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नमो भावति श्री रामाय

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## The Recollections of N. Balarama Reddy

Pan VI  
(continued from the *Nov/Dec issue*)  
Ganapati Muni

### MPI

After Ganapati Muni died, Bhagavan would always turn down requests to compose anything in Sanskrit. He never studied Sanskrit grammar and composed verses only through inspiration. He would say now that Nayana (Ganapati Muni) is gone, who could he turn to for assistance? He had complete faith in Nayana's knowledge of the language.

I never met Ganapati Muni, but I remember being with *Kapali Sastri* in Aurobindo Ashram when the news of his death arrived. I saw Sastri openly weep, lamenting the Muni's death. At that time Kapali Sastri had so much faith in Aurobindo and Mother, I heard him say, "If Nayana was here (at Aurobindo Ashram) he would not have died."

Nayana died in 1936 at Karagpur in West Bengal. A telegram relating this news was sent to Sri Ramanasramam, and then from there another telegram was sent to Aurobindo Ashram. Swami Viswanathan told me that when Bhagavan read the telegram, these few sad words fell from his lips: "Where will we find another like him?" Ganapati Muni was no ordinary *sadhaka*. He believed he was born on earth for a mission. He had great power and intelligence, and desired to rejuvenate India through *mantra* japa.

Bhagavan was once talking about him to me and said, "If Nayana had not come here (meaning to himself) and had his mind turned inwards to the Self, he would have certainly ended up in jail." Nayana had in his earlier years a predilection for political activity.

Aurobindo and the Mother recognized Ganapati Muni's extraordinary gifts. *Kapali Sastri* once took the Muni to Aurobindo Ashram and everyone there was eager that he should stay. He was given a royal welcome and offered a house and all the necessary conveniences for him and his family. Someone back at Sri Ramanasramam informed Bhagavan of how Nayana was being enticed to stay in Aurobindo Ashram. While this person was describing it all to Bhagavan, he expressed the opinion that Nayana, indeed, might very well settle down there. Bhagavan looked at the man in surprise and said, "Nayana ? Settle down at Aurobindo Ashram? Impossible!"

*Muruganar*, like Ganapati Muni, was an inspired poet. It is said when one receives the gift of writing it is similar to taking a new birth. Muruganar was like that. His poetry is of a very high order. In his case, the gift became the master and he was the servant of it. The gift compelled him to write.

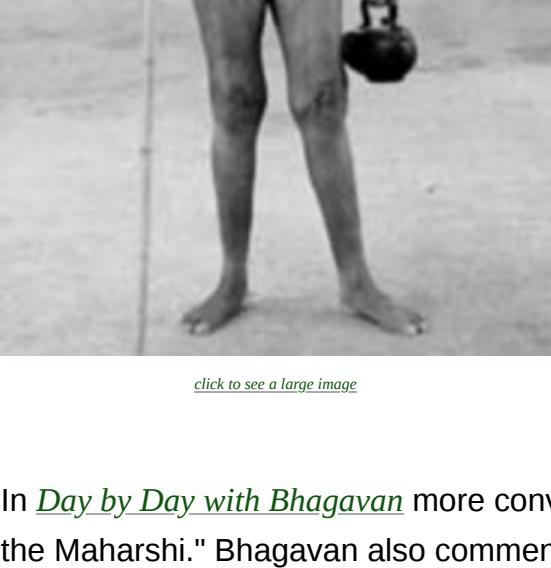
### Learned Scholars

Many learned scholars and sannyasins would often visit Bhagavan and ask questions Bhagavan's response to these visitors, and also to other visitors, was not always uniform. To some people he would give much attention, either by talking to them or pouring out his grace through a silent look; others he would stoically ignore. All these variations were not governed by status, wealth, or fame.

One morning a famous swami of Ahmedabad arrived at the ashram. I understood he had many wealthy disciples and was himself attired in a costly silk, ochre-colored cloth. He also had several pieces of luggage, which clearly indicated he was a man of some means. The swami came into the Guest House for Gentlemen and introduced himself to me. He wanted to know when he could see the Maharshi. I told him at 10 a.m. I would be going to the hall and he could accompany me and at that time I would introduce him to the Maharshi.

