



Mountain Path





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

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to by their saints and mystics, and to
clarify the paths available to seekers
in the conditions of our modern world.**

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Divine Names of Arunachala

30. ॐ वेदमूर्तये नमः

Prostration to the embodiment of the Vedas.

Ah, name and form! There is a purpose to it when we think we are the body. Arunachala was in the beginning a column of light, then Siva manifested as a Holy Hill to help devotees eradicate the ego. Siva took a human body as Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi and by His physical presence and example showed devotees, even those without any knowledge of the Scriptures, how a true *jñānī* conducts himself in daily life.

But are we the body? Can we know God in form alone? In verse 8 of *Ulladu Narpadu*, Bhagavan tells us:

“Whoever they may be, whatever name they give it, and in whatever form they worship it, that constitutes a way of knowing that Reality in name and form. Nevertheless, you should know that the only true knowing is to discern one’s own truth in the truth of that Supreme Reality, to subside into it, and to merge as one with it.”¹

How does one discern one’s own truth? Bhagavan came into the world to clarify the practice of *Advaita Vedānta* and to teach us to turn inwards so that by self-attention and surrender we might dissolve the ego that obscures Reality and be who we really are. Bhagavan

“Getting rid of the ‘I am the body’ idea, turning the mind inwards, and merging it in the Heart to realise the real, non-dual Light of the centre of the universe.”²

What more is there left to do, what more is there left to say?

— BKC

¹ Translated by Robert Butler.

² *Parayana*, Sri Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai, 2008, p. 14.

EDITORIAL

The Myth of Sri Ramana Maharshi

The further away in chronological time the historical Sri Ramana Maharshi appears, the more he becomes a myth in our eyes. This

time continually transforms everything that is alive. It does not freeze any form of expression. If it does, then the object is dead. Bhagavan is surely not a dead memory but a living expression of the power of Arunachala, ever present now to all who sincerely seek him.

Those who ‘knew’ him speak of his utter simplicity, his very ordinariness and approachability. He did not encourage adulation; he did not imply or declare that he could perform miracles though it was evident to those who were perceptive that miracles minor and major occurred spontaneously around him, though not of the demonstrative type, for that was not Bhagavan’s way.

He was born to help us. It would be egregious of us to place him on an elaborate pedestal to worship and pay little or no attention to what he wrote or said. We all have an idea of who is Bhagavan Sri Ramana

a guess, a conjecture. It is not Ramana Maharshi in himself. That will never happen, for to think we ‘know’ him either as a person, his history or what he taught is partial and, in some cases, is mis-guided.

gleaned from books, photographs or conversations with others. These

but of being. Bhagavan's teachings seem easy because they sound ordinary. But he was not ordinary, rather as many attest, he was *extra-ordinary*.

As time goes by there are inevitably more books, more speeches, and more articles about Bhagavan that become available. Many are full of good intentions, while some use Bhagavan's name to enhance their own reputation. That said, we do need to read or listen and understand the fundamentals of Bhagavan's teachings. The best way is to read them in the original or reliable translation. After a certain point, unless we are scholars or are called to study Advaita more deeply to help our understanding, we should focus on the practice. Too many books, however learned, can confuse us. Even if one just reads and understands the booklet *Who Am I?* to start one on the proper path.

Bhagavan once commented,

“All knowledge is meant only to lead the person to the realisation of the Self. The scriptures or religions are well-known to be for that purpose. What do they all mean? Leave alone what they say of the past or of the future; for it is only speculative. But the present existence is within the experience of all. Realise the pure Being. There is an end to all discourses and disputes.”¹

The way we approach Bhagavan is important. A correct attitude can alert and inspire us to the various possibilities that are catalysts for transformation. This is the reason why we come to Bhagavan. We

We are supplicants, no matter how we phrase our search. If we do approach him with reverence and humility, we can discover a new language and understanding that is alive with promise. There is the opportunity to consciously empty ourselves of our preconceptions or, to put it bluntly, recognise our seemingly endless foolishness. If

as the person with such a subtly arrogant attitude assumes they are capable of understanding Bhagavan. Such a person is not even on the

¹ Munagala S. Venkataramiah, *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, Talk§644.

tool or a spark. But not for long, as any ideas we entertain in isolation are effervescent. These limited ideas may bubble and sparkle for a moment with life and then subside. If they are related to a genuine,

dormant, and then with time, with remembrance, they will begin to take on an independent life. Not as part of our imaginary life that we are comfortable with, like an old garment we have learned to inhabit, but as a new independent reality that eats away at our presumptions. For these seeds to live we need to sustain them with our time, our energy, our thoughts until like a *yagna*, they burn bright and consume our ignorance, our shadows of half-truths.

What is a genuine idea? A genuine idea is proactive, it is creative

taught 'Who Am I?' (*Nan Yar?*) it was a ball of light, it illuminated the intellect. 'Who Am I?' rightly used has the power to stop our interminable train of repetitive thoughts. Like a thread the more we focus on it the more it unravels the complex, compulsive linkage of our private thoughts.

An alternative to *Nan Yar?* is the image of Bhagavan. When we concentrate on the likeness of Sri Ramana Maharshi, it is an entry to a beautiful star whose beginning and end we cannot fathom. We can only marvel at the aliveness of its subtle, elusive shimmer which entices us to search for the way to enter its reality so we can comprehend and breathe it.

Another image is that he is a sun, spontaneously erupting with

Bhagavan's Samadhi we are not engaging with a lifeless, historical monument but a powerful living force. We are irradiated, we are being transformed.

And it is here that we discover the criteria by which to weigh any statement or assertion by someone who claims to know either Bhagavan or the teaching. It is inevitable that with time there are those who claim for themselves some special insight or status. This is not true. Nobody is like Ramana Maharshi and never can be. We can only be ourselves even as he was himself always. We are small saplings protected beneath the shade of the enormous banyan tree we call Sri Ramana. Once we can stand straight, we are removed from his protective gaze to fend for ourselves.

MOUNTAIN PATH

Until we realise our smallness, it takes more than wishful thinking masters of our fate, we will remain stuck with second-hand dreams and ideas. It is hard, unremitting work to let go of them. However, once the seed is planted in us by the Grace of Bhagavan it works in subtle, imperceptive ways. It may take a lifetime to realise one charge of our lives and dictates the way we live. For some, there is no alternative but to give up their previous comfortable existence and follow the promptings of the heart. The prime symptom that Grace has entered our hearts is a quiet disaffection, a distant rumbling on the horizon of our consciousness that becomes increasingly loud the more we try to ignore it.

So, until we become touched by Grace, what we have before us is a myth or idea of Sri Ramana. It is useful as a starter and as we begin to gather more information and experience, it coalesces into a steady

absolutely no resistance.

in Baghdad or Samarra. He died in 846 CE at the age of 87.

Abu Bakr-e Shibli was originally Governor of Demavend. A dispatch came to him from Baghdad, and he set out with the Governor of Rayy and a retinue to present himself before the caliph. They returned homewards after being invested by the caliph with robes of honour. By chance the Governor of Rayy suddenly sneezed. He wiped his mouth and nose in his robe of honour. This was reported to the caliph, he commanded that he should be stripped of his robe,

“One who uses as a handkerchief a robe conferred by a mortal being,” he mused, “is accounted deserving to be deposed and

a handkerchief the robe [of the human body] conferred by the King of the world—what will be done to him?”

“At once he went to the caliph. “Prince,” he addressed the caliph, “you, a mortal being, do not approve that the robe conferred by you should be treated disrespectfully, and it is well-known what your robe

is worth. The Lord of the world has given me a robe of honour, and the love and knowledge of Him. How shall He ever approve of my using it as a handkerchief in the service of a mortal?" And he left the court

"You are recommended as an expert on pearls," Shibli said. "Either give me one, or sell one to me." Junayd replied, "If I sell you one, you will not have any idea of the price of it, and if I give you one, having so easily come by it you will not realise its value. Do like

obtain your pearl."

What followed was a series of tests initiated by Junayd in which how he felt. He replied, "I consider myself the lowest of all creatures." Junayd complimented him saying, "Your faith is now perfect."²

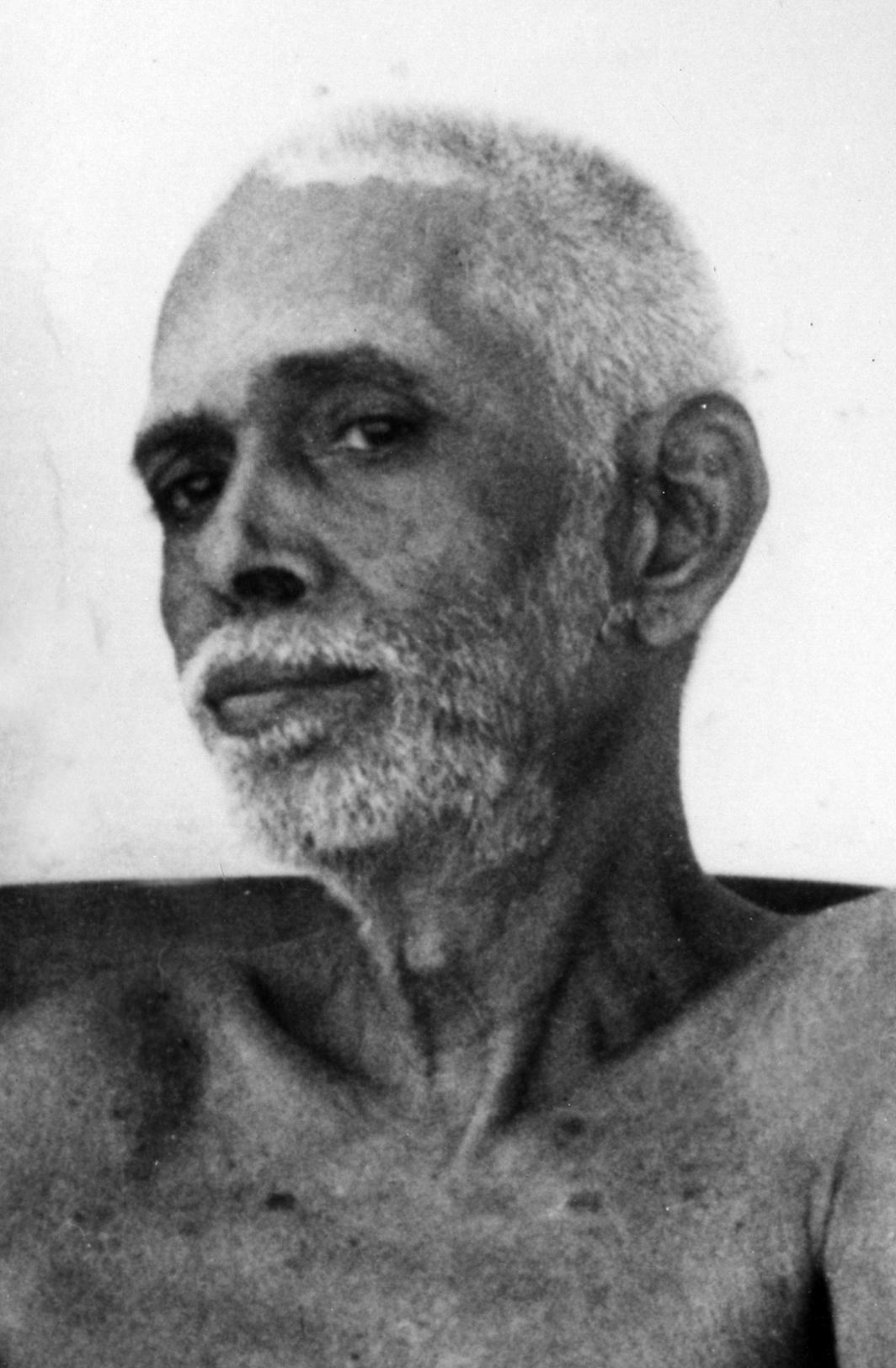
Al-Shibli now had no expectations about himself or others. He lived in the moment with the secure faith that all that was necessary for him to learn and experience would be given at the appropriate moment. We may not be required to endure such harsh conditions as Shibli but we will encounter time and time again situations where we will be stripped of our so-called autonomy. Our one consolation is that there are guiding hands which cushion the worst while guiding us with the lightest of touches that we may barely notice at the time. We cannot remain welded to the past.

Yes, a new, vibrant myth of Sri Ramana Maharshi is developing. How it unfolds remains to be seen but one point is evident, in whatever

May our faith in that higher power we call Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi, be perfect. ▲

² Quoted and paraphrased from *Muslim Saints and Mystics Episodes from the Tadhkirat al-Auliya' (Memorial of the Saints)* by Farid al-Din Attar translated by A.J. Arberry. Omphaloskepsis, Iowa, 2000, pp.277-80. See also *Tadhk Aratul-Auliya or Memoirs of Saints* translated by Bankey Behari. Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, Lahore, 1975, pp.182-84.

Once in the Old Hall someone commented, perhaps with some degree of exasperation, that each time they entered the Old Hall, they prostrated to Bhagavan yet again as was the custom. Bhagavan in reply said that though it was not evident to the physical eye, he prostrated to all who prostrated to him.



The Inner and Outer Human Being

SAMUEL BENDECK SOTILLOS

“[T]he *vyakti*, the outer self, is but a shadow of the *vyakta*, the inner self.”¹ – Nisargadatta Maharaj

“[T]he Heavenly is on the inside, the human is on the outside.”²

“[T]hough our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.”³ – 2 Corinthians 4:16

be considered.”⁴

In earlier eras when human collectivities were more anchored in their the sacred, and permeated the culture which nurtured and sustained the integrity of a person. In such an environment, both the horizontal

¹ *I Am That: Talks with Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj*, trans. Maurice Frydman, ed. Sudhakar S. Dikshit (Durham, NC: Acorn Press, 1999), p. 294.

² *Chuang Tzu: Basic Writings*, trans. Burton Watson (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1996), p. 104.

³ *The Bezels of Wisdom*, trans. R.W.J. Austin (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1980), p. 73.

Samuel Bendeck Sotillos is a practising psychotherapist who has worked for years in the mental health and social services, focusing on the intersection between spirituality and psychology. His works include *Paths That Lead to the Same Summit: An Annotated Guide to World Spirituality*, and *The Psychoanalytic Worldview and Behaviorism: The Quandary of a Psychology without a Soul*.

and vertical dimensions of reality supported the fullness of human beings. With the loss of a sense of the sacred on a global scale, our outer dimension has gradually become eclipsed and no longer the Divine. This has inevitably led to the obscuration of our inner dimension, causing the fragmentation we now see mirrored in the current global mental health pandemic, and topsy-turvy state of the world. In our day, it is the outward which dominates the inward, which is an inversion of the traditional norm. Our true purpose, then, is to live in accordance with the sacred and to better integrate our outward

human psyche remaining stable: “The state of the outer world does not merely correspond to the general state of men’s souls; it also in a sense depends on that state.”⁴

agreement that the tripartite constitution of the person and that of the cosmos – of which we are but a mirror – comprises Spirit, soul, and body; or the spiritual, psychic, and corporeal states. The dominance of the unseen world proclaimed by the spiritual traditions (and their corresponding psychologies) was gradually overthrown and replaced by the more tangible demands of the sensorial world and its empirical modes of knowing, represented by the modern West’s culture of materialism.

follows: “Therefore the universe is the outward visible expression of the Real, and the Real is the inner unseen reality of the universe.”⁵ In relying on a purely empirical approach, mainstream psychology – along with its mental health treatments – fails to recognise that it is through the visible world of forms that we can glimpse the unseen realities of the Divine. This reduction of reality to evidenced-informed ways of knowing, radically limits the scope of psychology to provide true healing.

The Perils of Reductionism

If, according to many of our contemporaries, we cannot identify the human soul or the transcendent Spirit by empirical means, then this

⁴ *The Book of Certainty: The Sufi Doctrines of Faith, Vision and Gnosis* (Cambridge, UK: Islamic Texts Society, 1996), p. 21.

⁵ *The Mystics of Islam* (London, UK: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975), p. 82.

meaning; you are delusional.”⁶ What this myopic position fails to recognise is that there are distinct levels of knowledge and modes of being.

What may be self-evident at one level is not so on a higher one, for lower levels cannot encompass what lies beyond them; only the higher can know the lower. While the reductionist position ostensibly shuns metaphysics, embedded in its argument is a hidden metaphysic of its own; one that implicitly attacks any suggestion of a reality that transcends the psycho-physical order. In doing so, it has transgressed its own conceptual assumptions.

With the emergence of the European Enlightenment, psychology lost its ability to fully discern the transpersonal aspect of reality, which alone can unify all dimensions of a human being in harmony with the environment. This has been the root cause of many present-day calamities. Theodore Roszak (1933–2011) remarked that a fundamental insight emerged “at the birth of modern science. Our knowledge of nature Out There begins with knowledge of ourselves In Here. Until we [are] freed ... of the hidden presuppositions that stand between us and the world, we can never be certain we are in touch with reality.”⁷

The Divide Between Psyche and Cosmos

This debilitating secularism has fundamentally marginalised the inner dimension of the person. This is evident in the following description provided by American psychologist James Hillman (1926–2011): “There is only one core issue for all [modern] psychology. Where is the ‘me’? Where does the ‘me’ begin? Where does the ‘me’ stop? Where

⁶ Sabine Hossenfelder, “A Warning,” in *Existential Physics: A Scientist’s Guide to Life’s Biggest Questions* (New York, NY: Viking, 2022), p. xvii.

⁷ Theodore Roszak, “Afterword: The Idols of the Bedchamber,” in *The Gendered Atom: Reflections on the Sexual Psychology of Science* (Berkeley, CA: Conari Press, 1999), p. 154.

⁸ James Hillman, “A Psyche the Size of the Earth: A Psychological Foreword,” in *Ecopsychology: Restoring the Earth, Healing the Mind*, eds. Theodore Roszak, Mary E. Gomes, and Allen D. Kanner (San Francisco, CA: Sierra Club Book, 1995), p. xvii.

does the ‘other’ begin?”⁸ The split between “in-here” and “out-there” is ultimately a play of appearances due to the superimposition of the ego on a limited comprehension of what is reality. However, according to a traditional understanding, this bifurcation is not problematic when discerned through the transpersonal faculty of the Intellect or “eye

outer human being – a fact acknowledged unanimously, in all times and places, by the spiritual patrimony of humanity.

The mind-body dualism attributed to René Descartes (1596–1650), is embedded in the ontological and epistemological presuppositions of mainstream psychology. This has led to inevitable consequences for how we envisage the human condition and, indeed, reality itself. Cartesian dualism – the exclusive division of the world into *res extensa* (extended entities) and *res cogitans* (thinking entities) – reduces all experience to the private and subjective realm, thus denying the demands of objective reality.

As the Scottish psychiatrist R.D. Laing (1927–1989) points out, this dichotomy becomes evident in the therapeutic process itself, seeing as many individuals “have come to experience themselves as primarily

with the ‘mind.’”⁹ French metaphysician René Guénon (1886–1951) speaks to how extensively this fundamental scission has permeated today’s intellectual climate: “The Cartesian duality ... has imposed itself on all modern Western thought.”¹⁰

The distinction between the inner and outer facets of our nature is evident in the very foundations of modern psychology. Swiss psychiatrist Ludwig Binswanger (1881–1966) offered an acute

⁹ R.D. Laing, “The Embodied and Unembodied Self,” in *The Divided Self: An Existential Study in Sanity and Madness* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1976), p. 65.

¹⁰ René Guénon, “Spiritus, Anima, Corpus,” in *The Great Triad*, trans. Henry D. Fohr, ed. Samuel D. Fohr (Hillsdale, NY: Sophia Perennis, 2004), p. 68. “Cartesian bifurcation created a dualism between mind and matter which has dominated Western thought since the seventeenth century, a dualism which has led many to choose the primacy of matter over mind and to establish the view that in the beginning was matter and not consciousness.” (Seyyed Hossein Nasr, “In the Beginning was Consciousness,” in *The Essential Seyyed Hossein Nasr*, ed. William C. Chittick [Bloomington, IN: World Wisdom, 2007], p. 224).

criticism of the fragmented mentality that underlies the modern form of this discipline: “The cancer of all [modern] psychology up to now [is] ... the cancer of the doctrine of subject-object cleavage of the world.”¹¹

psychoanalysis. Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) observed: “Ego appears to us as something autonomous and unitary, marked off distinctly from everything else”¹² and, elsewhere, he remarks on the “boundary lines between the ego and the external world.”¹³

John B. Watson (1878–1958) took a more extreme position: “No one has ever touched a soul, or seen one in a test tube, or has in any way come into relationship with it as he has with the other objects of his daily experience.”¹⁴ B.F. Skinner (1904–1990) calls for the eradication of our internal dimension altogether: “It is ... inner man who is abolished, and that is a step forward.”¹⁵ He continues by reducing the human being exclusively to its corporeal or physical order:

a body with a person inside, but of a body which *is* a person in the sense that it displays a complex repertoire of behavior.... What is being abolished is autonomous man—the inner man, the homunculus, the possessing demon, the man defended by the literatures of freedom and dignity. His abolition has long been overdue.... Science does not dehumanize man, it dehomunculizes him.¹⁶

It cannot be stressed enough that unless this disjunction is overcome, there cannot be a true “science of the soul.” We need to

¹¹ Ludwig Binswanger, quoted in *Existence: A New Dimension in Psychiatry and Psychology*, eds. Rollo May, Ernest Angel, and Henri F. Ellenberger (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1958), p. 11.

¹² Sigmund Freud, “Chapter One,” in *Civilization and Its Discontents*, trans. and ed. James Strachey (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 1989), p. 12.

¹³ Sigmund Freud, “Chapter One,” in *Civilization and Its Discontents*, trans. and ed. James Strachey (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 1989), p. 13.

¹⁴ John B. Watson, “What is Behaviorism? The Old and New Psychology Contrasted,” in *Behaviorism* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 1970), p. 3.

¹⁵ B.F. Skinner, “What Is Man?,” in *Beyond Freedom and Dignity* (New York, NY: Bantam, 1972), p. 205.

¹⁶ B.F. Skinner, “What Is Man?,” in *Beyond Freedom and Dignity* (New York, NY: Bantam, 1972), pp. 190–191.

examine the causes that have led to this dire predicament, as Victor Danner (1926–1990) notes: “One thing is certain: the modern world has generated a permanent separation between man’s inner and outer nature.”¹⁷

Furthermore, modern philosophy goes as far as denying the interior life altogether, as the well-known words of Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908–1961) reinforce: “There is no inner man.”¹⁸ As a response to this reductionist perspective, we turn to a paragon of Islamic spirituality,

able to see the inward—they only see the outward”;¹⁹ and further adds: “The body is outward, the spirit hidden.”²⁰ the metaphysical levels of existence, and the corresponding ways of knowing reality.

The Two Natures of a Person

In stark contrast, *Duo sunt in homine* (“There are two [natures] in man”)²¹ was an axiom in the West – prior to the emergence of the Renaissance – which recognised an inner and outer aspect to our being. Plato (429–347) also acknowledges this doctrine of the two natures within us: “[When] there are two opposite impulses in a man at the same time about the same thing, we say that there must ... be two [natures] ... in him.”²² All religions take for granted that we are one essence that comprises two natures; an outward form connected to the psycho-physical, and an inward dimension, being our spiritual constitution. Kurt Almqvist (1912–2001) writes:

¹⁷ Victor Danner, “The Inner and Outer man,” in *Traditional Modes of Contemplation and Action: A Colloquium held at Rothko Chapel Houston Texas*, eds. Yusuf Ibish and Peter Lamborn Wilson (Tehran: Imperial Iranian Academy of Philosophy, 1977), p. 411.

¹⁸ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, “Preface,” to *Phenomenology of Perception* (London, UK: Routledge, 1962), p. xi.

¹⁹ *The Sufi Path of Love: The Spiritual Teachings of Rumi* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1983), p. 161.

²⁰ *The Sufi Path of Love: The Spiritual Teachings of Rumi* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1983), p. 41.

²¹ St. Thomas Aquinas, Question 26, Fourth Article, *Summa Theologica, Part II (Second Part), First Number, QQ. I—XLVI*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (London, UK: R. & T. Washbourne, 1917), p. 336.

²² Plato, Republic 10.604b, *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*, eds. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980), p. 829.

One of the most important themes in religion—the most important—is the confrontation between the two “selves” in

nature and is identical with his “kingdom”, and the outer self, or human personality with a certain name. It is the intersection of these two dimensions that comprises the religious life. One sees man horizontally from the earthly side; the other vertically as a vehicle of divinity. The crossing point may be multiplied both horizontally and vertically, making a cosmic web formed in one direction of layered worlds or conditions and, in the other, of the beings embodied in them—horizontal and vertical, woof and warp.²³

Throughout the traditional cultures of the world, it is recognised that “your outward is the analogy of your inward”²⁴ — these two

The diverse religions all express the immanence of this transpersonal dimension found in human beings: “The kingdom of God is within you” (Luke 17:21), “I am the Self ... seated in the heart of all beings”²⁵

earth cannot contain Me, but the heart of my believing servant does contain Me” (*ḥadīth qudsī*). It is through the primacy of the ‘vertical’ dimension that immanence – or the horizontal dimension – is possible. Isaac the Syrian (c. 613–c. 700) gives a compelling description of our inner treasure-house and its connection to the celestial treasure-house that transcends each person:

Be zealous to enter the treasury within thee; then thou wilt see that which is in heaven. For the former and the latter are one, and entering thou wilt see both. The ladder unto the Kingdom is hidden within thee and within thy soul. Dive into thyself

²³ Kurt Almqvist, “Every Branch in Me,” *Studies in Comparative Religion*, Vol. 15, Nos. 3 & 4 (Summer/Autumn 1983), p. 194.

