

THE GOSPEL OF SWAMI RAMDAS

Recorded by
SWAMI SATCHIDANANDA

Volume I



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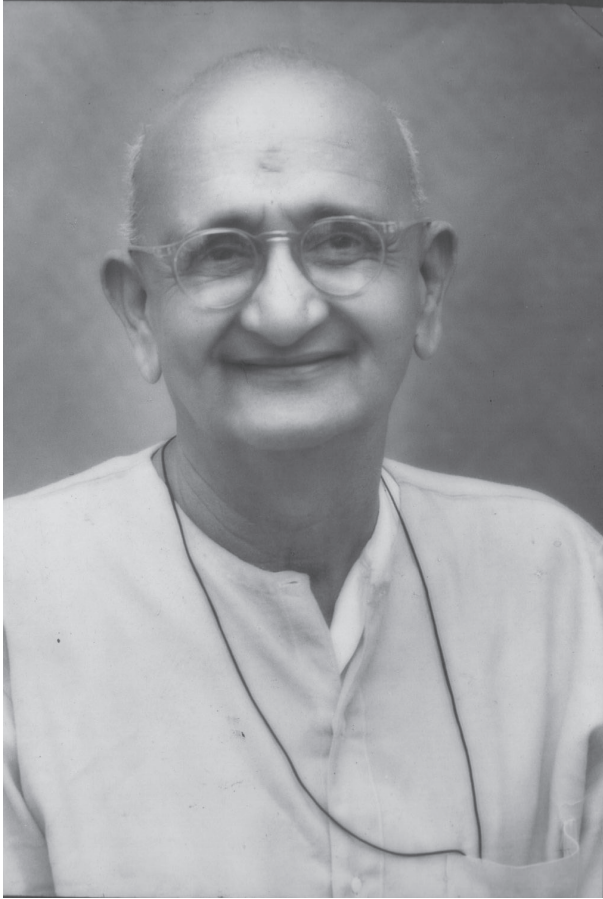
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Beloved Papa Swami Ramdas

CONTENTS
VOLUME I

Foreword	i
A few words	vii
Swami Ramdas	x
Chapter 1	1 - 17
1. Love: human and divine	
2. Transcend Himsa and Ahimsa	
3. Faith in blessings	
4. Self-adulation, a vice	
5. Milk, the best diet	
6. No ill will	
7. Unkempt in Sadhana days	
8. Tapasvins alone have creative genius	
9. Inaction in action	
10. The marks of a Jivanmukta	
11. Strictness in Sadhana	
12. Corruption even in Ashrams	
Chapter 2	18 - 30
13. Life stale without problems	
14. God plays all roles	
15. Mataji never half-hearted	
16. Food aplenty	
17. Papa's favourite	
18. Divine love transforms	
19. Difficulties with Sadhakas and orphans	
20. Misunderstanding cleared	

Chapter 3**31 - 46**

21. Sadhana Bhakti and Sadhya Bhakti
22. Contemplation leads to oneness with God-Take Ram Nam
23. A rubbish heap - Mataji's reflections
24. On conducting an Ashram
25. The source of donations
26. Sannyas
27. Evil, the creation of the ignorant mind
28. Mataji - A pucca communist
29. Mataji's old relations - new perspective

Chapter 4**47 - 65**

30. Karma affects all
31. Ramdas on his wandering days - Avoid worldly contacts
32. Renunciation, no joke
33. Temples - ancient and modern
34. The bond of affection between Papa and Ramkishor
35. Modes of imparting spiritual power
36. God hungers for love - Story of a butcher - Bhakta
37. Daya Vs. Maya
38. Renunciation, only a means
39. Jnana born of Bhakti, Sankara not properly understood, Sadhana for householders

Chapter 5**66 - 75**

40. Ganesh Pooja
41. Setbacks in Sadhana
42. Ramdas belongs to all religions
43. Fast on a call from within
44. Meditation must be spontaneous
45. Concentrate in heart centre or above

Chapter 6**76 - 90**

46. Natverlal Shah
47. Dharam Devi
48. A dangerous book!
49. Sorrow for human suffering
50. Initiation and advice
51. Faith in saints' teachings
52. Precautions for meditation
53. See Ramdas everywhere - Man is God playing the fool
54. Vairagya and Bhakti go together - Eschew pride in Sadhana

Chapter 7**91 - 107**

55. Struggle for the nectar of freedom
56. When can one be free?
57. Guru all-powerful
58. Nishkama Karma
59. Karma-Yoga
60. God as mother
61. Money, a worry
62. Attachment to gold - A story
63. If women had written Smritis

Chapter 8**108 - 124**

64. Extremes meet
65. Indriyas only delude
66. How Ram commands
67. Why critics are friends?-Transcend Gunas
68. All responsibility is God's - Repeat Ram Nam ceaselessly
69. Gopis and Jnana
70. Ramdas - A dangerous person
71. Effect of Grace - Why Sadhana?
72. A glorious end

Chapter 9**125 - 141**

73. Mend yourself
74. Ramdas of Bhadrachalam
75. Damaji of Mangalwedha
76. God beyond reasoning
77. The best advice to householders
78. Cause of man's fall
79. Mind, a wild bull
80. Concentrate on the sound of Ram Nam in solitude
81. God's Will is supreme

Chapter 10**142 - 154**

82. Be unaffected by Prarabdha - Purpose of Sadhana
83. Detachment - a queen's example
84. Samsara, hard to overcome
85. A new path to realisation-Mataji's wish
86. Why Sannyas not advised

- 87. Ask God to transform you
- 88. Short-lived experience

Chapter 11 **155 - 172**

- 89. Writing and talking, nothing before realisation
- 90. Mataji's unexpected entreaty
- 91. Pretentious repetition of Ram Nam
- 92. Mataji on fasting
- 93. Joy in all actions
- 94. Love of God breaks bonds of Moha
- 95. Need for correct understanding of saints
- 96. Ask blessings only for spiritual progress
- 97. 'My work must be universal', Mataji
- 98. Ram Nam - the best medicine

Chapter 12 **173 - 188**

- 99. Likhit Japa target
- 100. Power of Ram Nam - Likhit Japa, purely Nishkam?
- 101. Greatness of Ram Nam
- 102. A separate room for Papa
- 103. Cosmic mind does all thinking
- 104. Recording the talks
- 105. Yogi Milarepa
- 106. Open spaces broaden vision-Die to live
- 107. Bank of Ram Nam

Chapter 13 **189 - 202**

- 108. The whole universe is one
- 109. Who is a true instrument of God?
- 110. Saints promote universal peace
- 111. Thoughts will not go in vain

- 112. Love, the basis of Universal Service
- 113. Papa enthusiastic about foreign tour
- 114. Yogi Milarepa
- 115. Talk of foreign tour continued

Chapter 14

203 - 222

- 116. What survives realisation-Divinised individuality
- 117. The state of Moksha is indescribable-Avatars and Jivanmuktas
- 118. Saint and God are one
- 119. Recollection of Sadhana days
- 120. The engine and the wagons
- 121. Genesis of the ashram
- 122. His inner promptings Willed by God
- 123. Doubt worse than bullet
- 124. Reminiscences of Sadhana period
- 125. Attitude to Mother Rukmabai - The open secret
- 126. Yogi Milarepa
- 127. Mistake in bill

Chapter 15

223 - 244

- 128. Sadhana essential to be conscious of grace
- 129. Celibacy in married life
- 130. Impatience not good
- 131. Obstacles are imagined
- 132. Fall only natural-Take God to task
- 133. Thefts in the ashram
- 134. Ramana Maharshi's path difficult for ordinary people - Mataji's view

- 135. Laughing Swami
- 136. God's wonderful Lila
- 137. Conquering lust
- 138. Significance of sixtieth birthday
- 139. Ashram activities-Mataji's comments
- 140. 'Keep money were I cannot find it' -
Mataji

Chapter 16

245 - 262

- 141. Do not weaken the body
- 142. God's Lila is wonderful - Papa's sense of
humour
- 143. Change in building plan
- 144. Mataji's miracle - Mataji and her talk
about economy
- 145. Venomous snake killed. A cat saved
- 146. Make an honest living
- 147. Inner attachment hard to give up
- 148. Sri Ramakrishna's concern for his
devotee
- 149. Funny interlude
- 150. Belated Pada-Pooja

Chapter 17

263 - 282

- 151. Bring out all sides of a saint's life
- 152. What distinguishes a saint's anger
- 153. Mataji for a simple life, still ashram
expanded
- 154. Good management of existing
institutions needed
- 155. Two destitute boys
- 156. Satyakama Jabali

- 157. God gives and God takes away Enjoy all situations
- 158. They come, for what?
- 159. No faith in simple path

Chapter 18

283 - 299

- 160. 'You are running the whole universe'
- 161. Unreserved faith in Papa and his ways
- 162. How Likhit Japa Yajna started
- 163. Mataji on invidious distinctions
- 164. Be a Jnani-Bhakta
- 165. Mataji's account-keeping - The humorous side to it
- 166. Control of mind, not easy

Chapter 19

300 - 315

- 167. Gandhiji's experiments in Brahmacharya
- 168. He cures himself
- 169. Lives of Mahatmas must be presented in Toto
- 170. Papa's princely life, the why and wherefore
- 171. Mataji kind even to a detractor

Chapter 20

316 - 326

- 172. A devotee's criticism
- 173. Mataji's answer
- 174. Life in everything
- 175. Mischievous Sri Krishna

Chapter 21**327 - 336**

- 176. Make no plans-Surrender to God
- 177. Gandhiji's end
- 178. What, after all, is the loss of a watch?
- 179. Devotees are like Bhramaras
- 180. Transcend Gunas to see the Universe as God
- 181. Ram Nam, the nectarine pill

Chapter 22**337 - 353**

- 182. A Mother's grief
- 183. Papa besought for grace
- 184. Ramdas' concern for devotees
- 185. You cannot escape from Ramdas
- 186. Truth beyond good and bad- Laugh and be merry
- 187. Man, a conceited animal
- 188. A Bhagavatar's experience
- 189. What people expect from saints
- 190. Grace impartial - receptivity differs - Story of Purandharadas
- 191. Those who come to scoff remain to pray

FOREWORD

Sri Ramdas, called 'Papa', evolved in a way which may well seem somewhat incredible to all who want to fathom the miracle deep of sainthood. By 'miracle' I want to stress what appears to Reason as the recondite mystery which makes sainthood's flowering fulfillment so baffling to the mind. Ramdas started indeed like a postulant, with *japa* but bore down everything that stood in the way with an astonishing ease and a regal gait.

His father had given him the *Guru mantra*, *Sri Ram jai Ram jai jai Ram* (by Ram he meant Krishna also) which like a miracle seed of Godlove, blossomed in his heart's pure soil into the beautiful lotus of ecstatic *Bhakti*. They were all amazed, his father, relatives and neighbors to whom he appeared like an enigma which had to be seen to be believed. I will not try to give a cogent, historical account of his swift home-coming to the haven of his Lord's feet in as much as he has himself related graphically in his books how his heart opened and self-will merged in delight in the All-Will of the Divine, culminating in renunciation of his private worldly life. Many an aspirant hears, indeed, His call in the heart, but only a handful are chosen, the rare saints, who chose to be chosen. Being a wonderful raconteur, he has given a fascinating account of his spiritual pilgrimage, an account which has already been acclaimed gratefully by many an authentic spiritual seeker. It is the old and ever new (*Sanatan-Punarnava*) adventure of

the devotee yearning nostalgically to the soul's eternal sky and nest- at once the zenith and asylum of Grace Divine. In a good many of his revealing talks in these pages, seekers of the psychic light will find episodes of rare wisdom alternating with his simple laughter and humour which punctuate his heart warming recital leading us ever on like 'the Kindly Light' of the famous psalm. In fact, Ramdas did come to us as the beneficent invasion of Krishna's compassion to help us repeal life's teeming shadows with its native lustre. This is not an over statement: We have experienced the Lord's Grace time and again whenever we have had the blessed opportunity of contacting his pristine child-soul of inviolate purity which the elect alone are endowed with.

Only one thing I must add here to acknowledge a personal debt namely that Ramdas did come to bless me as a "messenger of Incommunicable" Krishna who is "hidden in every heart."*

This I say not only to hail his endearing sanctity, but also and primarily to emphasize that I felt in him over and over again the redeeming touch of Krishna, my best Beloved, whose fleeting contact only deepened my yearning to make Him abide with me. Since my adolescence, I have offered my love, such as it is, at His lotus feet and repeated His name in the deepest crises of my life. I told Ramdas all about it when he came to bless

*The messenger of the incommunicable ... SAVITRI... Sri Auribindo. " In every heart is hidden the Myriad one... "

us at Poona and stayed with us for three rapturous days in our humble cottage. Indira and I sang in joy, morning and evening, to him and his great disciple Mother Krishnabai who is indeed *Bhakti* personified. As for me, I found in him not only a guiding angel but a sweet friend and monitor in my quest when my great *Guru* Sri Aurobindo had passed away leaving me all but derelict. Often, I felt he had come to me at his psychological moment as an answer of Grace to my prayer, to assure me that he had conveyed my petition to the Lord to make me His own and mould me to His Will. We were both verily, intoxicated! For was it not a dream come true – a Bird of Paradise come to us earthlings with his songs of Godlove and tales of a God’s nursling who not only walked with Him but had a living communion with Him day after blessed day!

