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GOD-EXPERIENCE

By

SWAMI RAMDAS



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PUBLISHED FOR ANANDASERAM

By

SHARADHYA VIDYA BHAVAN

CHAUHPATY, BOMBAY

आ नो भद्राः क्रतवो यन्तु विश्वतः ।

Let noble thoughts come to us from every side

—Rigveda, 1-89-i

BHAVAN'S BOOK UNIVERSITY

General Editors

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107

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GENERAL EDITOR'S PREFACE

THE Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan—that Institute of Indian Culture in Bombay—needed a Book University, a series of books which, if read, would serve the purpose of providing higher education. Particular emphasis, however, was to be put on such literature as revealed the deeper impulses of India. As a first step, it was decided to bring out in English 100 books, 50 of which were to be taken in hand almost at once. Each book was to contain from 200 to 250 pages and was to be priced at Rs. 2/-.

It is our intention to publish the books we select, not only in English, but also in the following Indian languages: Hindi, Bengali, Gujarati, Marathi, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam.

This scheme, involving the publication of 900 volumes, requires ample funds and an all-India organisation. The Bhavan is exerting its utmost to supply them.

The objectives for which the Bhavan stands are the reintegration of the Indian culture in the light of modern knowledge and to suit our present-day needs and the resuscitation of its fundamental values in their pristine vigour.

Let me make our goal more explicit:

We seek the dignity of man, which necessarily implies the creation of social conditions which would allow him freedom to evolve along the lines of his own temperament and capacities; we seek the harmony of individual efforts and social relations, not in any makeshift way, but within the frame-work of the Moral Order; we seek the creative art of life, by the alchemy of

which human limitations are progressively transmuted, so that man may become the instrument of God, and is able to see Him in all and all in Him.

The world, we feel, is too much with us. Nothing would uplift or inspire us so much as the beauty and aspiration which such books can teach.

In this series, therefore, the literature of India, ancient and modern, will be published in a form easily accessible to all. Books in other literatures of the world, if they illustrate the principles we stand for, will also be included.

This common pool of literature, it is hoped, will enable the reader, eastern or western, to understand and appreciate currents of world thought, as also the movements of the mind in India, which, though they flow through different linguistic channels, have a common urge and aspiration.

Fittingly, the Book University's first venture is the *Mahabharata*, summarised by one of the greatest living Indians, C. Rajagopalachari; the second work is on a section of it, the *Gita* by H. V. Divatia, an eminent jurist and a student of philosophy. Centuries ago, it was proclaimed of the *Mahabharata*: "What is not in it, is no where." After twenty-five centuries, we can use the same words about it. He who knows it not, knows not the heights and depths of the soul; he misses the trials and tragedy and the beauty and grandeur of life.

The *Mahabharata* is not a mere epic; it is a romance, telling the tale of heroic men and women and of some who were divine; it is a whole literature in itself, containing a code of life, a philosophy of social and ethical relations, and speculative thought on human problems that is hard to rival; but, above all, it has for

its core the *Gita*, which is, as the world is beginning to find out, the noblest of scriptures and the grandest of sagas in which the climax is reached in the wondrous Apocalypse in the Eleventh Canto.

Through such books alone the harmonies underlying true culture, I am convinced, will one day reconcile the disorders of modern life.

I thank all those who have helped to make this new branch of the Bhavan's activity successful.

1, QUEEN VICTORIA ROAD,
NEW DELHI

K. M. MUNSHI

3rd October 1951.

FOREWORD

We are glad to bring out this book which is a report of the talks given by Swami Ramdas, affectionately called 'Papa' by devotees the world over, at Anandashram during Satsang since the beginning of 1961. The book has been prepared from the authentic notes of talks lovingly recorded by Swami Krishnananda Das, a disciple of Papa. The moments spent by the devotees with the Master at Satsang are the most precious, and a feeble attempt has been made to recapture, in the pages that follow, something of the joy of Satsang and of the mature divine wisdom ever flowing from the lips of the Master.

In the course of these talks, reference has been made about Mataji. Here 'Mataji' stands for Mother Krishnabai of Anandashram.

The book is fittingly titled GOD-EXPERIENCE, because it comprises the teachings of Papa based upon the fulness and richness of his Spiritual Experience.

Anandashram

Anandashram,
30th July, 1961.

GOD-EXPERIENCE

7th January, 1961.

Ramdas: The question is about omens and auspicious occasions. Suppose Ramdas goes out for Bhiksha at a so-called inauspicious time and as a result of it he does not get anything and goes hungry, so much the better for him. In the same way, as a result of non-observance of these beliefs, if he meets with opposition, dishonour, blame, injuries, he will enjoy them. Whatever comes he will take it as for his good. Ramdas was never influenced by such considerations. Success or failure, good or bad — all were the same to him.

Now, for example, if a building construction is started at an inauspicious hour, the work, it is feared, will be prolonged and sometimes never completed. Here, at Nileshtar, the Government wanted to construct a bridge. Without looking to an auspicious moment they started the work. Nearly four years passed and the work could not be completed. For some reason or other it was delayed. The Chief Engineer in Madras, a devotee of the Ashram, instructed the Superintending Engineer to take Ramdas over there and receive his blessings. Accordingly, a car came and Ramdas went there. They had arranged for Puja — festoons, flowers, cocoanuts, Arati, etc. The function was gone through. Later, the news came that within six months after Ramdas' visit the work was completed! When God's blessings are with you, there is no question of auspicious or inauspicious time.

When Ramdas was going to the forests in his Sadhana days, the villagers used to frighten him. Wild beasts were roaming about in the forests. Ramdas was sitting there the whole night

chanting Ramnam. Nothing untoward happened. If you have implicit faith in God's grace and guidance, no power on earth can frighten or harm you. If you meet with obstacles, so much the better. They come as a test of faith.

But Mataji believes in such things. If a calf is to be given away, she fixes an auspicious day for the purpose. When Ramdas laughs at such things, she says, 'You may laugh.' Sometimes she persuades Ramdas to conform to such practices. 'All right,' he would say. Why should he resist? But if it were during his Sadhana days, he would not have agreed.

Once Ramdas' right eye was throbbing. Ramdas asked what was its significance—was it a good or a bad sign? Somebody said, 'Throbbing of the right eye is good for men and that of the left eye, for women.' Then Ramdas put the question, 'Is Ramdas a man or a woman?' Mataji replied, 'When the right eye is throbbing, you are a man; when the left eye is throbbing, you are a woman! Both are auspicious to you.' So Ramdas is both man and woman, or neither. It means that all times, places, signs, are auspicious to him.

Whenever Ramdas started on his tours, Mataji would fix an auspicious day; and it was never on a Saturday. Many a time when he was wandering alone from place to place, he might have started on Saturdays. He does not remember whether anything untoward happened to him in consequence. Ramdas was daring and fearless. He did not care for auspicious moments and omens.

When Ramdas left his home in 1922 and wandered about without any money, it was his Shani-dasa. It was Shani that drove him out of his home. When he found this out later, Ramdas did Namaskar to Shani, for it gave him Vairagya. If some good planet was there, it would not have been beneficial to him. Shani-dasa was a boon to him! Some years ago an astro-

loger came to Ramdas and asked for his horoscope. 'Why?' asked Ramdas. He replied, 'I will read and tell you the planetary influence on your future.' 'Ramdas is playing football with the planets,' said Ramdas. He bowed and quietly left the place. Ramdas does believe in astrology. He believes in the influences of planets on human lives. But by the power of Ram he could digest all situations and could be always perfectly happy. His horoscope is RAM.

8th January, 1961.

Ramdas: Today Ramdas is going to talk about worries. Worry is in the experience of everybody. There is no person who has no worries. In fact, rare is the person who is free from worries. What should we do when worries and anxieties beset us? We should throw our burdens on God and be free from them. We have to depend upon God and leave all our cares to Him, because He is all-powerful, all-loving, all-merciful. Mother has worries, because the child looks up to her for everything. As the child has a mother to look after it, it is free from cares. So when there is God to look after us, why should we worry? If God does not take up our burdens, if He does not worry about us, we are lost.

In this connection Ramdas remembers the story of Saint Damaji, a great devotee of Vithoba of Pandharpur — how he relieved the distress of thousands of starving fellowmen by a fearless act of charity, and how God saved him by assuming the form of a Pariah.

So what do you want to be? You should be a devotee and also God. When you receive succour from God, you are His devotee; when you are compassionate and are helping others, you are acting the part of God.

Real compassion is Buddha's compassion. It flows out to

everybody alike. Ramdas remembers one instance. When he was in Bijapur many years ago, he was the guest of a Gujarati merchant. He was there for two days. Then he wanted to go and beg his food in the streets. He was told that in a certain house Sadhus were given rice, dal and other provisions free. He went there and got everything, which he tied up in his cloth. At that time, a man on the opposite side of the street was watching Ramdas. He ran up and falling at Ramdas' feet, cried, 'My wife and two children are starving at home. I am a householder and therefore I will not be given any Bhiksha. Will you give me the provisions which you got now?' Ramdas cheerfully gave it all to him. He was very happy. He addressed Ramdas: 'You are not a human being. You are God. I have received this help from God Himself. You are God incarnate.' Ramdas was thrilled.

So when you go to the rescue of another with a heart full of compassion, you play the part of God Himself. Such acts grant you immense peace and joy. The more you are helpful to the distressed, the more your heart softens. A soft heart is the heart of God. From such a heart relief comes to you also when in trouble.

9th January, 1961

Ramdas: Sri Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita speaks of Karma Yoga and Karma Sannyas. He says Karma Yoga is superior to Karma Sannyas which, according to ancient custom, was adopted as the fourth stage of life. Brahmacharya, Garhastya, Vanaprastha, Sannyas—these four stages of life have been prescribed in the Shastras from ancient times. Sri Krishna's Avatar was for pointing out a new path for attaining salvation or Moksha. Traditionally a man in the fourth stage lived in the forest as a Sannyasi, stopping worldly work completely.

But Sri Krishna said that one could attain the state of liberation even while doing work in the world to the very last. So he established what is called Bhagavata Dharma in which there is no need to renounce anything externally. But inner renunciation is necessary. Otherwise there is no Moksha either for the Sannyasi or for the householder.

Inner renunciation is attained through complete surrender to God — not possessing anything as belonging to oneself but as belonging to God. This dedicated life leads to the dissolution of the ego-sense and the attainment of Jnana. The method employed to reach this stage is to consider oneself as a devotee or a servant of God — *Dasya Bhava* — ‘I am Thy servant, Thou art my Master.’ He works in the world as a servant of God, doing everything for the sake of the Master in order to please Him. Such a devotee need not renounce anything externally. All his actions are done in a spirit of dedication to God.

मातृदेवो भव । पितृदेवो भव ।

आचार्यदेवो भव । अतिथिदेवो भव ॥

“Let your mother be God to you. Let your father be God to you. Let your spiritual preceptor be God to you. Let your guest be God to you.”

In this spirit he dwells in the house. Then he is an ideal householder.

He does not reject anything, but accepts everything without attachment. Attachment is when you love some and do not love others. You love those who are related to you, who are your kith and kin. Beyond the pale of that circle you have no love or concern for anyone. But the ideal householder loves all alike. The neighbour in difficulties is considered in the same light as one who is near and dear to him. This is the right vision, and in that vision there is no attachment.

It is Moha when your love is confined only to your kith and kin and not extended to others. The sense of 'I and mine' comes into play here, which vitiates your outlook in life.

Householder saints lead their lives in accordance with the Bhagavata Dharma preached by Sri Krishna. You are a householder to serve God. Serve parents, serve guests, serve those who are in distress, looking upon all these as the manifestations of your Master, your God. This vision of seeing the Lord everywhere was held out by Sri Krishna. According to a certain system of philosophy, the world is looked upon as an illusion. So ultimately you discard everything and go to the forest for your salvation. Here it is not so. The same salvation you can attain by living and acting in the world by dedicating your life to God, your beloved Master. There is no bargaining spirit in it. It is spontaneous service cheerfully rendered to God.

Questioner: Results of past Karma stand as obstacles to spiritual progress. The law of Karma operates and clashes occur in the family. What can we do?

Ramdas: This is because of your deliberate unwillingness to live the spiritual life. Whenever you are not able to do it easily, you talk of Karma. But when you go to the office and do all sorts of work for earning money, etc., you do not talk of Karma; nothing comes in your way. Obstacles do not hinder you. Ramdas will tell you of an incident. There was a Munsif at Ernakulam who used to come to Ramdas when he was the guest of a friend there. He was interested in religion. He was doing Puja, Sandhya, etc., regularly in the formal way. He was earning three to four hundred rupees a month. He was a great miser. 'Swamiji, I like sovereigns very much. My love for money is more than for Ramnam. In the evenings I usually go out for a walk. I take some money also with me.

On one side of the road I see a beggar sitting. He cries for help. I feel I should give him two annas. By the time I put my hand in the pocket I feel one anna will do. When I take the coin in my hand I think, 'Why an anna? Half an anna is sufficient,' and when taking out the money I take a quarter-anna coin and give it to him. What is this due to?' he asked. 'That is because you love money more than everything else,' said Ramdas.

So it was not past Karma that prevented him from giving that man two annas. It was stinginess, unwillingness. He could get over that. When you have an occasion to do a good thing, you do not will it but plead weakness and hesitate. Here past Karma plays no part. You have the initiative to do other things; you put forth all your energy. In giving anything in charity you plead that you are weak. You do not want to be liberal. By discrimination you can bring up good thoughts to control your life. You say, 'What can I do? My bad Karma stands in the way.' You have the power to subdue such thoughts. Many do it.

Suppose some people are prone to lead an immoral life and at the same time have a decent position in society. For fear of public censure and losing their prestige, they suppress the temptations. It is in their hands to live a good life or a bad one. Some failures, calamities and losses may come through past Karma. But your present and your future are in your hands.

