither see nor even feel it! So subtle is it that we must only accept that it is there as the all-pervading element.

The elements, in their gradations, become ever subtler until ether is reached, an element which we can only admit exists, but cannot tangibly prove. Thus the subtlest among the elements is ether.

Can you imagine? Mind is far subtler than ether, say the Vedas!

Mind is nothing but a bundle of thoughts, says Sri Maharshi. So thoughts are much subtler than even ether. Subtler still than thoughts is the parent-thought, the "I"-thought, says Sri Bhagavan.

Beyond the "I"-thought is *Suddha Sattva Manas* (Pure Mind, devoid of any thoughts, including the "I"-thought). This Pure Mind is the basis for the rising of the "I"-thought immediately on waking from sleep. This *Suddha Sattva Manas* is in the "form" of brilliance (of course, without form or heat).

Beyond even this brilliance, illumination, light, is the Self — the subtlest of all, the very ground, *Turiya*, on or from which everything arises and into which everything subsides.

Self alone IS — the one eternal unvarying ground of all existence. All else are, by definition, neither real nor true: they come and go and do not abide beyond time and space, that is, the Mind.

Thus, beyond and transcending the five elements, time, space, mind and thoughts, even the "I"-thought, is THAT, the Self.

Now, picture the place of Mind in this geographical map.

It is the one which is subtler than ether yet as gross as earth in relation to the Self. See the predicament!

Does not the demand on us to transcend the Mind appear insurmountable, incomprehensible, and therefore impossible?

That is:

We do not even know what ether is. Mind is subtler than ether. Thus, how can we ever hope to get rid of something which we do not even know?

Accepting the validity of the Upanishadic statement that "it is like walking on a razor's edge," the task does look difficult and, perhaps, impossible!

Yet, sternly turn your attention to Sri Bhagavan, who confirms again and again that "it is the easiest"!

The former statement poses it as a problem, whereas the latter categorically affirms the opposite.

That is:

If you want to try to tackle it as a problem, then the mind becomes all-important, predominant, projecting the whole undertaking as extraordinarily difficult, almost impossible.

Reverently turning to the Maharshi, we find the entire issue clarified: "Raise the question 'To whom is the problem?' The answer is 'to me'. Question it further; 'Who am I?'" Watch! Immediately, all thoughts stop! When there are no thoughts, there is no mind. You need no proof other than your own experience: with proper Self-enquiry there ensues a state where the mind has voluntarily become inoperative. A state of Silence alone prevails. That Silence is the Self. You are THAT — "*Tat tvam asi.*"

See the simplicity of it all! Don't convert "You are That" into a concept, yet another thought. Feel it as the reality that is your core, the imperishable, unchanging *ground* of your existence. *Feeling* (not thinking) is the clue.

All the questions and baffling riddles are raised, reared, prolonged, enriched and fattened only by the mind. In that state of mind, Self-knowledge is impossible for the simple reason that the mind, so gross, is obstructing it — a solid iron wall between Self-knowledge and your vibrantly feeling, BEing it. Where there is mind, THAT is not felt; where there is THAT alone, there is no mind!.

Truth, Reality is your real Being, devoid of every trace of thought. That is Self. To BE this Silence, which is Self, is Self-knowledge. And it is the "easiest thing, the easiest thing there is," since what IS, is only THAT. "To be is Truth; to be 'this' or 'that' is falsehood," said Sri Bhagavan.

"To be" (the Self) is the easiest thing there is since you have nothing to do, but only simply to "BE" — your eternal and true nature.

"To be 'this'" (a "somebody") is, by its very dependence on mind and elements, a falsehood. Hence its pursuance brings always untold misery for, in order to "be somebody", much mental and physical exertion is required, blocking us from our true nature through birth after birth.

Holding to Truth — the ground, our true nature — is the easiest.

"No Mind" = "To BE."

Holding to untruth is painful for it brings about the cycle of births and deaths. Moreover, your efforts to escape from it by means of any of the hundreds of methods of *sadhana* are equally painful and fruitless as they are based on mind. All *sadhanas* except *Atma-Vichara*, Self-enquiry, are mind oriented, says Sri Bhagavan.

Why not listen to the Master, Bhagavan Ramana, who says: "You are the Self" and "Self-knowledge is the easiest thing there is."

Why cling to our state of uncertainty and doubt, which is more than a poison, binding us as it does to mind, which forever asserts, "It is impossible!"... Which it is, for the mind.

Conflict is the essence of this impure mind. This deluded mind, thinking it knows all, forces you to take to the position of an "onlooker", a position rooted in untruth.

"There are no others," affirms Sri Bhagavan. "There is only the Self."

"The answer to 'Who am I?' is *the* asking," said Bhagavan Ramana.

YOU are *the* asking.

You are THAT.

You are the Self.

"I AM BRAHMAN"

"I AM BRAHMAN", is a beautiful audio tape that is played at Sri Robert Adams Sat-Sang. It is an excellent rendition of mixing earth sounds with music and Robert's voice heard intermittently in the back ground.

You may write to: Sri Robert Adams
P.O. Box 7210 Jordan Ave,
Canoga Park, Calif. 91304, USA

One Another

By A. Haji

God Guru and Self are One
One without a second
Not a second does it take
To realise the
One.

Mistaking One for the other
We struggle in vain
Hoping to achieve One-ness
When in fact there is no
Other.

Finding One we have found the other
But before One is found
We think we see One in the other
And chase after the illusion of
One-ness.

Never having lost the One
Yet surprised to find the One
Knowing One always as the other
But finding the other we finally see
One.

One comes not, nor does One go
All separation destroyed by One
It is this One that is always
Seen as Guru or God of
One.

One's own inner light
Which is One with God
Is projected into One's Guru: Ramana
Whose eyes fire flash grace on
One.

But it is none other than One
Till realisation destroys
One-ness and other-ness
And the Self of all is seen as
One.



Jagadeeswara Sastri was the Sanskrit poet-laureate at Sri Bhagavan's court. Bhagavan frequently asked his opinion on Sanskrit texts and on any matter relating to the Sanskrit language in general.

For some time Jagadeeswara Sastri was living in a hut on a large plot of land which was owned by David McIver. Mr McIver eventually had to sell the plot to raise urgently-needed funds, but he compensated Jagadeeswara Sastri by paying him an amount which was equal to the sum he had spent on his hut. Jagadeeswara Sastri was upset because the loss of his hut meant that he had to leave Tiruvannamalai, since he had nowhere else to stay. He took the compensation money and placed it on Bhagavan's lap.

After Bhagavan had thrown all his money in the Ayyankulam Tank in 1896, he never touched money again. However, on this occasion, he allowed the money to remain where it was. Sri Balarama Reddy, who witnessed the scene, said that Jagadeeswara Sastri was in an extremely depressed state when he came to the hall and handed over the money. After some time Sri Bhagavan's healing magic dispersed the gloom and restored him to his normal state. When Bhagavan saw that the depression had gone, he returned the money to Jagadeeswara Sastri.

AN EARLY DEVOTEE:

Jagadeeswara Sastri — The Symbol of Ramana's Grace

By A.R. Natarajan

J AGADEESWARA Sastri had become skin bones. His was terminal illness which had not responded to the best of medical treatment. The doctors had given up hope and so also the family members who had reconciled themselves to the inevitable. It was at this eleventh hour that Jagadeeswara Sastri invoked Bhagavan's grace to save him from imminent death. He could demand this of Ramana. His close association with Ramana from the Virupaksha Cave days gave him this liberty. He was fully aware of Ramana's fondness for him. For Ramana had indeed, in some mysterious way, a special soft-comer for him as he had for the 'chosen' ones like Ganapati Muni, Muruganar, Ramanatha Brahmachari, Sundaresa Iyer, Sub-Registrar Narayana Iyer and a few other devotees. Jagadeeswara Sastri was among the very few devotees whom Bhagavan would call by name. Ramana used to call him 'Jagadeesa'.

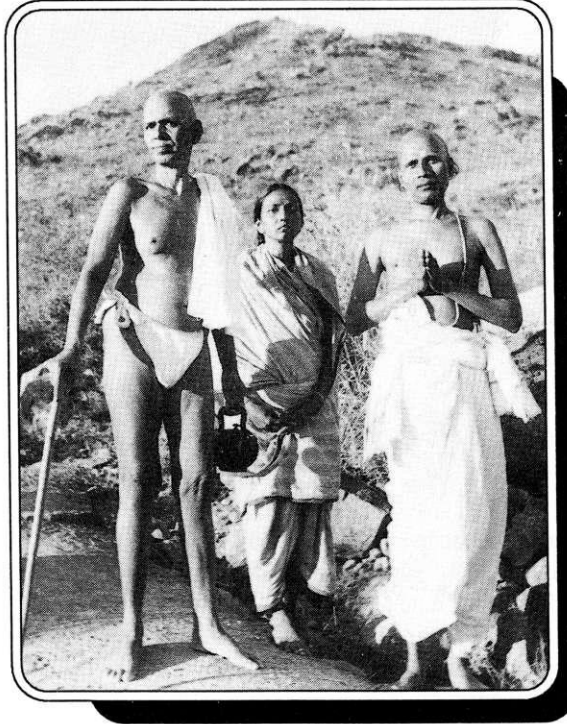
Jagadeeswara Sastri was fully aware of Ramana's love for him. He was also aware that Ramana would ordinarily not agree to change the course of destiny. He would simply say, 'What can we do? That is the law'. However Jagadeeswara Sastri surely knew too that this rule has an exception in respect of those who had surrendered to Ramana completely. At this point when death was knocking at his door, Sastri surrendered wholly. Being a natural poet he expressed this in the form of eight exquisite poems called 'Prapatti Ashtakam' in which he pours out his heart. These poems capture the glory and power of Ramana, and in each verse Sastri says 'I surrender'. In particular the third

verse is moving in this context: 'I surrender to the chastiser of death in order to be rid of the fear of the all-devouring alligator Time.' Verse five, 'I surrender to the dispeller of fever caused by ill-luck, three-fold ills, delusion and karma,' also brings out the mood of the occasion.

This death-bed appeal of Sastri is dramatically recorded by Devaraja Mudaliar in his *Recollections*: 'Jagadeeswara Sastri, whom I used to call the Sanskrit poet of Bhagavan's court, wrote his final appeal declaring that he would not accept any plea by Bhagavan that *prarabdha* must follow its course and that if only Bhagavan willed it, with his grace he could cancel *prarabdha* and save him. Bhagavan took such compassion on him that he pulled him out of the jaws of death.' Bhagavan not only saved him on this occasion but also blessed him with a very long life. Sastri lived up to the ripe old age of eighty-nine and died only in March 1983. Where is 1945 when Sastri lay dying and where is 1983? What is not possible for Ramana? What will he not do for those who have surrendered?

Our minds go back to the Virupaksha Cave days when the close association of Sastri with Bhagavan began. It was the rainy season of 1915. Sastri started writing a Sanskrit verse beginning with the words '*Hridaya kuhara madhye*' — 'In the centre of the heart core'. He was a past-master in Sanskrit and could easily have completed the verse. But somehow the pen stopped.

His inspiration took to flight. He could not



Sri Jagadeeswara Sastri, his wife and Sri Bhagavan (on the Hill)

proceed. Little did he realise that he was to be Ramana's instrument for giving the world the Sanskrit verse containing the very essence of Ramana's teaching. Many decades later Bhagavan himself told Suri Nagamma what happened: 'One day Jagadeesa wrote down on a piece of paper "*Hridaya kuhara madhye*," held it in his hand and sat down. When I asked him what it was, he said that he wanted to write a *sloka*, but when he actually began it, he could write only that much. And when I asked him to write the rest, he said he was unable to do so, however much he tried. After a time he went somewhere, leaving the paper under my seat. Before his return, I completed the *sloka* and wrote underneath it the word "Jagadeesa" and showed it to him as soon as he returned. He asked me why I had put his name to it. I said because Jagadeesa had begun it.' This verse, included as Chapter Two of *The Ramana Gita*, has been doing its work in the hearts of thousands of seekers since then. For, as Ganapati Muni says, 'Whoever understands this verse uttered by Bhagavan Maharshi, containing the essence of Vedanta, will never be assailed by doubt at any time.'

Ramana would always refer all Tamil works to Muruganar, and all Sanskrit works to Ganapati

Muni. After the Muni's departure from Ramanasramam to Sirsi, this rare good fortune fell to Jagadeeswara Sastri. Such was Ramana's confidence in his knowledge of the language. Anyone who reads the *Sri Ramana Sahasranama Stuti*, a litany of a thousand attributes on Ramana, can readily understand the depth of his Sanskrit knowledge which flows freely and beautifully in describing the magnificence of Ramana. Small wonder that this *Ramana Sahasranama Stuti* is now part of the regular worship at the shrine of Ramaneswara Mahalingam at Sri Ramanasramam and many homes on all occasions sacred to Ramana.

To Jagadeeswara Sastri we owe yet another debt. His commentary in Sanskrit on Bhagavan's *Upadesa Saram* is a classic. The clarity of his understanding of the teaching and his being a special recipient of Ramana's grace is evident in this commentary.

Jagadeeswara Sastri was a simple person. Scholarship rested lightly on his shoulders. Humble and devout, his name brings before our mind's eye the timeless Ramana. Had not Ramana stopped, for his sake, the wheels of fate, enabling him to defy death?

"King of Lankapuri"

SRI YOGA SWAMI OF JAFFNA

PART II*

Sri Yoga Swami is perhaps the greatest sage Sri Lanka has produced in this century, yet little is known of him beyond the borders of his native land. Born in 1872, he was a contemporary of Sri Bhagavan in more than the conventional sense. His teachings are so strikingly similar to those of Sri Bhagavan that they attract the attention of followers of both. When Sri Yoga Swami came to pay his respects to Bhagavan in the 1930's, he came away calling Him a "Maha Veeran" — a "Great Hero." His disciples, too, regarded Sri Bhagavan very highly and often came to Him for guidance, inspiration and elucidation of the often cryptic utterances of their Master.

— Editor

ONE OF Yoga Swami's closest disciples, who was also a frequent visitor to Ramanasramam in the 1940's, and thereafter until her death in 1993, was Ma Ratna Navaratnam. Besides being a renowned Tamil scholar, she also wrote a number of books on Yoga Swami and English translations of his *Natchintanai* and sayings, many of which were imparted in her presence and are unrecorded elsewhere. In her book, *Saint Yogaswami and the Testament of Truth*, Ma Ratna records her own experience with her Guru, dating back to her childhood.

Her father was an early and very ardent disciple of Yoga Swami. When he knew that his end was approaching, her father asked the members of the family to switch on all the electric lights — it was late evening — and spread a white cloth on the chair near his bed, and made them sing. He also indicated that they should worship "Him who shall come". Although they didn't understand why, they did as he requested. Just then, Yoga Swami arrived and opened the garden gate, calling out her father's pet name, and walked directly upstairs to his bedroom. Holding her father's hands to his chest, he sang a spontaneous and inspiring song conveying the assurance of the bliss that awaits the servants of Siva. Then, smearing her father's

head with *vibhuti*, he abruptly departed. Her father attained *samadhi* two nights later at the auspicious moment of the *Wesak* full moon. This experience broke down the last barrier of resistance, and Ma Ratna became Yoga Swami's devotee for life.¹

Regarding her mature impression of the Guru, Ma Ratna writes: "He was a man of God whose yogic wisdom made him touch some hidden chord in each one, so that he wielded a wondrous power to change people's inner nature by bringing up the secret chambers of their hearts to the surface, and exposing to their gaze the bewildering reactions and hidden motives underlying their actions.

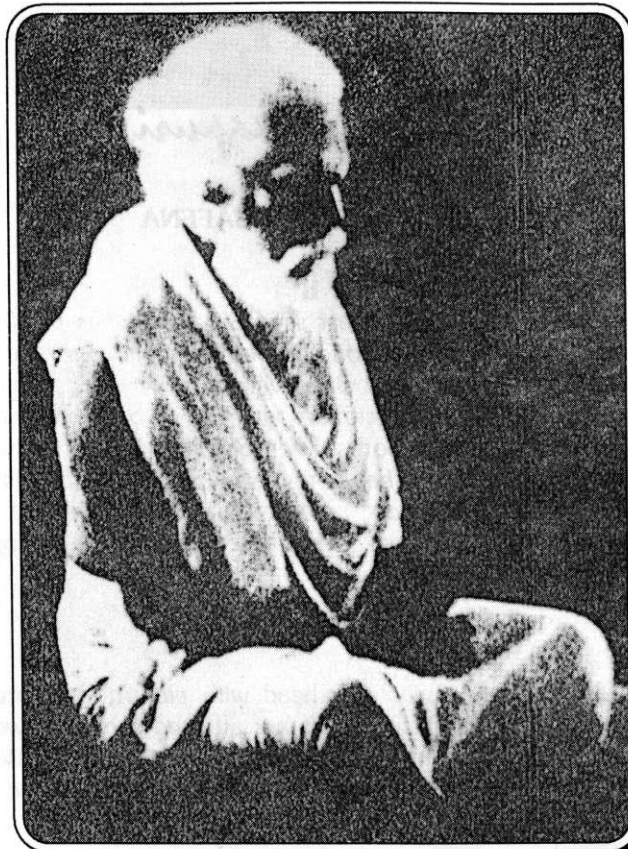
"This was perhaps the reason why many people would shiver inwardly in his presence, or keep away from his penetrative eyes. They were afraid of exposure. Yet so irresistible was his humanity that even his scorching onslaughts would act like the monsoonal showers of grace, and devotees would seek him in hours of tribulation and tension."²

In this connection, Susunaga Weeraperuma has recorded his own impressions and some characteristic incidents.

¹ *Testament of Truth*, pp. 129-31.

² *Ibid.*, pg. 126.

* Continued from previous issue



Sri Yoga Swami

"If Yoga Swami seemed to lack an unchanging personality it was presumably because his 'personality' temporarily acquired the characteristics of his visitors. Not surprisingly, therefore, proud persons invariably found Yoga Swami behaving arrogantly towards them. To those who were haunted by fears Yoga Swami's manner seemed timid. A South Indian *sannyasin* had recited a stanza from the *Bhagavad Gita* to Yoga Swami. Thereupon Yoga Swami had repeated the stanza with alterations and clever puns on certain words so that the sacred lines acquired an erotic significance. Yoga Swami could not help doing that for he was merely reacting to the hidden sexual imagery in the unconscious mind of the *sannyasin*. Consequently, this ascetic, like many other of Yoga Swami's visitors, was not only irritated but embarrassed. In a sense Yoga Swami was like a [mirror] who awakened people from their psychical slumber by shocking them without deliberately wishing to do so."³

During his first meeting with Yoga Swami

their conversation was interrupted by a man who entered the hut. "This person was apparently an ardent devotee of Yoga Swami. He lit a candle, placed a few jasmine flowers on the floor and finally prostrated himself on the cold cement floor before kissing Yoga Swami's feet.

"'Bloody fool!' yelled Yoga Swami. 'This is not an altar! Are you worshipping me or are you worshipping yourself? Why worship another?'

"The poor man withdrew into a corner of the hut with reverence and trembling.

"'Do you think,' went on Yoga Swami, 'that you can find God by worshipping another? You do such silly, stupid things — offering flowers and lighting candles! Do you think that you can find God by giving bribes?'"⁴

When one of his disciples reported to him

³ *Homage to Yoga Swami* (hereafter *Homage*), by Susunaga Weeraperuma, Poets' and Painters' Press, London, 1970, pg. 5.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pg. 11-12.

that people often complained about his apparent temper, he replied, "Is not a fire necessary to bum rubbish?"⁵

On another occasion a business man, entering Yoga Swami's presence with some offering in his hand, was greeted with harsh words, "Here he comes accompanied by his business!"⁶

Weeraperuma's own first meeting with the sage is both characteristic of Yoga Swami's manner and delivery as well as illustrative of his ability to divine the inmost thoughts of a person, whether or not the individual was aware of them himself. After a period of preliminary purification which freed him of all extraneous motives for meeting the sage, Weeraperuma was conducted to his hut at dawn by a Tamil friend.

"When we first saw Yoga Swami he was sweeping the garden with a long broom. He slowly walked towards us and opened the gates.

"I am doing a coolie's job," he said. "Why have you come to see a coolie?" He chuckled with a mischievous twinkle in his eyes.

"I noticed that he spoke good English with an impeccable accent. As there is usually an esoteric meaning to all his statements, I interpreted his words to mean this: 'I am a spiritual cleaner of human beings. Why, do you want to be cleansed?' He gently beckoned us into his hut. Yoga Swami sat cross-legged on a slightly elevated platform, and we sat on the floor facing him. We had not yet spoken a single word. That morning we hardly spoke at all for he did all the talking. Talking to him was unnecessary for one had only to think of something and he replied instantaneously. I did not have to formulate my questions into words for Yoga Swami was aware of my thoughts all the time.

"After we had comfortably sat on the floor, Yoga Swami closed his eyes and remained motionless for nearly half an hour.... My friend indicated with a nervous smile that we were really lucky to have been received by him. Yoga Swami suddenly opened his eyes. Those luminous eyes brightened the darkness of the entire hut. His eyes were as mellow as they were luminous — the mellowness of compassion.

