

₹ 50/-



Mountain Path



Vol. 59, No.2

April-June 2022



Original ink sketch of Arunachala by Sri Ramana Maharshi, from Kunju Swami's notebook

Mountain Path

FOUNDED 1964 BY ARTHUR OSBORNE

VOLUME 59, No. 1, ARADHANA 2022

Managing Editor &

Publisher : Venkat S. Ramanan

Editor: Christopher Quilkey

Editorial Board: S. Ram Mohan

V. Subramanian

Printer: N. Subramaniam

Web Team: M. Giridhar
S. Gopalakrishnan
L. Sivasubramanian
D. Thiyagarajan

Please address enquiries and
subscriptions to:

email: bookstall@ramanaguru.org

Website: www.sriramanamaharshi.org

Mountain Path

Sri Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai

Tamil Nadu - 606 603

Phone: 0091-4175-237200

+91 9244937292

Fax: 0091-4175-237491

Annual Subscription
(4 issues):

₹ 200 (India)

₹ 50 (single copy)

US\$ 20 (all other countries)

Life Subscription

₹ 2,000 (India)

US\$ 300 (Foreign)

**The aim of this journal is to set forth
the traditional wisdom of all religions
and all ages, especially as testified
to by their saints and mystics, and to
clarify the paths available to seekers
in the conditions of our modern world.**

Contributions for publication are
welcome. Please address letters
and submissions to The Editor. They
should be in English, original and
previously unpublished. Contributions
not published will be returned on
request. Contributors may also send
articles by email attachment.

No payment is made for contributions
published.

The Editor is not responsible for
statements and opinions contained in
signed articles.

Material from Mountain Path may be
published elsewhere with permission
from the Publisher and acknowledgement
to Mountain Path.

Please address articles for consideration to:

Mountain Path

Sri Ramanasramam

mountainpath@sriramanamaharshi.org

CONTENTS

DIVINE NAMES OF ARUNACHALA	2
EDITORIAL: THE WRITTEN LEGACY	3
THE METAPHYSICAL BOARD GAME Kanchana Natarajan	7
POEM: THE HARVERT OF HIS GRACE Suresh Kailash	15
IN THE HALL WITH BHAGAVAN Monica Bose	17
POEM: HOW MANY TIMES? Geeta Bhatt	23
TATTUVARAYAR AND HIS SASIVANNA BODAM Radha Raghunathan	25
J. KRISHNAMURTI: DID HE SUCCEED IN CHANGING HIS LISTENERS? S. Gopalan	43
A FEW ADVAITIC AND ZEN HI-COO Kevan Myers	53
THE PARAMOUNT IMPORTANCE OF SELF ATTENTION Sadhu Om	55
BOOK EXCERPT: SRI MAHASWAMI THE SAGE WITH EYES OF LIGHT Serge Demetrian	61
POEM: IN THE MORNING Upahar	70
KEYWORD: NIRVIKALPA B. K. Croissant	71
POEM: TARRY NOT Suresh Kailash	78
TAMIL SIDDHAS: SIVAVAKKIAR P. Raja	79
ADVAITA PRIMER: MISTAKING THE UNREAL TO BE REAL M. Giridhar	87
FROM THE ARCHIVES: WANDERING THROUGH INDIA Thelma Rappold	95
POEM: WINDS OF ETERNITY Cit Ananda	106
MAHA BHAKTA VIJAYAM: THE BLESSED LIFE OF SANT JAYADEVA Nabaji Siddha	107
VAIRAGYA CATAKAM Tavattiru Santhalinga Adigal	115
BOOK REVIEWS	121
ASHRAM BULLETIN	125

Divine Names of Arunachala

26. ॐ सकान्तिने नमः

Om sakāntine namaḥ

Prostration to the One who possesses brilliance.

Sakāntin means possessing *kānti*, brightness or splendour. The idea of brilliance frequently occurs in Sri Ramana Maharshi's *Five Hymns to Arunachala*. 'Arunachala of golden brightness beautiful', 'all-embracing light', 'shining within the Heart', 'shining as the cure for madness', 'Sun of bright rays who swallow everything' are just a few examples of its use. Nowhere, however, is Light so persistent as in verse 4 of the *Ashtakam*.

*See, leaving You, who exist and shine (oḷir), and seeking God is only like taking a light seeking darkness. Only to reveal Yourself, who exist and shine (oḷir), you exist as various forms in each and every religion. If people do not know You, who exist and shine (oḷir), they are only like the blind who do not have knowledge of the Sun. O Gem called the peerless great Aruna Hill, exist and shine (oḷir) in my Heart as one without a second.*¹

Blindness is indeed a problem. Why don't we see the Light, the incredible brilliance in every moment of our waking lives? Bhagavan's cure for this involves a simple shift in perspective. Listen to what He says.

*Bhagavan explained that the Self is the one reality that always exists and it is by its light all other things are seen. We forget it and concentrate on the appearances. In the waking state or dream state, in which things appear, and in the sleep state, in which we see nothing, there is always the light of consciousness or Self, like the hall-lamp always burning. The thing to do is to concentrate on the Seer and not on the seen, not on the objects, but on the Light which reveals them.*²

The brightness of Arunachala is none other than our very nature!
May YOU shine! — BKC

¹ Sri Sadhu Om and Michael James, *Sri Arunachala Stuti Panchakam*, Sri Ramana Kshetra, 2007, pp. 154-157.

² Mudaliar, A. Devaraja, *Day by Day with Bhagavan*, 16-9-45 afternoon.

The Written Legacy

Recently on the 22nd January 2022, a revered Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh died at the age of 95. The eulogies were effusive about his ability to affect those in his presence with an indefinable sense of peace and well-being. His central teaching of Buddhist mindfulness has helped psychologists to alleviate the pervasive spread of mental depression in their patients in the modern world. His impact on modern health care systems and mindfulness-based cognitive therapy is incalculable.¹

One of his senior disciples, Phar Dung paraphrased one of his admonitions before a stroke silenced his voice a few years before his death: “Please do not build a stupa for me. Please do not put my ashes in a vase, lock me inside and limit who I am. I know this will

¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jan/22/> from MLK to Silicon Valley, how the world fell for ‘father of mindfulness’ | Vietnam | The Guardian Suryagupta, Chair of the London Buddhist Centre, said, “What was so striking was, whenever he walked into a space, sometimes there would be hundreds of people there, without saying a word literally as soon as he walked in, his presence would instil this sort of stillness and quietness in the crowd... and a softness, you felt yourself relax and be alert somehow in his presence.” Suryagupta also said his inclusivity was a central feature of his teaching.

Another, Marianne Williamson said, “His gift to the planet was so significant I don’t think it will in any way lessen with his death. With some people, and certainly there are those we all know of today, their negativity permeates the consciousness of the planet... With Thich Nhat Hanh, his love and compassion permeated the consciousnesses of the planet and now it’s our responsibility to carry it forward from here.”

be difficult for some of you. If you must build a stupa though, please make sure that you put a sign on it that says, 'I am not in here'. In addition, you can also put another sign that says, 'I am not out there either', and a third sign that says, 'If I am anywhere, it is in your mindful breathing and in your peaceful steps.'"²

This cautionary statement is reminiscent of our approach to Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi. Though we have the ashram and his *samadhi*, his writings and the reminiscences of devotees who sat at his feet, if we truly follow the teaching, he lives in our hearts and minds. We absorb the teachings by applying them rather than just reading them.

It is a paradox that the more we read about Bhagavan but do not apply the lessons, the further away we become until Bhagavan is an historical figure with little relevance to our daily lives. Our inspiration comes not so much from the words of others however well meaning, but Bhagavan's own direct insights. If words cannot transform us then there are the innumerable photographs we have of his wise and compassionate image and the ever-present radiance we experience at his *samadhi*. Though Bhagavan is not bound by the ashram, it is a dependable compass point for it always turns us to true north. We should remember however that the power of the presence magnifies our dispositions or *vasanas*. By some inexplicable alchemy our motives, desires, fears are brought to the surface both for us to see and for others to observe. Our worst tendencies and our noblest traits are amplified.

It is now over seventy years since the *mahanirvana* of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi and in that time his name, the teachings he enunciated and the glories of Arunachala have slowly filtered into the consciousness of many around the world. He is venerated in India and his Name is associated with all that is pure and authoritative in Advaita Vedanta.

Before and after his physical departure from this world, many books have been published about incidents in his life either witnessed at first hand or interpreted at second hand from other accounts to stress a point that the author thought was important. Others endeavoured

² [https://plumvillage.org/articles/Thich Nhat Hanh's final mindfulness lesson: how to die peacefully](https://plumvillage.org/articles/Thich%20Nhat%20Hanh's%20final%20mindfulness%20lesson%3A%20how%20to%20die%20peacefully)|Plum Village

to explain and clarify what he taught from their own incomplete understanding. Many accounts give us a tantalising impression, while others fall short of the truth either from a lack of understanding or an impulsive desire to exaggerate to impress the reader.

If one were to grade the various books available the only true publications are those which were edited and proof-read by Bhagavan himself. This would include the various editions printed in his lifetime of his philosophical and literary compositions. His *Collected Works* or *Sri Ramana Nul-Tirattu* in Tamil, though slim in size, comparatively speaking are sufficient for gaining a true understanding.

As to the various reminiscences and records of conversations with Bhagavan there are a few which are considered dependable, notably *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi* and *Day by Day with Bhagavan*. The collection of verses *Guru Vachaka Kovai* composed by Muruganar based on the words of Bhagavan which he heard on a regular basis usually in the Old Hall, are an accurate if poetic rendering. Bhagavan saw each and every verse and made suitable corrections where necessary. We also may accept as reliable reminiscences by such long-time close devotees such as Kunju Swami, Viswanatha Swami, T.K. Sundaresa Iyer, S.S. Cohen and Suri Nagamma. The writings of Sadhu Natananandar may also be accepted as germane, as also *Ramana Maharshi and the Path of Self Knowledge* by Arthur Osborne and *The Path of Sri Ramana Part One* by Sadhu Om and *Maharshi's Gospel*.

Academics are now writing theses. Arthur Osborne observed that as soon as the founder of a religion departs from this world, that is the beginning of the slide from the original pristine state. It is inevitable that Bhagavan's original teachings will slowly be diluted by well-meaning commentators and others who have their own agenda.

That first generation of devotees have mostly gone and a second and even third generation of commentators have begun to air their views and give their own slant to various aspects of the teaching and incidents in Bhagavan's life. There is a tendency to sentimentalise Bhagavan as if he were a sweet old uncle. Bhagavan could demonstrate this aspect if compassion was required, but he was also a remorseless tiger who did not tolerate duplicity.

There are some who claim that their elaborated stories about Bhagavan are true. It is inevitable that during a public speech an incident will be dramatised to highlight a meaningful point. To a

certain extent they are right in that there is a kernel in the telling but the embellishment is just fantasy. Let us be clear: no one fully understands Bhagavan. If there was anyone who was considered to be qualified to speak of Bhagavan and the teaching it would be Muruganar but even he, when asked if he understood, is said to have replied, no, not all.

We only understand the teachings to the extent of our own genuine capacity. Here is a stark example: if we ask a child for say a detailed clarification of why the Soviet Union collapsed in the late 1980s, the child would be at a loss. It is similar to explaining Bhagavan, if we think that understanding him is easy, then we have not understood him at all! We are all children to some extent and though we may pretend to know more, it is an exaggeration which eventually fools no one, except perhaps ourselves. Put simply: information is not wisdom.

Many in Bhagavan's lifetime remarked on the overwhelming sense of presence which obliterated all their worries and concerns. This is the mark of a true sage. Muruganar once joked that when he entered the Old Hall where Bhagavan reclined, everything became clear but when he left the Old Hall confusion occupied his mind once more, he was as muddled as ever. Bhagavan laughed.

There is little that the ashram can do if people persist in writing and publishing their own idiosyncratic accounts of what Bhagavan meant and what he did while in the physical body. Bhagavan if nothing else, was low-key. He did not arrogate to himself authority, although his authority, based entirely on respect and awe, was absolute. He did not make himself superior and exceptional, and he certainly did not tolerate any special treatment for himself alone. Whenever any so-called miracle was credited to him, he would invariably play it down and would refuse to attribute it to himself. At most, he would say, it was "Automatic divine action."

What we can do with the literature that grows around Bhagavan, is to leave aside the exaggerations and focus on the basic truth, the bones of that which hold the structure of an account together.

Bhagavan was natural in all that he did or said. He does not need glorification nor a recitation of miracles. In fact, it is detrimental as our aim should be not to become someone but to be no one. Ultimately Bhagavan shows us the way by invisible Grace. And for that there are no words necessary but a silent, direct relationship. ▲

The Metaphysical Board Game

Avudai Akkal's *Pañcīkarana Kaṭṭam*

KANCHANA NATARAJAN

The object of creation is to remove the confusion of your individuality... Because you identify yourself with the body you want to know about creation... if you cease to identify yourself with the body no questions regarding creation, birth, death, etc, will arise... the object of creation is thus clear, that you should proceed from where you find yourself and realise your true Being.

Sri Ramana Maharshi¹

I. The 'Game' and Its 'Field'

Pañcīkarana Kaṭṭam ('Squares of Pañcīkarana') is a board game² invented by Chenkottai Avudai Akkal ('Akka'), an 18th-century Tamil woman Vedanta saint and poet.³ Akka's 'board game' offers a unique and complex reconfiguration of the renowned 8th-century Vedanta philosopher/sage Śaṅkarācārya's *Pañcīkaraṇam* ('Quintuplication'),

¹ M.S. Venkataramiah, *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, Talk§ 610.

² I am deeply indebted to women from Chenkottai and Saraswathi Ammal and her long term friends from Thoothukudi who introduced me to Pañcīkarana-Kaṭṭam, a *Viḷaiyāṭṭu* as they called. *Viḷaiyāṭṭu* is a 'play' and a recreative pastime. Women also called this play *Kaṭṭam Vaikkaradu*, 'placing the squares'.

³ For more details on Avudai Akkal refer to my previous articles in *Mountain Path*: Vol. 47, No. 1, pp. 16-29 and Vol. 56, No. 3, pp. 52-69.

Kanchana Natarajan is a retired Professor from the Department of Philosophy, University of Delhi.

a short canonical text that frames cosmology in an enigmatic manner.⁴ Śaṅkara's direct disciple Sureśvarācārya wrote a long commentary on this text, and over the centuries Śaṅkara's aphoristic masterpiece has inspired many scholarly sub-commentaries. Akka's explication departs from the traditional discursive format through presenting the abstractions of Vedānta creation doctrine as a concrete form of play. The 'playing field' here is a broad geometric template of *kaṭṭam* (lit. 'squares'). This ingeniously designed and mathematically precise Advaita 'board game' is collectively 'played' by groups of Brahmin women within their households on every *ekadashi* day.⁵

The *kaṭṭam* delineates the process by which the five basic elements (space, air, fire, water and earth) move within the ongoing universal cycles of *sr̥ṣṭi* ('creation') and *laya* (re-absorption). Each element is divided into two equal parts. One half is retained and the other half is further divided into four parts. The half is then combined with four one-eighth parts of the other four elements. Thus, each material element consists of one half of itself, and one-eighth of each of the other four. In *sr̥ṣṭi*, the elements combine into the material cosmos; in *laya*, a reversal or 'de-quintuplication' takes place, wherein these perishable elements are disaggregated and merge back into the imperishable subtle Being/Sat.

The 'playing field' consists of seven foldable wooden boards, a horizontal spread template upon which Sanskrit and Tamil philosophical terms are all inscribed in Tamil. Using small cowrie shells as counters, the players systematically negotiate a grid of internally linked metaphysical axioms laid out in a sequence of diagrams. In synchrony with the movement of cowries across this (cosmic) field, the players recite thematic verses from the game's accompanying manual of verses written by Akka, describing the manifestation, evolution and dissolution of the universe in accordance with the narrative trajectory of Śaṅkara's *Pañcikaraṇam*. While one player reads from the manual, another carefully moves the shell across the requisite squares, in strict progression, slowly, systematically traversing the entire grid,

⁴ There is a controversy regarding the authorship of this brief aphoristic work. Refer to *Pañcikaraṇam Vidyashankar*.

⁵ Women confessed that it is not anymore played because of other engagements.



powerfully reiterating the emanation/dissolution of the cosmos. The other player-spectators actively participate in the game – vigorously chanting, sometimes singing the verses and refrain from the manual at prescribed times, and discussing the various possible meanings of the inscriptions on the *kaṭṭam*, raising appropriate questions about cosmology.

Simultaneously fixed (within a grid) and flexible (involving player subjectivity), Akka's Pañcīkaraṇa Kaṭṭam is a deeply symbolic construct depicting *līlā*, the unceasing, cosmic 'game' in which no player wins or loses, and in which all participate equally. This extraordinary game affirms Akka's experience of Self-realisation as well as her intellectual grasp of Advaita. The game serves as a dynamic mode/model of visual and verbal instruction in Vedānta epistemology, using a popular device as a conduit of knowledge transmission. This is a most unusual alternative to formal discourse.

As with each of Akka's songs, her Pañcīkaraṇa Kaṭṭam specifically made for women, is an original intervention that successfully delivers the abstract fundamentals of classical cosmology to non-literate women in the midst of their daily household life.⁶ I read Pañcīkaraṇa Kaṭṭam as an example of Akka's compassionate intent to teach the emancipatory principles of Vedānta in a most accessible form to those who were completely excluded from orthodox learning systems. In broader terms, it is tempting to see Akka's board game as evidence of the presence and practise of parallel methodologies of learning and teaching independently initiated by women, and sharply distinct from the prevalent śāstraic knowledge-traditions and their attendant hegemonies.

II. The Players and the Rules

In 2010, after a prolonged search in Chenkottai and neighbouring villages, I had the good fortune to witness Pañcīkaraṇa Kaṭṭam being played by a group of senior women, who also invited me to photograph

⁶ Compare Akka's intervention with what is seen in the article 'Sri Poondi Swami and Ādi Śaṅkara's Pañcīkaraṇam' by Ram Brown Crowell in *Mountain Path*, Vol. 54, No. 1, 2017, pp 59-71. Crowell, informed by Hamsa, considers Pañcīkaraṇam as a closed text 'gupta-vidya', whose meaning is restricted to a qualified disciple hearing it directly from a realised guru... in so called 'hot' transmission... p.61.

the session. Upon arriving at my host's house, I was warmly welcomed by this group, who were long-term friends, and some younger local residents. They had all gathered to play the Pañcīkaraṇa Kaṭṭam.⁷ The ladies were not using an actual wooden foldable board but a horizontally spread template of colourfully created thick cardboard squares on which had been glued papers with terms inscribed in Tamil. The manual had been written out in a notebook, from which one player read the requisite verses aloud in accordance with the cowries being moved across the grid by another player, with the other players repeating the refrain. The players debated the meanings of the philosophical inscriptions on the grid; they also expressed heartfelt gratitude to the teachers who had trained them to navigate the *kaṭṭam* and the rules of the game when they were young and the game was a regular aspect of their life and sociality.

This gathering played with fervour, delight and remarkable affectionate intimacy for a total of six hours. At a particular juncture midway through the game they took a break, explaining to me that the phase of *sr̥ṣṭi-prakriya* ('creation/evolution process') was over. The players called this orderly filling of the grid *kaṭṭam vaikkaradu* ('placing the *kaṭṭam*'). Homemade sweets and savoury snacks along with bananas and coconut were offered to the squares, each now containing a cowrie, as a gesture of thanks, and to honour the supreme Creator.

After relaxation, refreshments and tumblers of hot filter coffee, the women resumed playing. The manual was read out with great zeal once again, and now the game moved through the phase of *laya-prakriya* ('dissolution process'), symbolised through what the players called *kaṭṭam eḍukkaradu* ('removal of the cowries') from their respective squares. As with the *sr̥ṣṭi-prakriya*, what was most striking was the players' absolute fidelity to the sequence dictated by the manual. The dialectic of infinity that had unfolded through the internal relationships built on the 'cosmic' field meticulously emanating via the careful placement of the cowries on each square of the grid, was now slowly

⁷The game was also later demonstrated to me in a metropolitan city by a lone lady player who was then 94 years of age. She had the entire manual in her memory and could simultaneously recite and place the shells in the grid. See the top picture on page 13.

being disaggregated with equal dexterity. The cowries were picked up off the squares one by one, in a reverse movement that signified the created elements being inevitably subsumed in their first causes, Maya and Brahman.

Though raptly following each step of the ‘game’ and all the animated attendant conversation between its players, I was unprepared for the mesmeric instant when all the cowries had been removed and the *kaṭṭam* was left bare. This finale came as a shock, deeply moving and unsettling, indescribably stark as well as indescribably serene. Each level of ‘cosmic’ embedment, from macro- to micro-level, had been taken apart as faultlessly as it had been constructed. No step could be bypassed, altered, shifted, repeated or substituted on the ‘cosmic’ grid. There were no deviations, no fissures or ruptures. Nothing had been random, nothing arbitrary. And nothing remained.

The players fell silent for some moments, acknowledging this symbolic release from *samsāra*. They then concluded the game by singing the manual’s final verse that celebrates the abiding presence of the ‘player’ unaffected by the infinite (re)arising and (re)absorption of the cosmic evolutes – i.e., the Advaitic *sākṣī* (inner ‘witness’), immutable pure Consciousness, the self-evident and self-luminous eternal principle. Akka’s logic of presenting the process of creation (*śṛṣṭi*) and its subsequent retraction (*laya*) in the form of a game was perhaps intended to remind the players of the transient nature of the world (their *samsāra*) and their existential suffering therein, that will ultimately and permanently disappear like morning dew with the dawn of *jñāna*/true Knowledge.

III. The Teacher and the Taught

As I watched, it quickly became apparent to me that the Pañcīkaraṇa board is not an inert instrument of communication; nor is the game a casual leisure activity. Rather, I understood that for these players the *kaṭṭam* is an extraordinary generator/transmitter/preserver of *vidya* (‘metaphysical knowledge’), and thus imbued with a special vitality, spirit, energy. Hence it is approached with reverence, worshipped with an invocation, and even offered food by the players, just as a practitioner would make offerings to a deity. The *kaṭṭam* not only delineates Vedanta’s creation doctrine but also, in a manner both exact

and exhaustive, describes the relationships between the mind, the body, the intelligence, the psychic apparatus and the senses – between macrocosm and microcosm, exteriority and interiority. Regardless of what material it is made of, when unfolded, the unassuming board suddenly expands into a magnificent enunciation of ontological truth. As the players engage in the game, shell by shell, square by square, verse by verse, they ‘create’ and ‘dissolve’ the outer and inner cosmos in alignment with an interwoven metaphysical, symbolic and natural order.

We can see the unique communicative method adopted by Akka to engage others (primarily women) in the learning and understanding process. Cosmogony as a game is non-competitive but participatory and dialogical. All the women are in a sense players as well as spectators, with a total responsive engagement. Thus, a “dance of mutual responsiveness”⁸ is central to Akka’s Pañcīkaraṇa Kaṭṭam, and the players have to pursue the game with sustained vigour, earnestness and concentration.

At any point, any of the player-spectators can raise questions about the meaning of a term inscribed on the grid or embedded in the manual’s verses. Anyone can suggest the answer, and the answer can be freely disputed, or analysed, or debated (for instance: Does *ākāśa* mean ‘ether’ or ‘space’? What is the difference between *retas* (‘semen’) and *medhas* (‘vitality’)? What are the functions of the five kinds of *vāyu* (breath: *prāṇa*, *apāna*, *vyāna*, *udāna*, *samāna*? etc.).

The game stops when a question is raised and does not proceed till a clear answer is reached or till a consensus emerges about the interpretation of a specific term on the board or in the manual. When opinions are deadlocked, the players resolve the issue through recall of their early training: “Don’t you remember what our teacher said about the meaning of this word...?” Deliberations continue within the group until the meaning is settled to everyone’s satisfaction, and

⁸ For relevant concepts of ‘play’, I draw upon Dutch cultural historian Johan Huizinga’s pioneering work *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1949) and German philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer’s significant work *Truth and Method* (trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, London: Bloomsbury, 2013).

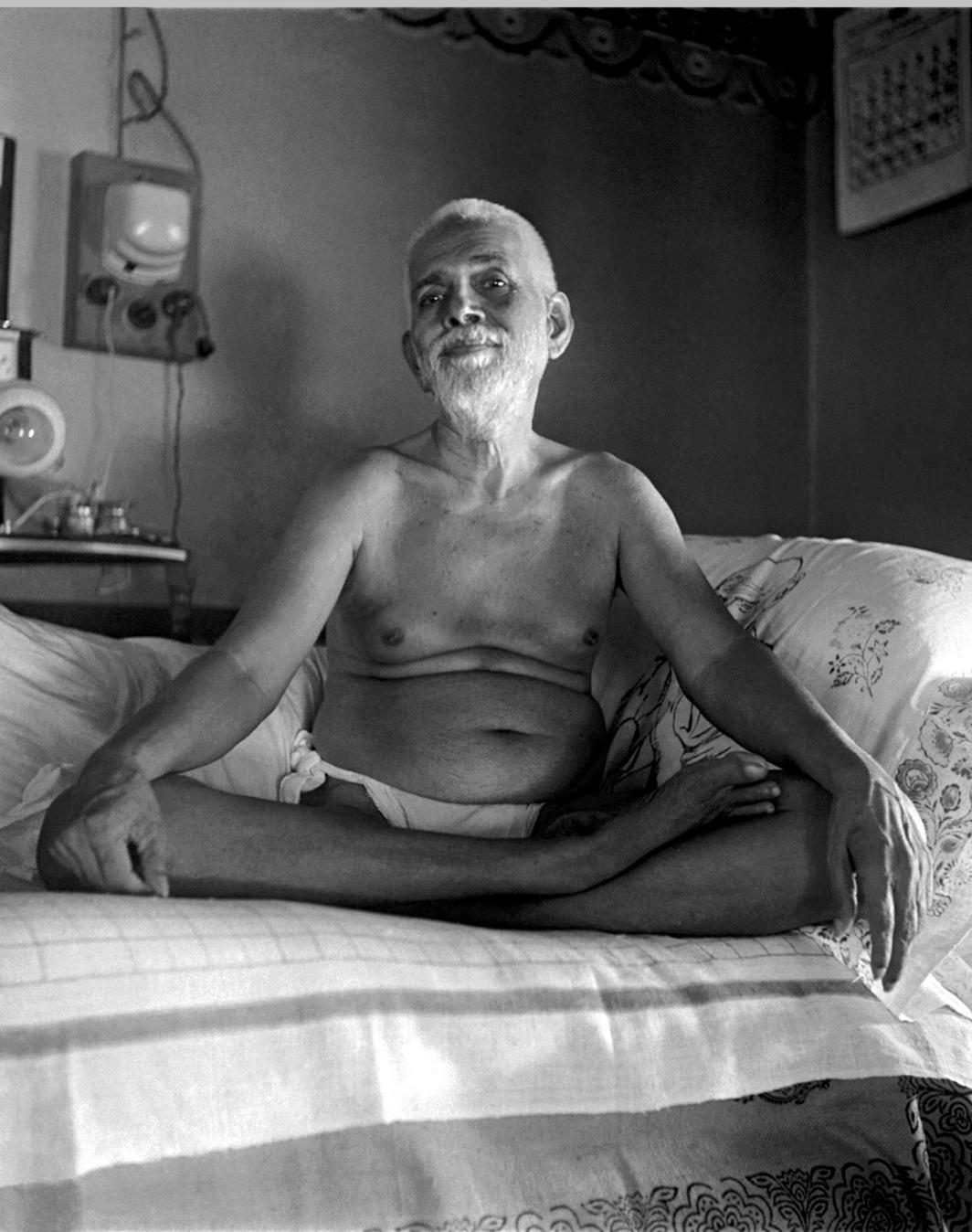
the game then proceeds. When the game is laid and play begins, they allow the manual of the game to overtake their subjectivities. The play speaks to them, the play has a life, and a spirit of its own that gradually unfolds when the players engage in the rhythm of the play. The play is a process with its own dynamism, the dynamism which ultimately imparts knowledge. The play becomes the teacher and the players the taught.