Q: My eldest son is employed. First daughter is married. Second daughter is to be married. I retired in December, 1957. We can just carry on. We are not rich. For the last ten or twelve years I have been very much interested in scriptures. I have been trying to live a religious life after retirement. I like to read spiritual books and attend religious discourses. My people are against all this. They want me even now to work

and earn. The more I earn, the more they spend. Things came to such a pass that I could not but leave that place. I went to the North and visited one or two Ashrams there. But the climate did not suit my health; sometimes food also did not agree with me. In October, I returned to the South. I had a vague idea of this Ashram and somehow God has brought me here. I am peaceful here. I wish to have your advice as to what I should do in the circumstances and whether my action is right or wrong.

Ramdas: Leave things to God and take His name. He will look after everything. Only remember God.

Q: My people say they will look after everything and are happy without me. I also cannot get on with them. But I do not feel that I am fit to adopt Sannyas and go to the forest. At the same time I want a shelter.

Ramdas: You are an unwanted person there. In the present state of things you have done well to come here and you are at peace. Do not worry any more. Leave things entirely to God.

10th January, 1961.

Ramdas: It should not be forgotten that God is the giver. Even if we are earning, the earning power is given to us by Him. So we cannot take pride in having achieved or obtained anything by ourselves. Ramdas has seen some successful businessmen who have earned crores and crores. They say, 'I was a poor man. I was struggling for my very existence. But I conducted my business in such an intelligent way that I began to make good profits. I used more and more of my intelligence. I was very careful and worked hard. So I am a self-made man. I acquired immense wealth by my abilities and cleverness.' Wherefrom did he get the ability and cleverness? God gave him the power,

the capacity and the ability. Do you know what happens sometimes in such cases? God sees that he has become proud, and gives him a blow. At one stroke he loses half of his wealth. He thought he was very clever. Where is his cleverness now? Although he may have vast wealth, this is not a small blow to him. Such cases Ramdas has seen. It is better to be humble and give all credit to God for our achievements and successes. If we are puffed up with pride we are likely to fall. If we are humble and meek where is any chance of a fall? So let us be humble enough to accept that God's will and power is supreme and that by His power alone everything happens.

There are some who are worth lakhs and lakhs. Still they run after more money. When misfortunes come, even millionaires kiss the dust. In big cities this is very common. There is what is called Satta — a kind of gambling. In an hour's time one loses everything and is in the streets without a *naya Paisa*. So king becomes beggar and *vice versa* in an instant. When people are wealthy they take pride in showing off their opulence. Pride lies heavily upon them and they are not happy. Whatever happiness they pretend to have is artificial, not genuine. Remember God constantly. Surrender yourself to Him. Then you are really happy, whether you are rich or poor.

Show of humility is another thing. Outwardly some are humble. Inwardly they are proud. They are worse than those who are openly proud. Their case is very hard. They cannot easily change. The proud man may become humble if he does not pretend to be humble, because he is sincere. Man has got various kinds of conceit — conceit of wealth, learning, high position in life, etc. Even a devotee of God has his own conceit, that he is a greater devotee than others. He looks upon them with contempt. The contemptuous attitude is not good for him. It brings about his fall.

Sri Ramakrishna taught us to say before God, 'I am nothing. You are everything.' Even when you say to God, 'I am your devotee, your child, your servant,' there is some trace of pride. Some say, 'I am the dust of your feet.' Still you are something, you are the dust. There is some room for conceit there. There is no conceit at all when you say, 'I am nothing.' What wonderful humility and self-effacement you will find in a true devotee! In comparison with the others, the true devotee considers himself inferior to everyone on earth, whatever may be his station in life, his nature, his caste, creed or nationality. Always he has a good word for everyone. Whereas, some pose themselves as superior to others and find fault with them. That is the way of the world. But saints are different. They are pure, guileless and ever cheerful. The secret of this is complete effacement of the self or 'I-ness.' We know how difficult it is to do away with this pride, this self-consciousness, this conceit, this sense of 'I-ness'. One who is intoxicated always with the thought of God is the only one who is free from the ego-sense — not others. Why should we be proud? What is there to be proud of? Pride is the cause of all trouble in the world. Pride dominates the hearts of people.

Some years ago Ramdas met Miss Elizabeth Sharpe in Limbdi. She came to see Ramdas in the company of the Thakore Saheb of Limbdi, Sir Daulat Sinh. She watched Ramdas' movements minutely. She saw him talking, walking, making gestures and answering questions. She wrote about him afterwards, 'I was trying to find out whether Ramdas was posing in any way.' Some people pose that they are saints. They assume airs, gestures and facial expressions to show to the world that they are saints. You will find a great deal of such posing in the world. A certain gravity in their demeanour, a certain force and emphasis in what they say — all this they exhibit in

order to pass for great saints. So she watched Ramdas to see whether anything which Ramdas did could be interpreted as posing. She said that she never found it in him. In fact Ramdas came to know from her that he was not posing. He did not know what he was. He was what God had made him. There is a saying, 'Let us see ourselves as others see us.' Otherwise we are apt to think always highly of ourselves.

Ramdas sees such posings in people and enjoys the fun. He sees it all as through a glass verily, he is witnessing the Lila of God.

14th January, 1961.

Ramdas: God is a mystery. You cannot say what He is and what He is not. When you think of God, you are baffled. What then to say of Him? In such moods words flow out of Ramdas. He says something about Him. Next moment he contradicts what he says. He is not speaking; words gush out of him. When opposites clash and disappear, what remains is silence. You can speak only about one of the opposites at a time — light or darkness. What can you say of that which is beyond light and darkness? You can conceive of light, conceive of darkness, but not of that which is beyond light and darkness. Even so God can be realized; but cannot be expressed, cannot be defined. It will be futile to describe the indescribable, to express the inexpressible. He is the witness of his silence, he is also the witness of his talk. He is silence; he is talk; and he is beyond silence and talk. Silence cannot describe God. Talk cannot describe Him. There must be neither talk nor silence. He is the all-pervading, all-inclusive, all-transcendent Godhead.

'When I talk, I am dumb. When I walk, I am still. When I work, I am at rest.' The Gita brings us to that point where these opposites meet and lose distinction. Purusha is static;

Prakriti is dynamic — one intensively active, the other completely at rest. The supreme, all-comprehensive Godhead spoken of in the Gita is the Purushottama who is static, dynamic and beyond both. God is at once active and inactive. To describe Him is difficult. One visualizes Him and tries to describe Him. It is all imagination, not reality. We form our own ideas about Him, but He is beyond all ideas. He is beyond all thought, all imagination. Imagination cannot soar up to Him. Mind cannot grasp Him. Words cannot describe Him. Still, we try to set Him forth in words. His glories are infinite. His powers are infinite. He who is beyond conception, beyond expression, has become everything. There is none but He. Therefore, the saint sees himself everywhere; sees God everywhere because God and he are not different. Ramdas cannot speak of Him except in this strain.

Q: 'I' is coming now in Papa's writings.

Ramdas: This 'I' is beyond first, second and third person. It is not the individual 'I'. This 'I' is equated with God. At a big meeting in America, since Ramdas was speaking as usual in the third person, one stood up and asked, "What became of your 'I'?" Another from the same audience said, "His 'I' has become God." Your 'I' should be transformed into the universal 'I' — God.

If there is no question of high and low, there will be equality, peace and goodwill in the world. All will move with one another in perfect friendliness. The consciousness, 'I am greater than you,' is responsible for so much of strife in the world. God dwells equally in the heart of every one of us. If we are all united in God there will be harmony and peace in the world. If we really bear true love for our fellow-beings, based on the knowledge of the Truth or God, then there will not be competition and exploitation born of the sense of duality.

God stands for harmony and brotherhood. If we really believe in God, we must be friendly with all in the universe. On the other hand, what do we see? In the name of religion we are fighting. God, who must descend into our lives to bring unity, peace and goodwill, has been made the cause of strife. It shows how limited and narrow our idea of God is. We can understand when one fights with another for political or economic reasons, for gaining some material objects. But it is very strange that there should be fight in the field of religion. What is the meaning of these conflicts in the name of God? Why this quarrel over 'your God', 'my God', 'his God'? There is no multiplicity of Gods. God is one and we are all His children. If we look upon God as our father and mother and ourselves as His children, we have no reason to war with one another. In households also brothers and sisters fight. Friends also fight. Then which example can we hold out to show that we should love, serve, help and be kind to one another and live in perfect harmony and peace? Divine love, affinity, harmony cannot be compared to anything material. You do not find any similarity between what happens in the spiritual plane and what happens in the physical plane. There is a song by Tulsidas in which he tries to describe the attributes of Sri Rama. Coming to the point of beauty he says, 'To whom shall I compare his face? Sri Rama's face is as handsome as his own.' So God can be compared to Himself alone. In the material sphere there is nothing that can be compared to things in the spiritual kingdom. Everywhere in the world there is confusion, dissension, competition and selfishness. We cannot live in harmony unless we transcend the lower levels and attain a spiritual life of peace, love and goodwill. Therefore, we have to raise our hearts to God, towards the all-pervading consciousness.

People asked Ramdas in America, 'Why is there so much of strife, misery and dissension in the world?' Ramdas' only reply was, 'The people have forgotten God.' If they really remember God, this state of things would never exist. They are busy making atom bombs. While they are speaking of disarmament they are piling up armaments. God is forgotten. That is why there is so much trouble and unrest. If even one man in a family raises himself to the higher level of consciousness, he will spread about him a peaceful atmosphere and those who come within the aura of his influence will change. If all strive and attain that blessed state, then they will spread everywhere nothing but peace and goodwill. For they will shed their selfishness, their sense of separation from their fellow-beings. They will achieve unity based upon the knowledge of the all-pervading Truth — God. They will have then a heaven upon earth.

Q: Then God's Lila will end.

Ramdas: No. It will be a Lila of happiness, love, goodwill and harmony. When two or more people belonging to different countries meet and talk in love and friendship with each other, what a happy sight it is to watch them! When they quarrel, what an unhappy sight! Here in the Ashram many people come from different places. Though they are strangers they move with each other on equal terms with all love and affection. Is it not a heavenly sight? There is no selfish love there. It is not based upon physical relationship. It is on the plane of the Spirit. There is no bargaining. Love is given away spontaneously, producing nothing but ecstasy in the heart of everyone. Here when they come they forget their nationality; all prejudices are dissolved. There is no question of class or creed. All sit together and eat. All join together to hear God's name sung. They forget their homes and normal activities. In that happy forgetfulness they move about in perfect bliss and peace.

Q: We therefore feel unwilling to go from here.

Ramdas: You have to go. You are drawn by business and other things at home. Take this atmosphere with you. Learn to lose yourself in the service of others.

When Ramdas went to America, Europe, Japan, Ceylon and other countries, he felt he was moving with people known to him for ages and ages. He did not feel he had gone to strange places or was moving with strange people. He was seeing God in them. He was moving freely with everybody. His Beloved is seated in the hearts of all beings. The world is his home. All these countries are but different rooms in that home. He was moving from room to room and meeting his own Beloved in different forms. If you develop this universal consciousness and see God everywhere and in everybody, then you are the happiest being on earth. That is the source of Ramdas' happiness. He knows no distinction, no sense of 'I, mine and thine'.

'God is my father; God is my mother; all beings are my brothers and sisters and the entire universe is my home.' This is what our Rishis taught us. Now you say, 'This is my country', and call it patriotism. While we have the privilege of calling the whole universe as our own, we are calling parts of the earth as 'my country' and 'your country'. This is a narrow vision whereas the infinite expansion of heart is what our Rishis expect of us. In the Gita the whole universe is shown as the manifestation of God. God pervades the entire universe and beyond to infinity. Why do you bind yourself to one place when the whole cosmos is yours? So your relation with everybody should be one of spiritual kinship. That is God-vision. Behold God as the entire universe. Your Beloved is everywhere manifest. What a grand conception of God as the universal manifestation! This you will find in the Gita and

the Upanishads. That is why God sent Ramdas outside India to various countries and afterwards made him write the book 'World is God'. Some people took exception to this title. Ramdas thought it was the most appropriate one. He actually saw God revealed in everyone he met. He loved everybody and he was loved by everybody in return. In that love he lost himself. He went abroad only to see his Beloved everywhere. He did not go with any sense of superiority to impart the ancient wisdom to the people. His object was to behold God there at close quarters. He found that the people there were none other than expressions of God. One question was put to him in Los Angeles: 'Have you realized God and have you seen Him?' Ramdas replied, 'Yes.' 'What is He like?' asked the questioner. Ramdas said, 'Like yourself. All the forms that he sees are the revelations or manifestations of God.'

God apart from man is no God for him. All the worlds are pervaded by Him. There is no place where He is not. All forms are His forms. Once Ramdas was introduced to the audience in America: 'I have brought God with me.' Ramdas said, 'God has come to see God.' If you really become God, you see God everywhere. When Swami Rama Tirtha was asked, 'Who are you?' he said, 'I am God, so are you.' God alone can see God. So when a man says that he has seen God, that means he sees everything as God. This is God-vision, God-realization. This is Divya Drishti. If the ego in your heart peeps through the windows of your eyes, you see all as different from yourself. When God sees through your eyes, He sees Himself everywhere just as one sees oneself reflected in the mirror. The illumined soul sees himself everywhere.

16th January, 1961.

Ramdas: It is said in the Gita, 'Let pleasure and pain, honour and dishonour, success and failure, gain and loss, be the same to you; a lump of earth, a stone and gold be the same to you.' How can that be? Ordinarily loss is loss, gain is gain. To what consciousness must you rise in order to see this equality between the pairs of opposites? Many commentators have failed to bring out the full significance of this truth.

The problem before everybody in these days is: 'Which is the ideal we have to follow — the path of Himsa or Ahimsa; the path of activity or inactivity?' The solution is to rise above all these conceptions or these ideals.

सर्वधर्मान्परित्यज्य मामेकं शरणं ब्रज ।

Here you transcend the distinctions of Himsa and Ahimsa, etc. When you are established in the supreme Reality, you are free. Human beings are caught up in these opposites. When a man wants to walk only on the path of Dharma, occasions arise when he has to do sometimes Adharma, because both Dharma and Adharma are based on the changing conceptions of the mind. But the Truth is beyond. You must take your stand on this Truth and then live your life inspired by It, which is your highest Dharma, transcending all pairs of opposites.

