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Maud A. Piggot

Maud A. Piggott was born in England, traveled to India several times, but ultimately settled down in Hollywood, California where she passed away on August 19th, 1974 at eighty-seven. She joined contemporaries such as Douglas Ainslie (Grant Duff), Sunyata, Anagorika Govinda, Pauline Noye, W. Y. Evans-Wentz, who also earlier in life had had some association with Bhagavan Ramana and for one reason or another migrated to or lived in California. At that time California was an incubator for spiritual discovery and intellectual openness that attracted scores of seekers looking for new approaches to inner and outer fulfillment.

RECORDS show that in the beginning of January 1935 Maud Piggott first visited the Ashram for a few days and then returned from Madras before the end of the month prepared for a longer stay. That is when she befriended an American visitor, Y. W. Evans-Wentz, the Tibetan translator of *The Life of Milarepa*, *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* and others works. They discussed spiritual matters and she took courage from him to question Bhagavan further until she was satisfied. Dr. Evans-Wentz himself asked many pertinent questions, especially useful for Westerners seeking enlightenment. Fortunately, these questions and answers and much of Maud Piggott's dialogues were diligently recorded in *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi* for posterity.

While living in California in 1967 a friend of Maud Piggott gifted her a subscription to the *Mountain Path*. She was delighted with the journal and when she saw the request to send to the publisher any reminiscences readers may have had with the Maharshi, she immediately responded, in 1968, with a fascinating article that was published in January, 1970. It was also pub-

lished the same year in *Vedanta and the West*, a journal of the Ramakrishna Order in Southern California. *The Mountain Path* article was prefaced with the following:

"This article relates to visits made to the Ashram of Sri Ramana Maharshi in the years 1932-3. Since that time there has been a continual flow of visitors from all parts of the world. This entailed much outward alteration and many changes have taken place."

This presents some confusion regarding the dates of her visits. The dialogues and individuals she mentioned in her article were recorded in *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi* to have taken place in January/February 1935.

In a letter of acknowledgment sent to the publisher of the *Mountain Path* in 1970 she graciously writes:

"This is just a note to thank you so very much for your sympathetic editing of the reminiscences of our dear Maharshi that I sent you a while ago, and which you printed in the last number of *The Mountain Path* (January 1970, page 4). You gave all the essentials pertaining to the Maharshi and left out all the frills.

“One thing I would like to mention (not important but just to set the record straight). It was Dr. Evans-Wentz who was at the Ashram at the same time I was; we had many pleasant talks. Paul Brunton was the man who told me about the Maharshi after I had read his book *A Search in Secret India* in 1932. That sparked me to go “in search” of myself. That was many years ago, and yet it seems like yesterday! Again, thank you for your kindness and trouble.

– Maud A. Piggott, Hollywood, USA”

Since she was very clear about the identity of the American she met at the Ashram (Dr. Evans-Wentz) and he appears to have first visited Bhagavan only at the beginning of 1935, we must infer that the dates in the preface may be in error.

Maud Piggott writes in her article:

“I had visited India before, but this was my first trip off the beaten track. Staying with friends or in the luxurious hotels of Bombay and Calcutta, provided with modern conveniences, can give little indication of the conditions to be met with when leaving the highways. But this was an adventure in a cause and nothing else mattered.

“For some years it had been my wish to meet one of the real holy men of India, but so far it was a vain one. I had, it is true, spoken with a few saintly men and also some fakirs of the mediumistic type, who were no doubt sincere enough in their way. But they were not what I was seeking. Then I was told of Sri Ramana Maharshi, and even from the little I heard, I knew I would travel anywhere and put up with any inconvenience in order to reach him.

“The friend who gave me the welcome news of his existence offered to take me to him, and so we arrived at Tiruvannamalai late one afternoon. We put up at that none-too-clean accommodation the “dak bungalow” or travellers’ rest-house, which is all that is offered to the wayfarer who strays from the cities. No bedding is provided and there is seldom much furniture. But we left my servant to wrestle with such details and made our way to the bazaar and then up to the Ashram in a cart drawn by a pony. The end of our drive found us somewhat battered but full of expectation.

“Several of the people living in the Ashram, mostly devotees, came out to greet us. Amongst them was the younger brother of the Maharshi. He was dressed

in the ochre robe denoting a sannyasin – one who has renounced the world. The others were not strictly monks in the western sense of the word, nor is an ashram a monastery. It is a place where people wishing to study or follow a spiritual life may live. Often there are no orders or binding rules, and anyone can come and go as he pleases. Even women, though not allowed to sleep on the premises, are welcomed. Most of the people spoke English and greeted me in a most friendly manner.