During that period, between 10 and 11 a.m. every morning in the Old Hall, *Devaraja Mudaliar*, *Munagala Venkataramiah* and I were going through Venkataramiah's English translation of a Tamil scripture. Bhagavan would open and hold the Tamil book in his hand and we would read the English translation for each verse. Then we would discuss it until we found it acceptable to Bhagavan.

The swami entered the hall with me at 10 a.m. and I introduced him to Bhagavan. He was fluent in Sanskrit and other languages, and also was well versed in all the scriptures. He inquired if he was allowed to ask a question. The consent was given and he asked Bhagavan if Ishvara, the personal God, actually existed. The Maharshi replied with one of his standard rejoinders: "We do not know about Ishvara or whether he exists or not. But what we do know is that we exist. Find out who that 'I' is that exists. That is all that is required."



The swami was not satisfied with this answer and continued to discuss the matter, quoting from various scriptures. Bhagavan then said, "If the scriptures say all this about it, why question me further?"

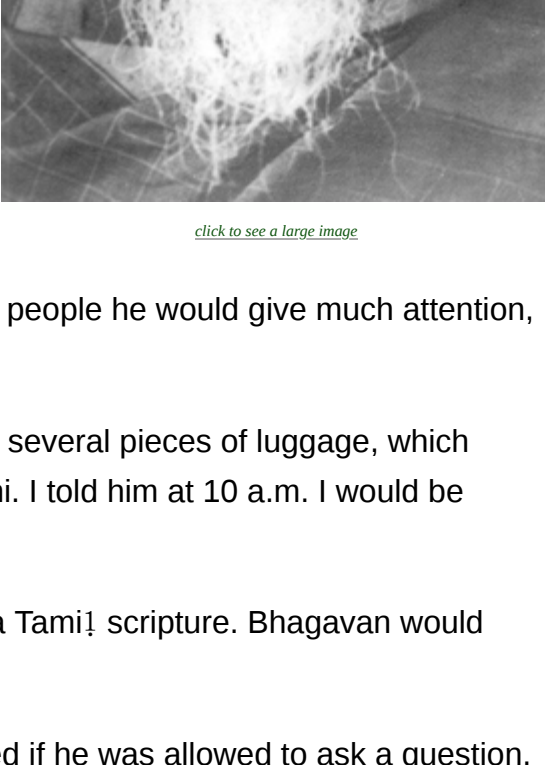
This also was not acceptable to the swami and he proceeded with more elucidation, at which point Bhagavan cut him off by turning to us and saying, "Come on. Let us begin our work." It is needless to say that the swami became quite annoyed and soon left the hall.

Later in the day I met him and he told me that my Maharshi doesn't seem to know very much. I simply replied, "Yes." And although this visitor was originally planning on staying for three days, he cut his visit short and left that very afternoon, without ever going back into the hall to see the Maharshi. Bhagavan later asked me what the swami said before leaving. When I told him, he simply smiled.

I remember when another similar incident occurred with a famous swami from Bombay, brought to the ashram by Mr. Bose. Although this swami too was well-known, had numerous disciples and was always given high honors wherever he went, in Bhagavan's presence he was just like everyone else: given no special seat, no special attention and made to sit on the floor with all the others.

When the swami had asked his first question, Bhagavan remained silent for a long time. He must have been wondering why there was no answer. Probably no one had ever, seemingly, ignored him like that before. The question was: "Which Avatar (incarnation) are you?" After sometime the Mauni (Srinivasa Rao) came into the hall and Bhagavan said to him, "He wants to know which Avatar I am. What can I say to him? Some people say I am this and some say I am that. I have nothing to say about it."

This was followed by a barrage of questions from the swami, who asked about Bhagavan's state of realization, about samadhi, the Bhakti school, etc. Bhagavan answered him very patiently, point by point. The swami listened and whether or not he was satisfied is hard for me to say. Before leaving the hall, the swami touched Bhagavan's couch, joined his palms in salutation and took leave.



