

The  
Mountain  
Path

ARADHANA ISSUE 1993

Arunachala is the Hill of Fire ( "அங்கி உரு" ), the Jnana Guru, embodied for us in that Blaze of Beatitude, (Jnana), Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi. From fire, any number of flames can be lit, while the originating fire remains undiminished, untainted, immutable.

Bhagavan Ramana, the Fire Supreme, has kindled many Flames of Oneness, thus proving that the state of Illumination is no far-off, hardly-attainable ideal, but an immediate Reality, accessible to all.

We are proud to introduce to our readers some of the many Ramana-Flames kindled through His Grace – each Flame unique in guiding "others" who imagine that they need Illumination.

— Editor

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# THE MOUNTAIN PATH

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

— *The Marital Garland of Letters*, verse 1

June 1993

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— Editor.

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## The Mountain Path

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THE MOUNTAIN PATH

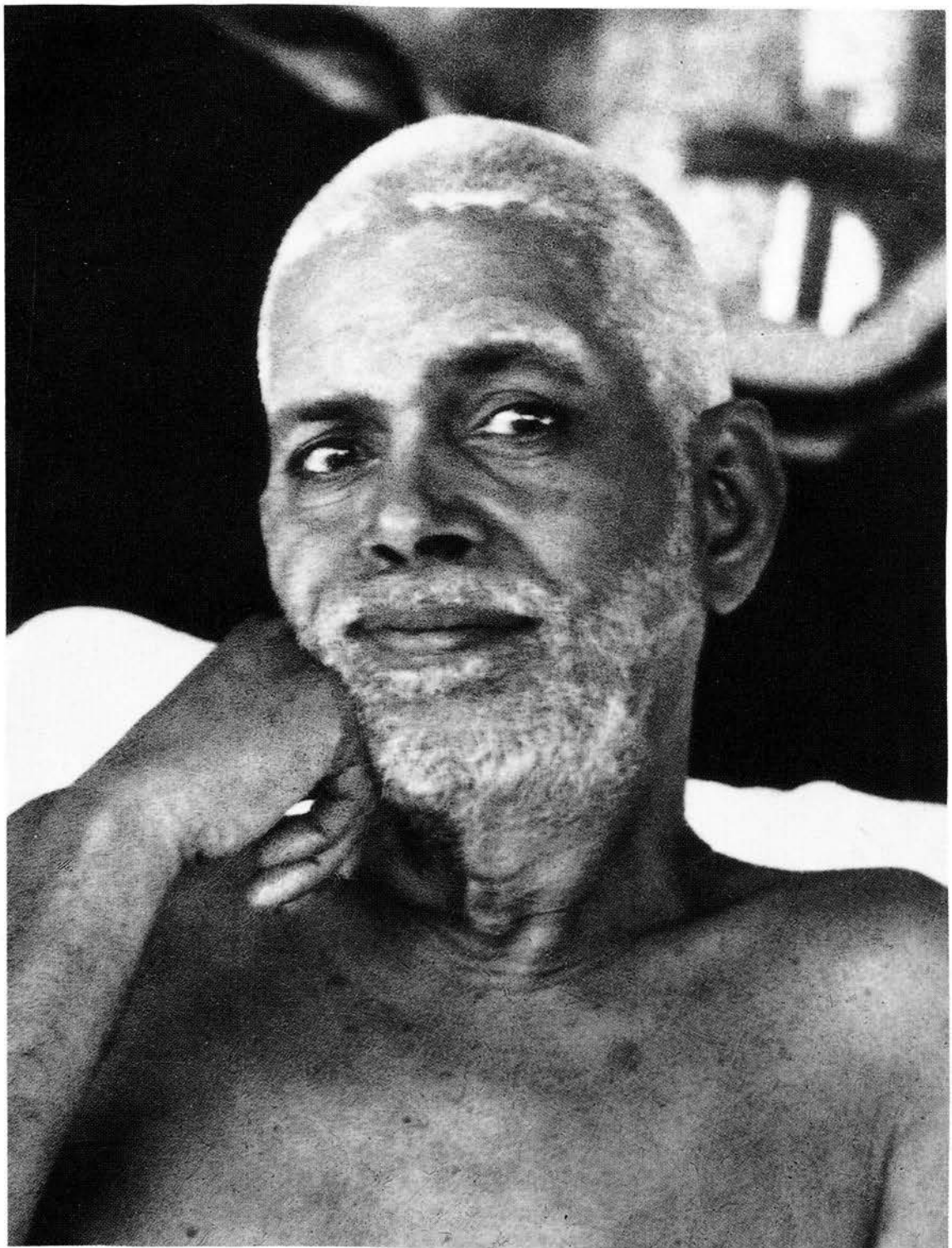
is dedicated to

Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi

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**I**S it possible to reveal Reality, entirely and definitively, through word, description and analysis? All scriptures point to the Truth and the means of attaining it, yet the very same sacred writings declare that Reality is beyond all description — it is *anirvachaneeyam*.

Similarly, we are faced with the conundrum of the elusive yet tangible embodiment of a saint or sage. A dictionary offers the following definitions: "*Sage (noun)* a profoundly wise man, any of the ancients traditionally regarded as the wisest of their time; (*adjective*) profoundly wise, especially from experience; of or indicating profound wisdom. *Saint (noun)* a very virtuous person, a person of great holiness, a member of the company of heaven, one of God's chosen people (as *sainted*); (*adjective*) sacred, of a saintly life, worthy to be regarded as a saint."

Perhaps one can safely describe the saint or sage as a completely natural human being: simplicity, humility, spontaneity, wisdom and compassion being directly and unmistakably experienced in his or her presence, like the fragrance of a flower.

Humankind has increasingly demonstrated a seemingly limitless mastery over the external world, yet we are baffled when confronted with the nature of inner space. The sage, however, effortlessly points to the goal, unerringly cutting through the plethora of doubts and conceptualisations, to the heart of being and bliss.

When a devotee remarked, "There must be a scientific approach to the subject", Ramana Maharshi made the pithy reply, "To eschew unreality and seek the Reality is scientific".

Again, when a questioner sought an answer to "the riddle of creation", Bhagavan's response was typical:

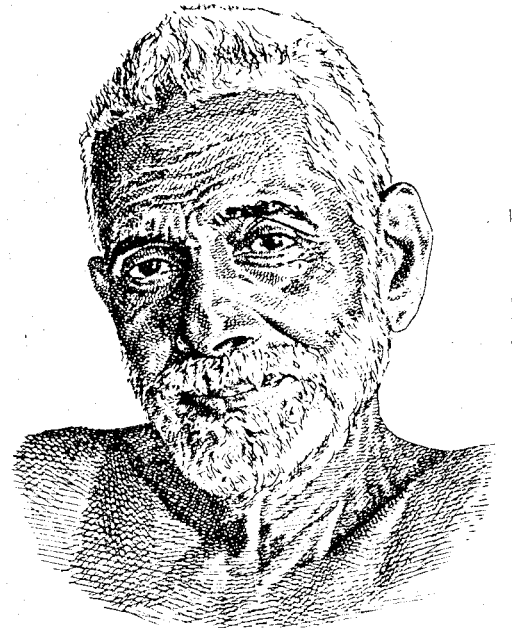
"Where are you now, that you ask this ques-

tion? Are you in the world, or is the world within you? You must admit that the world is not perceived in your sleep although you cannot deny your existence then. The world appears when you wake up. So where is it? Clearly the world is your thought. Thoughts are your projections. The 'I' is first created and then the world. The world is created by the 'I' which in turn rises up from the Self. The riddle of the creation of the world is thus solved if you solve the creation of the 'I'. So I say, find your Self."

## SAGES, SAINTS AND OURSELVES

\* \* \*

— EDITORIAL —



J. Krishnamurti says, "Truth is where the 'me' is not." How to bring this 'me' to naught?

The world is outer space and the inner space is silence. Thought pretends to be the link between the outer and the inner. So, like using a thorn to remove a thorn, by tracing thought to its womb, one regains one's original state of stillness. Since stillness is the birthplace of thought, plucking out thought by its root, thereby causing its annihilation, places one in the reservoir of stillness. The death of thought is the birth of stillness.

Just as Hercules cannot lift the stool on which he sits, thought can never be understood within its own framework. The content of thought var-



ies, but its essential nature, like one's own breathing, is constant movement. J. Krishnamurti clarifies this insight: "Thought can never be still. If it is still, it dies. Therefore, it cannot afford to be still."

Ramana Maharshi, characteristically, brought Occam's razor to bear on this Gordian knot, indicating a solution of elegant ease:

"The fact is that the mind is only a bundle of thoughts," says Sri Ramana. He says further that the root of all thoughts is the 'I'-thought, the sensation that arises in oneself and which one identifies with the body immediately upon waking up from sleep. This 'I'-thought extends itself to 'me' and 'mine'. Then follows the whole world with its attendant attractions and distractions. Thus, every day, while waking up from sleep, we walk away from the womb of silence.

Saints are those who have not only dissolved their own 'me' but also swallow up the 'me' of the people who come to them. A word, a look, or even the very presence of a saint activates this process of dissolution, resulting in a peace beyond thought or word. This experiential taste of truth leaves one longing for more, and this desire is the beginning of *sadhana*. Hence, we

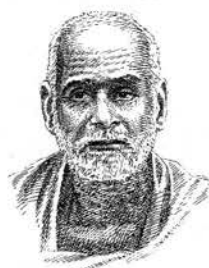
seek *satsang*, the company of a sage — one who knows.

"What are the fundamental tests for discovering men of great spirituality?" Bhagavan was once asked. His reply was revealing: "The *jnani's* mind is known only to the *jnani*. One must be a *jnani* oneself in order to understand another *jnani*. However, the peace of mind which permeates the saint's atmosphere is the only means by which the seeker understands the greatness of the saint."

And, by all accounts, everyone coming into contact with the king among sages, Ramana Maharshi, for the first time — either fortuitously or already knowing of His greatness — experienced this deep, silent peace.

Saints are ever present among us. Sages abound all over the world and throughout the history of humankind. Most, in all likelihood, remain unknown like beautiful flowers that blossom in the forests, vales and mountains untravelled by human feet. It is the precious mutual recognition of divinity which gives rise to a Buddha, a Christ, a Ramakrishna, a Ramana.

A reputable educationist, Avinasalingam Chettiar, was once on a Himalayan pilgrimage





to Kedarnath. He strayed from the path to take a closer look at a beautiful small waterfall. It was cold. On the way, he saw an emaciated, unclad man lying in a ditch. His eyes were closed. As compassion welled up in him, turning his thoughts to the needs and welfare of the old man, the prostrate figure spontaneously recited a verse from the *Gita*:

*Mookam karoti vaachalam pangum langhayate girim yatkipaa tamaham vande paramaanandamaadhavam.*

The dumb turn eloquent, the crippled cross mountains by the grace of Madhava, the source of Supreme Bliss; that I salute!

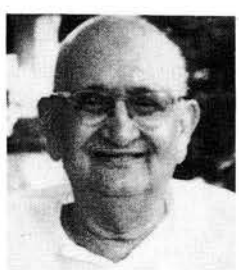
— *Gita Dhyana Sloka (8)*

Shirdi Sai Baba is famous, but few know of Venkusa who transmitted to him that state of perfection; a hug from a nameless saint turned a country ruffian into the renowned Swami Nityananda; numerous are such instances of anonymous sages. Then, too, there are dazzling illustrations of the divine grace directly moulding chosen ones into radiant messiahs: Gadadhara, a village illiterate, was transported by the ecstatic vision of white birds flying in formation

against a background of dark clouds, into a Ramakrishna Paramahansa; J. Krishnamurti endured an arduous "process" under the pepper tree at Ojai, to tread the pathless path. Faith and perseverance also bear fruit. Nisargadatta Maharaj literally and completely imbibed his master's instruction: "I AM' is your true nature."

Saints seek neither recognition nor fame. Like the sun, their very being is their greatness. It is the seeker who turns to them, to love and revere, on his or her own journey into freedom.

As the beatific Anandamayee Ma says, "A saint is like a tree. He does not call anyone, neither does he send anyone away. He gives shelter to whoever cares to come, be it a man, woman, child or an animal. If you sit under a tree it will protect you from the inclemencies of the weather, from the scorching sun as well as from pouring rain, and it will give you flowers and fruit. Whether a human being enjoys them or a bird tastes of them matters little to the tree; its produce is there for anyone who comes and takes it. And last, but not least, it gives itself. How itself? The fruit contains the seeds for new trees of a similar kind. So by sitting under a tree you will get shelter, shade, flowers, fruit and





in due course, you will come to know yourself."

From all the unnumbered millions of mankind who have been born, lived and died, let us select one exemplar whose life continues to illuminate mankind for more than two thousand five hundred years of our common history. In the words of an outstanding contemporary *bodhisattva*, His Holiness the Dalai Lama of Tibet, Tenzin Gyatso:

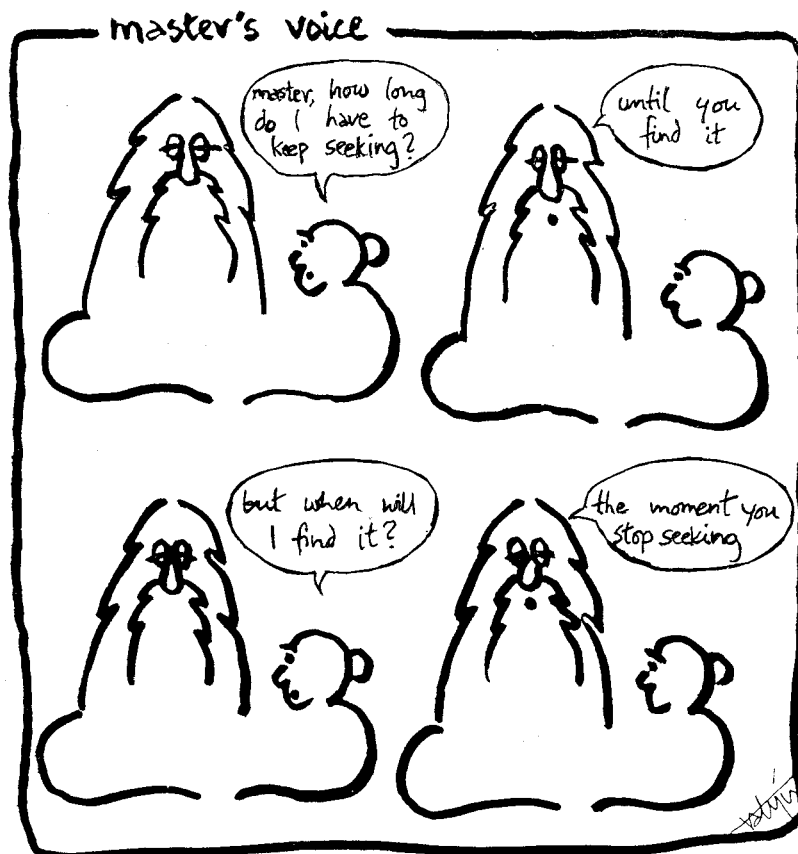
"Buddha said, 'You are your own master; things depend upon you. I am a teacher, and, like a doctor, I can give you effective medicine, but you have to take it yourself and look after yourself.'

"Who is Buddha? Buddha is a being who attained complete purification of mind, speech,

and body. Initially, Shakyamuni Buddha was Siddhartha, an ordinary being troubled by delusions and engaging in harmful thoughts and wrong actions — someone like ourselves. However, with the help of certain teachings and teachers, he gradually purified himself and in the end became enlightened.

"Through the same causal process we too can become fully enlightened. There are many different levels of mind, the most subtle of which is the deep Buddha-nature, the seed of Buddhahood. All beings have within them this subtle consciousness, and through the practice of deep meditation and virtuous actions, it gradually can be transformed into pure Buddhahood.

"Our situation is very hopeful: the seed of liberation is within us".



## Seer Alone is Self

(from *Talks*, No. 469)

**Yogi Ramiah asked:** A master is approached by an aspirant for enlightenment. The master says that Brahman has no qualities, nor stain, nor movement, etc. Does he not then speak as an individual? How can the aspirant's ignorance be wiped off unless the master speaks thus? Do the words of the master as an individual amount to Truth?

**Maharshi:** To whom should the master speak? Whom does he instruct? Does he see anyone different from the Self?

**D:** But the disciple is asking the master for elucidation.

**M:** True, but does the master see him as different? The ignorance of the disciple lies in not knowing that all are Self-realised. Can anyone exist apart from the Self? The master simply points out that the ignorance lies there and therefore does not stand apart as an individual.

What is Realisation? Is it to see God with four hands, bearing conch, wheel, club, etc? Even if God should appear in that form, how is the disciple's ignorance wiped out? The truth must be eternal realisation. The direct perception is ever-present Experience. God Himself is known as directly perceived. It does not mean that He appears before the devotee as said above. Unless the Realisation be eternal it cannot serve any useful purpose. Can the appearance with four hands be eternal realisation? It is phenomenal and illusory. There must be a seer. The seer alone is real and eternal.

Let God appear as the light of a million suns: Is it *pratyaksha* (direct experience)? To see it, the eyes, the mind, etc., are necessary. It is indirect knowledge whereas the seer is direct experience. The seer alone is *pratyaksha*. All other perceptions are only secondary knowledge. The present superimposition of the body as 'I' is so deep-rooted, that the vision before the eyes is considered *pratyaksha* but not the seer himself. No one wants realisation because there is no one who is not realised. Can any one say that he is not already realised or that he is apart from the Self? No. Evidently all are realised. What makes him unhappy is the desire to exercise extraordinary powers. He knows that he cannot do so. Therefore he wants God to appear before him, confer all His powers on the devotee, and keep Himself in the background. In short, God should abdicate His powers in favour of the man.

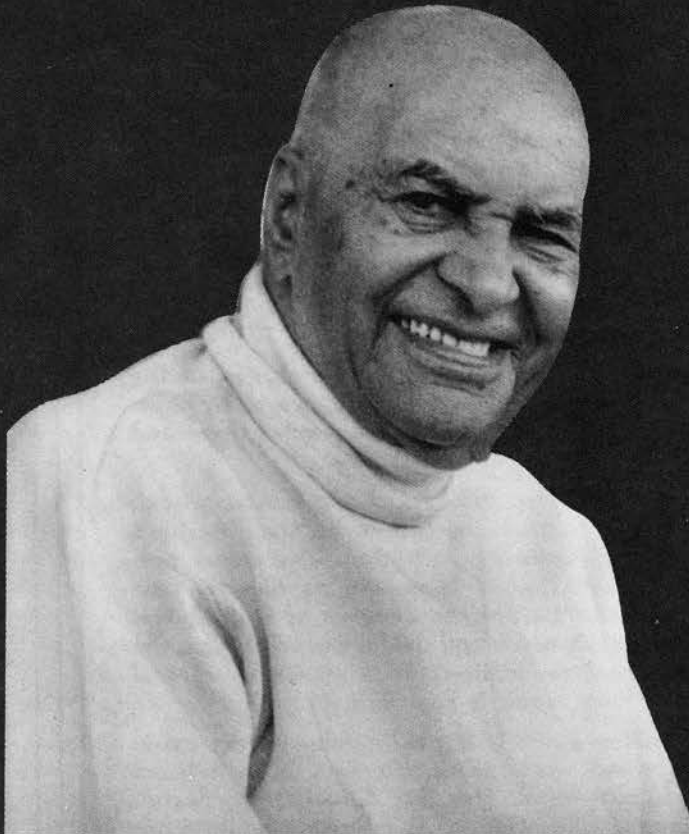
**D:** It is all right for *mahatmas* like Sri Bhagavan to speak out so plainly. Because the Truth does not swerve from you, you consider it easy for all others. Nevertheless, the common folk have a real difficulty.

**M:** Then does any one say that he is not the Self?

**D:** I meant to say that no one else has the courage to put things straight like Maharshi.

**M:** Where is the courage in saying things as they are?

# PAPAJI



'POONJAJI'

**Harilal Poonja was born in the Punjab in 1910. After having a direct experience of the Self in Lahore when he was still a boy, he tried to get it back by ardent devotion to Lord Krishna. As a result of his burning desire for God, Krishna appeared before him many times, but he could not re-establish himself in the formless state of Self.**

*After a brief career in the army he travelled all over India, looking for a Guru who could give him the experience of God he so much desired. He returned home, his mission unaccomplished. Then, one day, a sadhu appeared at his door in the Punjab and told him that Ramana Maharshi in Tiruvannamalai could show him God. He went there in 1944, but much to his disgust, he found the same sadhu who had visited him in the Punjab sitting on the sofa in the old hall. Annoyed at being tricked, he started to leave, but was persuaded to stay by a devotee who convinced him that Bhagavan had not been out of town for more than forty years. Somewhat intrigued, Sri Poonja decided to stay and ask Bhagavan about this strange manifestation.*

\* \* \*

I APPROACHED him in a belligerent way. 'Are you the man who came to see me in my house in the Punjab?' I demanded. The Maharshi remained silent.

I tried again. 'Did you come to my house and tell me to come here? Are you the man who sent me here?' Again the Maharshi made no comment. Since he was unwilling to answer either of these questions I moved on to the main purpose of my visit. 'Have you seen God?' I asked. 'And if you have, can you enable me to see Him? I am willing to pay any price, even my life, but your part of the bargain is that you must show me God.'

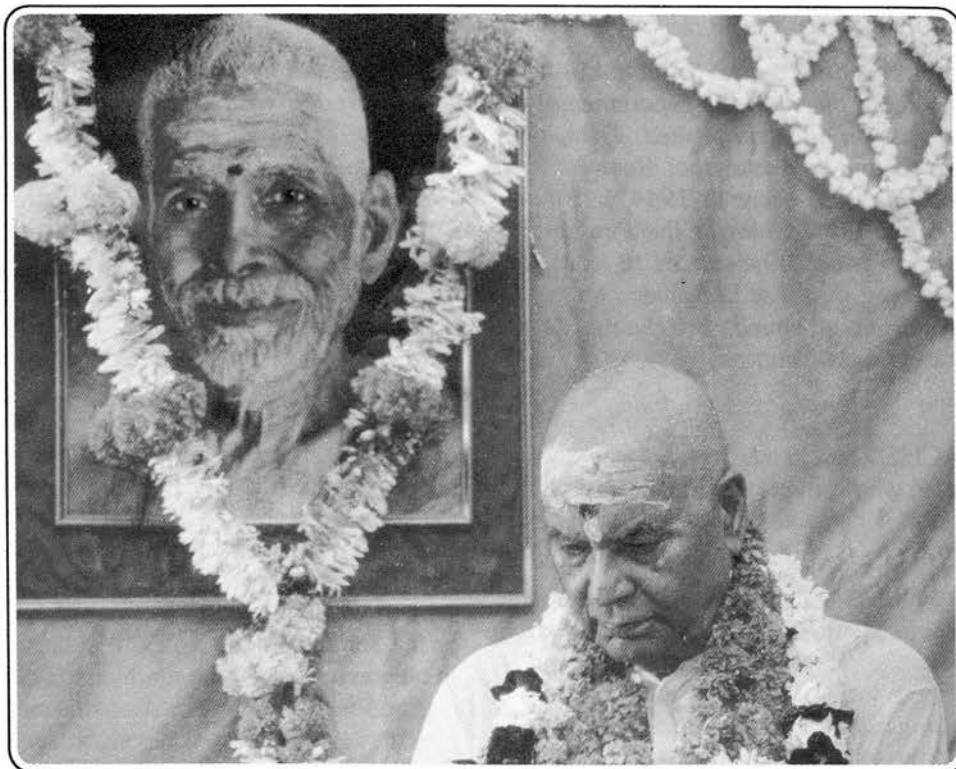
'No', he answered, 'I cannot show you God or enable you to see God because God is not an object that can be seen. God is the subject. He is the seer. Don't concern yourself with objects that can be seen. Find out who the seer is'. He also added. 'You alone are God,' as if to rebuke me for looking for a God who was outside and apart from me.

His words did not impress me. They seemed to me to be yet one more excuse to add to the long list of those I had heard from swamis all over the country. He had promised to show me God, yet now he was trying to tell me that not only could he not show me God, no one else could either. I would have dismissed him and his words without a second thought had it not been for an experience I had immediately after he had told me to find out who this 'I' was who wanted to see God. At the conclusion of his words he looked at me, and as he gazed into my eyes, my whole body began to tremble and shake. A thrill

of nervous energy shot through my body. My nerve endings felt as if they were dancing and my hair stood on end. Within me I became aware of the spiritual Heart. This is not the physical heart, it is, instead, the source and support of all that exists. Within the Heart I saw or felt something like a closed bud. It was very shining and bluish. With the Maharshi looking at me, and with myself in a state of inner silence, I felt this bud open and bloom. I use the word 'bud', but this is not an exact description. It would be more correct to say that something that felt bud-like opened and bloomed within me in the Heart. And when I say 'Heart', I don't mean that the flowering was located in a particular place in the body. This Heart, this Heart of my Heart, was neither inside the body nor out of it. I can't give a more exact description of what happened. All I can say is that in the Maharshi's presence, and under his gaze, the Heart opened and bloomed. It was an extraordinary experience, one that I had never had before. I had not come looking for any kind of experience, so it totally surprised me when it happened.

Though I had had an immensely powerful experience in the presence of the Maharshi, his statement, 'You alone are God' and his advice to 'Find out who the seer is' did not have a strong appeal for me. My inclination to seek a God outside me was not dispelled either by his words or by the experience I had had with him.

I thought to myself, 'It is not good to be chocolate, I want to taste chocolate'. I wanted to remain separate from God so that I could enjoy the bliss of union with Him.



*Bhagavan Ramana and Sri Poonjaji: Guru Poornima day, Lucknow 1992*

When the devotees came in that afternoon I viewed them all with the rather prejudiced eye of a fanatical Krishna *bhakta*. So far as I could see, they were just sitting quietly, doing nothing. I thought to myself, 'No one here seems to be chanting the name of God. Not a single person has a *mala* to do *japa* with. How can they consider themselves to be good devotees?' My views on religious practice were rather limited. All these people may have been meditating, but so far as I was concerned, they were wasting their time.

I transferred my critical gaze to the Maharshi and similar thoughts arose. 'This man should be setting a good example to his followers. He is sitting silently, not giving any talks about God. He doesn't appear to be chanting the Name of God himself, or focussing his attention on Him in any way. These disciples are sitting around, being lazy, because the Master himself is sitting there doing nothing. How can this man show me God when he himself shows no interest in Him?'

With thoughts like these floating around my mind, it was not long before I generated a feeling of disgust for both the Maharshi and the people who surrounded him. I still had some time before I had to report for duty in Madras, but I didn't want to spend it with all these spiritually lazy people in the ashram. I took off to the other side of Arunachala, a few kilometers away, found a nice quiet spot in the forest on the northern side of the hill, and settled down there to do my Krishna *japa*, alone and undisturbed.

I stayed there for about a week, immersed in my devotional practices. Krishna would often appear before me, and we spent a lot of time playing together. At the end of that period I felt that it was time to go back to Madras to make preparations for my new job. On my way out of town I paid another visit to the ashram, partly to say goodbye, and partly to tell the Maharshi that I didn't need his assistance for seeing God because I had been seeing Him every day through my own efforts.

When I appeared before him, the Maharshi asked, 'Where have you been? Where are you living?'

'On the other side of the mountain,' I replied.

'And what were you doing there?' he enquired.

He had given me my cue. 'I was playing with my Krishna,' I said, in a very smug tone of voice. I was very proud of my achievement and felt superior to the Maharshi because I was absolutely convinced that Krishna had not appeared to him during that period.

'Oh, is that so?' he commented, looking surprised and interested. 'Very good, very nice. Do you see Him now?'

'No sir, I do not,' I replied. 'I only see Him when I have visions.' I was still feeling very pleased with myself, feeling that I had been granted these visions, whereas the Maharshi had not:

'So Krishna comes and plays with you and then He disappears', said the Maharshi. 'What is the use of a God who appears and disappears. If He is a real God, He must be with you all the time.'

The Maharshi's lack of interest in my visionary experiences deflated me a little, but not to the extent that I was willing to listen to his advice. He was telling me to give up my search for an external God and instead find the origin and identity of the one who wanted to see Him. This was too much for me to swallow. A lifetime of devotion to Krishna had left me incapable of conceiving the spiritual quest in any other terms than that of a quest for a personal God.

\* \* \*

*Sri Poonja returned to Madras to take up a managerial post with the British army. He spent all his spare time locked in his puja room, chanting the name of Krishna. Then, unexpectedly, he had a vision of Rama, after which he found himself incapable of doing any kind of sadhana. A further vision of Bhagavan prompted him to return to Tiruvannamalai for spiritual guidance.*

\* \* \*

I sat in front of the Maharshi and began to tell him my story. 'For twenty-five years I have been doing *sadhana*, mostly repeating the name of Krishna. Up till fairly recently I was managing

**Sri Bhagavan said: A Madhva saint Tattvaroyar had composed a *bharani* on his master Swarupanand. Pandits objected to the composition, saying that it was reserved to such as have killed more than a thousand elephants in battle, whereas Swarupanand was an idle man sitting somewhere unknown to people and he did not deserve that panegyric. Tattvaroyar asked them all to assemble before his master so that they might see for themselves if he could slay one thousand elephants at a time. They did so. As soon as they appeared they were struck dumb and remained in beatific peace for a few days without the least movement. When they regained their senses, they saluted both, the master and the disciple, saying that they were more than satisfied. Swarupanand excelled the warriors in that he could subdue the egos, which is a much more formidable task than slaying a thousand elephants.**

**Maharshi said that the moral was clear. Peace is the sole criterion of a *Mahatma's* presence.**

— Talks, No 262.

50,000 repetitions a day. I also used to read a lot of spiritual literature. Then Rama, Sita, Lakshmana and Hanuman appeared before me. After they left I couldn't carry on with my practice. I can't repeat the Name any more. I can't read my books. I can't meditate. I feel very quiet inside, but there is no longer any desire to put my attention on God. In fact, I can't do it even if I try. My mind refuses to engage itself in thoughts of God. What has happened to me and what should I do?

The Maharshi looked at me and asked, 'How did you come here from Madras?'

I didn't see the point of his question but I politely told him the answer: 'By train.'

'And what happened when you got to the station at Tiruvannamalai?' he enquired.

'Well, I got off the train, handed in my ticket and engaged a bullock cart to take me to the ashram.'

'And when you reached the ashram and paid off the driver of the cart, what happened to the cart?'

'It went away, presumably back to town,' I said, still not clear as to where this line of questioning was leading.

The Maharshi then explained what he was driving at. 'The train brought you to your destination. You got off it because you didn't need it anymore. It had brought you to the place you wanted to reach. Likewise with the bullock cart. You got off it when it had brought you to Ramanasramam. You don't need either the train or that cart anymore. They were the means for bringing you here. Now you are here, they are of no use to you.'

'That is what has happened with your *sadhana*. Your *japa*, your reading and your meditation have brought you to your spiritual destination. You don't need them anymore. You yourself did not give up your practices, they left you of their own accord because they had served their purpose. You have arrived.'

Then he looked at me intently. I could feel that my whole body and mind were being

washed with waves of purity. They were being purified by his silent gaze. I could feel him looking intently into my Heart. Under that spellbinding gaze I felt every atom of my body being purified. It was as if a new body were being created for me. A process of transformation was going on — the old body was dying, atom by atom, and a new body was being created in its place. Then, suddenly, I understood. I knew that this man who had spoken to me was, in reality, what I already was, what I had always been. There was a sudden impact of recognition as I became aware of the Self. I use the word 'recognition' deliberately, because as soon as the experience was revealed to me, I knew, unerringly, that this was the same state of peace and happiness that I had been immersed in as an eight-year-old boy in Lahore. The silent gaze of the Maharshi re-established me in that primal state, but this time it was permanent. The 'I' which had for so long been looking for a God outside of itself, because it wanted to get back to that original childhood state, perished in the direct knowledge and experience of the Self which the Maharshi revealed to me. I cannot describe exactly what the experience was or is because the books are right when they say that words cannot convey it. I can only talk about peripheral things. I can say that every cell, every atom in my body leapt to attention as they all recognised and experienced the Self that animated and supported them, but the experience itself I cannot describe. I knew that my spiritual quest had definitely ended, but the source of that knowledge will always remain indescribable.

I got up and prostrated to the Maharshi in gratitude. I had finally understood what his teachings were and are. He had told me not to be attached to any personal God, because all forms are perishable. He could see that my chief impediments were God's beautiful form and the love I felt towards Him. He advised me to ignore the appearances of these ephemeral Gods and to enquire instead into the nature and source of the one who wanted to see them. He had tried to point out to me what was real and permanent, but stupidly and arrogantly I had paid no attention to his advice.

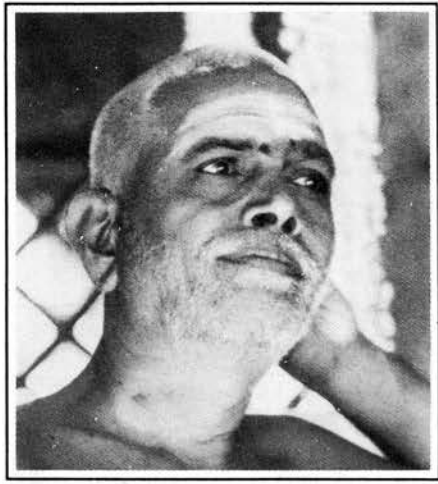
With hindsight I could now see that the question 'Who am I?' was the one question which I should have asked myself years before. I had had a direct experience of the Self when I was eight and had spent the rest of my life trying to return to it. My mother had convinced me that devotion to Krishna would bring it back and had somehow brainwashed me into undertaking a quest for an external God whom she said could supply me with that one experience which I desired so much. In a lifetime of spiritual seeking I had met hundreds of *sadhus*, swamis and gurus, but none of them had told me the simple truth the way the Maharshi had done. None of them had said, 'God is within you. He is not apart from you. You alone are God. If you find the source of the mind by asking yourself "Who am I?" you will experience Him in your Heart as the Self.' If I had met the Maharshi earlier in my life, listened to his teachings and put them into practice, I could probably have saved myself years of fruitless external searching.

Before I carry on with my story I should like to recapitulate some of the main events in my spiritual career because they illustrate, in a general way, how the process of realisation comes about. Firstly, there must be a desire for God, a love for Him, or a desire for liberation. Without that, nothing is possible. In my own case, the experience I had when I was eight awakened such a great desire for God within me that I spent a quarter of a century in an obsessive search for Him. This desire for God or realisation is like an inner flame. One must kindle it and then fan it until it becomes a raging fire which consumes all one's other desires and interests. A single thought other than the thought 'I want God' or 'I want Self-realisation' is enough to prevent that realisation from taking place. If these extraneous thoughts arise, it means that the fire is not burning intensively enough. In the years I was an ecstatic Krishna *bhakta*, I was fanning the flames of my desire for God, and in the process burning up all my other desires. If this inner fire rages for long enough, with sufficient intensity, it will finally consume that one central, overwhelming desire for God or the Self. This is essential because realisation will not take





R



"If one associates with Sages where is the need for all these methods of discipline? When a pleasant breeze from the south is blowing, of what use, tell me, is a fan?"

- Sri Maharshi in  
*Supplement to Forty Verses, v. 3*

place until even this last desire has gone. After this final desire disappears, there will be the silence of no thoughts. This is not the end, it is just a mental state in which thoughts and desires no longer arise. That is what happened to me in Madras after Rama appeared before me. All my thoughts and desires left me, so much so, I couldn't take up any of my practices again.

Many people have had temporary glimpses of the Self. Sometimes it happens spontaneously, and it is not uncommon for it to happen in the presence of a realised Master. After these temporary glimpses, the experience goes away because there are still thoughts and latent desires which have not been extinguished. The Self will only accept, consume and completely destroy a mind that is completely free of *vasanas*. That was the state of my mind for the few days I was in Madras. But realisation did not happen in those few days because the final ingredient was not present. I needed the grace of my Master; I needed to sit before him; I needed to have him tell me 'You have arrived'; I needed to believe him; and I needed to have him transmit his power and grace via his divine look. When the Maharshi's gaze met my *vasana*-free mind, the Self reached out and destroyed it in such a way that it could never rise or function again. Only Self remained.

\* \* \*

After his retirement in 1966 Sri Poonja led,

for many years, a peripatetic life, teaching small groups and occasionally leading the life of a sadhu. He has now settled down in Lucknow where he conducts public sat sanghs five mornings a week. He can be contacted at 20/144A, Indira Nagar, Lucknow, 226 016, U.P.

\* \* \*

A few months ago, at one of the *sat sanghs* I conduct in Lucknow, someone gave me a note which concluded: 'My humble respect and gratitude to you, especially to one who was a disciple of Ramana Maharshi.' I couldn't let this pass. 'Why do you say "was"?' I exclaimed. 'Please correct your grammar! Please correct your grammar! I *am* his disciple! I always *am* his disciple! He *is* my Master. How can I throw him away into the past? There is no past and no future for the Master. There isn't even a present because he has transcended time.'

When I left him physically in 1947 he told me 'I am with you wherever you are.' That was his promise and that is my experience. There is no one called Poonja left anymore. There is only an emptiness where he used to be. And in that emptiness there shines the 'I', the 'I' that is my reality, the 'I' that is my Master, the 'I' that he promised would be with me wherever I am. Whenever I speak, it is not someone called Poonja who is speaking, it is the 'I' that is the Maharshi who speaks, the 'I' which is the Self in the Heart of all beings.

I tried to explain this to the person who sent me the note. 'Who am I? What am I? I never think that it is I, Poonja, who am speaking. It is he, the Maharshi, the Master who is speaking. If I ever thought that this person called Poonja was speaking to you, I would have no right to sit here because whatever would come out of my mouth would be false. It is my own Master who speaks; it is your own Master who speaks; it's your own Heart speaking; it is your own Self which is speaking to you. There is no one here claiming to be an intermediary. There is no one here claiming that he once had a Master called "Sri Ramana Maharshi". There is only emptiness, and in that emptiness, the 'I' which is, not was, my Master speaks.