Vedanta creation doctrine can of course be learnt through studying texts and commentaries within the established system of orthodox pedagogy. In contrast, the *kaṭṭam*-as-teacher demands/requires direct, immediate, physical participation from the players, without which there is no learning at all. The *kaṭṭam* is both exegete and exegesis; and its rules have to be learnt from a ‘living teacher’, one who has herself played the game all through her life after learning the rules from her own living teacher. Thus, informally paralleling the formal *śāstraic* tradition, each set of learners is trained through an unbroken *parampara*. In life, and in memory, these learners revere their living teacher, and they extend this reverence to the *kaṭṭam* – the teacher who does not die, and who ensures that spiritual learning continues through an alternative, more inclusive genealogy of knowledge transmission. ▲

The Harvest of His Grace

Suresh Kailash

Just as the winter sun must turn
northwards its face,
So too the cool earth below,
its seasons must change,
But those whose hearts
are ploughed and well prepared,
Who live solely for his light
and seek rest in his shade,
In them his seeds he will sow
and his crops he will raise,
And they shall in all seasons reap,
the harvest of his grace.



In the Hall with Bhagavan

MONICA BOSE

I first came to Bhagavan in 1940 when I was twelve years old. It was wartime and my grandmother and I, who had been living in England for my education, had returned to India at the request of my mother who was concerned about our safety. She had been a devotee of Bhagavan since 1935 and when we arrived in Tiruvannamalai she took us straight to her Spiritual Master.

I went up a few steps and found myself in the hall (now called ‘the old hall’) where Bhagavan was reclining on a couch. I saw a kind old man, with wonderful eyes and a lovely smile. He looked very alert, and it was my first sight of Awareness, about which I was to learn much more.

I thought the hall itself was very banal. There was no attempt to make it a grand setting for the great Master that Bhagavan was. The only decoration was a painted frieze of flowers running around the base of the walls. The windows were open but barred mainly to keep

Monica Bose is the author of *Hill of Fire*, a biography of her mother Sujata Sen. She lives in London.

out the mischievous monkeys. To the left of Bhagavan's couch there was a revolving bookcase packed with books. To his right, on the wall there were several clocks, all kept by Bhagavan so as not to hurt the feelings of their donors. There were some small shelves which housed several small containers. I would soon see Bhagavan open one to give grains to a bird that had flown in. From another container he would later take out nuts for a visiting squirrel. For the asramam cow, Lakshmi, who had come on her own all the way from the cowshed to see Bhagavan, there was only a loving pat and a caress, then she turned very carefully so as not to slip on the stone-tiled floor polished by the tread of many feet, and went back to her shed.

The attendant burnt incense sticks before Bhagavan, but Bhagavan was not posing as a Divine Master, he was completely natural, putting on his spectacles and reading the newspaper or the letters brought to him by the genial postmaster, and suggesting what replies should be given to them. Or else, some very scholarly men would discuss a point of doctrine with him and a book would be taken out of the revolving bookcase, or from a wall cupboard further down the hall.

The forty or so devotees were divided into two groups. The bigger group of men and boys sat on the ground facing Bhagavan, while the smaller group of women and girls sat to his left. My grandmother, mother and myself would sit among other women devotees who, at the mid-morning time when we were there, usually included Mrs Osborne looking very devout with her gaze fixed on Bhagavan, and a Parsi lady called Mrs Taleyarkhan who sat reading her Zoroastrian prayers from a big book on a stand in front of her during most of the morning session in the hall.

Sometimes a devotee or visitor would sing some sacred songs. And in the evening session there was the daily recitation of the sacred Vedas by a group of Brahmacharins from the Veda school at the asramam. The vibrant Sanskrit syllables resounding in the hall did not break the silence but rather created the silence because they concentrated the mind. Bhagavan was silent, solemn, his gaze indrawn looking as if he was in another sphere of consciousness.

Some people who sat there before Bhagavan would attain fame by writing about him and his teachings. Many more would quietly obtain the blessings of faith, awareness, peace and happiness in his Presence.

Children felt at home with Bhagavan. They would freely come and confide something to Bhagavan, or show him their prize possessions, or just ask him a question. A boy who, after seeing Major Chadwick sitting in meditation with a Yogi's meditation band supporting his legs, asked Bhagavan: "What's he done to be tied up?" to which Bhagavan laughed heartily. Then, there was the boy who told Bhagavan that he hated someone but didn't want to hate, so what could he do? Bhagavan replied, "Hate your hate." People laughed, but in fact it was a very wise answer, as were all Bhagavan's answers. For, while it did not say that hate had to be suppressed, as hate has a habit when suppressed of reappearing in some other undesirable form, Bhagavan's answer did away with the split that our mind makes between ourself and others which creates and sustains the wrong idea that each one of us is a separate ego or self.

So there we all were in the Presence of Bhagavan, basking in his grace. We felt protected, cared for, safe in the hands of a great Master who would guide us to our spiritual fulfilment. In fact, the hall was rather like a schoolhouse in former times where there was only one classroom, and only one teacher for all the pupils regardless of their age or level of education. Our teacher was very competent having himself experienced what he taught. There was only one subject, 'How to realise one's true identity'. And the method was Self-enquiry, asking yourself "Who am I?" and negating all the answers given by the mind, until the course of reasoning was stopped in its tracks, leaving the way clear for the Truth to be directly experienced, or intuited. It is not easy to simply be the Self that you really are, a lot of concentration and practise are required. And often it is the humblest pupil, the one who said, "I don't know anything!" who gets a first rank.

In the hall we witnessed some dramatic moments, like people at a turning point in their lives. I remember a couple sitting close to Bhagavan so as to talk more confidentially with him, because Bhagavan very rarely gave a private interview. They looked very tense as they sat there with their baby. I did not know what they were confiding to Bhagavan. Years later I learnt that the man had been seized by the urge to give up the world and become a wandering ascetic who has broken all family ties. Bhagavan, though he was himself an ascetic, spoke at length to him against the idea and finally dissuaded

him from taking this drastic step. To some would-be renunciates who were thinking of giving up all their possessions, Bhagavan said they had to give up themselves as well, otherwise it was just a waste. Bhagavan wanted us to know the meaning of renunciation: it was to purify the mind of desire and attachment and to harmonise it with the Quest for the true Self.

And yet, when Yogi Ramiah, a dedicated ascetic who spent his days in complete meditative absorption, came into the hall after weeks of absence, and fell in full prostration before Bhagavan, and then rose, I saw something like a spark of light pass between Bhagavan's eyes and his eyes. I can only guess at a shared experience of the splendour that attends losing oneself in God.

The fact is that the teaching given by Bhagavan was always suited to the temperament and spiritual maturity of the person who received it. There was never any mass instruction.

Bhagavan spent more time in silence than in talking and giving advice, because as he often stressed "silence is unceasing eloquence" or "never-ending speech" and that "it is obstructed by thoughts and vocal speech." Therefore, said Bhagavan, "Truth is expounded by silence." Bhagavan also affirmed: "In silence, one is in intimate contact with the surroundings." Bhagavan was in effect telling us that by silencing the mind we could be in direct contact with our Teacher and that in itself was purifying. It was not enough for us to appeal to God or to our Guru in times of stress, we had to be in constant inner conversation or communion with Him in the unity of the Spirit.

During these moments of silence or "plunges into infinity", Bhagavan would be deeply absorbed in the Self, while still retaining his thought-free Awareness of both within and without. He was in the highly evolved state called *sahaja nirvikalpa samādhi* that had become natural for him. The atmosphere while he was in this state was charged with a transcendental energy. It was very powerful. Seeing Bhagavan in the stillness of Samadhi, his gaze indrawn, his face translucent as if lit from within we knew we were in the Presence of a very great Sage. Then sooner or later we realised that Bhagavan was always deeply absorbed in the Primal Silence, the Pure Source that existed before creation and is the potential of everything. Our Beloved Master did not only belong to us, but to the Power behind the Universe.

One day, when I was sitting in the hall, I looked up and saw Bhagavan looking at me with a very intense, direct and powerful look. It was hard for me to sustain that look but I did so by making my mind a receptacle for it. I wonder if that look is still there, lighting its way to my Heart. Several devotees received that look that opened up their inner awareness of the Self. At any rate, since then I feel as if my head is in the Lion's mouth, as they say. I began to know and love Holy Arunachala, to feel it as a Friend that will never forsake me. When I was fourteen, I wrote down what I felt about Arunachala. As it happened, an acquaintance of my mother read it, took it with him and to my surprise, it was later broadcast on All India Radio.

In those days we did not speak to Bhagavan directly but wrote our message on a slip of paper. In 1942 when we were in the hall, my French grandmother who had brought me up was feeling very despondent because it had been decided that I should go to a boarding school in Bangalore, and we would be separated for the first time. Feeling she had no longer a purpose in life, she wrote a note to Bhagavan: "Please give me your guidance for my future." Bhagavan's answer was brief. He said to her, "Go back to your religion." This was amazing, because no one there except us knew that she had left her Roman Catholic religion. It was way back in her past. Two years after her arranged marriage at the age of eighteen, she was divorced, and some years later married the man who would be the father of my mother. She was told that consequently she was excluded from the sacraments of the Church including Holy Communion, which was a great loss to her. After receiving Bhagavan's guidance, one day she entered a Redemptorist Church, and the old priest she spoke to told her in effect to leave her burden behind her and only look forward to her life in Christ. She did return to her religion and in the remaining thirteen years of her life she would find fulfilment and happiness by living ever closer to her Saviour.

In 1948, I too would write a note to Bhagavan asking for his counsel. I had passed my Intermediate Science exam as a preparation for entering medical college, in accordance with the wishes of my father and his family. But although both my parents were doctors, I felt that I did not have the capabilities required of a doctor. Bhagavan replied that whatever I chose would be right for me. And of course,

Bhagavan was right. I chose not to do medicine, but to study for my M.A. instead, and with hindsight I know that it was the right decision.

The following year, while in the new hall, one morning I would have my first revelation of the true nature of Bhagavan. I had come to get Bhagavan's blessing as I always did when after spending my school or college holidays in Tiruvannamalai I was returning to the world outside it. I was sitting near the back door of the hall when Bhagavan came in from the sunshine outside. Further down from where I was sitting, there was a group of devotees deep in meditation. Bhagavan did not go and lie down on his couch as usual, if he had I would not have been able to see him from where I was. Instead, Bhagavan stood at the end of the couch and looked with something like distaste at the closed windows with their gilt handles. He never liked any show of grandeur or luxury. Moreover, the closed windows kept out the poor villagers who, when Bhagavan was in the old hall, used to come and see him through the open windows, too afraid to come in because of their poor clothes. But Bhagavan loved those simple people, just as he loved the animals and birds which had freely come to him in the old hall. Then, Bhagavan turned and faced me, and it was as if the sun was rising from deep within him until he looked up his whole body aglow, his face in an expression of immense joy. The upadesa or spiritual instruction he gave me was clear: "Don't seek true happiness in what the world outside has to offer, seek it within your Self. The nature of the Self is Existence-Awareness-Bliss (the Peace that is Love, and Happiness). All these terms are Absolute, and they are inseparable and synonymous. If you realise one, you realise them all."

When I came out of the hall, I met Mr Osborne who was on his way in. I told him what had happened, and he looked very happy, as if what I had seen confirmed what he already knew about Bhagavan's true identity.

The next revelation would come in 1950 when Bhagavan was dying from cancer. During the last days he stayed in a small room (at the time was a little raised up from the surrounding ground) opposite the mother's shrine. In a way it was an extension of the hall because here he continued to give us his *darshan* (to see or be seen by a Guru or God) almost until the day he shed the body. The devotees queued in a long line to stand in the doorway of this room and get the last *darshan* from him. When it came to my turn to stand in the doorway,

I saw Bhagavan lying facing me and I was startled when I saw his look which was one of Supreme purist love. As his mortal body was being destroyed by disease, the true Self, the Immortal Spirit in him revealed itself more and more. That sight was his parting gift to us.

Between Bhagavan's first look of Pure Awareness and his last look of Supreme Love, I had grown up. Over the years, Bhagavan had given me his spiritual instruction, without speaking a word.

After Bhagavan's *mahānirvāṇa*, verses from the *Taittiriya Upanishad* (dating back to the 6th century BCE) would be chanted daily by the devotees before Bhagavan's Samādhi (grave). They began with the verse by Sage Trisanku about the immortal nature of the Self:

"I am the force behind the tree of existence (the empirical world)... I am glorious like the mountain, I whose pure light has risen, in that which is truly immortal, as it resides in the sun (the Eternal Brahman, Spirit, or Consciousness)... I am the treasure, wise, immortal, imperishable of the Vedas."

Of course, Bhagavan is still there in the hall – 'the high hall of Consciousness' – and always will be there for those who seek to live in Truth. ▲

How Many Times?

Geeta Bhatt

How many times my Lord told me,
To give up, pride.
How many times, he whispered in my ears,
Surrender the ego, at His feet.
How many ways, in how many words,
How many Sages of various tongues,
Sang to me of Brahman's,
Glory and benevolence.
This stubborn one,
Puts her head down at His feet,
But enshrines the ego;
Back in the flesh she calls her own.
The tears come, agony burns her,
She waits at the door –
For the moment of annihilation.



Statue of Tattuvarayar at His Samadhi

Tattuvarāyar and His *Sasivaṅṅa Bōdam*

RADHA RAGHUNATHAN

Introduction

Original Vedānta works in Tamil began to appear in the later part of the 15th century. For instance, Śivajñāna Vaḷḷal is known to have written his works on Vedānta during this period. However, Tattuvarāyar may be considered as the foremost among Tamil Advaitins for his clarity and body of works on Advaita Vedānta.

Tattuvarāyar's Period

Scholars arrive at Tattuvarāyar's period only through inference. Vaiyāpuri Piḷḷai, an author on the *Etta-t-togai* works, was the first to remark that Tattuvarāyar might have compiled the *Peruntiraṭṭu* towards the end of the 14th century. Mu. Arunachalam places Tattuvarāyar in the 15th century.¹ The hagiography of Tattuvarāyar presented in

¹ Arunachalam, Mu., *Tamizh ilakkiya varalāru – Tamizh-p pulavar varalāru – Padiṅaindām nooṭṭrāṅḍu – History of Tamil Literature through the centuries – XV-th century*, Tiruchittrambalam: Gandhi Vidyalayam, Tiruchittrambalam, Mayuram, 1969, p. 253.

Radha Raghunathan, is a disciple of H.H. Sw. Paramarthananda-ji, Vedanta Vidarthi Sangha, Chennai. She serves as Director and General Editor at the Adyar Library and Research Centre (of Theosophical Society), Chennai.

the publications of Koviloor Chidambaram Madalayam (Ko. Chi./Chida. Madalayam), for instance *Pāḍuturai* published in 1953, suggest that he was born in the 17th century.² Based on the evidences quoted by Vaiyāpuri-p Pillai and other scholars, we may assume that Tattuvarāyar's period would fall between 1450 and 1475, and that he belonged to the later part of the 15th century.³

Tattuvarāyar's Life

Koviloor Chidambaram Madalayam has published almost all the works of Tattuvarāyar. The following account on Tattuvarāyar's life is drawn from Ko. Chi. Madalayam's hagiography given in their introduction to *Pāḍuturai*⁴ and *Aḍaṅganmurai*.⁵—

Tattuvarāyar and his maternal uncle Svarūpānandar were born in an orthodox Smārta (Śaiva) family around the year 1653,⁶ in the town of Veerai also known as Veeramānagar in 'Naḍunāḍu'. Some are of the view that both belonged to a Madhva family, and that Tattuvarāyar was born at Veeramānagar and Svarūpānandar was born at Sēndamaṅgalam.⁷ Both were well-versed in Sanskrit and Tamil, and Vedānta scriptures. They led a spartan life from their childhood, followed orthodoxy and remained celibates. Svarūpānandar, found the guru he was searching for in Śivaprakāśa

² Sōmasundara Jñānadēsikan Swāmigal published, 'Tattuvarāya Swāmigal carittira curukkam', *Pāḍuturai*, Chidambaram: Ko. Chida. Madalayam, 1953.

³ Arunachalam, Mu., *Tamizh ilakkiya varalāru - Tamizh-p pulavar varalāru - Paḍiṅaindām nooṭṭrāṇḍu*, - *History of Tamil Literature through the centuries - XV-th century*, Tiruchittrambalam: Gandhi Vidyalayam, Tiruchittrambalam, Mayuram, 1969, p. 254.

⁴ Sōmasundara Jñānadēsikan Swāmigal published, 'Tattuvarāya Swāmigal carittira curukkam', *Pāḍuturai*, Chidambaram: Ko. Chida. Madalayam, 1953, pp. 8-16.

⁵ Chidambara Jñānadēsikan Swāmigal published, 'Tattuvarāya Swāmigal carittira curukkam', *Aḍaṅganmurai*, Chidambaram: Ko. Chida. Madalayam, Tamil year of *Raktākṣi*, (1924), pp. 2-8.

⁶ Pazhaniappan, V. and Pazhani, U., ed., *Tamizh-p pulavar varalāru-k kaḷaṅṅiyam (Biographical Dictionary of Tamil Men of Letters) Part III*, Annamalai University, 1989, p. 34.

⁷ Kō. Vaḍivēlu Chettiyār and Mangalam-Shanmukam Mudaliyār, ed., *Tattuvarāyariṅ Śiva-prakāśap-peruntiraṭṭu Kuruntiraṭṭuḍan*, Vedānta Pustakasālai & Sacchidānanda Acchiyandrasālai, Someswaranpet, Chennai, 1912, p.4ff.

Swāmigaḷ, a strictly orthodox Śaivite.⁸ Later, Tattuvarāyar joined Svarūpānandar and began to study Vedānta under him. The nephew-uncle relationship turned into a lifelong disciple-master bonding. ‘Tattuvarāyar’ and ‘Svarūpānandar’ were etymological names accorded to them, presumably by their disciples — because the former had deeply analysed, thoroughly understood and also taught the nature of Truth (Skt. *tattva*; Tamil *tattuvam*) and the latter, the nature of Self (Skt. *svarūpa*; Tamil *sorūpam*).

Svarūpānandar and Tattuvarāyar are said to have resided at Tiruvalancuzhi also for a considerable period. Some of the later followers of this tradition embraced Vīra-Śaivism.⁹ The *samādhi* of Śivaprakāśa Swāmigaḷ is near Tiruvārūr. That of Svarūpānandar is between Tiruvaṇṇāmalai and Tirumudukunḍram (also known as Vriddhāchalam). The *samādhi* of Tattuvarāyar is mid-way between Chidambaram and Vriddhāchalam, at Erumbūr (otherwise known as Iṟumbūdūr). Śrī Tatvesurar temple maintained by Koviloor Chi. Madalayam stands on his *samādhi*.¹⁰ The following information on Svarūpānandar’s and Tattuvarāyar’s *samādhis* is from the *Sentamizh-p pattirikai*, Togudi 34, 1903, page 322-27, a catalogue maintained by Madurai Tamizh Saṅgam —

*To the north of Tirunelveli, on the river-bank, stands a temple in the place of Svarūpānandar’s samādhi, and he is worshipped as ‘Tirucciṭṭrambalam Uḍaiyār’ especially during the configuration of Thursday, Kēttai star and Ekādaśī titi in the Tamizh month of Vaikāsi; special worship is conducted at the temple on Tattuvarāyar’s samādhi at Erumbūr, which is situated between Chidambaram and Vriddhāchalam, in the Tamizh month of Āḍi during the configuration of Saturday, Satayam star and Pratamai titi.*¹¹

⁸ Rāmaswāmi-p Pulavar, Cu. Ā., *Tamizh-p pulavar varisai – Pagudi A (Vol. IV)*, The South India Saiva Siddhanta Works Publishing Society Tinnevely Ltd., 1962, p.122.

⁹ Siṅgāravēlu Mudaliyār, A, ed., *Tamizh-k kalai-k kalañṇiyam – Abitāna cintāmaṇi*, Seetai patippagam, Chennai 600 005, 2010, p.940.

¹⁰ Chidambara Jñānadēsikan Swāmigaḷ published, *Aḍaṅganmurai*, Tamil year of Raktākṣi (1924), p.9.

¹¹ Arunachalam, Mu., *Tamizh ilakkiya varalāru - Tamizh-p pulavar varalāru – 15-ām nooṭṭrāṇḍu*, – *History of Tamil Literature through the centuries – XV century*, p. 229.

That Tattuvarāyar was a longtime resident of Erumbūr can be discerned from the title page of *Pāḍuturai* published in 1953: “*Pāḍuturai* — graciously granted by Erumbūr also known as Iṟumbūdūr Śuddhādvaita Vedāntācārya Śrī Tattuvarāyar Swāmigaḷ.”¹² An interesting folklore prevails at Erumbūr on how the place, otherwise known as Uṟumbūr and Iṟumbūdūr, acquired its name. This anecdote does not feature in the publications of Koviloor Madalayam. This researcher came to know about it from the localites and Sri. Raghupathy, the priest at the Śrī Tatvesurar temple. —

The present Erumbūr (or Iṟumbūdūr) was known as Caturvedi-maṅgalam in the 13th century, when scholars of all the four Vedas (*caturveda*-s) resided in the place. Once a Brahmin was proceeding with a pot towards Vriddhāchalam to immerse the ashes of his mother in the river Maṇimuttāru. Wanting to attend to nature’s call, he handed the sealed pot to his attendant. Out of curiosity, the attendant opened the pot and was surprised to see flowers (Tamil *pū*) in it. Since the pot was already opened, the Brahmin immersed the ashes at one of the ponds nearby, because of which the pond came to be called ‘*Aṅgavāri-k kuṭṭai*’ (‘Small reservoir of water for bones’; Tamil *aṅgam* – bone; *vāri* – water; *kuṭṭai* – small reservoir). There are three ponds in the vicinity. Among these three ponds, till date ashes of the cremated are immersed in the ‘*Aṅgavāri-k kuṭṭai*’. That Brahmin who immersed the ashes is thought to be Tattuvarāyar. It is believed that the bones (Tamil *elumbu*) of the cremated lady had turned into flowers and hence the place (*ūr*) came to be called ‘*Elumbupūr*’ (the combined form of ‘*Elumbu pū ūr*’). This name got modified in speech as ‘*Elumbūr*’, and over time, became further modified as ‘*Erumbūr*’. It is not known when or how the place came to be called Uṟumbūr.

There is a legend too on the ends of Svarūpānandar and Tattuvarāyar. —

¹²Sōmasundara Jñānadēsikan Swāmigaḷ published, ‘Tattuvarāya Swāmigaḷ carittira-curukkam’, *Pāḍuturai*, Chidambaram: Ko. Chida. Madalayam, 1953, title page.

ஸ்ரீதத்துவராய சுவாம்கள் சிந்ஷ்டானம்



Tattuvārayar's Samadhi Shrine

To meet his end, Svarūpānandar roved unaccompanied till he reached the seashore. Tattuvarāyar followed the guru. The elder continued to walk into the sea. The waters parted creating a path for the Self-realised wise man. And soon he disappeared from sight. Tattuvarāyar searched frantically for his master in all directions. Suddenly, Svarūpānandar's resplendent form appeared as undivided fullness of Existence-Consciousness-Bliss (*akhaṇḍa paripūrṇa sat-cit-ānanda*). This is described as Svarūpānandar's *mahāsamādhi* in tradition. Tattuvarāyar performed the last rites for his preceptor. Soon enough, he attained *mahāsamādhi* at Erumbūr.

Tattuvarāyar's works

Tattuvarāyar was hailed as '*ubhaya-kavi*' due to his erudition both in Sanskrit and Tamil. An adept in Tamil versification, his works include *Pāḍuturai* also known as *Tattuvarāya Shāstiram* ('the philosophy of Tattuvarāyar'),¹³ *Aḍaṅganmuṛai*, *Śivaprakāśa Peruntiraṭṭu* (*Peruntiraṭṭu* for short), *Kuruntiraṭṭu*, *Brahma Gītai*, *Īśvara Gītai*, and so on. Some of his works are original. A few others like *Brahma Gītai* and *Īśvara Gītai* are adaptations from Sanskrit texts of the same name (*Brahma Gītā* and *Īśvara Gītā*). His works spell lyrical beauty and depth of Vedānta philosophy. They exhibit the literary influences of Vaiṣṇavite Āzhvārs, the Śaiva Nāyanmārs, Tirumūlar's *Tirumandiram* and Iṅkārīkuḍi Meim-mozhi-t Devar's *Meim-mozhi-c caridai*, and the philosophical influences of Advaitins like Śankarācārya and Vidyāraṇya. In presenting his message on Vedānta, Tattuvarāyar resorts to the original source of Vedānta, namely the *Upaniṣads*. Interestingly, his *Aññavadai-p baraṇi* and *Mōgavadai-p baraṇi* both featuring in *Aḍaṅganmuṛai*, are written in the style of a war-poem (*baraṇi*) in praise of his guru Svarūpānandar.

Can an ascetic resort to *baraṇi* (war-poem) to praise his guru?

It is said that once a group of pilgrims along with a few scholars was waiting to have a *darshan* of Svarūpānandar. Tattuvarāyar was there. The ensuing conversation veered towards Tattuvarāyar's *Aññavadai-p baraṇi* and *Mōgavadai-p baraṇi*. The scholars argued that *baraṇi* was

¹³ Singāravēlu Mudaliyār, A, ed., *Tamizh-k kalai-k kaḷaṅṅiyam – Abitāna cintāmaṇi*, p.940.

a literary genre suited to praise the valour of a hero who has killed thousands of elephants in battle. Ascetics being peace-loving and non-violent, it was not appropriate to sing the praises of Svarūpānandar using the style of *baraṇi*. Tattuvarāyar tried to justify his choice of literary style saying that his guru Svarūpānandar had killed a thousand ‘elephants’ by removing the ignorance in the minds of thousands of his followers. The visitors argued how one guru could remove the ignorance from the minds of thousands of seekers. Even if it were true, it would take days to kill one ego-elephant. How could he remove a thousand invisible ego-elephants simultaneously? Svarūpānandar was sitting in deep contemplation. Without answering the detractors, Tattuvarāyar also entered into meditation. At this, the visitors became silent and they too slipped into a *samādhi*-state. They sat rooted to their seats unaware of three days passing by. On regaining their senses on the fourth day, they realised being rid of their egos. They accepted that Svarūpānandar was indeed capable of destroying the ego of thousand seekers simultaneously as swiftly as a valiant king would destroy a thousand elephants swiftly on the battlefield.