²⁴ *The Sufi Path of Love: The Spiritual Teachings of Rumi* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1983), p. 276.

²⁵ *The Bhagavad-Gītā with the Commentary of Śrī Śankarachāryā*, trans. Alladi Mahadeva Sastri (Madras: V. Ramaswamy Sastrulu & Sons, 1961), p. 241.

canst ascend.²⁶

Spiritual Health as Wholeness

Our theomorphic essence is unconditioned and unaffected by the activities of the world: “Everything a man does in the lower part of active life is necessarily exterior to him, so to speak, beneath him.”²⁷ This was expressed slightly differently by the great art historian Ananda K. Coomaraswamy (1877–1947): “Our Inner Man is in the world but not of it, in us but not of us, our Outer Man both in the world and of it.”²⁸ Mainstream psychology exclusively focuses on the diagnosis and treatment of the outer human being, unaware that its materialistic science excludes, perforce, the “inward man” (Romans 7:22), and thus has no framework by which to bridge the traditional doctrine of our two natures.

According to Frithjof Schuon (1907–1998), “It is necessary to make a distinction in the human being between the outer and inner man: the former is turned toward the outward and lives in the ‘accidental’; the latter looks inward and lives on Substance.”²⁹ Similarly, Buddhist writer Marco Pallis (1895–1989) observes: “As between the outer and inner man, only the latter is the Man (the image of God), the outer man being the ‘shadow’ or ‘vehicle’ or ‘house’ or ‘garment’ of the inner, just as the world is the Lord’s ‘garment.’”³⁰ Martin Lings (1909–2005) remarked that “The perfect balance of the primordial soul depends on

²⁶ Isaac the Syrian, “The Six Treatises on the Behaviour of Excellence,” in *Mystic Treatises by Isaac of Nineveh*, trans. A.J. Wensinck (Amsterdam: Koninklijke Akademie van Wetenschappen, 1923), p. 8.

²⁷ *The Cloud of Unknowing and Other Works*, trans. Clifton Wolters (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1978), p. 72.

²⁸ Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, “On the Indian and Traditional Psychology, or Rather Pneumatology,” in *Coomaraswamy, Vol. 2, Selected Papers: Metaphysics*, ed. Roger Lipsey (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978), p. 371.

²⁹ Frithjof Schuon, “The Argument Founded on Substance,” in *Logic and Transcendence*, trans. Peter N. Townsend (London, UK: Perennial Books, 1984), p. 82.

³⁰ Marco Pallis, “Do Clothes Make the Man?,” in *The Way and the Mountain: Tibet, Buddhism, and Tradition*, ed. Joseph A. Fitzgerald (Bloomington, IN: World Wisdom, 2008), p. 153.



John Maynard

the harmonious union of the domains of inner and outer man.”³¹ This distinction was understood by the traditional world, yet it has been forgotten, if not altogether subverted, by our contemporaries: “The Inner Man, who in traditional terms is considered as a spiritual being, endowed with mind and body, is thus reduced to the Outer Man.”³²

In the Hindu tradition, also known as *sanātana dharma* (eternal religion), there are several texts that speak of the “two birds who dwell on the same tree” (*Muṇḍaka Upanishad* 3:1:1; *Shvetāshvatara Upanishad* 4:6). One oft-quoted passage is the following: “Two birds, inseparably united companions, dwell in the same tree; the one eats the fruit while the other looks on without eating” (*Muṇḍaka Upanishad* 3:1:1). These birds illustrate the nature of the human being: one of them eats the fruit of the tree, meaning that it engages in the world of phenomena, while the other looks on without eating—witnessing the transitory nature of all things with equanimity. This describes the distinction between the corporeal and spiritual nature that exists in all of us, and presents a fully integrated understanding of the person.

The great Dominican mystic Meister Eckhart (1260–1328) exhorts us to “harmonise [the] inner and ... outer man.”³³ He observes:

In every man there are two kinds of man: One is called the outer

and yet the outer man works through the power of the soul. The second man is called the inner man, which is the man’s inwardness. Now you should know that a spiritual man who loves God makes no use in his outer man of the soul’s powers

and protects them, so that they are not employed for beastly purposes, as they are by some people who live for their carnal

³¹ Martin Lings, “The Heart,” in *What is Sufism?* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1975), p. 54.

³² M. Ali Lakhani, “The Black Mole on the Cheek of the Beloved: The Problem of Metaphysical Ambiguity,” *Sacred Web: A Journal of Tradition and Modernity*, Vol. 26 (Winter 2010), p. 12.

³³ Meister Eckhart, “Tractates 18: Commentary on the Gospel of St. John,” in *Meister Eckhart*, trans. C. De B. Evans, ed. Franz Pfeiffer (London, UK: John M. Watkins, 1924), p. 403.

delight, as beasts lacking reason do. Such people deserve to be called beasts rather than men.³⁴

spirits dwelling in one body”³⁵

house of the Divine love.”³⁶

Plotinus (c. 205–270) asserts that, because we lack discernment, our lives are driven by the outward: “[U]ndisciplined in discernment of the inward, knowing nothing of it, run after the outer, never understanding that it is the inner which stirs us; we are in the case of

goes in pursuit of it.”³⁷ The spiritual traditions teach that there is a

of ourselves that is caught in dysfunctional patterns, or addictive tendencies, can never compromise our primordial nature. Whatever transpires outwardly, it can never destroy the inward, as Johannes Tauler (c. 1300–1361) explains: “Even though thy outward man grieve, or weep ... thy inner man remain[s] at peace.”³⁸

cultivation of the inner man there is no failure in Tao.”³⁹ Likewise, Jakob Böhme (1575–1624) notes: “As the power of the inner man over the outer man increases, the former changes the qualities of the latter.”⁴⁰ An integral psychology informed by metaphysics and a sacred

³⁴ Meister Eckhart, “On Detachment,” in *The Essential Sermons, Commentaries, Treatises, and Defense*, trans. Edmund Colledge and Bernard McGinn (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1981), p. 290.

³⁵ *The Mystics of Islam* (London, UK: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975), p. 151.

³⁶ *Readings from the Mystics of Islam* (London, UK: Luzac and Company, 1950), p. 115.

³⁷ Plotinus, Enneads 5.8.2, *The Enneads*, trans. Stephen MacKenna (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1991), p. 412.

³⁸ Johannes Tauler, “From the Second Sermon for the Twelfth Sunday after Trinity,” in *Selections from the Life and Sermons of the Reverend Doctor John Tauler*, trans. Susanna Winkworth (Boston, MA: Roberts Brothers, 1878), p. 142.

³⁹ *Chuang Tzu: Mystic, Moralist, and Social Reformer*, trans. Herbert A. Giles (London, UK: Bernard Quaritch, 1889), p. 381.

⁴⁰ Jakob Böhme, quoted in Franz Hartmann, *The Life and Doctrines of Jacob Boehme: The God-Taught Philosopher* (Boston, MA: Occult Publishing Company, 1891), p. 280.

science recognises two distinct dimensions of human identity: one relative or horizontal, and the other Absolute or vertical (while never blurring or confusing the two). In order to understand the fullness of what it means to be human, Paracelsus (1493–1541) points out that “If we would know the inner nature of man by his outer nature,”⁴¹ a properly ordered metaphysical framework is required.

Every ‘science of the soul’ provides spiritual teachings and methods to integrate our inner and outer selves. Again, in our true identity as the primordial nature (*fiṭrah*), the “image of God” (*imago Dei*), Buddha-nature (*Buddha-dhātu*), or the Self (*Ātmā*), we are the eternal witness that does not partake in the activities of the temporal world. No matter how many transgressions we may incur in this life, it must never be forgotten that our primordial nature can never be lost or destroyed, as it contains within itself the transpersonal human archetype. It is our essential identity in the Divine that prevents our fallen or *samsāric* state from becoming absolute or terminal.

The obscuration of the Intellect or “eye of the heart” has distorted our vision of reality, which inevitably leads to innumerable problems and immense suffering: “Where there is no vision, the people perish” (*Proverbs* 29:18). Because of this, our noetic faculty is reduced to a one-dimensional or tunnel-like vision, which makes us forget who we truly are, and what our relationship should be with all that is. It is only the perspective of the outward that denies the inward, and not the other way around: “Who is it then who is calling it ‘nothing’? Our outer self, to be sure, not our inner. Our inner self calls it ‘All.’”⁴² The limited scope of our vision has been described in the following manner: “They know only an outward appearance of this lower life” (*Qur’ān* 30:7). This ubiquitous darkening of the “eye of the heart,” coupled with an exclusive reliance on reason alone, has caused us to see only the outward at the expense of the inward.

⁴¹ Paracelsus, “Arts, a Gift of God,” in *Paracelsus: Selected Writings*, trans. Norbert Guterman, ed. Jolande Jacobi (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), p. 133.

⁴² Chapter 68, *The Cloud of Unknowing and Other Works*, trans. Clifton Wolters (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1978), p. 143.

independent of the inward.”⁴³ Without the inner self to ground the outer, we become diffused into our environment without orientation.

your mind. He who looks too hard on the outside gets clumsy on the inside.”⁴⁴

Philip Sherrard (1922–1995) explains: “The higher or spiritual consciousness perceives and experiences things as they are in themselves, inner and outer, spiritual and material, metaphysical and physical interpenetrating and forming a single unsundered and unsunderable reality.”⁴⁵ Through the transpersonal order, human beings can obtain a lasting equilibrium, because the body and soul are contingent on what surpasses them. For this reason, only what transcends the psycho-physical order can bring balance to the physical body and its human soul.

The True Self

We cannot overlook the complexity involved in understanding and healing the human psyche. As the soul is inseparable from the spiritual dimension of existence, treating it requires knowledge of humanity’s spiritual traditions. This is something that modern Western psychology does not appear to comprehend. Each person consists of Spirit, soul, and body, and has an inner and outer facet; the inward is linked to the spiritual dimension, and the outward to the psycho-physical order. Neither of these dimensions can be ignored without causing grave harm to our equilibrium.

References to the three-fold constitution of human beings can be

peace Himself sanctify you wholly; and may your *spirit and soul and body* be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 *Thessalonians* 5:23). This tripartite structure of Spirit/Intellect, soul and body is known in Latin as *Spiritus/Intellectus*,

⁴³ *Knowledge of God in Classical Sufism: Foundations of Islamic Mystical Theology*, trans. John Renard (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2004), p. 83.

⁴⁴ *Chuang Tzu: Basic Writings*, trans. Burton Watson (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1996), p. 122.

⁴⁵ Philip Sherrard, “Introduction,” to *Human Image: World Image: The Death and Resurrection of Sacred Cosmology* (Limni, Evia, Greece: Denise Harvey, 2004) p. 8.

anima, and *corpus*; in Greek as *Pneuma/Nous*, *psyche*, and *soma*; and in Arabic as *Rūḥ/Aql*, *nafs*, and *jism*.

The soul is a mystery; it is immersed in time while also being rooted in the timeless. The human body participates in time and space, whereas the Spirit transcends both. The human psyche belongs to the intermediary realm between body and Spirit, but partakes of both dimensions. The spiritual traditions all attest that the intermediary realm of the person is of Divine origin. We see this, for example, in the Islamic tradition – the “Lord who created you from a single soul” (*Qur’ān*

out that “The soul is *the junction of the two seas* ([*Qur’ān*] 18:59) of corporeal and spiritual things.”⁴⁶ That the heart-intellect is the centre of the human psyche is taught by Eckhart: “There is something in the soul that is uncreated and uncreatable ... [and] this is the intellect.”⁴⁷ Additionally, he informs us that “At the highest point of his ... soul, man is more God than creature.”⁴⁸

The purification of the soul (*tazkiyat al-nafs*) is of utmost importance, as we are reminded: “Surely the soul commands to evil, save whom my Lord may show mercy” (*Qur’ān* 12:53). Within

of the human psyche: ascending from the animal soul (*an-nafs al-ḥaywāniyah*), the passional soul (*an-nafs al-ammārah* or “soul that incites” to evil), the discerning or intelligent soul (*an-nafs al-lawwāmah* or “soul that blames”), and the intellective soul (*an-nafs al-muṭma’innah* or “the soul at peace,” the human psyche reintegrated in Spirit or *Rūḥ*).

In the Hindu tradition, the Spirit (*Purusha*) or Self (*Ātmā*) manifests as the individual soul (*jīvātmā*

⁴⁶ Mulla Sadra, “Principle (concerning the soul as ‘spiritual body’),” in *The Wisdom of the Throne: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Mulla Sadra*, trans. James Winston Morris (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981), p. 148.

⁴⁷ Meister Eckhart, quoted in *The Complete Mystical Works of Meister Eckhart*, trans. and ed. Maurice O’C Walshe (New York, NY: Crossroad Publishing Company, 2009), p. 28.

⁴⁸ Meister Eckhart, “Tractates 3: The Rank and Nature of the Soul,” in *Meister Eckhart*, trans. C. De B. Evans, ed. Franz Pfeiffer (London, UK: John M. Watkins, 1924), p. 290.

(*koshas*). The Spirit transcends each of these yet includes them at the same time. They are listed here in descending order, from the highest to the denser, or from the innermost to the outermost. The *ānandamaya-kosha*) is the Spirit, the next three (*vijñānamaya-kosha*, *manomaya-kosha*, and *prānamaya-kosha*) *annamaya-kosha*)

Maharshi (1879–1950), offers the following pithy insight from a non-dual perspective: “In fact there is no inside or outside for the Self.”⁴⁹

aggregates or “heaps” known as *khandhas* *skandhas*):
rūpa

Sanskrit: *vedanā* *saññā*; Sanskrit: *saṃjñā*);
saṅkhāras; Sanskrit: *saṃskāras*); and
viññāṇa; Sanskrit: *vijñāna*). However, the

existence of these aggregates does not preclude the existence of an *Attā*; Sanskrit: *Ātman*) that is not bound to birth, old age, sickness, and death. The Buddha does not take issue with the Hindu understanding of the Self as *neti, neti* (“not this, not that”) which, by means of negation, conveys an apophatic understanding that eliminates all determinate conceptions, leaving only the consciousness of that which is – the Self alone; all that is not this, can be considered ‘non-Self’ (*anattā*).

Mending the Fissures

If we are going to authentically address the harm caused by the Cartesian mind-body dualism that continues to handicap modern Western psychology, the discipline needs to return to its rightful foundations in metaphysics, sacred science, and spiritual principles. The demarcations of inside and outside correspond to the centre and the circumference, as well as to the vertical and horizontal among all

“He is the First and the Last, the Outward and the Inward” (57:3).

Absolute. Paracelsus explains that “form ... is also the essence, and

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Talks with Sri Ramana

Maharshi (Tiruvannamalai, India: Sri Ramanasramam, 1996), p. 5.

thus the form reveals the essence.”⁵⁰ Within the Buddhist tradition,

Prajñāpāramitā-hridaya-sūtra): “Form is emptiness ... emptiness is form.”⁵¹ Joseph Epes Brown (1920–2000), discusses the power of traditional spiritual practices for transforming “these ‘inner’ and ‘outer’ worlds into one.”⁵² Fundamentally, as Paracelsus again notes: “The outer and the inner are one.”⁵³ It is worth recalling the pertinent words in *The Gospel According to Thomas*: “When you make the two one, and when you make the inner as the outer and the outer as the inner and the above as the below ... then shall you enter the Kingdom.”⁵⁴

(1836–1886), the Paramahansa of Dakshineswar, recognises this non-dual dimension: “There is inner and outer harmony between *Purusha* [Spirit] and *Prakriti* [universal substance].”⁵⁵ In Ultimate Reality or the Absolute, there are no distinctions between the inner and outer for they are all one in the Divine.

Without returning to its metaphysical and ontological foundations, the discipline of psychology is unable to acknowledge either the tripartite division of the Spirit, soul, and body, or the inner and outer dimensions of the human being and its integrative healing modalities.

self requires therapy, as the inner self is already intrinsically whole. The “science of the soul,” as informed by the spiritual traditions, supports the

⁵⁰ Paracelsus, “Inner and Outer Worlds,” in *Paracelsus: Selected Writings*, trans. Norbert Guterman, ed. Jolande Jacobi (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), p. 121.

⁵¹ *Buddhist Scriptures*, trans. Edward Conze (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1959), p. 162.

⁵² Joseph Epes Brown, “Contemplation Through Action,” in *The Spiritual Legacy of the American Indian: Commemorative Edition with Letters While Living with Black Elk*, eds. Marina Brown Weatherly, Elenita Brown and Michael Oren Fitzgerald (Bloomington, IN: World Wisdom, 2007), p. 62.

⁵³ Paracelsus, “Man and His Body,” in *Paracelsus: Selected Writings*, trans. Norbert Guterman, ed. Jolande Jacobi (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), p. 21.

⁵⁴ Logion 22, *The Gospel According to Thomas: Coptic Text Established and Translated*, trans. Antoine Guillaumont, Henri-Charles Puech, Gilles Quispel,

⁵⁵ *The Gospel of Ramakrishna: Originally recorded in Bengali by M., a disciple of the Master*, trans. Swami Nikhilananda (New York, NY: Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center, 1977), p. 667.

human psyche in becoming fully integrated in all its modes of knowing and corresponding ways of healing: “The soul’s apprehension of the nature of things changes in accordance with its own inner state.”⁵⁶ In the same way that sages have emphasised the existence of the inner teacher – “the Guru is always within you”⁵⁷ – there is also an inner therapist,

spiritual guidance of a valid tradition to help prevent us from going astray and becoming lost in our turbid subjectivity.

A true “science of the soul” ensures that the assessment, treatment, and healing of a person is informed by the transpersonal dimension

the human body.⁵⁸ Therefore, being a wayfarer on a spiritual path is indispensable. Paracelsus speaks about the “inner physician” hidden within each person and that “Each ... disease bears its own remedy within itself.”⁵⁹

to the sick man and questions the inward physician; for within you there is a physician.”⁶⁰ St. John Cassian (c. 360–c. 435) writes: “The Doctor of our souls has also placed the remedy in the hidden regions of the soul.”⁶¹

is within you, but you do not know.”⁶²

⁵⁶ Nikitas Stithatos, “On the Practice of the Virtues: One Hundred Texts,” in *The Philokalia, Vol. 4: The Complete Text*; Compiled by St. Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain and St. Makarios of Corinth, trans. and ed. G.E.H. Palmer, Philip Sherrard, and Kallistos Ware (London, UK: Faber and Faber, 1998), p. 92.

⁵⁷ *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi* (Tiruvannamalai, India: Sri Ramanasramam, 1996), p. 370.

⁵⁸ See Seyyed Hossein Nasr, “The Wisdom of the Body,” in *Religion and the Order of Nature* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 235–269.

⁵⁹ Paracelsus, “Nature of Disease,” in *Paracelsus: Selected Writings*, trans. Norbert Guterman, ed. Jolande Jacobi (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), p. 76.

⁶⁰ *Discourses of Rumi*, trans. A.J. Arberry (London, UK: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004), p. 61.

⁶¹ St. John Cassian, “On the Eight Vices,” in *The Philokalia, Vol. 1: The Complete Text*; Compiled by St. Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain and St. Makarios of Corinth, trans. and ed. G.E.H. Palmer, Philip Sherrard, and Kallistos Ware (London, UK: Faber and Faber, 1983), p. 76.

⁶² *Sufism: A Beginner’s Guide* (Oxford, UK: Oneworld Publications, 2008), p. 104.

materialism, has led to human beings being rendered one-dimensional. To deny that “Man is both inner and outer”⁶³ or that “there is within every man both an outer and an inner man”⁶⁴ is to perpetuate the

transpersonal centre. This bifurcation has created a void in the human psyche that has proven to be profoundly traumatic. A metaphysical framework integrating the Spirit, soul, and body – and its diverse modes of knowing – is urgently needed to reconcile all facets of treatment.

While there is a boundary that divides our inner and outer selves, they are not impervious to one another as one might think; in fact, through the Intellect or the “eye of the heart,” the outward can illuminate the inward. Modern science is restricted to the phenomenal world, but the sacred science of the world’s spiritual traditions provides the keys to unlock knowledge of both the human microcosm and the universal macrocosm, as it applies to the spiritual, psychic, and corporeal orders. Only in returning psychology to a true “science of the soul,” can humanity become fully integrated, and thus faithful to its true vocation: “May the inward and outward man be at one.”⁶⁵



⁶³ Philip Sherrard, “The Roman Background,” in *The Greek East and the Latin West: A Study in The Christian Tradition* (Limni, Eva, Greece: Denise Harvey, 1995), p. 20.

⁶⁴ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, “Self-Awareness and Ultimate Selfhood: The Role of the Sacred Science of the Soul,” in *The Need for a Sacred Science* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1993), pp. 15–16.

⁶⁵ Socrates, quoted in Phaedrus 279b, *The Dialogues of Plato, Vol. I*, trans. Benjamin Jowett (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1892), p. 420.

Sri Allama Prabhu: The King of Nothingness

VIRUPAKSHA

Sadguru Ramana has a number of times referred to Allama Prabhu, the popular Kannada mystic and saint, well-known in the world of Advaita philosophy and to spiritual seekers. Allama Prabhudeva was a

Mantapa'.¹

It was a democratic gathering of religious practitioners and spiritual devotees sharing their day-to-day metaphysical experiences as well as a discussion on various subjects of life, which even now is

Mantapa' was a major spiritual centre for Shiva devotees, created

¹ The Anubhava Mantapa (lit. 'experience pavilion') was established by the saint-philosopher-poet-social reformer Basavanna in the 12th Century C.E. and is located in Basavakalyan in Bidar district of north Karnataka, some 200 kms west of Hyderabad.

Shilpi Virupaksha Davangere is a civil engineer, who received a doctorate from Mysore University for his Kannada literary research works on Allama

by the spiritual revolutionary Jagajyothi Basaveshwara under the township of Bidar. This was during the period of the Kalachoorya minister of the kingdom. Though a Brahmin by birth, he became the leader of many 'lower caste' people, uniting them through pure

Bidar district of Karnataka. It represented a revolution of devotional spirituality against the existing caste-based beliefs and practices of the time. Through his humble devotion, Basavanna inspired the downtrodden castes of cobblers, butchers, washermen, potters, barbers and manual scavengers and initiated them into the devotional cult of Lord Shiva by giving them necklaces with a tiny linga, called an 'ishta linga', and naming them *Shiva Sharanas*' – 'those who surrender to Shiva' – or 'Veerashaivas' – the 'heroic devotees of Shiva'.

Bhagavan Ramana had a copy of *Prabhulingaleela* by Chamarasa Kavi on his bookshelf. He has utilised verses 45 and 46 of *Prabhulingaleela* to compose verse no. 20 in *Ulladu Naarpadu Anubhandham* which is chanted at the Ashram during the Tuesday *pārāyanam*.

*Idayamalar guhaiyahamay ilagiraiye guhesanena ēthapaṭṭōn
Nidamanaiya guhesan yānenum sōham bhavanaitān ninnudambil...*

The Lord whose home is The Interior of the Heart-Lotus is extolled as Lord of the Cave, i.e., 'Guhaiishwara' or 'Guheshwara'. Allama Prabhu's name for Lord Shiva was Guheshwara. In his innumerable verses the Lord is addressed as Guheshwara.

A verse of Allama Prabhu in Kannada discloses the depth and vastness of his knowledge on the canvas of nothingness.

*Bayalu bayalane bitthi, bayalu bayalane beledu,
Bayalu bayalāgi bayalāyithayya. Bayala jīvana,
bayala bhāvane, bayalu bayalāgi bayalāyithayya.
Nimma pūjisidavaru munnave bayalādaru,
nā nimma nambi bayalāde, Guhēshwara.*

Space sowed the space, Space yielded the space,
Space became space of space
Living in Space, feeling space

SRI ALLAMA PRABHU: THE KING OF NOTHINGNESS

Space became space of space
Those who worshipped you earlier,
have already dissolved into space,

In Kannada, the subtle word '*bayalu*' means space, nothingness, completeness, God, Guru, or the Self. Allama gave a colourful, spiritual, unfathomable literal density to the word *bayalu* in his verses. Guru Ramana always focused all his teachings and attention in his entire lifespan only on the Self and Being That. Allama also focused on the spaciousness, *bayalu*, which is the Self Itself. But who can understand the Space/Nothingness or the Self through the mind? How can a bowl hold the whole ocean in it? Understanding space is becoming space itself. Even after one realises the Self or Space/Emptiness, how can it be explained or revealed to others? The spiritual search is like the salt doll diving into the ocean to know its depth. It

perfect harmony in the basic spiritual teachings of Sri Ramana and Allama Prabhu, though a span of 700 years had lapsed between the two great spiritual masters.

in the 12th century who in their exploration of the nature of reality invigorated and stretched the language that was constricted by a strict grammar based on Sanskrit. They revolutionised the literal, rigid structure and developed a novel, simple, native, linguistic perspective based on individual metaphysical experiences. A tradition of Pure Kannada literary verses was evolved that united the physical and spiritual values of life which eventually became recognised in the world's spiritual literature. The verses were named '*vachanas*'. Sharana literature opposed the social differences of colour, class, and sex and encouraged seekers to reject the negative aspects that lurked in the mind by invoking the divine nature of human beings. Literature that previously was the sole domain of kings and the royal palace was brought by these new poets with their simple, straight way of writing and living to the attention of the common man and woman. *Vachanakars* (that is, those who composed *vachanas*) revealed and proved that by deploying their usual colloquial language, one can express one's inner and outer experiences through which individual

and universal truths can be realised and consequent upliftment of the individual and the community can be attained.