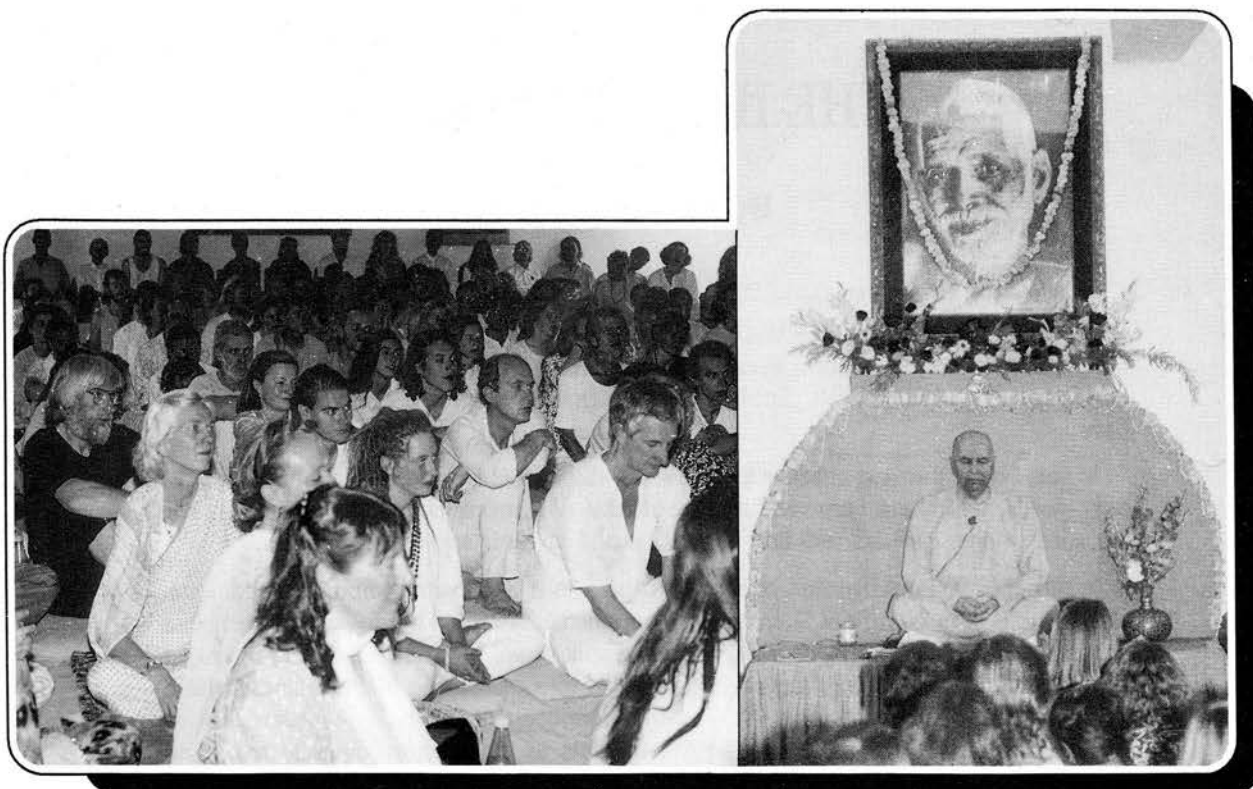
'I am sitting here introducing you to my

teacher and his teachings. He is the teacher, not I. He is your own Self. He is the teacher of the world. He was the teacher before you even knew him. He was there, waiting for you, smiling within your Heart. Now you are attracted by him, not me. I, Poonja, am not in the picture at all.'

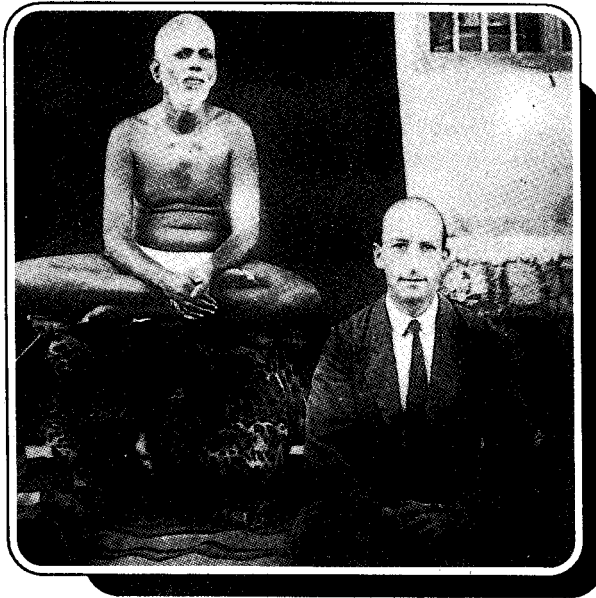
'Poonja has gone for good, but the Master remains and will always remain. He is seated in my Heart as my own imperishable Self. Shining as the 'I', he alone is.'

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This account is taken from *Papaji*, published by Pragati, Lucknow, and priced Rs.115. It is distributed by Universal Booksellers, 82, Hazratganj, Lucknow, 226001, U.P. *Papaji* is the name by which Sri H.W.L. Poonja is known to his many devotees.



*Papaji, with devotees, during satsangh*



## THE ILLUMINATION

By Paul Brunton

Paul Brunton's son, *Kenneth Thurston Hurst*, has done yeoman service to spiritual literature by bringing out the book, *Paul Brunton: A Personal View*, published for the Paul Brunton Philosophic Foundation by Larson Publications, 4936, Route 414, Burdett, N.Y. 14818, USA. Spiritual seekers the world over are deeply indebted to him.

In this book, the first chapter gives details about Paul Brunton's illumination in his own words, which are very vivid and instructive. We reproduce portions from it. We are sure sincere seekers will find it very helpful in their spiritual aspiration.

In July 1979, Paul Brunton conveyed to his son the following important additional information: "My own final illumination happened in 1963. There was this bomblike explosion of consciousness, as if my head had split open. It happened during the night in a state between sleeping and waking, and led to a deepening of the stillness: there was no need to meditate. The verse in the *Bhagavad Gita* which mentions that to the Knower the day is as night and the night is as day became literally true, and remains so. It came of itself and I realized that the Divine had always been with me and in me."

— Editor

**“W**HEN this experience happened to me, I felt dead and empty inside. I was suddenly faced with an entirely new problem which caused me intense mental anguish for about a day and a half. There seemed to be no way out from it. Desolation and emptiness covered my heart. Confusion and torment filled it. There seemed to be no one to whom I could turn for help or advice, and I could find no solution within myself and had no power to do anything within myself. It was impossible not to refrain from crying and giving away to tears as I sank deeper into this black state. I became oblivious of my physical surroundings, as I was so intensely wrapped up in my descending thoughts. I felt utterly lost within myself. All the people around me seemed like empty shells. I felt no affinity with them.

“Suddenly, I realized that this was a crushing of the self by an unknown power beyond myself. It was then that I began fervently to pray, feeling forlorn, humbled, terrified and lost. I did not pray for any particular one thing but prayed only for help in a general sense. I lost the feeling of the passage of time. I felt severed from earthly reality and became dizzy at the thought that I had reached the end of my endurance. Then I swooned. The moments just before I fainted were filled with indescribable horror. But I soon awoke. A tiny flame of hope appeared in my heart. And then it grew and grew. My first thought was that God was answering my prayers. I began gradually to feel close to the people around me once more; closer than ever before. Some hours later reassurance gradually returned to me and I felt mature and newly born. Enlightenment seemed to come.

“Next a feeling of oneness with God followed. I seemed to know and understand much that I had never understood before. My ego was going and my happiness increased every moment. I felt that this newfound faith would guide me through every possible situation.

“Previously, I had been somewhat of a dreamer and impractical. A big change in my nature took place and I became better balanced

and much more practical. Previously I had disliked certain duties, but now I welcomed them and was able to perform them efficiently and correctly. I felt that I was able to put that wisdom into action. In all conversations, decisions and actions I did not need to think out beforehand what I had to say or do but immediately and spontaneously uttered or did whatever came into my mind. It was always the right approach, the perfect approach to the matter in hand, however trivial it was. This gave a feeling of absolute certainty.

“All day long I felt that I was in communion with God so that I was either praying or talking to Him, and he was constantly with me as my beloved companion whose presence I felt strongly. At times I would become so immersed in this feeling that I thought I was God! I felt that the real me was invulnerable. No one could hurt it whatever they did to the outer person.

“The Divine Presence seemed to be very near. In fact, I knew that it was in my real essence. Whenever any difficulties or problems arose, I found that all I had to do to solve them was to say, ‘Not my will but Thy will be done’. With enough patience, they would invariably work out in the best way. During the illumination, whenever I saw something wrong in any situation and thought that it ought to be put right, this magical result was instantly brought about. It happened in widely different cases, such as the lack of certain needed things: they came into my possession; and in discord between two persons, I was able to put love into their hearts and harmony was restored.

“The outer personality who was the actor on the stage would express a wish for something but would place it at the same time under the higher will and say that it wanted that thing only if it was the Divine Will. Nevertheless, it seemed to get what it had wished for. Yet, it was not attached to the thing and was ready to relinquish it if it were not permitted by the Divine Will. Although there was desire in the sense of legitimate need, it was not attached desire. It was always subordinated to the Higher Will, for my

overmastering desire was to keep in harmony and communion with God. Under this rule all the lesser desires had to take a secondary place. The same applied to my worldly requirements. They were always met. For instance, when an important journey became necessary, and I had not the money to pay for it yet, almost at the last minute the money came to me as a gift though I had never asked anyone for it. I felt intuitively that every need would be provided for. And it was. I inwardly felt and outwardly realized the truth of the sentence in the *Psalm*: 'The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want.'

"The ordinary person is too attached to his desires to be able to get what he really wants from God. But he can, by the force of his ego, his ambition, his will power or his concentration of thought or desire be in a position to get some part of these desires satisfied. The illumined person is detached from desires and, since he is free from ambition, by stating even once only what he outwardly needs — since inwardly he is fully satisfied having given up the world — God brings it to him. But this is correct only when he is actually experiencing illumination for only then does he and can he truly depend on God. His thought, wish, prayer or word attain the power to become realized, magically fulfilled because he has stepped aside and allowed the infinite power to act within him. Prayer is sincere and its answer becomes possible when it becomes deeply felt and as concentrated as meditation when it asks God to take us away from the ego or to be something to set us free from the false self.

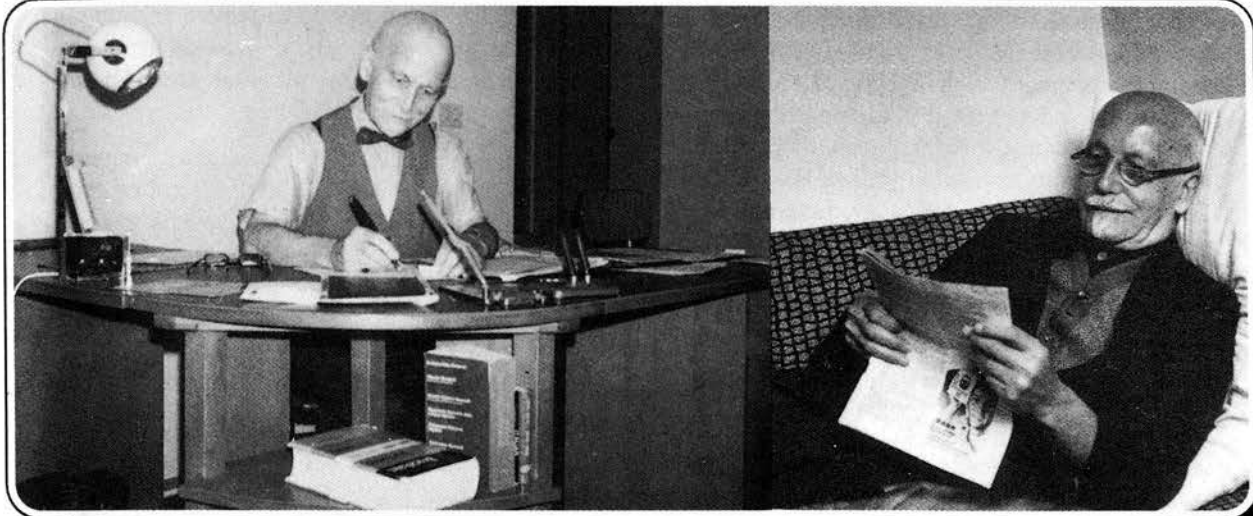
"The word 'I' was pronounced in me; I saw it was the only reality, all else was illusion. 'I' was in every person there but they did not know it and clung to its counterfeit — body, intellect and desire — which blocked their way to Spirit. 'I AM' is the foundation of truth and reality of the whole universe. I saw my body as a mere shell and all other people's bodies as shells. I felt like a bird, free of all desires, really detached from everything. I was not the body and felt so free of it that I knew I could not die; in the real 'I' I would always be able to live for it was God.

"Previously I had been in intermittent ill-health, but during the illumination I enjoyed perfect health and abounding vitality. I did not lose the awareness of the 'I' or the 'I AM.' Its presence pervaded every hour of the day and persisted even during sleep so that I was both asleep and not asleep. I found that four hours' sleep was quite sufficient. In fact, I never really slept at all, but remained partly awake, the real 'I' being conscious of the fact that my body was sleeping.

"Although I had descended deep into my being and experienced Timelessness, I was still able to live in my surface being and experience time. The two experiences went on side by side. Deep down within my heart I lived in a sort of everlasting NOW. I was perfectly content with it and did not look to any future for a greater happiness. Whether I was looking at a beautiful scene in Nature or hearing beautiful music or merely doing some prosaic task, my happiness remained unchanged. I lived completely, vividly and intensely in the present moment. There was no past and no future; they were both contained within it. This was not like the ordinary man's Now which is based on the passage of time. This had a timeless quality about it. It was an unmoving stillness and things, events, people, came into and flowed out of it. I realized that the passage of time was an illusion, that everything which was happening to the ego was not making any difference to the real Self, which remained the same. Looked back upon the past years I still seemed to be in the same eternal Now which I had been in when I first experienced it. It is as if nothing has happened since then.

"What happened to my sense of time, happened also to my sense of place. For the first time in years I lost the intense longing to return to India, which had until then seemed my only spiritual home.

"In the Light there was no struggle or fear. Here Nature was working willingly with her God. In my heart rose the mighty strains of Handel's 'Hallelujah Chorus'. 'Hallelujah! The Lord God omnipotent reigneth for ever and ever.' The power of God surged through my being with



*PB working in his custom horseshoe desk*

such force that I realized within myself, at the centre of my being, God was always there, strong, great, loving, blissful. And when I looked around at my fellows I saw that there too, deep within everyone of them, He dwelt, serene and quietly. Only they were not aware, not awake to this Reality. Still there He reigned, 'for ever and ever.' I wanted to say to them, 'Have no fears, my brothers, for we are in God, we are God, and with Him there is only peace, and power, and love. Be brave for it is your heritage one day to know Him, to be Free in your awareness of His presence, to be joyous and peaceful in His enfolding arms. You will be compensated for all your suffering. I can feel your pain and sorrow but listen to me, I tell you that within your very self is only joy and bliss. One day you shall all know this truth, that is the inescapable Law!'

"My relationships with people also underwent a great inner change. I felt independent of them, and no longer in compelling need of their affection or even presence. I felt detached even whilst still loving my known and unknown friends. What I gave was free from possessiveness and liberated from futile longings. It was purer, and not the chained kind of love that it is with so many people. Therefore, there was also no depen-

*PB taking his ease*

dence upon anyone for happiness. Happiness has to come from the harmony within and however welcome the love for or from the other person is, its loss will not then reduce one's own happiness. Love is the expression of this harmony. The infinite being loves us infinitely. To the extent that we can attune ourselves to it we too shall express love in our own relationships. Yet this love is not commonly seen and therefore what is commonly called 'love' is only a distant and distorted echo of it.

"I felt that my love for them did not diminish but on the contrary it greatly increased. There seems to be a fear in some people that they will have to give up their personal affections if they take to the spiritual path. The truth is that they will give out more real love if it comes through their higher self than if they do not. I was Love; there was no need to go out of my way to love anyone. Similarly, in illumination I found I was the basic condition of all the other virtues. There was no need to aspire to any specific one of them. So instead of seeking them one by one it is enough to seek illumination.

"All my experiences now began to fit into a pattern. All fear left me. The world was transfigured with light. A few hours later whilst in bed in a state between sleeping and waking, I be-

came conscious of a vast cosmic experience where the whole universe seemed engaged in constant movement with a dynamic power as the agent behind it. I felt that the entire universe was a unified whole in which everything related to everything else, and that I, myself, was at one with it. I could see now that everything that had happened to me in former years was part of a tremendous plan and had to happen that way. There was purpose and meaning in it all. Even the words that I and others had uttered were part of this plan. Even their thoughts and feelings and acts are within it too. There is a perfect harmony and pattern underneath all the jigsaw puzzle of the world's surface. When the pieces of this puzzle are put into their correct positions this harmonious pattern stands revealed. The world and everyone in it is controlled by a vast universal Mind. Every act and word is within this Mind or plan. Within this great pattern is the individual's free will but ultimately, even the free will is controlled by this great Mind. Both the persons who believe in free will completely and that there is nothing higher than man's will, as well as the others who believe the extreme opposite, that there is nothing but God's will and that they must remain passive in their existence incapable of doing anything to change their lives, both these are partly wrong and partly right. Neither is the theory that the two forces exist side by side correct. The right view is that one is inside the other, like two concentric circles, a smaller lying inside a larger one. It is not as if the Higher Power and our own personal will are jointly responsible for all that happens to everyone every day of their lives. The Higher Power's will is alone responsible, ultimately.

"Whatever any person decides to do, his personal freedom of choice will always be within the cosmic plan. So vast is this Plan that it has room for every possible choice. In this sense free will does exist. Yet, 'determinism' also exists, but the former is within the latter like a smaller circle within a larger one. Both Indian fatalist and Western individualist are expressions of God's plan, since the Universal Mind is using them as well as other types for its outworking. Whether people are good or bad, religious or atheistic, thoughtful or ignorant, they are all just

as they should be in the cosmic plan. Everyone is growing up spiritually and growing through his experiences, whether the latter are high or low. Inner growth is the Law.

"There are two levels from which to regard the concept of free will. From the level of the enlightened, every little circumstance is preordained; every little or large thing — such as a scrap of paper or a revolving planet — is in a place allotted to it. Even 'evil' is ultimately a part of the World-Mind Plan. Everything moves and acts according to the Creator's pattern.

"I felt no urge to teach others, or to preach and arouse them, or to tell them what I saw by enlightenment. I played the part of a Witness, and silently carried on with my ordinary life. In my enlightenment there was no desire to teach others or to awaken them. This was because I felt everything was right as it was, everything was fulfilling God's will, each person was at his proper place in evolution and could not be at any other one. Every person is in the place which properly belongs to him at this particular time, whether he likes or dislikes that place. By 'place' is meant not only the physical environment but also the human relationships which pertain to the environment and the mental conditions which are active within him. By 'time' is meant that every event seems to be pre-timed and could not happen before its proper hour as set by the will of God. Every creature, person, incident and event falls into the pattern at exactly its right place. He is at his natural level, and needs no interference from outsiders.

"The Cosmic Vision revealed the true meaning of freedom and fate, and showed how illusory is the feeling of free choice which we possess. The *Bhagavad Gita's* description of Arjuna's Cosmic Vision is a perfect description of the actual situation. The world is therein pictured as being whirled around on a wheel, with God as the driving force. Every human being is on that wheel, revolving through the series of innumerable embodiments. Whatever it chooses to do, it will still be whirled around with all the others. Its personal freedom will still be fitted into, and limited by, that supreme fact. I understood perfectly the *Bhagavad Gita's* statement

that God is the real doer of everything and we only actors in God's drama, that those destined to be slain on the battlefield are already dead, and those destined to slay them are already marked down as instruments to effect this purpose. I understood too, Muhammed's constant injunction to resign oneself to God's will.

"The world pattern is preordained in the sense that it is written out like a stage play. The author of the play is God. Each of us has an allotted part. Each has to play that part. He has no free will to reject it or to play another part. This is because he is the result of all that went before, cannot help being what he is, and what he has to do on the stage follows logically from what he is. Each person seemed to be enacting his allotted role, and saying and doing what he was ordained. Even I seemed to be one of the actors outwardly, although I was inwardly aware of what was happening and therefore, also played the part of a spectator. I looked upon the ego as something really separate from myself, or as a kind of puppet which I was manipulating. All other people looked like puppets to me too, although I could see that they were not aware that their higher selves were manipulating them — whereas I was aware, and could understand the process and the purposes of what it was trying to do in my outer self.

"Everything has to happen the way it does. Every incident is preordained by the past as well as by the Plan. Even the freedom of will to choose is only apparent, for the actual choice is itself preordained. Even our weaknesses and faults are used to bring about the preordained happenings. There is nothing wrong, nothing evil, everything contributes to ultimate good. Even seeming wrongs will be turned to right in some vast chain reaction which affects many other people whom we never know.

"I was much impressed by this Causal Chain. Each part contributes to the whole web and its ultimate ramifications stretch across the whole web. Not only do we affect those whose lives come in contact with our own, but also those whose lives seem too remote and unlinked with ours. There are unseen ties and filaments connecting man with Nature, man with destiny, and man with man. There was a strong feeling of being an intended part of the design of this immense, even endless, world system which is so incredibly complicated. All I had to do was to fulfil my existence as that little part and ignore or discard any personal feelings about it. By a single large comprehensive insight, all is now explained. I see human life, especially my own life, under this new light."

**Devotee:** Is solitude helpful for practice?

**Maharshi:** What do you mean by solitude?

**D:** To keep away from others.

**M:** Why should it be done? It is actuated only by fear. Even in solitude there is fear of intrusion by others and of solitude being spoilt. Moreover, how are thoughts to be erased in solitude? Should it not be done in the present environment?

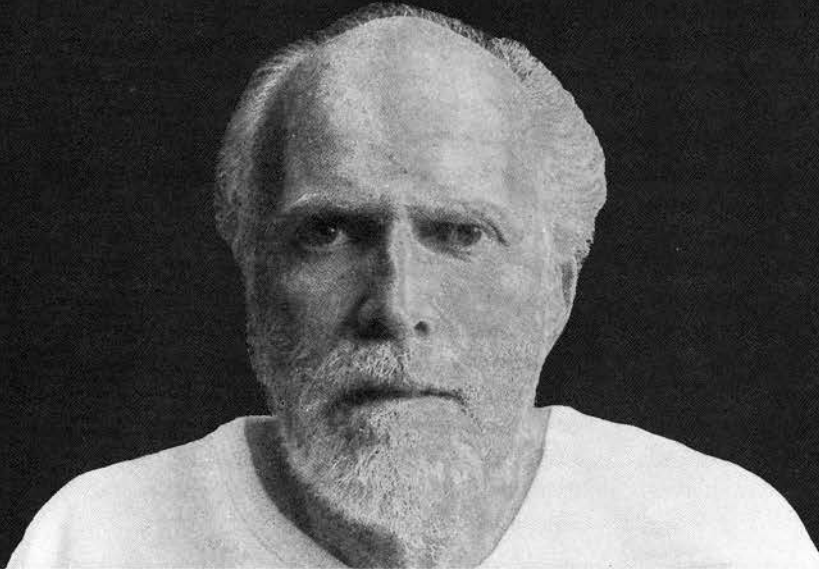
**D:** But the mind is distracted now.

**M:** Why do you let go the mind? Solitude amounts to making the mind still. This can be done in a crowd too. Solitude cannot efface one's thoughts. Practice does it. The same practice can be made here too.

*Talks, No. 156.*



# Robert Adams



**“Silence is the  
Ultimate  
Reality”**

Robert Adams was born in New York City in 1928. From the crib until the age of seven he experienced recurring visions of “a little man”. At fourteen, he discovered that this “little man” was Ramana Maharshi. After meetings with Joel Goldsmith and Paramashansa Yogananda, Robert Adams journeyed to India and was with the Maharshi during the last three years of His life.

We requested Robert to share with us his understanding and experiences. The following article has been adapted from his reply and transcripts of *satsanghs* which he holds weekly with a small dedicated group in California who can be contacted at:  
1312, Harvard Street, Santa Monica, CA-90404, USA  
- (310) 828-2953, USA.

— Editor

20

I WAS born on January 21, 1928, in Manhattan, New York. From the very beginning, as far back as I can remember, when I was in my crib, a little man with a grey beard, white hair, about two feet tall, would appear before me at the other end of the crib, and speak gibberish to me. Of course, being a child, I didn't understand anything he said. I thought this was normal, that everybody had this experience.

When I was about five or six years old, I told my parents about it. They thought I was playing games. I told my friends and they laughed at me. So I stopped saying anything about it. The visitations stopped when I was about seven. My father died and all of a sudden the little man stopped coming to me.

I asked my mother, "What am I doing here? I don't belong here." I didn't understand what I was saying but I felt that I was out of place. My mother thought I was crazy and so did a lot of other people. She took me to a doctor. The doctor told her that it would go away.

Something very interesting happened. Whenever I wanted anything, a candy bar or a toy, I would say God's name three or four times and somebody would bring it to me or it would come from somewhere.

Once, I wanted to play the violin. My mother told me that it would be too hard for me to play, so she wouldn't buy me one. I said, "God, God, God," and a few hours later my uncle appeared, whom I hadn't seen for about five years. He had thought I needed a violin and brought me one. This went on and on while I was going to school. When I was at school, I never really fitted in because I was always daydreaming. I never used to study. When we had a test I would say, "God, God, God," and the answers would come.

When I was fourteen, a strange phenomenon occurred. I was in my junior high school class. There were about 35 children. The teacher's name was Mrs. Riley. She weighed about 300 pounds, and when she got angry she used to jump up and down. So, of course, we used to make her angry [laughter]. I would borrow a bobby pin from a girl. There was a hinge in the

back of the seat. I would stick the bobby pin in the hinge and twang it, and she would go crazy. She didn't know where the noise was coming from and she'd jump up and down — a very interesting phenomenon [laughter].

Anyway, it was the end of term and we were taking our final test. It was mathematics. I never studied it, so I didn't know anything. I said, "God, God, God." Instead of the answers coming, the room filled with light, a thousand times more brilliant than the sun. It was like an atomic bomb but it was not a burning light. It was a beautiful, bright, shining, warm glow. Just thinking of it now makes me stop and wonder.

The whole room, everybody, everything was immersed in light. All the children seemed to be myriad particles of light. I found myself melting into radiant being, into consciousness. I merged into consciousness. It was not an out-of-body experience. This was completely different. I realised that I was not my body. What appeared to be my body was not real.

I went beyond the light into pure, radiant consciousness. I became omnipresent. My individuality merged into pure absolute bliss. I expanded. I became the universe. The feeling is indescribable. It was total bliss, total joy.

The next thing I remembered was the teacher shaking me. All the students had gone. I was the only one left in the class. I returned to human consciousness. That feeling has never left me.

Q : *What score did you get on the math test?* [Laughter]

R : [Laughs] Zero. I didn't take it.

When I was about fourteen, I went to the library to do a book report. I passed the philosophy section and saw a book on yoga masters. I didn't even know what that meant at the time. I opened a book [*Who am I?*, by Ramana Maharshi] and there was a picture of Ramana Maharshi. My hair stood on end, because it was the same person who appeared to me when I was a baby in my crib!

Since then I have never been the same. I



went back to school and made believe I was normal, whatever that is.

Joel Goldsmith was actually my first teacher. He was a Christian mystic who has written several books on mysticism. He explained to me what was going on within, my feelings, because I used to think I was crazy. Joel Goldsmith told me about Paramahansa Yogananda.

I went to the Self-Realisation Fellowship in Encinitas to see Yogananda. I was initiated and was going to become a monk, but after Yogananda talked to me, he said, "Robert, you don't belong here. You've got your own path. Go to India."

So I did. Through the grace of Paramahansa Yogananda I went to Sri Ramanasramam. It was with Sri Ramana that my eyes were opened to the meaning of my experience. I confirmed my feelings. Ever since I was born, I had never believed I was a body.

\* \* \*

*Q: When you first saw Ramana Maharshi, did he remind you of the person you had communication with as a baby?*

*R: Definitely, yes.*

*Q: Did you speak of this later with him?*

*R: No, I never did. We just smiled at each other. I had some personal conversation with him, but even at the end of 1947 he was sick. He couldn't walk very well — he had a cane — and had to be assisted by his devotees.*

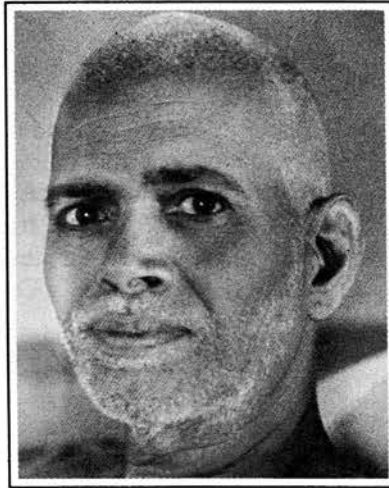
*Q: Ramana Maharshi was a doer.*

*R: On the contrary, Ramana Maharshi didn't do anything himself.*

*Q: Yet things happened.*

*R: He denied he had anything to do with it.*

*Q: He can deny all he wants, but other people had the experience of him doing things.*



**"By association with the Sages attachment (to material things) is removed. When this is removed the attachment of the mind also vanishes. Those who have got rid of their attachment of mind become one with That which is motionless. They become Liberated even while alive. Seek their company."**

**- Sri Maharshi in *Supplement to Forty Verses*, v. 1**

R: They believed things happened because of him. It was their belief that made it happen. A sage does nothing purposely, yet all kinds of things can happen around him.<sup>1</sup>

Q: *If one has strong faith in these teachings, then nothing can stop Self-realisation, right?*

R: It is not that simple. It has to do with God's grace, which is always available. You awaken into that grace. You can't pinpoint what leads to Self-realisation.

Q: *Are you a student of Nisaragadatta Maharaj?*

R: I wasn't a student of his, but I was with him for a while.

Q: *Was that before you were with Ramana Maharshi?*

R: No. Many years later, I spent six months with him.

Q: *What kept you there for six months?*

R: I was interested in watching his actions. I was there when Ramesh Balsekar was his interpreter.

Q: *What was your conclusion after watching him?*

R: My conclusion is that all is well, and everything is unfolding as it should.

Q: *When seekers came to Ramana with difficulties in their lives, was he able to help them?*

R: He never helped anybody voluntarily. He simply sat on his couch and everybody did what they wanted to do. He asked them a couple of questions now and again, and kept silent most of the time.

When people came to him with all kinds of problems, he used to look at his attendant and say, "They come to me to help them with their problems. To whom should I go?"

Q: *I am confused.*

R: He was not the doer! How could he help people with problems? He was not a psychologist.

Q: *I know someone who is not a doer. Some-*

<sup>1</sup> Please refer to *Talks*, No. 466:

*"Devotee: Is not the Self the witness only (sakshimatra)?"*

*Maharshi: 'Witness' is applicable when there is an object to be seen. Then it is duality. The Truth lies beyond both. In the mantra, sakshi cheta kevalo nirgunascha, the word sakshi must be understood as sannidhi (presence), without which there could be nothing. See how the sun is necessary for daily activities. He does not however form part of the world actions; yet they cannot take place without the sun. He is the witness of the activities. So it is with the Self."*

—Editor.

*one came to him with a physical problem. This person went up and did something to the other's body, and that person was helped.*

R: By Ramana's presence people were helped. Ramana was silent most of the time. People did all kinds of things in the silence. Just by sitting in his presence, all their troubles vanished.

Q: *In the presence of someone like that, you seem to feel something...*

R: You are feeling your real Self, your own bliss and happiness. That is beyond words.

Q: *I have different feelings in the presence of different teachers.*

R: That is confusion. You have never changed. The whole idea is to get the feeling to go deep within yourself. A real sage gives you the feeling you want to dive deep within yourself, deeper than you have ever gone before.

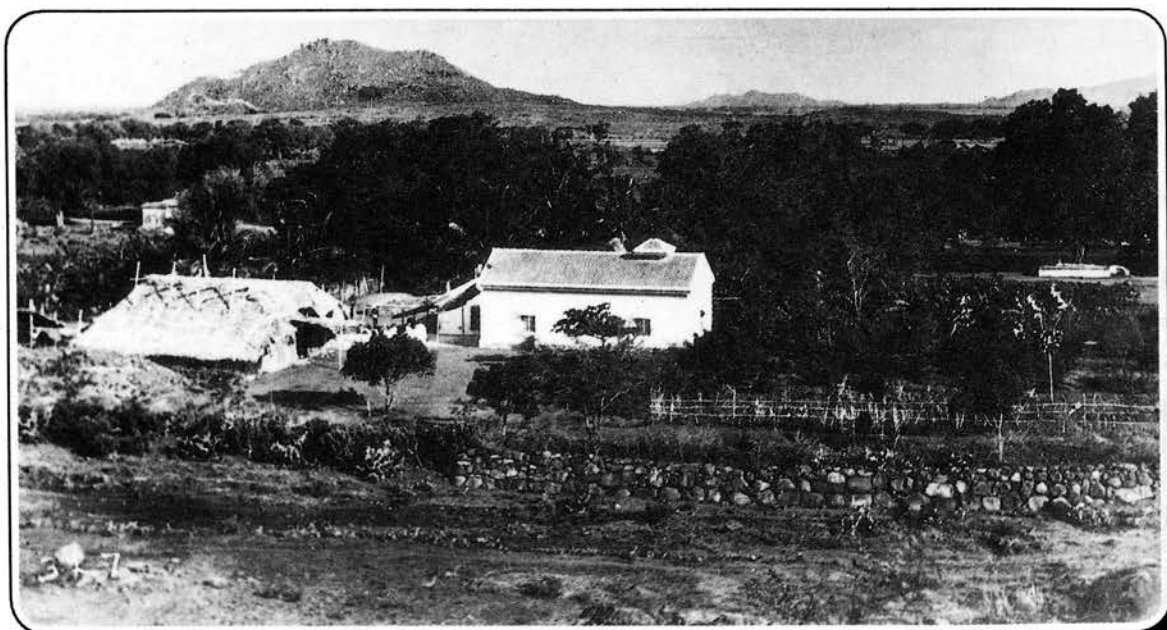
Q: *Could you talk about the importance of a teacher for Self-realisation, and how the relationship between teacher and student works?*

R: The teacher is really yourself. You have created a teacher to wake you up. The teacher would not be here if you were not dreaming about the teacher. You have created a teacher out of your mind in order to awaken, to see that there is no teacher, no world — nothing. You have done this all by yourself. Congratulations!

This is your dream. You have a teacher in front of you, explaining all these things to you, saying that you have to awaken sooner or later. If you go further, you will see, in truth, that you are already awake. Then all the rest will disappear.

While this is going on, there is a relationship between the student and the teachings. You are playing a game you created yourself. You create a teacher to wake you up, but you are already awake and do not know it. A teacher gives you teachings, gives you grace, and lets you understand that you are already awake and in peace. In return, you take care of the teacher. It is a reciprocal game. It is your game, it is your dream. Therefore, awaken now and be free.

\* \* \*



Sri Ramanasramam, in the 1940s

I was at Sri Ramanasramam during the last three years of Bhagavan Ramana's life. Through his grace I was able to confirm and expand my own experience. Subsequent to my years with Bhagavan, and other masters in India [over the next 17 years], I have travelled, moving frequently, avoiding any notoriety. A few devotees gathered around me at various places, but I have been able to avoid crowds of seekers.

When I was in Benares, I went to see a *jnani* no one had heard of, named Swami Brahmananda. He was called "the Staff of God". He was about 90 years old and had three disciples who had been with him for about 50 years. I was invited to sit by him. I think I was the first Westerner to get permission to stay with him. So I sat with him for a few days, listening to him say nothing. He was mostly silent.

On the third day that I was there, he announced to his disciples that his body was in pain, that it was arthritic, but that he still had work to finish on this plane. He said he was going to leave his body the next day at 3 pm and take on the body of a younger person. He said that someone would slip on the street and crack his head. "I will take up that body," he said. I listened as I usually do, and we couldn't wait for the morrow to come [laughter]. Nobody cared that he was going to die. We wanted to see if he could do what he said [laughter].

At 3 pm the next day, he was sitting in the lotus posture, he stiffened, and he *did* die! I felt for a pulse but there was none. I pinched him. Nothing happened. His body was an empty shell. We fooled around with his body for about a half hour to see if we could bring him back to life. Nothing.

We heard a commotion outside. Sure enough, a young man had slipped on the street — it was raining — and hit his head. A crowd had gathered and a doctor was there. He was pronounced dead. All of a sudden, the young man got up and ran into the forest. No one ever heard of him again.

Many times I have visions where I am walking

with Ramana Maharshi along the Ganga. We discuss simple things like the weather. A vision is not a dream. A vision is an actual experience in the phenomenal world. Anything is possible. Never believe that something is impossible. It limits you. Even if you haven't experienced it yourself, have faith that within you lies infinite possibilities.

My body has exhibited symptoms of Parkinson's disease for the past few years and it has, therefore, been forced to settle in one location to receive the appropriate care. I still wish to avoid crowds of seekers. I prefer to work with a small number of dedicated devotees. I do not write books or publish anything. Nonetheless, some of the *satsanghs* which I hold weekly have been recorded and transcribed. Thank you again for your enquiry. My blessings to you and all at the ashram.

\* \* \*

*Excerpts from satsang transcripts:*

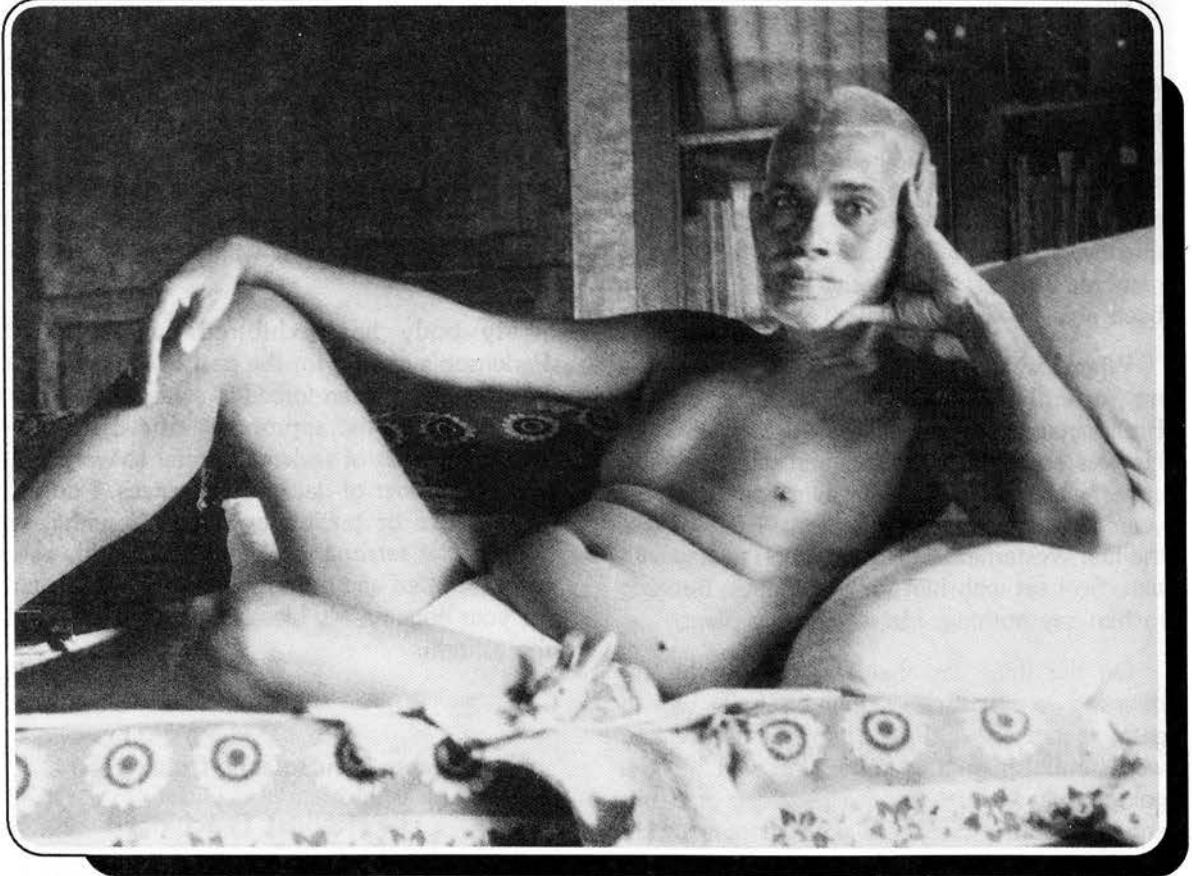
### **The Highest Teaching**

The highest teaching in the world is Silence. There is nothing higher than this.

A devotee who sits with a sage purifies his mind just by being with the sage. The mind automatically becomes purified. No words exchanged, no words said. Silence is the ultimate reality. Everything exists in this world through Silence.

