

Letters from
Sri Ramanasramam
VOLUMES I, II
&
Letters from and Recollections of
Sri Ramanasramam

By
SURI NAGAMMA

Translated by
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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

During the closing years of Sri Ramana Maharshi's bodily existence, his silent radiance and incomparable teachings attracted thousand of seekers to his Ashram in South India. Suri Nagamma was the chosen instrument to cast the immortal sayings of this illumined, divine personality onto paper and to paint an exquisite picture of a Rishi's life in modern times.

She did this in the form of 273 letters to her brother, Sri D. S. Sastri, who translated them from Telugu for the benefit of the English-reading public. They cover the last five years of the Master's earthly life, and are of particular relevance because they were shown to Bhagavan prior to being mailed. There is no other book from this period that captures so well the enlightened personality and profound sayings of the Master. These recordings will certainly guide seekers for countless generations.

One hundred and thirty-five letters were translated into English and first published as Volume I in 1962. Another 106 letters were added to this and published in 1970. In this 2006 edition of *Letters from Sri Ramanasramam*, we have included an additional thirty-one letters that were published by the Ashram in 1978, under the title, *Letters from and Recollections of Sri Ramanasramam*. The twenty-eight 'Recollections of Sri Ramanasramam' from this book have

NOTE: Volume II was published in 1969. Both the volumes were combined and published as a single volume for the first time in 1970. In this edition, *Letters From and Recollections of Sri Ramansramam* have been added.

also been added at the end of this volume, providing a complete collection of Suri Nagamma's remarkable description of the days she spent at the feet of the Master.

Another book written by Suri Nagamma and published by the Ashram as *My Life at Sri Ramanasramam* is mostly autobiographical and will certainly be of interest to the sincere reader.

INTRODUCTION

(TO VOLUME I)

SRI RAMANASRAMAM is a unique institution. Its inmates are not given specific instructions as to what they should do or should not do; they are left to fend for themselves and to absorb whatever they can from the calm and peaceful atmosphere of the Ashram.

Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi preached silence by observing it himself. At sunrise and at sunset every day, Vedic hymns were recited in his presence ending with “*Nakarmana naprajaya dhanena thyagenaike amrutatvamanasuh,*” which means that *moksha* (deliverance) is attained, not by *karma* (action) or *praja* (family) or *dhana* (wealth), but by renouncing every one of them. Ashramites aspiring for spiritual advancement were thus taught to learn and practice Self-enquiry and renunciation. They sat in silence at the holy feet of Bhagavan, imbibing the lessons of silence. Bhagavan spoke occasionally to the Ashramites and also to casual visitors on spiritual matters. On such occasions, a few devotees recorded whatever he spoke; and amongst them, Nagamma was one.

Nagamma had no school education worth mention and does not know any language other than her mother tongue, Telugu. During her early years, owing to domestic calamities and consequent enforced solitude, she studied books of ancient lore and thereby acquired some literary knowledge which resulted in her writing a few books in prose and poetry. When, however, she became an Ashramite, she renounced everything including her literary activities. Sitting at the feet

of the Master, day in and day out, she felt an irresistible urge to record the discussions devotees were having with Bhagavan and, as she began recording them, found that that work was a sort of *sadhana* for herself. She began writing them in the shape of letters in Telugu to her brother in Madras. 273 letters were thus written. Amongst them, the Ashram published the first seventy-five letters during the lifetime of Bhagavan and they were read out in his presence (*Sri Ramanasrama Lekhalu* in Telugu). The remaining 198 letters were published subsequently in four different volumes.

I read these letters over and over again on different occasions but never did I realise the depth of wisdom and knowledge contained in the cryptic sayings of Bhagavan until I had to sit up and translate them. I have also found throughout the letters the great trials and tribulations Nagamma had undergone in trying to live up to the high ideals of the Ashram. The letters are a veritable mine of information presented in a simple and easily understandable manner and are well worth a careful study, not only by the spiritual aspirant but also by the lay reader.

Some years back, at the suggestion of Mr. Arthur Osborne, an ashramite, and with his active help, I began translating these letters into English, but could not complete the work for want of time. When recently, the Ashramam Manager-President urged me to finish the work, I did so and am glad they are now being published.

‘RAMANA NILAYAM’,
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D. S. SASTRI

1st June 1962.

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LETTERS FROM SRI RAMANASRAMAM (TRANSLATED FROM TELUGU)

21st November, 1945

(1) THE SON IS BEHOLDEN TO THE FATHER

Brother, you have asked me to write to you from time to time whatever striking happens in Sri Bhagavan's presence and what Sri Bhagavan says on such occasions. But am I capable of doing so? Anyway, I will make an attempt and am beginning this very day. The attempt will succeed only if Bhagavan's Grace is on it.

The day before yesterday being full moon, the usual *Deepotsava* (festival of lights) was celebrated on a grand scale. This morning Sri Arunachaleswarar started for *giri pradakshina* (going round the hill) with the usual retinue and devotees and accompaniment of music. By the time the procession reached the Ashram gate, Sri Niranjanananda Swami (the *Sarvadhikari*) came out with Ashram devotees, offered coconuts and camphor to Sri Arunachaleswarar, and paid homage when the procession was stopped and the priests performed *arati* (waving of the lights) to the God. Just then Sri Bhagavan happened to be going towards the *Gosala* (cowshed) and seeing the grandeur he sat down on the pial near the tap by the side of the book depot. The *arati* plate offered to Arunachaleswarar

was brought to Bhagavan by Ashram devotees and Sri Bhagavan took a little *Vibhuti* (holy ashes) and applied it to his forehead, saying in an undertone “*Appakku Pillai Adakkam*” (The son is beholden to the father). His voice seemed choked with emotion as he spoke. The expression on his face proved the ancient saying “*bhaktipoornathaya Jnanani*” (the culmination of devotion is knowledge). Sri Bhagavan is Lord Siva’s son. Sri Ganapati Muni’s saying that he is Skanda incarnate, was confirmed. It struck us that Bhagavan was teaching us that since all creatures are the children of Ishwara, even a *Jnani* should be beholden to Ishwara.

We can never tell how pregnant with meaning are the words of Mahatmas. You ask me to write somehow, but how can I convey the exquisite beauty of his utterances? How can I describe adequately? I wrote in a recent poem that every word that falls from his lips is scripture. Why talk of his words alone? If one has the ability to understand, his very gaze and gait, his action and inaction, inhaling and exhaling — everything about him is full of meaning. Have I the capacity to understand and interpret all this? With full faith in Sri Bhagavan’s grace, I shall write to you whatever occurs to me, serving Sri Bhagavan with the devotion of the squirrel to Sri Rama.

SISTER

22nd November, 1945

(2) AHAM SPHURANA

Yesterday a Bengali Swami in ochre robes by name Hrishikesanand came here. This morning from 8-30 to

11-00 Bhagavan continuously discussed spiritual matters with him. That voice flowed full of nectar and uninterruptedly like the waters of the Ganges. How can my pen keep pace with that great flow? That *amrit* (nectar) can only be drunk deep with the hand of devotion: how can it be gathered and conveyed on paper? When Sri Bhagavan was relating his experiences in Madurai of the vision of death, these eyes were incapable of taking in the radiance of his personality, these ears of grasping the full wisdom of his words. It is natural for the enthusiasm of one who relates an incident to reflect the level of intelligence of him who listens.

I should have given you a more detailed account of the questions asked by the Swami and the replies given by Bhagavan; only at present the place reserved for ladies in the hall is rather far from Bhagavan and, as I happened to be sitting at the back, I could not hear properly all that was being discussed. I did however hear one thing clearly. Bhagavan said, "In the vision of death, though all the senses were benumbed, the *aham sphurana* (Self-awareness) was clearly evident, and so I realised that it was that *awareness* that we call 'I', and not the body. This Self-awareness never decays. It is unrelated to anything. It is Self-luminous. Even if this body is burnt, it will not be affected. Hence, I realised on that very day so clearly that *that was 'I'.*"

Many more such things were said but I could not follow or remember them, and so I am not able to write any more about them. There have been several discussions as this before. I am only sorry I have let slip such innumerable gems. Please excuse my laziness and indifference in not writing to you even though you have been asking me all these days to write.

23rd November, 1945

(3) QUARREL BETWEEN UMA AND MAHESWARA

This afternoon, while Viswanath was sitting near Bhagavan along with other devotees, Bhagavan was somehow reminded of an old widow and began to speak about her as follows: (I afterwards learnt that she is the younger sister of Muthu Krishna Bhagavathar who received Sri Bhagavan with kindness and gave him food at Kilur Agraharam.) “That good lady not only gave me a hearty meal, but also, with a loving heart, gave me a parcel of sweetmeats offered as *naivedya* (offerings to God) to the household God, saying, ‘My dear boy, keep this with you carefully and eat the sweetmeats on the way.’ She came to see me twice while I was in Virupaksha Cave and used to say, ‘My dear boy, look what a state you are in! Your body is golden and you do not even wrap a cloth round it.’” When he spoke in this strain about her motherly affection, I could see that Bhagavan was overflowing with love. His voice was choked with emotion. That sight reminded me of the saying that the heart of a *Jnani* is as soft as butter, and once more of the old saying, “*bhakti poornathaya Jnanam*” (The culmination of devotion is knowledge).

Sometime back, while reading that portion in *Arunachala Purana* where Gautama was extolling Amba, Bhagavan’s eyes were flooded with tears, his voice faltered and he put the book aside and sank into silence. Whenever any incident full of love takes place, or whenever passages saturated with *bhakti* are read, we often see Bhagavan thus overwhelmed with emotion. As one goes on observing, one gets confirmed in the view that *prema* and *bhakti* (devotion) are merely different aspects of *jnana* (knowledge).

About a week ago, a story appeared in the magazine *Hindu Sundari* under the heading “*Paachikalu*” (dice). It seems it was taken from the *Skanda Purana*. Once, even Parvati and Parameswara succumbed to the quarrel-mongering of Narada. “Lakshmi and Vishnu play dice, so why not you?” said Narada, and egged them on to play. Parvati was enthusiastic over the idea and persuaded Siva to play dice with her. In the game, Siva lost and Parvati was puffed up with pride and spoke slightly of him. That is the legend.

After reading it, Bhagavan, his heart full of *bhakti*, asked me, “Have you read this story?” When I said, “Yes, Bhagavan,” he said with a voice choked with feeling, “The holy festival which is annually performed here on Sankranti day, deals mainly with this quarrel between Uma and Maheswara.”

You know, every year, the divine marriage festival is celebrated here and during those days, if anybody were to speak about the festival in Sri Bhagavan’s presence, Bhagavan would usually remark with great feeling, “This is the marriage festival of Father and Mother.” You know the lives of *Mahatmas* are full of peculiar incidents. They express in their faces whatever *rasa* (feeling) is appropriate to the occasion. But what can one say in the presence of the all pervading *vijnana rasa* which integrates all the other *rasas*?

24th November, 1945

(4) MARRIAGES

Yesterday I wrote to you about Bhagavan talking sometimes of the marriage festival of “Father and Mother.”

Not only that, but whenever devotees bring newly wedded couples in their family to pay homage at the lotus feet of Sri Bhagavan, he blesses them with his wonted gracious smile; he listens with interest to all the various incidents of the marriage. If you observe Bhagavan's face on such occasions, you can see the same amusement which our elders used to show when they witnessed the dolls' marriages that we performed in our childhood days.

Prabhavati got married not long ago. It must have been about a year back. For about two years before her marriage she was staying here. She is a girl from Maharashtra, good-looking and cultured. She wanted to be a great *bhakta* (devotee) like Saint Meerabai and so used to sing and dance and say that she would never marry, and she would don ochre garments and behave like a naughty child before Sri Bhagavan. Bhagavan knew that her naughtiness would not leave her until she got married. At last somehow she did get married. Immediately after that the bride and bridegroom came in their wedding attire with their relatives and offerings of fruits and flowers and bowed down before Bhagavan.

After a stay of two or three days she came one morning at 8 o'clock with her husband seeking Bhagavan's blessings before leaving to set up home in her husband's place. Squirrels were playing about Bhagavan's sofa and peacocks were wandering outside the hall. There were not many people; it was calm and quiet in the hall, the young man bowed down to Bhagavan with awe and respect, took leave of him and stood waiting at the side of the doorway. With downcast looks and bubbling shyness and tearful eyes, the beloved child of the Ashram, while waiting there for Bhagavan's permission, looked like Shakuntala trying to tear herself away from the Kanva Ashram. Bhagavan nodded his head in token of permission, and then she bowed down to him. No sooner had she crossed the threshold than

Bhagavan remarked, looking at me, "It was only yesterday, she had the chapter of Krishnavatar in *Bhagavata* copied out by Sundaresa Iyer." I said with delight, "When next she comes here, she will come with a child in her arms." Meanwhile she began to sing a full-throated song full of devotion with voice as sweet as a *Kokila* while going round the hall in *pradakshina* (circumambulation). Bhagavan was evidently moved and like Kanva Rishi himself, he said, "Do you hear the hymn from *Mukundamala*?" My eyes were filled with tears.

I went out and gave her my blessings while she again and again prostrated herself to Bhagavan; then I saw her out of the Ashram and returned to the hall. I do not know if you will consider this an exaggeration, but I may tell you that the stories we have read in the *Puranas* are being re-enacted here and now before our very eyes.

25th November, 1945

(5) ON TO SKANDASRAMAM

Tomorrow is the auspicious day fixed for Bhagavan to go to Skandasramam with devotees and hold a feast there. All the brother and sister devotees residing in and around the Ashram were busy the whole day making a fuss about arrangements for the trip. Bhagavan was however sitting as usual, dignified, calm and unconcerned. If all ask him to go, he may do so; if they say do not go, he will stay away. Is there anything for him to pack up or worry about? The *kamandalu* (water bowl), the *karra* (walking stick), the *kaupeena* (loincloth) and the towel over him are all the things about him. The moment he thinks of it he could get ready to start.

Sankaracharya has described only such sages as “*kaupeenavantah khalu bhagyavantah*” (he who wears a loincloth is verily the richest). This Ashram, this programme, these devotees and this paraphernalia are all like a drama enacted on the stage for the benefit of others, but does Bhagavan really need them all? Out of his abundant mercy he is in our midst; thus bound down. By a mere wish, could he not go away freely crossing the seven seas? Remember, his staying with us is our special good luck. I shall write to you again about tomorrow’s happenings.

26th November, 1945

(6) IN SERVICE OF THE SAGE

When I went to the Ashram for the early morning *Veda Parayana* everyone was terribly busy. The kitchen presented a picturesque appearance, some cooking, some cleaning, some giving orders, everyone busy with one thing or another. *Puliyodara, dadhyonnam, pongal, vadai, chips, puries* and *kootu* and ever so many eatables were filled into baskets and sent up the hill. The *Sarvadhikari* does not appear to have had a wink of sleep the whole night. He is the person who has taken all the trouble.

Lord Krishna is reported to have stopped the celebration of the annual Indra *Yajnam* performed by the shepherds and instead arranged for the worship of the Govardhana Giri itself. When you saw the series of baskets going up the hill it appeared as if Sri Ramana had arranged this worship of Arunachala in place of the *vana samaradhana* of the Amala Tree (garden festival) performed annually during the month of Karthika.

After *Veda Parayana*, Bhagavan had his bath and breakfast and started for Skandasramam accompanied by Rangaswami, who is like Nandi to Lord Siva. Leading the way, Bhagavan went up the hill to Skandasramam as if he was going to his own home.

Without giving the least inconvenience to Bhagavan the devotees proceeded in several groups and reached Skandasramam. Aunt Alamelu (sister of Bhagavan) and myself followed. Some other women got to the destination a little late. Being surrounded by the devotees Bhagavan was seated comfortably under the pleasant shade of the trees just in front of the Skandasramam building. This showed what a *Rishiasramam* is generally like. This Ashram was just like Badarikasramam of old as described in *Harivamsam* though the latter could not now be witnessed direct. This Skandasramam like Badarikasramam provided a visual feast with its water coming out of the rocky fountain, resembling the *sandhyarghya jalam* (the oblations at dawn and dusk) of Samyameswara and warblings and melodious notes of the birds sounding like the musical hymns of *Sama Veda* as sung by *rishikumaras* (the sons of seers). Apart from the many *sadhakas* and *sannyasins* present, lawyers and doctors, engineers and artists, newspaper correspondents and poets, songsters and a good many others arrived from Madras, Pondicherry and Villupuram. The young and old, the men and women and all without distinction of high and low, squatted on the ground around Bhagavan looking at him with a fixed gaze. While the Arunagiri abounding in mineral wealth served as the precious jewelled-throne, the clouds adorning the sky served the purpose of *Sveta Chhatram* (the white Umbrella) and the tree grove with innumerable branches acted as *vensamarams* (fans used in deity worship). Sri Bhagavan shone in his glory as an emperor crowned,

while *Prakritikanta* (Nature personified) waved lights to him with its agreeable rays of the sun.

Brother! How can I draw that picture for you? The Maharshi is calm and his serene gaze, coming from the source, pervades all corners. His gentle smile shone like the cool rays of the moon. His words simply rained *amrit*. We sat there like statues without consciousness of the body. The photographers then attended to their job. After 9-30 a.m. the usual daily programme of the Ashram below, relating to mails, newspapers, etc. was gone through as in a Maharaja's durbar. The clouds then increased and the wind blew heavily. The devotees gave Bhagavan a shawl with which he covered his whole body except the face. Then Bhagavan, in his sitting posture, looked like his mother Alamma incarnate. Aunt and myself were of the same opinion. This scene was also photographed.

Sri Bhagavan preached for some time in silence in the "*gurosthu mouna vyakhyanam*" (the Guru explaining by mere silence) way. There may certainly be some pure-hearted souls that could all become "*chhinna samsayah*" (cleared of all doubts). But in my case, my mind ran to the preparations like *puliyodara* and *dadhyonnam*, etc., as it was lunch time. The question was whether everything was offered to the hill or anything was left behind. The doubt was solved after 11-30 in the forenoon. My brethren wished to arrange the delicacies for Bhagavan separately in a comfortable place. But would he agree to that? He got a table arranged by his sofa and feasted there in the midst of all.

After the meal, his sofa was set up on the verandah, which has an iron-grating enclosure. The devotees were at first at a distance but in a few minutes came near to Bhagavan. Aunt Alamelu and I with some other women were seated in an adjacent room looking at Bhagavan through a window just opposite to his lotus feet. He then began to talk, telling

us short stories about his past life on the mountain, relating the arrival of the mother, the construction of Skandasramam, the water supply, the supply of provisions, the rule of the monkey kingdom, the peacock dances, his association with serpents and leopards. During this discourse he greeted a new entrant, the poet Naganarya, by enquiring, “When did you come?” Turning towards me he observed, “Here he comes.” I replied, “Yes.” Then something was recalled to his mind and he said, fixing his resplendent gaze, “There mother had her *nirvana* (left her mortal frame). We made her sit there outside. Still no mark of death was visible in her face. Like one seated in deep *samadhi*, divine light was seen in a holy dance. There, just there, where you are now sitting.”

His enchanting words entered my ears like the sweet note of the *Venu* (the divine flute). I stood at this place worth seeking and heard the words worth hearing. What a glorious day is today!

Kapila liberated Devayani by initiating her into the Reality. Dhruva put Sunita on the path of salvation. Sri Ramana in his turn not only vouchsafed the eternal empire of freedom and bliss to his revered mother but also did the highest honour by installing the Mathrubhuteswara Lingam on her *samadhi* to make her glory permanently extolled in the world.

On hearing the word “Mother” from the mouth of Sri Bhagavan, I was overcome with ecstasy and tears filled my eyes. It sounded as though the words about the mother were uttered to the daughter. *Mahatmas* always honour women. They view woman as the mother and love in perfect form. There is no creation without nature. Before the arrival of the mother there was no cooking in the Ashram. The mother came and gave a hearty meal to the residents. The *agnihotra* (fire) first instituted by the mother does the cooking even today and fills the bellies of thousands of devotees.

I turned round to see the photo of that revered mother but, being disappointed on finding none, said silently within, “O Mother, that brought glory to womanhood in general! We are blessed!” In the meanwhile various kinds of delicacies were served. Half an hour after we ate them, *puri* and *koottu* were given. After helping ourselves we began to go back. After seeing us all off one after another, Bhagavan came down from the throne of Arunagiri accompanied by his attendants and, walking slowly, reached the Ashram at its foot just as the sun sank behind the mountain on the west. Then the routine programme of *Veda Parayana*, etc., was gone through as usual.

క॥ వినవలె కనవలెగా కే

యనువున వ్రాయంగవచ్చు నన్నా । వినుమా

యనుపమ తేజుని మహిమలు

వనజజుడే చెప్పుగాక వశమే నాకున్ ॥

May the powers of the *Mahatma* be heard and seen direct.

Listen! Can they be transcribed in true perspective?

Is it possible for any one to do it?

Let Brahma alone do that job.

27th November, 1945

(7) THE NIKSHEPAM (TREASURE)

I opened yesterday's letter and read it. The march to Skandasramam was undoubtedly a happy trip. But on deep thinking one thing could not but strike my mind. In a song Vinnakota Venkataratnam writes:

“He satisfies the hunger and sends them away; but allows not anybody to see the path to realisation. He behaves

as one attached and non-attached. Having shown the path, he never cares to enquire further.”

These words seem to have come true. So long as we were there in Skandasramam, he spoke on some topic or other and after feeding us to the full, commanded us to disperse. Notice this! By this alone we were overjoyed and upset, losing body-consciousness. The real wealth, the nectar-like treasure must have been hidden by him somewhere in Arunachala. Without allowing us to trace and find out that treasure, he made us forgetful of our real object by administering intoxicants like *puliyodara*, *dadhyonnā* etc. None had opened his lips to ask Bhagavan of that treasure. But the fault really lies with us. This was not the kind of food we really required, but of a different variety, the *ekarasa*, the one without a second. It is said that even a mother never gives anything without being asked. We only silently murmur about some want. But if we yearn for it with genuine hunger, would he not feed us with the spiritual food of everlasting knowledge? He is the ocean of love and sympathy. We didn't know how to ask him for it. How is he affected thereby? He kept his treasure hidden safely in Arunachala as if it were his own house. How striking are the actions of Mahatmas! He always fixes his gaze on *It* through the window. He never becomes unaware of this hidden treasure even for a moment. Is it possible for people like me to find out that treasure? He bestows it on us only when we acquire the requisite merit. It is said that gifts according to one's deserts should be made, and seed according to the nature of the soil should be sown. Though we possess among us such a Bestower as our Guru, we are not able to attain that Treasure, the reason being our own incompetence. What do you say? Is it not true?

28th November, 1945

(8) SERVICE OF ATMA SWARUPA IS ATMA SEVA

During the last two or three months, Bhagavan's personal attendants have been massaging his legs with some medicated oil to relieve the rheumatic pain. Some of the devotees, zealous in attention to Bhagavan's body, also began massaging by turn every half an hour, and this resulted in upsetting the usual Ashram routine.

Would Bhagavan tolerate all this? He was always considerate even to his personal attendants and would never say emphatically "No" to anything; so he said in a casual way, "All of you please wait for a while, I will also massage these legs a little. Should I too not have some of the *punyam* (merit)?" So saying, he removed their hands and began massaging his own legs. Not only was I very much amused at this but what little desire might have still been lurking in me to touch Sri Bhagavan's lotus feet and thus perform *pranam* (salutation) was completely obliterated. Bhagavan's words have a peculiar charm of their own! Look! He too wants a little of the *punyam*! What a delicate hint to those who have the intelligence to take it!

It was about that time that a retired judge of ripe old age said, "Swamiji, I should also be given my share of service to the feet of the Guru." To this Bhagavan replied. "Oh, really? *Atma-vai guruhu!* (Service to Self is service to Guru.) You are now 70 years of age. You to do service to me? Enough of that! At least from now onwards, serve yourself. It is more than enough if you remain quiet."

When one comes to think about it, what greater *upadesa* (teaching) is there than this? Bhagavan says it is enough if

one can remain quiet. It is natural for him to do so, but are we capable of it? However much we try we do not attain that state. What else can we do than depend upon Sri Bhagavan's Grace?

29th November, 1945

(9) SAMATVAM (EQUALITY WITH ALL)

I believe it was about a year back. You know Ramachandra Rao, an Ayurvedic physician? For preparing a medicine that would give strength to Bhagavan's body, he made out a long list of the necessary herbs and ingredients and showed it to Sri Bhagavan. Like a good boy, who would readily obey instructions, Bhagavan went through the whole list, praised the efficacy of the various drugs and finally said, "For whom is this medicine, my dear man?" He said quietly, "For Sri Bhagavan himself." On hearing that, Bhagavan said, "No doubt, you have given me a long list, but where am I to get the money for it? It may cost Rs. 10/-, and whom am I to approach for it?"

Someone quietly said, looking around at the Ashram property, "Whose is all this, Swamiji?"

"Yes, but what have I? If I want a quarter anna, I must go and ask the *Sarvadhikari*. How should I go and ask him? He gives me a little food, if I go there as soon as the bell rings. I also eat along with the others and then come back, and I might be refused food if I was late. Even in being served food, I come last," said Bhagavan. The poor physician trembled with fear and, with folded hands, said, "Swamiji, I just showed you the list and I myself will get the required drugs." Upon

this Bhagavan said, “Oh yes? You will get them? But if that medicine is good for me, it must necessarily be good for all the others here. Can you give it to them also as well as to me?” When some people said, “Why do we want it, Swamiji?” Bhagavan replied, “If people who do physical work don’t need a body-building tonic, how do I who merely sits here and eats? No, no, that can’t be!”

Once before, Dr. Srinivasa Rao told Bhagavan about an Allopathic medicine which gives strength and said that it would be good for Bhagavan if he took it. Bhagavan said, “Yes, that is all right, you are rich and can take anything; but what about me? I am a mendicant. How can I have such a costly medicine?” Then the doctor said, “Bhagavan always declines everything that is offered, but if he agrees to take something, won’t it be forthcoming? Or if not medicines, why not take some nutritious food such as milk, fruit and almonds?”

Bhagavan replied: “All right; but I am a *daridranarayana* (God in the form of the poor and the destitute). How can I afford it? Besides, am I a single individual? Mine is a large family. How can all of them have fruits, milk, almonds, etc.?”

Bhagavan dislikes anything special for himself. He has often told us that if anybody brings eatables and distributes them amongst all he will not mind even if he is left out, but he will feel hurt if the eatables are given to him only and not distributed to others along with him. If he is walking along a path, and some people are coming in the opposite direction, he does not like them to step aside for him but instead he will himself step aside and allow them to pass and, until they do, he will not go a step farther. We should consider ourselves fortunate if we can imbibe even a thousandth part of this spirit of equality and renunciation.

If dull-witted people like me who do not know his ideas give him preferential treatment in matters of food, etc., he excuses a great deal since forbearance is his nature, but when it goes too far he gets disgusted and says, "What am I to do? They have the upper hand, they are the people who serve, I am the one who eats. I must listen to what they say, and eat when they want me to. You see, this is *swamitvam* (life of a Swami). Do you understand?" What more admonition can one want than this?

30th November, 1945

(10) WORLDLY TROUBLES

About two years back, an old couple from Guntur, who have been visiting the Ashram for a long time past, came and stayed here for two months. The gentleman could not stay away from his house and children for more than two months at a stretch; however, with a view perhaps to put the blame on the wife, he approached Bhagavan and said, "I can't bear these family troubles; I told my wife not to come with me, but she has come. Before even two months have elapsed, she says, 'Come on, let us go. There are a lot of things to attend to at home.' I ask her to go alone but she refuses. However much I tell her she does not listen to me. Please, Bhagavan, you at least persuade her to go. Then I shall eat with you and stay on here."

Bhagavan replied jocularly, "Where will you go, my dear man, forsaking your family? Will you fly up into the sky? After all, you have to remain on this earth. Wherever we are, there is the family. I too came away saying I did not

want anything, but see what a big family I have now! My family is a hundred times bigger than yours. You ask me to tell her to go, but if she comes and says, 'where am I to go, Swami? I would rather stay here,' what shall I say to her then? You say you don't want your family, but what shall I do with my family? Where shall I go, if I leave all this?"

The people in the hall were all smiles. The old man squatted on the floor, saying, "Yes, but what does it matter to Bhagavan? He is free from all bonds, and so he can bear the burden of any family however big it may be."

You should see how humorously Bhagavan talks about things. Whatever he says has some teaching for us in it. Devotees like myself have got into the habit of telling Bhagavan about some pain in the leg or stomach or back. A person once came and said, "My eyesight is bad. I cannot see properly. I want Bhagavan's grace for my relief." Bhagavan nodded as usual, and as soon as that person had left, he said, "He says he has pain in the eyes, I have pain in my legs. Whom shall I ask for relief?" We were all taken aback and kept quiet.

1st December, 1945

(11) WHAT IS MEANT BY SAMSARA?

During the early days of my arrival here, on one day at about 3 o'clock in the afternoon, a middle-aged Andhra, who had come recently, asked Bhagavan, "Swami, as I repeat *Rama Namam* (the name of Rama) regularly every morning and every evening for an hour, other thoughts come in, one by one, increase from time to time and ultimately find that I have forgotten my *japam*. What shall I do?"

“At that time catch hold of that name (*Rama Namam*)” said Bhagavan. We all laughed. Poor man! He felt grieved and said, “The reasons for these interruption is the *samsara* (family), is not it? I am therefore thinking of abandoning the *samsara*.” Bhagavan said, “Oh! Is that so? What really is meant by *samsara*? Is it within or without?” “Wife, children and others” he said. “Is that all the *samsara*? What have they done? Please find out first what really is meant by *samsara*. Afterwards we shall consider the question of abandoning them,” said Bhagavan. He could not reply and so kept quiet, crestfallen.

Bhagavan’s heart was full of compassion. With a look full of tender kindness he said, “Supposing you leave your wife and children. If you are here this will become another kind of *samsara*. Supposing you take to *sannyasa*. Another kind of *samsara* comes into existence in the shape of a *karra* (walking stick), *kamandalu* (water bowl) and the like. Why all that? *Samsara* means *samsara* of the mind. If you leave that *samsara*, it will be the same thing wherever you are. Nothing troubles you.”

Poor man! He mustered up some courage and said, “Yes, that is it, Swami. How to give up that *samsara* of the mind?” Bhagavan said, “That is just it; you said you were doing the *japam* of *Rama Namam*. During the train of thoughts, you said you were sometimes reminded of the fact that you had forgotten the *japam* of *Rama Namam*. Try to remind yourself of that fact as often as possible and catch hold of the name of Rama frequently. Other thoughts will then slowly decrease. For the *japam* of *nam* (repeating the name of the Lord) several stages have been prescribed.

उत्तमस्तवादुच्चमन्दतः ।

चित्तजं जपध्यानमुत्तमम् ॥

It is better to repeat the name by the mere motion of the lips than by repeating it aloud; better than that is to repeat it in the mind, and the best is *dhyanam*.

Upadesa Saram, verse 6

2nd December, 1945

(12) “GO THE WAY YOU CAME”

On another occasion, an Andhra youth came and said, “Swami, having a great desire for *moksha* (deliverance) and anxious to know the way thereto, I have read all sorts of books on Vedanta. They all describe it, each in a different way. I have also visited a number of learned people and when I asked them, each recommended a different path. I got puzzled and have come to you; please tell me which path to take.”

With a smile on his face, Bhagavan said, “All right, then, go the way you came.” We all felt amused at this. The poor young man did not know what to say. He waited until Bhagavan left the hall and then with a depressed look turned to the others there appealingly, and said, “Gentlemen, I have come a long way with great hope and with no regard for the expenses or discomfort, out of my ardent desire to know the way to *moksha*; is it fair to tell me to go the way I came. Is this such a huge joke?”

Thereupon one of them said, “No, sir, it is no joke. It is the most appropriate reply to your question. Bhagavan’s teaching is that the enquiry, ‘Who am I?’ is the easiest path to *moksha*. You asked him which way ‘I’ should go, and his saying, ‘Go the way you came,’ meant that if you investigate

and pursue the path from which that 'I' came, you will attain *moksha*."

The voice of a *Mahatma* indicates the truth even when speaking in a light vein. Thereupon the book, "Who am I?" was placed in the hands of the young man who felt astonished at the interpretation, and taking Bhagavan's words as *upadesa*, prostrated himself to Bhagavan and went away.

Bhagavan usually gives us his teachings either in a humorous or a casual way or by way of consolation. During my early days at the Ashram, whenever I felt like going home, I would approach Bhagavan at some time when there were hardly any people present and say, "I want to go home, Bhagavan, but I am afraid of falling back into family muddles." He would reply, "Where is the question of our falling into anything when all comes and falls into us?"

On another occasion, I said, "Swami, I am not yet freed from these bonds." Bhagavan replied, "Let what comes come, let what goes go. Why do you worry?" Yes, if only we could realise what that 'I' is, we should not have all these worries.

3rd December, 1945

(13) AHETUKA BHAKTI (MOTIVELESS DEVOTION)

In August 1944, a Bengali youth in ochre-coloured robes, by name Chinmayananda, a *pracharak* (preacher) of the Hindu religion belonging to the Birla Mandir in Delhi, came here. He had gone round several countries, visited the Aurobindo Ashram and came here with a letter from Dilip Kumar Roy. He is fond of devotional music and has a fine

voice. It was clear from the conversation that he was a follower of the Bhakti cult of Chaitanya. He performed *bhajan* in the presence of Bhagavan four or five times, singing songs in Sanskrit and Hindi. It seems some one who was in charge of a modern *adhyatmic* (spiritual) institution told him that he cannot reach his goal in this life unless he stayed at one place undisturbed.

With a view to find out Bhagavan's opinion in this matter, one day he approached Bhagavan and asked in a general way: "Swami, can *sadhakas* attain this goal in life if they go about the world absorbed in singing songs in praise of God? Or should they stay at one place only for the purpose?" "It is good to keep the mind concentrated on one thing only wherever the person wanders. What is the use of keeping the body at one place only if the mind is allowed to wander?" said Bhagavan. "Is *ahetuka bhakti* (devotion without a motive) possible?" asked that young man. "Yes, it is possible," said Bhagavan. Some time back, when some others also asked the same question during conversation, Bhagavan had replied saying, "Why is it not possible?" The *bhakti* (devotion) of Prahlada and Narada was only *ahetuka bhakti*.

The devotion shown by our Bhagavan towards Arunachala is an example of this type of *bhakti*. During the very first *darshan*, Bhagavan had said, "Oh father! I have come here according to your orders and have surrendered myself to you." Look! Bhagavan says, Lord Arunachala had ordered and that he had come! Why was he ordered and why had he come? Bhagavan had come and had surrendered himself completely. If asked for what purpose he had done all that, what is there to say! See the *bhava* (meaning) in the seventh stanza of *Arunachala Navamani Mala* written by Bhagavan in Tamil. This was translated into Telugu by G. Narasinga Rao. What is the purpose indicated in this

stanza? Nothing. Bhagavan tells us, now and then, that *ahetuka bhakti*, *ananya bhakti*, *poorna bhakti* and the like are synonymous with *jnana* and are not different.

12th December; 1945

(14) CONVENTIONAL RESPECT

One morning, during the usual conversations the topic turned on Bhagavan's mother coming away to live with him and on her manner of life, and Bhagavan spoke to us as follows:

“Mother began coming here frequently and staying with me for long periods. You know I always address even beasts and birds in a respectful manner. In the same way, I used to address Mother also with the respectful form of speech. It then occurred to me that I was doing something hurtful. So I gave up the practice and began addressing her in the familiar way. If a practice is natural and has become habitual you feel uncomfortable at changing it. But anyway what do these bodily things matter?” He spoke with deep feeling and my eyes filled with tears.

Before the dawn of youth appeared on his face he had relinquished all worldly desires, and with Divine desire he hastened to the holy Arunachala where he reigns in the Kingdom of Eternal Bliss. How can one speak of the enormous fortune of that mother, in having had the privilege of being called ‘*Amma*’ (mother) by such a son? In the Vedas, the mother holds the first claim for worship: “*Mathru devo bhava*” (Let mother be your God). Even so, the beauty of it is that Bhagavan felt it unnatural for him

to address her in the respectful form. If he addressed her so, would she not feel hurt? She felt satisfied only if he addressed her as "Mother." Perhaps Bhagavan felt that he ought not to wound her feelings in so small a matter.

"When my Mother passed away I thought I had escaped bondage and could freely move from place to place and live in solitude in some cave or other, but in fact I have now an even greater bondage; I cannot even move out." Bhagavan often speaks in this way. Mother he had only one, but children he has in thousands, so is not this greater bondage? I tell you, the other day, hearing that Skandasramam was being repaired, he went there at noon, along with his attendant Rangaswami, just to see, without telling anybody, intending to return quietly. But what happened? We all went there, wild with excitement and surrounded him, and would not allow him to move. It was only with great difficulty that he managed to return with the whole crowd by about 8 p.m.

A fortnight later, the labourers reported to Bhagavan that they had finished constructing the path to Skandasramam and begged him to have a look at it. Bhagavan said, "We shall see." That morning we all expressed our keen desire to go there. Bhagavan cajoled us, saying, "We will all go there for a picnic some time later." Then in the evening at about 5 o'clock he went out as usual for his walk on the hill and from there slipped away quietly to Skandasramam. As soon as this became known, men and women alike began going up the hill with torches and lanterns regardless of the approaching darkness. It was one thing for people who do not know Bhagavan's ways to follow him up the hill, but I thought that I, who knew how things were, ought not to go. Twice I started to go up and returned after reaching the first turning, but finally I could not resist the temptation to

follow the crowd. Just as the monkey cannot change its nature, however we cajole it, so my mind's natural tendencies reasserted themselves, however much I tried to control them. What is the use of being sorry about it afterwards?

Actually, when all his children came up like that in the darkness, how grieved Bhagavan must have felt that there was no place for them to sit and nothing for them to eat. That is why in his overflowing kindness he later arranged a regular feast for them all there. How could he manage this enormous family but for his wonderful controlling ability? How could he manage to be so detached even in the midst of this big family were he not full of profound peace? Remember, there is nothing beyond the power of the great Master.

29th December, 1945

(15) ECHAMMA'S DEMISE

On the night of Thursday, the 27th, at 2-45, Echamma, who was like a mother to Bhagavan, left her body and attained union with the Almighty at Bhagavan's lotus feet. I feel rather gratified than sorrowful at this news. When I moved from her house to a residence near to the Ashram, she would often say, "I loved you as my child. I thought you would see me out of this world, but you have gone away to a distance. Now you will come to me only after I am dead, to see the body off to the cremation ground, won't you?" When she said this, tears used to well up in her eyes. But it happened just as she had said. I only heard the news of her

death, not of her sickness. There is a saying, “The child is firm as a rock, the mother fragile as shellac.” I am only sorry it came too true in this case.

You remember on the 25th you and your wife presented her with some clothes and she was then busy cooking for guests in the house. That same evening, she was unable to get up and so asked for water and she was given some. After drinking it, she lay quietly and so all the guests left. I am giving you the details as related by her niece who attended on her. After that drink of water she could not talk or eat, but remained bedridden. Next day this news was conveyed to Bhagavan. On the 27th her condition became serious. Telegrams were sent to her relatives. Even though she was almost unconscious she would open her eyes slightly, when anyone called her. At about four in the afternoon one lady wanted to test how far she was really conscious. So she said, “Food does not appear to have been sent to Bhagavan today.” Immediately she heard the word “food” she opened her eyes full and, with an exclamation, cast a questioning look. So as not to disturb her peace of mind, her niece said, “We have sent it,” and she nodded her head in approval. That is real *vrita deeksha* (strict observance of a vow). What can one say of the great mother who would not forget her *kainkarya* (service) to Bhagavan, even though she was in the throes of death!

That is all. At 8 o'clock that evening incoherent sounds were coming out of her mouth, her eyes were glazed and she was clearly in the pangs of death. Her niece came to Bhagavan and brought the news. The Ashram doctor went there, examined her and declared that there was no hope; and then they performed her *jeevaprayaschitham* (last rites). Anyway, after the news was conveyed to Bhagavan, she had not much suffering, the breathing became easier and feebler and she passed away at 2-45 a.m. I came to know of her

illness on Thursday evening and thought I could look her up the next morning but when I came to the Ashram before starting, I heard this sad news. Bhagavan said to me, “Oh, is she dead? I have been waiting to see when she would get away from all these worldly worries. So she has gone away from all these worries. All right, go there and come back.”

I went there along with some devotees. I was overpowered with grief when I saw that body with the face still undimmed. She was undoubtedly a powerful personality and, when I was here alone in my early days, she was my sole support. Though much against her will, I changed my residence, she used to bring me food along with Bhagavan’s whenever I was unwell. In accordance with her previous instructions, I bathed her body in Ganges water, smeared it with *vibhuti* (holy ashes) and put on *rudraksha* beads and then saw her off on her final journey. All her relatives decided that she should be cremated, not buried.

When I prostrated before Bhagavan at 2-30 in the afternoon, he asked, “How did she die? What did they do?” I replied, “They decided on cremation. Her relatives said that she wished her ashes to be buried in her village and a *samadhi* erected over them with a *tulsi* plant for worship.” Bhagavan said, “Yes, yes, that is right. The same was done with Ganapati Sastri and others.” After I sat down, Bhagavan said in a consoling manner, “I told her quite a number of times not to worry about this food but to stop it. But no! She was adamant and refused to take food until she had served Swami. Even today food was sent to me on her account.” I said, “No more now.” “That Mudaliar old lady is still there,” said Bhagavan. When he said this I was overcome with grief and said, “Whenever Echamma gave me something to eat, she used to get angry if I did not eat it then and there.” By this time my eyes were full of tears, and saying, “Yes, yes,”

Bhagavan changed the subject. The earthly life of a devotee who for thirty eight years kept this vow as her talisman and worshipped God has now come to an end.

Another interesting thing: on the evening of the 27th, after *Veda Parayana* and my usual *pradakshina* (going around the hall), when I went in to bow before Bhagavan, I saw him seated motionless in *padmasana*, deeply immersed in *dhyana* and with his hands hanging loose at his side. His eyes were glowing with radiance as if they were two celestial lights and I felt that the spiritual lustre of the universe had come down in a concentrated form in the shape of Bhagavan. I wanted to see it closer and longer but I could not stand the powerful glare and so I merely bowed and came home thinking all the while that there must be some deep significance for that deep meditative state of Bhagavan.

In the night after meals, and the subsequent short discourse with Bhagavan at his bedside, Krishna Bhikshu came to my place with a friend. When I enquired of Ashram news, he said that Bhagavan had been deeply self-absorbed with a radiant and distant look the whole evening, and that there must be something great and unusual about it. We wondered what it could be. Subsequently when we heard the details of Echamma's demise, we found that from 5 p.m. onwards yesterday she was in the throes of death and that at 9 p.m. when the news was communicated to Bhagavan, all her agony ceased and she had a peaceful end of her life. Then we all thought that it was to release this great devotee from her mortal state that Bhagavan had assumed that superb radiant form the previous evening.

(16) THE FIRST BHIKSHA

One afternoon, during casual conversation, Bhagavan got into a reminiscent mood and began telling us as follows:

“There used to be in Gopura Subrahmanyeswara Temple, a *Mouna Swami* (a silent *sadhu*). One morning when I was going about the Thousand-Pillared Mandapam, he came with a friend. He was a *Mouna Swami* and so was I. There was no talk, no greetings. It was soon midday. He made signs to his friend to mean: “I do not know who this boy is, but he appears to be tired; please get some food and give it to him.” Accordingly they brought some. It was boiled rice. Each grain was sized. There was sour water underneath. There was a bit of pickle to go with it. That was the first *bhiksha* given to me by Sri Arunachaleswara. Actually there is not an iota of pleasure in what I eat now. All the meals and sweets (*pancha bhakshya paramanna*) are nothing compared to that food,” said Bhagavan. “Was it on the very first day of Sri Bhagavan’s arrival in that place?” someone asked.

“No, no, the next day. Taking it as the first *bhiksha* given me by Ishwara, I ate that rice and pickle and drank the water given me. That happiness I can never forget,” remarked Sri Bhagavan.

“I believe there is some other story about Sri Bhagavan going to the town for the first time for *bhiksha*,” said one devotee.

“Yes, there used to be one lady devotee. She very often used to bring me some food or other. One day she arranged a feast for all the *sadhus* and pressed me to dine along with them. I signalled her to say that I would not do so and that I would be going out begging. I had either to sit and eat with them all or

go out for *bhiksha*. Yes, it was God's will, I thought, and started out for *bhiksha*. That lady had doubts as to whether I would go out for *bhiksha* or join the feast. She sent a man behind me. As there was no escape I went to a house in the street to the left of the temple and standing in front of it, clapped my hands. The lady of the house saw me and, as she had already heard of me, recognized me and called me in, saying, 'Come in, my son, come in.' She fed me sumptuously saying, 'My boy, I have lost a son. When I see you, you seem just like him. Do come daily like this, my boy.' I subsequently learnt that her name was Muthamma," said Bhagavan.

31st December, 1945

(17) HOW DO YOU KNOW THAT YOU DO NOT KNOW ANYTHING?

During the first week of last month, on one morning, an ignorant traveller came to the Ashram and, after staying here for two or three days, and in accordance with the saying "*satra bhojanam matha nidra*" (eating in choultries, sleeping in mutts) went away to eat and stay elsewhere, but was all the same coming here for some days enjoying the bliss of staying near and having the *darshan* of Bhagavan. Before leaving this town he approached Bhagavan one day with great hesitation and said, in humble tones, "Swami, the people sitting here always ask you something and you give them some replies. When I see that, I also feel tempted to enquire, but I do not know what to ask you. How then can I get *mukti*?"

Bhagavan, looking at him endearingly and smiling, said, "How do you know that you do not know anything?" He said,

“After I came here and heard the questions asked by all these people and the replies Bhagavan is pleased to give them, the feeling that I do not know anything has come upon me.” “Then it is all right. You have found out that you do not know anything; that itself is enough. What more is required?” said Bhagavan. “How to attain *mukti* by that much alone, Swami?” said the questioner. “Why not? There is some one to know that he does not know anything. It is sufficient if you could enquire and find out who that someone is. Ego will develop if one thinks that one knows everything. Instead of that, isn’t it much better to be conscious of the fact that you do not know anything and then enquire how you could gain *moksha*?”

He felt happy at that and went his way. That questioner might or might not have understood the essence of that *Bhagawathvani* (the voice of the Lord) but, for us people here, those words were echoing in our heart of hearts like *mantraksharas* (letters of the gospel).

1st January, 1946

(18) LEOPARDS AND SNAKES

The other day I learnt of one more incident in Bhagavan’s life on the hill and so I am writing to you about it. When Bhagavan was living in Virupaksha Cave, the roar of a leopard was heard from the place where drinking water was available nearby. By the time the scared devotees had gathered some plates and drums in order to make a noise and drive the leopard away, it had drunk the water it required and gone away with one more roar. Bhagavan looked at those frightened devotees and said to them in an

admonishing tone, “Why do you worry so much? The leopard intimated to me by the first roar that she was coming here. After drinking water she told me by another roar that she was going. She went her own way. She never meddled with your affairs. Why are you so scared? This mountain is the home of these wild animals, and we are their guests. That being so, is it right on your part to drive them away?” Perhaps with the intention of relieving them of their fears, Bhagavan added, “A number of *siddha purushas* (holy beings) live on this mountain. It is perhaps with a desire to see me that they come and go, assuming various shapes. Hence, you see it is not right for you to disturb them.”

From that time onwards, the leopard used to come frequently to that place to drink. Whenever the roar was heard, Bhagavan used to say, “There you are! The leopard is announcing her arrival.” Then again he used to say, “The leopard announces her departure.” In this manner he used to be quite at ease with all the wild animals.

One devotee asked Bhagavan whether it is true that, when living on the mountain, he was friendly with snakes, and one snake crawled over his body, one climbed up his leg and so on. In reply, Sri Bhagavan said:

“Yes, it is true. A snake used to come to me in all friendliness. It used to try to crawl on my leg. At its touch my body used to feel as though it was tickled, so I withdrew my leg; that is all. That snake used to come of its own accord and go away.”

2nd January, 1946

(19) WON'T YOU PLEASE HEAR MY SPEECHLESS APPEAL?

You have seen Jagadiswara Sastri, haven't you? When he was here, a dog used to go into the hall with him. It was a particularly intelligent dog. When Sastri or his wife came into Bhagavan's hall, it used to come in and sit like a well-behaved child and go out along with them. It was very keen on living in the house. People did whatever they could to prevent it entering the hall but it was no use.

Once the old couple entrusted it to somebody when they went to Madras and did not return for 15 days. At first, during the first four or five days, it used to search in the halls go round the hall, and then go about all the places which they used to frequent. Having got tired, perhaps disgusted, with those fruitless efforts, one morning at about 10 o'clock it came to Bhagavan's sofa and stood there, staring fixedly at Bhagavan. At that time I was sitting in the front row. Bhagavan was reading the paper. Krishnaswami and others tried to send the dog out by threats, but in vain. I too asked it to go out. No, it wouldn't move. Bhagavan's attention was diverted by this hubbub and he looked that way. Bhagavan observed for a while the look of the dog and our excitement. He then put the paper aside and, as if he had by his silence understood the language of the dog, waved his hand towards it and said, "Why, what is the matter? You are asking where your people have gone? Oh, I see, I understand. They have gone to Madras. They will be back in a week. Don't be afraid. Don't be worried. Be calm. Is it all right? Now, go."

Hardly had Bhagavan completed his instructions, when the dog turned and left the place. Soon after that Bhagavan

remarked to me, “Do you see that? The dog is asking me where its people have gone and when they are returning. However much the people here tried to send it away it wouldn’t move until I answered its questions.”

Once, it seems, the lady of the house punished the dog with a cane for something it had done and locked it up in a room for half a day. After it was let out, it came straight to Bhagavan as if to complain against her and stayed at the Ashram without going to their house for four or five days. Bhagavan arranged to feed the dog and admonished the lady thus: “What have you done to the dog? Why is it angry with you? It came and complained to me. Why? What have you done?” Finally she admitted her fault in Bhagavan’s presence and, with a good deal of cajoling, got the dog to go home.

3rd January, 1946

(20) A SQUIRREL

Do you know how much liberty our brother squirrel has with Bhagavan? Two or three years back, there used to be one very active and mischievous fellow amongst the squirrels. One day it so happened that when he came for food, Bhagavan was reading and otherwise occupied and so delayed a bit in giving him food. That mischievous fellow would not eat anything unless Bhagavan himself held it to his mouth. Perhaps because of his anger at the delay he abruptly bit Bhagavan’s finger, but Bhagavan still did not offer him food. Bhagavan was amused and said, “You are a naughty creature! You have bit my finger! I will no longer

feed you. Go away!” So saying he stopped feeding the squirrel for some days.

Would that fellow stay quiet? No, he began begging of Bhagavan for forgiveness by crawling hither and thither. Bhagavan put the nuts on the window sill and on the sofa and told him to help himself. But no, he wouldn't even touch them. Bhagavan pretended to be indifferent and not to notice. But he would crawl up to Bhagavan's legs, jump on his body, climb on his shoulders and do ever so many things to attract attention. Then Bhagavan told us all, “Look, this fellow is begging me to forgive him his mischief in biting my finger and to give up my refusal to feed him with my own hands.”

He pushed the squirrel away for some days saying, “Naughty creature! Why did you bite my finger? I won't feed you now. That is your punishment. Look, the nuts are there. Eat them all.” The squirrel would not give up his obstinacy either. Some days passed and Bhagavan had finally to admit defeat because of his mercy towards devotees. It then occurred to me that it was through pertinacity that devotees attained salvation.

That squirrel did not stop at that. He gathered together a number of his gang and began building a nest in the roof of the hall exactly above the sofa. They began squeezing into the beam bits of string, coconut fibre and the like. Whenever there was wind, those things used to fall down; so people got angry and began to drive them away. Bhagavan however used to feel very grieved at the thought that there was not sufficient room for the squirrels to build a nest and that the people in the hall were driving them away. We have only to see Bhagavan's face on such occasions to understand the depth of his love and affection for such beings.

When I told Bhagavan that I had written to you about the squirrels in my usual letter, he remarked with evident

pleasure: “There is a big story about these squirrels. Some time back they used to have a nest near the beam above me. They had children and then grand children and thus the members of their family grew very large. They used to play about on this sofa in whatever way they liked. When I went out for my usual walk, some little squirrels used to hide under the pillow and when on my return, I reclined on the pillow, they used to get crushed. We could not bear the sight of this, and so Madhava drove the squirrels out of the nest and sealed it by nailing some wooden boards over it. There are lots of incidents about them if one cared to write them.”

4th January, 1946

(21) DHARMA IS DIFFERENT FROM DHARMA-SUKSHMA

People occasionally bring to Bhagavan *prasad* consisting of *Vibhuti* (holy ashes) and *Kumkum* (vermilion) from various places such as Tiruchendur, Madurai and Rameswaram. Bhagavan accepts it with the greatest reverence saying, “Look, Subrahmanya from Tiruchendur has come. See there, Meenakshi from Madurai has come. Here is Ramalingeswara from Rameswaram. Here is this God, there is that God.” Others bring holy water saying, “This is from the Ganga, that is from the Gouthami, this is from the Cauvery, that is from the Krishna.” Whenever such water is brought in Bhagavan accepts it, saying, “Here is Mother Ganga, there is Gouthami, this is the Cauvery and that is Krishnaveni.”

At first this used to puzzle me. When Ramana himself is the embodiment of that Eternal Being, who is the origin

of all *thirthas* (holy waters) and who is shining in his abode as himself, how foolish of these people to bring him *prasad* of water from *thirthas* as if they had done a great thing! Are they mad? I wondered!

Sometime back someone brought sea water (*sagara thirtha*). Bhagavan accepted it saying, "Upto now all the rivers have come to me, but not the *sagara*, the ocean. This is the first time it has come. That is very good. Give it here."

When I heard that, I suddenly remembered all the ancient lore where it is stated that all *thirthas* (rivers), *samudras* (seas) and *devatas* go to such Sages as Ramana to pay respects to their lotus feet. I then used to feel that they were all hyperboles because stones and waters cannot walk to the places where great people live. But now, what I find is that without anybody desiring it, all these holy waters, holy ashes and the like are brought by *bhaktas* and Bhagavan accepts them, saying, "They have come." I could now see from incidents that occur in the immediate presence of the *Mahatmas* that one should read the inner meaning of things carefully. If that is done, it becomes clear that *dharma* is one thing and *dharma-sukshma* (the underlying principle of *dharma*) is another.

Since Bhagavan accepts all these waters with evident pleasure, it should be interpreted as his accepting the service of all *thirthas* and *prasadas*. This inner meaning occurred to me when *sagara thirtha*, i.e., holy water from the sea, was brought in. You remember that when he was living in a cave Bhagavan said when a leopard came, "Many who belong to the class of *siddhas* (realised souls) come to see me in different forms."



8th January, 1946

(22) MOKSHA

A few days ago, a lady, a recent arrival, came into the hall at about 3 p.m. and sat down. All the time she was there, she was trying to get up and ask something of Sri Bhagavan. As Bhagavan appeared not to have noticed her, and was reading a book, she waited for a while. As soon as Bhagavan put the book aside, she got up, approached the sofa and said without any fear or hesitation, "Swami, I have only one desire. May I tell you what it is?" "Yes," said Bhagavan, "What do you want?" "I want *moksha*," she said. "Oh, is that so?" remarked Bhagavan. "Yes, Swamiji, I do not want anything else. Is it enough if you give me *moksha*," said she. Suppressing a smile that had almost escaped his lips, Bhagavan said, "Yes, yes, that is all right; that is good." "It will not do if you say that you will give it sometime later. You must give it to me here and now," she said. "It is all right," said Bhagavan. "Will you give it now? I must be going," said she. Bhagavan nodded.

As soon as she left the hall, Bhagavan burst out laughing and said, turning towards us, "She says that it is enough if only *moksha* is given to her. She does not want anything else." Subbalakshamma, who was seated by my side, took up the thread of the conversation and quietly said, "We have come and are staying here for the same purpose. We do not want anything more. It is enough if you give us *moksha*." "If you renounce, and give up everything, what remains is only *moksha*. What is there for others to give you? It is there always. That *is*," said Bhagavan. "We do not know all that. Bhagavan himself must give us *moksha*." So saying she left the hall. Looking at the attendants who were by his side, Bhagavan

remarked, "I should give them *moksha*, they say. It is enough if *moksha* alone is given to them. Is not that itself a desire? If you give up all the desires that you have, what remains is only *moksha*. And you require *sadhana* to get rid of all those desires."

The same *bhava* (idea) is found in *Maharatnamala*:

वासनातानवं ब्रह्म मोक्ष इत्यभिधीयते

It is said that the complete destruction of *vasanas* is Brahman and *moksha*.

16th January, 1946

(23) WORSHIP OF THE COW

You know yesterday was the animal Festival of Cows, *Mattu Pongal*. On that day, all over the country, domestic animals are decorated and fed with *pongal*. In the Ashram also yesterday morning, several varieties of sweetmeats were prepared and, with garlands made of those sweetmeats, *puja* to Nandi was performed by drawing ornamental lines with lime powder before the cowshed, by tying plantain trees around the pillars, by hanging garlands of green leaves, by bathing all the cows, by placing *tilakam* (vermilion marks) on their foreheads and garlands around their necks, and by feeding them with *pongal*. Finally *puja* was performed to the chanting of *mantras* and the breaking of coconuts.

Lakshmi is the queen amongst the cows, is she not? You should have seen her grandeur! Her forehead was smeared with turmeric powder, and adorned with *Kumkum*. Around her neck and horns were hung garlands made of

roses and several other flowers, as also those made of edibles, and sweets. Besides these, garlands made out of bananas, sugarcane pieces and coconut kernels were put around her neck. Not satisfied with these, the person in charge of the animals brought from his own house another garland made out of some savoury preparation like *murukku* and placed it on the neck of Lakshmi. When Niranjananandaswami asked him what it was for, he replied with justifiable pride that that was his *mamool* (yearly custom) to do so. When I saw Lakshmi thus decorated like Kamadhenu, I was overjoyed and felt extremely happy.

Bhagavan, who went out at 9-45 a.m., came to the *Gosala* (cowshed) at 10 a.m. to shower his blessings on his children there. While he sat on a chair by the side of Lakshmi, enjoying the sight of the beautiful decorations on her, the devotees did *arati* with camphor, chanted Vedic hymns such as “*Na Karmana*” etc. Some devotees said that they would take a photo of Lakshmi. She was then led into the middle of the *Gosala* after asking the devotees who had gathered into a big group, to step aside. Lakshmi stood there, tossing her head in a graceful manner. Bhagavan also got up, came, and stood by the side of Lakshmi, patting her head and body with his left hand. And when he said, “Steady, please, be steady,” Lakshmi slowly closed her eyes and remained absolutely quiet as if she were in a *samadhi* (trance). Sri Ramana then placed his left hand on her back, and with his walking stick in his right, stood in a dignified manner by the side of Lakshmi, when the photographer took two or three photos. One must see that sight to appreciate its grandeur fully. Another photo was taken when Bhagavan was feeding her with his own hands fruits and sweetmeats. You can see the photos when you come here. I was reminded of Lord Krishna in Repalle when I saw the grand spectacle of Bhagavan standing in the

midst of the cows in the *Gosala*. Not only this, in the *Brahma Vaivārtha Purāna* it is stated that Krishna is the *Paramatma*, the Lord of the cow world, and that Radha is *Prakṛiti*. The theory in that *Purāna* is that Radha and Madhava are *Prakṛiti* and *Puruṣa* — the inseparable pair. Standing with his body bent slightly to the left, and with his left hand on Lakshmi, and with the walking stick in his right hand, looking as if it was a flute, with a sparkling smile on his face like the foam on the waves of the ocean of *ananda*, with a compassionate look towards the group of devotees that had gathered along with the herd of cows. It is no surprise if in Sri Ramana, the embodiment of grace, one were reminded of Lord Krishna Himself, standing with crossed legs, resting on his toes and playing exquisitely on the flute. If that Krishna is Ramana, what are we to say of our Lakshmi who appears to have been completely oblivious of this world with her ears hanging down, with her eyes closed and enjoying transcendental bliss caused by the touch of Bhagavan's hands on her body? Shall I say that she is the embodiment of *Prakṛiti* in the shape of Radha? Otherwise, how could she understand human language?

It is no exaggeration to say that we, with human eyes, saw in that congregation what is beyond human sight — a world of cows, and its overlords, *Prakṛiti* and *Puruṣa*. You would perhaps laugh at my foolish fantasies, but take it from me, that sight was so lovely. Every year this worship of the cow is being performed, but this year Bhagavan gave us this blissful *darshan* by standing by the side of Lakshmi, because the devotees said that they would take a photo of Lakshmi. What a great day! I am writing to you, because I just could not contain my joy.

17th January, 1946

(24) A PAIR OF PIGEONS

One morning about September or October 1945, a devotee from Bangalore, by name Venkataswami Naidu, brought a pair of pigeons and gave them to the Ashram as an offering. Seeing that, Bhagavan said, "We have to protect them from cats, etc., is it not? Who will look after them? A cage is required, food must be given. Who will do all that here? It is better for him to take them away."

The devotee said he would make all the required arrangements and requested that they should be kept in the Ashram. He placed the pair of pigeons in Bhagavan's lap. With overflowing affection and love, Bhagavan drew them near him, saying, "Come dears! Come! You won't go back? You wish to stay on here? All right, stay on; a cage will be coming." As he thus petted them with affection, they became absolutely quiet, closed their eyes as if they were in *samadhi*, and stayed on there without moving this way or that. Bhagavan thereupon keeping them on his lap stopped petting them, and with his gracious eyes fixed on them, sat in silence, deeply immersed in *samadhi*.

It took nearly an hour for the devotees in the Ashram to find and bring a cage for them. The wonder of it is, all through that one hour, the pigeons sat in Bhagavan's lap without moving one way or the other as if they were a pair of yogis in *samadhi*. What could we say about their good fortune? Is it not the result of their *punya* in previous births that this great sage should seat them on his lap, cajole them by patting them from the head down to the feet with his hands, bless them and thereby bestow on them divine bliss? Not only that, when the cage was brought in, Bhagavan

patted them cajolingly and put them in the cage, saying, "Please go in. Be safe in the cage." Then Bhagavan said, "In the *Bhagavatham*, pigeons also are stated to be in the hierarchy of Gurus, in the chapter relating to *Yadu Samvadam*. I remember having read that story long ago."

While the pigeons were on his lap, one devotee came and asked, "What is this?" Bhagavan said, without attachment but assuming responsibility, "Who knows? They come, and decline to go back. They say they will stay here only. Another family has come up on me, as if what I already have is not enough."

Dear brother, it is very interesting to witness these strange happenings. It is said that in olden days Emperor Bharatha renounced the world and performed great *tapas* (meditation), but towards the end of his life he could think only of his pet deer and so was born a deer in his next life. In *Vedanta Sastras*, in the *Bharatham* and *Bhagavatham* there are many stories like this. Bhagavan had told us long ago: "Any living being that comes to me, it is only to work out the balance of its karma. So don't prevent anyone from coming to me." When I looked at those pigeons, it occurred to me that they might be great saints who had fallen from their austerity in meditation; otherwise, how could they get into the lap of Bhagavan, a privilege which is impossible for ordinary people? In canto V of *Bhagavatham* there is a verse which says that people born in Bharatavarsha are blessed, since Hari has come there a number of times as an *avatar* and blessed them by His precepts, help and guidance. The above incident is an illustration of this, is it not? What do you say?

18th January, 1946

(25) BABY CHEETAHS

About a year ago, some person who was rearing two baby cheetahs brought them into Bhagavan's presence. When they were fondled and given milk, not only did they move freely amongst the people in the hall, but they got on to the sofa with Bhagavan's welcome and slept soundly thereon. One of the Ashram devotees took a photo of that unusual group. From about 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. Bhagavan confined himself to one end of the sofa keeping the cubs on the sofa in the same position all the time. They woke up afterwards and were there till about 4 p.m., moving about freely in the hall. Once again, before Bhagavan went up the hill at the usual time, photos were taken with the cheetah cubs on the sofa and also on the table in front of the sofa. They were published in the *Sunday Times* later.

The wonder of it was that even the cheetah cubs lay down happily on the sofa, overpowered by sleep induced by the touch of Bhagavan's hands. While they were there, the squirrels came and ate nuts and the sparrows came and ate broken rice, as usual. In olden days, when animals and birds of all sorts moved about together without enmity in any place, people used to think that it was perhaps a Rishi Ashram. There are stories like this related in the *Puranas*. But here we see the same thing before our very eyes. When I read out to Bhagavan yesterday's incident about the pigeons, and the worship of the cow, Bhagavan said, "Many similar things often happened here previously. But who was there to record them at that time?"

When the first edition of this book (in Telugu) came out and was being read in the presence of Bhagavan, one of

the devotees who heard the above story said, addressing him, “Is it a fact that when you were in Pachiamman Koil somebody got frightened and ran away from an approaching tiger there?” Bhagavan said, “Yes, yes! When I was there, Rangaswami Iyengar used to come off and on. One day, when he went to answer calls of nature it seems he saw a tiger in a bush. When he tried to drive her away by shouting, she replied by a mild roar. His body shook with terror and getting up involuntarily from where he sat, he began running towards me gasping for breath, and shouting at the top of his voice, ‘Oh, Bhagavan! Ramana! Ramana!’ I happened to come out for some work and so met him. When I asked him what all his fright was about, he said imploringly, ‘Ayyo, tiger, tiger! Come, Swami, we must go into the temple and close all the doors, otherwise she will come in. Why don’t you come?’ I said, laughing, ‘Let us wait and see. Where is the tiger? It is nowhere.’ Pointing towards the bush he said, ‘There it is in that bush.’ I said, ‘You wait here. I will go and see.’ When I went there and saw, there was no tiger. Still, he could not shed his fear. I assured him that it was a harmless animal and there was no need to be afraid, but he would not believe me. Another day, while I was sitting on the edge of the tank opposite the temple, that tiger came to drink water, and without any fear, roamed about for a while looking at me, and went its way. Iyengar, however, observed all this, hiding himself in the temple. He was afraid of what might happen to me. After the tiger left, I went into the temple and relieved him of his fear saying, ‘Look! What a mild animal it is! If we threaten it, it will attack us. Not otherwise.’ I thus dispelled his fears. We too were not there for long after that,” said Bhagavan.

20th January, 1946

(26) MEDICATION WITHOUT TREATMENT

When the personal attendants of Bhagavan were advised by doctors to give him food containing vitamins to relieve the pain in the legs they began doing so and were also massaging his legs with some special ointment. They were thus serving him to the best of their ability. Bhagavan used to say humorously, "A guest comes to your house. If you are indifferent towards him he will go away early, but if you show great respect towards him, and are very attentive he will never go. So is disease. If you attend to the disease in the manner you are doing now, why should it go? If you take no notice of it, it will disappear of its own accord."

Sometime ago, a young man set up an establishment about a mile from the Ashram, on the road round the hill, saying he would cure diseases by giving *vibhuti*. People get mad over such things, don't they? People who were diseased, possessed and the like started going in crowds to see that Vibhuti Swami, and on their way, they used to come to our Ashram also. What is there at this Ashram? No *vibhuti*! No magic lockets! They used to have *darshan* and then go away. On such occasions, if any attendants happened to be massaging his legs with medicated oil, Bhagavan used to say in a lighter vein, "Excellent, this is also good in a way. When these people see me thus, they would say, 'this Swami himself is suffering from pains in the legs and is getting massaged by others. What can he do for us?' and go away without coming anywhere near me. So far so good."

Four days back, Bhagavan called all the doctors and showed them a news item which he read in the newspapers about a person who was reported to have died as a result of

too much of vitamin food and vitamin injections. Next day the news appeared in another newspaper. Showing it again, he began saying, like a child, "For the last two years, a lot of vitamins are being given to me, saying that it is all good for my body. Not satisfied with it, they tried to give injections also. See what has happened to this person reported in the newspapers!" It is said that a great yogi enjoys bliss as if he were a little boy or an insane person. He knows everything but conducts himself as if he knows nothing. If he so desires, cannot Bhagavan cure all diseases? Can he not cure himself? He leaves it to others; that is because he never looks upon the body as his own.

Two or three years back when Bhagavan had jaundice, he could not relish his food and felt a great dislike for food. For about a week or ten days he ate only popcorns and the like. As Echamma and Mudaliar Patti have a vow that they will not eat until Bhagavan takes at least a morsel of food cooked by them he used to take a few grains from the rice brought by these ladies and mixing them with popcorn, used somehow swallow that food so that their *vratham* or *deeksha* might remain unimpaired. There is no limit to his benevolence and consideration for the feelings of his devotees, whatever the occasion might be. He does not allow others to feel hurt or aggrieved in any manner.

A number of doctors were giving him medicines to cure the jaundice. For their satisfaction, Bhagavan used to take the medicines and for the satisfaction of these ladies he used to eat their food. The good effects of the former and the bad effects of the latter neutralised themselves. Months passed by; the jaundice persisted. A reputed doctor from Madras was called. The result was the same. After all had come and gone, and after all medicines had been tried without success, he cured himself of jaundice in no time with *sonti* (dry ginger),

pippalu (ipecac) and other Ayurvedic herbal medicines. Let any one venture to ask him how the disease was cured!

21st January, 1946

(27) BHAKTI'S TASTE

When I was writing to you yesterday about eating popcorn with boiled rice, I was reminded of another incident. Echamma's cooking was never very good; it would not contain vegetables and spices in proper proportions. To Bhagavan her devotion was more tasty than her preparations and so he never complained, but some who could not relish the food casually hinted at this now and then while Bhagavan was cutting vegetables in the kitchen in the early morning hours. After hearing their complaints repeatedly Bhagavan said, "I don't know. If you do not like the food you need not eat it. I find it quite good and I shall continue to do so."

Sometime back, she was sending food for about a week or ten days through someone else because perhaps she was out of town or not quite well. The cooks one day forgot to serve the food sent by her and completed serving all other items of food cooked in the Ashram. Bhagavan who would usually beckon to others to start eating and would himself commence doing so, sat silently that day with his left hand under the chin, and his right hand on the leaf. The people there sitting in front began to look at one another and those in the kitchen, or wondering and enquiring in whispers about the possible reason. Suddenly they remembered that the food sent by Echamma had not been served and, when they served it saying, "Oh, we have forgotten," he gave the formal signal

to the others to eat and he too commenced eating the food. It is usual for him to eat with greater relish the raw groundnuts offered to him by a devotee than the highly seasoned sweets and puddings offered by rich people, just as Lord Krishna ate with relish the beaten rice handed over to him by Kuchela.

22nd January, 1946

(28) BRAHMASTHRAM (DIVINE WEAPON)

Yesterday or the day before, a boy of about 18 years of age came here on a cycle from some place. After sitting in the hall for a quarter of an hour, he went to Bhagavan and asked, "After crossing *Omkar*, where to merge?" With a smile Bhagavan said, "Oh, is that so? Wherefrom did you come now? Where will you go? What is it you want to know? Who really are you? If you first tell me who you are, you can then question me about *Omkar*." "I do not know that even," said the boy. Then Bhagavan said, "You know for certain that you are existent. How are you existent? Where really were you before? What exactly is your body? First find that out. When you know all that, you can ask me questions if you still have any doubts. Why should we worry where *Omkar* merges, and after it merges why worry about what comes next, when it ceases to exist? Where do you merge ultimately? How do you come back? If you first find out your state and your movements, we can think of the rest." When Bhagavan said all this, the boy could not give any reply and so went away after bowing before Bhagavan. What other *brahmasthram* (divine weapon) is there against a

questioner? If only that weapon is used, the questioner is silenced.

You may ask, “Who gave the name of ‘*brahmasthram*’ to the stock reply of Bhagavan, ‘Find out who you are?’.” Two or three years back, when a *sannyasi* boasted about having read all books on religious matters and began asking Bhagavan all sorts of questions, he repeatedly gave the same answer, “Find out who you are.” When the *sannyasi* persisted in his meaningless questions and arguments, Bhagavan in a firm tone asked him, “You have been asking me so many questions and entering into so many arguments. Why don’t you reply to my questions and then argue? Who you are? First answer my question. Then I will give you a suitable reply. Tell me first who it is that is arguing.” He could not reply, and so went away.

Some time later, I developed this idea and wrote five verses on ‘*Divya Asthram*’ and showed them to Bhagavan, when he said, “Long ago when Nayana (Ganapati Muni) was here, Kapali also used to be here. If they wanted to ask me anything, they would fold their hands first and say, ‘Swami, Swami, if you will promise not to brandish your *brahmasthram*, I will ask a question.’ If during conversation the words ‘Who are you?’ escaped my lips, he used to say, ‘So you have fired your *brahmasthram*. What more can I say?’ They called it *brahmasthram* and you are calling it ‘*Divya Asthram*’.” After that, I too started using the word *brahmasthram*. Really, who is not humbled by that *asthram*?

23rd January, 1946

(29) THAT IS PLAY, THIS IS VERSE

Some time back, while replying to the questions of some devotees, Bhagavan was reminded of a *sloka* in *Hamsa Gita*, which described the attributes of a *siddha* (highly developed soul), and with great enthusiasm he wrote out the verse in Tamil. As Balarama Reddy who happened to be there said, "What about a verse in Telugu also?" Bhagavan wrote a translation in Telugu in *Aataveladi* (a form of versification) and was wondering whether the import of the *sloka* had come out correctly. I suggested in a low tone that it might perhaps be better if it were in *Theta Gita* (another form of versification). "Yes, it could be changed thus," said Bhagavan; "That is *Aata*, this is *Theta*." I was rather intrigued by that saying.

When I went there again in the afternoon at 2-30 p.m., Bhagavan had already written it in *Theta Gita* verse and gave it to me saying, "See if it is all right." Though it did not appear smooth-flowing, I was happy in the thought that Bhagavan had written it and so without going deeper into it, I said, "In whatever way Bhagavan writes, to me it appears quite good." "It is quite enough even if one person is satisfied when written by an unqualified person like myself," said Bhagavan. People around burst out laughing. He says he is not learned, and all the other writers are great pandits! What else is it except a mild reproach to some of us who pride ourselves on our erudition?

It did not end there. Saying that the meaning is incomplete here or the grammar is defective there, Bhagavan discussed it the whole day with Balarama Reddy, and when I went there yesterday morning for *parayana*, he gave me a paper on which the *padyam* (verse) had been fair-copied.

When I brought it home and saw it, not only did I feel some doubt regarding the correctness of a particular letter in the *padyam*, but also got a desire to copy the matter in the Ashram note book and keep the original paper for myself and so, I cut it out neatly with scissors, and put it in my bag and went to the Ashram by 8 a.m.

Even as I was prostrating before him, Bhagavan made a mention of the very letter about which I had a doubt. He said, “It must be changed, give me back my paper. Should I not show it if anyone were to ask for it?” Yes, he could divine what I had in my mind. I felt surprised.

Many instances of this kind have occurred previously. When Bhagavan asked me and insisted on the return of his paper like a school boy, I felt ashamed of my desire, was afraid of being chided, and amused at his teasing words — all simultaneously.

“I have brought it, here it is,” I said and gave it. He took it, and put it away carefully as though it was a great treasure. The whole of yesterday he kept on saying that the grammar was not correct. When I was asked about it, I said, “For the divine voice, will the grammar come in the way?”

Bhagavan said laughingly, “It is all right,” and ultimately Bhagavan himself prepared it in *Theta Gita* and gave it to me to copy it out on the distinct understanding that I should return the original paper to him. For a small thing like this, he played with us for three days and ultimately finished the verse in *Theta Gita*.

“That is *Aata* (play); this is *Theta* (verse).” This is perhaps the meaning of his words. That verse is given hereunder:

తే॥ ఒడలు నశ్వర మది స్థితం బుత్థితంబొ
కర్మవశమున విడువడ గలయగలదొ ।

తన్నెఱింగిన సిద్ధుడు తనువు గనడు
గుడ్డను మదిరామదమున గ్రుడ్డివలెనె ॥

Theta Gita

26th January, 1946

(30) ANGER

Yesterday a newly arrived Andhra youth told Bhagavan about the vagaries of his senses to which Bhagavan said, "All that is due to the mind. Set it right." "That is all right, Swami, but however much I try to reduce this anger, it comes on again and again. What shall I do?" said the poor boy.

"Oh! Is that so, then get angry with that anger; it will be all right" said Bhagavan. All people in the hall burst out laughing. A person who gets angry with everything in the world, if only he introspects, and enquires why he does not get angry with his anger itself, will he not really overcome all anger?

Two or three years back a devotee who could freely approach Bhagavan came and told him five or six times that somebody had been abusing him. Bhagavan listened but said nothing. As there was no response from Bhagavan in spite of repeated and varied complaints and in a number of ways, this devotee could not contain himself any longer and so said, "When I am abused so much unnecessarily, I also get angry. However much I try to restrain my anger I am not able to do so. What shall I do?"

Bhagavan laughingly said, "What should you do? You too join him and abuse yourself; then it will be all right." All laughed.

That devotee, unable to understand anything, said “That is very good! Should I abuse myself?”

“Yes indeed! What they are abusing is your body, isn’t it? What greater enemy is there than this body which is the abode of anger and similar feelings? It is necessary that we ourselves should hate it. Instead of that, when we are unguarded, if anybody abuses us, we should know that they are waking us up. We should realise at least then, and join them in abusing the body, and crying it down. What is the use of counter-abuse? Those who abuse us that way should be looked upon as our friends. It is good for us to be among such people. If you are among people who praise you, you get deceived,” said Bhagavan.

In June 1924, thieves entered the Ashram and not only belaboured the devotees, but also beat Bhagavan on his thigh. Subsequently, while relating amongst themselves the thrashing they had received, the devotees said, “Bad fellows, they beat even Bhagavan.” Bhagavan is reported to have said, “Oh, you all worship me with flowers and they worshipped me with a stick. That is also a form of worship. If I accept yours, should I not accept theirs as well?” What he teaches is by practical illustration. Is not this such an instance?

27th January, 1946

(31) DECORATIONS TO AMBA (GODDESS)

You have seen the decorations made in the shrine of Mathrubhuteswara on the first day of *Navarathri* festival last year. There was a different type of decoration every

day during those nine days, and on one of the days, in accordance with the Puranic story that Amba went out to do *tapas* as she could not bear the separation from Siva, the idol of Amba was decorated suitably and was put in the shade of a tree. After the night meal was over that day, Bhagavan was taken to that place and was shown that idol.

Next morning, in the hall, while talking about the ornamentation in the temple of Arunachaleswara and in this shrine, Bhagavan said, "Yesterday's ornamentation was intended to show that Amba was doing *tapas*. Unable to bear the separation, she goes out to do *tapas* (penance) here. Parvati is depicted as sitting in a stylish pose under a tree to do *tapas*, wearing a silk saree, gold jewels and flower garlands. What our people do is always like this. *Tapas* means meditation connected with the practice of self-denial or bodily mortification, does it not? Amba is reported to have closed the eyes of Siva with both her hands for fun, and to expiate that sin, Parameswara asked her to perform penance, and so she left her husband, went to a lonely place, and in self-mortification, forgot about her body, became weak and with great austerity, performed *tapas*. See the way Amba is decorated to depict that story. She is dressed like a Maharani with diamonds and emeralds and gold ornaments and wearing a silk saree and flower garlands!"

30th January, 1946

(32) AVVAIYAR'S SONG

For the last four days Bhagavan has been going through *Sri Ramana Leela* (in Telugu) which has recently been received

from the printers. Seeing in it the translation of one of Avvaiyar's songs, he said it was not correct. It had been written thus:

“Oh, stomach! You will not go without food even for one day, nor will you take enough for two days at a time. You have no idea of the trouble I have on your account, Oh, wretched stomach! It is impossible to get on with you!”

He said that it was not correct and that it should be:

“You don't stop eating for a day even. Why won't you eat once in two days? You do not realise my difficulty even for a day. So the *jiva* says, ‘Oh, stomach! It is difficult to get on with you!’”

People like us are afraid of death. Why? Because the belief that we are the body is not gone yet. To those who know the real truth about the Self, the body itself is a burden. So long as the two are together, some effort is inevitable for eating and sleeping. Even that is a disturbance to the bliss enjoyed by such people, just as the clothes we wear appear to be a burden in midsummer. Under such circumstances, any effort at serving such people will perhaps be like asking them to put on a full suit when they are anxious to remove even the existing clothing on account of the distress caused by continuous perspiration. The *jiva* says that it is difficult to carry on with this stomach. Instead of that, Bhagavan has given a different meaning to the verse. According to him the stomach itself tells the *jiva* it is difficult to carry on with it! See the beauty of it: “O, *jiva*! You don't give me, the stomach, even a moment's respite. You don't understand my troubles. It is impossible to live with you.” That means, the *jiva* does not stop breathing even for a moment. So the stomach says, it is difficult to live with it indeed!

When I read this letter before Bhagavan, a Tamil disciple after learning what it was all about said, “Avvaiyar’s song is well known but Bhagavan’s interpretation is novel. No one else has shown such consideration for the stomach. It is not known in what context Bhagavan wrote thus.” Smilingly Bhagavan said, “On a full-moon day in the month of *Chitra* we were all sitting together after a hearty meal with sweets and the like. As we had our food that day later than usual, we were feeling rather tired. Amongst us, Somasundaraswami sang the *venba* written by Avvaiyar, lying down in the hall, rolling about and patting his stomach. I wrote this *venba* in fun and sang it. What has been read just now is the meaning of those two songs.”

31st January, 1946

(33) ASTRAL PATHS — HIGHER WORLDS

This morning after reading an article in the newspaper about paths beyond the sun and the higher worlds, Bhagavan said, “They write a lot about the paths beyond the sun and other planets, and the blissful worlds above them. All those worlds also are like this world. There is nothing specially great about them. Here, a song is being transmitted over the radio. Last time, it was from Madras. Now it is from Tiruchirapalli. If you tune again it will be from Mysore. All these places are in Tiruvannamalai, within this short time. It is the same way with the other worlds. You have only to turn your minds to them. You can see them all in one moment. But what is the use? You merely go about from place to place get tired and disgusted. Where is *shanti* (peace)? If you

want it, you must know the eternal truth. If you cannot know that, the mind will not get absorbed in *shanti*.”

Similarly someone enquired of Bhagavan some time back, “People talk of Vaikunta, Kailasa, Indraloka, Chandraloka, etc. Do they really exist?” Bhagavan replied, “Certainly. You can rest assured that they all exist. There also a Swami like me will be found seated on a couch and disciples will also be seated around him. They will ask something and he will say something in reply. Everything will be more or less like this. What of that? If one sees Chandraloka, he will ask for Indraloka, and after Indraloka, Vaikunta and after Vaikunta, Kailasa, and so on, and the mind goes on wandering. Where is *shanti*? If *shanti* is required, the only correct method of securing it is by Self-enquiry. Through Self-enquiry Self-realisation is possible. If one realises the Self, one can see all these worlds within one’s self. The source of everything is one’s own Self, and if one realises the Self, one will not find anything different from the Self. Then these questions will not arise. There may or may not be a Vaikunta or a Kailasa but it is a fact that you are here, isn’t it? How are you here? Where are you? After you know about these things, you can think of all those worlds.”

1st February, 1946

(34) BOOKS

One morning in 1944, a disciple approached Bhagavan with an air of supplication and said, “Bhagavan, I would like to read books and find out a path whereby I can attain *mukti*, but I do not know how to read. What shall I do? How can I

realise *mukti*?" Bhagavan said, "What does it matter if you are illiterate? It is enough if you know your own Self." "All people here are reading books, but I am not able to do that. What shall I do?" he said.

Stretching out his hand towards the disciple, Bhagavan said, "What do you think the book is teaching? You see yourself and then see me. It is like asking you to see yourself in a mirror. The mirror shows only what is on the face. If you see the mirror after washing your face, the face will appear to be clean. Otherwise the mirror will say there is dirt here, come back after washing. A book does the same thing. If you read the book after realising the Self, everything will be easily understood. If you read it before realising the Self, you will see ever so many defects. It will say, 'First set yourself right and then see me.' That is all. First see your Self. Why do you worry yourself about all that book learning?"

The disciple was satisfied and went away encouraged. Another disciple who has the courage to ask questions on such matters, took up the thread of the conversation and said, "Bhagavan, you have given him a peculiar interpretation." Bhagavan replied, "What is peculiar in it? It is all true. What books did I read when I was young? What did I learn from others? I was always immersed in meditation. After some time, Palaniswamy used to bring from various people a number of books containing Vedantic literature and used to read them. He used to make many mistakes in reading. He was elderly and was not well-read. He was however anxious to read. He used to read with tenacity and religious faith. Because of that I used to feel happy. So, when I took those books in order to read them myself, and tell him what was in them, I found that what all was written therein had already been experienced by myself.

I was surprised. I wondered, ‘What is all this? It is already written here in these books about myself.’ That was so in every one of those books. As whatever is written there has already been experienced by myself, I used to understand the text in no time. What took him twenty days to read, I used to finish reading in two days. He used to return the books and bring others. That was how I came to know about what was written in the books.”

One of the disciples said, “That is perhaps why Sivaprakasam Pillai, while writing Bhagavan’s biography, referred to Bhagavan even at the outset as ‘One who is a *Brahma Jnani* without knowing the name of Brahman’.” Bhagavan said: “Yes, Yes, that is right. That is why it is said that one should first know about oneself before reading a book. If that is done, it will be known that what is written in the book is only an epitome of what is really experienced by oneself. If one does not see one’s Self but reads a book, one finds a number of defects.” “Is it possible for all to become like Bhagavan? The use of a book at least helps one to set right one’s defects,” said the disciple. “That is so. I did not say that reading is no help. I merely said that there is no need for illiterate people to think they can never attain *moksha* on that account and thereby feel disheartened. See how depressed he was when he asked me. If the facts are not explained properly, he will feel still further depressed,” said Bhagavan.

2nd February, 1946

(35) DISEASE

Two years back, when our elder brother came to the Ashram, Mr. Manne Venkataramayya, retired Judge, was here. It seems he was sick some time back and got cured, but not completely. After listening to the details of the sickness from early morning till 8-30 p.m., Bhagavan said, “Yes, indeed! The body itself is a disease. If the body gets a disease, it means that the original disease has got another disease. If you really want this new disease not to trouble you, you must first take the required medicine for the original disease so that the later disease — that is, the disease of the disease — does not affect you. What is the use of worrying about the secondary disease instead of trying to find out a method of getting rid of the primary disease? Therefore allow this new disease to go its own way, and think of a medicine for the original disease.”

As an illustration of this, an incident happened recently. Being requested and encouraged by the devotees, Viswanatha Brahmachari translated into Tamil prose *Trisulapura Mahatmyam* from Sanskrit. By the time he finished translating it, Bhagavan was slightly ill and so, being afraid that Bhagavan might strain himself unduly by going through the book with a view to correcting it, the fact that the book was ready for printing was kept from him. Before he recovered completely, Bhagavan happened to see Viswanath one day and asked him, “How far have you got on with translating *Mahatmyam*?” Unwilling to tell a lie to Bhagavan, he said he had completed it. “Why did you not bring it then?” asked Bhagavan. Viswanath replied that he did not do so because of Bhagavan’s indisposition. “Oh, I see! If my body

is not well, what does it matter to me? Let it have its troubles. I don't bother about it. I am free. Bring it, and I will go through it. If this body required any services, all these people will attend to that. Bring the book," said Bhagavan. As he had no other alternative, Viswanath brought the book and gave it, and Bhagavan went through it immediately, even working at nights with the aid of a table lamp. His bodily ailment did not interfere with the work.

5th February, 1946

**(36) KOWPINAVANTAH KHALU
BHAGYAVANTAH
(FORTUNATE ARE THOSE
WITH A MERE LOINCLOTH)**

You know, off and on, Bhagavan has been going through *Sri Ramana Leela*, which has recently been received from the printers. In that connection, Rangaswami asked yesterday, "Has the story about the towel been written in it?" As it was not in the book, Bhagavan told us as follows:

"About forty years back — perhaps in 1906 — when I was in Pachiamman Koil, I had with me only one Malayalam towel. It was given to me by somebody. As the material was flimsy it became worn out within two months and was torn in several places. Palaniswami was not in town. I had therefore to look after the cooking and all other domestic work. As I used to dry my feet and hands with the towel every now and then, it got all sorts of colours. Its condition would be seen if I used it as a cover for the body. So I used to roll it and keep it near at hand. What did it matter to me? It was enough if the

required work gets done with its help. After bathing, I used to dry myself with the towel, and then put it out to dry. I used to guard it carefully so that no one else would know about it. One day a mischievous little boy saw when I was drying it, and said, 'Swami, Swami, this towel is required by the Governor. He has asked me to get it from you. Please give it to me.' So saying he mischievously stretched out his hand. 'Oh, dear! This towel! No, I cannot give it. Go away!' I said.

"As that towel gradually got torn more and more with a thousand holes in it, I ceased to keep it with me lest it should be seen by Sesha Iyer and others. I used it after my bath, and then after drying it, hid it in a hole in the trunk of a tree within the temple precincts. One day, when I went out somewhere, Sesha Iyer and others, while searching for something else, happened to search that hole in the tree trunk, and found the towel. Seeing its condition and blaming themselves for their neglect, they began offering profuse apologies when I returned. 'What is the matter?' I asked. 'Is it this towel with a thousand holes that you are daily drying your body with after your bath? Shame on our devotion to you! We could not find out even this.' So saying, they brought several bundles of towels.

"Something else also happened before this. My *kowpinam* (small piece of cloth, usually a small strip, worn over the privities) got torn. I do not usually ask anyone for anything. Bodily privacy has however to be maintained. Where could I get a needle and thread available to mend the *kowpinam*? At last, I got hold of a thorn, made a hole in it, took out a thread from the *kowpinam* itself, put it into the hole and thus mended the cloth, and, so as to hide the place where it was mended, I used to fold it suitably before putting it on. Time passed like that. What do we need? Such were those days!" said Bhagavan.

It was quite natural for him to tell us all this but we who heard him felt deeply grieved. Having heard this incident from Bhagavan some time back, Muruganar is reported to have written a verse. The purport of that verse is:

“Oh, Venkata Ramana, who wore a *kowpinam* mended by a thorn, and who was served by Indra as a towel with a thousand eyes.”

20th February, 1946

(37) MOKSHA WITH THE BODY

About a week back, a newcomer to the Ashram asked Bhagavan, “Is it possible to attain *moksha* (deliverance) while still in this body?” Bhagavan said, “What is *moksha*? Who attains it? Unless there is bondage, how can there be *moksha*? Who has that bondage?” “Me,” said the questioner. “Who really are you? How did you get the bondage? And why? If you first know that, then we can think of attaining *moksha* while in this body,” said Bhagavan. Unable to ask any further questions, he kept quiet and after a while went away.

After he left, Bhagavan looked at all the rest of us with kindness in his eyes and said, “Many people ask the same question. They want to attain *moksha* in this body. There is a *sangham* (society). Not only now, but even in olden days many people not only taught their disciples but also wrote books to the effect that there were *kaya kalpa vratas* (rejuvenation), and such things, and that this body could be made as strong as an adamant, so as to become imperishable. After saying all that, doing ever so many things and writing about them at length, they died in course of time. When the Guru himself

who talked and preached of rejuvenation passed away, what about his disciples? We do not know what will happen the next moment to a thing that we see now. Peace cannot be attained unless through Self-enquiry one realises that one is not the body and, with *vairagya* (absence of worldly desires and passions), one ceases to care about it. *Moksha* is after all the attainment of *shanti* (perfect peace). If therefore peace cannot be attained so long as the body is identified with the Self, any attempt to keep the body for ever as it is, increases the bondage instead of decreasing it. It is all an illusion,” said Bhagavan.

21st February, 1946

(38) CHIRANJEEVIS (IMMORTAL BEINGS)

Yadavalli Rama Sastri came here the other day and asked Bhagavan, “Swami, people say that the Self is as luminous as a crore of suns. Is that true?” Bhagavan said, “Certainly! Granted that its lustre is equal to that of a crore of suns, how could it be determined? We can’t see with these eyes even the one sun that is visible. How can we see a crore of suns? That is a different eye with a different type of vision. When you can see with that eye, you can give whatever name you like to it, a crore of suns or moons, or anything you like.”

Some time back, another person asked a similar question: “It is said that Aswathama, Vibheeshana and others are *chiranjeevis* (eternally living beings) and that they are now living somewhere. Is that true?” “Yes, that is true,” said Bhagavan. “What is your idea of a *chiranjeevi*? Those that know the state which is never destroyed, where is death for

them, and where is birth? They live as *chiranjeevis* for all time and at all places. We are now talking about them, and so they are present here. When it is said that a person lives forever, it does not pertain to this body consisting of the five elements. When *Brahma Kalpas* (ages of Brahma) themselves come and go like dolls' houses, is it possible to attribute permanency to bodies that age?" said Bhagavan.

26th February, 1946

(39) UMA

Before I started writing these letters, a devotee while talking about the *Puranas* one morning asked of Bhagavan as to how Parvati got the name of Uma. Looking at me, Bhagavan said, "There is a copy of *Arunachala Purana* in Telugu in the library. Is it there?" "Yes, it is in the library; shall I bring it?" I asked. "Yes, yes!" he said. Immediately, I brought the book from the library and gave it to him.

Opening it, Bhagavan said, "Here is the story. Sati Devi, the wife of Siva and the daughter of Daksha, gave up her life as she was insulted by her father during the *yajna* performed by him. She was subsequently born to Himavantha and Menaka. She wanted only Lord Siva as her husband, and to achieve that purpose she set out for doing *tapas*. Menaka, while trying to prevent her from doing *tapas*, said, 'U (no), Ma (give up)'. That is how she got the name of Uma." After reading that out, he gave me the book. While I was turning over the pages, Bhagavan was laughing quietly. I could not make out the reason. After a while, Bhagavan himself told us the following:

“Look! There is another story to it. Parvati started out for *tapas*, even though Menaka tried her best to dissuade her. Finding dissuasion of no use, Himavantha took her (Parvati) to the *tapovana* (hermitage) where Siva was staying in the form of Dakshinamurthy and said. ‘This little child of mine wants to do *tapas*. Please allow her to be under your care.’ Seeing Parvati, Siva said, ‘Why *tapas* at this tender age? Why does she not go home with her father?’ Parvati said, ‘No, I won’t go.’ Parameswara tried to dissuade her skilfully by saying, ‘I have conquered *prakriti* (nature) and so could concentrate on this *tapas*. If you are to be here, you will be exposed to the ravages of *prakriti*. So please go back.’ Parvati was equally skilful; so she said, ‘Oh Lord! You say you have conquered *prakriti*. Without some relationship with *prakriti* how could you do *tapas*? You have just spoken. How could you do that without *prakriti*? How could you walk? Without your knowing it *prakriti* is occupying your heart. If it is not for the sake of arguments, if you are really above the influence of *prakriti*, why are you afraid of my staying here?’ Siva was pleased with this and said, “*Ingithagna!* (you who are skilled in thought-reading), *Madhurvachan!* (you who are sweet of speech). Stay on!” and sent Himavantha home. This story is in this book in detail.”

I said, “The story of Dakshayani is in the *Bhagavatham* also, but this conversation is not given there. The story itself is very interesting.” Bhagavan said laughing, “Yes, yes. I read another story somewhere in which it was stated that after Kama was burnt to ashes, Parameswara came in a Brahmin’s garb, made love to Parvati and married her. Himavantha was worried over the caste of his son-in-law. What could he do? Whomsoever he asked, pleaded ignorance of the matter, and there was no one who could enlighten him. So he kept quiet. Subsequently Parvati closed the eyes of Parameswara

for fun, whereupon the whole world fell into turmoil. Parameswara saved the world by opening his third eye. Then Parvati realised her fault and started doing *tapas*, and after staying here and there for that purpose she at last came here to Arunachala where she got the approbation of Arunagireeswara, and obtained *Ardhanareeswara* (half the body of Siva). When Himavantha came to know of it, he said, 'Oh yes, the son-in-law is not of another caste but he is of our own caste' and felt pleased and happy. This Arunachala is a mountain. Himavantha too was a mountain."

11th April, 1946

(40) ASTHI, BHATHI AND PRIYAM (EXISTENCE, CONSCIOUSNESS AND BLISS)

Yesterday, between 10 and 11 a.m., a Parsi doctor brought a letter and gave it to Bhagavan. Bhagavan got it read out by a devotee, and said, "He himself has written the question and the answer as well. What else is there for me to say?" As the letter was in English, I could not understand it. The devotee who read it looked at Bhagavan and asked, "*Asthi*, *bhathi*, and *priyam*, are written there. What do they mean?" "*Asthi* means Truth, that which *IS*. *Bhathi* means lustre and *priyam* means *anandam*. That is *sat-chit-ananda swarupa*. *Sat-chit-ananda* is spoken of as *asthi*, *bhathi* and *priyam*. Both sets of expression mean the same," said Bhagavan.

The same devotee asked, "As *Atma* is devoid of name or form, should it be meditated upon with '*jnana atheetha bhakti*', *bhakti*, which is superior to and above *jnana*?" Bhagavan replied, "If you say that you should meditate, doesn't that

imply *dwaita* (dualism)? It implies one who meditates, and that on which he meditates; *Atma* however is nameless and formless. How is it possible to meditate upon the nameless and formless? '*Jnana atheetha bhakti*' means one's own Self, nameless and formless, just a Witness. The 'I' is one's own self. That 'I' is everywhere, Only one 'I'. Then what is there to meditate upon? Who is it that meditates? It is the 'I' that is everywhere which is called *asthi*, *bhathi* and *priyam*, or *satchit-anandam*. The names are many, but the thing is only one," said Bhagavan.

15th April, 1946

(41) THE TRUE NATURE OF PRADAKSHINA*

You know what a good day it is today! Bhagavan has taught us something very great. From the time I came here, it has been my usual practice, mornings and evenings, to bow before Bhagavan after going round the hall thrice by way of *pradakshina*.

When I was doing *pradakshina* as usual this morning, some other-worldly voice came out of Bhagavan's mouth and struck my ears as if from a flute. Wondering what it was, I looked up towards Bhagavan's sofa through the window. The rays of the morning sun were falling on Bhagavan's body and were giving out a peculiar lustre. Dr. Srinivasa Rao was massaging Bhagavan's legs with ointment. A light smile was

* A reverential salutation made by circumambulation from left to right so that the right side is always turned towards the person or object circumambulated.

visible on Bhagavan's face. "Oh, it is only Nagamma! I thought it was somebody else," he was saying. I felt that he would tell me something, and so I prostrated before him as soon as I entered the hall. Bhagavan smilingly said, "So! You too have started doing *pradakshina* after seeing others, have you? How many times do you do *pradakshina*?" I was rather surprised and as I was asked about the number of times, I said, "Thrice." "Is that so? Others also will do the same, following your example. That is the trouble. I told them not to do it. I tell you also. What do you say?" "What is there for me to say? I shall stop doing it, if you advise me to." So saying, I sat down. Looking at me, Bhagavan said, "See, these people go on doing *pradakshina* round the hall without end. It was only yesterday I told them not to do it. They will say, 'Nagamma also is doing *pradakshina*. Should she also not be told?' If people see you going round the hall, newcomers will think that they should do the same, and will start doing it as they do round a temple. That is why I am telling you." Bhagavan then told us all:

"What is meant by *pradakshina*? Sankara has written:

परिभ्रमन्ति ब्रह्माण्डाः सहस्राणि महेश्वरे ।

कूटस्तखिल रूपेऽस्मिन् इति ध्यानं प्रदक्षिणम् ॥

Real *pradakshina* is the meditation that thousands of universes are revolving around the Great Lord, the unmoving centre of all forms.

"The same *bhava* (idea), was expressed in Tamil by the author of *Ribhu Gita* in greater detail." So saying Bhagavan got that book, read it and told us the following:

"Oh Lord! I went all round the world to do *pradakshina* to you but you are in fullness everywhere. How then could I complete a round? I shall worship you as '*kutastha akhila rupa*' (immovable entire form of the world). That is the only

pradakshina to you'. *Namaskar* also means the same thing. The merging of the mind in the Self is *namaskar* and not the mere act of prostrating whenever you get up or sit down or whenever you go that side or come this side."

Doctor Srinivasa Rao said, "What you say about *pradakshina*, *namaskar* and the like may be for those who are in *atheetha sthithi*, i.e., in a highly developed state, but for people like us, is it not necessary to prostrate before the Guru? It is said that the *Advaita* attitude should not be shown towards the Guru, even if it is shown towards all the three worlds."

"Yes, it is so. The *Advaita* attitude does not mean that you should not do *namaskar* and the like. Only it should not be overdone. *Advaita* should be in *bhava*, in the disposition of the mind; it will not do for outside, worldly affairs. You are asked to look at everything with equality (*sama drishti*) but can we eat the same food that a dog eats? A handful of grain will do for a bird but will that do for us? We eat a certain quantity of food but will that be enough for an elephant? So you should have the attitude of *Advaita* only in *bhava*, in the mind, but you should follow the world in other matters. Though there are no pains and pleasures for a *Jnani*, for the sake of others, he does everything. He is like those who beat their chests, and weep loudly, if ordered to, for an agreed wage. That is all. He is not affected by it," said Bhagavan.

Someone asked, "What is that about beating chests and weeping for wages?" Bhagavan replied, "In olden times, there used to be such a practice. Supposing some elderly person dies and no one in the house bothers to weep for him, what is to be done? Someone must weep for the person who is dead. That was required by custom. There used to be some professional people whose vocation was to weep for a

fee. If called, they used to weep better than the deceased's kith and kin, methodically, like *bhajan* and with great variety, by beating their chests and shedding tears, which flowed either by long practice or by squeezing onion juice into their eyes, and they used to finish this programme to schedule. In the same manner, the *Jnani* conducts himself according to the wishes of others. He keeps time to whatever tune is sung. As he is well-experienced, nothing is new to him. He goes to whoever calls him. He puts on whatever garb he is asked to wear. It is all for the sake of others, as he does not desire anything for himself. His action will be according to the desire of the person who asks. One must therefore find out for oneself sufficiently well what is really good and what is really bad," said Bhagavan.

Previously whenever Bhagavan asked those devotees who were close to him, "Why is this done?" or "Why is that not done?" I used to regret that I had not the privilege of being questioned so familiarly. I have now been disillusioned. Not only that, I have received an *upadesa* (communication of an initiatory mantra or formula). Sri Bhagavan's voice seemed to say, "When I am everywhere in my fullness, how could you do *pradakshina* to me? Do you think that I am a stone image that you should go round and round me as in a temple?"

20th April, 1946

**(42) ABHAYAM SARVA BHUTHEBHYAHA
(COMPASSION TOWARDS ALL)**

At the time that Bhagavan was to go out in the morning today, the labourers who had been deputed to gather mangoes from the tree near the steps towards the mountain began beating the tree with sticks to knock down the mangoes instead of climbing the tree and plucking them one by one. In the course of the beating, the mango leaves also were falling down in heaps. Hearing the sound of the beating even while seated on the sofa, Bhagavan sent word through his attendants not to do so and when he went out as usual, saw mango leaves lying in heaps. Unable to bear the cruel sight, he began saying in a harsh tone to the labourers, "Enough of this! Now go! When you are to gather the fruit, do you have to beat the tree so that the leaves fall off? In return for giving us fruit, is the tree to be beaten with sticks? Who gave you this work? Instead of beating the tree, you might as well cut it to the roots. You need not gather the fruit. Go away!"

Bhagavan's voice, which was like thunder, reverberated in the ears of all who were there and made them tremble with fear. The bamboos that were held aloft were brought down and placed on the ground. The labourers stood with folded hands like statues. They had no words to speak. When I saw the personification of kindness towards nature in an angry mood, my heart beat violently and my eyes were full of tears. Can one who is so much moved by the falling of the leaves of a tree, bear pain in the minds of human beings? Bhagavan Ramana is indeed *karunapoorna sudhabdhi*, the ocean filled with the nectar of compassion.

By the time he returned from the *Gosala* side, the devotees had gathered the leaves into a heap and begged him to forgive the fault. Bhagavan went into the hall, saying, “How cruel! See how many beatings were showered on the tree! How big is the heap of leaves! Oh!”

When Bhagavan was in Virupaksha Cave, Echamma, who installed a picture of Bhagavan and a picture of Seshadri Swami in her house, decided to do *puja* with a lakh of tender leaves, and began it after informing Bhagavan about it. By the time she had finished the *puja* with fifty thousand leaves, summer had set in, and she could not gather any more leaves even though she wandered all over the mountain. She got tired, and went to Bhagavan to ventilate her grievances. Bhagavan said, “If you cannot get the leaves, why not pinch yourself and do *puja*?” She said, “Oh, but that will be painful!” Bhagavan said, “If it pains you to pinch your body, is it not painful to the tree when you cut its leaves?” She turned pale and asked, “Why did you not tell me earlier, Swami?” He replied, “When you know that pinching the body is painful, why did you not know that the tree will be equally pained if you rob it of its leaves? Do I have to tell you that?”

That tender leaves should not be cut from trees is also stated in the *sloka* in “Devikalottara Stotra” in *Jnanachara Vicharapadalam*, given below:

न मूलोत्पातनं कुर्यात् पत्रच्छेदं विवर्जयेत् ।
भूतपीडां न कुर्वीत पुष्पानं च निकृन्तनम् ॥

Roots should not be pulled out. Leaves should not be pinched. Living beings should not be harmed. Flowers should not be plucked.

23rd April, 1946

(43) THAT WHICH IS, IS ONLY ONE

This afternoon a Muslim youth came here with two or three friends. From the way he sat down, I felt that he wanted to ask some questions. After a while he began asking the questions in Tamil. "How can one know Allah? How can one see HIM?" That was the purport of his questions. As usual Bhagavan said, "If you first find out who it is that is questioning, you can then know Allah."

The young man said again, "If I meditate on this stick, thinking it is Allah, can I see Allah? How am I to see Allah?" "That real thing which is never destructible, is known as Allah. If you first find out the truth about yourself, the truth about Allah will present itself," said Bhagavan. That was enough to dispose of him. He went away with his friends. Soon after they left, Bhagavan remarked to those by his side, "See, he wants to see Allah! Is it possible to see with these eyes? How could these eyes perceive?"

Yesterday a Hindu asked Bhagavan, "Is *Omkara* a name of Ishwara?" Bhagavan said, "*Omkara* is Ishwara, Ishwara is *Omkara*. That means *Omkara* itself is the *swarupam* (the real Self). Some say that the *swarupam* itself is *Omkara*. Some say that it is *Sakti*, some say it is Ishwara, some say it is Jesus, some say it is Allah. Whatever name is given, the thing that is there, is only one."

Four or five days back, recalling a reply given to somebody's question, a devotee, residing in the Ashram, asked Bhagavan thus: "You said that *ananda* also gets dissolved; if so, what is the meaning of *dhyanam*, *samadhi* and *samadhanam*?"

Bhagavan said, "What is meant by *laya*? It should not stop with *ananda*. There must be someone to experience that.

Should you not know that someone? If you do not know that someone, how could it be *dhyanam*? If the one that experiences is known, that one is the Self. When one becomes oneself that becomes *dhyanam*. *Dhyanam* means one's own Self. That is *samadhi*. That is also *samadhanam* (perfect absorption of thought into the one object of meditation, i.e., the Supreme Spirit)."

27th April, 1946

(44) THE BLACK COW

For the last three days the black cow in the *Gosala* was suffering from some ailment and so she was tied to a tree near the shed built for the calves. Though she was suffering for three days, Bhagavan did not go to that side to see her. Yesterday she was in the last throes of death. Though she was suffering like that since morning, she did not breathe her last till 5 p.m. Bhagavan got up at 4-45 p.m. to go behind the *Gosala* as usual.

While returning, he turned towards the place where that cow was, stopped at the shed constructed for the calves and watched for a while her agony. As Bhagavan is the embodiment of kindness, it is natural that his heart should melt with pity. He favoured the cow with a look of deliverance from bondage, came back and sat as usual on the sofa.

After his benign look fell upon her, the *jiva* remained in the body for only five minutes. It was waiting and waiting for his benevolent look and as soon as that was obtained, it left the body. It is said that if a person can think of God at the time of death, that person gets freed from bondage. How

fortunate should that cow be that she could get freed from bondage at the time of her death by Bhagavan's holy and benevolent look! Bhagavan told us several times that though several animals suffered for days together, it never used to occur to him to look at them and that in some cases, it suddenly occurred to him to look at them in their agonies of death. He added that in such cases, the animals pass away peacefully immediately after. I have just seen an instance of this.

2nd May, 1946

(45) PARATPARA RUPAM (FORM OF THE SUPREME BEING)

This afternoon some Andhras came with their ladies, and went away after staying for some time in Bhagavan's presence. One of them asked Bhagavan with folded hands, "Swami, we have come here after going on pilgrimage to Rameswaram and other places and worshipping the gods there. We want to know from you what *paratpara rupa* is like. Please let us know."

With a smile Bhagavan said, "Is that so? It is the same. You yourself are saying that you have come after worshipping all the gods. Though He is one in all, that which is above all is *paratpara rupam*. It means 'The form of the Supreme Being'. As you have seen all those temples, it has occurred to you to wonder what that Supreme Being is which is the source of all these gods. Would this question arise if you had not seen them all?" On looking at Bhagavan's face, it appeared as if the Supreme Being was dancing on his face. That glow on his face, beaming with happiness must be seen! Though those words were not

understood by that young man, he was satisfied with the benevolent look of Bhagavan and so went away with his people after prostrating to Bhagavan.

After they went away, Bhagavan said enthusiastically to a devotee sitting nearby, "See, the real meaning is in their words themselves. *Paratpara rupam* means the form or figure of the Supreme Being which is highest of the high. The meaning of the question itself is not known. If the meaning is known, the reply is in the question itself."

11th May, 1946

(46) THE ETHICS OF SOCIAL EXISTENCE

Yesterday morning at 9-45, when Bhagavan went out and returned to the hall, a dog which was living in the Ashram was barking at another dog which had come there and which it was trying to drive away. While the people there were trying to pacify the Ashram dog, Bhagavan said in a lighter vein, "It is usual everywhere for those who come earlier to exercise authority over those who come later. This dog is trying likewise to exercise its authority." So saying, he looked at the Ashram dog, and said, "Why do you bark? Go away." It went away accordingly, as if it had understood his words.

This morning at 10 o'clock Dr. Anantanarayana Rao and his wife Ramabai brought some good mangoes from their garden and while giving them to Bhagavan, said, "The monkeys are taking away all the mangoes. So we hurriedly plucked these and have brought them here." Bhagavan said smilingly, "Oh, is that so. So the monkeys are going there

also?” Then looking at all the others there, he said, “Yes, monkeys take the fruits one by one while people take them all in one lot. If asked why, they say it is their right. If what the monkeys do is petty theft, what people do is regular looting. Without realising that, they drive away the monkeys,” said Bhagavan.

28th May, 1946

(47) WHICH IS THE VEHICLE?

Our brother's children, Swarna and Vidya, wanted to see Adi Annamalai Temple, Durgamba Temple and others and so we set out yesterday morning after obtaining Bhagavan's permission. As the summer had already set in, I was afraid these young children of ten and twelve years might not be able to walk in the hot sun and so engaged a bullock cart. The cart, other children of the same age and even younger ones, also started out with us. We went round the hill by way of *pradakshina*, saw all the places of interest and returned by about 11-30. As we came into the hall at 3 p.m., Bhagavan enquired of me, “At what time did you come back?” When I said it was 11-30 a.m., Bhagavan asked, “Were these children able to walk the distance?” I told him we went round in a bullock cart. Bhagavan jocularly said, “Oh, I see. You went in a cart. Who gets the *punya* (religious merit), the cart or the bullock or these children?” I could not give a reply. Bhagavan said: “This body itself is a cart. Another cart for this cart! A bullock to pull this cart! For a work done like this (going round the hill), people say, ‘We have done it.’ Everything is like that. People come by train from Madras

and say, 'We have come'. It is the same thing with the body. For the self, the body is a cart. The legs do the work of walking and people say, 'I walked, I came.' Where does the Self go? The Self does not do anything but appropriates to itself all these acts." So saying, he enquired, "Did they walk at least some distance?" I said that they walked up to Gautama Ashram, doing *bhajan*, but could not walk further because of the hot sun. "That is something. They walked at least some distance," said Bhagavan.

You know, Vidya is a mischievous child. Ever since she came she has been asking a lot of questions about Bhagavan. "Won't Bhagavan *Thatha* (grandfather) come anywhere? Why not?" Not satisfied with my replies, on the 24th she herself asked Bhagavan why he did not go anywhere. As you are aware, Bhagavan is very pleased with the words of little children. Looking at her affectionately, he said, "You want to take me to your place? That is your idea, isn't it? That is all very well but if I go anywhere, all these people will also come with me and on the way, ever so many people will invite me to their places. If I don't go, will they agree to that? No. They will take me there bodily. From there, some more people will start. Can you take them all with you? Not only these people. If I move out, the whole of Arunachala itself may start. How can you take it away? See, I have been kept in this jail. Even if you take me away, someone will catch me on the way and again put me in some other jail. What can I do? How can I come, tell me? Will all these people let me go? What do you say?" Vidya could not reply. From that time onwards, he used to tell people, "This child is inviting me to her place."

Yesterday, having heard that the two children were leaving for their native place that day, and seeing Vidya standing near the doorway, Bhagavan, while going out at

9-45 a.m., caught hold of her hand and said, “Child! Will you take me also with you? Tie me up firmly, put me in a cart and take me away.” Before leaving, Vidya took Bhagavan’s photos to him and showed them. As soon as he saw the photos, Bhagavan said, “So you are taking me away. Tie me firmly and throw me in the cart.” Every one present felt happy, and Vidya in her great joy, frolicking, began saying, “Yes, I am taking away Bhagavan *Thathayya*.”

Who? Where can one go? Which is the cart? Which is the jail? If the mountains themselves move, how can they be stopped? All these are problems!

3rd June, 1946

(48) JAPA, TAPA AND THE LIKE

Yesterday a gentleman came here — a devout *brahmin*. From his words and from the rosary of *rudrakshas* around his neck, it was clear that he was practising *mantra japam*. He said that he had *darshan* of Bhagavan once before in Virupaksha Cave. Today, going up to Bhagavan, he asked, “Swami, can a continuous *japa* of *Panchakshari* or *Tarakam* absolve one from sin such as drinking alcoholic liquor and the like?” “What exactly is your idea?” asked Bhagavan. The *brahmin* again asked pointedly, “Even though people commit adultery and theft and take alcoholic drinks and so on, can their sins be wiped out by doing *japam* with the *mantras* mentioned above. Or will the sins stick to them?”

“If the feeling ‘I am doing *japa*’ is not there, the sins committed by a man will not stick to him. If the feeling ‘I am doing the *japa*’ is there, why should not the sin arising from

bad habits stick on?” said Bhagavan. “Will not this *punya* (result of virtuous acts) extinguish that *papam* (result of those sinful acts)?” asked the *brahmin*. “So long as the feeling, ‘I am doing’ is there, one must experience the result of one’s acts, whether they are good or bad. How is it possible to wipe out one act with another? When the feeling that ‘I am doing’ is lost, nothing affects a man. Unless one realises the Self, the feeling ‘I am doing’ will never vanish. For one who realises the Self where is the need for *japam*? Where is the need for *tapas*? Owing to the force of *prarabdha* life goes on, but he does not wish for anything. *Prarabdha* is of three categories, *ichha*, *anichha*, and *parechha* (personally desired, without desire and due to others’ desire). For him who has realised his Self, there is no *ichha-prarabdha*. The two others, *anichha* and *parechha* remain. Whatever he does is for others only. If there are things to be done by him for others, he does them but the results do not affect him. Whatever be the actions that such people do, there is no *punya* and no *papa* attached to them. But they do only what is proper according to the accepted standard of the world — nothing else,” said Bhagavan.

Though Bhagavan told the questioner that for him who realises his self there is no *ichha-prarabdha* but only *anichha* and *parechha-prarabdha*, his usual views about the *prarabdhas* may be found in his work “Unnathi Nalupadhi”:

The *Jnanid* does not have present, future and *prarabdha* karma; to say that *prarabdha* remains, is only a reply to a question. Just as one of the wives cannot remain unwidowed when the husband dies, so also the three karmas cannot remain when the *karta* is gone.

The Forty Verses, Supplement, verse 33

9th June, 1946

(49) WHAT IS SAMADHI

Bhagavan spent a lot of time this afternoon freely conversing with devotees about many matters, and in between teaching them *Advaita*. Seeing that the conversation was going on without end, a new arrival got up and asked, “Bhagavan, when do you go into *samadhi*?” All the devotees burst into laughter. Bhagavan also laughed. After a while, he said, “Oh, is that your doubt? I will clear it, but first tell me what exactly is the meaning of *samadhi*? Where should we go? To a hill or to a cave? Or to the sky? What should *samadhi* be like? Tell me,” asked Bhagavan.

Poor man, he could not say anything and sat down quietly. After a while, he said, “Unless the movement of the *indriyas* and limbs stops, there cannot be *samadhi*, they say. When do you go into that *samadhi*?” “I see, that is what you want to know. You think, ‘What is this? This Swami is always speaking. What *Jnani* is he?’ That is your idea? It is not *samadhi* unless one sits cross-legged in *padmasana*, with folded hands and stops breathing. There must also be a cave near about. One must go in and out of it. Then people will say, ‘This is a great Swami’. As for me, they begin doubting and say, ‘What Swami is this who is always talking to his devotees and has his daily routine?’ What can I do? This happened once or twice even before. People who had originally seen me at Gurumurtham and then saw me at Skandasramam, talking to all people and partaking in normal activities, said to me with great anxiety, ‘Swami, Swami, please give us *darshan* in your previous state.’ Their impression was that I was getting spoiled. What can I do? At that time (while in Gurumurtham) I had to live like that. Now I am obliged to

live like this. Things happen the way they have to. But in their view, it is enough if one does not eat or talk. Then saintliness, *swamītvam*, comes on automatically. That is the delusion people have,” said Bhagavan.

5th July, 1946

**(50) WHAT IS SARVAM (EVERYTHING)?
(HOW TO SEE EVERYTHING
AS ONE’S SELF)**

For the last three days, a young man who came recently has been worrying Bhagavan with a number of questions without rhyme or reason. Bhagavan was explaining patiently everything in great detail. This morning at 9 o’clock he started again. “You say everything is one’s own self? How is one to get that feeling that everything is one’s own self?” With a voice indicating displeasure, Bhagavan said, “What is meant by everything? Who are you? If you tell me who you are, then we can think of everything. You have been asking me many questions for the last few days but you have not yet replied to my questions as to who you are. First tell me who you are and then ask me what is everything (*sarvam*). Then I shall reply. If only you try to find out who you are, these questions will not arise. If you don’t try that and go on thinking of what next to ask, this will go on like an endless flow. There is no limit to it. There will be *shanti*, peace of mind, only if one practises Self-enquiry and finds out the truth. If instead one enquires about this and that, what is the use? It is all wasted effort.”

The young man said again, “To know one’s own self, should there not be a Guru and *sadhana*?” “Why do you

want a Guru or *sadhana*? You say you know everything. Why then a Guru? You don't care to do what you are asked to do. What can a Guru do? A Guru's help will be available only if you go the way he indicates. You talk of *sadhana*. For what purpose? What type of *sadhana*? How many questions? One must go by one path. What is the use of running about with limitless doubts? Will your appetite be satisfied by your eating food, or by others eating their food? What is the use of wasting your time asking about those people and these people, or about that and this? You forget yourself and go round the sky and the earth, searching and enquiring 'What is happiness?' You must first enquire 'Who am I that am going round and enquiring?' If one thus enquires about one's own self, no other question will arise," said Bhagavan.

Meanwhile, another took up the questioning and asked, "How did the *jiva* acquire karma?" Bhagavan said, "First find out who *jiva* is and then we shall find out how karma came. How did the *jiva* acquire karma? Is that karma allied with *jiva* or is at a distance? These are the thoughts. None of these doubts will occur if the mind that is so active outwardly, is made to look within."

12th July, 1946

(51) DEATH OF MADHAVASWAMI

About four days ago, i.e., in the morning of the 8th or 9th, I went to Bhagavan's presence at 7-30. As I got up after prostrating before him, Bhagavan said, "Madhava is gone." "Where to?" I asked, as he was in the habit of going away from the Ashram on pilgrimage now and then. Smilingly Bhagavan said, "Where to? To that place, leaving

the body here.” I was shocked and asked, “When?” “The day before yesterday at 6 p.m.,” replied Bhagavan, and looking at Krishnaswami, said, “Acharyaswami who was there came here and died, and the one who was here went there and died. Everything happens according to fate. For a long time Madhava had a desire that he should be independent and without anyone in authority over him. His desire has at last been fulfilled. Anyway he was a good man. Merely for fun, when Acharyaswami who was in Kumbakonam passed away, I asked Madhava whether he would go, as there was no one there in the Math. He took up the idea, went there and thus fulfilled his desire. See how things happen! When I wrote Telugu *Dvipada* and other verses in Malayalam script in a notebook, he used to read them well just like Telugu people. He had some Telugu *samskara* (knowledge). He took away that notebook saying that he would be looking into it now and then. If it is there, tell them to bring it here. It was the same with Ayyaswami. He took away a note book, saying that he would bring it back after reading it. He himself never came back. The same thing has happened with this man also.” So saying he changed the topic. When they heard that a person who had followed Bhagavan almost like his shadow for 12 years, and was extremely meek and gentle by nature, had passed away suddenly somewhere, there was no one in the Ashram who did not shed a tear.

Kunjuswami who had gone from here to supervise Madhava’s burial ceremonies, came back this morning at 8 a.m., and after prostrating before Bhagavan said, “Madhavaswamy was wandering about in search of peace of mind but could not gain peace, and so he told people that he would not live any longer, and came to the Math at Kumbakonam. He had a sudden attack of diarrhoea for a

day, and as he complained of difficult breathing while taking soda water, he was made to lie down. He never regained consciousness, according to what the people in the Math told me. They kept the corpse till I got there. It did not deteriorate in any way even though three days had elapsed. I got it buried and have come back. I could not find the notebook anywhere.”

After he left, Bhagavan said, looking at Krishnaswami, “Madhava was a good man. That is why we all feel sorry that he is dead. But instead of feeling sorry that he is dead, we should all be thinking as to when we will pass away. A *Jnani* always looks forward to the time when he will be free from the bondage of the body and be able to throw it away. A person who carried a load for a wage always longs for the time when he could reach the destination. When the owner tells him on reaching the destination to put the load down, he feels greatly relieved and puts it down. In the same way, this body is a burden to a man of discrimination. He always feels that the other man is gone, and eagerly looks forward to his own exit from the body. If that little thing called life is gone, four people are required to bear the burden of the body. When that life is in the body, there is no burden, but when that is gone, there is nothing so burdensome as the body. For a body like this, *kayakalpa vratas* (rejuvenation processes) are undertaken with a desire to attain *moksha* (deliverance) with the body. With all that, such people too pass away sooner or later. There is no one who can remain in this body forever. Once a person knows the true state, who wants this temporary body? One should wish for the time when he will be able to throw away this burden and go free.”

Madhavaswami was a Malayalee. His birth place is a village near Palghat. He was a *brahmachari*. He came here

about 15 years back, when he was only 20 years of age and did personal service to Bhagavan. For some time past, he had had a desire to visit holy places, and so used to go away frequently and come back. When Acharyaswami, who was another devotee of Bhagavan in charge of the Math which was built for him in Kumbakonam, came here some time back and passed away, Madhava went there as head of the Math and passed away within a short time thereafter.

22nd July, 1946

**(52) “ANORANEEYAM MAHATOMAHEEYAM”
(AN ATOM AMONG ATOMS AND
A GIANT AMONG GIANTS)**

This morning at 10-30 Sonti Ramamurthi came with his wife, brother and some friends. At that time a devotee, reading some book, was saying to Bhagavan, “In this book, it is stated that we eat food and food eats us. How is that? That we eat food is correct. But what is meant by saying that food eats us?” Bhagavan was silent.

After waiting silently for about 10 minutes Ramamurthi told Bhagavan that he came there mainly because his brother was anxious to see Bhagavan, that he himself had Bhagavan’s *darshan* about ten years back and taking up the thread of the previous conversation of the devotee, remarked: “All living beings are born, maintained and absorbed ultimately by *annam* (food) and so food is known as Brahman. That Brahman is all-pervasive. All things are its images and as that is known as *annam*, it is stated that *annam* eats us. Isn’t that the meaning?” Bhagavan said “Yes”.

He told Bhagavan several things about science, and his brother also spoke about science, atom bombs and the like, all in English. I do not know English, so I could not follow their conversation. But Bhagavan replied in Telugu. After hearing all that they were saying about science, Bhagavan said at last, "Certainly. But not one of these things is divorced from one's own self, is it? Everything comes after one's self. No one says he is not existent. Even an atheist would admit that he himself exists. So whatever comes must come from out of one's self and must resolve into it ultimately. There is nothing separate from one's self, in accordance with the principle in the sruti, '*Anoraneeyam Mahatomaheeyam*', the self is smaller than the smallest and bigger than the biggest." Ramamurthi asked, "Where does the difference come between the atom and the infinite?" "It comes from the body itself," said Bhagavan. Ramamurthi asked, "How is it that we see so many forces in the world?" Bhagavan said: "The mind alone is the cause. It is the mind that makes you see so many different forces. When that is born, all else is also born. The five elements, and the forces beyond the elements, whatever they are, and the forces beyond others also take shape, once the mind is born. If the mind is dissolved, all the others also get dissolved. The mind is the cause of everything."

28th July, 1946

(53) DREAMS — DELUSIONS

Sometime back a North Indian came here and stayed for some days. One afternoon at 3 o'clock, he came to

Bhagavan and related his experiences through a Tamil devotee, thus: “Swami, I was sleeping in the guest house yesterday. You were there speaking to me in my sleep. After some time I woke up and even after that, you were speaking to me. What is that?” Bhagavan said, “You were sleeping, weren’t you? Then with whom could you be speaking?” “Only with myself” he said. Everyone laughed.

“You say you were sleeping. How could there be any conversation with someone who is asleep? ‘No, I was conversing,’ you say. That meant that, even though the body was asleep, you were awake. Then find out who that ‘you’ is. After that we will consider the conversation during sleep,” said Bhagavan. There was no reply at all. Looking at all the people with a kind look, he said, “There are only two things: creation and sleep. There is nothing if you go to sleep. You wake up and there is everything. If you learn to sleep while awake, you can be just a witness. That is the real truth.”

In the same manner, some time back Subbaramayya asked Bhagavan, “What is meant by *asparsa rupam*?” “It means that a thing is visible but not tangible.” “What is meant by *chhaya rupam*?” he again asked. “That is the same thing. It appears as a shadow. If you examine it, you will find nothing. Call it God, devil, dream, vision, inspiration or whatever you like. All this is existent if there is someone to see it. If you find out who it is that sees, all these will not be there. That which is nothing, that which is the source of everything, is the Self. Without seeing his own self, what is the use of a man’s seeing other things?” said Bhagavan.

Recently a person told Bhagavan that he had a friend who could see the limits of *sukshma sakti* (subtle powers), that he had seen the limits of the subtle power of *Mahapurushas* (great souls), that among them Sri Aurobindo’s subtle power-light extended to a distance of seven furlongs, that of

Bhagavan's, he could see upto three miles, but could not see to what further distance it extended and that the power-light of Buddha and others had not extended to that much distance. Having heard him patiently till the very end, Bhagavan said with a smile, "Please tell him that he should first look into his own power-light before looking into the extent of the subtle powers of so many others. What is all this about the limits of subtle powers and examining them? If one looks into one's own self, all these silly ideas do not come up. To him who realises himself, all these are mere trifles."