“...I was nervous, having been told that I was the first European woman so far to visit the Maharishi, or Maharshi, as he is generally called. We were then taken in at once to see the holy man, and after making the Indian salutation, by holding the two palms together and raising them thus joined to the forehead, we laid our offerings on the ground before him. He was seated on a divan upon which was spread a large leopard skin. In front of the divan sandal-sticks were burning and a small brazier of coals, on which a special kind of incense was constantly being thrown.

“About a dozen people were present in the hall. They spoke in low tones to one another, and a child prattled to his mother. But soon these sounds ceased and there was quiet. I sat cross-legged on the floor with the others, though a chair had been thoughtfully provided for me.”

Corresponding to her arrival in the hall on that day, in *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi* the following was recorded on 6 January, 1935:

“Mrs. M. A. Piggott, an English lady, who had read *Search in Secret India*, came to see the Maharshi. The services of a disciple as interpreter were provided. There were many visitors at the time in the hall, including some ladies with their infants. The place resounded with noise. At length silence prevailed. Suddenly Maharshi, who seemed to be looking at infinite space, was heard to say softly, ‘Monkey’! A little baby was then discovered in the doorway (unobserved by the mother who was seated on the other side of the door) with a large monkey standing on his hind legs, who with both hands was fondling the child, not hurting it in the slightest, both being at peace with each other in Maharshi’s presence. When Maharshi’s voice was heard the monkey jumped away adroitly and disappeared. The incident greatly impressed the lady.”

In her article she goes on to describe what appears to be an initiation by look from the Maharshi, and it did seem to bear fruit soon, as testified to by the following question she asked the Maharshi on 4 February, 1935:

“D.: Thoughts cease suddenly, then ‘I-I’ rises up as suddenly and continues. It is only in the feeling and not in the intellect. Can it be right?”

“M.: It is certainly right....”

Mrs. Piggott wrote more than thirty years later in the article contributed to the Mountain Path:

In her article she describes what transpired while first sitting before the Maharshi:

“For a while nothing happened. I tried to concentrate my mind. Suddenly I became conscious that the Maharshi’s eyes were fixed on me. They seemed, literally, like burning coals of fire piercing through one. They glittered in the dim light. Never before had I experienced anything so devastating – in fact it was almost frightening. What I went through in that terrible half hour in a way of self-condemnation and scorn for the pettiness of my own life would be difficult to describe. Not that he criticized, even in silence – of that he was incapable – but in the light of perfection all imperfections are revealed. To show how little responsible he was for my feelings, he told me later on that doubting, self-distrust, and self-depreciation are some of the greatest hindrances to the realization of the Reality.

“Presently the Maharshi got up and went for his evening walk. This was the signal for a general exodus, and we all trooped outside.”

The first question that Maud Piggott put to Bhagavan clarifies perhaps more than any other

statement recorded on the subject of the role of the Guru in the spiritual fulfillment of the disciple. She asked “Is a Master necessary for realisation?” and the Maharshi answered: “The realisation is the result of the Master’s grace more than teachings, lectures, meditation, etc. They are only secondary aids, whereas the former is the primary and the essential cause.”

It is curious why Mrs. Piggott’s counter question to Bhagavan and the reaction to it in the hall was not recorded in *Talks*. Maybe the recorder was absent, or perhaps the counter question was not deemed sufficiently respectful to be worthy of recording. Nevertheless, it demonstrates an endearing quality of the Master which few conversations have done.

In her 1968 article she wrote about the following dialogue:

“I asked the Maharshi: ‘Is it necessary for spiritual attainment to have a guru or spiritual teacher?’

“The Maharshi ordered a certain treatise to be read, in which it was stated that as in all physical and intellectual training a teacher or instructor is sought, so in matters spiritual the same principle holds good.

“‘And,’ he added, ‘It is hard for a man to arrive at the goal without the aid of such a one.’

“I turned to him. ‘But you had no guru?’

“A rustle of shocked horror ran through the hall. But the Maharshi was not in the least disturbed by my audacious remark. On the contrary, he looked at me with a twinkle in his eye. Then he threw back his head and gave a joyous, wholehearted laugh. It endeared him to me as nothing else could. A saint who can turn the laugh against himself is a saint indeed.”

(To be continued)

135th Jayanti of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi

You, your family and friends are invited to join us in celebrating the

135th birth anniversary of

Sri Ramana Maharshi.