True silence really means going deep within yourself to that place where nothing is happening, where you transcend time and space. You go into a brand new dimension of nothingness. That's where all the power is. That's your real home. That's where you really belong, in deep Silence where there is no good and bad, no one trying to achieve anything. Just being, pure being.

The only freedom you'll ever have is when you go deep into the Silence and you transcend, transmute the universe, your body and your affairs.



*Don't miss the rabbit near the lap of Sri Bhagavan*

**Boundless Space**

It is when you begin to feel in your heart that you are boundless space, that something begins to happen. As you feel yourself as boundless space, all your stuff begins to drop away. Yet you do not affirm to yourself that you are boundless space. You merely observe, you watch, you become the witness. You look out at the world and you see that the trees, the mountains, the planets, are all hanging in space. And you begin to consider that your body, what appears to be your body, is like the trees, and the moon, and the sun. It seems to be a thing of itself, and it is also hanging in boundless space.

Because you are able to observe this and see this and feel this, the realisation will come to you that you must be this boundless space, which your body and your mind and the rest of the things of this world are attached to. As you begin to consider this, the mind becomes quieter and

quieter and quieter, until the day comes when it falls away completely. Then you become boundless space. And yet you appear to be a body also. This is a paradox. This is why it's better to sit in the silence and not talk at all.

**It's All A Dream**

You are real. What you appear to be is false. Identify with the real, not with the false. Do not accept anything you see as reality. The only freedom you've got is to turn within. One day you will awaken from this dream, for this is also a dream, and you will be free.

There is no such thing as birth, and there is no such thing as death. Nobody is born, no one dies, and no one prevails in between. Nothing that appears exists. Only the Self exists. All this is the Self, and "I am That".

You are absolute reality, ultimate oneness. You are consciousness, emptiness, *sat chit*

*ananda*. That is your true nature. Why not abide in it and be free?

Empty your mind. Become still, and everything will happen of its own accord. There is really nothing you have to do. Just be still. "Be still and know that I am God." I am as the Self! Accept that and be free.

Why do you think of other things? Why concern yourself with the body? Or your mind? Or the world? Quit trying to solve problems. This doesn't mean that you are going to do nothing. Your body is going to perform the acts it came here to do. If you are meant to be an accountant, you are going to be an accountant. If you are meant to be a preacher, you'll be a preacher. If you are meant to be a homeless person, you will be a homeless person. You have absolutely nothing to do with it.

Allow your mind to say and think the way it will, only don't identify with it. Allow your body to do what it must, but do not react to it. Everything will happen of its own accord. When you allow your mind to think of its own accord, the thoughts begin to dissipate, and soon you have empty mind. Empty mind is consciousness, realisation.

As soon as you begin to identify with reality, with consciousness, all fear leaves you, all doubt leaves you, all false thinking leaves you, and you become free.

### Only One Self

There is only one Self. What you feel toward somebody else, you are feeling toward yourself. What you do to anybody else you are doing to yourself. If you help somebody else, you are helping yourself, and if you hurt somebody else, you are hurting yourself.

What your body does is karmic. It has nothing to do with you. When you realise, "I am not the body, I am not the mind, and I am not the doer," then you are safe. But as long as you think you are doing something kind for somebody, then you want a reward, you want recognition. But when you know there is only one Self, you are automatically kind to everybody. Virtue is its own reward.

*Q: So Self-realisation is the erasing of me as a separate entity?*

*R: Yes, exactly. It's also the erasing of the idea, "I'm self-realised." There is only Silence. It's beyond explanation. It's a mystery. The finite can never comprehend the infinite. There are no words to explain it. All is well. Consciousness is bliss, love — not as we know it, but a million times stronger. And that's our real nature. Be your Self.*

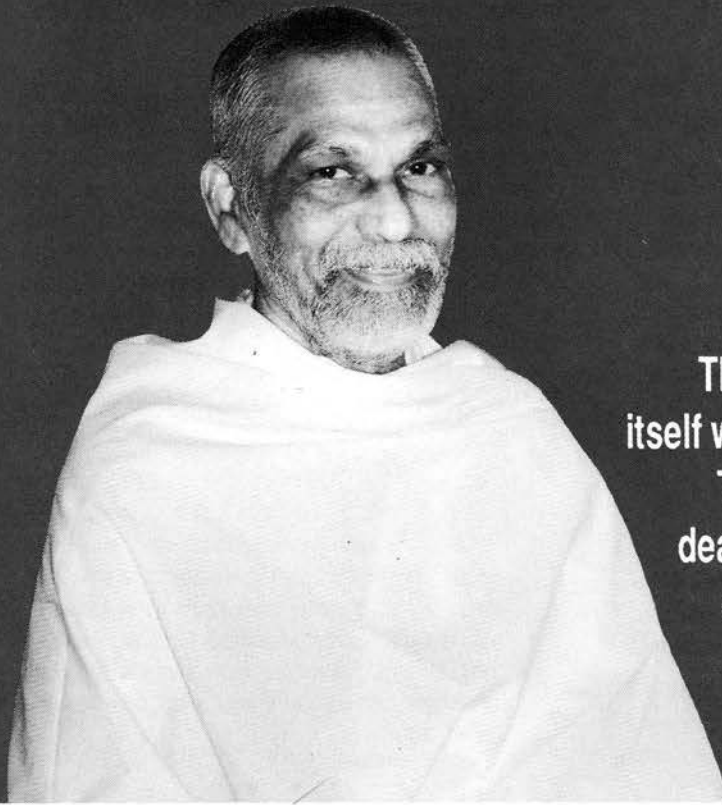
\* \* \*

**"So long as there is *vibhakti*, there must be *bhakti*. So long as there is *viyoga*, there must be *yoga*. So long as there is duality, there must be God and devotee. Similarly also in *vichara*. So long as there is *vichara*, there is duality too. But merging into the Source there is unity only. So it is with *bhakti* too. Realising the God of devotion, there will be unity only. God too is thought of in and by the Self. So God is identical with the Self. If one is told to have *bhakti* for God and he does so straightaway, it is all right. But there is another kind of man who turns round and says, 'There are two, I and God. Before knowing the far-off God, let me know the more immediate and intimate 'I'. For him the *vichara-marga* has to be taught. There is in fact no difference between *bhakti* and *vichara*."**

— Sri Bhagavan, in *Talks*, No. 154.



# Sri Lakshmana Swamy



The mind can never eliminate  
itself without the grace of the Self.  
The mind is afraid of its own  
death. It will not do anything to  
endanger its own existence.

Sri Lakshmana Swamy was born on Christmas Day, 1925, in Gudur, Andhra Pradesh. A great desire for Self-realisation arose in him while he was still in his teens, as a result of which he began to study spiritual books and practise *pranayama*. His first major experience occurred at the end of his initial year in college.

**I**T was just evening. I sat cross-legged in the posture of *padmasana* in the middle of the tank bed. Just then darkness was enveloping the place. I was doing *pranayama*. Suddenly the mind was concentrated and became one-pointed and still. There was a sudden flash of light within. The divine light shone in its full magnificence. The light encircled and engulfed me. I lost all consciousness of the body. Apart from the strange quietness, there was total inner stillness. *Paramatma* shone in its fullest glory and splendour. The effulgence of *atman* drove home the veritable fact that *atman* is God Himself in this temple of the physical body. My joy knew no bounds as I realised that *atman* had become my Guru.'

The experience was a brief one but it had given him a glimpse and a foretaste of the goal he was aiming at. He tried on many occasions to repeat the experience but it never came back. Reluctantly he came to the conclusion that he would never be able to establish himself in a state of permanent Self-awareness through effort alone: 'I could not establish myself in that state of total inner bliss and peace. Then I keenly felt the imperative need of a Guru in human form.'

*He learned about the existence of Bhagavan from one of his college teachers.*

On the last day of his second year at college Lakshmana's attention was drawn to a large crowd which had congregated in and around the main lecture hall. He was not able to enter the hall itself because it was crowded with students, but looking over the heads of the people at the back of the hall he could see that the lecture was being given by his English professor, G.V. Subbaramaiah. Lakshmana remembers the occasion very well:

'As I was at a great distance I could not hear the words of the lecturer clearly, but surprisingly, when the lecturer pointed to the portrait [that was standing next to him on the platform] and said that the sage in the portrait was Sri Ramana Maharshi, the words rang in my ears. Till then I had never heard of the Maharshi. No sooner

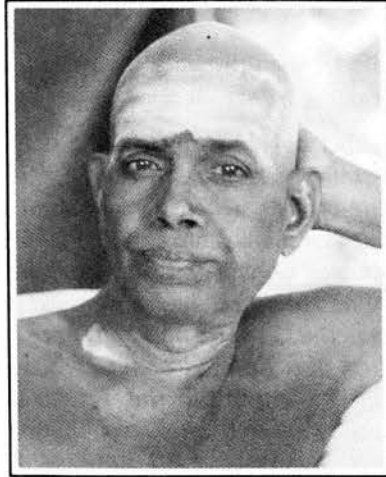
did I hear the name than I felt an irrepressible longing to see him.'

*Sri Lakshmana visited Sri Ramanasramam for the first time in March 1949. Because of the crowds which had assembled to celebrate the kumbhabhishekam of the Mother's Temple, he was unable to meet Bhagavan and talk to him. However, he recognised that Bhagavan was the Guru he had been looking for. On this first visit he read about Bhagavan's teachings on self-enquiry in the Telugu edition of Who am I? Though he found them interesting, he decided instead to do japa of Bhagavan's name.*

*After three days he went back to Andhra Pradesh, had a hut built for himself near the sea, and devoted all his time to solitary meditation.*

'On the seashore I did *japa* of my *Satguru's* name, "*Hare Ramana*", and whenever my mind became still, that is, without thoughts, I dived in and tried to know the source of it.' Sri Lakshmana clarified this by saying that whenever his mind became completely quiet as a result of doing the *Ramana japa*, the question 'Who am I?' arose spontaneously within him. Whenever this happened, as if in answer to the question, his mind automatically sank into its source, the Heart, and experienced the bliss of the Self. He never made any conscious attempt to practise self-enquiry. The question 'Who am I?' just appeared inside him on a few occasions when his mind was completely free of thoughts.

His stay there lasted five months. At the end of that time he contracted a serious case of malaria and had to be taken back to Gudur. The doctor who examined him there decided that he was likely to die and many of his relatives came to pay their last respects. Lakshmana was not of the same opinion. He was determined not to die without seeing his Guru again. He placed a picture of *Ramana Maharshi* by his bedside and willed himself to stay alive long enough to see him again. He meditated on the picture throughout his ordeal and whenever he looked at it he felt as if *Sri Ramana* himself were laughing or



**"That Supreme State which is to be attained here through association with Sages and steady inward-turning cannot be obtained through a learned teacher or by (understanding) the meaning of sacred texts, or by merit or by any other means."**

**- Sri Maharshi in *Supplement to Forty Verses*, v.2.**

smiling at him. He was convinced that it was the power and the grace that flowed from the picture that kept him alive and enabled him to make a full recovery.

He was in bed for nearly two months. Towards the end of that period he became a little despondent about his lack of spiritual progress:

'The body could escape from the jaws of death, but I could not escape from the ever-yawning mouth of the tiger, ego. I could not suppress the surge of egoism. How to efface it? I was much perturbed and gazed at the portrait of Bhagavan. From Bhagavan's face flowed grace and compassion in abundance.'

*As soon as he was able to walk he returned to Tiruvannamalai, arriving on the penultimate day of the Navaratri celebrations.*

On the following afternoon [*Vijayadasami*] he went to have *darshan* of Sri Ramana in the new hall that had recently been constructed for him. The official *darshan* hours were 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. Shortly before the *darshan* started Lakshmana found a seat near the east entrance to the hall, but outside because the inside of the hall was already full. Sri Ramana appeared punctually at 3 p.m. A few minutes later Sri Lakshmana closed his eyes and unexpectedly found that all thoughts had disappeared except for the primal 'I'-thought. The question 'Who am I?' then spontaneously appeared within him, and as it did so, the gracious smiling face of

Ramana Maharshi appeared within him on the right side of the chest. There was, he says, 'a lightning flash and a flood of divine light shining within and without'. Sri Ramana's face was smiling 'with more radiance than that of innumerable lightning flashes fused into one. In that ineffable bliss, tears of joy welled up in unending succession and they could not be resisted.' Finally the 'I'-thought went back to its source, the picture of Ramana Maharshi disappeared and the Self absorbed his whole being. From that moment on, the Self shone alone and the 'I'-thought, the individual self, never appeared or functioned in him again. Sri Lakshmana had realised the Self in the presence of his Guru and his 'I'-thought was permanently destroyed. Commenting on his realisation many years later, Sri Lakshmana said, 'The 'I' went back to its source, the Self, and disappeared without a trace. The Self alone remained. It is eternal peace and bliss.'

Sri Lakshmana remained absorbed in the Self, without body consciousness, for about three hours. The experience was so intense that even when he opened his eyes he found that he was incapable of either speaking or moving. He says that the realisation caused an intense churning within the nervous system and that when body consciousness returned he felt extremely weak.

When he opened his eyes and looked inside the hall, Sri Lakshmana noticed that everything was perfectly normal. Sri Ramana was sitting on his couch and all the assembled devotees were

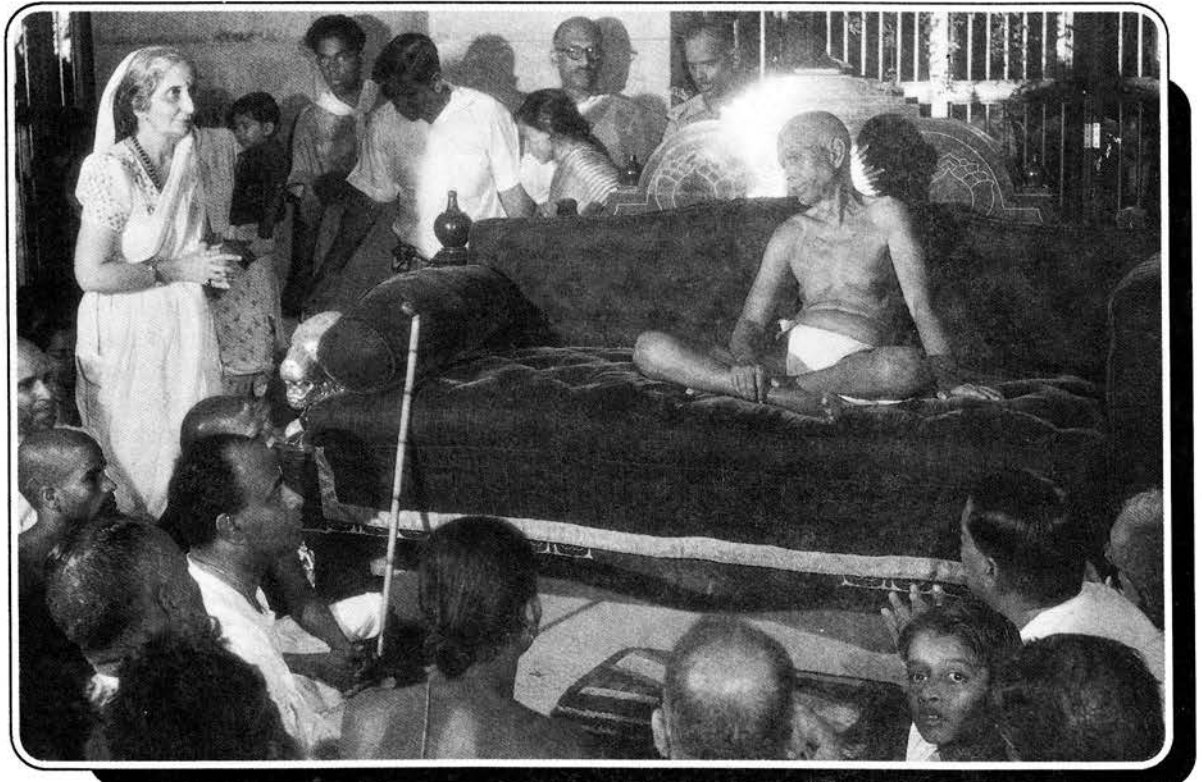
pursuing their normal duties and activities. It was as if nothing had happened, but for Sri Lakshmana, it was the major event of his life. Since that day he has continued to shine uninterruptedly as the Self.

Sri Lakshmana remained where he was for another three hours. He remembers hearing the dinner bell and the noise of the *Vijayadasami* procession as it went around the temple, but he was too absorbed in the Self to contemplate either eating or joining in the celebrations. At 9 p.m., when he was finally able to move, he slowly made his way back to his allotted place in the men's dormitory.

The following morning he still felt very weak. Thinking that he might feel better if he ate some food, he started to walk towards the town of Tiruvannamalai to see if he could get a meal at one of the hotels there. Unfortunately, he had overestimated his strength and before he could

find a suitable hotel he had an attack of dizziness and collapsed on the street. A friendly passer-by took him under his wing, ascertained that he needed something to eat, and guided him to a hotel on the south side of the main temple. Sri Lakshmana felt much better after the meal and he was able to return to the ashram without any further trouble.

Later that day Sri Lakshmana Swamy prostrated himself before Sri Ramana Maharshi and handed him a note, via his attendant Venkataratnam. The note, in Telugu, simply said, 'O Bhagavan, in your presence and by the quest [Who am I?] I have realised the Self'. Sri Ramana read the note, looked at him for a moment, and then his face lit up in a radiant smile. The two looked at each other for a few seconds, and then Ramana Maharshi asked him where he had come from. Sri Lakshmana answered that he had come from Gudur.



*Sri Bhagavan in the New Hall*



*A section of the mourning devotees on Sri Bhagavan's Maha Nirvana*

'That's in Nellore District, isn't it?' asked Sri Ramana.

Sri Lakshmana replied that it was, and no more words passed between them. Sri Lakshmana had not spoken since the moment of his realisation. After he had given his two brief replies to Sri Ramana, he did not speak again for another thirteen years.

*After some time Sri Lakshmana moved to a hut in Palakottu where he spent most of his time, sitting quietly, absorbed in the Self. Bhagavan, knowing that Swamy was often too deeply immersed in Self-absorption to look after himself properly, often sent his attendant Venkataratnam to make sure that all his physical needs were being attended to.*

On the evening of April the 14th, 1950, Sri Lakshmana was cleaning his room in Palakottu when a picture of Ramana Maharshi, which was normally kept on a stool in the corner of the room, fell to the ground. Swamy put it back in its usual place, making sure that it was not in a position which would cause it to overbalance

again. A few minutes later it fell to the ground for a second time. Swamy felt intuitively that this was a sign that his Guru was about to leave the body. He felt a strong urge to go to the ashram, but before he could leave he lost awareness of the world and became wholly absorbed in the Self for a period of 2-3 hours. His awareness of the outer world only appeared again shortly before 9 p.m. when he heard a great noise coming from the ashram. He knew then for certain that Bhagavan had attained *Mahanirvana*. He rushed to the back gate of the ashram, the nearest gate to his room, only to find that the police had already locked it. By the time he had made his way into the ashram via the front gate, Sri Ramana's body had already been removed from the room where he had spent his last hours and put on display outside it. Later that night, when most of the grieving devotees had left, it was taken inside the new hall.

Swamy had seen Ramana Maharshi for the last time earlier that day. On that occasion, as they looked into each other's eyes, Sri

Lakshmana had experienced such a strong wave of ecstatic bliss that he became oblivious to his surroundings. Now, seeing Bhagavan's lifeless body, he experienced very little emotion. People were crying all around him and Sri Lakshmana's first reaction was that he also should shed a few tears for his Guru. But no tears came. He was unhappy that Bhagavan had died, but at the same time he was unable to cry or even participate in the sorrow of the other devotees because he knew that nothing had really happened. He knew that Sri Ramana was the Self before he gave up the body and that he was the same Self afterwards. Filled with this awareness that nothing had really happened, he left the thousands of grieving devotees and silently returned to his room.

*Sri Lakshmana Swamy returned to Gudur, his home town, in October 1950, because, being absorbed in the Self for most of the time, he was unable to look after the basic requirements of his body by himself. He lived a very solitary life near Gudur, and for several years in the early 1950s spent most of his time in samadhi, rarely eating, and for the most part oblivious to the world. His return to physical normality was a protracted one. He began to speak again in 1963 and in the 1970s he began to give weekly talks on Bhagavan's teachings in a temple — called the 'Sri Ramana Gita Mandir' — which some devotees had built for him near his house. About two years ago he moved to Arunachala and he now lives about a fifteen-minute walk away from Sri Ramanasramam. He continues to live a very solitary, reclusive life and only meets visitors on major festival days such as Kartigai Deepam and Sivaratri.*

*Sri Lakshmana Swamy rarely speaks to devotees, preferring instead to teach through silence. However, when he does give out practical advice, he encourages devotees to follow the teaching of his own Guru, Sri Ramana Maharshi. His teaching is very simple and can be encapsulated in a single remark Arthur Osborne attributed to Bhagavan: 'Just keep quiet, Bhagavan will do the rest.'*

*Swamy:* The Self is ever-present; there is no question of realising it. You can neither reach it nor attain it because you are the Self even now. It is said that the mind prevents one from being aware of the Self, but the mind is non-existent. The Self alone exists, and one who knows this knows that there is no birth, no death, no mind, no time, and no question of enlightenment. This is the final truth.

If you think, 'This is not my experience' or 'How shall I realise the Self?', then the mind will appear to exist. All such doubts and thoughts arise in the mind. Deprive the mind of such thoughts and mind itself disappears. Be quiet and still and all thoughts will disappear. Self-enquiry and surrender are only techniques which bring one to the state of inner stillness and quietness. The ultimate instruction is therefore, 'Be still and quiet; stabilise in this state and the Self will be revealed'.

\* \* \*

*Question:* What are the different stages or levels of the mind that one passes through before realising the Self?

*Swamy:* Mind is only thoughts. The more easily you can be without thoughts, the nearer you are to a direct experience of the Self. To make the mind die, you must deprive it of thoughts. The effortless thought-free state is the highest level of practice.

There are no stages or degrees of realisation, there are only stages of spiritual practice. The final stage of *sadhana* is this effortless thought-free state. If this state can be maintained, then the 'I' will sink into the Self and it will experience the bliss of the Self. This is not realisation, for there is still an 'I' which is experiencing the bliss of the Self. These experiences are only temporary; the 'I' will continue to reassert itself until the moment of realisation. Realisation can only happen in this effortless thought-free state, for it is only in this state that the Self can destroy the 'I'-thought. The 'I'-thought, which is the mind, must die completely before Self-realisation occurs.

*Question:* How is one to make the mind die?

*Swamy:* The mind can never eliminate itself without the grace of the Self. The mind is afraid of its own death. It will not do anything to endanger its own existence.

The mind will engage in *sadhana*, thinking that it wants to destroy itself, but as soon as the mind starts to sink into the Heart, a great fear arises which prevents the mind from completely subsiding. This fear is part of the mind's self-defence mechanism, and you will never overcome it by effort alone. It is because of this that you need the grace of the Guru. When you concentrate on the name and form of the Guru, or try to be without thoughts, the grace of the Guru calms the mind and helps it to overcome the fear which would otherwise prevent it from completely subsiding.

*Question:* Why is it necessary for the mind to die?

*Swamy:* The mind must die. There is no other way to realise the Self. Some people say that complete equanimity of mind is Self-realisation, but this is not true. This is only a stage one passes through on the way to Self-realisation. Other people say that seeing the Self or God everywhere is Self-realisation, but this is not true either. To see the Self everywhere, there must be an 'I' who sees, and while that 'I' exists, the mind will also exist. The *jnani* does not see anything, because the seeing entity in him has died. In the Self there is no seeing, only being. When the mind still exists one can reach a stage where one can see the whole world as a manifestation of the Self, but when the mind dies, there is no one who sees and no world to be seen.

If you have a mind, then the earth, the sky and the stars will exist, and you will be able to see them. When the mind dies there will be no earth, no sky, no stars and no world. The world of objects, names and forms is only the mind, and when the mind dies, the world dies with it. Only the Self then remains.

Seeing everything as the Self gives the im-

pression that the Self is equally distributed everywhere. This is also an idea in the mind. When the mind finally dies you realise that there is no distribution and no everywhere.

\* \* \*

*Swamy:* The first thought to appear is the 'I'-thought. It rises in the Heart and, in a split second, travels to the brain, identifies with the body and the senses, and then sees the world around it as a real world.

Follow the quest 'Who am I?' Follow the 'I' back to its source. When the 'I' goes back to its source and identifies with the Self instead of with the senses, there is eternal peace and bliss. To do this you have to get rid of all thoughts. The first of all thoughts is the 'I'-thought. Give up all other thoughts and catch hold of the 'I'-thought. The Self will then embrace that 'I' and devour it.

Effort and grace are both necessary in order to follow the quest successfully, but without *vichara* there is no grace, and without grace there is no *vichara*.

You can hold onto the 'I'-thought by your own effort; more than that you cannot do. If the candle comes near the sun, what will happen? It will melt away. The same thing will happen to the mind if you hold onto the 'I'-thought. When it goes back to its source in the Heart, the Self will consume it until only the Self remains.

In the Self there is no 'I'-thought, there is no mind, and there are no thoughts.

*Question:* In self-enquiry, after concentrating the mind, I become aware of the thoughts and enquire as to their source, and I find that it is an 'I am', a beingness that is present before and after every passing thought. Then I just try to hold on to this sense of 'I am', and when any thought arises I just try to bring the mind back to it. Is this practice correct? Is anything else needed?

*Swamy:* In self-enquiry you have to catch hold of the 'I'-thought by giving up other thoughts. If other thoughts intrude, ask yourself, 'For whom

are these thoughts?' and you will find that the answer is, 'They are occurring to me'. Then question yourself as to who is this 'I' that is having the thoughts, or ask yourself, 'Where does this 'I' come from?'. If you are ripe, that is, free from thoughts, the 'I' dives into itself and experiences the bliss of the Self. In the end, the 'I', which is the mind, must die. The mind won't kill the mind by itself, so the grace of the Guru, who is the Self, is most important. The death of the mind is Self-realisation. As there is no mind after realisation, the Self alone remains, one without a second. It is eternal peace and bliss and it is beyond birth and death.

It is difficult to reach that beingness that you describe. Beingness means 'I am' and 'I am' means the Self. When the mind is quiet, the 'I'-thought may experience a little of the bliss that is emanating from the Self, but you will not experience pure beingness until the 'I'-thought has completely subsided into the Heart. Your imagination is making you think that a peaceful or blissful experience of the 'I'-thought is an experience of 'I am' or the Self. This belief has arisen because of ignorance, because you have not experienced the real 'I' as it really is.

First try to keep the mind quiet, that is, without thoughts.

*Question:* When I look into who I am, the mind becomes still. But only for the moment. After a few moments' silence, I find myself in the middle of thoughts again. Then I remember the self-enquiry again and become silent for a

while. Then I forget again. It goes on like this all day long.

*Swamy:* Yes, it is like this, but with more and more practice, the mind becomes still.

For me this world is a waking dream. If you are in this state, then there is no birth or death for you; or sleep. First look into yourself. Just sit every day for half an hour and look into the source of the 'I'. Ask yourself, 'What is the source of this 'I'?'

\* \* \*

*Swamy:* Humbleness has to be there in a *sadhaka*. Be humble. Have faith. Have faith in the Guru and have faith in yourself. Have faith because the Self is beyond words and beyond the mind. It is indestructible; even an atom bomb cannot destroy it. It is all-pervading and beyond the categories of birth and death. There is only the Self and nothing else. There is nothing apart from it. It is one without a second.

To know the Self is the only worthy knowledge. To experience the Self as it really is, it is essential that the mind be kept still, by any means. For spiritual practice you only have to remain still without thoughts. This is not for the realisation of the Self, because the Self is ever realised. Be without thoughts, be still and you will find out what you really are.

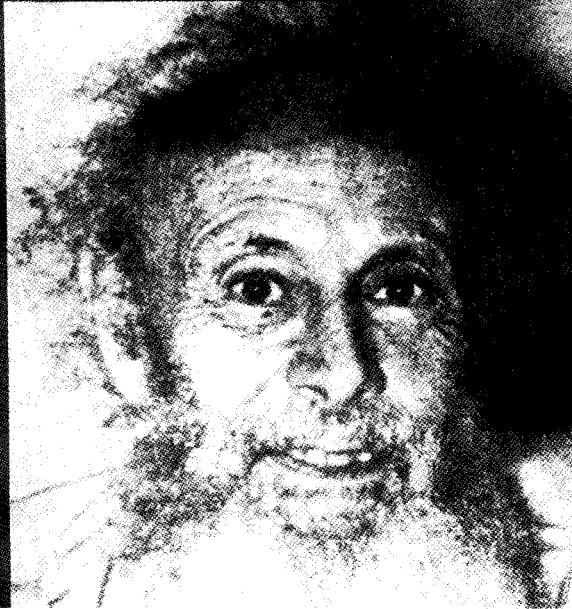
The portions of this article which are printed in Roman type have been taken from *No Mind — I am the Self*, published by Sri Lakshmana Ashram, Chillakur, Gudur, Nellore District, 524412, A.P. The book is currently out of print.

**"In the proximity of a great master, the *vasanas* cease to be active, the mind becomes still and *samadhi* results. Thus the disciple gains true knowledge and right experience in the presence of the master. To remain unshaken in it further efforts are necessary. Eventually the disciple will know it to be his real Being and will thus be liberated even while alive."**

**- Sri Bhagavan in *Talks*, No. 139.**



# Swami Abhishiktananda



“The Awakening”\*

By

J.D.M. Stuart

“In our days how great was the spiritual radiance spread throughout Tamil Nadu and far beyond by that young brahmin of Madurai who quietly walked out of his father’s house and made straight for Arunachala. During the fifty years which he passed on the mountain, how many thousands of those who thirsted for truth and salvation came to prostrate before him and to sit at his feet, eagerly drinking in the teaching of his lips, and far more deeply still, quenching their thirst from his silence.”<sup>1</sup>

These words were written by Swami Abhishiktananda (Fr. Henri le Saux) in 1954, when he himself was living as a hermit in one of the caves on Arunachala. He was one of those who drank deeply from Sri Ramana's words, and much more so from his silence. To the end of his life he never ceased to speak with love and reverence for the sage whom he regarded as the perfect example of Vedanta.

Abhishiktananda had the *darshan* of Sri Ramana on only two occasions: once in January 1949, just before the Maharshi's last illness, and again six months later. He recorded his impressions in his diary and later wrote them up in his book, *The Secret of Arunachala*.<sup>2</sup>

When he was introduced to Sri Ramana, "the Maharshi replied with a gesture of the hand, accompanied by a smile filled with a kindness that was impossible to forget."<sup>3</sup> But at first he did not know what to make of the sage whose *darshan* he had looked forward to for so long. He gazed at him, but all that he could see was "a kindly grandfather...happy, peaceful and smiling among his grandchildren."<sup>4</sup>

Where was the halo? He took his problem to an English lady who was living near the ashram. "Your trouble is that you are not receptive," she advised. "You want to know, to understand. Instead, simply be open before Bhagavan." He took her point and began trying to listen at a deeper level. As he sat in the hall, the chanting of the Vedic hymns, assisted perhaps by the feverish cold which came upon him, had the effect of relaxing the fetters of his mind. "Even before my mind was able to recognise the fact, and still less to express it, the invisible halo of this sage had been perceived by something in me deeper than any words."

The fever soon forced him to return home to Kulittalai. But, as he lay in bed, "In my feverish dreams it was the Maharshi who unremittingly appeared to me, the Maharshi bringing the true India which transcends time and of which he was for me the living and compelling symbol."

Then significantly, he added: "My dreams also

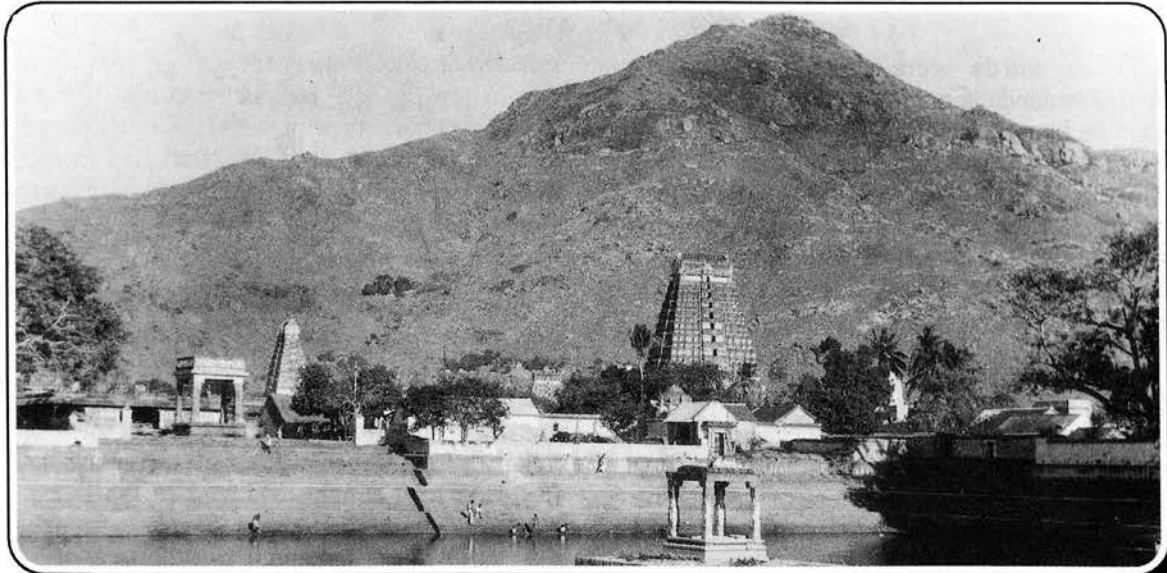
included attempts, always in vain — to incorporate in my previous mental structures, without shattering them, these powerful new experiences which my contact with the Maharshi had brought to birth; new as they were, their hold on me was already too strong for it ever to be possible for me to disown them."<sup>5</sup>

After this, Abhishiktananda saw Sri Ramana only once more, in July 1949, shortly after Maharshi's operation. This time he was better prepared to profit from Sri Ramana's grace: "I did my best not to allow my efforts at rationalisation to get in the way as on the first visit, and tried simply to attend to the hidden influence." As he had already begun to glimpse the eternal in Sri Ramana, the withdrawal of his physical presence (his *mahasamadhi* occurred on 14-4-1950) did not break the bond that was forming.

Abhishiktananda had been studying the *Upanishads* for several years and felt the attraction of *advaita*. His contact with Sri Ramana, a living example of *advaita*, gave to his study and meditation an existential direction. He realised that *advaita* is nothing until it is *lived*. He therefore sought to open himself to Sri Ramana in every way that he could, by meditating on the Maharshi's own profound poems and on *Sri Ramana Gita*, trying to listen beyond the words to the depth of spirit from which they came. At the same time, he took every opportunity of meeting those of his disciples who had most deeply realised Sri Ramana's message. One of these spoke to him of the mystery of the heart:

"Find the heart deep within oneself; cut all the bonds which restrain this heart and hold it at the level of sense and external consciousness, all the fleeting identifications of what one is with what one *has* or what one *does*."<sup>6</sup>

On his next visit to Sri Ramanasramam in November 1951, Abhishiktananda discovered — or was discovered by — Arunachala, and this also drew him nearer to Sri Ramana. "It was with me as with Ramana: Arunachala awakened me."<sup>7</sup> He was "truly reborn at Arunachala under the guidance of the Maharshi."<sup>8</sup>



The Hill of the Holy Beacon — ARUNACHALA

For many years Abhishiktananda had been leading an austere life as a Benedictine monk, and since coming to India he had begun to live as a *sannyasi* in his ashram at Kulittalai. Now he discovered what it was to live as a hermit in the caves of the holy mountain. In 1952 he spent five months there, mostly in *mauna* (silence) and living on *bhiksha* (alms), and he returned for further periods each year until 1955. Before him was the ideal of Sri Ramana, of the Desert Fathers in Egypt, and of his own St Benedict of Nursia, who loved the solitude of his cave, where "alone in the presence of the heavenly Witness, he abode with himself".

During these times the grace of Arunachala took hold of him in ways which are indescribable in words, though he gives hints in his *Diary* and in letters to his friends.

It was Sri Ramana who led him to Arunachala, and it was there, partly through the silence, and partly

through the words and example of other holy people, that he deepened his understanding of Sri Ramana's *upadesa* (instruction). This experience, so early in his life in India, was decisive. Although in his case there was no sudden, once-for-all illumination, there were moments which he afterwards called "the high points of my whole life."<sup>9</sup> In fact, it was many years before this experience was fully integrated.

Finally, it seems, only in the heart-attack of July 1973, when he hung between life and death, did he realise that "the awakening is independent of any situation whatever."<sup>10</sup>

In the last year of his life, he wrote to a friend: "[There has been] nothing new since Arunachala."<sup>11</sup> And to another friend, a month or so before his death, he said, "There were times there [in the caves of Arunachala] that were so high. And this was vastly deeper than I thought at the time. Words that I wrote in



Hut where Swami Abhishiktananda stayed up on the hill, Arunachala

those days were not fully understood until very long afterwards."

