

Om Sri Sai Ram

CHINNA KATHA

Stories and Parables

Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba

VINAYAKA --- THE LEADER OF ALL

On one occasion, a competition was arranged among the gods for selecting the leader of the games (troops of demigods who are attendants of Siva). Participants had to go round the world quick and come back to the feet of Lord Siva. The gods started off on their own vehicles; the elder son of Siva also enthusiastically entered the competition. He had an elephantine head; his vehicle was a mouse! Therefore, his progress was severely handicapped: He had not proceeded far, when Narada appeared before him and asked him, “Whither are you bound?” The son was very much annoyed; he fell into a rage. For, what happened was a bad omen, doubly unpropitious for those going on a journey. It is inauspicious if the first person you come across when you are on a journey is lone Brahmin. Though the foremost among the Brahmins (He was the son of Brahma Himself);, Narada was a bad omen! Again it is a bad omen if you are going somewhere and someone asked, “Whither are you bound?” Narada put him that very question!

Nevertheless, Narada was able to assuage his anger. He drew forth from Siva’s son the cause of his predicament and his desire to win. Narada consoled him, exhorted him not to yield to despair, and advised him thus: Rama –the name—is the seed from which the gigantic tree called the universe has emanated. So, write the name on the ground, go round it once, and hurry back to Siva, claiming the prize.” He did so and returned to his father. When asked how he returned so soon, he related the story of Narada and his advice. Siva appreciated the validity of Narada’s counsel; the prize was awarded to the son, who was acclaimed as Gana-pati. (Master of the Ganas) and Vinaayaka (Leader of all).

GURU’S GRACE BRINGS ETERNAL GLORY

Sankara, the great Acharya, had four chief pupils: Throtaka, Hastamalaka, Sureswara and Padmapada. Of these, Padmapada was intent only on service to the Guru; he could not pay attention to the lessons. The others used to sneer at him for his backwardness in studies. But his deep reverence for the guru made up for it. One day, he washed the clothes of his Guru and dried them on a rock in the middle of the river; but, even as he was folding them, the river rose fast in a swirling flood; and he had scarce a foot-hold on the top of the rock. It was getting late; the Guru would need the washed clothes soon; so Padmapada resolved to walk across, over the raging waters. He knew that the blessing of his Guru would rescue him. It did. Wherever his foot was planted, a sturdy lotus bloomed and bore him on its petals. That is why he came to be called, Lotus-footed Padmapada! The grace of the Guru enabled him to master all knowledge and shine as a brilliant exponent of the ancient wisdom.

LIGHTING THE LAMP OF WISDOM

Once a Sadhaka, who had great ambition to know something about the divine, wanted his eye of wisdom to be opened. He entered a cave where a guru was residing. While entering the cave he saw a small light. As he moved forward even that little light got extinguished. In darkness one feels frightened, and in fear, we think of God very intensively. Thus he uttered loudly the word ‘Namahsivaya and on hearing this, the saint asked him who he was. He said that he had come to

seek his grace. The great saint, who was sustaining himself in the cave only by breathing the air around him, had the competence to know the mind of his visitor. He said that he will answer his question later but asked him first to go and light the light lamp, which had been extinguished. The visitor took a matchbox and tried to light the lamp but did not succeed. He told the guru that he had finished all the matchsticks and yet he had not succeeded in lighting the lamp. The guru then asked him to open the lamp, put out all the water and pour oil in it, and then try to light it. The person did this but the lamp would not light even then. The guru then said that the wick was probably wet with water and asked him to dry it nicely in the open and then attempt to light the lamp. He did this and succeeded. Then the person ventured to mention his need and sought it to the guru. The surprised guru said that the appropriate answer was being given all the while. The visitor pleaded that, being an ignorant man he was not able to understand the significance of the teaching and requested the guru to explain to him in clearer terms. The guru said: In the vessel of your heart, there is the wick of your Jiva. The wick has been immersed all these days in the water of your sensuous desire. Therefore you are not able to light the lamp of wisdom. Pour out all the water of desires from the vessel of your heart, and fill it with Naamasmarana of God. Take the wick of Jiva and dry it in the sunshine of Vairagya; squeeze out of it all the water present in the form of desire and put into the heart the oil of devotion of Naamasmarana. It will be possible for you to light the lamp of wisdom.

THE LORD HAS NO FIXED FORM

There was an artist who had traveled far and wide and had built up for himself an extensive reputation. But so far he had not achieved access to Krishna! As much he was anxious to seek approbation from Lord Krishna as well. With his view, one day he got an appointment with Krishna, met Him and requested him to stay still, so that he could paint his picture. He prepared the outline and told Krishna that he would get ready the final painting in a week's time. Krishna knew the ego of the painter. After a week, the painter brought a finished portrait, covered with a white cloth. In Krishna's presence, when he uncovered the painting, the painter himself was shocked at the lack of similarity between Krishna and the painting. The painter was completely surprised and asked for a week's time to get the job done: The painter tried several times but every time the result was equally disappointing. In complete frustration and total dejection, he wanted to leave the city and go away. When he was going away, sage Narada met him. Narada told him that it was silly to attempt to paint the picture of Lord Krishna. The Lord has no fixed form and He can change His face every second. Narada advised, "If you do want to paint Him, I will tell you a method which will enable you to do so." Narada whispered something into the ear of the artist. Following the advice given by Narada, the painter came back, with a white cloth covering something and again approached Krishna and told him that this time, he is welcome to change in any manner but the painting will look exactly like him. When the cloth was removed, Krishna saw only a mirror and this mirror reproduced an exact replica of Krishna. If therefore, you are imagining that God is like this or like that, it is not correct. You cannot describe God and your attempts will fail. Make your mind clear and clean; fill it with love and devotion; that will enable you to have the true vision of God.

THE SACRED FRUITS OF ACTION

On Saturday, a father was involved in worshipping the Lord and he called his son and told him to get some plantains for one rupee. This son was a good boy; he purchased the plantains, but on his way he saw a mother and son, who were very hungry, standing on the road. When the hungry boy saw the plantains, he ran towards him. The hungry mother, who saw the boy running, ran after him and caught him but both of them collapsed of hunger. When this young man found these people suffering so much from hunger, he thought that it was much better to feed hungry

people than take the bananas home. He gave the bananas to this mother and son and later brought water and gave it to them. These people were so relieved of their hunger and thirst that they expressed their gratitude in many different ways and shed tears of joy. This young student went home empty handed and when the father asked him if he had brought the bananas, he replied that the bananas were, the son replied that the bananas were sacred, would not rot and could not be seen. The son explained that he fed two hungry souls with the bananas and the fruits, which he bought home, are only the sacred fruits of the action. The father then felt that his son was worthy of him and he felt that all his prayers had been answered that day. The father developed great affection for the son that day and they came much closer to each other.

DOUBLE THE PRICE

An individual took a watch, which was out of order to a watch-repairer. The watch-repairer said that the watch was very old and that it would cost a lot of money to repair the watch. He said that repair would cost at least two times the original price of the watch. The owner said that he would like the watch to be repaired even if it costs so much. The watch repairer thought that, since the owner was insisting on this old and worn-out watch being repaired, the watch was probably a lucky one. He replaced the old parts by new parts, repaired the watch and gave it back to the owner. When asked to pay the price of repair, the owner gave two slaps to the watch repairer.. The persons standing by handed him over to the police and when police asked him to explain why he beat the watch repairer, he said that he was asked to pay for the repair of the watch twice the price he paid originally when he acquired the watch and since he did not purchase it but got it by giving one slap to a person, he gave two slaps to the watch repairer.

THE BEST GIFT TO ASK FROM GOD

Our faith diminishes because our ambitions are limitless. There was a rich person who had a daughter with a flat nose. The father wanted to get this girl married. Every person who came and looked at the girl used to go away, although they were attracted by the wealth. In those days, persons who could perform plastic surgery were not available. In desperation, he announced that he would give plenty of money to anyone who would marry his daughter. The marriage was performed, and thereafter the couple developed considerable faith in God. They visited many temples, went on many pilgrimages and bathed in many sacred rivers. They met a saint who advised them that he, who created the nose, alone, could bring it back to normal. Although they had a lot of wealth, they were not happy at all. The girl used to feel others were looking at her and making fun. She suggested to her husband that they should both go to the lonely Himalayas and spend a month there in that manner. He agreed and they did go. The girl had a great desire to get back her nose, so she began to pray to God in great earnestness. God appeared, due to her good luck, and asked her what she wanted. As soon as God appeared, she asked for the grant of a good looking big nose. God said, so shall it be and granted her the boon. As soon as God disappeared, she looked at her face. She looked at the big nose and felt that she had become uglier than before. She prayed again more earnestly and God appeared again and asked her what she wanted. She said that she did not want that big nose. God said, so shall it be and granted her the boon. She immediately found that her nose had completely disappeared. The moral of this story is that although God is present before you, playing with you and talking with you, you do not know what to ask.

EVERY ONE MUST HAVE FAITH IN HIMSELF.

There is one who does not love himself, has no belief in himself and has no ambition to rise higher and higher. Even a man who does not have faith in God has faith in himself and desires

to have strength by which to cultivate faith in himself. There was once a guru communicating wisdom to people who came to cut the fruits with flowers and fruits. One day, as the offerings were plenty, he called a disciple and asked him to cut the fruits and arrange for its distribution as prasad. The disciple reported to the guru that all was ready for distribution and asked him who would be given first. The guru asked him to start with the person in whom he has the greatest faith and the highest confidence. All the people assembled there thought that the disciple would first give the fruit to the teacher and then distribute to the others. But the disciple did not do so. He took the first fruit himself. When the surprised onlookers asked for an explanation he said that since he had had the greatest confidence and affection for himself, he took the first fruit.

EXCESS WEALTH CAN CHANGE ONES QUALITY

There is a small story, which tells us how the possession of wealth will change the qualities of some people. A mother had only one son and a lot of money. The boy had lost his father early in his life. As the boy grew older and older, he got into bad company. If the tank is full, frogs gather but once the tank has dried up, all the frogs disappear. Many friends will gather round you so long as you have wealth and the moment wealth disappears, the friends will also disappear without telling you. The son of that wealthy person accumulated a large number of bad friends. He used to go to the mother day after day and demand large sums of money, with the result that the mother's affection towards the boy began diminishing and she developed positive hatred towards the boy. As days went on, the boy lost all attachment to the mother. She thought that it's much better that such a son who brings down the honour and reputation of the parents dies rather than lives and therefore she worked out a plan one day. At the same time, the son had its own plan as he thought that it is better that such a mother dies rather than lives. One day the son was to kill his mother with an iron rod as the mother came to serve him food. The mother also decided to kill the son the same day by poisoning his food. When the mother came to serve him food, the son hit her with the iron rod and killed her. A few minutes later, the boy also died after eating the poisoned food.

