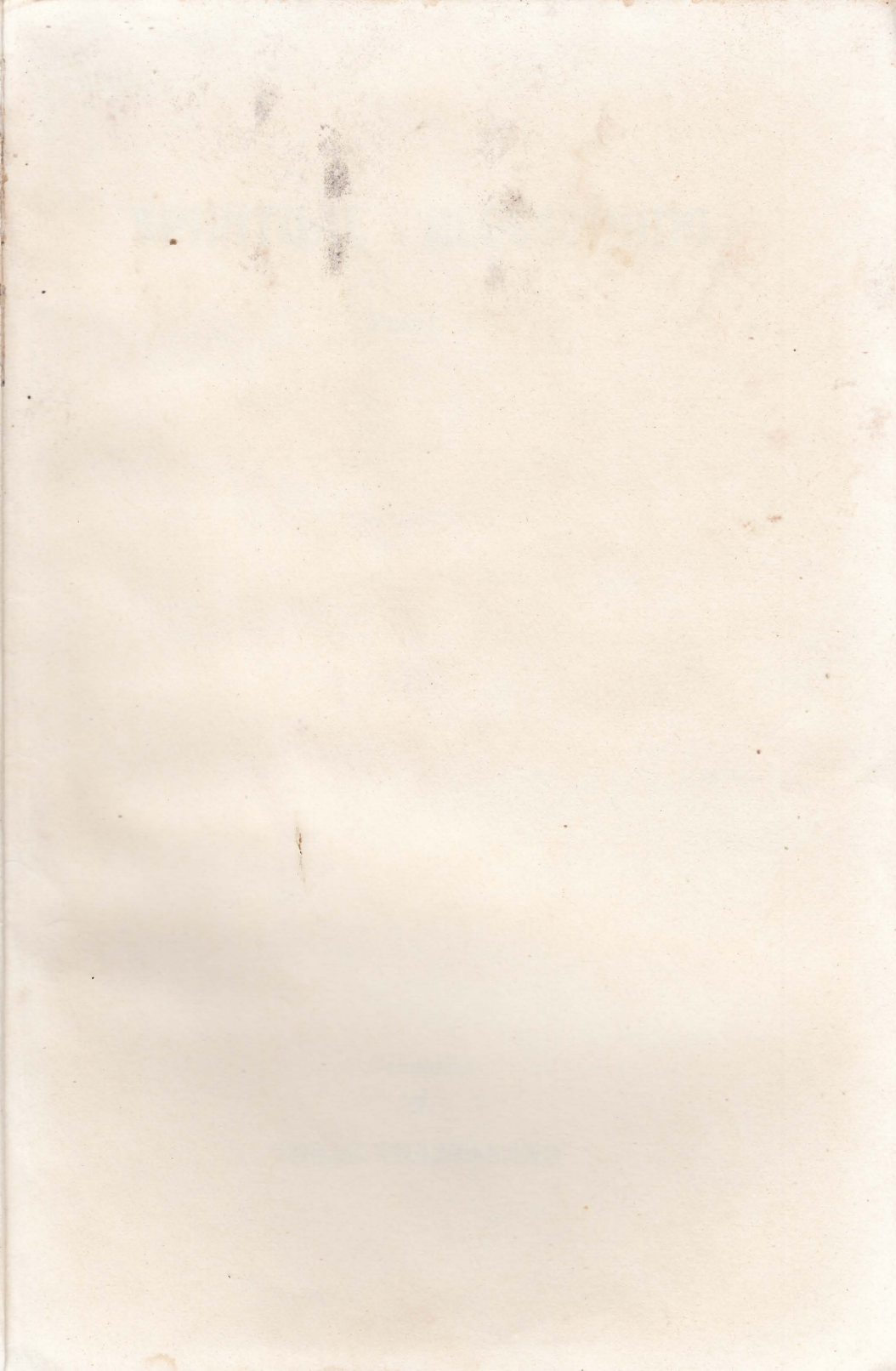
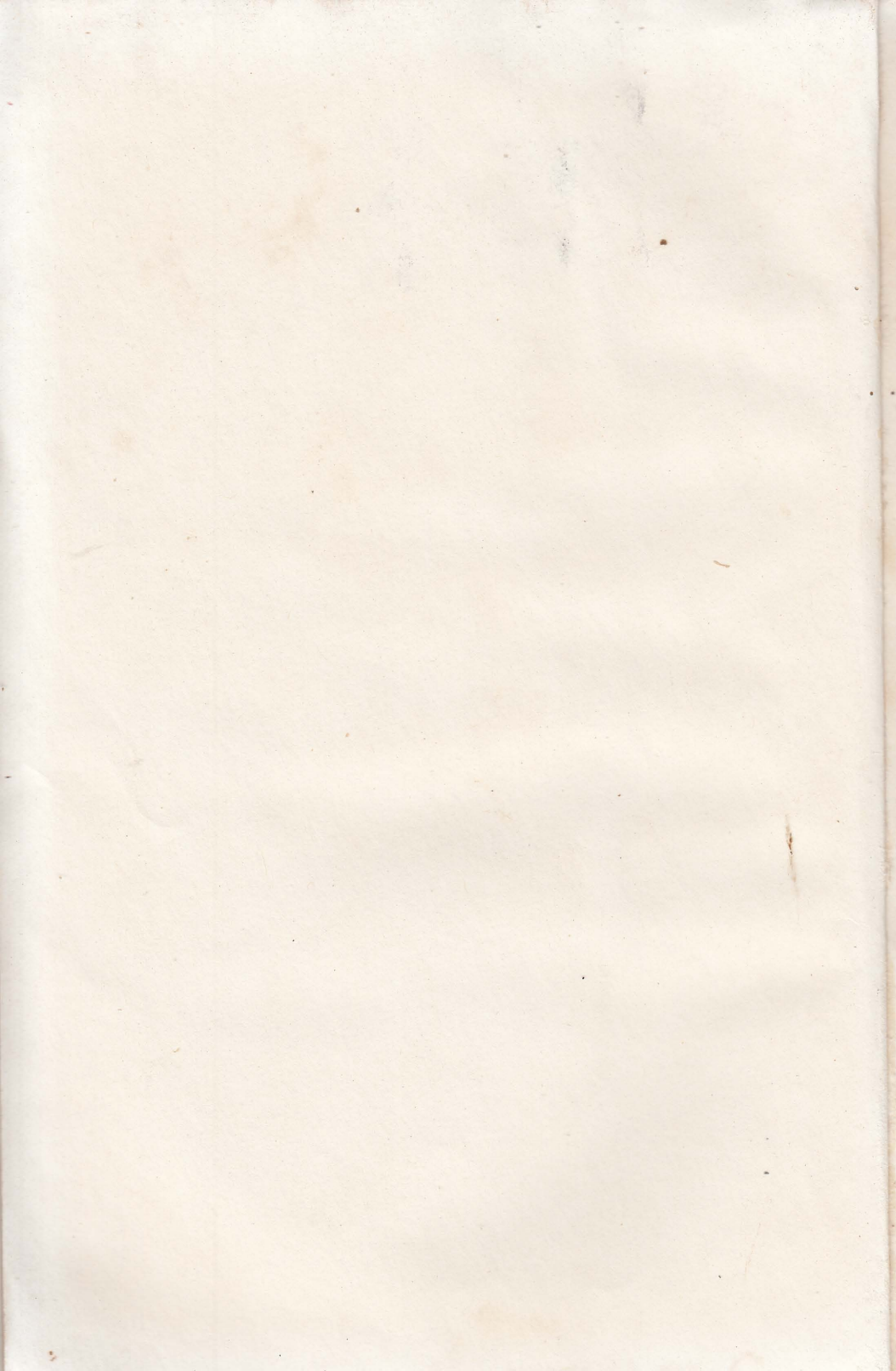


SPIRITUAL BLOSSOMING



SWAMI SHANTANAND





SPIRITUAL BLOSSOMING

Petal I



Discourses
of
SWAMI SHANTANAND

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INTRODUCTION

For those in search of the sublime, for those in whom there is an urge to look beyond a life lived by bread alone, for those to whom God is just a myth, for those to whom Spiritual truths are just figments of the imagination, for those to whom Providential justice is just flight of fancy, for those to whom Divine miracles are mere hallucinations of the fevered brain, for those to whom fate and free-will present perplexing problems, for those youth who stand bewildered at the conflict between scientific 'facts' and Religious 'truths', for those frustrated by the distances dividing practices and precepts, for those racked by the agony of separation from loved ones and in need of comfort and consolation—in fact for all who are weighed down by the perplexities and contradictions, the trials and tribulations, the corroding cares and storms of life—Swami Shantanand's teachings hold the key to peace and understanding.

To people of different layers of understanding he speaks at their appropriate levels. The philosophers he addresses in metaphysical style; the intellectuals who create their own problems and make themselves miserable trying to solve them, he satisfies by ascending to their intellectual heights and pointing out their fallacies; to the modern rational-minded youth he provides answers supported by scientific explanations; to those critical of Religious rites and ceremonies he gives the esoteric meanings of rituals; while speaking to children he comes down to their innocent level and talks of God and Spiritual values through little stories and parables.

Swami Shantanand belongs to the band of Yogis and Seers—a Brahmin by birth—to whom, however, this term is an anachronism. He underwent his Spiritual discipleship both in the North and South of India, having come in his early years under the influence of Spiritual giants like Sri Gnanananda Giri, the 168 year old Sage of South India, Sri Ramana Maharshi of Tiruvannamalai and Swami Shivananda of Rishikesh. It is, however, the last named who had the greatest influence on young Shantanand in moulding his life.

Swami Shantanand has no fixed abode, the entire world being his domain. He responds to invitations from every part of the world, captivating the hearts of his listeners by his enchanting songs, and Kirtans, the brilliance of his thinking, the charm of his personality and his penetrating Spiritual insight.

His message is universal, transcending creeds and dogmatic Religions and barriers of geographical frontiers. The core of his teachings lies in these statements :—

- (a) “ God is one, though the paths leading to Him are many. Follow any path that appeals to you with steadfast faith and try to ‘ experience ’ Him ”.
- (b) “ Religion is Living : Religion is behaviour and not merely a belief ”.

In the pages of this book, which is the first of a series to follow, under the present title, are offered some of Swami's inspiring talks edited from tape-recordings. It may be mentioned here that several other books under different titles have already appeared—some of them containing Swami's own inspired Mantra out-pourings. They all point the path to the summit of man's achievement—love of God and one's neighbour as oneself—by developing “ a heart to give, a heart to love, and a heart to serve ” as well as by the process of “ Adjusting, Adapting and Accommodating ”. In a nutshell they may be said to have the potential to transform the hearts of men from ego-centred living to a God-centred one by a slow and silent transmutation through the dynamism of his wonderful talks and soul-stirring songs rendered in English, Tamil and Hindi—many of them being his own inspirational out-pourings on the spur of the moment.

Kind reader, proceed from here and relish the nectar within.

*Guru Poornima
1979
Colombo*



Swami Shantanand

*My body Thy Temple
My heart Thy Altar
My bread Thy Grace, Oh Lord.*

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THE SEEKER AND THE SAGE

Portray'd the design on the cover page
 The bond betwixt the Seeker and the Sage.
 The little lotus bud was 'I' at first
 Which then for the Divine had little zest.
 In course of time there stirred an 'awakening
 As seen in the bud gently opening.
 The flower unfolding humbly bowing
 Depicts my mood receptive for learning.
 Then seek I the Enlightened Guru dear
 Symbolised by the Blossomed Lotus here.
 Bless me with thy Grace and Inspiration
 To reach thy stage of Illumination.

THE COVER DESIGN of this book is symbolic of its title—'Spiritual Blossoming'. It portrays the Spiritual Evolution of the Soul from the lowest stage to that of Supreme Enlightenment. The relationship between a Guru and a disciple in this path of Spiritual Evolution is symbolised in the form of a Fully Blossomed Lotus and a Bud bowing before it in obeisance. The Fully Blossomed Lotus signifies the Enlightened Guru or one who has received Divine Illumination, and the Bud—just beginning to blossom bending forward and seeking the Grace and guidance of the Guru to attain that same state of Divine Perfection—is the disciple.

The Lotus is an integral part of Hindu Spiritual lore. In the Dhyana sloka of the Bhagavad Gita, Vyasa Maharishi the foremost of Sages and compiler of the Vedas is addressed as :

“Namosthuthē Vyasa Visaala Buddhē
Pulaara Vindhāyade Patra Netra...”

“Visaala Buddhē” means one whose amplitude of intelligence is very great or a great intellectual. But Vyasa was not merely that, for as stated by Swami Vivekananda “intellectual giants can be Spiritual kids.” Therefore Vyasa is further described as “Pulaara Vindhāyade Patra Netra”—one whose eyes resemble the petals of a Blossomed Lotus. Since the eye is the instrument of perception, Vyasa having beautiful lotus petal-like eyes meant that his perception was that of a Fully Blossomed Lotus.

Thus in Hindu Symbolism the Lotus stands for the Blossoming of the Consciousness. The Lotus flower always blossoms with the sunrise which marks the culmi-

nation of *Brahma Muhurta*—between 4.00 and 6.00 a.m. The *Illumination* received from the Sun is symbolic of the *Divine Illumination* by which alone one gets *Enlightenment*, just as a *Lotus* too does not blossom without receiving the beneficent rays of the Sun. From the time of the first streaks of dawn, the *Lotus* flower begins to unfold gently and gradually, petal after petal after petal, simultaneously with the rising of the Sun, and when the Sun is completely risen above the horizon the blossoming of the flower is also complete—it has become a *Fully Blossomed Lotus* and that is the *Supreme Enlightenment*—a stage in which one is in constant communion with the *Divine* or is one with the *Divine*.

The *Fully Blossomed Lotus* therefore symbolises the *Self-Realised Soul* or one who has reached that state of *Ultimate Fulfilment* or *Ultimate Perfection* and is established in an unbroken, spontaneous, effortless, awareness of the *Supreme Reality*, within and without.

The evolution of the *Soul* can be compared to the different stages in the blossoming of a flower, for the same process takes place in the human consciousness too.

In the first stage, we are only a bud as represented by the bud on the right in the cover design.... there is no *Spiritual* awakening or awareness as we have yet to evolve. In this stage we are so crude. Our power of reason is just dormant. This is a kind of biological existence—an instinctive existence. The bud lives only on the material nourishment supplied from below. It has not yet opened its petals, nor is it receptive to the *Illumination* from above. Its petals are closed and so too its perception is limited. Its *Consciousness* has not awakened to the existence of a *Higher Power* de-

ciding and determining its very process of evolution. Entangled in the network of petty lower impulses, it is lost to God-Consciousness. This is the stage in which we are led by the senses—there is no blossoming at all.

Gradually, a stage comes when there is a recognition of some Superior Power—a Superior Intelligence...a Superior Illumination from above. The bud (disciple) sees the beauty of the Fully Blossomed Lotus (the Gnani or Saint or Guru) in the same pond, and seeks its guidance as to how it too may receive that Illumination and thereby open itself to the inflow of a higher Consciousness. It begins to loosen its petals from its original state of conditioning, and thereby its perception widens from that of the closed bud that it was before. This is represented by the bud on the left, bending forward and doing 'Namaskar' to the Guru with an open mind—an attitude of receptivity. This attitude of receptivity together with an open and submissive mind establishes a Spiritual rapport between Guru and disciple, which is said to be stronger than the bond between mother and child or Lover and Beloved, and which lasts not until death, but until they merge in the Infinite.

This bond between Guru and disciple is symbolically represented here in the form of a Fully Blossomed Lotus and a bud, as symbols always represent in picture form a deep idea or concept that cannot be fully expressed in words, even as an idol is the expression of the ideal behind it. This proximity between Guru and disciple is "Upa-Vasam"—the essence of the Upanishads—which means sitting near a person who is Illumined....a Perfect Master....a Seer of Wisdom so that we may receive from him the knowledge which illumines him. This is how from time immemorial knowledge was transmitted through

the Sages at whose feet the Seekers sat with devotion, receptivity and humility and thereby drew upon themselves a constant flow of purity, inspiration and Divine Consciousness.

The pond in which the Lotus blossoms represents the physical world—Bhava Saagaram—which provides the material sustenance and nourishment needed for the growth of the plant. The leaves though in the water, are never soaked by it, as it always slips off the surface of the leaf indicating that though in the world, one should not be of the world or be affected by it. Yet the leaves too, though symbolically denoting unattachment to the material world, do their duty by absorbing the Sunlight and carbon-dioxide and through the process of photosynthesis providing the plant with food.

In this picture, below the line of the horizon is the symbolic representation of the material world, and above is the Spiritual, both of which are necessary for the sustenance and evolution of an individual, as an individual is constituted of Matter, Life, Intelligence, Consciousness and Spirit.

Life is a perpetual process of Evolution. So the Fully Blossomed Lotus and the two buds in different stages of evolution also symbolically point out that we are all in various degrees of blossoming. But every individual, from whatever stage can blossom forth, step by step, and then the bud becomes a complete Blossom and we call that person a Sage or Saint—one who has reached the state of Divine Perfection or Supreme Enlightenment.

EVOLVE-EXPAND-BE (Evolution of Prayer)

Talk at the Saraswathi Hall, Colombo 4.

KNOWLEDGE VS EXPERIENCE

The Revelations which we come across in the Scriptures, whether they are from Hinduism, Christianity, Islam or Buddhism, make no difference at all with regard to the Ultimate Reality. *Every statement uttered by any Saint is based on his inner 'Experience.'* It is the inspirational outpouring of his Spiritual Experience—*Adhyatmic Anubhava Atmanubhuti—Gnana Anubhava—*Experiences of inner wisdom. When a Saint makes a statement, he means it as an Experience—an Experience which is neither an emotional feeling nor an 'Intellectual Concept', but an 'Experience', which for want of proper expression, may be termed intuitional.

But when we study or discuss any of those statements, invariably we do not go beyond an intellectual understanding—we do not Experience them. That is the difference between us and a Saint. We go for Spiritual discourses, we attend Religious festivals and functions, we read the Scriptures, we read the Bible, the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Gita and so on ; yet we don't try to Experience any of them. For us, they are but a conventional acceptance or of academic interest—nothing more than that.

The modern man is under a peculiar kind of illusion. Someone put it well :

" Many of us are under the illusion that we have no illusions. "

That is the basic illusion of the modern man. Somehow, the modern intellectual, the so-called rational man presumes that he has the capacity to reason out and therefore to understand, and thereby makes again another mistake of thinking, that to understand a thing intellectually is to 'Experience' it. But the great Sages and Saints who have understood and recognised the limitations of reason have gone beyond it, and say that mere 'Intellectual Concept' however refined and subtle, is not an 'Experience' in the true sense of the term. The word 'Experience' as we understand and interpret connotes 'something'—physical, sensual, conceptual, emotional or intellectual and nothing more. But in the language of the Saints, Experience of the Ultimate Truth is none of these, but transcends them all. It is *Anubhuti*—*Satyanubhuti*—*the Experience of the Truth—an Experience in which the 'Experiencer' and the faculties of Experience such as the body, senses, mind and intelligence cease to be, and 'Experience' alone remains.* Human language is too inadequate to express it and so the Scriptures put it :

"Yatho Vaacho Nivarthanthe Apprapya Manasa Saha..."