As I have written about his talks with me elsewhere* I will quote here just one remark of his. Once I asked him: “Tell me Papa, how can one attain Him, the Elusive Swain”? “By wanting him not among other things, but above other things,” he answered at once. “To give a simile: You are running to catch a train. A pedestrian calls to you. You say: ‘Not now – Afterwards. I have to catch a train’. In other words, look upon Him as the Quest of quests, the Light of lights, the heart’s One Prince and Swain”.

The talks recorded here (*The Gospel of*

*Kumbha, The Flute Calls Still , Pilgrims Of The Stars

Swami Ramdas) cannot but prove eminently helpful to seekers of every stripe. For Ramdas had transcended even in the first phase of his *sadhana* the grievous and clinging limitations of the mind. He homed in the Elysium of the spirit and although he advised every seeker to eschew formalism and ritualism, he told them that these too could be of help if we were on guard against dogmatism, the curd which soured the milk of human kindness. He told us time and again that Divine Love in its flawless purity could never brook narrowness, parochialism, untouchability and foolish assertiveness.

To give an instance in point to illustrate how spontaneously he could answer questions.

A devotee named Subbaiyar asks: Papa, does He not know that we are thinking of Him constantly?

Papa: where is that man who is thinking of Him constantly? Let Ramdas see him.

Subbaiyar: I am, Papa.

Papa: If you have been thinking of Him always you must have become one with Him. There cannot be any doubt about it. The thinker and the thought become one.

To continuously think of Him means to be rid of the ego-sense. The sloka "*Ananyaschintayantomam....*" means that we should accept Him completely and entertain no other thought. This exclusive thought of God grants one always great joy. Such a one deserves to attain Him and gets Him.

How simple, direct and true!

To end with a paeon Indira composed on him a song we sang in chorus to him and Mother Krishnabai when they were our guest at Poona.

We bow to thee, O Ramdas, O saint, we bow to thee:
O Rama's child whose love outpetals in light and harmony!
Thou com'st to bless our arid earth with His Name's rain of grace
And chantest: "Ram! I'll sing and sing of Thee in gratefulness."
Who's a king and who's a bondsman, a lonely alien, say?
Behold with the eye of love: In friend and foe He comes to play:
On land and sea 'tis He who reigns: all live by His breath of Grace:
And so, O Ram, I sing Thy glory in deep gratefulness:
Touching thy feet, the earth is blessed, O Ram's darling son!
Blessed Krishnabai and those who've seen in you the One,
And known that through you on our earth comes Ram to rain His Grace:
So, we will sing His glory and thine in fervent gratefulness.*

I must add a tribute to Mata Krishnabai composed by Indira, because Swami Ramdas is not complete with-out her, his disciple and colleague for so many decades, and who is still carrying on Papa's work in spite of her frail health. She lived for Papa and her whole being still moves in him and him alone:

*Translated from Indira Devi's Hindi Song by D.K.R

MOTHER, I BOW TO YOU

Mother, I bow to you.

I do not know whether you are the divine mother:

But that all orphaned hearts feel the love of the
mother in you- I know

Mother I bow to you.....

31st January 1979

DILIP KUMAR ROY

Bombay

A FEW WORDS

By chance or choice, many may see saints and listen to their inspired talks. But it is given only to a chosen few to cast in their lot with the saints, serve them with all their mind and heart and understand the rhythm of their lives.

Swami Satchidananda had the rare privilege of living in close contact with two revered saints, Swami Ramdas and Mother Krishnabai endearingly called as 'Papa' and 'Mataji' by their devotees the world over. He has been with them for nearly three decades. He accompanied them on their tours in India and abroad. His joy of having seen them converse with other men of God, do many things for their dear devotees, tackle the problems of day to day life and react to certain pleasant or apparently unpleasant situations was too great to be kept to himself. It impelled him to record a few of the events and conversations so that others may catch glimpses into the personal side of saints' lives.

In '*Gospel of Swami Ramdas*', Swami Satchidananda has presented some incidents and conversation of Papa and Mataji. In setting down the incidents and the conversations, undue importance is not given to any particular incidents or conversations. No relevant detail has been withheld deliberately. He has tried earnestly to give a factual account of his master's conversations. He has not let his own views and

ideas obtrude into or otherwise colour it. The bare details have been put down without any bias, and only with the aim that the lives of saints should be an open book for all to read. He feels that a plain unvarnished account may enable earnest aspirants to understand properly the thoughts and actions of the saints which are of the highest excellence and profoundest significance. Saints live, move and act like others to all intents and purposes, but the difference is only in their vision of life and its purpose. While an ordinary person thinks that he is someone in particular and works impelled by self-interest, for power and pelf, for name and fame, a saint acts spontaneously as the Divine urges him, for the good of humanity. His unbounded love flows out to everybody without stint. Through his words and deeds, he spreads sweetness and light. Having realized that he is ever one with the Supreme Being who is absolute existence, whose form is the entire universe and who is at the same time beyond all names and forms, he embraces every created being with his arms of love. He stands in relation to God as a child does to its parent or a servant to his master. He plays the role God assigns to him in the Cosmic game, ever dwelling in bliss ineffable. The Gospel shows how the saints live a perfectly normal life while bathed all the time in the bliss and peace of the Eternal.

The incidents and the conversations were recorded from memory, on the days of their

occurrences by, Swami Satchidananda. Since then many years have rolled by. Even at this distance of time, the account possesses freshness and charm on its own for those who can enter into the spirit of it. Papa had looked into the original record and made minor corrections in it. Mataji has also set the seal of approval on the record. By virtue of this the Gospel acquires a new special interest.

May the Gospel be found interesting and instructive and may it help the readers understand saints who are the salt of the earth!

January, 30, 1979
U.S.RAMACHANDRAN,
Anandashram

SWAMI RAMDAS

Sri Swami Ramdas, who was known in his *pre-sannyas* life as Vittal Rao, was born at Hosdurg, Kanhangad, North Kerala, on Thursday, the 10th of April, 1884. It was a day of the full moon and it happened to be Hanuman Jayanthi, i.e., the birthday of Hanuman, the greatest devotee of Sri Rama. This happy synchronization seemed to augur very well for the great future of the child born that day to Srimati Lalita Bai and Sri Balakrishna Rao. The one remarkable thing about him, that people who saw him then observed, was the extraordinary lustre of his eyes.

Vittal was not overfond of school or books, and so he came in for a large measure of his teacher's wrath. He often played truant, but in vain did he hide himself in the bathroom or in the loft of the cow-pen, for his ubiquitous teacher was well aware of the favourite haunts of his recalcitrant pupil. His High School career too was marked by extreme indifference to studies and supreme dislike of text-books. Although he refused to be cramped by the school curriculum, he became a voracious reader and read all the books of general interest he could lay his hands upon. His taste for literature enabled him to acquire even at so early an age a remarkable facility in his English style. His intelligence even as a student was of a high order. Whatever he read once, he made his own. He was even then a good conversationalist and had inherited from his father an unequalled sense of

wit and humour. He would raise roars of laughter in his listeners by the unique manner in which he related incidents from his own life or observations. The humour always lay more in the narrative of an event than in the event itself and he knew it. Whatever be the situation he was placed in for the time being, it was the lighter side of it rather than the serious one that appealed to his keen sense of the comic and the ludicrous in life.

As could be expected, Vittal lagged behind in his studies, with the result that he could not get through the Matriculation examination. He then joined the school of Arts and took a course in drawing and engraving. Though his progress here was remarkable, as the future prospects that this course held out were none too bright, he discontinued the course and joined the Victoria Jubilee Technical Institute of Bombay and took up the Textile Engineering course. At the end of the three years' course at the VJT Institute, Vittal Rao received his diploma in Textile Manufacture.

When he was employed as Spinning Master in a cotton mill at Gulbarga he was married to Rukmabai in the year 1908, and a daughter, Ramabai, was born to him in 1913. After a chequered career of several years he finally came down to Mangalore in 1917 and joined his father-in-law in his business. It went against his grain to stoop to any of the "tricks of the trade". Inevitably, this led to a clash with his father-in-law and he soon severed his connection with the business

and started his own business in dyeing fabrics and printing sarees. But he was too honest to be a businessman and the financial condition of the business was drifting from bad to worse. His domestic life also was none too happy.

Throughout his life in service, brief periods of employment were followed by longer periods of unemployment and idleness. Before he had hardly settled down at one place depending upon the appointment he had secured, circumstances so seemed to work up that he lost the post for no fault of his and he had once again to embark on the quest of securing some fresh means of livelihood. Thus, for him, continued domestic felicity was not to be; and the sweet pleasures of a home of his own were denied to him.

Slowly and imperceptibly, external circumstances were helping Vittal Rao's spirit of dispassion gain an added strength and impetus. Every evening, he spent an hour at the house of his brother, Sitaram Rao, whose children would be engaged in *bhajan* before the image of Sri Krishna. During the *Bhajan*, Vittal Rao would lose himself in a blissful state of self-forgetfulness. It was at this time Vittal Rao started chanting the Lord's name "Ram" and the repetition of the name brought him great mental peace and joy. He kept up a ceaseless flow of the blessed name on his tongue and its humming would automatically issue from his lips even when he was at work or was walking in the streets. He gave up the night meal and other

petty comforts of the body. His wife got thoroughly frightened at the strange turn her husband's life was rapidly taking now. No persuasion, appeal and protest either from her or from his child could induce him to alter the course he was now made to follow. He felt very strongly that he was set upon this path by that Highest Power which he was struggling to attain and realise.

At this stage his father came to him one day and gave his initiation of the holy *Mantra*, "Sri Ram Jai Ram Jai Jai Ram", assuring him at the same time that if he repeated the *Mantra* constantly, he would be blessed with eternal happiness. This was a great moment in the life of Vittal Rao. His progress from then was quicker and so was his detachment from the world. He was preparing himself for the final plunge.

Very soon (in December 1922) he bade good-bye to his worldly life and left Mangalore. Two days later, he reached Srirangam. There, after bath in the holy Cauvery, he changed his clothes to ochre, took the vows of *sannyas* and assumed the name "Ramdas" (servant of Ram) as commanded by his Master Ram. Shortly afterwards, he was standing in front of Sri Ramana Maharshi, praying for grace. Bhagawan nodded his head as if to say that he had showered his grace on this earnest aspirant.

Now the new Swami Ramdas' whole body trembled with emotion. On leaving the Maharshi he went to a cave in the Arunachala Hill and

spent twenty days in constant chanting of *Ram Nam*, taking only a little rice which he himself had cooked. At the end of this period he was blessed with a new vision. He saw his beloved Ram everywhere. In that ecstasy he embraced anything and anybody he saw. He was literally God-mad. In that condition he travelled all over India, visiting holy shrines and *Mahatmas*. A year later his wife and daughter, coming to know that he was staying in the ashram of Sri Siddharudha Swami at Hubli, went there and with permission of Sri Siddharudha Swami took him back to Mangalore. But Swami Ramdas, instead of accompanying the mother and daughter to their house, went straight to the Panch Pandav Cave at Kadri. He stayed there for over three months. The stay was very significant in that it afforded Swami Ramdas opportunity for undisturbed meditation and enabled him to get higher experiences. According to him, he first entered the state of *Nirvikalpa Samadhi* while he was in the Panch Pandav Cave.

Again, his wanderings took him many times to all parts of India and he had a large number of admirers and followers. Vivid descriptions of his itinerary as a mendicant have been written down by him in his own lucid style and published as '*In Quest of God*' and '*In the Vision of God*'. After a few years of wandering, he again came back to Kasaragod and started a small ashram. It was here that Mother Krishnabai first came into contact with him and after a couple of years, chose to dedicate

her entire life to the service of Swami Ramdas and his mission.

It was God's will that Swami Ramdas was not to continue in that little ashram for long. God prompted some miscreants to create trouble which made Swami Ramdas and Mother Krishnabai, submitting to His will, leave the ashram for good. Soon after, the Anandashram in Kanhangad came up and the opening ceremony of it was done on 15th May, 1931. Though it was started in a very humble way, the ashram has considerably expanded over the years. Anandashram has been a very powerful spiritual beacon and thousands of ardent devotees have been visiting it every year, carrying home with them the torch of light, love and service lit at the feet of the Great Master.