"I was beginning to feel hungry and tired, and thereupon Yoga Swami asked, 'What will you have for breakfast?' At that moment I would have accepted anything that was offered, but I thought of iddies and bananas, which were popular items of food in Jaffna. In a flash there appeared a stranger in the hut who respectfully bowed and offered us these items of food from the tray that he was holding. A little later my friend wished for coffee, but before he could express his request in words the same man reappeared on the scene and served us coffee.

"After breakfast Yoga Swami asked us not to throw away the banana skins, which were for the cow that was grazing in the garden. The cow clumsily walked right into the hut. He fed her the banana skins. She licked his hand gratefully and tried to sit on the floor. Yoga Swami held out the last remaining banana skin and said, 'Now leave us alone. Don't disturb us, Valli. I'm having some visitors.' The cow nodded her head in obeisance and faithfully carried out his instructions.

"After the cow had left us, Yoga Swami closed his eyes again.... I was indeed curious to know what exactly Yoga Swami did on these occasions.... I wondered whether he was meditating. It was an apposite moment to broach the subject, but before I could ask any questions he suddenly started speaking.

"Look at those trees. The trees are meditating. Meditation is silence. If you realise that you really know nothing, then you will be truly meditating. Such truthfulness is the right soil for silence. Silence is meditation.'

"Yoga Swami bent forward eagerly. 'You must be simple. You must be utterly naked in your consciousness. When you have reduced yourself to nothing — when your "self" has disappeared — when you have become nothing, then you are yourself God. The man who is nothing knows God, for God is nothing. Nothing is everything. Because I am nothing, you see, because I am a beggar, I own everything. So nothing means everything. Understand?'

⁵ *Words of our Master*, pp. v-vi.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pg. 74.

"Tell us about this state of nothingness,' requested my friend eagerly.

"It means that you genuinely desire nothing. It means that you can honestly say that you know nothing. It also means that you are not interested in doing anything about this state of nothingness.'...

"Yoga Swami frequently alluded to the state of Silence. He spoke of it as though it were his very life. To one who has not experienced this state of *samadhi*, any description of it will necessarily remain an abstraction. In his presence one caught a fleeting glimpse of that bliss....

"There is Silence,' he said, 'when you realise that there is nothing to gain and nothing to lose.'....

"As he was discoursing, there walked in an elderly American lady who quickly removed her sandals and joined our company on the floor. The familiar manner in which she smiled with everyone present and the affectionate way in which she greeted Yoga Swami indicated that she was probably a frequent visitor to the hut.

"What have you been up to?' Yoga Swami asked her playfully.

"I've been to the Hindu temple in the neighbourhood. It was so peaceful there.'

"You mean that stone temple?' asked Yoga Swami laughingly. 'You went to worship the stone gods in the stone temple! There is only one temple, and that is the temple of yourself. And to find God you have to know this temple of yourself. There is no other temple. No one can save you!'

"What about Christ and Buddha? Can they not help us?' interjected the American lady. From her demeanor it was clear that her question was not motivated by a desire to elicit information, but was rather the reaction of her wounded religious susceptibilities arising from Yoga Swami's remarks.

"The Buddha and Christ saved themselves through their own efforts. Afterwards the [people] got hold of the rubbish and propagated

Words of Yoga Swami

"Chellappan used to say that there is not a thing that is evil. When God is everywhere, how can there be a place for evil? There are changes and they sometimes appear evil. Everything is at work. Only God knows what He is about. There is balance and order in the universe. *Parashakti* adjusts herself to maintain this balance and order."

* * *

"You are Siva. I am Siva. All are Siva. Remaining *summa* is also Siva."

* * *

"There is nothing to know. Remain *summa*."

* * *

"I don't know. Why do you want to know? Just be as you are." (English)

* * *

"Don't take anything from eyes, from ears, from mouth, from hands — just sit. *Summa iru*." (English)

* * *

"Do not be a lamb and roam about from place to place. Sit down and meditate and roar like a lion. I am telling this to myself about myself. I am not telling this to you and you are not hearing me." (English)

* * *

"You have everything. You are the whole world. Why? Because the kingdom of God is within you. Then why do you want to run about and beg?"

* * *

"There is no *sannyasin* in the whole world. I am [is] the only *sannyasin*." (English)

it. Each man for himself in this spiritual business. Don't believe anyone who promises to help you. No one will help because no one can. Another may point the way, but you have to do the walking.'

"Indeed, Yoga Swami discouraged the recording of his sayings, which he likened to excreta that did not deserve preservation. He apparently regarded that the veracity of a spontaneously uttered statement depended on the unique and unrepeatability of circumstances that gave rise to it.

"Several persons were now standing at the narrow entrance to the hut, which was fast becoming crowded.

"Why do you all come to see me?!... I am just as much a fool as any of you. I am searching, groping in the dark, trying to understand. I really cannot help you. There is nothing that you can take away from here. Nobody believes that I am a fool. I am a fool.'

"But you are not!" snapped the American lady with impatience, as though to expose his false modesty.

"Perhaps,' observed Yoga Swami. 'I'm a different sort of fool — a fool who willingly admits the fact of my foolishness.'"⁷

A small number of Westerners came to know of Yoga Swami and, by the mid-1950's there were three English-speaking resident disciples: Sri Gauribala Swami from Germany, Sri Santaswami from England, and Sri Narikutti Swami from Australia. For the most part, Yoga Swami conversed with them in English, and we have thus a precious treasury of his sayings and *upadesa* in that language.

Sri Narikutti Swami recollects that his first impression on meeting Yoga Swami was, "Here is a man who speaks with authority." His flowing white hair and beard, always neatly washed and combed, reflected the lionine dignity which marked every move, gesture, word. His words and actions were always spontaneous, and so was his way of teaching. If you missed something he said, sang or did and questioned him about it, he would simply say, "Ah, that was *mantra*" — and that was that! The moment had

come and passed. What was relevant to that moment was not relevant to the next. Swami recalls one incident connected with the newly formed (1954) *Sivathondan Nilayam*, an organisation of Yoga Swami's devotees dedicated to carrying on and propagating his teachings. Yoga Swami never permitted an ashram to be formed around him.

"One day Dr. Guruswami, a close devotee, met Yoga Swami in his hut and asked him why he didn't visit the *Sivathondan Nilayam*. Swami instantly replied, 'I am not a member.'

"Two days later a membership card arrived in the mail. Yoga Swami laughed uproariously and showed the card to one and all. Nevertheless, he still did not enter the institution."

Gauribala Swami, the German disciple, recalled a similar incident that occurred with him.

Yoga Swami was standing at the collapsible steel gates of the *Sivathondan Nilayam*, shaking them and shouting for the manager. Gauribala quietly walked up behind him and asked, "Who have you got imprisoned here, Swami?"

Yoga Swami turned and accosted him firmly. "What do you know about prisons!" he exclaimed. "You are a walking prison! Come, ours is the open road."

Santaswami (James Ramsbotham) was the son of Lord Soulbury, the last English and first Governor General of independent Ceylon. The young man had met Yoga Swami for the first time in 1953, when he came from Oxford to visit his father. He returned to Lanka in 1956 to become a disciple and permanent resident in his Guru's vicinity. Susunaga Weeraperuma recalls him narrating how once, at the peak of his initial *sadhana* with Yoga Swami, his father, Lord Soulbury, was very much disturbed that his son and heir should have taken to a life of — quite literally — "sack cloth and ashes." His forehead was smeared with *vibhuti*, he wore a white khadi *veshti* (the South Indian *dhoti*), and lived a life of complete renunciation — hardly becoming for a British aristocrat and future member of the

⁷ *Homage*, pp. 8-14.

House of Lords! Displeasing his father was hardly pleasant for Santaswami either, and he became much distressed in mind. Arriving at Yoga Swami's hut in this state of distraction, he sat down. Immediately, Yoga Swami enunciated the words: "Take God as your father, God as your governor, God as your general." Santaswami said that those words touched a deep inner chord and suddenly resolved all his conflicts and settled his turbulent mind. When his father died and he inherited the title, Yoga Swami sent him back to England to do his duty, saying: "Go back to England and be a lord." These words, like all of Yoga Swami's utterances, were pregnant with meaning. The pun, made in English, was on the word "lord", which can be taken to mean not merely an aristocratic title but also "Lord" — a name of God. In Sanskrit the equivalent word is *swami* (from the root *sua*, "one's own"), which literally means "one who has no master but himself." In Sanskrit, too, the word is an epithet of God.

Santaswami also mentioned another incident highlighting Yoga Swami's spontaneous teaching methods and covert acknowledgement of his role as Guru.

One day Santaswami found Yoga Swami standing on one of the main roads of Jaffna. On being approached by the disciple, Yoga Swami made a mock attack at him with his closed umbrella poised like a sword.

Taking up the jest, Santaswami protested, "This is not fair, Swami. You are armed."

Yoga Swami stood still and opened the umbrella, saying, "This is my Ombrella." The opened umbrella does, indeed, strikingly resemble the configuration of the Tamil OM.



Besides the beautiful and graphic pun in English, the incident indicates that whatever action or words come from the Guru, they are meant to benefit and shelter the disciple in his spiritual unfoldment.

On February 22, 1961, Yoga Swami fell and broke the femur bone of his left leg. As with

many great saints, this injury from which he never recovered (Yoga Swami was already ninety years old when it occurred) brought him more than ever into the limelight. Although, with his tremendous vitality he conducted "business as usual" from his *asana* or from his wheelchair, and went about with devotees as before, he was never able to walk again. The end came three years later, on Tuesday, March 24, 1964 at 3:15 a.m. under the *Ayilyam nakshatram* of the Tamil *Panguni masam*. His last words to the devotees mourning around him were typical:

"எல்லாம் சரி"

— "Everything is all right."

"முழுதும் உண்மை"

— "The entirety of everything is the reality."⁸

⁸ Quoted in *Testament of Truth*, pg. 136.

References

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2. *In the Company of Saints*, by K. (Colombo) Ramachandran.
3. *Natchintanai, Songs and Sayings of Yogaswami*, translated and published by the Sivathondan Society, Jaffna, 1974.
4. *Saint Yogaswami and The Testament of Truth*, by Ratna Chelliah Navaratnam, Sri Lanka, 1972.
5. *Words of Our Master*, by Markandu Swami, A. Chellathurai, Santaswami and N. Sri Khanta, Jaffna Cooperative Tamil Books Ltd., Jaffna, 1972.
6. *நற்சிந்தனை*, collected and published by The Sivathondan Nilayam, Jaffna, 1974.
7. Personal interviews.

We extend a special acknowledgement to Swami Narikutti for his valuable contributions in the preparation of this article. For his obituary, please see page 208.

Errata

In the first part of "King of Lankapuri" (Aradhana Issue, June 1994), the Tamil quotations should read as follows:

p. 57, first column, second-last line:

"நீயே நான்; நானே நீ"

p. 58, first column, line 6:

"ஒன்றும் கதைக்கவில்லை"

We regret the errors.

Nothing to Teach, Nothing to Sell

SUNYA BABA

Part II*

In our previous issue, we recounted Sunyata's early life and life-transforming encounters with Sri Ramana Maharshi. We conclude with a brief account of his later life and meetings with Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Anandamayi Ma, Neem Karoli Baba, J. Krishnamurti, Indira Gandhi, and others.

— Editor

“IT WAS in the winter of 1965,” recalls Dr. O.P. Bharadwaj, “when I first met Sunyataji at Bhatinda, in Punjab. He was staying with my brother.

“No meeting is a chance meeting,’ Sunyata said to me. ‘It is all pre-ordained and pre-determined.’ He stayed with us in our house for a few days. We had never met anyone like him before. He had no preference for anything. He was calm and quiet till somebody put him questions which he then answered effortlessly. He was a lover of Silence. Not physical silence but the Silence of the ego. Sunyata was word-free, ego-free, and desire-free.

“Thereafter, he stayed at my home often when he was travelling. But he was always keen to go back to his abode in Almora. When asked if he ever felt lonely, he would reply, ‘No. I am whole when I am alone.’

“He had little but it was difficult to make him accept anything — shoes, clothing and other bare necessities of life. I never saw him fall sick or take any medicine. During our evening walks, I could not keep pace with him. He walked fast and straight without effort. His was an attitude of complete oneness with Reality. We never saw him become impatient. He could fit into every situation, favourable and unfavourable.”

Once, in a Calcutta slum, a Bengali youth chopping onions inside a little shop shouted out

to Sunyata, “In the whole world, there is nothing but God!”

In his travels, Sunyata visited Gandhi's ashram in Wardha several times. Gandhi put everyone at his ease. Sunyata loved best the evening walks and the hour or two when Gandhi was at his spinning wheel. He also remembered setting off with his Dutch ladyfriend of the time, with brooms over their shoulders, and buckets, to clean the nearby town. The town was really too dirty for any impression to be made, Sunyata laughed, but Gandhi believed in it and Sunyata accepted it while he was there.

He didn't accept Gandhi's Monday silences, however. Sunyata never observed any formal silence, like using a slate or refusing to speak for a specified length of time. He lived naturally in silence, unless prodded by a direct question. For this reason, Sunyata recalled very little in the way of conversation.

Sunyata was a frequent guest at the Nehru family's various residences, but most of the time Nehru himself was in jail. Meetings were always short. Later, when Nehru was P.M., this process went even further. Like the time Nehru was in Almora and somebody forgot to switch off the mike after his speech. Suddenly, Nehru's voice boomed over the crowds, “Where's Sunyata? Where did Sunyata go?” An American friend of Sunyata's was heard to exclaim, “How the hell

* Continued from previous issue

does that bum Sorensen know the Prime Minister?" Sunyata tells the story with a chuckle.

Nehru could be playful too. He once told Lady Mountbatten tall tales of Sunyata and his "cave-man life." Her ladyship was fascinated and became a friend, introducing him to the Nepalese P.M. who invited him to Kathmandu.

In 1953, when Sunyata became an Indian citizen, Nehru told him, "You have done us the greatest honour by becoming one of us."

Sunyata and J. Krishnamurti were part of a group invited by Nora Richard to her place in the Kangra Valley for several days "to meet each other and discuss where necessary." The setting was spectacular, with a panoramic view of the valley for miles around.

Again, the conversation played little part in Sunyata's memory. He thinks maybe Krishnamurti was "a bit shy of my dress. He's very anti gurus and uniforms." Later, he and Krishnamurti kept up a correspondence. Sunyata

Self-Radiant Silence

By Sunyata

Despite his limpid freedom of being, Sunyata was capable of penning impassioned prose-poetry, as in this fiery piece:

Come holy Silence, come great bride of all creation. Come holy Silence, reach — reach from the presence of God and envelop us. Let the inner sea heave no more in sound, hold the stars still in their commotion. Fold up all sounds until all is soundless and pure.

Ah, the holy Silence. There is nought besides.

Open ye gates — for the Silence screens us purely, and we may slip through. All that matters is to be at Home in the house of the God of Life; there is the deep and lovely quiet of a strong heart at peace.

To be able to forget, to be able to yield to God who dwells in the deepest Silence. Only in sheer Silence are we in God, for when we know in fullness, we have left off knowing; when I can strip myself of the trash of personal feeling, ideas, and concepts, and get down to my naked Sun-Self: the Self-luminous Silence.

If there were not an utter and absolute Light of Silence — an utter, sheer oblivion of ego — at the core of everything, how terrible the sun of day would be. But the very Sun himself is pivoted upon a core of pure Silence, and the integral soul has peace — inward, lovely peace.

Has man killed the Silence of the earth and ravished all the peaceful, obvious places where the devas used to alight? All the greatest teachers will tell you that the end of all knowledge is oblivion of the ego; sweet, dark, Self-radiant Silence, where I cease even from myself and am consummated.

was a little critical, saying that Krishnamurti's letters never really responded to his own — "Reply, not response."

They met several times. Krishnamurti is "very tense on the platform," said Sunyata, and he broke into a parody, raising his hands up to his chest, scrunching his face, and saying loudly, "Ohhh, if you would only listen!"

Sunyata knew Neem Karoli Baba quite well. Maharaj-ji spent a day with Sunyata in his hut.

No, not in silence, for flocks of devotees came up from Almora to get Maharaj-ji's blessing. It was Sunyata's busiest day ever.

Sunyata's story wouldn't be complete without mentioning his small plucky black-and-white dog named Wuti. Wuti was brought from Tibet in a sack along with a lion cub in 1950, and he became Sunyata's constant companion for the next nine years. Sunyata named him "Wuti" because that was the sound he made when he

Come — let us build a temple dedicated to Silence, with seven veils and an innermost Holy of Holies of sheer Silence. There ego-oblivion dwells, and the silent soul may sink into God at last, having passed the veils.

Are you willing to be sponged out, erased, cancelled, made Nothing? Are you willing to Be nothing, dipped in oblivion? If not, you will never really change. The Phoenix renews her youth only when she is burnt — burnt alive — down to hot and flocculent ash. Then the small stirring of a new, small fledgeling in the nest, with strands of down — like floating ash — shows that she is renewing her youth: Immortal Bird.

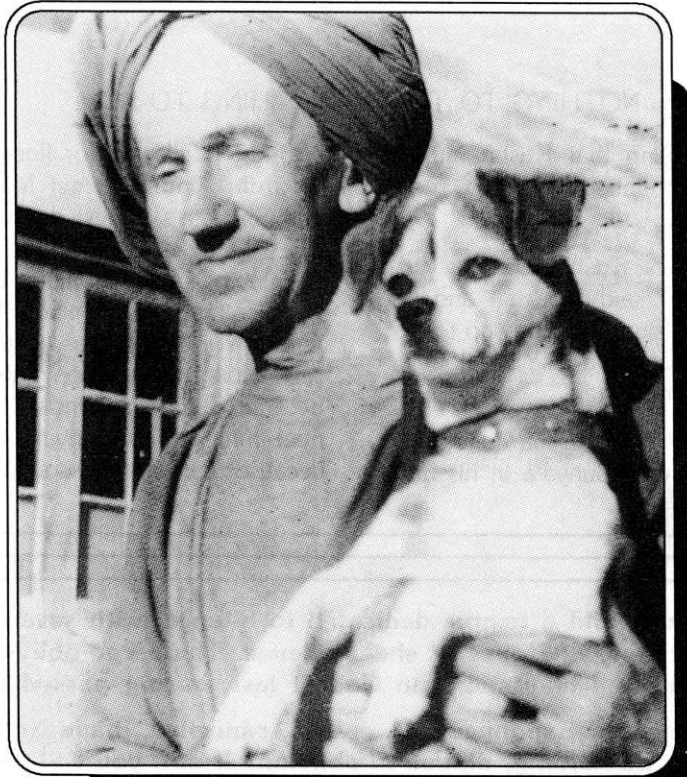
And now the best of all is to Be alone to experience one's soul in Silence. To be nakedly alone, unseen, is better than anything in the world, a relief like death. To Be — alone — is one of life's greatest delights. What is lovelier than to be alone, escaping the petrol-fumes of human conversation and the exhaust-smell of egos — and Be Alone?

Be Alone and feel the trees silently growing. Be Alone and see the moonlight outside, white and busy and silent. Be quite Alone and sense the living cosmos softly rocking, soothing, restoring, healing; when there is no grating of people with their ego-presence gnawing at the stillness of the *akasha*-air.

The unhappy psyches are those who cannot die and become silent and whole; most struggle on to assert themselves in aggressiveness and in wordiness. A man cannot fully live unless he dies and ceases to care; ceases to care and to try.

O ye seekers, when ye leave off seeking you will experience that there was never anything to seek for. You were only seeking to lose something, when you went forth so vigorously in search. Only the loving ones find love and they never have to reach for it.

Excerpted from "You And The Silence," by Sunya, *The Mountain Path*, July 1973, page 168.



Sunyata with Wutuji

barked. Wuti quickly learned to sit on his hind legs and *namaste* the local grocers (in exchange for a morsel of meat).

Once Sunyata was invited to sit in the "silence room" with the great Anandamayi Ma. Wuti went right inside too. Ma's disciples were upset at the canine impudence but Ma waved them off. She gave Sri Wuti a careful scrutiny and finally announced, "This is not a dog." But, as Sunyata recounts it, "she never did say what he was." Thereafter, she permitted Wuti into the inner sanctum of the ashram where no dogs were allowed.

After Wuti died, Sunyata changed Wuti's name to Wutuji and used this term to refer to his own higher Self. When Sunyata was asked why he changed the name, he replied, "Adding 'ji' to a name is what is done in India to show respect. The dog needed less bark and more bite."

Sunyata would have been happy and content to live in India for the remainder of his life. He never had the desire to go anywhere, let alone to America. In November 1973, a group of seekers from California associated with the Alan

Watts Society went to India to visit Lama Govinda, Sunyata's friend and neighbour. A local villager happened to mention to this group that there lived a solitary hermit-type nearby whom they might want to visit. They went to Sunyata's hut and decided that he indeed was an Enlightened One.

One of the group members told him, "You'll be in California next year." Sunyata protested, "But I have nothing to teach and nothing to sell." The gentleman replied, "That's why we want you!" Eventually, one of these visitors sent Sunyata a round-trip plane ticket to California with the promise, "Reality-wise, Sunyata need not do anything."

When he was invited to America, Sunyata believed that his life was drawing to an end. He was a man in his eighties who had spent many of the previous decades in silence. Over the years, however, he had developed a language to talk about his Reality and he discovered that there was an unusually good rapport with some of the spiritual seekers who had come from the West to visit India.

