

SRI RAMANA JYOTHI

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AVOID CONFUSION

This world appearance is a confusion as the blue sky is an optical illusion. It is better not to let the mind dwell on it. Neither freedom from sorrow nor realization of one's real nature is possible as long as the conviction does not arise in us that the world-appearance is unreal. The objective world is a confusion of the real with the unreal.

– *Yoga Vasishtha*

THE MIND: It is complex. It is logical and illogical, rational and irrational, good and bad, loving and hating, giving and grabbing, full of hope and help, while also filled with hopelessness and helplessness. Mind is a paradox, unpredictable with its own ways of functioning. It is volatile and restless; yet, it constantly seeks peace, stillness and stability. To be with the mind means to live our lives like a roller-coaster ride. The stability and stillness that we seek, the rest and relaxation that we crave for, the peace and calmness that we desperately need, are not to be found in the arena of mind. That is available only when we link to our Higher Self, which is very much with us. But we have to work for it. – *P.V. Vaidyanathan*

LOOK AT THE BRIGHT SIDE: Not everyone will see the greatness we see in ourselves. Our reactions to situations that don't fit our illusions cause us to suffer. Much of the negative self-talk is based upon reactions to a reality that does not conform to our illusory expectations. We have much to celebrate about, which we forget. Make a list of blessings right now: friends, freedom, material abundance, mobility, spiritual pursuits and more. With a constant sense of gratitude comes peace, contentment and the unfolding of a whole new world before our eyes. To cultivate gratitude, say 'thank you' to everyone and for everything we have. – *Bhava Ram*

CONTEMPLATION AND COMPASSION: A truly intelligent mind is one which can comprehend and experience the sorrow of another as one's own – and in this experience

the mind ‘feels’ the interconnectedness of life, beyond the limited ‘I-me-mine’ thought process, which has conditioned us. *Karuna* is the great spiritual force which separates the evolved from not so-evolved...Compassion is the healing meditative tool to tear away the veil of ignorance that makes us think we are all separate entities. The contemplative path and the path of compassion are really one. – *Pranav Khullar*

THIRUKKURAL OR KURAL

Thiruvalluvar, author of the immortal *Thirukkural* was a celebrated Tamil poet, who is thought have lived sometime between 2nd BC and 8th AD. The book is one of the most revered ancient works in Tamil. This collection of 1330 rhyming Tamil couplets is organised into 133 chapters dealing with a large and varied themes, two of which are summarized below. The government of Tamil Nadu celebrates 15th January as Thiruvalluvar Day as part of Pongal celebrations in his honour.

In praise of God

1. ‘A’ is the first and source of all the letters, so is God the first, and source of all the world.
2. What has learning profited a man, if it has not led him to worship Him who is pure knowledge itself?
3. The Supreme dwells within the lotus of the heart. Those who reach His splendid feet dwell endearingly within unearthly realms.
4. Draw near the Feet of Him who is free of desire and aversion, and live forever free of suffering.
5. A long and joyous life rewards those who remain firmly on the faultless path of Him who controls the five senses.
6. They alone dispel the mind's distress who take refuge at the Feet of the Incomparable One.
7. The boundless ocean of births can be crossed, but not without intimate union with Infinity's Holy Feet.

On renunciation

1. After a man has renounced, he enjoys the many true things in this world.

2. The five senses must be subdued and every desire simultaneously surrendered.
3. He who slays the conceit which clamours 'I' and 'mine', will enter a realm above the celestials' world.
4. If one clings to his attachments, refusing to let go, sorrows will not let go their grip on him.
5. Attach yourself to Him who is free from all attachments. Bind yourself to that Bond in order that all other bonds may be broken. – *The Internet*

KAMAKSHI: Siva destroyed Kama, but his wife is Kamakshi – one whose eyes awaken desire or one who has beautiful eyes. In a way, what Siva destroys and resists, ends up becoming his better half. In her grand temple at Kanchi near Chennai, she is depicted as holding symbols associated with the god of love – sugarcane bow, the arrows made of flowers and a parrot. Legend has it that here Parvati worshipped a Sivalingam made out of sand, under a mango tree and gained Siva's hand in marriage. – *Devdutt Pattanaik*

SRI RAMANA REMINISCENCES

By S. Srinivas

As a high school student, I came across Paul Bruton's book which contained a vivid sketch of Sri Ramana's life. It made a deep impression on me and I developed a great reverence for the Maharshi. In 1947, when a college student, my grandmother took me to the ashram to show me the Maharshi in person. We waited along with a few others to witness the arrival of the Maharshi from the hill after his morning walk. As he arrived and stood close to us, all eyes were glued on him with awe and reverence. A simple person, without any pretence of sainthood; as he stood stately and spoke a few words freely with a smile, his presence was captivating with an inexpressible grandeur, an awe inspiring peace and calmness. I felt deeply merged in peace radiating from his presence.

From there he walked slowly to his hall and sat on his divan. We also went and took our seat in the hall. The Maharshi was soon in a trance-like posture. It was as if he was looking everywhere and nowhere. The atmosphere was all peace. Time simply passed away without anyone feeling its passing till we heard the dining hall bell calling the devotees to lunch.

The Maharshi walked to the dining hall and all followed. He had the same menu as others. I was told that he does not allow any special attention or service being made to him. As he ate he did not appear to show particular interest in any menu; he was mixing up all that was served and ate without indication of any choice or taste. After lunch the Maharshi went to the hall.

By evening the Maharshi moved on to the veranda of the hall and sat on the divan to be with the devotees who had already collected there. All were sitting facing him in a prayerful mood. We had to leave his holy company to catch our train.

From then on, the Maharshi's presence is deeply etched in my mind and is always green in my memory. I always look to him with reverence and devotion. His teaching guides me in my aspiration to experience and get into the knowledge of truth, though it is difficult to succeed in the endeavour. However, the effort itself brings in a lot of peace and gives great strength of mind to face the flux of life. – Excerpted from *The Ramana Way*, September, 2011

THE GUNAS: The Gita describes three types of men, characterized by *tamas*, *rajas* and *sattva*. One who is deluded, unsteady, deceitful, despondent, arrogant and procrastinating, is dominated by *tamas*. *Rajas* is characterized by passion and restlessness that dominate the average human being, with all attendant discord and sufferings. We are *rajasic* when too selfish, greedy, violent, easily elated or downcast and prone to fear and worry. *Sattva* dominates us when we work free from attachment and egotism, being endowed with fortitude and enthusiasm, and are by and large unaffected by success or failure. A *sattvic* person is often silent, his mind being engaged in spiritual thoughts. Our constant endeavour has to be to enhance *sattvic* tendencies in ourselves, and reduce *rajasic* and *tamasic* attributes. – Swami Yatiswarananda

BE QUIET: When I tell people to keep quiet, it is not easy for everyone to follow. Most people feel they need to do something, to put something in practice. When I say, 'Be quiet', it is not a practice. Some who come to see me say, 'I do not understand.' What is there to understand? Simply be quiet. – this is what you really are. In keeping quiet you discover what you really are. – Papaji

MA DURGA: The word 'Durga' means a fort – something which is difficult to access. It is a pointer to the fact that her origin is traced to the determined efforts of all the harassed gods who had to share their power and weapons with her to make her powerful enough to successfully challenge the rampaging demons. She is also hailed as 'Bhukti mukti pradayani' suggesting that she can grant freedom from material bondage to

achieve ultimate liberation. The presentation of the protracted battle every year shows that it is not easy to rid oneself of the pernicious instincts entrenched within us. – *M.N. Chatterjee*

THE GOSPEL OF SRI RAMAKRISHNA

1. It is one thing to believe beyond doubt that fire exists in wood, but it is quite another to get fire from the wood, cook rice with its help and be satisfied.
2. With firm and unwavering belief, the followers of God with form will realize Him, as well as those who speak of Him as formless. You can eat a cake either straight or sidewise; it will taste sweet either way.
3. The God of worldly people is like our saying ‘I swear by God’. Or, it may be God of a person who while walking in the garden exclaims to his friend, Ah! What a beautiful flower God has made.
4. Can one find God in the sacred books? By reading the scriptures one may feel that God exists. But God does not reveal Himself to a man unless he himself dives deep. Only after the plunge, one’s doubt can get destroyed. By scholarship you may fool a man, but not God.
5. Nothing can be realised without His grace. Strive with a longing heart for His grace. Through His grace you will see Him and He will talk to you.
6. A worldly man is suffering from delirious fever, as it were. There is neither end nor limit to his desire for worldly enjoyment. Live in the world but hold fast to His Lotus Feet with one hand and with the other do your duties. When you get a respite from your duties, cling to God’s feet with both hands – live in solitude and meditate on Him.
7. Prey to God in secret and with yearning. Shed tears for Him. A man sheds tears because his wife is sick, or because he is losing money, or because he is worrying about getting a job. But who ever weeps for God?
8. Give God the power of attorney. With all the sincerity of the heart resign yourself to God and drive all your worries out of your mind. God Himself carries on His shoulders all the responsibilities of a person who thinks of Him with single-minded devotion.
9. A man cannot get rid of body-consciousness as long as he is attached to worldly things. As he becomes less and less attached to worldly things, he approaches nearer and nearer to the knowledge of Self. It is difficult to separate the kernel of a coconut from

the shell before the milk inside has dried up. When the milk dries up, the kernel rattles inside the shell. At that time it loosens itself from the shell. The sign of a man having realised God is that he becomes like a dry coconut. He does not seek the comforts of the body.

10. If the matches are dry, you get spark by striking only one of them. If they are damp, you do not get a spark even if you strike fifty. Similarly, if your mind is soaked in the pleasure of the worldly things, then God-consciousness will not be kindled in you. No sooner does attachment to worldly pleasures dry up then the spark of God flashes forth.

11. Egotism, sleep, gluttony, lust, anger and the like are traits of people with *tamas*. Men with *rajas* entangle themselves in many activities. When he worships God he wears a silk cloth. He has string of *rudraksha* beads around his neck, and in between the beads he puts a few gold ones. When he gives charity he makes a show of it. But a man endowed with *sattva* is quiet and peaceful. He does not hanker after name and fame. His worship, charity and meditation are all done in secret. *Sattava* is the last step of the stairs; next is the roof. As soon as *sattva* is acquired there is no further delay in attaining God. – Summarized from *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras.

LORD SUBRAMANYAN

By Devdutt Pattanaik

As Sri Ramana is considered an incarnation of Lord Subramanyan by a large number of devotees, it would of interest to know the following about the Lord.

After the great war at Kurukshetra, the Pandavas were haunted by dreams of dying warriors. To help them heel and sleep well, they were advised to pour sesame oil on the image of Kartikeya that is now enshrined in the city of Pehowa in Kurukshetra district of Haryana.

Kartikeya or Kumara was once a popular god especially during the Gupta period. He was the god of warriors, resplendent on his peacock, bearing a spear in his hand and a flag displaying the image of rooster. He was associated with the plant Mars and was shown to be aggressive. He was the patron of warrior communities. He was handsome, athletic and virile. His virility could be because to create him, Siva's seed had to be incubated in several wombs: those of fire, wind, and water, before being nurtured by the stars of the Kritika constellation, hence the name Kartikeyan. He was six men rolled into one, often

called the six-faced one, Shanmukha. According to some, his name Skanda linked him with Sikander, Alexander, whose love for war brought him to India.

But then his popularity waned, perhaps because of the rise of monastic orders and pacifist movements (Jainism and Buddhism). It is said that he shunned the company of women. One legend says that as he wanted to stay away from women, he completely renounced his flesh and blood, parts of his body that came from his mother, which is why the image in the temple at Pehowa (Kurukshetra) is said to be *Kankaal*, made of bones only.

In Maharashtra, women invoke him on the full moon day of the month of Kartik following the Deepavali-Dussehra festival season. He is seen as a monk-warrior, a fierce ascetic god, who became so when his parents, Siva and Shakti, allowed his brother Ganesha to be married before him. So he moved south, away from his parents. And in the south, especially on the hills of Palani near Madurai, he was adored very differently. He was boy-god, the cherubic child-warrior, who was also the romantic youth – Murgan – dark and beautiful, seductive and powerful, who danced with peacocks and who was loved by local tribes. He participated in the epic battles against demons, accompanied by Kotravai, the local, fiercer version of his warrior-mother, Durga.

In Tamil Nadu, he is associated with chastity as well as marriage. Images of the celibate warrior with spear in hand were given to merchants making sea voyages to South-east Asia so that they did not lose their character on foreign shores, like common sailors. But atop the hills, in the mainland, he is depicted with two wives, Sena and Valli.

Sena was the daughter of Indra, who made Kartikeya his son-in-law in gratitude for leading his armies into many successful battles against demons like Taraka and Surapadman, the latter referred to only in Tamil chronicles. But the wife who fired the imagination of the local people was Valli. Tales of how the god seduced the spirited tribal lass in her father's millet field is the stuff of many ballads.

In time, Kartikeya-Murugan became the most popular Hindu deity in Tamil Nadu, rivalling Krishna as well as his father Siva. He was the perfect child to mothers, a strong upright friend for men, a noble, chaste warrior to married women, and the romantic youth from the north to unmarried girls. He was Subramanyan – the perfect jewel, much loved by all. – Speaking Tree, *Times of India* supplement, October 9, 2011.

TRUE VALUE: A well-known speaker started by holding a \$ 20 bill and asked, “Who would like this?” Hands started going up. He then crumpled the bill and asked, “Who now wants it?” Still the hands were up. He then dropped the bill on the floor and started

grinding it with his shoe. Picking up the dirty and torn bill from the ground he asked the same question. Still the hands went in the air. “My friends,” he said, “You have learnt a valuable lesson. Many times in our lives, we are dropped, crumpled, and crushed by the dirt of decisions made or the circumstances that come our way. We feel as though we are worthless. But no matter what has happened, you will never lose your value. Don’t forget this!” – *The Internet*

KNOW YOUR TRUE SELF: You give no attention to your Self. Your mind is all with things, people and ideas, never with your Self. Bring your Self into focus, become aware of your own existence. Study the prison you have built around your Self by inadvertence. The way back to your Self is through refusal and rejection. Once obsession with the body goes, you will revert to your natural state, spontaneously and effortlessly. Just like gold made into ornaments has no advantage over gold, except when the mind makes it so, so are we one in being – we differ only in appearance. We discover it by being earnest, by searching, enquiring, questioning daily and hourly, by giving one’s life to this discovery. – *Nisargadatta Maharaj*

HOW TO LIVE LIFE: Life is like a notebook with several pages. It is up to us to scribble on it, or write a poem on it. Irrespective of what we do with the page, we can still turn to the next page. Once again we have the choice of either scribbling on it or drawing a beautiful picture on it. Till the pages of the notebook end, the freedom of choice to use, under use or abuse them rests with us. The dawn of every day offers us the choice of how we use the day. Assuming we have wasted a large part of our life, we can still make a beginning starting today. Only today let us be smiling, patient, loving and blissful. Let us live to make this day our best day. – *T.T. Rangarajan*

BOOK REVIEW: Sri Ramana Maharshi –The Supreme Guru, by Alan Jacobs, Yogi Impressions Books, pp. 143, price Rs. 250. (www.yogiimpressions.com)

Bhagavan Sri Ramana’s life story never fails to fascinate all those who have spiritual inclinations, irrespective of religion, language or nationality. The latest biography of Sri Bhagavan to appear on the scene is that of Alan Jacobs. The author, President, Ramana Maharshi Foundation, UK, is well-known to Ramana devotees the world over, through his articles and poems published in *Mountain Path*. This biography has been written by way of introducing Bhagavan and his Teachings, especially to the western devotees. It is brief and yet covers all major events in Sri Bhagavan’s life with adequate details. Jacobs has seen fit to include the full text of “Who Am I” – which, in the author’s words is ‘Sri Ramana’s historic seminal text’ – so that the quintessence of his teachings is conveyed along with Bhagavan’s life story.

Jacobs's style is simple and concise. His versified rendering in English of Kavya Kantha's *Forty Verses in Praise of Sri Ramana* – included as an Appendix – is outstanding. Equally exquisite is 'Sri Ramana Corona', a beautiful summary of Bhagavan's teachings, in poetic form.

Spiritual aspirants in all parts of the world, desirous of getting to know about Sri Ramana Maharshi, will benefit by this concise biography.

(The reviewer V. Krithivasan is a scholar devotee, and a former President of Sri Ramana Kendram, Hyderabad)

CHANGE ATTITUDE: You have a fundamental choice in every situation, at every moment. You could have the best of things and still be miserable. You may have nothing and yet be happy. The difference is in your attitude. In life, everyone is denied a few things. But all of us have been blessed with many gifts. If you focus on what you do not have, you will be unhappy. If you choose to focus on the things you have, you are grateful and develop desire to share and give. All selfish people are unhappy. To the extent you turn unselfish you will be happy. The world and all that it offers is temporary, fleeting, passing. Understand the transient nature of the world, and you will be happy. Transact with the world, enjoy it, but always remember that it will pass. Begin the search for the permanent. The journey itself becomes thrilling. – *Jaya Row*

EXPERIENCE THE TRUTH: Scriptures help us to get a vision; we get a vivid account of the glory and splendour of the omnipresence, omniscience and omnipotence of the Absolute Truth. However, we have to progress on the spiritual path only by our own efforts. We have accumulated vast mounds of information about the Truth, but very few have experienced the Truth. Truth, which is absolute, can never be comprehended by the human mind since it is relative. We are that Self which is a part of the cosmic consciousness and therefore beyond death and destruction. Acute awareness of this fact is essential to experience Truth. – *Sreeram Manoj Kumar*

EGO: It separates us from the rest of the universe. Our ego invariably finds expression in pride and haughtiness, and is often what makes us our worst enemies. It must, therefore, not be given a free rein. We have to extricate ourselves from its subservience, and transform its energy into a reinvigorating force that helps us to connect with our aspired Self. – *Harsh Kabra*

PARIJATA – THE CELESTIAL TREE: This is one of the items believed to be thrown up during the cosmic churning. Its white flower with orange stem blossoms

during August and December. It is the only flower that has to be picked up from the ground and offered to gods. It should not be plucked. This belief is based on a mythological story according to which princess Parijataka fell in love with the sun, but failed to win him over. Heart broken, she committed suicide and a tree sprang from her ashes. As she is unable to stand the sight of the sun, the tree flowers only at night and sheds them like teardrops before the sun rises. – *Speaking Tree*

FAITH: Faith is an important tool in life. Consciously or unconsciously we are living every moment with the help of faith. Take, for instance, the fact that this very moment you are perhaps seated on a chair – you have faith that chair won't break. Faith makes everything possible. You have just to be determined about something, have full faith and faith would take you where you want to go. Have full faith in yourself and in the Divine to sustain your faith. – *Swami Brahmddev*

PLAN YOUR APPROACH: There are as many paths as there are seekers and, therefore, each has to divine that which suits him well: 1. This would be according to one's material, creative and spiritual needs. 2. In which ways, different approaches and attitudes in the past could have yielded better results. 3. How to ensure needed changes, at least from now on? 4. How to ensure that the mistakes are not repeated? Prayerful contemplation enables one to divine one's own 'truths' and plan one's own approach. – *K. Vijayaraghavan*

WHY MYTHS? Our gods exist in the web of our thinking and our myths. We need some celestial nourishment to be fully human. Hence, we invent myths and 'devour' them and are continually nourished by them. Myths are essential substratums of all religions. – *Henryk Skolimowski*

A man can do as he wills, but not will as he wills. – *Schopenhauer*

The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others. – *Mahatma Gandhi*

Wise men talk because they have something to say; fools, because they have to say something. – *Plato*

You can never achieve success unless you like what you are doing. – *Dale Carnegie*

Each species is a masterpiece, a creation assembled with extreme care and genius. – *Edward Wilson*

Failure is the first step towards success. – Anonymous

You are like the sky – always clean and blue. Your thoughts are like the weather always changing. Don't confuse the sky with the weather. The sky is always untainted. – The Internet

All men's miseries derive from not being able to sit in a quiet room alone. – Blaise Pascal

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THE TRUE JNANA

Jnana is given neither from outside nor from another person. It can be realised by each and everyone in his own Heart. The jnana Guru of everyone is only the Supreme Self that is always revealing its own truth in every Heart through the being-consciousness 'I am, I am.' The grace of the Guru is only that Self-awareness that is one's own - Sri Ramana Maharshi

YOUR ARE NOT INCOMPETENT: The thought is only a conditioning created by you. Nobody is unfit. The difference between us and great persons is that they had demolished the thought that they cannot achieve the goal. Forget you are not competent. There are no doors to be opened. All directions are open for you. Be grateful for this human birth. The creator creates only those who are needed. Nothing is useless in His creation. – Osho

NEGATIVE MERCIES: In troubled times be grateful for small mercies. Do your very best and remain content in the knowledge that things could have been infinitely steeper for you. In the deceitful iron age of *Kaliyuga*, remain grateful for negative mercies. If you woke up this morning hale and hearty, that alone is reason enough to be grateful. – Vithal Nandkarni

POST-MONSON FESTIVALS: These witness the death of many demons – Durga kills Mahisasura, Rama kills Ravana, and Krishna kills Narakasura. In Goa, effigies of Narka are burned on Narka Chaturdashi, like effigies of Ravana burned, mostly in the north. – Devdutt Pattanaik

MOTIVATION – A DRIVING FORCE: To accomplish anything you need a driving force. Motivation is that force. To get motivated you need to identify what you want; possess a strong desire and be willing to do whatever it takes to make things happen. To have success, meditate and ask yourself whether the goal is worth your effort and time. Make your goal very clear and think about its benefits. Visualize and contemplate how you will feel once the goal is achieved. Start doing something small keeping your aim in mind. Make sure that you spend at least 10 minutes in the morning focusing on what you truly want to manifest. – *S. B. S. Surendran*

SOME SPIRITUAL HINTS: To change your life you have to change every moment. Your ‘I’ should be anchored to your consciousness. The spiritual work- exercise is to bring consciousness in small activities of life. Be conscious of your voice. Is your body relaxed or tense? Are your thoughts compulsive?...Mind has a self-talk mechanism. As we have not raised the level of our consciousness, our minds keep on chattering. Wait and watch out for thoughts that arise. Shut your eyes and observe for the first, second and the third thought in that order. You will observe that when you are alert, thoughts do not arise. Every thought creates a subtle substance. Negative thoughts create a hurt body; positive thoughts create a bliss body. Whenever a negative thought arises, see yourself as a witness and the thought as witnessed by you. You are an observer and the thought is being observed. Slowly distance yourself from the thought. Learn to develop the taste of being without any self-talk. – *Swami Sukhabodhananda*

KNOW YOUR TRUE NATURE

By Rajiv Vij

The universe is a closed system. There is no new energy or mass being created inside it; there is instead a shuffling and metamorphosis of forms that is happening constantly. Take the example of a snowflake, an ice cube, a water droplet and a steam vapour. All these are nothing but different expressions of the same entity. While the underlying essence of each of these forms is water, we attach different labels to each of the forms and in the process, get distracted from connecting with the truth.

The universe is constantly evolving and, in the process, continues to take different forms – galaxies, stars, planets, animals, plants and humans. All forms arise from the universe and dissolve into it; they are neither born nor die. Death is a concept of the mind and of its identification with the body form.

The butterfly starts with an egg that gets fertilized and hatches into a caterpillar; the caterpillar grows in size, sheds its last skin and in its place grows a tough, flexible shell;

and from this shell emerges a fully developed butterfly. In a few days, the butterfly dies and its remains become organic manure for plants; flowers bloom on the plants; a young butterfly feeds on the nectar and pollen from the flowers, turns it into protein and other nutrients, and lays eggs. And the cycle continues.

Through all these forms of egg, caterpillar and butterfly, the only constant is consciousness. All these forms are impermanent; the only thing eternal is the formless consciousness that just takes different identities from time to time. How else would you describe the transformation of forms in the above example of egg and caterpillar? Would you say, the egg died, or later, the caterpillar died, even though the egg and the caterpillar ceased to be so at some point of time.

With our conditioned beliefs, we tend to identify rather strongly with our physical form – the body, mind and senses. We fail to recognise that the physical form is not solid matter, even though it appears so, but essentially made up of fluid energy – the same energy that runs the universe. This energy is unborn and undying and irrespective of whether we are dead or alive in human form, we remain this consciousness. ‘We are not human beings having a spiritual experience, but spiritual beings having a human experience.’ This awareness would guide us to live our life in harmony with nature’s evolution. That is what brings us true joy and deep inner peace. – *The Speaking Tree*

PARMAHANSA SHOWS THE WAY: Sri Ramakrishna used to ask: Who wants to see God? People shed tears for money, wife and children. But if they would weep for God they would surely see him. Sri Ramakrishna advises us to retire to solitude now and then, analyse our mind, and try to develop firm faith in God. Occasional withdrawals from active life will reinvigorate and help one live life effectively and purposefully... Just as a boy holding to a pillar whirls about it with speed without fear of falling, if you perform your duties fixing your hold firmly upon God you would be able to maintain the necessary detachment. We have to remember God in the same way as the woman carrying pots of water on her head, talking all the way to her friends, without letting the pots fall; as she is subconsciously totally attached to the pots... Spiritual life is in living it, not about theory. So many good sayings are found in holy books, but mere reading them will not make us virtuous. – *Swami Atmashradhananda*

THE CORE OF SRI RAMANA’S TEACHINGS

Once the delusion that we are the body is gone, there will only be joy. We are not able to experience Grace all the time because of our desires and expectations. It can be

experienced only when our desires cease. Grace is always there but it becomes manifest when the mind merges in the Self, either through surrender, or through meditation.

God's very nature is Grace, and this can be experienced at all times only when a person surrenders. A person who surrenders accepts everything as His will. Such a person does not consider anything as good or bad, success or failure. After surrender, there is no individual will. In this state, one feels Grace all the time.

Just as the stems, branches, leaves, flowers and fruit of a tree will continue sprouting, so long as its root survives, so our *vasanas*, desires and thoughts will continue rising and distracting us away from our self-attentiveness so long as their root, our mind, survives.

As long as *vasanas* exist in the mind, the investigation 'Who am I?' is necessary. As and when thoughts arise, then and there, it is necessary for us to annihilate them all by self-investigation or keen and vigilant self-attentiveness in the very place from which they arise.

Until we are able to direct our mind entirely in self-consciousness, we will continue to be distracted by our thoughts; and the struggle between to know our own real self and our outward-going desires will continue.

Though we should always aim to maintain an unbroken continuity of self-attentiveness or self-remembrance, in practice our attempts to do so will often fail, and we will repeatedly succumb to the powerful attraction of our desires and consequent thoughts. However, we should not be disheartened by repeated failures to be constantly self-attentive, and should calmly persevere in our efforts to restore our self-attentiveness, whenever we find that we have lost our hold on it.

This constant struggle between self-attentiveness and self-negligence or self-forgetfulness is *sadhana* or spiritual practice. Calm, patient and steady perseverance is required to win this battle. Regardless of the number of times and frequency of our fall from our natural state of serene self-conscious being, we should rise again and again and try our best to stand firm in it. In this long inner warfare we are never alone, because the Grace of our *sadguru* is always shining in our heart as 'I am', giving us all the subtle help and support that we need in our earnest efforts. – *The Internet*

TULSI: This principal herb of Ayurveda is referred to as the 'the mother medicine of nature'. It is revered as a deity in Hindu households. Vaishnavites use *japa mala* made from *tulsi* stems. It is very dear to Vishnu and is ceremonially married to Vishnu on the

11th bright day in the month of *Kartika*. This ritual, called the ‘Tulsi Vivaha’ inaugurates the annual marriage season. *Tulsi* is rich in antioxidants, vitamin A and C, and calcium. Its leaves and flowers in the form of decoction are used in treating cough and diabetes. – *Speaking Tree*

BE WATCHFUL: Desires are the root of the darkness surrounding you. They are hindrances that do not allow you to become alert. If you really want to get rid of desires do not start fighting them. If you do so, that means you have created a new desire. Do not fight with the desires, be watchful of them. Become more alert. And you will see that more alert you are, the less desires are there. Gradually, very gradually, ripples start subsiding; waves start disappearing. Just be a watcher, a seer; be aloof from all the paraphernalia of the world and the body. Then only you can enjoy. – *Osho*

ZERO IS UNMANIFEST BRAHMN

By Ashutosh Maharaj

In the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, sage Yagyavalka was asked by his pupils to explain the nature of Brahmn, Universal Consciousness. The sage replied: *Neti Neti* – neither This nor That – such is Brahmn. The definition sounds enigmatic. But within this mysterious concept lies the profound philosophy of existence, which can be understood in terms of mathematics. If we look for a mathematical number equivalent to the Upanishadic ‘*Neti Neti*’, it is zero, because zero is neither This nor That; it is neither positive nor negative.

According to Panni, zero is ‘*Adarshanam Lopah*’. It indicates an entity that does exist, but it is invisible. Zero, therefore, represents a mysterious element that has an unseen and unfathomable existence.

In the *Chandogya Upanishad*, sage Udyalak asks his son Shvetketu to cut the seed of a fruit of a banyan tree into two halves. “Could you see anything inside it?” Shvetketu replies, “I can see nothing in it.” The sage remarks, “What you call as nothing is actually the source of everything. From this *shunya* springs a huge banyan tree.” From *shunya* or absolute zero, springs the entire Universe.

The zero is unmanifest Brahmn. The value of a standalone zero remains unmanifest. It gets manifested or quantified only when it combines itself with other numerals. Similarly, Brahmn alone remains *avyakta* or unmanifest. It is only in unison with matter

that it manifests itself. Only then, *nirguna*, the unmanifest, becomes *saguna*, the manifest, quantifiable and qualitative.

Zero is neutral. It simply quantifies the integer combined with it, be it positive or negative. If it is combined with -1, it quantifies it to -10, with +1, it makes it +10. Quite analogous to zero is the nature of Brahmn. If we employ it with negative mental propensity, it leads to wrong actions; with positive mindset, it leads to goodness. –
Speaking Tree

REMINISCENCES OF DEVARAJA MUDALIAR

A. Devaraja Mudaliar will always be remembered for his classic *Day by Day with Bhagavan*, which contains a very valuable date-wise record of Bhagavan's replies to the questions and his other utterances in the old hall, from March 1945 to January 1947.

It was in 1900 that I first cast my eyes casually on Bhagavan. From 1914 on I began visiting him, though my visits were few and far between. It was not till 1933 when I had my first great adversity that, true to the old adage, Bhagavan, our God, got his opportunity. From that time on I came more and more under his spell, got to know him better, and as a result have stuck to him forever.