Swami Ramdas, whom his devotees and followers lovingly called 'Papa', was bubbling with joy always as the result of his realisation of God in all His aspects and the consequent opening of the floodgates of joy in his heart. He reached the heights of realisation only by taking to the chanting of the *Mantra*, "*Om Sri Ram Jai Ram Jai Jai Ram*" ("OM" was added by him after he got initiation of the *Mantra*). This constant chanting of the *Mantra* enabled him to remember and feel the presence of God within him and everywhere about him, to realise that the entire universe was the form of God. This naturally brought him to the absolute state of surrender, i.e., accepting that whatever happened, happened by the will of God and he finally realised

his oneness with the Supreme Being. He therefore, taught everybody who sought advice from him to take to the chanting of God's Name constantly and submit to His will in all matters. This practice, he assured, would bring them eternal happiness. They had no reason to doubt the authenticity of this statement because he himself was a living example of what spiritual heights *Ram Nam* could take an aspirant to.

Swami Ramdas and Mother Krishnabai visited many places in India at the invitation of devotees every year from 1949 to 1957. Wherever he went, *bhajan* with the chanting of God's name was the main feature. He was not inclined to give long lectures though he gave short talks and answered any number of questions that were put to him on spiritual subjects. In 1954, he undertook a tour around the world where many friends from the European countries, America, Japan, Malaya, Singapore and Ceylon had the rare opportunity of meeting him and conversing with him. He wrote many books in English and started in 1933 a monthly called '*The Vision*' to carry his message of Universal Love and Service based on cosmic vision.

The universality and largeness of his outlook can be seen from one of his frequent utterances, quoted below:

"Ramdas does not belong to any particular creed. He firmly believes that all creeds, faiths and religions are different paths which ultimately

converge at the same goal. The very sight of a Mohammedan reminds him of Mohammed; of a Christian, Jesus Christ; of a Hindu, Rama, Krishna or Shiva; of a Buddhist, Buddha; of a Parsee, Zoroaster. All the great teachers of the world are from one God - the first eternal cause of all existence. Whether it be in the *Gita* or the *Bible* or the *Koran* or the *Zend Avesta*, we find the same note insistently ringing, viz., self-surrender is the supreme way to liberation or salvation."

Swami Ramdas entered *Mahasamadhi* on 25th July 1963 at the age of 79. Though not present in the flesh, he continues to inspire and guide his spiritual children and earnest aspirants wherever they are, and his work divine goes on.

Chapter 1

Anandashram, August 6, 1951

1. Love: Human and Divine

It was about 9.30 a.m. Papa was in the bhajan-hall along with S and Iqbal Nath Bakshi. S brought in a bottle of medicated oil for massaging Papa's knee-joints, which had developed rheumatic pain. Papa sat on a low bench. Iqbal Nath and S started massaging.

Tarabai's children, Umesh and Uma, came to the hall. Uma was four and Umesh two years old. Papa asked Umesh about his mother who was suffering from typhoid. Umesh prattled something in his peculiar language which Papa took to mean that his mother was sleeping. Uma was looking after her younger brother with great care as a grandmother would. Noticing Uma's love for Umesh, S remarked, "How loving the children are now! But as they grow up, they begin to lose their love and when they have their own separate families to look after, they may fail even to keep up their relationship as brother and sister."

Papa: Human love is like that. The object of such love goes on changing. Human love belongs to an ordinary plane. The truth is that everybody stands severely alone in this world. We come alone, and we go alone. Viewed from the plane of the highest Reality, this human love, nay, even universal love, belongs to a much lower plane. We have to rise above all these, which pertain to the plane of the mind.

Papa then referred to a poem he had written many years ago. S got up and brought the book of poems and handed it over to Papa, who then read out the poem:

In the infinite silence of the soul everything is naught;
It is beyond the utmost depths of the mind;
It is eternal rest, repose and peace.
The loftiest, the sweetest love stands
Aghast before that august Presence;
Even it has no entry in that mysterious realm
What then is mind? - what then is love?
Mind is movement in darkness,
Love is movement in light.
But the great Truth is beyond both -
It transcends thought, name, form, movement,
Change, time, space, causation.
One sole Reality - one sole Existence,
One supreme, colourless, attributeless, unthinkable Truth.

Continuing, Papa said, "This poem is about the highest experience before which even the loftiest love stands aghast. Very few people can understand the meaning of this poem unless it is explained to them. They may even then understand it only to the extent they have experienced."

2. Transcend *Himsa* and *Ahimsa*

It was 12 noon. Papa was about to retire for his midday rest. In the hall were Motiben, Natverlal Shah and S. Papa soon after went to bed. Motiben and S started massaging gently his body while Natverlal was fanning him.

Papa: Last night the rats were doing a lot of mischief. They were running about on the ceiling, making much noise; they also came down and started biting Mataji's and Ramkishor's feet. We must get a rat-trap to catch these rats.

After a pause, Papa continued, "What shall we do after catching the rats? We may not kill them. If we take them to some distant place and leave them there, we will be causing trouble to the people close by. If we do not catch them at all, how are we to live here? In course of time, we may have to leave the ashram in charge of the rats and go away to Benares or some other place.

S: Then what is the solution?

Papa: What is the solution? Find out.

All kept silent. After a few minutes, Papa said, "If we have to carry on in this world, we have to deal with many such problems. Running away from them, saying that this is sin and that is sin, is not correct. Absolute *ahimsa* is not practicable in this worldly life. The solution lies in going beyond the pairs of opposites and getting rid of the sense of doership and non-doership. We should realise that God is everything. The rat is God; and the people whom the rats trouble after we leave them at a distance, are also God. Thus, everything is God. Then who is to be affected by what?

After the evening *bhajan* a number of devotees were sitting in front of Papa. Gopal was making

Papa's bed. By the evening post, Papa had received a copy of *Gita Meditations* by Sri TL Vaswani. Papa was having the book in his hand. Addressing those in front of him, he said, "It is wrong to say that the '*Gita*' teaches absolute *ahimsa* or non-violence. The *Gita*, in fact, permits war and violence. Sri Krishna asked Arjuna to kill all his opponents, even though they happened to be his close relations, friends, teachers and so on. The *Gita* teaches us to do all actions in the world, whether violent or non-violent, with absolute detachment. That is the teaching. The stress is on detachment. The work should be done in a spirit of dedication to God. Work will never bind the knower of Reality who is completely detached in his actions."

Papa continued: "Absolute *ahimsa* is not possible when we are engaged in activities in the world. For a spiritual aspirant, non-violence, as a *sadhana*, is all right. For realising God, one has to develop *suddha sattwa*. This is possible only by the practice of total *ahimsa*, among many other disciplines. But in the last stage, the *sadhaka* has to go beyond that too before he reaches his ultimate goal."

August 8, 1951

3. Faith in Blessings

It was about 7 a.m. Papa who was in the bhajan-hall sent for S. S found Papa waiting for him with a letter in hand. Papa told S: "We have to send a Telegraphic Money Order for five rupees to

a devotee. She wants Ramdas to send this money for inclusion in her son's medical college fees (first fee) so that he may successfully get through the college course. She has also sent a rupee note, which she wants Ramdas to touch and return to her. She will use this rupee for the purchase of her son's books.”

Saying these words Papa laughed and continued: “Hers is no ordinary faith. She wants to get everything done by blessings alone. The only thing she could not do was to bring back her departed husband's life. About that too, she now regrets she did not wire to Ramdas for blessings when her husband's illness was serious. Even now she feels for what she considers to be her mistake. Faith carries her smoothly through all crises in life.”

S then left for the office to arrange for the TMO to be sent.

After correspondence was over, Iqbal Nath and S were giving massage to Papa's knee-joints with oil. Papa then took out a letter from his pocket and read it out. It was from a devotee in Bombay asking for blessings for one or two things. After reading the letter he observed: “People ask for blessings from the time the child is in its mother's womb for its safe delivery; then for his birthday, *upanayanam*, promotion in school, marriage, recovery from diseases, appointment and so on. Then in due course, blessings are similarly wanted

for the son's child. And even after his death, the son asks for blessings so that his father's soul may rest in peace. You can imagine how many blessings they ask for!"

4. Self-Adulation, a Vice

In that letter there was also a reference to a particular *sadhaka*. Iqbal Nath wanted to know when the *sadhaka* first came in touch with the ashram. Papa said, "Oh, he has been known to Ramdas for many years. When he came here for the first time he was a first-class dandy, putting on fine dress, hair oiled and combed, and a *tilak* on his forehead. In this dress he used to sit for *bhajan*. Once he told Ramdas that he was a spiritual aspirant. Then Ramdas replied: 'Nothing doing! How can a *sadhaka* lead such a fashionable life, spending two or three hours daily on his toilet?' After this, he got the hair on his head closely cut and made his dress also much simpler. He is a great lover of saints and he is after *Satsang*. Ramdas feels he has been leading a pure life. He has no vices except self-adulation. Of course, self-adulation is one of the worst vices."

Vaidyanathan, a visitor from Jaffna, who had been staying for some days in the ashram and was returning to his place, came to the bhajan-hall to take his leave of Papa. After prostrating before Papa, he asked, "Papa, please bless me."

Papa replied: "You need not specially ask for blessings. When you go to a saint, his blessings

are with you. Write to us some time after reaching your place.”

After the evening *bhajan*, at 8.15 p.m., Dr.R.Kuppuswami, in charge of the Anandashram Free Hospital, came and reported to Papa that a *sadhu* who was being treated for rheumatism had moved from the room allotted to him to the common *dharmashala*.

Papa told the doctor: “Ramdas knew it. Who is there now to look after him? He has been fighting with Mohideen, who was attending on him. He even went to the length of beating the latter. These *sadhus* are still very orthodox. They cannot mix freely with Harijans, Muslims and others. We have nobody else but Mohideen to attend on this *sadhu*. Let Mataji decide the matter.”

5. Milk, the Best Diet

It was 9.30 p.m. S took a glass of salt water to Papa for gargling. Papa took the glass and said laughing: “Oh, Ramdas did not remember this salt-water business. He remembered only the sugar candy.”

S: Yes, Papa, I shall bring sugar candy after the salt-water gargle.

Papa: That is very consoling.

Motiben: Nobody can get on without salt. We want salt to be added to every vegetable preparation.

Papa: That is our own making. In fact, there is a certain percentage of salt in every vegetable. But we want to add more salt so that we may have better taste and eat more. For a *sadhaka*, saltless diet is very good. Of course, milk diet is the best. When one is on milk diet his mind is very bright - as bright as burnished gold; but he should also repeat *Ram Nam* and do meditation. Now Ramdas must go to bed.

August 9, 1951

6. No ill Will

8.30 a.m. After attending to the day's correspondence, Papa was pacing up and down the bhajan-hall. He told S, who was by his side: "The Headmaster of Sri Krishna Vidyalaya has asked Ramdas for a strictly private interview this evening in the Vidyalaya hall upstairs. He expressed to Ramdas yesterday that he felt his going away, incurring the displeasure of Ramdas, was not good for him. Ramdas has absolutely no ill will towards anybody. He will make this clear to the Headmaster."

Next, Papa and S went to see the hospital ward building, which had just been completed. While returning, Dr. Kuppuswami said that Mataji was unwell, feeling giddy. Then Papa, S and the doctor went straight to the room in the building behind the bhajan-hall, where Mataji was lying down with a wet kerchief on her forehead. Papa asked her

what the matter was. She replied she felt slight giddiness and would be all right soon.

Papa: The trouble is that you are not taking any rest at all. All through the day you are engaged in work and nowadays you have given up even your one-hour rest in the afternoon. That is why you are not keeping well.

Mataji (smiling): I am not doing any work.

Papa: Then, why can't you rest and sleep for a short while in the afternoon? Now at least you should take complete rest.

7. Unkempt in Sadhana Days

From there Papa went to the bhajan-hall. S and Iqbal Nath began to massage Papa's knees with oil, while the talk went on about Iqbal Nath's admission to the Engineering College in Bangalore.

Papa said: "Ramdas wrote to KCR only to remind him about your talk with him, lest he should forget it amidst his many worries. Everybody has worries. Do not think that big people have no worries. They have big worries. Why, even *sannyasins* have worries. They may have only trifling worries, but having nothing else to think of, they magnify them."

At ten o'clock Papa again went to Mataji's room and asked her not to disturb herself for the sake of his bath, which she usually attended to. He said,

“Kindly give Ramdas freedom today. Ramdas will manage it himself. He does not like anyone else to help him in his bath.” Addressing S, he continued: “Mataji started giving bath to Ramdas when he was ill for a long time, and she continues it as she finds joy in it.”