"*Prarabdha karma*," Sunyata once explained, "is the *karma* that cannot be changed in one's lifetime." And so it was his *karma*, playful and joyous as ever, to first visit "Yankeestan" — the land of "Bhagavan Sri Dollar" — at the tender young age of 84.

For the last six years of his life, he made his home in California. "I take my home with me wherever I go," he said. He made no effort to "do" anything. His mode was simply "to be". Many people claimed that significant changes in their lives would occur after meeting with him. "I do nothing," he would always say, "it just happens."

Weekly meetings were held aboard the S.S. Vallejo, Alan's old houseboat in Sausalito. They were magical but they also could be quite trying, as Sunyata delighted in maintaining that he was "perfectly useless" and had "nothing to teach, nothing to sell." But for others, that emptiness was very full and solid and alive.

"Everything always happens rightly," he would say to his fellow pilgrims. "All is right that seems most wrong."

While crossing a busy intersection in Fairfax, California, on the morning of Sunday, August 5th, 1984, he was struck by a car. He was taken to nearby Ross Hospital, but by that evening he entered into a coma.

"The day is still alive," recalled William Patterson, "when I sat in the intensive care unit of the Ross Valley Hospital and realised Sunyata had gone. 'Where could I go to?' I could hear him asking, 'I am is always here.'"

"Hours before, Jean Klein had had a premonition of a 'terrible accident.' He and his friend Emma now sat on the couch beside me. I sobbed uncontrollably. Then I heard this low steady hum. It was Jean Klein talking. It seemed like small talk. All this emotion was roaring inside me but now there was this hum, too. It was drawing a line through my consciousness. Suddenly, I found myself watching myself cry. In the midst of grief, there was no grief."

Sunyata lived another eight days, but never regained consciousness. He was 94.

After his passing away, Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister (who was assassinated two months later), reminisced: "I met Sunyataji first in the mid-thirties, drawn by the notices asking for silence, which indicated the approach to his abode. He kept in touch during my stay in Almora and later was a regular winter visitor to my father's house in Delhi. Afterwards, I did not see much of him though he did drop in a few times and often wrote.

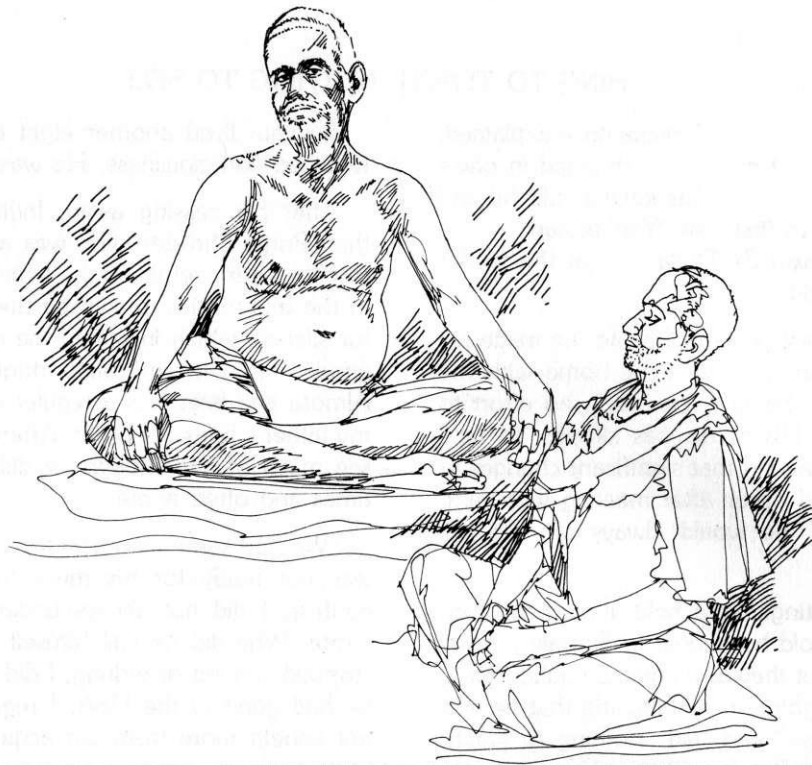
"We had some interesting talks but perhaps I was not ready for his message. And, I must confess, I did not always understand what he wrote. Why did he call himself Wu? When he stopped coming or writing, I did not realise that he had gone to the USA. I regret that I could not benefit more from our acquaintance.

"His detachment was obvious and he felt at peace with himself and his surroundings. He proved that in matters of the spirit there can be no boundaries of any kind."

San Bhagwat Singh, the retired headmaster of a local government school, an old friend who knew Sunyata since 1931, said on his passing: "He was a great soul and a source of pure love to all of us. He was a *janam-sidh*. He is really absorbed like a dewdrop into the vast sea."

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In earlier days, Sri Bhagavan was referred to by many as “the Ramakrishna of South India”. The appellation had deep significance. There is a great similarity between the teachings of the two Masters, whose lives overlap by some seven years (Sri Ramakrishna had *mahasamadhi* in 1886, and Sri Bhagavan was born in 1879). Thus, Sri Bhagavan was available as a living inspiration for the second generation of Ramakrishna disciples. Many yearning seekers who had been captured by the charm of Sri Ramakrishna were also ardent followers of Sri Ramana, seeing no essential difference between the two. A few of the most eminent of those who came to Sri Bhagavan for inspiration and guidance were Swami Siddheswarananda, Swami Yatiswarananda, Swami Lokesananda, Swami Ekatananda, Swami Ranganathananda, Swami Desikananda, and Swami Chidbhavananda.

When “Chinnu Maharaj” — as Swami Chidbhavananda was popularly known — came to Bhagavan Ramana, he experienced for the first time the Truth of Advaita. In Sri Ramana’s Silence he lost himself and found his Self. For the remainder of his life, Swami Chidbhavananda never failed to direct any earnest seeker to go to Tiruvannamalai to have *darshan* of the Maharshi while He was in the body, and to refer to His teachings after His *Mahasamadhi*. Anyone who came to him from Sri Ramanasramam received deferential treatment from this fellow-pilgrim.

A true son of both Gurus, an ideal *sannyasin*, karma yogi and *jnani* combined, Swami Chidbhavananda was indeed a true son of *Punya Bharat* (as Swami Vivekananda called India)!

— Editor

Swami Chidbhananda

Once, when Swami Chidbhananda was seriously ill, a devotee enquired about his health. "As far as I am concerned," answered the Swami, "I am perfectly all right. But if you want to know about the condition of my body, you'd better ask the doctor."

This bright light in the Ramakrishna Order of *sannyasins*, a spiritual teacher of great eminence, as well as a dynamic and skillful administrator, was born on March 11, 1898, in the Coimbatore District of Tamil Nadu. In preparation for entering the Indian Civil Service, he was given a thoroughly Western education in English-medium schools, and his parents planned to send him to England for higher studies. While he was in Madras to collect his passport, he noticed a book in a roadside kiosk. It was Swami Vivekananda's *Lectures from Colombo to Almora*. Chinnu, as he was then called, purchased the book, read it and immediately changed his mind about going abroad. He informed his family and joined Presidency College in Madras instead.

Here he was able to move closely with both Swami Brahmananda and Swami Sivananda, direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, and became a frequent visitor to the Mylapore Ramakrishna Math. Completing his junior B.A. in 1922, Chinnu proceeded directly to the Belur Math in Calcutta to be a *brahmachari* under Swami Sivananda. In July, 1926, Swami Sivananda initiated him into *sannyasa*, giving him the name Chidbhananda.

Sri Ramakrishna and his disciples were not the only influences on the aspiring *sadhak*. Even before he left for Calcutta and many times thereafter, Swami Chidbhananda undertook the sacred pilgrimage to Tiruvannamalai for *darshan* of Sri Ramana Maharshi.

On his very first visit, the future Swami was impressed most of all by the Silence reigning

supreme around the Maharshi. He immediately recognised Sri Bhagavan as "the author of that Silence — hence its perfection." It was this that would draw him again and again to Maharshi's feet: to enjoy the silent communion with the Self — his great goal in life.

From 1926 to 1940, Swami Chidbhananda was in charge of the Sri Ramakrishna Ashram at Ootacamund. During that busy period he took as many opportunities as possible to go to Arunachala to see the Maharshi. "I was not inclined to talk much with him," he wrote in the *Ramana Smrti* Souvenir. "Being seated in his presence was more than sufficient. Occasionally he spoke, but his Silence was what I sought and prized every time I went to him."

The Swami was also impressed with Sri Bhagavan's skill at fielding apparently foolish questions in such a way as to direct the inquirer's mind inwards. On one occasion a man came into the Hall and began wailing that all his life-long devotions had still not evoked the mercy of God. After he had exhausted himself, Sri Bhagavan said calmly: "Funny man. He cries — what is there to sob about? Instead of being poised in the blissful Self, he goes on wailing." The man immediately saw his mistake.

On another occasion, a man entered, took a seat near Sri Bhagavan and asked, "Bhagavan, what is your view on birth control?" He, too, spent himself on his pet notion, and silence reigned again in the Hall. In the midst of the silence, Sri Bhagavan asked, "Do you know death control?"

On another visit the Swami remembered Sri Bhagavan's injunction to "plunge the purified mind into the Heart," and decided to practise it then and there.

"I gazed at him and he gazed back at me," he writes. "What followed was indescribable. His body seemed a glass case from which a blissful brilliance streamed out. More than half an hour



passed in this way. It was an experience unique and unforgettable.”

The experience erased forever any doubt about the immensity of the Guru’s grace and the invaluable nature of *satsang*. “It confirmed [for me] Sri Ramakrishna’s statement that spiritual experience can be transmitted from one person to another in the manner in which material things are handed over.”

Sri Bhagavan, when once queried about this point in reference to Swami Vivekananda, answered that, “Yes, it is possible. But a great deal depends upon the spiritual maturity of the recipient.”

Swami Chidbhavananda was thus triply blessed: he had the good fortune to come into contact with Sri Bhagavan; he had the spiritual acumen to recognise His greatness; and he had the spiritual maturity to thoroughly benefit from it. The inspiration thus received was ever a guiding light for the Swami for the rest of his life.

Swami Chidbhavananda went on to become a brilliant scholar-*sadhak* and skillful administrator. He published more than 100 books in English and Tamil. By far the most popular one was, and continues to be, his Tamil and English translations, with commentary, of the *Bhagavad Gita*, which have already sold more than 3,00,000 copies. Under this administrator *par excellence*, many institutions took shape and prospered, especially *Sri Ramakrishna Tapovanam* at Tiruparaithurai.

Despite his high office, Swami Chidbhavananda led a very austere and simple life. He lived in a small room which he himself swept and cleaned. He washed his own clothes and looked after all his personal needs. His philosophy and his humility forbade him from taking the help of another unless it was absolutely essential.

Ever maintaining simplicity amidst the complexities of work, Swami attained *mahasamadhi* on November 16, 1985, at the advanced age of 88. His books and his example live on to inspire earnest seekers everywhere.

The *Ribhu Gita* contains the *upadesa* of Sage Ribhu to his noted disciple Nidaga concerning the supreme *advaitic* truth of the non-dual Brahman. One without a second. However, it is said that at first Nidaga was unable to grasp the teaching well enough to attain realisation, and returned to his native town to practice ceremonial religion.

Out of his compassion for the beloved disciple, Ribhu one day disguised himself as a village rustic and went to Nidaga's town. Finding the disciple absorbed in watching a royal procession, Ribhu enquired as to the cause of all the bustle. Not recognising his Guru, Nidaga answered that the king was going in procession.

"Oh! It is the king! He goes in procession! But where is he?" asked the rustic.

"There, on the elephant," answered Nidaga.

"You say the king is on the elephant. Yes, I see the two," said the rustic, "but which is the king and which is the elephant?"

"What!" exclaimed Nidaga. "You see the two, but do not know that the man above is the king and the animal below is the elephant? What is the use of talking to a man like you?"

"But," persisted the rustic, "you said 'above' and 'below' — what do they mean?"

"You see the king and the elephant, the one *above* and the other *below*, and yet you want to know what is meant by 'above' and 'below'?" shouted Nidaga, losing all patience. "Bend forward and I will show you!"

The rustic did as he was told, and Nidaga got on his shoulders, saying, "Know it now. I am *above* as the king, and you are *below* as the elephant. Is that clear enough?"

"No, not yet," answered the rustic. "The 'king', the 'elephant', 'above', 'below' — are all clear. But pray, tell me what you mean by 'I' and 'you'?"

When Nidaga was thus suddenly confronted with the problem of defining the "you" apart from the "I", realisation of the Truth dawned in him. Jumping down, he fell at his Master's feet, saying, "Who but my venerable Guru Ribhu could have thus drawn my mind from the superficialities of physical existence to the true Being of the Self?"

Sri Bhagavan used to say that the chanting of the *Ribhu Gita* was itself sufficient to induce in the mind the direct perception of the Truth.



The Ribhu Gita

Translated by ROBERT BUTLER

Chapter Two

Containing the teaching, '**You are of the nature of *Brahman***'.

1. With love in his heart Nidaga addressed the following questions to the sage Ribhu: 'Great teacher, who are they who are fit to obtain the knowledge of that Supreme *Brahman* and subsequently become one with it? What is the nature of that most fitting knowledge? And what is my own true nature in its pure and eternal state? I beg you to give a full reply to these queries in accordance with the revelation of the flawless Lord Siva.' The sage gave the following most pertinent reply:
2. Those who have flawlessly practised virtue throughout many births, with no attachment to the fruits of their actions, and have fulfilled the four disciplinary requirements through the lasting attainment of an impeccable purity of mind, will, through the correct practice of hearing, reflection and one-pointedness, attain in this life the knowledge of the Supreme *Brahman* and will become one with that indivisible non-dual transcendent *Brahman*, independent of which not a single atom can exist.
3. To refuse reality to all the artificial concepts relating to the soul and God by the method of uninterrupted self-enquiry, and to fearlessly attain the knowledge of the indivisible Supreme *Brahman*, which knows no weakness, by the repetition of the holy phrase, 'I am *Brahman*', is to attain that enduring and worthy wisdom whose form is *Brahman* itself. The resolute of mind who avail themselves of this knowledge will not experience the ignominious bondage of birth and death.
4. Unmoving, its nature is reality, consciousness and bliss. It is everlasting peace and tranquility. It is ever without attribute or diversification. It is unmanifest, formless and without defect. In it the unreal manifestation of the phenomenal world is totally absent. It is the unique all-embracing perfection which knows no equal. It is the indivisible non-dual Supreme *Brahman*, and that *Brahman* is eternally your own nature.
5. You are that Supreme *Brahman* whose nature is reality. You are that *Brahman*, the fullness and perfection of all things. You are the Supreme *Brahman* whose nature is consciousness. You are that *Brahman* in which the world, the soul and God do not exist. You are the Supreme *Brahman* whose nature is goodness. You are that *Brahman* in which name and form and all the rest do not exist. You are the Supreme *Brahman* whose nature is infinitely subtle. You are the Supreme *Brahman* which stands alone with no support but its own Self.
6. You are that *Brahman* which is formless like the open skies. You are that *Brahman*, the reality of which does not err. You are the Supreme *Brahman* which is imbued with all knowledge. You are that *Brahman* in which the world and all else do not exist. You are the Supreme *Brahman* which stands alone as the void. You are the Supreme *Brahman* which is the pure sky of consciousness. You are that

- Brahman* which is non-dual and indestructible. You are the indivisible fullness and perfection which is *Brahman*.
7. You are the Supreme *Brahman* which is the substratum of everything. You are that *Brahman* which witnesses all that exists. You are that *Brahman*, the possessor of all divine qualities. You are the Supreme *Brahman*, the universally transcendent. You are that *Brahman* in which neither the heavens nor any other entity exists. You are that *Brahman* which is beyond time and space. You are that *Brahman* which no defilement can obscure. You are that flawlessly existent Supreme *Brahman*.
 8. You are the Supreme *Brahman* which exists as the uniquely real. You are that *Brahman* which exists as the eternally blissful. You are the Supreme *Brahman* which is totally suffused with intelligence. You are that *Brahman* whose nature is the bliss of consciousness. You are that *Brahman* in which there is no joy or sorrow. You are that *Brahman* in which the pairs of opposites do not exist. You are the Supreme *Brahman* which is to the world what the letter 'a' is to the alphabet. You are that indivisible *Brahman* which delights in itself alone.
 9. Yours is the true nature of the Supreme *Brahman*: the Real, the perpetually enduring, the eternal, the spotless, the pure, the self-existent, the free and the desireless.¹
 10. Yours is the true nature of the Supreme *Brahman*: equanimous, peaceful, imper-turbable, majestic, flawless, all-pervading, undefiled and unmoving.
 11. Yours is the true nature of the Supreme *Brahman*: stainless, free from all sickness, non-dual, unique, having no home, perfection which is that loftiest Sivam, the mightiest of the mighty.
 12. Yours is that bodiless Self-nature whose form is pure consciousness. Yours is that celestial Self-nature whose form is pure consciousness. Yours is that unwearied Self-nature whose form is pure consciousness. Yours is that deeply blissful Self-nature whose form is pure consciousness. Yours is that non-dual Self-nature whose form is pure consciousness. Yours is that indivisible Self-nature whose form is pure consciousness. Yours is that indestructible Self-nature whose form is pure consciousness.²
 15. Yours is that Self-nature in which there is no trace of the world's defilement. Yours is that Self-nature in which there is no differentiation or identification. Yours is that Self-nature in which there is no trace of the ego's impurity. Yours is that Self-nature in which there is unsullied knowledge. Yours is that supreme Self-nature which underlies the three states of the soul. Yours is the supreme Self-nature which lies beyond even the highest state of the soul. Yours is the supreme Self-nature which is filled with bliss. Yours is the pure and supreme Self-nature of *Brahman*.³
 25. You are the reality designated by the word 'Thou'. You are the reality designated by the word 'art'. You are the reality designated by the word 'That'. You are the supreme reality whose meaning is one and indivisible. You are that enduring reality

¹ In verses 9, 10 and 11 the phrase 'Yours is the true nature of the Supreme *Brahman*' is repeated twenty-four times. In each case the phrase is followed by one of the twenty-four epithets which appear after the colons. The verses appear here in a contracted form to save space and to avoid what some readers may take to be tedious repetition.

² Verses 13 and 14 have the same format as verse 12. In these two verses there are sixteen statements. In each case a 'Yours is that ... Self-nature' phrase is followed by 'whose form is pure consciousness'.

³ Verses 16 to 24 follow the same pattern as verse 15. They are omitted here to avoid unnecessary repetitions.

which knows no fear. You are that supreme reality which is incomparable delight. You are the meaning conveyed by the word 'Real' and all similar terms. You are the essence underlying all phenomena of mind.

26. You are the reality which is the chief import of all those noble phrases which are the *Vedas*' crown. You are the reality which is the subject of all sacred formulae such as, 'Consciousness in its pure state is *Brahman*.' You are the reality which cannot be described, not even by those powerful sacred formulae. You are the reality which exists spontaneously in total freedom, in a way indescribable by words.
27. You are that indivisible Supreme Godhead in which there is no trace of Brahma and the other four aspects of Lord Siva. You are that Supreme Godhead, the ultimate meaning of all, in which no delusive manifestation can occur. You are that Godhead, the greatest of the great, the clear awareness which nothing can tarnish. You are the Supreme Godhead, the infinite expanse of consciousness with which no activity whatsoever can be associated.
28. You are the Supreme Godhead whose form is truth, firmly established in immutable tranquility. You are the Supreme Godhead whose form is consciousness, indivisible and inconceivable. You are that eternally blissful Supreme Godhead where no blameworthy thought of birth's afflictions exists. You are the Supreme Godhead, the all-embracing plenitude which knows neither bondage, liberation nor anything else.
29. You are that *Brahman*, the greatest of the great, that vast firmament of pure knowledge which contains no contradiction. You are that *Brahman*, a single mass of consciousness in which birth and all such illusions are absent. You are the Supreme *Brahman*, inseparable from that indivisible Self, independently of which not

a single atom can exist. You are that Supreme Brahman which stands alone, as itself, dependent only upon itself, with Selfhood as its only attribute.

30. Why should I keep on talking, analysing and making distinctions? Disciple, your own true inner nature is none other than that undifferentiated and indivisible Supreme *Brahman*. This I have stated categorically to you, exactly as I learned it through our noble Lord's grace. Since this truth is the divine edict received at the two holy feet of our Lord, there cannot be an atom of doubt concerning it. Therefore, simply by attaining to a realisation of the knowledge, 'I am *Brahman*', you will become one with that indivisible Supreme Reality.
31. These words inspired a deep devotion in Nidaga, filling him with an unparalleled delight. Overcome by a wonder hard to conceive, he offered worship and praise to the sage Ribhu, saying, 'Great teacher, I beg you to speak to me again out of your compassion so that I may become established in that indivisible knowledge.' The great sage Ribhu was moved by a deep affection for Nidaga, who beseeched him in this way with joy in his heart, and began his answer:
32. Nidaga, in order that it may become in-eradicably established in your understanding, I shall explain to you again and again in all its wondrous diversity that supreme and indivisible truth which Lord Sankara, the embodiment of grace, who grants happiness to every class of living soul, formerly, upon Mount Kailash, revealed to myself as the highest law. You should listen carefully to this supreme and indivisible truth with a pure and undefiled mind.
33. In truth, the universe never, at any time, exists. No world was ever brought into existence. No world ever possesses extension in time and space. And no world ever dies and is extinguished. The Supreme

Brahman alone exists in the form of pure consciousness, free from the diversity of the world's apparent manifestation. And that *Brahman* is the eternally enduring reality. Nidaga, this is the truth which cannot be doubted.

