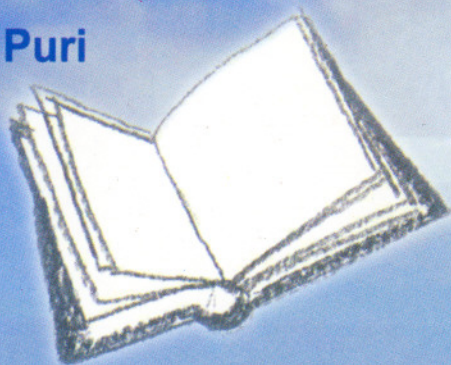


Stories for Inspiration

Swami Shantananda Puri



STORIES FOR INSPIRATION

Sri Swami Shantananda Puri

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STORIES FOR INSPIRATION – A collection of interesting and spiritually elevating stories of faith, humanity, God’s Love etc.,

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SAMARPAN

*This Book is dedicated with veneration
to the Lotus Feet of my revered Guru*

Swami Purushottamanandaji Maharaj

of Vasishtha Guha, U.P., Himalayas,

*but for whose infinite Compassion
I would not have been able to formulate
my thoughts and put them down
in this book*

and

to the welfare of Suffering Humanity.

– Swami Shantananda Puri

PREFACE

Every day's news bears evidence to the fact that cases of violence, moral turpitude, corruption, misappropriation of public funds etc. have become rampant at all levels from the ministers to a petty peon. There is indiscipline, unruly behaviour and violence among students too in all educational institutions. If this dangerous trend is to be reversed, the children and youth of this country will have to be induced to have basic faith in a benignant Super Power controlling the entire world and introduced to the rich cultural heritage of this country. People should be persuaded to love God and respect Dharma irrespective of the religions to which they may belong. In a very small way, it is hoped that these stories for inspiration will show the way to the present younger generation to have a deep faith in God, to have their moral values strengthened besides providing some entertainment. In the recent days, the stories of Harry Potter with an overwhelming flavour of magic and supernatural powers have become so popular that on the day of release of a new book in the series the boys/girls along with the parents go and stand for hours in long queue in the bookshops in order to procure the copies. Why should we not utilise this trend by dishing out stories involving the magic and miracles of God, compassion, love, truth and faith which will be more healthy and beneficial? With all our traffic safety measures and control, many cases of gruesome traffic accidents happen everyday where young people die miserably. Meditation and regular prayers to the Supreme Power done with firm faith and

conviction are the only possible insurance against all calamities and accidents. I have personally witnessed numerous such instances and a few stories of this nature have been included in this book as in the earlier book 'Stories for Meditation'.

We fondly hope that this book will contribute its mite in awakening the attention of the children and youth towards the higher universal values of life beneficial to the entire mankind.

Our profound gratitude is due to Mrs. Arpana Caur, an internationally renowned Artist of Delhi who has been magnanimous enough to provide us with a beautiful and meaningful design for the cover page of this book.

None of the stories in this book is original. All of them have either been read by me in some books or magazines (like Readers' Digest etc.) many years back or have been heard from my father or other sources. A couple of stories as in serial no.37, 30 & 4 have been adopted from some books of Bhagwan Rajneesh (OSHO). The names of persons in the stories have however been changed.

As usual Sri P. S. Venkatesh Babu of Omkar Offset Printers ably assisted by Sri B. Nagendra has provided us with his loving service in printing this book in a very elegant way. All our readers are highly appreciative of the continued excellent contribution of Sri Babu for over a decade. Our thanks and blessings to him and Sri Nagendra.

- Swami Shantananda Puri

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STORIES FOR INSPIRATION

1. GOD'S COMPASSION

Dr. Shanti was a Gynaecologist of repute in Ludhiana. Once she had to go on tour to Roorkee (U.P.) and stayed in a hotel for a night. That night the manager of the hotel woke her up at midnight and told her that a pregnant woman in the neighbouring charity house (Dharamsala) was in severe labour pains and was in need of urgent medical help. When the doctor went and examined that woman, she found that the child which was struggling to come out of the womb had no legs and it had only two small stumps of flesh projecting from the waist downwards. The woman was dressed in tattered rags and had very few possessions. Dr. Shanti was moved to compassion and pondered for a few minutes: "If I deliver the crippled child alive, it will only be a lifelong liability for this

beggar woman. I can easily throttle the neck of the child with the forceps and declare that the child was born dead. At the most, the woman may be subject to grief temporarily.” On second thought it flashed in her mind: “Who am I to play with the life of the child? I am sure that God has His own reasons for bringing a crippled child into this world. What all He does is for the ultimate good of mankind. Nobody can claim to be more compassionate and merciful than God Himself. May His Will be done.” She got the child delivered safely. Even though the Manager of her Hotel came forward to pay some fees, she waived it off and went back to her home.

Years rolled by; Dr. Shanti retired from service and settled down with her family at Delhi. One day she was forced by her granddaughter to escort the latter to an entertainment programme where one Mr. Robin was to entertain the audience with jokes, humorous stories, mimicry etc. Mr. Robin was a brilliant looking attractive young man, twenty-five years old. He was brought in a wheel-chair as he had no legs. He was accompanied by a white-haired old lady

dressed in a white sari. The performance was excellent and gripping. Mr. Robin had an international reputation for his wit, humour etc. and he had been the talk of the town at Delhi for months. He imitated famous actors like Amitabh Bachchan and Rajnikant and also Ministers and other politicians so well that the entire hall was resounding with applause. The children rolled with laughter at Robin's humorous stories which were all original. Nobody knew how quickly the three hours of entertainment were over. Dr. Shanti had never seen the like of it in her entire life.

Dr. Shanti purchased a nice bouquet from outside the hall and went backstage to congratulate Robin in person. While she was talking to Robin, suddenly the old lady by the latter's side fell at the doctor's feet and exclaimed bursting with tears: "Doctor Madam, this Robin is my son and it was you who gifted him to me. Don't you recollect that night twenty-five years back at Roorkee when you attended on me and got this boy delivered? He owes his life to you. Please bless him." Shanti was able to recollect the incidents of that night. She was stunned. When she returned to

her home she fell prostrate before the picture of Sri Ram kept in her Puja Room and said: “Lord, you only prevented me that night from putting an end to the child’s life in my arrogance of a misplaced compassion. If I had perpetrated that crime, how many children of the world would have been deprived of the hours of pleasure which Robin is now able to provide and how many adults would have been deprived of the occasions to forget their world of miseries and sorrows by drowning themselves in the entertainment afforded by him. I am grateful to you, my Lord and I bow again and again before your Will rooted in wisdom, compassion and love for the entire mankind.



2. KRISHNA CAME TO THE HOUSE

Bangaramma was a poor illiterate lady living alone in a small village near Nellore. She was widowed when she was eight years old. She had never gone out of the house in all her seventy five years of age. She was devoted to Lord Krishna and every day did Puja to a small Saligrama (a divine stone which possessed all the divine powers of Lord Krishna). One day she was invited to attend the Bhajan (religious singing on Lord) in a neighbour's house. For the first time she saw in that house a calendar with Krishna's picture in it. She was fascinated with that picture and enquired from her host as to where from she could procure a similar calendar with Krishna's picture. She was told that it was available in shops at Nellore which was 90 kms away from her village. She was downcast as she had never gone by bus, taxi etc. and she was afraid of attempting a trip.

Even after she went home she was only thinking of the Krishna in the calendar. She was weeping at her inability to travel to Nellore. She prayed fervently to Krishna throughout that night and next day too –

“Oh my Krishna, I am a stupid illiterate old lady who is incapable of going to Nellore and finding your address. But you are reputed to be very clever and you know my address. Why don't you come to me?” Next day, in the forenoon, a young boy knocked at her door to enquire whether she had any old newspapers to be sold. When Bangaramma opened the door, she found lying in the basket of the boy six calendars – the top one containing Krishna's picture. In answer to her enquiry the boy showed her all the six old calendars each one containing different pictures of Lord Krishna and each one excelling the other in its beauty. He said – “All these unwanted old calendars have been dumped on me by a lady in the next street. I have no use for them. If you want you can take all of them free.” Bangaramma was very happy, thanked the boy profusely and took the calendars inside the house. She cried before the Krishna of the calendar – “Krishna, how compassionate and magnanimous you are ! You have yourself come to my house in response to my prayers. How lucky am I? Glory be to you.”

God does respond to the sincere prayers of his devotees.



3. PRAYERS PAY

John was an officer working in the collector's office at Ahmedabad. He had married Martha some twenty-five years back and they were an ideal couple. They had never quarrelled even once in their married life. Everyday in the evening John used to come home with some book or newspaper. Martha used to bring a large jug of tea and while she poured cup after cup of tea, John used to read out to her some juicy portions from either a book or newspaper. This used to go on for 2 hours. One day after the tea was over, John casually called Martha and told her – “Martha, I am very sorry to have to tell you this. I am bored with this life and I want to live in freedom. So I have decided to divorce you. I hope you will have no objection to it.” Martha was too stunned to reply as this proposal for divorce came to her as an unexpected and sudden thunderbolt. She gathered herself up and replied – “John, you know that I have never questioned your decisions. This has come as a surprise. We have been living together in wedlock for more than twenty-five years and as a concession therefor please give me

fifteen days' time more. I assure you that I shall never stand in the way of your wishes." John readily agreed.

The entire night she spent in prayers to the Lord as she felt thoroughly helpless. Now she recollected that for the past two months her husband used to come late at night and go to a separate bedroom for sleeping. There had been no tea sessions. She took it for granted that he must have had a lot of work in office and hence the late-coming. She had been stupidly blind to this slowly widening chasm between her and John. Next day also she spent in prayers imploring the Lord to help and guide her.

She suddenly remembered what her guru had once told her about the visualisation method for achieving a goal. He had said – "Supposing you want to be a millionaire, you just visualise yourself i.e. imagine that you are already a millionaire. Stand before a full-length mirror and assert with confidence some hundred times 'I am a millionaire'. Further, imagine you are sitting in an opulent office room and in front of you there are three or four phones and you are speaking in those phones to your brokers on selling

and purchase of shares worth several lakhs of rupees. One should do it daily.”

It was 5.30 p.m. As in the old normal days she brought a big jug of tea with two tea cups and filled up both the cups. She imagined as if John was reading a book loudly and she was interjecting with appropriate comments and appreciation. She did it for full two hours. She repeated this act of visualisation everyday evening while the entire day time she spent in praying before the Lord. Ten days were over and it was the eleventh evening. At 5.30 p.m. when she brought a jug of tea and cups to the tea-table, to her utter surprise and joy, she found her husband John sitting in his usual place and pouring over the newspaper. She could not believe her own eyes. While they were sipping tea, John, as in old days, began reading out loudly some juicy portions from the newspaper. Everyday since then John began returning from the office in the evening and the life went on as in the earlier days. When fifteen days were over Martha gathered all her courage and asked John after the tea-time, “John, you remember that you were supposed

to ask me some question today.” You may ask. John looked non-plussed and said – “Do not talk in riddles, Martha. I do not remember anything. Tell me what question I was supposed to ask.” Martha replied patiently and inwardly praying to the Lord – “The other day you told me that you wanted a divorce from me and I asked you for fifteen days’ time. Now you can revive that proposal.”

“Oh Martha ! Forget it, I say. It was just a casual thought – call it a temporary aberration of the mind, if you like. I cannot imagine how such a thought could ever have crossed my mind.” Martha, with tears brimming in her eyes, ran to her Puja room, knelt on the ground and thanked the Lord again and again.

In all impossible situations even, if once we pray to the Lord in a helpless surrender, He will never let us down. He is the only safe and guaranteed refuge.



4. A FAIR JUDGEMENT

Bodhidharma was the first Buddhist monk to go to China. He was the honoured guest of King Wu who ruled over a fairly big state in China. The king was astonished to see the high acumen, perspicacity and the unerring capacity for judging situations in their correct perspective of Bodhidharma. He decided to appoint him as a judge in his State as he was so far looking after that onerous task himself. Bodhidharma reminded the king that he had come to China not seeking a job but for propagating the holy teachings of the Buddha. The king refused to relent and the monk was left with no choice but to accept it.