6th August, 1946

(54) PURE BHAKTI (DEVOTION) IS REAL SERVICE

Today a devotee asked Bhagavan: "Swami, what is that story about myrobalams while you were on the hill?" Bhagavan told us the following: "While I was in Virupaksha Cave, I used to eat one myrobalam every night to move the bowels freely. Once it so happened that there were none in stock. As Palaniswamy was thinking of going to the bazaar, I asked him to tell Sesa Iyer to send some myrobalams. He said he would do so as Sesa Iyer was on his way to the bazaar. The very next moment a devotee came from his village. He used to visit our place now and then. After staying with us for a while, he went out. A little later, Palaniswamy started to go to the bazaar. In the meantime, the devotee who had gone out, returned and said, 'Swami, do you want some myrobalams?' 'Give me one or two if you have them'

I said. He brought a big bag and placed it opposite to me. When I asked him, 'Where are all these from?', he replied, 'Swami, after having your *darshan*, I went out in a cart to a village nearby as I had some work there. Another cart had gone ahead of me laden with bags of myrobalams. One of the bags had a hole from which these myrobalams fell out. I picked them up and brought them here thinking that they might be of some use. Let them be here, Swami.' I took about two or three viss and returned the rest to him. Such things used to happen often. How many could we recollect! When mother came and started cooking, she used to say that it would be good if there was an iron ladle. I would say, let us see. The next day or the day after that someone would bring five or six ladles. It was the same thing with cooking utensils. Mother would say that it would be good if we had this or that article, and I would reply, 'Is that so?' and the same day or the next, such articles, ten instead of one, used to be received. Enough, enough of this I felt! Who is to look after them? There were many such incidents," said Bhagavan.

"What about the grapes?" asked the devotee. Bhagavan replied, "Yes, they also were being used for the same purpose as the myrobalams. One day the stock of grapes was exhausted. Palaniswamy wanted to know if he could tell some one going to the shop to get them. I said that there was no hurry, and that he should not worry about it but should wait and see. That was all. Within a short time, the brother of Gambhiram Seshayya came there. There was a big packet in his hand. When asked what it contained, he said, 'grapes.' 'What! Just a little while ago, we were saying that our stock had run out. How did you come to know about it?' I asked. He said, 'How could I know about it, Swami? Before coming here,

I felt that I should not come to you with empty hands, and so went to the bazaar. As it was Sunday, all the shops but one were closed. 'I am going to Bhagavan. What have you got?' I asked the shopkeeper. He said he had only grapes and that too they had just arrived. So he packed them and gave them to me. I brought them. It is only just a while ago, Swami, that this thought occurred to me.' On comparing notes, it was found that the time coincided. That was a very common experience for Ayyaswami also. We used to think that it would be better if we had a certain article, and at the very same hour, he used to feel that that article should be taken to Bhagavan. If we asked him, 'how did you know about it?' Ayyaswami used to say, 'Swami, how could I know? It merely occurred to me that I should take a particular article to Bhagavan. I brought it and that is all. You say that you were thinking of the very same article at the time. Swami alone should know about such strange happenings.' Really, he used to keep his mind pure, and so whatever we thought about here used to mirror itself in his mind."

Are we to be told specifically that we should keep our minds pure and without blemish? The life of Ayyaswami itself is an example of this, is it not?

8th August, 1946

(55) GURI (CONCENTRATION) ALONE IS THE GURU (THE PRECEPTOR)

Yesterday morning Yogi Ramiah questioned Bhagavan thus: "Swami, some disciples of Sai Baba worship a picture

of him and say that it is their Guru: How could that be? They can worship it as God, but what benefit could they get by worshipping it as their Guru?” Bhagavan replied, “They secure concentration by that.” The Yogi said, “That is all very well, I agree. It may be to some extent a *sadhana* in concentration. But isn’t a Guru required for that concentration?” “Certainly, but after all, Guru only means *guri*, concentration” said Bhagavan. The Yogi said, “How can a lifeless picture help in developing deep concentration? It requires a living Guru who could show it in practice. It is possible perhaps for Bhagavan to attain perfection without a living Guru but is it possible for people like myself?”

“That is true. Even so, by worshipping a lifeless portrait the mind gets concentrated to a certain extent. That concentration will not remain constant unless one knows one’s own Self by enquiring. For that enquiry, a Guru’s help is necessary. That is why the ancients say that the enquiry should not stop with mere initiation. However, even if it does, the initiation will not be without benefit. It will bear fruit some time or other. But there should be no ostentation in this initiation. If the mind is pure, all this will bear fruit; otherwise, it goes to waste like a seed sown in barren soil,” said Bhagavan.

“I don’t know, Swami. You may say that a hundred times or a thousand times. To be sure of one’s own progress, a living Guru like you is required. How can we give the status of a Guru to a lifeless portrait?” he said. With a smile on his face, Bhagavan said, “Yes, yes,” nodding his head and then kept silent. Brother, all I can say is that that smile and that silence were radiant with knowledge and wisdom. How can I describe it?

10th August, 1946

(56) SIDDHAS*

There was a talk in Bhagavan's presence today about *siddhas*. Some people said, amongst other things, that someone had tried to attain *siddhi* and had succeeded. After hearing them all patiently for a long time, Bhagavan said in a tone of annoyance, "You talk of *siddhas*. You say they attain something from somewhere. For that purpose they do *sadhana* and *tapas*. Is it not really a *siddhi* or attainment for us who are really formless to have got a body with eyes, legs, hands, nose, ears, mouth and to be doing something or other with that body? We are *siddhas*. We get food, if we want food; water, if we want water; milk, if we want milk. Are not all these *siddhis*? While we experience ever so many *siddhis* at all times, why do you clamour for more *siddhis*? What else is required?"

About two years back, Manu Subedar, a member of the Indian Legislative Assembly and translator of the commentary on the *Bhagavad Gita* by Jnaneswara, came to have *darshan* of Bhagavan, and asked Bhagavan during a conversation why it was that there were writings about *siddha purushas* in all books but none about *sadhakas*, and whether there were any books about *sadhakas*. Bhagavan said, "In *Bhakta Vijayam*, in Tamil, there is a conversation between Jnaneswara and Vithoba, his father. That is a discussion between a *siddha* and a *sadhaka*. The state of a *sadhaka* can be seen in that conversation." So saying Bhagavan sent for a copy of *Bhakta Vijayam* from the Ashram library, read out that

* Semi-divine people supposed to be of great purity and holiness and said to be particularly characterised by eight supernatural faculties called *siddhis*.

portion himself and explained it in detail. On reaching home, Manu Subedar asked for a copy of the conversation. Bhagavan sent a copy after getting it translated into English. Manu Subedar added it as a supplement to the third edition of his *Jñaneswari*. Recently I translated that conversation into Telugu. You remember when you came here last full-moon day, during some conversation, Bhagavan said that Jñaneswara was a *siddha* while Vithoba was a *sadhaka*. Hence it was named “Siddha-Sadhaka Samvadam” (Conversation between a *siddha* and a *sadhaka*.)

Bhagavan often says, “To know oneself and to be able to remain true to oneself, is *siddhi*, and nothing else. If one’s mind is absorbed in the enquiry of self, the truth will be realised some time or other. That is the best *siddhi*.”

I give below an extract from the prose writings of Bhagavan regarding these *siddhis* in his “Unnathi Nalupadhi”* which bears this out:

Siddhi is to know and realise that which is ever real. Other *siddhis* are mere dream *siddhis*. Would they be true when one wakes up from one’s sleep? Those who are wedded to truth and who had got freed from *maya*, will they get deluded by them? Please understand.

Reality in Forty Verses, verse 35

* “The Forty Verses” on Reality or Existence, originally composed by Bhagavan in Tamil under the title “Ulladu Narpadu”, is called differently in different language versions: “Unnathi Nalupadhi,” “Sad Vidya,” “Saddarshanam,” “Truth Revealed,” etc.

11th August, 1946

**(57) KARTHURAGNAYA PRAPYATHE
PHALAM
(FRUITS OF ACTIONS ARE ORDAINED
BY THE CREATOR)**

About ten months ago, Krishna Bhikshu wrote to me saying that he was thinking of gifting away his property to his brothers and then taking to *sannyasa* and going about the country, hoping thereby to get peace of mind, and that he was wondering what Bhagavan would say about it. I informed Bhagavan about this letter. Bhagavan first said, "Is that so? Has he finally decided?" and after a while remarked, "Everything happens according to each individual's karma."

When I wrote to him about this, Krishna Bhikshu replied: "It is said that '*Karthuragnaya Prapyathe Phalam*, fruits of actions are ordained by the Creator.' What has become of the Creator?" I was disinclined to tell Bhagavan about this, and was considering what to write in reply. Meantime, one devotee asked Bhagavan, "In '*Karthuragnaya Prapyathe Phalam*' who is the *karta*?" Bhagavan said, "*karta* is Ishwara. He is the one who distributes the fruits of actions to each person according to his karma. That means He is *Saguna Brahman*. The real *Brahman* is *nirguna* (attributeless) and without motion. It is only *Saguna Brahman* that is named as Ishwara. He gives the *phala* (fruits) to each person according to his karma (actions). That means that Ishwara is only an Agent. He gives wages according to the labour done. That is all. Without that *sakti* (power) of Ishwara, this karma (action) will not take place. That is why karma is said to be *jadam* (inert)."

What else could be the reply to the question of Krishna Bhikshu? So I wrote accordingly to him. With the supernatural

powers of his sandals, Vikramarka went to Brahma Loka, the world of Brahma, whereupon Brahma, being pleased, told him to ask for a boon. Vikramarka said, “Lord, the *Sastras* loudly proclaim that when you create living beings you write on their foreheads their future life according to the results of their actions in past lives. Now you say that you will give me a boon. Will you rub out what has already been written on my forehead, and write afresh? Or will you correct it by overwriting? What exactly is done?” Brahma was pleased at his intelligent question and said with a smile, “Nothing new is done now. That which was already preordained according to the karma of beings, comes out of my mouth. We merely say, ‘Yes, we have given you the boon.’ That is all. Nothing is given anew. Not knowing that, people do penances for boons at our hands. As you are an intelligent person, you have found out the secret. I am very happy.” So saying he presented Vikramarka with *Brahmastram* and sent him away. I remember having read this story in my younger days.

In the tenth canto of *Bhagavata*, the same idea was given in the exhortation of Lord Krishna to Nanda: to give up the performance of a sacrifice to God Indra.

12th August, 1946

(58) SARVA SAMATVAM (UNIVERSAL EQUALITY)

Last summer a Pandal was erected adjacent to the Hall so that it might be convenient for Bhagavan to sit outside in the evenings. Khus-khus thatties were tied west of the Pandal. Bhagavan’s sofa used to be placed very near to them. The

devotees used to sit there facing west, and Bhagavan used to sit facing south like Dakshinamurthy. We all used to sit opposite to his feet. When we look straight we get a *darshan* of the lotus feet of Bhagavan, while on one side, we see the fine flower-garden, and on the other, we get a *darshan* of the summit of Arunachala. How can one speak of our good fortune?

One evening at 4-45, after Bhagavan had gone to the hill for a stroll, the personal attendants raised the khus-khus thatties and tied them up as it was cloudy. Within 10 minutes of Bhagavan's return, there was bright sunshine. Though it was the evening sun, all were affected by the summer heat, and that caused a little discomfort. Unable to bear the sight of the sun's rays falling on the bare body of Bhagavan, one of the attendants, by name Vaikuntavas, slowly lowered the thatties that were behind Bhagavan. He thought Bhagavan had not noticed it. As *Veda Parayana* (Vedic recitation) was going on at the time, Bhagavan appeared not to notice it and kept quiet.

After the recitation was over, Bhagavan said with some annoyance, "See the doings of these people! They lowered only those thatties that were on my side. Perhaps they think that the others are not human beings! The sun's heat should not touch Swami alone. It does not matter if it touches others! Something special for Swami only! Anyway, they are keeping up the prestige of Swami's position! Poor chaps! Perhaps according to them, one is not a Swami unless he is looked after like this! Swami should not be exposed to sun or wind or light; he should not move or talk; he should sit with folded arms and with hands on a sofa. This is Swamyhood. *Swamitvam* is being upheld by singling me out amongst people for special treatment."

You see, Bhagavan does not tolerate any distinction. He insists on equality. The poor attendant got scared and tied up

the thatties. The evening glare fell on Bhagavan and got mixed up with the lustre of his eyes. The smoke from the agarbathis (incense sticks) spread all round. It seemed as if even the smoke from the agarbathis having made friends with the cool breeze and as if blown by a fan bowed before Bhagavan's feet and spread around evenly among the devotees.

13th August, 1946

(59) YATHECHHA (AS ONE DESIRES)

During the early days of my arrival at the Ashram, there was a Vaisya boy living here. His hair was matted without being attended to. He used to get food from charitable house holders, and sleep in the Arunachala Temple at night. His mother came to the Ashram and pressed him to return home, and so he ran away to Pandharpur. He was her only son. They had plenty of property. The boy was a sort of wandering beggar, a *bairagi*, who would say that he did not want anything. When that mother related her woeful story to Bhagavan and sought his help, Bhagavan tried to prevail upon the boy, once or twice, to listen to the mother's words. He did not listen, but instead, he ran away.

He came again during last month. He was keeping away from others, sitting in a corner of the hall. You may call it *sadhana* or whatever you like. Except that his hair was no longer matted there was no other change in his routine or appearance. Bhagavan was observing him continuously. The boy did not speak. After fifteen days, Rajagopala Iyer, who had retired from his job and come back to his library work in the Ashram, happened to come to the hall and noticing

the Vaisya boy, said to Bhagavan, “This boy appears to have returned from Pandharpur. His mother left her address, didn’t she, requesting us to write to her in case he came back?”

Bhagavan said, “Yes, he has come back. That was about fifteen days ago. I have been observing him. He does not speak. So, how then could I ask him ‘What is Pandharpur like? Where is the *prasadam*, etc.?’ We have to conduct ourselves according to the workings of the minds of others. We are in duty bound to adjust ourselves thus.” People of intelligence examine their own minds. There is no knowing about the minds of others. Bhagavan says that he has to adjust himself according to the desires and intentions of others! See what a great precept that is!

15th August, 1946

(60) PROGRAMME

Niranjananandaswami who went to Madurai about a month ago, travelled to Madras from there. T. K. Doraiswamy Iyer, who came from Madras, placed in Bhagavan’s hands a programme for the Golden Jubilee celebrations on 1st September, drawn up in consultation with prominent people in Madras, and stood aside reverentially.

The details of the proposed programme, beginning at seven in the morning and lasting till seven in the evening were mentioned therein. High Court Judges and a number of eminent people were fixed up as speakers. Musiri Subramania Iyer’s and Budalur Krishnamurthy Sastry’s music performance and very many other items were in

the programme. After reading it carefully, Bhagavan said with a smile, “Oh, what a crowded programme! Anyway, why should I worry? Let them do what they like. It is enough if I am given some time to go out. It is stated that all these big people will deliver lectures! What about? What is there to speak about? That which is, is *mouna* (silence). How can *mouna* be explained in words? In English, in Sanskrit, in Tamil, in Telugu. Oh, what an array of languages! Eminent people will speak in so many languages! All right! Why should I bother! It is enough if I am not asked to speak.”

That devotee respectfully and with folded hands submitted that if Bhagavan desired that any of the items should be omitted, it would be done. “Oh, I see! Have I asked for any of these items, so that I could now object to any one of them? Do what you like. It is all a series of lectures. I will sit like this on the sofa. You may do whatever you like,” said Bhagavan with a smile. “Yes, Swami, it is true. Who will be able to speak boldly in the presence of Bhagavan? Even so, all this is merely to express our joy at this great fortune we are privileged to have.” So saying, the devotee bowed before Bhagavan and went away.

16th August, 1946

(61) AN UNKNOWN DEVOTEE

Amongst the letters received by the Ashram today, there was one in English from an unknown devotee from Czechoslovakia. Seeing it Bhagavan affectionately told us all about it and had it read out in the hall. The gist of it is: “Though

my body is actually at a great distance from Arunachala, it is at the feet of Bhagavan from a spiritual viewpoint. I believe that fifty years will be completed by this 1st of September from the time when young Ramana reached Tiruvannamalai. I seek your permission to celebrate the occasion in the belief that it is the real birthday of Bhagavan. I shall celebrate the festival with an endeavour to submerge my mind in the dust of the feet of Bhagavan with limitless devotion, faith and regard, and with my heart dwelling on Bhagavan's voice."

While all of us were expressing our delight on hearing the contents of that letter, Bhagavan said with a face radiant with benevolence, "We do not know who he is, and what his name and his native place are. He never came here. How has he managed to know that it is full fifty years since I came here? He has written a letter full of devotion. From what he has written, it looks as if he has read about my life and understood it. Devotees have been looking forward to an article from Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, but it has not been received so far. If received, it is the intention of these people to print it as the very first article. When S. Doraiswamy was asked, he said, 'Oh no. I cannot do it. I prefer to be silent.' D.S. Sastri also said the same thing. This letter has come unexpectedly. That is how things happen. These people are awaiting articles from others, especially from Dr. S. Radhakrishnan. See the peculiarity! Where is Czechoslovakia and where is Tiruvannamalai? What are we to say when a person who has never seen me has written thus?"

18th August, 1946

**(62) EKAM AKSHARAM
(THE ONE LETTER AND THE ONE
IMPERISHABLE)**

A few days ago some Gujaratis who had come from Bombay purchased some Ashram books and Bhagavan's photos and showing them to Bhagavan, requested him to write his name on the books. "What name should I write?" asked Bhagavan. "Your name," said they. "What name have I?" said Bhagavan. When they said, "Your name is Ramana Maharshi, is it not?" Bhagavan said smilingly, "Somebody said so. Really what is a name or a native place for me? I could write only if I had a name." The Gujaratis went away quietly without saying anything further.

In January 1945, you remember that you sent your book on Banking with a request that Bhagavan might be pleased to write in it the word 'OM' or 'SRI' and return it to you, and Bhagavan declined to do so. Instead, he gave me a piece of paper, on which he wrote a Telugu translation of a verse that he had written long back in Tamil when Somasundaraswami made a similar request. When I sent that slip of paper to you, you took it as an *upadesa*, a precept from Bhagavan, and were overjoyed. Subsequently, he made some slight alterations therein. Later on Bhagavan translated it into Sanskrit as a *sloka* at the request of Muruganar as follows:

एकमक्षरं हृदि निरंतरम् ।
भासते स्वयं लिख्यते कथम् ॥

It means: "The one imperishable which is in the Heart at all times is self-luminous. How to write it?"

I was reminded of all this when the Gujaratis made a similar request today and got a refusal.

About ten months ago, Pantu Lakshminarayana Sastri, Telugu Pandit, Maharajah's College, Vizianagaram, came here. After praising Bhagavan with verses composed extempore, he appealed to Bhagavan thus: "Please let me have something to commemorate this event and bless this poor soul." "What shall I give?" asked Bhagavan. "Anything you please; just an *aksharam* (letter) by way of *upadesa*," he said. Bhagavan said, "How can I give that which is '*akshara*'?" and so saying he looked at me. I said, "It will perhaps do if you tell him about the *sloka Ekamaksharam*." Sastri asked, "What is that *sloka*?" I read out that *sloka*. "Where is that *dwipada*?" asked Bhagavan. I read out that too. Sastri was overjoyed as if he had got a great treasure, and copied both the *sloka* and the *dwipada*. When I told him about the circumstances under which those two were written, he felt very happy and went away after bowing before Bhagavan. I remembered all this when Bhagavan was saying to the Gujaratis, "What is a name or a native place for me?" Not only this. I was reminded of a song which mother used to sing while engaged in her domestic work, the meaning of which is somewhat as follows:

"Ramanamam is the wide universe which has no name or body or work. It has a lustre surpassing the moon, the sun and the fire."

Ramana's name also is just like that!

19th August, 1946

(63) CONTENTMENT

Bhagavan told Rajagopala Iyer to bind into the form of books the four copies of proofs of the Tamil work *Chatvarimsat* which had been recently received from the printing press. By the time I went there in the afternoon at 2-30 p.m. the books were ready; only the outer cover had to be put on. Showing the copies to the people around, Bhagavan said laughingly to Vaikuntavas who was by his side, "See, if we make good use of these proofs, we will have four more copies of the book. How else could we get four copies? Who would give them to us? We should have to buy them at the bookstall. Where would we get the money?" We were all amused, and Vaikuntavas laughed. "Why do you laugh? Am I doing a job and earning a salary of several hundred every month? Or am I doing business and earning lakhs? Where should I get money? What independence have I? If I am thirsty, I must ask you for water. If I went to the kitchen instead and asked, they would say, 'Oh, this Swami has started exercising authority over us'. I have to keep my mouth shut. What independence have I," said Bhagavan.

What other intention can he have than to administer a mild rebuke to all when he talks like this, though he is independent of everything in this world? Not only this. We always act freely according to our wishes. We ask for this and for that and become enslaved to desires. We achieve our desires by asking or ordering. Bhagavan depreciates not only the use of authority in such matters, but even obtaining such things by asking. There was another instance. Two or three years ago, as I entered the hall one morning, Bhagavan was saying as follows in reply to several questions which Krishnaswami was asking:

“When I was in Virupaksha Cave, Sundaresa Iyer used to go out into the town for *bhiksha* and bring us food. At times, there used to be no curry or chutney. People to eat were many while the food obtained was limited. What were we to do? I used to mix it into a paste and pour hot water over it to make it like gruel, and then give a glassful to each, and take one myself. Sometimes we all used to feel that it would be better if we had at least some salt to mix with it. But where was the money to buy salt? We should have had to ask someone for it. If once we begin to ask for salt, we would feel like asking for *dhal*, and when we ask for *dhal*, we would feel like asking for *payasam* and so on. So we felt that we should not ask for anything, and swallowed the gruel as it was. We used to feel extremely happy over such diet. As the food was *satvic*, without spices of any kind, and there was not even salt in it, not only was it healthy for this body, but there was also great peace for the mind.”

“Is salt also one of those things that stimulates *rajas*, (passion)?” I asked. “Yes. What doubt is there? Is it not said so in one of the *granthas* (books)? Wait, I will look it up and tell you,” said Bhagavan. “Isn’t it enough if Bhagavan says so? Why a *grantha*?” I said.

Not only do we not give up salt, but we always feel that chillies also are necessary for taste. That is how we have our rules and regulations about our eating habits. Great souls eat to live and serve the world, while we live to eat. That is the difference. If we eat to live, there is no need to think of taste. If we live to eat, the tastes are limitless. And for this purpose, we undergo ever so many trials and tribulations.

19th August, 1946

(64) ATMA PRADAKSHINA (GOING ROUND THE SELF)

One morning last May, Sundaresa Iyer, who used to bring food for Bhagavan while in Virupaksha Cave by going about begging came and bowed before Him. Bhagavan asked him, "Did you go round the hill by way of *pradakshina*?" "No," said the devotee. Looking at me, Bhagavan said, "Last night when people were going out for *giripradakshina* because of the moonlight, he also started to go. But he felt he could not complete the round. When they were starting out after telling me, he went round me quickly. When I asked him why he did so, he said, 'I am afraid I cannot go round the hill. So I have gone round Bhagavan.' 'Go round yourself. That will be *Atma pradakshina*,' I said." So saying Bhagavan began laughing.

"It means that he has done what Vinayaka once did," said one devotee. "What is that story?" asked another devotee. Then Bhagavan began telling it: "Once upon a time, Lord Parameswara wanted to teach a lesson to His son Lord Subrahmanya who fancied Himself to be a great sage; so Parameswara sat on the top of Mount Kailasa with Parvati, with a fruit in His hand. Seeing the fruit both Ganapati and Subrahmanya asked their father, Parameswara for it. Then Ishwara said that He would give the fruit to whoever of them got back first after going round the whole world. With self-confidence and pride that he would win the race, Subrahmanya started immediately riding on his favourite mount, the peacock, and began going at a fast pace, frequently looking behind to assure himself that his elder brother Ganapati was not following. What could poor Ganapati do, with his huge belly? His *vahanam* (mount) was after all a mouse. So he thought it was no good

competing with Subrahmanya in the race round the world, and went round Parvati and Parameswara, bowed before them and claimed the reward. When They asked him whether he had gone round the world, he said, "All the worlds are contained within you; so if I go round you, it is as good as going round the whole world." Pleased with his reply, Parameswara gave him the fruit and Ganapati sat there eating it.

"In full confidence that he would be the winner, Subrahmanya finished going round the world and arrived at the starting point, but found Ganapati seated before Parvati and Parameswara eating the fruit. When he asked Parameswara to give him the fruit for winning the race, Ishwara said, 'There it is, your elder brother is eating it.' When he asked his father how that could be fair, Ishwara explained to him all that had happened. Subrahmanya then realised his vanity in thinking that he was a great sage, bowed before his parents, and asked to be pardoned. That is the story. The significance is that the ego which goes round like a whirlwind must get destroyed, and must get absorbed in *Atma*. That is *Atma Pradakshina*," said Bhagavan.

20th August, 1946

(65) NARAKASURA — DIPAVALI

Ramachandra Iyer came here from Madras recently. One day he was seated in the hall going through an old notebook and correcting some dates and numbers in it. Seeing that, Bhagavan asked what it was. He replied, "This is an old notebook written by Bhagavan. I am looking into the numbers and dates in it, and entering them in the printed book." "Give it to me," Bhagavan said, and taking it and

turning over the pages, said to me, “There are some *Dipavali padyams* (verses) in it. Have you heard them?”

When I said I had not, he read them out and gave the meaning thereof as follows: “He is Narakasura (a demon) who feels attached in the thought that he is the body. That attachment to the body itself is a *Naraka* (hell). The life of a person who has that attachment, even if he be a Maharajah, is hellish. Destroying the attachment to the body, and the self shining by itself as Self is *Dipavali*. That is the idea contained in those verses.” I asked, “Are all these verses in *Nool Thirattu*?”* Bhagavan said, “These were all composed extempore on the spur of the moment from time to time. Why include all these in that book?”

After the first publication of the book, when these verses were read out in Bhagavan’s presence, he asked, “Do you know why I wrote those verses?” When I said that I did not know, he said, “Is that so? One *Dipavali* day, Muruganar wanted me to write something about *Dipavali*. ‘Why don’t you write? Why should I?’ I asked. He said that he would also write if I did. I agreed, and wrote these verses. I did not write anything without reason. There is a story behind every verse that I wrote.” So saying he showed me the verses (in Tamil). I give them below with the meaning:

Vrittam.

நரகுட னானா நரகுல காளும்
 நரகனெங் கென்றுசாஅய் ஞானத் திகிரியால்
 நரகனைக் கொன்றவ னாரண னன்றே
 நரக சதுர்த்தசி நற்றின மாமே.

* *Nool Thirattu* is the title of the book in Tamil containing all the verses, songs and prose writings of Bhagavan. *The Collected Works of Sri Ramana Maharshi* contains the English translations of these. Both these books have been published by Sri Ramanasramam.

He is the king of hell who says that he is the body which is hell itself. He is Narayana who ascertains who Naraka is, and destroys him with His vision of wisdom, *Jnana Drishti*. That is the auspicious day of *Narakachathurdasi*.

Venba

நரக வுருவா நடலை யுடல
கிரக மகமெனவே கெட்ட — நரகனாம்
மாயா வியைநாடி மாய்த்துத்தா னாயொளிர்தல்
தீபா வளியாந் தெளி.

The false belief that this hell-like house called body is me, is Naraka himself. To destroy that false belief and let the self shine as Self, is *Dipavali*.

21st August, 1946

(66) LIFE ON THE HILL — SOME INCIDENTS

Yesterday afternoon, I went to the hall a little later than usual. I believe it was 3 p.m. At the request of the devotees, Bhagavan was relating some incidents from his life on the hill. He was telling them how, when he was in Virupaksha Cave, they had at first a mud pot for bringing food, then an aluminium vessel, then a brass one, and then a tiffin carrier; how the vessels accumulated one by one like this and how the devotees quietly started cooking without heeding his protests. Bhagavan told us another incident also, with a smile on his face. "Once, when I was in Virupaksha Cave, Rangaswami Iyengar, Gambhiram Seshayya, a Vaisya and a Reddy happened to be there. One day they all felt like cooking food and started doing so enthusiastically. Every one of them had the *yajnopaveetam* (sacred thread), except the

Reddy. ‘Why should he not have it?’ they thought, and put one on him. That was great fun for all of them and they enjoyed the feast,” said Bhagavan. Rajagopala Iyer asked, “Was it while you were there that grandmother came?” “Yes, she came while we were there, and said that she would cook food for herself. We told her that she could do so in the small cave nearby. She agreed and started cooking, and said to me, ‘Venkatarama, I am cooking today. You should not therefore take any other food.’ I said ‘Yes’ and after she left, I ate with the others as usual. It was some distance between this cave and the other one, and so how could she know? After she had cooked, I ate that food also. She really thought I had not eaten anything else except the food she cooked.” He continued, “We had a grandfather amongst our relatives. He had the habit of abusing everyone. Even so, everyone used to invite him so as to enjoy the fun of his abusive language. That was because he was good-natured and did not mean ill to anybody. He came to see me while I was in Virupaksha Cave. Soon after he came, he said jocularly, ‘What, Venkataraman! It seems you have become a big Swami! Have you grown horns on your head?’ It was when mother was away in Kasi that all this happened.” It was really interesting to hear Bhagavan narrating these incidents with suitable modulations in his voice, and appropriate gestures.

22nd August, 1946

(67) ARPANA (OFFERING)

A devotee who has been a regular visitor here for a long time came a week back with a copy of the Tamil book *Thiruvaimozhi* and began talking to Bhagavan about Vaishnava

traditions. It seems he recently received *Samasrayanam* (initiation). When he said that, Bhagavan began relating his earlier experiences as follows:

“When I was on the hill, some Vaishnavaites used to come there to see me. There are, as you know, two sections amongst Vaishnavaites, *Vadakalai* and *Thenkalai*. I used to speak to these visitors in accordance with their respective traditions, as I lose nothing by doing so. When, however, they thought that I was on their side and wanted me to have *Samasrayanam*, I declined. They believe that no one will be permitted into *Vaikuntam* (heaven) unless he is duly initiated. I used to ask them, ‘Show me even one person who has gone to *Vaikuntam* with his body.’ According to their traditions, they do not accept *Sayujyam* (absorption into the deity). They say, ‘Sri Maha Vishnu is in heaven, *Vaikuntam*. Released souls sit around him and serve him.’ How will all find accommodation there? Perhaps they sit close together shoulder to shoulder? They alone should know. Not only that. It seems there is a *mantra* which declares that they surrender their all to their Guru at the time they receive *Samasrayanam*. It is enough if the *mantra* is recited and a *dakshina* (offering or donation) is given to the Guru. The surrender is over, and it does not matter whatever is done afterwards; a seat is reserved for them in *Vaikuntam*. What more is needed? That is the opinion of some of them. It is mere delusion to think of *arpana* (offering), so lightly. *Arpana* means that the mind gets merged in the self and becomes one with it. It means that it should become devoid of all *vasanas*. And that will not come about unless there is self-effort and God’s Grace. God’s force cannot get hold of you and drag you into itself unless you surrender completely. But where is the question of our surrendering? The self itself is to be surrendered. Until one can accomplish that, one

should go on struggling unceasingly. It is only after trying again and again that one may, finally, succeed in the effort. Once you succeed, there is no going back. That is the proper course. What is the use of merely repeating the word *arpana*, *arpana*? Except that you give some money while repeating the word *arpana*, what is the effect on the mind? In this *Thiruvaimozhi* itself there are some songs in the Advaitic cult sung by some devotees after attaining Self-realisation. Nammalwar is one such devotee. He sang that a mother praised her daughter who attained Self-realisation in a form that looked like condemnation. The gist of those songs is, ‘This child says, I am Siva, I am Vishnu, I am Brahma, I am Indra, I am the sun, I am the five elements and I am everything! It is that Vishnu who sits on her head and makes her talk thus; otherwise she would not have these aberrations. It is that Vishnu who has changed her thus.’ That is the purport of these songs.” Those songs were read out and Bhagavan explained the meaning.

After that, he explained to us about Visishtadvaita: “When some devotees sang in terms of *Advaita*, some commentators twisted the meaning, interpreting it in terms of Visishtadvaita. That is all; it is nothing else. That is also the opinion of all the ancients. After all, what exactly is meant by Visishtadvaita? That which is *Visishtha* (distinguished) and best is Vishnu. That is Ishwara, Sadasiva, Brahma and all. That which is, is only One. Some Vaishnavaites give it a name and a shape and do not admit that there could be any *Sayujyam* (absorption in the Supreme Being) except by way of living in the same world (*Salokyam*), in the same vicinity (*Sameepyam*), and the same form (*Sarupyam*) as the Supreme Being. They say, *arpana*, *arpana* (offering, offering). How can there be *arpana* unless there is a thing called ‘I’? Complete surrender cannot come about unless one knows who one is.

If you come to know that, you will realise that what remains is only one thing. The mind which is the 'I' submits of its own accord. And that is the real *arpana* (surrender)," said Bhagavan.

23rd August, 1946

(68) SADHANA-SAKSHATKARAM (PRACTICE-MANIFESTATION)

The day before yesterday a learned man who came from Madras, began at 3 p.m. to question Bhagavan thus: "Was there a period at any time when Bhagavan did *sadhana*?" Bhagavan said, "*Sadhana*? *Sadhana* for what? What is there to do *sadhana* for? Sitting like this is itself *sadhana*. I used to sit like this always. I used to close my eyes then; now I keep them open. That is the only difference. What is now, was then also. What was there then, is also here now. *Sadhana* is necessary only if there is a thing other than 'I', Self. *Sadhana* is required only for one who does not look towards the Self which is permanent, but is deluded by looking at the body, etc., which are transitory and delusive; but not for one who sees the Self and so does not see anything else different. And what else is *sadhana* for?"

Someone asked, "Then why is it that many books say that no one can attain *jnana* without a Guru?" Bhagavan said, "Yes. For those who, because of the action of their minds, are deluded into believing that they are the bodies, a Guru and *sadhana* are necessary to get rid of that delusion." Another person asked, "People say that those who have received *upasana* can attain the physical manifestation of their favourite God

and other blessings by *sadhana*. What is the meaning?” Bhagavan said, “That which is present at all times is *sakshath* (manifest). The person ‘I’ is always present (*sakshath*). Then what is *karam*? That which is the cause is *karam*, so *sakshatkaram* (manifestation) means the knowledge of that which is true, that which is permanent and that which is the cause of everything is one’s own Self. And they say that God will descend from somewhere and manifest Himself if the Self which is ever existing, creates a shape according to its own desires, and meditates on it. You give up the Self which is existing at all times and at all places, and do *sadhana* with the hope that some God from somewhere will manifest Himself. They say that God just descends and again just disappears. You give up the Self which is always existent and strive for this transient vision, obtain boons and thus multiply the mental struggles and strivings. There will be no trouble at all if one simply remains as one is,” said Bhagavan.

Though Bhagavan was teaching us so clearly that *sakshatkaram* means only the good state and the good ideas beyond the owner’s thoughts, I felt it a great pity that we were not able to understand it. While I was thus thinking, someone asked, “That state of exalted thought and existence which is above the owner’s mental plane is natural and possible only for people like Bhagavan, but is it possible for ordinary people like us without *sadhana*?” Bhagavan said, “Certainly it is! *Sadhana* is necessary but for what purpose? His Self is there at all times and at all places. So there is no need to try and get it from somewhere else. *Sadhana* is only to get rid of the bodily and other illusions which are in the way of the self standing up as Self. This delusion arises only by thinking that this bodily world is real, instead of looking at the Self, which is real. *Sadhana* is only to get rid of this illusion. Otherwise, why should there be *sadhana* for the Self

to attain its own Self? He who has realised his own Self does not recognize anything else.”

24th August, 1946

(69) BRAHMAN IS REAL — THE WORLD IS AN ILLUSION

Sometime ago a new arrival to the Ashram asked Bhagavan something in English, which I could not follow, being ignorant of the language. But Bhagavan replied in Tamil, and I give below his reply to the extent that I am able to grasp.

Bhagavan said, “It is said that Brahman is real, and world an illusion; again it is said that the whole universe is an image of Brahman. The question arises: how are these two statements to be reconciled? In the *sadhak* stage, you have got to say that the world is an illusion. There is no other way, because when a man forgets that he is the Brahman, who is real, permanent and omnipresent, and deludes himself into thinking that he is a body in the universe which is filled with bodies that are transitory, and labours under that delusion, you have got to remind him that the world is unreal and a delusion. Why? Because, his vision which has forgotten its own Self, is dwelling in the external material universe and will not turn inward to introspection unless you impress on him that all this external, material universe is unreal. When once he realises his own Self, and also that there is nothing other than his own Self, he will come to look upon the whole universe as Brahman. There is no universe without his Self. So long as a man does not see

his own Self which is the origin of all, but looks only at the external world as real and permanent, you have to tell him that all this external universe is an illusion. You cannot help it. Take a paper. We see only the script, and nobody notices the paper on which the script is written. The paper is there, whether the script on it is there or not. To those who look upon the script as real, you have to say that it is unreal, an illusion, since it rests upon the paper. The wise man looks upon both the paper and script as one. So also with Brahman and the universe.

“It is the same in the case of the cinema. The screen is always there; the pictures come and go, but do not affect the screen. What does the screen care whether the pictures appear or disappear? The pictures depend upon the screen. But what use are they to it? The man who looks only at the pictures on the screen and not the screen itself, is troubled by the pains and pleasures that occur in the story. But the man who views the screen, realises that the images are all shadows and not something apart and distinct from the screen. So also with the world. It is all a shadow play,” said Bhagavan. The questioner took leave and went away, happy at the reply.

25th August, 1946

(70) SWAMI IS EVERYWHERE

The Europeans whom you sent with a letter of introduction came here by car the day before yesterday. An American lady also came with them. Yesterday morning they went round the town and after visiting Skandasramam, reached the Ashram by midday. After making all

arrangements for the return journey they came into the hall by 3 p.m. and sat down. Unaccustomed to squatting on the floor, that poor American lady somehow managed to sit by my side but stretched out her legs towards Bhagavan's sofa.

I myself felt it unmannerly but kept quiet as she was to go away presently. One of the attendants, Rajagopala Iyer, could not however put up with it and so respectfully suggested to her to sit cross-legged. Bhagavan saw that and said smilingly, "When they find it difficult even to sit down on the floor, should you force them to sit cross-legged also?" "No, No! As they do not know that it is disrespectful to stretch their legs towards Bhagavan, I merely told them so, that is all," said the devotee. "Oh, is that so? It is disrespectful, is it? Then it is disrespectful for me to stretch my legs towards them. What you say applies to me as well." Saying that in a lighter vein, Bhagavan sat up cross-legged. All of us laughed but we felt a bit troubled in our minds. Those foreigners stayed there for about half an hour and then went away, taking leave of Bhagavan.

Bhagavan spent the whole of yesterday stretching out his legs from time to time and then folding them, saying that it might be deemed disrespectful. His legs get stiff in ten minutes if he folds them and the stiffness will not disappear unless the legs are stretched out for at least half an hour afterwards, not to speak of the pain that results. This afternoon when I went into the hall, there were not more than two or three persons there. Bhagavan began stretching his legs saying, "I do not know if I can stretch them. They say it is not good manners." Poor Rajagopala Iyer was standing there crestfallen and with a repentant look. Bhagavan is, after all, full of compassion! He stretched out his legs as usual. We all felt happy. Looking at me seated in the hall, he began telling us the story of Avvaiyar.

“Seeing that Sundaramurthi was going away on a white elephant which had come from *Kailas*, the Rajah of Chera whispered in the ear of his horse the *panchakshari mantra* and got upon it to go to *Kailas*. Avvaiyar, who was at the time doing *puja* to Lord Ganesar, saw them both going to *Kailas* and so tried to hurry up her *puja* as she too wanted to go to *Kailas*. Seeing that, Ganesar said, ‘Old woman, don’t hurry. Let your *puja* be performed as usual. I shall take you to *Kailas* before they reach it.’ Accordingly, the *puja* was performed in due course. Waving his hand around, he said, ‘Old lady, close your eyes.’ That was all. When she opened her eyes, she found herself seated in *Kailas* in front of Parvati and Parameswara. By the time Sundaramurthi and Chera Rajah reached the place, they found her already seated there. Surprised at that, they asked her how she had gotten there. She told them how Lord Ganesar helped her. They were overjoyed to hear how her bhakti was rewarded ultimately.

She was very old and so she sat opposite to Parameswara with her legs stretched out like me. Parvati could not bear that sight. She was worried because to sit with legs thus stretched out towards Swami, she felt, was a great insult. She respectfully suggested to Parameswara that she should be permitted to tell the old lady about it. ‘Oh, don’t speak, don’t open your mouth. We should not say anything to her,’ said Ishwara. Even so, is not Parvati His better half? How could She put up with that insult? She therefore whispered into the ear of her maid to tell the old lady about it. That woman approached the old lady and said, ‘Grandma, Grandma, don’t keep your legs outstretched towards Ishwara.’ ‘Is that so? Tell me on which side Ishwara is not present. Shall I turn this side?’ said Avvaiyar. So saying, she turned her outstretched legs to another side when Ishwara got turned that side; and when again she turned to a different side, He also got turned

the same side. Thus Swami got turned to whichever side she turned her legs. Looking at Parvati, Ishwara said, 'Do you see now? You would not listen to me. See, how she turns me this side and that. That is why I told you not to open your mouth.' Then Parvati requested the old lady to excuse her. It is similar to that when people are asked not to stretch their legs towards Swami. Where is He not present?"

That devotee then said, "There is a similar incident in the story of Namadeva, is it not?" "Yes, that is so," said Bhagavan and began relating that story thus:

"Namadeva used to pride himself on the fact that Vittal was always more fond of him than others and so once Jnanadeva and others took him to the house of Gorakumbhar for a feast. After food, all of them sat in a row and, during conversation, one of them said in an allegorical manner to Gorakumbhar, 'You are used to making good pots, aren't you? Now tell us which amongst these pots are good and which are bad?' Gorakumbhar thereupon took a potter's testing rod and began hitting them on the head, one by one.

"They all kept quiet out of regard for him and just kept their heads bent. When it came to the turn of Namadeva, he expressed his resentment at the procedure and refused to undergo the test. Kumbhar forthwith declared that that was an immature pot. All the others burst into laughter at that. Poor Namadeva could not contain his anger. He began saying that they all had conspired together to humiliate him thus and went to Vittal with tears in his eyes to complain. 'Well, what is the matter?' asked Swami, and Namadeva related the whole story. 'That is all right; but tell me what did the others say when they were tested?' asked Swami.

Namadeva: They all shut their mouths and bowed when tested with the rod.

Vittal: And you?

Namadeva: Am I like them? How intimate I am with you!
Am I to be beaten like that for a test?

Vittal: That is called *ahankara* (ego). All of them knew my real Self and had a contented mind. You are not so.

Namadeva: But you are kind to me; and what more is there for me to know?

Vittal: That is not it. You must serve elders if you want to know the truth. What am I? If you dance, I dance. If you laugh, I laugh. If you jump, I jump. If you find out the truth, you will not have these jumpings and bumpings.

Namadeva: You say, elders. Who is there older than you?

Vittal: Who? There is a temple in the nearby forest. In that temple there is a *sadhu*. Go to him and you will realise the truth.

“When Namadeva went to that temple in the forest, he saw an unkempt man lying there. ‘How could this man be a *sadhu*?’ he thought and, when he went closer to that person, he found the legs of the man on a *linga*. Shuddering at the sight, he said with trepidation, ‘Sir, what is this? You are putting your legs on the head of God!’ That man said, ‘Oho! Nama, is that you? Vittal sent you, didn’t he?’ Taken aback at this and wondering how the *sadhu* could know about him, he asked again, ‘Sir, you are a *sadhu*, aren’t you? How could you put your legs on a *linga*?’ ‘Is that so, my dear son? I don’t know all that. I am unable to lift my legs. Will you please lift them for me and move them away from the *linga*?’ he said. Namadeva, agreeing to do so, lifted them and tried to put them elsewhere but found that there was another *linga* there also. Thus wherever he tried to put the legs, he found a *linga* there and so finally, he placed them on himself, when he himself became a *linga*. That is to say, by the touch

of those holy feet, he had *jnanodaya* (dawn of knowledge of the Self). Namadeva stood up dazed. The *sadhu* asked, 'Yes, do you now realise (the truth)?' Saying, 'Yes, I have realised,' he bowed before Visobakesar, disciple of Jnaneswar, went home, sat in his room and got immersed in *dhyana* and stopped going to Vittal.

"After some days, Vittal came there running and asked him, 'Nama, how is it you haven't been coming to me of late?', when Namadev said, 'Oh, *Prabhu* (Lord)! Where is the place in which you are not present? I see you here at all times. I am you and you are me. That is why I do not go to you.' 'Oh, I see, that is good,' so saying Vittal vanished."

Bhagavan concluded the story and simultaneously released the legs that were kept crossed.

26th August, 1946

(71) AKSHARA SWARUPAM (THE IMPERISHABLE IMAGE)

Rajagopala Iyer came back home some time towards the end of July to help in arranging the papers and books, handing them out when asked and generally to look after the library work.

During the early days, while rummaging the papers that had been lying there for a long time, he found a small piece of paper containing a Tamil verse in Bhagavan's own handwriting and a Telugu translation of it.

When it was handed over to Bhagavan, he could not remember whose verse it was and so called me and, after

showing it, asked me whose it was. On scrutiny, I found that it contained a Tamil verse by Narasimha Shetty about Tiruchuli written after the *grihapravesam* ceremony of Sundara Mandiram in Tiruchuli and a Telugu translation in verse written by myself. After informing Bhagavan about this I asked permission to take a copy of it, and he consented.

After the evening *Veda Parayana*, I bowed before Bhagavan and was about to go home when Bhagavan said, "Where is my paper?" Though he had agreed to my request to take it home and bring it back the next morning after copying it, he had doubts whether I would give it back to him or not. Whenever I see his beautiful handwriting with round pearl-like, characters on any paper I feel like retaining the paper with me. Sensing this, Bhagavan asked me to give the paper back so as to rid me of such desires.

That night I copied the Telugu verse and also the Tamil verse in Telugu script on another paper so as to show it to Bhagavan and then copy it in the Ashram notebook. So when I went to the Ashram the next morning at 7-30 and bowed before Bhagavan, he asked me again, "Where is that paper?" "Yes, Swami, I have brought it. I have written the Tamil verse in Telugu script. I shall copy it if you will kindly see whether what I have copied is right," said I. Then he saw it and gave it back to me. I took out the notebook from the shelf and kept it with me before he came down from the hill. He did not see that. As I was about to go out with the paper and my bag in my hand, Bhagavan said, "Give me back that paper after copying it. I shall need it." I felt humiliated at being asked so many times for the paper. I could not contain myself and said, "In this writing work, ever so many papers have passed through my hands and I have not kept a single one. I have given back every one of them. He himself (pointing to Rajagopala Iyer) is my witness." When I said

that, Rajagopala Iyer said, “Yes, yes.” I still could not restrain my feelings and so said, “This is like the Telugu saying, ‘He who shouts, rules!’ All are asking and getting the writings of Bhagavan. If they chance to get such papers they quietly keep them with themselves. Am I to be misled into forgetting the Reality by this little piece of paper? I do not want it at all. I shall give it back straight away.” As I said so, my throat got choked and tears welled up in my eyes. Unable to contain myself any longer, I went out, somehow copied it in the book, gave the book to Bhagavan and the paper into the hands of Rajagopala Iyer who was standing nearby and in a quivering tone said, “I have given back the paper to him.”

With a heart full of compassion Bhagavan said in a soft tone, “Keep it if you like.” Am I lacking in pride? “Why? These letters get obliterated and this paper gets torn,” said I, in a quivering voice. As I was about to sit down in my usual place, Bhagavan said in a soft voice, “Is the *Padyam* (that is composed by you) with you?” Holding my breath I merely said, “Yes.” Though outwardly I appeared unconcerned, inwardly desire was tormenting me.

Two or three years ago, when Bhagavan composed a verse people vied with one other in getting it written in Bhagavan’s own hand. Some of them grabbed at the opportunity of securing his letters, hid them and refused to surrender them when asked. Seeing all this, and so as not to arouse such desires in me, I wrote a Telugu verse and contented myself with it.

Verse:

హృదయ కమలదళంబులన్ జెదరకుండ
 నక్షరస్వరూపుండవై యలరు నిన్ను
 గర్మవాసనమసక చేఁ గాంచ లేక
 హస్త లిఖితాక్షరము గోర నగునె రమణ ॥

You who are always present in the shape of Indestructible Being in this lotus heart, is it proper to ask for a handwritten letter unable to see the Reality because of the veil of karma *vasana*?

If only, some time or other, the eyes are washed so as to remove the veil, the *akshara swarupa* (the form of the imperishable spirit) will be clearly seen. That letter (*akshara*) will not get wiped out. That paper (lotus heart) will not get torn. It is more than enough if this *aksharam* is given away to those who can shout and the veil on the eyes of the voiceless child is removed. The child will then look after itself. The title of “*Bhava Roga Bhishagvara*” (the eminent doctor for the disease of mundane existence) is already there. Will he now live up to his title? Let us see. There is however one thing. He is continuously administering medicine to all. And the dimness in the eyes is getting reduced little by little.

27th August, 1946

(72) UPADESA SARAM — UNNADHI NALUPADHI

Sri Bhagavan himself wrote and kept in Telugu characters the Malayalam version of *Upadesa Saram*, known as *Kummi Pattu*. In 1944, I took it from Bhagavan saying I would make a copy of it. As I was returning the original after copying it in my note book, a devotee said to Bhagavan thus: “Bhagavan wrote *Upadesa Saram* only when Muruganar wrote about the *lilas* of Lord Siva — about Siva blessing the *tapasvis* of Daruka Vana, isn’t that so?”

Bhagavan said: “Yes, what he wrote was not merely about the story of the Daruka Vana *tapasvis*. He thought of writing

about all the *Avatars* of the Lord as applying to me, in one hundred verses. He took up the folk song of ‘Undeepara’ for the purpose and wrote up to seventy verses. Towards the end of those seventy verses he wrote about the story of the *tapasvis* of Daruka Vana and then requested me to write the remaining thirty verses as they pertain to *upadesa* (teaching). ‘You have done everything. What is there for me to do? You had better write that also,’ I said, but he did not write them for a long time. He insisted on my writing them, saying that he did not know anything about the *upadesa* portion of it and that Bhagavan alone could write them. What was I to do? I had no alternative but to write. After writing those thirty verses, we called them ‘Upadesa Undiyar’. When that was done, Yogi Ramiah said he did not know Tamil and so pressed me to write them in Telugu, and so I wrote them in *dwipada*. After that, Nayana said, ‘What about Sanskrit?’ I agreed and wrote them in Sanskrit also. After I had written them in those three languages, Kunjuswami, Ramakrishna and others requested me to write them in Malayalam also, and hence I wrote them in *Kummi Pattu* style in Malayalam.”

“So the original is the Tamil, next is the Telugu, then the Sanskrit and finally the Malayalam version, isn’t it?” I asked and Bhagavan said, “Yes.” I then continued, “As soon as Nayana saw those ‘Upadesa Saram’ *slokas*, it seems he wrote a light commentary on them?” “Yes, he was then in Mango Tree (*choota*) Cave. I wrote the *slokas* and sent them to him. Telling the people around him, ‘Can we write even one *sloka* like this?’ he wrote a light commentary on the *slokas* on a day when there was an eclipse. They were published in 1928,” said Bhagavan.

I then asked, “How was ‘Unnadhi Nalubadhi’ written?” “I had to write that also in Tamil at Muruganar’s pressing request. Yogi Ramiah too was there at the time. He requested

me to write at least the *bhava* (purport) in Telugu and so I wrote it in prose. After that Madhava said, ‘What about Malayalam?’ I said yes and wrote it in that language also in *kili* (metre). That will be like a *seesamalika* verse. That also I wrote in the Telugu script. You may make a copy of it if you like,” said Bhagavan.

“Why didn’t Bhagavan write it in Sanskrit?” I asked. Bhagavan said, “At that time, Nayana, Lakshmana Sarma and others were here. So I left it to them. Why should I worry, I thought, and so kept quiet.” I asked, “Did Nayana write the Sanskrit *slokas* for ‘Unnadhi Nalubadhi’ at that time?” Bhagavan said, “No, at the time of writing the verses, Muruganar and myself were arranging them suitably when Nayana gave us his advice but did not write the *slokas*. He went away to Sirsi after that. While he was there, Viswanathan and Kapali went and stayed with him for some time. Meanwhile, Lakshmana Sarma wrote *slokas* for ‘Unnadhi Nalubadhi’. The same were forwarded to Nayana, to return them duly edited. Seeing that, Nayana said he could as well write the *slokas* himself rather than correct them, and so returned them as they were. Subsequently with the help of Viswanathan and Kapali he wrote *slokas* to conform exactly to the Tamil verses and sent them. The former, however, remained as it was while Nayana’s was published under the title ‘Sad Darshanam’. Things happen as they should. What can we do? In accordance with that Sanskrit translation, Kapali wrote his commentary in English and in Sanskrit. After that Viswanathan translated it into Tamil.”

“How did the *Anubandham* (Supplement) happen to be written?” I asked. “I did not write it for any particular reason. As and when somebody wanted a verse I wrote one, and all of them were added on as a supplement. For the first publication, there were only 30 verses. Afterwards, they became 40. Even

they were written only in the first instance. Subsequently I wrote them in Telugu and then in Malayalam. Some of the *slokas* are from those written by great people in olden days and some by Lakshmana Sarma who followed the prose written by me,” said Bhagavan. “Some of the *slokas* are written by Bhagavan also?” I said. “I must have written only two or three,” said Bhagavan. “Bhagavan must have written some of the Telugu verses also,” I said. “Yes, there must be some. If you like, look at the manuscript. You will see the details,” said Bhagavan.

28th August, 1946

(73) THE ‘I’ IS THE MIND ITSELF

This morning an Andhra gentleman questioned Bhagavan: “You say the important thing to do is to enquire and find out who I am, but how is one to find it out? Are we to do *japam* saying, ‘Who am I? Who am I?’ or should we repeat, ‘*Neti*’ (not this)? I want to know the exact method, Swami.” After waiting for a while Bhagavan said, “What is there to find out? Who is to find out? There must be some one to find out, mustn’t there? Who is that someone? Where has that someone come from? That is the thing to find out first.”

That questioner said, again, “Should there not be some *sadhana* to find out who one’s self is? Which *sadhana* will be useful?” “Yes, it is that that has to be found out. If you ask where to see, we should say, look within. What is its shape, how was it born, and where was it born; that is what you have to see or enquire,” said Bhagavan. The questioner asked again, “If we ask where this ‘I’ is born, the ancients say, it is in the heart. How could we see that?”

“Yes, we have to see the heart itself. If you want to see it, the mind must get submerged completely. It is no use doing *japam* with the words, ‘Who am I? Who am I?’ nor by repeating the words ‘*Neti, Neti*,’” said Bhagavan. When the questioner said, that was exactly what he was unable to do, Bhagavan replied, “Yes, that is so. That is the difficulty. We always exist and are in all places. This body and all other attendant things are gathered around us by ourselves only. There is no difficulty in gathering them. The real difficulty is in throwing them out. We find it difficult to see what is inhering in us and what is foreign to us. See, what a great tragedy it is!” said Bhagavan.

Some time ago, when a Bengali youth asked similar questions, Bhagavan explained to him at great length. His doubts not being cleared, that youth asked, “You say that the Self is present at all times and at all places. Where exactly is that ‘I?’” Bhagavan replied with a smile, “When I say you are present at all times and at all places and you ask where is that ‘I’, it is something like asking, when you are in Tiruvannamalai, ‘Where is Tiruvannamalai?’ When you are everywhere, where are you to search? The real delusion is the feeling that you are the body. When you get rid of that delusion, what remains is your Self. You should search for a thing which is not with you but where is the need to search for a thing which is always with you? All *sadhanas* are for getting rid of the delusion that you are the body. The knowledge that ‘I am’ is always there: call it *Atma*, or *Paramatma* or whatever you like. One should get rid of the idea that ‘I am the body’. There is no need to search for that ‘I’ that is the self. That Self is all-pervading.”

As an illustration of this, I give hereunder the words of Bhagavan in “Unnadhi Nalupadhi”:

Without the Self where is time and where is space? If we are the body, we have to be bound by time and space. Are we the body? We are one and identical now, then and always; here, there and everywhere. So, we are existent, without time and space.”

Reality in Forty Verses, verse 16

8th September, 1946

(74) THE GOLDEN JUBILEE FESTIVITIES

Some friends requested me to write about the festivities connected with the Golden Jubilee that was celebrated on 1st September and so I am writing this letter. In this connection, even the people actively connected with the celebrations do not remember exactly what all was done. That being so, is it possible for a person of the weaker sex, who is only a mere observer, to know and understand all that was done? I am however venturing to write about it, bearing in mind what is stated by the author of *Bhagavatham*, when he wrote: “I shall expound to the extent I have seen or known or have heard from men of wisdom.”

About twenty days before the date of the celebrations, the *Saravadhikari* returned from Madras. About a month had elapsed by then, since he had gone to Madurai also. It seems soon after he reached Madras several devotees met and made plans for the celebrations, but until he returned to Tiruvannamalai the preparations for the celebrations were not very much in evidence. I do not know if anyone was working hard elsewhere for the publication of the Souvenir in English but so far as the people in the hall were concerned no one appeared very keen about the celebrations. Only to

satisfy the devotees' request, Bhagavan pretended to rummage old records so as to collect all Sanskrit *slokas* for translation into English. As soon as the *Sarvadhikari* arrived, preparations began in right earnest. There is no knowing what deliberations were held in the office or on whose persuasion it was, but they began erecting a big thatched shed adjacent to the hall on the hill side. For the past one month, Krishnaswami had been feeling weak and run down. However, as soon as the work on the shed was started, his weakness appears to have disappeared and he got enormous strength. He took an active part, climbing up the ladder, stitching the palm leaves together and doing all such work. The pandal was erected. They said the floor must be cemented. For watering the place, ramming in poles and doing sundry work, he appeared to have got the strength of a giant. It is said that Hanuman was originally sitting quiet like a bird with his tail tucked under him, but when he heard that the ocean had to be crossed, he assumed *viswarupa* (body of enormous proportions) and did all the work required. This is an illustration of the saying that God's devotees get inspired and do all types of work for the good of others when occasion arises.

You remember, you came here about twenty days ago and took away with you the songs and essays of Sri Chinta Dikshitulu and my "Gobbi" song saying you would get them printed before the Golden Jubilee. After that, Muruganar and some other devotees wrote some songs and verses and sent them for printing. The commentary on *Sri Ramana Gita* written in Sanskrit by Kapali Sastri was received duly printed. Invitation cards in English with fifty gold stars printed around them were sent out to devotees.

Fifty years ago, a day before *Gokulashtami*, it seems Bhagavan reached Araiyaninallur. That was a Sunday. On

Monday, i.e., on *Ashtami* day, he had a hearty meal at the house of Muthukrishna Bhagavathar in Kilur and stepped into Arunachala Kshetram, on the morning of *Navami*, Tuesday. From that day till now, it is a well known fact that he has not moved out of this place. That was the 1st of September, 1896. To enable people in other continents as well to celebrate the event according to the Gregorian calendar, the 1st of September was fixed for the Golden Jubilee celebration.

According to Hindu traditions, the day after *Gokulashtami* should be deemed to be the day of the Golden Jubilee celebrations. We do not know the ways of Providence but this year too *Gokulashtami* happened to be on a Monday (19th August 1946). The next day was a Tuesday. According to Tamil traditions, Ramaswami Iyer and others said that that was the day for the celebrations, and so he along with some other devotees wrote some songs and verses in Tamil and recited them. Sri Sambasiva Rao said that according to Telugu traditions, *Navami* lasted till Wednesday and so the fifty years were completed only on the 21st and, so saying, he wrote an old *sloka* and a *padyam* from the *Bhagavatham*, beginning with, “*Nee pada kamala sevayū*” (in the service of your lotus feet) and placed it before Bhagavan. Another person composed *padyams*, songs and essays and began reading them. That *Stotra Parayana* (recitations of prayers in verse) was continued until two days ago.

The railway strike commenced on the 23rd. We were wondering how the devotees could come here. Some came to Katpadi already on the 29th and somehow managed to come by bus or lorry. On *Chathurthi* (fourth day of lunar month), *puja* for Vinayaka was performed in the temple. By the side of the shed, which was named as ‘Jubilee Hall’, a huge pandal was erected which looked very much like a

marriage pandal. Some said it would be good if a garland of green leaves was tied around the sofa and decorated.

All the speakers came by bus by 9 o'clock at night. The celebrations are to commence next morning. We discussed them till late into the night and then went to sleep. When we went to the Ashram in the early morning by 5 o'clock as usual, "*Na karmana*" was already being recited. It seems they started the routine an hour earlier than usual. The Ashram *Vidyarthi*s (students) brought the articles for *pūja*, placed them before Bhagavan and, after bowing before him, took them into the temple. Upbraiding ourselves for our carelessness, we went into the pandal and were surprised to find that it was already beautifully decorated. All around the whole of the shed, a red cloth with folds was tied, along with garlands of green mango leaves, flowers and many other decorative things. Recently the Rani of Baroda sent sarees full of *jaree* (silver lacing) to decorate the Goddess in the temple. All those sarees were spread over the stone sofa, which was on the northern side of that *parnasala* (thatched shed) named Jubilee Hall, so as to give it the shape of a *mandir*. The silver-laced sarees were shining brilliantly because of the lights. When I asked one of the devotees whether the sarees were not meant for decorating the goddess in the temple, he said that that decoration could be done only after decorating Bhagavan's sofa. Another devotee said that the idea was excellent. Nothing had been done at nine the previous night. So if by five the next morning all that decoration had been done, we must conclude that the devotees did not sleep at all the whole night. We do not know how other devotees arrived during the night but by morning they were all seated in groups in several places with all their belongings.

Bhagavan finished his bath and breakfast by 6-30 a.m. and went towards Arunachala. By the time he returned,

Krishnaswami had already spread over the stone sofa pure *khaddar* clothes and covered the seat with a newly purchased cloth bearing the picture of the spinning wheel and the tricolour flag. It is no exaggeration to say that it was attractive because of its simplicity and also because the flag is a symbol of our national honour, in the midst of the splendour of the varied decorations. It is interesting to note that it was on a similar day of September that Jawaharlal Nehru became the Prime Minister of India.

By seven o'clock, Bhagavan was sitting on the sofa in his usual loincloth with his radiant smile, to bless his devotees. His gracious and benevolent look made all the devotees happy. It was indeed a great privilege to see him on that day. In olden days, Valmiki, Vyasa and other great authors told us how God Himself came down to this world in the shape of *Avatars* like Rama and Krishna to establish dharma from time to time — “*Dharma samsthapanarthaya sambhavami yuge yuge*” (for establishing Dharma, righteousness, on a firm footing, I am born from age to age; *Gita* IV-8). Today we are lucky in having a similar fortune. An *Avatara Purusha*, *Jagadguru*, Sri Ramana *Paramatma* has been staying in Arunachala *Kshetra* for the last fifty years and has been purifying the souls of people by his mere looks. To those who serve him with undivided bhakti he can with his silent teaching remove the worldly bonds and give *moksha*. Our duty is to serve him instead of wasting precious time on trifles. This Golden Jubilee itself proclaims that for fifty years now he has been occupying the exalted position of a Guru. Many devotees say this is a golden age or a new age. All these days many fortunate people secured his grace, drank the nectar of peace and became blessed ones. Many more are likely to gain his blessings thus. Till now my eyes have not been opened to know in fullness his real greatness. There will be

many like me, who do not know how this personification of kindness is giving us various occasions to serve him. Of all these occasions, it occurs to me, this Golden Jubilee is the greatest. Even now, I do not know how to serve this great Sage, how to pray to him and how to worship him. When he who is omnipresent, who is omniscient and who is incomprehensible comes here in human form what can we give him and how could we satisfy him? The real worship of him is to be in *mouna* (silence). As that type of worship is beyond my reach. I am always staying at a distance, hoping against hope that I may gain salvation by touching the dust of his feet and by satisfying myself with that only. What else is there to wish for except that he should live with us like this for long, giving the benefit of his grace to the true seekers of knowledge and saving their souls by his kindness and blessings.

I shall describe to you in another letter what all had happened from 7 o'clock in the morning to 7-15 at night.

9th September, 1946

(75) THE GOLDEN JUBILEE CELEBRATIONS

In yesterday's letter, I wrote to you in general about the Golden Jubilee festivities. I am writing to you in this letter a summary of all that was done on that day from 7 a.m. to 7-15 p.m.

The morning programme began at 7-15 a.m. with Uma and other *punyasthrees* (married ladies) bringing a milk pot, singing *bhajans* and placing the pot at the feet of Bhagavan. After that, several devotees read essays, songs and verses

written by them in Sanskrit, Tamil, Telugu, Kanarese, English and Urdu. This *stotra* (praise of the Lord) continued with short intervals till about 2 p.m. There were musical concerts by Budalur Krishnamurthy Sastry from 8-30 to 9-30 a.m., rest from 9-45 to 10-00, *puja* and *arati* in Mathrubhuteswara Temple from 10-15. At 11 o'clock inmates of the Ashram brought *prasadam* from Arunachala Temple and placed it before Bhagavan with great devotion. Then there was rest from 11 a.m. to 12 noon.

Devotees requested Bhagavan to take rest as usual till 2 p.m., but would he agree? No sooner had he taken his food, he sat on his sofa as usual. As a number of people had come long distances for his *darshan* and it was possible they might go away disappointed for want of time, he did not mind his bodily discomfort and out of his abundant love and grace he began giving them *darshan* without taking his usual rest.

Many people went home thinking that there would not be Bhagavan's *darshan* till 2 p.m. When after food I came there, Bhagavan was already sitting on the sofa in the shed, in his resplendent glory, surrounded by all the devotees.

The *stotras* were being recited one after another. You cannot compare this great Sage with any emperor or god. That is so because if you go for the *darshan* of an emperor there will be many impediments, and recommendations are required from many people. As for *darshan* of the gods, if you go to *Vaikuntam*, Jaya and Vijaya will be there at the gate and will say that it is not the proper time and ask you to go away. If you go to *Kailasa* the same thing is done by the *pramathaganas* (the servants of Siva). Here it is different; there is only one rule. No one should be obstructed from having *darshan* at any time — even animals and birds. Who is there equal to this great personification of kindness! He alone is equal to Himself.

In the afternoon from 2 o'clock onwards, people assembled there occupying every inch of space. The volunteers were silently arranging to seat them all comfortably. The Jubilee Hall presented the appearance of the durbar hall of an emperor. At 2 o'clock the Jubilee Souvenir was presented, and after that the *brahmin* pandits came there with *Purna Kumbha* (a vessel full of water) reciting Vedas, and thereafter there was the reading of an essay from the Hindi *Prachar Sabha*. The loud speaker was then installed and addresses were presented in Telugu on behalf of the Arya Vysya Samajam and in Tamil on behalf of Muniswamy Chetty Brothers. After that the lectures began.

The Chairman of the meeting was Sri C. S. Kuppuswami Iyer, a Judge of the Madras High Court. After his opening address in English an essay written by Sir S. Radhakrishnan was read out by Sri T. K. Doraiswamy Iyer. That essay was received just then by post.

After that Swami Rajeswarananda and Dr. T. M. P. Mahadevan spoke in English, Justice Chandrasekhara Iyer spoke in Telugu, M. S. Chellam and Omandur Ramaswami Reddiar, (subsequently he became the Chief Minister of Madras State) in Tamil and K. K. Iravatham Iyer in Malayalam, R. S. Venkatarama Sastry read some prayer *slokas* and lectured in Sanskrit. Kunjuswami sang some songs. The purport of all those speeches is worth recording but how do I know all those languages to record them? By the time the concluding remarks of the Chairman were made, it was 4-45 p.m. During the period, the Indian Information Bureau representatives took a number of photos with a view to prepare a film of the Golden Jubilee celebrations. And then there was a quarter of an hour's rest. At 5 p.m. there was a lecture of thanksgiving on behalf of the residents of Tiruvannamalai by Annamalai Pillai, after that a musical

concert by Musiri Subrahmania Iyer, then *Veda Parayana*. The proceedings came to a close by 7-15 p.m. Before that, at about 6 p.m., the mahout brought the temple elephant fully decorated and made it prostrate before Bhagavan. That elephant is usually kept at the Thousand Pillars Mandapam and it was within that Mandapam in an underground cave that Bhagavan resided during the early days in Arunachaleswara Temple. It was therefore quite appropriate that the elephant staying in that Mandapam should make obeisance to the emperor of that Mandapam.

You may ask what *sandesam* (message) Bhagavan gave to all those people who came and prostrated before him and prayed for his help and guidance. I wrote a verse in Telugu on that occasion meaning: “He is there as an observer, seeing everything but unaffected, without any *gunas* (attributes) and as the embodiment of *pranava*.” In the same manner, he was there without any movement, absorbed in his own Self, seeing and hearing everything but silent all through. That is the great and invaluable message he gave us. The grace and the kindness that shine from those eyes pierce through the hearts of all living beings and protect them by giving them the bliss of *shanti* (peace). The brilliant *tejas* (light) of the *Mouna Bhaskara* (Silent Sun) spreads on all sides, destroys the darkness of ignorance, but that *Mouna* which is beyond mind and speech — how could that be broadcast?

13th December, 1946

(76) BRAHMOTSAVAM

On the 28th day of last month, corresponding to *Suddha Panchami* in the month of Karthika, the *Dhvajarohanam* (flag hoisting ceremony) was performed in the temple of Sri Arunachaleswara in connection with the commencement of the *Brahmotsava* festival. In the evening of the tenth day of that festival the sacred light is lit on the peak of Arunachala mountain. This year that was done on the 7th of this month. During the ten days of the annual festival, the whole town bustles with the crowds of pilgrims that come and go. It is usual for them to come for *darshan* of Bhagavan. The *Deepotsavam* (lighting festival) is on the day of Karthika *Nakshatra* (star). As the crowds begin gathering even four or five days earlier, it is usual for Bhagavan to be seated in the thatched shed in front of the Mathrubhuteswara temple to facilitate *darshan* to the people. This year however the devotees felt that it would be better to seat Bhagavan in the Golden Jubilee Hall* and so made all necessary arrangements to prevent rain coming in by erecting *tatties* all around. Bhagavan shifted into the hall three days after the commencement of the *Brahmotsavam*, a day or two earlier than usual. It was raining heavily. Most of those who came were poor people. And amongst them were the old, the decrepit and women with babies in arms.

As the evening of the tenth day is the festival of the Sacred Light, people who set out on *Giri pradakshina* (going round the holy mountain) from about 2 a.m. on that day come to the Ashram in groups with wet clothes. To enable

* A thatched shed constructed to the north of the Old Hall in connection with the Golden Jubilee celebrations.

them to have *darshan* without any difficulty Bhagavan used to have one of the doors of the hall closed and the sofa on which he reclined, placed across the door. We thought the same thing should be done now also. "Why?" said Bhagavan. "It is all right here."

Throughout that night, there was a stormy wind and rain. My timepiece stopped. I therefore got up without knowing the exact time, bathed and sat up thinking of going to the Ashram early. There was no noisy movement of crowds on the road. I thought it was too early and so felt like resting for a while. I fell into a nap. Suddenly I heard the voices of the crowds as in a dream. I got up in confusion. The rain had decreased. Owing to the strong winds the clouds had dispersed. The moonlight was shining in the room through the windows. Feeling that I might be late, I got ready hurriedly and went out only to find that rivulets from the mountain were flowing rapidly making a gurgling noise. The road was a sheet of water. I hastened into the hall and saw the time by the Ashram clock. It was 4-30 a.m. Bhagavan was not to be seen in the hall. When I asked someone where he was, he said, "There, in the shed." Exclaiming, "In the shed, in this rain and wind!" I went there and saw Bhagavan sitting on the sofa without even a *duppatti* (sheet of thick cloth) over his body. Like the full moon, his face was beaming with smiles and spreading an air of benevolence and happiness to those around him. The smoke of the scented *Agarbathis* (incense sticks) filled the whole place with a sweet smell as if it were the perfume of the sandalwood trees of the heavenly *Nandavana*. The *Puranas* say that somewhere lies the ocean of milk, that there in that ocean lies the island of Sweta Dwipa, that there in that island Sri Maha Vishnu has His abode and that all the *devatas* (heavenly beings) surround Him there, offering their homage to Him in

enjoyment of bliss and happiness. To me the vast sheet of rain water that surrounded the hall appeared to be the ocean of milk, the Golden Jubilee Hall flooded with electric lights appeared to be the Sweta Dwipa, this Ramana Paramatma seated on the sofa to be Sri Maha Vishnu, and the devotees that surrounded him and offered their homage to be the *Devatas*. My heart swelled with blissful happiness at that sight.

As I approached Bhagavan with many similar thoughts crowding into my mind, he began to smile. I did not know why. When I bowed before him and got up, he said, “The Vedic recitation is all over.” Two months back, during the Golden Jubilee celebrations, the programme relating to *Veda Parayana* was gone through an hour earlier than usual and so it was all over when we went there, at the usual time. I thought that the significance of Bhagavan’s smile was that the same thing had happened this time also. Ashamed at my own carelessness, I asked Bhagavan, “Have you been here all night?” Bhagavan replied, “No. Every year people used to come group after group from 2 a.m. onwards. So, I came here at 2 a.m. Because of the rains, they have not come yet.” “You will be fined for having come late,” said one of the devotees to me. We all laughed.

While we were all seated there chatting, Ramaswamy Pillai and Kuppaswamy Iyer came and stood before the sofa. “Why? Is there any *parayana*?” asked Bhagavan. “Yes. It is not yet time for a bath. We shall recite *Thevaram* (Hymns of Lord Siva by three Tamil saints),” said Pillai. Bhagavan agreed and they started to recite. As soon as it was over Ramaswamy came there, saying that it was time for his bath. Pillai said he would recite the *Thiruvembavai* written by Saint Manikkavachakar. “It has twenty stanzas. How can I wait till it is all recited? It is time to go,” said Bhagavan, and got ready to go by massaging his legs. “We shall stop presently.” So saying Pillai started

reciting one stanza beginning with ‘*Annamalaiyan*’. The idea contained in it is this: “Oh! Sakhi (lady companion)! Just as the glitter of the precious stones in the crowns on the heads of the *devatas* who bow to the lotus feet of Lord Arunachala get dim and hidden by the shining of those lotus feet of the Lord, in the same way the rays of the rising sun dispel darkness (in the universe) and dim the light of the shining stars. At that hour, let us sing the praise of those sacred feet of the Lord. Let us bathe and swim in the tank full of flowers, singing in praise of those lotus feet.”

This recital just ended as Bhagavan placed his feet on the ground to go for his bath. As the recitation ended with the words, “Let us bathe! Get up!” Bhagavan got up from the sofa, saying “Yes! Here I am, getting up for my bath.” We all laughed.

Though the Paramatma who is neither man nor woman manifested Himself in this universe in the shape of Bhagavan, still in the worship of Lord Arunachaleswara, Bhagavan addressed the Lord with *abala bhava* (feelings of a woman towards her husband). I therefore felt indescribable pride at this. It appears Manikkavachakar sang those songs when he got *abala bhava* towards the Lord. Bhagavan too wrote his *Aksharamanamalai* with the same *abala bhava*. Do you see how exalted a place is accorded to the *abala bhava*!

I started writing to you this series of letters last year just after the festival of Karthika, on the occasion of the arrival of the procession of Lord Arunachala in front of the Ashram while going round the sacred hill (*Giri pradakshina*) and in the spirit of the Lord’s saying that the child is beholden to the father. All those letters were sent for printing a few days back.

19th December, 1946

(77) ATMAKARAVRITTI (THE SOUL, ITS FORM AND ACTION)

The day before yesterday an Andhra gentleman came and handed over to Bhagavan a letter containing the following question: “Some say that the *Jnani* is in the *Atmakaravritti* in the sleeping state and others say he is not. What is your opinion?” Bhagavan replied: “Let us first learn to be in the Atmic state, while in the waking state. There will be time enough then to consider what happens in the sleeping state. Is he who is in the waking state not in the sleeping state, as well? Are you now in *Atmakaravritti* or in the *Brahmakaravritti*? First tell me that.”

“Swamiji! I am not enquiring about myself, but about the *Jnani*,” said the questioner. “Oh! Is that so? That is all right, but you who are asking the question, first know about yourself. The *Jnanis* can look after themselves. We do not know about ourselves but we enquire about *Jnanis*. What does it matter to us whether they are in *Atmakaravritti* or in *Brahmakaravritti*? If we know about ourselves, the question about them does not arise,” replied Bhagavan. “Swamiji, this question is not my own, but is sent to me by a friend,” said the questioner.

“Indeed?” said Bhagavan, “Friends have asked the question. What are we to reply? When we say *vritti*, duality is implied, isn’t it? But that which IS, is only one. The question then arises, ‘Without the consciousness of the Supreme Being, how can there be any movement from the past to the present and the future? That is why we have to call it by some name or other, such as *Akhandakaravritti* (*Akhand*—limitless) or *Atmakaravritti* or *Brahmakaravritti*,

just as we say that the river is *Samudrakara* (the shape of the ocean). All rivers fall into the ocean, get merged, lose shape and become one with the ocean. That being so, what is the meaning of saying of the river that it is *Samudrakara*? Has the ocean any shape, such as so much depth and so much width? In the same way, people merely say that the *Jnani* has *Akhandakaravritti* or *Atmakaravritti* but, in reality, it is all one. All these are merely replies to questioners, but in the eyes of the *Jnani* the whole thing is only ONE.”

“Have the *Brahmavid*, *Brahmavidvara*, *Brahmavidvareeya* and *Brahmavidvarishta* and others all got a *satvic* mind?” some one else asked. “It is all the same whether you say *Brahmavidvarishta*, *Brahmavid* or *Brahman* itself” Bhagavan replied. “Like Brahman means Brahman itself. We shall have to say that the above four have *satvic* minds in common parlance but, in fact, there is no such thing as mind for them. *Vasanas* themselves are the mind. If there are no *vasanas* there is no mind. That which IS, is *Sat*. *Sat* is Brahman. That is self-luminous. That is *Atman*, and that is the SELF. Names like *Brahmavid*, *Brahmavidvareeya*, *Brahmavidvarishta* are given to those men of wisdom who, by Self-enquiry, realise the Truth and remain firmly in that Knowledge of the SELF. The day to day actions are said to be in *Atmakaravritti* or *Akhandakaravritti*.”

20th December, 1946

(78) ANDAVANE

A telegram was received at about 9 a.m. today informing us that Ramanatha Brahmachari, alias *Andavane*, expired in Madras last night. Someone informed me about it as I was

entering the hall. Ramanatha joined the group of Bhagavan's disciples when quite young, when Bhagavan was still in Virupaksha Cave. After that he never left Bhagavan except for short intervals of about fifteen days in the year. This staunch devotee and lifelong *brahmachari* went to Madras for treatment and we heard the news of his demise within fifteen days. I entered the hall, feeling sad that it had happened the same way as with Madhavaswamy some time earlier, and simultaneously feeling gratified that he had left his skeleton-like body without much suffering. Bhagavan said to me, "It seems that our Ramanathan is gone." Once before, when Madhavaswamy died and Bhagavan told me, "Madhavaswamy has gone," and I asked him, "Where to?" Bhagavan replied, "Where to? There, leaving his body here." So I did not ask him again this time, "Where to?" but merely replied, "Yes I have heard so."

In the afternoon at 3 p.m., two ladies, Uma and Alamu, began to sing the Tamil verses "Ramana Anubhuti". Bhagavan told me with some feeling, "Look! These are verses written by Ramanatha himself; there is also another song with the *pallavi* (refrain) '*Thiruchulinathanai Kandene*'. That also was written by him. There is an interesting story in this connection. During my stay in Virupaksha Cave, on one full-moon day we all started out on a *giri pradakshina*. Chidambaram Subramanya Iyer was here at that time. The moonlight was bright and all were in high spirits. They all decided to hold a meeting and each person was to deliver a lecture on a different subject. Subramanya Iyer was elected chairman of the meeting. The first lecture was by Ramanatha. The topic chosen by him was 'The similarity between the Paramatma dwelling in the cave of the human heart, Lord Nataraja in Chidambaram and Sri Ramana in Virupaksha Cave'. The chairman allowed him half an hour. There was no end to

the points of similarity elucidated by him. When the chairman declared that the time was up, Ramanatha said, 'Just half an hour more please'. It was a meeting of people who were continuously walking. Saying, 'A little more time, sir, a little more', he went on with his speech for full three hours, when the chairman firmly put a stop to his further talking. You should have seen the enthusiasm with which he spoke that day. Subsequently, he summarised the points of the lecture into a song of four stanzas entitled, 'Thiruchulinathanai Kandene'. Since the words '*Andavane*' had occurred in the song several times, Ramanatha himself began to be called '*Andavane*'. Pranavanandaji attempted to translate the song into Telugu but the translation did not come out well."

"Oh! Is that the reason why he is called '*Andavane*'?" I said and read the song. Though it may not be much from a literary viewpoint, it was pleasant to hear it as it was composed with a fullness of heart. Its purport is as follows:

"I saw Thiruchulinathan* and, being unable to turn back, stood there transfixed. He is the Lord that dances in Chidambaram and that protects the helpless and is merciful to them. The same Thiruchulinathan manifested himself as God in Virupaksha Cave on the hill in the sacred Tiruvannamalai.

"*Jiva* was ruling unjustly in the town called *Kayapuri*, with the *karanas* as his subjects and *ahankara* as his minister.

"After some time, *jiva* took up the sword of God's grace and cut off the head of his minister, *ahankara*.

"Having so cut off the minister's head, *jiva* stood with God who was dancing all by himself in the cave called *Daharalaya*.

* Thiruchuli is the village in South India where Bhagavan was born; it is also said to signify '*Srikara*' and '*Omkaara*'.

“He is this Thiruchulinathan; I saw him and stayed there, being unable to get away.”

24th January, 1947

(79) OMKARAM-AKSHARAM

Recently, as I was returning home from the Ashram one evening at about 5 p.m., I heard two young men having some discussion between themselves. One of them said, “I questioned Ramana Maharshi very boldly as to what remains after the *Omkaram* is crossed. He was unable to reply and so closed his eyes and slept. It is all a pose with him.”

Though, at the outset, I got angry at their speaking disparagingly about my Guru, I subsequently felt amused at their foolishness and said in a mild tone: “Sir, why do you decry your elders? Do we know, first of all, what *Omkaram* is, that we should venture to ask what remains after *Omkaram*?” The young man replied, “I asked him only because I do not know. Why should he not reply suitably?” I said, “Please do not be impatient. If you ask him once again, with patience, you will know.” They went away that day, but were present in the hall the next day. Unexpectedly, some one else questioned Bhagavan thus: “Swamiji, it is said that *Akara, Ukara, Makaras* make up *Omkaram*. What is the meaning of these three letters? What is the embodiment of *Omkaram*?”

Bhagavan replied: “*Omkaram* itself is Brahman. That Brahman is the nameless and formless pure SAT. It is that that is called *Omkaram. Akara, Ukara, Makara* or *Sat, Chit, Ananda* — any three of these two groups is Brahman. *Omkaram* which is beyond the speech or the mind and which

can only be experienced, cannot be described by word of mouth — one cannot say what its *swarupa* (shape) is.” This reply also served to clear the doubts of the two youths who questioned him yesterday evening.

Similarly, someone or other used to ask Bhagavan, now and then, “What is the form of *Akshara*? What does it look like? How can we know it?” Bhagavan’s reply to all such questions was: “In accordance with the saying in the *Gita*, ‘*aksharam brahma paramam*’, ‘that which is supreme and permanent is the form of *Akshara*’. As for the question how we can know it, the SELF is *Akshara*. That which is indestructible is *Aksharam*. How to know it? That question should arise only if *Akshara* were different from the Self. But the two are not different, but only one. That which is, is only one. That is SAT. That SAT is SELF; there is nothing else other than the Self. The proper thing to do is to enquire and know who the Self is and to remain in the Self.

25th January, 1947

(80) ANECDOTES REGARDING LIFE AT VIRUPAKSHA CAVE

Vasudeva Sastry who used to look after the routine work while Bhagavan was in Virupaksha Cave, came to the Ashram the other day and sat down in the presence of Bhagavan. After the preliminary enquiries about his welfare, Bhagavan told us that it was this Sastry who started the *Jayanthi* celebrations. A devotee asked, “Is he the person who got frightened, and hid himself when a tiger appeared?” “Yes. It is he,” Bhagavan replied. “During our stay in Virupaksha

Cave, we were all seated on the front verandah one night when a tiger appeared in the valley below. We put a lantern outside the railings of the verandah as we thought that the tiger would not approach us because of the light. Sastry however was very afraid. He therefore crept into the cave and asked us also to do likewise; but we refused. After entering the cave, he bolted the iron-barred door and from there tried to frighten the tiger, like a great warrior, saying, 'Look! If you come this way, take care. Take care of what I'll do. Yes! What do you think! Bhagavan is here! Take care.' All these heroics were from inside the cave and were like those of Uttarakumara (in the *Mahabharata* story). The story is, Uttarakumara, son of the ruling king Virata, started out with Arjuna, boasting of his prowess but took to heel when he faced the enemy. Arjuna finally won the battle. The tiger loitered about for a while and then went its own way. Sastry then ventured to come out — a very brave man indeed," said Bhagavan.

Sastry took up the thread of the conversation and said, "That was not the only occasion. Another time, in broad daylight, Swamiji and I were seated on a rock outside the cave. In the valley below, a tiger and a leopard were playing with each other and Bhagavan was smiling as he watched the friendly movements of the two animals. I was however in a terrible fright and requested Bhagavan to come into the cave. He was adamant and sat there motionless. As for myself, I sought the shelter of the cave. The two animals played about for a while, looked at Swamiji, in the same way as pets do, and without any fear or expression of anger, went their own way, one going up the hill and the other down. When I came out of the cave and asked, 'Swamiji, weren't you afraid when the two animals were playing about so close to you?' Bhagavan said with a smile, 'Why have fear? I knew as I saw

them that, after a while, one of them would go up the hill and the other down. And they did. If we get frightened and say, 'Oh! A tiger!' they will also get frightened and say, 'Oh! A man!' and will rush forward to kill us. If we do not have that fear, they too will not have any fear, and will then move about freely and peacefully." "In spite of all that Bhagavan had said," Sastry added, "my fear never left me."

"It was Sastry who embraced me and wept when my heart stopped beating," said Bhagavan and narrated the incident thus: "One day I went to the tank in front of Pachiamman Koil with Vasu and others for a bath, and we were returning by a short cut, when, as we approached the tortoise rock, I felt tired and giddy and so sat down on the rock. My experience at that time has been recorded in my biography,* as you all know," said Bhagavan. Taking up the thread of the conversation, Sastry said: "Yes. While all else stood at a distance weeping, I suddenly embraced him. I

* "Suddenly the view of natural scenery in front of me disappeared and a bright white curtain was drawn across the line of my vision and shut out the view of nature. I could distinctly see the gradual process. At one stage I could see a part of nature clear, and the rest was being covered by the advancing curtain. It was just like drawing a slide across one's view in the stereoscope. On experiencing this I stopped walking lest I should fall. When it cleared, I walked on. When darkness and a fainting feeling overtook me a second time, I leaned against a rock until it cleared. And again for the third time I felt it safer to sit, so I sat near the rock. Then the bright white curtain had completely shut out my vision, my head was swimming, and my blood circulation and breathing stopped. The skin turned a livid blue. It was the regular death-like hue and it got darker and darker. Vasudeva Sastri took me in fact to be dead, held me in his embrace and began to weep aloud and lament my death. His body was shivering. I could at that time distinctly feel his clasp and his shivering, hear his lamentation and understand the meaning. I also saw the discolouration of my skin and I felt the stoppage of my heart beat and respiration, and

was a bachelor at the time and had the liberty to do so. No one else used to touch Swami's body. He was in that state for about ten minutes, I think, and then gained consciousness. I jumped about with joy. 'Why this weeping? You thought I was dead? If I am to die, will I not tell you beforehand?' Bhagavan said, consoling us."

the increased chilliness of the extremities of my body. Yet my usual current of "Self-effulgence" (*Atma-sphurana*, Self-awareness). was continuing as usual in that state also. I was not afraid in the least, nor felt any sadness at the condition of my body. I had closed my eyes as soon as I sat near the rock in my usual padmasana posture but was not leaning against it. The body which had no circulation nor respiration maintained that position. This state continued for some ten or fifteen minutes. Then I felt a shock passing suddenly through the body, circulation revived with enormous force, as also respiration; and there was profuse perspiration all over the body from every pore. The colour of life reappeared on the skin. I then opened my eyes, got up casually and said, 'Let us go.' We reached Virupaksha Cave without further trouble. That was the only occasion on which both my blood circulation and respiration stopped." Then the Maharshi added, to correct some wrong accounts that had been obtained currently about the incident, "I did not bring on the fit purposely, nor did I wish to see what this body would look like at death. Nor did I say that I will not leave this body without warning others. It was one of those fits that I used to get occasionally. Only it assumed a very serious aspect in this instance."

26th January, 1947

(81) SIVA BHAKTA SUNDARAMURTI

Yesterday, while Bhagavan was going through *Thiruchuli Puranam*, spoke thus regarding the events connected with the visit of Sundaramurti to this holy place:

“The venerable Sundaramurti, born in the *amsa* (part) of Aalaala Sundara, who emanated from the reflection of Lord Siva, with the Somasekhara (with moon in his crown), acquired the friendship of the Kerala king, Cheraman Perumal Nainar, in the course of his wanderings as a pilgrim. Then they both went to Madurai on pilgrimage. The Pandyan king, as well as his son-in-law, the Chola king, extended a very warm welcome to them and expressed their happiness at being their hosts. Sundaramurti worshipped God Sundaeswara, the husband of the goddess Meenakshi, and sang the praise of the god with his poetic skill. Accompanied by the Chera king he visited and worshipped at the sacred shrines of the south, namely Thirukuttralam, Thirunelveli, and Rameswaram. From there he visited the sacred shrine of Thirukkedeswara in Lanka Dwipa (Ceylon) and offered worship. There he remembered Thrisulapuram (Thiruchuli), which is the Muktinagar (city of salvation) and proceeded thither. As they approached that city, the crowds saw them both resplendent as though the sun and the moon appeared at the same time. Sundaramurti was happy to have the *darshan* of Lord Bhuminatha and offered worship with the song, beginning with ‘*Unaiuyir puhala!*’ and was overwhelmed with devotion. He decided to stay in that holy place for a while, and so resided in a mutt (monastery) on the bank of the river Kowndinya.

“One night during his stay there, Lord Siva appeared to him in a dream with a ball in his hand (ball is the symbol

of kingship) and a crown on his head, as a youth of incomparable beauty and with a smile dancing on his lips, and said, 'We stay in Jyotivana (Kaleswara)'. On hearing these words, Sundaramurti woke up with excitement, and recollected the glorious kindness of the Lord who appeared and showered benevolence on him, and narrated the wonderful vision to the Chera king with joy. There and then he sang, overwhelmed with devotion, the *Thevara Pathikam* on Lord Kaleswar, commencing with the words, '*Thondar adithozhalum*'.

"From there they started to visit the far off holy place, Thiruppunavayil, and even as they started, God Kaleswara, who had appeared in the dream of Sundaramurti, and Amba approached them in the guise of an old *brahmin* couple. When Sundaramurti asked them, 'Who are you? Where do you come from?' they replied, 'We shall talk about that later. First give us food. We are hungry.' Sundaramurti consented and got food prepared and looked for the couple to serve it to, but they were not to be seen anywhere. All the lanes and by-lanes of the village were searched but they could not be found anywhere. They came back to the mutt only to find that the food that was cooked had all disappeared and the leaves in which the food was eaten were thrown all over the yard. Sundaramurti was wonder-struck and exclaimed, 'Ah! What a wonder is this! What can this be except the *leela* (game) of the Lord of the Universe?' As he arrived at this conclusion, he heard an invisible voice: 'Where do you intend going without seeing us that reside in the Jyotivana?' Sundaramurti was wondering where that Jyotivana was and how to go there, when the invisible voice once again said, 'We are proceeding there on the vehicle of the sacred bull Nandi. You may also come there, following its footsteps.'

“Sundaramurti followed the footsteps accompanied by the devotees there; but suddenly the track disappeared. As he stood there in confusion, the invisible voice was heard to say, ‘Look carefully.’ As he followed carefully the footsteps he saw a particular place full of Siva Lingas. There was no space even for a single step forward and he and the other devotees stood there in confusion. Suddenly he saw a narrow footpath and they followed it, on and on until at last they beheld the temple of Kaleswara. They all took their bath in the tank in front of the temple and, as they were thinking of going into it, all on a sudden, the temple with its tower disappeared. Sundaramurti was wonder-struck and sang some songs in praise of the Lord, conveying the idea, ‘Is this the result of my not having come for worship in your temple before bathing?’ At once, a whole view of *jyoti* (light) appeared and the view of the peak of a temple tower and then the temple itself with its compound wall. He was overjoyed, had a darshan of God, worshipped Him and sang songs in praise of Him, and then proceeded on his pilgrimage. This is a wonderful story. There are many more stories of him,” said Bhagavan.

He is the same Sundaramurti that was referred to in my letter printed earlier under the heading, “Swami is everywhere,” (No. 70). His story is given in detail in the Sanskrit works *Siva Bhaktha Vilasam*, *Upamanya Bhaktha Vilasam* and in the Telugu works, *Panditharadhya Charitra* and *Basava Puranam* of the poet Palakurthi Somanatha.

Bhagavan told us once before that the devotion of Sundaramurti to the Lord is that of a friend, of Manikkavachakar that of the beloved, of Appar that of a servant, and Sambandar that of a son.

27th January, 1947

(82) SUNDARAMURTI'S BOND OF SERVITUDE

Yesterday, after hearing Bhagavan's narration of Sundaramurti's story, which I have mentioned in my letter to you, I was desirous of hearing the story of that devotee's younger days and so went to Bhagavan's presence early this morning at 7-30 a.m. Bhagavan had already returned from the hill and was reading some book. There were not many people in the hall at that time. Having made my obeisance, I asked Bhagavan what book he was reading. He replied, "*Peria Puranam*. I am just going through the story of the younger days of Sundaramurti." "It is all very interesting, isn't it?" I asked. "Yes. Would you like to read it?" asked Bhagavan. "I should very much like to but I do not know Tarnil sufficiently well," I replied. "All right. I will tell you the story briefly," said Bhagavan and, with a smile, proceeded with the story as follows:

"Sundaramurti was born in the sacred place Tirunavalur in Thirumunaippadi country in the Siva Brahmana caste called *Adi Saivam*, to the Siva priest called Chadayanar, alias Sivacharya, and his wife Isaijnaniyar. He was named by his parents Nambiyarurar. One day, while he was playing in the street with a toy cart, the king of the place, by name Narasinga Muniyar, saw him and took a fancy to him. He requested the father, Sivacharya, to let him have the boy. The father agreed and the boy was brought up by the king as his foster son. Even so, the Brahminical customs as regards thread ceremony and *vedic* instructions were carefully observed and he became well-versed in all the *Sastras*.

"When he came of age, his marriage with the daughter of a relative by name Chatangavi Sivacharya was decided

upon, and invitations were issued to all relatives for the function. Sundaramurti went through the usual premarital ceremonies a day before the marriage, and on the marriage day proceeded properly dressed as the bridegroom, along with his relatives, to the bride's father's house in Puttur village on horseback quite early in the morning. On reaching the bride's house, he alighted from the horse and sat on the wedding seat in the marriage pandal in accordance with the usual custom. There was a blare of music and the arrival of the bride was awaited.

“Just then, Lord Siva approached the marriage pandal in the garb of an old *brahmin*, and announced, ‘All of you please listen to what I say.’ On their assenting, the old man told the boy, ‘Look here, there is an agreement between you and me. First fulfil it and then marry.’ The boy replied, ‘If there is an agreement let it be so but tell us first what it is.’ The old *brahmin* told the audience, ‘Sirs, this boy is my servant. I have with me the deed of service executed by his grandfather in my favour.’ Sundaramurti replied, ‘Oh! Madman, enough! We are hearing for the first time that a *brahmin* is the servant of another *brahmin*. Go, get away!’ The *brahmin* replied, ‘I am neither a madman nor a devil. I am not offended at your remarks. You have not understood me at all. Stop this childish talk and come and serve me.’ Sundaramurti then said, ‘Show me the deed.’ ‘Who are you to decide after seeing the deed?’ said the old man. ‘If the people in the audience see the deed and agree that it is true, you should begin to serve me.’ Sundaramurti got very angry and pounced upon the man to snatch the deed from him. The *brahmin* however ran away but the boy pursued him, snatched the deed at last, and tore it to pieces. The old man caught hold of Sundaramurti and began shouting. The marriage guests got agitated over that, separated the two and

said to the *brahmin*, 'You are speaking of arrangements unheard of in this world. Oh! Quarrelsome old man! Where do you come from?' The *brahmin* replied, 'I belong to the village of Thiruvonnainallur. Don't you agree that this boy Nambiyarurar has confirmed his servitude to me by unjustly snatching away the service deed from my hands and tearing it to pieces?' Sundarar replied, 'If indeed you are a resident of Thiruvonnainallur village, your claim can be decided there, can't it?' The *brahmin* replied, 'Yes. Come with me. I shall produce the original deed before the Council of Brahmins there and establish my claim that you are my servant.' Accordingly the *brahmin* walked ahead and Sundaramurti and all the other Brahmins followed him.

"As soon as they all reached the Council of Brahmins in the other village, the cunning old *brahmin* filed his claim petition before them to the effect that the boy Nambiyarurar tore up the service deed in his favour. The councillors said, 'We have not heard anywhere in this world that Brahmins become servants of Brahmins.' The *brahmin* replied, 'No. Mine is not a false claim. The deed that this boy tore up is the deed of service executed by his grandfather to the effect that he and all his successors are to be my servants.' The councillors asked Sundaramurti, 'Can you win your case by merely tearing up the deed executed by your grandfather? What do you say?' He replied, 'Oh virtuous men, learned in all the vedic lore! You all know that I am an Adi Saiva. Even if this old *brahmin* is able to establish that I am his servant, you must please consider it a piece of magic, beyond the reach of mental reasoning. What can I say of such a claim?' The councillors told the *brahmin*, 'You must first prove to us that he is your servant. To decide an affair of this nature, three things are needed, custom, written evidence and oral evidence. Should you not produce at least one of these three items?' The *brahmin* replied, 'Sir!

what he tore up is only the duplicate copy; the original deed is with me.' The councillors demanded the production of the original deed, and gave him an assurance that it would not be torn up by Sundaramurti. The old man took out the original deed from the folds of the cloth around his waist, and showed it to them. The village *karnam* (village officer) who happened to come there unexpectedly then, was asked to read it. He bowed before the councillors, opened the folds of the original document and so as to be heard by all, he read it out aloud as follows: 'I, Adi Saiva by caste and Arurar by name, residing in Thirvennainallur village have executed this deed of service gladly and out of my own free will, undertaking to do service by me and by my successive descendants, to *pitthan* (mad man) residing in Thiruvannainallur village. (Sd.) Arurar.'

"The witnesses to the deed were those very councillors, and they all identified and confirmed that the signatures were their own. The councillors asked Sundaramurti to verify if the handwriting in the deed was his grandfather's. The man pretending to be a *brahmin* said, 'Sir! This is a mere boy. How can he identify his grandfather's writing? If there is any other paper available, containing his grandfather's writing, please send for it, and compare.' They all agreed, and the relatives of Sundaramurti searched, and produced a paper containing his grandfather's handwriting. The councillors compared the two papers, and confirmed that the writings in the two papers agreed. They told Sundaramurti, 'Boy! There is no way of escape for you. You have lost. It is your duty to do service according to this old man's orders.' Sundaramurti was stupefied at this and said that he would obey the order, if fate had decreed that way. They had compassion on the boy, and had still some doubts about the *brahmin*, and questioned him, 'Sir! This deed says that you belong to this very village. Can you show us where

your ancestral house and property are?’ The *brahmin* pretended surprise, and said, ‘What! You are all of this village, so learned, so intelligent, so elderly — does not even one among you know my house? How surprising are your words! Come with me then!’ So saying, he led the way, and they all followed. They all saw the God in disguise enter the Siva’s temple called ‘Thiruvurul Thurai’ in the village, and were stupefied.

“Sundaramurti thought, ‘The *brahmin* who made me his servant has entered the temple of my God Parameswara! What a wonder!’ So thinking, he followed alone eagerly the footsteps of the *brahmin* and entered the temple with great desire and shouted, ‘Oh *brahmin*!’ At once Lord Siva appeared in the company of Goddess Parvati, seated on the sacred Bull, and said, ‘My son! you are Aalaala Sundara, one of my *Pramatha Ganas* (chief attendants). You were born here as a result of a curse. You requested me to have you as My own, wherever you might be, even during the period of the curse. I therefore made you My servant here.”

Thus Bhagavan narrated to us the earlier story of Sundaramurti. He continued:

“As soon as Sundaramurti heard those words of the Great Lord, he was overjoyed like the calf that hears the mother’s call. With his voice trembling with emotion and eyes filled with tears of joy, he made prostrations to Him, and with folded hands said, ‘Oh Lord! You are gracious to my worthless self, hold me fast to you like the cat holding on to its kitten, and make me your own. What gracious kindness!’ and praised Him. The Great Lord was pleased and said, ‘My son! Because you have disputed with me, you shall have the name of ‘*Vān Thondan*’. The service to be rendered hereafter by you to me, is to worship me with flowers of verses. Compose verses on me, and sing them.’ With folded hands, Sundaramurti said, ‘Oh Lord! You

came in the guise of a *brahmin*, and preferred a claim against me, and I contested and argued with you, not knowing your greatness. You are the great Lord that gave me recollection of my past, and saved me from falling into worldly actions and behaviour and getting drowned therein. What do I know of your limitless great qualities, and what shall I sing of them?' Ishwara said, 'You already called me *Pitthan*, madman. Therefore, sing of me as the Mad Man'. So saying, he disappeared. Sundaramurti immediately sang the "Sri Padikam", commencing with the verse '*Pittha pirai sudi*'. His story is full of such strange experiences," said Bhagavan.

I asked, "Is he named Sundaramurti as the result of the recollection of his past?" "Yes, yes! No other reason is to be found in his story!" replied Bhagavan.

28th January, 1947

(83) NATURE

This afternoon at 3 o'clock an Englishman asked Bhagavan something in English in which the word "Nature" occurred a number of times and Bhagavan replied as follows:

"These questions would not arise if one knew one's own nature well. They will continue to arise till one knows it. Until then we will be under the delusion that all these unnatural things are natural. We have to understand that the true state is always there and at all times. We discard that which is there and wish for that which is not there, and suffer on that account. All that comes and goes is unreal. The soul always remains in its natural place. As long as we do not realise that truth, we suffer."

“Where can we see this soul? How can we know it?” was the next question.

“Where can we see the soul? This question is like staying in Ramanasramam and asking where Ramanasramam is. The soul is at all times in you and everywhere and to imagine that it is somewhere far off and search for it, is like performing Panduranga *bhajan*. This *bhajan* commences in the first quarter of the night with tinkling bells tied to the feet of the devotees and with the brass lamp stand placed in the centre of the house. The devotees go round and round the lamp stand, dancing rhythmically to the tune, ‘Pandarpur is thus far! Pandarpur is thus far! Come on! proceed,’ but as they go round and round, they actually do not proceed even half a yard closer to Pandarpur. By the time the third quarter of the night is reached, they will begin to sing, ‘See! there is Pandarpur. Here is Pandarpur. See, see!’ During the first quarter of the night they were going round the same lamp as now in the third quarter. It dawns, and they sing, ‘We have arrived at Pandarpur. This is Pandarpur,’ and so saying, salute the same lamp stand and end the *bhajan*. It is the same with this also. We go round and round in search of *atma* (soul) saying, ‘Where is *atma*? Where is it?’ till at last the dawn of *jnana drishti* (vision of knowledge) is reached, and we say, ‘this is *atma*, this is me.’ We should acquire that vision. When once that vision is reached, there will be no attachments even if the *Jnani* mixes with the world and moves about in it. When once you put on shoes your feet do not feel the pain of walking on any number of stones or thorns on the way. You walk about without fear or care, whether there be mountains or hillocks on the way. In the same way, everything will be natural to those who have attained the *jnana drishti*. What is there apart from one’s own self?

“That natural state can be known only after all this worldly vision subsides.” “But how is it to subside?” was the next question. Bhagavan replied, “If the mind subsides, the whole world subsides. Mind is the cause of all this. If that subsides, the natural state presents itself. The soul proclaims itself at all times as ‘I’, ‘I’. It is self-luminous! It is here. All this is THAT. We are in that only. Being in it, why search for It? The ancients say:

दृष्टिं ज्ञानमयीं कृत्वा ब्रह्ममयं जगत् ।

Making the vision absorbed in *jnana* one sees the world as Brahman.

“It is said that *Chidakasa* itself is *Atma Swarupa* (image of *atma*) and that we can view it only with the help of the mind.” “How can we see it if the mind has subsided?” someone else asked. Bhagavan said, “If the sky is taken as an illustration it must be stated to be of three varieties — *chidakasa*, *chittakasa* and *bhuthakasa*. The natural state is called *chidakasa*, the ‘I-feeling’ that is born from *chidakasa* is *chittakasa*. As that *chittakasa* expands and takes the shape of all the *bhutas* (elements), this is all *bhuthakasa*. After all, the mind is a part of the body, isn’t it? When it is *chittakasa* which is consciousness of the self, ‘I’ does not see the *chidakasa* but sees the *bhuthakasa*; This is said to be *mano akasa*; and when it leaves *mano akasa* and sees *chidakasa*, it is said to be *chinmaya*.* The subsiding of the mind means, the idea of multiplicity of object vanishes,

* चित्तं चिदिति जानीयात् त-कार रहितं यदा ।

त-कारो विषयाध्यासः जपारागो यथा मणौ ॥

Bereft of the letter “ta” mind becomes consciousness. “Ta” indicates association with worldiness, just as a colourless gem manifests colour in the proximity of a China Rose.

and the idea of oneness of objects appears. When that is achieved everything appears natural.”

In accordance with this idea, Bhagavan has written in his *Unnadhi Nalupadhi*, verse 14: “If it is said that there is the first person ‘I’ then there are the second and third persons ‘you’ and ‘he’. When the real nature of the first person is known and the ‘I’ feeling disappears, the ‘you’ and the ‘he’ disappear simultaneously, and that which shines as the only One becomes the natural state of the ultimate reality.”

29th January, 1947

(84) WHO IS RAMANA?

On the 7th of this month Dr. T. N. Krishnaswamy, a devotee of Bhagavan, celebrated the Jayanthi of Sri Ramana in Madras. It seems a Pandit mentioned in the course of his lecture on the occasion that there was a reference somewhere that Bhattapada would be born in Thiruchuli as Ramana. While the devotees in the Ashram were searching for these references, Bhagavan himself said, “Nayana (Kavyakantha Ganapati Muni) said that Skanda (Lord Subramanya) was born first as Bhattapada, then as Sambandha (Thirujnanasambandhar), and in the third birth as Ramana. The appellation, ‘*dravida sisuhu*’ used by Sri Sankara in *Soundarya Lahari* refers to Sambandha, doesn’t it? Therefore Sambandha must have existed prior to Bhattapada who was a contemporary of Sankara. Nayana said that Sambandha was of a later date than Bhattapada. One is not consistent with the other. Which of the above versions is the authority for the aforesaid lecturer’s statement is not yet known.”

Surprised at these words which were meant to throw everyone off guard, I said, “Why so much discussion about it? We may ask Bhagavan himself. Doesn’t Bhagavan know who He is? Even if He does not tell us now there is His own reply to the song asking, ‘Who is Ramana?’ written by Amritanatha Yatindra while Bhagavan was dwelling on the Hill.” Bhagavan replied, “Yes, yes!” with the smile of approval on His face, waited for a while, and then said, “Amritanatha is a peculiar person. He is very interested in all matters. When I was on the Hill he used to come now and then and stay with me. One day I went somewhere. By the time I returned he had composed a verse in Malayalam, asking “Who is Ramana?” left it there and went out. I wondered what was written on the paper, so I looked at it and found out. By the time he returned I composed another verse in reply, in Malayalam, wrote it down below his verse and put the paper back. He likes to attribute supernatural powers to me. He did so when he wrote my biography in Malayalam. Nayana had it read out to him, and after hearing it, tore it off, saying, “Enough! enough!” That was the reason for his posing this question also. He wanted to attribute some supernatural powers to me, as ‘Hari’ or ‘Yathi’ or ‘Vararuchi’ or ‘Isa Guru’. I replied in the manner stated in the verse. What could they do? They could not answer. A Telugu translation of those verses is available, isn’t it?”

“Yes, it is. Isn’t Bhagavan’s own version enough for us to establish that Bhagavan is Paramatma Himself?” I said. Bhagavan smiled, and lapsed into *mouna* (silence).

I give below the prose translation of those Malayalam verses given in *Ramana Leela*:

Amritanatha’s question: “Who is this Ramana in the Arunachala Cave, who is renowned as the treasure of compassion? Is he Vararuchi or Isa Guru? or Hari? or

Yatindra? I am desirous of knowing the Guru's *Mahima* (supernatural powers)."

Bhagavan's reply: "Arunachala Ramana is the Paramatma Himself who plays about as Consciousness in the hearts of all living beings, from Hari downwards. He is the Supreme Being. It will be clear to you if you open the eye of *jnana* and see the truth."

30th January, 1947

(85) DRAVIDA SISUHU

Yesterday Bhagavan said that Sankara sang about Sambandha in *Soundarya Lahari*, referring to him as '*dravida sisuhu*', didn't he? Last night I took out *Soundarya Lahari* with a Telugu commentary and saw the *sloka* written by Sankara about Sambandha which is as follows:

तवस्तन्यं मन्ये धरणिधरकन्ये हृदयतः
 पयः पारावारः परिवहति सारस्वतमिव ।
 दयावत्या दत्तं द्रविडशिशुरास्वाद्य तवय-
 त्कवीनां प्रौढानामजनि कमनीयः कवयिता ॥ ७५ ॥

O Daughter of the Mountain, I fancy that the ocean of the milk of poesy rising out of Thy heart verily caused the milk of Thy breasts to flow. On swallowing this milk given by Thy grace, the Dravidian child became a poet among great poets.

The Telugu commentary stated that the word '*dravida sisuhu*' in the *sloka* meant Sankara himself. On the next day I mentioned this to Bhagavan. Bhagavan replied, "The Telugu commentators must have stated it wrongly. The

Tamil *Soundarya Lahari* stated that the words ‘*dravida sisuhu*’ meant Sambandha and not Sankara”; and he sent for the Tamil book and read out all that was written in it about the reason for Sambandha receiving the title of ‘*dravida sisuhu*’, and explained it to us as follows:

“Sambandha was born in an orthodox *brahmin* family in the town of Sirkali, to Sivapada Hridayar and his wife Bhagawatiyar. The parents named him Aludaya Pillayar. One day, when the boy was three years old, the father took him to Thiruttoni Appar Koil. While immersed in the tank for a bath, he began repeating the *aghamarshana mantram*. When the child could not see the father in the tank, it looked around with fear and grief. There was no trace of the father. It could not contain its grief and so wept aloud looking at the temple chariot saying, ‘Father! Mother!’ Parvati and Lord Siva appeared in the sky, seated on the sacred Bull and gave *darshan* to that little child. Siva directed Parvati to give the boy a golden cupful of her breast milk, the milk containing *Siva Jnana* (Knowledge of Siva). She did accordingly. The boy drank the milk and became free from sorrow, and the divine couple disappeared.

“Having drunk the milk of *jnana*, and feeling quite satisfied and happy, Sambandha sat on the tank bund with milk dribbling from the corners of his mouth. When the father came out from his bath, he saw the boy’s condition and angrily asked, flourishing a cane, ‘Who gave you milk? Can you drink milk given by strangers? Tell me who that person is or I will beat you.’ Sambandha immediately replied by singing ten Tamil verses beginning with, ‘தோடுடைய செவியன் விடையேறி ஓர் தூவெண் மதிசூடி...’ The gist of the first verse is: ‘The Man with *kundalas* (sacred ear-rings), the Man who rides the sacred Bull, the Man who has the white moon on His head, the Man whose

body is smeared with the ashes of the burning ghat, the thief who has stolen my heart, He who came to bless Brahma, the Creator, when Brahma, with the Vedas in his hand did penance, and He who occupies the sacred seat of Brahmपुरi, He, my Father, is there, and She, my Mother who gave the milk, is there!" So saying he described the forms of Siva and Parvati as he witnessed with his eyes and who gave him milk to drink, and also pointed towards the temple chariot.

"It was clear from the verses, that the people who gave milk to the child were no other than Parvati and Lord Siva. People gathered round. From that day onwards, the boy's poetic flow began to run unimpeded. That is why Sankara sang, *Thava Stanyam Manye*. The commentators therefore decided that the word '*dravida sisuhu*' referred to Sambandha alone. Nayana also wrote of him as '*dravida sisuhu*' in *Sri Ramana Gita*."

1st February, 1947

(86) JNANA SAMBANDHAMURTHY

After Bhagavan had read out from the Tamil commentary of *Soundarya Lahari* and told us that the words '*dravida sisuhu*' referred to Sambandha himself, the discussion on that subject continued in the Hall for the subsequent two or three days. In this connection a devotee asked Bhagavan one day, "Sambandha's original name was Aludaya Pillayar wasn't it? When did he get the other name of 'Jnana Sambandhamurthy?' and why?" Bhagavan replied, "As soon as he drank the milk given by the Goddess, *Jnana Sambandha*

(contact with Knowledge), was established for him, and he got the name Jnana Sambandhamurthy Nayanar. That means, he became a *Jnani* without the usual relationship of Guru and disciple. Hence, people all over the neighbourhood began to call him by that name from that day onwards. That is the reason.”

I said, “Bhagavan too acquired knowledge without the aid of a Guru in human form?” “Yes! yes! That is why Krishnayya brought out so many points of similarities between Sambandha and myself,” said Bhagavan.

“In Sri *Ramana Leela* it is stated, that while Sambandha was coming to Tiruvannamalai the forest tribes robbed him of his possessions. He was a man of wisdom and knowledge. What property had he?”, I asked. “Oh! that! He followed the path of devotion, didn’t he? Therefore he had golden bells and a pearl palanquin and other symbols of that nature according to the injunctions of Ishwara. He had also a mutt (an establishment for monks) and all that a mutt requires,” said Bhagavan. “Is that so? When did he get all those?” I asked.

Bhagavan replied with a voice full of emotion, “From the time when he acquired the name of Jnana Sambandha, that is, even from his childhood, he used to sing with uninterrupted poetic flow and go on pilgrimage. He first visited a holy place called Thirukolukka, went into the temple there, sang verses in praise of the Lord, beating time with his little hands. God appreciated it and gave him a pair of golden bells for beating time. From that day onwards the golden bells were in his hands whatever he sang and wherever he went. Thereafter he visited Chidambaram and other holy places and then went to a pilgrim centre called Maranpadi. There were no trains in those days. The presiding deity in that place observed this little boy visiting holy places on foot.

So His heart melted with pity and He created a pearl palanquin, a pearl umbrella and other accompaniments bedecked with pearls suitable for *sannyasis*, left them in the temple, appeared to the *brahmin* priests there and to Sambandha in their dreams and told the Brahmins, ‘Give them to Sambandha with proper honours,’ and told Sambandha, ‘The Brahmins will give you all these; take them.’ As they were gifts from Gods he could not refuse them. So Sambandha accepted with reverential salutations by doing *pradakshina*, etc. and then got into the palanquin. From that time onwards he used to go about in that palanquin wherever he went. Gradually some staff gathered around him and a mutt was established. But whenever he approached a holy place, he used to alight from the palanquin as soon as he saw the *gopura* (tower) of the shrine and from there onwards, he travelled on foot until he entered the place. He came here on foot from Tirukoilur as the peak of Arunagiri is visible from there.”

A Tamil devotee said that that visit was not clearly mentioned in *Periapuranam*, to which Bhagavan replied as follows:

“No. It is not in *Periapuranam*. But it is stated in Upamanyu’s *Sivabhaktivilasam* in Sanskrit. Sambandha worshipped Virateswara in Arakandanallur and won the god’s favour with his verses and then he worshipped Athulyanatheswara in the same way. From there he beheld the peak of Arunagiri and sang verses out of excess of joy and installed an image of Arunachaleswara in the same spot. While he was seated there on a *mandapam*, God Arunachaleswara appeared to him first in the shape of a *Jyoti* (light) and then in the shape of an old *brahmin*. Sambandha did not know who that old *brahmin* was. The *brahmin* had in his hand a flower basket. Unaccountably,

Sambandha's mind was attracted towards that *brahmin* like a magnet. He at once asked him with folded hands, 'Where do you come from?' 'I have just come from Arunachalam. My village is here, nearby,' replied the *brahmin*. Sambandha asked him in surprise, 'Arunachala! But how long ago did you come here?' The *brahmin* replied indifferently 'How long ago? Daily I come here in the morning to gather flowers to make a garland for Lord Arunachala and return there by the afternoon.' Sambandha was surprised and said, 'Is that so? But they said it is very far from here?' The old *brahmin* said, 'Who told you so? You can reach there in one stride. What is there great in it?' Having heard that, Sambandha became anxious to visit Arunachala and asked, 'If so, can I walk there?' The old man replied, 'Ah! If an aged man like myself goes there and comes here daily, can't a youth like you do it? What are you saying?'

"With great eagerness Sambandha asked, 'Sir, if that is so, please take me also along with you,' and started at once with all his entourage. The *brahmin* was going in advance and the party was following behind. Suddenly the *brahmin* disappeared. As the party was looking here and there, in confusion, a group of hunters surrounded them, and robbed them of the palanquin, umbrella, golden bells and all the pearls and other valuable articles, their provisions and even the clothes they were wearing. They were left with only their loin clothes. They did not know the way; it was very hot and there was no shelter, and all were hungry as it was time for taking food. What could they do? Then Sambandha prayed to God. 'Oh! Lord, why am I being tested like this? I don't care what happens to me, but why should these followers of mine be put to this hard test?' On hearing those prayers, God appeared in His real form and said, 'My son, these hunters too are my *Pramatha Ganas* (personal attendants).

They deprived you of all your possessions as it is best to proceed to the worship of Lord Arunachala without any show or pomp. All your belongings will be restored to you as soon as you reach there. It is noon time now. You may enjoy the feast and then proceed farther'. So saying He disappeared.

“At once, a big tent appeared on a level space nearby. Some Brahmins came out of the tent and invited Sambandha and his party to their tent, entertained them to a feast with delicious dishes of various kinds and with *chandanam* (sandal paste) and *thambulam* (betel leaves). Sambandha who was all along entertaining others, was himself entertained by the Lord Himself. After they had rested for a while, one of the Brahmins in the tent got up and said, ‘Sir, shall we proceed to Arunagiri?’ Sambandha was extremely happy and accompanied the *brahmin* along with his followers. But as soon as they set out on their journey, the tent together with the people in it disappeared. While Sambandha was feeling astonished at those strange happenings, the guide who had been leading them to Arunachala disappeared as soon as they arrived there. Suddenly, the tent along with the people in it and the hunters who had robbed them previously appeared from all sides and restored to Sambandha all his belongings which they had robbed previously, and vanished. With tears of joy, Sambandha praised the Lord for His great kindness, stayed there for some days, worshipped Him with flowers of verses and then proceeded on his journey. Out of His affection for Sambandha, who was serving Him with reverence, God Himself, it would appear, invited him to this hill.”

So saying, Bhagavan assumed silence, with his heart filled with devotion and with his voice trembling with emotion.

2nd February, 1947

(87) DIVINE FORCE

I went to the hall at 2-30 this afternoon. Bhagavan was there already, reading a slip of paper which someone had handed over to him. I sat there waiting to hear what Bhagavan would say. Bhagavan folded the paper with a smile and said, "All this will occur if one thinks that there is a difference between Bhagavan and oneself. If one thinks that there is no such difference, all this will not occur."

Is it enough if we say that there is no difference between Bhagavan and ourselves? Is it not necessary to enquire who oneself is, and what one's origin is, before one thinks that there is no difference between oneself and Bhagavan? Why is Bhagavan saying this? I was thinking of asking Bhagavan why he was thus misleading us but could not summon up enough courage to do so. I do not know if Bhagavan sensed this misgiving of mine; but anyway he himself began speaking again as follows:

"Before one could realise that there is no difference between him and Bhagavan, one should first discard all these unreal attributes which are really not his. One cannot perceive truth unless all these qualities are discarded. There is a Divine force (*Chaitanya Sakti*) which is the source of all things. All these other qualities cannot be discarded unless we get hold of that force. *Sadhana* is required to get hold of that force."

I got courage as I heard those words and said unconsciously, "So there is a force?" "Yes," replied Bhagavan, "There is a force. It is that force that is called *swasphurana* (consciousness of the Self)." I said with a quivering voice, "Bhagavan said casually that it is enough if we think that there is no difference between us and God. But we can

discard these unreal attributes only if we are able to get hold of that force. Let it be the Divine force or the consciousness of the Self. Whatever it is, should we not know it? We are not able to know it however much we try.”

Never before this did I ask Bhagavan questions in the presence of others so boldly. Today, the inner urge was so great that words came out of my mouth of their own accord in the course of the conversation, and my eyes were filled with tears and so I turned my face towards the wall. A lady sitting next to me told me afterwards that Bhagavan’s eyes also became moist. How tender-hearted he is towards the humble!

Bhagavan sometimes used to say, “The *Jnani* weeps with the weeping, laughs with the laughing, plays with the playful, sings with those who sing, keeping time to the song. What does he lose? His presence is like a pure, transparent mirror. It reflects our image exactly as we are. It is we that play the several parts in life and reap the fruits of our actions. How is the mirror or the stand on which it is mounted affected? Nothing affects them, as they are mere supports. The actors in this world — the doers of all acts — must decide for themselves what song and what action is for the welfare of the world, what is in accordance with *sastras*, and what is practicable.” That is what Bhagavan used to say. This is a practical illustration.

4th February, 1947

(88) SLEEP AND THE REAL STATE

This afternoon somebody handed a slip of paper with a question on it to Bhagavan. The purport of it was: “What happens to this world during sleep? In what state is the *Jnani* during sleep?” Affecting surprise, Bhagavan replied, “Oh! Is that what you want to know? Do you know what is happening to your body and in what state you are when you are asleep? During your sleep you forget that your body is here, in this place, on this mat, in this very condition, and you wander about somewhere and do something. It is only when you wake up that you realise that you are here. But you are always existent during the sleeping state as well as during the waking state. Your body is living inert, without any activity during your sleep. Therefore you are not this body during the sleeping condition. Then, to what are you attached during sleep? There must be something which is the prop for these comings and goings. You lie down with a view to sleep. But you get dreams; next you sleep, knowing happily nothing. It is a very happy sleep. So you admit that you were there in the sleeping state. And yet you say that you are aware of nothing in that state. What is real, you say you do not know. What is unreal and fleeting, you say you know. But in truth you know what is real. These fleeting things — let them come and go — they will not touch you. You do not know about yourself but you ask what happens to the world? What does the *Jnani* experience in the sleeping state? If you first know what happens to you, the world will know about itself. You ask about *Jnanis*; they are the same in any state or condition, as they know the Reality, the Truth. In their daily routine of taking food, moving about and all

the rest, they, the *Jnanis*, act only for others. Not a single action is done for themselves. I have already told you many times that just as there are people whose profession is to mourn for a fee, so also the *Jnanis* do things for the sake of others with detachment, without themselves being affected by them.”

Another devotee took up the conversation and asked, “Swami, you say the real state must be known, and that meditation is necessary to realise that. But first of all what is meditation?” “Meditation means Brahman,” Bhagavan replied. Continuing, he said, “To get rid of the evils that are created by the mind, it is said that some *nishta* (religious practice) must be adopted, and meditation based on that must be practised. As you go on doing it, those evils will disappear. And, after they disappear, the meditation itself becomes fixed as Brahman. *Tapas* also means the same thing. When you ask how to get rid of all these *vasanas*, they say, ‘Do *tapas*.’ But what is the reward of *tapas*? It is said, ‘*tapas* itself is the reward.’ *Tapas* means *swarupa* (realisation of the Self). What is real is the *swarupa*, that is *Atma*, the Supreme Self, that is Brahman. That is everything. Of course in technical language you have to say, ‘Do meditation’ but these doubts do not arise if you know who it is that is really meditating.” The same idea is conveyed in Bhagavan’s “Upadesa Saram”:

अहमपेतकं निजविभानकम् ।

महदिदं तपो रमणवागियम् ॥

The Realisation of That which subsists when all trace of ‘I’ is gone is great *tapas*. So sings Ramana.

Upadesa Saram, verse 30

7th February, 1947

(89) THE INCARNATION OF SRI DAKSHINAMURTHY

While translating “Dakshinamurthy Stotram” into Tamil verse with commentary, Bhagavan summarised the original story about the reason for Dakshinamurthy’s incarnation and wrote it in the preface. Besides that he divided nine *slokas* therein into three groups dealing with the world, the seer and the seen respectively.

The first three: (1) *Viswam Darpanam*, (2) *Bijasyanthariva*, (3) *Yasyaiva sphuranum*, deal with the origin of the world. The next three: (1) *Nanachhidra*, (2) *Rahugrastha*, (3) *Deham Pranam*, deal with the seer; and the last three: (1) *Balyadishwapi* (2) *Viswam Pasyathi* (3) *Bhurambhamsi*, deal with the light by which things are seen. The last *sloka*, *Sarvathmatvam*, means that the whole universe is merged in Brahman.

Recently I translated the preface into Telugu. Bhagavan went through the translation, and said with a smile, “I mentioned briefly in the preface, only as much of the life story as related to the *stotra*, but the real story is much more interesting. It goes like this: Brahma asked Sanaka, Sanatkumara, Sanandana and Sanatsujata, who are the creations of his mind, to assist him in the task of creation, but they were not interested in that task and so declined to assist. They were surrounded by the heavenly gods, saints and other attendants, and were staying in Nandana Vana and so they were considering who would impart to them *jnana*, the supreme Wisdom. Narada appeared, and said, ‘Who can impart the *Brahma Jnana*, the Supreme Wisdom, except Brahma himself? Come on, we shall go to him.’ They

all agreed and proceeded to *Satya Loka*, the abode of Brahma, and found Saraswathi playing the veena, with Brahma seated in front of her, enjoying the music and beating time to the tune. They all beheld the scene and wondered how a person who is engrossed in the appreciation of his wife's music could teach them *adhyatma tattva* (the essence of spirituality). Narada said to them, 'Come! let us go to *Vaikunta*, the abode of Vishnu'. They all proceeded thither. The Lord was in the interior of his residence. Narada is however a privileged person and so he went directly into the Lord's abode, saying he would see and come back. Soon he came out and, when asked, told them, 'There Brahma was seated a little away from his wife who was playing the veena for him. But here, the Goddess Lakshmi is seated on the God's couch and is massaging his feet. This is much worse. How can this family man who is spellbound by the intimate glances of his consort, render us any help (in learning *adhyatma vidya*)? Look at the splendour of this palace and this city! This is no good. Let us seek the help of Lord Siva.'

"They all proceeded towards Himachala and seeing Mount Kailas, they ascended it with great hopes. But there, in the midst of a vast gathering of his fellows, was Siva performing his celestial dance with his wife sharing half of his body. Vishnu was playing on the Drum, and Brahma was keeping time with the bells as an accompaniment for the dance. They who came eagerly seeking spiritual guidance, were aghast at the sight, and thought, 'Oh! He too is after women! Brahma was no doubt having his wife sitting very close to, but was not in physical contact with her, while Vishnu was in physical contact with his wife, but she was merely massaging His legs, but Siva is actually keeping Parvati as part of His body. This is much worse. Enough of this.' And they all departed. Siva understood and was sorry for

them. He said, 'What delusion on their part! They regard the three Godheads as devoid of spiritual wisdom merely because they were being served by their respective wives at the time the devotees saw them! Who else can impart spiritual knowledge to these earnest seekers of Truth?' Thus thinking, Siva sent away Parvati on the plea of himself doing *tapas* and the kind-hearted Lord seated Himself in the guise of a youth with *Chinmudra*, as Dakshinamurthy, under a banyan tree on the northern side of lake Mansarovar, just on the way by which these disappointed devotees were returning to their respective homes. I read this story somewhere," said Bhagavan.

"How interesting is the story! Why did not Bhagavan include it in the Introduction?" I said.

"I cannot say! I thought it unnecessary for me to record all these incidents of Dakshinamurthy's life in the Introduction. I included only as much as was required for the *Ashtaka* (8 *slokas*)," replied Bhagavan.