34. Some say by way of argument that since the world's appearance before them is the common experience of all men, it is the individual mind-essence, evolving from pure consciousness, that appears as the world. But if we examine this mind-essence closely, it is no different from that *Brahman* whose nature is consciousness itself. Therefore, my son, we conclude that *Brahman*, in its eternal perfection, alone exists.
35. If we examine the silver which appears to line the inside of an oyster shell, we see that it does not exist independently of the shell itself. In the same way, if we examine the individual mind-essence which appears to evolve from pure consciousness, we see that it does not exist in its own right, separate from that consciousness. Since the mind-essence has no reality, then the world itself cannot exist. Therefore, my son, we conclude that *Brahman*, in its eternal perfection, alone exists.
36. If we properly scrutinise all the phenomena which appear to manifest and exist independently within the Supreme *Brahman*, which is the substratum of the whole universe, we see that they are none other than that *Brahman* whose nature is the Real. Truly, if a rope is erroneously perceived to be a snake, does that mean that it can ever really be anything more than just a rope when we look carefully into the matter? Therefore, my son, we conclude that *Brahman*, in its eternal perfection, alone exists.
37. There is no *maya*, nor anything evolving from it. There is no delusion, nor any world to engender it. There is no wicked

Love Songs of the Undivided

By Kavita

Where my voice dies, another rises
That does not take on words
But speaks through everything
that is —

The source of the dream
Is ever-sparkling, clear, transparent
Electric, as a river unseen
Running through both dreamer
and dream —

I am kissed, I am the kiss
Of awakening
To myself
From a dream
Of separation
That never
Existed

* * *

Thousand-chambered echoes of a dream
Mirrored in the diamond-space of silence;
Dancing rainbow-waves
Of a sea
Without a seer
Or a seen...

The face that divided
To look at itself
At last turns inward
And the mirage
Vanishes
With the
Horizon...

* * *

The thunder of the whole world
Breaks from a drop of silence —
Lightning cracks
From an opening
No-one has ever
Seen —

* * *

In a drop of silence
A thousand moons
Mirror a thousand suns;
Who speaks of
Dark and light,
Night and day?

ego, no sense-obsessed mind, no volition, no intellect. There is no body, no deed, no doer. There are no organs of action, no seer, no sight. There are no righteous teachings whatever to tell of that Supreme *Brahman* which alone exists for all eternity.

38. There is no body, nor any other limiting adjunct. There is no ignorance nor any aware discrimination. There is no godly devotion, nor any lofty spiritual practice. There is no hearing of the truth, nor any other means of acquiring divine wisdom. There is no blissful supreme state, no divine knowledge. There is no debilitating bondage, no final release. *Brahman* alone, the unique supreme perfection, the irrefutable truth, exists for all eternity.
39. The four prerequisites of literary works do not exist. The three kinds of relationships which are spoken of, do not exist. The five inert elements do not exist. All the five aspects of the Lord, including *Sadasiva*, do not exist. All the jargon of philosophers signifies nothing real. Eternally shining out as pure consciousness, the Supreme *Brahman* alone exists in the form of bliss which no affliction can mar.
40. Nothing has existed or will ever exist. Nothing exists which is currently being cognised by the senses. The holy waters of Gaya, Ramesvaram, the river Ganga and all the rest do not exist. None of the Gods we praise, including Lord Siva Himself, really exists. All the sacred vows we perform in accordance with the moral law do not exist. The variously apportioned fruits of men's actions do not exist. Causeless, the Supreme *Brahman* exists for all eternity as the sole reality.
41. The divisions of caste and the stages of life do not exist. The variously classified sins and virtues are all non-existent. Hell, heaven, to which men aspire, and all other worlds do not exist. All the pairs of opposites, like joy and sorrow, do not exist. There is no oneness nor any differentiated duality. There is no illusion created by false attribution. Unborn and unmoving, the Supreme *Brahman* alone exists in the form of the Real, which is its essential nature.
42. Nothing exists to be grasped by the intellect. Nothing exists to be reflected upon by the impure mind. Nothing exists to be considered by the thought processes. No portentous words exist for the voice to utter. No phenomenal world, with its pairs of opposites, exists. The dread which plagues that phenomenal existence does not exist. Eternal and unmoving, the Supreme *Brahman* alone exists in the form of the Real, which is its essential nature.
43. The six modifications of physical existence, starting with birth, do not exist. The six emotional states originating in the body, which corrupt the mind, do not exist. The four states of the soul, including wakefulness, do not exist. The one who fancies that he experiences those changing states does not exist. Existence and non-existence are equally unreal. Nothing exists, whether collectively or as a diverse individuality. Immovable, *Brahman* alone exists as the indivisible truth in the form of a knowledge which has no second.
44. There is no statement which says, 'The universe is not.' There is no statement which says, 'All is illusion.' There is no statement which says, 'Everything is *Brahman*.' There is no statement which says, 'The immortal "I" is Brahman.' There is no statement which says, 'The enduring *Brahman* is my own Self.' There is no 'I', no 'You', nor any other saying. Immovable and indivisible, the Supreme *Brahman* alone exists beyond the reach of any verbal formulation whatsoever.
45. In reality, the three *gunas*, including

sattva, do not exist; neither does the interplay between them. There is no *dvaita*, no *advaita*, nor any other religion, nor is there any teacher or pupil to teach or be taught about them. The confusion of this phenomenal world does not exist. The very words 'does not exist' do not exist. Blissful and supreme, its inherent nature Self-awareness only, *Brahman* alone exists as the infinite sky of pure consciousness.

46. For those who, relying on this supreme and indivisible certainty, have left behind all the wandering mind's confusion, and have become one with the non-dual ultimate *Brahman*, which is beginningless, endless and free of all content, the perpetual bondage of birth and death will fall away. For all the rest that bondage will never end. Worthy ascetic, you should therefore, by means of that indivisible and supreme certainty, become one with that ultimate *Brahman*, which is eternally without distinctions.
47. Within that Supreme *Brahman*, which is the foundation underlying everything, all that is perceived through the illusive power of *maya* has no actual existence whatsoever. Therefore you should refuse reality to all of that, realising that what remains thereafter is *Brahman*, alone and undefiled. This spotless and indivisible truth I have told to you exactly as the immaculate Lord Siva revealed it to me. Whoever listens attentively to these words

even once and understands their meaning will become one with that very *Brahman*.

48. In the ocean foam appears, consisting of a mass of evanescent bubbles. Similarly, within the boundless Supreme Siva, the insubstantial pageant of all things moveable and immovable appears. Those adepts who, through steadfast self-enquiry, have attained the strength of matchless divine wisdom, will realise that all this is none other than the all-pervading Self-nature of the Supreme Lord Siva, and so, shaking off all the horrendous bonds of birth, will become one with that flawless and supreme Self-nature.
49. Thus did the enlightened sage Suta explain to all the other *rishis* the essential teaching that the world is *Brahman* only, saying, 'Such was the noble reply that Skanda in his ineffable compassion gave to Saikisavya, telling him how the sage Ribhu imparted to Nidaga that supreme, indivisible, non-dual truth exactly as he himself had received it through the Lord's grace.'
50. Having firmly established the teaching: 'You are that selfsame eternal reality which has no attributes,' and having revealed that all worlds, being transitory, have no real existence whatsoever, and that the true ultimate reality is That which is free of all such delusive manifestation, our heavenly King in His boundless form resumed His dance of supreme bliss.

Awakening

By Dianne Vielleux

In the bright sky of pure Self-awareness
Shines the resplendent light of Siva-Knowledge.
All bonds of attachment have been cut asunder.
Sparks of Siva-bliss spring forth from the Heart
And flood the mind with waves of joy.

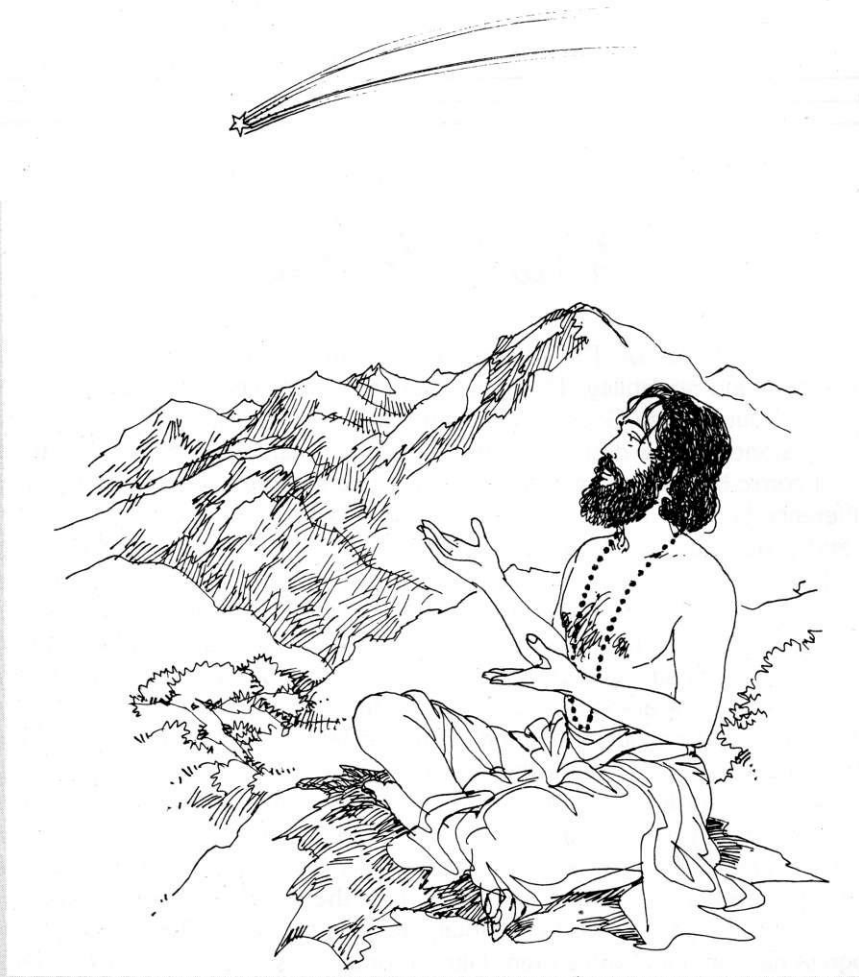
A True Reflection

The last two issues of *The Mountain Path* are nothing less than stunning, in layout, design and readability. The covers are particularly good and the photographic work carried out by Dev Gogoi is excellent. Yes, there is a minor element of comic book appearance in the design, but this is not necessarily a detraction. Part of the appeal of comic books is the emphasis produced by the artwork and layout. However, the difference between the two is fundamental — comics are produced for entertainment and profit, but *The Mountain Path* is produced out of love and this element shines throughout and gives it a 'life' that no comic book can ever hope to match. As to the contents: It is important that it does not become a dry academic periodical, full of endless and argumentative references. It does reflect the fundamental truth of Bhagavan's teaching and as important, it helps to penetrate the 'truth' in other faiths — something which is absolutely necessary for those of us to who carry the baggage of those beliefs and prejudices hammered into us by the 'blood and thunder brigade' in our formative years. Beliefs which tend to rear up to strangle us at the most vulnerable moments in our *sadhana*. It is never enough for us come to the right conclusions alone, we all need the confirmation from others who are patently our 'spiritual betters', to help us be rid of the poisons accumulated over so many years of wrong perception — and also to learn to take the world less seriously, which is a poison in itself. Bhagavan's wisdom is total, He understood that Advaitic *Sadhana* has to progress hand-in-hand with current faiths in order for success; the sudden switching of one to the other simply transfers the former prejudices along with it and this is regression not progression. *His* Truth has to burn itself slowly into our psyche in order to undo the damage of countless aeons.

For those of us who see the prospect of *Mukti* as an ever receding horizon, *The Mountain Path* is a light to penetrate the darkness in our times of despair. Not all can live at the blessed feet of Bhagavan Ramana and Holy Arunachala, but we can at least taste that Holy presence through the illuminating and spirit-lifting contents of this magazine. Anything which helps the *sadhaka* in the seemingly endless war against the ego is welcome, whether poignant jokes, stories, overt criticism or otherwise. I for one need as much as possible.

Finally, as for Bhagavan's approval — how could it be published if it were not approved, where can there be room for doubt?

— G. Boyd, Scarborough, U.K.



When Sri Narayana Maharaj was touring South India, he had *darshan* of Sri Bhagavan. This contact entirely transformed his inner life. Great Ramana-*bhaktas* such as Sri Parthasarathy (later known as Sadhu Parthasarathy) became his admirers and kept in constant touch with Maharaj, even after he returned to the Himalayas. When any South Indians came to the Maharaj he would enjoin them to go to the heart of their own land and see Sri Ramana Maharshi to receive His blessings.

Sri Narayana Maharaj's one-pointed devotion to and adoration of Sri Bhagavan was such that on April 14, 1950, when the Maharshi shed the body, Maharaj, gazing at the glorious Himalayas, had a vision of the singular meteor streaking through the sky. He bowed to it, intuitively identifying it as Sri Maharshi's *jyoti*. The very next day he wrote a letter about it to a devotee in Madras.

— Editor

Sri Narayana Maharaj of the Himalayas

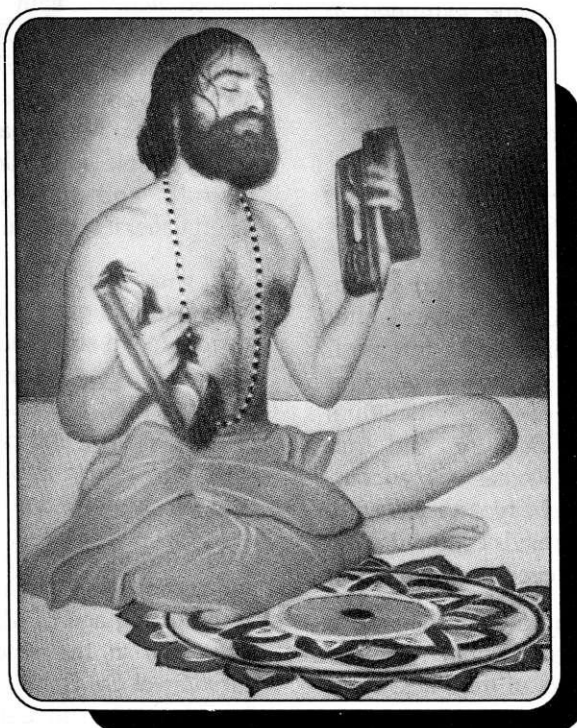
“Knowledge of the Name is the essence of life and the essence of Jnana”

O Name! beside whom there are no names. O Name! ever-living, self-subsisting, by whom all subsist. All is in the Name. The Name is all in all, for the Name is the eternal NOW, is the reality of Being, beyond all relativity, the knowledge and the known.

— from *Song of the Name*
by Sri Narayana Maharaj

WHO IS this ecstatic *bhakta* of Himalayas? One who, while singing the Name and glories of Bhagavan Narayana (Lord Vishnu), made his body the vehicle of perfect *karma yoga*, while he himself abode in the realisation of *jnana*? We will never know for certain as Sri Narayana Maharaj never revealed his past — family history, birth place, upbringing, etc. Neither was he an orator, preacher or writer of books. What we know of him and his mind is from the many letters he wrote to his followers and devotees, and their reports of him. It is said, however, that Sri Narayana was born on December 2, 1914,

of a great and noble family from Karnataka, and that the family had for several generations received high honours from the rulers of Mysore State. Although affluent, the family was traditional and spiritually inclined. It appears that Sri Narayana left his home to take to the life of a wandering *sadhu* at an early age. He travelled throughout India, mostly on foot, and also went to such South-east Asian countries as Burma. Somewhere during this time he attained *vairagya* (renunciation) and went to the Himalayas near Gangotri, where he met his Guru. After two years of intense *tapas* and in-



Sri Narayana Maharaj

struction under his Guru, the latter enjoined his disciple to express his realisation by serving the innocent but poor and illiterate people of the Himalayas.

It was with this sacred mission enthroned in his heart that Sri Narayana began searching for a suitable place to establish an ashram. In 1936, he finally selected a piece of land some three miles north of Sosa, and 120 miles from Almora, in the northeast Himalayas. It is situated at an altitude of 9,000 feet on the route to holy Manasarovar and Mount Kailas. The locality is aptly named "Kailas". Construction of the ashram began with a small band of followers. After giving detailed plans about the ashram's construction, Sri Narayana left for the plains and stayed at Gangapur (Rajasthan), mostly in cremation grounds and cemeteries, where his continuous *samadhi* and great spiritual qualities attracted a number of people who ultimately became his devoted followers. These devotees had relatives in Gujarat and Bombay who invited him to visit them. In this way, the circle of devotees widened and in years to come extended to Madras and Madurai in the south and Delhi and Calcutta in the north. Sufficient funds poured in to bring the construction of the Himalayan ashram to completion in 1946.

The great mission of which the ashram was the nucleus began. Some seventeen institutions for the uplift of the community received the blessings of Sri Narayana, the Bapu Mahavidyalaya, an Intermediate College named after Mahatma Gandhi, being perhaps the foremost. At the ashram itself activities include *gopalan* (maintaining cattle for dairy and agricultural purposes), bee-keeping, agriculture, and fruit cultivation. In such ways devotees are encouraged to lead a life of simplicity and self-sufficiency with their hearts and minds centered upon the divine Name, which is ever on their lips.

Sri Narayana Maharaj had a stentorian voice and his *bhajans* (devotional singing) reverberated among the snowy peaks of the Himalayas. His deep interest in the well-being of humanity was fully reflected in his bestowing loving care on the poor and illiterate people of the area.

Through the power of his own indomitable devotion, he revived the *bhakti* cult in the northernmost part of India.

Sri Narayana preached without words or assertions. He rarely spoke, even in greeting. As Sunya Baba has written, "No noisy greeting and no word-symbols blurred the intuitive eye. And this word-free awareness, be it mutual or not, was the real meeting — the true sharing in mystic clarity and in unclinging love. It is wisdom by identity or *essence-darshan* The mature quality and radiance of his Silence shone through in a calm strength and purity that transcended power, willing and trying!"

Although he drew multitudes to himself, people always found Sri Narayana to be free and easy to approach, whether about intimate or general matters. He had few disciples. He did not give *diksha*, *mantras* or *upadesa*. He lived and radiated the impersonal and all-suffusing Lord Narayana. His love was not possessive; it was pure and liberating. The reality in which he moved was "radiant love-sameness," a calm, joyous wholeness in Silence and in inner freedom. It healed, harmonised and lifted the mind above ego-consciousness. Yet with all his mature radiance, Sri Narayana was playful and childlike, utterly simple and guileless, intuitive rather than mental, and totally devoid of ambition, assertiveness or the lust for power.

It was ever an inspiring sight to see Sri Narayana singing *bhajans* and playing his *kartals* (palm-sized musical cymbals). His whole body and being became an ecstatic rhythm of the grace and unity of the One he worshipped. Both spectators and participants were drawn, at least temporarily, into the heightened consciousness of harmony and Be-ing.

His devotion to Bhagavan Ramana was utter and complete. Though the Maharaj passed away at the young age of 42, he lived a very rich and active life in the *smarana* of the Lord. The *darshan* of Sri Ramana consummated his inner flowering into spiritual excellence. Truly did he write to one of his devotees, "When God captures a man, then is he free indeed."

God and the Godhead*

By David Godman

The previous instalment concluded with a discussion of Eckhart's and Bhagavan's views on God the creator. The present instalment continues with a discussion of Bhagavan's views on the personal God.

Iswara, the Personal God

In an earlier section I reported how Paul Brunton had questioned Bhagavan on the distinction between the personal God and the Godhead. It was a subject which seemed to interest him a great deal, for in *Conscious Immortality*, his record of Bhagavan's conversations, there are a number of very interesting answers on the nature of Iswara which cannot be found in other Ashram books. Here, strung together, they give an intriguing portrait of Iswara, His power, His attributes and His functions.

Q: Is there a separate being, Iswara, who is the rewarder of virtue and punisher of sins? Is there a God?

A: Yes.

Q: What is he like?

A: Iswara has individuality in mind and body, which are perishable, but at the same time he also has the transcendental consciousness and liberation inwardly.

[*Bhagavan:*] Iswara, the personal God, the supreme creator of the universe, really does exist. But this is only true from the relative standpoint of those who have not realised the truth, those people who believe in the reality of individual souls. From the absolute standpoint the sage cannot accept any other existence than the impersonal Self, one and formless.

Iswara has a physical body, a form and a name, but it is not so gross as the physical

body. It can be seen in visions in the form created by the devotee. The forms and names of God are many and various and differ with each religion. His essence is the same as ours, the real Self being only one and without form. Hence forms he assumes are only creations or appearances.

Iswara is immanent in every person and every object throughout the universe. The totality of all things and beings constitutes God. There is a power out of which a small fraction has become all this universe, and the remainder is in reserve. Both this reserve power plus the manifested power as the manifested world together constitute Iswara.