THE UNIQUE TREASURES OF MANKIND

It is said that during the Kurukshetra battle which lasted for 18 days. Visva had his mind with contrition, for, the contestants were both of his lineages. So, he could not cast his eyes on the fratricidal carnage! One day, he was so overcome by remorse that he hastened beyond the blood-soaked plain, where another day's holocaust was about to begin. Hurrying along, he saw a spider scurrying forward on the ground! "Why so fast?" inquired the sage, the spider ran off the road, climbed up an ant hill by its side and from that eminence, it replied, "Know you not that the war chariot of Arjuna is about to pass this way" If I am caught under its wheels, I am done". Vyasa laughed at this reply, he said, "No eye gets wet when you die! The world suffers no loss when you are killed! You leave no vacuum when you disappear". The spider was touched to the quick by this insult it was a bloated rage. It ejaculated, "How is that? You are a bloated sage! You feel that if you die, it will be a great loss, whereas I will not be missed at all. I too have a wife and children to whom I love. I too have a home and a store of food. I too cling to life with as much tenacity as you do. I have hunger, thirst, grief, pain, joy, delight and the agony of separation from kith and kin. The world is as much in me and for me, as in and for human beings and other."

Vyasa hung his head and moved on in silence, muttering the live, Saamaanyam eivath psubhir naraani; for man and beast and insect and worm, these things are common, but, he told himself, "Inquiry into the ultimate, yearning for Beauty, Truth and Goodness, Awareness of the

underlying Unity, these attributes of Wisdom are the unique treasures of mankind”, and went his way.

ADI SANKARA’S PITHRU BHAKTI BRINGS DIVINE GRACE

Sankara knew the real meaning of the Vedic words “Mathru Devo Bhava”. Once when his father left the house, he told his son: “My dear son, I am daily worshipping God and distributing naivedya to all the people. So also in my absence and in the absence of your mother, you will please do like that”. Sankara promised too so without fail. He poured some milk in a cup, put it before the Idol of the Goddess and prayed to her: ”Mother! Take this milk which I am offering”. Though he prayed for a long time, the Mother did not take the milk, nor did she appear. He was very disappointed. He said again, “Mother! Mother! You are daily taking the offerings that are given to you by my father. What sins have these hands of mine committed that you are not accepting the offering which I am giving to you?” He prayed to her earnestly from the innermost depths of his heart. He prepared to sacrifice even his life and told himself, “My father asked me to offer this milk to the goddess but I am not able to do so because the goddess is not receiving the offering, which is made. It is better that I die”. He went out and brought a big stone to kill himself. The Mother of the Universe is very compassionate and she was very moved and touched by Sankara’s sincerity. She at once appeared before him and drinks the milk that he offered. She drank the whole milk and placed the empty cup before him. The boy was very glad that the Mother of the Universe came and drank the milk but there was nothing in the cup.

He thought that his father would certainly ask for the naivedya of the God after his return. He feared that the father may thought that he drank away all the milk and may be angry with him. Therefore he prayed to the Goddess. “Goddess, give me at least drop of milk so that I may be able to give it to my father”. But the Goddess did not come. He again sincerely continued to pray; the Goddess was moved and she appeared. Because she was not able to give the milk that she drank, she gave he own milk and filled the cup. There is a belief that because Sankara tasted the Divine milk, he was able to attain the highest tearing, knowledge and wisdom that are ever possible. So the essence of the Grace of the Goddess became the essence of learning of Sankara. In order to please his father, he tried hard and was able to get the Goddess of the Universe to manifest Herself before him. From this story, we must learn to revere and obey the orders of our fathers implicitly and sincerely.

THE WORLD CONFERENCE OF ANIMALS

Man is the noblest of all animals, the final product of unfolds ages of progressive evolution; but he is not consciously striving to live up to his heritage. The beasts held a World conference, to confabulate on the authenticity of man’s claim to be the some of creation and the monarch of all that walks the earth.

The Lion presided over the deliberation. The tiger questioned the claims of man; the leopard seconded the resolution of emphatic protest. It made a devastating speech, condemning man, “He is a standing disgrace to animals everywhere. He manufactures and drinks merrily fatal poisons and is proud of his utter foolishness. He cheats his own kind and spends all his energies and resources in devising diabolic weapons to wipe out his sisters and brothers; he prods horses and dogs to run in desperate haste and gamble s his earnings away, while they gallop along the track; he is cruel, greedy, immortal, insatiable and unashamed. He sets a bad example to the animal world. Though endowed with superior emotions and intelligence, his behavior is disgusting and demeaning”, he said. “We do not know if and where we will get our next meal; we have no sure place to rest. We have nothing to wrap round ourselves, except the skin. But, yet the least of us is far worthier child of God than this monster called man.” He concluded.

The fox rose and added, “We have a reason when we mate, but, man, I am ashamed to say, has broken all regulations and cares for no restraint. He is a law unto himself and a disaster to the rest”.

The lion rose, to sum up the arguments. He agreed with the general trend of the tirade against man, provoked by his undeserved claim to supremacy. But, he refused too far all with the same brush.

He distinguished between men who are bestial and worse, and men who have transcended their bestial past by the proper use of the special gifts of discrimination and detachment. The latter, he said, ought to be received by all beasts as Masters, while the former deserved severe reprisals and condemnation.

SEEK THE POINT OF VIEW OF GOD

Four friends once started dealing in cotton. They had a godown for the storage of the bales; finding that the cottonseeds attracted rats to the godown, a cat was introduced by them to scare the rodent throng. They tied jingles to her feet and since they loved it much, the jingles were gold! Once, when the cat jumped from the top of the bales, it started limping on one foot. So, they applied some balm and tied a long strip of bandage round the injured foot. The bandage got loose. And the cat, unaware of the long narrow cloth that was trailing behind her, sat near the fireplace, and when the cloth began to burn, she ran helter-skelter and fled into the godown itself, where the entire stock of cotton was reduced to ashes in a trice. The four friends had assigned to themselves each of the feet of joint cat and the injured foot belonged to one of them; so the other three charged him with the damages, which they claimed, from him.

The matter went to the court and after hearing arguments on both sides, the judge said, “The injured leg has no responsibility, for it was taken into the godown with the trail of fire by the three healthy feet, So, damages have to be paid by the owners of the healthy feet to the owner of the limping foot”. What may thus appear correct at first sight might prove wrong on second thoughts. There to distribute to others is correctness from the worldly point of view and correctness, from God’s. Find out what the point of view of God would be, by association with godly men; the y can give you proper advice. You must seek and not avoid men.

THE BLANKET OF MAYA AND BEAR

The Atma Tattvam is one and indivisible. On the bank of a river, once a group of children were tending their cows. It was the monsoon and all of a sudden a furious current of water developed. Because it was a fast current, one bear, which slipped into the water, was drawn into the midstream and was being carried away. One of the boys looked at the floating mass, and from a distance, it appeared to him to be a bundle of blankets floating in the water. He said to his companion. “I shall jump into the water and get the blanket out”, and he jumped into the water. With the mistaken idea that it is a bundle of blankets the boy embraced with his hands the bear. Then the bear also embraced him with its own hands. However much the boy tried to extricate himself; the bear did not leave him. It held him fast. The boys on the shore shouted: “Oh my dear companion, leave the bundle and you come away.” The boy in the water, struggling to escape, cried out. “Though I want to escape from it, it does not allow me to escape.” So in this river of life, Maya plays like the bear and we mistake it to be a bundle of blankets. Hoping that it would offer us solace, comfort and happiness, we jump into the river and try to catch it. At a later stage when we want to extricate ourselves from it, we find it impossible to do so. This illusion is created by Maya but the ‘divine principle is always one. Visistadvaita has been

teaching from time immemorial that though the forms are different, there is only one Purusha, which is the Unity in the diversity and multiplicity of forms.

TENALI RAMAKRISHNA'S TANESHA BHARATAM

With a view to use the sacred story of the pandavas for some material purpose the Tanesha of Delhi once invited to his court the eight renowned poets of Vijayanagara. These poets were asked to describe the distinctiveness of the Mahabharatha. They did so in a beautiful and attractive manner. After hearing the story Tanesha wanted them to write a fresh epic in which he would figure as Dharmaraja the eldest of the Pandava, all the ministers whom he liked would figure as the other Pandavas and all his enemies would figure as the Kauravas. In other words, he asked them to write a Tanesha Bharata. These poets were not inclined to produce an epic of this kind and were discussing among themselves as to how they could tackle the situation. Amongst them a clever poet by name Tenali Ramakrishna came forward and said that he would undertake preparing this book. He wanted to teach a good lesson to the Tanesha. The Tanesha then asked him to prepare the text in a week's time. The week was coming to a close and Ramakrishna had not even started writing and the other poets were afraid that the Tanesha would punish them. By the end of the agreed period, Ramakrishna took a few pieces of paper and went to the Tanesha who in turn had invited many friends to listen to this great text. Tanesha asked Ramakrishna if the Bharata was completed. Ramakrishna told that it was nearly complete but that there were one or two minor doubts, which required clarification from the Tanesha. Then the Tanesha asked him what these doubts were so he could clarify them. Ramakrishna replied that he had some hesitation to raise these doubts in public and he would wish to do so when both of them were alone. Tanesha and Ramakrishna went inside and Ramakrishna said that he had a doubt as to who would be fit in the role of Draupadi. Since Draupadi was wife to all the five Pandavas, the person in this role would have to be wife for the five Pandavas in the story. This means that Tanesha's wife would be a wife to the ministers as well. Ramakrishna asked Tanesha if he would agree to give this role to his wife. Tanesha not at all liked this and he told Ramakrishna that there was no need to write such a Bharata and asked him to clear out after giving him suitable gifts. Thus we see here that the Tanesha wanted to have a reputation of the Pandavas but he did not want to accept the sacred terms under which the five Pandavas took Draupadi as their wife. Today, if we want to establish the nobility of our culture, we should realize and accept as a fact that the basis for it is respect for morality and truth. We should follow the path of morality and truth. If we want to have the reputation alone but not follow what the Tanesha wanted to do. This will be leading an artificial life. We should both hanker after getting a name and cheer popularity. We should look to the fulfillment of life.

SABARI'S SADHANA

Sabari had a very tender, compassionate heart. How she came to Matanga Rishi and stayed at his hermitage is a very interesting story. Her parents arranged her marriage, and as was the custom among the Adivata a goat was to be offered to the tribal Goddess, on the night previous to the ceremony, in order to win the Grace for the couple. When Sabari came to know about this slaughter, she wept, and fell at the feet of her parents, plying them to save the goat. She asked, "How can our married life be happy, when the dying bleat of this goat is the prologue?" But, the father pushed her aside and proceeded with the cruel rite. That night, Sabari stole out of the den of torture and hid herself in the depths of the jungle that was not far off.