11 a.m., Saturday 10 January 2015

Arunachala Ashrama

8606 Edgerton Boulevard, Jamaica Estates, NY 11432

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Prapatti Ashtakam

Eight Verses on Surrender

by Sri Jagadisa Sastri

ABOUT 1945, Sri Jagadisa Sastri, a great Sanskrit scholar and compiler of “Ramana Sahasranamam” was seriously ill and bed-ridden. All had lost hope of his survival. Bhagavan’s special intervention to save him was sought.

A. Devaraja Mudaliar writes about it in *My Recollections of Bhagavan Sri Ramana*: “Jagadisa Sastri, whom I used to call the Sanskrit Poet of Bhagavan’s Court, wrote the stanzas called “Prapatti Ashtakam”. He was on his deathbed, and wrote his final appeal in this poem (“Prapatti Ashtakam”) declaring that he would not accept any plea by Bhagavan that *prarabdha* must follow its course, and that if only Bhagavan willed it, His Grace could cancel *prarabdha* and save him. Bhagavan took such compassion on him that he was pulled out of the jaws of death.”

To show how much importance Bhagavan gave to this special prayer, we shall quote from Devaraja Mudaliar’s book again: “These verses were translated into Tamil with the approval and encouragement of Bhagavan by T. K. Sunderesa Iyer. I got a tiny notebook stitched and wanted to have the Sanskrit and Tamil versions on alternate pages in it.

“The Sanskrit I wanted to have written in Tamil script. I wrote the Tamil verses first and left the alternate pages blank for the Sanskrit. I was on the lookout for somebody who would be able and willing to transliterate them for me. I certainly did not intend to trouble Sri Bhagavan to do such a job for me but, as usual with me, in the course of a talk I told Bhagavan of my desire and he, brushing aside all objections, took the notebook from me and copied the Sanskrit verses into it in Tamil script, neatly and beautifully as was his wont, and gave it back to me. The notebook is with me and will go to my sons as an heirloom.”

The above text was reproduced in the October, 1985 *Mountain Path*, wherein the Ashtakam was reproduced in Bhagavan’s own handwriting.

This issue can be downloaded from the Sri Ramanasramam website:

(http://sriramanamaharshi.orgresource_centre/publications/mountain-path/)

Needless to say, Bhagavan responded to the devotion of Jagadisa Sastri expressed in this composition, and he soon recovered to live a long life in the service of the Master.

Below are the translation, Sanskrit text, and transliteration of “Prapatti Ashtakam.”

1. To Him born in Tiruchuli, I surrender; to Him who sported in Pandya country, I surrender; to the dweller on Arunachala slopes, I surrender; to the bikshu unaffected by the rigours of tapas, I surrender.

आवर्तपुर्यां जनितां प्रपद्ये पाण्ड्यदेशे विहृतं प्रपद्ये।
शोणाचलप्रस्थचरं प्रपद्ये भिक्षुं तपःक्लेशसहं प्रपद्ये ॥ १ ॥

āvartapuryām janitām prapadye
pāṇḍyēśadeśe vihṛtām prapadye |
śoṇācalaprasthacaram prapadye
bhikṣum tapaḥkleśasaham prapadye || 1 ||

2. To Him who is alike to all, from the Creator to the worm, I surrender; to the subduer of the six passions, I surrender; to the bearer of the essence of Knowledge, I surrender; to the store of unbounded mercy, I surrender.

आब्रह्मकीटान्तसमं प्रपद्ये जितारिषद्वर्गमहं प्रपद्ये।
सर्वज्ञतासारभूतं प्रपद्ये निस्सीमकारुण्यनिधिं प्रपद्ये ॥ २ ॥

ābrahmakīṭāntasamam prapadye
jitāriṣadvargamaham prapadye |
sarvajñatāsārabhūtam prapadye
nissīmakāruṇyanidhim prapadye || 2 ||

3. To Him who surpasses the universe, I surrender; to Him whom the Vedas say to be the universe and more, I surrender; to the chastiser of death in order to be rid of fear of the all-devouring alligator Time, I surrender.

अस्मात्प्रपञ्चादधिकं प्रपद्ये विश्वाधिकोक्तेर्विषयं प्रपद्ये।
कालग्रहग्राहभयापनुत्यै कृतान्तशिक्षाकृतिनं प्रपद्ये ॥ ३ ॥

asmātprapaṇcādhikam prapadye
viśvādhikokterviṣayam prapadye |
kālagrahaḡrāhabhayāpanutyai
kṛtāntaśikṣākṛtinam prapadye || 3||

4. To the embodiment of Knowledge who conquers the pain of sensual life, I surrender; to the enemy of Kama come down in sport to prevent the fevers caused by proud Cupid, I surrender.