On further enquiry, it was found that this story was narrated in *Siva Rahasya*, tenth canto, second chapter, under the heading, "The Incarnation of Sri Dakshinamurthy." A devotee who heard this asked, "Does incarnation mean birth of Sri Dakshinamurthy?" "Where is the question of a birth for him? It is one of the five *Murthys* (forms) of Siva. It means that he is seated facing south in *mouna mudra* (silent posture). It is the want of Form, Formlessness, that is indicated in its inner meaning. Is it the Murthy, the Form, that is described in the "Dakshinamurthy Ashtaka"? Is it not the want of Form, Formlessness? 'Sri Dakshinamurthy' — 'Sri' means *Maya Sakti* (illusory force); one meaning of '*Dakshina*' is efficient; another meaning is 'in the heart on the right side of the body'; '*Amurthy*' means 'Formlessness'. A lot of commentary on this is possible, isn't it?" said Bhagavan.

The same devotee asked, “Sanaka and the others are described in the *Bhagavata Purana* as young boys of five years of age for all time; but this *stotra* says ‘*vriddha sishya gurur yuva*’ (old disciples and young Guru). How is that?”

“*Jnanis* (the wise) always remain young. There is no youth, and no old age for them. The description ‘*vriddha*’ and ‘*sishya*’, ‘old’ and ‘disciple’ means that Sanaka and the others were old in actual age. Though they are old in years they remain everlastingly young in appearance,” said Bhagavan.

I give below my translation of the introduction written by Bhagavan:

“Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanatkumara and Sanatsujata who are the four sons born from the mind of Brahma, learnt that they were brought into existence to further the creation of the world, but they were not interested in the task, and sought only Truth and Knowledge and wandered in search of a Guru. Lord Siva sympathised with those earnest seekers of Truth and Himself sat under a banyan tree in the silent state as Dakshinamurthy with *chinmudra*. Sanaka and the others observed Him and were at once attracted by Him like iron by a magnet, and attained Self-realisation in His presence in no time. To those who are not able to know the real significance of the silent and original form (of Dakshinamurthy), Sankara summarised the universal truth in this *stotra* and explained to *Utamadhikaris* (highly developed souls) that the *Sakti* (force) which dissolves the three obstacles for realisation of the Truth, that is the world, the seer and the seen, is not different from one’s own self and that everything gets ultimately merged in one’s own self.”

8th February, 1947

(90) THE JNANI'S MIND IS BRAHMAN ITSELF

I went to the Hall at about 7-30 this morning. It was all silent inside. The aroma of the burning incense sticks coming out of the windows indicated to the new visitors that Bhagavan was there. I went inside, bowed before Bhagavan and then sat down. Bhagavan, who was all along leaning on a pillow, sat up erect in the *Padmasana* pose. In a moment his look became motionless and transcendent and the whole hall was filled with lustre. Suddenly someone asked, "Swamiji! Do the *Jnanis* have a mind or not?"

Bhagavan cast a benevolent look at him, and said, "There is no question of one realising Brahman without a mind; realisation is possible only if there is a mind; mind always functions with some *upadhi* (support); there is no mind without *upadhi*; it is only in connection with the *upadhi* that we say that one is a *Jnani*. Without the *upadhi*, how can one say that some one is a *Jnani*? But how does the *upadhi* function without mind? It does not; that is why it is said that the *Jnani's* mind itself is Brahman. The *Jnani* is always looking at Brahman. How is it possible to see without a mind? That is why it is said that the *Jnani's* mind is *Brahmakara* and *akhandakara*. But in reality his mind itself is Brahman. Just as an ignorant man does not recognise Brahman within but only recognises the external *vrittis* (things), so also though the *Jnani's* body moves about in the external *vrittis*, he always recognises only the Brahman within. That Brahman is all-pervading. When once the mind is lost in the Brahman, to call the mind *Brahmakara* is like saying that a river is like the ocean; when once all the rivers get lost in the ocean, it is all

one vast sheet of water. Can you then distinguish in that vast sheet of water, ‘This is the Ganges, this is the Goutami, this river is so long, that river is so wide’, and so on? It is the same with regard to the mind also.”

Someone else asked, “They say that *satvam* is Brahman, and that *rajas* and *tamas* are *abhasa*; is that so?” Bhagavan replied: “Yes! *Sat* is what exists; *Sat* is *satvam*; it is the natural thing; it is the subtle movement of the mind. By its contacts with *rajas* and *tamas* it creates the world with its innumerable forms. It is only due to its contact with *rajas* and *tamas* that the mind looks at the world which is *abhasa*, and gets deluded. If you remove that contact, *satva* shines pure and uncontaminated. That is called pure *Satva* or *Suddhasatva*. This contact cannot be eliminated unless you enquire with the subtlest of the subtle mind and reject it. All the *vasanas* have to be subdued and the mind has to become very subtle; that means, subtle among the subtlest — they say *anoraneeyam* (atom within an atom). It should become atomic to the atom. If it becomes subdued as an atom to the atom, then it rises to the infinite among infinities, ‘*mahato maheeyam*’. Call it the mind seeing, or the mind acquiring powers; call it whatever you like. By whatever name it is called, when we sleep the mind, with all its activities lies subdued in the heart. What do we see then? Nothing. Why? Because the mind lies subdued. We wake up from our sleep, and as soon as we wake up there is mind, there is *Sat* and Brahman. As soon as the mind that is awake is attached to the *gunas*, every activity emerges. If you discard those *guna vikaras*, (vagaries of the mind), the Brahman appears everywhere, self-luminous and self-evident, the *Aham*, ‘I’. Then everything appears *thanmayam* (all pervading). See the technical language of the Vedanta: they say, *Brahma-vid*, (Brahman-knowing), *Brahma Vidvarishta*, (supreme among the Brahman-knowing), and

so on, and then they say, *Brahmaiva Bhavati*, (he becomes Brahman itself). He is Brahman itself. That is why we say that the *jnani's* mind itself is Brahman.”

Someone else asked, “They say that the *Jnani* conducts himself with absolute equality towards all?” Bhagavan replied, “Yes! How does a *Jnani* conduct himself?”

मैत्रीकरुणामुदितोपेक्षाणां
सुखदुःख पुण्यापुण्यविषयाणां
भावनातश्चित्तप्रसादनम् ।

Maitri (friendship), *karuna* (kindness), *mudita* (happiness) and *upeksha* (indifference) and such other *bhavas* become natural to them. Affection towards the good, kindness towards the helpless, happiness in doing good deeds, forgiveness towards the wicked, all such things are natural characteristics of the *Jnani*.

Patanjali Yoga Sutra, 1: 33

9th February, 1947

(91) MAYA (ILLUSION)

The same devotee who questioned Bhagavan yesterday again asked him this afternoon about illusion, *maya*: “Swami, all the innumerable varieties of things that appear to the human mind to be real, are mere *maya* (illusion), aren't they? Will the illusion disappear if they are all discarded?”

Bhagavan replied, “Illusion will continue to appear as illusion, so long as the idea that oneself and Ishwara are two different entities persists. When once that illusion is discarded and the individual realises that he is Ishwara, he will understand that *maya* is not something distinct and separate

from his own self. Ishwara exists without and distinct from illusion, but there is no illusion without Ishwara.” “Therefore that illusion changes into pure illusion, doesn’t it?” asked the questioner. Bhagavan replied, “Yes! It amounts to that; unless the individual self is existent how can one realise Ishwara? There is no self, unless the illusion is there. When once the individual realises who he is, the evil effects, i.e., ‘*doshas*’ of illusion do not affect him. Call it pure illusion, or anything else you like. That is the essential thing.”

Somebody else took up the topic and asked, “They say that the *jiva* is subject to the evil effects of illusion such as limited vision and knowledge, whereas Ishwara has all-pervading vision and knowledge and such other characteristics and that *jiva* and Ishwara become one and identical if the individual discards his limited vision and knowledge, and such other characteristics usually attached to him. But should not Ishwara also discard his particular characteristics such as all-pervading vision and knowledge? They too are illusions, aren’t they?”

“Is that your doubt? First discard your limited vision and such like characteristics and then it will be time enough to think of Ishwara’s all-pervading vision, knowledge etc. First get rid of your limited knowledge. Why do you worry about Ishwara? He will look after Himself. Has He not got as much capacity as we have? Why should we worry whether He possesses the all-pervading vision and knowledge or not? It is indeed a great thing if we can take care of ourselves.”

The questioner asked again, “But first of all we must find a Guru who can give us sufficient practice and thereby enable us to get rid of these *gunas*, mustn’t we?”

“If we have the earnestness to get rid of these qualities can we not find a Guru? We must first have the desire to get rid of them. When once we have this the Guru will himself

come, searching for us, or he will somehow manage to draw us to himself. The Guru will always be on the alert and keep an eye on us; Ishwara Himself will show us the Guru. Who else will look after the welfare of the children except the father himself? He is always with us, surrounding us. He protects us, as a bird protects its eggs by hatching them under the shelter of its wings. But we must have whole-hearted faith in Him," said Bhagavan.

A devotee, by name Sankaramma, who is generally afraid of asking Bhagavan questions, said quietly on hearing those words: "But Swamiji! Guru's *upadesa* (instruction) is necessary for *sadhana*, isn't it?" Bhagavan replied, "Oh! Is that so? But that *upadesa* is being given every day. Those who are in need of it, may have it." Others present there said: "But Bhagavan must bless us that we may be enabled to receive the instruction. That is our prayer." "The blessing is always there," replied Bhagavan.

10th February, 1947

(92) AADARANA (REGARD)

At noon today three French ladies arrived here by car from Pondicherry. One was the Governor's wife, another the Secretary's wife and the third was someone connected with them. They rested for a while after food and reached the hall by about 2-30 p.m. Two of them could not sit on the floor and so they sat on the window sill opposite to Bhagavan; the third somehow managed to sit on the floor. They took leave of Bhagavan at about 3 p.m. and left. When I saw them I remembered some other incidents connected with

the visit of an American lady to the Ashram, how she sat with legs stretched out, and was advised by the inmates of the Ashram not to do so, how Bhagavan admonished them by narrating the stories of Avaiyar and Namdev. I wrote to you about all that long back. I shall now write to you two more incidents of a similar type.

About ten months ago, an old European lady came here along with another European called Frydman and stayed here for about twenty days. She was not accustomed to squatting on the ground because of her Western style of living. Besides, she was old. So she used to suffer considerably, being unable to sit down, and if she sat down, she was finding it difficult to get up. The gentleman used to help her to get up, by holding her hand. One day when I reached the hall by about 8 a.m. I found them both seated in the front row in the space allotted for ladies. The other ladies were hesitating to sit nearby, and so I signalled to him to move a bit farther away, which he did immediately. Bhagavan got annoyed and looked at me but I did not at the time know why. I was standing near the sofa talking to somebody. Frydman suddenly got up and also helped her to get up. Her eyes were filled with tears and most reluctantly she took leave of Bhagavan. Bhagavan as usual nodded his head in token of permission. As soon as they left, Bhagavan looked at me and said, "It is a pity they are going away." I felt that I had committed a great crime and said, "I am sorry. I did not know they were leaving." Bhagavan felt that I had realised my mistake and that I was repenting for it and so said, "No. It is not that. They suffer a lot if they sit on the ground. That is why so many who are anxious to come here stay away. They are not accustomed to squat. What can they do? It is a great pity."

Some time ago, a very poor old lady came here one morning with her relatives. All except she made their *pranams*

to Bhagavan and sat down. She however remained standing. Krishnaswamy, the attendant, requested her to sit down, but she did not do so. Her relatives called her to come away but she did not do that either. I too advised her to go to them and sit down, but she did not take any notice. Someone there said, admonishing her, "Why don't you listen to the advice of all the people here?" I looked at her relatives to find out the reason of her obstinacy. They said that she was almost blind and so wanted to go near Swami to see him at close quarters. I got up, took her hand and led her to the sofa where Bhagavan was seated. Shading her eyes with the palm of her hand she looked at Bhagavan intently and said, "Swami! I can't see properly. Please bless me that I may be enabled to see you in my mind." With looks full of tenderness, Bhagavan nodded his head by way of assent saying, "All right."

As soon as they left, Bhagavan told us, "The poor lady can't see properly and so was afraid of coming near to see me. What can she do? She merely stood there. To those who have no eyes, the mind is the eye. They have only one sight, that of the mind, and not many other sights to distract their attention. Only the mind should get concentration. When once that is obtained they are much better than us." What a mild and soothing admonition!

12th February, 1947

(93) SADHANA IN THE PRESENCE OF THE GURU

Today, I reached the hall at about 3 p.m. Bhagavan was at leisure, answering questions asked by some devotee. One

of the questions was: “Swami, they say that *japa* and *tapa* performed in the presence of Bhagavan yield greater results than usual. If so, what about bad actions done in your presence?” Bhagavan replied, “If good actions yield good results, bad actions must yield bad results. If the gift of a cow in Benares yields great *punya* (virtue) to the donor, the slaughter of a cow there result in great *papa* (sin). When you say that a little virtuous action done in a holy place yields enormous benefit, a sinful action must likewise yield enormous harm. So long as the feeling that you are the doer is there, you must face the consequences of your actions, good or bad.”

“There is the desire to discard bad habits but the force of the *vasanas* is very strong. What are we to do?” that person continued. “There must be human effort to discard them. Good company, good contacts, good deeds and all such good practices must be acquired in order to eliminate the *vasanas*. As you keep on trying, eventually with the ripening of the mind and with God’s grace, the *vasanas* get extinguished and efforts succeed. That is called *purushakaram* (human effort). How could God be expected to be favourable towards you without your striving for it?” said Bhagavan.

Another person took up the thread of conversation and said, “It is said that the whole universe is God’s *chidvilasam* and that everything is *Brahmamayam*. Then why should we say that bad habits and bad practices should be discarded?” Bhagavan replied, “Why? I will tell you. There is the human body. Suppose there is some wound inside it. If you neglect it, on the assumption that it is only a small part of the body, it causes pain to the whole body. If it is not cured by ordinary treatment, the doctor must come, cut off the affected portion with a knife and remove the impure blood. If the diseased part is not cut off it will fester.

“If you do not bandage it after operation, puss will form. It is the same thing with regard to conduct. Bad habits and bad conduct are like a wound in the body; if a man does not discard them, he will fall into the abyss below. Hence every disease must be given appropriate treatment.”

“Bhagavan says that *sadhana* must be done to discard all such bad things, but the mind itself is inert and cannot do anything by itself — *Chaitanya* (Self) is *achalam* (motionless) and so will not do anything. Then how is one to perform *sadhana*?” someone asked. Bhagavan replied, “Oho! But how are you able to talk now?” “Swami, I do not understand that and that is why I ask for enlightenment,” he said. Bhagavan replied, “All right. Then please listen. The mind which is inert is able to achieve everything by the force of its contact, *sannidhyabala* (strength of proximity) with *chaitanya* which is *achala*. But without the aid of *chaitanya* the inert mind cannot accomplish anything by itself. *Chaitanya*, being immobile, cannot accomplish anything without the help of the mind. It is the relationship of *avinabhavam*, one dependent on the other, and inseparable. That is why elders discussed this matter from various angles and came to the conclusion that the mind is *chit-jada-atmakam*. We have to say that the combination of *chit* (Self) and *jada* (inert) produces action.”

Bhagavan has written nicely about this *Chit-jada-granthi* in his “Unnathi Nalubadhi”, verse 24, as follows:

The body does not say ‘I’. The Atman is not born. In between, the feeling ‘I’ is born in the whole body. Whatever name you give it that is *Chit-jada-granthi* (the knot between the consciousness and the inert), and also bondage.

*13th February, 1947***(94) HRIDAYAM – SAHASRARAM**

As verses written by Bhagavan in Tamil on different occasions are found scattered in different notebooks, we have been thinking for a long time past that they should all be collected together in one book, but somehow we have delayed the matter. Four or five days back I told Niranjanananda Swami about this, brought a notebook and began copying them enthusiastically, though my knowledge of Tamil is very limited.

When I asked Bhagavan in what books they are to be found, he said, “They must be in those big notebooks bearing numbers one, two and three. Please see,” and again, “Whenever anyone asked me, I used to write them out on small bits of paper and give them to them. They used to take them away. Some of them were noted down in these books and some were not. If all of them were here, there would be now have been a quite a lot. I wrote many more while I was on the hill. Some of them were thrown away. Who had the desire or the patience to preserve them? If you want them, you may gather them now.” I felt pained that the Divine voice expressed in verses had not been preserved for future generations and had thus been wasted. I took up volume one, and found verses under the heading, “Bhagavan’s Compositions.” I asked him what those verses were and he replied:

“When I was in Virupaksha Cave, Nayana came there once with a boy named Arunachala. He had studied up to the school’s final class. While Nayana and I were talking, the boy sat in a bush nearby. He somehow listened to our conversation and composed nine verses in English, giving the gist of what we were talking about. The verses were good

and so I translated them into Tamil verses in *ahaval* metre. They read like Telugu *dwipada* metre. The substance of the verses is as follows:

From the sun of Bhagavan's face, the rays of his words start out and bestow glow and strength on the moon of Ganapathy Sastry's (Nayana's) face which in turn lights the faces of people like us.

“One thing more. Ganapathy Sastry used to say that *Sahasrara* is the source and the centre of all. The Heart is the support of *Sahasrara*, is it not? The Heart bestows light on the *Sahasrara*. I used to say that the Heart is the source of all and that the force that emerges out of the Heart shines in the *Sahasrara*. To include this idea, the verse suggests a double meaning that the Heart is the sun, the solar orb, and the *Sahasrara* is the moon.”

15th February, 1947

(95) TELUGU VENBA

The magazine *Thyagi* published last month a review on the recently printed Tamil *puranam* called *Tiruchuli*. In the review they included three verses taken out from the book called, *Thiruchuli Venba Andadhi*, for purpose of comparison. Encouraged by the Sarvadhikari, I wanted to read the review, and therefore took the magazine from Bhagavan about ten days ago.

The *venba* is poetry with double meanings. Since it is in praise of Bhuminatha (i.e. Siva) it is pleasant to hear it sung. I was seated in the hall, staring at the magazine. Bhagavan felt that I would not be able to understand it, and so gave me the

gist of the three verses, as follows: “Bhuminatha is the name of the God in Thiruchuli temple, and Sahaya Valli the name of the Goddess; this local *purana* is included in *Skanda Purana* under the name of *Tirisulapura Mahatmyam*.

“O Bhuminatha! All the Gods in heaven praised you as a hero unaided, on the assumption that you achieved victory by your own powers, unaided by any one in the fight against Tripurasuras. But you are Ardhanareeswara, half-man and half-woman; so, what would you have achieved in the fight against Tripurasuras, if you had not been aided by the Goddess Sahaya Valli? The left side of your body is hers. Could you have stretched your bow without her aid?’ That is the meaning.

“You are immobile as you are in the form of a Mountain; without the aid of the Goddess Sakti (energy), what could you achieve? Therefore it is not true to say that you are a hero, unaided. You cannot achieve anything without the aid of our Sahaya Valli. That is the other meaning. There are many other varieties of special meanings included in those writings,” said Bhagavan, in an ecstasy of devotion.

It appears that the book *Venba Andadhi* was received from the editors of the magazine on the next day. When I went to the Ashram in the afternoon at 2-30, Bhagavan told me that the book had been received.

As I took it up to see, Bhagavan told me laughingly, “Nayana started to compose *venba* in Sanskrit, but the *prasa* (metre) did not agree, and he left off as he found the metre to be more difficult than *arya vritta*. He himself said that it is *Sukla Chandas*. Lakshmana Sarma at first composed his verses ‘Unnathi Nalubadhi’ in Sanskrit in *venba* metre but the *prasa* and *ganas* were not right. I corrected only the *mangala sloka*. Narasinga Rao composed it in Telugu but that too did not come out well.” “That is perhaps because there is no suitable metre in Telugu,” I suggested. “Yes! It is so! It is rather difficult.

I could have composed it, but somehow I did not do so.” I asked Bhagavan, rather regretfully, “Has Bhagavan stopped altogether composing in Telugu?” He replied, “You yourself can do so, if I tell you the *ganas*. Why should I?” “But I do not know even the ordinary *chandas*. How can I know this specialised variety? Even Nayana could not compose, you said. If so who else can do it? Bhagavan himself must write. Bhagavan’s compositions which are in the form of *sutras* are very pleasant, aren’t they? You must please favour us (with your composition),” I requested him earnestly. He did not utter a word, but remained silent. I felt dejected and went home with the book.

I could not attend the hall for three days. When I reached there on the fourth day, Bhagavan gave me bits of paper and said, “The other day we were talking about ‘*venba*’ in Telugu. The next day I composed these three verses in Telugu and then translated them into Tamil. See! They should be sung in *Sankarabharana raga* slowly, very slowly.”

“You should give us some more verses on the same lines!” I requested him. He replied, “Enough! There is no suitable *chandas* in Telugu. People would laugh at it! There is not even a suitable topic to write about! They are all ordinary words.” “Bhagavan’s voice does not require any topic in particular. Whatever comes out of his mouth is a topic, and that is the Veda. If there is no suitable metre in Telugu, why does Bhagavan not create one?” I said.

Muruganar supported me, and said, “If Bhagavan composes now and then like this, it will become a volume in due course. If the Telugu language can get a new metre, is it not a great gain for it?” Bhagavan did not reply. I copied out the three *venbas* for my record.

20th February, 1947

(96) EKATMA PANCHAKAM

In my last letter I wrote to you about Telugu *venba*. I felt that it would have been better if Bhagavan had composed some more verses, but kept quiet for the time being, as I felt I should not ask unless a suitable opportunity presented itself. When I reached the hall in the afternoon of the 16th, Bhagavan was talking to a devotee about *venba* metre. He saw me and began to explain the differences between Tamil and Telugu *chandas* and said, "It seems once Guha Namasivaya Swamy decided to compose at the rate of one *venba* per day. That would be about 360 verses in a year. He composed a number of verses accordingly, some had been lost and the remaining verses were printed by his devotees. Quite a number of them are available now." "Will it not be beneficial to the world if Bhagavan also composes similarly?" said the devotees. "I do not know why, but my mind refuses to move in that direction. What am I to do?" replied Bhagavan. "But they are so few! If some more are composed, and if the relative *chandas* is constructed, it will be a new treasure for our language!" I said.

"That is all very well, but am I a pandit? If all this is to be written, one has to study *Bhagavatam*, *Bharatam* and all that. But what am I to write about? What is there to write about?" he asked.

"Whatever Bhagavan writes will itself be a matter of interest," I replied.

He replied, "You write so many verses. Is that not enough? If you want, get me *Pedda Bala Siksha* (popular children's primer in Telugu), or *Sulakshana Saram*. I shall tell you the *ganas*, and you may compose yourself." I said, "I don't want to write anything. If Bhagavan writes anything, I shall read it; otherwise not." He laughed and kept silent.

I went out and began writing something sitting in front of the verandah. But you see Bhagavan is full of kindness. As soon as I left the hall, it seems he composed a *venba* and read it out to the devotees. He saw me in the evening as he was going out, looked at me and said, "Here is another *venba* I have just now composed. You may see it." Overwhelmed with joy, I looked at it and kept it. Bhagavan translated it into Tamil and told Muruganar, "Am I well read in Telugu? That is why I try to avoid writing in Telugu, but she keeps on asking. I raised several objections but she did not agree. Therefore I had to write."

"Bhagavan's saying is destined to come out in this manner," said Muruganar. It was 6 p.m. I came home saying I would copy it the next day. I went to the Hall next morning at 8 o'clock. On seeing him, Bhagavan said, "Here is another composed by me last night. They make five in all. They may be called 'Atma Panchakam'! But Sankara has already composed something under the same name. Let us therefore call them 'Ekatma Panchakam'. I have already numbered the verses. You may verify, and copy them out."

As instructed, I copied them out. On seeing me do that, several other devotees also copied them and got them by heart. This afternoon a lady devotee sang the *Ekatma Panchakam* in the Hall. When she sang the third verse, commencing '*thanalo thanuvunda*' Bhagavan looked at me and said, "See I gave this example of the cinema when I was in Virupaksha Cave, even before cinemas became popular. There were no cinemas in Sankara's time. Therefore he gave the example, '*viswam darpana drisyamana nagari*'. He would not have given that example if there had been cinemas in his time. We have now got in the cinema a very easy example to give."

*24th February, 1947***(97) BIRTH**

Yesterday a lady devotee showed Bhagavan her notebook in which she had copied out the five verses of “Ekatma Panchakam”. Bhagavan saw in that notebook two verses composed by him for his devotees when they first started celebrating his birthday, and told us the following incident:

“On one of my birthdays while I was in Virupaksha Cave, probably in 1912, those around me insisted on cooking food and eating it there as a celebration of the occasion. I tried to dissuade them, but they rebelled saying, ‘What harm does it do to Swamiji if we cook our food and eat it here?’ I therefore left it at that. Immediately after that they purchased some vessels. Those vessels are still here. What began as a small function has resulted in all this paraphernalia and pomp. Everything must take its own course and will not stop at our request. I told them at great length, but they did not listen. When the cooking and eating were over, Iswaraswamy who used to be with me in those days, said, ‘Swamiji! this is your birthday. Please compose two verses and I too will compose two.’ It was then that I composed these two verses which I find in the notebook here. They run as follows:

1. You who intend to celebrate the birthday, first ascertain as to whence you were born. The day that we attain a place in that everlasting life which is beyond the reach of births and deaths is our real birthday.
2. Even on these birthdays that occur once a year, we ought to lament that we have got this body and fallen into this world. Instead we celebrate the event with a feast. To rejoice over it is like decorating a corpse. Wisdom consists in realising the Self and in getting absorbed therein.

“This is the purport of those verses. It appears that it is a custom amongst a certain section of people in Malabar to weep when a child is born in the house and celebrate a death with pomp. Really one should lament having left one’s real state, and taken birth again in this world, and not celebrate it as a festive occasion.” I asked, “But what did Iswaraswamy write?” “Oh! He! He wrote, praising me as an *Avatar* (incarnation of God) and all that. That was a pastime with him in those days. He used to compose one verse and in return I used to compose one, and so on. We wrote many verses, but nobody took the trouble to preserve them. Most of the time we two were alone in those days; there were no facilities for food etc. Who would stay? Nowadays as all facilities are provided, many people gather around me and sit here. But what was there in those days? If any visitors came, they used to stay for a little while, and then go away. That was all.”

On my request to give me a Telugu translation of those birthday verses, he wrote one and gave it to me.

25th February, 1947

(98) SELF (ATMAN)

This morning a Gujarati lady arrived from Bombay with her husband and children. She was middle-aged, and from her bearing she appeared to be a cultured lady. The husband wore *khaddar*, and appeared to be a congressman. They seemed to be respectable people by the way they conducted themselves. They all gathered in the Hall by about 10 a.m., after finishing their bath, etc. From their attitude it could be seen that they

intended to ask some questions. Within fifteen minutes or so they began asking as follows:

Lady: Bhagavan! How can one attain the Self?

Bhagavan: Why should you attain the Self?

Lady: For *shanti* (peace).

Bhagavan: So! Is that it? Then there is what is called peace, is there?

Lady: Yes! there is.

Bhagavan: All right! And you know that you should attain it. How do you know? To know that, you must have experienced it at some time or other. It is only when one knows that sugarcane is sweet, that one wishes to have some. Similarly, you must have experienced peace. You experience it now and then. Otherwise, why this longing for peace? In fact we find every human being is longing similarly for peace; peace of some kind. It is therefore obvious that peace is the real thing, the reality; call that ‘*shanti*’, ‘soul’, or ‘*Paramatma*’ or ‘Self’ — whatever you like. We all want it, don’t we?

Lady: Yes! But how to attain it?

Bhagavan: What you have got is *shanti* itself. What can I say if some one asks for something which he has already got? If it is anything to be brought from somewhere, effort is required. The mind with all its activities has come between you and your Self. What you have to do now is to get rid of that.

Lady: Is living in seclusion necessary for *sadhana*, or is it enough if we merely discard all worldly pleasures?

Bhagavan merely answered the second part of the question by saying, “renunciation means internal renunciation and not external,” and kept silent.

The dinner gong sounded from the dining hall.

What can Bhagavan reply to the earlier part of the last question of this lady who has a large family? She is also educated and cultured. Bhagavan used to speak similarly to householders;

and there is a ring of appropriateness about it. After all, is internal or mental renunciation so easy as all that? That is why Bhagavan merely replied that renunciation means internal renunciation and not external. Perhaps the next question would have been, “what is meant by ‘internal renunciation?’” and there would have been a reply if the dinner gong had not intervened. I returned to my abode where I live in seclusion. You see God has allotted to each individual what is apt and appropriate.

Did Bhagavan ever ask me, “Why are you living alone?” Or did he mention it to anybody else? Never. If you ask why, it is because this is appropriate to the conditions of my life.

26th February, 1947

(99) GURU SWARUPAM (THE GURU’S FORM)

This afternoon a Tamil youth approached Bhagavan, and asked, “Swamiji! Yesterday morning you told the Gujarati lady that renunciation means internal renunciation. How are we to attain it? What is internal renunciation?”

Bhagavan: Internal renunciation means that all *vasanas* should be subdued. If you ask me, ‘How to attain that?’ my reply is, ‘it is attainable by *sadhana*.’

Question: *Sadhana* requires a Guru, doesn’t it?

Bhagavan: Yes! A Guru is required.

Question: How is one to decide upon a proper Guru?
What is the *swarupa* of a Guru?

Bhagavan: He is the proper Guru to whom your mind is attuned. If you ask, how to decide who is the Guru and what

is his *swarupa*, he should be endowed with tranquillity, patience, forgiveness and other virtues capable of attracting others, even by a mere look, like the magnetic stone, and with a feeling of equality towards all — he that has these virtues is the true Guru. If one wants to know the true Guru *swarupa*, one must know his own *swarupa* first. How can one know the true Guru *swarupa*, if one does not know one's own *swarupa* first? If you want to perceive the true Guru *swarupa*, you must first learn to look upon the whole universe as Guru *rupam*. One must have the *Gurubhavam* towards all living beings. It is the same with God. You must look upon all objects as God's *rupa*. How can he who does not know his own Self perceive Ishwara *rupa* or Guru *rupa*? How can he determine them? Therefore, first of all know your own real *swarupam*.

Question: Isn't a Guru necessary to know even that?

Bhagavan: That is true. The world contains many great men. Look upon him as your Guru with whom your mind gets attuned. The one in whom you have faith is your Guru.

The youth was not satisfied. He started with a list of great men now living, and said, "He has that defect; he has this defect. How can they be looked upon as Gurus?"

Bhagavan tolerates any amount of decrying of himself, but cannot tolerate even a little fault-finding of others. He said with some impatience, "Oho! you have been asked to know your own self, but instead you have started finding fault with others. It is enough if you correct your own faults. Those people can take care of their faults. It looks as if they cannot attain salvation unless they obtain your certificate first. That is a great pity! They are all waiting for your certificate. You are a great man. Have they any salvation unless you approve of them? Here you blame them, elsewhere you will blame us. You know everything, whereas we know nothing, and we have to be submissive towards you. Yes! we shall do

so. You go and please proclaim, 'I went to Ramanasramam; I asked the Maharshi some questions; he was unable to reply properly, so he does not know anything'."

The youth was about to speak again in the same strain, but another devotee prevented him from doing so. Bhagavan observed it, and said, "Why do you stop him? Let all keep silent, and let him go on speaking as long as he pleases. He is a wise man. We must therefore lie low. I have been observing him ever since his arrival. He was originally sitting in a corner with all his questions carefully assorted and kept ready bundled up, as it were. He has since been moving and coming nearer day by day till at last he has come close enough and has started asking questions. After hearing the lady questioning me yesterday, he decided to show off his knowledge and so has opened his bundle. All that is in it must come out, mustn't it? He is going to search the whole world and decide the Guru *swarupa* for himself. It seems he has not so far found anybody with the requisite qualifications for being his Guru. Dattatreya is the universal Guru, isn't he? And he has said that the whole world was his Guru. If you look at evil you feel you should not do it. So he said evil also was his Guru. If you see good, you would wish to do it; so he said that good also was his Guru; both good and evil, he said, were his Gurus. It seems that he asked a hunter which way he should go, but the latter ignored his question, as he was intent upon his aim to shoot a bird above. Dattatreya saluted him, saying, 'You are my Guru! Though killing the bird is bad, keeping your aim so steadfast in shooting the arrow as to ignore my query is good, thereby teaching me that I should keep my mind steadfast and fixed on Ishwara. You are therefore my Guru.' In the same way he looked upon everything as his Guru, till in the end he said that his physical body itself was a Guru, as its consciousness does not exist during sleep and the body that does not exist

should therefore not be confused with the soul — *dehatnabhavana* (the feeling that the body is the soul). Therefore that too was a Guru for him. While he looked upon the whole world as his Guru, the whole world worshipped him as its Guru. It is the same with Ishwara. He who looks upon the whole universe as Ishwara, is himself worshipped by the universe as Ishwara — *yadbhavam tadbhavathi* (“as you conceive you become”) What we are, so is the world. There is a big garden. When a cuckoo comes to the garden it will search the mango tree for fruit while the crow will only search the neem tree. The bee searches for flowers to gather honey, while the flies search for the faeces. He who searches for the *salagrama* (small holy stone) will pick it up, pushing aside all the other stones. That *salagrama* is in the midst of a heap of ordinary stones. The good is recognised because evil also coexists. Light shines because darkness exists. Ishwara is there, only if illusion exists. He who seeks the essence, is satisfied if he finds one good thing among a hundred. He rejects the ninety-nine and accepts the one that is good, feeling satisfied that with that one thing he could conquer the world. His eye will always be on that single good thing.” Bhagavan said all this in a resounding voice and then remained silent.

The whole hall was steeped in a dignified silence. The clock struck four. As though it were the original peacock that had come to salute the lotus feet of the Arunachala Ramana that destroyed the demon Surapadma, and to offer praises to him, the Ashram peacock entered the hall from the northern side and announced its arrival by giving out a resounding cry. Bhagavan responded to the cry by saying, “*Aav, Aav*” (come, come) and turned his look that side.

12th March, 1947

(100) NO WASTE

Recently Bhagavan wrote the birthday verses and “Ekatma Panchakam”, didn’t he? He was writing them on bits of rough paper that absorbed ink and as I felt pained that the divine letters that looked like a string of pearls should have been written on bits of rough paper, I said to him, “It would be better if they are written in a notebook.” “This is all right,” he replied, “if I write them in a notebook somebody will recognise my writing and take it away. There is no such fear now. The Swami is the common property of all.” And he declined to accept my suggestion.

As some alterations were made this morning in the birthday verses, I wanted a small piece of white paper to note them down and paste them in my notebook but on searching for it in the hall, there was none. I had no patience to go home to fetch the paper and so, without any hesitation or fear, I told Bhagavan that I would ask for some from the office. When I went there, they showed me some nice paper. I took one sheet for myself and also said that it would be nice for Bhagavan to write on, if only some sheets of paper are supplied to him. “Then take them,” they said, and gave me four sheets. I took them to Bhagavan and suggested that he should use them for his writings, so that they could afterwards be pasted in a book. I asked if the paper should be put on the shelf. He said, “Where is it from? Did you get it from the office?” I said, “Yes.” Then he said, “Why do I need it? If you want, you can keep it for yourself. I shall tear bits of paper from the newspapers, keep them carefully and write on them. Why do I need such good paper?” As I could not answer, I put it on the shelf.

It was about 9 a.m. After the post was received and disposed of, Bhagavan began reading the newspaper. He saw there a blank portion of about four inches. He began folding it and tearing it off. He was smiling at me, but I could not understand why. After tearing it off he folded it nicely and, putting it on the shelf said, "Look, I shall use this paper for my writings. How else could I get any paper? Where can I go to get any? Isn't this good enough for my writings?" I replied, "So this is to teach us a lesson. Bhagavan is always teaching us lessons, but we are not learning them." Bhagavan smiled and kept quiet.

Sometimes people here who receive books by post bring the books into the hall together with the papers wrapped around them. Bhagavan nicely folds the wrapping and says to the attendants, "Look! Keep this carefully. We shall cover some other book with it. How can we get such paper if we need it? What is thus acquired is a net gain." Daily the inward letters are brought from the office for Bhagavan's perusal. Amongst them, officials like you fold the paper and write on one side, leaving the rest unused. Bhagavan tears off such bits of unwritten paper and keeps them. The same is the case with pins. After reading the papers, the pins are taken out and handed over to the attendants, saying, "These will be useful when we want them. They will otherwise be merely thrown away. We shall use them. How should we get new ones? They have to be bought. Where is the money?"

While living on the hill, Bhagavan personally used to prepare ladles, spoons, cups and the like from out of coconut shells. Till recently he was making cups and spoons of coconut shells and polish them like ivory and tell the attendants, "Look, keep these carefully. They will be useful on occasions. How could we get silver and gold articles? These are our silver cups and golden spoons. The hands won't get burnt.

They won't be contaminated like metalware. It will be pleasant to use them." Not only that, when he takes any refreshments or Malayalam *kanji* (gruel) Bhagavan uses only those articles.

Whenever Batavia or Kamala oranges and the like are received, the skins are not allowed to be thrown away, and chutneys and pickles are made out of them. They are also used in soup or put to other such uses. Besides this, while taking food, not a morsel is thrown away or discarded. He thus shows us, by his own example, that not a single useful article should be wasted.

If someone brings roses and presents them, Bhagavan presses them against his eyes, puts them on the clock, eats the petals when they get dry and fall off and gives some of them to those near him. Once when someone brought a rose garland, it was used to decorate the idol in the Mother's temple and afterwards thrown out by the priests into a waste basket along with other flowers. Bhagavan saw that when he went out and, getting angry with them, collected all the petals and had them mixed with *payasam* (pudding), which thus got a delicious flavour and excellent taste. On his way to the hill, if he chances to see any useful leaves, he will pluck them along with his attendants, give instructions about cooking them and thus arrange for a delicious dish. He likes preparations which do not cost anything rather than those that are costly. All this may appear to be quite commonplace, but if we think it over carefully, we will find it a good lesson for us. It means, he teaches us that we could live comfortably on small means.

28th March, 1947

(101) DELUSION AND PEACE OF MIND

Yesterday a youth arrived from Andhra Pradesh. From his looks he appeared to be simple-minded. He approached Bhagavan this morning and asked, "Swamiji! I came here ten months ago for your *darshan*. I got a desire to have your *darshan* again now, and so immediately set out and came here. I could not delay even for a moment. Can I do so in future also, whenever I have such a desire?"

Bhagavan replied, "Whatever happens, happens. Everything happens according to what we deserve. Why worry in advance about it?"

He again asked, "Can I come whenever I have such a desire at any time in the future? Or, should I suppress the desire?"

"Things happen of their own accord, if you stop thinking ahead to the future," replied Bhagavan.

Question: "I am not able to suppress this desire even for a moment. Is it a self-deception?"

Bhagavan looked at me with a smile, and said, "It seems he came here some time ago, and again had a desire to come here now, and so he came immediately. He is asking me whether he may do so whenever he has such a desire in future."

The youth intervened and said, "Whenever I get the desire to see Bhagavan, I am not able to control it even for a moment. I am only asking whether it is mere mental delusion."

I said, "How can a desire to have *darshan* of a great person be mere mental delusion? While there are so many delusions of the mind to be controlled and suppressed, does

this desire alone appear to you to be a mental delusion?” There was no further question.

There were some Andhra visitors in the hall who had come there on pilgrimage. One of them got up and asked, “Swamiji! How does the soul attain peace?” Bhagavan replied, laughing, “What! What is peace for the soul?” “No, no! I mean for the mind.” “Oh! for the mind! The mind attains peace if the *vasanas* are suppressed. For that, one must enquire and realise who one is. How can one get peace by merely saying, ‘I want peace, I want peace!’ without first enquiring what is peace? First make efforts to recognise and realise what already exists.”

There was a Pandit among them. He asked, “Life itself becomes extremely hard in some places. How is one to perform *sadhana* in such places?”

Bhagavan replied, “The place is within you; you are not in the place. When you are in all places, where is the question of difficulties in some places, and not in others? All are within yourself. How can they cause you difficulties?” “But we get no peace of mind at all in some places,” he protested and Bhagavan replied, “That which always exists is peace. That is your natural state. You are not able to recognise your natural state. You get deluded by aberrations which are unreal and feel sorry that there is no peace. If you realise your self, all places will become equally suitable for *sadhana*.”

3rd April, 1947

(102) MOTHER ALAGAMMA

The other day there was a talk in Sri Bhagavan's presence about old songs. Bhagavan said, "Mother used to sing 'Dakshinamurthy Stotra' and other Vedantic songs. They used to be full of meaning. Nobody cares about them nowadays but it would be very good if they were edited and published."

On hearing that, I remembered about the old philosophic songs in Telugu also and felt that it would be beneficial spiritually to our ladies if those songs also could be edited and published, and wrote an article about it. In it I mentioned the "Appalam Song"* which assumed much prominence in Bhagavan's teachings to Mother Alagamma, and which is considered to be one of the best of songs. When I told Bhagavan that I wanted to send the article to the Telugu magazine *Griha Lakshmi*, he asked me to read it out to him. On hearing it, Bhagavan said, "There is a big story about this song," and at my request he was pleased to narrate it.

"In the early days when Mother came to stay with me in Virupaksha Cave, there was no cooking. If Echamma or anybody else brought her any food she used to eat it, clean the vessels and then go to bed. That was all. One day she thought I had nothing special to eat and as I was fond of the twin *appalams*, she thought it would be a good idea to make some for me. Being well experienced, she could not refrain from making them. Without my knowledge she asked the Mudaliar old lady, Echamma and some others to get everything ready and one evening she set out, saying that

**Appalam* in Tamil, *Poppadam* in Malayalam, *Appadam* in Telugu, is a very thin, round cake made of black gram flour fried crisp.

she was going to the village. I wanted to see where she was really going, and so when she left, I waited silently under the tree outside. She thought I did not know anything. She went to several houses, collected all the required things in a big vessel and returned. I closed my eyes and pretended complete ignorance. She put them away carefully in the cave till all the visitors left. After nightfall, I had my usual meal and lay down pretending to sleep. Leisurely, she took out the wooden roller, wooden seat, loose flour and the balls of paste and commenced making *appalams*. There were about two to three hundred to be made. She could not prepare them all single-handed. I knew the job. So she quietly began telling me, 'My boy, please help me with it.' I got the opportunity I was waiting for. If I were lenient in this, she would start something else. I wanted to put a timely stop to it. I said, 'You have renounced everything and have come here, haven't you? Why all this? You should rest content with whatever is available. I won't help you. I won't eat them if you prepare them. Make them all for yourself, and eat them yourself.' She was silent for a while and again started saying, 'What, my dear son, please help me a little.' I was adamant. She continued to call me again and again. Feeling it was no use arguing any more, I said, 'All right. You make these *appalams*; I will make another kind', and I started singing this 'Appalam Song'. She used to sing a rice song, soup song and other such songs, all with Vedantic meanings. None appears to have written an *appalam* song. So I felt I should compose one. She was very fond of songs. So she felt that she could learn another song. By the time the preparation of the *appalams* was over, my song also was finished. 'I will eat this *appalam* (the song about the *appalams*), and you eat those that you have made,' I told her. That happened sometime in 1914 or 1915."

“What a big story! I wrote it in brief in this essay. This won’t do,” I said. “Why all this in that essay?” asked Bhagavan. I said I would write all this in my “Letters” (to my brother) and Bhagavan agreed to it. He was then reminded of some other incident, and said, “Some time after the ‘*Appalam Song*’ was composed, we all set out one day on *giri pradakshina*. Someone said, ‘Swamiji! Please tell us the meaning of the “Appalam Song”’. I started explaining thus: ‘Take the words ‘*thanugani pancha kosa kshetramunnada* (in the body with the five elements)’ — there are many authorities about the ‘*pancha kosa kshetra*’ in the *Bhagavad Gita* and other Vedantic texts. I quoted them all. Similarly for every word there are many authorities. I gave them all, explaining their meanings and significance. We finished our round of the hill, returned to the Virupaksha Cave and sat down. I was still explaining. All the essence of the Vedanta is incorporated in that one song. If properly commented upon, it would make a big volume by itself.”

I said, “It would have been good if somebody had recorded all that when Bhagavan explained. Who can comment upon the song as Bhagavan does! Why not somebody record it even now?”

“That is all very well!” he said laughing. After hearing all the commentary, I said, “I am not satisfied with this article and so I will not send it to *Griha Lakshmi*.” Bhagavan said, “Just as you please,” and resumed his talk, “Though I was remonstrating with my mother, she slowly started cooking, first a vegetable, then soup, and so on. We went to Skandasramam afterwards. She used to wander all over the hill, gather something or other, and say, ‘He likes this vegetable and that fruit’. She took no notice of my remonstrations. Once, while she was coming to the jungle at this side, her saree got in a thorny bush. It was only then

that this path was cleared of all bushes and the like. She said she would not leave me and go anywhere else. If she went anywhere, she was afraid that she might die there. She was particular that she should die in my arms. When Alamelu (Bhagavan's younger sister) built a new house in their village near Manamadurai, she begged mother just to go over there and see the house. She said it was enough if she (mother) just set her foot in it. But she never went. She declined because she was afraid that in case she fell ill there, there might not be trains running properly at that time to bring her back here and in that case, she might not die in her son's arms. She used to say, 'Even if you were to throw away my dead body in these thorny bushes I do not mind but I must end this life in your arms.'" As he was saying that, his voice began to falter through emotion. My eyes got moist. I said, "Renunciation should be as firm as that with everybody." "Yes, yes!" he said and was silent. Because she said, "Even if you were to throw away my body in these thorny bushes," we now see that the place of her burial is adorned by a temple fit to be worshipped by kings and emperors.

4th April, 1947

(103) HUMAN EFFORT

A devotee who was a frequent visitor to the Ashram arrived two or three days ago. Ever since his arrival he has been looking all round the hall frequently. I was expecting him to ask Bhagavan some questions. This afternoon he sat near Bhagavan and slowly commenced asking questions: "Swamiji! Everyone in this hall is seated with his eyes closed.

Do all of them get results?” “Certainly! Each person will get results according to his thoughts,” Bhagavan replied humorously.

Question: *Vasishtam* also says the same thing. In some places it is stated that human effort is the source of all strength. In others it is said that it is all divine grace. It is not clear which of them is correct.

Bhagavan: Yes, they say that there is no God other than the karmas of the previous birth, that the karma done in the present birth in accordance with *sastras* is known as *purushakara*, (human effort), that the previous and present karmas meet for a head-on fight like rams, that the one that is weaker gets eliminated. That is why they say one should strengthen *purushakara*. If it is asked what is the origin of karma, they say, such a question should not be raised as it is like the eternal question, which is earlier, the seed or the tree? Such a question is for mere argument and not for deciding finally what is what. That is why I say, first find out who you are. If one asks ‘Who am I? How did I get this *dosha* (fault) of life?’ then there will be Self-realisation. *Dosha* will get eliminated and *shanti* will be obtained. Why even obtained? It (the Self) remains as it IS.”

In *Vasishtam*, in the second canto of *Mumukshu Vyavahara*, there are *slokas* containing this *bhava* (import):

कोऽहं कथमयं दोषः संसाराख्य उपागतेः ।

न्यायेनेति परामर्शो विचार इति कथ्यते ॥

विचारात् ज्ञायते तत्त्वं तत्त्वाद्विश्रान्तिरात्मनि ।

अतो मनसि शान्तत्वं सर्वदुःखपरिक्षयः ॥

‘Who am I? How did this faulty *samsara* come into being?’ Such investigation is known as the ‘Path of Enquiry’ (*Vichara*). By *Vichara*, Reality is understood, and such

understanding brings repose in the Self; then follow tranquillity of mind and cessation of all sorrow.

5th April, 1947

(104) HEADSHIP OF A MUTT*

The same devotee who questioned Bhagavan yesterday about human effort in the individual's action, today told him about his ill health, treatment by doctors and services rendered to him by his servants and said, "Swamiji! We are unable to keep this body of ours in good condition and so entrust it to the care of doctors and servants. When the body itself is not under our control, what is the use of people talking of reforming the world?"

Do you know that for the last five or six months Bhagavan is not allowing anybody to touch his legs or massage them with oil, and that he himself does it whenever necessary? Hence he did not reply to the devotee's question immediately, but in the evening, when the devotees all gathered, he began massaging his legs with oil, and looking at the questioner with a smile, said, "We are our own doctors and our own servants." Again the questioner said, "What are we to do if we do not have strength like Bhagavan's to attend to our own work?" Bhagavan's reply was, "If we have the strength to eat, why should we not have the strength to do this?" The questioner could not say anything and so kept silent with bent head. Just then the post arrived. After looking through the letters, Bhagavan began narrating as follows:

* A Mutt is an independent monastery.

“Once a certain *sannyasi* was anxious to be the head of a mutt. He had to have disciples, you see. He tried his level best to secure some. Any one who came, soon found out the limited knowledge of the person and so went away. No one stayed on. What could he do? One day he had to go to a city. There he had to keep up his position, but he had no disciple. ‘No one must know this’, he thought. His bundle of clothes was on his head. So, he thought he would place the bundle in some house unobserved and then pretend to go there afterwards. He wandered throughout the place. Whenever he tried to step into a house, he found a number of people in front of it. Poor chap! What could he do? It was almost evening. He was tired. At last, he found a house with no one in front. The door was open. Greatly relieved, he placed the bundle in one corner of the house and then sat in the verandah. After a while the lady of the house came out and enquired of him who he was. ‘Me! I am the head of a mutt in such and such a place. I came to this city on some work. I heard that you were good householders. I therefore sent my belongings through my disciple to put them in your house, thinking that we could put up with you for the night and go away next morning. Has he done so?’ ‘No one has come, sir,’ she said. ‘No, please check. I asked him to put the bundle here, go to the bazar and get some things. Kindly see if he has put it in any corner,’ he said. When the lady searched the house, she saw the bundle in one corner. Thereupon her husband and she welcomed him and gave him food and a room to sleep in. Rather late in the night, they asked, ‘How is it, sir, your disciple has not come yet?’ He said, ‘Perhaps that useless fellow has eaten something in the bazar and is wandering about. You please go to bed. If he comes, I will open the door for him.’

“That couple had, by then, understood the *sannyasi*’s true position. They thought they would see further fun and

so went into the house to lie down. Then the person started his pretensions. He opened the door and closed it, making a loud noise so as to be heard by the members of the household. He then said loudly, 'Why! What have you been doing so long? Take care, if you do it again, I shall beat you black and blue. Be careful henceforth.' Changing his tone thereafter, he said in a plaintive voice, 'Swami, Swami please excuse me. I shall not do it again.' Assuming the original tone, he said, 'All right. Come here, massage my legs, here; no, there; please hit lightly with your fists. Yes, a little more.' So saying, he massaged his own legs and then said, 'Enough; it is rather late, go to bed.' So saying he went to sleep. There was a hole in the wall of the room where the couple were staying and through it they saw the whole farce. In the early morning the *sannyasi* again began repeating the evening's performance, saying, 'You lazy fellow! The cocks have begun to crow. Go to so and so's house and come back after doing such and such work.' So saying, he opened the door, pretended to send him away and went back to bed. The couple saw this also. In the morning he bundled up his belongings, put the bundle in a corner, and went to a tank nearby for bathing, etc. The couple took the bundle and hid it somewhere. The *sannyasi* returned and searched the whole room but the bundle was not found anywhere. So he asked the lady of the house, 'Where is my bundle?' The couple then replied, 'Sir, your disciple came here and took away the bundle saying you wanted him to bring it to you. It is the same person who massaged your legs last night. He must be round the corner. Please see, Swami.' What could he do then? He kept his mouth shut and started going home."

6th April, 1947

(105) REGULATING SLEEP, DIET AND MOVEMENTS

Yesterday, a devotee asked Bhagavan, “Swamiji! One has to meditate in order to enquire about his self. When I sit for meditation, I go to sleep. What can I do? Is there any way out?” Bhagavan replied, “First learn to be awake when you are in the wakeful state. Then we can think of the sleeping state. We dream of many things even when we are awake. We must learn to guard ourselves against them in our waking state. All that we see about us is a dream. We should wake up from this dream world.”

The questioner said, “*Sadhana* is required to acquire that carefulness. Whenever I decide upon some method and try to do *sadhana*, I get sleepy. Will Bhagavan kindly tell me how to overcome this sleepiness?”

Bhagavan replied: “Of the *avarana-vikshepas* (obstructions and disturbances), the first *avarana* is sleep. We must try as far as possible not to succumb to it. We must enquire why we get sleep and regulate our food, movements, etc. and see that we do not feel sleepy, but it is no use trying to stop it when once we are sleepy. Don’t we get sleep if we eat heartily? Then the head begins to nod as we sit for meditation. It seems some tie their hair to a nail in the wall to keep them awake. Except that they wake up when their head nods, what use is it for *dhyana*? My boyhood experience of sleep is well known. While the school lessons were being taught, lest I should fall asleep, I used to tie a thread to the nail on the wall, and tie my hair to it. When the head nods, the thread is pulled tight and that used to wake me up. Otherwise, the teacher used to twist my ears and wake me up.” So saying, Bhagavan began to laugh.

“Is it possible Bhagavan is concocting all these stories and telling us?” asked Muruganar.

“No, no! It is true! I used to do all that because I was afraid the teacher would punish me for not listening to his lessons. That was the state in those days. In the early days after my coming here, when I closed my eyes, deeply absorbed in meditation I hardly knew whether it was day or night. If at any time I opened my eyes I used to wonder whether it was night or day. I had no food and no sleep. When there is movement of the body, you need food. If you have food, you need sleep. If there is no movement, you do not need sleep. Very little food is enough to sustain life. That used to be my experience. Somebody or other used to offer me a tumblerful of some liquid diet whenever I opened my eyes. That was all. But one thing: except when one is in absorbed motionless concentration of mind, it is not possible to give up sleep or food altogether. When the body and mind are engaged in the ordinary pursuits of life, the body reels if you give up food and sleep. Therefore it must be said that limitation of food and movement is very necessary for the elevation of the soul. Great people restrict their sleep to the barest minimum so that they may not waste their time but use it for the performance of selfless good deeds. Some say that it is healthy to go to bed at 10 p.m. and wake up at 2 a.m. That means that four hours’ sleep is enough. Some say that four hours’ sleep is not enough, but that it should be six hours. It amounts to this, that sleep and food should not be taken in excess. If you want to cut off either of them completely, your mind will always be directed towards it. Therefore the *sadhaka* should do everything in moderation,” said Bhagavan.

This is what is stated in the *Bhagavad Gita*:

नात्यश्नतस्तु योगोऽस्ति न चैकान्तमनश्नतः ।
न चातिस्वप्नशीलस्य जाग्रतो नैव चार्जुन ॥ (VI:16)

युक्तहारविहारस्य युक्तचेष्टस्य कर्मसु ।
युक्तस्वप्नावबोधस्य योगो भवति दुःखहा ॥ (VI:17)

Yoga is not for him who eats too much, nor who abstains to excess, nor who is too much addicted to sleep nor even to wakefulness. Yoga kills out all pain for him who is regulated in eating and amusement, regulated in performing actions, and regulated in sleeping and waking.

7th April, 1947

(106) DEVOTION WITHOUT IRREGULARITY

Yesterday I wrote to you what Bhagavan told us about moderation in sleep, diet and movements. He teaches this in various ways by his own practical example. He does not take milk and is nowadays eating only one iddli for breakfast daily saying that a man who sits without doing any physical work does not require two. So also with his midday meal. Mixed with curry etc., each meal amounts only to about a handful. Even that he does not eat each dish separately as we do for taste. He makes a ball of the vegetable, chutney, soup, etc. and then mixes it with rice and eats. In the course of the conversation one day, he said, "It would be more tasty to eat the rice with only one dish instead of so many. Why so many dishes? We used to eat only a single dish in the olden days. I have not given up that practice even now. While I was on the hill many people used to bring rice, fruit and sweets. Whatever they brought, I used to eat only as much

as could be lifted with three fingers. I used to eat some of whatever they brought so that the whole day's intake of the food eaten did not amount to a handful. That method of eating used to give me more than happiness. Nowadays they spread a leaf and serve several things on it. As I cannot waste anything, I eat them and feel heavy thereafter."

So also as regards sleep. On special festival occasions such as the birthday celebrations (Jayanthi) and Maha Puja, the students do not commence the Vedic recitations at the *Brahma Muhurtham* time (a couple of hours before sun rise), being tired with work on the previous night, but Bhagavan gets up as usual and keeps himself ready. If he is ever in ill health and his personal attendants request him to sleep a little longer, he replies, "What is the point in sleeping at the time of the *Brahma Muhurtham*? If you want, you may sleep."

In *Dhanurmasam* (December-January), *puja* starts in Arunachaleswara temple early in the morning. Bhagavan wakes up here by that time. People who do the Tamil *parayana* may take some time to get up and come here, but he is always ready to receive them. Of course his movements also are limited. It is said that all these restrictions are only for *sadhaks* and not for *Jnanis*. But *Jnanis* also observe all this discipline for the welfare of the world. They never slip down from the pinnacle of complete dispassion. Devotion to principle, determination, etc., which do not transgress Nature's laws are normal for them. Their actions are all lessons for us.

8th April, 1947

(107) BLESSINGS

Recently, elder brother's children, Sastri and Murthi, wrote a letter to Bhagavan as follows: "To *Chiranjeevi* Bhagavan *Thathayya* (grandfather), *Namaskarams*. Do you know of any *mantram* that gets us whatever we want? If so, please send it to us in writing immediately. Your grandchildren, Sastri and Murthi."

When I said, "What do they mean by writing '*Chiranjeevi Thathayya*?' Silly" (*Chiranjeevi* means 'long life', and is used by elders in addressing younger people). Sundaresa Iyer remarked: "They have written correctly. Who else can be *Chiranjeevi* other than Bhagavan? They bow to the grandfather who lives eternally. They wanted him to bless them so as to get whatever they want. What is wrong?" Bhagavan said with a smile, "In my younger days I wrote a similar letter to my uncle's son Ramaswamy. I stayed with them for some time in Dindigul where I was studying. I came to Tiruchuli during a vacation. I wanted to write a letter to Ramaswamy. I did not know how to address him. In the letters written to him by my father I noticed him writing '*aseervadams* (blessings) to Ramaswamy'. So I also began to write to him '*aseervadams* to brother-in-law'. He was older than me and I did not know that I should have written '*namaskarams*'. I thought it would be the same for all people. I realised this mistake when he laughed at me for this."

One devotee said, "I believe Bhagavan was very familiar with that Ramaswamy." Bhagavan replied, "Yes, in the place where my picture is now placed in the Sundara Mandiram in Tiruchuli, there used to be a tape cot. My

father used to sleep on it. No one else but Ramaswamy and myself could take the liberty of getting on it. When father was not in town, we two used to sleep on it together. No one had any familiarity with father except Ramaswamy because he had no mother, and myself because I was by nature very free in such matters. Father was a towering personality.”

That devotee said, “Did that Ramaswamy ever come here?” Bhagavan said, “He came here once long back. To move out of his place was a great problem for him. People who had been here used to tell him about me, it seems. He had been putting off his visit to this place from time to time when this Viswanath ran away from home saying he did not want to marry and came here. He is the son of Ramaswamy. He thought he could take Viswanath back. After all, it being the case of his own son, he could not delay coming here. Viswanath himself got a letter saying that he was coming. Without telling me that news, he (Viswanath) gave me that letter saying, ‘the Dindigul mountain has started moving’.

“On looking into the letter I understood what he meant. Ramaswamy came here the very next day. Recently, while writing letters to me, he himself has begun writing, ‘*namaskarams* to Swami’. He writes, ‘Swami should bless me’. It means he received my blessings even when I was young. Whoever expected at that time, that it would turn out like this? I wrote something. That was all.”

9th April, 1947

(108) A BOUQUET OF PRECEPTS

Yesterday morning, a group of Andhras arrived, and started questioning Bhagavan within ten minutes of their arrival.

Question: “Bhagavan teaches us always to know ourselves. He should kindly teach us how to know ourselves, and bless us.”

Bhagavan’s reply: “The kindness is always there. You should ask for something that is not there, and not for something that is there already. You should believe with all your heart that the kindness is there. That is all.”

Another said: “In the Vedic recitations that are conducted here daily, they say, ‘*thasya sikhaya madhye paramatma vyavasthithaha*’. What is ‘*sikhaya madhye*’ (in the middle of the summit)?”

Bhagavan’s reply: “‘*Sikhaya madhye*’ means, ‘in the middle of the summit of the fire’ and not ‘in the tuft of the hair of the Vedas’. It means that the *Paramatma* resides in the centre of the fire of Knowledge that is generated by churning of the Vedas.”

Question: “In what *asana* is Bhagavan usually seated?”

Bhagavan: “In what *asana*? In the *asana* of the heart. Wherever it is pleasant, there is my *asana*. That is called *sukhasana*, the *asana* of happiness. That *asana* of the heart is peaceful, and gives happiness. There is no need for any other *asana*, for those who are seated in that one.”

Another said: “The *Gita* says, ‘*sarva dharman parithyajya mamekam saranam vraja*’ (discard all *dharman* and seek refuge in Me). What are the *dharman* that are conveyed by the expression ‘*sarva dharman*’?”

Bhagavan: “‘*Sarva dharman*’ means ‘all the *dharmas* of life’. ‘*Parithyajya*’ means ‘having discarded those *dharmas*’. ‘*Mamekam*’ means ‘Me, the *Ekaswarupa* (the only one Self)’. ‘*Saranam vraja*’ means ‘take refuge’.”

Question: “The expression ‘*hridaya granthi bhedanam*’ occurs in *Sri Ramana Gita*. What is meant by it?”

Answer: “That is what I say, ‘going away’, ‘exit’, ‘extinction of all *vasanas*’, ‘destruction of the ego’, ‘I’, ‘destruction of *jivathva*’, ‘destruction of the mind’, and so many other names. All mean the same thing — *mano nasanam* (destruction of the mind) is *hridaya granthi bhedanam*. The word *jnanam* also means the same thing — some technical word for the sake of recognising.”

When the conversation started, an attendant switched on the fan, finding it to be stuffy in the hall. Bhagavan got it stopped, remarking ‘why this?’ and turning to those nearby said, “Look here! Many people ask how anyone can continue to engage in performing karma after he has become a *Jnani*. In reply to that question, in the olden days, they used to quote the potter’s wheel as a comparison. As the wheel turns round and round, the pot emerges. Even after the pot is finished and the turning of the wheel is stopped, the wheel does not stop revolving for some time longer. In these days we can cite the example of the electric fan. We switched it off, but it did not stop revolving for some time after. Similarly, even after one becomes a *Jnani*, he does not give up the physical body so long as actions which he is destined to perform with it remain unfinished.”

Suddenly a little baby of about eight months began to prattle “Thatha, Thatha” behind my back. When Bhagavan heard those sweet words, he lifted his head and asked who it was. I said, “It is our little child Mangalam.” Bhagavan is very fond of babies. He said, “Is it she? I thought it is some older

girl. Has she already begun to call out ‘Thatha, Thatha?’” The child continued to say, “Thatha, Thatha.” Bhagavan said to those nearby, “See this wonder! Children first begin to say the word ‘Thatha’ which means ‘*than than*’. ‘*Thanthan*’ — ‘it is its own self’ — is the same with our minds also. The word ‘I’ comes out first, automatically. Only thereafter the words ‘you’, ‘he’, etc. are uttered, just as all other words follow the word ‘*thatha*’ in the case of little children. It is only after the feeling ‘*aham*’ (ego) comes that the other feelings follow.”

It was nearly 9 o’clock and so Krishnaswamy turned on the radio to verify the time. After the clock struck nine the radio ended with the words ‘*namaste* to all’. Bhagavan smiled and said, “The radio announcer says, ‘*namaste* to all’ as if he and they were different. Is he not one of them? It amounts to this, that he is saluting himself also. They do not realise that. That is the strange thing.”

10th April, 1947

(109) ABSOLUTE SURRENDER

This morning, an Andhra youth handed over a letter to Bhagavan in which it was written: “Swamiji! They say that one can obtain everything if one takes refuge in God wholly and solely, and without thought of any other. Does it mean sitting still at one place, and contemplating God entirely at all times, discarding all thoughts, including even about food which is essential for the sustenance of the body? Does it mean that when one gets ill, one should not think of medicine and treatment, but entrust one’s health or sickness exclusively to Providence? From the definition of *sthitha prajna* given in *Gita*,

विहाय कामान् यः सर्वान् पुमांश्चरति निस्पृहः ।

निर्ममो निरहंकारः स शान्तिमधिगच्छति ॥ (II:71)

The man who sheds all longing and moves without concern, free from the sense of 'I' and 'mine', he attains peace.

“It means the discarding of all desires. Therefore should we devote ourselves exclusively to the contemplation of God, and accept food, water, etc. only if they are available by God’s grace, without asking for them? Or does it mean that we should make a little effort? Bhagavan! Please explain the secret of this *saranagathi*.”

Bhagavan saw that letter leisurely and told the people near him: “Look! ‘*Ananya saranagathi*’ means to be without any attachment of thoughts, no doubt, but does it mean to discard thoughts even of food and water, etc., which are essential for the sustenance of the physical body? He asks, ‘should I eat only if I get anything by God’s direction, and without my asking for it? Or should I make a little effort?’ All right! Let us take it that what we have to eat comes of its own accord. But even then, who is to eat? Suppose somebody puts it in our mouth, should we not swallow it, at least? Is that not an effort? He asked, ‘If I become sick, should I take medicine or should I keep quiet leaving my health and sickness in the hands of God?’ ‘*Kshudvyadeh aaharam*’, it is said. There are two meanings to this. One is, since *kshuth*, i.e. hunger, is also like sickness, so for the sickness called hunger, the medicine called food must be given; the other is: like medicine for *vyadhi* (sickness), food for *kshuth* (hunger) must be given. In the book *Sadhana Panchaka* written by Sankara, it is stated, *kshudvyadhischa chikitsyatam pratidinam bhikshoushadham bhudyatam*. It means, for treatment of the disease called hunger, eat food received as alms. But then,

one must at least go out for *bhiksha*. If all people close their eyes and sit still saying if the food comes, we eat, how is the world to get on? Hence one must take things as they come in accordance with one's traditions and must be free from the feeling that one is doing them oneself. The feeling that I am doing it is bondage. It is therefore necessary to consider and find out the method whereby such a feeling can be overcome, instead of doubting as to whether medicine should be administered if one is sick or whether food should be taken if one is hungry; such doubts will continue to come up and will never end. Even such doubts as, 'May I groan if there is pain? May I inhale air after exhaling?' also occur. Call it Ishwara or call it karma — some *Karta* will carry on everything in this world according to the development of the mind of each individual. If the responsibility is thrown on him (the *Karta*), things will go on of their own accord.

“We walk on this ground. While doing so, do we consider at every step whether we should raise one leg after the other or stop at some stage? Isn't the walking done automatically? The same is the case with inhaling and exhaling; no special effort is made to inhale or exhale. The same is the case with this life also. Can we give up anything if we want to or do anything as we please? Quite a number of things are done automatically without our being conscious of it. Complete surrender to God means giving up all thoughts and concentrating the mind on Him. If we can concentrate on Him, other thoughts disappear. If *mano-vak-kaya karmas*, i.e., the actions of the mind, speech and body are merged with God, all the burdens of our life will be on Him. Lord Krishna told Arjuna in the *Gita*:

अनन्याश्चिन्तयन्तो मां ये जनाः पर्युपासते ।

तेषां नित्याभियुक्तानां योगक्षेमं वहाम्यहम् ॥ (IX:22)

To those men who worship Me alone, thinking of no other, to those ever harmonious, I bring full security and attend to their needs.

“Arjuna had to do the fighting. So Krishna said, ‘Place all the burden on Me, do your duty; you are merely an instrument. I will see to everything. Nothing will bother you.’ But then, before one surrenders to God, one should know who it is that surrenders. Unless all thoughts are given up there can’t be surrender. When there are no thoughts at all, what remains is only the Self. So surrender will only be to one’s Self. If surrender is in terms of *bhakti*, the burden should be thrown on God, and if it is in terms of karma, karma should be performed until one knows one’s own Self. The result is the same in either case. Surrender means to enquire and know about one’s own Self and then remain in the Self. What is there apart from the Self?”

That young man said, “What is the path by which it can be known?” Bhagavan replied: “In the *Gita* several paths are indicated. You are asked to do *dhyana*. If you are not able to do it, then *bhakti* or yoga or *nishkama karma*. Many more have been indicated. And one of the paths must be followed. One’s own self is always there. Things happen automatically in accordance with the *samskaras* (the fruits of the actions of previous births).

“The feeling that the doer is ‘I’ is itself bondage. If the feeling is got rid of by *vichara*, these questions do not arise. *Saranagathi* is not the mere act of sitting with closed eyes. If all sit like that, how are they to get on in this world?” While Bhagavan was speaking the bell of the dining hall rang. “There goes the bell; should we not go?” So saying with a smile, Bhagavan got up.

*17th April, 1947***(110) VISIONS IN DREAM**

The day before yesterday at about 8 or 9 in the morning, an elderly man of a middle class family, who knew Ayurveda, came to Bhagavan, prostrated before him and said, "Swami, this is good for phlegm, take it." He wanted to give some medicine. When the attendants tried to prevent him from giving it, Bhagavan stopped them, took the medicine, and told the attendants, "Look, he used to give me some medicine or other now and then from the time I was living on the hill. Let him give it. Perhaps he has had some dream." With evident pleasure, the old man said, "I have not had any dream now, Swami. You used to have excess of phlegm at this time of the year, didn't you? So I have brought it." So saying he bowed and went away.

As soon as he left, a devotee sitting near Bhagavan asked, "What about the dream you referred to?" Bhagavan replied: "Oh that! While living on the hill, one evening I casually asked Palaniswamy if he had a lime fruit. He said, 'No'. 'If so, don't worry', I said. It seems that very night this person dreamt that I had asked him for a lime fruit. Next morning, as I came out he was already there and said, 'Swami, take this lime fruit!' 'Yesterday, I asked him (Palaniswamy) if he had one. How did you know about it?' I asked. In reply, he said, 'You appeared to me in my dream and told me that you wanted a lime fruit. That is why I have brought it now'; and he placed the fruit in my hand. That is how it happened." The devotee asked, "Is it a fact that Bhagavan appeared to him in a dream?" Bhagavan replied with a smile, "I don't know. Who knows? He said so. That is all."

Another devotee asked, "K. K. Nambiar's notebook also happened to be brought here in the same way, isn't it?"

Bhagavan replied, “Yes, that is so. At that time Madhavan was here. I was telling him to take out from the bureau a long notebook with a black cover so that I could write a commentary on *Sri Ramana Gita* in Malayalam and copy it out in that notebook. He said he would get it but forgot about it for four or five days. Meanwhile Nambiar came here and gave me a notebook of the exact size and description I was asking for. When I asked him how it was that he had brought a notebook of the sort I was asking for, he said, ‘Bhagavan appeared to me in a dream and asked me for a notebook, describing the number of pages, the breadth and length. When I went to the shop, I found one of the exact description. I have brought it.’ In the meantime, Madhavan came. I said to him, ‘Look, here is the book. You have given it to me, haven’t you?’ He was surprised and, remembering my instructions, took out my notebook from the bureau which was found to be exactly of the same size. It was just sufficient for *Sri Ramana Gita* with the *slokas* and the commentary. As soon as that work was over, Nambiar came and took it away, saying he would get it printed but at the same time hesitated to hand over the book containing Bhagavan’s handwriting to the press. So, he got another copy made, which he sent to the press and kept the original himself. It must still be with him. Even Rajagopalan did almost the same thing once. As the stock of our ink was finished I told the people here once or twice to replenish it. The next day or the day after he brought a big jar of ink while returning from some place. When I asked him how he came to know that the ink was needed here, he said that Bhagavan appeared to him in a dream and told him that ink was needed. ‘So I brought it,’ he said. That is how things happen from time to time,” said Bhagavan.

That devotee said, “They say that Bhagavan himself told them. Is that a fact?” Bhagavan replied, “What do I

know? They said so. That is all.” The devotee again said, “Even so, isn’t it surprising that what was needed here should be seen by them in a dream?” Bhagavan nodded his head in approval and kept quiet.

18th April, 1947

(111) DIVINE VISIONS

This morning at 8 o’clock, Bhagavan looked at an old man who was coming into the hall and asked me, “Do you know who this is?” I said ‘No’. “He is the husband of my cousin sister who, it is stated in my biography, was suckled by my mother along with me,” said Bhagavan. (His name is Manamadurai Ramaswamy Iyer). “What is her name?” I asked. “Meenakshi,” said Bhagavan. Saying that I had seen that gentleman from time to time but never known the relationship, I asked another devotee sitting nearby whether he knew him. He said, “Why? I know him well. Bhagavan gave *darshan* to that lady at the time of her death.” “Is that so?” I asked Bhagavan with some surprise. Bhagavan replied thus: “Yes. It happened in her case the same way as in the case of Nayana at Tiruvottiyur. It seems I went near and touched her. She got up startled and said, ‘Who is it that has touched me?’ That is all. She woke up immediately after that. It transpired subsequently that this happened in the last moment of her life.”

“Did she tell anyone there about this experience?” I asked. “We enquired about that but she was not at that time in a condition to speak,” said Bhagavan. “That means, you had blessed her with your *darshan* in the same way as in the

case of Nayana. Would the privilege of the drinking of milk from your mother go to waste?" I said. "Yes, that is so. Mother used to give her breast milk to both of us. I was drinking mother's milk till I was five years of age. If my father saw, he used to scold her, saying, 'What is this giving of milk to a grown up child like that?' So I used to wait until he had gone and then drink milk. Mother had plenty of milk," said Bhagavan.

A devotee asked, "Why does Bhagavan call *Ganapati* Sastri 'Nayana' (Nayana means father)?" "There is a reason for it," he replied, "it is my custom to address all people with respect. Moreover, he was older than me. I therefore always used to call him *Ganapati* Sastri Garu. That was very distressing to him and so he begged me times out of number not to do so, saying, 'Am I not your disciple? You should call me by a familiar name. This is very unfair.' I did not pay any heed to his protests. At last one day he insisted on my giving up the formal way of addressing him and adopting a familiar one. All his disciples call him 'Nayana', you see. So I made it an excuse and said I too would call him 'Nayana' like the others. He agreed to it because 'Nayana' means a child and a disciple could be addressed as one's own child. I agreed because 'Nayana' also means 'father' and hence it would not matter so far as I was concerned. I was still addressing him in respectful terms. Whenever I asked him to come here or go there he was still uncomfortable because after all that he had done, I continued to talk to him with the respect due to elders," said Bhagavan.

I said, "You stated that Meenakshi was not in a condition to tell others about the *darshan* she had. That is all right, but Nayana did tell others about the *darshan* he had, didn't he? In Vedantic language, what do they say about similar experiences that two people have at the same time?"

Bhagavan said, with a smile, “They are called ‘*divya darshanas*’ (divine visions).”

20th April, 1947

(112) THE WHITE PEACOCK

On the 12th instant someone brought a white peacock, saying it was sent by the Rani of Baroda and offered it as a gift to the Ashram. On seeing it, Bhagavan said, “Isn’t it enough that ten or twelve coloured peacocks are here? They may come to fight with this one because it is of a different variety. Besides that, it has to be protected against attacks of cats. Why this? It is better to send it back to its own place.” That person took no notice but went away leaving the peacock here. It was thereupon decided that Krishnaswami should look after its welfare and others should help him.

The other day when I went to the Ashram in the afternoon Bhagavan was telling the devotees near him about the peacock. “Look! A merchant manufacturing matchboxes brought a little deer called Valli and went away similarly leaving it here. It used to be roaming about in the Ashram. When Bengalgram dhal and *mura muras* were mixed together and placed in a plate, it used to eat all the dhal without spilling even a grain outside, leaving the *mura muras*. After some time when it began going to the forest with the goat-herds, people who knew that it belonged to the Ashram used to bring it back here. Subsequently, it used to come back of its own accord. So we let it go. One day, when some *panchamas* broke its leg, hoping to kill and eat it, a person who knew that it belonged to the Ashram took pity on it and brought it back,

carrying it all the way. It was bleeding. We nursed it but without success and after some days it breathed its last in my lap. Annamalaiswami and I built a *samadhi* near the steps on the side of the hill yonder.”

Astonished at this, I said, “We see here ourselves what the ancients said that in Bharatakhanda (India) God comes down as an *Avatar* and gives *moksha* to animals and birds also.”

As the peacock had run away somewhere, Krishnaswami caught it and brought it back. Bhagavan, placing his hand on its neck and stroking it up to the heart with the other hand, said “You naughty chap, where did you go? How can we manage to look after you if you go away like this? Please don’t. There will be cruel animals elsewhere. Why not stay on here?” Thus he cajoled it.

For a long time after that it did not go out of the Ashram but learnt to go about the various cottages within the Ashram compound. Seeing that, Bhagavan used to say, “It is now like the Sarvadhikari.” This afternoon at 2-30 when I went there, the radio was playing and the electric fan was revolving. The peacock sat by the side of the radio, with closed eyes as if it was immersed in *dhyana*. Seeing that, one person said, “See how carefully it is listening.” Bhagavan said, “Yes. The peacocks are very fond of music, especially if it is from the flute.”

“Though this peacock is white, it is the other peacocks that are really beautiful,” someone said. Pointing to the peacock, Bhagavan said, “If it is like this, it has a beauty of its own. Those peacocks have many beautiful colours. This is pure white without the mixture of any other colours. That means it is *suddha satva* (pure self) without the mixture of other *gunas* (attributes). See, in Vedantic language, the peacock also can be taken as an example. Even the other peacocks do not have so many colours at birth. They have only one colour. As they grow up, they get many colours. When their tails grow,

they have any number of eyes. See how many colours and how many eyes! Our mind also is like that. At birth, there are no perversities. Subsequently, there will be many activities and ideas, like the colours of the peacock.”

24th April, 1947

(113) WHICH IS THE FOOT AND WHICH IS THE HEAD?

This afternoon at 3 o'clock, a devotee stood near Bhagavan's sofa and said, "Swami, I have only one desire, namely to put my head on Bhagavan's foot and do *namaskar* (obeisance). Bhagavan must grant me this favour." "Oh! is that the desire! But then which is the foot and which is the head?" asked Bhagavan. No reply. After pausing for a while Bhagavan said, "Where the self merges, that is the foot." "Where is that place?" asked that devotee. "Where? It is in one's own self. The feeling 'I' 'I', the ego, is the head. Where that *aham vritti* (ego) dissolves, that is the foot of the Guru."

"It is said that *bhakti* should be like mother, father, Guru and god, but if the individual self gets dissolved, how is it possible to serve them with *bhakti*?" he asked. Bhagavan said, "What is the meaning of the individual self getting dissolved? It means, making that *bhakti* expansive. Everything is from one's own self. Hence, if one is in one's own self, one gets the *shakti* (energy) to broad base them all." That devotee said, "Does dissolving one's self in its own place mean that with *buddhi* (developed mind) one discards the *annamaya* and other *kosas* (sheaths of the body) and after that discards *buddhi* itself?" Bhagavan replied, "Where do you go if you discard *buddhi*?"

The *buddhi* remaining in its own state is the knowing of one's own state. To eliminate or discard the various elements mentioned already, *buddhi* must be used like a punishing rod. The *buddhi* is described as of two parts, unclean and clean. When it is associated with the work of the *antahkarana* it is stated to be unclean. That is known as mind and *ahankara*. When *buddhi* is used as a punishing rod to drive away those things and to give the inspiration of the Self (*aham sphurana*), i.e. 'I', it is known as clean *buddhi*. If that is caught and the rest is discarded, that which is, remains as it is."

Further questioning was: "It is said that that *buddhi* must be made one with *Atma*. How is that?" Bhagavan replied, "How can it be made one with *Atma* when it is not a thing which comes from outside? It is within oneself. The feeling or the shadow of *Atma* is *buddhi*. If that *buddhi*, the static thing, is known, one remains as one's own self. Some call that '*buddhi*', some '*shakti*' and some call it '*aham*'. Whatever the name, it must be caught hold of firmly to drive away all that comes from elsewhere.

15th May, 1947

(114) SUICIDE

This afternoon, a young man from Tiruchirapalli wrote a letter and handed it over to Bhagavan. The gist of that letter is, that countless people in the country are suffering for want of food, that there is any amount of commotion, that we are unable to see their troubles, that Bhagavan must give out some plan to alleviate their suffering and that elders like him should not remain unconcerned like this.

Bhagavan read it and looking at him critically said, “Is that what you want? You say that you are suffering at the sight of their troubles. Does that mean that you yourself are all right unlike them and are happy?” “No, I am also suffering in one way or other,” said that young man. “Ah! that is the trouble. You do not know what is your own happiness, and yet you are worried about others. Is it possible to make all people similar? If all get into the palanquin, who is to carry it? If all are kings, what is the point in saying that any one is a king? Some people will be known as wealthy only if others are poor. A *Jnani* can be recognised only when there are ignorant people. Darkness will be known only when there is light. Happiness will be known only if there is suffering. Food will be tasteful only if there is hunger. Hence, help can be rendered only to the extent possible, but if it is desired to make all people equally happy, that is never possible. A number of leaders of the country are working. Some of them say the work that has been contemplated has not been finished properly and so they will lecture. What for? People become leaders one after another and work goes on. There must be one *shakti* directing them all. If we throw the burden on that *shakti* with the confidence that it can do what is required and be free from worry, things will somehow go on. Some preach against the killing of animals. If people do not listen to them, they say they will fast unto death, ‘We will commit suicide or we will give up life’. If one says he will commit suicide, if others do not give up killing animals, is not suicide itself a killing of a living being? They think suicide is merely leaving the body. Is not the body a part of the self? Atma is always there, at all times and all places. Instead of looking at the Self which is real and permanent, if one looks upon the body, etc. as one’s own Self, it is suicide. What other murder could there be than that? He who is able to see his own Self by knowledge and

wisdom will not be moved by whatever conflicts may come about. He will look upon the sorrows and happiness of the world as mere acting on a stage. In his view the whole world is a stage. On that stage the same man once puts on the dress of a king, another time of a minister, next a servant, washerman, barber, and many other dresses, and acts appropriately on each occasion, but as he is conscious of his real Self and knows that he is not any one of those whose parts he is acting, he does not worry about the various vicissitudes of life he depicts on each occasion. In the same manner, the world is a stage of Ishwara. In that stage you are an actor. You may help to the extent of your ability, but you cannot make all people equal. It has not been possible in the past for anybody to do so and it will not be possible in future either.”

The young man said, “Because of all this, there is no peace in this world. I am unhappy about that.” “Look, you have come again to the point where you began,” Bhagavan replied. “Instead of feeling concerned about there being no peace in the world, it is better to enquire and find out how you will get peace in this world. If you give up that objective, what is the use of worrying yourself about the lack of peace in the world? If one’s mind has peace, the whole world will appear peaceful. Tell me, have you that peace?” asked Bhagavan. That person said, “No.” “Ah! that is the thing. You do not have peace. You do not know how to secure that peace. If instead of trying to gain that peace, you attempt to secure peace for the world, it is like one who has no food, asking for food himself which, if given, he says he will use to feed any number of other people. Something like the lame man who said, ‘If only someone holds me up can’t I beat up the thieves!’”

16th May, 1947

(115) THE SHAKTI THAT IS, IS ONE

Like the young man of yesterday, a North Indian gentleman handed over to Bhagavan a letter full of questions, chief amongst them being why Bhagavan does not try to improve the welfare of the world. After reading it Bhagavan said, looking at those near, “Yesterday also we had the same type of question. It is enough if all these people who preach about working for the welfare of the world, first work for their own welfare. Unable to enquire who they are and know that, they think of reforming the world. They must first find out who it is that is thinking thus. They don’t do that. And they say, they will reform the world. It is just like the story of the lame man.”

That questioner said, “Swami, how can *Jnanis* like you sit quiet without moving? When there is strife and turmoil in the world, should they not help in establishing peace?” Bhagavan replied, “Yes, they should, but how do you know that *Jnanis* are not rendering any help? Their remaining where they are is itself a help to the world. To all outward appearances they seem to be doing nothing. Supposing there is a wealthy man. In his dream he goes about begging, works as a coolly and sweeps the streets. When he wakes up, he realises that he is not that sort of person and remains dignified in the thought that he is a wealthy man. In the same manner, a *Jnani* may do anything according to his *prarabdha* (fate) but he remains unattached and maintains a dignified aloofness. His *shakti* works in many ways but he does not feel happy or unhappy over the success or failure of his efforts. That is because he sees the world as full of Brahman and so nothing appears to him to be happy or

unhappy. How can he have feelings of gratification or sorrow when he does not feel that he is in this body, that he is in this man or that this is the world? Accordingly it is said: ‘*dristim jnanamayeem kritva pasyeth Brahmamayam jagathi*’, when a person gains the outlook of a *Jnani* that very moment everything appears to be full of Brahman. Where then is room for the feeling ‘I am doing?’ They will then realise that everything is going on through the force of some *shakti*. That is all,” said Bhagavan.

Another person said, “*Jnanis* are said to be capable of cursing and giving boons. You are saying that they have nothing to do. How is that?” Bhagavan replied, “Yes. Who said they are not capable? But they do not have the feeling that they are one thing and the *shakti* or Ishwara is another. The force, that is, is only one. They realise that they are moving because of that *shakti* and keep themselves from the feeling that they are the doers. Their presence itself is of use to the world. They do whatever acts they have to in accordance with their *prarabdha*. That is all.”

17th May, 1947

(116) PRARABDHA (FATE)

This morning at 9 o'clock one devotee addressed Bhagavan as follows: “Swami, you said yesterday that a *Jnani* will perform such actions as are ordained according to his *prarabdha*. But it is said that *Jnanis* have no *prarabdha* at all!”

Bhagavan said, in a leisurely way, “How did they get this body if they have no *prarabdha*? How do they perform the various actions? The actions of *Jnanis* are themselves called *prarabdhas*. It

is stated that there is *prarabdha* from Brahma right up to Sadasiva and the *Avatars* of Rama and Krishna and others also.

परित्राणाय साधूनां विनाशाय च दुष्कृताम् ।
धर्मसंस्थापनार्थाय संभवामि युगे युगे ॥

For the protection of the good, for the destruction of evildoers, for the sake of firmly establishing *dharma* (righteousness), I am born from age to age.

Bhagavad Gita, IV: 8

“As stated in this *sloka*, Ishwara assumes a shape when the virtues of good people and the sins of bad people mingle and become *prarabdha* and he has to establish *dharma*. That is called *parechcha prarabdha* (the acts of other people). The body itself is *prarabdha*. The purpose for which that body has come into existence will get done of its own accord.”

The questioner of yesterday said, “In the *Gita*, Karma Yoga has been given greater prominence.” “Oho! Is that so? Karma Yoga is not the only one. What about the others? If you understand them all, you will know the real secret of Karma Yoga; only you don’t do that,” said Bhagavan.

अहं क्रतुरहं यज्ञः स्वधाहमहमौषधम् ।
मन्त्रोऽहमहमेवाज्यमहमग्निरहं हुतम् ॥ IX: 16

I am the oblation, I am the sacrifice, I the offering, the fire-giving herb, the *mantram*; also the clarified butter, the fire, and the burnt-offering.

Before saying this, Lord Krishna in the *Gita* has said:

न च मां तानि कर्माणि निबध्नन्ति धनञ्जय ।
उदासीनवदासीनमसक्तं तेषु कर्मसु ॥ IX: 9

Nor do these works bind me, O Dhananjaya, enthroned on high, unattached to actions.

Besides this:

उदासीनवदासीनो गुणैर्यो न विचाल्यते ।

गुणा वर्तन्त इत्येव योऽवतिष्ठति नेङ्गते ॥ XIV: 23

He who, seated as a neutral, is unshaken by the qualities (*gunas*), who stands apart immovable saying, ‘the *gunas* revolve’.

And:

समदुःखसुखः स्वस्थः समलोष्टाश्मकांचनः ।

तुल्यप्रियाप्रियो धीरस्तुल्यनिन्दात्मसंस्तुतिः ॥ XIV: 24

Balanced in pleasure and pain, self-reliant, to whom a lump of earth, rock, and gold are alike, the same to loved and unloved, firm, the same in censure and in praise.

And again:

मानापमानयोस्तुल्यस्तुल्यो मित्रारिपक्षयोः ।

सर्वारम्भपरित्यागी तुणातीतः स उच्यते ॥ XVI: 25

The same in honour and dishonour, the same to friend and foe, abandoning all undertakings — he is said to have crossed over the qualities (*gunas*).

“That is what has been stated. The *Mahapurushas* (great personages) mentioned above, are realised souls. Whatever outward shape they may have, *sishya* (disciple), *bhakta* (devotee), *udaseena* (the unconcerned) and *papatma* (sinner), all the people in these four categories are protected through the grace of the *Jnanis*. The *sishyas* worship them as gurus, ascertain the truth and attain *mukti* (freedom from bondage). *Bhaktas* pray to them as the *swarupa* (form) of God and get release from their sins. *Udaseenas* listen to what the Guru says, get enthused and become devotees. Sinners hear the stories from people that come and go and get release from their sins. People in these four categories are protected by the grace of *Jnanis*,” said Bhagavan.

Someone said, “You said that bad people will be released from their sins. Is that by listening to what others say or by

talking amongst themselves?” “It is by hearing what others say. They are sinners, aren’t they? How will they talk about good people?” said Bhagavan. Yesterday’s questioner asked, “You said sinners will get released. Does that mean from their bodily or mental ailments?” “It is for the mind only,” Bhagavan replied, “happiness is possible only if the mind is right. If the mind is not right, whatever else may be, there is no peace. The mind becomes ripe according to each person’s fitness. A *nastik* (an agnostic) becomes an *astik* (a believer), an *astik* becomes a *bhakta*, a *bhakta* becomes a *jignasu* (one desirous of Knowledge) and a *jignasu* becomes a *Jnani*. This refers to the mind only. What is the use of saying it refers to the body? If the mind is happy, not only the body but the whole world will be happy. So one must find out the way of becoming happy oneself. One cannot do this except by finding out about oneself by Self-enquiry. To think of reforming the world without doing that is like thinking of covering the whole world with leather to avoid the pain caused by walking on stones and thorns when the much simpler method of wearing leather shoes is available. When by holding an umbrella over your head you can avoid the sun, will it be possible to cover the face of the whole earth by tying a cloth over it to avoid the sun? If a person realises his position and stays in his own self, things that are to happen will happen. Things that are not to happen will not happen. The *shakti* that is in the world, is only one. All these troubles arise if we think that we are separate from that *shakti*.”

18th May, 1947

(117) SEEING A LION IN A DREAM

This afternoon, at 3 o'clock, another series of questions started. "Brahman is said to be *Sat-Chit-Ananda Swarupa*. What does that mean?" said one. "Yes. That is so," Bhagavan replied, "That which is, is only *Sat*. That is called Brahman. The lustre of *Sat* is *Chit* and its nature is *Ananda*. These are not different from *Sat*. All the three together are known as *Sat-Chit-Ananda*. It is the same in regard to the attributes of the *jiva-satvam*, *ghora* and *jadam*. *Ghoram* means the quality of *rajas*, and *jadam* means the quality of *tamas*. Both these are parts of *Satvam*. If these two are removed, what remains is only *Satvam*. That is the truth which is eternal and pure. Call it Atman, Brahman, Shakti or anything you like. If you know that that is yourself, everything is lustrous. Everything is *Ananda*."

That questioner said, "The ancients say that for a person who wants to know that real state *sadhana*, *sravana*, *manana*, and *nididhyasana* are absolutely necessary till the very end." Bhagavan replied, "They are necessary only to get rid of the various things that come from outside and that too for purposes of *sadhana* only, but not for realising the Self. One's own self is there at all times and in all places. *Sravana*, etc., are to be resorted to only to get rid of external influences, but if they are regarded as the most important things they will be the cause of the development of the feelings of *ahankara*, such as 'I am a pandit' (learned man), 'I am a great man' and the like. That is a big *samsara* (family). It is difficult to get rid of it later on. It is bigger than a wild elephant. It will not yield ordinarily.

"For that wild elephant, it is said that Guru *Kataksham* (the Grace of the Guru) is like seeing a lion in its dream,"

said the questioner. “That is true. If an elephant sees a lion in its dream, it wakes up startled and will not sleep again that day for fear that the lion might appear again in a dream. In the same way in a man’s life which is also akin to a dream, it is not Guru *Kataksham* alone, but also *sravana*, *manana*, *nididhyasana*, etc., that are akin to the sight of a lion in a dream. As they go on getting these dreams they wake up, and again go to bed and by efflux of time they may some day get a lion’s dream called Guru *Kataksham* in an intense manner. They get startled and obtain *jnana*. Then there will be no more dreams and they will not only be wakeful at all times but will not give room for any dreams of life but will remain alert until that true and real knowledge is obtained. These lion’s dreams are unavoidable and must be experienced,” said Bhagavan.

With some surprise, that questioner said, “Are *sravana* etc. and Guru *Kataksha* akin to dreams?” “Yes, that is so. For those who realise the truth, everything is akin to a dream. That being so, what do you now say is the truth? During sleep you have no control over this body. You wander about in various places with different bodies. You do all sorts of things. At that time everything appears real. You do everything as if you are the doer. It is only after you wake up that you feel that you are a Venkiah or a Pulliah, that what you had experienced in the dream is unreal and that it was only a dream. Not only that. Sometimes you go to bed after eating your fill at night — sweets such as *laddu* and *jilebi*. During sleep you dream that you are wandering in all sorts of places, cannot get food and are about to die of starvation. When you get up startled, you will be belching. Then you will realise that the whole thing was a dream. But during that sleep, did you remember about this (your overeating)? Another person goes to bed suffering from starvation. In his

dream, he enjoys a feast, eating *laddu* and *jilebi*. Will he remember at that time the fact that he had gone to bed hungry? No, he wakes up and finds himself terribly hungry. 'Oh God! It is all illusion, a mere dream,' he thinks. That is all. You were existent in the wakeful state as well as in the dream state and also in the sleeping state. When you are able to understand your state which had been existent all the time, you will then understand that all the rest is like a dream. When that is known, the feeling that the Guru is different from you will disappear. But then, since this realisation must come about because of Guru *Kataksha*, that Guru *Kataksha* is likened to a dream of a lion. That dream must be intense and must imprint itself in one's mind. It is only then that a proper wakefulness will come about. For that, the time must be propitious. If *sadhana* is performed relentlessly, some time or other favourable results turn up. That is all." So saying, Bhagavan assumed a dignified silence.

The clock struck four. The people in the hall who were completely absorbed in this spiritual discourse of Bhagavan, came back to their own consciousness. The voice of Bhagavan was ringing in my ears. I returned, wondering whether at any time in this life I would get that lion's dream of Guru *Kataksha* and get it imprinted on my mind.

19th May, 1947

(118) WHERE IS THE KING AND WHERE IS THE KINGDOM?

This afternoon, during a conversation regarding old *Sankara Vijayam*, Bhagavan asked one devotee whether it was

not a fact that amongst all books on the life of Sankara, *Sankara Vijayam* of Vidyanaraya was the best. “He was a great scholar and so his book is taken as an authority by all,” said that devotee. Bhagavan said, with a smile, “Yes, his mental powers were very great. He was a great votary of *Sri Vidya*, you see. He therefore wanted to create a city in the shape of *Sri Chakra* (wheel) and started doing it in Hampi but could not complete it. So he said that an emperor in future would rule the country and would be able to build a city in the shape of a *Sri Chakra*. When I told Nayana about this while I was on the hill, he made a peculiar comment, namely: ‘*Sri chakrakriti sona saila vapusham, sri shodasarnatmakam* occurs in ‘Arunachala Ashtaka Stotram’ written by Sri Sankara. Besides this in *Arunachala Purana*, it is stated that this hill is reputed to be in the shape of *Sri Chakra*. Hence, without searching for it, we have been lucky in getting this place which is in the shape of *Sri Chakra*. Bhagavan is the *Chakravarthi* (Emperor). If about ten houses are built around the hill, this itself is a great empire. Sankara must have intended this only,’ so said Nayana. He followed it up by arranging the whole administrative set up by saying, ‘Here is the commander-in-chief, that man is the treasurer, he is this, he is that.’ It used to be very amusing when he was here. All used to sit together and say, ‘What are the refreshments today for our Durbar?’ Then they used to draw up a programme, cook, and eat. They used to conduct the programme as if they were ruling an empire. This Sundareshan and that Kalyanam, were they like this then? Oh! Each person used to be highly active and hilarious. They used to think that they were great warriors,” said Bhagavan.

“When was all that?” asked Sivanandam. “That was while we were in Virupaksha Cave. Nayana actually drew up a plan on paper for the city to be built. A special place

was allotted for me in that plan. Afterwards he used to draw up plans suitable for the administration of the empire. No king, no kingdom — plans, however, were got ready. Many plans were prepared like that. Where was the king? Where was the kingdom?” asked Bhagavan. Subba Rao, a disciple of Nayana, said, “Why, was there no king? He is just opposite to us. Only this king wears a loin cloth. What is wanting? Haven’t houses been built around the hill? Isn’t the place where Bhagavan sits, like a king’s palace? The whole administration here is going on like a king’s household. Only there are some differences between an ordinary kingdom and this. That is all.”

“That is all right. Nayana also used to say that the position of a Maharaja and a *Mahajñani* is the same. When astrologers predicted that Tathagatha (Buddha) would become either an Emperor or a *sannyasi*, full of wisdom and knowledge, his father prevented him from going out anywhere, kept him in the palace and tried his best to interest him in the pleasures and luxuries of the palace. At last when he (Buddha) somehow managed to go out on some pretext, he saw all the sufferings of people in the world. So, he ran away and took *sannyasa*. One of the two empires, material, or spiritual,” said Bhagavan.

21st May, 1947

(119) NIDIDHYASANA (INTENSE CONCENTRATION)

Yesterday morning at 8 o’clock, Dr. Syed who is a worker for Arya Vignana Sangha and one of the disciples of

Bhagavan, came here for Bhagavan's *darshan* and asked, "Bhagavan says the whole world is the *swarupa* of Atma. If so, why do we find so many troubles in this world?"

With a face indicating pleasure, Bhagavan replied "That is called *Maya*. In *Vedanta Chintamani*, that *Maya* has been described in five ways. One by name Nijaguna Yogi wrote that book in Canarese. Vedanta has been so well dealt with in it, it can be said to be an authority on the Vedanta language. There is a Tamil translation. The five names of *Maya* are, *Tamas*, *Maya*, *Moham*, *Avidya* and *Anitya*. *Tamas* is that which hides the knowledge of life. *Maya* is that which is responsible for making one who is the form of the world appear different from it. *Moha* is that which makes a different one look real: *sukti rajata bhranthi*—creating an illusion that mother-of-pearl is made of silver. *Avidya* is that which spoils *Vidya* (learning). *Anitya* is transient, that which is different from what is permanent and real. On account of these five *Mayas* troubles appear in the Atma like the cinema pictures on the screen. Only to remove this *Maya* it is said that the whole world is *mithya* (unreal). Atman is like the screen. Just as you come to know that the pictures that are shown are dependent on the screen and do not exist otherwise, so also, until one is able to know by Self-enquiry that the world that is visible is not different from Atma, it has to be said that this is all *mithya*. But once the reality is known, the whole universe will appear as Atma only. Hence the very people who said the world is unreal, have subsequently said that it is only Atma *swarupa*. After all, it is the outlook that is important. If the outlook changes, the troubles of the world will not worry us. Are the waves different from the ocean? Why do the waves occur at all? If asked, what reply can we give? The troubles in the world also are like that. Waves come and go. If it is found out that they are not different from Atma this worry will not exist."

That devotee said in a plaintive tone, “However often Bhagavan teaches us, we are not able to understand.” “People say that they are not able to know the Atma that is all-pervading. What can I do? Even the smallest child says, ‘I exist. I do; and this is mine’. So, everyone understands that the thing ‘I’ is always existent. It is only when that ‘I’ is there, the feeling is there that you are the body, he is Venkanna, this is Ramanna and the like. To know that the one that is always visible is one’s own self, is it necessary to search with a candle? To say that we do not know the Atma *swarupa* which is not different but which is in one’s own self is like saying ‘I do not know myself’,” said Bhagavan.

“That means that those who by *sravana* (hearing) and *manana* (repeating within oneself) become enlightened and look upon the whole visible world as full of *Maya*, will ultimately find the real *swarupa* by *nididhyasana*,” said the devotee.

“Yes, that is it. *Nidi* means *swarupa*; *nididhyasana* is the act of intensely concentrating on the *swarupa* with the help of *sravana* and *manana* of the words of the Guru. That means to meditate on that with undeflected zeal. After meditating for a long time, he merges in it. Then it shines as itself. That is always there. There will be no troubles of this sort if one can see the thing as it is. Why so many questions to see one’s own self that is always there?” said Bhagavan.

23rd May, 1947

(120) AJAPA TATVAM (THE MEANING OF INVOLUNTARY JAPAM)

This morning at 8 o'clock, an ochre-robed person asked, "Swami, for controlling the mind, which of the two is better, performing *japa* of the *ajapa mantra* or of *Omkar*? Please tell me which is more useful?" Bhagavan replied as follows: "What is your idea of *ajapa*? Will it be *ajapa* if you go on repeating aloud '*soham, soham*'? *Ajapa* means to know that *japa* which goes on involuntarily without being uttered through the mouth. Without knowing the real meaning of that *japa*, people think that it means repeating with the mouth the words '*soham, soham*' lakhs of times, counting them on the fingers or on a string of beads. Before beginning a *japa*, '*pranayame viniyogah*' is prescribed. That means, first do *pranayama* (regulating of breath) and then begin repeating the mantra. *Pranayama* means first closing the mouth, doesn't it? If, by stopping the breath, the five elements in the body are bound down and controlled what remains is the real Self. That Self will by itself be repeating always '*aham, aham*'. That is *ajapa*. To know that aspect is '*ajapa*'. How could that which is repeated by mouth be *ajapa*? The vision of the real Self which performs *japa* of its own accord involuntarily and in a never ending stream like the flowing down continuously of ghee is *ajapa*, *Gayatri* and everything. At the time of the *upanayanam* itself, *pranayama* is taught by *anganyasa*, *karanyasa* and other methods of stopping the breathing, and people are asked to understand that *ajapa* by practice with suitable accompaniments. Without thinking of it, people talk of *ajapa*. It is the same thing in regard to *Omkar*. *Om* is all pervading and complete by itself. How can one do *japa* of that word

with the voice? The *sutra* is always there: ‘*Omityekaksharam brahma adviteeyam sanatanam*’ (Om is the indivisible and primordial Brahman). Without understanding that elementary thing, big books have been written stating the number of times each name should be repeated, such as so many thousands for *Ganapati* in *mooladhara* and for other *chakras*, so many thousands for Brahma, so many for Vishnu and Sadasiva. If you know who it is that is doing *japa* you will know what this *japa* is. If you search and try to find out who it is that is doing *japa*, that *japa* itself becomes the Self.”

Another person asked, “Is there no benefit at all in doing *japa* with the mouth?” “Who said no? That will be the means for *chitta suddhi* (purifying the mind). As the *japa* is done repeatedly the effort ripens and sooner or later leads to the right path. Good or bad, whatever is done, never goes to waste. Only the differences and the merits and demerits of each will have to be told, looking to the stage of development of the person concerned,” said Bhagavan. His “Upadesa Saram” itself is an authority on the subject.

28th May, 1947

(121) WHY ANY SECRECY?

Often it happens that in Bhagavan’s presence fruits and sweets are brought and placed before him; sometimes they are served on his leaf while taking meals and at times they are brought into the hall and Bhagavan is asked to eat them in the presence of all the people there. It is all right if they are new people but if they are old devotees Bhagavan would remark, “What more is there to do? *Naivedya* is over. Perhaps

camphor also will be burnt?” or “Will *swamitvam* (the role of a Swami) be lost unless I eat whenever asked and do as requested?” If they are Asramites, he would even administer a mild rebuke, saying, “Why all this, instead of looking to the purpose for which you have come?” It is, I believe, a year back, that one morning I brought fried jowar at the breakfast time, gave it to the people in charge of the kitchen and said nothing. What of that? As soon as I went to the hall Bhagavan complained, “I have eaten all sorts of foodgrains. Why do you take all this work on yourself?” From that time onwards, I have not been giving the Ashram anything prepared at home. Recently when you sent figs and other fruit, I gave them to Bhagavan’s attendants secretly as I was afraid of what Bhagavan would say if I gave them in the presence of all the people. They waited for a suitable opportunity and gave them to Bhagavan. He did not say anything at the time, but you know what happened four or five days later? I went to the Ashram in the afternoon at 2-30. There was no one else with Bhagavan except the attendants. Squirrels were scrambling about the sofa and indirectly demanding their food. Bhagavan was emptying the tin and was saying “Sorry, nothing in it,” and turning towards me, he said, “The cashew nuts are finished. They do not like groundnuts. What am I to do?” I looked at the attendants enquiringly. They said that there were no cashew nuts even in the storeroom. The squirrels did not stop their fuss. I had to do something. At the same time I was afraid what Bhagavan would say if I got some from the bazar.

In the evening when someone was going to town, I gave him money to bring ten *palams* (1.5 kilograms) of cashew nuts. The person who brought them did not give them to me immediately but gave them the next morning at 9 o’clock. Afraid of what Bhagavan would say if I gave them in his presence, I gave the packet to the attendant, Krishnaswamy, after Bhagavan

had gone out at 9-25 a.m. I do not know what happened in the noon. I went to the Ashram at 2-30 p.m. and stayed on till 4. This topic never came up. I felt greatly relieved, went home, came back in the evening at 6 and sat in the hall at a distance. *Veda Parayana* was over. Krishnaswamy was pouring into a tin the cashewnuts I gave him. Bhagavan saw and asked him who gave them. He said, "Nagamma." "When?" asked Bhagavan. "At 9-45 a.m. when Bhagavan went out," said the attendant.

"Is that so? Why not give it in my presence? Why this secrecy? Because I suppose she was afraid Bhagavan would be angry. These pranks have not been given up yet. Perhaps it is at her instance that Subbulakshmi brought cashewnuts a short while ago and gave them secretly to Satyananda through the window and slipped out. In addition, she gave an excuse to the effect that Athai (Bhagavan's sister) had asked them to be given. She put it on to Athai as she thought I would not say anything in that event. These are the silly acts of people here. Why do they indulge in these things instead of confining themselves to the purpose for which they have come here? They try to hoodwink Swami. They do not know that they themselves are getting hoodwinked. This weakness has not left them in spite of years of stay here. Have they come here for this purpose?" said Bhagavan in a thundering voice.

As I sat there, I became still as a statue. I never told Subbulakshmmamma nor did I know of her giving the cashewnuts. But I could not venture to open my mouth to mention the facts. I was however reminded of the purpose for which I had come. I thought that the lion's dream known as *Guru Kataksha* was like this. The clock struck the half-hour. Startled by it, I looked at it and found it was 6-30 p.m. As that is the hour at which ladies have to leave the Ashram, all of them were slowly going away. I got up somehow and

bowed before Bhagavan. He was looking at me with piercing eyes indicating anger coupled with sympathy. I could not look at that majestic personality, and so without raising my head, I came home and went to sleep. Next morning it was broad daylight by the time I woke up. I realised that the reason for the rebuke, which was like a precept, was not merely the cashewnuts but my forgetfulness of the purpose for which I had come to the Ashram, namely the acquiring of *jnana*. There must be many instances of such forgetfulness and so I prayed to Bhagavan in my mind to forgive me.

I got up, finished my morning routine quickly and went to the Ashram. No sooner did I step into the hall than Bhagavan, with a face radiant with smiles, brought up my case for enquiry. It became clear that I never told Subbulakshamma, and that Alamelu Athai herself sent those nuts through Subbulakshamma for the squirrels as they were left over after the *Shashtiabdhapurthi* (completion of 60th year) celebrations of her husband. “Is that so! The story has now taken a different turn. Even so, why the secrecy? Anyway, it is all over now.” So saying Bhagavan changed the topic and tried to cover up the whole incident by consoling words. But I have not been able to forget it even now:

आशया बध्यते लोको कर्मणा बहु चिंतया ।

आयुक्षीणं न जानाति तस्मात् जाग्रत जाग्रत ॥

Men are bound down by desire, activity and much worry; they do not realize the shortening of life-span. Hence awake! awake!

These words of the ancients are worth remembering. So far as I am concerned, the words that Bhagavan spoke, the looks that he cast with a feeling that this child, without realising how fast time flies, was wasting her time on trivialities, were imprinted on my heart. Brother, how can I

write the full implications of that incident! After all, Bhagavan is a *Jnanadatha* (Giver of *Jnana*)!

5th June, 1947

(122) KRITI SAMARPANA — DEDICATION OF A BOOK

After leaving your house in Madras the day before yesterday night, I reached the Ashram yesterday morning by 7 o'clock. Though it was only four days since I had left the Ashram, I felt as if it was four centuries. So I went straight to the Ashram from the Railway Station. Bhagavan was taking his breakfast. When I prostrated before him and stood up, he said, "You have come back? So soon?" I said, "Yes," and told him that ten copies of '*Lekhalu*' were ready, that I had brought them with me and the printers said that they would send the remaining copies to the Ashram direct. Bhagavan said "Yes," and remained indifferent.

After finishing my bath, etc., I took the bundle of books and went to the Ashram office, but the *Sarvadhikari* was not there.

So I thought I could as well show them to Bhagavan and then bring them back and so went into the hall. I did go into the office first, in accordance with the rules, to give books there, but the desire to show them to Bhagavan first was dominant in my mind. Whatever it be, taking advantage of the absence of the *Sarvadhikari* from the office, I went to the hall first. Bhagavan was reading the newspaper and appeared not to notice me. Afraid of giving the books into his hands, I placed them on the stool nearby. In dedicating a book, it is

usual to honour the person to whom it is dedicated by offering him fruits, flowers and presents according to the author's ability. But you know the proverb: "For a God as big as a mountain, can you offer flowers, etc., mountain-high?" For Bhagavan, what is it that we could offer for worship? Even so, if I wanted to offer any of the classical *pūja* articles such as *patram* (sacred green leaves), *pushpam* (flowers), *phalam* (fruits), *thoyam* (water), I was afraid Bhagavan would again scold me as he had done recently. So I merely folded my hands to salute him. You know what a nice thing happened then? As I bent down to prostrate, a devotee came there with a group of Brahmins and with a plate full of flowers, fruits, *agarbathies* (incense sticks), arecanuts, betel-leaves, etc. and placed it by the side of the books. When I got up and saw them, I felt extremely happy at the coincidence. All of them stood in a group and chanted the vedic hymn beginning with 'nakarmana naprajaya dhanena'. After the chanting was over, we all got up after bowing before Bhagavan. Krishnaswamy sent them away after giving *prasadam*. Bhagavan put the paper away and said to me leisurely, "Today it is *Shashthiabdhapurthi* for him, it seems." "Is it so?" said I. Whatever it is, I was satisfied that though I never brought anything, unexpectedly someone else had brought flowers and fruits to make up for the omission.

Krishnaswamy left the books there. So I myself handed them over to Bhagavan. Turning them over this side and that Bhagavan said, "Give them to the office, let them come to me with the office stamp." I opened a copy and showed Bhagavan that under his photo the press people had forgotten to print the name. "Oh! A mistake has been made. It doesn't matter. The *namam* (name) has merged in the *rupam* (form). Give them to the office," said Bhagavan. I took them to the office and came back after handing them over to Sri

Niranjanananda Swamy, the Sarvadhikari. After 9 a.m. Mounaswamy brought two copies of the book and gave them to Bhagavan. Bhagavan saw them and enquiring if one was for him and one for Nagamma, he told a devotee nearby, "Please give the copy to her. She wrote it and her brother got it printed. She herself brought and gave us some copies and from out of them we are giving her a copy. It is just like making an idol of Pillaiar (Lord Ganesa) with jaggery and, after *puja*, pinching a little of that jaggery and using it for *naivedyam*. When fruits are brought and given to us, do we not give *prasadam*?"

20th June, 1947

(123) KARATHALA BHIKSHA (ALMS IN THE PALMS)

Four or five days back, a notebook of Madhavaswami was found. As Bhagavan was looking into it, he saw a Tamil verse in it written by him, long ago. It was in Malayalam script, and while transcribing it into Tamil he told us its meaning: "When a man attains *jnana*, he will not have any regard for this body. Just as, after taking food, the leaf on which it was taken is thrown away however nice it may be, so also after attaining *jnana* one will be waiting eagerly for the time when it can be thrown away. This is the essence of what is stated in this verse."

One devotee asked, "For what reason did Bhagavan write this verse?" "In Tamil, in a book called *Prabhulingalila*, the same idea was expressed in a verse of four lines, and so, seeing it I thought it better to write briefly in a smaller verse

of two lines,” said Bhagavan. He then wrote it in Tamil script and began telling us further as follows: “The symbol of the used leaf has been given by many people. However nicely a leaf-plate is stitched, it is useful only until the meal is over. After that will there be any regard for it? It is immediately thrown away. Rich people have food on silver plates with gold flowers inlaid in them. Why are such things required when we have hands given by God?”

“When I was on the hill someone got a leaf plate made of silver and requested me to eat from it. I sent it back saying that I did not require it. When the food can be eaten out of the hands, why silver and gold? For a long time I did not eat food from a leaf. If anybody brought food, I used to stretch out the palms of my hands and when the food was put in them I used to eat it. It is only of late that I have begun eating food served on a leaf.”

Another person said, “Is it because of that, that *Ganapati* Muni praised you saying ‘*Karathamarasena supatravata*?’” Bhagavan replied “Yes. When you have hands, why all these things? It used to be an exhilarating experience in those days. When I was going out for *bhiksha*, I used to take the alms in the palms of my hands and go along the street eating it. When the eating was over I used to go on licking my hands. I never used to care for anything. I used to feel shy to ask anyone for anything. Hence that *karathala bhiksha* (alms in the palms) used to be very interesting. There used to be big pundits this side and that; sometimes big government officials also used to be there. What did I care who was there? It would be humiliating for a poor man to go out for *bhiksha*, but for one who has conquered the ego and become an *Advaiti*, it is a great elevation of the mind. At that time, he would not care if an Emperor came there. In that way, when I went out for *bhiksha* and clapped my hands, people used to

say, 'Swami has come', and give me *bhiksha* with fear and devotion. Those who did not know me used to say, 'You are strong and sturdy. Instead of going out like this as a beggar, why don't you go out to work as a cooly?' I used to feel amused. But I was a Mouna (silent) Swami and did not speak. I used to laugh and go away feeling that it was usual for ordinary people to talk like that. The more they talked like that the more exhilarated I felt. That was great fun."

"In *Vasishtam*, there is a story about Bhagiratha before he brought Ganges down to the earth. He was an Emperor but the empire seemed to him a great obstacle to *atmajignasa* (Self-enquiry). In accordance with the advice of his Guru and on the pretext of a *yagna* (sacrifice), he gave away all his wealth and other possessions. No one would, however, take the empire. So he invited the neighbouring King who was an enemy and who was waiting for a suitable opportunity to snatch it away and gifted away the empire to him. The only thing that remained to be done was to leave the country. He left at midnight in disguise, lay in hiding during day time in other countries so as not to be recognised and went about begging alms at night. Ultimately he felt confident that his mind had matured sufficiently to be free from egoism. Then he decided to go to his native place and there went out begging in all the streets. As he was not recognised by anybody, he went one day to the palace itself. The watchman recognised him, made obeisance and informed the then King about it, shivering with fear. The King came in a great hurry and requested him (Bhagiratha) to accept the kingdom back, but Bhagiratha did not agree. "Will you give me alms or not?" he asked. As there was no other alternative, they gave him alms and he went away highly pleased. Subsequently he became the King of some other country for some reason and when the King of his own country passed away, he ruled

that country also at the special request of the people. That story is given in detail in *Vasishtam*. The kingdom which earlier appeared to him to be a burden did not trouble him later when he became a *Jnani*. All that I want to say is, how do others know about the happiness of *bhiksha*? There is nothing great about begging or eating food from a leaf which is thrown out after taking food from it. If an Emperor goes out begging, there is greatness in that *bhiksha*. Now, *bhiksha* here means that you must have *vada* and *payasam* (pudding). In some months, there will be several such things. Even for *padapuja* (worshipping of the feet) money is demanded. Unless the stipulated money is tendered before hand, they refuse to take *upastaranam* (a spoonful of water taken with a prayer before beginning to take food). The unique significance of *Karathala Bhiksha* has now degenerated to this extent,” said Bhagavan.

मूलं तरोः केवलमाश्रयन्तः ।
पाणिंदूयं भोक्तुममन्त्रयन्तः ॥
कन्थामिव श्रीमपि कुत्सयन्तः ।
कौपीनवन्तः खलु भाग्यवन्तः ॥

Living only under trees, eating food out of their palms, disregarding even the Goddess of Wealth like an old rag, fortunate indeed are those dressed in a codpiece.

21st June, 1947

(124) UPANAYANAM (CEREMONY OF THE SACRED THREAD)

One morning two or three days back some people came with a young boy whose *Upanayanam* had been recently performed and went away after prostrating before Bhagavan. Soon after they left, some devotee asked him about the significance of *Upanayanam* and Bhagavan related it to us as follows:

“*Upanayanam* does not mean just putting round the neck three strands of cotton thread. It means that there are not only two eyes but a third also. That is the *jnana netram* (wisdom-eye). Open that eye and recognise your *swa-swarupa* (own form); that is what is taught. *Upanayanam* means additional eye. They say that the eye must be opened and for that purpose they give training in *pranayamam* (breath control). After that they give *Brahmopadesam* (Initiating about Brahman), give the boy a begging bowl and tell him to go about begging. The first *bhiksha* is *mathru* (mother’s). When the father gives *Brahmopadesam*, the mother gives three handfuls of *bhiksha* (rice) to enable the young boy to do *manana* (repeat inwardly), the *upadesa* given by the father. He is expected to fill his stomach by begging, stay in the Guru’s house for training and realise his self by opening the *jnana netram*. That is the significance of *Upanayanam*. Forgetting all that, what is done at present is this: *pranayamam* has come to mean just closing the nose with the fingers and pretending to control the breath; *Brahmopadesam* means just to cover both the father and the son with a new dhoti when the father whispers something in the ear of the son; *bhiksha* means just filling up the begging bowl with money. What could they preach to the boy when the

father who gives the *upadesa* and the priest who gets this done, do not know the real significance of *Upanayanam*? Not only that. After receiving the required knowledge by staying with the Guru for a sufficiently long time, the Guru used to send the boy to his parents to find out whether his mind would get caught in worldly affairs or turn towards *sannyasa*. After staying for some time in their own homes, the boys used to start on a pilgrimage to Banaras, devoid of worldly desires and with a view to renouncing them completely. At that time, parents having girls of marriageable age dissuade the boys from going to Banaras and offer them their daughters in marriage. Those that are strongly inclined towards renunciation would go without caring for the offers of marriage and those that are otherwise, return home and accept the offer of marriage. All that is forgotten now. Pilgrimage to Banaras at present means the young man puts on a silver-lined silk dhoti, his eyes are coloured black, his forehead bears a caste mark, his feet are ornamented with yellow and red paste, his body is smeared with sandal-paste, his neck is adorned with flower garlands, an umbrella is spread over his head and wooden sandals are worn on his feet and he walks on stylishly to the accompaniment of music. When the girl's brother comes and offers his sister in marriage and presses him to accept the offer, he says, "I want a wrist watch. I want a motor cycle, I want this and I want that. If you give them, I can marry, otherwise not." Afraid that the marriage which is arranged may fall through, the parents of the bride give whatever is demanded. Then they have photos, feasts and presentation of cloths and the like. Nowadays, *bhikshas* are used for filling up the begging bowl with rupees and pilgrimages to Banaras are used for extracting dowries."

27th June, 1947

(125) FORCED DINNERS

This afternoon at 3 o'clock, a devotee from Eesanya Mutt came and bowed before Bhagavan. Seeing him, Bhagavan said, "A telegram has been received that the Swami in Kovilur Mutt is no more. Is Natesa Swami gone?" "Yes. Two days ago. We knew beforehand that he was sick," he said. Someone asked, "Who is Natesa Swami?" "The deceased who passed away at the Kovilur Mutt was originally in charge of the Eesanya Mutt. When the *Matadhipathi* (head of the *mutt*) of Kovilur passed away Natesa Swami was taken there and was made the head of that *mutt*. That is the most important Vedanta *mutt* this side. Though he was not very learned, he was a good *sadhak* and so he was chosen. It might have been about twenty years back," said Bhagavan.

"Is he the same person that made Bhagavan get into a bandy?" I asked. "No. That was the one who was in the *mutt* before Natesa Swami. He was not like this person. He was a powerful personality," said Bhagavan. "When was that?" someone asked. "That was when I was still in Virupaksha Cave and about four or five years after I came to Tiruvannamalai. It is a funny story. One day when Palaniswamy and myself went round the hill and came near the temple it was 8 p.m. As we were tired, I lay down in Subrahmanya temple. Palani went out to fetch food from the choultry. He (the head of the *mutt*) was going into the temple. As usual there were a number of disciples around him. One of them saw me and told them about it. That was enough. While returning, he came with ten of his disciples and stood around me. He began saying, 'Get up, Swami. We shall go.' I was in *mouna* then, so I showed by signs that I wouldn't accompany them. Was he the man to listen to me?"

‘Lift him up bodily, lift,’ he said to his disciples. As there was no alternative, I got up. When I came out, there was a bandy ready. ‘Get in, Swami,’ he said. I declined and showed them by signs that I would prefer to walk and suggested that he should get into the bandy. He took no notice of my protestations. Instead, he told his disciples, ‘What are you looking at? Lift Swami and put him in the cart.’ There were ten of them and I was alone. What could I do? They lifted me bodily and put me into the cart. Without saying anything more, I went to the *mutt*. He had a big leaf spread out for me, filled it with food of all kinds, showed great respect and began saying ‘Please stay here always.’ Palaniswami went to the temple, enquired about me and then came to the *mutt*. After he came, I somehow managed to escape from there. That was the only occasion on which I got into a cart after coming to Tiruvannamalai. Subsequently whenever new people arrived they sent a cart, asking me to go over to their place. If once I yielded, I was afraid there would be no end to that sort of invitation and so I sent back the cart, refusing to go. Eventually they stopped sending carts. But that was not the only trouble with them. Even if I did not go to them when invited, I used to go round the hill and would sometimes visit the *mutt*. He would then go in and say something to the cook. At meal time he would have a big leaf spread out for me, sit by my side and instruct the cook to serve me food over and over again. On other days he would not eat along with the disciples in the *mutt*. but when I visited the *mutt* he used to sit by my side for food. How could I eat all that was piled on the leaf? I used to touch a little of the various preparations. The balance used to be mixed together by the disciples and the inmates used to eat it saying, ‘It is Swami’s *prasadam*.’ Noticing that, I gave up eating from a leaf. Whenever I felt like eating there in the

mutt, I used to stay in Pachiamman Koil or somewhere nearby, go to the *mutt* soon after the *naivedya* bell was rung, stay near the main entrance and ask for the *nivedana* (food offering to God). They used to bring it, and give it into my hands. I used to eat without the aid of a leaf. Salt is not put into that *nivedana*, as it is a Siva temple. Even so, I didn't mind it at all. All that I wanted was to satisfy my hunger. As the head of the *mutt* was staying upstairs, he knew nothing about it for some time. One day he saw it accidentally. 'Who is it that is giving Swami food without salt?' he enquired angrily. Subsequently he learned all the facts and left the matter at that. The person who died recently was not like that. He was a very peaceful and easy-going man. He used to sit by my side along with all the others and arrange for serving me food in normal quantities, similar to the others."

"Bhagavan also once lectured there, didn't he?" someone asked. "Yes," he replied. "When the person who recently passed away was teaching some lessons to the inmates of the *mutt*, I happened to go there. They received me with great respect and made me sit down. 'Go on with the lessons,' I said. 'Can I teach lessons in Swami's presence? Swami himself must say something,' he replied. So saying, he got a copy of *Gita Saram*, made his *sishyas* to read and requested me to explain it. As there was no way out, I gave a discourse."

"Ramachandra Iyer's grandfather once took Bhagavan to his place, it seems," said that questioner. "That was long back, perhaps in 1896. I was then at Gopura Subrahmanyeswara Temple. He used to come to me daily, sit for a while and then go. I was in *Mouna*. So there was no talk or consultation. Even then he had great devotion. One day it seems he invited someone to his house for a feast. In the noon, before meal time, he came to me with another person. One standing on either side of me they said, 'Swami, get up. Let us go.' 'Why?'

I enquired by signs. They told me the purpose. I refused. But would they go? They caught hold of my hands and forcibly pulled me up. They were prepared even to carry me in their arms. He was tall, stout and with a big belly. I was at the time lean and weak. I was nothing before him. His friend was even sturdier. What could I do? I was afraid they might even carry me in their arms if I resisted any further. I knew they were inviting me with great *bhakti*. So, thinking it was no use arguing with them I walked with them. From the main entrance they took me into the hall with great respect, spread a big plantain leaf and fed me sumptuously and then sent me back. That is the only family house here where I have eaten on a leaf.”

28th June, 1947

(126) QUESTIONS WITH HALF KNOWLEDGE

A few days back a meeting of the Vysya Sangam was held in this town. A number of prominent Vysyas from Andhra State attended it. Two days back all of them came to the Ashram in the morning and one of the chief men amongst them addressed Bhagavan thus: “Swami, God has become *jīva*. Will the grief that the *jīva* suffers affect God or not?”

Bhagavan did not give a reply immediately but remained silent. The questioner waited for a while and asked, “Swami, shall I wait until you give me a reply?” “Who is it that is asking the question?” said Bhagavan. “A *jīva*,” he said. “Who is that *jīva*? What does he look like? Where was he born? Where does he get dissolved? If you enquire and find out, he who is known as *jīva* will be found to be God himself.

Then it will be known whether the grief experienced by the *jiva* will affect God or not. When that is known, there will be no trouble at all.” “That is what we are unable to know,” said the questioner. “There is no effort required to know one’s self. You exist during sleep but all the things in the world that you see are not visible then. When you wake up you see everything. But you existed then and exist now (during sleep and while awake). That which comes on you in your wakeful state should be thrown out,” said Bhagavan. “How are we to throw it out?” enquired the other. “If you remain as you are, it will go out of its own accord. Your nature is to be. If you see the Reality as it is, the unreal will go away as unreal,” said Bhagavan. “What is the method by which this can be seen?” asked the questioner. “By enquiring ‘Who am I?’ and ‘What is my true state?’” said Bhagavan. “How am I to enquire?” asked that questioner. Bhagavan kept silent.

The questioner waited for a reply for a while and then, saying, “Yes, this is the method,” he touched the feet of Bhagavan despite the objections of the attendants and went away with all the members of the Vysya Sangam. After they had left, Bhagavan said to those sitting near him, “Don’t they know the reply? They just wanted to test me. They felt that their work was over, when they touched my feet. What more do they require?”

A rich Reddy from Nellore who happened to be there said, “*Ananda* is said to be *Atma*. *Ananda* is free from sorrow. If so, when the *jiva* experiences *ananda*, will he be free from sorrow?” Bhagavan replied, “There can be *ananda* (joy) only if there is *duhkha* (sorrow). It is only if a thing is known as *duhkha* then *ananda* can be known. If *duhkha* is not realised, how can *ananda* be realised? So long as there is one who knows, these two will exist. *Vastu* (the thing that is) is above *sukha* and *duhkha*. Even so, that *vastu* is known as *sukha*

because *Sat* is above *sat* and *asat*. *Jnana* is above *jnana* and *ajnana*, *Vidya* is above *vidya* and *avidya*. The same thing is said about several other things. So what is there to say?" said Bhagavan. The same idea is expressed in stanza ten of "Unnadhi Nalupadhi".

30th June, 1947

(127) PUJA WITH FLOWERS

Recently a rich lady residing in Ramana Nagar was getting a basket of jasmine flowers from her garden everyday and giving them to all the married ladies in the hall. Bhagavan observed this for four or five days but said nothing. She did not discontinue that practice. One day she put the flower basket on the stool, bowed before Bhagavan and got up. Bhagavan looking at someone nearby said, "Look! She has brought something. They are flowers perhaps. What for?"