What is right and what is wrong? The Gita says that over this even sages are perplexed. When Sri Rama was going to the forest in order to fulfil the vow of his father, many wise men advised him, 'It is not right. Kaikeyi did it out of jealousy. It is not proper for you to leave the kingdom and go.' Sri Rama said, 'No.' He did not accept that standard. He said, 'My father's word must be fulfilled,' and he went to the forest

with all cheer and joy.

Q: Is it not egoistic action, Papa? Can it not be interpreted like that?

Ramdas: No. Ruling the kingdom and going to the forest were one and the same thing to him. If he felt like ruling the kingdom and enjoying the luxuries of life, he would have accepted the advice of the wise men contrary to the fulfilment of his father's vow. But he went to the forest all the same. In that sacrifice he experienced joy. He was grateful to Kaikeyi for having become the cause of his going to the forest. Instead of condemning her, he revered her all the more. People told him, 'Your Dharma is to rule the kingdom now. The old father is incapable of ruling.' But he did not listen to them. Truth guided him, and not any worldly consideration.

Q: It is said that he had to go to the forest as a result of Narada's curse.

Ramdas: If he was forced to go against his will, then there would have been some meaning in saying so. Here he felt it a blessing. 'All is for the best' — that is the lesson we have to learn. We have to transcend all Dharmas, all standards. Standards are for worldly people. Surrender to the will of God and rise above all standards set by the human mind — that is the highest Dharma. In society you will find many Dharmas observed and many Adharmas condemned. They are of no significance for saints who have transcended all Dharmas. There are no duties for those who have surrendered to God. The translation of the Sloka in the Gita by Annie Besant is: 'Abandoning all duties come to me alone for shelter'. The word used is 'duties'. The society will say you should not give up your duty. When the question of surrendering yourself to God comes, all duties are meaningless. Certain rules and injunctions are made in order

that people may live in peace and harmony. They are made by men for the convenience of the people in society. They are not binding on sages who have realized the Truth. Therefore, their ways are different from those of the world. It does not mean that they are free to do Adharma or bad things. Their actions are neither good nor bad. Their standards are above good and evil.

People try to follow man-made standards. When they cannot follow them they are perturbed. Arjuna knew what Dharma was. That did not give him any consolation when he had to face his elders and others in the battle-field. He felt that if he did not fight, it would be Adharma. But would it be right to kill the elders and his kith and kin? He was perplexed. Sri Krishna said, 'Surrender yourself to me and fight. You will be a free soul fighting for Lokasangraha — for the welfare of the world.' Thus Sri Krishna took him beyond all standards and made him fight.

Q: Complete detachment is necessary.

Ramdas: Inner detachment and outer action. Still within and dynamic without. Action is necessary but should be controlled by the divine power ruling the universe. Your standard is God; not the rules made by man and written down in books for the guidance of ordinary people. God guides you. He is your all in all. Till that state is reached, these rules seek to guide you and yet in certain situations you do not know how to act. Whether you act one way or the other, you feel you are wrong. The right way is to go beyond all rules and be guided by the Divine Spirit within you.

Q: When caught up in the mire of desires, how can they act like that?

Ramdas: When you surrender yourself to God, your ego

will die and the desires will disappear. When the tree is cut down, the birds on the tree fly away.

17th January, 1961.

Q: There is a Yogi in Tumkur. He is a worshipper of Divine Mother. He lives in a rented house and cooks his own food. Many people in difficulties go to him and get their problems solved. He is a very simple man and is not after money. Whatever is paid to him voluntarily, he spends in charity. He gets instructions in dreams as to what he should do or should not do. When he hears God's names or glories sung, he soon gets into a trance, loses body-consciousness and after some time comes to normal state. When in trance his whole body is seen shivering and tears flow from his eyes.

Ramdas: Ramdas is in trance when sleeping; he is in trance while sitting; he is in trance while walking; he is in trance at all times. What is the nature of this trance?

Q: I know of a person who goes into trance whenever she hears Bhajan.

Ramdas: Ramdas was getting such a trance. He had a hard time to get over it which would come to him suddenly. He did not want that kind of trance. He wanted a trance that abides at all times and in all conditions. Trance is caused by rising above the physical and mental consciousness. When you are raised to this consciousness, your body is forgotten; but when you return from that state you become conscious of the body. Permanent experience of that consciousness is possible only when the mind ceases to exist and the body is mostly forgotten. Such a person does not live in the plane of the senses. Sense attractions have no meaning for him. Mind is perfectly still. A slight body-consciousness remains for moving about, talking and maintaining the body. He has no desire

for the things of the world, no ambition for name, wealth or anything of the kind. He enjoys perennial peace. He does not see any difference that people see in the world. His love flows towards everybody alike. He has no enemy. He is sunk in bliss; an unbroken stream of it will be pouring out of him. This is called Sahaja Samadhi.

Q: This must be beyond trance state.

Ramdas: Beyond or not we cannot say. It is our natural state. We have forgotten it. We have lost it. It is just like the losing of the Garden of Eden by Adam and Eve. The original peace and joy is lost. We have to regain the lost paradise. Ignorance is responsible for our losing that glorious and pure state. That is why we are asked to meditate, pray and surrender to the Divine within us and free ourselves from the clutches of the pairs of opposites, from the bondage of the senses, from lust, greed and wrath. We must be absolutely pure children of God — incarnations of God. Then we will have recovered the 'lost paradise.' We shall then be flooded with peace and joy which we can have at all times because we are established in it. It is not a state that comes and goes. Now we know what we really are.

The sense of duality is responsible for all the mischief in the world — 'I and you.' Either it must be all 'you' or all 'I'. In both cases you must lose this individual 'I' — I-ness it is called, or ego-sense; false belief that we are merely bodies; this body is separate; that body is separate. If you want to realize unity, you must discover the all-pervading Truth or Atman. Realization of the Atman is realization of God. Then there is no possibility for you to dislike, to get angry with, to do harm to, or to exploit anybody. You then become the very embodiment of love. Love unites, hate divides. That which unites us into one is God. God is love and that love is the

deity of your heart. Reveal it. Manifest it.

There was in Mangalore a Brahmin lawyer. He had great love for Harijans. At that time Gandhiji had not started the movement for the uplift of Harijans. So the lawyer started a school for them. They would be taken in procession through the streets. People would mock at him, fling stones at him. He would not mind. He was carrying on his work selflessly. We were then little children. We found that people were persecuting him. In those days Harijans were called 'depressed classes.' Higher class Hindus used to treat them with contempt and subject them to indignities. They were untouchables. Nobody cared for them. They would live in hills and jungles. The lawyer used to bring them into the town. All the money he earned he would spend on them. They were in rags. He would give them clothes, teach them how to bathe and keep their bodies clean. He gave them every kind of help to raise their standard of life and make them move with the higher classes with a sense of self-respect. He worked for over thirty years with them. Later on, towards the end of his life he became a Sannyasi. He came to be known as Swami Ishwarananda.

The Swami started in Mangalore a Mahila Sevashram. He brought women out from their seclusion. He opened clubs for them, where they could come and learn many things. He gave them freedom. Now you will find many women in Mangalore taking a leading part in serving orphans. He was the life and soul of that movement.

You see, when love rises in your heart, all distinctions vanish. Love is a solvent which dissolves all diversity. Love knows no nationality, caste or creed. You love all alike. So-called good men and bad men are the same to you. Jesus taught,

'Love your enemies.' Gautama Buddha taught, 'Give love for hate.' It amounts to the same thing. Vedanta says, 'Look upon everybody as yourself.' Your Self and his Self are one. Physically you may appear to be different from each other. In Spirit you are one. Realize this truth. Then there is no room for hate or illwill towards any creature in the world. 'O, Father, forgive them; they know not what they do.' Thus spoke Jesus on the Cross. What a heart it is that utters these words! Love is given to friend and foe alike. A person who has such a heart is like the sandalwood tree. Even if one cuts the tree one gets only perfume from it. No hate, no dislike, no illwill. In such a person God is revealed. As the sun gives light to all alike and does not demand anything in return, so God loves us. If we love all alike without expecting anything in return, we are the embodiments of God. Where God is, there is peace, there is joy, there is freedom. As a Maharashtrian saint has said, 'God dwells in that heart in which there is compassion, forgiveness and peace.' Saints all over the world bear witness to this truth.

"Re' means back. 'Ligare' means to bind. So 'religion' means 'to bind back.' It does not mean rituals or worship. It shows that we who are separated from Him should reunite ourselves with Him. God is love, sweetness, mercy. These are the attributes of God. We must develop these qualities if we want to feel His presence within us. If we think of Him, meditate on Him, surrender ourselves to Him, then these qualities will develop in us both internally and externally. Only we must draw out these great qualities which are inherent in us. We have built barriers between ourselves and others because of ignorance. Break down the barriers of caste, creed, race and country. Ramdas remembers Edward Markham's poem: Wonderful lines they are! Ramdas is charmed by them:

He drew a circle that shut me out
 Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout;
 But love and I had the wit to win.
 We drew a circle and took him in.

How inspiring, how elevating and how true and wise these lines are!

You see how many walls we have erected for keeping ourselves separate from others. Feel one with all being. Embrace the whole universe as your own. Everybody draws a circle and says, 'Clear out. You do not belong to our circle.' Everybody has an inner circle and an outer circle. In temples they ask, 'Are you a Harijan? Are you a foreigner?' 'Your church and my church; your mosque and my mosque; your temple and my temple' — what is all this prattle? We are believers in one God. God is for all people, all nations, all countries. What divisions we have created among ourselves! 'Mine and his' has broken us into pieces. Instead of peace it is pieces. Peace means harmony, co-operation. But how can we be happy if we are torn up into shreds?

18th January, 1961.

Q: Silence is sometimes very eloquent, Papa.

Ramdas: Silence is Brahman. You realize this when the mind is still. It is not merely silence of the tongue. No good to keep the tongue silent and allow the mind to race like a wild horse. It is mental Mouna that is indicated when we say that Mouna is Brahman.

Q: What is meant by saying, 'Silence is eloquent?'

Ramdas: It is more telling and more powerful than talk. We convey our feeling better by silence than by talk. There is a saying, 'Be still and know that I am God.' Stillness of

the mind reveals the glory of God in us. Mind must be silent or still. This is very difficult to attain. There are many who are seemingly meditating. All the limbs are at a standstill without any movement, but the mind is racing. Mind must be stilled through communion with and meditation on God. God is peace. You get peace when the mind is still. That is what they call seeing God, feeling God, being conscious of God, being aware of His presence. This can be had when the mind-waves have ceased to toss about. So we are asked to concentrate our mind on God through prayer, chanting of His name, reading about Him. By all these methods we can concentrate our mind upon Him. His impersonal aspect cannot be concentrated upon. But we can concentrate upon something that symbolises God.

Our mind cannot be easily fixed on God. It is the nature of the mind to wander. If you love God above everything else, your mind will be always thinking of Him. It is distracted because of your attachment to worldly objects. Thus your mental energies are frittered away. You must think of God, talk about God and serve God. In this way you must be in communion with God, dedicate your life to Him and do all actions as service to Him. You should, as the saying goes, 'live, move and have your being in God.' God must be the one predominant thought in your mind. Then God within will guide you every moment of your life and you are safe in His keeping; and your life will be supremely blessed. You are asked to follow the path of truth and righteousness. If you want to live such a life, God must be your guide and inspirer. Then you live for the good of all. You are here to fulfil the will of God, carry out His behests for bringing harmony and peace into the world. You are not here for your own sake, but for His sake.

We toil day and night to get things for ourselves. When we come to know that our life's purpose is to serve Him, we adjust our conduct and movements in consonance with this ideal to fulfil His will. We now become true servants of God and serve Him in all that we do. His will we can know very well when we surrender ourselves to Him. Then our life flows selflessly for the good of all. We do not expect anything in return for our service — either name, fame, wealth, praise or the like. But man generally works for name and fame or something in return. There is an expression in Marathi: करी लाभ वीण प्रीती 'Love without expecting any gain.' In such a life alone there is true joy. Love for love's sake. Our heart flows spontaneously towards those who are suffering. With such a heart we serve; that service is divine. When our heart is filled with compassion, be sure God has manifested Himself in us. Thereafter He guides us at every step and our work will have the highest significance. We then become the real redeemers and benefactors of the world.

It is said, what your right hand gives your left hand should not know. When you are a selfless and humble servant of God, if anybody praises you, you are not elated. You simply reply, 'God did it. Give the credit to Him. I am merely His servant. My hands would not move unless His power activates them.' Some people arrogate to themselves the credit. This is strange in the eyes of the true servant of God. Wherefrom did they get the power to do things? In the body many organs are working involuntarily — digestion is going on, hair is growing, blood is circulating in the veins. Are *they* doing all these things? Some mysterious power is active in them. Is it not the same divine power that is active when they work and serve?

The ego-consciousness is responsible for the confusion in

our life. If we submit to the will of God and know that by His will everything happens, our actions will be saturated with love, forgiveness and mercy. We cannot but give love to everybody, whatever anybody may do to us. This lamp here cannot give darkness. Its nature is to give light. So our nature is to give love to everybody. Through prayer, communion and surrender to the will of God we develop this nature. Then we are full of peace and joy.

If we are proud of any good work we do, it does not help us in going nearer God. Therefore, in the Hindu scriptures it is said that the path of Karma is very difficult. You are puffed up when people praise you, and God is forgotten. Hence, you must remember constantly the greatness, glory and magnificence of God. When you forget Him, the ego rises. Continuous remembrance of God means keeping down the ego. If you surrender to God, you will live from moment to moment and He will guide you. You will not then be calculating and planning for the future. Even if you make plans they must be subject to the divine will. If your plans are fulfilled, God fulfilled them. Plan always for the good of others. In fact, if you make others happy you are really happy. You think if you gain something at the expense of others you can be happy. It is quite the reverse. You are not happy. Buddha said, 'Rejoice in the good fortune of others.' Suppose you try to get something and somebody else gets it, you feel jealous of him and are miserable. If you have true love for others, you must feel happy because they got what you wished to have for yourself.