When day dawned, his parents as well as the groom's party were plunged in grief and anxiety; they combed the area, even where she was lying low amidst the thick bushes, and they went back, saying among themselves. He could not have gone to the hermitage, for no woman would be given asylum there". He heard those words and so, and so she concluded that the hermitage

was the safest place for her. She felt that some monk would take pity on her, and not send her back. Matanga espied her and gave her permission to be in his habitation. He told her that God in the form of Sri Rama was coming to the hermitage some day, since he had been exiled into the forests for 15 years and He is eager to save the monks and the seekers, doing Tapas in the forests, from the ravage of the demonic enemies of peace! Rama, he said, was proceeding from one region to another, with His consort Sita and His brother Lakshmana.

From that day Sabari had no other thoughts than of Rama, no other desire than the desire to have the Darshan of Rama, the chance to touch His Feet and the opportunity to speak with Him. Her heart was saturated with the Ramarasa, the sweetness of the Rama principle. She had no other Japam or Dhyana or spiritual exercise. She spent her time, preparing for the visit of Rama to the hermitage; just as she cleaned the paths, she cleaned her heart, too. Pebbles and thorns disappeared from both through her efforts. She walked through the under growth and removed overhanging creepers and briars, for she imagined Rama would not have combed His hair and it might get caught. She broke the lumps of earth, for she feared the tender soles of Sita would be hurt when she walks over them. She gathered fruits and tubers from the jungle trees and plants and kept them by every day, for no one knew when Rama would arrive! And she took no risks. She tasted every fruit, whether it was bitter, sour or sweet, so that Rama could eat the best. She smoothed the surface of all stones that lay by the side of the tracks in the jungle for, she expected Rama, Lakshmana or Sita to sit upon one of them when they got tired of walking. She hoped that one of them would rest awhile on one of the rocks she polished with great care. Thus, her heart became Rama Hridaya!

Sabari was so immersed in Rama that the ascetics lost all awareness of her sex; they allowed her to remain in the hermitage, after Matanga related to them her high level of sadhana. Matanga also left this body and gave up her hermitage to Sabari, saying, you alone deserve to be here when Rama arrives!

The Sadhana that Sabari did to earn the bliss of serving Rama, you can do, when you serve Sai Rama in the poor. By this service, you realize the Self of Rama.

ATMA TATWA IS ONE AND THE SAME IN ALL

There was a guru with a large number of disciples and the guru was telling them some good things. One day, when the lesson was going on, the teacher told the disciples that while they are engaged in Pooja and meditation, no matter what obstacles come their way, they must take care to see that their meditation is not disturbed. The disciples had great faith in the guru. There were also some disciples who were trying in the ashram itself. On a birthday of the guru, one disciple decided to offer special prayers to the guru by repeating the 108 names of the Lord. The disciple collected a photograph, 108 flowers and wanted to perform the Pooja in the traditional manner. One other disciple invited the guru and took him to his house. The guru while going told this other disciple, who wanted to do the worship at the ashram itself, to be careful and asked him to keep front door closed. The day was very hot and the guru neither had slippers for his feet nor did he have sufficient hair on his head to protect him from the sun. When the guru came to the ashram and wanted the door to be opened, the disciple inside was engaged in offering Pooja. The guru knocked at the door and asked the disciple to open the door. The disciple replied that he was engaged in Pooja and that the guru must wait till the Pooja was over, as the Pooja was not to be interrupted. Today ninety-nine out of hundred people are like the disciple. They only worship the photograph of the person whose grace they long for, and continue to do so even when the latter is knocking at the very door of the worshipper.

THE ONE BASIS AND DIFFERENT CONTAINERS

When a guru was sitting and teaching his disciple. One day he said; Guru Brahma, Sishya Brahma, Sarvam Brahma. Thus the guru was implying that everything in the universe was Brahma, Every day, one disciple was accustomed to greet the guru respectfully on his arrival, but after this particular event, he did not do so and he never got up from his seat. The guru questioned him on this strange behavior and the disciple replied that the previous day, the Guru had said that everything was Brahma and therefore there was no difference between them.

Then the teacher felt that what he said came back to him as a boomerang and he wanted to teach the student a good lesson. He went to the board and wrote "Guru Brahma" as two different words. He also wrote "Sishya Brahma", and "Sarvam Brahma". When you look at these three, though Brahma is occurring as the same in all the three, the Guru, Sishya and Sarvam are different. Only when these three words also become one, you can say that all are one. Thus, until you are able to experience this oneness of all in practice, the student will remain a student and a teacher will remain a teacher and there is no escape from the need for the student having to respect the teacher. The basis is one but the containers are different.

THE RIGHT PATH TO LIBERATION

While devoting your life to worldly pleasures and ideas. It is not possible for you to realize God. There is a story of a King, who used to ask all people who came to his kingdom, to tell him the correct path for realization. Each one, basing himself either on some standard texts or on what elders told him, used to say that a particular pathway the right one for liberation. While this was going on, so servant close to the king was listening to the many descriptions that were being given of the right path for liberation. He found that the king was listening continuously to various method of attaining Moksha but he was not putting any one of them into practice. With the intention of teaching the king a good lesson, one day when the king was sitting and talking to many people in the central hall, the servant came from outside shouting loudly. The king then got up and asked the servant what he was shouting about for. The servant replied with some anxiety in his face that all the palace camels were climbing up to the top of the terrace. The king asked how the camels could climb to the terrace. The servant then said that if the king, steeped in luxury, can aspire to climb up the path of spirituality and attain liberation and Moksha, there need be no surprise at the camels climbing to the terrace, and then running off.

EVERY ACT OF THE LORD HAS A SIGNIFICANCE

Krishna humbled Arjuna's pride during the war in an interesting manner. About the end of the war, one evening, Arjuna felt proud that Krishna was his charioteer and his 'servant'. He felt that as master; he should get down from the chariot after Krishna and not before Him. So, that day he insisted that Krishna should get down first. But, Krishna was adamant: Arjuna must come down first, he said. After wasting a long time, pleading and protesting and praying, Arjuna got down, very unwillingly, swallowing his pride. Krishna then came down, and, immediately the chariot went up in flames! Krishna explained the reason. The incendiary arrows and missiles that had struck on the chariot were powerless so long as He was on it; but, when his presence was no longer there, they set the chariot on fire. Thus, Krishna showed that every act and word of the Lord had significance and a purpose, which mortals cannot gauge. Egoism is a tough enemy and it requires constant vigilance to conquer it.

HANUMAN'S DEVOTION

After the coronation, one day, Sita and the three brothers of Rama met and planned to exclude Hanuman from the seva of Rama and wanted that all the various services for Rama should be divided only among themselves. They felt that Hanuman had enough chances already. So, they drew up a list, as exhaustive as they could remember, of the services from dawn till dusk, down to the smallest minutiae and assigned each item to one among themselves. They presented the list of items and assignees to the Lord, while Hanuman was present. Rama heard about the new procedure, read the list and gave His approval, with a smile. He told Hanuman that all the tasks had been assigned to others and that he could now take rest. Hanuman prayed that the list might be read and when it was done, he noticed a task of 'snapping fingers when one yawns'. Of course, being an emperor, Rama should not be allowed to do it himself. It has to be done by a servant, he pleaded. Rama agreed to allot that task to Hanuman.

It was a great piece of good luck for Hanuman, for it entailed Hanuman's constant attendance on his Master, for how could anyone predict when the yawn would come? And, he had to be ready with a snap, as soon as the yawn was on! He could not be away for a minute nor could he relax for a moment. You must be happy that the seva of the Lord keeps you

KARNA, THE GREAT FIVER

There is a fine story about Karna. He was applying oil to his head, preliminary to his bath, from a jeweled cup, Karna had taken the oil in his right hand and rubbed it well into his hair, when Krishna appeared and Karna rose to revere Him. He said He had come to demand the cup from him as a gift! "I am surprised that You, the Master of the Universe, have a desire for this paltry thing but who am I to ask you question? Here is the cup; "I gift it to You", he said, and placed it in the Lord's right hand with his left hand. Krishna took him to task for that error in dharma, offering a gift with the left hand. But Karna said, "Pardon me, O Lord! My right hand is smeared with oil; I was afraid, that if I take time to wash the hand and make it fit to give the cup, my wayward mind which now had agreed to the gift, might discover some argument not to accede to your request; I might therefore be deprived of the unique fortune, by the fickle mind with which I am burdened. This is the reason why I asked immediately and passed it on to you, regardless of the breach of a rule of etiquette; please sympathize with me and pardon me". Karna pleaded. Karna knew that the mind is unsteady, but, as Krishna advised Arjuna, detachment and discipline can tame it.

VAIRAGYA --- THE STORY OF MOHAJITH

Bhakti and the attitude of Sharanaagathi that is its final fruit will give you great courage to meet any emergency; such courage is what is called Vairagya. The story of Mohajith is a good example of this highest type of Vairagya. Mohajith, the Prince, went to a sage in the forest and sought guidance in the spiritual path. The sage asked him whether he had conquered Moha as his name indicated. The Prince said that not only he, but also every one in his kingdom had! So the Sage started to test the truth of this claim. He took the Prince's robes, soaked them in blood and hastened to the Palace Gate with the gruesome story of the murder of the Prince by some ruffians in the jungle. The maid whom he met refused to hurry with the news to the Royal apartments because she said. "He was born, he died; what is the special urgency of this news that I should interrupt my regular routine and run to the King and Queen?" When at last he got an audience and was able to communicate the sad news to the father, he sat unruffled, whispering to himself, "The bird flew off the tree on which it had alighted to take rest." The Rani too was unmoved.

She told the sage that this Earth is a caravanserai, where men come and stay for the night and when dawn breaks, one by one, they tramp their different ways. Kith and Kin are the words we use for the attachment to the travelers cultivated in the caravanserai during the short term of acquaintance. The wife of the “dead” Prince was also unaffected; she said, “Husband and wife are like two pieces of wood drifting down a flooded river; they float near each other for some time and when some current comes between, they part; each must move on to the sea at its own rate and its own time. There is no need to grieve over the parting of the two; it is in the way nature of Nature that it should be so.” The sage was overjoyed to see this steady and sincere Vairagya in the rulers and the ruled. He came back to the forest and told the Prince that while he was away, a hostile army had invaded his Kingdom and enslaved his subject. He took the news calmly and said, “All this is a bubble, impermanent, flimsy. Let it go the way of the bubble. Guide me to reach this Infinite, the Imperishable”.