Speech and thought go and come back, unable to express it or comprehend it.

One can be convinced intellectually that there is a Reality; that there is a God and that God exists; but still it may not be one's Experience—*Anubhuti*. *One can give a beautiful talk on how God exists, why God exists, where God exists, what His form is, is He with form or without form.* One can give a learned discourse on the Gita, the Upanishad, the Bible, or the Dhammapada, on Western or Eastern philosophy, *but still, it will be only an intellectual exercise and not an 'Anubhava' or 'Anubhuti'—an immediate Experience.* It will not be an Actual Experience.

“ To Know is to Be ”

So goes the saying. When you say, “ *I know God exists,* ” do you Experience Him? No....then it is absurd to say “ *I know God exists* ”. It amounts to ignorance. A person who says “ *I believe in the existence of God, but I don't Experience Him* ”, and another who says “ *I don't believe in the existence of God* ” are both in the same boat. There is no difference at all between them because both their beliefs are merely Conceptual. To deny or to accept, are both mere Concepts, it is not Experience.

ACTUAL VS IDEAL

Let us now take an example. I would like to climb Mount Everest—to reach the top. That is the Ideal. Intellectually, I will be able to understand and grasp the Ideal, what it is, where it is, how I could travel, and all about the place. I could also understand the obstacles, the troubles which I may have on my way, as well as while climbing. But all said and done, I am yet only in Colombo and not on Mount Everest.

To decide to go to Mount Everest, to imagine and to understand all about it, and the way to reach it, is itself not the same as the Experience of being on the top of Mount Everest. That is the Ideal—a far off Ideal, but what is my Actual? I am now in Colombo, that is my Actual. So what? As long as I understand the Ideal as well as the Actual, I am one step ahead on my march onward to the Ideal. The moment I realise—*this is my Actual and that is my Ideal*—at that very moment I have started my journey.

But in our Spiritual journey, we often do not take into consideration the Actual. Since we are so much emotionally and feverishly worked up with merely ‘knowing’ about the Ideal....all along we quarrel over the Ideal or about the Ideal....forgetting the Actual.

The Christians say that Mount Everest is like this. The Muslims say that Mount Everest is like that; so too, the Hindus and the Buddhists. This goes on and on. Everybody is quarrelling with everybody else about what the Truth is. All through our quarrels we forget we are just sitting only at Colombo, and not on the top of Mount Everest. All these arguments, all these discussions, all these quarrels, therefore look ridiculous to a Saint, because he knows pretty well that the persons who are quarrelling thus are, after all, sitting in Colombo but imagining that they are on Mount Everest. So the Saint smiles at the ways of the world.....these silly quarrels which we have in the name of God, in the name of Religion, and in the name of Spirituality. These are but the results of *misunderstanding the Ideal for the Actual*. But what the Saints say is this :

“ Whatever may be your Actual, my friend, start the journey towards the Ideal, and when you reach it, you can discuss it with others who are there, if it is necessary.”

STAGES OF THE ACTUAL

The interesting thing about it is that every person is at a different stage of the Actual. I am in Colombo, so Colombo is my Actual and Mount Everest is my Ideal. Another person may be in Madras, still another in Bombay, the third at Khatmandu, the fourth at the foothills, and the fifth might have climbed half the mountain, and the sixth perhaps may be a hundred yards below Mount Everest. For every one of these persons, wherever he is, that point is his Actual. To the one who is hundred yards below the peak, the Actual is that point....the Ideal being just a hundred yards above, whereas for the man who is at Colombo, his immediate Ideal to be worked out is Madras and the ultimate Ideal is far far off. So this man cannot imagine and compare himself with that man who is just a hundred yards below the peak.

There is no comparison. Wherever you are, that is your Actual and there is nothing wrong about it. There is no use in just grumbling or feeling jealous, or getting irritated or frustrated, or being disappointed with the man who is in Madras, or Bombay, or Delhi or Khatmandu, or who is at the base camp, or who is one hundred yards below the peak. Whatever may be your Actual—you may be the most horrible, wretched scoundrel—but the moment you recognise that sincerely and honestly, you have reached one step nearer to God, nearer the goal, because to recognise one's insincerity is sincerity, to recognise one's weakness is strength. To understand and be aware of one's weakness, that itself is strength.

But unfortunately we are not even aware of our weaknesses. Instead, we think and imagine that we are very strong, and that is the cause of all our troubles. So let us recognise our Actual and start our journey towards the Ideal. What does it matter at what point we are, since, after all, we are all on the same journey?

The truth is that, and if the question of time arises, what is time, when what you are going to reach is timelessness? The Ideal you are going to reach is timeless dimension—Eternity. What does it matter with regard to time? A few months, or a few years, or a few births—even a million births—have no meaning at all.

There is a beautiful story in one of the Scriptures of two great aspirants. The story goes that Narada Maharshi was passing through their Ashrams. One Yogi asked him :

“ Sir, when will I attain Moksha or Liberation ?
How many births more ? ”

Narada looked at him, and after a pause said,

“ Four births more. ”

When the Yogi heard it, he felt terribly dejected and disappointed.

“ So much of Sadhana and effort for the last forty years and yet four births more ! ”

Thus he mused. Then the other Yogi asked the same question, and Narada replied,

“ After as many births as the number of leaves you find on this tree, my dear one. ”

This Yogi was overjoyed on hearing this !

“ After all, my Liberation is assured. What does it matter how many births it takes ? ”

That is the kind of sustenance and patience which is required for a Sadhaka. It is not taking it easy in a Tamasic way....it is taking it in a Sattwic, cool and courageous way. That is what is expected of an aspirant. What is time, when what you are going to reach is Timeless Eternity ?

BLOSSOMING TOWARDS THE IDEAL

“ To Know is to Be and to Be is indeed to Know ”

The above is an apt saying, indicating that when you are aware of the Actual and can distinguish between the Actual and the Ideal, that itself becomes your first Experience. Intellectual understanding and recognition of whatever your present condition is, is in itself your Experience. From that stage, you must make an attempt to go to the next. Divine Illumination is like a built-in head-light. You may not be able to see the distant goal—your ultimate Ideal—but as you proceed one foot, the light will illumine exactly one foot ahead of

you and so on till you reach your final destination. This idea is echoed beautifully in the words of Cardinal Newman in his famous hymn :

“ Lead, kindly Light.

Lead Thou me on.

. I do not ask to see

The distant scene; *one step enough for me* ”

I am in Colombo, my next halt is at Madras. Now I must understand all about Madras, and then start going towards Madras. So then Madras is my immediate Ideal because Colombo is my immediate Actual. I need not bother about what is in Bombay. I must work out what is in Madras, how to go to Madras, what is the available conveyance—plane, boat or train. My immediate Ideal at present is neither Bombay nor Delhi, nor Khatmandu, nor the foot-hills, nor one hundred yards below the peak. My immediate Ideal is Madras, and only Madras. But when I reach Madras, I try to understand all about my next halt, which will be then my immediate Ideal and try to reach that place. *In this way, step by step, in whatever blossoming state I am, from that, I try to blossom more petal after petal just blossom and blossom and blossom till a time comes when I become a fully ‘ Blossomed Lotus ’ and then there is that Supreme Enlightenment.*

So let us try to understand the various stages from Colombo, the Actual to Mount Everest, the Ideal.

Life is a perpetual process of Evolution. Every day, every hour, every minute, every second we are in the process of evolution. Every experience we undergo in life, whether bitter or sweet, pleasurable or miserable, has something in it to teach us, something in it to learn a lesson from, to push us a little forward, to mould us a little, and to make us blossom into higher consciousness. *Every experience in life is a kind of crucible*

into which Nature throws man to mould him into a sublime Super-man. That is the beauty of life. Whenever we fail to learn, the same experience is given to us again and again and again, till we learn the lesson from it. This scientific kind of a process is what is known as the law of Karma. Whatever experience we consider as painful is given to us because we have failed to understand something out of it. *Pain is a blessing in disguise, because pain is pain only superficially, but it is a process of the Blossoming of the consciousness, which is Evolution.* It is not the blossoming of the body, it is the *Blossoming of the Heart*, the blossoming of the reason, the understanding, the knowledge, the illumination of the consciousness, the expansion of the consciousness, and that is called Evolution.

Now, let us take the first stage of the 'Actual.' I am so crude....my power of reason is just dormant. From the animal level I evolve into a human. I am but an animal in human form. Mine is then an instinctive life. I have no power of discrimination. The forces of Nature impel me. I am hungry....I have to eat....so I eat anything. I am thirsty....I have to drink....so I drink anything. Some other force impels me....the instinct of sex—so I mate, no matter who it is, as long as I can be appeased. So I eat, I drink, I enjoy again and again—this instinctive process goes on till I decay and die. *So this stage is a kind of biological existence—an instinctive existence.* I have neither the power of reason to understand and accept the Laws of Nature—external and internal—nor the power to reject it, since there is no blossoming at all. *I am yet a bud.*

From this state the next step in evolution begins. The first petal of the Lotus begins to blossom. I start observing the things and events which are happening in and around me. There is curiosity....I pose questions to myself and to others....there is an inner restlessness. Now I am aware of a faculty which is within me.

Slowly and slowly the intelligence in me starts blossoming. I try to understand and observe the various natural phenomena such as the sunrise, sunset, night, seasons, thunder, lightning, earthquake and so on. This power of observation impels me to ask the questions "What is behind all this? Who does it etc?" I find that no existing being, human or otherwise, does it nor can do it. That means there must be some power, some being, perhaps Super-human who is responsible for it. I realise that I and others like me, and everything here, are helpless in the presence of the fury of this 'Something' of this 'Super-Being'. So I develop a fear consciousness : I recognise that Power, but I fear it. From a consciousness that is ignorant and instinctive, I blossom into a consciousness of fear.

Now comes the third stage. My intelligence starts blossoming further. I observe, question, enquire, contemplate on the cause of each and every effect or event which takes place in and around me. *My knowledge blossoms into an understanding of the workings of the Laws of Nature. I am no more afraid—there is no more fear consciousness, but a consciousness of awe and wonder.* I understand the natural phenomena, and the knowledge that 'I understand' gives me an inner joy. With the power of intelligence, I am able to protect myself from the fury of Nature, and this knowledge gives me immense self-confidence, and confidence in the powers of my faculties. *Then there is a further blossoming—fear into awe . . . awe into confidence . . . confidence into conceit.* I am confident I can understand everything . . . I can control everything. Therefore I am the Great . . . I am the Centre . . . everything here is meant for me and me alone. It is at this stage Man becomes what is known as an Atheist—Nastika.

"There is nothing beyond me, and I am the All. Because of this feeling, I deny anything called Super-human, Super-Being, Super-Power, because I do not now believe that there is anything as such. This

belief, I had previously out of ignorance and fear. In this stage, I feel I can do anything. Whatever I want, I can do, I can achieve. With understanding, planning and execution, I can obtain anything. I feel thirsty.... I want to drink a glass of water.... there is a glass of water in front of me.... I can drink it. The origin of water is a tap or a pond or a river—ultimately the rains. With my knowledge, I understand the how and the why of rain. So why should I bring God here? What has God to do with it? Why should I think God has created the water? All events can be traced to Nature. As a human being, I have the understanding, and therefore the knowledge of the workings of Nature. So to believe in God, or some Super-human Being is but ignorance and superstition.” In this way he argues and believes he can understand all things, can do anything and achieve everything.

A time however comes, when there is another stage of transformation. The arrogance and conceit is the result of imperfect knowledge, which at that moment or at that stage, he mistakes as perfect and true knowledge. He plans beautifully on a particular project—a project which is his heart's desire. He understands the project well, plans it well, and executes it well. But alas ! It becomes a failure. In spite of all his efficiency, all his knowledge, all his experience, that particular project flops. He gets terribly disappointed and frustrated. Take another example, say a dear one falls sick. He can command the best doctors in the world. He goes to prominent specialists all over the world—from anywhere—the best available are called for. All kinds of treatment by renowned specialists are given, but in spite of all this wonderful attention, one fine morning his dear one just collapses and dies right in front of his eyes, in the very presence of the doctors. For the first time in his life, he gets a jolt, a shattering blow to his conceit and self-confidence. It is a dreadful blow to his belief that he can do everything, that everything is at his command. But, from another angle, it is a blossom-

ing—this very unexpected shattering blow gives rise to a blossoming—if he can only reflect over it. On the one side it is a jolt—a terrific nerve-racking experience, that puts him off completely, but along with it, *this tremendous jolt induces the blossoming of his Consciousness, which leads to a recognition of his limitation—a recognition of the superiority of Something, some Power, some Cause other than his own, which has decided the event.*

Now he starts reflecting....“ There is a higher Power behind and beyond me, which can at any time, in any event, in any experience, put off all my plans, and my plans can become a terrific disappointment. *It can dispose of what I propose.*” So when he comes to this knowledge, *for the first time a devotion to that invisible Reality arises.* He does not know what it is; he may say there is a Power. He has lost his son, a young baby. He tried everything possible. But before his very eyes the child collapsed and died. Then he does not know why it happened thus. So he goes to a Swami....he goes to a Saint....he reads a book. In that book he reads that there is a Power, there is a Reality, there is a God who does all things; who has a control over everything. So a vague understanding dawns that there is something higher than him—an invisible Power which they call God. *He starts believing in the existence of God, not because his belief is based on conviction, but because he has received a shattering blow to his egoistic arrogance born of ignorance.*

He now, enters the next stage....“ I can plan, I can think, I can execute any project efficiently with all the available resources at my command, but it need not necessarily end in success. *It does not depend exclusively, mark the word ‘exclusively,’ on my effort all the time.* Many times I may succeed, but it need not be so always.” A great realisation dawns here. The very fact that the plan can flop, can become a failure sometimes, shows and proves that even at other times when

he succeeded in his efforts, the success was not 'exclusively' due to his own efforts. *There was that some other Power, that some other Being behind it.*

It is not always such a shocking tragedy alone that brings one to a realisation of the Truth. Some unexpected good fortune, or fulfilment of one's yearnings too can produce such transformation. Then one more petal blossoms. The understanding becomes more ripe, more mature.

From Ignorance to Fear, Fear to Awe, Awe to Knowledge (limited or imperfect), Knowledge to Conceit, and from Conceit, now to Humility—that's the progress.

For the first time the Super-human Power which he once denied, he now accepts. He starts growing now to the next stage of blossoming. He observes the marvellous Intelligence which is working in the whole Universe—the sun rises, the moon shines, the earth rotates and revolves; there is rain, thunder, lightning—so many beautiful things in Nature he sees. And then an exclamation comes to the fore: "My goodness, what a tremendous mighty Intelligence is behind all these things!" Behind everything, everywhere, he sees the working of the marvellous Intelligence. *The conceit and pride disappear and a veneration grows within him, born of humility, born of knowledge, though through bitter experience in this case. He believes and recognises the existence of a Super-Power, a Super-Being, which is Omnipresent and Omniscient. He believes in God.*

BIRTH OF PRAYER

But even at this stage, what is the utility of this knowledge? What does he do? Anything he wants, any task he undertakes, any endeavour he attempts—whether it is to start a business, build a house, to have a child or to arrange a marriage, any material fulfilment, any desire or longing—in all these he adopts a

new approach. All along he was thinking "I can plan, I can do, I can succeed," but then because of the shattering experience he had undergone and the resultant blossoming due to that, he comes to a new understanding—a prayer is born in his heart spontaneously.

"Oh God, I can do, I can plan, . . . but to succeed Your Grace is also needed. . . . I want to build a house, please make it a success. . . . I want to have a child, please bless me. . . . I want to have wealth, please grant me same." That is the prayer, that is the blossoming, that is the progress.

So he goes to this Ganesh Temple, that Murugan Temple, this sacred Shrine, that holy place ; he goes to Tirupati, he goes to Palani, he goes to Kathirgamam, stands before every Deity and submits application after application. He goes there, not because he loves Venkateshwara or Subramaniam, but for the fulfilment of his own desires—material desires. There is nothing wrong in this approach. Don't come to the conclusion that it is wrong to ask for favours from God. In that particular level of understanding it is right. Let us be true to whatever we are at any given moment because, "To Know is to Be."

"This is my desire. This I want, my own effort alone will not do. Divine Grace is required. I don't know what is Divine Grace, where it is, how it is : all that I know is, that they say there is a Holy place called Kathirgamam and in the Shrine there, there is Lord Murugan—Lord Subramaniam. They say He is very powerful and will grant me whatever I pray for. So let me go there." The moment he believes that—that being all his understanding about God—and if he is true to himself, he translates this belief into practice—Experience. If he is sincere and honest about it, God Himself will give him the higher understanding. So there is no use asking God for Liberation or Nirvikalpa Samadhi, when in truth we are just desperate to possess some material needs of life. None of us want Moksha alone.

At Conjeevaram in South India, there is a famous shrine dedicated to Lord Vishnu, who is known there by the name Varadaraja Swami. Old widows of the town used to visit this Deity, and standing in front of the idol, they used to pray :

“Oh God, Varadaraja Swami, when are you going to take us from here, from this wretched world, to your abode? Please do not delay, we want to come to You. We are fed up with the life here.”

The priest of the Temple was also fed up with the hypocritical prayers of these old ladies. As usual one day the ladies came and recited the prayer. Immediately, a voice from behind the idol spoke :

‘ If that is your wish, I am going to take you all this evening itself. Be prepared. ’

All got so frightened ! One lady pleaded :

“ Oh God, please do not do that. My granddaughter is yet to be married. ”

Like-wise others too made similar excuses. The priest who was hiding behind the idol, came out and chided them for their dishonesty and hypocritical prayers.

So to ask God for Liberation when all that we want is material comforts is hypocrisy. At present we do desire a decent house, a beautiful car, modern comforts and conveniences, and we wish to have a good husband or wife, good children, good relatives and friends etc : but along with these, we may also have belief in God, in His Grace and Mercy and His Power to grant our desires, and we may pray to Him for these. This is the stage the majority of us are in. So let us be honest about it, and make that stage our Experience.

“ I want God, not for God’s sake or for God-Realisation, or for Ultimate Wisdom, but I want Him because I feel He has the power to grant my prayers ”.

What is that prayer ? Prayer for material comforts, for myself, perhaps for my family also. That is all and nothing more than that. But let us be honest. He will appreciate our child-like innocence and frankness. The child is not going to ask. “ Mummy, Mummy, give me Cosmic Consciousness ”. He will definitely ask for a piece of chocolate or a toy to play with. Won’t he? So too we are ‘children’ in Spiritual understanding. We are ‘children’ in the field of true understanding. *So let us ask God what we really want, let us mean what we say, and let us say what we mean. That alone is real, sincere prayer.*

To proceed on, I go to Kathirgama once, twice, thrice. . . . I want some promotion in my job, I pray to Lord Subramaniam :

“ Lord, I want this promotion. A particular individual is obstructing my way. He is in front of me like a Nandi. Please, Oh Lord, do something, push him out, so that I can get my promotion.”

But the Lord is doing nothing about it. So I now lose faith in Murugan, since He has not granted my wish. After a few days, a friend of mine comes to me and suggests:

“That Ganapati there in that town is more powerful. Why don’t you go and pray to Him? Don’t forget to put some money in the till there.”