The first thing that struck me, which subsequent closer acquaintance has thoroughly confirmed, was the fact that Bhagavan was no more anxious to annex any devotee who came to him than the devotee was fit to be annexed. Even to draw me nearer, his spell took him nearly twenty years. He waited for time and circumstances to make me ready for him. Ganapathi Muni was so advanced in mantra *japa*, *tapasya*, and had great devotion to Bhagavan. Bhagavan, in return, had great respect for him and showed him great consideration. But even in a case such as this, Bhagavan did not go out of his way to ripen him before his time was due. He was content to wait for the right moment.

I have heard that when, after the passing away of Ganapati Muni, Bhagavan was asked whether, in his case, there was likely to be liberation from all further births. He replied, 'How could it be? He had such a strong desire for more powers?'

The reader should not, however, run away with the impression that Bhagavan does nothing. On the contrary, he does everything, each act in its own proper time, as he alone knows best. In the worst years of my domestic grief, which occurred at the same time as

the end of my professional success, Bhagavan was a source of help and strength, past all description. In that period, a devotee, well known in ashram circles as Thiruppugazh Alamelu, was singing before Bhagavan a song from Bharati's 'Kannan Pattu', but substituting the name Ramana for Kannan. I felt then, and feel even more so now, that all that is said therein of Krishna is true of Bhagavan. The poem says:

'If he wants to initiate a soul in the path of perfection, he can do it in a word. He will tell us how to overcome karma and get on in life. When earnestly sought for, he will come without a moment's delay and without pretexts for holding off. To me, he is what the umbrella is against rain, and food against hunger. He will give me money whenever I ask for it. Bear and forbear even when I scoff at him. Console me with dance and song and know without my telling him what is my heart's desire. Among all saints, where is there one so kind? If I get conceited, he will bring me to my senses by sending a severe blow. He will contemptuously turn away from anything said in hypocrisy. In times of depression, his words of grace will flood our soul with light and cheer. When we have our quarrel with him and feel he has neglected us, he will do something to gladden our heart and fill it with gratitude. When we are in great peril, he will come and stand by us and avert the catastrophe. By his grace all evils will be consumed like moths in a flame.'

From my experience and also the experience of some other devotees, I can affirm all this of Bhagavan, though it must perhaps be added that such things happen to Bhagavan's devotees more in the earlier stages of their affiliation with him than in the later years, after they had become seasoned followers.

This is not to say that nothing bad or painful will ever happen to a devotee. There would still be cases where some calamity, disaster, sickness or pain has to come, as per one's *prarabdha*, which it would not be proper even for great souls such as Bhagavan to prevent altogether. In such cases, I found that Bhagavan greatly softens the blow, or at the very least grants all help and resources in various ways so as to enable the devotee concerned, to tide over the crisis and bear it easily. I have seen all this happen in my own case, as well as in the case of others. Even now I am just passing through the effects of a small mishap which befell me recently. But while the mishap had to come, Bhagavan has seen to it that it came at a time and place, and under circumstances which were the best for one in my position to face.

Once when I asked Bhagavan how, in answer to our earnest prayers to him for help, we get relief, seeing that he has no mind which can desire to send us the required relief, he was pleased to say, 'All will still happen. It will happen automatically.'

There is another trait that I have observed in Bhagavan. Though he was equally accessible and kind to all alike, and though thousands of visitors came and went over the years, there was a small coterie of followers among all this crowd whom he definitely took over for his special care. Here again it must be said that he was not making any choice, for where was there a mind in him to make a choice? Such things were happening automatically. However, to all alike he was immeasurably kind.

Now I must draw attention to another characteristic of Bhagavan. He was extremely humble, affable and accessible, and yet kept all at a distance. There was a royal dignity that clothed the naked Bhagavan, and few could ever allow themselves to forget it. Also, even in his kindest and most indulgent moods, he would never make a concession in stating the truth or advising its pursuit. Kind and loving, as he undoubtedly was, he was, unlike some saints, more the strict father than the indulgent mother. I myself used to call him my father-mother in all my letters to him. Whenever anyone used to sing a Tamil song in which that phrase occurred, Bhagavan would look at me and smile. I mention this here merely to illustrate what great attention he was always paying to his devotees.

While apparently indifferent to the hordes who came and went, he was really closely attentive to all that was happening, and helping wherever he could. Bhagavan has himself said that as soon as someone appears before him, that person was an open book for him. Nothing about us was hidden from him.

Bhagavan's whole teaching can be succinctly expressed in the Biblical quote, 'Be still and know that I am God', that is to say, one should attain quiescence or real *mauna* and realise the Self that is within each of us as 'I am'. To attain this state of thoughtlessness Bhagavan asked us to concentrate on the question 'Who am I?' He wanted us to find the source of this I-thought, which is the root of all other thoughts. Through this enquiry, he said, the individual 'I' will disappear and the Self will emerge. Though Bhagavan always said this *vichara* method was the best, he almost always added, 'If you say this method is too hard for you, or if you are too weak to follow it, you had better completely surrender to God. The same result will follow.'

Thus he advocated the *bhakti* method almost in equal measure, saying that the *bhakta* will eventually come to realise there is only the Self and not a dichotomy of God and devotee. I never, however, saw Bhagavan recommend either the *karma yoga* or *raja yoga* methods.*

– www.davidgodman.org

* Some other reminiscences of Mudaliar are in *Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, a publication of our Kendram, at pages 72-74.

THE BODILESS PRESENCE

By Kenneth Grant

The truly illuminating book 'Maha Yoga' by 'Who', refers to the question put to the Maharshi whether he has seen God. The Sage answered, laughing mildly: "If any one had appeared to me and said, 'I am Shiva' or 'I am Rama' or 'I am Krishna', I could know I had seen such a one. But no one appeared to me, telling me who he was."

It is a failing common to many of us that we, like the ignorant questioner, seek to prove to ourselves the existence of something by trying to make it an object of knowledge. We know not what the sky is, what the mind is, nor what we ourselves are, and so we proceed to qualify these concepts by limiting them to a few or many characteristics, which we can easily grasp with our minds. Yet we never seek to question the nature of the supposed knower of all these things.

When it comes to the question of God, or the Creator of the World, we, like the questioner, expect to be told by a Sage, who has experienced communion therewith, that He is this or He is that. And if the explanation given to us does not accord with the limited and fanciful picture conjured up by our minds, we either turn away disappointed with God or become suspicious of the Sage, who fails to fulfil all we expect of him in the matter of furnishing the details about God, which we ourselves secretly cherish, and which we wish to have confirmed.

There are some who, even in the loftiest flight of mystical experience, insist on making of God an object of knowledge, as when the 'servant-ego' is retained for *Bhakta*, or the 'knowledge-ego' for a *Jnani*. But Bhagavan emphatically declares that *no one* spoke to him and proclaimed himself God. And the reason is that God is void of all those concepts which the mind desperately endeavours to attribute unto Him, for He is God solely *because* He is unlimited by any form or concept; in other words He is not, and never can become, a mere thought-construction. It is evident from the reply which Bhagavan made to the question whether he has seen God that he neither saw, heard, touched, or apprehended God in any way.

Bhagavan in his simple yet cogent reply identifies the Self with the Void, wherein even the highest God cannot exist to be seen or known in any way other than in the full self-realization that reveals God at last to be one with the Self. And this Void is the cavity of

the Heart in each separate and individual formulation which Maya, in Her mysterious manner, imagines into being. If that cavity is entered, the individual *jiva* is merged in the Void and, like Bhagavan, he sees no God, hears no God, knows no God, for he is That truly in the spaceless, timeless and blissful abode of Arunachala Siva, which is the Void nature of the Self.

That the conceptual idea we call God has to be surrendered if we are to enter into and merge with the Self in the cavity of the Heart, is stressed by Bhagavan. In verse 26 of 'Sad-Vidya' this is emphatically expressed as follows: "If the ego is, all else also is. If the ego is not, nothing else is. Verily, the ego is all. Therefore, only the enquiry as to what this ego is, is the giving up of all." And to give up all is to relinquish forever the false conception of God. If only this great truth were grasped and never lost sight of all differences be resolved and all worries dissolved. – Excerpted from *Call Divine*, September, 1953

SUKHMANI SAHIB: It is revered and recited by Sikhs in their morning prayer. It is the most popular composition of guru Arjun Dev, who wrote it for a devotee who was suffering from great physical pain and mental anguish. *Sukhmani Sahib* soothes tired nerves and it rejuvenates the mind and soul. It comprises 24 *ashtapadis* or cantos, and opens with an invocation to the Supreme who is remembered as *adi-guru*, the true guru. It urges that in order to gain peace one should make a constant effort to remember the Name – the only way to realise God is through *nam simran* or chanting God's name, which greatly helps in self-purification. One *ashtapadi* enumerates the traits of a *brahma jnani*: who like the lotus in the water remains detached; always unstained like sun; who looks upon all alike like wind, and within his mind, he is the most humble of all. The guru says that such a person is the Supreme Himself. – *Kulbir Kaur*

It is not the number of books you read, nor the variety of sermons you hear, nor the amount of religious conversation in which you mix, but it is the frequency and earnestness with which you meditate on these things till the truth in them becomes you own and part of your being, that ensures your growth. – *Frederick William Robertson*

Blessed indeed are those who have found a Master with whom they have established connectivity. – *Anonymous*

We tend to blow up small matters a lot and are therefore left with less time for matters that matter a lot. – *B. Chopra*

Half the world is composed of people who have something to say and can't, and the other half who have nothing to say and keep on saying it. – *Robert Frost*

Any subject or object to which you lose yourself completely is your God for that moment. In a way that presence to which you lose yourself so completely is your God in form. – Lata Krishnaswamy

Remember not only to say the right thing in the right place, but far more difficult still, to leave unsaid the wrong thing at the tempting moment. – Benjamin Franklin

The branches of a tree are shaken by the wind, the trunk remains unmoved. Both action and inaction may find room in thee; thy body agitated, thy mind tranquil, thy soul as limpid as a mountain lake. – Madam Blavatsky

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That in which all these worlds seem to exist steadily, that from which all these worlds arise, that by which all these worlds come into existence, and that which is indeed all these - that alone is the existing reality. Let us cherish that Self, which is the Reality, in the Heart. – Sri Ramana Maharshi

DISSOLVE EGO TO BE HAPPY: When you are happy you are ordinary, because to be happy is just to be natural. Trees are happy; so are birds, animals and children. To be blissful is to be absolutely ordinary. The self, the ego, does not allow that. A person becomes happy when there is no ego. The more egoless you are, the more happy; the more happy, the more egoless. ‘You’ cannot exist together with happiness. In happiness there is dissolution. When ‘you’ enjoy the beautiful sun rising, a silent lake, or a flower, suddenly, ‘you’ are not. – Osho

DESIRE: Desire is a good thing. It is good for our growth. Desires are not good when they are based on selfishness, on greed, on ego-satisfaction, and on self-centeredness...If I have to desire, what should be the highest and the best desire? Never ask God to give you anything. Tell God, “I need you. How You fulfill this desire, that is Your problem.” – Swami Brahmdev

TAKE A BREAK FROM ACTION: If we want to live a meaningful life, we need to do some *atma chintan* – introspection, at regular intervals, by asking ourselves: What I am living for? What did I do towards my goal today? What did I do counter to my goal today? What is something that is more important to live for? Instead of Action-Action-Action, a better day may look like this: Action-Reflection-Action. The process of

reflection allows us to review, question, and reassess experiences revealing new insights.
– *Marguerite Theophil*

THE ESSENCE OF *GITA* BASED ON VERSES SELECTED BY BHAGAVAN

The Maharshi at the request of his devotees selected 42 verses from *Gita* to help *sadhakas* in their quest. Some verses out of these are summarized below.

Verse 20 of chapter 10, which was considered as the most important of all verses in *Gita* by Bhagavan is: “I am the Self, O Arjuna, dwelling in the Heart of every being; I am the beginning and the middle, and likewise the end of all beings.”

High they say are the senses; higher than the senses is the mind; and higher than the mind is the understanding; but one who is higher than understanding is He. Thus knowing Him to be higher than the understanding, steadying the self by the Self, O Arjuna, slay the enemy in the form of desire, which is so hard to overcome.

Little by little should one realize tranquility, making the mind abide in the Self. Towards whatever the mind wonders, being fickle and unsteady, it should be withdrawn and brought under the sway of the Self alone.

I undertake to secure and protect the welfare of those who without ‘otherness’ meditate upon Me. The *jnani*, who is ever attuned, whose devotion is centered in One, is the most excellent, and he is dear to Me.

He by whom the world is not disturbed, and who is not disturbed by the world, free from joyful excitement, impatience, fear, and agitation – he is dear to Me.

He who holds honour and dishonour equal, who is equal to those friendly and the foe, who has renounced all enterprise – he is said to have transcended the *gunas*. The man who revels in the Self alone, who is satisfied with the Self, and in Self alone is content – for him there is no work which he must do.

Content to take what chance may bring, having transcended the pairs, free from ill-will, and even-minded in success and failure, though he works, he is not bound.

O Arjuna, with all thy being, surrender unto Him; by His Grace obtain Peace Supreme, the Abode of Eternal. – *The Song Celestial*, Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai

BHAGAVAN'S GRACE FLOWS TO T.V. RAJASEKHAR*

During my school days I used to get Bhagavan's *darshan* in my sleep, but could not make out who he was. This continued for many years. My uncle working in a court office at Tiruvannamalai invited me to his place, but I could not go. In 2003, I saw a book with Bhagavan's photo on front page. Suddenly, I could experience the whole *darshan* series which I had in my dreams years ago.

In 2005, I visited Tirupati. While returning to Hyderabad I happen to see a bus ready to leave for Tiruvannamalai. Without a second thought I boarded it and reached the holy place. Before I reached the outskirts of the town, an unknown man sitting beside me, explained to me the importance of *giri pradakshina* and said that the Arunachala was Shiva Himself, incarnated as hill. The experience of Shiva facing the blue sky just before twilight filled my heart with the sacred concept of Shiva. After getting down from the bus, as I entered the Ashram I regained all the missing things in my life-journey. Bhagavan equipped me with sufficient *chaitanya* and upgraded my soul matching to the needs of this world. His *sharanagati* has stabled my life like a ship anchored in sea. This lovely life is his gift to me.

*Chittoor born Rajashekhar, a devotee of our Kendram, is an executive in Air-India.

As you think, so you shall be. – Socrates

Kindness, helpfulness and deep affection begin to flow naturally from a pure loving heart. – Anonymous

All power is within you, you can do anything. Believe in that. – Swami Vivekananda

Remember, O man, you are dust and unto dust, you shall return. – Genesis 3.19

Your speech should be better than silence, if not, be silent. – A Chinese proverb

Just as a whole tree is contained potentially in a seed, so the world is in the mind. – Sri Ramana Maharshi

We see the world not as it is but as we are. – Anonymous

Once we realise our intrinsic value, we will stop playing to the gallery and will not look for constant approval or appreciation. – Janina Gomes

People are just as happy as they make up their minds to be. – Abraham Linclon

TYAGARAJA: Lord Siva seated on a magnificent throne with his consort Neela and son Skanda in the shrine at Tiruvarur (Tamil Nadu) is known as Tyagaraja, which literally means ‘king of renunciation’. It points to the profound truth that it is not the outer forms of *sannysa* but the inner process of ‘giving up’, while situated in the centre of the family and the material world, that indicates true yoga. The temple is known as Somaskanda (sa+Uma+Skanda). – *Lalita Ramakrishna*

RICH AND POOR: All of us are born as immensely ‘rich’, but traverse life in misery. Human body (with Kingdom of God within) is the ‘richness’ while the anguish of life is the ‘misery’. Poor are desperate for their survival. Moneyed men suffer fear syndrome of losing wealth. Men of power remain panicked by potential instability. Masters give a ‘wake up’ call to contemplate beyond physical, and seek treasure of Divine inheritance within. – *Tejinder Narang*

REMINISCENCES OF A PARSI DEVOTEE

Berzin M. Lahevala (1947-2008) of Bombay was totally immersed in Sri Ramana. The following excerpts are from his autobiography¹.

I was born into a highly educated, middle class Parsi family. My father was an eminent solicitor. I was spiritually inclined since my childhood. Even from my school days I was instinctively attracted to the deep, hidden mysteries of life and death, the secret side of the man’s psyche. I had many clairvoyant experiences, both in the waking as well as dream states. Books like *Autobiography of a Yogi* and *A Search in Secret India* fired my imagination, thrilled me through and through, and filled my heart with overpowering inspiration. The turning point in my spiritual studies came when I read *The Life of Sri Ramakrishna*. This book awakened me completely and made me realise the truth that life in this world is just a passing show; everything is so transient and fleeting. I began to feel that the real purpose of life is, in the words of the Delphic Oracle, to ‘*Know Thyself*’. I also remembered the words of Jesus Christ, ‘*Know the Truth and the Truth shall set you free*’.

I was seriously handicapped by my Parsi background when I started following the ancient time-honoured path of Hindu mysticism. My father was fully convinced that his only son was going the wrong way, and was throwing away his life and a promising career. He was seriously concerned about my sanity because I behaved in a way completely different from that of any young man of my age. My suffering at his hands was the springboard which made me dive deeper and faster into the ocean of spirituality.

In 1969, the single most important event in my life occurred. In *The Indian Express* I came to an article on Sri Ramana Maharshi. My eyes were just glued to His picture and were quite simply caught by His captivating gaze. I just could not stop looking at His serene, blissful face. And as I kept looking into His deep, fathomless eyes, tears started streaming down my cheeks, wave after wave of ecstasy drowned me, my hair stood on end and I was simply overwhelmed. I had never experienced anything like that in my life. Years later I was to find out that some other persons also had similar experience. After this dramatic, novel and unprecedented experience via the newspaper photo, I was no more the same. Like a salt-doll fallen into the sea, the flood of tears had melted me away into the endless ocean of His Being. I was transformed. Now Bhagavan Ramana was the sole sun in my spiritual sky.

One blessed day, in Chetana Book Store, Bombay,² I found *Sages, Saints and Arunachala Ramana* by Mrs. Taleyarkhan.³ She was from an aristocratic, high-society Parsi family, who had abandoned her husband, son, family and a posh way of life to become a spiritual seeker. She had met many saints and sages but after visiting Ramanasramam and staying with Bhagavan, she realised His greatness and then never left Him. I wrote to her about the wonderfully inspiring effect her book had on me. She was overjoyed to read my letters and insisted that I should come and stay with her while she was still alive. It was through her that Sri Ramana drew me to His Ashram, where I first reached in October, 1975.

When I stepped into the Ashram, it was a novel experience for me. Having lived all my life in the hustle and bustle of a noisy, overcrowded city, the sudden peace and quiet, the open grounds amidst the tranquil surroundings, the highly charged spiritual atmosphere, all contributed to a breathtaking experience for me. It seemed as if I was in another world altogether. Sadly enough, my one-week stay in this paradise sped by with lightening speed and soon I was back in the miserable atmosphere of my Bombay home.

My father's ceaseless persecution year in and year out, gave me a nervous breakdown. I felt highly depressed, suffocated and helpless. Little did I know that this seeming misfortune was perfectly planned by Sri Ramana and that it was to signal the start of the

most important phase of my life. I said to myself, why live in misery at home when there was a paradise waiting for you. In 1980, five years after my first visit, the hour had struck for me to return to where I belonged. As my feet tread the sacred soil of Ramanasramam I was delirious with joy and exaltation. I experienced an overwhelming sense of freedom like a captive parrot escaping from his cage. Indeed I felt as much at home as a fish in water. I was a love-mad lover intensely in love with my beloved Ramana and I did not want my love to diminish even one bit. I devised a routine in which I would stay at my Beloved's place for three or four weeks and then spend one or two weeks in Bombay. This routine went on for all the seven years that I lived at the Ashram and I must have made a minimum of hundred trips by train and bus between Tiruvannamalai and Bombay. Every time I left the Ashram I strongly felt that I was going away from home, and I used to feel sad. And every time I returned I unmistakably felt that I had returned home, and my heart was filled with joy to be back home once again.

After becoming an inmate of the Ashram, I found that it was an international spiritual centre. I met people of all ages from countries like USA, UK, France, Finland, Germany, Switzerland, Poland, Israel, Argentina, Italy, Canada, Australia and many more. I could feel that the Ashram was supercharged with an invisible and indefinable spiritual power which draws seeker as irresistibly as a candle-flame draws moths. Bhagavan Ramana's bodily absence does not diminish his spiritual presence in the least. His presence is the same as it was when he was in the body. It is all pervasive; every inch of the Ashram is saturated with it. But it is especially powerful at two places, namely, the Samadhi, and the Old Hall. But you need to be sensitive enough to perceive this.

Sri Ramana was famed far and wide for His all-powerful silence. Seekers who came with a long list of questions never had to ask them. Sitting in His silent presence, the answers to their questions would spontaneously occur to them, or else they would simply forget their questions, or find that they were not relevant any more. Those who were drowned in some worldly trouble, grief or sorrow, would find His silence as a soothing balm which stealthily and gently healed and revitalized them. The second source which contributes to the potent spiritual power pervading the Ashram is the close proximity of Arunachala – the Holy Hill. Arunachala and Sri Ramana are inseparable and inextricably linked together. In fact, Sri Ramana is considered as the human embodiment of Arunachala, the walking-talking form of the Holy Hill.

I was really impressed by the seriousness, sincerity and wholehearted dedication of the large number of foreign devotees who flocked the Ashram every winter. Some had made

much sacrifice to visit the Ashram. A young couple from Italy told me that they had to sell their flower shop to raise the funds for the trip.

As many foreign visitors to the Ashram told me, Sri Ramana's photo was a fantastic pulling power for them. The most common experience was the one in which they were in a book-shop or library when they were irresistibly captivated by His picture on the cover of a book.

Barbara, a German girl, was drawn to the Ashram after seeing Bhagavan's framed photo in her friend's house. She was an air-hostess with Lufthansa Airlines. After her first visit she was a regular visitor to the Ashram every winter. She was warm, friendly and extrovert. Once she went to *pradakshina* with me at night. I told her not to go alone at night. One day while talking to me inside the Ashram she narrated a stunning miracle. She said, "Last night I was fast asleep but was suddenly awakened at 4 a.m. and felt a strong compulsion to go for *pradakshina*. After walking a mile or so when I saw some men ahead of me, I started feeling very afraid. As soon as I felt fear, out of nowhere, a *sadhu* appeared and started walking in front of me. Now all fear left me and I started following into his footsteps. He was with me until the light of dawn appeared, and I felt confident that I could be alone now. Then, right in front of my eyes, the figure of *sadhu* disappeared into the Holy Hill." She added, "You are the only person to whom I have told this. No one else is going to understand or believe me."

A fortunate few even had a vision of Sri Ramana in flesh and blood. An Australian lady at the Ashram told me the following story. She said that she lived in a remote part of her country. One evening while relaxing in an easy-chair in the porch of her house, an old man with a short silvery beard and hair appeared in front of her. He was brown-skinned, clad only in a loin-cloth. He was standing with the support of a staff. After a minute or two the figure abruptly disappeared. She was completely puzzled by the strange incident. The mystery got resolved a few days later when her friend gave her a book to read. As she turned over the title page she was astonished to see a photo which was the same figure which she had seen in flesh and blood a few days ago.

When I put my usual question to an American – What made you come here?, he gave me the following amazing account: "I was involved in a severe car crash and was rushed to hospital. After weeks of hospitalization, I got disgusted with life and wanted to die. As I was thinking like this, suddenly I saw a man standing beside my bed. He looked like an Indian and was clad only in a loin-cloth. His face was shining with an unearthly light. He gave me long compassionate look and softly said, 'No, it's still not the time for you to leave the world, I will show a reason for living.' The next moment he vanished. I

could not make head or tail of the extraordinary vision, but my condition improved dramatically after the old man's visit. A week before my discharge, a friend gave me a book to read. As I unwrapped it my breath simply stopped in shock to find the same smiling, compassionate face of the old man on the cover page. Then I read the book with great interest and anticipation. After that it was but natural that I couldn't keep away and had to come here."

One day, while coming out of the Ashram's front gate, I saw a young European couple asking for a rickshaw driver about the bus to Madras. When I asked, "When did you come here?", the boy by name George said, "Just today." And the reason he gave was that he came all the way from Poland to visit the Ashram, but Bhagavan's *jayanti* being just a few days away, they were not able to find accommodation. I promised to help them but with no result. Finally, after a long search I remembered what my Tamil widow friend had told me a few days before. In the house next to hers, her mother and brother used to live. Now they had vacated the house but they had paid the rent for the whole month. Still there was a week to go before the month to end. This solved their problem. They had a whole house to stay in. As usual, a Ramana-miracle had made the impossible possible. In Ramana's dictionary there is no word like impossible.

My way of life at the Ashram was quite unusual. My spontaneous spiritual absorption was intense and all-consuming. My food intake diminished and hours of sleep lessened. Many times, for most of the night I was sitting on my bed absorbed in myself. I uttered hardly a few words for the whole day. The austere way of life reduced my body to almost a skeleton. The Ashramites thought I was doing severe *tapas*. But the truth was that I was not doing anything out of my own will and everything was happening spontaneously and automatically.

[Many more captivating details of Lahevala's seven year's almost continuous stay at the Ashram are contained in his 230-page autobiography. As stated by him, after his father's demise in 1983, his mother was living a lonely and hard life. In 1988, when he suddenly and strongly felt that his stay at the Ashram should end, and felt convinced that by Bhagavan's grace the worldly life would not distract him from his path, he left the Ashram to be with his mother. In Bombay he led a life full of devotion to Bhagavan and of service to others. His article 'How every letter of Bhagavan's name inspired him', shows the extent of his immersion in Sri Ramana. It appeared in *Sri Ramana Jyothi* of May 2008.] This article first appeared in *Mountain Path*, Jan.-March, 2012

1. *A Life of Endless Love-Grace, Marvellous Miracles* published by the author in 2003.

2. It was this bookstore where Lahevala came across our publication *Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi* and contacted us. His review of this book, praising it to the sky, appeared in *Sri Ramana Jyothi* of February, 2009.

3. For excerpts from this book, see, *Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi* (pp. 364-6).

ANNAMALAI SWAMI'S ADVICE TO *SADHAKAS*

The Swami came to Bhagavan in 1928 and spent the following ten years serving him, initially as an attendant and subsequently as supervisor of all the building projects that the Ashram undertook during this period, under direct supervision of Bhagavan. Here are his words of wisdom:

You stumble around in the darkness of your mind, not knowing that you have a torch in your hand. That light is the light of the Self. Switch it on and leave it on, and you will never stumble again.

Wet wood does not catch fire easily, but if you dry it for a long time in the sun it will be much more combustible. Materials such as camphor, petrol and gun powder will ignite as soon as they are touched by a flame. Those who are damp or wet can dry themselves out by *sadhana*, by having a strong determination to be aware of the Self at all times. Self is readily available all the time, but we cannot be aware of it or put our attention on the thought of it because our *vasanas* are continuously leading our interest and attention in other directions. That is why it is so important to have the awareness, 'I am not the mind. I am the Self.'

You should forcibly drag your wandering attention back to the Self each time it shows an interest in going anywhere else. Don't be interested in the words that the mind is serving up for you. It is putting them there to tempt you into a stream of thoughts that will take you away from the Self. You have to ignore them all and focus on the light that is shining within you.

You have to look within to find the Self. You will not benefit from looking anywhere else, from doing anything else, or listening to any other voice. Walking round and round a temple, doing rituals to a deity – activities like these will not bring you any nearer to the Self. The *pujas*, the *japas*, the rituals – these are just for beginners. We need not waste time by indulging in the activities of the infant class again and again. Here, in this class, I ask you to put all your attention, all your interest on realising the final teaching, 'I am not the body or the mind. I am the Self.' Nothing more needs to be added to it. Keep good company while you pursue this path and all will be well. **Fierce**

determination to succeed is a must. – *Annamalai Swami Final Talks* by David Godman

IS LIFE FAIR OR UNFAIR?

By P.V. Vaidyanathan

Many of us would say that life is not always fair. We have our own set of grouses against people, events, occurrences and circumstances. But every one of us would like to believe that natural justice does exist. However, we also know that justice is not done every time. If someone has harmed us physically or mentally, we are likely to look for that person to suffer in some form or the other. And we ourselves set out to allot justice, or hope for divine intervention against the person who has harmed us.

It is our nature to compare and we may feel unhappy when we see others having resources, better relationships, or good health. We may then try to find flaw in their lives, look out something that is not right with them, and would try to see how we are better off than them in some areas of life.

Existence does not work according to our needs, desires, ideas, wants or beliefs. No one really knows for sure how existence works, why life unfolds for each of us the way it does. While some might call it fate, others believe in past life karma or chance. Still others say it is the law of cause and effect playing out. You might feel that the person who is having some benefits today must have done some good in the past, and is reaping the reward of his past good deeds. Despite many of us living good, honest lives, existence does not seem to shower its blessings on us, the way we would like to have them. It is then that we wonder if life is unfair.

In reality, life or existence is neither fair nor unfair. Existence just is: life flows as it is meant to. Is there a master blueprint somewhere which has the details of how life should proceed every second on earth for each one of us? There is no concrete evidence or proof of this. In reality, existence does not favour anyone more than the others.

For the universe to run smoothly, events and occurrences have to be in a certain way, and life moves not in a straight line, but in infinite cycles. While life may seem unfair, if things changed as per every individual's desires and wishes, imagine the chaos and confusion that would result. – *Speaking Tree*

CONFUSION ABOUT IDENTITY: The main cause of suffering is the confusion about our own identity. While scriptures reiterate that each one of us is *sat-chit-anand-atma*, which is changeless and pure bliss, we conclude that the Self is only body and

mind. Because of our emotional bonding with the body, we do not see body to be mortal and expect it to be the same always, which is not a fact. But we continue to harbour this belief, and suffer. If we want happiness in the real sense of the term, we have to recognise our higher Self within us, and get attached to it. – *Swami Visharadananda*

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FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT: Whenever we feel we are in darkness, we need only to tap into the light of our soul. Our true nature is light. We have light of the soul, but we are not aware of it because we identify ourselves with the outer world of illusion. When we find ourselves disturbed, let us close our eyes and focus within until we see the light that brings peace. Let us not be distracted by the darkness of the thought. – *Sant Rajinder Singh*

SAMADHI: It is of two kinds: *savikalpa* and *nirvikalpa*. In the former, the *sadhaka* retains the ego – the distinction of the knower, the knowledge and the known – yet he is able to see the underlying unity. In the latter, the mind merges in Brahmn and becomes one with it, just as a lump of salt when dissolved in water cannot be separated. – *M.S. Rao*

PRABODHA SUDHAKARA – THE NECTAR-OCEAN OF ENLIGHTENMENT OF ADI SANKARA

This lucid poem of 257 verses is a compendium of *sadhana* synthesizing *jnana*, *yoga* and *bhakti*. This work of Adi Sankara treats the paths of *jnana* and *yoga* on equal footing, and explicitly declares the oneness of Brahman with and without attributes. *Prabodha Sudhakara* begins with salutations to Krishna, who is pure consciousness and eternal bliss. Thus, the identity of the personal God with *nirguna* Brahman is established in the beginning itself. A few excerpts from this book are as follows:

The *jiva* takes birth in 84 lakhs different species. The human body is the ultimate in the scale of evolution. Even after such a birth, if a person does not discriminate between Self and non-self, such a life is wasted.