Sacrifice means giving your all to God and His service. That is dedication, that is surrender. We see beggars going without a cloth. We will not part with ours. Here in the Ashram if anybody comes wearing a torn saree, Mataji gives

her spare saree. She never keeps more than two for herself. If another comes at the same time in a similar condition, she borrows one from somebody else, wears it, and gives away her only saree. Nowadays she gets a number of sarees from friends and she freely distributes them. Many destitute families come to the Ashram. Mataji gives them clothes and takes care of them in other ways. Some poor people have no homes and no friends. They are in the streets. They are taken care of by her with great love. She does it naturally. She does not think that she is doing anything great. She does not want praise from anybody. Her giving these things is usually not known to people. But those who carefully observe things may know. It is done in a spirit of perfect humility, without expecting anything in return. She says, 'It is natural for me to do such things.' God alone can give us that nature. It is not by our efforts we can get it. Our effort is only to cry to Him, to supplicate ourselves before Him. Then He enters into our lives and brings about a transformation in us. Mataji feels the bodies of others are her own. When she is hungry she feeds herself. Similarly, when others are hungry she feeds them. She feels there is nothing wonderful about it. When you act in that spirit, where is the question of seeking praise? When you feed yourself or clothe yourself do you feel that you have done any favour to yourself?

19th January, 1961.

Q: May we know something about free will and how it is related to God's will?

Ramdas: When man is not independent he cannot be said to have any free will. Free will means individual will. When he considers that he is exercising his will it is, in fact, the divine will that is acting through him. So man has no free

will. What he thinks is free will is not free will. In everyday life when a man engages himself in some work or the other, he thinks he is so engaged on his own initiative and makes a decision. But sometimes he meets with obstacles. He struggles and finds himself unable to carry it out. There comes a clash between his will and another's will. He is disappointed and suffers. But, if he knows that the will he is exercising is the divine will and takes the opposition also as divine will, that is self-surrender. Here there will be no clash. If he undertook the work at the behest of the divine will and if the Divine frustrated it, he won't be affected thereby. He would say, 'God's will be done,' and keep calm.

Q: If, as you say, everything happens by the will of God, then there is no cause for worry — success or failure.

Ramdas: Opposition comes also from God. So you should submit. Once Ramdas started for a walk with a friend. He told the friend that he was going for a walk by the will of God. He went about ten yards and returned. The friend asked, 'What is the matter?' 'God told him to go back,' replied Ramdas. To this the friend said, 'When He told you to go, I did not hear, and when He told you to return I was so near you, but I did not hear.' The friend could not understand this. All the time Ramdas was in divine bliss.

On another occasion Ramdas, along with some friends, started to go to a far-off place. Ramdas had to board a bus at the stand about half-a-mile distant from the city, but by the time we reached the bus-stand it had left. We had to walk in the street for ten or twelve minutes to reach the bus-stand and Ramdas was going along laughingly. When the bus was missed, Ramdas returned in the same cheerful mood. While returning, the friends were wondering why Ramdas never felt disappointed. He was returning in as jolly a mood as he was

while going. Everything happens by God's will and that is a fact. So, if we submit to His will, there will be no disappointment and frustration. How can there be free will for us when God is the inner controller? We are mere puppets in His hands. He holds and pulls the strings.

Q: What about the murderer?

Ramdas: The murderer thinks he is committing the murder. If he knows God's will is working in all that he does, then he will not murder. Murders are committed and the murderer thinks he is doing it. But in fact, it is God who impels him to do it. It is He who brings about the murder.

Q: Is it God's will that he should do so?

Ramdas: It is God's will that the man should be murdered. Why should you worry? If his death is to take place in that manner, who can help it? He gets what is ordained for him. So you take it that it is God's will. The working out of Karma is evident here. The victim must have committed a murder in the past and the reaction comes to him in the same manner. What one sows, one reaps. Sri Krishna throws a new light on this question. He declares in the Gita (Chapter II-19):

'He who takes the Self to be the slayer, he who takes It to be the slain, neither of these knows. It does not slay, nor is It slain.'

Q: If the Karma is done by God's will, is counter action bound to come?

Ramdas: This is how we look at it. Every action is followed by a reaction. One should have a clear idea of the right attitude to be taken in life and action. One should not get confused and resist evil. One should take everything for the best. He who has got this frame of mind is not affected by the result of his past Karma, because he has submitted to

the will of God.

Sri Rama, we may say, had to undergo the trials and difficulties of forest life for fourteen years as a result of his Karma. Suppose we take it that way. If Karma had affected him it would have made his life miserable. When he was wandering through the forests without sleep for days, exposed to all kinds of dangers and privations, he reconciled himself to them and took everything in the best spirit and was always uncomplaining, cheerful and happy. He teaches how we should submit to adverse circumstances without a murmur of complaint or resentment. He took everything that came to him in the right spirit. That is the way we can put up with all unpleasant situations in which we are placed. But we make ourselves miserable because we want things to take place as we wish. In all conditions we should submit to God. Never grumble, never complain, never be sorry. If this is our attitude towards all happenings, we will be free. We cannot but be happy. On the contrary, we want everything to happen in our own particular way. We aim at success, victory, gain, honour, praise and so on. If any reverses come we are disappointed. Gain or loss, victory or defeat, success or failure, honour or dishonour, praise or censure — all will be the same to us if we take them in the right spirit. This is called equipoise or equilibrium of mind. In the Gita it is called Samatwa or equality.

Had God not brought about a state of abject poverty, beggary and destitution to Ramdas during the early days of his Sadhana, he would not have evolved to the spiritual state attained by him now. He took these privations in the best of lights. He did not grumble and did not accuse anybody. He took it that God had done it for his good. So he was extremely happy throughout his wanderings in the streets, in the plains and in the forests without a resting place, without a single pic

in his pocket and living on alms got from door to door. He considered it the best thing for him at that time and he remembered God continuously — without break. So the saying, 'There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so,' is true. If we think anything is evil, it is evil for us. If we think anything is good, it is good for us. So we have to take it that everything that happens is for the best as it is the will of Providence. From God no evil can come. God never does any harm. So there is no cause for sorrow or disappointment.

Q: So there is no such thing as free will at all as we think. Not even fifty per cent.

Ramdas: Hundred per cent no free will. There can be no two wills. There is only one will. You think you have a will and initiative of your own. It is utterly wrong. There is no individuality apart from God. If we think *we* are doing actions, we will be entangled.

A devotee who came here, at the time of parting, promised he would come again after ten days. Later he wrote a letter stating that owing to circumstances beyond his control he regretted he could not come to the Ashram as promised. Where is his will working? Whose will is it that prevailed? What about his promise? Why could he not have used his independent and free will if he had one? You are controlled by the highest power in the world. If that power wills, you will do it; otherwise you cannot.

Sri Ramakrishna was trying as far as possible not to tell a lie. Once he said that he would go to the pine-grove, but later he felt that he had no particular urge to do so. He asked the priest of the Radhakanta temple what was to be done. He said that there was no need to go. Sri Ramakrishna then reasoned to himself, 'Well, everyone is Narayana. So the

priest too is Narayana; why should I not listen to him? The elephant is Narayana no doubt, but then the Mahut is Narayana too. Since the Mahut asked me not to go near the elephant, why should I not obey him?’

On another occasion Sri Ramakrishna said to the Mother, ‘Good and evil, righteousness and unrighteousness I lay at your feet.’

In Bombay some years ago Ramdas was invited by a devotee friend for lunch on his birthday. The friend had invited also about two dozen of his friends so that they might get the benefit of Ramdas’ company. On the appointed day another friend, living in Kurla, came all the way to Ramdas and said, ‘Papa, I want you to take food with me today.’ Ramdas complied with his request. The people at the other place waited and waited for Ramdas. No news was sent to them that Ramdas was unable to attend. Then they heard that Ramdas had gone to some other place for lunch. They were very much disappointed. Ramdas did not feel anything about it. God made him go to Kurla. Ramdas never felt the responsibility at all, although it was not a thing well done from the point of view of social etiquette. He had broken a promise and created an unpleasant situation for the person who had invited him.

22nd January, 1961.

Q: Sri T. V. S. says that a big burden has been lifted from his head as a result of listening to Papa’s talk the other day on ‘Divine will and free will.’

Ramdas: He seems to have been fully satisfied and is free from all doubts. See, after that he is not coming here to attend the talks at all!

It is not a matter of believing. It should be experienced.

Intellectual acceptance of that principle is not enough. At every moment you must know that the divine will alone is supreme. Whatever happens should be attributed to it. The sense of good and evil will disappear the moment you do so. Your mind will be perfectly at rest. That is what is meant by surrendering ourselves to the divine will. That is the easiest way to transcend the Dwandwas.

Those on the path of Jnana try to identify themselves with Brahman. That process is difficult. To surrender is easier. The moment you do so you rise beyond the Dwandwas. You get established in that supreme consciousness in which the pairs of opposites do not exist. They belong to the Gunas, to the sense of individuality. When you are one with the universal Reality, they have no meaning for you. In all conditions you remain free and happy. The weaver's story in the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna is an example in point. By submitting to the will of God, he was perfectly at peace in all circumstances. That is true surrender. You are upset if anything goes wrong from your individual, narrow standpoint. You have to cultivate the universal standpoint. Then anything that happens, which you considered at one time to be wrong, will not disturb you. There will be no conflict in your mind.

The message of the Gita is to go beyond the Dwandwas and Gunas:

समदुःखसुखः स्वस्थः समलोष्टादमकाञ्चनः ।

तुल्यप्रियाप्रीयो धीरस्तुल्यनिन्दात्मसंस्तुतिः ॥

मानापमानयोस्तुल्यस्तुल्यो मित्रारिपक्षयोः ।

सर्वारम्भपरित्यागी गुणातीतः स उच्यते ॥

'He to whom pain and pleasure are alike, who dwells in the Self, to whom a lump of earth, a stone and gold are alike, to whom the dear and the undear are

alike, who is a man of wisdom, to whom censure and praise are the same; he who is the same in honour and disgrace, and the same towards friends and enemies, who has given up all initiative for action — such a man is said to have transcended the Gunas.'

This is possible only by surrendering yourself totally to God's will. All other Dharmas are of secondary importance. Thus transcend the Gunas and Dwandwas. That is what is called Brahmi Sthiti, universal consciousness. In that state the mind ceases to exist. Mind is the veil between you and God, and when the veil is removed you realize that you are He.

Westerners speak of Brahman or Atman; but when they hear this idea of going beyond the Dwandwas, they are puzzled. They cannot understand. They are worshippers of the personal aspect of Godhead more than the impersonal. The Personal they can grasp by the mind. The Impersonal they cannot conceive of. When Ramdas was in Kasaragod Ashram, Mark Sanjiva Rao, a Hindu convert to Christianity, used to visit him often. Once he came when Ramdas was reading 'Vivek Chudamani' of Sankara. When he heard two or three Slokas from the book, he said, 'I do not want to hear this,' and closed his ears with his fingers. Ramdas said, 'You must hear it,' and pulled out his fingers from his ears. 'I cannot bear to hear this philosophy,' he said. 'To rise beyond birth and death and enter into that realm of the Infinite without name and form! Oh, I cannot hear anything about it.' This shows that he was the votary only of the personal God.

The Gita speaks of the Impersonal more than the Personal. The Personal leads you to the Impersonal through motiveless or disinterested action. Jnana is beyond the Gunas. Universal vision also is Nirguna Darshan of the Divine who is all-pervad-

ing, dwelling in all beings and creatures in the universe. That is Viswarupa Darshan referred to in the XI Chapter of the Gita. That Darshan comes after Jnana. Sankara's view is that we must turn our mind from the world, taking it as illusion, and merge in the all-pervading Consciousness and attain Jnana. Thereafter the Jnani looks upon the universe as Brahman.

Those who approach God through the path of Bhakti do not look upon the world as illusion, but as the Lila of God. Everything is 'Vasudeva'. This is the realization. Here Jnana and Bhakti go together, not Bhakti of the lower type, but Para Bhakti. This is beautifully explained by Swami Vivekananda in his book on Bhakti Yoga.

When the ego ceases to exist, then it is you get the universal vision. Your activities will then be inspired by the supreme Godhead and done spontaneously for the welfare of the world. When you have reached this exalted state you cannot be selfish and narrow-visioned. In the fire of Jnana all your Vasanas are destroyed. What exists then is only Brahman. Even the idea of Lokasangraha seems to be limiting your action to a motive or a goal. Lokasangraha is there only from the view of the world. You are not even conscious that you are doing good to anybody. The example of the sun is appropriate. If you ask the sun, 'Are you giving light to the world in order to make all people happy?' The sun would reply if it could, 'No, it is my nature to give light.' That is the position of the Jnani-Bhakta. Every action, small or big, will prove to be conducive to the welfare of others. So long as you are in the clutches of the ego, you are selfish, and real good cannot be done by you. You may pretend that you are doing so. Real good flows out of you when you have surrendered yourself to God. It is divine Shakti that now inspires you to perform all actions.

Manifestation itself is Shakti. The same Shakti creates, preserves and destroys. Shiva and Shakti are one. What appears motionless is also moving. Unless there is movement there cannot be any form or appearance. It is not possible for our naked eyes to see the vibrations which make the objects visible. The particular grouping of vibrations, according to their subtle rhythm and densities, makes the objects appear in different forms and shapes. They have all emanated from one cosmic power — Shakti. That power is both visible and invisible, and in its pristine and inherent nature is indestructible though apparently kaleidoscopic and mutable.

The objects gradually disintegrate and disappear. But the power that causes their appearance and disappearance is eternal. It is called Para Prakriti — universal Shakti or Mother. The moment you realize the truth that it is this universal Mother — dynamic force — who reveals Herself as the universe and causes all its movements, your ego will automatically vanish. Then you will be one with the integral Divine — at once one with Shakti and Shiva, the support of Shakti.

So you come to the conclusion that there is nothing but God. Everything, seen as well as unseen, is God. When you say that He is at once this and that, the mind is puzzled — you cannot grasp how two contrary facts relate to the same Truth. God is at once both active and inactive. This is the principle underlying the teachings of the Gita. Sri Krishna says to Arjuna, 'I will teach you a Yoga by which you can fight and at the same time know that you do not fight. Instead of going to the forest renouncing the battle, if you fight with this vision and realization, it will be conducive to the welfare of the world. You are established in the inner peace of the Eternal on the one hand and active in the field of Nature on the other. While you destroy evil by your action, you remain unaffected by it.'