So now, I say good-bye to Murugan and start going to Ganapati and submit the application there. After some time, if I don’t get what I want, I give up Gana-

pati too and go to Devi's Temple. Nothing happens even then, I am disappointed and frustrated. One fine morning, I meet another friend who quips:

“What's all this? Going from temple to temple, praying to this God and that God....all bunkum I know a great Saint, who lives in India....go and ask him whatever you want....he is a great Yogi with all powers. Pray to him, bow to him....even before you tell him what you want, he will grant you your wish.”

Now, I say good-bye to all these Gods and go to the great Yogi. Suppose he too doesn't fulfil my wishes, within my expected time limit, and in the way I want, I go on and on and on, like a rolling stone from one Saint to another, one Swami to another, one Guru to another.

Now from this level, I blossom a little more. At any given moment, I may desire something—a promotion, a child, wealth or anything for that matter. I know fully well that my effort alone will not do....God's Grace also must be there. I also know that God is Super-human, the Indwelling Presence in all, Omnipotent and Omniscient. That means, the moment I tell Him “this is my problem”, He knows how to deal with it....He is not only my God, but God for everyone. So while I ask for a promotion, the person who is higher than me may also pray “This one may come to you and pray for a promotion. Please don't grant him his prayer. I want to be wherever I am.” So naturally God takes into consideration every aspect and angle of a problem—the various pros and cons before solving it. *There is not a single, sincere prayer which goes unanswered. When we complain, “God has not answered my prayer”—we only mean that He has not answered it in the way we want.* But it need not necessarily be answered in the way we want, because *our knowledge is limited, His knowledge is unlimited.*

When I become mature in my understanding, I recognise God, His Mercy and His Grace. I may work hard, plan out a project efficiently, and execute it perfectly and pray to God sincerely for its success. If it becomes a success, I would accept it with humility. If it is not a success according to me, I don't say good-bye to God. Even then I love Him, because He knows what is good for me. From a narrow-minded devotion, my concept of devotion and prayer broadens.

“ Let me work hard, pray to Him and leave the rest to Him. Success....well and good. It is His Grace. Failure....yes, according to me, but there must be some specific reason for it....*He knows what is best.* ”

So, for the first time, I develop the spirit of surrender and submission. I don't say good-bye to Murugan and go to Ganapati. I am loyal to Murugan, and to be loyal to Murugan is to be loyal to Ganapati, Shiva, Christ, Allah or Devi.

Prayer, even for material comforts, is to focus our minds on the Universal Reality which is being worshipped under different names and forms.

From here we blossom a little more. We come to this understanding : “ Why should I ask anything material from God ? Whatever I deserve and whatever I need, I am going to be provided with. *So I am not going to pray for anything material.* This then becomes my prayer:

“ *Oh God, give me devotion, Bless me with Faith, Grace me with Wisdom, make me Pure, give me Strength..Courage..Compassion..Love.*”

ULTIMACY OF PRAYER

One more petal blossoms now. Do I have to ask God for anything whatsoever—material or Spiritual? He is Omniscient—doesn't He know what I want

and what I need—material or Spiritual? Does the baby go and tell the mother, “Mother, I am hungry, give me food.”? She knows when the baby is hungry, what the need of the baby is, when to feed it, and with what, for the very simple reason that the mother loves the baby, constantly thinks of it, and has a constant watch over it. If that is the case, *why should I ask anything, be it material or Spiritual from God?* Now the prayer becomes just a prayer.... I go and pray.... that is the end of it. What do I pray for? Nothing.

“Thou art the Creator, Thou art the Reality, Thou art the Mother, Thou art the Spirit, Thou art the Indweller. My humble adorations to Thee.”

This is all the prayer. What is there for me to ask from God, because to ask for anything is ignorance? By asking I imply that God does not know what I need. So I come to this higher understanding, when the surrender becomes still more perfect.

If we go on in this way, a time comes, when it is not a prayer in the morning or evening, or once in a week or on a festival day, but it is a prayer—a perpetual, continuous, unbroken awareness of the existence of God working in and through me, and in and through everything. It is the recognition and consciousness of an Indwelling Presence in Man and an Operating Presence behind the world with all its events. This very awareness is in itself the highest Prayer. It is a prayer without words and without thoughts.

When I blossom into this stage:

*I am in Him, He is in me. The world is in Him,
He is in the world. He is the All, the All in All.*

Then who is to pray, to whom and for what? So I do not pray at all; and not to pray in this way is the highest Prayer.

See the beauty of it. When I was a bud, I did not pray, because I did not know. When I have become the fully blossomed flower, again I do not pray because I know. The

blossomed flower was dormant in the bud, and therefore the bud blossoms into a full blossom, petal by petal. And this process is an Eternal Process and so it is "*Sanatana Dharma*"—the path Eternal to the Eternal, by the Eternal.

In the initial stages, in the Tamasic stage, when absolute ignorance prevails, I do not have the capacity to think of the existence of another Power higher than my own. I am so ignorant, a mere instinctive biological entity, hence there is no question of prayer at all. To whom should I pray as there is no one else except me? Then again at the highest stage too I do not pray. For, to whom am I to pray? Am I different from God, or is God different from me and the world?

He alone IS or I alone AM. Within and without, everywhere, in all events, in anything and everything that happens anywhere, in the inanimate, vegetable, animal or human kingdom—at any time, from Eternity to Eternity....anywhere from Infinity to Infinity is He....is He....is HE ALONE.

When I get established in this extraordinarily wonderful consciousness, I see everything in Him, and Him in everything, including myself. When that stage comes I am absolutely quiet:

"Be still and know that I am God"

"Yoga chitta vritti nirodha."

Union with God is achieved when there is stillness of all conceptions, all mental modifications.

"Dhyanam nirvishayam Manaha...."

True prayer is that which is without any content of the mind. It is a contentless conscious awareness. That is meditation, dhyanam or prayer.

Now, on our Spiritual journey from Colombo to Mount Everest, we have already left Colombo. The fact that we have developed a desire for Satsang, a desire to go to Temple, a desire to pray, a desire to recite His Name and sing His glories... is proof that we have already left Colombo. The journey is on.

Let us then recognise our Actual, and work out slowly, step by step, marching on and on, till we reach the Highest Ideal—the Mount Everest.... a state of EVER REST.

“TO KNOW IS TO BE”

May the Almighty Bless us to Evolve, Expand, Know and Be, is my humble prayer.

HARI OM.

Prayer begins where human capacity ends.

* * *

Let your Prayer be “Thy will be done”
not “I will do Thy will”.

This indicates complete absence of the ego.

* * *

When all our self-effort reaches saturation point, when we turn to the Divinity for His Grace, Prayer becomes the sole guide in our path.

* * *

RATIONALE BEHIND THE HINDU PANTHEON

Talk at Saraswathi Hall, Colombo 4.

Present in every person is the urge to inquire as to the source of whatever he comes in contact with. There arises, will arise and has arisen in the minds of thinkers questions such as, "What is the source of ourselves? . . . what is the source of this world? . . . what is the source of things around us? . . . where do we come from? . . . where do we go from here? . . . what is the meaning and purpose of all these things? . . . does it mean that everything starts with this world and ends with it? Is there nothing more, nothing beyond? Does this life mean only eating, drinking, enjoying and becoming worldly and one morning 'packing off' from here with no apparent rhyme or reason, and that is all and nothing more? What are all these about?" Questions of this nature will bother every individual one day or another as it did Lord Buddha to the point of asking "Why should a person die? . . . why should one become ill? . . . why should one age? . . . is there a way out etc.?" Those who have already asked questions, contemplating seriously . . . going to the root of things in an absolutely ruthless and rational way, taking nothing for granted—have either given up their inquiries or given out their experiences. To the latter group belong the Saints and Sages, Munivars and Mahatmas, Messiahs and Messengers, Prophets and Patriarchs, Rishis and Yogis. The experiences which these holy men outpoured are enshrined in books known as Shastras—books of knowledge, treatises on wisdom—by knowing which, one knows everything.

COSMIC ORIGIN

The experiences and utterances of these Saints point to what is known as a Cosmic source, a 'something' behind and beyond everyone of us, and the world of which we are a part and that this source of ourselves as well as the world outside is the same—the beasts and birds, the insects and creeping things, the vegetables and flowers, the creepers and trees, all come from the same source... even the inanimate stones, the Sun, moon and stars in the galaxies, mountains and rivers—in fact everything emanated from IT. This is the Origin... the Great Source.

The Moolastanam in a temple—the place where God's idol is kept—represents this truth. The Moolastanam is also known as the Cosmic womb—Garbagraham... the womb of the Universe... the abode of the Person who lives in the whole Universe. Another name for this abode is Sanctum Sanctorum, the Holy of Holies. This stands for the root, the base from which everything comes out (Evolves), and by which everything is sustained (Revolves), until finally absorbed (Resolves). IT alone survives : IT was, IT is and IT shall ever be.

GOD—PERSONAL/IMPERSONAL

To this Cosmic Source has been given a name—God—who, when visualised through the faculty of intelligence is Power, and when identified by emotion or feeling is Person. Power and Person here signify the same thing. What is that? IT is that which is... TAT SAT... that which is the Ultimate Truth... the Supreme Truth... That which ever exists... That which is independent, whereas everything else is dependent upon IT... That which is the Uncaused Cause whereas everything else is effect, IT is the Original Cause... IT has no cause... IT generates everything but ITSELF is ungenerated... IT is self-generated... I knows every-

thing but ITSELF is not fully known. . . . IT sees everything but is ITSELF invisible. . . . IT understands everything but ITSELF is above understanding.

When we express the IT emotionally, we say He understands everything but none understands Him . . . He knows everything but no one can totally know Him. . . . He hears everything but none can hear Him fully. . . . He feels everyone but none can feel Him entirely because He is the very Power behind the feeling. Thus, on an emotional level God finds expression as He or She. So He, She or IT—all apply to the one God. When we refer to God by the name Ishwara we conceive Him as the Supreme Administrator, the Ruler of everything.

On an intellectual level we refer to God as Brahman which means the Infinite Immense occupying every point in Time and Space. . . . there is no place where IT is not. . . . IT is everywhere at all times as Intelligence, Consciousness, Power, Life and hence Absolute-Existence and All-Perfection.

It is strange why God is called God. This is because there is no co-relation in this English term God between the word and its meaning or concept, whereas in the other languages through which the Saints spoke, this relationship is markedly present. For instance in Tamil the equivalent of the English term God is Kadavul which means 'everywhere' and 'within' Transcendental and Immanent.

Kadavul = Kada + Ul

Kada = Kadanthavar. . . . Transcendent

Ul = Ul Uraipavar. . . . Immanent

Then again there is the word Andavan meaning Ruler.

We human beings somehow prefer a person-centred God and so we ascribe the form of a person to Him, but with a difference; we attribute Superhuman

powers to Him while we are just ordinary persons. God is a V.I.P. in the sense that He is a 'Very Important Person.' We are also v.i.p.s in the sense that we are 'very insignificant persons.' God is Uttama Purusha while we are purushas. He is Perumal (in Tamil meaning 'big person') while we are only 'Aal' (meaning person). Once a form is given, a name for it follows, since name and form in combination represent a person. A form in scientific terms is a mass of light, while name is a mass of sound.

GOD IN DIFFERENT ASPECTS

Moreover, a single form may not appeal to all minds. Everyone would like to visualise God in the form of his liking. For example, in a family the father may wish his child to be dressed in a particular way, the mother in another way and the child himself/herself in some mod fashion. Every member of the family has a different idea as to the dress in which the child would look best according to their individual tastes. If, however, the child is 'smart', it will please everyone by wearing whatever each one fancies best and say, "Come on, you can admire me in whatever way you like by taking pictures of me, dressed in the fashion of your liking". In doing so, the child is not forgetful of the fact that "Though I am all these, yet I am not exclusively any one of them".

Similarly, 5 major forms of God are recognised at the emotional level—Shiva, Shakti, Ganapathy, Subrahmanya and Vishnu. So when we use any of these names, we must understand that it applies to the Cosmic Universal Person—God. It is immaterial whether we worship Ganapathy, Subrahmanya or for that matter God by any name, for it implies that it is the worship of the one God by various names.

At the intellectual level this Cosmic Universal Person of this emotional conception becomes known as Cosmic Energy. This has two aspects—as Energiser

and Energy—equated as Shiva and Shakti (or Devi) in Spiritual language, which manifests Itself in three phases as Evolution (Creation), Revolution (Sustenance) and Resolution (Re-absorption). These three phases are symbolised as Saraswathi, Lakshmi and Kali or Durga. Saraswathi represents Cosmic Energy which creates, Lakshmi that phase which sustains and Durga, that which destroys and re-absorbs. For instance the activity involved in a mango seed sprouting is personified as Saraswathi, when the flower or fruit is plucked, eaten and consumed as body-building energy it is Lakshmi, and when the waste material is discharged and re-absorbed it is Durga. This process of Srishti (Creation), Sthithi (sustenance) and Laya (Re-absorption) takes place in every bit of activity, in a cycle. So we worship Saraswathi to obtain wisdom, Lakshmi for prosperity and Kali or Durga to be rid of our troubles. To those who cannot understand scientific principles, these processes are explained in this simple form, which is the role of Religion.

All names and forms introduced for simplicity have likewise meanings and significances. It has already been stated that Saraswathi is that aspect of the Supreme Energy which has in Herself the power to evolve as this mighty Universe but only in fusion with another aspect of the Supreme Energy who is called Brahma. So Brahma is the creator and Saraswathi the creatrix and they are referred to as husband and wife to emphasise joint action, without any element of sex in it. Similarly the male counterparts of Lakshmi and Durga are Vishnu and Shiva.

Such symbolic representation of 'activity'—by names and forms as Saraswathi, Lakshmi or Durga—match the description about their functions. That is why Durga wears a garland of skulls in keeping with her function as destroyer—when everything loses its identity, name and form, becoming one with Herself. Again in one aspect Lord Shiva is portrayed as

roaming in Smashana (cremation ground), His body smeared with ashes because everything ultimately becomes ashes and everything is absorbed in Him. This is in agreement with the Christian understanding also where when a body is consigned to the grave, the words used are, "From dust thou art, to dust thou shalt return". As for Saraswathi the first point to note is that she wears a white saree. White is not considered a colour proper as it reflects all the 7 rays of the spectrum and hence is employed to depict the pre-creation state when there was no name, no form, nor formation. She is seated on a white lotus since lotus in Hindu Philosophy represents blossoming ; and in this instance it indicates blossomed energy creation having not begun, it is about to begin, so there are no colours and hence it is white. She has a Veena in one hand representing the emanation of the Primal Sound or Nadam when Cosmic Energy begins to whirl and act. Saraswathi also carries a Japa Mala in one hand and a book in another representing Spiritual Wisdom and worldly knowledge respectively. Finally she is depicted as riding on a Hamsa Vahanam (Swan Vehicle). Hamsa, besides being a Swan, also stands for the action of breathing—inhaling and exhaling—Soham . . . Soham, indicating the movement of the Prana (life force). So Saraswathi riding on Hamsa Vahanam symbolises Cosmic Energy manifesting as Prana Shakti in control of our lives.

THE ONE-NESS OF GOD

What is significant is that Ganapathy, Subrahmanya, Shiva, Vishnu or Shakti, Allah, Ahurmazda, Jehova, Jesus are all equal to one another and ultimately equal to the Supreme Divine Father, who is equal to the Divine Mother. Hence the Supreme Being may be conceived in any way—a really beautiful concept indeed—which unfortunately we have made a mess of. A Sanskrit saying expresses this point aptly.

“ Ekam Sat Vipra Bahuta Vadanti ”

meaning “Truth is one, Sages call it by many names. ”

• In the Ajanta caves there is an anonymously chiselled inscription which runs thus, lending further support to the concept of the one-ness of God:

“ Him the Shaivites worship as Shiva
The Vedantins as Brahman,
The Buddhists as Buddha
The Jains as Arahāt
And the Vedic Ritualists as the great Cause
and Effect—the law of action and reaction
(Karma)
May He grant our prayers, the Lord of
Trilogam—the triple plane of existence....
the Material world, the Thought world or the
Astral world, and finally the Spirit world. ”

The world has three layers and they are called ‘Bhur, Bhuva, Svaha....the Physical, Astral and Causal....Matter, Life and Intelligence and then Spirit. Matter is one layer, Life and Intelligence the next, and Spirit the third. All these three layers comprise Trilogam of which God is the ruler—the Divine Person or Universal Person.

EVOLUTIONARY PROCESS

From here we proceed to the next step, namely of analysing the Universe with all its diversities. We find that the Universe consists of living and non-living things. Living things comprise those with life alone such as vegetables, those with life and an instinctive mind called animals, and those with life, mind and intelligence known as human beings. There is another category of humans more evolved and possessing an additional faculty, that of the Spirit, who are called Saints. Thus there has been evolution towards THAT from which we originated, the cycle being com-

pleted with the attainment of what is called Liberation, Mukti, Moksha, Kingdom of Heaven, Wisdom or Perfection. In essence it means we find a Universe of which everyone and everything is a part.

Now what is the connection between all these? Reason tells us that intelligence and non-intelligence cannot co-exist without a common basis and that basis should be All-Intelligence. Furthermore, inquiries reveal that there is a link by which 'That' has become 'This' or 'This' has come out of 'That.' That TATSAT is Idam Sarvam—That Is—God. Everything should have proceeded from That. And if it be so, then naturally everything must be also sustained by the same power. You cannot pluck a rose from a tree without disturbing a distant star above. So closely is everything inter-linked.

The nature of this link should be clear from the analogy of an inert bulb getting suddenly illuminated, dispelling the surrounding darkness. When we try to trace the source of this phenomenon we will realise that all lights, all fans, all radios, all refrigerators, television sets etc function with power from one source—the Power house. In the course of such tracing we first come across the main switch in the house, then the street post carrying the connection to the house; proceeding further we get to the sub-station and finally to the Power house. There we get confused for what we can see are a few rotating turbine wheels with water gushing around. We know that neither the water nor the wheels is electricity nor the rotation of the wheels, but yet we find power is being produced. In the attempt to find a link as to how that which was non-luminous suddenly became luminous, we discover certain missing links which have to be traced in order to understand the whole process. Then we realise that power is being generated, and in that process we see only the water, the wheels and their rotation etc but *something else takes place invisibly, This*

invisible power which is generated is just stored in the power house. During this process we see nothing, but that something is taking place is indicated by an accompanying vibratory hum in the power house. Then again, the unseen power flows out invisibly: all that we can see are the transmission wires which are connected to a post from where the invisible current is led to a switchboard. These are visible connecting links but the power is invisible at any time until it is manifested as light in the bulb or as sound in the radio or as a picture in a television set etc. At no time is the power seen but we can infer the existence of the power from its manifestations in different forms. The visible manifestations are a clue to the existence of the invisible power. The visible effect proclaims the invisible cause. The visible manifestation of something which is sheer effect is the key to the knowledge that something which is somewhere—the unseen source—must necessarily be the ultimate cause.