The deluded man goes after pleasures of the senses which only weaken his body. Possessed by the demon of desire, the human mind becomes a devil. It laughs and weeps by turns, and wanders in ten directions, perplexed. In the ocean of worldly existence filled with deep waters of sense objects, the boat, that is, the human body is tossed about,

impelled by the winds of *karma*. A mind thinking of sense objects becomes turbid, and *tamas* dominates. The mind is like a deer which has forgotten its abode, wandering about for a long time in the vast forest of worldly existence. The never-ending desires that keep rising in the mind bring about the ruin of man, and act as obstacles to spiritual advancement. Dispassion only would dry up *tamas*, and the quality of *sattva*, with knowledge and harmony, will slowly manifest. The mind gradually gives up its agitation through *pranayama*, the company of sages, renunciation of desires, and devotion to the feet of Hari.

The Self is the only self-luminous entity which illumines everything in the universe. The Self is known by the Self. When one's essential nature is contemplated upon, the subtle sound called *anahata* is heard in the right ear. But it should be remembered that the ultimate goal is to transcend even such subtle 'experiences'. The absorption of the mind through contemplation on the subtle sounds within is superior to other methods, as the mind easily gets attached to the pure, continuous and pleasing sound heard within. Just as a river enters the ocean becomes the ocean, the mind becomes the Self as a result of constant direct perception of the Self.

The Supreme Spirit has two forms, one with attributes and the other without attributes. Devotion to Hari can be gross or subtle. In the beginning it may be gross and from its presence, the subtle devotion may arise. Krishna, the ornament of the Yadu-race, is the only Supreme Self who is higher than Nature (consisting of the three *gunas*), who is inner controller of all beings, who is full of Knowledge and is Pure Existence-Consciousness-Bliss. He is the very soul and basis of all universes, gods and beings.

Sankara considers all objects, including final liberation, insignificant as compared to constant meditation on the feet of Krishna. He says that Krishna, the Divine Lord who has the colour of the rain-bearing cloud, pours down his grace on all. What matters is the intensity of the inner feeling of Love for the Divine. The selfless devotee who has totally surrendered to the Divine is sure to be rewarded, making him blissful and immortal. – Condensed from the *Tattavaloka*, Jan. 2012

BHAGAVAN RAMANA AND HIS PHILOSOPHY

By Prof. T.M.P. Mahadevan*

Most humans have to be content with a slow and laborious journey towards the goal. But a few are born as adepts in flying non-stop to the common home of all beings – the Supreme Self. The generality of mankind takes heart when a great sage like the Maharshi appears. Though it is unable to keep pace with him, it feels uplifted in his presence. Countless people went to Tiruvannamalai during the life time of the Maharshi. They saw in him a sage without the least touch of worldliness, a saint of matchless purity, a witness to the eternal truth of Vedanta. It is not often that a spiritual genius of the magnitude of Sri Ramana visits this earth. But when such an event occurs, the entire humanity gets benefited and a new era of hope opens before it.

The philosophy of Sri Ramana has for its aim Self-realization. The central path of this philosophy is the inquiry into the nature of Self, the content of the notion 'I'. We speak of our body as 'I'; we say, 'I am fat', 'I am lean', etc. It will not take long to discover that this is a wrong usage. The body itself can not say 'I', for it is inert. It is not easy to resolve the mistaken identity of the 'I'. That is because the inquiring mind is the ego, and that in order to remove the wrong identification it has to pass a sentence of death, as it were, on itself. This is by no means a simple thing. The offering of the ego in the fire of wisdom is the greatest form of sacrifice.

The discrimination of the Self from the ego is not easy. But it is not impossible. We have two 'I's – the pseudo 'I', which is the ego, and the true 'I', which is the Self. The identification of the 'I' with the ego is so strong that we seldom see the ego without its mask. All our experience turns on the pivot of ego. With the rise of the ego on waking from sleep, the entire world rises with it. The ego, therefore looks so important and unassailable. But this is really a fortress made of cards. Once the process of inquiry starts, it will found to crumble and dissolve. For undertaking this inquiry, one must possess a sharp mind. It is with the one-pointed intellect that the truth is to be seen. It is true that even the intellect will have to get dissolved before the final wisdom dawns. But up to that point it has to inquire – and inquire relentlessly. Wisdom, surely, is not for the indolent!

What one does in Self-inquiry is to run against the mental current, instead of running along with it, and finally transcend the sphere of mental modifications. When the pseudo 'I' is tracked down to its source, it vanishes. Then the Self shines in all its splendour –

which shining is called realisation and release. The body may continue to exist and the world may continue to appear, but that makes no difference at all to the Self that has been realised. In truth, there is neither the body nor the world for him; there is only the Self – *sat, chit and ananda*.

To inspire even the lowliest of us with hope, and help us out of the state of despair and despondency, is the supreme significance of such illustrious models as the Maharshi. – *Bhagavan Ramana* by T.M.P. Mahadevan.

*He was head, Department of Philosophy, Madras University. Some of his reminiscences are in Kendram's publication, *Face to Face with Sri Raman Maharshi*, pp. 51-2.

LEGAL STATUS OF SRI RAMANSRAMAM, TIRUVANNAMALI

In 1954, the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Board of Tamil Nadu, won its case in a court, claiming that the Ashram was a Hindu temple, which it had a right to manage. In 1959, Madras High Court struck down the decision of the lower court as detailed below.

In 1938, Bhagavan executed a will stating that “I appoint my brother, Niranjanananda Swami, as the sole manager of the Ashram...This right of management or trusteeship will vest as a hereditary right in his family so as to devolve successively on his lineal male descendants from generation to generation.” (For details of Bhagavan's will see, *Sri Ramana Jyothi* of May, 2004)

In 1954, the Endowment Board of Tamil Nadu went to court and challenged the right of Niranjanananda Swami to run the Ashram. One of the primary functions of this Board is to take over Hindu religious institutions that were either not being run properly, or had no legally established management structure. The Board wanted to take over Ramanasramam since it claimed that Bhagavan's will did not legally convey the Ashram properties and the management of them to Niranjanananda Swami, who was the *sarvadhikari* of the Ashram when the will was executed. (The president of the Ashram at present is the eldest grandson of Niranjanananda Swami.)

The claim of the Endowment Board mainly depended on proving that Ramanasramam was a Hindu religious institution. The Board asserted that what they were actually taking over was the Mother's Temple, arguing that all the other components of

Ramanasramam were merely adjuncts to this Temple, and the judge agreed with this view.

Ramanasramam appealed to Madras High Court against this decision stating that it was not a Hindu institution, and therefore could not be taken over by the Board. The High Court went into the matter at great length and came to the conclusion that the shrine was never intended to be a place of Hindu public religious worship, or that it could be permitted to evolve into a Hindu temple. The Court said: “The *samadhi* of a Brahmin widow, even if she was a most worthy and excellent person who gave birth to one who was surely among the illuminati, cannot be consecrated according to the *sastras*. Without *prana pratishtha*, there can be no idol; and the *Linga* installed can only be symbolic, like the cross erected over a Christian tomb, as a symbol of redemption. The record is definitely against the interpretation that the Maharshi authorised the worship of his mother. The provisions in the Maharshi’s will relating to the continued management of the Shrine and Ashram after him by his *sanyasi* brother Niranjanauda Swami, and that line of descent, were clearly prompted by a concern to retain his abode at Tiruvannamalai as a spiritual centre, not for self-glorification or the security of dependants.”

The Court added, “The evidence on record clearly establishes that it is not a place of Hindu public religious worship, though the forms of *puja* or *archana* might be similar to those adopted in Hindu temples, but that it is a shrine in which all who are drawn to the Maharshi's teachings, whether Hindu, Christian, Parsee or Muslim, have equal rights of access and to the acquisition of spiritual benefit by prayer or meditation.” (AIR 1961 Mad 265, (1960) 2 MLJ 121)

After holding the view that Ramanasramam met the requirements of a public religious trust, it drew up a scheme under which Ramanasramam would be governed by a board of trustees, with the president of Ramanasramam being a permanent member. He was allowed to designate two more trustees, while the government was allowed to nominate two. The four nominated trustees have fixed terms of office. This arrangement enabled the Ashram president to run the Ashram with a three-to-two voting majority on its board. – Excerpts from a lengthy blog filled with legal niceties on www.davidgodman.org

SILENCE IS THE ESSENCE: The essence of dharma is silence. Beginners recite *bhajans*. The more advanced chant mantras aloud and try to meditate on them. With progress on the path, spoken words become less and less until, eventually, mantras are

recited in the mind. After that even the mantras become silent, and we focus on the inner Self, wondering “Who am I?” Gradually “who” goes away and only “I” thought remains. In the deepest stillness even the “I” thought has to go. – *Kishore Asthana*

AVOID FEAR OF DEATH: Too many people ignore the reality of physical death until it is too late. They feel that intellectual knowledge and physical wealth, name and power are more important. But when death nears, they discover that their intellectual acquisitions and worldly possessions are of little use. Daily meditation will build up our spiritual abilities so that we can reach a point at which we can experience the spiritual realm within, live a happy life and pass out peacefully. – *Sant Rajinder Singh*

SOME THOUGHTS ON VEDANTA: Vedanta postulates that the Creator did not create the material universe: it *became* the universe. Reality, as constructed by the senses, is deceptive and hence an illusion because it excludes the invisible Absolute Reality. Behind and beyond this illusion is the imperishable and constant Absolute Reality, the Brahmn. In his *Savitri*, Sri Aurobindo says: “I looked upon the world and missed the Self/And when I found the Self, I lost the world.” Dismissing the visible world as an illusion and considering the invisible Absolute Reality to be the sole reality has three implications. First, it makes spirituality the preserve of only a select few. Secondly, it makes worldly activity look like an exercise in futility. Hence even those engaged in worldly activity do not put their heart and soul into it. Finally, it assigns a separate compartment to worldly life and spiritual life. Our independent existence and our individual desires and ambitions is the sole reality of worldly life. On the other hand, seeing divine in all creations implies that at the deepest level we are all interrelated. This vision translates into love and compassion for our fellow beings. – *Ramesh Bijlani*

A UNIQUE ENCOUNTER WITH BHAGAVAN

By Suddhananda Bharati*

November 20th: Krithikai Day. The Ashram is busy with the pouring crowds. Bhagavan is sitting outside his cottage. The Ashram was then just a cottage of thatched leaves. I was sitting inside. I did not stir from my perch from 6 a.m. to 7 p.m. Even the call for food did not shake me. My friends had come that day to take me to Pondicherry. I was rather unwilling to leave the presence of this dynamic force. I could not even open my lips for permission, because my mission and its fulfilment were clear before me. I was hanging and swinging between ‘this’ or ‘that’, ‘here’ or ‘there’. My friends sat before me putting questions to me. Silence was my answer. They went to Maharshi and rolled out their conundrums [Confusing and difficult questions]. Silence was the answer.

We were in silent heart-to-heart communion as my friends pestered him.

What is the good of remaining mum like this? What is the goal of man? What is God? What is 'I'? Why are we born? How to get *swaraj* [self-rule] for the country? Violence or non-violence? What is Vedanta? What is Siddhanta? What is the meaning of the Vedas? A series of questions and a cascade of thrilling silence followed. One self-sufficient man lost his patience; he was a follower of modern education. His brain was full with Kant [German philosopher] and Descartes [French philosopher who said, 'I think, therefore I am']. He had very poor opinion about our Sankaras and Gaudapadas. He had more regard for hatted and booted western armchair philosophers than for realised bald heads.

He hurried up to me and remarked, 'Swamiji, you, as a well-educated man, must not be like this. You must be more like Bergson [French philosopher], Berkeley [Irish philosopher], Jung [Swiss psychoanalyst], Huxley [British novelist and mystic]. You must go to America and London and acquire name and fame.' My reply: silence.

At this time the Maharshi rose up and came inside. The crowd was melting away for supper. The evening was solemn. The Maharshi sat quite near me. I touched his feet, and then caught hold of his hands. His force was flowing into me. I saw his eyes. I saw the fire of knowledge radiating from those two red binocular-like eyes that saw the world around like a cinema show. His eyes darted into me. Tears flowed from my eyes. I did not move my tongue. The Maharshi was reading my heart and mind, which were being saturated with divine consciousness.

Then the Maharshi spoke out in a calm, mellow, silvery voice: 'Bharathi, take refuge in silence. You can be here or there or anywhere. Fixed in silence, established in the inner I, you can be as you are. The world will never perturb you if you are well founded upon the tranquility within. You have a *sankalpa* – to write out your inspirations, to bring out the *Bharata shakti* [Power of India]. It is better to finish off *sankalpas* here and now and keep a clear sky within. But do it in silence. Gather your thoughts within. Find out the thought centre and discover your Self-equipose. In storm and turmoil be calm and silent. Watch the events around as a witness. The world is a drama of gold, women, desire and envy. Be a witness – intuned and introspective.'

I wept and mumbled, 'Do you want me to remain here?' I felt I must come back the next day. The Maharshi, after a deep silence, saw my face. After his gaze had sunk into me he whispered, 'You must come back, and you will. For every one must come to this path. Wind wanders before returning to the silence of the *akasa*.'

I said, 'Are you saying that I will not return in a week?' The Maharshi smiled now and said, 'Why a week? Even after years you must come here. Only take refuge in silence. Allow *karma* to work itself out and march on in faith. You will not miss the goal.'

With this he fell into trance while I fell at his feet. One hour passed. Then half an hour more. My philosophically inclined friend also stood there, struck dumb. His questions were hushed into silence. I placed a lump of dates into the hands of the Maharshi. He took a piece and returned the rest to me. I understood, 'Today's date is a sweet one. It is the date when I received the message of silence. I must taste in silence each date of my life by having communion with the divine.'

For two decades I was silence itself. Years later I returned. The former simple Ashram had disappeared; the body of the Maharshi had disappeared. But the vibrating presence whispered into me 'Silence, yet more silence!' – www.davidgodman.org

*He was a patriot who worked in the fields of Tamil literature and social reconstruction, during 1920s and 30s. His *Ramana Vijayam* (1931) is Bhagavan's first biography in Tamil, every line of which breathes intense devotion to Bhagavan. Contact with Bhagavan made his egotism sink so low that he began to refer himself in the third person. His *Arul Aruvi* (Torrents of Grace) contains songs dedicated to Bhagavan. *Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi* has his other reminiscences at pp. 262-3.

SELECTED QUOTES FROM *ASHTAVAKRA GITA*

Also known as *Ashtavakra Samhita*, it is in the form of a dialogue between sage Ashtavakra and king Janaka. Nearly 300 verses of the text reflect the essence of Advaita. Some excerpts from the book as follows:

1. You are neither a doer nor an experiencer of results.
2. Be convinced that you are liberated and you get liberated.
3. Cut off body sense. You are awareness.
4. Bondage is only mental. Torn asunder by knowledge, it is only unreal and imagined.
5. Formless alone is real. All forms are unreal.
6. The world appears due to ignorance; it disappears with knowledge.
7. I alone am. I own nothing or everything.
8. Duality is the cause of all sorrows.
9. A *jnani* is neither pleased nor displeased.
10. When the mind neither grasps nor abandons anything, it is liberation.
11. Liberation is assured when 'I' goes away.
12. Desire is bondage. Detachment from world brings happiness.
13. A *jivanmukta* withdraws himself from his body, speech and thought and remains as he is.
14. You are *atman*, the pure consciousness.

15. A *Jivanmukta* has no work or duty to do, he remains happy in his own Self.
16. Revel in solitude and abide in the Self.
17. Accept all that comes and reject nothing.
18. Except the Self, everything else is imagination.
19. A *Jnani* lives like other people, but internally he is neither disturbed nor collected.
20. There is no world for the one who has realised the Immortal Self. – *Tattvaloka*, Dec. 2011

KAMANDALU: It can be made of dry pumpkin, coconut shell, clay, metal or wood. Saints and yogis use it for storing drinking water...The universe is made up of matter, which is made up of energy, which in turn are vibrations. When a yogi sits in meditation, his spiritual vibrations get absorbed by the water in the Kamandalu, which gets positively charged and can be used for spiritual healing. When Kamandalu is made out of a ripe pumpkin, its flesh and seeds are cleaned, leaving only the outer shell. This can be interpreted as the removal of ego from a person, making him fit to achieve Self-realisation. – *Speaking Tree*

AVATAR: The concept of *avatar* is an integral part of Hindu philosophy. ‘*Sambhavami yuge yuge*’ is the promise of Krishna in *Gita*. When an individual transcends duality of illusion to become One with divinity he reaches God-realisation. When such a God-realised person [like Sri Ramana] is able to retain human consciousness while continuously enjoying Godhood, he is called the *sadguru*. An *avatar* uses every circumstance as a means to lead us towards realisation, leaving for the posterity the divinely human example of a life supremely lived. – *Speaking Tree*

RENOUNCE TO ENJOY: They alone can enjoy things who renounce them. They alone become real masters who refuse to be masters. Everything falls into the hands of those who have no desire to hold on to things...An individual desires to be rich, but when he begins to accumulate wealth, he becomes as poor and mean within, as he appears rich without. Death never visits the house of the person who is willing to meet death, while one who is afraid of death dies everyday...A person who gives charity here so that he gets the reward in heaven is not renouncing at all. – *Osho*

We see the world not as it is but as we are. – *Anonymous*

Faith is to believe what you do not see; the reward of this faith is to see what you believe. – *Saint Augustine*

Patience and perseverance have a magical effect before which difficulties disappear and obstacles vanish. – *John Quincy Adams*

The difference between success and failure could be determined by our ability or inability to sustain an intense effort. – *Anonymous*

The Self existed before the birth of this body and will remain after the death of this body. The Self is immortal. The fear of death is of the body. – *Sri Ramana Maharshi*

Life is ten per cent what you make it, and ninety per cent how you take it. – *Anonymous*

Not all that counts in life can be counted and not all that can be counted counts. – *Einstein*

Let sincerity and not seriousness be the guiding basis of all our actions and responses in life. – *Anonymous*

OBITUARY

The first Managing Editor of Sri Ramana Jyothi (SRJ), who not only conceived the idea of a journal for Sri Ramana Kendram, but gave full financial support to the project, Sri R.J. Doshi, attained Sri Ramana's feet on February 11, 2012, at the age of 77. He is survived by wife and two sons. The first issue of monthly SRJ was printed and published by Sri Doshi, with Dr. K.S. as editor, in 1980, with an annual subscription of Rs. 6 only. The magazine carried the address of his shop, namely, Kathiawar Agencies, Tilak Road, Hyderabad, for subscription purposes. Devotees of the Kendram will always remember Sri Doshi for his valuable service to Sri Bhagavan's cause.

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WHO AM I?

He who sees the Self, sees only the Self in the world also. To the *jnani*, it is immaterial whether the world appears or not, his attention is always on the Self. It is like the letters and the paper on which they are printed. Those grossly engaged with the letters, have no attention left for the paper. But the *jnani* thinks only of the paper as the real substratum, whether the letters appear on it or not. - *Sri Ramana Maharshi*

DON'T FORGET THE HIGHER POWER: Every venture and project needs divine grace for its successful completion. Hard work and perseverance are absolutely necessary, doubtless. But somewhere along the course, after having exhausted all human possibilities, one must learn to sit back, be detached from the outcome of efforts, and handover the endeavour to a higher power. How and when to do this is purely an intuitive or instinctive phenomenon. The power or destiny works in myriad and unexpected ways. When success becomes palpable, it is important to remember and acknowledge and give thanks to God, without proudly proclaiming that everything was achieved only by our own perseverance. – *P.V. Vaidyanathan*

WORDS OF WISDOM: Who is wise? 'One who always finds something to learn from others.' Who is strong? 'One who is capable of dominating himself.' Who is wealthy? 'One who knows the treasure he has: his days and hours of life, which can change everything which goes on around ourself.' Who deserves respect? 'He who respects himself and his neighbour.' "These things are all so obvious." Asked one of the disciples. The guru answered: "That is why they are so difficult to observe." – *The Internet*

WAKE UP TO THE CHALLENGE: Being aware of a problem does not solve it. It's the difference between: *kuch karna hai* (problem identification) vis-à-vis *kuch kiya hai* (problem redressal.) For example, a person may know that he gets angry easily at the slightest provocation and this may have landed him in many difficulties, yet he makes no move to cultivate calmness. He is aware of the situation but not awakened enough to adopt a solution. Our problem is that we bind ourselves with mere promises but fail to translate the words in action. The need is to set aside some time to understand our own mind better to improve the quality of our lives. – *Girish Deshpande*

SYMBOL OF COSMIC UNION: Scientists describe the shape of the universe as ellipsoidal or egg-like. The *sivalingam* is a miniature representation of the universe. The supreme truth is attributeless, and is beyond name and form. The *lingam* represents all this in a tangible form. It is also symbol of Siva-Shakti union. The concept is relevant in family life. The husband and wife must live with one mind; they need to complement each other. At the start of creation, the Supreme Truth branched out into *Prakriti* or nature and *Pursha* or the dwelling principle. *Purusha* and *Prakriti* are not two different concepts – they are one, just as fire and power to burn are one, and they cannot be separated. – *Mata Amritanandamayi*

WORK TOWARDS CHANGE AND LEARN TO WAIT: Life is always knocking at your door. It is telling you to change. But you want somehow the change to take place

and favour you. This is not possible. We all want peace, harmony and happiness. But how many would work towards achieving these? Further, we have to wait for change to happen. We must have patience. Learn how to wait with patience and in silence. If you have a wish, you should also have patience. A seed can grow; but it is only with patience that it becomes a big tree. – *Swami Brahmdev*

NEED TO LOOK WITHIN

By Sreeram Manoj Kumar

The life of a human being is an opportunity to enable us to move forward from bondage to liberation. To transcend bondage one has to know that the fundamental prerequisite quality is to engage in Self-enquiry. Those who do not enquire about the nature of life are missing the opportunity to know about life. It is only in human form that we have the capacity to seek knowledge. Can a dog enquire about the purpose of its life? It is worried about catering to its basic requirements like food, water and other physical needs. In contrast, the human form of life is gifted with the exceptional ability to enquire beyond the physical needs. While other species possess *manomaya kosha* – the mental sheath, only humans have *vijnanamaya kosha* – the wisdom sheath that enables us to pose questions that go beyond basic instincts.

The purpose of life is to realise the inherent bliss and tranquillity within. Once this is understood, our self is elevated to higher dimensions wherein it merges with the Absolute. As this awareness is felt we begin to realise that the rat race we are in to achieve power, riches or fame was really so insignificant.

The answer to the meaning of life is in us and in the journey within. The quest for it outside is unfruitful, tiring and unfocussed. The search within will transform life and showcase the true nature in us. As soon as the true being shines in us, the radiance beams a warm glow which accompanies us, and life becomes beautiful beyond description. This is the process of moving from bondage to liberation. – *The Speaking Tree*

MIND CONTROL: If in spite of repeated attempts, the mind is not controlled, think of God and dedicate all your *karma* (activities) to Him. One who always thinks about the Lord and dedicates all his actions to Him would be happy with a restful mind. By the grace of his Guru, he will advance step by step and attain *moksha*. – *The Gita*

STORY OF TATTUVARAYA AND HIS *UPADESHA*

Tattubaraya, a 15th century Tamil saint, was “the first to pour forth Advaita philosophy in Tamil.”* The story about him as told by Bhagavan, and some excerpts from his works are as follows:

His story: Tattubaraya composed a *bharni* [a kind of poetical composition in Tamil that features military heroes who win great battles] in honour of his guru Sorupananda and convened an assembly of learned pandits to hear the work and assess its value. The pandits raised the objection that a *bharni* was only composed in honour of great heroes capable of killing a thousand elephants, and that it was not in order to compose such a work in honour of an ascetic. Tattubaraya said, ‘Let us to go to the guru and settle the matter there.’ After all had taken their seat, Tattubaraya told his guru their purpose of coming there. The guru sat silent and all others also remained in *mauna*. Three days passed, yet all sat silently; no thoughts at all occurring to anybody. Then the guru moved his mind a bit and thereupon the assembly regained their thought activity. Then they declared, ‘Conquering a thousand elephants is nothing as compared to this guru’s power of conquering the rutting [strong and hard to control] elephants of our egos. So he certainly deserves the *bharni* in his honour. – *Day by Day with Bhagavan*, 21st November, 1945. (*Mountain path*, Oct.-Dec. 2011 carries a full length article on Tattubaraya)

Excerpts from Tattubaraya’s *Amirta Saram*:

What does it matter to what caste *jnanis* belong? What does it matter to which religion they belong? Only the words of those who have renounced the mind are pure words. All the rest lead only to rebirth. The *jnani* knows that consciousness alone exists. He knows consciousness entirely through consciousness. he who worships a perfect *jnani*, regarding him as Sivam, has indeed feasted his eyes fully on the Supreme Being and worshipped Him.

It is rare indeed to obtain a human birth. Even if one gets it, it is more rare to study the *jnana* scriptures. Rarer still is to become one who possesses renunciation. But rarer than that is to become one possessing knowledge of reality.

Do not say this impermanent world is different from the eternal reality. Before becoming an ornament, when it is an ornament, and when the ornament is re-melted and made again into a lump of gold, it is only gold.

The Eternal One creates the 84 lakhs of different species and abides within them all, just as empty space enters into and occupies all the countless pots that have ever been made.

The Asuna bird, the elephant, moth, fish and bee get ruined respectively by a craving for sounds, touch, sight, taste and smell. Won't human lose their power through their appetite for not one, but all these five cravings?

There is not single thing that remains permanent in this world. Only impermanence is permanent.

Those who want to bring to an end this birth, should realise that even the body is superfluous.

Only those who possess *jnana* belong to the noble caste and lineage, and deserve to be worshipped. The rest are low caste people.

The holy rivers are for the body only. For the mind to be cleansed of defilement and to shine, the holy water one bathes in is consciousness.

Those lacking wisdom and thirsting for bliss are like those who while standing in the flood of endless supreme bliss that abides in the heart, will bathe in water, collect water for *abhishekam*, gather flowers, cleanse the precincts with cow-dung, and eventually perform *puja*.

Those who truly possess *brabhmacharya* are the ones who have become one with Brahman, which is extremely difficult to attain

In the three words of the *Mahavakya*: *Tat-Tavam-Asi* – 'That you are', 'That' refers to Brahman, 'You' refers to *jiva*, and 'Are' refers to the union of Brahman and *jiva*, achieved through casting of the limitation – the body

The difference between the *jiva* and the Ishwara: In the body there are two, a knower and a witness, known as *jiva* and Ishwara.

Cause of *maya*: If you can know and tell me the cause of darkness with the help of a lamp, then you can know the cause of ignorance through consciousness.

Despite fire existing within wood, it roots on earth, becoming a prey to white ants. This is similar to what happens in the absence of the shining of the Self.

The greatness of the Guru: God remains in the heart concealing Himself, but the Guru dispels ignorance, reveals God. It is He who gives the formless form, so that formless might be seen. – *Mountain Path*, Jan.-March, 2012

*The quote is of Bhagavan as in *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, 17th March, 1939.

IN PURSUIT OF NOTHINGNESS: The ocean has numerous waves; can we say that each wave has an identity independent of the ocean? The identity of the wave exists because of the ocean, just as life exists because of the divine. Each sunray exists because of the sun. Each soul is a divine spark like a sunray. As human beings we forget our origin and end up saying that ‘I exist’. It is the ego that makes you say so. Knowledge that you are nothing and the identity which comes with it, will connect you with your true Self, and so make it possible for you to get connected with the biggest identity: Zero. When you are complete, you achieve Zerohood, a state that reveals nothingness – the Divine state. – *Swami Brahmdev*

WRITING CAN BE PRAYERFUL: Many seekers maintain a personal diary in which they sort themselves out by recording their daily experiences. Writing can help make the mundane and the sacred meet. Writing propels thought and action. Faith as tiny as a mustard seed can move mountain. Similarly, heartfelt expressions can create waves like sound waves, piercing ether and spreading vibrations of peace and love. – *Jaina*

BODY, MIND AND SOUL: Our hearts beat 86,400 times and our lungs breathe 21,600 times every day. All this is possible due to the inexhaustible power of the soul, which is making the life throb. Process the mind. Examine every thought and emotion with objectivity and vitality. Chanting Aum energises the mind and transforms it into an impartial witness. This also churns the mind and draws out all thoughts and emotions hidden in its subconscious layers. Eliminate negativity through intellect and concentration. As we get immersed in *sadhana*, we transcend our senses and our mind blossoms. Our heart expands to embrace all beings. – *Shri Shri Nimishananda*

UNIVERSE AND VEDANTA

By M. S. Rao

The phenomenal [Perceptible by senses] aspects of the universe are known in Vedanta as Prakriti and Purusha. The former is visible and inanimate and the latter is invisible and animate. The animate Purusha identifies Himself with the inanimate Prakriti and assumes all its characteristics. He is then known as Kshetragya. He is not affected by Prakriti. But at the microcosmic level, there is a part of Purusha, which identifies itself with the Prakriti and is affected by it – and that part is known as Jivatma or the soul.

The word Kshetra, which refers to this body, means a fertile field that is ploughed. But this fertility provides scope for both the corn and the weed to thrive. Similarly, the Jivatma reaps the fruits of good and bad actions.

According to Vedas, the universe consists of 14 worlds. The seven upper worlds are – Bhuh, Bhuvah, Swah, Mahah, Janah, Tapah and Satyam. The seven nether [lower in position] worlds are – Atala, Vitala, Sutala, Rasatal, Talatala, Mahatala and Patala. Bhuh is the earth where mortals live. Bhuvah is the intermediary region. Swah or Swarga is the celestial world, where people retire after death, to enjoy rewards of their good deeds on the earth and enjoy material happiness. Janah, Tapah and Satyam constitute Brahmaloaka, where fortunate souls enjoy spiritual communion with Ishta Devata. At the end of the cycle, they attain liberation and merge with Nirguna Brahmnn, but a few return to earthly existence from Brahmaloaka after exhaustion of their merit. The plane of Mahah is an intermediary region, between Brahmaloaka and the other three worlds, namely, Bhuh, Bhuvah and Swah.