Tattuvarāyar’s *Mōgavadai-p baraṇi* also known as *Tattuva nirūpakam*¹⁴

A brief idea about *Mōgavadai-p baraṇi*, the larger text of which ‘Sasivaṇṇa bōdam’ is a portion, is given here to show the context and relevance of ‘Sasivaṇṇa bōdam’.

Mōgavadai-p baraṇi describes how Svarūpānandar destroys the inner demon called ‘*mōga*’ (Skt. – *moha*; – delusion). It is interesting to note that while Tattuvarāyar presents ignorance (*ajñāna* or *avidyā*) as the cause of bondage (*saṃsāra*) in his *Aññavadai-p baraṇi*, he presents delusion (*moha*) as the cause of *saṃsāra* in *Mōgavadai-p baraṇi*. There is no contradiction in these two stands, since ignorance

¹⁴ Generally, Tattuvarāyar gives two titles at the beginning to each of his works, one based on the story, or genre of poetry, and the other based on the philosophical message conveyed through the work. For e.g., *Jñāna-viṇodaṇ-kalambakam* also known as *Tattuva-jñāṇam*, *Aññavadai-p baraṇi* also known as *Jñāna baraṇi* or *Tattuva-k kātci*, and so on. But in the case of *Mōgavadai-p baraṇi*, the title based on the philosophical content is not seen at the beginning of the text in the available printed versions. This essayist found the philosophy-based title *Tattuva nirūpakam* in the colophon of the text.

leads to delusion and *vice versa*. The story of *Mōgavadai-p baraṇi* in brief is as follows —

Avidyā (ignorance) gave birth to a son named *Maṇam* (mind). *Maṇam* had two wives — *Apekṣai* (attachment) and *Upekṣai* (detachment). The former gave birth to a son named *Mōhan* (delusion); the latter gave birth to a son named *Vivēkan* (discrimination). Out of his excessive affection for *Apekṣai*, *Maṇam* handed the reins of the kingdom to *Mōhan*, who was a tyrant. *Mōhan* indulged in evil acts and was constantly causing distress to *Vivēkan*. The wise counsel, *Svarūpānandar* was supportive of *Vivēkan*. (In this fiction, *Tattuvarāyar* portrays his own teacher *Svarūpānandar* as the wise counsel of *Vivēkan*). In the war between *Mōhan* and *Vivēkan*, *Vivēkan* (discrimination) routed *Mōhan* (delusion). ‘*Sasivaṇṇa bōdam*’ is a portion featuring in this *Mōgavadai-p baraṇi*. Much like the *Śrīmad Bhagavad Gītā* featuring in the *Mahābhārata* is studied as an independent text in itself, ‘*Sasivaṇṇa bōdam*’ too has come to be read as an independent text, especially by the beginners of *Advaita Vedānta*.

‘*Sasivaṇṇa bōdam*’ as an Interpolation in *Mōgavadai-p baraṇi*

Tattuvarāyar is said to have completed the terse *Mōgavadai-p baraṇi* and presented it to his guru *Svarūpānandar*. However, chiding the disciple that only those who were well-versed in *Vedānta*, grammar, literature and logic may be able to understand the text, and not the lay person, the guru retired for a siesta. By the time the guru woke up, *Tattuvarāyar* had written the ‘*Sasivaṇṇa bōdam*’ in 110 verses and inserted the work in the *Mōgavadai-p baraṇi*. A reading of the larger text for the philosophical content suggests that the insertion of ‘*Sasivaṇṇa bōdam*’ does not interrupt the flow of the text. Available literary sources by eminent Tamil scholars also affirm this observation. Being an insertion gives room for study on whether ‘*Sasivaṇṇa bōdam*’ was by *Tattuvarāyar* himself or by some other author, perhaps, for instance a disciple.

The Context of the Original ‘*Sasivaṇṇa bōdam*’ (Skt. *Śaśivarṇa bodha*)

Tattuvarāyar has drawn the story of *Sasivaṇṇan* from the Sanskrit text *Sūta saṁhitā*. Later, the Tamil text *Vriḍdhāchala Purāṇam* draws the



D. Thyagarajan



Śrī Tatvesurar Temple Gopuram

story of Sasivaṇṇan from the Sanskrit *Sūta saṃhitā* and Tattuvarāyar's Tamil work 'Sasivaṇṇa bōdam'. In the Sanskrit text, Śaśivarṇa, a gross sinner is taken by his father Bhāva-yajña to a great sage Nandiparāyaṇa at Śaktīśvaram (Tamil: Caṭīcuram¹⁵). The compassionate sage, who always abides in Brahman, cures all the diseases of Śaśivarṇa (Tamil: Sasivaṇṇan). The father leaves the boy to stay behind till his last breath and serve the sage with gratitude. While doing so, Sasivaṇṇan gets instructed in and liberated through the direct knowledge of the Self (*apratibandha aparokṣa sākṣātkāra jñāna*). The original story of Śaśivarṇa in the *Sūta saṃhitā* makes a mention, but does not elaborate, on the teaching of Self-knowledge imparted by Nandiparāyaṇa to Śaśivarṇa. But Tattuvarāyar's 'Sasivaṇṇa bōdam' gives a detailed presentation of the teaching and the traditional methodology employed by the preceptor.

Aptness of the Title 'Sasivaṇṇa bōdam' and Names of the Characters in it

The word 'Sasivaṇṇan' means 'one who has the complexion of the moon' (*Sasi* – Skt. *Śaśi* – the moon; *vaṇṇan* – *varṇan* – one who has the complexion of). Legend is that due to the enormity of his sins, Sasivaṇṇan was afflicted with all diseases including leucoderma (Tamil *veṇ-kuṣṭam*) where the skin loses its pigmentation. The text deals with the teaching (Tamil – *bōdam*; Skt. – *bodha*) imparted to Sasivaṇṇan. Hence the title 'Sasivaṇṇa bōdam' (Skt. *Śaśivarṇa bodha*).

Nandiparāyaṇar — *Nandi* – one who is ever in bliss. Nandi is one of the names of Lord Śiva; also, the bull of Lord Śiva is popularly known as Nandi; *parāyaṇar* – one who is beyond, one who has transcended. Here, the name Nandiparāyaṇar suggests 'the one who has transcended bliss and is established in Brahman'.

The Setting of the Story of Tattuvarāyar's 'Sasivaṇṇa bōdam'

The class of Tamil literature named '*barāṇi*' describes the hero's valour and glories through the words of the demons feasting on the blood and gore that lie in the battlefield after the war. Before consuming

¹⁵ Śaktīśvaram is near Gopurapuram and Vriddhāchalam in Tamilnadu. The lore of Sasivaṇṇan is popular in and around Śaktīśvaram, Vriddhāchalam, and so on. A small temple each for Nandiparāyaṇar and Sasivaṇṇan are in the temple complex of a larger temple for *Ādiśaktīśvarar* and *Ādiśaktīśvarī* at Śaktīśvaram.

what they have cooked, the demons offer the food to the goddess Kālikā or Kūli. In ‘Sasivaṇṇa bōdam’, one of the demons, ashamed and repentant of his deplorable state of existence, asks Kālikā Devi if at all sinners like his ilk can ever be salvaged. It is in this context that Kālikā Devi assures them of their liberation by reciting the story of Sasivaṇṇan. The mythological background makes the story appear authentic from the Purāṇa-s. The text is addressed to a beginner who has to first understand these concepts and terminologies in Advaita Vedānta before embarking on scriptural study.

The Central Theme of Tattuvarāyar’s ‘Sasivaṇṇa bōdam’

This text, in the format of a teacher-disciple (*guru-śiṣya*) dialogue, is an introductory text (*prakaraṇa grantha*) that introduces the fundamentals of Vedānta – nature of the Self (*jīva svarūpa*), nature of the world (*jagat svarūpa*), nature of God (*Īśvara svarūpa*), nature of bondage (*bandhana svarūpa*), nature of liberation (*mokṣa svarūpa*), and means of liberation (*mokṣa upāya*). The central theme of this text is essentially that salvation of the individual soul is the chief objective to be achieved through removing the ignorance of its difference from Brahman, the Ultimate Reality, through knowledge.

Commentaries on ‘Sasivaṇṇa bōdam’

‘Sasivaṇṇa bōdam’ has been commented upon by Pirasai Aruṇāchala Swāmigaḷ, Īsūr Saccitānanda Swāmigaḷ, Kō. Vaḍivēlu Chettiyār of Chennai, Kō. Chida. Śivānanda Swāmigaḷ (his *Antarārtta Dīpikai* with explanation on 41 verses is an incomplete work), A. Cheṅgalvarāya Mudaliyār of Kānceepuram (his commentary is titled *Tattuva-p prakāśikai*), and Kāsikānanda Jñānāchārya Swāmigaḷ (his explanatory work titled *Padārtta Bhāskaran* gives the word meanings and explanation of difficult terms). A simple explanation to the verses with word-meanings is provided in Koviloor Ādheenam’s *Koviloor Marabu Vedānta Nūlgaḷ - Part I – Sasivaṇṇa bōdam*. According to Pulavar Soma. Iḷavarasu, an English translation of ‘Sasivanna bodham’ by Rev. Thomas Foulkes was published in 1862.¹⁶ This essayist is in the process of translating and providing an annotated explanation of ‘*Sasivaṇṇa bōdam*’ in English.

¹⁶ Pulavar Soma. Iḷavarasu, *Baraṇi ilakkiyaṅgaḷ*, Maṇivācakar Nūlagam, Chidambaram, October 1967, p. 137.

Pedagogy in ‘Sasivaṅṅa bōdam’

‘Sasivaṅṅa bōdam’ (*SB*) presents all the important philosophical concepts of metaphysics, epistemology and soteriology as followed in Advaita Vedānta. In doing so, Tattuvarāyar follows, and thereby shows, the traditional pedagogical process of teaching and learning.

The firm core of Advaita is that Brahman alone is. Superimposition or māyā is an indispensable concept in Advaita Vedānta to establish the nonduality of Brahman, the oneness of the individual soul and Brahman and the falsehood of the world. Īśvara, jīva and world are superimpositions caused by māyā on the ground of Brahman. Ignorance (*avidyā*) is the root cause of bondage and transmigration. Brahman-knowledge alone can remove ignorance. Advaita Vedānta emphasises that one’s essential nature is neither the superimposing māyā nor its superimposed effect in the form of one’s body, mind or the world, but is the nondual ātman, Brahman —

*aṛiyā-p-poruḷ kāraṇa māyai kuṛittu
aṛiyum poruḷ kāriyamām ulagin-
neriyāl tigazh nāṅmarai andam elām
nī aṅṛu eṇa oḍu nirandaramē*

“The unknown principle is the cause māyā.
The distinctly known object is the effect, the world.
By this rule, the final part of all the four *Veda*-s
repeatedly aver that you are neither. (*SB* – v. 58)

Realising one’s essential oneness (*advaita*) as Brahman is liberation. The intention of all the great sentences (*mahāvākya*-s) in all the Upaniṣads is to establish this oneness of the Self (Ātman), Brahman which transcends all distinctions. —

*vēda-p-poruḷtāṇidu vēṛu colum
viṅṅai yāvaiyum aṅṛu oru vēṛum ilā-p
bōda-p-poruḷ anda maraikku aṅiyām
puṅṅida-p-poruḷ at tatvamasi-p poruḷē*

“This is the objective of the *Veda*-s; not all actions indicating duality.

[It is] the knowledge principle without any difference,
the jewel of that [*Sāma*] *Veda*, the jewel at the end of the
Veda-s,
the sacred Reality, the objective of ‘*That you are*’. (*SB* – v. 60)



Ādiśaktīśvarar Temple inner prakaram



Nandiparayanar and Sasivannan Shrines

Tattvarāyār, like all Vedāntins, employs the triple tool of scriptural statements (*śruti*), reasoning (*yukti*) and Self-realisation or Self-experience (*anubhava*) to establish one's essential oneness as Brahman. Of the many *mahāvākya*-s seen in the Upaniṣads, four are generally quoted and studied as a sample from the four Vedas. Here again, a beginner aspirant is generally made to assimilate the true import of the three terms in the great sentence '*tat tvam asi*' (That [Brahman] you are) to realise his oneness with Brahman. After understanding the 'instructional statement' (*upadēśa-vākya*) '*tat tvam asi*' (*Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 6.8.7) as taught by the scriptures and the guru, the disciple is encouraged to assimilate it and realise it as 'realisation statement' (*anubhava-vākya*) '*aham brahmāsmi*' (*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 1.4.10). Tattvarāyār too follows this time-tested method in 'Sasivāṇṇa bōdam.'

While the Advaitin accepts perception (*pratyakṣa*), inference (*anumāna*), verbal testimony (*śabda* or *āgama*), comparison (*upamāna*), postulation or presumption (*arthāpatti*), and non-apprehension (*anupalabdhi*), verbal testimony is the most important epistemological tool used by the Advaitin to establish the oneness of jīva and Brahman. The great sentences '*tat tvam asi*' ('That you are') and '*aham brahmāsmi*' ('I am Brahman') are analysed using the methods of discriminating between Self (*ātman*) and not-Self (*anātman*) on the basis of three bodies or the five sheaths, the three states of experience and the 'fourth' state, and the method of exclusive–non-exclusive implication (*bhāga-tyāga-lakṣaṇa* also known as *jahadajahal-lakṣaṇa*).

For instance, to discriminate between the Self (*ātman*) and not-Self, Tattvarāyār prompts the disciple to reason (*yukti*) himself —

aṛigindṛa poruḷ eṇḍrum aṛivāṇil vēṛē
āṇāl ivvūṇāga nāṇ eṇṇalāmō
ceṛigindṛa puḷ allavē kūḍu ivvagaiyē
ceḍamāṇa uḍal niṇṇil vēṛu eṇḍru teḷiyē

“If the object known is always different from the knower,
 is it correct to define 'I' as this flesh?

Certainly, the nesting bird is not the nest. So too,
 know that the inert body is different from you. (*SB* – v. 46)

The method of exclusive–non-exclusive implication (*bhāga-tyāga-lakṣaṇa* also known as *jahadajahal-lakṣaṇa*) helps to understand one’s nondual nature. It results in a direct experience (*anubhava*) by intellectually discarding all the adjuncts (*upādhi-s*) in the *jīva* and *Īśvara*, also known as *Saguṇa Brahman*, and realising oneself as the silent, non-actor Witness-Consciousness (*Sākṣī caitanya*). —

piriyā uyir kāriyamām uḍalum
brahmattu uru kāraṇamām uḍalum
kariyāgiya vādaṇaiyum kazhiya-k
kāṭṭumpaḍi kaṇḍu koḷ kaṇ uravē

“Experience directly by the manner explained to eliminate the effected adjuncts inseparable from the individual self, the causal adjuncts of [Saguṇa] Brahman, and also the impression of being the Witness. (*SB* – v. 78)

Similarly, be it the *jīva* or *Īśvara*, one must realise the ‘fourth state’ or *turiya* which transcends all the three states of experience, namely waking, dream and deep sleep. Realising one’s existence to be of the ‘fourth state’ is the ultimate import of the *mahāvākya*. —

akhila-k-kari parama turiya-p poruḷ
turiyamaḍu āgaiyē
pugal uṭṭra tatvamasi eṇum muppattin
muḍi poruḷāvadē

“The Witness of all [in the individual self] being the Reality in the ‘fourth state’ of the universal lord, [and] that ‘fourth state’ being *That* [Reality in the individual self] is the ultimate meaning of the three terms said earlier as ‘*That you are.*’ (*SB* – v. 83)

Brahman transcends all distinctions. The ‘fourth state’ transcends all normal states of experience. In fact, the ‘fourth state’ is not an experiential state like waking, dream or deep sleep. It is the state of realising oneself as the Absolute Reality. Thus Brahman, Brahman-knowledge and the ‘fourth state’ are identical.

But, this teaching being of the highest order, a disciple needs the grace of a guru who is a realised soul himself to impart this Self-

knowledge (*Ātma-jñāna*). Lord Kṛṣṇa granted Arjuna the ‘divine eyes’ (*divya-cakṣu*), that is the ‘eye of knowledge’ (*jñāna-dṛṣṭi*), in the *Gītā*. Similarly, Nandiparāyaṇar blesses Sasivaṇṇaṇ with ‘the intuitive vision of knowledge’ (*jñānamām uḷa vizhi*) [— *SB*. v. 88] and asks the disciple to recount what he has understood. In reply, Sasivaṇṇaṇ recounts what he has assimilated in the same order as he was taught.

Towards the end, Sasivaṇṇaṇ finds himself at a loss of words to praise the guru, his compassion and his systematic method of teaching the loftiest Truth. —

aruntavā maṛai andamām
agōcarantaṇil nī
irundavāṛu aṛivittavāṛu
eṇṇaṇam isaippēṇ

“Great master of penance! How
 may I describe your method of teaching
 the conclusion of the *Veda*-s while
 you remained in the state beyond perception! (*SB* – v. 101)

empirāṇ iḍantoṛum
iḍantoṛum aduvaduvāi-t
tambirāṇ naḍam ceyum vagai
cāṭṭrumāṛu aṛiyēṇ

“Our lord! The way our master strode
 each and every state as
 the respective form and content —
 I know not how to praise. (*SB* – v. 102)

jñāṇiyai naraṇ curaṇ eṇādu ozhiga
jñālam uya nādaṇ aṛuḷāl
mēṇiyadu koṇḍu taṇai nalga varum
eṇḍṛu aṛaiyum vēda muḍivē

“Abstain from calling a wise man a human or a celestial.
 Out of compassion to liberate mankind,
 God arrives with a bodily form to offer the Self” —
 so proclaim the culmination of the *Veda*-s, [the *Upaniṣad*-s]”
 (*SB* – v. 110)

These final verses bring to mind Bhagavan's remaining as he was and yet directing the seekers to find within themselves the Truth they sought.

Conclusion

In Advaita Vedānta, the progression from viewing the Self with empirical reality of temporal pluralities to realising the Self to be essentially the One non-temporal Reality involves enquiry on two important questions — ‘*What is a human being?*’ and ‘*Who am I?*’ The different methodological approaches employed in this enquiry focus on a gradual and deeper reasoning of such revelatory statements from the Upaniṣads like ‘*tat tvam asi*’ (‘You are That’ – *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 6.8.7), ‘*aham brahmāsmi*’ (‘I am Brahman’ – *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 1.4.10), ‘*ayam ātmā brahma*’ (‘This Self is Brahman’ – *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* 1.2), and ‘*prajñānam brahma*’ (Brahman is Consciousness’ – *Aitareya Upaniṣad* 3.3). The analysis of the revelatory statements ‘*tat tvam asi*’ and ‘*aham brahmāsmi*’ form the core of ‘Sasivanna bōdam’ in understanding the cognitive, ontological, existential and soteriological dimensions of the Self.

The text helps us to view the Self as subject and not object of enquiry. With existence (Tamil *bavam*; Skt. *bhava*) as the *schema* of the whole text, ‘Sasivanna bōdam’ deals with the concepts of theology drawn from the *Upaniṣads*. For instance, it establishes the essential oneness between the individual self (*jīva*) and the Cosmic Self (*Īśvara*) from the standpoint of Advaita Vedānta based on the theological concept that Reality is One only without a second (*ekameva-advitīyam* – *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* Chapter 6). Yet, it is neither to be viewed as a religious text, nor as dealing with any dogmas exclusive to Hinduism. On the other hand, it must be appreciated for its presenting the universal concepts of theology (world, individual soul, Cosmic soul and Absolute Reality) from a philosophical standpoint through discrimination and logical reasoning centred on existence. ▲



J. Krishnamurti: 'Did He Succeed in Changing His Listeners?'

S. GOPALAN

Are Seers expected to bring change in those that listen to them?

It does seem to be the general expectation. And this gives rise to Teachers and Followers, the Knowledgeable and the Ignorant...

Does not this process – of bringing about Change in another and its consequent invention of Teachers and Followers, the Knowledgeable and the Ignorant – essentially stem from Authority, the authority of the Teacher, the Knowledgeable?

The true goal of all inward and religious endeavour is to understand the structure and working of the Psyche. Does authority have any place in understanding the Psyche?

In exploring these questions, perhaps there will be an insight into the Message and Teaching of Krishnamurti.

Three Contemporary Seers

The 20th Century is witness to the very rare phenomenon of three Seers in Southern India, contemporaries of one another — Sri

S.Gopalan is a former teacher at The Valley School, Krishnamurti Foundation India, Bangalore. He is the author of *Bud to Blossom: Blooming Creative in Life and Education* and *One Plus One: Infinity or Eternity?* He maintains a website: www.nurturecreativity.in

Ramana Maharshi (1879-1950), Sri Aurobindo (1872-1950) and Jiddu Krishnamurti (1895-1986).

They did not meet one another although, in India, they resided within 150 km of one another. They had their own distinctive and unique expression and style of communicating their Message and Teaching. It is tempting to think that their Message and Teaching is distinct and separate as well.

Is it?

Let us investigate the phenomenon of bringing Change or Realisation from the perspective of Jiddu Krishnamurti and examine whether any of the other Seers had a different Message and Teaching at the very core.

Or, there are apparent differences only at the periphery in description, style and words?

As Change and Realisation refer to human beings, it is first necessary to examine who is this — the individual human being.

The Individual Human Being

At first glance, individual human beings are distinctive and unique beings at the physical level. No two human beings are identical.

Is this not the basis of all techniques of identification based on finger prints, facial patterns or DNA? Finger prints and facial patterns are based on purely peripheral features; DNA is based on the differences at the very core of the physical body — the human cells.

But investigate further and doubt begins to arise.

When the cells decompose, into what do they break down? Medical science informs us that they break down into organic compounds (Carbon, Hydrogen, Nitrogen and Oxygen), minerals (Calcium, Magnesium, Phosphorus, Potassium, Sodium, and Sulfur) and trace quantities of other minerals (Chromium, Copper, Iron, Manganese, Molybdenum, Selenium, and Zinc).

These compounds, in turn, can be broken down into their building blocks – electrons, protons – which, in turn, are now discovered to be forms of manifestation of Energy. In fact, Quantum Science proposes that Matter and Energy are continuously oscillating states, too fast for Thought-Intellect to grasp.

Every human cell breaks down into the same compounds. The apparent uniqueness is only in the proportion and pattern in which these compounds are arranged and joined together.

A human being doesn't exist at the physical level alone. His Psyche is equally important, if not more.

Again, on the face of it, every human being seems to be different in his mental makeup — the memories that he or she has access to as well as bias, conditioning or likes and dislikes that determine the pattern of individual thinking.

Again, delving further, all patterns of thinking emanate from memories. The same memory can invent ideas of different kinds and imagine or project in many ways.

Memories do not have even the relative solidity of physical compounds. Being projections, they cannot even become Energy as physical compounds do.

All differences in patterns of thinking, bias, conditioning or likes and dislikes are only in the way different ideas are projected by varied combinations of discrete memories.

Bringing Change Or Realisation

Change means *alter, vary, modify*. Realisation implies complete understanding without a shadow of doubt.

In whom is this alteration, variation, modification or understanding to be brought? Obviously in the Physical bodies and Psyche of individual human beings.

As seen previously, the compounds that build up the Physical body are, at their core, continuously oscillating between the states of Energy and Matter. Can there be any more alteration, variation or modification than this oscillation?

Realise alludes to *bringing in understanding*.

Can memory and its projections as ideas, imagination or projections *understand*? Clearly not — they do not have Energy of their own to do so.

Modern Education, since the last few centuries, has placed Thought-Intellect on a pedestal and imbued it with the qualities of Energy — attention, comprehension, insight, perception, understanding.

Hitler's propagandist minister, Goebbels, is famously said to have remarked, '*Repeat a lie often enough and it becomes the truth*'. Has not Modern Education done something similar with its presumption that Thought-Intellect can understand?

Who Understands? Understanding, then, is by Energy alone. All the creative human capabilities and qualities – attention, comprehension, insight, perception, understanding – are of Energy alone.

Isn't this Energy *the one and the same Energy* that gives rise to Matter, induces the activity of Thought-Intellect, initiates sensations and is the very basis of all Life? From this perspective, is not classification of objects by human beings as *animate* and *inanimate* merely indicative of the extent of the manifestation of the Energy? Understanding is always in the present moment. The expression of it through Thought-Intellect is Knowledge. Knowledge is always after the moment and is of the past.

Knowledge and Thought-Intellect are projections that arise from the brain when Energy brings Life to the body.

The body is Matter. As Thought-Intellect rises from it and expresses itself as Knowledge, Thought-Intellect and Knowledge are also of Matter.

'That Which Is Beyond Matter'

So a mind that is no longer creating illusion, that has no hypotheses, that has no hallucinations, that does not want to grasp an experience of that which is called truth, has now brought order into itself. It has order. There is no confusion brought about by illusions, by delusions, hallucinations; the mind has lost its capacity to create illusions.

Then what is truth?

The astrophysicists, the scientists, are using thought to investigate the material world around them, they are going beyond physics, beyond, but always moving outward.

But if one starts inwards one sees that the 'me' is also matter. And thought is matter.

If one can go inwards, moving from fact to fact, then one begins to discover *that which is beyond matter*. Then there is such a thing as absolute truth, if one goes through with it.¹

¹ J. Krishnamurti, Questions and Answers, 9th Question, '2nd Question and Answer Meeting', 'Truth'.

Isn't the same message conveyed by Sri Ramana Maharshi?
नष्टमानसोत्कृष्टयोगिनः । कृत्यमस्ति किं स्वस्थितिं यतः ॥ १५॥ *naṣṭa-mānasot-*
kṛṣṭa yogināḥ kṛtyam asti kiṃ svasthitim yataḥ

Mind extinct, the Seer Returns to his own natural being and has no action to perform.²

And by Sri Aurobindo?

This would mean that the reality is an eternal absence at once of all self-conscious existence and of all that constitutes movement of existence: Knowledge would mean a return to that from the appearance of the constructed universe.

There would be a double and complete self-extinction, the disappearance of Purusha, the cessation or extinction of Prakriti; for the conscious Soul and Nature are the two terms of our being and comprehend all that we mean by existence, and the negation of both is the absolute Nirvana.³

Can They Be Brought About Or Facilitated?

Can change and realisation be brought about?

Yes they can, if there are the separate persons as teacher and student, you and I ...

Does such a separation exist in actuality or only in Thought?

Separation is known only through Thought-Intellect. In the state of deep sleep, is there any separation seen? It, therefore, exists only in Thought.

Sri Ramana Maharshi advises 'destruction of mind' (*manōnāśa*) as a prerequisite for the light of Energy / Self to shine unhindered. It is this unhindered shining that is, verily, called Realisation.

It is Thought-Intellect that hinders and obstructs the light of Energy / Self. Hence it brings about disorder.