Mataji: Papa was not allowing anyone even to touch his body while bathing. When he had rheumatism, and was unable to freely raise his hands to reach his back, I began to help him. If he is allowed to take bath unaided, he may not bathe his back and body properly.

Papa: In those days Ramdas had to allow Mataji to give him bath, but he is not going to allow anyone else to do so.

Papa went for his bath alone and then went for *bhajan* after a few words with Mataji. Mataji told S: “Papa took fifteen minutes for his bath today. He said he took his bath properly because he remembered me. See how careless he is about his body! During his *sadhana* days, he even had lice on his head and body. He never cared to shave or wash properly, except when forced by friends.”

8. Tapasvins alone have Creative Genius

After Papa's lunch, before his afternoon rest, Motiben, Natverlal Shah and S were with him. He read a few pages from the book ‘*Lava and Kusa*’ in Hindi. When the clock struck twelve, he closed the book and said: “How nicely sage Valmiki has

narrated the story! What wonderful brains these great rishis had! Whether we accept their works as historical or not, we have to appreciate their genius which gave us great works like the '*Ramayana*' and the '*Mahabharata*'. *Tapasvins* alone have such creative genius and capacity. What they produced have been a source of inspiration for ages past and will continue to be so for ages to come. The works of mere intellectuals, however great, last for a short time and then become stale. These rishis were spiritually inspired poets. They composed their works in a state of spiritual ecstasy. The intellectuals, without any spiritual experience, cannot find enjoyment in their work as much as the rishis do, who are ever in tune with the Eternal and create great works which express their inner ecstasy and experience."

9. Inaction in Action

For an hour in the afternoon, Papa read a few pages from '*The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*'. Closing the book, Papa observed: "Sri Ramakrishna never liked anyone criticising another, as in doing so there is the danger of straying away from Truth."

S reported that Mataji's giddiness continued and that she had not had any food.

Papa: Ramdas has been repeatedly asking her to take sufficient rest daily. But she finds no time for rest. When further pressed, she would say, 'I am not doing anything at all. Work is all done

by others.’ Though she is working long hours, she says she never does anything! That is real inaction in action. She acts and at the same time feels she acts not. *Siddhas* say that they never work, though they are seen engaged in ceaseless activity. Bhagavan Vyasa drank a potful of curds and standing on the bank of the Jamuna, said, ‘If I am a *nitya-upavasi* - one who is ever fasting - may the river Jamuna make way for me’. Instantly, the waters parted, and a clear passage was seen across the river. Such is the secret of inaction in action. When you are established in the Cosmic Consciousness, in the *Atman*, you are not affected by your activities in the sphere of *prakriti*.

10. The Marks of a *Jivanmukta*

After the night bhajan, when devotees were sitting in front of Papa, S reminded him of the question raised in the afternoon on the signs of a *jivanmukta*.

Papa: Yes, this is a point worthy of consideration. How can you make out if one is a *jivanmukta* or not? He may be engaged in worldly activities as any other man, eating like any other man and doing many things as ordinary people. Take for example the case of Ramdas himself. How can any of you say he is a self-realised soul?

All remained silent for a while.

S: I feel it can be done only by intuition. One might be able to find a lot of difference between Papa and

an ordinary man by long and close observation also.

Papa asked Natverlal Shah: “What do you say?”

Natverlal: S has moved with Papa for a longer time. He might have observed something special.

Papa: You have also been with Ramdas for a long time. What have you observed?

Natverlal kept quiet, when S remarked: “The wise man keeps quiet.”

Then Papa himself came out with the answer: “It is not possible to say one is a *jivanmukta* or not from his external appearance and actions. The qualities of a *jivanmukta*, as described in the scriptures are - he is conscious of his immortality; he has conquered fear; his senses are under control; he is ever in tune with the Infinite; he has *Sama-drishti* - equal vision; he is ever immersed in bliss.

“As these signs refer only to the internal state, how is it possible to know a *jivanmukta* from merely external signs? It is not possible. But by the inner joy and peace one gets in the presence of a *jivanmukta*, one feels intuitively that he is such a saint. One does not get inner joy when one is in the presence of worldly people or moves with them. The only reliable sign of a *jivanmukta* - that too seen only in rare cases - is that he has

a certain extraordinary personal charm, which draws people to him in thousands. When people flock to a person in thousands and also go to him often, we can be sure that God has manifested in him in a special degree more than in others. Of course, there are many *jivanmuktas* who are not at all known to people. They do not wish to be known and so remain obscure.”

S here mentioned how Janakinath Bakhshi, the Kashmir friend, became Papa's devotee the instant he met Papa.

Papa: Then Ramdas had put on ochre robes.

S: But there were so many with ochre robes on. Why did he pick out only Papa?

Papa then narrated how he came into contact with Janakinath Bakhshi and his trip to Amarnath.

August 10, 1951

11. Strictness in *Sadhana*

It was about 9.30 a.m. Papa had just returned to the bhajan-hall after spending a few minutes with Mataji in the room where she was lying down, still unwell. S brought the bottle of oil and asked Papa to sit on the low stool so that Iqbal Nath and he might massage his legs. Considering that massage was no longer absolutely necessary, as he was almost free from the rheumatic pain and not liking much the idea of sitting quiet while the

legs were massaged, Papa asked S: “This massage business has become a routine. Is it not time to stop this?”

S: This being the rainy season, it would be better if the massage is continued as a precautionary measure.

Papa then reluctantly agreed.

While massaging, S started talking about *sadhana*. In reply to one of his questions Papa said: “When a *sadhaka* advances on the spiritual path and his mind gets purified, *sattwa guna* becomes predominant in him. Then he sees visions of light and forms. Even when he closes his eyes, he will be seeing sparks of light, light like that of the moon and so on. These signs indicate that he is in *sattwa guna*. But he does not stay long in that state. He has to be very, very careful at this time as a fall back to *rajas* and *tamas* is easy. Slackness in *sadhana*, bad company or impure food may cause the fall. After reaching the state, in which *sattwa guna* is dominant, he must go beyond the *gunas*. If he is intense, persevering and sincere in his *sadhana*, he will definitely rise to the higher stage. Strict self-discipline is absolutely necessary. Ramdas was very particular about his food and sleep when he was passing through such a stage. He wanted to control sleep and for that he had to control food. He was for a long time living only on boiled potatoes and milk. Even milk he gave

up later. The stomach used to burn with hunger as also the whole body. His sister, Lakshmi Devi, one day brought some sweets she had made and requested Ramdas to take them. Ramdas firmly refused saying, 'No, Ramdas won't give in till his goal is attained.' Once he even refused to take the bread offered by *Gurudev*. So strict was his discipline. When he made a vow, nobody could make him break it until he got a command from within to do so."

In the afternoon, Papa read as usual from the '*The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*' to a few ashramites. At the close of the reading, Dr. Kuppuswami came and requested Papa to go over to his house for coffee, as it was the day of *Varalakshmi pooja*. The doctor invited others also who were sitting in the bhajan-hall. The doctor's wife was full of love and devotion. As soon as Papa entered the house, she prostrated at Papa's feet and took him to the *pooja-room*, which was nicely decorated with flowers and green leaves. Papa felt happy to see how the Universal Mother was worshipped. He came out and sat on a chair in another room. Seeing the house clean and tidy, Papa observed: "The arrangement and neatness in the house show that there are no children here. That is why everything is in its right place." The doctor and his wife had not so far had a child. Papa was given a cup of coffee after drinking which he watched others taking prasad consisting of various sweets.

12. Corruption even in Ashrams

It was evening and Papa went on his usual rounds. S was with him. After visiting the Vidyalaya and *Udyog Shala*, Papa was going towards the new hospital building. On the way he observed: “Corruption has become nowadays so common that it threatens to enter even our institutions.”

S was surprised to hear these remarks.

Papa continued: “Mataji often says that it was a mistake to have started these institutions. Of course, we started these, placing lofty ideals before ourselves, but unfortunately some of the workers do not co-operate, or even care to understand the ideals.”

The evening post brought a photograph of Mother Anasuya Devi of Jharia. Papa and Mataji had visited her house in Jharia during their tour that year. The picture of the pious mother, taken when she was in a state of ecstatic trance, brought back to Papa all the memories of the visit, the loving welcome she gave him and Mataji and her devout, loving and childlike nature. After the *bhajan* was over, he showed the picture with great joy to all those present in the hall, talking to them about his visit to her house.

It was nearing ten o'clock and Papa was about to retire when Mataji came up to the bhajan-hall. She was feeling slightly better and looked it. She sat near Papa's cot. He talked with her for a few minutes about his visit to Dr.Kuppuswami's house and the *pooja* arrangements there.

Chapter 2

Anandashram, August 11, 1951

13. Life stale without problems

6 a.m. Papa had just got up. Mataji was still in bed. When she was asked about her health, she said she was feeling better. Papa's throat was bad as he had a cold. So, it was suggested that Papa should reduce talking to the minimum. Mataji said that Papa's afternoon reading should be stopped.

The doctor gave throat paint to Papa some time later. In his talks with the doctor, Papa again returned to the topic of corruption and observed: "There are so many problems in the ashram, cropping up every day. Of course, if there are no problems, life will be very drab. There is joy only when there are problems and when they are tackled properly. God is responsible for everything and if we ask Him why He makes some people resort to corrupt practices, do you know what He will say? That He Himself is playing the whole game of this universe; He puts on the parts of a thief, a good man, a criminal, a *sadhu* and so on."

14. God plays all Roles

S: Yes, Papa, but when He Himself is putting on different masks and acting in the various roles in the world-drama, the description that He is all-compassionate, etc., seems to have no meaning. To whom has He then got to show mercy and compassion? To Himself?

Papa: To complete the whole game all these varieties are necessary. When He is putting on different roles, He has naturally to act accordingly. What He does is this: When He wants to play the part of a miserable or vicious person, He goes about telling lies, harms others and practices all sorts of vices. When He wants to play the role of a good and saintly man, He leads a virtuous life, does good to others, practices kindness and compassion, performs austerities and shows that by such practices the individual purifies himself and realises his true nature. Having assumed different masks, He plays in various ways and pretends to be different from Himself. As such, He really prays to Himself and He shows mercy and compassion to Himself in other forms. Everything belongs to His world-play.

9.45 p.m. It was Papa's bedtime. He remarked, lying down: "Ramdas feels healthier when his food is adjusted in such a way that he is always a little hungry. When food is taken even slightly in excess, it becomes troublesome. We should have only five percent consciousness of our body. Ninety-five percent we should be above body-consciousness. When the stomach is very light, and the mind is contemplative, this is possible.

S: Instead of five percent body-consciousness, we are now having one hundred and five percent.

Papa laughed.

August 12, 1951

15. Mataji never Half-hearted

Mataji was much better in the morning, although weak.

After dictating replies to the letters that had been pending for some days, Papa went to the room where Mataji was resting. He had in his hand the latest issue of *'The Hindu'*, wherein there was an article on paddy cultivation explaining how a farmer in Salem district had raised a record crop. As Mataji was in charge of the cultivation of the ashram fields, Papa gave her an account of that Salem farmer's achievement for comparison with the yield in the ashram fields. Mataji observed that there was still great scope for improvement in the agricultural activities of the ashram, though the results then obtained matched with those in the areas nearby.

Mataji was keenly interested in agriculture. She was thorough in everything she did. There was no half-heartedness in any work she undertook. She might oppose the expansion of ashram activities in any particular line and not approve the starting of a new work. But once Papa decided on doing anything even in the face of her strong opposition, she gave him her whole-hearted co-operation and saw to it that the work was carried out successfully. So complete was her surrender to him.

Sitting in the veranda of the building behind the bhajan-hall, Papa was shaving himself. Keshav Bhat, the ashram mechanic, came running with joy and reported the arrival from Salem of Soundararaja Mudaliar, an engineer, to whom a telegram was sent requesting him to come immediately to repair the ashram oil engine which had gone out of order recently. In a few minutes, Mudaliar himself came to Papa and made *pranams*. Papa greeted him with a broad smile and gave him a brief account of the engine trouble and said, "Now go and have your tiffin. See the joy of Keshav at the very sight of you. He is jumping as if his God has given him darshan. Poor fellow, he has been worrying himself all these days over the engine."

Shortly afterwards, an ashram worker brought before Papa a basket containing rice of a very fine quality brought by Soundararaja Mudaliar. Seeing the rice, Papa asked Mataji to prepare *keshar-bhath*. Mataji said it could be done on the 15th, being the Independence Day.

In the afternoon, most of Papa's time was spent with Soundararaja Mudaliar in the engine-room. Late in the evening, the defect of the engine was found out. Mudaliar then, with great joy, remarked: "Papa, when you asked me to come here last time, I delayed, and the result was that I had a lot of trouble with the engine. Therefore, when I left this place then, I had decided that I would respond to Papa's call in future immediately. So, this time

I came the moment I received your wire. Now see the result! The defect has been located soon and now the repair work can be done in no time.”