Some hints of his experience on Arunachala are given in these passages from his *Diary*:

"*Satori*, the illumination, is the real baptism, this new view of oneself and of the world, not an intellectual knowledge, but an abysmal, cataclysmal transfiguration of one's being.<sup>12</sup>

"There is a mystery in Arunachala. What is this mystery? Why have so many in the past been drawn by its 'magic'? Like elder sons, they have come from every direction. And I have come from beyond the seas. Fascinated. Why this strange sensation? Why, despite all the inconveniences of life, do I feel happy and at peace here as nowhere else? This fascination has attracted ascetics over the centuries. There is something in the caves of Arunachala. Sages have lived there and have impregnated the rocks with their inner life. And yet there is more to it than that. Brahman himself inhabits the cave of the heart, say the *Upanishads*. Here is the cave of Brahman himself, not so much that he lives in me, as that I live in him. If it is still possible for there to be he and me! Ramana lived the mystery of the unity in Arunachala, the illuminated, the illuminating.<sup>13</sup>

"On entering this place which is so isolated and so pure, these words sang in my heart: 'This shall be my resting place forever; here will I dwell for I have a delight therein' [a verse sung at the profession of a Benedictine monk]. How will God's will for me be manifested in the coming days? 'Boldly take the final plunge into pure *advaita*,' is what is constantly whispered by the voice which continually sings in the depth of my heart."<sup>14</sup>

A few days after the foregoing entry, he meditated in the underground crypt of the Patala Linga, which he later called his true 'meeting' with the Maharshi. This meeting "took place on a plane that has nothing in common with any visual, auditory or psychic phenomenon whatever; literally at the one level where Ramana can always be truly met."<sup>15</sup>

"The place of birth and the changing circum-

stances of life are really of little importance to him who has chosen — or rather, has been granted — to exist in this world as no more than a sign, a *linga*, of the Lord, while his own self, his 'I', has been swallowed up for good in the overwhelming experience of him who alone IS. This is what the young *Brahmanaswami* understood at the moment when, in the heart of the temple, he recognised the Lord Arunachala. And that is why, from then on, it is only at that level that he in his turn can truly be met by anyone who is himself engaged in the inner quest for his true being."<sup>16</sup>

"They — Ramana and Arunachala — have become infused into my flesh, they are woven into the fibres of my heart."<sup>17</sup>

The following excerpts indicate how deeply Abhishiktananda integrated the *upadesa* of Sri Ramana:

"[His teaching] is simply to go back to the source of myself and to *grasp* (but not intellectually) that the 'authorship', the *Aham*, which governs our corporal and mental activity, cannot be divided into two — God and myself.<sup>18</sup>

"...the submersion of the self in the Self. The great mistake is surely to wait for the submersion. The goal is neither the submersion nor an eternal life. There is no goal to attain, there is only an eye to open — rather, not to open, still less to close, or even to gaze — the gaze is just there, eternal, timeless, spaceless; the gaze, the love, the bliss, the divine *shanti* which is in and through me...it is merely to be no longer diverted from the Real.<sup>19</sup>

"The *sahaja* is not something to be produced in myself. It is just there. It is only a matter of discovering it, or recognising it, of finding the way to it, clogged as it is with stones, thorns, so many *vasanas* since the time of my birth.<sup>20</sup>

"*Advaita* is neither a doctrine nor a system. It is the supreme experience here below, one which forbids giving an absolute meaning to the form of multiplicity which marks everything in the world and that comes before our senses or our mind. *Advaita* is the fundamental dimension of being.<sup>21</sup>



"The *jnani* neither realises nor discovers anything that is new. He simply sees reality in all its splendour. He penetrates to the essence of things and there discovers *Yaweh-Brahman*."<sup>22</sup>

"The teaching of *advaita* is not a matter of negation — no rites, no dogmas, etc. It is the blazing discovery of a secret, of an interior level; the level into which Jesus entered and remained."<sup>23</sup>

In his book *Saccidananda*, Swami Abhishiktananda gave a clear and forceful account of Sri Ramana's teaching:

"It is the worst possible illusion to imagine that we have to struggle to find liberation or *mukti*; or to experience the Self, which is the same thing. To strive consciously and deliberately, to arrive at this 'realisation of the Self', is paradoxically the greatest obstacle in the way of reaching it; for it involves the assumption that man's natural state — the *sahaja sthiti*, as he called it — is something that man does not yet possess. As if a man could *be* without being himself! This method leaves no place for subconscious transference or for the inflation of the ego. It is through and through a method of relaxation, of detachment, of flight towards what is inward and authentic. It cuts at the root of any self-satisfaction and so achieves the most radical purification."<sup>24</sup>

Some of Abhishiktananda's references to Sri Ramana show how he revered him as a supreme *advaitin* and grasped the Maharshi's own explanation of his role as a *guru*:

"Ramana is not a *brahmaid*; there is no other *brahmaid* than Brahman. Brahman knows *himself* in *his* Ramana-murti. Ramana is Brahman's own pure consciousness of himself. There is nothing left in Ramana which could congratulate itself or delight in knowing Brahman, or in the fact that Brahman knows himself in him, Ramana. There is only pure *chit* in itself, *chitswarupa*, pure *ananda* in itself, *swarupananda*, because he is nothing but pure *sat* (truth). The mental and physical functions of Ramana are pure *Brahma-shakti*, pure radiance of self-awareness in himself of Brahman. There

is nothing in them to deflect them from their essential object... the essential object of the divine, cosmic sport which also is nothing other than Brahman, if one may so express it. The *shakti* of the *jivanmukta* is the very power of Brahman at work in the world.<sup>25</sup>

"The true *guru*, precisely because he has realised, is able to penetrate the soul of his disciple. The whispering of the sacred mantra in the disciple's ear on the day of his initiation is the symbol of a mysterious and effective whisper from heart to heart. The disciple is united to God through his *guru*. Not that the *guru* would be an intermediary between the disciple and God. It is in the person of the *guru* that God appears to the disciple. The *guru* is for him an authentic revelation of God. So the only true *guru* is he who is realised.<sup>26</sup>

"Books and the *guru* can only point the way. It is for the Self to find the way to the Self. The intellect can merely give assistance; it is not able to open the door. It makes preparations, but only the Self opens the door of the Self. Lightning, thunder...!<sup>27</sup>

"Why trouble about a *guru*, about Ramana, about Arunachala? *Tat tvam asi!* The *guru*, Ramana, Arunachala, and the rest, they are the outward projections of the Self, who hides himself in order to be found.<sup>28</sup>

My deepest ideal — that to which unconsciously everything in me is referred — is that of Ramana, who is such a perfect example of Vedanta. This ideal of Ramana could never have rooted itself at this depth in my psyche if there had not been a meeting with an obscurely felt call, an awakening."<sup>29</sup>

Finally, it will be of interest to note another very important aspect of the *advaita* which Abhishiktananda lived as a consequence of his 'initiation' by Sri Ramana and Arunachala. He once described himself in his *Diary* as "at once so deeply Christian and so deeply Hindu, at a depth where Christian and Hindu in their social and mental structures are blown to pieces, and yet are found again ineffably at the heart of each other."<sup>30</sup> In his *Diary*, he often writes, "We

Hindus..." Yet he was, and remained to the end of his life, a Christian and a Christian priest with a profound sense of responsibility towards his Christian brethren.

"Christianity and Vedanta, are they not, in the end, two points of view from which man seeks to understand the mystery of God? Two irreconcilable perspectives, but is not God precisely the meeting point of opposites — *coincidentia oppositorum?*"<sup>31</sup>

A few extracts hint at the deepening of Abhishiktananda's entry into the Christian mystery:

"Ramana's ashram helps me to understand the *Gospels*.<sup>32</sup>

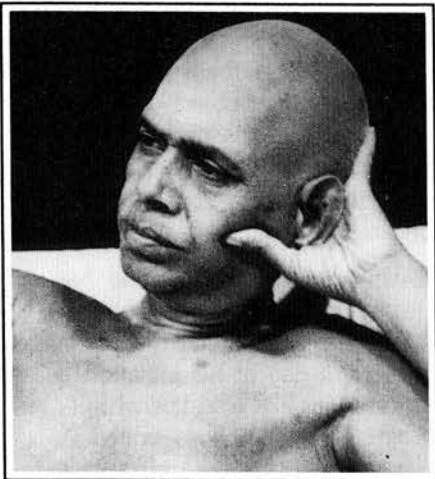
"There is one fact which overrides all: the religious experience which I have had in a non-Christian environment with an intensity never known in my previous life, and in real continuity with all that I had obscurely felt hitherto. Ramana's *advaita* is my birthplace — *mulagarbha*. Faced with that, all reasonings are shattered.<sup>33</sup>

"The essential task is the absolute surrender of the peripheral 'I' to the inner mystery."<sup>34</sup>

Part of Abhishiktananda's discovery was undoubtedly to realise more clearly the *advaitic* dimension in Christian experience. He tirelessly drew attention to this in his writings for Christians, calling for a real recovery of contemplative prayer and exposing the shallowness of popular dualistic forms of Christianity. It was no small consolation to him that a number of Christians wrote to tell him that his books had helped them *for the first time* to understand their own experience.

A near-fatal heart-attack in July 1973 was an experience of intense realisation. "In seeing myself so weak, so incapable of thought, of movement, I was freed from being identified with this 'I' which had previously thought, willed, moved about, and been worried about each and every thing. All that consciousness with which I was moving about was no longer mine; but as for myself, I still was..."<sup>35</sup>

**"Neither sacred bathing places consisting of water nor the images of Gods made of stone and clay can equal those great ones (*mahatmas*). They take countless days to purify one, but know that the Sages do so by a mere look."  
 — Sri Maharshi in *Supplement to Forty Verses*, v. 5**



A close friend and disciple of Abhishiktananda wrote of him shortly after his death on December 7, 1973:

"His spiritual path essentially consisted in the complete appropriation of the *advaitic* experience of the Upanishadic rishis, without however losing hold of his own rootedness in the Christian tradition. He never ceased to contemplate the mystery — at once the mystery which has a face, even as the *Gospels* present it to us in the person of Jesus; and at the same time, the mystery that has no face, as it was revealed in

the heart of India's rishis. For him there was the one single and unique act of contemplation, centered unflinchingly on the non-dual experience of the absolute and unique *aham asmi*, pregnant with the resonance of the 'I AM' of Yahweh which Jesus pronounced is his own name. That *aham* is the mystery realised by Swamiji, the essence of his illumination."<sup>36</sup>

Swami Abhishiktananda deeply drank the *upadesa* of Sri Ramana and lived his own authentic experience of the unique mystery.

\* Abridged from "Sri Ramana Maharshi and Abhishiktananda", *Vidyajyoti*, April, 1980, by kind permission from the author — Editor.  
 1 *Ermites du Saccidananda*, Paris, Casterman, 1956, pp. 48-49.  
 2 Delhi, ISPCK, 1979.  
 3 Abhishiktananda's *Diary* is still unpublished. Excerpts have been very kindly supplied by Mme Odette Baumer-Despeigne, without whose help this article could not have been written.  
 4 *Ibid.*, 24-1-49.  
 5 *The Secret of Arunachala*, p. 9.  
 6 *Ibid.*, p. 14  
 7 *Diary.*, 30-5-72.  
 8 *Ibid.*, 29-7-55.  
 9 *Ibid.*, 30-3-53.  
 10 *Ibid.*, 11-9-73.  
 11 Letter of 1-2-73.  
 12 *Diary.*, 17-7-52.  
 13 *Ibid.*, 4-3-53.  
 14 *Ibid.*, 23-3-53.  
 15 *The Secret of Arunachala*, p. 112.  
 16 *Ibid.*, p. 114

17 *Diary*, 24-11-56.  
 18 *Ibid.*, 17-7-52.  
 19 *Ibid.*, 19-7-52.  
 20 *Ibid.*, 22-3-53.  
 21 *Ibid.*, 30-3-64.  
 22 *Ibid.*, 12-11-66.  
 23 *Ibid.*, 21-12-71.  
 24 *Saccidananda: A Christian Approach to Advaitic Experience*, Delhi, ISPCK, 1974, p. 37.  
 25 *Diary*, 23-11-56.  
 26 *Ibid.*, 3-4-52.  
 27 *Ibid.*, 17-7-52.  
 28 *Ibid.*, 26-4-64.  
 29 *Ibid.*, 2-7-71.  
 30 *Ibid.*, 30-6-64.  
 31 *Ibid.*, 16-5-58.  
 32 *Ibid.*, 4-12-53.  
 33 *Ibid.*, 3-9-55.  
 34 *Ibid.*, 3-2-56.  
 35 *Ibid.*, 11-9-73.  
 36 From the Foreword to *The Further Shore* by Abhishiktananda, Delhi, ISPCK, 1975, pp. ix.x.

## Discovering Early Texts of *Who am I?*

Devotees in the Ashram have recently been conducting research on the various early texts of Sri Bhagavan's Tamil prose work, *Nān Yār?* (*Who am I?*). Among the most interesting finds to come to light is an early manuscript of the essay version of *Nān Yār?* in Sri Bhagavan's own handwriting, a facsimile of which we have pleasure in reproducing here. In all probability this manuscript is the original draft made by Sri Bhagavan of the essay version of *Nān Yār?*, which he edited and compiled from the earlier dialogue version containing thirty questions and answers.

The manuscript was found bound along with various printed booklets by and on Sri Bhagavan published between the years 1924 and 1930. It was kept in Sri Bhagavan's Hall for His personal use and reference.

In the facsimile which we reproduce here, the first page is of the actual size of the original manuscript. The remaining twelve pages are reproduced in a reduced size for convenience of printing.

This essay version of *Nān Yār?* was first published in 1927 or 1928 in a booklet entitled *Upadesa Mozhigal* together with the two other works composed by Sri Bhagavan in 1927, *Upadesa Undiyar* and *Anma-Viddhai*. The booklet was later attached as an appendix to a small Tamil biography of Sri Bhagavan by Iswara Swami, entitled *Sri Ramana Maharshi Charitam*, published in 1928. Although one

### Appeal

#### Upadesa Mozhigal

*Anyone possessing a copy of this booklet, either as a separate book or as an appendix to Sri Ramana Maharshi Charitam, is requested to send us xerox copy of the same for preservation in our archives.*

#### Nān Yār?

*Anyone possessing editions of Nān Yār? (either question-and-answer or essay version) printed prior to 1942 is requested to send a xerox of the same to Sri Ramanasramam for our archives.*

copy of this book is contained in our archives, the appendix is missing. We therefore have no printed copy of this important earliest edition of the essay version of *Nān Yār?*



(உபதேச மொழிகள்.)

நானூர்?

சுகல ஜீவர்களும் துக்கமென்பதின் றி  
எப்போதும் சுகமாயிருக்க விரும்புவதா  
வும். யாவருக்கும் தன்னிடத்திலேயே பரம  
பிரியமிருப்பதாவும். பிரியத்திற்கு சுகமே  
காரணமாதலாவும் மனமற்ற நித்திரயில்  
தன்மனுபவிக்கும் தன் சபாவமரண அச்ச  
கத்தை யடைவத தன்னித நானூர்தல்வே  
ண்டும். அதற்கு நானூர்? அன்னும் நான  
விசாரமே முக்கிய சாதனம்.

நானூர்? ஸப்ததாதுக்களாலாகிய ஸ்  
தூலதேகம் நானன்று. சப்த ஸ்பரிசு  
பூப ரஸ கந்தமென்னும் பஞ்ச வி  
ஷயங்களையும் தனித்தனியே அறி  
தின்ற சூரோத்திரம் துவக்கு சுகூ  
ஸ் ஜிஹ்வை கிராணமென்கிற ஞா  
னேந்திரியங்களேந்தும் நானன்று.  
வசனம் கமனம் தானம் மலவிசர்ஜன  
னம் ஆளந்தித்தல் எனனும் ஐந்து தொ  
ழில்களையும் செய்கின்ற வாக்ரு பாதம்  
பாணி பாயு உபஸ்தம் எனனும் க  
ன்மேந்திரியங்களேந்தும் நானன்று. ச  
வாஸர்தி ஐந்தொழில்களையும் செய்கி  
ன்ற பிராணதி பஞ்சவாயுக்களும் நா  
னன்று. நினைக்கின்ற மனமும் நானன்று.  
சர்வ விஷயங்களும் சர்வ தொழில்க  
ளமற்று விஷயவாசனைகளுடன் மாத்தி  
ரம் பொருந்தியிருக்கும் அஞ்ஞானமும்

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நானன்று. மெந்தீதொல்லியயாவும்  
 நானல்ல நானல்ல வவன்று தொழைய  
 து தனித்துநின்றும் அறிவே நானன்று  
 வின் தொழும் உத்திதானந்தும். சர்வ அ  
 றிவிற்றும் சர்வதொழிற்று நானானமரகிய  
 மனமடவதினும் ஆகத்தொழிற்று நானன்று  
 வித ஸரம்ப நானும் பரஸ்பலாழிய து  
 ஷ்டான ரஜஸூலும் நானடாகாந்து  
 து போலதந்திதமான இகத்தொழிற்று  
 னாலையி அறிவிடான தொழும் தர்  
 ன முண்டாகாது மனமென்பது அந்த  
 தொழும்புதின்னா ஓர் அந்திதவசத்தி .  
 அது தகவ நினைவுகளையும் தொழுவ  
 க்கின்றது. நினைவுகளையெல்லாம் நீக்கி  
 பார்த்தின்ற போது தனியாய் மனமென்  
 னோர் பொருளில்லா துதயால் நினைவே  
 மனதின்மொழும். நினைவுகளைத் தவிர்ந்து  
 ஆகவென்றோர் பொருள் மனம் அன்னிய  
 மாயில்லை. தாக்கத்தில் நினைவுகளில்லை  
 ஆகமும் இல்லை. ஆகர தொழும்புதின்னா  
 நினைவுகளை; ஆகமும் மெண்டு திவந்தி  
 படுகின்ற அப்படித் தன்னிடமிருந்து வெ  
 ளியில் நினைவுகளை தவிர்த்து மறுபடியும்  
 தன்னும் திருந்துகொள்ளுகிறதோ அ  
 ப்படியே மனமும் தன்னிடத்திலிருந்து  
 ஆகத்தனை தொழுவதித்து மறுபடியும்  
 தன்னிடமே ஒருங்கிக்கொள்ளுகிறது.  
 மனம் ஆத்மதொழும்புதின்னா வெளி  
 சிப்பமும்பொது ஆகத்தொழும்பும். ஆ  
 தையால் ஆகம் தொழும்புதொழும் தொ  
 ளும் தொன்றது; தொழும்பு தொன்றும்  
 (பிரகாசிக்கும்) பொது ஆகம் தொன்றது.

மனதின் தொழும்புதின் விதாரித்து  
 தொண்டல-பொருள் தானே மனமா  
 ய்ப்படியும். தானேயுத்து ஆதும் தொழும்  
 மெ-மனம் எப்போதும் ஒரு துதலாத்  
 தையலுசரித்தென்றிக்கும்; தனியாய் நி  
 லலாது. மனமென்கூறும் சர்வமனமும்  
 ஆவனென்றும் தொல்லப்படுகிறது .  
 தித்த தொழும்புதின் நான் என்று தினம்பு  
 லதுவே அசேத மனமாம். தானேனதி  
 ர நினைவு தொழும்புதின் மெதுவில் எந்த  
 கிடத்தில் தொன்றுகின்ற தொன்று விசாரத்தால்  
 னிருதயத்தி வென்று தெரியவரும். அதுவே மன  
 தின் பிறப்பிடம். நான் நான் என்று கருதிக்கொ  
 ண்டிருந்தாலும் கூட அவ்விடத்தின் கொண்  
 டிப்பாய் விட்டுவிடும். மனதின் மென்றும் தினை  
 வுக் கொல்லாமலுந்திறும் நான் என்றும் நினை  
 வே முதல் நினைவு. இது எழுந்த பிறகே ப்னை  
 ய நினைவுக் கொடுக்கின்றன. தன்மை தொன்றி  
 ய பிறகே முன்னிலை படர்க்கைகள் தொன்றின்  
 றன. தன்மையின்மீ முன்னிலைப்படர்க்கை விரா .  
 நானுள்ளும் விசாரணையாலேயே மனமடங்  
 கும். நானுள்ளும் நினைவு மற்ற நினைவுகளை வே  
 ல்லாமழித்துப் பிணக்குகிடுதடிப்பால் முகவில்தா  
 னுமழியும். பிற னன்னங்கு கொழுந்தால் அவ  
 றறைப் தூர்த்தி பண்ணுவதற்கு எத்தனிடாமல் அ  
 வை யாருக்குண்டாயின? என்று விசாரிக்கவேண்  
 டும். எத்தனை எண்ணங்கள் எழினு மென்ன? இங்  
 கிறையைய ஒவ்வோ ரெண்ணமும் தினம்புமே  
 தே இது யாருக்குண்டாயிற்று என்று விசாரித்தால்  
 எனக்கு என்று தொன்றும். நானுள்ளும் விசாரித்

தால் மனம் தன் பிறப்பிடத்திற்குத் திரும்பிவிடும்.  
 எழுந்த எண்ணமும் அடங்கிவிடும். அப்படியும்புதும்  
 பழக மனதிற்குத் தன் பிறப்பிடத்திற்குத் திரும்பித் திரும்பு  
 சக்தி யதிகரிக்கின்றது. சூசும்மொன் மனம். முனை  
 அறிந்தியங்கள் வாயிலாய் வெளிப்படுமே போது ல்லா  
 மமான நாமபூயங்கள் தொன்றுதின்றன. ஹதயத்தி  
 தில் தற்கும் போது நாமபூயங்கள் மறைகின்றன. ம  
 னத்தை வெளி விடாமல் ஹிருதயத்தி ல் வைத்துத்  
 கொண் டிருப்பதற்குத்தான் அகமும் அல்லது அந்  
 தர்மமும் என்று பெயர். ஹிருதயத்திலிருந்து வெளி  
 விடுவதற்குத் தான் பஹிர்முக மென்று பெயர். இவ்  
 விதமாக மனம் ஹிருதயத்தின் றங்கவே. எல்லா  
 நினைவுகளுக்கும் முலமான நான் என்பது போய்  
 எப்பொழுது முன் தான் மாத்திரம் விளங்கும். நா  
 ன் என்றும் நினைவு ாகுதித்து மில்லா விடமே  
 தொழும்புமும். அதுவே மெனன மெனப்படுமே .  
 இவ்வாறு சும்மா விடுப்பதற்குத்தான் னானதிரு  
 டு பென்று பெயர். சும்மா விடுப்பதற்குத் மனதை  
 ஆத்ம தொழும்புதில் லயிதகச் செய்வதே. அன்றி  
 பிறர் கருத்தறிதல். முக்தாயலுணர்ந்தல். தாரிதசத்  
 தில் நடப்பன வறிதல் ஆகிய இவை னானதிரு  
 யாக மாட்டா .  
 யதார்த்தமா யுள்ள; ஆத்ம தொழும்புமொன்று.  
 ஆக ஆய் சர்வர்கள் அப்பியில் வெள்ளி யாவதி  
 கற்பனைகள். இவை முன்னும் ஏக காலத்திற்குள்ளே  
 ஏக காலத்தில் மறைகின்றன. தொழும்பும் இகம் ;  
 தொழும்பும் நான்; தொழும்பும் சர்வரன்; எல்  
 லாம் சிவ தொழும்பும்.  
 மனம் அடங்குவதற்கு விசாரணையைத்தவிர  
 வேறு திருந்த உபாயங்க எல்லை. மற்ற உபாயங்க  
 னினு லடக்கினால் மனம் அடங்குகிறு போகிறது

மறுபடியும் தினம்பிவிடும். பிராணயா  
 மத்தாலும் மனமடங்கும்; ஆனால் பிரா  
 ணைண்டங்கியிருக்கும் வரையில் மனம்  
 மடங்கியிருந்து பிராணை வெளிப்பட  
 டும் போது தானும் வெளிப்படும் வராத  
 னை வயத்தொழியலையும், மனத்திற்கும் பி  
 ராணைக்கும் பிறப்பிடமென்றே நினை  
 வே மனத்தின்மொழும். தானே என்றும்  
 நினைவே மனத்தின் முதல் நினைவு. அ  
 துவையகங்காரம்- அகங்கார மெங்கி  
 னுந்து உற்பத்தியோ, அங்கிருந்துதான்  
 முக்கம் தினம்பிவிடும். ஆகையால் மன  
 மடங்கும்போது பிராணமும், பிராணை  
 டும்போது மனமடங்கும். பிராணை  
 மனத்தின் ஸ்தலாலுபயமென்பதும். மர  
 ணைகாலம் வரையில் மனம் பிராணை  
 உடலில் வைத்துக்கொண்டிருந்து உட  
 ல் மறிக்கும்வகையில் அதனைக்கவ  
 ர்த்துக்கொண்டு போகின்றது. ஆகையால்  
 பிராணையாமம் மனத்தை யடக்க தகா  
 யமாபுதற்கு உபாயந்தி மனதொக்செ  
 ய்யாது.  
 பிராணையாமம் போலவே சூர்த்தி தி  
 யானம். மந்திரஜ்யம். ஆகாரஜ்யம்  
 மென்பவைகளும் மனத்தை யடக்கும்  
 சகாயங்களை. சூர்த்தி யானத்தாலும்,  
 மந்திர ஜ்யத்தாலும் மனம் ஏகங்கி  
 ரத்தையடைகிறது. சதா சலித்தக்கொ  
 ண்டிருக்கும் யானையின் துதிக்கையி  
 ல் ஒரு சங்கிலியைக்கொடுத்துதால் ஆய்  
 யரனை எப்படி வெள்ளைநாறுதால் பற்ற  
 ம வதைபே பற்றிக்கொண்டு செல்லு  
 யோ, அப்படியே சதா சலித்துக்கொ

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எனக்குத்தம் மனமும், ஊழலின் ஏதோ ஒரு நாமம் அல்லது ரூபத்திற் பழக் கினால் அனாதைய பற்றிக்கொண்டிருக்கும் மனமளவிற்ற நினைவுகளாய் விரிகின் றபடியால், ஒவ்வொரு நினைவும், அ திபலவினமாகப்போகின்றது. நினை வு எட நடங்கவடங்க ஏகாகிரத்தன்மை யடைந்து, அதனால் பலந்தையடை ந்த மனத்திற்கு ஆத்மவிதாரம் சுவ பமாய் சித்திக்கும். எல்லா நியமங் கனிவும்திறந்த மித லாத்வித ஆகார நியமத்தால் மனத்தின் ஸ்தவனும் வி ருத்தியாகி, ஆத்ம விசாரத்திற்கு சகா யமண்டாகிறது.

தொன்றுதொட்டு வருகின்ற விஷயவாச னைகள் அளவற்றளவாய்க் கடல்கள் போற் றுன்றினு மலையாயும் கொடுப த்யானம் திளம்பக் கிளம்ப அழிந்து விடும். அத்தனை வாழ்வைகளுமொ டிங்கி, ஏறாடுபமாத் திரமாயிருக்க முடியாமலென்னும் சந்தேகநினை வுக்கு மிடங்கொடாமல், கொடுபத்யா னத்தை விடாப்பிடியாய்ப் பிடிக்கவே ண்டும். ஒருவன் எவ்வளவு பாயியாயி ருந்தாலும், நான் பாயியாயிருக்கிறேன்; எப்படிக்க கடைத்தேறும் போகிறேனென் னிறேய்தி அழுதுகொண்டிருமல் தான் பாயி எனது மெண்ணத்தை யு மறவேயொழிந்து தொருபத்யான த்தி வாக்கொருள்ளவனாக

விருந்தால் அவன் நிச்சயமாய் உற ப்படுவான்.

மனத்தின்பண் எதுவரையில் விஷய வாசனைகளிருக்கின்றனவோ, அதுவரை யில் நானு ரென்னும் விகாரணயம் வேண்டும். நினைவுகள் தோன்றத் தோன் ற அப்போதைக்கப்போதே அவைகளையு ல்லாம் உற்பத்திசந்தானத்திலேயே வி காணியால் நலிவிக்கவேண்டும். அ ன்னையத்தை நாடாதிருந்தல் வைராக்கி யம் அல்லது நிராசை. தன்னிலிடாதி ருத்தல் ஞானம். உண்மையி லிரண்டு மொன்றே, முத்துக்குளிப்போர் தம்மிடை யிற் கல்லிக் கட்டிக்கொண்டு முத்திக்கு க டலடியிற் கிடக்கும் முத்தை எப்படி எ டிக்கிறார்களோ, அப்படியே குல்வொருவ றும் வைராக்கியத்துடன் தன்னுள்ளா ழ்ந்து முத்தி ஆத்மமுத்தை யடையலாம். ஒருவன் தான் கொடுத்த யடையும் வரையி ல், நிரந்தர கொடுப ஸ்மரணைகைகைய நவானுயின் அதுவொன்றேயாதும். கோ ட்டடைந்துள் எதிரிகளுள்வகரையில், அ திலிருந்து வெளியே வந்துகொண்டேயி ருப்பார்கள். வர வர அவர்களையெல்லா ம் வெட்டிக்கொண்டேயிருந்தால் கோ ட்டடை கைவசப்படும.

கடவனும் ஒருவம் உண்மையில் வேற ஸ்கர். புலவாயிதப்பட்டது எவ்வாறு

தீரும்பாடுதோ, அவ்வாறே ஒருவினையு பார்வையிற் பட்டவர்கள் அவரால் ர ஷிக்கப்படுவரே யன்றி யொருக்காலும் ளைவிடப்படார். எனினும் ஒரு கட்டி ய வழிப்படி தவிர்த்து நடக்கவேண்டும்.

ஆர்னம் சிந்தனைகளைத் தவிர வேறு சிந்த னை கிளம்புவதற்குக் கற்று மிடங்கொடா மல் ஆத்ம நிஷ்டாபரான யிருப்பதே தன்னை ஈசனுக்களிப்பதாம். ஈசன் உ யரில் எவ்வளவு பாரத்தைப் போட்டாலும், அவ்வளவுவயம் அவர் வகித்துக் கொள் றாகிறார். சகல காரியங்களுமாய் ஒரு ப ரமேசுவரசத்தி நடத்திக்கொண்டிருக்க கிறபடியால், நாழித்தந்தகங்கியிராம ல், இப்படிச் செய்யவேண்டும் அப்ப டிச் செய்யவேண்டுமென்று ஸதா சி ந்திப்பதென்; புகைகவண்டி கலபாரங்க ளையும் தாங்கிக் கொண்டுபோவது தெரி ந்திருந்தும், அதிலேதிகொண்டுபோகும் நாம் நம்மடைய சிவிய மேட்டையைப் மதித் போட்டுவிட்டு சுக்மாயிராமல் அ தை நமது தலையிறாங்கிக் கொண்டு ஏ ன் கைட்டப்படவேண்டும்.

சுகமென்பது ஆத்மாவின் கொடுபமே. சுகமும் ஆத்மகொடுபமும் வேறன்று. ஆ த்மசுகம் ஒன்றேயுள்ளது. அதுவே ஸ த்யம். பரபஞ்சம் பொருள் ஒருவரு ள்லது சுகமென்பது கிடையாது. அலை கனிவிருந்த சுகம் கிடையப்படுக தாம் நமது அவிவகத்தால் நினைக்கின்றும், மனம் வெளியில் வரும்போது அக்க

த்தை யனுபவிக்கிறது. உண்மையில் ந மது எண்ணங்கள் பூர்த்தியாகும் போ டெல்லாம் அது தன்னுடைய பதாந்தா னத்திற்குத் திரும்பி ஆத்மசுகத்தை அ னுபவிக்கிறது. அப்படியே தூக்கம், சமா தி, மூர்க்கை காலங்களிலும், இக்கித்த பொருள் கிடைக்கிற போதும், ஸுத்த பொருளுக்க்கொண்டாகும் போதும் ம னம் அந்நர்முதலாகி ஆத்மசுகத்தை அனுபவிக்கிறது. உதாரணத்திலும் பூதமர க ஓய்வின்றி யலுகிறது. மரத்தடியி ல் நிழல் சுகமாயிருக்கிறது. வெளியி ல் சூரிய வெப்பம் கொடுமையா யிருக் கிறது. வெளியிலெவ்வொருவன் நிழலி ன் சென்று குளிர்க்கியடைகிறான். கிதி து திரத்திற்குப்பின் வெளிக்கிளம்பி வெ ப்பத்தின் கொடுமைக்கொற்றது, மதுபடி யும் மரத்தடிக்கு வருகின்றான். இவ்வா ளு நிழலினின்று வெயிலிற் போவதுமர வெ யிலினின்று நிழலிற் செல்லுவதுமா யிரு க்கிறான். இப்படிச் செய்கிறவன் அவி வேகி. ஆனால் விவேகியோ நிழலெயிலி ன் நீங்கான். அப்படியே ஞானியின் மனங் கும் பிரம்மத்தைவிட்டு நீங்குவதில்லை. ஆ னால் அருஞானியின் மனமோ பிரபஞ்சத் திவழிந்து துக்கப்படுவதும் விதிது தந ரம் பிரம்மத்திழ்ந்துதிரும்பி சுக்மடை வதுமாயிருக்கிறது. ஈசமென்பது நினைவு ஜகம் மறையும்போது அந்நாவது நினைவு தற்போது மனம் ஆனந்தத்தை யனுப.

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விக்கித்து. ஜகம் தோன்றும் போது அது துக்கத்தை யடையலிக்கின்றது.

இச்சகா ஸங்கல்ப யதனமின்றி எழுந்த சூத்திரஞ் சன்னிதி மாத்திரத்தில் காந்தக்கல் அக்திவிசையக் கங்குவதும், தீர்வுவழியும், உலகைர் தந்தம் காரியங்களிற் பிரவர்த்தித்து இயற்றி யடங்குவதும்; காந்தத்தின் முன் உலகி சேஷிப்பதும் போல; ஸங்கல்ப ரக்திராவிருஷம் என சன்னிதான விசேஷி மாத்திரத்தால் நடக்கும் முத்தொழில் அல்லது பஞ்சகிருத்தியங்கட் டுட்பட்ட ஜிவர்க ள்தந்தம் கர்மாணசாரம் சேஷித்த தடங்குகின்றனர். அன்றி அவர் ஸங்கல்ப ஸகிரதர்ஸர்; ஒரு கரும மலரை யொட்டாது. அது ஸாக கருமங்கள் சூரியனை யொட்டாததும்; ஏனைய சகர்சுதங்களின் குணகுணங்கள் வியாபகமான சூகாயத்தை யொட்டாததும் போலும்.

எந்நூலிலும் ழந்தி யடைவதற்கு மனத்தை யடக்கவேண்டு மென்று சொல்லப்பட்ட ழுள்ள பயியால் மனோதிகா கமே நூல்களின் மடிவான கருத்து எ ன்றவித்து கொண்டபின்பு நூல்களைய எளிதிறிப் படிப்பதற்கு பயனிலியே. மனிதனை யடக்கவதற்குத் தன்னை

யாரென்று விசாரிக்கவேண்டுமெ டையல்லாமல் எப்படி நூல்களில் விசாரிப்பது. தன்னைத் தன்னுடைய குணக் கண்ணுத் குண யறியவேண்டும். சாமன் தன்னை ராமனென்றறியக் கண்ணாடி வேண்டும். தான் பஞ்சகோகங்களுக் குன்றிடுப்பது. நூல்களே அவற்றிற் று வெளிபிலிருப்பவை. ஆகையால் பஞ்சகோகங்களுயும் தீக்கி விசாரிக்க வேண்டிய தன்னை நூல்களில் விசாரிப்பது வீணே. பந்தத்திலிருக்கும் தான் யாரென்று விசாரித்து தன் யதார்த்த கொட்பத்தைத் தெரிந்து கொள்வதே முத்தி சகாகாலமும் மனத்தை ஆத்மாவில் வைத்திருப்பதற்குத் தான் ஆத்ம விசார மென்று பெயர். தீயான மோ தன்னை வச்சிதானந்த பிரம்மமாக பாவிப்பது. கற்றவை யனைத்தையும் ஒரு காலத்தில் மறக்கவேண்டி வரும-

குப்பையைக் கூட்டித் தள்ளவேண்டிய ஒருவன் அதையாராய்வதா லெப்படிப்பயனில்லையே அப்படியே தன்னை யறியவேண்டிய ஒருவன் தன்னை மறைத்துக்கொண்டிருக்கும் தத் திவகங்களே நனையும் சேர்ந்துத் தள்ளிவிடாமல் அவை கித்தினையென்ப கணக்கிடுவதாஸும்; அவற்றின் குணங்களை யாராய்வதா.

வம் பயனிலியே. பிரயஞ்சுந்தையொரு சொப்பனத்தைப் போலெண்ணிக் கொள்ளவேண்டும்.

ஜாக்ரம் தீர்க்கும். சொப்பனம் கிணிக மென்பது தவிர்வது பேதமில்லே. ஜாக்ரத்தில் நடக்கும் விவகாரங்க ளெல்லாம் எவ்வளவு உண்மையா சூத் தோன்றுகின்றனவோ அய்வளவு உண்மை யாகவே சொப்பனத் தில் நடக்கும் விவகாரங்களும் அக்காலத்திற் ழுன்றுகின்றன. சொப்பனத்தில் மனம் லெறெரு தேகத்தை யடுத்துக் கொள்ளுகிறது ஜாக்ரம்; சொப்பன மிரண்டிலும் நினைவுகளும் நாமருபங்களும் எககாலத்தி ல் திகழ்கின்றன.

நல்ல மனமென்றும் கெட்ட மனமென்று மிரண்டுமென்கள்ளிலி; மனமொன்றே. வாக்ஷைகளை சுப்பமென்று அசுப்பமென்று மிரண்டுவிதம். மிணம் சுப்பவாக்ஷை வயத்தாய் நித்கும் போது நல்லமன மென்றும்; அசுப்பவாக்ஷை வயத்தாய் நித்கும் போது கெட்ட மன மென்றும் சொல்லப்படு ம். பிறர் எவ்வளவு கெட்டவர்களாய் தோன்றினும் அவர்களை வெறுத்தலாகாது. விருப்பு வெறுப்பு களிர்ண

டும் வெறுக்கத்தக்கன. பிரயஞ்சு விஷயங்களி லுத்கமாய் மனத்தை விடக்கூடாது. சாத்நியமரணவரையிலு; அன்னியர் தாரியத்தில் பிரவேசிக்கக்கூடாது. பிறகுக்கொருவன் கொடுப்பதெல்லாம் தனக்கே கொடுத்துக்கொ ள்ளுகிறார். இவ்வண்மையை யறிந்தால் ளவன்தான் கொடாதொழிவான்.

தானேந்நதால் சகலம பெழும். தானடங்கினால் சகலம மடங்கும். எவ்வளவு சுகெவ்வளவு தாழ்ந்து நடக்கி ழுமோ அவ்வளவுகிதவ்வளவு நன்மை யுண்டு. மனத்தை யடக்கிக்கொண்டிருந்தால்; எங்கெயிருந்தாலு மிகுக்கலாம்.

முற்றிற்று.

\* \* \* \* \*

# Annamalai Swami



**Annamalai Swami came to Bhagavan in 1928. After a brief spell working as his attendant, Bhagavan gave him a new job, supervising all the building projects in the ashram. Between 1928 and 1938, working directly under Bhagavan, he supervised the construction of the cowshed, the *Veda Patasala*, the dining room, the storeroom, the old office block (now used as the book-packing room), the dispensary and the large revetment on the north side of the ashram.**

**I**N 1938 an experience he had with Bhagavan changed the course of his life:

I went to Bhagavan's bathroom to help him with his morning bath. Madhava Swami and I gave him the usual oil bath and massage. When the bath was over, Madhava Swami asked a question: 'Bhagavan, the people who take *ganja lehiyam* [an ayurvedic medicine whose principal ingredient is cannabis] experience some kind of *ananda*. What is the nature of this *ananda*? Is it the same *ananda* the scriptures speak of?'

Bhagavan replied, 'Eating this *ganja* is a very bad habit'. Then, laughing loudly, he came over to me, hugged me and called out, 'Ananda! Ananda! This is how these *ganja*-taking people behave!'

It was not a brief hug. Madhava Swami told me later that he held me tightly for about two minutes. After the first few seconds I completely lost all awareness of my body and the world. Initially, there was a feeling of happiness and bliss, but this soon gave way to a state in which there were no feelings and no experiences. I did not lose consciousness, I just ceased to be aware of anything that was going on around me. I remained in this state for about fifteen minutes. When I recovered my usual world-consciousness, I was standing alone in the bathroom. Madhava Swami and Bhagavan had long since departed for breakfast. I had not seen them open the door and leave, nor had I heard the breakfast bell.

This experience completely changed my life. As soon as I recovered normal consciousness I knew that my working life at Sri Ramanasramam had come to an end.<sup>1</sup> I knew that henceforth I would be living outside the ashram and spending most of my time in meditation.

Bhagavan approved of his decision to leave, and within a few hours of having had the experience Annamalai Swami had established himself in Palakottu, the *sadhu* colony which adjoined the ashram. Bhagavan encouraged him to build a house there and even helped him by

advising on its design and construction. Annamalai Swami has lived there ever since. In fact, he has not left Tiruvannamalai, even for a single day, since 1938.

Bhagavan told him to lead a quiet, reclusive life, and to meditate continuously on the Self. Taking this to be his Guru's *upadesa*, he spent the succeeding years trying to stabilise in the experience of the Self, a brief glimpse of which had been given him by Bhagavan during their encounter in the bathroom. After many years of arduous and unremitting effort, he says that he was able to stabilise himself in Self-awareness to such an extent that the experience is now continuous and effortless.

In the last few years many devotees have started to visit him, seeking spiritual guidance. Though he does not encourage visitors, he is, health permitting, always willing to see people who want to talk about Bhagavan's teaching or the practice of meditation. The following exchanges, recorded in 1987, are typical of the many that have taken place in his ashram in the last few years.