CHARACTERISTICS OF GOD

In like fashion when the ancient thinkers investigated the Source which manifested Itself in manifold forms, they discovered that everything in the Universe owed its existence to this cause—God. Among the questions that arose in the course of study was whether the Cause diminished in power or exhausted itself while manifesting in diverse forms, and if so, how the world is kept in perpetuity. . . . once God had created this world, has He ceased to be God? There is a humorous story in illustration of the point in issue. Once in India, an Irrigation Minister went to inspect a big dam. He went to the power house where several thousands of kilowatts of electricity were produced. He also happened to see a large gush of water running past the irrigation channels to the paddy fields. He turned round to the Engineer and asked him "Look, after the power is taken from the water, the water must be powerless; can it be of any use to the plants or for any other purpose?" Isn't it a

genuine doubt that after the power has been taken from the water that the power must have exhausted itself? Can then that water be used for irrigation?

In the same way once God has created this world has He ceased to be God? Has He exhausted Himself? According to modern Physics, while some part of the Universe is in the process of formation another part is disintegrating; something new and fresh can arise and the whole of the Solar system may attain full form only perhaps a million years hence. Like this in different periods, at different stages of evolution, each solar system has evolved to its present form. That means there must be a perpetual and inexhaustible reservoir of power, which can manifest itself in different ways. In the same way if God has exhausted Himself by creating the world, He could no more be there. If He is no more, how is the Universe being maintained? It sounds absurd therefore to think that He is no more; obviously He must still be there. If He is, He has not used His full power; only a part has been utilised in the creation of the world and the balance is available for sustenance and also for withdrawal; but He has still more power which has the capacity to produce further. The truth is that He is eternally self-sustained. The example of a car is cited as an explanation. The car engine is started by power in the battery and once it starts working, generation of electricity takes place and the battery is charged and its level of power is maintained. By the mere functioning of the engine of the car, auto-generation takes place.

Similarly God too is Power which gives a momentum to the Universe He created. That very momentum generates power whereby He maintains the Universe continuously, perpetually and for ever and hence He is the Eternal, Inexhaustible Power, and this is the only rational conclusion one could arrive at. *Modern science corroborates this particular point that there is some vast reservoir of Intelligence-Power which is self-generated, self-operated,*

self-sustained, out of which millions and millions of Solar systems constantly evolve. But all the Solar systems owing their source to this Reservoir do not exhaust the Reservoir itself. In other words there must be a perpetually Operating (Evolving) Sustaining (Revolving) and Re-absorbing (Resolving) Energy ever-present—an ever-present Energy—with the potentiality to maintain the cycle of self-sustenance from beginning to endless time.—that is God.

GOD—BEING/BECOMING

One may therefore start on the premise that apparently there is God on one side and the world on the other, comprising living and non-living things, sentient and insentient things which operate in a set pattern—they come into view, they grow to a climax, then decline, descend, die, decay and disappear. What happens next we do not know. For that matter we do not know from where we have come. This is a mystery. Time-wise, Space-wise we do not know what was before, what is going to be beyond. Yet the inquiry goes on restlessly and relentlessly—that there must be some connection somewhere. One thing is certain—everything originates, everything is sustained and everything dissolves....everything must have an origin or source and therefore that source must be a Reservoir of Power which has itself the potentiality to 'Become' everyone and everything. That source is what we call the Supreme Universal Being or God who must therefore contain within Himself a potential power which manifests and 'Becomes' this Universe, which is sustained and dissolved and again resolved in a cycle.

All these lead to the inference, first that there is an Universal Being and there is power in Him to project, fuse and manifest as all these beings and things. That Power must be Intelligence, Consciousness, Life, Mind and Matter, and Spirit—all packed together.

The very fact that we see Matter, we see Life, we see Mind, the vegetable kingdom, the animal kingdom, the human kingdom, the intelligence kingdom and that we also see among human beings some who have reached the stage of 'near Divine Beings' . . . the very fact that all these things emanated from one Source is an indication that that Source must be Matter, Life, Mind, Intelligence, Consciousness etc.—each in its potential form, and when it reaches the optimum potential the whole Universe comes to be wonderfully understood. Granting there is God and there is a world, it implies that the world has come out of God, which means that God must have the power to procreate it. He must possess the power since without something in Him, He cannot bring something out of Him. For if something has come out of Him, there must have been something in potential state and that potential condition in God is to 'Become'. God the 'Being' has the power to 'Become'—from 'Being' to 'Becoming'. 'Being' is the static condition and 'Becoming' the dynamic condition. This would be understood better if explained by an example. When the electric current is switched off, the power within remains in a static state in the switch. The moment the switch is put on, current flows through the wire and an activity takes place. This invisible power is in two states—in its unmanifest form it is static and in its manifested condition it is dynamic.

In the same way God, the Creator of the world must possess power in two dimensions—static and dynamic. So God's power which is within Him is known by the Sanskrit word Shakti. Strictly speaking, God, the Supreme Unmanifest (Para Brahman) should not be referred to in the masculine alone as Him. For that matter, the Supreme Brahman transcends every attribute and therefore all genders as well. But this Para-Brahman—the Impersonal Nirguna Brahman—'takes on' attributes and characteristics and then becomes Saguna Brahman. This Saguna Brahman—

the Brahman with attributes—is masculine and is the Supreme Governor or Administrator of every-thing and hence called Ishwara (Shivam) ; and the latent power within Ishwara, when it manifests itself, is Ishwari—Shakti. The fact that God creates implies that He must possess ‘ Something ’ within Him, that is the power which can bring forth all that is Matter, all that is Life, all that is Mind, all that is Intelligence and all that is Spirit. Therefore, God must be a very great Power and that Power is in Him—that means that Power is one with Him in an unmanifest state.

HOW GOD OPERATES

In order to understand how the latent, dormant, potential power of God manifests as a dynamic power let us take, as an example, the case of a well known Carnatic musician Balamurali Krishna (B.K.) and his singing.

B.K. is an ordinary person like any other when he is seated amidst the audience in a music hall. But when he mounts the rostrum for a recital he becomes a singer, having brought out of himself some power which was in an invisible unmanifest condition. What was that ? It was his power of singing which consisted of his knowledge of singing, his knowledge of music, his knowledge of the song, his power to sing and the desire to sing also. B.K. had the power to sing, the knowledge of music and the desire to sing ; *when all three potential powers operated* and when he came and sat on the stage, *B. K. the human being became B. K. the singer. Out of this fusion of B.K. the human being and B.K. the singer, there arose something which is the song.* Now this song may be of many varieties, in different ragas, different sudis, different surams and different notes etc. The picture is like this. B.K. comes and sits down. . . . there is silence. . . . he decides to sing. . . . next he decides what to sing—may be Hamsathvani ragam. Within a fraction of a second he puts all ‘ these ’ into action.

The decision therefore to sing springing from the desire to sing, what to sing, and the will to sing were constituent processes which subsequently took shape and crystallised as the song : all these were already present in a static condition in B.K. the human being before he started to sing. B.K. sings different songs, differing in their musical forms like raga, tala etc, but all the varieties of the song are yet the expressions of one and the same singer B.K.

In the same way God operates in the world in various ways comparable to the various songs. In as much as these songs came from the same singer, the various heterogeneous things in the world came out of God. He was able to bring out all these because He had and always has the power in Him. If we inquire how *He brought this power out*, it would be noted that it was *because He had desired it, He had the knowledge of that power, and He also had the will to bring it (power) out.*

In other words, God and His Power, or Ishwara and Ishwari, or Shiva and Shakti in fusion manifest in three ways—as Desire, Knowledge and Action—in the same manner as the song came out of the singer because of his desire to sing, his knowledge of singing and the act of singing—Desire, Wisdom, and Action, which in Sanskrit are respectively called, Ichcha Shakti, Jnana Shakti and Kriya Shakti. Similarly one may explain God and His creation as follows. God as the Universal Person has within Him the latent Shakti and when this manifests, it becomes the Universe consisting of variegated forms or shapes (Rupa) which are called by various names (Nama). This ‘end product’—the Universe—was preceded by the Desire (Ichcha) for creating inherent in the knowledge (Jnana) and actually came into final shape by His Will (Kriya). So God is the first Principle, Shakti in potential form is the second, Ichcha the third, Jnana the fourth and Kriya the fifth and then evolves the manifested world. So from God to the world there are 5 stages—the five

graded operational functions of the one Supreme. To these may be added another two when the actual song starts, making a total of 7. In relation to B.K. these 7 stages would be as follows :

1st Formation	
....B.K. as unknown entity	<i>Para Brahman.</i>
2nd Formation	
B.K. as a potential singer	<i>Universal Power</i>
3rd Formation	
....B.K. as power to sing	<i>Shakti</i>
4th Formation	
....B.K. as desire to sing	<i>Ichcha</i>
5th Formation	
....B.K. as knowledge to sing	<i>Jnana</i>
6th Formation	
....the act of Singing	<i>Kriya</i>
7th Formation	
....the song elaboration	<i>Universe</i>

That means from the subtlest Truth—the unmanifest attributeless Nirguna Brahman,—Truth from its subtlest essence to the grossest manifestation (Universe)—may be understood through these constituent processes.

Going back to the example of the production of electricity, from the stage of abstraction to the production of light in the inert bulb, the stages would be :

- 1st gradation — Electricity in abstraction.
- 2nd gradation — Electricity during rotation of the wheels.
- 3rd gradation — Electricity in the Power House.
- 4th gradation — Electricity in the Sub-Station.
- 5th gradation — Electricity in the Main Switch.
- 6th gradation — Electricity in the house.
- 7th gradation — Electricity in the bulb.

The same electricity manifests in different gradations from the subtlest invisible level to the grossest manifested level through seven courses. . . . seven gradations. . . . seven planes. . . . seven conditions, . . . seven divisions.

7 is a mystic number. This number 7 is recognised in the Bible not only in the story of creation, but it also finds an important place in the Book of Revelations during the prophesied last days of the world, supporting the theory that 7 is the total number of stages from the subtlest abstraction to the grossest matter.

So far the one Supreme Reality has been expressed at the level of the intellect. Now when this intellectual, metaphysical gradation of the same one Supreme Reality is viewed in a manner more conducive to the emotions, IT becomes God as Ishwara, Ganapathy, Shiva, Shakti, Subrahmanya and Vishnu. These forms are also assigned operational or functional names. For purposes of convenience, four of them can be classed together as these appear to be popular emotional forms in which the intellectual, and metaphysical aspects of the one Supreme Reality seems to be worshipped. These four are Shiva, Shakti, Ganapathy and Subrahmanya and these together constitute what is called in common parlance the Shiva Family.

The above four in terms of the earlier example of B.K. the singer would be :

Shiva—B.K. as Shiva—the totality of everything, including the dormant power to sing.

Shakti—That dormant power mentioned above in B.K. to sing also known as Devi or Parvati—the consort of Shiva.

Ganapathy—That element involved in all the planning which includes the removal of all hindrances and obstacles prior to the singing. The entirety of this is referred to as *Ideation* which includes everything and anything before the actual execution.

Subrahmanya—The actual execution, the very act of singing.

It should also be remembered that during the change from the state of the passive Shiva (containing within Himself the dormant Shakti) through the stages of Ideation and Execution there is an accompanying kind of restlessness or vibration. . . . Spandam or Nadam. This finds an echo in St. John's Gospel and is referred to in mystical language as :

“In the beginning was the ‘Word’, and the ‘Word’ was with God and the ‘Word’ was God”.

This statement applied vis-a-vis the case of B.K. the singer would be “In the beginning was B.K., in him there was Shakti (the power to sing) and this Shakti was B.K.”—B.K. and his power to sing being identical. This vibration—the ‘Word’ according to the Bible—is known as Sabdha Brahman or Sound Brahman in Vedic terms. So the Sound itself is God and hence it is known as Pranavam—OM. It is the Prana . . . the life force of everything that is . . . it is the very throb of everything that is to come. It is the Prana of everything that is going to be.

The Pranavam—symbolically the vehicle of movement of Shiva and Shakti—is Nandikeshwara. When Shiva—the Universal Spirit—and Shakti—the Universal Energy—mingle and move (symbolically as husband and wife) there is a throb which is Nandikeshwara represented as a white bull in every Shivan Temple in front of the Shivalingam. All these activities result in the Universe. Thus God is the unifying Principle. He is the very Power, the Energy from which everything

emanates,—these processes in metaphysical gradations being Spirit, Power, Motion, Ideation and Execution—and they constitute what is known as the Shiva Panchayathanam or the five-fold Shiva.

Shiva being Spirit.

Shakti being Power.

Nandikeshwara being Motion.

Ganapathy being Ideation.

Subrahmanya being Execution.

PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SYMBOLISM

By now it would be clear that the depiction of the one God by various names and forms is a symbolic expression of different types of cosmic forces at work—personifications of various attributes and functions. There are two systems of symbolism—Primary and Secondary. When God's transcendental nature—God in His totality—is referred to by the names of Shiva, Shakti, Nandikeshwara, Ganapathy or Subrahmanya in terms of equality with one another, it denotes Primary Symbolism, whereas when God is referred to in His operational or functional aspect, it indicates Secondary Symbolism.

Taking a couple of examples—the Siddhi Vinayagar Temple represents secondary symbolism in that it refers to God in His capacity as miracle worker and not God in His totality. Maha Ganapathy Temple signifies primary symbolism as its very name implies. Madurai Meenakshi Amman Temple represents primary symbolism as God is worshipped as Mother here. But at the Kali Amman Temple, God is represented in the operational symbolism, since Kali has a particular function. Kali is also the personification of Time. In the Maha Mari Amman Temple God is worshipped as the Illusory Power—Mahamayai. She hides herself from our vision by Her own power, creating a veil around us. It is of interest to

note that Ammah (Mother) became Amman and that Mayi became Mari and the Temple dedicated to Her came to be known as Mari Amman Temple.

By way of explaining the concept of consorts of God in His various aspects in primary symbolism, it may be stated that the Power (Shakti), inherent in God is referred to as His consort. Thus it is that Parvati or Devi is symbolically Shiva's consort. Saraswathi is Brahma's consort and Lakshmi is Vishnu's consort. Similarly Devasena and Valli are the consorts of Subrahmanya, and Riddhi and Siddhi are the consorts of Ganesha. From another aspect Ganesha is Nithya Brahmachari,

“ Riddhi Siddhi Samedha Shree....
Naishtika Bramachaarine ”

Subrahmanya has often been depicted in more than one functional aspect. At the famous Tiruchendur Shrine, He is represented as Murugan with six faces, each face symbolising a particular function—sporting on His peacock, being in communion with the Father, listening to the supplications of His devotees, bearing a countenance with which He blasted the Krauncha rock, the triumphant face that annihilated the dissentient Surapadman and finally that comely mien with which He absorbed unto Himself His beloved Valli in holy wedlock—so beautifully portrayed in the famous Thirupugal of Arunagirinathar. At this shrine Murugan is also depicted seated on a bluish green peacock—symbolic of the wide expanse of the Universe....of Space....and holds a white cockerel as his banner....symbolic of Time. He has 12 hands, 11 of them holding every weapon of Him from whom He originated.

Subrahmanyam Para Brahman
Para Maa Kaasham Parothbhavam
Soma Shekara Vanni Nayanam
Guhaskandam Namoh Namaha

And the 12th hand grasping the special weapon—the Vel—symbolising Jnana Shakti (total Knowledge and Grace). Subrahmanya is flanked on either side by Valli his consort as His Power denoting Ichcha (Desire), and Devasena His Power as another consort signifying Kriya (Action). All these point to the fact that at this Shrine Murugan is depicted in the Being/Becoming state—complete Power.

At Palani the one Supreme Lord is worshipped as Muruga in yet another aspect. He is seen here in the form of a complete recluse—with neither the symbol of Space (Peacock) nor that of Time (Cockerel). He stands with one face only and that too shorn of its lovely locks but adorned with holy ash and a single-beaded Rudraksha mala round His neck and wearing a mere span-cloth, devoid of all implements including the Vel, but holding just a Dandham (Spiritual staff) in His hand.

Dhandapaanim Mahaayogim
 Dhyaana Jyothim Cha Hrith Jyothim
 Dhyaanantha Jyothim Jyothir Jyothim
 Guhaskandam Namoh Namaha

Finally at the very sacred Shrine of Kathirgamam in Sri Lanka, girt by the Menik Ganga, every known concept of Murugan is absent. This Shrine has only a curtain. Murugan here is symbolised in that Ultimate Transcendental form, where words fail and the mind gets stilled so that the one who truly gets to that stage never returns to tell the tale, for that person becomes established in Him, who is worshipped here as having transcended beyond both form and formlessness : He is worshipped as All-Knowledge and Beyond Knowledge....

Roopaa Roopam Cha Aroopam Cha
 Swaroopam Cha Swasthitham
 Param Aparam Paraath Param
 Guhaskandam Namoh Namaha
 and is the Great Mahasoonyam.

It is relevant to mention in this context that God is also worshipped as Vishnu—the Aggregate of atoms in the Universe. This worship of Vishnu comes under primary symbolism.

“ When Dharma declines, and wrong-doing
flourishes,
I give Myself birth, to restore the balance.
And every yuge witnesses My birth ;
I come to protect the good, and destroy the
wicked.
I come to re-establish Dharma ”.

The above lines from the Song Celestial—The Bhagavad Gita—are words of absolute assurance pronounced by the Supreme Lord (Vishnu) Himself.

Vishnu for the express purpose of such a mission had re-incarnated Himself, nine times already in forms not only of ‘ Man ’ but also as other forms of life which included Matsa (fish), Varaaha (wild-boar) and even Nara-Hari (half man half lion). There is a promise of yet another—Kalki.

In the worship of these Avatars (incarnations) of Vishnu mentioned above, the most widely observed are two.....one, the Avatar of Sri Rama symbolising the perfect ‘ Human Being ’, but not always conscious of His own Divinity. The other is that of Sri Krishna—the Bewitching Blue Boy—Beloved of the Gopis and the expounder of perhaps the greatest, most widely read philosophy of all times—the Gita—who is, however, always conscious of His Own Divinity.

TRUE RELIGION

Thus in these descriptions, these names, these forms, these symbols lie concealed wonderful meanings reflecting the wisdom of the ancients. But unfortu-

nately no one—not even the Poosari knows their roots or significances, and little wonder the rational-minded man looks down on Religion as superstitious non-sense. A deep study of the significance of symbols, ceremonials and customs, rites and rituals, will yield a wealth of knowledge and information that will falsify such impressions.

Religion is not blind faith....it is not dusty dogmas....it is out and out rationality....it is not sentimental rationality. Our attitude towards Religion must be like that of the science teacher who declared, "I know, I experience, I believe" and goes on to advise his students, "My dear students, you who joined the College today, believe what I say, but don't you stop there : try to understand, experiment and experience. It is only thereafter you will truly and fully believe and you will be able likewise to help in illuminating the minds of others. I accepted hypothetically what my Guru taught. I reflected over and then accepted without reservation, because I experienced and understood," So *Religion implies first implicit obedience and acceptance, next one-pointed reflection, which if done seriously and with humility, results in true experience automatically leading to abiding Faith.*

So, if we understand the various names and forms by which the one Supreme Reality is worshipped, it leads to a growth of in-depth understanding, in fact an understanding with the entirety of one's personality by the Grace of God, of God Himself, His creation,—the world and everything in it resulting in that perfect understanding that That (macrocosm) is whole.... and This (microcosm) is also whole....What has come out (microcosm) of the whole (macrocosm) is also whole and even when the whole (microcosm) is taken out of the whole (macrocosm), the whole (macrocosm) still remains whole and in this idea the mighty Seers of old

rejoiced and cried out in their joy of declaring the Truth for the benefit of mankind in the Shantipad of an Upanishad:

“ Om Puurnamadah Puurnamidam
Purnat Puurna Mudachyate
Puurnasya Puurnamaadaaya
Puurna Mevaavasishyate

Om Shaantih Shaantih Shaantihi

and thus conveyed the joyous experience of that Truth that God and God alone pervades everything and everyone and that man was born to feel, understand and experience the Joy of knowing that Truth.