This is what the Gita teaches: 'Action in inaction and inaction in action.' You are doer and non-doer at once. Here actions do not bind you and they leave no stain on you. You can put this truth into practice in your daily life. You will be like the lotus leaf in water. It is in water, yet is untouched by it. To attain this state you must rise above the pairs of opposites. Yours is to do, but not to be concerned about the result. This is Karma Yoga—action done in a state of Yoga. Now you are an instrument of the Divine Power. You are above like and dislike. Truly, you are acting in a spirit of spontaneity.

Egoistic action is the cause of man's bondage. When he feels he is an instrument of the Divine Power, he is free from bondage. He is a liberated soul. Vasanas must die, ego-sense must disappear. Vasanas can go only through Nishkama Karma and practice of concentration. These are the Sadhanas for the purification of the mind without which you cannot realize God. In the Gita it is said you must be free from the clutches of lust, greed and wrath. But, as Sri Ramakrishna puts it, the desire for Kamini and Kanchana must go. The desire for these is very difficult to conquer, for attraction for them leads you astray and you feel helpless. Primarily you want grace in order to get the necessary strength to conquer these Vasanas. Usually a man's mind is obsessed by these two desires. If you aspire to rise to the divine consciousness you have to free yourself from their hold. Of course, by God's grace it is possible to overcome them and then, transcending the Gunas, you come to realize that you are not the body or a bundle of desires, but the eternal Atman.

You have a body, but you are not the body. Your real nature is divine—you are the immortal, changeless Atman. If you live in that consciousness, you will always be in Sat-Chit-

Ananda — eternal existence, consciousness and bliss. The world is too much with you because the body is too much with you. You identify yourself with the body. When anything happens to the body you say it happens to you — so much is the identification with the body. You declare: 'I am born, I am growing, I am dying.' Detach this 'I' from the body and identify it with the immortal Atman and see how blissful and free you become. Identification with the body gives rise to like and dislike, love and hatred, resulting in misery, pain and anxiety. All these are changing and momentary. You are caught in this vicious circle. This is all your own creation, a trick of your mind. There is no such thing as good and evil. If you rise beyond the mental plane to the spiritual, you will find that you suffered all along through ignorance and for nothing at all. You had forgotten your real Self. Therefore know that you are the immortal Self and not this changing, perishable body. Be aware of your real Self by continuous concentration and meditation on any sound, form, name or light as a symbol of the Self. Just as you use ladders to get to the top floor, so these are like ladders to take you to the absolute Self. This is the Upasana or Sadhana by which you attain the eternal, changeless Self.

24th January, 1961.

Ramdas: There is a yearning for peace in the hearts of all people. Without peace life is not worth living.

Q: It is the most difficult thing to get.

Ramdas: Life is intended for attaining peace. Otherwise, what is the purpose of life? There are potentialities in us, which, if properly harnessed, will work wonders. We can bring sunshine where there is darkness, joy where there is misery, love where there is hate. We can transform the people who come

into contact with us.

Our object is to give happiness to others. By giving happiness our happiness increases. This secret very few people know. In spite of fabulous wealth and all other worldly comforts, happiness eludes our grasp. We cannot get it. The most unselfish man is the most happy man. Selfishness can go when the ego-sense disappears. Where there is selfishness there is nothing but misery. How to get peace? For that we knock about in various ways and do not get it. We may learn from saints the secret of peace. But peace must be won by oneself; and that peace is within.

Q: Then, is there nothing like grace?

Ramdas: Grace is there always, but you are not aware of it. You must try hard until you become aware of it. You have closed the windows of your room and you are complaining of darkness. If you open the windows you will get light. It is there for you all the day.

Q: Sometimes in the darkness we do not know even how to open the window.

Ramdas: If you grope for the window you can get it. If you simply sit idle, it is no good. You must try. You may by mistake touch the wall where there is no window. Grope about, find out the window and push it open. At once a flood of light will come to you.

Q: What do you say about litigation?

Ramdas: If you want to be miserable, you may engage yourself in litigation. You will then have plenty of trouble. Civil suits are often handed down from father to son and become a legacy for generations, and finally when the court gives a decree, there is nothing left of his money but instead a large

debt incurred on litigation, which cannot be paid off even by selling his property.

Q: A certain person conducted a big civil suit for a number of years; ultimately he won in the Privy Council, but died soon after.

Ramdas: We advised a person not to go to the court. But his reply was, 'If I get the money, I will give it for charitable purposes. Why do you say that I should not sue?' We said, 'It is not so easy as that.' He is now having a crop of troubles.

Q: Does D. not come here?

Ramdas: When worried he comes here and is peaceful. When he goes back he puts his head again into the hornets' nest.

Q: It is like the fight between the serpent and the mongoose.

Ramdas: In the world there is nothing but worry, worry, worry. But when you worry for others — 'others' means not friends and relatives alone — you play the part of God. When you yourself have difficulties and you throw the burden upon God, then you play the part of a devotee. God is compassionate and merciful. He wants us to be peaceful. He ever leads us on the right path. His heart is tender. You can leave everything to Him.

Q: Does He not create problems?

Ramdas: He is creating problems for Himself. God and devotee are one. He looks after you in a mysterious way. Which part do you want to play? You must play both the parts. When you throw your burden on Him, you play the devotee's part, and when you relieve the sufferings of others you play the part of God. The heart that melts at the sight of suffering is not your heart, it is God's heart.

27th January, 1961.

Q: K. has written to say that he has been trying to visit Kollur temple for the last four years and he has not yet succeeded. In the same way, he has long been trying to come to the Ashram but to no effect. Something or other demands his attention and he is unable to snatch himself away from his work. He requests Papa to see that his desire is fulfilled.

Ramdas: He wants Ramdas to go there, take him on the shoulders and bring him to the Ashram! When he was poor he had no difficulty to come. Now he has become rich, *there* is the trouble.

Nishkama Bhakti is a very rare thing in the world. And a Nishkama Bhakta is looked after by God in a mysterious way. Even if he does not want anything from God or from anybody, help comes to him. Tukaram was a very poor man. He earned his livelihood by selling oil. He lost everything because he was generous to a fault. He had nothing at home. Neighbours and others would feel compassion for him, his wife and children. They would provide food and provisions for the family from time to time. They were carrying on in this way. Shivaji who was a great lover of saints, once happened to be in the vicinity of Dehu, the place where Tukaram lived. He came to know that Tukaram and his family were living in great poverty. So he called his minister and directed him to provide the family with all things. The minister at once made arrangements and brought to the family a big bundle consisting of costly clothes and rich ornaments, and also provisions. Tukaram was absent; he was singing God's name in the temple. His wife was given all these things. She and children soon dressed themselves in rich clothes, wore the fine gold ornaments set with diamonds and looked attractive and beautiful. When they were thus enjoying themselves, Tukaram came home. He was shocked.

'O God, wherefrom have these things come? A misfortune has visited us!' He enquired and was told by his wife that Shivaji had sent them. He cried, 'No. No. We shall be ruined. Take out all these things. Put on your old clothes.' He accordingly collected the clothes, ornaments, etc., made a bundle of them and put it on his shoulders. He went straight to Shivaji, placed the bundle before him and said, 'If we are caught up in these things, we will forget God.' He then came away.

This is an example of Nishkama Bhakti. Even if God gives you wealth you reject it. You want to remain poor. You are satisfied with His name. You can enjoy supreme bliss with the Name. What is the use of these things — costly ornaments, clothes, money, etc.? You will only be tempting thieves and also earn the envy of many. Besides, you will become proud and cease to think of God. How much harm will be done to you! So you refuse to have them.

Satan offered a kingdom to Jesus. Do you know what he said? 'Get thee behind me.' He prayed, 'Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.' Mara tempted Buddha. He did not yield to temptation. Siddhis bring you money, powers, honour, etc., but you have to withstand temptation. If you fall a prey to it, you are lost. There is no hope of spiritual progress.

Purandharadas, after he left home, was going to a temple at Vijayanagar. He had renounced everything that he possessed. He had nothing with him. On the way he noticed that his wife was hiding something. When asked, she said, 'I have got a silver vessel.' He took the vessel from her and threw it into a well nearby. She was also a great soul. She had taken the vessel for the use of her husband, not for herself. They proceeded on the journey. He was going ahead of his wife. He saw on the road a diamond that had been dropped

by somebody. He feared that his wife might be tempted to pick it up, and so covered it with some soft earth by his toe. She came forward and asked him, 'What is it that you were hiding?' He replied, 'There was a diamond there. I hid it so that you might not pick it up.' She said, 'You still see difference between a stone and a diamond. Your renunciation is not complete. You are still unripe.' She thus taught him a good lesson. On account of her, he got true devotion to God. The spirit of Vairagya came to him through his wife. He was at one time a most miserly man.

Tukaram and Rameswar Bhat were contemporaries. They lived as neighbours. Rameswar Bhat had a philosophers' stone (Parasmani). Everyday he would get some iron turned into gold by the touch of the stone. He was thus leading a very comfortable life. Tukaram's wife came to know of this. So she went to Rameswar Bhat's house when he was away, and asked his wife to show her the Parasmani. On examining it she said, 'This is but a simple stone.' 'No,' the other lady replied, 'if it touches iron, the latter turns into gold.' Tukaram's wife was surprised and said, 'Please lend it to me for a day. I will also convert some iron into gold. We are starving at home. My husband is always in the temple, singing God's name.' She was given the philosophers' stone and she took it home. In a few minutes Tukaram came. 'What is this you have got?' he asked. She replied, 'This is philosophers' stone. I borrowed it from Rameswar Bhat's wife for a day.' Tukaram took it from her, went out and threw it into the Chandrabhaga river. Tukaram's wife was distressed and asked, 'What shall I say to that woman who lent it to me?' When the philosophers' stone was not returned as promised, the woman came, and when told that it had been thrown into the river, she asked, 'How can I face my husband? He will surely kill

me.' Then Tukaram's wife told her husband, 'What is this you have done? You have put me into great trouble. When her husband comes home he will ask her, and what can she reply? He will flog her to death.' At this, Tukaram led the neighbour's wife to the riverside. He then took a handful of pebbles from the bed of the river and asked her to take one pebble. Lo! all the pebbles in his hand had turned into philosophers' stones. She took one out of them and the rest he threw back into the river. By the touch of the saint, pebbles became philosophers' stones. Still Tukaram and his family were starving at home owing to poverty. When wealth comes to the door, the Nishkama Bhaktas reject it. Ramdas has seen many who are wealthy. They are utterly forgetful of God.

Q: Rameswar Bhat who was using the philosophers' stone only once a day, was a wise man, indeed.

Ramdas: As he was rich, he became proud and arrogant. He was giving a lot of trouble to Tukaram. He treated him with utter contempt. Tukaram bore everything calmly.

Q: Diogenes was supposed to have renounced everything. He had nothing of his own except a cup to be used while drinking. One day while going through the streets he saw a little boy drinking water from his open palms. He at once threw even that cup away. Such was his renunciation.

Ramdas: For several months Ramdas was without a vessel when he was going from place to place. In the first year he had a small aluminium Lota which cost him six annas. In that he sometimes boiled rice for his food. Later on, as he travelled, he found it an encumbrance. Books also he gave up. He had only one cloth. Whenever he went to a house for Bhiksha, he would be given some Roti with Chutni. He would take it in his hand, sit in the courtyard outside the house

and eat it. After his meal he would drink water in his 'cupped' hands and walk away.

At Chitrakut, Ramdas found a Sadhu standing on the terrace of a house and calling him. Ramdas went up to him. The Sadhu was naked. He was observing silence. He looked at Ramdas and said by signs, 'What is this, you have no vessel? You must have one.' He had one small water vessel made of gourd, which he forced Ramdas to take. As it was given by the Sadhu, he used it for a day. The next day he gave it away. Ramdas was for months without any water pot.

Sadhus, who were keeping him company in the wandering life, used to have two or three vessels with them for cooking and for carrying water; and they used to have on their back a bundle containing blankets, deer-skin, some extra cloth, etc. As Ramdas had nothing with him except one cloth that covered his body, the Sadhus had great respect for him. When they were cooking for themselves, they would get the provisions and do the cooking together. Some would bring water, some firewood and so on. But, if Ramdas would offer to join them, they would object, saying, 'No. No. You sit down there and take Ramnam.' They would take a deer-skin, spread it on the ground and tell him, 'Sit here; do not bother.' When the food was ready, they would take a leaf, spread it before him and serve Roti and dal on it. And when going to sleep in the night they would take out a Kambal, spread it and ask him to sleep on it. The next morning he would get up and walk away. He never asked them to do anything for him. He could sleep on bare ground. He never felt any discomfort. He became used to that kind of life.

When Ramdas was staying in a rest-house at Kasaragod, friends in that place provided him with all things—Lota, deer-skin, mats, country-umbrella, lantern and some books to read.

One night Ram came in a strange form and took away everything. He had only one Kaupin left. Next morning people came to see him. With that one Kaupin on he was sitting on the floor. 'Who robbed you of your things?' they asked. 'Ram came and Ramdas gave them to Him,' replied Ramdas. In no time all things were replaced anew as if nothing had been taken away. Ram takes away and Ram provides.

There is so much joy in giving. When you give with joy, the giver is blessed and the receiver is blessed. It is not the joy born of the feeling that you are sacrificing. Giving itself yields pure ecstasy. The things pass from your hands into the hands of others. Even the consciousness of giving is not there.

Look upon the person to whom you give, as God. If you think you are giving to some person who is inferior to you, the value of the gift is gone! You will not derive real benefit from such giving. 'I am giving; I am doing him service; I am helping him;' such thoughts cannot give peace, but will tend only to increase your pride. God is joy and peace. When God reveals Himself in your heart, you do things spontaneously.

28th January, 1961.

Q: Ramdas' example is the only one, I know, in which a vision spoke to him but he could not understand. If saints refer to a vision, they understand always.