Iswara, God, the creator, the personal God, is the last of the unreal forms to go. Only the absolute being is real. Hence not only the world, not only the ego, but also the personal God are of unreality.¹

Other devotees received answers which add to the details Paul Brunton elicited:

Explaining how the Self is mere light and how it is both the word or sound and also that out of which word and sound originally came, Bhagavan said, 'Man has three bodies, the gross one made of the five elements, the *sukshma* or subtle one made out of *manas* and *prana*, and the *jiva*. Similarly, Iswara has three bodies. All the manifested universe is his gross body, light and sound are his *sukshma* body and the Self is his *jiva*.² We pray to God for bliss and receive it by grace.

¹ *Conscious Immortality*, pp. 7,8,10,180-1.

² *Day by day with Bhagavan*, 24.3.45.

* Continued from the previous issue

The bestower of bliss must be bliss itself and also infinite. Therefore Iswara is the personal God of infinite power and bliss. *Brahman* is bliss, impersonal and absolute.... Take this as a probable hypothesis. Creation is by the entire Godhead breaking into God and nature (*maya* or *prakriti*).³

This is the only instance I have been able to find of Bhagavan using the term 'Godhead', and his use of it is fairly consistent with Eckhart's own world-view: the impersonal Godhead 'breaks out' into God and the appearance of the world in Him.

And now to a different aspect of Iswara. The manifest universe, according to some Hindu systems of philosophy, is composed of the three *gunas*: *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. Since Iswara's gross body comprises the totality of the manifest universe, logic dictates that He too is involved with this trinity. Bhagavan accepted this point and occasionally explained that Iswara could be regarded as the *sattva guna*:

Q: Swami, it is said that there is no world without the individual soul and God (*Jiveswara*). What is the meaning of it?

A: Yes, the world, soul and God (*Jagatjiveswara*) are the embodiment of the three qualities or *gunas*.

Q: Is the personal God, Iswara, to be included in the three qualities?

A: Certainly. In that group, goodness (*sattva*) is the personal God; activity (*rajas*) is the individual soul, and heaviness (*tamas*) is the world (*jagat*). It is said that the Self is pure goodness (*suddha sattva*).

Pure *sattva*, *suddha sattva*, is, says Bhagavan, just another name for the unmanifest Self. By itself it cannot produce the appearance of the world. For this to happen it must make contact with the other two *gunas*. Iswara, therefore, exists transcendently as the *sattva guna* and immanently as the three *gunas* combined:

Q: They say that *sattva* is *Brahman*, and that

rajas and *tamas* are *abhasa* [reflections]; is that so?

A: Yes! *Sat* is what exists; *sat* is *sattva*; it is the natural thing.... By its contacts with *rajas* and *tamas* it creates the world with its immeasurable forms. It is only due to its contact with *rajas* and *tamas* that the mind looks at the world, which is *abhasa* [a reflection], and gets deluded. If you remove that contact, *sattva* shines pure and uncontaminated. That is pure *sattva*, or *suddha sattva*. There is *sat* and *Brahman*: as soon as the mind that is awake is attached to the *gunas*, every activity emerges. If you discard these *guna vikaras* [vagaries of the mind] the *Brahman* appears everywhere, self-luminous and self-evident, the *Atman*, 'I'.⁵

The Light of God

This is really a continuation of the previous section, for Bhagavan occasionally equated Iswara with *chidabhasa*, the reflected light of consciousness which causes the world appearance.

Q: It is said that Iswara, who is the reflection of the soul and appears in the thinking mind, has become *jiva*, the personal soul, which is the reflection of the thinking faculty. What is the meaning of this?

A: The reflected consciousness of the Self is called Iswara, and Iswara reflected through the thinking faculty is called *jiva*. That is all.

Q: This is all right, Swami, but what then is *chidabhasa*?

A: *Chidabhasa* is the feeling of the Self which appears in the shining of the mind.⁶

³ Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi, talk no. 28.

⁴ Letters from Sri Ramanasramam, 2:19.

⁵ Letters from Sri Ramanasramam, 1:90.

⁶ Letters from Sri Ramanasramam, 2:6.

Iswara, then, is both the light of the Self and the reflection of it in the mind which causes the world picture to arise. The light, Iswara, arises first, followed shortly afterwards by the soul and the world:

From the Self there arise in succession (i) *chidabhasa* (reflected consciousness) which is a kind of luminosity (ii) *jiva* (the individual consciousness) or the seer of the first concept (iii) phenomena.⁷ ...at the moment of rising up, the mind is only light; only afterwards the thought 'I am this' rises up. The 'I'-thought forms the *jiva* and the world. The first light is the pure mind, the mind-ether (*chidakasa*) or Iswara. Its modes manifest as objects. Because it contains all these objects within itself, it is called the mind-ether.⁸

The reflecting process and the consequent generation of the world picture are described very precisely in *Arunachala Ashtakam* in one of the verses which Bhagavan composed spontaneously while he was walking around Arunachala. Verse six, which explains the creation of the world, begins by saying, 'You, the Heart, the Light of Consciousness, the one Reality alone exist! A wonderful power exists in You which is not other than You!' The 'Heart' is the term Bhagavan used for the Self when he wanted to denote the source and centre from which all manifestation springs. The 'wonderful power' in the second sentence is the *sakti* of the Self, its dynamic mode which brings creation into existence without, paradoxically, affecting the motionless, unmanifest Self with which it is integrally one. Note that Bhagavan called the one reality 'the Light of Consciousness'. This is the original light of the Self whose later reflection brings into existence the world. Bhagavan continued:

From [this *sakti* rise] a series of atom-like shadow thoughts which, by means of consciousness in the whirl of *prarabdha*, are seen as shadowy world pictures, both inside on the mirror of the thought-light, and outside through the senses, such as the eyes, in the

same way that a cinema picture comes into existence via a lens. O Hill of Grace! Whether they stop or whether they continue, they do not exist apart from You.

This is a very complex series of ideas, and the verse itself is notoriously hard to translate. What Bhagavan is saying, though, is that the reflected Light of Consciousness, *chidabhasa*, falls on the *vasanas*, the mind's mental tendencies. The resulting reflection is cognised internally as the idea of the world and is projected externally as the tangible world we see around us. The last sentence notes that though the mind-projected world is wholly illusory, it is still, in essence, Arunachala, the Heart, and cannot therefore be separate from it.

The analogy of the cinema projector was one which Bhagavan himself invented. On several occasions he noted that it was by far the most appropriate analogy to explain the appearance of the world-picture, and that had Adi Sankara been alive in the twentieth century he would also have adopted it. It was an analogy wholly different from the ones which were traditionally used in philosophy. Kunju Swami noted in his memoirs⁹ that a famous *vedantic* pandit who visited Bhagavan at Skandashram and read this verse had to ask what it meant because the idea that the world was a cinema-like projection was completely new to him.

Bhagavan wrote this verse during the period of his life when he was still living on the hill, at a time when cinema projectors must have been a great rarity, especially in a small provincial town. There is no record of his ever attending a cinema show during this period, or of being shown how the mechanism of the projector worked, but he clearly understood enough of the basic engineering to construct a very elaborate

⁷ *Upadesa Manjari*, 2:11.

⁸ *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, talk no. 589.

⁹ *Ennadu Ninaiuvagal*, pp. 45-46.

analogy. Sadhu Natanananda tabulated Bhagavan's full description in *Upadesa Manjari*:

- | | |
|---|--|
| (i) The lamp inside the apparatus. | (i) The Self. |
| (ii) The lens in front of the lamp. | (ii) The <i>sattvic</i> mind close to the Self. |
| (iii) The film which is a long series of separate photos. | (iii) The stream of latent tendencies, consisting of subtle thoughts. |
| (iv) The lens, the light passing through it and the lamp which together form the focused light. | (iv) The mind, the illumination of it and the Self which together form the seer or the <i>jiva</i> . |
| (v) The light passing through the lens and falling on the screen. | (v) The light of the Self emerging from the mind through the senses and falling on the world. |
| (vi) The various kinds of pictures appearing in the light on the screen. | (vi) The various forms and names appearing as the objects perceived in the light of the world. |
| (vii) The mechanism which sets the film in motion. | (vii) The divine law manifesting the latent tendencies of the mind. ¹⁰ |

In *Talks*, talk no. 323, Bhagavan himself gave a detailed explanation of this verse from his *Ashtakam* during the course of which he clearly identified the reflected light, *chidabhasa*, with *Iswara*. I shall devote the rest of this section to an examination of his commentary. Since Bhagavan's explanation was quite technical in places, I have added lengthy explanatory notes of my own.

Bhagavan: In the present stanza the tiny dot equals the ego; the tiny dot made up of darkness equals the ego consisting of latent ten-

dencies; the seer, the subject or ego rising, it expands itself as the seen, the object or the *antahkaranas*.

The tiny dot Bhagavan referred to is the word '*anu*' in the original, which means 'atom'. I have rendered it as 'atom-like' since it qualifies the phrase 'shadow thoughts'. The darkness he refers to comes from a Tamil word which has the implication of 'dark', 'shadowy' or even 'phantom-like'. The tiny dot, *anu*, along with the shadow thoughts, constitute the *vasanas*, the latent mental tendencies. *Vasanas*, according to Monier-Williams' dictionary, are 'The impression of anything remaining unconsciously in the mind; the present consciousness of past perceptions; knowledge derived from memory; latent tendencies formed by former actions.' When the light of consciousness falls on the atom-like dot of ego and *vasanas*, the dot acts like a lens which projects the picture of the world we see while simultaneously differentiating itself into an 'I' who sees and an objective world which is seen. Since the world-picture is merely a magnified image of the atom-like *vasanas*, the resulting picture is a thought projection with no independent reality of its own.

The *antahkaranas*, which also come into apparent existence during the projection, are the 'inner organs'. In the following answer, in response to a query about whether the Heart is the source of the *antahkaranas*, Bhagavan explained what they are and confirmed that their source is the Heart: 'The inner organs (*antahkaranas*) are classified as five: (1) Knowledge — *Jnana*; (2) Mind — *Manas*; (3) Intellect — *Buddhi*; (4) Memory — *Chitta*; and (5) The Ego — *Ahankara*. Some say only the latter four [are *antahkaranas*]; others say only two, namely *Manas*, mind, and *Ahankara*, the ego. Still others say the *antahkarana* is only one, whose different functions make it appear differently and hence its different names. Heart is thus the source of the *antahkaranas*.'

¹⁰ *Upadesa Manjari*, 2:13.

Bhagavan continued with his explanation of verse six of *Arunachala Ashtakam*:

The light must be dim in order to enable the ego to rise up. In broad daylight a rope does not look like a snake. The rope itself cannot be seen in thick darkness; so there is no chance of mistaking it for a snake. Only in dim light, in the dark, in light darkened by shadows or in darkness lighted by dim light does the mistake occur of a rope seeming a snake. Similarly it is for the pure radiant Being to rise up as the ego — it is only possible in its light diffused by darkness.

The logical conclusion of this argument is that when the light of the Self is not mediated through the *vasanas*, which diminish its intensity, the world itself, along with the perceiver of it, vanish. Bhagavan confirmed this on several occasions: 'In a cinema show you can see the pictures only in a very dim light or in darkness. But when all the lights are switched on, the pictures disappear. So also in the floodlight of the supreme *atman*, all objects disappear.... The world can be seen neither in the utter darkness of ignorance, as in deep sleep, nor in the utter light of the Self, as in Self-realisation or *samadhi*.¹²

On another occasion he explained: 'The Self is the Heart. The Heart is self-luminous. Light arises from the Heart and reaches the brain, which is the seat of the mind. The world is seen with the mind, that is, by the reflected light of the Self. It is perceived with the aid of the mind. When the mind is illumined it is aware of the world. If the mind is turned in towards the source of the light, objective knowledge ceases and the Self alone shines forth as the Heart.'¹³

Q: Is the light which gives the 'I'-sense identity and knowledge of the world ignorance or *chit*, consciousness?

A: It is only the reflected light of *chit* that makes the 'I' believe itself different from others. This reflected light of *chit* also makes the 'I' create objects, but for this reflection there must be a surface on which the reflection takes place.

Q: What is that surface?

A: On realisation of the Self you will find that the reflection and the surface on which it takes place are one and the same *chit*.¹⁴

Here we are brought back again, with a rude bump, to the uncompromising *ajata* position: *chidabhasa*, Iswara, the world, the mind, reflecting mediums, etc. are unreal appearances in the Self. They may give an elegant intellectual picture of how the world apparently came into existence, but one must always keep in mind that from the standpoint of the Self, it never did.

I have been neglecting Eckhart in the last few pages for the simple reason that, as a medieval Catholic, he did not have anything constructive to add to the discussion on the properties and role of Hinduism's Iswara. He did, however, have a few interesting things to say on 'God as Light', and, as usual, his comments have much in common with Bhagavan's views. Eckhart also taught that God is Light and that the world of creatures is merely a realm where God's Light has not fully penetrated. A key biblical verse for Eckhart was John 1:5: 'The Light [of Jesus, the Logos] shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.' It may also mean, 'the darkness did not comprehend the light'. Here is Eckhart expounding on the significance of this verse:

The darkness neither received nor comprehended the Light. The avenue by which the Light ought to get in is littered and barricaded by falseness and darkness, for light and darkness are incompatible, like God and creatures. If God is to get in, the creature must get out.... When one turns to God, a light at once begins to glimmer and shine within.¹⁵

Here we have Bhagavan's basic thesis expressed in Eckhart's terminology: 'creatures' are a prod-

¹¹ Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi, talk no. 392.

¹² Guru Ramana, p. 46.

¹³ Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi, talk no. 98.

¹⁴ Guru Ramana, 1974, p. 56.

¹⁵ Ubi est qui....

uct of darkness and have no existence in the full Light of God.

In the next quotation Eckhart speaks at length on the relationship between the full Light of God and its diminished form which permits the soul, its faculties, and, by extension, the outside world, to exist:

One authority raises the question: 'Does the divine Light shine as clearly in the soul's agents [the intellect, the five senses etc.] as in the soul's core-essence considering that the soul receives being immediately from God and its agents extend immediately from the soul?' The divine Light is far too aristocratic to make common cause with the soul's agents. For all that touches creatures or can be touched by them is far from God and alien from him. As the agents of the soul touch the world and are touched by it, they lose their virginity.¹⁶ The divine Light cannot shine in them and they can only be made sensitive and holy through purification and renunciation. This is what the authority means who says that the soul's agents are given a Light which is *like* the inner Light, but it is not the Light itself. In part the soul's agents are influenced by this Light, so that they may be sensitive to the inner Light.¹⁷

The examples which Eckhart used to illustrate the way in which the original Light of God gets diminished and dimmed suggest that he conceived the process to be one of filtering or refraction rather than reflection. In one place, for example, he notes how the density of water causes light passing through it to refract in such a way that a straight stick entering it appears, in an illusory way, to bend. In another place he notes how the sun, filtering through the atmosphere, has its intensity diminished, a remarkably astute observation for a medieval cleric. Bhagavan's model too incorporates an element of refraction, for the scheme outlined in a tabular form in *Upadesa Manjari* (2:13) has the light of the Self refracted through the lens. Even though there is no mention of reflection or a reflecting surface in Eckhart's cosmology, the general tenor of his remarks on the Light of God indicates that he is describing the process by which the *chidabhasa*, as described by Bhagavan, comes into existence and functions through the soul's agents.

[To be continued]

¹⁶ This would seem to be analogous to Bhagavan's explanation that the soul and the world arise when *sattva guna* comes into contact with *rajoguna* and *tamoguna*.

¹⁷ *In deibus suis...*

The soul had given up its hold on the body when it renounced the 'I-am-the-body' idea and it was seeking some fresh anchorage; hence the frequent visits to the temple and the outpouring of the soul in tears. This was God's play with the soul. I would stand before Iswara, the Controller of the universe and of the destinies of all, the Omniscient and Omnipresent, and sometimes pray for the descent of His Grace upon me so that my devotion might increase and become perpetual like that of the sixty-three Saints. More often I would not pray at all but silently allow the deep within to flow on and into the deep beyond.

— Sri Bhagavan

BOOK REVIEWS

In the Charge of J. JAYARAMAN

THE POETS OF THE POWERS: MAGIC, FREEDOM AND RENEWAL: by Kamil V. Zvelebil. Pub: Integral Publishing, Post Box 1030, CA 95457, USA. pp.144, \$12.95

The present volume is a monograph dedicated to Tamil Siddhas. Siddhas contributed to the spiritual unity of India. Their doctrine, a blend of yoga and *tāntrism*, a kind of 'living fossils', penetrated the whole of India. They, better than anywhere else, have survived in Tamil Nadu. Rāmalinga Swāmi and Bhārathi were very much influenced by Siddha poetry. Ramana Maharshi quite often spoke about Siddhas.

They wrote on religion, philosophy, medicine, alchemy and yoga. They viewed Vedānta and Siddhānta alike. They possessed remarkable powers. Boasts Pāmbātti Cittar, 'We can lift the eight big mountains throwing them about; all the seven oceans drink and spit them out; enter burning fire and waters and a tiger fight.'

Eighteen Siddhas are mentioned in Tamil. The author says that three different groups are lumped together under the name and feels the need for distinguishing them. The groups, in the opinion of the author, denoted as Siddhas in Tamil culture, are:

- (a) a group of alchemists and physicians. eg: Kōrakkar.
- (b) a group of thinkers and poets who composed large number of stanzas in Tamil. eg: Tirumūlar, Sivavākkiyar.
- (c) a few Siddha-like poets appended to the Siddha school. eg: Pattinattār (15th Century), Tāyumānavar (19th century).

Eightyfour Siddhas are mentioned in North India and 18 in the South. The author deals with the two components in Siddha culture: the philosophical and the social. At the social level they dreamt of a future age where there would be no castes and disregarded and despised the social fabric of their times.

Their attitude to the body is positive. The body is valued as the temple of God. To keep the body fit for doing tapas, they formulated a medicinal system, said to have been founded by Akattiar (Agastya) employing in its therapy along with herbs, inorganic bodies -- salts, metals and mineral poisons. Breathing is the most important part of Cittar (Siddha) therapy. The theory applied to medicine is the same as that of yoga, which the author fails to bring to notice.

The yoga system of the Siddhas is elaborately dealt with by the author. Four types of yoga, viz. Laya yoga, Raja yoga, Mantra yoga and Hatha yoga are advocated by the Siddhas. The chakras of the body are equated with the endocrine glands in the body: Mulādhāra with adrenal, Svādhishthāna with gonads, Manipūra with pancreas, Anāhata with thymus, Visuddhi with thyroid and Ajna with pituitary and pineal glands.

12

One cannot agree with the author that the Siddhas deny Bhakti or his opinion, 'that Tirumūlar was the greatest poet of symbolism in Tamil is doubtful'. Tirumantiram of Tirumūlar is a 'masterpiece of mystic wisdom, robust philosophy and moving poetry'.

The author's favourite Siddha poet is the forceful Sivavākkiyar. Brief accounts of Pattirakiri, Idaikkādar, Akappēy, Kutampai and Pāmpātti and some of their poems translated into English add to the value of the books.

We cannot agree more with the author when he says, 'what is needed first is a massive, detailed and critical study of all available Siddha texts'.

A pleasing book. An informative book. One to relish!

-- Dr. T.N. Pranathārthi Haran.

THE WISDOM OF SRI NISARGADATTA MAHARAJ: by Robert Powell. Pub: Globe Press Books Inc, P. Box 2045, NY 10159-2045, USA. pp.128, \$10.95

Like the Buddha, Sri Ramana Maharshi and J. Krishnamūrti, Sri Nisargadatta Mahārāj is one of the supreme messengers of the blissful Advaitic truth. Man's real work is to realize the Self, all else is window dressing says Nisargadatta. Like Ramana he lays stress on the liberating question 'Who am I?' His teachings have their root in the Upanishads. According to him, "there are no steps to Self-realization. It happens suddenly. Then we rotate into a new dimension". Mahārāj was very flexible in moulding the teaching to the state of readiness of the student. His vision arises above the disputations of all theologies. Hence it is universal.

His main thrust is to bring us back to the 'here and now'. 'All this is the Self and I am that' is the essence of his teaching. The author states in his Note: "Some major changes have been made to this new edition of *The Blissful Life*". So, not only is the title new but the author's deletion of his commentaries to the 'self-explanatory' aphorisms of the Master has made this edition 'more readable and direct'. Many new sayings have been added as also the wonderful photos of Mahārāj at his daily *darbār*. The first part of the book deals with The Man and His Teaching, and has a very interesting chapter, *A Day with Mahārāj* by Milo Clark. A sample of aphorisms from Part II:

"Whatever happens, remind yourself that only your body and mind are affected, not yourself."

"Memory is a good servant, but a bad master. It effectively prevents discovery".

"Forget the known, but remember that you are the knower".

"Remember that you are. This is your working capital. Rotate it and there will be much profit".

"The mind cannot know what is beyond the mind, but the mind is known by what is beyond it".

"The world and the mind are states of being. The Supreme is not a state. It pervades all states, but it is not a state of something else".

"Your own Self is your ultimate teacher".

"What you need will come to you if you do not ask for what you do not need".

"Meditation is the knowledge 'I am'."

"When one is fully matured, realization is explosive".

"Suffering is a call for enquiry, all pain needs investigation. Do not be lazy to think".

"Divest yourself of the idea that you are the body with the help of the contrary idea that you are not the body".