HARI OM

The Law which operates intelligently in a tiny particle of dust is the same Law that operates in a mighty star . . . and the same Law operates in the very heart of man who tries to understand this Law. This Universal Law is beyond any name. Therefore different names were given apparently to this one Law - God.

* * *

Religion is Philosophy in action. Religion is applied Philosophy. Religion is the way of life, Philosophy the view.

CHRIST—HIS MESSAGE TO HUMANITY

*Talk at the Parish hall of the Church of
St. Michael and All Angels, Colombo 3.*

Everytime I see a Rev. Father in his priestly robes, a story comes spontaneously to my mind. A Priest was travelling by bus from Colombo to Kandy and among the passengers was a youth....very moddy moddy in his drain-pipe pants, wearing a batik shirt called unisex shirt. He had a beetle hair style with sideburns and cigarette on his lips. This up-to-date youth felt somewhat allergic when he saw the Priest sitting quietly reading a book. He was overcome by an impulse to draw the Priest into a conversation and tease him, but since he could not address him directly, he made occasional remarks to the person seated next to him (Priest) to the latter's hearing in a vein somewhat like this : " Don't you think all these Swamis and Priests are humbugs, talking nonsense about God all the time?" and so on. But, the Rev. gentleman did not bother and went on reading. As the bus was approaching Kandy, the young fellow got exasperated as he had failed to draw the Priest into an argument. His pent-up desperation now gave him just enough courage to move close and sit next to the Priest and then the following conversation ensued :

Young man : " Do you believe in Hell ? Do you believe in Heaven ? Don't you think it is all nonsense ? "

Priest : " I do believe in Heaven. Do you believe in Heaven ? "

Young man : " I don't believe in Heaven ".

Priest : " Then son, you had better go to Hell ".

With this remark, the Priest turned once again and concentrated on his book. The young fellow felt so dazed at this reply that he didn't open his mouth again till the bus reached Kandy and there both the Priest and the young man went their different ways.

We have very many people like this young man, not only in Colombo, but in Bombay, Calcutta, Delhi, London, New York, Paris—in fact wherever you may go. All fashionable people wear similar dress: in this respect we have achieved uniformity all over the world. Such people feel at ease in a restaurant in Bombay, in Colombo, in London, New York or anywhere, since their mode of dress, their musical tastes like pop, their sensually inclined dancing are everywhere very much alike, transcending caste, community, race, religion, nationality—all normal barriers are broken. To that extent it is the grace of God that where Religion could not succeed or what politics could not do, modern fashion has achieved, because the mini, midi, maxi which you see at the Galle Face Green here in the evenings are just like those displayed at the Bombay Chowpathy beach or in New York or Paris, London, Copenhagen, Argentina and so forth. In that way modern fashion, it may be said, has stolen a march over the other methods of uniting people. Thank God for it.

God has His own mysterious ways to unite us, though we foolishly believe that Religion, politics and such-like approaches to life are the only means of bringing unity. We quarrel, we fight, we misunderstand and throw mud at one another. The Hindu insults the Christian, the Christian abuses the Hindu, but when it comes to fashion, they all wear the common drain-pipe pants etc. To that extent they are uniform . . . they are united. The mod-fashioned crazy fan in whatever city he may be living in this world, be he a Christian, Hindu, Muslim or Buddhist, sports side-burns and adopts hair-styles following the style in

Western cities like Paris....and if this fashion becomes out of vogue in Paris....then London and New York will follow suit....and the mod here will instantly shear away the side-burns and it may be some other 'burn' that would become the fashion. So it is a very very significant, though amusing point. We who are interested in Religion, and politicians involved in politics have missed this point that a significant change is taking place imperceptibly.

God is not only full of mercy, compassionate, kind and loving, but is also smart ; we can't think of out-smarting Him. He has His own out-smarting methods through the modern youth, since the well-known methods of uniting people such as politics, Religion, sociology, economics etc have failed. He seems to be having ideas of attaining this objective through the mini....midi....maxi....and drain-pipe pants, restaurants, soups, specialities, forks and spoons and such like things. God knows that these mods will fall for these and indeed they have succumbed and are united. So, go anywhere and these chaps are at ease and united.

To the vast bulk of such young men united by these habits of mod dress etc., the question at issue is not one of this Religion or that Religion, but Religion or no Religion. When there is disputation between different Religious views....these mods take advantage of the situation to denounce Religion as a whole, and join the materialists in discarding all Religions.

Their aim in life is only to eat, drink and be merry—do anything, cut anybody's throat, live any kind of life without principle or moral scruples, without love, compassion, ambition, aim, aspiration, emotion, and so forth. Such society is nothing short of animalistic living which we erroneously call independence, freedom, liberation, radicalism, progress and what not ? This exactly is the situation prevailing all over the world today.

A factor that has tended to draw men away from God and Religion is the advancement of technological science. Man with his marvellous intelligence has made fantastic progress in science and technology. He has the power in his hands which can be used for construction or destruction. Destruction how?destroy within a matter of 15 minutes all that has been created and constructed during the past several thousand years. Remember the point : he has the power to destroy all that he has built up step by step. It took him several thousand years to invent the mike, the radio, the television, the transistor and the jet plane etc. This advancement represents a struggle of many cultures conferring such conveniences and comforts on mankind. But all these can be erased and totally wiped out in 15 minutes by just pressing a button—Inter-continental ballistic missile. Just press the button and everything is gone. Perhaps for 150 years not a blade of grass will grow and whoever is left living in the world will be victims of all sorts of deformities. And to recreate or rebuild the kind of culture and civilization we now have, it might take another 10,000 to 15,000 years. That is the kind of time. . . .the crucial juncture. . . . the historic cross-roads. . . .we now live in.

Man's intelligence has evolved. . . .he is not inclined to accept anything unless a rational explanation is forthcoming. With this reason he has achieved tremendous progress and possesses the power which has the capacity to destroy everything complete—lock, stock and barrel. The late President Kennedy expressed this point in this way :

“Misunderstanding, madness, miscalculation—anyone of these can unleash a nuclear war, the result of which would be ashes in both hands.”

But I suppose that neither hand will be there to hold the ashes. Everything will be shambles—there will be a holocaust. Everything will be ashes only.... in fact there won't be anybody to collect the ashes and perform the funeral ceremony or carry out the cremation or burial, or recite prayers or place flowers, because the whole earth will be one cemetery. And who buries?.... Only Nature is going to bury us....it is no exaggeration....it is a reality....it can happen any time. The words of Mahatma Gandhi ring in my ears in this connection:

“Modern man knows how to fly like a bird, swim like a fish. But he has yet to know how to walk like a human being.”

He has constructed a plane to fly, he has built a ship to swim but he cannot walk like a proper man. *On one side man has the intelligence to go to the moon, but he has yet to know how to walk on the streets like an ordinary human being—giving way to others, adjusting, adapting and accommodating, living and letting others live.* These finer accomplishments he has yet to learn. On one side he appears to be a very learned person, on the other he appears like some kind of biological entity with no sense or reason....and no sanity in thought. How does one reconcile the existence of the reasoning faculty of man and his very irrational behaviour at the same time? But the fact is that they do co-exist.

II

For instance look at the way we celebrate Religious festivals. These wonderful people who call themselves the followers of Christ are crucifying Him while supposed to be celebrating His birth. During Christmas celebrations it is said that in the U. S. A. alone about 450 people die on a minimum as a result of traffic accidents on that day. Why?....because of the rush for the midnight dance. It is not Christmas-eve prayer, mind you, but Christmas-

eve dance. Every hotel, every restaurant, every night club advertises these dances and entices people with offers of dance, dinner, lunch, breakfast, this special, that special at such and such rates and so on. We have become slaves to all these revels and feverish festivities, which have been commercially organised in the name of Religion.

The air is full of these enjoyments during this period, and mark you, all this in the name of Christ. Everything tends to make man into an animal and not the other way about. When you refer to the Christmas-eve dance in a night club or Christmas-eve cabaret, can you imagine what takes place? A person enters the place in pants and coat and collar and bow and is well-behaved at the start. By 9 o'clock the cocktail starts. . . . one peg. . . . two pegs, then he talks nonsense, he giggles, he laughs like a mad cap and after a little while, he does not know where he is standing and just blabbers. The dance begins and his steps go one way while the music is something else, he keeps swinging, not dancing. And eventually he is found fallen flat with a lady in the same condition, fallen here and another fallen there — all in absolutely 'super-conscious' state.

Then finally when the dance is over by 2 o'clock, the chauffeur has to get inside looking for his master. Having found him, he carries him into the car, takes him home, puts him in bed, removes his pants and coat and tie and changes him into his pyjamas. Poor Christ, really poor Christ !

Thus it was not Christmas that was celebrated but Good-Friday was observed on Christmas day. It was the crucifixion of Jesus that was 'celebrated' and not his birth. By whom? By the Christians as if they enjoy His crucifixion. The same kind of humbug takes place where other Religions are concerned as well, such as during Sivaratri or Navaratri or Deepavali festivals. There is much drinking and dancing on these

days. If you go to any city during the Christmas festivities—except perhaps for a few towns where they celebrate the occasion in the correct spirit—you will see people at the Churches eagerly waiting for the service to be over to rush to the dances at the Hilton Inter-Continental, Gaylord, Blue-Nile and such places. Now, what I want to draw your attention to is this question. Are you celebrating Christmas or are you crucifying Christ? Do you celebrate the advent of Christ, the descent of the Divinity on earth, or are you crucifying Him and enjoying the fun saying :

“ This fellow has been crucified today : He came and told some nonsensical stories, let us finish Him off once and for all. ”

This unfortunately is the truth with regard to Christmas celebrations.

Take again the New Year-eve dance. New Year is meant for stock-taking....what I was one year before and what I am today....January 1st to December 31st. During these 365 days what is my account—credit or debit, assets or liabilities? So I resolve : such should be the New Year thought—the New Year is meant to make a resolution. This was me January 1st....this is me now December 31stthis is what I am going to be on 31st December next year. This is a review of my life for the past year....how far have I advanced....how much have I transformed....to what extent have I become a better human being....to what degree have I developed the spirit of feeling for others, the spirit of kindness, the spirit of giving....how much less proud, less irritable, less acquisitive, less jealous have I become? New Year-eve is meant for this specific purpose—it is to audit our own account and arrive at a balance sheet and try to chalk out a fresh account for the New Year. But what really has taken place? In one single night we

have gone back from the human to the brute level, from the animal level to the stone level, when we were brought back from the hotel to the bedroom.

Now we call these Religious festivals. . . . Religious functions. What betrayal of Religion ! Why are we in this mess ? . . . for the very simple reason that we have ignored and misinterpreted one simple injunction given to us by Jesus. We keep daily muttering the prayer :

“ Our Father who art in Heaven, hallowed by Thy name.

Thy Kingdom come, give us this day our daily bread. . . . ”

But when we ask for daily bread many of us have in mind that which gives the kick to life, whereas Jesus meant the bread for the Soul and not the bread that will make a human into an animal. Judah's betrayal of Jesus led to the killing of only His body. . . . but we kill His very spirit. . . . all that He stood for, we crucify. . . . if we can only realise how much of agony He undergoes thereby !

Last evening when I was in Batticaloa, a Rev. Father narrated an interesting story. It seems a Negro who was very devoted to God wanted to go to Church but he was not allowed inside. This happened somewhere in U.S.A. He was so devoted a Christian that he yearned to go inside the Church, but this was taboo to him because of his colour. So he stood outside feeling miserable. Someone who passed by asked him :

“ Son why are you waiting here ? ”

When the Negro turned round he recognised that the speaker was Jesus, and replied :

“ Lord, I would like to go inside ”

and the answer he received was :

“ Why are you wanting to go inside, I am not there, I walked out long ago ”,

meaning that in some of the so-called places of worship, the true spirit of Religion has ceased to exist.

The truth, however, is that Christ is knocking at our doors, every day, every hour, every minute, every second. . . . He knocks at the doors of our hearts. *Christ is not a person or personality, not merely a historical figure who lived somewhere in the Mid-East for so many years and was crucified, and was buried, round whose name Christianity blossomed forth. . . . Christ is that which is the Truth always.*

“ I am the Way, and the Truth and the Life. ”

He is seeking us. . . . we don't like to be sought. . . . we do not wish to be even introduced to Him. . . . but He is very patient because He is the embodiment of all-goodness and all-patience and therefore of all-Godliness. . . . He is everything perfect. . . . therefore He is also Patience personified. . . . He waits for the Prodigal son to come back. . . . The Divine Father is waiting, knocking at the door of our hearts. Even if we refuse to open the door, He will come again and again—one year, two years, 15 years, 20 years, 40 years, 50 years, nay even a million years or more perhaps—then a day will certainly come when we will keep the door open on our own and wait for Christ. . . . He need not then knock. . . . He can just enter. *Only then will we become Christians, and it is then that the real Christmas is celebrated, when we allow Christ to be born in our hearts. . . . and till that day any amount of fanfare for Christmas is not Christmas at all.*

When are we going to open the door ? Up to now, Satan has been having dinner with us, and when Christ knocks at the door, we have not been inclined to get up and open it. . . . but He keeps on knocking to remind us that we are in the company of some ‘ chap ’ who does not mean well by us, and who only wants to mislead us. . . . and we will discover this some day when we will be able to say like Christ :

“ Get thee behind me Satan ”,

and order the devil out of our lives.

Christ accepts us as His children, but we do not recognise Him as our Father. . . . we have deserted Him as our Father, but He has not abandoned us. . . . it is at present a sort of one-way traffic. . . . His love for us is so perfect, so wonderful because He is the embodiment of Love itself. . . . He is Love itself—Love in personified form. . . . so He has all the patience to wait for the Beloved—for the day that we give in to Him, and surrender to Him. He is ready to take us with outstretched arms. But we will never love Him as long as we are in the clutches of that illusory mistress known as Miss Devil. She tries to mislead us, and tempt us by offering the glitterings of the sense objects saying :

“ Come on, take some drinks, life is meant for drinking, life is for cutting another’s throat, life is for eating, and drinking, mating and making merry, life is for enjoyment, life is not meant for caring for others ”.

In this way, she does not allow us to think. . . . but Christ continues to knock at the door of our hearts.

III

Now, I wish to draw your attention to certain Religious practices and blind beliefs that have no sincerity behind them, and which lack the necessary faith and clear understanding, so much so that they have the effect of estranging the minds of the thinking youth.

For instance, there is a belief among Hindus that a bath in the holy waters of the Ganges will wash away all sins. This belief has arisen as a result of a literal interpretation given to a tradition to suit the convenience, soothe the conscience and thereby give mental satisfaction to the people. Some do all the nonsense throughout their lives and at 60 go down to this river to avail themselves of the opportunity to wash away their sins and to get the satisfaction that their places in heaven have been

reserved. There are others who go there periodically to have their baths and return again to their old 'business' of cheating, acting crookedly, being hypocritical, false, full of jealousy, hatred and anger, imagining that all their sins have been pardoned. Ganges is not going to purify them in this manner. The river Ganges really stands for the Ganges of Wisdom which is within—God. That is the sort of Wisdom that Jesus referred to when He addressed the Samaritan woman by the well:

“Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst again.”

In connection with this belief in the purifying powers of the Ganges, there is a story. It is said that Lord Shiva and His consort Parvati were watching from the heavenly spheres the fun of lakhs and lakhs of people bathing in the Ganges. According to the story Parvati asked Shiva :

“Can you tell me how many of these lakhs taking part in bathing in the Ganges do so with the real faith that a dip in the Holy river will wash away all their sins?”

Shiva looked round and said :

“Not one among them has genuine faith”.

Parvati expressed complete surprise at this and said :

“What do you mean? It is unbelievable, that there is such little faith among them, having come here after spending so much money and undergoing so many difficulties”.

So Shiva said :

“I tell you that any person who has such deep faith in God or Religion or Prayer is one who does not necessarily believe in the purifactory effects of the Ganges. Let us carry out a test.

I will disguise myself as an old man. You be my wife—an old woman. I will allow myself to be carried away by the Ganges waters and you start crying out and people will gather round. Some may perhaps attempt to pull me out, but you must warn such people that due to a curse in our family by a Rishi, any person who wants to save your husband must be absolutely sinless, else he will also be drowned”.

So with this arrangement between themselves they descended to the river bank. After a few minutes the old man was being washed away and the woman started shouting :

“ O God, my God, save him, my husband is being washed away ”.

When some of the onlookers were about to jump into the water she cried :

“ I implore you to be careful as there is a curse in the family that they who jump in must be without sin, else they will be also carried away by the waters ”.

This threw the would-be rescuers into a predicament even as it happened when Jesus addressed those who accused the woman taken in adultery :

“ He that is without sin, let him cast the first stone ”.

The impact of the warning was so strong and startling that it struck their conscience and there followed a suspense. They just stared at one another. The big pundits and even the Swamis who were there looked on sheepishly not knowing what to do. Meanwhile, the old man was being carried away. Just then a man

who had spent the night in a brothel—a drunkard as well—happened to pass that way on his way back home. His attention was drawn by the shouting and screaming and on inquiries he was told about the drowning old man and the consequences that would befall the wrong kind of rescuer. He addressed the woman :

“ You stupid, have you got any sense ? What do you mean ? Sin or no sin, the man is being washed away and you are laying down impossible conditions for rescue. ”

So saying he jumped in and rescued the old man. Then Shiva explained :

“ See two lakhs of people have assembled here. The condition for saving me was that the rescuer should be sinless. Now the Ganges according to the prevailing belief washes off all sins once a person dips in it. Therefore the moment one jumps in, one’s sins are washed away and one becomes pure. As such, anybody could have rescued me. This shows that those people had not the sincere belief in the purifying power of the Ganges. It was only a hollow belief which was exposed under test. If they sincerely believed in the power of the Ganges to purify them, they need not have hesitated over the condition laid down for rescue, but could have jumped in as they would have become sinless on touching the waters. The condition was okay, but there was a ‘ catch ’ in it. But that man who perhaps may have been indifferent to the cleansing powers of the Ganges was not stumped by this condition. ‘ A man is drowning and you fellows are talking nonsense,’ he said and jumped in without any thought for his own safety. That is real worship of God. . . .

worship of Christ....worship of Krishna....
worship of Shiva....whatever his other
frailties might have been."

Doesn't this remind us of this Biblical statement ?

"If anyone says 'I love God', and hates
his brother, he is a liar".

Or isn't it like the person who prays

"Our Father who art in Heaven...."

but cares not one bit what happens to his neighbour?

