

## PRESENTATION

Bowing down to the Gitacharya and Sankaracharya I carry out the holy and pleasant duty of presenting this book to the readers, a duty that the devolved upon me as the son of the translator Sri C. V. Ramachandra Aiyar of sacred memory.

C. V. R. Aiyar (1905-1979) came of a pious and erudite family of the temple-town Chidambaram. Right from his early years he began imbibing devotion to the Kula-Devata, the Divine Mother, knowledge of our scriptural lore and *sraddha* in religious observances at the feet of his rshi-like uncle, Sri Doraiswami Aiyar. At the time he finished schooling the family faced a rude economic set-back and he had to get admitted into the Sri Ramakrishna Mission Students' Home, which provided free board and lodging to deserving boys, when he began his collegiate education in the Presidency College, Madras.

It was a blessing in disguise. For it brought C. V. R. under the inspiring tutelage of Sri N. Subramania Aiyar, affectionately called "Anna" (elder brother), who was later to become not only the President of the R. K. Mission Home, but also one of the respected spiritual illuminati of Tamilnadu. As a further stroke of divine luck during his days in the Home, C. V. R. had the great good fortune of rendering service to Pujya Sri Swami Brahmananda, the 'Spiritual Son' of Sri Ramakrishna, when he sojourned in Madras. Out of the abundance of his heart the Swami gave *diksha* to the *sraddha*-imbued young C.V.R.—a fact which the latter never divulged but came to light through "Anna". His deep devotion to the Paramahansa and the Holy Mother gave a refreshing catholic touch to his strict Conformism, which naturally led him to hold Sri Sankara Bhagavadpada, the doughty upholder of the Vedic Tradition, in the highest esteem. This Ganga-Yamuna confluence in C.V.R. is brought to the fore by the present volume itself—a rendering of the Bhashya of the Bhagavadpada dedicated to the Paramahansa.

As the years rolled on, C.V.R. intensified his *upasana* and continued extending the horizons of his spiritual scholarship. Gaining mastery in Vedanta and Mantra-sastra he took a share

in many of Anna's scriptural classics in Tamil—in jealously guarded anonymity.

Though *Bhakti-upasana* through *puja* and *japa* was his main *sadhana*, he was an *advaitin* by conviction. And conviction consummated into flashes, at least, of Realisation under the benign influence of Sri Ramana Maharshi, whom he revered as one of his gurus.

On the secular side C.V.R. took his B.A. degree with Honours in Mathematics when he was barely nineteen and immediately entered government service. But his heart was not in it. Though he brought to bear his characteristic thoroughness in the official assignments that fell to his lot, he did not care to take the departmental tests for promotion, with the result that when he retired after thirty-six years of loyal service he had not risen above the rank of Tahsildar! If at all he stuck on to professional career it was because of the heavy responsibilities he had to shoulder as the eldest among seven offspring of an economically shaken family. He did acquit himself well in discharging the duty cast upon him, and the family ever remained grateful to him. On the domestic front he was blessed with a noble wife, a real *saha-dharma-charini*, who, in spite of her very poor health, ably and heartily carried out the heavy chores that housekeeping for an orthodox Brahmin, given to elaborate rituals, entails. Her poor health was, again, a blessing in disguise to C.V.R., helping him to lead an immaculately continent life right from his thirtieth year, which beside contributing to his spiritual *sadhana*, also sharpened his intellect. Absolutely honest and guileless, 'allergic' to public gaze, uncompromising in principles, unknown to mincing words, assiduous in whatever he did, this stickler for frugality and simplicity was forbiddingly reserved, and, to add to the forbidding aspect, was quick-tempered. If, in spite of this, he commanded nothing but love and respect from all who knew him, that surely is a mark of the intrinsic power of the purity of heart.

On retirement, which he was eagerly looking forward to, he plunged into what his heart was athirst for—punctilious *Devi Puja* and in-depth study of the *Mantra-sastra*. He devoutly attached himself to the Sage of Kanchi, His Holiness the Paramacharya, for enlightenment on many abstruse and intricate points.

The Sage always had a softer corner in his soft heart for this sincere sanatanist-*sadhaka*, and however big the crowds around him, never disappointed the disciple without a very private audience and ever enthused him with the illumination he sought from the venerable Gurudeva. In his last years C.V.R. was also drawn in profound devotion to Sri Satya Sai Baba. It is moving to think of his very last moments on earth—On the forenoon of that *sravana purnima*, a fully conscious and meditative C.V.R. was gracefully slipping out of the body. Quite unexpectedly the *vibhuti* of the Baba arrived at the nick of time. C.V.R. had it smeared on his forehead and chest and a pinch placed on his tongue. He raised up his hands to fold the palms up above his head. With that final act of supreme thanks giving ended in natural ease a life of life-long prayer.