The seven lower worlds are regions where the wicked souls go after death to repent their unrighteous acts on earth, known as Papam. They too, in due course, are re-born as humans for spiritual evolution. According to Vedas, no soul can be condemned and deprived permanently of the ultimate goal of liberation.

Vedanta also has the concept of Ishta Devata, the personal god with name and form and with attributes of Omnipresence, Omniscience, and Omnipotent, who is Ishwara. He derives his powers from Brahmnn and is the highest form of the Infinite that can be perceived by the finite mind for worship. He is a step lower than the Brahmnn. Both the individual soul and Ishwara merge in Brahmnn. The Brahmnn, Ishwara and Jiva, become one. Brahmnn alone is! The knower of Brahmnn becomes Brahmnn. This is the essence of Vedanta. – *Speaking Tree*

SIVARATRI: Celebrating the Siva *tattva* in oneself is called *Sivaratri*. *Ratri* means night, the time for rest. When activities stop and things become quiet and peaceful, the body goes to sleep. *Sivaratri* is a rest not only for the body, but also for the mind, intellect and ego. There are certain days and time frames in a year that enhance one's mental and spiritual faculties. *Shivratri* is one such precious day. – *Sri Sri Ravi Sanka*

BHAGAVAN'S REPLY TO A QUESTION OF PAUL BRUNTON: Prof. V. B. Athavale, M.Sc., F.R.G.S., Kirloskarwadi writes: I had the good fortune of meeting Sri Ramana Maharshi in April 1944 and observed for one week his state of supreme

consciousness in which worldly knowledge appears insignificant. When Brunton asked, ‘Will the world soon enter a new era of friendliness and mutual help, or will it go down into chaos and war?’ Maharshi replied, ‘There is one who governs the world. He knows how to look after it. He bears the burden of the world and not you.’ – www.davidgodman.org (Other reminiscences of Prof. Athavale are at pp. 269-70 of *Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi*.)

GO BEHIND THE MASK

By Jaya Row

The word ‘personality’ comes from the Latin ‘persona’, which means mask. You are an amalgam of matter and spirit; body, mind and intellect being matter. That which breaths life into the inert matter is spirit, the real you. Ignorant of your true nature, you wrongly attribute limitations of body, mind and intellect to yourself and so you suffer. You are the spirit. Nothing in the world has power to affect you. Yet, you are weak and powerless, and at the mercy of your environment.

The *Gita* asks you to awaken to your own glory. The mask of body, mind and intellect is provided so that you enjoy the playground of the world. Instead, you have made it the source of stress and distress, anguish and agony. Once you understand and imbibe the difference between matter and spirit, you are empowered, happy and unaffected by fluctuations in the world. Appreciate and absorb within you the distinction between the mask and the real you and you will be full of grace, happiness and power. And when the time comes, the spirit will inspire you to discard the mask.

In chapter 13 Arjuna asks Krishna the difference between matter and spirit, field and knower of the field, knowledge and that which is to be known. Krishna says, ‘The body is the *kshetra*, field. Know me as the *kshetragya*, knower-of-field in all fields.’ He divides field (matter) into 31 segments. The spirit is different from them. He adds that while spirit is one, matter undergoes changes and is born in good or bad circumstances according to *gunas* or qualities.

Spirit enables one to enjoy the world and wield power. In the end, when all obstacles are removed, the spirit reveals itself as the supreme Self. You become spirit when you see the one unifying force in everything. Spirit neither acts nor is tainted by actions. It is untouched like space and lights up creation as sun illuminates the world. – *Speaking Tree*

Note: Sri Bhagavan’s method of Self-enquiry can help us to go behind the mask of the body, mind and intellect, provided we are sincere, persistent enough in our efforts, and have an ardent desire to reach our goal. The guru’s grace should also be sincerely sought and secured with full devotion, to reach the goal.

HOW I CAME TO BHAGAVAN

By T. Satyanarayana¹

In the desert kingdom of Bahrain on a hot Thursday afternoon, my friend J and I drove to meet a gentleman for the first time. Mr Ranganathan (Ranga) was very kind. After few pleasantries he spoke with us with a lot of enthusiasm and fervour on spiritual matters. We felt drawn to him and we became good friends in due course.

The weekend *satsangs* at the house of Ranga became our eagerly awaited event. Ranga used to explain the limitless tenets of Vedanta. We had lengthy discussions, followed by delicious *prasad* prepared by the lady of the house Vijaya. We covered basics of vedantic texts for two years, followed by the core teachings of Ramana Maharshi, Paramahansa Yogananda, Jiddu Krishna Murthy, Rajneesh and Nisargadatta Maharaj. Ranga had been the follower of Yogananda and had taken *kriya yoga deeksha* in India.

The vedantic inputs and teachings of the great masters mentioned above had profound effect on my friend J and me. As four years of spiritual study in a far off country came to an end, the question before us was: ‘What next in our spiritual journey?’ Ranga asked us, “Why not start with Yogananda’s *yoga marga*?²

By that time I had already made four visits to Ramanashramam and each time it was an exhilarating experience. I enjoyed every bit of the Ashram atmosphere and the spiritual vibration in the Meditation and the Samadhi Hall. It had its impact on me. One weekend at Ranga’s house, after the *satsang* was over, I was in front of beautifully framed and decorated pictures of Sri Ramana, Lord Krishna, Sri Paramahansa Yoganada, with oil lamps placed in front of them. As I took leave of Ranga and his wife, I stood up, looked at those pictures at the altar once again with great reverence, for some unknown reason, Bhagavan Ramana’s picture suddenly attracted me more than ever before so powerfully and profoundly that my eyes slowly got filled with tears, which coursed down my cheeks. With emotion-choked voice I slowly whispered to Ranga, “Ranga! Am I going away from Sri Ramana?” ‘No sir,’ Replied my friend smilingly.

I had taken the spiritual lessons along with *kriya yoga deeksha* at Ranchi. Four to five years of intense practice of meditation helped me to remain in the exclusive attention to the core of my consciousness. I felt that the spiritual lessons I have taken have greatly helped me in my spiritual path, and particularly practicing of Self Enquiry at a later date, as propounded by the Maharshi.

Both Ranga and myself returned to India. We started inhaling the blessed air of our country. My transition from *Raja yoga* to *Jnana marga* was smooth. Guru Yoganada, I felt, with his tender love handed me over to the care of Ramana Maharshi. My visits to Ramanashramam continued. In one of my subsequent meetings with my friend Ranga, I quizzed him about a comment made by an orthodox friend of mine saying, “Oh, you have left your master?” Ranga replied assuring me “No! Masters are not jealous. They work on the devotee as per the divine plan. Every single phase of an individual’s spiritual life has a purpose.”

(Note: Ranga and his wife Vijaya settled down in Tiruvannamalai, leading a quiet, simple and humble life. Ranga and I meet regularly. Few friends of mine from our Kendram have also met him. I understand that Ranga’s mother with child Ranga in her arms had Bhagavan’s *darshan* at the Ashram, and Bhagavan had blessed the child Ranga.)

1. A former President of our Kendram, worked with ITC in a senior position.
2. Swami Yogananda’s reminiscences of Bhagavan are in *Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, pp. 372-4. Swami’s photo with Bhagavan can be seen in photograph no. 13 in the book.

GROWING SPIRITUALLY: For a spiritual person it is necessary to cultivate qualities like kindness, compassion, gratitude, devotion and forgiveness. Forgiveness is an act of compassion for our imperfect natures...Quieten your mind and loosen its grip over you by not ascribing meaning and importance to every thought that floats by. Try to extract the best out of what life offers at any given moment. Stop using material possessions to define your identity...Invoke the feeling of sacredness as often as possible during the day. Use idols, pictures, music, symbols, etc., until it becomes a felt experience...Show greater acceptance to the shortcomings of human nature. – *Ramaratnam*

THE ART OF MEDITATION: A guru told his disciple, “Meditate on anything, but let not the monkey come into your thoughts. Meditate on any think you wish, just not the monkey.” The disciple sat day and night but all he could think of was the monkey. Traumatized by the monkey, he went to his guru and told him his problem. The guru was not surprised. He knew the power of exclusion. He said, “In reality one cannot live with just what one wants to live with. To be able to steer your mind away from that which is

not desired to that which is desired, is the true art of meditation.” – *Sudhamahi Regunatha*

Turn the mind inside and cease thinking yourself as a body. Neither grief nor misery is experienced in this state. – *Sri Ramana Maharshi*

Pure happiness is achieved because when you forgive a person who has done you harm, you detoxify yourself of all negative energy, and purify your soul and body. – *Oswald Perelra*

Life is not lost by dying; life is lost minute by minute, day by day, in all the thousand small uncaring ways. – *Stephen Benet*

The mind is everything. What you think you become. – *The Buddha*

All the powers in the universe are ours. It is we who have put our hands before our eyes and cry that it is dark. – *Vivekananda*

If you can access the super-conscious dimension of your mind, you will be able to achieve any noble aspiration and conquer any obstacle that stands in your way. – *Rick Levy*

Accept your limitations and then, go beyond them. – *Anonymous*

When the mind is still, when the senses are quiet, when the intellect ceases functioning, we enter the silence, wherein dwells the unfathomable peace of the eternal. – *Swami Sivananda*

People are just as happy as they make up their mind to be. – *Abraham Lincoln*

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LIFE – A BATTLE FIELD: Remember always that it is easy to do what is pleasant. It is often difficult to engage in something which is beneficial. Not all that is pleasant is profitable. Success comes to those who are prepared to give up the path strewn with roses. Life is a battle field – a *dharmakshtra*, where duties and desires often conflict. Meet all obstacles with courage and perseverance. – *Venkat Narayanan*

BODY IS OUR TEMPLE: We have been bestowed by the Creator with one and only one capital – the body – for a worthy and useful life. The body is our temple or kingdom. As it is the essential duty of the dweller to keep the house clean and tidy, it is the duty of every human being to keep the body healthy and clean. Ethics begins from here. – *B.K.S. Iyengar*

THE MIND: Observe your mind. Can you hear the noise of thought currents within? Scientists say 30 to 31 brain waves are constantly in flow. The tussle of thought currents continues unabated. The brain gets stressed when thoughts are generated on a continuous basis. When the mind ‘dies’, silence prevails. Death of mind means controlling the mind to the extent of thoughtlessness. To attain this state, gurus have stressed the need to connect with the inner Self. Buddha used to tell his disciples, ‘Practise peace’ – *Ashutosh Maharaj*

BHAKTI IN *SIVANANDA LAHARI*

Adi Sankara describes Bhakti at great length in his *Sivananda Lahari*. Bhagavan selected ten *slokas* from it. These beautifully summarise the whole poem. Their excerpts are as follows:

Bhakti is the natural affinity between the devotee and God just as the affinity between the seed and the trunk. It is the attraction between the devotee and God just as the attraction between a needle and the magnet. It is akin to the love that exists between a dutiful and selfless wife whose supreme object in life is to serve her husband to her utmost capacity. It is continuous flow of mind of the devotee towards God just as the flow of a river, which maintains an unbroken and everlasting contact with the ocean.

Bhakti is the cloud that rains and fills the tank called the mind with water of bliss and irrigates the land of life and makes it bear fruit. As the purpose of life will not be fulfilled without Bhakti and as everlasting happiness cannot be secured without Bhakti, we should cultivate Bhakti. We should adore that All-powerful Mahesa, the giver of infinite bliss and liberation.

There is nothing that is impossible or inaccessible for a Bhakta. What makes the person a Bhakta is not the place of his residence but only the firm attachment of his mind to God. The stations in life such as a bachelor, a householder, a recluse, do not by themselves

elevate a person. Only if one surrenders his heart completely, without any reservations, God takes over and looks after him in all respects.

With much physical exertion, people bring flowers from lakes, forests and hill-sides for worship of God. Without all this trouble, if God is worshipped with internal flower called mind, one can be ever-happy easily. – Source: *Sri Ramana Bhagavan* by K.R.K. Murty (Chief electrical engineer, government of A.P.) His heart-felt reminiscences are in the Kendram's publication *Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, pp.323-26.

IMPORTANCE OF *PRATYAHARA* AND *VAIRAGAYA*

By Pranav Khullar

An important theme running through Patanjali's 'Yoga Sutras' is of *pratyahara* or withdrawal of mind from its scattered externality to interiorising it and focussing on the origin of the thought. Patanjali details several practical steps to initiate this withdrawal including *yama-niyama*, *svadhyaya* and *satsang*. He also emphasis the need for *vairagaya* or dispassion as the crucial prerequisites to be cultivated for *pratyahara*.

The distinction between real and momentary *vairagya* is repeatedly emphasised in Vedanta. It is said that even Brahm *vichara* or enquiry into Self and all yogic practices become redundant if the mind has not fully turned away from externals because *vairagya* is absent. Sages have pointed out that most people go through momentary phases of dispassion that arise out of personal disillusionment in a situation, but they are unable to sustain that state for long. This is because they are distracted by externalities. Then there are those who hypnotize themselves into believing that this 'accidental' *vairagya* is a real state of renunciation and, curiously, the so called renunciation itself becomes a means to seek external vanities. True *vairagya*, says the wise, can arise only when there is genuine inner discrimination developed through *vichara*, to be able to distinguish the glamorous outer that is transient at best, and the witness-Self which is beckoning to a dimension beyond what is transitory.

Bhartrihari, a great king and a poet, in his classic 'Vairagya Shatakam' – hundred verses on renunciation, points out on how, despite the transitory nature of the world that is staring us in the face and which is full of death, disease, deceit, greed and what not, we continue to desire a lot of things, and never get satiated. And so get trapped in a vicious cycle of pleasure and pain. Nothing seems to stop us from desiring more, for desires arise from our misunderstanding of what is real and permanent. In perceiving outer reality as the only reality and in perpetuating this notion, we keep desiring external

‘enjoyments’ and thereby get directed to them. Desire gives birth to more desire, triggering a self-consuming ‘mind-reality’ that is desperate to possess just that bit more – be it richness, fame or position. The play of mind creates in us dissatisfaction with our identity and so makes us restless.

Vairagya does not entail going to the extreme of abnegation of social responsibility by running away on a whim. If the mind is not disciplined enough, desires will follow even in the most secluded of spots. The path of a Buddha or Sankara must be taken only when the seeker has cultivated intense *vairagya*, a state of total disregard for all things material; not merely momentary disenchantment.

Vedanta says that the mind itself must be used as an enquiring tool to look deeper into the purpose of life, beyond the visual-auditory-sensory matrix of impressions. A discriminating mind would be able to distinguish between what is essential and what is perishable, even as you go about your duties in life. – *The Speaking Tree*

SHAKTI: Mother is the first manifestation of power. With the name of Mother comes the idea of Shakti. The Divine Mother is the Kundalini (coiled up power) sleeping in us. Without worshipping Her, we can never know ourselves. – *Swami Vivekananda*

ABSOLUTE TRUTH: The concept of an Absolute is unchallengeable. He can be realised only by His own grace, and grace is experienced only by a completely surrendered soul...We are to find the way, to see, to realise Truth. Because the Supreme is infinite, everything about Him is also infinite. As we are finite our mental and intellectual capacity will also be finite. The truth cannot be manufactured in the factory of mental or intellectual capacity. We have to go beyond the physical self to realise Truth. – *B B Tirtha Maharaj*

HOW A GERMAN LADY CAME TO BHAGAVAN

Marlies Hibschenberger writes:

When a university student in Germany in 1959, I was one of a group of four friends interested in Eastern philosophy. I thought, ‘There must be some very deep meaning to this life and our reason for being here, but if so, how to find out?’ One day, while looking for some new books at a bookshop, I happen to run into *A Search in Secret India* by Paul Brunton. I could not stop reading it as it completely captivated me. After some time, going back to the same bookshop, I found *In Days of Great Peace* by Mouni

Sadhu. I was so anxious to read these two books that I was forced to hide a torch under my blankets or otherwise my parents would scold me for not doing my studies properly. I was completely distressed when I learned about the Maharshi's death. I cried endlessly being sure of having missed the chance of meeting a great being who had already stolen my heart and soul.

I had already decided for myself that the Maharshi was definitely 'alive' and so, as soon as I had the money I resolved to go to India. After my college, I got a government job. Not knowing the exact address of the Ashram, I wrote a letter, 'The Ashram of Sri Ramana Maharshi at the holy hill of Arunachala, South India.' It was not long before I got a very welcoming letter from the president of the Ashram. I could hardly believe that Bhagavan was reaching out to take me 'into the tiger's mouth.' From that day I eagerly saved up money. As there was no such thing then as a cheap flight, I booked my ticket by boat. My parents were shocked, and my fiancé confronted me with 'either me or India.' I stuck to my decision and left from Marseille in France to reach Bombay after 14 days, from where I proceeded to Madras, and reached Tiruvannamalai by train.

Entering the gate I knew I was coming home; nothing was strange, everything familiar. And Ramana Maharshi never died! What a solemn, vibrant and silent place. The Ashram office was in front of the Mother's temple and there was no grand Samadhi hall, only a thatched roof and a rope fence around. The atmosphere was thrilling, powerful, and penetrated my whole being.

There were some Westerners at the Ashram, one of whom was a German, who had already been there for five years and who shared with us his acquired knowledge. And there was our great Muruganar Swami and Viswanatha Swami whose doors were practically open 24 hours for all devotees requesting advice on Bhagavan's teachings. There were also Kunju Swami and Annamalai Swami to whom we could joyfully listen. Mr. Arthur Osborne who lived outside the Ashram had been adding much to the explanation on *vichara*/self-enquiry, which was the main and total point of interest. Mrs. Lucia Osborne, Mrs. Roda McIver and Ma Talayarkhan cared very much for the needs of single ladies who stayed at the Ashram.

And those days and weeks were spent sitting in the Old Hall where I felt Bhagavan had never left and where his grace was showered upon me uninterruptedly. Days and weeks passed, I knew I had been born only to come here and be filled with what life's purpose means. Coming as an empty cup, I left Tiruvannamalai knowing that I carried now the greatest treasure a being in ordinary form can be capable of receiving.

I boarded a ship from Colombo and reached Marseille two weeks later, where my husband-to-be, already waited, eager to hear about my journey to Tiruvannamalai. Since then we have been visiting the Ashram every year for longer or shorter periods. – Excerpted from *Mountain Path*, July, 1997

EFFICACY OF MANTRA: Mantras are sound vibrations that permeate every cell of our being and allow us to dissolve and repose. Mantras are impulses or rhythms of consciousness. Their effect, influence, method and mode of working are a mystery. When we chant mantras, or listen to them, we get purity of mind and word. This prepares us for meditation. As a result of sound vibrations, different patterns of the mind rearrange themselves to become tranquil, and this helps us to turn inwards. Repetition of the mantra creates a psychological response which is very deep and beyond the realm of expression. When the mind is calm and centered, it can turn inward. Only a mind turned inward can experience the vastness and beauty of Divine consciousness. – *Bhanumathi Narasimhan*

ORIGIN OF THE SONG OF PAPPADAM (APPALAM)

Bhagavan himself narrated how the song came to be written:

In the early days when mother came to stay with me in Virupaksha Cave, there was no cooking. If Echammal or anybody else brought food, we used to eat and go to bed. One day the mother thought that as I was fond of *appalams*, it would be a good idea to make some for me. Without my knowledge, she went to the village and collected all the things needed for making *appalams*. After night fall, she took out the wooden roller, wooden seat and commenced making *appalams*. As she the number of *appalams* to be made was very large, she pleaded with me to help her. I refused and asked her that she has renounced very thing and come here, then why all this? I told her that she should rest content with whatever is available. I made it very clear to her that I won't help her, and won't eat her preparation. She continued to call me again and again. Feeling it was no use arguing any more, I said: 'All right! You make these *appalams*, I will make another kind and I started singing the *appalam* song. By the time the preparation of the *appalams* was over, my song also was finished. I told her, 'I will eat this *appalam* (the song about *appalams*) and you eat those that you have made.'

Sometime later, one day, when we all set out for *giripradakshina*, someone said, Swamiji! please tell us the meaning of the *appalam* song. I started explaining and gave them the meanings in detail. I said that the essence of the Vedanta is incorporated in this one song. If properly commented upon, it would make a big volume by itself.*

Translation of the song:

Try and make some *pappadams*.
Eat them and your longing satisfy.
Don't roam the world disconsolate.
Heed the word, unique, unspoken
Taught by the teacher who teaches
The truth of Being Awareness and Bliss.

Take the black gram, ego self,
Growing in the five field body field
And grind it in the quern¹,
The wisdom quest of 'Who am I?'
Reducing it to finest flour.

Mix it with *pirandai*² juice,
Which is holy company,
And add mind control, the cumin seed,
The pepper of self restraint,
The salt of non-attachment,
And asafoetida, the aroma
Of virtuous inclination.

In the heart mortar place the dough.
And with mind pestle inward turned,
Pound it hard with strokes of 'I', 'I',
Then flatten it with the rolling pin
Of stillness on the level slab (of Being).
Work away, untiring, steady and cheerful.

Put the *pappadam* in the ghee of Brahman
Held in the pan of infinite silence
And fry it over the fire of knowledge.
Now as 'I' transmuted into That,
Eat and taste the Self as Self,
Abiding as the Self alone.

(Adapted form *Arunachala's Ramana*, vol. I)

* The song reflects Bhagavan's full knowledge of how *appalams* are made.

1. A small hand-mill for grinding grain.
2. A vine used for seasoning the *applalam* dough.

RAMANA MAHARSHI AND SESHADRI SWAMI

Excerpts from B.V. Narasimha Swami's classic *Self Realization*, the first authentic biography of the Maharshi (1931).

It was often said that Tiruvannamalai had two eyes by which the town was sanctified – Seshadri Swami and Ramana Maharshi...The former was born in 1870 in North Arcot district of Madras. He was adept in mantra *sastra*, and by constant repetition of mantras, with due observance of the required conditions, had obtained a vision (*darshan*) of his Goddess Kamakshi – Shakti. His long *tapas* had given him psychic powers such as telepathy, clairvoyance [The power to see and know things that are out of natural range of the human perception] and prophecy.

They had many points in common. Both were Brahmin bachelors who attained *vairagya* and left their homes at the age of 17 or 19. Each had lost his father at an early age. Both were keenly intelligent and had retentive memory. Both had deeply rooted-love for Lord Arunachala. Both were orthodox till they left home, but soon after their arrival at Tiruvannamalai both gave up caste prejudices in matters of food etc., and both stuck to their new abode with determination.

Seshadri was the earlier arrival. He was highly learned. He had composed Sanskrit verses, had a good command of Vedas, grammar and *jyotisha*, and was an excellent singer with a good knowledge of the theory of music.

Seshadri found that the new arrival, Sri Ramana, was of rare worth who had transcended sense attraction, withdrawn his senses from external objects, and was constantly absorbed in Samadhi, and so he tried to extend what help he could to the junior to save him from the stone-pelting and pot-hurling lads. When the junior moved to the hill Seshadri went up to see him and occasionally ate with him. About 1914, he regularly visited Virupaksha cave for some weeks.

The high regard the Swami had for the Maharshi is reflected in a conversation he had with his *chela* T.V. Iyer, when the latter asked him what were the three *lingas* at Tiruvannamalai. And he then explained to him that these were: the Hill itself, the Maharshi, and he.

The affectionate relationship between the two Swamis may be illustrated by reference to a dream. Students of psycho-analysis know that one's inner most thoughts are often brought to the surface in dreams. Maharshi related to his disciples in March 1930 that he

had, a few days previously, met Seshadri Swami in a dream. Maharshi went up and patted him on the back saying, “Hallo”. The Swami looked up and, finding that it was Maharshi, got up and held him fast in embrace for many minutes.

At the death of Seshadri Swami, Maharshi spent an hour at his funeral [a very rare gesture], witnessing the formalities of the saintly internment [putting the body in the Samadhi], amidst a crowd of thousands of people, and added to the impressiveness and sanctity of the proceedings by his presence.

WHAT IS LIFE? Life is neither meaningful nor meaningless. Life is just an opportunity and opening. It depends on what you make it. Life is a creative challenge. Existence is so spacious that it allows you absolute freedom to be whatsoever you want to be, whatsoever you have the capacity to be. It allows you an unhindered space to grow and blossom. – *Osho*

THREE LEGENDARY BIRDS: (i) *Hamsa* (Swan) – it resembles a goose. It is reputed to eat pearls and to be able to separate milk from water, and drink only milk. It is supposed to transcend the limitations of creation for it can walk on the earth, fly in the sky and swim in the water. It is depicted as the vehicle of Sarasvati, Goddess of learning. Lake Manasarovar, near mount Kailash, is seen as the summer abode of *hamsa*. When the word *hamsa* is constantly repeated, it changes to *Soham*, meaning ‘That I am’. Thus, the *hamsa* is often identified with the Supreme and those who live with the supreme – *paramhamsa*, the one, who is always listening to the sound of air that is inhaled, called *ham*, and the air breathed out called *sah*. (ii) *Chataka* is a cuckoo bird. It can only drink rain water as it drops in its beak from the clouds. It is a migratory bird that appears in the rainy season. It constantly pleads with the clouds to bring in rain so that its thirst can be quenched. The great Hindi poet Tulsidas compares an ideal *bhakta* with this bird, who constantly utters Lord’s name and seeks His grace to flow to him. Kalidasa and Adi Sankara refer to this bird. (iii) *Chakora* is a kind of partridge, which thrives only on the moonlight for its food. The bird’s love for moon is legendary. It is reputed to eat burning coal, considering it as a small portion of the moon – its beloved. The association of *chakora* and the moon, has inspired a number of folk stories in India. – Excerpted from *Tattvaloka*, March, 2012

PEACE: Everyone is after happiness. The hunt for a comfortable job, position of influence, the size of bungalow, are evidences of the eagerness to live in happiness. But there is no real eagerness to live in peace. Happiness should not be confused with peace. One who is rich, well-placed and powerful is unlikely to have peace. Realize that the

physical is subordinate to the spiritual. The secret of peace lies in service and love towards all beings. – *V. Narayana*

TAKE DESTINY IN YOUR HANDS: Nothing is destined. It is just that unconsciously we have made ourselves into a certain possibility. The destiny we talk about is something we have created unconsciously. The accumulations within us form certain attitudes and tendencies, and we start moving in that direction. It is not because somebody is guiding us in that direction. Simply our tendencies are such that we are going that way. A river born on the mountain joins the ocean. Is this the river's destiny? No, this is the water's tendency to constantly move from one place to another, depending upon the level. We have to strip ourselves with all fancy stories and come to term with life. – *Sadhguru*

THOUGHTS FROM BUDDHISM: In Buddha's conception of dharma there is no place for priest-craft and ritualism. Buddha believed that every individual must find the truth in his own way and should question everything, even his own words. In this rationality there is no place for blind faith. Buddha emphatically said, 'Be a lamp unto yourself'. His approach of rational Self-enquiry enables a person to achieve a higher state of discipline and harmony. – *Balmiki Prasad Singh*

SIVA'S GURU: Subrahmanyan is also known as Swaminathan, which means the Lord of the Lord! This signifies the fact that Subrahmanyan became Guru to his father Lord Siva. This happened on one occasion. The story goes thus: Once there ensued an intense debate between Subrahmanyan and Brahma (responsible for Creation), with regard to Pranava or AUM. Subrahmanyan was not satisfied with Brahma's explanation of Pranava and suspended him from his activity of Creation by imprisoning him. He started taking care of the function of Creation himself. When the Lord heard about it, he intervened and asked him whether Subrahmanyan himself knew the correct meaning of AUM to which Subrahmanyan replied 'yes'. There upon the Lord asked him to explain the meaning. Subrahmanyan retorted saying "AUM is the most sacred sound. If you want to know its meaning you should formally become my disciple." Lord Siva was amused by this demand of Subrahmanyan and agreed to become his disciple. He bowed down his head and Subrahmanyan whispered the meaning of Pranava in Siva's right ear, as per tradition. Swami malai temple on a hill near Kumbhakonam in Tamilnadu is dedicated to Subrahmanyan in his form as Guru to the Lord. The temple's Gopuram contains a sculpture depicting the above story. This temple is one of six most famous temples dedicated to Subrahmanyan in Tamilnadu. Subrahmanyan is also known as Kumar – ever young. When he became Siva's guru, he also came to be known as Kumaraswami. – *V. Krithivasan*

IMPORTANCE OF FAITH: Among the many factors that contribute to success in life, the most powerful is faith. It may be a mysterious power, but it has a profound soul force. Faith brings security and stability. Without faith, fear and panic could take over. Faith might not have ‘eyes’ but it is like a candle which takes the struggling soul through the dark alleys of life, giving protection against gloom and frustration. One should not shake other’s faith, however crude it may appear. If one is pure and sincere, his faith will gradually show him the way. Childlike faith in God and in one’s own potential is the key to success. – *Swami Atmashraddhananda* [Full faith in the fact that Sri Ramana Maharshi is Divinity incarnate, and He will help us to cross the ocean of *samsara*, is essential to have a peaceful life.]

As long as we don’t forgive people who hurt us, they occupy a rent-free space in our mind. – *Brahmakumaris*

We are often so caught up in our activities that we tend to worship our work, and play at our worship. – *Charles Swindoll*

Change your thoughts if you wish to change your circumstances. Since you alone are responsible for your thoughts, only you can change them. – *Paramhansa Yogananda*

The entire world cannot and may not change. But your tiny world can and will change forever at this very moment with the help of your determination to change. – *Sri Chinmoy*

Accomplishment would follow when true wish is routed through an abiding perseverance with intelligence. – *Anonymous*

There is no pillow as soft as clear conscience. – *French proverb*

Pure diet is of great help in controlling sensual desires and anger. – *Atharva Veda*

Connect within and find limitless talk time. – *The Internet*

The real test of good manners is to be able to put up with bad manners pleasantly. – *Kahlil Gibran*

We see the world not as it is but as we are. – *Anonymous*

Whenever we want to achieve something, *sankalpa* or focussed thought is essential. If it is not there, there is no question of further progress. – *Tejomayananda*

Devotion should be like the river that retains water even in the hottest season. – Kabir

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AVOID WRONG IDENTIFICATIONS: The most common ego identifications have to do with possessions, the work you do, social status and recognition, knowledge and education, physical appearance, special abilities, relationships, personal and family history, belief systems, and often political, nationalistic, racial, religious and other collective identifications. *None of these is you. – Eckhart Tolle*

THE MIND: Mind needs to be cultivated to reach its potential power. Buddha said, “The mind is everything. What you think, you become.” A mind tuned finely with the melody of the universal mind can alter and better the course of life. Controlling the mind is a lifelong process. – *Soma Chakraverty*

MEANINGS OF TITLES OF SWAMIS

Adi Sankara in his work *Matha Aamnyaya* explains the meanings of the ten titles – *Dasanami* orders.