"Liberation is never of the person, it is always from the person".

Even a cursory glance at this book is sure to delight us. Certainly, this book breaks open the lock of dogma by instructing that the key is with us, within us.

-- Dr. T.N. Pranathārthi Haran

CONSCIOUSNESS SPEAKS: Conversations with Ramesh S. Balsekar: ed. by Wayne Liquorman. Pub: Advaita Press, P.O. Box 3479, CA 90277, USA. pp.392, \$15.95

On his retirement as a bank's General Manager, Ramesh Balsekar happened to read about Nisargadatta Mahārāj in *The Mountain Path* of Oct 1978 and soon thereafter climbed up the steps to Mahārāj's attic room. There was an inevitability about it for, on his very first meeting Nisargadatta greeted him with the words, "You've come at last, have you?". On Deepāvāli day in 1979, in the midst of translating Mahārāj's talk, he suddenly knew that something had happened, a complete change in consciousness. This was noticed by Nisargadatta who authenticated it by saying "I am glad it's happened". Balsekar presents the *advaitic* approach in a series of questions and answers in a language that, being breathtakingly unambiguous, forcefully direct and ruthlessly shorn of all verbiage, brings about sudden illuminations, sudden intuitive understanding at levels deeper than that of the superficially intellectual. His presentation closely resembles that of Ramana Maharshi for whom he has great reverence and whom he quotes in many an instance.

His basic theme is this : All that there is, is Consciousness. It is the Totality, the Divine Ground, the Self, God, and its functioning is impersonal. All manifestation is only an appearance in Consciousness. The human being with his sense of individuality is, like any other object in manifestation, merely a dream character. There is no individual, only a body-mind organism in search of its own non-existent identity: *who is seeking what?*

Balsekar says, "The 'who' is merely an imagined concept. There is no 'who' and there is no 'what' to be sought ... You go out in the Sun and there is your shadow. There is a shadow. It is real to the extent you can see it but it is an illusion in the sense that it has no independent existence."

Consciousness plays a *līla* or game in all its wondrous diversity, producing billions of forms each conceived with certain inherent characteristics for certain purpose, in order that certain actions will take place through it. These are the actors who will carry out the actions 'good' or 'bad' which are pre-ordained and are an essential functioning of Totality or the Self. Who then is to be held responsible? What then of Karma?

Balsekar explains, "There is Karma of course, which is causality. It has however nothing to do with the individual doer, the individual entity, because there is no individual entity, as the doer". As for Karma from past lives, "Past lives, yes, but 'whose' lives?" Consciousness, functioning impersonally produces body-mind organisms for working out the causes and effects in a continuum that has already been set in motion.

So it is in the case of reincarnation. So long as you live in the illusion that there is a 'you' as an individual then the illusion of past and future lives will continue. However if you have had an insight into the truth, if you have seen through the illusion and the dream for what it is, then all questions cease, all seeking goes and you know yourself for what you are -- the Great Nothingness. The witness consciousness arises from this and Balsekar calls this void the Non-Witnessing state and equates it with the term *sahaja samādhi* used by Sri Ramana.

Balsekar's book is veritably a hymn to Consciousness, the Self of Maharshi, the Reality of J. Krishnamūrti. Before his death Nisargadatta predicted that his disciple would not merely repeat what he had said but would say things differently. Two month's before his death, *Mahārāj* told those present, during *satsang*, "You can continue to ask your questions", and, pointing at Balsekar, "he's authorized to answer them". That Balsekar has done so in all humility, simplicity and compassion is the mark of a genuine teacher.

-- Prema Rāo

BHĀSĀBODHINI - A Sanskrit Primer: by Malaya Gangopadhyaya. Pub: Sri Satguru Publications, 40/5, Shakthi Nagar, N. Delhi 110 007. pp.158, Rs.150/-

The book is a beginner's course and the lessons were originally prepared for the beginning students in Sanskrit at the Council of Adult Education and at the Department of Indian Studies, Melbourne University, Australia. The approach of the author is that Sanskrit is the second language, a classical language or a foreign language to be taught to those who are already proficient in their respective first language. As such the method of language teaching is a bit different. The emphasis is on the structural side of the

language, its phonology, morphology and syntax. No prior knowledge of Sanskrit is assumed. The script is introduced, its rationale explained, the sound value and word formation are dealt with, the regularities of the pattern are demonstrated, and with controlled vocabulary and limited grammar, graded exercises lead the student to the process of forming simple sentences. The place of Sanskrit as the mother of all Indo-Aryan languages, as an inexhaustible treasure to be tapped for coining new words and ideas is emphasized. Its divine origin, its role in shaping the hoary culture of India and its *śabda śakti*, the Mantric force embedded in the very words of the language are not lost sight of. The student is encouraged step by step not only to learn the language but also to imbibe the culture, the *samskriti* of mankind, it has been reflecting through the ages.

To show the grandeur and spiritual content of the language, certain Hymns are included in the lessons. It would add to the interest of the book if some easy *subhāshita* Slokas are also included in the Primer. All lovers of Sanskrit owe a debt of gratitude to the learned author.

-- S. Sankaranārāyanan

PILGRIMAGE WITHIN: by Vimala Thakar. Pub: Vimala Parivar, C/o Rajguru & Co., 28/32 Mint Rd., Bombay 400 001. pp.159, Rs.40.

"The Journey inward is the longest" wrote Dag Hammarskjöld, renowned UN administrator and mystic. Vimalā Thākār seeks to prove it otherwise during the course of a delightful journey encompassing 159 pages.

Vimalāji describes the pilgrimage as "the communion between what is vibrating within me and what surrounds me". There is nothing easy and nothing difficult. Everything is ever free and ever virgin to be interacted with, to be gone into communion with, so that the communion results in our inner flowering. One hears here the spiritual echo of *Aksharamālai* and the stamp of Śrī Bhagavān. While showing the 'pathless path' to the followers, Vimalāji urges the reader to listen to her preceptor "the scientist of spirituality" -- J. Krishnamūrti. At the same time, during her lectures and discussions, Vimalāji comes out, not as an iconoclast, but as a teacher with practical wisdom. She recognises the fact that it is easy to throw away external authority - but immensely difficult for a person who is not attentive, to be free of the authority that one creates out of one's own knowledge and experience. Unlike Krishnāji she recognises the valuable help *sat sanga* can render to one's spiritual unfoldment and exhorts the questioner to resort to such company when there is psychological need of companionship in inquiry. In the revealing chapter "Why is not one able to live in the present?" she extensively discusses the concept of latencies. She eloquently asks "If we do not create and build up new memory, moment by moment, if we let it end, then would there be a psychological past?"

How to achieve this? Through understanding and inquiry Understanding flows into action without the exercise of will or effort. "Like the food digested which is the substance of

the physical organ, that which is understood is assimilated and becomes the substance of consciousness, not the content of it". When understanding flows, there is no feeling of acquisition, but a spontaneity. It generates its own momentum; when true understanding flows, "the perceptual and the conceptual is grafted in the experience."

She offers several valuable hints to the practitioner of spirituality -- the need to avoid unwarranted verbalization, minimizing socialisation, self-education, need to develop patience, value of developing self-restraint -- "no suppression, no repression but the very gentle restraint awakened by the understanding of the fact, by the authority of not denying or accepting the fact but to be with the fact" (p. 124). To live without an image is Sādhanā. Echoing Bhagavān, she says "If an awareness of death is activated, then it can wake up the sense of sacredness of life" (p. 136). She beautifully builds up the concept of living in silence as an alternate way of living, starting with the need to have a scientific approach, coupled with the austerity of not building up any images whatsoever. Then follows the integrity of purpose that will give depth to the inquiry and it is this integrity that will stimulate fearlessness. "One should determiningly and fearlessly give up the past psychological structures for the dimensional quantum jump."

One need not despair at the enormity of the task. "You are surrounded by the Supreme Intelligence, Cosmic Intelligence and every expression of inner maturity will find native response from the cosmos .. in such a way that the outer circumstances will become favourable for your inquiry.

One is amazed by the wealth of wisdom and practical guidance contained in this small book -- a must for every dedicated aspirant.

-- S. Rām Mohan

SUFISM: An account of the mystics of Islam: by A.J. Arberry, Pub: Unwin Hyman, Harper Collins, Pub., 77-85 Fulham Palace Rd., Hammersmith, London W68JB. pp.141, \$5.99

This succinct and erudite book charting the rise and decline of Sufism was first published in 1950. Its scholarly approach gives a good overview of the different aspects of Sufism.

It places Sufism firmly within the bounds of Islam whilst not denying outside influences on its growth. There are chapters on the Theorists of Sufism, on the Mystics, the Persian Poets, the Sufi Orders and also on the structure of Sufi theory and practice. Each chapter is well documented and those wishing to do further study on any specific person or idea will find it easy to do so.

There has always been a tension between orthodox Islam and Sufism and defining the boundaries as to what was acceptable led to the untimely persecution and sometimes death of several Sufi mystics. Al-Junaid, for example went beyond seeing the supreme mystical experience as reunion with God and "taught that man may thus be viewed as God

incarnate." He did not say that he was Divine himself but his statement: "I am the Truth" led to his execution.

But still, despite these occasional persecutions great ecstatic outbursts of writing and poetry from individuals such as Rabia (the female saint) Dhu'l-Nun, Ibn al-Farid, Ibn 'Arabi, Attar, and Rumi for centuries continued to enrich not only Islam but all who were attracted to God as "The Divine Lover."

The author charts the decline of Sufism to the 16th century when there was a general collapse of learning which preceded the Ottoman conquest of that region. The "new Sufi" in general boasted of their ignorance and showed contempt for the ritual obligations of Islam and also for moral order.

Whilst clearly stating that Sufism in its original form has now disappeared, the author does believe that in this age of secular humanism, there is an urgent need for the rediscovery of those truths which were expounded by the Sufi teachers. With their discipline of the body and the spirit, these great Sufi mystics were generally teachers of the Heart. That, is what we need to reclaim in our Age.

-- Michael Muirhead

THE MYSTICISM OF SOUND AND MUSIC: by Hazrat Inayat Khan. Pub: Element Books, Longmead, Shaftesbury, Dorset, U.K. pp.322, \$9.95

Since this book is an anthology of the author's talks over a period of 12 years, it is inevitable that there is a degree of repetition in its content. However while the duplication of material is at times less than stimulating the beauty of Hazrat Inayat Khan's words, and his passionate love for the subject, shine above such shortcomings.

Inayat Khan (1882-1927) was an Indian Sufi and veena master, who eventually gave up his music "because I had received from it all I had to receive I played the veena until my heart turned into the same instrument." The reader is left in no doubt as to the sincerity of this claim, and if a certain chauvinism persists throughout this book (eg; "music is most essential for spiritual development") then this reflects the absolute devotion of the master to his music. "We may certainly see God in all arts and in all sciences, but in music alone we see God free from all forms and thoughts."

Music is interpreted in its broadest sense, encompassing all occupations of life where beauty has been the inspiration, in life itself which invariably reflects rhythm. The harmonies of nature are all manifestations of rhythm of the divine music. Daily conversations, the curves and flows of handwriting, the ambience between people, all contain the rhythmic seed of all creation, the music of the spheres.

The book is divided into four sections: Music; the Mysticism of Sound; Cosmic Language; and the Power of the Word, and the subject matter of each is self-explanatory. The first and largest section, Music, covers the meaning and many forms of music; the second deals with the different

aspects of sound; the third with human attributes and concepts giving expression to sound and music; and the fourth with the power of words and the significance of sacred words.

For whatever bias is revealed in his interpretations, Inayat Khan was surely expressing the essence of Advaita Vedanta, of non-separation of all forms with the Divine. As an example of pure bhakti, we all might take inspiration from the detached passion with which he obviously lived his life, perceiving music manifest in all. Enjoyment for music, Hazrat claimed, echoed feeling for life. This resounds clearly throughout the book.

"... there will come a day when music and its philosophy will become the religion of humanity."

-- John Button

THE DANCE OF THE SOUL: Sufi sayings: by Hazrat Inayat Khan. Pub: Motilal Banarsidass, N.Delhi 110 007. pp.277, Rs.85/Rs.150 (pb/cb)

It is fitting that Hazrat Inayat Khan, once a renowned court singer and vina player before devoting himself exclusively to his Sufi movement, should structure his volume of aphorisms, *The Dance of the Soul* in terms of music and dance. Thus the book is divided into three sections: Gāyan (singing), Vādan (performing) and Nirtan (dancing). Each of these sections is further subdivided into categories titled by classical Indian music terms such as ālāpa, alankāra, gamaka, rāga and tāla. I think the reader must be somewhat conversant with the subtleties of these terms in order to fully appreciate Khan's artistic and mystical use of them. However the book could still be enjoyed even without understanding the author's implicit intentions.

The text ranges from short, pithy one-liners, "To be alone with one's self is like being with a friend whose company will last forever" (p38), to longer poems or songs to The Beloved, all with a lot of practical, gentle humour, good sense and love. My favourite under the sub-division Rāga which Khan defines as "Modulation. The outpouring of the soul calling upon the Beloved God":

When thou didst sit upon thy throne, with a crown upon thy head, I did prostrate myself upon the ground and called thee My Lord; When thou didst stretch out thy hands in blessing over me, I knelt and called thee my Master.

When thou didst raise me from the ground, holding me with thine arms, I drew closer to Thee and called Thee my Beloved.

But when Thy caressing hands held my head next to Thy glowing heart and Thou didst kiss me, I smiled and called Thee myself. (p150).

A nice little volume of inspiration in a lyrical mode.

-- Priscilla Gong

PRESUPPOSITIONS OF INDIA'S PHILOSOPHIES: by Karl H. Potter. Pub: Motilal Banarsidass, N. Delhi 110 007. pp.226+10, Rs. 225.

Karl H. Potter is one of the most earnest as well as one of the most perspective of foreign students of India's cultural and philosophical heritage. He has been General Editor of an Encyclopaedia of Indian Philosophy, covering among others India's uniquely comprehensive theories of reasoning. For this unique work, Dr. Potter was able to enlist the services of several notable scholars from South India, scholars like P. Subrahmanyam and Dr. Kunjunni Rājāh. This is an achievement which merits greater recognition than it has received. Foreign exponents of Indian thought are generally viewed with a certain natural and more often justified distrust. We have a Gough who ridiculed the Upanishads. We have Nicol Macnicol sharing a common but utterly foolish Western view that the Vedas are just glorified gibberish. Even. Rt. Hon. Max Muller regarded portions of our Upanishads as too obscene to be translated. Karl Potter differs from them all by the respect with which he deals with the philosophical classics as well as the sense of sheer duty which made him choose Indian Pandits of acknowledged standing for his Encyclopaedia.

The book under review is Karl H. Potter's own brave, exercise in expounding the presuppositions of India's philosophies, in their impressive standing as philosophies and their scholarly foundations in more than merely impressive exercises in logic and intellection. However, quite inevitably, Dr. Potter's training in Western thought influences his interpretation of the basic suppositions of Indian thought as well as his "doubts" about these various philosophies. Dr. Potter thinks there is no word in Indian *paribhāshā* equivalent to the Western term philosophy. We venture to think *darśana*, the classical Indian term is much more expressive of everything pertaining to the processes as well as the goals of Indian speculation. In his preface Dr. Potter equates 'not self' with reality. This shows how difficult it is for a foreign scholar, however eminent and earnest, to appreciate the nuances as well as the essential substance of Indian thought. Freedom, or Moksha rather than merely Truth is the goal of Indian thought. *Jnana* is certainly knowledge of the Truth but Indian thought goes beyond and aims at the Truth that saves. *Jnana* is the means as well as the end, *Moksha*. It is noteworthy that Sankara thinks Mādhyamika Buddhism as 'not worth refuting' but scholars regard Nāgārjuna's position as having significant affinities with that of Advaitins; this shows the limitations of 'scholars'. These have not faced the challenge posed by that masterful tenth century Naiyāyikā Udayana who asks the Mādhyamikas to say whether *Sūnya* or the void, is something or nothing.

It would be too long to go into a detailed assessment of Dr. Potter's expositions and interpretations. But one salutes Dr. Potter for the wide range, the scholarly integrity and the academic earnestness with which he surveys the remarkably vast, complex and often confusing schools of thought that "Indian philosophy" covers.

One wishes there were more Potters than Goughs among the Western expositors of one of the greatest and most

significant achievements of the human mind in the field of interpretation of the nature, meaning and goals of human life.

-- Prof. S. Rāmaswāmy

A COMPARATIVE HISTORY OF IDEAS: by Hajime Nakamura. Pub: Motilal Banarsidass, N. Delhi 110 007. pp.xx+572, Rs. 250.

In a time when the emphasis on dissimilarity or difference rather than similarity or unity is a dominant theme in the humanities, Hajime Nakamura's ambitious volume, *A Comparative History of Ideas*, may appear to be an anachronism. Although the volume under review first appeared in 1975, Nakamura was not unaware of this fissiparous tendency in the humanities, at least with regard to the academic study of religion; indeed this book is not at all sympathetic with the fractious mood currently troubling the academy. As Nakamura writes, "In recent scholarship there has been a tendency to avoid comparative studies. This reaction is expressed in the truism: 'Apparent similarities are really disguised dissimilarities.' One result of this view has been that the whole attempt at any comparative analysis has come to be suspect" (4). Indeed, this view will bring under suspicion the comparative method of academic scholars such as Mircea Eliade, what to say of popularizing scholars such as Joseph Campbell. Yet, despite the danger of facile and misleading generalizations, the study of the history of ideas can be neither comprehensive nor intellectually satisfying unless the monographs of the specialists are, as Nakamura, suggests "placed in a comprehensive framework to make clear the significance of the total subject matter" (4). One may even offer a complementary truism to the one stated above: Apparent dissimilarities are really disguised similarities.

Nakamura does not take this provocative approach, but concerns himself rather with sketchy overviews of the advance of ideas in Greece, the Near East, India, China, and Japan. Although it is stimulating to see the ideas of these cultures brought together under the same topic headings, Nakamura does not go far toward making good on his intention of taking Indian thought as the norm of his exposition (12).

Nakamura's book will undoubtedly prove useful for the reader who is unfamiliar with the main themes of global philosophy. It likely would be a useful textbook in an introductory course in world philosophy. However, the scholar who is familiar with a number of the traditions covered in this book will perhaps wonder why Nakamura has taken scant notice of the numerous scholarly studies in his areas of interest that have appeared in the fifty years preceding the publication of the first edition of this book.

-- Kenneth Rose, Ph. D

MEDITATION DIFFERENTLY: by Dr. Herbert V. Guenther. Pub: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 41 U.A., Bungalow Road, Jawahar Nagar, Delhi 110 007. pp.xvi+210. Rs.135.

This book brings into focus two traditions of Buddhist meditative practice -- the Māhāmudra and the rDzogs-chen.

particularly the sNying-thig version. Central to Buddhist thought is the recognition of the fact that restraint of sense-dominants drains energy from the destructive mental process and attaches it to a creative process. To obtain Buddhahood, the disciple purifies his mind composing himself in *mahāmudra*. The consolidation of what is deeply felt as an inner calm (zhi-gnas) is summed up by four images:

- (a) a Brahmin twining his sacrificial cord (not too loose and not too tight)
- (b) cutting the rope that holds a bundle of hay together (tension release)
- (c) a child visiting a shrine (wonder and awe) and
- (d) pricking an elephant with a thorn (unconcern).

In rDzogs-chen (Great Completion) all is only and forever Rig-pa that is Pure Intelligence. Unlike other spiritual practices, it is not circumscribed by context. The Ven. Sogyal Rinpoche gives a beautiful illustration of the state of mind abiding in its natural purity, "even if you looked for ordinary pebbles on an island of gold and jewels, you wouldn't have a chance of finding any." The notion of bondage becomes a short-sighted view. One recalls the teachings of the great sage Bhagavān Sri Ramana. A man in harmony with himself can reach the utmost sympathy for the universe, because its life has become his own.

Put in its simplest form, the question is: What does it mean to be? The rDzogs-chen point of view, involves an experiential understanding which goes beyond conceptual framework.

Dr. Herbert Guenther, the author, distinguishes Being and Existenz (rang-bzhin-gyi-rgyud) the former obtained as an enduring reality in the latter. Existenz, by contrast, is a pulsation of Being in the sense that each and every pulsation reveals a different possibility of Being's infinite openness. Being-as-such "generates the structures or standing-wave patterns of both knowledge and opinion -- the former aids one's creative unfoldment by disposing one to meaningfulness, whereas the latter merely perpetuates one's biases."

sGam-po-pa and Padma dkarpo's study of 'The Four Tuning-in Phases' a Mahāmudra meditation text, and Rang-grol's 'The Sun's Life-Giving Force, a rDzogs-chen text, are translated with detailed commentary and notes by the author. Besides, *Meditation Differently* covers such topics as Realms of Potentia and Actuality, Gestalt Experience of Being and Empowerments as psychological Stepping-Stones. The candidate for the higher life finds his way through long tracts and tangles of terminology. There is much truth in the saying that the Way is not for the weaklings, nor for dabblers, nor is it for misfits. Comprehensibility is in actual fact closely intertwined with implementation. Dr. Guenther has from the beginning and throughout, preserved that subtlety and complexity, as intended by the rDzogs-chen tradition itself, in this book uncommonly rich in content.