विनेतुमार्तिं विषयाध्वजान्यां विज्ञानमूर्तिं दधतं प्रपद्ये।
कन्दर्पदर्पज्वरवारणाय कामारिलीलावतरं प्रपद्ये॥ ४॥

vinetumārtim viṣayādhvajanyām
vijñānamūrtim dadhatam prapadye |
kandarpadarpaḡvaravāraṇāya
kāmarililāvataṛam prapadye || 4||

5. To the strictly life-long celibate, I surrender; to the holder of kamandalu and staff, I surrender; to Him that rests in dhyana on Brahmasana, I surrender; to the Hermit at one with Brahman, I surrender.

आजन्मवर्णिव्रतिनं प्रपद्ये कुण्डीभृतं दण्डधरं प्रपद्ये।
ब्रह्मासनध्यानरतं प्रपद्ये ब्रह्मात्मभूयं यतिनं प्रपद्ये॥ ५॥

ājanmavarṇivratinam prapadye
kuṇḡibhṛtam daṇḡadharam prapadye |
brahmāsanadhyānaratam prapadye
brahmātmabhūyam yatinaṛam prapadye || 5||

6. To Hara, I surrender; to the never-decaying, I surrender; to the abode of independence, I surrender; to Him of immeasurable skill, I surrender; to the foremost of spotless knowers, I surrender.

हरं प्रपद्ये विजरं प्रपद्ये स्वतन्त्रतायास्सदनं प्रपद्ये।
अमेयसामर्थ्यवहं प्रपद्ये विशुद्धविज्ञानिवरं प्रपद्ये॥ ६॥

haram prapadye vijaram prapadye
svatantratāyās sadanam prapadye |
ameyasāmarthyavaham prapadye
viśuddhaviññānivaram prapadye || 6||

7. To the dispeller of fever caused by ill luck, three-fold ills, delusion and karma, I surrender; to Him of true resolve, no taint, perfect contentment and bliss, I surrender.

दौर्भाग्य तापत्रय कर्म मोह सन्तापहन्तारमहं प्रपद्ये।
यथार्थसङ्कल्पमपेतपापमवाप्त कामं विशुचं प्रपद्ये॥ ७॥

daurbhāgya tāpatraya karma moha
santāpahantāramaham prapadye |
yathārthasaṅkalpamapetapāpam
avāpta kāmam viśucam prapadye || 7||

8. To the face of gentle smile that brings peace to the devotees, I surrender; to RAMANA (Blessing), so named because removing all pain He brings joy, I surrender.

मनः प्रसादं भजतां ददानं मुग्धस्मितोल्लासिमुखं प्रपद्ये।
व्यथामशेषां व्यपनीय मोदप्रदेन नाम्ना रमणं प्रपद्ये॥ ८॥

manah prasadam bhajatām dadānam
mugdhasmitollāsimumkham prapadye |
vyathāmaśeṣām vyapanīya moda
pradena nāmnā ramaṇam prapadye || 8||

9. To Siva, the bestower of bliss, the Master, the store of all virtues, I surrender; to the indweller of my heart-lotus, I surrender; to the refuge and Lord, I surrender.

शिवं प्रपद्ये शिवदं प्रपद्ये गुरुं प्रपद्ये गुणिनं प्रपद्ये।
मदीयहृत्पद्मजुषं प्रपद्ये शरण्यमीशं शरणं प्रपद्ये॥ ९॥

śivam prapadye śivadam prapadye
guruṛam prapadye guṇinam prapadye |
madiyahṛtpadmajuṣam prapadye
śaraṇyamīśam śaraṇam prapadye || 9||

10. May all others also wisely surrender to Ramana in order to gain His qualities by His blessings.

प्रपत्तिं रमणस्यैतां तन्वतां तत्त्वदर्शिनः
तत्कृतुन्यायरसिकाः तत्तादृशफलाप्तये॥ १०॥

prapattim ramaṇasyaitām
tanvatām tattvadarśinaḡ
tatkratunyāyarasikāḡ
tattādrśaphalāptaye || 10||

Note: This ashtakam does not conform exactly to the regular structure of an ashtakam (8 verses). This interesting discrepancy is seen in other noted ashtakams and compositions. For example, Sri Bhagavan's divine composition "Arunachala Padikam" (padikam, meaning 10 verses) actually contains 11 verses.

Letters and Comments

A Whole Lifetime to Render the Mind Quiescent?