- 1. Sarasvati:** One who is greatly learned and adept in yoga, and has proficiency in the Vedas. He specialises in music and propagates *jnana* of the fine arts.
- 2. Puri:** One who is full of knowledge of Brahman. One with perfect (*sampoorna*) spiritual prowess. He is duty bound to be completely engaged in *jnana* and does not mingle with the external world.
- 3. Giri:** One who is steadfast like a mountain. He lives on the lofty peaks in seclusion away from the people. He internalises his *sadhana* for universal good.
- 4. Bharati:** Carrying the treasure trove of learning, he forsakes all worldly burdens. He transcends worldly sorrows and is duty bound to propagate all *vidyas* and *jnana*.

- 5. Aranya:** One who lives in a forest completely detached from mundane affairs, yet experiencing bliss of living in a mystical garden. He is duty bound to spread the Supreme happiness of merging with the Divine.
- 6. Ashrama:** A monk living in a hermitage. He has cast away the bonds of *kama*, *krodha*, *lobha*, *moha*, *mada* and *matsarya*. He is duty bound to propagate conquest of desires and worldly attractions.
- 7. Parvata:** One who resides at the foothill of the mountains in *samadhi* state, and has realisation of the exalted ideals with knowledge of the transient nature of the world.
- 8. Sagara:** One who has dived into the depths of the ocean of knowledge and collected the gems of Truth. He goes in-depth into philosophical matters and his duty is to spread this knowledge of wisdom.
- 9. Vana:** One who has transcended all the snares and desires. Unshackled from the worldly ties he lives quietly in the interiors of deep forests, in seclusion.
- 10. Tirtha:** One who bathes in the confluence of the three rivers of knowledge and seeks realisation of Truth through *maha vakyas*, with the constant aim of unravelling their hidden meaning. – Excerpted from *Tattvaloka*, April, 2012

WHAT BHAGAVAN MEANS TO ME

D. Samarender Reddy*

Any number of times I read about Bhagavan it is a sheer joy. Bhagavan's words have a magical effect on one and make one's mind turn towards the non-dual Self and away from the world and its varied manifestations. There seems to be a subtle power and gentle persuasion in his words which are expressed matter-of-fact – simple and direct. Reading Bhagavan's words makes one lose interest in all other philosophical quibbling, be they of the Eastern or Western variety. Without Bhagavan's life and teachings one would have been lost in the jungle of intellect, if not in the jungle of sense objects. Self-realization would have seemed too remote a possibility. Nay, one would have wondered if Upanishads and Advaita philosophy, though seemingly sound, might yet harbour in their bosom some hard-to-detect defects in logic or metaphysics. To think of Bhagavan is to think of the Self, for the Self was his incessant leitmotif [A dominant theme], to

which he was never tired of drawing one's attention. Bhagavan's life and teachings are the two wings that allow one to fly easily into the empyrean [The highest reaches of heaven] of truth and freedom.

O Sage, who rarely spoke,

When you did speak

We, too, fell silent

For, the chatterbox called mind

Was seen for the thief it was

Robbing us of peace.

*A medical doctor who works in Hyderabad. <samarender.reddy@yahoo.com>

GIVE UP AND BE HAPPY: 1. Give up the need to always be right. Many of us can't stand the idea of being wrong even at the risk of straining a relationship or causing stress and pain, for ourselves and others. 2. Give up the need for control. Allow everything and everyone to be just as they are. 3. Give up on blame. Stop blaming others for what you have or don't have, for what you feel or don't feel. 4. Give up negative and self-defeating self-talk. 5. Give up your limiting beliefs which keep you stuck in the wrong place. 6. Give up complaining. Nobody can make you unhappy; no situation can make you sad or miserable unless you allow it to do. 7. Give up the luxury of criticism and passing judgement on every person and situation. 8. Give up the need to impress others. 9. Give up your resistance to change. Change can help you to make improvements in life. 10. Give up the past. The present moment is all you have and all you will ever have. 11. Give up attachment. Have possessions but don't be too possessive about them. – Excerpted from the *Internet*

RENUNCIATION AS SUPREME SATISFACTION

Sri Ramana Maharshi was renunciation incarnate. And he enjoyed and not suffered renunciation and abstinence. He never touched money in life. He never wore footwear. However hot the rocks of Arunachala may be, he would walk unflinchingly. He stressed need for begging, as it reduced one's ego. Once when he was informed that his great devotee Viswanatha Swami, a scholar, and author of the ever-green *Ramana Ashtotra* –

108 names of Sri Ramana, which are recited by his devotees every day, was going for *bhiksha* and not sharing food at the Ashram along with other devotees. He asked the Swami whether it was so. People around were wondering what he would advise him. Sri Ramana asked the Swami as to how he went about for *bhiksha*. When told that he carried a small tin for drinking water with him, Sri Ramana remarked where was the need for a tin, he could use his hands as well! Sri Ramana also told him about his own experience of going for *bhiksha*. He said, “I lived on such food during my stay at Pavalakundru [a small hillock in Tiruvannamalai]... You feel yourself to be independent and indifferent to everything worldly. It has a purifying effect on the mind.” (David Godman, *The Power of the Presence*, part II.)

Sri Ramana had no possessions. He wore only a *kaupina*, the bare minimum to cover oneself. He always remained lost in the Self. Even as a boy of 17 years when he sat in the dark large pit, known as Patala Lingam, enjoying the bliss of his soul, scorpions, ants, mosquitoes and other vermins attached themselves to his body, drinking his blood. His being completely unconcerned about his body is unprecedented.

More than two centuries ago, a Greek philosopher Diogenes (412-323 BC) also gave up everything. All he kept with him was a begging bowl, for begging and drinking water. One day he saw a villager drinking water by cupping his hands; he immediately threw away his begging bowl. When asked what he has done, he replied, “I never knew one could drink water by cupping one’s hands – why should I be deprived of such a joy? When I fill my hands with water, they feel the connection with water, its coolness, its life-giving energy.” In winter he would walk barefoot on snow. He did this to harden himself against discomfort. When asked whether he was overdoing a little, he replied, “I am like a teacher of choruses who has to sing louder than the rest in order that they may get the right tone.” Diogenes was once asked why he always begged. He replied, “To teach people generosity.”

When people complimented Diogenes, he would cry and say, “Shame! I must have done something terribly wicked.” A man told him that his mind is not made like that and he can not be bothered with philosophy. He replied, “Why do you bother to live, if you can not be bothered to live properly.” When some one asked him whether freedom is meant to be alone, he replied, “We come into the world alone and we die alone. Why, in life should be less alone?” Once he was asked the difference between life and death. He answered, “No difference.” In reply to the counter question, “Well then, why do you remain in life?”, his retort was, “Because there is no difference.”

Alexander the Great, once went to Diogenes when he was resting in sunlight on a winter morning, and offered to grant him any request. He replied, “Stand back at some distance, you are obstructing the sunlight.” – *The Internet*

AVOID DELUSION: The blueness of the sky is an optical illusion. Similarly, the negativity which we experience is also delusion because essentially, there exists the same positivity within. However, just as an inebriated person enjoys his deluded mind, the ignorant enjoy their pathetic condition. The ignorant would take their own sweet time to understand the reality based on their *prakriti*. – *Deepak Pathak*

GOD-INTOXICATED SRI RAMANA

***Day by Day with Bhagavan* by Devaraja Mudaliar records Sri Ramana mentioning his own state of affairs before he left Madurai in search of his beloved Arunachala. The entry dated 18.3.1945 reads as follows:**

“On or about 15-3-1945 Bhagavan had asked someone in the hall to read aloud *Bhakta Vijayam* [written by Nabhaji, a north Indian saint] to illustrate from the story of Tulsi Das [tallest among Hindi poets and author of the celebrated *Ramacharitmanas*], how one totally immersed in sensual life, suddenly recoils and goes to the other extreme of highly religious life. In the story, Tulsi Das runs away from wife and home* and is mad after Hari at Banaras. The wife and mother go and entreat him to come back, reminding him of his great love for them all. He takes no notice of them, but asks them, ‘Has my Hari come? Yes. He is coming there! etc.’ He was after Hari alone and took interest in nothing else. When this portion was being read Bhagavan said, ‘I was somewhat like this at Madura. Going to school, books in hand, I would be eagerly desiring and expecting that God would suddenly appear before me in the sky; and so I would be looking up at the sky. What sort of progress could such a one make in his studies at school?’”

Mudaliar’s note which appears along with the above record says, ‘This was apparently shortly before he left Madura. I have never heard before, either from Bhagavan or from others, that he was so God-mad at Madura. So I record it here.’

*As the legend goes, Tulsi Das was deeply immersed in love with his wife, and could not bear separation even for a moment. Once she had to leave for her mother’s place. Not finding her at home, he rushed to be with her in heavy rain, and crossed the flooded river

with some help, not realising that it was a dead body. Finding the door closed, he reached the balcony in the dark, with the help of a snake hanging therefrom. Wife, greatly annoyed seeing him, said, “I feel tormented by your love for this physical body. It is a matter of shame for me. If the intensity, with which you sought me out, had been for the Lord, you would have crossed the ocean of *samsara* without difficulty.” Stung by these words, he left home, went to Banaras, and sang in praise of his Lord Sri Rama. His outpourings are a treasure trove for any Rama *bhakta*. Some details about Tulsi Das are in *Mountain Path*, April-June, 2012, pp. 97-105.

NARAYANA GURU VISITS MAHARSHI

The following has been excerpted from the book *Reminiscences* by Kunju Swami, an attendant of Sri Ramana for three decades, who belonged to Kerala.

Narayana Guru, who lived in Kerala, was more known as a social reformer than a *jnani* of high order. He established several mutts in Kerala and Tamilnadu. His greatness was such that great men like Mahatma Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore, and C.F. Andrews, when they went to Kerala, visited him. He wrote a few philosophical works in Sanskrit. He used to travel and stay in his own branch ashramas. He and his disciples were devoted to the Maharshi.

Once he went to Skandasraman along with his disciples. Bhagavan was seated in the verandah. The Guru observed Bhagavan – people paid their respect to Bhagavan and sat or passed on. Bhagavan took no particular notice of anybody. He did not enquire about the whereabouts of anyone nor said anything. This impressed the Guru very much.

When it was lunch time, Bhagavan indicated to his disciples to call the Guru. They pleaded humbly that he himself may invite the Guru. Bhagavan came out and looking up where the Guru was seated said, “You may come and join us for lunch.” Narayan Guru responded, “Oh yes! We shall share Maharshi’s Prasad.” He came and sat next to Bhagavan.

Soon after lunch, Bhagavan went for a walk and Narayan Guru went back to his mango-tree shelter. The Guru asked one of his disciples whether we should make an offering to the Maharshi. When the disciple was wondering what could be given as an offering, the Guru asked him to bring a piece of paper and pencil. He wrote five verses in Sanskrit entitled *Nirvritti Panchakam**, which in very brief meant: He alone enjoys the inner felicity of the One Self of all, who remains the same with the known and unknown. Who has no differentiation as I, you, he, that, within or without, existence or non-existence.

Who does not enquire of anybody where he is going, arriving from where and who he is. Who does not ask anyone to come, go, or not to go.

When Bhagavan returned, Narayan Guru came and sat next to him and placed the piece of paper on his seat. He told Bhagavan, “They have come to take me to Esanya Mutt; I have to leave.” Bhagavan nodded in assent. Narayan Guru stood up and for a few moment, looked straight into Bhagavan’s eyes and said in ecstasy, “Let it happen like that.” (Meaning let me too become established in the state of *Sahaja Nishtha*.) After he prostrated and left, Bhagavan read what was written on the sheet.

Narayan Guru told his disciples that the Maharshi’s spiritual state was so great that even a single glance from him was enough to redeem a person. He added, now he remains unknown to the world like a lamp hidden within a pot. He should be made known to the world so that his spiritual treasure is plundered by as many people as possible.

After returning to his ashram in Kerala, he wrote another five verses: *Muni Charya Panchakam**, and sent them to Bhagavan, who appreciated them very much. In very brief these meant – Will not the arm as a pillow serve, and the floor as a couch to the one who sanctifies the ground beneath with every fall of his feet? Transcending all enjoyments, he enjoys, having the realisation of “That thou art.” Having got a body, all the time he abides in the seat of the Self, the unconditioned knowledge of Supreme. Always perceiving the Self, he attains his own imperishable, unparalleled state, sparkling with the union of his Self and the Supreme Self. Not involved in the arguments about Existence and Non-existence, turning his face away from this and that, he has attained the imperceptible, intangible, unsullied high. (Both the hymns by the Guru were put in the big notebook in the Ashram.)

Whenever anyone from the Ashram visited him, he would ask about Bhagavan’s health. If anyone from Tamilnadu visited him, he would ask whether he/she had seen Bhagavan. If the reply was no, he would say, “Having been born in Tamilnadu, if you have not seen Bhagavan, you have wasted your life.” He used to refer to Bhagavan as a *Raja Sarpam* (King Cobra).

* The meanings of *slokas* of complete poem are in *Arunachala’s Ramana*, vol. I.

UNDERSTANDING THE MIND

By Swami Satprakashananda*

Mind is distinct from the physical body and the spiritual Self. It is the source of freedom as well as bondage. It is one's greatest friend, as well as the worst enemy.

Vedanta says mind is dark and devoid of consciousness. It is not the mind that feels, imagines, wills, hopes or fears; it is the light of consciousness that enables the mind to behave in this way... The need is to cultivate and develop the conscious mind. It is through conscious mind that one has to overcome the 'unconscious', which works mechanically. There are many practices for development of the mind. One process is self-discipline. This is not suppressing something; you are just changing your actions to those which you recognise as right. You have to learn to say 'No' to what you consider as wrong.

Another course for development of the mind is meditation, which increases one's power of introspection. Through meditation one can clearly see the working of the mind, and of the subconscious impressions thwarting the progress.

The impurities that dwell in the mind are lust, greed, anger, jealousy, hatred, etc. Other impurities that cloud the mind are prejudice, misconception, doubts, worries and fears. Even when the impurities do not prevail in the conscious mind, they live in subconscious mind as subtle forces. They may manifest in the conscious mind anytime.

There is a light beyond the light of the senses, which is the light of the Self. That Self has been associated with the psychophysical system, which is so mixed up that it does not realise the Self as really is. When you are able to realise the Self, you know you are absolutely free, pure and immortal. The moment you know you are distinct from the body and mind, the whole system will be in order. Gradually, darkness will leave you and you will realise your unity with the Divine.

It is the *buddhi*, the determinative function of the mind, that has the capacity to judge the pros and cons of things and find that which is most desirable. In most human beings, the reasoning ability is not well developed. Reason has vision, but cannot act; emotion can act but has no vision. If reason rides on the shoulder of emotions, they can get along well.

The mind, being made of refined matter, can reflect the light of the spirit better than the body and the senses...An important function of the mind is to store all impressions of our experiences and activities, from childhood to the present.

Controlling the mind is a universal human problem. Control is obtained by detaching the mind from all that is worldly, and fixing it upon the Supreme Being. One has to make sincere efforts, persistently and assiduously, to fix the mind on the Higher Reality. Anyone who wants to live properly should know what he lives for. He should seek something noble, even as the mind insists on moving towards lower levels. *Vedanta says that you have to know what you are and assert yourself as you really are.*

All variations of the mind are completely hushed during deep sleep. You are completely relaxed. You forget your bodily self and therefore you feel so fresh after a real deep sleep.

Getting away from the mind is possible through Samadhi, which is not easy to attain. Rare individuals attain it after long preparations. Samadhi is direct experience of the Ultimate Reality. Try to meditate on your spiritual self and you see a self-effulgent, infinite ocean behind the self. The more the mind is concentrated, the more it takes on the form of that Truth.

In both kinds of Samadhi, namely, *savikalpa* and *nirvikalpa*, the mind becomes completely tranquil and get absorbed in the Reality. However, in the first case there is “I” consciousness, and in the other, there is no “I” consciousness.

You will need some physical posture when you practise meditation. The backbone should be kept straight, and the head and the back should be in one vertical line. In meditation, some symbol is necessary because we cannot set the mind on the subtle truth, or on the abstract reality. Any object, word or personal form can be a symbol. A sacred word can be used as a visual or audible symbol. When you visualise the word “Om” as radiant, that can serve as a visible symbol. A flame that does not flicker can also be visualised as a symbol of divinity. One can also select some personal symbol. One can choose the form of Krishna, Rama, Siva, or whatever answers to one’s conception of the highest ideal.

Note: In the recorded history, divinity never come so close to humanity as in the form of Sri Ramana Maharshi. Sri Ramana devotees can always sing His praise for some time and meditate upon Him, seeking His grace. We cannot forget Sri Ramana’s repeated assurance that He would very much remain with us after His physical form disappears. We can visualise His presence in whatever manner it suits us.

*Excerpts from his book *Mind According to Vedanta*, published by Ramakrishna Math, Chennai – 600 004, obtained from a summarised version of the book published in *Tattvaloka*, May 2012.

SUPREME COURT EXPLAINS HINDUISM: Hinduism incorporates all forms of belief and worship, without necessitating the selection or elimination of any. The Hindu is inclined to revere the divine in every manifestation, whatever it may be, and is doctrinally tolerant, leaving others – including both Hindus and non-Hindus – whatever creed and worship-practices suit them best. Since the Hindu is disposed to think synthetically, he would regard other forms of worship and divergent doctrines as inadequate, rather than wrong or objectionable. As Truth transcends all verbal definitions, it is not conceived in dogmatic terms by a Hindu. Hinduism is both a civilisation and conglomerate of religions, with neither a beginning, a founder, nor a central authority, hierarchy, or organisation. (Based on a judgement of 1977, quoted in www.davidgodman.org)

TAALA: It is the rhythm with which musicians sing or play songs and melodies. In the word ‘taala’, ‘taa’ comes from ‘taandava’ or Siva’s divine energy as he dances, and ‘laa’ from ‘laasya’ or divine energy of his consort, Parvati, as she dances. When the two energies interact, and its loud and soft parts speak to and answer each other, ‘taala’ acquires its pace, walk and gait. ‘Taala’ is special because of its ‘yin’ and ‘yang’, the opposites, which are made for each other. – *Bindu Chawla*

TAKE DESTINY IN YOUR HANDS: Nothing is destined. It is just that unconsciously we have made ourselves into a certain possibility. The destiny we talk about is something we have created unconsciously. The accumulations within us form certain attitudes and tendencies, and we start moving in that direction. It is not because somebody is guiding us in that direction. Simply our tendencies are such that we are going that way. A river born on the mountain joins the ocean. Is this the river’s destiny? No, this is the water’s tendency to constantly move from one place to another, depending upon the level. We have to strip ourselves off all fancy stories and come to term with life. – *Sadhguru*

THREE MENTAL TEMPERAMENTS: These are – *Tamas*, *Rajas* and *Sattva*. *Tamas* is the state of inertia; a mood of lethargy, indolence, indifference, indisposed to activity, with no intellectual conviction to pursue an active life in response to the need of the situation. *Rajas* is when a person bristles with frenzied actions leading to his complete involvement in worldly affairs. *Sattva* is the state of equanimity and serenity. When a person is poised, mature, contemplative and detached from excitement, he is described as trans-active. Every individual possesses all three *gunas*. These three *gunas* or temperaments combined in different proportions account for the variety of individuals in

the world. The role of the individual is to eschew as much as possible of *tamas*, have a moderate amount of *rajas*, and inculcate as much *sattvic* qualities as possible. – *Swami Parthasarathy*

The whole world came out of a single spark; who is good and who is bad? The Creator is in the creation, and creation in the Creator. He is everywhere. – *Gurbani of Sikhs*

Service to others is the rent you pay for your room here on earth. – *Anonymous*

Life's most urgent question is: What are you doing for others? – *Martin Luther King Jr.*

The spiritual journey is individual, highly personal. It cannot be organised or regulated. – *Ram Dass*

Generosity is giving more than you can, and pride is taking less than you need. – *Khalil Gibran*

Any fact facing us is not as important as our attitude towards it, for that determines our success or failure. – *Norman Vincent Peale*

Patience is the companion of wisdom. – *Saint Augustine*

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JUST BE, IT IS FULFILLING : By accumulating things, and sitting amongst them, one feels that he has something. Still, a constant urge to add to the existing pool remains. This may be of physical possessions, knowledge, status or recognition, but it keeps a person always on the run and uneasy in the process. Just 'being' is so fulfilling, that one feels no further need to collect anything. – *Osho*

GET FULLY INVOLVED IN WHAT YOU DO: A Zen master wrote – I get up every morning, have a bath and when I take bath I take it *fully*, that is, I am *fully* involved in it, not thinking *at all of any thing else*. In the evening I take a walk in the mountains *fully*. In the night I lit an incense stick in front of the idol of Buddha and then sit for some time *fully*. Zen does not regard sitting in isolation as being any different to working, carrying out your day-to-day activities. What is the point if although you are sitting for prayer,

your mind is still embroiled in worldly thoughts? Then you have not achieved anything by sitting. – *Anandmurti Gurumaa*

FATE AND FREE-WILL

By Swami Chandrasekhara Bharati*

There is no conflict between fate and free-will. Fate is nothing extraneous to yourself; it is sum total of the results of your past actions. It is not His creation but only yours. Free-will is what you exercise when you act now. Fate is past karma, free-will is present karma. The present is before you, and by the exercise of free-will you can attempt to shape it. The past karma is invisible.

We must not resign to our fate, but devote our self to free-will. Fate is the resultant of the past exercise of your free-will. By exercising your free-will in the past, you have brought on the resultant fate. By exercising your free-will in the present, you can wipe out your past record if it hurts you, or add to it if you find it enjoyable. For acquiring more happiness or for reducing misery, you have to exercise your free-will in the present.

It is not quite correct to say that fate places obstacles in the way of free-will. If we do not succeed at the very first attempt, we can easily deduce that in the past we have exercised our free-will just in the opposite direction, that the resultant of the past activity has first to be eliminated and that our present effort must be proportionate to that past activity. Thus, the obstacle which fate seems to offer is just the gauge by which we have to guide our present activities.

At the start, we must not be obsessed with the idea that there will be some obstacle in our way. Start with boundless hope and with the presumption that there is nothing in the way of exercising our free-will. If we do not succeed we have to tell ourselves that there has been in the past a counter-influence brought on by ourselves exercising our free-will in the other direction, and, therefore, we must now exercise our free-will with re-double vigour and persistence to achieve our objective. We have to tell our self that inasmuch as the seeming obstacle is of our own making, it is certainly within our competence to overcome it. Our failure only means that our present exercise of free-will is not sufficient to counteract the result of the past exercise of it.

Adopt the same course in every effort of yours. Exert yourself as much as you can. Your will must succeed in the end. But in the beginning you can not know the amount of effort to be put in by you. Take for example a strong, big nail driven into a wooden pillar, which has to be pulled out. When you see it you actually see, say, an inch of it projecting

out of the pillar. The rest of it is in the pillar and you can not see the length of the nail embedded inside. It is unseen or *adrisha*. Now can one tell as to how many pulls will be necessary and how powerful each pull has to be? The length which has gone into the wood depended upon the number of strokes which drove it and the intensity of such strokes. The number and intensity of the pulls needed to take out the nail, therefore, depend upon the number and intensity of the strokes which drove it in. But the strokes that drove the nail are now unseen. They relate to the past and are *adrisha* – invisible. Do we desist from the attempt to pull out the nail simply because we happen to be ignorant of the length of the nail in the wood or of the number and intensity of strokes which drove it in? No, we persist and persevere in pulling it out by increasing the number and the intensity of our present effort to pull it out.

* Excerpts from *Dialogues with the Guru* by R.K. Aiyar, Chetana Ltd., publishers, Bombay.

SOME FORGOTTEN TRUTHS

By Paul Brunton*

1. Those who refuse to be deluded by their brighter hours will not suffer so greatly from their darker ones. There is no life that is not made up of the warp of pleasure and the woof of suffering. Therefore, no man can walk with proud and pontifical [Pompously authoritative] air. The fate of all things moves in cycles and only the thoughtless observer can fail to note this fact. Even in the universe it may be seen that every perihelion [Point nearest the sun in the orbit of a planet] is succeeded by an aphelion [Farthest point]. So in the life and fortunes of man, the flood of prosperity may be succeeded by the ebb of privation, health may be a fickle guest, while love may come only to wonder again.

2. A man will feel safe, protected, secure, only when he discovers that the radiant wings of sublimity enfold him. While he persists in remaining unilluminated, his best inventions will become his worst impediments, and everything that draws him closer to the material frame of things shall become another knot he must later untie. Let him, then, deliver himself, his worldly cares and burdens, into the beautiful care of his better self, and it shall not fail him.

3. He who has once seen his real self will never again hate another. There is no sin greater than hatred, no result more certain than that it will recoil on those who send it forth.

4. Scholars may burrow [A hole or tunnel dug in the ground by a small animal, such as a rabbit or a mole, for habitation or refuge] like moles among the growing piles of modern books and ancient manuscripts which line the walls of the house of learning, **but they can learn no deeper secret than this, no higher truth than the supreme truth that man's very self is divine.**

5. **When a man receives the august revelation of his own starry nature, he is overwhelmed.** All that is worthy in thought and feeling now comes unsought to his feet. Inside the cloistral quiet of his mind arise...the light which Buddha understood and brought news of Nirvana to men.

6. No dust can ever settle on the grave grandeur of these ancient truths. Whoever is ready to accept them must not only apprehend [Grasp mentally] these truths with his intelligence, but must appropriate [To make use of exclusively for oneself] them with his heart until they inspire him to diviner action.

* Excerpts from his classic *A Search in Secret India*, chapter xvii.

LIFE WITH SRI BHAGAVAN

By Arthur Osborne*

A brief description of daily activities of Bhagavan around 1947.

At 5 a.m. doors of the old hall were opened for early morning devotees to enter. They enter quietly and prostrate themselves before him. A small group of Brahmins sit near the head of the couch and intone [To recite in a singing voice] the Vedas. All sit quietly mostly with eyes closed in meditation. A few minutes before six the chanting ends. All rise and stand as Bhagavan raises himself with an effort from the couch. He leaves the hall, leaning on his stick and a little bent, to the bathroom beside the cowshed. Two attendants follow him. Only occasionally he looks up if some devotee approaches him or to smile upon some child. There is no way of describing the radiance of his smile.

Breakfast is at seven. After breakfast, Bhagavan goes for a short walk and then returns to the hall. By eight Bhagavan's devotees begin to arrive. Most of them sit facing Bhagavan. It is the Hindu tradition for men and women to sit apart and Bhagavan approves of it, as the magnetism between them may disturb the greater spiritual magnetism. Incense sticks are burning. Some sit with eyes closed in meditation; others

relax and simply feast their eyes on Bhagavan. There is an ineffable [Indescribable or unspeakable] tenderness in Bhagavan's look. And yet, despite tenderness, the lines of his face can show the sternness of one who has conquered and never compromised. This aspect of hardness is usually covered by a soft growth of white hair. His face is like the face of water, always changing, yet always the same. It is amazing how swiftly it moves from gentleness to rock-like grandeur, from laughter to compassion. Technically he may not be beautiful, and yet the most beautiful face looks trivial beside him. Such reality is in his face that its impress sinks deep in the memory and abides when others fade.

Some of the devotees, without rising from their places, talk with Bhagavan about themselves, give news about the absent devotees, ask doctrinal questions. One feels the homely atmosphere, as of a great family...A mother brings a little child and he smiles to it more beautifully than a mother. A little girl brings her doll and makes it prostrate before the couch and then shows it to Bhagavan who takes it and looks at it. A young monkey slips in and tries to grab a banana. A three-year-old shows his story book to Bhagavan, who takes that too, and looks through it with the same interest. But it is tattered, so he passes it to an attendant to bind and give it back next day neatly repaired.

At about eight-thirty newspapers are brought in, and unless questions are being asked, Bhagavan will look through them, perhaps remarking on any item of interest – though never in a way that could be taken as a political opinion. From about ten minutes to ten, till about ten past Bhagavan used to walk on the hill. But during these last few years his body is too infirm and he just walks across the Ashram ground. All rise as he leaves the hall, unless anyone is deep in meditation.

Bhagavan re-enters, and if those who are sitting in the hall make to rise he motions them to remain sitting. The mail is now brought to him. A letter was addressed simply 'The Maharshi, India'. A packet of flower seeds from a devotee in America to sow in the Ashram garden. Letters from devotees all over the world. Bhagavan reads through each one carefully. He himself does not answer letters. Answers are written in the Ashram office and submitted to him in the afternoon, when he will point out if there is anything inappropriate in them. After the letters are disposed of it may be that all sit silent, but there is no tension in the silence; it is vibrant with peace. Perhaps someone comes to take leave, some lady with tears in her eyes at having to go, and the luminous eyes of Bhagavan infuse love and strength. How can one describe those eyes?

At eleven the Ashram gong sounds for lunch. All stand up until Bhagavan has left the hall. If it is an ordinary day the devotees disperse to their homes, but when it is some festival or a *bhiksha* is being given by some devotee as an offering or thanksgiving, all

are invited to lunch. Pieces of banana leaf are spread out as plates. Attendants walk down the rows serving the devotees. All wait for Bhagavan to start eating, and he waits till everyone has been served. Eating is a full-time occupation, not mixed with chatter, as in the West. One of the servers piles some vegetable on the leaf of an American lady, and tells that they have been specially prepared without hot spices – Bhagavan himself gave instructions for it. Bhagavan calls an attendant back angrily, who is putting a quarter mango on every leaf and has slipped a half mango on to his. He puts it back and picks out the smallest piece he can see.

Until two in the afternoon, Bhagavan rests and the hall is closed to devotees. In the afternoon there may be new faces in the hall...Bhagavan never speaks about doctrine except in answer to a question, or only very rarely. And when he is answering questions it is not in a tone of pontifical [Ceremoniously authoritative] gravity but in a conversational manner, often with wit and laughter. If the questions are put in English he replies through an interpreter. Though he does not speak English fluently he understands everything and pulls up the interpreter if there is the slightest inaccuracy. A Christian missionary asked, “Is God personal?” and, without compromising with the doctrine of Advaita, Bhagavan tried to make the answer easy for him: “Yes, He is always the First Person, the ‘I’ ever standing before you. If you give precedence to worldly things God seems to have receded into the background; if you give up all else and seek Him alone He alone will remain as the I, the Self.”