In *Day by Day* with Bhagavan more conversations with this swami have been recorded. Mr. Bose reported that before the swami boarded his departing train in town he told him, "I have truly gained something from this visit to the Maharshi." Bhagavan also commented after his departure, "It will work." Whenever he made this observation we understood it to mean that the conversation the person had with Bhagavan will sink in and ultimately have positive effects.

One day, some Mr. Bose came to the ashram in deep despair. His only son, a bright boy of twenty, had just died. A private meeting with Bhagavan was arranged between 12 and 2 in the afternoon. At one point during the interview, in a desperate and somewhat challenging tone, Mr. Bose asked, "What is God?" For such a long-standing devotee to ask this question looked incongruous.

Bhagavan kept silent for a while and then gently replied: "Your question itself contains the answer: What is, (is) God."

One should note that this was not merely a clever and well-thought-out answer. That may be the case with ordinary men. A Jnani's utterances are free from the intermediary action of the mind, which colors and often distorts the truth. Also, Bhagavan's silence before answering the question was evidently meant to prepare the questioner to receive the full impact of the answer.

Another incident comes to my mind when yet one more learned swami visited Bhagavan. He questioned Bhagavan in Sanskrit and Bhagavan, once again, patiently answered in Malayalam, the swami's mother tongue. As the session continued it became clear that this swami's sole intention was to defeat Bhagavan in argument. Eventually Bhagavan said, "Will you be satisfied if I issue you a certificate stating you have defeated me in the argument?" But even that did not silence the swami's impertinence.

*Jagadish Sastri, a Sanskrit pundit, was quietly listening to the proceedings. When he saw that the swami was incorrigible, he blurted out in Sanskrit, "He dushta bahirgachha," which means "O wicked man, get out!" I don't remember anyone ever making such an aggressive remark in the presence of Bhagavan. But it worked. The swami finally got the message and left the hall.*

*Bhagavan had no desire to argue or to prove anything to anyone. If people were not ready to accept his teaching, he would never try to force his views upon them. He left people free to believe whatever they wanted.*

*And his response to visitors was never influenced by status, wealth, or appearance. What was within the heart of the visitor reflected onto the clear mirror of Bhagavan's mind. His responses were automatic and directed to the needs of whomever he addressed. Those with genuine humility and childlike faith would attract his grace spontaneously. The garb of a sannyasi, of a householder, a man, child, or a woman, meant nothing before the pure, all-knowing gaze of Bhagavan.*

### Insincerity

*When we were living with Bhagavan there was one thing we could never be: insincere. There was no way we could fool him on this account.*

*Once a group of influential devotees from Madras came up with a scheme to take Bhagavan away to Madras. In an attempt to execute this plan, a number of them arrived at the ashram and came into the hall. It wasn't long before they realized that Bhagavan would never consent to leave Ramanasramam, and eventually they left.*

*One old devotee was sitting in the corner of the hall quietly watching the whole drama unfold. He said nothing while the discussion was underway, though he was secretly in collusion with the group from Madras. After the group left, Bhagavan turned to one of his attendants and said, "Some people will sit quietly as if they have nothing to do with what is taking place before them. But on the contrary, they have everything to do with what is going on."*

*The old devotee questioned, "Bhagavan, are you testing me?"*

*Bhagavan simply remained silent. Any acts of insincerity were easily known to Bhagavan and he did not hesitate to point them out.*

### Foreigners and the English Language

*I had seen many Western visitors come to the ashram after reading or hearing about the Maharshi. Out of all these foreigners, none had impressed me so much as Grant Duff. He was 70-years-old, tall, lean, graceful in his movements, and when he spoke his words were clear and soft, originating from a deep sincerity.*

On his first visit, I remember him asking if he could hear the Vedas recited. A chair for him was placed in the hall opposite Bhagavan's couch, while the priests chanted. At the conclusion of the parayana he looked at Bhagavan and said with deep feeling, "Magnificent!". Bhagavan also openly spoke of his virtues. Rarely had I heard Bhagavan speak about anyone like that.

*Grant Duff* studied Sanskrit for six months in Ootacamund. He loved the language and he loved Bhagavan. No one has written in English about Bhagavan as he has, as can be seen in the preface to *Ramana Gita*.

