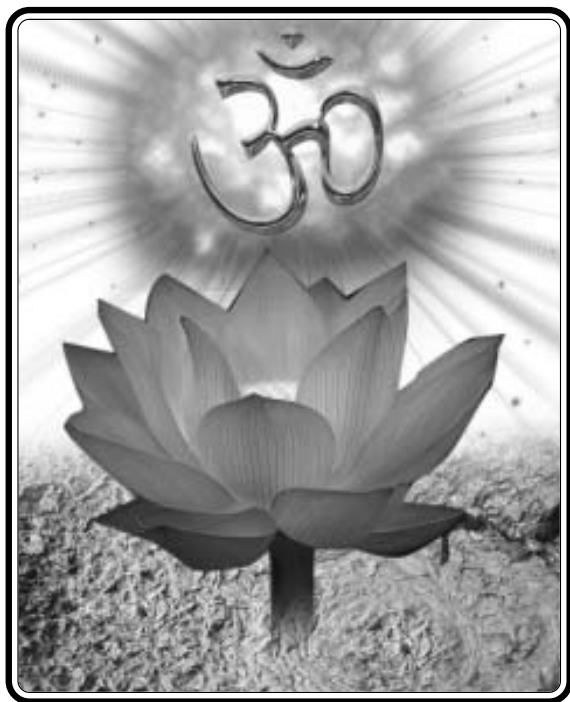


AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OMKAR

- SWAMI OMKAR

VOLUME - I



GOD IS ONE

THE MISSION OF PEACE

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AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OMKAR

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1st Edition : 1977

2nd Edition : 9.7.2017 (Guru Purnima)

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Sri Santi Ashram

Published by :

The Mission of Peace - Sri Santi Ashram

Sri Santi Ashram (PO)

Sankhavaram (Via)

East Godavari (Dt.) - 533 446.

Andhra Pradesh, India.

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Printed at:



H.H. Swami Omkarji Maharaj

Birth 21.1.1895

Niryanam 10.6.1982

OFFERING

These days, everything I do is an Offering, my *Puja*, to the Almighty God, the Indwelling Presence, the Eternal Light, which is the only Changeless Reality and which pervades all, from the tiniest atom to the greatest planet.

My Autobiography is an Offering to all the devoted readers who are privileged to read it, and especially to kumari Jnaneswari, who never thinks of herself but always of others, who has typed half the chapters of the Autobiography and also to Sister Susana Reynolds, an emblem of selfless service and devotion who has completed the Autobiography by retyping and arranging the chapters selflessly and lovingly.

May God's richest blessings of Peace that passeth all understanding and Illumination, which is the Divine Heritage of all ever be upon both of them, the two chosen selfless and dedicated Angels of light, life and love, who live like twin sisters, loving each other in His name; for they are one without a second, ever serving His children selflessly without expectation of any reward. This is an offering not only to the Twin Sisters but to all the loving Sisters and Brothers in all Religions and Nations.

May God's richest blessings ever be upon *bada* Rami and *chota* Rami also, my faithful and loyal companions who follow me everywhere, even to my Jnana Guha when I meditate there; and upon each and every tiny flower on land and to each and every twinkling star and planet in the sky, for they have been the inspiration of my life.

May peace be unto all !

OM OM OM

- Swami Omkar

Note : Since the writing of this offering several years have passed away; along with the passing of time our faithful and loyal dogs, both the Ramies, have also passed away, but their loyal spirits hover over their *samadhis* and the Ashram itself. May peace be unto our Ramies and to all beings. AUM

FOREWORD

By God's Blessings and Prayers of all of you - the Living Images of God, the Autobiography has come to an end with the last Chapter. The friends and well-wishers of Sri Santi Ashram - The Mission of Peace write letters of appreciation, after reading some of the chapters in our monthly journal Peace.

In spite of the appreciation of devotees, I feel dissatisfied with what has come out, for it could have been better. To me all seems to be selfpraise. May my loving readers in the East and the West, take all that is good and assimilate, from the Autobiography and leave the non-essentials.

It was about three years ago I first started to write the first chapter of the Autobiography unwillingly. By God's grace and with the help of our Kumari Jnaneswari in the beginning and with the assistance of Smt. Susana Reynolds towards the end, the Autobiography is now completed. How good is God; Pujya Swami Ramananda Thirthaji has already contributed his learned and inspiring Foreword and Autobiography is blessed to have the sympathy and blessings of many devoted friends and well-wishers of the Ashram in the East and the West. How true are the words that not a blade of grass moves without God's Will! I feel His presence now for it is He who has completed the Autobiography which was started on the 14th May 1967. May all Glory be unto Him and Homage to all the devotees and members of the Ashram for their silent prayers for the successful completion of the Autobiography.

We are deeply grateful to Sri Tharakam Garu for his great help in publishing not only this Autobiography but in all our publications.

Our sister Susana who was staying for sometime in the Peace Centre of the Nilgiris was kind enough to type all these chapters of Autobiography. She desired to end it with the prayers of the simple helpful Peace Prayer not only in the different languages of India, but also in foreign languages of the World. We have added those Peace Prayers, which are available in the last chapter.

May His Will be done and may this Autobiography be useful not only in India but also in foreign lands!

OM TAT SAT

Swami Omkar

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

H.H. Swami Omkarji's Autobiography leaves an indelible mark on every reader. It inspires and touches the core of the heart, as every word comes out of the crucible of Swamiji's experience. For a sincere seeker it is a very valuable and practical guide to lead him/her on the spiritual path, ultimately making him/her arrive at the cherished destination viz. liberation. The beauty of the Autobiography - it is simple both in language and the application of the instructions, nay, the suggestions that come through directly from Swamiji's heart. It is his angst that every one should attain Peace that passeth all understanding, makes the true sadhaka follow his foot steps.

Pujya Swamiji attained Mahasamadhi on 10-06-1982. But he left his Autobiography and Pujya Sri Jnaneswari Mataji, his ideal disciple, the spiritual daughter as his legacy, so that both all continue to guide us, he as the universal, all pervading spirit and she as the Guru, a tower of spiritual strength (though in a patite, delicate physical frame) by her physical presence.

Those who were/are previlaged to have come into personal contact with Swamiji who radiated love and peace and also those who feel his presence in every atom of the Ashram after his Mahasamadhi, and those of us who have come into the radius of the magnetic spiritual field of Pujya Jnaneswari Mataji, an embodiment of simplicity, humility and love are all immencely blessed.

It was the intence desire of Polisetty Saibaba garu, Vice President of the Ashram to reprint the two volumes of the Autobiography of Swamiji as an offering on the auspicious occasion of the centinary celebrations of the Ashram during the Month of January 2017. He undertook the noble task, personally prepared the typed script. But unfortunately because of the pressure of work and the responsibilities during the centenary celebrations the book could not be released then. Now at the sacred Gurupurnima time it will be offered at the Holy Feet of Sadguru Omkarji Maharaj. Sri Tulasi Satyanandam of Kakinada prepared a flawless DTP script.

We pray to God Almighty, Puja Sri Swami Omkarji Maharaj and Pujya Sri Jnaneswari Mataji to shower their blessings on all those who helped in this noble task directly or indirectly.

Hari Om

INTRODUCTION

This Autobiography is both exhilarating and exciting. It is exhilarating because it adds to the buoyancy of the Spirit. It is exciting because it reveals the evolution of the soul from the embryonic stage to that of a fully grown Banyan tree which gives cooling shade to the millions who seek shelter under it. The wayward soul of early childhood, with all its childlike habits, undistinguished from the ordinary ones, in a swing grows into a fast-developing sainthood. This is the exciting part of the Autobiography of His Holiness Swami Omkarji Maharaj, the Founder of Sri Santi Ashram, the Abode of Peace.

The beauty of this Autobiography is that it is couched in simple words conveying deep meaning, fully saturated with ripe spiritual experiences. These are no mere words; they are permeated with deep meaning and soar in the highest flights. At times I wonder how in a single sweep Swamiji soars so high as to leave the readers bewildered far below.

Gifted with Universal Vision from his early boyhood, step by step he has realisations all his own. There is a distinctive feature in all of his experiences : the way in which he expounds them is so simple, so easy and so direct.

Call it a pilgrimage on the way to Truth, a sojourn, or a quest of the Universal Light, Swami Omkarji, in his onward march has left behind a trail of milestones for humanity to be guided by. Even a cursory perusal of this Autobiography will make it clear that Swamiji is giving his own experiences and not relying on quotations from any books or scriptures whatsoever. He has realised on his own and this is revealed in this Autobiography. So the contents of this book have a freshness all their own, they have come spontaneously and the method of expression is so simple and direct that they go to the heart in a moment.

The main core of the teaching of Swami Omkarji, as I have been able to understand him, is self-reliance. He is against all Gurudom. He does not consider himself a Guru and he makes no *chelas*.

'Do not rely on me. Do not rely on anyone else!

Depend upon your own Inner Light.

That is the real Guru! He will never fail you'.

In spite of this unequivocal assertion many have considered themselves as his *chelas*, much to his discomfiture.

I have a feeling he has glimpsed that Self-effulgent Light within. One

may not feel it to be complete, but it is there! What the depth of that vision is it is difficult to say; at least I have no competence to do so. It is for those who have the privilege of reading this book to make their own assessment.

Swami Omkarji is a true Messenger of Peace. His one Mission in life is to sow the seeds of Peace. It is the individual Peace that paves the way to Universal Peace. This is the truth and he has persistently been working for it. The Abode of Peace, Sri Santi Ashram is a veritable instrument to carry out this Mission.