Compare with the false faith displayed in the above
story the real faith shown by the thief who was nailed
to the cross along with Jesus. He repented sincerely
and appealed to Jesus:

"Lord, remember me when Thou comest into
Thy Kingdom."

Jesus promptly forgave him, and assured him :

"Today thou shalt be with me in Paradise".

That was an instance of sincere repentance and
redemption. But is this what we see in the ritual of
confession which goes on in the Churches? We make
a mockery and convenience of confession by going to
Church, making confessions, coming out and committ-
ing the same sins over and over again somewhat like
what happened in the Ganges bath story. Such insin-
cerity is not only in Christianity; it is in Hinduism,
it is in Islam, in Buddhism, in fact in all Religions.

A man is liable to err and make mistakes due to
the residue of his Samskaras (inherited tendencies) in
past evolutions. He may be carried away by temp-
tations, but at least when he becomes aware of his

faults, he must try to mend his ways without giving way to self-pity or self-condemnation. *Life is full of failures, and every failure is a stepping stone to success. God is compassionate. . . . so if we sincerely confess our sins, making a genuine effort to avoid such sins, there is a purgation, and if we fail in these efforts it does not matter. . . . I tell you, God is not worried even if you make mistakes 10,000 times a day. So try and feel genuinely as the tax-collector—in the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican—prayed.*

“ God be merciful to me a sinner. ”

If there is sincerity in the prayer and the yearning is pure, you will find the 10,000 mistakes coming down to 9000, 9000 to 8000 and within a few months, a few years, you will be absolutely purified. *In every Religion, things are made mechanical and the ideal behind is forgotten and the spirit encompassing it is lost sight of and the whole thing becomes a matter of routine.*

Then again look at the way we view a conversion of a person from one faith to another. When a Hindu becomes a Christian, the Hindus keep grouching “ The Christians are converting Hindus, ”, but when a Christian becomes a Hindu they welcome the change saying: “ Even Christians are becoming Hindus, how great is our Religion; even the Americans are singing ‘ Hare Rama, Hare Rama ’. ” But what I say is, *why should the Americans come and sing ‘ Hare Rama ’ when they have Jesus Christ, the Gospels, the Church and the Bible? Christ has taught everything to enable His followers to become perfect. . . . to become Divine.* Now, if you say Christ has not helped you in your development, how do you expect Krishna to do so? If Christ couldn’t help you, Krishna also cannot help you, if the Bible couldn’t help you, the Gita also cannot help you. . . . if you are fanatic about one Religion, you will be fanatic about other Religions too. . . you will be a fanatic anywhere.

To a Christian who wants to become a Hindu, I would say : " Come here friend, it is not necessary to change Religion or change to singing ' Hare Rama' from praying ' Our Father who art in heaven' Go to your own Church, pray to Christ, read the Bible, and Christ will bless you." Do we have the courage to say so? There we conveniently fail. But why do you object only when someone from the Hindu fold changes to Christianity? You must bluntly tell such a person too : " Come here, why do you want to become a Christian? If you no longer believe in Hinduism, what is the guarantee your belief in Christianity is going to last, and that you will believe in Christ? A man who does not believe in one form of Divinity is not going to believe in another form of Divinity essentially the trouble is a lack of faith ".

IV

Let us now try to understand what Jesus taught. If you do not understand the Bible, why don't you pray to Christ direct ?

" O Lord, what does it mean when you asked us to pray ' Give us this day our daily bread.' ?" Would you approach Christ in that spirit? Have you ever tried it? I tell you, it is not necessary to get anybody's interpretation. As you read the Gospels you will come across the passage :

" Be ye perfect as your Father in Heaven is perfect ".

Now, what does Christ convey in that statement about being perfect? How can I be perfect like God? I am such a stupid fellow and subject to so many limitations how can I become like God? How then can Christ make such a declaration? If you can make such a sincere approach, since He is within you, He will be able to give a flash to your understanding, and then

you will be able to understand the true import and appreciate the spirit behind that particular statement. This is the way to understand the Gospel of Saints.

The Gospel of Saints cannot be understood intellectually. You can only understand the literal meaning thereby. But the spirit of it has to go to your soul....get assimilated there....get saturated there and become part and parcel of you. You have to deeply and sincerely ponder over such words invoking His Grace to help you to understand....unless and until you meditate about them you will not be able to understand the true meaning of the Bible, the Koran, the Gita, the Upanishad....for that matter the true meaning of any Gospel of any Saint. So why should a Christian want to learn Yoga, when he can go to the Church and pray? He can recite the Lord's prayer with all his heart and soul remembering Christ's commandment :

“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength.”

Have you ever practised this first of all? When you pray:

“Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name”.

Have you put your heart and soul and everything there? The heart may be in one place, the mind in another, and the soul elsewhere. The body alone is in the Church. How then do you expect Christ to bless you and give you illumination and wisdom and make you a good Christian to realise the Kingdom of heaven within you? Have you ever tried first to pray with your whole heart? *When you pray with all your heart and Soul you will find newer and newer meanings of the same statements flashing in your mind.* It is so not only in regard to the Bible, it is equally applicable where any Gospel of any Prophet, anywhere in the world is concerned.

Now, what does conversion really mean ? It means a change from a lower understanding to a higher understanding.... from a base nature to a refined nature....from an uncivilised brutal behaviour to a civilised refined cultured behaviour....from an animal level to a human level....from a human level to a refined human level....from a refined human level to a Divine human level. That is the *conversion*....it is not giving up one holy book for another, abandoning one path and taking to another. If you are a nuisance in the Temple, you will be a nuisance in the Church too. If you are quarrelsome in the Temple, you are going to be the same in the Church as well with questions like "Why should Rev. Father do it this way and not the other way ?" and so on. All the time you quarrel there too, because *essentially a transformation has to take place within which is the real conversion.*

The Tamil word for conversion is "மதமாற்றம்" (Mathamattam). It does not signify a change from one Religion to another. The meaning of "மதம்" (Matham) is arrogance, vanity, pride, greed, anger, hatred, lust, the animal nature, the evil qualities within, the base nature within, the devil within. These have to undergo conversion, or they have to change. So "மதமாற்றம்" (Mathamattam) means "மதத்தின் மாற்றம்" (Mathathin mattam) and not change from one Religion to another. Once the "மதம்" (Matham) is transformed you can be in any Religion....a true Christian is a true Hindu, a true Hindu is a true Muslim, a true Muslim is a true Buddhist and so on.

So when we analyse the position in this way, we will find that all we need is available in whatever Religion we might have adopted. It so happens that you are of Christian parentage....you therefore go to Church, read the Bible and pray to Christ....it so happens I am a Hindu Swami : what does it matter ? Take the Gita and start reading it, take Saint Tayumanavar's

hymns and read them. You will understand them because *the Truth realised by all Saints everywhere is the same*. If Christ had been born somewhere in Colombo, He would have spoken in Sinhala, and the Bible would have been in Sinhala. If some other Saint, say Tayumanavar, had been born somewhere in Mid-East, he would have spoken in Hebrew. It so happened one was born in Mid-East, another in Tamilnad, somebody else somewhere else and so on. But the *Truth is the same though the languages are different, and the approaches different*.

The essence of all Religions is found in a few statements in the Bible. Take the statement :

“ Be ye perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect ”.

In each one of us, there is the potential condition of Divinity....we are all potential Christs. Even the worst kind of Chicago gangster is a potential Christ.... he is waiting to blossom. Every woman is a potential Mary....a potential Divinity....a potential Divine Mother....Divinity is sleeping within her.... it has to be awakened....Even though you may be the worst sinner there is potential Divinity in you....you are the child of God.

Norman Vincent Peale, the author of a number of books contends that when you cannot do a certain thing stating “ ‘IT’ is not in me,” such a statement is totally incorrect, since ‘IT’ is in everyone because Christ has said :

“ The Kingdom of heaven is within you ”

When the Kingdom of heaven is within you, how do you say ‘IT’ is not in you ? Often we say that it is not in our power, when we have the power of the Kingdom of God within ourselves. So do not develop this kind of

inferiority complex that you cannot do certain things....you can do anything because you are potentially Divine. Now, to adopt this positive attitude Jesus has given us a tremendous confidence when He declared :

“ Whatsoever ye ask in My name, it will be given”.

Whatever you may be at present, you can become Divine. Then again take the statement :

“ Man does not live by bread alone ”

together with the prayer :

“ Give us this day our daily bread ”.

Though apparently there is a contradiction in these two statements, it would be clear that in the statement that ‘man does not live by bread alone’, the term ‘bread’ applies to the ordinary needs of everyday life—that which is needed for physical sustenance, whereas the prayer asking God for our ‘daily bread’ implies not merely the needs of the body, but also the requirements of our minds and spirits....“ every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God ”....the Spiritual food for everlasting life. The Power of God, the Love of God—these are what sustain the Soul. It is the Divinity within that Light, the Light of all Lights.... the Light of the Intelligence....the Light of the Mind....the Light of the Breath.... the Light of the Eye. There is an Upanishadic statement according to which Divinity is the Light of the eye, the Light of the nose, the Light of the ear, the Light behind the act of touch, the Light behind thinking, the Light behind understanding, the Light behind the Light of the Soul. So he is the Light of Lights.... the Supreme Light.

This is what St. John referred to when he said :

“ The Light shineth in the darkness and the darkness comprehendeth it not.”

Tayumanavar, and other Saints and Sages, all understood alike and expressed the same thought on this point because the Truth is the same. We are blind. . . . we are keeping our eyes closed. . . . the Light is on. . . . but we say it is dark. . . . the Light is shining in the darkness of our closed eyes. All that we have to do is to open our eyes and see. . . . the Light is ever shining. . . . the Light is never absent. The Light shineth in the darkness and the darkness comprehendeth it not. How? Because we imagine man can live by bread alone—that is material comforts and conveniences. When we think we can live by this bread alone, then we will not bother about the Light which sustains the soul. So He gives the confidence :

“ Be ye perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect.”

and warns us :

“ Man shall not live by bread alone ”

“ Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life”.,

and therefore :

“ Seek ye first the Kingdom of heaven and all else shall be added unto you ”.

Now, where is the Kingdom of heaven? Jesus has given the answer clearly :

“ The Kingdom of heaven is within you ”

And to the question as to how you know that, the Bible declares :

“ Be still and know that I am God. ”

And then you will realise :

“ I and my Father are One ”,

and attain Christhood....the highest Truth where the concept of I, the world and God are One....The same Truth is expressed by Christ when He says :

“ In that day you will know that I am in my Father, you in Me, and I in you. ”

That is the wonderful Cosmic Consciousness—the Christ Consciousness.

This is the crux....this is the essence....the quintessence....this is the “ सारम् ” (sāram)....this is the distilled juice of all Religions, all teachings, of any book published in the name of Religion right from time immemorial....of whoever has talked something about Religion....something about Truth....something about God. *Collect all these outpourings expressed in any Religious book....of any faith....of any philosophy...of any Gospel, you will observe that they all boil down to the same Truth.* This is Hinduism, this is Buddhism, this is Christianity, this is Islam, this is Zoroastrianism, this is Judaism—in a nutshell. *These names of Religions are tags put on by us for conventional understanding,* just as we call by different names the different rooms of a complete house for convenience, according to the uses they are put to. But remember all these divisions—these rooms—are within the house.

Once we understand this, what does it matter whether I am a Christian or a Buddhist or a Hindu or a Muslim ? We are all human beings. We would like to become perfect by breaking all the barriers and limit-

ations, the lower animalistic tendencies and base natures, sublimate them all and transform ourselves into Divinities and sparks of Divinities and realise the Christ-Consciousness, realise the Shiva-consciousness, the Buddha-consciousness, the Allah-consciousness and exhibit it in our daily dealings....by Love....by Service....by Understanding....by Adaptability....by Adjustment....by Accommodating....by Forgiving and Forgetting....and Enjoying life—this is Paradise, Heaven, Swargam, Vaikuntham, Kailasam, Mukti, and so on and so forth.

When we understand Religion in this way we have no quarrels, we have no disagreements. Then we can tackle that Rationalist....the man who says there is no Hell or Heaven, like the young man who accosted the Priest in the story I related at the beginning of this talk. Now, this is where we should wake up a little. *Those of us who believe in God.... those of us who would like to propagate the message of God.... the Gospel of the Love of God, we have to wake up because if we keep quarrelling among ourselves whether this Religion or that is true or which Religion is the greater, how can we convince the man who says no Religion is true?* We can never convince such doubters so long as we quarrel among ourselves. So the unbeliever boldly claims that there is neither Heaven nor Hell. He teases us :

“ You want to tell me about Heaven and Hell, when you have not clarified the point among yourselves. ”

The Christians say Hell is one thing, the Hindus say it is something else, the Christians say Liberation is like this, the Buddhists say it is like that and so on. One Religion describes God as something, another as something else. So the Rationalist says :

“ First of all, settle your quarrels and try to come to a uniform understanding : then tell me what I should do. ”

This is the crux of the problem before us. On one side there is Science and Technology offering all the glitters of this world towards a materialistic outlook. To counteract this attraction, to bring conviction that man requires more than bread there is only half baked knowledge—the inability of Religious people to give a convincing answer to the modern educated man, especially the youth. The youngsters want neither Christianity nor Hinduism, nor for that matter any Religion. But if we stop our quarrels among Religions as well as other bickerings regarding dogmas etc. and show love to one another, be kind to one another, we can join together and deal with those youngsters. If we can co-operate we can arrive at a beautiful understanding. That requires a little broadmindedness. Religion will never constrict your heart.... make you narrow in your outlook and ambition and aspirations because as Jesus said :

“Ye shall be perfect as your Father in Heaven is perfect”.

Perfection means expansion. If it is an expansion there cannot be narrow-mindedness. It is broad-mindedness. Therefore if we say we are Religious, no matter whether Hindu or Buddhist or any other faith, unless and until we are broad-minded we are not truly Religious. A Christian who is a fanatic is insulting Christ, a fanatic Hindu is insulting Shiva, a fanatic Buddhist is insulting Buddha, no matter how many times he goes to the Church or Vihara and does pooja there. You can burn all the candles in the shops in Colombo at the altar, but it would be meaningless ‘burning’....that’s all.. you will be just burning money. *But if you really want to burn the candle, the base nature in you must burn as candles. That is how Meera’s song to Krishna ran like this :*

“I am the candle, O Lord : my body is the deepam—the ahal. The Love for You is the oil : myself am the wick and You are the Light.

Light me with Your Light and let me glow and glow, burn and burn, and then melt in You—Your radiance. Meera is the lamp. Meera is the wick. Meera's mind is the oil. Meera's body is the lamp and Your Light is the flame which lights the wick. So let me burn and burn and burn and dissolve in Your Light. So this Light let it merge in that Light."

That is what Meera wanted and Meera had achieved that. Is it not the same thing that Christ says? Is it not the same thing that Buddha says? Is it not the same thing that the Hindu and Muslim mystics sang? *It is the same old wine, in different bottles with different labels. And we are quarrelling over labels and the bottles, not the contents.* We are quarrelling over the containers forgetting the contents. What does it matter whether you give me a cup of coffee in a beautiful Chinese porcelain or ever-silver or stainless steel cup, or mud cup or paper cup, so long as the coffee is good. But the unfortunate thing is that we quarrel and are carried away by the containers forgetting the contents.

So let us try to understand the contained....that which is contained in the Church....in the Temple.... in the Mosque....in the Masjid....in the Buddhist Vihara....as one Supreme Elixir Divine. Once you take this drink, you will never thirst again. You will be everlastingly quenched. That is the wonderful message of Christ.

"Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, will never thirst".

May we follow Christ? Open the door then, He is knocking constantly. One day we are going to open it. He will be patient to wait for us to open the door, and will not force it open....He will not do that since He loves us and His love has no condition. Therefore He knocks and knocks and knocks again and again. One day we are going to open the door. When

we open it and allow Christ to come inside and He enters, the devil will not stand in the same place. There can be no co-existence between the devil and Christ.... It is the devil or the Divine. So, if you are giving dinner to the devil, Christ will be waiting outside. The moment you open the door.... the moment you think of opening the door.... the devil feels uncomfortable. He is going to try to tempt you not to open the door.... Isn't it happening every day? Every time we do some wrong, Christ is knocking at the door saying :

“ Behold I stand at the door and knock ; if any man hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and sup with him and he with Me.”

But the devil counters it saying :

“ Don't be silly man, Christ will be only knocking like this, don't answer Him at all.”

Then when we are carried away the devil smiles. But Christ's love still holds on. So again He knocks at the door patiently.... He knocks again and again. A day will come when we will discover this chap as one who misleads. The moment we think of opening the door he will feel uncomfortable and run away. He will just quit through the back door. We allowed him through the front door. He locked us inside and bolted us, and he did not allow the real owner in—Christ—who keeps on knocking. *Let us open the door for Christ so that the devil may bolt by the back door.*

It is then that we celebrate real Christmas.... and that Christmas is the re-birth.

“ Unless one is born again, he cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven.”

So the day we open the door and admit Christ, that is the 'D' day. It is doom's day for the devil and the Divine day for Christ—that is *the death of the ego and the birth of the Spirit. You become immortal. . . . so the death of the devil is the birth of Christ, and that is the true Christmas, the day Christ enters your heart.*

So may we all pray to the Divine Lord to bless us so that we can celebrate the real Christmas.

HARI OM.

It is immaterial to what Temple or Church you go, what days you go for worship, what Scriptures you learn, what books you read, what Poojas you do, unless there is going to be an improvement in you.

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The Religion of Buddha does not differ from the Religion of Christ. The Religion of Christ does not differ from the Religion of Krishna. But the Religion about Buddha may differ from the Religion about Christ. . . . The Religion about Christ may differ from the Religion about Krishna. . . . this is all our bungling.

VESAK—ITS UNIVERSAL SIGNIFICANCE

Talk at the Ramakrishna Hall, Colombo 6.

Life is a perpetual process of evolution—growing out of itself, growing horizontally and vertically—from a tiny chromosome or protoplasm, an unicellular organism or egg cell which has an inherent capacity to multiply and evolve, which process goes on and on and various organisms emerge such as plants, trees, insects, birds, animals, apes and human beings.

The whole life of an ape-man—the brute-man—is spent motivated, impulsed and impelled instinctively for the fulfilment of three inherent urges in him—hunger, thirst and sex. His whole attitude to life outside is a struggle for existence—eating, drinking, mating, dying and decaying.

That means it is a life of darkness, a life of ignorance, a life of instinct...in fact a life of an animal, more or less. Even the 20th century modern man is like that, in spite of all the expansion in his cerebral centre, his tremendous intellectual power and all kinds of technological advancements, rendering life so comfortable. His aspiration is only to eat, drink and to make merry. He dies and decays and once again the process is repeated.

When from this darkness of ignorance he evolves a little, his intelligence starts functioning in the right way and then there is an awakening....a blossoming. He gets fed up with his monotonous living, reaches a saturation point and begins to question "What is life.... Why am I here.... Where do I go from here.... What is the ultimate end of all these things.... Who is guiding the

whole thing....Is there anyone....If so, where is He. Is it a He or a She or an It?" In this way when he seriously starts questioning, it is a sign of the blossoming of his consciousness....the First Poornima (Full Moon)...and this takes place in stages. The Amavasya (New Moon day), when there is total darkness in the night sky, can be compared to the enveloping of the Soul by darkness and the progression of the Moon from this point is symbolic of the mind's evolution to its fullness and brightness.