The very first day, a thief was brought before Bodhidharma by the police as he was caught red-handed while stealing some silver vessels in the house of a rich man. The police were also accompanied by the rich owner of the house, whose property the thief tried to steal. The police apprised the Judge in detail about the case of theft and awaited the latter's judgement. After a few routine questions, Bodhidharma

announced that the thief was to be imprisoned in the jail for one year and the owner also to be imprisoned for one full year. Such a judgement had no precedent. The police as also the owner once again explained – “Your Honour, it seems you have not correctly understood the situation. It is the thief who has tried to steal and deserves to be punished. The owner is an innocent victim whose house was broken open by the thief.” The monk smiled and decreed – “I understand the case very well. My judgement stands.” By that time the owner of the stolen property became panicky at this apparently unreasonable judgement and sent word to the king who was his personal friend. The king himself came to Bodhidharma and took pains to explain the case. Bodhidharma retorted – “Your majesty, I can assure you that I have understood the case very well. While I agree that the thief deserves to be punished, this rich man is equally responsible for the theft. He has been living ostentatiously and had accumulated too much of riches which has not only deprived other people of that much of money and things but has also been responsible for tempting the thief to break into his house. My judgement is just

and is based on scriptural injunctions.” The king was aghast and was unable to reply. He only told the monk “From this moment I relieve you of this post of a Judge. You are free to go about my kingdom and propagate the Dhamma.”

It is told in Srimad Bhagavatam that one should accumulate only that much riches as is sufficient to cater for his livelihood. Anybody who accumulates more is a thief and he should certainly be punished¹.



१ यावद् भ्रियेत जठरं तावत् स्वत्वं हि देहिनाम् ।
अधिकं योऽभिमन्येत स स्तेनो दण्डं मर्हति ॥

(Bhagavatam VII-14-8)

5. THE UNEXPECTED DONATION

Swami 'X' was an internationally known Sannyasi who was having a moderately big Ashram in Rishikesh. He was a great saint who had done continuous Sadhana for a number of years. He was also a prolific author of several spiritual books in various languages. One day his personal secretary Swami 'S' sought an urgent audience privately with his Gurudev (Swami X). He told the Gurudev "Swamiji, we have a lot of debts to clear and the creditors are pressing for their money in the most aggressive way by coming and shouting at us in the office. We are having a bad reputation as we owe Rs. 20,000 to the grocery shop, Rs. 20,000 to the printers, Rs. 30,000 to the stationery shop etc. and the debt goes on increasing. The donations we get fall far short of our needs. Something has to be done urgently. The Gurudev replied: "I am sure you have some proposal up your sleeve to redress the situation." sheepishly Swami 'S' said: "Gurudev, we have nearly one hundred swamijis and brahmacharis living permanently in this Ashram who are a drain on our slender economic resources and they are all non-productive in that this Ashram does

not benefit in anyway by their presence. I feel that some of the juniors may be retrenched and sent away so that our burden will be lessened.”

Gurudev: “I do appreciate your wonderful proposal. In your pre-monk days you must have been a government officer. Tell me where the Sannyasis retrenched from here will go and seek shelter.”

Swami ‘S’ – “Your Holiness, when people renounced their home and hearth, they only depended on God and were never given a guarantee that they will be looked after till death in anybody’s Ashram. There are so many Ashrams in Rishikesh and Haridwar and these Sannyasis and brahmacharis may seek refuge in them. Even otherwise there are so many *Annakshetras* where all of them can get their food daily. I have been praying to God in the last few months devoutly to save the Ashram from such a crisis and no response has come. In sheer desperation I had finally to approach Gurudev with my problem.”

Gurudev sighed deeply and said, “this Ashram does not run on my sweet will and pleasure. It runs on the collective Prarabdha (result of actions of past

birth) of all the people who form an integral part of the Ashram. We are doing only God's work and it is He who controls the destiny of this Ashram. This is not a Private Limited Company. It is a Public Unlimited Company. Remember, God is not a bell boy or a servant to come running to you on your pressing a bell. He is the Master and He certainly responds to prayers but in His own time. Continue your prayers to God and let us wait for some six months more. If no solution to the problem dawns on us and the situation deteriorates further we shall close the Ashram. Let us all take our kamandalu and go to other Ashrams or Anna Kshetras where they dole out free bhiksha. Be patient.”

Three months passed and there was no change in the situation. One day when Gurudev came to his office at 9 in the morning, an old gentleman with an unshaven face and wearing a tattered dhoti came and prostrated before him. He told the Swamiji, “your Holiness, I am in dire distress. I want to talk to you privately in confidence for a few minutes. Please grant me this favour”, Swamiji said with all compassion – “You see me this evening at 4 p.m., when I come back here.”

The gentleman went away and was waiting at the door when Gurudev returned at 4 p.m. and saluted him. Gurudev asked his secretary – “Oh Swamiji, this person wants to talk privately. Where can we have privacy?” The secretary pointed out a bench lying on the terrace of the next building. As soon as Gurudev sat on the bench, the gentleman began to weep and tell the former, “Swamiji, I am a great sinner. There is no sin that I have not committed in my life. Please take pity on me and guide me to reach the Lord.” Gurudev immediately called for a tulsi mala and a spiritual diary and gave them to him. He immediately gave him the Mantra of Sri Krishna – the favourite God of that gentleman. Then he said – “Now forget the past. Your slate is clean and you are under my protection. Do the Japa of this mantra sincerely – minimum 10 malas each day. HARI OM.”

Gurudev got up from his seat but the gentleman requested him to wait for 5 more minutes. He signalled to someone who was standing below with a suitcase to come up. He opened the suitcase, took out bundles of currency notes and placing them at the feet of Gurudev said – “Gurudev, here is Rs. 5 lakhs and it is

my dakshina.” Then, Gurudev asked him who he was and what he was doing. The gentleman replied, “Swamiji I am a rich man and belong to Andhra State. My wife died long back and I have given the shares from my property to my two sons. I have earned this money in my business and I entreat you to accept it and bless me.” With a broad smile Gurudev called his secretary and told him: “Your prayers have now been answered by God. Here is Rupees five lakhs. You may pay all the dues of grocery shop, printing press etc. and in addition give them an advance of Rs. 50,000 against future services. Let them know that Gurudev not only takes supplies and services on credit but he is capable of giving them amounts in advance also.”

The gentleman from Andhra walked out in silence. It is said that he was never again seen in that Ashram in any of the subsequent years. Was it perhaps the Leela of God Himself? Who can say?

God may delay answering the prayers of his devotees but never denies.



6. A STRANGE HIGHWAY ROBBERY

One night, Kalu, a thief entered the house of a rich merchant in Bangalore and sneaked into a room where a Godrej locker containing jewellery and cash were kept and the key was left hanging from the key hole. He could see that in the big hall of the drawing room hundreds of people were seated and one brahmin priest was giving discourses on Krishna Leela. The thief's attention was fully drawn to the discourse. The priest was describing the beauty of Brindavan and also of Krishna and Balaram, who were about seven years of age and were walking in the evening alone in the jungle of Brindavan enjoying the breeze and the scenery. Both of them were decked with ornaments of gold, diamonds and other precious stones like emerald etc. from head to foot. All of them would have been worth a few million dollars. Even today both could be seen walking in the jungle all alone. On hearing this, the thief's eyes glinted with greed. If only he could go to Brindavan and loot these two children, it would be sufficient for generations together to live in magnificent luxury. He could renounce his life of a burglar or thief

once for all and settle down to enjoy his life. He abandoned his intention to steal anything from the house of the merchant. He went out and was lying in wait outside impatiently for the priest to come out so that he could get details of the location of the jungle in Brindavan. Soon enough when the priest came out and began to go towards his home, Kalu silently followed him. When they were in a lonely place, the thief ran and caught hold of the priest's hand and enquired in a threatening way "Do not be afraid of me, I shall do no harm to you. Please only tell me, whether what you told about the two chaps Krishna and Balaram daily walking in the jungle of Brindavan every evening is even now really true? If so, tell me where exactly this Brindavan is, how far from here and also the exact place in the jungle where one could meet these boys." The priest was terrified. He confirmed that what all the said was true and the Leela of Krishna goes on always and is called NITYA LEELA.

"If you go on towards north of India, for more than 2000 kms approximately, you will reach the jungle of Brindavan. There will be an intoxicating scent of flowers in the entire jungle and the branches of all the

trees will not grow upwards but bend downwards so that these small boys could pluck edible fruits from the branches without much ado. In the Brindavan you will find in the middle a cluster of Kadamba trees and Krishna is fond of walking in that area. He will be sporting a peacock feather on his head and will be carrying a flute in his hand, studded with gems. I have never gone myself to Brindavan. But all these descriptions have been given in an authentic work called Srimad Bhagavatam whose author Vyasa was a great saint famous for his honesty.” The thief was impressed by the sincerity of the words of the priest. He cautioned the brahmin while parting: “Thank you, holy man. I am straight away going to Brindavan. If what you say is true, I shall meet Krishna and Balaram and loot all their ornaments and jewelleries. I shall come back and deliver half the booty to you as you well deserve it. But in case I find that you have lied to me I shall certainly return, find you out wherever you are and kill you for certain.” The thief walked away and started on his journey by foot to Brindavan. Night and day he had no thoughts except of Brindavan and the two divine children. On many days he could not get food on the way but the very thought of

Krishna whom he was going to loot sustained him. Automatically he began to love the word 'Krishna' and used to repeat it several times in his mind while walking. He began to dream of Krishna and Brindavan while sleeping. He had no idea how far he had walked. Months passed. His shoes had worn out and he had to throw them away. His garments became tattered and torn. He was not aware of his body and its needs. His mind was concentrated on Lord Krishna whose figure he could visualise walking in the jungle of Brindavan, in the manner described by the priest. One day he came to a jungle which had a peculiar intoxicating scent. The moment his eyes alighted on a cluster of trees with white flowers which he thought to be Kadamba was delighted him beyond bounds. He had to wait for the evening to come and in its wake Krishna and Balaram. He was thoroughly exhausted, hungry and thirsty too. He was waiting patiently. It was 5 p.m. and he could hear some footsteps and the jingling sound of the anklets (called paayal). At last he could see brilliant looking children shining like the sun and the moon decked with costly ornaments from head to foot. One of them was darker in colour sporting a peacock feather on his head-gear and a

flute in his hand. What a heart-filling sight! Krishna was looking straight at him and a smile played on his lips. Kalu was fascinated and was unable to take off his eyes. Krishna spoke: “Uncle Kalu, would you like to have all these ornaments? Take them.” So saying, both Krishna and Balaram took off all the ornaments and handed them over. Kalu was stunned – how could these children know his name! He thrust all the ornaments in a big bag he had brought with him. He looked at them and unknowingly tears welled up in his eyes. For one moment he thought of returning all the jewellery and seek the privilege of living permanently with these two children serving them. Krishna addressed him again: “Uncle, your bag has still a lot of space. Tomorrow if you wait at the same time, I shall be coming with more jewels which my mummy will be putting on me. We have a lot more in our house.” Kalu was spell-bound by the bewitching smile and words of Krishna. He could barely nod his head. The next day again Krishna was as good as his words and brought more jewels. Kalu’s bag was full. When he finished strapping the bag around his shoulders he found to his dismay that Krishna and

Balaram had disappeared. Reluctantly Kalu walked back to his village. After months he directly went to the home of the priest and placed before him half the booty as promised earlier. He narrated all the incidents to the priest as they had happened. The priest was incredulous. Krishna lived thousands of years back. How can all this happen. He told Kalu – “I do not want any of these jewels. You keep them all yourself. But please do me one favour. Please lead me to the jungle where you met Krishna. You do not understand. I lied to you. Krishna was God Himself who took that form some three thousand or so years back. It was that God Himself who gave darshan to you. My only goal in this life is to see Him once. How fortunate you are !” Kalu could not understand these words but took the Brahmin with him and again went to the same jungle where he had met the Divine brothers. They waited in the same spot for a week in hunger and thirst. Krishna did not appear. Undaunted Kalu kindled a large fire with the twigs and branches of the trees. He shouted “Krishna, I do not know what you are – God or human. If you do not appear before this Brahmin I am going to immolate myself in this fire.”

Suddenly, Krishna appeared before him decked with all ornaments. Kalu fell prostrate at his feet and begged for forgiveness. The priest was unable to see Krishna. He began to implore God – “Lord, am I such a sinner that you refuse to grant me the vision which you have bestowed on this thief.” Lord Krishna appeared before the eyes of the Brahmin also and told them – “You distribute all your property and money to the poor, come back to the place and spend your life in meditation and prayers. In due course you shall reach me.”

The thief had undergone all the austerities and sadhana which a devotee normally does and disregarding his body's needs, was thinking of Lord constantly. Even though his motive was to loot, as Kalu was one-pointedly thinking of Lord he got the blessings of God. If only you can spend daily half an hour to one hour, whether you are children, students or adults in jobs or in retirement, sitting and thinking of your favourite God and visualising His form you will attain perennial happiness and all your desires will be fulfilled in this life itself.



7. A TRUE LEADER

Scientists at the Rocket launching station in Thumba were in the habit of working for nearly 12 to 18 hours a day. There were about seventy such scientists working on a project. All the scientists were really frustrated due to the pressure of work and the demands of their boss but everyone was loyal to him and did not think of quitting the job.