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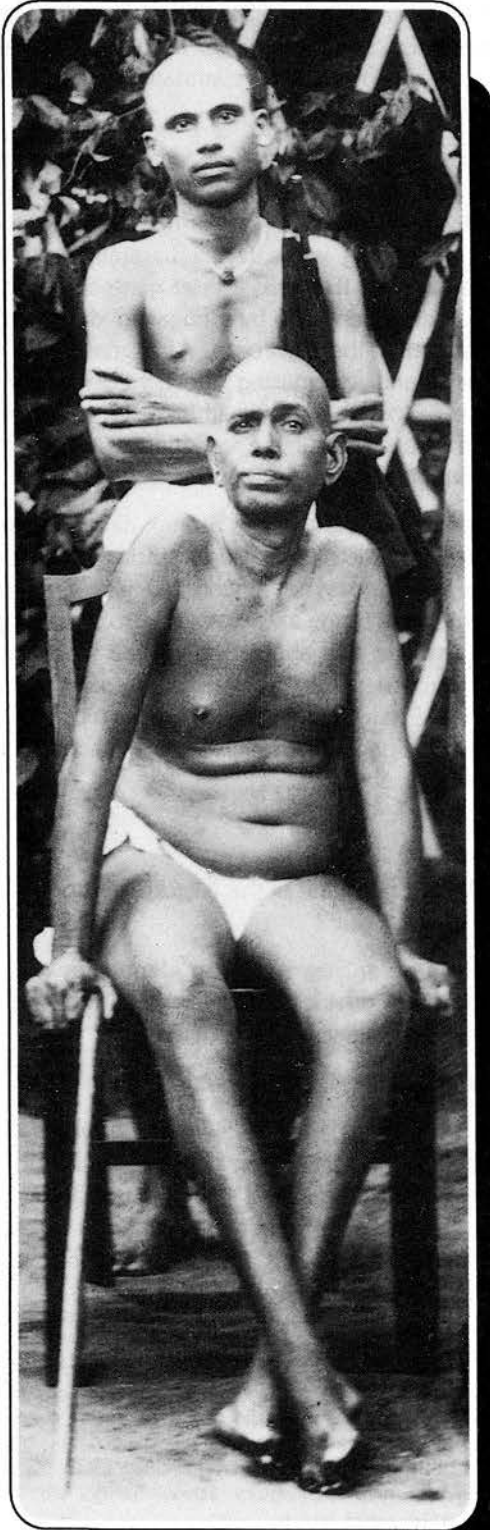
**Question :** What is the easiest way to be free of 'the little self'?

**Annamalai Swami :** Stop identifying with it. If you can convince yourself, 'This little self is not really me', it will just disappear.

**Q :** But how to do this?

**AS :** The 'little self' is something which only appears to be real. If you understand that it has no real existence it will disappear, leaving behind it the experience of the real and only Self. Understand that it has no real existence and it will stop troubling you.

<sup>1</sup> In 1942, following a request from Bhagavan, he came back to the ashram and did one more major construction job: the construction of a dispensary. Though he was not a full-time ashram worker after 1938, he continued to help with minor ashram works whenever Bhagavan asked him to.



*Sri Bhagavan and Annamalai Swami*

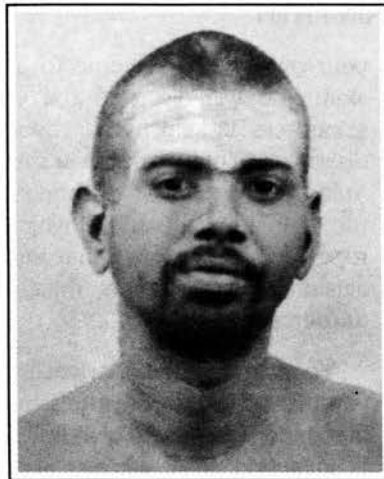
Consciousness is universal. There is no limitation or 'little self' in it. It is only when we identify ourselves with and limit ourselves to the body and the mind that this false self is born. If, through enquiry, you go to the source of this 'little self', you find that it dissolves into nothingness.

**Q :** But I am very accustomed to feel 'I am this little self'. I cannot break this habit merely by thinking 'I am not this little self'.

**AS :** This 'little self' will only give way to the real Self if you meditate constantly. You cannot wish it away with a few stray thoughts. Try to remember the analogy of the rope which looks like a snake in twilight. If you see the rope as a snake, the real nature of the rope is hidden from you. If you only see the rope, the snake is not there. Not only that, you know that there never was a snake there. When you have that clear and correct perception that the snake never at any time existed, the question of how to kill the snake disappears. Apply this analogy to the 'little self' that you are worrying about. If you can understand that this 'little self' never at any time had any existence outside your imagination, you will not be concerned about ways and means of getting rid of it.

**Q :** It is all very clear but I feel that I need some help. I am not sure that I can generate this understanding by myself.

**AS :** The desire for assistance is part of your problem. Don't make the mistake of imagining that there is some goal to be reached or attained. If you think like this you will start looking for methods to practise and people to help you. This just perpetuates the problem you are trying to end. Instead, cultivate the strong awareness, 'I am the Self. I am That. I am *Brahman*. I am everything.' You don't need any methods to get rid of the wrong ideas you have about yourself. All you have to do is stop believing them. The best way to do this is to replace them with ideas which more accurately reflect the real state of affairs. If you think and meditate, 'I am the Self', it will do you a lot more good than thinking, 'I am the little self. How can I get rid of this little self?'



Heat is allayed by the cool moon, poverty (is removed) by the wish-fulfilling tree and sin by (bathing in) the Ganges. But all three are removed by the benign look of the peerless Sages."

- Sri Maharshi in *Supplement to Forty Verses*, v. 4

The Self is always attained, it is always realised. It is not something that you have to seek, reach or discover. Your *vasanas* and all the wrong ideas you have about yourself are blocking and hiding the experience of the real Self. If you don't identify with the wrong ideas, your Self-nature will not be hidden from you.

You said that you needed help. If your desire to gain a proper understanding of your real nature is intense enough, help will automatically come. If you want to generate an awareness of your real nature, you will be immeasurably helped by having contact with a *jnani*. The power and grace which a *jnani* radiates quiets the mind and automatically eliminates the wrong ideas you have about yourself. You can make progress by having *sat sangh* of a realised Guru and by constant spiritual practice. But the Guru cannot do everything for you. If you want to give up the limiting habits of many lifetimes, you must practise constantly.

Most people take the appearance of the snake in the rope to be reality. Acting on their misperceptions, they think up many different ways of killing the snake. But they can never succeed in getting rid of the snake until they first give up the idea that there really is a snake there. People who want to kill or control the mind have the same problem: they imagine that there is a mind which needs to be controlled and then take drastic steps to beat it into submission. If, instead, they generate the understanding that

there is no such thing as mind, all their problems would come to an end. You must generate the conviction, 'I am the all-pervasive consciousness in which all bodies and minds in the world are appearing and disappearing. I am that consciousness which remains unchanged and unaffected by these appearances and disappearances.' Stabilise yourself in that conviction. That is all you need to do.

Bhagavan sometimes told a story about a man who wanted to bury his shadow in a pit. He dug the pit and stood in such a position that his shadow was on the bottom of it. The man then tried to bury it by covering it with earth. Each time he threw some soil in the hole, the shadow appeared on top of it. Of course, he never succeeded in burying the shadow. Many people behave like this when they meditate. They take the mind to be real, try to fight it and kill it, and always fail. These fights against the mind are all mental activities which strengthen the mind instead of weakening it. If you want to get rid of the mind, all you have to do is understand that it is 'not me'. Cultivate the awareness 'I am the immanent consciousness'. When that understanding becomes firm, the non-existent mind will not trouble you.

Q : I don't think that repeating 'I am not the mind, I am consciousness' will ever convince me that I am not the mind. It will just be another thought going on within the mind. If I could experience, even for a moment, what it is like to



be without the mind, the conviction would automatically come. I think that one second of experiencing consciousness as it really is would be more convincing than several years of mental repetitions.

AS : Every time you go to sleep you have the experience of being without a mind. You cannot deny that you exist while you are asleep and you cannot deny that your mind is not functioning while you are in dreamless sleep. This daily experience should convince you that it is possible to continue your existence without a mind. Of course, you do not have the experience of full consciousness while you are asleep, but if you think about what happens during this state you should come to understand that your existence, the continuity of your being, is in no way dependent on your mind or your identification with it. When the mind reappears every morning you instantly jump to the conclusion, 'This is the real me.' If you reflect on this preposition for some time you will see how absurd it is. If what you really are only exists when the mind is present, you have to accept that you didn't exist while you were asleep. No one will accept such an absurd conclusion. If you analyse your alternating states you will discover that it is your direct experience that you exist whether you are awake or asleep. You will also discover that the mind only becomes active while you are waking or dreaming. From these simple daily experiences it should be easy to understand that the mind is something that comes and goes. Your existence is not wiped out each time the mind ceases to function. I am not telling you some abstruse philosophical theory. I am telling you something that you can validate by direct experience in any twenty-four hour period of your life.

Take these facts, which you can discover by directly experiencing them, and investigate them a little more. When the mind appears every morning, don't jump to the usual conclusion, 'This is me. These thoughts are mine.' Instead, watch these thoughts come and go without identifying with them in any way. If you can resist the impulse to claim each and every thought as

your own, you will come to a startling conclusion: you will discover that you are the consciousness in which the thoughts appear and disappear. You will discover that this thing called 'mind' only exists when thoughts are allowed to run free. Like the snake which appears in the rope, you will discover that the mind is only an illusion which appears through ignorance or misperception.

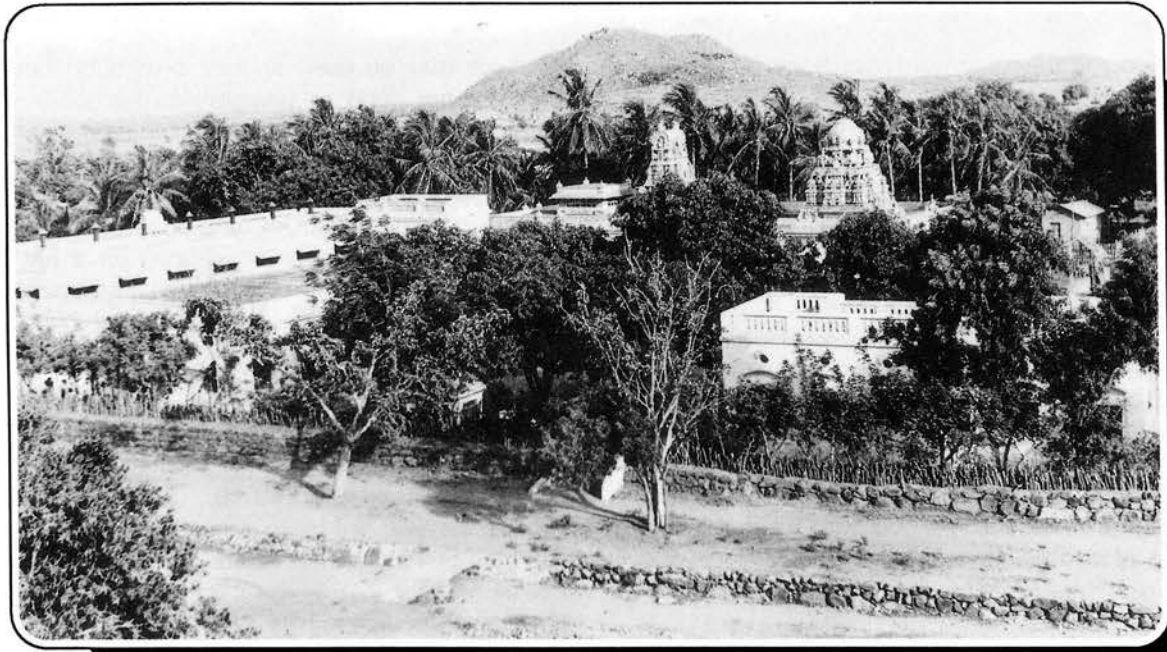
You want some experience that will convince you that what I am saying is true. You can have that experience if you give up your life-long habit of inventing an 'I' which claims all thoughts as 'mine'. Be conscious of yourself as consciousness alone, watch all the thoughts come and go. Come to the conclusion, by direct experience, that you are really consciousness itself, not its ephemeral contents.

Clouds come and go in the sky, but the appearance and disappearance of the clouds don't affect the sky. Your real nature is like the sky, like space. Just remain like the sky and let thought-clouds come and go. If you cultivate this attitude of indifference towards the mind, gradually you will detach yourself from it.

Q : Bhagavan said that repeating 'I am the Self' is an aid to enquiry, but it does not constitute the enquiry itself.

AS : The meditation, 'I am not the body or the mind, I am the immanent Self' is a great aid for as long as one is not able to do self-enquiry properly or constantly. Bhagavan said, 'Keeping the mind in the Heart is self-enquiry'. If you cannot do this by asking 'Who am I?' or by taking the 'I'-thought back to its source, then meditation on the awareness 'I am the all-pervasive Self' is a great aid.

Bhagavan often said that we should read and study the *Ribhu Gita* regularly. In the *Ribhu Gita* it is said, 'That *bhavana* "I am not the body, I am not the mind, I am *Brahman*, I am everything" is to be repeated again and again until this becomes the natural state'. Bhagavan sat with us every day while we chanted extracts from the *Ribhu Gita* which affirmed the reality



*Other than the temple towers, buildings seen were built by Annamalai Swami*

of the Self. It is true that he said that these repetitions are only an aid to self-enquiry, but they are a very powerful aid.

By practising this way the mind becomes more and more attuned with the reality. when the mind has become purified by this practice, it is easier to take it back to its source and keep it there. When one is able to abide in the Self directly, one doesn't need aids like this. But if this is not possible, these practices can definitely help one.

**Q :** What is the correct way to pursue self-enquiry?

**AS :** Bhagavan has said, 'When thoughts arise, stop them from developing by enquiring "To whom is this thought coming?" as soon as the thought appears. What does it matter if many thoughts keep coming up? Enquire into their origin or find out who has the thoughts and sooner or later the flow of thoughts will stop.' This is how self-enquiry should be practised.

When Bhagavan spoke like this he sometimes used the analogy of a besieged fort. If one systematically closes off all entrances to such a fort

and then picks off the occupants one by one as they try to come out, sooner or later the fort will be empty. Bhagavan said that we should apply these same tactics to the mind. How to go about doing this? Seal off the entrances and exits to the mind by not reacting to rising thoughts or sense impressions. Don't let new ideas, judgments, likes, dislikes, etc. enter the mind, and don't let rising thoughts flourish and distract your attention. When you have sealed off the mind in this way, challenge each emerging thought as it appears by asking, 'Where have you come from?' or 'Who is the person who is having this thought?' If you can do this continuously, with full attention, new thoughts will appear momentarily and then disappear. If you can maintain the siege for long enough, a time will come when no more thoughts arise; or if they do, they will only be fleeting, undistracting images on the periphery of consciousness. In that thought-free state you will begin to experience yourself as consciousness, not as mind or body.

However, if you relax your vigilance, even for a few seconds, and allow new thoughts to escape and develop unchallenged, the siege will be

lifted and the mind will regain some or all of its former strength.

In a real fort the occupants need a continuous supply of food and water to hold out during a siege. When the supplies run out, the occupants must surrender or die. In the fort of the mind, the occupants, which are thoughts, need a thinker to pay attention to them and indulge in them. If the thinker withholds his attention from rising thoughts, or challenges them before they have a chance to develop, the thoughts will all die of starvation. You must challenge them by repeatedly asking, 'Who am I? Who is this person who is having these thoughts?' If the challenge is to be effective you must make it before the rising thought has had a chance to develop into a stream of thoughts.

Mind is only a collection of thoughts and the thinker who thinks them. The thinker is the 'I'-thought, the primal thought which rises from the Self before all others and says, 'I am this body'. When you have eradicated all thoughts except for the thinker himself by ceaseless enquiry or by refusing to give them any attention, the 'I'-thought sinks into the Heart and surrenders, leaving behind it only an awareness of consciousness. This surrender will only take place when the 'I'-thought has ceased to identify with rising thoughts. While there are still stray thoughts which attract you or evade your attention, the 'I'-thought will always be directing its attention outwards rather than inwards. The purpose of self-enquiry is to make the 'I'-thought move inwards, towards the Self. This will happen automatically as soon as you cease to be interested in any of your thoughts.

Q : Many people find self-enquiry very difficult. Even most of Bhagavan's devotees seem to follow a *bhakti* path. If one cannot do enquiry successfully, should one first purify the mind with *japa*?

AS : No. If you have some interest in the path of self-enquiry, you should follow it even if you feel that you are not very good at it. If you want to do self-enquiry effectively and properly you should stick to that method alone. Other

methods may be good in their own right, but they are not good as preparations for self-enquiry. If you are serious about becoming a good violin player, you take lessons from a good teacher and practise as much as you can. If you encounter some difficulties, you don't switch to the *nadaswaram* [a type of clarinet] for a few months. You stay with your chosen instrument and you keep practising until you get it right. The best preparation for self-enquiry is self-enquiry.

Q : Going back to your advice to think 'I am the Self': we are accustomed to make distinctions between things. You say, 'Meditate that you are the Self'. If I try to generate this feeling, 'I am the Self', it will not be the real thing; it will just be another idea in the mind. Can thinking about this idea really help me?

AS : When I say, 'Meditate on the Self', I am asking you to be the Self, not think about it. Be aware of what remains when thoughts stop. Be aware of the consciousness that is the origin of all your thoughts. Be that consciousness. Feel that that is what you really are. If you do this, you are meditating on the Self. But if you cannot stabilise in that consciousness because your *vasanas* are too strong and too active, it is beneficial to hold on to the thought 'I am the Self'. If you meditate in this way, you are not cooperating with your *vasanas*, the ones that are blocking your Self-awareness. If you don't cooperate with your *vasanas*, sooner or later they are bound to leave you.

Q : When I read the Ramanasramam literature, Bhagavan often appears to be very strict and stern. Was Bhagavan as kind to you as you have been to us?

AS : Different people elicited different responses from him. In my case he was always kind and considerate. But you should not judge Bhagavan by his behaviour. If he got angry with people or ignored them, it was always for their own good. He was transmitting grace through his anger as well as through his kindness.

Q : Bhagavan's body has gone now. I know intellectually that he is the Self and that he is

everywhere but I still sometimes wish that I could have had the good fortune of sitting in his physical presence. I know that the body is ultimately not important, but I would feel so happy and secure if I knew that I could go and talk or just sit with Bhagavan every time I had a problem.

**AS :** Everything you see is Bhagavan's body. The guiding presence that you desire is shining through all these forms and animating them. Don't be attached to Bhagavan's form or body. The real Bhagavan is beyond form and beyond death.

Though water flows through the mouth of a stone tiger statue, everyone knows that it is not coming from the tiger. We all know that it is coming from the reservoir. Similarly, Bhagavan now speaks through everyone who knows and experiences him as he really is.

**Q :** You often say that *sat sangh* is important. Can I have *sat sangh* of Bhagavan even

though he is now dead? I am asking this because I once had a very powerful experience of his presence while I was in Switzerland. At that time Bhagavan had been dead for many years.

**AS :** Bhagavan is at all times and in all places. Since he is the Self and not any particular form, it is of little importance that the body which we took to be Bhagavan is now dead. Radio waves can be received anywhere. If you tune yourself to Bhagavan's frequency, which means abiding in the Self, you can be aware of him broadcasting his grace wherever you are.

There is never any separation from Bhagavan. Every atom in the material universe is Bhagavan. Every act which happens in the world is done by Bhagavan alone. Every being, every form, is Bhagavan's form. When you are clearly attuned to Bhagavan you will experience clarity and peace. You will receive guidance wherever you are.

**A group of respectable Coorg ladies was in the hall. One of them asked: I have received a *mantra*. People frighten me saying that it may have unforeseen results if repeated. It is only *Pranava*. So I seek advice. May I repeat it? I have considerable faith in it.**

**Maharshi:** Certainly, it should be repeated with faith.

**D:** Will it do by itself? Or can you kindly give me any further instructions?

**M:** The object of *mantra japa* is to realise that the same *japa* is already going on in oneself even without effort. The oral *japa* becomes mental and the mental *japa* finally reveals itself as being eternal. The *mantra* is the person's real nature. That is also the state of realisation.

**D:** Can the bliss of *samadhi* be gained thus?

**M:** The *japa* becomes mental and finally reveals itself as the Self. That is *samadhi*.

— Talks. No. 527.

*A Centenary Offering*

# Paramahansa Yogananda



By

Dr. Susunaga Weeraperuma

Paramahansa Yogananda was born in 1893, the same year that Swami Vivekananda, the great disciple of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, attended the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago. Just as Swami Vivekananda took the West by storm with his gift of the *Sanatana Dharma*, so too did Paramahansa Yogananda twenty-seven years later, when he came to America to serve as India's delegate to the International Congress of Religious Liberals.

Born into an upper middle class Bengali family, Mukunda Lal Ghosh (for so he was named at his birth) knew from his earliest moments that he was not destined to lead the life of a householder, but pursue the highest possible calling, that of Self-Realization. Visions and ancient memories haunted him of wanderings and meditations in snowy Himalayan vastnesses. Disinterested in the tedium of worldly learning, he was more to be found in his attic meditation room or in the company of saints. His friends soon nicknamed him the "Mad Monk".

In seeking the guidance of so many holy men, Yogananda's innate spiritual discrimination was evident even in his early youth. One encounter with a "Perfume Saint", a man who had developed the *siddhi* to give the natural perfume of any flower to a scentless one, or revive a wild blossom, or make a person's skin exude any fragrance, demonstrates his precocious *viveka*:

"Son, I am glad to see you. Say what you want. Would you like some perfume?"

"What for?" I thought his remark rather childish.

"To experience the miraculous way of enjoying perfumes."

"Harnessing God to make odours?"

"What of it? God makes perfume anyway."

"Yes, but He fashions frail bottles of petals for fresh use and discard. Can you materialize flowers?"

"Yes. But usually I produce perfume, little friend."

"Then scent factories will go out of business."

"I will permit them to keep their trade! My own purpose is to demonstrate the power of God."

"Sir, is it necessary to prove God? Isn't He performing miracles in everything, everywhere?"

"Yes, but we too should manifest some of His infinite creative variety."

"How long did it take to master your art?"

"Twelve years."

"For manufacturing scents by astral means! It seems, my honoured saint, you have been wasting a dozen years for fragrances that you can obtain with a few rupees from a florist's shop."

"Perfumes fade with flowers."

"Perfumes fade with death. Why should I desire that which pleases the body only?"<sup>1</sup>

"Wonder-workings such as those shown by the 'Perfume Saint' are spectacular," he cautions, "but spiritually useless. Having little purpose beyond entertainment, they are digressions from a serious search for God."<sup>2</sup>

Another example of his acute discrimination and spiritual maturity is recorded in his description of his attitude toward the guru. Even as a lad, he had noticed that

Many disciples have a preconceived image of a guru by which they judge his words and actions. Such persons often complained that they did not understand Sri Yukteswar [his own guru].

"Neither do you understand God!" I retorted on one occasion. "If a saint were clear to you, you would be one!"<sup>3</sup>

All the more, as the Swami himself often said, whether in the East or the West, he was always eager to meet a true saint. He saw them as "the ornaments of God", each one manifesting His infinite glories in a different way. Some saints demonstrated no miraculous powers beyond their own stupendous realisation. Others, who had acquired them during their *sadhana* or after, were never deluded by them, nor did they use them to delude others. The real goal of all *sadhanas* is Self-Realization.

<sup>1</sup> *Autobiography of a Yogi*, by Paramahansa Yogananda, Jaico Publishing House, India, 1982, p. 44.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 121.



*Sri Ramana, Paramahansa Yogananda and Paul Brunton*

Mukunda knew this keenly even as a boy of seventeen. When at last he met his guru, Sri Yukteswar Giri, he extracted from his master what the ardent youth wanted most: "I accept your authority in every detail of my life — on one condition ... that you promise to reveal God to me!"

An hour's verbal tussle ensued while the guru tested his disciple's sincerity. At last the long-sought promise was given. Knowing that a guru's word is not lightly given, Mukunda began his eight-year apprenticeship under Sri Yukteswar.

While far from faultless, here, too, Mukunda demonstrated his spiritual maturity. He was beyond the delusions of jealousy or competition with his fellow-disciples. He wanted something far greater than praise or power, or indeed any temporal benefit from his guru — he burned for Self-Realization, and that hunger consumed all the various impediments that still stood in his way. While Sri Yukteswar seemed to find no fault in the young disciple's spiritual progress, the Master never missed an opportunity to point out any personal defects as and when required.

My guru could not be bribed, even by love. He showed no leniency to anyone who, like myself, had willingly offered to become a dis-

ciple. Whether Master and I were surrounded by his students or by strangers, or were alone together, he always spoke plainly and upbraided sharply. No trifling lapse into shallowness or inconsistency escaped his rebuke. This flattening-to-the-ego treatment was hard to endure, but my unchangeable resolve was to allow Sri Yukteswar to iron out all of my psychological kinks....

I am immeasurably grateful for the humbling blows he dealt to my vanity. I sometimes felt that, metaphorically, he was discovering and uprooting every diseased tooth in my jaw. The hard core of egotism is difficult to dislodge except rudely. With its departure, the Divine finds at last an unobstructed channel.<sup>4</sup>

In recalling his training, Yogananda makes the observation that after he at last abandoned all underlying resentment against his guru's attacks on his ego, there was a marked decrease in his chastisement. In time he demolished every wall of rationalisation and subconscious reservation behind which the human personality generally shields itself. The result was a perfect harmony between guru and disciple.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 119.

This training culminated in the disciple's attaining the ability to enter into samadhi at will and also to transmit it to others when they are suitably developed. Yet Mukunda still had a doubt:

"I want to know, sir — when shall I find God?"

"You have found Him."

"Oh no, sir, I don't think so!"

My guru was smiling. "I am sure you aren't expecting a venerable Personage, adorning a throne in some antiseptic corner of the cosmos! I see, however, that you are imagining that possession of miraculous powers is proof that one has found God. No. One might gain the power to control the whole universe — yet find the Lord elusive still. Spiritual advancement is not to be measured by one's displays of outward powers, but solely by the depth of his bliss in meditation.

In July of 1915, after receiving his university degree, Mukunda Lal Ghosh was initiated into *sannyas* by Sri Yukteswar and received the name Swami Yogananda.<sup>5</sup>

Yogananda had noted many indications throughout his life that his *dharma* lay in the West. Indeed, although secular learning was of no importance to either guru or disciple, Sri Yukteswar had insisted upon his young charge's completing a university degree. "Someday," his guru had predicted, "you will go to the West. Its people will be more receptive to India's ancient wisdom if the strange Hindu teacher has a university degree." It was only five years after his initiation that Yogananda received the foreordained invitation to represent India at the World Congress of Religious Liberals in America. He was only twenty-seven years old when, in 1920, he set sail for strange shores with only his boundless faith and spiritual stature as guides. His success in America was immediate and immense. Teaching his own particular path of *Kriya Yoga*, a branch of Raja Yoga, he found disciples and generous friends wherever he went. By 1925 he had established the Ameri-

can headquarters of the Self-Realization Fellowship on Mount Washington Estates in Los Angeles, California.

I have visited and meditated at the major centres he established — the Mother Centre on Mount Washington; the Lake Shrine, just minutes away from worldly and sensational Hollywood; the hermitage in Encinitas; and the centre in San Diego — and have found them all to be beautifully laid out havens of great peace. I recall being taken to the Lake Shrine at a time in my life of great spiritual upheaval, my mind a welter of chaotic thoughts, peace and equanimity mere memories. Instantly upon entering, I was overwhelmed by a wondrous peace. My thoughts disappeared and my whole being was enveloped in a healing silence. The same silence greeted me whenever I went to the centre in San Diego. These experiences left me with no doubt that the *parampara* of gurus which Yogananda represented embraces and blesses these centres, offering the abiding peace of true spiritual knowledge through a path to Self-Realization that is both viable and adapted for Westerners.

"God is simple. Everything else is complex. Do not seek absolute values in the relative world of Nature." It is this simple truth that Paramahansa Yogananda has brought home to the materialistically prosperous but spiritually anaemic West. Through his various writings, teachings, poetical and musical compositions, and his own living example he has set — and continues to do so — many Western hearts alight with the fire for spiritual awakening.

In 1935 Swami Yogananda returned to India for a year's visit. It was during this visit that he sought out Sri Ramana Maharshi at a time when Sri Bhagavan was only just becoming known outside South India.

Bhagavan affectionately greeted him and pointed to a stack of *East-West* magazines, the official journal of the Self-Realization Fellowship. It was from Sri Bhagavan that Yogananda learned not only that "God is simple", but also

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 146-7.



that there is a simple path to Him via "the Great Inquiry — 'Who am I?' " From Sri Bhagavan he understood this direct approach, which he describes in his own words:

By stern rejection of all other thoughts the devotee soon finds himself going deeper and deeper into the true Self, and the sidetracking bewilderingments of other thoughts cease to arise.<sup>7</sup>

The dialogue which brought this home to him is recorded in *Talks*, No. 107. Yogananda eulogized the new inspiration, seeing it encapsulated in verse 9 of Sri Bhagavan's *Reality in Forty Verses (Ulladu Narpadu)*:

The dyads and triads always depend upon the One. If one sees within one's mind what that One is, they disappear. Only those who have seen this have seen the Truth. Know that they will never be perturbed.

Expanding on this, Yogananda himself has written:

The Greek ideal, echoed in Western philosophies, is: "Man, know thyself". A Hindu would say: "Man, know thy Self". The dictum of Descartes, "I think, therefore I am," is not philosophically valid. The reasoning faculties cannot shed light on man's ultimate Being. The human mind, like the transitory world that it cognizes, is in perpetual flux and can yield no finalities. Intellectual satisfaction is not the highest goal. The seeker of God is the real lover of *vidya*, unchangeable Truth; all else is *avidya*, relative knowledge.<sup>8</sup>

Paramahansa Yogananda saw no conflict between his own path of active organisation-building and teaching on the one hand and Sri Bhagavan's path of silence on the other:

Even saints who engage in no outward work bestow, through their thoughts and holy vibrations, more precious benefits on the world than can be given by the most strenuous humanitarian activities of unenlightened men. The great ones, each in his own

way...strive selflessly to inspire and uplift their fellows.<sup>9</sup>

Paramahansa Yogananda returned to the West in 1936 and spent the next sixteen years of his life spreading his message of liberation from all woes through Self-Realization. On March 7, 1952, he entered *mahasamadhi* after concluding his speech at a banquet in honour of Sri Binay Ranjan Sen, the Indian Ambassador to the United States.

It is well known (and documented) that as a final demonstration of the power of yoga, Paramahansa Yogananda kept his physical body in a state of incorruptibility during the twenty days it was on display. Never a miracle-monger, this great lover of God and Truth, the Paramahansa, like Jesus Christ, only used the miraculous to point materialistically-oriented minds Godwards, to demonstrate that the spiritual sciences far excel the secular ones, and to make clear that what can be gained for mere flesh and blood can be gained for man's spirit as well.

At the saint's funeral, Sri Binay Ranjan Sen, the Indian Ambassador to the United States, said:

If we had a man like Paramahansa Yogananda in the United Nations today, probably the world would be a better place than it is. To my knowledge, no one has worked more, has given more of himself, to bind the peoples of India and America together.<sup>10</sup>

Yogananda himself expressed similar sentiments in his own humble words at the conclusion of his autobiography: "I often think gratefully: 'Lord, Thou hast given this monk a large family!'"

<sup>6</sup> Later, in 1935, during his visit to India from the West, he received from his guru the further monastic title of "Paramahansa".

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 391.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 367.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, under photo between pages 240-241.

# Swami Lakshman Joo

SUN OF  
KASHMIR SHAIVISM



By

Bettina Bäumer

I worship that pure Sadguru  
whose nature is Awareness,  
by whose spiritual power  
the universe shines as the path of Shiva  
for the devotees.

Abhinavagupta  
*Dehasthadevatachakrastotra*

The rays of the late afternoon sun reflect on the clear surface of Dal Lake, fall through the leaves of a huge Chinar tree, and touch the faces of a group of devotees sitting with rapt attention on a lawn. The atmosphere is filled with peace and concentration. The focus is on the master sitting with a radiant face under the tree. The devotees cannot distinguish whether their eyes are blinded by the rays of the sun or by the radiance emanating from his face.

The Master is plunged in blissful silence. He then recites a Sanskrit *sloka*, explains its meaning and makes the devotees repeat it. After a while Kashmiri ladies appear and distribute tea and *prasad*. The Master carefully observes whether everybody is served with equal attention. His gracious look touches the devotees, noticing the slightest movement of their minds. Some get up and *pranam* at his feet. He blesses them gently.

The setting is Ishvar Ashram, Nishat, near Srinagar, and the Master is the Shaivacharya of Kashmir Shaivism, Swami Lakshman Joo<sup>1</sup>, called Ishvar Swarup by his close disciples, and Rajanaka Lakshman Raina by scholars.

For many decades he was a source of inspiration and compassion to innumerable devotees from Kashmir, other parts of India, and abroad. His kindness was showered on all alike — simple villagers, government officials, scholars, rich and poor, and seekers from all walks of life and all religions. Those who were fortunate to be accepted as his disciples were guided by him on the spiritual path.

The small ashram above Dal Lake, at the foot of the mountains near the splendid Nishat gardens, was a centre of attraction for spiritual seekers. There was neither publicity nor the usual crowds which flocked around famous gurus. Swami Lakshman Joo was withdrawn and loved to preserve the peace and silence so essential for *sadhana*. Even the casual visitor could not help being struck by the pure spiritual atmosphere and the power emanating from the Master's presence.

Scholars knew him mainly as a great pandit and the last representative of the Kashmir Shaiva tradition of mysticism and philosophy. Many Indian and foreign scholars sat at his feet to study the mystical texts and to decipher their secret meaning. Jaideva Singh and Lilian Silburn (Paris), his students, published many of the important texts with English and French translations, and thus made a tradition known which had been almost forgotten in India itself.

Swami Lakshman Joo himself published several Sanskrit texts and Hindi translations, such

as Abhinavagupta's commentary on the *Gita*, Utpaladeva's *Shivastotravali*, *Sambapanchashika*, and others. Some of his lectures on Kashmir Shaivism were also published in English. A well-known pandit of Varanasi, Acharya Rameshwar Jha, discovered his spiritual greatness and composed a *Gurustuti* on him. But his deep learning of Sanskrit and of the *shastras* was for him only a means of mystical realisation, not an end in itself.

Born in Srinagar on May 9, 1907 (Vaishakh Krishna Dvadashi), as the son of a well-known producer of houseboats, Narayanadasa Raina, and his wife Aranyamali, Lakshman showed signs of his spiritual tendencies at an early age. The then master of Kashmir Shaivism and their family Guru, Swami Ram Joo, who was famous for his powerful *shaktipata*, recognised him and gave him the name and his first initiation. Lakshman experienced states of samadhi even as a child and at school.

After the death of Swami Ram Joo, Lakshman became the disciple of his successor, Sri Mahtab Kak. In spite of his parents' efforts, he refused to get married. Because of his father's illness, he gave up his studies in order to look after the factory. But at the same time he studied the *shastras* with his Guru and the best pandits of Srinagar. However, his inner calling was too strong, and early one morning, at the age of about 20, he left his parent's home, leaving behind a note for his brothers, saying: "I am leaving in search of the Supreme. Kindly take care of my parents."

He spent many years of intense *sadhana* in solitude. Later, his father built an ashram for him near Ishbar.

When he was about 30, he heard about Sri Ramana Maharshi.<sup>2</sup> He immediately travelled

<sup>1</sup> Joo is the Kashmiri equivalent of the Hindi "-ji", a suffix denoting respect.

<sup>2</sup> In his "Letter" to *The Mountain Path* published in April 1985 (p.107), he says he was in his twenties, but since his visit coincided with that of Eleanor Pauline Noye, who is seen in the photograph with him, it must have been in the year 1938, when he was 31 years old.



Sri Lakshman Joo offering obeisance to Sri Bhagavan. Mrs. Noye is also seen

from Srinagar to Madras, and from there to Tiruvannamalai. When he entered the hall where Sri Bhagavan was seated, he prostrated fully before him. Bhagavan made him sit in front of him and looked at him graciously. Swami Lakshman Joo immediately entered the state of samadhi.

Later, he said that he had received *drishtidiksha* at that very moment. It must have been a unique meeting, a total recognition (*pratyabhijna*). Swami Lakshman Joo had already attained a high state of realisation, and that meeting must have established him fully in the Divine Consciousness.

Abhinavagupta, the great Master of the school of Kashmir Shaivism, mentions *anupaya* as the highest means of realisation — that which is no means at all, because the Ultimate Reality is always and everywhere present, and no means can lead to That which is ever manifest. He says that only very mature disciples can receive it from a perfect Master by his *darshan* alone, and he compares it to "lighting a lamp with another lamp." This rare form of *anupaya* initiation must have been the case in their meeting. It all happened in silence.

Swamiji spent some weeks in the presence of the Maharshi. Whenever Sri Ramana went up

on Arunachala early in the morning, Swamiji accompanied him. He described it as a blissful time, as divine days spent in the nearness of Bhagavan, and he composed several Sanskrit verses on the Maharshi.

He never returned after that one meeting. That too is a sign of *anupaya*: it happens once and for all, and need not be repeated.

There is a striking parallel between Abhinavagupta, the great *acharya* who lived around the year 1000 A.D., and Swami Lakshman Joo, who felt very close to his predecessor. It is the spiritual link between Srinagar and Madurai. At the time of Abhinavagupta, a monk in Madurai called Madhuraja, having heard about the fame of the Master, travelled to Kashmir to meet him. He was so overwhelmed that he composed a poem, *Gurunathaparamarsha*, describing the greatness of Abhinavagupta. After spending some time with him, Madhuraja returned to his native South India.

Swami Lakshman Joo loved to read this poem. It was as if it described himself: a young swami from Srinagar making a pilgrimage to the sage from Madurai at Tiruvannamalai. It is this deep spiritual link which unites Kashmir and Tamil Nadu.

He who for many decades enlightened seekers and received one of the most precious spiritual traditions of mankind, attained *mahasamadhi* on September 27, 1991, at Noida, New Delhi, where he had been taken for treatment. He became one with the transcendent Reality, the supreme Shiva, which was his natural state even when he was in the body. He who had bestowed *shaktipata* on innumerable devotees had, even in his sickness, become a condensation of that very *shakti*, the divine energy of Grace; such is the power of a *jivanmukta* who is already one with the Lord.

As Swamiji himself has written: "This is the greatness of Lord Shiva's grace, that in no matter what intensity His grace is with you, it will carry you in the end to His Nature."<sup>3</sup>

During the times of political unrest in Kashmir, his ashram remained an island of peace. What will happen to the tradition of Kashmir

Shaivism is as yet uncertain, but it will live on if the seeds of realisation sown by Swami Lakshman Joo in the hearts of his disciples bear fruit. His own spiritual power is not bound by any limitation and its influence will continue to inspire seekers of Truth.

In the words of Abhinavagupta:

Some beings are enlightened only for their own liberation, but others for the sake of redeeming the whole world — just as a firefly shines only for itself, jewels shine for others, the stars shine for more, the moon shines for still more, and the sun bestows light on the whole universe.

Tantraloka XIII. 159

<sup>3</sup> *Kashmir Shaivism: The Secret Supreme*, by Swami Lakshman Joo, p. 72.