In Hindu occultism, the Sun represents the Truth in us....the Soul in us....the Divinity in us. The Moon stands for the Mind. The light of the Moon is actually the light of the Sun reflected on the surface of the Moon and re-reflected towards the earth, which we call moonlight. The Sun is self-luminous, whereas the luminosity of the Moon is dependent on the Sun.

In the same way there is in us a Soul-Consciousness and a Mind-Consciousness. The Mind-Consciousness is symbolised by the Moon and the Soul-Consciousness by the Sun. The Soul-Consciousness is an eternal, perpetual Light, whereas the Mind-Consciousness begins from the darkness of Amavasya (New Moon) growing from life to life through millions of births till one fine morning man asks "Is this life only eating, drinking, mating, dying and decaying.... Is there anything beyond, etc.?" When these questions occupy one's mind seriously it may be considered the first stage towards Enlightenment—symbolically said to be the First Poornima in its evolutionary process.

Even after this, man in his evolutionary march towards Enlightenment continues to be riddled with more serious and deeper questions involving concern for humanity, such as "Why does one grow old....Why does one fall ill....Why does one die....Does life consist of only these....Will these occurrences happen to me also?" He gets terribly upset and perturbed in mind.

But as a result of prolonged and introspective reflection—may be under a tree, by a river, a cave, a mountain or shrine—at long last there occurs something like an explosion in his mind when his consciousness is Enlightened and he has found the answers to his anxious and harrowing questions. He begins to understand that life is painful but he also now knows how to overcome it. . . . that life involves suffering but he has the knowledge to transcend it. The calm and peace that follow is expressive of the Enlightenment he has received, benefiting all mankind. This marks his reaching an important milestone in the process of Enlightenment—symbolically known as the Second Poornima.

From this stage of Enlightenment there springs a yearning that other humans too should share the same joy on the principle of the ancients :

“ யான் பெற்ற செல்வம் பெறுக இவ்வையகம். ”

In the FIRST POORNIMA we became Siddharthas, in the SECOND Gautama Buddhas, and the THIRD is when the mortal frame drops and the individual Light merges in the Universal Light radiating Love, Peace and Wisdom to everyone. . . . the Sun and Moon become One. . . . the Moon is extinguished in the Sun, and the Sun absorbs the Moon. That is what is called the Great Emptiness, the Great Nakedness, or Para Nirvana. This is the process through which everyone of us passes—first in realising that life is not merely eating, drinking, dying, etc., secondly in becoming aware of the answers to our perplexities, and thereafter experiencing an Invisible Universal Light, Eternal and Infinite. First Siddhartha having intellectual knowledge, wealth, enjoyment and all worldly comforts. Then Siddhartha becomes Bodhisatva. . . . an awakened person. . . . a Buddha who finally becomes the Para-Buddha, Sam-Buddha, the Supreme Universal Awakening Itself. . . . Reality Itself.

21st May was Vaisaka Poornima....Vesak Full Moon. This day always falls, according to the Hindu astrological calculations, when the Sun occupies the house of Taurus in the star Rohini. During this period the Moon attains the maximum brightness due to its astronomical situations. Buddha's Poornima being Vaisaka Poornima is therefore significant—He was born on a Vaisaka Poornima, He attained Buddhahood on a Vaisaka Poornima, and He attained Para Nirvana also on a Vaisaka Poornima. It is noteworthy that all three Poornimas (evolutionary experiences) occurred in the life-time of a single individual,—Buddha being the Descent of the Universal Person in a mortal frame, leading the life of the entire human evolution in one single life-span.

He proclaims to humanity that in our lives too we have to be born again in three ways....pass through three Poornimas and attain Sathwic Consciousness illumined by the Divine within, the Truth within, the Immortal within, the Universal within. When that takes place, our life becomes a life of Love and not hatred, a life of Compassion and not cruelty, a life of Joy and not sorrow, a life of Serenity and not conflict and so on, reaching that composed Ananta Sayanam of Buddha as portrayed wonderfully in statues and pictures—the reclining posture. Sayanam is not lying flat or on the back, but lying on a side, reclining with the elbow and palm as head rest. Ananta means Infinite and Sayanam means relaxing. Thus Ananta Sayanam conveys the sense of reclining in Infinity....lying on the bed of Universal Consciousness.

In Hindu mythology Maha Vishnu is portrayed as in Ananta Sayanam—lying on the bed of Infinity with half closed eyes. If the eyes of the reclining Buddha are closely examined it would be noticed that they are neither fully opened nor fully closed. It is the eye of the Drishta or Visionary....withdrawn and not focussed on anything in particular....it is withdrawn and

yet it is out-focussed. That means there is the stillness and yet there is the vision of everything which is taking place around. He sees all things that are taking place, but is not affected by them. That is the Consciousness of Buddha in Ananta Sayanam when He was about to shed his mortal coil—that is His THIRD POORNIMA. He was in a state of sleep, a sleep which is awakening, an awakening which is sleep. . . . a thoughtless Stillness. . . . a relaxed Awareness. One day when we too experience the Third Poornima in our lives we will throw the garment of our bodies away as casually as Buddha, Ramakrishna, Ramana Maharishi, Christ or Prophet Mohamed did. One day we will also go into Ananta Sayanam and that is possible only if we go to Conscious sleep now. If we have a Conscious sleep every day, then at the time of death too we can with consciousness make our exit.

The coincidence of three events — Buddha's Birth, His Enlightenment and final Absorption—is of the most beautiful occult mystical significance. *Buddha is the same Universal substance that had descended into the mortal world in a mortal frame for the guidance and ascent of mankind. So He is not merely the Light of Asia, but of all humanity because He is the Light of the Universe, He is the Light of the Cosmos. The Light of the Cosmos descends to this solar system and becomes a Light of humanity so that humanity could ascend to the Light of the Cosmos and become 'One' with it.*

This Divine Master has influenced this wonderful Island known as the Pearl of the Orient—not materially speaking. It is the Divine Pearl of the Orient, because Buddha is the crest gem of this necklace. If you conceive Ceylon as a necklace suspended from Point Pedro, Buddha is at the centre—a beautiful priceless marvellous Pearl. In Divinity's sight we are ungrateful beings for even though nature has blessed us so bountifully, yet we do not have the eyes to see the beauty of it all, and we live unworthy lives. . . .

we fight in the name of Religion, in the name of language, in the name of caste and so on. We do everything except heeding the tender, loving, compassionate pleadings of the Great Master who came 2500 years ago and cried his heart out. His words have fallen on deaf ears often. Let us pray to that compassionate Buddha to inspire our minds; He alone can do it—not the politicians, not the statesmen, not the United Nations. They cannot think rationally because their minds are agitated—convulsed in their own shells, their own prejudices and predilections, their own ideas, ambitions etc. They do not want to see their friends' point of view. Each is holding on to his own, and the common man suffers.

What can I as a Sadhu . . . a beggar . . . and a visitor do? Buddha, once a prince, deliberately chose to be a beggar and stood with the begging bowl at every door. In return He gave you Compassion, He gave you Knowledge, He gave you Light, and He gave you Wisdom to make your life worthwhile for all generations. How many wonderful Enlightened Souls have trod from Kashmir to Dondra and blessed this land. I can also as a Sadhu only beg of you, I cannot appeal to your reason because it is agitated . . . I cannot appeal to your heart because it is cold . . . your head is heated up and your heart is cold. Therefore all that I can do is to appeal to that Divine Master—Lord Buddha. “Oh Lord, You alone can Bless them all . . . You came and gave your Message to these souls.” Some have been blessed by other Saints and Messiahs and Prophets—either by the Light of Prophet Mohamed, by the Light of Christ or Krishna. They all can shed the Light of understanding on the people of this land and develop in them a sense of gratitude, devotion, peace and brotherly understanding. Once we have this, every body can be smiling, laughing, meditating and serene and go through the experience of the same POOR-NIMAS as Buddha.

If we examine in which Poornima we are, we will find that the vast majority, except for a few blessed advanced Souls, are somewhere between Ekadasi and the First Poornima (Ekadasi being the 11th day of the bright fortnight after the New Moon.) Hence for the most part we are prone to the attractions and distractions of material objects while also having a bit of inclination towards Spiritual values. We are in the dilemma of being subject to the Divine as well as the devil. But that we shall progress is certain, when the allurements of the flesh will drop off and we shall be in a mind to stand before the Truth and ask for nothing but Enlightenment.

Buddha's story is the story of mankind. Every thing in the Universe is evolving from matter to life, intelligence to consciousness, consciousness to Truth. The compressed spring of evolution is trying to uncoil from its confined space. We are all in the process of uncoiling.

May this Island be happy and prosperous.

“God is my mother and father
Devotees are my relatives
The whole Universe is my home.”

That is the ideal of Buddha, that of Krishna, Christ and Prophet Mohamed.

Buddha is none other than the Universal Substance, the Universal Truth, and so we offer the prayer :

Buddham Saranam Gachchaami

I take Refuge in the Supreme Divine Light
Buddha.

Dhammam Saranam Gachchaami.

I take Refuge in that Supreme Divine Path.

Sangham Saranam Gachchaami

I take Refuge in that Divine Order.

HARI OM.

WHAT IS UNDERSTANDING?

Talk at Saraswathi Hall, Colombo 4.

“Without trying to Understand what is Understanding, endeavouring to Understand others, is it Understanding or Misunderstanding?” So asked a Sage.

“அறியும் அறிவினை அறியாது அயனை அறிவது
அறியாமையன்றி அறிவோ?”

To be able to Understand, I must first know exactly what is that which is meant by Understanding. Understanding means to Understand my capacity to Understand as well as my liability to Misunderstand. I have to Understand both.

How Misunderstanding arises

Regardless, we go on trying to Understand everything else, and life becomes a big flop, a failure, a conflict, a commotion, full of restlessness, excitement, tensions and so on. The son does not know why the father behaves in a particular way ; the father does not know why the son behaves like this ; the husband does not know why his wife acts like this and vice-versa. The result is confusion.

Take a very common and striking example. The husband goes to office in the morning, working there for hours and hours dealing with so many characters. His nerves are on edge : physically and mentally he is exhausted. Naturally he would like to get home at the end of the day to forget the whole thing, to have a cup of coffee, relax and perhaps indulge in some light reading. Meanwhile, the wife has been slaving in the house right from early

morning bothered with coffee, lunch, tiffin, servant, milk, rations, chillie powder and the like. She has had to tackle so many problems and is just tired and fed up by 4 o'clock. She likes to have a little fresh air and is in a mood to 'go out'. The husband is in a mood to 'come in'. Understand that. The wife at the time she finishes her house-hold chores Understands exclusively only her feeling of wanting to 'go out' but does not Understand her husband's feeling of wanting to 'come in'. In a similar manner, the husband Understands only his desire to 'come in', but does not Understand his wife's desire to 'go out'. *Each is conscious of and Understands only his or her own restricted individual personal needs and not the other's.* So what happens?. You can let your imagination work here. As soon as he comes, she is all dressed up and says "I have already booked the tickets for the 'show' through the next door boy; it is already 6 o'clock, so come on, get ready". The husband is annoyed and starts, "What nonsense are you talking? Can't you Understand I am so dead fagged, I want to have a bit of rest; who asked you to book the tickets?" He starts firing in this way; she fires back. Then 'flying saucers' flit across and within a few seconds such a mess ensues. This is a case where there has been Contact only on the physical level....no Dialogue, no Understanding....so mentally separation, emotionally also separation. She thinks the husband is cruel and he thinks his wife is inconsiderate.

But if the man had a little Understanding, he would have felt "just as I have been outside the house and am a little exhausted and fatigued and would like to come in and relax, so too my wife who has been inside the house the whole day, bothered with a number of chores would like to go outside. So it is quite natural for her to wish to go out, as it is quite natural for me to want to come in. Therefore, let me Understand her in that way." Likewise, if the wife had a bit of Understanding, she would have thought,

“ It is true that I would like to go out but that does not mean that my husband does not want to take me out. The poor man, because of the load of work in his office is physically and mentally tired. So what he would require is a little rest. As such I will not raise the issue immediately he comes home....all that he would need is a little cheering up. Let him settle down. I shall take off his coat, remove his tie, unlace his shoes, give him a change of clothing and after a wash and a nice cup of coffee, I will approach him with regard to the cinema.” Such thinking on the part of both would have revealed their Understanding of their own Misunderstandings. As soon as his wife takes action on these lines he is cheered up, his fatigue is gone, he is relaxed and receptive. In this receptive mood, the moment the wife throws the suggestion about the cinema, he accepts it with joy. The man obliges the wife, and the wife obliges the husband.

Consequences of Misunderstanding

But more often than not we don't think and act like this. Why? Because we lack Understanding and sometimes we don't care to Understand. Right from the silly husband and wife quarrels onwards to world wars, this has been the cause. On the proper Understanding of Understanding depends the peace and tranquillity not only within oneself, but also between man and man, and nation and nation. It has a vast potential for good as well as for evil. It can unite the world and bring in its train happiness and prosperity, but it can also destroy civilization, and annihilate life on earth. So let us analyse Understanding to secure the good from it, and avert the evil.

STAGES OF UNDERSTANDING

In order to Understand what is Understanding, certain fundamentals have to be grasped first :

Power of Understanding

This is the faculty by which I am able to deal with others. . . . there is some power of reason, power of Understanding, some equipment which is within—call it mind, intelligence, reason—by which I am able to see and talk to you and you are able to hear me, and interpret what I am talking.

Self-awareness

No proof whatsoever is required that I exist. You don't go and ask someone else, "Do I exist?" Well, even if you do, that itself proves that you exist, since the question cannot arise without your existence or as the famous French Philosopher Descartes put it :

" I think ; therefore I am. "

It is the self-conscious principle.

Existence of others

When I am conscious of myself, I also become conscious of myself which is the Subject, and then I am conscious of something other than myself, outside myself, apart from me, which is known as the Object. All Objects can be classified into five categories—He, She, It, They, Those—and the Subject is always I. All these collectively put together is what is known as the world.

Contact

The establishment of a link between the Subject and Object is known as Contact.

Experience

When the Object is connected with the Subject, something happens 'within', which is called experience—some reflex action, some reaction, some response.

Experiences are of two kinds—one is experience where there is Contact alone, and the other is where there is Contact plus Communication.

Communication

Contact need not necessarily be Communication as well—just seeing one is Contact—a neutral experience. But it can become a Communication if I am involved—where some emotion is created. When the reaction or response to a Contact is positive, it is called pleasure and when it is negative, it is known as pain or suffering.

Dialogue and Communion

If I have to establish Contact and Communication, I must have a Dialogue and that Dialogue leads to Communion. When I really establish a Contact and Communication, and have an understanding Dialogue with you, then I Commune. So Communion is possible only when there is a Dialogue and Dialogue is possible when there is Communication, and Communication is possible only when there is Contact.

OURSELVES AND THE WORLD

The degree of Understanding between various people is determined by many factors. Let us now try to examine them.

Life

All experiences put together constitute what is called life. . . . that means life is a sum total of experiences. Experiences begin with Contact and without Contact you just cannot truly live. Experiences are of varying degrees,—where there is Contact only and where there is Contact plus Communication. If I have to live, I have to Communicate—no one can

really live without Communicating. That means life is nothing but a perpetual dealing with something or someone all the time—you have to establish a Contact, a Communication, a Dialogue,—this may be positive or negative, pain or pleasure. That means we are compelled to deal with others whether we like it or not.

Life means dealing and dealing means Contact and Communication. True Communication is Dialogue and true Dialogue leads to Understanding. Therefore, in dealing with others, we must know what is that which can help us in the process. It is Understanding, which means Understanding myself first, my capacity to Understand, and my proneness to Misunderstand and likewise those of the other person. The wife must Understand her capacity to Understand as well as to Misunderstand. She must also Understand the husband's capacity to Understand, and his susceptibility to Misunderstand her. If we do not Understand these four factors we will not be able to have a Dialogue, and hence we cannot Communicate; so we don't deal with one another. . . . we can have only Contact.

Absence of Dialogue

In many of our discussions and dealings in life, it is not Dialogue, but Monologue. Dialogue means, I listen to you, you listen to me. But in practice when I speak to you, you 'shut' your ears and vice-versa. Though my eyes may be looking at you as if intently listening, I don't listen to all that you say. It is true the other way about also. That is because we lack Understanding and therefore we cannot have a true Dialogue and hence we cannot Commune. And if we cannot Commune we are isolated—separated. But the necessity of living compels us to Communicate with one another and have Dialogue, but the tragedy is we are unable to have true Dialogue.

Thus it is that for 20 years a couple has been husband and wife, but the wife does not know the husband and vice-versa. For many years you worked in an office, the subordinate does not know the boss and the boss does not know his subordinate ; for almost a lifetime you have associated with a friend, but you do not know him and he does not know you. There is Contact, but no Communication. Even if there is Communication there is only a Monologue, and not a Dialogue. And why is there no true Dialogue ? Because there is no Understanding and when it is absent, it is a Monologue and so there is no true Dialogue. So unless and until I Commune with myself first, I will not be able to Communicate with you and have true Dialogue. . . . I will not be able to Commune with you.

Capacity to Understand

The first requirement therefore to retrieve this position is to Understand my capacity to Understand as well as my liability to Misunderstand. Let us take the first part first. In order to Understand my Understanding, I have to develop the power to Commune with myself first before I am able to Communicate with you. . . . Commune with you. Communion with me gives me capacity to Communicate with you, and Communication and true Dialogue with you leads to Communion with you and thus we become one that is perfect Understanding. Then I know how to respond, when to respond and how much to respond.

When I have not Communed with myself, how am I going to Communicate with others ? When I am tensed within, how am I going to give you peace ? When I am excited within, how am I going to radiate joy and restfulness to you—composure to you ?

You might have observed that in the presence of an irritable person, you feel uncomfortable yourself ; you just want to get away from him. In fact you get

infected with his irritation because he radiates a kind of negative atmosphere in which you feel restless and uncomfortable.

Capacity to Misunderstand

In regard to the second part, namely Understanding my possible prone-ness to Misunderstand, we have a tendency to think we can Understand anything, anybody, any situation, any event. We do not allow a margin for the possibility that we can Misunderstand too.

Suppose you want to talk to me about the latest political situation in Colombo. I do not even know who the Opposition Leader is, the party positions and the arguments for or against. It will therefore be Greek and Latin to me. So I have to Understand when you discuss the latest political position of Colombo that I don't have the knowledge to Understand what you have Understood. As such I may Misunderstand when you make certain statements. That point, I have to Understand first. So, before listening to you, before trying to Understand the politics of Colombo, I must Understand my own capacity to Misunderstand, because of my lack of knowledge of the subject. But how many of us have such Understanding? When we talk on any topic, we pose off as if we have the ability to Understand everything and thereby Misunderstand, which we confuse as Understanding. In the result, confusion gets worse confounded.

VARIETY IN REACTIONS

There are many other reasons which cause Misunderstanding. We are often at a loss to rationalize some of our reactions.