Duncan Greenless, whom I knew well, was another Englishman attracted to Bhagavan. He had an M.A. degree from Oxford University. Because of the many plans and projects he wanted to carry out in India, he was unable to stay with Bhagavan for any length of time. He was a Theosophist and had been commissioned by the Theosophical Society to write a fifteen volume History of Religion. Besides this, he had grandiose schemes to open many schools in India, but as fate had it, he was unable to accomplish any of his great designs before his death.

Bhagavan was familiar with, and had respect for, the classical English works. He had read many English books and would daily read an English newspaper. W.Y. Evans-Wentz had given Bhagavan copies of his published books, and of these books Bhagavan liked best Tibet's Great Yogi, Milarepa. He once requested me to read it.

Although he read and understood English quite well, he rarely spoke it. If people spoke English to him with clear diction and pronunciation he would not have much trouble understanding them. Once he said to me, "I couldn't understand a word Chadwick said." Which shows he did fail to understand English at times if not spoken clearly.

Bhagavan was once walking to Palakothu when the American engineer Guy Haig was standing directly in his path, apparently waiting to ask something. I was at the moment approaching from behind, but before I reached there, Haig had asked, "Can I help others after the attainment of Self-realization?"

To this Bhagavan replied in concise English, "After the realization of the Self there will be no others to help."

### The State of a Jnani

Bhagavan once remarked, referring to himself, "In this state it is as difficult to think a thought as it is for those in bondage to be without thoughts." I also remember him telling us, "You ask me questions and I reply and talk to you. If I do not speak or do anything, I am automatically drawn within, and where I am I do not know."

This state is difficult for us to comprehend. Once during the winter months Bhagavan was sitting on his couch and, at one point, while picking up a shawl and wrapping it around himself, remarked, "They say I gained realization in twenty-eight minutes, or a half an hour. How can they say that? It took just a moment. But why even a moment? Where is the question of time at all?"

Then I asked Bhagavan if there was any change in his realization after his first experience in Madurai. He said, "No. If there is a change, it is not realization."

How he managed to remain in that unbroken state of Universal Awareness and still function in a limited, physical form remains a mystery. We cannot understand that state. And in spite of his exalted state, he interacted with us at our level. He took considerable interest in the operation of the ashram and the accommodation of visitors. This, no doubt, was a simple act of grace on his part, for what need did he have for all of this?

Once a princely family of India was visiting the ashram. It was commonly known that in spite of their high social position they were having financial difficulties. After they had visited for a few days and were preparing to leave, Bhagavan sent word to the office that no one should ask them to donate anything to the ashram.

On another occasion there was a French visitor named Jean Herbert, who had written several books on India, its holy men, and ashrams, etc. I saw him while he was on his second visit to the ashram. During this visit he requested the publication rights of all of the ashram literature, as he planned on using this material in his books. The ashram authorities were at first enthusiastic about books being published in the West on Bhagavan and his teachings. I told Bhagavan that Jean Herbert also requested the same permission from Aurobindo Ashram, but they decided not to give it. Perhaps they felt he would exploit Aurobindo's writings. When I had told Bhagavan this, he requested me to go to the office and explain it to them. I did, and the permission was withheld.

In this way, I observed Bhagavan taking special interest in the affairs of the ashram and, at times, personally directing them. It might not always have been so apparent as in the two cases above, but it was, no doubt, forthcoming.

### Photographs

On December 2, 1947, Srinivasa Rao from Bangalore took photographs of Bhagavan sitting on the couch in the Old Hall. Two of them came out quite well and hand-colored enlargements were sent to the ashram. I was shown the photos and someone from the office asked me if I would like to purchase one. This was the same photo that we now see on Bhagavan's couch in the Old Hall. In the picture he is smiling, resting his right hand on his knee, his left on his thigh, and two clocks and a lamp are on the table to his right. I purchased it and was about to send it to Madras to be framed when Mrs. Telyarkhan said a far superior framing job could be done in Bombay and that I should send it there. I followed her advice, and when it came back everyone found it beautiful to look at. I brought it into the hall and handed it over to Bhagavan to examine. He held it in both hands, carefully inspected it and then returned it to me. In this way, I had this framed photograph sanctified by his touch.