One day, one scientist came to his boss and told him – “Sir, I have promised to my children that I will take them to the exhibition going on in our township. So I want to leave the office at 5.30 p.m.”

His boss replied – “OK. You are permitted to leave the office early today.” The scientist started working. He continued his work after lunch. As usual he got involved to such an extent that he looked at his watch when he felt he was close to completion. The time was 8.30 p.m.

Suddenly he remembered of the promise he had given to his children. He looked for his boss. He was

not there. Having told him in the morning itself, he closed everything and left for home.

Deep within himself, he was feeling guilty for having disappointed his children. He reached home. Children were not there. His wife alone was sitting in the hall and reading magazines. The situation was explosive any talk would boomerang on him.

His wife asked him, “Would you like to have coffee or shall I straight away serve dinner if you are hungry.” The man replied, “ If you would like to have coffee, I too will have ; but what about children???”

Wife replied, “Don’t you know? Your manager came at 5.15 p.m. and took the children to the exhibition.”

What had really happened was...

The boss who granted him permission was observing him working seriously at 5.00 p.m. He thought to himself, this person will not leave the work, but if he has promised his children they should enjoy the visit to the exhibition. So he took the lead in taking them to exhibition.

The boss may not have to do it every time. But once it is done, loyalty is established.

That is why all the scientists at Thumba continued to work under their boss even though the stress was tremendous.

By the way, can you hazard a guess as to who the boss was???

He was A P J Abdul Kalam (presently the President of India)

It is exactly the same type of techniques that are adopted by the Supreme Lord to ensure undying devotion and unquestionable allegiance of the devotees to Himself.

(Adapted from Internet)



8. UNFAILING RESPONSE OF GOD TO DEVOTEES

Sadhu Vaswani fondly known as Dada was a saint of the highest order during the last century. In 1910, he visited several places in Europe including the world Congress of Religions at Berlin where he addressed large audiences on the inspiring messages of saints and rishis of yore. He awakened in many hearts deep faith and love for God as also sympathy for the suffering and needy humanity.

When his work in Europe was over and it was time to return to India, he found that he did not have enough money to purchase the return ticket to India. He was not in the least dismayed but had a deep faith that Lord would ensure his return to India at the right time.

A day before the steamer was set to sail for India, he was invited by the Maharani of Cooch Behar to have tea with her. She was in England on a holiday trip. In the course of her talk the Maharani made a request to Dada - “ I understand you have completed

your work in Europe and are due to return to India. Will you please permit me to get for you a ticket for return to India by the steamer due to leave in a day or two?”

Dada was not surprised. For any normal man, the incident would look like a miracle. But, for Sadhu Vaswani, this was only an expected normal response of the Divine Mother to the implicit trust placed on her by her loving children. The Divine Mother anticipates and fulfills every need of her trusting children. How wonderful are her ways! Blessed be Her name!

One is reminded of the Lord’s promise in the Bhagavad Gita - “When a devotee worships me by constantly thinking of me at all times, I personally look after the entire welfare of such a devotee.”

(Adapted from Ticket to Heaven by Sri J.P. Vaswani)



9. THE BAFFLING QUESTION

A young man went into a forest for twenty years and did penance (Tapas). At last Lord Brahma the creator appeared before him surrounded by a retinue of many gods and rishis (seer saints). He asked the person to ask for any boon he wanted. The person replied “Revered Brahmaji, Prostrations to you. I only want to know why the world was created i.e. the purpose of this creation.” Brahmaji was astounded as nobody had put this question to him ever before. He told the young man in a lofty tone “This is a great Divine Secret. I cannot reveal it to you in public before all the audience. Come to the corner behind that big Banyan Tree and there I shall divulge the truth.” Brahmaji took him to a lonely corner and upbraided him in whisper – “You stupid fool, you have wasted twenty years of your prime life for getting an answer to a silly question. I myself do not know the purpose of this creation but how can I acknowledge this openly in the presence of so many gods who revere me for my superior wisdom? When once somebody walking in a forest has been pierced

by a poisoned arrow, he should call for help urgently and try to reach a hospital quickly and have treatment. Will it not be foolish on his part if he tarries in the forest and continues analysing as to from which direction the arrow has come, which one of his enemies would have shot the arrow, what poison was used in the arrow etc.? Similarly when once you have been created and put in this world full of dangers and miseries, your duty should be to seek the help of God and try to get out of this world.

“Now when we emerge outside, go out with a broad smile as if your question has been answered to your full satisfaction. Remember, all the gods outside will be watching your face and there is a photographer too waiting to take our photo.”



10. ENOUGH SPACE IN THE GENEROUS HEART

There were three great staunch devotees of Lord Narayana who were contemporaries but were not known to each other. They were all called Alvars and they had written numerous hymns on Lord Narayana (Vishnu) in Tamil which are sung even today in the Vishnu temples in Tamil Nadu. One night, no. 1 Alwar was returning home through a long jungle when it began to rain very heavily and it was pitch dark. Luckily he found a small wooden cabin and lay himself down on a mat lying there. There was just sufficient space for one person to lie down. After a few minutes, no. 2 Alwar was also coming by that jungle path in pouring rain when he saw the wooden cabin. He knocked on the door and enquired very humbly whether he could come inside in order to escape the rain. Alwar no. 1 opened the door and invited him saying – “Please come in. There is sufficient space here for two people to sit down.” Within another few minutes the third Alwar came by that way and knocked at the door of the cabin seeking entry. The inmates opened the door and invited him saying –

“Sir, please come in. There is enough space for three people to stand.” All the three were standing inside the cabin room and began to sing loudly the names of Lord Narayana. They forgot themselves, linked their hands together and were dancing and singing the glories of God with their eyes closed and in an ecstatic mood. Suddenly when they opened their eyes they were delighted by the sight of a divine form standing in their midst and singing with them. The new person was having a diadem set with diamonds on his crown, sparkling ear-rings, a bewitching smile playing on his beautiful face, an azure coloured gem sticking to his chest, wearing a yellow silken garment and a garland of Basil (Tulsi) leaves. It was Lord Narayana Himself. When God saw the Always looking at Him with reverence and delight, He disappeared in the twinkling of a moment. GLORY BE TO LORD NARAYANA.

It is told in the Bible somewhat on the following lines – “Verily I say unto you, when two or three are gathered together in my name, there I am in the midst of them.”



11. BEREAVEMENT SHOULD NOT BE A CAUSE FOR SORROW

A Rabbi (a Jewish Priest) loved his two sons more than his own life. Every evening when he returned home, he would spend all his time conversing and playing with his children and have dinner along with them.

One evening when he returned home, he was puzzled to see that his children were not there to greet him. He felt restless. His wife did not take the trouble of offering any explanation. After a little while, he sat for his evening meals all alone and his wife served him in silence. Suddenly his wife broke the silence by putting a question - "If someone left two precious diamonds in my custody and, after several years, claimed them back from me, would I be right in refusing to return them?"

"What a question ! the Rabbi exclaimed. Go immediately and restore the diamonds to the right owner without delay."

After the Rabbi finished his dinner, his wife took him to the children's bed room where the dead bodies of their two children were lying covered by a white

sheet. Both the children had been run over by a lorry while they were playing in the road that evening. The Rabbi was unable to control his grief and he burst out weeping loudly.

“Why do you grieve?” – asked the wife of the Rabbi. “Did you not tell me that what belongs to a person must be restored to the owner without any delay when demanded?” - The Lord had left these two precious diamonds in our custody. The one who gave them has taken them back. Let us be grateful to God for giving us immense joy all these years in the company of these children.

The Rabbi repeated, “yes, He gave. He has taken. Blessed be His Name !”

Many a person, irrespective of his education, status and other qualifications is shaken to the core and driven to a state of deep and irrecoverable state of sorrow and depression, when someone near to him dies especially at the prime of youth and middle age. This story which has been taken from “Ticket to Heaven” by J.P. Vaswani should be an eye-opener and a matter of highly logical solace to such people. The famous philosopher J. Krishnamurthy while

mercilessly analysing such cases of bereavement used to tell the people “No body weeps for the dead person but weeps for oneself”. It is more a case of self-pity. It is because one has lost a valuable companionship, a source of insurance for future security etc.. that one grieves, for all the grief is based on selfishness. Apart from this, saints like Ramana Maharshi have told that when a soul discards the heavy burden of its body, it gets into a state of ecstatic joy. Often enough, death is a step towards further evolution in the next birth. Should one begrudge the happiness and the prospects of evolution of the departed by grieving over it?

Everything we have really belongs to God as averred in Isavasyopanishad.²

The wealth of the world, its possessions and power are a loan to us from God. If He takes back anything, we cannot protest or grumble over it. What all God does is based on infinite compassion ultimately redounding to the benefit of the person.



2 ईशवास्यमिदगंसर्वं यत्किञ्च जगत्यां जगत् ।
तेन त्यक्तेन भुञ्जीथा मा गृधः कस्यस्विद्धनम् ॥

(Isavasyopanishad-1)

12. IS THIS TRUE OR IS THAT TRUE

King Janaka was the king of Mithila and was always interested in spirituality. One day he was resting on his bed soon after lunch with his wife fanning him. It was a peaceful day. Janaka's relationship with all the neighbouring kings was excellent and exceedingly cordial. Suddenly there was a commotion outside his room. His army chief came running with wounds all over his body and shouted – "Oh king, run for your life through the secret door. Enemies have overpowered us and taken over the city. Run." Before the king could get up, a number of enemy soldiers came rushing, overpowered the Army chief and his companions. They handcuffed Janaka and took him before the enemy king. The enemy king addressed Janaka in a stern voice – "I do not want to kill you as you have a reputation for ruling this kingdom with love. But by midnight today you should get out of the borders of the kingdom. Run with all your might by foot. You are not to meet anybody – your wife, courtiers or any subjects. On your way, no one will dare talk to you, give you food or water or render any help and thus risk their own life. If you are not

out of this kingdom by midnight sharp, my soldiers have instructions to kill you wherever you are found. Start running for your life.”

Janaka was running and running panting for breath, thirsty and hungry. On the way people avoided him and nobody came forward to render any help. At last it was exactly midnight when he managed to cross the border. He fell down exhausted. He pulled himself up and walked up to the charity-house (Dharmasala) which was just near the border. The Manager of the house was sleeping on a cot outside in the open. Janaka woke him up by shaking him and implored in a pitiable voice – “Sir, I am king Janaka driven out of my kingdom. I am very hungry. Please take pity on me and give me something to eat.” The Manager expressed his helplessness and said “I am sorry that I have nothing to give you. The big vessel in which rice was cooked the previous night is lying full of water yonder below the water tap to that it will be easy to clean it in the morning. It is likely that some rice particles sticking to the sides might have come loose and floating on the water. You may go and search inside the vessel and if you find some rice you are

welcome to have it.” The king rushed up to the utensil and with his searching hands was able to gather one handful of rice. With glee when he was about to take it to his mouth, from somewhere two dogs jumped over him toppled the rice from his hand into the ground and ate it. The king was dismayed and began to wail loudly cursing God for His cruelty. In a second this scene vanished and Janaka saw himself lying on his bed with his wife fanning and all the attendants standing at a distance. Janaka was sure that what all happened was not in a dream. It was real so long as it lasted.

Janaka asked his wife and many others in the room – “Is this true or is that true?” As nobody was aware of his earlier nightmarish vision, none could understand the significance of Janaka’s query. The king ordered his minister to proclaim in his entire kingdom that the any one who could satisfactorily answer his question would be rewarded with substantial wealth and riches. Many came forward and some said “This is true” and others said “That is true”. None of them knew what was meant by ‘This’ or ‘That’ and were unable to explain how ‘This’ or ‘That’ was true.

One day Janaka was sitting in the conference hall and was discussing certain moot points in Advaita philosophy with renowned scholars and philosopher saints. A great saint 'Ashtavakra' walked into the hall. He was hunch backed and had in all eight deformities in his spine and entire body. He was walking with a waggling gait like a crab. On seeing such an uncommon sight the entire audience of philosophers and pundits broke into a laughter. The king himself joined them in their gaiety. Ashtavakra stopped in his track and laughed the loudest of all. The king asked – “Oh saint, we were all laughing at your weird appearance. Why are you also laughing?” Ashtavakra replied with a scornful smile playing on his lips – “Your majesty, I walked into this hall with high expectations of meeting my peers, men of profound wisdom as also the king reputed to be a great practising philosopher himself. When I actually found that I have walked unwittingly into an assembly of cobblers and shoe-makers whose eyes are only on the hides and skin and who have no ability to look inside, I was unable to restrain my laughter at my foolishness. I beg your forgiveness.”

All the audience and the king were stunned into silence by the audacious reply.

The king begged forgiveness and enquired into the real purpose of Ashtavakra's visit.