NEVER JUDGE ANOTHER DEVOTION

There is a widely prevalent habit now of judging others and labeling them as Bhaktas or Nasthikas. What do you know, what can you know of the inner working of another’s mind? There was once a queen who was a great devotee of Rama; she felt so sad that her husband, the Raja, never even uttered the name of Rama and had no Bhakthi. She had vowed that the first occasion, on which she got evidence of his Bhakthi or at least respect for Rama Nama, she would conduct Puja in all the temples and feed the poor on a lavish scale. Then, one night, while fast asleep, the Raja uttered the name of Rama thrice plaintively and prayerfully. She heard the Naamasmarana and was happy at the discovery of her husband’s devotion to Rama; she ordered general rejoicing throughout the kingdom and the feeding of the poor. The Raja did not know the reason for the celebration for he was only told that it was an order of the Rani, which the officers carried out. Similarly, a husband may not be aware of the excellence of a wife’s spiritual attainments. There is the case of a couple who was proceeding through thick jungle on pilgrimage to an inaccessible shrine. The husband saw on the footpath a precious stone, shining brilliantly when the sun’s rays fell upon it with movement of his foot so that his wife may not be tempted to pick it up and become a slave to the tinsel. The wife saw the gesture and chided the husband for still remaining in his mind a distinction between sand and diamond. For her, both were the same.

The Raja who spoke on his sleep the sacred name of Rama felt very sorry, according to the story, that he let Rama Nama out of his mouth, for he believed that no one should know of his ‘love’ for Rama. There are many who will not shout about their Guru or their favorite Nama and Rupa but whether you declare them to others or not, keep them ever in your consciousness. Rama Nama or any other name must be as constant as breathing. For this, practice it essential. A person once told Dr. Johnson, the famous English thinker, that he could seldom get time to recite the name of God, what with the hundreds of things he had to do from morning till nightfall and even far into the night. Dr. Johnson replied which another question. He asked how millions of people found space to live upon the face of the earth, which is two thirds water and rest is too full of mountains, deserts, forests, icy regions, river-bees, marshes and similar impossible areas. The questioner said that man somehow struggled to find a living spec. So too, said Dr. Johnson, man must somehow find a few minutes a day for prayer to the Lord.

GOD ON YOUR SIDE---WORLD IN YOUR HOLD

You may have accumulated riches, acquired deep scholarship and achieved health and strength. But, unless you have gained, in addition, a vision of the supreme sovereign, and an aspiration to be ever in the ecstasy of that vision, all that has been garnered by you is mere lumber. India has a great epic, the Mahabharata, which describes a war between the Kauravas and Pandavas. The Kauravas had superior financial and military resources. They approached Krishna, the Incarnation of the Lord, for help; but they were content to receive from Him a large army and a huge quantity of hardware. The Pandavas sought from Him only His grace! The Lord agreed he came over to their side, alone and unarmed! He held just a whip and drove the horses of Arjuna's chariot! That was all, but that was all that was needed for victory. The Kauravas were defeated to the uttermost; the Pandavas won the empire and eternal fame.

If God is on your side, you have the world in your hold. This is the lesson driven home by the Hindu scriptures. "Give up all bonds of right and duty; surrender unreservedly to Me! I shall guard you from sin and liberate you from that sad cycle of 'entrances' and 'exits' on the stage of life. You can remain ever in your own Reality of Eternal Calm", the Lord has assured.

DHARMARAJA'S GRIEF OVER KARNA'S DEATH

Karna, the eldest born of the Pandavas, did not know that he was the brother of the other five. Nor did the five brothers know this fact. As a consequence of this ignorance, Karna was saturated with hatred towards the five; he longed to destroy them; he prepared himself for battle against them, with unabated vigor. The five brothers planned to destroy him and behaved towards him as if he were their deadly enemy. When Dharmaraja, the eldest of the five, came to know—after the death of Karna, which they effected successfully—that Karna was his brother, his agony knew no bounds; he was struck disconsolate and was torn by despair. If only he had known the truth, all that grief could have been avoided isn't it? So, too, until you know that all are altars where the same God is installed; all are moved and motivated by the Grace of the self-same God, you are afflicted by hate and pride; once you know it and experience it, you are full of love and reverence to all. The Barbarous remedy of war will be given up when this basic brotherhood is felt in the deepest core of man.

KRISHNA IS THE VISUALIZATION OF THE ATMA

The Krishna whose advent you should celebrate is not the cowherd boy who charmed the village folk with His flute, but, the Krishna, the indefinable, inscrutable, Divine principle that is born in the navel of the body (Matura) as the product of the Energy (Devi), that is then transported to the Mouth (Gokulam)

And fostered by the Tongue (Yashoda) as its source of sweetness. Krishna is the Visualization of the Atma that the repetition of the name grants; the Vision that was gained by Yashoda. You must foster that Krishna on your tongue; when he dances on it the poison of the tongue will be rejected completely, without harming any one, as happened when as child He danced on the hoods of the serpent Kalinaga.

Yashoda traces Krishna to the place. He hides in, by the Footprints He leaves, when He has broken the curd pot, which she was churning. This is a symbolic story to illustrate how the Lord breaks our identification with the body and leads us on to Himself, by signs and signals that He provides all round us. These signs are ever present in the Nature around each one of us, in the beauty of the rising sun, ecstasy of the rainbow, the melody of the birds, the lotus-spangled surface of lakes, the silence of snow-crowned peaks - in fact, since god is Rasa, sweetness, ecstasy, all nature, which is but Himself in action, is sweet and ecstatic, With or without form, it

is ananda, Welcome it into the heart as Rama - He who is joy and grants joy or as Krishna - He who draws by means of the joy He imparts - and, live all your moments with it, offering it your Dhyana, your Puja, your Japa. That will open the doors of Jnana and of liberation. This is the mark of the wise, while those who are otherwise wander in the wilderness, filling their moments with meaningless trifles, toys and gewgaws.

NARADA BHAKTI SUTRAS

Narada asked Vishnu once: “The Rishis or sages who had attained the purest wisdom relating to the universal Atma could not win your grace; but the illiterate milk-maids of Gokul who were charmed by Your beauty, Your sport, Your music, Your prattle, Your sweetness, Your inscrutable novelty – they won Your grace. How did this happen?” But, Narada himself came to know later that the Gopis had Krishna (the Lord) as the very breath of their lives, as the very sight of their eyes, the very sound of their ears, the very taste of their tongues, the very touch of their skin. While tending the cows and calves, attending to their husbands and children, doing the thousand and one chores of worldly life, they lived in Krishna, with Krishna, and by means of Krishna only; sarvada sarva kaleshu Hari Chintanam. Under all conditions, at all times, in all places, their minds dwelt on Hari (Krishna –the Lord). How then can God deny them grace?

When Narada went to Gokul and called the Gopis to gather around him so they can listen to his teachings about the attainment of Jnana, the Gopis gave no heed; they said, they did not like to waste precious minutes. “The hours of day and night are not enough for us to dwell on the name of the Lord. We do not require your verbal acrobatics to convince us that God is Satchita ananda Swarupa; we know, we feel, we experience the bliss every moment”, It was after this revelations of the supremacy of Bhakti that Narada composed the Bhakti Sutras, which have become the guiding lamps for aspirants.

PLAYING MARBLES WITH THE NAME OF GOD

There was once a boy, who picked up a precious gem, bright and round, and used it for playing marbles on the road, with his comrades. A merchant dealing in precious stones chance to pass along that road, and his discerning eye fell on the gem. He approached the boy, took him aside and offered to pay him fifty rupees in exchange. If the boy could know the value of fifty rupees he would have known the value of the gem! He went to his mother and told her that a stranger had tempted him with fifty rupees in return for the marble he played with. She was surprised that it was so costly and she said, “Do not go at the compound with it: play in the garden with your friend”. When the value was revealed, limits were set.

The merchant had no sleep that night, he was planning to secure the gem from those simple folk, so that he could sell it at a huge profit to some millionaire or maharaja, He discovered the house of the boy and moved up and down that road hoping to boy. When he saw the boy play with it, as it was as cheap as a marble, his heart was wrung in agony. The boy threw it on the floor; his mother emerged just at the moment from the inner apartments and it struck her foot and fell under the bush. He spoke to the boy asking for the gem in exchange for a hundred rupees, and again for five hundred rupees! The son ran into the house in tears, complaining about the stranger who would not let him alone. The mother came out into the garden and begged the merchant to go away.

The merchant grasped the chance; he told them other that he was ready to give a thousand rupees on the spot, if the marble was placed in his hand! On hearing this, she forbade the child to play with it outside the house; he could play only within thee rooms. The merchants could not be

shooed off like that; he appeared the next day in front of the house; he held out ten thousand rupees as his offer for the marble. The mother refused to part with it but kept it now in an iron safe, under lock and key! When the merchant came the next day with fifty thousand rupees she took it to a bank and deposited it in their safety vaults. You are also playing marbles with the name of God unaware of its value. Once you realize its worth, you will keep it in your heart of hearts as the most precious treasure. Know that the name is the key to success in your search for consolation, confidence, courage, illumination and liberation.

CHAITANYA --- INCARNATION OF KRISHNA

Chaitanya gave indication of his being an incarnation to his mother, as a child. Chaitanya was then a baby crawling on all fours. His mother had a guest in the house, an old orthodox Brahmin, who was cooking his own lunch from the provisions given by her. He desired his food to be ceremonially pure, uncontaminated by the touch of other hands. He offered to God the food he prepared to eat; that was his vow. It was rather late when the offering was ready. Just when he sat before the idol of Krishna for worship. The child toddled forward and dipped his fingers in the vessel of food thus making it 'impure' as an offering to God. So, provisions were given again. Food was cooked again, and very late in the day the worship was resumed. This time, too, the child crawled in from somewhere and contaminated the sacred food! It repeated the mischief a third time. The mother dragged the child away and threatened to thrash the prank out of its head. But the child asked the mother, quite innocently; "He is calling on me to eat it, but when I go near it he gets angry". Thus did he reveal that He was Krishna again?

THE GREATER GRIEF SCOURS OFF THE SMALLER

When Dasaratha, the Emperor died, there was no one at hand to perform the obsequies and so, they sent word to the two younger sons, Bharata and Satrugna, who had left for their kinsman's capital! They were not informed of the death, and when they came and saw the body, they were too shocked at the inert silence of their dear father, that they ran to Kausalya, the queen, and their stepmother. She burst into tears when the two boys ran into her apartments. They were shocked at this and inquired why. It was then that she broke the sad news of the death of their father. Bharata was plunged in grief at this tragedy; he wept aloud beating his breast. It was inconsolable agony. The amidst the distress he said, "Mother, how unfortunate I am. I had no chance to nurse him in his illness. During his last days. Alas, dear brother, you too lost the precious chance of service", he said, patting Satrugna on the head. After some moments, he continued, "Mother, how fortunate are Rama and Lakshmana. They were with him. The nursed him and ran on little errands for him. They were with him when he breathed his last. Since we were far away, did father leave any command for us? What was his last wish regarding us? Did he remember us, ask that we should be sent for?" Kausalya said, "Son, he had only one word on his lips, one form before his eye; that word was Rama, that form was Rammer". Bharatha looked surprised. He asked, "How is it that he uttered the name and craved for the form of Rama, who was by his bedside, and did not yearn for me who was far away? O, how unlucky I am? I have but the affection of my dear father." Kausalya replied, "Well, if Rama had been by his bedside or near him, he would not have passed away? Bharatha ejaculated, "Mother, where had Rama gone? Why was he away? Where is he now? Did he go a-hunting to the forest? Was he on a pleasure trip on the Sari?" The mother said, "No, no, He was gone into the forest for fourteen years". Bharatha could hear it no longer. "Alas, what an outrageous tragedy, this? What crime, what sin did Rama commit to deserve this exile? Why had he to go?" "Your mother wished that he should go, and so he went!" said the queen.