Ramdas: When Ramdas had the vision of Buddha he never talked. So also Sri Krishna never talked. In Christ's vision he spoke something, but it was not intelligible. For he spoke in a language which Ramdas could not understand. Ramdas did not mind it. He was satisfied with the vision. The vision left a deep impression on him. Later he lost body-consciousness and remained in a state of ecstasy for hours.

Q: Would Papa tell me about the vision of Buddha?

Ramdas: Ramdas saw only his face. A serene face in a state of deep meditation. There was a halo all round his head.

Q: On what occasion did Papa get it?

Ramdas: That was in Kadri cave, Mangalore. He does not remember whether it was night or day time, perhaps it was night. He was sitting up. He was awake, but his eyes were closed. The vision was seen with the eye of the mind. He had forgotten his body. Mind was not functioning at that time. In certain states of meditation the mind is active, thinking of the attributes, greatness, or the image of God. There was no such thing at the time when he saw Buddha.

Q: How did you know it was Buddha?

Ramdas: The features clearly showed it was Buddha. Ramdas had seen his statues in some places. There was a clear resemblance. He could feel it was Buddha. So also he could feel it was Christ in the other case. In Geneva somebody asked Ramdas, 'How did you know it was Christ?' He had seen so many pictures. But one did not tally with the other. His brilliant face with beard was like that one you see in the picture on the wall here. Wonderful figure! When Ramdas thinks of it, it appears before him. It is so vivid.

Ramdas had the vision of Sri Krishna in the house he lived, while he was chanting Ramnam. He saw the full figure of Sri Krishna dancing, flute in hand. That was the first vision he saw. He had these three visions because he was guided spiritually by the Gita, the Light of Asia and the New Testament. He did not pray for these visions, but they came to him unsought. And, after they had disappeared, he never craved for them again. He was not after these visions at all. He wanted to see the universe as the manifestation of God.

Step by step one has to rise up to that realization where every form, every object is seen as the expression of God, form of God. That experience can alone give one the fullest freedom from bondage of ignorance or 'I-ness'. A divine form appears only to disappear and to leave one in darkness. In Ramdas' case he now feels God's presence all the twentyfour hours of the day. He lives, moves and has his being in God.

Q: Since Papa is living constantly in this blissful state, Papa will have no dreams at all, I hope.

Ramdas: He is dreaming of happiness only.

Q: No forms?

Ramdas: Forms do come. Now also Ramdas is seeing forms. He enjoys seeing forms in dreams also. Nothing extraordinary about it. Ramdas is externally living a normal life. Only his inner vision has changed.

Q: So long as the mind is working, they must be there.

Ramdas: He searched for the mind and could not find it.

Q: Then what causes dreams?

Ramdas: Ram is the cause. Everything can be explained in terms of Ram. The question came about his horoscope some days ago. In conclusion he said, "Ramdas' horoscope is RAM."

Q: N. had taken Papa's horoscope to an astrologer. I do not know what the astrologer predicted.

Ramdas: Is there a past and is there a future?

Q: For the sake of Lila.

Ramdas: Beyond Lila there is a state of existence in which there is no form or movement. Lila denotes movement, play. Play is activity. But you can see this as Lila only when you

have the experience of the all-pervading, changeless, nameless, formless, eternal Purusha. Then only you can look upon the world as Lila. Otherwise you are only saying so. Saying will not do. You must be a perfect witness, detached, unaffected, beyond name and form. Then you can see the world as Lila.

Q: Are we not simply acting on the stage?

Ramdas: After Self-realization you will be acting as well as witnessing. Even when you are acting, witness-consciousness remains.

Q: An actor knows he is acting.

Ramdas: There are many actors who identify themselves so much with their roles that they forget they are acting. They are engrossed in the play. That is what is happening in the world. You must shake yourself up. You must be conscious of your real nature. For witnessing the Lila you must get established in the static, all-pervading Reality. Now you know that you are controlled by the universal Shakti. You as Atman are not doing anything.. The same power which makes the sun shine, the breeze blow, the flower blossom, the trees grow, is making you also do everything. If you are conscious of this, then you are free.

Really the ego does not exist. It is illusion which makes you think that the ego is there. In fact, the non-existent ego is giving so much trouble.

Q: Because it is not existent, it is difficult to drive it away.

Ramdas: How can you drive away something which does not exist? When knowledge comes you understand it never existed. When you stumble against a rope in the darkness you think there is a snake. When you bring the light you find that it is only a rope. So the snake never was except in your imagination. Such an illusion makes us think that we, as

individuals, exist. Individuality is false. God alone is. God is omnipresent, infinite and eternal.

When you go to Ramana Maharshi to ask a question, he would say, 'First find out who you are that puts the question.' You analyse your self; you search for the source of the 'I'. It is like peeling out the layers of the onion to get at the seed and finally discovering that there is no seed at all. Through this process of self-enquiry you know that the supreme Self alone exists and the ego is false.

You go in search of God thinking you are different from Him. At the end of your quest you find you are He. The seeker never existed. It is only a play, in a state of illusion, that you are going in search of Him thinking you are someone distinct from Him. There never was a separation between you and Him. You think you are separate only through illusion. When you find Him you know you are already He, you were always He. You did not know it. Now you have come to know it. This is Jnana.

Jnana dispels darkness and makes you see things as they are. A person suffering from jaundice sees everything yellow. When he is cured of the disease, he sees all things as they are. With the eye of knowledge you see one Atman pervading everywhere. Gold ornaments are in various forms, but they are all made of the same gold. So every object you see is the manifestation of the Divine. The manifestation itself is divine. In the Gita, Sri Krishna says, 'Like the thread in the rosary of beads, so I am dwelling in all beings.' When 108 beads are strung on a thread and the two ends of the thread are joined, you call it a rosary. 108 beads are made into one rosary by that thread. Here beads may be of glass, and strung on cotton thread, or silver wire. They are two different substances. But Jnaneshwar has improved upon this simile. He says gold beads

are strung on a gold wire. Gold inside and gold outside. Thus the unmanifest and the manifest are both one. So consciousness of this one all-pervading Reality makes you see unity in the world. One in many. So world is God. You come to that realization.

Q: Liberated souls pass away and they do not take birth again. For the good of mankind, can they not take birth if they will?

Ramdas: What is liberation? After liberation, does the soul exist as an entity? Individual is the soul or Jiva. You have a sense of individuality. An American writer treats of three types of consciousness in his book — simple consciousness, consciousness and super-consciousness. The simple consciousness you will find in animals. They have not developed a distinct individuality. They are guided by instinct. The second type of consciousness is seen in man. Man is a reasoning animal. He has developed a consciousness of individuality which makes him feel he is separate from others. The third is super-consciousness which transcends individuality. This is the same as universal consciousness. 'Love thy neighbour as thyself' — this is possible only after attaining super-consciousness. Previously you thought you were the body and so different from others. Some people you liked, some you hated — some you called 'mine' and some you called 'not mine'. Thereby a conflict ensued which gave rise to sorrow, fear, etc.

Q: Is soul this individual consciousness?

Ramdas: Yes; if 'soul' is taken as the synonym of Jiva. 'Soul' is an English word. Jiva is a very comprehensive term. The Christian theologians do not accept fusion of the individual with the cosmic soul and they do not believe in the transmigration of souls. The Jiva casts off ignorance and reveals itself as God. Jiva minus Maya is God. 'Man is indeed God playing

the fool.' So long as ignorance remains he is a man. Ignorance consists in thinking that one is separate from another. When we know that we are the universal Spirit, we are free from Maya. In this freedom we realize we are one with God. According to Vedanta we are essentially divine. But we are oblivious of this fact. Forgetfulness can go by remembrance. Ignorance can go by knowledge.

Q: What is the source of that ignorance? Is it intellect?

Ramdas: Mind, senses, outer perceptions — all these create ignorance in us. Why? Nobody can know. But it is there, to be taken only as Lila. Truly, God alone is. Any conception other than this is born of ignorance, delusion or pretension. If a person is playing the part of Akbar the King, and you ask him on the stage, 'Who are you?' he will reply, 'King Akbar.' He will not reveal his identity. If you go to the green-room and ask him, he will not say, 'I am Akbar.' So you pretend that you are somebody other than God. All the same you are He. There was an insane old lady in a mental hospital. Some people would go to see her. Whenever they went near her she would say, 'I am Queen Victoria.' She was thinking she was Queen Victoria. So you may play some part under illusion or hallucination and your real nature is hidden.

Q: Those great souls who have realized God do not take birth again, I hope. I am coming to my original question.

Ramdas: After having realized God and shed the individuality or 'I-ness', who is there to make a Sankalpa to take another birth?

Q: But they do not at once drop off their bodies. They live and act like individuals. They even plan for the next day or year.

Ramdas: Who makes the plans? God makes the plans.

It is just like a wooden doll made to dance. In the same way the body is living and acting. They see it only that way. Why? 'Because He makes me do so. It is not I who make plans; it is all God's plan. I will not be reborn through unfulfilled desires. If I come again, I will do so only when I am commissioned by God.'

Q: What about Avatars?

Ramdas: Avatar is God's direct descent; a special descent.

यदा यदा हि धर्मस्य ग्लानिभवति भारत ।

अभ्युत्थानमधर्मस्य तदात्मानं सृजाम्यहम् ॥

'Whenever, O descendent of Bharata, there is decline of Dharma and rise of Adharma, then I incarnate Myself.'

He comes in response to the cry of human beings in distress. Swami Vivekananda was inspired to say that he would be born a million times to relieve people of their misery.

The seed of misery and sorrow is within us. That seed is ignorance. It must be burnt up by the fire of knowledge — knowledge of our divinity.

29th January, 1961.

Ramdas: On Mataji's return from Bombay, Ramdas asked her, 'What is the news?' She said, 'I have Rs. 250. I paid certain amounts to persons in need, from the love offerings I received there. I do not remember the details.' Ramdas came to know from N. that she had received amounts totalling over Rs. 8000, which she distributed to the needy, poor devotees during her one month's stay in Bombay. Thousands are nothing to her — just a trifle.

Q: She must be made the Governor of the Reserve Bank

of India.

Ramdas: Reserve Bank will go to pieces. Even if Kubera, the god of wealth, were to be Mataji's treasurer, he would become bankrupt in no time. He would have to go a-begging with a cocoanut shell in his hand as a beggar's bowl. That would be the fate of Kubera — poor fellow!

Q: Mataji will not like this sort of joke.

Ramdas: Ramdas told her about it. She merely laughed. Money given to Mataji is like a bit of stone swallowed by a hen, which is digested immediately. As soon as she receives money it is given away.

Q: Mataji did not incur any debt!

Ramdas: That is the redeeming feature. Ramdas considers himself lucky to have got Rs. 250. When she was leaving for Bombay, Ramdas asked her how much money she might require for herself, as her expenses were all met by N. 'It is enough if you give Rs. 25,' she said. Ramdas gave her Rs. 75 in five-rupee notes. 'All right,' she said. At once she went out and gave five rupees each to those whom she saw, as if she was distributing Pappad. Whoever was in front of her got Rs. 5. At the Kanhangad railway station five or six porters were there. She had no money. N. gave her twentyfive rupees which she at once gave away. By that time the train arrived. Otherwise the station staff also would have got a five-rupee note each. If Ramdas had been present there, he too would have got one five-rupee note! Whatever is received is for giving away. That should be our motto. Nothing belongs to us.

Q: It is a Charitable Trust.

Ramdas: That too in her hands! It is a 'Two-minute' Trust or 'One-minute' Trust. She will never keep money for

the morrow. She will distribute it then and there. It is charity running riot. When the money comes into Ramdas' hands, she finds it a little difficult to worm it out and do as she likes. When she is in a mood to give, she cannot control herself. Then Ramdas controls her.

Without Ramdas' knowledge she freely distributes cloth to the poor. At the end of the month the bill comes to a huge figure and Ramdas quietly pays it.

Q: As the Weavers' Society members are working on handlooms, their production is limited, and Mataji cannot purchase cloth as she likes.

Ramdas: If not available there, she gets it from the market. They readily supply whatever she orders. On seeing the bill Ramdas is sometimes stunned. But Mataji merrily cuts and tears the cloth for distribution. The sound of tearing cloth is very sweet to her.

Q: Three years ago when I came here, some Sadhu died.

Ramdas: Yes. Mataji attends the cremation also. She is in the cremation ground until the body is perfectly burnt out. Some people come here deliberately to die. They have no other object in coming here. They are very ill. They do not go. 'Where am I to go? I have seen enough of the world. This is the fittest place for me to die,' they say. About a hundred persons would have been cremated here during these thirty years. Mataji looks after the sick with great love. She would arrange for their proper treatment, nursing, bath, food, clothing and everything. She would sometimes send them to Mangalore hospital with a letter from here. After ten or fifteen days in the hospital the patients would return, being slightly better. These are wandering Sadhus. They have no homes and no money.

Q: People go to Kashi to die. This Ashram also is like Kashi.

Ramdas: This is Kashi, Rameshwar, Vrindavan and Vaikunta. For those who come to die, this is Kashi. For those who come for peace, this is Vaikunta.

Q: Is there any restriction regarding the stay of Sadhus in the Ashram?

Ramdas: Generally they can stay for three days. If they do not go in three days they are reminded of this restriction. If they are ill, they stay until they recover.

1st February, 1961.

Q: Suppose a householder enters the order of Sannyas and afterwards repents for his action, what should he do?

Ramdas: He must return to the householder's life and do some work to earn his livelihood. Of course, this requires some courage.

Q: Is that the only remedy?

Ramdas: What else can he do? If he has intense aspiration to realize God, there is no question of repentance. He will not feel the rigour of Sannyas life at all. Here the mind of this person is still after worldly comforts. To conquer worldly desires is no joke.

Even if he returns to the householder's life, he will have to bear the brunt of criticism. The wife and other members of the family will make fun of him and will have scant respect for him. The public will taunt him, insult him and treat him with contempt. Thus, to continue as a Sannyasi is hard, whereas to return home is a disgrace. But he may try to get away to some unknown place, take up some job there and live with his family. The people of that place, being strangers, will

not harass him.

Q: Is fasting a necessity?