16. Food aplenty

9.45 p.m. Papa's bedtime. To those who were sitting near his cot he spoke about the arrangements for the celebration of the Independence Day at the Vidyalaya. Then S remarked: “The wife of the Central Food Minister is appealing to all to give up food for one day a week and is herself doing so.”

Papa: Ramdas has now increased his food to thrice daily and if the Food Minister comes to know of it, he may be angry.

Madhukar Shah: As you are taking food thrice a day, Papa, we are also having food in plenty.

Mataji, who was listening to the conversation, then chimed in: “Papa, if you reduce your food, we all shall have to go starving. Now that you are taking food thrice daily, though in small quantities, food is plenty in the ashram kitchen and we are getting so much wheat that there is not enough room to store it.”

Papa: Is it so? Anyway, Ramdas is not going to take food more than three times. You can rest assured that this is his maximum.

August 13, 1951

Papa spent most of the day in the engine-room, where Mudaliar was trying his best to set

the engine right. He had not been successful yet though he was fully confident last night. After seeing Mudaliar working the whole day without success, Papa remarked: "Soundararajan has been tied here without a rope. Poor fellow has a lot of work on hand at his place." S added: "Yes, he was dragged here by 'wire' and tied down without a rope."

Mataji being in her normal health attended to her work as usual.

17. Papa's favourite

In the evening, Papa went on his usual rounds to Udyog Shala. While there, he asked the tailor to stitch a Khadi cap for Ramkishor for use on the Independence Day.

Ramkishor, then nine years of age, was loved very much by Papa and had been his pet ever since he was born in the ashram in 1943. His mother, Motiben, in her helpless condition, was given refuge in the ashram by the all-compassionate Papa and Mataji on the recommendation of her well-wishers. The boy was born a few months later.

In his childhood the boy's life was in danger in many ways. Papa and Mataji had to face very grave situations to provide security to the mother and the child. Papa loved Ramkishor so deeply that he did everything for him and tended him as a mother would her child. Papa would wake Ramkishor up early in the morning and sit with him when he

did his lessons and saw to every item of his daily programme with so much exactness and care that it demanded no small amount of patience and surely none other than Papa could do so. Only Papa could have the patience to answer all the questions put by Ramkishor. They were innumerable, continuous and covered many subjects. Papa gave everything he wanted and made him happy. The boy in turn was very loving and could not live apart from Papa. He could be away from his mother but not from Papa. He was intelligent but also mischievous. He was so far given only private tuition and the tutors found it no easy job to control and teach him. So, it was decided to put him in class-V in Sri Krishna Vidyalaya, conducted by the ashram. Ramkishor would take his meals with Papa, sit with him and sleep near him. Often, Papa remarked about him thus: "This boy Ramkishor is very intelligent. His love for Ramdas is very great. There are signs of greatness in him. His life and Ramdas' life have been so mysteriously and closely linked together that separation is very difficult. Severance is impossible in this life."

18. Divine Love Transforms

8 p.m. *Bhajan* was just over. The evening post brought many letters, which Papa was busy reading for some time. In front of him were seated a number of devotees. During the talks that followed, Papa referred to an incident early in his itinerant life.

He said, "When Ramdas was in Lahore once, he was the guest of Ramchandra Gupta. One day, this friend took Ramdas to the house of an advocate. Ramdas waited in the drawing room and Ramchandra Gupta went inside to inform the friend about the arrival of Ramdas. More than ten minutes elapsed before they came out and sat opposite to Ramdas. The advocate's face showed that he did not at all like Ramdas' visit. Soon, he started talking against *sadhus* generally and remarked: "These *Sadhus* are going from place to place to serve their own selfish ends. They make money and have disciples only to live in ease and comfort. They go about visiting the houses of devotees so that they may get good and rich food daily."

Ramdas was listening to these words silently. When the advocate stopped, Ramdas talked for some time on divine love, making absolutely no reference to what the advocate had said so far. Ramdas said that divine love was very powerful. It was above everything else and it was given even in return for hate. The talk went on in this vein for some time. Gupta was naturally very much disturbed over the cold reception given to Ramdas there. But he was not aware of the great transformation that was silently taking place in the heart of his advocate friend as a result of Ramdas' words. Gupta pointed out to Ramdas that it was

time to leave and both got up. The advocate friend also got up, but now quite a changed man. With folded hands he begged of Ramdas to excuse him for what he had said and, to the great surprise of Gupta, also requested that Ramdas should be pleased to accept *Bhiksha* in his house the next day. Ramdas readily accepted the invitation and was treated with all love and kindness when he went there the next day. Thus, you see, divine love is a great transformer.

August 14, 1951

19. Difficulties with *Sadhakas* and Orphans

Mataji often said that the starting of the ashram was a great mistake and expanding its activities was a still greater mistake. She had many things to look after. In the early days, she wished that sincere *sadhakas* should be given the chance to be with Papa, to have the privilege of serving him and thereby to progress on the spiritual path. Therefore, many were admitted and advised to do some small service and spend the rest of their time in *sadhana*. But, unfortunately, instead of progressing, they started finding fault with the ashram administration, Mataji and Papa. So, Papa advised them for their own good to leave the ashram. Mataji then resolved not to encourage *sadhakas* to stay permanently in the ashram.

Mataji was then bringing up poor orphan children in the ashram. They were looked after

by her with great affection. Their requirements were met in every way. They were sent to school or taught by tutors and enjoyed more than average comforts. But the pity of it was that they often proved disobedient even to her and behaved rudely to others. There was no end to the troubles they sometimes gave her. She would patiently hear complaints about them from many quarters and simply say: "What am I to do? It is very difficult to change one's character formed in early childhood. Look at the boy Chandrasekhar. He was put under the care of the headmaster for proper training. For some time, he seemed to be shaping well. Now he is no longer under the control of the headmaster, as he has joined another school. So, he has reverted to his bad ways. His tendencies were only repressed for a time when he was with the headmaster, who, it would appear, was given to beating the boy; and now they are coming out again with greater force."

It was 5.30 p.m. Papa was sitting in the open, near the cement benches in front of the bhajan-hall. The weather was fine. S was near him. The boy Chandrasekhar came there. Papa called him near and told him: "Look here, Ramdas understands that you are falling back into your old ways. If Ramdas hears complaints about you any more, he will have to send you away. We do not want here boys who are disobedient, who insult others and who make themselves in many ways a nuisance to the ashram. You are also reported to be getting up

very late in the mornings. This habit is bad for you. From tomorrow you should get up at six o'clock and write *Ram Nam* till seven. This will make you behave better, as your mind will then be calm.”

A few minutes afterwards, Ramkishor was seen plucking leaves, causing injury to plants in front of the bhajan-hall. Papa had warned him many times that he should not do so. Papa called him near and admonished him saying: “Ramkishor, you have been warned several times not to hurt plants. You are by that causing great pain to them. If you repeat this again, you will be punished for it.”

How kindly Papa took care of, moulded and guided children! Sometimes he advised them, sometimes admonished them, only with a view to freeing them of their bad habits and enabling them to develop good qualities. He watched the children so closely that it needed infinite patience which he alone had.

20. Misunderstanding Cleared

When on a tour of Saurashtra in March that year, Papa and Mataji were about to leave Bhavnagar for Rajkot, a report reached them that some of the devotees of Sri Ranchhoddasji Maharaj of Rajkot, all of whom had warmly received and honoured Papa on the occasion of his visit in 1949, had then (in March 1951) removed the photos of

Papa and Mataji from their homes and a few of them had even left Rajkot to avoid meeting them. Still, a few met Papa and Mataji. One among them, Sri J Jobanputra, Collector of the district of Rajkot, had invited them to his house. In the course of the conversation they were shown the photograph of a saint whom they did not recognise. Sri Jobanputra said that it was the photo of Sri Ranchhoddasji Maharaj, to whom the courtesy due to a saint was reported to have not been extended by Mataji during his stay at Anandashram a few years before, as he was then asked to prepare cakes out of cow-dung. Mataji denied all knowledge of any such incident and added: "I do not remember having ever done so. Even if it be true, I am only his child and the Mahatma could excuse me, treating the ashram as his own. Anyhow, if I had done so, I tender my sincere apologies."

The letter received that day was from Chakkubhai, one of Papa's devotees at Rajkot. Chakkubhai had met Sri Ranchhoddasji Maharaj at Chitrakut, where the saint then was. On being informed of the above incident the saint said that he had been at Anandashram for eighteen days some twelve or thirteen years before; that he prepared his own food; that he saw Mataji toil at almost the entire work of the ashram herself with little assistance; that he offered to share the work of the *goshala* and joined others in the making of cow-dung cakes; that he was sorry for the

misunderstanding on the part of his householder devotees of Rajkot; that he himself was away from Rajkot on both occasions when Papa was in Rajkot in 1949 and 1951 and so could not meet Papa; that he had a high esteem for Papa, whom he considered as an *avatar* of Sri Rama and that he would himself be writing to Papa to convey his regret at the misunderstanding. Sri Ranchhoddasji Maharaj's letter in similar terms was received the same day. The two letters cleared up the unfortunate misunderstanding, much to the joy and happiness of Papa and Mataji*.

* When Papa and Mataji visited Rajkot, they were invited by the disciples of Sri Ranchhoddasji Maharaj to their ashram and were treated with all love and devotion.

Chapter 3

Anandashram, August 15, 1951

21. *Sadhana Bhakti* and *Sadhya Bhakti*

It was 7 a.m. Papa was sitting on his chair in the Bhajan-hall near the radio. Some devotees were sitting in front of him. When S entered the hall, Papa was holding in his hand the book, '*Stories of Great Bhaktas*', in Hindi. As he opened the book, the words '*Sadhana Bhakti*' and '*Sadhya Bhakti*' caught his eyes. In the course of the talk that followed he observed:

The devotee at first aspires to realise God. He tries to think of Him always. He repeats His name. For him, God is somewhere in the heavens, or in temples, or he meditates on Him as residing in his own heart. Finally, by the intensity of his aspiration and devotion, his mind gradually becomes pure and he gets darshan of God in the form in which he has been conceiving of Him. The devotee realises finally his oneness with Him. *Bhakti*, up to this stage, can be termed *Sadhana Bhakti*.

Even after this realisation of God, i.e., after having realised his oneness with Him, the devotee still desires to maintain a sort of relationship with God as between mother and child, master and servant and so on. He subsequently sees his Beloved everywhere. Nothing else exists for him but his Beloved. He is one with the Beloved and

at the same time he is also His child, or servant, or friend and loves Him as such. This love of the devotee for his Beloved does not arise out of desire for anything, not even for any spiritual attainment. This is love for love's sake, for the pure joy of love.

During his period of *sadhana* the devotee considered his God as different from the universe, and so he rejected the universe as something unreal. Now that he sees the whole universe as the very manifestation of God, his Beloved, there is nothing for him to reject. So, this love for God, which persists even after realising His presence everywhere, is known as *Sadhya Bhakti* or *Parabhakti*.

Some *jnanis* do not accept this stage of *Bhakti*. Having realised their oneness with God, they do not go beyond it and see the whole universe as His very manifestation. They consider the world as mere illusion, as non-existent.

When Ramdas was wandering in ochre robes, whenever he was asked to talk, he talked about *Bhakti* and *Parabhakti*. Some of his *sannyasi* companions naturally did not subscribe to his views and told Ramdas that his dress, name and talk were inconsistent with each other. He was wearing ochre clothes, but was named simply Ramdas, which was not proper. He should either wear white clothes or change his name to one ending in Ananda or some other suffix usually adopted by *sannyasins*. They further asked how, if he were a

sannyasi, he could talk about *Parabhakti*. Ramdas replied that Ram gave him the dress, gave him the name and made him talk on *Parabhakti* and that until He commanded him to change, he would not do so.

22. Contemplation leads to Oneness with God - Take Ram Nam

The Sri Krishna Vidyalaya students and teachers were celebrating the Independence Day. Papa went to the Vidyalaya at 9 a.m., witnessed the flag-hoisting ceremony, watched the distribution of sweets to the children and saw them start on a procession. He returned to the ashram about 10.30 a.m.

In the afternoon, A Subramania Iyer, Natverlal Shah and S were with Papa in the Bhajan-hall. Subramania Iyer asked Papa to explain a paragraph in '*The Vision*', the ashram magazine, relating to silent meditation.

Papa: Why do you want to discuss all these things? You had better take *Ram Nam* constantly. These articles are for those who do not meet Ramdas often. You are here always and have heard about it so often. Still, Ramdas will tell you. When the mind is contemplating God, thought waves come one by one and subside in it. In between the merging of one thought wave and the rising of another, there is a period of stillness, a state of complete absence of thought. This is pure consciousness.