At quarter to five, Bhagavan rubs his stiff knees and legs and reaches out for his stick. Sometimes it requires two or three efforts to rise from the couch, but he will not accept help. Some ten or fifteen minutes after his return, the chanting of the Vedas begins, followed by the *Upadesa Saram*. The chanting lasts about thirty-five minutes. While it is going on, he sits still, his face eternal, motionless, majestic, as though carved in a rock. When the chanting is over, all sit till 6.30 p.m., when the ladies are expected to leave the Ashram.

An attendant comes to massage his legs with some liniment, but he takes it away from him, and turns the refusal into a joke: “You have had Grace by look and speech, and now you want Grace by touch? Let me have some of the Grace by touch myself.”

Most of the devotees could come only occasionally, so there were crowds for the public holidays, specially for four festivals of Kartikai Deepam, Deepavali, Mahapuja (the anniversary of the Mother’s death) and Jayanthi (the birthday of Bhagavan). Jayanthi was the greatest and most heavily attended of these. Bhagavan was reluctant to have it celebrated at all, but for the devotees, the birth of Bhagavan was cause of rejoicing and

he was induced to submit. However, he refused on any occasion to allow *puja* to be made of him.

On any such festival day Bhagavan would sit aloof, regal, and yet with an intimate look of recognition for each old devotee who came. At one of the Kartikai festivals, when the crowd packed the whole Ashram ground and a railing had been erected around Bhagavan to keep off the crowd, a little boy scrambled through the bars and ran up to him to show him his new toy. Bhagavan turned to the attendant, laughing, “See how much use your railing is!”

*Excerpts from his book entitled *Ramana Maharshi and the Path of Self-Knowledge*, Sri Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai. Osborne (1907-70), an ardent devotee of Bhagavan, an Oxford-educated Britisher, was professor of English in a university in Bangkok, before he came to Bhagavan in 1945. His heart-felt reminiscences are in *Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, a publication of the Kendram, at pp. 94 -102.

SANT TUKARAM

Once a devotee asked Bhagavan, “How does the repetition of God’s name help realisation?” Bhagavan replied, “The oral repetition of the name leads one to mental repetition which finally resolves itself into the eternal vibrations. Thereupon Bhagavan told the following story.

“Tukaram, the great Maharashtra saint, used to remain in *samadhi* in the day and sing and dance at night with large crowd of people. He always used to utter the name of Sri Rama. Once he was answering the call of nature and also saying ‘Ram, Ram.’ An orthodox priest was shocked at the uttering of the holy name by the saint when his body was not clean. Hence, he reprimanded him and ordered him to be silent. Tukaram said, “All right!” and remained mute. But at once there arose the name of Rama from every pore of Tukaram and the priest was horrified by the din. He then prayed to Tukaram, “Restrictions are only for the common people and not for saints like you.” – *Spiritual Stories as told by Ramana Maharshi*, Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai, p. 25.

MOTHER’S TEMPLE AT SRI RAMANASRAMAM – A BRIEF HISTORY OF ITS CONSTRUCTION

The following excerpts are from David Godman’s article in *Mountain Path*, 2000, pp. 179-87.

Bhagavan's mother attained Self-realisation on 19th May, 1922, at Skandasram. The devotees decided that her body be buried, rather than cremated. Since the mountain itself was a Siva lingam, it was considered an act of desecration to bury a dead body on it. A place at the foot of the mountain, near the Pali Tirtham was chosen for the purpose. Sacred ash and sacred grass were put inside the *samadhi* and the Mother's body was lowered into it. Bhagavan and others put a handful of *vibhuti* and camphor. It was covered with a stone slab on the top of which was placed a Siva lingam. The lingam was then worshipped in the traditional manner. From that day on, *puja* was performed daily at the shrine. Bhagavan continued to live at Skandasram but Chinnaswami and Dandapani Swami decided that they would live full-time near the Samadhi. They erected a coconut-leaf hut over the shrine and built another hut nearby which they used as a kitchen.

Sometime later, Bhagavan left Skandasram and went to live in the hut that had been built over the *samadhi*. How it happened was told by Bhagavan to Devaraja Mudaliar.* “After Mother's death I used to come down now and then to the Samadhi and return to Skandasram. One day, about six months after Mother's death, I went there on one such visit and after sitting there for some time, wanted to get up and go back. However, something told me that I should not go back but stay on there. It was as if my legs refused to get up. And I stayed on. That is how the Asramam began. Who knew then that all this would grow up?”

Bhagavan added sanctity to the Mother's *samadhi* by living in the small building that had been erected over it for a period of 5½ years. He moved out of it in 1928 when the devotees constructed the old hall on an adjacent piece of land.

In the mid-1920s Bhagavan himself decided that a more substantial building was needed to house the Mother's *samadhi*. He decided to utilise some badly baked bricks that had been abandoned by some brick makers who had set up a temporary kiln near the Ashram. The following day a mud-and-brick wall was constructed around the *samadhi*. Bhagavan himself did all the work on the inside of the wall while a professional mason worked on the outside. The 'temple' was completed by erecting a thatched roof on top of the wall. This construction, the forerunner of the temple that now stands on the same site, remained unchanged for more than ten years.

In the 1930s, Sri Ramanashram began to develop and expand. The cowshed, the dining room and the kitchen, the storeroom, the *patasala*, the old office and the bookstore were all built between 1929 and 1938. The only remaining, uncompleted project was a plan to build a stone temple over the Mother's *samadhi*. At Bhagavan's sixtieth birthday celebrations, which took place in January 1939, there was a long debate between those devotees who wanted a big temple and those who thought that the Ashram's funds would

be better invested in building more accommodation for visitors. Bhagavan remained aloof from the debate, and no one really knew what his own views on the subject were.

Throughout the 1930s, Annamalai Swami had been supervising all the major building projects in the Ashram. Each day he would receive instructions directly from Bhagavan, and each evening he would go back to Bhagavan to tell him how much had been completed and how much still remained to be done. *Sarvadhikari* Chinnaswami thought that Annamalai Swami was the best person to find out what Bhagavan's intention was in regard to the temple. When Annamalai Swami conveyed the query to Bhagavan, Bhagavan finally disclosed his decision: 'If it is constructed well, and on a large scale, I shall be happy.'

Chinnaswami was delighted because he had been wanting to build a big temple over his mother's *samadhi* for many years. Since it was not an ordinary building work, a qualified outsider had to be brought in. After careful consideration, the whole project was entrusted to Vaidyantha Sthapati, an expert in temple architecture and engineering. He brought with him many accomplished stone-masons.

When the project started, the Ashram only had enough money to pay for a small portion of the work. Bhagavan knew that funds were in short supply but he made it clear that he wanted the temple to be financed out of unsolicited donations. He repeatedly told Chinnaswami and all the other devotees that they should never ask for funds on the Ashram's behalf. When Annamalai Swami was very worried about the finances, Bhagavan told him, 'We should not worry about the financial aspect of the work because God will supply all the money that we need.' As usual, Bhagavan's faith was justified. The temple put a severe strain on the Ashram's finances, but the work kept going. On some days, the Ashram had to depend on donations received during the day to pay the wages in the evening. At the start of the day the Ashram would hire workers, even though it knew that it had no money to pay them. During the day donations would arrive in various ways and by evening there would always be enough to pay the workers.

Bhagavan made daily visits to the temple to watch the progress of construction and to inspect the quality of workmanship. If any work was not up to standard, he would call attention to it and request that the necessary improvements be made. On one visit he requested that some cracks in the wall be properly filled with cement. Bhagavan occasionally initiated jobs himself. For example, Bhagavan decided that the name of the temple should be inscribed on the front wall. Annamalai Swami, who was asked to help with this work, told David Godman:

If one looks over the entrance to the *garbha graha* one can see two elephants carved out of stone. Under their feet is a stone scroll. The full name of the temple, '*Mathrubuteswaralayam*', meaning 'the temple of God in the form of the Mother', is carved in stone on this scroll. Bhagavan himself wrote out this name for me in big

Sanskrit letters. His idea was that I should make a stencil and then paint the letters on the scroll. Later, one of the *sthapatis* would carve out the name by chiselling out the area covered by the painted letters. I sat in Bhagavan's presence in the hall, carefully cutting out the name. I kept all my attention on the work because I knew that I would not be able to get away with even the smallest of mistakes. Bhagavan was watching me all the time I was working. When the cutting was over, I painted the letters on the scroll under the elephants' feet.

The construction of the temple, which was concluded at the beginning of 1949, took approximately ten years. When it was finished, the temple complex included a large hall that was originally intended to replace the old hall that Bhagavan had lived in since 1928. A large stone sofa was installed there for him to sit on. But when the time to make the move came, Bhagavan clearly indicated that he didn't want to either sit or live there. When he was first shown where his new sofa would be located, he complained that if he sat there, the monkeys and squirrels would no longer have access to him. Bhagavan eventually stayed in the new hall for about six months. The remaining few months of his life were spent in the *mahanirvana* room.

The *kumbhabhishekam* ceremony for the Mother's Temple performed in March 1949, was a fitting climax to the years of effort that had been spent in its construction. The ceremonies, which lasted for four days, were attended by tens of thousands of people from all over India. On the final day alone, over 15,000 people were fed in the Ashram. Two hundred priests, under the supervision of the Sankaracharya of Puri, carried out the rituals, while Bhagavan himself empowered the Sri Chakra that was to be worshipped in the main shrine. The temple had come a long way from the coconut-leaf hut of 1922.

* From his book *My Recollections*, pp.134-5.

Any fact facing us is not as important as our attitude towards it, for that determines our success or failure. – Norman Vincent Peale

Fasting of the body is food for soul. As food upkeepes the body, so fasting strengthens the soul. –St Chrysostom

With the conquest of my mind, I have conquered the whole world. – Japuji of Sikhs

The greatest treasures are those invisible to the eye but found by the heart. – Bible

Heaven is not a place; it is a state of being where one experiences a sense of relaxation and lightness. – Swami Sukhabodhananda

All that we are is a result of what we have thought: we are formed and moulded by our thoughts. – *The Buddha*

The most self-serving thing one can do is live selflessly. Selflessly give your experience...Selflessly give whatever it is you have to give. And the world we rise to meet you. – *Steve Harper*

There is something beyond our mind which abides in silence within our mind. – *Maitri Upanishad*

If you can recognise illusion as illusion, it dissolves. The recognition of illusion is also ending. Its survival depends on your mistaking it for reality. – *Eckhart Tolle*

Guru is a *tattva*, an element, a quality inside you. It is not limited to a body or form. – *Sri Sri Ravi Shankar*

Human beings are not beasts but angles trapped inside the bodies of beasts, forever craving transcendence. – *V. Ramachandran*

Start the practice of self-control with some penance; begin with fasting. – *Lord Mahavira*

Dear devotees:

Sri Ramana Kendram, Hyderabad, has now got exemption under 80G from the Income Tax Department vide their letter no DIT (E)/HYD/80G/22(11)/11-12 dated 18.5.2012. It means that you can now claim 50% rebate in tax on your income for donations made to the Kendram in cash.

SEPTEMBER – 2012

RIGHT PATH IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE TIME TAKEN TO ACHIEVE THE GOAL – AN ANECDOTE: Two monks in steadfast penance were meditating under a *peepul* tree. The Lord is appeased and asks them what they wish for. The first monk asks: “How many more births to take before I attain salvation?” The Lord replied, “Six more births.” The reply saddens the monk and crestfallen he continues his penance with a heavy heart. The second monk asks the same question and he is told that he would be reborn as many times as the number of leaves the *peepul* tree has. On

hearing this the monk is elated and thanks the Lord and resumes his penance in all earnest. The first monk is puzzled and asks him the reason for his happiness. The monk replied, “I am happy because I was assured that I am on the right path. How long will it take is no concern of mine. When I am sure of the direction there is no doubt reaching the destination, and I can focus on enjoying the journey.” – *Deepak Ranade*

MEDITATION: When you are close to yourself, you are in meditation. When you sit to meditate do not do anything, just be quiet with yourself. Just enjoy your own company. To awaken your meditative nature, you observe your breath. If you cannot observe your breath, then count your breaths. As you start it, in 10 minutes you will start feeling some changes inside. Do not make any effort to breathe, let it be natural. Just count it. Counting your 100 breaths will awaken your meditative nature. *Continue the practice with all sincerity and devotion at your command.* – *Swami Brahmdev*

NAYANAR SAINTS: The life of these 63 venerable saints is contained in *Periapuranam*, the first religious book read by Sri Ramana Maharshi, which greatly influenced him. The life of these saints is a saga of devotion to Siva, whose name was their life breath. Their bodies were his temples and their minds his sanctum sanctorum. Their very existence was a pilgrimage to his blissful abode. They were individually called Nayanars and collectively Nayanmars. They thought only about Siva and spent their entire lives meditating on him. (One such saint was Kannappan, whose story is contained in *Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, a publication of our Kendram, at pp. 412-3.) A popular 240-page book on the life of these saints has been published by Ramachandra Iyer Trust, Bangalore, phone: 080- 2344 6023, price Rs. 70, *Tattvaloka*, June, 2012

SOME EASY LESSONS: 1. Don't dwell in the past or worry about the future. 2. If you think you will be happy when some of your dreams come true, you chasing a mirage. 3. Be happy as you now are and enjoy peace. 4. Simply remain happy and in peace. 5. Don't give importance to change of place. Experience joy wherever you are now.
– *Ganapatrao Maharaj*

WHAT IS *NIRVANA*?

By Girish Deshpande

Nirvana in Buddhism is defined as release of suffering. Here, *nir* is suffering and *vana* is beyond. So nirvana means to go beyond suffering of *samsara* or cycle of existence. All teachings and practices in various religions, and in particular the Buddhist tradition, are aimed at training the mind towards this singular objective. The root cause of our continuing to remain in cyclic existence is the tendency of our mind to get distracted easily. This is not simple distraction that we are talking of, but something that gives rise to causes and conditions for more severe impact.

Grasping does not mean attachment to things which we like. It is to do with the very concept of judging an arising thought, emotion or phenomenon with the intent of categorising it in terms of attraction or aversion, like or dislike, and so on. Repeatedly and single-pointedly, observing the arising thoughts and emotions, not just during meditation but all the time, their tendency to stick reduces. This happens not because the nature of afflictive thoughts and emotions reduce in stickiness, but because of the ‘non-stickiness’ that we come to develop in our mind with the help of practice.

How often we have blamed circumstances, people, situations and everything external, to us our misery. It is utter foolishness to even think, much less to believe, that something external can cause us to be in a situation, either good or bad. All these situations are totally self-created. This is the very basis of the law of karma.

We need to insulate ourselves from those causes and conditions that will come around and bear upon us harmful effects including unpleasant situations ahead in this life. There are thousands of external influences and internal arisings that compel us into negative actions and it is hardly possible to stop them to coming on to us. However, what is definitely possible is to insulate our minds from their sinister plans taking shape.

It you want to walk the earth without getting your feet dirty, there are two ways of doing it. Either you can cover the whole earth with leather, or you wear a pair of shoes. Insulating our minds is like wearing a pair of shoes.

By generating awareness through simply watching one’s mind in meditation, it is possible to release our minds from grasping and insulating it from influences. And this is really what nirvana is all about. – lamagirish@gmail.com (*The Speaking Tree*)

A DEVOTEE EXPERIENCES SRI RAMANA

Ramanadasa Sadananda (Seshagiri Iyer) was a teacher in a high school at Madras. He first visited Sri Ramana in 1915. The meeting filled him fully with bliss. He went to Virupaksha again after some time and Bhagavan answered his questions.

Q. How am I to ascertain who 'I' am?

A. By frequent, if not constant, questioning and searching within.

Q. How to deal with the mind which stands in the way of such enquiry?

A. The mind is nothing but a bundle of thoughts and the root thought is 'I' which is known as ego. When the question 'Who am 'I'?' predominates it kills all other thoughts at first and goes ultimately.

Q. What replaces the disappearing ego?

A. The all-knowing feeling of bliss, shining as 'I, will take its place.

In 1933, Sadananda composed 'Sri Ramana Daskam' in Tamil, and included some verses in it in English also, a few lines from which are as follows:

If you are fond of miracles reader dear,
A fact relating to a lady hear.
In her eighth month of pregnancy she came
(To see the Lord whose sight long sought this dame)
Overborne with grief for death of children four
Hoping to get a fifth to die no more
Within her lease of life; for often she thought
Her woes did fly and she desired, though hard,
To walk the eight miles round the Holy Hill
And God Himself with her and thirty-six
Devotees marched in starlight to fulfil
Her wish and lo! A snake the Lord's feet licks

And then was gone as He showed it its way.
‘A mile per hour alone should all now walk’
Said He who over earth and heavens holds sway
We walked and sang that night, none felt a shock,
It dawned and we regained the starting place.
That pregnant lady’s health did us amaze.
Her child was born, well formed, two months later
Completely filled with joy, His Grace made her.

Sadananda was saved from death during a virulent attack of small pox in 1916. He says that this may perhaps be because as his mind was filled only by Ramana, the ‘God of Death’ did not dare to take his life. He also records two other miracles, as follows.

1. At about 9 p.m. one dark night, when none of the 30 visitors assembled in Virupaksha cave could stir out on account of incessant rains, there was not enough food to be served for all. On being told that the quantity available would hardly suffice for two or three persons, Bhagavan ordered it to be distributed among all those present there and then. The morsel that everyone received was more than enough to fill their stomachs.*

2. Dandapani Swami, a great devotee of Bhagavan and father-in-law of the revered poet Muruganar, had shifted to Haridwar. He was penniless and helpless in fulfilling his strong desire to see Sri Ramana again. Then one day, most unexpectedly, some cultured ladies from Kashmir literally surrounded him like angels and provided him with the required fare for the journey. – Excerpted from *Timeless in Time* by A.R. Natarajan, Ramana Maharshi Centre for Learning, Bangalore.

* Dr. K.S. has recorded a similar incident: “On one occasion a large number of people came to the Ashram unexpectedly and they had to be provided lunch. One of the cooks went to Bhagavan and said, “We are worried because there is not enough food.” Bhagavan said, “Don’t worry. There will be enough.” My uncle was present in the dining hall along with others. Bhagavan looked at almost everyone before he started eating. My uncle said that even before eating most of the people felt full. So each one ate very little and what had been prepared was more than enough.”[§] – *Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, p. 68

\$ These incidents remind us of *Mahabharata*, wherein Durvasa and his followers suddenly felt that their stomachs were full as a result of Sri Krishna's eating a particle of rice from the then emptied 'Aksaya Patra' of Draupadi, to save her honour.

SRI RANGANATHAR TEMPLE: Located in Srirangam, the town near Tiruchirapalli, Tamil Nadu, the temple spreads over 156 acres, with about 50 shrines encircling the sanctum sanctorum. The town around the temple is in seven layers of streets, with houses and shops lining each street. What greets you as you enter the temple through the northern entrance is Kamban Mandapam, dedicated to Tamil poet Kamban, who wrote his version of the Ramayana – *Ramavatharam* at that spot. Apart from the presiding deity – Ranganathar, the temple complex houses many big and small *sannidhis*. The main one's are those dedicated to Sudarshana Chakra, to Ramanujacharya – who is believed to have spent his last days here, to Vishnu's celestial vehicle, to Dhanvantiri – god of medicine, and to Hygrevar – an incarnation of Vishnu, who is worshipped as god of knowledge and wisdom. Ranganathar, in the main sanctum, gives audience in His reclining position, lying on the bed of Adishesha, with Lakshmi sitting near His feet. – *Aruna Srinivasan*

THE DEVOTEES OF BHAGAVAN

An interesting account of Bhagavan's devotees in later half of 1940s, as provided by Arthur Osborne¹ is given below.

On the whole, the devotees were very normal people. By no means all were scholars or intellectuals...Naturally, Hindus were the most numerous among them, but there were others also...None did more to spread knowledge of Bhagavan through the world than Paul Brunton with his book, *A Search in Secret India*.

Among the resident devotees were Major Chadwick², large and benevolent, with a booming voice; Mrs. Taleyarkhan³, a Parsi lady with an imperious nature and the air of a grande dame [A woman revered as a leading figure in her group]; S.S. Cohen⁴, quiet and unobtrusive; Dr. Hafiz Syed⁵, with something of the old-world charm of a Muslim aristocrat. Visitors came for longer or shorter periods from America, France, Germany, Holland, Czechoslovakia, Poland and many other lands.

Viswanathan⁶ came in 1923, as a nineteen-year-old youth and remained. Speaking to Viswanathan in his usual humorous way, Bhagavan once said, “At least you knew Sanskrit when you left home; when I left home I knew nothing.”

Others who knew Sanskrit, among them were the retired professor Mungala Venkatramiah, compiler of *Talks*, who lived as a sadhu and for some years kept an Ashram diary, and schoolmaster Sundaresa Aiyar⁷. Muruganar⁸, who came in 1923 was one of the foremost of Tamil poets. Bhagavan himself would sometimes refer to his poems or have them read out. It was he who put together the *Forty Verses* and had written an outstanding Tamil commentary on them. The musician Manavasi Ramaswami Aiyar⁹, is a still older devotee. Senior in years to Bhagavan, he came first in 1907, and has composed beautiful songs in praise of the Master.

Ramaswami Pillai¹⁰ came as a youth straight from college in 1911 and stayed. Like Vishwanathan and Muruganar, he remained a sadhu. In Pillai’s case the path was of devotion and service. Once in 1947, Bhagavan injured his foot on a stone during his daily walk on the Hill. Next day Pillai, grey haired already but still robust, set out to make steps and a path up the hillside. Single-handed he worked from dawn to dusk, day after day until the path was finished, steps chiselled out and thoroughly constructed to avoid any injury to Bhagavan in future.

Ranga¹¹, old school friend, had studied in the same class as Bhagavan and had played and wrestled with him, always enjoyed great freedom in talking and joking. Coming in the early days to see what his old friend looked like as a Swami, he immediately recognised that he stood before Divinity.

A large part of Maharshi’s Gospel was compiled from conversation which Maurice Frydman¹², a Polish Jew. Two Polish ladies are well-known figures at the Ashram. [One of them was Uma Devi¹³]. Few spoke with Bhagavan more freely than Devaraja Mudaliar¹⁴, and T.P. Ramachandra Aiyar¹⁵. Many beautiful pictures of Bhagavan, showing incredible variety of expressions, were taken by Dr. T.N. Krishnaswami¹⁶, who used to come on occasional visits from Madras. Some of the most vivid and delightful accounts of incidents at the Ashram are contained in letters written by a lady devotee Nagamma.¹⁷

Again, there were devotees who seldom or never found it necessary to speak to him. There were householders who came whenever occasion permitted, from whatever town or country, and others who paid one short visit and remained thenceforth disciples of the Master though not in his physical presence. And some who never saw him but received the silent initiation from a distance.

Once when Bhagavan came to know that Major Chadwick² intended to go *mouni*, he spoke at great length against the practice, pointing out that speech is a safety valve and that it is better to control it than to renounce it. He added that the real *mouna* is in the heart and it is possible to remain silent in the midst of speech just as it is to remain solitary in the middle of people.

1. Excerpts from his book *Ramana Maharshi and the Path of Self-Knowledge*. His enchanting reminiscences of Bhagavan are at pp. 94-102 of the Kendram's publication *Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi*.

Enchanting reminiscences of devotees from 2 to 17 are also in *Face to Face* at pages shown here: For 2, pp. 110-116. For 3, pp. 364-66. For 4, pp. 78-84. For 5, pp. 47-9. For 6, pp.171-73. For 7, pp.285-89. For 8, pp.154-59. For 9, pp. 248-49. For 10, pp. 350-52. For 11, pp. 122-25. For 12, pp. 75-7. For 13, p. 401. For 14, pp. 72-4. For 15, pp. 159-61. For 16, pp. 256-58. For 17, pp. 88-94.

GITA AT THE WORKPLACE: How to be efficient at work is what the Gita is all about, for it is the science of action. One has many roles in life and one can play only one role at a time. One should give his all to the role played at the time. That way one would do justice to the role played at the time. The role of Arjuna in the war field is just to fight, giving his all to it, doing maximum justice to his role. When he plays the role of the fighter he should not share the concerns of his other roles...Unconcern for the fruits of action is not an unearthly ideal; it is just part of efficiency at work. When the fruits of action weigh heavily upon one's mind, one is distracted and one's decision becomes unsteady. Thoughts of returns should not burden one's actions. A farmer who doubts that he might not reap profit from his crops, cannot farm with complete dedication and do justice to his role. Do not look at the returns. Just love your work and do it lovingly, just for the pleasure of doing... Think plenty before plunging. Once you plunge, swim come what may. It is important that you play the game well. Give no care to win or defeat. Keep your spirits high. Don't trade it off for the fruits of work. Act not for the boss in the cabin but for the Boss within – the Spectator-I. Krishna says, act always with me in mind. And when you act with Him in mind, He will take care of the fruits. – *K.M. Gupta*

WORLD A STAGE: Shakespeare in his *As You Like It*, echoed the central theme of Upanishads, when he said – “All the world's a stage,/ And all men and women merely players;/ They have their exits and entrances...” You are an actor in the drama of life. Play your role wholeheartedly, dispassionately, perfectly and exit gracefully when the time comes. Don't get entangled in a make-believe world. – *Jaya Row*

SADHANA ESSENTIAL TO ACHIEVE THE GOAL OF LIFE

By Dada J.P. Vaswani*

A simple input-output ratio operates in *sadhana*; you get as much out of it as you put in. Invest sincerely, dedication, commitment, faith and perseverance, and you will achieve your goal. The simplest *sadhana* is to remember God, to live and move in His presence, and feel His divine energy flowing through you.

If you wish to dispel the darkness around you, you must kindle the light – the Light is within you. How long can we look to others for lighting our way? We have to take the responsibility. *No pains, no gains* is specially true here. Something in life cannot be outsourced. We have to work for it. There are no short cuts, no quick-fixes, and definitely no paid-service that can provide us the facility.

We have accumulated the *vasanas*. We are imprisoned by the karmic bonds from previous births, and carry the yoke of negative karmas. To create your own destiny, you must be free of the burden of the past. Erase the past through *sadhana*. You must learn to meditate, go into silence; you must chant the name of God within your heart. This will help you to tap your latent power and help you to rise above the restrictions of your external environment.

On the physical plane, excessive austerity and penance would lead to emaciation [To make abnormally thin] and exhaustion, but not the enlightenment sought. *Sadhana* is disciplining of the senses, but not denial of the senses!

The life of Spirit is a battle with appetites and desires. He who battles with desires must shed tears. It is a life of tremendous difficulties, pain and struggle. In the life of flesh, we have pleasure, but darkness surrounds us. In the life of Spirit, we struggle and fall – but we rise again and again, until, at last, we touch the divine! This is what *sadhana* is all about.

Human life is a bridge we must cross to reach the other side. We cannot linger on the bridge for ever. The purpose of human life is liberation and Self-realisation.

For *sadhakas*, silence is the first and simplest step on the spiritual path. Silence helps us to commune with the inner Self. Chanting your favourite *stotra* in silence or writing the word Om silently, are ways to turn the mind towards silence. Practise silence everyday, as much as you can. Prayer is the most fulfilling techniques of *sadhana*. Prayer is reposing *all* your faith in God. It is not passive, helpless submission, but a dynamic faith that we are in safe hands. God does not dwell in the heavens above. The kingdom of God

is within you. Prayer helps us to establish an intimate and personal communion with God.

* Based on a summary of his book *The Goal of Life and How to Attain it*, published in *Tattavalo*, July 2012.

SRI RAMANA WAS INSCRUTABLE*

By Gudipati Venkatachalam**

Sri Ramana was unpredictable and beyond all understanding. The unexpected with him was inevitable...He seemed to be completely indifferent to whatever was going on in the Ashram and would give an immense amount of care to some apparently insignificant detail. He would be highly critical of the Ashram manager's passion for improvement and expansion and yet take personal interest in the work of the carpenters and masons. He would scold his younger brother [*Sarvadhikari* of the Ashram] soundly, but would rebuke anybody who came to him with some complaint against him. He did not even want to hear about the money coming to the Ashram, but would read carefully the incoming and outgoing letters. He would refuse his consent to a certain work, but if it were done against his wishes, he would earnestly cooperate.

He would deny all responsibility for starting and developing the Ashram, would refuse to claim it as his property, but signed a will creating a hereditary managership for the Ashram. He would refuse all treatment when asked, but would swallow any medicine that was given to him without asking. He would relish some rustic dish and would turn away from costly delicacies. A serious loss or damage would leave him unconcerned, while he may shout warnings lest a glass pane in a cupboard should break. Greatness, wealth, beauty, power, penance, fame, philanthropy – all these would make no impression on him, but a lame monkey would absorb him for days on end. He would ignore a man for a long time and then suddenly turn to him with a broad smile and start an animated discussion. To a question about life after death he would retort, 'Who is asking?' but to another man he would explain in great detail what death was and what the state of mind was after death. **It was clear that all he did was rooted in some hidden centre to which none of us had any access. He was entirely self-directed, or rather Self-directed.** – *Arunachala's Ramana*, Vol. IV

*One who is impossible to understand or interpret. ** Chalam was a famous Telugu author. A great devotee of Bhagavan, he moved to Arunachala in 1950 (before the *mahanirvana*) and spent the

remaining years of his life there. He compiled reminiscences of 19 Sri Ramana devotees, including his own and his daughter Souris, in *Bhagavan Smritulu* (Telugu). For Chalam's reminiscences, see *Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, pp. 138-43.

THE GURU: Guru is not a physical form. Guru is the energy, the medium through which *jnana* flows to the *shishya*. A guru needs nothing from you; it is you who need him. He is a mirror that will show you your true self and helps you to elevate yourself provided you want to rise. As you focus on the guru, gradually you start acquiring his qualities. One must not rush to making a guru; you have to be absolutely sure. Because once you call somebody your guru, you must walk the path shown by him with full faith. The journey, which begins when you meet your guru, **requires continuous and dedicated practice.** – *Yogi Ashwini*

SRI RAMANA'S UNIQUE GESTURE FOR HIS DEVOTEE: Kunju Swami who was Maharshi's attendant from 1920-32, records – “Once it became necessary for me to go to my native place in Kerala. I had just enough money to buy the train ticket and no extra money to buy food on the way. That afternoon a devotee unexpectedly brought a lot of *pooris* and served them to Bhagavan and others in the Ashram. We were surprised to see that Bhagavan, who normally did not take more than two *pooris*, happily accepted six from the devotee. When the serving was over, he ate only one of the six and neatly packed and tied the remaining five with his own hands and gave the packet to me.” – *Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, p.153.