Realisation, then, is Thought-Intellect becoming silent, seeing its own limitations through Inquiry into Who am I, Who Is The Thinker, is it not?

Krishnamurti counsels:

Be alone sometimes, and if you are lucky it might come to you, on a falling leaf, or from that distant solitary tree in an empty field.⁴

² Sri Ramana Maharshi, *Upadesa Saram*, v.15.

³ Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, Chapter XV, 'Change And Realisation'.

⁴ J. Krishnamurti, Meeting Life, Bulletin 1, 1968.

Krishnamurti's Last Words

A week before he died, Krishnamurti called for a recorder and dictated into it:

I was telling them this morning: for seventy years that super energy – no, that immense energy, immense intelligence has been using this body. I don't think people realize what tremendous energy and intelligence went through this body – like a twelve-cylinder engine. And for seventy years, which is a pretty long time, and now the body can't stand any more. Nobody can – unless the body has been prepared very carefully, protected and so on – nobody can understand what went through this body. Nobody. Don't anybody pretend. Nobody – I repeat this – nobody amongst us or the public know what went on. I know they don't. And now after seventy years, it has come to an end.

Not that intelligence and energy – it's somewhat here, every day, and especially at night. And after seventy years the body can't stand... can't stand any more. It can't. The Indians have a lot of damned superstitions about this, that you will and the body goes – and all that kind of nonsense.

You won't find another body like this, or that supreme intelligence operating in a body for many hundred years. You won't see it again. When he goes, it goes.

There is no consciousness left behind of that consciousness, of that state.

They'll all pretend or try to imagine they can get into touch with that. Perhaps they could, somewhat, if they live the teachings. But nobody has done it. Nobody. And so that's that.⁵

'Why has not a single person transformed?'

In 1989, a few years after Krishnamurti's passing away, a documentary film titled *Krishnamurti: With A Silent Mind* was made based on interviews with personalities who had interacted and known Krishnamurti.

In her interview, Sunanda Patwardhan, a close associate of Krishnamurti of over three decades, said:

⁵ Mary Lutyens, *The Open Door*, p.112. Verbatim transcription.

He was a delight to go with; he will joke with you, he will talk with you, you can go for walks with him, you can correct – he used to sit and edit his work – and sit by him; such fun it was, being with him. He enjoyed being with you. In the fifties – I would say, roughly, by the end of the fifties this personal factor gradually started dimming.

Later on, I found he became very severe – very serious, rather, and then, onwards, there was very little of the personal in him. And, as years went by, one could see that he was deeply concerned with the state of humanity; why is it not changing? Fifty years he has taught, he has spoken, he has travelled all over the world. *Why has not a single person transformed?*

He was deeply concerned with this problem; with the situation, rather, and therefore, there was no place for personal factor, personal relationships, and all of us who had known him knew that personal element no longer had any place; it was only to the extent to which you were aware, you had a different turning of mind, that you could talk with him, dialogue with him. And this continued through the years.

If Realisation can only come of its own accord, why then is Krishnamurti *‘deeply concerned with the state of humanity; why is it not changing?’*

The key to this apparent contradiction lies in his last words:

There is no consciousness left behind of that consciousness, of that state.

What is consciousness?

Your consciousness contains all the culture that has been poured into that mind, the tradition, the books that you have read, the struggle, the conflict, the misery, the confusion, the vanities, the arrogance, the cruelties, grief, sorrow, pleasure – all that is your consciousness, as a Hindu, as a Buddhist, Muslim: that’s your consciousness. Right?

The content of that makes your consciousness. The book is its content. It’s simple. So, consciousness is its content.⁶

The content makes consciousness. Is this not also the identity of a person – *Ego, I, Me, Mine?*

⁶ J. Krishnamurti, Talk 6, Madras, 08 January 1978.

Anyone born in a body-mind, then, must have identity as Ego, I, Me, Mine. The identity may be held very lightly as in the case of Seers or it may be the most dominating aspect of the person that is behind his every motive, as it generally is with others.

So long as there is identification and its resultant separation as Observer and Observed, there must be concern with what happens in the world.

Is this not why avatars behave as any other human beings, seemingly forgetting that they are avatars?

‘Truth Is A Pathless Land’

Krishnamurti’s Message and Teaching as a ‘Seer Who Walks Alone’, can be said to have begun in 1929 when he dissolved the Order Of The Star In The East, of which he was the head. In that speech he said:

... Truth is a pathless land, and you cannot approach it by any path whatsoever, by any religion, by any sect. That is my point of view, and I adhere to that absolutely and unconditionally.

Truth, being limitless, unconditioned, unapproachable by any path whatsoever, cannot be organized; nor should any organisation be formed to lead or to coerce people along any particular path. If you first understand that, then you will see how impossible it is to organize a belief.

A belief is purely an individual matter, and you cannot and must not organise it. If you do, it becomes dead, crystallized; it becomes a creed, a sect, a religion, to be imposed on others. This is what everyone throughout the world is attempting to do. Truth is narrowed down and made a plaything for those who are weak, for those who are only momentarily discontented.

Truth cannot be brought down, rather the individual must make the effort to ascend to it. You cannot bring the mountain-top to the valley. If you would attain to the mountain-top you must pass through the valley, climb the steeps, unafraid of the dangerous precipices...

Throughout the remaining 57 years, Krishnamurti steadfastly refused to be considered as an authority of any kind or a ‘Guru’ and maintained that his listeners were not his followers.

Don’t agree or disagree, just listen, find out.

I am not your authority. I am not your guru, because you are not my followers, because that's... you destroy everything when you follow somebody.⁷

A Seer, Of And For The Time

The most distinguishing and unique characteristic of Krishnamurti, that makes him stand apart from his contemporaries, is that he speaks in the idiom and language of the time, solely from his insight and perception without reference to any other authority, past or present. The twentieth century is the age of the Computer and Artificial Intelligence. The ubiquitous personal computer made its appearance on a mass scale in 1981 when the PC was introduced. This opened the flood-gates of the present day micro chip driven world as well as machine learning and robotics that has already turned the world of business, careers, communication, education, employment and social interactions upon its head. This has brought comforts and wealth on a hitherto fore unseen scale across the globe. It has also resulted in the largest ever number of persons having a regular and well paying job, a safe and stable home, access to health care, retirement security, time off for vacation and education for their children.

In a prescient talk given in 1981, Krishnamurti pointed out how this is bringing human beings to a crossroads with only two possible directions from which they have to choose:

What becomes of you, when what you think, what you feel, what you have, all that thought, the machine can do.

You understand this? The seriousness of this?

If the computer and the robot take the place of man, what is man then?

Either he pursues entertainment, football, television, all the circus that goes on in the name of religion, which is another form of entertainment, or he turns inward.

You have that choice in front of you, it is coming; that is your challenge.

Whether you are going to pursue entertainment invented by thought through computers, robots, and your life then becomes totally empty.

⁷ J. Krishnamurti, Discussion 1, Madras, 15 December 1973.

You understand?

So either you turn to the psychological search inward or pursue pleasure which is entertainment, sexual, all that. ...

And if you are inclined to be entertained for the rest of your life then what happens to your brain? You understand all this, sirs? I wonder if you do.

It will either wither, slowly decay, because the computer is doing everything that thought can do.

Or you turn and look at the psychological structure of yourself and that psychological structure is consciousness.

Consciousness is common to all mankind; it is not your consciousness.⁸

‘If They Live The Teachings’

This brings us back to the question from where this investigation began — *‘Did He Succeed In Changing His Listeners?’*

Whether he succeeded or not in changing his listeners, this is certain – Krishnamurti pointed out the way to his listeners and readers, clearly, precisely and unambiguously.

The listeners could not have any doubt in their minds about what they had to do or in which direction they had to go to bring true Change or Realisation for themselves:

There is no consciousness left behind of that consciousness, of that state. They’ll all pretend or try to imagine they can get into touch with that.

Perhaps they could, somewhat, if they live the teachings.⁹

‘Live The Teachings’

Teachings, in common use, means *‘ideas or principles taught by an authority’*. Most certainly, the expression *‘live the Teachings’* is not used in this sense since Krishnamurti, throughout his life, made it clear that he is not an authority and emphatically refuted having followers. Krishnamurti, again and again, pointed out the importance of understanding the true implication and meaning of Religion and its vital importance in human living:

⁸ J. Krishnamurti, Talk 2, Bombay, 25 January 1981.

⁹ Mary Lutyens, *J. Krishnamurti: The Open Door*, A Biography. Chapter 12, p. 112.

*And this mind from past millennia has been seeking that germ which man has planted from the beginning of time, which has never flowered, that germ, that seed of real religiosity, because without religion there can be no new civilisation, no new culture.*¹⁰

‘Way Of Religious Life’

Surely, religion is a way of life: a way of life that is whole, that is not fragmentary, in which there is no conflict whatsoever, which means there is no contradiction in oneself, contradiction of opposing desires, opposing ideas and demands, a total non-fragmentary life, a whole life, a total mind, a whole mind which doesn't think one thing and do another, doesn't say one thing and act contrary to what has been said.

*That is, not the beginning, but that is the way of religious life, because that demands great energy to live that way, not occasionally, once a week or once a month, but to live daily that way, every moment that way, demands tremendous energy.*¹¹

Can any *Seer* or Teacher bring about such a way of living in another?

Or, a *Seer* or Teacher can only point the way.

It is up to the listener alone to undertake the journey. ▲

¹⁰ J.Krishnamurti, Talk 3, Madras, 29 December 1979.

¹¹ J. Krishnamurti, Talk 3, Rajghat, 30 November 1969.

A Few Advaitic and Zen Hi-Coo II

Kevan Myers

Will any machine ever be made
that can catch
the wonder of now?

In this space before the fly
touches my face again:
the essence of Zen.



The Paramount Importance of Self Attention

Part Forty One

SADHU OM

AS RECORDED BY MICHAEL JAMES

14th January 1979

Sadhu Om: In the fifth paragraph of *Nāṇ Ār?* Bhagavan says:

Of all the thoughts that appear in the mind, **the thought called ‘I’ alone is the first thought.** Only after this arises do other thoughts arise. Only after the first person appears do second and third persons appear; without the first person second and third persons do not exist.

Likewise in verse 14 of *Uḷḷadu Nāṛpadu* he says:

If the first person exists, second and third persons will exist.
If the first person ceases to exist [by] oneself investigating the reality of the first person, second and third persons will come

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

to an end, and the nature that shines as one alone is oneself, the state of oneself.

The first person is ego, the thought called ‘I’, whereas second and third persons are all other things, namely all objects or phenomena, which like ego are all just thoughts. Since second and third persons seem to exist only in the view of the first person, he says ‘Only after the first person appears do second and third persons appear; without the first person second and third persons do not exist’, thereby implying that ego is the root cause for the seeming existence of all other things.

This is why he describes ego in verse 24 of *Uḷḷadu Nārpadu* as ‘bondage’ and ‘this *samsāra*’, because there can be no bondage without ego to be bound by it and no *samsāra* without ego to experience it. Therefore if we want to be free from bondage and this *samsāra*, we need to cease rising as ego, and to cease rising as ego we need to investigate ourself, who now seem to be ego.

Whenever we rise and stand as ego, we are aware of ourself as ‘I am this body’, so this false awareness ‘I am this body’ is what is called ego or the first person. What is real in this adjunct-mixed awareness ‘I am this body’ is only the fundamental awareness ‘I am’, which alone is what we actually are, so what Bhagavan refers to in verse 14 as ‘the reality of the first person’ is only ourself as this fundamental awareness ‘I am’.

Therefore we ourself are the reality of ego, the first person, and to the extent that we attend to ourself, ego will subside and dissolve back into ourself, so if we attend to ourself keenly enough ego will cease to exist, and when it ceases to exist everything else (all second and third persons) will cease to exist along with it, as he implies when he says: ‘If the first person ceases to exist [by] oneself investigating the reality of the first person, second and third persons will come to an end, and the nature that shines as one alone is oneself, the state of oneself’. What he means by ‘the nature that shines as one’ is our real nature (*ātma-svarūpa*), which is the one, indivisible and immutable whole, so it is never actually divided as the first, second and third persons, and hence they are all just an illusory appearance.

That is, the nature of ego is to rise, stand and flourish by attending to anything other than itself (any second or third person), but to subside

and dissolve back into ourself, its source, by attending only to itself (the first person), as he implies in verse 25 of *Uḷḷadu Nārpadu*:

Grasping form it comes into existence; grasping form it stands;
grasping and feeding on form it grows abundantly; leaving
form, it grasps form. If sought, it will take flight. The formless
phantom ego. Investigate.

Therefore we cannot put an end to our rising as ego by attending to anything other than ourself, the reality and source of the first person, as he implies in the second sentence of verse 27 of *Uḷḷadu Nārpadu*: “Without investigating the place where ‘I’ rises, how to reach the annihilation of oneself, in which ‘I’ does not rise?” This is why he never of his own accord recommended any practice other than this simple practice of self-investigation.

However, some people wrongly believe that self-investigation is too difficult and that it is therefore necessary to first practise some other *sādhana* in order to gain the strength required to practise self-investigation. This is a mistaken belief, firstly because self-investigation is actually the easiest of all *sādhanas*, as Bhagavan taught us in *Ānma-Viddai*, and secondly because the strength required to practise self-investigation is the strength to be self-attentive, whereas the strength that can be gained by practising other *sādhanas* is the strength to concentrate on something other than oneself. These two kinds of strength are fundamentally different, so the latter does not necessarily lead to the former.

If self-investigation seems to be difficult, that is because of the strength of our *viṣaya-vāsanās*, which are inclinations to attend to anything other than ourself, so in order to gain the strength required to practise self-investigation we need to weaken our *viṣaya-vāsanās*, which we can do directly and most effectively by self-investigation, because by holding fast to self-attention we are not allowing ourself to be swayed by any *viṣaya-vāsanās*. Any practice other than self-investigation entails attending to something other than ourself, so though it may weaken some *viṣaya-vāsanās*, it cannot weaken all of them.

That is, self-investigation is attending only to the first person, whereas any other practice entails attending to one or more, second or third persons. Attending to the first person is *nivṛtti*, withdrawal of the mind from all activity by retreating inwards, so it causes the

subsidence and eventual dissolution of ego, whereas attention to any second or third person is *pravṛtti*, engagement in mental activity by going outwards, so it nourishes and sustains ego. In other words, second or third person attention is a doing or *karma*, whereas first person attention is not doing anything but just being.

When we attend to any second or third person, we do so under the sway of *viṣaya-vāsanās*, so we are thereby strengthening whichever *viṣaya-vāsanās* we are allowing ourself to be swayed by, and those strengthened *viṣaya-vāsanās* will be obstacles to us when we try to turn our attention back towards ourself, the first person. When we attend only to the first person, on the other hand, we are not being swayed by any *viṣaya-vāsanās* but only by *sat-vāsanā*, the inclination just to be as we actually are, so we are thereby strengthening *sat-vāsanā* and weakening all *viṣaya-vāsanās*.

The strength required to practise self-investigation is the strength of *sat-vāsanā*, whereas *viṣaya-vāsanās* are what weaken our ability to be firmly self-attentive, so the only direct and most effective means to gain the strength required to practise self-investigation is to patiently and persistently try to be self-attentive, as Bhagavan implies in the sixth paragraph of *Nāṅ Ār?*:

If other thoughts rise, without trying to complete them it is necessary to investigate to whom they have occurred. However many thoughts rise, what [does it matter]? Vigilantly, as soon as each thought appears, if one investigates to whom it has occurred, it will be clear: to me. If one investigates who am I [by vigilantly attending to oneself, the ‘me’ to whom everything else appears], the mind will return to its birthplace [namely oneself, the source from which it arose]; [and since one thereby refrains from attending to it] the thought that had risen will also cease. When one practises and practises in this manner, for the mind the power to stand firmly established in its birthplace increases.

Though other practices can be a means to cultivate strength of mind, the strength gained thereby is the strength to focus attention on things other than oneself, which is a strength of *pravṛtti*, whereas the strength required for self-investigation is the strength to focus attention on oneself alone, which is a strength of *nivṛtti*. These are

therefore two quite different forms of strength. One is the strength to go outwards, and the other is the strength to go inwards.

As Bhagavan used to say in this context, a racehorse that is bred and trained to gallop forwards at great speed will not be useful for drawing water from a well, for which a backward movement of the horse is necessary. This is why he advised all true spiritual aspirants to practise self-investigation from the very start. Even if our *viṣaya-vāsanās* are still relatively strong, the most effective means to weaken them is to try as much as possible to be self-attentive, as he assured us in the tenth paragraph of *Nāṇ Ār?*:

Even though *viṣaya-vāsanās*, which come from time immemorial, rise in countless numbers like ocean-waves, they will all be destroyed when *svarūpa-dhyāna* [self-attentiveness] increases and increases. Without giving room even to the doubting thought ‘So many *vāsanās* ceasing [or being dissolved], is it possible to be only as *svarūpa* [my own real nature]?’ it is necessary to cling tenaciously to self-attentiveness. However great a sinner one may be, if instead of lamenting and weeping ‘I am a sinner! How am I going to be saved?’ one completely rejects the thought that one is a sinner and is zealous [or steadfast] in self-attentiveness, one will certainly be reformed [transformed into what one actually is].

Even if our efforts to be self-attentive are relatively feeble at first, such feeble efforts will be far more efficacious in weakening all *viṣaya-vāsanās* and thereby strengthening our ability to cling firmly to self-attentiveness than any amount of effort made to practise any other *sādhana*, so with firm trust in the words of Bhagavan and the assurances he has given to us, let us each try our best to practise being self-attentive as much as we can.

Though we cannot gain the strength to focus our entire attention steadily on oneself alone by trying to focus it on anything else, the strength and clarity that we gain by trying to focus it on oneself alone will make our mind a very sharp and subtle instrument, which can therefore be used effectively for any other purpose. For example, this is how it became so easy for me to learn Carnatic music in a relatively short time and with relatively little practice.

When I was living in Ramanasramam in the late 50s and early 60s some friends who came to visit the ashram were surprised to see the

skill I had gained in Carnatic music. ‘When we met you two years ago you said you knew very little about Carnatic music, so how have you gained so much proficiency in such a short time? Normally it would take at least twelve years of dedicated study and practice to gain the level of mastery that you now have, but you haven’t spent all your time practising, so how do you now have so much knowledge and skill in such a difficult art?’ they asked, to which I replied that it was all thanks to Kannappa, my blind music teacher, but they were not satisfied with this reply. ‘He is no doubt a very good teacher’, they said, ‘but that does not explain how you have learnt so much in such a short time and with so little practice’.

I did not say anything further, but the only explanation can be that this ability was an unintended by-product of practising self-attention. It is only by the reflected light of awareness (*cidābhāsa*) that the mind is able to know anything other than itself, so when we focus our mind on any other thing we are using only this reflected light. However, to know ourself this reflected light is not necessary, because we know ourself naturally by our own original light of pure awareness. By attending to ourself we are immersing our mind in this original light, so the power and clarity of mind gained by self-attention is far greater and more refined than any power or clarity that can be gained by attending to anything other than oneself. This is why Ādi Śaṅkara says in verse 364 of *Vivēkacūḍāmaṇi* that the potency of *nididhyāsana*, which means the practice of self-attention, is a hundred thousand times greater than that of *manana*, which is a hundred times greater than that of *śravaṇa*. ▲

(To be continued)

‘Aham Sphurana’ Manuscript

Sri Ramanasramam has extensively reviewed the manuscript *Aham Sphurana* said to be written in 1936, and we have come to the conclusion that there is no verifiable factual basis for it.

BOOK EXCERPT

Sri Mahaswami

The Sage with Eyes of Light

SERGE DEMETRIAN

Śrī Mahāswami, The Sage with Eyes of Light relates the direct experiences of the author with Śrī Kāñci Pīṭhādhipati Jagadguru Śrī Śaṅkarācārya, Śrī Candrasekarendra Sarasvati Svāmī, which took place from 1968 until the mahāsamādhi of Śrī Mahāswami in 1994.

The book is available at Indica Books, Varanasi. The price for PB ₹1,095/- & HB ₹1,500/-; pp.816. ISBN: 978-93-81120-20-0. The book is available in Amazon and other webpages. If Indica Books is emailed at indicabooksindia@gmail.com they will send the book by post.

Kanchipuram, 17th May 1972

Sri Shankara Jayanti

It is difficult to wake up in an atmosphere where there are high decibel sounds of roaring, vaguely musical noises coming from several nearby loudspeakers. We are in the town centre where the wedding-halls abound. In addition, it is the most favourable period of the year for these sorts of celebrations.

By 5 am., at the first sound of a very punctual factory-hooter, I started the repetition of the Great Words of non-duality. The higher mind, more in retreat, notices with joy that it does not allow itself to be deluded anymore by the antics of the lower mind, this old ham actor. If now and then it dwells on frivolities, it, as soon as it comes back in its witness position is not embittered anymore by having become somewhat confused.

The withdrawal of the higher mind should be permanent, day and night, as one talks or as one works. Not to forget the inner Presence, it is essential, even in the worst bustle of the ordinary life. Remembering the interior Purusha, the Guru, the Great Goddess, their respective images and also the Sun is very useful, or better, absolutely necessary for keeping the higher mind in the witness position.

I started meditating almost as if pushed by some force. The day should have been beautiful: is it not the most blessed of the year? The great lineage of the Gurus (*Guru-paramparā*) and the Great Friends quickly appeared in force. The Goddess showed Herself with material intensity: She had only 150 metres to walk from Her Temple to my room! Sri Mahaswami, Adishankara, Agastya, the mythological sage whose existence I rediscovered only these last days, appeared in their light forms. My eyes and soon the brain as well, were swept away by a wave of Presence that was coming down on both sides of the neck and spread like a faint tide of gleaming air, through all the senses and organs.

A marvellous experience took place at the moment when the required degree of purity was achieved. By the combined effort of the Goddess and of Sri Mahaswami, assisted by all other presences, there was kindled in my heart a fire, a true one, a column of a red, orange, whitish flame. The ardour was unbearable: its intensity incinerated everything material, every sensation, every mark, and every idea. The enflamed explosion lasted only one or two seconds, but everything was reduced to ashes. I was like a tree that once struck by a lightning bolt becomes for one or two seconds the lightning itself and then still stays straight, although changed into dead powder. And at the slightest knock it would crumble on the earth, into a formless heap.

There was no painful feeling at the return to normality. 'Normality' did not exist anymore as it was so tenuous, it was enough to scratch the appearance a little to arrive at the real nature. When it was no longer possible to remain like this, there came about, almost automatically, a retreat into the heart where the Presence of Sri Mahaswami and of the Queen was constantly perceptible.

The day unfolded with ease, as happens sometimes: gracious gestures, dancing gait, with no trace of effort or strain.



Toward 8 am., I went to the Temple of the Goddess, without having really wished it. I simply saw myself leaving! In the hall that leads into the main sanctuary, there is on the right side the chapel of Varasiddhi Ganapati with his trunk reposed on his jovial tummy. The deity made it a point of honour to receive me with the initial blessing. Someone, a good person – who sent him? – offered me a lump of fresh sandal paste. I was able to easily fix it in the centre on top of my head as the hair had over recent years discreetly started to go bald.

Adishankara, from his shrine, took me in charge straight-away. It was indeed his anniversary! For the occasion he wore a festive ‘dress’, entirely covered by a thick layer of yellowish sandal paste, which is a local custom in the South Indian temples. A not very inspired artist has coated his face with an almost funny mask that had a minute hole for the mouth. An enormous disproportionate festive tiara of white flowers did not enhance in any way his dignity. Only his eyes surged with life. Usually his looks are very scarce but that day he showed his Grace! In two or three minutes, he purified me, rendered me white, and illuminated me. In between this blessing, his eyes had become, successively, light blue, white, transparent and then lost their limits and melted in an azure haze; finally this vapour became more dense and to some extent green-blackish. Was this phenomenon due to the fatigue of my eyes? I do not think so, as at the same time I was continuously bathing in waves of bluish happiness of almost material density. For two or three seconds I obtained a new total identification that had substance: it existed only in the luminous azure ether. The Great Âchârya himself signalled to me, in the heart, the end of the darshan and directed me to the Great Goddess.

The Queen stood back to some extent, but she still showed very clearly her beautiful eyes: they were two large radiant blue pearls.

Mahasarasvatî and the utsava-murti of the Queen, in their respective chapels, were even shy; probably my resources had to be conserved.

I returned to Adishankara. This time his presence manifested itself intensely. In addition, during the ten minutes I stood in front of him, nobody troubled me, which is almost a miracle in itself for a festival day when the public crowds the temple.

I was floating, made of the same substance as Adishankara, less dense, but certainly of the same nature. This state lasted a few

seconds or a few minutes. Toward the end I was permitted to offer to the Great Acharya a gigantic project that came to light this morning after the meditation – was it in the superior or in the inferior mind? It was difficult to localise it: indeed, after some meditations, this type of mental excitement still exists. The best method to get rid of these airy fulminations of post-meditative mental activity is to offer them on the spot to the feet of the Guru. The acts of will by the Truth itself, which appears as Wisdom, are beyond any mental activity.

I started immediately afterwards for Shivasthana and arrived there by 10 am. Sri Mahaswami took me in charge as soon as I had completed my first pradakshina round the temple and the hut. He was seated at the western door of the temple, which was open for the occasion. There had been erected a festive-shed, a pandal in between this door and a new statue of Ganesh which had been installed on the western side, at some ten metres from Shrî Mahâsvâmi's hut. Svâmiiji had requested the visitors to sit and this situation allowed me to see him from some four metres distance. He was squatting, the face toward north-west. He had the outlook of a Christ, the way at least the Christian poets of the paintbrush and of the chisel had seen him in their hearts.

With his infallible look Sri Mahaswami quickly assessed the interior position of 'this one' and opted for an hour of 'warming' at low heat.

I started to withdraw to the southern side, near the well, but was unable to stay for more than 20 minutes, because of the packed, shoving crowd, but that proved to be an advantage as, pushed toward west, I could witness a milk abhisheka to the new Ganesh. Then I tried my chances at the rudra-homa. It was an enormous fire in which were offered clarified butter, rice, flowers to the accompaniment of special Sanskrit incantations. They had begun the Shiva-trishati, but in my view, the recitation was less powerful than the one done by the assistants of Sri Mahaswami during his offices. Someone then appeared and asked me to move farther. It had been a good idea by this person as I took refuge beside the statue of Dakshinamurti, Shiva who teaches through silence. A young boy, full of good-will in fact, strived to cover the statue with white sandal paste, however he had left a black space on the noble face that resembled a carnival puppet. I

started helping the youngster and contributed to render a more human face on Dakshinamurti.

It was exactly 10.30 am. when I returned to be in front of Sri Mahaswami, once again at some four metres, near the western extremity of the festive shade-pandal. Between us were several rows of people listening to a local ‘musician’ who made a violin suffer by squeezing out impossible tremolos. But I felt at home in that crowd. Someone withdrew to make place for me, while another asked a child to sit so that I could see better. There was even a horizontal pole on which to lean; I was in the shade and at hardly four metres from Swamiji! He was in the same position: half-turned toward north-west. His face looked smaller and colourless. Judging from his mien he must have been in a state of very intense concentration.