When Bharatha heard this, the grief that he sustained on hearing of the death of his father paled, and he grieve the grief that arose at his mother sending Rama into exile for fourteen years supervened overwhelming all else. The greater grief scours off the smaller.

SOUND IS SACRED

One teacher, having about 10 students, was teaching them some good things. To such an ashram came one who had some position and power. This teacher did not go to the door to welcome and receive him. This man came there because he had some position and authority. He felt somewhat hurt and he went right into the class and asked the teacher. "Why is it you didn't care for me? You have not come and received me. What are you doing?" The teacher said, "I am busy teaching the children some good things." The person who came in asked, "Just because you are teaching them some good things, are the hearts of these children going to be changed and become more sacred?" The teacher took some courage and said, "Yes, of course, there is every possibility of their mind changing by my teaching". The intruder said, "No, I cannot believe it", it simply means that you have no faith in it. Because of that, I cannot give up teaching these boys some good things". Then this person, who felt somewhat important, started arguing and said there is no possibility of changing a mind merely by words. The teacher who was clever and who had known thee things asked one of the youngest boys to stand up. In the bearing of this visitor the teacher told the young boy, "Look here! My dear boy! You just get hold of the neck of this visitor and throw him out of the door." Immediately on hearing these words, the visitor because completely excited and his eyes were red and he was very angry and he came to beat the teacher. Then the teacher asked, "Sir, what is the reason for your becoming so angry? We did not beat you, we did not throw you out, and the only thing that has excited you to this stage of anger is the word, which I conveyed to this young boy. You, who said that you do not believe in changing the mind by mere words, what is the reason why these mere words, which I have uttered to this young boy, have changed your mind so much that you are so excited? So it is very wrong to say that with mere words you can cause any amount of affection. With mere words you can earn the grace of anyone else". So, if in this world you want to promote friendship, you can do so by using sweet words, by talking in a very sweet manner and by speaking about sacred words. On the other hand if you use harsh words, you are not going to promote friendship in this world.

BRAHMAN IS ALL PERVADING

In the Upanishads, we have the story of one individual who was very learned man who was himself a guru. His name is Uddalaka. He had a son by the name Swetaketu. Made several attempts to get his education at the feet of his own father Uddalaka. But the father did not agree to such a procedure. The reason for this is, for a son who moves freely with his father, it is rather difficult for both himself and the father to deal with and abide by the right disciple -and-guru relationship. The son will always have the idea that the teacher is his father and the concept of father and son will persist. This is because of the affection that obtains between the father and son. Here you will also have the justification for calling the son a 'Kama Putra', a son who was born out of affection. Where there is attachment, where there is affection and where there is a feeling of belonging to, and then there will be lenience and it is not possible to impart education in its fullest measure and with the right disciple. Because Uddalaka understood and realized the situation that education cannot be complete and proper when there is a relationship of attachment, he sent his son Swetaketu to another guru and desired that his son be taught and given proper education.

Looking at this situation, Swetaketu being young and experienced, mistook and interpreted it to himself wrongly and got the feeling that perhaps his father is not quite learned and hence sent to another guru for studies. For some years Swetaketu stayed in the Guru's house and completed his education and came back to his father's house with some conceit of high learning. Noticing this, the father asked the son, "What is it that you have learnt? What are the various systems that you have learnt? Have you learnt about Brahman? Have you learnt that particular branch of education which if one has learnt, one needs not have to learn anything else and will be knowing all?" Such were the questions by the father. While the father was asking these questions, the son was behaving in a rather queer and funny way. He was still showing superior airs and conceit as if he was far more educated and learned than his father and that the latter would not understand at all if he started telling what he had learnt over those few years. The father could easily understand the false vanity and the immature state of his son. The son was trying to show off; replying to his father that God is like this, God is like that, and so on.

Uddalata felt that his son would not be able to grasp anything at all if he tried to tell him the Truth about Brahman in words. He thought it better to teach the truth to him by example. So he brought a pot filled with water. He brought also some sugar in his hand and he showed the sugar to his son. After showing him the sugar, he put all that sugar into the water in the pot. Then he stirred the sugar till it was completely dissolved in the water and then looked at the son and asked in him; "I brought the sugar with me and you have seen the sugar yourself, I have put it into the vessel. Can you tell me where in this vessel does that sugar lie now?" The son looked into the vessel and of course did not find any sugar remaining as such in the vessel. The father put a few drops of the contents of the vessel from the bottom on the tongue of the son and asked, "how do you find the taste? You can take a drop from anywhere within the vessel and taste it," The son had to agree that the sugar was there now in every drop of the contents of the vessel and that it was present everywhere in that vessel. Then the father explained saying: "Just as you have now seen this sugar being present everywhere, so also the Brahman assumes the form of 'Saguna' or One who has the attributes and comes into the world and resides in every thing in everything that we see around you in this world. It is not possible to see Him separately with your eyes; it is not possible to get hold of Him separately with your eyes, it is not possible to get hold of Him separately with your hands, but it is only possible to cognize him by experiencing Him in the state of the world. You cannot do anything more with your gross body than to experience Brahman who is omnipresent and all pervading ". It is only after you have attained this rich experience that you will be in a position to talk of Adwaita and give expressions to the nature of God. His omnipresence etc. It is only after such an experience will you have any claim, right and authority to talk about the omnipresence of God. Otherwise, with more book-knowledge, prating like a parrot about God and His omnipresence, as if you truly know all, are all untruths? Only after the non-dual experience of Divinity can you talk of Adwaita or nondualism.

COMPASSION IS A SIGN OF THE GREAT

Once when Samartha Ramadas was moving about the countryside with his disciples, those behind him seeing a fine field of juicy sugar cane entered it and started pulling out the cane, crunching it with great relish. The owner of the field naturally emerged at their behavior and at the loss, to which they were subjecting him, fell upon them with a stout cane. The Master was sorry that his disciples broke the discipline so objectionably drawn by the desire of the tongue for the sweet juice. Next day they reached Emperor Sivaji's place, where a great welcome awaited the Guru and his followers. Sivaji offered to attend personally to the Guru during his ceremonial bath; when Ramadas undressed, Sivaji was shocked to find broad red marks, indicating that he had been beaten! Such was the sensitive sympathy of the great saint, that he received on his back the blows meant for his pupils; Sivaji sent for the owner of the field of cane; and, when he stood

shivering in fear before the Emperor and His Guru, Ramadas was requested by Sivaji to inflict on him any punishment he liked. But, Ramadas accepted the fact that wrong was committed by his disciples and blessed the farmer, granting him a boon that his lands would be tax- free for ever.

REWARD FOR SINCERE YEARNING

There was a Sultan once, ruling over the region of Mathura, Brindavan and other places, on the Yamuna during his reign the emperor of Vijayanagara came on pilgrimage and stayed at Brindavan for some days, where he paid homage to Krishna in the temple. The Sultan argued that he must have come so only to pay respects to see that One, come what may. So late one night he went and called out before the closed doors of the temple, "Who is inside?" He heard a voice, which gave the reply. "Govind Maharaj and Radha Rani!" The Sultan was now sure that there were two persons living inside, a Super-Emperor and His Super-Empress. He was filled with an agonizing yearning to see the distinguished occupants of the temple. He waited outside the door, without food or drink for three full days. He waited outside the door, without food or drink for three full days. He was overcome with hunger and thirst; but he did not stir, for he was afraid the Imperial Couple may emerge any moment and he might miss the Darshan.

That night, when the town was asleep, just before midnight Govind Maharaj and Radha Rani emerged from the temple. They signed to him to follow him. They were magnificently dressed and had elaborately bejeweled headgear, necklaces, wristlets and ornaments for the hands and ghetto. They moved on until they reached the banks of the Yamuna, where thousands of Gopas and Gopis were gathered to welcome them. There were music and dance in the bright moonlight, heavenly joy shone on every face. At 4 A.M. They returned to the temple and before they passed through the closed door, they gave into his hands the Kankanas they wore on the wrists, for safekeeping. Before he could say anything, they had gone.

A party of priests came along at that time, and seeing him, asked him, why he was standing there and what he had in his hands. They had come to open the locks of the cutter and inner doors and inaugurate the ceremonials of the Day, with Suprabhatham and Nagarasamkirtan. (Awakening Hymn and Moving Choirs). The Sultan said, "Govind Maharaj and Radha Rani have just gone in; I was with them at the Yamuna Bank from midnight till a few minutes ago. They gave me these kankanas for safekeeping. I don't know why," They surmised he was a thief who, caught in the act, was spinning a yarn and so. Bound him and beat him. But they found the locks unbroken, everything intact. Only the idol of Krishna had no gold kankanas! Now they were convinced that the man outside was a great Bhakta, who had the unique vision of the Lord. They honored him and craved pardon for the wrong perpetrated in ignorance. Such is the reward for sincere yearning; unlimited ananda can be earned through implicit faith in God.

THE MOST AMAZING THING ON EARTH

When once Brahma asked the sage Narada, what was the most amazing thing he noticed on earth, Narada replied, "The most amazing thing I saw was this" the dying and weeping over the dead. Those who are themselves nearing death every moment are weeping over those who have died, as if their weeping has any effect, either to revive the dead or prevent their own death! Brahma asked him to tell another. Narada said, "Another amazing thing is: Everyone fears the consequences of sin, but goes on singing nevertheless! Everyone craves for the consequence of Punya (meritorious acts), but everyone is reluctant to do any meritorious act!"

THE BEST FRIEND IN LIFE

Friendship rampant these days can be illustrated by a story. A person had three friends. He had taken to several bad ways and consequently had to face a court case. He went to a friend and sought his help. The friend blankly told him that he would not like to associate himself with the crime committed by him. He refused to give evidence to rescue him. The second friend, when approached, told him that he would only go up to the court but would not be a witness in a witness box. Thereafter he approached the third friend for help. He immediately responded and said, "Yes, your troubles are mine, my troubles are yours and I shall help you in whatever manner you wish me to help". It is quite clear that amongst these three the third is the best kind of friend, For your life also we have three such friend. As the time of death, one has to leave behind all that one owns. Wealth and status do not accompany you. Your friends and relations may come to the burial ground to bury or cremate the body, and thereafter all will return home. Only the good and bad acts that you have reformed in your life will accompany you. Your next birth will be carved out according to your deeds in this life. In order to remain good, you must cultivate respect for truth, which is permanent, whereas everything else including your body is subject to change, decay and death.