It is said that the inquiry "To whom are these thoughts? To me. Who am I?" is only needed at the early stages of Self-enquiry. But is it possible that vasanas can be so strong that this routine questioning for a particular individual may have to be practiced for 30-40 years, or maybe even a whole lifetime, to render the mind quiescent so as to advance to the next stage of Self-enquiry, i.e., the actual investigation into the source of the 'I-thought'?

Secondly, how can Self-enquiry be effectively practiced in our work environment when office work requires a substantial portion of the mind to be used in analysis of data, dealings with customers, factory work, etc.?

– Devotee from India

It all depends on ones 'pakva' (ripeness, maturity). One may advance quickly or slowly depending on the intensity of previous efforts in this or past lives. The more intense and one-pointed the effort, the sooner the results will come. Those with intense vairagya (detachment) progress faster. No time period for each individual can be or should be deduced.

It is important for a sadhaka to dedicate some time each day solely to the practice. Even a half-an-hour of intense spiritual practice will suffice to sustain you throughout the day. Once you connect with the inner current during meditation, you will begin to feel its continued presence during your daily activities and in the workplace.

If you can perform your work with perfect detachment and one-pointedness then the work itself will become a form of sadhana. The more you perfect this art of efficient, detached work the easier it will be to sink deeper into meditation when not so occupied. As you go on alternating between calm, detached work and deep meditation you will one day discover that both of them have merged into that one expanse of pure awareness which is your natural state. This is the process.

–Editor

Events Hardly Seem Unreal

When we read "Ulladu Narpadu," ("Forty Verses on Reality"), the truth about what is Real becomes evident. But, how is one to deal with challenging situations in the world? For example, the department of a company where you work may not be needed, but you are forced to continue working there because your family depends on you. In addition to this, you have a difficult boss and because of the recession in India, switching jobs is infeasible. Our cup of woes seems filled to the brim. We understand that it is all a concoction of the mind, but the harshness of these seemingly real events hardly seems unreal.

How do we retain focus on the Consciousness, which is the only Reality, while dealing with illusion?

–Same Devotee from India

A theoretical understanding of the Truth of our existence does not immediately translate into transcendence. The mind may understand, but the mind is not entirely ours. Its samskaras, tendencies and habits do not evaporate the moment we intellectually understand that we are the Self, beyond time and space. Our perception of life may totally change, our desires and ambitions may automatically be reset, but it is very unlikely that we will fall into permanent Samadhi and be liberated.

That is why in the vast majority of cases it is recommended for the devotee to practice Self-surrender along with Self-enquiry. Only when our faith in the Guru becomes unshaken can we surrender completely, and when the I is completely surrendered to its Source, realization of our True Nature is experienced. Sadhana is more than just an intellectual process.

God's or the Guru's grace comes to sincere sadhakas in different forms. The most potent form is often one that is not recognized. It is in the form of insurmountable difficulties.

How we are saved from them or overcome them is normally not in the way devised by the mind. In fact, it is the mind that is in the way of its solution.

At some point in our lives we realize that we are not in control of the events that bring us happiness or sorrow. We feel our limitations in finding solutions to our problems. It is at such times that we have the greatest opportunity to progress spiritually and experience

the greatest peace and happiness. It does sound paradoxical, but it is true.

If your best friend who has unlimited resources at hand comes to you and says, “Leave it to me. I will take care of your problem,” would you hesitate to comply. That exactly is the case of the sincere devotee and his or her insurmountable difficulties.

If we simply throw up our hands and say, “Oh Lord, please take care of these problems. I give them over to You,” will He not respond? He will. But He cannot unless we GIVE OVER the problem to Him.

If we still keep it with us, still feel burdened by it, how can He take it? We have to let go.

So we must hand over the problems to the Guru, let Him do what is best for us, and be at peace. He knows what is best for us and will do what is needed. It is His problem, not ours. “He knows what is best and when and how to do it. His is the burden. You have no longer any cares. All your cares are His. Such is surrender,” says Sri Ramana Maharshi.

So I suggest you do this. It will work and you may be surprised at what happens. *—Editor*

Ramana Satsangs in the USA and Canada

Regular satsangs with recitations, songs, readings and meditation are conducted in or near large cities. Some of them are weekly. If you would like to attend any of these, please contact the individuals below for more information.

Atlanta Area — Mangalam Kalyanam (678-546-0378 / smoothcutter@hotmail.com)

Ann Arbor, MI — Nirupama & Ramesh (574-514-4766 / neeru_2@hotmail.com)

Birmingham, AL — Sai Kand (205-441-6859 / kandsai@yahoo.com)

Boston, MA — David & Anna (617-928-1487 / annaklegon@gmail.com)

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