Basaveshwara and his group of Sharanas gave life to the increasingly moribund social system through a new spiritual revolution which was received enthusiastically amongst the common people. Many sadhaks were attracted by these novel thoughts and spiritual ideology and

Bhakti Bhandari Basavanna as he was addressed by the Sharanas for his down-to-earthiness, united the Sharanas through his transparently genuine devotion and reformatory impulse. And the other pillar of this movement, Allama Prabhu deva, known as the treasure of knowledge and renunciation, propelled them towards formless truth.

Allama was not a sentimental person, he was a rare rational saint, a rebel poet and a seeker of knowledge. He vigorously rejected the blind rituals of caste and creed. He was a *jnani* and a kindhearted human being. His spiritual verses were oriented towards the eternal, formless Absolute. They often sound contradictory, being constructed like puzzles or koans, complex and pregnant with hidden spiritual meaning.

Allama mocked the casteist rituals, customs, and blind religious beliefs of his day with his deeply ironic and sarcastic verses. Only mature jnanis can excavate the depth of meaning in his verses. This verse illustrates his biting sarcasm:

*Ajnānavemba thōṭṭilalli gnānavemba shishuva malagisi,
Sakala vēda shāsthraṅgalemba nēna katti
tūgi jogulavāduththihalu bhrānṭhi emba thāyi.
Thottilu muridu nēna haridu jogula nindallade
Guhēshwaranemba lingava kānalāgadu.*

In the cradle of ignorance, a child of knowledge is laid to sleep,
Tied with the rope of all the Vedas and shastras,
Mother delusion is swinging the cradle singing a lullaby.
Unless the cradle is dismantled,
the ropes sheared off and the lullaby stopped,
Lord Guheshwara Linga can never be seen.

Allama Prabhu took birth in Balligavi in Shikaripura taluk of Shimoga district, Karnataka state. He belonged to the Naagavaasa 'lower' caste.



They were temple performers serving the royal family. The poet and

that this Naagavaasi family was allowed to dwell within the palace grounds. Nirahankaara was Allama's father and Sujnani his mother. Allama was their only son, born after a long span of conjugal life. As he belonged to a family of musicians, he learned how to play the *mridangam* and the *dhol*, and developed a great interest in music and dance, like his father. He became an extraordinary player of the *mridangam*. But his behaviour was very different from that of other young men.

As a youth, he had no interest in worldly attractions or in the beauty of young girls. His youthful energy only appeared while playing the *mridangam*. The rest of the time he was like a mouna muni (silent saint) engrossed in introverted silence.

But, as time passed, an act of divine sport disturbed Allama's silence. He was a very handsome young man with a *rudrakshamala* (necklace) tied around his neck. On the night of Shivarathri, Allama, radiant with *rudraksha* beads decorating his neck and the *mridangam* in his hands entered the Madhukeshwara temple in the silent night of Banavasi town. He played the *mridangam* all through the night, dancing to its beat. All the people were greatly attracted by his play on a drum. During that night of Shivarathri, Mayadevi, a beautiful young woman, along with her servants, entered the temple. Her beauty made her appear like an incarnation of Jaganmohini Parvathi, the wife of Lord Shiva. An ocean of beauty, an angel of love, her body like that of a creeper thin and buoyant, her skin glowing as if lit with the lustre of moonlight, attracted many a passerby. She was Maya! At the sight of Allama she forgot her *pūjā* and curiously observed the long-haired drummer, who looked like Lord Shiva, dancing around Nandi.

She loved him wholeheartedly and Allama also dissolved in her irresistible ecstatic beauty. They both fell in love and tuned together like rhythm and music. The stage of dance transformed into a dais of love. Both were deep in love and destined to be inseparable. The two souls were united like two rivers syncing together in *sangama*. The lovers were soon married.

But God had his own plans. He struck a thunderbolt in Allama's peaceful life. Beloved Mayadevi was taken ill, had a high fever and

died. Allama was drowned in an ocean of despair. He lost interest in life, in his relatives, his *mridangam*, and the Madhukeshwara temple, and instead roamed here and there aimlessly, like a dried leaf caught in a whirlwind. Months rolled by.

One day, as Allama was sitting on a small hilltop, he picked up a long stick and aimlessly started scratching the earth. Suddenly, a yellow metallic tip shone in the earth below. He vigorously removed the soil around it and found out that it was the top of a golden *kalasha* (the spire of a temple). Some people reported this to the king, who immediately ordered that the hill be excavated, to reveal the temple hidden inside it. Hundreds of workers started the excavation work and in a short time a very ancient temple was revealed. Its main door stood open. But nobody dared to enter the temple, despite the offer of a reward for the brave man who dared to enter it. At last Allama stood up and declared, 'I will enter the temple.'

He stepped into the temple. Profound darkness met him. But Allama had lost all hope in life and was hence determined to explore the temple against all odds. Walking on into the darkness, he was

The light of a glaring sun blinded him. He discovered that it came from a tiny Shivalingam, which blazed in the palm of an aged Shiva yogi! This mysterious yogi was sage Animishaiah.

many centuries the Shiva yogi Animishaiah had been meditating in this ancient temple? He was skeletal, but his eyes were as powerful as blazing suns. Allama, however, saw only the light of the *lingam* in Animishaiah's palm. The mass of delusion (*maya*) within him began to dissolve. He prostrated to the saint and instinctively moved his hands towards the blazing *lingam*. The yogi dropped his *ishta lingam* into the palms of Allama. At that very instant, as the *lingam* touched Allama, he attained self-realisation. He was reborn to a new incarnation. His transformation was like that of the ugly caterpillar

eyes on the *ishta lingam*. Everything else disappeared! Temple, town and world dissolved, along with his body and mind. Who knows how long he was in this state?

In a *vachana*, he explains the grace that was poured upon him:

*Eththana māmara eththana kogile eththanindeththa
sambandhavayya?*

*Bettada nellikayi samudradolagana uppu eththanindeththa
sambandhavayya?*

*Guhēshwara lingakkeyu enageyu indu eththanindeththa
sambandhavayya?*

Where dwells the mango tree, where rests the cuckoo?

How and where did their relationship evolve?

The gooseberry on the hilltop,
salt in the ocean beneath,

How and where did their relationship evolve?

How and where did our relationship evolve, my Lord?

He was transformed into an untainted spiritual river that would quench the divine thirst of seekers. Allama Prabhu was now a Siddha Purusha who wandered like a *jnana prabhu* who could reveal *mukti marga* to devotees.

In a verse he discloses his advaitic state:

Manave lingavāda balika innāra nenevudayya?

Bhāvane aikyavādabalika bayasuvudinnāranu?

Bhrameyalidu nijavu sādhyavāda balika,

Arivudinnāranu Guhēshwara?

When mind itself has transformed into a linga,
who is there to remember?

When thought itself has vanished, what is there to desire?

When delusion itself has dried up and truth has been realised,

While wandering he met a farmer ‘Goggaiyah’, a karma yogi who secretly worshipped Lord Shiva. Allama guided him. Instead of cultivating the external farm and getting caught in the clutches of karma, he enlightened him on the path of cultivating the ‘inner farm’, i.e. the body and mind, after plucking out the roots of delusions. He guided him on the path of Self-realisation through his own experiences.

A vachana of Allama explains the need of ‘farming’ the inner mind:

*Thanuva thōntava mādi, manava guddaliya mādi, Agedu
kaLedenayyaa bhraantina bēra;*

*oDedu samsārada henteya, Bagedu bittidenayyā brahma
bījava;
akanda mandalavemba bāvi, pavanave rātāla, sushumna
nāladinda udakava tiddi,
basavaḡaLaivaru hasagedisihavendu, samathe sairane
emba bēliyanikki,
āvāḡaluI tōtadalli jāḡaraviddu, sasiya salahidenu kānā
Guhēshvara.*

I made the body a farm, mind a pickaxe,
dug and removed the root of delusion,
broke up the lumps of soil of life,
pierced and planted the seed of Brahman,
Well of Akanda Mandala, breath as pump,
diverted to Sushumna Nala, I fed water to the farm,
I erected a fence of tolerance and tranquillity to guard

Being always awake in the farm, I cultivated the

Allama Prabhu reached Srishailam. A famous Hatha Yogi named ‘Goraksha’ lived there. His body had become as strong as iron through his yogic *sādhana*. While immersed in the bliss of the Self, Allama was spotted by Goraksha in the forest. Inviting Allama for a challenge, Goraksha exhibited his many powers of black magic. At the end, he took a long sword, gave it to Allama and asked him to strike his body. Allama struck Goraksha, as asked. When struck, a metallic sound echoed from Goraksha’s body. The sword could not pierce his hardened body. Goraksha therefore smiled, enjoying his victory. But Allama returned the sword to Goraksha and asked him to strike at his own body. Goraksha was stunned by this. But when Goraksha struck Allama with his sword, the sword passed through his body as if moving through air! There was nobody there! It was just like striking the sword at empty space. Shocked by this, Goraksha immediately realised what it meant. Allama had escaped all the limitations of name and form and was completely bodiless, in truth. That was why the sword had passed through his body as if through air. Goraksha’s ego vanished, as soon as he realised that even the most powerful

body could not conquer the Formless. He immediately surrendered to Allama, praying to be accepted by him as his disciple. Accepting him, Allama revealed the Ultimate Reality:

*Kallaganji kāda hokkode hulyu thimbuda māmbude?
Huliganji huththa hokkode sarpa thimbuda māmbude?
Kālakanji bhakthanādode karma thimbuda māmbude?
Intii mrutyuvina bāyi tuthhada vēsha dambakaranēnembe
Guhēshwara?*

Afraid of the thief, if you hide in a forest,
won't the tiger eat you?

Afraid of the tiger, if you hide in an anthill,
won't the serpent bite you?

Afraid of time, if you pose as a devotee,
won't your karma consume you?

Likewise, what is there to say about a charlatan who will end

Another story relates how Allama met Mukthayakka, the only beloved sister of Ajaganna, a *jīvanmukta* who had initiated her to the spiritual path. He subsequently died and Muktha couldn't imagine her spiritual life without her guru brother. At this juncture, Allama met her all the while she was drowned in deep sorrow, and chided her for crying. Like a master he lit the lamp of knowledge in the dark days of Mukthayakka and led her to total liberation:

*Bevasaya mādi maneya bīyakke bhaththavilladiddare aa
bevasāyada godovethakayya?*

*Kraya vikrayava mādi maneya sancha nadeyadannakkara
aa kraya vikrayada godavethakayya?*

*Odeyanōlaisi thanuvinge ashtabhogava padeyadiddare
aa ōlagada godavethakayya?*

*Bhakthanāgi bhava nāsthiyagadiddare aa upadeshava
kotta guru unDa shishya ivaribbaramaneyalli māri
hogali, Guhēshwara lingavaththale hogali!*

Being an agriculturist, if you have no seeds for sowing,
then what is the use of such farming?

then what is the use of such a trade?

Being a servant of the king, if you have not relished delicious food, then what is the use of such service?

Being a devotee, if you cannot realise the Truth, let devils occupy the houses of the guru and *sishyā* who gave and

(now, Sholapur in Maharashtra). Siddarameshwara, a Shiva yogi who attained the grace of lord Shiva in his childhood, had engaged himself in social and spiritual activities and was enshrined as the master of the place. Construction of reservoirs, temples, ashrams for doing *annadanam* (charitable food offering) was his public service. He had many *siddhis* and a large number of followers who worshiped him.

Allama understood about Siddarama through his inner vision and there followed a confrontation between Allama and Siddarama.

Siddarameshwara became enraged and used his occult powers

Siddarama couldn't accept the defeat before his disciples, and again attacked Allama with the multiple powers he had accumulated but failed. Ultimately he collapsed on the ground unconscious. When he woke up, he held the feet of Allama Prabhu and prayed, "O, Mahatma, I realised that you are none other than my beloved Lord Shiva. Hence you succeeded in repelling my attacks. Kindly excuse me and show me the path of eternal victory and peace."

Allama Prabhu in reply said, "Siddarama, you are drowned in the reservoir of *karma bhakti*

jnana. Providing social services like shelter, food, water etc. to make this physical body comfortable is not the duty of a yogi. These services are temporary. They cannot offer eternal bliss. The duty of a real spiritual master is to show others the path of Self-realisation which is the seed of eternal bliss. It is where one can be without duality of joy and sorrow. The reservoir built by placing stones one over the other will surely one day break down. Instead, using stones of awareness and constructing a reservoir of Self-knowledge, the water of eternal

of a yogi or a master". Allama enlightened Siddarameshwara on the

path of self-knowledge. Allama Prabhu through a verse awakens yogi Siddharameshwara:

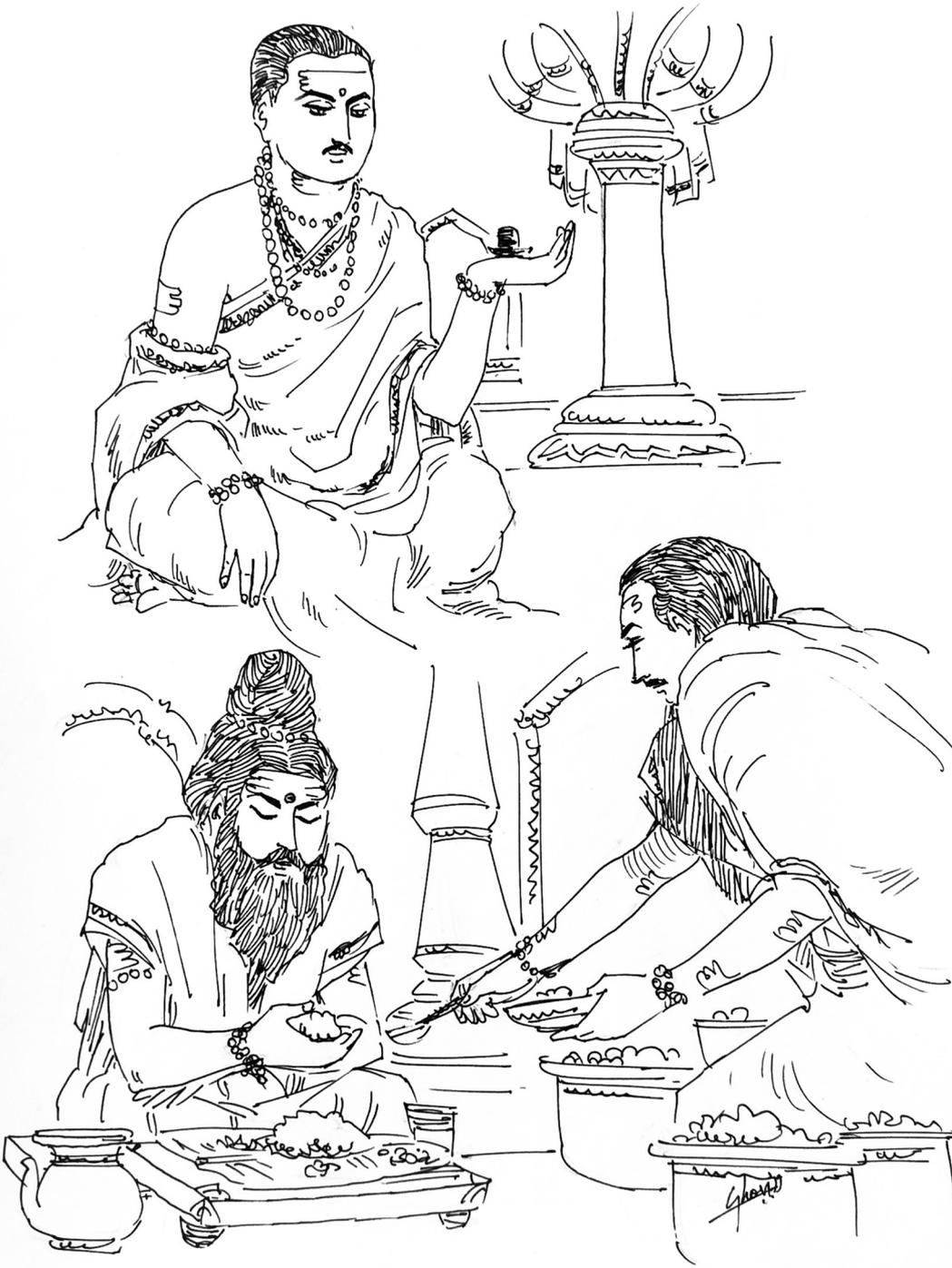
*Deha bhāvavalidallade jīva bhāvavaliyadu
Jīva bhāvavalidallade bhakthi bhāvavalavadadu
Bhakthi bhāvavalavattallade arivu tale dōradu
Arivu thale doridallade kuruhu nashta vāgadu
Kuruahu nashtavādallade māye hingadu
Idu kārana kāyada jīvada holigeyalida bhēdhava
Thiliyaballade guhēshwara lingada arivu sādhyavappudu-
Siddharamaiah.*

Unless *deha bhāva* (body feeling) is annihilated,
jīva bhāva (ego feeling) can't be eradicated,
Unless *jīva bhāva* is eradicated, *bhakti bhāva* (the feeling
of devotion) can't be attained,
Unless *bhakti bhāva* is attained,
Awareness can't be awakened,
Unless Awareness is awakened, identity can't be erased,
Unless identity is annihilated, delusion can't be discarded.
This is the reason, Siddharamaiah. If you can discern the
difference, beyond the union of *dēha* (the body) and *jīva*

In the above verse, the word *bhāva* is used to denote the hidden passion of the mind. *Bhava* is birth; *bhāva* is an extended hidden fruit of action that yields the seed of birth through the mind i.e., *chitta*. Hence, *deha bhāva* is nothing but passion for one's own body. *Jīva bhāva* is passion for *prana* or life. Hence, Allama says, to realise Guheshwara, the eternal Self, one must understand the profound limitations of the perishable body and enter the great mystery of communion with the Real.

Soon after, Allama hears of Basavanna and the Anubhava Mantapa.

Jagajyothi Basaveshwara, better known as Bhakti Bhandari Basavanna was a great spiritual reformer who reformed the Veerashaiva religion by putting the Bhakti, Jnana, Karma and Yoga paths together. Even though a Brahmin by birth, he had rejected caste identities altogether, and was thus able to win the loyalty of many



MOUNTAIN PATH

‘lower caste’ people. He taught them how to attain equanimity by leading a spiritual life when he initiated them in the worship of the Ishta Linga. He did this for people from the Dalit (‘untouchable’) castes too. He was a humble, pure hearted devotee of Lord Shiva. His modesty, humility and loving nature attracted devotees to him from Kanyakumari to Kashmir.

Hennu māye embaru, hennu māye alla.

Honnu māye embaru, honnu māye alla.

Mannu māye embaru , mannu māye alla.

Manada mundana aaseye māye kānā Guhēshwara

Gold is *māyā* (delusion) they say,

No! Gold is not *māyā*,

Woman is *māyā* they say,

No! Woman is not *māyā*,

Wealth is *māyā* they say,

No! Wealth is not *māyā*,

The desires of the mind are the only *māyā*!

with Siddarama to meet Basavanna. Allama stood at the main entrance and sent a messenger in. But Basavanna was deeply engrossed in his Shiva pooja. He couldn’t attend to Allama. So Allama pretended to burst with uncontrollable anger, declaring, “Does not Basavanna know that Lord Shiva has declared that a Shiva Sharana (Shiva devotee) is greater than Shiva himself? Why can’t he stop his Linga pooja to attend to Jangama seva?”

Suddenly Basavanna appeared before him, welcoming him and performing *pāda pūjā* (worship of the feet of a holy person) with utmost devotion. But Allama was not fooled – he realised that Basavanna had appeared before him in his *sūkṣma śarīra* (subtle body)! While his physical body continued to perform the *pūjā* of his *iṣṭa līngam* at home, Basavanna had materialised before Allama in his subtle body, in order to welcome him. Allama thus realised the power of Basava’s religious devotion and whole-heartedly embraced Basavanna. In fact, knew each other well, even though they had not met earlier. The union of these two great souls was like the meeting

(*sangam*) of the two great rivers, the Ganga and the Yamuna, Basava offered in worship to the Lord, while Allama was like the pure gold

deep humility, praised Basavanna in this verse:

Advaitava nudidu ahankāriyādenayya
Brahmava nudidu bhramita nādenayya
Shūnyava nudidu sukha dukhake guriyādenayya
Guhēshwara, nimma sharana Sangana Basavannana
sānnidhyadinda nānu sadbhaktanādenayya

I became an *ahankari* (an egotist) speaking on Advaita (Non-Duality),
I deluded myself while speaking on Parabrahman,
I became subjected to joy and sorrow while commenting on *Shūnyata* (Emptiness, i.e. the pure Self-nature),

Only by the divine grace of your *sharana sanga*,
Basavanna, have I (at last) become a true devotee!

Allama, though an advaitin, surrendered to the loving-kindness and humble devotion of Basavanna and accepted his offer to settle at for an extended period.

‘Throne of Nothingness’ on Allama Prabhu at his religious centre, the Anubhava Mantapa. About 180,000 Shiva Sharanas (devotees) were fed there daily. People from all castes gathered there to seek the spiritual guidance of Allama and Basavanna.

It is recorded as the foremost democratic concept in the world. As early as in the 12th century Basava invited women to participate and share their experiences in Anubhava Mantapa. Under the marvellous

a Shiva Sharane and wrote verses to express herself. Credibility of a verse was valued on the basis of its spiritual quality. They were

recorded in the book made of palmyra leaves. Within a short while

the master of Shiva Sharanas by evaluating the spiritual values of the

writers of the verses. Allama and Basava were enshrined like the sun

Basavanna had a *sattvic* pride of having serving food to 1,80,000 Sharanas at Anubhava Mantapa. It is called ‘*dāsoha*’ i.e feeding food with *dāsa bhava* (the humility of a servant). Usually the one who gives *dāna* or offering is considered to be superior to the one who receives it. But here, the giver gives in the *bhāva* of *dāsa* (servant).

Basava wanted Allama to visit the place where the 180,000 Sharanas received ‘*prasādam*’ several invitations, one day he accepted to visit and have *prasādam*

“Alright Basavanna, today, I am very much hungry. Now, quench my hunger by serving the *prasādam* of your *dāsoha*”. He sat in the dining hall to have food. Basava himself served the *prasādam*. Allama swallowed everything within no time. Again, food was served, again it was consumed. All that was cooked was exhausted. Despite serving all the food cooked for all 1,80,000 Sharanas Allama’s hunger was barely satiated. Allama was devouring the food served on the plate like a glutton. Basava was perspiring heavily and soon got tired. He was puzzled and shocked at Allama’s hunger. He ordered to bring all the rations, and raw vegetables from the storeroom to satisfy him. But all went in vain. Allama emptied whatever was served! The pride of Basava vanished. With tears in his eyes Basava surrendered himself along with his nephew Channabasaveshwara, “Let me be rice, let Channabasava be Sambar, kindly accept our lives as *prasādam* to satisfy your divine hunger.” Then Allama with a smile said,

Bettakke chaliyādade adēna hodisuvenayya.

Bayalu beththalādode ēna uDisuvarayya

*Bhakthanu bhavi ādare adanēna Upamisuvenayya,
Guhēshwara?*

What do you cover with, to the chilled mount,

What do you dress with, in the nudity of space,

What can you say,

when a *bhakta* (devotee) turns into a sinner (*bhavi*),

O Lord Guheshwara!

rose from the seat with a loud burp. Thus, he concluded the event of *dāsoha*. In the interval, 1,80,000 Shiva Sharanas were hungry and waiting for *prasādam*

delay and were ready to quit the hall. Basavanna apologised to the Sharanas and begged Allama to satisfy their hunger. Allama with a smile picked up a grain of rice, swallowed it, and burped out fully contented. Surprisingly all the *jangamas* who were crying for food became silent with contentment. Like a miracle, their stomachs were

This *mahima* (greatness) of Allama increased the respect for Basava devotion for the Sharanas surpassing even that for Lord Shiva.

Thumbi bandade parimala odiththa kande, ēnu sōjiga hela!

Mana bandade buddhi odiththa kande.

Dēva bandade dēgula odiththa kande, Guhēshwara.

When the bee approached, I saw the fragrance running away... what a surprise you see...

When the mind approached,

I saw the intellect running away.

When the Lord approached,

nondual ultimate reality. Everyone was weighed on Allama's scale of knowledge which was as sharp as the edge of a sword.