WORLDLY PLEASURES ARE LIKE A SERPENT GRIP

One person came to Me about 30 years ago. And prayed that he should meet with success his examination and secure a high first class. I told him that there will have to be effort and the result will be according to God's will. I gave him My blessings and sent him away. He did secure a high first class and came to Me again after passing his examination and asked for My blessings so that he may get a job. He did get a job within a month. He again came to Me after a few months. He said he got a job, that he was happy, and he also said he wanted to marry a typist girl in his own office. I told him that if it is agreeable to his father and mother, he may do so but they may not like it. He was not inclined to listen to Me. He said that even if it meant transgressing the wished of his parents, he was determined to marry that girl. He in fact suggested that he would even give up his life, if this marriage were not possible. I told him that he must convince his parents before entering into such an alliance. He brought a lot of pressure on his parents and they, finding no other alternative, agreed to the marriage. The marriage was over and after a year, both of them came to me again and said they wanted a son. After the birth of a son his expenses multiplied, his wife gave up the job, and he came to Me desiring a promotion. By his good luck, he got a promotion. Although he was somewhat foolish in regard to worldly matters, he had great faith in regard to matters relating to Swami. I gave him My blessings and he got a promotion. He did not turn up thereafter for over five years. They had 4 children. He came again to Me after five years and said that he was fed up with the family, said that he cannot bear the burden of the family and that he was looking for relief from all the means. He said that he wanted a small jobs in the ashram itself and said that his family has now got a hold over him like a big serpent. I asked him if the serpent caught him on its own or whether he let the serpent came to him and catches him.

LEAVE EVERYTHING TO HIS WILL

Yearning leads to surrender, and surrender gives highest joy. Leave everything to His Will, accept whatever happens whether pleasant or painful. There was a rich merchant once in Baghdad. He was leading a virtuous God-fearing life. He had a daughter whom he adored greatly, for she was the very embodiment of virtue. The father decided that he would give her in marriage only to a young man who was intimately bound with God, regarding of any other excellence or handicap. He searched for such a groom, in caravanserais, mosques and places where holy persons were likely to gather. One Friday, he noticed in the mosque a fair young

man, on his knees even after all else had left, crying out to God most endearingly and with great sincerity. He approached him and asked whether he would marry his daughter. He said “I am the poorest of the poor; I have a leaky roof over my head, and a gravel floor whereon I sit. Who will wed such a beggar? I shall marry if some one who would not object to my spiritual Sadhana, consents to share my poverty”.

The merchant felt that he was the most eligible groom and the wedding was celebrated soon. His daughter came to the fakir’s residence and started cleaning the floor. She was happy that her husband was of her own heart; she too was a pilgrim on the road to God, a practitioner of spiritual exercises. While sweeping the floor, she found in a corner a plate with a piece of bread on it. She asked him why it was kept there, and he replied, “I kept it by, lest tomorrow, when I go my rounds, we may not get enough to eat”.

At this, the wife replied. ‘I am ashamed of you. You have so little faith in Allah. He who gives us hunger, will He not give us bread, too? I shall not live with a person of this nature. You have no faith in God and His Companion’ she said, and left the fakir to himself.

GOD MAKES HIMSELF AWARE TO BEAST AND BIRDS

There are people who bring forth tears when they pass away; there are others who bring forth your Tears, when they pass across your way! They are to be avoided. God makes himself aware to beasts and birds, rather than man, who have strayed into the wilderness. Recently at Dharmavaram, a jutka full of men luggage was being driven towards the railway station, the driver beating the horse mercilessly in the back and neck so that it may run fast. A bearded old man, fair and rosy in health, was passing that way. He accosted the driver and said, “Here! Don’t hold the rein so tight. Leave them free, hold them loose! The horse will then run fast.” The driver retorted, “You keep quiet! I know my horse better”. One of the men inside the Jutaku said, “Who do you think he is?” The driver said, “I don’t care!” The driver then heard a voice (it was the horse that spoke), “He is Krishna, who drove the horses of Arjuna’s chariot: He knows all about horses!” The driver thought that the voice belonged to some one among his fare. He replied looking into the jutka, “He may know all about Arjuna’s horses: but what does he know about mine?”

THE GOPIS MESSENGER

The gopis felt that a bee can sympathize with their pangs of separation from Krishna, more than any human messenger can. They asked the bee to intercede with the Lord, on their behalf. Pray to HIM, to bear the garland of my adoration, one goop asked the bee. Another wanted it to ask Krishna to illumine the darkness of her heart. Radha asked it to pray to Krishna to make the desert sands of her heart sprout into greed, so that His feet may tread thereon, light and soft.

YOU CANNOT PAINT THE WORLD GREEN

Before you experience the divine in every being in the Universe and in every cell and room, you have to experience It in yourself. Each act words and thought must be charged with that awareness. There was a millionaire once who was bothered by two aches, one in his stomach and the other in his head! He was diagnosed and treated. He was examined and treated by a galaxy of medical expert; he consumed heavy loads of drugs, and underwent centuries of injections. But the aches persisted with greater vigor than ever before! At last, a Swami (monk) arrived at the scene of his agony. He spoke very kindly to him, and pronounced the fault to be in his eyes! Set right the eye, and the head on top and the stomach below would both behave very sweetly!

To improve the eye, concentrate on only one color. Concentrate on free, he suggested. Do not let your eyes fall on red or yellow, or any other color.

The millionaire got together a group of painters and purchased barrels of green color and directed that every object on which his eye was like to fall be painted thick green. Just as the ashtagraha calamity (the ominous astrological phenomenon of eight heavenly bodies reaching a straight line in space, which was sought to be avoided by superstitious persons through ceremonials of exorcism) resulted in a rich harvest for priests, the millionaire's malady resulted in a rich harvest for paint craftsmen. When the Swami came back to him after about ten days, the craftsmen ran toward him with a bucket of green paint for he wore a green gown! He wondered why, and got the answer that their master dare not cast his eye on any color other than green, lest the aches may return. The Swami reprimanded the patient, and said that he had wasted lakhs of rupees as a result of his monumental stupidity. "If only you had purchased a pair of green spectacles, worth perhaps four rupees, you could have saved these walls and trees and pots and pans, and chairs and sofas and also a pretty large share of your fortune! You cannot paint the world green.

LASHMANA COUNSELS GUHA

The knowledge that you are architect of your fortune and that you can, by steady effort, rebuild it or foster it, that you are every day laying on or pulling down the structure of your career, will be a great inspiration provided you welcome it. It was the first night of Rama, Lakshmana and Sita in the thick jungle into which they were exiled. Guha, the chieftain of the fishermen, who had rowed them across the Ganges was engaged in subdued conversation with Lakshmana, while Rama and Sita were sleeping on the riverbank! Guha was sunk in sorrow, that the inheritor of the empire should be cast on the sands under the sky; he cursed the Queen and her wicked accomplices for contriving this breathtaking tragedy. But, Lakshmana prayed that he halt his tirade. "I too emitted fiery fury at the perpetrators of this tragedy. For, I did not know the inner purpose of this chapter of Rama's history. He has come in this human form to destroy the evil brood of demons, and so, He has himself contrived this exile, to be free from imperial responsibilities until that aim is accomplished! What do we know, dear Guha, of the mysteries of God or even of man, who is God in human attire? Or of any living being or non-living matter, for they are the entire inscrutable Divine, appearing to our limited senses in the way they do. What their real nature is, how can we ever know, with these inefficient instruments of knowledge?"

KALIDASA'S BHAKTI GREATER THAN HIS YUKTHI

Senior poets and scholars who were jealous of his attainments insulted Kalidasa in the court of Bhojaraja. He was poor and that was enough reason for them to look down upon him. When the tank is full, the frogs sit round its bank and croak; when it is dry no frog leaps by its side. The seniors spread scandals about Kalidasa and attempted to cast him out of court.

Kalidasa knew of only one person who was free from jealousy and pride and was Kali, the Mother. So, he went to the Kali temple and prayed before the Mother to assure him of high status among poets. After a long time spent in intense prayer, Kalidasa heard a voice emanating from the shrine, which extolled Dandi and Bhavabhuthi as great geniuses and scholars. There was even a whisper about his attainments! So, he got hurt and even enraged; he gave vent to his ire in harsh words and insisted that she should declare the truth, however unpleasant. Then, the voice announced, "Thwamevaha, thwammenaham, twamevaham, na samsayah" (You are Myself, you are Myself, you are Myself, without doubt)". What greater status did Kalidasa need

than this? That is the reply that every seeker will get, for that is his truth, his prize, and his consummation.

There are many stories, which describe Kalidasa as a very resourceful poet who defeated the stratagem of his opponents by clever tricks; his Bhakthi was much greater than his Yukthi. I am reminded of the Yukthi of a householder when he heard at midnight the noise of his house being broken into by thieves. He guessed that they were within earshot and so, he asked his wife loud enough to be heard by the thieves, “Why are you torturing me thus, asking me to bring back all your jewels that I have pledged with thee Marwari? I know that all your gold has gone with me; let well times come; I shall certainly recover them and give you. But, now, you need not be told that the thieves left, to enter some other house that night; they left the house that had “no gold, not even a rupee.”

BHARATHA’S ADORATION OF RAMA

The Ram Principle is the Principle of Love that descended from Heaven, as the Gift of the Gods, as a result of the great sacrifice. Rama means Delight! Nothing delights more than one’s own innate self, and so, Rama is also known as Atma Rama. How then could Bjaara6ha agree to usurp the throne, of which Rama is the rightful heir? He and Satrugna were at the Kekaya capital, when Ran was exiled and Dasaratha died heartbroken at the separation. News was sent to him, and when he entered the palace, unaware of the double tragedy that had cast its gloom over the City, he sensed some calamity, Vasishta, the family preceptor, advised him to ascend the throne, for the empire was suffering an interregnum!

Bharatha appealed that he allowed going to “the God of my prayers, the Lord who receives the homage of my unceasing adoration”. Vasishta told him that it was his father’s command, and his preceptor’s counsel that he sits enthroned as Ruler. Bharatha replied that the request was proof of the extreme hatred that the parents, the people, the preceptor and everyone in Ayodhya had towards him, for, had they loved him, they would not have pressed him to commit such a mean sin. Bharatha stood before Vasistha with folded palms; he prayed, “Is it just, fair, that you should burden me with the sovereignty over a kingdom, which slew my father, widowed my mothers, exiled my dearest brother whom I value more than any my very breath to the demon-ridden jungle, wish his dearly beloved queen and which finally brought indelible disgrace on my mother? My empire is the realm, which Rama rules over, namely, my heart, which is too small to contain His Glory. “ Bharatha’s name itself signifies that he is saturated with love of Rama. (Bha –means, Bhagawan—the Lord Rama; Ratha—means, pleased by, happy over, attached to).