From the story of the Translator to the story of the Translation:

Years back, 'Anna' was apprised of the interest of a certain religious institution in bringing out an English translation of the Sanskrit Commentary of Sri Sankara Bhagavadpada on the *Bhagavad-Gita*. Immediately he thought of C.V.R. and entrusted the difficult task to him. C.V.R. set himself to the *punya kainkarya* heart and soul and working on it for months brought out the finished product. 'Anna' sent it to the veteran Professor of Philosophy, Sri P. Sankaranarayanan for comments. Sri P. S. was all praise for the translation and recommended it for publication without any correction or touching up. But, unfortunately, the expected publishing arrangement fell through. Though he had undertaken a rigorous *tapasya* over the work, C.V.R. was least worried about its publication! He had carried out the behest of his Guru, 'Anna', and there the matter ended for him! He passed away in 1979, nine years before his monumental labour of love was to see the light of the day. The *lila* of the Lord is inscrutable!

I could have struck upon the present publishing arrangement through the god-parenting of the *Kalpataru-dampati*, Sri T. Sadasivam and Smt. M. S. Subbulakshmi, even while my father was alive. But I purposely kept back because of my knowledge that *this* Kalpataru is not one overladen with fruits which it could easily dispense with as soon as one comes under it, but one that has itself to strike newer roots to tap the resources to produce the fruit needed by the new-comer! To put it factually—a fact that

may sound like fiction—this renowned Benefactor-Couple have never cared to build up any large savings out of which to draw upon when a call comes for help. As no less a person than the Sage of Kanchi once said, they do not give out of what they have got, but they set out to get in order to give! The beauty of it is, that in this way they have been helping cause after worthy cause as not even *crore-patis* can do! Once they feel a cause worthy of their god-parenting, either M.S. offers her golden voice to bring in the needed shower of gold, or T. S. addresses himself to the delicate task of calling upon the liberality of his affluent friends, or both. As I did not want them to take the trouble involved, I scrupulously avoided telling them about my father's unpublished manuscript for over a decade. But in His inscrutable *lila*, some months back I found myself blurting out the 'secret' to them. Perhaps it was His will that the book must come out only during the grand celebration of the 1200th *jayanti* of the great Bhashyakara! At once, and with the utmost warmth, the Sadasivams became the godparents of the project and began nourishing it as they would a pet child!

It was but the spontaneous expression of not only their devotion to the Gitacharya and the Bhashyakara but also their genuine regard for my father and affectionate love for me. Unburdening me of any the least responsibility and absolving me of dereliction of filial duty, Sri Sadasivam 'made over' the project to himself and with his characteristic thoroughness attended to every little detail of its planning and execution. In particular, he arranged for the free supply of the paper and the printing of the book at modest charges, and as I am writing this, is busy planning the Release. What an ambrosial nourishment for this *Gita*-child to have the *Sangita* of Mother Subbulakshmi bring in the entire resources for the printing! Thanks giving being impossible, I pray with all my heart that this blessed-and-blessing *Dampati* are ever in the shower of the Bliss Supernal!

My very grateful thanks are due to Sri Ganga Prasad Birlaji for his generous and prompt gift of the entire bulk of paper needed for the book.

I owe a deep debt of gratitude to Sri C. T. Nachiappan of the Kalakshetra Publications, not only for the nice printing, but also for his personal involvement in the publication, which he under-

took not as a business proposition but as an opportunity for being of some help to the Sadasivams.

It is in the fitness of things that this great spiritual treasure of Bharat is published by the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, one of the foremost institutions dedicated to the dissemination of our cultural legacy to the world at large. I thank the Bhavan, and in particular, its energetic Executive Secretary Sri S. Ramakrishnana, who has evinced a keen interest in the shaping of the book.

My affectionate thanks are due to artist ' Vinu ' for his beautiful wrapper design and frontispiece, and to Sri S. Mohanaraman for his diligent preparation of the typescripts.

May the blessings of Sri Krishna, the Avatar of Vishnu, who delivered the *Gita*, and of Sri Sankara, the Avatar of Siva, who elucidated it, ever be on all those connected with the publication and on all the readers!

Madras  
24-2-1988.

RA. GANAPATI.