Dear devotees

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The recognition of illusion is also its ending. Its survival depends on our mistaking it for reality. – *Eckhart Tolle*

Fasting of the body is food for soul. As food upkeep the body, so fasting strengthens the soul. – *St Chrysostom*

With the conquest of my mind, I have conquered the whole world. – *Japuji of Sikhs*

The greatest treasures are those invisible to the eye but found by the heart. – *Bible*

All that we are is a result of what we have thought: we are formed and moulded by our thoughts. – *The Buddha*

Victory over oneself is a state where one can never know defeat. – *Anonymous*

The longer we dwell on our misfortunes, the greater is their power to harm us. – *Voltaire*

Whatever is begun in anger ends in shame. – *Benjamin Franklin*

OCTOBER – 2012

LORD SIVA AS KAPALI is the supreme ascetic who smears ashes on his body as *vibhuti* (the real meaning this word is ‘splendour’). He wears a garland of skulls and his garments are the skin of an elephant and a tiger. Kapali’s matted locks of hair hold the crescent moon and the river Ganga. He lives in cremation grounds and has Yama (Lord of Justice and Death) under his control. The drum in his right upper hand vibrates its rhythms throughout the cosmos. His left hand holds a deer (*kurangam*), an emblem of our mind that is restless, swift and unsteady like a deer. Kapali’s Eye of fire that represents wisdom (*jnana*) is above the eyes in the centre of the forehead. The third eye is situated at the pineal gland which controls all other glands in the body. – Excerpted from *Tattvaloka*, June 2012

RELEASE THE PAST: It is human to err, to make mistakes, to know defeat and to face failures. What is important is not to indulge in self-blame but to accept what needs to change, while acknowledging and respecting what is good in you. Release the past and move on. Forgive yourself for not being what you want to be. With forgiveness you can experience the beauty of the present moment. – *Neellam Nanwani*

MYSTIC MANTRA: Mantra is that key which frees one from the mind. If it is repeated with intensity and totality, it explodes into the sound vibrations which help the mind dissolve. Intone the sound loudly, then, by and by, feel attunement with the sound. Be filled with it, forget everything else. Tune yourself to the sound and begin to feel harmony with it. – *Amrit Sadhana*

THE GREAT CHURNING: The ocean is our mind. *Danavas* and *devas* are symbolic of vices and virtues within our mind. *Halahala* (poison) is a symbol of the foul thoughts

and desires that exist as *vasanas*. These hidden tendencies flood the mind of the *sadhaka* when he is on a spiritual path. At this point he turns to his guru, with whose help he can contain the evil and get relief. Siva is the symbol of guru, who comes to the help of the *sadhaka* and takes care of the poison. – Excerpted from *Tattvaloka*, June 2012

FORGIVENESS: Forgiving is good for the one who forgives. The moment you forgive, you let go the injustice done to you. To nurse a hurt is self-damaging. Forgiveness is like taking a psychological bath, it keeps you fresh. – *Swami Sukhabodhananda*

THE MIND: It is a great servant but a terrible master. Gradually, gaining greater self awareness and becoming an observer of our thoughts and feelings, we begin to see how our negative emotions and the sense of absence or deficiency of something is nothing but the perception created by the mind. This shift is transformational, and equips us to become aware of negative thoughts that arise in our mind. Acknowledge them and put them aside without delving on them or letting them grow. – *Rajiv Vij*

THE SAT-GURU

By Dr. T.N. Krishnaswami*

‘From darkness lead me to light,’ says the Upanishad. The guru is one who is competent to do this; and such a one is Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi.

The Sat-Guru, who is Divine Consciousness in human form, is the one guide to Enlightenment, the only bridge from the mental concepts in which the disciple is enclosed to spiritual consciousness. Adi Sankara said, “Even though you possess learning and all gifts and endowments, it will not avail you unless your mind is protected by the Guru and absorbed in him.” Again, in *Vivekachudamani*, he says, “There are three things that are rare and acquired due to Grace of God: a human birth, thirst for Liberation, and the protective care of the Guru.”

The Guru is ever ready to help and uplift those who appeal to him. It is vanity and pride to suppose that one’s own unaided efforts will suffice. The Guru has already trodden the path and can show it to the seeker. Even if he has arrived spontaneously at the goal, as did Bhagavan, he can still see and indicate the approaches to it. The Maharshi said, “The real Guru is in the heart. The task of the outer Guru is only to turn you inward to the Guru in your heart.” The power of the Guru in helping one to do so is far more important

than any mere verbal explanation he may give. The Maharshi said, “The Guru’s work goes on inwardly where it is not apparent to the disciple. As the disciple dives inwards in search of the Self, the Guru will do his part.” Although it is true that the Guru is the giver of Liberation, it is also true that the disciple must earn it by making himself fit to receive it.

The Guru does not add to the ideas or theories with which the mind is already cluttered up. Rather he induces cessation of thoughts in the disciple. The Guru helps you to awaken from the illusion. To keep the ‘I’-thought alert is his only *upadesa*. He says: One should not lose consciousness of his ‘I’ under any circumstances. This is remedy for all the ills of life. The ‘I’ springs up from the centre of our being and our only concern should be with this ‘I’. Give up thoughts; you need not give up anything else. The loss of body is not Enlightenment, it is death. The loss of ego-sense, the I-concept, is what is required.

Those who saw the Maharshi sitting in Samadhi were moved and awed by it. He radiate peace as the sun radiates light. People felt that there was God incarnate on earth. He assured us when leaving his body that he was not going away. ‘People say that I am going away, but where can I go? I am here.’ Being universal there was no going from here to there for him. He has assured us that “he who is ready for Divine Knowledge will be led to it.” – *Mountain Path*, 1965, no. 3

* He was a prolific photographer and is known for a variety of beautiful pictures of Bhagavan. His reminiscences are in *Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi* at pp. 256-8.

BODY IS GOD’S PALACE: Among the various beautiful creation of God, the human body stands out prominently as His most wonderful creation. Swami Sivananda calls the body a mysterious moving palace within which God dwells. It is rather ironical that despite the Lord dwelling right within the innermost chambers of one’s heart, people remain unaware of His presence throughout their lives. – *Anup Taneja*

BOOK REVIEW

Daily Meditations on the Divine Spiritual Life compiled by Dr. B.N. Mathur, pp. 426, available free of cost from Mr. G.C. Garg, 99, Preet Nagar, Ambala City – 134003 (Haryana)

The book, based on the teachings of Swami Dayanand Giriiji Maharaj, is meant to be read on daily basis for 365 days. One page is assigned to each day’s reading along with

verses on spirituality at the end of each month. The book is a treasure trove of information and guidance for seekers, seriously interested in meditation. The book will put an average reader on the path of spirituality and self-development.

Though numerous dimensions of spirituality are covered in the book at great length, it does not give adequate emphasis on the difficulties which a *sadhak*, who follows the *jnana* route, which is the central theme of the book, would face. The *sadhak* needs to be constantly reminded of the difficulties he would encounter in his way of Self-realisation. Our tendencies of *kama*, *krodha*, *moha*, *mada*, *lobha* etc. are so deep-rooted and strong that it is almost impossible to get over them. They just don't leave their strong grip over us. The *sadhak* needs to be reminded again and again of the need of patience, perseverance and unremitting practice needed to reach the goal, without losing heart. Further, he would need a great amount of *vairagya* and a clear understating of transitory nature of the things, which factors need to be stated repeatedly for the *sadhak* to imbibe.

It is also necessary to emphasise the need for complete surrender to the Supreme Power or a Guru. When the *sadhak* sincerely leaves himself in the hands of the Power, saying, 'I am yours, you have to take care of me', much of the battle is won. This dimension does not seem to have been adequately emphasised in the book. A really heart-felt prayer can go a long way, but most of us lack sincerity in this direction, and we need to be told about it.

The book should prove useful to anyone who has chosen the spiritual path. – Editor

THE TRUE DESTINATION: Within this body exists the entire Universe. Recluses, ascetics and monks are searching for Him in variegated garbs. The learned of the world, puffed up with pride in their scholarly traditions, remain deluded by their erudition. Many glorify bathing in holy waters, get lost in rituals and external observances and never reach the destination. – *Tulsidas*, the great Hindi poet

MEDITATION: Sit erect. Keep eyes closed. Breathe normally. Now shift attention to the mind. Keep observing it without getting distracted. Just observe. Your mind will tend to grasp the rising thought, follow it, build on it, until this conceptualization reaches a dead end and falls. Then the mind grasps on a new thought and begins to chase it, and the process goes on. As your observation towards the mind gets more intense, the arising of thoughts gets slower too. If you observe carefully there is a hair's breadth gap between two thoughts. Seize this gap and try to rest in this gap as long as you can.

Initially, this may be possible only for a few seconds. Resting in this gap even for a few moments, one feels peaceful and refreshed. – *Girish Despande*

ON FREE WILL

D. Samarender Reddy*

Our having free will need not be at odds with the omniscience of God. That is, we can have free will and still God can know the future even if He does not know what we will choose at any given point of time. God knows in advance ‘the infinity of all possible futures’, their various permutations and combinations, contingent upon the various choices that all persons on the face of this earth make at all possible times – the past, present and future. Just as the fate of the physical universe is bound up in a certain way, our future, too, is bound up in a certain way, though we may make choices out of free will.

Only the making of the choice is ours, and for every choice we make or thought we think, God knows not only how our future will shape up but also how the future of the world changes with that, given the other choices that are being made by others. God knows not only ‘the future’ but more accurately knows ‘the infinity of all possible futures.’ Future is already ‘canned’, to use a film analogy. The only choice we have is which reel we are going to play. God may not know which reel we will choose, which is where our free will comes in, but He darn well knows the contents of all the reels that we have in our possession, hence he is omniscient. If you accept that much, it is only a small step away to wondering if at least a part of our immediate future, or the entire course of our present life if you will, is quite possibly already ‘canned’ or determined. I will let you wonder about that if you are buying in to this sort of (pseudo?) reasoning.

Roads upon roads,
An infinity of them,
Stretch out into infinity.
But roads as they come
You well know
Are full of hazards –
Potholes, dead ends, distractions
And accidents.
Travelling may be fun

For a while
But sooner or later
The road will get to you
And have the last laugh.

*A medical doctor who works in Hyderabad. samarender.reddy@yahoo.com

DON'T BOTHER GOD – AN ANECDOTE: A very religious person, who sat for prayers day in and day out, lived next to one who never visited temples or sat for *puja*. The latter's life was good. He had a well-paying job and was happy in every way. The pious man's job was strenuous and his salary was low. His wife was not keeping good health, and so on. One day, deep in prayer, he raised his eyes towards heaven and said, "Oh, God, I seek your advice for every problem and confess to you my every sin, yet my neighbour, who never prays, seems blessed with every happiness. Why is this?" And a great voice was heard from above: "Because he doesn't bother me all the time." – *The Speaking Tree*

SOME USEFUL THOUGHTS: 1. Life is not about finding the right person, but creating the right relationship. 2. It is not important to hold good cards in life, but how well you play with the cards you have. 3. It is very easy to defeat someone; but very hard to win someone. 4. God gives, gives and forgives, but human gets, gets, gets and forgets. Be thankful in life. 5. Smiling faces do not mean that there is absence of sorrow; it means that they have the ability to deal with it. – *The Internet*

EGO IS THE CULPRIT: Bring humility to all that you do. Humility vanquishes the ego. It must be true humility – the releasing of all thoughts that set you apart from another by claiming you are better than, stronger than, more powerful than another, etc. We are not all those things that seem to make us different, separate from others. This superficial layer of self – the ego – is what prevents us from experiencing our true nature. Identification with the egoistic self keeps us away from God. God equals man minus ego. He who is least in ego, is most in Spirit. It is indeed ironic that while we claim we want spiritual enlightenment, we are unwilling to part with our ego identification. – *Raymond Stewart*

HOW I CAME TO BHAGAVAN

Prof. M. Sivaramkrishna*

A glimpse of his photograph was my first awareness of Bhagavan. This was in 1950. The photo had appeared on the cover page of *Swatantra*, an English weekly, edited by Khasa Subbarao. I was in my teens. I wondered who he was: the elegant beard, the gentle, luminous eyes; indeed, the very grace and serenity drew me instantly and irresistibly. A sense of inexplicable, unearthly holiness radiated from the photo.

All this I now describe through words, roughly. But the experience got communicated before I understand it. Or, as a poet says, before I could “heave my heart” into my mouth and, transfer them as words on to a paper. The magic of the experience remained inexplicable. I asked my father (a great devotee of Sri Ramakrishna). He gave me some details but I don’t think they registered. It hardly mattered “who am I?” I floated in the sheer joy of gazing at the face and its luminosity.

Years rolled by, I read about him and, (foolishly enough) wrote a small book also. I rarely dream but, in Chittor, just before Raghuram, my son-in-law, took us to Tiruvannamalai, I had a dream. Bhagavan appeared (the details are vivid but too personal, and it would be heretical to reveal). Strangely, I never had regrets that I did not see him. But, I reason that his photo is an abiding and enduring Presence. Isn’t “writing with light” the meaning of the word “photo”? Haven’t I experienced that luminosity before my mind and consciousness got cluttered with the colossal quantum of words and thoughts?

I don’t feel like knowing “who I am?” I have an identity, a name and form and roles to play and enact the various, need-based functions. “That’s all I know, and all that I need to know,” as the poet said. But quite often, playfully, I tend to ask: “Who are *You* Bhagavan”, asking us to know ‘who am I’? I look at you, and I am disarmed. I look at your various acts, observe the devotees, enjoy your antics with the animals, your answers to an unending stream of questions. And also, your recycling vegetable remains into delicious dishes. In between, looking at the manuscripts of books to be published.

I love to see this astonishing spectrum of your actions. That’s enough. More over, as great poet-saint T.S. Eliot said, ‘words slip, slide, perish, do not stay in place,’ I hesitate to write about you. Instead, I feel desperately – felt over many years – to feel love for him. He tugs at my heart and, makes it restless. Many who read this piece may think that I am melodramatic, romanticising. I don’t think so. If I get engulfed by his love for all, I would still like to assure myself that in that ‘all’ I am there, with my identity intact. It is

selfish, I know. But, it is Self-preservative. I don't want to drown. I want to taste sugar, sitting on the edge.

This brings me to the most powerful mode Bhagavan communicates through: Silence. Silence is dynamic, ever-renewable source of wordless communion. Lovers sit in vibrant silence holding each other's hands (no longer so in present-day movies, alas!). Love for Bhagavan, for me, matures when words cease, when talk gets terminated (taming words is not enough) and, I look at him, at his eyes which seem to say: "Don't place me on a pedestal. Come and bask in my silent yet deeply expressive love and concern for you!"

It is, surely, that love for those who insisted on surgery – in spite of his reluctance – which made him go through the 'agonising' (for us) phase of medical experimentation. Even that context made him remind us: "there is the *easy way* of, Yes, curing myself and, living for a few more years, but inevitably to die. There is the fundamental way of realizing that "Bhagavan is not the body". That is why one is joyful in loving Bhagavan, the definitely born and surely, subject to physical phenomena. At least, for me, right now, it seems loving Bhagavan is a loveable, highly covetable act. The rest is silence. That Silence engulfs, drowns even these words, "I love you"! Then, should I ask "Who am I?" The asking I leave to others.

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INDESCRIBABLE SMILE OF SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI

Among so many other things, Sri Ramana Maharshi was unique for his smile. He belied the belief that saints and ascetics are withdrawn, frigid and uncommunicative. Major Chadwick in his book *A Sadhu's Reminiscences of Ramana Maharshi*, says, Sri Ramana "had a great sense of humour and when talking, a smile was never far away from his face." (p. 26) As given below, the ways in which Sri Ramana's mysterious smile was perceived by the devotees is amazing.

Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi (a publication of the Kendram) records at many many places that whenever Sri Ramana spoke, smile always preceded it. It is a great lesson for all of us as well. Many of us too often become too serious. What is important is sincerity and not seriousness.

Smile is also important for spiritual growth, but many of us tend to forget this. Even when we pray in front of God (or a picture of Bhagavan Ramana) we should keep the smile intact. It is rightly said that smile is momentary, but it leaves a lasting impact.

Sri Ramana's smile was beyond description. This is clear from the enthralling impact of his smile, a sample of which is provided below. (Page no. after each quotation is from *Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi*.)

Arthur Osborne: My seven-year daughter wrote to me, 'When he smiles everybody must be happy.' (p. 95)

Major Chadwick: 'His face was wreathed in the most lovely of smiles, which is impossible to describe, or even believe, unless you have seen it yourself.' (p. 115)

Souris: 'As soon as he saw me, Bhagavan smiled as if I were an old acquaintance.' (p. 145)

Viswanatha Swami: 'His look and smile had a remarkable spiritual charm.' (p. 172)

Annamalai Swami: 'He smiled at me. How can that smile ever be described? It contained the whole world. On that occasion I felt I was being bathed in radiant glow of love and light.' (p. 200)

Mouni Sadhu: 'I have never seen, and undoubtedly shall never see in any other face, such an inexpressibly wonderful smile as the Maharshi's.' (p.206)

M.A.Piggot: 'When the Maharshi turned his head and smiled, I felt suddenly as if all the flowers of the world had poured their fragrance into our midst.' (p. 219)

F.H. Humphreys: 'You can image nothing more beautiful than his smile.'(p. 246)

Mercedes de Acosta: 'Then Bhagavan smiled at me. It seemed to me that I had never before known what a smile was.' (p.283)

Swami Satyananda: 'When we arrived, Bhagavan was sitting in the hall alone. He looked at us and smiled. I can never forget that smile.' (p.338)

Henri Hartung: 'A smile of love and peace, which can never be described in words.' (p. 340)

Bhagavan is beyond words and so his bewitching smile will remain inexplicable and incomparable, and a lesson for us that we keep smiling. – *The Editor*

NEED TO SEEK HIS GRACE

Excerpts from a letter that Swami Brahma Yogiesir wrote to one of his devotees before leaving the body.

You must understand that this human body has been vouchsafed to us as an expression of God's unmotivated Grace. It is in this body and this body alone that we can understand the inwardness of His Grace and become an object of supreme love to God. Life is ebbing every moment and it is impossible to obtain such an opportunity again. This valuable human life should not be idled away or wasted in enjoyment of worldly pleasures, in hugging shadows and clasping illusions, and indulging in forbidden pursuits.

Man should learn to see the operation of His Grace in all circumstances, favourable or unfavourable. When there is an abundance of objects of enjoyment, one should consider that God has allowed them as reward for past meritorious acts in order to enable one to minister to the needs of others, to perform more virtuous acts and to develop love of God. When objects are lost, one should consider that they were hindrances in the path of devotion insofar as we develop attachment to them. That is why the supremely merciful Lord has removed them – in order to draw us closer to Him – in an act of Grace.

Similarly, when the body is in sound health one should cultivate the feeling that this is in order that one may realize His all pervasiveness, and meditate on Him. When the body is in the grip of disease, the feeling should be cultivated that the affliction has been sent by Him out of compassion to enable us to work off our past sins and guard against committing new ones. In this way, we should learn to see the operation of His grace at all times and under all circumstances.

Take refuge in God or Ramana and pray daily as follows: “O Lord, Sustainer of the Universe, Gracious Protector of the distressed, Ocean of Mercy, Knower of the Heart, Saviour of the fallen, Almighty Lord, Friend of the poor, O Lord Ramana, Siva, Arunachala, have pity on me! O Reader of Man’s Heart and Mind, Thou art famous as an Ocean of Mercy, therefore it is right for Thee to show compassion on me, O Ramana.” – *Mountain Path*, 1967, no. 2.

A THOUGHT TO REMEMBER: The senses they say are high; higher than the senses is the mind; and higher than the mind is the Buddhi; but one higher than the Buddhi is

He. Thus knowing him higher than the Buddhi, steadying the self by the Self, slay the enemy in the form of desire, so hard to overcome. – *The Gita*

Heaven is not a place; it is a state of being where one experiences a sense of relaxation and lightness. – *Swami Sukhabodhananda*

The gem cannot be polished without friction, nor man perfected without trials. – *Confucius*

Pride is an exaggerated positive evaluation of oneself, often based on a devaluation of others. – *Buddhist definition*

The need is to fill the unforgiving minute with sixty seconds' worth of distance run. – *Rudyard Kipling*

People blame their circumstances for what they are. The people who get on in this world are the people who get up and look for the circumstances they want, and if they cannot find them, make them. – *Bernard Shaw*

And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. – *Bible*

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I am silence among all secrets. – *Gita*

People blame their circumstances for what they are. The people who get on in this world are the people who get up and look for the circumstances they want, and if they cannot find them, make them. – *Bernard Shaw*

And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. – *Bible*

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SURRENDER TO THE HIGHER POWER: Recognize your individual self as only a tool of the Higher Power. That Power will take over your affairs along with the fruits of actions. Whether you recognize the Power or not, the scheme of things does not alter. Only there is a change in outlook. Why should you bear your load on the head, when you are travelling on a train? – *Sri Ramana Maharshi*

ENJOY BLISS OF SELF THROUGH PRAYER AND MEDITATION

The followings excerpts are from Paul Brunton's 11th and last book *The Spiritual Crisis of Man*.

One difference between mystical and religious worship is that in the former there is an effort to unite through meditation with the higher power, whereas in the latter case there is an effort to commune through prayer with it. The separateness from it is therein acknowledged and maintained, whereas the mystic seeks to overcome that. Each kind of worship is necessary and has its own place in spiritual life. The conviction that there is an 'Other' , a power different from and higher than his own, possesses the religious devotee. The conviction that this 'Other' is identical with innermost self, possesses the mystical meditator.

All meditations should be prefaced by intense devotion, fervent aspiration, loving worship and humble prayer. The emotions must get deeply involved in this quest. Self-development thought is necessary but self-humbling prayer is not less necessary. The chief value of any kind of religious worship is the extent to which it abruptly recalls the mind from preoccupation with worldly affairs to self-humbling recognition of its own relation to the divine source.

Sometimes within the periods of relaxation, prayer or meditation, but sometimes outside them, the aspirant will experience moments, moods, hours or even days of great uplift, serene exaltation of ecstatic inspiration. These are really glimpses of the Overself. [Brunton has used this word for the *atman* in us.] Such moments endure in memory and can never be forgotten. The felicitous [Marked by well-being or good fortune] experience of the Overself may or may not come briefly but it always comes abruptly. It may be preceded by a curious happy premonition. The oncoming of this experience will be marked by various signs. The intellect gets suspended, a deep serenity unknown before takes possession of the seeker and an exquisite calm settles over him, and he feels as if he is emerging into glorious light after a dreary journey through a long dark tunnel.

For the Overself to give itself wholly and perpetually to a man, is a rare and wonderful event. Most often it gives itself only for a short period. The seeker cannot retain it precisely because is unequipped for doing so. The delight of this exalted moment and the fragrance of this heavenly visitation will linger in memory for years after it has itself vanished.

It is often asked why it is that this inner self is so cunningly hidden, so utterly elusive, so completely withdrawn from human sight and search? Why we have been put to such pains to find it? The answer is that the greatest treasures are the most carefully guarded. God has no intention of hiding from the children whose very existence is the result of God's own activity. Nothing is withheld from them except that what does not belong to the particular phase they are passing through. They will have to unfold all their faculties of feeling, thought and will, later of intuition, discipline and balance them under the intuition's rule. This done, the revelation will certainly be made and the Overself will then of its own accord bestow its light spontaneously, at first through glimpses but in the end fully and finally.

The Overself is the soul of man, his connection with the Absolute Power. It can never really visit him because it has never departed from him. It is an ever-presence, always with him. That which changes, that which moves, is thinking. Whether we listen or not and whether we hear it or not, the Overself perpetually and silently says: "I AM!" [Brunton's fascinating and elevating reminiscences of Bhagavan are in *Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi* at pp. 13-23. His classic *A Search in Secret India* made Bhagavan known throughout the world.]

SIVA AS VISVANATHA

By Lalita Ramakrishna

Located in Varanasi, earlier known as Kasi, the temple rests on the western bank of the Ganga. It enshrines one of the 12 *jyotirlingas* of Lord Siva. The presiding deity is known as Visvanatha or Visvesvara. The holy lingam is placed on a silver altar. There are small temples for Kalabhirava, Dandapni (Subrahmanya), Vishnu, Virupaksha and Virupaksa Gauri in the complex. There is small well in the temple called the Jnana Vapi, the wisdom of well, where the original linga was hidden to protect it from invaders.

It is a belief that pilgrims visiting the temple should give up one favourite vegetable or fruit as their offering to the Lord, who is renowned for his asceticism.

Adi Sankra on Kasi: *Kasyaam hi kaasate kasi/ Kasi sarva prakasika/ Sa Kasi vidita yena/tena prapta hi Kaasika* (Among the spiritually glowing regions, Kasi is the most luminous. Kasi illumines everything in this world – he who realises this, he alone is able to attain the spiritual illumination granted by Kasika.) Sankra also calls Kasi as Anandakanana (the forest of delight) since the bliss of Atma can be attained here. Kasi is also called Mahasmanam (The great cremation ground) since the five elements are believed to get dissolved at this centre during cosmic dissolution (*pralaya*).

Kasi kshetra is revered as the final abode of many people who choose to spend their twilight years here, as it is their firm belief that Lord Visvanatha whispers the mantra of salvation (*taraka nama*) into their ears. The name ‘Rama’ is revered as *taraka nama*, since it is the mantra that carries one across the ocean of births. Siva is called Tarakesvara since he enables those breathing their last with the *tarka nama* to go to his own celestial region, Kailas, after death.

When Devi asked Siva if there was a simple way to utter the thousand names of Vishnu, Siva gave her the name ‘Rama’ – *Sri Rama Rama Rometi/ Ramey Raamey manoramey/ sahasra nama tathtulayam/ Rama nama varanamey*. (Utter the auspicious Rama, Rama, Rama, delight the charming Rama, this exalted name is equal to a thousand of Lord’s names.) Sage Vasistha meditated intensely to choose a name for the first born son of Dasratha and selected ‘Rama’. The meaning of Rama is delight (*ramayati iti Rama*). This word brings joy and bliss to all those who ruminate [meditate] upon it constantly. Just as ‘Om’ is considered mantra for *nirguna* worship, Rama is the mantra for *saguna* worship. It is also said that the syllable *ra* is the *bija akshara* of Agni, which energises the body and all *jivas*. The syllable *ma* is *amrta bija*, and it consolidates the *prana shakti* in human beings. Lord Visvanatha in Kasi ferries *jivas* across the tumultuous ocean of life. – *Tattvaloka*, August, 2012

A JIVANMUKTA: He is one who attains liberation while still alive. He is free from attachments, desires and fears. He is not affected by either happiness or sorrow, has a sense of inner calm in all circumstances, and has firm and unwavering faith in the Supreme Being. In *Gita*, the Lord says that a person is *jivanmukta* when he casts of all cravings of the mind and is satisfied in the Self. He knows that the visible world has no substance. It does not mean that he turns away from his *karmas*, but he does not wallow in doership, and claim no credit to all he does for others. His ego is like a burnt rope, it does not bind. He feels nothing as mine; even his own body is not his. – *Sonal Srivastava* [Sri Ramana Maharshi is the only person known to us who had all the attributes of a *jivanmukta*.]

THE HANDS WHICH FED SRI RAMANA AFTER HIS ARRIVAL AT TIRUVANNAMALAI

After reporting his arrival ‘to his Father at Arunchaleswara temple’ Sri Ramana remained immersed in his own natural bliss. There was none to feed him and he was so intoxicated with inner bliss that he himself did not ask for food. Then Lord Himself made Ramana His concern. There were many sadhus in the temple. One of them was a Mouna Swami (a silent sadhu). He told his disciples through signs, ‘I do not know who this boy is; but he appears to be tired. Get some food and give it to him.’ Sri Ramana told Suri Nagamma much later that “It was boiled rice, with sour water under it, and some pickle in it. Taking it as the first *bhiksa* given to me by Arunachaleswara I ate the rice and drank the water given to me. That happiness can never be forgotten.”

To escape from the mischief of urchins, Sri Ramana had entered Patala Linga, which was totally neglected, dingy and full of insects. There also the Infinite took a hand by sending one Ratnammal, wife of Velayudha Chetty, to the underground cave who gave him food. B. V. Narasimha Swami’s *Self Realization* states how in that place Sri Ramana became totally oblivious of his body and was not even aware that ants, mosquitoes and worms were feasting upon his thighs and legs. Ratnammal who went into the pit to give him food, saw his pitiable condition and tried to persuade him to come to her house. To save him from the attack of pests, she left a clean piece of cloth to sit on. Sri Ramana did not respond. Such was the intensity of his inwardness that he noticed nothing.

When Sri Ramana was bodily shifted to Subrahmanya Shrine from Patala Linga, Mouna Swami used to give him milk mixed with turmeric, sugar, plantains, etc. The priest who noticed this, one day said that pure milk poured over the goddess Apeeta Kuchamba during *abhisehka* should be collected immediately and given to him. This sustained him for few months.

Later, when Sri Ramana was shifted to the garden surrounding the temple, one Rathnamma provided food to him. An account of this was given to Suri Nagamma by Sri Ramana himself: “When I was living under a tree, a twenty year old dancing girl, by name Rathnamma grew devoted to me and told her mother that she would not eat unless she consented to give food to me. So, both of them brought food. But I was then in deep meditation and opened neither my eyes nor my mouth. But they somehow woke me up by asking a passerby to pull me by hand, and then gave me food and left. When Rathnamma insisted that she must feed me daily, her mother said, ‘You are young and so

is the Swami, and he does not wake until somebody touches and pulls him. We cannot do that; what can we do?’ Rathnamma then asked a cousin of hers for assistance and with his help used to give me food every day. She had great devotion.”

During Kartigai festival of 1896, many sadhus came to the temple and one of them, Uddandi Nayanar, took up the responsibility of caring for Sri Ramana’s body. This privilege was later taken over by Annamalai Tambiran, who passed it on to Palaniswami.

After shifting to Virupaksha cave, devotees who had joined Sri Ramana would go round the streets of the town and collect alms. This would be shared equally by all. It would serve as a single meal and often there would either be no food or only adequate food. Again the Divine took a hand by bringing Echammal in 1906 to the cave. To this saintly person belongs the credit of serving food to Sri Ramana for the almost four decades, until she passed away in 1945.

As recorded in *Self Realization*, Echammal had lost her husband before she was 25, then her only son and finally her only daughter in quick succession. The shock stunned her. She met many holy sages, yet her sorrow remained deep and she was inconsolable. In 1906, when told about Sri Ramana she immediately went to Virupaksha cave. She stood in Sri Ramana’s presence for an hour and spoke nothing. No words were exchanged. Wonder of wonders! She stood transfixed [To remain motionless with amazement or awe] and could not leaving the cave. Finally, she somehow pulled herself away. By the grace of Maharshi the oppressively burdensome sorrow got lifted from her heart.