With some fear she said that they were not for Bhagavan but for the married ladies and began distributing them. "Oh! If that is so, they could as well be distributed at their houses. Why here? If someone gives flowers thus, all others begin doing the same thing. Seeing that, people who come newly will think that flowers must be distributed and will buy and bring them. Then the trouble starts. I never touch flowers. In some places, it is usual to present flower garlands. Hence, many people bring flowers. I have not allowed people to do *puja* to the feet or to the head. Why do we require such practices?" said Bhagavan.

With fear and trepidation she said, "No. I will not bring them any more." Bhagavan said, "All right. That is good,"

and looking at those still near him, went on as follows: “You know what happened at one of the *Jayanthi* celebrations? A devotee got a book by name *Pushpanjali* printed and said he would read it. When I said ‘Yes’, he stood a little behind and began reading. He appears to have had some flowers hidden in his lap. As the reading came to a close, bunches of flowers fell on my legs. On enquiry, it was found that it was his doing. He did it thus because he knew I would not agree if he told me beforehand. What to do? Perhaps in his view it is no *puja* unless it is done like that.”

During the early days of my stay here, on a Varalakshmi Puja Day, one or two married ladies placed some flowers on Bhagavan’s feet, bowed before him and went away after seeking his permission for *puja*. Next year, all began doing the same thing. Bhagavan looked at them angrily and said, “There it is — one after another, all have started. Why this? This is a result of my keeping quiet instead of stopping it in the very beginning. Enough of this.”

Not only in regard to himself but even in regard to *puja* to the deities Bhagavan mildly rebukes devotees about using leaves and flowers. I have already written to you in one of my previous letters about the *laksha patri puja* (*puja* with one lakh of leaves) of Echamma. There is another instance. During the days when Bhagavan used to go round the hill with devotees in stages, they camped one morning at Gowtama Ashram. After the men and women had cooked, eaten and rested, and were getting ready to go so as to reach the Ashram before sunset, a lady devotee by name Lakshamma, who was born in Tiruchuli and was a childhood friend of Bhagavan and who used to talk to him familiarly, was plucking and putting in a basket the jasmine and *tangedu* flowers that had grown luxuriantly on the trees in and around the cremation ground there. Bhagavan

noticed it and asked smilingly, “Lakshmmamma, what are you doing?” She said, “I am plucking flowers.” “I see. Is that your job? It is all right but why so many flowers?” asked Bhagavan. “For *puja*,” she said. “Oh! It won’t be a *puja* unless you worship with so many flowers, is that it?” said Bhagavan. “I don’t know. These trees have abundance of flowers. So I am plucking them,” she said. “I see. As in your opinion it will not be nice if there is a luxuriant growth of flowers, you are making them naked. You have seen the beauty of that growth and you do not like others to see it. You have watered them and helped them in their growth, haven’t you? So you can take the liberty of plucking all the flowers and making them naked so that no one else can see that beauty. It is only then that you will get the full benefit of your *puja*, is it?” said Bhagavan.

3rd July, 1947

(128) ABHISHEKAM (WORSHIP WITH WATER)

A devotee, who has been coming to the Ashram off and on, yesterday, during conversation regarding Bhagavan’s stay on the hill, asked him, “While Bhagavan was on the hill, it seems some one did *abhisekham* to Bhagavan with coconut water. Is that a fact?” Laughingly Bhagavan said, “Yes, while I was in Virupaksha Cave, some ladies from the north came. I was sitting on a platform under the tamarind tree with half-closed eyes, without particularly noticing their arrival. I thought they would go away after a while. Suddenly there was a noise of breaking something. I therefore opened my

eyes and saw coconut water trickling down my head. One of those ladies had done that *abhisekam*. What was I to do? I was in *mouna* and couldn't talk. I had no towel even to wipe the water off, and so the water dried on my body as it was. Not only that. There used to be lighting of camphor, pouring of water on the head, *thirthas* (sacred waters), *prasadas*, and several such troublesome performances. It used to be quite a job stopping such things."

I myself have seen similar instances some four or five years back. In the room where Bhagavan takes his bath, there is a hole through which the water that is used drains out. Below that, a gutter was constructed to drain off the water. At the time of his bathing, some devotees used to gather at that place, sprinkle on their heads the water that came out of the room, wipe their eyes and even use it for *achamaniyam* (sipping drops of water for religious purposes). That was going on quietly and unobserved for some time. But in due course people began bringing vessels and buckets to gather that water and soon there was a regular queue. That naturally resulted in some noise which reached Bhagavan's ears. He enquired and found out the facts. Addressing the attendants, he said, "Oh! Is that the matter? When I heard the noise I thought it was something else. What nonsense! Will you get this stopped or shall I bathe at the tap outside? If that is done, you will be saved the trouble of heating water for me, and there will be no trouble for them either, to watch and wait for that *tirtha*. What do I want? Only two things, a towel and a *koupinam*. I can bathe and then rinse them at the tap and that completes the job. If not the tap, you have the hill streams and the tanks. Why this bother? What do you say?" When Bhagavan thus took them to task, they told everything to *Sarvadhikari* who thereupon put a ban on any one going to the side of the bath room during the bathing hour.

Another thing happened during those days. Bhagavan used to go to the hill in the hot sun after taking meals in the forenoon. On his return, when he came to the platform near the hall, the attendants used to pour water on his feet from the *kamandalu* (wooden bowl) and he used to wash his feet and then go in. Some used to hide somewhere there and, as soon as he went into the hall, they used to collect that water and sprinkle it on their heads. Once an enquiry starts, all faults come to light, don't they? Bhagavan appears to have noticed that also. One afternoon he saw through the window an old and long standing devotee sprinkling this water on his head. Seizing that opportunity, he began saying, "There it is! See that! As I have not been taking any special notice of it, it is going beyond all limits. However long they are here and however often they hear what I say, these ridiculous things do not stop. What is it they are doing? I shall henceforth stop washing my feet, do you understand?" He thus reprimanded them severely. That devotee was stunned, and with shame and grief, went to Bhagavan immediately and begged to be excused.

Not only did Bhagavan admonish him like that, but from the next day onwards, Bhagavan refused to wash his feet there even though the attendants pleaded with him to retain the existing custom. As I was then in the town, I did not know about this immediately. Four days later, somebody arranged *bhiksha* in the Ashram and invited me for meals. After meals I stayed there. Bhagavan as usual came down the hill. As I had some doubts about my *sadhana*, I thought I could ask him leisurely after he returned to the hall and so, I stood at the western window outside the hall. It is usual for me to do so whenever I wanted to ask Bhagavan and clear my doubts. You know what happened this time? Instead of facing east, as usual, Bhagavan turned towards

the side where I was standing. I stepped aside and gave way with some misgivings. He looked at me with concealed anger. I trembled with fear. I did not know why he looked at me like that. As he was turning the corner by the window, the attendants tried to give him water to wash his feet. Bhagavan shouted at them, saying, "No." When they said, "You have been in the hot sun," he said. "What of that? If we look to cleanliness, a number of people wait for that water. Enough of this. If you want, you wash your feet." So saying, Bhagavan entered the hall.

I was wondering if I had committed any fault resulting in Bhagavan getting angry and so went away, without trying to clear my doubts. In the evening, I enquired and learnt all that had happened before. It was only after that, I had some peace of mind.

6th July, 1947

(129) TIRTHAS AND PRASADAS (HOLY WATER AND FOOD)

Long back, when there were not many people in the Ashram, one of the attendants of Bhagavan used to wait until Bhagavan had finished eating and then used to have his food on Bhagavan's leaf. Gradually Asramites and old devotees began asking for that leaf and getting it. So long as rival claims for the leaf did not take a serious turn, Bhagavan did not take much notice of it. A plate also had to be placed before the leaf for washing his hands. As soon as he went away after washing his hands, that water also used to be taken in like *tirtha* (holy water). In due course,

these two practices of the Asramites went beyond the Ashram precincts and spread to Ramana Nagar also.

One day the mother of a wealthy devotee came there during lunch time and stood by the side of Bhagavan. Seeing her, Bhagavan said, "Why don't you sit down for meals?" She did not do so. Bhagavan understood the purpose but kept quiet as if he did not know anything. On the other side, the granddaughter of another devotee, aged eight, stood with a tumbler in her hand. Noticing her also, Bhagavan said, "Why are you also standing? Sit down and eat food." "No," she said. "Then why have you come? What is that tumbler for?" asked Bhagavan. After all, she was an unsophisticated child, and so, not knowing it to be a secret, said, "Grandmother has sent me to fetch *tirtham*." Bhagavan could not contain his anger any longer and so said, "I see. That is the thing. This child is waiting for *tirtham* and that lady for the leaf; that is it, isn't it?" When he thus asked with a commanding tone, one of the people near him said, "Yes." "I have been noticing this nonsense for some time now," he said. "They think that Swami sits in the hall with closed eyes and does not notice any of these things. I did not want to interfere in such matters all these days, but there does not seem to be any limit to them. *Tirthas* and *prasadas* out of *uchishtam* (food and water left as a remainder) and people to take turns for them! Look! Henceforth, I will not wash my hands in the plate, not even anywhere about this place. I will not leave the leaf here and go. I myself will remove it and throw it away. You understand? All of you join together and do these things. This is the only punishment." So saying and repeating several other charges for a long time, Bhagavan folded his leaf after eating food and then got up with the used leaf in his hand. However much people

there begged of him, he did not give them the leaf, but went up the hill and, after turning a corner, threw it away and then washed his hands there. Eventually the Asramites prayed and assured him that they would stop those undesirable practices. He said, “When everyone removes his used leaf and throws it away, why should I leave mine?” Until 1943, after meals, everyone used to remove their leaf and throw it away. That practice was changed only after this incident.

After all the Asramites swore that they themselves would remove all the leaves and throw them away along with Bhagavan’s leaf, he reluctantly began leaving his leaf there. But even till today he has been washing his hands outside, near the steps leading into the hall. If anybody requested him to wash his hands in a plate, he would say, “Will you provide all these people with plates? If all the others do not have them, why do I require one?” What reply could we give him?

8th July, 1947

**(130) HASTHA MASTHAKA SAMYOGAM
(TOUCHING OF THE HEAD WITH THE HAND
BY WAY OF BLESSING)**

Some people might say, “From what you have written in the last three or four letters, it is clear that Sri Bhagavan not only declines to allow *pada puja* (worship of the feet), *abhisheka* (worship with water) and *uchishta tirtha prasadas*, but actually condemns them. But then, in *Guru Gita* and other books, it is stated that *Guru pada puja*, *padodaka panam* (taking in water with which the feet are washed) and the like

are approved religious practices. Some elders have accepted such practices from their disciples. What then is the explanation?” Bhagavan is in a highly exalted state and has realised the oneness of the Self with the universe so as to dispense with the distinction between Guru and *sisya*. Hence he does not require these practices and always maintains that they are meant only for those who have not yet given up the belief that the body is identical with Atma, and that it is for the satisfaction of such people that these practices have been laid down by some of the ancients. It may then be asked, “If that is so, why does he remain indifferent when some of these acts are done and object to them afterwards?” When two or three people do it once in a way he may not mind it and feel sorry that they have not yet got over the belief that the body is identical with Atma, but if it becomes a regular practice, how can he refrain from objecting? He might also feel sorry that the *dehatma bhavana* (a feeling that the body is identical with Atma) had not yet left people. In his objections, there will be many fine shades of thought which is not possible for us to describe exactly.

It has been mentioned in books, that Bhagavan himself gave *vibhuti* and the like to Sivaprakasam Pillai and some other devotees. We have also heard of this from several people. But then, Bhagavan himself has told us several times that when there were not many people around, he used to move with them freely and give them whatever they asked for. Even now, if he is eating anything and we, longstanding devotees are there, he gives a portion of it to us. When he was living on the hill it happened sometimes that there was not enough food for all the people there, and so he himself used to mix all the available food, make it into small balls of equal size and give one to each of them, eating one himself. It was natural for the devotees to feel that that was *prasadam*

to the *sishtyas* from the Guru's hand. That is all. I have never heard Bhagavan saying that he was giving such things as *anugraha* (grace extended to the *sishtya* by the Guru) or that he had ever done such a thing before.

Recently a devotee who had heard such reports, asked Bhagavan himself about it: "I hear that Bhagavan gave *hastha mastaka samyogam* to a devotee. Is that a fact?" "How is that possible? As I got up from the sofa or conversed with people or went about here and there, my hand might have unintentionally touched their heads, and they might have taken it as *hastha diksha* (touching with the hand by way of blessing). In the case of people with whom I am a bit familiar, I might even have patted them. That is all. I have never deliberately done this *hastha mastaka samyogam*. I like to move with people freely and in a natural manner. And they might take it as an act of grace from me. Just because of that, will it become *hastha mastaka samyogam*?" said Bhagavan.

About ten or fifteen days back, a *sadhu* came here and stayed for a few days. Approaching Bhagavan humbly one day, he said, "Swami, I pray that, when you take food, you may be pleased to give me a morsel of food as *prasadam*." "Take all the food you eat as *prasadam* of the Lord. Then it becomes God's *prasadam*. Isn't all that we eat *Bhagavat-prasadam*? Who is it that eats? Where does he come from? If you go to the very root of things and know the truth, you will find that everything is *Bhagavat-prasadam*," said Bhagavan.

10th July, 1947

(131) “VICHARAMANIMALA”

It seems that a book by name *Vichara Sagara Sara Sangraha* written by Bhagavan in Tamil about thirty years ago, was got printed by Arunachala Mudaliar. As, however, Bhagavan's name was not mentioned therein, it remained unknown. Recently, someone took *Vichara Sagaram* in Malayalam from the library and while he was returning it, it came into the hands of Bhagavan. He then remembered that he had once written *Vichara Sagara Sara Sangraha* and enquired where a printed copy was kept. After some search it was found in a crumpled state. When a devotee was copying it out for reprinting, Bhagavan asked him to include the example of a flag in regard to *vairagya*. When that devotee asked what is the significance of that example, Bhagavan said with a smile, “It means the flag of *vairagya* for a *Jnani* and the flag of *raga* for an *ajnani* will be there as if tied before them. One can tell who is a *Jnani* and who is an *ajnani* by seeing that flag. For an *ajnani*, even if he gets *vairagya* on account of mental or physical ailments, it will be temporary only. The flag of *raga* will come and stand in front of him. The flag of *vairagya* will never move. What greater sign does a *Jnani* require than that?”

Someone else asked, “What induced Bhagavan to write this book?” “Sadhu Nischaladas wrote *Vichara Sagaram* in Hindi,” Bhagavan replied. “It is full of arguments. Arunachala Mudaliar brought a Tamil translation of it and said, ‘this is very elaborate. Please write a small book summarising the important points in it’. As he was insistent and as it would be useful for *sadhaks*, I wrote it. He immediately published it. That was about thirty years ago.”

“Why is it that Bhagavan’s name was not mentioned therein?” the devotee continued. “I was afraid every one might bring a book and press me to write a summary of it. So I myself forbade it,” said Bhagavan. “There may be several similar unknown writings. It would be a good thing if they could be published,” I said. “Is that so? Have you no other work to do?” said Bhagavan and assumed *mouna*.

Bhagavan felt that the name of the book was not satisfactory and so changed it recently into *Vicharamanimala*. When they were thinking of sending it to the press for publication with Bhagavan’s name on it, I felt that it would be better if Bhagavan himself wrote it in Telugu. I was afraid he would not agree, so I said nothing. Mouni (Srinivasa Rao) made Rajagopala Iyer request Bhagavan to write it in Telugu also, so that both could be published at one time and said to me encouragingly, “Nagamma, why don’t you also ask Bhagavan?” I accordingly prayerfully requested Bhagavan. For some time he argued saying, “Am I a Telugu Pandit? Why don’t you write it? Why should I?” However, as he is full of kindness, he himself eventually translated it into Telugu in answer to our prayers. It will shortly be published in both languages. It is in prose. Each sentence is like a *sutra*.

12th July, 1947

(132) RESIDENTS IN FOREIGN COUNTRIES

Arvind Bose, a longstanding Bengali devotee, had one son and one daughter. The son, a stalwart young man, suddenly passed away before he completed his eighteenth year. Bose was very much grieved and to get relief he used

to ask Bhagavan questions now and then. Today also, he asked some questions. Even in that question, his grief was evident. Bhagavan, as usual, asked him to enquire into the Self and find out. He was not satisfied. Bhagavan then said, "All right. I will tell you a story from *Vichara Sagaram*. Listen." So saying, he began telling us the following story:

"Two youngsters by name Rama and Krishna, told their respective parents that they would go to foreign countries to prosecute further studies and then earn a lot of money. After some time, one of them died suddenly. The other studied well, earned a lot and was living happily. Some time later the one that was alive requested a merchant who was going to his native place to tell his father that he was wealthy and happy and that the other who had come with him had passed away. Instead of passing on the information correctly, the merchant told the father of the person that was alive that his son was dead and the father of the person that was dead, that his son had earned a lot of money and was living happily. The parents of the person that was actually dead, were happy in the thought that their son would come back after some time while the parents of the person whose son was alive but was reported to be dead, were in great grief. In fact, neither of them saw their son but they were experiencing happiness or grief according to the reports received. That is all. It is only when they go to that country they will know the truth. We too are similarly situated. We believe all sorts of things that the mind tells us and get deluded into thinking that what exists does not exist and that what does not exist, exists. If we do not believe the mind but enter the heart and see the son that is inside, there is no need to see the children outside."

About a year back, a Rani from Bombay Presidency came here. She was a good lady and a mother of several

children. Her husband was staying in foreign countries. However courageous she might be, would she not feel his absence? We all thought she came here hoping to get peace of mind by Bhagavan's *darshan*. Accordingly, you know what happened? Having heard that Muruganar had written several songs and verses in Tamil about Bhagavan, she requested Bhagavan through a friend, to get some of the good ones translated into English.

Though Bhagavan said in an indifferent manner, "What do I know? Better ask Muruganar himself," by the time I went there at 2-30 p.m. he was turning over the pages of the book, leaving book-marks here and there and showing them to Sundaresa Iyer. I sat down, surprised at that kindness. Looking at me, Bhagavan said, "That Rani requested me to select some songs from Muruganar's book and get them translated into English. In his book *Sannidhi Murai* there is a portion called '*Bringasandesam*'. I put some marks in that portion. The *bhava* is that of a *nayika* (heroine) and of a *nayaka* (hero). The mind is *nayika*. Ramana is *nayaka*. The bee (the unwavering *buddhi*) is the maid. The gist of the songs marked is: the heroine says to her maid, 'My Ramana has disappeared. Search and bring him'. The maid says, 'Oh, mistress! When your Ramana is in your own self, where can I search for him? If at any time, the food given is hot, you say, 'Oh! my Ramana, my lord, is in my heart; will he not get burnt with this heat? Now where do you want me to search? When your Lord is within yourself, where can I search for him? Give up this delusion. Join the Lord that is within yourself and be peaceful'. This is the gist of those songs. I marked them as they may be of use to her. Poor lady! There is no knowing where her husband is. The mind is troubled. So, we shall have to tell her to adapt her mental attitude. I felt that these verses would be appropriate."

Meanwhile, the Rani came, Lokamma was made to sing those songs and Sundaresa Iyer to give the meaning in English. She was satisfied. We thought that Bhagavan, by this opportunity, taught us that one should not grieve over people residing in foreign countries but should turn the mind inward so that the *atma swarupa* (the Lord in the self) will be close to us at all times.

18th July, 1947

(133) AKSHAYALOKAM (THE ETERNAL WORLD)

The day before yesterday a Tamil young man approached Bhagavan in the afternoon and said: “Swami, when I lay down doing *dhyana* today, I fell asleep. Someone, I can’t say who, appeared to me in my sleep. Seeing me, he said in a firm tone, ‘God has come down as an *avatar* of Kalki with fourteen heads. He is being brought up somewhere’. I have come here thinking that Bhagavan will be able to tell me where that Kalki *avatar* now is.”

“I see. Why did you not ask the person himself who appeared in your dream about it? You should have asked him at the time. What is lost even now? Go on doing *dhyana* until he comes back and tells you,” said Bhagavan. Unable to understand the significance of that, the young man said, “Will he really come back to me and give me the required information if I go on doing *dhyana*?” “You may or may not be informed where that *avatara purusha* is. If only you do not give up *dhyana* but do it continuously you will realise the Truth. Then there will be no room for any doubts,” said Bhagavan.

Taking advantage of this conversation, another person asked, “It is said that God lives in an eternal world. Is this true?” Bhagavan replied, “If we are in a temporary world, He may be in an eternal world. Are we in a temporary world? If this is true, that also is true. If we are not real, where is the world and where is time?”

In the meanwhile, a young boy, four-years old, entered the hall with a toy motor car. Seeing that, Bhagavan said, “See. Instead of the car carrying us, we are carrying the car. That is right,” and laughed. Later, looking at us all, he said, “Look, this also can be taken as an example. We say, ‘we sat in the motor car’, ‘the motor car is carrying us’, ‘we have come in the car’, ‘the car has brought us here’. Will the car which is inanimate move without our driving it? No. Who drives? We. So also this world. Where is the world without our being in it? There must be someone to see the beauty of this world, and understand it. Who is the seer? He. He is everywhere. Then what is transient and what is permanent? If one knows the truth through Self-enquiry there will be no problems.” Bhagavan has already written the same thing like a *sutra* in verse No. 19 in his “Sad Vidya” (“Unnadhi Nalupadhi”).

20th July, 1947

**(134) JNANADRISHTI
(SUPERNATURAL VISION)**

Bhagavan used to write *slokas*, *padyas* and prose on small bits of paper, whenever he felt like it or whenever anyone requested him to write. Quite a number of them have been lost but whatever were available we gathered and kept them

carefully. I wanted to stitch a small book of white paper and paste them all in. I mentioned this to Bhagavan now and then but he always said, “Why bother?”

Yesterday afternoon, I was bent upon pasting them and so when I requested him, he said, “Why? If all of them are in one place, someone or other will take it away finding that it contains all Swami’s writings. We can’t say anything. Swami is the common property of all. It is better to leave them separate.” I then understood the real reason why Bhagavan was unwilling and so gave up my attempt.

In the meantime, a fussy young man who had recently come, asked, “Swami, it seems a *Jnani* has *jnanadrishiti* (supernatural vision) besides *bahyadrishiti* (external vision). Will you please do me the favour of giving me that *jnanadrishiti*? Or will you tell me where there is a person who could give it to me?” Bhagavan replied, “That *jnanadrishiti* must be acquired by one’s own effort and is not something that anybody can give.” That devotee said, “It is said that the Guru himself can give it if he so pleases.” Bhagavan replied, “The Guru can only say ‘if you follow this path, you will gain *jnanadrishiti*’. But who follows it? A Guru who is a *Jnani* is only a guide but the walking (i.e. the *sadhana*) must be done by the *sishtyas* themselves.” The young man felt disappointed and went away.

A little later, a devotee’s child of about five or six years of age, residing in Ramana Nagar, brought two raw fruits from their garden and gave them to Bhagavan. She used to bring sweets and fruits now and then and give them to Bhagavan. On all such occasions, Bhagavan used to say, “Why all this?” But he ate them all the same. Yesterday, he gave them back without eating and said, “Take this fruit home, cut it into small bits and give them to all the others saying, ‘This is to Bhagavan, this is to Bhagavan’ and you also eat some. Bhagavan is within everybody. Why do you

bring them everyday? I told you not to. Give them to everybody there. Bhagavan is within everybody. Please go.” That girl went away disappointed. Looking at me, Bhagavan said, “Children take great pleasure in such things. If they say they will give Swami something they know they will also get something out of it. When I was on the hill, little boys and girls used to come to me whenever they had a holiday. They used to ask their parents for money and bring with them packets of sweets, biscuits and the like. I used to sit along with them and get my share.”

“So you used to enjoy the feast like Bala Gopala,” I said. “If they say they will take something for Swami, they know they will get something for themselves. It is all right if that is done once in a way. But why every day? If all of them eat, isn’t it equivalent to my eating?” said Bhagavan. I was happy and pleased at Bhagavan so clearly illustrating to us how he is in everybody.

You know what happened a week or ten days ago! In the morning at breakfast, someone served more oranges to Bhagavan than to the others. Seeing that, Bhagavan completely stopped taking oranges. Four or five days back, when devotees appealed to him to resume taking oranges, Bhagavan said, “Is it not enough if you all eat?” The devotees said, “Isn’t it painful for us to eat when Bhagavan doesn’t? That is why we are appealing to you to excuse us.” Bhagavan said, “What is there to excuse? I don’t like them so much.” When they said, “They are good for Bhagavan’s health,” he replied, saying, “Look, there are about a hundred people taking breakfast. I am eating through so many mouths. Isn’t that enough? Should it be through this mouth only?”

That is *jnanadrishhti*. Who can give it to others?

19th July, 1947

(135) HEARING, MEDITATION AND THE LIKE

Yesterday, two pandits came from Kumbakonam. This morning at 9 o'clock, they approached Bhagavan and said, "Swami, we take leave of you. We pray that you may be pleased to bless us that our mind may merge or dissolve itself in *shanti*." Bhagavan nodded his head as usual. After they had left, he said, looking at Ramachandra Iyer, "*shanthi* is the original state. If what comes from outside is rejected what remains is peace. What then is there to dissolve or merge? Only that which comes from outside has to be thrown out. If people whose minds are mature are simply told that the *swarupa* itself is *shanti*, they get *jnana*. It is only for immature minds that *sravana* and *manana* are prescribed, but for mature minds there is no need of them. If people at a distance enquire how to go to Ramana Maharshi, we have to tell them to get into such and such a train or take such and such a path, but if they come to Tiruvannamalai, reach Ramanasramam and step into the hall, it is enough if only they are told, here is that person. There is no need for them to move any farther."

"*Sravana* and *manana* mean only those described in Vedanta, don't they?" asked some one. "Yes," Bhagavan replied, "but one thing, not only are there outward *sravana* and *manana* but there are also inward *sravana* and *manana*. They must occur to a person as a result of the maturity of his mind. Those that are able to do that *antara sravana* (hearing inwardly) do not have any doubts."

Whenever any one asked what those *antara sravanas* are, he used to say, "*Antara sravana* means the knowledge of that

Atma which is in the cave of the heart always illuminated with the feeling ‘*aham, aham*’ (‘I, I’), and to get that feeling to be in one’s heart is *manana*, and to remain in one’s self is *nididhyasa*.”

In this connection, it is worth while remembering the *sloka* written by Bhagavan bearing on this subject. In that *sloka* mention is made not only to *Atma sphurana* but also how to secure it. Securing means only remaining in one’s own self.

हृदयकुहरमध्ये केवलं ब्रह्ममात्रम् ।
 ह्यहमहमिति साक्षादात्मरूपेण भाति ।
 हृदि विश मनसा स्वम् चिन्वता मज्जता वा ।
 पवनचलन रोधादात्मनिष्ठो भव त्वम् ॥

Brahman is glowing lustrously in the middle of the cave of the Heart in the shape of the Self, always proclaiming ‘I am, I am’. Become an *Atmanishta*, a Self-realised person, either by making the mind absorbed in the search of the Self or by making the mind drown itself through control of the breath.

3rd September, 1947

(136) THE ATTITUDE OF SILENCE

I went to Bhagavan’s *sannidhi* (presence) at 3 o’clock this afternoon and joined the group of people around him in their discussions. Bhagavan casually remarked that Adi Sankara wrote “Dakshinamurthy Stotram”¹ in three parts and said, “Sri Sankara felt like singing in praise of Sri Dakshinamurthy but then, Dakshinamurthy being the

¹ Dakshinamurthy is Siva incarnate as a youth, teaching in Silence. Bhagavan has been identified with Dakshinamurthy.

embodiment of silence, the problem was how to describe silence. He therefore analysed the three attributes of silence, namely, *Srishti* (creation) *Sthithi* (preservation) and *Laya* (dissolution) and thus offered his salutations to Dakshinamurthy. Dakshinamurthy is the embodiment of these three attributes which do not have any discernible characteristics or distinguishing marks. How else can silence be eulogised?”

Taking up the thread of the conversation a devotee said, “Dandapani Swami told us several years back that on a Mahasivarathri² day, devotees gathered around Bhagavan saying, ‘Bhagavan must explain to us today the meaning of “Dakshinamurthy Ashtakam” (Eight Slokas in Praise of Dakshinamurthy). Bhagavan however, sat in silence, smiling. After waiting for some time the devotees went away feeling that, by his continued silence, Bhagavan had taught them that silence alone was the true meaning of those *slokas*. Is that a fact?”

Bhagavan (with a smile): “Yes. That is true.”

I (with some surprise): “So that means Bhagavan gave a silent commentary?”

Bhagavan: “Yes. It was a silent commentary.”

Another devotee: “*Mouna* means abiding in the Self, isn’t it?”

Bhagavan: “Yes. That is so. Without abiding in the Self, how could it be *mouna* (silence)?”

Devotee: “That is just what I am asking. Would it be *mouna* if one were to completely refrain from speech without at the same time having an awareness of the Self and abiding therein?”

² Great Night of Siva (in February each year).

Bhagavan: “How could real *mouna* be achieved? Some people say that they are observing *mouna* by keeping their mouths shut but at the same time they go on writing something or other on bits of paper or on a slate. Is not that another form of activity of the mind?”

Another devotee: “Is there then no benefit at all in refraining from speech?”

Bhagavan: “A person may refrain from speech in order to avoid the obstacles of the outer world, but he should not consider that to be an end in itself. True Silence is really endless speech; there is no such thing as attaining it because it is always present. All you have to do is to remove the worldly cobwebs that enshroud it; there is no question of attaining it.”

While we were thus engaged in discussions, someone said that a broadcasting company was thinking of recording Bhagavan’s voice. Bhagavan laughed and said, “Oho! You don’t say so! But my voice is Silence, isn’t it? How can they record Silence? That which Is, is Silence. Who could record it?”

The devotees sat quiet, exchanging glances and there was absolute silence in the hall. Bhagavan, the embodiment of Dakshinamurthy, sat in the Attitude of Silence (*mouna mudra*) facing southwards.³ That living image, his body, was radiant with the Light of the Self. Today is indeed a memorable day.

³ One meaning of the name Dakshinamurthy is ‘The Southward facing’. The Guru (teacher) is the spiritual North Pole and, therefore, traditionally faces south.

6th September, 1947

(137) BEYOND THE THREE STATES

Last month, during my sister-in-law's stay here, the proofs of the Telugu version of the 'Vichara Mani Mala' (Self-enquiry) were received. In the afternoon Bhagavan corrected them and passed them on to me. On reading them, my sister-in-law asked me the meaning of *swapnatyanta nivrithi*. I tried to explain, but as I was not sure myself, I could not satisfy her fully. On noticing this, Bhagavan asked, "What is the matter? Is there a mistake?"

I replied, "No. She is asking the meaning of *swapnatyanta nivrithi*."

Bhagavan said kindly, "It means absolute, dreamless sleep."

I asked, "Would it be true to say that a *Jnani* has no dreams?"

Bhagavan: "He has no dream-state."

My sister-in-law was still not satisfied, but as people began to talk about other things, we had to leave the matter there. Only at night she said, "In the *Vasishtam*¹ it is stated that a Realized Soul appears to perform actions, but they do not affect him at all. We ought to have asked Bhagavan the real meaning of this."

On going to the Ashram next morning, it so happened that Bhagavan was just then explaining the very point to Sundaresa Iyer. Eagerly availing herself of the opportunity, my sister-in-law again asked, "Bhagavan has stated that *Swapnatyanta nivrithi* means absolute, dreamless sleep. Does it mean that a *Jnani* does not have dreams at all?"

¹ *Yoga Vasishtam* is a book on yoga by Vasishta Maharshi.

Bhagavan: “It is not only the dream-state, but all three states are unreal to the *Jnani*. The real state of the *Jnani* is where none of these three states exists.”

I asked, “Is not the waking state also equivalent to a dream?”

Bhagavan: “Yes, whereas a dream lasts for a short time, the waking state lasts longer. That is the only difference.”

I: “Then deep sleep is also a dream?”

Bhagavan: “No, deep sleep is an actuality. How can it be a dream when there is no mental activity? However, since it is a state of mental vacuity, it is nescience (*avidya*) and must therefore be rejected.”

I persisted, “But is not deep sleep also said to be a dream state?”

Bhagavan: “Some may have said so for the sake of terminology, but really there is nothing separate. Short or long duration applies only to the dream and waking states. Someone may say: ‘we have lived so long and these houses and belongings are so clearly evident to us that it surely can’t be all a dream’. But we have to remember that even dreams seem long while they last. It is only when you wake up that you realize that they only lasted a short time. In the same way, when one attains Realization (*jnana*), this life is seen to be momentary. Dreamless sleep means nescience; therefore it is to be rejected in favour of the state of pure Awareness.”

My sister-in-law then interposed, “It is said that the bliss that occurs in deep sleep is experienced in the state of *samadhi*² as well, but how is that to be reconciled with the statement that deep sleep is a state of nescience?”

² *Samadhi* means perfect absorption of thought in the one object of meditation, i.e., the Supreme Spirit (the 8th and last stage of yoga).

Bhagavan: “That is why deep sleep has also to be rejected. It is true that there is bliss in deep sleep, but one is not aware of it. One only knows about it afterwards when one wakes up and says that one has slept well. *Samadhi* means experiencing this bliss while remaining awake.”

I: “So it means waking, or conscious sleep?”

Bhagavan: “Yes, that’s it.”

My sister-in-law then brought up the other cognate question that had worried her: “It is said by Vasishta that a Realized Soul seems to others to be engaged in various activities, but he is not affected by them at all. Is it because of their different outlook that it seems so to others, or is he really unaffected?”

Bhagavan: “He is really unaffected.”

My sister-in-law: “People speak of favourable visions, both in dream and while awake; what are they?”

Bhagavan: “To a Realized Soul they all seem the same.”

However she persisted, “It is stated in Bhagavan’s biography that Ganapati Muni had a vision of Bhagavan when he was at Tiruvottiyur and Bhagavan was at Tiruvannamalai, and that, at the very same time, Bhagavan had a feeling of accepting homage. How can such things be explained?”

Bhagavan answered cryptically, “I have already stated that such things are what are known as divine visions.” He was then silent, indicating that he was not willing to continue the talk any further.

8th September, 1947

(138) SAMADHI

This morning, a European who was sitting in front of Bhagavan said through an interpreter:

“It is stated in the *Mandukyopanishad* that, unless *samadhi*, i.e., the 8th and last stage of yoga, is also experienced, there can be no liberation (*moksha*) however much meditation (*dhyana*) or austerities (*tapas*) are performed. Is that so?”

Bhagavan: “Rightly understood, they are the same. It makes no difference whether you call it meditation or austerities or absorption, or anything else. That which is steady, continuous like the flow of oil, is austerity, meditation and absorption. To be one’s own Self is *samadhi*.”

Questioner: “But it is said in the *Mandukyopanishad* that *samadhi* must necessarily be experienced before attaining liberation.”

Bhagavan: “And who says that it is not so? It is stated not only in the *Mandukyopanishad* but in all the ancient books. But it is true *samadhi* only if you know your Self. What is the use of sitting still for some time like a lifeless object? Suppose you get a boil on your hand and have it operated under chloroform; you don’t feel any pain at the time, but does that mean that you were in *samadhi*? It is the same with this too. One has to know what *samadhi* is. And how can you know it without knowing your Self? If the Self is known, *samadhi* will be known automatically.”

Meanwhile, a Tamil devotee opened the *Tiruvachakan* and began singing the “Songs on Pursuit”. Towards the end comes the passage, “Oh, Ishwara,* You are trying to flee,

* Ishwara signifies the personal God.

but I am holding You fast. So where can You go and how can You escape from me?”

Bhagavan commented with a smile: “So it seems that He is trying to flee and they are holding Him fast! Where could He flee to? Where is He not present? Who is He? All this is nothing but a pageant. There is another sequence of ten songs in the same book, one which goes, ‘O my Lord! You have made my mind Your abode. You have given Yourself upto me and in return have taken me into You. Lord, which of us is the cleverer? If You have given Yourself up to me, I enjoy endless bliss, but of what use am I to You, even though You have made of my body Your Temple out of Your boundless mercy to me? What is it I could do for you in return? I have nothing now that I could call my own.’ This means that there is no such thing as ‘I’. See the beauty of it! Where there is no such thing as ‘I’, who is the doer and what is it that is done, whether it be devotion or Self-enquiry or *samadhī*?”

10th September, 1947

(139) REMAIN WHERE YOU ARE

At a quarter to ten this morning, just as Bhagavan was getting up to go for his usual short mid-morning walk, an Andhra young man approached the couch and said, “Swami, I have come here because I want to perform austerities (*tapas*) and don’t know which would be the proper place for it. I will go wherever you direct me.”

Bhagavan did not answer. He was bending down, rubbing his legs and knees, as he often does before beginning to walk, on account of his rheumatic trouble, and was smiling

quietly to himself. We, of course, eagerly waited to hear what he would say. A moment later he took the staff that he uses to steady himself while walking, and looking at the young man, said, "How can I tell you where to go for performing *tapas*? It is best to stay where you are." And with a smile he went out.

The young man was confused. "What is the meaning of this?" he exclaimed. "Being an elderly person, I thought he would tell me of some holy place where I could stay, but instead of that he tells me to stay where I am. I am now near this couch. Does that mean that I should stay here near the couch? Was it to receive such a reply that I approached him? Is this a matter for jokes?"

One of the devotees took him out of the hall and explained, "Even when Bhagavan says something in a lighter vein there is always some deep meaning in it. Where the feeling 'I' arises is one's Self. *Tapas* means knowing where the Self is and abiding in it. For knowing that, one has to know who one is; and when one realises one's Self what does it matter where one stays? This is what he meant." He thus pacified the young man and sent him away.

Similarly, someone asked yesterday, "Swami, how can we find the Self (*Atma*)?"

"You are in the Self; so how can there be any difficulty in finding it?" Bhagavan replied.

"You say that I am in the Self, but where exactly is that Self?" the questioner persisted.

"If you abide in the heart and search patiently you will find it," was the reply.

The questioner still seemed unsatisfied, and made the rather curious observation that there was no room in his heart for him to stay in it.

Bhagavan turned to one of the devotees sitting there and said smiling, "Look how he worries about where the Self

is! What can I tell him? What Is, is the Self. It is all-pervading. When I tell him that it is called 'Heart' he says there is no room in it for him to stay. What can I do? To say that there is no room in the heart after filling it with unnecessary *vasanas** is like grumbling that there is no room to sit down in a house as big as Sri Lanka. If all the junk is thrown out, won't there be room? The body itself is junk. These people are like a man who fills all the rooms of his house chokeful with unnecessary junk and then complains that there is no room for keeping his body in it. In the same way they fill the mind with all sorts of impressions and then say there is no room for the Self in it. If all the false ideas and impressions are swept away and thrown out what remains is a feeling of plenty and that is the Self itself. Then there will be no such thing as a separate 'I'; it will be a state of egolessness. Where then is the question of a room or an occupant of the room? Instead of seeking the Self people say, 'no room! no room!', just like shutting your eyes and saying there is 'no sun! no sun!'. What can one do under such circumstances?"

11th September, 1947

(140) ONLY ONE AND ALL-PERVADING SELF

Yesterday, a *sadhu* came and sat in the Hall. He seemed anxious to speak to Bhagavan, but hesitant. After some time, he approached him and said, "Swami, it is said that the Self (*atma*), is all-pervading. Does that mean that it is in a dead body also?"

* *vasana*: The impression unconsciously left on the mind by past good or bad actions, which therefore produces pleasure or pain.

“Oho! So that is what you want to know?” rejoined Bhagavan. “And did the question occur to the dead body or to you?”

“To me,” said the *sadhu*.

Bhagavan: “When you are asleep do you question whether you exist or not? It is only after you wake up that you say you exist. In the dream state also, the Self exists. There is really no such thing as a dead or a living body. That which does not move we call dead, and that which has movement we call alive. In dreams you see any number of bodies, living and dead, and they have no existence when you wake up. In the same way this whole world, animate and inanimate, is non-existent. Death means the dissolution of the ego, and birth means the rebirth of the ego. There are births and deaths, but they are of the ego; not of you. You exist whether the sense of ego is there or not. You are its source, but not the ego-sense. Deliverance (*mukti*) means finding the origin of these births and deaths and demolishing the ego-sense to its very roots. That is deliverance. It means death with full awareness. If one dies thus, one is born again simultaneously and in the same place with *Aham sphurana* known as ‘*Aham, Aham (I, I)*’. One who is born thus, has no doubts whatsoever.”

Yesterday evening, after the chanting of the Vedas, a young European who came four or five days ago, asked Bhagavan a number of questions. Bhagavan, as usual, countered him with the question, “Who are you? Who is asking these questions?” Unable to get any other elucidation, the young man as a last resort asked Bhagavan which verse of the *Gita* he liked the most, and Bhagavan replied that he liked them all. When the young man still persisted in asking which was the most important verse, Bhagavan told him, Chapter X, Verse 20 which runs: “I am the Self, Oh

Gudakesa¹, seated in the heart of all beings. I am the beginning and the middle and the end of all beings.”

The questioner was pleased and satisfied and on taking leave, said, “Swami, this unreal self is obliged to travel owing to the exigencies of work. I pray that you may be pleased to recommend that this unreal self be merged into the real Self.”

Bhagavan, smiling, replied, “Such a recommendation might be necessary where there are a number of different selves — one to ask for a recommendation, one to recommend and one to hear the recommendation. But there are not so many selves. There is only one Self. Everything is in the one Self.”

12th September, 1947

(141) MANIFESTATION OF THE SELF

A devotee who came here some time back and had been listening to the various discussions in Bhagavan’s presence, approached Bhagavan this afternoon and respectfully asked, “Swami, it is said that Ishwara who is the reflection of the soul and appears as the thinking mind, has become *jīva*, the personal soul, which is the reflection of the thinking faculty. What is the meaning of this?”

Bhagavan answered, “The reflected consciousness of the Self (*Atman*) is called Ishwara, and Ishwara reflected through the thinking faculty is called the *jīva*. That is all.”

The devotee: “That is all right, Swami, but what then is *chidabhasā*?”

¹ Another name of Arjuna.

Bhagavan: “*Chidabhasa* is the feeling of the Self which appears as the shining of the mind. The one becomes three, the three becomes five and the five becomes many; that is, the pure Self (*satva*), which appears to be one, becomes through contact, three (*satva, rajas* and *tamas*) and with those three, the five elements come into existence, and with those five, the whole Universe. It is this which creates the illusion that the body is the Self. In terms of the sky (*akasa*), it is explained as being divided into three categories, as reflected in the soul: the boundless world of pure consciousness, the boundless world of mental consciousness and the boundless world of matter (*chidakasa, chittakasa* and *bhutakasa*). When Mind (*chitta*), is divided into its three aspects, namely mind, intuition and ‘Maker of the I’ (*manas, buddhi* and *ahankara*), it is called the inner instrument, or ‘*antahkarana*’. *Karanam* means *upakaranam*. Legs, hands and other organs of the body are called ‘*bahyakarana*’, or outer instruments, while the senses (*indriyas*) which work inside the body are *antahkaranas* or inner instruments. That feeling of the Self, or shining mind, which works with these inner instruments, is said to be the personal soul, or *jiva*. When the mental consciousness, which is a reflection of the tangible aspect of pure consciousness, sees the world of matter, it is called mental world (*mano akasa*), but when it sees the tangible aspect of pure consciousness, it is called total consciousness (*chinmaya*). That is why it is said, ‘The mind is the cause of both bondage and liberation for man (*mana eva manushyanam karanam bandha mokshayoh*)’. That mind creates many illusions.”

The questioner: “How will that illusion disappear?”

Bhagavan: “If the secret truth mentioned above is ascertained by Self-enquiry, the multiplicity resolves itself into five, the five into three, and the three into one. Suppose you have a headache and you get rid of it by taking some

medicine. You then remain what you were originally. The headache is like the illusion that the body is the Self; it disappears when the medicine called Self-enquiry is administered.”

The questioner: “Is it possible for all people to hold on to that path of Self-enquiry?”

Bhagavan: “It is true that it is only possible for mature minds, not for immature ones. For the latter, repetition of a prayer or holy name under one’s breath (*japa*), worship of images, breath-control (*pranayama*), visualising a pillar of light (*Jyotishtoma*) and similar yogic and spiritual and religious practices have been prescribed. By those practices, people become mature and will then realize the Self through the path of Self-enquiry. To remove the illusion of immature minds in regard to this world, they have to be told that they are different from the body. It is enough if you say, you are everything, all-pervading. The Ancients say that those with immature minds should be told that they must know the transcendent Seer through enquiry into the five elements and reject them by the process of repeating, ‘Not this, not this (*Neti, neti*)’. After saying this, they point out that just as gold ornaments are not different from gold, so the elements are your own Self. Hence it must be said that this world is real.

“People note the differences between the various types of ornaments, but does the goldsmith recognise the difference? He only looks into the fineness of the gold. In the same way, for the Realized Soul, the *Jnani*, everything appears to be his own Self. Sankara’s method was also the same. Without understanding this, some people call him a nihilist (*mithyavadi*), that is, one who argues that the world is unreal. It is all meaningless talk. Just as when you see a stone carved into the form of a dog and you realise that it is only a stone, there is no

dog for you; so also, if you see it only as a dog without realizing that it is a stone, there is no stone for you. If you are existent, everything is existent; if you are non-existent, there is nothing existent in this world. If it is said that there is no dog, but there is a stone, it does not mean that the dog ran away on your seeing the stone. There is a story about this. A man wanted to see the King's palace, and so started out. Now, there were two dogs carved out of stone, one on either side of the palace gateway. The man standing at a distance took them for real dogs and was afraid of going near them. A saint passing along that way noticed this and took the man along with him, saying, 'Sir, there is no need to be afraid.' When the man got near enough to see clearly, he saw that there were no dogs, and what he had thought to be dogs, were just stone carvings.

"In the same way, if you see the world, the Self will not be visible; if you see the Self, the world will not be visible. A good Teacher (Guru) is like that saint. A Realized Soul who knows the truth is aware of the fact that he is not the body. But there is one thing more. Unless one looks upon death as a thing that is very near and might happen at any moment, one will not be aware of the Self. This means that the ego must die, must vanish, along with the inherent *vasanas*. If the ego vanishes thus, the Self will shine as the luminous Self. Such people will be on a high spiritual plane, free from births and deaths." With that Bhagavan stopped his discourse.

13th September, 1947

(142) SIMPLICITY

Recently, while coming from Bangalore, Arvind Bose brought some costly pencils and gave them to Bhagavan. After answering the usual enquiries about his welfare he went away to his compound, named "*Mahasthan*".

After he left, Bhagavan examined the pencils closely, wrote with them, appreciated their good quality, and handed them to Krishnaswami, saying, "Please keep these carefully. Our own pencil must be somewhere. Please see where it is and let me have it." Krishnaswami carefully put away those pencils, opened a wooden box which was on the table nearby, and, after searching for a while, found a pencil and gave it to Bhagavan.

Turning it this way and that, and examining it, Bhagavan said, "Why this one? This is from Devaraja Mudaliar. Our own pencil must be there. Give it to me and keep this one also safely somewhere." Krishnaswami searched everywhere but could not find it. "See if it is in the hall," said Bhagavan. Someone went there and came back saying it was not there. "Oh! What a great pity! That is our own pencil, you see. Search properly and find it," said Bhagavan. Devaraja Mudaliar, who was there, said, "Why worry, Bhagavan? Are not all these pencils your own?" Bhagavan said with a smile, "That is not it. You gave this one; Bose brought the other ones. If we are not sufficiently careful, somebody may take them away. You know, Swami is the common property of all people. If your pencil was lost you might feel aggrieved, for you bought it, spending a good amount of money, and gave it to me. If it is our own pencil it does not matter where it is kept. It costs half-an-anna and

even that was not purchased. Some one brought it and gave it, saying it had been found somewhere. So, it is our own. As regards the others, we are answerable to the donors. No one will question us about this one and that is why I am asking for it. The others are for the use of important people. Why do we want such pencils? Have we to pass any examination or have we to work in an office? For our writing work, that pencil is enough." So saying, he had a search made for it and ultimately got it.

Sometime back, a similar incident happened. Some rich people brought a silver cup, saucer and spoon and placing them reverentially before him, said, "Bhagavan, please use these when you take any liquid food." Bhagavan examined the things and passed them on to his attendants. As the attendants were placing them in the bureau in the hall, he objected and said, "Why there? Let them be kept in the office itself." "They were given for Bhagavan's use, were they not?" said a devotee. "Yes," replied Bhagavan, "but those are things used by rich people. What use can they be to us? If required, we have our own cups and spoons. We can use them — why these?" So saying, Bhagavan told his attendant, "Look, from tomorrow we will use our own cups. Take them out." A devotee asked, "What are those cups, Bhagavan?" "Oh! Those cups are made of coconut shells, smoothed and preserved. They are our cups and spoons. They are our own. If we use them the purpose is served. Please keep the silver articles carefully elsewhere," said Bhagavan. "Are not those silver articles Bhagavan's own?" asked the devotee. Bhagavan said with a laugh, "Yes, they are. But tell me, why all this ostentation for us? They are costly. Should we be careless, some one might steal them. So they must be guarded. Is that the job for Swami? Not only that. Somebody might think, 'after all, he is a *sannyasi*

and so will he not give them away if asked?’ and then ask for them. It is not possible to say ‘No’. Yet, if they are given away, those who presented them might resent it, as they gave the articles for Swami’s use only. Why all that trouble? If we use our own cups it does not matter how we use them or what we do with them.” So saying, he sent away the silver articles, had his own cups taken out and shown to all present.

About the same time, a devotee brought a nice walking stick with a silver handle, and presented it to Bhagavan. Turning it this side and that, and examining it, Bhagavan remarked to the devotee, “Good. It is very nice. Please use it carefully.” “But it is not for my use,” he said. “I have brought it thinking that Bhagavan would use it.” “What an idea!” exclaimed Bhagavan. “A nice walking stick with a silver handle should be used only by officials like you. Why for me? Look, I have my own walking stick. That is enough,” concluded Bhagavan.

“When that one is worn out, you could use this one, couldn’t you?” asked another devotee. “Why these costly things for me? If a bit of wood were chiselled, a walking stick could be made out of it in an instant. While I was on the hill, I used to chisel a lot of wood into walking sticks, smooth them and preserve them. Not even a paisa was spent on that account. Several people took away those walking sticks. They were our own. Why all this ostentation for us? Those cheap walking sticks will do for us.” So saying, Bhagavan gave the stick back to the devotee.

As a rule, Bhagavan does not use costly things. He likes things which do not cost even a *paisa*.

14th September, 1947

(143) MOTHER'S GIFT

Last month, Niranjananandaswami sent a bull, born and bred in the Ashram to the Meenakshi Temple, Madurai, as a present. People there named it Basava, decorated it nicely and took a photo of it along with Sri Sambasiva Iyer who had accompanied it. Sambasiva Iyer returned with a copy of the photo besides an old fashioned silk-fringed shawl, some *vibhuti*, *kumkum* and *prasad*¹ given to him by the temple authorities.

Due to the great crowd of visitors since August 15th, Bhagavan has been spending the days out in the Jubilee Hall. Sambasiva Iyer came into Bhagavan's presence with the shawl, *vibhuti*, etc., on a large plate. The *brahmins* who had accompanied him recited a mantra while all of us prostrated before Bhagavan, then rose. Looking at me, Bhagavan said, "Our bull has been sent to the Meenakshi Temple, did you know?" "Yes, I knew," I said. "On the day it was going, I saw it decorated with *turmeric*,² *kumkum*, etc. and came to know of the purpose when I asked the cattle-keeper."

Holding the plate reverentially and smearing the *vibhuti* and *kumkum* on his forehead, Bhagavan said, "See, this is Meenakshi's gift." And his voice quivered as he said it. Sambasiva Iyer spread the shawl over Bhagavan's feet, and when Bhagavan, deeply moved, removed it with evident feeling of reverence, the attendants took it and spread it over the back of the sofa. Adjusting the shawl properly with his hands, Bhagavan, looking towards us, said, "Mother

¹ *Vibhuti*: sacred ash. *Kumkum*: vermilion powder. *Prasad*: any flower or food consecrated by being offered to the Deity.

² *Turmeric*: a bright yellow powder of the turmeric root.

Meenakshi has sent this. It is Mother's gift." And, choked with emotion, he was unable to say more and became silent. His eyes were full of tears of joy and his body became motionless. Seeing this, it seemed to me that Nature herself had become silent. When, as a boy, Bhagavan was in Tiruchuli and someone had been angry with him, he had gone to the temple and wept, sitting behind the image of Sahayamba. He alone knows how the Mother consoled him and what hopes she gave him.

Three years ago, the Ashram doctor said that hand-pounded rice would be good for Bhagavan's health. Thereupon the Ashramites approached Bhagavan with a request to take such rice, which would be specially cooked for him. When Bhagavan asked them whether the same rice would be served to all, they said that it would not be possible, as the supply of such rice was limited. Bhagavan therefore would not agree to having it however much they tried to persuade him. At last they said that they would use the hand-pounded rice for the daily offerings to the deity in the temple, for which rice is usually cooked separately and they requested Bhagavan to partake of that rice. "If that is so, it is all right. I will take it because it is Mother's *prasadam*," said Bhagavan. And from that day onwards, they have been cooking hand-pounded rice separately and, after offering it to the goddess in the temple, have been serving it to Bhagavan, giving what was left over to all others in his company.

Last summer, Ramaswami Iyer's son got married and for the occasion there was a feast here. That day, Iyer noticed that there was white rice on the leaves of all, whereas the rice on Bhagavan's leaf was reddish, and he enquired the reason. Bhagavan smiling, said, "This is Mother's *prasadam*. What is wrong with it? It is cooked specially as an offering to Mother." He then related the above incident. He once again

said, "This is Mother's gift; I have accepted it only because of that."

Is this not a great lesson to those who say that they have given up visiting temples and such things?

16th September, 1947

(144) PEACE OF MIND ITSELF IS LIBERATION

The day before yesterday, an Andhra lady with her husband came to Bhagavan and asked, "Swami, I have heard several discourses on Vedanta. I also do some meditation. Sometimes while in meditation, I feel blissful and tears come to my eyes; at other times I do not have them. Why is that?"

Bhagavan with a smile, said, "Bliss is a thing which is always there and is not something which comes and goes. That which comes and goes is a creation of the mind and you should not worry about it."

The lady: "The moment the bliss that comes, with a thrill of the body, disappears, I feel dejected and desire to have the experience over again. Why?"

Bhagavan: "You admit that 'you' were there both when the blissful feeling was on and when it was not? If you realize that 'you' properly, those experiences will be of no account."

Another questioner: "For realizing that bliss, there must be something to catch hold of, mustn't there?"

Bhagavan: "There must be a duality if you are to catch hold of something else, but what IS, is only one Self, not a duality. Hence, who is to catch hold of whom? And what is the thing to be caught?"

No one replied, and with a kindly expression, Bhagavan said, “The inherent *vasanas* are so strong. What can be done?”

A young man came in, sat down, and gave a note to Bhagavan.

Bhagavan, after reading it, said, “See, in this note is written, ‘Is peace of mind liberation (*moksha*)?’ The reply is contained in the question itself. What else can be said? He must have asked after knowing what mind (*chitta*) is.”

Someone asked the young man, “You know what is meant by *chitta*, don’t you?”

The young man: “*Chitta* means mind.”

Bhagavan: “Yes, but what about it? Your question itself states that peace of mind is liberation.”

The young man: “The mind is at times peaceful and at other times distracted. How are we to prevent those distractions?”

Bhagavan: “For whose mind is that distraction? Who is it that is enquiring?”

The young man: “For my mind. The enquirer is myself.”

Bhagavan: “Yes, that is the real thing. There is a thing called ‘I’. Peace being experienced now and then, it must be admitted that there is a thing called peace. Moreover, those feelings called desires are also of the mind, and if desires were banished, there would be no wavering of the mind; and if there is no wavering, that which remains is peace. To attain that which is always there requires no effort. Effort is required only for the banishing of all desires. As and when the mind wavers, it must be diverted from those matters. If that is done, peace remains as it is. That is Atma, the Self, that is Liberation and that is Self.”

यतो यतो निश्चिरति मनश्चञ्चलमस्थिरम् ।

ततस्ततो नियम्यैतदात्मन्येव वशं नयेत् ॥

Restraining the restless and fidgety mind from all those objects after which it runs, one should repeatedly concentrate on the Self.

Gita, VI: 26

20th September, 1947

(145) ARUNACHALAM

Four or five days ago, some devotees who were going for Giripradakshina, asked me to accompany them and so I went with them after obtaining Bhagavan's permission. By the time we reached Adi Annamalai, it began to rain and so we took shelter in a small *mutt* by the side of the road. I asked a *sadhu* who was there, "Whose is this *mutt*?" "It is Manivachakar's" he said. When I enquired about the circumstances under which the *mutt* happened to be built, he narrated all sorts of stories. I could not understand what exactly he said; even then I listened to him patiently, without further questioning, in the hope of getting the required information from Bhagavan himself later.

Yesterday I waited for an opportunity to enquire about this but Bhagavan was busy reading the story about Sundaramurti in the *Kaleswara Mahatmyam*. This *Kaleswara Mahatmyam* is a part of *Brahmavaivarta Puranam*. He read out to us the portion relating to Sundaramurti going to the Kaleswara Temple but before entering it, Sundaramurti went for a bath to the Gaja Pushkarini Tank which was opposite. When he came out of the tank after his bath, he found that the temple had vanished. So Sundaramurti sang a few songs, expressing his regret at going to the tank for a bath and not to the temple first for the Lord's *darshan*. Thereafter the

temple reappeared. After reading some more portions of the story Bhagavan remarked, “Everything appeared to him first as a large expanse of water and nothing else and later as *Jyothi* (divine light).”

A devotee enquired, “It is said that Arunachalam is also a form of *Jyoti*.” “Yes. It is so. For the human eye it is only a form of earth and stone but its real form is *Jyoti*,” said Bhagavan. Taking advantage of this opportunity I asked, “There is a *mutt* in Adi Annamalai in the name of Manikkavachakar. What could be the reason for its being named like that?” “Oh! That one. It seems he came to Tiruvannamalai also in his pilgrimage. He then stood at that particular place and addressing Arunagiri, sang the songs ‘Tiruvempavai’ and ‘Ammanai’. Hence the *mutt* got established there, in commemoration. You must have heard of the ‘Tiruvempavai’ songs; they are twenty in number. Andal sang thirty songs in praise of Lord Krishna and in the same strain Muruganar also has sung songs in praise of me,” said Bhagavan.

DEVOTEE: “How did this Mountain get the name *Annamalai*?”

BHAGAVAN: “That which is not reachable by Brahma or Vishnu is *Annamalai*. That means it is the embodiment of the *Jyoti* which is beyond word or mind. *Anna* means unreachable. That is the cause of the name.”

DEVOTEE: “But the mountain has a form and a shape.”

BHAGAVAN: “When Brahma and Vishnu saw it, it appeared as a pillar of Light enveloping the whole universe. It was only later that it appeared like a mountain. This is Ishwara’s *sthula sariram* (gross body). *Jyothi* itself is the *sukshma sariram* (subtle body). That which is beyond all these bodies is the Reality. Subtle means the *Tejas* (illumination which fills the whole universe).”

DEVOTEE: “Was it the same thing even to Sundaramurti?”

BHAGAVAN: “Yes. At first it appeared as *Jalamayam* (expanse of water), subsequently as *Tejas* (Lustre all round) and finally to the human eye it appeared as a temple. *Mahatmas* always look with divine eyes. Hence everything appears to them as Pure Light or Brahman.”

NAGAMMA: “Bhagavan has, I believe, written a *padyam* (verse) about the birth or appearance of the Arunachala Linga, is it true?”

BHAGAVAN: “Yes. I wrote it on a *Sivarathri* day in the year *Vikrama*, when somebody asked for it. Perhaps I have written it in Telugu also.”

NAGAMMA: “Yes. It is stated in that *Telugu padyam* that the linga appeared in *dhanurmasam* on the day of the *Arudra* star; that Vishnu and the devas worshipped Siva who gave divine vision to them; that was in the month of *Kumbha*. What is the original story? And what was the occasion for the festivities connected with the *Krithika* star?”

BHAGAVAN: “Oh! That! Brahma and Vishnu were quarrelling as to who was greater. In the month of *Kartika*, on the day of the *Krithika* star, a luminous pillar appeared between them. To mark that event, a festival of lights is celebrated on that day every year. You see, both Brahma and Vishnu got tired of their fruitless search for the beginning and the end of the pillar. Depressed by defeat they met at a common place and prayed to God Almighty when Lord Siva appeared before them in the pillar and graciously blessed them. At their request, He agreed to be within their reach for worship in the shape of the mountain and the Linga (in the temple). He also told them that if they worshipped Him thus, He would after a time, come out in the shape of Rudra and would help them in all possible ways. Then He disappeared. From then onwards, in the month of *Dhanus*,

on the day of the *Arudra* star, Brahma and Vishnu began to worship the Linga that had manifested itself according to the promise of Ishwara. As they continued the worship from year to year in the second half of the month of *Kumbha* on the thirteenth/fourteenth day at midnight, Siva manifested Himself from that Linga and was then worshipped by Hari and the *devas*. Hence that day is called *Sivarathri* as stated in the *Linga Puranam*, and *Siva Puranam*. It seems it is only from then onwards the worship of the Linga commenced. It is emphatically stated in *Skanda Purana* that it is only in Arunachala that the first Linga manifested itself.”

21st September, 1947

(146) MANIKKAVACHAKAR

From the time Bhagavan told me about the probable reason for the establishment of Manikkavachakar’s Mutt in Adi Annamalai I have been keen to hear the story of his birth and achievements. When an opportunity came I asked: “It is stated that while Manikkavachakar was singing the *Tiruvachakam*, Natarajamurthy wrote it down. Is it true? Where was he born?”

BHAGAVAN: “Yes. It is true. That story will be found in *Halasya Mahatmyam*. Don’t you know?”

NAGAMMA: “There is no copy of *Halasya Mahatmyam* in Telugu here. So I do not know.”

BHAGAVAN: “I see. If that is so, I shall tell you the story in brief.” So saying Bhagavan narrated the following story:

“Manikkavachakar was born in a village called Vadavur (Vatapuri) in Pandya *Desha*. Because of that people used to

call him Vadavurar. He was put to school very early. He read all religious books, absorbed the lessons therein, and became noted for his devotion to Siva, as also his kindness to living beings. Having heard about him, the Pandya King sent for him, made him his Prime Minister and conferred on him the title of '*Thennavan Brahmarayan*', i.e., Premier among *brahmins* in the south. Though he performed the duties of a minister with tact and integrity, he had no desire for material happiness. His mind was always absorbed in spiritual matters. Feeling convinced that for the attainment of *jnana*, the grace of a Guru was essential, he kept on making enquiries about it.

“Once the Pandya King ordered the minister to purchase some good horses and bring them to him. As he was already in search of a Guru, Manikkavachakar felt that it was a good opportunity and started with his retinue carrying with him the required amount of gold. As his mind was intensely seeking a Guru, he visited all the temples on the way. While doing so he reached a village called Tiruperundurai. Having realised the maturity of the mind of Manikkavachakar, Parameswara assumed the form of a school teacher and for about a year before that had been teaching poor children in the village seated on a street pial, near the temple. He was taking his meal in the house of his pupils every day by turn. He ate only cooked green vegetables. He was anxiously awaiting the arrival of Manikkavachakar. By the time Manikkavachakar actually came, Ishwara assumed the shape of a *Siddha Purusha* (realised soul) with many *sannyasis* around him and was seated under a *Kurundai* (yellow amanth) tree within the compound of the temple. Vadavuraar came to the temple, had *darshan* of the Lord in it, and while going round the temple by way of *pradakshina*, saw the *Siddha Purusha*. He was thrilled at the

sight, tears welled up in his eyes and his heart jumped with joy. Spontaneously, his hands went up to his head in salutation and he fell down at the feet of the Guru like an uprooted tree. Then he got up, and prayed that he, a humble being, may also be accepted as a disciple. Having come down solely to bestow grace on him, Ishwara, by his mere look, immediately gave him *Jnana Upadesa* (initiation into knowledge). That *upadesa* took deep root in his heart, and gave him indescribable happiness. With folded hands and with joyful tears, he went round the Guru by way of *pradakshina*, offered salutations, stripped himself of all his official dress and ornaments, placed them near the Guru and stood before him with only a *kowpeenam* on. As he felt like singing in praise of the Guru he sang some devotional songs, which were like gems. Ishwara was pleased, and addressing him as Manikkavachakar, ordered him to remain there itself worshipping Him. Then He vanished.

“Fully convinced that He who had blessed him was no other than Ishwara Himself, Manikkavachakar was stricken with unbearable grief and fell on the ground weeping and saying, “Oh! my lord, why did you go away leaving me here?” The villagers were very much surprised at this and began a search for the person who was till then working in their village as a school-teacher but could not find him anywhere. Then they realised that it was the Lord’s *leela*. Some time later, Manikkavachakar got over his grief, decided to act according to the injunctions of Ishwara, sent away his retinue to Madurai, spent all the gold with him on the temple and stayed there alone.

Hearing all that had happened, the king immediately sent an order to Manikkavachakar to return to Madurai. But then how could he go to the king without the horses? If he wanted to purchase them then, where was the money?

Not knowing what to do, he prayed to Lord Siva for help. That night Lord Siva appeared to him in a dream, gave him a priceless gem and said, "Give this to the king and tell him the horses will come on the day of the *Moola* star in the month of *Sravana*." Startled at that vision he opened his eyes, but the Lord was not there. Manikkavachakar was however overjoyed at what had happened, put on his official *dress* and went to Madurai. He gave the gem to the king, discussed the auspicious time when the horses would be arriving and then was anxiously waiting for the day. He did not however resume his official duties. Though his body was in Madurai, his mind was in Tiruperundurai. He was merely biding time. The Pandyan King, however, sent his spies to Perundurai and found out that there were no horses there meant for the king and that all the money meant for their purchase had been spent in the renovation of the temple. So he immediately put Manikkavachakar in prison making him undergo all the trials and tribulations of jail life.

"Meanwhile, as originally arranged, on the day of the *Moola* star, Ishwara assumed the guise of a horseman, transformed the jackals of the jungle into horses, and brought them to the king. The king was astonished at this, took delivery of the horses and according to the advice of the keeper of the stables, had them tied up at the same place where all his other horses were kept. He thanked the horseman profusely, and after sending him away with several presents, released Manikkavachakar from jail with profuse apologies. The same night, the new horses changed into their real forms, killed all the horses in the stables, ate them, created similar havoc in the city and fled. The king grew very angry, branded Manikkavachakar as a trickster and put him back into jail. Soon in accordance with Iswara's orders, the waters of the river Vaigai rose in floods and the whole of

the city of Madurai was under water. Alarmed at that, the king assembled all the people and ordered them to raise up the bunds of the river. For the purpose, he ordered that every citizen should do a certain amount of work with a threat of dire consequences should he fail to do his allotted work.

“There was in Madurai an old woman by name ‘Pittuvani Ammaiyar’. She was a pious devotee of Lord Siva. She was living alone earning her livelihood by daily preparing and selling ‘*pittu*’ (*pittu* is sweetened powdered rice pressed into conical shapes). She had no one to do her allotted work on the river bund nor had she the money to hire a person to do it. She was therefore greatly worried and cried, ‘Ishwara! What shall I do?’ Seeing her helplessness, Ishwara came there in the guise of a cooly with a spade on his shoulder and called out, ‘Granny, granny, do you want a cooly?’ ‘Yes’, she said, ‘but I do not have even a paisa in my hand to pay you. What to do?’ He said, ‘I do not want any money and would be satisfied if you give me some portion of *pittu* to eat. I shall then do the allotted work on the river bund.’

“Pleased with that offer, she began making *pittu* but they did not come out in full shape but were broken. Surprised at this she gave all the bits to the cooly. He ate as many of them as he could and went away saying that he would attend to the bund-raising work. Surprisingly, the dough with the old woman remained intact even though she had prepared and given bits of the *pittu* to the cooly. The cooly went to the workspot, but instead of doing the work lay down there idly standing in the way of others doing their work.

“The king went round to inspect the progress of the work and found that the portion allotted to Ammaiyar remained unattended to. On enquiry, his servants told him all about the pranks of that cooly. The king got infuriated,

called the cooly and said, 'Instead of doing the allotted work, you are lying down and singing.' So saying he hit the cooly on the back with a cane he had in his hand. The hit recoiled not only on the king himself but on all living beings there and all of them suffered the pain on that account. The king immediately realised that the person hit by him was Parameswara himself in the guise of a cooly. The king stood aghast. Parameswara vanished and soon a voice from the sky said, 'Oh king! Manikkavachakar is my beloved devotee. I myself did all this to show you his greatness. Seek his protection'. Soon after hearing that voice, the king went to see Manikkavachakar, and on the way he stepped into the house of Pittuvani to see her. By that time she had already got into a *vimanam* (a heavenly car moving through the skies) and was on her way to Kailasa. The king was greatly surprised and saluted her and from there he went straight to Manikkavachakar and fell at his feet. Manikkavachakar lifted him with great respect, and enquired of his welfare. The king entreatingly said, 'Please forgive me and rule this kingdom yourself.' Manikkavachakar, looking at the king, said with kindness, '*Appah!* (a term of endearment) As I have already agreed to serve the Lord, I cannot be bothered with the problems of ruling a kingdom. Please do not mistake me. Rule the kingdom yourself looking after the welfare of the people. Henceforth you will have nothing to worry about.' So saying, smilingly, he put on the dress of a *sannyasin*, went about visiting holy places singing the praise of Siva. There are several stories like this."

NAGAMMA: "When was the *Tiruvachakam* written?"

BHAGAVAN: "No. He never wrote. He merely went about singing his songs."

NAGAMMA: "Then how did *Tiruvachakam* get to be written?"

BHAGAVAN: Oh that! He was going from one place to another until he came to Chidambaram. While witnessing Nataraja's dance he started singing heart-melting songs and stayed in that place itself. Then one day Nataraja, with a view to making people know the greatness of Manikkavachakar and to bless those people with such an excellent collection of hymns, went to the house of Manikkavachakar in the night, in the guise of a *brahmin*. He was received cordially and when asked for the purpose of the visit, the Lord smilingly and with great familiarity asked, 'It seems you have been singing Hymns during your visit to the sacred places of pilgrimage and that you are doing it here also. May I hear them? I have been thinking of coming and listening to you for a very long time but could not find the required leisure. That is why I have come here at night. I suppose you don't mind. Can you sing? Do you remember them all?' 'There is no need to worry about sleep. I shall sing all the songs I remember. Please listen'. So saying Manikkavachakar began singing in ecstasy. The Lord in the guise of a *brahmin*, sat down there writing the songs on palm leaves. As Manikkavachakar was in ecstasy he hardly noticed the *brahmin* who was taking down the songs. Singing on and on, he completely forgot himself in the thought of God and ultimately became silent. The old *brahmin* quietly disappeared.

"At daybreak, the *dikshitar* (priest) came to the Nataraja Temple as usual to perform the morning *puja* and as he opened the doors he found in front of the Nataraja idol a palm-leaf book on the doorstep. When the book was opened and scrutinised there were in it not only the words 'Tiruvachakam', it was also written that the book was written as it was dictated by Manikkavachakar. It was signed below '*Tiruchitrambalam*', i.e., Chidambaram. The stamp of Sri

Nataraja also was there below the signature. Thereupon, all the temple priests gathered in great surprise and sent word to Manikkavachakar, showed him the *Tiruvachakam*, and the signature of Nataraja and asked him to tell them about the genesis of the hymns.

“Manikkavachakar did not say anything but asked them to accompany him, went to the temple of Nataraja and standing opposite to the Lord said, ‘Sirs, the Lord in front of us is the only answer to your question. He is the answer.’ After having said that, he merged into the Lord.”

As he narrated the story, Bhagavan’s voice got choked. Unable to speak any more he remained in ecstatic silence.

25th September, 1947

(147) THE OMNIPRESENT

Bhagavan was reading something from a Malayalam book yesterday afternoon. Someone nearby enquired whether it was the *Vasishtam*, and Bhagavan replied in the affirmative. A Pandit who was there began discussing the stories in the *Vasishtam*, and said, “Swami, there will be several bondages for the attainment of realization, will there not?”

Bhagavan, who was reclining on the sofa, sat up and said, “Yes, that is so. They are the bondages of the past, the future and the present.”

“Of past bondages there is a story in the Upanishads and also in the *Vasudeva Mananam*. A *brahmin* with a large family acquired a she-buffalo and, by selling milk, curds, ghee, etc., he maintained his family. He was fully occupied the whole day with obtaining fodder, green grass, cotton seed,

etc. for the buffalo and in feeding her. His wife and children passed away, one after the other. He then concentrated all his love and affection on the buffalo, but, after a time, the buffalo too passed away. Being thus left alone and disgusted with family life, he took to *sannyasa*, renouncing the world, and began practising prayer and meditation at the feet of a Holy Teacher (Sadguru).

“After some days, the Guru called him and said, ‘You have been doing spiritual practices (*sadhana*) for several days now. Have you found any benefit from them?’ The *brahmin* then related the above story of his life, and said, ‘Swami, at that time I used to love the buffalo mostly because it was the mainstay of my family. Though it passed away long ago, yet when I am deeply engrossed in meditation, it always appears in my thoughts. What am I to do?’ The Guru, realizing that it was a past bondage, said, ‘My dear friend, the Brahman is said to be ‘*asti, bhati* and *priyam*’. *Asti* means omnipresent; *bhati* means lustre; *priyam* means love. That buffalo, being an object of your love, it also is the Brahman. It has a name and a form; so what you should do is to give up your own name and form as well as those of the buffalo. If that is done, what remains is the Brahman itself. Therefore, give up names and forms and meditate.’

“The *brahmin* then meditated, giving up both of them, and attained realization (*jnana*). Name and form are past bondages. The fact is, that which IS, is only one. It is omnipresent and universal. We say ‘here is a table’, ‘there is a bird’, or ‘there is a man’. There is thus a difference in name and form only, but That which IS, is present everywhere and at all times. That is what is known as *asti*, omnipresent. To say that a thing is existent, there must be someone to see — a Seer. That intelligence to see is known as *bhati*. There must be someone to say, ‘I see it, I hear it,

I want it'. That is *priyam*. All these three are the attributes of nature — the natural Self. They are also called existence consciousness, bliss (*sat-chit-ananda*).”

Another devotee queried, “If *priyam* (Love), is a natural attribute, it should be existent no matter what the object may be. Why then is it not existent when we see a tiger or a snake?”

Bhagavan replied, “We ourselves may not have any love for them, but every species has love towards its own kind, hasn't it? A tiger loves a tiger, and a snake a snake. So also a thief loves a thief and a debauchee a debauchee. Thus, love is always existent. There is a picture presented to you on a screen. That screen is *asti*, omnipresent, and the light that shows the pictures is *bhati* and *priyam*, lustre and love. The pictures with names and forms come and go. If one is not deluded by them and discards them, the canvas screen, which has been there all through, remains as it is. We see pictures on the screen with the help of a small light in an atmosphere of darkness; if that darkness be dispelled by a big light, can the pictures be visible? The whole place becomes luminous and lustrous. If, in the same way, you see the world with the small light called mind, you find it full of different colours. But if you see it with the big light known as Self-realization (*atma-jnana*), you will find that it is one continuous universal light and nothing else.”

26th September, 1947

(148) BONDAGES

A devotee who had been listening to all that Bhagavan had said yesterday morning about past bondages, came and sat near Bhagavan today.

The devotee spoke: “Yesterday, Bhagavan was pleased to tell us about past bondages, but he did not tell us anything about present and future bondages.”

“That is so,” said Bhagavan, “but then has not Sri Vidyaranya, in his *Panchadasi* explained in detail about future bondages and the way in which deliverance from them can be had?”

“I have not read the *Panchadasi*,” said the devotee.

“Then I will tell you,” said Bhagavan, and proceeded to expound it:

“Present bondages are said to be of four types — ‘*vishaya asakti lakshanam*’, ‘*buddhi mandyam*’, ‘*kutharkam*’ and ‘*viparyaya duragraham*’. The first of these means great desire for material things; the second, inability to grasp the teachings and expositions of the Guru; the third means to understand perversely the teachings of the Guru; the fourth is to feel egoistically that ‘I am learned in the Vedas’, ‘I am a Pandit’, ‘I am an ascetic’. These four are called present bondages. If it is asked how these can be overcome, the first can be overcome by tranquillity (*sama*), by curbing the evil propensities of the mind (*dama*), by detachment (*uparati*) and by indifference to external things (*titiksha*). The second type can be overcome by hearing the teachings of the Guru over and over again; the third by reflection or contemplation; and the fourth by profound meditation on a thought. If, in this way, the obstacles are removed and

destroyed, seekers get confirmed in their belief that they are themselves the embodiment of the Self (*atma-swarupa*).

“As for future bondages, they arise from acts done without anyone knowing they are sinful. How can this be discovered? A seeker should recognize it as a future bondage when some action presents itself which makes him feel that he wishes to do it because the doing of it is an act of human kindness and sympathy; and so he is tempted into doing it. He does not realise that the act will be the cause of future bondage. If he thinks that, by being a non-doer (*akarta*) and worldly-detached (*asanga*), the fulfilment of the desire will not affect him and he can therefore do the act, he will become bound all the same and will be freed from the bondage only after several more births. That future bondages result in re-births is authoritatively stated in the Scriptures (*srutis* and *smritis*). Vasudeva, for instance, had one more birth, Bharata had two more, and others many more. Hence a seeker must bear in mind the three bondages and carefully avoid them. If he does not avoid them there can be no doubt that he will have more births. ‘Whosoever is released from these three bondages, for him deliverance (*mukti*) is certain,’ said Vidyaranya. All this is mentioned also in the *Vasudeva Mananam* in which, in addition to this, a number of stories are related. The story of Bharjuva and that of Yajnapasu are particularly interesting, as also that of Asura Vasana. For each aspect of these bondages, a separate story is given by way of illustration. Have you not read even that?”

“I did read it when young but did not realise that it contains such important matters. I will look into it again, Bhagavan.”

With that, the devotee took his leave of Bhagavan.

28th September, 1947

(149) BRINDAVANAM

This morning, a North Indian wrote the following on a slip of paper and handed it over to Bhagavan.

“If I could have audience (*darshan*) of the real form (*swarupa*) of Lord Krishna in Brindavanam, would I find the strength to rid myself of all my troubles? I want to have audience with Him to tell Him all my troubles.”

Bhagavan replied, “Yes, what is the difficulty? It can be done all right. After seeing Him, all our burdens will be transferred to Him. Even now, why worry about it? Throw all the burden on Him and He will see to it.”

The questioner: “If I want to see the real form of Lord Krishna, do I have to go to Brindavanam and meditate, or could it be done anywhere?”

Bhagavan: “One should realize one’s own Self and when that is done, Brindavanam is wherever one is. There is no need to go from place to place thinking that Brindavanam is somewhere else. Those who have the urge to go, may go, but there is nothing imperative about it.

अहमात्मा गुडाकेश सर्वभूताशयस्थितः ।

अहमादिश्च मध्यं च भूतानामन्त एव च ॥

Arjuna, I am the Self seated in the hearts of all beings. I am the beginning, the middle and also the end of all beings.

Bhagavad Gita, X: 20

“Where one is, there is Brindavanam. If one enquires as to who one is and what one is, and finds out the truth, one becomes oneself. To resolve all inherent desires into one’s own Self is real surrender. After that, our burden is His.”

A priest, one Sastri, who was present, enquired, “It is said in the *Bhagavad Gita*, XIII: 10 ‘*Vivikta desa sevitvam aratir janasamsadi*’. What is meant by ‘*vivikta desa*?’”

Bhagavan replied, “‘*vivikta desa*’ is that where there is nothing but the Supreme Self, the Paramatma. ‘*aratir janasamsadi*’ means to remain without getting mixed up with, or absorbed by the five senses (*vishayas*). It is these five senses that rule the majority of people. ‘*Vivikta desa*’ is that state in which they are in abeyance.”

The questioner said, “The ‘*vivikta desa*’ state to which Bhagavan refers is, I take it, the state of intuitive experience (*aparoksha*), and if so, that state of intuitive experience can only be attained if one follows the precepts, i.e., does *sadhana*, for keeping the senses in abeyance. Is that right?”

“Yes, that is so,” replied Bhagavan. “In the *Vasudeva Mananam* and in other books, it is stated that one has to gain conceptual realization (*paroksha jnana*) with the help of a Guru by the act of hearing (*sravana*) and musing (*manana*), and then gain knowledge of ‘intuitive experience (*aparoksha*)’ by spiritual practice, and by consequent complete maturity of the mind. It is stated in the *Vicharasagara*: ‘Intuitive experience (*aparoksha*) is always present; the only obstacle is conceptual knowledge (*paroksha*)’. Spiritual practice (*sadhana*) is required to remove the obstacle; there is no question of attaining intuitive experience. It is all the same — hearing and the like, are necessary whether it is to know the intuitive, or to remove the obstacles. Those who are able to overcome the three-faced obstacles are likened to the naked light in a windless place, or to the ocean in a waveless state; both are true. When one feels the Self within one’s body, it is like the naked light in a windless place; when one feels that the Self is all-pervading, it is like the waveless ocean.”

*18th October, 1947***(150) SIMPLE LIVING**

Recently, owing to some maladjustment in diet, Bhagavan's health has been somewhat indifferent. Noticing this, a rich devotee, by name Kamala Rani, sent a soup made of costly vegetables and sweet grapes to the Ashram one morning, with a request that it might be served to Bhagavan. As it was received just as Bhagavan was about to take his food, Bhagavan accepted it.

Next day, she again prepared it in the same way and sent it to the Ashram. But this time, looking at his attendants, Bhagavan said, "Why this daily? Please tell her not to send it henceforth."

The lady, however, sent it the following day too.

"There!" said Bhagavan, "It has come again. She will not stop sending it. I should have said 'No' at the very beginning. It was my mistake to have accepted it."

A devotee said, "At present, Bhagavan is much run down. She is perhaps sending it because a liquid preparation with grapes might be good for Bhagavan's health."

"Oho!" Bhagavan exclaimed, "Is that so? And have you authority to plead on her behalf?"

"That is not it, Bhagavan. I am saying so because I thought that such preparations might be good for the health."

"May be so," rejoined Bhagavan, "but such things are for rich people, not for us."

"That devotee says that she herself will prepare it and send it," persisted the devotee.

"That is all right," replied Bhagavan, "and if so, please find out if she could supply the same thing for all the people who sit here."

“Why to all people?” asked the devotee.

“Then why to me alone?” said Bhagavan.

“It is possible to do it, if it is for Bhagavan alone, but would it be possible to prepare the same costly food for everyone?” said the devotee.

“Yes, that is just it,” said Bhagavan, “everyone says the same thing, ‘We will do it for Bhagavan alone’. Yet, if it is good for Bhagavan, is it not good for all others? If, with the amount spent on this preparation, broken rice were brought and rice-gruel (*kanji*) prepared, a hundred people could partake of it. Why this expensive preparation for me alone?”

“Our anxiety is that Bhagavan’s body should be healthy.”

“That is all right,” Bhagavan rejoined, “but do you mean to say that health could be maintained only if soup prepared from grapes and costly vegetables is taken? If it were so, then rich people should all be enjoying good health. Why is it then that they are more unhealthy and sickly than the others? The satisfaction that poor people get by taking sour rice-gruel cannot be had from anything else. In olden days, when we were doing the cooking during summer, we used to have a pot into which we put all the cooked rice left over, fill it up with water, a little buttermilk, a little rice-gruel, dry ginger and lemon leaves, and set it aside. It would get sour, cool and clear. The liquid used to be drunk with a pinch of salt by all of us by the tumblerful, and we used to feel very happy. No one had any illness whatsoever. Even now, if I were to drink two tumblerfuls of such water, all my ailments would disappear. But then nobody prepares it for me. ‘Aye! Aye! How could we give sour milk gruel to Swami?’ they say. What is to be done? To prepare soup of this sort will cost a rupee. If, with that money, millet (*ragi*) were brought and ground into flour, it would last for about a month for preparing gruel from it

which is very healthy and nutritive. The amount spent on a single meal could be utilized for the living of a person for a month. I took all those things while I was on the hill and I used to be very satisfied. Now, who will do that? Grape juice, tomato soup and the like are offered to me. Why do I require such things? Tell her not to send the soup from tomorrow.”

The thing stopped there. Bhagavan told us several times that while he was living on the hill he was eating bilva fruit (a sort of wood-apple) for some days and sustaining himself on it. Bhagavan does not like to eat any food without sharing it with the people around him.

22nd October, 1947

(151) ON BEING THE MASTER

Bhagavan’s body has become much reduced of late and some of the devotees have been saying that it is due to his not taking enough of nourishing food. Having heard this a Bengali lady brought some pieces of guava sprinkled with salt and chilly powder, and said beseechingly, “Bhagavan, you are getting very thin; it is good to eat fruit like this. Please accept my humble offering.”

Bhagavan said with a smile, “Who is it that is thinner? You or I?”

She said it was Bhagavan.

Bhagavan: “That is nice. Who exactly has grown thin will be known if the weight is taken. If you like, you may eat those fruits every day yourself. Why this for me? It is all right; you have brought them to day, but please do not bring

them again.” So saying, Bhagavan took a few pieces and said to his attendants, “See how lean she is! Please give her several of these pieces and distribute the rest to the others.”

One of those who could venture to talk to Bhagavan more freely said, “Bhagavan, you have recently very much reduced the amount of food you take daily. It’s not good.”

“Oho!” said Bhagavan. “Who told you that? I am taking whatever I require. What good would there be in my taking more food and getting fat? By getting fat, do you know how many ailments one suffers? The more you eat, the greater will grow the strength of the ailment. If you eat just what is necessary, ailments will be avoided.”

“Why have you given up taking even pepper-water and buttermilk?” said another devotee.

“You enquire why?” said Bhagavan. “If you observe what is being done when the meals are served, you yourself will understand. Buttermilk is brought into the dining hall in big buckets with large ladles. When taking out the buttermilk for serving me, the ladle is full, but when the same is served to the very next person, the ladle is only half full. When I saw that, I got disgusted and felt that I myself should not take any more than half a ladleful.”

“Why not at least take fruit juice?” said the devotee.

“So this has started again!” said Bhagavan. “Everyone says the same thing. How will all that be possible for me?”

“What do you mean, Bhagavan? We get quite a lot of fruit. Why say that it is impossible? You yourself have stated that what is offered voluntarily can be accepted.”

“So that is it!” said Bhagavan. “If I did say that such offerings could be accepted, did that mean that the people around could be ignored?”

“True,” said the devotee, “but quite a lot of fruit is received; it can be distributed to the others too.”

“All is very well,” said Bhagavan, “but where have we the wherewithal to give them all? The fruit is shown here to the Swami as an offering, a *naivedya*, and then taken away. It is kept locked in the store room. The keys are in the charge of the store-keeper. Who will go and ask him? In the same way, the various articles here are in the custody of someone or other; I have none. This is the result of being a spiritual preceptor!” said Bhagavan smiling.

It seems that some fifteen days back, someone brought some green pepper. Bhagavan had that pepper, some myrobalams, acetic acid, salt and other ingredients mixed, ground and made into little pills. Today Sivanandan came in to enquire whether he could get the pills for Bhagavan, as they are supposed to be good against phlegm and Bhagavan had been using them now and then during the cold weather. As Sivanandan had not enquired about them all these fifteen days and is doing it only now, Bhagavan said with a laugh, “I see, you have now remembered about them. Yes, yes, you have been waiting to see whether I would ask for them, and thereby test me. Were I to ask, you would say, ‘What is this? Swami has begun to ask about everything and is worrying us’. What am I to do? They feel that if they but salute me once, I should thereafter do everything they want. People say that spiritual preceptorship (*swamitvam*), is a matter for happiness. But see, this is what it is to be a spiritual preceptor. Would it not be good if a book is written on spiritual preceptorship?”

“Bhagavan is saying something unusual,” said a devotee.

Bhagavan replying with a smile, said, “What is there unusual about it? It is all true. ‘Swami is seated on a sofa with a soft mattress spread on it. What is there for him to worry about?’ That is what people think. But do they know about our troubles? That is why I say that it would be good

for a big book to be written on spiritual preceptorship. If all the things that have happened here during the last years had been written in the form of a book, it would be as big as the *Mahabharatham*! Anyone who cares to write it, may do so even now!" he said.

"Who would write all that?" said a devotee.

"Why not?" said Bhagavan. "If a book recording these events is written, all people will then know that spiritual preceptorship consists in saying, 'Yes, yes,' and 'All right, all right'. What is the difficulty in writing about it?"

So saying, Bhagavan looked at me and with a laugh said, "Why? If you like, you can write it!"

24th October, 1947

(152) ONE-POINTEDNESS

Yesterday a monkey with her baby stood in the window by the side of Bhagavan's sofa. Bhagavan was reading something and so did not notice it. After a while, the monkey screeched and one of the attendants tried to drive her away by shouting, but she would not go. Bhagavan then looked up and said, "Wait! She has come here to show her baby to Bhagavan. Do not all the people bring their children to show them? For her, her child is equally dear. Look how young that child is." So saying, Bhagavan turned towards her, and said in an endearing tone, "Hullo! So you have brought your child? That is good!" And, giving her a plantain, he sent her away.

Did you hear about what the monkeys did last Independence Day? A few days before, on the 11th or 12th, while Bhagavan was seated in the Jubilee Hall, an army of

monkeys came clamouring for fruit. Krishnaswami, the attendant, tried to drive them away by shouting, whereupon Bhagavan said, "Remember, the 15th of August is an Independence day for them as well. You must give them a feast on that day instead of driving them away."

On the 14th, while some of the Asramites were busy making arrangements for the hoisting of the flag, the army of monkeys came again and again. One of the servants tried to drive them away. Seeing this, Bhagavan said with a laugh, "Do not drive them away, please. They too have attained independence, have they not? You must give them Bengal-gram, lentils and parched rice and feast them. Is it proper to drive them away?" "But tomorrow is the Independence Day, Bhagavan," said the servant, "not today." Bhagavan laughed, "So that's it, is it? But when you are making arrangements for the celebrations, should they not make their own arrangements? That is why they are busy, don't you see?"

You know what happens with the monkeys on other occasions? One of the attendants will be sitting with a basket to receive the fruit offered to Bhagavan by devotees. Off and on the attendant sits with closed eyes being drowsy or listening to the radio. Waiting for a suitable opportunity, some of the monkeys come and snatch away the fruit. When the people in the hall try to scare them away, Bhagavan would say, "When these attendants are immersed in deep meditation (*dhyana samadhi*), the monkeys come and see to the work of the attendants. Someone has to look after the work! The attendants put the fruit into the basket, the monkeys put the fruit into their stomachs; that is all the difference. While people forget themselves while listening to the music over the radio the monkeys busy themselves in enjoying the sweet juice of the fruit. That is good, isn't it!" If the monkeys come while no attendants are there, Bhagavan says, as soon as one

returns to duty, “See, not one of you was here and so the monkeys have been looking after your work. They are actually helping you. So you can take some rest. When I was on the hill, they were my constant companions. You now drive them away, but in those days, theirs was the empire.”

Sometimes these great monkey-warriors knock the fruit out of the hands of newcomers, while on their way to Bhagavan, and at times even snatch away the fruit which people keep by their side after having had it given back to them as *prasadam** by Bhagavan’s attendants. Noticing these things Bhagavan would say, “They take their share of the fruit, why be angry with them? There is the concentrated look, the ‘*lakshya drishti*’. Somehow they find out where the fruit is kept and in the twinkling of an eye, all of them come and take away their share. Their attention is always on the fruit. That is why, in Vedantic parlance, the monkey’s look is given as an illustration of the concentrated look, *lakshya drishti*. The moment the Guru makes a sign with his eye, the disciple should understand; otherwise the disciple cannot achieve his aim.

26th October, 1947

(153) EXISTENCE AFTER REALIZATION

This morning after *Veda Parayana*, a gentleman who came a few days ago, enquired of Bhagavan, “Swami, it is said that though a *Jnani* (a realised soul) appears to be doing all the

* It is customary in India, on offering fruit or flowers to the deity or a holy man, for a portion of the offering to be returned to the devotee.

routine things, he really does nothing. How can that be explained?”

Bhagavan: “How? There is a story about it. Two friends while travelling on business slept the night somewhere, and one of them had a dream that he and his companion had gone together to several places and had done various things. On rising in the morning, the other man had nothing to say, for he had slept soundly. But the first man asked his friend about the various places they had seen together during the night, but the second man could say nothing about them, having had no dream like the other. He merely said, ‘I have gone nowhere; I have been here only’. As a matter of fact, neither had gone anywhere; but the first man had only an illusion of having gone. Similarly, to those who look upon this body as real, and not unreal as in a dream, it may appear real, but, strictly speaking, nothing affects the *Jnani*.”

Remarked some other person: “It is said that the eyes of a *Jnani* appear to look at things, but in reality they see nothing.”

Bhagavan: “Yes, the eyes of the *Jnani* are likened to the eyes of a dead goat, they are always open, never closed. They glitter but they see nothing, though it seems to others that they see everything. But what is the point?”

The devotee continued: “It is also said that for such adepts, *siddhas*, there is no conditioning or limitation (*upadhi*) of space and time.”

Bhagavan: “That is right. It is true that there is no such thing as conditioning or limitation, but the doubt then arises as to how the day-to-day work is done. It has therefore to be said that they have limitation. It is also stated that the limitation will be there in a subtle way until there is deliverance from the body (*videha mukti*). It is like a line drawn on water; the line appears while it is being drawn, but is not there immediately after.”

The devotee: “If that is so for emancipated souls (*siddha purushas*), there will be no *upadhi* (support) after their mortal body falls away. But Bhagavan himself has said that there are several emancipated souls on this hill. If they have no support (*upadhi*) how could they remain in existence?”

Bhagavan:

क्षीरं क्षीरे यथा क्षिप्तं तैलं तैले जलं जले ।

संयुक्तमेकतां याति तथाऽत्मन्यात्मविन्मुनिः ॥

Those who have attained complete emancipation (*jnana siddhi*) merge with the universe after their bodies fall off, just as milk merges with milk, oil with oil, water with water.

In the case of lower souls, because of some *samskaras* or latent tendencies remaining unexpired, they stay in this world, taking whatever form they please, and ultimately become merged.

Viveka Chudamani, verse 567

The devotee: “Why does that difference arise?”

Bhagavan: “It arises because of the strength of their desires (*samkalpas*).”

28th October, 1947

**(154) VAIRAGYA, BODHA, UPARATI
(NON-ATTACHMENT, ILLUMINATION,
DESIRELESSNESS)**

I have recently been reading the *Vasudeva Mananam*. Yesterday I read in the chapter of “Vairagyabodhoparati” that, if Realization be attained, then liberation, (*moksha*) can be gained even without *vairagya* (non-attachment) and *uparati* (desirelessness). I asked Bhagavan how that could be, as

according to the Ancients, the sign of a Realized Soul (*Jnani*) is non-attachment.

Bhagavan replied, “It is true that non-attachment is the sign of a Realized Soul. But it is also stated in the same book that any apparent attachment one may be conscious of pertains to the body only and not to the Self. That attachment is a deterrent to the complete happiness of a *jivan mukta*, i.e., of one delivered from worldly bonds during his lifetime; whereas for the *videha mukta* (one who is delivered from worldly bonds only at death), Realization alone is important. When it is stated that liberation can be gained by obtaining realization even without non-attachment and desirelessness, it means that liberation is gained only at the time of death. It cannot be said, however, that it will all be of waste if one has non-attachment and desirelessness yet no realization, for they will enable one to attain heaven (*punya-loka*). It is all mentioned in *Vasudeva Mananam*.”

I then asked how realization could ever be attained without non-attachment and desirelessness.

Bhagavan explained, “Non-attachment, Illumination and desirelessness (*vairagya, bhodha, uparati*), these three, will not remain separate from one another. After attaining realization though one may continue outwardly to show attachment, inwardly non-attachment will necessarily be there. It is however said to be a hindrance to the complete enjoyment of bliss by a *jivan mukta*. Owing to the strength of the results of past actions (*prarabdha*), he acts as one having inherent tendencies (*vasanas*); but, strictly speaking, attachment will not touch him. That is why it is said to be the result of past actions.”

I asked whether that meant that, even though one attained knowledge of the Self, one would not be able, were past actions to remain too strong, to discard inherent

tendencies, and that, until those inherent tendencies were destroyed, one could not attain undisturbed peace.

Bhagavan replied, “Yes, those who are firm in their *vairagya*, *bodha* and *uparati* are indeed in a high state of realisation, that means they are *jivan muktas*. If instead those for whom Self-realisation alone is the most important, but out of *prarabdha* they move about as if they have attachments, they remain conscious of the fact that they actually do not have attachments. Strictly speaking such attachments do not affect them. That is why in *Vasishtam* it is said that even in the third stage, *vasanas* get exterminated and the mind gets destroyed. If it is asked when the fourth stage is reached and where is the need for the fifth and the sixth stage, some vague replies are given. So long as there is a doubt, there is an explanation. The disappearance of all doubts is realisation.”

“For a Realized Soul,” I asked, “to the extent to which he has non-attachment, will he to that extent have tranquillity and peace; while to the extent that his attachment grows, will he to that extent be further removed from tranquillity?”

“Yes,” said Bhagavan, “that is the meaning.” And so saying, he was again silent.

29th October, 1947

(155) KNOWLEDGE OF OTHER LANGUAGES

This afternoon at 2-30, Bhagavan was reading a Malayalam book and was speaking to a devotee seated near him. The devotee was asking, “Did Bhagavan learn to read Malayalam in his younger days?”

“No,” Bhagavan replied, “while I was staying in Gurumurtham, Palaniswami used to be with me. He had a copy of the *Adhyatma Ramayanam* and was often reading it aloud. Every Malayali who knows how to read, invariably reads that book.

“Hence, even though he did not know how to read well, he somehow managed to read it, albeit with many mistakes. I was at the time observing silence, and so I used merely to listen. After we shifted to the palmyra grove, I took the book and found it to be in Malayalam script. Having already learnt that script, I easily learned to read and write.”

“When did you learn Telugu?” asked someone.

“When I was in the Virupaksha Cave,” said Bhagavan, “Gambhiram Seshayya and others asked me to write some stanzas in Telugu and so I transcribed letter by letter from Sanskrit into Telugu script and practised them. Thus I slowly learnt Telugu in the year 1900.”

I asked him when he had learnt the Nagari script.

“That must also have been about the same time,” said Bhagavan. “Muthurama Dikshitar and others used to come frequently, as they had books in Nagari script, I used to copy the letters and in that way got used to them.”

Someone said, “We had heard that you learnt Telugu only after Nayana came to you.”

“No,” said Bhagavan, “I learnt it much earlier, but I got used to speaking it freely only after he came, that’s all.”

“We had heard,” said another, “that you learnt Telugu in your boyhood days.”

“I did not know how to write or read Telugu at that time,” said Bhagavan. “My grandfather’s younger brother knew Telugu; he used to keep me by his side on the cot and teach me Telugu alphabet. That was all. I learnt Telugu only while writing the stanzas. Subsequently, when I wrote

‘Upadesa Saram’, Yogi Ramiah wanted it in Telugu, so I wrote it in couplets (*dvipada*), closely following the Tamil metre. I then showed it to Nayana who said that it was not a correct Telugu couplet and he taught me the metres (*ganas*) of the Telugu verses. I wrote them down in Tamil script and then made the required alterations. When I showed it to Nayana, he said it was correct and could be given to the printers. Later, when Balarama Reddy got me a copy of the *Sulakshana Saram*, I learnt the metres of the other verses, copied them on two pages of paper and pasted them in our copy of the Telugu primer. That has been sufficient for my purposes. Now, if anyone reads a verse, I can easily find out in what metre it is and what mistakes, if any, there are. I learnt one language after another in the same way. I did not purposely learn any language,” said Bhagavan.

30th October, 1947

(156) TURIYAVASTHA (THE FOURTH STATE)

This morning, a young Tamilian asked Bhagavan, “Swami, it is said that there is no world without the individual soul and God (*jiveswara*). What is the meaning of it?”

“Yes,” Bhagavan told him, “the world, individual soul and God (*jagatjiveswara*) are the embodiment of the three qualities or *gunas*.”

“Is the Personal God, Ishwara, to be included in the three qualities?” asked the young man.

“Certainly,” said Bhagavan. “In that group, goodness (*satvam*) is the personal God (Ishwara); activity (*rajas*) is the

individual soul (*jīva*); and heaviness (*tamas*) is the world (*jagat*). It is said that the Self is pure goodness (*suddha satva*).”

A young Bengali who was present asked, “Swami, *samadhi*¹ is said to be of two sorts: ‘*kevala nirvikalpa*’² and ‘*sahaja nirvikalpa*’³. What are their attributes?”

Bhagavan looked kindly at him, and said, “One who accustoms himself naturally to meditation (*dhyana*) and enjoys the bliss of meditation, will not lose his *samadhi* state whatever external work he does, whatever thought may come to him. That is called ‘*sahaja nirvikalpa samadhi*.’ It is these two states that are called complete destruction (*nasa*) and suppression (*laya*); *nasa* is *sahaja nirvikalpam* and *laya* is *kevala nirvikalpam*. Those who are in the *laya* (suppressed) *samadhi* state will have to bring the mind back under control from time to time. If the mind is destroyed, it will not sprout again; the mind will then be something like a fried seed. Whatever is done by such people is just incidental; they will not slide down from their high state. Those that are in the *kevala nirvikalpa samadhi* state are not *siddhas*⁴; they are mere *sadhakas*.⁵ Those who are in the *sahaja nirvikalpa* state are like a light in a windless place, or the ocean without waves; that is, there is no movement. They cannot find anything which is different from themselves. For those who

¹ *Samadhi* is that state of absorption within when distinction between subject and object is lost.

² *Kevala nirvikalpa samadhi* is the state of absolute thought-free awareness. The mind which is subject to Vasanas is forcibly stilled by a person sitting quietly for some time. At other times he gets back to his normal worldly activities.

³ *Sahaja nirvikalpa samadhi* is the state of pure awareness even during normal activities.

⁴ Semi-divine beings supposed to be of great purity and holiness and said to be particularly characterized by eight supernatural faculties called *Siddhis*.

⁵ Those who are practising to become *Siddhas*.

do not reach that state, everything appears to be different from themselves.”

Two days ago, a young man in ochre robes and belonging to the Ramakrishna Mission, asked, “What is meant by the ‘Fourth State’ (*turiyavastha*)?”

Bhagavan replied, “There is no such thing as the Fourth State. Self itself is the Fourth State.”

“Why then do people say the ‘Fourth State’ and ‘Beyond the Fourth State’ (*turiya* and *turiyatita*)?” asked the questioner.

Bhagavan replied, “What there is, is one state only; you may call it *turiya* or *turiyatita* or what you like. The wakeful state (*jagrat*), the dream state (*swapna*) and the state of deep sleep (*sushupti*) — these three states go on changing like the scenes in a cinema. All the three are ideas of the mind. That which is beyond these three, and which is real and permanent, is the Self itself. That is the state called the Fourth, the *turiya*, state. In common parlance, people talk of the ‘Fourth State’ and of ‘Beyond the Fourth State’, and so on, but strictly speaking, there is only one state.”

19th November, 1947

(157) UNIVERSAL BROTHERHOOD

Until some time ago, the evening *Veda Parayana*, (chanting of the scriptures), was held in the little hall, but for some time past, many people, for lack of space, have had to sit outside. Now that the Golden Jubilee Hall* has been

*A great ridge-roofed and thatched verandah abutting on to the old hall facing the hill. Bhagavan sat on a stone couch at its western end, head to the north.

constructed, the evening *Veda Parayana* has been shifted there. It was after this change that the Maharani of Baroda presented a white peacock to the Ashram.

During the early days after its arrival, Bhagavan watched over it with great care, for it was very young. It slept at night in Bhagavan's old hall; being summer time, Bhagavan himself slept out in the Jubilee Hall at night, and hence, the morning scripture chanting (the Upanishad *parayana*) was held there. But now, with the onset of winter, the attendants moved Bhagavan back into the old hall at nights. The peacock at night rested on a beam in the hall with the consequence that the floor underneath it became very dirty by the morning and much inconvenience was felt at the early morning *parayana*, some people being actually obliged to sit outside. This disgusted the attendants, and on expressing their disgust, Bhagavan said, "Why are you disgusted? Why not get a cage made and keep the peacock in it in the Jubilee Hall?" Taking the hint, a devotee immediately had a cage made.

The cage was placed in the Jubilee Hall next to the stone couch of Bhagavan, and this automatically became the home of the peacock. The day it was moved out to the Jubilee Hall, Bhagavan who had been sleeping in the old hall until then, insisted on his bed too being shifted outside to the Jubilee Hall. But, as it was now very cold at night, it was feared that sleeping in the open hall would adversely affect Bhagavan's health. On the devotees expressing their fears, Bhagavan laughed and said, "The peacock came to us from somewhere. What respect is it to that guest if we make him sleep outside while we sleep inside? If a relative comes to your house, is it proper to make him sleep on the verandha while you sleep inside the house? If possible, we have to take him inside, or else, we too should sleep outside on the

verandah.” Turning to his attendants, he said, “If you are afraid of the cold outside, you can sleep inside.”

The attendants said, “Sleeping outside will be bad for Bhagavan’s health. If necessary, one of us will sleep there to keep the peacock company.”

“Enough, enough of this!” said Bhagavan. “Will that not affect your health? If you want to, you can sleep inside.”

However much they pleaded, Bhagavan was adamant and slept that night out in the Jubilee Hall.

Next afternoon, as soon as Bhagavan went out for his walk at about 4-45, his attendant Krishnaswami removed Bhagavan’s things from the Jubilee Hall back into the old hall and arranged for the *Veda Parayana* to be held there. Seeing this, on his return, Bhagavan said, “This is what I don’t like, keeping the peacock a prisoner in its cage and leaving it there outside, while we are all here inside. Not only that, it was because this hall was found to be insufficiently small for the *Veda Parayana* that we shifted outside to the Jubilee Hall. Has this hall then grown any bigger? Are we again to allow some people into this hall while others are forced to be outside? Why is all this? If everything is done there in the Jubilee Hall, the peacock will not feel lonely and we shall have ample space. From tomorrow arrangements should be made accordingly. If you shift my seat here, I will not sit here, so take care!” Having spoken thus, Bhagavan had his bed transferred after food to the Jubilee Hall and slept there keeping the peacock company.

The next day, Bhagavan went back to sit in the old hall but on going out in the afternoon, Bhagavan looked at the peacock’s cage and again said, “It is all right if, by the time I return, you have arranged for the *Veda Parayana* to be held in the Jubilee Hall; otherwise I will spread my towel

and sit here alone. If you find it difficult to change my seat from one hall to the other, I will stay all day long in this Jubilee Hall only. It is just as you please. After all, what do I need? This towel is enough for me.”

By the time Bhagavan returned from his walk, his seat was shifted into the Jubilee Hall. It was after this incident that the old hall was extended and that Bhagavan continued to stay there all the time. Treating all living beings that come into his presence as near and dear relatives is possible for Bhagavan alone. Is it possible for us?

21st November, 1947

(158) REMEMBERANCE — FORGETFULNESS

At 3 o'clock this afternoon, the white peacock came into Bhagavan's presence and began moving about in the midst of us all. A devotee, noticing how tame it was, remarked, "This bird appears to have a knowledge of its previous births; would it otherwise move so freely in the midst of all these people?"

Bhagavan said, "That is why so many people here say that it is Madhava (an old attendant of Bhagavan who had recently passed away) who has come here in this form."

The devotee asked, "If so, will it know that it was so and so in its last birth?"

Bhagavan: "How could it? No one knows about his previous birth. People forget, and that forgetfulness is good. In this one life alone, we are sometimes terribly worried over what had happened in the past. Could we bear such worries if we knew all about our previous births? Knowing the facts

of previous births means knowing one's own Self. If that is known this birth and the previous births will be seen to be of the mind and its desires (*sankalpa*) only. See in how many different ways this creation has been described in the *Vasishtam*. When Gadhi asked Krishna to show him his illusory bodies (*maya swarupam*), He showed him innumerable forms. The story of Lavana Maharaja is also like that, and the story of Sukra is still more interesting. It is told that Sukra remained in *samadhi* without realizing that his body had meanwhile completely decayed and was no longer in existence. During that time, he had several births. At last he was born as a *brahmin* and, while leading an austere life on Mount Meru, his father Bhrgu with the God of Death (Kala) in their human bodies (*sthula sarira*) went to him and told him all that had happened during his births and rebirths. Sukra then accompanied them both and saw his original body and, with the permission of the God of Death, entered into it. In some other stories it is told that what appeared to one person in a dream, another saw it in the waking state itself. Among these, which story is true?" added Bhagavan.

The devotee said, "If something appeared to one in a dream, how could it appear to someone else in the waking state?"

"Why not?" said Bhagavan. "That is also a dream, though of a different sort. Like the pictures that appear on a screen, everything that appears is the creation of the mind. In reality one is not any one of those things. In this unreal world, which is like a doll's play, it is better to forget everything rather than remember that one was that doll or this picture."

The devotee: "According to the material world, we have to say, 'this is mine', must we not?"

"Yes, indeed," replied Bhagavan, "we have to say so. By merely saying so, however, there is no need to think

that we are all that, and get immersed in the pleasures and sorrows relating to that. When we ride in a carriage, do we feel that we are the carriage? Take the example of the sun; it shines in water in a small pot, in big rivers and in a mirror. Its image is there. But just because of that, does it think that it is all that? The same thing with us. All the trouble arises if one thinks one is the body. If one rejects that thought, then, like the sun, one will shine everywhere and be all-pervading.”

The devotee: “It is for that, is it not, that Bhagavan says that the best thing to do is to follow the path of Self-enquiry of ‘Who am I?’”

Bhagavan: “Yes; but in the *Vasishtam* it is mentioned that Vasishtha told Rama that the path of Self-enquiry should not be shown to anyone who is not sufficiently qualified. In some other books it has been stated that spiritual practices should be done for several births, or for at least twelve years under a Guru. As people would be scared away if I said that spiritual practices had to be done for several births, I tell them, ‘You have liberation already within you; you have merely to rid yourselves of exterior things that have come upon you’. Spiritual practices are for that alone. Even so, the Ancients have not said all this for nothing. If a person is told that he is the Godhead, Brahman itself, and that he is already liberated, he may not do any spiritual practices, thinking that he already has that which is required and does not want anything more. That is why these Vedantic matters should not be told to spiritually undeveloped people (*anadhikaris*); there is no other reason.” And Bhagavan smiled.

A recently arrived devotee, taking up the thread of the conversation said, “In the stanza on Sankara, ‘like a city in a mirror, the Universe is a reflection in the Self (*viswam darpana drisyamana nagari tulyam nijanthargatam*)’. The statement that

the world is a myth and unreal is for ordinary people and not for Realized Souls. Is that not so?”

“Yes,” replied Bhagavan, “In the eyes of the Realized Soul, everything appears to be full of Brahman. The non-realized soul (the *ajnani*) cannot see anything, however much he is told. Hence all the scriptures are for the ordinary people only.”

29th November, 1947

(159) THE PATH OF SELF-ENQUIRY

This afternoon, a devotee asked Bhagavan, “Swami, for gaining Realization, is the enquiry ‘Who am I?’ the only way?”

Bhagavan answered him: “Enquiry is not the only way. If one does spiritual practice (*sadhana*) with name and form, repetition of holy names (*japa*), or any of these methods with grim determination and perseverance, one becomes THAT. According to the capacity of each individual, one spiritual practice is said to be better than another and several shades and variations of them have been given. Some people are a long way from Tiruvannamalai, some are very near; some are in Tiruvannamalai, while some get into Bhagavan’s hall itself. For those who come into the hall, it is enough, if they are told as they step in, ‘Here is the Maharshi’, and they realize him immediately. For others they have to be told which route to take, which trains to catch, where to change, which road to turn into. In like manner, the particular path to be taken must be prescribed according to the capacity of the practiser (*sadhaka*). These spiritual practices are not for knowing one’s own Self, which is all-pervading, but only for getting rid of the objects of desire. When all these are discarded, one

remains as one IS. That which is always in existence is the Self — all things are born out of the Self. That will be known only when one realizes one's own Self. So long as one has not that knowledge, all that is seen in this world appears as real. Supposing a person sleeps in this hall. In his sleep he dreams of going somewhere, loses his way, wanders from one village to another, from one hill to another, and during that time, and for days together, searches without food or water. He suffers a good deal, enquiries of several people and finally finds the correct place. He reaches it, and feeling that he is stepping into this hall, greatly relieved, he opens his eyes with a startled look. All this will have happened within a short time and it is only after he wakes up that he realizes that he had not been anywhere. Our present life is also like that. When the eye of knowledge is opened, a person realizes that he remains ever in his own Self."

The questioner asked further: "Is it true that all spiritual practices, as is said, merge into the path of Self-enquiry?"

"Yes," replied Bhagavan, "the enquiry 'Who am I?' is the beginning and the end of the teachings of Vedanta. It is said that only he who has the assets of the four kinds of spiritual practice is fit for Vedantic enquiry. Of the four categories of practice the first is the knowledge of the Self and the non-Self (*atma* and *anatma*). That means a knowledge that the Self is eternal (*nitya*) and that the world is unreal (*mithya*). How to know this is the question. It is possible to know this by enquiry as to 'Who am I?' and what is the nature of my self! Usually this procedure is suggested at the beginning of the spiritual practice, but generally it does not carry conviction. So all sorts of other spiritual practices are resorted to and it is only ultimately, as a last resort, that the practiser takes to Self-enquiry. The alphabet A B C D E, etc., are learnt while young. If it is

stated that these letters are the fundamentals for all education and that there is no need to study for B.A. or M.A., will people listen to such advice? It is only after studying and passing these examinations that it will be realized that all that has been studied is contained in those fundamental letters A B C, etc. Are not all the scriptures contained in the elementary thing, the alphabet? That it is so, is only known after learning by heart all the scriptures. It is the same with every one of these things. There are a number of rivers, some flow straight, some wind and twist zig-zag, but all of them ultimately become merged in the ocean. In the same way, all paths become merged in the path of Self-enquiry, just as all languages become merged in Silence (*mouna*). *Mouna* means continuous speech; it does not mean that it is a vacuum. It is the speech of self, identifying with the Self. It is Self-luminous. Everything is in the Self. In Tamil Nad a great person composed and sang a song the purport of which is, 'We are like a screen, and the whole world appears like pictures on it. Silence is full and all-pervading'. Like the saying, 'ॐ पूर्णमदः पूर्णमिदं पूर्णात्पूर्णमुदच्यते (*om purnamadah purnamidam purnath purnam udachyate*),* everything appears to be the same for the Realized Soul. Even though he sees something it is as good as his not seeing it."

So saying, Bhagavan was once more silent.

* "From the Fullness when the Full is taken the Full remains." The Abstract Brahman in Its fullness is all-pervading. The Jiva in the body is also full with the knowledge of the Brahman and awareness of the world. From the former, i.e., *nirvikalpa* Brahman, is born the latter, i.e., *savikalpa* Brahman, with all the fullness of the world.

29th November; 1947

(160) THE HOLY BEACON

When the Holy Beacon is lit on Arunachala, it is a sight well worth seeing. In the Ashram, in Bhagavan's presence, a small *deepam* is also simultaneously lit, sacramental offerings (*prasadam*) are distributed and "Akshara Mana Malai" and other hymns are sung.

This year in particular, as there was no rain, the function went off very well. In the afternoon, from 3 o'clock onwards, the devotees started making preparations for the festival at the Ashram. In the Jubilee Hall, the floor was decorated with lime and rice powder floral designs, while hanging from the roof all round, were mango leaf festoons. On such occasions, the crowds which come to town for this Dipotsavam (Festival of Lights) usually visit the Ashram in the morning as they go round the hill; whereas in the evenings, it is mostly the Asramites who are present at the Ashram celebrations, and there is no crowd.

On this evening, when Bhagavan went out to the cowshed, the attendants placed his couch in the open space facing the summit of the hill, spread the bedding on it and put a stool with all the things on it that Bhagavan usually has by him. Opposite the couch a large shallow iron pan was placed on a high stool, ghee poured into it and a wick placed in the centre; flowers and garlands were strewn around it. Just as these preparations were nearing completion, Bhagavan came from the cowshed with his attendants, and it was as though it were actually Lord Siva Himself arriving on the scene. Spontaneously those gathered there rose; Bhagavan seated himself on the couch and all prostrated before him. We then sat in rows, the men on Bhagavan's

right, the women on his left, along the steps leading to the Hill. The space in front of Bhagavan was filled, not only with baskets of fruits brought by the devotees, but also with vessels of all sorts full of sweetmeats and other preparations. When the ghee brought by devotees was poured into the pan, it was overflowing. Camphor was then placed on the wick. The fragrance from the lighted incense sticks spread on all sides and created a holy atmosphere.

Bhagavan sat lovingly looking at all the devotees and related to those near him the significance of the Festival of Lights. He also pointed out the exact place where the deepam was to be lit on the hilltop. After that, *Veda Parayana* began.

By the time the *parayana* was over, the sun had set. Soon, little lights in earthenware saucers were lit all round the hall and garlands of electric lights of many colours were switched on. Everyone was eagerly awaiting the lighting of the sacred beacon on the hilltop and the attendants had handed to Bhagavan a binocular with which he, too, was eagerly scanning the hill. While his gaze was concentrated on the summit of the hill, ours was concentrated on his Divine face, for it was just a reflection of Arunachala.

With the firing of crackers at the Temple, the light on the hilltop appeared. Immediately, the '*akhanda jyoti*' (uninterrupted) light, opposite Bhagavan was lighted. The *Brahmins* rose and chanted the mantra, '*na karmana naprajaya dhanena*', and lit the camphor; *kumkum* and *vibhuti* were distributed and then all the devotees sat down. After Bhagavan had partaken of a little fruit and some sweetmeats, the rest were distributed amongst the devotees. Immediately after that, the devotees divided themselves into two parties, one singing the hymns in the "Akshara Mana Malai", and the other taking up the refrain

'*Arunachala Siva*'. After that, the five stanzas beginning with '*Karunapurnasudhabhde*' in Sanskrit and its equivalent in Tamil were recited.

Bhagavan sat resting his cheek on his hand, slightly reclining on the pillow — his characteristic pose. His face appeared as though mirroring his Self-illumination, with his silence and his profound thought reflected on it. The moon rose in the east and cast its light on him as though seeking its light from him. I sat there, facing east, with my back against the almond tree. If I looked west, I had the light of the Arunachala Hill; if I looked ahead I had the brilliant light of the moon; and if I looked to the right, I had the glowing light emanating from Bhagavan's face. What a sight it was, and how lucky I felt that I had the three-faced Light around me that night! I felt an inexplicable bliss and involuntarily closed my eyes.

On hearing the sound of the dinner bell, I opened my eyes. Bhagavan was looking steadily at me, and that look was more than I could stand; involuntarily my head hung down. Bhagavan smiled and entered the dining room, the devotees following him.

After the meal, with Bhagavan's permission, we, the devotees, started for the walk round the hill. I shall write to you about it some time later.

30th November, 1947

(161) POOR MAN'S MITE

I have already written to you that on the night of the festival of the Holy Beacon, (i.e., the Deepam Festival) when the Beacon at the top of the hill was lighted, we took the permission of Bhagavan and went round the hill. Hitherto, the usual practice had been to go round the hill before the festival, not after. But this time, however we started at night, after the evening meal. There were about a hundred of us.

With Bhagavan in our hearts and with the Beacon Light on the top of the hill before our eyes, and with the full moon brightly shining, we started out on foot. Devotees who had had the privilege of accompanying Bhagavan on his walks round the hill in his earlier days, began to tell us about their experiences: "Bhagavan used to sit here"; "here we used to cook"; "this happened here"; "Bhagavan told us about this, there." While they were relating such incidents, we did not feel the fatigue of walking, for we were absorbed in the tales. But for the fact that we wanted to get back for the *Veda Parayana* at 5 a.m., we might only have returned at day-break. As it was, we returned at 3 a.m.

I will now tell you some of the things the devotees told us that night:

As we were approaching the Unnamalai Tank, a devotee said, "When Bhagavan went round the hill, he used to sit here for some time so that those who were lagging behind might catch up with the party. Let us also sit here and wait for a while." We accordingly all sat there for some time.

"How long ago was it that Bhagavan gave up going round the hill?" I asked.

"Till 1926 Bhagavan used to do it. That was an exhilarating experience," said Kunjuswami, one of the old devotees.

“Why not tell us some of the incidents of those days?” we asked. Kunjuswami agreed and began to tell us as follows:

“One day, we all felt like going round the hill with Bhagavan. When we told him, he readily consented and we started that afternoon immediately after food. It was usual for Bhagavan to walk slowly while going round the hill, so Venamma hearing that he had gone and confident that she could catch up with the party in no time, started out with a big basket of provisions.

“We were passing Sona Thirtham when Bhagavan noticed Venamma at a distance, approaching, and he said, ‘There, you see, Venamma is coming. Someone must have told her and sent her with a basket of food. However much I protest, people will not give up these things. There she is, with a heavy load on her head. All right, this is going to be a punishment for her.’

“So saying, he began to walk fast. Could she overtake him if he walked fast? Let us see. She continued to hurry, panting and fretting all the time, but did not stop walking. Bhagavan continued to walk in this way until we passed the Gautamasram, when he looked back. He could see that she, too, was walking fast, and, his heart melting at the sight, he led us to a mango grove that was nearby the road.

“Standing under the shade of one of the trees, Bhagavan said, ‘We will stop here. There is a well, and if not here, we may not get water anywhere else near. I was hoping that she would give us up, but she would not. She is tired and is panting for breath. What a shame!’ So saying, he sat down.

“Unable to discover our whereabouts, and coming up to the trees, Venamma began anxiously saying, ‘Where has Bhagavan gone? There is no sign of him anywhere’. When Bhagavan heard this, he began laughing, whereupon she traced us to where we were and joined us. After eating what

she had brought us, we began our walk again, Venamma now with us. From that day, we named the tree Venamma's mango tree.

“Bhagavan used to tell us that sometimes he started for *pradakshina* at night and returned by daybreak. It was the usual thing to start so. Sometimes, however, we would start in the morning, with cooking utensils to cook food at noon either at Sona thirtham or at Gautamasram or at Pachiamman Shrine, eat, rest and return to the Ashram in the evening. Before the Ashram grew to its present size, we would go round leisurely, sometimes taking two days, or three days or even a week, camping en route.

“On one occasion, we started to go round in the morning with the intention of returning the same evening. We stopped at the Gautamasram, cooked our food, ate it and after taking some rest, packed all the milk, sugar, buttermilk, etc., that remained and started walking again. As we were approaching Adi Annamalai, Bhagavan began walking off on a side road and very fast. Thinking that he wished to avoid the crowds on the main road, we followed him.

“After going along a path for about half a furlong, we came to a tank. At the edge of the tank and under a tree, sat an old man, his body covered by a blanket and holding a small pot in his hand. This old man, whenever he heard that Bhagavan was coming round the hill, would await Bhagavan's arrival on the road and bring him something to eat. Not seeing him on the road, and lest the poor man should be troubled at missing him, Bhagavan had made the detour.

“Bhagavan, on seeing him, called him by name and began talking with him very freely. The old peasant prostrated before Bhagavan, then stood with folded hands,

saying nothing. 'What is the matter?' said Bhagavan, 'why is it that I do not see you anywhere these days? Are crops and cattle all right? How are the children?' And then, 'What is in that pot?' queried Bhagavan.

"Very hesitantly, the old man said, 'Nothing particular, Swami. I came to know that you were coming. I wanted to bring something as usual to offer you, but there was nothing in the house. When I asked my old woman, she said, 'There is ample food in the cooking pot. You can take it to them'. Unable to decide what to do, I put some of the food into this small pot, but ashamed to face you with only this sort of food to offer you, I was sitting here, Swami.'

"Bhagavan, seemingly very pleased, exclaimed, 'Oh! Cooked food, is it? That is excellent. Why be ashamed? It will be very good. Let me have it'. As the old man was still hesitating, Bhagavan took the pot from him, sat down under a tree and told his followers to put down all the things they had brought. We did accordingly. Bhagavan took out from among the cooking things, a big open-mouthed tin-lined vessel into which he put all the food, poured in a lot of water, and mixed it well into a paste with his hand. Then from some left-overs amongst our things, he took out some limes and squeezed the juice into the mixture, poured in some buttermilk, and made the whole thing into a liquid. Finally he mixed some salt and dry ginger powder, then took out a tumblerful of the liquid, drank it, and said, 'Oh, this is delicious!' Then looking at us all, he said, 'All of you, mix some sugar with that milk left over and drink it; our luggage will be lighter. I have this food; so what need have I for the milk? This is first rate food for me in this hot weather. It is also very nourishing, and has many other good qualities too. But you wouldn't like it, so drink the milk, and please give my share of it and the sugar to this old man'.

“We accordingly mixed the sugar with the milk and, after giving some to the old man, we drank the rest. Bhagavan was meanwhile talking sociably with the old farmer and taking two or three tumblerfuls of the liquid preparation saying that it was like nectar. He then said to the old man, ‘My stomach is quite full. I feel that I shan’t be able to take any food tonight. Take the rest of this liquid food home’. So saying, he gave the remaining food to the old man, who accepted it as though it were nectar. Wiping the tears of joy that were welling up into his eyes, he took leave of us and went off to his cottage.”

“Until recently,” I said, “that old man used to come to see Bhagavan every now and then. Vyasa wrote in glowing terms in the *Bhagavatam* about the beaten rice that Kuchela presented to Lord Krishna. Had he seen this Lord’s kindly act, how much more glowingly would he have written!”

30th November, 1947

(162) THE SLEEPER IN THE CART

Listening to the stories by Kunjuswami, we had gone beyond Adi Annamalai. On reaching Vetavalam Mandapam, he asked us whether we had heard why Bhagavan had written the verse 31 of the “Supplement to the Forty Verses”. On our answering in the negative, Kunjuswami related the following incident:

“One night, as we were going round the hill with Bhagavan, just about here, two or three fully loaded bullock carts were passing along. The people in the cart were sound asleep, their legs stretched out, and free from all cares. Pointing them out to

us, Bhagavan said, ‘Did you see that? It is like the natural state, *‘sahaja nishta’*. For the Realized One the Self (Atman) which sleeps in the body, all three states are the same, namely, that of waking, dream and deep sleep. For example, this cart is going, the man in the cart is asleep; that is like the working of the body of a Realized Soul. Supposing the man continues to sleep even when the cart stops on reaching its destination, is unloaded and the bullocks removed, and he continues to sleep all through. That is like the sleep of a Realized Soul. The body is for him a cart; while in motion, while standing still, or while being unloaded, that man goes on sleeping.’ Subsequently, the same idea was expressed in the verse referred to above, which was also written in prose in Telugu.”*

Continuing our conversation, we walked on and reached the turning which leads to the Isanya Mutt. Kunjuswami then continued his narration:

“Sometimes, while going round the hill, it would all of a sudden rain heavily. Others accompanying Bhagavan would run for shelter, but he never hurried his pace and walked on steadily, unaffected by the rain. Once at this turning, it began to rain heavily; we all ran to the Isanya Mutt, but Bhagavan walked as usual and was drenched by the time he reached the *mutt*. As a rule, he did not go to the *mutt* because they would detain him there unnecessarily; he would go alongside the hill to the Municipal Bungalow over there and sit on the narrow verandah in front of it. Except for one or two of his attendants, the rest of the party continued the walk after prostrating to him. This was because, had they all gone together as a crowd, the people of the town would come to

* “To the Realized Soul who is asleep in the gross body the states of activity, *samadhi* and deep sleep mean no more than a cart’s moving, stopping and being unyoked mean to a traveller who is asleep in the cart.” (Translation).

know about our circumambulation and would have gathered round and begun to do something in adoration of Bhagavan. So, after sending all the others off, he would cover himself with a shawl and reach the Ashram by a byepath. Even so, sometimes a few people would recognize him and offer him something to eat. If he went round the hill at night, he would, on nearing the town, ask us not to sing or talk loudly as that might disturb the people in their sleep.”