Akka Mahadevi, a great woman mystic and saint, was tested by Allama at the Anubhava Mantapa. Mahadevi, then a beautiful young woman, had spurned the royal life of a queen, offered by Koushika, the king of Uduthadi, and instead, in a shocking rejection of social conventions, had shed all her clothing, became nude, only covered by her long hair, and had walked barefoot, as a religious mendicant, to

Shiva Sharanas.

Allama decided to test her to ascertain the genuineness of her dramatic public renunciation. He secretly sent a young man, Kinnari

Bommanna, to try to seduce her, by pretending to be in love with her. But Bommanna failed totally. Bommanna then publicly declared that she was “the true Elder Sister (Akka – a term of respect) of the whole world”, and that her mind was as pure as ether.

Hearing this, Allama extolled Akka Mahadevi’s renunciation in this verse:

Āsege saththudu koti!

Āmishakke saththudu koti!

Honnu, hennu, manninge saththudu koti!

Guhēshwara nimagāgi saththavarāranū kāne!

Ten million people died for the sake of their desires,

Ten million people died for the sake of their temptations,

Ten million people died trying to gain gold, women, wealth!

Allama means that Akka Mahadevi alone, of all the populace, through her extraordinary rejection of all social and worldly values, has ‘died’ to all worldly attachments, for the sake of the Lord.

Then, in order to demonstrate the genuineness of Mahadevi’s renunciation to all the Shiva Sharanas and to the world at large, Allama once more challenged Akka Mahadevi, at the entrance to the Anubhava Mantapa, with these words: “Stop there, Mother. You have rejected your material abode, and you claim that Lord Channamallikarjuna (Lord Shiva) is your husband. Give me the details of your husband. You claim that you are a nude Vairagini, like empty space, but you have hidden your nudity with your long hair. You claim that you have renounced the world. Alright, prove your renunciation and your spiritual realisation!”

Tender-hearted Basavanna was deeply pained by Allama’s peremptory questioning of Akka Mahadevi. However, Mahadevi answered Allama with perfect calm, quoting widely from many religious verses (vachanas), and giving extremely apt replies to his questions. Hugely impressed, the Shiva Sharanas unanimously accepted her as the ‘Elder Sister’ (Akka) of their conclave. And Allama Prabhu himself declared, “We prostrate to Vairagini Mahadevi Akka, saying ‘Namō Namaha to her feet!’”

Like a goldsmith testing gold, Allama proved Akka Mahadevi's saintliness to the entire conclave at the Anubhava Mantapa. He reiterated his astonishment at the depth of her renunciation and at the luminous quality of her wisdom in this verse:

*Huliya benninalli ondu hulle mēidu bandenendade Ida
kandu beragāde
Rakkasiya manege hogi nidregaidu bandenendode Ida
kandu beragāde
Javana manege hōgi sāyade badiki bandenendode Ida
kandu beragāde Guhēshwara*

If a deer returns after grazing behind a tiger, I am astonished,
If one returns from a devil's house having a good sleep,
I am astonished,
If one enters the home of death and returns alive,

Marula Shankara was a great Shiva Sharana, who worked as a humble servant at the Anubhava Mantapa, picking up the used leaf plates in the dining hall. He never spoke to anybody and was regarded as a madman, hence people called him, 'Marula' Shankara. But Allama, on seeing him, instantly recognised his extraordinary spiritual attainments. He celebrated Marula Shankara Deva with this verse:

*Veda pramānavalla, shāstra pramānavalla,
Purāna pramānavalla ,kānibho lingakke!
Angasangada madhyadallidduda baichittu belagida
Guhēshwara, nimma sharana.*

The Vedas cannot measure,
The holy scriptures cannot measure,
The sacred myths cannot measure,
The immensity of the Shiva Linga!
He, your true sharana, Marula,

Allama's personality was like the vast sky. Unfathomable, unpredictable, puzzling, very subtle, sensitive and cosmic, universal relevance was his temperament. He comments in a verse about the

expansive universe as just ‘*yathkinchit*’, just a dust molecule. He had such completeness of *jñāna* in his vision. Allama, being in the state of Parabrahman, in expressing the whole universe as just ‘*yathkinchit*’ cannot be a matter of astonishment.

At the end of the 12th century, Allama felt that the purpose of his life on earth was complete and declared that he had chosen *kadali vana* (plantain garden) of Srishailam to discard his body and attain the ultimate communion with Lord Guheshwara. He disclosed to all the Sharanas the way and place of their communion with Lord Shiva.

would guide the *aikya sthala*² for all Shiva Sharanas.

Allama’s spiritual strength and his deep understanding of Advaita played a very important role in forming the new sharana religion and its radical ideology that utterly rejected the inhumane casteist prejudices of the old religious tradition. Allama’s contributions to Advaitic philosophy, to the creation of Lingayat religious ideology and to universal spirituality are immeasurable.

He therefore remains the pole star for true seekers, in the vast sky of spiritual wisdom, encouraging us with these words:

*Kanduda hidiyalollade kānadudanarasi
hididade sikkademba balalikeya nōda,
Kandudane kandu gurupādava
hididalli kānaduda kānabahudu, Guhēshwar!*

If we reject the seen (phenomena) and seek the Unseen
(the Self) by searching for it with our intellect,
It is unlikely that we will succeed!
Instead, if we accept the seen,
but cling solely to the Holy Feet of the Guru,



² The *Aikya Sthala* is the phase/state/level which is the culmination where the soul leaves the physical body and merges with the Supreme. The six Shatsthala comprises the *Bhakta Sthala*, *Maheshwara Sthala*, *Prasadi Sthala*, *Pranalingi Sthala*, *Sharana Sthala* and the *Aikya Sthala*.

The Paramount Importance of Self Attention

Part Forty Five

SADHU OM
AS RECORDED BY MICHAEL JAMES

2nd February 1979

Sadhu Om [while talking with me and another young friend]: At least you have some friends to talk with and to encourage you to persevere in following this path of self-investigation and self-

though they were all devoted to Bhagavan, they were not interested in following his path. Janaki Matha encouraged her followers to do *pūjā*, *japa* and so on, but not self-investigation or self-surrender.

She and her followers were not exceptions in this respect. Then as now, the majority of Bhagavan's devotees are devoted to him, but not to his teachings. For them he is God, and they love and worship him as such, while paying little more than lip service to the fact that

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.

guru. That is, the reason he appeared in human form was to teach us to turn back within, where he is always shining as our own real nature, and thereby to surrender ourself wholly to him, losing ourself forever in him. Therefore, though he is certainly God, his primary role is the deeper and more important role of *guru*. If we take him to be God, as such he will certainly bless

take him to be not only God but more importantly *guru*, which means that we should be devoted not only to his outward name and form but also to his teachings, and should accordingly try our best to turn back within and thereby surrender ourself completely to him, allowing him to swallow us entirely.

Though Bhagavan was bodily present in those days, we could not ask him about the inner challenges and struggles we faced in following his path. If anyone were to ask him about such things, he would generally keep quiet. Though his silent response may make it

experienced by such earnest aspirants, he actually knows all our

our heart to rectify the causes of all the obstacles that prevent us turning within and surrendering ourself entirely to him.

Among those who came to him sincerely seeking *mōkṣa* [liberation], the most ripe souls came, learnt all that needs to be learnt by reading his writings and quietly observing his answers to questions, considering carefully and deeply the meaning and implications of his words, and putting them into practise by turning and thereby subsiding back within, and then left after achieving what they had come for, without anyone else knowing the great transformation that Bhagavan had accomplished in their heart. Others, who were not so perfectly ripe, understood what they needed to do, but nevertheless struggled to sink deep enough within, so they inwardly prayed to him to give them the wholehearted and all-consuming love required to surrender themself completely to him by sinking back within and merging forever in the source from which they had risen. By their

thereby allowing him to devour them entirely.

THE PARAMOUNT IMPORTANCE OF SELF ATTENTION

A few of us, like Muruganar and myself, were blessed by Bhagavan with the gift of poetry, so instead of just praying inwardly, we would write our prayers as songs and verses, which we would give to Bhagavan and sometimes sing in his presence. He generally never commented on the prayers we made in such verses, or expressed either approval or disapproval of them, but he would make small but

even more meaningful, forceful and heart-melting, and thereby he indirectly showed his approval for what we were praying for. If you read some of the verses he had amended in this way, your heart would melt and you would weep with love for him.

Earnest and mature aspirants seldom if ever used to ask him any educated of his devotees, never asked him any questions, so what to

to him by sinking back within? Most of the questions were asked by casual visitors, learned pandits and less mature devotees, some of whom had lived many years in his presence but who had nevertheless still not imbibed the true import of his teachings, and whose minds were therefore constantly assailed by doubts and confusion. It is

Talks and Day by Day, and Bhagavan's answers were given accordingly to suit the needs and level of understanding of each particular person who asked those questions.

Sadhu Om [when some visitors were discussing different reasons people give for doing *giri-pradakṣiṇa* (circumambulating Arunachala), such as gaining *puṇya* or even feeling some vibration, and then asked him why he did so, and what dos and don'ts should be observed while doing so]: I never did *giri-pradakṣiṇa* for gaining

I knew that it was only by his grace that I was able to do *pradakṣiṇa*, I never felt any need to observe any dos or don'ts such as not talking or not urinating. The only thing I do not like to omit while doing *pradakṣiṇa* is singing *Aruṇācala Akṣaramaṇamālai*, but nowadays even that is sometimes not possible.

Regarding *puṇya* [righteous action and merit accruing therefrom], I was never interested in any such thing. Whenever Devaraja Mudaliar

saw me doing *pradakṣiṇa* he would say, ‘Even to see someone who is going round Arunachala is a great *punya*, so you are sharing your *punya* with me’, but I would just keep quiet without saying anything in reply. One day he asked me why I never replied when he said this, so I explained that I never considered that I was gaining *punya* by going round the hill, and hence even if it were true that he was taking any *punya* from me, it was no loss for me. What is the loss if someone takes from us what we do not want and do not even know we have?

9th February 1979

Sadhu Om: In one of my verses I sing to Bhagavan: ‘What a foolish fellow I am! All this time I have been trying to convince myself that the world is unreal and to regard it as such, while overlooking the primary mistake of mistaking myself, the one to whom this world appears, to be real’.

18th February 1979

Sadhu Om: Like most of the other verses of *Uḷḷadu Nārpadu Anubandham*, verses 4 and 5 are Tamil translations that Bhagavan wrote of Sanskrit verses. In verse 4 he says:

Heat will be removed by the cool moon, poverty by the good
kalpaka *pāpa* [sin or demerit]
by the *gaṅgā* [the holy river Ganges]. All these three, beginning with
heat, will depart [slip off or cease] just by the great *darśana* [sight]
of peerless *sādhus* [benevolent people, which in this context implies
jñānis, those who know and abide as their own real nature].

In this context ‘heat’ means not just physical heat but the heat of mental activity in the form of burning desires, fears, hopes, worries, anxieties and such like. Likewise, ‘poverty’ means not just lack of material possessions but the still greater poverty called ‘desire’

wealth or whatever else one may desire. All kinds of heat, all kinds of poverty and all *pāpa* [sinful actions and demerit accruing therefrom] are removed just by one’s seeing the *jñāni*, who is peerless in every respect.

The *gaṅgā*
heaven, the world of the gods, and the moon is in the intermediate world called *pitṛlōka* [the world of departed ancestors who are yet to

move on to any other world], so when Bhagavan describes *sādhus* or *jñānis* here as ‘*iṅai-y-illā*’, peerless, incomparable or unequalled, he implies that in all these three worlds, and indeed in all other worlds, there is no one and nothing that is equal or even comparable to the *jñāni*.

Likewise in verse 5 he implies that there is nothing that is equal, similar or comparable to the *jñāni*:

Tīrthas [sacred bathing places], which are composed of water, and deities [images of God], which are [composed of] stone or earth, are not at all like [equal or comparable to] those *mahātmās* [great souls or *jñānis*]. Ah! See, those [*tīrthas* and deities] give rise to purity by countless days [that is, gradually over a long period of time], [whereas] *sādhus* [*jñānis*] [do so] as soon as they see by eye.

Tīrthas and divine images bestow purity in accordance with the faith and love of each devotee, so whether they purify one’s mind and the speed at which they do so is dependent on the existence and extent of one’s faith and love. If someone has no faith or devotion at all, *tīrthas* and divine images will not purify their mind, and since the faith and devotion of most people are not very deep and intense, the rate at which *tīrthas* and divine images will purify them is extremely

it, whether or not they believe it will do so or want it to do so, the gracious look of the *jñāni* will purify anyone, whether or not they have any faith and devotion, so the purifying effect of being seen by the *jñāni*

faith and devotion will sprout, grow and blossom in it.

things are consumed by it more quickly than others. For example, the

because it is full of moisture, whereas dry wood will be consumed more quickly, and gun powder instantaneously. Likewise, though the mind of anyone who is seen by the *jñāni* will thereby immediately

and consumed, whereas a mind that is less full of impurities will be

When we see the *jñāni*, our *pāpa* [sin or demerit], which is the fruit or effects of our past sinful actions, will thereby be removed, whereas when the *jñāni*

The impurities in our mind, which will be removed by the gracious look of the *jñāni*, are our *viṣaya-vāsanās* [inclinations to seek happiness in things other than ourself], which are what impelled us to do sinful actions. Therefore what Bhagavan implies in these two verses is that by our seeing the *jñāni* the effects of our sinful actions will be removed, whereas by the *jñāni* seeing us the cause of them will be removed. In other words, the *jñāni* seeing us has a far deeper and greater effect on us than our seeing him.

The reason for this is that when we see the *jñāni*, we see him as a person like us, so we are not seeing him as he actually is, whereas when he sees us, he does not see us as a person but as we actually

as the eternally pure being that we always actually are, so the look of the *jñāni* is grace.

by Mudaliar Patti. Towards the end of her life she became almost completely blind, but she nevertheless came to Bhagavan every day and spent some time just standing in front of him. One day Devaraja Mudaliar asked her affectionately, '*Pāṭṭi* [Grandmother], why do you stand here every day facing Bhagavan when you cannot see him?', to which she replied rebukingly: 'Silly boy, who can see Bhagavan? I don't come here to see him but to be seen by him'. ▲

(*To be continued*)

KEYWORD

Ālamba

Support

Part One

B.K. CROISSANT

Ok, so you continue to struggle but are still not free from sorrow, and it is becoming more and more insufferable. Although you have heard, contemplated and are practising the teachings of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi to the best of your ability, the ego still steals the microphone after your morning meditation and starts to plan the day. Soon you think you are the body, and everything in the world seems separate from you. You keep thinking the chattering within is who you are, and you react, forgetting to turn inward and make your attention one-pointed. You know better, but the current you felt earlier is still relatively unfamiliar ground. The *Devikālottara: Jñānācāra Vicāra Paṭalaḥ* (Chapter on the Investigation of the Means for Jñāna as Given to Devi at the Final Stage of Maturity) ancient verses in Sanskrit that were translated into Tamil by Bhagavan,

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.

might be the wake-up call you have been waiting for! It could fuel new energy and motivation to move intermittent experiences of your true self-conscious being to more frequently and long-lasting ones. It could deeply inspire you to keep practising so that realising the joy of abidance becomes a reality in your daily life. Give them a try!

The origin of Bhagavan's translation is recounted by Smt. Kanakammal in a very detailed introduction to her commentary on *Devikālottaram*, which contains 24,000 *ślokas*. She tells how these verses, written on palm leaves, were brought to the Master's attention by the son of a local priest while he was living in Virupaksha Cave. Bhagavan was amazed *Advaita* and the path of Knowledge were included in the *Āgamas*, divinely-inspired Hindu scriptures that mainly focus on temple construction as well as idol worship, and that those instructions conformed to his own experience of realisation! He copied them and set them aside. When a totally unprompted urge to translate them occurred, they had been misplaced. Nonetheless, the verses appeared to him one by one, and He translated them from memory in the *veṅḇā* metre.¹

Since Bhagavan's main method of teaching was silence, most of his works were written at the request of devotees. So this translation, like the *Padikam* and *Ashtakam*, two of his hymns to Arunachala, is an exception to the rule and thus clearly indicates the importance he gave it. It was soon published (the second edition appeared in 1924) and is regularly recited at Sri Ramanasramam in the *kaliveṅḇā* version,

of the Tamil *Pārāyaṇa*. It thrills the hearts of devotees and elevates their spirits. Bhagavan wrote his own introduction to his translation, and it reads thus:

“This work is one of the *upa-āgamas* and explains the supreme wisdom to be attained by mature souls and their mode of life expounded by the Supreme Lord Siva to Devi Parvati. It is the essence of all *āgama śāstras* on matters of spiritual knowledge. This is verily

¹ Kanakammal, Smt. T.R., *Commentary on Anuvāda Nūnmālai*, Volume I, Sri Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai, 2011, pp. 2-3. A similar version of the origin of *Devikālottaram* is told by Krishna Bhikshu in his biography of Bhagavan, *Sri Ramana Leela*, Sri Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai, 2004, pp. 123-124.

the boat which can rescue the mortals struggling hard, sinking and rising, in the sorrowful ocean of *samsāra* – the endless cycle of birth and death – and takes them by the direct path to the shore of liberation. Let all earnest seekers after Truth, instead of groping in the dark, bewildered, and losing their way, adopt the aid of this direct path and reach the supreme state of bliss and peace.”²

As indicated by Bhagavan, the *Devikālottaram* is framed as a dialogue between Lord Siva and Parvati, who as Universal Mother and beloved consort, is in a particularly appropriate position to earnestly plead for the release from suffering for all of her children. Her request

path of Supreme Wisdom (*jñāna*) as well as proper conduct (*ācārya*) to be followed. Siva’s intimate response is sweetly delivered into her

the Lord? Bhagavan provides an authoritative answer as follows:

“He whose mind has been purified through *upāsana* and other means or by merit acquired in past lives, who perceives the imperfections of the body and sense-objects, and feels utter distaste whenever his mind has to function among sense-objects and who

Self-enquiry. By these two signs, that is by a sense of the transitoriness

for Self-enquiry can be known.”³

Over and over again we are instructed by Siva to control the wandering mind, the source of all suffering – as well as being, in fact, non-existent – and to constantly hold it absolutely still in our natural state, which is adjunct-free consciousness of being. When that is accomplished, the highest purpose of human life has been

religious observances for the mature seeker. Blemishes of the human soul, such as hatred, desire, anger, fear, etc., are to be eschewed until they progressively fall away of their own accord. In Sanskrit all of

² *Parayana: The Poetic Works of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi*, Second Edition, Sri Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai, May 2008, p. 121.

³ Chapter Seven, verses 9-11 from *Sri Ramana Gita* (composed by Sri Vasishtha Ganapati Muni) with English Translation by Prof. K. Swaminathan, Sri Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai, 2008, p. 55.

this is delivered in the epic *anuṣṭubh* metre, except for eight soaring verses (53-60) in the *triṣṭubh* metre that describe in lilting terms the indescribable glory of pure consciousness of being. As previously noted, Bhagavan translated these verses into the melodious *veṅbā* metre.

Various keywords appear multiple times in the original Sanskrit text. One of them is ‘*ālamba*’ and derivatives of it, such as ‘*ālambana*’, ‘*nirālamba*’ and ‘*sālamba*’. ‘*Ālamba*’ is from ‘*ā*’ plus the verbal root ‘*lamb*’ meaning ‘to hang from, cling to, lean upon’ or ‘to support, hold’. It can be an adjective meaning ‘hanging down’ or a masculine noun meaning ‘that on which one rests or leans, support, prop’. A synonym for it is ‘*āsraya*’, which is frequently used in the text. Together they testify to the extreme importance of attachment to thoughts or objects and the ultimate removal of those attachments on the path to liberation.

In a series of articles for the *Mountain Path*, verses containing keywords from the original Sanskrit text will be compared to

English translations of the Sanskrit were done by the author, while translations of the Tamil were graciously done by Michael James, who also provided word-for-word translations, paraphrases of each verse and answers to my questions. The aim is to appreciate the import and beauty of both versions as well as to highlight insights in the Tamil text that enrich our understanding of the content. According to T.K. Sundaresa Iyer, even Vasishtha Ganapati Muni, the great poet and scholar, relied on Bhagavan for meaning in all spiritual matters.

“Nayana [Ganapati Muni] mainly stayed in the Mango Tree Cave on Arunachala and used to visit Bhagavan off and on. Nayana used to discuss shastras with him and get his doubts cleared. He was a mighty scholar, while Bhagavan was just literate, yet he would say: ‘Without Bhagavan’s grace, the intricacies of the scriptures are beyond one’s power of understanding. One word from him makes everything clear.’”⁴

Who wrote the *Devikālottaram*? As Sri Ramana stated in the invocation of his translations of *Dakṣiṇāmūrti Stotram* and the *Ātma*

⁴ *At the Feet of Bhagavan*, Sri Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai, 1980, p. 5.

Bodha

humanity. So, Bhagavan's translation of the *Devikālottaram* can be gave us multiple translations of the *Upadeśa Sāram* in several languages, all clarifying and embellishing the aphoristic Sanskrit text that is sung daily at Sri Ramanasramam.

That said, *ālamba*

अस्मिताकलयायुक्तं चैतन्यं शक्तिरुच्यते ।
तया प्रकाशितं विश्वं शक्तिध्यानमुदाहृतम् ॥
सर्वालम्ब विनिर्मुक्तं निष्कलज्ञानमुच्यते ॥

Awareness that is inseparable from the aspect 'am-ness' is called . The universe is called thought and is illumined by it. Total liberation from all support is known as indivisible awareness .

This beautiful verse is simple yet immensely profound and packed with meaning. Without any doubt, it discriminates between the real and the unreal and puts the *jīva* and the world in perspective.

*asmitā*⁷

kleśas

body complex. In this context, however, it has the meaning of being or *sat*. *Śakti* as consciousness or *caitanya* is not separate from *sat*. *Cit* is *sat* and *sat* is *cit*. That identity is expounded by Bhagavan in verse 23 of *Upadeśa Sāram*.

“Because of the non-existence of [any] consciousness other [than being] to know being, being is consciousness. [That] consciousness alone exists as ‘we’ [our essential being or true self].”⁵

When *śakti* arises as the mind or ego, the world appears in all of its multiple forms and splendour. The world and all that is in it

⁵ Translation by Michael James from *Upadesa Saram: The Complete Version in Four Languages Composed by Sri Bhagavan, Sri Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai*, 2011, p. 66.

is pervaded and illumined by *śakti*. However, the world is only an appearance. When the ego perishes and the mind no longer clings to any thoughts or forms whatsoever, all of which are supports (*ālamba*), *śakti* becomes pure 'I am', without differences of any kind, partless and indivisible (*niṣkala*).

Note how strongly attachments or thoughts are negated in the phrase '*sarvālamba vinirmuktam*'. '*Muktam*' or 'liberated, set free' has *nir*' meaning 'from' or even 'beyond' and '*vi*', which is

meant. The direct path is not for sissies or the weak-hearted! When all thoughts are eliminated, what remains is pure consciousness of being. That is *śakti*, the power of imagination, merged in absolute reality.

In *Nāṇ Yār* (Who am I), Bhagavan explains how pure consciousness of being will not be experienced when it is blocked by the mind or, in this case, *ālamba*.

"If the mind, which is the instrument of knowledge and is the basis of all activity, subsides, the perception of the world as an objective reality ceases. Unless the illusory perception of the serpent in the rope ceases, the rope on which the illusion is formed is not perceived as such. Similarly, unless the illusory nature of the perception of the world as an objective reality ceases, the vision of the true nature of the Self, on which the illusion is formed is not obtained."⁶

Now let's look at the Tamil version:

இருக்கின்றே னென்கலையோ டேய்ந்தசை தன்ய
வுருசத்தி யஃதா லொளிரும் — பிரபஞ்சஞ்
சர்வஞ்சத் தித்யானஞ் சார்நிட் களஞானஞ்
சர்வ நிராலம்பந் தான்.

*The awareness-form that **shines** with the aspect called 'am' is
The **entire** universe shines by that thought. The indivisible
awareness **to be attained** is just what is devoid of all support.*

⁶ 'Who Am I?' in *Words of Grace*, Sri Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai, 1978, p. 2.

First of all, the original Sanskrit verse includes an extra line, so that instead of four *pāda*-s, it is six. Bhagavan treats it like all other verses in his translation, giving it four lines. Note that in his translation, he retains many words of Sanskrit origin, such as *caitanya*, *śatti* (*śakti*), *dhyānam*, *niṅkaḷa* (*niṅkala*), *ñānam* (*jñāna*), *sarvam*, and *nirālabam*.

ēynda’ is a past adjectival participle meaning ‘suited, matched’. It also implies ‘existing, shining, which exists or shines’, which is in accordance with the next line, namely, “The entire universe shines by that *śakti*’s thought.”