Ashtavakra introduced himself and said: "Oh king, I have come to answer your question. Neither 'this' was true nor 'that' was true. Truth is that which remains unchanged in all the three periods of time – past, present and future ("Trikaaleshu abaadhitam vastu"). Does the vision of your running for your life and searching in the cooking pot for a handful of rice remain now? The answer is 'NO'. Did that vision come to you some ten years earlier? Again the answer is 'NO'. So, that which did not exist in the earlier past nor is present now can never be real or true? Same argument holds good for your vision where you were resting in your bed with your queen fanning you. That vision does not exist now nor did it exist hundred years back. So neither of these visions is true. The real seer who witnessed both the visions is your Real Self and that remains unchanged. That is the only Reality. Know that and remain in Bliss."



13. GOD CANNOT BE CHEATED

A farmer living in a village near Tirupati (in Andhra) was suffering from typhoid fever and in those days there was no cure or any medical treatment. He prayed to Lord Balaji, the famous presiding deity of Tirupati – “Lord, if I become alright and healthy in two days' time, I shall sell off the only bull I possess and offer the entire sale proceeds to your temple Hundi (Donation Box). Please help me this time and I shall never forget you.” By Lord’s Grace he recovered completely in two days' time. The bull he had was worth Rs. 4,000 and as a poor farmer he was reluctant to sell off the bull. He devised a plan. He had a small chicken costing Rs. 20. He put up an advertisement in his street as also in the market place – “A package deal: – A bull is for sale for one rupee and a chicken for Rs. 3,000 and both will have to be purchased together. They will not be sold separately.” As the sale price for both together came to Rs. 3001 as against the cost of Rs. 4,000 for a bull alone, someone purchased both together. As the farmer had announced the sale price of the bull at Re. 1/-, he promptly took

the one rupee coin and put it into the Hundi of Lord Balaji. He purchased another bull for his use in his farm. Unluckily that bull died of a mysterious disease within two months. One should never try to cheat God. If one was rash enough to make an impossible vow he could approach the Lord Himself to release him from such a vow and to forgive him. God is all merciful and all prayers will be answered.



14. GOD'S NAME IS NOT THAT CHEAP

Roopa was a rich old lady who was living in Mysore along with her three sons who were all looking after a family business. In her lifetime she never felt the need of a God. There was not a single picture or idol of any God in her entire house. She was eighty years old and one day she fell ill and the doctor pronounced that she would not live for more than four to five hours. Her neighbour and her only friend from childhood was Ranjani who was seventy-eight years old. She was very devout. She used to go the local temple twice a day and was always taking the name of the Lord mentally. Her earnest desire was that her friend Roopa should be made to take God's name at least once before her death. If Roopa were to be advised to do so she will flatly refuse on the ground that "While I never needed a God while alive why should I need him after death." Ranjani went and sat by the side of the dying Roopa. Roopa's eyes were half-closed. Ranjani called her eldest son to her side and asked Roopa as to who he was. The latter replied unhesitatingly: "This is Hitler, my eldest son."

Similarly when the second son was presented before her, she again replied – “This is Butler, my second son”. The last son was named SRI RAM. When he was brought before his mother Roopa, the latter answered “Oh, this is my last son” and breathed her last. The word Sri Ram would not come out of her lips.

At the last minute of one’s life if one could take God's name, one becomes the beneficiary of God's compassion and blessings. But unless one has practised continuously throughout one’s life to take the name of the Lord, it will not come in one’s mouth at the last minute alone.



15. STORY OF PADMAPADA

Padmapada was a great devotee of Lord Narasimha – the Lord who took the Avtar of half - lion and half - man – from his childhood. He used to chant his God’s mantra for 18 hours a day. Even after several years when he could not get the realisation and direct vision of his God, he became highly disappointed and decided to end his life. One day early in the morning he ran to a deep impenetrable forest which was nearby, prepared a strong noose with the creepers and vines and tied it to a fairly high branch of a tree with a view to hang himself. Just at that moment, a hunter who had been residing in the forest for three or four generations appeared on the spot and enquired from the young brahmin the reasons for the mad act he contemplated. Padmapada told that illiterate hunter who had no idea of a God that he was in search of a strange animal in that forest, which had the head of a Lion, the lower half being a man and as he was unable to get it, he had decided to commit suicide. The hunter who knew every nook and corner and every denizen of the jungle assured

him that there was no such animal but Padmapada equally strongly asserted that it did exist in that forest. Finally the hunter requested:

“Oh sir, in that case wait here itself till 6 p.m. I shall certainly search for it and bring it to you before dusk provided such an animal existed in this forest. If I fail in my attempt I shall immolate myself and you will then be free to do what you want.” Thus saying he went away. Hungry and thirsty he began to search systematically every nook and corner for the strange animal and all the while he had no thoughts except about that animal. He had gone through the entire forest and the animal was nowhere to be found. It was 5.30 p.m. The hunter collected some dry wood and twigs and lit them up into a big fire. When he was ready to jump into it, he suddenly heard the roar of a lion and saw a huge being half - lion and half - man. In a trice the hunter bound it hand and foot with the ropes he had with him and dragged it to the presence of Padmapada who was waiting impatiently. The hunter shouted to Padmapada – “Oh holy Brahmin, at last I have caught that rascal of an animal

whom you were seeking. Here he is.” Padmapada was able to see the rope dragging something heavy but was unable to see Lord Narasimha who had allowed himself to be tied by the rope. He began to wail with tears in his eyes: “Oh my Lord, who could reveal Himself to the illiterate hunter! Am I such a sinner that I am not worthy of the grace of the darshan you have deigned to bestow on this hunter?” An aerial voice came: “This hunter sought me with such an ardent and one pointed desire (not for a selfish motive but to help my brahmin devotee) that I was forced to reveal myself. As for as you are concerned your time has not come for my full realisation. But I shall be always be present by your side at all times and come to your help any time you feel its need. You need not feel jealous of this hunter. As he has not recognised me as God his merely seeing me is not of much use.

The hunter went away to another part of the forest and was musing over the words of Narasimha that He has not been recognised by the hunter. He could now understand that it was all some play of

God and perhaps God Himself had come in the form of the animal. It was all the mute effect of his having been in the company of a holy man like Padmapada and God Himself in person. He shed tears for his stupidity. He vowed that he would not budge from his seat and would go on beseeching Lord for this darshan till he succeeded.



16. WHY GOD GAVE BOTH JOY AND SORROW ?

A Guru and his disciple were rowing in a river in a canoe. The Guru was plying the boat with two oars each in either of the hands. The disciple enquired: “Guruji, why should God give us both happiness as also misery? Can't he give us all only happiness?”

The Guru was silent as he was busy roving the boat. He just handed over one oar to the disciple and bade him move the boat and himself sat quietly, exhausted. The disciple found to his dismay that the boat was circling round in the same place and did not move forward in spite of his best efforts. He reported to the Guru and requested guidance as to what further he should do. The Guru gave him the second oar. When the disciple applied the second oar, with the two oars on either side, the boat began to move forward. The Guru told the disciple: –“Our life is like this boat; joy and sorrow are the two oars on either side. Both these oars are necessary if life is to go forward.”



17. THE HUMBLE HEALER

Bhagavan Das was a healing saint, who was always wandering in the forests in the Tehri Garhwal district of the Himalayas. People used to come to him from all parts of India and take some vibhuti (sacred ash) from his hands, which would cure all diseases (including cancer) by its mere application on the body of the patient for ten days. There was an old lady at that time in Indore whose only son was suffering from an incurable eczema in his entire legs and hands. She went on searching by foot in the forests of Garhwal for more than a year as there was no fixed place for Bhagavan Das, the healer. One day she came across an old man with an unkempt beard and dishevelled hair. When she enquired from him the whereabouts of Bhagavan Das, the old man enquired why she was searching for the latter. When the lady told him about her ailing son, the old man replied:- “Never again take the name of that bogus rogue Bhagavan Das who is a cheat and a scoundrel. I shall give you some sacred ash and you apply it on your son daily. I guarantee he will be cured within ten days.” After

receiving the ash the lady asked the old man his name. The latter replied – “People call me Kallu Das”. When the lady left, the old man who was no other than Bhagavan Das chuckled to himself.

Real saints do not go after name and fame and do not like to have their names advertised. That is real humility.



18. GOD'S MERCY

Professor Michael, a top scientist from Venice had come to New Delhi to take part in a seminar at Vijnana Bhavan. Two days after the seminar he was to leave for Paris where there was an international meet of scientists – in which he was to present a paper about his own latest research. The day after the seminar he reached the airport quite late as he had been delayed in the hotel by some journalists who interviewed him. When he reached the gate leading to the Airfield where planes were taking off, the gatekeeper refused to let him in. He could see the air-plane of his flight ready for take off and the ladder meant for the passengers to go inside was just being withdrawn. The Professor showed his air-ticket and pleaded with the officer at the gate to phone the pilot to delay the take off for five minutes so that he could rush in. The gatekeeper mercilessly refused to do anything in the matter and that plane took off.

As the scientist in his disappointment and fury ran from pillar to post between the various office rooms in

the airport, he was directed to a counter where there was a long que of people for cancellation of tickets. The scientist stood at the tail end of the que and his disappointment was all the greater because as the next plane was a day later there was no possibility of his reaching the meet in Paris in time. After a long time when there were only three or four people standing ahead of him in the que, an announcement came that the flight by which the scientist was supposed to have gone met with a major accident and that it had crashed down having been hit by two flying eagles and many passengers were injured badly and some dead on the spot. The scientist was moved to tears. He knelt on the ground where he was standing and prayed to the Lord for having saved him by delaying his arrival at the airport.

Whatever happens is by the will of the Supreme Lord. Even if it looks calamitous at the time of happening, what all God does is for the ultimate good of the person affected. God, Thy name is compassion.



19. SNIPPETS

(a) Choose A Guru

There were two saints in one Ashram – Ramdas and Shyamdas and both were highly devoted to the Lord, humble, full of scholarship and immersed in taking the name of the Lord and remembering His glories. There was a young disciple well devoted to both the saints and ardently desiring to attain God – Realisation. As both the saints were equally mature spiritually, the disciple was unable to decide whom he should take as his Guru who will be capable of taking him across the ocean of Samsara. He prayed to the Lord to guide him in this matter. He dreamt that night that there were two boats in a big ocean. In one, Ramdas was sitting in meditation unaware of the Boat or the ocean but by Divine Will the boat was unerringly going on its course by itself. In the second, Shyamdas was sitting and paddling the boat with both oars, joyfully singing the glory of God in an ecstatic mood. The command came through a voice from the Heaven “You choose”. The disciple pointed towards Shyam’s boat and said: “He is the one who, though established

in the Lord is equally awake to the world and alert to rescue the swimmer in distress. I choose him.” The divine voice again told him: “The other boat is moving by itself by the Divine will and is it not better that you get transported in a boat guided directly by the Divine Will?”

The disciple queried: “Lord, is there anything on earth which is not moved and guided by the Divine Will? It is the same Divine Will which guides unseen the second boat too. I stand by my first choice. Even this is your Divine Will which is behind my choice. Ultimately where is a choice at all? I have chosen my Guru and not the boat.”



(b) How long will you stand outside ?

Rabbia was a great woman saint in the Sufi tradition. Hassan was also a contemporary saint and also close friend of Rabbia. Once he came as a guest to the cottage of Rabbia. Early in the morning Rabbia was engaged in preparing a cup of tea. Hassan came out of the house and was charmed by the scenery of

sunrise from behind the mountains nearby. He shouted in sheer delight: “Rabbia, what are you doing inside? Come out and enjoy the beauty outside !” Rabbia replied from inside in a voice of agony – “Oh Hassan, Hassan, – How long will you still continue to stand outside? Come inside, man. The source of all the beauty, the perfect beauty is only inside. The outside is a mirage. The inside is the Reality.”



(c) What is a temple ?

Inside the impenetrable forest in Bastar, there was a small ashram where a very old saint was living. He was moving among the tribals, teaching the children, telling tales and looking after the small kids while their mothers went away for work and running a small dispensary for the poor tribal patients. He had only a dozen bottles of some pills but whoever came to him once and took one dose of his medicine left completely cured and never more fell ill. The local tribals began to worship him as God himself. Himself being poor, the ashram was being maintained and funded by a famous Maha Mandaleswar (i.e. a Sannyasi who is

declared as one of the Holy chiefs like a Bishop controlling a number of Ashrams in various places) living in Jhansi. As a part of their project to buttress religious worships in backward areas, they sanctioned lakhs of rupees for building a temple for Lord Krishna in Bastar District and the old saint was put in charge. They were releasing huge amounts to the saint who was reporting from time to time about the excellent progress achieved in building the temple and how happy the tribals were. Suddenly, somebody who was envious of the old saint and hailing from Bastar came to Jhansi and informed the Mandaleswar that out of the amount of Rs. 50 lakhs received by the old saint not one pie was being spent and no construction of any temple had been started. This news came as a shock and the Mandaleswar sent a group of persons to go and personally verify whether the construction of temple had not been started and if so, to bring the old saint before him at Jhansi for questioning so that if necessary, he can be handed over to the police for misappropriation of funds.