**"The *Jnani* is fully aware that the true state of Being remains fixed and stationary and that all actions go on around him. His nature does not change and his state is not affected in the least. He looks on everything with unconcern and remains blissful himself.**

**"His is the true state and also the primal and natural state of Being. When once the man reaches it he gets fixed there. Fixed once, fixed ever he will be. Therefore that state which prevailed in the days of Pathala Linga cellar continues uninterrupted, with only this difference that the body remained there immobile but is now active.**

**"There is no difference between a *Jnani* and an *ajnani* in their conduct. The difference lies only in their angles of vision. The ignorant man identifies himself with the ego and mistakes its activities for those of the Self, whereas the ego of the *jnani* has been lost and he does not limit himself to this body or that, this event or that, and so on.**

**"There is action in seeming inaction, and also inaction in seeming action".**

**- Sri Bhagavan in *Talks*, No. 607**

# Paul Brunton



By

A.R. Natarajan

Paul Brunton came to India in search of its saints and seers. It was really a quest for 'Sacred India'. He was determined to find out from its truly great seers the wisdom for which the East has been famous throughout the centuries. Surprising as it may seem in retrospect, the list did not include Ramana Maharshi. Strange, because in the divine scheme of things Brunton's very coming to India was in order to make the world aware of Ramana's uniqueness.

He meets a magician from Egypt on the first night at Bombay. A disappointing visit to a self-proclaimed 'messiah' is followed by interviews and visits to the 'Anchorite' of the Adyar River, Yogi Brahma, and to one who never speaks. Drawing blank he makes arrangements for leaving the South the next day. It is at this eleventh hour that Ramana enters his life. One Subramanya accosts him and sings Ramana's praise into his almost deaf ears. Subramanya tells Brunton with a quiet certainty that it is Ramana's power which has drawn Brunton to India. Brunton practically slams the door on him. But the visitor calmly insists that he will be back to take him to his Master, Ramana.

The next scene in the divine drama is enacted in the holy presence of the Shankaracharya of the Kanchi Math. Taken there by a journalist friend, Venkata Ramani, Brunton is told, "I recommend you to go to the Maharshi. I have not met him but I know him to be a high master. Shall I provide you with full instructions so you may discover him?" Paul Brunton learns much later from Venkata Ramani that His Holiness had whispered to him, "Your friend will travel all round India. He will visit many yogis and listen to many teachers. But in the end he will return to the Maharshi."

Continuing the strange story, Brunton returns to his room only to find Subramanya waiting there to act as his guide and take him to Ramana. Brunton decides to give himself a chance or, in his frame of mind, to give the Maharshi a chance to prove the claims made about him. However, he budgets only for a week-end stay. "The proposed week-end quickly passes". He extends his stay to a week and then to a fortnight. He is drawn by the compelling presence of Ramana "as surely as the iron filings would be by a magnet". He has had some very useful interviews. But he is not yet ready. The mood of surrender is not there. He wants to get 'results' within his own framework of a fortnight. The Sadguru's timing, however, depends on the ripeness and readiness of the seeker. So, Paul Brunton has to wander all over India again before he comes back to Ramana.

Sick and tired of his wanderings, Brunton books his passage back to England, resolving firmly that he will never again offer his "time, thought, energy and money upon the altar of such superstitious masters". After finalising his departure plans he visits Chandi Das, who advises him to go back to the Maharshi, saying, "A sage awaits you even now since you are tied to him by ancient threads". Does not the Sadguru follow his flock, life after life, till the disciple finds the truth?

Brunton is still adamant. It is a regular tussle between his inner voice, which keeps reminding him of the uniqueness of the Maharshi, and his tired body and dejected mind. At last the inner voice is too compelling to be disobeyed. He informs the shipping agents that he has decided to postpone his return. Immediately he hastens back to Ramana. This time he has no definite time frame for remaining. His search has ended and his only hope lies in Ramana.

He builds a makeshift abode only three hundred feet away from the Ashram, and is ready to give his all to finding out the truth at the feet of Ramana. "Day after day would bring fresh indications of Ramana's greatness. He learnt to see the Maharshi's way of helping others by his unobtrusive, silent and steady outpouring of healing vibrations into troubled souls. The mysterious telepathic magic was there". He has many fruitful interviews with Ramana. It enables him to understand the path of Self-Enquiry. By Ramana's grace he is blessed with the experience, the peace and bliss of Self-abidance.

In 1935 Brunton wrote his first book, *A Search in Secret India*. It was an instant success. Of the seventeen chapters in the book, three relate to Ramana. Ramana stands Olympian in stature. This book has proved to be a perennial best-seller. Small wonder, Paul Brunton had a powerful pen but it became mighty when dipped in the experience flowing in Ramana's dynamic presence.

His second book, *The Secret Path*, was the product of a vision of Ramana which he had in a small Quaker village in England. Brunton was



*PB seated to the left of Sri Bhagavan, holding the calf*

about to sail to Egypt for his book, *A Search in Secret Egypt*. "This time he had a vision. Ramana Maharshi, whom he would always refer to as his beloved Master, appeared to him and told him that before he left 'for the land of the waving palms he should write a book to share with his fellowmen some of the spiritual uplift he himself had obtained'." Brunton took this vision to heart. He promptly set to work on *The Secret Path*. Words flowed effortlessly from his pen for it was a task assigned to him by Ramana. Hence the inspiration.

Brunton wrote nine other books during his lifetime. One can readily see the strong inner presence of Ramana. For even though Brunton had coined his own terminology to express the 'ultimate experience', the essential features of what he wrote were undoubtedly the product of his grounding in the straight path of Ramana. He had been given the experience in Ramana's jungle hermitage and all his subsequent writings bear this mark.

Brunton told his son Kenneth Hurst that he had his final illumination in 1963. This experience is best described in his own words. "There was a bomb-like explosion of consciousness, as if my head had been split open. It happened during the night in a state between waking and sleeping and led to a deepening stillness. It came by itself and I realised that the Divine had always been with me and in me. I knew that the Divine presence was my real essence. Although I had descended deep into my being and experienced Timelessness, I was still able to live in my surface being and experience. Deep down within me I lived in a sort of everlasting Now. Whether I was looking at a beautiful scene in nature or hearing beautiful music or merely doing prosaic work, my happiness remained unchanged. I lived completely, vividly and intensely in the present".

More particularly, after this illumination he became a gentle irresistible powerhouse of peace. Radiating the beauty of the inner life, he attracted many seekers. He kept writing when-



ever the mood came on him. He would carry a pad with him while going to the park or woods and jot down or write whatever occurred to him when a deep silence was on him. On July 25, 1981, he was at work in his home in Switzerland when the fatal stroke came. He had remained till the last day light-spirited, full of pep and inward bent.

What stands out in Paul Brunton was his tireless striving. His 'never say die' spirit could be seen through all the years of search, questing for genuine spiritual experience which he finally had in Ramana's presence. It remained with him through the years. But he had to go through the rough and tumble of the spiritual path before he could be stabilised in that experience, before he could make it his own. Therefore, he is an example of hope for all of us that striving and earnestness are never in vain. For "he had all the human failings, had fallen by the wayside several times, but picked himself up each time and at last achieved the goal". Of course he symbolises also the wonder that is the grace of Ramana.

Every scrap of paper he wrote has been preserved, and sixteen volumes have been published posthumously so far.

One might wonder what exactly was his link with Ramana after those unforgettable months he spent at Sri Ramanasramam in the early thirties. This is what he writes in 1971: "Forty years have passed since I walked into his abode and saw the Maharshi half-reclining, half-sitting on a couch. After such a long period most memories of the past become somewhat faded, if they do not lose their existence altogether. But I can truthfully declare that in this case nothing of the kind happened. On the contrary, his face, expression, figure and surroundings are as vivid now as they were then. What is more important to me is that — at least during the period of my meditation — the feeling of the radiant presence is as actual and as vivid today as it was on that first day". What better testimony can there be of the time-transcending constant radiance of Ramana's inner presence?

□

**Sri Bhagavan said that Tattvaroyar was the first to pour forth Advaita philosophy in Tamil. He had said that the earth was his bed, his hands were his plates for taking food, the loin-cloth was his clothing and thus there was no want for him. In *Maharaja Turavu* (Renunciation of the King) he says: He was seated on the bare ground; the earth was his seat, the mind was the *chamara*; the sky was the canopy; and renunciation was his spouse.**

**Then Sri Bhagavan continued:**

**I had no cloth spread on the floor in earlier days. I used to sit on the floor and lie on the ground. That is freedom. The sofa is a bondage. It is a gaol for me. I am not allowed to sit where and how I please. Is it not bondage? One must be free to do as one pleases, and should not be served by others. 'No want' is the greatest bliss. It can be realised only by experience. Even an emperor is no match for a man with no want. The emperor has got vassals under him. But the other man is not aware of any one besides the Self. Which is better?**

**— Talks, No. 648.**



*Devotees during a giripradhakshina with Sri Sadhu Om Swami (extreme right, holding the umbrella)*

## Sri Sadhu Om Swami and the question 'Who is a Jnani?'

By Michael James

**D**URING the 1950's and 1960's, a question which used to rise in the minds of many visitors and devotees newly coming to Sri Ramanasramam was, "Among the old devotees of Sri Bhagavan still living here now, who has attained *Jnana* by His Grace?" Some people used to raise this question out of mere idle curiosity, but some genuine aspirants who were earnestly attempting to practise Sri Bhagavan's teachings also used to raise the same question with the sincere hope that by meeting such Self-realised devotees of Sri Bhagavan they would be able to gain further guidance and encouragement in their pursuit of His teachings.

However, when such new devotees used to raise this question, it often led to controversy, because some old devotees would claim either that they themselves had attained *Jnana* or that some other specified devotees had attained it, while other old devotees would deny the same. Therefore, when new devotees used to put this or similar questions to Sri Sadhu Om Swami, he would generally reply, "Why do you seek to know about others? Even if you conclude that a certain person is a *Jnani*, there will always be scope for doubt to arise in your mind. And if you try to clear that doubt by asking the opinion of others, it is liable to lead to dispute and con-

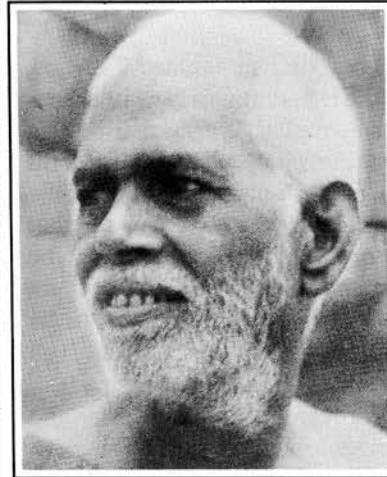
troversy, and you will end up only being all the more confused. Why should you give room for such confusion, doubt and controversy? There is one *Jnani* about whose attainment there is surely no room for any doubt or controversy, and that is Sri Bhagavan. Is not this one *Jnani*, whose supreme attainment no one can doubt, sufficient for you? Believe Him wholeheartedly, and inwardly seek guidance and encouragement from Him alone. Then only will all your doubts and confusion come to an end. If you seek all guidance and encouragement directly from Him by turning your mind away from others and towards Him, who is ever-shining in your heart as the light of true knowledge, He will surely never disappoint you and will bestow upon you all the help you require."

Even after hearing such encouraging words from Sri Sadhu Om Swami, some people were not fully convinced or satisfied, and hence they continued to ply him with questions regarding how one could recognise a *Jnani*. In reply to one such questioner, one day in the early 1960's Swami composed eleven Tamil verses which later came to be included in *Sadhanai Saram* as verses 340-350 under the title '*Yar Jnani?*' (Who is a *Jnani*?). The following is an English rendering of those verses:

1. Is the intellect which decides, 'This person is a *Jnani*, that person is an *ajnani*', knowledge (*jnana*) or ignorance (*ajnana*)? The *Jnani* is only, one! Therefore, even the *Jnani* who is seen by the mind, the *ajnana* which sees *Jnanis* as many, is only a product of that *ajnana*.
2. You [the mind which sees others] are yourself a mere thought. Therefore the person who is said by you to be a pure soul or a *Mahatma*, is only one among the many thoughts which are thought by you, the first thought! How can such a thought, which is an illusory product of *ajnana*, be a supreme *Atma-jnani*? Reflecting in this manner, know this truth.
3. To say, 'He is a good soul, a *Jnani*, I know', is untrue. Even to say, 'All people are *Jnanis*', is untrue, because to see as if many people are existing is the sign of ignorance. Only one person truly exists; that is you. Know thus.
4. In the true outlook of the *Jnani*, there is no *ajnani* [because there is no one who is other than himself]. The *ajnani* [pointing to a body and saying 'This person is a *Jnani*'] gives the name '*Jnani*' only to a body. Due to this defective outlook whereby the *ajnani* sees even the *Jnani* as a body, he becomes one who sees even the *Jnani* only as an *ajnani*.
5. Even though you may visit any number of *Mahatmas*, and even though they may exhibit all the eightfold occult powers [*ashta siddhis*], know that he who turns your attention towards Self, saying, 'Without allowing your mind to go after these juggleries, turn within', is alone the true *Mahatma*.
6. Let the individual [*jivatma*] who enters the lofty Himalayas and forests seeking *Mahatmas*, enter instead the heart by turning within; seeking 'Where am I?' and thereby become the blissful Self [*sukhatma-swarupa*]. Thereafter all who were seen externally as *Mahatmas* will be experienced by him to be his own Self [*atma-swarupa*]. This is the teaching given by Sri Ramana Bhagavan.
7. Before one knows oneself, in whatever way one may try, it is not possible for one to know the real *tapasvis* [the *Jnanis*, who ever remain in the egoless state of Self-abidance, the true state of *tapas*]. Therefore, [giving up all the futile efforts to seek externally to know *Mahatmas*] cling firmly to the great and worthwhile effort of attending to Self, which will destroy the unreal feeling 'I am an individual *jiva*'.
8. Therefore, if any thought arises in you hereafter to seek to determine whether someone is a *Jnani* or an *ajnani*, reject that thought immediately by enquiring 'Who am I who rises to determine the state of oth-

**"Earnest seekers who worship the Enlightened Ones, with perfume, flowers, water, fruit, incense, clothing and food, or by word, deed and thought, are liberated then and there. By praising them they share their merits, by slandering them their demerits."**

**- Sri Bhagavan in Devikalothara, v. 83 & 84**



ers?' and thus merge your mind in the heart, the source from which that thought arose, by turning within and keenly fixing your attention in that source.

9. If you give up the effort to know whether a certain person is a *Jnani* or an *ajnani* and instead scrutinize 'Who is it who feels that this person exists?' the answer will be known 'It is I'. Then scrutinize immediately 'Who is this rising I?' The true *Jnani* will then shine forth [being clearly known to be your own Self, 'I-I'].
10. If someone is a *Jnani*, what is that to us? So long as we do not know our Self, that will be of no benefit to us. On scrutiny, *Jnana* alone is the *Jnani*; the *Jnani* is not a human form; he is only the supreme space of pure consciousness. That supreme space is our true nature.
11. Therefore, by Self-enquiry destroy the petty mind which seeks to know 'This person is a *Jnani*; that person is a *Jnani*'. The *Jnana* [the pure Self-consciousness 'I am' which remains after the mind has thus been destroyed], which shines as one [devoid of any other] and which does not rise and jump as 'I am this' or 'I am that', is alone the *Jnani*. Seeing the *Jnani* thus by Silence [the thought-free state which remains after the mind has been destroyed] is alone seeing him correctly.

However, being unable to appreciate fully the

subtle and profound truths revealed by Sri Sadhu Om Swami in these verses, some visitors used to ask him directly, "All right, you do not like to tell us about others. But can you not at least tell us about yourself? Please tell us openly and frankly whether you have attained the state of *Jnana* which you describe so clearly and vividly in these verses". In reply to all such questions about his own state of attainment, Sri Sadhu Om Swami would usually smile and say, "I do not know! If you wish to know the answer to that question, you must ask only Sri Bhagavan", and if questioned further he would explain, "If Sri Bhagavan has bestowed *Jnana* upon me, how can I remain as a separate individual even to know that attainment, let alone to rise and tell others that I have attained?" In this way he used to exemplify in practice the great truth revealed by Sri Bhagavan in verse 33 of *Ulladu Narpadu*, "Saying 'I have known myself' or 'I have not known myself' is a ground for ridicule ...", and in verse 2 of *Sri Arunachala Ashtakam*, "When I scrutinized within the mind 'Who is the seer?' the seer became non-existent and I saw that which remained. The mind does not [now] rise to say 'I saw'; [therefore] how can the mind rise to say 'I did not see'? Who has the power to reveal this [state of Self-knowledge] by speaking, when in ancient times [even] You revealed it [only through Silence] without speaking?..."

However much and in however many ways friends or visitors used to question him about his state of attainment, asking him whether he had

attained *Jnana*, when he had attained it or how he had attained it, Sri Sadhu Om Swami always avoided saying or admitting directly that he had attained anything. Similarly, when we read his vast and copious poetic outpourings, it is difficult to find any verses in which we can say that he has explicitly or categorically stated that he has attained the state of *Jnana*. Of course, there are some verses in which he has given subtle hints of the state he had attained, but even such verses do not constitute an explicit statement of his attainment. For example, in *Sri Ramana Sahasram*, his *magnum opus* consisting of a thousand verses praying to Sri Bhagavan for *Jnana*, in a chapter towards the end entitled '*Arulai Viyattal*' (Wondering at His Grace), he sings in verse 960:

"O Lord Ramana, O Divine Tiger who caught me with Your wide-open mouth, have I died, or am I still living? Or have I forgotten You? I do not know anything. What happened to me after you caught me? You alone can say."

Nevertheless, though Sri Sadhu Om Swami himself never gave explicit expression to his own state of attainment either in his poetry or in his conversations with friends, he did not deny the

possibility that some *Jnanis* may unusually be found who have given clear and explicit statements of their attainment, particularly in their poetry. For example, whenever any friends asked him about Sri Muruganar Swami's state of attainment, he would unhesitatingly refer them to the thousands of verses sung by him in which he has revealed the exalted state bestowed upon him by the Grace of Sri Bhagavan. Devotees who wish to understand and appreciate more about the high esteem which Sri Sadhu Om Swami cherished for Sri Muruganar's state of attainment, may read the article 'Sri Muruganar — The Right Hand of Sri Bhagavan', which is a compilation of extracts translated from various Tamil writings of Sri Sadhu Om Swami, and which is published in the book *Ramana's Muruganar*, pp. 54-93. Some selected passages from that article, which will throw more light on our present subject, are appended to this article under the caption 'Introducing Sri Muruganar's *Sri Ramana Jnana Bodham*'. As can be seen from these passages and from his other writings, Sri Sadhu Om Swami always used to make it clear that, in singing of his state of supreme attainment, Sri Muruganar had no individual sense of doership and was functioning merely as

**A visitor asked Sri Bhagavan: People give some names to God and say that the name is sacred and repetitions of the name bestow merit on the individual. Can it be true?**

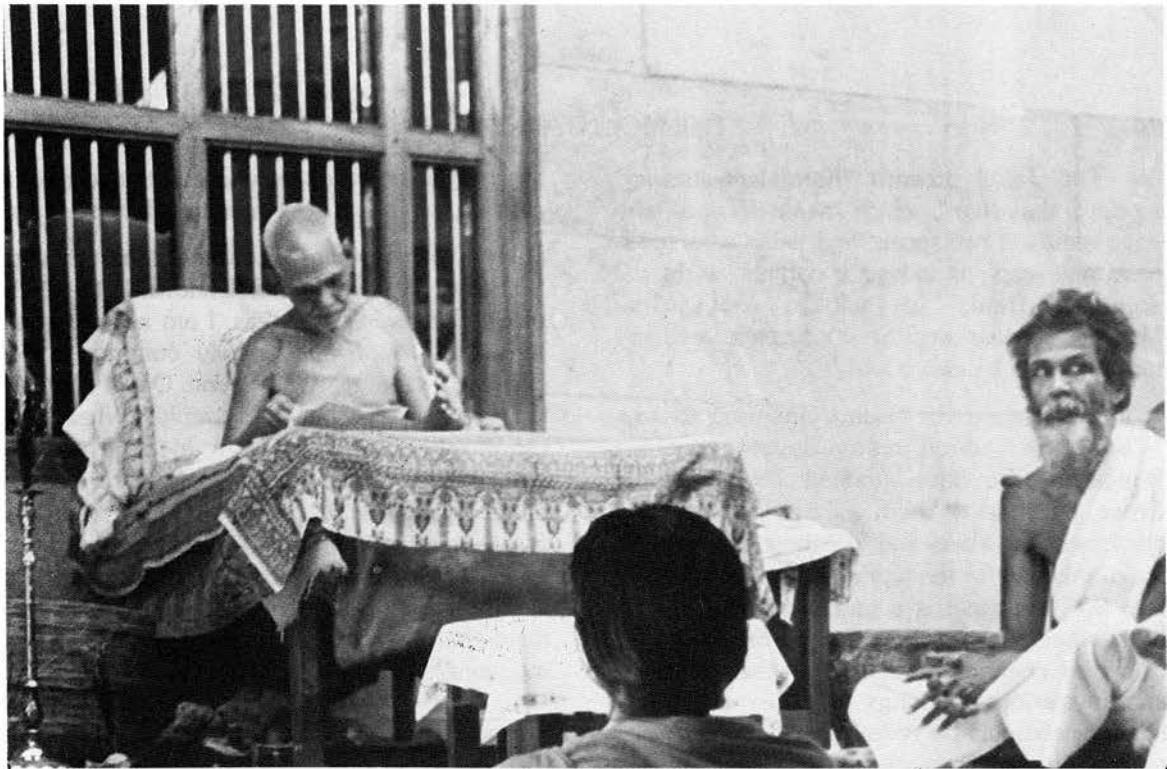
**Maharshi: Why not? You bear a name to which you answer. But your body was not born with that name written on it, nor did it say to any one that it bore such and such a name. And yet a name is given to you and you answer to that name, because you have identified yourself with the name. Therefore the name signifies something and it is not a mere fiction. Similarly, God's name is effective. Repetition of the name is remembrance of what it signifies. Hence its merit.**

**But the man did not look satisfied. Finally he wanted to retire and prayed for Sri Bhagavan's Grace.**

**Sri Bhagavan now asked how mere sounds assuring him of Grace would satisfy him unless he had faith.**

**Both laughed and the visitor retired.**

— Talks No. 526.



*Sri Muruganar with Bhagavan*

## **Introducing Sri Muruganar's *Sri Ramana Jnana Bodham***

**By Sadhu Om Swami**

There are many good spiritual aspirants nowadays coming to Sri Bhagavan only to gain Self-knowledge who ask, "By coming to Sri Bhagavan and by following His teachings, is there anyone who has attained that state of Self-knowledge which He taught to be the true aim of human life?" Why do they ask thus? It is only because of their yearning to know, "Can we also attain the goal shown by Sri Bhagavan? To enable us to attain it, will Sri Bhagavan bestow His Grace? Has He thus bestowed His Grace upon anyone else? Among those true disciples who have attained Self-knowledge by becoming receptacles of His Grace, if there is anyone who can console and encourage new devotees like us by describing the great experience he has attained, touching his chest and publicly declaring, 'This is the fruit of Sri Ramana's Grace', from his words of truth we will gain great strength and courage to follow in practice the teachings of Sri Bhagavan!" For sincere devotees of Sri Bhagavan who are yearning thus, a great support and refuge is now and for ever after available in the form of the great work *Sri Ramana Jnana Bodham*, in which, in the ecstasy of the *Brahmanubhuti* which he had attained by the Grace of Sri Bhagavan, Sri Muruganar by his divine poetic gift reveals, describes and expounds the nature of that supreme experience in as many ways as it is possible to do so.

— *Ramana's Muruganar*, p. 74

(Extracts translated from *Sri Ramana Jnana Bodham*, vol. 3, p. vii, and vol. 4, p. v.)

an egoless instrument being used by Sri Bhagavan's Grace to fulfil a special purpose in providing guidance and encouragement to all those earnest aspirants who are sincerely attempting to follow the spiritual path which He had revealed to the world. However, though it is true that Sri Muruganar was thus used as an

instrument of Sri Bhagavan's Grace, Sri Sadhu Om Swami used to warn us that the same is not necessarily true in the case of all people who declare that they have attained Self-knowledge, because there will always be some people in this world who falsely make such claims in order to gain personal glory and the appreciation of oth-

ers. The Tamil proverb "*Kandavar vindilar; vindavar kandilar*", which means, 'Those who have seen will not speak, and those who speak have not seen', is indeed a natural law in the spiritual field, to which sages like Manikkavachakar and Sri Muruganar are very rare and special exceptions.

In this regard Sri Sadhu Om used to say, "There are indeed many devotees of Sri Bhagavan who have attained *Jnana* by His Grace, but most of them will never reveal their attainment to others and will therefore ever remain unknown to the world. Among such devotees Sri Muruganar is a rare exception, in that he has been specially selected by Sri Bhagavan as a pure channel through which the wonderful and mysterious workings of His Grace should be revealed to the world. Through the abundant outpourings of Sri Muruganar's poetry, Sri Bhagavan has chosen to reveal countless profound and subtle truths about the state of *Jnana* and about how it is attained by His Grace. The truths thus revealed through his poetry have hitherto never been revealed so fully through the writings of any other sage, nor is it likely that any sage will come after him to reveal the secrets of their inner experience in such a full, detailed and lucid manner in so many thousands of beautiful and powerfully moving verses". That is, having immersed himself for years in the work of collecting, compiling and editing the vast treasure-house of Sri Muruganar's verses in order to preserve them for posterity, Sri Sadhu Om Swami knew very well that all that need be revealed to the world about the workings of the *Sadguru's* Grace and about the state of inner experience bestowed by that Grace had already been revealed by Sri Bhagavan through the channel of Sri Muruganar's poetry, and perhaps this may be one of the reasons why Sri Sadhu Om Swami himself never sang anything about his own attainment, nor ever admitted that he had attained

anything, even when he was questioned by sincere aspirants and well-intentioned friends.

As a person whose love and admiration for Sri Sadhu Om Swami is well-known in the circle of Sri Bhagavan's devotees, I am nowadays often asked by friends newly coming to Sri Bhagavan's path, "Was Sadhu Om a *Jnani*?" To such questions I generally reply, "What is the use of my saying that he is a *Jnani*? There are so many people in this world who are claimed either by themselves or by their admirers and followers to be *Jnanis*, so if I tell you that he is a *Jnani* I would only be adding him to the long list of such people, about many of whose attainment there is ample room for doubt. How will my words carry any more weight with you than

the words of so many others who declare, 'So-and-so is a *Jnani*? Why should we accept a person to be a *Jnani* just because someone else claims them to be so? We must each either keep an open mind or use our own power of judgment to decide for ourselves whether or not we can accept a certain person to be a *Jnani*. If you sincerely wish to

understand about the inward state of Swami, you should yourself read his writings, both his numerous verses addressed to Sri Bhagavan in which he pours out his love at His Feet, and his various other writings in prose and poetry addressed to those who came to him seeking clarification to understand more deeply and to follow more correctly the teachings given by Sri Bhagavan to the world. If you can taste and appreciate the all-consuming love for his *Sadguru* and the wonderful clarity regarding His teachings which are patently expressed in all of Swami's writings, you will be able to judge for yourself and arrive at a firm conviction regarding his state of inward attainment. More than anything myself or anyone else may say in praise of him, his own writings will be able to create a true understanding and firm conviction in your mind."



Sri Sadhu Om Swami

Having had intimate personal contact with Swami or having read his writings deeply, there are many devotees of Sri Bhagavan, both old and new, who firmly believe Swami to be a *Jnani*, and some of them have expressed their firm conviction openly. For example, Sri Natanananda Swami, a very senior devotee of Sri Bhagavan who had close contact with Sri Sadhu Om Swami for many years, has clearly expressed his own conviction regarding the latter's attainment in some of the verses he has sung about him. In one such verse he has sung, "O heart, due to the quality of contentment, Sadhu Om has for ever attained perfect tranquility of mind in *Bhuma* [the state of *Brahman*]"<sup>1</sup>. Many of the younger generation of Sri Bhagavan's devotees have also independently arrived at this same conviction after reading the songs and prose expositions written by Sri Sadhu Om Swami.

However, it cannot be expected that all devotees of Sri Bhagavan should have had the opportunity to read the writings of Sri Sadhu Om in so much depth that they could gain such a deep insight into his rich inner life, and hence it is natural that, having been able to see only his unassuming and seemingly ordinary external life, many do not feel strongly impelled to revere him

as one among those who have been blessed to attain *Jnana* by the Grace of Sri Bhagavan. However, it is truly not necessary that all devotees should correctly understand the inner state of Swami. If Sri Bhagavan wishes that any particular devotee should be spiritually benefited by Swami and by his rich and varied writings, His Grace will certainly enkindle in their heart the clarity to appreciate the inward state of Swami in the correct light. Without the help of Sri Bhagavan's Grace it is certain that no one can correctly understand and appreciate the inner state of attainment of any *Jnani*. Therefore, as Swami always used to say, what is important is not that we should all understand correctly the state of others, but that we should all make earnest efforts to turn our minds inwards to understand correctly our own real state. If we have sincere aspiration and make honest efforts to understand our own state, whatever outward help we may require in any form (such as receiving guidance and encouragement from any of the Self-realised devotees of Sri Bhagavan) will automatically be provided to us by Sri Bhagavan's Grace.

<sup>1</sup> The Tamil original of this verse may be seen in *The Mountain Path*, July 1985, p. 203.

**Major Chadwick:** It is said that one look of a *mahatma* is enough; that idols, pilgrimages, etc., are not so effective. I have been here for three months, but I do not know how I have been benefited by the look of Maharshi.

**Maharshi:** The look has a purifying effect. Purification cannot be visualised. Just as a piece of coal takes long to be ignited, a piece of charcoal takes a short time, and a mass of gunpowder is instantaneously ignited, so it is with grades of men coming in contact with *mahatmas*.

— Talks, No. 155.





*Icon of the Madonna and Christ*

## The Elders and Mysticism of the Russian Orthodox Church\*

By Mikhail Mikhailovich Bogolyudiev

Though Christianity concedes that a saint can experience God, and even attain union with Him, it is less comfortable with the idea that saints can be so imbued with the Holy Spirit that merely by looking at someone, or by being with or near them, they can act as a vehicle for Its transmission. And yet there is ample evidence that some Christian saints have functioned in the same way as realised Hindu Gurus, transmitting grace, quietening the minds of those around them and giving them a direct experience of the God within. St Seraphim certainly had this power and the records of how he exercised it will have a familiar ring to anyone who has had *darshan* of a *jnani* or who has read about such encounters. Here Nikolai Motovilov, a householder who had been miraculously cured by St Seraphim, describes what happened one winter day as the two of them were talking together in the forest. Seraphim had spoken of the need to acquire the

Holy Spirit, and Motovilov asked how a man could be sure of 'being in the Spirit of God'.

Then Father Seraphim took me very firmly by the shoulders and said: 'My son, we are both at this moment in the Spirit of God. Why don't you look at me?'

'I cannot look, Father,' I replied, 'because your eyes are flashing like lightning. Your face has become brighter than the sun, and it hurts my eyes to look at you.'

'Don't be afraid,' he said. 'At this moment you yourself have become as bright as I am. You yourself are now in the fulness of the Spirit of God; otherwise you would not be able to see me as you do.'

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\* Continued from the previous issue

Then, bending his head towards me, he whispered softly in my ear: 'Thank the Lord God for His infinite goodness towards us. But why, my son, do you not look me in the eyes? Just look and don't be afraid, the Lord is with us.'

After this I glanced at his face and there came over me an even greater reverent awe. Imagine in the centre of the sun, in the dazzling light of its midday rays, the face of a man talking to you. You see the movement of his lips and the changing expression of his eyes, you hear his voice, you feel someone holding your shoulders; yet you do not see his hands, you do not see even yourself or his body, but only a blinding light spreading around for several yards and lighting up with its brilliance the snow blanket which covers the forest glade and the snow flakes which continue to fall unceasingly.

'What do you feel?' Father Seraphim asked me.

'An immeasurable well-being,' I said.

'But what sort of well-being?', I said. How exactly do you feel?'

'I feel such a calm,' I answered. 'Such peace in my soul that no words can express it.'

'This,' said Father Seraphim, 'is the peace of which the Lord said to His disciples: "My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give you [John 14:27], the peace which passes all understanding" [Philippians 4:7]... What do you feel?'

'Infinite joy in all my heart.'

And Father Seraphim continued: 'When the Spirit of God comes down to man and overshadows him with the fulness of His presence, then the man's soul overflows with unspeakable joy, for the Holy Spirit fills with joy whatever He touches.'<sup>1</sup>

This encounter was not a unique one. St Seraphim was radiating, on certain occasions, a dazzling light, and this rather interesting feature of his teaching career illustrates rather vividly a

characteristic of Orthodox mysticism which distinguishes it from its Western counterpart. To understand the full implications of this exchange between Seraphim and Motovilov, and in particular the manifestation of the light, it is necessary to go back to the beginnings of Christianity and to see how Orthodox Christian theology and practice gradually evolved over time.

It is one of the fundamental axioms of Christian theology that God cannot be 'known', that is, He can never be experienced fully in the way that He experiences and knows Himself. No words can describe God, says the Christian theologian, and no experience can fully encompass Him. St Gregory of Nyssa, an early Christian teacher, summed up this attitude when he wrote, in his *Life of Moses*, 'The true knowledge and vision of God consist in this — in seeing that He is invisible, because what we seek lies beyond all knowledge, being wholly separated by the darkness of incomprehensibility'. In the first few centuries of the Christian era theologians in the Eastern Christian world had what Hindus would call a '*neti-neti*' approach to God which denied all positive attributes to Him and stressed that He was, in His essential nature, unknowable and unreachable. The most famous of these 'negative' statements was the *Mystical Theology* of Dionysius the Areopagite, a sixth century Syrian monk whose negative or 'apophatic' theological stance had a profound influence on the emerging theology and practices of both the Eastern and Western Churches. Taking their cue from John's Gospel, 'No man has seen God at any time' (1:18), these early texts went out of their way to outdo each other in stressing just how inaccessible God was.

Though the Bible stresses that God cannot be 'seen', it does say that it is possible to partake of His divine nature, although Christians would stress that the experience can only ever be a partial one. John, who wrote emphatically in his Gospel that 'God could not be seen' also has Jesus say, 'The glory which thou, Father, gavest

<sup>1</sup> Motovilov, *op. cit.*

me, I have given to them, that they may be one, just as we are one; I in them and thou in me, that they may be perfectly one'. (John 17:22-3)

Here we have two apparently conflicting standpoints: God is fundamentally unreachable and unknowable, and yet at the same time, if one takes Jesus' words literally, Christians may attain union with Him. Eastern Christians resolved this apparent paradox by distinguishing between God's essence and His 'energies'. They taught that while the essence of God, His fundamental nature, will always remain unknowable, it is quite possible to attain a union with His energies, which seem to correspond to the Hindu notion of *sakti*. 'We know God from His energies,' wrote St Basil the Great, 'but we do not claim that we can draw near His essence. For His energies come down to us, but His essence remains unapproachable.'

It is through these energies that God enters into a direct and immediate relationship with mankind. In relation to man, the divine energy is in fact nothing else than the grace of God... Grace signifies all the abundance of the divine nature in so far as it is communicated to men.<sup>2</sup>

In the verses from John cited earlier, Jesus quite boldly asserts that He has given the glory of God to His followers, enabling them to become one with both Him and the Father. The early Greek Fathers of the Church accepted the literal meaning of this statement and taught that it was quite possible for man, through grace, to attain a state of deification (*theosis* in Greek). In their interpretation of this verse they argued that if man is to share in God's glory to the extent that he becomes perfectly one with God, in effect he must be deified. Such a man becomes by grace what God is by nature. Christ, they say, became incarnate, so that He could transmit the grace which would enable all people to attain union with the Father. However, one should always remember that when the Eastern Church speaks of 'union' or even 'deification', it is always referring to a union with God's energies, and not with His fundamental essence.

The state of union with the divine energies is attained by a practice which the Orthodox call 'the prayer of the heart'. This is not related to the *hridayam* of Hinduism, to the physical organ, to any subtle heart centre in the body, or even to any emotional centre or faculty. Instead, it derives from a Hebrew conception which holds that the 'heart' is the whole being of man, including the intellect, the mind, the will, the emotions and even the body. So, the prayer of the heart is a state in which all the physical, emotional and mental faculties are attuned to and partake of the energy or grace of God.

Greek philosophy and many branches of the world's religions have given us an idea that there is a soul imprisoned in the body, and that the body must be transcended, punished or ignored in order to liberate the soul from its physical shackles. The Orthodox Church emphatically rejects this view. It maintains that the human body is an integral part of man's sacred being, not something to be rejected. Orthodox religious thought lays great emphasis on the idea that the body of man is an image or reflection of the divine. By looking on the body as an icon (that is, a sacred image, the contemplation of which can produce an experience of the divine) man can find God by looking within himself and attuning himself to the divine energies which permeate his heart, his whole being.

St Gregory of Palamas, an authoritative fourteenth century Orthodox theologian, affirmed that since man, including his body, was created, according to the Bible, in the image of God, and since Christ Himself incarnated in a human form, the human body has the potential of being 'an inexhaustible source of sanctification'. Man's body, therefore, is not, for the Orthodox, an enemy to be defeated, it is a partner and collaborator with his soul. This has great practical consequences for Orthodox spiritual practices, for it means that the body 'joins in' the prayer of the heart and is purified and transformed by it. 'Man's body is deified at the same time as his

<sup>2</sup> V. Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*.

soul,' wrote St Maximus the Confessor. It is never rejected as a profane appendage.

Verbally, the prayer of the heart is the repetition of 'Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner'. Initially its repetition is mental and intellectual, but, with time and practice, it takes over the whole of man's being.

When a man begins to pray, at first he prays with the lips and has to make a conscious intellectual effort in order to realise the meaning of what he says. But if he perseveres, praying continually with recollection, his intellect and his heart become united: he finds the 'place of the heart', his spirit acquires the power of dwelling in the heart and so his prayer becomes 'prayer of the heart'. It becomes something not merely said by the lips, not merely thought by the intellect, but offered spontaneously by the whole being of man — lips, intellect, emotions, will and body. The prayer fills the entire consciousness, and no longer has to be forced out, but says itself. This prayer of the heart cannot be attained simply through our own efforts, but is a gift conferred by the grace of God.<sup>3</sup>

There is one biblical incident of which the Orthodox practitioners of the prayer of the heart take special note. Jesus once took three of his disciples up a high mountain, usually identified as Mount Thabor. There 'He was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun and his garments became white as light'. (Matthew 17:2-3) This light was held to be the pure light of God Himself, the divine energy which the Orthodox strove so hard to unite with. Scholars of the Eastern Church discussed the implications of this event for centuries, finally agreeing on several points:

- (a) That the light witnessed by the disciples was the original, uncreated light of God Himself,
- (b) That by practising the prayer of the heart the whole being of man would become suffused, purified and eventually deified by this uncreated light,

- (c) That when the practice had been perfected, the practitioner would attain complete union with God's energies,
- (d) That though the light was invisible to ordinary eyes it could be discerned in a non-physical way by anyone who was consciously and fully aware of the inner Holy Spirit.

The last conclusion is interesting because it explains to some extent what happened in the forest encounter between Motovilov and St Seraphim which I related earlier. Motovilov saw the saint's face as a blazing ball of fire because, as St Seraphim noted, both of them were, at that moment, 'in the Spirit of God'. To other people his face would have appeared quite normal. The 'immeasurable well-being' and the joy and the peace which Motovilov experienced were also a consequence of being immersed, temporarily, in the fulness of the divine energies, for, as St Seraphim concluded, 'When the Spirit of God comes down to man and overshadows him with the fulness of His presence, then the man's soul overflows with unspeakable joy, for the Holy Spirit fills with joy whatever He touches'.