-- R. Rāmasāmi

DIAMOND DAYS WITH OSHO (The New Diamond Sutra): by Ma Prem Shunyo. Pub: Motilal Banarsidass, N. Delhi 110 007. pp.260, Rs.225/Rs.150 (cb/pb).

Sri Rajneesh, who is considered as 'Bhagwān', by his disciples spread all over the world, became "Osho" (Zen Master) shortly before his death, in January, 1990. For 15 years Shūnyo devoted herself to following Osho's pathway of enlightenment and serving him in various ways. This book under review (which follows the extremely well written THE GOD THAT FAILED by Hugh Milner, the personal body-guard of Bhagwan and one of the inner circle) is her diary of "the roller-coaster ride of her inner and outer adventures". Shūnyo has divulged many of the secrets of the 'inner life' in Rajneesh Ashram both in Poona, India and in Rajneesh Puram in the State of Oregon in U.S.A. No other spiritual leader has been subjected to such diametrically opposite varieties of criticisms as is Osho subjected to. The book reveals the dispassion with which Osho viewed the various incidents in his life. He took honour and dishonour, praise and condemnation, with equanimity, quite unconcerned in the true spirit of the Gīta. Unfortunately he was poisoned with thalium which ultimately led to his demise. The title of this book was given by Osho himself, wherein the diamond days of world peregrination are depicted. Shūnyo does not hesitate to mention various incidents, concerning her personal life including related 'adventures'. The book once opened, is a compelling read till the end.

-- Tādimala Jagannātha Swāmy

THE PATH OF NON-DUALITY: Advaitavada: by Raphael. pp.99, Rs 125. TAT TVAM ASI (That Thou Art): The Path of Fire According to Asparsa Yoga: by Raphael. pp.130, Rs. 150/-. Both published by Motilal Banarsidass, New Delhi 110 007.

These two are companion volumes which bear a near identical title and aim as well at giving clarifications on the common subject of Advaita from various angles. Raphael who provides the explanations in answer to various questions is the founder of the *Asrham Vidya Order*. He has the special needs of the Western reader in mind while giving his answers. In these discussions attention is focused on the *asparsa yoga* as explained by Gaudapāda in his commentary on the *Māndūkya Upanishad*. The essence of *asparsa yoga* is that pure Being cannot have any contact or relation with anything else -- nor be supported as such. There is no such thing as a second entity. *ajātivāda* and *asparsa vāda* are not different therefore and they indicate the pristine state of the non-dual Self.

There is a separate chapter on Parmenides, the Western Philosopher who solved the existential enigma by formulating the doctrine of the uncreated, imperishable, continuous and unchanging truth. 'It is and not-being is impossible', he declared. Some other general subjects taken up for discussion are: *saguna brahman*, transmigration, *karma*, evolution, etc.

Some curious statements occur in the Preface to the first

volume. For example: "What has the Advaita philosophy, presented by Gaudapāda and Sankarāchārya and re-proposed here by Raphael, got to say with regard to these matters?" One another reads: "... then Gaudapāda, Sankarāchārya and Raphael indicate the true metaphysical pathway leading to the realisation of the unqualified Absolute Being." This attempt to equate Raphael with Sankara and Gaudapāda is neither in good taste nor justified in the least.

When even stalwarts hardly measure upto Sankara and Gaudapāda in the matter of metaphysical ability and spiritual perfection we do not know what to say about the stature of persons like Raphael. We can take the statements in the Preface as an amusing anti-climax to the contents of the volumes which make sense, otherwise.

-- Ramāmani

TOWARDS A TANTRIC GOAL: by B. Bhattacharya. Pub: Sterling Publishers Private Limited, L-10, Green Park Extension, New Delhi 110 006. pp.202, Rs. 160.

A number of esoteric practices or systems which originated mainly in the post-Vedic period are collectively known as Tantra and it is not easy to give a precise definition of the term. Tantra is essentially practice-oriented and there is very little scope for theoretical discussion. The dominant mood is that of *bhakti*.

In this brief work the author has given a general account of Tantra indicating its background as well as the methodology involved and its implications. Man is a complex entity and there are different strands to his personality. However there is a core to it all which is eternal but which is not easily recognised. This is in contrast to the ease with which things around or external to him are recognised. Forgetting the inner reality leads to an identity crisis and consequent discontent or unhappiness. The aim of Tantra is to help resolve this identity crisis. This amounts to pursuit of real happiness.

A spiritual seeker inevitably needs guidance. It is certainly so in Tantra practice. The Guru performs delicate and varied functions and there is need for total dependence on him on the part of the disciple. He not only prescribes the particular practice to be followed by the seeker, he also modulates or regulates such practice as required. The Guru alone knows the problem of the seeker, his particular abilities or weaknesses -- in short all his qualities in so far as they affect his spiritual effort. A *mantra* is packed with power and its significance is subtle. One cannot expect to comprehend the meaning in the ordinary literary sense. In the case of mono-syllabic *mantras* (or mono-syllabic *mantras* ending with nasal sounds) it is absolutely impossible to guess the meaning by ordinary means. Whereas a *mantra* recited under proper conditions will prove beneficial, only harmful results will follow if such recitation is done in an improper or indiscriminate manner.

Thus the spiritual quest which has a discontent for a starting point is really set in motion only after the Guru comes into the scene, gives an appropriate *mantra* to the seeker and

energises the spiritual practice by appropriate guidance. Finally illumination results which is only a realisation by man of his true identity.

The author's exposition of the significance of *mantra* is comprehensive and commendable. *Towards a Tantric Goal* may be read with profit by the layman as well as the advanced seeker.

-- Ramāmani

LIVING YOGA: A Comprehensive Guide for Daily Life: by Georg Feuerstein and Stephan Bodian with the staff of *Yoga Journal*. Pub: The Putnam Publishing Group, 200 Madison Av., NY 10016, USA. pp.xiii + 290, \$15.95

Set against a deluge of Literature that has descended on us on Yoga and Yogic Exercises, this book (a collection of the best in the *Yoga Journal*) promises to be the most rational anthology available to those of us who are interested, not so much in the received wisdom, but in a scientific analysis of the use of Yogic Exercises in facing the problems of stress and tension which has become so much an integral part of this our present technological age.

"Living Yoga" has an eclectic sweep about it which captures and retains the attention of the reader without directing it to any one particular school of thought or dispersing it over a medley of thoughts recorded by the practitioners of Yogic Exercises over the ages. The book is rich in quotations and fully authenticated references from a wide variety of unimpeachable sources. Some examples from the chapter *Eating the Yoga Way*: "A mind consciously unclean cannot be cleansed by fasting". "A favourite saying among contemporary yoga masters is 'You are what you eat'".

"Indeed advanced hatha yoga practice, involving the awakening of the body's psychospiritual energy known as the Kundalini, particularly calls for diet rich in fat". "The most important dietary rule for longevity is systematic undereating".

In the section *Yoga of Health* there is a useful contribution on "Yoga and the Menstrual Cycle" by Jane MacMullen.

The section *Cultivating Love (Bhakti Yoga)* is perhaps the most controversial part of this illuminating book. There is an astounding chapter in this section entitled "Sacred Sexuality" by Georg Feuerstein Ph. D.

This anthology published at a time when there has already set in an universal laxity of sexual mores and morals pointing to a completely permissive society in the 21st Century allowing pre-marital loss of virginity and post-marital adultery as a perfectly normal way life may not find favour with all. Nevertheless it is a seminal, thoroughly researched publication, highly provocative and yet scientifically persuasive in its aim of offering Yoga as a guide for daily life.

-- S. Jayaraman

THE MAN WHO KNEW INFINITY: A Life of the Genius Ramanujan: by Robert Kanigel. Pub: Rupa & Co., Calcutta 700 073. pp. 374+64, Rs. 195.

This biographical tour-de-force will be read with profit not only by great mathematicians scattered all over the world but also by great academicians in other disciplines. In this particular sense Rāmānujan emerges from this book as a Universal Man.

The first thing that catches the eye as one opens the book is a fascinating map of Madras and South India on one side and of Cambridge, England on the other. [Not found in the Indian edition]. Robert Kanigel has gone and lived in every place in S. India where Rāmānujan had lived, moved and had his being and actually captured in these pages the social and cultural ambience of South India during Rāmānujan's lifetime. There are few biographers, even among Indians in India, who have so completely identified themselves with the whole cultural milieu in which their Indian subjects lived as indeed Kanigel has done in this his magnum opus on Rāmānujan.

Rāmānujan was born in 1887. His mother Komalatammāl had borne six children after wedding Rāmānujan's rustic, simple-minded father Srinivāsa. It is clear from the narration that she treated her husband almost like a doormat and having herself chosen "a bright-eyed wisp of a girl," Jānaki, as bride for Rāmānujan, she took it upon herself, out of some strange sadistic streak in her character, to see that right from the day of marriage to the end of his all-too short a life Rāmānujan and his wife never came together to consummate their marriage.

To what extent was this responsible for sowing the seeds of the destructive side of Rāmānujan's psyche in the tragedy of his brief and intermittently brilliant life on earth? Tuberculosis killed him when he was only 33 years of age. He may not have contracted this wasting disease at all if only Jānaki had been permitted by Komalatammāl to sail with him to England in 1914. He died in 1920 a year after his return to India.

That "study in perpetual youth", the great mathematician G. H. Hardy of Trinity College, Cambridge (to whom Kanigel rightly devotes full 48 pages of his book) literally reached out his helping hand from England and pulled Rāmānujan to England where his papers blazed a trail in the mathematical firmament of the world and eventually crowned him with the prestigious title, *Fellow of the Royal Society*, in 1918.

Brilliantly summing up the way Rāmānujan shot into international fame in just 5 years, Kanigel says: "You cannot say much about Rāmānujan without resorting to the word *self*. He was self-willed, self-directed, self-made ... He had sprouted up out of the soil of India of his own accord. He had created himself .. Hardy discovered Rāmānujan? Not at all: the facts of 1912 and 1913 show that Rāmānujan discovered Hardy." (p.358)

Among the Indians who laboured hard to put Rāmānujan on the mathematical map of the world, his immediate boss at the Madras Port Trust, Nārāyana Iyer [a great devotee of

Sri Ramana whom Iyer visited frequently] occupies pride of place next to the pivotal role which R. Rāmachandra Rāo, the imperious District Collector of Nellore, played as Rāmānujan's benefactor. Rāmānujan's audience with Rao profoundly changed the course of his life around the year 1910.

Robert Kanigel's language in this evocative biography is replete with "measured cadences" of carefully sculpted prose. Kanigel writes with biblical brevity, marshals his facts with scientific accuracy and devotion to truth; and as revealed by his profuse notes he bases his observations on a fully authenticated and highly painstaking research. Throughout all the 427 pages of the book, Kanigel holds the reader in thrall not only by what he says but how he says it.

-- S. Jayarāman

* * *

BOOKS RECEIVED

QUEST FOR EXCELLENCE : pp. 154, Rs. 100; QUEST FOR INSPIRATION : pp. 112, Rs. 75. Both compiled, ed. by O.P. Ghai. Pub : Instt. of Personal Development, N. Delhi 110 016.

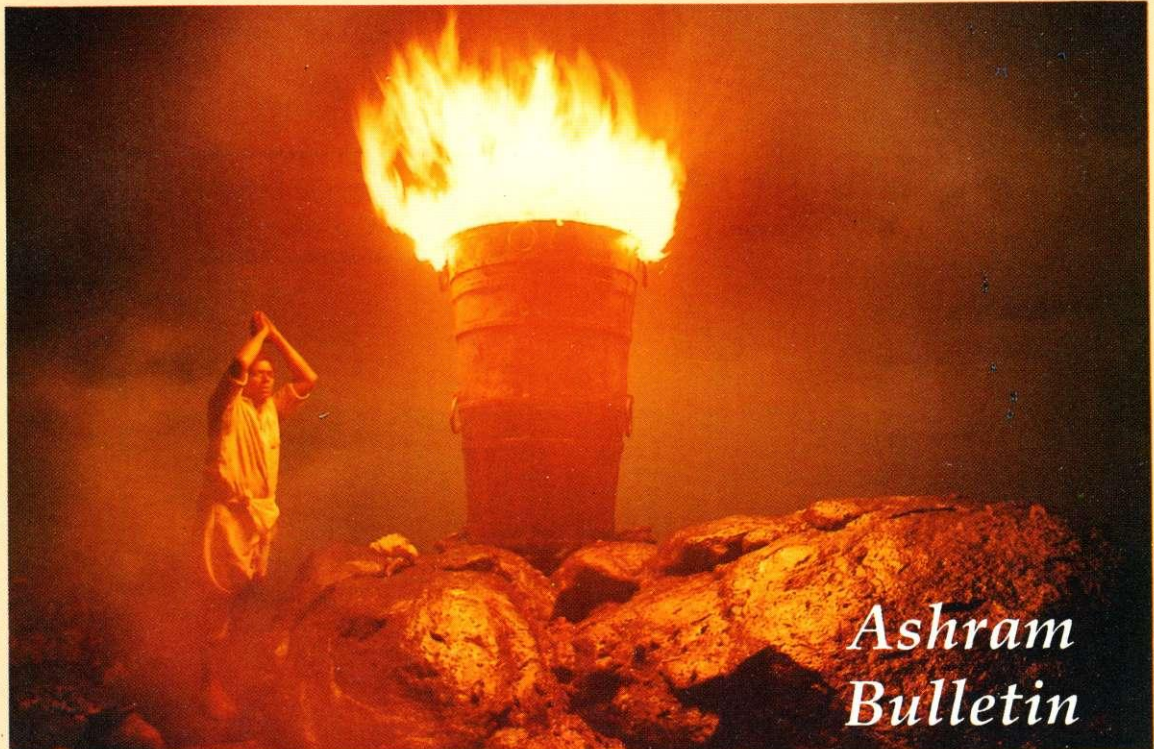
KABIR: MYSTIC OR MAVERICK?: by Prof. David Scott; SRI AUROBINDO'S INTERPRETATION OF THE MAHABHARATA; by Prema Nandakumar; WOMEN'S STUDIES IN THE INDIAN CONTEXT; by Dr. Indira Jai Prakash; SCIENCE AND CIVILIZATION IN TRADITIONAL PERSPECTIVE: by R. Ramakrishnan; PEACE AND HUMANISTIC CULTURE: by M.V. Venkataramiah. Pub: above five Transactions Nos.84-87 and 89, by Indian Institute of World Culture, Bangalore 564 004.

TO CHERISH ALL LIFE: by Philip Kapleau; EVERYDAY MIND: by Harada Sekkei Roshi; THE DHAMMAPADA AND THE BUDDHA'S LAST BEQUEST: tr. by Prof. N.K. Bhagwat; LIFE WITHOUT VIOLENCE: by Upali Ananda Peiris. All four from Mahabodhi Society, Bangalore 560 009. Free.

FAMILY PLANNING AND BIRTH CONTROL IN BUDDHIST PERSPECTIVE: by Louis Van Loon; THE LIVING MESSAGE OF THE DHAMMAPADA: by Bhikku Bodhi; THE EDICTS OF KING ASOKA: tr. by Ven. Dhammika. All three published by Buddhist Publication Society, PO Box 61, Kandy, Sri Lanka.

STUDY ON THREE VEDIC SUKTAS: by N.D. Sonde. Pub: Vasantik Prakashan, 65-B, Linking Rd. Bombay 400 054. Rs.25.

AAZHWAARS, THE TWELVE GOD-PERSONS OF VAISHNAVISM: by Sw. Satchithaananda Bharati. Pub: Author, Mouna Swami Mutt, Courtallam 627 802. Rs.10.



The huge cauldron lit on the top of Arunachala Hill on Deepam day

The Great Deepam Festival

Every year the *Deepam* is lit on the peak of Arunachala, symbolizing Siva — Self-Knowledge — who appeared as an infinite column of Fire — Pure Knowledge — before the quarelling Vishnu (*ahankara*) and Brahma (*buddhi*). To prove their superiority, the two gods tried but failed to find the column's beginning or end. Siva then manifested Himself before them as the Sacred Hill, Arunachala. Realizing that Brahman — Siva — is omnipresent, without beginning or end, they worshipped Him with humility, understanding that they were only His instruments.

"Getting rid of the 'I-am-the-body' idea and merging the mind into the Heart to realise the Self as non-dual Being and the Light of all, is the real significance of *darshan* of the beacon on Arunachala, the Centre of the Universe."

— Sri Bhagavan in *The Collected Works of Ramana Maharshi*, p. 82.

This symbolic festival has been going on from pre-historic times. It lasts for ten days with tens of thousands of people witnessing the daily procession of Siva, Uma and other deities around the great Arunachala Temple, day and night.

The *Deepam* on the Hill is lit on the tenth evening of the festival in a huge cauldron filled with camphorised ghee and yards of cloth serving as a wick, all provided by Sri Arunachaleswara Temple as well as several devotees. At Sri Ramanasramam as well, from its earliest days, a light is lit.

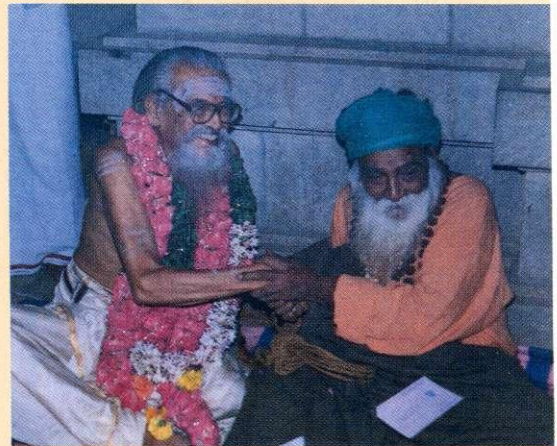
This year too the Light on the Hill, as well as at the Ashram, was lit punctually at 6 p.m. on November 18, as the Full Moon entered *Krittika*, the constellation of the Pleiades.



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Satabhishekam Celebrations

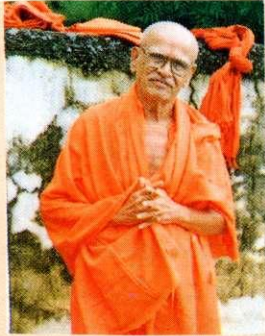


As announced in our previous issue, the *Satabhishekam* celebration (completion of 80 years of life) of our Ashram President, Sri T.N. Venkataraman, was celebrated on June 10 on a grand scale. Devotees, friends and relatives, especially his grandchildren and great-grandchildren, rejoiced on the occasion, a truly grand and unique one for joy and celebration.



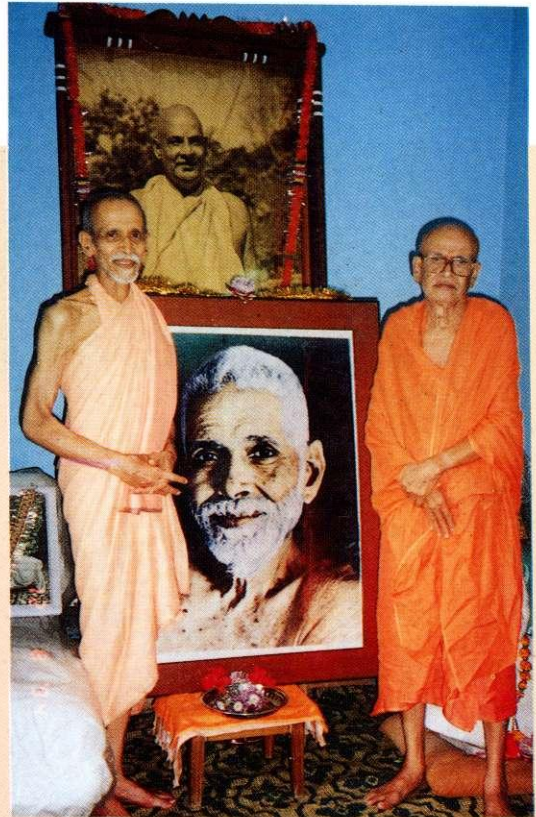
Messages of good wishes and greetings poured from all parts of the globe, congratulating "*Venkatoo*" and wishing him a longer and happier life.

Sri Yogi Ramsuratkumar graced the occasion with his presence, thus blessing our beloved Ashram President.



**Sri Swami
Ramanananda Saraswati
(formerly Sri T.N. Venkataraman)**

Within two months of having completed 80 years of life, **Sri T.N. Venkataraman**, President of Sri Ramanasramam, was initiated into the order of *sannyasa*. He is now known as **Swami Ramanananda Saraswati**. **Sri Swami Chidanandaji Maharaj**, President of the Divine Life Society, Sivanandashram,



Rishikesh, gave him *sannyasa diksha* on August 12, 1994.

Sri Chidanandaji Maharaj said: "Sri Venkataraman Maharaj (known to everyone as 'Venkatoo') is a most blessed being who has had the rare grace and good fortune of having grown up since childhood in the close divine proximity of Sri Ramana Bhagavan, one of the greatest among illumined seers and sages of enlightenment who have blessed *Bharat Varsha* [India] and this *Bhu-loka* [world] by their advent."

Our Swami Ramanananda Saraswati returned to Sri Ramanasramam on August 19, where he was

received by the inmates of the Ashram, headed by Sri V.S. Ramanan, with all honours due to a *sannyasin*. Sri Swami now resides in Room No. 19, within the Ashram premises itself.