At last, the old saint came tottering into the august presence of the Mandaleswar who was sitting on the throne with all his majesty with evident indignation on his face. The old saint was very tired but his face was peaceful and lit with divine light. As he had forgotten his glasses at Bastar he was unable to see his path or any object in the room clearly. There was a thin beam of sunlight looking like a wire which was coming out of the ventilator and falling on the ground near the place where the saint stood. As the saint was sweating a lot, he took off his old tattered coat and hung it on the sunbeam along with his umbrella as he thought that it was a wire. Both the umbrella and the coat remained hanging in the air over the sunbeam and did not fall down. All the people in the room were astonished at this miracle and some of the persons present fell and prostrated at the feet of the holy saint. The Mandaleswar himself was taken by surprise at this miracle, came down from his throne, bowed to the saint in reverence and seated him in a seat next to his.

The saint began to talk in a quiet tone: “Your Holiness, I know what for you have summoned me. It is true that I have not constructed any separate temple for Lord Krishna. All these tribals have been living in temporary shackles whose roofs were leaking heavily in rainy season and which afforded little protection from the cold in winter. The sanitary conditions were appalling. The entire amount of Rs. 50 lakhs has been spent by me in building small houses for thousands of these tribals. A small township has arisen with shopping centres, playgrounds for children and two school buildings too. All the tribals are very happy and grateful to you. Does not Lord Krishna live in the hearts of these poor neglected tribals? Is not each one of the houses for these needy people verily a temple for Lord Krishna? I do not regret what I have done. You may deal with me as you wish.” Tears came into the eyes of the Mandaleswar. He hugged the old saint.



20. REAL WORSHIP OF GOD

Swami Ananda was a reputed sage in Nellore. He was held in great respect and reverence by all the people in and around the town. But certain prominent citizens of the town became envious of the great reputation of Swami Ananda. One day they went to Swamiji and abraided him – “It is widely believed that you have God – realisation and that you converse with God everyday in a solitary place for about three hours and stroll along with Him. We can’t tolerate your hypocrisy and deceit of the simple inhabitants of this town. It is a great sin for a sage to pose that he is God-realised and thus exploit the devotion of other people. To-day we have decided to expose you and your deceit. You will have to show us now your God with whom you have communion everyday; otherwise, we will have to expose you and you will be subject to the indignity of derision and contempt of all the people.”

On hearing this, Swami Ananda was not, in the least, perturbed but smilingly talking to them in sweet voice said - “I certainly understand your concern for

the society which I am supposed to deceive. Please follow me tomorrow at 6 a.m. to the place of my tryst with God and you would be able to see my God.”

They agreed but spent the entire night without sleep thinking of how they were going to expose the deceitful Mahatma the next day. They reached the Ashramam of the Swamiji very early in the morning. The Swamiji, after having finished his morning rites, started towards the adjoining jungle along with them. After walking for about 2 kms, he entered a hut on the bank of a river where an old couple completely disabled by severe leprosy in both their hands and feet were lying together on an old cot. The Swamiji prepared two cups of tea and gave it to the couple for drinking. Soon after he took out a bottle of medicated oil and began to massage the couple with that oil. He prepared hot water and gave them a bath in the bathroom and dressed them in new cloths which he had brought with him. He also prepared some hot porridge and fed them.

The self-styled reformers who accompanied were stunned by this sight. Tears of repentance at having

defamed such a great sage welled up in their eyes. They fell at his feet and begged pardon for their act saying “Oh sage, forgive us for our sins in doubting you. You have shown that there is no greater God than the distressed and suffering humanity. We are fortunate in our being able to see your God.”

They went back to the town and narrated the event to all the people of the town they met and told them “To-day we saw Mahaprabhu Chaithanya who has incarnated as Swami Ananda. Thanks to the Lord again and again for having given us this great blessing.”



21. WHAT IS 'I' AND WHAT IS 'YOU' ? (RIBHU GITA)

Ribhu was a great saint well versed in Vedanta philosophy. Nidagha (N) was his disciple who studied under Ribhu for 15 years in their Ujjain Ashram. Nidagha (N) was feeling bored as he felt that he had already learnt what all he was to study. One day Ribhu left Nidagha to stay and take care of the Ashram and departed on a long pilgrimage. After twenty years, Ribhu came back to Ujjain. He had now become quite old with his beard and mustache gray. His eyes were sagging and his face had a withered look. He was dressed like a village farmer and wore a turban on his head. While proceeding towards the Ashram, he saw his disciple 'N' standing near a shop in the bazaar. The latter (N) was unable to recognise his Guru. He thought that the person was an illiterate villager. The Guru asked N – “Why are you standing here, sir?”

N – “See the king standing yonder with his retinue and coming in this direction. After he goes away I shall proceed to my Ashram.”

Guru – “Holy sir, I see so many people standing yonder. Who is the king among them?”

N – “The one who is sitting above the elephant is the king. The elephant is below the king. Is it clear?”

Guru – “What is called ‘ABOVE’ and what is called ‘BELOW’?”

Nidagha contemptuously bent the back of his Guru so that he will be bent like a horse touching the earth with his hands too and nimbly jumped over the back of his Guru, which was bent.

N – “See, now I am above You. You are below. Is it clear?”

Guru – “Oh thank you so much. I am not bothered about the terms above and below. I do not understand what is ‘I’ and what is ‘You’ as mentioned by you. Now I call myself ‘I’. Just now you called yourself ‘I’. Who is the real ‘I’ ? Now Nidagha looked at his Guru intently and recognised him. N fell at the Guru's feet saying “Who else but my Guru can put such a question? You please teach me”



22. THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A KING AND A SAINT

Swami Visuddhananda was a genuine Sannyasi who was living under a tree in some forest beyond Kasi. Come winter or rains he used to stay and sleep at night under the tree. To avoid his body being soaked in the rainy water he used to put a few bricks under him and sleep over them. He lived on whatever a passerby deigned to give him for eating. The then king of a place called 'D' in Bihar, who used to come to the forest on hunting expeditions was highly impressed by the vairagya, the indifferent demeanour and the stoic and austere life led by the Swamiji. Every time he came to the forest he used to bring some items of need for the saint and sit with him for hours in silence. During one of his trips, the king requested the Swamiji to accompany him to his palace at D and spend a few days with him. The Swamiji readily agreed and started with a small bag in his hand. The king was a little disappointed at his readiness as he expected such a saint with a high vairagya to protest accepting his invitation.

When they reached the palace, a palatial suite of rooms with all comforts, air-conditioned and with a bathroom with hot water facilities and beds and furniture equipped with cushions was allotted for the sole use of the saint. Everyday, morning milk, breakfast, an excellent lunch with many courses, afternoon tea and snacks, vegetable soups and fruit juices in between and dinner were all being served and the saint ate them with full relish. Three months passed and the saint did not broach the subject of his departure at all.

The king felt that there was no difference between the king and the saint at all except for the former's grihasta life with his wives. The saint was enjoying all the royal luxuries with evident relish and idling all the day while the king was at least engaged in the affairs of his kingdom and was toiling hard during the day. He began to think that the past vairagya of the saint was all perhaps a matter of compulsion due to lack of resources and not a culture of his mind. The king could not stand this situation any longer and one evening he put this question to the saint – "You are now enjoying all the luxurious hospitality of the palace

with relish. Can you tell me whether there is any difference in life between you and me at this moment?"

The saint said: "Let us discuss this matter tomorrow, but now let us go for a walk. We will go alone." The king agreed and both of them went out for a walk by a forest path. They had already walked for three hours and it was night and pitch dark. The king was anxious to return as it would take three hours more to return to the palace. He suggested to the saint that it was late and time to go back. The saint said: "No, no. Let us go. We are now proceeding by foot to Rameshwaram in South India." The king was aghast and protested: "What are you talking? Where is Bihar and where is Rameswaram? The latter is more than two thousand kilometers away. We do not have any clothes, money and other equipment. I have not told my wives, ministers or anybody else. They will all be distraught with anxiety and worry. I have not made arrangements for looking after the affairs of the State during my absence. There are wild animals in this forest and we have not taken even a match box with us. Let us turn back immediately."

Now the saint laughed and told the king: “Do you see the difference now between yourself and myself.” I can leave off all the comforts and walk out in second at any time. You cannot. You remain tied by bondages of imagined duty and attachment to your family, State affairs, comforts etc. I remain free at all times and nothing binds me. You are afraid of travel at night. I am not attached to my body and have no fears. I shall escort you upto your city, leave you and then go on my way. May God’s blessings be with you.”



23. THE STORY OF SRIDHARACHARYA

Sridhara, in his young days was not much bright and was unable to go beyond 2nd standard. One day when he was walking along the road, the king of that city was looking at him from the balcony of his palace, where he was having his evening stroll. The king pointed that boy to the Dewan (Minister) and said – “My dear Dewanji, you always claim that your God is capable of making even the impossible as possible and is all - powerful. Now I am giving you a chance to prove it. Look at the boy Sridhara going yonder. He is reputedly a dull-headed boy and is still practically illiterate at the age of eighteen. You take him in your charge and make him a scholar in Sanskrit within one year. I shall then get few temples constructed for Sri Ram as you have been pestering me to do.” The Dewan accepted the challenge and sent for the boy. In presence of the king, the boy was instructed to live with the Dewan henceforth in the latter's house and study Sanskrit and scriptures. The king undertook to inform his parents and also to take care of their welfare and maintenance.

The very next day, the Dewan initiated the boy into Narasimha mantra known as Nrusimha Poorva

Tapinee Upanishad and started teaching him. By the grace of the Lord the boy became a scholar in the Sastras (Scriptures) within one year. Sridhara's most favourite text was SRIMAD BHAGAVATAM authored by the great Vyasa Maharshi. He was never tired of reading it again and again.

One day he went to a garden and was reading Bhagavatam sitting under a tree. Suddenly two eggs fell from a nest in the tree and broke. As they were mature, two sparrow fledgelings came out of them. They were hungry and desperately looking for something to eat. They were keeping their mouths open. Just then two big flies came fighting with each other and mortally wounded each other. The two flies dropped dead into the open beaks of the two sparrows whose hunger got appeased providentially. Sridhara thought to himself:- 'See how God has provided the breakfast for the two sparrows just born. He will certainly look after every body's needs. Why should I still foolishly depend on the Dewan for food and shelter.' Thus musing he went into the forest along with his Bhagavatam book. While in the forest he wrote a Sanskrit commentary on Srimad Bhagavatam and it took him some years to complete it. He then took it to Kasi and gave it to the Pundits for

their stamp of acceptance. After going through it, an assembly of Pundits informed him of their rejection on the ground that the commentary had leanings on the Vaishnava philosophy while Bhagavatam was in reality based on Advaitic concepts. After having laboured hard, this came as a disappointment to Sridhara. In his vexation he told the Pundits “You are not the final authority on this. Let us go to Kasi Visvanathji (Jyotirlinga at Kasi) and seek His verdict.” All of them went to the temple, placed the manuscript commentary before Him and prayed for His verdict. Lord Visvanath’s thundering voice was heard all over: “Vyasa, the author knows Bhagavatam thoroughly. So does Sukadeva. As for as King Parikshit is concerned it cannot be vouchsafed whether he understood fully or not (because a student may get through his MBBS examination by getting the minimum pass mark of 40% and not necessarily 100%). But I declare that SRIDHARA knows all about Srimad Bhagavatam through the grace of Lord Narasimha.”³ His commentary is still revered and considered as a most authentic one.”



3 व्यासो वेत्ति शुको वेत्ति राजा वेत्ति वा न वा ।
श्रीधरः सकलं वेत्ति श्री नृसिंह प्रसादतः ॥

24. HE IS MY GURU

There were two saints in Badrinath considered to be realised souls. One was young and middle-aged staying in the first cottage on a road. The other one was quite old, having a long white beard and he stayed in the last house of the same road as the younger one. When the visitors to Badrinath enquired of the local people regarding any great Mahatmas worth meeting in that town, people invariably pointed out these two saints. Usually the visitors used to go to the first house. At the time of their departure the younger saint used to tell them sarcastically – “Why don’t you go to the bogus old man in the last house who has grown a long beard to impress you all and is waiting for victims with fat purses.” He used to abuse the second saint directly and indirectly in the presence of the visitors. Most of the visitors used to get discouraged and would go away without visiting the older saint. This matter used to reach the ears of the older saint too. One of the disciples of the old saint asked the latter – “Maharaj, why are you tolerating this reprehensible behaviour and the undeserved abuses

of this young upstart? Why don't you send for him to this cottage and give him a bit of your mind?" The old man replied: "We do not know what personal grouse the young man has against me. You better go and become the disciple of the younger man without disclosing your connection with me. Try to ingratiate yourself into his favour and find out what offence, he feels, has been committed against him and why he abuses me before all visitors."