He started to bless me through the secret zones of the far corners of both his eyes. Lightning bolts, oscillating slowly, but very intensely, shot at irregular intervals and took me by surprise. Sri Mahaswami thoughtfully caressed his white silk moustache, an indirect sign that he foresees an important action. It is possible that I will be included in his plans. I gazed in his eyes while turning in my mind the Great Words of non-duality, and then the current of the blessing stopped abruptly.

“Some weakness might have crept into my thought,” I mused for myself.

Immediately the blessed influence started again. The pause was but an interval. Now, Sri Mahaswami had turned toward the west; I was exactly in front of him and could see that his eyes had changed, the left one especially. There was no trace of an emission zone. The eyes entirely disappeared and in their place the sockets were full of a cloudy dark brown substance. On the left, the cloud tended to swirl in a funnel-shaped form that largely bypassed the eyes. Everything was similar to this morning’s blessing at the temple when the eyes of Adishankara had changed into black ethereal clouds. The same phenomena took place now but it was much more intense. I was out of breath while repeating fragments of texts:

“I am Brahman’, the one who knows so, surely becomes this entire (world); the gods are no more able to harm him (as, having known the Self,) he verily has become their Self.”

And,

“The one who thinks every time ‘I am myself Brahman’ having experienced in him the eternal Brahman takes life as a play.”

By the will of Sri Mahaswami – as from my side I could do nothing else than offer myself to him –, I entered into total unity with him. For a few seconds only his eyes existed. It is very probable that beyond the limitation of the senses other events must have happened, for Ishvara when He comes, acts in several places at once!

It must have been about 11.30 am., as all of a sudden, Sri Mahaswami leaped up as if propelled by a spring. He now stood exactly in front of me. He looked like a tongue of fire without heat or like incandescent lava with its fiery vehemence turned inside soaring up from the centre of the Earth. He became, for me at least, an ethereal consistency. I saw him, I recognised him, but it was impossible not to realise that there was nothing remotely material left in him! He was an impalpable vapour, a sort of cold light, vaguely coloured with a semblance of clothes, body, and hair.

His eyes! I never have seen anything like them! They were blue and clear, as if they gathered the entire sky, shortly before the rise of the Sun, and were concentrated in the dimension of a human eye. Everything possible – the purity, the light, the immensity, the wings, the dreams, the happiness – that could offer to a human being with an honest heart the clear sky of dawn, was found in both eyes of Ishvara under the guise of Sri Mahaswami. On these two miniature firmaments, two little suns rose up and shone brightly to their full capacity. The rays of light, which the eyes could no longer contain, gushed about in a fine shower, like a radiant halo. After a handful of seconds, the crown of sparkling rays of light turned back on itself and rendered transparent the face and the top of the head. Now Sri Mahaswami was nothing else but fierce, glaring ether. At the surface, this purported immaterial matter became somewhat dense so as to form what appears to be his body, whose radiation filled the festive shade where he stood with a luminous vapour.

With his danda he finally saluted the gopura, then he left, his gaze wandering above the heads of the people sitting in front of him.

It is certain that it was the moment of the descent, the birth of Adishankara in the calculations of Sri Mahaswami. I also had a place in his plans as his visible movements had been centred on my eyes,

which were placed, by his grace, exactly in the same axis as his. They had since long become a fragment of Sri Mahaswami's. He turned his head a little toward the right or left, but he always came back to 'my' eyes.

If, since 11 am., I did not leave his eyes for more than a few seconds, it is because I clung to them with the despair of someone threatened by death:

"Either You save me or I will die here, at Your feet!"

I was no longer able to repeat whatever it may be, because every verbal image had vanished. I had become his eyes. This blessed period that persisted for four or five minutes seemed to have reached its peak. Sri Mahaswami stopped a few seconds and looked at me even more intensely. His eyes became even larger, even brighter, as if this was imaginable! At the same time, his visible form had become even more airy. I also felt how much he had stripped me off 'my' old body. He had transformed his eyes into mine and in this way, he had rendered my body transparent, ethereal!

There followed a few side looks as if to stabilise the treasure he had bestowed upon me.

Then he sat down. His face was still turned toward me but the look was slightly diverted sideways. He was thoughtful. I understood that he remained there in order to calm me down. His intention was to prevent the over-excitement of this body and of 'my' mind that reeled under the load of the bestowed jewels. So it thus happened that I came out with not even the slightest trouble, nor even an intimation of a headache.

After ten minutes, he showed some interest in the gathering. People came up and bumped into each other in a rather rough manner. It seems that the decorous wait in turn, at least in front of a Great Sage, is not part of the accepted spontaneous reactions of the public in this area.

I moved away. An event seemed to have taken place. My eyes were neither irritated, nor painful, but were as if burned away, consumed. Nothing remained of them but a sort of sponge made out of solar ashes. They were no more my eyes: Sri Mahaswami had taken out the essential ingredient of I-ness from these organs.

I started a pradakshina round the fortress-hut of Sri Mahaswami, refreshed myself with some water from the reservoir, and returned

to the western door. The rush of devotees was near its end. I asked myself if I should come nearer, as three people, all unknown to me, one after another, invited me to approach!

Sri Mahaswami was standing, but seemed to be totally someone other than before. He gently smiled, he is joyous; his face shone with human life. He had become once again the young man who is pleasant to be with and a sage at the same time who, with a beard and a few wrinkles here and there, had just the necessary qualities to look somewhat old.

He wears also another pair of eyes: they are black, polished charcoal stone, while the white part is clearly visible, but there is no trace of a lightning shaft neither in front nor from the side. There were no iridescent light or ethereal rays! Īshvara appears as He wants and when He wants!

He blessed everybody with assuring and graceful gestures. Sometimes he became serious. He looked at me from far, sideways and permitted that I approach in the second line only, which was at one metre and a half. He seemed satisfied with what he found in me. He was in such a jovial mood! I looked at him while I thought:

“Īshvara loves the world as the shepherd His sheep. He knows how they are small, weak, stupid sometimes, but still He loves them. Thus Īshvara becomes man so that the flock may have a shepherd.”

Today, around 11 am., I had mentally submitted to Sri Mahaswami the idea of abandoning this body, supposed to belong to ‘me’, in two years’ time as that would solve many problems. Nevertheless, Sri Mahaswami did not stop at this question. I understand that one should not create plans for nothing, neither on life nor on death. It is better to leave this care to the One who has created the World, to the Creator. As it is He who took the responsibility to protect the World.

Although the heat was intense, I reached my residence with no pain. I received the May pension before the end of the month, which is a rare event. The balance of this great day was restored by a very painful blow on the fifth left toe; I was conscious, but it was impossible to avoid. In the evening, when I wanted to go to the Temple of the Great Goddess I suffered a second blow. No doubt, it was a sign not to proceed further. I had had my fill of blessings in the morning! It

MOUNTAIN PATH

was necessary to protect the nervous system: I submitted without a murmur and returned home.

I surprised myself thinking of the not so distant future when my Indian visa expires and my passport will cease to be valid in the autumn of this year. Is it that I have to stay in India or shall I go to Europe? And in which country? To France? If so, shall I have to start work once again and lead an ordinary life? And from where to get the money for the journey? In fact the decision belongs only to Sri Mahaswami: he has the means to direct me to where he wants. ▲

In the Morning

Upahar

Over the night's dark ocean,
carried on winds of love; eternal stranger,
most intimate, yet ever undefinable,
set down once more upon these shores of light;

deep in the lonely temple of your heart
a lotus drinks the sunrise,
a single sound is bordering on silence.
A day spreads out within you, carelessly.

Admit the world; can you turn back the stream,
or bind the elements to your desire?
You are the way, the flow, the dream of time
in which you come and go,

the open sky. What could you hide, or seek?
Bright in the sanctum of your helplessness
a timeless flame is dancing.
A tree of life takes root where you bow down.

KEYWORD

Nirvikalpa

Beyond the Mind

B. K. CROISSANT

One of the most overwhelming, transformative and moving messages of the *Aṣṭāvakra Gītā* is “Don’t get attached to form!” It’s written with words, but it’s really found in between the lines and somewhere behind the words in the empty spaces. You have to catch it not by looking too closely but by stepping back a bit. By reflecting on the words and then letting them go.

So words are both important and not. The poet, however, is a master in manipulating them. Why? Because he is passionate about making us see our own incredible, wondrous and precious freedom that dwells not in front of us but somewhere within us, somewhere behind words and form. It is a stupendous act of sheer Love from someone who is nothing but Love. Let him speak to you. Open your heart!

One dynamic and powerful example of words that can carry you to the mountain top is *nirvikalpa*. It means absence of fluctuations, in this case of the mind. The mind creates form, so the word is an

B.K. Croissant first encountered Bhagavan in 1993. She retired in 2006 after serving as a senior administrator in the arts and humanities at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. Since then *sādhana* has been her highest priority and greatest joy.

important messenger for the poet. He may or may not have invented the word, since it does not appear anywhere in the *Upaniṣads* or the *Bhagavad Gītā*. But other poets and teachers have used it freely, like Gauḍapāda, Patañjali, and Śaṅkara. For our benefit Aṣṭāvakra keeps coming back to it, in fact seven times in his Song. That, however, is not enough! He reaches into his bag of tricks and draws out many more words that are also derived from the verbal root *klṛip* or else its derivative *vikṛip*. The capacity to deepen and nuance the meaning of a verbal root by simply adding a prefix or suffix is a special feature of the Sanskrit language that especially shines in poetry. So we are being pounded from many directions, over and over again.

Klṛip means to bring about, produce; to create; and in the causative to believe, consider, imagine, think. *Vikṛip* means to alternate with; to waver, hesitate; to suppose, conjecture, imagine. Aṣṭāvakra revelled in their offspring, which include *kalpita* and *vikalpita*, *vikalpa* and *nirvikalpa*, *kalpanā* and *vikalpanā*, even *saṅkalpa* and *nihsaṅkalpa*.

Pausing on *nirvikalpa*, Apte asserts that as applied to *samādhi*, it is an exclusive concentration without distinct and separate consciousness of the knower, the known and the knowing, even without self-consciousness. Monier-Williams defines it as free from change or differences; admitting no doubt, not wavering. Concerning the highest state of *nirvikalpa*, Sri Ramana Maharshi said, “One who accustoms himself naturally to meditation (*dhyāna*) and enjoys the bliss of meditation will not lose his *samādhi* state whatever external work he does, whatever thought may come to him. That is called *sahaja nirvikalpa samādhi*. Those who are in the *sahaja nirvikalpa* state are like a light in a windless place, or the ocean without waves; that is there is no movement. They cannot find anything which is different from themselves. For those who do not reach that state, everything appears to be different from themselves.”¹

Nirvikalpa makes its first appearance on the stage in Chapter II, verse 17, when King Janaka, the disciple, explodes with exaltation after hearing his guru’s inspired exposition on Advaita Vedānta in the previous Chapter. In a state of mystic elation, he contrasts the eternal Self as the sole Reality with mere projections of the mind. Having

¹ Nagamma, Suri, *Letters from Sri Ramanasramam*, 2006, 30 October, 1947.

completely surrendered the body, the world and everything else, he is at peace.

बोधमात्रोऽहमज्ञानादुपाधिः कल्पितो मया ।

एवं विमृशतो नित्यं निर्विकल्पे स्थितिर्मम ॥

bodhamātro’ham ajñānād upādhiḥ kalpito mayā,
evaṃ vimṛśato nityaṃ nirvikalpe sthitiḥ mama.

I am Pure Awareness. Due to ignorance, I have imagined distinctions. By constantly dwelling on That, in this way I abide in a state beyond the mind. ²

[Note the use of *mātra* in *bodhamātraḥ* to emphasise the absolute quality of Consciousness. *Ajñānāt* (by ignorance) is repeated throughout the *Gītā* as the cause of delusion. *Upādhiḥ* (distinctions) is wide-ranging in its implications. In the end, all must be abandoned! *Kalpitaḥ* (imagined) is contrasted with *nirvikalpe* (in a state beyond the mind), giving emphasis to both. *Nityam* (constantly) is an essential notion for *sthitiḥ* (abiding) to constitute true Liberation. *Sthiti* is a keyword for the poet, and he uses it often in the context of the higher stages of meditation.]

Two more compelling verses, 19 and 20, in Chapter II resonate with the profundity of verse 17. In both cases, the poet uses *kalpanā* (imagination) to great effect. “*I have known, for certain, that the body and the universe are unsubstantial and that the Self is pure Consciousness alone. So, now upon what can imaginations (kalpanā) stand?*” “*Body, the notions of heaven and hell, bondage and freedom, as also anxiety – all these are mere imaginations (kalpanāmātram). What purpose have I with all these – I whose nature is pure Consciousness?*”³

On our way to the next instance of *nirvikalpa*, we can’t just fly over Chapter VIII because the subject of its four magnificent verses is the mind. Its first two verses unequivocally state the relationship between mind, bondage and liberation. “*It is bondage when the mind desires or grieves at anything; does reject or accept anything; does feel happy or angry at anything.*” In a perfectly parallel fashion he asserts that

² All verses with *devanāgarī* are translated by the author.

³ All quoted translations without *devanāgarī* are from Swami Chinmayananda’s *Aṣṭāvakra Gītā: Song of Realisation*, Central Chinmaya Mission Trust, 2019.

“Freedom is attained when the mind does not desire or grieve; does not reject or accept; does not feel happy or angry at anything.” The third verse energetically proclaims the relationship between attachment, bondage and liberation, with perfect symmetry. “It is bondage when the mind is attached to any of the sensory perceptions. It is freedom when the mind is detached from all perceptions.” The last verse is both a resounding grand finale and a passionate plea. “When there is no ego-‘I’ there is freedom, when there is ego-‘I’ there is bondage. Knowing thus, stop from accepting or rejecting anything playfully.” Did you hear it loud and clear? Was your heart open?

In Chapter XI, Aṣṭāvakra takes our hand, and in a loving, practical fashion offers eight equally potent verses to choose from. They are all launching pads for catapulting the earnest seeker to a higher level of meditation (otherwise, unfortunately, they won’t work!). In verse 7 he consciously uses *nirvikalpa*.

आब्रह्मस्तम्बपर्यन्तमहमेवेति निश्चयी ।

निर्विकल्पः सुचिः शान्तः प्राप्ताप्राप्तविनिर्वृतः ॥

ābrahma-stamba-paryantam aham eveti niścayī,
nirvikalpaḥ suciḥ śāntaḥ prāptāprāpta-vinirvṛtaḥ.

One who has determined with certainty “I indeed pervade everything from the Creator to a clump of grass” is beyond the mind, resplendent, tranquil and indifferent to what is obtained or not.

[The poet uses the quote in this verse several times in the *Gītā*. He really likes it! Note the word *niścayī* (one who has determined with certainty). It alone constitutes a refrain in the Chapter and appears in every verse in the same place. Here, *nirvikalpa* is one of several strong adjectives describing the earnest seeker in a high state of *samādhi*. As in *prāptāprāpta* (what is obtained or not) Aṣṭāvakra frequently expresses two opposites by using the same word twice, one of which has a negative prefix like ‘a’. It is a very elegant poetic device.]

Chapter XV, a song of twenty verses, is both mystical and practical. In verse 5, using *nirvikalpa*, Aṣṭāvakra reminds us that we are not the mind. Although all is One and One only, we are the Ocean, not the waves!

We are beyond the mind, not our imagination!

रागद्वेषौ मनोधर्मौ न मनस्ते कदाचन ।
 निर्विकल्पोऽसि बोधात्मा निर्विकारः सुखं चर ॥
 rāga-dveṣau mano-dharmau na manaste kadācana,
 nirvikalpo'si bodhātmā nirvikārah sukham cara.

Love and hatred are properties of the mind. You are never the mind. You are Awareness itself, beyond the mind and immutable. Live happily!

[Note the beauty of the first *pāda*, both compounds (*rāga-dveṣau* and *manodharmau*) ending on the same sound. The four syllables of *kadācana* (never) in second *pāda* are like a bugle call. The three successive long vowels of *bodhātmā* (Awareness itself) in the next *pāda* are intended to slow us down and cause reflection. *Sukham cara* (Live happily!) at the end of the last *pāda* occurs three times in this Chapter alone. *Sukhībhava* appears twice. Since both expressions are evoked many times in the *Gītā*, true happiness is definitely a strong and compelling *leit-motif* that pulls us inward and inspires hope.]

Chapter XVIII is a brilliant recapitulation of Aṣṭāvakra's wisdom in one hundred amazing verses and the Sage's final attempt to communicate the state of Self-Realisation through a precise and detailed portrait of a *jñāni*. Verse 1 is a thrilling invocation to the Self that can stop you in your tracks. Don't read it without pausing and letting it sink in. "Salutations to That, which is the embodiment of Bliss, serenity, effulgence, with the dawn of whose knowledge all delusions become unreal as a dream."

The eternal contrast between the Real and the mind's inventions is played out again for our benefit, beginning in verse 4. "This universe is but a mode of thinking. In reality it is nothing. The inherent nature of the existent (Self) and of the non-existent (universe) are never lost." Then, in verse 5, *nirvikalpa* appears on the stage in a supporting role to describe the unsurpassable wonders of the Ātman.

न दूरं न च सङ्कोचाल्लब्धमेवात्मनः पदम् ।
 निर्विकल्पं निरायासं निर्विकारं निरञ्जनम् ॥
 na dūraṁ na ca saṅkocāl labdham evātmanah padam,
 nirvikalpaṁ nirāyāsaṁ nirvikāraṁ nirañjanam.

The realm of the Self is neither remote nor limited and ever attained. It is beyond the mind, free from striving, perpetually

the same and without attributes.

[Note the sheer beauty of the second line. It bears reading over and over again, in Sanskrit, aloud or silently! *Nirvikalpa*, in this context, could also be translated devoid of distinction, unchangeable or Absolute.]

Verse 6 is bursting with hope! Don't let its power escape your notice. "Those whose understanding (vision) is fully unveiled, they shine free from misery. As soon as their illusion ceases, the Self is realised." In verse 7, one of *nirvikalpa*'s cousins, namely *kalpanā*, appears. "All that exists is mere imagination (*kalpanāmātram*). The Self is free and eternal. Knowing thus, does the wise one act like a child?" *Kalpita*, another cousin, shows up in verse 8. "Having known with certitude that the Self is Brahman and the existence and non-existence are mere imaginations (*kalpita*), what can one who is desireless know, say or do?" Voila, in verse 9, a third cousin, *vikalpanā*! "Such thoughts (*vikalpanā*) as 'this is That' 'I am That,' and 'I am not this' are extinguished for the yogin who has become quiet, knowing with certitude that everything is Self only." Finally, verse 11 takes us back to *nirvikalpa*.

स्वराज्ये भैक्ष्यवृत्तौ च लाभालाभे जने वने ।

निर्विकल्पस्वभावस्य न विशेषोऽस्ति योगिनः ॥

svārājye bhaikṣya-vṛttau ca lābhālābhe jane vane,

nirvikalpa-svabhāvasya na viśeṣo'sti yoginaḥ.

To the yogi who is beyond the mind by nature, it doesn't matter whether he lives in heaven or in beggary, in poverty or in affluence, in society or in solitude.

Verse 66 describes the Perfect Man beautifully, reminding us that the realised yogin stands alone in *kaivalya*, totally indifferent to circumstances and fully immersed in Bliss.

क्व संसारः क्व चाभासः क्व साध्यं क्व च साधनम् ।

आकाशस्येव धीरस्य निर्विकल्पस्य सर्वदा ॥

kva saṁsāraḥ kva cābhāsaḥ kva sādhyam kva ca sādhanam,

ākāśasyeva dhīrasya nirvikalpasya sarvadā.

Where is the world and where are false appearances, where is the accomplishment and where the means for the Master who is beyond the mind and like space pervading the whole universe?

Verse 76 sounds a cautionary note. Although a person, worldly or otherwise, may appear to be calm and composed, unless attachment has permanently been broken with the ego, true happiness is still out of reach.

मन्दः श्रुत्वापि तद्वस्तु न जहाति विमूढताम् ।

निर्विकल्पो बहिर्यत्नादन्तर्विषयलालसः ॥

mandah śrutvāpi tadvastu na jahāti vimūḍhatām,

nirvikalpo bahir yatnād antar viṣaya-lālasah.

Even hearing the Truth, the foolish one doesn't relinquish his folly. With effort he may appear outwardly beyond the mind, within he longs for sense objects.

After Aṣṭāvakra's spectacular portrait of a *jīvanmukta*, a Man of Perfection, in Chapter XVIII, he turns to Janaka for the final lapse. And what does the King do but serve us with rapture and ecstasy! Chapters IXX and XX are pure poetry and bliss. The entire *Gītā* ends with an immortal verse, the last in Chapter XX, that leaves us stunned and overwhelmed. “*Where is existence or where is non-existence? Where is the one (unity) and where is duality? What need is there to say more? Nothing indeed emanates from me.*” The mind has been completely stilled. No more movement or modifications whatsoever. Just Silence and everlasting Peace.

What more is there to say on the subject of mind or no mind? The last word goes to Sri Ramana Maharshi. Consider these verses from *Ulladu Narpadu*, His hymn on ‘The Nature of Reality in Forty Verses’. Out of His infinite compassion, comes a clear explanation for all human misery and out of His personal experience, the ultimate method for transcending it in our daily lives. Not at some distant place or date in the future, but here and now.

23. *The body says not it is ‘I’. And no one says, “In sleep there is no ‘I’.” When ‘I’ arises all (other) things arise. Whence this ‘I’ arises, search with a keen mind.*

24. *The body which is matter says not ‘I’. Eternal Awareness rises not nor sets. Betwixt the two, bound by the body, rises the thought of ‘I’. This is the knot of matter and Awareness. This is bondage, jīva, subtle body, ego. This is saṃsāra, this is the mind.*

25. *Holding a form it rises; holding a form it stays; holding and feeding on a form it thrives. Leaving one form, it takes hold of another. When sought, it takes to flight. Such is the ego-ghost with no form of its own.*

26. *When the ego rises all things rise with it. When the ego is not, there is nothing else. Since the ego thus is everything, to question 'What is this thing?' is the extinction of all things.*

27. *'That' we are, when 'I' has not arisen. Without searching whence the 'I' arises, how to attain the self-extinction where no 'I' arises? Without attaining self-extinction, how to stay in one's true state where the Self is 'That'?⁴*

Om śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ.



⁴ *The Collected Works of Sri Ramana Maharshi*, 2009, pp. 118-119.

Tarry Not

Suresh Kailash

Wipe off all anger, all trace of lust,
pride, envy, desire, aversion, disgust,
Clear out the debris, the cobwebs, the dust,
of buried fears and betrayed trust,
Brush clean the carpet, of crumbs of greed,
and crumpled shame swept underneath,
Light all the lamps, dark thoughts dispel,
burn incense, grief's odour expel,
Part the curtains, open the windows, the door,
let bright sunlight wash the tear-stained floor,
Tarry not, my maids, quick, be on your way,
Ramana, our lord, comes home today.

Tamil Siddhas

Part Four

Sivavakkiar: The Siddha's Siddha

P. RAJA

What are temples? What are sacred tanks?
How stupid of you to adore them?
Temples are in your mind. So too are tanks.
No becoming, no unbecoming, never, never. (v. 32)¹

Only a genuine Siddha could have sung such a song of revolt and that too in a daredevil language. Those dauntless words rolled out of the tongue of Siddha Sivavakkiar, a great mystic and a greater poet.

Sivavakkiar was a rebel to the core. He condemned not only idol-worship and ceremonies performed in temples, but also the Hindu orthodoxy associated with brahminism. A merciless opponent of the caste system, he pooh-poohs the division between the Vaishnavites and the Saivites. For him all are one and the one is the divine in us.

You call a woman a pariah or a brahmin –
What difference does it make in their flesh,
Skin and bones? Could you ever tell who's who
after sleeping with them?! (v. 37)

¹ All references to verse numbers are to Ma.Vadivelu Mudaliar's *Sivavakkiar Paadal* – 500.

Dr. P. Raja. Cell: 9443617124. Email: rajbusybee@gmail.com
web: www.professorraja.com

Sivavakkiaar saw god in everyone and urged everyone to feel the god in them. A very great believer in monotheism, he practised what he preached:

Our god and your god – oh, can god be two?

How can one be here and another there?

It's only one and that one is omnipresent.

Let worms eat those tongues that differentiate. (v.123)

No wonder that such a rebel poet was admired and revered by the common man and the elite of the society alike. The fact that two eminent sacred poets referred to him in their works speaks of Sivavakkiaar's glory.

One was Pattinathar purported to have lived in the 10th century. He mentions him in his work *Tiruvudai Marudhur Mummanikovai* as 'Siddhanar Sivavakkiya Devar'.

This particular reference helps us a great deal to establish Sivavakkiaar as belonging to an age immediately preceding the 10th century A.D.

Another sacred poet Thayumanavar was a great admirer of Sivavakkiaar. Inspired by his rebellious verses, he wrote:

Oh, God! No more, I will perform any religious rites in your temple. I was stupid enough to imagine that you have a form. And to honour you I went to gather flowers. You were present in every flower. I left them in their plants. How can I ever pluck you to honour you? I decided to honour you by bringing my palms together before you. But I was bashful about it for I found you residing in me. Something in me mocked at me as to why I should make this outward show when it cannot be of any use. That thought apart, I realized that I was not alone for you were also with me. As you and I reside as one, to pray to you would not be total... may be an incomplete activity. That's the reason why I cease from worshipping you.

Such rebels who sang against religious orthodoxy and sacerdotalism were simply ignored by the holier-than-thou minded. It is needless to say that the orthodox expressed horror at the very mention of the name, Sivavakkiaar.

Tamil literary historians and critics still lock horns over a subtle aspect of Sivavakkiaar. Some believe that Thirumalisai Alwar, one of

the twelve Vaishnava saint-poets and Sivavakkiar were one and the same, by studying their poems from the stylistics view point. Some simply refute that theory by saying that it is baseless. We may however proceed as this is not germane to the discussion.

Sivavakkiar expressed his strong views with power-boosted zeal in common man's language. His aim was to reach his ideas to the illiterates of the society who were misled and fooled. Though he considered Lord Siva as the supreme God, he believed that the Supreme power is above Siva and Vishnu:

God is neither Hari nor Siva – Above all these;
 Neither dark nor fair nor pearly in complexion
 Neither huge nor tiny – know this, know this
 Move at a fast pace to hold on to the long-distant God. (v.9)

Sivavakkiar's work, known to the Tamil world as *Sivavakkiam*, is an anthology of his one thousand and twelve quatrains. The verses were scrutinised by Devendranatha Pandithar from his own cadjan leaf manuscripts and published for the first time by Munusamy Mudaliyar in his own press in 1903. The verses later published by the famous B. Rathna Nayagar Sons of Chennai in 1955. Many years later, 1970 to be exact, Ma. Vadivelu Mudaliar selected 519 from the original, commented on each of the Quatrains. B. Rathna Nayagar and Sons of Chennai published it under the title, *Sivavakkiar Paadal – 500*.