Ramdas: That depends upon individual need. Conditions and temperaments differ. When you feel the need, you may fast. There is no use of taking anybody's advice in this matter. Each one should decide for oneself. Otherwise, if you fast in accordance with another's opinion or the injunction of the Shastras, hunger will torment you and your mind will get disturbed. Your attention will be on food. If you do not feel the need, do not fast. There is no rule that everybody should fast.

6th February, 1961.

Ramdas: You do Bhajan, read scriptures and repeat Ramnam at prescribed times, but when you begin your daily work you allow the mind to wander. That will not do. Constant remembrance of God is necessary. Sri Krishna says:

असंशयं महाबाहो मनो दुर्निग्रहं चलम् ।
अभ्यासेन तु कौन्तेय वैराग्येण च गृह्यते ॥

'O Arjuna, undoubtedly the mind is hard to control as it is of a wavering nature. It can be steadied by practice and dispassion.'

You should have dispassion towards objects of the senses and also constant practice in the repetition of Ramnam. Otherwise the mind will be tossed about by desires. Continuous remembrance of God is possible only when your devotion is intense.

Sankara says:

सत्संगत्वे निस्संगत्वं निस्संगत्वे निर्मोहत्वम् ।
निर्मोहत्वे निश्चलतत्वं निश्चलतत्वे जीवन्मुक्तिः ॥

'Contact of saints gives detachment, which in turn

brings freedom from delusion. Freedom from delusion results in perfect stillness of mind by which Mukti or liberation-in-life is attained.'

A wandering mind cannot see God. It must become still. The way to this is Satsang.

Some Sadhus dwelling in Kutis or Ashrams in Rishikesh lead a hard life for several years. They say, 'I have lived in the Himalayas for twenty years and more and undergone severe austerities, but still I have achieved nothing!' What kind of life do they lead there? They take unwholesome food which they receive from Annakshetras. Their stomach is consequently upset. They suffer from so many physical ailments. They frequent hospitals. They do little Sadhana as their mind is preoccupied with thoughts of the body.

Unless you have a burning aspiration for God, the mind cannot be fixed on Him. Where your love is, there your mind is. Just as a miser constantly thinks of money and money alone, so a Bhakta has Ananya Bhakti — exclusive devotion for God. In Narada's Bhakti Sutras, Bhakti is defined as highest love for God. When you have intense love for God, everything else is forgotten. Then you will realize God.

Therefore you must do Bhajan, have Satsang and remember God. If you taste once the sweetness of God-remembrance, you will never forego Him. You will have the first taste of that experience in Satsang only.

Q: We are having Satsang with Papa.

Ramdas: Satsang must be within, not outside alone.

Q: We have taken refuge in you. Our mind is in Papa alone. Even if Papa drives us away, we will not go. You are everything — father, mother and all. We will not leave you even at the point of death.

10th February, 1961.

Ramdas: What is meant by remembrance of God? It is not simply uttering His name. The repetition of the Name must bring God into the mind. Otherwise repetition is mechanical. It is no good repeating God's name like a parrot. Remembrance must develop into an intoxication of God; and that intoxication in turn must develop into God-consciousness, so much so you come to know that you and He are one; and thereafter you are aware of the divine presence at all times. In that state you forget the body. You may be conscious of the body to the extent necessary for talking, eating, walking and for its maintenance. But you have no desire for money, fame, name, sense-enjoyments, or anything of the world because you are filled with divine ecstasy, divine joy. You behold God everywhere, you hear Him everywhere, you touch Him everywhere, because for you, in that state, there is nothing but God. And you know you are He. You are not different from Him. This is what Vedanta teaches us. This is God-realization.

In every religion there is a class of devotees who have attained the highest mystic experience. In Hinduism they are called Bhaktas. In Mohammedanism they are called Sufis. In Sikh religion they are called Udasis. These mystics have realized that they are not different from God. But in the orthodox religion — among Hindus, Muslims, Christians, etc. — they cannot bear the idea of oneness with God. They consider it a blasphemy or insult to God if anybody says that he is one with Him. In some religions this was not tolerated and the person would be persecuted and hounded out of society. But the truth is you are He.

Jesus was a mystic. He boldly declared, 'I and my Father are one.' Mansoor who was a Sufi, declared, 'I am God.' Joan

of Arc, a French woman, who was inspired by the presence of God within her, was burnt at the stake when she said she was speaking God's words. St. Theresa had universal vision and she saw God everywhere. So also St. Paul. He who sees God everywhere is God, because God alone can see God. He sees his own reflection everywhere; he himself is manifest everywhere. This is pure Vedanta. It is the height of Sufism, height of Bhakti, height of God-realization, not in the impersonal sense alone, but in the personal sense also. You take everybody as the embodiment of God. The whole universe is the manifestation of God. For you there is nothing but God. The so-called good and evil have no meaning for you. Just as you see your own reflection in the mirror, so you see the whole universe as your own reflection, not different from you. The mystics are a class by themselves and very difficult to be understood by the common people. Their sayings are mystic in character and so difficult to be easily understood. They speak in riddles. All our Sadhanas must lead us to that height of realization in which we know we are God, in which we see everything is God.

Q: What is God-consciousness?

Ramdas: You should know you are not the body, but the divine reality, pure wisdom, all-pervading light, infinite love, everlasting joy, all put together. *That* you are. Ordinarily man thinks he is a body subject to birth, growth, decay, disease and death. But he is truly the changeless, birthless, deathless Atman, whose nature is bliss and peace. To realize this is to attain God-consciousness. Man, in his state of ignorance, dwells in body-consciousness. When he rises to God-consciousness he knows he is God. How very different one is from the other! When Ramdas visited the house of a devotee in Seattle in America, the person who introduced Ramdas to a group of

spiritual aspirants told them, 'I have brought God to show you.' She was a lady and the leader of that group. Ramdas said, 'God has come to see God.'

Q: Papa made all of them God.

Ramdas: No. Man thinks he is the body, but he is God. There is no question of making or unmaking. You pretend you do not know. Shake off the illusion that you are not God. Then you know you have not attained anything new. You have always been that. But you choose to pretend that you are a father, a brother, a son of so and so, that you belong to this place or that. All these you assume for the sake of Lila. But really you are He and that is a self-evident truth.

Q: On Sunday we had arranged a Bhajan at 'Guru Prasad', Trivellore. N. the singer did not come on that day. Photos of Papa and Mataji were kept in a prominent place. We had invited the Trivellore Bhajan party. They came and when they learnt that N. would not come, their leader said, 'Excuse me, if you want me to do Bhajan you must place the picture of some God also with those photos. Then only I will start.' I replied, 'I have no God's picture here. I have one 'Ananda Vikatan' calendar with a picture of Muruga.' I placed it in the front. Then only he started. After Bhajan, he said, 'You have to excuse me.' I said I did not mind as I see my Papa in that picture also. Some people see God only in the pictures sold in the market.

Ramdas: Some people see God in temple images only, not outside. In the early stages this is natural. One place is holy, another is not; temples are holy, mosques are holy, other places are not. It is better to get over that and feel the divine presence everywhere. When you see God in the photos of Papa and Mataji, why not in the other pictures also?

Q: We are doing like that for the last five years.

Ramdas: You must transcend all these things. You must find Him within.

Q: If he had wanted me to remove those photos I would have done so. I would have had no objection.

Ramdas: Then why did you keep Papa's and Mataji's photos for the Bhajan? You must see them in yourself and everywhere. The sooner you come to realize God as indwelling and all-pervading, the better. The photos may kindle some divine emotions. But you must not stop with that, because Papa and Mataji are everywhere. God is everywhere and you are everywhere. The sense of 'otherness' sets limits to the Illimitable. That is what you did and he also. He wanted a particular picture. You wanted our pictures. That means you both see God in pictures only.

Q: I keep them for the sake of outsiders.

Ramdas: What outsiders? You have made Papa and Mataji a fetish, while really Papa and Mataji are dwelling in the hearts of all. You must get that awareness. Papa is not only in your pockets or in your room. If you want really to get him, you must see him everywhere. You have put Papa on the wall in a frame.

Q: Smaller photos also I had. One set was sold and one I reserved for myself. Somebody insisted on having it. I gave it away.

Ramdas: Those photos arranged for the Bhajan, if anybody asks, will you give? Will you give it of your own accord? If not, you think Papa is only in those pictures.

A Devotee: He will give and replace it.

Ramdas: Make your heart a temple. God is within you.

He is always there. This very question came up when Mataji first joined Ramdas. She was looking upon Ramdas' body as so holy that she was worshipping it daily. Ramdas thought she was caught in this worship of form. Ramdas told her, 'You have to see Papa in your heart.' 'How can I see there?' she asked. Ramdas said, 'Stop this worship. Do not even prostrate before him.' She was garlanding Ramdas half a dozen times a day and prostrating any number of times. Ramdas asked her to stop all this external worship. She gave it up. No garlanding, no prostrating, no worshipping. Gradually what happened? She had already no thought of things of the world. So when this support of the personal worship was also cut off, where could the mind go? It went inward — it had no other place to go. Ramdas asked her to sit for meditation. She sat. For four or five hours she was unconscious of the world. She was immersed in her Self.

Therefore the mind must be withdrawn from external things so that it may turn inward and realize the Truth within.

Q: My father-in-law wanted Navagraha Homa, etc.

Ramdas: If you try to satisfy everybody, you will be nowhere. Then you will be a prey to doubts and fears. When you believe in these things, the mind will be externalised. You will have worries and anxieties.

Q: Can I go against the words of my elders?

Ramdas: When you want to realize the Truth there is nothing else for you to care about. If you want to please everybody, by all means do so. If they ask you to jump into the well, would you jump? That you will not do. So you should say, 'Let people praise me or blame me. I am doing what is good for me.'

Prahlada who was devoted to God did not care for the

words of his father when he was warned not to worship God. Vibhishana abandoned his elder brother Ravana when asked not to be devoted to Sri Rama. If you want to realize God, you must be true to God within you and not mind the opposition from anybody. Bharata did not take heed of his mother's counsel, but rejected her for the sake of Sri Rama. The path of truth is like a razor's edge. You must be brave. If Prahlada had obeyed his father he would never have been a Bhakta. Likewise, Vibhishana would have been a slave of Ravana, but he became a devotee of Sri Rama. It is not easy to follow the path of righteousness. 'The path of God is for heroes, not for cowards.'

Persons who strive to please one and all are like mud-worms with no backbones. You know the story of 'an old man, his son and the donkey!' The old man tried to please everybody and in the end the donkey fell into the river and was drowned. Whatever wrongs that a man commits for pleasing others, affect him alone. Wife, son, father or others do not share them. If you are living in ignorance you suffer for it. If evil deeds are done by you, you alone are held responsible. Valmiki was robbing people in order to support his wife and children. 'For their sake I am doing this,' he said. Narada then told him, 'Ask them whether they are prepared to share your sins.' He asked them and they replied, 'We are not prepared to share the sins.' Even if they were prepared, they could not share them. All have to reap the fruits of their actions. We must do what is good and right, whatever others may say.

Ramdas does not say that you should not do Homa or that there is any harm in doing it. It is to please yourself you are doing it. We are doing everything for our own pleasure and we say we are doing it for the sake of others. If we are not

pleased, we will not do it. There are masters who urge their servants to do dishonest deeds. Some servants refuse to do so, and are ready to court dismissal. Some yield and say, 'Because the master told me I did it.' They become a party to it. They could have refused and faced the consequences if they had the grit in them. God gives courage and will-power if one wishes to walk on the path of Dharma. So the saints are heroes. They never care for the world or anybody's opinion. They tread the straight and narrow path of truth leading to God. Let people call them mad if they will. People may throw stones at them, but the heroic ones will not give up the path they have chosen. 'Do not be like the dumb driven cattle, be a hero in the strife.' If you are led like a herd of cattle, you will be stricken with fear and anxiety at every step of your life. Heroes are brave. They are free from all fears and sorrows. They are not even afraid of death. They say, 'Take away my body, you cannot take *me*. I am the immortal Spirit.'

Do you think God-realization is a joke? God wants full price to be paid for it — total dedication — entire and complete. Then He will come out from the depths of our being. We care for the opinion of persons. We have many ambitions for the future. God is made a toy to play with. No. True devotees are ready even to die in order to attain Him. Because we are afraid of suffering, we compromise with the world and give up the path of Dharma — truth, righteousness. When we do so we have virtually given up God, because God can be had only by following the path of righteousness. If a person can get money by telling a lie, he is prepared to do it. Money rules the world. God is forgotten.

If you want to develop God-consciousness, you must feel His presence in the heart. It is no good worshipping a picture or an image. It may be helpful for a short period. But you

must transcend it. People come to the Ashram here. They think it is like a temple. They peep here and there to find out where an image is. 'You are the image — living, talking and walking image,' Ramdas tells them. All are living images everywhere. Love, worship and serve them. Then you are worshipping God. Swami Vivekananda says, 'By worshipping stone images the worshipper's heart has turned into stone.' When poor people go to such a worshipper, he will not give them a single pie, but will say, 'Get away. Don't disturb me. I am worshipping God.'

Q: A devotee from Madras came to the Ashram. After returning from here he came to my office. 'I have seen a speaking God,' he said.

Ramdas: You ought to have told him, 'Speaking Gods are everywhere. You are a speaking God. Everybody speaks and everybody is God. God speaks through many tongues.'

Q: Kabir says, 'I went in search of God and found Him as myself.'

Ramdas: If you are really in search of God you will find you are He. You must search within, not outside. Kabir says, 'Where do you go in search of Him? He is with you.' In your meditation you get Him. You must turn your mind inwards. You do not see him because there is so much impurity in your heart. Clean it. Then you will find Him. Kabir again says, 'Through Bhakti and Dhyana turn your gaze within and you will find Him. All these external observances do not lead you anywhere.' All saints in their teachings emphasise this.

Apply Guru Kripa, the eye-salve, to your eyes. Then see. Your sight will be illumined. You will see Him within and without. In the waking, dreaming and sleeping states it is all Ram. That is the right vision. If you are sincere in your

quest you will have Him. How long will you play like this as you are doing now? It is all tom-foolery. You appreciate miracles. What do you get from them? Some wonderful things are done here and there. They do not help you. You must be oblivious of the world. Without Vairagya and Abhyasa you cannot get God. When you are attached to the world, how can the mind go within and see God? Samarth Ramdas says to the mind, 'O gentle mind! Go along the path of devotion to God. Then you will in due course have the vision of God.' He calls the mind gentle as though he pats it on the back.