Let the Love for the Lord grows in you, as it did in Bharatha. Let that sense of adoration, which discard even a throne, flourish in you. Then, you can be of great use to your country, your culture, your society, your religion and your community. Or else, all this bother that you have undergone, to attend Satsang, to listen to spiritual discourse, study spiritual texts, etc. Will be a colossal exercise in futility.

PRACTISE SELF-CONTROL WITH STEADY FAITH

Those who deny God are denying themselves and their glory. All have Love in their hearts, in some form of other, either towards the children or the poor or their work or goal. That Love is God, the spark of the Godly in them. They have Ananda however small or temporary and that is a spark of God and the Godly. They have Shanthi, Detachment, and Sympathy. All these are reflection of the Divine on the mirror of their minds. These are all mental Excellencies, revealed through an appreciation of the advantages of virtue. Shanthi or Calmness practiced through

helplessness, as in the case of the thief in the story of Tenali Ramakrishna is no good. One thief exhibited great Shanthi and Sadhana, calm fortitude! Noticing that a thief had come into his garden at night and that he was hiding under a “snake-gourd bush” near the well. Ramakrishna called his wife to his presence. He asked her to bring a rope and bucket so that he may draw water from the well. The wife drew the water and gave the bucket to him.. The thief watched his movements and he crouched in the darkness, expecting that the man and his wife would go into the house soon. He planned that he should gain entry later and collect his loot without having caught. Meanwhile, Ramakrishna pretended that he had something in his throat. He poured the water into his mouth, gargled loud and spat underneath the “snake-gourd bush” right where the thief was crouching! He gets it right on his face, and that was Ramakrishna’s intention too. The poor fellow could not run away, he could not protest, He was afraid to move he showed perfect fortitude. But, do you call it a virtue? Do you appreciate him for it? He was motivated by fear, not faith. Such Santa and Sadhana are of no use at all. Practice self-control, with steady faith. Then it is a source of strength.

THE LORD CARES FOR THE FEELING BEHIND THE ACT

Abdullah was sleeping in a corner of a mosque in Mecca, when he was awakened by the conversation of two angels above his head. They were preparing a list of the Blessed and one angel was telling the other that a certain Mahhub of Sikandar City deserved to be ranked first, even though he had not come on pilgrimage to the Holy City. Hearing this Abdullah went to Sikandar City and found that he was a cobbler, repairing the shoes of people. He was famished and poor; for, his earnings barely sufficed to keep flesh and home together. He had by severe sacrifice piled up a few coppers during the course of years, one day; he spent the entire treasure to prepare a special dish, which he proposed to place before his encephalic wife as a surprise gift. When he was proceeding home with the gift he heard the cry of a starving beggar who seemed to be in the throes of extreme hunger. Mahhub could not proceed any further; he gave the pot containing the costly delicacy to the man and sat by his side, enjoying the blossoming of satisfaction on his haggard face. That act gave him a place of honor in the register of the Blessed, a place which pilgrims to Mecca who had spent millions of dinars in charity could not secure. The Lord cares for the feeling behind the act, not the fanfare and the fuss.

GURU - THE LAST RESORT

An aspirant after spiritual realization went off into a jungle and was plodding across the infested region, through the thick undergrowth, when he heard the angry roar of a lion; he climbed a tree to escape from the beast, but, the lion saw him among the branches and roamed round and round the trunk in terrific rage. On the tree he was attacked by a bear and so, he slid down the roots that descended from one of the branches of the Banyan tree. Luckily, there were two roots hanging from the branch, so that he could hang on in mid-air clinging to them, one in each hand. Just then, he saw two rats, one white and the other black, which were gnawing at the base of the roots, endangering his life with every bite. While in his perilous state, a honeycomb, which was full of sweet nectar situated on one of the top branches leaked a few drops, which fell his way; so, the unfortunate man put out his tongue to catch a drop so that he may taste the delicious honey. But, no drop reached his tongue. In despair and terror, he called on his Guru, “O Guruji. Come and save me/” The guru who was passing by heard his appeal; he sped to the rescue; he brought a Bow and arrow and slew the lion and bear, frightened off the rats and saved the disciple from the fear of death. Then he led the man to his own ashram and taught him the path of liberation.

This is a story of every one of you. This world is the jungle on which you roam; fear is the lion, which drives you up the tree of Samsara, world activities; anxiety is the bear that terrifies you and dogs your steps in Samsara; so, you slide down into attachments and binding deeds, through the twin roots of hope and despair. The two rats are the day and night, which eat away the span of life. Meanwhile, you try to snatch a little joy from sweet drops of egoism and mind feeling. Finding at last that the drops are trivial and out of reach, you shout in the agony of renunciation, calling on the Guru; the guru appears, whether from within or without, and saves you from fear and anxiety.

FREEDOM FROM EGOISM FIRST QUALIFICATION OF A BHAKTHA

Worry and grief there will always be, of one type or other-in the past and future; while walking, dreaming and sleeping. But place faith in the Lord and do your tasks as dedicated to Him and they will vanish. Narada one day boasted before Vishnu that no devotee could excel him; but this boast was against the very first qualification of a Bhakta-freedom from egoism. So, Vishnu spoke of a ryot who was tilling his little plot of land as a greater devotee and recommended that Narada should visit and learn the art of devotion from him! Narada felt very much humiliated and he proceeded to the village indicated in great chagrin. He found the ryot engrossed in his round of duties on the field and in the cattle shed and at home and in spite of the most vigilant watch, he could not hear him speak the name of the Lord more than thrice a day; once when he woke up from bed, another time when he took his midday meal and the last when he retired for the night. Narada was naturally incensed that he was deemed inferior to his very poor specimen of a Bhakta. He was always singing melodiously the Leelas of the Lord and spreading everywhere the message of Nmasankirtanam and here was a horny-handed son of the soil who remembered the Lord just three times a day, whom Vishnu judged superior to him. He hurried to heaven; his face flushed with anger and ignominy, Vishnu only laughed at his plight. He gave him a pot full to the brim with water and asked him to carry it on his head and go round a certain course without spilling even a drop. Narada did so, but when asked how often he had remembered the Name of the Lord, he admitted that his anxiety to walk without shaking the pot and spilling the water, he had forgotten the Name completely. Then Vishnu told him that the ryot who was carrying on his head more precious and more spoilable burdens than a pot of water and who had to be careful not bring harm to any of them, must perforce admired remembering the Lord at least three times a day!

Therefore it will be great gain of you remembering the Lord with thankfulness at least thrice or even twice a day; that will give you great peace. Do not give up your worldly duties, but do them with the Name of God on your lips inviting the Grace of God on you.

DESIRE BINDS US

Those who catch monkeys prepare a pot with a small opening and fill it with some sweets. The monkey, who desires the food, will put its hand inside that pot and take a big handful of the food. Thus, the monkey becomes unable to draw its hand out through the opening. Only on releasing the grip will the monkey be able to take its hands out. It is to desire for the food that has bound in hands. Because it took its hand some food to fulfill its desire, it was bound there. This wide world is like that pot and our 'samsaras' or families are like the narrow top. Our desires are the sweet in the pot. The world being the pot, containing the desires, sweets, man put his hand in the pot. When he sheds his desires, he will be able to live in the world freely. To get freedom, the first thing to do is to sacrifice. In philosophical terms, this is called renunciation. We think that the world is binding us but the world is lifeless. It is the desire that binds us.

YOUR THOUGHTS AFFECT THE FOOD YOU COOK

To purify the mind and the intellect for the correct reflection of the truth, the first caution is in regard to food. Instead, this is a very serious matter of Sadhakas. There lived in Mallur, Mysore State, and a pious Brahmin who was a great scholar. He had an equally pious wife. He was always intent on Puja and Japa Dhyana and was known far and wide for his virtuous character. One day, a sanyasin called Nityananda came to his door seeking alms; so, he was happy beyond measure. He invited the monk to take dinner with him the next day so that he might honor him with due hospitality. He hung green festoons over his doors and made elaborate arrangements for the reception. But, at the eleventh hour, physical impurity rendered his wife unfit to prepare food for the honored guest or for any one else. A neighbor volunteered to cook the meal and she was brought in and introduced into the kitchen. Everything went off well and all were as happy as they could be, under the circumstances. Only, the sanyasin was wrong during meals by an overpowering desire to steal the silver cup, which the host had placed near the plate. In spite of his best efforts, the evil idea won and the sanyasin hurried to his abode with the cup hidden in the folds of his robe. He could not sleep that night, for his conscience pricked him so. He felt he had brought disgrace on his Guru and on the Rishis whom he invoked by the mantras he recited. He could not until he ran back into the Brahmin's house and, falling at his feet, restored the article with tears of repentance trickling down his cheeks. Everyone wondered how such a saint could stoop so low. Then someone suggested it might be the person who cooked it transmit the fault to the food he ate. And when they examined the history of the neighbor they found that she was an irrepressible thief! The thieving tendency had, by subtle contact, affected the food she prepared. This is the reason why Sadhakas are advised to live on fruits and tubers only, when they reach a certain stage of spiritual achievement.

YAGNAS AND YAGAS ARE HIGHLY VALUABLE

Good deeds done in dedicatory spirit do not add to the length of Yama's rope; they give shanthi and santosha, in plenty. Why, you have a very good illustration of this just today. The final offering of sacred objects in the sacrificial fire of the Rudra Yaga was done here at 10 A.M. and, there was a welcome downpour of unexpected rain at 10:45 A.M.! Those who do not know the true values of Yagna and Yaga ridicule these rites and shout that they involve the loss of precious ghee and fuel, which could be put to better use. They do not realize that the food they themselves consume is a colossal waste, for, they do no good to the world or for themselves. The cigarettes are a waste, indeed, a dangerous waste; the bush coats, the films they see the radio-hours they listen to are all waste. You are sculptor working away at a rock with his chisel of precious time, and valuable stone. You do not know that one day a form of divine beauty will emerge. You see the ryot scatter valuable stone on the mushy field; you blame him for wasting eatable stuff! You do not realize that he will harvest it a hundred folds in a few months. Your criticism is born of ignorance and short sight. The rain that fell this morning and surprised everyone did not surprise me, for it is the inevitable consequence of the Yaga. It is special sciences, which pundits know, honor them for it.

STEADFASTNESS AND DEEP FAITH WIN THE GRACE OF GOD

When you have filled your heart with sympathy for the distressed, the Lord will shower His grace. Draupadi had earned the grace through her devotion and virtues. Sita, too, stuck to the highest ideal for life, in spite of the severe sufferings she underwent. Hanuman, who discovered her in the grove where she was kept as a prisoner by her abductor, offered to re-cross the ocean with her on his shoulders and take her safe to her Lord, Rama, But, she replied that she will not allow herself to be abducted back from the custody of Ravana, since that will deprive Rama of the chance to punish him for his crime and retrieve her through his own heroism! Splendid

words these! Quite in consonance with the dictates of Dharma! No wonder, the Lord's Grace saved her in good time! If you have no steadfastness and no depth of faith, you can have no Grace.