Bhagavan also occasionally spoke about the Self being light and noted on several occasions that the experience of realisation can be compared to a flood of light which banishes ignorance and causes the world-picture to disappear:

Just as cinema pictures can be made visible by a reflected light, and only in darkness, so also the world pictures are only perceptible by the light of the Self reflected in the darkness of *avidya* [ignorance]. The world can be seen neither in the utter darkness of ignorance, as in deep sleep, nor in the utter light of the Self, as in Self-realisation or *samadhi*.<sup>4</sup>

The same experience was also reported by those who had successfully practised the prayer of the heart and become submerged in a flood of divine light:

<sup>3</sup> Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church*.

<sup>4</sup> S.S. Cohen, *Guru Ramana*.

When in the intensity of its love for God the intellect goes out of itself, then it has no sense of itself, or of any created thing. For when it is illumined by the infinite light of God it becomes insensible to everything made by Him, just as the eye becomes insensible to the stars when the sun rises.<sup>5</sup>

Bhagavan often noted that, so far as ordinary people were concerned, the two discernible characteristics which may indicate that a person is a *jnani* are the sense of equality he displays to everyone around him and the peace one feels in his presence. I have already noted how Motovilov felt an overwhelming sense of peace in the presence of St Seraphim. Here St Maximus, an early founding Father of the Orthodox faith, explains how being immersed in the divine light as a result of practising the prayer of the heart leads on to a state in which one knows that all are one in Christ.

The sign of [the second and highest form of prayer] is that at the very onset of the prayer the intellect is so ravished by the divine and infinite light that it is aware neither of any other created thing but only of Him who through love has activated such radiance in it... For him who is perfect in love and has reached the summit of dispassion there is no difference between his own and another's, or between Christians and unbelievers, or between slave and free, or even between male and female. But because he has risen above the tyranny of the passions and has fixed his attention on the single nature of man, he looks on all in the same way and shows the same disposition to all. For him there is neither Greek nor Jew, male nor female... but Christ who 'is all, and in all'. (Colossians 3:11)<sup>6</sup>

I began this article by discussing the *charismata*, the gifts of the Holy Spirit which empower a Christian to begin a public ministry, even though he may not have been ordained or authorised by any recognised Church. I should like now to discuss briefly the ideas of another Orthodox mystic, St Simeon the New Theologian, partly because it is generally

recognised that he systematised and expounded, from direct experience, the prayer of the heart practices which culminate in a union with the divine light, and partly because he had some very interesting, if somewhat unconventional, views on religious authority, and in particular, on who is allowed to exercise spiritual authority over others.

St Simeon (949-1022) had his first experience of the divine light after repeating the Jesus prayer as a young man. He described it as a 'flood of divine radiance' in which he was so 'wholly in the presence of immaterial light' that 'he seemed to himself to have turned into light'.<sup>7</sup> This was the first of many experiences in which, as a consequence of repeating the Jesus prayer, he found himself bathed, purified, transformed and ultimately 'deified' by the same transfiguring light that shone in Christ on Mount Thabor. Many of these ecstatic and blissful experiences were recorded in his *Hymns of Divine Love*. For example:

But Oh, what intoxication of light! Oh what movements of fire! Oh what swirlings of the flame in me, miserable one that I am, coming from You in Your glory!... I thank You that You, even when I was sitting in darkness, revealed Yourself to me. You enlightened me, You granted me to see the light of Your countenance that is unbearable to all! ... O awesome wonder which I see doubly, with my two sets of eyes, the body and of the soul!<sup>8</sup>

In his less ecstatic moments he wrote carefully argued theological discourses which aimed to demonstrate, among other things, that God's energies (the only part of Him we can know and experience) take the form of this uncreated light, the vision of which is a proof that the inner Holy Spirit is actively transforming and purifying the whole being of man:

<sup>5</sup> St Maximus the Confessor, *First Century on Love*.

<sup>6</sup> St Maximus the Confessor, *Second Century on Love*.

<sup>7</sup> St Simeon, *Discourses*.

<sup>8</sup> St Simeon, *Hymns of Divine Love*.

It shines in us without evening, without change, without alteration, without form. It speaks, works, lives, gives life and changes into light those whom it illuminates. We bear witness that God is light and those to whom it is granted to see Him have all beheld Him as light. Those who have seen Him have received Him as light, because the light of His glory goes before Him.<sup>9</sup>

As I mentioned before, the light of which St Simeon speaks can be conceived of as grace: it is both God Himself while simultaneously being His activating energies. Like the 'ocean of grace' which Bhagavan said was always available to those who brought a vessel to its shores, the light is always there in infinite amounts. The more one eliminates all that is not of the Holy Spirit, the more the inner divine light shines:

As a man standing on the seashore not only sees the sea but can also walk into it as often as he likes, so it is with men who have reached spiritual perfection: they can also enter the divine light when they wish, contemplating it and participating in it consciously in proportion to their works, their efforts and the aspirations of their desire.<sup>10</sup>

Having been transfigured himself by the divine light, St Simeon eventually fell foul of the Church authorities of his day by teaching that *charismata*, spiritual gifts coming directly from the Holy Spirit, were the only proof of a God-given authority to teach and preach. He even went so far as to say that the power to absolve sins, a monopoly of Church-ordained priests, should be vested with unordained charismatics because they had demonstrated that they had been specially selected by God. He taught a radical doctrine of the primacy of experience over authority which derived from human appointments. It was not enough, he said, to believe or know that the Holy Spirit is within us, we must activate it by becoming continuously and consciously aware of it. Unless it is active, and unless one is consciously aware of it, it may as well not be there. His stance that those who are not fully conscious of the God within have no God-given spiritual authority caused him, in

1009 AD, to be exiled to a remote corner of the country where he died thirteen years later. The Orthodox Church later canonised him for his saintliness and his contribution to mystical theology. His distinctive and unpopular views on the necessity of direct experience were conveniently forgotten.

The practice of the prayer of the heart would, in Hindu terms, be called a *sakti* yoga: breathing is carefully regulated and synchronised with the '*mantra*'; a particular bodily posture (head bowed, chin on the chest) is recommended; the eyes are fixed on the heart; and the whole exercise is aimed at activating an internal *sakti* which purifies and deifies the whole man. Though the ultimate aim is deification, there are some interesting yogic side-effects, not the least of which is the ability to stay warm during the harsh Russian winters in which sub-zero temperatures may prevail for months at a time. St Seraphim, who stood on a rock all night for three consecutive winters, explained how this happened in a continuation of the conversation in which he appeared as a blazing sun:

You told me that around us it is as warm as in the bath house, but look, neither on you nor on me does the snow melt, and above it is the same. Of course the warmth is not in the air but in us... Warmed therewith the hermits have not feared the winter frost, being clad, as in warm coats, in the cloak of grace woven by the Holy Spirit... The Lord said: 'The kingdom of God is within you.' By the kingdom of God the Lord meant the grace of the Holy Spirit. See, the kingdom of God is now found within us. The grace of the Holy Spirit shines forth and warms us.<sup>11</sup>

The physical transformation and ultimate deification of the body may seem to be a long way from Bhagavan's teachings, since he taught that the body should be ignored during *sadhana*, but

<sup>9</sup> St Simeon, *Discourses*.

<sup>10</sup> St Simeon, *Writings on the Philokalia on the Prayer of the Heart*.

<sup>11</sup> Motovilov, *op. cit.*

it cannot be denied that Bhagavan's own body was transformed by his own realisation, even though he made no effort to attain this goal. Rangan, one of Bhagavan's schoolfriends, found evidence of this when he visited Bhagavan at Skandashram:

On another day, when we were at Skandashram together, I felt Bhagavan's leg from heel to knee and commented, 'When our legs touched when we played games together in our childhood, yours used to feel like iron. Your skin used to be so rough that when it touched mine, it felt like it was being scratched by thorns. Now your skin is all changed; it is like velvet.' Bhagavan commented, 'Yes, my body is all changed. This is not the old body.'<sup>12</sup>

On other occasion when Rangan told this story he said that Bhagavan had said, 'This is not the old body. The old body was burned by *jnanagni* [the fire of *jnana*].' Though the Orthodox mystic sets about it in a more deliberate way, it is the same 'fire of *jnana*' which divinises his body.

The yogic exercises and the endless repetitions of the Jesus prayer do not by themselves produce the desired union with God. It is the underlying love of God which is the ultimate divinising factor. As Sri Bhagavan once remarked, 'To use the name of God one must call upon Him with yearning and unreservedly sur-

render oneself to Him. Only after such surrender is the name of God constantly with the man.'<sup>13</sup> St Maximus, emphasising the same point, said that by 'continued participation in the divine radiance' the 'intellect becomes filled with light'. But this is not enough. It must then 'with unceasing love' be filled 'with an incomprehensible and intense longing for Him, thus drawing it away from worldly things to the divine.'<sup>14</sup>

St Seraphim, the saint who gave 'darshan' to Motovilov in the forest, led a rigorously ascetic and reclusive life, but when he came back to the world as a *starets*, bubbling with joy, having united with the Christ within, he told his visitors that an intense and passionate love was more than enough to reach the goal:

The grace of the Holy Spirit is given abundantly from above. The Lord seeks a heart filled with love of God and neighbour; this is the throne whereon He loves to sit and whereon He appears in the fulness of His heavenly glory. 'My son, give me thy heart,' He says, 'and all the rest I Myself will add unto you.' For the kingdom of God is in the human heart.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Chalam, *Bhagavan Smrtalu*, 'Rangan'.

<sup>13</sup> *Maharshi's Gospel*.

<sup>14</sup> St Maximus the Confessor, *Second Century on Love*.

<sup>15</sup> Motovilov, *op. cit.*

**Mr.Cohen:** I get into meditation and reach a point which may be called *peace* and a contemplative mood. What should be the next step?

**Maharshi:** Peace is Self-Realisation. Peace need not be disturbed. One should aim at Peace only.

**C:** But I do not have the satisfaction.

**M:** Because your peace is temporary. If made permanent it is called Realisation.

— Talks, No. 155.

# God and the Godhead\*

By David Godman

*The previous instalment concluded with a discussion of Eckhart's views on the Trinity. It continues with an explanation of his ideas on the Son of God, the second Person of the Trinity.*

## The Son of God

Eckhart's teachings on the Son form the core and the most important part of his philosophy. Christ, the second Person of the Trinity, is, according to Eckhart, being continuously generated by God the Father in the innermost part of the soul of each person. The indwelling Christ is thus the mediator between the soul and the Father. By turning within and by merging with this indwelling Son, one attains to a union with God the Father, since the Father and the Son are one in essence.

Christian theologians have always taught that the three Persons of the Trinity are uncreated, that is to say, they have always existed, whereas the soul of each person is a later created entity. Since Christianity teaches that God brought all of His creation into existence *ex nihilo*, meaning 'out of nothing', rather than out of Himself, created things, including the soul, do not contain within them a divine essence. Pantheism, the view that all of creation is a manifestation of the divine, is firmly rejected by Christianity. Things are made by God but are not composed of Him.

So, the traditional view is that the soul, while capable of perceiving and experiencing God to some extent, is not God within us, in all His power and purity, but a created organ or faculty through which one can receive emanations from God in a dualistic way.

Eckhart seemed to reject this view by preaching on many occasions that there is a place in the inner core of the soul where the Godhead flourished in Its pristine state. In this inner core God the Father, drawing on the power of the Godhead, is continuously creating and generating God the Son.

I have sometimes said that there is one agent alone in the soul that is free. Sometimes I have called it the tabernacle of the Spirit. Other times I have called it the light of the Spirit, and again a spark. Now I say that it is neither this nor that... It is free of all names and unconscious of any kind of forms... God blossoms and is verdant in this agent of which I speak with all the Godhead and spirit of

\* Continued from the previous issue



God and there He begets His only begotten Son as if it were in Himself... If you can only see with my heart, you may well understand what I am saying, for it is true and the Truth itself bespeaks my word.<sup>1</sup>

This inner core, 'the tabernacle of the spirit' seems to correspond to the Heart and the Heart-centre of which Bhagavan often spoke. When Bhagavan wrote, 'In the interior of the Heart-cavern the one *Brahman* shines alone as "I" ',<sup>2</sup> he was saying something very similar: that somewhere inside us there is a place where the personal God, supported by the supreme *Brahman*, dwells and shines. In the same way that the Trinity is a dynamic aspect of the ever-motionless being of the Godhead, the 'I-I' radiation is a dynamic mode of the inactive *nirguna Brahman*.<sup>3</sup>

Abiding in the 'I-I', or its Christian equivalent, attaining union with the three Persons of the Trinity, is the penultimate resting place of the soul on its final journey to extinction in the Godhead. There is, says Eckhart, an even deeper level of the soul where even God, in the form of a Person of the Trinity, cannot enter. He once called it 'the little castle of the soul', the image being one of a high fortified place, so inaccessible that even God the Father and God the Son are denied access to it:

God himself cannot peek into it for a moment — or steal into it — in so far as He has particular selfhood and the properties of a Person. This is a good point to notice, for the onefold One has neither manner nor properties. And therefore if God is to steal into it, it will cost Him all His divine names and Person-like properties.<sup>4</sup>

There has been considerable debate among Eckhart scholars over his conception of the inner 'divine spark', the manifestation of the Son within. At the beginning of his career he wrote several small works in which he stated that the soul was a created entity that had lower and higher faculties. The lower faculties experienced and dealt with the world, while the higher faculties, when turned to God, experienced Him.

It should be noted that when Eckhart said that something is 'created', he really meant that it has no fundamental reality. His logic was the same as Hinduism's *advaitins*: God is real because He is unchanging Being; created things are unreal because they have no being of their own and because they are subject to change. So, a created soul is, according to Eckhart, an essentially unreal entity.

Eckhart must have realised the logical problem of having the higher faculties of an unreal created entity experience God as He really is. So, as his teaching career progressed he began to teach that there is an essence within us which, being uncreated, is identical with God. This got him into trouble with the Church authorities because it means that the essential nature of man and God is the same.

As a consequence of the criticism he was receiving, he made a public declaration from his Cologne pulpit, denying that he had ever taught that the soul was uncreated, that is to say, fundamentally identical with God:

I have never said that there is in the soul something of the soul which is uncreated and uncreatable, since in that case the soul would consist of something created and something uncreated. In fact I have taught and written the contrary.<sup>5</sup>

If this is true it means that many of his sermons have been badly recorded since the uncreated essence in the core of the soul is one of their main motifs. Since the sermons were written down from memory by some of his students, it is possible that there are some inaccuracies, but it is hard to explain how so many similar mis-

<sup>1</sup> *Intravit Iesus in....*

<sup>2</sup> *Sri Ramana Gita*, 2:2

<sup>3</sup> See 'I' and "I-I", a Reader's Query' in *The Mountain Path*, 1991. pp. 79-88, for more details of the relationship between 'I-I' and *Brahman*

<sup>4</sup> *Intravit Iesus in...*

<sup>5</sup> Jeanne Ancelet-Hustche, *Meister Eckhart and the Rhineland Mystics*, p.65.

takes could have been made in so many different manuscripts.

How can this problem be resolved? One way would be to say that the uncreated essence is not in the soul at all, but exists independently of it. This solution would posit a real essence within us, which is identical with God, and an unreal creation, the soul, which does not partake of this essence. A close reading of Eckhart's Cologne declaration reveals that he is not denying that there is an uncreated essence in us, he is merely denying that it is part of the soul.

This explanation would bring his teachings on the subject into harmony with Bhagavan's. Bhagavan was quite emphatic that there are not two selves, a higher one which communes with God and a lower one which is enmeshed in the world:

Q: They speak of a lower and higher *atman*.

A: There is no such thing as lower or higher in *atman*. Lower and higher apply to the forms, and not to the Self or *atman*.<sup>6</sup>

Bhagavan's unchanging position was that there is a real Self which is our real nature and which always exists as being, and an unreal self or soul (*jiva*) which appears to exist but which, being merely an idea, has no fundamental reality. I think that Eckhart ultimately came round to this view because in one of his sermons he declared, 'Therefore, because even the soul is a creature [that is, an unreal created thing], even it must be first cast out.'<sup>7</sup>

Since, according to Eckhart, there is a place in us or a part of us which is identical to the Son, which is the Son, it naturally follows that each of us is a Son of God. 'My heavenly Father is my true Father,' says Eckhart, 'and I am His Son... I am His only begotten Son.'<sup>8</sup> And since God the Father and God the Son are united in their beingness, Eckhart could say with the full



<sup>6</sup> *Day by Day with Bhagavan*, 22.7.46.

<sup>7</sup> *Expedit vobis ut...*

<sup>8</sup> *Justi autem in ....*

authority of direct experience, 'God's is-ness is my is-ness, and neither more nor less.'<sup>9</sup>

According Eckhart, all we have to do to experience the inner Son, the is-ness of God, is to withdraw attention from sense objects and thoughts. In that stilled state the soul discerns its identity with the Christ within, and experiences the full glory of the Trinity within as beingness and bliss:

The soul knows the paternal glory in its fruitful procreation, and the real is-ness in its simple unity, in which there are no distinctions. Jesus also reveals himself in unmeasured sweetness and fullness which flows from the powerhead of the Holy Spirit, overflowing its unsearchable riches and sweetness into hearts which are sensitive to it.<sup>10</sup>

Most Christians would regard the claim of a mystic to be the 'Son of God' as either very daring or downright heretical, but it was an area of his teachings that Eckhart could find ample biblical support for. He was exceptionally well read. He had gone through the Greek and Arab philosophers, he had absorbed the classic theological authors of his time — St Augustine, Dionysius, Boethius and St Thomas Aquinas — and quoted from them freely, if somewhat loosely, but he derived the main support for his argument that each of us is the Son of God from the Bible and in particular from the Johannine and Pauline writings of the New Testament. Here is a selection of texts that particularly appealed to him:

You are gods, sons of the Most High, all of you.<sup>11</sup>

The kingdom of God is within you.<sup>12</sup>

... that we should be called children of God; and so we are... we are God's children now.<sup>13</sup>

His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness... you may escape from the corruption that is in the world... and become partakers of the divine nature.<sup>14</sup>

For all who are led by the spirit of God are sons of God... we are children of God, and if

children then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ.<sup>15</sup>

For in Jesus Christ you are all sons of God, through faith.<sup>16</sup>

So, through God, you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son then an heir.<sup>17</sup>

I [Paul] have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.<sup>18</sup>

The glory which thou [God] hast given me [Christ], I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and thou in me, that they may become perfectly one.<sup>19</sup>

St Athanasius once made a famous remark that 'God became man that we might be made God'.<sup>20</sup> This, in a slightly modified and mystical form, was Eckhart's interpretation of these various biblical remarks on divine Sonship: 'Why did God become man? So that I might be born to be God — yes — identically God.'<sup>21</sup>

Christ is God's natural Son. It is open to everyone to 'join the family' by recognising oneness with Him:

The fruit of the incarnation of Christ, the Son of God, is that man should be by the grace of adoption what Christ is by nature, as it is written: He has given us power to become Sons of God.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>9</sup> *Justi autem in ....*

<sup>10</sup> *Intravit Iesus in ....*

<sup>11</sup> Psalm 82, v.6.

<sup>12</sup> Luke 17:21.

<sup>13</sup> I John 3, 1-2.

<sup>14</sup> 2 Peter 1: 3-4.

<sup>15</sup> Romans 8: 14-17.

<sup>16</sup> Galatians 3:26.

<sup>17</sup> Galatians 4:7.

<sup>18</sup> Galatians 2:20.

<sup>19</sup> John 17:22-3.

<sup>20</sup> *On the Incarnation*, 54.

<sup>21</sup> *Convascens praecepit eis ....*

<sup>22</sup> *In Johannem*, 1, 12-13. From Ancelet-Hustache.

There is one more biblical quote which, because of the frequency with which Eckhart refers to it, seems to be one of the major supports for his teaching that man is divine. In the Old Testament there is a brief account of the creation of man: 'Let us make man in our own image... so God created man in his own image.'<sup>23</sup> This is, of course open to many interpretations, but Eckhart, predictably, adopted it as a supporting proof that God generated an image of Himself, the Son, and that man is, in his essence, identical with that Son.

It must be understood that Eckhart is not saying that each of us has the capacity to become a separate Son of God. What he is teaching is that there is only one Son of God, that He abides within us, and that by turning to Him we lose the idea that we are a lot of separate selves functioning in the world and become one with the real and only Son.

There is only one Self, says Bhagavan, agreeing with him. The idea that there are different selves operating in different bodies is entirely erroneous. This was conveyed quite vividly in a conversation Bhagavan had with a visitor who had written a book called *Maya*, which was a comparative study of the ideas of Sankara and Einstein. At one point the author, in order to explain part of the theory of relativity, had attempted to demonstrate that two observers, situated in different locations but recording the same event, will necessarily come up with different sets of facts and figures, indicating that time and space are not absolute but relative. Bhagavan read the book and explained to the visitor that the idea that one could have two separate observers recording the same event was false in itself, since the Self is the only reality, and therefore none of their observations could be considered real or valid:

When two observers, taking positions in space, observe a particular event, they obtain different time-space measures which will conflict with each other and necessarily vitiate any conclusion they may arrive at concerning the particular event. Sri Maharshi pointed out

to me that the very presumption of two observers situated at given points is itself an unwarranted one... the space between one observer and another being relative and unreal, there cannot be more than one real observer.<sup>24</sup>

### The Timeless God

Having discussed *where* God created His Son, it remains to be explained *when* He created Him. As I noted earlier, traditional Christianity teaches that the Trinity existed from the beginning of time, or possibly even prior to time. When time began it unfolded in the usual linear way until, around 2,000 years ago, Christ took birth in a human body, occupied it for thirty or so years before returning to heaven to remain with the Father until His second coming, which will be the final day of judgement for mankind.

Eckhart rejected not merely this traditional sequence, but the very notion of time itself. For him, the present moment, which he called the 'Now-moment' is the only temporal reality. God, the only existing reality, can therefore only exist and function in the present moment:

The now-moment in which God made the first man and the now-moment in which the last man will disappear and the now-moment in which I am speaking are all one in God, in whom there is only one now.<sup>25</sup> In eternity [the term Eckhart uses to describe the timeless state where God is and functions] there is no yesterday, nor any tomorrow, but only now, as it was a thousand years ago and as it will be a thousand years hence.<sup>26</sup>

Space, too, says Eckhart, is an illusion: 'A point a thousand miles beyond Jerusalem is as near to my soul as my body is.'<sup>27</sup> That is to say, so far as God abiding in the soul is concerned, space

<sup>23</sup> Genesis 1:26, 27.

<sup>24</sup> *The Golden Jubilee Souvenir*, 1949, p.293.

<sup>25</sup> *Intrauit Iesus in...*

<sup>26</sup> *Elizabeth implemmentum est ....*

<sup>27</sup> *Adolescens tibi dico ....*

and distance, as conceived by ordinary people, do not exist.

This, of course, was Bhagavan's position too. He repeated it on many occasions and summarised his views in verse sixteen of *Ulladu Narpadu*:

When we investigate, apart from 'We',<sup>28</sup> the known existing reality, where is time and where is space? If we are the body, we shall be caught in time and place. Since We are the One, now, then and always, the One, here, there and everywhere, 'We', the 'We' who is devoid of time and place, alone exist.

The words *nal nadu il* which appear in the last line of this verse can be read in two different ways: (a) 'We' [the Self], who is devoid of time and place (b) time and place do not exist. Both readings convey Bhagavan's essential point: when one abides in and as the Self, one under-

stands that time and place are not merely suspended, but that they never had any real existence.

If we take Eckhart's view to its logical conclusion, it seems that he is saying that the appearance in a past age of the historical Jesus Christ and the belief that He lived and taught over a period of thirty or so years, is fundamentally flawed. The real Jesus Christ has only ever existed as the indwelling God-engendered mode of being that Eckhart called 'the Son'. In His essence within us, He exists timelessly and non-spatially; to see Him as existing only in a historical place and time is an error of perception.

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<sup>28</sup> The word 'We' in inverted commas ('*nam*') means the Self rather than a personal pronoun. It is a term which Bhagavan occasionally used to denote the Self.

**"Question: Is it necessary to serve the Guru physically?"**

**Maharshi: The *sastras* say that one must serve a Guru for twelve years in order to attain Self-realisation. What does the Guru do? Does he hand it over to the disciple? Is not the Self always realised? What does the common belief mean then? Man is always the Self and yet he does not know it. Instead he confounds it with the non-Self, the body, etc. Such confusion is due to ignorance. If ignorance is wiped out the confusion will cease to exist and the true knowledge will be unfolded. By remaining in contact with realised sages the man gradually loses the ignorance until its removal is complete. The eternal Self is thus revealed."**

**— Talks, No. 350.**

## BOOK REVIEWS

In the charge of J. JAYARAMAN

THE COMPLETE COMMENTARY BY SHANKARA ON THE YOGA SUTRAS: by Trevor Leggett: Pub: Kegan Paul Interl., P.O. Box 256, London WC1B 3SW. pp. 418, £ 65.

It is an accepted fact that not all of the works attributed to Shankara are his own. A personality of his spiritual eminence and command of language can only create masterpieces that open out new eras of development. From this standpoint some of the devotional hymns ascribed to Shankara are clearly not of his authorship. Here we have a commentary that has surfaced some forty years ago purporting to be of the Āchārya; it is titled Vivarana, a sub-commentary on the commentary of Vyāsa on the Sūtras (Yoga) of Patanjali. The text was found to be defective but after the labours of sound scholars in the field, the Govt. of Madras brought out an edition of the Sanskrit text in 1952. What we now have before us is a detailed, scholarly translation with notes by Trevor Leggett, a recognised interpreter in this field. Unfortunately there is no Sanskrit text in the volume and that makes it difficult to evaluate the genuineness of the work. The translator has certain doubts on this score but ultimately he is inclined to accept it as Shankara's commentary.

Naturally there is bound to be difference of spirit in the approach of Āchārya Shankara and of Vyāsa to the subject matter. The original Sūtras themselves are largely in the framework of the Sāṅkhya, a position which the Vedānta of Shankara cannot accept. The translator correctly underlines the passages where things are explained from the standpoint of Vedānta viz. Sūtras I.23-8, where oneness with God is explained in the light of the commentary on the Gīta. Refusal to accept the plurality of the selves, the reality of the world on the part of the author of Vivarana are pointed out. Vyāsa's eulogistic treatment of the *siddhis* comes in for devaluation.

The background of the Āchārya's commentary on the Gīta and the Brahma Sūtras repeatedly find their echoes in this sub-commentary on the Yoga Sūtras. The anti-Buddhist tone in IV. 13-14, is taken to confirm Shankara's authorship. We do not know.

Anyway the present edition is replete with the critical scholarship and sharp intellect of Dr. Leggett and should serve as a model for similar exercises. One does not need to agree with everything while admiring his solid contribution to the subject.

-- (late) Sri M.P. Pandit

C.V. RAMAN: A MEMOIR: by A. Jayaraman. Pub.: Affiliated East-West Press Ltd., 1/1 General Patters Rd. Madras 600 002. pp. 214, Rs. 80.

Written by a scientist who was closely associated with

Sir C.V. Rāman for eleven years, this biography gives a detailed account of the life of an outstanding son of India who brought glory to his land and kept his promise to bring the Nobel Prize for Physics east of Suez. Jayarāman tells the history of the development of Science in the 20th century in India in narrating the life-story of Rāman. He describes how the British element in the Govt. of India, headed by Curzon, stalled the progress of scientific research initiated by Rāman and even got him removed from the Directorship of the Indian Institute of Science.

Entering the Finance Service of the Central Govt. Rāman changed stream early in life and involved himself in gruelling research work for twenty years in Calcutta with the simplest equipment at his disposal. All along he had the ability to inspire his colleagues with his own zeal for new discoveries in physics, optics and acoustics. He moved on to the Indian Institute of Science where he did commendable work before setting up his own Institute with full freedom to chalk out his own course. His quickness of mind was such that Max Born exclaimed that Rāman leaped over mathematics. The story of his achievements culminating in the award of the Nobel Prize in 1930 and his participation in the Ceremony at Stockholm are described in picturesque detail.

Rāman's abilities were unquestioned. His sharp brain was matched by his sharp tongue. The author narrates many an incident in Rāman's career highlighting this trait in his personality, quoting C.R. [Rājāji]: "Raman is like a brilliant cut diamond. If you rub it on the wrong side, it will cut your finger." (p.128).

There are enjoyable instances of Rāman's repartees to Nehru, to Mahātmā Gāndhī and other celebrities. Now what precisely is the *Rāman Effect* for which he is remembered? There was once a group of high school students from Tamil Nādu on a visit to the Institute. The teachers accompanying the party requested the great man to explain to them what the Rāman Effect was. Rāman seated them in the lecture hall and explained to them in Tamil, the gist of which is something like this:

"Think of a person throwing a tennis ball at a certain speed to a tennis player who is waving his bat back and forth. If the bat is moving backward when the ball hits the bat, the ball will lose some of its speed and bounce back with a reduced speed. Similarly, when the ball hits the bat while the bat is moving forward, the ball will gain speed from the forward moving bat and bounce back at a higher speed than the thrower put in.

"The Rāman Effect has to do with light and molecules. You should think of the incoming light as the tennis ball thrown and the molecule as the tennis player who is moving his bat back and forth. The atoms in a molecule are vibrating constantly about the equilibrium position. Light also vibrates at a certain frequency (when it is monochromatic), and when

it hits a molecule the frequency of the light is decreased or increased, depending upon the energy state of the molecule; the frequency of the light is increased when the molecule gives energy to the light, or decreased when the molecule takes energy from the light, like the ball gaining or losing its speed." (p.190).

The author presents a happy combination of Rāman the scientist, Rāman the administrator, Rāman as a person. Even his rough lines produce a delightful effect. The author has been meticulous, fair and objective in his portrayal of this spectacular personality.

-- M.P. Pandit

ROAD TO FREEDOM: by Bindeshwar Pathak. Pub: Motilal Banarsidass, New Delhi 110 007. pp. 254, Rs. 300/-.

The author is an idealist of the Gāndhian type who worked for over twenty years to tackle the problem of manual scavenging and succeeded to a great extent in freeing thousands of men and women in Bihār from thralldom to this ugly social heritage. The book is a thesis written by Sri Pāthak recording his studies and efforts in awakening the conscience of his fellowmen against continuing the old evil. The *Sulabh Shauchālaya* movement started by him has gained momentum and even recognition from U.N. bodies.

After a rapid survey of the state of things in the country down the ages, the writer describes his efforts in obtaining reports of experiments tried in other countries viz. Viet Nam, to introduce low-cost sanitation. Wisely he has not stopped with displacing the manual method of disposal by cheap flushing systems. He has worked out schemes to provide alternate employment to the persons so freed from the unwholesome drudgery.

As Sri Pathak notes: "The scheme is revolutionary in spirit, but not coercive or violent in nature, for it corresponds to the ideals of service to humanity and welfare of all. The positive results of the programme of liberation of scavengers through low cost sanitation are based on positive thinking and positive programme of social reconstruction." (pp.185).

The substantial section of Tables (55 of them) at the end of the book testify to the scientific spirit in which the project has been conducted.

-- M.P. Pandit

THE WORD SPEAKS TO THE FAUSTIAN MAN: by Som Raj Gupta. Pub: Motilal Banarsidass, New Delhi -110 007. pp. 445+8, Rs. 500.

This is the first of the ten-volume series planned by the author in his efforts to put across the true message of Āchārya Shankara to the modern man. Dr. Gupta has a conviction that scholars have laid disproportionate emphasis on Shankara as a philosopher and in the process missed the high spiritual wisdom embedded in his writings. Too much of scholasticism, excessive interpretative zeal have clouded the immediacy of the Āchārya's direct experience of the Reality. The

author is also of the opinion that Western literature has more in common with the spirit of Indian Philosophy than Western philosophy.

In this volume the author takes up the Isha, Kena, Katha and Prashna Upanishads. There is first the text (transliterated), his translation, Shankara's commentary as translated by him and then his own elaborate commentary and explanation. Somehow he feels that writings of authors from the West, poets, psychologists and philosophers are helpful to bring out the spirit of the approach of Shankara and he quotes from them liberally. There is Blake, Wordsworth, Sartre, Heidegger and others who intrude every now and then distracting from the flow of understanding that comes naturally to an open mind. Shankara's style captivates whether one accepts his approach or not. We are afraid this exercise of the author will put off many a reader. This is not to say that the book is without merits. The author's sincerity and command over the English language are indisputable.

-- M.P. Pandit

POEMS TO SIVA: By Indira Viswanathan Peterson. Pub: Motilal Banarsidass, New Delhi 110 007. pp. 302+16, Rs. 225.

Tamil religious poetry is absolutely peerless both in its evocation of the Supreme and as poetry. The poet-mystics of Tamil religious poetry, called Nāyanmārs for those adoring Śiva, and Ālwārs for those adoring Vishnu, seem so obviously on intimate, intensely personal relations with the most High that in reading their poetry one feels as if one is in the very Presence of the Divine. The sheer boldness of the poet who says 'Naam yaarkum kudi allom' (we are not subjects of anyone) is breathtaking in its affirmation that God alone matters. One recalls the Prahāda episode in *Srimad Bhāgavata* where the Religion vs. State conflict is most decisively resolved. And how cheerfully, though humbly, a Nāyanmār affirms: 'Unaippesāda nālellām piravāda nāle.' (Those are days unborn, not spent in Thy praise). One recalls the Sufi mystic who counted his age, (he was very old! indeed) only from the date of his awareness of God!

*Thevāram* which Peterson seeks to present to the non-Tamil speaking world, is a world religious classic of exquisite poetic intensity and subtlety. Translation fails utterly to convey either the power or the ineffable essence of the poets' experience of the Supreme. Her efforts, in spite of the sincerity she has brought to the task, seem distressingly inadequate. She does succeed now and again.

Here is Appar:

He is the seed, the sprout and root

.....

My Lord is the flower and its colour.

.....He is the drum and the drumbeat.

One recalls Emerson's *Ode to Brahman*.

-- Prof. S. Rāmaswāmy

**HINDU THEOLOGY:** By José Pereira. Pub: Motilal Banarsidass, New Delhi 110 007. pp. 508+46. Rs. 250.

It is a most gratifying sign of the trends of these times that person of faiths other than Hinduism have taken to the serious study and exposition of the fundamentals of a faith which not so very long ago they were to dismiss as glorified animism. World religious harmony can only be founded on a clear realisation of the basic truth, so forcefully propounded by Sri Chandrasekhara Bhārati of Sringeri that the *Tattva* of all faiths is the same while *matha* may be different with each of these faiths. Even so, one has to be on one's guard against unwitting misinterpretation of texts consequent on imperfect grasp of the language of the sacred texts of a faith.

José Pereira is now a Professor at the Catholic University of Fordham, in the U.S. His academic credentials are most impressive. Besides, Dr. A.L. Basham, one of the most perceptive interpreters of 'the wonder that was India' hails the book under review as the finest of its kind. And Pereira claims that he has noted significant similarities between the faith he holds and that which he expounds in this book. This is interesting indeed.

One has, however, to confess to a fear that however broadminded a scholar may be and however impressive his grasp of the language of the sacred texts of Hinduism, José Pereira still stands far outside the arena of the faith he explores here so strenuously.

Let us deal with the defects one has noticed. First. Prof. Pereira uses rather bizarre, jargonised chapter headings like *Discriminationism* for Sāṅkhya, *Self-intuitionism* for Yoga, *Monistic Pastoralism*, *Triadism*, *Hero-Saivism* for Vīra Saivism of Basavanna, *Sonic Absolutism* for Sabda Prāmānya and *Energicism* for Śākta. We wonder how these translated titles will help better than the Sanskrit titles of the various schools.

On p.51, Prof. Pereira says, "Other schools (ie., other than the trichomatous (!) Vedānta) began as atheist or ambiguously theist and except for Yoga, are mostly unmystical." This is surely a sweeping judgement. "Ritualism (here equated with Mīmāṃsa) remained atheist" says Prof. Pereira. Mīmāṃsa has two branches, *Pūrva* and *Uttara*. *Pūrva* extols the way of sacrifice propitiating various deities as a means to *Moksha* or Liberation. How could this be regarded as atheist? Even *Uttara* Mīmāṃsa called Vedānta centres around Brahman as the ultimate Absolute Reality and, barring Rāmānuja and Madhva, Sankara's position derived in part from Gaudapāda has been denounced as that of a crypto-Buddhist, *aprachchanna Bauddha*. Prof. Pereira says that the yogic contemplator seeks to experience his own spirit and not the Supreme spirit. This is one of the major mistakes of perception of José. His translations too are, here and there, distressingly flawed. Śrī Bhāshya of Āchārya Rāmānuja is translated as *Glory Bhashya*. Śrī means holy, sacred, auspicious; not glory.

There are other defects of translation too. The truth seems to be clear that one has to be born into a faith to be able to comprehend it and expound it.

-- Prof. S. Rāmāswamy

**THE PHILOSOPHY OF SARVEPALLI RADHAKRISHNAN:** by Paul Arthur Schilpp. Pub: Motilal Banarsidass, New Delhi 110007. pp. 883+12, Rs.375.

This purports to be an Indian reprint, at an affordable price of the book published forty odd years ago, in the U.S., in the Library of Living Philosophers Series by Paul Schilpp. The essays by scholars, Eastern and Western, are altogether good reading. Dean Inge of St. Paul's Cathedral hails Rādhākṛishnan as an excellent interpreter of the East to the West, and of the West to the East, and as a philosopher of the Religion of the Spirit, and others are equally impressed by the outstanding brilliance of this person who, with none of the advantages of birth or status rose from dire penury to be a philosopher President of the Republic of India. The most moving document in this book is Rādhākṛishnan's *Fragment of a Confession* in its earnestness, wide sweep and poignancy. This should be published as a separate book at an affordable price. Rādhākṛishnan's work in Indian philosophy is that of a master-mind expounding great master-minds.

-- Prof. S. Rāmāswamy

**MINDFULNESS IN PLAIN ENGLISH:** by Ven. H. Gunaratana Mahathera. Free copies from Maha Bodhi Soc, 14, Kalidasa Road, Gandhi Nagar, Bangalore 110009. pp.185.

This is yet another book written simply for the seeker of liberation - presented especially for Western audiences such as in the U.S.A. The author happened to have gone to the U.S.A. in 1968 when he started teaching courses in Buddhism, conducted meditation retreats and lectured widely in that country and also in Europe, Australia and New Zealand. The method is the Vipassana school of meditation. The book is a step by step guide to Insight meditation, very clear in its practicality as it is meant to be used in daily life. It offers a first few steps which the seeker has to take on this journey -- of who you are and what it all means. It is a journey worth taking.

Some of the chapters include: Meditation, why bother? What meditation is and is not; What to do with your body, your mind; Structuring meditation; Dealing with problems, Dealing with distractions; Mindfulness or concentration; Meditation in every day life; What's in it for you; and so on. It is a very well written book from another viewpoint with regard to salvation: the paths are many but the goal is one. A book worth reading.

-- S.C. Malik

**SHRI YOGA VASISHTHA:** The Spiritual Dialogue between Shri Ram Chandra and Shri Vasishtha: Abridged and presented in questions and answers, originally in Sindhi, by R.M. Hari: translated into English. Pub: H.M. Damodar, 1194, Shanti Nagar, Ulhas Nagar, Thane Dt. 421003. pp. 362+22, Rs. 100.