About a year later, Gune, the Marati biographer of Bhagavan, brought from Bangalore the Welling photographs. They were a father and son team. Bhagavan was at that time sitting on the couch in the verandah outside the hall. In the early morning, just after breakfast, I remember seeing the son moving back and forth in front of Bhagavan, trying to get the right framing, focus and lighting to begin shooting. The photographs that were taken on that day turned out to be the most endearing and universally appealing images of Bhagavan, and one of the bust shots is now the most recognized and liked picture of Bhagavan. Another one wherein he is sitting with his legs crossed, with his walking stick and kamandalu resting by his side, is the most popular full-bodied pose of Bhagavan. There are two other remarkable scenes taken that day, showing Bhagavan reclining on the couch in a very delightful and majestic manner. The one thing remarkable about the hundreds of photographs we have of Bhagavan, is that in none of them do we see him with his eyes closed.

Before Bhagavan's Mahanirvana I purchased two large colored photos of Bhagavan taken by the Welling photographers. I asked one of Bhagavan's attendants to take them to Bhagavan and show them to him. I thought even if he casts his eyes on them they will be sanctified. These two photos, and the one I bought earlier, which was taken by Srinivasa Rao, are now in the village adorning the walls of my ancestral home.

(continued in the *Mar/Apr issue*)

## Balarama Reddy's Last Hour

### MPI

In our *July/August 1995* issue, we reported the sudden passing of Sri Balarama Reddy. An attendant who was with him in his final hour gave the following report:

"Balarama Reddy was in Bangalore recovering from what seemed to be a minor illness. The doctor had told him that his condition had improved and he would be all right. The day after he was told this, and one hour before his passing, he pointed to a corner in the room and said to me, "Do you see Bhagavan there? He is calling me."

I replied, "I don't see anything, and why would he be calling you now when the doctor has just said you are quite all right and healthy."

"No!" said Balarama, "He is right there (pointing) and he is calling me."

One hour later, unexpectedly, Balarama expired.

## Annamalai Swami

### MPI

*Annamalai Swami, a lifelong devotee of Sri Ramana Maharshi, was absorbed in his Master on November 9, 1995. He was 89-years-old. The Swami's remarkable story was edited by David Godman and published in 1994 by the Sri Annamalai Swami Ashram Trust.*

*Annamalai Swami came to the Maharshi in 1928 and, at the Sage's behest, undertook the supervision in the construction of the Goshala (cow shed), Dining Hall, Dispensary and various other projects. In the mid-1940s, Bhagavan instructed him to leave the ashram and engage in intense sadhana. He would then occasionally meet the Maharshi on his walks, but never again in the fifty years that followed did he reenter Sri Ramanasramam, preferring to live a quiet, austere life in Palakothu. His small ashram borders the western boundary of Sri Ramanasramam and he was well known to many devotees and visitors to Tiruvannamalai.*

*In the passage below, excerpted from Living By the Words Of Bhagavan, Annamalai Swami relates the incidents preceding his departure from Sri Ramanasramam.*

(archive.arunachala.org/plp1/mnh/star).NOT -->

My days as an ashram worker were coming to a close, although I didn't realize it at the time. In retrospect I can remember only one small incident which indicated that Bhagavan knew that my time in the ashram was coming to an end.

I was doing some digging with a crowbar when Bhagavan came and asked me, "Did you decide to do this work yourself or did Chinnaswami ask you to do it?"

I told him that Chinnaswami had asked me to do it. Bhagavan was not very pleased.

"So, he has given you work. So, he has given you work. Why is he giving you work like this?"

A little later Jogi *Ramaiah* remarked to Bhagavan, "*Annamalai Swami* is working very hard. His body has become very weak. You should give him some rest."

Bhagavan agreed with him: "Yes, we have to give him some rest. We have to give freedom to him."

A few days later I went to Bhagavan's bathroom to help him with his morning bath. Madhava Swami and I gave him the usual oil bath and massage.