By the time Kunjuswami had finished telling us these incidents, it was about 2 a.m. and we had reached the town. Everything was quiet, and he again began reminiscing to us:

“Another time, during summer, after supper we started to go round the hill. There was good moonlight and by the time we reached this place, it was as now about 2 a.m. All the people in the town were asleep and it was very quiet. Being summer, all the windows of the houses were open. All the shops were closed and locked; only the watchmen were patrolling the streets. Bhagavan, pointing this out to us, said, ‘Do you see how still the whole town is? The streets, the houses and the lights are there, but all the people are asleep except the watchmen. Hence it is all quiet. But when the day breaks, everyone will get up and there will be activity on all sides. That is like *‘savikalpa samadhi’*. Do you see those big houses and small ones? The windows are open, but the one who sees is sleeping. That is like the *turiya*, or Fourth State. It could be said that the state of the Realized Soul is also the same and could be given as an example. It appears as though the eyes see; they, however, sleep peacefully.”

After listening to this story, we reached our homes. The next day, after finding out from those near him all the details of what had happened during our walk round the hill,

Bhagavan said, "When I hear the happy way you went round the hill, I feel envious of you. But then I cannot go out like that now." And he laughed. "If a lot of people accompanied me, I used to go by the path through the jungle; but if I was going alone, I used to take the path along the foot of the hill."

"Are there three paths for going round the hill?" asked a devotee.

"Yes. The one is the road, the other is along the foot of the hill, and beyond it is the jungle path," said Bhagavan.

"So Bhagavan used to wander along all those paths?" asked the devotee.

"Why along those paths only?" said Bhagavan, "I might even say that there is no place on the hill that I have not set my foot on. There are innumerable Ayurvedic herbs on the hill; there are waterfalls in several places. That is why it is said that this mountain is the abode of *siddhas* (adepts with powers). Some time ago, a geophysicist came here to find out how old this hill is, and when he wrote to us on his return to his native land, he asked us to send him some stones as specimens. They were sent and, on receiving them, he compared those stones with some from other mountains (like the Himalayas) and found that those from Arunachala were older. He himself wrote to us about it."

3rd December, 1947

(163) SIX KINDS OF SAMADHIS

This morning a devotee approached Bhagavan and asked, "Swami, it is said that some people remain in thought-

free awareness (*nirvikalpa samadhi*) for quite a long time. Do they take food and other things during this period?"

"How can that be?" asked Bhagavan. "When you are asleep, do you ever take food?"

"No. But then, during *nirvikalpa samadhi*, will the mind be there or not?" asked the questioner.

"Why should it not be there? That which is there in sleep, is there then also. Just see. Now, from noon 12 o'clock to 2 p.m. we shut the doors of the hall and sleep inside. That is also *samadhi*. A fine type of *samadhi* indeed! Who knows whether the mind is there or not?" said Bhagavan.

The devotee asked once again, "What about those who are in complete awareness (*sahaja samadhi*)?"

Bhagavan replied saying, "It is just because of such questions that Vasishtha narrated the story of the 'Sage and the Hunter' to Rama to illustrate the fourth or *turiya* state. In a forest, once a great Muni sat in the lotus posture (*padmasana*) with his eyes open, but in deep trance. A hunter hit a deer with an arrow, but the deer escaped and ran in front of the Muni into the bush nearby and hid itself. The hunter came in hot pursuit of the deer and not seeing it asked the Muni where it had gone. 'I do not know, my friend,' said the Muni. The hunter said, 'Sir, it ran right in front of you and you had your eyes wide open. How could you have not seen it?' Finding that he would not leave him in peace unless a proper reply was given, the Muni said, 'My dear man, we are submerged in the Self; we are always in the Fourth State. We do not have the waking or dream or deep sleep states. Everything is alike to us. These three states are the signs of the ego and we have no ego. Egoism is itself the mind and it is that which is responsible for all the deeds done in this world. That ego (*ahankara*) left us long ago. Hence it does not matter whether we keep our eyes closed

or open; we are not conscious of what is happening around us. That being so, how can I tell you about your deer?" The hunter thought that it was all sheer nonsense and went his way.

"It may well be asked, 'If there is no 'I' (*aham*), how did he speak?' When properly understood, that which occurred as 'I' before, becomes our own Nature (*swarupa*) afterwards. That is called destruction of mind (*mano nasa*). That thought-free awareness or other signs of awareness are cases of merging (*laya*) and not of destruction (*nasa*). So long as there is merging and emerging, it is merely a state of spiritual practice (*sadhana*)," said Bhagavan.

Taking up the thread of the conversation, another devotee said, "*Samadhi* is said to be of several kinds such as *Savikalpa* (absorbed in the thought) and *Nirvikalpa* (thought-free). Can you tell us about them?" Thereupon, Bhagavan explained thus:

"Yes. Sankara described the six kinds of *Samadhi* in his *Vivekachudamani* and his *Drigdrisyaviveka*. The six are divided into two main categories namely, *Savikalpa* and *Nirvikalpa*. The former is divided into two, namely '*Drisyanuviddha*' and '*Sabdanuviddha*' and these two are again subdivided as under:

(1) *Antar Drisyanuviddha Savikalpa Samadhi*: Meditating upon one's own Self as a witness of desires and other visible attributes of the mind.

(2) *Antar Sabdanuviddha Savikalpa Samadhi*: To know that the Self is *Asanga* (contact-free), *Swaprakasa* (self-luminous), *Sat-chit-ananda* (existence, consciousness, bliss) and *Advaita* (non-dual).

(3) *Antar Nirvikalpa Samadhi*: With the exalted feeling of the Self gained as a result of enjoying the ecstasy of the above two states and discarding both of them and remaining motionless like an unflickering light in a windless place.

(4) *Bahya Drisyanuviddha Savikalpa Samadhi*: As in the case of the Self that is in the heart, to be able to discard with indifference the outer things in the world which have their names and forms and which are visible, and to meditate on the underlying Reality.

(5) *Bahya Sabdanuviddha Savikalpa Samadhi*: To know and be aware at all times that the Thing which manifests itself as *Sat-chit-ananda* (existence, consciousness and bliss) is the universal Brahman.

(6) *Bahya Nirvikalpa Samadhi*: With the experience of the above two, to overcome all desires and to remain calm and motionless like the waveless ocean.

“By constantly practising these six kinds of *Samadhi*, at all times and without a break, one can attain a state of thought-free awareness. Unless one attains that state, the ego will not be completely destroyed. Persons whose ego is destroyed are so detached that even if they appear to see they do not really see; though they appear to eat they do not really eat; though they appear to hear they do not really hear; and though they appear to sleep they do not really sleep. Whatever they do is not really ‘doing’.”

5th December, 1947

(164) GREATNESS OF NON-ATTACHMENT

When yesterday, during some conversation, Bhagavan was describing the greatness of non-attachment (*vairagya*), I said that in the Telugu *Bhagavatam*, in the second canto, apropos of Suka Yogi, there is a nice verse about non-attachment, explaining the path of deliverance. At Bhagavan’s

request, I read aloud the verse, of which the following is a translation:

Are there not nice places on the earth on which to lie down?
 Why the cotton bedding?
 Are there not hands which nature has given?
 Why all the various implements for eating and drinking?
 Are there not fibre cloth, deer-skin and kusa grass for wear?
 Why fine cloth of different varieties?
 Are there not caves in which to live?
 Why these houses and palaces?
 Do not the trees yield juicy fruits?
 Do not the rivers give sweet water?
 Do not good housewives give alms?
 Why then serve those who have become blind and proud
 On account of their wealth?*

Having listened with great interest, Bhagavan said emphatically, "That is right. In this part of the country, one of our Ancients wrote almost similarly, 'O Lord, Thou hast given me a hand to use as a pillow under my head, a cloth to cover my loins, hands wherewith to eat food; what more do I want? This is my great good fortune!' That is the purport of the verse. Is it really possible to say how great a good fortune that is? Even the greatest of kings wish for such

* Original Telugu Verse:

“సీ || కమనీయ భూమి భాగములు లేకున్నవే
 పడియుండుటకు దూది పరుపు లేల
 సహజంబు లగు కరాంజులులు లేకున్నవే
 భోజనభాజనపుంజ మేల
 వల్కలాజిన కుశావళులు లేకున్నవే
 కిట్ట దుకూలసంఘంబు లేల
 గొనకొని వసియింప గుహలు లేకున్నవే
 ప్రాసాదసాధాదిపటల మేల
 ఫలరసాదులు గుడియనే పాదపములు
 స్వాదు జలముల నుండనే సకల సదులు
 బొసగ భిక్షంబుపెట్టరే పుణ్యాసతులు
 ధనమదాంధుల కొలువేల తాపసులకు”

happiness. There is nothing to equal it. Having experienced both these conditions, I know the difference between this and that. These beds, sofa, articles around me — all this is bondage.”

“Is not the Buddha an example of this?” I said.

“Yes,” said Bhagavan, “when he was in the palace with all possible luxuries in the world, he was still sad. To remove his sadness, his father created more luxuries than ever. But none of them satisfied the Buddha. At midnight he left his wife and child and disappeared. He remained in great austerity for six years, realized the Self, and, for the welfare of the world, became a mendicant (*bhikshu*). It was only after he became a mendicant that he enjoyed great bliss. Really, what more did he require?”

“In the garb of a mendicant he came to his own city, did he not?” asked a devotee.

“Yes, yes,” said Bhagavan. “Having heard that he was coming, his father, Suddhodana, decorated the royal elephant and went out with his whole army to receive him on the main road. But without touching the main road, the Buddha came by side roads and by-lanes; he sent his close associates to the various streets for alms, while he himself in the guise of a mendicant went by another way to his father. How could the father know that his son was coming in that guise! Yasodhara (the Buddha’s wife), however, recognized him, made her son prostrate before his father and herself prostrated. After that, the father recognized the Buddha. Suddhodana, however, had never expected to see his son in such a state and was very angry and shouted, ‘Shame on you! What is this garb? Does one who should have the greatest of riches come like this? I’ve had enough of it!’ And with that, he looked furiously at the Buddha. Regretting that his father had not yet got rid of his ignorance, the Buddha too, began to look at his father

with even greater intensity. In this war of looks, the father was defeated. He fell at the feet of his son and himself became a mendicant. Only a man with non-attachment can know the power of non-attachment,” said Bhagavan, his voice quivering with emotion.

7th December, 1947

(165) SELF-ENQUIRY: ESSENTIAL IN ALL WALKS OF LIFE

Recently some people in responsible positions in Madras came here and stayed for some days. On one of the days, they went to the Gurusurtham and Pavalagiri caves on the hill, where Bhagavan had lived long ago, and returned in time for the evening *Veda Parayana*. After the *parayana*, when Bhagavan was telling us about his life at the Pavalakkunru Temple, and enquiring whether they had seen this or that there, one of the party said to him, “Bhagavan tells us most interestingly about those places we have just seen, but by the time we reached the Pavalakkunru Temple and went into the room there, we were thoroughly exhausted. Bhagavan stayed there for a long time and we now realize how completely Bhagavan must have felt that the body was not his. Swami, how can people like us be saved from our materialistic outlook? If we ask, you will surely say, ‘It is enough if you go on with Self-enquiry — Who am I?’ How is that possible for us who are family people and are doing our respective jobs? If the mind goes on with worldly affairs, how can we get peace of mind?” Bhagavan simply remained silent, listening to them quietly.

This morning when I got to the Ashram, one of the Asramites was speaking freely with Bhagavan and was saying, “Yesterday evening, the people who came from Madras asked you some questions, but you did not answer. Why was that? In the past when Sivaprakasam Pillai wrote a verse beginning ‘*Udalinaï veruthum*’ I am told that you were also silent. Why, Bhagavan? Does it mean that no one can become a Realized Soul, a *Jnani*, unless he lives in a lonely place like that?”

“Who said that?” Bhagavan replied. “The nature of the mind is determined by its former actions, its *samskaras*. People are able to continue to do all their work and yet pursue their Self-enquiry and ultimately become Realized Souls. Janaka, Vasishtha, Rama, Krishna and others like them, are examples of this. Again, for some it would appear impossible to do this and they have to go to solitary places to become Realized Souls through Self-enquiry. Of these, Sanaka, Sanandana, Suka, Vamadeva, are amongst the examples. Self-enquiry is essential for whomever it may be. It is called ‘human effort (*purushakara*)’. The course of the body follows according to our fate (*prarabhdha*). What more can we say about it?” added Bhagavan.

13th January, 1948

**(166) VRITTI JANYA JNANAM
(AWARENESS OF THE SELF GENERATED
BY ACTION)**

This morning one of the inmates of the Ashram, Sri Sundaeswara Iyer, sat near Bhagavan’s sofa, book in hand, waiting and watching Bhagavan’s face for a favourable

sign, then quietly asked, “In this book it is written in one place ‘*mano vritti jnanam*’. What is the meaning of *mano vritti jnanam*?”

“It means that the Self (*atma*) cannot be realized at all unless there is mental action (*mano vritti*). They say, ‘We must know the Self, we should know the Self; and we have known the Self’. How do they know it? Let us agree that we are in existence. Even so, is it not necessary that there should be some action (*vritti*), to know that? Hence, the action of the mind which is turned within is called Knowledge (*vijnana*) and that which is turned without is called Ignorance (*ajnana*). *Vijnana* is also called mind or *chittam*. When that *vritti* is *antarmukham* (turned inward) it has to be called ‘*buddhi*’ or ‘*aham*’. All these put together are known as ‘*antahkaranam*’. *Aham* is *achalam* (steady; immovable). But with the aid of this *antahkarana* the *panchabhutas* (the five elements) came into existence. These elements individually and collectively multiplied and the body with its various limbs came into existence. Discarding the present creation, which has come into existence with the support of *antahkarana*, when the mind becomes *antarmukham*, *vritti janya jnanam* (awareness of the Self generated by action) appears. That means, you will know the source of action (*vritti*). That source, or origin, is called ‘*aham sphurana*’, or the Self. However, it is only by the mind that that is to be known. That is why it is called *mano vritti jnanam*. That means it is the mind which is ‘*suddha satvam*’ (*suddha* = pure; *satvam* = the first and the best of the three *gunas* which are supposed to constitute the external world). It is that which manifests itself in innumerable ways and it is that which remains still, all by itself. You may call it by whatever name you like; any name,” said Bhagavan.

A person who had recently arrived and who had been closely following the conversation, enquired of Bhagavan,

“Swami, is it a fact that a *Jnani* will not have any *prarabhdha* except that of *pareccha*?” “Yes, it is the same thing. The *prarabhdhas*, ‘*iccha* (desires), *anichha* (no desires) and *pareccha* (desires of other people)’ will be common to *Jnanis* and *ajnanis*. Experience also is the same. The difference, however, is that for the *Jnani*, there will be no feeling that he is doing anything and so there will be no bondage, while the *ajnani* feels that he is doing everything and so there will be bondage. Mind alone is the cause of bondage and release. The saying, “*mana eva manusyanam karanam bandhamokshayoh,*”

मन एव मनुष्याणां कारणं बन्धमोक्षयोः

from the *Upanishads* (‘Mind alone is the cause of bondage and release’) asserts that mind is the cause of everything. For that mind, desires are the form. If the root cause of desire is discovered, there won’t be any bondage. That root is the Self. If one knows one’s Self, whatever desires may come or go, they will not worry one,” said Bhagavan.

6th February, 1948

(167) THE PASSING AWAY OF MAHATMA GANDHI

On the night of January 30th, the news of Mahatma Gandhi’s death became known everywhere. I heard the news at home only, because women cannot be in the Ashram in the nights. I went at 7-30 next morning. A prayer was being broadcast over the radio. The news of the death was in the newspapers, and Bhagavan reading it and hearing the prayer, said, “This is the prayer of people who prayed like that

throughout his life.” The song “Vaishnava Janato” was broadcast over the radio and Bhagavan listened to it sadly.

At 9-45, Bhagavan was about to go out when a newspaper reporter came and requested him to give his views on the tragedy so that they might be published.

Bhagavan, his voice choked with emotion, said, “For the Mahatma’s death in this tragic manner, every person’s heart is mourning. What is there in particular that I could say? Who is there who is not grieved? If I say anything, you will publish it and then, one after another, people will come and ask me. What is the good of it?”

So saying, Bhagavan sent the reporter away and went for his walk. On his return, “Vaishnava Janato” was again being broadcast and tears fell from Bhagavan’s eyes.

At 4-30 that afternoon, all the ladies began to sing “Raghupati Raghava Rajaram”.¹ With tears in his eyes Bhagavan signed to us to continue. At 5 o’clock the conch shell blew and in view of the Mahatma’s death a special *arati* (waving of lights) was offered in the Mother’s temple. When the sacred ash and vermilion powder were brought, Bhagavan took them with great reverence.

The day before yesterday, while reading the paper, Bhagavan remarked to someone sitting near him, “Look, didn’t a comet appear some time ago? It is written in this paper that the death of the Mahatma was due to that. So the first result of it is now over.”

What exactly was in Bhagavan’s mind when he said that? Meanwhile, he took up another paper and on reading it, said, “The person who fired the shot, it seems, came up to the Mahatma and, after bowing down, asked him, ‘Why have

¹ A favourite song of Mahatma Gandhi, sung in chorus in praise of the Lord Rama.

you come so late today, Sir?’ The Mahatma replied that it was due to some work. The shot was fired immediately after.” Bhagavan then drew a parallel from the Ramayana, saying, “It seems that after Rama killed Ravana, he forgot that he, Rama, had to go to Vaikuntha. So the Devatas took counsel among themselves and then sent Yama, the God of Death, to him. Yama came in the garb of an ascetic, and respectfully said, ‘The work for which you have come is now over; please come to heaven’. This is similar; ‘Swaraj has been obtained; your work is over; why are you still here? Shouldn’t you go back? It is already late’. Thus the Mahatma appears to have been sent away.”

I asked, “The story you have just told us is from the *Uttara Ramayana*, is it not?”

Bhagavan: “Yes, but not only there. It has been written in another book that, in the case of Krishna, the arrow of Vyadha was the cause of His death; similarly it happened with the Mahatma.”

Yesterday, Harindranath Chattopadhyaya² showed a photo of Mahatma, and said, “It is a pity that there was never any meeting between Gandhi and Bhagavan.”

Bhagavan: “Some time ago, he came to Tiruvannamalai. A meeting had been arranged for him to be held on the road around the hill, beyond the Ashram. People here thought that he would come to the Ashram on his way back, but owing to the pressure of the crowds it was impossible, and he went away direct to the station. It seems that he very much regretted this afterwards. Shankarlal Banker was very keen on bringing him here, and in 1938, when Rajendra Prasad and Jammalal Bajaj came here and saw Skandasramam, they wanted to

² A brother of the famous Indian poetess and patriot, Sarojini Naidu, and himself a fine poet.

induce the Mahatma to stay there for some time. But it did not happen. If at Sabarmati, or at Wardha anyone said that he was mentally depressed, the Mahatma used to say, 'Go to Ramanasramam and come back after a month's stay there'. When Ramaswami Reddiar went to see the Mahatma immediately after taking office as Chief Minister, Madras State, the Mahatma, it seems, asked him for how long he had been going to the Ramanasramam. When he answered that he had been going there for over thirty years, the Mahatma said, 'Is that so? I have tried thrice, but so far have not been able to go there'. What could he do? How could he come here when he was not left alone for one moment?"

Bhagavan read in today's paper a report to the effect that the Mahatma had had from a dream the night before the tragedy, a premonition of his death, and that therefore, he had quickly disposed of his papers which had caused the delay in his coming to the prayer. Bhagavan commented, "Yes. For enlightened people, will there not be that much of premonition? They will know, but will not tell others."

7th February, 1948

(168) EQUALITY

It is now fifteen days since our nephew Tilak had come here from London. The results of his examination were not yet out. His father, having written to him to come home quickly, he decided to leave here on 30th of last month.

On the evening before leaving, he went to the bazaar to buy raisins, dates etc. for offering to Bhagavan. On the 30th we placed them all on a tray and took them to the Ashram in

time for breakfast. The kitchen people asked me to serve them myself, and as I had no experience of serving in the dining hall, I took them to Bhagavan first. In a tone showing that he was not pleased, he asked me what it was. I told him that my nephew had brought some fruit. Bhagavan nodded, "All right. Give me one of each variety." After serving Bhagavan accordingly, I served the others likewise. But towards the end, it was found that only a few bananas were left and so one of the attendants cut them into small bits and served them equally to the last ten people.

With an expression of disgust, Bhagavan said, "This is what I don't like. Why do you serve when you cannot give the same quantity to all people?" And he began recounting all other similar mistakes. The people all left quietly after eating. As Bhagavan was about to get up, after massaging his legs a little, Tilak and I went up to him, and prostrating before him, I told him that Tilak was leaving. Bhagavan said, "I see. When fruit was brought I thought he had passed his exam. So he is going to his native place? Very good." So saying, and pointing me out to the people near him, he said, "She served me first instead of serving all the others first."

"I am sorry," I said, "I was new and so made the mistake."

"That is all right," Bhagavan said, "that is why I am telling you. If you serve Bhagavan after you serve all the others, there will be equal distribution. If by chance nothing remains, it does not matter if I don't get anything. If all eat, I am satisfied even if I do not get my share. Serving should always be on that principle; it is a good principle. If all people here eat, is it not tantamount to Bhagavan's eating?"

I said, "That is so, I am sorry for the mistake."

Bhagavan said, "All right, don't worry, it does not matter."

I do not know whether you have noticed that in the Ashram three times a day, when the bell goes, a small portion

of all the dishes, including rice cakes (*iddlies*) are taken out for feeding the cows, crows, dogs, monkeys and also any poor people who happen to be in the Ashram at the time. If that is not done first, Bhagavan will not come for food, nor will he keep quiet unless they are fed. If squirrels and peacocks come, groundnut kernels are given. If anyone shows disinclination to serve like that, Bhagavan will not tolerate it, and says, "All right. Go, if you like. They have come here in the same way as we have all come, and they will get their food as we all get it. You want to serve us with respect, saying 'Swami, Swami', but you serve them with curses. Did we purchase them and bring them here? They have come just as we did. Why this disrespect to them?"

Bhagavan said all this because I had forgotten the principle and had made a mistake. One peculiar thing to note in this connection is that Bhagavan had said, "When the fruit was brought, I thought he had passed his examination," and on verification, we found that the results were out in London on that very day. Brother sent a telegram yesterday to say that the boy had passed his exam.

The voices of great souls do not go in vain, you see!

8th February, 1948

(169) NIHILISTS AND ADVAITINS

When I went into the hall this morning, everything was quiet. The smoke of the incense sticks enveloped the whole atmosphere and a sweet smell was emanating from all sides. Bhagavan had finished reading the newspapers and was sitting in a calm attitude. Krishnaswami was winding the

clock. Unexpectedly someone asked, “Nihilists and Advaitins go on arguing among themselves without end. What exactly are their differences?”

The clock struck the hour, “tung, tung.” With a smile, Bhagavan said, “You want to know the differences of opinion? Look here. Just now, the clock has been wound; it has been working and has struck the hour. ‘There must be someone to wind the clock; otherwise the clock will not work,’ say the Advaitins. ‘It is admitted that there must be someone to wind the clock, there must then be someone to give the power or the ability to that someone, and so on. If we proceed on that basis, there will be no beginning and no end, and so there is no such person as a *doer* (*karta*)’, say the Nihilists. These are the differences of opinion. For instance, take this towel. It is not separate from the cotton. What does that mean? The cotton is first changed into seedless cotton, then into yarn and finally into cloth. For doing all that there must be someone, and so the weaver is called the *doer*, and it is admitted that the various colours and varieties of a cloth are not different from the basic thing, namely, the cotton. In the same manner, the Advaitins say that though there is a *doer* for the innumerable varieties that go to make up the world, none of them is different from that which Is, namely, Existence (*Sat*). There must be pots — big and small — but they are all mere earth. If anyone of them gets broken, we say that the pot is lost. But what is it that is lost? Only the name and the form. When name and form are lost, the earth still remains, as earth. But then, pots can be made only if there is a potter. So the Advaitins say there is a *doer* as an efficient cause. Nihilists say, ‘No’. Arguments increase but the net result is zero. There will be no difficulties if they find out who it is that is arguing.”

“Why then these arguments?” said the questioner.

“That is because all which is inside of a person must come out. There will be several thoughts inside,” said Bhagavan.

One of the devotees who heard this, said, “What, Bhagavan? You say that which is inside will always come out. How will it come out? What is there inside?”

Bhagavan smilingly said, “Unless there is something inside, how can anything come out? Unless some desire is born inside, nothing appears outside. Desire is born inside only. It develops into a big thing and comes out ultimately.”

27th March, 1948

(170) BHAGAVAN'S FIRST MANUSCRIPT

When I was copying out Part II of these letters, beginning with “*drishtim jnanamayim kritva*,” I did not know where exactly the stanza occurred. I therefore went to the Ashram a little earlier than usual to ask Bhagavan. Bhagavan was seated at leisure and I approached and enquired in what book the stanza was to be found. He kindly told me that it was in the *Tejobindu Upanishad* and that Sankara had written the same thing in his “Aparokshanubhuti” of which the relative stanzas were:

दृष्टिं ज्ञानमयीं कृत्वा पश्येद् ब्रह्ममयं जगत् ।
सा दृष्टिः परमोदारा न नासाग्रवल्लोकिनि ॥

दृष्टिं दर्शन् दृष्टीनां विरामो यत्र वै भवेत् ।
दृष्टिं तत्रैव कर्तव्या न नासाग्रवल्लोकिनी ॥

“Which means,” said Bhagavan, “that the aim (*drishti*) is not to concentrate on the tip of the nose or between the

eyebrows. It should be to concentrate on the place where all the attributes of the seer, the seen and the act of seeing are dissolved. The meaning is that, when the aim, *jnanamaya*, that is Realization is attained through meditation enabling a man to understand his own nature and to see the way to be united with the Supreme Spirit, then the whole universe appears to be full of Brahman.”

The ‘Aparokshanubhuti’ was in the library, but I hesitated to take it from there as I have to ask somebody to get it. At the same time, I did not remember the stanzas in full and was wondering what to do. Sensing the situation, Bhagavan asked one of the attendants to take out Palaniswami’s small notebook which was in the drawer. The attendant took it out, shook the dust off it and handed it to me. It is a very small notebook, written in Malayalam characters. Bhagavan took a pen and paper to write. I murmured, “There is a copy of the ‘Aparokshanubhuti’ in the library, I think.”

“Why bother?” said Bhagavan, “I will write it out myself.” And so saying, he copied the two stanzas from the notebook. I was overwhelmed with joy and asked him, “Have you copied the stanzas of Sankara as they are, or have you just written down their meaning in stanzas of your own?”

“I merely copied them from the book,” said Bhagavan.

“In most of the small books written by Sankara, the stanzas have been copied en bloc from the Upanishads. Palaniswami asked me to copy out and give him some stanzas of Sankara, but where were notebooks or paper with us at that time? I collected every scrap of paper I could, stitched them together into a notebook, wrote out the stanzas and gave them to him. In this small notebook, selections from about ten books of Sankara have been written.”

“So, this is the first book?” I asked.

“Yes,” said Bhagavan, “At that time we had nothing but a pot; we did not have even a towel then. In the early days of our stay in the Virupaksha Cave, Palaniswami alone had a towel to wrap round him. The cave had no iron doors then, it had a wooden door with a wooden latch. We used to bolt it from outside with a small stick, go round the hill, wander hither and yon, return after a week or ten days, when we would open the door with the help of another stick. That was our key at the time; no need to keep it anywhere! This notebook was the only article we took with us. As Palaniswami wore a towel, he used to fold the book and tuck it into his waist. That was enough for us. This book was the first beginning of our (book) ‘family’,” said Bhagavan laughing.

“Did you write this from the Nagari script?” asked another devotee.

“Yes,” Bhagavan told him, “and that too, only because Palaniswami asked for it. At that time, and even afterwards, I did not write anything of my own accord.”

“Why does Bhagavan require to do all this? He does everything for the sake of others,” remarked the questioner.

“Yes, that is so,” said Bhagavan, “and of the ‘family’ that has grown since then, this book is the first.” And he showed the book to us all.

4th April, 1948

(171) KAILASA

This morning a devotee brought an old copy of the *Peria Puranam* and gave it to Bhagavan. Reading the story about Sundaramurti going to Kailasa, Bhagavan said, “It seems that

Sundaramurti found that after his own arrival, the Chera Raja had arrived on horseback almost immediately. The Raja asked him, ‘How did you come here without my calling?’ So saying Bhagavan read a verse from it. A Tamil youth, who was present, said, “Where is that Kailasa, Swami?” “Kailasa! It is at the very place where we are. First of all, tell me where we are?” said Bhagavan.

“That’s not it, Swami. The Kailasa of which you have just read, that Sundaramurti had gone to; does it really exist? If so, where is it? Please favour me with a proper reply,” said the young man.

“I have told you already,” said Bhagavan. “We have come here now. From here we will go to some other place. If all this is true, then that also is true. There, also, a Swami will be found seated on a raised pedestal. Just like this there will be devotees around. They ask something; he replies something. That will also be like this. If you look at the thing from the point of view of the body, that is how it is. If, however, you look at it from the point of view of truth, wherever we are, it is Kailasa. There is no question of its being born or growing or dying. When we realize that there is nothing real in this world, Kailasa is everywhere.”

“How will that be known?” the young man asked.

“Everyone knows that he is in existence. You were in existence when you were born, when you were a year old, when you were in middle age and when you were old. YOU have not changed; it is only the body that has changed. To know that your SELF has not changed, this illustration itself is enough,” said Bhagavan.

Giving up that line of questioning, the youth again asked, “It is said that a *Jnani* does not have happiness or sorrows, bodily ailments, or the like. Sundarar and Appar are reported to have jumped with joy when they had a vision

of God. Even Ramakrishna Paramahansa is reported to have grieved terribly when he did not get a vision of the Holy Mother and to have gone into ecstasies when he did get a vision. Not only that, when Ramakrishna Paramahansa had some bodily ailment, he used to cry out for Mother. What does it mean? Do *Jnanis* have happiness and sorrow?"

Bhagavan answered him, "You say all that in relation to the body, don't you? It is not possible to judge a *Jnani* by his bodily ailments. Manikkavachakar sang a hymn the purport of which is, 'O Ishwara you have showered on me your blessings even before I asked for them. How kind of you! Even so, why is it I do not feel grieved? Is my heart made of stone? My eyes do not get wet. Are they made of wood? Not only with these two eyes, but I wish that my whole body were full of eyes so that I could weep with them. I would then be very happy. I wish my heart would melt and become watery so that it could be integrated with you.' That is the purport. But then is that grief real grief? Some people give vent to their happiness by loudly expressing it when they get a vision of God, and some shed tears of joy. It was the same with Ramakrishna Paramahansa. 'Mother, how kind of you; how merciful!' he used to say and weep, and sometimes he used to laugh. Anyway, if we want to know about his real state, we should first know about our own state," said Bhagavan.

Instead of stopping at that, the young man again asked, "Swami, when he was in an ecstasy of happiness, he did not know the pain of the disease he was suffering from, but when that ecstasy was over he used to realise the pain and groan under it. Does a Realized Soul really know what pain or pleasure is?"

"I see, that is your doubt. First find out about your own affairs. What does it concern you how a Paramahansa was?"

He need not become a *Jnani* only after obtaining your certificate. He has become something. Boyhood has passed with boyhood; sleeping has gone with sleep. In this wakeful state at least find out what you are, where you are. Is it Kailasa* or Bhooloka or, Vaikunta? Why not find out all that for yourself and become a *Jnanî*” said Bhagavan. The questioning then stopped.

4th April, 1948

(172) EDUCATED PEOPLE

Yesterday, Sri Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan and family came here. Having had Bhagavan’s darshan, they went to the great Arunachaleswara Temple in the town and, after taking food and rest, came to Bhagavan to take leave of him. Bhagavan graciously nodded his head, giving them leave to go. Having known the ladies of the party, I went to their car to see them off, and then came back to the hall. I sat down and Bhagavan asked if they had gone. I replied in the affirmative. “Ten years ago,” said Bhagavan, “they were here; Pranavananda Swami is a first cousin of his.”

After a short while, Bhagavan noticed that the European and the Gujarati ladies sitting by me were asking me something, and so enquired what they were saying. I said that they were enquiring as to whether Radhakrishnan had asked Bhagavan any questions.

“I see,” said Bhagavan. “No, they are all well-read people, they know everything. What is there for them to ask?”

* Kailasa: The world of Lord Siva. Bhooloka: Our human world. Vaikunta: The world of Lord Vishnu.

An Andhra gentleman: “Did he ask any questions when he came last time?”

Bhagavan: “No. It was the same thing last time too. He had heard everything about me from Pranavananda Swami, and when he came here he just sat, and never opened his mouth.”

The devotee: “Outside, he gives lectures in a grand style. Why did he sit here without any talk or discussion?”

Bhagavan with a laugh, said, “In 1938, Rajendra Prasad came here and it was the same thing with him too. Although he was here for four or five days, he did not ask questions even once. He used to sit quietly in a corner with closed eyes. Only when he was leaving did he want to know what message, if any, I had for the Mahatma. Even that, he prevailed upon someone else to ask for him.”

The devotee: “It seems that Bhagavan said that the Mahatma was always in communion with the inner Self (*antaratma*), that the inner Self is here, there and everywhere, and that there is nothing that needs to be communicated. Is that so?”

Bhagavan: “Yes, indeed. Jammalal Bajaj also came at that time, and it was the same with him too, he used to sit in a corner quietly, without anyone being aware of where exactly he was sitting. In the early morning, when we were all cutting vegetables, he would join us in the work. It was only at the end that he asked us a few questions and had his doubts cleared.”

The devotee: “In 1944, when Manu Subedar, the translator of the *Jñaneswari* into English, came here, he did not ask any questions either, did he?”

Bhagavan: “No. At that time someone was reading the *Ribhu Gita* and Manu Subedar said that in every book the *Siddha* or adept state is elaborately explained, but nothing much is

said about the *sadhaka* state, the state of the spiritual practitioner. It was then that I showed him the discussion between Vithoba and Jnaneswar in the *Bhakta Vijayam*. That was all. He asked no more questions. He is a well-read man. What is there for people like him to ask? They come here for Peace.”

The devotee: “Satyamurthi, Thiru V. Kalyanasundara Mudaliar, Jnaniyar, Bulusu Sambamurthi, Tanguturi Prakasam, Karapatraswamy and many others, when they came here did not speak at all. Yet all these people, when they go away, deliver lectures, thumping the table and roaring like lions, Bhagavan.”

Bhagavan: “Yes, they are learned people. Some are writers, some are orators. Nayana was also like that.”

The devotees: “So people who are well-read do not ask Bhagavan any questions. It is only ordinary people like us who worry you with them. But if we do not ask you, Bhagavan, how else are we to know?”

Bhagavan: “That is all right; it doesn’t matter.” And he was once more silent.

6th April, 1948

(173) SALUTATIONS

At about 3 o’clock this afternoon a young boy, four or five years of age, came with his mother. She prostrated before Bhagavan and sat down. The boy prostrated likewise, but continued the salutations over and over again. Bhagavan laughed at that and told his attendants, “Just see. He is prostrating to me over and over again. Perhaps he thinks that if he does so, he may afterwards do whatever he pleases.

He is a young lad. What does he know? He is just imitating his elders. He must however be rewarded. All that he wants is a plantain. If he gets it he will stop. Give him one.” On being given one, the boy went and sat down.

After some time, someone came and did *sashtanga namaskara* (reverential salutation by prostrating with all the eight limbs of the body touching the ground), but did not get up for a long time. People nearby finally made him get up. He somehow got up but began saluting again and again. He was ultimately prevailed upon to stop saluting and sit down. Bhagavan told the people near him: “*Namaskara* means prostration a number of times according to some. What can be done? The real meaning of *namaskara* is the dissolving of the mind.” “What is the meaning of *sashtanga namaskara*, Bhagavan?” asked the devotee. “It means that eight limbs of the body, namely, two hands, two legs, two arms, chest and forehead, touch the ground while saluting. The idea behind this type of obeisance is that the person doing it says, ‘the body which touches the earth, will resolve itself into that earth ultimately, and the “I” in me will continue to be “I” alone’. That idea must be known to oneself by enquiry. Without knowing it, there is no use in doing these. With meaningless *namaskaras* people want to secure all the benefits: ‘Swami must give them whatever they desire, be it a bag of clothes or money.’ Whenever they do *namaskara*, I feel afraid. I must be beholden to them. I must act according to their wishes. I must fulfil all their desires. I must conduct myself carefully after knowing their minds. Not only that. Just by bowing to me, they get a sort of right over me. When people like us suffer like this, what about Ishwara himself? He must be beholden to ever so many; he must act according to the wishes of people; he must give boons to people. When *swamitvam* itself has so many troubles, what about *Ishwaratvam*? If anyone refrains from

prostrating before me, I feel very happy because I need not be beholden to him. A *Jnani* need not prostrate before anybody nor need he give his blessings to anybody. That is because his mind remains always submerged. He is deemed to be doing *namaskara* at all times. Some people feel offended when they prostrate before a *Jnani* and he does not respond with another *namaskara* nor even raise his hand and bless them. But the fact is, before the others have prostrated, the *Jnani* will have already prostrated lower, his mind having been dissolved. Even blessing (*asirvadam*) is similar. The submerging of the mind itself is a blessing. The *Jnani's* mind remains always submerged. That being so, who is the one to bless? What is it that is done?" said Bhagavan.

8th April, 1948

(174) THE SACREDNESS OF THE FEET OF THE GURU

This afternoon when I went to Bhagavan, I found someone singing a song, "*Guru pada mahima*". After the singing was over, looking at me, Bhagavan said: "These songs have been written by Tatvarayaswami. You have heard of the sacredness of the feet of the Guru, haven't you?" "Yes. I have heard the songs. As the meaning of the songs is profound I thought some great personage must have written them," I said. "Yes. There is a story behind it," remarked Bhagavan. When I enquired what it was, Bhagavan leisurely related to us the story as follows:

"Both Tatvarayar and Swarupanandar decided to go in search of a *Sadguru* in two different directions. Before

they started they came to an understanding. Whoever finds a Sadguru first should show him to the other. However much Tatvarayar searched he could not find a Sadguru. Swarupanandar, who was the uncle of Tatvarayar was naturally an older man. He went about for some time, got tired, and rested in a place. Feeling he could no longer go about in search, he prayed to the Lord, 'Oh Ishwara! I can no longer move about. So you yourself should send me a *Sadguru*'. Having placed the burden on the Lord, he sat down in silence. By God's grace, a *Sadguru* came there by himself, and gave him *tatva upadesa* (Instruction for Self-Realization). It is the gist of that *upadesa* that got composed as a song, named *Tatva-saram*. That book has been published with a commentary and is very famous. The understanding arrived at by the uncle and his nephew, could not be implemented as the Guru passed away soon after. Under the circumstances, the uncle himself gave *upadesa* (instruction) to his nephew. Swarupanandar wrote only one book but Tatvarayar sang innumerable songs; amongst them "Gurupada mahima" is one. Though many other songs also are available, now several have been lost."

8th April, 1948

(175) WHAT IS DELIVERANCE (MUKTI)?

At 3 o'clock this afternoon, an Andhra youth with a sad face approached Bhagavan and said, "Swami, I have a request to make, if you will allow me to mention it. I have just come from Bangalore. I do not know how to meditate in order to

attain deliverance (*mukti*), and so am worried. You must put me in the way and help me to realise it.” “What are you doing now?” asked Bhagavan. “I am doing nothing now, Swami. That is why I am praying to you to tell me how I should meditate,” said the young man. “Why do you want to meditate? What is deliverance? What is it you want to realise? Why has this idea come to you at all?” asked Bhagavan.

Poor man, he could not say anything and so was silent. It was however clear from his face that he was worried over something. After waiting for a while, Bhagavan, with a compassionate look, said, “Keep your mind steadily on your family deity, discard outside thoughts and meditate, or keep the Self itself before your mind and meditate. If that is done, that which comes from outside will gradually disappear and meditation alone will remain. You need not meditate separately. The meditation on Self will steady itself and will remain constant. What IS, is meditation. There is no such thing as attaining deliverance. Getting rid of extraneous things itself is deliverance. Breath control (*pranayama*) and other spiritual practices are only for concentrating the mind on one thing. Breath control keeps the wandering mind within the body. That is why breath control has been prescribed first and only then the practising of *japa* (repetition of Divine name), *tapa* (austerities) and the rest. If breath is controlled and kept within for a while, it helps in practising Self-enquiry. If the family deity or some other form is meditated upon, the mind becomes controlled of its own accord. Where that is done repeatedly, that meditation itself leads on to the realization of the Self. You will not then have the duality of the doer and the thing done. All becomes one’s natural state (*Swarupa*) only.”

The young man sat like a statue hearing all this. Bhagavan, addressing himself to another devotee by his

side, said, "See! Call HIM Ishwara (the Personal God), or Atma (the Self) or what you will. He is omnipresent and omniscient; only people cannot see Him. They say that they will do *tapas* and, as a result of it, they want Him to come to them suddenly. What can I do? We are in Him, and we search for Him saying, 'Where is He?' The little ego 'I' wells up and does all this mischief. See its great capacity!"

11th April, 1948

(176) NATURE'S SPLENDOUR

As summer has advanced and the space in the hall has been found insufficient, Bhagavan has started staying in the Jubilee Hall itself all day. Bamboo screens are usually tied down behind his seat, but the attendants raised them yesterday as they were obstructing the free flow of the breeze. I did not notice it. I went there this morning at 8 o'clock. Bhagavan was seated there on the sofa, facing south, like Dakshinamurthy. The mango trees behind covered the whole space like a pandal with their branches, their tender leaves and delicate flowers heralding the dawn of summer. Between those leaves and the flower stalks, bunches of little mangoes, looking like Sivalingas, were dangling. The bowers of the flower garden on his right were full of flowers. Pots containing crotons were placed behind him very close to the sofa. On the left, they had filled a cement tub with water, in which sparrows were enjoying a bath. On either side of the sofa, two peacocks were standing — one white and the other coloured. The incense sticks were giving forth their perfumed smoke, assailing the nostrils of the devotees

gathered there. The sun's rays were coming in through the slits in the covering of the thatched roof and falling on Bhagavan's body, making it shine like gold. Seeing all this splendour, I do not even know if I prostrated as usual before Bhagavan; I remained standing still, lost in admiration.

Ramachandra Iyer, one of the attendants, looked at me as much as to say, "What is it?" Unable to contain my joy any longer, I exclaimed, "Brother, have you noticed how beautiful this scene is? See how nature around has blossomed and is showing us all its beauty! It would be nice if a photo were taken." Bhagavan enquired as to what it was all about. "The whole scene here looks so beautiful that I was suggesting that a photo might be taken," I said. Iyer also fell in with the idea, and so said, "Yes, we will take a photo." Immediately thereafter, Bhagavan began narrating to us some incidents in his early life: "As you all know, I was in the Mango grove next to Gurumurtham, for some time. At that time also, I had a small shed under a mango tree. They erected something overhead like a nest to prevent rain falling on me. There was however not enough space even to stretch my legs fully while sleeping. I used to be sitting almost all the time like a bird in its nest. Opposite my shed, Palaniswami also had a small shed. In that huge garden, only two of us used to stay."

Quoting, I said, "चित्रं वटतरोर्मूले वृद्धाः शिष्याः गुरुर्युवाः... 'It is nice to see the young Guru and the old sishyas together under the banyan tree'. It used to be like that, I suppose. Did anyone take a photo at that time?"

"No. Where were photos in those days?" said Bhagavan. Addressing his attendant, he said, "See. She says a photo must be taken of this sight." "We shall arrange for it this afternoon," said Ramachandra Iyer. Looking at the trees and recalling past incidents once again, Bhagavan said, "That

mango tree also had small fruit like this. They used to fall on top of my shed now and then, creating a sound like ‘tup, tup.’ Even though they got ripe, the outer cover was green. After they were sufficiently ripe, they used to be plucked and kept in storage until fully ripe. In the meantime, you know what used to happen! Bats used to come in the nights, nibble at all the ripe mangoes, eat a bit of each and throw it down. The balance fell to our lot. That means it was a *prasad* (remnants of food presented to a deity) from the bat.” When he heard this, Ramachandra Iyer asked, “Did that gardener never give you any fruit?” “He used to tell us to take the fruit from the trees when we felt like it, but we never touched them. We had the bat’s *prasad*, you see. When they got fully ripe on the tree itself, they were delicious. Is that not enough? Those thatched sheds and that nature’s beauty, gave us immense joy,” said Bhagavan.

12th April, 1948

(177) THE FIRST BATH AND THE FIRST SHAVE

After writing to you yesterday afternoon about the grandeur of Bhagavan’s surroundings in the Jubilee Hall, I went to the Ashram a little later than usual. As soon as he saw me, Bhagavan said, “Ramachandra Iyer and Ananthanarayana Rao together have just taken a photo.”

Being summer and already hot, Krishnaswami sprinkled water on the rush screen at the back of Bhagavan’s sofa and also on the crotons which were behind the screen. The spray from the sprinkling fell on Bhagavan and he

rubbed his body, saying, “See, they are consecrating (*abishekam*) me!”

That incident seemed to have reminded him of something that had happened in the past, for with smiles all over his face and with appropriate gestures, he told us the following story:

“After I came to this place, Tiruvannamalai, I had no bath for four months. One day, when I was in the compound of the Arunachala Temple, the wife of a devotee by name Ponnuswami, came unexpectedly, pulled me along, made me sit, cleaned my head with soap-nut powder and gave me a bath. She had been coming to the temple every now and then; so I had thought that she had come as usual, but that day, she had come there prepared! That was my first bath.”

“Were you bathing regularly everyday afterwards?” I asked.

“No, there was no question of a bath; who was to make me bathe? Who was the one to bathe? After that, a year or so passed in the same way. I had been in Gurumurtham for some time, you see, and as not many people came there every day, no one bothered me. Even so, a lady, by name Minakshi, who used now and then to bring food to give me, one day brought a large pot and began to boil water. I thought it was for some use for herself, but, taking from a basket some oil, soap-nut, etc., she said, ‘Swami, please come’. I did not move. But would she keep quiet! She pulled me by the arm, made me sit, smeared the oil all over my body and bathed me. The hair on the head which had got matted for want of care, was now spread out and hung down like the mane of a lion. That was my second bath. After that, Palaniswami came and everything was adjusted into routine of daily baths.”

“This incident is not found in your biography,” I said.

“No, that is so,” said Bhagavan, “it was never written then. Shaving was also like that. The shave I had on the day I came here has been recorded; the second was after a year and a half. The hair had got matted and woven like a basket. Small stones and dust had settled down in it and the head used to feel heavy. I had also long nails, and a frightful appearance. So people pressed me to have a shave, and I yielded. When my head was shaven clean, I began to wonder whether I had a head or not, it felt so light. I shook my head this way and that to assure myself that it was there. That showed the amount of burden I had been carrying on my head.”

“During those one and a half years, did nobody try to get your head shaved?” asked a devotee.

“Yes, indeed they did try,” said Bhagavan. “When I was in the Subramanya Temple, one Nilakanta Iyer, the grandfather of a lawyer of the same name now practising, used to come there frequently. One day he came prepared for the purpose. Thinking that he had come as usual, I kept my eyes closed. Without saying a word to me, he stood some way off opposite me. I heard a ‘tip, tip’ behind me, so opened my eyes. I saw a barber sharpening his razor. I left the spot immediately without saying a word. Poor man, he realized that I was not willing to be shaved and so had gone off. Ponnuswami’s wife alone would not leave me unless and until I took a bath. When she dragged me, pulling me by the arm, what was I to do?”

“Perhaps she felt you were like a child,” I said.

“Yes,” said Bhagavan, “and another thing happened when I was living under the madukha tree. A twenty-year old dancing girl, by name Rathnamma, saw me one day while going to and from the temple to dance. She grew devoted to me and got disgusted with her profession, and told her mother that she would not eat unless she could

give food to the Swami. So both of them brought me food. But I was then in deep meditation and opened neither my eyes nor my mouth, even when they shouted. But they somehow woke me up by asking a passer-by to pull me by the hand; they then gave me food and left. When Rathnamma insisted that she must daily feed the Swami before she ate, her mother said, 'You are young and so is Swami, and he does not wake until somebody touches and pulls him. We can't do that; what can we do?' Rathnamma then asked a first cousin of hers for assistance, and with his help used to give me food daily. After some time, however, relatives of the boy felt this work to be undignified and so stopped sending him. She, however, would not give up her resolve to feed me; so at last the old mother herself came regularly, and being elderly and thinking that therefore there was no harm in it, used to wake me up by shaking me and then gave me food. Shortly afterwards, the old mother passed away, and I too shifted from there to a distant place. Rathnamma could no longer then go the long distance to feed me, and so gave up her attempts. Since she could not live unless she earned by her profession, Rathnamma confined herself to one man only. What does it matter to what community she belonged, she was pure. She had great non-attachment and great devotion. She had never liked her profession and did not want her daughter to follow it, so married her off."

The story finished, Bhagavan was once more silent.

14th April, 1948

(178) UNDIVIDED ATTENTION

This afternoon I went to the Ashram at 2-30. Bhagavan was taking some fruit. On seeing me, Bhagavan's face lit up with a smile. I thought there was some good news for me. After a while, he began saying, "A letter and a photo have been received from South America. In that photo, there are six men and one woman. That woman is seated in the middle with a photo of mine on her head. On either side, two men are seated and four men are standing. It seems that they are members of an association which is known as 'Arunachala Sangam'. In the letter it is written thus: 'Bhagavan, we cannot go over to your presence We are sending from here only our reverential salutations to you and are doing spiritual practices (*sadhana*). We want your blessings.' They sent a prepaid envelope also. Where is South America and where are we?" said Bhagavan.

"Did any of them ever come here?" I asked.

Bhagavan replied: "They do not seem to have come. I remember to have seen that lady some time. How they have heard about me, I do not know. They have written saying that they have read our books and started *sadhana*. South America is the southern end of America. They have respect for me. Why that is so, I cannot say."

"Devotion has no bounds of distance, has it?" I asked.

"No, that is so. That lady has kept my photo on her head. How could she have known about me?" said Bhagavan.

"When the sun rises will not the light be seen by the whole world?" I said.

"That is all right. Seven or eight years back, a lady came from Europe to see me. As soon as she landed, she did not

stop anywhere, but came straight here. After sitting in the hall for half an hour, she got up, prostrated before me, took leave, went round the Ashram, and left immediately. She went straight to Colombo and as she got into the steamer there, wrote me a letter: 'Bhagavan, having heard about you, I had a desire to see you. My desire is fulfilled. I have now no desire to see anyone else in this country. Hence I am taking this steamer.' That was what she wrote. Rather strange," said Bhagavan.

I said to Bhagavan, "With a desire to see the form of Brahman, and with the help of the divine sight given by Lord Krishna, Dhritarashtra saw Brahman and when the form disappeared, he told Krishna, 'After seeing your sacred form, I do not wish to see any other. So please take away the sight you have given me.' Just like that, this lady did not feel like seeing anything else in India after seeing you. For devotion, there is no difference between men and women, is there?"

"No, there is no difference," said Bhagavan.

26th April, 1948

(179) THE PATH OF LOVE

This morning a Tamil youth approached Bhagavan and asked, "Swami, it is good to love God, is it not? Then why not follow the path of Love?"

"Who said you couldn't follow it? You can do so. But when you talk of love, there is duality, is there not — the person who loves and the entity called God who is loved? The individual is not separate from God. Hence love means

one has love towards one's own Self. For this, i.e., loving one's own Self, examples have been given in the *Vasudeva Mananam*, stage by stage. Man loves money most; but he loves his son more than money; his own body more than the son; his *indriyas* (the organs of the body) more than the body; the eye most among the organs; life more than the eye; and the self (*atma*) more than life. This is exemplified thus: If the son does something untoward and the government decides to punish him for it, the parents offer money and even bribes to set him free. Hence the love towards the son is more than money. If, however, the government does not accept money but say that they will let off the son if the father agrees to undergo the punishment himself instead, then the father will say, 'Do whatever you like with the boy; I have nothing to do with him'. Hence the father loves his own body more than his son. If a man does something for which the powers that be say that his eyes must be plucked out, he tries to save his eyes by agreeing to bodily torture; so bodily torture is preferred to loss of an organ. If, however, they decide to take his life by beheading him, he would be prepared to lose his eyes or any other organ rather than lose his life; so life (*prana*) is loved more than the organs. In the same manner, a person who desires to have *Atma-Anandam* (bliss of the Self) would be prepared to lose his life even, if necessary; so the Self is loved more than life. Hence the idea of a person in loving God, is only with a view to being happy himself. He is, however, the embodiment of happiness and that happiness is God. Who else is to be loved? Love itself is God," said Bhagavan.

"That is why I am asking you whether God could be worshipped through the path of love?" said the questioner.

"That is exactly what I have been saying. Love itself is the actual form of God. If by saying, 'I do not love this; I do

not love that', you reject all things, that which remains is *Swarupa*, i.e., the innate Self. That is pure bliss. Call it pure bliss, God, atma or what you will. That is devotion; that is realization and that is everything," said Bhagavan.

"The meaning of what you say now is that we should reject all outside things which are bad, and also all those which are good, and love God alone. Is it possible for anyone to reject everything, saying this is no good, that is no good, unless one experiences them?" said some other.

"That is true. To reject the bad, you must love the good. In due course that good also will appear to be an obstacle and will be rejected. Hence, you must necessarily first love what is good. That means you must first love and then reject the thing you love. If you thus reject everything, what remains is the Self alone. That is real love. One who knows the secret of that love finds the world itself full of universal love," said Bhagavan and resumed silence.

23rd April, 1948

(180) GRACE OF THE GURU

On the 12th April one by name Gangaraju Mallikarjuna Rao, of Vijayawada, who has been visiting the Ashram off and on, came here with his wife and children. He has five daughters. In between these daughters he had had five sons alternately and they had all died. For the sixth son they wanted to perform the *annaprasana* (ceremony of giving it solid food for the first time) in Bhagavan's presence.

Two days before the auspicious day, while still in Vijayawada, the child suddenly died. They decided to leave

for this place that very evening and reached Bhagavan's presence the next day at 3 p.m.

As though Bhagavan had inspired the question in order to be able to reduce the grief of these people, a devotee asked, "Swami, it is said that by breath control (*pranayama*) and other practices this body can be made to last for a long time and that some people indulge in these practices to enable them to become Realized Souls, *Jnanis*. Is it true? Is it good to do such practices?"

"Yes," Bhagavan gently replied, "people do live long if they do these practices, but does a person become a *Jnani*, a Realized Soul, by living long? Does realization depend on how long one lives? Sankara lived for only thirty-two years, Manikkavachakar thirty-two years, Sundarar eighteen and Sambandar left the body in his sixteenth year. Were they not Realized Souls? A Realized Soul has really no love for his body. For one who is the embodiment of bliss, the body itself is a disease. He will await the time to be rid of the body. When he has the body, he has to clean its teeth, has to walk, bathe, and give food to the body; and has to do many other things besides. If a boil grows, it has to be washed and dressed; otherwise it becomes septic and emits a bad smell. In the same way, if the body is not kept clean, it will get diseased. A Realized Soul looks upon his body in the same way that a coolie does regarding his load. He will look forward to putting down the load at the destination. That being so, will he try to keep on his body and prolong its existence by breath control and rejuvenation (*kayakalpa*) processes? Those are the methods adopted by men in pursuit of powers, *siddhas*. When I was on the hill, I had seen *siddhas* of that sort. If anyone went to see them, they would make them sit, enquire the name of their village and the names of their fathers, grandfathers and great-grandfathers, and tell them that they

had once, during the great-grandfather's time, been to their village. Surprised at that, and wondering how such old men could not only live so long, but could also remain so strong, the villagers would give them several presents and depart. All this was done to impress on the public their greatness, but will people become Realized Souls by such methods? In the *Vasishtam* it is stated that Rama, after his return from a pilgrimage, found that the whole world was itself a cause of misery. He therefore left everything to others, even things like eating and drinking and remained motionless. When Viswamitra asked Dasaratha to send Rama to guard his oblations ceremony (his *yagna*), Dasaratha said that Rama was like a mad man and described some of the signs of his madness. On hearing them, Viswamitra said that he was very pleased to hear of those symptoms, that such madness did not come to many people and that he would like to see him and asked for him to be brought. Rama accordingly came, prostrated before all those present and sat down.

“Viswamitra saw him and asked him the cause of his madness, and addressing Vasishta, said, ‘Please teach Rama the knowledge of the Self, the knowledge which Brahma taught you and me.’ Vasishta agreed to do so. While he was teaching, *siddhas* from all over came to listen to him and they thought to themselves, ‘Rama has gained so much knowledge at such a young age; how surprising! how great! What is the use of our living so long?’ Do you see how all this is?” said Bhagavan.

“Yes, it is true,” said another devotee. “Some people say we have lived for fifty years, what more is needed? As though living so long were a great thing!”

“Yes,” said Bhagavan with a laugh, “that is so. It is a sort of pride and there is a story about it. It seems that in the olden days, Brahma once felt proud of the fact that he was long-lived. He went to Vishnu and said, ‘Do you not see how great a person

I am! I am the oldest living person (*chiranjeevi*). Vishnu told him that that was not so and that there were people who had lived much longer than he. When Brahma said that that could not be, since he was the creator of all living beings, Vishnu took him with him to show him people older than him.

“They went along, until, at a certain place, they found Romasa Mahamuni.* Vishnu asked him his age and how long he expected to live. ‘Oho!’ said Romasa, ‘You want to know my age? All right, listen then and I will tell you.

“This era (*yuga*) consists of so many thousands of years. All these years put together make one day and one night for Brahma. It is according to these calculations that Brahma’s life is limited to one hundred years. When one such Brahma dies, one of the hairs of my body falls out. Corresponding to such deaths as have already occurred, several of my hairs have fallen out, but many more remain. When all my hair falls out, my life will be over and I shall die.’

“Very much surprised at that, they went on to Ashtavakra Mahamuni, an ascetic with eight distortions in his body. When they told him about all the above calculations, he said that when one such as Romasa Mahamuni dies, one of his own distortions would straighten, and when all the distortions had gone, he would die. On hearing this, Brahma got crestfallen. Similarly, there are many stories. If true realization is attained, who wants this body? For a Realized Soul who enjoys limitless bliss through realization of the Self, why this burden of the body?”

The devotee asked, “Is it possible to gain knowledge without the blessings of a Guru? Even Rama, who was like a dullard in his early life became a Realized Soul only with the help of his Guru.”

* *Romasa*: full of hair

“Yes,” said Bhagavan, “how can there be any doubts? The grace of the Guru is absolutely necessary. That is why Thayumanavar praised his Guru in his hymns, and another said, ‘Oh, Gurudeva, your look falling upon it, a tiger becomes gentle like a goat, a snake like a squirrel, and a bad man becomes a good man. And what else may not happen? With your gracious look everything becomes good. How can I describe your greatness?’ Thus he sang. The guru’s grace is extraordinary,” said Bhagavan.

Hearing all these stories, the people from Vijayawada were overjoyed and said, “Blessed are we that the grace of the Guru has been showered on us! Bhagavan has told us all these stories and relieved us of our grief.”

24th April, 1948

(181) DISCUSSION BETWEEN ASHTAVAKRA AND JANAKA

A devotee who heard the story of Ashtavakra two days ago, asked Bhagavan yesterday morning, “The Ashtavakra Muni, whom you mentioned yesterday, is he the same as the one who gave *upadesa** to Janaka?”

“Yes,” said Bhagavan. “The *Ashtavakra Gita* is well-known in Northern India but not in the south. Only recently, Viswanathan translated it into Tamil.”

An Andhra gentleman, who was present, said, “Is that *Gita*, in Telugu?”

**Upadesa*: Initiation or communication of an initiatory mantra or formula.

“Yes, it is in Telugu. More than that *Gita*, the conversation between Ashtavakra and Janaka, which was the cause of that *upadesa*, is very interesting,” said Bhagavan, and he then told us the story:

“As you are probably aware, all the kings of Mithila are known as Janakas. Amongst them, one Janaka, before he gained Self-knowledge heard one of the pandits reading, in the course of his studies, the following passage: ‘Knowledge of the Brahman can be gained even in such a short time taken for placing the second foot on the second stirrup after putting one’s foot in the first stirrup.’ He asked the pandit whether such a thing was true. The pandit said that it was possible and there was not the slightest doubt about it. The king said that he would immediately send for his horse and test the correctness of what was stated in the Scriptures (*sastras*) and that the pandit would be held responsible for it. The pandit said that he was not capable of proving the correctness of the statement, but asserted that what was stated in the book was absolutely correct. The king got angry and said that if it could not be proved, the said sentence should be removed from the text. Even then the pandit was not afraid and so said that he had not the slightest doubt about the truth of what was stated in the scriptures and that he would not therefore say anything against it.

“The king immediately put the pandit in jail and sent for all the pandits in the city. When he asked them about the correctness of the statement in the scriptures, they all said that it was correct. But when he asked them if they could prove it, they also, like the first pandit said that they were not capable of proving the truth of the statement. He therefore put them all in jail and also ordered that whichever *brahmin* entered his kingdom should be brought before him; and if they too replied in the same way as the others, they

should also be put in jail. The news spread throughout the country and so no *brahmin* ventured to set his foot into the kingdom. After some time, Ashtavakra Muni happened to pass that side and, while he was about to take rest under a tree, saw two Brahmins. He enquired of them as to who was the king of that city. They replied, 'What do you propose to ask of that king? Do you intend to enter the city?' When he said that he was thinking of going there and that was why he was asking them about the king, they said, 'Swami, the king that rules this city has imprisoned a number of Brahmins and we would advise you not to go there. If any unfortunate *brahmin* goes into this city, he will be asked, "Can you prove that within the time taken to put both feet in the stirrups of the saddle of a horse, one can become a Realized Soul as stated in the scriptures?" And if he says he cannot prove it, he will be put in jail.' Amused at that, he said, 'Oho! Is that the way of things? Then do one thing. Carry me in a palanquin and take me to the king. I shall prove that the statement in the scriptures is correct and get all the pandits released.' They were pleased and so immediately brought a palanquin, seated the Muni in it, carried it themselves and set it down before the king. The king was then sitting in the *Durbar* hall.

"As soon as he saw the shining face of the Muni, the king felt like worshipping him. Immediately he prostrated before him, stretching himself full length on the floor, with his eight limbs touching the ground, and with folded hands, said, 'Swami, what is the purpose of your visit to this place? If there is anything I can do, please let me know.' Satisfied with the respect shown to him, the Muni said, 'What fault have the pandits committed that you have put them all in jail? Please tell me this first. Then we can consider other things.' 'They could not prove that the statement in the

scriptures that Self-knowledge can be obtained within the short space of time taken by a person to place his other foot in the second stirrup after the first foot has been placed in the first stirrup. I have therefore put them all in jail. I have done so to find out the truth of that statement,' said the king. 'How absurd!' said the Muni, 'can we say that what is stated in the scriptures is untrue merely because it cannot be proved? I declare that each word therein is true,' said the Muni. 'If that is so, I shall send for the horse just now. I pray that you favour me by proving that what is said in the scriptures is true,' said the king. 'As your desire is a good one, I am happy. But I suppose you know that initiation into realization cannot be given to one who is not fit for it. If you want that initiation you must have the fullest confidence in me and first release the pandits who are in jail. After that, if you come to the forest on a horseback, I shall judge your fitness and then give you *upadesa* (initiation)' said the Muni.

"When he heard the words of the Muni, which inspired great confidence, the king's eagerness increased vastly and so the prisoners were freed immediately. Ashtavakra was made to sit in the palanquin, the king himself rode on horseback, and went to the forest with his ministers and other followers. Then, when they stopped under a banyan tree, the Muni said, 'Why not send away the whole retinue? Why all these for the initiation?' Accordingly, the king sent them all away and unwilling to waste any further time, obtained the permission of Ashtavakra and placed one foot on the stirrup and as he was about to raise the other foot, the Muni said, 'Wait, wait! Before you raise the other leg you must reply to my questions.' On the king agreeing to it, the Muni asked, 'In the scriptures under reference, is there merely the sentence that Realization can be obtained by one within the short time of putting his other foot in the stirrup, or is

there something else also?’ asked the Muni. The king said that there were many other things also. When the Muni asked if it was also stated there that for obtaining realization, a Guru also would be necessary, he replied in the affirmative. ‘If that is so, why do you ask for initiation without first accepting me as your Guru?’ said the Muni to which the king replied that as stated in the scriptures he straightaway accepted the Muni as his Guru. ‘What about *Gurudakshina* (gift to the Guru as fee)?’ asked the Muni. The king said that he was at the very moment placing at the feet of the Guru his body, his mind, his wealth, and everything that he possessed in this world and requested him to accept them.

“As soon as he heard that, Ashtavakra went into a bush close by and hid himself. The king with his one foot in the stirrup, remained as he was without moving. The sun set. His ministers and others, anxious at his not returning home, went to the forest. They found the palanquin but no Ashtavakra. The king was there motionless like a statue. They all stood aghast at the sight. The minister went to the king and asked him the reason for his remaining motionless but received no reply. Then they thought that the Muni must have used some black magic and so began searching for him, but he was not found anywhere. Giving up all hopes of finding him, they put the king in the palanquin, took him back to the palace and made him lie down on a cot. He lay on the bed in the same position as he was placed on it and remained motionless. The ministers were very much grieved over it and called all the cavalry men, and ordered them to go in search of the Muni with instructions not to return without him.

“Not only did the king not eat anything, he did not utter a single syllable. He would not even gulp down the water that was poured into his mouth. Seeing his state, the queen and other relatives of the king got overpowered with

grief. The news spread amongst the people and a feeling of terror arose amongst them. Even at sunrise, the king did not get up nor did the Muni turn up. While everyone was anxiously waiting for some news, one of the servants turned up towards sunset together with Ashtavakra seated in a palanquin. As soon as they saw the Muni, the ministers were wild with anger. But afraid that the work ahead would be spoiled if they expressed their resentment, they respectfully enquired of the Muni if any black magic had been practised on the king. 'What do I gain by practising black magic on your king? Anyway, why not ask your master himself?' said the Muni. 'We did ask, but the king is unable to speak. He has not taken food, nor even water, for the last two days. Please somehow see that he eats something', said the ministers. Then the Muni approached the king and said 'Rajah!' Immediately the king said, 'What orders, swami? What is that I have done against you?' The Muni asked, 'Who said that you have done anything against me? You have done nothing. It is all right. Don't worry. Now get up and eat,' said the Muni.

"The king got up, ate and sat again motionless. 'Please have mercy on us and restore our king to his original condition,' said the ministers. The Muni promised to do so. After sending them all out, he bolted the doors behind them, and approaching the king, asked him why he was sitting motionless like that. Immediately the king said, 'Swami, I have no rights whatsoever over this body. These legs and these hands are not mine; this tongue is not mine; these eyes, ears and all the senses — none of them are mine; this kingdom is not mine. In truth, I surrendered to you my body, my mind and my wealth. Without your orders, I am not competent to do anything. That is why I am like this,' said the king.

“Hearing these words of faith and devotion, the Muni was pleased and satisfied and placing his hand on the head of the king said, ‘My dear man, to know whether you are fit to be a *Mukta* or not, I had to give you these preliminary tests. I have now secured a disciple who is fit for initiation. You are now *Brahma Swarupa* (of the nature of Brahman), a realised soul; one who has done successfully all that has to be done; one that has received all that has to be received.’ The king thereupon prostrated before the Muni wondering within himself how he had become *Brahma Swarupa* though he was fully enveloped in ignorance, and asked:

Katham jnanam avapnothi
Katham muktir bhavishyathi
Vairagyamcha katham praptham
Etat bruhi mama prabho

Swami, please tell me how realization can be obtained, how liberation is secured and how non-attachment is gained.

“*Ashtavakra Gita* is in the form of questions and answers, Janaka got initiated into Self-knowledge. As a result of that initiation, the whole night passed as though it were but a few moments.

“Immediately after sunrise, as the door was opened the ministers and others came in and were overjoyed to find the king in great ecstasy. Then the great Muni enquired of the king if he still had any doubts about obtaining knowledge within the short space of placing the other foot on the stirrup as mentioned in the scriptures and that if he had any, he might as well send for his horse so that the statement could be proved. With a heart full of gratitude and devotion, the king said that there was no room in his mind for any sort of doubt and that what was said in the scriptures was absolutely true. He again expressed his gratitude for the great favour

shown to him. That is the story. The *Ashtavakra Gita*, like the *Ribhu Gita*, teaches about the Supreme state of Realization. That is to say, when Janaka surrendered his body, mind and wealth unreservedly to the Guru, he became absorbed in his own Self and went into the state of *samadhi*. In other words, by teaching him the *Gita*, he was told that that was his real state and that he could remain established in that natural state.”

“It is the same as Vasishtha preached to Rama, is it not?” I said. “Yes. That is so. But in the *Vasishtam* it is in the shape of stories. Only in this and in the *Ribhu Gita* the nature of the Self (*Brahma Swarupa*) has been enunciated in greater detail,” said Bhagavan.

25th April, 1948

(182) RIBHU AND NIDAGHA

An Andhra gentleman who listened to the story of Ashtavakra yesterday when Bhagavan related it, approached the Maharshi today morning and said, “Yesterday while relating the discussions between Ashtavakra and Janaka you made a reference to *Ribhu Gita*. What could be the reasons for that *Gita* coming into existence?” “Oh, that. The initiation Ribhu Maharshi gave Nidagha is itself the *Ribhu Gita*,” said Bhagavan. “The story of how Ribhu tested Nidagha is very interesting. Is it not?” I said. On hearing me, that devotee requested Bhagavan to relate to him the story which Bhagavan did with a smile.*

* The story of Ribhu and Nidagha is found in the *Vishnu Puranam*.

“Though Ribhu had several disciples he had some special affection for Nidagha because of his thorough knowledge of the *sastras*, his pure mind and great devotion to the Guru. Ribhu taught him in great detail and clarity the essentials of Advaita philosophy. Even so, his *sisya*’s mind was steeped largely in the performance of *karma* and so he could not keep steady in the path of *jnana* taught by the Guru. He was performing all the rituals as laid down in *Karma-Kanda* and went to live in his native place. Even though he was living far away, the Guru’s concern for Nidagha was growing from day to day. So Ribhu was going to Nidagha’s place now and then to see how far he was getting disassociated from the *Karma-Kanda* (performance of *karma*). Once in a while he used to go incognito also.

“On one occasion, Ribhu went in the guise of a villager and found Nidagha standing and watching the king coming out of the Raj Bhavan in a royal procession. Nidagha did not notice Ribhu coming from behind. The latter wanted to test Nidagha and so said, ‘Why is there a big crowd here?’

Nidagha: (without looking behind and not knowing who the questioner was) The Rajah is going in a procession.

Ribhu: Oho! The Rajah is going in a procession! Who is the Rajah!

Nidagha: There you see. The one on the elephant; that is the Rajah.

Ribhu: What? What do you say? Did you say that the Rajah is on the elephant? Yes. I see both of them. But who is the Rajah and who is the elephant?

Nidagha: What is all this nonsense? You say you can see both. Don’t you know the one above is Rajah and the one below is the elephant?

Ribhu: What? What did you say? Please tell me clearly.

Nidagha: What a nuisance! It is difficult to explain anything to a man like you. How often should I tell you the same thing? Now listen. The one above is the Rajah and the one below is the elephant. Have you understood it now at least?

Ribhu: I am sorry. Please don't get angry with a simpleton like myself. I pray, one more word. You say above and below. My dear sir, please tell me what exactly it means.

Nidagha: (With great anger) How funny! You can see the one above; that is the Rajah. The one below is the elephant. What nonsense do you mean by saying that you do not know what is above and what is below?

Ribhu: Yes. Yes! It is true. I see both. But I do not understand what is meant by above and below.

Nidagha: (Unable to contain his anger) What nonsense! If you cannot understand that which is obvious and visible the only way to make you understand is to give you a practical demonstration. I shall do so now. Bend down. You will then understand everything fully.

“That rustic labourer bent down as directed. Nidagha sat on him and said, ‘Now, now look. Do you understand? I am above you like the Rajah, and you are below me, like the elephant. Is it all right? Do you understand clearly?’

Ribhu: No. I have not yet understood. I am still unable to know the meaning. You say you are above me like the Rajah and that I am under you like the elephant. I am able to understand to the extent that the Rajah is above and the elephant is below. You say, ‘You’ and ‘I.’ That I am not able to understand. Whom are you addressing when you say ‘You’ and ‘I’? Please explain this clearly in some detail.

“He said all that in a calm and dignified tone.

“When Nidagha heard this question aimed at him pointedly, he realised the nonexistence of separate entities

as ‘You’ and ‘I’ and that they merge in the consciousness of the Self. So instinctively, he realised his mistake, jumped down and fell at the feet of the rustic, who, he felt could be no other than his Guru as he had made his mind turn from outer distinctions to the TRUTH that is the Self. He folded his hands and expressed his deep gratitude for the great revelation and thanked him for all that he had done for him. Ribhu again explained to him the state of Reality and taught how to abide in the Self. That teaching is *Ribhu Gita*. In that *Gita* the Self and the Self alone is dealt with at great length.” So said Bhagavan.

28th April, 1948

(183) THE SCREEN

Yesterday afternoon, a devotee approached Bhagavan and said, “Swami, for one who has realized his Self, it is said that he will not have the three states of wakefulness, dream and deep sleep. Is that a fact?”

Bhagavan said kindly, “What makes you say that they do not have the three states? In saying that ‘I had a dream; I was in deep sleep; I am awake’, you must admit that you were there in all the three states. That makes it clear that you were there all the time. If you remain as you are now, you are in the wakeful state. This becomes hidden in the dream state, and the dream state disappears when you are in deep sleep. You were there then, you are there now, and you are there at all times. The three states come and go, but you are always there. It is like a cinema. The screen is always there. Several types of pictures appear on the screen and disappear. Nothing

sticks to the screen; it remains a screen. Similarly, you remain your own Self in all the three states. If you know that, the three states will not trouble you, just as the pictures which appear on the screen do not stick to it. That means that the three states will not stick to you. On the screen, you sometimes see a huge ocean with endless waves; that disappears. Another time, you see fire spreading all around; that too disappears. The screen is there on both the occasions. Did the screen get wet with the water or did it get burned by the fire? Nothing affected the screen. In the same way, the things that happen during the wakeful, dream and sleep states do not affect you at all; you remain your own Self.”

The questioner: “Does that mean that, although people have all three states, wakefulness, dream and deep sleep, these do not affect the people?”

Bhagavan: “Yes, that is it. All these states come and go. The Self is not bothered; it has only one state.”

The questioner: “Does that mean that such a person will be in this world merely as a witness?”

Bhagavan: “That is so. For this very thing, Vidyaranya, in the tenth chapter of the *Panchadasi*, gives as example the light that is kept on the stage of a theatre. When a drama is being played, the light is there, which illuminates, without any distinction, all the actors, whether they be kings or servants or dancers, and also all the audience. That light will be there before the drama begins, during the performance and also after the performance is over. Similarly, the light within, that is, the Self, gives light to the ego, the intelligence, the mind and the lower mind (*ahankara, buddhi, chitta* and *manas*) without itself being subject to processes of growth and decay. Although during deep sleep and other states, there is no feeling of the ego, that Self remains attributeless, and continues to shine of

itself. That is the meaning. There will be no doubts whatsoever if one finds out who one is and what one is by Self-enquiry.”

29th April, 1948

(184) THE DOER AND THE DOING

This morning, at about 9 o'clock, a lawyer from Rayalaseema who came here yesterday, sat near Bhagavan's couch and asked, "Swami, in the *Gita*, Lord Krishna first said that everything is embraced in the 'doing' only, and one's self plays no role. Subsequently, He says that He Himself is the 'doer', the 'doing' and the 'deed' (*karta*, karma and *karyam*); though 'doing' (karma) is the most important of the three, it is ineffectual by itself (*jadam*). If this is so, then everything depends upon the 'doer', who is Ishwara. Why when He first created 'doing' (*karma*), did He create different karmas for different people? It is said that afterwards everyone is made to function according to his karma. How did this difference come about in the very beginning? How did it arise? Not only that, if everything is left to the 'doing' and to the 'doer' who is Ishwara, where does personal effort (*purushakaram*) come in? If there is no personal effort, why is it said that we ourselves must attain Realization? What does it mean?"

Bhagavan said, "Who is it that is asking? To whom has this doubt arisen? Why has it arisen? First think that over and find out."

The devotee: "Swami, I am only enquiring why Lord Krishna said that."

Bhagavan: “That is what I am referring to. What exactly did Lord Krishna tell Arjuna? He told him, the deed will get done according to the ‘doing’. I am the ‘doer’ watching the whole thing from above. Why do you worry? It is your body which does the killing of your relatives. Are you the body? No! Why then this bondage for you? Renounce the idea, He said. This means that He asks Arjuna to do the thing but to give up the feeling that it is he that is doing it. That is personal effort. The feeling that one is, or is not, the body, comes from one’s own ignorance. One only has to give up that feeling; that which one has, one must oneself reject. Who else can do it? If by personal effort that bondage is removed, action, under the orders of the ‘doer’, Ishwara, goes on of its own accord. Every one has his work allotted to him and he will do it automatically. Why should one worry? Arjuna, when he felt that it was not proper to kill his relatives, was only told to give up the feeling that he was the ‘doer’, yet it was Arjuna himself who ultimately fought. By listening to the *Gita*, he lost the feeling of being the ‘doer’ and the doubt he had had was no longer there. The work had to be done with that particular body, and it was done. Even Duryodhana was like that. Not that he was not aware of the correctness or otherwise of what he was doing. He knew that what he was doing was not right, but some force was leading him on to that work. What could he do? That work had to be done in that way by that body, and it was done. He is reported to have said so at the time of his death. Hence it is clear that some Force is making all people to do things. Getting rid of the feeling that ‘I myself am doing’ is personal effort (*purushakaram*). All spiritual practices (*sadhanas*) are towards that end.”

Another devotee: “That is all right. For this karma there must be a beginning, but how it began, no one has mentioned.”

Bhagavan: “Yes, but it is the same thing. If you are asked ‘how did you get this?’ you say you have got it by ‘doing’ (karma). How were you born? By ‘doing’ (karma) that is all that could be said. If, however, you ask how was this karma born, you are told you should not ask such questions. This is known as the Law of the seed and the tree (*bija ankura nyayam*). The tree is born of the seed; again from the tree a seed is born. Where is the origin of that seed? That is a question which you are told is not to be asked. What can we say to that? That is why I always ask people to find out first how they were born and where they were born.”

इश्वरः सर्वभूतानां हृद्देशेऽर्जुन तिष्ठति ॥

भ्रामयन्सर्वभूतानि यन्त्रारूढानि मायया ॥

O Arjuna, the Lord dwells in the heart of all beings who are mounted upon the automation of this body, causing them by His illusive power to spin round according to their actions.

Gita XVIII: 61

तमेव शरणं गच्छ सर्वभावेन भारत ।

तत्प्रसादात्परां शान्तिं स्थानं प्राप्स्यसि शाश्वतम् ॥

Seek refuge in Him alone, with all your being, O Arjuna! Through His grace, you shall obtain supreme peace and the eternal abode.

Gita XVIII: 62

30th April, 1948

(185) NAYANA AND THE RAMANA GITA

Yesterday afternoon at 2-30, there was a talk about the *sloka*, "Hridaya kuhara madhye". A devotee asked Bhagavan whether it was written while living at the Skandasram.

Bhagavan: "Yes, it was written while I was there. In 1915 I had to write it on account of Jagadiswara Sastri."

The Devotee: "Is that the reason? In the *Sri Ramana Gita* it is indicated that Bhagavan himself wrote it."

"No, No," said Bhagavan. "In 1915 Jagadisa was in Skandasram during *Chaturmasya*¹ and one day he wrote down on a piece of paper 'Hridaya kuhara madhye', held it in his hand and sat down. When I asked him what it was, he said that he wanted to write a *sloka*, but when he actually began it, only that much he could write. And when I asked him to write the rest, he said he was unable to do so however much he tried. After a time, he went out somewhere, leaving the paper under my seat. Before his return, I completed the *sloka*, wrote underneath it the word 'Jagadisa' and showed it to him as soon as he returned. He asked me why I had put his name to it. I said that it was because Jagadisa had begun it. He said that if that were so, he should have the paper for himself,

¹ The *Chaturmasya* period begins in the month of *Asadha* (June-July) from the day of *Ekadasi* called *Sayana-ekadasi*, in the fortnight of the waxing moon. The period ends in the month of *Kartika* (October-November) on the *Ekadasi* day known as *Utthana-ekadasi*, in the fortnight of the waxing moon. This four-month period is known as *Chaturmasya*. During the four-month period of *Chaturmasya* one should practice giving up all food intended for sense enjoyment.

and took it away from me and carefully kept it with him. He was very young at that time.

“Some time afterwards, I wrote down that same *sloka*. I was sitting on a big stone slab near the Ashram and all gathered round me and wanted me to tell them the meaning of the *sloka*. I acquiesced and explained it to them for some two or three hours. Taking advantage of this, Jagadisa recently wrote a long commentary on it in the same style as had been done on a *sloka* of Sankara’s. The manuscript has apparently been lost somewhere. When Nayana² wrote the *Ramana Gita*, he took this *sloka* as the opening *sloka* for the second chapter. That is the whole story. I have not written anything unless for a good reason.”

“Did you write this *sloka* at about the same time as Nayana wrote the *Ramana Gita*?” asked someone.

“No,” said Bhagavan, “it was some time later; he wrote in July 1917. But there is an interesting thing about it. In 1913, he asked me some questions and learnt something. When what he had learnt became fully implanted in his mind, he used, whenever he gave a lecture, to recite a *sloka* extempore and say that it was from chapter so and so, *sloka* number so and so, in the *Ramana Gita*. And that was long before he began to write the *Ramana Gita*. When he bluffed thus, no one dared to call his bluff, for he was a powerful personality, full of resourcefulness. Reciting thus from time to time, he finally wrote the *Ramana Gita*.”

Someone asked, “Had anybody asked where the *Ramana Gita* was, what would he have done?”

Bhagavan laughed: “Who had the courage to challenge him like that? That was his strong point. Even after writing

² Kavyakantha Ganapathi Sastri who used to be addressed and referred to as ‘Nayana’.

the *Ramana Gita*, do you know what he used to do? He used to quote some *slokas* which were not in the *Gita* and cite them as examples. If any one had the courage to say that they were not in the printed book, he would say that they were in the *Maha Ramana Gita*, an enlarged version of the original. He had planned to write that also, but was finally unable to do so. He used to say that he would write a commentary on the “Arunachala Pancharatna”, and thereby show off all his knowledge, but that too was never done.”

“It seems that Nayana once spoke in the same way on the ‘Saiva Siddhanta’,” said another devotee.

“Yes,” answered Bhagavan. “That was in the early days of his coming here. At that time, he knew nothing of Saiva Siddhanta. The Association of Saiva Siddhantis decided to hold their conference in this place and invited Nayana to preside over it. They also published that he, being a great pandit, would speak at length and authoritatively on Saiva Siddhanta. He was informed of the exact date only four or five days before the conference. On the very morning of the conference he came to me and said, ‘These people have asked me to attend Saiva Sabha and speak, but I do not know what that Siddhanta is and what really is its nature.’ I thereupon took out a Tamil book, the *Siva Jnana Bodha*, selected twelve aphorisms from it, explained their purport and then briefly told him the essence of that Siddhanta. That was enough. Being very intelligent he grasped the fundamentals in no time and went to the conference. Able to compose *slokas* extempore, he recited them with great confidence and then lectured in Tamil so authoritatively that everyone present was surprised at the profundity of his thought and erudition. When Nayana returned from the Conference he said, ‘It was not out of my knowledge or capacity that I spoke today. It was all due to Bhagavan’s grace. The Saiva Siddhanta which

I have never read appeared to me as though I had had it in my mind all these years'. Such was his intellectual power."

Said one devotee: "It seems that even for the *Umasahasram* he did not get ready until the evening before the day fixed for its reading."

Bhagavan replied, "Yes. Invitations had been sent out to several people saying that the *Umasahasram* would be read out at the Apeetha Temple on a certain day, and so many people came even the day before. It was to be read the following morning, and still 300 *slokas* had to be written. Nayana came to me and said, 'These 300 *slokas* have to be written before daybreak. How can it be done?' 'Why worry?' I said. 'It will be all right if we sit up after food.' 'Then you must come there,' he said. All this happened when I was still living on the hill. As desired, I went to the Mango Cave and sat down in a corner, keeping my eyes open all the time. Nayana sat down opposite me, kept four disciples by his side to write and, giving them extempore, each a part of a *sloka*, finished all 300 *slokas* by midnight."

The devotee said, "Is it a fact that Bhagavan kept intently looking on until all 300 *slokas* were finished, and as soon as they were done, sat up and said, 'Have you taken down all that I said?'"

Bhagavan nodded: "Yes, it was so. I felt that I had dictated all those *slokas*."

The devotee further asked, "Is it also a fact that Nayana changed the other *slokas* several times but never touched even one of the 300 *slokas*?"

Bhagavan nodded his head in assent and was once more silent.

1st May, 1948

(186) CONCENTRATION AND DESIRELESSNESS

Being busy with some bookbinding work, I went to the Ashram a little late this morning. It was by then about nine o'clock. By that time, some gentleman from Maharashtra, who came here yesterday, appears to have asked some questions. Bhagavan was replying to them with uninterrupted eloquence. The words filled with nectar seemed to be coming out of him like the rapid flow of the waters of the Ganges. A devotee was translating them into English. I felt sorry for having come late. I got into the hall hurriedly and sat down. The question of 'abhyasa' (concentration of mind on one subject) and 'vairagya' (desirelessness) was being discussed at that time. Bhagavan explained as under:

शनैः शनैरुपरमेद्बुद्ध्या धृतिगृहीतया ।

आत्मसंस्थं मनः कृत्वा न किञ्चिदपि चिन्तयेत् ॥

He should through gradual practice attain tranquillity; and having established the mind in God through reason controlled by steadfastness, he should not think of anything else.

Gita, VI: 25

यतो यतो निश्चरति मनश्चञ्चलमस्थिरम् ।

ततस्ततो नियम्यैतदात्मन्येव वशं नयेत् ॥

Restraining the restless and fidgety mind from all those objects after which it runs, he should repeatedly concentrate it on God.

Gita, VI: 26

In spite of all this teaching, Arjuna's doubts were not dispelled and so he questioned further:

चंचलं हि मनः कृष्ण प्रमाथि बलवद् दृढम् ।
तस्याहं निग्रहं मन्ये वायोरिव सुदुष्करम् ॥

For, Krishna, the mind is very unsteady, turbulent, tenacious and powerful; therefore, I consider it as difficult to control as the wind.

Gita, VI: 34

In reply to this:

असंशयं महाबाहो मनो दुर्निग्रहं चलम् ।
अभ्यासेन तु कौन्तेय वैराग्येण च गृह्यते ॥

The mind is without doubt unsteady and difficult to curb, Arjuna, but it can be controlled through practice of meditation and dispassion, O son of Kunti.

Gita, VI: 35

So said Lord Krishna. Hence it is very necessary that a *sadhaka* should have practice and desirelessness.

One of the questioners said, "In the second chapter of the *Gita* it has been stated that practising *dhyana* (meditation) along with the path of enquiry is the best but in the twelfth chapter it has been stated that the path of devotion is the best. How to reconcile these two?" Bhagavan said, "The *sadhaka* was first asked to practise meditation in the path of *Jnana*. He could not do so; next yoga, then karma and finally *bhakti*. In that way one after another was taught so that a person could follow a path that suits him best. After all, the goal is one, whatever the path. Lord Krishna's idea was that each path would be easy according to each person's spiritual development."

2nd May, 1948

(187) THE GREATNESS OF MAN

After writing to you the gist of yesterday's discussion about practice of meditation and desirelessness, I wanted to give you the number of the chapter and the number of the *slokas* that were quoted but could not locate them easily in the *Gita*. So I thought the best thing would be to ask Bhagavan himself. I went to the Ashram early in the afternoon by about 2-30. Not many people were there. I gave Bhagavan my copy of the *Gita*. Bhagavan was not only pleased to point out the *slokas* but also once again explained their meaning to me. While doing so some Andhras came there in a group and sat down. One of them asked, "Swami, what is the easiest way to attain *moksha*?"

Bhagavan said with a smile, "That is just what I am explaining now. As and when the mind goes astray, it should be turned inward and made to steady itself in the thought of the Self. That is the only way."

Another said, "To do so, the repeating of the name of Rama is good, is it not?"

"Certainly it is good," said Bhagavan. "What could be better? The greatness of the *japa* (repeating) of the name of Rama is extraordinary," and looking at me, he said, "You know the story of Namadeva. He is reported to have told one devotee, 'If you want to know the greatness of the name of Rama you must first know what your own name is, (Own name means one's real nature *Swarupa*), who you are and how you were born. Unless you know your own origin, you will not know your name.' This idea is found in the *abhangas* of Namadeva written in Marathi language. Someone wrote *Adhyatma Ramayana* in great detail in the Malayalam

language. It is stated in that book that when Anjaneya went in search of Sita, he seated himself opposite to Ravana in the Durbar Hall on a high pedestal and fearlessly spoke to him thus: 'Oh Ravana, I give you a teaching (*upadesa*) for attaining liberation (*moksha*). Please listen to me carefully. It is certain that the self (*atma*) gets purified by intense devotion to Hari, who is in the lotus of the Heart at all times. The ego gets destroyed and then the sin gets destroyed. Afterwards, in its place, the knowledge of the transcendent Self emerges. With a pure mind and with the Bliss (*Ananda*) generated by a firm knowledge of the Self, the two letters 'Ra' 'Ma' which are like mantras, will repeat themselves within you automatically. What more is required for a person who has this knowledge, however little it might be? Hence worship the lotus feet of Vishnu, which will remove all worldly fears, which are dear to all devotees and which shine as brightly as the light of a crore of suns. Give up the ignorance of your mind.' This has been mentioned in two or three *slokas* in the Sanskrit *Adhyatma Ramayanam* but not as elaborately as in the Malayalam text. Is the greatness of the name of Rama ordinary?

"But one thing. The method of repeating the name (*japa*) must be known. In the case of all *japa* it is stated '*pranayame viniyogaha*' which means that the breath is to be controlled first, and then *japa* should be done. In other words the mind must be controlled. Sambanda is a devotee of Siva. He explained in a verse the way to do the *Japa* of *Panchakshari* (five letters) of Lord Siva's name. Its meaning is that one should close *navadwaras* (the nine apertures of the human body, i.e., two eyes, two ears, two nostrils, mouth, anus and the organ of generation), lock them and seal them; otherwise the mind will run away. After sealing the nine doors, do *Panchakshari japa* (repeating the five letters). If, by controlling the senses, the mind can be controlled, i.e. submerged, that which remains

is the Self. One meditates on one's Self and the *japa* becomes one's own Self."

"Is that state called '*ajapa*'?" asked someone else.

Bhagavan: "That which is repeated inwardly is '*ajapa*', but how could the one which is repeated by the mouth be '*ajapa*'?"

Devotee: "Will it be possible for all people at all times to do *Japa* like that?"

Bhagavan: "No, it will not be possible. That is why elders have said that you should do *japa* for some time, sing for a while, read, write and thus turn the mind to good deeds and prevent it from getting into bad habits. The *Gita* also says that one should stop the mind from wandering by practice and desirelessness. Even *japa* is like that. The mind should gradually be made single-pointed while performing *japa*. It is to get that single-pointedness that all the other practices have been prescribed for spiritual practice (*sadhana*)."

अभ्यास वैराग्याभ्यां तन्निरोधः

Its (mind's) control by practice and dispassion.

Patanjali Yoga Sutras

4th May, 1948

(188) VEDARANYAM

The verses written by Appar and other devotees are mostly *padikams*. That means a particular topic dealt with in ten verses. Yesterday was the anniversary of Appar and so Sundaresa Iyer and Sivanandam were singing the verses of Appar at the rate of one or two from each of the *Padikams* and Bhagavan was explaining to them the meaning of each

verse. When the last verse in the *Stotra Padikam* composed at Vedaranyam was being sung, Bhagavan said:

“While on a pilgrimage, the twelve-year old Sambandar and Appar reached Vedaranyam. The main gate of the Vedaranyam Temple was found locked. It seems that long ago the ancient Vedas took human shapes. They worshipped the Lord in this temple with sprinkling or pouring of water (*abhishekam*) and *puja*, and on going away, closed the main gate and sealed it. Since then no one had the courage to open it and so a hole was bored through the wall and a side gate improvised for people for coming and going out. When Appar and Sambandar enquired about the closure of the main gate, the watchman told them this story and suggested that they could go in by the side gate. They did not feel like using the gate and so decided to pray Ishwara for the opening of the main gate. Sambandar suggested that Appar should pray. It was then that Appar sang this hymn of ten verses. Ishwara is fond of Appar’s songs. It seems He was so absorbed in hearing them that He forgot to open the gate. When the gate did not open even on singing the ninth verse Appar was overwhelmed with grief and sang the tenth verse saying, ‘Oh Lord, has not Your heart melted yet?’ When even that had no effect, he sang a eleventh verse beginning with ‘*Arakkanai viralal adarthitta neer...*’, the purport of which is ‘when Ravana lifted the Kailasa with his hands you struck him down with your little finger and inflicted trouble on him for a thousand years. That being so, how will you have compassion for me?’ When this was sung, it seems that Ishwara regretted the delay and immediately opened the doors.”

Bhagavan continued: “After entering the temple and worshipping the Lord therein, they came out. Appar requested Sambandar to pray to Ishwara to close the door and when Sambandar sang only one verse, the doors closed with a bang.

On this occasion, Ishwara tested Appar by not answering his prayers until he sang eleven songs and favoured Sambandar by promptly closing the doors when he sang only one song. On another occasion, it was Sambandar that was put to a severe test while Appar was readily granted favour. That is another story.” When I asked about that story, Bhagavan related it:

“From the time Ishwara put him to a severe test at Vedaranyam, Appar felt aggrieved and began worshipping Ishwara with greater devotion than ever. Subsequently both Appar and Sambandar went on a pilgrimage with their respective retinues and reached a village called Tiruveelimalai. At that time the village was in the grip of a famine. Unable to bear the sight of the sufferings of the people they decided to stay in two different *mutts* along with their attendants and distribute food to the people. They had of course no money with them and so went to the local temple to pray to Ishwara. Pleased with their devotion, Ishwara gave them a sovereign each every day. The sovereign used to be kept on the doorstep. The one given to Appar was accepted by the vendors of food supplies and the required articles were readily purchased. Food could therefore be given to the people before the afternoon set in. The sovereign of Sambandar was however below the standard purity of gold and so the dealers offered to take it only at a discount. The attendants had therefore to come back to the *mutt* to obtain Sambandar’s consent, then return to the shop, buy the required articles and then feed the people rather late, by about 2 p.m. every day.

“In due course this delay came to the notice of Sambandar. On enquiry he found that it was all due to the bad coins he was getting from the Lord daily. He felt very sad, went to the temple and sang ten songs beginning with ‘*Vaasi teerave kaasu nalguveer*’, which means, ‘Swami, why are

you giving me coins which are not pure gold!’ Then the Lord who is the embodiment of kindness, said, ‘Appar is worshipping me with his mind, thought and deed, while you are doing it with your mind and thought only. (It seems Appar was washing the idol and worshipping it daily, along with menial service to the temple.) It was only to point out the difference that I have been doing like this. Henceforth, I shall give you also good coins. Don’t worry’. And from that day onwards good coins were given. There are many stories like this in their biographies,” said Bhagavan.

5th May, 1948

(189) APPAR (A SAINT)

After writing to you about what had happened yesterday, regarding the Vedaranyam Temple and gold-coin stories, I went to the Hall to day at 2.30 p.m., when I found that the topic regarding Appar was still being discussed.

One devotee asked Bhagavan, “Is it a fact that Appar got that name only because Sambandar was calling him Appah?”

“Yes. That is a fact. The name given to him by his parents is Marul Neekkayar. As his voice was pure, he later got the name of Vageesa but it was mainly because Sambandar called him Appah (father) that he got the name Appar,” said Bhagavan.

“Which was his native place?” enquired some one. Then Bhagavan related the full details about Appar:

“Appar was born in a village called Tiruvamur in the Thirumunaipadi region of a Vellala family of Saivites. His father’s

name was Pugazhanar and mother's name was Madiniyar. He had only one sister by name Tilakavati. As he grew up, he became proficient in all studies. When Tilakavati was twelve years of age, the parents decided to give her in marriage to a commander in the king's army. Just then there was a war and that commander went away saying he would marry her on his return. In the meantime Pugazhanar passed away and his wife Madiniyar committed *Sati*.* The brother and sister were left alone. They awaited the return of the commander, but after some time they heard that the commander had died in the war. Tilakavati wanted to commit *Sati* as her parents had decided to give her away in marriage to that commander and she felt that her body was therefore *his*. Marul Neekkiyar, with great grief, fell at the feet of his sister and told her that he looked up to her as his father and mother, and if she insisted on dying on the funeral pyre, he would also commit suicide. As she was anxious that her brother should live and prosper, she gave up her idea of committing *Sati*.

"She however did not marry but remained at home absorbed in the service of the Siva's temple and in her own *tapas* (austerity).

"Marul Neekkiyar realised that material wealth was transitory. Consequently, whatever money, gold and other valuables he had, he gave away, became a *sannyasi*, left home and in his wanderings reached Patalipuram (Tirupodiripuliyur, i.e., Cuddalore). There the most important place at that time was the Samana Jain Mutt. As fate would have it, he went there, joined the *Samana* establishment, was given the title of Dharmasena, became the head of the *mutt*, the *Purohit* of the Rajah and the Poet Laureate of the kingdom. He therefore stayed on there.

* Self-immolation by falling into the funeral pyre of the husband.

“Tilakavati, who was staying at her native place, heard this news, felt sad, went to their family deity — Veerasthaneswara — on the banks of the river Gedila and prayed to God several times to save her brother from following the way of heretics. One day Parameswara appeared to her in a dream and said, ‘O Tapaswini, you can now give up your mental agony. In his last birth, your brother was a *Sannyasi* but did not perform *tapas* properly. There was a flaw in his *tapas*. As a result of that, he has now joined that heretic (*Pashanda*) cult. I shall now save him by making him suffer from stomachache. Give up your grief and relax.’

“Immediately thereafter, Dharmasena had a violent stomachache. Several people in that *mutt* who were well versed in *mantras* and *tantras* tried best to cure him but could not succeed and so gave up all hopes. Dharmasena could not bear the agony any longer. He then remembered his sister. Hoping she might be of some help, he sent a man to fetch her. She refused to give up her own *Dharma* and go over to that Samana Mutt. On hearing that, Dharmasena regretted his having given up his own *Dharma*, namely, Saivism, and without the knowledge of other people in the *mutt*, left the *mutt* at night, with two servants, for his native place. When he tapped at the door and called his sister, she recognised his voice and opened the door. He fell at her feet and requested her to forgive him. She received him with open arms, and overjoyed at the kindness of Parameswara, taught her brother the *Panchakshari Mantra* (Om Namah Sivaya) after giving him holy ash. He smeared the holy ash all over his body and repeated the *mantra*.

“Tilakavati took her brother to the temple of Veerasthaneswara. When he prostrated and got up, Marul Neekkiyar began composing songs in Tamil in praise of Siva. The first of the Ten Verses (*Padikam*) begins with ‘Kootrayinavaru.’ His

stomachache ceased immediately. That is why there is a belief that whoever recites these songs gets relief from all illness.

“After that he went on a pilgrimage singing his *Padikams* (containing 10 verses each). In due course he reached Chidambaram. After worshipping Nataraja there, and singing *Padikams*, he went with his followers to Sirkali, which was nearby, as he heard that Sambandar had become a saint by drinking the milk of the Mother of the Universe, Parvati, when he was a little child. Hearing that he was coming, Sambandar with his followers went out to meet him. As soon as they met, Marul Neekkiyar fell at the feet of Sambandar. The latter lifted him up with his hands with great affection and as a show of respect, called him ‘Appa’ (father). Appar immediately claimed that he was the *Dasan* (servant) of Sambandar. From that time onwards, Marul Neekkiyar came to be known as Appar. Subsequently both of them went together to the temple of Brahmasureeswara. Sambandar then asked Appar to worship the Lord, which Appar did with his *Padikams* (ten verses). After that, they went together to several temples and sang *Padikams* in praise of the Lord. You have already heard of Vedaranyam and the sovereigns. There are several other stories like that. After his contact with Appar, Sambandar went to Patalipuram, defeated the people of Samana Mutt by arguments and established Saivism. They always used to be together.”

19th May, 1948

(190) THE MEANING OF DAKSHINAMURTHY

Yesterday being Tuesday, I got up very early and went round the Hill. After returning home and finishing my household work, I went to the Ashram at 7-30 a.m. As soon as I got up after prostrating before Bhagavan, he asked me, "Have you come back so soon after *Pradakshina*?"

"I returned by 7 O'clock but I was delayed a little at home," I said.

"Is that so? At what time did you start?" asked Bhagavan.

"At 3-30 a.m.," I said.

"So early? Who else was with you?" asked Bhagavan.

"No one. I have been going alone. I do not feel afraid," I said.

"That is all right. What is there to fear? When we were going around the hill, we were mostly doing it at nights only," said Bhagavan.

A devotee said, "It seems that on one occasion when you all went round the hill, a devotee requested you to explain the meaning of the 'Dakshinamurthy Stotram' and, by the time you had completed explaining only one *sloka*, it was daybreak."

Bhagavan: "Yes, naturally; there is so much to explain if one wants to. When I was on the hill, Palaniswami asked me and I wrote in verse the meaning of those *slokas*. I wanted to write the commentary also but in the meantime the book was sent for printing. Later on, one devotee sent a man urgently to ask for material for an introduction. And that was the end."

"So that was all we were destined to get," said the devotee.

“Today, while going round the Hill, I noticed in the Arunachala Temple the idol of Dakshinamurthy with the figure of a demon under the feet and wondered why it was so. The same thing I observed in the idol of Dakshinamurthy by the side of the road here and also, in the Amman Temple. What is the significance?” I asked.

“It is said that that figure represents the magically created demon called *Muyalakan*, that was hurled at Siva by the *Tapasvis* of the Daruka Forest and that Siva stamped the demon under his feet, killed it and sat on it. After all, Dakshinamurthy is one of the five forms of Siva. To explain esoterically one can say that that demon is *ahankara* (egoism) or some such thing,” said Bhagavan.

“There being no form (*rupa*) for egoism, why do they say like that?” I asked.

Bhagavan: “Even Dakshinamurthy does not mean only a form. In the “Dakshinamurthy Stotram” it is that formlessness that has been described in various ways. They all indicate only formlessness. Just as that formlessness was invented, so also descriptions of form.”

Another person took up the conversation and asked, “It is said that Valmiki got his name because he got out of a *valmika* (anthill) and that Vyasa got his name because of his arranging (*vyasa* = arranger) the Vedas in their present form. What could be the reason for Vasishtha being called by that name?”

Bhagavan: “Vasishtha means a person who knows what is best (*Visishta*).”

Devotee: “What is the meaning of the words ‘*pasyan sarvam tavakrititaya satatam*’ which occur towards the end of the fifth *sloka* of ‘Arunachala Pancharatnam?’”

Bhagavan: “That means ‘seeing everything as a form of Yours.’”

Devotee: “I am not able to understand that yet. May I request you to let me have the meaning of the whole *sloka*?”

Bhagavan: “All right. Now listen. ‘*Tvayyarpita manasa*’ means with the mind surrendered to you. ‘*Pasyan sarvam tavakrititaya satatam*’ = seeing everything as your form at all times; ‘*tvam*’ = yourself; ‘*bhajate ananya preetya*’ = worships you with wholehearted devotion; ‘*saha*’ = he; ‘*jayatyarunachalatvayi sukhe magnah*’ = gets lost in Thy bliss, Oh, Arunachala! and thus succeeds in his efforts. That is the full meaning of the *sloka*. When the mind gets merged in the Self, everything is the form of the Self. As, at all places, his own Self is all-pervading, he worships his own Self.”

Hereunder is given the full *sloka*:

त्वयार्पित मनसा त्वां पश्यन् सर्वं त्वाकृतितया सततम् ।
भजतेऽनन्य प्रीत्या स जयत्यरुणाचल त्वयि सुखे मग्नः ॥

He who dedicates his mind to Thee and, seeing Thee, always beholds the Universe as Thy figure, he who at all times glorifies Thee and loves Thee as none other than the Self, he is the master without rival, being one with Thee, Oh Arunachala! and lost in Thy bliss.

Arunachala Pancharatna, verse 5

5th June, 1948

(191) SERVICE

On 1st June, 1948, which was the day of the Maha Puja in the Mother’s temple, I went to the Ashram at 2 O’clock in the afternoon. Bhagavan had just returned from the cowshed and was settling down on the sofa. Not many people were there. I offered my humble salutations and sat down. Venkataratnam came. On seeing him Bhagavan began laughing and, looking at me, said, “Do you know what he

has done this afternoon? He has done a great meritorious service to the Swami — unparalleled service!”

It is about a week now since Venkataratnam was deputed to work in place of Rajagopalan, to look after the library and also to do personal service to Bhagavan. I thought he might have done something wrong and so said anxiously, “Why? What has he done?” “Why do you ask me what he has done? Ask him yourself,” said Bhagavan. When I looked at Venkataratnam I found him silent and with his head bent down. After a while Bhagavan himself related the incident thus:

“This afternoon, after food, when I got up to go towards the cowshed, there were several people near the office barring the way and so my attendants tried to make way for me. Not liking those people to be disturbed, I decided to go to the hill by the side of the dispensary and so began walking that way. The place was filled with used leaf-plates. I wanted somehow to walk along stepping in between the leaves but this chap Venkataratnam came there hurriedly and began pulling away those platters and throwing them to one side. With that, even the little clean space that had been available in between the platters became polluted and dirty. How then was I to walk? Should I carefully see which place is clean and then step on or wait until the whole place is washed and cleaned? But would it be possible to clean the whole place then and there? See the dear little boy’s smartness and intelligence!”

I too laughed and asked Bhagavan how exactly he managed ultimately.

Bhagavan: “I had to go, and so on I went. What else could I do? But it did not stop there. While he was putting the platters from one side, Subramaniam began pulling from the other side all the platters near the steps on the hillside.

He is more intelligent than this chap! Will they stop doing all that by mere words? No, their one idea was to remove immediately the polluted platters being in Bhagavan's path but never for a moment imagining that, by so dragging the platters away, the whole space would become polluted. This is how they do service. I walked all the way over that polluted ground and had to wash my feet and my walking stick later before I could enter the hall. It does not matter at all if it is not deemed to be pollution; but then these people have done all this knowing that there was pollution and mainly with a view just to avoid it."

"That is so. Westerners may not take it as pollution but these people do; but it did not occur to them at that time," I said.

Bhagavan thereupon observed: "Yes, that is so. Once a European came here and ate his food with all the others. After that, he cleaned his hands with his handkerchief, put it into his pocket and sat there until I got up. In those days all people used to remove their used leaves themselves and throw them away outside and so, as all the leaves were removed by that time, the whole place was polluted. As soon as I finished eating and got up he too got up and walked along stepping on the polluted places. People there began protesting but what would he know about the pollution? True. He could not understand them but I told him about it in English. What of that? To understand our objection he should know that the places from where the leaves were removed were being looked upon by us as polluted. Not knowing that, he went on stepping on those places. Afterwards I told our people that he was not aware at all of the fact that we look upon the places as polluted and it was therefore not a fault on his part. Really, in their country there is no such practice. So they do not treat it as pollution. It is all right when you

do not know. It is a fault only if you know that it is wrong. Did these two people today do this without knowing it to be pollution? They knew, but they did it out of devotion to Bhagavan. This is service indeed!" said Bhagavan and laughed.

"Who could really do service to Bhagavan faultlessly?" I said.

Then Bhagavan observed: "That does not matter. I will tell you another thing. They disturb people near the office who are conversing among themselves, standing or comfortably seated, saying, 'Bhagavan is coming, give way, get up.' When I could easily go by another way, why trouble them all? Is that the way to do service to Bhagavan? We must just get our work done somehow. Is it possible to keep everything clean? Everyone acts like this in one thing or another. They say, 'Bhagavan wants this, wants that,' and thereby create trouble and inconvenience to all others. What does Bhagavan want? Giving trouble to others is all that Bhagavan wants, is it? This is all done in my name. To add to this, they say, 'We are doing everything to please Bhagavan; we are serving him.' Oh! what attention and what service!"

15th June, 1948

(192) EMBODIMENT OF COMPASSION

As the summer has set in, Bhagavan has started staying all the time in the Jubilee Hall only. At midday, when it is hot, the attendants shift the sofa to the north where there is a bower with crotons on either side and sprinkle water on khus-khus tatties that are tied around. This afternoon

I happened to go there at about 2 O'clock. Bhagavan was seated with a matty cloth over his body and his head. There was no one there except Krishnaswami. He was standing behind Bhagavan with a sprinkler in his hand, which appeared to be full of rose-water. He opened the screw cap. From that sprinkler the rose-water was sprayed on to Bhagavan like a light shower of rain and Bhagavan was rubbing his body with evident satisfaction. When he saw me coming, he said, "Look! They are doing *abhishekam* to me (sprinkling holy water)." So saying he covered his face with that matty cloth and said, "They have covered me with this wet cloth. They have tied tatties all round and are sprinkling water thereon. This place is now cool like Ootacamund."

I went a little closer to the sofa and found it was cool. "Coming from the hot atmosphere outside, this seems very cool," I said, and came back to my usual place. After thinking for a while, Bhagavan in a reminiscent mood began to talk:

"When I was in the Virupaksha Cave, we used to change over to the Mango Cave during summer as there was no water in the former. At the Mango Cave, at midday, some women of the lower castes used to come there for water with heavy loads of grass on their heads and very tired. Poor people, they start from their homes early in the morning after taking a little gruel (*kanji*), go up the hill and secure a head load of grass. As soon as they come to the cave they throw down their bundles, bend down and say, 'Swami, Swami, first pour a full vessel of water down our spines.' I used to stand on the verandah there and when I poured water on them as desired, they used to recover from their exhaustion, saying, 'Oh, how good this is!' Then, making a cup of both the hands they used to drink water until their stomachs were full, wash their faces, take some rest in the shade of the trees and then depart. They alone could

experience the happiness of it all. It is only when one experiences the oppressiveness of the heat that one knows the relief of the coolness of water.”

“Was it Bhagavan himself who poured the water?” I asked.

“Yes,” said Bhagavan. “I knew they would be coming at that hour and so would wait there with the water ready. What could they do? They should not touch the water in the Mulaipal Thirtham (holy tank) and there is no water anywhere else. The heat is unbearable. They cannot have food unless they sell the grass and get some money. They have children at home. They must reach home quick to look after them. What can they do, poor people! They used to come to the cave with the hope that the Swami would supply water. We were not cooking at that time. If any day we did cook, we poured a lot of water into the rice when cooking, took out the gruel, poured it into a pot, mixed water with it liberally, and added salt. If dry ginger was available I would mix it in also. By the time they came, the gruel water would be quite cool. When a tumblerful of it was poured into their hands, they used to drink it like nectar and go away. The taste of that gruel and the happiness of drinking that water they alone could know.” Filled with emotion, he assumed silence.

I was also unable to speak for some time and so sat still looking at that embodiment of compassion. After a while I said, “This incident is not mentioned in Bhagavan’s biography. Why?” “No, it is not there. I did not think it worth mentioning,” said Bhagavan. “How many more incidents like this must have occurred and left unrecorded!” I said. Bhagavan merely nodded his head.

20th June, 1948

(193) THE DELIVERANCE OF LAKSHMI THE COW

In my letter to you under the caption “Worship of the Cow,” I described to you the grandeur of Lakshmi, the queen of the cows, and the amount of love Bhagavan had for her. To that queen, as for his own mother, Bhagavan on Friday the 18th of June gave *Videha Mukti* (liberation). That morning when I went to the Ashram, I was told that Lakshmi was seriously ill and would not survive the day. So I went straight to the cow shed, without seeing Bhagavan even. The room built for the calves was vacated, cleaned and Lakshmi was given a bed of straw to lie down upon. As it was Friday, she was as usual decorated with turmeric paste, vermilion mark on the forehead and a garland of flowers round the neck and horns. Venkataratnam was sitting by the side fanning her. Lakshmi was lying down with her majestic look spreading lustre all round. She reminded me of Kamadhenu going to Kailas to do *abhishekam* with milk over the great Lord Siva.

When I went to Bhagavan and prostrated before him and got up, he looked at me with a divine look. Taking it as an order, I said I would go and stay with Lakshmi. He nodded his head in assent and I went immediately. Venkataratnam gave me the fan and left. Sitting in that place I began repeating *Ramana Dwadasakshari* (twelve letters of Ramana Mantram), *Ashtotharam* (108 names of Ramana), etc. and Lakshmi appeared to hear them attentively.

When Bhagavan came to the cowshed at 9-45 a.m. as usual he came to see Lakshmi. Bhagavan sat on the hay by her side, lifted her head with both his hands, and passing one of his hands lightly over her face and throat, and then

placing his left hand on the head, began pressing with the right hand fingers her throat right down to the heart. After pressing like that for about a quarter of an hour he said, addressing Lakshmi, “What do you say, mother? Do you want me to stay here alone? I could stay, but what to do? All people could be around you as in the case of my mother. Even so, why? Shall I go?” Lakshmi remained calm, devoid of all the bonds of this world and of the pains of her body as though she were in *samadhi*. Bhagavan sat there unwilling to move and with a heart full of compassion. I was overwhelmed at the sight and exclaimed involuntarily, “Oh! Mother Alagamma had the greatest luck. So has Lakshmi now.” Bhagavan looked at me with a smile. Subramaniam came and said, “It seems the doctor will not be coming till 10-30 as there is no immediate danger to Lakshmi.” “All right. So Doctor will not be coming now. Have you brought the medicine for injection?” asked Bhagavan. Turning towards Lakshmi and gently stroking her head and neck, he said, “What do you say? May I go?” Subbulakshmi said, “She will feel happy if Bhagavan is by her side.” “That is so, but what to do?” So saying and looking into the eyes of Lakshmi, Bhagavan said, “What? May I go? Won’t you tell me?” Lakshmi looked at him proudly. What reply Bhagavan got, we do not know but he got up and went away saying, “See that the flies do not get into the mouth.” I assured him that we would take due care of Lakshmi and Bhagavan left the place very reluctantly.

With the divine touch of Bhagavan, the outer breath of Lakshmi began subsiding and the movement of the body began to decrease. When the doctor came at 10-30 and gave an injection Lakshmi remained unaffected as if the body was not hers. There was no death agony. Her sight was calm and clear. The doctor turned her over into the posture of

Nandi, put some medicine on the boils and went away instructing us to keep some support for the head. As it was 11-30 by then, Venkataratnam came back after having his meal. He asked me to hold up the head saying he would bring some more hay. The tongue touched me and it was icy cold; the life of Lakshmi reached the feet of Sri Ramana and was absorbed in Him.

Ten minutes later, Bhagavan came into the shed saying, "Is it all over?" and squatted by her side, took her face in both his hands as though she were a little child, and lifted it and said, "Oh Lakshmi, Lakshmi," and then, to us, controlling his tears, he said, "Because of her, our family (the Ashram) has grown to this extent." When all were praising Lakshmi, Bhagavan asked, "I suppose the doctor has not troubled her much, did he? How did her life cease?" We told him all that had happened. "That is all right. Did you notice this? The right ear is uppermost now. Till yesterday she was lying down on her other side. Because of the boil she was turned over to this side. So this ear had to come up. Look, in the case of people who die in Kasi, people say Lord Siva will whisper into the right ear. Lakshmi too has her right ear up," said Bhagavan, and showed that ear to all people there. By that time, crowds gathered. After a quarter of an hour, Bhagavan got up and said, "Ramakrishna has been saying for the last ten days that a good tomb (*samadhi*) must be built for Lakshmi." Bhagavan then went away to the hall.

18th June, 1948*

(194) BURIAL OF LAKSHMI THE COW

Thinking of Lakshmi all the time today we had our usual meal and some rest. When at 2-30 p.m. I went to the cowshed Bhagavan was already there. We went and saw the body of Lakshmi. The face did not show any sign of death. We came back to the hall and sat down. Till evening Bhagavan was telling us stories about Lakshmi and was giving instructions to the people concerned about the arrangements for the burial. "It was the same thing in the case of Mother. Until the *abhishekam* (pouring of the holy water over the body) was done, the lustre of the face did not fade. The body could hardly be seen from under the garlands and camphor that were thrown upon it by people from time to time. There were *bhajans*, Nagaswaram music, etc. all around. We brought the body down at night and kept it under the pipal tree with the intention of burying it somewhere near the Pali Tank before daybreak. There was, however, some delay in bringing bricks and slaked lime for constructing the tomb. Meanwhile many people gathered round and put up a big show. On the tenth day, even shops were newly opened. Just see what all will happen now." Always hearing and feeling that Bhagavan was giving undue importance to Lakshmi's burial, one of the devotees, Govindarajula Subbarao, said, "We see many instances here of animals getting deliverance more often than human beings. Bhagavan has told us several times that they come here to work out the balance of their karma. It looks as if they are better looked after by Bhagavan than ourselves."

* The letters have been numbered by date, but the three letters that chronicle the Cow Lakshmi's liberation, burial and history have been rearranged in the order of events.

Bhagavan remarked: “Will it be possible to say so in all instances? Is anybody making all these arrangements deliberately? And do we have the money for all that? When the time comes people spontaneously take up the work and all the required articles come in automatically. The work is done in a trice. Sadasiva Iyer came here the day before yesterday; perhaps he has come specially for this purpose. He knows the full details of erecting a tomb. He is there now on the spot, giving all the directions. He says he will go away tomorrow. It is individual luck; what can we do? Were it an ordinary animal, the butcher would drag it away. For this (Lakshmi) the tomb is going to be erected on a scale equal to that of a *Mahatma*. Look at this white peacock. How many peacocks have come and gone? They are different from this one. This goes about meekly and mixes freely with all people. Where is Baroda and where is Arunachala? It was born there and has come here. Who wanted it?” said Bhagavan.

Towards the hill side and near the dispensary, the tombs of a deer, a crow and a dog were erected long ago. Now a pit was dug near them and the work for the construction of the tomb was begun.

All was ready by 6 p.m. People had come in large numbers. Some of them even sat on the compound wall. The *Sarvadhikari* brought the body of Lakshmi in a wooden cart. Bhagavan came and sat on a chair. Lakshmi's body was placed opposite to him. Devotees brought water in pots and poured it over the body of Lakshmi. After that, *abhishekam* was done with milk, curds, ghee, sugar and rose water. Incense was burnt, a silk cloth was covered over the body, the face was smeared with turmeric powder and vermilion and the body was covered with flower garlands. Sugar candy was offered and *arati* (waving of lights) was performed.

Lakshmi's face beamed with beauty and charm when she was thus decorated.

By about 7 p.m. devotees lowered the body of Lakshmi into the grave with cries of "Hara Hara Mahadev." Bhagavan was visibly affected. After Bhagavan had touched the holy leaves, they were thrown on to Lakshmi by the Sarvadhikari. After that, devotees sprinkled turmeric and vermilion powder, camphor, holy ashes, sandal paste, flowers and salt, and finally, earth was thrown in to fill the grave. After the burial was over, Bhagavan came back to the hall. The *prasad* was then distributed. The whole thing ended like a marriage festival. Lakshmi the cow is no longer in the cowshed. She has been freed from the bonds of the body and now is merged in the lustrous Atman of Sri Ramana.

In the early morning hours of the night Bhagavan wrote a final epitaph in Tamil on Lakshmi. At our request he wrote it in Telugu and Malayalam also. Hereunder is the Telugu verse:

Venba

*sri sarvadhari samvatsara jyeshtakhya
masasita dvadasim bhargava vasaramu
taraka visakha sahitamm avu Lakshmigati
cheru dinamani cheppu.*

It is hereby recorded that Lakshmi the cow was liberated under the star of Visakha, on Friday the twelfth day of the bright half of Jyeshtha, in the year Sarvadhari.

24th July, 1948

(195) THE HISTORY OF LAKSHMI THE COW

At 4 O'clock yesterday afternoon, a Tamil youth came into the hall. On seeing him, a devotee said that the youth was the grandson of the man who had presented Lakshmi the cow to the Ashram. "I see," said Bhagavan. "Does he know that Lakshmi passed away?" That youth said, "I have just heard it, Swami. When I went to the cowshed to see Lakshmi I was informed of it. I have come here after seeing the tomb."

On enquiry, the youth said, "I belong to a village called Kannamangalam. It is about forty miles from here. My grandfather Arunachalam Pillai wanted to present a good milch cow to Bhagavan and so, in 1926, he brought Lakshmi here along with her mother. Lakshmi was then barely six months old. I also came along with them. I was quite young then. From that time onwards I always look up Lakshmi whenever I come to this place on business. I have now heard this sad news." After he left, Bhagavan told us the following story:

"You know what happened when they came here with the cow and the calf. 'Why all this for us?' I asked. Arunachalam Pillai replied saying, 'I have for a long time been thinking of presenting Bhagavan with a cow. I am now in a position to do so. I have brought it after a good deal of trouble on boat and rail. Please keep it, Swami.' I said, 'You have done your duty in presenting it to us. Who is there to look after it? Please keep it with you on our behalf.' The owner of the cow replied, 'I will not take it away even if you cut my throat.'

“Hearing this Ramanatha Brahmachari was piqued and said with great zest that he himself would look after the cow. ‘All right. Hang it round your neck!’ I said. As the calf came to us on a Friday, we named her Lakshmi. Ramanatha somehow tended the cow and the calf for two or three months. Lakshmi was very playful, jumping about as she pleased and, while so doing, she ruined all the vegetable plants we were growing. If anyone chided her, she used to come to me for protection. I used to tell the Asramites that if they so desired, they could put up a fence to protect their plants. Poor chap! Ramanatha could not put up with all these troubles from the other inmates of the Ashram and so handed over the cow and the calf to a keeper of cattle in the town with some stipulations. I do not remember his name.”

A devotee said, “His name is Pasupati. He is a Kannadiga (from the state of Karnataka). Lakshmi’s mother passed away after a short time. The arrangement was that if Lakshmi gave birth to a male calf, it should be given to the Ashram and if it were a female calf he should retain it.”

Bhagavan said, “That might be so. About a year after that, he came here with Lakshmi and her calf for a bath on an eclipse day. He saw me first, had a bath in the Pali Tank along with the cow and its calf and then they went home together. At that time Lakshmi saw the whole of this Ashram. Remembering the route carefully she began coming here everyday. She used to come in the morning and go away in the evening. She used to lie down by the side of my couch. She insisted that I myself should give her fruit. She would not take any other than the hill plantain.”

Someone said, “Before leaving every evening she used to go round the hall, it seems?”

Bhagavan replied, “That is the thing. We had no bell in the dining hall then. We do not know how she did it but

everyday exactly at the appointed time for meals she used to come and stand before me. We used to look at the clock and find that that was just the time for meals. Her coming was the signal for us. She used to return to town daily most reluctantly.”

On further enquiry, I came to know that Lakshmi came away permanently to the Ashram in 1930, that she had three calves by then — all males — and that, as per agreement, all the calves had been given to the Ashram. When she was pregnant for the third time, one evening she was unwilling to leave Bhagavan and go home, like Nandini* of Vasishtha; she was shedding tears and lay close to the couch. Bhagavan was visibly affected and softly passing his hand on her face said, “What! You say you can’t go away, and want to stay here alone? What am I to do?” and, looking at the others, said, “Look, Lakshmi is weeping saying she cannot go away. She is pregnant and may have confinement any moment. She must go a long distance and again come here in the morning. She cannot refrain from coming here. What is she to do?” At last Bhagavan somehow coaxed her and sent her away. That very night she delivered. About the same time Pasupati had some domestic difficulties. Unable to bear the burden of this Lakshmi with all her vagaries, he brought her and her three calves and presented them to Bhagavan. Lakshmi lay at Bhagavan’s feet and would not rise. Placing his right hand on her head and pressing it, he asked if she would like to stay here permanently. She closed her eyes and lay still as in a trance. Noticing that, Bhagavan pointed out to the others that she appeared as though her responsibility for her calves were over, for they had been placed in Bhagavan’s charge.

* Nandini was the wish fulfilling cow who lived with the Sage Vasishtha.

When I narrated this story to Bhagavan he agreed. “Yes,” he said, “that was so. After Mother came to stay with me, regular cooking and meals started, and after Lakshmi came, cattle and dairying became established. Subsequently, for three or four years Lakshmi was presenting us with a calf every year on the Jayanthi day. Afterwards, that practice stopped. Altogether she had nine deliveries. After Lakshmi came here to stay, cows from different places were brought by devotees and left here. So the cattle shed grew in size. In the beginning, they were tied up here and there under a thatched shed. When Salem Sundaram Chetty (Judge) came here, he decided to construct a *Gosala* (cowshed) and fixed an auspicious time for the laying of the foundation stone. Half-an-hour before appointed time, when everything was being got ready, Lakshmi broke loose from her tether and came to me running as though to tell me that a house was being constructed for her and that I should be there. When I got up, she led me to the spot. She did the same for her housewarming ceremony also. Somehow she used to understand everything. Very smart indeed!”

21st July, 1948

(196) DELIVERANCE TO A THORN BUSH

One of the devotees who yesterday heard of the verse written by Bhagavan about the deliverance of Lakshmi approached him this morning and said, “Swami, we ourselves see that animals and birds are getting deliverance (*moksha*) in your presence, but is it not true that only human beings can get *moksha*?”

“Why? It is stated that a *Mahapurusha* (great saint) gave *moksha* to a thorn bush,” said Bhagavan with a smile. The devotee eagerly asked who that great saint was and what was the story about the thorn bush, and Bhagavan then related this story:

“In Chidambaram, there was a *Jnani* by the name of Umapathi Sivacharya. He was a poet and also a pandit. As he was in an extraordinary state of spirituality, (*athita sthithi*), he did not pay much attention to the usual Brahminical practices. Hence, the pandits of the place became angry with him, especially since he was a learned man and knew all the precepts of the Hindu religion. They forbade him from living in the town or even visiting the temple. He therefore lived in a small hut built on a raised ground outside the town. A low caste man called Pethan Samban used to supply him with all that he required and also help him in a general way. As things went on like this, one day, when that Pethan was carrying on his head a bundle of firewood to the hut of the Dikshita, Ishwara Himself met him on the way in the guise of the Dikshita in charge of the temple, wrote a verse on a palmyra leaf, gave it to him telling him that it was to be handed over to Umapathi Sivacharya and then disappeared.

“Pethan gave that verse to Sivacharya, who, on opening it, found in the first line itself the words, ‘*Adiyarkkadiyen chitrambalavanan*’ (the servant of the devotees, the Lord of Chidambaram). Immediately, he was overwhelmed with devotion and a thrill passed through his body as he read the letter. The gist of the verse was: ‘A note from Chidambaranathan — the servant of the devotees — to the person who has set up a new establishment, namely Sivacharya. It is your duty to give initiation to this Pethan Samban regardless of caste and to the surprise of all people.’

“He read the letter and was overwhelmed with joy. In obedience to the orders of the Lord, he initiated Pethan,

though he belonged to the lowest caste and in due course he gave *nayana diksha* (transmission of power through the eyes) to Pethan. Immediately after which Pethan vanished into holy light. Sivacharya himself was immensely surprised at this occurrence and only then understood the wisdom of Pethan.”

“Enemies of Sivacharya noticed the sacrificial offerings and other things he was having for his initiation and complained to the Government that Sivacharya had burnt Pethan to death for some mistake the Pethan might have committed. When the king came there with his retinue to enquire into the complaint, Sivacharya showed the verse of Lord Nataraja and said that he gave initiation to Pethan and that Pethan vanished thereafter in the form of a divine light (*Jyoti*). The king was surprised and asked Sivacharya if he could likewise give initiation and *moksha* to the thorn bush nearby. ‘Yes. What doubt is there?’ said Sivacharya.

“Accordingly he gave *nayana diksha* to that thorn bush and that too immediately disappeared in Pure Light (*Jyoti*).

“The king was still more astonished at that and said, ‘This looks like some black magic. You said this note had been written by Lord Nataraja. Let us go and ask Him.’ Sivacharya pointed out that there was a ban on his entering the temple. The king said that would not matter as he himself was accompanying Sivacharya. Accordingly they started for the temple together. Hearing all this, all the people — the pundits, the common people curious about the whole thing and the enemies of Sivacharya who were sure he would be duly punished — flocked to the temple to see the strange sight. The two entered the temple, and out of regard for the king, *arati* (waving of lights) was offered to Lord Nataraja. It was then found that on either side of the Lord stood Pethan and the thorn bush. The pundits were surprised and, out of fear and remorse, fell at the feet of Sivacharya, requesting

him to pardon them for all their faults. They subsequently brought him back into the town with due honours. This story is found in *Chidambara Mahatmyam*.”