In the ripeness of his life Swami Omkarji has written the Autobiography. As such it contains the sweetest fruits of his life-long Sadhana. The garden is there, it is for the Seekers of Truth to gather the fruits in this vineyard. Bit by bit, through real *Tapas*, penance, swamiji has gathered the nectar; let us have the will and the capacity to sip it !

His message is perennial. It cannot decay because humanity needs it, at the present more than ever !

In the short space of this introduction it is not possible to give all that Swamiji has to say. I therefore consider it best to leave the seeker free to find for himself the precious gems which Swamiji depicts in this most useful instrument of the Autobiography.

Swamiji is a great Karma Yogi. From dawn to dusk he is seen working, now helping the devotee on their onward march of spiritual progress and then in watering the plants, feeding the dumb animals and planting trees, plants and flowers. Work is worship he often says. 'In serving any of the least of His creatures you are serving Him.' Swamiji often repeats, 'He who does not work has no right to eat.' He will not allow any ashramite to remain idle. Needless to say, his Karma Yoga is for the progress of all beings, both human and animal.

'The Beloved is within, in the stillness of your own purified heart!' says Swamiji, the Light is within! Let us seek It and be aware of It. God, the Inner Light, is only awaiting your recognition.'

'The vineyard is immensely wide, but the labourers are few.' How true is this adage when applied to Spiritual Enlightenment!

'I need not close my eyes or meditate anymore to see God. I see Him in all of you, in all that is manifested and in everything and in everyone.' This is what Swami Omkarji is.

May all homage be unto such a one!

Swami Ramananda Tirtha

Sultan Bazaar, Hyderabad
11 September 1970

SRI SANTI ASHRAM - THE MISSION OF PEACE



From the Front Gate itself Santi Ashram extends a hearty welcome to all the children of God, of all Colours, Castes, Classes, Religions and Nations, in the East and the West who visit or stay permanently and realise the Goal of precious human birth, the Indwelling light, *brahman*, the One Changeless Reality.

God is love and love is God

Inhale and exhale peace.

Religion and Life are not two but one.

Live in God and help others to live in Him.

God is One. Worship Him universally.

Om Om Om

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Chapter 1

EARLY YEARS

पूर्ण मदः पूर्ण मिदं पूर्णात् पूर्ण मुदच्यते
पूर्णस्य पूर्णमादाय पूर्ण मेवाव शिष्यते

Aum Purnamadh Purnamidam
Purnat Purna mudachyate
Purnasya Purnamadaya
Purnamevava sishyate

That (Brahman) is Infinite. This (Universe) is Infinite.
Even when from That, That alone remains.

(Brihadaranyaka Upanishad)

Generally, Autobiographies begin with some legend or other. First, let it be said that I do not like to use the word my, saying my Mother, my Father, my home and so forth, as I begin to write this Autobiography. Yet, without the personal pronouns, I and my it is not possible to write any Autobiography.

LEGENDS:

In my imagination I have now to go back into the dead past of seventy-eight years ago and awaken the old forgotten memories. For the time being I live no longer as **Swami Omkar**, the Founder of **Sri Santi Ashram**, the Mission of Peace, which had its Golden Jubilee a few years ago but as a baby born in an obscure village, thus returning to childhood days. I do not know even now whether I was born in Pithapuram, East Godavary District, or in Kothapalli, a nearby village on the beach in the same district, where my ancestors have lived since the beginning. In any case it is enough to know that I was born somewhere in the Lap of God, as all Creation, the whole Universe, is in His Lap.

It seems my parents were without children and were engaged in the performance of special Pujas and the worship of every kind of deity in many temples for the purpose of begetting a child. The elders of the family related how, on an auspicious day a tall Sadhu mahatma came suddenly to the house, blessed my parents and gave them consecrated water, *Mantrajalam*, water made holy through prayers. My Mother took this water with all reverence

and devotion. When my parents wished to worship this holy Mahatma he was nowhere to be found. Having done his good deed he disappeared, leaving my parents disappointed.

After some months however, to the great joy of my parents, relations and friends alike, a baby was born and named Venkateswara or VenkataRao. I love the name Venkateswara and wish to be associated with the Lord of the Seven Hills, the Tirupati Venkateswara. In any case, Venkateswara is in Venkat Rao and Venkat Rao is in Venkateswara. It is not the name that is most important but the awareness of the Indwelling Spirit which is most essential.

Even though I now try to pierce the veil and peer into those early days or babyhood it is beyond my comprehension to know or remember when and how I was born and how, in the beginning those early days were spent. As far as I am able to remember, to gaze into the past, I see myself as a little child of three or four years, sitting in the *Puja room*, cross legged in *Padmasana* while my father was engaged in his early morning worship with the repetition of the *Bhagavad Gita* and morning prayers. I used to sit there like a little statue waiting more for the Prasad, the sugar candy or fruit which was distributed to all present at the end of the Puja. I was more anxious to get my share of the Prasad, the sweets, than to pay attention to the Puja and Worship. This is one of the happiest memories of my early childhood. It gives me great joy even now when I remember it.

May homage and praise be unto the devoted parents who blessed me with a firm spiritual foundation at such an early age. As are the parents, so are the children. Blessed are the children. Blessed are the parents who lead their children towards God, the Goal of precious human birth.

OM! OM! OM!

STUDY IN A VILLAGE SCHOOL:

In Pithapuram at that time, nearby to my home was a village school. Perhaps the name of the old schoolmaster was Rangayya and I wonder if he was not a little lame as well. Anyway, I went to this school with joy every day for it was near, almost opposite to my home and I went in the company of some other children. In order to come and go to the

school it was necessary to go through the verandah of a thatched, low-roofed cottage. Once, returning home playfully, a bamboo stick, one of the sharp ends of the hut, stuck my head and blood began to flow profusely. I do not remember now how I reached home and which doctor bandaged and treated me, but the scar from this deep cut is still visible on the left side of my head. Perhaps I was five or six years old at the time. I do not remember now how long I remained in bed bandaged with this head wound. By God's Grace I believe I was patient and forbearing, even at such an early age.

To this day I am amused by the memory of another incident. It is wonderful how, even then too, as a young boy I was very fond of pets, the dumb animals. I had a puppy of my own which I loved to play with. Once the unfortunate puppy was stung by a scorpion and began to cry. It was too much for me to see such suffering without rendering any assistance to the little puppy. It was weeping with pain and I too was weeping right along with it. As this weeping would not help I took the puppy and went to the homes of nearby friends and requested them to do something to reduce the pain of the scorpion sting. I can still, see with interest how both the puppy and I were weeping, begging for help from home to home. All the people who saw us both weeping laughed at us and some offered sympathy as well. I do not remember now how relief came to my companion, the little puppy. But in the end, somehow, it was free of pain and both of us were happy and contented.

Blessed is the life that loves plants, birds, beasts and man, for the Lord pervades all the world, abiding in the hearts of all His children, be they in the form of a tiny fragrant flower or an innocent puppy, a flying bird or a playful child.

*He prayeth well who loveth well
Both man and bird and beast.
He prayeth best who loveth best
All things both great and small.
For the Dear God, who loveth us
He made and loveth all.*

May all Homage be unto God, Who is in the form of dumb animals as well as living human beings.

May Peace be unto all!

OM

OM

OM

Chapter 2

SCHOOL DAYS

स्थाने हृषीकेश तव प्रकीर्त्या
जगत्प्रहृष्य त्वनु रज्जतेच
रक्षंसि भीतानि दिशो द्रवन्ति
सर्वे नमस्यन्ति च सिद्ध संघा

*Sthane Hrishikesa tava Prakirtya
Jagat prahrushya tyanu rajjatecha
Rakshansi bhitani diso dravanti
Sarve namasyanticha siddha sanghah*

*It is meet, O Hrishikesa that the world is delighted
and rejoices in your praise; Rakshasas fly in all
directions and all the hosts of Siddhas bow to you.*

(Bhagavad Gita - XI - 36)

THE RAO CHELLAYAMMA RAO HIGH SCHOOL:

The Rao Chellayamma Rao High School in Pithapuram was noted not just for its efficient teaching but, much more for its great and saintly Headmaster, Sri Kuchi Narasimham Pantulu and his devoted staff of teachers. Every day school began with the gathering of all the boys and girls of all the classes for prayers. All the students were made to learn by heart the Ekadasa Adhyayam, the Eleventh Chapter of the Bhagavad Gita which deals with Visvarupa Darsana Yoga, ‘The Yoga of the Universal Vision’ and we had to repeat it each morning, all in a chorus. After Prayers the usual classes would begin. Those who were late for Prayers were reprimanded. It was my good fortune to begin my early school years with spiritual study under a religious and God-loving soul. One sloka, verse thirty-six which begins with the words *sthane hrishikesa* used to ring in my ears even long after I had left the school and gone abroad.

I do not remember much about my studies in the school for I was more interested in gathering together the boys of my own age and feeding them with things brought from home. Often we would go together on excursions. A party of us some times would go to the Railway Station to meet the drivers of the trains and we used to give them pickles and other food. In return they would

give us charcoal, which was quite costly in those days, or some other articles of which I do not now remember. Our Headmaster came to know of these visits to trains with pickles and gave each of us severe punishment of six cane strokes on the palms. With this strong chastisement we gave up visiting the trains.

Later on, after several years, when we were editing the Peace Journal in Santi Ashram, Thotapalli Hills, sometime after my return from the West, the same Headmaster who had given me the cane strokes on the palms wrote a nice letter of congratulations, praising my article on 'Contacting the Masters'. He was highly appreciative of the Master of masters who is ever within, in the stillness of our own purified hearts, who never need be sought outside, in temples or churches or in the far-off Himalayas. Verily, the Real Master is to be contacted within, in Silence.