UNCONCERN LEADS TO THE DEEPEST YEARNING FOR GOD

Sri Ramakrishna said that if you want to avoid that sticky fluid in the jackfruit from contacting your fingers when you peel it, you have to apply a few drops of oil on them. So, too, said he, "if you do not want the world and its reactions to stick to you, have a few drops of "unconcern applied on your mind".

The unconcern leads to the deepest yearning for God. Chaitanya went to Brindavan, where every particles of dust was sacred for him, since Krishna trod that soil centuries ago. He did not see or hear or touch or smell or taste anything except Krishna at Brindavan. He was rendered so oblivious to the world around him that he ignored demands of hunger, thirst and social etiquette. He yearned for the consecrated food that was offered to Krishna in the temple. But, one night, the Lord appeared before him and admonished him for entertaining those desires, too! When at last, he gave up the desire also and was overwhelmed with the thirst for Him and Him alone. Krishna manifested before him. The Divine Chaitanya (consciousness) illumined the Chaitanya in human form.

Learn therefore the discipline that can make the mind settle on God only and never waver therefore.

SUPERSTITIONS AND BLIND IMITATION

In the years gone by, every village home was stocked full of paddy bags, and so, rats too inevitably infested every home. In one such home they were celebrating every full moon day, the rite called Satyanarayana Puja. This required the collection of a good quality of milk and ghee, the previous night itself. The rats attracted cats and the cats often preferred milk and ghee to the rodent food they are accustomed to. So, the milk and ghee were carefully kept in places, out of reach of the cats. But, during the celebrations on the sacred day, the milk and ghee had to be kept open and available for use, in vessels around the shrine. That was the chance for the deprecatory cat; so the master of the house caught the cat by the neck and put it under a heavy basket, and placed a stone on it, so that it could not play any mischief with the holy offerings. This was done so consistently every full moon day as a safety measure in one home that the children and grand-children felt that, Puja or no Puja, no full moon day should pass without a cat being imprisoned under a weighted basket! They started searching for a cat and bring it home, so that the ritual of the cat and basket could be observed without fail.

The original meaning and purpose was lost during the passage of time and later generation were burdened with a belief that danger lurks if a cat is not dealt with in the way, of their forefathers. From being an insufferable nuisance, the cat rose to a new status of importance! This is a blind imitation.

IT IS NEVER TOO SOON IN THE SPIRITUAL REALM

There was once a miser who lived in a leaky house; the rainwater poured into the house through the roof but he sat through it all. Neighbors laughed at him and warned him to get the roof repaired. But in the rainy season he replied. "Let the rains subside, how can I repair it now?" And when the rains stopped, he replied. "Why should I worry about leaks, now the rains have stopped?" Do not suffer the leaks when the rains come, as they are sure to do; repair the roof

now itself. That is to say, acquaint yourselves with the spiritual primers and textbooks now itself; begin the first lesson of silence prayer, and chanting the Name of the Lord. It is never too soon in the spiritual realm.

TRANSISTOR RADIO—A BARBER’S BOX

It is the distorted sense of values that makes you carry a radio receiver strapped to your shoulder, even when you come to Prashanti Nilayam! This has become a fashion; sons-in- now try to extract a transistor radio from their fathers-in-law, as quickly as possible. There was a young man in a big town; it so happened that his father arrived on a visit and was received at the railway station by the son himself. They were going home in an auto-rickshaw, when the father, already confused by the roar and noise of the traffic. Noticed some one carrying a small rectangular box, strapped in his shoulder. He saw many more attired and walking in the strut, with a nonchalant gaze. He asked his son what they charged in the town for a shave and when the son answered, a half-rupee, he was surprised that it was so cheap. “These barbers going about with these boxes strapped on the shoulders are so well dressed and rich looking that I thought they must be charging five rupees at least”, he said. The poor man thought the transistor radio sets were barber’s boxes! In fact, much that carries them and tune in does not know the ABC of music, eastern or western, nor do they know an iota of geography or history or politics to appreciate the news. They carry watches on their wrists but to know what hour it is, they have to stretch their wrists before those sitting next to them! They cannot read a watch, nor have they any engagement keep. All this is needless multiplication of misery!

KABIR PITAMBARA FOR THE LORD

Kabir was weaving a pitambara for the Lord, his Rama. He had to work the loom alone by hand. He recited Rama Rama Rama Rama Rama and went on weaving ceaselessly. The cloth had become twenty yards long, but, Kabir did not stop; his tapas continued unabated; the pitambara was becoming longer and longer. The Ananda of the craft, devotion to this Lord, were enough food and drink for his subsistence. When he gave it to the temple priest for clothing the idol of Rama, the pitambara was just the size, just the length and breadth, not a finger more!
“DHARMA BODHA”---TRUE ATMA OF A MAHATMA

Samartha Ramadas appeared before Sivaji, with his usual call for alms: Bhavati Bhikshaam Dehi, Sivaji realized that the guru is God; so he wrote something on a piece of paper and deposited it reverentially in the alms bag of Ramadas. For the relief of hunger, how can paper suffice? Asked Ramadas. Sivaji prayed that the paper might be read. The paper recorded a gift of the entire kingdom and all the Sivaji owned to the Guru. Samartha Ramadas replied: “No, my dharma is dharma-bodha, the teaching of dharma, instructing the people in the right way of life, Kshatriyas like you must follow the dharma of ruling the land, ensuring peace and content to the millions under your care”. Yagyavalakya too once refused a kingdom, because he cared more for the kingdom of Moksha, the realm of freedom. Vasistha is also said to have renounced a kingdom offered him by Rama.

EVERY MATERIAL OBJECT HAS A QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE DIFFERENCE

By reading many books and developing an argumentative tendency, it is quite common today that young people get into argument with others. Once a young man aged 22 years went to Sankara. When Sankara was giving spiritual lessons to his disciples he interrupted and asked Sankara if all human beings in the wide world should not be regarded as equal since the same kind of blood flows in all of them. Sankara smiled at this young man and said that the blood that the blood flowing in this youngster is hot and fast and so he was trying to push things too

far. It is not possible for man to distinguish between permanent and impermanent things. One can adopt the notion of non-duality or Adwaita in one's own thought and attitudes but it is not possible to equate everything in the world in practice. The young man insisted that this does not seem right. He stated that to him, the proper thing appeared to be to treat all living things in the same manner. Sankara recognized that if this young man was allowed to go on in this strain, he was likely to reach some absurd conclusions. Sankara decided at once to teach him a lesson and immediately asked whether he had a mother. The young man replied that he had a mother he respected. He again asked if the young man was married. The young man replied that he was married and that his wife also had come with him to the ashram. Sankara then asked him if he had a mother-in-law. The young man replied that the mother-in-law was quite hale and healthy. Sankara again asked if he had sisters and the young man replied in the affirmative and said that he had two sisters. Sankara asked if all these people were women. The young man asked how it should be otherwise. Sankara asked if he regarded all of them as equal and was treating all these people in the same manner and if in particular, he was treating his wife as his mother and his sister as his mother.

In this world of multiplicity one has to recognize qualitative and quantitative differences. Each electric bulb is varying in power and wattage. Therefore the difference in the light radiating from the bulb is not due to the electric current. The current is the same everywhere but the difference arises from the bulbs with different intensities. God's power is like electric power and our bodies are the bulbs.

RABBIA MALIK AND HUSSEIN

Remember that your real nature is the same as the other mans; he is yourself known by another name. When you do good deed, you are doing it to yourself; when you do a bad turn to some one, remember, you are injuring yourself; so, avoid doing evil to others. I am reminded of what Hussein, the son of Rabbia Malik of Persia used to do. He rose early and went to the mosque for prayer with great diligence and devotion. When he came, he found the servants of the house still sleeping on their mats and he grew wild at them; he swore and cursed them for neglect of religious duties. Then his father chastised him. He said, "Son, why do you get angry with those poor souls who are too tired to wake up early"? Do not wipe off the good results of your adherence to the rule of God by falling foul of these innocent slaves. I wish you would much rather rise late and abstain from the mosque, for now you have grown proud that you are more religious than these others and you dare blame them for faults for which they are not themselves responsible".

FAITH AND SCIENCE

A Hindu and his British friend once happened to come to the bank of the Godavari. The Hindu said, "I will bathe in this sacred water". He recited the name "Hari" as he plunged in and came out refreshed in mind as well as body. He felt great happiness that he not got the rare chance of a bath in the holy water. The Britisher laughed and said, "This is mere H₂O; how can you get unspeakable joy by dipping into it"? It is all superstition". But the Hindu replied, "Leave me to my superstition; you can stick to your superstition". The cynic got only physical cleanliness but the believer got mental purity also.

MAYA CAN RUIN A LIFE

Maya has the capacity to ruin our life. If we understand the nature of Maya well, it will go away from us in one moment. If we give a high place to it without understanding, then that will get the upper hand and will begin to dance on our heads.

In one village a marriage was to take place. The party of bridegroom came to the village and was staying in a house. The party of the bride was staying in another house. In between these two parties, there was one individual who wanted all kinds of comforts and was demanding them from both parties. This individual used to go to the bridegroom's place and tell them that they were always coming late and causing a lot of problems to the bride's party. People belonging to the bridegroom's party thought that he was some respected elder from the side of the bride. Similarly he went to the bride's house and told them that they were not respecting the bridegroom and told them that they were not respecting the bridegroom and members of his party and were not giving them all the respect that was due to them. This individual was the respect that was due to them. This individual was enacting a drama. He was going to the bridegroom's party and was behaving as if he was a respected elder from the bride's side and he was going to the bride's people and behaving as if he was a respected elder from the bridegroom's side. When this drama went too far the two parties started investigating and found that he belonged to neither side. Once you make an inquiry and find out the origin of Maya, it will disappear, even as the individual in our story disappeared.

AFFECTION AND ATTACHMENT RESPONSIBLE FOR ALL JOYS AND SORROWS

Moha expresses itself in desiring things. Desires go on multiplying. Moha may be compared to the water that is found in a lake.

I will now give an example. There is a girl in one house. There is a young man in another house. Their houses are almost side-by-side. But the girl does not know anything about the young man, and the young man does not know anything about the girl living in the neighboring house. One day, the girl, fell seriously ill. That day all the people in the house were hectic and they were all anxious and several doctors were called in. When the boy in the neighboring house heard the noise, he thought it was a disturbance to his studies, and, therefore, he closed his windows and started reading. But in the course of time, as a result of destiny, this boy who was living in that house got married to that girl in the neighboring house. The marriage took place in the morning. In the afternoon that girl developed a stomachache and this bridegroom felt very anxious for the girl and her stomachache. Where and when had he developed this attachment to the girl? Because he got married to her, even a little stomachache upsets him now. Though the same girl felt dangerously ill some time ago, he did not feel even the slightest anxiety for her because at that time there was no attachment or relationship with the girl. So, abhimana and mamakara, affection and attachment are responsible for all joys and sorrows.