25th July, 1948

(197) A POOR OLD WOMAN

At 3 o'clock this afternoon, in Bhagavan's presence they were again talking about Lakshmi when a devotee said, "It seems Arunachalam Pillai purchased Lakshmi, not at Kannamangalam but at Gudiyatham." Hearing that Bhagavan said, "This was also Keerapatti's* town." That devotee asked, "When exactly did she come to this place?" With a smile Bhagavan began telling us her history:

"I myself do not know. Even when I was in Arunachaleswara Temple she was staying on the hill and was visiting me now and then. But it was only after I went to the Virupaksha Cave she began coming to me frequently. She was then living in the Guha Namasivaya Mandap. At that time the Mandap was not as well maintained as at present. It had only a wooden door and wooden latch. She had no other articles than an earthen pot. She used first to prepare hot water in it to bathe and then cook vegetables and food in it. She had only one pot for preparing whatever she wanted. She used to go out before sunrise, wander about the hill and bring back some special leaves useful for cooking as vegetables. She used to cook them tastefully, bring me about a handful and persuade me to eat. She never failed to do so even once. Sometimes

*A poor old woman, living by selling in the vegetable market green leaves collected from the hill.

I used to help her in cooking by going to her place and cutting the vegetables. She had great confidence in me. She used to go to town daily, obtain rice, flour, dhal and the like by begging at various houses and store them in a big open-mouthed earthen jar. Once in a way she used to prepare gruel with that flour and dhal and bring it with the vegetable curry, saying, 'Sami, Sami, yesterday one good lady gave me a little flour. I have made some gruel, Sami.' She believed that I knew nothing. When she was not there, I used to open the doors of that Mandap and find several varieties of foodstuffs in the jar. But then she had absolute confidence in me. She did not allow anyone else into that Mandap. When she could not find any vegetables she used to sit there depressed. On such occasions I used to climb the tamarind tree, pluck some tender leaves and give them to her. She was thus somehow supplying me food every day. She never used to take anything herself. She used to bring all sorts of curries, saying, 'Sami likes that.' She had great devotion and attention. Even at eighty years of age she used to wander about all over the hill. She was living there on the hill even before I went there."

"Was she not afraid of anything?" I asked.

Bhagavan said, "No. What had she to be afraid of? You know what happened one day? I went to the Skandasramam and stayed there for the night. Palaniswami was in the Virupaksha Cave. At midnight a thief got into her place and was trying to get away with things, when she woke up and cried out, 'Who is that?' The thief put his hand over her mouth but she somehow managed to shout at the top of her voice, 'Oh, Annamalai! Thief! Thief!' Her cries could be heard even at Skandasramam where I was. I shouted back saying, 'Here I am! I am coming. Who is that?' So saying I ran down in hot haste. On the way, at the Virupaksha Cave, I asked

Palaniswami about it and he said, 'I heard some shouting from the cave of the old woman, but I thought she was mumbling something.' Some people were living at the Mango Cave and the Jataswami Cave but no one appears to have heard her cries.

"The cries were heard by the one that had to hear them and Arunachala himself responded to her call," I said. Nodding his head in assent, Bhagavan said, "Hearing my shouting, the thief ran away. We both went to her, asked her where the thief was and as there was no one, we laughed away saying it was all imagination. She said, 'No Sami. When he was removing things I challenged him and so he put his hands over my mouth to prevent me from shouting. I somehow managed to shout at the top of my voice. It was perhaps you that said you were coming. He heard that and ran away.' There was no light there and so we lighted a piece of firewood and searched the whole place when we found the jar and around it several small odds and ends scattered about, we then realised that it was a fact."

I said, "Her belief in God was profound. Hers is not an ordinary birth, but a birth with a purpose." Bhagavan merely nodded his head and was silent.

When Gajendra sent out his appeal to Lord Vishnu the latter heard it in Vaikunta and immediately rushed to relieve the distress of Gajendra without telling Lakshmi and without bearing his arms, viz., Conch and the Disc. In the same manner Bhagavan ran to the rescue of his devotee. See the solicitude towards devotees!

27th July, 1948

(198) FAITH

This morning at 8 o'clock one of the ardent devotees brought the Tamil note book written by Bhagavan and gave it to him. Bhagavan showed the verses he required, turned over some of the pages, showed some more verses and explained their meaning. I could not hear him and so looked at him enquiringly. Noticing it Bhagavan said loudly, "Some time ago, Muruganar wrote two verses in Tamil in praise of Vishnu. One is a *Kayikam* (pertaining to the body) and the other is a *Vachikam* (pertaining to the word of mouth). The gist of those verses is:

'1. Swami, you took the *Varaha Avatar* (The Boar Incarnation), lifted the earth which was submerged in water and saved the people. How could I, one of the inhabitants of the earth, praise you suitably for the great good you have done me?'

'2. The world was one great ocean (*Ekarnavam*) when the *devatas* prayed to you to save them. You then took the shape of a *hamsa* (swan) and when with both wings fanned the water, the water gave way and the earth came out of it. For what you have done for us, how can I sufficiently praise you?'

"This is the purport.

"After writing those two verses he insisted on my writing the third one *Manasikam* (pertaining to the mind). So I could not help writing it. It was only then that I wrote the verse, the purport of which is:

'O Swami, to relieve the burden of the earth, you took the *avatar* of Krishna and by your teaching through the *Gita*, like, "whenever there is decline of righteousness," "for the

protection of the virtuous”* you assured us that you would have several other incarnations. To praise such a Lord and his various forms, who am I?’

“These words of praise or ‘Who am I?’ have several meanings and could be interpreted in different ways by different people. I wrote this verse on Vishnu mainly on Muruganar’s insistence. He wrote *Kayikam* and *Vachikam* and said that Bhagavan alone should write the *Manasikam*. What could I do?”

I said, “Who else could possibly write the *Manasikam*?”

Looking at a gentleman sitting opposite, Bhagavan said, “Look, that Krishnaswami Iyer wrote a commentary on *Bhagavad Gita*, attached a picture of Krishna on the front page of the manuscript and pressed me to write something underneath. Then I wrote the verse ‘Parthan Therinal’ (in Tamil) and then changed it into a *sloka* in Sanskrit reading:

पार्थसारथिरूपेण श्रावयित्वा शुभां गिरम् ।

पार्थस्यार्तिहरो देवः कृपामूर्तिं स्स पातु नः ॥

As the Charioteer of Partha (Arjuna), the Lord gave him the divine teaching. May He, who is compassion incarnate and who resolved the distress of Arjuna, protect us!

“It is found in *Bhagavad Gita Ratnamalika*. These are the only two I have written in praise of Vishnu and I had to write them under the above circumstances.”

* *Gita*, IV: 7 & 8

28th July, 1948

(199) COMMENTARY ON SANKARA'S ATMABODHA

It seems that Mr. Minna Nuruddin, a competent Sanskrit scholar and Tamil poet had written and published a translation in Tamil verse on Sankara's "Atmabodha". He presented a copy of it to Bhagavan while on a visit to the Ashram. Bhagavan glanced at them and sent them to the library. We could however see from his face that something was wrong. He sent to the library for Sankara's "Atmabodha" in Nagari script and every now and then was looking into it. After doing so for two days, he took a pencil and paper and began writing something of his own accord. We were wondering what he was writing. On the 16th instant he translated the first two *slokas* into Tamil verse in *venba* metre and showed them to us. All of us said it would be good if all the other *slokas* also got translated. In spite of saying, "Why? Why?" he wrote some more during the next two days and said, "Though I have been disinclined and have been putting off writing them, they come to me from time to time, one after another and stand in front of me. What am I to do?" I said, "If you write down whatever comes to you, the whole thing may be over in a month's time. That will be good." "Several people have written it," said Bhagavan. "Why should I do it?"

I said, "Will any of them be like Bhagavan's writings?"

By the 19th, he wrote some more and said, "These appear to be suitable for children only, but I am unable to resist the urge to write."

"Are we not all your children?" I said.

The 20th instant was Vyasa Purnima (full moon, Guru Purnima day). By then thirteen verses were completed.

Addressing Venkataratnam, Bhagavan said, “This won’t leave us now. Stitch them into a book,” and so saying he wrote a verse by way of introduction.

“*Annavin bodhamarulashanam sankaran...*” It means:

Could Sankara, who wrote the “Atmabodha”, be other than the *Atma*? Who else could it be than Himself that was in my heart and made me write this in Tamil?

By the 27th instant all the sixty-eight stanzas got translated into verse and on concluding the work Bhagavan said, “These stanzas were written in Malayalam Script in that small notebook which, as I said, was our first possession forty years ago, but somehow it never occurred to me then to translate them.”

A devotee said, “For everything the right time must come.”

Bhagavan with a smile said, “Yes, that is so. If I write one thing now another presents itself. How is it I feel I have read this before? Is it possible that someone has already written this?”

Muruganar: “No one has written it in *venba* metre. What surprise is there if one verse after another occurs to Bhagavan? It is said that in every *kalpa** the Vedas appeared as though they were standing before Brahma. This also is like that.”

Bhagavan: “Yes. It is said that the Vedas are *anadi* (without a beginning). That is true.”

Muruganar: “Is not *atma vidya* also *anadi*? For Bhagavan even that *atma vidya* is effortless.”

Bhagavan said with a smile, “That is all right. As in the case of the story of Jayadeva, someone might come and claim authorship of these verses.”

* A day of Brahma or thousand *Yugas*, being a period of 432 million years of mortals and measuring the duration of the world. The one in which we now live is known as *Svetha Varaha Kalpa*.

Devotee: “What is that story, Bhagavan? Please tell us.”
And Bhagavan began telling us that, as follows:

“Jayadeva’s story is found in *Panduranga Bhakta Vijayam*.

After writing the *Gita Govindam*, Jayadeva wrote *Bhagavatam* also in Sanskrit. On hearing about that, Krauncha Raja appealed to Jayadeva to read the *Gita Govindam* in the Durbar Hall and so he began reading it. People who heard him were so impressed with the writing and with his discourses that his fame spread in all directions and people came in large numbers to hear him. His fame spread so far that Jagannatha Swami of Puri (the deity of the temple) was eager to listen to him. So he started in the guise of a *brahmin* and one day while the discourse was going on, he entered the Durbar Hall of the king. After blessing the king, he said, ‘Sir, I am a resident of Gokula Brindavan. I am a pundit well versed in all *sastras*. I have been searching all the world over for someone who could discuss the *sastras* with me on equal terms but so far I have not found any one. I am therefore itching for a discussion. I learned that Jayadeva was with you and so I came here. Where is he?’ When the people pointed out Jayadeva to him, he said, disdainfully, ‘Oho! You are Jayadeva. Let me see. Let us discuss any one of the *sastras* you have studied,’ and looking at him steadily, said, ‘What is that in your hands?’ Without waiting for a reply, he snatched the book from his hands and said, ‘Oho! This is *Bhagavatam*. So you are a *Pauranika*? (one who gives discourses on the Epics). Who wrote this?’ With fear and devotion Jayadeva said, ‘Sir, I am not a pundit to hold discussions with you. I humbly seek the blessings of elders like you. Though I do not have the courage to say before you that I wrote this book, still as it will be a fault not to tell you the truth, I admit that I am its author.’ That *brahmin* pretended surprise and said, ‘What! If it is you who wrote it, tell me, how could I have learnt all its contents by heart?’ So saying and

without opening the book he began repeating the contents quickly, chapter by chapter. The king and the audience were amazed. Realising that Lord Jagannatha Himself had come in that form to shower His grace on him, Jayadeva prayed to him to reveal His real form (of Vishnu) with the conch, mace, chakra (discus), etc. Pleased with the *stotras* (prayers), Lord Jagannatha showed Himself in the various forms in which Jayadeva had invoked Him in his *stotras*, blessed him and disappeared. In the same way, some one may quarrel with me saying that he had written the ‘Atmabodha!’”

29th July, 1948

(200) APPROPRIATE TEACHING

As Bhagavan was going out this morning at a quarter to ten, his body faltered a little. The attendants hesitated to touch him to enable him to steady himself as they knew he would not like it. An old devotee who was walking by his side at the time tried to hold him up. Warning him against that, Bhagavan coolly said, “You all try to hold me from falling down but actually throw me down. Enough of it. Please take care that you don’t fall down yourself.” These words are pregnant with great meaning. Though it would appear that Bhagavan was saying something commonplace, there was a great truth in those words and I therefore made a note of them then and there.

In the meantime, Bhagavan returned and sat down in his usual place. Even before that, a young man had come there in a huff into the Hall. After some attempts he said, “Swami, I have got a question in my mind. Can you tell what

that question is? Or do you want me to ask it?” Bhagavan said, “Oho! That is what is the matter, is it? Sorry. I do not have such powers. Being a capable person you may be able to read other’s thoughts. How can I get such powers?” That young man was about to say, “What then is your greatness if you cannot do that much?” but others who were there prevented him from saying that. Seeing that, I came and sat nearer Bhagavan. Looking at me Bhagavan said, “Look. This young man asks me whether I can know what question he has in his mind! No one has asked such a thing so far. So it means that he is testing me. The purpose of a person in coming here is known even as he comes in. The manner in which he sits itself reveals the purpose of his visit. Instead of trying to test me, why does not he test himself and find out who he is? Would that not be much better?”

A gentleman, who happened to be sitting by the side of the young man, took up the thread of the conversation and said, “Swami, you say that finding out the Self is the greatest thing in life. But for finding it out, is the *Nama Japa* (repeating the name of the Lord) good? Can we attain *moksha* in that way?” Bhagavan said, “Yes, it is good. That itself will take you in due course to the goal. The repeating of the Name is to remove all extraneous things. Then everything extraneous disappears and what remains is the Name alone. That which remains is the Self or God or the Supreme Being. *Nama Japa* means we give a name to God and call HIM by that name. You give Him that name which you like most.”

That devotee asked, “Will Ishwara manifest Himself if you give Him some name and pray to Him to appear in a particular form?”

Bhagavan: “Yes. He will answer your call by whatever name you call Him and will appear in whatever form you worship Him. As soon as He manifests Himself you ask

something. He grants the boon and disappears, but you remain where you were.”

I said, “I suppose Bhagavan also will do likewise, if we ask him for some material benefits.” Without taking any heed of what I had said, and by way of avoiding the question, Bhagavan said, “That is why God is afraid of manifesting Himself. If He comes, the devotees will ask Him to give away all His Powers and retire. Not only will they say, ‘Give everything to us’, but they will also say, ‘Do not give them to any one else’. That is the fear. That is why God delays in coming to His devotees.”

Another devotee: “Is it the same thing with Mahatmas?”

Bhagavan: “There is no doubt about it. If any lenience is shown to people, they begin to exercise authority on Mahatmas. They will say, ‘You should do as you are asked to.’ They will also say, ‘No one else should come here.’ And so on.”

Devotee: “It is said that the *Mahatma* looks upon all with the same kindness. Why then do they tenderly receive some, reply to some and not to others, when asked, shout at some and show indifference towards others?”

Bhagavan: “Yes. All the children are the same for the father. He wishes them all well. Hence he treats them with love and anger according to their propensities, and thus gives them training. Children who are gentle, remain aloof with fear and do not ask for anything; they should be cajoled with love and tenderness and given whatever they want. Those who are bold, ask for and take whatever they want. Those who are vagrant should be reprimanded and kept in their proper places. Those who are stupid should be neglected and left to fend for themselves. In the same manner *Mahatmas* have to be loving or harsh according to the merits of the devotees.”

30th July, 1948

**(201) ARDHANAREESWARA
(A FORM OF SIVA — HALF MAN AND
HALF WOMAN)**

Jagadeeswara Sastry came from Madras this morning and while discussing the greatness of Arunachala as a pilgrim centre, enquired of Bhagavan why Parvati got the second half of the body of Siva. Bhagavan thereupon told us the following story:

“Once upon a time when Siva was seated comfortably on Mount Kailas, Parvati came from behind and closed his eyes for fun. As a result, the whole world was plunged into darkness, as the sun and the moon lost their lustre. People were terrified and shaken. Devotees prayed to Siva to save them from the catastrophe. Parameswara immediately opened his third eye and saved the people from their agony. Parvati got afraid and removed her hands. Parameswara did not say anything. But Parvati trembled with fear. The Lord said gently, ‘Devi, this was no doubt only a pastime for you, but by that the whole world was deprived of the light of the sun and the moon. See how much people suffered. You may think it is just for a moment but a minute for us is an aeon for the world. Why this childishness?’

“After listening to that mild reprimand of Parameswara, Parvati realised her mistake, felt ashamed and prayed for permission to do penance for the expiation of her sin. Parameswara said, ‘You are the Mother of the world. You have no sin. There is no need for penance.’ She was not satisfied. She said she would set an example to the whole world and so would do penance, and after obtaining his permission she started southwards. At that time, in the kingdom of Kasi, there was a drought and famine. The people

were suffering greatly, as they could not get food. Seeing this on her way and taking pity on the people, Devi created a big mansion by her mere wish, took the name of Annapurna, and with the vessel which never got empty, fed thousands of people. Before long, her fame spread throughout the country. Meanwhile, the king himself found that his granary had become empty and was wondering what to do. When he heard of the poor feeding that was being done by the lady Annapurna, he was greatly surprised at the ability of a mere woman and, to test her, asked for the loan of a few measures of rice. He got a reply to say that there was no question of lending but that he could come there and eat. With a wish to test her ability, the king and his ministers went there in disguise and ate the food that was given. When the king found the inexhaustibility of the food that was being served all round, he immediately realised that this could not happen by any human agency and must be by a divine power. And so, after the meal, he went and fell at the feet of Annapurna and said, 'Great Mother, please live with us and grant us deliverance.' Pleased with the devotion, the Holy Mother assumed her original form and said, 'My son, I'm pleased with your devotion. As I have stayed here so long, your country will be relieved of the evils of draught. You will now have rains and there will be no famine. I cannot stay here any longer. I must go south for my penance. Rule the people well and be happy.' The king said, 'Even so, you should be available to us for our worship.' So the Mother agreed and left. That is the reason why she manifested herself as ANNAPURNA and the place where she was is now famous as the Temple of Annapurna.

"From there she went to Kancheepuram in the South, made a Sivalinga of sand, worshipped it and, on realising that she was free from sin, and at the prayer-full requests of

the people, manifested herself there as Kamakshi. After that, she got upon the Bull and saying she would go to Arunagiri, she came here. Devi went first to the Gautama Ashram at the foot of the Pravala Hill. On seeing her, Satananda, the son of Gautama, was filled with devotional fervour. He invited her into the Ashram, worshipped her as prescribed and requested her to stay on while he went to the forest to bring his father Gautama, who had gone to fetch some *kusa* grass. By that time Gautama had already started for home and, when Satananda saw him, he ran to his father with great excitement and told him that the Divine Mother had come to their Ashram. The whole forest in the twinkling of an eye became green and full of flowers and fruits. Gautama was surprised and asked his son if it was really so. Satananda, with a faltering voice said, 'Mother Parvati herself has come.' Equally thrilled and elated, Gautama hastened to the place, saw Parvati and worshipped her. After that the Devi performed penance according to the instructions of Gautama for a long time when Mahadeva presented Himself and said that He would give her whatever boon she asked for. Devi said with great respect that she would become half of Siva Himself. 'I cannot live', she said, 'any longer with a separate body. If separate, I may make another mistake like this and then undergo all the hardships of penance and suffer the pangs of separation.' Parameswara therefore acceded to her request and so became as 'ARDHANAREESWARA'. This is how Amba the Mother of the universe became one half of Siva."

While narrating this story, Bhagavan became visibly affected, tears welled up in his eyes and his voice faltered. On completing the narration he assumed a dignified silence.

26th August, 1948

(202) LOVE OF ANIMALS

At 3 o'clock this afternoon while we were discussing something in Bhagavan's presence, a stranger came to the Ashram with a platter full of fruits. It seems that on the way to the hall some monkey came, snatched some of the fruits and escaped. Hearing the noise outside and realising what had happened, Bhagavan laughingly said that the monkey took away its portion of the fruit as it was afraid we would not otherwise give it. We all laughed.

While this was going on, a female monkey with a babe at her breast approached the fruit basket. People near the basket shouted it away. Bhagavan said, "It is a mother with a child. Why not give her something and send her away?" But he was not sufficiently audible, and so the monkey got frightened, went off and hid herself in a tree. Bhagavan, full of pity and kindness, said, "Is this fair? We call ourselves *sannyasins*; but when a real *sannyasi* comes we drive him away without giving him anything. How unfair! We want to eat for years and live. We store things in a room, lock it and keep the keys with us. Has the monkey got a house? Can it put anything by for the morrow? It eats whatever it can get and sleeps on whatever tree available. It carries the child under its belly, wherever it goes, until the child is able to walk about, when it leaves the child to itself. Who is a real *sannyasi*, the monkey or ourselves? That is why the male monkey took its share on the way itself. That was a male and could do it with impunity. This is a female. What can she do?" So saying Bhagavan began calling that monkey cajolingly. The monkey came on to the side of the couch and stood there.

In an endearing manner, Bhagavan gave her all the fruit she wanted and sent her away.

A little later, the white peacock came in all its grandeur. Bhagavan, looking at it, said to me, "Look, their ears are not visible. In the usual place for ears there are big holes. They are covered by feathers in the shape of a fan." I said, "Is that so? I never knew it before." Bhagavan then remarked, "I observed this while I was on the hill. We then had two peacocks with us. The peahen always used to sleep in my lap. I observed this when she was thus sleeping. The peacock never came so close to me. He used to wander about in all sorts of places. She never used to leave me but always sit by my side or sleep in my lap. She was very familiar with me. The peacock used to call her to accompany him whenever he went out, but like a little child, she would never leave me and go."

I said, "Little girls are always more attached to Bhagavan and Bhagavan also shows towards them greater affection."

Bhagavan: "One day a fellow took her away by force. She never returned. What happened I do not know. The cock however at last breathed his last in my lap. It was then we built a tomb for him there."

"How very fortunate it is!" I said. "Yes, yes," said Bhagavan and was again silent.

10th September, 1948

(203) WHAT IS HAPPINESS?

For some time past, the Ashram doctor has been suggesting that Bhagavan should take wheat diet instead of rice as that would give better nutrition. Four or five days back, he emphatically stated that the change over to wheat diet should be effected without further delay. The Ashram authorities came to Bhagavan and asked for permission to prepare *puris* (wheat cakes fried in ghee). Bhagavan objected to it saying that the *puris* would require a lot of ghee and it was not necessary to spend so much money on them. They said that there was no need to worry about the expenses and, as the doctor says it would do good for Bhagavan's health, *puris* would be prepared. Bhagavan said, "Please don't do anything of the sort. If this doctor says wheat is good, another doctor will say that wheat is no good for Bhagavan's health. He also is a great doctor. Should we not obtain his permission also? Are we independent in such matters? First ask the doctor."

On enquiry as to who that doctor was and what really happened it was found that he was none other than our Subramania Mudaliar the storekeeper. It seems some time back wheat had been given as a part of the rations of foodgrains. As no one was accustomed to wheat diet it was difficult to dispose of it separately. Hence wheat and rice were cooked daily and served in equal proportions to all the people in the Ashram. Bhagavan, however, insisted on being served with wheat only and was eating it daily. That devotee, the storekeeper, knowing that wheat would unduly generate heat in Bhagavan's body and upset his health, requested Bhagavan not to take wheat, but it was no use. Hence he

stopped serving wheat in the dining hall and had it served to the coolies only.

When the doctors questioned him on this matter and challenged his statement that wheat does not suit Bhagavan's health, he tried to evade giving a straight answer by saying that, on that occasion the wheat obtained on the ration was worm-eaten and if that fact were known to Bhagavan he would insist on eating that food himself and so he had no alternative but to have it served to the coolies. Bhagavan came to know of that after he returned from the cowshed and, with some bitterness, said, "Oh! Is that so? What a great service he has done! We should eat all the good food and the food that is prepared from damaged wheat should be given to the poor coolies! I suppose they think Bhagavan will be pleased when he is informed about it. So a noble deed has been done and all this because of their devotion to Bhagavan. What greater shame could there be if food that is not fit for us is given to the coolies in our own presence? That is how everyone here behaves. Enough of all this nonsense. I do not want *puris* or anything of the kind. Give them to the coolies. If they eat them is it not the same as my eating them?"

Taking up the thread of the conversation, another devotee said, "Our only anxiety is that Bhagavan's body should be healthy."

Bhagavan: "Yes, that is true. But what is health and what is happiness? Does happiness consist in eating only? Take the case of a Maharaja. Everyday he has rich and delicious food cooked for him. But he is always sick; always suffers from indigestion. He has no taste for food. He cannot digest what he eats and suffers from stomachache. He can't sleep, even though he has a fine cot, nice silk curtains and soft cushioned bedding. What is the use? He is always worried about one thing or another. A coolie is happier than that

king. He eats or drinks whatever he can afford and sleeps soundly without any worries. As he works with the sweat of his brow he gets first class appetite. With that appetite he relishes food like nectar even if he takes only gruel. He has nothing to lay by for the morrow and so he has no worries about safeguarding his belongings. He lies down comfortably under some tree or other and enjoys sound sleep.” That devotee said, “But then he does not think that he is a happy man.”

Bhagavan: “That is the trouble with the world. The one who sleeps under the tree looks at the palaces and mansions and regrets that he does not have those pleasures. But he is the really happy man. Once I saw a coolie here. Till noon he was doing hard labour by digging the earth and throwing it on the road. He was sweating profusely all the time and was tired. He became hungry. He washed his legs, hands and face in the tank, sat on a slab and opened the pot containing his food. It was full of cooked rice, with a little soup sprinkled on it. He took out three handfuls of that rice and swallowed it with evident relish. Nothing was left over. He washed the pot, drank some water and dozed away under the tree, with one of his arms serving as a pillow. I then felt that he was really a happy person. If one eats just to live, everything one eats gives strength. It is only when you live to eat that you become sick.”

Devotee: “What Bhagavan said is true, but a Maharaja regrets that he has not become an Emperor; an Emperor that he has not become a Devendra (the Lord of the Gods). They will not have the feeling that a coolie is happier. Is it not?”

Bhagavan: “No. They will not have that feeling. That is the illusion. If they have the true feeling, they become realised souls. As I have experienced both of them, I know the value of that happiness. To tell you the truth, the

happiness I experienced while in the Virupaksha Cave when I ate only if somebody brought something for me and slept on the earthen platform without even a cloth on it, I do not have it now with this luxurious food I now eat. This cot, this bed, and these pillows — all these are bondages.”

11th September, 1948

(204) WHERE IS THE SWAMI?

After Bhagavan told us yesterday that he does not now have that happiness which he enjoyed when he was sleeping on an earthen platform, some devotees went to Skadasramam after obtaining Bhagavan's permission and, on their way back, saw the Virupaksha Cave. On returning to the Ashram they asked Bhagavan if the earthen platform referred to yesterday was the same as that which is now in the verandah there, and whether it was a fact that Bhagavan himself constructed that platform.

Bhagavan: “Yes, that is a fact. We all thought that it would be convenient for visitors to sit on. So I built it with stones and mud. It was only some time later that it was cemented.”

I said: “Is it a fact that while the platform was being constructed some stranger came and enquired of Bhagavan where the Swami was and Bhagavan sent him away saying that the Swami had gone somewhere?”

Bhagavan said, “How did you come to know of that?” and laughed. I replied that Echamma had told me about it. Thereupon Bhagavan related the incident to us as under:

“Yes. It is a fact. One morning I arranged the stones, prepared the mud and was building the platform. Some

stranger came there and asked me 'Where is the Swami?' There was no one else besides myself. So I said, 'Swami has just gone out somewhere.' He again asked, 'When will he return?' I said, 'I don't know.' As he was afraid it might be a long time for the Swami to return, he began descending the hill when he met Echamma coming up, who asked him why he was going down. When he mentioned what had happened, she asked him to accompany her saying she would show him the Swami. Echamma came up, put down inside the cave the vessel containing the food she had brought with her, prostrated before me, rose and told the stranger, 'There he is. He is the Swami.' The man was surprised and, after prostrating before me, said to her, 'Is he the Swami? When I came here a little while ago, he was building the platform. Not knowing who he was, I asked him "Where is the Swami?" and he said "The Swami has gone out somewhere." I believed him and so started going back.' Echamma thereupon began teasing me for misleading him. Then I said, 'Oho! Then do you want me to tie a board round my neck saying I am the Swami?'

Devotee: "It seems you misled people in the same way even after coming here?"

Bhagavan: "Yes. That is true. We did not have many buildings then. We had only this hall where we all are now sitting. Even this was originally constructed as a kitchen with a chimney. Our Shanmugam Pillai, father of Gopala Pillai, and several other devotees insisted on having a hall for Bhagavan to sit in, and said that the construction of a kitchen could wait. The chimney that had already been constructed was therefore dismantled and the building was converted into this hall. Between this hall and Mother's temple there used to be a thatched shed for a kitchen and by its side near the black neem tree there used to be the store room. That also was a thatched shed. Daily, we used to get up early in

the morning and cut vegetables. One day while I was thus cutting vegetables keeping the door of the store room open, and all the others had gone out on different errands, two or three people who were going round the hill came into the hall and, finding the couch empty, came round to the store room. They were people who frequently visited the Ashram. What has that got to do with it? My head was wholly covered with a bed-sheet and as I was cutting vegetables, my face was not visible. 'Sir, Swami is not on the couch. Where is he?' they asked me. I replied saying that he had just gone out and would be back in a little while. They thereupon went away without waiting as it would be too late for them to go round the hill. Some one here noticed that and asked me why I had misled them. 'What else to do?' I said. 'Was I to tell them that I was the Swami?' Such incidents happened quite a number of times."

When I mentioned all this to a devotee, who has been in the Ashram from very early days, he said, "Not only that. You know there used to be a swami by name Dandapani. He was stout with a big paunch and with an ochre-coloured loin cloth. He had a stentorian voice. Bhagavan therefore used to say that it would be a good thing to keep him at the doorway during the Krithikai Festival of Lights so that people who came in crowds could take him to be the Swami, prostrate before him and go without troubling Bhagavan. Bhagavan has thus always been anxious to avoid publicity."

20th September, 1948

(205) ASTROLOGY

A few days ago an astrologer came here. At about 10 a.m., the day after his arrival, he asked Bhagavan several questions on astrology and obtained suitable replies. I give below a brief report of their conversation:

Questioner: "Swami! According to astrological science, predictions are made about coming events, taking into account the influence of the stars. Is that true?"

Bhagavan: "So long as you have the feeling of egoism all that is true. When that egoism gets destroyed all that is untrue."

Questioner: "Does it mean that astrology won't be true in the case of those whose egoism is destroyed?"

Bhagavan: "Who is there to say it won't be true? There will be seeing only if there is one who sees. In the case of those whose egoism is destroyed, even if they appear to see they do not really see. The window is open. Even so there must be some one to see. Does the window see anything?"

Questioner: "If that ego were not there how could the body continue to function from day to day?"

Bhagavan: "Yes. That is it. The body is a house for us. This house will be properly maintained only if you are in it. Hence we must realise that we are keeping the house habitable only so long as we are in it and must never give up the knowledge that the house is separate from the Self. The moment that is forgotten the feeling of ego comes in and troubles begin. Everything in the world thus appears real and the destruction of that feeling is the destruction of the ego. When that ego is destroyed nothing (of this world) is real. What is to happen will happen; and what is not to happen will not happen."

Questioner: “You say that what is to happen will happen and what is not to happen will not happen; if that is so, why should it be said that good deeds must be done?”

Bhagavan: “If something good is done, it results in happiness. Hence people say good deeds must be done.”

Questioner: “Yes. That is why elders say that sorrow is adventitious.”

Bhagavan: “That is so. Sorrow is adventitious. It is only happiness that is natural. Every living being desires happiness because his natural state is the embodiment of happiness. All *sadhanas* (spiritual efforts) are for overcoming adventitious sorrow. When a headache comes on casually, you have to get rid of it by medicine. If it is a permanent ailment of the body, attached to it from birth to death, why should you try to get rid of it? Just as boils and other diseases of the body are cured by a doctor’s treatment, sorrows which are the result of various difficulties can be overcome by *sadhana* specially aimed at them. This body itself is a disease. The root cause of it is ignorance. If for that ignorance the medicine called *jnana* is administered all inherent diseases will disappear at once.”

Questioner: “Is it possible to get immediate results by *sadhana*?”

Bhagavan: Some yield immediate results and some do not. That depends upon the intensity or otherwise of the *sadhana*. If good acts or evil acts are done with great intensity the results will manifest themselves immediately; otherwise the results are slow. The results, however, necessarily follow. It cannot be helped.

30th September, 1948

(206) LIFE ON THE HILL

Recently Bhagavan himself changed the verses of “Atmabodha” which are in *venba* metre into the *kalivenba* metre by writing them afresh. As they have now been printed in a book form, that has since been the topic of frequent discussions in Bhagavan’s presence. Yesterday afternoon, Bhagavan himself said, addressing a devotee sitting nearby: “Look. When we were in the Virupaksha Cave I wrote in this small note book in the Malayalam script at the request of Palaniswami a good portion of Sankara’s *slokas* and *upadesas*. This “Atmabodha” also is found in that notebook; but at that time I did not feel like writing a commentary thereon. Off and on, the *slokas* used to come to my mind. You know what happened once. We all started to go to the summit of the Arunachala Hill, with all necessary things for cooking our food and eating it whenever and wherever convenient. That was when we were in the Virupaksha Cave. Palaniswamy stayed behind in charge of the cave. By the time we reached the Edudonalu (Seven Ponds) it was rather hot. So, we bathed and then wanted to cook our food. We took out the cooking vessels and all the foodstuffs, such as dhal, salt and ghee and also arranged the fireplace and then found that we had not brought the most important thing of all, namely the matchbox. The cave was too far away to go and fetch a matchbox. Moreover, it was very hot and everyone was terribly hungry. Some tried to make a fire by striking one piece of flint against another but without success. Some tried to rub one piece of wood against another as they do in *Yagnas* for lighting the sacrificial fire, but that too was not successful. The second stanza in “Atmabodha” came to my mind, namely,

बोधोऽन्य साधनेभ्यो साक्षान्मोक्षैक साधनम् ।

पाकस्य बन्धवत् ज्ञानं विना मोक्षो न सिध्यति ॥

“I read it out, explained the meaning and kept them all in good humour.”

Another devotee said, “We do not know the meaning of that *sloka*.”

Bhagavan replied with a smile, “You want to know its meaning? It means that just as you cannot cook whatever articles you may have unless you have fire, so also you cannot attain liberation (*moksha*) unless you have *jnana*.”

“What happened afterwards?” asked someone.

Bhagavan said, “Someone appears to have sent word through one of the grass-cutters who was returning home with head-loads of grass. Palaniswami sent a matchbox through some one of those going up the hill for woodcutting. Subsequently we lit a fire, cooked and ate. You know how the cooking was done? Rice, dhal and vegetables were all put in one vessel and boiled together and then some salt was added. A *kitchadi* (hotchpotch) was thus made. All of us had decided on it beforehand. After food, we took a little rest and then started for the summit. To enable them to understand the stanza ‘*Bodhonya Sadhanebhyo*’ I continued to explain its full significance to them during our walk. On reaching the summit, I said to them, ‘You see the amount of trouble experienced in reaching here. We climbed to a little extent and then had to mix a lot of things and eat before we could climb farther. For preparing the food we had no fire, and so nothing could be done. Similarly, you may have everything for teaching and learning but without understanding there cannot be full ripening of wisdom. With that fire of *jnana* all worldly things must be mixed up and swallowed to attain the highest state.’ After that we came back straight to the cave before it was

dark. In those days we never felt it difficult or tiresome to go to the summit; so we used to go whenever we felt like it. When I think of it nowadays, I begin to wonder whether I ever went to the summit.”

“Is it a fact that Echamma and others also used to accompany you?” I asked. “Yes. Even the old woman, Mudaliar Patti, used to come with us. Both of them used to bring food everyday without fail. They would not listen to me. Even if I went away somewhere just to avoid them, they used to find me out somehow,” said Bhagavan. I remarked, “We complain of pain in the legs for several days if we go up to Skandasramam even once. It is remarkable how these old women managed to go up to Skandasramam everyday with a bundle on their head, and sometimes elsewhere also, wherever Bhagavan happened to be. Their great desire to fall at the feet of Bhagavan perhaps gave them the required strength.” With a nod of approval and a smile, Bhagavan was silent.

10th October, 1948

(207) PLAYING WITH CHILDREN

A few days ago, Mahadeva Sastri, son of Kavyakanta Ganapati Sastri, came here. Bhagavan introduced him to us all. As he is now living in this place our talk turned on his father Sri Kavyakanta yesterday afternoon. Bhagavan began telling us:

“When I was living in Virupaksha Cave, sometime in 1903, Nayana* came there with his family. At that time this

* Sri Kavyakanta was always addressed as ‘Nayana’ which means ‘father’ in Telugu.

Mahadeva was about four or five years of age. Nayana prostrated before me and then asked the little boy to do likewise. He appeared not to have heard it and, with an air of indifference, kept quiet. Nayana too did not mind it. Then, all of a sudden, that boy prostrated before me in full length (*Sashtanga namaskaram*). Like a young boy who has had his Thread Ceremony he placed his hands on his ears and then touched my feet. I wondered how that little boy could have known the correct procedure of prostration and felt that it must have come from family traditions.”

I said, “Yes. Every habit comes out from family traditions.”

Bhagavan: “That is so. This Mahadeva has since changed a lot. I used to talk with him frequently. During the days when I was living in the Mango Cave, Nayana invited all those near and dear to him, to listen to his reading of the “Uma Sahasram” in Pachiamman Shrine. His family also came. Mahadeva was then eight years of age. I asked him if he remembered me. He did not say anything in reply and quietly went away to play. After a while, somebody came to see me. They prostrated before me and telling me that they had come once before, asked me if I remembered them. As I did not remember, I was silent. I do not know how he noticed that incident, but after they left, Mahadeva came to me running and said, “Swami, what did those people ask you first?” I replied saying that they had enquired of me if I remembered them as they had come once before and that I had been silent as I did not remember them. He promptly stated that he likewise did not remember me. I felt amused.

“You know what I did one day? Seating Mahadeva on my back I began swimming in the tank opposite the Pachiamman Shrine from one end to the other. When we were halfway through he began pressing me down, greatly

elated, shouting ‘Aha, Hail!’ as cart drivers do to their bullocks. I was tired and it seemed as though both of us would be drowned. I was of course very anxious that he should be saved from such a catastrophe. So I managed somehow to reach the other side.”

I said, “For one who helps people to swim across the mighty ocean of *Samsara* (the material world) is that difficult?”

Another devotee enquired if it were a fact that Bhagavan and Nayana used to swim in the Pandava Tank.

Bhagavan replied, “Yes. That also was only in those days. We used to try to excel each other in swimming. That was great fun.”

Another devotee said, “It seems you played marbles with children?”

Bhagavan replied, “Yes. That was so. That too was while we were in the Virupaksha Cave. The holes dug for the purpose of playing marbles must be there even now. Those children sometimes used to bring packets of sweets. We all shared them. During Dipavali they used to put aside my share of crackers and bring them up to me. We used to fire the crackers together. It was most entertaining.”

I was reminded of the *leelas* (playful acts) of Lord Krishna’s boyhood days. Even now Bhagavan plays with children if they come here with toys.

स तत्वज्ञो बालोन्मत्त पिशाचवत् ।

जड वृत्त्या लोकमाचरेत् ॥

The Knower of Truth goes about the world, (outwardly) like a child, a madman or a devil.

Mahavakyaratnamala

20th October, 1948

(208) SADHU SANGAM

At 3 o'clock yesterday afternoon an elderly lady came to Bhagavan along with her children, grandsons, granddaughters and others. On seeing them, Bhagavan said with a smile, "Oh Kanthi! Is that you? I thought it was somebody else." She went to Bhagavan with some familiarity, showed him all her progeny, prostrated before him and came back to sit with the ladies. Looking at me Bhagavan asked, "Do you know who she is?" On my replying in the negative, he told us:

"There is in the town a gentleman called Seshachala Iyer. She is his daughter. This lady, Echamma's niece, Chellamma, Rameswara Iyer's daughter, Rajamma and some others are all of about the same age. They were all quite young when I was on the hill. They used to climb up the hill and come to me very often. Sometimes they used even to bring their dolls and perform the dolls' marriages. At other times they used to bring rice, dhal, etc., cook and eat and give me also something from their preparations."

"I take it, Bhagavan used to play with them?" I said. "Yes. They used to come up whenever they felt like it. They were all very young, you see, and so they were independent. Now she has a big family and so she cannot come whenever she wants to. As it is a long time since she came last, I was wondering who it was," said Bhagavan. "Not only did you play marbles with the little boys but you played *Gaccha Kayalu* (children's game) with the little girls. They were all born lucky," I said. Nodding his head in affirmation, Bhagavan related an incident that had occurred at that time.

"It was in those days that Chellamma came to me with a paper in her hand. When I looked at it out of curiosity, I found written on it the following *sloka*:

सज्जनसङ्गे संप्राप्ते समस्तनियमैरलम् ।
तालवृन्तेन किं कार्यं लब्धे मलयमारुते ॥

If association with sages is obtained, to what purpose are the various methods of self-discipline? Tell me, of what use is a fan when the cool, gentle south wind is blowing?

“I translated it into Tamil in verse form beginning with ‘*Sadhu sangathal*’. Subsequently it was included in the supplement to the “Forty Verses” (verse 3). You have it in prose, have you not?” asked Bhagavan, and I replied in the affirmative.

I asked, “How did Chellamma get that paper and why did she bring it to you?” Bhagavan replied, “Echamma used to fast every now and then, saying it was Ekadasi or it was Krithikai and the like. Chellamma too started to fast with Echamma. But then Chellamma was very young and used to suffer a lot in consequence. Echamma usually sent food for me through her. On a Krithikai day she brought me food even though she was fasting that day. How could I eat when she was not taking any food? I told her that she should not indulge in such fasts being young, and somehow prevailed upon her to eat. Next day while she was coming up the hill with food she found that paper. It appeared to contain some *sloka* and so she brought it with her to show it to me. When I saw that, I found it contained this *sloka*. I said, ‘Look. It contains the same thing I told you about yesterday.’ She asked me what its meaning was and so I translated it into a verse in Tamil and explained the meaning to her. Thereafter she gave up her fasts. She had great faith in me. Even after she attained age she never would write anything on paper without the words ‘Sri Ramana’ to begin with. Those children used to recite before me all the songs and verses they learnt. When Chellamma passed away all of them felt as if they lost their own sister,” said Bhagavan.

One devotee said, "It is stated in the Biography that when the news of her death was announced, Bhagavan was visibly moved and expressed sorrow. Is that a fact?" Bhagavan said that it was a fact and was silent. You know, Bhagavan has said several times that a *Jnani* weeps with those who weep and laughs with those who laugh.

20th November, 1948

(209) BHIKSHA IN AGRAHARAM*

From 2-30 p.m. this afternoon Bhagavan was telling us about the happenings of the early days of his coming to Tiruvannamalai. It was 3 o'clock. Gambhiram Kuppanna Sastri brought a marriage invitation card, gave it to Bhagavan and prostrated before him. After talking to him for a while about the marriage Bhagavan looked at us and said, "It seems the granddaughter of Gambhiram Seshayya is going to be married. This is the invitation card." "Is that so?" I said. With a smile Bhagavan enquired, "Do you know why these people get their surname as Gambhiram?" "I do not know," I said.

Bhagavan: "These people belong to the family of Akkanna and Madanna. Gambhiram is the title given to his ministers, Akkanna and Madanna, by the Golkonda Ruler. That has become their surname now. You know there is the tomb of Bhagavantaswami in Cuddalore. That Bhagavantaswami belonged to this family."

* An Agraharam is the residential area of a town occupied by *brahmins*.

Questioner: “Is that so? Then was that Bhagavantaswami a *brahmin*?”

Bhagavan: “Yes. He was a *brahmin*. When he was lying some where near Cuddalore unmindful of his body, the maternal grandfather of Somasundaram Pillai who happened to be in Cuddalore brought him home and kept him until he breathed his last. Kuppanna and the rest of his family were with that Swami all the time. It is only after that Swami passed away that they came here to be with me. I suppose you know that he is Gambhiram Seshayya’s elder brother’s son?”

Questioner: “That I know. But they are Andhras, and how did they come to style themselves Iyers?”

Bhagavan: “That is because they have been staying in this part of the country for a very long time; may be for some generations. When I was in Gurumurtham, Krishna Iyer, the brother of Sesha Iyer, was working here as Salt Inspector. After I left Gurumurtham, I stayed for some time in the Arunagirinatha Temple opposite to the Ayyankulam Tank. During that period, I went one night to the Agraharam for alms and I called at Krishna Iyer’s house. He was playing cards at the time seated on a mat with three others and before a candle light. When I clapped my hands (as is usually done by Bhagavan to draw the attention of the householders) they were startled. Krishna Iyer felt ashamed, hurriedly removed all the paraphernalia of the cards, mixed some rice and gave me alms. At that time I did not know who they were. After Seshayya came here, he told me that Krishna Iyer was his brother. It seems his brother felt highly repentant for sitting there playing cards when the Swami came and thereafter completely stopped card playing.”

Questioner: “So, Bhagavan used to go out to collect alms personally while staying in Arunagiri Temple?”

Bhagavan: “Yes. I used to go out every night. I went to Arunagirinatha Temple in the month of August or September 1898.

“As soon as I went there to stay, I told Palaniswami that I would go my way and he should go his and sent him away. But although he came back the same evening, I myself went out for alms. At times I used to go even during daytime. At night people used to wait for me outside, with lanterns, to give me alms. Seshayya’s brother also used to wait similarly for my arrival. I was there for about a month only. As it was near the Agraharam the crowds of people waiting to see me began to grow. With a view to avoiding all the rows incidental to crowds, I went up the hill to stay. In those days, going out for alms used to be an exhilarating experience. I used to accept two or three handfuls of food at each place and eat. By the time I had thus eaten at three or four houses my belly would be full and I used to return home.”

Questioner: “Perhaps the other householders used to feel disappointed at your not visiting their houses.”

Bhagavan: “Yes. That is so. That is why the next day I used to go to the other side of the Agraharam. I do not think ultimately I left out even one house in that Agraharam.”

Questioner: “How blessed those householders must be!”

4th November, 1948

(210) THE LOTUS FEET OF THE MASTER

I do not know if you have noticed that there is a big light-red mole on the sole of Bhagavan’s right foot. I too did not notice it for a long time. Only the other day I saw it. As

you are aware, during the winter months, a charcoal stove is lighted and kept near Bhagavan to warm his hands and feet. I feared therefore that the stove had been kept too near, resulting in the sole of the foot getting burnt, and so asked Bhagavan anxiously. Bhagavan replied: "Oh! It is nothing. It has been there since my childhood." I did not attach much importance to it at the time. Yesterday, however, during some conversation, I broached the subject with Aunt Alamelu (Bhagavan's sister). She said, "I was also once perturbed on seeing it and asked Bhagavan. He laughed and told me that it had been there even at birth. He also stated that it was by that mark of identification that his uncle had recognised him after he had run away from home."

You know, we used to read in fairy tales (Kasi Majli Stories) that great personages have a pearl in their navel and a lotus flower on their instep. I went to sleep thinking of that mole. The foot of Bhagavan appeared in my dream. With that thought in mind I went to the Ashram early this morning, by half-past seven. By that time Bhagavan had returned from the bath room by the side of the cowshed and had sat down on the couch. After all the others had prostrated before him, I too prostrated and got up, and standing, continued to stare at his foot. Noticing this, Bhagavan looked at me enquiringly. "Nothing," I said, "I am looking at that foot which has all the characteristics of a great personage (*Mahapurusha*)."

"Is that all?" said Bhagavan with a smile and was about to open the newspaper to read it when I said, "It seems that when Auntie enquired about that mole, you stated that it was by that sign you were recognised by your uncle when you ran away from home."

Putting the paper down and sitting cross-legged in *Padmasana* pose, Bhagavan replied, "Yes. It is stated in the *Ramana Leela*, as you know, when my younger uncle, Subba

Iyer, passed away, my other uncle Nelliappa Iyer, while he was in Madurai, came to know through Annamalai Thampuran that I was here. However much Thampuran told him, Nelliappa Iyer was not sure about my identity. So when he came here he could recognise me only by that mole.”

“How anxious he must have felt!” I said.

Bhagavan then remarked, “How could he not be anxious? He used to look after us with great care after we had lost our father. I came away like this and so he was always fearful for my safety. In the meantime Subba Iyer also passed away and so the burden of looking after Subba Iyer’s family also fell on him. It was then that he heard that I was here. He came here running, with great concern. Subba Iyer had great courage and pride, but this man was very meek and mild. If it had been Subba Iyer, he would never have gone back home leaving me here. He would have bundled me up and carried me away. As I am destined to stay here, my whereabouts were not known so long as he was alive. It was known only a month after he passed away. Nelliappa Iyer, being spiritually minded and mild in his ways, left me here saying, ‘Why trouble him?’” So saying, Bhagavan became silent.

“It seems that the watchman of the garden, Rama Naicker, did not allow him even to enter the garden?” I enquired.

Bhagavan: “No. He did not allow my uncle. That is why he wrote a chit and sent it inside. For writing the chit, however, he had neither pen nor pencil. What could he do, poor man! He took out a neem twig, sharpened the end to a point, plucked a ripe prickly-pear from its stalk, cut it open, dipped the twig into the red juice of the pear, and with it wrote the chit and sent it on to me. He finally came in and realised that there was no chance of my accompanying him. Subsequently, he saw in a neighbour’s garden a learned man giving a discourse

on some book to a small gathering and so went to enquire about me. In the view of that learned man I was an ignorant person knowing nothing, so he said, ‘That boy is sitting there without any education and with a crude philosophy’. My uncle was naturally worried because I was young, had not learnt anything from anyone and might turn out to be a good-for-nothing fellow. So he told that gentleman, ‘Please keep an eye on my nephew and teach him something, if possible’, and went away. For a long time, he (that learned man) held the view that I knew nothing, and tried once or twice to teach me something, but I never cared. Later on, when I was giving a discourse on the ‘Gita Saram’ in the Eesanya Mutt, he came there. He then discussed with me various matters and when he heard my explanations and expositions of the *Gita*, he said, ‘Oho! You are such a great man! I thought you were illiterate.’ So saying, he suddenly prostrated before me and went away. Nelliappa Iyer, however, continued to feel sad for a long time for my lack of education.”

On my enquiring whether he ever came back, Bhagavan said, “Yes. He came back twice when I was in the Virupaksha Cave. On the first occasion, I never spoke anything. Though I was speaking to someone before he came, when I learnt he was coming I kept silent as I did not like to say anything before an elder such as he. But you know what happened when he came another time? I did not know beforehand about his coming. Some people wanted me to explain to them the meaning of “Dakshinamurthy Stotra”, while I was in the Virupaksha Cave, and so I began explaining. Daily I used to sit facing the door; that day I sat with my back to it. Hence I did not know of his arrival. He came in quietly and sat outside listening to me. We came up to the *sloka* ‘*Nana chidra*’. After I gave out its meaning and began my commentary thereon, he suddenly came inside and sat down. What could I do? I felt

unconcerned and gave my commentary without any hesitation. After hearing it all, he felt that his nephew was not an ordinary person, that he knew the subject very well and hence there was no need to worry any further. He went away fully satisfied. Till then he was always anxious about me. That was his last visit. He never came again. He passed away a few days later.” Bhagavan’s voice quivered, as he said that.

“This incident has not been mentioned in the Biography. Why is it?” I asked. Bhagavan replied saying, “It ought to be there. But they never asked me and I never told them.”

22nd December, 1948

(211) PACHIAMMA-DURGA

Today is Tuesday, my pradakshinam day. Hence I obtained Bhagavan’s permission yesterday evening itself and started going round the hill (*Giri Pradakshina*) early morning at 3-30. By the time I reached Pachiamma Shrine, the sun had just risen. As the day was not yet advanced, I thought of going from there along the foot of the hill and through the forest, so that I could see the tortoise slab where Bhagavan had once rested when his heart stopped, and from there reach the Ashram by the same route. So, I went to the tank opposite to the temple where a man was taking his bath and asked him whether the Shrine was open for worship.

“I am the priest. I will open the doors presently,” he said. As I had heard that Bhagavan used to stay in the shrine now and then in his earlier days, I have gone there several times to see the place, with great enthusiasm, but had not been able to see it because the priests were not there and the

doors were closed. I was therefore overjoyed at this opportunity of seeing the place and went inside with the priest. I saw the Goddess surrounded by Gautama and other *rishis*, worshipped the Goddess, received *Prasad* of holy ashes (*vibhuti*) and vermilion powder (*kumkum*) and walked along the hill path to see the tortoise slab. I could not however identify it. I came back to the Ashram by that path. As soon as I got up after prostrating before Bhagavan he noticed the small packets in my hand and asked me what they were. I related to him the story of my journey.

Looking at Sundaresa Iyer who was close by, Bhagavan said, "It seems that that is the *prasad* of Mother Pachiamma. Bring it here." So saying, he took it and smearing it on his forehead, said, "There are two rooms to its right, newly built. Have you seen them?" I replied, "Yes. I have seen them. Some one had arranged a fireplace for cooking." "Yes, yes. That is it," said Bhagavan. "They were built specially for cooking. When they were newly built, we thought of going round the hill and, on the way, camp at Pachiamma Shrine. The authorities who were working there were very pleased at our arrival and requested us to grace the new buildings with our stay and enjoy a feast by cooking there. That is just what we wanted, and we did the housewarming ceremony. When Nayana and myself had been living there, those rooms had not yet been built and so we used to do everything in the presence of the Mother (i.e. the idol of the Goddess)."

"How did she get the name 'Pachiamman'?" I asked. Bhagavan said, "Pachai means emerald colour. When Parvati came to Gautamasrama to perform austerities to appease Ishwara, Her form was of emerald colour and She performed austerities at that place. Then, it is said, that She went round the hill in *pradakshina*, stayed at several places at different times continuing her austerities, and

finally merged into Siva as a half of His body and came to be known as 'Apita Kuchamba'."

"How was it that that Goddess was given the name of Durga?" asked one devotee. "It is said that the Goddess killed a demon called Durgama and so from that name was derived the name 'Durga'," replied Bhagavan. The devotee again asked "In the Durga Temple in this place, there is the tank (*tirtham*) known as the Khadga Tirtha. What was its origin?"

Bhagavan: "It is said that the Goddess started from here for killing the demon, Mahishasura. On killing the demon, the idol of Siva (Siva Linga) which was tied round his neck, was caught in her hand and could not be removed. She came here for a bath but there was no water anywhere. She thereupon dug the ground with her sword and water gushed forth there. She took her bath in the water, released the idol of Siva from her hand, installed it on the bank of the tank, worshipped it with the water of that tank and then discarded the fiery spirit she had assumed to kill the demon. After that, she stayed on in the place to bestow boons on her devotees. That tank has a perennial supply of water. However great the scarcity of water experienced here, that tank will always have water."

Devotee: "We hear that Bhagavan repaired the Sri Chakra (a tantric symbol of worship) of that temple when it got damaged."

Bhagavan: "Yes. When I was in the Virupaksha Cave, the *Maha Kumbhabhishekam* of that Durga's temple was performed. Before that festival, they brought the Sri Chakra to me saying it was damaged slightly and wanted me to repair it. I acceded to their request."

So saying, Bhagavan became silent.

9th January, 1949

(212) VISIT OF THE HEAD OF PURI MUTT

About a week or ten days ago, the Puri Sankaracharya came here. His meeting with Bhagavan was something unique. As the arrival of the Acharya was known beforehand, the *Sarvadhikari* made all the required arrangements for the occasion. As you know, Bhagavan has been staying only in the Jubilee Hall during daytime. On the day of the arrival of the Acharya, devotees spread a tiger skin on Bhagavan's couch and decorated it in a fitting manner. By the side of the couch, a suitable seat was arranged for the Acharya also. After Bhagavan had been out for his afternoon walk at 3 p.m. and had returned and resumed his seat on the couch, the devotees as usual prostrated before him and sat down. The Acharya arrived at the Ashram at the appointed hour, went to his lodging in the Veda Patasala (School for Scriptures), made his ablutions and then, accompanied by his disciples, came to Bhagavan's presence.

At the time of his coming, Bhagavan sat cross-legged in his usual *padmasana* pose and with his characteristic silence. The Acharya came to Bhagavan with his *Danda* (the staff of an ascetic) and saluted him. Bhagavan nodded his head in acceptance of the salutations and with great regard requested him by signs to sit on the seat arranged for him. He did not, however, sit there but sat down nearby on a deerskin and began looking at Bhagavan with a fixed stare. Bhagavan too looked at him with an unwavering and compassionate look. Neither spoke. The audience also kept perfect silence like the still waters of a great lake. For about half an hour, both of them remained absolutely still like that, exemplifying the relationship between devotion and compassion. At that time,

Bhagavan's face shone like the illumination of a crore of sun gods. Because of that brilliance, the faces of the people who came to witness this scene also blossomed like lotus flowers. A glorious voice saying, "What a splendour on Bhagavan's face!" appeared to ring in the hearts of all the people there. One amongst them spontaneously said, "It will be very good indeed if someone takes a photo now." As though the silence were disturbed by those words, the Acharya got up, respectfully asked for permission to leave, and went away to his lodging.

Seeing all this, I was reminded of Sri Dakshinamurthy who came to the earth to initiate Sanaka, Sanandana and others. "Vriddah Sishya Gurur yuva" (The disciples are old and the Guru is young). Similarly, the Acharya is a very old man and in contrast Bhagavan appeared to be a young man. The place also appeared at the time to be similar. The flower garden to the right was like Nandavanam; the Arunachala Hill at the back like Mount Kailas; the almond tree to the left, with its several branches, like a banyan tree; and the open space in front with a sea of human faces which had blossomed as if they were lotus flowers, like the great lake Manasarovar. Like the saying, "Gurosthu Mouna Vyakhyanam Sishyasthu Chhinnasamsayah" (The Guru's sermon was 'Silence' and the doubts of the disciples were cleared). The Acharya did not ask any questions that day. It seems that before he came here, he had written regarding his doubts as to the sentence in the Agama Sastra beginning with "*Haragowri Samyoge. . Avachhaya Yogah.*" The Ashram authorities did not reply to him giving Bhagavan's views as they felt that the matter could be explained when the Acharya came here. Hence when the next day the Acharya asked Bhagavan about it, Bhagavan replied saying, "What is there? It is a well known thing. '*Avachhaya Yogam*' means, when the force that is engaged in doing things, i.e., *mano vritti* (action of the mind)

becomes pure and merges in Hara (Lord Siva), and when the shadow of the Self (*Atma*) falls on that force, it is called ‘*Avachhaya Yogam*’.” The Acharya said he did not understand it. Bhagavan thereupon spread his benign look over him for about half an hour. The Acharya’s eyes got closed involuntarily. After experiencing indescribable bliss and with tears of joy and with hands folded on his head, he said, “Bhagavan, I have now understood it,” and assuring us that he would be back by the time the *Kumbhabhishekam* (consecration ceremony) is performed, he left on pilgrimage to the south accompanied by his disciples.

10th January, 1949

(213) THE ARRIVAL OF THE HEAD OF SIVAGANGA MUTT

After the Puri Sankaracharya left, the conversation naturally turned on his visit. A devotee asked Bhagavan, “Amongst the Heads of the various Sankara *mutts*, is he the only Head that has come here?”

Bhagavan: “When I was in the Virupaksha Cave, the Head of the Sivaganga Mutt¹ came there. He is the grandfather of the father of the present Head. Between him and the present Head of the *mutt* there have been two other Heads.”

Devotee: “Did he ask Bhagavan any questions?”

Bhagavan: “What was there to ask? He was also a wise man and a great Pandit. On seeing me, it seems he told one of those near him, ‘If there is anyone that is happy, it is Ramana.’”

¹ Sivaganga Mutt is a branch of the Sringeri Mutt.

Devotee: “Did he stay at the same place as Bhagavan?”

Bhagavan: “No, No. That was a special meeting. He came to town with his disciples, took his lodgings in the choultry (a free lodging house) and invited me to that place. I declined the invitation saying that I had not the required learning to deserve such an honour. Hearing my reply, he himself came to me with his disciples, bringing with him a big platter containing a laced shawl and Rs. 116/- in cash.² While he was climbing the hill to come to me, I happened to be returning to Virupaksha Cave from Mulaipal Tank. We met midway at a place where there was a tree. He placed the platter before me and requested me to accept the contents but I would not do so. At last, he took back the money and saying that the shawl would be useful to me during the winter, pressed me to accept it. As an outright refusal would not have been quite proper, I accepted the shawl. Subsequently I tore away the lace, got the borders stitched and used it for covering myself whenever necessary. That lace was here till recently. He went away immediately after that. He was very old even by then and passed away within a few days of coming here.”

Devotee: “Did not any of the Heads of the Sringeri Mutt visit you?”

Bhagavan: “No. Narasimha Bharathi tried to come here several times, but did not succeed. It seems he always used to enquire about me.”

Devotee: “Was he an Andhra?”

Bhagavan: “Yes. But why?”

Devotee: “One by name Narasimha Bharathi has written in Telugu a number of beautiful, philosophical songs on Devi

² It is a custom for Heads of a Mutt to present learned people with money, shawls, titles and the like.

(*Devi Nakshtramala*). I wanted to know if he were the same and hence the query.”

Bhagavan: “May be. He was a Pandit and a poet also.”

Devotee: “Why could he not come here?”

Bhagavan: “You see, he was the Head of a *mutt*. They have several regulations. Moreover, people around will not ordinarily allow such things.”

Devotee: “What can the people around do if he is really intent on going?”

Bhagavan: “What you say is something strange. You say what can the people around do? See my own condition. They have put bars around me, though wooden, as in a jail. I may not cross these bars. There are people specially deputed to watch me and they keep watch on me by turns. I can’t move about as I like; they are there to prevent it. One person goes and another comes according to turns. What is the difference between these people and the police except that the former are not in uniform? We are under their protection. Even if I want to go out to answer calls of nature, they must follow me to protect me. Even my going out must be according to the scheduled time. If any one wants to read anything to me or talk to me, they must obtain permission from the office. What do you call all this? What is the difference between this and the jail? It is about the same thing for him (Sankaracharya) too. The headship of a *mutt* is also a sort of a jail. What can he do, poor man?”

Devotee: “It is perhaps because of that, Ishwara got the name ‘*Bhakta Paradheena*’ (in the hands of the devotees)?”

Bhagavan: “Yes. That is so. When there is trouble for Swamitvam itself, how much more it should be for Ishwara? He must respond to whosoever calls and by whatsoever name he calls. He must appear in whatever form he is asked to come. He must stay wherever he is asked to stay. If he is

asked not to take one step forward, he must stay wherever he is. Being so dependent on others, what liberty or freedom has he?”

13th January, 1949

(214) ACCEPTANCE OF DIKSHA

A devotee who had heard about the meetings of the Head of the Sivaganga Mutt and the discussions about Narasimha Bharathi asked Bhagavan, “It seems a long time ago someone from the Sringeri Mutt requested Bhagavan to accept *diksha* (formal initiation).”

Bhagavan: “Yes. That is so. That was during the early days of my stay at the Virupaksha Cave. A Sastri residing in the Sringeri Mutt came to see me one morning. He saw me, spoke to me for a long time, and before going to the town for meals, drew near me and with folded arms and great respect said, ‘Swami! I have a request to make. Please hear me.’ When I asked him what it was, he said, ‘Swami, as you are born a *brahmin*, should you not take *sannyasa* in the regular way? It is an ancient practice. You know all that. What is there for me to tell you? I am anxious to include you in the line of our Gurus. Hence, if you give me the permission, I will come here with all the requisite articles from my *mutt* and give you the initiation. If you do not care to wear the full ochre-coloured robes (*Akhanda Kashayam*), I respectfully submit that it is enough if your loin cloth at least is of ochre colour. You may think over this well and give me a reply. I am going down the hill to take my meals and will come back by 3 p.m. All the members of our *mutt* have heard of your

greatness and I have come here to see you at their request. Please do this favour.'

"A little while after he left, an old *brahmin* came there with a bundle. His face appeared familiar. It could be seen from the outside of the bundle that there were some books in it. As soon as he came, he placed the bundle opposite to me and like an old acquaintance said, 'Swami, I have just come. I have not had a bath. There is no one to look after this bundle. I am therefore leaving it with you.' So saying he left the place. As soon as he went away, why, I do not know, but I felt like opening that bundle and seeing the books. As soon as I opened it, I saw a Sanskrit book in Nagari characters with the title *Arunachala Mahatmyam*. I did not know before that the *Arunachala Mahatmyam* is in Sanskrit also. I was therefore surprised and as I opened the book I found the *sloka* describing the greatness of this place in the words of Ishwara:

योजनत्रयमात्रेऽस्मिन् क्षेत्रे निवसतां नृणाम् ।
दीक्षादिकं विनाप्यस्तु मत्सायुज्यं ममाज्ञया ॥

Those who live within twenty-four miles of this place, i.e. this Arunachala Hill, will get My *Sayujyam*, i.e. absorption into *Me*, freed from all bonds, even if they do not take any *diksha*. This is my order.

"As soon as I saw that *sloka*, I felt I could give a fitting reply to that Sastri by quoting that *sloka* and so hastily copied it out, for the *brahmin* might come back at any moment, and then tied up the bundle as before after replacing the book. I showed this *sloka* to the Sastri as soon as he came in the evening. As he was a learned man, he did not say anything further but with great reverence and trepidity saluted me, went away and, it seems, reported everything to Narasimha Bharathi. Narasimha Bharathi felt very sorry for what his

disciples had done, and told them to stop all further efforts in that direction. I subsequently translated that *sloka* and wrote it in a verse in Tamil, ‘*Yojanai munra mittala vasarku...*’. It has now been added at the beginning of the five hymns in praise of Arunachala (*Arunachala Sthuthi Panchakam*). In the same way, many people tried to convert me to their path. So long as it was mere talk, I used to say, ‘Yes, yes,’ but never agreed to take any initiation. I always used to find some ruse to escape. Even the writings of verses too is about the same. I never wrote any of my own accord. Somebody used to ask me on some pretext or other. And I used to write on some urge from within. That is all.”

Devotee: “There is such a long history behind only this one verse.”

Bhagavan: “Yes. For every one of them, there is a story. If all of them were written down, it would become a big volume.”

“If Bhagavan permits, they can be written,” I said.

Bhagavan: “Have you nothing else to do?” So saying he changed the topic.

Devotee: “Did the *brahmin* who brought the bundle come back again?”

Bhagavan: “I do not remember whether he came back or not, but the bundle was not there. I had got what I wanted. Was it not enough?”

Devotee: “So, it would mean that Lord Arunachala himself came there in that form.”

Bhagavan merely nodded his head silently.

14th January, 1949

(215) NAVA MANI MALA

Having heard the narration of events concerning the acceptance of Diksha yesterday one youth this morning at 8 O'clock sat near Bhagavan and while talking about matters in general said, "It seems some time ago that a person from Chidambaram urged Bhagavan to go over there for a *darshan* of Nataraja. Is it so?"

Bhagavan replied as follows:- "Yes, yes. That was in 1914 or 1915. A Dikshitar (priest) residing in Chidambaram having heard about me came here. He stayed in the town and was coming to the Virupaksha Cave every day. Whenever he came, he used to talk about several things and always ended up with an exhortation that as the Ether (*Akasa*) linga, Chidambaram, is one of the hallowed *pancha lingas** in the south and I should go over there and have a *darshan* of Lord Nataraja. It was only in that connection I wrote the *padyam* '*Achalane yayinum achavaithannil*'. (This was written after 1923 when Bhagavan came down to the present Ashram.)

"The meaning of it is: 'Father (Siva) though immoveable danced in that Sabha (Chidambaram) before *Amba* (Mother). That is the dance of Siva. After that Sakti subsided, please note it became the flame at Arunachala.' That means the brilliant but immoveable Arunachala is better than the moveable Ambara lingam. After seeing that *padyam*, he stopped bothering me about visiting Chidambaram." That *padyam* was afterwards made the first verse of "Nava Mani Mala".

* One of the five famous Lingas in South India: *Prithvilingam* - Tiruvarur; *Appu lingam* - Jambukeswaram; *Tejo lingam* - Arunachalam; *Vayu lingam* - Sri Kalahasthi; *Akasa lingam* - Chidambaram.

Venkataratnam remarked that perhaps the remaining eight *padhyams* in “Nava Mani Mala” were written occasionally like that. Bhagavan smilingly said, “Yes, Yes. That was so. Iswaraswami one day read out one of the *padhyams* of the Mahakavi Ottakuthur of Tamil Nadu and insisted on Bhagavan writing one *padhyam* in the same metre and with the same idea. Ottakuthur wrote that *padhyam* as a challenge to the people, praising his own scholarship and he received a reward from the king for writing it. Iswaraswami wanted me to write similarly and so I did. The other eight verses were written on various occasions and then arranged as it now stands:

‘Bhuvikkutpongidum bhuvicchor pungavan...’

“The meaning of it is: ‘A famous place and the place of Bhuminatheswara Tiruchuli, born to the holy person by name Sundaramayyar and his Alagamma, I was taken in by Lord Arunachaleswar. With a heart full of mercy and with the mind glowing and overflowing with compassion, He kept me out of the world’s troubles’.

“The remaining seven *padhyams* were written for some reason or other like this.”

“Can you tell us those reasons also?” I said. “I see. Perhaps you have no other work,” said Bhagavan and diverted the conversation to some other topic. I kept quiet feeling that that was all I deserved to get for the time being.

15th January, 1949

(216) SUPERNATURAL SIGHTS ON ARUNACHALA

This afternoon, I went to Bhagavan's Hall as early as 2 o'clock. Only the attendants and a few old devotees were there. Bhagavan was conversing with them about sundry matters. During the conversation, one of the devotees addressed Bhagavan: "You told us once that you had seen on this hill very high temples, gardens and such like. Was that all during the period you were on the hill?"

Bhagavan: "Yes. That was perhaps when I was in the Virupaksha Cave. I closed my eyes. I felt I was walking on the hill itself towards the northeast. I saw at one place a nice flower garden, a big temple, a fine compound wall and a big Nandi (a bull carved in stone). There was a strange light. It was extremely pleasant. As I was looking at all these, it was time for *puja* (worship). The bell was rung and immediately after that I opened my eyes."

Devotee: "Bhagavan told us some time back that there was a big cave also."

Bhagavan: "Yes, yes. That also happened when I was living on the hill. I was wandering about aimlessly when I found at one place a big cave. When I entered the cave, I saw a number of waterfalls, beautiful gardens, tanks within those gardens, well laid paths, fine lighting; everything there was most pleasing. As I went farther and farther I saw a Realised Person (Siddha Purusha) seated like Dakshinamurthy under a tree on the banks of a tank. Around him, a number of saints (*munis*) were seated. They were asking something and he was replying to them. That place appeared to me very familiar. That is all. I opened my eyes. Subsequently,

after some time, when I saw *Arunachala Puranam* in Sanskrit, I found the following *slokas* wherein Lord Siva says:

अत्रसिद्धः पुनर्नित्यं वसाम्यग्रे सुरार्चितः ।
ममांतरे गुहा दिव्या ध्यातव्या भोगसंयुता ॥

अग्निस्तंभमयं रूपं अरुणाद्रिरिति श्रुतः ।
ध्यायन् लिङ्गं मम बृहन्मन्दम् कुर्यात्प्रदक्षिणम् ॥

In these two *slokas* that cave and that Siddha Purusha have been described and so I was surprised that what appeared to me in a trance was to be found in that book. So I translated them into Tamil: '*Angiyuru vayumoli mangugiri yaga...*'. Its meaning is: 'Though you are in the form of fire, you have kept away the fire and have taken the shape of a hill mainly to shower your blessings on the people. You are always living here in the form of a Siddha. The cave that appeared to me is in you with all the luxuries of the world.' Recently when the temple in Adi Annamalai was renovated, it has been reported that in the sanctum sanctorum of the temple a large tunnel was found and when people tried to find out its extent they saw that it was extending to the very centre of the hill. As they could not go in very far, they came back. I therefore thought that which occurred to me and that which is in the Purana appears to be true and that the tunnel was the way to the place I had seen. It is reported that Siddha Purushas come from the cave inside to the temple through that tunnel night after night and go back after worshipping Ishwara. Why so far? Recently, something like that was seen even here. I was going on to the hill as usual when, as I was getting near the steps over there, a big city appeared before me. There were huge buildings of several varieties, well laid thoroughfares, good lighting; and it

appeared to be a great city. At one place a meeting was being held. Chadwick was with me. He was even saying, 'Bhagavan, all this is so self-evident! Who will believe if we say this is all a dream!' Everything appeared as if it was actually happening. Meanwhile, I opened my eyes."

Devotee: "Is all this really a dream?"

Bhagavan: "I can't say whether it is a dream or not. What is real?"

16th January, 1949

(217) THE BIG SELF

About ten days back an American young man came here. Knowing that he takes photographs, some people from here arranged to get the elephant which lives in the Thousand-pillared Mandapam in Arunachaleswarar Temple and keep it in the open space by the side of the Jubilee Hall. Bhagavan on his return from the bathroom stood by the side of the elephant and was giving it a feed, when that American took a photo. Yesterday morning, after 10 o'clock, someone brought the photo to Bhagavan, to show it to him. All people began to see it with some curiosity. They were talking amongst themselves about something that was written on the back of that photo. As I did not understand what all they were talking about, I asked Bhagavan about it quietly in a low tone.

Bhagavan: "Nothing particular. On the back of the photo it is written, 'A big Self which does not know the body and a big body which does not know the Self are at one place'."

Devotee: "What exactly could be his idea in writing thus?"

Bhagavan: “That is easy. Though that elephant has such a big body it does not know the Self. For that reason, whatever food is given to it, it stands there dissatisfied trumpeting unceasingly. Perhaps because of that or for some other reason, it is stated to be a big body without knowing the Self. I stood there somehow with a shaky body; so again, perhaps because of that or for any other reason, it is stated that I am the ‘Big Self not knowing the body’. That might be his idea.”

Devotee: “That is true. Bhagavan always appears unconcerned about the body, does he not?”

Bhagavan (with a smile): “That’s it. That’s it. Chintha Dikshitulu has written saying that I am like a statue in the Madras Museum. Sowris has written saying that I am like a celluloid doll. People say something or other.”

Devotee: “I suppose Jada Bharata also used to appear as though he was not concerned about the body.”

Bhagavan: “What you say is true.”

Devotee: “Is it because he was a big Self who did not know his body that he got the name Jada Bharatha?”

Bhagavan: “What else could it have been? It cannot mean that he was lying down inertly like an inanimate being. It means that he was the personification of the Self who did not care for his body.”

As an illustration of this Bhagavan himself in his early days was sitting in the Arunachala Temple compound either under a Madhuka (*Iluppai*) tree or in a flower garden or in the vehicles’ mandap or here and there without caring for his body. People who were coming and going, used to say, “He is sitting like a *jada* (dull-witted person); he must be a mad fellow,” and they never paid any attention to him. And Bhagavan has told us several times that he used to be amused at such talk and wish such madness would overtake all people. Not only that, when under the instructions of the Sarvadhikari, Kunjuswami

was serving Bhagavan as an attendant, he found Bhagavan's body and head were shaking and faltering and so, when there was no one else there but close disciples, he asked Bhagavan, "Bhagavan, although only in middle age, strangely enough, has a shaking of the head and of the body necessitating the aid of a stick for walking. What could be the reason for it?" Bhagavan replied, it seems, with a smile, "What is there so strange in it? If a big elephant is tied down in a small hut, what else will happen to that hut except troubles of all sorts? This is the same."

Do you see what profound meaning there is in those words? Without revealing this meaning to all people, he says humorously now and then, "Do you see? While all of you have two legs, I have three."

It is said in *Mahavakya Ratnamala* about a *Jnani*:

अन्धवज्जडवच्चापि मूकवच्च महींचरेत् ।

He conducts himself in the world as a blind or a dull or a dumb man.

18th January, 1949

(218) KUNDALINI SAKTI — CHINMAYA DEHA

Yesterday morning an Andhra youth came here with his wife. It seems he has come here after visiting the whole of the Himalayan region. In the afternoon at 3 o'clock he approached Bhagavan and said, "Swami, is the manifestation of *Kundalini Sakti* (a form of yogic power) possible only for those who follow the yogic path of acquiring *sakti* (power) or is it possible also for those who follow the path of devotion (*bhakti*) or love (*prem*)?"

Bhagavan: “Who does not have *Kundalini Sakti*? When the real nature of that *Sakti* is known, it is called *Akhandakara Vritti* (Plenary consciousness) or *Aham Sphurana* (effulgence of ‘I’, ‘I’). *Kundalini Sakti* is there for all people whatever path they follow. It is only a difference in name.”

Questioner: “It is said that that *sakti* manifests itself in five phases, ten phases, hundred phases and a thousand phases. Which is true — five or ten or a hundred or a thousand?”

Bhagavan: “*Sakti* has only one phase. If it is said to manifest itself in several phases, it is only a way of speaking. The *Sakti* is only one.”

Questioner: “To realise the Self, some say you must concentrate your mind on the *anahatam* (the 4th of the mystical *chakras* [plexuses] of the body); some say on the *sahasraram* (a mystical plexus in the brain with a thousand petals); and some say on the *muladharam* (a mystical plexus about the organs of generation). Which is the most important?”

Bhagavan: “All are important. Self (Atman) is everywhere in the body. Some say you should see it in the *muladharam*; some say in the *anahatam* and some say in the *sahasraram*. It is the same whichever it is. But, for all of them, the place of birth and of dissolution is *anahatam* only.”

Questioner: “Can a *Jnani* help not only those who follow his path but also others who follow other paths?”

Bhagavan: “Undoubtedly. He can help people whatever path they choose to follow. It is something like this. Suppose there is a hill. There will be very many paths to climb it. If he were to ask people to climb by the way he came, some may like it and some may not. If people who do not like it are asked to climb by that path, and by that path only, they will not be able to come up. Hence a *Jnani* helps people following any particular path whatever it may be. People

who are midway may not know about the merits and demerits of other paths, but one who has climbed the summit and sits there observing others coming up is able to see all the paths. He will therefore be able to tell people who are coming up to move a little to this side or that or to avoid a pitfall. The goal is the same for all, you see.”

The young man was not satisfied with the replies given by Bhagavan and again began asking questions about *Kundalini Sakti* and how it arises. Bhagavan appeared unconcerned about those questions but when they were asked repeatedly, said, “What do I know about those paths? Please ask those who know them well.” Giving up the topic, the young man took up the topic of spiritual bodies (*chinmaya dehas*) by saying, “My Guru gave a *darshan* in *chinmaya rupam* (form) on such and such a day, spoke to me of this and that,” and started speaking about the miracles performed by his deceased Guru. Bhagavan did not speak but kept quiet for some time. At last the young man said, “Is it a fact that Lord Krishna is still with his *chinmaya deha* (spiritual body)?”

Bhagavan replied with patience: “Does *chinmaya deha* mean the human body? *Chinmaya* means *Chit-prakasa*, i.e. lustre of the spirit. That light is always existent:

अहमात्मा गुडाकेश सर्वभूताशयस्थितः ।

अहमादिश्च मध्यं च भूतानामन्त एव च ॥

Arjuna, I am the Self seated in the heart of all beings. I am the beginning and middle and also the end of all beings.

Gita, X: 20

“Does that mean that He is in the hearts of all beings with this material body? It means He is in the hearts of all beings in the shape *Aham Sphurana* (effulgence of ‘I’, ‘I’). That effulgence of the Self is known as *Chit-prakasa* or *Chinmaya*.”

Questioner: "Is the same thing said of other *Mahapurushas* (great personages) or is it that Lord Krishna's body becomes *Chinmayam* and remains like that?"

Bhagavan: "Oh! You think that that body becomes *Chinmayam* and sits somewhere. The whole world is *Chinmayam*. That being so is it that one body alone has become *Chinmayam*? Visions (*sakshatkaras*) are also like this. People say that they descend from somewhere with a body. That which is omnipresent you leave or ignore and talk of *karam* and *sakshatkaram*."

Questioner: "My Guru stated that a great personage who would reform the whole world will be born. Can you tell me when he will be born?"

Bhagavan did not reply but kept quiet. A devotee who was close by said to the young man, "Sir, you are not able to realise the greatness of the Mahapurusha that is sitting opposite to you; so what is the sense in asking him himself when a Mahapurusha will be born? You are not able to understand even that much. If you have so many doubts, could you not have asked your Guru himself? Enough of this here. You may go to your Guru who is in *Chinmaya* body and ask him."

The young man thereupon quietened down and gave up further questioning.

19th January, 1949

(219) THE SELF

By the time I went to the Ashram this morning, a devotee was asking something and Bhagavan was replying by saying, "First find out who you are."

Devotee: “Before beginning the Self-enquiry, ‘Who am I?’, is it necessary to give up all actions (*Karma Sannyasa*)?”

Bhagavan (with a smile): “What is your idea of *sannyasa*? Sitting, getting up, going about, and eating, are karmas (actions). Of these which are you going to give up? That is why ancients say, when they talk of *Karma Sannyasa*, ‘First give up the feeling that you are the doer’.”

Devotee: “Sankaracharya gave prominence to *Karma Sannyasa*.”

Bhagavan: “Yes, he did. But then, even he did karma (action). He went from one place to another and from village to village and established the doctrine of *Advaita* (non-duality). At that time, there were no railways. He went on foot. Is not all that karma? The meaning is, when a person becomes a *Jnani*, nothing affects him, whatever he may do. He does everything for the welfare of the world. He, the *Jnani*, gives up only the feeling of ego namely that he is doing everything. In the *Bhagavad Gita*, Krishna Bhagavan said:

उत्सीदेयुरिमे लोकाः न कुर्या कर्म चेदहम् ।

संकरस्य च कर्तास्यामुपहन्यामिमाः प्रजाः ॥

If I do not perform action, these worlds will perish; nay, I should be the author of confusion of castes and of the destruction of these people.

Gita, III: 24

सुक्ताः कर्मण्यविद्वांसो यथा कुर्वन्ति भारत ।

कुर्याद्विद्वांस्तथासक्तः चिकोर्षुर्लोकसंग्रहम् ॥

Arjuna, as the unwise act with attachment, so should the wise man, seeking maintenance of the world order, act without attachment.

Gita, III: 25

“That means, if I do not perform action, no one else will perform actions. There will be confusion of castes. Why should

I be the cause of that? That is why I am doing all actions. While ignorant people do actions with desires, I do them without desires. That is the meaning. Hence *Karma Sannyasa* means, one should know the difference between attributes of the senses and the attributes of karma, and with that knowledge remain desireless and, at the same time unattached to all actions and conduct oneself as only a witness. That is *Karma Sannyasa*. There is not much use in mere outward *sannyasa*.”

Devotee: “But then Lord Krishna has said that He is the *karta* (doer) and He is the *bhokta* (enjoyer.)”

Bhagavan: “Yes. He did say so. But when *Mahatmas* talk of *kartrutvam* (doership) and *bhoktrutvam* (enjoyership), it is different. For them *Aham* means Self (*Swarupa*). It is not the ‘I’ which says, ‘I am the body’.

अहमात्मा गुडाकेश सर्वभूताशयस्थितः ।

अहमादिश्च मध्यं च भूतानामन्त एव च ॥

Arjuna, I am the Self seated in the heart of all beings. I am the beginning and the middle and also the end of all beings.

Gita, X: 20

“The thing called ‘I’ is the all-pervading Self (Atma). That which the sages speak about as ‘I’ is the functioning of the Self only and of the body. The ‘I’ which ignorant people talk of is about the body, and this is *Asura Vasana*. They say, ‘I am Ishwara. I should be worshipped.’ When they say that, they are in for trouble. About this *Asura Vasana*, three *slokas* have been written briefly in the 16th chapter of the *Gita*. In the *Vasudeva Mananam*, a whole chapter has been devoted to this subject. When the ancients claim to be Ishwara, they do not talk of this body. Self itself is Ishwara. That is Brahman, Atman and all the rest. That which is always present is *Aham*. To be is Brahman according to *Brahma Gita*. That which is

NOT is *maya*. If you look at that which is NOT, that which IS remains as it is. If you realise that which is, which is your SELF, there will not be so many questions.”

19th January, 1949

(220) MUTUAL CURSINGS

A devotee who had recently returned after a visit to Tiruchuli enquired: “There is a pipal tree on the banks of the Sula Thirtha (tank which is opposite to the Bhoominatheswara Temple in Tiruchuli). It is said that Gautama performed *tapas* (austerity) under that tree. Is it a fact? If so, what is the reason of his doing *tapas* there?”

“Yes. It is a fact,” said Bhagavan. “It is stated in the Sanskrit version of the *Trisula Purana*, that at the instance of Sanaka, Gautama went to Avartha Kshetra to perform *tapas*. In the Tamil version of the *Tirchuli Puranam*, however, it is different. It is well known that Gautama cursed Indra and Ahalya. Indra approached Ahalya (wife of Gautama) taking the form of Gautama and she yielded without knowing that he was not her husband. Without ascertaining the truth, Gautama cursed her to become a stone. Angered thereby Ahalya said, ‘Oh, you fool of a Muni! Without enquiring into the truth, you have cursed me and have not even stated when I shall be free from the curse. Tell me, when will the curse end and how? Why not have some consideration for me and tell me at least that?’ Gautama thereupon told her that she would be released from the curse at the time of Rama *Avatar*, and when the dust from Rama’s feet fell on her. Immediately thereafter she became a stone.

“Gautama left that place and tried to get into his daily rituals but he could not, for he had no peace of mind. He tried his level best but could not control his mind and became more and more troubled. On thinking deeply over the matter, he realised that he had cursed his wife Ahalya without proper enquiry and also recollected that she had in return cursed him, by saying, ‘You fool of a Muni!’. After all, she was also a great *tapaswini!* (a female ascetic). Hence those words which were unusual must have resulted in an irrevocable curse on himself. He therefore decided to seek the help of Ishwara by seeing his ‘Nataraja Dance’ in order to get relieved of the curse. He therefore went to Chidambaram. At that place he heard an ethereal voice saying, ‘I shall be pleased to give you *darshan* of my *Thandava* Dance in Trisulapura.’ Gautama immediately left that place and went on foot towards Trisulapura. On nearing the place, and at the mere sight of it, even from a distance, his mind began to get clear. He stayed there for a very long time doing *tapas*. At last Ishwara was pleased and gave him a *darshan* of his Nataraja Dance in the month of Dhanur when the Ardra star was predominant. It was at that time Gautama is reported to have lived under the tree and performed *tapas*. After seeing the dance of Ishwara, Gautama worshipped Ishwara, went to his original place and began to perform his rituals as usual.

“Later on, Ahalya became purified by the dust of the feet of Sri Rama, regained her normal form and approached Gautama. He too was very pleased to see her back and both of them went to ‘Avartha Kshetra’ (Tiruchuli) with a view to obtain the blessings of Ishwara before they resumed their normal family life. Ishwara also gave them *darshan* of His own ‘Marriage Festival’ and blessed them. Gautama worshipped Ishwara as all their obstacles had been removed

and then went back to his native place accompanied by his wife, where they resumed their worship. This is how it has been described in the Tamil *Puranam*.”

Devotee: “Is there a story about Gautama also being affected by a curse? I have never heard it.”

Bhagavan: The story about these mutual curses is found only in the *Thiruchuli Puranam*. In the *Ramayana* it is only stated that Satananda, who was at the time with Janaka, heard through Viswamitra about the restoration of his mother (Ahalya) to her original state at the touch of the dust of Sri Rama’s feet and that after worshipping Rama she went back to his father. On hearing the story, he was very happy about the reunion. The other things are not in it.

Devotee: “If so, the statement that Ahalya turned into a stone applies only to her mind and not to her body. Is that so?”

Bhagavan: That is so. If it is not for the mind, could it be for the body? It is only ordinary people that say that her body turned into a stone and that Rama restored her to its original form by putting his foot on the stone. How is that possible? It only means that the mind lost its awareness of the Self, and unable to think of anything else, she became dull like a stone. That dullness got relieved by the *darshan* of a great personage. As she herself was a great *tapaswini* she could immediately become aware of the Self. She worshipped Sri Rama as the embodiment of the Self. This inner meaning could be found in the *Ramayana*. The moment Rama set his foot in Gautama Ashrama the mind of Ahalya was restored to its original state, like the blossoming of a flower.”

22nd January, 1949

(221) BLISS OF THE SELF

At 3 o'clock yesterday afternoon, two pilgrims came and sat in Bhagavan's presence. It was clear from their attitude that they were thinking of asking something. After a while, one of them said, "Swami, it is all right if we sit up for meditation with closed eyes but if we keep them open, the outer senses give trouble. What should we do?"

Bhagavan: "What happens even if the eyes are kept open? It is enough if you make the mind sleep just like your sleeping in a house, keeping the windows open."

Devotee: "That means the mind should be kept away from worldly affairs. However much we try, we are not able thus to control the mind."

Bhagavan: "Yes, that is true. That is why it is said that when a child tries to catch its own shadow by running after it, and weeps when unable to do so, the mother comes and prevents him from running. So also, the mind should be prevented from running away."

Devotee: "By what method can that be prevented?"

Bhagavan: "The mind should be held by hearing and meditating on the sayings of the Vedanta and thereby prevent it from going astray."

Devotee: "That means, you must give up worldly pleasures and catch hold of *Atma Ananda* (Bliss of the Self). Is that so?"

Bhagavan: "*Ananda* (Supreme Bliss) always exists. It is only the worldly things that have to be given up. If they are given up, what remains is only Bliss. That which IS, is the Self. Where is the question of catching that which IS? That is one's own nature (*Swabhava*)."

Devotee: “Is that nature also called *Swarupa* (the Self)?”

Bhagavan: “Yes. There is no difference between the two.”

Devotee: “If it is said that *Ananda* is the Self itself, then who is it that experiences it?”

Bhagavan: “That is the point. So long as there is one who experiences, it shall have to be stated that *Ananda* is the Self itself. When there is no one to experience, where is the question of a form for *Ananda*? It is only that which ‘IS’ remains. That IS, is ‘*Ananda*’. That is the Self. So long as the feeling that the Self is different from oneself there will be one who enquires and experiences, but when one realises the Self there will be no one to experience. Who is there to ask? What is there to say? In common parlance, however, we shall have to say that Bliss is the Self or is our Real Nature (*Swarupa*).”

Devotee: “That is all right, Swami. But, however much we try, this mind does not get under control and envelopes the *Swarupa* so that it is not perceptible to us. What is to be done?”

Bhagavan with a smile placed his little finger over his eye and said, “Look. This little finger covers the eye and prevents the whole world from being seen. In the same way this small mind covers the whole universe and prevents the Brahman from being seen. See how powerful it is!”

23rd January, 1949

(222) YATANA SARIRAM*

At 3 o'clock this afternoon a young man approached Bhagavan and asked, "Swami, it is said that Siva is in Kailas, Vishnu in Vaikunta, Brahma in Satyaloka, while Devendra and several Devatas are in Devaloka. Is it a fact that they are all there?"

Bhagavan: "Oho! That is what you want to know! But first tell me, is it a fact that you are existent? If you are in existence, they too must be existing. If you are not in existence they too are not."

Devotee: "It is said that there are some known as *Pithru Devathas* (the manes), in the world of the manes and that if *Sradh*¹ is not performed they will punish the people concerned. Do the Manes really exist separately?"

Bhagavan: "That is just what I have been saying. So long as you have the feeling of ego, that you are the doer, all those beings are in existence. If that ego disappears there is nothing else in the world."

Devotee: "What about devils?"

Bhagavan: "It is the same thing with regard to them. If there are Devatas in this world, devils also are there. If you are in existence, everything else is in existence. If you are not in existence, nothing else is. If you examine yourself everything will be found in yourself only. There will then be no scope for these doubts."

Devotee: "It is said that when a man dies he goes to the world of Yama with a *Yatana* body after crossing the horrid

* *Yatana Sarira*: the subtle body tormented by pleasure and pain in the dream world and also after death (in fact the mind itself).

¹ *Sradh*: death anniversary.

river Vaitharani, and that the messengers of Death create untold miseries to the body. Is it a fact that there is a world of Yama?”

Bhagavan: (smilingly): “Aha! If there is a heaven there is also a hell. All these exist only if you exist; otherwise not. First tell me, are you in existence or not? We shall then consider the question of the existence of hell.”

Devotee: “There it is. Bhagavan is using his *Brahmastram* (invincible weapon). What can I say now?”

Bhagavan: “All right. I won’t use it. You may ask whatever you like.”

Devotee: “What exactly is meant by a *Yatana* body?”

Bhagavan: “When we are asleep this body lies inert. We have dreams. In those dreams, we experience happiness sometimes and troubles at other times. When the body is asleep who is it who experiences all these? It must be admitted that it is the mind. That mind is called *Sukshma* (subtle) or *Yatana* body. After all, it is only the body that dies when a person dies.”

Devotee: “So *Yatana* body means it is only the mind.”

Bhagavan: “Otherwise, what else can there be that troubles the body other than the mind?”

So saying Bhagavan was silent.

14th February, 1949

(223) IN THE SERVICE OF THE MOTHER

Arrangements are now in progress for the *Kumbhabhishekam* (*Kumbhabhishekam* literally means sprinkling of consecrated water from a big pot. This ceremony is performed

when a temple is newly constructed and the water is sprinkled over the tower of the temple with elaborate ceremonies). Hence conversation in Bhagavan's presence centred around Mother Alagamma. This morning, the office staff brought a vessel containing sacred Ganges water and also a *kamandalam* (earthen or wooden pot used by ascetics), saying some devotees had sent them. Immediately thereafter, Bhagavan began to tell us about some happenings of the past.

“When mother came to live with me I was in the Virupaksha Cave itself. At that place there was no water. She was, therefore, inconvenienced on that account. We used to go to the Skandasramam, to bathe as there was a waterfall. She was too old, you see, and so she could not accompany us. We had at the time two big *kamandalams* with us. We made one of them ourselves. The other, some one brought and gave us. Each could hold a small potful of water. I used to bring water in both of them, carrying one in each hand. She used to sit down wearing a small cloth and I used to pour the water over her head just as we do *abhishekam* over an idol. That is how she used to have her bath. There was no cooking. Some one used to wash her cloth and bring it back. That was all. If water was brought in those two *kamandalams* all her requirements used to be met.”

“The *kamandalams* should then be very large,” I said.

“Yes. They were large,” said Bhagavan. “What has become of them now?” asked some devotee.

Bhagavan: “One of them must be here. The other disappeared even while we were in the Skandasramam. Vallimalai Muruganar used to visit us even while we were in Virupaksha Cave. After our residence was changed to the Skandasramam, he came again. He had a loud voice and was very fond of chitchatting. He cast his eyes on that *kamandalam*. He knew it was no good asking Perumalswamy

and others and so he approached Mother. She was a simpleton. If anyone flattered her by saying that there was no one equal to her in this world, she used to give away whatever was asked of her. He was clever enough to discover this. ‘Mother, you have given birth to a diamond of a son. There is no one to equal you in this world. Your son is a very great personage, unparalleled,’ and so on. After praising her like that for some time, he finally said, ‘If you give me one *kamandalam*, I will bring Ganges water in it and will do you *abhishekam* with it.’ No sooner he said that, than she was overjoyed and gave away the *kamandalam*. He could not, however, bring Ganges water during her lifetime. But recently, that is about twelve years back, he did bring Ganges water in that *kamandalam* and performed *abhishekam* over Mother’s image, thus keeping his word. That was the first time she had *abhishekam* performed with Ganges water. Subsequently, several people did *abhishekam* with Ganges water but they brought it in small vessels whereas he brought it in a large *kamandalam*. The *kamandalams* that we have just received are small in comparison.”

15th February, 1949

(224) TIGER’S SKIN

After hearing what Bhagavan had said yesterday about the *kamandalams*, a devotee asked, “Is it a fact that somebody asked Bhagavan to give him the tiger’s skin on which Bhagavan was sitting and, as it was being taken away, someone here prevented him from doing so?” Bhagavan said with a smile, “Yes. That happened only after we came

here. It was in 1924, or about that time. One *sadhu* came here to see me. I happened to be seated at the time on a tiger's skin. He cast his eyes upon it. Waiting for an opportunity when no one was with me, he said, 'Swami, I want that tiger's skin. Please give it to me.' I said that I had no objection to give it, but if any one saw him taking it away, they might not keep quiet. He said that there was no one present at the time and that he would manage to walk away with it before anyone could notice it. I said, 'All right. Just as you like. I will get up. Take it. But if any one sees you and stops you from going away with it, I won't be responsible.' So saying, I got up. He took the tiger's skin, rolled it, tied it and was going out with it when Dandapani Swami, who was coming in, happened to notice it. He said, 'What nonsense! Bhagavan sits on that tiger's skin. You can't take it away.' The *sadhu* protested, saying, 'I am taking it away with Bhagavan's permission.' Dandapani Swami, however, remonstrated saying, 'Was it proper for you to ask for it when Bhagavan was sitting on it? Is it proper for you to take it away? No. That cannot be allowed.' Thereupon both of them came to me for resolving the dispute. I told Dandapani Swami that the *sadhu* pressed me to give him the tiger's skin and so I gave it away but that I had already warned him about others preventing him from taking it away if they noticed it. I left it to them both to resolve the dispute as best as they could. Dandapani Swami found fault with the *sadhu* saying that it was highly improper for him to have asked Bhagavan to get up from his seat and to have asked him to give away the tiger's skin. Finally Dandapani Swami prevented it from being taken away." We were all very much amused.

A devotee said, "Bhagavan, you have replied to them both in a very funny way."

Bhagavan: “What to do? Some one brings that tiger’s skin and requests me to sit on it. I accede to his request. Some one else comes here and says, ‘Please get up. I want that tiger’s skin.’ So I get up. What do I lose? Dandapani Swami prevented that *sadhu* from taking it away. He was then in power. They could settle the score between themselves. Why should I bother?”

Devotee: “So Bhagavan has no part or lot in the matter?”

Bhagavan: “No. I have no rights, and I have no troubles.”

16th February, 1949

(225) WHAT DOES BHAGAVAN LIKE MOST?

Several people that come to Bhagavan’s presence become interested in Self-enquiry and do *sadhana*. Other people are not satisfied with mere looking around. They begin to say, “We will repair this,” or “We will improve that.” If they asked Bhagavan, he would say, “Yes, yes. That is good no doubt, but discuss the matter with the Office.” If the office staff and those people agree and place the matter before Bhagavan, he would merely nod his head in approval, but if they did not agree and sought his opinion, he would say, “I do not know. Do as you think best.” And as soon as they left, he would tell devotees, “Look. Without minding the purpose for which they come to the Ashram, they begin thinking of reforming the Ashram. It is enough if they reform themselves. Instead of that, they say, ‘We will do this and we will do that.’ What then? If all of them agree, then there is no trouble. But if what they say, the office staff do not like and what the office say, they do not like, in between, what is

it I can do? Added to that, they enquire what it is that Swami would like to be done. Do I want all these things?”

As an instance, one interesting thing happened here recently. A devotee came here and offered to supply a *Kavacham* (outer cover) for the Meru Prasthara Sri Chakram* made of copper with a silver plating over it. The Ashram authorities, however, wanted the cover to be made of pure silver. As they could not agree on this issue, they decided to refer it to Bhagavan and so came to the Hall. On behalf of the Ashram authorities, one of them approached Bhagavan and asked him with great reverence, “They say that they will make the outer cover for the Sri Chakra of copper plated with silver while we all feel it would be better for it to be made of pure silver. What is Bhagavan’s advice in the matter?”

Bhagavan: “What have I to do with it? It is all right in whatever way it is done. Both of you come to an unanimous decision and do that which you have decided to be the best.”

Enquirer: “Swami, we wish to know what Bhagavan would like us to do.”

Bhagavan: “That is exactly what I am saying. That which you all agree to do in mutual consultation will be to my liking. If both of you give different opinions, what can I do?”

Enquirer: “As we hold two different opinions, we are enquiring in order to find out what Bhagavan would like best.”

Bhagavan: “Oh, I see. You want to know what Bhagavan would like best! What Bhagavan likes best is to remain silent without doing anything. If people with different opinions give up their *mouna* (silence) which is the embodiment of love, and come to me and say, ‘We will do this,’ and ‘We will do that,’ and enquire of me what I like better of the two, what

* A wheel representing the universe.

can I say? If you all agree upon a course of action and then ask me for my opinion, I would then say it is all right. But when you are of two opinions, why do you come to me and ask me which I like the better? What I like is, to know who I am and to remain as I am with the knowledge that what is to happen will happen and what is not to happen will not happen. Is that not right? Do you now understand what Bhagavan likes best?" So saying Bhagavan assumed silence.

18th February, 1949

(226) RENTED HOUSE

A young man from Bangalore came here this morning for the first time and appeared anxious to ask something, but could not get an opportunity. At last at about 3 o'clock in the afternoon he approached Bhagavan and said, "Swami, which is better for meditation — meditating with eyes closed or with eyes open?"

Bhagavan (with a smile): "Is that your doubt? Do it in whichever way it appears easier for you."

Questioner: "If I keep my eyes open, all the outside things force themselves on my attention."

Bhagavan: "Will they not appear even if you close your eyes? We are sitting here. The mind sees ever so many things. It wanders to many places."

Questioner. "Yes, Swami. That is true. You should therefore show us a way by which we could avoid seeing all those places."

Bhagavan: "Everything comes out of ourselves. If we know our own Self and remain still as we are, there is

nothing else. Only if we are fickle-minded, everything comes upon us.”

The young man could not understand the significance of Bhagavan’s words and so sat there absorbed in his own thoughts, downcast. Bhagavan’s heart melted on seeing him and addressing a devotee seated nearby, said, “Look. If we are not existent, what is there outside to see? The scenery that is shown in a cinema is within the reel of the film. It is wound round and round within the reel wherein it is merged. It can be seen only if and when a hall is hired, a curtain is erected, a light is projected across the reel and the reel is unwound. If all that paraphernalia is removed and the reel is again wound up, the scenery on the screen ceases to exist. The picture and the scenery are all from the reel only. The world also is like that. This body is like a rented house. The *jīva* gets into it and enacts a drama. The breath of life is like a watchman at the gate. During sleep, the *jīva* goes to his original place and, on the body waking, comes back. Meanwhile, so long as the watchman, known as the breath of life, is there, no one else can get inside the body. Usually when dogs or thieves want to get into a house, they look this way and that and if they find that there is a watchman, they run away saying there is someone at the gate. Otherwise they get in and do all sorts of damage. The house known as the body is also like that. Even if the *jīva* is away, leaving the breath of life to watch the body, all living beings first come close to see if there is breath left in the body. If there is breath in the body, they say the owner is in and so go away. If there is no inhaling and exhaling of breath, they get in and do whatever they please. When the *jīva* does not like the house, he leaves it and he takes away along with him the watchman also. He wanders from one house to another saying this is no good and that is no good until at

last he feels disgusted and gives up houses and the life connected with them. He then realises that his own Self is the best of all and, with an intensity of feeling, enquires about his own Self, realises the truth and stays within his Self. When that happens, who is the Seer?" said Bhagavan.

नष्टमानसोत्कृष्टयोगिनः

कृत्यमस्ति किं स्वस्थिति यतः ॥

What action remains to be done by that great *yogi* whose mind has been extinguished, and who rests in his own true and transcendent state of Being?

Upadesa Saram, verse 15

20th February, 1949

(227) ALL TAMASIC ARTICLES ARE FORBIDDEN

Four days ago, we received a copy of *Grihalakshmi*, a monthly journal. Bhagavan was turning over the pages and laughing to himself. I thought there must be something amusing in it. While going out, Bhagavan gave me the journal and said with a laugh, "The greatness of garlic is described in it. Please read it." On bringing it home and reading it, I found that there was in it a description of how to cook garlic, how to make pickles out of it, how to make chutneys and in conclusion it was stated that there is nothing equal to it in its greatness and its benefit to the body. I could not help laughing when I read it. I then understood why Bhagavan was laughing while he was reading it. In the afternoon at 2-30 when I went to Bhagavan's presence, Bhagavan smiled

on seeing me. No sooner did I step into the hall than he said, "Well, did you read about the greatness of garlic? Was there not also a verse?" I replied, "Yes, I have read it. There is a saying amongst us that the good which garlic can do, even a mother cannot do. That verse expresses the same sentiment."

Bhagavan: "Such a saying is prevalent in this part of the country also. People say it is very good for health. Really it is so. It removes rheumatism and gives strength to the body. For children it acts like *amrit* (nectar). Garlic is also known as *amrit*."

Devotee: "How did it get that name?"

Bhagavan: "There is a curious story about it. As is well known, when gods (*devas*) and demons (*rakshasas*) churned the ocean, *amrit* came out of it. When the *rakshasas* were running away with the vessel containing *amrit*, *devas* appealed to Vishnu. Vishnu came on the scene in the shape of Mohini (Enchantress), and offered to resolve their quarrel by serving *amrit* to them all. They agreed. While serving it to the gods first, it appeared that there might not be enough to go round for the demons and so one of the latter got into the line of the gods unobserved by Mohini and was swallowing the *amrit*, when the Sun and the Moon noticed it and gave her the hint. She threw the ladle, with which the *amrit* was being served, at the demon. The ladle became the *Chakra* (an invincible lethal weapon of Vishnu) and cut off his head, but as *amrit* had already gone down his throat, the head became a *graha* (planet) and has since been taking vengeance on the Sun and the Moon at the time of an eclipse. That is the story. Now, when the head of the demon was severed, the trunk fell down and, in the process, a few drops of *amrit* also fell on the ground, and it is said that those drops became the garlic plant. That is why it is said that garlic has some of the

properties of *amrit*. It is very good for the body. But since it also has the touch of the demon, it has *tamasic* qualities too, which affect the mind, if eaten. Hence it is forbidden for *sadhakas*.”

Devotee: “Are not horseradish (*mullangi*) and drumsticks also forbidden for *sadhakas*?”

Bhagavan: “Yes. Watermelon, horseradish, drumsticks, onions and other similar vegetables are forbidden. The mind will be clear and pure depending on the sort of food one eats, *sattvic* or otherwise. If one overeats *sambar*, soup and boiled vegetables one will have to belch ‘Ho Ho’ and ‘Ha Ha’ and get worried over digesting it. If, however, one eats *sattvic* food with only one side dish, one digests it easily and will be happy. Who pays attention to such advice?”

Devotee: “Why do they not pay attention to such advice? It is rather strange.”

Bhagavan: “That is a fact. Nobody heeds such advice. Everyone says he must bring for Bhagavan *laddoos* and *jilebis* (sweetmeats) but no one says rice and pepper water are better for Bhagavan. They bring them all for Swami. But why does Swami require all these things? Dandapani Swami was here long back. At that time the method of cooking itself was different. A big vessel used to be put on the fire. Whatever vegetables were received till noon used to be cut and put into it, boiled and *sambar* made. There was no ladle even to stir and mix them. We used to take a piece of firewood, chisel it and use it for stirring those vegetables in the vessel. That preparation was the only side dish. When we mixed it with rice and ate, it used to be very tasty. The labour also was comparatively less. After cooking in the Ashram grew in size, cooks had to be appointed. They used to consult me in the early days about what to cook. I used to ask them, ‘Do you have rice?’ and their reply was, ‘yes’. ‘Do you have water?’

‘Yes’. ‘Do you have salt?’ ‘Yes’. ‘Do you have pickles?’ ‘Yes.’ ‘Buttermilk?’ ‘Yes.’ ‘If so, what else do you want?’ I used to say. After that, they ceased to ask me and now they merely tell me, ‘We will cook this and we will cook that,’ and I say, ‘Yes, yes.’ I also advise them suitably. What do I lose? I do not, however, give up my own custom, but mix all the side dishes into one before taking them. When several people gather together, they must have their way. Why should they suffer on my account?”

2nd March, 1949

(228) SOLITUDE

It seems that an American lady by name Eleanor Pauline Noye came here once or twice a long time ago. A friend of hers, an elderly American woman, came here about ten days back, and told all people that she would stay for some time. The *Kumbhabhishekam* being fixed for the 17th instant, the place is now full of people. Because of the crowds, she could not have a peaceful atmosphere.

As it is Tuesday today, I went round the hill and came to the Ashram a little later than usual. I did not therefore know what had happened in the morning in Bhagavan’s presence. As soon as I went to the Ashram in the afternoon at 3 o’clock, prostrated before Bhagavan and sat down, the old American lady came in. Looking at me, Bhagavan said, “The old lady over there wrote a letter and showed it to me this morning. It is stated therein that she would like to go the Himalayas to move about with the animals there and remain in solitude. There are lots of people here now. She is

perhaps unable to put up with the noise. Last night some one else also complained to me about the noise and I told him that he could not live in solitude even in the forest because, if there were men here there would be animals there. Why should anyone go to the Himalayas to live in solitude?”

I asked, “Does the saying ‘*Ekaki Yatachittatma*’ (living in seclusion with the mind subdued) apply to the mind only?”
Bhagavan: “Yes. That is so.

योगी युञ्जीत सततमात्मानं रहसि स्थितः ।
एकाकी यतचित्तात्मा निराशीरपरिग्रहः ॥

The Yogi who has subdued his mind and body and who is free from desire and bereft of possessions, living in seclusion all by himself, should constantly engage his mind in meditation.

Gita, VI: 10

“That means a Yogi must remain steadily in the secret place called Atman, realise that there is none other but his Self, and keep his mind in the Atman without his mind being deflected to any other matter. ‘*Viviktadesasevitvam*’ also means the same thing.

मयि चानन्ययोगेन भक्तिरव्यभिचारिणी ।
विविक्तदेशसेवित्वमरतिर्जनसंसदि ॥

Unflinching devotion to Me through exclusive attachment of the mind, living in secluded and sacred places, absence of pleasure in the company of men. *Gita*, XIII: 10

“It means one has to remain in a state where nothing else but one’s own Self is existent, without attachment to the outer world and with exclusive devotion to the Self; living in a place without thoughts, and unattached to worldly matters.” Hence solitude refers to the mind and not to the body. If men are here, animals are there. Will they not be

noisy and disturb peace? An American, by name Haig, used to live in our Palakothu.* About ten years ago, he went away to the Himalayas for the same reason. Recently we received a letter from him, saying he is coming back and that he will stay here alone till his death. Many people are like this. They go away saying they do not get peace here. They wander from place to place and come back here again.”

6th March, 1949

(229) DOSAIS

The temple of Draupadamma is about a furlong from here on the right hand side of the road going west from the Ashram. Recently the temple was renovated and *Kumbhabhishekam* was performed there. Many people going to that temple casually drop in at the Ashram. One afternoon, the attendants brought in sweetmeats, given in large quantities to the Ashram by devotees, and sought permission of Bhagavan to distribute them amongst the people in the hall as there were lots of them and it would be difficult to dispose of them otherwise. Just then an old woman arrived, feeling her way with the aid of a walking stick, and brought with her two or three *dosais* (pancakes) enclosed in a banyanleaf bowl. As soon as she entered the hall, she went straight to Bhagavan and of her own accord said, “Swami, take these *dosais*. I am sorry, I had nothing better to bring.”

* ‘Palakothu’ is a small property with a temple and a tank adjacent to the Ashram to the west where *sadhakas* live. A foreigner by name Guy Haig, used to live there and was always playing with the dogs and monkeys he was raising.

So saying, she tried to hand them over to Bhagavan direct. People nearby tried to prevent her from doing so by saying, "Please put them somewhere else." She got angry and said, "You had better keep quiet. Who are you to tell me? You have all come here yesterday or the day before. What do you know? Was it not I that got this platform built for Swami and made him sit here? You say I should not go near him. Enough, enough." All were taken aback by her authoritative attitude. Bhagavan stretched out his hand and accepted her offerings with the greatest kindness, saying, "Grandma, they are little children, who do not know what is what. Please do not take it otherwise. With what flour did you prepare these *dosais*? Are none of your brother's sons looking after you properly? How are you able to maintain yourself? Did you come walking, or in a cart?" Thus enquiring about her welfare, Bhagavan began eating the *dosais*. They were not properly roasted but he ate them with great relish as if they were equal to nectar.

The old woman sat there overwhelmed with joy and unimaginable happiness. Bhagavan afterwards asked for some sweetmeats, took a little of each variety, said that was enough for him and instructed his attendants to distribute the rest amongst themselves and the people there, giving the rest of his share to the old woman. She got up, prostrated before Bhagavan, took her share of the sweetmeats as *prasadam* and left saying, "What does it matter how others look after me, Swami? By your grace I am selling *dosais* and making a living out of the business. It is enough if I could pass the rest of my life thus."

After she left, the attendants asked, "Instead of eating those *dosais* which are not properly roasted, why not give them to us and eat the sweets?" Bhagavan said, "Oh! Those sweets, you think, will be much more tasty than these *dosais*?"

If you want, you eat all the sweets. These *dosais* are enough for me.” The attendants could say no more.

Looking at me, Bhagavan said, “Poor old woman, what can she do? She brought what she had. When I was on the hill, she and her husband used to come to me. She used to bring me something to eat now and then. After her husband passed away, she lived with her brother. Even he passed away. As her brother’s sons did not look after her properly and turned her out, she has been staying somewhere else and has been living by selling *dosais* it seems. It is she that had a platform constructed near Mother’s Samadhi where I used to sit and had it covered by palm leaves. Till then, I used to sit under a tree. ‘Aye! Swami is sitting on the floor and is exposed to the sun!’ So saying, she got the platform built. It is her brother’s son that has repaired Draupadamma’s temple. Having grown old, she does not come here often. See how she has come here all this distance, with great effort, helped by the walking stick!” He ate all the *dosais* without leaving even a crumb.

On another occasion, when Bhagavan was living in Skandasramam, on a Dipavali day, devotees from the town came early morning and offered him sweetmeats such as *laddoos*, *jilebis* etc. It was about 8 a.m. The Asramites who had by then finished their oil bath, took the sweets from the devotees, sent them away after giving them *prasadam*, and were about to eat them, when another devotee, an old woman, came with a meal of millet boiled in water, and placed it before Bhagavan. She had lost her husband when quite young and was living in a *mutt* with the help of her brother. She was giving gruel (*kanji*) to the poor and to Sadhus. Even when Bhagavan was living in Virupaksha Cave, she was now and then bringing cooked *ragi* for him. One day he told her that *ragi* makes for chilliness in the body, and it should

therefore be mixed with some ground wheat like *suji*. From that day onwards she prepared *ragi* meal accordingly and gave it to Bhagavan. On this festival day, therefore, she prepared the food and brought it to the Ashram like all the others. Thereupon, Bhagavan took the food, put it in a wide-mouthed vessel, added water, dry ginger, salt and lime juice and mixed it all together. Telling the people who were serving food that they might eat the *laddoos*, *jilebis*, etc., he ate that mixture himself with great relish. The devotees said, "When there are nice preparations available why are you filling your stomach with ordinary food? How unfair!" Bhagavan said, "What is unfair? Like all the other items, this food also has been received. What am I to do? Do you want me to throw it away?" The devotees replied, "Why throw it away? If all of us eat a little, it will be finished. Should Bhagavan alone eat it?"

Bhagavan: "Well said! But when there are such nice things available, who would care to eat this? People would feel disgusted that on a festival day they had to eat such food. Why trouble others?"

Devotee: "If not now, we can eat it in the afternoon. Why not keep it over?"

Bhagavan: "Will it not be spoiled if kept over for sometime? But the sweets will not be spoiled, if kept over, and people will eat them without needing any persuasion. They will merely open the almirah and take them, while this, if kept over, will stay where it is. That is why I have decided to take it myself. When she has brought it with such great devotion, could we throw it away?"

It seems Bhagavan ate the whole thing himself. Who knows how often such things happened in the Ashram?

8th March, 1949

(230) GOLDEN-ARMED

Before I went to Bhagavan's presence this morning, Sundaresa Iyer appears to have handed over to Bhagavan a book which he was reading. Bhagavan was saying, "Look. '*Namo Hiranya Bahave*' (Salutation to the Golden-armed) is in here," and Sundaresa Iyer was saying, "I was unable to know the finer points in it until Bhagavan explained them." I asked Bhagavan what it was all about.

Bhagavan said (with a smile): "You know, in my younger days, I got the name *Thangakkai* (the Golden-Armed). In "Namakam",* Rudra has already got the name '*Hiranya Bahu*' (the Golden-Armed). Though this is being repeated daily here during the *Veda Parayana*, no one has noticed it. Yesterday that name came to my mind unaccountably and I told Sundaresa Iyer that the name was not a new one to me. He has now brought me that book."

Devotee: "How did Bhagavan get the name of *Thangakkai*?"

Bhagavan: "At all times and in all games, I used to win invariably; were it wrestling or swimming, or even in doing domestic chores. That is why they called me *Thangakkai*. If my aunt began preparing *appalams*, or such like, she would call me and ask me to put my hand on it first. She had great faith in me, because I used to do everything according to her wishes and never told lies. I had to tell only one lie and that was when I came here."

Devotee: "What was that?"

Bhagavan: "When my brother asked me where I was going, I told him that I was going to attend a special class in

* A Vedic Hymn.

the school. After food, when I asked for the keys, I told my aunt the same thing. How could she know? She believed me when I said that.”

Devotee: “It means that for doing a great thing, sometimes a lie has to be told!”

Bhagavan: “Yes. When it is for the welfare of the world and when the exigencies of the situation demand it, it has to be done. It can’t be helped. Where is the question of telling a lie? Some force makes one say so. So long as there is a purpose, there is need of action. When there is no purpose, no action is needed. In this case, we can avoid action in the same way as was done by the sage in “The Sage and Hunter” story in the *Yoga Vasishtam*.”

Devotee: “What is that story?”

Bhagavan: “In a forest, a sage sat motionless and in silence. His eyes however were open. A hunter hit a deer and as it was running away, he began pursuing it and when he saw the sage, he stopped. The deer had run in front of the sage, and hidden itself in a bush nearby. The hunter could not see it and so asked the sage: ‘Swami, my deer has come running this way. Please tell me where exactly it has gone.’ The sage said he did not know. The hunter said, ‘It ran in front of you. Your eyes were open. How could you say you do not know?’ To that the sage replied, ‘Oh my friend! We are in the forest with universal equality. We do not have *ahankara*. Unless you have *ahankara*, you cannot do things in this world. That *Ahankara* is the mind. That mind does all things. It also makes all the sense organs work. We certainly have no mind; it disappeared long ago. We do not have the three states, the states of waking, dream and deep sleep. We are always in the fourth or *Turiya* state. In that state nothing is seen by us. That being so, what can we say about your deer?’ Unable to understand what the

sage was saying, the hunter went his way thinking they were all the words of a mad man.”

9th March, 1949

(231) AVATAR (INCARNATION)

After hearing Bhagavan telling us that his nickname *Thangakkai* was nothing new and that it was one of the names of Rudra in Sanskrit, namely, *Hiranya Bahu*. One or two similar events that had occurred previously came to my mind and I am writing to you about them.

On the 18th of December last, when we had Bhagavan's birthday celebrations, Krishna Bhikshu wrote some verses in praise of Bhagavan. They were not read out on the Jayanti day. After the celebrations were over, I was asked to read them in Bhagavan's presence. They began with the idea, "Oh Ramana! Let your fame be everlasting," and ended with the idea "let your births be everlasting." When I read the last portion, Bhagavan with a laugh looked at Krishna Bhikshu and said, "Very nice. Am I to continue to have births?" Bhikshu said, "For our sake." Devaraja Mudaliar said, "How is it you have written like that? Instead of asking him to be with us in this body, how could you pray to him to be born again and again? Where is the question of another birth for Bhagavan?" Turning towards Bhagavan, I said, "What is wrong in it? It is said, 'To save the good people (*parithranaya sadhunam*).'" As I was saying so, Bhagavan took up the thread of the conversation and said, "Yes. That is true."

परित्राणाय साधूनां विनाशाय च दुष्कृताम् ।
धर्मसंस्थापनार्थाय संभवामि युगे युगे ॥

For the protection of the virtuous, for the destruction of evil-doers and for establishing Dharma (righteousness) on a firm footing I am born from age to age.

Gita, IV: 8

“So I should continue to go on having re-births. Very good.”

“How could that be avoided?” I said. Bhagavan just nodded his head and was silent.

A devotee, Dr. Syed, who has been here for a long time doing *sadhana*, had asked Bhagavan a number of questions and got suitable replies. Even so, he was not able to have any spiritual experiences, and so one day he came to Bhagavan in great grief and said, “Bhagavan, even though you have shown me all possible ways of *sadhana*, I am not able to gain strength in spiritual experience. You must give me that strength; otherwise how can I get that strength?” Bhagavan said, “You must get it by *sadhana* only. Who can help you in the matter?”

Dr. Syed: “Who else, Bhagavan? I must have Bhagavan as my Guru for however many births I may have and he alone should give me salvation. I do not want another Guru any time, any *yuga*. It is enough if you give me the promise that you will help me to attain salvation.”

Bhagavan appeared to be visibly affected. He looked at him (Dr. Syed) kindly, smiled, placed his hand on his own cheek in his characteristic pose, leaned against the pillow and remained silent.

“What, Bhagavan?” said Dr. Syed again. Bhagavan merely nodded his head and kept quiet. The devotee took it to be his blessings and was satisfied.

25th March, 1949

(232) INAUGURATION OF MOTHER'S TEMPLE

The *vaidiks* (priests) who were invited by the Ashram obtained the permission of Bhagavan early morning on Sunday the 13th instant to perform the Chandi Homam and the worship of *Navakanyakas*. On Monday, the 14th, which was the full moon day, thousands of people gathered at the Ashram as it was announced that the preliminaries for the *Kumbhabhishekam*, such as *puja* of Vigneswara, would begin after the night meal. The Ashram presented the appearance of Kailas (heaven) with brilliant electric lights everywhere. Pictures of Siva's dance poses were tied around the shed of the *vaidiks* and the pandits. The roads were crowded with shops on either side. The *pandal* was decorated with strings of green leaves, and the Ashram was resounding with instrumental music.

It was past 8 p.m. The music stopped. The chanting of the Vedas could be heard from the side of the cowshed. Wondering what it was, I looked that side and saw the Vaidiks following Bhagavan from the side of the cowshed to the temple where *puja* had already begun. After Bhagavan came and sat down on the sofa, another batch of *vaidiks* chanting Vedas, brought in Sri Sankaracharya of Puri who had come here two days earlier. They seated him on a special sofa by the side of Sri Bhagavan.

After that, hundreds of *brahmins* sat at a distance from Bhagavan in rows and began filling the whole atmosphere with the music of the chanting of the Vedic Hymns. It is no exaggeration to say that it exceeded the grandeur of even the *darbar* of Brahma. The resplendent face of Bhagavan,

who was seated under the starry sky was radiating a cool lustre all around. People were spellbound at the sight. It appeared as if the lustrous Linga of Lord Arunachala himself had assumed that shape.

The son of the Sarvadhikari, T. N. Venkataraman, came there accompanied by his wife and with *brahmins* walking in front in a procession. The fruits and flowers that were brought with them were placed at the feet of Bhagavan. Venkataraman then prostrated before Bhagavan and after obtaining his permission to begin the ceremonies sat on a wooden seat. After that, Vaidyanatha Stapati, the sculptor, came there with his attendants and prostrated before Bhagavan. The Stapati Puja had then to be performed after the *puja* of the Dharmakarthas. So he obtained Bhagavan's permission and went away. Subsequently, the *vaidiks* and the Ashramites came one after another, obtained Bhagavan's permission and began the ceremonies with the worship of Ganapati. On completion of the worship, Venkataraman and his wife prostrated before Bhagavan and left.

Soon after that, Bhagavan got up with the *puṇḍarikāśā* (a pot full of water) and, with a procession of Brahmins chanting Vedic Hymns, he came to the hall constructed as a *Mukhamandapam* (raised platform in front of the new temple), opened the doors leading into the temple as a symbol of the opening of the temple. Thereafter he went straight to the *samadhi* where the Linga is to be installed as also *Meruprasthara Chakra*, touched them, examined them, went round the temple examining everything and then came to the hall in the front portion of the temple.

At that place a specially carved stone sofa had been placed for seating Bhagavan. In the centre of the sofa there was a lotus, in the back the *Pranavam* ('Om') and on either side two lions. On the four legs of the seat there were carvings

representing some of the *avatars*. All of them were painted with a golden hue. The Ashram authorities wanted to seat Bhagavan on that stone sofa not on that day but on the day of the *Kumbhabhishekam*. That was why there was no bedspread on the sofa. All expected Bhagavan to examine it merely and come away but he sat on the sofa unexpectedly. All were astonished. They prostrated before him. After a while Bhagavan started from there, and went into the shed erected for Sri Chakra Yaga, and there touched all the vessels. At about 10 a.m., he came back to his usual place in the Golden Jubilee Hall.

After 2 a.m. in the night, *Kalakarshanam* and *Ghatasthanam* were performed. The Chandi Yaga was begun and was performed according to Sastric rites in the sheds of the *vaidiks*. Similar rituals were performed in the Agama sheds also. Thus in all the several places the respective gods were invoked, the vessels with sacrificial waters were installed and the Homas were begun. Besides the Homas, four Vedas were being chanted by four different sets of people. The music of the Vedas was pleasing to the ear and created an atmosphere of serenity, reminding one of the atmosphere similar to that which prevailed in the ancient Asrams. Besides these, there was a recital of the *Devi Bhagavatam* also.

On the second day, Homas were performed in the same manner. Between 7 and 10 in the morning, and between 5 and 10 in the evening, Yaga Puja was performed. The same morning, the oxen in the *Gosala* (cowshed) were brought to the temple where the *pujas* were being performed, their horns were decorated with turmeric powder, *kumkum* and flower garlands and a Linga was tied between the horns of one of them. After the Linga had dangled for a while between the horns as a part of the ritual the oxen were sent back and the Linga

was taken in a procession to the temple to the accompaniment of instrumental music and the chanting of the Vedas. After *pradakshina*, the Linga was taken inside. Subsequently the idols of Yogamba, Vigneswara and Kartikeya were taken into the temple in the same manner.

On the night of the second day between 10-30 p.m. and midnight, the Meruprasthara Sri Chakra was placed behind the Linga by Bhagavan to the accompaniment of the chanting of Vedas. After that, devotees chanted the appropriate mantras and placed the Meruchakra in its proper place where the nine gems were inset. There was another golden Sri Chakra which was to be placed under the Linga and sealed with gold. As that would cause delay, at the request of the devotees, Bhagavan merely touched it and came back to his original seat. The remaining idols were installed by others subsequently.

During the early morning of the third day, the *Kalakarshana* ceremony was performed. Thereafter the various idols were fixed in their respective places which were studded with *Navaratnas* (nine gems). The stone sofa which was specially prepared for Bhagavan referred to earlier was likewise studded with nine gems.

The most important of all the ceremonies was performed on the fourth day. Hearing the instrumental music as early as 2 a.m., I got up and went to the Ashram and found the whole place full of people sleeping on the floor. There was no space even to walk along. As the music was played at different places, the people who were asleep woke up slowly. As all the Yagas had been performed for three nights and were ended, the other rituals like *Suvasini Puja*, *Sparsahuti* and *Purnahuti* were performed. On the morning itself the *Kalastas* (water pots) were placed in the

temple with appropriate rituals. Subsequently the priests carried on their heads the *Purnakalasam* with chanting of mantras, went round Bhagavan and with his permission climbed up the summit of the temple. Bhagavan sat on the sofa and all the devotees prostrated before him. After that was done he was taken into the shed where the Yaga was performed, was made to sit on a chair and the tower of the temple was sanctified with the sprinkling of holy water. Thereafter Bhagavan was brought to the interior *Kalasa* of the temple and was made to sit on a bench before the Nandi and then *abhishekam* was done to *Meruprasthara* and to the Mathrubhuteswara Linga.

After this *Mahakumbhabhishekam*, Bhagavan resumed his seat. Niranjanananda Swami, who was responsible for all the festivities, was garlanded and honoured in the presence of Bhagavan. In the evening at 4, the Ayurvedic Doctor, Bangalore Ramachandra Rao gave a lecture in the presence of Bhagavan about the utility of *Kumbhabhishekams*, how the twigs used in the Homa contain rare medicines and how when they were burnt with mantras all diseases of the lungs get cured by the inhaling of the fumes. That is why, he said, elders have ordained on us to perform the *Yagas*.