पितासि लोकस्य चराचरस्य
त्वमस्य पूज्यक्ष गुरुरगरीयान्
न त्वत्समो ऽ स्यभ्यधिकः कुतोऽन्यो
लोकत्रये ऽ प्य प्रतिम प्रभाव

Pitasi lokasya chara charasya
tvamasya pujyascha gururgariyan
natvatsamo stybhyadhikah kutonyo
lokatraye pyapratima prabhavah (B.G. XI-43)

You are the Father of this world, moving and unmoving. You are to be adored by this world. You are the Greatest Guru; none there exists who is equal to You in the Three Worlds; who then can excel You, O Being of unequalled Power?

Since I had some rich relations who were high Government Officials in Waltair, some years after the 'train incident' I was shifted from the local Pithapuram School to the Christian Baptist Mission High School in Visakhapatnam. This stay with rich relations gave me the opportunity to lead a life of luxury and freedom and also to spend some time by the beachside listening to the roaring sound of the rising waves. Then, as a youngster, I did not know that the waves were chanting the holy sound OM. In those days I was interested, not in the holy sound or in the outer beauties of Creation but only in the companionship of youngsters of my own age. Those were unforgettable nights when, sitting by the side of the ocean, watched over by the Moon and sparkling stars, my companions and I would become absorbed in our Prayers and deep Meditations.

May all Glory be unto God, the Giver of all Blessings!

OM OM OM

THE CHRISTIAN BAPTIST MISSION HIGH SCHOOL, VISHAKHAPATNAM:

As far as my general education is concerned, one can only say that it was poor, for I was not much interested in study and preferred to be off flying in the sky or wandering on the beach with a bunch of boys. The Principal, Rev. Lazarus, a devoted missionary, seemed to have a special liking for me even though I was shy and young. He went every day to the school with his children in a special bullock cart and was kind enough to invite me to join them every day. How thoughtful it was of Rev. Lazarus to have been so attentive to me! His house, with its large garden and lovely bungalow was near to my own dwelling. The Rev. Lazarus also had a tennis court where his children and nieces and nephews used to play in the evening. He was kind enough to invite me to play tennis with his children. Often I would go in the evenings, nicely dressed, to his home to play tennis with his cultured children.

Moving in the circle of a pious Christian family and studying in an ideal Christian School, I was drawn day by day towards the saintly life of the Blessed Christ. The School began with prayers from the Gospels and during each day there was a period devoted to the study of the Bible. In Pithapuram our school began each day with Vedic Prayers and study of the Bhagavad Gita, while in Vishakhapatnam the day began with the Bible study. All this was by God's Special Blessings and my own past good Karma.

I was able to realise that the essence of the Gita and the Bible were one and the same. Even in boyhood days I was not interested in conversions from one religion to another. I felt that God knows what is best for each of us and that He has planted us, or rather made us to be born in a particular religion because of our tendencies and inborn nature. My studies in the Christian Mission School led me to respect and pay homage to the ideal life of the Blessed Christ, a respect which has deepened as time has passed. How blessed it is to be pure and childlike as is the Blessed Christ! He is ever there, repeating to the sick and the poor, to the sinful

and the weak, the memorable words:

Come unto me.

Verily the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to the childlike and pure in heart, to the simple and guileless children.

As I have already mentioned, my life in Vishakhapatnam was very luxurious, filled with all the latest fashions in dress and all the alluring things in the world. My father had to be both mother and father to me, for I had lost my own mother at an early age. He doted upon me and spared nothing for my comfort. As I had to walk a distance of nearly two miles from the place of my residence to the school, my father was kind enough to buy for my use new bicycle. It is sad that I do not have any recollection of my mother, who gave birth to me in her bosom, for she left the body when I was still too young to have known her. All my friends and relations have praised her saintly life of devotion. May her dedicated soul of consecration live in God, in Peace, wherever it may be now, the many years since her demise. It was a blessing to have had a sweet and saintly little sister who loved and served me in every way, looking after all my comforts. At the early age of twelve God received her back into His bosom. I will tell more about my 'Little Sister' in a later chapter.

To ride the new cycle I needed a wardrobe of costly clothing. I now went about with some of my boyhood friends and classmates dressed in expensive garments and naturally I wore them while riding on my cycle through the streets and by the beachside. At this time also, because the distance from home to school was long in spite of the cycle, or for some other reason, I rented a room in the town itself, for the purpose of studying. A classmate named Somayajulu was my room-mate. I hung all my costly coats and other garments from hangers on the walls of my new rented room, which faced the road.

One night, during my absence, while my friend was sleeping there and no one else was around to hear, some rowdies, young thieves, came and stole all my costly clothing. When I returned in

the morning and discovered the loss I felt very sad and dejected over the theft of all the expensive garments. Even though it was reported to the Police, nothing came of it. In fact the Police found fault with me for my carelessness in leaving such valuable clothing in an open room facing the street. Anyway, I learnt the valuable lesson of being simpler and more careful, not to be reckless, wasting precious money on costly garments and the like.

No one can tell anything of the uncertain, dim future. How true are the words: *Today man is, tomorrow he is not*. As his own house and also our rented room were near to the beach, Somayajulu went to take bath in the ocean and was drowned accidentally. What a sad and shocking surprise! After the sudden demise of Somayajulu his parents came to collect his belongings. Imagine their surprise when they came across a Pro-note, a notarised I.O.U. stating that I owed Somayajulu one thousand rupees. It was childish of me to have given such a legal document without having received any money but only in expectation of it. I explained to his parents my intense boyhood aspiration to go to America and how Somayajulu, who never had a *nayapaisa* (Smallest denomination like a penny) of his own, in his love and eagerness to help, had promised to get the money by borrowing it from one of his wealthy friends. His parents laughed at me. They reprimanded me and told me never to do such a foolish and reckless thing again. Giving back the Pro-note they asked me to tear it up in their presence. Thus, the note was destroyed with sad disappointment. Fortunately his parents realised that their son had never had any money of his own and thus I was let off, sadder and wiser. How strange are the ways in which God unfolds His Divine Plan!

The Rev. Lazarus and the other teachers were sorry over my neglect of studies, for I was always flying in the air, hardly touching the earth, with some grand idea or other. When the results of the school's final examination for Matriculation came, I being poor in English was not passed for want of two marks but was detained, plucked out. This naturally made me very sad, but also more determined than ever to have a deeper study of the English

language. I do not remember why now, but in any case I was shifted from Christian Baptist Mission School to the Mrs. Ankitham Venkata Narsinga Rao College, popularly known as the Mrs. A.V.N. College, also in Vishakhapatnam and began to pay more attention to my studies, reading various books in English.

At that time I came into contact with the founder of Psychic College in the Tinnevely District, (Tamil Nadu) one Professor Ramaswamy, who was extremely friendly and interested in me and my aspirations. He wanted to teach me Hypnotism, Mesmerism, Spiritual Healing and the like. He also introduced me to some of his foreign students. Thus God opened new vistas and dreams of journeys to faraway lands, to America!

May Peace be unto all!

OM

OM

OM

Chapter 3

THE DREAMS OF YOUTH

THE ACADEMY OF RELIGIONS:

I think the name of the founder of the Psychic College Tinnevely, South India was Dr. Ramaswamy, M.A., Ph.D. He was also at that time the Editor of an occult magazine and he greatly encouraged me to write articles and express my thoughts. When I sent him one of my messages he not only published it in his magazine with the title 'Universal Prayer' but was also kind enough to print it as a separate booklet and to send me two hundred copies. At such an early age this event elated me to the skies. I wrote another message and sent it to him; this was also published and sent to me as a separate booklet so that I might share it with my friends and devotees. Dr. Ramaswamy's sympathy and appreciation caused me to 'puff up' with the thought that I was already a good writer. As he was closely connected with many spiritual and psychic organizations both in England and America, he was good enough to introduce me to some of the leading figures in the Psychic movement in those days. There was one Nevada Psychic college in the U.S.A. which offered me a four years scholarship for a course of study in the 'Art of Healing'. I completely lost my head and gave up my academic studies at the prospect of going to a foreign land to take up the study of the 'Art of Healing' diseases.

By my good fortune I came in touch, in those blessed days, with the life and teaching of Swami Rama Tirtha, the Poet-Saint of the Punjab. His works completely influenced me and drew me away from the mundane to the Spiritual, from the outer to the inner. After studying the life and works of Swami Rama, my young heart longed to live like Ram, to breathe and work like Ram and above all to visit America as he had done. Under the guidance of Dr. Ramaswamy, the founder and president of the Psychic organization of Tinnevely I had become a Master Hypnotist and Mesmerist and was able to put people, especially my classmates,

to sleep. I could also see things at a distance and lift objects from a bench or the ground a few inches into the air by the power of auto-suggestion. Sometimes I cured minor sicknesses such as headache, fever and the like. With these special powers and latest attainments I now thought that I was fit and ready to go to America to become a Healer of Diseases, to study at the Nevada College such Arts as Spiritual Healing.

At that time I also had a small following of my own, consisting of some of my cultured companions and classmates, such as DR.C.K.Prasad Rao, the retired Dean of the Madras General Hospital, Sri Tanneti Viswanatham, a former M.P in Delhi and many others who are now eminent doctors, lawyers and successful professional people in their respective occupations. The noted Alluri Sitarama Raju, the terror of the British Government for several years was one of the students in our Academy and would join our silent meditation group by the beachside in Vishakhapatnam for prayer and meditation, with my spiritual instructions. It was then that the Academy of Religions was founded, with the help of all these devoted and aspiring students. As part of their spiritual discipline they were made to keep a spiritual diary and to write in it every day, noting their daily progress.