Several religions of the world believe in rebirth or resurrection. But the religion of the Siddhas is dead against that thought. Perhaps they strongly believed in the Tamil saying, "Once dead, there is no more dying then." Sivavakkiar beautifully expresses the idea in a lovely and thought provoking quatrain:

Milk can never enter back into the udder as butter cannot
 into the curd. The broken conch yields no sound;
 The fallen fruit and the bloom cannot climb to the tree;
 No come back for the dead never, never again. (v. 45)

All the thousand and odd poems found in *Sivavakkiam* read like personal experiences of a keen observer of life. If life is worth living, then it is worth writing about. An English saying that reads, "Everyman is a novel if you know how to read him", supports this view. Sivavakkiar's life, though made of hearsay, is worth listening to, as it is filled with magic and fantasy.

Almost every new born, the moment it lands on Planet Earth for its sojourn cries its lungs out. The contemplative minded invariably says, “Oh! The baby cries because it feels that it has come to the wrong place, an unfriendly one at that,” in spite of what physicians say.

There is a method in the madness of thinkers. But as soon as baby Sivavakkiaar landed he opened his mouth not for crying but for uttering ‘Siva...Siva’. So it was in the fitness of things that his parents named him Siva-vakkiaar, meaning Siva-chanter.

Sivavakkiaar grew to be a strikingly handsome man. Yet his mind instead of wallowing in worldly affairs, wanted to follow the ways of the Siddhas. Hence, he went to Kasi in search of a guru.

After a great search he found a cobbler, about whom everybody spoke in high terms. He specialised in making footwear by measuring the naked feet with his naked eyes. He too was in search of a like-minded helper to whom he could impart his knowledge of yoga and footwear.

Sivavakkiaar perhaps met him at the right time. The cobbler made him sit on a plank and looked at him intently. After a while, the cobbler said, “I have made some money through my job. Now I want that money to reach the hands of my younger sister Ganga Devi. Will you please do that for me?”

Sivavakkiaar nodded an yes. The cobbler then pushed a big *peisuraikai* (bitter gourd) towards him and said, “Bring this back after washing off its bitterness.”

Nurturing not an iota of doubt, Sivavakkiaar reached River Ganges and stepped into it. The moment he touched the water with his hand out popped from the big river running in spate a slender and beautiful hand adorned with bangles.

The hand stretched towards him and when Sivavakkiaar placed the little bag of money on it, the hand disappeared without a trace. Yet he could hear the clink-clink-clinkety-clink of bangles and he was a cloud nine.

When he came back to his senses, he washed the *peisuraikai* in the river, reached the cobbler and gave it to him with all respect.

The cobbler was happy at heart. Yet he wanted to test Sivavakkiaar’s confidence once again. Therefore, he said, “Oh, I have blundered badly, my dear young man! I want my money back. But you don’t

have to go back to my sister. She will appear even in this leather bag if filled with water. Try.”

Sivavakkiair did as advised and asked, “Ganga! Return what I gave you.”

The very same hand that showed up from the river showed up from the leather bag and gave back the bag of money and disappeared into it, making the very same clink-clink-clinkety-clink sound. Sivavakkiair sighed out of excitement.

Pleased with the performance of Sivavakkiair, the cobbler Siddha hugged him and blessed him. He was happy that he got a disciple brimming with a lot of confidence and power. Yet with the knowledge of *prapthi*, the cobbler comprehended that Sivavakkiair still had a fascination for women’s touch. Therefore, he gave his disciple a handful of sand and the *peisuraikai*, and said, “You will have to lead a conjugal life to reach maturity. You are quite young. Take my gifts with you and marry the girl who cooks them for you.”

Flabbergasted stood Sivavakkiair. He was amazed how the cobbler Siddha could read his mind. He fell at the feet of his guru, before he took leave of him.

In his venture to find a suitable girl for his family life, he moved from place to place only to find that no girl was ready to cook sand and *peisuraikai*, but almost every girl showed lot of interest in his tantalizing features. He felt that all the girls he met lacked confidence. He continued with his search.

One day his legs took him to a place where *narikuravars* (gypsies) lived in mobile tents. From one of those tents came out a young woman to know who he was. At his very sight she realised that the newcomer was a great man and so she gave him due respect he commanded.

“Where are your parents?” he asked. The young woman replied, “They have gone into the forest and will be back any time. Tell me what I can do for you.” Sivavakkiair said, “I have not eaten for days. I need food. But I have a handful of sand and *peisuraikai*. Will you be able to cook them for me?”

The young woman without any hesitation took the sand and *peisuraikai* from him and moved into the tent. Her cooking over she came out to serve him food. In her hand the handful of sand pushed into boiling water turned into well cooked rice and the *peisuraikai* into tasty side dish.

Sivavakkkiar could not believe his eyes. He held her in admiration.

“She is the one and the only one that my guru spoke of.” Sivavakkkiar said to himself, as he tasted the cooked miracle.

Meanwhile the young women’s parents returned and were very happy to see a young yogi seated in their tent. Their laudatory remarks made Sivavakkkiar very elated and on the spur of the moment asked, “I have taken a liking for your daughter for her maturity of mind. I need a companion of her calibre in my yogic way of life. May I ask for your daughter’s hand? I will be happy if you say ‘yes’. I will not be unhappy if you say ‘no’.”

The parents said in unison, “What a boon for us to have a young yogi for our son-in-law. Yes! We are willing to marry her off to you, provided you stay back with us.

Sivavakkkiar agreed. The marriage was performed as per *narukuravar* ceremonies and rites. Sivavakkkiar became one with the *narukuravar* family and took up hunting and weaving bamboo baskets. No doubt he enjoyed his family life. Yet nothing stopped him from continuing with his yogic practice.

One day in the forest when he was cutting bamboo plants for weaving baskets, he found to his dismay a cut sturdy plant shedding powdered gold. He immediately took to his heels and after reaching a safe distance, stopped. He began to pray, “O Lord! All that I seek in this life is salvation but you land me into trouble by giving me gold, the man-slayer. With the arrival of wealth all kinds of agony and anguish creep in. Save me from such a killer.”

Four youngsters who saw Sivavakkkiar running for his life, came near him and asked what the matter was. He rehearsed to them what he saw. The youngsters took Sivavakkkiar for a madcap and told him to run away from the danger zone. His legs carried him as fast as they could.

Once Sivavakkkiar was out of their sight, the four young men spent their time in collecting the gold-powder and bundling them up. By the time they gathered their ‘luck’, it was dark. They hesitated to go home. Then they decided to stay put there and move out of the forest by sunrise.

They became hungry as their fate wanted it. So they unanimously decided that two of the four would remain guarding their unexpected

wealth, while the other two would go to the village, satiate their hunger and fetch food for the two guards.

As planned, two of them went to the village, had their stomachs' fill and brought food for the guards. Man's avaricious nature played its undisputed role at that time. They mixed poison in the food they brought, so that just the two could enjoy equal share.

When the two gave food to the guards, the latter asked for water. So the two went to the nearby pond, unaware of the other two following them clandestinely. Once in the pond the two guards pounced on them and drowned them. Their mission over, they sat to eat their food and soon joined hands with the dead.

By sunrise, Sivavakkiair walked into the forest and was appalled at the sight of the four dead, the very same four youngsters who asked him to go away. "What a great killer is this wealth! These four young men were alive before they saw gold. Now gold has taken away their lives! Are they to be pitied or cursed?" Sivavakkiair said to himself, before he started cutting the bamboo plants.

Another day, Sivavakkiair wanted to put his wife's greed to test. Hence, he planted a stone of easy-to-carry size in the sand and urinated on it. He called his wife and told her to pour water on the stone, good enough to wash the urine.

The lady who always obeyed her husband's words to every syllable did as she was told. To her surprise the stone turned into gold. "Now take it and enjoy all the luxury that gold could bring," he said to his wife. But she refused to touch it and said, "You are my wealth. I am not unaware of the fact that gold is a real killer."

Sivavakkiair was so happy with her words of contentment that he congratulated himself for getting such a wife, as per the wish of his guru, the cobbler Siddha. Blessed is he who gets such a wife.

News of Sivavakkiair's power to convert base metals into gold reached everywhere. People from several walks of life approached him under the pretext of getting his blessings. Once Sivavakkiair understood that they were all the greedy lot, he advised them to throw away their love for gold and meditate upon the divine in everyone, so that each one could shine like gold.

Yet several crooked minded were at his heels to learn alchemy. Sivavakkiair quietly laughed.

MOUNTAIN PATH

It is true that every Siddha worth his name is an expert in the art of alchemy. But alchemy is possible only to those who have no desire for gold. The experiences such Siddhas have undergone are encrypted in their songs.

The *samadhi* of Sivavakkiaar is to be found at the Masilamaneeswarar temple in Thiruvaduthurai (near Kumbakonam). On every full moon day special *pujas* are performed at his final resting place. ▲

(To be continued)

All the translations from the poems of the Siddhas quoted in this essay are free renderings done by the author.

Grateful acknowledgements are made to the following books in writing this essay:

1. Gaanamanjari Sampath Kumar: *Sivamayam Kanda Siddhargal*. Pub: Sri Indu publications, Chennai, 2009.
2. Era. Thamizhpriyan: *Sitham Thelivikkum Siddhar Sivavakkiaar paadalgal*. Pub: Narmada Pathipagam, Chennai, 2014.
3. Dr. K.Narayanan: *Siddhar Sivavakkiaar*. Pub: Maari Pathipakkam, Puducherry, 2003.
4. Era.Elankumaran: *Sivavakkiaar*, Pub. Kazhaga Veliyeedu, Chennai, 2002.

MOUNTAIN PATH

Statement about ownership and other particulars about Mountain Path (according to Form IV, Rule 8, Circular of the Registrar of Newspapers for India).

1. Place of Publication – Tiruvannamalai; 2. Periodicity of its Publication – Quarterly; 3. Printer's Name – Sri. N. Subramaniam; Nationality - Indian; Address – Sudarsan Graphics Private Ltd., 4/641, 12th Link Street, 3rd Cross Road, Nehru Nagar, Kottivakkam (OMR), Chennai 600 041; 4. Publisher's Name – Sri. Venkat S. Ramanan; Nationality - Indian; Address – Sri Ramanasramam, Sri Ramanasramam PO., Tiruvannamalai 606 603; 5. Editor's Name – Sri. Venkat S. Ramanan; Nationality – Indian; Address – Sri Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai; 6. Names and addresses of individuals who own the newspaper and partners or shareholders holding more than 1% of the total capital – SRI RAMANASRAMAM, Tiruvannamalai.

I, Venkat S. Ramanan, hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief. 31/03/2022

Mistaking the Unreal to be Real

Part Three

M. GIRIDHAR

In the first article of this series, we examined what is Advaita Vedanta and why we should study it. In the second article, we learned that the *jāgrat* (world) is classified as *mithyā*, which is neither real nor unreal. As defined in *Panchadasi*¹, *mithyā* is merely the appearance of an object that is non-existent, just as an elephant seen in a dream. It is neither *sat* (सत्) nor *asat* (असत्) but *Anirvacanīya* (अनिर्वचनीय) i.e., indescribable.

The illusory appearance is a product of ignorance (*avidyā*) about the substratum and the error is caused due to *maya* which is also indescribable. The root of *avidyā* lies in *adhyāsi*², which consists of mistaking and superimposing the unreal on the real. This line of argument is called *Anirvacanīya-khyātivāda*, one of the five schools of Indian theories of perceptual error.³

¹ *Panchadasi* 2.70. yat asat bhāsamānam tat mithyā svapna-gajādi-vat.

² *Adhyasa Bhasya* is the masterly introduction of Adi Shankara to the *Brahma sutra bhashya*: <https://www.wisdomlib.org/hinduism/book/brama-sutras/d/doc62758.html>

³ *Khyātivāda*-s are the arguments for perceptual error used in Hinduism and Buddhist philosophies. *Khyātivāda* claims that wrong perception is not simply the human failure to perceive correctly but depends upon the cognising activity of the mind.

The *Thirukkural*⁴ also states that is the reason for births:

பொருளல்ல வற்றைப் பொருளென்று உணரும்

மருளானாம் மாணாப் பிறப்பு.

Adhyāsa, according to Ādi Śāṅkara, is not an intellectual construct (*kalpanā viśaya*) but a matter of experience (*anubhava*). For instance, we measure the duration of the day with reference to sunrise and reckon our existence in terms of years. This duration, however, does not exist from the viewpoint of the sun. Though both these positions are real in their own sphere but one is a *relative reality* while the other is the *Absolute reality*. Unfortunately, due to ignorance, we confuse the relative reality with the Absolute reality and accept the relative as the Real.

Adhyāsa has two components. That which is superimposed is termed *adhīnam* (अधिनाम्) while the substratum is called *adhiṣṭhāna* (अधिष्ठान). For example, the snake is the former while the rope is the latter. In this case, *jagat* i.e., the world is the *adhīnam* while Brahman is the *adhiṣṭhāna*. The latter is undeluded and unaffected by the illusory nature of the former. The *adhiṣṭhāna* remains non-dual although the *adhīnam* is in duality. The independence of the *adhiṣṭhāna* is not traded off by the relationship. The *adhīnam* may be inferred to be different each time but the *adhiṣṭhāna* always remains the same. In the above example, one may see a venomous snake or a non-venomous snake or a two-hooded snake depending on the memory of the person who sees it but the rope is unaffected by all these illusory visions.

It is only due to *avidyā* that the individual fails to see the nexus between the *jāgrat* and Brahman. Take the case of a pond that is clear and undisturbed. When the water is clear, it reflects the sun clearly and one can also see the bottom of the pond. However, when a stone is thrown in the pond, the ripples in the water make it look as if the sun is trembling and moving while the bottom of the pond is obscured. Even so, as a thought occurs, the person becomes the subject and recognises the thought (object) resulting in a subject-object relationship. The sun does not undergo any modification and is unaffected by the ripples though the reflection may appear disturbed. The water in the pond is

⁴ *Thirukkural*, 351. Inglorious births are produced by the confusion (of the mind) that considers those things to be real which are not real [i.e., attributes reality to the unreal].

the transactional world while the bottom of the pond (and the sun) is the transcendental reality. The disturbance created by the ripples is *avidyā*.

The Self in the *vyavahārika* context is *śarīrika* (embodied self) as it encounters the world. However, the Self in reality is not *saririka*; it is absolute, *nitya* (eternal), *nirguna* (without form), *asaririka* (without embodiment), *ananta* (infinite) and *ānanda* (bliss). The infinite Self, perceived as the limited self (*jīva*) is *adhyāsa* and the purpose of Advaita is to remove this *adhyāsa*. Once removed, Brahman will shine of its own accord, for it is the only reality.

Bhagavan explains⁵:

The Realisation is now obscured by the present world-idea. The world is now seen outside you and the idea associated with it obscures your real nature. All that is needed is to overcome this ignorance and then the Self stands revealed. No special effort is necessary to realise the Self. All efforts are for eliminating the present obscuration [concealment] of the Truth.

Ādi Śaṅkara defines *adhyāsa* as *smritirūpah paratra pūrvadrishta avabhāsaḥ* i.e., it is like memory wherein the appearance is of some thing seen previously. These are two components of an error. One is the erroneous cognition that occurs in the mind, which is called *jñāna-adhyāsa*. The second component is the object of error that exists outside of the mind called *artha-adhyāsa*. In *anirvacanīya-khyāti*, a snake is not merely imagined in the mind but the *avidyā* about the rope outside manifests as a snake on the rope. This can only occur to a person who has seen a snake before and recalls from memory about the venomous nature of the snake. This is why a person runs away from the rope when he sees a snake on it.

Similarly, this is why the negation of the error occurs in the form of ‘it is a rope, not a snake’. This *adhyāsa* does not necessarily occur due to *pramāṇa dosa* (defect in the means of knowledge). For example, the mistake of a snake in a rope can occur due to poor dimmed light or bad eyesight. However, *adhyāsa* occurs even in cases where a person mistakes the sky to be blue or a mirage to have water due to the inherent properties of light that deceive the senses.

Thus it is held that what is seen in the illusion, or imagined to exist, is not merely the attributes of the object, but the object itself.

⁵ Munagala S. Venkataramiah, *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, Talk§ 490.

For example, in the case of a mirage, it is held that water is not just cognised but it is seen to exist there. The reason for this conclusion is that, when there is cognition of water, the object (water) must be considered to exist there, because there can be no cognition without an object. Of course, subsequently, it is found that there is no water, but as long as the delusion lasts, water is considered to be present. It should be pointed out that unless the person believed that water was actually there, he would not make an effort to grasp it.

In the same way, we believe that the world actually exists and is real until the dawn of Self-knowledge. Thus the theory of *artha adhyāsa* is intended to explain why we not only see the world, but accept it as real. This is illustrated by a story.

A man was walking home along a polluted and smelly river. He saw a shimmering sparkle in the river and when he looked closely, he saw a diamond necklace. To reach that necklace in the river, he put his hands into that filthy river and tried to grab that necklace but could not catch it. Being frustrated, he walked into the river and his trousers were sullied. Surprisingly, he still could not get the necklace. Frustrated at these failed attempts, he thought to give up and walked away feeling unhappy about it. But as he saw the necklace again, he was once again overcome by desire and decided to get it by any means. So he decided to get completely into the river even though it was a very disgusting thing to do. He searched everywhere for the necklace but still failed. He came out of the river even more forlorn and depressed.

A saint, who was passing by, saw him and inquired about the matter. While he was unwilling to share the information, he also had a conviction that the saint will not steal the necklace from him. Therefore, he told him about the problem that while he sees the necklace in the river, he is unable to retrieve it. The saint, smilingly, told him to look upward towards the branches of the tree that was overhanging the river. The man looked up and was surprised to see that the necklace was dangling on the branch of the tree. For the whole time, he had been trying to catch a mere reflection of the real necklace.

Similarly, we try to grasp the reflection thinking it is real because we actually think that the pleasure can be derived by acquiring the object. However, the *ananda* one gets from worldly objects is only *pratibhāsika ananda*. The Brahman's *ananda* is reflected on the

world and appears as if it is the real *ananda*. That is the reason why beings get attracted by this *prātibhāsika ananda* and desire it. This *prātibhāsika ānanda* is not permanent, *ādyantavantaḥ* — it has a beginning and an end. Thus it is said,

ये हि संस्पर्शजा भोगा दुःखयोनय एव ते ।
आद्यन्तवन्तः कौन्तेय न तेषु रमते बुधः ॥⁶

The meaning of this verse is that “Though the pleasures arising from the contact of sense objects appear to be pleasurable, they invariably result in misery. O son of Kuntī, such pleasures have a beginning and an end, and so the wise man does not delight in them.”

A person who wishes to enjoy the Real *ānanda* should develop *vairāgya*, dispassion towards the enjoyment of the world. Unless *vairāgya* on the *prātibhāsika ānanda* gets fully developed, the Real *ānanda* cannot be enjoyed even though it is always present. One should get out of this illusion completely to enjoy the Real *ānanda*, which is Eternal as it does not have either a beginning or an end.

We think of destruction as the future non-existence of a previously existent thing. However, no error ever has any real existence and the destruction of an error cannot be the future non-existence of a previously existent error. When a person knows the rope, his understanding is not that the snake *no longer* exists, but it never existed in the first place. The existence of the snake was always due to the existence of the rope. Therefore the destruction of the snake is only the *understanding* of the *eternal non-existence* of the snake. In the same way, the existence that a *jīva* currently attributes to the *jāgrat* is really the existence of Brahman. He mistakes the existence of Brahman as the existence of *jāgrat*. Therefore, when the *adhyāsa* of *jāgrat* is destroyed, that which has existed will continue to exist, and that which never existed will remain non-existent.

Adhyāsa can also be of two types: One is to impute wrongly and seeing as existing what is not there, for example, the snake on a rope and water in a mirage etc. There is also a negative superimposition wherein one takes it as not there what is already there, such as the missing necklace, as illustrated by Bhagavan.⁷

⁶ *Bhagavad Gita* 5.22. ye hi sansparśha-jā bhogā duḥkha-yonaya eva te
ādyantavantaḥ kaunteya na teṣhu ramate budhaḥ

⁷ Munagala S. Venkataramiah, *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, Talkṣ 490.

MOUNTAIN PATH

A lady is wearing a necklace round her neck. She forgets it, imagines it to be lost and impulsively looks for it here, there and everywhere. Not finding it, she asks her friends if they have found it anywhere, until one kind friend points to her neck and tells her to feel the necklace round the neck. The seeker does so and feels happy that the necklace is found. Again, when she meets her other friends, they ask her if her lost necklace was found. She says 'yes' to them, as if it were lost and later recovered. Her happiness on re-discovering it round her neck is the same as if some lost property was recovered. In fact she never lost it nor recovered it. And yet she was once miserable and now she is happy.

So also with the realisation of the Self. The Self is always realised. The Realisation is now obscured. When the veil is removed the person feels happy at rediscovering the ever-realised Self. The ever-present Realisation appears to be a new Realisation. Now, what should one do to overcome the present ignorance. Be eager to have the true knowledge. As this eagerness grows, the wrong knowledge diminishes in strength until it finally disappears.

Adhyāsa is thus the *apparent* transformation of Brahman into the objects of the world and Self into 'I am the body' consciousness. *Jnana* removes false attribution and allows the real to be seen as it really is. Once the false appearances are removed, no special effort is required as the Self shines by itself. Bhagavan blames superimposition for the prevalent mistaken notion that the Self is bound, and thus in need of being liberated, like the woman who needs to find her lost necklace though it was never lost.

In the rope-snake analogy, when a light is turned on, it is not the fear of seeing the snake that goes away (in fact, the fear will linger for some time due to the body chemicals in force) but there is the realisation that there never was a snake and thus the snake is *dissolved*. Similarly, when *avidyā* is destroyed, the problems in the world are not destroyed but the world is no longer seen as just a world of duality. The purpose of *advaita* is not to solve the problem but to show that the problem did not exist at all. This is illustrated by a famous story titled, 'The Princess of Kashi'⁸.

⁸ Adapted from the talk: Vedanta in five parables, by Swami Sarvapriyananda, <https://youtu.be/BMRbh3M4AGw>

In the great city of Kashi (Varanasi), the king organised a play called the princess of Kashi. The queen came up with the idea of dressing up her five year old son (the prince) as a young girl so that he can play the role of the princess. The queen's maids dressed him so nicely that the prince looked like a cute beautiful girl. Everyone was impressed with the child and the court painter made a portrait of the child and dated it. This portrait was stored in the basement. Fifteen years passed, the prince had now become a handsome youth, trained in all skills and fit to become a king. One day while exploring the basement of the palace, he accidentally discovered that painting. He was so mesmerised, hypnotised and enthralled by the beautiful princess in that painting that he wanted to get married to her.

He expressed this wish to the minister and took the minister down to the basement and showed him the well-kept and preserved painting, inscribed 'Princess of Kashi'. The moment the minister saw that painting, he instantly realised the problem and then explained the incident behind that painting. He told the prince was indeed the 'Princess of Kashi' himself. The girl in the picture and he himself are one and the same. The moment the prince heard of the truth, the desire for the princess in his heart disappeared. The desire was not fulfilled in the conventional way of getting married to her but the problem itself was dissolved.

In this story, the prince realised that the duality of him and the princess, was only ignorance and not reality. There are no two different individuals, two different beings. The illusion caused by his not knowing, was because of the darkness of ignorance. Once the ignorance is removed, the *mahavakya* of *tat tvam asi* (तत् त्वम् असि) i.e., Thou art That applies and thus *Atman = Brahman*. The desires within his mind were thus dissolved because he realised that duality is false and there is no such girl apart from him.

Thus, *advaita* does not solve the problem but dissolves the problem as the problem itself no longer exists! We should take refuge at the lotus feet of Arunachala Ramana, who will remove the *adhyāsa*, and leads us from the unreal to the real⁹, and to dissolve all our problems. ▲

⁹ *Brihadaranyaka Upansiad* 1.3.28.



Main entrance of Sri Arunachaleswara Temple

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Wandering Through India

Part Four

THELMA RAPPOLD

[Throughout the text Thelma refers to ‘Mr. Rappold’ as ‘Sati’. ‘Wally’ is a friend from Seattle.]

1948 Sat Jul 17

Back to Saddle Rock this morning for one of those inspirational meditations that starts the day in the clouds – of Reality.

1948 Sun Jul 18

Hopi-ty-hop from rock to rock. The bare feet soon made their way to Saddle Rock where all is Peace in the pristine stillness of the morning air. How dare one be so cruel as to try to imprison such moments of rapture within the confines of words – they refuse to be captured. Lila is the only one who casts a shadow over that hour of freedom.

1948 Mon Jul 19

The morning hours spent on Saddle Rock are becoming like a hypnotic drug which makes one oblivious of Time and of the unreal world about. Fortunately the weather cleared so that Sati and I could make a pilgrimage around the Hill tonight. Not a word was spoken until we

MOUNTAIN PATH

were well past the half-way mark. We paused by the side of the road beneath a giant tree where some kind soul had built an unquenchable fire. In the coolness of the evening, the warmth of the fire had its glowing effect. A frightened panther made lightning tracks across the path – perhaps the fire kept him from coming too near.

1948 Tue Jul 20

Went to the bazaar at sunrise; an ideal time to get a good selection of vegetables. Stopped at the Ramakrishna Lunch Home for breakfast. The feet were dragging by the time we reached home but the spirits were soaring high on top of Arunachala. Hurried to the Ashram immediately and inasmuch as this was Gurupuja day everyone had an invitation to eat lunch with Bhagavan – wonderful.

1948 Wed Jul 21

This was the day for the Abode to serve an ‘All American’ lunch from the goodies sent by my darling and thoughtful sister Marge. Sati arrived first with yards and yards of snow-white jasmine. After decorating the Abode, Mrs. Osborne and I wore some in our hair and we even made a jasmine corsage for each of the banana-leaf plates. Sati brought a shining new taper of sweets for the occasion. The main dish of tuna and corn was a huge success. Mrs. Osborne brought REAL butter from Madras for the Ry-Krisp. Everyone ate till the tummies bulged. Food from home is always so filling.

The night was balmy, the moon was beautiful and the air was full of strange whims that in turn caused the lights to flicker. Sati lingered until 10:30 o’clock trying to clarify some very pertinent points in connection with our individual sadhanas. Never a day goes by without its major and minor problems. No wonder lifetimes are spent in but a fleeting moment with Bhagavan.

1948 Thu Jul 22

Saddle Rock was waiting impatiently for the two barefoot aspirants to come for the solution of their mounting problems. Be alert! at all times inwardly and outwardly. Only by the Grace of the guru was it possible for two such understanding and cooperative souls to meet and work out their individual problems together, different though they may be. Because today’s problem needed extra attention we put Lila off until 8:15.

1948 Sun Jul 25

Back to Saddle Rock after a long absence – a glorious feeling to have the soft winds caress the face, especially after having to sleep indoors all night.