Very soon, this disciple became a close confidant of the younger saint. One day he asked the latter in private – "Holy sir, I find that you are an excellent Mahatma in every aspect but how is it that you daily indulge in defaming the old saint at the end of this road. In what way has he offended you?"

The younger saint laughed gaily, took out a photo from his pocket, showed it to the disciple and said "He is my Guru". The photo was of the old saint. He further added: "My Guru does not like to meet all and sundry people all the time everyday."

It is he who has installed me in this house for the purpose of screening the visitors. After hearing me

also if some rare persons insist on going and meeting him, he welcomes them. I am only doing the duty allotted to me by my master. He also sent me a word that he was sending you, his best disciple, for some time in order to serve me.”



25. WHO IS THE GREATER POET?

Kalidasa as also Dandi were both well-renowned Sanskrit poets of yore and were contemporaries. Kalidasa was famous⁴ for use of metaphors called similies (Upama) in his poems while Dandi was famous for his use of lovely expressions.⁴ There was always a quarrel between the admirers of the respective poets as to who was the greater of the two – Kalidasa or Dandi. Once when both the poets met, they proposed to have this matter settled once for all to avoid future controversies. With their Yogic power they invoked Goddess Sarasvati, the goddess of learning and wisdom, who appeared before them. When she was asked to arbitrate on this issue she immediately pronounced her judgement that “Dandi is the poet, Dandi is the poet, Dandi is the poet without any doubt.”⁵ Kalidasa, enraged at this shouted at her –

-
- 4 उपमा कालिदासस्य भारवेरर्थं गौरवम् ।
दण्डिनः पदलालित्यं माघे सन्ति त्रयो गुणाः ॥
- 5 कविर्दण्डी कविर्दण्डी कविर्दण्डी न संशयः ।

“Oh wretch, who am I then ?” Saraswati decreed with a smile – “You are myself. You are myself. You are myself without doubt.”⁶ Both the poets went delighted with that unique judgement.



6 त्वमेवाहं त्वमेवाहं त्वमेवाहं न संशयः ॥

26. THE UNIQUE BIRTHDAY GIFT

Ramanuja Acharya was one of the greatest Vaishnava saints in the south. One year, just on the eve of SRI RAM NAVAMI, Ramanuja was highly agitated. Ram Navami being the birthday of SRI RAMA, Ramanuja desired to present some gift to SRI RAMA but it was to be such an item which Rama did not possess. He was racking his brain throughout the night and he could not think of a suitable gift. Early in the morning when he got up there was a flash in his brain. He went to the puja room, prostrated before Lord Rama's idol and said: "Oh Ram, please accept my loving greetings today, your birthday. I have a birthday gift to offer to you. Lord, I offer you as a gift all my ignorance (ajnana) which is a commodity you do not possess but is available with me in plenty."

Lord Rama was delighted with this gift.



27. THE INCURABLE STOMACH ACHE

Lord Adishesha is a Serpent king with one-thousand hoods and Lord Vishnu is supposed to sleep on his coils. Once he had a terrific stomach ache. He got prescriptions and Ayurvedic medicines from various top specialists in Ayurveda. Two years passed but there was no relief from his pain. He got so disgusted with Ayurveda that he decided to collect all copies of all the main works like Ashtanga Hridayam, Charaka Samhita, Madhava Nidanam and make a bonfire of them. He collected all the books in a heap and was just bringing a match box to set fire to them all. At that time, Dhanvantari the Lord of all Doctors and medicines came over to Lord Sesa disguising himself as an old brahmin. He enquired into the reasons for setting fire to so many books. On hearing the reasons he promised to cure Adishesha of his pain through any of the medicines he has been taking. He inserted a long rubber tube into the throat of Adishesha and fixed a funnel to the outside end of the rubber tube. He took out the liquid medicines brought by Adishesha having been used by the latter for months without any

effect and poured them direct into the throat of Adishesha through the funnel and the rubber tube. The medicine directly went to the stomach of Adishesha and within half an hour Adishesha was miraculously cured of his stomach ache for good. Adishesha was amazed. Dhanvantari told him: “The medical science and the medicines are perfectly alright but while applying them to the various circumstances one should learn to adopt suitable methods of administration. You have poisonous teeth being a serpent and all the medicines which were poured into the mouth were contaminated by the teeth and became poisonous and hence ineffective. Now that I poured the medicines directly into the throat through the rubber tube without being contaminated, the medicines worked immediately.” Whether philosophy or science when it is put to practical application, it should be tailored to the needs of the environments and circumstances.



28. GOD IS IN HELL TOO

During the Second World War when Poland was under the occupation of German Nazis, there lived two devout German sisters – BETTY and BESSY. Both were very devout and used to pray and meditate for hours. The Nazis used to go from house to house, arrest all the Polish Jews (including children and women), beat them brutally and send them to concentration camps where the prisoners were subjected to inhuman treatment and tortures. Those who survived the torture were then taken away and fed into the ghettos where they were burnt alive in burning fire. Anybody found sheltering them and hiding them in their own houses were also put into the concentration camps. Betty and Bessy prayed for the safety of all the Jews. In the sly, they hid a few Jewish families in the attic of their own house. The Nazi Police somehow got scent of it, searched the house of these two sisters and found the Jews who were hidden. The two sisters along with the Jews were all sent to a concentration camp. They were allowed very little clothing. It was quite cold and a few were lucky to have a thin

blanket. Betty daily harangued her fellow prisoners about the mercy and compassion of the Lord who, though invisible, was very much with them all in the concentration camp. The rest of the prisoners refused to believe in the benign presence of the Lord and retorted that this camp was the worst hell and naturally God cannot be expected to be there.

An epidemic of flu broke out in the camp and many prisoners died. Betty and Bessy were helping the patients to the extent possible tirelessly. The younger one, Bessy, also contracted flu at last and became bed ridden. She was reduced to a skeleton and was feeling very weak. As Betty had a good blanket, she secretly traded it for a bottle of multivitamin tablets to one of the matrons who was looking after the prisoners. She began to give the Vitamin tablets to her sister who began to pick up her health. When only 12 tablets were left in the Vitamin bottle, about hundred prisoners were brought into the camp from other prisons and all of them were having fever and in a very pitiable condition. Betty distributed the vitamin pills to all the prisoners freshly brought and to her surprise she found

that after distributing to nearly hundred people still twelve tablets remained in the bottle. Daily new and new prisoners were coming in equally bad state of health and Betty continued to distribute the vitamins. At the end of the day the same 12 nos. remained in the bottle. The fellow prisoners at first thought that Betty was daily getting fresh supply of vitamins from somewhere but they were ultimately convinced that it was a real miracle as the entire distribution was only out of the twelve tablets which always remained in the bottle. The prisoners were of the opinion that God had favoured only Betty and the rest have been abandoned to their fate. Betty and Bessy were seriously praying to God on behalf of all the prisoners. It was October and one day Betty told her sister "Bessy, we will both be released from this hell on the coming Christmas day." Soon after Betty fell ill and died exactly on 25th December, the Christmas day, taking the name of the Lord till the last breath. At her death - bed, Betty made her sister promise that after the latter was released she would tell the story of the concentration camp and the miracle of the vitamin

pills to all the world and make it public. It was the custom in the concentration camp to introduce their own stooges in the camp as prisoners and from time to time the authorities would make a show of releasing them from the camp and providing them with money, clothings and food - stuffs so that they can return home. This was meant to impress the world that they were treating the prisoners very well and were releasing them in reward for their good behaviour. On this Christmas day release orders for two prisoners were issued. In one of them, by oversight, the name of Bessy had been written by mistake instead of one of their own stooges. Bessy was promptly released and sent home. When she was walking out of the camp, she could hear the voice of her sister Betty whispering into her ears – “Bessy, do not forget your promise. You have to tell this story to all the people in the world.” Bessy wrote and published a book describing the entire story. All through her life she gave lectures and gave T.V. programmes regarding her nightmarish experience and how God was always with them. She

always asserted: The concentration camp was the deepest pit in hell but remember, no pit can be so deep that God cannot be found deeper still.

Within another three months or so the airforce commandos of the allies swooped down on the concentration camp, shot down the guards and rescued all the prisoners God's justice may be delayed but never denied.



29. UNDERSTAND THE SCRIPTURES

There was an educated young man in Kanyakumari named Amulya who was athirst for spiritual knowledge. He went in search of a competent Guru well versed in scriptures who could interpret and teach so as to suit him to the modern environment. He spent years with various Gurus at Rishikesh, Haridwar, Uttarkasi etc. in the Himalayas. They were all pompous and could repeat Vedas and Sankara's commentaries by rote but had little or no experiential knowledge of their own in the spiritual field. They had large followings of people who worshipped them as God. They had the gift of the gab and could express themselves in highflown English as also in Hindi. Amulya was not satisfied with any of them. He still continued to wander in the Almora hills. He was praying to God daily for hours to lead him to a proper Guru who could guide him on the spiritual path. One day he heard of a monk who was living alone in a cave on the top of the mountain which was not easy of access. He vowed that this would be his last attempt to find a Guru. In case he did not succeed, he would go back to the world, marry and settle down to a worldly life. With

great difficulty and after a number of days he reached the cave and fell down exhausted. The kind monk took good care of him and brought him back to normal health. Amulya saw that the cave was littered with all books on various scriptures of the Hindus, Buddhists, Jains, Christians etc. The monk was very humble and sincere. When Amulya disclosed his mission and his disappointments with various Gurus, the monk said that he would teach him to the extent of his knowledge. The monk gave him two tips as given by his own Guru:

1. Never proceed further in a scripture unless you have understood the earlier sentence or paragraph in full.

2. The best way to understand any sentence in the scriptures is to go on meditating on it ceaselessly till the meaning reveals itself. In the Bhrigu Valli of the Taittiriya Upanishad it is told that in order to understand Brahman, the Supreme Being, one should meditate on it. “TAPASA BRAHMA VIJIGYASASVA TAPO BRAHMETI.” Meditation is the surest way to success in spiritual path.

The next day morning, the monk started the class. He took up one of the scriptures and began to read.

Amulya was unable to recognise as to from which scripture the monk was reading. The first sentence the monk read was more or less as follows:

“When the king sits upon the throne, all the subjects will attend to him only and thus no evil can approach.”

This was from the old testament. The moment he heard it Amulya stood up, and went out of the cave. He was never seen afterwards and days passed. After nearly a year later, Amulya came and sat before the monk. He said – “Holy sir, last time when you read that one sentence I could not comprehend what it meant. I spent days meditating over it night and day in another cave. Lord has now revealed its meaning. Now you can go ahead and read the further portion.” Amulya’s entire face was lit up by a special glow – a divine light – the hallmark of a highly evolved soul. The monk requested him humbly – “Can you please divulge to me the meaning of the first sentence?”

Amulya started explaining: by king is meant God. The throne refers to the heart of the devotee.

The ‘subjects’ are the senses and the mind. When once we install the Lord in our heart by ceaseless

prayers and meditations so that we do not think of anything but the Lord, all the extroverted senses – eyes, ears, speech etc. are subjugated and their attention is all turned towards God. A description of similar nature in respect of King Ambarisha has been given in Srimad Bhagavatam:

“His mind was always rooted to the lotus feet of Lord Krishna; his words were only for praising Lord’s glories; his hands were engaged in cleaning the temple of the Lord and his ears in hearing the stories of God. No temptations of the world can ever assail him i.e. no evil can ever approach him.” The old monk hugged Amulya and said: “Blessed indeed are you, Amulya. You have caught the core of all sadhanas. There is no need for you to read anything further. This one sentence is enough. Install the Lord in your heart through loving prayers, meditation and ceaseless remembrance of Him. I shall myself follow it from now on. I have no need of all these scriptures. You have opened my eyes too and I am ever grateful to you.”⁷



7 स वै मनः कृष्ण पदारविन्दयोः
वचांसि वैकुण्ठगुणानुवर्णने ।
करौ हरेर्मन्दिरमार्जनादिषु
श्रुतिं चकाराच्युत सत्कथोदये ॥

(Bhagavata IX-4-18)

30. COMMUNICATION GAP

A man by name Mr. Govind was walking on the sands of the Arabian desert. It was day time and the sun was scorching. He had around his waist a belt containing some gold nuggets. His shoes were all torn and tattered. It was hard going. Every step was an agony and still there was a long distance to go.