I would regularly and patiently correct the diaries of all the members of the Academy of Religions and give instructions for their spiritual progress. Sometimes we held long moonlight meditations as well. As we were reaching home late after these meditations, we were found fault with and taken to task by our guardians and parents. They thought we were playing, wasting our precious time and perhaps doing wrong things as well.

I was happy and contented that even at such an early age my life was helpful to several of my classmates and other student friends, for I was giving them inspiration and high ideals for the living of noble lives of service and love, filled with self-discipline and devotion.

May Adorations be unto the Giver of all Blessings!

OM OM OM

LITTLE SISTER:

Sad events make one sad, even to recall and remember. Similarly, happy events make one happy. Somehow, the events of this chapter make me sad and heavy. The late K.S.D. Iyer of the Spiritual Healing Centre, Coimbatore, published a booklet titled *Reincarnation*, which gives some of the details of the consecrated and devoted life of the Little Sister and tells of her passing with suffering into the Great Beyond.

She was twelve when she passed away. Even though she was very young, one could see that she was a God-loving and devoted soul, for she spent a large part of her time in puja, the worship of various Gods. Rama and Krishna were her ideal Avatars, Saviours. She was completely gentle, sweet and charitable; whenever our parents or uncles gave us both some money she would give away her share as well for my use, without a thought of herself. I used to spend the money in reckless way, entertaining and feeding my young friends, instead of looking after the comforts of the Little Sister.

Once, when she was cleaning the glass chimney of a hurricane lamp, it broke in her hand and made a deep cut, out of which much blood flowed. She became sick and anaemic and then one of her lungs was affected. As a result she was taken to Vishakhapatnam hospital for efficient treatment but alas, she was pronounced as incurable and brought back home to Pithapuram. As I was young and thoughtless I did not realise the seriousness of her end, the last moments of the Little Sister who had lived for and loved only me, considering me as her all in all. When the end came she was asking for me. A telegram was sent but I did not rush there immediately and thus she passed away with my name on her lips, awaiting my arrival at any moment. This event has made me sad for all the rest of my life. Repentance came too late.

I failed to help and serve her while she was alive. After her demise I longed to help her. How could I help her then or now? Hence, I resolved to see the Little Sister in all the sisters of the

world and to serve her in all the forms in the East and the West. Her dedicated life of service, love and devotion reminds me of the life of our Jnaneswari, who now lives and breathes for my welfare. I often wonder whether the Little Sister has reincarnated to love and serve me as Jnaneswari. Blessed are the dedicated souls of service and love wherever they may be, in disembodied or other forms of the One Indivisible Spirit!

My Father also had been too kind, good and generous. He helped me with the necessary funds for the journey to America and he took care of me always, looking after my welfare in little things as well as in big things, concerning himself with my comforts and progress in education and in life. After the starting of the Ashram, the Mission of Peace, he stayed for several years, spending all his time in prayer and meditation. It has made me sad to remember though, that in his closing years he had to go back to his native place, Pithapuram. During that time he had a fall and was sick and he had to leave the body away from the Ashram, in the world, which I have regretted much both then and throughout the years. For all that he did, both as a father and as a mother, worshipping the very dust of my feet; I failed miserably in doing my part to make him happy and comfortable in the Ashram in his closing years. I was foolish enough to care more for the public opinion at that time and listened to those who said that father should be allowed to live in his native place in his closing years. Now I consider all as my fathers. In this case also, repentance came too late. Where is the dedicated Spirit of Father now? It must be somewhere, in someone and my only consolation is to worship all forms near and far, so that my Father's Spirit also will be included in this Universal Worship.

I feel pangs of sorrow and heaviness even now, whenever I remember how, in the rush of my mad dreams for going to America I completely neglected the little, sick Sister and how, in my absorption in the activities of the Ashram I neglected, sacrificed the welfare of the Father who had adored me, lived and worked for me and relied on my support and care in his old age. Certain things

happen that cannot be remedied, because of Karma or Fate. As it is a waste of precious time to worry or cry over spilt milk, my prayers, since the passing of the Little Sister and Father, have been for their Mukti, Freedom and Peace. In loving and serving humanity throughout the world they too are included, for my Love or Religion Universal includes all and excludes none.

May the devoted souls of both Sister and Father rest in God, in Peace, eternally! In spite of my neglect, this has been my ardent Prayer both for my consolation as well as for their Peace.

May Peace be unto all!

OM OM OM

GETTING READY TO LEAVE FOR AMERICA:

America is such a faraway place, and I was too young, without any experience of the world. Yet, I was all enthusiasm to leave for the U.S.A., all alone and so unafraid. A lot of preparation and paraphernalia were needed for departure to a foreign land. A Passport had to be obtained from the British Government and a Visa extended by the American Consulate. A lot of testimonials and letters of recommendation were needed from men of influence in order to obtain the Passport and Visa. The Principal of the A.V.N. College, Sri Srinivas Iyyangar and other professors were kind enough to give the necessary certificates. Even the District Collector of Vishakhapatnam helped me get the necessary papers and Passport. All were very helpful and very amused for I was too young, only a teenager, to be leaving India. It is wonderful to remember how I was so bold and unafraid of the long sea voyage. I went to book passage by steamer. Imagine, the very name of the steamer which was to take me to America was *The City of Banaras!*

Many friends from near and far helped me in those days, especially Sri Kakkirala Rama Rao and Mother Ratnam, his devoted wife. Many of my classmates and boyhood friends, such as Sri Kotha Suryanarayana, Sri M. Rangachary and others helped me in a great number of ways. This Autobiography would be

incomplete without mentioning the devotion and selfless service of my Sister, Smt. Rednam Venkayamma, a devoted and dedicated, God-loving soul.

Before I was born, as my parents were without children, she was adopted and later given in marriage to a rich family in Waltair. It was there that I received my education and it was she who took such tender care of me in her home. Her husband was a very strict taskmaster and never liked my coming home at late hours, for he was always suspecting me of some mischief. One night, when I did not return for a longtime, he took a big stick and started towards the beach in search of me, to give severe punishment.

Imagine his surprise when he saw me meditating in the moonlight on the beach with a bunch of boys, all absorbed in meditation. From that night forward his suspicion changed into great respect. He and his devoted wife helped me a great deal in getting ready to leave for America. Father was really sad and heavy-hearted at the thought of allowing me to go to such a far-off place when I was still so young, just in my teens. However, my mind was resolute and firm and he finally agreed to help me, even with the necessary funds.

We had some relatives in Calcutta who were in business there and they helped me to make the steamer reservations by settling all the preliminaries before I arrived in Calcutta. It was all so new. All the *kalasis*, servants and workmen on the steamer were Bengalis and Muslims. They were all kind and attentive to me even though I did not know their languages. Some of my Ayurvedic friends provided me with ginger pieces and digestion powders to protect me against sea-sickness. At an auspicious hour, perhaps the midnight hour, our *City of Banaras* left Calcutta harbour. There were only a limited number of passengers aboard, for the ship was a cargo steamer. My companion in the cabin was a Bengali gentleman named Bannerji. As the steamer moved away from the harbour I was sleeping in Peace, chanting the Holy Word, the sacred syllable OM and wishing the Peace of all.

Lokah Samasthah Sukhino Bhavanthu!

May Peace be unto all!

OM

OM

OM

Chapter 4

FIRST JOURNEY TO AMERICA

IN THE CITY OF BANARAS:

As I begin to write this chapter I feel that I am in the city of Banaras and my steamer is rocking even now. How blessed it was to have had my first voyage in the *City of Banaras* towards the shores of America. It is interesting that of all the steamers in the world I should have travelled on that very one named '*The City of Banaras*'. May we ever live in Banaras, the holy City of Lord Viswanath, ever feeling His Presence! May Peace be unto all! This is my ardent prayer as I begin to write this chapter now.

Before I left India my friend and well-wisher, Dr. Ramaswamy of Dr. Tinnevely had given me letters of introduction to two famous people in New York City. One was Orison Swett Marden, a well-known author and lecturer whose books were popular not only in America but throughout the world. He came to see me when the steamer reached America and I was detained on Ellis Island. The second letter was to Mrs. Williams, a devoted and dedicated soul who was interested in India and its spiritual traditions. But we shall read about my visit to Ellis island a little later. Let us now proceed with my voyage on *The City of Banaras*.

The cabin that I was sharing with my Bengali friend had two berths and was comfortably arranged to suit the needs of two passengers. My new friend was a good man but unfortunately he had the bad habit of drinking. He tried to persuade me in so many ways to join him, but when I kept refusing he was quite disappointed, for the man who drinks loves to see all people drinking. One day, when he was dead drunk he put his hand to my throat and tried to force me to drink. As he was such a big, husky fellow I felt somewhat afraid, but fortunately the electric bell used to summon the cabin boy was near at hand. I rang the bell and immediately the cabin boy who attended upon us came and removed my fellow passenger to another cabin. Thus I was protected and left alone. This served as a blessing in disguise for I was able to

pass the remaining journey all alone in the cabin, with prayers and deep meditation.

How good is God always! I feel so deeply grateful to him for all his innumerable blessings. The more frail and weak we are the more, He helps and protects, provided we trust and love Him completely. Wherever I may be it has been my nature to share what I have with my fellow travellers, passengers and other companions.