Sashtiabdhapurti

Sri V.S. Ramanan's *Sashtiabdhapurti*, completion of 60 years of life, was grandly celebrated at the Ashram on June 16. His wife, Smt. Susila was a picture of happiness throughout the function; so too were his children and near and dear ones!

Devotees blessed this fortunate couple profusely, while the youngsters, in their turn, received the blessings from Sri Ramanan and Smt. Susila, on that happy day.



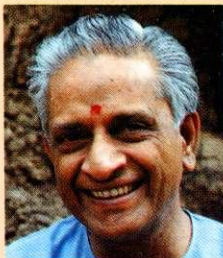
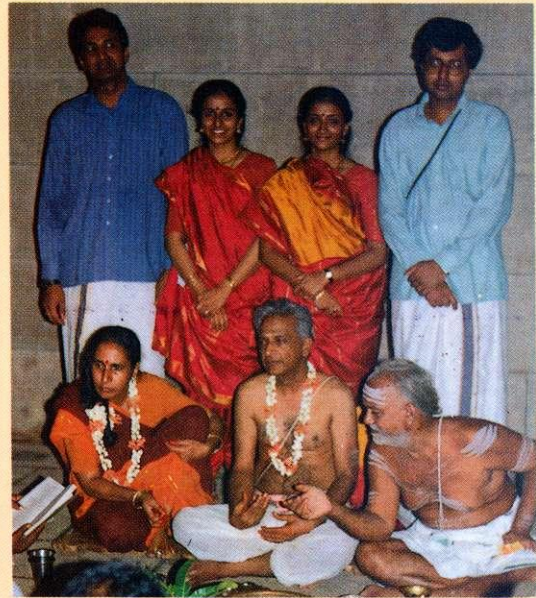


Sri V.S. Ramanan, Ashram President

Before taking up *sannyasa*, Sri T.N. Venkataraman, officially handed over the Ashram Presidentship, in accordance with Sri Bhagavan's WILL, to his eldest male descendent, **Sri V.S. Ramanan**, his eldest son.

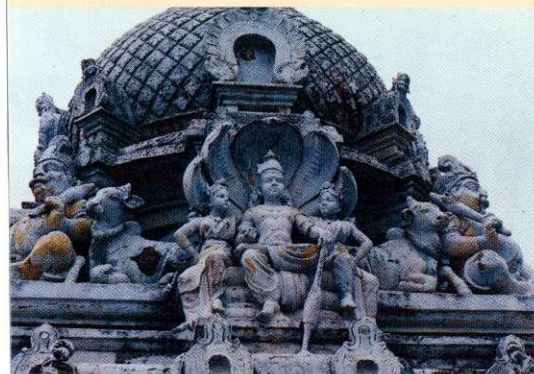
Thus: "I (T.N. Venkataraman, President of Sri Ramanasramam) hand over the Presidentship of Sri Ramanasramam, to my eldest son, V. Sundara Ramanan, also known as V.S. Ramanan, who retired as the General Manager of M/s. Indian Petrochemicals Corporation, Baroda, from 1992".

On behalf of all the devotees of Sri Bhagavan, we express our great joy and heartiest congratulations to Sri V.S. Ramanan — *our Sundaram* — assured that Sri Bhagavan's blessings will carry him in this laudable responsibility, with immense success.



Smt. Susila, a perfect mother to her own children, by the grace of Sri Bhagavan, has now become 'mother' to all of us. Through her well-known infinite affection, all of Sri Bhagavan's devotees are assured that they will be recipients of her boundless care.

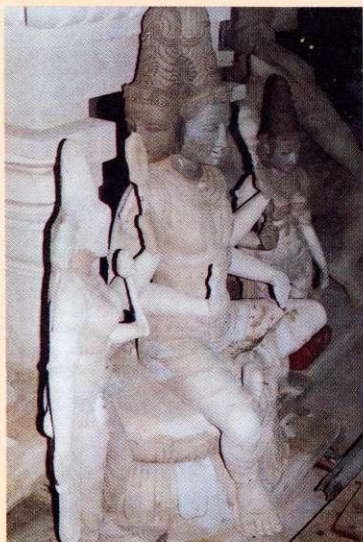


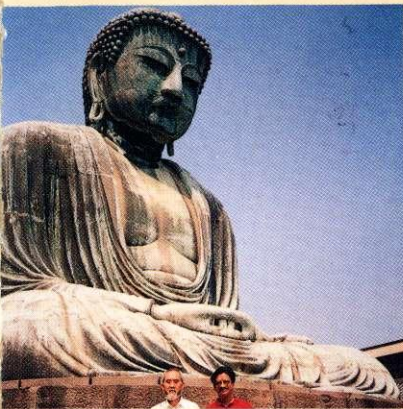


Renovation of Temples

We are happy that the renovation work on the Temple Towers over the Mother's Shrine and Sri Bhagavan's Shrine, begun on July 3, is progressing steadily. The work is entrusted to M/s Ganapati Sthapati Associated, Madras, past masters in temple architecture. **Sri Ganapati Sthapati**, their chief, is the son of Sri Vaidyanatha Sthapati who, in the days of Sri Bhagavan, built Sri Mathrubhuteswara Temple (Mother's Shrine) at the Ashram.

Skilful work in the traditional time-tested manner is being meticulously carried out, including the use of special quality lime as mortar.





— JAPAN —

Round-the-World Pilgrimage

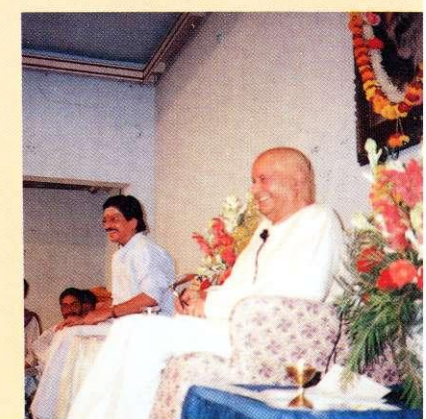
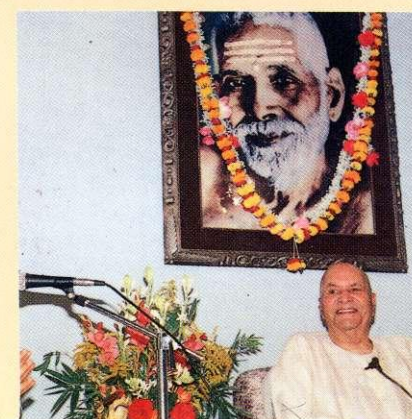
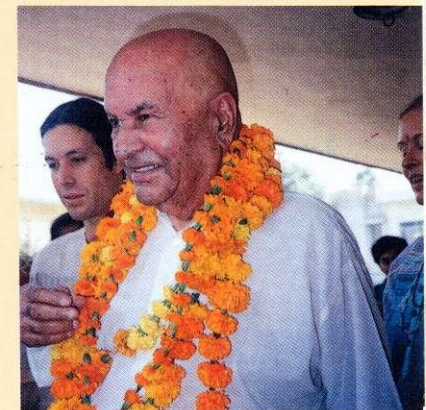
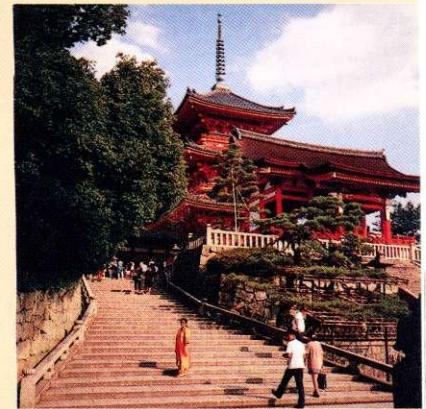
As in previous years, our *Editor*, Sri V. Ganesan, was cordially invited by devotees and friends abroad, to visit them and share with them Sri Bhagavan's teachings and anecdotes on His noble life.

Beginning his pilgrimage on August 11, his first stop was at Singapore, followed by Hong Kong, Japan, U.S.A., England and Germany. He returned to India on October 15.

He is very happy that Sri Bhagavan's unique message of Self-enquiry is being welcomed, assimilated and put into practice by more and more earnest seekers, especially young people.

Our *Editor* thanks all his hosts who were exceptionally kind to him during his stay with them.

On his return to India our *Editor* went to pay his deep respects to Sri H.W.L. Poonja — "Papaji" — at Lucknow. According him a royal reception, Papaji blessed him and enveloped him into the fold of his limitless spiritual splendour.



— LUCKNOW —



Thank You!

After many decades of dedicated service to the Ashram — especially in the Publications section — V. Ganesan retires from all the official positions that he has been holding hitherto at Sri Ramanasramam. He will, however, continue to be available between 8 and 11 in the morning for seekers to meet him and have spiritual discussions with him. He will also continue to give talks on Sri Maharshi and His teachings whenever invited by devotees.

* * *

V. Ganesan expresses his limitless gratitude and thanks to the following who helped him edit The Mountain Path, for the past eight years. "It is their willing and unconditional assistance which enthused me to carry on this sacred but very heavy burden, all these years."

K.V. Subramanyan



David Godman



Dev Gogoi



Nadhia Sutara



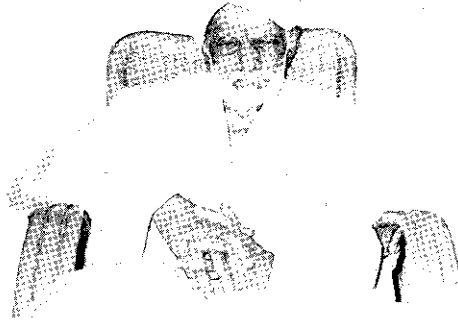
Anuradha



J. Jayaraman
who is in charge of
Book Reviews



T.V. Venkataraman
who has been printing
the journal from its
inception.



Sri Ramaswamy Pillai is One Hundred years old

Devotees of Sri Bhagavan will surely rejoice over this piece of very happy news that one of our Ashramites from 1922 and one of the staunchest devotees of Sri Bhagavan, **Sri G. Ramaswamy Pillai**, is now one hundred years of age! Let us sing to him, 'Happy 100th Birthday to You'!

Sri Ramaswamy Pillai came for the first time in 1917 when Sri Bhagavan was at Skandashram. He had completed his school final examination. Everything was robust about him: health, voice, physical work and views. Sri Pillai writes: "... I fancied I saw a royal hunter in the forest; Sri Bhagavan's personality was striking and I thought of Him as a hunter hunting down the senses." Tormented as he was by unruly instincts and a sense of guilt, within a few years he found that these feelings were being hunted away. Some hunter, some quarry! Then, in 1921 there was a brief conjugal interlude. Disillusioned, the young man returned to the Ashram for a marriage of souls which would never break down.

1922 was the year when the present Ashram was being founded and Sri Pillai had not come too soon. With his robust body and zest for work, he was cut out for the spade-work that went on day and night in clearing and levelling the grounds. Later, when some of the present buildings had come up and labourers were employed, it was he who supervised the manual labour, often chipping in himself with tools in hand.

Old devotees recollect that when Sri Bhagavan's knees were badly swollen with rheumatism and Sri Pillai was himself already well advanced into middle age, Sri Bhagavan once slipped and fell during His daily walk on

the hill, injuring His foot. Without a word to any one, Sri Pillai set out next day to make a path up the hill, shoring the steep slope into steps, chiselling steps into the slabs of rock, putting a firm stone edge to the path. From dawn to dusk, for hours together, he worked single-handedly until the path was made!

Another outstanding feature about him is his love of spiritual songs. He has a stentorian voice and a vast repertoire, and every day, morning and evening, he sings Sri Bhagavan's Tamil songs. His devotion to the Master is matchless: "To me Sri Bhagavan is more than father, mother, king, country, Guru and God!" His love for going round Holy Hill Arunachala is unsurpassed. He does so even now, though his infirmity compels him to do so in a cycle-rikshaw.

His advice to younger seekers who now flock Sri Ramanasramam, is: "From my experience, the best way to communicate with Bhagavan is to gaze into His eyes. Then peace of mind comes spontaneously, and the inward search is made much easier."

Sri Pillai affirms: "Sri Bhagavan's Presence and Guidance are still here at the Ashram — at the Old Hall, at the Nirvana Room, at the Samadhi Hall. Also, from any of His photographs the Spiritual Nectar that He ever was and is gushes forth towards the yearning seeker!"

The Mountain Path, of which Sri Pillai has been a keen reader from its very first issue, joins the innumerable devotees who, with all reverence, pay their salutations to this 'oldest Ramana-*bhakta*' living in our midst!

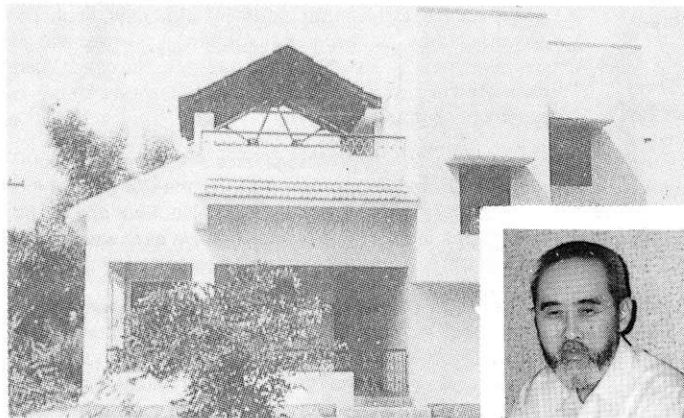
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His Holiness **Sri Bharati Tirtha**, Sringeri Sankaracharya, giving message of blessings at *Ramana Kendra*, Delhi on Sept. 5.



Advent of Bhagavan Ramana at Arunachala Celebrations: On Sept. 4, this great event was joyously celebrated, by *Arunachala Ashrams*, both at Nova Scotia, Canada and at New York City. Sri Bhagavan's Shrine at Nova Scotia, Canada; and devotees seated around Sri Bhagavan's portrait at New York City.



Prof. Tadashi Yanagida, President, Nippon Ramana Kendra, Japan, has now become *Arunachala-Vaasi* (permanent resident at Arunachala), taking shelter under 'Arul Ramana'.

Ashram thanks **Sri V. Dwaraknath Reddi** for a donation of Rs. 70,000/-, a Milk Chiller and a Jersey Cow, as a mark of his completion of 70 years of age; clothes were also gifted.

Obituary

K. Venkataraman

1921 - 1994



K. Venkataraman — known to Ashramites as 'K.V. Mama' — was born on November 17, 1921 to Chellamma, the niece and adopted daughter of Bhagavan's great devotee Echammal. This child was orphaned almost immediately, as Chellamma died very shortly. The baby was put on the lap of Bhagavan by Echammal, entreating Him to be both the father and mother

of the child henceforth. 'Ramanan', as he was popularly known among his relatives and wide circle of friends, was successful in life and had a happy family. He enshrined Sri Bhagavan in his heart as his sole God.

He was instrumental in founding the Ramana Kendra at Delhi. In 1979-80, during the celebrations of Sri Bhagavan's Centenary he played a very important part and was the treasurer of the Celebration's Committee. After taking early retirement in 1983, he spared no efforts to devote his skills and energy to the service of the Ashram and devotees. His efficiency, always with a smile and ready wit, will fondly be remembered by fellow-workers and Ramana-devotees alike.

The end came quickly for K.V. Mama. Shortly after midnight on November 23, he suffered a massive heart attack in his room at the Ashram. Within fifteen minutes, consciously and peacefully chanting, "Ramana, Ramana" he was absorbed into the Heart of his chosen Master.

He is survived by his two sons and two daughters, all well settled in life.

Prof. O. Ramachandraiah

1912 - 1994



Dr. Oruganti Ramachandraiah was born in Kavali, Nellore District, Andhra Pradesh. He was the first scholar to obtain the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History (1946) from Andhra University for his commendable work on history of Krishna Devaraya. Having married Sow. Kamakshi, daughter of Munagala Venkataramaiah, the recorder of *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*,

Prof. Ramachandraiah came early into the fold of Ramana-bhaktas. Not only did he use his scholarly gifts to translate *Talks* into Telugu, but he also wrote poetic compositions of his own to the glory of the Guru. From his retirement in 1972, he came to spend his last years at the foot of Arunachala. On July 1, 1994, he was swiftly and peacefully absorbed into the Lotus Feet of the Beloved.

N. Nataraja Iyer (N.N. Rajan)

1906 - 1994



N.N. Rajan first came to Sri Bhagavan in 1935, when he was twenty-nine years old. Thereafter he became an ardent Ramana-bakta and even had himself transferred to Tiruvannamalai in order to be near Him. As railway stationmaster, this gave him and his family tremendous opportunity to move freely with Sri Bhagavan in the days before the crowds came and access to Him was limited. Even after Rajan's transfer elsewhere, he lost no opportunity to come and imbibe the grace of the Master. His book, *Ramana Dhyanam*, was translated into many languages even during Sri Bhagavan's lifetime. His last book, based on his Diary, was completed and released shortly before his absorption into the Lotus Feet of the Master on October 4, 1994 at 3.45 p.m.

R.S. Ramachandran

This great devotee of Sri Bhagavan not only showed his devotion in life, but also in death. Having come from a great family of Ramana-bhaktas — his wife, Smt. Shyamala and her deceased parents already being well within the Ramana circle — he immediately used his skills to build up the Delhi Ramana Kendra decades ago while he was working in the Central Government. Later, when he was transferred to Madurai, he and his wife were the pillars of the Madurai Ramana Kendra, of which he became President. He actively participated in the renovation of the Madurai Sri Ramana Mandiram in 1987. On retirement, he settled in Madras, where he took a keen interest in the formation of Sri Ramana Vidya Trust.



Despite the fact that the *Satabhishekam* of our Ashram President was intended to be a small family affair, Sri Ramachandran's devotion was such that he could not stay away. After attending the ceremonies, he returned to Madras on the same day. A few miles from Tiruvannamalai, the bus they were travelling was involved in a serious accident, and he was mortally injured. Although in great pain, and with other hospitals nearby, he adamantly insisted to be taken back to Tiruvannamalai, where with the Holy Name of Arunachala Ramana in his lips, he died a few hours after reaching Arunachala on May 16, 1994.

If his own devotion were not miraculous enough to be recorded, that of his wife is no less so. Throughout the funeral ceremonies in the Ashram, she held continuous *satsang*, making frequent reference to her husband's great devotion to Sri Bhagavan and narrating stories from his life, making the tragedy yet one more brilliant example of Sri Bhagavan's grace to His devotees.

R. Nagaraja 1939 - 1993



This great son of Bhagavan's long-standing devotee, K. Ramaswamy of Bangalore was, together with all his family, a great Ramana-*bhakta*. When, in the midst of a brilliant career as a scientist in the Defence Science Department, he was diagnosed as having incurable cancer, he came immediately to Arunachala to spend the remainder of his life at the Feet of the Guru. During the last seven months of his life, which he spent at Ramanasramam, he showed remarkable courage in the face of increasing pain and the imminence of death. He passed away peacefully on December 13, 1993 at around 4 p.m. His funeral was attended by all the Ashram inmates amidst the chanting of *Aksharamanamalai* and other works of Sri Bhagavan.

S. Subbalakshmi Ammal (Mrs. M.R. Krishnamurthi Iyer)



Smt. Subbalakshmi, wife of Dr. M.R. Krishnamurthi Iyer, the first doctor of the Ashram Dispensary, was herself a great devotee of Sri Bhagavan. When the Dispensary was opened in 1929, she was able to be near Sri Bhagavan to her heart's content. Sri Bhagavan gave her his *anugraha* both in His presence and in dreams. Details of Smt. Subbalakshmi's continued contact with Sri Bhagavan, while Dr. M.R. Krishnamurthi Iyer was attending on Sri Bhagavan as His physician for decades, are of very absorbing interest. All her children are devotees of Sri Bhagavan. Her eldest son,

Sri Mani, is now serving at the Ashram Stores. She was absorbed into His Lotus Feet on March 31, 1994.

Narikutti Swami

While still in his 20s, Sri Narikutti Swami left his native Australia for Sri Lanka, where he met his Guru, Yoga Swami of Jaffna. After the *Mahasamadhi* of his Guru, Swami came to Arunachala, where he confirmed for himself that the teaching of his Guru was more than heightened by the towering eminence of Arunachala-Bhagavan. He settled here permanently in 1972, establishing his residence on the hill in the Lakshmi Ammal cave. Among the many works carried out by him were the planting and tending of the trees that now form the oasis stretching north from Mulaipal Tirtham, and the restoration of the Tirtham itself. Having shown great courage in the face of prolonged ill health, Swami was released and merged in the Feet of his beloved Arunachala on September 15, 1994.



Satyanarayana Tandon

This ardent Ramana-*bhakta* of Kanpur, U.P. had been visiting Sri Ramanasramam regularly for the past thirty-five years. Sri Tandon was instrumental in spreading Sri Bhagavan's name and fame in the Hindi-speaking areas of North India, by bringing out the Maharshi's works in Hindi transliteration. His entire family is devoted to our Master. He passed away peacefully, without any illness, on March 28, 1994 and was absorbed into the Lotus Feet of his Beloved.



SRI RAMANASRAMAM USA

We are happy to announce the founding of SRI RAMANASRAMAM USA in the United States of America. It is a non-profit, tax-exempt organisation, and its main aim is to disseminate the teachings of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi in the Western Hemisphere.

It will distribute at **cost price** books on and by Bhagavan Ramana, published by Sri Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai.

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