He prayed to Lord Rama “O Ram, please give me a horse.” Soon enough he found a Sheikh coming with a retinue of soldiers and staff. One of the fillies (female horses) gave birth to a foal (young horse) which was unable to walk yet. As the Sheikh found Govind walking along the path, he ordered him to carry the new born horse and to follow him. Govind cried out mentally in distress: “Ram, you did not understand me properly. I wanted you to give me a horse to enable me to ride on it. You have given me a horse which rides on me.”



31. MENTAL WORSHIP

There was a man named Dhanpal belonging to the business community, a contemporary of Tulsi Dasji the author of 'Ramcharit Manas'. One day he approached Tulsi Das and asked him "I want to worship Lord Ram everyday elaborately but I cannot afford to spend even a single pie for purchase of fruits, milk, camphor or incense sticks etc. Can you kindly instruct me on such a method of worship." Tulsi Das looked at him with all compassion and said – "Yes, there is a method of mentally worshipping Bhagavan and all offerings are only through imagination. It would cost you nothing. You have to install your Ram on a golden throne and offer him plenty of different varieties of fruits and hot cow's milk with sugar added to it. As it is all through imagination there is no need for you to be miserly. Do not forget to add one full teaspoon of sugar to the milk offered to the Lord." Tulsi Das told him the method in detail.

Dhanpal began to worship daily as directed by Tulsi Das. He was keeping a small plastic container

with sugar and he never forgot to add one spoon of sugar to the milk (all in imagination). Fifteen years passed. One day as he had misplaced the spoon, he had to pour the sugar into the cup of milk directly from the container when a good amount of sugar fell into the cup (imagination). Immediately he dived his hand into the imagined cup and tried to take out the surplus sugar, though there was no cup in reality. The Lord saw that even after 15 years of continuous worship the miserliness has not left Dhanpal. Lord caught hold of his hand and told him – “Aye, there is neither real sugar nor a real cup of milk. If more sugar has fallen into it, let it remain so. It is after all imagination.” When once Dhanpal experienced the Divine touch of Lord’s hands he was transformed. He renounced his house and all property and went to the Himalayas to do Sadhana.



32. LULLABY OF VEDANTA

Madalasa was a queen steeped in Vedanta philosophy and scriptural knowledge since birth. When she got her first son, she used to sing the following lullaby to her son while rocking the cradle:

“Oh son, you are pure, enlightened and untainted and free of the worldly illusion (Maya). Leave off this sleep of ignorance which is part of the Maya of the world and get up.”⁸

The son who was thus exposed to philosophical concepts from birth took no interest in worldly matters but went away to a forest when he was ten years old and got himself engaged in severe sadhana.

When the second son was born Madalasa used to sing the following lullaby:

8 शुद्धोऽसि बुद्धोऽसि निरञ्जनोऽसि
संसारमाया परिवर्जितोऽसि ।
संसार मायां त्यज मोहनिद्रां
मदालसा वाक्यमुवाच पुत्रम् ॥

“Oh son, you are pure and you have no name. We have just now given you a name by imagination. Neither this body made of five elements belongs to you nor do you belong to it. Why are you weeping?”⁹

This son also left the house and went away in due course to a forest for sadhana. The king was becoming old and became anxious. If Madalasa were to make fakirs of all his sons, he might not be left with any heir to inherit the kingdom.

He requested Madalasa to spare at least one child for the Throne and not to inculcate vedanta into him. Madalasa assented.

Her son, Alarka, became the king after his father. One day he asked his mother: “Oh mother, I am anxious to have a proper Guru. Please tell me who is the best in spiritual wisdom today, whom I can choose as my Guru.” Madalasa replied – “My son, Lord

9 शुद्धोऽसि रे तात न तेऽस्ति नाम
कृतं हि ते कल्पनयाऽधुनैव ।
यद्भौतिकं देहमिदं न तेऽस्ति
नैवास्य त्वं रोदिषि कस्य हेतोः ॥

Dattatreya who is an avatar of the Lord is the best of the gurus of all times. But it is difficult to find him. He is always wandering and may sometimes be disguised as a beggar, a mad man or an alcoholic etc. But he is a person who will not contradict anybody. Even if somebody called the moon as sun Dattatreya will never contradict him. May my blessings be with you.”

Alarka carried an ordinary stone with him and wandered through all religious and holy places in search of Dattatreya. He will show the stone to some people whom he thought were likely to be Dattatreya and asked them what it was. When they told him that it was an ordinary stone, Alarka would affirm that it was a diamond or a gold nugget. Those persons used to call him a fool and go their way. At last he came to a temple where in one corner a brahmin wearing a sacred thread was sitting quietly and scratching his body with the sacred thread. Alarka approached him with the stone and when Alarka affirmed that it was a diamond the latter coolly agreed that it was a diamond. Again Alarka told him – “I only joked; it is only an ordinary stone” to that also the brahmin readily agreed.

Alarka had found his guru – Dattatreya. He fell at the brahmin's feet and requested the latter to accept him as a disciple. The brahmin initially protested but ultimately revealed his identity and accepted Alarka as his disciple.



33. VIOLENCE AT SIGHT

Today there is a lot of talk about disarmament. There is a beautiful story about it in Valmiki Ramayanam.

When Rama was to leave for the forest for 14 years in order to fulfil his father's words to Kaikeyi, his wife Sita and brother Lakshmana, also accompanied him. Rama dressed himself like an ascetic or a sage but kept his bow and arrows with himself.

Sita tried to persuade her husband not to take the bow and arrows with him, one of the reasons advanced therefor being that even if we keep weapons for innocent reasons with a resolution not to use them except in unavoidable emergencies, the very sight of the weapons may in due course incite us to violence involuntarily. She told the following story to illustrate it:

Once there was a great sage (rishi) who was doing severe penance in the forest. Indra the king of gods became afraid that the Rishi's aim was to snatch his post of Indra by virtue of his penance. So he wanted to put some obstacles in the way of the penance of the rishi. He dressed himself as a travelling warrior

and came to the cottage of the sage. He was carrying a long shining sword. He beseeched the permission of the sage to leave his sword in the verandah of the latter's cottage till such time as he returned from a pilgrimage to Kedarnath. The sage readily gave his consent. Daily when the sage was going out of the cottage for picking flowers for puja he used to invariably look at the shining sword kept on the ground. One day he was tempted to touch it. When he fondled it in his hand he found that its edge was very sharp. For a few days more he used to fondle it in his hand for a while before going out daily in the morning. One day he took it in his hand and went out for picking flowers. There he cut a few branches and leaves of trees with that sword and found to his surprise that he was able to wield the sword effortlessly. It became a habit with to carry the sword wherever he went. One day when he found a cat crossing his way in the forest he just threw his sword at it. The cat died on the spot. As a result of the sin of murdering an innocent cat, all the merits accumulated as a result of penance over many years were washed off. Indra chuckled to himself on the success of his strategy.



34. A STIFF FEES FOR EDUCATION

Kautsa was a disciple the great Maharshi (sage) Varatantu. When his study came to an end after 15 years of life with his Guru, he enquired from his Guru how much Guru Dakshina (fees) he should give him. His Guru refused to take any fees as he was well aware of the extremely poor financial status of Kautsa. When Kautsa expostulated and pressed him for accepting some fees, Varatantu got angry and harshly demanded – “In return for the fourteen different subjects I have taught, you go and bring for me Rs. 14 crores worth of gold coins.” Kautsa was not a little daunted. He had complete faith in his guru’s compassion that he would certainly show him also the way to get Rs. 14 crores in gold. He was impelled to approach King Raghu (the great grandfather of SRI RAM) for help through the unseen compassion of his own guru. Unluckily that was exactly the time when King Raghu had exhausted all the wealth he had in his treasury in giving dakshina (fees) to the priests and brahmins in connection with a big sacrifice called ‘Visvajit’ performed by him. Notwithstanding this condition when Kautsa approached him for help King Raghu assured him that his desire will be got fulfilled

and in the mean time he requested the young Rishi to stay with him overnight. As the only source where such a huge amount of gold would be available is Kubera, the god of riches, Raghu decided to invade Alkapuri the capital of Kubera the very next morning and alerted his troops to get ready. Somehow Kubera got wind of this plan of Raghu to invade his capital. Kubera appreciated the undaunted courage and the compassionate heart of Raghu, who wanted to help the Rishi in distress at any cost. Same night Kubera saw to it that the sky rained a huge quantity of gold in the court yard of Raghu's palace. King Raghu made arrangements for the gold to accompany Kautsa to the latter's Guru's cottage.

It is said in Guru Gita: "A Guru will protect his disciple against the anger of Lord Siva even. But if the Guru becomes angry, nobody will protect his sishya."¹⁰ This only means that in the latter case the Guru himself will save him in a subtle way. Kautsa's case is the one that illustrates this point.



१० शिवेरुष्टे गुरुस्त्राता गुरौ रुष्टे न कश्चन ।

35. DO NOT DEAL WITH MIND VIOLENTLY

SWAMI SARANANANDA of GHAZIPUR was a highly evolved soul but blind. He established 'Manav Seva Sangh' in various places like Brindavan. Once a gentleman, a long time associate of Mahatma Gandhiji, came to see Swamiji. He asked the following question:

“Swamiji, great texts of philosophy like Yoga Vasishtha emphasise on annihilation or destruction of the mind (Mano-nasa). Please enlighten me as to how to achieve it ”

Swamiji: “Ram, Ram, you claim to be a follower of Gandhiji but speak of violence. Why should you destroy the mind? What is the main tenet of Gandhiji? Is it not non-violence and non-co-operation. Apply them here. Do not co-operate with the mind. When the mind says “Come on, let us go to the theatre to hear a music concert”, do not co-operate with it. That is all.”



36. NOTHING IS MINE

Yagyavalkya was a great maharshi who has had God-realisation (called Jeevan muktas). He was living at the outskirts of Mithila whose king was Janaka – highly spiritually oriented ruler. Yagyavalkya was daily conducting satsang classes on Vedanta philosophy in the evening which was attended by a number of monks as also king Janaka. If Janaka were to be delayed due to urgent matters of State, the Satsang would not begin till Janaka came. Other monks used to pass derogatory remarks – “Look at Yagyavalkya the great knower of Brahman. Even he wants to please the king as he provides him with all provisions and bears all the expenditure in connection with the maintenance of the Ashram.” Yagyavalkya, who came to know of their sentiments wanted to prove to them as to what a high level of fitness or eligibility the king had for leading a spiritual life, which none of the monks can equal.

One day when the Satsang meeting was in progress, a villager came running and shouted to the monks that their colony was on fire. Immediately on

hearing it, without even taking permission of the lecturer all the monks rushed to their colony only to find that it was a false alarm and all their possessions which mainly consisted of loin cloths and some rags were all safe.

A few days later when the Satsang was in session, some palace guards came in with a highly agitated demeanour, went quietly to King Janaka without disturbing the discourse and whispered something in his ears. Janaka instructed them something crisply and they left. It took another one hour for Satsang to end. Then Yagyavalkya casually asked Janaka as to whether anything was serious as he had found the Palace guards who came to the king in a highly disturbed state. When Janaka replied that the, guards came to inform him that there was a big conflagration of fire in the palace, which had extended to the harem (living apartments of Janaka's wives and children, and showed no signs of abating in spite of their best efforts to extinguish it. The Maharshi was astounded at this cool reply and exclaimed – “Janaka, how strange that you

have continued to sit in the satsang for an hour knowing full well that all your kith and kin and the palace were in danger of being consumed fire ! How was it possible?” Janaka’s famous reply was:

“I possess nothing and nothing is mine. But I may say that the INFINITE is my wealth. So even if the entire Mithila city is to be burnt to ashes nothing of mine will be destroyed.”¹¹

The other monks hung their head in shame.



11 “अनन्तं बत मे वित्तं यस्य मे नास्ति किञ्चन ।
मिथिलायां प्रदीप्तायां न मे किञ्चित्प्रणश्यति ॥

37. FIGHT WHILE AT EASE

In Himachal Pradesh, there were two princes by name, Ram and Shyam, who belonged to two neighbouring kingdoms. Both the families were enemies of each other and had been hating each other for generations. Nobody knew how many years before and why it was started. But both the princes who had never seen each other continued to have mutual hatred in their heart without any visible cause. One day when Ram went for hunting in a jungle, providentially he met Shyam who had also come for the same purpose. They were intuitively quick to recognize each other and both were on horseback carrying their respective spears. The moment they saw each other they started fighting with each other with their spears. During the fray, Shyam was unseated and fell on the ground with his spear flying away from his hand to a distance. Ram quickly jumped on the chest of the fallen prince and raised his spear high with the intention of smiting him. Just at that moment, the fallen prince Shyam spat straight in the eyes of Ram, mustering all

his strength. The face of Ram become livid with fury. But he threw away his spear and got down from the chest of Shyam saying, “We shall meet another day and decide our fate. Go home safe.” When he turned back to go away, Shyam caught hold of his sleeve and told him, “If our roles had been reversed, I would have finished you with one stroke of my spear and would never have spared you. Brother Ram, please enlighten me as to why you did not fight when all the odds were in your favour”. Ram replied, “Brother, my Guru had advised me never to fight when I am angry. When I started the fight, as I had no cause for personal animosity against you, I had no anger. But the moment you spat on my eyes, my ego was hurt and a surge of anger rose within me. Then I remembered my Master’s words.”