The chief steward of *The City of Banaras* was an educated and enlightened Englishman. During a conversation I gave him some of my prayers and he said roughly, 'I do not read such stuff'. This made my heart sad and heavy. He was smoking and perhaps he had a drink also. So our civilized English friend does not read such stuff as Prayers and the Bible, yet he indulges in reading cheap and obscene novels, side by side with smoking and drinking! What a sad world of disappointments! Is it culture and civilization to smoke, drink and engage in the life of the senses, to shun or avoid going to church and reading the Holy Scriptures? How impossible it is to serve both God and Mammon!

Our *City of Banaras* stopped at all the important seaports after leaving Calcutta. We touched Colombo, Aden, Port Said, Naples, Genoa, Marseilles, Gibraltar, London and finally reached New York City. All the passengers were required to pass through customs and meet the Immigration Authorities. In the harbour of the city is an island named Ellis Island where, in those days all passengers entering the U.S.A. were taken for inspection. Foreigners were often detained for longer periods of time until the completion of the inspection process. It took more than forty days to reach America for I was on a slow cargo ship which loaded and unloaded cargo at every port. But being a lover of silence and solitude I certainly enjoyed my long stay on *The City of Banaras*.

The enchanting hours of sunrise and sunset were simply glorious on the ocean, facing the horizon. I used to enjoy the sunrise and sun set with ecstasy, with tears of bliss in my eyes! May all

Glory be unto God, the Giver of all Blessings and to His manifested world of Beauty and Silence.

OM OM OM

ELLIS ISLAND:

The City of Banaras reached safely the shores of America, the port of New York and Ellis Island. There was no one to receive me, except for the Immigration Officials and the customs people. It was a lonely hour for a youngster, more so because I was detained for examination to see whether I was fit for entry into the United States of America. It was a helpless and forlorn hour, all alone, while others, especially the American citizens were leaving Ellis Island with bag and baggage. I was left behind all alone. Then came the reporters from several daily newspapers, both men and women and they were very kind to a mere teenager. They were most interested in creating and writing some sensational news about my coming from faraway India. First of all, they asked me if I was a member of a royal family. I replied that I belonged to the Royal Family of God and that all of us belong to Him, we are all the children of God.

They asked me many questions about myself, India and its spiritual traditions. Somehow, they thought that everyone who comes from India must belong to a royal family and so, from that day forward I was lovingly called Prince Rao. Every day in the newspapers they wrote about my ideals and aspirations, explaining that I was being detained on Ellis Island, awaiting further examination into my fitness for entry into America. Some of the reporters from the dailies were sympathetic and they were kind enough to bring me apples, oranges and other things. They wrote many interesting articles in the morning and evening editions of the newspapers regarding the details of my case. Some of my fellow travellers would give me the newspapers so that I could read about myself. Later on, when I became a Swami, a Sannyasin like Swami Rama Tirtha, I tore up all the old newspaper clippings, including my School Final Certificate and School Registration

Book and threw them in the ocean.

I still remember an interesting sentence, a quotation from one of the New York dailies which read:

When asked of his plans if permitted to land, he replied in his sing-song voice, that he came as a Bearer of Light and for the benefit of humanity.

Now, with the added experience of nearly fifty-six years I would rather say that I came as a Seeker of Truth, not to teach but to learn and assimilate all that is best in America. As the years roll on one finds that there is so much to learn in order to rise from darkness to Light, from ignorance to Knowledge.

In those days, if one wished to enter the U.S.A. it was essential to be in possession of, to show one Hundred and Fifty Dollars as an Entry Fund. When asked for this entry money all that I could produce for the Immigration Officials was a slip of paper from Thomas Cook & Sons. It was not a bank draft but only a receipt. When our steamer stopped in London, being in a hurry and without any experience, instead of waiting for and the taking the draft, I left with only the receipt paper. I thought it was the draft and that when I presented it in New York the money would be handed over to me. At the outset this absence of a draft or of actual money stood in the way of my entrance into New York City, even though I later received the actual draft along with a note from Cook & Sons explaining that I had forgotten it in their London Office.

In my loneliness, while feeling somewhat depressed, I received a visit on Ellis Island from the well-known author and famous lecturer of the day, Mr. O. S. Marden. He was so tall and sturdy that his very presence did me some good, imparting to me necessary strength. He was kind and sympathetic and promised to render all possible help to get me removed from Ellis Island soon. He also said that he would send some of his books for my study. His visit was Godsent and timely and was all due to the letter of introduction from Dr. Ramaswamy.

As I had travelled on a cargo steamer I was considered a Third Class Passenger and treated accordingly by the Ellis Island officials. The food that they fed me was very bad, mostly such non-vegetables as mutton and beef. I was living with great difficulty on dry bread and boiled potatoes and drinking black coffee, which I was not used to. I was famished, starving, for want of proper food. Thus, when questioned by the newspaper reporters, I told them that even the dogs in India would not touch such food as was given to me on Ellis Island. When this was printed in the daily newspapers it was rather too much for the Immigration Authorities. They decided I was creating a sensation and making trouble and therefore should be sent back to India as quickly as possible.

I had a sudden trial, an examination and on the grounds that I was too young, without even the necessary landing money and funds for a visit to the U.S.A. it was decreed that I should be sent back to India. I remember having told the Immigration Officers who were examining my case that if I were allowed entry I would not be a burden to America but would do my part by helping to heal the sick with my mental and psychic powers. During those remaining days of my stay I was given, as a special case, better food, consisting mainly of vegetables. The fruits that were brought as gifts by the newspaper reporters and some devoted ladies were also helpful in keeping me happy and healthy.

In such cases where entry was not allowed those detained were given free passage to return home. Since I was a British Subject I was given passage back to London, England only. But they were kind enough to give me Second class accommodation. As the steamer on which I was to return was anchored somewhere far off in another part of the City's harbor I was taken there first in a double horse buggy through the streets of New York, the City of Skyscrapers and finally brought to the pier. I was all excited for they had not told me of their decision and I was under the impression that I would be allowed to land in New York City. But finally, when I was taken onto a steamer and brought into a fine cabin I felt shocked, more so when I discovered that the cabin door was

locked from the outside. Thus was I rudely awakened to find that I was not to enter America, but would have to return from whence I had come and locked in as well so that I might not escape from the steamer.

Once the steamer had left the shores of America my cabin door was opened and I was allowed to come out and also given food and all comforts. Imagine my sad surprise, heaviness of heart and great disappointment after all the trouble I had taken to come to America , with such great dreams of becoming a Healer of Diseases, to learn so much and give forth so much for the good of the world and to be a blessing to India, the Motherland! In my loneliness and great, unexpected sorrow I wept with a sad and heavy heart. In my helplessness and loneliness I remember to have taken the Bhagavad Gita and found consolation and strength in its study. The life-giving words of the noble American, Abraham Lincoln, were also helpful. Lincoln's great life of dedication and self-sacrifice has ever served as an ideal to all seekers of Truth. Thus I repeated the words:

Out of the depths, fresh strength

Out of the darkness, new light

Even in the gloom we are on the way.

Certainly no one else was in greater gloom than I in that dark and cruel hour of great disappointment and sorrow. Thus I slept, tired and weary, in my comfortable cabin on the big steamer *Mauritania*.

OM OM OM

I PROMISED MY GOD I WOULD DO IT:

I have ever admired those who are full of optimism and who when they undertake anything, will do it at any cost, even at the cost of life itself, death. Thus, in the gloom of those hours of defeat I meditated and resolved that I would return to America yet, pass through immigration in all glory and become a great Spiritual

Healer, serving the sick and suffering in the East and the West. In those hours I became more determined than ever, following the words of Abraham Lincoln, 'I promised my God I would do it'. I should like to share with my readers part of a message which was published in Peace, November 1931, inspired by these words of the sage Lincoln, the Patriot and Seer, which gives some good thoughts on Promises.

I PROMISED MY GOD I WOULD DO IT

Dear Loving Readers, how many of you have given thought to these beautiful, life-giving and uplifting words of Abraham Lincoln? How many of you feel inspired by these soul-awakening words?

It has been said that one word is enough for the wise. Are you not wise, seeking Truth? Are you not striving to realise that Peace which passeth all understanding? Above all, do you not have any promises to make to God?

Dear Friends, before you read any further remember and bear in mind that this chapter is not for surface study but for assimilation and realisation of God's Presence within yourselves through your Atonement with the Universal Spirit.

'I promised my God I would do it' were the impressive words written by that great soul, Lincoln, in his private diary. How many of us are keeping diaries for self-improvement? How many of us are making promises to God to rise from weakness to strength? How many of us are struggling day and night to attain union with the Highest of the high?

Facing God within himself, Lincoln promised Him that he would liberate the slaves; make his country free from slavery. He resolved to abolish slave trade, knowing that it is the greatest sin to buy and sell human beings, God's own children, His Living Images.

In the face of ridicule, opposition, hardship and even death Lincoln fulfilled his promise to God. Such is the iron will and

determination of all great souls. By nature they are silent. They do not undertake the common things; neither do they meddle in the affairs of others. When they fix their minds on doing a certain thing they succeed in it even if mountains stand in their way. Christ promised His Father to realise the Kingdom of Heaven within and to serve His children with the last drop of blood. The Father's will became Christ's Will: Not my will but Thine be done.

The Buddha promised or resolved to attain the blessed state of Nirvana so that he might share it with the suffering world. He neither slept nor ate until he succeeded in seeing the Light.

Krishna, the Lord of Wisdom realised the high state of *Nirvikalpa Samadhi* in order to be an Ideal for all seekers of Truth.