This is a very clear exposition of the topic, presented for the layman in a simple manner of dialogue -- as if almost for



the contemporary age. It was originally abridged and presented in questions and answers in Sindhi by R.M. Hari, lovingly addressed as Dādā Sai, a sage whose father, Dr. Rochaldās Sāhib, was also his Guru. Both of them were followers of the line of Sufi tradition as represented by Hazarat Qutub Ali Shāh of Sindh. There is a brief life-sketch of both these savants in the book.

The dialogue between Rishi Vasishtha and Lord Rāma, even though well known, is a rare treat in our day and age for those who seek insights into the goal of salvation. The book truly helps one to understand spirituality; about the nondual nature of Oneness, of *ātma*. It establishes firmly that there is no difference between man and God - *Jīva* and *Brahman*. The book offers traditional wisdom and guidance to true intense seekers, those who have an urge for freedom as a priority. The book is recommended for all.

-- S.C. Malik

AWAKEN CHILDREN (Vols. 1 & 4) : Dialogues with Sri Mātā Amritānandamayī. Pub: Mātā Amritānandamayī Mission Trust, Kollam, 690542. pp. 414/318. Rs. 50/Rs.35.

From time immemorial this holy land *Bhārat* has been the *janma bhoomi* of an unbroken succession of saints and sages. The spiritual tradition of India is vibrant, living and an integral part of the life-blood of Indian society. It has earned for India the distinction of being called a *Punya Bhoomi* or *Moksha Bhoomi*.

These volumes under review are a record of the dialogues between a great saint and her devotees of all strata of human society and at all levels of human development. She is a living saint, young in years, and affectionately called as '*Ammaachi*' in her native Malayālam.

Born in 1953 in an obscure fishing village on the west coast of Kerala, she had little schooling. She began to exhibit divine powers even in her teens. By 1972 when she was barely nineteen, her fame as a saint spread all over Kerala. People young and old, infirm and healthy began to flock to her village to see this wonder girl. Those who came to mock stayed to pray. She was a simple unsophisticated rustic with unassuming manners, and received her devotees with great love and affection as would a devoted mother. She hugged them irrespective of their age or sex. Such unconventional conduct evoked adverse comments from some of the people around her. Time proved her expression of Universal Motherhood, her exceptionally innocent, pure, divine soul embracing all in the universal vision of Oneness. Later her fame spread to Europe and America where devotees in large numbers accepted her as a Guru.

The conversations give an insight into the divine personality of Mātā Amritānandamayī. Wherever she went devotees flocked and unburdened themselves of their problems. Domestic problems would be discussed and the relief obtained was at a higher level than that of the questioner. A family crisis would be raised from a mundane to a spiritual level leading the devotee towards spiritual aspiration and understanding.

The operation of the ego is the central issue from which arise all problems. All great spiritual teachers make that the central theme in all their talks. Ammāchi is no exception. The books are replete with stories of great spiritual significance and import, narrated by Ammāchi with great effect, and so could be valuable additions to any *sādhaka*'s library for study and contemplation and practise in daily life.

-- K. Rāmaswāmi

SRI KRISHNA LEELA TARANGINI (Vol. I): by Narayana Thirtha, tr. B. Natarajan. Pub: Mudgala Trust, 12, IV Cross, Madras-600 028. pp. 538.

To dip into the pages of 'Krishna Leela Tarangini' is to emerge drenched in images of the marvellous sports of young Krishna. In this first of two volumes translating Nārāyana Thirtha's work into English, B. Natarājan also includes an exhaustive introductory section. In fact, the book is divided into two parts. The first part reads as a thesis on the political and cultural history of Nārāyana Thirtha, on his life and works, and especially in the context of his composition 'Krishna Leela Tarangini' and its impact on the future of Kamātik music, dance, drama and the literary tradition of South India. No effort has been spared to make this record as detailed and authentic as possible. The question remains whether such a scholastic analysis of the life and work is required for a reader to enjoy fully the 'Krishna Leela Tarangini'. Happily, though, legend has not been dispelled, but given its due place wherever it is not out of character.

As for the text, the importance of authenticity cannot be understated and B. Natarājan must be complimented on the care taken to mention even traditional variations. The text is also practically free of printing errors, except for some page numbers missing and eight pages of notes between the 3rd and 4th *tarangas* being totally blank! It is hoped the error is restricted to this copy. Yet it shows the quality of the notes that one misses these pages. Natarājan's notes are very apt and precise, giving the right emphasis on awareness of links with *Bhāgavatam* and the *Upanishads* and pointing out influences on later composer-saints like Tyāgarāja. (It came as a moment of wonder to find a phrase of the Thirtha's echoed in 'Ramana Gīta'!)

The translation is also true to the original in meaning although it cannot capture that musical and semantic richness. For instance, '*Mahāmūdhō Mahābali*' is translated as 'undiscriminating but a mighty person'. The beauty of the original, however, lies in the use of the same adverb for the two adjectives - 'Enormous his stupidity as his strength'. Herein lies the basic problem of a translation of Sanskrit poetry and that too into English prose! However, one must be deeply thankful to Natarājan for making bold and publishing the translation, thereby affording an entry into the marvellous world of the 'Tarangini' to a vast world of those who know no Sanskrit. It must also be said to his credit that the translation of prose passages, *slokas* and some dramatic songs read very well. As for the poetry, he may on his own, or with suitable collaboration, attempt a verse translation in

English that would be of great value in re-creating the flavour of the original. A fully notated version of the 'Tarangini' would also be a treasure. What is made available here is a prose rendering of the entire work. The first six *tarangās* are covered in this volume. An accurate transliteration is also given to acquaint the reader with the alliterative and musical timbre of the original.

Yet the lasting impression is the aroma of *bhakti* that the 'Tarangini' exudes and that gently enters one's mood as one reads. There are what may initially seem to be repeated descriptions of Krishna's beauty. Only after setting aside the book does one realise the significance of Thīrtha's method. For a glorious while the picture of Krishna remains joyously etched in the mind.

-- Dr. Sārada Natarājan

THE PHILOSOPHY OF SRI RĀMAKRISHNA : pp. 31. Rs.5.  
SRI RĀMAKRISHNA, SRI SĀRADĀ DEVI & DISCIPLES:  
pp. 39. Rs.2. Both by Swami Harshānanda. Pub: Sri. R.K.  
Ashram, Bangalore 560019.

In the book *Philosophy of Sri Rāmākrishna*, Swami Harshānanda has shown the parallel between the general principles of framework of Vedānta of which Sankara is a great exponent and the highest spiritual truths taught by Sri Rāmākrishna Paramahansa in his discourses. The author admits that Sri Rāmākrishna never propagated a system of philosophy of his own, but experienced TRUTH directly and then spoke out of the fullness of that experience.

The highest spiritual truths taught by Sri Rāmākrishna constitute a philosophy eminently suited to the present age and can be brought under the ambit of definition of the word "Upanishat" inasmuch as these ultimately destroy the primeval ignorance of the seeker of Truth. The author names it *Sri Rāmākrishnāmsopanishat*.

Some of the aspects of Vedānta dealt in the book as examples comparing the approaches of Sri Sankara and Sri Rāmākrishna are:

- Brahman: Like Sankara, Sri Rāmākrishna also accepts Brahman as the absolute - *Nirguna* and *Nirākāra*. But Sri Rāmākrishna does not accept God (*Īsvara*), the aspect of Brahman with form (*Sākāra*) and with attributes (*Saguna*), as either illusory or reality of the lower order. To Sri Rāmākrishna, God is both formless and possessed with form and is beyond both these too. "He alone knows what He is". Dilating upon this aspect of God he calls the Absolute as Brahman when He (It) is at rest or is inactive. But when He is involved in the process of Creation, Preservation, and Destruction, (*Līla*), Sri Rāmākrishna calls Shakti or Kālī as the same as *Īsvara* or God. Brahman and God are one without any distinction (*bheda*).
- Creation according to Sri Rāmākrishna is the *Līla* aspect of Brahman having a degree of reality greater than that conceded by Sankara. It is real though not eternal.
- Īsvara* or God: According to Sankara, Brahman the

Absolute is not very responsive to human emotions or prayers. According to Sri Rāmākrishna, *Īsvara* who is Brahman in its *Līla* (Sportive) aspect, is real and responsive, and *Bhakti* is primary and placed on an equal footing with *Jnana*. Sri Rāmākrishna accords reality to the Avatāra of God and says by intense prayer to God, God will appear in reality, whom one can speak to and even touch.

Also shown are subtle differences between Sankara and Sri Rāmākrishna in respect of other aspects of Vedānta.

The other book *Sri Rāmākrishna, Sri Sārādā Devi and Disciples*, gives brief biographical sketches of the great spiritual personalities of the Rāmākrishna Mission, who were initiated to the order by the trinity, Sri Rāmākrishna, Sri Sārādā Devi and Swāmi Vivekānanda. The sketches and the teachings of these personalities should serve as a beacon light for seekers of Truth.

-- B.N. Nārāyana

THE PHYSICS OF KARMA: A Requiem to Time: By V.  
Dwāraknāth Reddy. Pub: MAPIN Publ., Ahmedabad  
380013. pp.167. Rs.275.

The author, Master of Science, Louisiana State University, USA, was Chairman and MD of the now famous Nutrine Confectionary Co. His quest for the meaning and purpose of life brought him to Sri Ramanāśramam in South India, where he now leads a rich life of inner pursuit as evident in his writing and his concern for all.

The author takes a rational route into exploration of Reality. His probing is logical and scientific. He speaks of time, space and eternity thus: "Then it must follow that when my mind is stilled, and the withdrawal of my energy has deprived Time of its movement, the lack of action makes of Consciousness a homogenous expanse like an ocean without a wave which is at once both the Void with reference to the ceased movement and the Presence with reference to the continuing observer. This then is the meaning of Eternity, not a linear extrapolation between past and future, but a present Presence that cannot cease. This then is the mighty meaning of a transcendence "beyond Time and Space", a release from temporal and spatial conditionings".

The book has captivating chapters. Special reference must be made of *Being and Becoming, Who is the Doer of Action?, In Quest of the Unified Field, S/T<sup>2</sup>: The Equation of Karma*, and to crown it all, *Sri Ramana Maharshi*.

The Epilogue and the Appendix on the *shānti mantra* of the *Īsa Upanishad* give the book its charm and meaning.

-- Kuldīp Nārāin

HEAD OFF STRESS: by D.E. Harding. Pub: ARKANA -  
Penguin Group, 27, Wrights Lane, London - W 8 5 TZ,  
England. pp. 325. £ 5.99.

All of us face the problem of stress in some measure and in one form or another. Feeling dreadfully tired even before

the day ends is an experience common enough. Even ordinary bread-winning activity legitimate in itself and essential for self-preservation is rendered complicated by today's conditions. These complications are further intensified and tensions and stressful conditions created on account of the universal tendency now to be one-up over others. In other words we knowingly opt for more and more of stress. What, on the other hand, would be the implications of a totally stress-free life? It is obvious that it would mean dullness and inaction, akin to a state of deep freeze. It is not preferable. Obviously we should go in for the golden mean between the two extremes in which life would go on but without the impact of stress.

Stress cannot be viewed in isolation from the one who feels it. Enquiry into the matter leads to the logical conclusion that deep within, man is unaffected by external happenings and that he is always at rest. Because, nothing can cause any stress to Pure Being. The aim of *Head Off Stress* is to drive home this point. The author has done this very ably with the aid of choice quotations from the best spiritual literature of the world, also adding meaningful stories or anecdotes.

However he does not stop with simple statements or interpretations. These are augmented by practical methods for apprehending the truth. With this end in view he had devised a good number of exercises which require for their performance such simple equipment as a mirror, paper bag, measuring rod, etc. These exercises have been tried successfully over a period of time by a good number of people. They provide a 'deconditioning instrument' or a 'remedy for hallucination'. That is, you are enabled to get over your defective ways of seeing or perceiving which are usually called 'normal' (ways of seeing). There are exercises intended for specific parts of the body also (for relieving stress in those areas). The constant practice of these exercises is important for obtaining relief from stress.

The book is jampacked with ideas. It may read like scrap notes rather than a regular thesis but it is certain that any idea picked up at random from any corner of the book is sufficient to provoke right thinking.

A passage from the book sums up the whole thing beautifully "God is the cure of my stress, so I seek Him everywhere and if I don't find Him, it's because I'm not bowing low enough." [p. 250]

*Head off stress* is a reliable guide and shows the way to achieve an inner harmony and peace amidst all the constraints of external activity.

-- N. Ramāmani

SRĪ LALITĀ SAHASRANĀMA STOTRAM : tr. Swāmi Gabhīrānanda. Pub: Sri Rāmākrishna Math, Puranattukara 680551, Trichur, Kerala. pp. 116+20. Rs.15.

The *Lalitā Sahasranāma* is a perfect composition done by the deities presiding over speech at the behest of Devi Herself. In highly elegant language and enchanting poetry

it describes the surpassing beauty of the Divine Mother, Her different manifestations and the ways of worshipping Her. The choice words of the hymn enshrine the secrets of *Srī Chakra* and the *Panchadasī* mantra. The recital of the hymn is highly efficacious and the faithful who do it according to the prescribed rules are sure to derive all desired benefits, material and spiritual.

In the work under review the translator has made certain additions to the original on his own. He has also radically changed its structure. Thus the words "O lovely Mother, may I meditate on you as ....." have been added to each verse of the stotra. This is redundant for the reason that there is a dhyāna sloka preceding the stotra along with details of *nyāsa* (given in authentic versions of the hymn). The whole text also appears as an address to the Devi in the second person (unlike in the original). These changes have marginalised the 'feel' of the original in the translated version.

The translator has duly explained that the stotra has been 'reorganised' by him in order to give it the form of a prayer.

Being a competent scholar, the translator has succeeded in giving a readable and cogent version, although faithfulness to the original has not been his top priority. The inclusion of Sri Rāmākrishna's saying on worship of the Divine Mother in the work is an original and welcome feature.

-- N. Ramāmani

THE SUPREME KNOWLEDGE REVEALED THROUGH VIDYĀS IN THE UPANISHADS: by Sw. Brahmānanda. Pub: The Divine Life Society, Sivānanda Nagar, U.P. 249192. pp. 575. Rs.80.

In recent times we have been witnessing a growing interest among the younger generation, in our religion, yoga and meditation. This is a welcome development, but there are real difficulties in making progress because the source passages relating to meditation and *sādhana* lie scattered in the numerous Upanishads. Further the Upanishads are highly condensed statements often using vocabulary out of use now. I expect that this book will reduce some of the difficulties in the path of the youngsters. The language of the book and the explanations and commentaries are highly readable.

The Introduction running into more than fifty pages surveys the wide range of the subject and prepares the reader for what follows. The object of the whole system of meditation is to proceed step by step from ordinary learning to a deeper understanding of the unity of all in Brahman. This is called *Brahma Vidyā*. This realisation cannot be brought about by rote learning. It has to flower from within.

The passages are selected from fourteen Upanishads and are classified in 101 *Vidyās*, each *Vidyā* being one method of concentrating the mind. It is enough if one or two *Vidyās* are selected and systematically practised. For those unable to conceive of the Infinite, there are some *Vidyās* which aim lower. Of course no one has the time or energy in this world to practise all these *Vidyās*, consistently for a long time. But

a beginning in this direction may give one a glimpse of the ultimate Truth, which is quite a satisfying end in itself.

-- P.P.I. Vaidyanāthan.

*Life Surrendered in God-Hand Book to New Era Discipleship*  
- The Science of Kriya Yoga: by Roy Eugene Davis. Pub:  
CSA Press Publishers, Georgia 30552, U.S.A. pp. 419.  
\$14.95.

Roy Eugene Davis is a direct disciple of Paramahansa Yogānanda whose book "Autobiography of a Yogi" published in 1946 profoundly influenced very eminent thinkers both in the West and the East. Mr. Davis a fine speaker with an excellent command of simple but captivating English prose brings to bear upon this Book the wisdom he has acquired in extensively travelling, in over 100 US cities and in Japan, Canada, Brazil, England, Spain, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Ghana and Nigeria.

The sub-title "Hand book to New Era Discipleship" - sets the tone and the structure of his thought - provoking exposition. It plainly and bluntly points out right at the outset that for the practice of Kriyā Yoga in the New Era physical and financial security is the sine-qua-non. This is to be set in contrast to the spiritual Masters of a much earlier Era who lived like the "lilies of the field" and the "birds of the air" and cared not for the morrow, being sufficient unto to the day and all the evil thereof.

The author says, "In the Training of the senses for self-discipline profound study and analysis of Physics and Metaphysics and surrender of self-consciousness (egoism) to God are the practical means of attaining perfect concentration. This is the path of Kriya Yoga".

Obviously such a training is indispensable if one should succeed in keeping one's end up in today's strife-torn world of cut-throat competition, political, social and environmental pollution and the consequent psychological insecurity that has enveloped whole masses of people across the world.

"By *Physics* we mean an understanding of causes and their effects in the *physical* realm, how and why things work and how to function in practical ways to live easily in the world".

"*Metaphysics* is higher knowledge--knowledge of the inner causes which govern outer effects".

These two propositions form the foundation on which the author builds, brick by brick, the structure of Right Living in a Wrong and Wronged World.

The third corner-stone of this new philosophy of living is in fact the essential condition prerequisite for peaceful living in a world utterly devoid of peace and that is: Surrender of one's life to God - Prapatti as expounded in the Gīta.

The main objective of Kriyā Yoga is to bring the body and mind into harmony by daily practice of Āsanās and Prānāyāma. Here the author's as well his Masters' approach is by and large based on Patanjali's Yoga Sūtras. In the hands

of Davis and his Masters these sūtras gain a new gloss and a fresh meaning which immediately appeals to "the modern mind which is practical and pragmatic, ethical and social, altruistic and humanitarian. Humanity is its God and Social service its religion".

Photographic illustrations of the important Āsanās are given. Among the Āsanās dealt with under "Life-Enhancing Routines" the Scientific description of Breathing from the Diaphragm, Alternative Nasal Breathing, Sushumna Breathing and Basic Procedures for Enlivening and Directing Vital Forces, particularly the "chin lock", stand out as perfect examples of the author's refreshing originality of approach.

In the last chapter: "The Transmission of the Kriyā Tradition in the *New Era*", short, pithy and yet brilliant and valuable biographical sketches are given of 1) Mahāvatār Bābāji 2) Lahiri Mahāsaya 3) Swāmi Śrī Yukteswar and 4) Paramahansa Yogānanda. The reader will profit immeasurably by reading these biographical sketches again and again.

The glossary of Terms given at the end not only helps to better understand the main text but is in itself a fine piece of precisely chiselled and accurately descriptive literature rarely found in most Text Books on philosophical studies written here in India or abroad.

Upon completing a careful reading of the whole book from end to end in the specific order of the chapters, one is left with the feeling of having been into a multi-coloured mansion carefully sculpted with painstaking exactitude and ringing with an orchestral symphony of its own. The Mansion speaks in limpid and lapidary prose.

-- S. Jayarāman

THE POETRY OF WALTER DE LA MARE : by Dr. P. Sreedharan Nair, Retd. Principal, 6/328 Perumpadappu Mana Lane, Ollakkara, Trichur Dt. 680000. pp. 263. Rs.50.

In the language of symbolism, poetry stands for a quality of raised consciousness, of mind illumined by intuition. It is clearly not born in the world of the lower mind. Beyond the boundaries of physical consciousness the poet looks out into the unknown in search of what is immortal. A good deal of De la Mare's work is the attempt at a discovery of what is immortal which is otherwise the absolute truth.

This book is a critical work in which the author mainly discusses De la Mare's poetry, what it is and what makes it hold a place of special distinction in mystic literature.

The author, Dr. Sreedharan Nair, a former principal of Sree Kerala Verma College, Tiruchūr, was in touch with Walter De la Mare at the time of this book's preparation, so we can be confident that he faithfully represents the poet's message. The introductory chapter provides simply and beautifully the key to his self-created world of solitude. The view that a sober solitude captures the imagination of enlightened people conjures up in the poet's mind the prospect of peace in living away from the 'madding crowd'.

Concerning this mystical influence of the inner world, De la Mare has much more to say than his contemporaries: "...his contribution is typically individual and remote from the times in which he found himself. While writers like Conrad and Kipling explored the outer world, De la Mare sought to explore the inner world of mind. Conrad, Kipling and De la Mare were impelled by the same Psychological curiosity characterised by romantic inspiration."

The author vividly describes the setting and implication of De la Mare's long philosophic poems like 'The Traveller' and 'Winged Chariot', relating to 'an inward journey of the mind'. He also throws light on this dominant theme that plays a big part in his symbolic story of 'The Three Royal Monkeys' (The Three Mulla-Mulgars) and a few other prose works. This even leads the author to reminisce about his early days blessed by Bhagavān Śrī Ramana Maharishi.

De La Mare on Love, God, and Dream, and his practical philosophy and compassionate nature are all handled well by the author. Hear the poet himself:

"When then in memory I look back  
To childhood's visioned hours I see  
What now my anxious soul doth lack  
Is energy in peace to be  
At one with nature's mystery." (DREAMS)

"We who in one strange kiss  
Have proved a dream the world's realities  
Need heed no more of life, waste no more breath  
On any other journey but of death."

(THE REMONSTRANCE)

"I can't abear a butcher,  
I can't abide his meat,  
The ugliest shop of all is his,  
The ugliest in the street;  
Baker's are warm, cobbler's dark,  
Chemists burn watery lights;  
But oh the sawdust butcher's shop,  
That ugliest of sights!" (I CAN'T BEAR)

This is an admirable work on a subject difficult to tackle, but the author's style of writing makes for comfortable and easy reading. The bibliography is meticulously detailed. It is hoped that the reprint of this book will be more carefully composed.

In essence a useful, informative survey, honest, unflattering and lucid.

-- R. Rāmasāmi

**THE POWER OF PLACES AND HUMAN ENVIRONMENTS**  
—AN ANTHOLOGY: By James A. Swan. Pub: Quest Books, The Theosophical Publishing House, P.O. Box 270, Wheaton, Illinois, U.S.A. pp. xvi+362, \$14.95

The book under review is an anthology containing twenty five learned and scholarly articles under five divisions: The Meaning of place; Traditional view of Place; Ancient and

Modern Geomanics; Modern Science and Ancient Wisdom; The Spirit of Place in Modern Times. It is the collective result of many, many people who have participated in the 1988 and 1989 Spirit of Place symposia with the support of Beldon Fund, the JRM Foundation, Joshua Mailman, Laurance Rockefeller, University of Extension of U.C. Davis and Grace Cathedral. Wife of James A. Swan, Mrs. Roberta co-produced the symposia with great skill and patience.

In an age when one feels loss of one's connection to the planet, this book is a boon to discover our own relationship to the life around us, and offers a deeper meaning for those who would reverse the ecologically senseless onslaught of civilization. The articles in this book are exciting, highly intelligent and fun, and try to educate us about our relationship to the earth.

The book is a superior anthology of articles, and an important step on the path of creating a multi-cultural overview of the role of sacred places in all people's lives. It is a 'Land Ethic' that cherishes humanity, other living creatures, and the land that sustains all life.

This Anthology is of great interest in twentieth century when there is so much of talk on environmental pollution and ecological imbalance. James A. Swan and his Mrs. Roberta have done great service by bringing out this valuable anthology of the power of place and human environments.

— Prof. K.S. Rāmakrishna Rāo

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## BOOKS RECEIVED

**THE ESSENTIAL PRACTICE - I:** by Ven. Webu Sayadaw. Pub: Buddhist Publication Society, P.Box 61, Kandy, Sri Lanka. pp. 46

**NOTHING HIGHER TO LIVE FOR:** by Bhikku Nyana-sobhano. Pub: as above. pp. 16

**RAMANA MAHARSHI ENSINAMENTOS ESPIRITUAIS:** (Spiritual Teaching of Ramana Maharshi, in Portuguese) tr. Terezinha Santos. Pub.: Editora Cultrix, Rue Dr. Mario Vicente, 374-04270, Sao Paulo. pp. 148

**DHARMĀDVĀITAM:** by Anthony Elenjmittam. Pub: :Basic Education Pub., Aquinas Hall, Bombay 400 050. pp. 509

**101 STORIES FOR YOU AND ME:** by J.P. Vaswani. Pub: Gita Pub House, 10, Sadhu Vaswani Path, Pune. pp. 191, Rs. 35/-.

**TICKET TO HEAVEN:** by J.P. Vaswani. Pub: as above. pp. 120, Rs. 25/-.

**WHY DO GOOD PEOPLE SUFFER?:** by J.P. Vaswani. Pub: as above. pp. 111, Rs. 30/-.

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# Ashram Bulletin

SRI BHAGAVAN'S  
ARADHANA CELEBRATIONS  
AT SRI RAMANASRAMAM (19.4.93)



SRI VIDYA HAVAN (19.3.93)



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## SRI RAMANA JAYANTI

AT SRI RAMANASRAMAM (9.1.93)



At LUCKNOW



At BOMBAY



Hon'ble Sri Madhukarrao Choudhri, Speaker, Maharashtra Legislative Assembly (r) garlanding Sri Bhagavan's portrait on Ramana Jayanti, assisted by Sri P.V. Somasundaram

Sri Papaji (Poonjaji) doing aarti to Sri Bhagavan's portrait on Jayanti day

**CELEBRATIONS**



**At ARUNACHALA ASHRAMA, New York City, U.S.A.**



**At SOCIETY OF ABIDANCE IN TRUTH, Santa Cruz, U.S.A.**



**At VIGNANA RAMANEEYA ASHRAMA, PALGHAT. Sri Mridananda Swami speaks.  
To his left: Sri N.S. Ramanan and Dr. P. Achutan.**



**At SRI RAMANA KSHETRA, JINNUR. Sri Nannagaru (B.V.L.N. Raju) speaks.**



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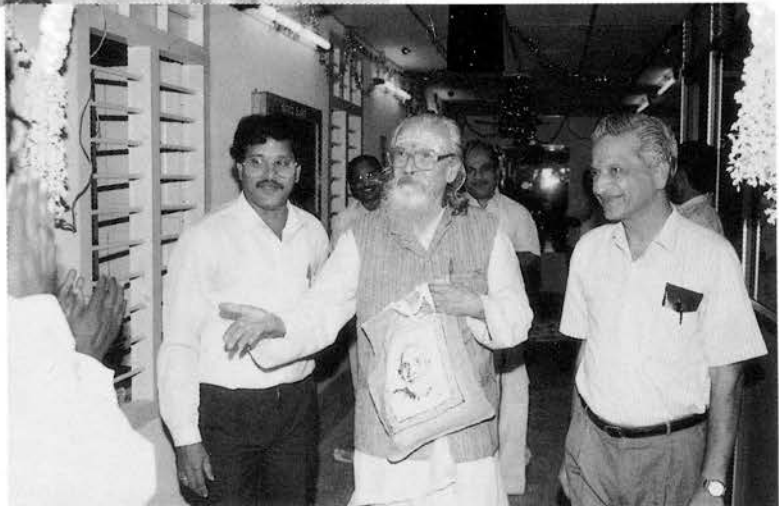
**FUNCTIONS PARTICIPATED BY ASHRAM PRESIDENT,  
SRI T.N. VENKATARAMAN**

**At HYDERABAD** — Release of *Sri Ramana Maharshi Tho Sambhashanalu* — a fresh translation into Telugu of TALKS WITH SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI — by **Sri M. Subba Rao**. The first copy is being handed over by **Sri T.N. Venkataraman** to **Sri K. Bhappi Raju**, then Minister of Andhra Pradesh. **Sri Nannagaru** is seen at extreme left.

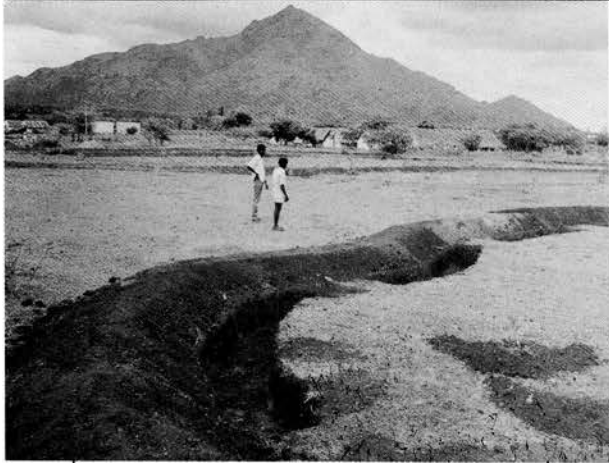


**SANMARGA DAYASRAMAM** (Orphanage and Physically Handicapped Children's Home) Kattu Nallanpillai Petral Village, Tiruvannamalai-606602. **Sri T.N. Venkataraman** declares open 'Bhagavan's Home'. **Sri Kalai Nambi** (who runs the Orphanage) is seen to the left of the Ashram President.

**Sri T.N. Venkataraman** declares open the Tiruvannamalai branch of the **Vysya Bank**. To his right **Sri P. Gunasekaran**, Manager, Vysya Bank and to his left is **Sri V.S. Ramanan**, Manager of Sri Ramanasramam.



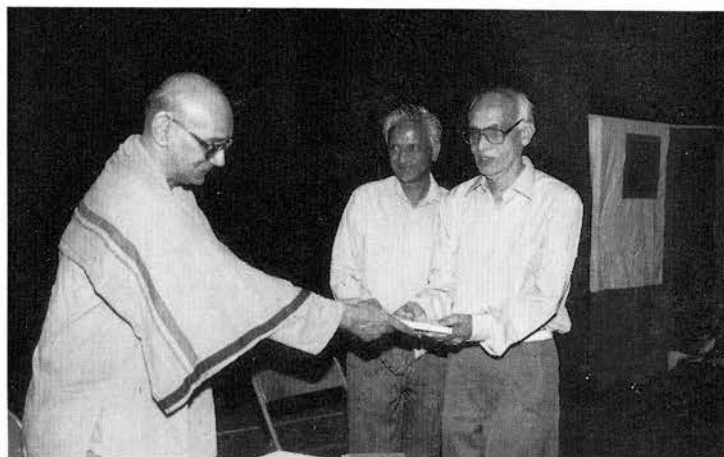
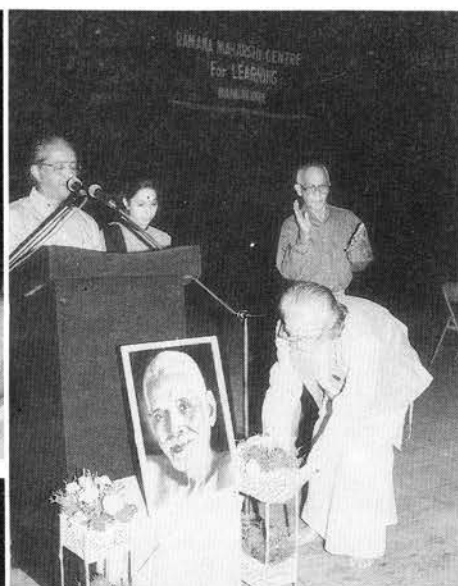
**ANNAMALAI  
REFORESTATION SOCIETY'S  
ONWARD ACTIVITIES**



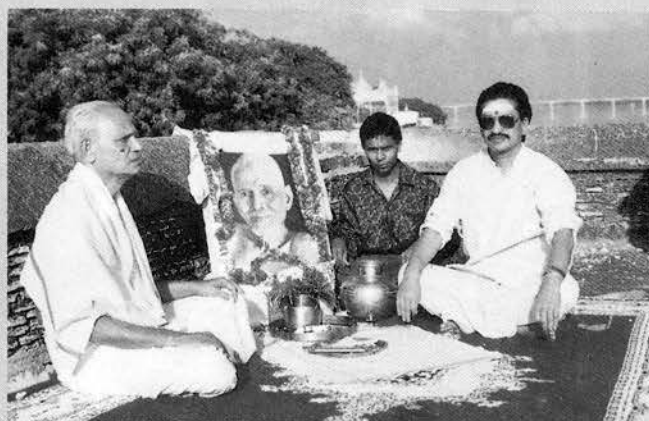
**EYE CAMPS AT SRI RAMANASRAMAM**  
Arvind Eye Hospital, Madurai (with cooperation from Sri V. Dwaraknath Reddy) conducted two

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**RAMANA MAHARSHI CENTRE FOR LEARNING, BANGALORE  
DASABDHI CELEBRATIONS AND 16TH NATIONAL SEMINAR AND CULTURAL FESTIVAL**



**RAMANA KENDRA, GHAZIPUR, U.P.**



To house the 'Ramana Kendra', a building is being raised in the upstairs of 'Annapoorna Bhavan', situated right on the bank of the Holy Ganges (right); in Nov.'92, our Editor inaugurated it. (l to r) Sri R.N. Khare, the donor, Pigne and our Editor. Ganga Mata is seen as the backdrop.

## Obituary

### Sampurnamma

Sampurnamma, quite a familiar figure at the Ashram to devotees old and new alike, attained the Lotus Feet of Sri Bhagavan on the 19th April. It was Sri Bhagavan's *Aradhana* Day and at 6.15 in the evening when *puja* to Sri Bhagavan was about to commence, she breathed her last. It was *Pradosha* time. An added significance to the occasion was that it also happened to be a Monday. She was about 94.



She first met Sri Bhagavan some time in 1928. During her next visit in 1932 she had the opportunity to sit before Sri Bhagavan and experience a state in which thoughts stood still, even though she did not consciously attempt meditation. It was a rewarding visit in more ways than one. Sri Bhagavan Himself gave her a copy of *Who am I?*

In her next visit she was asked to help in the Ashram kitchen. A better opportunity for close proximity to Sri Bhagavan could not be imagined and Sampurnamma got trained in the fine art of cooking under His direct supervision. Sri Bhagavan taught the proper way of boiling vegetables, grinding the ingredients, stewing, etc., and this careful way of cooking demanded the utmost attention of those partaking in the work. His instruction was to put the lid on when vegetables were cooking. He elaborated on this and used to say, "It is the same with the mind. You must put a lid over it and let it simmer quietly. Then only does a man become food fit for God to eat."

It was under the tender care and direction from Sri Bhagavan that Sampurnamma perfected herself as a good cook. No wonder when once she had to go away from the Ashram, temporarily, Sri Bhagavan remarked: "Oh, our best lady cook wants to go away!"

Once Sri Bhagavan presented her with a copy of *Ribhu Gita* and asked her to study the book. When she wanted to be excused on the ground that she did not understand a word of it, Sri Bhagavan persisted and asked her to read it all the same. "It does not matter that you do not understand," He said. "Still it will be of benefit to you."

Thus Sampurnamma's life which had the full potential of becoming one of sorrow and grief due to early widowhood and childlessness was transformed into an active and spiritualised way of life spent in the service of others. In her later years Sampurnamma could not do much work in the kitchen in the routine manner due to old age and poor health. But she still spent the time usefully, listening to the *parayana* and watching *puja* to the Shrines, both in the morning and in the evening.

Though her physical condition warranted that she should stay away at her native town with her relatives, Sampurnamma adamantly insisted that she would stay

put and would drop her body only at Holy Arunachala. And, she did it, heroically too. Aspirants are grateful to Sampurnamma for her sharing with fellow-devotees the experiences of and anecdotes on Sri Bhagavan.

We record with gratitude the assistance and nursing help rendered by Nartaki and Manfred (Viriya) Wiesberger to Sampurnamma in her last days.

This dedicated cook is a good 'food' for Arunachala, indeed!

\* \* \*

### M.P. Pandit

Sri M.P. Pandit, a staunch devotee of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, was regarded as a perfect instrument for spreading their message and carrying out the work dear to their hearts.

A profound scholar and author of many books of high standard, he was an authority on *Tantra* in particular. His great abilities as a reviewer require special mention. One can be certain of finding a couple of his reviews in any journal picked up even at random.



Readers of THE MOUNTAIN PATH are only too familiar with his reviews. He was a source of strength to us in the sense that books sent to him were not only reviewed in expert fashion, they were also returned expeditiously.

He passed away in Madras on March 14, after a brief illness. We have lost a fragrant and fully ripened fellow-pilgrim in the passing away of Sri M.P. Pandit.

\* \* \*

### A.K. Ramachandra Aiyar

Sri A.K. Ramachandra Aiyar, father of Sri A.R. Natarajan, was an epitome of surrendered devotion to Sri Bhagavan. He passed away in Madras, after a brief illness, at the ripe old age of 90 years.

In *Ramana Smrti*, Bhagavan's Birth Centenary Souvenir, there is a record of his meeting with Sri Maharshi, in 1930:

"I was specially blessed on this occasion as I saw Him all alone in the dining hall in the early hours of the morning. I caught hold of His holy Feet, as Markandeya caught the Lingam, and beseeched Him to bless me. With tender love beaming out of His eyes, He said, 'It will be all right in the end'... I



have always cherished in my heart those words of benediction and those blessed moments, as the most worthwhile event in my life".

May Sri Ramachandra Aiyar rest in peace at the altar of his choice — the Twin Sacred Feet of Bhagavan Ramana!

Hall enabled him in later years to give impressive talks on His teachings. After retirement he stayed in the Ashram for some time and did useful service.

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### M.S. Nagarajan



In the death of Sri M.S. Nagarajan we have lost an old and staunch Ramana-*bhakta*. Having come to the Ashram at a very young age, he had the privilege of doing *puja* to Sri Mathrubuteswara for some time. His proximity to Sri Bhagavan in the Old

### Pachaiappan



We are sorry to report the death of Pachaiappan, an old servant of the Ashram. First engaged as a worker in the garden and subsequently as a construction worker during the building of Sri Mathrubuteswara Temple, Pachaiappan had done different types of work at the Ashram, all these years. He will always be remembered by the Ashramites as an obedient and humble worker.

## FORTHCOMING FESTIVALS

<b>MATHRUBUTESWARA MAHA PUJA</b>	<b>Sunday</b>	<b>13.6.1993</b>
<b>GURU POORNIMA (Vyasa Puja)</b>	<b>Saturday</b>	<b>3.7.1993</b>
KRISHNA JAYANTHI (Gokulashtami)	Tuesday	10.8.1993
DAY OF BHAGAVAN'S ADVENT TO ARUNACHALA	Wednesday	1.9.1993
VINAYAKA CHATHURTHI	Sunday	19.9.1993
<b>NAVARATHRI FESTIVAL(commences on)</b>	<b>Saturday</b>	<b>16.10.1993</b>
SARASWATHI PUJA	Saturday	23.10.1993
DEEPAVALI	Saturday	13.11.1993
SKANDA SHASHTI	Friday	19.11.1993
<b>KARTHIGAI FESTIVAL (commences on)</b>	<b>Friday</b>	<b>19.11.1993</b>
<b>KARTHIGAI DEEPAM</b>	<b>Sunday</b>	<b>28.11.1993</b>
<b>SRI BHAGAVAN'S JAYANTI</b>	<b>Thursday</b>	<b>30.12.1993</b>
PONGAL	Friday	14.1.1994
CHINNA SWAMIGAL ARADHANA	Thursday	27.1.1994
<b>MAHA SIVARATRI</b>	<b>Thursday</b>	<b>10.3.1994</b>
<b>SRI VIDYA HAVAN</b>	<b>Friday</b>	<b>18.3.1994</b>
TELUGU NEW YEAR'S DAY	Tuesday	12.4.1994
TAMIL NEW YEAR'S DAY	Thursday	14.4.1994

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I, T.N. Venkataraman, hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Date: 31.3.93

Signature of the Publisher: (SD) T.N. Venkataraman

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