Shyam hugged Ram and requested, “Please introduce me to your Guru. I am coming with you.”

“One should defeat anger by composure. (akrodhena jayet krodham)”



38. THE DEXTROUS SCULPTOR

There was once a famous sculptor in Indore, Govind by name. As he had been initiated into certain mantras by a great guru from the Himalayas, whatever statue he made was endowed with a divine splendour and power. It looked always as if the statue had come alive. He was very devout and used to spend hours on end in japa and meditation. By his guru's grace he got a prior intimation intuitively that he was to die on wednesday the coming week. He was barely fortyfive years old and obviously he did not like dying so early.

He created seven identical statues of himself and he himself stood in their midst. There was not an iota of difference even in the minutest detail between himself and the rest of the statues. All of them had a smile in their face and the eyes were half-closed as if in meditation.

He also put a spell on those statues that anybody who failed to touch him but touched any of the statues instead would have his head blown-off instantly.

Lord Yama, the God of Death himself came personally on the due date, as he had heard that the sculptor was as clever as he was dextrous. Lord Yama was amazed to see eight identical statues and become aware of the spell cast on them. With all his divine powers, he was unable to divine as to which was a statue and which was the real sculptor. His eyes were expressive of his admiration for the handiwork of the sculptor. He clapped his hands with wonder and said, "What an excellent work, but what a pity that there is one major fault which has been overlooked." On hearing this the sculptor came out of the rank and queried with indignation, "What do you know of sculpture? Tell me where is the fault?" Lord Yama caught hold of him and said with a wistful smile, "Dear Sir, this is the only fault, that is, your 'ego' which has made you reveal yourself forgetting the danger that lay in wait for you."

A little ego is enough to spoil the effects of all other good qualities a man may possess.



39. WHAT PRICE RAM NAM ?

Madan was a lawyer of repute in Mysore. From childhood he did not believe in any god or any scriptures. He was always careful to keep a distance from saints and mahatmas. His neighbour, Varan, was a boxer by profession, but was very devout and a strong believer in chanting of Ram Nam. He loved Madan very dearly and was always desirous that Madan should be made to take the name of Ram at least once. One day when both of them met in a park, the boxer suddenly caught the hands of Madan in a vice-like grip and gave a resounding slap on his cheek and said, "Come on, you take the name of Ram now. Otherwise I am going to beat you to a pulp." Madan answered stubbornly, "I will not take the name. I will not take the name." The boxer threw Madan to the ground, sat over his chest and gripping his throat thundered, "Will you utter Ram Nam or not?" Again Madan defiantly answered, "Do what you will, I have told you I shall never take the name of Ram." The boxer released his hold on Madan, embraced him and kissed him on his cheek. He told him, "You have uttered the name of Ram, though

defiantly. it is alright for me. But heed my words; if at anytime you are asked to exchange or sell this Ram Nam which you have told, do not agree to it.”

A few years later, Madan died and was taken to the court of Lord Yama. Yama admonished him, “You are a stupid fellow - who had no belief in God and had done no good to anybody in this life. I am sending you to hell where you will suffer for a long time.” Madan protested, “Sir, there must be some mistake in your account. I have uttered the name of Ram once in my life. “On verification, Yama, found this claim to be true. He turned to Madan and asked him, “What will you take in exchange for the one Ram Nam you had uttered in your life?” Suddenly Madan remembered the words of Varan, the boxer. He said, “You please find out what is the value of Ram Nam according to scriptures and give that to me.” Yama consulted all the scholars and found that the value of Ram Nam had never been discussed in the scriptures. He took Madan and went to Devendra, the King of gods. The latter was equally ignorant of the value of one Ram Nam. Both Yama and Devendra together took the soul to Brahmaji and later on to

Lord Siva and none of the latter were able to throw light on the root question. When they decided to go finally to Vaikunta, Madan refused to walk any further. Being helpless, they seated him in a palanquin and all the four gods, Yama, Devendra, Brahma and Siva themselves bore the palanquin and reached the abode of Lord Vishnu. When Lord Vishnu saw from a distance a palanquin borne by the four prime gods coming towards him, he surmised that it should be some unique V.I.P. who is being brought. He promptly went forward to receive the visitors. He gave his hand to Madan to enable him to get down, led him to his seat and placed him on His own lap. Now when, Yama, Brahmaji etc., requested him to enlighten on the value of Ram Nam, Lord Vishnu laughed and said, “Is it not evident from what has happened? You four gods had borne his palanquin and I have embraced him and seated him on my lap. Is it not due to the glory of Ram Nam which he took once? What more do you want to know? The value of this Ram Nam is inestimable and is beyond all assessment. If you want to purchase the Ram Nam from him you will have to pay whatever he demands” Madan clapped his hands in glee.



40. A COSTLY EXCHANGE

There was a village near Bhubaneswar, where all the inhabitants were devoted to Lord Krishna. A time came when every resident of the village began to feel the intolerable burden of miseries and sorrows. To their dismay, each one of them found that his immediate neighbours were all far better off and were subjected to far less unhappiness than themselves. They all sent individual petitions to Lord Krishna imploring him that they should be allowed to exchange their own burden of sorrows with their neighbours'. The Lord sent them all a message saying that each one should count their sorrows and bundle them all in a zipped up bag, label each one of the bags with their own name, take them to the Krishna's temple in their village and deposit them in the order in which their names would be called (based on their alphabetical sequence). They were to go back and stay outside till their names were called one by one and each one was to be allowed to choose any one of the existing bags as he may feel lighter. They followed the instructions meticulously and each one walked back from the temple with somebody else's bag of sorrows considered by him to be lighter and smaller than his own.

After a couple of days they began to find that in reality the bag of each one of them was far heavier than their own which they had exchanged in vain. Again they urgently petitioned to Lord Krishna to allow each one of them to exchange and get back their own original bags of sorrows which they have now found to be a far lighter burden to bear. The Lord took His own time and refused to concede to their demands till each one of them increased their prayers and supplications for hours together each day. Weeping before Lord Krishna profusely and imploring Him to pardon their stupid demand made earlier. The Lord was ultimately pleased and each one managed to get back his own bag of sorrows. As the villagers now learnt to increase their prayers and meditations, they found that as each day passed, their bag of sorrows began to get smaller and lighter, to the happiness of one and all.

जाही विधि राखे राम,
ताही विधि रहिए ॥

(Remain in whatever state Ram is pleased to keep you. Continue to remain in that state happily. Acceptance of Lord's will is the key to happiness)



41. A SMILE WITH A DIFFERENCE

Sailu was a prisoner in the notorious prison of Andaman islands, convicted for life term imprisonment. How many murders had he committed in cold blood of young and beautiful women and girls who were his speciality ! Even now when he walked in the courtyard of the prison he could remember vividly the details - of the last moments of his victims - the pleading terror - stricken eyes, the enticing faces, the helpless wailings and the flailing of their hands helplessly none of which ever evoked any response or touched a single chord in his heart. How greater he was than even the sages like Viswamitra who succumbed easily to the bewitching glances of the divine damsels (nymphs) !

He was sent to the prison in Andaman as he had been declared the most dangerous criminal. This prison had a reputation that no man had ever been successful in scaling the walls and none of the persons who had gone in was ever known to have come out of it alive. Sailu had no base motive for his killings. His murders were purely as a matter of hobby and he had perfected

them to a fine art. Sailu was having his usual morning walk towards one corner of the courtyard where all the rubbish - empty bottles, rusted tins, dried leaves, twigs and fallen branches of trees etc. had all been accumulated and had become a big mound - which had never been swept or cleaned up for a number of years. Suddenly Sailu stopped dead in his tracks. He saw a tiny new born girl child nestling among the fallen leaves, with eyes gleaming like twin stars lying on his path. Perhaps it was the wages of sin of some female prisoner from the adjoining ward who might have had some affair with one of the jail attendants and had thrown it in the rubbish heap. The huntsman got a nice victim a long time after his retirement. The muscles of Sailu's face visibly hardened. A cruel smile played on his lips. His eyes were gleaming avariciously with a wild glee just like that of a tiger bending over a prey savouring it with its glance and gloating over its luck.

Sailu lifted up his booted right leg with the precision of a master just over the throat of the tiny tot. Just one smash and the victim would be crushed to pulp.

At that moment he saw the long beautiful throat of the child. It excited him and he remembered the nylon cord lying in the secret pocket of his pant, which had given the embrace of death to the necks of many a victim in the past. That is why he was better known to the world as 'The Strangler'. In that moment of indecision, Sailu saw the child opening its eyes and staring at him straight and fearless. Slowly a tiny smile creased the face of the child. While smiling, it opened its rosy mouth slightly. Sailu was spell - bound and paralysed. He stood still with his legs raised like Lord Nataraja. He continued to stare at the child unbelievably. There was an invitation of undaunted pure love in the smiling eyes of the child. A tirade of divine compassion full of unstinting and unconditional love was gushing forth from behind the eyes of the child. Sailu sat by the side of the child and playfully put his own little finger in its mouth. The child sucked it greedily. Sailu understood that it was hungry. As a prisoner, milk was inaccessible. He remembered that some broth from his lunch was still left in his mug in the room. He hurried to his room and brought it. He dipped his finger into the broth and allowed the child

to suck it. Sailu was unable to understand the feelings which made him to do these actions involuntarily. Sailu felt that he was a stranger to himself. He could not decipher what happened to him and why. Tenderness and mercy were words outside his vocabulary. He went to his room, tore off some cloth from underneath his own bed, plucked off some cotton from the inside of his bed and took them to the child. He wrapped up the child to protect it from the cold at night. It was time for his room to be locked up at night and he rushed back to his room.

In the morning he was late as he was allowed to come out after the parade and breakfast only. He brought with him a little diluted porridge in his canister and gave little by little to the child through a folded leaf. When he came to the secret lair he was surprised to see that a number of small birds were sitting around the child and they all flew away in terror on seeing him. His second surprise was that the child had never once wept and if only it had wept, the attention of the warders on the security staff would surely have been attracted. The second day he had been able to tear

off linen - lining of his own coat and bring it with him so that he was able to replace the soiled clothes of the child with fresh ones. Whatever free time he had, he began to spend with the child - caring to her, fondling her etc. The birds also in due course gathered courage to come, sit in his lap, on shoulders, head and all over him and took pleasure in watching the child for hours. A Hindi couplet which he had studied while a boy of eight years came to the mind of Sailu - "The one on whom the Lord's protective hand is there, can never be killed by anybody."¹²

After about a week, one day when he came to the child he found that the child had high fever. The child's body was burning hot, eyes were closed and its face was withered-like. He did not know what to do. He suddenly remembered the days as a young child when he was made by his mother to kneel down and recite some prayers to the Lord. He sat down by the child and an improvised prayer began to flow from his mouth :

१२ जाके राखे साइयाँ मार सके न कोय ।

“Lord, if ever you exist, this is the time when you should come to my succour. Who would believe in your compassion unless you demonstrate it in deserving cases? I want nothing for myself. Please rescue this innocent child who has been unfortunate from its very birth. I won't mind if I am to trade my life for this child's. So help me God.”

Sailu was sobbing helplessly. Suddenly he heard a voice from behind - “Babu. How long can you look after the child like this?” He turned round and saw a prison warden standing behind him and looking at the child. For a moment he froze up and thought of throttling the throat of the warden but it was not going to solve the problem. The warden was an old man and had a vermilion mark on his forehead. His eyes were kind. The warden who divined the thought of Sailu hurried with his explanation :- “Don't worry, Babu. I will not give you away. Thirty years back, my wife gave birth to a child but both of them died. This child is ill and you cannot treat it. I shall smuggle this child out in my bag and take it to a doctor. The child will grow up in my house as my brother's child and

my recently - widowed sister-in-law will stay with me and look after it. From time to time I shall bring the child, with me, into the prison so that you could spend your spare time with it". Tears came out of Sailu's eyes and he fell at the feet of the warden.

Who can understand the ways of God who could transform the heart of a hardened criminal in a moment and provide refuge to an abandoned child? In the scriptures the Divine Mother is depicted, inter alia, with one of the hands holding a lasso - like noose for bringing back her truant children who have lost their way. There is no being in the world who is beyond the pale of the grace of the ever - merciful Mother. Glory be to Her.

Hari om