Noticing that there were no arrangement for Sri Ramana’s food, she would prepare a meal everyday for him and some of his devotees, and carried it to him to the cave. Even when she was sick, she would arrange to send the food. Nagamma has recorded that even after the food for scores of devotees was being cooked and served in the present ashram, Sri Ramana waited for her food to come, and would not eat unless the food sent by her was served to him.

Once the ashram management out of regard for Echammal’s age decided that she need not take the trouble of bringing food all the way. This was a great blow to her, as her very existence was for serving food to Bhagavan. Hearing this Bhagavan refused to enter the dining hall when the mid-day meal bell rang. He did not give any reason, but the devotees soon understood the situation. By this time Echammal had gone back to town. On being told about this, she returned at once and requested Bhagavan to enter the dining hall and have his meal. After this everyone knew the importance which Sri

Ramana attached to the great service of Echammal. – Refer also *Timeless in Time* by A.R. Natarajan of Ramana Maharshi Centre for Learning, Bangalore

THE CENTRAL THEME OF *SRIMAD BHAGAVATAM*

The following excerpts are from the above-titled book by Swami Ranganathanada.

Bhagavatam means that which deals with Bhagavan, the blessed Supreme Being. It has 12 *skandas* or books, with 18,000 verses. Its subject is pure love – the nature of pure love, how you can acquire it, and stories of saints and sages that illustrate love in its various forms. A verse in the beginning of the book says: Drink *Bhagavatam* again and again, the very ocean of *rasa*, pure love, O you, who are *rasikas* and *bhavukas* (who can appreciate love and have experienced some love). The book is a ripe and nectar-like fruit on the tree of the Vedas, brought down by the sage Suka.

Suka, son of Ved Vyasa, taught this scripture of love to king Parikshit, the grandson of Arjuna, who was to die in seven days. Suka was a great devotee of the Divine and a great *jnani*. He was *atmarama*, one who delights in the Atma and finds no delight in anything of this world. *Atmarama* is an Upanisadic idea that appears in *Bhagavatam*. Here a devotee says: ‘I don’t want anything from you, O God. I only love you for love’s sake. This love is the central theme of *Bhagavatam* around which love of other types are also expounded.

The third *skanda* has story of Kapila, an incarnation of the Divine. When he wanted to leave home and go to the forest, his mother Devahuti asks him of some spiritual instructions. Whereupon he tells his mother: ‘I am always present in all beings as their very Self. I am not at all pleased by being worshipped in an image by those who insult me in various living beings. I have already built a temple in their body. Therefore, worship me in all living beings.’

The theme of innate human greatness is expounded again and again in the Upanisads and *Bhagavatam*. The human beings have a profound divine potential within them, which can be realised in this very body, in this very life. *Bhagavatam* emphasises the uniqueness of the human being again and again.

Gajendra Moksha episode in the eighth *skanda* is the story of how God gave salvation to an elephant. The highest Vedantic teaching is contained in the hymn of praise sung by the elephant in the following words: ‘I take refuge in that *Svayambhu*, or self-existing Being, *in Whom* is this universe, *from Whom* is this universe, *by Whom* is this universe,

Who Himself is this Universe, and *Who is* also beyond this manifested universe and the unmanifested *Prakrti*.’

In the seventh chapter of eighth *skanda*, the churning of the ocean is described. There we find gods worried about *kalakuta*, as nobody could handle that poison. Siva came to their help; drank the poison and became Nilkantha. The myth has a profound meaning, and the moral of the story is given in one *sloka*: ‘Very often compassionate people feel for the sufferings of others. That constitutes the worship of the Supreme Divine, the one Self in all.’

The ninth *skanda* contains the story of Emperor Yayati, who was pleasure-seeking consumerist par excellence. But he attained the spirit of renunciation after self-questioning, and proclaimed an eternal truth: Never can desires be quenched by repeated enjoyment of desires; like butter poured on fire, with a view to quenching them, desires only get inflamed thereby.’

The tenth *skanda* is known as *Bhagavata Pradhanam*. It contains full and beautiful narration of Krishna’s childhood *lilas* and his variegated life. Krishna is the ‘Pied Piper of the Indian heart.’ He has tremendous influence on all aspects of Indian culture. That is why He is called *purna avatara*, the complete manifestation of the Divine. In *Gopita Gitam*, where the *gopis* singing the praise of Krishna, among so many other things, says, ‘You are not just son of Yasoda, but the inner Self and Witness of all embodied beings. Your stories are capable of destroying sins; they are sweet to the ears and full of *sri*, or auspiciousness; those who spread them in the world are the greatest givers of charity.’

The eleventh *skanda* also has discourses of nine yogis, in reply to the questions posed by King Nimi. This episode of the Navayogis forms one of the most illuminating sections of the book, wherein the whole *bhakti* and *jnana* are dealt with in brief compass with great devotional fervour. It is, in fact, *Bhagavatam* in a nutshell. In this *skanda*, Uddhava, the great friend and devotee of Krishn, requests him: O Lord! Before you go away, give us some spiritual advice. Thereupon follows the elaborate conversation between the two, which is known as *Uddhava Gita*. One of the verses here states that after creating the universe, Brahman was not satisfied with all the animals and plants created by him, because he thought that if he entered into these bodies, he would not be able to rediscover himself. Then he projected the human form and he was very happy, because he thought that in that body He could rediscover Himself. *Chandogya Upanisad* says, you are not the tiny genetic system. You are that Infinite Atman; that is your true nature. This great teaching is also stressed by *Bhagavatam* which tells us that through *bhakti*, we

can achieve the highest spiritual realisation. *Bhakti* can grow higher and higher, grow more and more. That is called progress in spiritual life. We have to develop dynamic spirituality. Our spiritual consciousness has to be awakened and gradually raised.

As part of *Uddhava Gita*, is the story of the *Avadhuta*, who learnt spiritual lessons from 24 sources, whom he regarded as his gurus. Among them one is a courtesan, named Pingala. In one of her despondent moods, she gets a great feeling of revulsion against worldliness, and she sings a song about the abominable nature of this body in a very vivid language. Finally, she resolves to give up hankerings for sense pleasure and takes refuge in the Lord alone.

Then we also have *Bhiksu Gita*. In reply to a question by Uddhava, Krishna narrates the story of a Brahmin who was a great miser, but later develops *vairagya* and lives the life of a mendicant. This Gita is his soliloquy [The act of speaking to oneself as if in solitude.] Here it is shown that the cause of all sufferings in this world is oneself only, and not any external agency. When Uddhava asks Krishna, ‘O Lord, please tell me something concrete for practising, Krishna asks him to follow *Bhagavata Dharma*. Its fundamental doctrines are: performance of one’s action as offering to the Lord, and practice of seeing the Lord in all beings. Almost all the important teachings of *Bhagavatam* are expounded in the eleventh *skanda*.

Bhagavatam combines both *jnana* and *bhakti*. The presence of *jnana* makes *bhakti* free from narrowness and sectarianism. It is that Advaitic *bhakti* that pervades the book. That *bhakti* is further reinforced by a third value, namely, *vairagya*, the force that helps a consumerist society to save itself. It helps to let the mammal in us die so that the man in us may live. – The 56-page book, price Rs. 22, can be ordered from Advaita Ashrama, 5, Dehi Entally Road, Kolkatta- 700 014, or < mail@advaitaonline.com >

WHO AM I? Discovery of our real identity is perhaps the greatest discovery of human civilisation. The real ‘I’, the One, universal consciousness, is not limited to or divided by the body-mind personality. Rather, the whole universe, of which the body-mind personality is but a miniscule part, appears in consciousness. This consciousness, which can be known only as the Self, does not allow any division or differentiation. – *Swami Nirviseshananda Tirtha*

ACHINTYA BHEDABHEDA: Midway between Sankar’s *Advaita* and Madhava’s *Dvaita*, and closer to the *Vishistadvaita* of Ramanujacharya, is the *Achintya Bhedabheda* of Chaitanya Gaudiya school of Vedanta which states that ‘God is simultaneously one with and different from His creation’ – the individual soul is intrinsically one with the creator; yet is not the same as Him. – *Pranav Khullar*

GET INSPIRED: Even the greatest person cannot make you great; you need to make yourself great. To get inspired means to shape our inner creativity. When one gets inspired, an ordinary person is transformed into someone extraordinary. The inspiration works like a ladder to achieve great heights in life. We do need inspiration from others in life. Inspirational words are very important. Great writings, and life history of great persons come in handy here. – *Sudhanshuji Maharaj*

LAUGHTER: Religion misses one fundamental quality: the sense of humour, which is an essential part of the wholeness of man. It keeps him healthy and fresh. Laughter is the only quality that distinguishes man from other animals. To be able to laugh, you need to be like child – egoless. And when you laugh, suddenly laughter is there, you are not. You come back when the laughter is gone. Laugh so that your whole body, your whole being becomes involved. And in the moment of laughter you will be able to see the whole of existence laughing. – *Osho*

TRUE KNOWLEDGE: The Upanishad tells us that what we should know is knowledge of God, not an intellectual knowledge but an illumined personal experience of the Supreme. There are many who say God exists, but that knowledge is not personal, it is theoretical and borrowed knowledge. Those who say, that I have felt the reality of God in pulse of my being, I know Him as deeply as myself, that is the true knowledge of God. – *S. Radhakrishnan*

Our bodies are our garden; our will our gardener. – *Shakespeare*

Enquiry doesn't lead one to the truth. Enquiry leads to dissolving of the one who is seeking the truth. – *Anonymous*

You are already perfect. You don't have to listen to anything that doubts that. Inadequacy is just a thought. – *Bentinho Massaro*

The gap between your expectations and reality is your suffering. – *St. Augustine*

Bondage is when the mind longs for something, grieves about something, rejects something, holds on to something, pleased about something or displeased about something. – *Ashtavakra Gita*

The present moment holds the key to liberation. But you cannot find the present moment as long as you are your mind. – *Eckhart Toll*

The difference between you and me is that I don't mind what happens. – J. Krishnamurti

Food for soul is silence. If we are not practising silence, we are starving ourselves. – J.P. Vaswani

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KEEP SMILING: If you cannot give anything else, at least give a smile. Leave home with a smile and when you return, do so with a smile. When you pray, pray with a smile. Enter your workplace with a smile. Try to smile in adverse situations. If you want to make life better, decide to smile and stay happy. A smile is momentary, but can have a lasting impact. – *Sudhanshuji Maharaj*

SPIRITUALITY: It cannot be captured by intellectual effort or recitation of sacred compilations, though they may provide inspiration for the fulfillment of the soul's yearning for divinity and peace of mind. Unless the 'healing touch' is experienced by the mind and the soul through reverberations of 'Word' (the divine power) of the 'Music of Spheres' or 'Nam', the mind's perversions cannot be reined. The self's ascent to the highest awareness that purifies the mind through meditative concentration on 'Word' is spirituality. Higher awareness dispels darkness of the lower mind, and deepens discrimination for righteousness and equanimity in life. Otherwise, life swings randomly from virtuosity to vice or survives in confusion – despite self-professed scriptural literacy. – *Tejinder Naran*

OBSTACLES: We have to be grateful for obstacles because without them we never learn. Only because of difficulties and challenges we come up with solutions, some of which will work and some not. But even if they don't work, it doesn't mean we should give up. It only means we should try again. – *Karmapa Dorje*

ONLY HAPPINESS: A man told Buddha, "I want happiness." Buddha said, first remove "I", that is ego, then remove "Want", that is desire. See now, you are left with only "Happiness." – *Speaking Tree*

CANDLE IN THE DARK: Never feel bad if people remember you only at the time of their need. Feel privileged that they think of you like a candle, when in darkness. –
Anonymous

BHAGAVAN SHOWERS GRACE ON MURUGANAR

Muruganar (C.K. Subramania Iyer) (1890-1973) was a great poet and an outstanding devotee of Bhagavan. Thousands of his verses praising Bhagavan, or expressing gratitude towards him, or recounting the experiences he had through Bhagavan's grace, or explaining Bhagavan's teachings have been published in a nine-volume Tamil series entitled *Sri Ramana Jnana Bodham* by Ramana Kendra, New Delhi. His *Guru Vachaka Kovai (A Garland of the Guru's Sayings)* was thoroughly edited by Bhagavan himself, thereby making it one of the most authoritative works on Bhagavan's teachings. Prior to his meeting Bhagavan he was working on a committee that was compiling a multi-volume Tamil dictionary.

He felt Bhagavan's power and grace in the very first meeting in September 1923. In his words: "In the same way that wax melts on encountering fire, on seeing his feet, my mind dissolved and lost its form. Like the calf finding its mother, my heart melted and rejoiced at his feet. The hair on my body stood on end. Devotion surged in me like an ocean that has seen the full moon. Through the grace of *chit-sakti*, my soul was in ecstasy."

Shortly after Muruganar came to Bhagavan, he had a strong desire to have Bhagavan wholly to himself, at least for a short while. He never mentioned this yearning to anybody. But can anybody hide anything from Bhagavan? His secret wish was fulfilled in a totally unexpected way. In those days, Bhagavan and his devotees used to collect leaves from the trees in the forest to make leaf-plates. Once, while a party was getting ready to go into the forest, Bhagavan gave Muruganar a very significant glance. Interpreting this look as a sign to follow him, Muruganar hurried after Bhagavan. By the time others entered the forest, Bhagavan and Muruganar had disappeared into the woods.

Bhagavan led Muruganar deep into the forest. At one place he sat down on a log and asked Muruganar to sit beside him. Muruganar sat, but no words were exchanged. Bhagavan looked directly into his eyes and he felt the power of Bhagavan's grace flowing through him like an electric current. He lost all perceptions of time and space and experienced a joy beyond description. Immersed in this state of bliss, he was

oblivious to the passage of time; it was only when he regained his senses that he realised that he must have remained in that state of bliss for hours together. Muruganar himself has mentioned this incident in one of his verses:

“He took me to the forest with him on the pretext of plucking leaves to make leaf-plates. There, with great delight, he destroyed my mind’s restlessness by bestowing his glance on me. He subdued my divided individual consciousness, granting me the experience of undivided reality.” – Excerpts from *Padamalai* (Teachings of Sri Ramana Maharshi) by David Godman. (This valuable 396-page book, priced Rs. 150, is available at the Kendram’s bookstore.)

LETTING GO: We are so busy with our daily lives that we have become like robots, going through the motions without thinking. We do not realise the toll it is taking on us. We are always on a short fuse. We cannot tolerate car overtaking us. We are impatient at the traffic signal. We are so high strung that we don’t even breathe properly. Take a little break. Just let go of your ego and see your life changes for the better. Letting go does not mean giving up. It means accepting reality. Having aspirations is not a bad thing, but having desires that keep you enslaved is unhealthy. Letting go means embracing life as it comes. – *Umesh Dwivedi*

AVOID MISTAKEN IDENTITY: Spiritual philosophers give metaphor of a crow sitting on a buffalo and believing that it is driving the buffalo. Another one is of a dog tied to a bullock cart who believes that it is driving the bullock cart. Our bodies are simply the instruments through which the Creator achieves His different activities in this world in keeping with His big picture. But, because of our limited and narrow perspective, we do not appreciate this truth. – *Kishor Kulkarni*

FORGIVENESS: Like garbage at home, the mind too accumulates garbage. The past is dust. For how long will you gather it? Somewhere you have to delink yourself from the past and come back to the present. All diseases come from the mind. We should check with ourselves who is it that we need to forgive. Sit in silence before a lit lamp and forgive those who have insulted, humiliated, harmed and hurt you. Forgiveness lifts the burden of mind and creates space within. – *Aruna Jethwani*

SIVA – LORD OF DEATH AND TIME

By Lalita Ramakrishna

Siva is also known as Mahakalesvara – which means that He is the Supreme Lord of *Kala*. The temple of Mahakala dominates the city of Ujjain. The city of Ujjain, also called Avantika, was a centre where students went to study holy scriptures. The icon of Mahakalesvara faces the south and is called Dakshinamurti. The temple is three-tiered, with Mahakala at the lowest level. At the middle level is the temple of Omkareshvara, and over it is a shrine for Nagachandresvara, which is opened only on *Naga Panchami* day every year.

The temple opens at 4 a.m. with a *arati*, called *Bhasma Arati*. In ancient times, this *bhasma* used to be the fresh and burning hot ‘ash’ from a funeral pyre. Now, *arati* is performed with *bhasma* made from dried cow-dung cakes.

The Maha Mrityunjaya Mantra is a prayer to Lord Siva, the Three-Eyed (*Tryambakam*) Lord (*Yajamahe*); Who is fragrant (*Sugandhim*), who nourishes (*Pushti*) and develops (*Vardhanam*) all beings. Just as the ripened cucumber (*Urvaruhamiva*), when it ripens, relinquishes its hold (*Bandhanaat*) on the plant, may He ‘liberate’ us (*Mokshiya*) from death (*Mrityor*), but not from immortality (*Ma amritaat*). [Sukla Yajurveda Samhita III. 60] Here the seeker is concerned with avoiding spiritual ‘death’ rather than physical death. By chanting this mantra with devotion, one can ‘mature and ripen’ spiritually, to be freed from the bondage of worldly desires.

This mantra is also called Markandeya mantra since Siva halted Markandeya’s aging process as he turned the deadline age of 16. The legend is that Markandeya was to die at the age of 16. On the destined day, when Yama came to take his life, and flung his noose at him, he hugged the *linga* tightly. As a result, the noose landed around the *linga* which was in the process of getting uprooted. The Lord emerged and made Yama promise that Markandeya would live as a *chirnajeevi*, without death. Siva came to be known as *Kala antaka*, one who ends time. This story is inscribed in metal at Tirukkadavoor shrine (Tamil Nadu), where the Lord is worshipped as Amritaghatesvara.

Adi Sankara’s *Kalabharava Ashtakam* is a musical offering to Kalabhairava, the fearsome aspect of Siva. Each of the eight verses here ends with the line ‘Kasika-puraadhi-natha Kalabhairavam bhaje.’ In the fifth verse Sankara says, ‘I salute Kalabhairava who maintains the bridge of *dharma* in life, and who destroys the paths which are *adharma*, saves us from the ties of *karma*, and who is the Lord who makes us ashamed of wrongful acts.’ This *Ashtakam* is fervently recited every day in the temple at Varanasi and elsewhere. –Excerpted from *Tattvaloka*, September, 2012

QUIETENING THE MIND

By Pushpa Amin

It is rightly said that ‘Silence is God, God is silence.’ *Sadhakas* often go into silence for extended periods of time as part of their *sadhana*. This is a recommended practice in most religions.

Sadhana is for purification of the mind-body complex. There are several pillars of *sadhana*, but five of them are generally followed – silence, stillness, fasting, celibacy and conquest of sleep. All these practices are supportive of each other.

The real practice of silence must incorporate systematic methods that gradually reduce the internal dialogue – the chatter of the mind. What is mind? It is just energy. The mind has layers and layers of energy that vibrate at different frequencies. The top layer is the shallowest. It is in this layer that waves of thoughts are generated by the sense organs – eyes, ear, nose, skin and mouth. These waves create a continuous internal dialogue, which is expressed in the form of speech and through reactions and impulsive actions.

To start *sadhana* one has to train the mind first. With the practice of silence, one tries to quieten the ‘internal dialogue’ and go into the deeper levels of the mind. With constant practice of silence and meditation, one progresses into deeper levels.

The Buddhist system of *Vipassana* is one of the methods of exploring the inner depth of the mind. Here, first, one has to abstain from any physical or vocal action which disturbs the peace and harmony of others; second, develop mastery over the mind by training it to remain fixed on a single object, that is, the breath; third, to constantly observe the body with full concentration from tip to toe in a systematic manner and not react to any sensations in the body, simply observe them. Gradually, these will subside leading to purification of the mind. This is termed as *pragya* or internal wisdom.

Make a *sankalpa* or resolve, to go into silence on a periodic basis, for example, once a week for a couple of hours. Select a day and time of the day when there is the least distraction and one is free from commitments.

Regular practice of silence helps increase awareness and equanimity, and deepens spiritual practice. It helps a person stay calm through difficult situations. Compulsive talking and actions are reduced and one begins to speak and act from the deeper levels of the mind. – Excerpted from *Speaking Tree*

POWER OF HEART-FELT INTENTION: When we really want something to occur, life tends to move towards us, fulfilling our aspiration. When we focus on accomplishing

something, when we intensely desire something to occur, and sustain that over a period of time, life brings us what we want. The Upanishads declare: You are what your deepest desire is. As is your desire, so is your intention. As is your intention, so is your will. As is your will, so is your deed. As is your deed, so is your destiny. – *Roy Posner*

HOW I CAME TO BHAGAVAN'S FOLD

By Sneha Choudhury*

In 1995, eight years into my married life, with two daughters aged six and two, balancing a job, family, torn between conflicting beliefs of two religions, I found that the happiness, smiles and cheerfulness that were outwardly visible never reached my heart. I was totally disillusioned with life; the travails of life seemed difficult to bear. Prayers no more afforded solace. There was no one to turn to. Out of immense compassion for His dear child, to assure me that He was always there, Bhagavan sent an angel in my life in the form of Sri S. Ram Mohan.** Sir (referred to henceforth), was my HOD in the Accounts department of South Central Railway, where I worked as an Accounts Assistant. Sir was an ardent devotee of Bhagavan. I had applied for long leave to take care of my sick daughter. Sir suggested that I could utilize my time effectively to study and appear for the departmental exams for promotion to group B services. He offered to be my teacher for the exams, which I gratefully accepted. My lessons on Railway Accounts and Finance began in earnest, and I frequented his house during the lunch hours when he came home for lunch.

Sir had innumerable books all over his house, and pictures of Bhagavan and Arunachala adorned the walls. I was not overly curious about Bhagavan, but I did wonder, why such a scholarly person should believe in *sadhus* and sages. Unaware, along with the office lessons, the unseen hand of Bhagavan was also at work. One day, in his house, the portrait of Bhagavan with those mesmerizing eyes held me captivated and I could not look away. The eyes spoke volumes of love, compassion, affection, promised so many things and gently invited me into His hold. I was a willing captive, and since that day, Sir's house became a temple for me. Sir became my spiritual teacher, and God and Guru became one for me. His life and love became mine and I felt extremely grateful and humble, that out of trillions of people in this world, Bhagavan has chosen to come into my life, to be near Him.

I learnt so many things from Sir. He taught me how to lead a meaningful life, take care of children, not to be overly worried, and accept things as they come. He did not preach

or give sermons. He came home and played with my children, and in that playfulness, I found the joy of motherhood. He gave me a book 'Mad Book Of Worries', which had more than five hundred ways of worrying – making me understand the futility of worrying. I became a sensitive individual, and learnt to care for my in-laws, my parents, my near and dear ones. Sir taught me to understand life, and the life was no longer burdensome.

In February, 1996, I visited Sri Ramana Kendram, Hyderabad for the first time, and got acquainted with devotees of Bhagavan. I met Dr. K.S. His affection and gentleness overwhelmed me. In between Sir and Dr. K.S., my Sunday visits to the Kendram was a thing of joy, as I always travelled to and fro with them. Like Ugly Duckling of Hans Christian Anderson's fairy tale, this ugly duckling had changed ponds to find her true nature.

Soon after, I was transferred to Vizag. But what would have been a matter of concern and worry, leaving children and husband, and working in an unknown place, proved a sabbatical [A period of paid leave granted for travel, research or rest.] for me; for as Sir said, devoid of conditioning, I will be able to reflect on my true nature better! During that period, I read about Bhagavan, His devotees, and each time I read, I was drawn closer to Him. I tried to imbibe Bhagavan's way of life as much as I could. I began to care for people around me and seeing me for the first time no one would believe that I was shy and reserved earlier in my life.

After my return to Hyderabad, *satsangs* continued. The *satsangs* at the Kendram were unique. No fanciful speeches and no learned expositions, just devotees sharing their experiences about their quest. Sir always told that the Kendram afforded a perfect place for one's *sadhana*, and in the midst of like-minded people, the inhibitions just disappeared.

Since Bhagavan has come into my life, in merry tune, with the song in my heart, I carry on, secure and safe in the confidence that Bhagavan is always with me. Lord Krishna assures us in *Bhagavad Gita* that 'there never was a time when you and I were not, and there never will be a time when we shall cease to be. All is forever.'

I do not know what self realization is, but I do try my best to meditate, though at times I feel I do not know how to do it. I do pray, very earnestly with all my heart and soul that each and every moment of the day, Bhagavan make me worthy of His love, and I become a purified soul, to be surrendered at His holy feet.

In August 1997, I visited Sri Ramanashramam, Tiruvannamalai, for the first time along with a friend, and felt the home coming. We were there for four days, and those days are the priceless gift that Bhagavan has given to me. *Om Namo Bhagavate Sri Ramanaya.*

* A devotee of the Kendram, is an officer in South Central Railway, Hyderabad.

** Worked in senior positions in Indian Railways. Is on the editorial board of *Mountain Path* and is editor of Tamil magazine *Ramanodhyanam*..

REGULAR PRACTICE NECESSARY FOR SELF REALISATION

Though the Self ever shines of its own accord effortlessly, we find ourselves ignorant of this presence and are enmeshed in an illusion that our consciousness is bound to a specific name and form. Our effort should be to get rid of the ignorance of believing ourselves to be separate from the Self.

Bhagavan gave the example of the sun shining on a bale of cotton and yet not burning it. He added that unless a catalyst in the form of a lens captures sun's rays and pointedly turns them on the cotton, it does not catch the fire. In the same way, although the Self is of the nature of knowledge, it does not burn away the heavy veil of ignorance unless it is focused on the ignorance through the catalyst of Self-enquiry.

In numerous instances Bhagavan has stressed the need for effort. He has wondered that people want to become established in the Self the moment they enter his presence, 'they ignore the effort involved.' To every sincere aspirant he advocated the need for continuous practice. However, as the effort to become self-aware is to be made by the very entity which is preventing that awareness, it does not often work. Bhagavan pointed out that if the ego is assigned the task of tracking and capturing the ego, it will be like asking the thief himself to catch the thief. – Excerpted from an article by Dr. Sarada Natarajan in *The Ramana Way*, April, 2012

KEEPING THE BODY AND MIND TOGETHER: Auto-suggestions are beneficial for this. When we sit down to meditate, the mind is likely to wander. The following in the form of sincere and heart-felt prayer can prove beneficial: 'O God, I am happy to be with you. I have no other desire. This is my only desire for now. And there is nothing here that belongs to me. All is yours. Even my body, everything is yours. Let me be with you. I have no other desire.' This simple exercise can help us in freeing our minds or desires that may be distracting us at that hour. – *Vijay Sethi*

POINTERS TO SELF-REALISATION – BOOK REVIEW*

By V. Krithivasan**

The book is a commentary on teachings of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi, expressed as responses to devotees' questions. It draws material mostly from *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, a book greatly renowned for its range and depth of spiritual content and unique power to bring about a transformation in the outlook of sincere seekers. The author-compiler has done an excellent job in selecting certain outstanding conversations that highlight Sri Bhagavan's expressions on the Ultimate Truth. He has presented the teachings in the form of chapters arranged topically with brief introduction to each chapter, followed by the relevant Talks, along with the Talk Nos. The gist of the selected Talk is aptly outlined in the sub-heading preceding the Talk. All these sub-headings in themselves can be taken as Sri Bhagavan's concise *Upadesa* on a range of subjects. They sparkle as great Vedantic truths carrying Sri Bhagavan's stamp of authority. The author's complete understanding of Sri Bhagavan's philosophy (if such a word can be used to describe His expression of the ultimate truth) is easily seen in the choice of the Talks and the commentary that goes with them. *Pointers to Self-realisation* is certain to serve a whole range of seekers interested in Vedanta in general and Sri Bhagavan's prescription to reach the Ultimate Truth in particular.

*This book by N.S. Ramamohan, a devotee of the Kendram, is published by Sri Ramana Kendram, Hyderabad. Pages, 223, price, Rs. 120

** A senior learned devotee of our Kendram

And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. – Bible

The mind sees separateness, love sees unity. – Sai Baba

The real secret of success is enthusiasm. – Anonymous

***Brahma satyam jaganmithya* is the beginning of spiritual life. *Sarvam khalvidam Brahmam* is the culmination of spiritual life. – S. Sudharshan**

Your degree of absence of thought is your measuring stick on the spiritual path. – Sri Ramana Maharshi

Prayer is an invaluable means of keeping an intimate contact with Him. – Swami Ramdas

**Faith consists in believing when it is beyond the power of reason to believe. –
*Voltaire***

**Physical efficiency and intellectual alertness are dangerous if spiritual illiteracy
prevails. – *Dr. S. Radhakrishnan***

The poorest man in the world is he who has nothing but money. – *John Rockefeller*

**Only one who possesses himself and is content with himself is actually secure. –
*Anonymous***

**Someone complained that he did not gain anything from his visit to Sri Ramana
Maharshi. The retort was that it was so because he did not lose anything. (Meaning
his *aham*). – *Anonymous***

TOTAL SURRENDER MAKES THE GRACE TO FLOW

Once Bhagavan told his well-known devotee Sivaprakasam Pillai, “One who has the
grace of the Guru will surely attain liberation; the Guru will never forsake him. A *sishya*
coming to a guru is like something that falls in the jaws of a tiger.”

To a Dutch devotee, Bhagavan said, “Even if you leave Bhagavan, he won’t leave you.”
Someone immediately asked Bhagavan. “Is this special to him or does it apply to all.” “It
applies to all,” came the reply.

Bhagavan once told Kitty, daughter of his great devotee Arthur Osborne, “If Kitty thinks
of Bhagavan, Bhagavan also thinks of Kitty.”

Once a devotee said to Bhagavan, “Bhagavan so long as we are in your presence we are
all good people but once we return to our place we resume our usual activities. I have
been coming here for so many years but I do not seem to have progressed even a little
bit.” Sri Bhagavan replied: Those who travel by first class inform the guard of the train
where they have to get down and ask him to wake them up. Thereafter they shut the
windows and go to sleep. Do they wake up midway and ask themselves whether they
have crossed their destination already? You are all like first class passengers. You have
informed the guard about your destination. Does not guard know what to do? When your
destination arrives he himself will come and wake you up.” – *Sri Ramana Leela* by Sri
Krishna Bhikshu [Here it would be relevant to quote the great Hindi poet-saint Tulsidas,
who said, ‘Just as fish are mighty happy in deep water, total surrender leads to freedom
from all troubles.’]

THE TRUE TEMPLE: He who does not know through subtle enquiry the truth that God is himself the temple for both the *jiva* and the world, will build a temple consisting of many enclosures, restrict God to an idol, and perform elaborate and magnificent worship to it. – *Sri Ramana Maharshi*