In the evening at 5-30, Dr. K. Vijayaraghavan gave a music recital. In the night after 8 p.m., *Mahabhishekam* was performed. A troupe of Thirupugazh singers, performed *bhajan* all the four days in the presence of Bhagavan and also at the Yagasalas. There was no limit to poor feeding on all the three days. Special arrangements were made with the help of the police and volunteers for poor feeding. Bhagavan went round with his attendants during the feeding to supervise the arrangements. Cinema people took a film of all the festivities. The festivities came to a close with the usual mantras. As the work in the hall in

the front of the temple was not over, Bhagavan came back to the Golden Jubilee Hall the same night.

24th March, 1949

(233) ARRANGEMENTS FOR KUMBHABHISHEKAM

In Andhra Desa, the construction of big temples is rare; as also the performance of *Kumbhabhishekam*. Hence, several people requested me to watch the *Kumbhabhishekam* ceremony of the Mathrubhuteswara Temple closely and describe it in detail in a letter. But then, is it possible for me to observe it with its manysided activities from beginning to end? I will however write to you whatever I have been able to see and hear.

It has been stated in *Ramana Leela* about the origin of the temple and the Ashram as under:

When Bhagavan was on the hill, his mother Alagamma came there to live with him in 1917. While there, she was absorbed in *tapas* and in due course became highly advanced spiritually. On 19th May, 1922, knowing that her end was near, Bhagavan placed his hand on her heart and head, prevented the breath of life escaping out of the body and with his powers guided it to become absorbed in the *Atma*. Hence the *vasanas* were destroyed and the *jiva* was released. It was thereupon declared that the body of the mother had become holy and it was buried to the east of the Pali Thirtham (tank). On the tenth day, devotees consecrated a Linga on the *Samadhi* after it was touched by Bhagavan. A well was dug by its side known as Alagammal Tirtham. Subsequently

Bhagavan left the hill and came down to live in the present place where the Ashram is located.

The Sri Chakra prepared by Kavyakanta Ganapathi Muni in Bhagavan's presence was placed near the Linga and was worshipped. Ten years ago, the *Sarvadhikari* decided to erect a temple on the *Samadhi*. At the time of the temple construction, the Linga was placed in a small hut near the *Samadhi* and was worshipped regularly everyday. Alongside the Linga, the idol of Devi Yogamba also was installed five years ago. A photo of Bhagavan, taken while he was in Pachiamman Koil was also placed by the side and worshipped. By Bhagavan's grace, the construction of the temple was completed and it was decided to have the *Kumbhabhishekam* on 17-3-1949. The work relating to that was begun on an auspicious day after performing *puja* to Vighneswara. The *Sarvadhikari* concentrated his attention on this work and the devotees assisted him in all possible ways. On 1st January 1949, in the early hours of the morning, the foundation stone for Sri Chakra was laid to the accompaniment of music. Immediately after that, as arrangements were being made for the construction of the Yagasala, Bhagavan happened to pass that way. He was made to sit on a chair and its foundation was laid with due ceremony. Subsequently, one of the devotees, Thoppiah Mudaliar, was entrusted with its construction and the *Sarvadhikari* went to Madras to make the necessary purchases. He returned after about twenty days.

By the 12th of March all the work was over. People began arriving in batches. For the convenience of visitors coming from distant places, two huge thatched sheds were put up near the Ashram gate. In front of the first shed, a reception office was established. In Gownder's compound, a big shed was put up for the convenience of the ladies. In the ground opposite the Ashram, arrangements were made for

the stay of the volunteers and the police. In the Ashram itself, sheds were put up on the terrace of the buildings. To the west of the hospital, sheds and kitchens were put up for the convenience of the Brahmins, priests and the other orthodox persons who came there for the ceremonies. For the other visitors and for local devotees arrangements were made in the common dining hall and in the Jubilee Hall. For feeding the poor, arrangements were made to supply food packets with Bhagavan's picture thereon and the distribution was to be made with the help of the police in Bose's compound. Two fire engines were kept ready, but by Bhagavan's grace no accident occurred. The engines were, however, used one day to clean the *gopuram* of the temple by using the hose pipes to spray water. The whole place was lighted suitably. *Darbha* (kusa grass) and *samidhas* (chips of wood) were dumped in huge heaps. Bags of rice, vegetables and plaintain leaves came in by lorries from various places. As high officials came in cars, pandals were erected for the parking of cars in the *maidan* (open field) east of the Morvi guest house. The Municipal and the Railway authorities made special transport arrangements for the visitors. All the devotees in the Ashram without exception, were allotted some work or other. Puri Sankaracharya, who had come to the Ashram some two months previously, sent word that he would attend the function. For *abhishekam*, the ivory of elephants and holy water from all the great rivers were received. From Kanyakumari and other places bags of holy sand were received. The High Priests of Arunachaleswara Temple agreed to come every day with sandal paste and with camphor to partake in the *abhishekam* and other ceremonies. Lawyers, doctors, engineers and several high officials said they would participate in the celebrations. *Navaratnas* (nine precious stones) were also received from several Rajahs.

Kumbhabhishekam really means the pouring of holy water on the image that is receiving *puja*, offerings, etc., daily in the small shed. These idols were to be placed in the new temple: placing the Linga on the *Samadhi*; placing under the Linga the gold Bhuprasthara Sri Chakra; placing behind the Linga another Meruprasthara Sri Chakra; and placing in the assigned places the idols of Yogamba, Vighneswara, Kartikeya, Chandikeswara, Bhairava, Chandra and Surya and the Navagrahas. That is the programme. Before that is done, *puja* of Mahaganapati, *Chandi Yagam*, *Agama Yagam* and others have to be performed. All these items of the programme were completed before a holy fire and in accordance with strict Vedic rituals and to the *Agama Sastra*. I will write to you about them in another letter.

26th March, 1949

(234) WORSHIP OF THE SANDALS

The devotion to duty of those who were responsible for the enthusiasm with which they made all the arrangements for the festivities connected with the *Kumbhabhishekam* is indeed commendable. The Asramites, the police, the scouts from various schools, the volunteers and hundreds of devotees made the function a grand success by working day and night. With a view to honour some of the important ones amongst them, the Sarvadhikari, Sri Niranjanananda Swami, began giving gifts to the *vaidiks*, to the pandits, to the Asramites and other devotees. The chief among them was Vaidyanatha Stapati, the sculptor of the temple. A gold medal with Bhagavan's picture thereon was given to him.

In the afternoon of the 19th instant, at 3, Sri Niranjanananda Swami invited the Stapathi to come into the presence of Bhagavan, when Bhagavan himself presented him with the medal. The Stapathi, full of devotion, prostrated before Bhagavan and said, "I had the great fortune of doing this service in Bhagavan's presence. Bhagavan will bless us to the effect that this medal will be worshipped as our family god and as our saviour." Bhagavan blessed him with a look of endearment.

There was another event on the morning of the 20th instant. Sri Giddaluri Sambasiva Rao decided to worship the feet of Sri Niranjanananda Swami in the front hall of Mathrubhuteswara Temple. He brought new ochre robes and all the materials required for *Pada Puja* and brought Sri Bhagavan to the hall and made him sit on the sofa, after telling him (Bhagavan) of his intentions. He then prevailed upon Niranjanananda Swami to come, brought him there with a number of Brahmins and made him sit on a dais in the centre of the hall. Overwhelmed with feelings of humility, Niranjanananda Swami said, "So you all want to catch me napping. Enough of your devotion. I will not agree to this worship. *Pada Puja* is only for those who do not have the sense of ego. It is not for others. I am not worthy of it." So saying, he got down and squatted on the floor. Sambasiva Rao however would not allow him to go, and began pressing him. Swami was in a dilemma. In those embarrassing circumstances, his face suddenly lit up. Something occurred to him. With a tremulous voice, he said, looking at the students of the *Patasala*, "So it means, you will not leave me alone; Bhagavan's sandals are near that Linga, bring them; do *puja* to them."

A devotee had brought those sandals with silver plating before the *Kumbhabhishekam* and had given them to the

Ashram. They were touched by Bhagavan's feet and placed near the Linga to be worshipped. In accordance with the orders of the Sarvadhikari, the *brahmin* boys brought those sandals in a plate and placed them before the Sarvadhikari. After Sambasiva Rao had done *abhishekam*, Swami cleaned them with a cloth and replaced them on the plate with great reverence. After the usual *puja* was performed, the ochre clothes were placed on the sandals and the plate containing them was handed over to Niranjanananda Swami who received it, touched the sandals with his eyes and accepted the clothes as a *prasadam*. While doing so, he said, "Look. I have accepted the *puja* of the sandals this time because of your pressing request. This should never be done by anybody else. Things of this nature should never be done in the presence of Bhagavan."

From the day of the *Kumbhabhishekam*, *abhishekas* according to *Mahanyasa* are being performed every day regularly. On Monday the 2nd of May, corresponding to Vaishakha Suddha Chathurthi, *Mandalabhishekam* will be performed.

It is no exaggeration to say that when the great ceremony is performed in the presence of Bhagavan who is the embodiment of *Sat-Chit-Ananda*, one is reminded of the *Rajasuya Yaga* of Yudhishtira. Even though so very many things were being done in his presence, Bhagavan was seeing them and listening to them only as a witness (*Sakshi*) merely saying, "Yes, yes." He was like Sadasiva seated on the sofa looking with compassion at all those who came to him.

28th March, 1949

(235) THE STORY OF THE TEN BRAHMINS

I went to Bhagavan's presence rather late this afternoon. When I looked at the clock it was 3-30. Bhagavan was replying with a smile to a question about *Atmanandam* asked by a new arrival who sat close to him, "Please find out first who you are. If you know that, everything is *Anandam* (Bliss). In fact your 'Self' is itself '*Anandam*.'"

Taking up the thread of the conversation, one Asramite said, "When I requested you to bless me so that I could always be in *Anandam*, you said, '*Anandam* is your nature; that is your Self; that is *moksha*.'" Bhagavan replied with a smile, "Yes, yes." So saying, he looked at Dr. Srinivasa Rao who was there and said, "What do you say, doctor? We say that a doctor should be called and he should give medicine only if there is sickness. Otherwise why is he required? Yesterday the health was good. Today there is a headache. As there is a headache, you say medicine is required. Why? Just to see that it goes off and you remain natural. It is the same thing with *Ananda*, otherwise why do you yearn for it?"

The doctor said, "Bhagavan always says that these things come on because of the mind and that they will disappear if you try to get rid of them yourself. In *Vasishtam* also it is stated that all these come upon a person by the desires of the mind and it is the mind that creates them all. But how is that possible, Bhagavan?"

"How, you say. Is this not stated in the story about the ten Brahmins? That story is also in the *Vasishtam*," said Bhagavan.

"Will you kindly tell us what that story is?" asked another devotee.

Bhagavan thereupon cheerfully began telling us the story.

“Once upon a time Brahma, the Creator, after performing his duties the whole day, went to sleep at night fall. When the night was over, he woke up. After completing his morning ablutions, he looked at the sky before beginning his day’s work of creation, when he saw that there were several other worlds. His work of creation was being performed properly and so there was no justification for the other worlds to come into existence. ‘What! The worlds that should remain dormant until I created them, have come into existence! How have these come into existence?’ Greatly surprised at this, with the power of his mind he summoned one of the suns in those worlds and asked, ‘Sir, how have these worlds come into existence?’

“The sun replied, ‘Oh, my Lord, you are the Brahma. What is there that you do not know? Even so, if you want to hear from me, I will tell you.’ So saying, he began relating as follows: ‘Swami, a *brahmin*, living with his wife, in a city near Mount Kailas prayed to Parameswara for children as he had none, and ultimately begot ten children. The children in due course grew up and studied all *Sastras*. After some time, the parents passed away. The boys were filled with grief. They had no near relatives and consequently could not continue to live in their parents house. So they climbed Mount Kailas and decided to do *tapas* there. They then began considering what exactly they should do to get rid of their sorrows. At first they thought wealth would give them happiness but dismissed the idea as there would always be wealthier people than themselves. It would be the same thing with regard to kingship or even the Lordship of Mahendra. They therefore felt that there was no fulfilment in any of those things. Finally the eldest amongst them said, ‘He who

creates all these is Brahma and so Brahma is the highest of them all.' They all felt likewise and so said, 'What is the way to achieve Brahma-hood (*Brahmatvam*)?' After thinking for a while, the eldest said, 'It is not so difficult. Mind is the basic cause of everything. So let us all sit in a lonely place and concentrate the mind on attaining *Brahmatvam*, giving up thoughts on all other matters including the body. Continuously feel that you are seated on a lotus; that you are lustrous and that you are creating this world and destroying it. I will also do likewise.' All of them felt happy at the idea. The idea 'I am the Brahma with four faces' became firmly fixed in their minds and they forgot completely about their bodies. Subsequently those bodies fell off like dry leaves from a tree. On account of the intensity of their desires, ten worlds have come into existence as all the ten of them have become Brahmas. The force of their desires is now stationary in the *Chit Akasa*. I am the sun of one of the ten worlds.' So saying, the sun went back to his original place. This is the story of the ten Brahmas. It is given in full detail in *Vasishtam* under the heading '*Naveena Srishu*,' said Bhagavan.

"That means that if one consistently desires *Ananda*, that *Ananda* comes and remains permanently, is that so?" asked that questioner.

"Yes. If that desire becomes strong, it will remain so, but then there should be no other desire in the mind." So saying Bhagavan resumed silence.

10th April, 1949

(236) THE BANYAN TREE

In the third edition of the *Ramana Leela*, which is just out, several matters which were in the earlier editions have been omitted and some were added. Bhagavan looked into the book and said that there were some factual errors. I told Krishna Bhikshu about it and suggested that he should get them corrected in Bhagavan's presence, so that the corrections could be incorporated in the next edition. He had come here for the *Kumbhabhishekam* and was here till recently. On the 29th ultimo he obtained the permission from the office to read the book in Bhagavan's presence and make the required corrections. Accordingly he began to read it from 2-30 p.m. on the 31st ultimo. As Bhagavan was giving him instructions about the various corrections to be made and was incidentally narrating several incidents, only half the work could be completed by the 2nd instant. The tumour that had grown on Bhagavan's arm was operated on the 3rd instant, and so the reading of the book was stopped that day. The doctors and the Ashram authorities permitted the reading of the book on the 3rd day and so it was resumed and completed in two days. Krishna Bhikshu left this place afterwards.

Even though he had left, discussions relating to the book were continued subsequently in Bhagavan's presence. Yesterday afternoon a devotee said that between the Telugu and the English versions of the biography there were several discrepancies. Bhagavan remarked, "Yes, that is so. Krishna Bhikshu has made several alterations as he has been coming here every now and then and checking up. Narasimhayya, who had written the English version and Suddhananda

Bharati, who had written the Tamil version, have not come here since writing them.”

I said, “The incident regarding the bees and the banyan leaf has been written in ‘Ramana Leela’ differently. I remember Bhagavan telling us that he had gone up the hill only after seeing the leaf and it was only then that the insects stung him.”

“Yes, yes. One morning unintentionally I came down the hill from the Virupaksha Cave and was going round the hill, when it occurred to me that I should go up the hill by a short cut between Panchamukha Temple and Pachiamman Temple. It was all a big forest. While I was feeling my way, a big banyan leaf drifted across my path. That one leaf was as big as the leaf we stitch together with several banyan leaves to eat food on. When I saw that leaf I was reminded of the *sloka* in the *Arunachala Puranam* where there was a description of the banyan tree under which Arunagiri Yogi was living.”

“What is that *sloka*?” asked one devotee. Bhagavan thereupon recited it as follows:

अस्त्युत्तरेस्मिन् शिखरे दृश्यते वटभूरुहः ।

सिद्धवेषस्सदैवास्ते यस्य मूले महेश्वरः ॥

यस्यच्छायाति महती सर्वदा मण्डलाकृतिः ।

लक्ष्यते विस्मयोपत्रैः सर्वदा देव मानवैः ॥

On the northern peak of the hill there is seen a banyan tree where the great Lord in the form of a Siddha eternally sits. The immense shade of the tree constitutes a charmed circle of immortality. Its expanses of foliage represents the entire universe, including men and gods.

“As soon as I was reminded of that *sloka*, I thought that that leaf must be from that banyan tree and so felt that I could see that tree if I went along the direction from which

the leaf came. I started climbing up farther and soon saw a tree on an elevated spot. As I was going along to it, my thigh hit against a bush. On account of the disturbance, the bees in the bush came out and began stinging me. I thereupon thought that I had committed an offence and that that was the punishment. So thinking, I stood still. The bees did not sting me at any other place than the one that touched the bush. They bit me to their fullest satisfaction. After they left me, I began walking. Curiously enough I forgot all about the banyan tree and wanted to reach the place of the seven springs. But there were three big streams in between which were very deep. The thigh too had swollen and was paining. I somehow crossed the three streams, and reached the seven springs. From there I began to descend the hill and reached the cave of Jataswami by the evening. Till then I had no food, nothing whatsoever. There they gave me a tumblerful of milk which I drank and then took a little fruit. After some time I went to the Virupaksha Cave and stayed there for that night. The leg got still more swollen. Jataswami and others did not notice it, but Palalniswami saw it and said, 'What is it?' and I told him all that had happened. Next day, he applied some gingelly oil to it. When he smeared it with the oil, he found that in every place I was stung there was a spike as strong as a wire nail. With great effort he took out every one of them and gave some treatment. The swelling subsided after two or three days."

"Did not Bhagavan make any effort afterwards to trace the place where the banyan tree was?" I asked.

"No. That thought never came to my mind again," replied Bhagavan.

I said, "It seems that some time later, Venkatramayya, Muruganar, Kunjuswami and others went in search of the place and came back disappointed."

“Yes, yes. That was a *tamasha*. You were also here at that time and you have heard about it, haven’t you?” questioned Bhagavan.

“I did hear about it but I do not know the details,” I said.

“If that is so, you had better ask any one of them. They would tell you. It would be good if the people who had experienced those troubles told you about them,” said Bhagavan.

12th April, 1949

(237) DEVOTEE’S DISCOMFITURE

After writing all that Bhagavan had said about the banyan tree, I was wondering whom to ask amongst the devotees that had gone out to locate the banyan tree, when unexpectedly Kunjuswami came to see me this morning. I told him all that had happened in Bhagavan’s presence and said, “I don’t know why Bhagavan asked me to enquire and find out from others the required details. Please let me have them.” Taken by surprise he exclaimed, “Ayyo! That (*affair*). Why ask? God alone knows what troubles we experienced.” “That is why I want to hear them from you,” I said. “All right. You hear me and write down what I say. It will be a good lesson to others so that no one would attempt to do such things in the future.” So saying he related the incident as follows:

“It must have happened some five or six years ago. That year quite a number of devotees came for *Jayanti*. The *Jayanti* was celebrated as usual. After the bustle of the celebrations,

we all thought of visiting the summit of the Arunachala Hill. About twenty-five of the devotees expressed their readiness to start. So the previous night we informed Bhagavan about our intention.

“While telling us about the route and the facilities available, Bhagavan casually made a mention of the banyan tree where Arunagiri Yogi lived and told us all in the same way as he told you, about the stinging of the bees while he was walking along that side. After hearing that, Munagala Venkataramayya and myself felt very eager to see the place. We didn’t, however, tell Bhagavan anything about it. After we returned to Palakothu, Venkataramayya and myself started for the journey. We conferred with Muruganar, Kalyanasundaramayya, a European by name Thomas and his friend, a Zamindar youth and two other new people, without telling anything about the plan to the rest of the party. We all started early taking with us the necessary food. By morning we reached the side where there were steps leading to the town. Our party of eight stopped there and told the others that they should go ahead as one or two others were yet to come. Sending them ahead on that pretext we sneaked away from there and started climbing the hill by a short cut on the side of Pachiamman Temple. The Zamindar youth brought a camera as we wanted to take a photo of the banyan tree and show it to Bhagavan. We climbed up and up in search of the tree but could not locate it. We could not even get up to the summit for that was not visible. Unable to know whether to go up or down, we went round and round, felt tired and ultimately got stuck at one place. Down below there was a deep valley. There was no level ground even to sit and there was nothing even to lean against. The scorching sun was beating on us as it was 12 o’clock. Venkataramayya suddenly began to have a palpitation of his heart and so lay

down on the grass. Muruganar could not be seen anywhere. Wondering what had happened to him, we searched and found him crawling up behind us. He had no strength left even to walk. We were half dead and had no energy left even to speak to one another. I began to feel worried and anxious because we had done all this without telling Bhagavan. How could I go to Bhagavan's presence if anything happened to any one of us? Instead of facing him, I thought I would go straight up to northern India on a pilgrimage, abstain from taking food and water, and thus give up my life. I had never till then prayed to Bhagavan for the fulfilment of any of my desires but on that occasion I prayed to him from the depth of my heart to save all these people from danger.

“Immediately thereafter the sound of someone chopping wood was heard. Looking towards the side from where the sound was coming, we saw a woodcutter a long way off. As our voices would not reach him, one of us waved his upper cloth indicating our presence to him. As one or two in our group were wearing pants and coats he mistook us for forest officers, and began to run away. Then I waved our ochre robes which showed him that we were Ashramites and assured him that he need not be afraid of us. Thereupon he believed us and came to us. By that time, we had given up all hopes of locating the banyan tree and so requested him to take us either to the summit of the hill or to the seven streams. He told us that there was no path to reach the summit of the hill and that he could take us only to the seven streams, but that there were three deep streams in between which would be very difficult to cross. Even so, he began taking us one by one by the hand and helped us to cross the three streams. By the time he finished helping all of us to cross the streams, and seated us on the other side we

were completely exhausted and unable to move. At that stage, through Bhagavan's grace, there was a slight drizzle. That shower gave us great relief and we felt very much refreshed. We could see from the seven streams the people who had gone earlier up the hill. They could not see us. After eating something, they began searching for us, worrying themselves about our safety. Ultimately they caught sight of us in our sorry plight. They shouted. We responded. The wood cutter somehow managed to take us to them.

“We were a sight to see with our torn clothes and bruised bodies. They first gave us fruit and then after finding out what had happened and seeing the camera and the thermos flask, remarked, ‘It does not matter if you have drunk all the curd from the flask, but have you at least taken a photo of the place?’ Only then did we realise that we had a camera. We had completely forgotten its very existence.

“We rested for a while and then came down to the Virupaksha Cave. As we felt we should not go to Bhagavan's presence in that untidy state, our group stayed on until sunset and then came down. I went to Palakothu with the intention of bathing and then going to Bhagavan. The Zamindar youth and Venkataramayya however went straight to Bhagavan and prostrated themselves before him from a distance. As they were leaving the place, Bhagavan noted their dishevelled condition and remarked to the devotees sitting near by him, ‘Look at them. See their condition. Something unexpected appears to have happened.’

“At that moment I went there. As soon as I got up after prostrating, Bhagavan asked me anxiously, ‘What happened? From what I see of those two people they are in a frightful state, with blood sprinkled all over their bodies and with clothes torn.’ I related respectfully all that had happened. Scolding me for what I had done Bhagavan said, ‘Is it proper

for you to do such things? If you had asked me beforehand, I would have told you not to go. Is it not a wrong thing to pry into the secret places where *Mahatmas* stay? Bees stung me violently even though I stepped into that place unintentionally. It never occurred to me afterwards to go that way again. It was a mistake of mine to have told you at all about those places.' With folded hands and in a penitent mood I said, 'Bhagavan, it was a mistake. I used to feel curious to see and investigate all the places whenever Bhagavan was relating to us about the great and interesting things connected with the hill. Now that desire has vanished. I have also been suitably punished for going there without informing Bhagavan. I shall never do such silly things hereafter.' That is how I sought Bhagavan's pardon," said Kunjuswami.

13th April, 1949

(238) AASURA VASANA

Sri Yogi Ramiah came here about a week back. Sitting before Bhagavan this morning he said, "Bhagavan, some people say 'We have become *Jnanis*. We are in the *Jeevanmukta* state.' They do not, however, sit quietly even for a minute but will always be wandering. How can they be *Jeevanmuktas*?"

"What of that?" said Bhagavan. "Are not Narada and others *Jeevanmuktas*? What is wrong with the *Jeevanmukta* state if one goes about the world? All things happen according to one's *prarabdha*."

"That is not it, Bhagavan. People like Narada went round the world singing celestial songs for the benefit of the world after they became *Jeevanmuktas*. These people are not

like that. They mix in all worldly affairs full of *raga* and *dvesha* (desires and aversions) and claim to be *Jnanis* and *Jeevanmuktas*. How can that be?” said that devotee.

“That is what you ask, is it?” said Bhagavan. “I see. That is all known as *Aasura Vasana* (demoniac tendencies). It has been humorously described in *Vasudeva Mananam*. Wait. I will have it read.” So saying, Bhagavan asked Venkataratnam to bring a copy of *Vasudeva Mananam*. Taking the chapter on *Aasura Vasana* and asking him to read it, Bhagavan said, “Look. Please note that you must read it without laughing. You should also read it aloud without mumbling to yourself. There you are. You have already started laughing. Read without laughing.” He somehow controlled his laughter and began reading. I will only write down the summary. “For a *sadhaka* the obstacles relating to *Aasura Vasana* exhibit themselves frequently though he feels that he has got rid of them. For instance, he would say, ‘You are a fallen yogi. Useless fellow. Is this the way to perform rituals? There is no doubt about it. Even the Guru who taught you these rituals is also a *brashta* (a fallen person). Don’t come to my presence from tomorrow. Get away.

“You fellow! Prostrate before me and save yourself. Take the holy waters from our lotus feet and save yourself. What other Vedantic enquiries are required than serving us? All your desires will be fulfilled if you worship us. Do not serve any one else but us. You fellow, if you do not give all that you have to one of the people here, do not come to us. Look! One person never cared for us. We therefore said that he should live no longer. He was thereupon reduced to ashes. In the same manner another person lost all his wealth and still another fellow received *upadesa* from us and never cared for us and therefore got reduced to ashes subsequently. Who could know about our greatness except great people like ourselves? We

know the past, the present and the future. We protect the world at all times. We earned a good deal of money and gave it away in charity. We know the desires that are in the minds of each and every individual. Those desires come and stand before us. We know when a particular person is to get into trouble and when another person is to get huge wealth. In this manner we surely get to know future happenings. I am a *Siddha*; I am Ishwara. Who is there higher than me? All must serve me. It is only through me that persons could get their desires fulfilled. If they do not try to get their desires fulfilled through us, they will fall into the well of sin. They will soon be guilty of sinning against the Guru. Take care.’”

With some more things like this the chapter concludes with the remarks: “Feelings like *raga* and *dvesha* are the causes of retarding the progress of the spiritual aspirant and so those who are anxious to attain *moksha*, must practise ‘Self-enquiry’ and give up those feelings. If any one observes practices like *sravana*, *manana*, etc. he may not gain *moksha* during his life time, but those practices will not go to waste. He will get into *uttamaloka* (higher life) through that, attain *chitta suddhi* and will be born as a *Brahmanishta* and, by repeated practice of *sravana*, *manana* and the like, attain *Jnanam* in due course.”

After Venkataratnam finished reading this chapter, Bhagavan looked at the devotee who had originally asked the question and said with a laugh, “Now, sir. You have heard everything, have you not?” The devotee said, “Yes. I have heard. But there it has been stated that when there are obstacles, a person will not attain *moksha* even if he practises *sravana*, *manana*, etc. It has also been stated that those practices will not go to waste and will lead him to higher life. But what happens if one does not practise *sravana*, *manana*, etc. but continues one’s malpractices?”

“That will be the cause of his ruin. Have you not heard of Nahusha who lost his empire and remained as *ajagara* (boa constrictor) for ten-thousand years?” replied Bhagavan.

14th April, 1949

**(239) TULYA NINDA STUTIHI
(HE WHO TAKES PRAISE AND
REPROACH ALIKE)**

Sometime in the month of June or July, 1945, a European youth came here from Nilagiri. When he came it was 7-30 a.m. Bhagavan had by then gone for taking light refreshments. Handing over to the attendants in the hall a basket of fruit which he had brought with him, the youth went hurriedly into the dining hall. While doing so, his purse fell out. He did not notice it. An old man, a Reddiar from Anantapur, who observed the whole thing thought of telling that youth about it on his return. Meanwhile, a Vaishnavite with a *Namam** came and picked up the purse. The old man saw that and told him that it belonged to the European. The Vaishnavite said, “I am his representative. He has asked me to bring it. I will give it to him only.” So saying he disarmed the suspicion of the old man, went into the dining hall and disappeared from there unnoticed.

When the European youth returned, he told all the people there about the loss of his purse. The old man told him about the trick played by the man with the *Namam*. The people there searched for the trickster all over the place,

* A caste mark on the forehead worn by Vaishnavaites.

but to no purpose. It seems there were ten rupees in that purse. All this happened before I went to the Ashram at 7-45 a.m. After hearing the whole story from the old Reddiar I went into the hall when Bhagavan said with a smile, "Look. This is the gentleman who gave a present of ten rupees to that great Vaishnavite." A gentleman in the hall remarked, "The person who found the purse will feel happy in the thought that Bhagavan himself gave it to him." Bhagavan remarked, "I see. The person who lost the purse will also feel that it was Bhagavan who stole it."

About that time, some devotees came to the Ashram from a distant place. After finishing their bath they came to Bhagavan's presence with fruit and various sweets in a big plate, prostrated before him, and sat down. After a while, they all got up saying that they would go to Arunachala Temple and come back. One of them with folded hands said, "Swami, I prayed to Bhagavan when I started some work. That work was successful. It was Bhagavan's grace that was responsible for my success." After praising Bhagavan thus for a long time he went away to the temple along with the others. As soon as he left, Bhagavan looked at us and said with a smile, "It seems he thought of something and it became a success. That was because of his past karma. He keeps saying that it was all due to Bhagavan's grace. Another person takes up some work but does not succeed because of his karma. He will decry Bhagavan saying that Bhagavan had not helped him at all. Reproach comes on me the same way as praise and I have to accept both."

Another interesting event occurred only yesterday. A letter in English was received by post alleging several things against Bhagavan and decrying him. The Ashram authorities showed it to Bhagavan in the afternoon while he was taking rest. At 3 p.m., as soon as Muruganar, Viswanatha

Brahmachari and other devotees came in, Bhagavan began telling them about the letter and then said, looking at Venkataratnam, "Please go to the office and get that letter. One of the people here will read it so that all the others can hear it." Venkataratnam hesitated to go as he felt that it was all unnecessary. Thereupon Bhagavan said, "Why do you say it is unnecessary? You always speak highly of me, saying 'Swami, Swami.' You will now know all about my Swamitvam when you read that letter." Venkataratnam did not move. Looking at him, Bhagavan again said, "Why? Why do you hesitate? When anybody writes praising Bhagavan, you get the letter, and read it aloud, so that all can hear. Why don't you get this one?" So saying, Bhagavan looked at us and said, "Look how he behaves. When anyone writes saying Bhagavan is great, he has it read out. But he does not want this letter to be read out. Why?"

Muruganar said, "Let us leave it at that. Why read it?"

"Oho! So that is it," said Bhagavan. "All of you have already conspired amongst yourselves. If that is so, why should I bother about it?" So saying, with a tolerant smile, Bhagavan resumed silence. We all felt that it was nothing when compared with the patience with which he put up with the attempts to decry him by Mallaswamy, Jataswami and others, who could not with equanimity bear the great fame that Bhagavan was getting. This is a good illustration of *slokas* 18 and 19 in the 12th chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita*.

समः शत्रौ च मित्रे च तथा मानापमानयोः ।

शीतोष्णसुखदुःखेषु समः सङ्गविवर्जितः ॥

He who is alike to friend and foe, and likewise to honour and ignominy, who is alike to heat and cold, pleasure and pain, etc., is free from attachment.

तुल्यनिन्दास्तुतिमौनी संतुष्टो येन केनचित् ।
अनिकेतः स्थिरमतिर्भक्तिमान्मे प्रियो नरः ॥

He who takes praise and reproach alike, who is given to contemplation and is content with whatever comes unasked for, without attachment to home, fixed in mind and full of devotion to me, that man is dear to me.

Gita, XII: 19

10th May, 1949

(240) PATALA LINGA (THE UNDERGROUND LINGA)

It has been stated in the biography of Sri Bhagavan that in the early days of his arrival he used to sit near the underground Linga in the Thousand-pillared Mandapam of Arunachaleswara Temple and that he was so completely absorbed within himself that he was quite unconscious of the insects which were biting him until blood came out. You remember we had seen that cellar and the Linga. They have long been in a dilapidated state. Recently Mrs. Talayarkhan decided to get it repaired and convert it into a fine shrine. She collected some money and entrusted the work to the contractors Messrs. Tarapore & Co. It was ready before the *Kumbhabhishekam* of the Mathrubhuteswara Temple. Even so, the opening ceremony was put off until the *Kumbhabhishekam* was over.

The *Kumbhabhishekam* being over, Mrs. Talayarkhan arranged for the opening of the Patala Linga Shrine by the Governor-General, Sri C. Rajagopalachari, at 8-30 a.m. on the 4th instant and sent out invitations to all people. Before

the arrival of the Governor General with all his paraphernalia, several batches of Reserve Police came here. The roads were repaired and decorated with national flags. The Thousand-pillared Mandapam was cleaned and white-washed. Spectators came from all places. The whole town was full of bustle and noise. Knowing that the Governor General, the Madras Governor, the Maharaja of Bhavanagar and his wife, would also come for the occasion and would visit the Ashram for having a Darshan of Bhagavan, the Municipal authorities and the police made all the required arrangements at the Ashram also.

The Governor General went to the temple straight from the railway station at the appointed hour, performed the opening ceremony, spoke in terms of praise about Sri Bhagavan and went away, sending a message to Bhagavan that he could not visit the Ashram owing to some urgent work. As soon as he left, all the people assembled at the temple came here. By 10-30 a.m., the Bhavanagar royal couple came into Bhagavan's presence, prostrated before him with great devotion, spoke to Bhagavan with great reverence, stayed for half-an-hour, received *prasadam*, and went away.

One of the devotees who had witnessed all the festivities when the shrine was declared open, addressing Bhagavan, said, "Nowhere do we find cellars in Thousand-pillared mandapams. What can be the reason for the existence of a cellar here?" Bhagavan replied, "No, they are usually not in existence anywhere. The reason for its existence here is because some important person passed away, and his body was buried there and a Linga was installed thereon. As the Linga was there much before the construction of the thousand-pillared Mandapam it was not disturbed but was left as it was. The remaining portion of the ground was raised

and the Mandapam was erected. That is why the Linga is underneath the Mandapam which remains like a cave. Later on, steps leading to the place were constructed. When I was staying there it was full of dust. Excepting the elephant on the Mandapam and myself in the cellar, no one else used to be there.” We were all surprised at hearing the circumstances under which the cellar came into existence.

Bhagavan had told us on several occasions that there were several inscriptions on the walls stating that the Hoysala Emperor, Krishnadevaraya, constructed the Mandapam and that it was also stated in those inscriptions that the Emperor did several other similar good deeds. After hearing this, Dr. Anantanarayana Rao went there with some devotees, got the inscriptions in Prakrit language copied and published them in one of his books. After my return from Tiruchuli in June 1944, Bhagavan related to me several similar anecdotes. I will write to you about them some other time when I have leisure.

12th May, 1949

(241) THE MEDICINE ITSELF HAS ARRIVED

About a week back, a letter was received by post from Madhavi Amma. In it was written as follows:

“I hear that Bhagavan is growing weaker and weaker. My prayer is that you should take tomato juice or orange juice.”

Reading the letter and telling us about it, Bhagavan said, “What a suggestion! She is a rich lady. She can afford to take anything she likes. How can I do that? Even so, how strong and healthy is she by eating them all? She always

complains of this pain and that. And her height is just about one foot! Why does she not herself take all those drinks?”

The same evening, Ayurvedic Doctor Ramachandra Rao came here from Bangalore. Noticing his arrival at the hall, Bhagavan said to people near him, “Look! Ramachandra Rao is coming in. He must have brought some medicines with him. When I see him I do not feel that I am seeing a human being. I feel that I am seeing the medicines themselves.” In the meanwhile, Ramachandra Rao came in, placed before Bhagavan a big bottle of medicine and prostrated. No sooner did he get up, than Bhagavan said with a laugh, “Did I not tell you all that the medicine itself has arrived?” With folded hands and in a prayerful attitude, Ramachandra Rao said, “It is not a medicine, Bhagavan. It is an *Arishtam* (a distilled mixture; a tonic). Bhagavan’s body is very much emaciated. If you take this tonic it will give you strength. Please use it.”

Bhagavan said, “That is all right. If, by taking this, a person gets sturdy, why do you not try it on yourself? See how lean and weak you are! First take it yourself and become sturdy and strong. After that we shall think of my case.” Turning towards us, he jocularly said, “See how he is! He is not able to improve his own health, and he says he will improve mine!” The doctor could not say anything and so went away to the office. The next day Bhagavan arranged to give an ounce of the *Arishtam* to each and everyone of those sitting near him and, taking one ounce himself, said, “Look. That Ramachandra Rao is leaner than any one of us. So give him one more ounce. We will see if he becomes stout thereby.”

Four or five days after that, contractor Satagopa Naidu came from Bangalore. He brought with him some bottles containing sherbet and sent them to Bhagavan through one of the people who usually sit near Bhagavan, saying that the sherbet should be given to Bhagavan every day in summer

as it would help in giving some strength to the body. Satagopan comes to the Ashram, stays for months together, spends thousands of rupees and contributes a lot of money for the Asramam's working but never comes into the presence of Bhagavan. If you ask why it is so, there is nothing to say. That is one type of devotion.

As soon as he saw the sherbet bottles, Bhagavan laughed and said, "Ramachandra Rao and he must have consulted each other. Why all these things for us? He is a rich man and so can afford to drink any number of bottles of sherbet. Please tell him to keep these bottles in his room and take the sherbet himself in small quantities every day."

"It seems he brought them for Bhagavan's use only," said a gentleman.

"I see," said Bhagavan. "We shall then do one thing." So saying, he had a big vessel brought, had it filled up with drinking water, poured all the sherbet into the water and then asked that one glassful each be given to everyone of the people assembled there. He moreover directed that one extra glassful should be given to Satagopan so that he could recover from exhaustion. The remaining sherbet was subsequently given to all the other Asramites.

In 1948, a devotee from Kanpur, by name Khanna, sent by parcel post some tins containing Chyavanaprash, saying that it was prepared by himself specially for Bhagavan's use and that it would give some strength to Bhagavan's body if he took it. Saying that if it gave him strength it should give strength to others also, Bhagavan had it served to all people in the Ashram along with their early morning breakfast and himself took along with the others a similar quantity and nothing more.

If there is anything that is not wanted by others such as kanji or cold rice, Bhagavan takes the major portion of it

himself. If it is a delicacy like sweetmeats which everybody likes, he gives away the major portion to others and takes a small portion himself. Who is there comparable to him in this feeling of equality? He can be compared to himself only.

16th May, 1949

(242) VEDA ADHYAYANA (STUDY OF THE VEDA)

It is usual for Dr. Srinivasa Rao to take part in *Veda Parayana* (chanting of Vedic hymns) along with the boys of the Sanskrit school whenever he comes here. Two or three days back, he came here and as usual sat with the boys for the evening *parayana* tying his *dhoti* in the same manner as the Brahmacharis. Bhagavan had been noticing this for some time past but had not said anything. That evening he looked at the doctor and began laughing within himself. I thought there must be something unusual. As soon as the *parayana* was over and the doctor got up, Bhagavan said, "What sir! Do you wear your *dhoti* in this way or in the orthodox style on such occasions?"*

With some nervousness the doctor said, "I do wear it in the orthodox style usually. I somehow tied it like this today. From tomorrow onwards I will wear it properly." "That's not it," said Bhagavan. "The pandits who come for *parayana* tie their *dhotis* in the orthodox style. That is why I asked you.

* The orthodox style consists of weaning a *dhoti* round the body with one end taken in between the legs and tucked in at that back. This is how Maharashtrians and others wear the *dhoti* and also all married men.

Moreover, you are a Maharashtrian. You are also a married man. I am only interested to know whether you are accustomed to that style or not.” “No, Bhagavan,” said the doctor. “From tomorrow onwards, I shall wear it in that manner only.” From that day onwards, he began wearing his *dhoti* in the same manner as is done by married people. Bhagavan, of course, saw this and laughed within himself.

With regard to the *Veda Parayana*, if anybody commits a mistake, Bhagavan generally corrects him in this subtle way. In 1938, a Malayalee devotee by name Sankaran wrote Bhagavan’s biography in Malayalam and brought it to Bhagavan saying, “We are thinking of sending it to the press. Bhagavan may be pleased to go through the book before publication.” Bhagavan thereupon made a few corrections after informing the people around him. It seems that in the book it was stated in one place that people of all castes could study the Vedas. Bhagavan noticed this and corrected it to say that all castes could practise the Vedas by inserting the word *abhyasa* in place of the word *adhyayana*. As Ramanatha Iyer was there in the hall at the time, he heard all this. He did not know at the time that there was a difference between the words *abhyasa* and *adhyayana*. Hence some people thought that Bhagavan had approved of *adhyayana* (Study of Vedas) by all castes. With the intention of telling Kunjuswami about this Sankaran went home as soon as Bhagavan went into the hall for food.

It seems in those days Kunjuswami and Ramanatha Iyer were living in a room by the side of the path leading to Palakothu. Both of them sat on a platform in their verandahs after food and, during a discussion about sundry matters, Ramanatha Iyer said, ‘Look, Kunjuswami. From tomorrow, you also can do *Vedadhyayanam*. Bhagavan has decided about it today.’ Bhagavan, who usually goes to Palakothu after food,

happened to be returning from there at the time and having heard this, said, “What? Is it I that decided thus? I never said all castes could do *adhyayana*.”

Both of them were startled by this sudden interruption and got up and with folded hands, Ramanatha Iyer said, “It is only a short time back Bhagavan had approved of Sankaran’s biography. It is stated that people of all castes could study Vedas (*Vedadhyayana*).” “Yes. I did go through the book. I corrected, however, the word *adhyayana* into ‘*abhyasa* (practice)’” said Bhagavan. “Is there a difference between *adhyayana* and *abhyasa*?” they asked. “Why not? Veda means *jnana*. So I said *Vedabhyasa* (practice of *jnana*). That’s all. I never said *adhyayana* (study) can be done,” said Bhagavan. Ramanatha Iyer replied, “I was not able to understand the difference. Only now when Bhagavan has explained to me clearly, I could comprehend the whole thing. Unless it is clearly stated that *adhyayana* should not be done by all castes, it will not be possible for ordinary people to understand.” Bhagavan said, “Let people understand in whatever way they like; why should we bother? Are we responsible for all the misunderstandings in this world?” So saying Bhagavan went towards the Ashram.

17th May, 1949

(243) WORLDLY DUTIES

Bhagavan has expressed his views not only about *Vedadhyayana* and similar matters but also about *Lowkika Dharma* — that is, worldly duties. A young lady, by name Rajamma, the daughter of Thiruppapuliur Krishnaswami Iyer, a devotee

who has been coming to the Ashram off and on, came here recently, rented a house in Ramanagar and began staying all alone in that house. It seems there were differences between herself and her husband and, as they had no children, she came away in 1945, saying that she would remain permanently in Bhagavan's presence. She was the only daughter of her parents. Perhaps because they were too old, or because of some other reason, the parents could not come to stay here permanently. As they felt it was not proper to allow their middle-aged daughter to stay all alone here, they were writing letters to her saying that she should stay either with her husband or with them. They had no objection to her going to Bhagavan for *darshan* now and then but they were unwilling to let her stay here permanently. She used to inform Bhagavan about all this and say that she did not feel like going back.

For some time Bhagavan kept quiet as if he had not heard her properly. At last one day he said, "Look here. You have elders who want you there, but you insist on staying here. You may do as you please. Stay if you like or go if you want to. Why tell me all this? Your parents have been visiting this place for a very long time. If they come here and ask me, 'Swami, what is this?', what can I tell them?" She was upset by what Bhagavan said and went out. Immediately after that, Bhagavan looked at Ramachandra Iyer and said, "When the parents advise her either to stay with her husband or with themselves, what is the use of her coming and telling me all this? What can I do? Will they not think that instead of advising her properly, Swami has kept her near himself? Both the parents are old. She is the only child. Whoever asked her to discard her duties and stay alone here? Whoever asked her to come here?"

You know, during the early days of my stay here I used to go over to your place whenever you had any domestic

difficulty and come back in due course. In 1945, you wrote to me about my sister-in-law's sickness and the troubles you were experiencing, but you did not ask me to come. You did, however, say that my sister-in-law, in her sickness was always expressing a desire to see me. I read out the contents of that letter to Bhagavan and told him that I would write to you again and go over to your place after receiving a reply. That was because you had not written to me to come. Bhagavan however felt displeased and told me to do as I liked best. Noticing it, I said immediately that I was starting that same night. Then Bhagavan replied saying, "Yes. That's good." Meanwhile, Rajagopala Iyer came into the hall and enquired whether it was a fact that I was going away to my brother's place. Bhagavan said, "Yes. They will be satisfied if she goes there. It is good that she should go. When a person is suffering from illness and keeps on asking for her sister-in-law, should she not go?"

Sometime back a young man, closely related to Sundaram Iyer (Bhagavan's father) argued with his parents saying that he did not wish to marry and that was the reason why he came here. It did not matter if he came but even in the very beginning he went and sat for food in the place where non-Brahmins eat. The *Sarvadhikari* did not like it and asked him to come to the place reserved for Brahmins. He did not do so. Instead, he said that there was no need for caste distinctions in Bhagavan's presence. The *Sarvadhikari* tried to give him proper advice by saying, "It is all right for Bhagavan as he has renounced everything. How can you take up that stand? If your parents hear of this, what will they say?" He did not, however, heed that advice and began to argue. There was a heated exchange of words. Bhagavan was silently observing the whole thing unconcernedly. The young man could not contain himself and so, approaching Bhagavan, said, "Should

not caste distinctions be discarded when one comes to Bhagavan's presence?'

"Oho! Is it the only thing that has remained for you? Does it mean that everything else has been discarded? If so, this also could be discarded. Where is the question of discarding? It disappears of its own accord. What do you say? Have all other differences been discarded by you?" enquired Bhagavan. Thereupon that young man went to the place reserved for Brahmins and sat there without uttering another word. Later on he married, got children, began doing a job and comes here now and then for Bhagavan's *darshan*.

Is it not clear from this that Bhagavan wants everyone to perform worldly duties so long as one has the feeling of ego and also the feeling of love and hatred?

22nd May, 1949

(244) SAMADARSATVAM! (EQUALITY)

The *Mandalabhishekam* was performed in Mathrubhuteswara temple on Vaisakha Suddha Chathurthi, *i.e.*, Monday the 2nd May, 1949. *Mahapuja* (the Anniversary of the death of Bhagavan's Mother) was performed yesterday, Vaishakha Bahula Navami. By that time, the erection of the front hall of the temple had almost been completed. Hence the *Sarvadhikari* consulted his assistants and requested Bhagavan to stay in the front hall on those two days. Accordingly on the afternoon of the 20th, Bhagavan came there. That day I happened to be there a little earlier than usual. When I went in by the main gate there was an

uncommon activity in the front hall. I went to the verandah eagerly and found that Bhagavan was seated on the sofa. His face was not radiant as usual. I was wondering why it was so. I could not ask anybody.

The *Sarvadhikari* was standing opposite Bhagavan's sofa with his friends and some important people amongst Ashram workers and was saying something. Bhagavan was merely saying 'Yes, yes,' in a noncommittal manner. I hesitated to go in under those circumstances and so stood in the verandah. Bhagavan had noticed through the window my coming and my hesitation to enter the hall. Ten minutes elapsed by the time all of them left. Subsequently Sivanandam alone was there near Bhagavan. Two or three people who had recently arrived were seated at a distance. Bhagavan was looking intently at the ceiling of the hall and at the huge stones that were being chiselled outside. I went in, prostrated and got up. Bhagavan looked at me and with a voice full of kindness, said, "Do you see this? They have imprisoned me within these four walls. They have made me a prisoner by preventing other people from coming in. Look! There is no scope for anyone to come in." So saying, he looked up at the ceiling, which had no outlet or inlet any where and said, "How can they (the squirrels) come here?" He continued to stare at the ceiling. I stood absolutely dumbfounded on realising his way of looking at things. Sivanandam, who was close by, said, "The *Sarvadhikari* and others feel that if Bhagavan is here he will be protected from rain or hot sunshine outside." Bhagavan whose look was concentrated on the ceiling, came to with a start when he heard those words and looking at Sivanandam, said, "That's all right. If we look to our comfort, is it not at the expense of the sufferings of others? Squirrels, monkeys, peacocks, cows and others have no chance of coming here. Does it not mean

that we have deprived them all of their privileges? People think that it is a great happiness for Swami if he is here. What is to be done?" Bhagavan's voice became tremulous. The attendant took up the thread of the conversation and said, "Yes, that is true. Only human beings can come in; animals and birds cannot come in freely." Bhagavan did not say anything.

After sometime, some rich devotees came and sat opposite Bhagavan. One or two poor people came after them but were afraid to come in. Noticing this through the windows, Bhagavan said to his attendants, "There you are. Look at those people. You said there was every convenience for men to come in. Is there scope for all people to come in? Rich people are accustomed to see huge buildings with lights, fans, collapsible doors and other imposing furnishings, and so they come inside unhesitatingly. But poor people like me will hesitate to come in, for they feel that it is a place where only rich people live. They are afraid of what people would say if they come in, and so, go away quietly like those people who, as you see, are peeping through the windows. Where is the place for them here? See those poor people! What a pity!" Unable to say anything further Bhagavan resumed silence.

As soon as it was evening, he sent away some of his attendants saying that the evening was the time when all of them (monkeys, peacocks, etc.) come here. "They may perhaps think that Swami has given them the slip and gone elsewhere. Please go. What a pity! Go, give them at least some food and come back." As soon as the attendants returned after feeding them, Bhagavan remarked with a tremulous voice, "Have you fed them all? They will perhaps feel that Swami has deserted them and has gone away to a better place and is sitting there so that he alone can be happy. Perhaps they thought that I had forgotten them. There is no

scope for them to come here. What to do?" Whenever any animals or birds come to him, he would always say, "We do not know who they are," and would never look at them with indifference. If any of the attendants do not give them proper attention he would not tolerate it, but would say, "That is bad. You merely see the skin that covers the body but not the person that is within. You feel that you are great, and the others are small, and so try to drive them away. They have come here just as we have come. Why do they not have the same rights that we have?" He used to admonish them thus. It is not surprising that Bhagavan feels compassionate towards the animals and the poor who do not venture to come into this new hall with all these lights, fans, iron doors, guards and other paraphernalia. You see, *samadarsatvam*, i.e., looking at all living beings with equality, is but natural to Bhagavan.

23rd May, 1949

(245) KINDNESS TO ANIMALS

One afternoon in 1946, at 2 p.m. some savouries prepared in the Ashram were distributed amongst the devotees. A few of them were given to Bhagavan also. Bhagavan ate them, drank some water, went out and came back, when some monkeys came to the window near his sofa. Seeing them, Bhagavan asked his attendants to go and bring some of the savoury preparations, saying, that the monkeys would relish them very much. The attendants returned saying that the people in the kitchen refused, saying that they had not prepared enough savouries to feed the monkeys also. "Oho! How did we get them then?" said Bhagavan.

“This is ration time,” said a devotee. “What if it is ration time? When we have rations, why should they (monkeys) not have rations as well? The problem will be solved if a ration card is obtained for the monkeys as well. They will eat these things with greater relish than we. If they do not have it, why should we have it either? When we are eating, see how those children (i.e., the monkeys) are looking at us,” said Bhagavan. Thereupon, they also got their share.

From that time onwards, Bhagavan used to accept things only after the monkeys’ share were given to them. It seems there was an earlier practice of taking out their share first before anything was distributed. The change that had come about in the interim period disappeared with this reprimand from Bhagavan. In the past, on festive occasions like *Jayanti* and *Mahapuja*, Bhagavan used to see that some food was taken out separately, made into balls, placed in a basket and then taken into Palakothu where he used to sit and personally hand over the balls one by one with great joy to the monkeys. A photo was taken of this event at the time of Bhagavan’s *Shashtiabda-purthi* festivities in 1939. The radiance on Bhagavan’s face at that time can be seen and appreciated if that photo is looked at.

You know what happened one morning in 1946? Squirrels came on to Bhagavan’s sofa for cashew nuts. The nuts, which used to be in the tin near Bhagavan, were exhausted. Groundnuts were given instead. The squirrels would not eat them and began to express their discontent in all possible ways. “We don’t have them, my dears. What to do?” said Bhagavan, as he tried to cajole them. No. They would not be appeased. They were crawling over the legs and hands of Bhagavan continuously as a sign of their displeasure. So Bhagavan asked Krishnaswami to go and find out if there was any stock of cashew nuts in the

storeroom. Krishnaswami went and brought a few nuts. "Is that all?" asked Bhagavan. Krishnaswami said that they were preparing *payasam* that night and so they could spare only that much. Bhagavan felt annoyed and said, "I see. *Payasam* will not be less tasteful if the cashew nuts are a little less in quantity than usual. What a pity. These squirrels do not like anything less and they are worrying me. The storekeepers have declined to give cashew nuts saying that they will have to put them into the *payasam*. Who will be worried if there are no cashew nuts in the *payasam*? See how these children are worrying themselves for want of cashew nuts!" With that, the cashew nuts which should have gone into *payasam*, went into the stomachs of the squirrels and also into the tin by his side (for future feeding of the squirrels).

The same evening, Dr. Anantanarayana Rao brought from Madras two visa (about 4.5 kilograms) of cashew nuts, saying that he had brought them for the squirrels. With a smile, Bhagavan said addressing Krishnaswami, "Look at this. They are earning whatever they want. There is no need to beg of you. These cashew nuts are their property. Keep them carefully. Note that they should not be given to the storeroom. Take care."

One morning in January 1947, at about 9 a.m., Lakshmi the cow entered the hall hurriedly with her legs, body and tail full of mud, with blood oozing out of her nose and with a half-severed rope round her neck. She went straight to the sofa where Bhagavan sat. The attendants began saying with some disgust that she had come in with mud on her body. Bhagavan, however, said with affection, "Let her come. Let her come. What does it matter how she comes?" Addressing the cow, he said. "Come, my dear. Please come near." So saying he passed his hand over the body lightly, patted her on the neck and looking at the face and said, "What is this?"

Some blood is oozing!” One of the attendants said, “Recently they had put a rope through her nose.”

“Oho! Is that the reason? That is why she has come here to complain to me about it. Is it not very painful for her? Unable to bear the pain, she has come here running to complain to me without even washing her body. What to do? Give her some iddli or something,” said Bhagavan, evincing great solicitude for her welfare. The attendants gave her some plantains and thus managed to send her out. I went to the kitchen, brought some iddies and gave them to her. She was satisfied and went away to her usual place.

After all of us returned to the hall and sat down, Bhagavan remarked, looking at the attendants, “Do not all of you come to me to relate your troubles? She too has done the same thing. Why then are you vexed with her for coming here with mud on her? When we have troubles, do we consider whether our clothes are all right or our hair is properly brushed?”

There is no need to mention the love and affection Bhagavan has towards the peacocks. Not only is he specially considerate towards mild animals like these, he is equally considerate towards beings like snakes which are also given shelter in the Ashram. Not only is this mentioned in his biography but we ourselves have now and then witnessed it here. I have already written to you earlier about the tiger cubs. Recently an incident happened here about snakes.

As the opening ceremony of the Patala Linga Temple was fixed for the 4th and as several visitors were expected at the Ashram on that account, and especially the Governor and his wife, it was felt that the available space would not be sufficient and so a *pandal* was put up to the right side of Bhagavan’s sofa in the Jubilee Hall to accommodate them. A

week earlier, i.e., towards the end of April, Krishnaswami arranged that the pandal should be used for *Veda Parayana* and also for the ladies to sit under. It is after all a new construction. On all its sides crotons were placed, khus-khus thatties were tied and water was sprinkled regularly. Hence the place remained comparatively cool. Some four days after the pandal was erected I happened to go there in the afternoon a little earlier than usual. Bhagavan had just gone out and come back. There was nobody near him. I prostrated before him and then sat down under the pandal. A big green snake came through an opening between the crotons on the side of Bhagavan's sofa, glided along some distance, got up on to the roof of the pandal and settled down comfortably there. I was not frightened in any way and so kept quiet looking at the snake and at Bhagavan. He noticed my feelings and said with a smile, "He has come here because it is cool." I said, "Since how long could he have been here?" Bhagavan replied, "He came here about the same time as I returned after the midday meal. He has been going around the pandal and also the crotons. He has been coming here like this for the last three days and going away around 2.30 p.m."

I said, "He must be a great soul. He must have come here in this shape to serve Bhagavan when he is alone." As I was saying this, Krishnaswami came in.

Krishnaswami: "I do not know what to do. He is coming here every day. Bhagavan says we should not chase him away."

Bhagavan: "What if he comes? What harm has he done to us?"

Krishnaswami: "He has not done anything to us. But this is a place to which several people come. Is it not risky?"

Bhagavan: "But he goes away at 2.30 p.m., doesn't he?"

Krishnaswami: "It is all right now, but during festival days people come in at all times."

Bhagavan: “Oho! That is your fear!” So saying, Bhagavan looked at the snake and at me. I too began looking at the snake and at Bhagavan, and I said, “He must have come here to serve Bhagavan. But if he comes with this cover (meaning the body), there is likely to be some trouble to him from the people in general and from him to the general public.”

Bhagavan: “It might be so.”

Bhagavan thereupon looked at the snake for a while, steadfastly and graciously. Immediately after that the snake, which was remaining still all the time we were discussing, got down the pandal rapidly, went into the flower garden and disappeared. There was no knowing what message he received when Bhagavan gazed at him. The clock struck the half-hour. Devotees began coming in rows and prostrated before Bhagavan. Bhagavan’s look thus got diverted and he came back to his normal state. The snake was never seen afterwards.

There are ever so many incidents to show that Bhagavan’s abode is a place of safe resort not only for the weaker sex and the poor but also for dumb animals at all times. I shall write to you in another letter some more incidents of this nature.

24th May, 1949

(246) THE HELPER OF THE HELPLESS

You remember, till 1943, in the old hall there used to be a door on the southern side opposite to where Bhagavan used to sit on the sofa and a window in the southern wall

which is now converted into a door. Devotees used to enter by the southern door, have a *darshan* of Bhagavan who is the incarnation of Dakshinamurthy and go out by the northern door. Some ladies used to sit on the southern side opposite to Bhagavan. As time passed, the number of visitors increased and ladies with their children began sitting there. The children naturally began to create some nuisance. Besides that, from 1943 onwards, the number of visitors of all types increased still more. Moreover, some poor ladies were coming with their children to prostrate and the children were urinating there. The mothers do not get even a cloth to wipe it out; and even if a cloth was given, some of the modern ladies would not take the trouble to clean the place. Therefore, Bhagavan's attendants had to clean it up. They were tired and vexed at this and thought of preventing such uncivilised people from coming into the hall. Bhagavan, however, would not, under any circumstances, agree to it. Hence, they began thinking of preventing ladies from sitting in the hall and making arrangements for their sitting in the verandah only. I came to know of it indirectly and was very much grieved. I told them, "Just because one or two people behave in an uncivilised manner, why do you intend to penalise all ladies by preventing them from sitting inside? We trusted Bhagavan and have come here from long distances. Please do not penalise all of us. I will clean that place whenever necessary." From that time I began looking after that work. Even so, they were not satisfied. At last, one day, they went to Bhagavan and told him that they would make seating arrangements for ladies outside. Bhagavan thereupon asked why men should sit in the hall if women could not sit there. The attendants stated the difficulties they were experiencing in looking after the ladies that come and go. Bhagavan said,

“What work is there in the hall even for Bhagavan? It will be all right if he sits under the almond tree, which is opposite. There will then be no trouble or worry for anybody, whatever the children may do.” When he said that, they gave up all their attempts to isolate the ladies. Instead, the window on one side was replaced by the door on the other side and vice-versa. After that, the ladies got their seating place opposite to Bhagavan’s feet.

A similar incident happened in 1946 when I was appointed as a volunteer for ladies during the Brahmotsavam. I have already written to you that Bhagavan changed his seat to the Golden Jubilee Hall immediately it was ready, that is, on the third day of the festival. He did not thereafter come back to the hall even during the rest period in the afternoons. There was not even a curtain around the sofa. Only a rope was tied to prevent people from the villages crowding around him in the afternoons. The people used to wander about the town and so when they came to Bhagavan’s presence very much tired, some used to squat on the floors with legs outstretched; some used to discuss their affairs in loud voices and some used to lie down and snore. That used to happen between 12 noon and 2 p.m. Mothers used to sleep while breast-feeding the children and the other children used to wander and play about everywhere. When attempts were made to send such people away, it seems Bhagavan said, “Poor people! They must have wandered about a good deal. They are now taking some rest. How could you drive them away? Let them stay on.”

I went there soon after 2 p.m. By that time, those people were leaving. Krishnaswami and others had to clean the places themselves. Unable to put up with that nuisance any longer, Krishnaswami was requesting Bhagavan to sit in the hall only. Bhagavan did not agree.

Krishnaswami: “Who will tidy up the nuisance committed by the children?”

Bhagavan: “It should be all right if their mothers are asked to clean it up themselves and are requested to be careful thereafter.”

Krishnaswami: “Who is there to tell them all that? If it were the Congress, they have women volunteers for looking after the women visitors.”

Bhagavan (looking at me with a smile): “There she is. We have a volunteer. Why do you say we have none?”

I: (understanding Bhagavan’s instructions): “Will they care to listen to me?”

Bhagavan (cooly): “Why not? Outsiders will certainly carry out your instructions.”

I: “Then it is all right. I shall certainly tell them.”

Bhagavan: “Poor people! They come here only to see Swami; and they get all the required conveniences here.”

In accordance with Bhagavan’s orders I looked after the work from that day. That arrangement was found very convenient, and so the office people considered the matter and confirmed me in that work. Bhagavan wanted to give *darshan* to poor people in that way during those ten days and he sat there too, with kind solicitude for them. I therefore felt that I should also do that much of service to them.

As you know, during the time of the *Jayanti, Mahapuja* and other celebrations, Bhagavan does not get up for his meals unless and until the feeding of the poor starts and is half-finished. It seems in the past, during such festive occasions, Bhagavan did not take his food except with the last batch. It is only recently, on representations made by devotees, that Bhagavan has been taking food after the feeding of the poor was halfway through. Daily, before the time for the midday meal, and before striking the gong, rice

was mixed with all the other preparations, made into balls and was sent out for distribution to the poor. That custom prevailed for a long time. Within recent times, however, it so happened that the distribution was done either while meals were being taken or soon after that. One day, Bhagavan saw a poor man struggling under a tree as he could not get his share of the food. Next day, when the gong was struck, Bhagavan got up and went to the tree where the poor people had gathered, stood there and said, "If you do not give them food first, I will not come to the dining hall at all. I will stand under the tree along with these people, stretch out my hands for food like them, and when I am given a ball of food, I will eat it, go straight to the hall and sit there." From that day onwards, it is only after food is sent to the poor, they strike the gong in the dining hall.

You know what happened one day in February 1947? A poor man came into the hall and stood opposite to Bhagavan's sofa. As Bhagavan was busy writing something, he did not notice him. The attendants asked the poor man to go out. He did not go. "If you do not go away, why not sit?" they said. He did not move. Bhagavan lifted his head and looked at him questioningly. The poor man said with great eagerness, "Swami, I do not want anything. My stomach is burning with hunger. Please arrange to give me one handful of rice to satisfy this great hunger." Bhagavan looked at his attendants indicating his intentions. "For this small thing, should you ask Bhagavan? Come, let us go," said one of the attendants and took the poor man towards the kitchen. After they left, Bhagavan looked at all those in the hall and said, "Do you see that? As he is a very poor man, he has no desires except one and that is to fill his stomach with food as it is burning with hunger. With that, he will be satisfied and will go. He goes and lies down under some tree and sleeps

happily. Where do we have the satisfaction that he has? We have any number of desires. If one desire is satisfied another one comes up. Hence where is the chance for our desires to be satisfied?"

Is it not clear from this that in Bhagavan's presence, there is a shelter for the weak, the helpless and the poor at all times?

3rd June, 1949

(247) RESIDING IN THE FRONT HALL

Bhagavan spent the whole day time in the new hall of the temple on the *Mahapuja* day and returned to the Golden Jubilee hall for the night. The work in the new hall was finished a week later. Some devotees felt that the Golden Jubilee Hall would be more comfortable for Bhagavan and pointed this out to the office people. The Sarvadhikari, however, desired that Bhagavan should be seated only in the front hall of the temple. So, he approached Bhagavan one morning with his attendants and told him that on *Jyeshtha Suddha Panchami* (the 5th day of the lunar month of *Jyeshtha*), i.e., on Wednesday, 1-6-1949, at 10 a.m., he would make all the arrangements for Bhagavan to sit on the *Yogasana* (couch) in the new hall and would Bhagavan be pleased to occupy that seat. Bhagavan in his usual disinterested manner, said, "What have I to say in the matter? I will sit wherever all of you want me to sit." "That is why we have all come here to beg of you to come to the new hall," they said. Bhagavan nodded his head in assent.

On the morning of the first instant, decorative designs of lime powder were drawn on the floor around the front

hall and strings of green leaves were tied in a row to the doors and windows. On the *Yogasana*, a mattress of silk cotton with a covering of satin cloth was spread and at the back a broad pillow was laid. A silk bed sheet covered the mattress. It was also prettily decorated. *Abhishekam* and other Pujas were being performed in the temple, the bells were ringing, *arathi* (light) with camphor was being waved, when at 9-45 a.m, Bhagavan, who was returning from the *Gosala*, was led with *Purnakalasa* (vessels full of water) and with *brahmins* chanting the Vedas, to the front hall and was requested to sit on the *Yogasana*. After the recital of ‘*Nakarmana*’ and other mantras, and the waving of camphor lights, and after all the devotees had prostrated before him, Bhagavan sat on the couch arranged for him.

I sat in the hall reflecting on the whole scene as follows: Vidyaranya began the building of a city in the shape of a *chakra* (wheel) but did not succeed. He had, however, written about it, saying that in the future some emperor would do it. Ganapati Muni had that in mind and so wrote in “Arunachala Ashtakam” (Eight verses in praise of Arunachala), beginning with: “*Sree chakrakriti shona shaila vapushani*”.

In accordance with that sentence, he said, “This hill itself is in the shape of a *chakra*, so this is the place meant by Vidyaranya. Bhagavan is the emperor and the only thing that remains is to build houses around.” So saying, he drew up plans for the proposed kingdom but disappointed us ultimately as he passed away before the plans could be executed. The Sarvadhikari, however, built a temple over the *Samadhi* of his mother, made the front hall the chief place of the empire, constructed a stone seat like the throne of Vikramarka for Bhagavan to sit on; all according to Ganapati Muni’s great dreams. His desires have been fulfilled and the

Emperor amongst Yogis, Sri Bhagavan, is seated there, like real the Sadasiva.

While I was thus absorbed in my own thoughts, the Stapati and others came with a plate containing fruits, flowers and other auspicious articles and got them touched by Bhagavan; they then went out through the southern doorway. I did not understand what it was all about. Bhagavan was looking with steadfastness in that direction. With a desire to know what it was about, I went out and saw opposite the doorway and in the open courtyard a huge stone. They smeared on it turmeric powder and kumkum, placed on it a flower garland, broke some coconuts on it, lit some camphor and began chiselling it. When I asked somebody what it was, I was told that it was for making a statue of Bhagavan. My heart throbbed with misgivings. You may ask, why? I felt disturbed because it is known to us all that Bhagavan is sick. Under these circumstances I began to wonder why a statue was being thought of. Comforting myself with several explanations, I came to Bhagavan's presence and sat down. Bhagavan noticed all my misgivings and my troubled mind. In the meantime the function relating to the statue was over and they all came in. The bell in the dining hall rang and all dispersed. But somehow my mind continued to be troubled. When I entered in the afternoon at 3 p.m. Bhagavan told us some stories and made me forget the matter. I will write about all those things in another letter.

3rd June, 1949

(248) THE HAPPINESS OF AN INDEPENDENT LIFE

Revolving in my mind the details relating to the function held this morning for the construction of a statue, I went to the Ashram this afternoon before 3 p.m. As Bhagavan had gone out, I was standing in the hall awaiting his return. The silk-cotton mattress that was spread on the couch was slippery because it was new, though it was thick and firmly stitched. As a big pillow was placed on one side for Bhagavan to keep his arms, another behind to lean against and a third one at the feet, the actual seating space got considerably reduced. As I was wondering how Bhagavan would be able to sit there, he came in. Sitting on the mattress and pressing it with his hand, he said, looking at his attendants, "See how this mattress slips from one side to another! People think that it will be comfortable for Bhagavan if there is a costly mattress. It is, however, not possible to sit on this restfully. Why this? It will be much more comfortable if I sit on the stone seat itself. Truly, I do not find even the slightest happiness on these mattresses and pillows, compared with the happiness I had when I was sitting or sleeping on the raised platform which I myself constructed of stone and mud in Virupaksha Cave. As was told in the story about the *sadhu*, people think that Swami is undergoing great hardship when he lives in a thatched shed and lies on a stone bench, and so they make a fuss. I do not find the slightest happiness on these mattresses and pillows. It will perhaps be better if, like that *sadhu* in the story, I gather some stones similar to those I had in the Virupaksha Cave, take them to whichever place I go, and spread them on a mattress like this. At that place it was a stone platform. In the Jubilee Hall and even

here, it is a stone couch. The only obstacle between me and this couch is this mattress. But one thing. The pillow under the feet, the pillow on the side, and the broad pillow at the back, all the three, are almost as hard as stones. So this is almost like the story of the *sadhu*. Without bringing stones from elsewhere, my bed of stones is already here.”

A devotee said, “What is that story of the *sadhu*, which Bhagavan has now mentioned?” whereupon Bhagavan began relating the story as follows:

“A great *Mahatma* was living as a *sadhu* under a tree in a forest. He always used to keep with him three stones. While sleeping, he used to keep one of them under the head, another under the waist and the third under the legs and cover himself with a sheet. When it rained, the body used to be on the stones and so the water would flow underneath, and the water that fell on the sheet too, would flow down. So there was no disturbance to his sleep; he used to sleep soundly. When sitting, he used to keep the three stones together like a hearth and sit upon them comfortably. Hence snakes and other reptiles did not trouble him nor did he trouble them, for they used to crawl through the slits under the stones. Somebody used to bring him food and he would eat it. And so, there was nothing for him to worry about.

“A king, who came to that forest for hunting, saw this *sadhu* and felt, ‘What a pity! How much must he be suffering by having to adjust his body suitably to those stones and sleep thereon. I must take him home and keep him with me at least one or two days and make him feel comfortable.’ So thinking, he went home and sent two of his soldiers with a palanquin and its bearers, with instructions to invite the *sadhu* respectfully and bring him to his palace. He also said that if they did not succeed in bringing the *sadhu*, they would be punished. They came and saw the *sadhu* and told him that

the king had ordered them to bring him to the palace and that he should come. When he showed disinclination to go with them, they said that they would be punished if they returned without him. So they begged of him to come, if only to save them from trouble. As he did not want them to get into trouble on his account, he agreed to go with them. What was there for him to pack up? A *kauppeenam*,* a sheet and those three stones. He folded and kept the *kauppeenam* in that sheet, kept those three stones also in the sheet and tied them together. ‘What is this? This Swami is bringing with him some stones when he is going to a Raja’s palace! Is he mad or what?’ thought those soldiers. Anyway, he got into the palanquin with his bundle and came to the king. The Raja saw that bundle, thought it contained some personal effects, took him into the palace with due respect, feasted him properly, arranged a tape cot with a mattress of silk cotton to sleep upon. The *sadhu* opened his bundle, took out the three stones, spread them on the bed, covered himself with the sheet and slept as usual.

“The next morning the king came, bowed to him with respect and asked, ‘Swami, is it comfortable for you here?’

“Swami: Yes. What is there wanting here? I am always happy.

“King: That is not it, Swami. You were experiencing hardships in the forest by having to sleep on those stones. Here this bed and this house must be giving you happiness. That is why I am asking.

“Swami: The bed that was there is here also. The bed that is here is there also. So I have the same happiness everywhere. There is nothing wanting at any time, either in regard to my sleep or to my happiness.

* *Kauppeenam*: A small piece of cloth, usually a small strip, worn over the privities.

“The king was puzzled and looked at the cot. He saw that the three stones were on it. Whereupon, the king immediately prostrated before the *sadhu* and said, ‘Oh Holy Man! Without knowing your greatness I brought you here with the intention of making you happy. I did not know that you are always in a state of happiness, and so I behaved in this foolish manner. Please excuse me and bless me.’ After making up for his mistake in this way, he allowed the *sadhu* to go his way. This is the story of the *sadhu*.”

“So, in the eyes of *Mahatmas*, that free life is the real happy life?” said that devotee. “What else? Life in big buildings like this is like prison life. Only I may be an ‘A’ class prisoner. When I sit on mattresses like these, I feel that I am sitting on prickly pears. Where is peace and comfort?” said Bhagavan.

Next day that mattress was taken away and the usual mattress was spread on the couch. Even so, several people thought that it might be better to leave Bhagavan to a free life like that of the *sadhu*. But Bhagavan had to stay there alone, like a parrot in the cage of the devotees because the devotees never leave him free.

4th June, 1949

(249) FAN

Yesterday evening, by the time Bhagavan went out and came back, some of the modern civilised devotees switched on all the fans in the new hall and sat there comfortably, awaiting Bhagavan’s return. As soon as he came, he looked up and while sitting on the couch, asked the attendants as to who had

switched on all the fans. Pointing to the people sitting there, they said, "They wanted us to do so and we have done it." "I see. What a great thing you have done! If they were feeling so very sultry it would have been sufficient if only those fans where they are sitting had been switched on. Why all this?" asked Bhagavan. "They said that it would be very pleasant if all the fans were switched on," said the attendants. "Is that so? What an amount of electric power will be consumed by these fans! What a costly bill! Why this expense on our account? Enough, enough. Stop that," said Bhagavan. "They are asking that they may be kept on until at least the *Veda Parayana* is over," said Krishnaswami. "Oh! Is that so? They are rich people and so in their houses they can sit down with fans whose use may cost ten times more than this. Why should we have this? Why this show? The hand fan is there and the hands are there. Stop them all," said Bhagavan. At that, the attendants switched off all the fans except the one above those people.

During the early days of my stay here, i.e. in 1941-42, someone brought an electric fan and requested that it be used by Bhagavan. "Why this fan? The ordinary fan is there. We have hands. I will fan myself with it whenever necessary. Why do I require all these things?" said Bhagavan. "Is it not some trouble? If the electric fan is used there is no trouble whatsoever," said that devotee. "What is the trouble? If the ordinary fan is used we get just as much breeze as we want. The electric fan blows too much breeze and with a whizzing noise. Moreover, some electric current is consumed. For that, there will be a bill. Why should we make the office bear that expense on our account?" said Bhagavan. "We have got it here, Swami, with the permission of the office," said the devotee. "Oh, is that so? Then let them have the fan for themselves. They are people who work and it is necessary for them. Why should I need it?" said Bhagavan. The devotee

did not say anything further but went away, leaving the fan there.

As it was a table fan, it was kept near Bhagavan's sofa and it used to be switched on by someone nearby whenever it was sultry. Bhagavan would immediately say, "It is only because of such things I had said you should not keep it here at all. If you want a fan you can keep it near yourselves." And if nobody stopped it he used to stop it himself with the aid of a small stick. When Bhagavan would not agree to the use of even one fan, would he consent to the use of many fans? Not only that, he will not allow anyone to fan him even with an ordinary fan. If any one does so, he will say that if it is so sultry, he too should serve the devotee by fanning him. Last May, when the radium needles were applied to Bhagavan's hands and Venkataratnam and other attendants were fanning him Bhagavan admonished them a number of times.

5th June, 1949

(250) DESIRELESSNESS

I wrote to you in my letters of yesterday and the day before about the disinclination of Bhagavan to use satin-covered mattresses, pillows, fans and the like. You know, in September 1946 the Golden Jubilee of Bhagavan's Advent at Arunachala was celebrated. About a month before those celebrations the Maharani of Baroda sent by parcel post a velvet shawl embroidered with silk and gold thread. The office people sent it to Bhagavan through Rajagopala Iyer, one of the office attendants. He showed it to Bhagavan and

wanted to spread it on the sofa, but Bhagavan would not permit him to do so. When the devotee tried to place it under Bhagavan's feet, Bhagavan withdrew his feet and sat with folded legs. Thereupon the devotee placed it over the pillow on which Bhagavan reclined. Immediately, thereafter, Bhagavan stopped leaning on it, moved to the middle of the sofa and sat in *padmasana* pose without uttering a single word.

The devotee felt it was no use trying any further and so he folded the shawl and took it back to the office. After he left, Bhagavan sat as usual and said, "These are meant for those who wear shirts, coats, turbans and appear in style, but why do I require all these? If I have to sit on them, I feel like sitting on prickly pears. According to the old saying, I have a bare body and a bald head; of what use are these to me? This towel itself is my silk shawl and my lace upper cloth."

"In some places such things are being used. That is why perhaps they have sent it," said a devotee. "It may be so. But what status have I to use them? I am a poor man. For my status, even what I now have is too much. This sofa, these mattresses, these pillows — why all these? You people do not agree, but how happy would it be if I could spread out this towel and sit on the floor!" said Bhagavan. "You say even that towel should be no bigger than the present one!" said Mudaliar. "Why a bigger one? It is half-a-yard broad and three-quarters of a yard long. It is sufficient for drying the body after bath, for spreading over the head if you walk in the sun, for tying round the neck if it is cold and for spreading on the floor to sit on. What more could we do with a bigger one?" said Bhagavan.

Some rich people bring silver tumblers and plates and request Bhagavan to use them. Bhagavan would not even touch them, but would send them back to the office if received through them, or give them back to the people if they are

brought direct to him. Knowing that such articles would not be accepted, Janaki Ammal, the wife of Dr. Ganapati Iyer, sent through a devotee for Bhagavan's use wooden sandals with silver fittings. Bhagavan touched them and seeing the silver fittings remarked, "They are rich people. Sandals with silver fittings are therefore suitable for them but not for us. So, send them back to those people. Tell them, 'Swami has touched them and that is enough'. We have feet given to us by God. Why these ornaments? Give back to them their articles." So saying he sent them back.

Let alone the question of wearing sandals with silver fittings. He does not wear even ordinary wooden sandals. Even in the height of summer, when the feet get scorched by heat, he walks barefooted and refuses to use anything to protect the feet. Sometime back, when the path leading to the *Gosala* from the office was cemented and Bhagavan was walking on it in the hot sun, some devotees, who could not see him suffering thus, poured water along the path, but Bhagavan stopped them saying, "Why are you wasting so much water for my sake by pouring it over the ground? If you open a shed for supplying drinking water to travellers, how much more useful it will be! Why do two or three people waste their time and water for my sake? Please don't do it." It was therefore stopped but, instead, the whole passage was covered with a pandal. Bhagavan used to say the same thing even if khus-khus *thatties* (screens) were hung and water sprinkled on them.

For a great *Thyagi* and *Mahapurusha* like this, will there be any desire for silver sandals, satin-cloth mattresses, silk-covered pillows and other ornamental things? Why these luxuries which curtail freedom? *Vairagya* is his ornament, *Sivavibhuti* his glory.

26th June, 1949

(251) THE IMPORTANCE OF YATRA AND PRADAKSHINA (PILGRIMAGE AND CIRCUMAMBULATION)

Bhagavan has not been keeping good health for some time past. Troubled in my mind on that account and unable to know what to do, I decided to go round the hill, not only on Tuesdays as usual but also on Fridays and to pray to Arunachaleswara for Bhagavan's health. With that decision, I went to Bhagavan on Thursday evening to tell him that I was going round the hill the next morning, "Tomorrow? Is it Tuesday?" asked Bhagavan.

"No. It is Friday," I said. As if he had understood my purpose, he said "Yes, yes."

One of the devotees who had recently come and had been staying for some time, asked Bhagavan, "Several people here go round the hill frequently. What is its greatness?" Bhagavan told him the following story:

"The greatness of this *Giri Pradakshina* has been described at length in *Arunachala Puranam*. Lord Nandikesa asked Sadasiva a similar question and Sadasiva narrated as follows: 'To go round this hill is good. The word '*Pradakshina*' has a typical meaning. The letter '*Pra*' stands for removal of all kinds of sins; '*da*' stands for fulfilling the desires; '*kshi*' stands for freedom from future births; '*na*' stands for giving deliverance through *jnana*. If by way of *Pradakshina* you walk one step it gives happiness in this world, two steps, it gives happiness in heaven, three steps, it gives bliss of Satyaloka which can be attained. One should go round either in *mouna* (silence) or *dhyana* (meditation) or *japa* (repetition of Lord's name) or *sankeertana* (*bhajan*) and thereby think of God all the time. One should walk slowly like a woman

who is in the ninth month of pregnancy. It seems Amba who was doing *tapas* here, went round the hill on the day of the Krithikai star in the first quarter of the night. Immediately after the *darshan* of the holy beacon, she became finally absorbed in Lord Siva. It is stated that on the third day after the festival of the Holy Beacon, Siva himself started for the *Pradakshina* with all his followers. Really, it is difficult to describe the pleasure and the happiness one gets by this *Pradakshina*. The body gets tired, the sense organs lose their strength and all the activities of the body become absorbed within. It is possible thus to forget oneself and get into a state of meditation. As one continues to walk, the body automatically gets harmonized as in the *asana* state. The body therefore becomes improved in health. Besides this, there are several varieties of medicinal herbs on the hill. The air that passes over those herbs is good for the lungs. As there is no vehicular traffic there is no worry about making way for cars and buses. One can walk carefree according to one's wishes.

“It used to be very exciting during those days when we were going for *Pradakshina*. We started whenever we felt like it, especially if there was any festival day, we used to halt whenever we felt it was late or we were tired, cook for ourselves and eat. There was no anxiety whatsoever as there was no stipulation that we should stop at any particular place. Before railway travel came in, pilgrimages were all made on foot. They never used to start with an idea of reaching a particular place at a particular time, or that they should stop for a particular period at any particular place. There is a proverb saying that people who go to Kasi (Banaras) and those who go to *Kati* (cremation ground) are equal. Only those who have no hope of coming back would start for Kasi. Carrying all their belongings with them, they used to walk along immersed in *dhyana*, stop whenever they felt tired and

start again in due course. There used to be *dharmasalas* (rest houses) at the outskirts of the villages so that there was no need for those pilgrims to go into the village proper. Where there were no *dharmasalas* there used to be temples, caves, trees and piles of stones, which were available as places of shelter for them. Those pilgrims became absorbed in their Atma by walking with no other thought than that of God. *Giri Pradakshina* is also the same thing. The body becomes light and it walks of its own accord. There will not be the feeling that we are walking. The *dhyana* that you cannot get into while sitting, you get into automatically if you go for *Pradakshina*. The place and the atmosphere there are like that. However unable a person is to walk, if he once goes round the hill he will feel like going again and again. The more you go, the more the enthusiasm for it. It never decreases. Once a person is accustomed to the happiness of the *Pradakshina*, he can never give it up. Look at Nagamma! She used to go round only once a week, on every Tuesday. Now she is going around even on Fridays. She goes around all alone in the dark without any fear whatsoever.”

“A *sadhu* by name Kannappa, it seems, goes round every day,” said the devotee. “Yes, yes. He is a very old man. He cannot see. So he starts every day at 8 o’clock in the night as there will not be much cart traffic. He has a conch shell which he blows as he goes. Hearing that sound, all people make way for him. There are several devices for people who do not have eyesight,” said Bhagavan.

“Is it a fact that when Bhagavan was going round the hill with the devotees during the night he used to see groups of *Siddhas*?” asked another. “Yes. All that is written in the Biography.” So saying Bhagavan resumed silence.

2nd July, 1949

(252) SASTRAS

After Bhagavan came into the new hall it was decided by the *Sarvadhikari* to keep the library in the old hall, and so some big almirahs were made. It was also decided that the library should be looked after by Govindarajula Subba Rao, and that Venkataratnam should remain exclusively in the service of Bhagavan. Venkataratnam handed over all the work to Subba Rao and sat in the new hall with Bhagavan.

In the afternoon of the day before yesterday, at 3 o'clock while returning from the *Gosala* Bhagavan saw the almirahs that were being made and also the books that were spread out in the old hall and then came into the new hall. While sitting on the couch he looked at Venkataratnam and said, "What, Assistant Librarian? Have you handed over charge of everything and come here?" Venkataratnam replied in the affirmative. With a view to remove any little regret about it that Venkataratnam might be having in his mind, Bhagavan remarked as follows: "Ancients have said that the superabundance of book knowledge is the cause of the rambling of the mind. That will not carry you to the goal. Reading of *Sastras* and becoming pandits may give fame to a person but they destroy the peace of mind which is necessary for the seeker of truth and deliverance. A *Mumukshu* (a seeker of deliverance) should understand the essence of the *Sastras* but should give up the reading of *Sastras* as that is inimical to *dhyana* (meditation). It is like accepting the grain and discarding the chaff. There will be many big almirahs with many books. How many of them can be read? There are so many books and religions that one life is not enough to read all the books relating to even one religion. Where then is the

time for practice? The more you read, the more you feel like reading further. The result of all that is to go on discussing with other people who have books and spend time thus, but that will not lead to deliverance. What books had I seen and what Vedanta discourses had I heard except to close my eyes and remain peaceful and quiet during the first two years of my coming here?”

A person who had come into the hall a little earlier, said, “Swami, you must favour me by giving me that peace for my mind.” Bhagavan replied with a smile, “Oho! Is that so? First find out what is meant by the mind. If you enquire thus, the mind itself will disappear. That which will be left is peace itself. You will then know that what is always there is what is called peace. Even the Vedas begin with ‘*Shanti*’ and close with ‘*Shanti*’ (peace). Everyday the Vedas are being recited here. Whenever they are recited, the words ‘*Shantihi, Shantihi, Shantihi*’ will be repeated. But no one bothers to find out the meaning of those words. If they understand the meaning they would realise that what is begun with *Shanti* and what is concluded with *Shanti* must have *Shanti* in between also. The whole thing will be full of *Shanti*. Hence they must be begun at a time when the mind is peaceful and quiet.”

Venkataratnam remarked, “Sankaracharya has said the same thing in his ‘Atma Bodha’ when he described the *Jnani* as Atmarama and Shanti as Sita:

तीर्त्वा मोहार्णवं हत्वा रागद्वेषादि राक्षसान् ।
योगी शान्ति समायुक्तो ह्यात्मारामो विराजते ॥

Having crossed the ocean of illusion and having killed the demons of likes and dislikes, the *yogi*, now united to *shanti* (peace), finds delight in the Self and so remains in his own glory.

Atma Bodha, verse 50

It is this *sloka*, is it not?" "Yes," said Bhagavan.

"Recently, a gentleman who came here for Bhagavan's darshan has written to me. It seems that, since his return he is seeing a light and hearing a sound while sitting for *dhyana*. He is unable to find out what it is. He has asked me to mention this to Bhagavan and write to him your remarks, if any," said Venkataratnam.

"Whatever light is seen and whatever sound is heard, there must be someone who sees and who hears. Ask him to find out who that someone is. He should not worry about these outside things. If he enquires about the someone who sees, the thought of those outer things will completely disappear. There will not be any care or concern whether such things appear or disappear. They are not there without the Self. None has any doubt about one's own self. Leaving such a certain thing as Self, people begin entertaining doubts and undergo all sorts of troubles to clear those doubts. Let him doubt the person who gets the doubts," said Bhagavan.

"If all experiences disappear through the enquiry 'Who am I?' is there any need of *Sastras* for a *sadhaka*?" asked Venkataratnam. "If a person reads *Sastras* he can debate with the pandits and thus feel satisfied, but they are of no use for *sadhana*. Whenever any thought comes, enquire who gets the thought. The answer to this is *mouna* (silence). Where there is nothing else except one's own self, whatever you see or hear, that is Brahman. That is Atma and that is the 'Self'," said Bhagavan.

10th July, 1949

(253) ADVAITA DRISHTI

Recently an Andhra gentleman came here, discussed the story of the deliverance of Gajendra in the *Bhagavatam* and read out some *padyas* (verses) from the *Bhagavatam* written in Telugu by Pothana. He then asked for Bhagavan's opinion about the 'Sakshatkaram' (divine vision) that Gajendra had. Bhagavan said with a smile, "You see, Gajendra prayed that he might be saved from death. In the *padyas* that you have read out, there is description of God, saying that He is without any of the attributes, such as birth, sin, form, action, destruction and other qualities. It is also stated that He is omnipresent. That means that he prayed to the Paramatma in all His fullness. When he came to a state where he did not see anyone else except Paramatma, it means that he sees only the Paramatma everywhere. If that is so, who is it that causes pain and who is it that is being pained? When the subject matter is thus so full, what is the meaning of saying that God came out of a fort in a garden in Vaikunta? What else is it except a *bhavana* (idea)? You may call it *Sakshatkaram* or whatever you like."

"If that is so, are all *Sakshatkaras* mere ideas?" asked the devotee. "From the viewpoint of *Dvaita*, that is *Sakshatkaram*, but from the view-point of *Advaita*, those are only *bhavanas*," said Bhagavan.

Sometime back, some Andhras who were going on a pilgrimage came here and stayed for some days. Amongst them a lady sang in the hall now and then the songs of Bhadradri Ramadas. One day she sang the song beginning with '*Ikshvaka kulatilaka*'. In that song it is stated that Ramadas made this jewel and that jewel and it cost this much and that much. After that, she sang the song wherein it is stated that

Ramadas made some ornaments which Sri Ramachandra wore and went about proudly with them. When Bhagavan heard this, he looked at us and said, “Did Sri Ramachandra ask for those ornaments? It is all the devotee’s own desire. Why then abuse Ramachandra?”

“If you want to abuse, you should abuse God only, it is said,” remarked a devotee.

“That is all right. Appar also prayed to God abusing him in the same manner. He however abused in a subtle way. Apart from that, it is stated that ‘I have made this ornament and that ornament’. Who is he to make that ornament? It means that he is somebody different from God,” said Bhagavan.

“So long as there is a God and a devotee, that feeling is natural,” said the devotee.

“Yes, that is so as long as we have a *Dvaita Drishti*— a feeling of duality; but in *Advaita Drishti*— a feeling of oneness — you will not have all this. You are myself and I am yourself. When such a feeling comes, who is the doer? What is it that is being done?” said Bhagavan.

“That is called *Parabhakti*, is it not?” asked that devotee.

“Yes, yes,” said Bhagavan nodding his head and kept quiet.

26th July, 1949

(254) JNANA YAGNAM

Gurram Subbaramayya came here the day before yesterday morning. Whenever he comes, he talks to Bhagavan all the time he is here. This morning also, while speaking to Bhagavan as usual, he said, “As I was coming

here, I got down in Madras and went to the house of Nagamma's elder brother, D. S. Sastri. They were having a discourse on the *Gita* at the time."

Bhagavan said, "Yes. All of them came here before having the discourses. What chapter are they reading now?"

Subbaramayya replied, "They are reading the fourth chapter on 'Jnana Yoga'. At the time I sat there, it was stated that the karma that a person does after attaining *jnana* is all *Brahmakarma*. Everything is *Yagna*. To illustrate that point, the *slokas* from 25 to the 30 of chapter IV of the *Gita* were read and it was explained how the various sacrifices done by yogis merge into Brahman. The word '*Juhvati*' was used to indicate that everything is consumed by the sacrificial fire so as to merge ultimately in Brahman. The commentator said that '*Shrotradeen indriyanyanye samyamagnishu juhvati*' meant that they are controlling the *indriyas* (senses). I was not able to understand it properly. Bhagavan may be pleased to explain it clearly."

Bhagavan, who was till then reclining, sat up and said:

“श्रोत्रादीनीन्द्रियाण्यन्ये संयमाग्निषु जुहति ।

शब्दादीन्विषयानन्ये इन्द्रियाग्निषु जुहति ॥

Others offer as sacrifice their senses of hearing etc. into the fires of self-control. Other yogis again offer sound and other objects of perception into the fires of the senses.

Gita, IV: 26

“The method of performing these sacrifices was first explained as above. Again,

सर्वाणीन्द्रियकर्माणि प्राणकर्माणि चापरे ।

आत्मसंयमयोगाग्नौ जुहति ज्ञानदीपिते ॥

Others sacrifice all the functions of their senses and the function of the vital airs into the fire of Yoga, in the shape of self-control, which is kindled by wisdom.

Gita, IV: 27

“This means that the actions of the *indriyas* and of the vital airs are sacrificed in the fire of *samyama*. Having said this, it has further been stated that vital airs like *prana*, are sacrificed into *Apana*, *Apana* into *Vyana* and in this way one thing is sacrificed into another. Not only the vital airs and the senses; childhood is sacrificed into boyhood, boyhood into youth, youth into middle age and middle age into old age. So also the inhaling and exhaling of vital airs. Thus is the one sacrificed into the other, and this is a continuous process. This happens without one being conscious of it. That which is done consciously is called *Jnana Yagna* (Wisdom Sacrifice),” said Bhagavan.

Another devotee joining in the conversation asked, “It is said that for doing that *Jnana Yagna* the life’s impurities must be destroyed. How to destroy them?”

Bhagavan replied, “You want to know how?”

आत्मानमरणिं कृत्वा प्रणवं चोत्तरारणिं ।
ज्ञाननिर्मथनाभ्यासात्पाशं दहति पंडितः ॥

Kaivalya Upanishad

It means that the Self is to be made the lower ‘*Arani*’* and ‘*Pranavam*’ (Om), the upper *Arani* and by rubbing them constantly one against the other, thus causing by friction the fire of *jnana* between the two; the *Brahma Jnani* burns away the bond known as ignorance. If one understands this and puts it into practice, life’s impurities get destroyed,” said Bhagavan.

The devotee said, “But Bhagavan always tells us that Self-enquiry of ‘Who am I?’ is the most important, is it not?”

Bhagavan replied, “It is the same thing. For enquiry there must be somebody. There is the person and there is

* *Arani* means a twig of the ‘Sami tree’ used for kindling the sacred fire by attrition.

the Self. They are known as the lower *Arani* and the upper *Arani*. The enquiry itself is the attrition. As one goes on continuously with this attrition the fire called *Vijnana* gets generated and the bond of ignorance that the Self is different from the object gets burnt out. That means the life's impurities get destroyed. Then the Self remains as the real 'Self'. That is 'Moksha'. It is this, that is called *Jnana Yagna* or some such thing." So saying Bhagavan assumed silence.

2nd August, 1949

(255) PRANAYAMAM (BREATH CONTROL)

A devotee told me that he could not hear properly the questions you asked Bhagavan when you came here two days back and the replies Bhagavan gave. He therefore requested me to write out the whole conversation and show it to him. Accordingly I wrote it down. I am now sending it to you along with other letters so that you can see if it is all right.

At 4 p.m. on the 28th of last month you sat near Bhagavan when you had a discussion as follows:

You: "In Gayatri it is stated '*Dhiyo yonah prachodayat*'. What is its meaning?"

Bhagavan: "*Dhi* means *buddhi* (intellect); *yah*-that, lustre; *nah*-our; *dhiyah*-the intellect; *prachodayat*-teaches. That is the meaning, is it not? It is by the Intellect that the *indriyas* (senses) are induced to all action."

You: "For *sadhana* (practice) is *pranayama* necessary?"

Bhagavan: "Yes, yes. Before starting any work you begin with *pranayama*, don't you? One says, '*Acharya, pranayamya*'.

That means you begin with *achamana*,* then gather the *pranas* (vital airs), and proceed with *sankalpa* (i.e., the purpose of the worship) and recite the time, date, place, etc. You must first do *pranayama* and then only do the Gayatri Japa. It is the same thing for every Japa. You must first do *pranayama*. But then you should not stop there. If you keep the vital breath under control and then do *japa* continuously for a long time, you will realise what *japa* really is.”

You: “Some say there is not much use in practising *pranayama*.”

Bhagavan: “That is so. For immature minds, it is stated that they should control the breath to meditate or to do *japa*, but for mature minds, meditation is the main thing. If one inhales and retains the breath and thereby tries to control the mind, one gets choked and upset on that account.”

You: “That means it will be like ‘*Jala Pakshivat*’ (a bird in a net).”

Bhagavan: “Yes, that is so. But for an immature person, the mind cannot be controlled unless he practises breath control. That is why it is said that it (control of breath) should be practised until you get control of the mind; even after that you should not stop it. For mature persons the control of breath comes of its own accord. That is because what mainly is, is the act of breath. It goes on of its own accord. The mind remains concentrated whether you do *japa* or meditate. When that happens, the breath becomes controlled automatically. All the *sadhanas* are for the concentration of the mind.”

You: “When one meditates, the whole body appears overheated. Why so? And is it good?”

* *Achamana* means taking three sips of water before religious ceremonies from the palm of the hand.

Bhagavan: “Yes. Would it not be so? When the mind gets concentrated, the act of breathing stops involuntarily. When that happens, the body does feel overheated. What of that? In due course one gets accustomed to it.”

Your wife, who was there at the time, took up the thread of the conversation and asked, “Are *japa* and *dhyana* the same thing?...”

Bhagavan said, “Yes. As you go on doing *japa* continuously for a long time, you will know what *japa* really is. That is called *dhyana*. When *vritti* (movement or action of mind) becomes audible (*sabda*) it is called *japa*: when there is *vritti* alone, it is called *dhyana* and knowing of the Thing is called *jnana*.”

20th September, 1949

(256) SIVAM-SUNDARAM (BLISS AND BEAUTY)

The wife of the Zamindar of Peddapavani, a frequent visitor to the Ashram, came with her children last month. She stayed for a month and went away a couple of days ago. One evening, after *Veda Parayana*, she approached Bhagavan and said, “Sometime back Bhagavan gave me *darshan* in my dream and gave me *upadesa*. After that, I realised my Self, but it is not steady. What should I do?”

Bhagavan: (amused) “Where has it gone without being steady? Who is it that is not steady?”

Zamindarini: “That (realisation) is not steady.”

Bhagavan: “Where has it gone without being steady.”

Zamindarini: “That experience which I had does not remain steady because of bodily ailment and family worries.”

Bhagavan: "I see. Say so. Those that come, come. Those that go, go. We remain as we are."

Zamindarini: "You must bestow on me the strength to remain as I am."

Bhagavan: "You have realised the Self, have you not? If that is so, all the others disappear of their own accord."

Zamindarini: "But they have not disappeared."

Bhagavan (smiling): "I see. They will disappear. *Vasanas* have for a long time built their nests within. If we realise that they are there, they will disappear gradually."

Zamindarini: "Bhagavan must bestow on me the strength to make them disappear."

Bhagavan: "We will see."

The next day about the same time she stood humbly in the presence of Bhagavan and said, "Bhagavan, it is not possible for a married woman to stay on in the presence of the Guru for any length of time, can she?"

Bhagavan: "The Guru is where one is."

Zamindarini: (still unconvinced) "Should one look upon the whole world as Brahman or should one look upon one's own Self as the most important?"

Bhagavan: "We exist. And the world is Brahman itself. What then is there to look upon as Brahman?"

She was taken aback and stood still. Whereupon Bhagavan looked at her compassionately and explained further: "As you know we undoubtedly exist. The world also exists as Brahman. That being so, what is there that one could see as Brahman? We should make our vision as the all-pervading Brahman. Ancients say, '*Drishtim jnanamayim kritva pasyeth brahmanam jagat*'. The world is as we see it. If we see it as material, it is material. If we see it as Brahman, it is Brahman. That is why we must change our outlook. Can you see the picture in a film without the screen? If we remain as we are, everything adjusts itself to that attitude."

Overjoyed at this and fully satisfied, she came out and sat on the step on the verandah which is opposite to Bhagavan's couch. Bhagavan was sitting on the couch in his characteristic pose, silent as usual and with a smile on his face. Looking at the radiant face of Bhagavan, she said involuntarily, "Ah! How beautiful Bhagavan is!" A devotee who heard the exclamation approached Bhagavan and said, "She is saying how beautiful Bhagavan is." With a slight nod of his head Bhagavan said, "*Sivam Sundaram*"* See how pregnant with meaning that expression is?

24th September, 1949

(257) THE MUDALIAR GRANNY

The Mudaliar Granny who, like Echamma, was bringing food to Bhagavan daily, gave up her body last night and got merged in the lotus feet of Sri Ramana. She was buried in Gounder's compound this afternoon. Her native place is a village called Thillayadi near Karaikal. She belonged to the Thondaimandala Mudaliar caste. Her name was Alankaratthammani. She had a son by name Subbiah Mudaliar and a daughter-in-law Kamakshi. The three used to spend their time in the service of an old *sannyasi*. That *sannyasi* passed away sometime in 1908 or 1909. During his last days, when all of them implored him to tell them about their future it seems he told them that their future was at Arunachala.

* *Sivam-Sundaram* means that which is beautiful is the form of Atma, *Satyam-Sivam-Sundaram* and *Sat-Chit-Anandam* are the names given to describe Atman or Brahman.

Subsequently, in 1910, it appears she came here along with her son and daughter-in-law. By then Echamma had been supplying Bhagavan food every day. In the same way Alankaratthammani also began supplying food. In due course, she began giving food now and then to the devotees also. The son and daughter-in-law used to help her in the work. After some time the son renounced everything, took to Sanyasa at the Tiruppananthal Mutt and began wandering about as a Tamburan (wandering minstrel). Kamakshi, the daughter-in-law, concentrated all her attention in the service of Bhagavan with single-minded devotion, without being in the least worried over her husband's desertion. She passed away sometime in 1938-1939.

The Granny had no money and none to help her in the domestic work in the house. Seeing her desolate condition, and taking pity on her, Niranjananandaswami, Kunjuswami, Ranganatha Gounder and others advised her saying, "Now you are an old woman. You can no longer worry yourself about this service of offering food to Bhagavan. The Ashram is giving shelter to several people. So you eat here and sit in peace in Bhagavan's presence with closed eyes; or if you so desire we will send you food to your place. Eat and stay at home." She replied, "Whatever the difficulties, I will not give up this holy task. If I do not have money, I will go to ten houses, feeling my way with my stick, beg for food, offer it to Bhagavan and then only will I eat. I cannot keep quiet." So saying, and with tears in her eyes, the woman went away. Kunjuswami, Gounder, and other devotees took pity on her and gave her financial help so as to enable her to continue her offerings to Bhagavan. It was only after that, that Rangaswami Gounder built two houses in the place where Kunjuswami is now staying with a stipulation that Kunjuswami can occupy them during his life time, and after

him these should be given away for the use of *sadhus*. He endowed some property also for their maintenance and arranged for this old woman to stay there. In her last days, her son came to her and helped her in her offerings to Bhagavan, even though he had renounced the world by becoming a *sannyasi* and a wandering minstrel. In this manner, the life of a devotee who had worshipped Bhagavan for about forty years without failing even for a single day in her self-imposed duty has come to a close.

Granny took great liberties with Bhagavan. During the early days of my stay here she used to bring food and serve it herself to Bhagavan. She used to place on his leaf a handful of curry and a handful of cooked rice. One day, Bhagavan reprimanded her saying, "If you serve so much, how can I eat it?" With great familiarity, she said, "How much is it, Swami? It is only very little." "There are several other things also to eat. Should not my stomach contain them all?" said Bhagavan. "It is all a matter of the mind, Swami." So saying, she served him as usual and left. Laughing at it, Bhagavan told people near about him, "Do you see? She is paying me back in my own coin (*my upadesa*)."

For the last two or three years, she had been sending food through somebody, and had given up serving it to Bhagavan personally as her eyesight was failing. It seems some one told her that Bhagavan's body had become very much emaciated. She was therefore feeling that it was all due to her ceasing to serve food personally, and one day she came to see Bhagavan. She approached him, and shading her eyes with her palm, said with great feeling of sorrow, "Oh! How reduced has the body become!" "Who told you, Granny? I am all right. What you have heard is all false," said Bhagavan. The old woman came to the place in the hall where women sit and sat down in the front row.

After a while, Bhagavan rose from his seat to go out. When Bhagavan gets up, as you know, all the rest of us also get up. She stood at the doorway leaning against the door. When Bhagavan came near, he said with a laugh, “Granny, have I become reduced? See how well I am! It is a pity you are not able to see.” So saying, he went out.

Of late, she has not been able to see at all. Even so, when about four months ago she expressed a wish to see Bhagavan, a devotee led her to Bhagavan’s presence. When a person near Bhagavan said, “Granny, you have no eyesight to see Bhagavan. Why have you come?” She replied, “Though I cannot see Bhagavan’s body, my body can be seen by Bhagavan and that is more than enough for me.” The agony she experienced when she heard that an operation was performed on Bhagavan’s arm for the tumour that had grown on it, is indescribable. When Echamma passed away, Bhagavan remarked that Mudaliar Granny was still alive. She too has now passed away. You see, Bhagavan felt relieved because a great responsibility was off his hands now. She is indeed lucky, but somehow I could not help grieving over her death.

12th November, 1949

(258) PILGRIMAGE TO TIRUCHULI

When I came back here after a two week’s stay with you in Madras, I found that the condition of Bhagavan’s body had changed a good deal for the worse. Hence, with a view to give him some rest, no one was allowed to remain in his presence except during the time of the *Veda Parayana*. I could

not therefore write to you about the questions of devotees and the replies of Bhagavan as they have become rare. As I was troubled over it, I began going through my old papers when I found the notes I had taken about incidents that happened in Bhagavan's presence and the remarks made by Bhagavan from time to time. The notes were written before I began writing these letters to you. I am therefore copying the notes and sending them on to you.

You have already heard of the installation of the photos of Bhagavan and his parents in Sundara Mandiram in Tiruchuli where Bhagavan was born. That was done some time in June or July 1944 when, with the help of devotees, the building was acquired and taken possession of by the Ashram authorities. With a view to repairing the house, the *Sarvadhikari* started with some devotees on 17-1-1945 for Tiruchuli. Before he actually left, he invited us all to accompany him, saying that there would be several travel facilities for the occasion. Alamelu Amma, Bhagavan's sister, and some other women and men also went. Though I was unwilling to leave Bhagavan's presence, who is to me the personification of God, I was prevailed upon to go with them. As we were about twenty devotees for this journey, it was interesting in its own way.

To go to Tiruchuli, one has to get down at Madurai and go by bus for about thirty miles via Aruppukottai. As the *Sarvadhikari* had some work to do at Madurai, we had to halt there for two days. We were put up in the house of Krishnamurthy Iyer. At night, all of us who came with the *Sarvadhikari*, offered worship at the Meenakshi Temple and also saw the idols of the sixty-three saints before whom Bhagavan, in his boyhood, overwhelmed with devotion, used to stand frequently, with eyes full of tears. The next morning, some of us went to the temple of Perumal (Vishnu) where in

the three storeys of the building, Lord Varadaraja reigns in three different poses, and we offered worship. Thereafter we began enquiring about the holy house where Bhagavan attained *jnana* (knowledge of the Self). A devotee of Bhagavan and his boyhood friend joined us and took us that evening to the house, No. 11 in Chokkanatha Street on the western side. We entered that old house and went into the upstairs room which was by the side of the staircase. “This is the room where Bhagavan realised his Self,” said the people there. They also pointed out the place where he sat at 11 o’clock in the morning of the day he left Madurai, where he had to write an imposition from Bain’s Grammar given to him as a punishment by the teacher and where Bhagavan got immersed in meditation. My heart was filled with devotion, my eyes with tears and my voice got choked. I was in a state where I could not know whether it was grief or happiness that overcame me. In the eleventh verse of the “Supplement to the Forty Verses on Reality” Bhagavan had written as under:

Who is born? Know that he alone is born who, enquiring
‘Whence am I born?’ is born in the Source of his being.
The Supreme Sage is eternally born, again and again, day
after day.

As Sri Ramana was born in the way described above for the welfare of the world, how holy and blessed that place must be!

It is from this small house that Bhagavan started, renouncing everything, after leaving in the almira by his side a note which he wrote after a hearty meal, and sitting in an easy chair. The provocation was a remark made by his elder brother which was by way of a reprimand, saying, “Why all these things (writing and study) when a person is like this (sits still)?” Bhagavan was at the time deeply immersed in

meditation. It looked as if Lord Arunachala did not wish him to remain for more than six weeks in the place where he attained *jnana*. Lord Buddha attained *jnana* after living in a forest for six years and doing penance day and night. It is that place which is known as Buddha Gaya and is now a place of pilgrimage. In the case of Ramana Bhagavan, however, he attained *jnana* without any effort in an ordinary house in a narrow lane in the centre of a city and in a small room surrounded by all his relatives. How strange!

I was grieved to find such a holy place remaining unknown, though it was here that Bhagavan changed from a young boy into an *Atmananda* Ramana (a Ramana who enjoys the bliss of Self-knowledge); the place wherefrom he started with the *Brahmastram* known as 'Who am I?', to go to Arunachala and vanquish the myth about the greatness of pandits who go on arguing but have no practical experience. However, I felt confident that, with Bhagavan's grace, this place also would become a place of pilgrimage like the Sundara Mandiram in Tiruchuli. I prostrated with devotion in the room, went on to the terrace at the side and went down the staircase. There I met an old woman. Her name is Subbamma, aged seventy-five. She told us that she was there in the same street when Bhagavan went away on his travels and told us some stories about his boyhood. We took leave of her in due course and came back to our lodgings.

Next morning we started by bus, passed through Aruppukkottai and, as we were approaching Tiruchuli, we first saw the Gopuram of the temple of Bhuminatheswara. After passing by the temple and its compound wall, we reached Sundara Mandiram where the bus stopped. We all got down, entered the house where Bhagavan was born and, on seeing the picture of Sri Ramana seated in the *padmasana* pose in between the pictures of his parents we prostrated

before it with emotions of great joy. We and the people that had come to see us, numbering about forty, had our meals in that house. Several others who came later while we were taking rest began saying that the house used to be full like that during the days of Sundaram Iyer.

During the three days that we were there we bathed in the Koundinya River, had the darshan of Kaleswara, worshipped Bhuminatha with his consort Sahayavalli, went round Pralayarudra, prostrated before Bhairavi and saw all those places where Bhagavan had spent his boyhood days. Subsequently among those who came from Tiruvannamalai, some went to Rameswaram on pilgrimage; the *Sarvadhikari* with his associates stayed back on account of some work; and I alone neither stayed there nor went to Rameswaram but came to Madurai by the night of the 22nd, started again the next day and so reached the lotus feet of Bhagavan. Even before I came, people here came to know about the house in the Chokkanatha Street through a letter written by Krishnamurthy Iyer. All the devotees enquired about it and were pleased on hearing the details from me. It is only after that, that the Ashram purchased the house with the financial help of the Wanaparti Raja. The joy I felt when I related the details of my journey was beyond description, even much greater than what I felt when I actually saw them. What is more, Bhagavan, while enquiring whether I had seen this and that place, told me a number of events about his boyhood. I noted down some of them as they were not in the biography. I shall write to you about them in another letter.

14th November; 1949

(259) BOYHOOD DAYS

The morning of the day on which I returned from Tiruchuli passed off with enquiries about the welfare of all the people. I went into Bhagavan's presence in the afternoon a little earlier than usual, that is, by about 2 o'clock. As soon as I prostrated and got up Bhagavan asked me, "Did you have a bath in the Shoola Theertham?"

I: "No. The water in it is not quite good now. We bathed in tank which was at a little distance from there."

Bhagavan: "Yes. The water will not be so good at this time of the year. In the month of *Magha*, on the day of the star *Magha*, it swells and the water rises. The *Abhisheka* festival of the Deity is celebrated on that day, that is, on the 10th day of the *Brahmotsavam*. That day, the Deity is brought to the Mandapam and the *Abhishekam* is done with the water of the Trisula Theertha. After the *Abhishekam* is over, all the people bathe in that tank. In my boyhood days, all of us used to join together and draw on the steps some signs in order to see how much the water rose everyday. It used to be amusing. The rising of the water used to start ten days earlier and used to submerge the steps at the rate of one step per day and become full by the full moon day. To us, it was great fun. Some people have said that the water was not rising properly of late. Our people went there last year to test it and found that it was rising properly. They were thus satisfied that what has been stated in the *puranas* was not untrue."

I: "People say that on that day Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati also come there. Is that so?"

Bhagavan: "That is so. It has been mentioned thus in the *Sthalapurana* (*puranam* of the place). As soon as the

Abhisheka of the Swami is over, the water goes down at the rate of one step per day. We used to play in the *Kalyana Mandapam* which is by the side of the temple. The classes of our school were also held there for some time. You have seen it, haven't you?"

I: "Yes. I have seen it. It seems that one Mr. Muthirulappa Mudali is Bhagavan's boyhood-friend. He showed us all those places. I have seen also the Telugu people who were living to the right of your house. They have kept a photo of Bhagavan and are worshipping it."

Bhagavan: "Oh! Those people! In those days I used to be in their house for the major portion of the day. People who were older than myself and those of my age have all passed away by now. Only one of them, who is younger than myself, is still alive. I got accustomed to talking Telugu by talking with them."

I: "Is that how you got into the habit of addressing your father 'Nayana', as the Telugus do?"

Bhagavan: "No. That was through Lakshmana Iyer. He knew Telugu very well. He taught me to call father 'Nayana'. After I began calling father 'Nayana' all the people got used to calling him 'Nayana'. Lakshmana Iyer was very fond of me. While all were calling me Venkataraman, he alone used to call me 'Ramana' and 'Ramani'. Ultimately that name became permanent."

Rajagopala Iyer: Did Ganapati Sastri know about this when he gave Bhagavan the name 'Ramana Maharshi'?"

Bhagavan: "No. How could he know? Long afterwards, during some conversation, I myself told him about this. That's all."

I: "Was Lakshmana Iyer living in the house to the left of your house?"

Bhagavan: "No, no. He was living for some time in the left portion of our house. He came there because he was

transferred to that place. He was employed for a long time in Andhra Desa, and that is how he was able to speak Telugu well. He was afraid that he might forget it, and so, used to speak to me in Telugu only. The family of Karpura Sundara Bhattar, who now performs *pujas* in our house, were living even then in the house next to ours. The father of Karpura Sundara Bhattar is still alive. You saw him, didn't you?"

I: "Yes. I saw him. He has become very old."

Bhagavan: "He is, however, two or three years younger than myself. He had two or three stepbrothers older than myself. They used to tease him always. One day he got a sugarcane and a knife, and as he could not cut it himself, he requested his brothers to help him, but they went away without heeding his request. He began weeping. I felt sorry for him. I took the sugarcane and tried to cut it. My finger got cut and began to bleed. Even so, I felt sorry for him because he was weeping and was a little fellow, so somehow I managed to cut the cane into pieces. I tied my finger with a wet cloth; the bleeding, however did not stop. I was called for food as it was meal time. I went and sat but could not use my hand for mixing the food; father mixed it for me. He had my finger bandaged afterwards. He enquired and found out what had happened. That cut did not heal up for about a month."

I: "So help and sympathy have been natural to Bhagavan from boyhood itself?"

Bhagavan: "That is all right. What is there in that?" So saying and changing the topic, Bhagavan said again, "They are priests, you see. So, when it was their turn to do the *puja* of the Kalayar Temple, they used to prepare the food at home and send it to the temple through the boys. Sometimes I used to go there with the boys. We used to bathe in the Koundinya River, pour a vessel-full of water on the Linga in

the temple, offer the food by way of Nivedana and then eat it. The children in the Pallematam, a village adjacent to the temple, used to join us there. We used to play together till nightfall and then go home.”

I: “Sundaramurthi used to live there, didn’t he?”

Bhagavan: “Yes. He went up on the *Jyotirvanam* (vehicle of Light) from there only.”

I: “What did you do when the river was full? Was there another way?”

Bhagavan: “No. That is the only way. But then the river usually had water only up to the waist. If at any time there were floods, we used to go by boat. On such occasions the boys were not sent. The elders themselves used to go. The floods used to subside in a few days. Did you not bathe there?”

I: “We did bathe. We do not know why, but the water had some bad smell and so it was no good for drinking.”

Bhagavan: “That is true. The water is no good for drinking. As it is supposed to have some sulphur in it which is good for skin diseases, people bathe in it. That’s all. It is stated in one of the *puranas* that a king by name Somaseethala bathed in it and got cured of leprosy. Once when I had an itch, mother made me bathe in it every day. That is a *jivavahini* (perennial), a river with water flowing in it throughout the year. Even in the worst summer, water will be flowing in some corner or other. It seems that when Koundinya was doing *tapas* in that place, there was no water and so he prayed to Siva for it. It was then that the river was born as a perennial stream and flowed under the name ‘*Papahari*’ (destroyer of sins). As it was born for the sake of Koundinya, it was also known as Koundinya River.”

I: “It is stated in *Ramana Leela*, that that place is known as Koundinya Kshetra. Is it so?”

Bhagavan: “Yes, yes. As Koundinya performed *tapas* at that place, somebody wrote that Jnanasambandha was born into their family. That is also stated in the *Ramana Leela*.”

I: “If that is so, Sambandar belongs to the Koundinya Gothra?”

Bhagavan: “Yes. That is why our Venkatakrishnayya wrote down his name in the *Ramana Leela* as ‘Krishna Koundinya.’ He wrote that Bhagavan was born in Koundinya Kshetra, the river is Koundinya, the chief disciple Ganapati Muni is a Koundinya. Several people think that Bhagavan in his previous birth was Jnanasambandar, as Jnanasambandar was Koundinya and all Koundinyas are Vasishtas and all people of the Vasishta family are *Advaitins*, and so Swami belongs to that family. That is how it is stated in *Ramana Leela*. ‘I wrote the biography of Ramana and so I am a Koundinya; so we all belong to the same family tree, the same *Advaitin* family’. That is how Krishnayya writes in the biography.” So saying, Bhagavan smiled.

I: “Oh! That is the theory?”

Bhagavan: “Yes. That is so. Ganapati Sastri and his disciples write their *gothra* first. Krishnayya is one of the disciples. That is also another reason.”

A devotee: “That *Kshetra Puranam* (*purana* of the place) has not been written in detail.”

Bhagavan: “No. It seems it is mentioned in a portion of *Skanda Puranam* itself. There is a manuscript in Sanskrit and also, a brief *puranam* in Tamil. In *Jyotirvana Mahatmyam* also, there are some stories here and there in Tamil, relating to the *kshetra*. It would be good if somebody were to put them all together and write them in prose.”

Rajagopala Iyer: “Viswanatha Brahmachari might perhaps do it?”

Bhagavan: “Who knows? He must agree to look into all those *puranams* and write it.”

Devotee: “We should tell him and see.”

Bhagavan: “All right. Do it.”

As soon as Viswanatha Brahmachari came that evening, Bhagavan told him with a smile that all the devotees felt that it would be good if he wrote the *Trisula Pura Mahatmyam* (Tiruchulipuranam) in prose. It was only after this that Viswanatha Brahmachari went through all the relative *puranas*, with the help of Bhagavan, translated the relative portions and wrote the *Trisula Pura Mahatmyam* in Tamil prose. It was immediately published. Naganarya wrote it in verse in Telugu. That has not been published yet.

21st November, 1949

(260) HELP FOR GOOD WORKS

You remember in March-April 1946, I had written the Telugu translation of the conversation between Vithoba and Jnaneswar contained in *Bhakta Vijayam*. That happened under peculiar circumstances. In 1944, ever since Manu Subedar came here and left and the English translation of the debate between a Siddha and a Sadhaka had been sent to him by a devotee, I have been inclined to translate it into Telugu. When Subbaramayya and Venkatakrishtnayya were here I asked them about it in Bhagavan’s presence. “You can speak Tamil very well,” they said. “It would be better for you to have the Tamil text read out by somebody and write it yourself, instead of our translating it from English.” So saying they entrusted the work to me and went their own way.

Noticing this, Bhagavan one day told Muruganar about it in my presence. In the evening when Bhagavan went out,

Muruganar looked at me and said, “From what Bhagavan has said now, it appears that you will have a lot of work to do with Tamil literature. Why don’t you learn Tamil? I would not ask you to learn it, if it were any other language. Normally Bhagavan writes and speaks in Tamil only. That is why I am suggesting that you learn it.” I took it as Bhagavan’s orders. Accordingly I obtained a copy of Balabodhini, a Tamil-Telugu dictionary which is in the library, wrote down the alphabet by myself slowly by frequent reference to the text, superscribed the letters over and over again and, in a week’s time learnt to read and write. I did not care to read primary lessons about the dog and the fox, but asked the librarian to give me a copy of *Bhakta Vijayam*. He did so. When he was giving it to me, Bhagavan looked at it and said, “Have you learnt, to read Tamil?” I said, “I learnt a little of it,” and told him all that had happened. Saying it was all right and good, Bhagavan asked me why I had taken *Bhakta Vijayam* in the very beginning. I told him that I had chosen devotional stories as they would be interesting to read. Bhagavan asked me if I would like to read the debate between Vithoba and Jnaneswar. When I expressed my willingness to do so, he asked me to fetch the book saying that he would show me the portion concerned. Accordingly I got him the book whereupon he picked out the relevant portion and marked it with red ink. He casually enquired whether I would translate it into Telugu. I told him that I had taken it merely to read and I was not sure that I could understand it sufficiently well to be able to translate it. Then he said that I could do it but I should seek the help of some Tamilian if I wanted to translate it into Telugu.

Subsequently I told Viswanatha Brahmachari about Bhagavan’s suggestion and requested him to help me, to which he agreed. He kept, however, putting it off. Some

days passed like that. One evening he came to me suddenly and said, "Shall we do the translation without telling Bhagavan? If we tell him he would ask for it and then correct it, thereby straining himself unduly. We would thereby be giving avoidable trouble to Bhagavan in his delicate health. What do you say?" I told him that the work ought somehow to be completed. Things would take their own course and that we should not worry over anything. We thereupon began the work and went on with it continuously till 10 p.m. we completed it. You know what happened in the meantime? As it was the bright half of the month, several Europeans wanted to go round the hill in the moonlight. So, at 1 p.m., they went to Bhagavan and requested him to give them the help of some one who knew the path. Looking at the people near him, Bhagavan said that it would be good if Viswanathan was sent with them as he knew English. So he was sent for. People went one after another to Palakothu and searched everywhere, but could not find him anywhere. Bhagavan wondered as to where he could have gone. No one could give any reliable information. Subsequently people were sent to all the houses in Ramana Nagar to which he was in the habit of going; still he could be found nowhere. Whereupon Bhagavan sent someone else as a guide to the Europeans.

When Viswanathan returned to his room after 10 p.m. his neighbours told him about what had happened. Thinking it was no longer possible to avoid telling Bhagavan, Viswanathan woke up early morning and went straight to Bhagavan. No sooner did Bhagavan see him than he asked whether he had gone to town the night before, as he was not to be found anywhere in Ramana Nagar. Viswanathan told him the facts. On hearing them, Bhagavan remarked that the people had not gone to Nagamma's to search for him as

he was not accustomed to going there. He then enquired if he was reading anything there. What could he say? He could not help telling the truth. After learning that the Vithoba-Jnaneswar discussion had been translated completely, Bhagavan said with a laugh, "I see. So that was it! Anyway, a good work has been completed. For a long time Nagamma has been asking people to translate it into Telugu. There is nothing wrong in what has been done. It is after all a good work. It does not matter if I was not told beforehand. But could you not have told the people in the next room? See how many people searched for you and felt worried," said Bhagavan.

Next morning I went to the Ashram at 7.30 as usual. As soon as he saw me, Bhagavan began laughing to himself. I could not understand why. As soon as I had prostrated and got up, he asked me if it was a fact that the translation work was completed the previous night. I was taken aback and could not reply. Then Bhagavan told me that he had learnt it from Viswanathan early in the morning and pointed towards him. When I looked at Viswanathan, he smiled and said nothing. Then Bhagavan asked me for the copy. When I told him it was yet to be fair copied. Bhagavan told me that I could do it at my leisure.

When Bhagavan went out, Viswanatha Brahmachari told me all that had happened and said, "We wanted to translate it quietly without anybody's knowledge but every one has come to know about it now. Who can hoodwink Bhagavan? When he himself is asking for the copy, there is nothing for us to be afraid of now. Write out the fair copy and give it to him."

Bhagavan enquired every now and then about the fair copy, and when I gave it to him ultimately, he returned it to me duly corrected. You know all that happened subsequently.

Bhagavan suggested that it should be published as a supplement to Part I of the *Letters from Ramanasramam* and you agreed to it. Thus, you see, Bhagavan always helps people when they want to do any good work.

8th December, 1949

(261) DECEPTIVE APPEARANCES

One afternoon in 1944, when devotees were conversing about sundry matters in Bhagavan's presence, the topic of deceptive appearances and talks came up for discussion. Addressing Bhagavan, a devotee said, "Some people put on all sorts of false appearances to deceive the world."

Bhagavan said, "Yes. Not some, but many. What of that? If people put on false appearances, it is their own minds that get troubled ultimately. They begin to be afraid of what others would think of them and so their minds become their own enemies. If people think of deceiving others by putting on false appearances they themselves get deceived ultimately. They think, 'We have planned and have deceived others and thereby have shown great cleverness.' With pride they practise more and more deceptions. The consequences of their actions will be realised only when the deceptions are discovered. When the time comes, they will collapse as a result of their own deceptions."

While all were wondering whom Bhagavan had in mind, Yogi Ramiah said, "Swami, this reminds me of an incident. I remember to have read somewhere that Bhagavan had once put on *Panganamam*.* Is it true?"

* *Panganamam* is the distinctive caste mark of a Vaishnavaites.

Bhagavan replied as follows: “Yes. That was during the early days of my life on the hill. At that time some Vaishnavaites used to come to me, and at their pressing request I used to put on the *namam*, having nothing to lose thereby. Not only that. Do you know what I did once? Those were days when a Kalyana Mandapam was constructed in Arunachaleswara Temple. It was *Navaratri* time. (Dasara Festival). A *bhajana* troupe had arranged in the temple a display of dolls for worship. They pressed me to go with them to see the display. As I was afraid that somebody might recognise me and start doing all sort of services, I put on a *dhoti* of Palaniswami’s and covered my body with another cloth, put on a *namam* like a Vaishnavait and went with them. The administrators of the temple knew me well. I wanted to avoid them. They however recognised me at the gate itself, and came after me saying, ‘Swami! Swami! You also have come here to see the Swami? You yourself are a Swami, aren’t you?’ What to do? I felt I was deceiving myself. I somehow managed to evade them and get inside but I felt that everyone was looking at me only. I did not see the Mandapam nor could I see anything else. I turned back intending to return unnoticed but the chief amongst the *archakas* (priest) caught me again at the gate. ‘Swami! Swami! You have come in this dress? Aha! How nice it is, Swami! Please wait.’ So saying he stopped me, and addressing his assistants, he said, ‘You fellow! bring a garland of flowers; bring sandal paste; bring *prasadam*. Our Brahmanaswami has come here putting on the dress of Lord Sri Krishna. It is our great luck.’ So saying, they began to shower temple honours on me. I somehow managed to escape their attentions and went away. Later on, I tried a number of times to hoodwink them and somehow go to the temple but invariably they used to recognise me and give me all the

temple honours. Thereupon I gave up all further attempts and stopped going to the temple altogether. It is the same with everything. You can stay anywhere without fear, if you are in your real form. If you put on a dress to deceive others, you will be afraid every minute that someone might catch you at your deception and so your mind becomes your own enemy and troubles you," said Bhagavan.

12th December, 1949

(262) IS ALL THE WORK FOR WHICH YOU HAVE COME OVER?

Sometime during the year 1943-44, a young Andhra lady by name Alamelu came here from Coimbatore. As it was during the early days of her husband's demise, she brought her brother with her for company. She had no children. She and her mother had been coming to the Ashram even before this. Whenever they came, they used to stay for about ten to fifteen days, bring some sweetmeats every afternoon at 2 o'clock and give them to Bhagavan and to the devotees. Bhagavan told them several times not to do so. They would not listen, but continued to bring something everyday, saying "this preparation was liked by my mother, that is very much to my liking, and this had been done because my brother had come." This time also they rented a house in the town, stayed for about a month and continued to bring sweetmeats as usual. Perhaps because they were in difficulties, Bhagavan did not say anything this time. Taking advantage of that and thinking Bhagavan liked it, they began to prepare more edibles. At last, the day before they left the

Ashram, they approached Bhagavan and said, “We are going away tomorrow.”