In the second line, Bhagavan chooses ‘*pirapañcam*’, (*prapañca* in Sanskrit) to mean ‘world’. According to Michael James, “partly

its deep meaning. It is often said that the world is called *prapañca* (*pañca*) elements. A somewhat deeper

actual reason is deeper than that. That is, *pañca* is derived from the verb *pañc*, which means ‘to spread out or display’. It came to mean

prapañca means ‘that which is spread out or displayed’, namely the world, which is spread out by the power of *vikṣepa* or dissipation. *Māyā* consists of two powers, namely the power of *āvaraṇa* or veiling (which is ego, the false awareness ‘I am this body’, which is the root-thought) and the power of *vikṣepa* or dissipation (which is all the other thoughts that arise from ego). So *prapañca* is a particularly appropriate word in this context because this sentence says that the entire world shines or is illumined by thought.”⁷

In the third line, the addition of ‘*sarvam*’ meaning ‘entire’, which is not in the Sanskrit original, gives emphasis to the idea of universality, completeness, and all-pervasiveness. It also implies that the world depends entirely on *sat-cit* for its very existence.

Bhagavan’s addition of the word ‘*sār*’ or ‘*cār*’ meaning ‘reach,

verse 13 because it implies an injunction which is not present in the Sanskrit original. Pure consciousness of being is devoid of the

⁷ Quote from an email exchange with Michael James dated 9/15/22.

unreal, but it is also that which is to be attained. How to reach or attain pure adjunct-free consciousness? Only by turning inward. In other words, we are told emphatically that the goal is to remove our attention from the illusory world and to place it instead in the realm of pure consciousness of being. Just BE is the message. Kanakammal summarises the verse aptly when she writes:

“What this verse of *Devi Kālottaram* instructs us is to go beyond the illusion of manifestation and, by enquiring into the origin of the ‘I-thought’, to remain simply ‘I am’.”⁸

Ālamba occurs for the second time in verse 22.

निरालम्बमिदं सर्वं निरालम्बप्रकाशितम् ।

निरालम्बमिदं कृत्वा निरालम्बो भविष्यति ॥

*The entire universe is That which is without support
and illumined by That which is without support . Making
the objects of the world as That which is without support ,
the yogi will become That which is without support .*

First of all, it is impossible not to note the repetition of ‘*nirālamba*’, meaning ‘reality which exists without any support’, since it occurs at the beginning of each *pāda*. It grabs our attention and at the same time creates a beautiful rhythm making the verse easy to memorise.

In her commentary of this verse, Kanakammal nicely summarises its meaning with an emphasis on the concept of support or the absence of it. “This verse instructs that the appearance of the entire Universe is but the very form of that Transcendent Content that has no support for Itself. That Content, clinging on to which as support and stay the entire Universe stands, remains Itself unsupported (*nirālambam*) without any support. But It is the support of everything else. This is the characteristic of *vastu* or *Vastu Lakshana*. A *yogī* who has turned the mind inward merges all the objects seen in the world in that Form along with himself, and becomes one with it.”

⁸ *Commentary on Anuvāda Nūnmālai*, Volume I, Sri Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai, 2011, p. 35.

She goes on to elaborate on the practice of seeing only God everywhere in the universe.

“Though the world manifestation is experienced it cannot be conceived as separate from the all-pervading Self. Cognition of unity of all existence in this way or unifying all the objects and the forms of worlds in that Supportless, all-pervasive *Satcitānanda* is called *pravilapa dhristi* or *bhāva-advaita* or *Sarvātma bhāva*. Other than that Self, the form of Bliss, there is not even an iota of a world. It is this Awareness (the Self) that reveals the world and without this awareness the world is inconceivable. Hence *yogīs* see the world as Brahman.”

Upadēśa Undiyār of
Bhagavan is in perfect agreement with this. ‘Worshipping the eight

as the forms of God Himself is perfect worship of the Lord.”⁹

Now for the Tamil version.

நிராலம்ப மிந்த நிகிலமு மன்றி
நிராலம்பத் தாலொளிரா நிற்ப — நிராலம்ப
மாகச்செய் திந்த வனைத்து நிராலம்ப
மாகிடுவ னென்றே யறி.

All this entirety is nirālamba; besides, it stands shining by nirālamba. Know that making all this entirety as nirālamba, he becomes nirālamba.

Not surprisingly Bhagavan repeats the drum beat ‘*nirālamba*’ four times at regular intervals in his translation. It matches in beauty and import the Sanskrit version!

In the first and third lines, he employs two synonyms, ‘*inda nikhilamum*’ and ‘*inda aṇaittum*’, meaning ‘this everything’ or ‘this entirety’ for the Sanskrit ‘*idam sarvam*’ or simply ‘*idam*’ the poetic metre, they also enhance the idea of completeness or wholeness.

um’ to ‘*nikhilam*’ implies universality.

The word ‘*andri*’, meaning ‘besides’, is an addition to the original Sanskrit text. Furthermore, in the second line, Bhagavan has added

⁹ Ibid., pp. 61-62.

‘*nirpa*, meaning ‘stands’ or ‘exists’, to ‘*olirā*’ meaning ‘shining’. Michael James points out that Bhagavan often couples ‘shines’ with ‘existing’, as in verse 4 of *Arunachala Ashtakam*.

“See, leaving You (the real Self), who (always and everywhere) **exist** (as existence or *sat*) **and shine** (as consciousness or *chit*), and seeking God is only (like) taking a light seeking darkness. Only to reveal (the truth about) Yourself, who **exist and shine** (as the existence-consciousness “I am”), You exist as various forms in each and every religion. If people do not know You, who (thus) **exist and shine** (as ‘I am’), they are only (like) the blind who do not have knowledge of (the existence of) the Sun. O Gem (of self-shining consciousness) called the peerless great Aruna Hill, (graciously) **exist and shine** in my heart as one without a second!”¹⁰

‘*Ari*’, meaning ‘know’, is also an added word. According to Michael James, here ‘know’ implies ‘know yourself as *nirālamba*’. “Making all this *nirālamba* implies seeing it all as *nirālamba* because it is always *nirālamba*, even when we see it as all this multiplicity. Likewise, becoming *nirālamba* implies remaining as *nirālamba* because *nirālamba* is what we always actually are. We remain as *nirālamba* only by seeing ourself as such, and only when we see ourself as such can we see everything else as ourself, namely as the same *nirālamba*. Therefore our seeing everything as *nirālamba* cannot precede our seeing ourself as *nirālamba*.”¹¹

Sri Sadhu Om translated verses 52-54 of Sri Muruganar’s *Guru Vāchaka Kōvai* thus:

“If one’s outlook is changed into *Jnana* [Divine Wisdom], seen

such as ether and so on, will be found to be real, being the Supreme Knowledge Itself. Thus you should see. If one’s outlook is changed into *Jnana*, seen through That, this same world, seen previously as a hell of misery, will be found to be a heaven of Bliss. As per the saying “The seen cannot differ from the seeing eyes”, the *Jnani*, whose eye

¹⁰ *Sri Arunachala Stuti Panchakam*, with Meaning by Sadhu Om and Translation by Michael James, Sri Ramana Kshetra, Kanvashrama Trust, Tiruvannamalai, 2007, pp. 156-157.

¹¹ Quote from an email exchange with Michael James dated 9/18/22.

¹² *Guru Vachaka Kovai* by Sri Muruganar, Translation and Commentary by Sri Sadhu Om, Sri Arunachala Ramana Nilayam, Tiruvannamalai, 2005, p. 13.

[i.e. outlook] has become *Sat-Chit-Ananda* due to the cessation of all mental activities, sees this world also as *Sat-Chit-Ananda*.¹²

In her commentary, Kanakammal takes this position into account.

“If one proceeds to unify one by one the perceived objects in that

becomes that form or at-one-ment with It, everything else becomes That. Bhagavan also says: ‘See just yourself as Brahman. Then see the world as Brahman.’¹³

Talk #1 also takes up this idea.

“A wandering monk (*sannyasi*) was trying to clear his doubt: ‘How to realise that all the world is God?’ Maharshi: If you make your

pervasiveness?”¹⁴



(To be continued)

¹³ *Commentary on Anuvāda Nūnmālai*, Volume I, Sri Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai, 2011, pp. 62-63.

¹⁴ Venkataramiah, Munagala, *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, Sri Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai, 2000, p. 1.

The Enchantment

John Maynard

Entering into this hallowed home
the enchantment begins.
The natural man, Sri Ramana,
has bequeathed it thus.
A mild samadhi falls upon us;
and, if we should speak at all
we sparkle with each other, no formed words at all;
each speaks Vedas effortlessly;
sparking eyes, shining souls,
naturally each is the same One;
Happiness is the Presence.



BOOK EXCERPT

Ramayana Unravelled

The Making of Vishvāmitra

AMI GANATRA

*The following excerpts are from the book Ramayana Unravelled:
by Ami Ganatra and
published by Bloomsbury India (July 2022). The book covers many
incidents from that are either lesser spoken of or
erroneously known. The book is available in Kindle and paperback
formats. PB. Rs.408. pp.380. ISBN: 9789354353321*

Rwas Kaushika, an illustrious king of the Kusha dynasty. As the

was under his sway either directly or through feudatory kings.

is your benefactor. His deeds are extraordinary and his brilliance

of *Brahmarshi*
the extraordinary tale.

Brahmarshi

A rishi is one who attains realisation through knowledge and wisdom, as prescribed in the Vedas and Upanishads. Typically, rishis lived an austere life, having gained control over their senses (*indriya-nigraha*), involving themselves in the study

chanting Vedic mantras and performing other activities as prescribed in the scriptures, with the intent of the well-being and happiness of all. Most rishis received royal patronage as they served as guides and teachers to the king and presided over the rituals he performed. Depending on the level of *indriya-nigraha* and corresponding siddhis (supranormal physical and mental abilities) attained by them, certain appellations were used. In the increasing order of realisation and accomplishment, these

solely concerned with the well-being of his people and those who sought his refuge and had himself risen above worldly material desires. A Brahmarshi was at the top in the order. He was one who had realised Brahma, the ultimate truth. He operated from the highest level of consciousness and transcended the dualities of sorrow and joy, love and hate, as well as impulses of lust, anger, greed, pride, delusions and jealousy.

A Rude Awakening

Many years ago, King Kaushika reigned over a sprawling kingdom. He was a noble and just king, liked by his subjects. Once he undertook a journey across vast regions of the earth, taking along one *akshauhini* army. They travelled for many days through forests, mountains,

Seeing the celebrated rishi, Kaushika prostrated at his feet. Vashishtha welcomed the king with delight. After he was seated, Vashishtha
you ruling your kingdom in a just manner and keeping your subjects

your orders? Have you vanquished your enemies? Are your treasury, army and family in good health?’

discussion for quite a while. Later, Rishi Vashishtha offered to host the entire army of Kaushika. Kaushika was reluctant. He was aware he gave in to Vashishtha’s affectionate insistence.

‘I have offered to host the king and his army. Please arrange a feast for the royal entourage. Shower us with the most delectable of foods.’

that the guests could possibly wish for. The army feasted to its heart’s content. Kaushika looked on in amazement.

Soon it was time to leave. Kaushika approached Vashishtha with a proposition. ‘My army and I are extremely grateful for your generous hospitality. I have an offer to make to you. I will give you a hundred rightfully belongs to me.’ Rishi Vashishtha was a little taken aback.

a hundred thousand cows nor a hundred crore or any other form of dependent on her. She is everything to me.’

Kaushika thought Vashishtha was looking for a bargain, so he upped his offer, adding fully decked elephants, golden chariots, horses of the best breeds and lavish amounts of gems and gold. But the rishi life; I will not part with her,’ he asserted.¹

Not used to hearing a ‘no’, Kaushika decided to take the cow away. The cow, using all her strength, pulled herself free from him and ran towards the helpless rishi. The king’s soldiers began pulling her again. This time, she made a loud sound of ‘moo’. From that

Kaushika’s soldiers. They even killed his sons. His army was no match

¹ *Vālmīkī Rāmāyaṇ* (Sanskrit - Hindi).

1.53. Geeta Press, Gorakpur.

for these warriors. Kaushika returned to his kingdom, embarrassed and shocked. He lost his will to rule. Handing over the kingdom to his to serve and please Shiva.

do you seek, Kaushika?’ Shiva asked. ‘Let all the best techniques of warfare and all the weapons in the universe come to me,’ requested Kaushika. ‘So be it,’ blessed Shiva and disappeared. Kaushika was beaming. He thought he was now invincible. No army could defeat him. Armed with his newfound strength and hubris, he attacked and the animals ran helter-skelter, trying to save their lives.

which was so lovingly built by me. Your stupidity and wickedness will surely destroy you,’ thundered the rishi as he lifted his danda which was as powerful as the Yama-danda—the baton of the lord of attack but also destroyed all his weapons.

Kaushika was humiliated once again. That he, the king who was feared by one and all, was no match for an unarmed rishi came as a rude shock to him. ‘Darned be all my *kshatriya-balam*, my warrior prowess. The real strength is what Vashishtha has, his *brahma-balam*. I will also undertake intense penance and achieve the power that comes with becoming a Brahmarshi,’ declared Kaushika and went away.

Brahma-Balam

The out-of-ordinary physical and mental vigour of a Brahmarshi due to complete control over all senses, mind and intellect is referred to as ‘*brahma-balam*’. The strongest of warriors and the best of weapons can do no harm to such a person. A Brahmarshi can burn an opponent to ashes with the heat of his own innate strength. A Brahmarshi is also intuitively discerning of when to use his powers and when not to. Even his anger has a larger purpose.

Trishanku’s Desire

The loss at the hands of Vashishtha had left Kaushika agitated. Determined to take his revenge after acquiring equivalent prowess,



he headed southwards with his queen and plunged himself into deep

Brahma deva appeared to him. ‘You have achieved the stature of a *Rājarshi*. Hereby I proclaim you as one,’ he said and left. Kaushika was embarrassed and dejected. ‘All this effort and all I could gain

another king named Trishanku. He desired to go to heaven before his death. He wanted to enter heaven with his earthly body. Trishanku approached Rishi Vashishtha to sanctify a yajna that could make it happen. Vashishtha refused, saying such a feat was not possible. Trishanku took his request to Vashishtha’s sons. They too declined to oblige Trishanku and even berated him for seeking other rishis when Rishi Vashishtha had discouraged him from the deed.

Trishanku reached out to Kaushika and told him of his desire as well as the rejection by Vashishtha and his sons. Kaushika recognised this as a great opportunity to use his newfound powers and position himself as a more accomplished rishi than Vashishtha. He agreed to conduct a grand yajna for Trishanku and sent invitations to many other rishis, including Vashishtha’s sons, to participate in the yajna. Vashishtha’s sons scoffed at the invitation. Kaushika was infuriated by the insult. Using the power accrued through his penance, he cursed them with death.

Trishanku’s yajna. But that didn’t seem to work. The devas refused to be complicit in something that violated the law of nature. This made Kaushika even more furious and determined to send Trishanku to heaven in his earthly body. As this deed wasn’t welcome in the existing heaven, Kaushika decided he would create a new heaven

Trishanku and established him there with his earthly body.²

He headed to Pushkar to start again.

The Lure of Lust

Once again, Kaushika began practising intense austerities. After a few years, Brahma deva came once again to bless him. ‘You have

2

achieved Rishi-hood,' he said. Brahmarshi-hood still appeared out

arrived in Pushkar for a bath. Kaushika's eyes fell on her. A shiver of excitement ran through his body. Overcome with lust, he approached the lady. Attracted by the resplendent Rishi Kaushika, she acquiesced.

Both spent over ten years in each other's company, till one day it dawned upon Kaushika that he had lost both time and merit accrued

The realisation made him sorrowful and repentant. His heavy sighs

to the north, settled by the banks of the River Kaushiki and took up even more intense meditation and penance. Many years went by. Kaushika resolutely continued his penance. Finally, Brahma deva came and said, 'I am very pleased with your unfailing commitment. I bestow upon you Maharshi-hood. You have now achieved prominence among rishis.' Kaushika bowed down to the deva with folded hands:

the stature of *Brahmarshi*, I will consider that I have achieved control over my senses.' Brahma deva smiled. 'You haven't achieved that completely yet, son. Continue with your efforts,' he said.³

The Anger Impulse

Kaushika resumed his penance, making it even more intense. This time he meditated standing up, with his hands raised over his head. He gave up all kinds of food and survived only on air. Come rain, come heat, come cold, Kaushika persisted. The devas were disturbed

nymph of immaculate beauty, to go near the rishi and distract him.

He understood that it was an attempt to hinder his efforts. Mad with

3

As soon as he had uttered the curse, the words of Brahma deva completely, he had said. His angry utterance made Kaushika realise that he was still far away from gaining control over his anger. All his hard work in the past had amounted to zilch because of his failure to

He resolved to never give in to anger or speak any untoward words out of anger. He also resolved to conquer every single impulse of his—be it emotions or bodily needs like hunger, thirst and even breathing. ‘Come what may, I will not give up till I have achieved complete self-restraint,’ Kaushika proclaimed.⁴

on for many years and throughout he maintained a vow of silence. Many obstacles and challenges came his way, but Kaushika remained steadfast. The stipulated time ended. Kaushika had accomplished the impossible. A sankalpa of such proportion had not been undertaken before, nor would it be repeated ever again by anyone else. There was not an iota of anger left in him.

food to the guest and stood silently as the guest ate. Kaushika was resplendent, exuding a divine aura. The world seemed to have dulled before his radiance.

All the devas conceded that Kaushika had transcended lust, anger and other such impulses, and had achieved complete control over his senses. There was no trace of impurity or ill-will in him. He had truly transformed into a Brahmarshi. The resplendence was the splendour of his *brahma-balam*. Brahma deva arrived and bestowed upon him Brahmarshi-hood. He also proclaimed that from then on, Kaushika

of the sages, Brahmarshi Vashishtha himself, acknowledge that I have become a Brahmarshi.’ Vashishtha came and was delighted to

4

see the transformed Kaushika. ‘There is not a doubt that you indeed have become a Brahmarshi; all the wisdom will come to you in

down to Vashishtha reverentially.

Kaushika had embarked on a journey to seek revenge on Vashishtha remained in his heart.⁵

When Vashishtha had assured Dasharatha in the court the day he

considered as *drashtā*

Real strength lies in conquering our base instincts of lust, anger, greed, attachment, pride and jealousy. Real power lies not in doing as we desire but in making our senses and desires subservient to our wisdom, in acting as we should rather than as we like. Real freedom lies in unshackling ourselves from the bondage of likes and dislikes. ▲

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Forthcoming Ashram Events

Tamil New Year	14.04.2023	Friday
Bhagavan’s 73rd Aradhana	18.04.2023	Tuesday
Maha Puja	12.06.2023	Monday
Cow Lakshmi Day	30.06.2023	Friday
Guru Poornima	03.07.2023	Monday



Confluences and Divergences

Sri Ramana Maharshi,
Jiddu Krishnamurti and
U.G. Krishnamurti

Part One

S. GOPALAN

Introduction

An innocuous email from the editor of Mountain Path to say, ‘*KVS has hatched an idea for an article on UG and his relationship (or not!) with JK. It would be appreciated if you would consider this idea and contribute an article for the Mountain Path on this subject*’ set the ball rolling. (KVS is the legendary K.V. Subrahmonyan — the singular and unique 90 years old who resides at Sri Ramanasramam, UG refers to U.G. Krishnamurti and JK, of course, to Jiddu Krishnamurti.

Ramana Maharshi. Maharshi, JK and UG had this in common. They all had life changing experiences — Maharshi at age 17 in 1896, JK at age 27 in 1922 and UG at age 49 in 1967. The consequences and fallout of this experience, however, were different and unique for every one of them.

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UG, The Maverick

In Astronomy, the term Retrograde — *Vakri* (in Indian languages) — is applied to planets that seem to be temporarily moving backwards. *Vakri* in Sanskrit means moving backwards / twisted or crooked / indirect, evasive and ambiguous.

Planets don't actually change direction. They only appear to be doing so based on their speed and distance from the Earth. You may

signal, another motorist drove away faster than you when the light turned green. For a brief moment, you might have felt as if you were going backwards when you hit the accelerator. Did you actually go backwards? No, but your perception was altered due to the difference in speed of your car versus the other car. This is similar to the nature of retrograde movements from an astronomical perspective for an observer on Earth.

Vakri may well be applied to UG from the common standpoint that is considered to be 'normal'. But, then, what is normal?

As the Cheshire Cat observed in **Alice In Wonderland**, "We're all mad here. I'm mad. You're mad." It is we who label our state of mind as 'sane'. Then, by comparison, if the state of mind of another does not conform to the parameters of our state of mind, we call that mind 'insane'. Without a reference point, comparison is not possible. When there is no comparison, what is the state of mind? Can it be called sane or insane?

Unmatta is a word from Sanskrit that is present in all Indian languages. It translates as Crazy, Delirious, Distracted, Fanatic, Frenzied, Giddy, Hallucinatory, Hysterical, Impassioned, Intoxicated, Light headed, Lunatic, Mad or Rapturous depending upon the context. All these words denote states of mind which — in comparison to our

Datta is called as **Unmatta Datta**, which means **Mad Datta**. **Datta** gives Knowledge from His absolute state, which is the absolute reality. In that state, everything except Him is only relatively real including the various souls. The knowledge radiating from that state is the absolute truth, which cannot be assimilated by human beings, who are in the lowest layer called as *Maya*. Therefore, **Datta** looks like a mad fellow, whose statements are beyond what can be normally assimilated.

Is UG an **unmatta**?

How are these questions to be approached?

When climbing a steep mountain, the shortest path is often not a path that can be climbed in actual practice. This is because it is too steep with almost vertical gradients of 1:1. Compare this gradient with that of mountain railways 1:12 or main line railways whose maximum gradients are 1:33. A longer route is necessary to reach the summit because of the inability to climb the shortest path.

Similarly, perhaps, it is not possible to directly address these questions as the instrument used to investigate is Thought-Intellect. Thought-Intellect can only function through comparison. Hence, faced

examine them is by comparison to two other Seers of his time — Jiddu Krishnamurti (JK) and Sri Ramana Maharshi (Maharshi).

While investigating these questions, it must be kept in the forefront of the mind that we are examining from our state of mind which we have assumed to be sane and intelligent. If this assumption is set

Are UG's utterances truth that is too simple to be understood by minds that for aeons have been trained in complex, elaborate and tortuous analysis and explanations?

At bottom, is there any difference in the tattva — the essence of the truth — between what is said by UG, JK or Maharshi?

These questions are examined in this article.

Sources For This Investigation

collect material in the form of talks and writings of UG.

It turns out that there are two sources of such material — Biographies and Compilations by his admirers as well as Video Talks of his discussions now available on YouTube. Similar resources are available for JK as well, in addition to his own Writings. In the case of Maharshi, only Biographies and Compilations as well as his own Writings are available.

Biographies and Compilations have major drawbacks — they are partial as well as coloured and limited by the bias, fallible recall of

memory and fading recollections of the biographer. Written up from memory, notes (and, nowadays, audio recordings) much after the

recorded through the screen of conditioning of the biographer. As a result they present a skewed view to the reader. An example of this may be seen here from Maharshi.

Talks With Sri Ramana Maharshi by Sri Munagala Venkataramiah describe conversations between Maharshi and the visitors who put questions to him between 1935 and 1939. Similarly, *Day By Day With Bhagavan* by Devaraja Mudaliar covers similar conversations with Maharshi between 1942 and 1946. Reading these biographies paints a picture of Maharshi sitting in the hall, expounding on the questions asked by the devotees and visitors sitting before him.

However, Paul Brunton's *A Search In Secret India* provides a completely different perspective:

The minutes creep by with unutterable slowness. First they mount up to a half-hour by the hermitage clock which hangs on a wall; this too passes by and becomes a whole hour. Yet no one in the hall seems to stir; certainly no one dares to speak. I reach a point of visual concentration where I have forgotten the

of fruits remains unregarded on the small carved table which stands before him.

My guide has given me no warning that his master will receive me as I had been received by the Sage Who Never Speaks. It has come upon me abruptly, this strange reception

would come into the mind of any European, "Is this man merely

twice but I soon rule it out. He is certainly in a trance condition, though my guide has not informed me that his master indulges in trances. The next thought which occupies my mind, "Is this state of mystical contemplation nothing more than meaningless vacancy?" has a longer sway but I let it go for the simple reason that I cannot answer it.

There is something in this man which holds my attention as from him. My initial bewilderment, my perplexity at being

totally ignored, slowly fade away as this strange fascination begins to

But it is not till the second hour of the uncommon scene that I become aware of a silent, resistless change which is taking place within my mind. One by one, the questions which I have prepared in the train with such meticulous accuracy drop away. For it does not now seem to matter whether they are asked or not, and it does not seem to matter whether I solve the problems which have hitherto troubled me. I know only that a steady river

penetrating the inner reaches of my being, and that my thought-tortured brain is beginning to arrive at some rest.

How small seem those questions which I have asked myself with such frequency! How petty grows the panorama of the lost years! I perceive with sudden clarity that the intellect creates its own problems and then makes itself miserable trying to solve them. This is indeed a novel concept to enter the mind of one who has hitherto placed such high value upon intellect.

— Paul Brunton, *A Search In Secret India*

would be to provide a brief biography of the personages involved. This procedure is not being followed in this examination.

enlightened or illuminated person. Such images are the product of deeply conditioned Thought which weaves in its bias, expectation and surmise at every opportunity — very often without our even being aware. The resultant skewed image is the measure by which we assess, compare, evaluate and judge.