The aim of the aspirant is to prolong the period of this stillness and ultimately have it always. This perfect stillness is the state of *samadhi*.

When you sit still, silent and serene, with all your senses at rest, in the awareness of your divine self, you feel that you are not an individual tied down to the desires of the flesh, but a purified and enlightened being. You feel that you are the infinite, not a finite being. Now you experience your oneness with God - the Absolute Existence. This experience comes to you after you have remained in a state of perfect stillness, which means *samadhi*. You have now achieved a state which has been yours from time immemorial, but of which you have been ignorant till now.

Go on repeating *Ram Nam* continuously, without any break. So long as you have desires for worldly objects and sense-enjoyments, or have worries about mundane matters, you cannot achieve this stillness and have real joy. You should completely surrender everything to God first. Leave off your worries and feel light and free. By proper discrimination between the real and the unreal, give up the desire for worldly enjoyments, which are but ephemeral. The more you fill your mind with God, the less will be its desire for sense-pleasures. *Bhakti* intensifies *vairagya*. Strenuous effort and regular practice will gradually fill the mind completely with God and there will be no chance for worldly thoughts or desires to enter

it. Now you experience immeasurable joy and the moment you utter God's Name you go into ecstasy.

Pointing to Sri Ramakrishna's picture on the wall, he continued: "He was often in that state; it is called *bhavasamadhi*."

Subramania Iyer: What kind of repetition of God's Name is advised, silent or loud?

Papa: Silent repetition is of course more efficacious. But it is very difficult where there are external disturbances. It needs perfect solitude. For one who is used to mental repetition of *Ram Nam*, the moment he starts repeating it, the mind becomes perfectly still.

23. A rubbish heap - Mataji's Reflections

After some time, Papa went out on his usual evening rounds. On his return at about 5 o'clock, he saw *Sadhu Balaram*, who had arrived only a few minutes back, waiting for him near the gate. Papa greeted him, loudly exclaiming; "Oh Balaram, you have grown stout! How are you? When did you come?"

Balaram fell prostrate at Papa's feet and said: "Papa, I had been to Badri. I am all right."

Papa: Are you still on diet?

Balaram: Yes, Papa.

Papa: All right, go, have your bath and take some food.

It was about 6 p.m. The dinner-bell had gone. The ashramites and visitors were going one by one to the dining-hall. Mataji was taking her round within the ashram compound. S met her near the car-shed. She was looking at the open space outside the shed, where various articles like pieces of firewood, dry leaves and rubbish were lying pell-mell, making the place rather untidy. Pointing that to S, Mataji remarked: "See, this is just like our human body. However well and often we may clean it, it becomes dirty again. This place has been cleaned so very often. Still, see how soon rubbish has accumulated here!"

After a pause, she picked up the threads:

"I have a very bad habit. Wherever I go, I see the faults first. In the ashram when I walk round, the many mistakes and irregularities easily catch my sight. Again, I feel I am responsible for all such defects and shortcomings in the ashram. It is not that we have a dearth of workers here. We have forty workers and they are not idle. If, instead of myself, somebody else like our head-master were to get work out of them, things will be done much better, even with a lesser number."

August 16, 1951

24. On Conducting an Ashram

It was 7 a.m. Papa was in the Bhajan-hall. Sitting in front of him were a few devotees, including Shankar Rao Dhamre (of Shurdi) and Prem Singh,

both of Sholapur district, who had recently come. Shankar Rao Dhamre had been thinking seriously of building a small ashram in his land at Shurdi, near Osmanabad. He had written to Papa about it before he came here, and Papa had given him permission to do so. The talk now turned on that subject. Papa told him again as follows:

“When the ashram is ready, it may be named ‘Anandashram, Shurdi’. The ashram should be used only for holding *Satsang*, *bhajans*, *kirtans*, reading and exposition of scriptures etc. It should never be used for any worldly purpose like conducting marriages and other social functions. When *mahatmas* happen to visit your place or near about, invite them to the ashram and hold *Satsang*. Have also regular bhajans there.”

Prem Singh then suggested that Janardan Pant Kulkarni might be asked to stay in the ashram to look after the programmes and conduct classes in various religious subjects. Janardan Pant was one of the oldest devotees of Papa and was also a man of learning. Papa approved the suggestion, saying: “Yes, you can ask Janardan Pant to come and stay there. But he should not stay there with his family. The latter may stay in the village, not in the ashram. Please see also that no women are allowed to stay in the ashram at night. You should be very strict in this matter. Further, do not allow gossipers to stay there. Whoever stays in the ashram must spend most of the time in *kirtans*

and *japa*. If Janardan Pant comes there, you may entrust all internal matters to him. You need look after only the general management. If anybody offers help in the form of cash or kind, you may accept them and keep correct accounts of receipts and expenses. After the ashram is well-established Ramdas will surely visit the place. One more point to be noted is that you should never press people to do any fixed number of *japa* within a fixed time. They should be left free in the matter. They should have full joy in doing the *japa*. Compulsion in this matter is no good. Write to Ramdas every month as to how things are going on there.”

From 8 a.m. Papa was busy attending to correspondence. Upendra Bhatt, a devotee of Rajkot, had recently returned from a visit to Russia. He had written to Papa giving his impressions of that country. Papa replied to him as below:

“After all, a few days' stay can give one only a superficial knowledge of a large country like Russia. The Russians seem to have successfully solved the problem of unemployment and food. But above all, what the soul of man hungers for, is the inner spiritual peace. This is the outcome of communion with the divine source of our existence. When this is absent, all the material comforts of life cannot bring real happiness and peace.

“Soon, India will rise in all her glory. Then she will be not only spiritually great, but will have material wealth also in plenty. India has a great

destiny to fulfill in the world. Her chief heritage is spiritual power and glory. Her children have only to be awakened and made conscious of this rich inheritance. Our rishis and *avatars* have left their indelible impress upon us all. They belong to all ages and climes. Our outlook also must be universal.”

It was past 8 p.m. *Bhajan* was just over. Papa was sitting in the Bhajan-hall. Mataji came and sat near Papa, who then took out a few letters in Marathi from his letter bag and had them read out to her by an ashramite. Papa was daily reading from the ‘*Jnaneshwari Gita*’, or ‘*The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*’, or some such book, explaining to the mothers of the ashram the meaning in Konkani. But due to pressure of work, the mothers were not able to attend for a few days and the reading had to be suspended. Getting from the library ‘*Srimad Bhagavata*’ in Kannada Papa resumed the reading session.

25. The Source of Donations

TP of Jhansi, a pensioner and an old devotee of Papa, had recently been in trouble on account of a criminal case filed against him. He was reported to be very miserly. He had been doing private banking business, lending money on security at high rate of interest, and by that means earning a good deal of money. When Papa went to Jhansi and stayed with him, people used to ask him, ‘How is that you, a saint, happen to be the guest of such

a miser who is an exacting money-lender?' At this question, Papa said, he would laugh, so also TP. Six or seven months ago TP lent some money on the security of two or three bicycles. It was later found that the bicycles were stolen properties and the police arrested him for possessing them. He was in police lock-up for a few days. He had now been released on bail and the case was still going on. He was asking for blessings from Papa. There was a postcard from him and Papa was talking about it to Mataji.

Mataji: Most of the money we receive is earned by the donors not in a proper and good way, some in the black market, some by heavy interest and some by exploiting the poor in other ways.

Papa: May be. But if we decide not to have anything to do with things which have come from such sources, Ramdas can tell you, everybody here will have to starve. First you have to stop getting the provisions. The provision merchant is a pucca black-marketer, and even the hay we purchase for cattle passes through the black-market.

Mataji did not wish to continue the talk and went away.

S: Papa, it is true we cannot stop black-marketing. But at least Papa's devotees should not engage themselves in it.

Papa: Who is a devotee and who is not a devotee? Even the provision merchant claims to be a

devotee. The argument of these people is that they are children and they consider God as mother. The children get themselves dirty by rolling in the filth of *maya* and go to the mother. Is it not the mother's duty to clean the children? When She makes them play in filth, it is Her duty to clean them also.

S: The mother once or twice tolerates, but surely the third time gives such a beating that the child never again gets near filth.

There was a peal of laughter.

Papa: Perhaps TP is getting the beating now - very severe beating too!

August 18, 1951

26. Sannyas

7.30 a.m. Papa was sitting in the ashram hall tuning the radio. A *Sadhu* sitting in front of him requested Papa to initiate him into the order of *sannyas*, to which Papa replied: "No. Ramdas does not initiate anybody into *sannyas*. He himself was not initiated by any one. He got the call from within and in obedience to that call, he took *sannyas* himself. His advice to all who come to him is that they may themselves take *sannyas* similarly, when they feel strongly the call from within."

9.30 a.m. Papa went to see the new hospital building under construction. On the way, his foot struck against a sharp stone and received a small

cut. S informed Mataji about it and requested Ashram hospital nurse, Saraswati, to apply some medicine. Later on, when Papa was about to rest, S enquired about the cut. Papa said: "You see, you asked Saraswati to apply the medicine; when Ramdas came out of the bathroom she asked Ramdas to show her where the injury was. Ramdas was unable to find out on which leg it was - left or right. She examined both the legs and found that it was on the left leg and applied the medicine."

In the afternoon, Papa was reading the 'Kathopanishad' by himself. When S went near him, Papa said: "Many sages lived in our country ages ago without taking formal *sannyas*. Vasishta, Janaka and others were such *jnanis*. *Sannyas*, no doubt, helps spiritual progress. But it should be remembered that *sannyas* is not the end. One has to go beyond *sannyas*."

27. Evil, the Creation of the Ignorant Mind

Continuing, he said: "The question is generally asked why there should be so much evil in the world when there is God, who is all love and compassion. But Ramdas does not see evil anywhere. Everywhere it is He and nothing but He. Everything is done by Him alone and He does everything only for good. The so-called evil is not evil. Good cannot come out of evil. Good comes only out of good. So, there is no evil in the world. Evil is only the creation of the ignorant mind.

“The *jnanis* say that the whole world is but the creation of the mind. For one whose mind is absolutely still, the world does not exist. But this is the view of the *jnanis*. The *bhaktas* do not care whether the world is real or otherwise. Whatever they see they take as nothing but the manifestation of their Beloved Lord.”

“Coming back to the point that good alone comes out of even the so-called evil, let us look at our own present-day national affairs. What Pakistan does for India may apparently seem to be a great evil. But you will see in course of time that good alone will come out of it. By the threats of war that Pakistan is holding out, all parties and communities in India are coming closer and closer together. Thus, strong and powerful national unity is developed here. So, Pakistan's threats cannot be considered as evil. It is really good, though it may apparently look otherwise. In spite of the war-cries in Pakistan, Ramdas does not think that there will be a war between Pakistan and India. There cannot be.”

28. Mataji - A Pucca Communist

In the evening, Papa went out to see the houses which had been newly built by the ashram for the workers. Ramkishor and S followed him. Two houses were ready for occupation. They looked nice, well-planned and well-finished. They were quite spacious with proper arrangements for kitchen, store-room, bath etc. Papa remarked that

they were very good. He said: "Mataji has built bungalows for the workers. But we do not know how well they will be used and kept by them. She wants to build houses for all the workers. What do you think of her? Hers' is pucca communism without its evils. She believes in giving equal treatment and equal comforts to all, without making any distinction of caste, creed, wealth or social position and she puts her ideal into practice. Let her have her own way."

In those days, to avoid exposure to cold, a piece of flannel used to be wound round Papa's waist in the evening. At 5.30 p.m. seeing the flannel lying near him on the stool, S asked, "Papa, have you abandoned this?"

Papa: Yes, these upadhis have to be given up, one by one. Why, not only these – finally, this body also will be abandoned. So, let us see if Ramdas can manage without the flannel today.

Just before bedtime S gave Papa, as usual, a piece of sugar candy, when Papa asked: "Who brought this sugar candy? Was it the mother who came this evening?" S answered, "Yes". Then Papa said: "She is, indeed, a good mother. Let her come again and again!" When she came, Ramdas was looking to see if she had anything with her. He was so happy when she took out a packet and gave Ramdas a piece of sugar candy.

At this there was loud laughter among the devotees present.

When Papa lay down on the bed, Motiben and S began to massage his body. Motiben remarked: "Nowadays, Papa is very careful in adjusting the quantity of his food. He is always hesitating to eat, perhaps he is afraid of the weighing machine!". Papa's weight was being taken every Monday. Those few weeks his weight had been on the increase and he was trying to bring it down to one hundred and fifteen pounds as suggested by the doctors.

Papa: This weighing business and urine test (for sugar on account of diabetic trouble) should be stopped. Mahatma Gandhi has said that we should take food like medicine. We have to adjust our daily food in such a way that we take only what is required.