1948 Mon Jul 26

This must have been a jinx day. The cracked wheat turned out to be flour, not needed and not wanted. The food left in the cooker burned to a crisp, the fire went out. Mrs. Osborne came to throw a little confusion to the already muddled situation and ‘Mud Face’ stopped production to tell of his troubles, and the back kept tugging at the waist line all day – all supposedly the result of Saturn exerting his influence. Personally however, I think only the ‘Who-Am-I-er’ has the power to chase these little unwanted perturbances into oblivion.

1948 Sat Jul 31

The going back to Saddle Rock was like a homecoming. The air is SO pure one needs no effort to meditate, even the horizons recede far, far into the distance.

Sati was bitten on the big toe by a scorpion tonight. He ate no dinner and he felt the best thing was complete relaxation.

1948 Sun Aug 01

Had a wonderful meditation during the electrical storm this afternoon. All were sitting quietly at the feet of Bhagavan listening to the raging wind and the roaring thunder ... Flash ... a bolt of lightning struck within three feet of a woman’s side. Not a soul moved. Only by the Grace of Bhagavan could such calm reign in the midst of such fury. A very interesting phenomenon occurs whenever it rains. Many of the heavy downpours come in the late afternoons, but invariably at 7:30 when the men are scheduled to leave the Hall – the rain stops – perhaps only for a few minutes but long enough for the men to get home. Just a coincidence some will say – perhaps!

1948 Mon Aug 02

Evening brought with it an oft interrupted meditation. Between the mosquitos and the mice there was very little peace. As time went on the binding power of attachment to personalities and individual expressions brought itself into the glaring foreground and necessitated

MOUNTAIN PATH

the assertion of much will power and courage and determination to do something about not imposing any more karma upon the already heavily burdened souls which are trying so desperately to slough off the debris of what has already gone before. Fortunately for those concerned the skies cleared and the stars once more came out in full regalia.

1948 Tue Aug 03

No dinner tonight. Sati brought Paul Brunton's letter for perusal. Rode the crest of the wave all day as though little 'Rays' of sunshine held back momentarily the misty veil of maya so that the Changeless One could be seen in all its buoyant splendor. The climax to such a lovely day was to retire early beneath the star-sapphired canopy of heaven.

1948 Wed Aug 04

[This entry, which includes excerpts from letters, covers events up to fall 1949.]

Aspiration Abode has had a persistent visitor, 'nosey' the mouse. He got so bold he would appear anytime of the day or night regardless of what I was doing. On several occasions I found myself holding the door for him while he non-chalantly walked out. I couldn't help laughing to myself as the thought came to me, so this is why you came to India, to become a doorman to a mouse, or shall I say a rat?

The 5:00 A.M. meditations have been called off for a few days because Bhagavan hasn't been looking too well recently. The management felt he should get more rest. That happened during my leave and now instead of getting up at 4:15 every morning maybe I'll sleep an extra half hour. However there has been a suggestion or two that some of us go up on the Hill at the usual hour of 5:00 for our meditation. Recently every morning from 6:00 to 7:30 after the hour in the hall I have been going on the Hill. Those early morning hours are so full of inspiration and just BEING.

Yesterday Mr. Rappold and I went on a hiking excursion up the Hill to see some of the Yogis living in caves. One woman, Lakshmi Mahal has lived in a cave for 12 years and hasn't spoken for 6 years. I was positively fascinated by her cave. She had considerable work done on it. She combined the natural cave with a little masonry and has made a really charming place. Everything has been painted white

inside and is spotless and is ever so peaceful. It is built on the side of the mountain in full view of the entire city below. It is in such a beautiful setting I fell in love with it. Most of the caves are so low one can hardly stand up in them, but not hers. Perhaps when I find my dream cave I shall pattern it after Lakshmi Mahal's.

* * *

There is a big celebration going on and the place is teeming with people. In the hall we get trampled on like flies most of the time. For the past 48 hours there has been a constant parade around the Hill at all hours of the day and night. At 4:00 o' clock in the morning the place is already humming with excitement, the beating of drums, ringing of bells and the jingle jangle of anklet clad bare feet on pilgrimage around the Hill of the Holy Beacon.

All this in the midst of an oriental jungle setting is something that must be witnessed to appreciate, especially the color, mystery and beauty. Most of the women wear several toe rings on each foot, several anklets on each ankle, nose studs as well as nose rings. Sometimes as many as 6 or 8 rings on each ear. The gold ear rings are so heavy the lobe of the ear hangs down so as to resemble an old fashioned hoop. With their bright colored sarees and gaily colored flowers in their hair they are really a picture.

Bhagavan's birthday is on the 18th, and that promises to be another stampede affair to which all are invited. One break for us is that we don't have to cook that day.

* * *

A few days before Christmas the Maharaja of one of the Northern states came to the Ashram. He invited us all for afternoon tea. He brought with him 25 or 30 servants. Aside from stumbling over one another I can't imagine what they could do for one fat man. All Europeans and Americans were invited to the Morvi Guest House which is reserved exclusively for Royalty. We had a delightful time of course.

While we were all having a festive time at the Darba, Shri Amranala, Maharaja and ruler of Amarnagar State of Katheatar got the exciting idea that we should all have Christmas dinner together. Nobody refused and so each and everyone of us put on our best bib and

MOUNTAIN PATH

tucker and went to the big dinner. There was a continual procession of servants passing before us to make sure we didn't run short of food. We had a large variety of Indian dishes. Some of them were hot enough to start a forest fire and others were quite delicious.

Shortly after the first of the year another Maharani came to the Ashram and invited us to dinner. We always welcome such invitations in that we don't have to cook on those days. The elegant saris worn at such occasions are breath taking, some of them are several hundreds of years old and are worth fortunes.

* * *

The Mahakumbhabeshukum celebration from the 14th to the 17th of March was really a big affair. Thousands of people came from all parts of India. Special trains were dispatched from various parts of the country. The crowd is gradually dwindling and believe me all the regular ashramites are very happy about it. Now we should be able to get our breath once again. During that time we couldn't sit in the hall without being sat on, stepped on and mauled from every angle. We were all invited to eat our meals at the Ashram during that time, but always at mealtime there was such a stampede that I decided it was far better to spend a little time in the morning preparing food for the day in order to be able to eat in peace.

About two months ago one of the top editors of Life Magazine a Mr. Sargeant was here one afternoon. That particular afternoon Wally and I had gone to Major Chadwick's to have Ramon, his servant, read our palms. While there Harin, the poet called me out to meet Mr. Sargeant. We talked for a long time about various topics of interest and then he went away.

During the big celebration who should appear on the scene but Mr. Elisofon, Life Magazine's No. 1 photographer to "shoot" the place, and so unless something unforeseen happens Sri Ramanashram should make Life Magazine sometime during the latter part of May.

Mr. Elisofon stayed in the same room Wally had when she first arrived which meant we were close neighbors. Madan Gopal, his host had me over on occasions to help entertain the American. He was here for four days and when he left he gave me a few tins of miscellaneous articles from the good old U.S.A. What a treat.

* * *



Adi Annamalai Village



Bazaar, Tiruvannamalai

MOUNTAIN PATH

In February Bhagavan had a growth removed from his left elbow and within a month it had grown again to the size of an egg. The Doctors insisted it had to be cut away again. Specialists were brought from Madras to do the job. The second wound wouldn't heal. He kept losing about 4 cups of blood every day and became so weak he could hardly walk.

The Doctors held a conference and decided they should apply radium externally 8 hours each day for a period of 132 hours in order to stop the bleeding and arrest further growth. In spite of all they did the wound wouldn't heal as it should.

Seven Doctors got together and the majority said the arm should be amputated. The others said there should be a third operation. Bhagavan put his foot down and refused to have anything more done, saying there was nothing the matter with him. It was supposed to be Sarcoma which is a form of cancer.

Many of the devotees were weeping and wailing and pleading with Bhagavan not to give up his body. The Doctors also said they had done all they possibly could and now it was time for him to heal himself – for their sakes. Strangely enough since the first of May he had been on a steady upgrade, since all the treatments have been discontinued.

* * *

A few nights ago Wally and I went up on the Hill to spend the night on some of the mammoth rocks. The original plan was to meditate all night rather than sleep. However, that seemed to be a wee bit too much for us for the first time. The moon was so beautiful, there was a lovely breeze and it was almost a pity to close the eyes.

We told Bhagavan what we planned to do as it is considered rather risky business normally on account of the many snakes and wild animals such as cheetas, panthers and scorpions. With Bhagavan's grace all went well and nothing more than the big ants bothered us. We hated to come the next morning, but all good things must come to an end.

Received a box of goodies from the Mahasiddha among which was a large tin of Butter Mints. The Custom men opened the tin and helped themselves to a very generous portion of the mints. They probably figured they had earned them for all their efforts.

In the package he had also sent some little trinkets, probably from the dime store for Shakur, Mrs. Syed's little servant boy, who does my

shopping. One of the things in the package was a Police whistle, another was a blue plastic harmonica, a yo-yo, a razor, and some lollypops.

Shakur was on hand when the package was in the process of being opened. I have never seen anyone so excited when he saw the things, never dreaming of course that most of them were for him. He pleaded with me for the things. I let him wonder for a while and then gave them to him. I actually thought he was going to cry, he was so thrilled. Mrs. Syed said nobody had ever given such nice things to him before and probably none of them cost more than 10 or 15 cents at the most. He keeps them on his person most of the time. It isn't difficult to tell where he is now, because whenever he has one hand free he is either blowing the whistle or playing the harmonica. I have seen him on several occasions come out of the kitchen with a pot in one hand and the harmonica in the other.

I couldn't help thinking how much more children here appreciate small things than our children do at home. Our children get and see so much, they take most of them for granted. It is too bad the Mahasiddha couldn't be here to give the things to Shakur in person and to see how much fun he gets out of them.

* * *

At the moment I am considering changing the name of 'Aspiration Abode' to 'Aspiration Zoo'. As mentioned before 'Aspiration Abode' is so tiny another person couldn't possibly stay with me. However, a tailless lizard and his family of little little lizards and all their relatives have moved in with me. Papa lizard must have been minding somebody else's business because he got his tail bitten off. I notice however he is starting to grow another. In addition to the lizard family I have Hoppy the frog, Mickey the mouse, Noisy the cricket, Skinny the silverfish and a dozen and one other varieties of creatures whose names I don't know living with me. I almost forgot to name the flying-roach who loves to eat and make his nest in any kind of paper. So far I haven't found anything that will affect the roaches. They seem to grow fat on D.D.T. This morning I even found a two-foot snake just outside the door. Anyone interested in moving into my little Zoo with me?

* * *

Mrs. Osborne has been so nice to me during my illness and so I decided to have her over to Tea. She was head over heels in work

trying to get away to Madras and so she said Frania, her 7 year old daughter could take her place. I thought it would be fun to have an all 'Frisco' Tea which Marge had sent from San Francisco. We had popcorn, mixed nuts, milk, a few graham crackers, Cheese Tid-bits and part of a Hershey Bar.

The popcorn struck her fancy especially after I told her how as children we used to try to figure out what each kernel looked like. She also liked the walnuts especially well, personally I think it was that the shells could be used as tiny boats. After she had been here several hours I tried to get her to go home, but she said she didn't want to go. The train was scheduled to leave at 8:00 o'clock and she left here at 7:00 - but only after her mother had sent a servant to get her.

1950 Sat Apr 15

[Here, for some reason, Thelma's text is not chronological.]

MAHARISHI'S SAMADHI

Puja was offered to Bhagavan Ramana after Abhishekam on Saturday morning and again in the evening April 15, 1950 before the body was placed in samadhi.

Amidst moving scenes and in the presence of a vast concourse of weeping men and women the body of Sri Ramana Maharshi was placed in Maha Samadhi a little before seven in the evening.

As the flower decked body was detached from the pedestal on which it was placed in a sitting posture and lowered into the stone vault, devout cries of "Hara Hara", rent the air.

The lowering of the Maharshi's remains evoked so much spiritual emotion that many of the bhaktas threw in whatever valuable things they had on their person. Mr. N. Annamalai Pillai M.L.A. threw the gold buttons he was wearing on his shirt, and a number of women flung their gold rings, while others showered coins. From all directions, flowers were showered over the departed sage.

On April 14, 1950 Bhagavan left his body. Simultaneously a large meteor moved majestically and slowly across the sky from South to North and fell at the foot of Arunachala where Bhagavan had spent the last 55 years of his life. Even though his Light has now gone from this place, still his presence permeates every atom here and the air is electric with his scintillating presence.

By 9:30 that night his body was removed from the little room where he parted and was taken to the big meditation hall in the new Temple. There it was placed in a sitting position with folded hands and crossed legs as he had sat so often before. His body was garlanded with flowers, sandalwood paste, holy ashes, essences of various scents etc.

When his passing was announced the place was in a state of confusion, but soon after he was removed to the big hall and we gathered sitting at his feet as before, a great peace and calm spread over us like a warm blanket on a wintry night. All the sniffing, sobbing, weeping and wailing of men, women and children stopped instantly as if by magic. It was nothing short of miraculous in that some had even fainted and passed out in grief. Incense was burned the whole night through along with the chanting of the Vedas and the hymns Bhagavan had written many years ago to Arunachala.

News of his passing spread like wild fire over the town and neighboring villages. A special Police force was called in from Vellore (the Headquarters of the District) to manage the large crowd which had come to pay their last respects to Bhagavan. The townspeople were allowed to go through single file and often the gate had to be locked to let the crowds disperse before letting more in.

We who had been with Bhagavan for a long time were allowed to remain all night. I went home about 5:00 A.M. to get a bite of food and a bath before returning. It was a never to be forgotten experience - a privilege of many many life times, to watch the passing of so great a soul. In India Bhagavan is considered even greater than Christ - and Who Am I to say one way or the other. I can say, however, that those present felt very tangibly and forcefully the pouring out of his Grace, even more so than when he was still in his body. It is something that must be experienced - it cannot be expressed.

Darrel Berrigan of the *Saturday Evening Post* who had just recently arrived from China with Hi Chu his Chinese interpreter as well as Henri Cartier Bresson (a French photographer) with his Indonesian wife were all here at the time. It was a big break for them. Berrigan said the Post would be running a story, although it wouldn't appear for at least six weeks to six months. I have alerted the folks at home to be on the lookout for the article.

People have been leaving rather fast since Bhagavan's passing and I too shall be leaving although at the moment I can't say when. It seems a pity to leave while the air is so potently charged with Bhagavan's presence. Meditation comes so easy now that it would be a shame to break the spell so soon. Naturally I am eager to know what the future holds, but patience and Inner Silence is the keynote for the present.

[Here ends Thelma's personal reminiscences of Tiruvannamalai. The remainder of her book involves further travel in India and Mr. Sam Rappold's memories of Bhagavan.] ▲

Winds of Eternity

Cit Ananda

The cracks of time open inside your depths,
I feel you Arunachala, enduring,
dancing Shiva moving in slow motion
as an illuminated mountain of Grace
embracing the wild winds and humming trees.

And so, I open, receive your plea,
spread my cells and wings
and arrive inside your gaps,
merging into wholeness with the cool sacred air
resting as it has for eternity
in the depths of Now.

This feeling, it anchors something,
something words cannot preach,
something lips cannot sing,
something eyes most certainly cannot see.

And yet, I hear you, and feel you,
and find this otherworldly music arising in me
chanting harmony, effortlessly delighting
in the magic of this sacred essence.

In your gaps, I feel the winds of eternity
blowing the Heart open.

MAHA BHAKTA VIJAYAM

The Blessed Life of Sant Jayadeva

NABAJI SIDDHA

Invocation

O Supreme Lord! God of all gods, residing in Sri Vaikunta!
Whom all gods supplicate with sweet hymns,
O Sri Hari! O precious Jewel! O Madhava!
Glory of all glories, my Lord!
O Damodara, clad in yellow-silk garment,
Rarest of the rare treasures, O Achyuta!
I take refuge in Thee!

Hymn to Sant Jayadeva

O Jayadeva Swami! O supreme Teacher!
Bestowing your benign grace on the vile dacoits,
You made them your own;
You restored life to the noble and unparalleled Padmavathy,
Who gave up her life in anguish of parting from you!
I surrender myself at your holy feet;
Please confer on me your grace,
And grant me success in my endeavour,
To narrate the sublime story of your life in its full glory!

Chapter One

The Birth of Jayadeva

Addressing the ripe souls like Uddhava, the great Sant Nabhaji said, “O mahayogis! You are great adepts in the art and science of Yoga!

“In your *mooladhara chakra* resides Ganesha clad in white, bestowing auspiciousness on His devotees, destroying all obstacles instantly, thus accomplishing their work without loss of time;

“In your *swadhishtana chakra* resides Brahma, whose tongue is adorned by the goddess of learning who abides verily as Truth in liberated ones who are scarce in the three worlds;

“In your *manipooraka chakra* resides Achyuta, the consort of Lakshmi who remains as auspiciousness in the hearts of those who abide within, setting to naught all outgoing tendencies and individuality;

“In your *anahata chakra* resides Sankara, sharing the left side of his body with goddess Annapoorani who follows like a shadow, with rice and milk in her hands, those who are fixed firmly in righteous ways and have penetrated into the mysteries of existence, burnt down all their Karmas and remain self-forgetful, revelling in the waves of Brahmic bliss;

“In your *vishuddhi chakra* resides Maheswara, who abstains from deluding those who are beyond the three types of suffering and ever remain immersed in the ecstasy of Self;

“In your *ajna chakra* resides Sadasiva, the eternal Truth, who purifies the minds of devotees engaged in the service and worship of exalted beings who have transcended all the four states of waking, sleep, dream and witness state and abide in the superconscious state, oblivious to day and night and to desire and distraction, i.e. *sankalpa* and *vikalpa*.

“I am indeed very pleased, O noble souls, to bring to you the all-purifying waters of the amazing life of Jayadeva Swami which is intertwined with the glories of Lord Jagannath who has taken up His abode in Puri.”

Sant Nabhaji, who had unified the two gems of duality into a single gem of the Undivided One, waking into the thousand-petalled lotus of Brahmarandhra, the apex mystical centre in the spiritual ascent and chasing away death, transcending Time, radiating forth Light, before which the brilliance of millions of suns pale, immersed in the bliss of direct experience of Self, said in mellowed tones, “O righteous ones, favouring ever the company of Truth! What better way of starting the story than dwelling on the holy city of Jagannath Puri, the pride of the universe?”

“The great temple-city is adorned with flags emblazoned with the beautiful image of Hanuman, the Poorna-jnani who cast away the pearls presented to him by Lord Rama himself, for they contained not the jnana-prema rasa; and flags decorated with the image of divine Garuda who caused anguish to the snakes with the breeze emanating from his fluttering wings. Here, the towers and spires – built by great kings who put to shame even Yudhishtira in their dispensation of justice – stand proud and tall, reaching out, as it were, to kiss the sky; long trails of smoke emanating from yajna-kunds tended by great rishis, who have conquered all desires and thus astonish even the sages of Satyaloka by their dispassion, overtake the tall towers; and sacrificial fires, which are pleasing to the demi-gods, remain always kindled in the sacred town.

“The abode of the Lord Jagannath is full of feeding houses and alms centres, and engaging in such righteous actions invites the envy of even the lord of dharma; it is beautified by pleasant groves, exquisite flower gardens, which are the fond abode of bliss-filled sages who walk the righteous path unswervingly; and adorned by huge parks with meandering streams, beautifully laid-out gardens, pavilions with well-decorated stages on which celestial damsels vie to perform. The magnificent city is always filled with the melodious sounds of drum-beats, wind-instruments and stringed instruments, like the veena, delighting the hearts of people. It is no wonder that the Lord has become enamoured of this city of Puri and has lost Himself entirely in its grandeur.”

The celestials, beset with fear and anxiety, implore Him, “O Lord, You have taken a long residence here, forsaking even Your habitual state of Yoganidra! What is so unique about this city that has made

You abjure even the Milky Ocean? Please hasten back to Your realm and resume Your reclining posture on the Sesha!”

“Near such a holy city is situated the village of Kindubilvam, where the great devotees sing sweet hymns pleading with Lord Hari never to leave Jagannath-Puri which is resounding always with the praises of the Lord; and where people belonging to the four castes sit together without caste restrictions and partake of food. Here, lived a brahmin by name Narayana Sastri who was free from attachment, sense-indulgence and sense of honor and dishonour. He was of subtle intellect and erudite in scriptures. He was aware of the transitory nature of worldly existence and was filled with devotion. He had entirely annihilated his individuality and effaced his mind totally. Day and night, he was immersed in great bliss, revelling in the names of Sri Hari, his mind dissolved in the state of absolute Brahman.

“He lived with his worthy consort Kamalabai who was purity–incarnate. She was a pious lady and united with her husband in performing acts of hospitality to sadhus and being charitable to the poor. They were humble before the elders, courting the company of the wise always and earnestly discharging the duties of householders. They lived harmoniously with noble people and the name of God was ever on their lips. He had the scriptures always in hand, uttered only the truth and was established in unflinching equanimity despite challenges and remained unwavering in meditation, having offered his mind and spirit entirely to Lord Jagannath.

“However, his wife Kamalabai was secretly hankering for a son. With the prayer for a child in mind, she was worshipping the Lord with great devotion. One night, the Lord in His resplendent form appeared in the dream of Narayana Sastri and said, “O noble one! I am very pleased with the penance and worship performed by you and your wife. I grant the boon sought by Kamalabai which will uplift you and all your ancestors.”

Waking up from his sleep, the husband enquired of his wife lovingly, “My dear, the Lord came in my dream and said that He had granted your wish. What is it that you had prayed for?”

Worshipping the feet of her husband, she replied with a shy smile, “O Lord, I asked for a son who will redeem us from worldly bondage and immerse us in joy.”

On hearing this, the husband became upset and rebuked his wife and said in a grief-stricken voice, “Alas! However learned a woman is, she ultimately succumbs to worldly tendencies. O ignorant and dull-witted woman! You have proved your limited vision by asking for the pleasures of this world, instead of asking for the immortal state! Though your meditation on the Lord and austerities are praiseworthy, it saddens me that you failed to seek refuge at His feet. Had you been sensible enough to choose the higher life, all the impressions of past life would have left you in one stroke, setting to naught all your Karmas. Can’t you distinguish between transient pleasures and eternal joy? Haven’t you read in the scriptures that the noose of bondage is tightened on people yearning for worldly happiness and eternal joy awaits those who long for the Reality? Your wish is like choosing the goddess of penury over the goddess of prosperity; or like laboriously drilling a huge mountain merely to catch a mouse; or applying the magic collyrium only to locate a trifle like a piece of bone; or like the demons performing long and intense penance only to become mighty demonic forces in the world; or like Kubja seeking sense pleasure from Lord Krishna instead of immortal bliss. All your austerities are futile.”

Thus censuring his wife for her shortsightedness, he became very sorrowful. He sought inner solitude and became absorbed in remembrance of the Lord. He did not speak to his wife for a long while.

Kamalabai became ashamed of her petty tendencies and berated herself, “I was indeed stupid to have succumbed to such desires, believing the words uttered in karma-kanda of the scriptures which reiterate that there is no liberation without progeny. I failed to understand the subtle nuances of dharma. Deluded that I was, I sought a trifle from the Almighty.” She directed her lamentation to the Lord pleading for His grace to uplift them.

Both the husband and wife, foregoing food and water, stayed awake the whole night in great distress. Taking pity on them, the Lord appeared in the form of a brahmin and said, “By My boon of progeny to you, generations of your ancestors will attain deliverance. Further, pleased with your austerity, I grant you, now, the boon of pure devotion to Me. Giving up your fast, engage yourself in your daily routine and live together happily.”

Amazed by the occurrence, the Sastri praised his wife, “O exalted woman, you have uplifted the entire lineage by your worship. What a great fortune has been bestowed on us!”

The couple passed their days praising the Lord and engaging in deeds that were pleasing to Him. In course of time, just as Sri Hari manifested in the womb of Kausalya and Adishesha in that of Sumitra, the great Veda-Vyasa, the son of Parasara Rishi, the central figure in Vedic tradition, whose appearance as Vyasa was the greatest event in sanatana dharma, revered for his supreme knowledge, erudite in scriptures, knower of subtle truths, compiler of Vedas, one of the chiranjeevis toiling for the welfare of jivas, entered the auspicious womb of Kamalabai. Her indescribable good fortune, of the great sage incarnating as her son, is comparable only to the blessedness of the noble life of great beings who see no faults in anyone; or to the austerities of the compassionate ones; or to the auspiciousness of the chaste women; or to the japa performed with loving devotion by the spiritual seekers; or to that of a joint family living in harmony without being goaded by pride and conflict.

The infant, born in the propitious household, shone with divine splendour. The fortunate parents were overwhelmed with joy. They felt that it was like eyesight given to one born blind; or a barren woman blessed with the birth of a son; or an ill-fated person gifted with all auspiciousness; or like a beggar bestowed with a prosperous kingdom. Do you know how they brought up the child? Like the eyelid protecting the eye, cow its calf, a noble woman cherishing her chastity and like the life-force guarding the body, they doted on the precious child. Giving high praises to God and removing the fault-finding tendency from their minds, they engaged in acts of charity and compassion. The child was named ‘Jayadeva’ and the blissful parents invited all the relatives for a feast during the naming ceremony. When the child was five years old, his sacred-thread ceremony was performed by virtuous brahmins to the accompaniment of auspicious musical instruments and recital of scriptural hymns and then the boy was initiated into the study of scriptures.

When Jayadeva attained marriageable age, the parents fixed his marriage with Padmavathy who was excellent in terms of beauty, conduct, learning, kindness, chastity, devotion and every kind of

auspiciousness. All relatives gathered together. The marriage hall was laid with a green canopy of bamboo shoots and decorated beautifully with mango leaves, banana bunches and flowers. The pavilion became the object of envy of everyone. The bride and the groom looked resplendent in beautiful clothes and ornaments. The marriage took place invoking the presence of heavenly gods and in front of the sacrificial fire amidst the chant of Vedas and auspicious sound of musical instruments. The guests showered flowers and rice grains on the couple and blessed them. They were all praise at the wonderful sight of the newly-wed couple.

Jayadeva and Padmavathy lived a very happy life, enjoying the pleasures of a householder's life. They remained so loving towards each other as if they were two bodies united by one heart. No harsh words uttered, no differences of views nurtured or aired, no conflict or disharmony entered in their life. They were in such perfect accord with each other that there was no scope for Maya to lay her finger on them and create any discord. They discharged earnestly all the duties ordained for householders in the scriptures. They treated the elders with great respect and honoured guests with warm hospitality. They were very generous in their giving gifts of gold, raiment and food to brahmins and the needy. They were mature enough to realise the transitoriness of life, value of austerities and the company of the noble and wise.

