

The greatest casualty in the book is the English language. While an attempt is made to cater to a western audience: using the word pancakes for *dôsās*, and a typical British expression: "Say, how old is Bhagavân?" (p.238), there are at the same time, typically Indian expressions: "Arasi was narrating what all she saw" (p.4); "He was busy for ten, twelve days" (p.35); "For him all these distinctions were not there." (p.53). Apart from errors that can be passed over as typographical ones, there are others that cannot be excused: "The mother was having fever" (p.124); "Some people started enquiring his father ..." (p.6); "Well, I will tell myself" (p.79); "to make our ends meet" (p.8); mentioned about , etc., to cite just a few examples. Other errors are the use of vocal chords (p.1) instead of vocal cords, and a factual error in referring to the Kichaka episode as being from the Râmâyana rather than the Mahâbhârata (p.18).

Still, there are moments of inspired writing and flashes of poetry in the style: "The sea of humanity in the temple had turned into a flowing river in the streets" (p.5), "Sômu once tried to count the thousand pillars, but gave up, his interest flagging and his arithmetic faltering" (p.13); "The man is so modest that he would be lost in a crowd of one" (p.186). And, while for mere mortals, the end of life is dust to dust and ashes to ashes, for Srî Ramana, the end of bodily existence is "Light to Light".

This unevenness in language, style and emphasis characterizes the book. The overall impression one carries at the end of it all is that a devotee has made an effort to attempt something different, but greater care might have been shown in the process.

— Pingali Sailaja

#### THE QUANTUM LEAP INTO THE ABSOLUTE:

*Essence of Ashtavakra Gita*: by Swami Shantananda Puri. 2001. Pub: Parvathamma C.P. Subbaraju Setty Charitable Trust, 13/8, Pampa Mahakavi Road, Shankarapuram, Bangalore-560 004. pp.48.

In this little publication, his most recent, Swâmi Shântânanda Pûri offers an exuberant introduction into the *Ashtâvakra Gîtâ*. Without burdening his readers with unnecessary scholarly details (though careful to footnote his citations with the original Sanskrit), Swâmiji presents us with an impassioned exhortation to hear the message of the *Ashtâvakra Gîta* and embrace the ancient teaching of Advaita.

Rather than exegesis, he provides a protocol for the awakened life vis-a-vis King Janaka's encounter with the sage. The author underscores the sage's admonition that the sâdhaka not get overly burdened with technique but rather only remain "in the firm conviction that 'I am the Pure consciousness'...". Only thereby may one "become freed from all miseries and established in happiness."

Ashtâvakra maintains that enlightenment can be instantaneous. This is what the author calls the "quantum flight" from body identification to abidance in the eternal. Swâmiji's "instant recipe for *mukti*" à la Ashtâvakra, consists in what the author calls "three Moksha capsules": 1) separating oneself from the body and resting in Consciousness through witnessing, 2) the process of "de-hypnotizing lies" and remaining "in the conviction that you are liberated and free"; and 3) elimination of the 'I' through cessation of the sense of doership.

If theory and praxis are sometimes at a distance from each other, these three methods while straight forward enough on paper seem like 30,000 miles on one's hands and knees when it comes to putting them into practice. And yet, so says the author, this is just what the ego-sense would have us believe. The seeming bootstraps maneuver is contained simply in the "firm faith that we are that ultimate self-knowledge which is sought, the very Self and the Lord".

It sounds too simple. But it is precisely this, proclaims our author, for no sâdhana can bring us to who and what we already are. Rather the only 'sâdhana' here is remaining in that fundamental reality of the Self.

While the reader of this little volume may stumble upon some few typographical errors and minor copy-editing oversights, they will not distract him unduly as the spirit, vigour and vitality of Swâmi Shântânanda's narrative succeed not only in making the *Ashtâvakra Gîta* "an easily digestible capsule" but inspire its hearer to the one great work of earthly life: the discovery of and becoming established in one's true Self.

— Michael Highburger

#### AWAKENING NATURE'S HEALING INTELLIGENCE:

(Expending Ayurveda Through the Maharshi Vêdic Approach to Health: by Hari Sharma. 1999. Pub: Motilal Banarsidass, Jawahar Nagar, Delhi 110007. pp278, Rs295

This book gives the readers a rare insight into the common focus of all natural health approaches.