29. Mataji's Old Relations - New Perspective

Mataji was in the room in the bhajan-hall. Prem Singh's wife and her sister, who had come from Sholapur, requested her to show them the ashram photo albums. So, Mataji took all the albums out and began showing them one by one. The sisters were eagerly looking at and questioning Mataji about the photographs. In one of the albums there was a picture taken in Bombay in 1949, of Mataji with her eldest son Ganesh, his daughter and Mataji's two brothers. When S pointed out to that photo and asked if it was not Ganesh, the attention of the sisters too was drawn to it. Then they asked Mataji to explain who they all were in that picture. In the same room there was a

photograph on the wall, taken many years ago, of Mataji and her husband. Pointing to that she said: "Look at the woman sitting there. This (showing Ganesh's picture in the album) is that woman's son. The other two in this picture (her brothers) are this boy's uncles." S had a hearty laugh over the way Mataji was describing her own son and brothers to the ladies. Looking at S, Mataji said, "Some people seem to think that I am now keeping Ganesh and Narayan at a distance. That is wrong. What difference is there to me now between them and others? I would never keep them away. They are loved by me as much as others are."

Chapter 4

Anandashram, August 19, 1951

30. *Karma Affects All*

Prem Singh and party, who had been in the ashram for over two months, left this morning. The party took their leave of Papa and Mataji and got into the cart. But Prem Singh walked. Reaching the gate, he made a *dandavat namaskar* towards the ashram bhajan-hall. Then again, having gone a few yards, he made another, and yet another after going a few more yards before reaching the Vidyalaya building. Then he was out of sight and nobody knew how many more *dandavats* he did before he reached the railway station!

It was 2 p.m. Papa was sitting in the bhajan-hall. Iqbal Nath, Natverlal Shah and S were sitting in front of him.

Papa (to Iqbal Nath): Which religious book is most popular in Kashmir?

Iqbal Nath: The *Bhagavad Gita*.

Papa: That is true of all places. The teachings of the *Gita* are universal. One who is engaged in *karma* (action) is affected by it; so also, the one who has renounced all *karmas*. However, detached one may live in the world, one is likely to be affected. So, if those who have renounced and those who have not renounced are both affected, why not one engages

oneself in work and worry rather than do nothing and worry? Even great saints and *avatars*, when moving in the world, were affected by it. But in their case the disturbance is only like a wave that comes and goes without touching them inwardly. During the *Mahabharata* war, Sri Krishna got angry when challenged by Bhishma. Buddha was filled with sorrow when he saw the miseries of the world. Christ flogged the money-lenders. So, when you are in the world you have to face all kinds of things.

31. Ramdas on his Wandering Days - Avoid Worldly Contacts

See our own case. Mataji is engaged in so much activity. She is in fact fed up with it. She did so much for these people around her, hoping that they would improve and progress. But she has been completely disillusioned now. She says we made a great blunder in starting this ashram. We could have lived in forests and caves and begged for our food. In fact, Ramdas was for that kind of life. When we left Kasaragod, Ramdas would have gone away wandering. But Mataji would not leave him. She wanted to follow him wherever he went.

When Ramdas took to a wandering life, he was thoroughly reckless. He would stay anywhere and everywhere. He would go without food for days together. When he was fasting, how could his companion eat? God gave Ramdas great power of endurance.

When Ramdas was in Srinagar, he went and occupied the cave in the Sankaracharya hill. Knowing this, the devotees were so upset that they came and pressed Ramdas to come down from the hill. Ramdas did not listen to them. Winter was fast approaching. Ramdas stayed on there for a few days. During his stay, he did not even use water for any purpose. Caves and mountains had a great fascination for him. If Mataji were to follow Ramdas, it would be very difficult for her. Of course, she does not mind suffering. She has conquered death and is not afraid of anything. But, her health would have been shattered to pieces. Now, considering the amount of work she is doing here, perhaps it would have been better to wander and live in the forests.

S: When Papa was wandering, as described in the book '*In the Vision of God*', was not Papa affected by the world?

Papa: Then, Ramdas had very little contact with the world. Most of the time he spent in the company of *sadhus*. Saints are like snake-charmers who, having controlled the cobra, can play with it. Worldly influences do not disturb their inner tranquility. Their spiritual attainments do not permit the poison of worldliness to enter into their minds. But a *sadhaka* who is still struggling to attain the goal must avoid all worldly contacts. He must be very careful, and devote all his energy to his *sadhana*. Some advanced *sadhakas*, feeling

that they are strong enough, engage themselves in worldly activities and often fall. Before one is firmly established in the Reality one should not get into the world-current, which is apt to carry him away. Only those who are ever conscious of the Reality can see the world as the *lila* of the Lord. So long as the ego-sense persists, one cannot see the world as God's *lila*.

9.30 p.m. When the usual reading of the '*Bhagavata*' was over, Papa said: "It is said that those who hear the '*Bhagavata*' will go to *Vaikunta*. How many of you here would like to go? But remember, the she-buffalo has now delivered a calf. She will be yielding a lot of milk and you can take thick milk and curds. How can you go now? Let Lord Vishnu wait for some time. Is it not? Of course, by that time another buffalo will have delivered a calf, and this will go on and on, so that Vishnu will have to wait for you indefinitely!

All present roared with laughter.

August 21, 1951

32. Renunciation, No Joke

7.45 a.m. A young man from Palghat arrived at the ashram and was brought straight to the dining-hall for breakfast. He was asked to have a wash before taking coffee. A few minutes afterwards, a loud cry was heard. The young man was seen then prostrating before Mataji and was weeping and sobbing like a child. Mataji directed him to go to

Papa, who was in the bhajan-hall. The moment he saw Papa, he started again crying and sobbing and fell at Papa's feet. He was saying something which, though not clearly audible, indicated that he had no peace of mind.

Papa: Take *Ram Nam*, everything will be all right. It is no use merely weeping. Take *Ram Nam* in earnest.

He slowly calmed down and was taken to the dining-hall for breakfast. After the morning bhajan, Papa gave him the *Ram-Mantra*. In the evening, he had a talk with Papa, whom he requested for permission to stay on in the ashram.

Papa: That is not advisable. Ramdas has given you *Ram-Mantra*. Now you may go home and repeat the *Mantra*.

Young man: Swamiji, I do not like to return home. My wife and children have enough money to carry on without my help. I want to take *sannyas* and need your advice in the matter.

Papa: If you are determined to devote all your time to God, then you may go to a place like Rishikesh and do intense *sadhana*.

Young man: Who will give me food there?

Papa: One who is earnest in quest of God, will not worry about his food or such matters. He will rely entirely on God.

Young man: Swamiji, please tell me if I am fit for it.

Papa: One who is really fit will never put such a question. The very question shows that you are not yet ready.

Papa continued: “Complete renunciation is not a joke. It is like climbing up a coconut tree and letting off your hands. You have to give up everything - money, position, name, relations, friends etc., and rely on God entirely. There are people who take *sannyas*, keeping a decent bank balance or having a good pension. What kind of renunciation is it? They simply say they do not depend upon anybody, while in truth they depend upon their assets and not on God. If they happen to hear about the crash of any bank, their mind at once turns in anxiety to their deposit. How can they progress? Spiritual *sadhana* is not easy. It is as hard and perilous as walking on a razor's edge.”

Young man: Swamiji, you are Ram Himself. You should guide me. You surely know if I am fit or not.

Papa: Ram is also within you. It is on Ram within that you have to depend and not on anyone outside. If you depend on the guidance of Ramdas, how long can you have such a guidance from without? It will be, say, for a day or two. After that, what will you do? So, depend on Ram within you.

33. Temples - Ancient and Modern

That day, the talk before bedtime was about the ancient and modern temples. Papa remarked: “See how nice and holy the ancient temples are!

The whole atmosphere there is surcharged with spirituality. The moment you enter them you feel thrills. But the modern temples have not that life in them. During one of his tours Ramdas visited a temple. Lakhs of rupees were spent on it. But the spiritual atmosphere was lacking. Look at the ancient temples. Great men built them. They did not want the temples to be known by the names of the persons who built them. Nowadays, the merchants make a lot of money and spend lakhs on such pious acts to wash their sins away. They cannot wash sins off this way. But if they give all they possess in charity and stop earning money in bad ways, they will surely be free of their sins. Remember, all their money must be spent for the service of God.”

August 28, 1951

34. The Bond of Affection between Papa and Ramkishor

After his usual evening rounds to the Vidyalaya and hospital, Papa had just returned. Before entering the bhajan-hall, he saw Ramkishor running about with his friends in the *maidan* just outside the ashram. Papa told S, who was with him: “See that boy, how he runs! By the time he returns home he is completely tired. Though he is there playing about, his mind is definitely on Ramdas because Ramdas is also thinking of him. His love for Ramdas is so great. He does not care for his mother. He can live away from her, but

not from Ramdas. What attachment, what love! He must have had very close connection with Ramdas in his previous births and that too not of an ordinary type, but an extraordinary, strong spiritual connection. Otherwise, what relation is there between us? Considering his case, Ramdas often thinks how Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa loved Rakhal. When Rakhal could not be seen one day, Paramahansa was not feeling happy. He found future greatness in Rakhal. So also, Ramdas finds future greatness in this boy.”

35. Modes of Imparting Spiritual Power

Swami Ramachandrananda Saraswati, a great devotee of Sri Sai Baba, came to the ashram at 6 p.m. He used to come here often, being a great admirer of Papa. After paying his respects to Papa, he told S that while in Shirdi (where rests the *Samadhi* of Sri Sai Baba) he got a message from Sri Sai Baba to visit Anandashram and, so he took the earliest opportunity to have darshan of Papa.

After the usual reading of ‘*Srimad Bhagavata*’ at night, Swami Ramachandrananda was sitting near Papa, conversing with him.

Papa: Did you go to Rishikesh recently?

Swami: Yes, Papa, I was there in May last. I went to Badri also.

Papa: How many times have you been to Badri?

Swami: Twice, Papa.

Papa: A devotee going Badri is pulled towards it again and again. Such is the charm of the Himalayas!

Swami: Papa, this is also Badri! You are the Badri Narayana here! At Badrinath, before the deity we can only meditate. But here, before you, we can also talk!

Papa: Which do you like - talking or meditating?

Swami: Both.

Papa: Ramdas is nowadays talking rather too much. Of course, you know Ramdas usually does not give lectures. Spiritual power is rarely imparted through talks or lectures. More is done through touch, look and thought - through silent communion. In ancient days, our rishis never lectured to large audiences. Talks about high spiritual matters to a large lay audience are practically useless. A large number of them are not able to grasp the subject. That was why the rishis taught only a few select disciples who lived intimately with them. For the awakening of God-consciousness, even talking is not essential. The saint simply looks at a person, or touches him, or thinks of him, and the thing is done. The first method is compared to that of a fish that hatches its eggs by simply gazing intently at them; the second to that of a bird sitting on her eggs to hatch them, and the third to that of a tortoise that only thinks of her eggs and hatches them.

Swami: Papa, whenever you are free I want some time with you.

Papa: Yes, you can talk to Ramdas any time you like.

Swami: When I am in your presence, I do not wish to talk at all. Darshan satisfies me and it gives me all the joy I need.

August 29, 1951

36. God Hungers for Love - Story of a Butcher-Bhakta

The usual reading from *'The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna'* was over at 3 p.m. There were some ashramites and visitors in the bhajan-hall. After taking coffee that was brought to him, Papa said to the devotees: "Ramdas will tell you a story, listen. Once there was a butcher in a small town. He was a great bhakta. Even when plying his trade, he used to take God's Name mentally and in course of time, he found it hard to kill animals. He, therefore, stopped killing. But he had to carry on his business as he had no other means of livelihood. So, he purchased meat and sold the same at a small profit. For weighing the meat, the butcher was using a stone which happened to be a *salagram*, the sanctity of which he had no idea. He did not even remember how the stone came to his hands. He was using it for a long time.

"One day, a *brahmin*, who was passing in front of his shop, chanced to see the butcher placing

the *salagram* on the balance for weighing meat. Naturally, the *brahmin* was surprised. He therefore, asked the butcher to have the stone washed and handed over to him for closer scrutiny. Confirming that it was a *salagram*, he enquired why the butcher used such a sacred stone for weighing meat. The innocent butcher replied that he did not know anything about a *salagram* or its sanctity. The *brahmin* then explained to him that *salagram* was a sacred thing to be worshipped daily with flowers, sandal paste etc. The *brahmin* also requested for permission to take the *salagram* with him, so that it could be worshipped along with the other deities in his house. The butcher readily agreed.