What about your own ideals? Have you made any promises to God? It is not enough just to make promises. It is very easy to forget them. When once we make a promise we must spend our days and nights in doing only such things as lead us nearer to the fulfillment of our promises. We need not be discouraged even if we break or fail to keep our promises because of luke-warmness or lack of fervour. Our ideal should be to rise each time we fall until we reach such a state where there will be no failure.

What is it you want? What is your life's ambition and goal and what steps are you taking to realise the same? Is it not high time that we promise God that we will succeed in our endeavours? It is not too late to repeat with Lincoln, I promised my God I would do it. Let us waste no more time in doing the so-called big things. Let us instead realise the sanctity and preciousness of every moment and attune ourselves with the Almighty, serving His children and doing His work.

Bless us, O Lord of Love to live in the ceaseless flow of Thy Light of lights, recognising always our eternal oneness with Thee. Let us realise and stand by God at any price.

May Peace ever abide with all of you forever.

OM

OM

OM

Chapter 5

HOMEWARD BOUND

S. S. CITY OF MAURITANIA:

The steamship *Mauritania* was considered to be one of the largest of its day, along with the *S.S. Oceanic*. They both had a heavy tonnage of more than fifty thousand tons. They were next in size to the unfortunate Titanic which had the great disaster, hitting an iceberg in mid-Atlantic and going down with a loss of nearly five thousand lives. Some of those who perished were eminent people, millionaires, writers, statesmen, etc. Anything may happen at any moment. Death comes to one and all! Blessed are they who are ready for death whether it comes suddenly or naturally. Many are getting ready for life but very few are they who are preparing for death. May Peace be unto those who have departed in disasters such as the sinking of steamers and May Peace be unto those few survivors in the sudden world of calamities!

It was rather a privilege to have been allowed to travel on such a large and comfortable steamer, in spite of my rude shock and terrible disappointment. As soon as the steamer left the shores of America my cabin doors were opened and I was free to roam and wander as I liked, no longer a prisoner in my cabin. The Immigration Officials had taken such strict precautions because there were some who, when refused admittance would do anything in their desperation to escape from custody and enter the country by any illegal means. Of all the passengers on the ship, one, a young Jewish Law student from Columbia University named Chester Solomon became my close friend. It is strange how I can remember his name and antecedents after so many years have passed. The following facts about him and our close association on the steamer, as well as subsequent events in London will explain why I have been able to remember his name not only then and now, but always.

He was very sympathetic about my disappointment and he criticised and found fault with the American Government and its

unreasonable Immigration Laws. He said that when he returned to America he would do everything in his power to get me back again. I was deeply touched by his sympathy and interest in me. I heard that he himself was travelling without a ticket and when I asked him he told me that his own people had also arranged passage on the same steamer but had missed the ship. God alone knows how true this was. Anyway, we became fast friends and shared not only each other's thoughts but also whatever possessions we had.

It was a lonely and forlorn time that we spent on the steamer throughout the long voyage. Our steamer had to continuously blow its horn in order to avoid collision with other ships coming in our direction. In spite of the fog horn we were amused to see other vessels passing very close to our steamer. God alone protected us and our steamer, the *Mauritania*.

OM OM OM

IN LONDON

There were no Immigration Laws or restriction for landing in England. Our large steamer anchored in the Port of South-Hampton and from there we had to go to London. I think the American Government provided me with a free ticket from South-Hampton to London but I'm not sure. My new friend, Mr. Chester Solomon, would not leave me alone. For reasons of his own he clung to me and promised to render all possible help. Because I was so young and inexperienced I fell into his trap. We selected a boarding house and stayed together for some days in London. I paid for his board and lodging while he waited for his parents to arrive on the next steamer. He promised that he would take me to America again. But then, since his relations never arrived, Mr. Solomon suggested another helpful idea which seemed good for both of us under the circumstances.

He requested that I pay for his return passage to America, buy a ticket for him and he promised to send back the money by Telegraph Money Order as soon as he reached the other shore. He also promised to immediately make all arrangements for my own

journey back to America and to provide for me an easier entry through Immigration. Like a fool, without the least experience, I bought from my own meager funds a ticket for New York and even gave him some pocket money as well. I saw him off, wished him Bon Voyage and expected all kinds of help from my new friend out of my own helplessness and disappointment and my foolish resolve to return to America at any cost. I waited and waited for days, patient and trusting, but no help came, not even a word of his safe arrival in New York City.

There was an Anglo-Indian Association in England at that time which had been founded for the purpose of helping Indian students and other nationals who were stranded and helpless in foreign lands. I came into contact with them and they promised to render me all possible help. Some of my friends wrote to their Indian friends in America about the injustice of not letting me enter the country. They went so far as to say they would file a suit against the American Government, to show cause why I had been expelled so suddenly without being allowed entry. It was like a tiny mouse fighting against a big mountain.

It was my good fortune at that time to have met Sri V. V. Giri, my life-long friend, who was studying in London to become a Barrister. From the very beginning he was loving, devoted and sympathetic towards me. He was very sorry for me in my disappointment of having come all the way from India only to be turned back, refused entry into America. One of Sri V. V. Giri's name is Varaha, which means gold, and so it was not surprising that he gave me four gold sovereigns right away to use in my great need and helplessness in London. Brother Giri has been my greatest friend since those early days of boyhood friendship in London. His selfless service to the Motherland as Labour Minister, Member of the Cabinet, Governor and now as President have been always a source of joy and strength to me. The words of Swami Ram, *deserve, and no need of desiring* have been life-motto of Sri V. V. Giri. And as he fully deserves, with his selfless nature, it is no wonder that God has now chosen him to be the President of India.

In all these fifty long years Sri V. V. Giri has kept in close touch with me and has always appreciated my humble work in the name of Santi Ashram, the Mission of Peace, the Common Property of all the seekers of Truth in every religion in both the East and the West.

A relation of mine was studying in London to become a barrister at that time. He tried to discourage me from going back to America or from even staying in England, instead of giving sympathy in any form. I remember one day especially when I invited him to lunch at my boarding house. My English landlady was very much interested in me, considered me as one of her own children and did everything she could to please me. As I wanted to surprise my rich relation with a real Indian dinner, I requested my landlady to prepare several Indian dishes.

When my relative, Dharma Rao arrived and saw all those rich Indian preparations he nearly fell in a swoon. He couldn't believe how I, newly arrived and in a strange land, had come to have all these delicious foods prepared. Nevertheless he was quite touchy and wouldn't eat anything for fear of getting sick. To our disappointment he hardly ate anything, after all the trouble my kind landlady had taken to prepare a truly Royal Indian Dinner.

Having nothing to do I would wander all over the streets of London, both in the daylight hours and at night and on through the midnight hours too. Sometimes Mr. Dharma Rao used to accompany me on these night wanderings and both of us managed to waste our precious time. In all of my nearly two months in London I do not think that I went even once to the cinema or theatre I spent my time in going to lovely and lonely places where I could remain in Peace, with prayer and meditation. Love of silence and solitude was my main trait or nature even in those early years and this was remarked upon and highly appreciated by my friend and brother, Sri V.V.Giri, even in those early days of our association.

OM OM OM

THE CITY OF BARODA:

The President and the Secretary of the Anglo-Indian Association were very much interested in me for I was only a boy in his teens and in a foreign land with no one to look after me. They often invited me to take dinner with them and other members of the Association. When I did not hear from my Jewish friend, Mr. Solomon or from any of the Indian friends who had promised to return me to America, filing a suit against the Government if necessary, to correct the injustice of my being sent from the American shores so suddenly, without the opportunity to sufficiently represent my case, the Anglo-Indian Association was kind enough to book passage for me on a steamer returning to India, *The city of Baroda*. Those steamers were very comfortable for they carried only limited number of passengers and cargo. I loved travelling in this way because of the lovely life and the long voyage of many days on the ocean. Sometimes there were two or three passengers, often I was all alone. I used to feel that I was the sole Master or Owner of the whole steamer, with complete freedom.

Some years later, after I had become a Sannyasin and was living in the Himalayas some friends in New York City contacted Mr. Chester Solomon. He apologized for all his selfish actions and offered to pay back the money he had taken. By then I had renounced the world of name and fame and would not accept any money from him. I wonder now what has become of Mr. Chester Solomon.

As a Swami I also visited the beautiful City of Baroda in the North of India as a guest of the Secretary to the Maharajah and Maharani of Baroda. I naturally remembered my sea voyage on the steamer, *The city of Baroda*. The days of my sojourn on the steamship Baroda were naturally somewhat sad and depressing for I was being compelled to return to India without having had entry into America. What had become of my Scholarship to the Nevada College for the study of Mental Healing? My Inner Spirit was rebellious and unconquerable and I planned to wreak vengeance on all those who had thwarted my plans, whether or not

they were for my good and the good of others or not.

I resolved that someday I would go to America, not as a young student but as a Swami, as a Bearer of Light and for the benefit of humanity. In my depression and dejection I read again the Bhagavad Gita from the first to the last chapter, as well as the life and writings of Swami Rama Tirtha and other spiritual books for my consolation and strength.

My prayers and meditations, lying on a deck chair on the spacious deck of the steamer, facing the horizon and sunrise and sunset were very helpful and inspiring. Not only the Captain and the Officers of the steamer but even the crew and cabin boys were all devoted and interested in me and always tried to help me for they saw my silent life of devotion and dedication, even at such a young age. In my own way I tried to help and serve everyone who was interested in me. The seeds of service, love and help for all with whom I came in contact have ever been present from the very beginning. May all Glory be unto God, in spite of my sad failure and drastic disappointment.