Different reactions at different times

For instance I am able to Understand a thing at a certain time, but not at other times. . . . the same thing that I Understand at a particular time, I am unable

to Understand at another time. In the morning I am told of a certain thing, I am able to Understand it perfectly well, but the same thing told in the evening does not convince me. For example, in the morning the cup of coffee comes a little late. . . . suppose I am used to coffee at 6 o'clock, and the wife brings it at 6.30. I somehow put up with it thinking "Perhaps today the milk has been late or perhaps—poor thing—she has overslept and she is tired, perhaps something in the house like electricity is not working". In this way I am ready to Understand and when the coffee comes, I give a smile and take it. But the same event, when it takes place in the evening, produces a different effect. I am used to coffee at 6 o'clock in the evening, and when it comes at 6.15 after my office I get irritated and shout, "What is this nonsense? Can't you Understand that 6 o'clock is 6 o'clock, and not 6.15?" Now the wife gets upset, being unable to Understand. She is puzzled, "In the morning when I was half an hour late my husband smiled, now I am only 15 minutes late, but he is shouting". This is just a simple incident—an example.

Different reactions in respect of different persons

Now we have never made an inquiry as to why we are like this. How is it that at a particular time we Understand and at another time we Misunderstand? In a particular mood, we Understand, but not in another. If my mother gives me coffee late, I Understand. But if my wife gives it late, I don't Understand. The housewife takes it easy if the sister comes there and breaks something. If the same thing is broken by the sister-in-law, she gets perturbed. How do you account for this? If the daughter does some mistake the mother takes it easy saying "Poor thing, she is tired, what is to be done?" All lovely excuses she brings out and Understands the situation where the daughter is concerned. If, however, the daughter-in-law does the same thing, the reaction is different—

she becomes furious. Now how do you account for this? An event in respect of one person, I Understand, but the same event in respect of another person, I don't Understand.

In this way if we carefully examine all our actions from morning till night, we will know what a chaotic existence ours is. Yet, we call ourselves rational beings, intellectuals, civilised persons, living in cities like Colombo, Paris, London and so on—going on world tours, reading newspapers, studying International politics, what happened in Vietnam, the whole story of Vietnam, the subtle shades of the various political activities that are taking place around, every blessed bit of knowledge we have mastered. But the sum total of our reactions is just chaos. It is therefore not knowledge that we possess but stupidity.

REASONS FOR VARYING REACTIONS

If we make a proper inquiry, we will find that many factors influence our attitudes.

Each person is an Individual

Somehow each person is a different individual. I have my individuality: you have yours: father and mother, husband and wife, sons and daughters, they all belong to the same family—there is an establishment of a blood relationship, but still they can be unrelated to each other in their Understanding. A brother who can't adjust himself with a brother who is a blood relation can beautifully adjust himself with some unknown person who is in no way related to him. He may be altogether of a different caste, creed, race, Religion, community or country. Don't we experience this in life? That is because each one of us has a distinct individuality.

Samskaras and Vasanas

What do you mean by individuality? It means the sum total of a special combination of Vasanas and Samskaras, particular to that person, a set of moods and moments, a set of whims and fancies, a set of complexes. The Samskaras are nothing else but the impressons which we have gathered in the innumerable past incarnations in the evolution of life. And all these things collected together, bundled up together give a kind of a colour to the total content of that individual's mind. The total content of one's mind is called Samskaras, and my total content, in so far as it depends upon the sum total of all my experiences in the innumerable past lives which are not necessarily yours too, is different from your total qualitative content....and therefore my Samskaras and yours are two different things. I may be your brother....you may be my brother....we may belong to the same parents, the same blood and might have been brought up in the same environment, given the same education, but still my Samskaras would be different from yours. That is why one brother is different from the other brother, in spite of all other similarities.

Once you Understand this, that I am different from you fundamentally in the total content, you will appreciate why I see a thing differently from you. It is because the only faculty by which we both are able to see and react to anything is the mind within. So when that very faculty is of different shades, according to those different shades your reactions also would be of different varieties, though the event be the same. It is something like this. I am wearing a dark blue glass, you are wearing a light blue glass, another is wearing a light green glass, a fourth is wearing a dark green glass. Now according to these shades the object seen would be also of different colours—dark blue, light blue, light green and dark green. If ordinary eye-perception can differ like this, how much more can be

the differences in our conceptions when the very mind which sees is of different colours and different shades ? When you say " We are brother and sister " perhaps one point....one spot may be of the same colour. To that extent you are similar, when you say you are brother and sister. But what about the other spots ? They may be all quite different. Suppose I am wearing a multi-coloured glass with multi-spots in one single glass—in this corner it is green. Another person is also wearing a multi-coloured glass, but in that corner—the same spot where I see green, it is also green. So when he and I both focus on that point, the object will be green. Isn't it ? But when I look through another spot where it is blue and in his glass it is not that colour, I will say it is all blue and he will say it is all another colour. So then who is right ?

Similarly when you say myself, my brother, my sister, my father, my wife and so on, only in one small spot there may be uniformity. But all the other spots may be absolutely diverse. So you will not see eye to eye on all occasions, in all events, in all things. To Understand this, is to Understand about yourself and others, *that you are made up of certain Samskaras and Vasanas which influence your thought structure, your conceptions, seeing things, hearing things, tasting things, smelling things, reacting to things and therefore Understanding things.*

Moods and Moments

Again, each one of us has certain moods and moments. A person may be essentially good. For example, take a loving father—he loves his children, he plays with them, he pats them and teases them, pulls their legs and carries them, and expresses his love in many such ways. That is due to his original Samskaras and Vasanas, which are very good. But there is also a mood to reckon with. He might have come from the office, where probably there might have been terrific work or some upset. Some file might

have been missing, the boss had probably given him a shelling. Feeling fed up and exhausted physically and mentally he comes back home, and if at that time the son says "Daddy, Daddy, shall we play cricket?" He would shout, "Shut up ; get out from here." Now, that same father was playing two hours' cricket with the son the previous evening. This evening when the son comes with the same love, he gets annoyed, because the mood is different. Perhaps after five minutes he may become alright. So certain moods and moments also affect our attitudes.

Whims and Fancies

We also have certain whims and fancies....each one of us has different whims and different fancies.... and there is no rationality in this....there is no logic in this. When you say "I like a particular dish" can you explain why you like that particular dish? You just like it....that's all. There is no logic in this.... just certain whims and fancies. A certain kind of taste you like, a certain kind of colour you like, a certain kind of a way of dressing you like, a certain kind of a hair-do you like. If somebody were to ask you why it is so, you would not be able to give an answer. You just feel so. Even if somebody says, "It does not suit you" you would say "May be so, but it is very nice for me". Then others would say "He is a funny chap....you can't make out this fellow." It is a kind of whim, a fad. Each one of us is having different types of fads, so we don't have a right to criticise others. Just because somebody is having some fad which you don't like, that doesn't mean we don't have fads at all. So keep quiet. We can't throw stones at others because we are living in glass houses ourselves.

Complexes

Take a common example and you will see how silly we are at times. If you are a girl with a dark complexion, you develop a little complex. Even if you have

wonderful talent you may not bring it out because somehow you have developed a complex. "I am dark. . . .so I am not going to exercise my talent. . . .nobody is going to bother about me. . . .nobody is going to talk to me. . . .everybody is looking at me in a funny way " and so on. . . .all just silly imagination, which hampers free living.

The villager has no complexes. If he feels like spitting he just spits, no matter where. If he wants to talk or if he wants to shout he will do so, if he wants to sit in a particular funny way, however funny it may appear to us, he will do so, and if he feels like changing his shirt in the middle of the road, he will just change and go on. He doesn't have complexes. But we have complexes—"I am a big man. . . .I have got this prestige. . . .how can I change the shirt on the roadside? Who will be looking on? What will people say? What will they talk?" All the time we will be worrying about what others would say.

Our eating, our dressing, our doing anything is conditioned by what we imagine others think of us. So we live more or less for the opinions of others and not for ourselves all the time—though we are expected to live for others in a different sense. In many ways we live influenced by the opinions of others. This is a kind of complex. We come across various kinds of complexes in people. Now each one of us has complexes. . . . perhaps my complexes may not be your complexes. . . . your complexes may not be mine.

WHERE LIES THE REMEDY?

Having got so far as to analyse the causes for the existence of different degrees of Understanding in various individuals, let us see how best we can utilize this knowledge to Understand one another.

Understanding myself

The first step in Understanding is to Understand that I am made up of a set of Samskaras. . . . I am made up of a set of Vasanas which influence my total content, the qualitative content of my mind. . . . the power of mind is the only faculty available in me to react and respond, and Communicate and Contact. Therefore, according to the quality or the colour of this particular faculty, I am going to see things, hear things, taste things, smell things. My temperament, my Understanding, my views, my values, my aims, my aspirations. . . . everything is going to depend upon this particular faculty which has a particular total qualitative colour or content. Now I have some moods and moments. . . . I have some whims and fancies. . . . I have some complexes. When I Understand in this way, it gives tremendous knowledge. . . . that means there is a possibility that I can Understand certain things. . . . I can also Misunderstand certain things. To Understand this is Understanding.

Understanding Others

Then again I have to Understand my friend whom I am going to deal with. . . . Understand that he has a set of Samskaras and Vasanas, which are different from mine. He has certain moods and moments which are not of the same type as mine. He has certain whims and fancies which are dissimilar to mine, unlike mine. . . . he has certain complexes which are not mine. Therefore, when I deal with him, I must take into consideration all these factors. When I do so, then the Contact becomes a Communication, the Communication becomes a Dialogue, the Dialogue becomes a Communion. And then I am able to see him as he is, and not as he appears to be. Then the entire life becomes a joy.

Adjustment according to the total content of Mind

Thus at any given moment, whether it is an event, or a circumstance, or environment, anything, whatever it is, we always see things, and conceive things, react to things, respond to things, according to the conditions in which we are caught up. Now the moment we try to Understand and be conscious of it, we have won the game—half at least. “I may Misunderstand Mr. so and so when I am in a nasty mood . . . so it is better that I don’t have a talk with him now . . . let me keep quiet”. The moment you try to Understand this, you are conscious of your inherent deficiencies. And the moment you are conscious of your inherent shortcomings, that itself is an armour and strength. So try to Understand that.

Understanding as Judge

Now the problem is how am I to gain this Understanding? The point is I have to Understand what is Understanding on the analysis made so far. And what is that which made this analysis possible? It is Understanding once again. That means I am going to be my own auditor . . . I am going to be my own lawyer . . . and I am going to be my own prosecutor . . . and I am going to be my own judge. How is it possible? The Understanding which is supposed to Understand is going to judge itself and try to Understand whether the Understanding itself is right or not.

Self-analysis

As stated before, to Understand and deal with others we should try to Understand what is our Understanding, what is our capacity, what is our incapacity, what is our strength, what is our weakness—that is what is known as self-analysis. In Sanskrit they call it Swadya. Swadya is a must for all Spiritual aspirants. But literally translated Swadya means reciting the

the Scriptures—Gita parayanam, Upanishad parayanam, Ramayana parayanam. But the basic meaning is Swa and Adyayanam—Self-Auto-Analysis—analysing myself with the help of my own intelligence, my own Understanding,....trying to Understand my Understanding. This self-analysis is a must for every person. Everyday when going to bed, try to recapitulate the events right from morning till evening....“What are all the things I have done.... with whom have I dealt,..with all those persons have I Communicated or have I only had Contact....how did I deal with the persons and matters that came up....how did I react, whether foolishly or wisely.... why here, why not there, and so forth ?” In this way, if you can make a self-analysis, you will be on the way to perfect Understanding about other persons.

Invocation of Higher Power

But in all these there is an inherent drawback so far as our capacity to Understand and that is where Religion comes to our aid. The ancient sages who were highly developed never took anything for granted. That is why I have emphasized many times that Religion is not a bundle of nonsense, but Supra-sense. It is not nonsense, but the only thing is, it is so ‘Supra’ and we are so caught up in ‘nonsense’ that there is no meeting point. Religion is on the 8th floor and we are on the ground floor. We can’t shake hands at all. Either Religion has to come down or we have to climb up. A meeting is possible only in that way. Now the moment we Understand this much, then things become clear.

Those sages with Supra-sense prescribed that up to the 8th year a child may be left alone since his faculties do not begin to blossom until then. On reaching the 8th year the child should be given a training, commencing with a ritual of Baptism. Baptism means initiation into Life and Understanding. Since Life is

nothing else but dealings and dealings involve Contacts, Communications and Dialogue and Communion, resulting in Understanding, and since as a small boy he would not be able to have this Understanding, a Higher Power is invoked through the Gayatri Mantra: and other Religious instructions were also given.

“ Om Bhūr Bhuvah Svaha
Tat Savitur Varenyam
Bhargo Devasya Dhīmahi
Dhiyo yo nah prachodayāt. ”

And the instructions given were somewhat like this.

“ My dear child, you are now 8 years old ; after another 12 years you have to face Life : and Life means dealing with other persons and situations ; you can deal with others only when you have a perfect Understanding and Understanding consists in Understanding your Understandings and Misunderstandings about yourself and others. Therefore, you have to awaken this particular faculty so that it gains the capacity to be a judge of its own capacities. ”

In short the child is given this simple training and he begins to live in the thought that after 12 years he would have to face life : he constantly recites the prayer.

“ Oh Universal Power, the Creator of the Universe :
Radiant, full of Luminosity, Wisdom,
That Radiant Being, Adorable, Supreme,
I propitiate You,
Enlighten my Wisdom ”.

Now, how does the child know about the Universal Power, the Creator of the Universe, that Intelligence, that Wisdom, that Spirit? The child does not know, but he repeats the prayer mechanically as directed and who gave this beautiful prayer . . . this Mantra? It is a great Sage : and how did he get it? . After deep contemplation he came to the conclusion that *behind these world phenomena, behind these fantastic activities which take place in the Universe, in the human kingdom, in the animal kingdom, in the vegetable kingdom, in the mineral kingdom, there is a Supra-Intelligence operating in perfect precision, pervading everything, permeating all, and interpenetrating every atom. The sage visualized, contemplated, and experienced a mighty Universal Power which is All-Intelligence and Wisdom, which activates, animates, motivates, inspires, and then pulsates, permeates, throbs and pervades everything in the Universe. That is the Universal Intelligence which put in a simple word, is GOD.* That is what the sage had realized.

So the child is told,

“ My dear child, the faculty with which you would Understand the world and others is your power of Understanding. This has to be saturated or charged with the powers of the Universal Intelligence. Now it is not possible for you even emotionally and with faith to establish a contact with that Something which we have realized. So you had better recite this Mantra ”.

“ Om Bhūr Bhuvah Svaha
Tat Savitur Varenyam
Bhargo Devasya Dhīmahi
Dhiyo yo nah prachodayat ”

This prayer helped the child to establish a contact with that Universal Intelligence as Saint Arunagairi Nathar put it :

“ சுற்றிடும் அடியவன் புத்தியில் உறைபவன் ”

The instructions to the child continued in words like these:

“There is a Light which shines in your intelligence.

That Light is the Light of all lights....
The Universal Light....the Universal Intelligence which throbs in your intelligence because of which your intelligence has the capacity to Understand this world”.

So the child is given a training from the 8th year onwards to feed this thought in his mind.

“Dhiyo yo nah prachodayat
Dhiyo yo nah prachodayat
Enlighten my Intelligence
Enlighten my Understanding”.

Because once that is bestowed, life is his....he becomes a conqueror.

There is a Biblical story according to which God appeared to King Solomon in a dream, and wanted him to ask whatever he wished. The young king only asked for an Understanding heart, and God in granting it said,

“Since you have not asked for anything material and you ask for only an Understanding heart, with an Understanding heart I grant you everything”.

When God says I grant you everything, it means that when you possess an Understanding heart everything else also is automatically granted to you because you have a conscious success in whatever you do....since you have a conscious awareness of your deficiencies and efficiencies, not only of yours, but of everything else and of everybody else.

ENLIGHTENMENT OF WISDOM

Now, when we have done introspection and invoke the blessings of God, there follows a state of perfect Understanding.—Enlightenment.

Perfect Understanding

And when there comes this Enlightenment, there follows my Understanding of my own Understandings and Misunderstandings, and your Understandings and Misunderstandings, which depend upon my Samskaras, my Vasanas, my whims and fancies, my complexes and my moods and moments....and so too in your case. So naturally I am able to deal with you perfectly at any given moment—when I should talk to you, what I should talk, how I should talk and what are the words I should use.

Because I have perfect Understanding about myself, I have Communed with myself. Therefore, I can establish a Contact and Communication with you....therefore I can have a Dialogue with you, and therefore I have Communion....and when I establish Communion that is Joy....whenever there is Communion it is Joy.

Conscious Living

Then life becomes a perpetual process of conscious movement of everything I do, I think, and act. Everything is under my control like the main switch being in my hands—any light I want, I can put on or off. I am like an electrical operator having everything under my control. In that way I develop a conscious awareness of every bodily movement, every thought movement, every emotional movement, in fact of every thing. I am also aware of their capacities. This is perfect mastery....I become the real Master.

Communion with myself aids Communication with others....then alone there is Communion with others....and I become a centre of Communion. Why? Because I have the knack of Communing with everybody else. *When I commune in this way with all and with everything—be it ‘He’, ‘She’, ‘It’ or ‘They’.... the whole world, every situation, every event, every person, everything—then I am able to go to the root of any matter and the root of everything is the Truth. So I am in Communion with the Truth....and that is the Supreme Enlightenment or Attainment.*

May we all pray to the Almighty to Enlighten our Understanding so that we can Understand ourselves and others, and establish Contact, Communication, Dialogue and Communion, and become one with the Universal Wisdom.

HARI OM.

Happy is the man who finds WISDOM,
And the man who gets UNDERSTANDING
For the gain from it is better than gain from silver,
And its profits better than gold.

Get WISDOM.....Get UNDERSTANDING
Do not forsake her,.....and she will keep you.
Love her,.....and she will guard you,
Prize her highly.....and she will exalt you,
When you walk.....your step will not be hampered,
And if you run.....you will not stumble.

—Bible.

UNIVERSAL PRAYER

O Adorable Lord of Mercy and Love !

Salutations and prostrations unto Thee.

Thou art Rama and Krishna, Shiva and Vishnu,

Jesus and Allah, Buddha and Mahavira,

Ahurmazda and Jehovah.

Thou art Omnipresent, Omnipotent and Omniscient.

Thou art Satchitananda.

Thou art the Indweller of all beings.

Grant us an understanding heart,

Equal vision, balanced mind,

Faith, devotion and wisdom.

Grant us inner Spiritual strength

To resist temptations and to control the mind.

Free us from egoism, lust, greed, anger, hatred
and jealousy.

Fill our hearts with Divine virtues.

Let us behold Thee in all these Names and Forms,

Let us serve Thee in all these Names and Forms,

Let us ever remember Thee,

Let us ever sing Thy Glories,

Let Thy Name be ever on our lips,

Let us abide in Thee for ever and ever.

HARI OM TAT SAT

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Our belief and conviction about God who exists behind all things should be emotionally acceptable, intellectually sound and above all practical and demonstrable in our lives.

—Swami Shantanand