Is this not why some of the images of Shiva — naked ascetic, mendicant beggar, outcaste accompanied by a dog — do not suit our emotions and feelings? Is it not, again, this image which shocks our sensibilities when escapades of such personae — especially with the opposite sex and outside the moral code that we have constructed for ourselves — make themselves known?

What is being examined in this article are the implications, meaning and relevance of the teachings, sayings or utterances by, for and in

themselves alone, without any connection or link to the person who uttered them.

Is this not how we impersonally study the scriptural texts of yore where the authors of the texts are unknown?

Consequently, all the material that is about the person himself or his relationship with others is being omitted from this examination —

that UG had with Maharshi and one meeting that UG had near the end of his relationship with JK. These are provided so that the reader gets a clear overview of the divergence between UG, JK and Maharshi without it being biased by the biographical details. The addition of the biographical slant in such a study would, without any doubt, result in volumes of spicy and titillating gossip, but it is doubtful if it will add any value to the inquiry.

As a consequence, in this article, material has been taken from two sources — biography (*U.G. Krishnamurti: A Life* by Mahesh Bhatt, as well as Videos of discussions available on YouTube — with the following objectives:

Biographical material has been used to bring alive the image of the persona of UG.

Videos of discussions, that bring up directly UG's utterances are made use as starting points of an impersonal examination of his message as well as to bring out the convergences and divergences in approach between UG, JK and Maharshi. (On the Internet, the web address *Lectures Beyond Beyond* (<https://m.youtube.com › user › lecturesbeyondbeyond>) claims to be an archive/library of U.G. Krishnamurti recordings, videos and interviews. It has over 250 video recordings where UG's utterances can be seen and heard directly).

The real story with all the three personalities begins with the life changing experience that they had.

of the experience and its impact on their subsequent living, talks and writings.

Aftermath Of The Experience — Maharshi, JK and UG

The essence of the experience for Maharshi, JK and UG was the break in continuity of ego — the *I*, the identity of the person, the thinker

— that links the records of impressions made by all experiences and provides an illusory thread of continuity. With this break, the subject was disassociated from the object of experience. There remained only experiencing in the moment.

The experience resulted in consequences for all and, it seems, also a fallout for UG.

Maharshi

Maharshi himself described the aftermath of the experience of 1896 when he was 17 years old:

'So I am Spirit transcending the body.

The body dies but the Spirit that transcends it cannot be touched by death. This means I am the deathless Spirit.' All this was not dull thought; it flashed through me vividly as living truth which I perceived directly, almost without thought-process. 'I' was something very real, the only real thing about my present state, and all the conscious activity connected with my body was centred on that 'I'.

From that moment onwards the 'I' or Self focused attention on itself by a powerful fascination. Fear of death had vanished once and for all. Absorption in the Self continued unbroken from that time on.

Other thoughts might come and go like the various notes of music, but the 'I' continued like the fundamental sruti note that underlies and blends with all the other notes. Whether the body was engaged in talking, reading, or anything else, I was still centred on 'I'.

- <https://www.sriramanamaharshi.org/ramana-maharshi/death-experience/>

JK

JK had experiences on three distinct occasions. The effect of the

Its aftermath may be seen in *From Darkness to Light* — a collection of poetry, prose and parables published between 1923 and 1931. In this collection is a poem — *The Path*, the last part of which is reproduced below:

MOUNTAIN PATH

*I am the stone in the sacred temple. I am the humble grass that is mown down and trodden upon. I am the tall and stately tree that courts the very heavens. I am the animal that is hunted. I am the criminal that is hated by all. I am the noble that is honoured by all. I am sorrow, pain and fleeting pleasure; the passions and the gratifications; the bitter wrath and the infinite compassion; the sin and the sinner. I am the lover and the very love itself. I am the saint, the adorer, the worshipper and the follower. I am God. — **The Path, From Darkness To Light***

The second experience occurred in the early 1950s, when JK stayed alone in a cottage in the Himalayas. *Commentaries On Living* records an incident of that period.

heads. One was old and the other quite young, and the burdens they carried looked rather heavy. Each had balanced on her head, protected by a roll of cloth, a long bundle of dried branches tied together with a green vine, and she held it in place with one hand. Their bodies swung freely as they came down the hill with a light, running gait. They had nothing on their feet,

way, for the women never looked down; they held their heads very straight, their eyes bloodshot and distant. They were very thin, their ribs showing, and the older woman's hair was matted and unwashed. The girl's hair must have been combed and oiled at one time, for there were still some clean, sparkling strands; but she too was exhausted, and there was a weariness about her. Not long ago she must have sung and played with other children but that was all over. Now, collecting wood among these hills was her life, and would be till she died, with a respite now and then with the coming of a child.

Down the path we all went. The small country town was several miles away, and there they would sell their burden for a pittance, only to begin again tomorrow. They were chatting, with long intervals of silence. Suddenly the younger one told her mother she was hungry, and the mother replied that they were born with hunger, lived with hunger, and died with hunger; that was their lot. It was the statement of a fact; in her voice

there was no reproach, no anger, no hope. We continued down that stony path.

There was no observer listening, pitying, and walking behind them. He was not part of them out of love and pity; he was them; he had ceased and they were. They were not the strangers he had met up the hill, they were of him; his were the hands that held the bundles; and the sweat, the exhaustion the smell, the hunger, were not theirs, to be shared and sorrowed over. Time and space had ceased. There were no thoughts in our heads, too tired to think; and if we did think, it was to sell the wood, eat, rest, and begin again. The feet on the stony path never hurt, nor the sun overhead. There were only two of us going down that accustomed hill, past that well where we drank as usual, and on across the dry bed of a remembered stream.

— J.Krishnamurti, *Commentaries on Living*, Series II, 'Positive And Negative Teaching', Chapter 44

The third experience came about in 1980 when JK was at Rishi Valley.

JK dictated an account of it which is reproduced in *Krishnamurti: The Years Of Fulfillment*, the second part of his biography by Mary Lutyens. The closing part of this record is reproduced below:

With the arrival in Rishi Valley in the middle of November 1979 the momentum increased and one night in the strange stillness of that part of the world, with the silence undisturbed by the hoot of owls, he woke up to find something totally different and new. The movement had reached the source of all energy. This must in no way be confused with, or even thought of, as God or the highest principle, the Brahman, which are the projections of the human mind out of fear and longing, the unyielding desire for total security. It is none of those things. Desire cannot possibly reach it, words cannot fathom it nor can the string of thought wind itself around it. One may ask with what assurance do you state that it is the source of all energy? One can only reply with complete humility that it is so.

All the time that K was in India until the end of January 1980 every night he would wake up with this sense of the absolute. It is not a state, a thing that is static, fixed, immovable. The whole universe

is in it, measureless to man. When he returned to Ojai in February 1980, after the body had somewhat rested, there was the perception that there was nothing beyond this. This is the ultimate, the beginning and the ending and the absolute. There is only a sense of incredible vastness and immense beauty.

— **Krishnamurti: The Years Of Fulfillment**

After 1980, Krishnamurti did not write. Apart from talks and discussions, he dictated pieces into a tape recorder. All these talks have a distinct and unique expression of their own which is not seen in the earlier talks and writings.

On 3 January 1986, six years later, JK gave his last talk at Madras (Chennai). He ended the talk saying:

The origin is nameless; the origin is absolutely quiet, it's not whirring about making noise. Creation is something that is most holy, that's the most sacred thing in life, and if you have made a mess of your life, change it. Change it today, not

your thinking is not straight, think straight, logically. Unless all that is prepared, all that is settled, you can't enter into this world, into the world of creation.

— **JK, Talk 3, Madras, 04 January 1986**

A few weeks later, on 17 February 1986, JK passed away at Ojai, California.

UG

UG later called his experience as '*calamity*' because the usual mind, the limiting structure of thought, disintegrated in him.

He steadfastly believed, thereafter, that all spiritual teachers and enlightened persons were charlatans and fakes who were stopped in their inward journey by the mystical experience that they had. In this he included Buddha, Jesus Christ, Maharshi and JK:

You see, I knew how you could make money. If I had dedicated myself to money I would have been the world's richest man. World's richest. All the billionaires in the United States - nowhere. That was not my interest. My only interest was to be certain that Buddha was a conman.

- U.G. Krishnamurti - All Spiritual Teachers are Con Men: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tWsNfoiU-4&list=PLJGnfFmap7N9BTHNv4mIaqqyv-Co1K0Sy&index=10>

UG's Meetings With Maharshi and JK

UG met with both Maharshi and JK before he had his 'calamity'. What impression did these meetings make upon UG?

UG's Only Meeting With Maharshi

Maharshi had a self-effacing personality who showed little interest in the World outside him. Most of the time he remained lost to those around as he remained with the natural state of his Being.

In the periods when he came down from this state of Consciousness, he answered questions that were put to him or made observations — teaching.

In 1939 when UG was 21 years old, he was taken by a friend to Tiruvannamalai to meet the Maharshi.

Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi was reading comic strips when UG first saw him. At the very first glimpse of him UG thought, 'How can this man help me?' As he sat there for two hours, watching the Bhagavan cut vegetables and play with this, that or the other, he wasn't at all surprised to find that all those fancy assertions to the effect that this man's look changed you and that all questions disappeared in his presence, remained fables.

'Is there', asked UG, 'Anything like enlightenment?'

'Yes, there is,' relied Ramana.

'Are there any levels to it?'

The Master replied, 'No, no levels are possible. It is all one thing — either you are there or you are not there at all.'

Finally UG asked, 'This thing called enlightenment, can you give it to me?'

Sri Ramana did not answer.

After a pause UG repeated the question, 'I am asking you whether you can give me whatever you have.'

Looking UG in the eyes, Bhagavan replied, 'I can give it to you but can you take it?'

'What arrogance', UG thought to himself, 'I can give it to you but can you take it? Nobody had said anything like that before.'

UG never visited Sri Ramana again.

— **U.G. Krishnamurti: A Life** by Mahesh Bhatt

However, it is mentioned in Wikipedia that later, UG would say that Maharshi's answer – which he perceived as “arrogant” – put him “back on track” (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U._G._Krishnamurti#Quest).

UG's Meetings With JK

then, until his last meeting with JK in the late 1950s, UG intermittently met JK over this period of a few decades.

Disagreement on basic issues surfaced all the time between UG and

the nature of the disagreement.

In one of our meetings I told Krishnamurti, 'I am not called upon to save the world.'

He asked, 'The house is on fire—what will you do?'

'Pour more gasoline on it and maybe something will rise from the ashes,' I remarked.

Krishnamurti said, 'You are absolutely impossible.'

Then I said, 'You are still a Theosophist. You have never freed yourself from the World Teacher role. There is a story in the Avadhuta Gita which talks of the avadhut who stopped at a wayside inn and was asked by the innkeeper, "What is your teaching?" He replied, "There is no teacher, no teaching and no one taught." And then he walked away. You too repeat these phrases and yet you are so concerned with preserving your teaching for posterity in its pristine purity.'

...

The subject of my children and their education arose one day. Krishnamurti asked me, 'What school are your daughters attending?'

'Naturally, Besant Theosophical School,' I answered. 'You know, it's almost next door to us.'

'They teach religion, Sir,' he said.

I retorted, 'What do they teach in Rishi Valley School? Instead

of having them attend a prayer meeting, you drag those poor unwilling students to watch sunsets from the hilltop. How is that different? You like sunsets. So the children have to watch them too. You know, I spent three-and-a-half days in that Guindy National School. You will recall that you gave talks to us during that time. There is nothing marvellous about those schools. As for myself, I attended a street-side school. And what's wrong with me! — **U.G. Krishnamurti: A Life** by Mahesh Bhatt

UG stormed out from meetings with JK more than once stating that he was wasting his time. Yet, like the proverbial bull drawn to the red rag, UG was drawn, again and again, to meet and pointedly challenge him. These challenges were mainly at the level of the individual persona, lifestyle and the approach to communicating the message to lay persons. There was little to question about the insights. ▲

(To be continued)

One Step at a Time

Suresh Kailash

When rocky sometimes seems the way,
And the path ahead too hard to negotiate,
I turn back and look at the progress made,
And see that I was borne this far by grace.

That's when I pause awhile to contemplate,
On how through it all I have been kept safe,
And realisation dawns that the hand of God,
Is much too vast for one to stray and fall off.

Now, whether I walk, plod, stumble or crawl,
No matter the distance or how high the wall,
A deep breath and again the journey starts,
One step at a time, with thanks in my heart.

Taming the Tiger

Sathiya Narayanan

my blanket of eyelids from its hideout,

its valiant body crouches ready to spring
and claim every part of me as its own.
Many a day I lay and stared inward

to prolong its impending attack.
But the tiger is too quick.
With every ounce of resistance,

Try all I may, elusive are its ways,
it evades my every attempt.
I give in.

In between the waking and sleeping moments
the tiger chews on everything it catches.
It morphs to a humming bird, its buzz constant in ears.
To a lazy python, its grip tighter with no escape.
Still I try to cross my legs and close my eyes
hoping to tame the tiger,
only to witness the ringmaster being tamed.
I turn to the graceful and piercing eyes
of the Guru in desperation.
Neither there is tiger nor ringmaster,
words of the Guru echo but are not experienced.
The question remains. Who is the tiger?
Strange, once I asked:
I see the tiger with a pen suddenly.
“I am writing a poem”, it says.
I ask in dismay,
“Who am I?”

Consciousness

Part Six

M. GIRIDHAR

IAdvaita Vedanta. In the subsequent articles, we examined the concept of *jagat* (world) as *mithyā* arising due to ignorance (*avidyā*) resulting in wrong superimposition (*adhyāsa*) with Brahman. We also explored the relationship between the triad namely *jīva*, *Brahman* and *jagat*, and the relationship between each of the above entities with *īśvara*. Brahman is *nirguṇa* (without attributes) but when it is associated with auspicious attributes, it is called *saguṇa* Brahman (*īśvara*). In this article, we will examine how Advaita and modern science view consciousness and how the former proposes a consciousness with matter.

The fundamental question of consciousness has been examined for several millennia in Indian philosophical literature, but has decades. The question that needs to be grappled with is how can a person experience and feelings? The materialist view is that the matter is primary with the consciousness being generated by the brain. The consensus among dualistic theological schools of thought is that

Consciousness in the form of God created matter and thus matter is a product of consciousness. The Sankhya school emphasises that consciousness cannot be reduced to the brain and states that both matter and consciousness are fundamental independent realities that interact with each other.

The fourth approach is the Advaita Vedanta view that neither does matter produce consciousness nor does consciousness produce objects but there is only one non-dual reality, which is the Consciousness.

consciousness (*brahma-caitanya*), cosmic or God consciousness (*īśvara-caitanya*), individual consciousness (*jīva-caitanya*), and indwelling consciousness (*sākṣī-caitanya*). However, all these distinctions are due to limiting adjuncts (*upādhis*) and are not intrinsic to the true nature of consciousness, which is absolute consciousness and by itself one and non-dual. We will examine this carefully in this article.

The *brahma-caitanya* is the substratum of this universe, also called the *nirguṇa* Brahman, and is consciousness (*prajñānam brahma*),¹ which is pure awareness. The very nature of Brahman is described as *sat* (Reality), *chit* (knowledge), *anantha*² and *ānanda* (bliss).³

The *īśvara-caitanya*, is Brahman united with *māyā* and is the creator, preserver, and also responsible for the dissolution of this universe. Several sentences in the *upanishads*⁴ and *purāṇas*⁵ emphasise that the ruler of the *prakṛti* (world) is *īśvara*. This has been discussed in the previous article on *īśvara*.

The next type of consciousness is *jīva-caitanya*, which is the individual or empirical consciousness. The superimposition of the ego-idea upon consciousness is the plunge of the individual into *māyā*. The feeling of separateness produces the chain reaction of further superimposition and entanglement. Considering ourselves as separate individuals inexorably superimposes a world of multiplicity upon the one, undivided reality of absolute consciousness (*brahma-caitanya*, Brahman).

¹ *Aitareya Upanishad*, 3.1.3. ² *Taittiriya Upanishad* 2.1.3. ³ *Taittiriya Upanishad* 3.6.1. ⁴ *Svetasvatara Upanishad* 4.10, *Svetasvatara Upanishad with the commentary of Shankara*, Swami Gambhirananda, Advaita Ashrama. ⁵ *Vishnu Purana* V.27.15.

Just as *jīva*
limiting adjunct of *upādhi*, *īśvara*

māyā. Thus, with the qualifying attribute of *māyā* it is *īśvara* and, without the qualifying attribute but just with the limiting adjunct of *upādhi*, it is *jīva*. The other difference is that while *īśvara* is the controller of *māyā*, the *jīva* is under the control of *māyā*.

The *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*⁶ describes the relationship of the absolute consciousness with the empirical self (*jīva-caitanya*) as “Like two birds of golden plumage, inseparable companions, the individual self and the immortal Self are perched on the branches of the same tree. The former tastes the sweet and bitter fruits of the tree; the latter, tasting of neither, calmly observes.”

This indwelling observing consciousness (*sākṣī-caitanya*) transcends the changing states of the mind, neither suffering nor enjoying the mental and physical conditions of human existence and is a witness. This witness-self is described as the Self-luminous consciousness⁷ and is the inner controller (*antaryāmin*), as described⁸ as the rider within a chariot-body. The charioteer is the intellect (*buddhi*), the reins are the mind, the senses are the horses and the roads they travel are the mazes of desire.

Having defined the various classifications of consciousness in Advaita Vedānta, we now turn to look at the scientific viewpoints of consciousness. There are a few things in life that we cannot speak about because we do not know enough about it. Some examples are quantum physics or rocket science that require at least graduate level knowledge of physics and mathematics. However, there are a few things that we feel we are very familiar with but when asked, we are entirely stumped to answer. These include time, matter, love and,

with

concepts that are fundamental.

⁶ *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, 3.1.1–2, in *The Upanishads: Breath of the Eternal*, Swami Prabhavananda.⁷ *Kena Upaniṣad*, 1.2., *Kena Upaniṣad with Shankara Bhashya and Anandagiri Tika*, Publisher. Ananda Ashrama. ⁸ *Katha Upaniṣad*, 1.3.4, *The Upanishads — A New Translation* by Swami Nikhilananda, Advaita Ashrama.

study of consciousness till recent times. The interest in consciousness studies has picked up considerable pace in the last few decades. The

computer scientists come together with Buddhist meditating monks to explore what is most fascinating – the quest for ourselves.

Most of the schools developed in India as part of and Buddhism had only one goal – the release of the individual from worldly suffering termed as *mokṣa* or *nirvāṇa*, depending on the school or philosophy. As the individual is associated with consciousness, the understanding of consciousness is fundamental to all schools of philosophy as it is an indisputable part in any soteriology. In no other philosophy other than Advaita Vedanta has consciousness been examined in such great detail. Advaita categorically states that Only Consciousness IS. That is, there is nothing else other than consciousness. This leads to the inevitable conclusion that it is the ground of all knowledge and source of everything in the world.

To understand this issue, we need to examine the scientific view of consciousness. Chalmers⁹ coined the term *hard problem* of consciousness wherein one needs to explain the relationship between the objective world with our subjective experience. For example, brain scans can reveal our emotions. However, measurements of the

that experience. There is something ineffable about the subjective nature of conscious experience. Why does pain, pleasure or love feel like something? Even seeing a colour may produce different feelings in various people. How does one explain this feeling by instruments? This indicates and argues against a strictly objective view of consciousness.

The science postulates that consciousness can be reductively explained as a product of matter and expect advances in brain science to ultimately explain how the brain can produce consciousness. The problem is the inability to explain subjective experiences. The dualistic approach states that the consciousness is something special that cannot be reduced to the brain. However, they are unable to explain how this irreducible

⁹ Chalmers, D.J. 1996. *The Conscious Mind: In Search of a Fundamental Theory*, New York: Oxford University Press.

consciousness can interact with matter. Thus they are stuck with the same question of the consciousness and the mind-body interaction.

Advaita solves this question in its own inimitable manner. addresses this question in numerous texts. In the *Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad*¹⁰ the sage, Yajnavalkya, on consciousness and the Self.

katama ātmeti; yo 'yaṃ vijñānamayaḥ prāṇeṣu hr̥dyantarjyotiḥ puruṣaḥ; sa samānaḥ sannubhau lokāvanusaṃcarati, dhyāyatīva lelāyatīva; sa hi svapno bhūtvemaṃ lokamatikrāmati mṛtyo rūpāṇi

When Janaka asks, ‘Which is the Self?’, Yajnavalkya answers

is in the midst of the organs, the (self-effulgent) light within the heart (intellect). Assuming the likeness (of the intellect), it moves between the two worlds; it thinks, as it were, and shakes, as it were. Being

(ignorance etc.).”

Sri Ramana Maharshi explains about the *hr̥dyantarjyoti* in *Ramana Gita* 11

*hr̥dayakuhara madhye kevalaṃ brahmamātram |
hyahamahamiti sāksād-ātmarupeṇa bhāti ||
hr̥di viśa manasāsvaṃ cinvatā majjatā vā |
pavana calana rodhād ātmaniṣṭho bhava tvam ||*

In the interior of the Heart-cave, Brahman alone shines in the form

a questing mind or by diving deep within through control of breath,

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*nirgacchanti yataḥ sarvā vṛttayo dehadhāriṇām |
hr̥dayaṃ tatsamākhyātāṃ bhāvanā "kṛtivarṇanam || 2*

That, from where all the activities of the embodied beings emerge, is mentioned as the Heart. All descriptions of its form are conceptual.

¹⁰ *Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad* 4.3.6 and 4.3.7. *Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad with the Commentary of Śaṅkarācārya*, translated by Swami Madhavananda, Advaita Ashrama.¹¹ *Ramana Gita*, Chapter 2, verse 2, translated by S. Sankaranarayanan.

¹² *Ibid.*, *Ramana Gita*

*ahaṁvṛttiḥ samastānām vṛttinām mūlamucyate |
nirgacchati yato 'haṁdhīr hṛdayam tatsamāsataḥ || 3*

It is said that the I-activity is the root of all activities. The source, from where the I-thought emerges, is the Heart.

How and where does pure consciousness dwell within the body? The *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*¹³ discloses, “There is the heart, and within the heart, there is a little house. This house has the shape of a lotus, and within it dwells that which is to be sought after, inquired about, and realised. ... Though old age comes to the body, the lotus of the heart does not grow old. At the death of the body, it does not die. The lotus of the heart, where Brahman exists in all his glory — that, and not the body, is the true city of Brahman.”

Janaka’s query on *hṛdyantarjyotiḥ*, the (self-effulgent) light within the Heart (intellect), is an attempt to locate the Self and asks whether the body, sense organs, organs of action, mind and intellect are the *jyoti* is different from the objects

it helps reveal. While the objects are insentient, the *jyoti* is not, it is pure consciousness. This pure consciousness, which is the Self, is *buddhi*. What we experience as consciousness in daily life is this empirical consciousness. This empirical consciousness (*jīva-caitanya*) is technically called *chidābhāsa buddhi*. This is the *jīvātman*, the individual who designates himself

mind complex. Consciousness is separate from the body and senses and illumines them but it is self-illuminated.

jyoti. Next comes the

manas

then the organs, through contact with the *manas*; and lastly the body, through the organs. Thus the Self successively illumines with its own light the entire aggregate of body and organs. It is therefore that all people identify themselves with the body and organs.

empirical consciousness carries on all activities in the waking and dream states. Incidentally, this explains why empirical consciousness

¹³ *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 8.1.1, 8.1.5, *Chāndogya Upaniṣad with the Commentary of Śaṅkarācārya*, Swami Gambhirananda, Advaita Ashrama.

that state. But Advaita holds that *brahma-caitanya* persists in deep sleep, is unchanging, eternal, different from the body-organ-mind (and by extension the entire external universe) while being unlimited by time and space. *jīva-caitanya*

body-organ-mind complex and located (and limited) in time and space.

Empirical knowledge and action cannot be ultimately predicated to the pure consciousness (*brahma-caitanya*), but only to the empirical consciousness (*jīva-caitanya*). Consciousness transcends the physical body, and it is the light that illumines dreams, and transcends the mind

it is a knower and doer, and suffers too.

Pure consciousness is ever effulgent and never changing. But our *vṛtti*. A *vṛtti* *antaḥkaraṇa*, and the *antaḥkaraṇa* is simply the *upādhi* or limiting adjunct of the Atman. The *vṛttis* contents which constitute the contents of our various knowledge episodes. The *vṛtti* is illumined by the light of the *chidābhāsa*, the empirical consciousness which pervades the *antaḥkaraṇa* (and which in *antaḥkaraṇa*), and this illumination of the *vṛtti* constitutes empirical knowledge (*vṛtti jñāna*).

Pure consciousness itself is called *svarūpa jñāna* to distinguish it from *vṛtti jñāna*

what constitutes empirical knowledge. The *vṛttis* the mind, rise and subside but consciousness shines eternally. As Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi says,¹⁴

“*Vṛtti* is often mistaken for consciousness. It is only a phenomenon and operates in the region of *ābhāsa* knowledge lies beyond relative knowledge and ignorance. It is not in the shape of *vṛtti*. There are no subject and object in it. *Vṛtti* belongs to the *rajasic* (active) mind. The *sattvic* mind (mind in repose) is free from it. The *sattvic* is the witness of the *rajasic*. It is no doubt true consciousness. Still it is called *sattvic* mind because the knowledge

³ Munagala S. Venkataramiah, *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, Talk§68.

of being witness is the function of *ābhāsa* only. Mind is the *ābhāsa*. Such knowledge implies mind. But the mind is by itself inoperative. Therefore it is called *sattvic* mind. Such is the *jīvanmukta*'s state. It is also said that his mind is dead. Is it not a paradox that a *jīvanmukta* has a mind and that it is dead? This has to be conceded in argument with ignorant folk.