The City of Baroda was a cargo ship like *The City of Banaras* and it stopped at most of the important ports, such as Marseilles, Genoa, Naples, Port Said, Aden, Etc. It was very interesting to see all the vendors coming to the ship at every port to sell their many goods, such as necklaces, shells, rings, picture postcards and so forth. It was really strange how they tried to dupe the innocent passengers, claiming first the price of a necklace or ring at Rs 50 and after bargaining, giving it away for half a rupee or for a few annas.

It was really disappointing when our steamer anchored in Madras Harbour. It was very lonely and there was no one there.

OM OM OM

Chapter 6

SECOND ATTEMPT TO STUDY MEDICINE

RETURNING HOME IN FAILURE, PITHAPURAM:

Strange are the ways of Providence. No one can tell what is going to happen next. Like the Prodigal Son of the Bible story I had squandered all my money and given charity to unworthy people. I acted hastily for I had no experience and thus I was compelled to return home in complete disappointment and depression. Although more than fifty-five years have passed I can still see myself as a young student, wearing a black suit as a mark of mourning for my great failure, alighting at the Pithapuram Station instead of being in America studying the Arts of Medicine and Mental Healing.

There was no reception, no one was there to receive me, not even my old classmates and trusted *chelas*. I could see only Father, anxiously awaiting my arrival with a sad face, behind the railing of the platform in the Pithapuram station. I wanted to change from my suit of European clothing into the simple Indian dhoti but somehow I could not open my big trunk in another compartment of the train. Thus I had to present myself in the foreign clothing of suit, hat and boots, as though returning as a doctor in all success. It was a sorry and miserable spectacle.

After a little while many of my old classmates, schoolmates and some of the Members of the Academy of Religions came and welcomed me home with love, in spite of my disappointment and failure. In any case I was their hero for I had crossed the Seven Seas, had been in New York and seen the ‘City of Skyscrapers’, even if only for a few hours. I had also passed a number of days on Ellis Island.

My friends, being mischievous young boys, were naturally curious and thus, while I was taking a bath they took the keys of my trunk from my coat pocket and began to ransack my things, clothes, papers, etc. to see what I had brought back from the far away America. Later on I gave each of them a souvenir and also a prayer to repeat for the Peace of all. In those early days the simple,

inspiring and memorable Peace Prayer had not come into existence, but I always had some prayer or other to share with friends and devotees for I had the aspiration to live in God and help others to live in Him.

In spite of the utter failure and great disappointment with regard to my plans and dreams of becoming a great Doctor and Mental Healer there was still the same pent-up energy within, unused, waiting to express itself in some form or other in the future. Although I was still so young, just a teenager, I could not sit by idly with daydreams and waste precious time, even though I had just experienced an utter failure. Every wave that goes down surely rises again. Every night is succeeded by a day of sunshine. To overcome my sadness, depression and failure I began to read more and more spiritual books and I went deeper and deeper with prayers and meditation to forget the great disappointment, the first of its kind.

I was also anxious to teach and preach to my young friends what little I then knew. *The Gita* and a little book called *The Essence of the Upanishads* were my companions and bedside books. *The Imitation of Christ* also gave me strength, consolation and inspiration. By teaching others I too was being taught; thus unconsciously I trained myself while being a teacher to my young friends. Thus, the old band of disciples rallied around me and more new friends joined our old association, The Academy of Religions. This had been started in Waltair when I was as student there, before I left for America. It was my strong wish and will then to make of my life something, even out of this very failure itself. Since my return from America some people, especially my young admirers considered me to be a Mental Healer and a great Mesmerist. I was able to help and serve the sick, relieve their illness, by curing headache, heartache and fevers through the use of hypnotism and mesmerism. Whether it was through God's special Blessings and Grace or because of my simple and sincere life of aspiration there were many cases which had relief and this gave great joy to my friends and inner strength and satisfaction to me.

To do any real and lasting good for others it was not enough however for me just to imagine myself as a great Mental Healer. I longed to study some kind of medicine in order to add to my mental powers of curing disease. In those days one of my boyhood friends, Dr. Govinda Rajulu, the well-known surgeon of Vijayawada, was studying medicine in Calcutta and requested me to join him and at least study Homoeopathy at a large Homoeopathic College there. The school offered a five year course of study and I felt very happy at the thought of studying at a Homoeopathic College, getting a degree and then practicing for the sake of relieving the suffering of the sick and the poor. Father also was very happy with my new venture and was kind enough to provide me again with the necessary funds to proceed to Calcutta and enroll in the college. My relations in Calcutta extended a hearty welcome and promised to help me in all possible ways. Dr. Govinda Rajulu was the sole cause and real instrument behind my entering the Homoeopathic College in Calcutta. On an auspicious day all my friends and *chelas* gave me a hearty send-off at the Pithapuram Station, from whence I proceeded to Calcutta to begin a new life as a Student of Homoeopathy.

May all Blessings be unto Dr. Govind Rajulu and my family and friends for all their love and help and may all Glory be unto God, the Doctor of Doctors for giving me a second chance!

OM OM OM

IN CALCUTTA :

The pent-up energy, the dormant power within, was trying to express itself and was always scheming to do something, to be something, to make something out of life and thus be a blessing to home, family, town, country and to the world at large. The aspiration and the vision have always been for the good of all, to do great things for the benefit of all. Thus I was again given a sendoff on an auspicious day and I left for Calcutta, the big city, the capital of Bengal, where Sri Ramakrishna Pramahansa,

Chaitanya Maha Prabhu and many other spiritual souls have been born. Their consecrated lives have been a great blessing not only to India but to all the world.

I think it was Dr. Govinda Rajulu who received me at the Calcutta Railway Station and took me to the home of my relations. I was to stay with them while studying medicine at the Homoeopathic College. Dr. Govinda Rajulu had made up his mind to make me a doctor of something or other and so he had made all arrangements for my entry into the College. I was introduced to the Principal and other doctors and teachers. It created quite a sensation when it was announced to all of them that I had gone to America even at such a young age. All the professors of the College were very loving and paid special attention to me.

My relation's house was very small and situated in a narrow lane. I occupied what was practically the attic on the top of the house, but I could enjoy the scenery of the surrounding tall buildings near and far. My soul could not be content with living in an attic however; a small room on the top of a little building in a narrow lane for it had high and noble aspirations. I longed to live in a beautiful garden where there were ponds of water, lakes and flowers of various kinds. On holidays I would go to the outskirts of the city and seek out any such places that might be available for my residence at a low rent. As every selfless wish gets fulfilled, I was able to find a small room, not in palatial building but in the servants' quarters of a Dewan, a caretaker who looked after the gardens and buildings of a large estate. I was given the privilege of roaming all through the garden and meditating wherever I liked. At last I was able to rest, relax and meditate. I was happy to go every day to the Homoeopathic College on a trolley and attend my classes regularly.

After some time my mind began to incline towards lovely places and lonely places of silence such as Dakshineswar, where Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa performed Sadhana at Belur Math. I would spend hour after hour alone in prayer and meditation. The Botanical Gardens of Calcutta are considered the finest in India, with the well-kept and beautiful parks, winding paths bordered by

fragrant flowers and many comfortable places for rest and meditation. My mind used to wander towards the lovely and lonely Botanical Gardens more often than it did towards the Homoeopathic College.

I had a Muslim friend who lived near the ‘Garden of the Zamindars’ where I was staying. He was very kind and often invited me to his home where we had prayers and the study of comparative religions. Sometimes he would make especially for me a mixed dish, a vegetable pulao. Perhaps through *Purvajanmasukrutham*, good deeds done in past births, God has blessed me with a heart of universality. From childhood I have seen only the Sweet Face of God in everyone, regardless of caste, creed, colour or nationality.

The big garden with its tanks, ponds, trees and flowers had its disadvantages however. There were mosquitoes and I was bitten and developed a malarial kind of fever. Hearing of my sickness while all alone in a faraway place my father and friends wired me to return home.

The account of my stay in Calcutta would be incomplete if I did not mention with gratitude one of my boyhood friends, Sri Rangachary, who supported me in the expensive city by sending month after month the salary he received as a Station Master. I was deeply touched when I heard from some of our mutual friends that brother Rangachary used to live sometimes on rice and rice water alone, without even milk, for want of money. He was sending the major portion of his salary for my education and maintenance in the great city of Calcutta.

How blessed it is to have such selfless and devoted friends who live for others, denying themselves even daily nourishment and the comforts of life. Blessed has been my life to have had such dedicated and consecrated friends!

May Peace be unto all.

OM

OM

OM

Chapter 7

A HEALER OF DISEASE

RETURNING HOME IN SICKNESS, PITHAPURAM :

The body is but a rented house, be the inhabitant saint or sinner. We have to pay rent every month. If we do not do so, eventually the rent will be collected in a lumpsum. My malaria grew worse and became chronic for I took no precautions or medicine at the outset. As my father and friends had wired me to return home and as I had lost interest in Homoeopathy, I left all my books, clothes and things in the cottage, locked the room and giving the key to the caretaker, left for home. I said good bye to my Muslim friend and others at the Railway Station and promised to return again and then, by God's Grace, reached Pithapuram safely where all were anxiously awaiting my arrival.

I have never been in favour of taking medicines, for some actually prove poisonous. If we want real and permanent cure Mother Nature is the unfailing remedy. I was interested in Nature Cure and read various books by Purington and other Naturopaths. I tried steam baths, massage, mud packs and special diet to cure the malaria. As Nature Cure takes a long time my friends and relations became discouraged, for I continued to have high fever often. But God blessed me with the strength to test my convictions despite opposition.