The parents of the couple became pleased with the way Jayadeva and Padmavathy led their life. With contentment in heart, they blessed the children. They further counselled Jayadeva to adhere to patience and humility, the stepping stones to liberation and for Padmavathy to look upon her husband verily as God. Then they left for the forest to spend the rest of their lives in contemplation and God-remembrance. The young couple resolved to follow their footsteps soon, for their hearts also were dedicated to the Lord. ▲

(To be continued)



Vairagya Catakam

The Hundred Stanzas on Dispassion

Part Six

TAVATTIRU SANTHALINGA ADIGAL
TRANSLATED BY ROBERT BUTLER

Sivaprakasa,
You who in Tillai's city dwell,
King, who over the ancient way
that's free from birth hold sway!
Appear to me once more,
stand mounted on the bull,
and say those three words,
'Do not fear!'
to me who flounder weary
in birth's torment[ing sea]. (22)

Hidden succour,
Raft to cross birth's ancient sea,
Great grace-bestowing Consciousness,
who shower your mercy even

Robert Butler has published, independently and through Sri Ramanasramam, a number of translations and commentaries on works by Sri Ramana, Muruganar and earlier authors of works in the Tamil advaita tradition.

MOUNTAIN PATH

upon such wicked ones as me!
Now hold me in your thoughts,
so that I may unite with Thee,
the inner witness of my heart,
and from the deluded world
of parents, wife and all the rest
henceforth delivered be. (23)

As guru, lingam, band of devotees
mounted on the bull you came.
In your grace you showered me
and placed me on the path
that from birth and death is ever free.
All this most clearly did I see,
so what lack for me can there be?
Yet until love for you wells up
within this heart that flees [your feet]
a lack indeed there must surely be. (24)

Lord, you whose holy name
alone bears the fair distinction
of being the path to birth's extinction!
My mind was lost,
running off and suffering,
grasping at the world's illusion,
rejecting you, our true recourse,
in ever growing base delusion.
So hold it now in your Heart's grasp,
so that it may [now] be slain [at last]. (25)

Lord, in whatever chosen guise
it pleases you to come henceforth,
I crave to perceive your real Self
that dwells in Chidambaram's Hall,
for which my yearning never palls.
So spare a little thought for me,
and dwell within my heart,
so that holy form may revealed be. (26)

As the very Consciousness
of the consciousness
that dwells upon Thee,
you did reveal your Truth to me.
And, as the Vedas' eternal import,
liberation's path to me you taught.
Then, appearing in the guru's form,
your grace you made me crave.
To tell of your compassion,
what words can I say? (27)

Upon investigation, dwelling inwardly,
we find that for the world of *maya*
no innate awareness can there be,
nor does the *jiva* its own awareness
in any degree at all possess,
unless in that *maya*'s grasp it comes to rest.¹
So knowing that it is you, the Lord,
who, taking this defective pair,
the Five Divine Acts perform,
grant that I may suffer no more,
trusting the world that stands before. (28)

Coming in a degree consistent
with my soul's maturity
as guru, lingam and band of devotees,
you granted me the means
by which true knowledge,
arising, might flourish within me.
So may you now to me appear,
granting your sweet grace,
as I, stand, unwavering, before you,

¹ The *jīva*, the ego-mind, arises simultaneously with the world of *māyā* and subsides with it. Both are an illusory appearance within the Self, *Śivam* and therefore its only awareness is that illusory one which it possesses in conjunction with *māyā*. For the nature of the *jīva* see the latter part of note 1 to *Cāttiram*, v. 34, in which Chidambara Swamigal describes the nature of the *jīva*'s relation with *Śivam* and with *māyā*.

praising you with wounded heart
and hailing you as sadguru. (29)

Just as the children of a single mother,
not knowing whence they came,
might see her as other than themselves
and, petulantly, reject her in disdain,
O, how I do myself revile you,
taking as so many different gods
all the many holy forms, in which you,
of all creation unique source,
do through your great grace
yourself adorn. (30)

Nothing that exists is to be scorned.
Illuminate my understanding,
Father, my Lord,
so that I may praise your holy feet
as my mind melts,
seeing that the eight entities,
earth and all the rest²
are nought but your own shining form.
Mask it not with darkness [as before]. (31)

With tears cascading,
palms together facing,
[I stand] in praise of you.
My Father, Lord,
by dark Mal adored,
Rider of the young white bull!
Wielder of the sharp *mazhu*!³

² *Maṅ mudal eṭṭum* – the eight [forms of Lord Śiva], beginning with earth. These are the *aṭṭa mūrṭti*, *Skt. Aṣṭa mūrṭti*, the eight forms of Śiva. Their Tamil names are as follows: *būmi* – earth, *nīr* – water; *tēyu* – fire, *vāyu* – air; *ākāyam* – ether; *iyaṁāṇaṅ* – the sacrificer or *jīva*, *cūriyaṅ* – the sun, *candiraṅ* – the moon.

³ *mazhu* – battle-axe.

Grant me now your grace, I pray,
that wicked as I am, I too
may behold your cosmic dance [this day]. (32)

Holy Kalahasti's Lord,⁴
Poor fool that I was,
drowning in a sea of misery,
I trusted not in your holy feet,
yet shamelessly declared,
'You whose breast
a deadly snake adorns,
O how you gave your love to me,
that I might reach the shore
of incarnation's boundless sea.' (33)

O Lord, who in Peraiyur⁵ reside,
granting to Lady Ambal
a place as your left side!
My mind I sent to you,
with this request,
'Pray, to my mistress grant
the garland that lies
upon thy chest!'
Swiftly did it run
but never reached your side,

⁴ The Pērūr Ādhīṇam literature quotes this verse as evidence that Sāntaliṅga Swāmigaḷ sang this verse in praise of Kāḷatti Nādaṅ, a follower of the Madhva philosophical school, whom his guru, Ādi Civa-p-pirakācar, defeated in debate and subsequently took as his disciple. Other sources also state that this Kāḷatti Nādaṅ was Sāntaliṅga's teacher at some point. However, the tone and content of the verse suggests more that it a homage to Lord Śiva at Kāḷatti (Kālahasti), Kālahastīśwara.

⁵ *pērai* appears to refer to the Śiva temple in Pēraiyyūr in the Madurai District, about 15 km from Pudukkottai. The deity there goes by the name of Nāganādar with his consort, Periyāyaki or Pirakatāmbaḷ. According to legend Śiva was worshipped there in ancient times by the serpent *nāga* race. Nowadays worship is performed there to counteract the effects of negative horoscopes, brought about by the influence of the two notional planets in Hindu astrology, Rahu and Ketu.

detained in pretty maidens' arms,
drunk on heady desire's wine.⁶ (34)

In joy and rapture did I behold,
coming in a noble form,
by name of Sivaprakasa known,
the Lord who ruled my soul.
Now I, coming as your devotee,
to sing your praises have begun,
just as you had once decreed. (35)

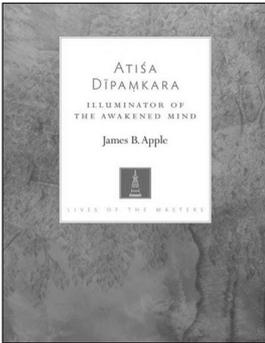
Three-eyed One,
reveal to me how to dispel
the sensate world,
that all around [my soul] besets
and binds me ever in its net.
If you do not such means provide,
how then might those five subside.
And until they do, how might
I cross birth's ocean [unto you]? (36)



(To be continued)

⁶ This verse follows the Tamil *bhakti* tradition in which the hero / heroine paradigm of the earlier secular *Agam* love poetry is employed to represent the spiritual paradigm of God and soul. A lady of good family (the *jīva*) wishes to gain the favour of her paramour (Lord Śiva), so she sends a messenger (the mind) to request his garland (grace) in token of his favour. Unfortunately, the messenger (mind) never reaches her beloved because he is beguiled by the pretty girls (the attractions of the sensory world, i.e. *māyā*, delusion) he meets on his way and does not complete his task. Here the author is pointing to the untrustworthy nature of the mind, which renders it unfit to serve as a means of attaining the divine, thus echoing the major theme of the first 50 verses of *Upadeśa*, in which the mind is constantly being upbraided by the the discriminating faculty, *vivēkam*, for just such aberrant behaviour.

BOOK REVIEWS



Atiṣa Dīpaṃkara: Illuminator of the Awakened Mind. James B. Apple. Boulder: Shambhala, 2019. 303 pages. ISBN 9781611806472. Rs. 1500.

James B. Apple's book is part of Shambhala publication's *Lives of the Masters Series* which as described by the publisher "offers engaging introductions to the lives, works, and legacies of key Buddhist teachers, philosophers, contemplatives." Atiṣa's works have been made quite famous because they have been emphasised in the writings of Western Buddhist monks and quoted extensively by H.H. Dalai Lama. This work is a must-read for anyone with a desire to understand the great influence he had on Buddhism.

Atiṣa is one of the most important figures in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition. He refined, systematised, and compiled an innovative and thorough approach to *bodhichitta* known as *lojong*. He conveyed that teaching through *A Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment (Bodhipathapradīpam)*, and other texts. This is a mind training practice given in a set of 59 aphorisms formulated formally by Chekawa Yeshe Dorje but originally developed by Atiṣa. The short text lays out the entire Buddhist path in terms of the three vehicles: *Hīnayāna*, *Mahāyāna*, and *Vajrayāna*, and became the model for subsequent texts. The text categorises spiritual practitioners as of initial, medium and advanced capacities. The aim of a person of initial capacity is to gain relief from suffering through the practice of morality. A person of medium capacity seeks liberation from cyclic existence, while a person of advanced capacity develops the awakening mind of a bodhisattva. Thus the advice ranges from the simple, "When everything goes wrong, treat the tragedy as a way to wake up," to the complex "Find the consciousness you had before you were born".

The book by Apple contains two parts. The first part is the biography based on two Tibetan sources: *The Extensive Biography by Ja Dülzin Tsöndrū* and *The Universally Known Biography* by Chim Namkha Drak. Atiṣa Dīpaṃkara Shrijnana was born in 982 AD

into a royal family in the city of Vikramapura. For the first eighteen months of his life, eight nurses in the royal palace of the capital city sheltered him. When he was eleven years old, he was surrounded with the luxuries and extravagance of royalty and his parents sought to find a bride. On the eve of his wedding, Atiśa encountered the Vajrayana goddess, Tara, who explained to the prince that in his past lives he had been a devout monk and that he should resist the pleasures of the world. If not, Tara continued, then “as an elephant sinks deeply into the swamp, [he], a hero, [would] sink in the mire of lust.” With that revelation in mind, Atiśa renounced his kingdom, family, and position to find a spiritual teacher. He travelled to numerous places including Sumatra and India but returned to Nepal for his final years, where he died in 1052 AD in Lethan, near Lhasa. He wrote, translated and edited more than two hundred books, of which nearly seventy-nine of his compositions have been preserved. Much of the practice developed by him involves refining and purifying one’s motivations and attitudes. They are designed to remove the undesired mental habits that cause suffering. When he travelled to Nepal, he heard that the people there were soft and kind-hearted. Therefore, he took a Bengali boy with him who would constantly shout abuses at him and make his daily life miserable. Thus, he lived his teaching of training the mind.

The second part of the book contains the translations of several of Atiśa’s writings including selections of *Stages of the Path to Awakening*, *Lamp for the Summary of Conduct*, *Lamp for the Path to Awakening*, selections on Tārā, etc. demonstrating Atiśa’s breadth of knowledge and teaching topics. Apple introduces each text with a summary. Every translation reads smoothly and some of these translations are now available for the first time in English. Apple’s extensive scholarship on Atiśa and his talent for writing an easily accessible work makes this extremely useful for western readers. While the book is scholarly, the author tries a balance to make it useful for aspirants as well.

— M.Giridhar

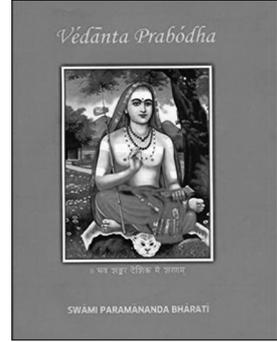
Vedanta Prabodha by Swami Paramananda Bharati Jnanasamvardhani Pratisthanam; second edition (11th April 2019); pp.282; Rs. 395.

This book originally written in Kannada, received huge appreciation and was then translated to English, Hindi, Telugu, Tamil and Malayalam. It

has 19 sections subdivided into 183 subsections, each of which is focused on a separate topic. The author uses Ādi Śaṅkara's teachings exclusively derived from the *bhashyas* of the *Upanishads*, *Bhagavad Gita* and *Brahmasutras*.

Ādi Śaṅkara formulated the doctrine of Advaita in a very systematic and scientific way primarily based on logic. The aim of the teaching was three-fold: revive the teaching of advaita, dispute all the claims of the other philosophical schools of that era and, finally, present a philosophy that should be practised to remove *avidyā* (ignorance) resulting in the revelation of the self-luminous Brahman. Ādi Śaṅkara takes a direct practical approach and does not attempt to explicate *avidyā* but advises the student that it is futile to enquire about the logical status of this *avidyā*. As Ādi Śaṅkara points out, the search for the beginning of *avidyā* itself is a manifestation of the same. It is like asking a small child how long has he not known the multiplication tables. Though that question cannot be answered, the ignorance will end as soon as the tables are taught to the child. Similarly, *avidyā*, though being limitless, does not have a beginning but has an end. As explained in the *Sankara Bhashya of Brahmasutra (SBB)*, 2.2.22, *avidyā* is, therefore, unreal as it is destroyed when knowledge is obtained.

Due to the extensive opposition of Ramanujacharya and, later, Madhvacharya, on the apparent invalidity of *avidyā* as *anirvacanīya* (indescribable), various sub-schools of advaita were developed to present the logical implications of *avidyā* and *māya*. Two sub-schools, known as the *bhāmatī* and the *vivarāṇa* schools emerged within advaita vedanta. The former school is based on the commentary of Vacaspati Misra on SBB, while the latter school is based on the commentary of Prakasatman's *ṭīkā* (sub-commentary) on Padmapada's *Pañcapādika*, which itself is a *vārttika* (detailed commentary) on SBB. Among other differences, the *bhāmatī* school emphasises that the *jīva* is the locus of the *avidyā* and it is controlled by Brahman but the *vivarāṇa* school claims that there is only Brahman, it Itself is the locus and the subject of *avidyā*. Appayya Dikshitar, whose *Siddhānta leśa saṅgraha* is an encyclopedic compilation of various views, points out that these are



not fundamental philosophical differences but these two schools are rather different approaches based on ontology and epistemology, respectively. While each school has its own logical problems, both of them provide insight into Oneness from different angles.

Though Ādi Śaṅkara himself has written books on advaita ranging from a child (*Balabodhasangraha*), intermediate (*Upadesasahasri*) and advanced students (*upanishad bhashyas*), he has also used the 5L method. This method of learning is usually used to elucidate a subject to five different levels of students. An expert explains the same subject to five levels (5L) of students: child, high school student, college student, doctoral student and a colleague. These tasks require different ways of speech and expressions and sometimes even require a similar expression to be used with entirely different meanings.

Take the case of *māyā*. It has been described as an *upādhi* (adjunct), *anirvacanīya* and *ananya* (non-different) in various works. Swāmijī answers this as follows: A novice *sādhaka* thinks Brahman is only the *nimitta kārana* (efficient cause) and thinks of *māyā* as the *upādana kārana* (material cause) of *jagat*. Subsequently, he develops the view that *māyā* is *anirvacanīya* because it is *anadi* (beginningless). Finally, he learns, though the *guṇas* originate from *māyā*, it is actually *ananya* with *nirguṇa* Brahman. Swāmijī endorses this: “..... if all *guṇas* must come from it, it must be *nirguṇa*. Is not light, which contains all colours, itself colourless?” Swāmijī concludes by saying that only this realisation constitutes correct knowledge (*yathārtha jñāna*) about *māyā*; the earlier thinking that *māyā* is *anirvacanīya* is doubtful cognition (*samśaya jñāna*) while the thinking that *māyā* is *upādhi* of Brahman is just working knowledge (*mithyā jñāna*). Similar is the case for other theories and explanations of other concepts.

The aim of this book is to show that, despite the superficial variance of the teachings of Ādi Śaṅkara, there is complete unity; the contrasting presentations are merely due to different levels and the evolving understanding at various stages by the aspirant. Thus a structured approach of the teachings is presented and the content is expressed in a simple concise manner. The book is not meant for a lay reader who is cursorily interested in advaita but for those who are genuinely interested in the teachings of Ādi Śaṅkara and the philosophy of advaita, both for understanding and practise. — M.Giridhar ▲

ASHRAM BULLETIN

Mahasivaratri 1st March 2022

The *Tiruvādirai* day of the month of *Mārgazhi* is the ancient day on which Lord Śiva made the image of the great magnificent *Śivaliṅgam* Arunachalam, the first *liṅgam*. *Mahā Śivarātri* is in the month of *Māsi* (*Kṛṣṇapakṣa Chaturdasi* Day), the day on which all the deities, including Lord Viṣṇu worshipped Lord Śiva in the form of an idol from the Arunachala Jyoti pillar. There is no doubt that the grace of Śiva would be perfected in those who observed *Śivarātri* by pronouncing *Namah Śivaya* for as the Tamil saint Auvaiyar had said, “There is never a danger of war if one thinks of *Śivaya Namah*.”

The sacred *Mahā Śivarātri* worship was held on 1st March at the Ashram with four *kāla pūjas*. The *pūjas* were held at 6 pm, 10 pm, 2 am and 4 am. Further, at the stroke of midnight, the worship was conducted to the *liṅgodbhava*. The entire event from 6 pm to 5 am was telecast live on YouTube and watched by thousands of devotees all over the world.

The ashram was open to all devotee and visitors the whole night of *Mahā Śivarātri* as in accordance with the State Government guidelines.

Obituaries



Smt. Mahalakshmi Suryanandan (8th October 1925–7th December 2021). Mahalakshmi or Maggie Ma as she was affectionately called, was the eldest daughter of the eminent scholar and editor, Professor K. Swaminathan. Mahalakshmi recalled in a video interview that in the early 1940s her father and she came to see Bhagavan. “We came in a bullock cart and saw Bhagavan standing in front of the illuppai tree which is almost 300 years old. We did *Sāshṭāṅga*

Namaskaram to him. On raising my head, I was wonderstruck to see a beautiful golden coloured *devata* standing before me.”

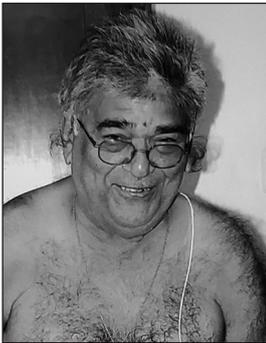
She later joined Queen Mary’s College, the first women’s college in Chennai. In February 1946 she was asked to be a volunteer

for Gandhiji's upcoming 3-day visit to Madras. Maggie had the opportunity to see Gandhiji at close quarters over three days.

Following Bhagavan's *Mahānirvāṇa*, the family house in Madras, *Dharmalayam*, became home to weekly meetings of the Ramana Bhakta Sabha, where Maggie and others were called on to sing. Gathering with devotees was the only balm that could soothe the burden of grief the family felt after Bhagavan's *Mahānirvāṇa*. Maggie's accomplishments with singing were known to all who knew her. She set Muruganar's songs to music and was among the first to sing *Sri Ramana Sannidhi Murai*. Maggie set *Akṣaramaṇamālai* to classical carnatic music which she sang in the Ramana Bhakta Sabha. For thirty years, Maggie Ma led the monthly singing each *Punarvasu* morning in the New Hall.

Maggie went on to get married and to live a happy married life with her husband P.R. Suryanandan, a person of great integrity, until his demise in August 2012. She wrote six books, four of which consisted of her compositions in praise of Bhagavan, among them, her well-received *Ramana Glory Be To Him*. She battled cancer in the mid-1990s and managed the suffering caused with light humour about how she was blessed to have the same illness that Bhagavan had had.

Late in life, Maggie Ma said: "[I experienced] Bhagavan as a mother and child. In his presence I had not bothered to ask any questions but there was no problem, no ideas, as I felt only peace and indescribable happiness." A much fuller account of Maggie-ma can be read in the *Saranagati* Newsletter, January and February 2022.



Sri Parasara M. Narasimham, founder President of Sri Ramana Bhakta Mandali, Ramana Maharshi Heritage and Vasishtha Ganapathi Muni Memorial Trust, Hyderabad, and Sri Arunachala Ramana Ganapathi Asramam, Kaluvarai reached the Lotus Feet of Sri Bhagavan on December 29, 2021 at Hyderabad. The news of his departure left his family, fellow devotees and a multitude of his acquaintances in shock and sorrow.

In 1962, his association with Bhagavan started when he married Ramana Puthri, daughter of Sri Griddaluru Subba Rao. The Griddaluru family have been staunch devotees of Bhagavan since the early

1920s. During his visits to Sri Ramanasramam, the then President Sri T.N. Venkataraman and Smt. Nagalakshmi Ammal used to fondly address him as ‘maappillai’ which translates to son-in-law, to which Narasimham demurred, requesting them to address him as *pillai* (son), since he belonged to the same *gotra* as Bhagavan.

In the year 1979, Sri Ramana Kendram, Hyderabad was founded by Dr. K. Subramanian and M. Narasimham. The following year, he established Sri Ramana Bhakta Mandali with the motto of ‘To serve mankind is serving Sri Bhagavan’, to which end he started a poor feeding on last Sunday of every month and distributed Bhagavan’s *prasadam*. He insisted that whatever was done, was done well.

At the request of Sri A. R. Natarajan, he discovered the exact location of the birthplace of Ganapathi Muni, Kaluvarai in Vizag district of Andhra Pradesh and established a beautiful Ashram there.

He has served the simple, poor people of that village in several ways. Every *pūja* related to Bhagavan was a celebration for which he planned meticulously. He was a man who loved life and lived an active life. All remember him as one who was joyous with a positive outlook even in difficult circumstances.

Smt. Shantha Gurumurthy was born in 1938 at Tiruvarur, to a pious family. She married in 1959 and when the family moved to Bangalore in 1974, she joined music class conducted by Smt. Sulochana Natarajan where she learned Ramana music. Later she took up residence near the Ashram, with her (*sannyasi*) husband, and studied *Sri Ramana Sannidhi Murai* under the tutelage of Kunju Swami and Smt. Kanakammal. In the mid-1990s she transcribed the *Tamil Pārāyaṇam* into roman script for those not familiar with the Tamil alphabet. The first *pārāyaṇa* transliteration was published in the mid-1990s. After shifting to Chennai, she taught the *Tamil Pārāyaṇam* to various groups. A few weeks before her departure she was at Ashram with daughter Usha and both sang a song at *Sri Chakra Pūja*. On 29th December, 2021, she received a call from Bhagavan. On the night of 30th until midnight before she glided into sleep, she related stories of Bhagavan and Arunachala to those who



were by her side. During *Brahma muhūrtam* of 31st December, she merged at the Feet of Arunachala Ramana.



Smt. Kanti Krishnamurti, a well known devotee in Ashram circles, was absorbed peacefully in Arunachala Ramana on 19th January.

Born in 1928 she was brought to Bhagavan's presence by her father in the mid-1940s when she was barely 14 years old. Bhagavan's benign gaze at her sent a shiver of a thrill through her which made her a lifelong devotee of Bhagavan. Her devotion was such that she stayed at Adi Annamalai every year for a few months from 2002 to 2016. She is survived by three sons Sri Sriram who is a prolific author on Muruganar, Sri Chandrasekhar and Swami Tanmayananda Sarasvati, all of whom are steadfast devotees.

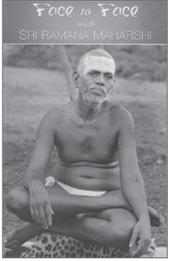
Dr. R. Rajamohan (10th April 1944–29th January 2022) MSc, Ph.D. (Physics) was an astronomer by profession and was the first Indian to discover minor planets from an Indian observatory. He was born in Thiruvisanallur near Kumbhakonam, Tamil Nadu and raised in Secunderabad, Andhra Pradesh (now Telangana). In his younger days he loved telescopes and reading books. He served at the Indian Institute of Astrophysics, Bangalore. He had intuitive knowledge and a true believer in Ramana Bhagavan's teachings. He was humble and down to earth, friendly and supportive of needy people in personal life. He was a very passionate researcher with a deep sense of spiritual knowledge. He was married in December 1975 and is survived by his wife, a son and a daughter.



Prof. Rajamohan was well known for his Kalki project – a project to discover minor planets. Project Kalki was launched to survey and discover asteroids, comets and the elusive tenth planet of the Solar System.

His services as a member of the planning committee for Bhagavan's Advent Centenary Celebrations was invaluable. ▲

NOW AVAILABLE...



Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi (ENGLISH) – pb. xxxii+641+22 photographs; Prof. Laxmi Narain; ISBN: 978-81-8288-296-6; Price: ₹250. This third edition has been revised and expanded with a new index and is published by Ramana Ashram with the permission of the author and Ramana Kendra, Hyderabad, who had published the earlier editions. This book is a compilation of enchanting and uplifting reminiscences of 202 devotees of Sri Ramana Maharshi. Each contribution sheds invaluable light on the uniqueness of the Maharshi. The reminiscences presented here have no particular order and are independent of each other. They begin with the chronicler's brief biographical sketch followed by their reminiscences. These reminiscences tell us about Maharshi's philosophy, his teachings and his love for all living beings, including animals and plants. They reveal how sincere aspirants felt the impact of the irresistible light of the Maharshi's eyes which penetrated their inner being, and also how the peace and bliss got transmitted just by the Maharshi's presence. Many descriptions in the text make us feel that the jivanmukta (emancipated while yet in the physical body) and the sthitaprajna (a person of steadfast wisdom) as envisioned in our scriptures, are not mere concepts but the reality as authenticated by the Maharshi. The reader of these pages will discover that spirituality is not something vague and uncertain but substantial and proven as manifested by the Maharshi.

Announcement: Sri Ramana Maharshi Heritage



Sri Ramana Maharshi Heritage (SRMH) is a newly created 501 (c) (3), registered non-profit in the United States.

The organization's purpose is to preserve Sri Ramana Maharshi's heritage and to serve devotees who are drawn to the life and teachings of Bhagavan. The new entity's objectives are aligned with those of Sri Ramanasramam in India. Devotees in the United States who wish

to donate towards and participate in Sri Ramanasramam's charitable initiatives in India can learn more by visiting the SRMH website: <https://www.srmh.org/> or by sending an email to: sriramanamaharshiheritage@gmail.com.

Available from: Sri Ramanasramam Book Depot, Sri Ramanasramam & PO
Tiruvannamalai 606603, Tamil Nadu, INDIA.

Also available online: <http://bookstore.sriramanamaharshi.org>
(Postage and packing charges extra).

D: Why is it said that only the mind which is the internal organ, shines as the form of all, that is of God, the world and the individual soul?

M: As instruments for knowing the objects the sense organs are outside, and so they are called outer senses; and the mind is called the inner sense because it is inside. But the distinction between inner and outer is only with reference to the body; in truth, there is neither inner nor outer. The mind's nature is to remain pure like ether.

What is referred to as the Heart or the mind is the arrangement of the elements of phenomenal existence that appear as inner and outer. So there is no doubt that all phenomena consisting of names and forms are of the nature of mind alone.

All that appear outside are in reality inside and not outside; it is in order to teach this that in the Vedas also all have been described as of the nature of the Heart. What is called the Heart is no other than Brahman.

— Sri Ramana Maharshi, *Self-Enquiry*, Invocatin 8.