It is also said that Brahman is only the *jīvanmukta*'s mind. How can one speak of him as *Brahmavid* (knower of Brahman)? Brahman can never be an object to be known. This is, however, in accordance with common parlance. *Sāttvic* mind is surmised of the *jīvanmukta* and of *Īśvara*. "Otherwise," they argue, "how does the *jīvanmukta* live and act?" The *sattvic* mind has to be admitted as a concession to the argument. The *sattvic* mind is in fact the Absolute consciousness.

and Absolute consciousness alone reigns supreme. It is not a state of *śūnya* (blank) or ignorance. It is the *swarūpa* (Real Self). Some say *ābhāsa*);

others say that the *ābhāsa* mind. In fact both are simultaneous."

This theory of consciousness circumvents the mind-body interaction problem as the mind is only a form of matter and can

Satprakashananda summarises, "In the Vedantic view the mind is not a process nor is it a function, or a state, or an attribute of something else. It is a positive substance, though not ultimately real. It has

nature, the potential cause of the universe, called *prakṛti* or *māyā*, which has no consciousness inherent in it." Thus both the mind and body are inert and *jaḍa*.¹⁵

The *antaḥkaraṇa* is matter but how does it interact with consciousness. Atman is the true subject, *chit*, eternal, unchanging and all-pervasive, while the *antaḥkaraṇa* is objective, *jaḍa*, ever changing and limited in space and time. How could two such diametrically opposite entities interact? Thus, the mind-body interaction problem morphs into the consciousness-matter interaction problem. We now

¹⁵ Swami Satprakashananda, *The Goal and the Way*, St. Louis: Vedanta Society, 1977.

have to explain how consciousness, which has been shown to be separate from mental phenomena, can interact with mind (which is now regarded as matter)! This problem arose in the *Sāṃkhya* and Yoga philosophies too. The split between consciousness and matter (*Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti* in *Sāṃkhya*) cannot be reconciled in these philosophies because these philosophies are unwilling to deny ontological reality to either of them and thus they give individual ultimate reality to both of them.

Adhyāsa Bhāṣya,

which is just a 50 line comprehensive introduction to the *Brahma Sūtra Bhāṣya*.¹⁶ He says the subject (consciousness) and the object (matter) are as contradictory as light and darkness. Thus the coexistence of matter with consciousness should be impossible just like darkness cannot exist in the presence of light. However, it is a common everyday experience that they seem to interact all the time. Thus the concept of superimposition (*adhyāsa*) is introduced. Thus the body (and more crucially, the mind) is superimposed on consciousness and the world on Brahman. Such superimposition is a consequence of ignorance (*avidyā*) of the nature of Self and it can be sublated by true knowledge of the Self. This sublation is *mokṣa*, which is the goal of Advaita Vedanta.

That which is superimposed must be false but the ground of superimposition must be real. We see a snake on the road at night,

it is actually a rope. This snake-universe is a superimposition upon the rope-Brahman. There is no more causal relationship between this world-appearance and Brahman than there is between the snake and the rope. Thus the universe has no existence apart from Brahman, just as the snake has no existence apart from the rope. Like a snake on a rope, the non-existent world is superimposed on the Self-existing Reality. As a clear crystal appears red against a red surface so also, by veiling and conjunction of impurities, Consciousness, though persistently perfect, appears limited due to ignorance (*avidyā*).

Body-mind and the whole external world are *mithyā* while Brahman alone is real – *Brahma satyam jagat mithya*.¹⁷ The term

¹⁶ *Brahma Sūtra Bhāṣya of Śaṅkarācārya*

Swami Gambhirananda translation. Advaita Ashrama. ¹⁷ *Brahmajñanavalimala*, verse 20.

reality besides consciousness. Thus the two — the world (*jagat*) and the individual (*jiva*) have no existence apart from Consciousness — hence Advaita, ‘not-two-ism’. The true nature of the *jiva* and *jagat* is Brahman. We are that Brahman, each one of us. This is expressed by the famous Vedantic *mahāvākya tat tvam asi* (That Thou Art).¹⁸

Thus, consciousness is the sole reality and matter is merely a superimposition. That which is superimposed is false. Hence the whole panoply of matter is false – it has no reality apart from the ground of superimposition, which is consciousness itself. Now we see how this world view can lead to a way out of the consciousness-matter deadlock. Consciousness itself projects matter, matter evolves into

(which is then experienced as empirical consciousness. These minds (and organs, bodies and the external universe) are superimposed upon consciousness. The empirical consciousness with its superimposed adjuncts (mind, sense organs) gets empirical knowledge of the world and feels itself to be a knower (*jnātā*), an agent (*kartā*) and enjoyer (*bhoktā*).

As Swami Sarvapriyananda states,¹⁹ the problem of consciousness studies at the present juncture is that it does not seem to recognise the possibility of pure consciousness. Science is only interested in the consciousness manifestation in daily transactions – empirical

pure consciousness in the Advaitic parlance, we cannot formulate a satisfactory theory of consciousness if we limit ourselves to empirical consciousness and discount the very possibility of pure consciousness.

in Advaita Vedanta discussed earlier, a solution to the intractable hard problem of consciousness may not be found by science.

But Advaita Vedanta’s goal is not just to solve the intractable problem or to speculate or develop theories. It has direct experience as its basis as well as ultimate proof. However, the teaching is not trying to have an experience or gain unknown knowledge. The *Mandukya*

¹⁸ *Chandogya Upanishad* 6.8.7.¹⁹ *Ancient Wisdom, Modern Questions: Vedāntic Perspectives in Consciousness Studies*.

*Upanishad*²⁰ states that the waking, dream and deep sleep are not three states or levels of consciousness. Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi

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“There is only one consciousness, which subsists in the waking, dream and sleep states. In sleep there is no ‘I’. The ‘I-thought’ arises on waking and then the world appears. Where was this ‘I’ in sleep? Was it there or was it not? It must have been there also, but not in the way that you feel now. The present is only the ‘I-thought’, whereas the sleeping ‘I’ is the real ‘I’. It subsists all through. It is consciousness. If it is known you will see that it is beyond thoughts.”

The empirical consciousness and the deepest *samādhi*, no matter how long they appear to last, always end, leaving you as you are now. There is only ever you, as pure consciousness, appearing as the many. Thus we are the answer to the question that we are trying to solve. We are the shadow trying to seek the sun not realising that we are the shadow and sun at the same time. The shadow that seeks the sun is a metaphor for the ego (false self) looking for the light (Self). No new knowledge is required or acquired. No transcendental experience or higher consciousness needs to be achieved. When the recognition of already are.

In the manuscript, *Ozhivil Odukkam*²² exhorts the disciple, “The Reality is the unbroken current of Knowledge by whose light we know all else. As you grow aware of these, they disappear before you. As they do so, do not look for them but lie immersed in the Self like a pot lying sunk in the sea, with water in and out. Once taught that the world is an illusion and the body false, one should know them as a

Suffering is the belief that we are a personal entity trapped in a body and in a world. When you see that this is false, nothing merges,

and happiness and to end suffering is only an appearance, a show. In actual experience, trying to get rid of a separate self is like a knife trying to cut itself. You, as awareness, know this show as yourself.

²⁰ *The Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad with Gaudapada’s Karika and Sankara’s Commentary*, Swami Nikhilananda, Advaita Ashrama. ²¹ *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, Talk\$43.

²² Translated by Munagala Venkataramiah, Sri Ramanasramam Archives.

MOUNTAIN PATH

You are complete. Nothing is missing. Nothing was ever missing.
You are the particular knowledge, always was and IS.

Thus, Advaita inspires the spiritual seeker to take the testimony of ourselves as Brahman. These are the compasses and maps, who along with a Guru such as Arunachala Ramana will guide us to realise who Self. Those who turn to Him and follow His teaching by the enquiry 'Who am I?' or surrender or by any other path indicated by Him ever-watchful, ever-helpful. ▲

I'm Caught

Kevan Myers

I'm caught between times of stress

and other times when helped by friends
I glide through tasks
which ask for nothing much from me

of this way through the maze that ends in death
and yet the whole idea that I have lived
some kind of life that got me here
is nothing but a thought
and I can say in honesty that all this history,
that seems to be the way,
that has developed me to what I am today
is no more real than the scene
which caught my eye
enough just now to shake me half-awake
from thoughts going through the brain,

if any of this stuff is true.

Tamil Siddhas

Part Seven

Kuthambai: He Saw God as Plain Clear Light

P. RAJA

Long long ago, nobody knows how long ago, there lived a cowherd named Gopalan. He was a staunch devotee of Lord Kannan, another version of Lord Krishna. Like his Lord, he herded cows to the forest by dawn and brought them back home safely at dusk with their udders chock-a-block with milk. Gopalan's wife, devoted to her husband, milked those cows and offered the milk graciously to the poor and needy children. The generous couple earned the blessings of

Ādi (July-August) a boy child was born to them, under the auspicious star, Visakam, the sixteenth lunar mansion.

The boy was very beautiful and handsome at the same time. People loved the boy so much that they hardly let him sleep on the mat; instead, they gave him their lap to form a spongy bed. His parents were overjoyed by their love towards the boy. Both the husband and the wife showered their affection on their handsome boy and loved to see him beautiful. They dressed him up with girl's attire, pierced his earlobes, and made him wear the ear stud called 'Kuthambai'.

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MOUNTAIN PATH

In days of yore, married couples regardless of their wealth and status, prayed to their '*kula deviam*' (family deity) to bless them with a girl child. They believed that a girl child would bring prosperity

a boy, his parents delighted themselves by making him wear girl's dress and ear studs. They thereby had the satisfaction of bringing up a girl child. It was also a sort of prayer to the Lord to bless them with

“A girl to enjoy love and affection of her parents; a boy to enjoy wealth and riches accumulated by his parents.” That is by the way.

The boy with the ear stud grew to be a lad. Since the ear stud called 'Kuthambai' looked very prominent on his body, everybody including his parents called him 'Kuthambai'. Very soon, the boy too forgot his name and responded to his pet name.

One day a yogi came in search of Kuthambai, only to have a tête-à-tête with him. Kuthambai soon realised that the yogi was heaven sent for he found a guru in the yogi. Having learnt from his guru certain exercises especially the art of achieving *Aṣṭamā siddhi* (eight great miraculous powers), Kuthambai promised to practise what he had learnt from him.

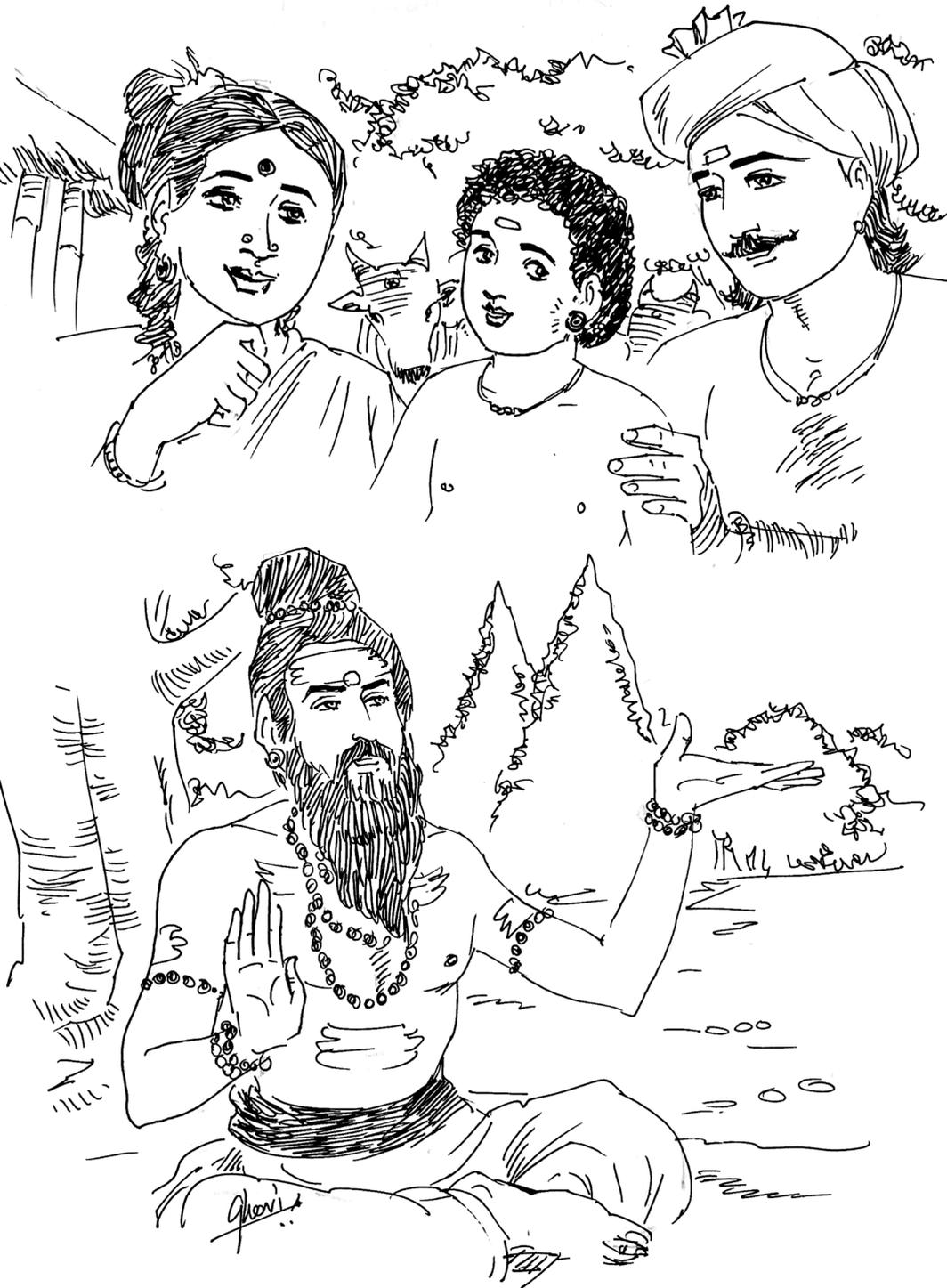
When the guru was about to take leave of his sishya, he said, “In your previous birth, dear Kuthambai, you were working very hard towards the attainment of your higher goal. But before you could achieve it, Death snatched you away and left you in the void. It was

you the right path. Follow what you have learnt from me and you are sure to achieve your higher goal in this life.”

Kuthambai nodded his head in approval. Back with his family members, Kuthambai began to practise what he had learnt from his guru.

No achievement comes without any struggle. His own kith and kin proved to be obstacles for his *tapasya*. Soon something in him made him to move away from those hostile forces. Therefore, under cover of darkness he left his parental abode and moved into the depth of the forest, to be far from the madding crowd.

waving its branches and creating an ambience through the rustle of



its leaves. The tree had a big hole in its trunk and Kuthambai found shelter inside.

Peace of mind, his guru's advice, and his own experience all these years, joined hands to trigger the best from him through his verses. What we call 'Songs of Kuthambai' today were all written from inside

So much for the legend.

A few others delight in retelling the same legend with a different twist at the end. They believe that the songs were all addressed to a woman wearing Kuthambai, whom he met in the forest.

Whether the poet addressed his songs to himself or to the woman, who lent him her ears, is immaterial to the readers. What matters is, the songs are all an offspring of a revolutionary mind, and they paved the way for the renaissance in literature and the culture of the Tamils.

The famous work *Gnana Kovai*, an anthology of all the poems of the eighteen Tamil siddhas, like any other anthology, records only 32

volume attributes to him 246 songs. Further he says, "This is according to the unpublished script of Muthialu Naidu, son of Bangaru Swami Naidu, residing on Madurai to Dindigul highway." Leaving this note to the researchers and the fans of Kuthambai Siddhar, we can harp on the subject matter of Kuthambai's available poems.

Like any other Tamil Siddha, Kuthambai too composed his songs in the common man's language. They may sound enigmatic but are quite charming. His '*kannis*', as his stanzas in Tamil are called, may be crude in their expression. But their thought structure displays a spirit of assurance in the powers of the Siddha and puts in plain sight what he considered as evil force in the then existing religious and spiritual life.

The songs of Kuthambai are so popular that they are sung with great verve, as folksongs are sung. The stanzas of Kuthambai, may sound

meanings to those who read between the lines.

No roof, no abode
to call one's own.
To those, what use is
Spiritual literature,
O Kuthambai, what use?

(stanza 30)

KUTHAMBAI: HE SAW GOD AS PLAIN CLEAR LIGHT

The surface meaning of the above stanza would simply mean that

life. However, its real meaning is, “To those who wallow in sorrow and take no steps to wipe off other’s tears can have no peace of mind and so their chanting of divine songs would bear no fruit.” Several other interpretations are also possible, provided we know the art of reading the siddha’s mind.

Again in another stanza, he says:

Drunk with the juice of mango
and reach the top of the hill.
To those, what use is coconut milk,
O Kuthambai, what use? (Stanza 28)

The poem seemingly talks of mango juice and coconut milk. In fact, it talks of the functions of the pituitary gland and the intoxicating toddy respectively. These examples are to show that there is not much on the surface to see and that one has to swim deep into the poems

As siddhas easily pass for physicians, who gave herbal treatment to the sick, here is a stanza in which Kuthambai advises everyone to take the concoction for a better health.

When there is onion, pepper,
and dry ginger, what use is
any other remedy, O Kuthambai,
what use? (Stanza 27)

The siddha system of medicine talks of a brew to get rid of headaches caused by tension. The concoction is made by brewing an onion, black pepper and dried ginger. Yet all these three ingredients are only symbols of other things in Siddha’s parlance. For instance, the onion is a symbol of nothingness, for nothing in the onion is left when we peel off its successive skins one after the other. This is to say that one should feel off the unrealities, illusions, and falsehoods of the material world.

Kuthambai was also a revolutionary to the core. He hated the caste system and sang:

Male and Female are
the only two castes on earth.

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Again in another stanza he admonishes:

No such thing as caste,
No such thing as religion.
Learn thus and realise,
O Kuthambai, realise. (Stanza 145)

It must be mentioned in passing that Avvaiyar, the grand old woman of Tamil Literature, went a step further to say,

“There can be no castes except two.
Those who give belong to the higher caste.
Those who don’t belong to the lower caste.
This is what all sacred texts preach.” (Nalvazhi, verse 2)

Cast in a simple form, all his stanzas have the refrain ‘Kuthambai’, which also means the soul. The songs of Kuthambai speak only of the ultimate reality as ‘*vettaveli*’ (plain, clear light) or ‘*uyarveli*’ (the highest light), which in common man’s language would read as ‘God realisation’.

Kuthambai Siddhar, according to tradition, rests his body at *darśan* of his *samādhi*, under the Vellai Pillaiyar shrine, close to the shrine

Note: All the translations from the Songs of Kuthambai and the verse from Avvaiyar, quoted in this essay are free renderings done by the author. ▲

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MAHA BHAKTA VIJAYAM

The Blessed Life of Sant Jayadeva

Chapter Five

Padmavathy's Reunion with her Husband

NABAJI SIDDHA

The king was astonished to hear that Jayadeva Swami was a householder. He felt deep remorse for his negligence in not gathering full information about his personal life. He enquired, "O Swami, are your utterances true? Are you a householder? Won't you please tell me why you are away from your family?"

At this point, the noble Sant apprised the king of what happened to him on his way home from the merchant-devotee's town and how his wife had been left behind.

"Curse on me, what a fool I have been not to have enquired about this sooner," the king berated himself. Immediately, he arranged for a palanquin to be sent forth to fetch Padmavathy from Kindubilvam. He

and other auspicious articles and instructed the courtiers to present the gifts to Padmavathy and fetch her with due reverence.

Then turning to Jayadeva Swami, the king asked, "We have heard that whoever harms noble men will be doomed forever. Then how

is it that the robbers who committed such ghastly atrocities on you were not reduced to ashes? If your mind had been agitated by their cruelty even for a moment, they would have been surely committed to perdition. Please be gracious and tell me, how such brutes were spared from instantaneous punishment?”

Speaking in deep accents of humility, Jayadeva Swami said, “O great king, seeker of the bliss of the Eternal and established in righteousness! One’s ordained destiny cannot be defeated even by the Trinity, demi-gods and great Rishis. When it is so, how could I have escaped such a mishap? I will narrate a story to you to illustrate how helpless we are before destiny.

“There was an exalted Siddha who was steadfast in Knowledge of the Self and could divine the course of events in all three times of past, present and future. An earnest seeker of Truth came to the Mahatma and dedicated himself to his service. His devotion was so great that he was perfectly attuned to the mind of the Mahatma. He could foresee as to what the Guru would require as soon as he emerged from samadhi and had such things ready. There was never an occasion when the Guru had to ask the disciple for anything nor had the disciple to enquire about the Guru’s needs. He was so perfectly attuned to the Guru’s slightest wish.

One day, in order to test the student, the teacher remained without any sankalpa when he surfaced from his meditation. The disciple was at a loss and became extremely upset that he had become absent-minded and therefore was not able to divine the Teacher’s wish. In his anguish, he tried to take his life.

The Guru said, ‘My dear child, there is no one to match you in dedication. I had deliberately stilled my mind today. I cannot commend you enough for your devotion and service. You are a most worthy student. I will impart all the sixty-four kinds of supernatural powers and subtleties of knowledge to you. I will defy even the lord of death and give you protection against all fear. If any harm befalls you, I will annihilate the entire universe.’ Saying thus, he placed his hand in benediction, on the head of the disciple.

As he delved into the disciple’s life through his yogic power, he was

He gave him a pill that would protect him from any harm and reached

Brahmaloka in his subtle body. He enquired of Brahma why the boy was fated to die so early. Brahma pleaded helplessness. Similarly, Vishnu and Siva expressed their inability to change his destiny, since the time left was too short to do anything. As he was about to reach the lord of death, the last moment arrived and the disciple fell dead.

grief and anger which started scorching the realm of death. The lord of Time hastened to the Mahatma and appealed, “O venerable sage, please contain your anger. If you had come here straight to me and challenged me, instead of running here and there, I would have had no power to approach your disciple. Because he was destined to die, he could not be blessed even by the Trinity with long life. You are a wise person and are well aware of the power of fate. Then, why this anger please? If you have great compassion for your student, even now, you can place your hand on his head and bless him to rise.”

Hearing this, the Siddha’s anger subsided and he pronounced the sacred Omkar and commanded his disciple to come back to life. The boy was thus revived and the Guru imparted all his knowledge to him.

“Therefore, O ruler of the earth, destiny is not to be easily foiled and the Karmic trail is inscrutable. However, the grace of God, blessings of Mahatmas and steadfastness in Knowledge will protect a person. On this account, though I was mangled cruelly, I didn’t suffer the pain. On the contrary, I was immersed in blissful remembrance of the Lord. Whatever pleasure and pain have to be experienced cannot be avoided. Service to the Sants is a potent way to reduce the mountain of sufferings into a molehill. What cannot be solved by the Trinity can be reversed by the Sants in a trice. Once, the king Mandata was unhappy as he had no offspring. Narada appealed to the Trinity on behalf of the king. However, They rejected the appeal as the king was not destined to have any issue. The grief-stricken king left for the forest to engage in austerities. In the meantime, a Mahatma visited the palace and pleased with the queen’s hospitality, he blessed her with a boon that she would bear four children. Needless to say, the king became the father of four children. Those who serve the Sants will never come to any misfortune. Hanuman became immortal by the blessings of great souls. O king! By your loving service, you will attain all glory.”

The king was very pleased with the sweet and profound words of Jayadeva Swami. He was totally absorbed in serving the sadhus. Meantime, the Minister's party arrived at Kindubilvam. Making enquiries in the village, the party reached the house of Padmavathy. Bowing at her feet, the leader of the party addressed her thus, "O noble lady, the perfect consort of Jayadeva Swami! The Sant is safe and sound in the kingdom of Krauncha. The king has sent us here to take you to the kingdom at the earliest. Will you be kind enough, O mother, to accompany us without delay?"

Padmavathy, the crest-jewel among high-born women, on hearing the words about her husband's safety, felt revived as if the life-force which had left the body entered it again. Her joy was like that of a mother whose dead children had come back to life; or like a devotee who got the vision of his *iṣṭadevatā*; or like a destitute who attained a kingdom. She said in a choked voice, "You have brought to me a new lease of life with the good news, like Hanuman who rescued Sita Devi, the consort of Lord Rama at the crucial moment when she was about to commit suicide while chanting the glories of her Lord."

Padmavathy treated the visitors with warm hospitality. Just as Damayanti remained wearing the same piece of cloth that she had worn on the day she got separated from Nala till her reunion, Padmavathy also had paid the least attention to the care of her body during the one year period of her husband's absence. She came out of the house in the same condition, with the same piece of apparel that she had worn on the day of separation. She lamented to herself, 'What a hard-hearted person am I to have remained alive even after such a long separation.

to my husband.'" With this resolve, she started walking fast. However, the maids-in-attendance who had come with the party surrounded her and forcibly put her in the palanquin.