Look at the fate that overtook Ravana, Hiranyakasipu, Kaiser and Hitler. Still you have the pride that you can do everything. At one stroke, your pride is made to kiss the dust and you are nowhere. Give up pride. Be humble. Walk on the right path and you will attain perfect peace and bliss.

Some people recite the forty Slokas of Samarth Ramdas, addressed to the mind, everyday and are not any the wiser for it! No change is seen in them. There is one who learnt the whole of the Gita — 18 chapters — by heart. He was repeating it ten times a day. Yet he was complaining, 'My mind is the same. There is no change. Impurities, anxieties, sorrows, fears, doubts are still there.'

Q: What is it due to, Papa?

Ramdas: They think that by doing Parayana they can get Him. If they say, 'Chapati, dal, rice' any number of times, will the stomach be filled? If man gives up attachments he will realize God. But he does not give them up. He has so much hunger for worldly pleasures. The poor man wants to be rich, if not in this life, in the next life. So he carries with him this desire. For its fulfilment he has to take another birth. He

carries with him this desire life after life. Desirelessness — absence of attachment to objects — is a condition for God-realization.

Firstly, you must be free from Moha — attachment. If you are at all interested, let it be for the whole universe. Then you develop universal consciousness. But you are concerned only with those who are related to you, not outside that circle. If any one of those near and dear to you die, you are affected. You are caught in the meshes of Moha. Your heart is attached to perishable things. Universal vision means love and sympathy for the whole world. The sense of nationality, caste or creed does not cloud this vision. He who has this vision loves everybody for the sake of the Atman. His love goes to all alike. This is Samadarshan, Brahmi Sthiti. He knows that he is Brahman and that Brahman alone *is*.

11th February, 1961.

Ramdas: By constant remembrance of God you rise beyond body-consciousness and dwell in divine consciousness.

Q.: Will one then become God?

Ramdas: You will realize God. As long as body-consciousness is there, the sense of separation will remain. So you will be in the physical plane in which there is bondage, misery, ignorance and darkness. Rise above body-idea and you will become one with the Divine. Your life will be full; it will be replete with light, wisdom, peace, power and joy. You will know that you are immortal. When you think you are the body, there arise the sense of seeing, sense of hearing, sense of touch, etc., and you forget your own Self or God. Your whole pursuit becomes a search for objects of the senses, a desire to possess them for enjoyment and you get caught up in an endless maze. You may be chanting Ramnam now and

again and talking about God, but as long as your main pursuit is the objects of senses you cannot realize Him. You must rise above body-consciousness, forget the world and then you will realize Him. As it is, the world is too much with you. The divine element is ignored and forgotten.

The man who is leading a life of the senses cannot imagine the joy one can have by getting over the body-idea and living in the Divine. In the world people are engaged in activities of various kinds for the sake of gratifying their senses. The higher pursuit is lost sight of. How to enjoy, how to acquire, how to possess and how to preserve — this is what engrosses man's whole attention throughout life. If he is devoted to God at all, it is for the sake of material prosperity, name, fame and position. This is all what he wants from God and that is the aim of his worship. He tries to acquire certain things by the grace of God. He forgets that whatever he acquires is impermanent. Either they fall away from him or he falls away from them. In either case he becomes miserable. Not only that, but even while he possesses them he encounters troubles in protecting them. Somebody cheats him, somebody robs him or something is lost. Then he laments over it, sometimes in regret and sometimes in remorse.

Ramdas does not mean that you should not pursue your legitimate activities in order to earn and look after your family. But of all things, the one aim that should be kept in view is the realization of God, by looking upon all people as manifestations of God and by dedicating all your thoughts and actions to Him. The nature of the service you do should be such as will lead you to the perception of God in all beings and creatures. Service done to whom? To God; not to the human being as such, but as manifestation of God. Service done in this spirit blesses him that renders it as well as him that receives it. If,

on the other hand, you live only for your own sake, for the sake of your family and relations, your life becomes dry and insipid and brings you a crop of anxieties and miseries. Your vision becomes thereby so narrow that you find God-realization a distant goal. The more circumscribed your vision is, the more miserable you become. You must expand your vision more and more. Only a person of the widest vision can realize God.

There are many who are doing Sadhana. They do not know why they are doing it. Their conception of God is very limited and narrow. They must have in the first place a right conception of God before they try to attain Him. They take Him as an individual, as a person only, who lives in Vaikunta, in Kailas, in Satya Loka or in heaven. They adore Him, take His name, do Puja to His image. What is the benefit? By the power of faith they may get something they ask for. But God-realization cannot be had that way. You must realize Him as pervading the entire universe and beyond. For that you must dissolve your ego-sense in the vast, infinite consciousness of the Divine. Then you feel like a bird released from the cage — happy and cheerful. You are not bound by anything. You enjoy eternal peace and bliss, because you have united your will with the divine will, your consciousness with the divine consciousness, your life with the universal life.

Many do Sadhana for thirty or forty years. They say they have not gained anything. The goal they have placed before them is not very clear to them. Who is God and what is God? Saints say Vaikunta is within you, Kailas is within you, heaven is within you, God is within you. They ask you to direct your vision inward, dive into the source of your being. God is the all-pervading Atman. He is changeless, immanent, all-inclusive and transcendent. There is nothing outside Him, nothing

beyond Him. In that infinite Consciousness you must lose yourself. Now the body-consciousness is not there. You know that you are present everywhere at the same time. You know that you are the Truth, nameless, formless, changeless, birthless, deathless, infinite and eternal. From the personal you must go to the impersonal, from the changing to the unchanging, from the unreal to the real, from that which has name and form to that which is nameless and formless.

The question is often asked: When do we get our Vasanas destroyed? When can the desire for worldly enjoyments be completely rooted out? Many are struggling and struggling. They are still in the clutches of lower desires — physical and mental. How can they get over them? In the Gita the answer is given. When you surrender yourself to God and get rid of your ego-sense, you realize you are the all-pervading Truth and behold the Divine everywhere. Till then the Vasanas will go on harassing you. When you have Sarvatma Bhava — the vision and experience that everything is He — then the Vasanas will be completely destroyed. Now your senses, mind, body and everything turn divine. There is no room for Vasanas, which are the outcome of the individual sense. When the individual sense has disappeared, naturally Vasanas must go. Unless you remove their source, which is ego-sense, they cannot be eradicated. There is no use of cutting the branches for destroying a tree. It must be pulled up by the roots and thrown away. Then it cannot grow up again. Therefore lay the axe at the source of all sense-desires, attachments, clingings to worldly things. That requires a ceaseless remembrance of God, not merely utterance. When you say, 'Ram, Ram, Ram,' your mind may wander in many directions. The mind must fix itself on God when you repeat the Name.

13th February, 1961

Ramdas: When we fall through our weakness, we put the blame for it on God and call Him merciless. If we attribute lack of mercy to God, it is no use depending on Him, and there can be no hope of any grace flowing to us from Him. We say God is omnipotent, all-wise, all-love and all-mercy. It is to such a God that we surrender ourselves. And if He fails us, then the attributes given to Him are meaningless. God never lets us down. It is we who fail. You might have read the most inspiring poem of Francis Thompson, 'The Hound of Heaven'. In that he says that God is ever pursuing us like a hound, to catch us. We hear the tread of His footsteps. We run away from Him. We must be willing to be caught by Him. You see, the mother sometimes pursues her child. But it runs away. She is not able to catch it. If it goes on running here and there, it cannot be in the arms of the mother.

You have heard of the 'prodigal son' in the Bible. He gave up his father, took his patrimony with him and wasted everything. For him life became most miserable. He then returned to the father, penniless and helpless. The father welcomed him, lovingly embraced him and fed him. Like the 'prodigal son' we must some day return to God from whom we have separated ourselves. Then we will be welcomed by Him.

Now Ramdas is reading out to you his articles: 'Divine Alchemy,' 'The Lure Eternal,' and 'How God Came into My Life.'.....

Having listened to these you can form an idea of the severe struggles Ramdas had to pass through before attaining God. We should not make the mistake of thinking that by our efforts we can get Him. Really, by His will, grace and power alone we can have Him. Even before Ramdas left Mangalore in 1922,

it had become increasingly clear to him that God had taken him up for granting him the vision and experience of His light, power and joy. In the book, 'In Quest of God', you will find, he left Mangalore not of his own accord. God wanted him to go out of Mangalore and wander about. Everything Ramdas did was at the prompting or inspiration of God. When we are on the path, the best way is to struggle with the knowledge that He is making us struggle. He is giving us the incentive to do Sadhana. The teacher gives a lesson to his pupil and watches. So also He is watching and guiding us in every action. When led into solitudes Ramdas went there like an automaton. God willed, 'You must go there,' and he obeyed. In the midst of wild beasts, he had absolutely no fear because he was obeying the Master's command. And nothing untoward happened.

After Ramdas had got the initiation from his Guru, guidance always came to him from within. As he recognized this he would not care for the advice of anybody. Many told him he was going on the wrong path. But the fact was he did not know what he was doing was right or wrong. God had set him on the path. And he had no fear of fall or frustration. We must always feel He is guiding us. God must inspire us in all things. We should feel God leads us on. There is no reasoning or planning here. The urge comes from within and we act. Many people struggle egoistically for years without any spiritual attainment.

Q: Grace comes first.

Ramdas: You ought to know that God is directing you. You must be conscious of it. For instance, at the age of thirtyeight suddenly the change came over Ramdas. He was leading an ordinary life. Hunger for God came to him because God gave it to him. Why did he not have it earlier? For, God did not will it. He felt that it was He who called him away. In his

book he has stated that God drove him away from Mangalore. In fact, God led him away, just as a mother leads the child by the hand to any place she likes. In the book, 'World is God,' the first chapter is entitled 'God leads'. 'What made you give up everything and go away?' they ask. 'God made him do so,' says Ramdas. His renunciation was not reasoned out or planned out. The urge was so strong that he could not resist it. It was all in His hands. God did whatever He liked with him. There was no question of why and wherefore.

Q: There cannot be any compromise with the world then.

Ramdas: There is no question of compromise with the world, because world itself is Brahman. There is a saying by Sankara: ब्रह्म सत्यं जगन्मिथ्या 'God is Truth, the world is illusion.' The world as Brahman is real and the world as world is illusion. God Himself is manifest everywhere, as everything. The manifest is He, the unmanifest is He. The manifest and the unmanifest are not two separate entities. Shiva and Shakti are not two. Just as the sun cannot exist without its light, and that light cannot exist without the sun, so God and His power are one and the same. God is at once Purusha and Prakriti. There our minds cannot reach. Therefore the Gita calls Him unthinkable being—Achintya Rupa—or greatest secret—Uttamam Rahasyam. We cannot imagine what He is and what He is not. At once He is everything and beyond everything. He is beyond our comprehension. Therefore silence is He. Mouna is Brahman.

It appears two boys were sent to Kashi for studying Shastras under a famous pandit of that place. They came back on the completion of their studies. Their father asked one of the boys, 'Have you understood what Brahman is?' 'Yes,' he said. 'What is it?' the father asked. The boy quoted profusely from:

the Upanishads and other texts. 'Son, you have not understood Brahman,' said the father. He called the other son and asked him, 'You have studied everything. Do you know what Brahman is?' He remained silent. Thrice he was put the question. Still no answer. Then the father said, 'You have understood what Brahman is.'

The man who has realized Brahman cannot express what it is. All we have to do is to follow a course of discipline to still the mind. Then we will know the Truth. One cannot express what it is, but one can experience it. Therefore Buddha never attempted to define the ultimate Reality. Ramdas came across a pregnant sentence in his teachings in 'The Light of Asia' by Sir Edwin Arnold: 'Do not dip the string of thought into the unfathomable; he who questions errs, he who answers errs.' He does not define that state. He calls that state Nirvana, which is the same as Moksha. Negatively you can say, 'It is not this; it is not this.' You cannot say what it is. So we have only to follow the path chalked out for us by the sages and the saints. They ask us to go along the path trodden by them. We ourselves must walk the path and reach the goal. There is no use of speculating about it. You must go beyond all thoughts if you want to enter the realm of immortality. Your intellect cannot follow you there. Forget everything and still the mind, then you will realize that you are the eternal Truth — Silence. The world is non-existent for you for the time being. Then you know who you are and what the world is. You are Brahman and the world is Brahman.

Stilling the mind is very difficult. When you become a perfect witness of the mind, the mind ceases to be. You will experience an ecstasy born of the consciousness of the Truth that you are. Since the mind disappears and you are established in that consciousness, you are always happy, calm and serene.

Sages point out various ways of approach suited to the different temperaments.

Q: Are there different Sadhanas for different types of temperaments?

Ramdas: Yes. So long as we do not know who we are in reality, we are caught up in the lower planes of life. We feel life is a bondage. There is no satisfaction — everywhere we face obstruction, anxiety, sorrow. This is the common lot of all. The soul within them struggles restlessly for freedom. At that time the contact of a great soul is essential. It is enough if we merely see him. We will be imbued with great courage. That is the first step.

14th February, 1961.

Ramdas: There are three ways of transmitting divine power by the saint to the disciple. They are by touch, sight and silence. It should be noted that talk is nowhere stated as a way of transmitting the spiritual grace. A saint's touch heals and awakens. So we ask saints to place their hands on our head by way of blessing us; or we prostrate before them and touch their holy feet with our head. This brings about a marvellous change in us. The mind becomes pure and calm. In the same way, sight also is very powerful. The saint's gaze thrills our heart. The third way is, he stills our mind by his silence. Thus, it is by touch, by sight and by silence he influences people mysteriously. He is not deliberately doing it. It is a spontaneous act. By this spiritual transmission we become still, calm and serene. The time factor does not affect us. We are lost in rapture in the presence of the saint. Ramdas went to see Ramana Maharshi. He never talked. He gazed into Ramdas' eyes and the result was simply wonderful! At other places he received the influence by touch also. Hands