When the bath was over Madhava Swami asked a question: "Bhagavan, the people who take *ganja lehiyam* [an ayurvedic preparation whose principal ingredient is cannabis] experience some kind of *ananda* [bliss]. What is the nature of this *ananda* ? Is it the same *ananda* that the scriptures speak of?"

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



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

This experience completely changed my life. As soon as I recovered normal consciousness I knew that my working life at Sri Ramanasramam had come to an end. I knew that henceforth I would be living outside the ashram and spending most of my time in meditation. There was a rule that only those who worked for the ashram could live there full-time. Those who wanted to spend their time in meditation had to live somewhere else. I thus knew that I would have to leave the ashram and fend for myself, but the thought of losing my regular meals and my room never troubled me.

I made a belated appearance in the dining room to eat my last breakfast. As soon as I had finished eating I went up onto the hill to look for Bhagavan. I found him sitting on a big rock.

"I have decided to leave the ashram," I said. "I want to go to *Palakothu* to live alone and meditate."

"Ah! Very good! Very good! Very good!" exclaimed Bhagavan.

The decision clearly had his approval. How could it be otherwise since it was Bhagavan himself who gave me the experience which precipitated the decision?

After getting Bhagavan's permission I packed my possessions and locked my room. I also locked all the other places that were in my charge.

I took the bunch of keys to Chinnaswami and told him, "I have decided to go and live in *Palakothu*. Please take these keys and keep them."

Chinnaswami was, quite naturally, very surprised. "Why are you leaving?" he asked. "You have constructed all these buildings. You have done so much here. How can you go after doing all this work? Where will you sleep? How will you eat? You will have many troubles because you have no way of supporting yourself. Don't go, stay here."

I told him that I would not change my mind. I also tried to give him the keys but he refused to accept them. I didn't want another argument with him so I just handed over the keys to Subramaniam, who was also in the office, and left.

It was an abrupt change in my life. Within a few hours of having the experience I was walking to *Palakothu*, knowing full well that I had left all of my old working life behind me.

## Jayanti Celebration in New York

The 116<sup>th</sup> birthday of Sri Ramana Maharshi will be celebrated at the New York City Arunachala Ashrama on **Saturday, January 6th, 1996.**

This date corresponds with the Tamil calendar day of his birth. Sri Ramanasramam in India will celebrate it on this same date.

The program will be from 11:00 am to 1:00 pm, and dinner will be served to all the guests.

Call (718) 575-3215 for details.

Arunachala Ashrama  
Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi Center  
72-63 Yellowstone Blvd, Forest Hill, Queens, New York 11375

We kindly ask friends and devotees from the New York City area to attend.

## A New World Wide Web Site

Graham Boyd of Scarborough, England has now set up a WWW site on the Internet that should be of interest to all devotees and admirers of Sri Ramana Maharshi. The http address is:

<http://dSPACE.dial.pipex.com/town/square/1a56/>


On this site you will find many pages, including:

1. Our complete book catalog, providing a desierption of every book.
2. Low-resolution copies of all the available prints and photos of the Maharshi.
3. News from Arunachala Ashrama, New York and Nova Scotia.
4. News from Sri Ramanasramam, India.
5. News from Ramana Foundation of England.
6. A link to all our past issues of the MAHARSHI.
7. A complete twenty-eight page biography of Sri Ramana Maharshi.
8. A list of addresses where books, prints and information are available.
9. Dozens of black and white and color images of the Master digitally restored.

Graham, who is a professional photo restorer, has done a wonderful service by setting up this site for people to access from all over the world.

## Ramana Satsangs

Satsangs with recitations, songs, readings and meditation have been going on in a few places near or in large cities. Some of them are weekly. If you would like to attend any of these, please see the *Sri Ramana Satsang* online page.

"*The Maharshi*" is a free bimonthly newsletter distributed in North America by *Arunachala Ashrama*, Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi Center. You can subscribe to this newsletter's announcements by email. All back issues are available as *html* pages and in *Acrobat PDF* format from 2000 to the present. *Books, images, videos and audio CDs* on Sri Ramana Maharshi can also be found in the *eLibrary*, the *On-line Bookstore* pages and the Ashrama's  channel.

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