However, she couldn't control her weeping and berating herself, 'How coolly I was living in the village without searching for my lord in distant places. I am unworthy to be his wife.' Now and then, whenever they were passing through a town, she asked, "O revered sirs! How many days will it take to reach my lord? Is this the town where he lives?" The king's men and the maids were amazed at the depth of her devotion to her husband.

On reaching the palace, she took off like the wind to the place where Jayadeva Swami was seated. She prostrated to him and went round him shedding tears of joy. As she stood in front of him, she found that he was totally crippled. She became frozen with shock and horror.

uncontrollably. Sharp arrows of shock and sorrow pierced her heart, rendering her unconscious. When she revived, she beat her chest in uncontrollable grief and wailed loudly, “Who are the evil-doers who committed such a heinous crime on you? Can they live in peace for long on this earth without retribution?” The burden of her anguish at the sight of her maimed husband is past description.

With a note of disapproval, Jayadeva Swami said, “Don’t utter words of censure on my friends. What if legs are missing? What if hands are missing? What if even the life is lost? It makes no sense to blame the arrow. One cannot overtake the destiny ordained for one. Can we defy the will of the Master? It is all due to the evil deeds of my past. What can the Lord do? My beloved! Understand that mishaps, separation, illness and worries are brought about by one’s own Karma. Therefore, do not remain plunged in sorrow, my dear! Be it royal favour or dawn of Knowledge, everything happens according to what is writ on the wall by the Invisible Hand. You surely know about the trials and hardship in the lives of king Harishchandra and king Puru? Please take comfort from the lives of such great men and attain peace.” Recounting the stories of Harishchandra, Puru and

that were raging in her heart.

However, Padmavathy’s heart remained raw with pain at the sad condition of her lord. She looked upon her husband as the Lord and his words were gospel, his service was real worship, thinking of him was meditation, to be united with him was Knowledge, to give up her life along with him was liberation. With this exalted state of mind, she consoled herself and looked after Jayadeva Swami like the eyelids protecting the eyes.

Seeing the ideal life of the saintly couple, the king gave up his desire for sannyas which he had nurtured in his heart after associating with the Sant. He looked after the couple with great devotion and reverence and engaged himself unconditionally in serving the

sadhus. He extended the highest kind of hospitality to the wandering sadhus, presenting them with precious gifts, and making necessary arrangements for their pilgrimages etc. He instructed his advisors and courtiers to keep him informed of the visits of sadhus and devotees belonging to different sects and to make everything conducive for his sadhu seva thus uplifting him and also attaining their own welfare.

The streets in the city were always resounding with the chanting of Vedas and songs in praise of the Lord. All directions shone with

high in the sky added to the majesty of the city. The cowsheds were full of milch cows enhancing the auspiciousness in the kingdom. The fame and pure renown of the city which shone like Sri Vaikunta, Kailash, Satyaloka and Alakapuri, spread far and wide. The reign was like that of the great kings of yore like Harishchandra, Sri Rama and Dharmaputra. It was as if bliss had made its abode in the kingdom of Krauncha! ▲

As You Are

Upahar

Under this tree of knowledge, all aflower,
radiant with unforbidden fruit,
how long will you stand, and ponder, and reflect?

The game is up; what you aspire to
is ever-present, ever out of reach.
Fail beautifully now, with all your being.

What you already know is here, is now.
Break all the mirrors. Lose your heart to That.
No moment is more favourable or true.

The One you love makes no demands of you.
The time is up; there's nothing to detain you.
Come as you are to your own festival.

Śiva Bhōga Sāram

The Essence of the Bliss of Sivam

GURU JNANASAMBANDHA DESIKAR

TRANSLATED BY ROBERT BUTLER

Guru Jñānasambandha Dēsikar founded the Dharmapuram monastery or math in the 16th century. It is situated 17 miles to the south-east of Cīrkāli, the birthplace of his namesake, the illustrious saint Tiru Jñānasambandhar. The 16th century was a time of great flowering of the Saivite faith in Tamil Nadu, when many great teachers emerged, and in many cases founded maths, such as that founded in Perūr, Coimbatore, by Santhalinga Swamigal, whose work Catakam has recently been serialised in this magazine.

Like many other Saivite maths, including Pērūr, mentioned above, Dharmapuram Ādhīnam traces its origins from Lord Śiva himself, passing through a lineage of celestial and then temporal gurus, the latter beginning with Meykaṇḍār Dēvar, the first guru of the Saiva Siddhānta tradition. In this article, we shall give a brief biography of Guru Jñānasambandhar, which will be followed in subsequent editions by a serialisation of his work,

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.

, a work of 139 verses in the metre. It is a little known classic whose curt and trenchant verses carry a deep and powerful advaitic import.

The following biography is based on two accounts of the saint's life, both published by Dharmapuram Ādhīnam, one being from the 1967 Tamil edition of Śivabōga Cāram with commentary by Ci. Aruṇaivēl Mudaliyār, and the other, from the 1981 English work Guru Jnana Sambandha, the Philosopher inspired by Madurai, written by M. Arunachalam. The two accounts are broadly the same but differ in some details.

bhakta of the

earlier had been instrumental in driving out Jainism and Buddhism from Tamil Nadu and establishing Saivism as the dominant religion.

Tamil and Sanskrit, had studied and clearly understood all the *āgama śāstras* and was exemplary in his conduct.

One day his mother and father travelled to Madurai, desiring to

staying there for several days, and performing worship to the Lord

eyes. When the time came to leave and they called to him, he looked at his parents and said, 'Since the mother and father of my soul reside in this temple, I cannot leave them and come with you, who are the mother and father of this body,' quoting to them many *śāstras* by way of reassurance and explanation. His parents were able to understand the situation to some degree and, leaving him in Madurai, returned

temple's golden lotus tank, performing his daily observances with

Śiva pūja on the margins of the golden



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lotus tank. Tears of bliss were running down in streams from their eyes as they sang melodious Tamil hymns. The thought came to him that for them to be performing *pūja* in this manner, they must have some previous connection with the Lord. Accordingly he prayed to Lord of

are dwelling in the form of a lingam, contained within a casket, which is submerged in the north-eastern corner of the golden lotus tank. Having gone there and retrieved it, you shall perform *pūja* according to your desire!’ ‘What a wonder!’ he cried in astonishment, dancing and singing praises in bliss in his desire to approach the feet of the three-eyed Lord. When dawn came, and he submerged himself in the water at the north-eastern corner of the golden lotus tank, Lord

out the lingam and dancing in ecstasy, he made his way to the holy *sanctum sanctorum* and sang 11 verses¹ of praise with tears streaming from his eyes.

In a form sweet to the eye into my hands you have come.
What a wonder is this! A miracle praised by gods above.

may you lead even me into the ocean that is perfect bliss!

Having sung this hymn, he made this petition, before taking leave and returning to his dwelling place, ‘You have granted your grace in the manner that I, your devotee desired. Now may you show me through your grace an enlightened teacher who will impart to me the

One who wears the crescent moon appeared in a dream once more,

¹ *Cokkanātha-k-kali-t-turai*

kali-t-turai metre. Here he bemoans his

grace on an unworthy person like himself. The word *cokkam* is a Tamil form of the Sanskrit word *svarga* – *heaven*

Lord of Heaven.

to our lineage, and perform my worship.’ Then in the same manner a Monday you should transmit the teaching of true knowledge in you.’ Thus he commanded and disappeared from view. Meanwhile

pūja and other sacred

afraid!’ Seating him facing north, he bestowed upon him *jñāna dīkṣa* (a form of initiation reserved for the most mature aspirants) and initiated him in the performance of *Cokkalinga pūja* performed the *pūja*, adorning the Lord with a garland of verses entitled *cokkanātha veṇba*, and composing a hymn in praise of his guru called *ñāṅappirakāca mālai* feet in worship.

on certain occasions to perform *pūja* at night, accompanied by his disciples. A torchbearer accompanied them to light their way home afterwards. On one occasion, upon completion of the *pūja*,

was delighted at the opportunity to take the torch himself and act as torchbearer for the group. When the party reached the house of usually simply the signal for the torchbearer to be dismissed. However

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there exactly as he was and so continued standing there until dawn. That night it rained heavily, but the rain did not touch him, nor did the rivulets of rain that ran down the street wet the ground he was standing on, and all the while the torch continued to burn, although it had long ago consumed its fuel. The next morning, when the guru's wife came out to sprinkle cow dung and water on the threshold, she

out to see for himself.

Recognising the power of divine grace, he embraced

said, 'You have become a great teacher, who will dispense the light of divine grace for the good of all. You should go at once from here to a place of your own choosing and dispense the teach of *śiva jñāna* to ripe aspirants, fostering the Saivite faith.' On hearing this,

me to be separated from you, my Lord and God?' and composed a poem in the *kaṭṭalai-k-kali-t-turai* metre, in which he declared that other than obeying the command of his guru, he had no freedom to do anything at all.

Does an ox or its heavy burden choose where to go?

Where I or this body goes, is that for me to know?

you who in anger the demon cities scorned,

let it be as you wish. Pray speak your gracious word!

distance of two *yojanas* to the north of this place, to the east of

of *vilva* trees. It is the place where Yama paid homage to the Lord and received his grace, and where Agastya and many other rishis have performed worship. You should go there and make that your seat, where you shall dwell, imparting the teaching of true knowledge to

deity, bestowing initiation upon ripe disciples, purveying the teaching of true knowledge and illuminating divine grace through the performance of many miraculous deeds. He composed a number of *jñāna śāstras*, one of which is the *Śiva Bhōga Sāram* and also many works of praise to the Lord. In the course of time, those sages and descendants of Agastya who had charge of the worship

temple into his authority, saying that he, and those who followed in his lineage, should foster them as they themselves had done in the past. So saying, they departed from that place. From that time on,

holy festivals, works of construction and renovation and all the rest.

There is a story that on one occasion he travelled to Chidambaram

pillared hall and sank into blissful *samādhi* which continued for a long time both night and day. One day the consort of the Lord of

middle of the night and gave him the *payasam* in a silver dish and rice in a golden dish along with Ganges water, which had been placed in her bedchamber.

When he came to know through divine grace that the time was

to enter into *jīva samādhi*

headship of the math and the entitlement to perform *Cokkalinga pūja*.

that he sought nothing more than the grace of his guru and as soon as he gained it, with tears coursing down, he fell down in worship at the *samādhi* of his guru. Then proceeding to the west of the shrine, and seating himself there, facing east towards the shrine, he too attained *jīva samādhi*

followers gathered at his *samādhi* and begged him to appear once

of his state of *samādhi*

enter the state of *jñāna samādhi* that had been conferred upon him.

sang the following Tamil verse:

merge with *sat-cit-ānanda*'s form,
the glory that has no beginning end or middle, alas,
you have not been able that supreme state to grasp.
Is it because egoic attachment still remains?
Or have *āṇavam*, *karma* and *māyā* not been erased?
Or has true knowledge not in your heart been born?
We know not. Speak, what delusion is this of yours?

that he was able thereafter to attain the state of *jñāna samādhi* and
samādhi of non-dual

of a successor, chosen in his lifetime by the incumbent head of the math. The epithets *guru* and *dēsika* (teacher) were in the course of time added to his name, in view of his role as a great teacher and also to distinguish him from others of the same name.

Homage to the Guru

The Lord who to us attainment grants,
who dwells in Kamalai's¹ southern land,

¹ *Kamalai*, Sanskrit *kamalā* is a female proper name meaning *she of the lotus* (*kamala*)

Kamalālaya
sthala in

the Tanjavur District of Tamil Nadu, to be born in which is said, in the following well-known Sanskrit *śloka*, to guarantee liberation.

darśanāt abhrasādasi jananāt kamalālaye
kāśyāntu maraṇāt muktiḥ smaraṇāt aruṇācale.

Liberation [will be assured] in *Abhrasādasi* (Chidambaram) through seeing [it], in *Kamalālaya*

the supernal Lord who in us love implants,
 the Lord who to us the truth reveals,
 the Lord of liberation supreme –
 ² is He. 1

Neither formless nor with form,
 nor both with form and without,
 the One who as the life of life itself shines out,

And ruled me as my Lord. 2

Who could know the path of justice,
 who could know *siddhi* and *mukti*,
 who could know true *tapas* and *bhakti*,

the Lord of all who in the world abide
 had not come, in a form like mine? 3

The great One whose foot and head in olden times
 neither Vishnu nor Brahma could cognise,

he who dwells In Kamalai, I saw
 in groves where bees hum as nectar pours.
 This worldly bondage slipped from me.
 Ambrosia I scooped and sipped,
 and I came to dwell in supreme bliss. 5

²

and is praised as such, in terms which combine his temporal and transcendental attributes in equal measure, and without distinction, as in this and the following nine verses.

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‘Informing their awareness within them do I ever dwell,
yet they are quite unable my presence there to tell.
So appear to them I shall, within and without a well.’
Thus he thought, and softly in a human form

Like the sun that drives the enshrouding dark away,
grace in full measure to dawn in me he made,
and the onset of dark ignorance allayed.

he who the Vedas’ and Agamas’ true import tells. 7

You of the fair and ruddy lotus feet,
You who are the deathless reality supreme,
You who in unceasing bliss are steeped,
You of southern Kamalai, the Vedas’ Lord!
may you to this cur your grace afford
so that I may dwell unawakened to the world.³ 8

Hoarded wealth, the body, the feeble mind,
and the desire for these are all unreality,
he said, and with the state of grace united me,
the Lord who in his locks the crescent moon bears,

who dwells in noble Kamalai’s great city fair. 9

3

ulagil
viriyāḍ(u) irundu – remaining in the world without waking. This the state of the *jñāni*, who is asleep to the world and awake to the self, *ātma svarūpa*. This state is characterised by Sri Ramana as follows, as recorded in Muruganar’s *Guru Vācaka Kōvai*, v. 960:

The great ones have reached the lotus of the Heart, no longer moving in the paths
ātman, and are
experiencing the conscious sleep (*ari tuyil*) in which they ‘sleep without sleeping.’
Only they are experiencing the waking state of liberation, which is true knowledge
(*jñāna*). As for the rest, they lie asleep, gripped by the dense darkness that is the
unreal appearance of this transient world.

Unreal is all that is heard and seen.
 Unreal are good works, taken up with zeal.
 Unreal are pleasures, whatever they may be.
 This one thing alone is real,
 that Sambandhar⁴ has himself in glory shown,
 as the tide of bliss, within myself enthroned. 10

That which is Hard to Attain

Hard, hard, hard it is to ever rest in grace,
 united with the Lord in that lofty state,

 pride, cruelty, ego, self-conceit, ire
 and actions born out of desire. 11

When thoughts of one's own greatness fade,
 when one's personal awareness dies away,
 when desire for the world's glory has passed,

 when day in, day out, the body is despised,

 the pain of birth will end that day. 12

Of scriptures, to study a mountainous array,
 to sing praises and act out *pūja* as in a play
 to the God that can only be espied
 when speech and thinking mind have died,
 and when *māyā*'s curtain has been torn aside,
 as pure and utter falsehood do we deride. 13

Even if you call out to that Secret sublime
 day and night with no regard for time,
 with voice grown hoarse from wasted words,

4

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will that reality supreme be thus discerned,
though down he dug into the earth? 14

and gain all the *siddhis* through great *tapas*,
for those who have not the power to remain
in the state by their guru for them ordained,
there will for ever and day be mental pain. 15

Keep the Truth apart for those ripe souls
who in love have ever greater grown,
and therein true discrimination have known;
who thus banishing the suffering of their deeds,
come running, having conceived
a thirst for the blissful supreme Reality. 16

(To be continued)



A Drop of Dew

Suresh Kailash

At the end of the long night,
You came as the tawny dawn,
The koel's piercing, urgent cry,
Waking my heart's silent song.

I wait for the light of your sun,
To dissolve like a pining lover,
In the arms of the beloved one.

The Avadhut

Luke Ball

In emptiness beyond my comprehension of your state,
What generates this sense of being incomplete
Your presence in my world can so create?

Did you once have a wife or son or daughter

You bless and consecrate the holy water
What stimulus extinguished your desire?

That now you roam this frayed remains of life
Where your horizons but exist within
A world so free of all your former strife
Seen only as the drunken mendicant's wineskin.

To loose the heavy chains my past secures
Would I be tempted by your distant shores
Or resubmit to what I now endure?

Was ever the exchange one you could make?
Did time, experience or idle thought
Make you feast on dry bread instead of cake
What impulse won the prize so dearly bought?

Your bare feet stroll in opposite direction
To footsteps striding on so smartly shod
Which scamper to their stations of subjection
While you are free to fraternise with God!

ASHRAM BULLETIN

Sri Bhagavan's 143rd Jayanti

Sri Bhagavan's 143rd *Jayanti* celebrations started early on the morning of the 7th of January with *Nādasvaram* *pūjā* and *Śrī Viṣṇu Sahasranāma Pārāyaṇa* took place in the early morning, followed by a special Tamil *Pārāyaṇa* and *Mahanyāsam Rudrajapam*. *Pūjā* and *abhiṣekam* to Sri Ramaneswara Mahalingam culminated in *Deepārādhana* at 10.30 am. The afternoon programme on the 7th included a special *abhiṣekam* and *pūjā* in Bhagavan's Shrine. The Ashram kitchen served *bhikṣā* to some 10,000 during the celebration.

Pāṇḍaveswarar Temple Mahākumbhābhiṣekam

Behind Ramanasramam, about 200 metres to the right of the back gate that leads to the Skandasramam path, on the lower slopes of Arunachala,

Tirtham in which Bhagavan used to swim regularly during the early

brothers in *The Mahābhārata*

were forced into exile and wandered with their wife Draupadi. During

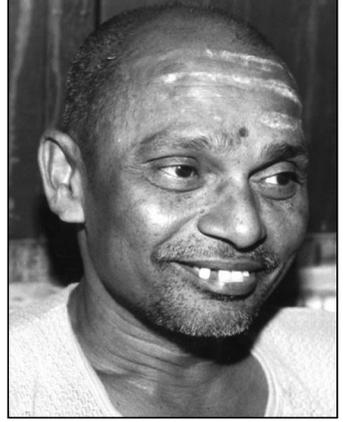
War with Krishna's help. In their wanderings, they made their way all over the land of Bharat and are said to have come to Tiruvannamalai where they took up residence on the Holy Hill just up from the current day Ramanasramam.

In recent years, the temple that bears their name was in need of restoration. Owing to its proximity to the Ashram and given the history of the temple's *tīrtham* which Bhagavan sometimes swam in, the Ashram fully funded and supervised the extensive renovation of the ancient site. The *Mahākumbhābhiṣekam* was performed on the 12th of December.

Sri Sadhu Om's Birth Centenary

On the 5th and 6th of January 2023 Ashram President Dr. Venkat S. Ramanan and Ramana devotees attended Sri Sadhu Om's Birth

Centenary at the Sadhu Om Kudil to remember the life of a great devotee. Renovations of the shrines of Sadhu Om and Thinnai Swami were carried out in recent months and the Centenary was the fitting occasion to perform *Mahākumbhābhīṣekam* which took place between 9-10 am on the morning of the 6th of January, followed by *Maṅgala Deepārādhana*. Afterwards, *prasādam* was served for all. RMCL Ramananjali singers performed in the afternoon.



Sivaprakasam Pillai

On Thursday 12th January devotees gathered in the New Hall to sing a repertoire of verses written by Sivaprakasam Pillai who was an important early devotee of Bhagavan who was instrumental in Bhagavan giving out his famous teachings on ‘Who am I?’ in answer to his questions. When his *mahānirvāṇa* was conveyed to Bhagavan, he indicated that Sivaprakasam Pillai attained *mokṣa*. The recitation was followed by *āratī* and the distribution of *prasād*.

Ramaswami Pillai

On Saturday 14th January devotees gathered at the *samādhis* of devotees near the back gate at the shrine of Ramaswami Pillai. After chanting *Śrī Aruṅācala Akṣaramaṇamālai*, *āratī* was performed followed by the distribution of *prasād*.

Mahā Śivarātri

was celebrated at the Ashram on *Krishna Paksha Chaturdasi*, the 18th of February, with *jagaran*, the traditional all-night vigil sustained by *pūjā*, recitation and meditation.

kāla pūjā was followed by the lighting of the ceremonial *gośala* generating the upcoming year’s supply of sacred ash.

Lectures at the Grantalaya Auditorium

From the 3rd to the 5th of February, discourses on ‘Sri Ramana Tattva Bhodha’ were given by Dr. Garikipati Narasimha Rao in Telugu at the Grantalaya Auditorium in celebration of Sri Ramanasramam’s Centenary Year. Also, on the morning of the 26th of February a discourse on ‘Bhagavan Ramanula Vaibhavam’ was given by Brahmastri Dr. Chaganti Koteswara Rao. The lectures were well attended.

Obituary: Smt. Nirmalaben Mehta



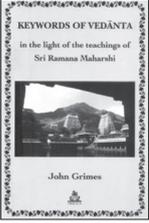
On 14th April 1950, a yet to be married 18-year-old girl in a small village near Navsari in south Gujarat saw a very bright shiny object crossing the night sky. Two weeks later she got married and as she entered the house of her new family, her mother-in-law pointed to a framed picture, and told her, “This is your husband’s Guru. Please seek His Blessings.” It was the famous Mani portrait of our Bhagavan. Only then did she realise that the bright shiny object she had seen that night coincided with Bhagavan’s *Mahasamadhi*. The picture in the frame had been cut out from a newspaper and was the only picture of Bhagavan in the family for many decades.

After retirement she and her husband built a house near the Ashram where they lived for many years. Due to age, they returned to Baroda a few years back, but her devotion never wavered. Though she never discussed Bhagavan, occasionally pearls would escape her mouth. Once she casually mentioned that practically every night, she

out from her and she wrote and sang many songs on Bhagavan. A book was published in recent years and devotees in the USA made a high-quality CD of her songs. Though she never felt the need to read books by or on Bhagavan, the Master had claimed her even before she knew Bhagavan, like so many devotees.

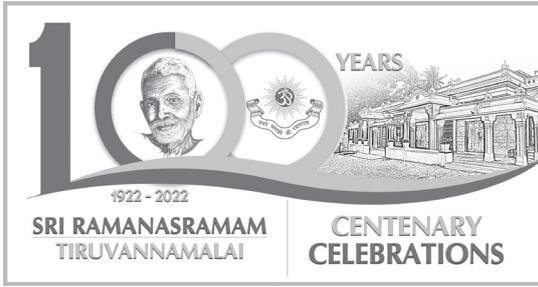
Smt. Nirmalaben Mehta passed away amid the sound of the family’s recitation of Arunachala Siva and Ramana Sat Guru, merging at the feet of Arunachala on 13th December 2022. Like a true devotee, she lived a humble self-effacing life, loving and gentle. She will be missed by devotees and family members alike. ▲

NOW AVAILABLE...



KEYWORDS OF VEDANTA - In the light of the teachings of Sri Ramana Maharshi by John Grimes. Indica Books, Varanasi. pp.205. Rs.475. ISBN: 9789381120316; www.indicabooks.in; email: indicabooksindia@gmail.com

From October 2009 to January 2019 John Grimes, a recognised academic authority on Advaita Vedanta, contributed a series of refreshing articles on the subject to the *Mountain Path*. These articles have now been collated and published by Indica Books, Varanasi. Their value lies in the directness and simplicity as only a master of his subject could bring to bear on a subject. John Grimes's knowledge was not merely theoretical but a living expression of his life as a *bhakta*. For those who find the abstruseness of much of the writing on Advaita daunting, this book is a welcome guide.



Announcement: Sri Ramanasramam's Centenary Year

(September 2022 - December 2023)

Sri Ramanasramam's Centenary celebrations called, Ramanasramam: The Next One Hundred Years, began on the 1st of September 2022 and will continue over a 16-month period until Jayanti, 28th of December 2023. It is recorded in one place that Bhagavan came down the Hill to stay permanently 'about one week' before Jayanti which fell that year on the 3rd of January 1923. If so, this means the Ashram would have been established with Bhagavan's arrival around the 28th of December 1922. Ashram President Dr. Venkat S. Ramanan invites devotees to send their suggestions for this Centenary Year to him directly at <posrm@gururamana.org>.

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: What is the real purport of *sannyasa* (renunciation)?

M: *Sannyasa* is only the renunciation of the ‘I-thought’, and not the rejection of the external objects. He who has renounced the ‘I-thought’ thus, remains the same whether he is alone or in the midst of an extensive empirical world (*samsara*). Just as when the mind is concentrated on some object, it does not observe other things even though they may be proximate, so also, although the sage may perform any number of empirical acts, in reality he performs nothing, because he keeps the mind in the Self without letting the ‘I-thought’ arise. Even as in a dream one appears to fall head downwards, while in reality one is unmoving, so also the ignorant person, i.e., the person for whom the ‘I-thought’ has not ceased, although he remains alone in constant meditation, is in fact one who performs all empirical actions. Thus the wise ones have stated.

— Sri Ramana Maharshi, *Self-Enquiry*, Section 14