“The *brahmin* took it home and kept it in his pooja-room with the other images of God he had and carried on the worship as usual, with elaborate rituals and costly offering of food etc. But the deity embodied in the *salagram* did not like the change. It missed in the *brahmin*'s house the spirit of true love and devotion which it found in the butcher's shop. Unable to bear the loveless worship and company of the *brahmin* any longer, the deity appeared to him in a dream and said: ‘Why have you brought me here? I was very happy with the butcher, who is a true devotee. He was always chanting my holy names and now and then putting me gently on the balance with his own hand. Oh, what a soft had he has! His touch is like a warm embrace! His heart is full of prem! He was talking with his customers mostly about my

glories and praising me and repeating my name always. But here, for want of love and devotion, I am not at all happy, though you give me rich offerings and *panchamrita abhisheka* and perform elaborate *pooja*. Please take me back to the butcher so that I can again be happy’.”

After finishing the story Papa added: “God is hungry only for love. He is not satisfied with mere religious forms and ceremonial worship. Pure love and devotion alone will satisfy Him.”

37. *Daya vs. Maya*

In the evening, Papa went for a walk followed by S. In the course of conversation about the distinction between worldly and divine love, Papa said; “Sri Ramakrishna loved Hriday who attended on him for many years and who happened to be a relation of his. He used to say that *maya* is love towards one's own relations, which brings about attachment and bondage. *Daya* is love for all beings, irrespective of any bodily affinities or relationships. He used to ask his devotee if his love for Hriday was pure or tainted, if it was *daya* or *maya*.”

S: How could it be *maya* in his case? Sri Ramakrishna had severed himself from all narrow domestic ties and merged himself in the ocean of divine love, which embraced the whole universe. Hriday was therefore to him only one in the wider circle. He loved him only as he loved anybody else.

Papa: That is exactly the point. Sri Ramakrishna would have loved Hriday even if he were not a relation. In fact, he loved Rakhai more. And Rakhai was not related to him by ties of blood. So, relation or no relation was not at all the consideration which weighed with Sri Ramakrishna. He loved those who were pure-hearted and devoted to God. His love was therefore *daya* and not *maya*.

September 2, 1951

38. Renunciation, Only a Means

Early in the morning, D.D.Joshi of Cannanore arrived at the ashram with a batch of devotees and a *sannyasi* friend of his who had come from Rishikesh. Papa was in the bhajan-hall. Entering the hall, the party paid their respects to Papa, and after a few minutes, were taken to the dining-hall for tea. Papa also accompanied them and sat with them for coffee. From the dining-hall they all went to the house where the visitors were to stay. There, in the central hall, Papa sat on the floor and the devotees sat around him. The *sannyasi* friend requested Papa to say a few words.

Papa: Ramdas is only a child before you. He likes to listen more than to talk. So, let him have the joy of hearing you. Will you please talk on something?

Sannyasi: Swamiji, why do you say so? What are we before you? We are but you children. Still the father likes to hear the children prattle.

With this preface he talked for over half an hour on *jnana*.

After the evening bhajan, Joshiji and other devotees were sitting before Papa in the bhajan-hall. Joshiji had certain doubts. He asked Papa about renunciation. Joshiji had been a follower on the path of *Bhakti*, trying his best to lead the life of a true householder. He was not at first assailed by doubts as to the efficacy of his path. But, after he came in contact with that *sannyasi*-friend and heard his talk on *jnana* yoga, he was beginning to feel disturbed. He wanted to get the matter cleared up, and requested Papa to remove his lingering doubts.

Papa: Never think that you are the perishable body. Always identify yourself with the Spirit, the imperishable, changeless *Atman*. When you fully realise that you are the *Atman* and not the body - which you can do only after practicing long dissociation from the body - you will not be bound by anything. You are then free. As a true householder, you are to consider that the whole of your property, your wife and children, belong to God and that you are only His agent, entrusted by Him with the task of running the household. This is the right spirit in which a householder should carry on his duties. If you are able to adopt this attitude, why should you have to become a *sannyasi*? Is not everyone in your household verily the manifestation of *Brahman*? You cannot easily

give up the world as mere illusion. As long as the ego-sense is alive in you, the world is real to you. Having the body-idea you cannot say, 'I am *Brahman*.' After all, renunciation is only a means to an end. You have ultimately to realise the whole universe as the manifestation of the Lord, as a part of His *lila*. Through *Bhakti* you attain *jnana*, and after attaining *jnana*, you have to go still beyond that to what is called *Parabhakti*. A mere *jnani* says the whole universe is an illusion. But one who has reached the plane of *Parabhakti* sees the whole universe as *Brahman*. Then he does not call it an illusion, but as the Lord's *lila*. Though at the same time, he knows the play to be impermanent and transitory and so does not get entangled in it.

So, if a householder is able to lead a purely detached life, with the full consciousness that *Brahman* alone is real, and that the whole universe, including his own family and possessions, are nothing but manifestations of God, he will realise Him. There is no need for such a one to renounce the family, as he is fully aware of the impermanence of the world and is not deceived by this passing show. He is absolutely detached and so, is happy in all conditions. Whether his relations live or die, whether his business fails or flourishes, he ever remains happy and cheerful, being firmly established in the consciousness of the divine.

September 3, 1951

**39. *Jnana* Born of *Bhakti*
Sankara not Properly Understood
Sadhana for Householders**

It was about 7 o'clock in the morning. Joshiji was sitting in front of Papa when S entered the bhajan-hall. Joshiji was continuing yesterday's discussion with Papa on *Jnana*.

Papa said: “*Jnana* is born in the womb of *Bhakti* and protected by *Bhakti*. The *jnanis* say that the universe is an illusion. When Ramdas was once in Mount Abu, he was taken to a mahatma living there known as Swami Kaivalyananda. Going near the mahatma, Ramdas prostrated before him. The latter sprang up and asked Ramdas, 'To whom are you prostrating?' Ramdas replied, 'Ramdas is prostrating to Ram.' He asked again, 'Are you not the same Ram?' Ramdas said, 'Yes, Ram is in Ramdas also. He knows he is one with Ram, but at the same time, he wants to be His child and prostrate to Him as a child does to its mother.' Swami Kaivalyananada said, 'Oh that is all false. The whole universe is an illusion. There is only one, no two'.”

Papa resumed the thread of his talk: “To attain the highest realisation, one need not necessarily reject the world as an illusion. It may be that for some time when the mind is fully drawn within,

the *sadhaka* feels that *Brahman* alone is real and the whole world is unreal. But, after this inner experience, he realises that what he once rejected as unreal is only an expression or manifestation of the Real. There were many *bhaktas* like Saint Tukaram, Eknath and others who had attained the highest realisation through the path of *Bhakti* alone. They never had to reject the world as unreal.

“A *sadhaka* on the path of *jnana* might be able to consider the world as illusion for some time by the withdrawal of the mind inwards. But the moment the mind is externalised, diversities are again observed, and the inner conflict will rise up. But a *sadhaka* on the *Bhakti* path goes on joyously singing the sweet name of the Lord, rejecting nothing and accepting everything as the very embodiment of his Beloved. So, his *sadhana* itself is turned into a *sadhya*. That is, the means becomes the end. The *bhakta* finds so much joy in his *sadhana* that even after attaining his goal, he likes to continue his *sadhana*; if possible keeping up his individuality, just for the joy of it.

“Sri Sankara was, no doubt, a great *advaitin*, who proclaimed that *Brahman* alone is real. But he admitted that the manifest and the unmanifest are both *Brahman*. He also established various temples and mutts, wrote many *stotras* glorifying the Divine Mother, and also composed songs like *Bhaja Govindam* which lay stress on the value

of *Bhakti*. These show that he was not a mere *jnani*, but had attained the highest stage of *Parabhakti*. Sri Sankara is not properly understood nowadays.

“The most natural and easy way of approach to God is through *Bhakti*. Love begins to manifest itself in us from our very childhood. The child loves and is deeply devoted to its mother and father. As he grows up, his circle of love is gradually widened, and he becomes attached to friends and relations, besides his family members. This love and devotion to mother, father etc., has only to be purified and directed towards God. Thus, we should look upon Him alone as mother, father, friend etc. This is a natural and easy process. We start from duality and end in unity.

“The easiest path is to take the name of God. Love Him and sing His sweet name. You need not know anything more. You need not study any philosophy. Ever remembering Him, and with His sweet name on your tongue, you can walk on the path blissfully. It matters not whether the world is believed to be real or unreal. For the devotee, everything is but the form of his Beloved.”

It was evening. Papa was sitting in the open, outside the bhajan-hall. Joshiji and a few members of his party were sitting in front of him. They were about to leave and asked Papa for a message.

Papa said: “You are all householders. The best *sadhana* for you is to repeat *Ram Nam* constantly. Always do your work remembering God, who is dwelling within you. As Sri Ramakrishna puts it, engage one hand of yours in your work and with the other hold on to the feet of the Lord. After the work is over, place both the hands on the Lord's feet. Your mind must always be fixed on God. The mind has a natural tendency to wander. But wherever the mind goes, try to see God there. It cannot go where God is not, because God is everywhere. By such practice the mind will gradually be purified and trained to stay always on God. We should view the world as a drama, as a *lila* of God. By being ever conscious of the Eternal, the all-pervading Reality, we should at the same time play our parts in the world-drama. We should be detached witnesses of our own actions and also of the world-play. We have to take care not to get attached to the world of diversity, to this passing show. Then only we can enjoy the play.”

Joshiji and party, including the Rishikesh-*sannyasi*, left the ashram after taking prasad around 7 o'clock.

Chapter 5

Anandashram, September 5, 1951

40. *Ganesh Pooja*

After midday meal, Papa was resting. Mataji, standing near his cot, was fanning him. Motiben and S were massaging his body.

Mataji asked S: “Where is Natverlal?”

S: He must have gone to Anna's (T. Bhavanishankar Rao's) house.

Sri Bhavanishankar Rao was an old devotee of the ashram. After retirement from Government service, he lived in his house near the ashram. His wife, Lakshmi Devi was Papa's sister. Both the husband and the wife were greatly devoted to Papa. God made them instruments to help Papa in the construction of this ashram. They were celebrating *Vinayaka Chaturthi* that day and had invited, among many ashramites, Natverlal Shah also, for the feast at their house.

Mataji: Natverlal does not seem to be well nowadays. What is the matter? Do you know?

S: There is nothing wrong with him as far as I know.

Papa (to Mataji): Ramdas asked Natverlal yesterday whether he would like to go away or stay on, when we are away from the ashram on tour. He replied,

‘As you suggest’. He seems to be quite happy here. There is nothing to worry him. His mind is at peace.

In the evening Papa started to go out earlier than usual. He called S and told him: “Ramdas is going to Anna's house to see the image of Ganapati. Amma (Lakshmi Devi) has requested Ramdas to go there in the evening.”

So, Papa, Ramkishor, S and some children went together to Anna's house. Papa spent a few minutes there, entered the pooja-room, and saw the image of Ganapati. Anna and all members of the family prostrated one by one before Papa. Lakshmi Devi offered various kinds of sweets to Papa and others who had accompanied him.

September 6, 1951

41. Setbacks in *Sadhana*

It was about 10 o'clock in the morning. Papa was sitting in the veranda of the building behind the bhajan-hall. Talking about *sadhana*, he said to S: “Without *Vairagya* one cannot properly derive benefit from *Ram Nam*. Taken with intense *Vairagya* and faith, the *Guru-Mantra* produces wonderful results. By constant repetition of *Ram Nam*, training the mind to dwell on God always, and by being conscious of Him as the all-pervading Reality, as well as by *Satsang*, the *sadhaka* can go beyond the *dvandvas*. *Bhakti* is a safe path, though setbacks are inevitable here also. If any disturbance is caused, the aspirant is apt to

get upset, feeling that he has fallen. But such temporary setbacks can be remedied by going to his teacher and explaining everything. Learning the cause of the setback from his *Guru*, he returns and resumes his practice with greater zeal. At such times, he should get away from the busy world and go into solitude to practice intense *sadhana*. Thus, setbacks prove helpful to drive the mind inwards and to do *sadhana* with redoubled vigour.”

It was noon. Papa was sitting on his cot and was about to take his midday rest. Mataji was sitting near the cot, making flower garlands. Natverlal Shah and S were standing by their side.

Mataji (to Natverlal): Yesterday Papa said that you are a good man.

Natverlal kept quiet. Then Papa added: “By saying to his face that he is a good man, he is not spoiled. But there are certain people who, by such remarks, get so puffed up that they seem to burst.”

All laughed.

Mataji was looking at Natverlal. She noticed that his dhoti was not well washed. She asked him: “Did you not use soap to wash your dhoti? Have you not got soap with you?”

Natverlal: I have soap, but I did not use it. When a *sadhu* came the other day, and asked you for some money for constructing a Krishna *Mandir*, you asked him to make Krishna's *Mandir* first in his own heart before building it outside. So, I must try to clean my inside first.