Laughing to himself, Bhagavan said, “Oh, is that so? Is the work for which you have come over?” Unable to understand what exactly was meant by the question, they said, “There is some work at home for us. Our people have written to us to come back.”

Bhagavan said, “That is all right. Is all the work for which you came here, over? Is there anything remaining?” Unable to say anything, they stood confused.

Bhagavan then said, “That is not it. You say you will go. Have you finished preparing all the varieties of sweetmeats, or is there anything left? That is what I am asking.” All of us laughed. Unable to say anything in reply, the mother and the daughter stood there with folded hands. Bhagavan said with a laugh, “That is all right. You can go.” As soon as they left after prostrating before Bhagavan, he looked at Ramachandra Iyer and said, “When I tell them to look to the purpose for which they came, they do not listen to me. I said to them several times, why all this? What is the use? Everyday they think of preparing only this or that sweetmeat and also of what is liked by Bhagavan. Is it for this they come? Is that the thing that pleases Bhagavan? Many people do the same thing. They forget the purpose for which they come. What to do?”

14h December, 1949

(263) FLOOR DECORATION WITH LIME POWDER

On a festival day in 1944, some ladies were decorating the floor of the Ashram with rice paste prepared by soaking rice in water and then grinding it. While returning from the cowshed, Bhagavan remarked to the people following him, "Look at those people. See what they are doing. They concentrate their mind on that sort of work. What to do? Let them carry on. Be careful not to step on the drawings. Why should we step on them when they are doing it with such great devotion?" So saying, he walked carefully without disturbing the designs and sat in the hall.

Immediately after that, Bhagavan noticed an old lady of the Ashram carefully drawing designs with dry lime powder on the floor below the steps opposite to the hall. Bhagavan called her by the familiar name, Granny, and when she came with great expectations, he said, "Look here, Granny. You are taking so much trouble for decorating the floor with that powder, but is it rice flour?" When she replied that it was powdered lime only, Bhagavan said, "What a pity! It will not be useful even for the ants. The ladies there are also doing the same thing. It is mere waste of time. Their work is of no use whatsoever. The paste they are using is made of rice dough which sticks to the ground and so the ants cannot eat it. Decorating the floor really means feeding the ants. If that *dharma* is given up and powdered lime is used not only the ants cannot eat it but if, by mistake, they come anywhere near, they die because of the strong pungent smell. Why all that? Please add at least some rice flour to it."

An Andhra gentleman enquired, “Is it for feeding the ants that in the *dhanurmasa*, i.e., in the month of December-January, that floors are decorated with rice powder?”

“Yes, of course!” said Bhagavan. “Out of their feelings of happiness and joy at the receipt of the fresh crop of rice, they decorate the floor with rice powder thus feeding the ants. Practices laid down by elders are always based on kindness to living creatures. But who cares for those traditions now? They do most things just for the sake of beauty only.”

16th December, 1949

(264) FOLLIES

Some time in 1942-43, Sri Jagadeeswara Sastri's son who was studying in the *Vedapatasala* in Madurai, came here during the holidays. Being young, he had tresses of hair hanging down to the shoulders. May be he wanted to appear fashionable. As soon as he came into the hall and got up after prostrating, Bhagavan said, “Oh, is that you? When I saw your hair style, I thought it was somebody else. Oh! My! How you look! Who would believe that you are the son of Jagadeeswara Sastri?” The boy was so ashamed, that he came to the hall next day with only a small tuft of hair behind. Noticing it, Bhagavan said, “Yes. That is right. Will not people criticise adversely if Jagadeeswara Sastri's son, a bachelor living in a *Gurukula* (the house of a Guru), has an unbecoming hair style?”

In 1943, Gurram Subbaramayya Garu came here with his daughter of five or six years of age. As you know, she had

no mother. Noticing that she had a plait of hair on either side of her head, Bhagavan remarked, "What child! Only two plaits? Why not have two more in front and two in the centre of the head?" So saying Bhagavan laughed. Bhagavan had passed similar remarks before whenever he saw other children dressed up like this. Now this child felt ashamed, came to me, got her hair done into a single plait and went to Bhagavan. Smiling at it and saying it was good, Bhagavan told her father, "Look, European ladies who come here, wear sarees, tie their hair in a plait and put some flowers in it and thus try to appear like our ladies, while our people try to adopt their style. What to do?"

Sometime in 1943-44, a European by name Mr. McIver used to live here; on a Dipavali day, he wore a Salem silk-bordered dhoti in the orthodox style, covered the upper portion of his body with a similar cloth, prostrated before Bhagavan, put on his forehead holy ashes and kumkum, went out of the hall and sat there with closed eyes in *padmasana* style. Bhagavan began smiling to himself, looking at him through the window. Meanwhile Rajagopala Iyer came into the hall, whereupon Bhagavan, laughing loudly, exclaimed, "Look at that. McIver Sastri has come here. There he is, sitting over there. Really, if anyone were to see him now, could they say he was not a Sastri? While all of you put on suits and boots, instead of wearing dhoties, he dressed himself up like a Sastri. The only thing that is wanting now is the sacred thread. As our people are discarding even that, there is no difficulty even on that score now. Look at him!"

Whenever Bhagavan speaks to native Indians, he normally talks to them in their own language, namely Tamil, Telugu or Malayalam, but never in English. Even though they know this, some of our young men put their questions to Bhagavan in English. Sometimes, there will be nobody to

translate or the translation will be found difficult. If on such occasions, we enquire why those people could not put their questions in their own language, Bhagavan would say, “You want to know why they ask me in English? That is because they want to test Bhagavan. They have gained some knowledge of the English language. Should not all people know about it? Not only that, they sincerely believe that their language is no good for such an important matter. The infatuation for that language makes them feel like that. Poor people! What can they do?”

24th December, 1949

(265) BHAJAN

In December 1943, that is, in the *dhanurmasam** a *bhajan* party, while going around the hill, came to Bhagavan, prostrated before him, went round the hall by way of *pradakshina* doing *bhajan* and then left. As soon as they had gone, Rajagopala Iyer asked Bhagavan, “Is it a fact that when Bhagavan was living in Pachiamman Temple, some people arranged a big *bhajan* party and invited Bhagavan to attend it?”

“Yes,” said Bhagavan. “It is a fact. That was in the days when the plague epidemic raged in the town. The devastation caused by that plague has already been described in the biography. When the epidemic was over, the people of the

* *Dhanurmasam*, that is, mid-December to mid-January, is considered very auspicious for the worship of Lord Vishnu and *bhajans* are conducted during that period, generally in the early hours of the morning.

town and those that had come for eradication of the plague arranged a *bhajan* party. As some of the prominent people amongst them had been coming to me off and on, they requested me to attend the *bhajan*. When I expressed my disinclination to join the party, they did not leave me alone but pressed me to attend it. So I went there just to see the whole thing. I was living in Pachiamman Temple at that time. You know, there is a tank opposite that temple. They erected several tents in the maidan adjacent to the tank bund and arranged for the *bhajan*, there. The *bhajan*, however, was not of the ordinary type. No, not at all. In the big tent they left the required open space in the centre and arranged chairs and benches around it as in a circus tent. They brought edibles as for a tea party and arranged them all systematically as in an exhibition. There was no limit to the flower garlands they brought. Collectors, Tahsildars, and police were all there. They arranged a special platform for me. As soon as I arrived, they all got up, bowed before me, and requested me to sit on the dais. I felt embarrassed. But what to do? I never knew they would make so much fuss about it. Having gone there, I had no alternative but to sit on the platform. They tried to garland me but I declined saying that they should garland their own dignitaries. They did accordingly. Till that was done, they did not begin the *bhajan*. After I had sat down, they asked for permission to start the *bhajan*. After one party had finished their *bhajan* another party started theirs, while the others took refreshments, soda and other drinks and thus took rest. Till early morning there was eating and continuous *bhajan*, by turns. I was the only one who did not touch or do anything. I merely sat there. I felt satisfied and contented that they did not press me to do anything. By daybreak all was over, and there was not a single soul; all had left along with the tents. Oh, they were all very enthusiastic and exhilarated.”

“So even in those days Bhagavan was held in high esteem,” said Rajagopala Iyer.

“Yes. They did not start the *bhajan* until I came,” said Bhagavan.

“This incident is not in the biography,” I said.

“Why? Is there not enough in it already? Why tell them all this?” said Bhagavan.

“We do not know how many more incidents like this have been kept from us,” I said. Bhagavan smiled and assumed silence.

26th December, 1949

(266) MEDICATED OILS AND BUTTER

Sometime in September or October 1944, Bhagavan received a small book on Ayurveda written by Achanta Lakshmipati which he read and, in accordance with a prescription therein, got *Karpura Thailam* prepared (a medicinal oil prepared from camphor, etc.) and began using it for the muscular pain in his legs. Observing this, some devotees said that *Narayana Thailam* was better, some said that *Mahanarayana Thailam* was much better and so on and so forth. After hearing these suggestions, Krishnaswami got exasperated and said, “How many medicated oils can we apply? However much we rub them on, the pain has not abated.” Bhagavan remarked, “Oho! When they are discussing about the relative merits of the various medicated oils, why do you feel exasperated?”

Krishnaswami: “Some treatment is being given. Why do they not keep quiet? How could we manage if everyone

suggests a different remedy? How often have we applied those medicated oils? Has the pain been cured thereby?”

Bhagavan: “No. But then, you never rubbed that oil with a desire that the pain should be cured. If you had done it with a strong will, why would that pain not leave us? As the pain has not disappeared, they are suggesting other remedies. Why would they suggest all these things if the pain were cured?”

Krishnaswami: “There is some relief now by the use of this *Karpura Thailam*. Why do they bother us by suggesting all those other remedies?”

Bhagavan: “But then, are you sure that the pain will disappear completely with this medicine?”

Krishnaswami: “We can’t say. But we shall try.”

Bhagavan: “Yes, that is the thing. If you apply the medicine with a desire that the pain should disappear completely, it will certainly disappear. But then, you are afraid that if it disappears you will not be allowed to touch Bhagavan’s legs. That is why you rub the oil with a desire that the pain should not disappear completely. That being so, why will that pain disappear?”

One afternoon at 3 o’clock, a devotee who was going to Madras gave a small tin containing some ointment and said that if that medicine was applied to Bhagavan’s legs, the pain would decrease, and that if Bhagavan would continuously use it, he would bring a dozen tins of it from Madras. Bhagavan replied, saying, “Enough. The *Karpura Thailam* I am using now is adequate. Why do I require such costly medicines? If diet is properly regulated, no medicine will be required. When these medicines are used, the ailment apparently disappears, but it starts again. That is because of some irregularity in diet, and that can’t be helped.” The devotee said, “If that is so, it will be all right if the diet is suitably regulated. Why not do that at least?”

“Yes, Sir. That is good. But how can I regulate my diet? Whenever I think of having a simple diet with pepper water, they will say that there is a *bhiksha* day. I cannot avoid *vadai** and *payasam* (milk pudding) prepared for the occasion.

“When the servers come to Bhagavan they serve much more than to the others. No doubt that is done out of devotion, but what to do? I must eat it. If food is thus taken, it will result in some ailment or other. How will that ailment be cured by medicines? It must get cured of its own accord. Once when I was on the hill, I was suffering from a severe cough. Many tonics were given, but they were of no use. I came down and stayed here. I do not know whether it was because of the air that blows here over the medicinal herbs of the hills, but it somehow got cured of its own accord. The forest itself became full of *Chyavanaprash* (a specific Ayurvedic medicine for cough). The present ailment also will get cured likewise. This tin is enough. Please do not bring any more,” said Bhagavan.

A devotee said, “Swami, some people, after they come out of the state of *samadhi*, live on butter only. We have actually seen some such people. How do they manage it?”

Bhagavan replied with a laugh, “Aha! What is that if a person puts a handful of butter on a leaf and eats it, how will he have any appetite afterwards? For that purpose one need not come out of a state of *samadhi*. Anyone can eat it. There are several herbs. If they are eaten, one will not feel hungry at all. Some people keep those herbs in their pockets or in their bags and go on eating them one after another. How could they have any appetite thereafter? People then say that this Swami is living without food and he is a great soul. He thereby becomes a Swami.”

* *Vadai* is a cake prepared with all dhals, like black-gram, green gram, etc., ground into a paste and fried in oil.

30th December, 1949

(267) BOOK BINDING

Some people bring ancient and sacred books in a very bad condition to Bhagavan with a request to examine its contents. Simultaneously with the examination of the contents, Bhagavan used to arrange the pages, properly paste together the torn bits and also write in his own hand the missing portions of the text and thus give the book a new appearance. Some people used to send loose leaves of a book tied together with a string with the request to set them right after examination. On such occasions Bhagavan used to cut the papers properly, paste them together, stitch them, get them bound and on the cover paste a piece of white paper sufficient to write the name of the book in letters like pearls, underline it with red ink and thus preserve the book carefully.

In 1942, Gurram Subbaramayya sent here an old copy of *Amuktamalyada* written by Krishnadevaraya with a request to the Ashram that Bhagavan should read it and that thereafter it should be kept in the Ashram library. The covers of the book were loose, soiled and badly torn. Bhagavan immediately set the whole thing properly, bound it neatly, pasted a white paper on the cover, wrote the name in bold letters that appeared better than print, drew a line with red ink under it, made it look like a new book and passed it on to me saying, "See how it looks now." The book was as beautiful as a newly-married bride and so I wrote some verses about it and reverently placed them in the hands of Bhagavan.

Sometime in June or July 1943, you remember, I was entrusted with the writing work relating to all Telugu matters

in the presence of Bhagavan. In those days when paper was scarce because of the World War, I brought from your house all the typed papers relating to your book on banking, as they were typed only on one side and so could be used for writing on the back. I used those papers to copy, in Telugu script, the *Ramana Puja Vidhanam* written in *nagari* script and prepared by Jagadeeswara Sastri. Bhagavan saw it and asked me where I had got the paper from. I told him the facts. "You have done a good thing. Others would merely throw away such papers. We can use them for rough work. I always use paper which is thrown away as useless by others. When pages are written only on one side, the written sides could be pasted together so that the unwritten sides of the page could be used profitably and bound together into a new book. We did like that quite a number of times. Why allow them to go waste?" said Bhagavan.

A devotee enquired if it was a fact that Bhagavan had picked up sheets of paper that were thrown away in a dustbin by Nayana and had bound them all together into a book. Bhagavan replied saying, "Yes, that is a fact. You know, Nayana was with us for some time in Palakothu. When he was going away from there, he threw away all the waste sheets. He was accustomed to writing only on about a half of a sheet and leaving the rest blank. There are quite a number of books which are half-written like that by him. When that is so with books, would he care for mere sheets? A number of such sheets were thrown in the dustbin. After taking food in the noon, Madhava and myself went out as usual and noticed the heap. As we did not like to waste them, we picked out the useful sheets, cut them suitably, stitched them together into a book and kept it carefully. That was almost like a newly-bound book. After sometime Nayana returned and wanted a notebook to write something. I asked Madhava to give

him that bound-book and he gave it. I kept silent, laughing to myself. However, Madhava said, 'Nayana, these are the sheets of paper which you threw away as useless. Bhagavan saw them and asked me to pick out the useful ones, which I did, and bound them into this notebook.' Nayana was very much surprised. I usually stitch notebooks with such papers only," said Bhagavan.

3rd January, 1950

(268) WHERE TO STAY? WHERE TO GO?

Sometime in 1943/1944, one of the devotees who is familiar amongst the circle of devotees, built a house in Ramana Nagar and before the housewarming ceremony, approached Bhagavan and said in an undertone, "It would be nice if Bhagavan could come to my place." With a smile Bhagavan said, "What a request! Where is Bhagavan to come? Why not think that whoever comes for the function is Bhagavan himself? If all people come, is it not something like Bhagavan himself coming? Please go. Finish the housewarming ceremony." Sending him away with those words Bhagavan remarked to those nearby, "Do you see? He says Bhagavan must go over there. Everyone says the same thing. Were can I go?"

Another devotee said, "Is it not a fact that someone said that a temple for Bharata Mata was being constructed and that Bhagavan should lay the foundation stone?"

"Yes, yes. It must be about five or six years ago. There was no invitation. Nothing whatsoever. It was however published in the papers that Bhagavan would be attending the ceremony and that a first class berth had also been reserved. Several people came and asked me whether I was

going, and I gave the reply, 'Where to stay and where to go? There is no place to which I could go,'" said Bhagavan.

"Arrangements were once made for going to Tirupati also, weren't they?" asked another devotee.

Bhagavan replied, "Yes. It is true. That was when I was in the Virupaksha Cave. At that time I was not covering the upper part of the body with anything. For some unknown reason the trouble from mosquitoes was unusually great that year. Jayaraman bought a good shawl and pressed me to cover my body with that. I did not even touch it. He waited for some time. The shawl remained folded. The mosquito trouble continued unabated. Unable to bear the nuisance, the people near me conferred amongst themselves and without the knowledge of outsiders, made all preparations for going to Tirupati. They told me that we should go by this way and should come back by that way and the like. I nodded my head in assent to all that they said. They fixed an auspicious day for the journey, packed everything and, before starting, came to me saying, 'Swami, shall we start?' I said, 'Yes. Do go and come back.' 'What about Bhagavan?' 'Where can Bhagavan go? Where is he staying?' I said. They said, 'We are unable to bear this mosquito trouble, you see.' I said, 'If you are not able to bear it, you may go and come back. Is it for my sake that you are going? Did I say that I was not able to bear the mosquito nuisance?' What more could they say? They felt that it was no use arguing further, gave up their journey, and began pressing me to cover my body with the shawl. Jayaram's son Pichandi was at the time a very young fellow. He used to come every day covering himself with an old rug. As I felt that they would not leave me in peace until I covered my body to avoid the mosquito bites, I told them that I would wear the old rug if they gave that young man the new shawl in exchange. What could

they do? Unwillingly they exchanged the new rug for the old one and I covered myself with the rug. That was the beginning of my covering the body with anything. When I began covering myself with that prickly type of rug, the mosquitoes did not dare to come anywhere near me. It used to be warm too,” said Bhagavan.

Another person asked, “It seems that someone requested permission to take you round the whole of the country for propaganda and for preaching.” Bhagavan replied, “Yes. That was Swami Rajeswarananda himself. You know, he used to live here some years ago. At that time, he was drawing up plans for touring the whole of India; to which important places we should go for delivering lectures; how a special train was to be arranged for travel; how many days to stay in the various places, and so on. I used to hear all that he said and keep quiet. He mistook my silence for consent. Ultimately he arranged to travel by first class, packed all things and said, ‘Swami, shall we start?’. ‘Yes, why not? Go and come back,’ I said. ‘What about Bhagavan?’ he said. ‘Me, Why?’ I said. ‘You must preach the essence of the *advaita* to people in the whole of India, Swami,’ he said. ‘Is that so? What can I do? Where to stay? Where to go? I have no place to go to,’ I said. He was taken aback.

“During the early days of the arrival of motor cars into this country, several people used to buy cars, bring them here and say, ‘If Bhagavan gets into the car but once, we will take it round the hill and return immediately. Please get in.’ Where was I to go, getting into such things,” said Bhagavan.

See what is stated in *Mahavakya Ratnamala*:

What is there for me to do, where am I to go, what am I to accept and what am I to discard, since I pervade the entire universe like the waters of the final deluge.

15th January, 1950

(269) BOYHOOD DAYS AT MADURAI

I have already written to you about my going to Tiruchuli (in 1945) when the *Sarvadhikari* started for that place to do repairs to the birth place of Bhagavan and how, on that occasion, several devotees, including a number of ladies, accompanied him and how, after my return, Bhagavan told me several incidents of his boyhood. At that time we had also seen the house in Madurai where Bhagavan had Self-realisation. When I told Bhagavan that an old lady by name Subbamma related some more incidents about his life there, he pressed me to tell him all about it.

I said, "She told me that she was living in the same street when Bhagavan ran away from his house in Madurai; that Bhagavan showed even then, by his conduct, glimpses of his feelings of equality with all human beings and that there were several incidents at the time to indicate it."

"What are they?" asked Bhagavan.

I said, "It seems that there was not sufficient supply of water in the house in which Bhagavan lived and so water had to be brought from the opposite house; that sometimes Bhagavan used to help his aunt by bringing water and by doing several odds and ends of the household work."

Bhagavan said, "Yes. Auntie could not lift any big vessel. The water she brought in a small vessel was at times found insufficient for the household. So I used to fetch water in a big vessel. So what?"

I said, "It seems that your mother felt a little annoyed when she heard of this and is reported to have remarked that her son was being made to carry heavy things. When she came to Madurai once, she too had to fetch water. She

could not lift the big vessel and requested Bhagavan to fetch water in the big vessel. While bringing it, Bhagavan is said to have remarked, ‘You found fault with auntie. What have you done now?’ Is that all true?”

Laughing, Bhagavan said, “Yes, yes. But what of it? There are municipal taps now. But in those days there was a lot of difficulty about water. The Vaigai River is at a long distance from Chokkanatha Street. It used to be very near to the house where we first stayed. When we were there, we used to bathe in the Vaigai River every day. As summer advanced, the water in the river would dry up. We then used to go there in the evenings and excavate enough sand in the riverbed so that a big vessel could be dipped into it. Subsequently we played about in the sands. By the time we finished our games, the sand ditch would be filled with water. We would bathe in that water and return home. The ditches that we excavated every day were very useful for other people also.”

I said, “It seems even the playthings of *Mahatmas* serve as useful things for others.”

Bhagavan said, “That’s all right. But tell me, you have gone to the temple of Varadaraja Perumal, haven’t you? You must have noticed that there are three parapet walls for each of the three storeys. Very often, all of us boys used to go to the third storey and play hide-and-seek and other games. A big tank could be seen from the window of the third storey. We used to go to that tank off and on and have competitions in swimming. I invariably used to win in the competitions. That tank is on the way leading to Tirupparankundram.”

I said, “I read in *Ramana Leela* about a feast that Bhagavan had with other boys in Tirupparankundram. It was however not possible for us to go there.”

Bhagavan said, “That is on the way to Tiruchuli. Only you have to take a little diversion. There are similar places

around Madurai like Pasumalai, Nagamalai, Enugamalai and several others. We used to go there sometimes. Their greatness could be found in *Halasyamahatnyam*.”

I asked, “Is it a fact that you were going to Alagar Koil also?”

Bhagavan replied, “Yes, yes. That is about twelve miles from Madurai. The temple is a very big one. There, everyday *Sarkarai Pongal* is offered twice to the Lord. It was excellent. Once when I went there I was given a little of it along with others. I wished I could have more of it. I felt, however, shy to ask for more. So I kept quiet. You know what happened when I went there another time? The children of one of the *archakas* were going home for the holidays. I accompanied them and stayed with them for a whole day. On that day, it was their turn for *archana*. Their house was about two furlongs from the temple. After the night *pūja* was over they got a big plateful of *pongāl* as their share. On seeing me, they felt that I was a sturdy fellow and could easily carry it and so they put the plate on my head and went ahead chitchatting amongst themselves. You know how heavy it was! All the muscles of my neck began to ache. It was night time. It was also dark. The plate must not fall down because it contained God’s *prasadam*. What could I do? I felt that it was a punishment for my wanting to have some more *pongāl* when I came last, and so I somehow carried it until I reached the house.”

I said, “Did not any one of them offer to carry it for a little distance?”

Bhagavan replied, “No. They were walking and were completely absorbed in their discussions about some of their own affairs. How would they think about me?”

I said, “Perhaps, Bhagavan did not say that it was heavy and he could not carry it?”

Bhagavan remarked, “How could I do that? It was preordained that I should carry it and so I carried it. Subsequently, they gave me a big lump of the *pongal* on a leaf. When I ate some of it, I got a feeling of aversion to it. It was however *prasadam*, and as it could not be thrown away, I somehow managed to eat it. None of the others touched it even. They gave it away to the servant next morning. It is the same with everything. If there is ample supply, no one wants it.”

I remarked, “So Bhagavan carried the plate with the same feelings as Jada Bharata* had when he carried the palanquin.”

Bhagavan said, “What of that? They merely felt that I was robust and could easily carry it. What else did they know?” So saying, he changed the topic and began telling us about wrestling bouts, playing with balls and other boyhood games. All those things have been mentioned in *Ramana Leela*.

20th January, 1950

(270) MUKTI KANTA

Sometime ago, Putumbaka Srikrishnayya, a devotee of Bhagavan, wrote the biography of Dhanurdasa, who was a devotee of Lord Sri Ranganatha, in verse and dedicated it to Bhagavan. After Bhagavan had graciously accepted this book of verses, he wrote some more poems separately and offered them to Bhagavan. The gist of the first poem was: “Swami, my *Kriti Kanya* (comparing the poems to a young

* Jada Bharata was a *Jivanmukta* and an *Avadhuta* like Bhagavan.

maiden) has refused to accept anyone else but Bhagavan as her suitor. I have decided to offer you humbly this maiden. Please accept her and bless us.” In the last poem he wrote: “You have become my son-in-law. I have partaken of the marriage feast with you. I have thus become blessed. I will take leave of you. Just because you have wooed and won *Mukti Kanya* (comparing *Mukti* to a maiden), please do not neglect my beloved child.”

When this happened, I was not in town. As soon as I returned, Bhagavan told me all about it: “Look. It seems I have already married *Mukti Kanya*. He has ordered me not to neglect his daughter. Read this,” so saying Bhagavan made me read the poems. Apart from this, he used to narrate this event humorously. Later on, when the author of this book came there, he used to say jocularly, “My father-in-law has come. Have you seen him?” Sometime later, when Mahadeva Sastri came, Bhagavan showed him these poems and made him read them. Ramanamma, a devotee of Bhagavan, not knowing that these poems were only fit for diversion, got Bhagavan’s permission and took the book for copying. The next morning, when I went there, I saw the book in Bhagavan’s hands. Seeing me, Bhagavan said with a slight smile, “See that lady sitting over there. She took this book yesterday saying that she wanted to copy these ‘*Kriti Kanya Samarpana*’ poems. This evening she brought the copied poems saying that she wanted to read them out to me. ‘That’s enough. Don’t read them. Keep them with you and do *parayana* everyday,’ I said. The other day when Mahadeva came, I showed him these poems for fun. He read them here. What more was needed? She must have thought that Swami was very fond of them. She copied them immediately. It is not as though she really wanted them. Her real intention was only to read them in the hall.” Saying this Bhagavan laughed. I said, “If anybody writes about Bhagavan

in a humorous way, that he is a thief, a simpleton, and a deceiver, and Bhagavan starts joking about it, then some people begin imagining that Bhagavan likes it." Bhagavan replied, "Yes, yes. If the writer who had written these poems had also added that the reading of these verses would give them the merit of giving away their daughter in marriage (*kanya dana phalam*), then it would indeed have been very apt."

Four or five years ago, the wife of Ranganatha Iyer, a devotee, gave Bhagavan a book named *Ramana Kalyanam* written by their son. It seems that her husband was a playmate of Bhagavan in his young days. The whole book was full of songs. In it, Bhagavan was depicted as a bridegroom with a *Mukti Kanta* as the bride. One day he started to sing all these songs in the hall. Everything that pertained to the marriage ceremony was described in it in detail, such as the bri dal procession, the exchange of garlands, etc. At that point Bhagavan, looking at us, said, "Have you all observed me getting married? Here am I, playing with flowers, exchanging garlands, hearing songs and getting married in the proper way. These people are all grief-stricken because Swami has not been married all these days. In this way they have at last made up for the deficiency. Just listen to them!" And Bhagavan laughed.

4th February, 1950

(271) TITBITS

It was decided to construct a building to commemorate the name of the famous poet, the late Subrahmanya Bharati and unveil his portrait on the 12th October, 1947 at

Ettaiyapuram in Tirunelveli District. Rajaji was to declare the building open and Ramaswami Reddiar was to unveil the portrait of the poet, Bharati. For the last five or six days, Rajagopala Iyer and Krishnaswami have been collecting cuttings of the photos of Bharati, and the buildings that have been appearing in the daily papers. They were busy pasting them on to a cardboard with the photo of the building below that of Bharati. Bhagavan was helping them with his advice in all respects. This job was completed on 11th October, and they both showed it to Bhagavan. Bhagavan said smilingly, "Well what you have to do now is to cover the top and bottom of the cardboard with two pieces of cloth fashioned like a curtain with strings attached, etc. Let Rajagopala Iyer play the role of Rajagopalachari, the Governor-General and Krishnaswami Reddiar the role of Ramaswami Reddiar. Just when the function at Ettaiyapuram takes place, both of you draw the curtains on these photos so that the function will be duplicated here simultaneously!"

One day, in 1947, from 2.30 in the afternoon to about 4 o' clock, Bhagavan was explaining something to a devotee who had come from the north. The attendants were standing before him with Bhagavan's walking stick and *kamandalam* indicating that it was getting late for Bhagavan's evening walk. Massaging his legs, Bhagavan said, "Wait, wait. Ramabhakta Hanuman's father (the Wind God) is holding on to my legs firmly. He is not an ordinary person. He will not lose his hold in a hurry. He will do it leisurely. Wait a little." Then Bhagavan rubbed a little oil on his kneecaps and got up. Some of those present, who could understand the way Bhagavan punned on his stiff joints which were supposed to be due to the wind, laughed at his jocular remarks.

As soon as Bhagavan returned to the hall and sat on the couch, one of the devotees put some incense into the

stove nearby. The fumes were a little too intense and as they spread around Bhagavan's face, he felt almost suffocated. "Shall we open the windows?" suggested a devotee. Bhagavan said, "Let it be. Leave it alone. In the temples, we burn the incense and fan the fumes towards the deity so that the idol is completely enveloped in the fumes. Your idea in burning the incense here also is to see that the Swami should enjoy the fumes. Moreover, they are spreading out of their own accord. Why are you now trying to drive the fumes away?" Just as Bhagavan was saying this, a devotee fanned the embers in the stove with his hand. Suddenly the whole thing burst into a flame. We were afraid that the heat of the flame might affect Bhagavan and began to feel anxious. But Bhagavan said with a smile, "Yes, now it is all right. The incense has been burnt and the lights have been waved, the process of *puja* is now complete." Then Bhagavan resumed silence.

4th February, 1950

(272) THE GREATNESS OF CHILLIES

In the last week of April 1947, *Bharati*, a Telugu monthly journal, was received in the Ashram. It contained an article on the chillies of Palnad (a part of Guntur District, Andhra Pradesh). In it, it was stated that chillies would cure congestion of the chest due to phlegm, help digestion, and act as a good tonic for the body. The author also said that chillies have a number of beneficial effects to the body and stimulate the brain and are useful in the preparation of many medicines. He also quoted authorities in support of this theory. Bhagavan asked me to read out the article, called the Ashram doctors

and said smilingly, "Look here. You want me to cut down on chillies. The efficacy of chillies has been described in an article in the *Bharati*. Nagamma is going to read it. Listen carefully. It prevents phlegm and acts as a good tonic. Many are the beneficial effects of chillies." So saying Bhagavan asked Venkataratnam to preserve that issue of *Bharati*.

Venkataratnam and I were wondering why Bhagavan wanted us to preserve this particular copy. Ten days later, Janaki Ammal, wife of the retired surgeon, Ganapathi Iyer, (now Janaki Matha) came with some other ladies to stay in the Ashram for a few days. One afternoon, around 3 o'clock, addressing Bhagavan, she said, "Bhagavan, you are looking very weak. You must completely cut out chillies and take only nutritious food. Chillies dry up the system," and quoted a number of examples in support of her statement. She went on in the same strain even though someone there remarked that chillies had never done any harm to Bhagavan.

Again someone nearby tried to interrupt her. Then Bhagavan remarked, "Don't be impatient. She is the wife of a surgeon. While he prescribes the medicines, she prescribes the patients the diet. What can you know about such things?" He then turned towards her and said, "You say chillies are not good but there is a long article in the *Bharati* extolling the good qualities of chillies. Whose advice am I to follow? Wait a minute. They will read the article to you and you can yourself understand all about it. According to you, chillies weaken the body but according to the article, the Reddis of Palnad are strong and sturdy because they eat plenty of chillies. Listen to the details." So saying Bhagavan asked Venkataratnam to get the journal and read out the article.

The lady was not able to say anything any more.

BRAHMANIRVANA

The small tumour which showed itself on the left upper arm of Bhagavan in November 1948, began growing from day to day so that by 1-2-1949 it became as big as a marble. The doctor in charge of the Ashram hospital, Dr. Sankara Rao, and a retired surgeon, Dr. Srinivasa Rao, pointed it out to Bhagavan and offered to remove it by a small surgical operation. Bhagavan however did not agree to it. As it continued to grow rapidly, the doctors got perturbed and somehow prevailed upon Bhagavan to agree to its removal. Accordingly the first operation was performed on the morning of 9-2-1949.

All the devotees wanted the bandage to be covered so as not to be visible to outsiders. But then, was there an upper cloth to cover it? Was there a shirt to wear? The only thing Bhagavan had was a white cloth, half-a-yard wide and three-fourths of a yard long. He tied it around his neck so as to conceal the bandage. Still the bandage was visible through the gaps. When some people who had the courage to ask him what the matter was, Bhagavan used to reply with a laugh, that he had worn a bracelet on the arm or that a *Lingam* had been born there, or that it was a *Swayambhu Lingam*.* Some time later the bandage was removed. People said that the wound was healing up. Somehow, everyone forgot about it during the bustle of the Kumbhabhishekam which took place on 17-3-1949. As soon as the festivities were over all people came to know that the tumour had shown itself again. Some suggested treatment with green leaves and milk of the fig tree. Others brought a medicated plaster and put it on. On 27-3-1949, Raghavachari and other doctors who came from

* Swayambhu Lingam is a lingam which springs or arises from the ground by itself. It is associated with Lord Siva.

Madras, said that none of those remedies would do and that the tumour must be operated upon again. They left after deciding that a second operation should be performed and promised to come back on 3-4-1949 for the purpose.

I was somehow frightened and in a prayerful attitude, entreated Bhagavan, saying, "Why all these operations? Why do you not cure yourself by getting some medicine prescribed by yourself and using it, the same as you did when you had jaundice?"

Bhagavan replied, "They are all reputed doctors. Let their treatment be carried out."

When I said that they had already performed an operation which had been found unsuccessful and enquired why Bhagavan should not have his own treatment, Bhagavan said, "Let it go this time. If it appears again, we will see about it."

On the morning of 3-4-1949, while we were discussing about the details of the operation in the presence of Bhagavan, the doctors came. Seeing them, Bhagavan said, "Look. The doctors have come," and began arranging his legs preparatory to getting up. Bhagavan was demonstrating the practical application of his *upadesa* (teaching), whatever is to happen will happen, and whatever is not to happen will not happen. Then Bhagavan said with a firm voice, "Yes. That which is to happen will not stop even if we say 'no'." So saying he got down from the couch and went into the hospital. Till about the middle of May 1949, everything went on fairly satisfactorily. But afterwards there was an all round anxiety and worry because when the stitches were removed blood began oozing from the place where the operation had been performed. The tumour had not healed and was clearly exhibiting its malignancy.

As it was suggested that it would do good to expose the tumour to the sun's rays, in June 1949, the doctors used to

seat Bhagavan behind the *Gosala* (cowshed), open the bandage, wash the wound and keep it exposed for some time to the sun's rays. On such occasions, devotees who expressed their fear and anxiety were told by Bhagavan, "See how nice it is! It is like a precious ruby. It has become an ornament to my arm. See how red it is! It is glowing brilliantly with the sun's rays falling on it. Look at it!" And when they saw blood oozing out and remarked about it with great grief, he used to say, "Why worry? Let the blood flow out. It is a ruby, you see. Like the '*Syamanthakamani** this is also producing gold every day. The only difference is, in that case, the gold that was produced was yellow while in this case it is red. See how much is oozing out." And if any devotees prayed to him to heal himself, he used to say "What have I to do with this?" or "What can I do?".

On 5-7-1949, an old man from Valuvai, a village nearby and a reputed Ayurvedic doctor, started applying the juice of some green leaves and bandaging the wound. Before he began the treatment, he saw the wound in all its malignancy and remarked with immense grief. "Oh Bhagavan! How serious this is! Swami, this is cancer. This should not be touched at all. Why did you allow it to be operated on? If I had known it in the beginning, I would have dressed it with green leaves containing medicinal properties and cured it. It is too late now Swami."

When Bhagavan was returning to the hall after leaving the hospital in the evening of 1-7-1949, his body began to shake and his legs began to falter. He had fever. He somehow reached the hall and squatted on the couch. While we were all alarmed and were anxiously looking at him,

* *Syamanthakamani* is a kind of valuable gem, said to yield daily eight loads of gold and also protect the wearer from all kinds of dangers and calamities.

Santhamma could not contain herself and, being elderly, and a very old devotee, took the liberty of addressing Bhagavan and said, "Oh, the body!" No sooner had she said this than Bhagavan remarked, "Oh, the body? Why? What has happened? It is shaking. What if it shakes?" So saying, he suppressed the shivering, and looking at his attendants, said with a laugh, "That is Nataraja's* dance. Why should you be afraid? If everyday the body is giving you *darshan* in its static form, today it is giving it to you in a dance pose. Why all this anxiety?" So saying, he sat there in dignified silence. The *Veda Parayana* was then done.

On 7-8-1949, Dr. Guruswami Mudaliar was here personally to supervise the third operation. I had already written to you that it was from that date that questions and answers in Bhagavan's presence had become rare. After the final operation was performed on 19-12-1949, Bhagavan did not come into either the new hall or the old hall. He confined himself to the small room opposite the big hall. After homeopathic treatment was tried Ayurvedic treatment began. The Moos (a famous Ayurvedic doctor from Kerala) who was treating Bhagavan felt discouraged and on 3-3-1950 he wrote a *stotram* in praise of Bhagavan and arranged for its *parayana* along with *Vishnu Sahasranamam* (thousand names of Vishnu), every day. Some devotees performed *Surya namaskar* (salutation to the Sun) and some began doing *Mrityunjaya Japam* (prayer to Lord Siva, the conqueror of death). Just as he had handed over his body to the doctors to do whatever they liked with it, saying 'Yes, yes', he was accepting the offerings of those devotees in the shape of *tirtha* (consecrated water) and *Prasadams* (offerings of food to the gods).

* Nataraja is another name for Lord Siva, one of the Trinity. He is reputed to dance when in ecstasy.

After the *Mrityunjaya Japam* was over, the people concerned asked him if they could proceed with the *Mrityunjaya Homam*. He nodded in assent and as soon as they left turned towards Venkataratnam and said, “Extinction of ego and abidance in Self is the *Mrityunjaya Homam*. In *Devikalottaram*, verse 16 and 17, it is stated that one should not get immersed in mantrams, *homams* and such things. Also in *Sarvajnanottaram*, verse 35, it is said that abidance in Self itself is the mantra, the *devata*, the *diksha*, the *tapas*, the *homam* and the *dhyana*.”

About the same time a lady devotee had *Chandi Homam* performed. Another lady lighted holy candles to appease Sani (Saturn). Some had *abhisheka* and other *pujas* performed in Arunachaleswara Temple.

On 17-3-1950, Bhagavan had some vomitings with consequent discomfort and so did not take any food subsequently. Hearing that, his sister Alamelu went to him and said, “Oh, Bhagavan! It seems you have not taken anything at all. Today’s *payasam* (pudding) is very tasteful. You have not taken even a drop of it.” Bhagavan however sent her away with some words of comfort.

From the time the cancer showed itself, I always used to pray to Bhagavan whenever I could manage to see him, “Please get yourself cured of this ailment and remain in this world for our sake.” Bhagavan used to console me with some comforting words or other. When the third and the fourth operations were performed and I expressed my fear and anxiety, he used to say that there was no need for worry and there was nothing really seriously wrong. Hence, however serious the ailment was, and however much other people felt anxious and discouraged, I used to think that Bhagavan would hint to me if there was anything imminent. That egoism enveloped my whole being and blinded me to the grim realities of the situation. I was therefore confident that he would get cured ultimately.

19-3-1950 was the Lunar New Year's Day. From the time I had come here, it had been usual for me to offer to Bhagavan for his personal wear a *khaddar* towel and a *kowpeenam* and arrange for *bhiksha* in the Ashram that day. As I did not like to give it up this year, I took with me a towel and *kowpeenam* in the evening at about 7 o'clock of 18-3-1950, went into that small room accompanied by our postmaster, Raja Iyer. Bhagavan stared at me. I quietly placed the clothes on the table and said the next day was the *Ugadi* (New Year's Day). Bhagavan started at that and said, "Is the *Ugadi* come? Is the Vikruti (the name of the new year) come?" There was something strange and perplexing in that voice. And I cannot explain why, but it seemed to forebode something disastrous and it was to me heart-rending. The two attendants stood aghast. I too could say nothing and so mumbled, "I felt it would be inauspicious if I gave up my usual practice." Bhagavan said, "Oh! What is there in that?" and looking at one of the attendants by name Anjaneyalu who was by his side, he said, "Keep those clothes carefully. Nagamma has brought them. Tomorrow it is *Ugadi*, it seems." So saying, in a very gentle manner he gave us leave to go. As the attendants were removing the clothes, I went near the couch and asked Bhagavan, "How is the arm?" Bhagavan said, "What shall I say how it is?" I told Bhagavan, "You must somehow cure yourself." Bhagavan replied, "Ahem. I cannot say anything now." I pleaded with great humility, "How could you say that, Bhagavan?" Perhaps he felt that my hopes would not go unless he told me the bare truth and so looking at me with compassion, he said, "Ahem. Cure? What cure?" I said, "Ayyo! Will it not be cured?" Bhagavan replied, "Ahem. Cure? What cure? How could there be any cure now?" The previous assurance that there was nothing to worry about and nothing would happen — all of them disappeared at that moment and when I heard those words, my whole body shook with fear. My

eyes filled with tears and my voice got choked. I wanted to ask about our fate for the future and so was trying to gather some composure of mind and open my lips when someone from the office came in hurriedly on some urgent work. I was startled by that noise and came out without asking what I wanted to ask and slowly retraced my steps to my hut. The next morning I thought of approaching Bhagavan again and ask for his final message, but could not get an opportunity. The resonant voice of Bhagavan that said, “Is the *Ugadi* come?” appeared to me to say, “All is over.” With that *Ugadi* the great privilege I had all these years of hearing and enjoying the nectar of Bhagavan’s voice ended.

On the evening of 14-4-1950, I went at 6-30 and stood in the queue arranged for an orderly *darshan* of Bhagavan and when I got up on the raised mound opposite the door of the room where Bhagavan was sitting, and stood there for a while with my sight concentrated on him and prayed to him mentally, “Oh Prabho! Won’t you for once radiate on me your compassionate look?” Bhagavan’s eyes slowly began to open and from those eyes, a mild and compassionate look came on me. That was the last time I had the great fortune of his compassionate look.

At 8-47 that night, Sri Ramana, the embodiment of light and enlightenment, left his mortal coil.

When the mortal body of Gurudev, who was at once my mother, father, Guru and God and who has protected me all these years, ceased to be the abode of that great soul, I remained still as a statue, drowned in inexpressible grief and sorrow.

The writing of these letters was begun on 21-11-1945 and continued uninterrupted all these days through the grace of Bhagavan, and with the end of the *Avatar* of Bhagavan, I am giving up the writing of these letters.

RECOLLECTIONS OF
SRI RAMANASRAMAM

FOREWORD TO LETTERS FROM AND RECOLLECTIONS OF SRI RAMANASRAMAM

When the *tapas* of great devotees reaches a sufficiently ripe stage, they are reborn in this world by God's grace. When their allotted work is over they go back. To this category belong Kumaraswami, Kumarilabhata, Jnanasambandar and Sri Ramana Maharshi.

There is no one in this century who has taught *Advaita* in such an easily understandable manner by the ten-lettered mantra "*Neevevarovo telusuko*" (find out who you are).

Sri Nagamma Garu obtained shelter at the lotus feet of this eminent Guru, stayed at the Ashram a long time enjoying great bliss, noted down every little incident that happened there and gave to the public in an easily understandable manner the great Truth the Maharshi expounded from time to time. Readers have seen this through her books *Letters* and *Life*.

Such incidents as were omitted while writing these two books are now related in this *Smrutulu*. May *Jignasus* read them and experience immense joy!

Ramakrishna Mutt
Rajahmundry
(East Godavary Dt.)
12-6-78

Swami Nirvikalpananda

PREFACE TO LETTERS FROM AND RECOLLECTIONS OF SRI RAMANASRAMAM*

Several devotees expressed their desire to hear interesting sayings and nectar-like utterances of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi. One of them is my elder brother Sri D. S. Sastri. In February 1976, I had to undergo a surgical operation for cancer at Madras. My brother, his daughter Vasantha and her husband Ramakrishna looked after me and served me with love and affection. After the surgery and during the subsequent Cobalt treatment, my brother used to sit in a chair by my bedside and read *Bhagavad Gita* in the mornings and *Bhagavatam* in the evenings. On such occasions, I related several incidents that happened in Bhagavan's presence, which came to my mind readily. He noted down all such incidents which had not already appeared in *The Letters from Sri Ramanasramam* or in *My Life at Sri Ramanasramam*. Though later he urged me to write them down in the form of a book, I did not have the energy or the enthusiasm to do so at the time.

On 10-5-1976, I went to Bangalore for convalescing at the invitation of my sister's son, G. R. Sarma and his wife Nirmala. It was during that time Ganesan of Sri Ramanasramam wrote to me saying that I should carefully recollect and write down in a narrative form all my reminiscences relating to Bhagavan so that in due course

* The thirty-one letters previously published under this title have been incorporated into the preceding 'Letters'. The twenty-eight 'Recollections' follow this Preface.

the Ashram could publish them. Even so I did not have the required urge or strength to sit down and write and so replied that I would take up the work when I got sufficient strength to go over to the Ashram for a long stay.

On 12-10-76 my sister's daughter, Prafulla and her husband S. V. Avadhani, invited me to Bombay for a change. While there P. V. Somasundaram, the Secretary of the local Ramana Kendra, arranged a meeting of the devotees on 21-10-76 and asked me to speak. When I told him that I was not accustomed to public speaking he said I could write down what I wished to say and that he would arrange with my nephew to translate the same into English and read it out at the meeting. I had therefore no alternative but to agree to his request. On 18-11-76, I sat under an Aswatha tree in the park outside the Bank House in Nariman Point, Bombay, where my nephew resided and began writing these reminiscences. I felt it was the call of Bhagavan and I thought I should not ignore it any longer. That was how I came to write again.

Four years ago, I wrote *My Life at Sri Ramanasramam* and because of the shortness of the time, it is just possible some repetitions have crept into these writings through oversight. I request readers to bear with me in this regard.

Sri Ramanasramam

Thiruvannamalai

1-1-1978

Suri Nagamma

RECOLLECTIONS OF SRI RAMANASRAMAM

(1) COME, LET US GO

In the biography of Bhagavan, *Ramana Maharshi, and the Path of Self-Knowledge*, it is mentioned how when Bhagavan was in the Virupaksha Cave his mother came there on one or two occasions, and how when in 1912 she stayed for about ten days, she fell ill. It was on that occasion Bhagavan composed four verses appealing to Lord Arunachala, which is perhaps the only instance known of any prayer of his to influence the course of events. The fever subsided and she returned to her family in Manamadurai. In 1916, as a result of some calamities in the family, she got disgusted with life and came to Arunachala again, this time with the intention of staying with Bhagavan till the end of her life. As she was doubtful about her being permitted to stay with him in the Virupaksha Cave, she went first to Echamma's house for a temporary stay and visited Bhagavan frequently along with Echamma and other lady devotees. After a while, she made known her desire to remain in the cave permanently with Bhagavan. Bhagavan just listened to her but did not say anything. One of the attendants who was looking after the affairs of the Ashram at the time protested, as he felt that Bhagavan might not like the idea and might go away from the place never to return. That was because of his well-known attitude towards his relatives, including his mother. Moreover, it was felt that if an exception was made in the

case of the Mother, other women like Echamma and Mudaliar Patti might likewise seek an exception. Hence all the attendants in one voice said that ladies should not be allowed to stay in the cave under any circumstances.

When their objections were made known, Echamma and other ladies gave an assurance saying, “We will never ask for permission to stay in the Ashram. It is enough if the Mother alone is allowed to stay. She has become too old. She cannot climb up the hill every day; and where else can she go at this old age? Bhagavan alone should look after her hereafter.” As no one could guess what exactly was in Bhagavan’s mind and afraid of suggesting any change in the existing traditions of the Ashram, they persisted in refusing to accede to Mother’s requests. She therefore got up in great anguish to leave the Ashram. Seeing that Bhagavan, deeply moved, also got up and taking hold of her and said, “Come. Let us go. If not here we can stay somewhere else. Come.” At this, the residents of the Ashram fell at his feet and as they were afraid that he might leave them altogether, begged him to stay, saying, “Please do not go anywhere. Pray do stay here itself along with Mother.” From then on Mother stayed with Bhagavan.

With the passage of time, because of latent *vasanas*, Mother would say it would be better if they had this article or that and Bhagavan would admonish her quietly saying, “Mother, if you want bodily comfort, go to the other son; if you want mental comfort you stay here,” and she opted for latter as a matter of course. She adjusted herself to the hard life of the Ashram and never thought of going elsewhere under any circumstances. She remained there alone till the very end, and Bhagavan with his divine grace gave her *moksha* thus fulfilling the Upanishad injunction “*Matrudevo Bhavah.*”

When I heard about this incident from Kunjuswami, I asked him why it was not mentioned in Bhagavan’s biography.

He said, "It is a fact that it is not mentioned." I asked Bhagavan in the same manner as you have asked me and he said: "Why? I did not like to make public a matter where there was some difference of opinion amongst the members of the Ashram." When I suggested that there might be many such matters which are not known to the public, Bhagavan said, "Yes. There are very many matters not known to others. What can one do?"

I was naturally interested in giving publicity to important matters of this nature and so one day mentioned it to Santhamma and Subbalakshamma, two lady devotees working in the kitchen. They related to me another incident which is as follows: "After Bhagavan settled down in Skandasramam along with his mother, Chinnaswami, the younger brother of Bhagavan, came to Arunachala, took *sannyasa* and began living by begging food from the public. After some time he came to stay with Bhagavan along with the other attendants. It will be remembered Bhagavan stayed in Skandasramam till the death of his Mother. Knowing that her end was near and before losing consciousness, she called Bhagavan to her side and placing Chinnaswami's hand in his, said, 'Look, my dear. This boy does not know what is right and what is wrong. Don't let him go away from you. Keep a watchful eye on him. This is my last wish'. So saying she entrusted her third son to the care of Bhagavan. In accordance with her wishes Bhagavan always kept a watchful eye on him. Whenever there were any lapses on the part of Chinnaswami, who later became the *Sarvadhikari*, Bhagavan tactfully solved the problems arising therefrom. Chinnaswami too, had the greatest devotion and highest regard for Bhagavan.

This was very much in evidence when Chinnaswami was looking after the administration of the Ashram as its *Sarvadhikari*. If he found fault with anybody and the devotee

stricken with grief complained to Bhagavan, Bhagavan would look on him with compassion and in his inimitable way relate some amusing stories to soothe his feelings. If in spite of that, the devotee were to persist in his complaint, Bhagavan would console him by saying, “Who knows what tales have been carried to the *Sarvadhikarî*?”

As regards giving *mukti* to his mother, as stated above, one incident deserves special mention. When Palaniswamy, an early disciple, was in the last throes of death Bhagavan thought of giving him *mukti* and so placed his hands on the heart and the head but the strength of his *vasanas* was so intense, they could not get dissolved and so after some time he removed his hands and gave up the effort, ultimately. In the case of his Mother some years later, Bhagavan similarly placed his hands on the heart and the head and as the *vasanas* gradually subsided, he continued to keep his hands thus until life was completely extinct. Thus his efforts at giving *mukti* to Mother succeeded. In the case of Lakshmi, the cow, Bhagavan often told us that all the past incidents in life welled up in the same manner as in the case of Mother but they subsided ultimately, which did not happen in the case of Palaniswami. When I pointed out that Bhagavan was not with Lakshmi till she breathed her last as in the case of Mother, he said, “Oh that! What desires did Lakshmi have after all? Only if there are desires in plenty, they will remain till the end.” So what Bhagavan wanted us to understand was that Lakshmi the cow, being an animal, had no *vasanas* like us human beings. It was only in the case of these three living beings that Bhagavan was known to have extended his grace during the last moments of their lives.

(2) THE COOK

Sometime in 1942, a devotee asked Bhagavan why the *slokas* in “Chatvarimsat” though they are only forty in number are in different metres. Smilingly Bhagavan said, “Oh that! Nayana wanted to write a “Ramana Satakam” (100 *slokas*) with each set of ten *slokas* in different metres and selected the required metres for the purpose. He then began writing one *sloka* in each metre and slowly added some more *slokas* as and when he felt like writing but could not complete the work. By the time he passed away it was found there were only 40 *slokas*. These were gathered together by me and named as “Chatvarimsat”. This is being recited every morning before the *Upanishad Parayana*. What to do? A number of his writings remained incomplete similarly. That was his way of doing things.” “In one or two places there are ten *slokas* at a stretch in one metre. How come?” asked the devotee. “Yes, yes. In one *dasakam* (series of ten *slokas*) he wrote only two *slokas* in a lighter vein saying ‘*Bhuvana bhupate, bhagavatah krite, bhavasi pachako yamavatam pate,*’ (Oh! Lord of *Sannyasa*! You are like a cook in the services of God). ‘*Narapasooniman ahami tadayan, parasivodanam vithanushe pachan,*’ (You are demolishing the egos of the human animals and cooking meals for Parama Siva). You see, that means I am a good cook. Nayana has styled me a cook. How strange! Perhaps Arunachaleswara was till then eating human beings uncooked and now he has got in me an expert cook. Nayana means I cook well and tastefully and serve it to the Lord. Good! He can eat the food with great relish. A nice cook indeed,” said Bhagavan with a smile.

(3) TITLES

In 1944, while copying all Telugu poems in a notebook, I chanced on a *stotram* written by Durbha Subramanya Sastri. I showed it to Bhagavan. Pointing out to me a verse in it, he said, “Look! He has written saying, ‘What a simpleton you are! The valuable knowledge you had gathered while doing *tapas* in the various caves in the hill you have not safeguarded by taking out a copyright and have scattered it all over.’ So he says I am a simpleton. Yes. That is good. Something or other.” All of us were amused at what Bhagavan said. It was in those days that a poem written by Vinnakota Venkataratnam in Telugu was found amongst other papers. The purport is as under:

“He is the child of Alagamma; this child is very gentle;
He is very delicate; he is very shrewd.

He does not talk at all; but when he talks nectar spills;
He does not see at all; but when he does see, he sees
within his Self.

He puts you off your balance by feeding the hunger of
stomach, but does not show the path of deliverance;
He moves about unattached; he does not show the path
of unattachment.”

There are several verses in the same strain. When I enquired when Venkataratnam wrote those verses, Bhagavan said, “Oh that! He came and stayed here for some time long before you came to the Ashram. Towards the end of his stay he wrote these poems and handed them over to us. You see, he called me a *mayadi* (one who puts people off their guard). Right. People give me some name or other. Who is to question?” said Bhagavan with a smile. A few days later, an article written by Sowrees appeared in a Telugu monthly journal. Srinivasa Mowni, who looks after all

correspondence, brought the journal with him along with other articles received by post that day. After Bhagavan had read all the letters received, he gave them back to Srinivasa Mowni who left the journal with Bhagavan, saying with a smile, "What a thief Bhagavan is!" After going through the article in the journal, Bhagavan handed it over to me saying, "Look. There is an article about me in the journal written by Sowrees. Read it aloud so that all those present here can hear it." I read through the whole thing. Towards the end, the writer had stated, "Finally Bhagavan swallowed me, i.e., my ego outright. What a thief!" When I read it out, all those who could understand Telugu laughed. Bhagavan also said with a smile, "Mowni gave me the journal saying, 'What a thief Bhagavan is!' without telling me what it was all about and went away smiling. I was intrigued as to what made him say that. So I went through the article. So that is that. I do not know what I really am. Sarma says that I am a simpleton; Vinnakota says I am a *mayadi*. Sowrees says I am a thief. They alone must decide who exactly I am. Nayana has already dubbed me as a cook. Yes, something or other. All are good titles." So saying he made us all laugh and he too joined in the laughter.

(4) HOW FORTUNATE IS THIS SABARI!

Sometime in 1946, S. Doraiswamy Iyer came to the Ashram. He was a very successful lawyer practising in Madras, earned a lot of money, gave up practice, donated all the money to the Aurobindo Ashram, and lived there as an Ashramite. Off and on, he used to come to Ramanasramam. Once it so happened I was copying in a notebook various *stotras* in Telugu

in praise of Bhagavan, when Doraiswami came into the hall and sat there. He saw how Bhagavan was calling me now and then and giving me instructions about copying the *stotras* and others in Telugu. Doraiswamy appears to have observed the paternal affection with which Bhagavan was calling me and so when Bhagavan left the hall and when I too was about to leave soon after, he came directly behind me unobserved and began singing the famous Thyagaraja *kirtan*: “How fortunate is Sabari? How fortunate is this Sabari!” Startled at the unexpected singing right behind my back, I turned round and found him looking at me smiling. I asked him why he was singing like that. Pointing his hand towards me he said, “Yes, Amma, I am saying how fortunate is this Sabari! Bhagavan does not speak to us even once though we ask him all sorts of questions. In your case, Bhagavan himself asks for you saying, ‘Where is Nagamma?’ and speaks to you every now and then. How lucky you are!” I naturally felt very much elated at that.

In 1954 I shifted my permanent residence from the Ashram to Andhra Pradesh and was coming to the Ashram once or twice a year for a few months’ stay. On one such occasion, perhaps in 1957, I remained in Bhagavan’s hall a little longer than usual and with all thoughts of Bhagavan crowding in on my mind, was going out when all of a sudden I heard a voice from behind similar to Bhagavan’s calling, “Where is Nagamma?” (*Nagamma yedhi?*). Startled at that, I looked behind and found Devaraja Mudaliar smiling at me. Noticing the tears that had welled up in my eyes, he said, “Bhagavan used to call you like that, didn’t he?” Recovering my balance of mind I replied, “Yes, Brother. What you have said is perfectly correct. For a fleeting moment I felt it was Bhagavan himself that was calling me. What a delusion! Be it as it may, I have heard those soothing words once again at

least through your mouth. What a good day for me! It was only after hearing those words from Bhagavan that Doraiswamy Iyer sang the song ‘How fortunate is this Sabari!’ Those good days are gone never to return,” I said. Mudaliar also felt likewise, and shared with me my regrets, being a fellow devotee.

(5) NO NEED FOR LEAVE APPLICATION FOR WOMEN

As is customary for orthodox women to refrain from reading or writing during their monthly period, I was observing that practice for a long time, and was not going to the Ashram during those three or four days. The work of copying Telugu writings received from various people therefore was piling up. Bhagavan was observing this for some time. After the fourth occasion when I absented myself thus, Bhagavan commented on this. That day some *stotras* were received through post and had to be copied after being read out in the hall. When they were as usual placed in Bhagavan’s hands, he looked at Rajagopala Iyer and remarked, “Oh! These papers have been received but Nagamma has not turned up. She goes on leave thus thrice every two months. Even the Governor of a State has perhaps to apply for leave; not so the women. They keep away as they please and we have to infer the reason. All right. Go and give her these papers and the notebook. She may copy them at her leisure. Ask her to look into the proofs first as they have to be sent back to the press immediately. Better you bring them back with you.” He thus sent me the papers. Rajagopala Iyer brought the papers soon after and related to me smilingly all that Bhagavan said. He gave me the papers

and went away. Whatever doubts I had before about writing and reading during the monthly period got cleared up that day. I took Bhagavan's views as authoritative and corrected the proofs immediately. Subsequently, I copied all the papers sent to me in the notebook and after my purificatory bath went to the Ashram and placed them at the lotus feet of Bhagavan. He accepted them with a gracious smile.

(6) WHY WORRY?

Bhagavan's *Jayanti* (birthday) is always an important annual event. The day previous to the celebrations, *stotras* in praise of Bhagavan are read in the Hall and in the night there is feasting. While most of the devotees come in the morning of the *Jayanti* day and leave the same evening, some of the older devotees come a day earlier and leave a day after, so that they may spend a longer time with Bhagavan. Thus, for three days at a stretch, there used to be unusual bustle and activity.

Once the *Jayanti* fell during the December holidays. So Gurram Subbaramayya, Krishna Bhikshu and others employed in service came four or five days in advance. I thought I could spend time usefully with all of them discussing Bhagavan, but as ill-luck would have it, I had my period in the early morning of the day previous to the *Jayanti* day. I was very much upset and sat in the verandah of my house brooding over my misfortune. As I did not turn up at the Ashram at the usual hour, Subbaramayya came to my place to find out the reason. When I explained my predicament, he said a few words of consolation and then went back. On seeing him Bhagavan asked him, "What is the matter? Why has Nagamma not come?" After mentioning

the cause of my absence, Subbaramayya stated that I was very much disappointed and depressed. “Why? Why should she be sorry? She can sit and meditate,” said Bhagavan. Subbaramayya came to me after lunch and told me about Bhagavan’s observations. From that day onwards I got confirmed in the view that there is no need to refrain from the practice of meditation under such circumstances and what is really important is to get rid of the impurities of the mind. The same holds good for writing work also. What Bhagavan said was indeed an injunction coupled with his grace and kindness.

(7) FASTING

Another important thing happened during the days of my commencing the writing work. On auspicious days like Mondays in the month of Kartik or Maha Sivarathri days, I used to fast and as if to test me, papers to be copied by me used to be received in large numbers on such days. Bhagavan looked into them carefully instead of just glancing at them if I were there. So Rajagopala Iyer enquired why he was taking the trouble of perusing them at length instead of passing them on to Nagamma. Bhagavan never replied to the question and so I went to him to ask for the papers. He gave them to me reluctantly. After it had happened thus on one or two occasions, I recalled the circumstances under which Echamma’s niece, Chellammal, gave up fasting on special occasions, feeling that service at the holy feet of Bhagavan was more valuable than indulging in fasts. I give below the *sloka* that accidentally came into the hands of Chellamma:

*Sajjanasange samprapte samastha niyamairalam
taalawrinthena kim karyam labdhe malayamarutham*

When one gets the company of holy men, there is no need for religious austerities. When cool breeze blows, where is the need for a fan?

It seems Kunjuswami was for some time observing fast on special festival days. Bhagavan was therefore not entrusting him with any work on such occasions saying, “How can we ask him to do any work when he is weak with fasting?” When Kunjuswami came to know of it, he gave up fasting saying, “Enough, enough of this. Is fasting greater than serving the Master?”

Once a devotee asked Bhagavan about the significance of fasting. With a benevolent look towards him, Bhagavan said, “If all the activities of the indriyas are given up, the mind becomes single-pointed. When such a mind gets concentrated on God, it is real *upavasam* (fasting). ‘*Upa*’ means being near; ‘*vasam*’ means living. Where is he going to live? He will live in his Self. Desires are the food for the mind. Giving them up in *upavasam*. If there are no desires whatsoever there is no such thing as mind. What remains then is the Self. One who can ‘fast’ the mind, need not ‘fast’ the body,” said Bhagavan.

The same devotee asked again, “Why is it that people say that one should perform *yagnas*, *yagas*, *abhishekas*, *pujas* and the like and fast on such occasions?” Bhagavan replied, “That is secondary. For those who cannot manage to fast the mind as aforesaid, fasting of the body has been suggested so as to purify the mind. For those who cannot do even that, i.e., fasting, *bhajan* and *sankeertanam* have been suggested. All that is to the good.”

(8) GIVE THEM TO THOSE WHO HAVE ALREADY EATEN

In January 1950, Homeopathic treatment was given for the cancerous growth on Bhagavan's left elbow, as all other systems of treatment had failed to cure it. The Homeopathic doctor, like all other doctors, also first appealed to Bhagavan to cure himself before commencing treatment, saying what he himself could do was only minimal. At that time I was taking only *cholam* (corn) meals instead of rice. As it was the month of January and a fresh crop had arrived in the market, I prepared puffs with *cholam* the same way as I was doing in previous years and wanted to offer them to Bhagavan as usual and then only cook the *cholam* meal for myself. Bhagavan had a great liking for *cholam* puffs and so whenever I offered them he ate them with great relish. Owing to his illness now, the office authorities had issued an order that no eatables or medicines should be offered to Bhagavan without their prior knowledge or permission. In view of this, I first asked the doctor and when he said there was no objection, I prepared the puffs, put them in a big brass container and went to the Ashram office about an hour before breakfast. When I told them that the doctor had no objection to the puffs being eaten by Bhagavan and that I would hand them over to the people in the kitchen for being served to Bhagavan and others during breakfast, the *Sarvadhikari* and the others with him did not say anything. Not knowing what to do, I handed over the puffs to Santhamma in the kitchen, leaving it to them to do whatever they pleased. In those days, Bhagavan did not go to the dining hall for his meals and so did not know what exactly happened there. As the Ashram authorities did not themselves ask the doctor, they hesitated to give the puffs to

Bhagavan and so gave them to the devotees only. Ramachandra Iyer, one of the attendants of Bhagavan, who ate them, during breakfast came and told Bhagavan, "It seems Nagamma gave some *cholam* puffs for being distributed in the dining hall. They were served to us all. We ate them and found them very tasty." It seems Bhagavan merely remarked, "Oho! Is that so? They are very tasty. I cannot eat them now without the doctor's permission."

As I was anxious to know whether the puffs were given to Bhagavan or not, I asked Ramachandra Iyer about it in the afternoon. "No. They were not given to Bhagavan. Perhaps they were afraid the doctor would not approve," he said. Annoyed at that, I told him that I had already obtained doctor's permission and also had informed the office about it. I came home feeling very sad. Subsequently Ramachandra Iyer quietly informed Bhagavan about my having obtained the doctor's permission and told the authorities about it before handing the puffs to the people in the kitchen. "Oh! Is that so?" said Bhagavan and left the matter at that. Ten days later the Ashram authorities themselves obtained the doctor's permission, and brought *cholam* puffs to Bhagavan saying, "Doctor has permitted you to eat them. Please take them." With evident displeasure, Bhagavan said, "Oho! I should not eat them if Nagamma gets them but should eat them only if you get them, is it? She brought them after getting the doctor's permission; only you never believed her. I should now believe you, should I? Enough of this nonsense. Give them to those who ate them previously. I don't want them." So saying he refused even to touch them.

The *cholam* meal which I started taking in 1940 and continued to take till 1950 did not suit me afterwards and I have not taken it since. Perhaps in one of my previous births I had given *cholam* as food for about eleven years to some

Mahatma who was doing his *tapas* sustaining himself with that food. Consequently I must have been privileged to eat *cholam* as food in this life and do service at the feet of Bhagavan.

(9) FIGS

A few days after the above incident, my sister-in-law sent some dry figs through someone coming here with instructions to give some for me and the rest to Bhagavan as she knew Bhagavan liked figs very much. I cleaned them carefully dried them and kept them in a Horlicks bottle. I could not give them to Bhagavan as the Ashram authorities had prohibited the giving of any eatables to Bhagavan by devotees. This time I did not even attempt to seek their permission though I was feeling sore over it. The fruit was however carefully preserved and so there was no hurry either. I did not taste even a single bit as I did not feel like eating them before offering them to Bhagavan. The Homeopathic treatment was still being continued. One day I went to the Ashram a little earlier than 4 p.m. In those days Bhagavan was giving darshan from 8 to 10 a.m. in the mornings and from 4 to 6 p.m. in the afternoons. By the time I went there arrangements had been made for Bhagavan to sit on a table with a mattress spread thereon in the verandah attached to the *Nirvana* room. That day when Bhagavan came out and sat on the dais there were about five hundred devotees, men and women, children and old people. To the south of the verandah at a lower elevation ladies including myself were seated. Srinivasa Mowni came at 4.30 p.m. and showed to Bhagavan the letters that were being sent out. On reading

one of the letters Bhagavan turned towards me and looked steadfastly. I could not understand the reason why he did so. When he looked thus twice or thrice S. Doraiswamy Iyer and others by his side began discussing amongst themselves in whispers what it could be about. Mowni got back the letters from Bhagavan and left. No sooner than he left, Bhagavan turned towards me and said, "Look. It seems the Homeopathic doctor has given me permission for taking figs, grapes and other dry fruits. So these people are writing to your brother, D.S. Sastri in Madras, to send some. That is the letter that I have just read." I was surprised and summoning enough courage, I said immediately: "Is that so? How strange! My sister-in-law sent some time back dry figs with instructions to give them to you but I have not brought them here because I was afraid I would not be permitted to give them to you. I have therefore washed them, dried them and preserved them carefully in a glass jar." Looking at me with compassion, Bhagavan said, "Is it so? They are in your house now?" I replied in the affirmative and was hesitating whether to go and fetch them then itself or not, when Bhagavan said, "Oho! I see. They are here itself in your house. Then why worry? Why have they written to Madras?" On hearing that, I could not sit there any longer and unmindful of consequences, got up saying, "I will bring them immediately."

I went home and returned in about ten minutes with the bottle filled with figs. Noticing my coming back, Bhagavan told Rangaswami, one of his personal attendants, "There, Nagamma is bringing the fruit jar. Go and receive it." Accordingly, Rangaswami came to the edge of the verandah and stretched his hands when I gave the jar to him from below. Bhagavan got its lid removed immediately, took some fruit from it, asked for a penknife and when Rangaswami

brought it, cut the fruit into small bits and began eating them. All those around him looked at him with surprise. Handing back the jar to Rangaswami with the remaining fruits, Bhagavan asked him to preserve them carefully as otherwise they would write to all sorts of places for their supply. "We will be able to say that we have them already with us. I can eat them whenever I feel like it," said Bhagavan. Looking at me Rangaswami asked me if I wanted the empty jar back and I replied in the negative. My joy knew no bounds at the graciousness extended towards me. My eyes were filled with tears of joy. Bhagavan looked at me as if to say, "Is your desire now fulfilled?" It is no exaggeration to say that his eyes were shining bright like emeralds.

It was a great surprise to those who were present there that Bhagavan who does not eat anything given to him by devotees without sharing the same with all those around him at the time did not do so on this occasion. As this is most unusual, my happiness was without bounds. I was reminded of Lord Sri Rama and His acceptance with great relish of fruits given to Him by Sabari, which she had preserved for a very long time awaiting the arrival of the Lord. I also felt that the song sung by Doraiswamy Iyer in 1946, standing behind me directly, "How fortunate is Sabari? How fortunate is this Sabari?" That has come true, in a sense. The same Doraiswamy Iyer was present now witnessing the whole scene and looking at me with great kindness.

(10) YADBHAAVAM TAT BHAVATI (AS ONE CONCEIVES, SO THINGS HAPPEN)

One of the devotees who could speak to Bhagavan with some familiarity noticed some undesirable acts of some of the devotees in the Ashram and so asked, “Bhagavan, why do people behave like this even in your august presence?” With a smile Bhagavan replied: “What else can be done? That which is within comes out. Nothing that is not inside can come out, you see. If there is something good, it comes out; so also that which is bad likewise comes out. Nothing can remain bottled up within for long.” “That means the *sannidhi* in the presence of *jnanis* or *Mahatmas* acts only as a mirror. Whatever is within gets reflected outside. Is that so?” asked the devotee, “Yes. That is so. The thoughts of the one sitting opposite to me get reflected here. What of that? Where people gather together such things necessarily happen. It can’t be helped,” said Bhagavan. There were several incidents of this nature. I give below one such:

Annamalai was looking after the construction work when the Ashram was shifted to the foot of the hill. One day when everyone was quietly meditating in the hall, he came to Bhagavan and prostrated. When he got up, Bhagavan began enquiring of him whether the construction of a particular wall was over and whether the construction of the new room had begun. Noticing the enquiries, a devotee said, “Bhagavan. Why is it that whenever Annamalaiswami comes here you talk to him only of construction work?” “Is that your doubt? When he comes here does he come here as an individual by name Annamalai? He appears as if the structures themselves have come. What can I do? With whatever ideas people come to me, the ideas occur to me as if reflected in a mirror. When I speak to him on that subject

he is satisfied. He will have no regrets that he could not sit here and meditate. He is concerned only about construction work and he is amply satisfied if I enquire about it. That is why elders say ‘*Yadbhaavam Tat Bhavati*’,” said Bhagavan.

(11) A GARLAND OF UPADESAS

Once a devotee asked, “What is the import of the *upadesa* (communication of an initiatory mantra or formula) of Lord Krishna contained in the following verse of the *Gita*?”

*paritranaya sadhunam vinasayacha dushkrutam
dharma samstapanarthaya sambhavami yuge yuge*

Bhagavan: (with a smile on his face) “What is the difficulty about it? It means for the protection of the virtuous, for the destruction of evildoers and for establishing *dharma*, I am born from age to age. This is easily understandable.”

Devotee: “That is not my point, Bhagavan. Lord Krishna says, ‘I will be born; I will protect’. Does it mean that He will be born again and again?”

Bhagavan: “Oho, is that your doubt? When *Mahatmas* talk of ‘I’ they do not speak of the body. That ‘I’ means I along with *ahamkarana* which becomes *ahankara* (*ahamkarana* means mind, *buddhi*, *chitta* and *ahankara*). That which is freed from the *ahamkarana* is *Atma*. When that I becomes *bahirmukha*, i.e., outer-directed it becomes worldly and when it is inner-directed *antarmukha*, it becomes *aham-sphurana*, all-pervading.”

Devotee: “If that is so, *sastras* say that without *prarabdha* no one is born into this world. Where is the question of *prarabdha* for *Paramatma*?”

Bhagavan: “There is no need to doubt the *sastras*. *Paramatma* is *nishkriya* (without action). How can he have

prarabdha, you say. The reply to your doubt is in that verse itself. The verse says, ‘When the evil-doers hurt the virtuous, the latter pray to God by doing *puja, japa, tapas, yagna* and other good deeds to relieve them of the tortures inflicted on them by the evildoers. The bad deeds of the evildoers and the good deeds of the virtuous result in *prarabdha* and God comes down to the earth assuming a form — an *avatar* — that is known as *pareccha prarabdha*.’

On some other occasion, another devotee asked: “What is the meaning of *Achyuta*?”

Bhagavan: “*Achyuta* means one who does not slip down from his real state; that is a *Mahatma*, one whose mind has become one with the *Atma*. *Askhalita brahmachari* also means the same thing; one who dwells in *Brahman*; one whose mind does not slip down from *Brahman*.”

Devotee: “What is meant by *Hrisheekesa*?”

Bhagavan: “*Hrisheeka* means the *indriyas*. *Eesa* means the Lord. So *Hrisheekesa* means the Lord of the *indriyas*. There is always a separate meaning for the various words describing the Lord.”

On another occasion, a devotee speaking about the *Gita* asked: “In the *sloka* ‘*dievi hyesha gunamayee*’ it is said he who is devoted to me can conquer my *maya*. What exactly is its import?”

Bhagavan: “It is the same thing.

*dievihyesha gunamayi mama maya duratyaya
mameva ye prapatdyante mayametham tharanthi the*

Gita, VII: 14

“That means: ‘This wonderful illusion of mine, consisting of three *gunas* (modes of nature) is extremely difficult to get over; however, those alone that take refuge in me cross it.’ Those that take refuge in me means those that engage

themselves in an enquiry of the Self and take refuge in that 'I' can cross over the *maya* (illusion). That is the meaning. In the *Gita* in another verse after this there is mention of the four types of *bhakti*:

*chaturvidha bhajanthe mam janah sukritino arjuna,
artho jignasu artharthi jnaneecha bhatarashbha*

Gita, VII: 16

“It means: ‘Four types of virtuous men worship Me Oh Arjuna! the seeker of worldly objects; the sufferer; the seeker of knowledge and the man of wisdom.’

“Immediately after that verse there is another:

*thesham jnani nityayukta ekabhaktir visishyate
priyo hi jnaninotyartham aham sa cha mama priyah:*

Gita, VII: 17

“It means: ‘Of them the best is the man of wisdom constantly established in identity with Me and possessed of exclusive devotion; for extremely dear am I to the wise man (who knows Me in reality) and he is extremely dear to ME.’ You see that what the *Jnani* likes most is the ‘I’. He worships only that ‘I’. He is dear to Me and I am dear to him. It means the *Atma* which always says ‘I, I’ is dear. In the same manner whenever in the *Gita* it is said, ‘Serve Me, surrender to Me, I am everything’ it relates to the *Atmaswarupa* and not to the form wearing *sankha*, *chakra*, *gada* and four arms. The references made by all *Mahatmas* to ‘I’ are to that *atmaswarupa* and not to the body. To them nothing other than the Self is evident.’ So saying Bhagavan assumed silence.

(12) MANTROPADESA

Once a lady devotee went about saying that Bhagavan had deputed her to give *upadesas* (communication of an initiatory *mantra* or formula) to others. She gathered around her some devotees. In due course, this developed into a racket — *upadesas*, presentations and the like, and later deification of the lady by giving her not only costly silk sarees but also doing *pada pujas* (worship of her feet as the Guru). A devotee of Sri Ramanasramam happened to visit his native place when he met some of the lady's disciples. He deprecated all the false propaganda that was being made there in the name of Bhagavan. He asserted that Bhagavan never instructed others to do any propaganda in his name nor in the manner that was being done. They did not pay any heed to his protestations and asserted that Bhagavan himself gave personal instructions to that lady. According to them she was the very embodiment of the Holy Mother and would never tell a lie. When the devotee came back to the Ashram, he related to Bhagavan the whole story and asked him if he had given any instructions as alleged. Bhagavan replied, "What do I know? I never said like that to anybody." "If that is so, may I go and tell all the people there and stop all the propaganda that is being made in your name?" asked the devotee. With a smile Bhagavan remarked, "What an idea! Suppose you go and tell them that Bhagavan never gave instructions in the manner alleged. They may say he did it in a *sukshma* (subtle) manner, or they may say he appeared in a dream and gave instructions and thus argue endlessly. Will they stop at that? She may even come here and question me saying, 'Swami, did you not come to me in a dream on such and such a day and tell me. Or, did you not come to me in a subtle form and tell me?' and thus challenge

me. What can be done then? To say 'No' there must be evidence. Who can quarrel with them?" With that the devotee gave up all further attempts in this regard.

(13) A LITTLE CHILD

Sometime in 1944-45, a devotee by name Somasundaram Pillai came to Arunachala with the intention of staying in the Ashram permanently. His wife is also a great devotee of Bhagavan. Her devotion is however of a peculiar nature. It seems Bhagavan once appeared to her in a dream as a little child; so she wrote some verses about feeding the little child, bathing it, putting it in a cradle and lulling it to sleep. She began singing those songs in the hall and at times used to faint after getting into an ecstasy. Her relatives used to take her home on such occasions with a strong belief that it was a divine blessing. Bhagavan watched the whole thing with amusement but kept quiet. One day, she brought a cradle, sat opposite to Bhagavan in the hall, kept a small photo of his in it, rocked the cradle and began singing a lullaby. She had by her side a diaper bag with a spare bed and children's clothing. People in the hall were witnessing the whole thing with curiosity. As I stepped into the hall, I looked at Bhagavan enquiringly. Bhagavan suppressed a smile and sat as usual in a dignified manner. I sat down quietly. After rocking the cradle and singing a number of songs, she collected her things and went away with all her people. As soon as she left, Bhagavan looked at me and said, "There you are! She found me as a small child and is now bringing me up perhaps because there is no one to look after me. She took me home, gave me milk, bathed me, laid me on a bed specially prepared for me, sang lullabies

and put me to sleep. She says, ‘Come my little child; I will give you milk; I will give you a bath; I will give you food; I will put you to sleep.’ She is doing all this in my very presence. What to tell them! People do all sorts of funny things according to their preconceived notions. We have merely to keep quiet witnessing them,” said Bhagavan.

(14) KUNJUSWAMI’S TRIP TO TIRUPATI

During the period Bhagavan was living on the hill a Malayali devotee brought Kunjuswami who was then very young and told Bhagavan, “Swami, this little boy came to us saying he did not want his mother, father or his native village and stayed with us. Even in his childhood he had great *vairagya* (absence of worldly desires or passions). Quite a smart lad. But what is the use of his staying with us? We thought it would be good if he were to stay with a holy person like you and so have brought him here. Please allow him to stay with you.” Thus they entrusted him to Bhagavan and went away. From that tender age itself, he was very obedient and docile and so Bhagavan began calling him, “Kunju, Kunju.” Subsequently all others began calling him by the same name; and that ultimately became his permanent name. As he grew up he showed remarkable intelligence.

The number of Bhagavan’s personal attendants also gradually increased, as also the devotees when Bhagavan shifted from Skandasramam to the present place. Dandapani Swami was looking after the management of the Ashram at the time. He was in charge of the kitchen also. At that time Bhagavan was working in the kitchen like an assistant under him. If Dandapani fried the ingredients for chutney,

Bhagavan ground them suitably; if rice and *dhal* were soaked in water overnight, Bhagavan ground them into *iddli* paste the next morning. That kind of work was being done by Bhagavan at the time.

Once it so happened that when Bhagavan was grinding rice and *dhal* for *iddli* his hands got blistered. Noticing it, Kunjuswami with great humility, requested Bhagavan not to grind. Bhagavan did not listen to him. He begged of Dandapani not to entrust that work to Bhagavan, but it was of no use. At the same time, Dandapani got a basketful of tamarind leaves, fried them lightly with chillies and gave the whole lot to Bhagavan for grinding into chutney. Bhagavan began grinding it in spite of the blisters on the hands. Unable to contain his anguish, Kunjuswami told Bhagavan, "Please don't grind it. If you do, I will not eat that chutney." Without minding his protest, Bhagavan completed the grinding and got the chutney ready. When it was served during meal time, Kunjuswami declined to eat it. Bhagavan noticed it and from then onwards whenever anyone came to see him he sent for Kunjuswami and asked him, "May I talk to this person?" Other times he used to enquire, "May I go out to answer calls of nature? May I take food?" and the like. That way he began taunting Kunju by asking for permission for everything. When his attendants asked him, "What is all this, Bhagavan?", he said, "Yes. I must act according to his directions; otherwise he might even decline to take food. If he asks me to stand, I must stand; if he asks me to sit, I must sit. I must act according to his instructions in every respect. He has refused to eat the tamarind chutney just because I did not stop grinding when he protested. That is the way with these people. They come here as *sadhakas* and then try to boss over us. Things will be all right if we act according to their instructions."

Hearing all that, Kunjuswami felt deeply grieved and crestfallen and in his depressed state of mind, resolved to go away on pilgrimage for some time. Accordingly, he approached Bhagavan for permission to go to Tirupati. Bhagavan did not say yes or no to his request but instead began giving him some work or other to keep him busy all the time and thereby effectively prevented him from asking permission to go. Suddenly one day Bhagavan started for *giripradakshina* (circumambulating the hill) and asked Kunju to accompany him. Afraid of raising any objections and hoping against hope he would get permission to leave after the *giripradakshina* was over, he packed his clothes and took them with him so as to go to the railway station straight, without returning to the Ashram. Observing this Bhagavan purposely began walking much slower than usual, with the result by the time they approached the town towards the end of their *giripradakshina* the train had already steamed out of the railway station. Looking at Kunju with a smile Bhagavan said, “Kunju, there is the train by which you wanted to go. Hurry up. Go and catch it.” When all the devotees present laughed at this, Bhagavan said, “That is not it. When he was a little boy someone — perhaps his Guru brought him to me and entrusted him to my care. Now he says he will go away from me. Where will he go? In case his Guru comes and asks me, ‘Where is my *sisya*?’ What reply can I give?” That was the end of the story and the idea of his going on pilgrimage was given up. It only shows how he was tied down by the grace of Bhagavan.

Subsequently, the devotees respectfully submitted to Bhagavan, “Kunju is feeling extremely sad. That is why he wanted to go to Tirupati for getting some peace of mind. How can he stay on here if Bhagavan does not forgive him?” With a laugh Bhagavan said, “How queer! All that I said was

in a lighter vein. After all what wrong has he done? He could not bear the sight of the blisters on my hands getting worse by my continuing to do the grinding work and so tried to dissuade me. Nothing very wrong. Tell him to give up all these foolish ideas about pilgrimage. What can I say if his Guru turns up and asks for his *sishya*?" After that Bhagavan's attitude towards him became perfectly normal.

Relating to me this incident Kunjuswami said, "Amma! After this incident, I have gone to several places on pilgrimage but could not find any peace of mind until I came back to Arunachala. This is Bhagavan's grace." Kunjuswami is staying in the Ashram to this day.

(15) ARUNACHALA MAHATMYAM

During the early days of my stay at the Ashram, i.e., sometime in 1942-43, I obtained permission from Bhagavan to take home a copy of *Arunachala Mahatmyam* in Telugu from the library. After I finished reading it, I put a fresh wrapper over it and wrote carefully on it in a neat hand the words "*Arunachala Mahatmyam*" and placed it in the hands of Bhagavan. He turned it this way and that and appeared visibly amused. I could not understand why he was amused. As soon as Rajagopala Iyer came in, Bhagavan said with a smile, "Here. Look at this. Nagamma has returned to us the book she had borrowed. Normally when women borrow books from us, they use them as covers to their *rachappas* (stone jars for preserving food articles) with the result the covers of the book get dirty with the marks of the jars. It is not so in the case of Nagamma. She has put a neat cover over the book and has brought it back in an improved

condition. Not only that, she has written on it the name of the book also. See how she has done it.” As Rajagopala Iyer did not know Telugu, he enquired as to what exactly had been written. “What? She says ‘Arunachala Mahatyam’. She is a poet, you see. So gives entirely new names just as she likes. She says ‘*Mahatyam*’, ‘*Mahatyam*’.” So saying he laughed. I could not understand what exactly was wrong with the name and so thought it better to ask him. With great trembling I asked, “Was that a mistake? I did not know.” Laughing once again, Bhagavan said, “It is *Maahaatmyam*, not *Mahatyam*. See what you have written here.” Showing it to me he himself corrected the mistake. I said within myself, “Oh Mahaprabho! How many mistakes we commit in life! It is your grace that should come to our rescue from time to time and save us!”

(16) RAMANA SAHASRANAMAM

Once in 1943, a letter was received from Nellore devotees saying that for several years they had been celebrating Ramana *Jayanti* and as they wished to perform *puja* to Bhagavan’s portrait as part of the celebrations, they would like to have the procedural *mantras* prepared and sent to them. After reading that letter, Bhagavan passed it on to Jagadeeswara Sastri. It seems some time earlier Sastri had written *Ramana Sahasranama Stotram* (*stotram* of a thousand names of Ramana), but it appeared to have been lost and so the matter was left at that. Now that a special request was made not only for the *stotram* but also for the *puja mantras*, Sastri felt happy and enthusiastic and agreed to prepare the whole thing himself. He took up the work in right earnest.

On learning that the work had been undertaken the devotees from Nellore started reminding about it every now and then; so Sastri completed expeditiously the *puja mantras* and the *stotram*. On finishing the work, he came to Bhagavan and prayed for permission to perform the first *puja* to Bhagavan personally in the hall. With a smile, Bhagavan said, “Oh! Is it your idea to make me sit here and perform your *puja* to me?” “No Bhagavan; it is not to you but to your lotus feet,” replied Sastri. Drawing back his feet hurriedly, Bhagavan said, “Enough, enough of this nonsense. Go home and perform your *puja* to a portrait. *Pada puja* and *Sirah puja*! (worship of the feet and the head) Why all that here?” Unable to say anything in reply and in accordance with Bhagavan’s injunctions he had a portrait of Bhagavan in his house to which he performed the first *puja* and then placed the *stotra* book at the feet of Bhagavan. We all felt that it was a good lesson to all those so called holy men who accept *pujas* from their devotees forgetting that they are mere mortals like the devotees themselves with a body composed of the five elements which are subject to decay, same as in the case of the devotees.

The procedural details of the *puja* were written in Sanskrit in *Devanagari* script. The Nellore people however wanted them in Telugu. Bhagavan therefore asked me to do the transcription work. My knowledge of the *nagari* script being limited, I had to seek the help of others whenever I had doubts. Later Bhagavan himself went through the whole work and made corrections wherever necessary. Thereafter, I made a fair copy and it was sent to Nellore. They had it printed in 1944 and copies are now available in the Ashram bookshop. In the Ashram also *puja* is now being performed in accordance with that book. The *Ramana Ashtottaram* (108 Names in praise of Bhagavan) written by Viswanatha Swami

is also being recited at the time of the *puja*. That book also has been published by the Ashram in two or three languages and is now available at the bookshop.

It is not only now that Bhagavan declined to allow any personal worship. Even when he was in Gurumurtham, Thambiranswami once performed *puja* to his body. He was in *mouna* (silence) during that period and was not talking to anybody; so he wrote on the wall with charcoal: "This is all this body requires," and showed it to him. Thambiran did not understand the meaning of what was written and so made arrangements for worship the next day. Bhagavan wrote again: "This is only to fill the stomach," and disappeared from the place at the time of the *puja*. Thambiranswami thereupon gave up all attempts at personal worship. All this is mentioned in the Telugu biography of Bhagavan, *Ramana Leela*. Besides this, Mudaliar Patti, Echammal and other ladies used to bring flower garlands and flowers with a desire to put the garlands around Bhagavan's neck and the flowers at his feet and then worship him. That was when he was staying in Skandasramam. Sensing the situation, Bhagavan had a portrait of his installed in an adjacent room and said, "Go there and have all your desires fulfilled." So they used to perform *puja* to the portrait only. At no time did he give the slightest encouragement to anyone to feel that the body is the same as the Self.

(17) GANESAN

During the years 1943/44 T. N. Venkataraman, son of Chinnaswami, the *Sarvadhikari*, was living in the town and coming to the Ashram daily to do his allotted work. His

second son, Ganesan was at the time a little boy of about seven or eight years of age. One day while returning from school, he accidentally met a *jutka* driver known to the family and so got into his *jutka* for a joy ride. As the boy did not return home at the usual time, his people got worried and began to search for him. He was not found anywhere near the school nor anywhere near about. One or two people searching for him came to the Ashram and informed Bhagavan about the missing boy. Bhagavan sent them away saying he would be somewhere near and they need not make a big fuss over it. One of the devotees sitting nearby remarked, "The boy used to be playing about here worshipping the idols of Vighneswara, Sri Krishna and other gods. What a pity! Where could he have gone?" Bhagavan with a laugh remarked, "Why worry? He will be loitering somewhere. Running away from home is in the family. There is nothing strange." The boy was found afterwards. He grew up and took his M.A. While doing a job in Bombay he got disgusted with life, renounced everything, went away from there without informing anybody and was ultimately traced at Kashi. His father went there and brought him back home. He however declined to take up any salaried job or marry and settle down. Devotees from Madras and at the Ashram told Ganesan, "Never mind all that. It is enough if you remain at the Ashram and look after its affairs." Accordingly he stayed back and is now the Managing Editor of *The Mountain Path* journal. The words of Bhagavan that running away from the family and becoming a *sannyasi* is in the family have come true in his case. It is truly said that the words of *Mahatmas* are prophetic and never go waste. Their prophecy invariably comes true in due course.

(18) IS YOUR EBULLIENT DESIRE SATISFIED?

In 1944-45, Atmakuri Govindachari and Bulusu Sambamurthi came to the Ashram. The day before their arrival, we all knew about it. I had known Sambamurthi previously but was not sure he would remember me as he had since become a prominent political leader. So I went to the Ashram only at the usual hour. It seems Sambamurthi and his friend had already arrived by train, had Bhagavan's *darshan* and had gone to their room within the Ashram precincts. As soon as I prostrated before Bhagavan and got up, he said, "Sambamurthi and others have come. Better go and find out if they are comfortably lodged. They are in the Ashram compound only." I said, yes, and went there accordingly. Both of them had by then finished their bath and were getting ready to go to Bhagavan's hall. Seeing me Sambamurthi said, "Amma! So you yourself have come. I was thinking of enquiring about you because your brother Seshadri Sastri told me you were here. It is very good for you to be in the Ashram." So saying, he introduced me to Govindachari and both of them started for Bhagavan's *darshan*. I told them that Bhagavan had sent me specially to find out if they were all comfortable and if anything was needed. They said they were quite comfortable. After we started, Govindachari went to the office for some work there and, as Sambamurthi's eyesight was defective, I walked slowly by his side and led him into the hall. He prostrated before Bhagavan, and then said, "Swami, Nagamma's elder brother, Seshadri, told me she is here. We are all happy she is staying here. Is it possible for people like me to have the privilege of living in your Ashram under your benevolent care?" Bhagavan smiled and with a nod of his head, requested him to be seated.

After he sat down, Govindachari took out a paper containing some *stotras* in praise of Bhagavan and gave it to him. Bhagavan looked around for me and, when I went up to him, gave it to me to read. I read it as best I could in a clear voice with suitable pauses so as to be understood by all the people there. Sambamurthi was very pleased and told Bhagavan that I had read it very nicely. With a tender look, Bhagavan remarked, “Yes, yes. She does it even better if it is prose. If I get any essays written by Chinta Dikshitulu and others I ask only her to read out. When she reads, it looks as if what is described therein is actually happening before our eyes or is being spoken out in our presence.” How elated I felt at that endearing description. God alone knows.

The visitors decided to leave the next day by the night train. So the next morning I came earlier than usual, prostrated before Bhagavan and, as Sambamurthi and his friend had not come there by then, I went to their room. While there, I incidentally mentioned to them that Bhagavan’s handwriting was so good that the letters look like pearls. “Can you show them to us?” they asked. “Oh, sure,” I said and came to the hall a little in advance of them. I went straight to the bookshelf near Bhagavan’s sofa to fetch the book containing his handwriting. Bhagavan looked at me enquiringly. “They want to see Bhagavan’s handwriting and so I told them that I would show it,” I said. Bhagavan laughed and said, “Is that so? But why show them all this?” I did not know how I could summon enough courage but replied, “What if they are shown? They want to see. I will show them and bring the book back.” Accordingly I took out the *Unnadi Naluvadi* and *Upadesa Saram* in the original. “Yes. All right. You seem to have no other work.” Remarking thus, he began looking into the daily newspapers which he was reading at the time. I was overjoyed for the permission given. I showed

the books to the distinguished visitors who were just outside the hall. They were very pleased and remarked that they had this unique opportunity because of me. Soon after I brought the books back and placed them in their usual place when Bhagavan remarked, "Has your ebullient desire been satisfied?" "How very happy they were!" I said. "So then you would do likewise whenever anyone comes here, won't you?" asked Bhagavan. "No, only for those who are genuinely interested." So saying I went back to my seat. Bhagavan resumed silence looking at me with paternal affection.

(19) ANGER AND RESENTMENT

A devotee asked me, "Anger and resentment may not be visible outside but may be latent. Is there any harm in it?" I then remembered an incident that happened in Bhagavan's presence in 1944-45. A lady devotee from Andhra Pradesh came to the Ashram and stayed for some time. Her devotion was of a peculiar nature. Her conception of Bhagavan was that he was Lord Sri Krishna and she was a *Gopika* (shepherdess). The devotees here however felt that such a concept had no place here as Bhagavan was a *brahmachari* from birth and a *Jivanmukta*. But then she would not keep her view to herself but publicised it and even wrote to Bhagavan accordingly. Bhagavan was as usual indifferent to such writings. He however gave me those papers to read. He remained untouched by all such trivialities but I could not keep quiet after seeing such atrocious writings. So I quietly rebuked the lady. She flared up and began writing all sorts of nasty things about me. On seeing them Bhagavan said laughingly, "Here are the papers from her. All about

you only,” and handed over the papers to me. I was completely upset, but what to do? At last one day with tears in my eyes I told Bhagavan, “I cannot read such letters any longer and keep quiet. Let her damn herself. Please do not give me her letters any more.” “All right. I won’t given them,” said Bhagavan and stopped giving me her letters.

Some days later, that lady began tearing her clothes and started running about in the streets shouting, perhaps because of mental imbalance or deliberately. When Bhagavan came to know of it he remarked, “Somebody must take pity on her and do something, otherwise how can she get on?” Taking it as an order, I spoke to a few of the well-to-do Andhra devotees and with their help sent a telegram to her husband and also arranged a person to look after her until the arrival of her husband. In a few days her husband came and took her away. Sometime later she sent registered notices to four or five of us saying we had out of envy at her attaining *siddhi* (deliverance) dubbed her as a mad person and that she would file a suit against us for defamation. She followed it up with a visit to the Ashram with her lawyer. When Bhagavan explained to him all that had happened, the lawyer spoke apologetically to us all and scolded her saying, “What nonsense! Enough. Enough of it,” and left. Realising she could not bluff any more, she also left for her native place in Andhra Pradesh.

Subsequently, sometime in November 1949, I received a letter from her enquiring about Bhagavan’s health, as she had received alarming reports about his health. She wrote, “I have heard that Bhagavan’s health is not satisfactory. Please let me know how he is now. I had earlier written to you abusive letters. I am sorry for what I had done. You are really Bhagavan’s child. Please excuse me and favour me with an immediate reply. I have given below my address.”

I informed Bhagavan about the letter. He simply said, “Is it so?” and kept quiet for about three days. During those days the usual graciousness in his look was absent whenever I prostrated before him; instead he used to turn his face away from me. It then occurred to me that the cause of his displeasure was perhaps because of the internal impurity of my mind in still harbouring ill-will towards that lady and not replying to her. I therefore bought a postcard immediately and wrote to her. “There is nothing particular now to worry about Bhagavan’s health. I will write again in case there is any cause for anxiety.” I posted the card and came to Bhagavan. When I got up after prostrating before him, he looked at me graciously. I told him that I had just posted a reply to that Andhra lady. In a pleasant tone, he remarked, “Yes, yes,” and calling Rangaswamy, Satyanandam and other attendants that were there said, “Look. She has written a letter to that Telugu lady. It seems that the lady had stated in her letter to Nagamma, I had abused you some time back but now I have realised my mistake. Please excuse me and let me know about Bhagavan’s health.’ Nagamma has just sent her a reply. So that lady has now expressed her regret.” He thereafter turned towards me with a benign and benevolent look. I was extremely happy and pleased. So this is the result of living at the feet of the Guru — all the impurities of the mind get washed away thus.

Narrating this incident I told that lady devotee from Andhra Pradesh that renunciation can never be real if anger and resentment remain in the mind. That lady wondered if such impure thoughts occur even in the presence of Bhagavan and if he would treat such people with sympathy and tolerance. The saying that *Mahatmas* are *Patitapavanas* (saviours of fallen people) has been illustrated in Bhagavan’s presence. Though the lady had behaved senselessly,

Bhagavan always had compassion for her, and he made me understand in his inimitable way that I should not harbour any ill will towards her; he kept up a cool attitude towards me until my anger and resentment towards that lady were given up. What are we to say about his great compassion!

(20) HE IS A RAJA, ISN'T HE?

Servers in the kitchen usually devote special attention to Bhagavan by serving him something more than they serve to others. He notes such undue discrimination and tries to dissuade them. Once post master Raja Iyer did so and Bhagavan looked at him disapprovingly but did not say anything at that time; and so Raja Iyer was continuing the practice off and on.

One night *palpayasam* (milk pudding) was prepared and Chinnaswami finding it particularly delicious, appeared to have hinted to Raja to serve a little more than usual to Bhagavan. So Raja served a little more. Bhagavan could not tolerate it and burst out, "There! Again the same nonsense. The same monkey tricks. Why do you serve me more than what you serve others? When it comes to serving Bhagavan, the ladle is immersed fully while it is immersed only half when it is served to others. How often have I told you not to do so? No one listens to my words. When the ladle is in his hands the server thinks he is as powerful as the District Collector and thinks he can do anything without fear. He is the one who serves and we are the people to eat whatever he serves. His hand is above and ours is below. We must act as he pleases and eat as he decides and then lie low." And Bhagavan went on talking in that strain, severely rebuking all the people concerned.

A few days later a parcel containing some medicine addressed to Dr. Srinivasa Rao was received in the post office. Dr. Srinivasa Rao happened to be out of town. The medicine was ordered specially for the use of Bhagavan. Raja Iyer was not however aware of it, and so retained it for the return of Dr. Srinivasa Rao. Bhagavan's personal attendants told Raja Iyer that the parcel was intended for Bhagavan and requested him to deliver it, but Raja declined to do so. Bhagavan came to know of it. When I went to the Ashram that afternoon, Bhagavan was saying, "Yes, sir, yes. He is himself a Rajah; not a mere Rajah but Ginjee Rajah (Raja Iyer belongs to a village called Ginjee and so is popularly known as Ginjee Rajah); besides this, he is a post master. However big people may be, they must go to him, otherwise they will not get their letters properly, or even their money orders and parcels. Hence people must be obliged to him, must move around him with due respect and regard. That being so, we have perhaps to go to him and tell him that the medicine is meant for us and request him to deliver the parcel to us. Who will do all that now? Don't worry about it. Let us forget." As I was not aware of the matter, I could not follow what was being said and so asked Krishnaswami what it was all about. He told me all that had happened. Subsequently on hearing about Bhagavan's remarks, Raja came there with the parcel and offered it with profuse apologies. It was declined. When Dr. Srinivasa Rao returned he came to Bhagavan with Raja and the parcel and prostrating before Bhagavan pleaded to be excused. Then Bhagavan accepted the parcel gracefully. After all, Bhagavan is a *bhaktavatsala* (friend of devotees)!

(21) SECRETARY

In 1943-44, I began copying in a notebook verses in Telugu which were lying scattered, and so Bhagavan was giving me for copying whatever was received subsequently. Incidentally, he was also discussing with me the affairs relating to the printing of Telugu books. I was also looking after the library, lending books and receiving them back. As I was doing all this work, Bhagavan was calling me frequently and entrusting me with some work or other. Later on, I also commenced writing my *Letters from Sri Ramanasramam*. Thus I came into closer contact with Bhagavan than the other devotees.

Noting all this, one day Devaraja Mudaliar jocularly said, “Nagamma is Bhagavan’s Telugu Secretary.” As I did not like his saying so I protested saying, “My dear Sir, if you have any regard for me, please keep it to yourself. Why all these designations? After all, what is the work I am doing for Bhagavan? Really speaking, what work is there for Bhagavan to be done by me?” “That is not it, my dear sister. Is it not a fact that whenever anything written in Telugu is received he passes it on to you? You are looking after all the Telugu work. So I am calling you his Telugu Secretary,” he said. I begged of him not to call me that way but he would not listen. Finally one day I told him, “Look. If you persist in calling me Secretary I shall make you stand before Bhagavan and complain to him.” I thought the threat would have the desired effect but was he of the sort that could be so easily threatened?

The next morning after looking through the mail, Bhagavan went out as usual and returned. While he was seated leisurely on the sofa with Balarama Reddy opposite to him, Devaraja Mudaliar suddenly came in, prostrated himself before Bhagavan and after getting up said with a smile, “Bhagavan,

Nagamma says she will make me stand before you and impeach me today.” Mudaliar with a further smile turned towards me and said, “Yes. Start with your impeachment. I am now standing before Bhagavan.” “So you have started it. All right. What am I to do, Bhagavan. He teases me saying ‘Nagamma, Secretary, Secretary.’ I requested him several times not to do so but he ignores my entreaties. What great work has Bhagavan got to require a Secretary?” No sooner had I said it than Mudaliar laughed and said, “Yes. I did say so. It is based on actual facts. Nagamma is the Telugu Secretary and Muruganar Tamil Secretary to Bhagavan. What is wrong if I say so?” He left the hall thereafter. Bhagavan merely laughed and kept quiet.

Taking up the thread of the conversation, Balarama Reddy remarked, “Bhagavan has no work whatsoever. Where is the need for a Secretary?” “That is exactly what I have been saying. When Bhagavan has no work to do where is the need for two secretaries, Nagamma and Muruganar? Whatever little work there is, we are doing it on our own to satisfy ourselves; otherwise, where is any work worth mentioning? I have told him several times that if he has any opinion, to keep it to himself, but not give such high sounding designations. He however persists. So I thought I should bring the matter to the notice of Bhagavan hoping it would have the desired effect on him. That is all.” Bhagavan laughed and said, “I have already been dubbed as a man having no work.” “Yes. That is just it. This is just like the saying, ‘A person having no work has ten people working under him’,” I said. We all had a hearty laugh. In spite of all that had happened, Mudaliar did not give up calling me Secretary.

(22) I SEE, THAT IS THE REAL PURPOSE

When Bhagavan was living on the hill a pundit from a place near Madurai used to visit him now and then. He wrote a biography in Sanskrit called *Ramaneeya Vilasa Mahakavyam* and handed it over to Bhagavan. It was not published even after the present Ashram came into existence. Sometime after I came here in 1945, or so, it was published by the Ashram. As it was in Sanskrit, only a limited number of copies were printed. Everyone here read it with interest. About that time, Girdalur Sambasiva Rao happened to come here. So he too read it. While reading it he noticed that there were nine verses in it in praise of Bhagavan. So one afternoon when there was no one near Bhagavan, he said that the nine verses were very good and requested Bhagavan to copy them in Telugu script. He left the book there and went away. At 2 p.m. when I went there and prostrated before Bhagavan as usual, he beckoned to me to come near and showing me the book said, "Look. In this biography written by Viswanatha Sastri there are nine *slokas* in praise of me. Sambasiva Rao wants them in Telugu script. He has requested me to copy them out instead of getting it done through someone else. Can you copy them for me?" "Yes. I shall do so carefully noting what is in the book as I do not know *Devanagari* script well. If I make any mistakes Bhagavan may correct them," I said. He gave me the book and the required papers for copying and looked on as usual unconcerned as if his responsibility had ceased.

With my limited knowledge of *Devanagari* script I carefully copied the verses and gave them to Bhagavan the next day. After going through them, he made one or two corrections and handing over the papers back to me instructed me to give them to Sambasiva Rao. On seeing the

papers, Sambasiva Rao exclaimed, “Ayyo! He gave the work to you? I was hoping he himself would copy the *slokas* so that I could preserve his handwritten papers with me. That is why I made this request to him; otherwise, I could easily have got this work done by somebody else.” I told him that I did not know anything about it and that I was merely carrying out Bhagavan’s instructions. He took the papers with great disappointment. I came back and related to Bhagavan what had happened. “I see! That is the real purpose. So he somehow wanted some papers in my handwriting for preserving them. That is what everyone does. Earlier I did not mind such things. Now I cannot write properly. My hand shakes as I write. What to do? It is because of my disability I wanted you to copy it,” said Bhagavan.

A devotee pointing towards me said, “Is she now looking after all Telugu work?” “Yes. yes. I stopped doing work relating to the Telugu language after she came here. She is looking after everything. Even though they know it, I do not know why they ask me to copy anything in Telugu. It is curious,” remarked Bhagavan.

(23) WILL NOT THIS TOO GO TO COURT?

Sometime in 1946-47, news was received to the effect that the Mounaswami of Courtallam had attained *samadhi* (final beatitude). On hearing it, Bhagavan told us about some incident relating to him and his good nature. A new devotee enquired, “Who is that swami actually? People say he is an Andhra. Is that a fact?” Bhagavan replied, “Yes, yes, he is an Andhra. His name in his *purvashrama* (the stage of life before taking to *sannyasa*) was Sivayya. When he first came to see

me, I was in the Virupaksha Cave. Thereafter he came off and on; quite a number of times I should think. Later on he took to *sannyasa*, went to the south on a pilgrimage, reached Courtallam in due course and then became a big swamiji. He established a *peetam* (a monastery with temple) there.” Rajagopala Iyer said, “He is reported to have acquired many *siddhis* (occult powers). Is that a fact?” “Yes, It seems he was making gold and showing it to others,” said another devotee. Bhagavan kept quiet even though he was hearing all that was being said.

For some days thereafter devotees continued discussing the same matter amongst themselves in the presence of Bhagavan. One day, a devotee remarked, “It seems disputes have arisen over the ownership and control of the *peetam* and its properties in Courtallam.” Another devotee replied, “Yes, Yes. Disputes have arisen. It seems the deceased swami made out a Will saying that only an Andhra Niyogi *brahmin* should succeed as *mathadhipathi* (the head of the *peetam*). The Tamilians disputed it saying, ‘After all it was we Tamilians who have donated the properties to the *peetam* and so we should have the right to decide about the succession.’ The matter has gone to court.” “What! to the court?” exclaimed Rajagopala Iyer and looking at Bhagavan, said, “This matter has gone to court even though there is a Will!” With a smile Bhagavan said, “Yes. It is so. What else will happen if property is accumulated? Why? Will not this also (meaning the Ramana Ashram) go to court?” Folding his hands with great humility, Iyer remarked, “We have a Will, don’t we?” “Yes sir, Yes. There is a Will. First Chinnaswami, then Venkattu and thereafter Sundaram, and so on, should manage according to the Will. What of that? Will not this too go to court?” So saying Bhagavan resumed silence.

The affairs of the *peetam* in Courtallam were ultimately settled in accordance with the terms of the Will of the Mounaswami. In the same manner here also after Bhagavan left his body the question of the management of the Ashram was taken to court and in due course the court decided that the management should remain in the hands of the family of Chinnaswami in accordance with the terms of the Will. Even so, there is always some contest or other in courts. So what Bhagavan has said has come true. How strange! The words uttered by *Mahatmas* will never go wrong.

(24) TELL THEM AND SEE IF THEY CARE FOR YOUR WORDS

In August 1943, I shifted my residence from the town to a house in Raju Chettiar's compound in Ramana Nagar. After coming to Tiruvannamalai, I got into the habit of taking coffee in the mornings. At the new house, milk was being supplied very late; sometimes as late as even 8 or 9 a.m. As I had no work to do till then, I was going to the Ashram in the early morning hours. A lady devotee who is rather egoistic, was coming there earlier still. There used to be two or three ladies also with her. While I was sitting somewhere near the back door of the dining hall, they were sitting right in front of the main door which was facing the bathroom of Bhagavan. According to the existing practice, the bell for the breakfast used to be rung as Bhagavan came out of the bathroom and he went direct into the dining hall. Bhagavan expressed several times his embarrassment about his going in for breakfast while some devotees were waiting just opposite to him without having had their breakfast: "Look

at that. While all those are standing there with empty stomachs, not having even their morning coffee I feel awkward in going in and eating sumptuously.” No serious notice was taken of his remarks. One day, after having his breakfast he was going out to the hill when he happened to notice me standing at the back door. Grieved at it he remarked, “See. Nagamma also is standing there. She does not eat anything in the nights. She looks tired. She is not able to have her morning coffee because the milkman comes late. How could I eat heartily leaving all these people hungry? What to do?” It seems he had remarked thus twice or thrice.

A few days later Ramakrishnaswami, Bhagavan’s attendant, told me about this. “Ayyo! If only I had known that this would cause some pain and embarrassment to Bhagavan, I would never have come that side,” I said, and stopped going to that side from that day onwards. I went to the Ashram only after Bhagavan returned from his morning walk on the hill. Ramakrishnaswami appears to have informed Bhagavan about this, and so Bhagavan is reported to have said, “Oho! I see. You have told Nagamma, all right. But tell the other ladies and see what happens.” “Why not? I shall tell them and see that they heed my words,” he said confidently. Accordingly he spoke to them the next day. Are they the people to care for him? Instead, they remonstrated with him saying, “Mind your business. What do you lose if we stand here? We have not come here for your coffee. This is all your fabrication. Bhagavan will not say anything like that.” When Bhagavan came to know about this, he had a hearty laugh. He said, “So you have had it. You said that they would heed your words. Are these people like Nagamma to take it in the right spirit? If you say anything further, they will state that Bhagavan himself had permitted them to stand there. Supposing you say Bhagavan never permitted this, they will say he gave the

permission not verbally but in silence. If that too is disbelieved, they will say Bhagavan told them so in a dream. What can you do then? That is how they behave,” said Bhagavan.

(25) GURU PRASADAM*

One afternoon in 1945-46, I went to the Ashram late in the afternoon. Devotees assembled there were munching something. When enquired what it was, I was told that some coconuts which were ripe had fallen on the ground, there was ripe copra within which was very nice and so they were eating it. “Is that so?” I said and went to Bhagavan. He too was eating holding a portion of it in his left hand. As soon as he saw me he said, “There she is. Nagamma has come. Give her also a portion.” “Ayyo! it is all exhausted,” exclaimed those near him.

Normally if anyone brings something to eat during the afternoons and it is over by the time I go to Bhagavan, it is usual for Bhagavan to offer me a portion of what he has in his hands, but as what he eats is usually very small quantity, I respectfully decline to take it and go to the kitchen and eat. I wanted to do the same thing this time also and looked towards the kitchen. Noticing it Bhagavan called me and said, “Listen. You won’t get this there, as it is all being consumed here only. Come near. This is very tasty.” When I went there as desired, Bhagavan gave me all that he had in his hands. When I protested against his giving me away all that he had, he said, “Never mind. I have already eaten a lot. Your share only is the leftover.” I accepted it as a *mahaprasadam* — an invaluable gift — and ate it with great relish. To me it appeared like nectar. My delight knew no

* Prasad means food offered to God.

bounds as it was a *prasadam* received unsolicited from Bhagavan's own hands. My joy was indescribable. *Guroruchistam* (the leftover of a Guru) is really this and not what is left over from the guru's plate or leaf after he eats. This is perhaps what Bhagavan wanted to teach us that day.

While residing on the hill and also during the early days of the Ashram, Bhagavan used to take part in kitchen work and so devotees were at the time receiving *prasadam* at his hands like this, but since my coming here this has not happened. So on that day, when I received from Bhagavan's own hands a portion of what himself was eating, all felt that it was my special good fortune — the result of my past births.

(26) SANNYASA FOR WOMEN

During 1946-47, the head of the Kamakoti Peetam came to Arunachala on his tour and camped in one of the choultries in the town. Arrangements for his public lectures were made in the compound of Arunachala Temple and also in other places. A number of pandits who had been accompanying him were coming to the Ashram and several Ashramites were visiting the *peetam*.

One day Kalluri Veerabhadra Sastri, a reputed Sanskrit scholar and a capable exponent of *sanatana dharma* came to see Bhagavan. As he had given discourses on *Bhagavad Gita* for several months at my brother's place in Madras, I knew him well. On renewing our acquaintance, he asked me if I had the *darshan* of Kamakoti Swami. As a matter of fact I had no desire to see anybody else except Bhagavan. Even so I did not like to mention that to him and so said casually, "Is it not a fact that the Swami does not see people like me, i.e., *brahmin* widows who have not removed the hair on their heads." "Yes.

That is so, but you could see him from a distance during a public meeting,” he said. I replied, “It is useful for *sadhana* if one could go near and talk to elders like that but what use could there be by merely seeing them from a distance?” He agreed with me in that.

Later on, one morning I learnt that the Swami had started for *giripradakshina* (circumambulating the hill) and that he would pass by the Ashram as it was on the way. There was speculation amongst the devotees whether he would step into the Ashram or not. I did not like to get involved in those discussions and so went and sat before Bhagavan.

At about 9 a.m. it was reported that the Swami was nearing the Ashram, so all of them went out and waited at the Ashram gate. Bhagavan and myself were the only people that remained behind. Bhagavan asked me why I had not gone along with them. I replied saying that since the Swami did not see people like me (i.e., *brahmin* widows with hair on their heads) I did not wish to create any embarrassment to him or to those around him. Bhagavan nodded his head in approval and with a look of compassion towards me remained silent. A little later, the Swami with his followers stopped at the Ashram gate for a while looked around and left. The Ashramites came back and reported about it. That evening at a public meeting, the Swami spoke at great length saying that every head of a religious organisation has to observe established traditions, while one who is an *Athyasramite* has no such restrictions. An *Avadhuta* is such an *Athyasramite* and to attain that state is very difficult, and that had been possible only for a great soul like Ramana Maharshi.

Four or five days later Raju Sastri and other pandits well versed in the Vedas and who were coming from town daily for *Veda Parayanab* before Bhagavan and *Mahanyasam* in the Mother’s temple came a little earlier than usual and told

Bhagavan that they had been served orders from the Swami prohibiting them from doing *Mahanyasa Puja* in Mother's temple saying, "*Sannyasa* for women is not permissible, that the Mother's *Samadhi* and the linga erected over it is against the *sastras*, and so *Mahanyasa Puja* in the temple should not be performed." Thereupon Bhagavan said, "In *Ramana Gita*, in reply to a question Visalakshamma asked me through Nayana, I have already given a suitable reply to this question, namely, for those women who become *parivrajakas* through the practice of *jnana* there is no prohibition either for *sannyasa* or for *samadhi*. What more is there to be said now?" They however enquired, "What reply should we give to that Swami?" "Why are you concerned about all such arguments and counter-arguments? So long as he is the head of that *peetam* he must observe and practise the rules and regulations of that *peetam*. He has therefore sent his prohibitory orders, in the usual course. It is better we quietly continue our work. Whoever amongst you want to come, may come; others may keep away. Why raise all sorts of doubts?" said Bhagavan.

They were fully convinced of what Bhagavan had said and continued to perform *Veda Parayana* and *Mahanyasa Puja* as before. I give hereunder Visalakshamma's question and the explanation contained in the *Ramana Gita*, XIII Chapter:

If obstacles confront women that abide in the Self, does the *sastras* sanction their renouncing the home and becoming ascetics?

Sloka 5

If a woman, liberated while alive, happens to shed her body, what is the proper thing to do, cremation or burial?

Sloka 6

Bhagavan, the great Sage, Knower of the import of all the Scriptures, listened to the two questions and gave his decision:

Sloka 7

Since there is no such prohibition in the *sastras*, there is nothing wrong in women abiding in the Self and fully ripe becoming ascetics.

Sloka 8

As in *mukti* and *jnana* there is no difference between man and woman, the body of a woman liberated during life is not to be cremated, for it is a temple.

Sloka 9

Whatever evils are said to follow the cremation of the body of a man liberated during life will follow even when the body of a woman liberated during life is cremated.

Sloka 10

(27) GODDESS KALI

After the fourth surgery in 1949, Bhagavan shifted to the small room opposite the temple, now known as the Nirvana Room. As the space therein is very limited, devotees were not allowed to sit there in his presence as before. Hence I was wandering aimlessly between the Ashram and my house. One afternoon while I was thus wandering about with growing anxiety about Bhagavan's health, I noticed some commotion in the temple of Goddess Kali, which is situated on the roadside between my house and the Ashram. I thought that some special *puja* was being performed. When, however, I heard the bleatings of a goat, I felt it must be the killing of the goat by way of sacrifice. Such cries used to be heard quite often even before while I was resting in my house, but I did not pay any particular attention to them. Now that Bhagavan's health was causing great anxiety, I felt those cries of goats were bad omens and began wondering why such animal sacrifices were being performed so close to the Ashram.

With these thoughts in my mind I went to the Ashram, made the usual enquiries about Bhagavan's health and while returning home noticed that the idol of Goddess Kali was dripping with blood and presenting a rather ghastly sight. There was no one nearby at the time and perhaps because of that, I began to shudder and perspire with fear. I thought within myself, "Oh God! Why this slaughter of innocent animals, and that too in the midst of a residential locality? Is it proper to allow this barbarous practice in the name of religion in the holy neighbourhood of an Ashram? More so when Bhagavan's health was bad." I felt that those sacrifices must be stopped at any cost and so the same evening I contacted a number of devotees and expressed to them my feelings in the matter. I suggested that some steps should be taken to put a stop to these practices. They all said, "Oh no! The worshippers of Kali are adepts in *tantric* practices and if we say anything adverse, they may turn against us their *tantric* powers and harm us. It is best to keep away from them." Thus no one ventured to take any initiative in the matter. I waited for two or three days and as the sacrifices were on the increase and the bleatings of the goats heart-rending, I thought I had no alternative but to approach Bhagavan for advice and guidance. So I told Krishnaswami and other personal attendants of Bhagavan one morning about this. That afternoon when there was no one else with Bhagavan, I went to him, prostrated and stood up before him. He looked at me enquiringly. Nervously I said, "Goats are being sacrificed at the local Kali temple and it is a ghastly scene. It was not so bad before. The bleatings of the poor goats are possibly heard in this room also. It is heart-rending. I am unable to bear the sight of blood dripping on the idol of the goddess Kali." With a tender look towards me Bhagavan said, "Yes, the bleatings are heard here also, but nobody takes any action in the matter. What to do?" I told

him that I had contacted a number of devotees and expressed my grief over the slaughter of the animals at a place so close to the Ashram and suggested that they should take some action to prevent it but they were all afraid of the worshippers of Kali who were well versed in *tantric* practices and black art. I also told him that there was a legislation prohibiting animal sacrifices in residential areas and that our area had recently developed and so some action might be taken. I also told him that if other devotees did not join me in protesting against these practices, I myself would take up the matter if Bhagavan permitted me. After hearing me patiently, Bhagavan said, “To ask the devotees is no good. Let us see if the worshippers heed to our protests. There is no need to be afraid of speaking to them about this.” When Bhagavan spoke thus, I felt I had been given the strength of an elephant. I returned home and sat up to write seven or eight verses in praise of Goddess Kali the purport of which is: “Oh Mother! this is a place where your son Ramana is living. Why are you assuming your *rajasic* and *tamasic* form instead of the *sattvic*? If you are really fond of having flesh as an offering, why not take the sacrifice of my head? Is it proper for you to take the sacrifice of dumb animals? If you are hungry have you not got coconuts, fruit and sweetmeats? There is *pongal* also. Please heed my prayers and be satisfied with *sattvic* food and give up taking *rajasic* and *tamasic* food. Not only myself but your son, Ramana, also feels sad and is grieved on hearing the slaughtered goat’s bleatings.” I sat up the whole night and wrote some more verses in the same strain. At daybreak I told my landlord, Raju Chettiar, about these sacrifices and Bhagavan’s remarks. Through his good offices we sent for the temple priests and spoke to them in a very convincing manner that it might have been in order to perform animal sacrifices when this locality was deserted with no human habitation around, but now that the place was

full of people who had constructed houses and had started living in them, these sacrifices must stop. We told them even Bhagavan was grieved over what was happening. At first they demurred and started offering excuses. Thereupon I told them that the District Collector and other government officials were due to visit the Ashram shortly and if they persisted in their activities, I would bring the matter to their notice, as there was legislation against such sacrifices in residential areas. Out of fear of the law and the government officers, or of Bhagavan, they stopped the sacrifices forthwith. I got some signposts made at my expense and had them exhibited there prominently. Bhagavan was pleased when I told him all that had happened. With a look of approval he said, "That is good. This has been happening for a long time. No one has taken any interest in the matter. It was getting worse from day to day. What to do? It has stopped at last."

From that time onwards animal sacrifices have ceased at that temple. Worship is being conducted with *sattvic* offerings. Everyone felt it was the strength of the will of Bhagavan that made me carry out this mission successfully.

(28) ENDURANCE

In the Preface of this book I had already mentioned that in February 1976, I had surgery for cancer in Madras and thereafter I went to Bangalore and Bombay for rest and recuperation. It then looked as if I had recovered normal health. However in February 1977, pain behind the left arm developed and gradually extended up to the neck. People said that it might be only some rheumatic pain. I had however my own doubts.

My sister's son, Dr. G. R. N. Sastri who was then working as a senior executive in the Indian Petro-Chemical Corporation, Baroda, invited me to his place for a change and so I went there. After about a month, the pain increased greatly and a lump appeared in the place where I was originally operated upon. The local doctors declared that it was due to the Cobalt treatment I had after surgery and it might disappear after a while; instead it went on increasing and along with it the pain also. I had therefore no alternative but to return to Bombay for expert treatment.

In Bombay, cancer specialists were consulted. After elaborate tests, they declared that the lump was cancerous in nature, that further surgery could not be thought of and that the only hope lay in Cobalt treatment, though success was very doubtful. Cobalt treatment was immediately given and as that too was found of little use, it was stopped. The case was given up by all allopathic doctors as hopeless and beyond any cure. In the meantime, there was excruciating pain despite taking sedatives. That was during the month of May 1977.

As there was no hope of cure by medication, I prayed to Bhagavan day and night to give me the strength to bear the pain stoically, I also wrote some appealing verses. Prayer and meditation were my only refuge. My strength gradually decreased and I became almost bedridden. As suitable arrangements for nursing me at Bombay could not be made, my nephew, G. R. Sarma, decided to take me to Bangalore by air and actually bought the ticket for me.

It was at that juncture, Ashram President Sri T. N. Venkataraman and his wife who happened to come to Bombay to see their son who was working there, called on me along with Sri R. Venkataraman and his wife at about 3 p.m. on 14th May, 1977. Sri R. Venkataraman is the Controller of

Defence Accounts in Bombay and a great devotee of Bhagavan. He practises homeopathy as a hobby. They were all very much grieved at the great suffering and agony I was experiencing. I formally handed over to the President the paper containing my prayers to Bhagavan for relief of my pain. Seeing the sad situation, Sri R. Venkataraman took my son-in-law, Sri S. R. Avadhani, aside and enquired if he could try homeopathic treatment. As allopathic doctors had already given up the case as hopeless, we were ourselves thinking of trying homeopathy and so the offer appeared to us providential. We readily consented to it. It appeared to us as if Bhagavan himself had sent Venkataraman, one of his devotees, specially for the purpose of treating me. Venkataraman prepared the medicine that night itself and, as his house was very near ours, came to us the next morning and started his treatment. That was on Sunday, the 15th May 1977.

From that day onwards, he came once or twice a day and tried one medicine after another. The pain increased considerably in the initial stages and the lump burst open. Taking it as a favourable indication, he continued his treatment until, with Bhagavan's grace, the pain began to decrease gradually. Meanwhile a Parsi devotee came to me and told me incidentally that his wife died of cancer but that there was a Tibetan doctor whose medicine was reported to be particularly effective in cancer cases. That medicine could not however be used in his wife's case as her ailment was by then too far advanced. He said that there was a special representative of that Tibetan doctor in Bombay and that he would bring him to my place. Two days later, P. V. Somasundaram, Arunachala Bhakta Bhagavata from New York and another devotee from Canada came to see me. At the same time the representative of the Tibetan doctor also came. The latter examined me and said that his master did not treat patients without seeing them personally, that he was at

the time in Tibet and that I should go over there or arrange for his coming to Bombay. I exclaimed, “Oh! Going to Tibet! I am getting ready to go on a Kailasa *yatra* and am waiting for the final call of *Ishwara*. I am satisfied with the present treatment by a devotee of Bhagavan.”

Two or three days later, the devotee from Canada, Somasundaram and some other devotees came and though I was suffering acute pain insisted on my reading something which they recorded for their use in Canada. By the 10th of June there was such relief from pain that I gained enough strength to go out for a walk. When I told Venkataraman that I was getting ready for a Kailasa *yatra* and he had upset all my plans, he coolly said that as his medicine had worked, he was sending me instead on an Arunachala *yatra*. I do not know whether it was due to his great devotion to Bhagavan or it was due to Bhagavan’s grace working through him, the lump became smaller and smaller and the pain gradually decreased. I gained strength from day to day and began to move about freely as of old. Devotees in Bombay who had seen me earlier were emphatically of the opinion that the cure was nothing short of a miracle. And the eminent doctors of Bombay who had examined me earlier could hardly believe it.

I remained in Bombay till September 1977 when in the company of my relatives I went to Vijayawada, stayed there for about two months, vacated my house “Ramana Sadanam” and came away to Madras. It so happened that Sri R. Venkataraman had by then been transferred to Madras and so I took all the required medicines from him, showed the manuscripts of these *Smrutulu* to my brother, D.S. Sastri, and reached Arunachalam on the night of 27th November, 1977. Early next morning, I went to the Ashram and prostrated before Bhagavan’s *samadhi*. It was indeed miraculous that one who was getting ready for a Kailasa *yatra* should have come to Arunachala *yatra* and could

once again prostrate before Bhagavan's *samadhi*. Destiny appeared to have played a great part, and I am having the good fortune of staying in the Ashram once again and writing my reminiscences at the bidding of the Ashram authorities.

The manuscript I had written has been fair-copied by one of the devotees and got ready for printing. On this auspicious day of Makara Sankranthi, I placed the manuscripts, as my humble offering, at the lotus feet of Sri Ramana Bhagavan.

OM NAMO BHAGAVATE SRI RAMANAYA

Sri Ramanasramam
14-1-1978

Suri Nagamma

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