Day by day I grew healthier and more happy. I was drawn towards the Inner Spirit and spent hours in prayer and meditation. Friends also would join me for long walks in the evenings and at the midnight hours as well. My simple and ideal life of devotion brought joy not only to my loyal students but to many others who had been watching my life all along, hoping for Service and Peace.

Often sick people would come to me uninvited for cure of disease through prayers and mental power. Thus I became a mental healer or spiritual doctor unknowingly. I would write the sacred syllable OM on the water and give *Mantrajalam* to the sick. My studies in homoeopathy and Mesmerism were also helpful for they

teach one to assert health and strength, facing God in all. Many of the sick who came to me were thus finding some relief.

Strange are the ways of God! He uses His children, even the weak, erring and ignorant ones to serve His Purpose, to glorify His Name. We read in the holy Bible how the Blessed Christ used to exorcise, drive away, the devils and evil spirits from the bodies of sick people. By God's Grace such signs of healing were seen in my own life in those days.

By another strange coincidence, through past Karma, a *Tantrika*, a Mental Healer, was living nearby and drawing hundreds of sick people to him not only for the cure of physical illness but also for the obsessed as well. Hearing of my silent life of prayer and austerity he visited my dwelling place in Pithapuram. I also was interested in his healing work and when he invited me to his village about eight miles away, I accepted. Thus along with my devoted young friends I went to the village of the Yogi to learn the Art of Healing and the driving out of devils from this new Guru. At last I saw being fulfilled my dream of becoming a Bearer of Light and a real Benefactor to the world.

OM OM OM

IN CHENDURTY:

A Prophet is not honoured in his own county. It can also be said that familiarity breeds contempt. Yet, a pure, ideal and selfless life commands respect, even among one's countrymen. A selfish life harms all. A weak and negative thought will spread and increase weakness. The passing clouds of depression should be ignored and only good thoughts be allowed to spread, for the good of all. What you think you become. Think only good thoughts and forget the evil in yourself as well as in others. How life-giving and inspiring is the message of the Three Monkeys :

See no evil.
Hear no evil.
Speak no evil.

Self-praise combined with the condemnation of others is one of the worst traits for it creates differences, misunderstandings and distrust. Speak only when you have something good to say of others. How blessed it is to see God in each and every one! In spite of the passing clouds of difference all are the living Images of the One, Indivisible God!

Although this well known Tantric Master, the Karnam of Chendurthy was drawing crowds of sick people, coming on foot and in juktas, carts, who sought relief from his magnetic touch and *Mantrajalam*, the people of his own village avoided him like the plague and went instead to nearby doctors and hospitals for cure of their illness. At a time when the fame of the Tantric was waning I was lured, or rather bewitched and taken to the village of Chendurthy to live with this magician. He seemed to have some power for curing disease by his *Mantrajalam* and could drive away the devils or evil spirits that had taken possession of the bodies of the innocent and were making a havoc of their lives. Ninety-nine percent of these cases were women, mature ladies and young girls, but never men.

Once we were taken to the home of a rich merchant in Kakinada where one of the ladies of the house was possessed by evil spirit and was wreaking havoc in the whole family. Although only a witness to the play of the spirits and their threats I was young and felt afraid within as I sat bravely beside the Tantric, facing the obsessed. Before him the person would become silent and obey all his commands. When we arrived at the house in Kakinada the possessed woman was crying and dancing around a pillar on the verandah and creating a lot of disturbance. At the approach of the Tantric she became silent and there was satisfaction for all.

Whether it was true or not people, especially those of the village used to say the cures were taking place because of my presence. The Tantric took me whenever he went to drive out evil spirits from the possessed. Once we went to the house of the Munsiff of Kirlampudi, a wealthy man. One of the ladies of the house was suffering with obsession. The Munsiff arranged for the Tantric Master and myself to be carried in palaquins to his home, a

distance of twelve miles. Eight servants were employed to carry the palanquins and I protested against this injustice to human dignity but I was finally persuaded by the Tantric to sit in the palanquin and be carried to Kirlampudi. It was an interesting experience and a privilege to help the possessed.

We were given comfortable rooms, delicious food, coconut water and plenty of fruits. Some of my close friends and admirers also came along. I was happy in my separate room where I could meditate in silence when not needed to help with the cure of the patient. After two or three days relief was given to the satisfaction of all and we were carried back from Kirlampudi in the same comfortable palanquins.

Generally palanquins are used for marriages, to carry the bride and the bridegroom. The bearers chant certain songs, perhaps to lessen their burden. I was able to hear and feel the sound of the sacred syllable OM in the refrain of their song:

OM Bhai....Bhai OM! OM Bhai....Bhai OM!

mile after mile. It is a comfortable journey for those carried in the *savari* but for the eight or ten people who carry it, it is a strenuous and painful work. The only consolation for the workmen is that they will be paid well and sumptuously fed.

Once I was taken alone to a home where a devoted and respectable lady was possessed by an evil spirit. She was shouting and cursing everyone. I sat in a chair silently meditating. After a while the suffering woman said : ‘Please open the window. I cannot bear the presence of the dedicated soul here. I will depart and leave the woman in Peace’. I glorified God for all his Blessings and said in a trembling voice: ‘We will open the window. Please do not come again and give trouble to the woman.’ There was Peace and rejoicing in the house.

All Glory belongs to God, who can make the crippled to walk, the dumb to speak and the blind to see. Alone the finite man can do nothing. It is by the Grace of God only that the manifested world has its being.

May Peace be unto all.

OM

OM

OM

Chapter 8

RENUNCIATION

ALL GLORY IS VANITY:

Just as every wave which rises must fall, so I was not satisfied with the dual state of things in the world, nor with all the outer glory of name and fame. I began to think about where it would lead. I might be taken in a palanquin to Heaven itself but would this bring God-realisation and true Peace? Even if I were to be made ruler of all India or Emperor of the world, would it lead to God-realisation, the Goal of precious human birth?

All Glory is Vanity. The fleeting clouds of name and fame, the outer glory, is like the petal of a tiny flower or a blade of grass. The flower blooms, then fades and finally disappears. Such is the outer life of man in the world. By running after shadows man can never reach God, the Substance. Man must go back to the Source from which he has come, retreat from the unreal to the Real, from change to the Changeless, from the mortal to the Immortal. With such aspiring thoughts I became more and more detached from all the outer activities and more drawn towards Silence and detachment from all names and forms.

I became weary and tired of all Gurus and *chelas*. I wanted something substantial and permanent which would give Peace to the mind, heart and soul. I realised from various sources that the Tantric Guru was leading me astray day by day. He had a devoted wife whom he was also taking into delusion along with all the sick patients and other followers. They were blind sheep falling into the depths of darkness unknowingly. I felt it was time to retreat from the outer Guru to the Light within.

It was a blessed day when I departed from Chendurthy, leaving the Tantric Guru to his Karma and oblivion. What we sow, we reap. After I left his name and fame began to lessen. No longer did the blind sheep come for *Mantrajalam* to be cured of their diseases or to have the demons driven out. How true are the words of the sage Abraham Lincoln:

You can dupe and deceive some of the people all of the time, all of the people some of the time, but you can never deceive all of the people, all of the time.

The divine Laws are inexorable, inflexible and unrelenting. They operate on all equally, whether rich or poor, learned or ignorant, healthy or sick, young or old. Inner life leads to purification. By God's Blessings I was able to realise in all intensity that real joy, Changeless Peace for myself as well as for all my young, trusting devotees is only in perfect detachment and complete renunciation of the outer world of name and fame.

My mind leapt to the Holy Himalayas with the ringing words, Renounce, Renounce! Happiness, the Changeless Happiness lies only in complete renunciation. At an auspicious moment I made the final decision, purely by His Grace, to abandon the alluring and bewitching and to walk on the lonely and rugged path of Dharma, the Truth.

May all praise be unto Him!

OM OM OM

PREPARATIONS FOR ASCETICISM:

It is not so easy to renounce suddenly. One should know first whether or not he is fit for the hard life of Sannyasa, asceticism. There is a story about a man who became angry with his wife over some argument and left home to become a sannyasi. On that day he did not get his usual good food or soft bed. He returned home quietly, reconciled with his wife and settled down. I also had led a life of luxury with many personal attentions from rich relations and devoted student friends. Before making the final decision to go from the life of the world to the life of asceticism I prepared myself in some of the daily things of life, eating sleeping, walking long distances and fasting concurrently.

I longed to be simple and humble and forget that I had been to America. To kill the egoism, the *Ahankara*, I would go to

the Railway Station at night and offer to carry the luggage of the passengers. I longed to earn my keep by hard labour. But no one would give me their baggage even after seeing my youth and earnestness. Even though this first attempt was not successful I had the experience of offering myself as a servant.

I gave up salt and chillies and lived on raw fruits and vegetables such as coconuts and bananas for many years. As I had been told that Aloes, *kalabanda*, were helpful for Brahmacharya I would take the jelly-like substance along with milk. I gave up wearing shirts and distributed my Western clothing among the sick and the poor. Renunciation of the outer as well as the inner is most essential.

At that time I was staying in Waltair and would spend much of the time in prayer and meditation with my friends by the ocean. I tried to help my classmates as best as I could with spiritual instructions. Some of them wanted to follow me on my pilgrimage of asceticism but I dissuaded and discouraged them for I wanted full Self-reliance.

On an auspicious day, in the middle of the night I left home carrying neither money nor clothing but only a *kamandal*, a water vessel and the holy books, Bhagavad Gita, Ashtavakra Gita and The Imitation of Christ. I was entirely relying on God, the Indwelling Light.

May Peace be unto all!

OM

OM

OM

Chapter 9

FREEDOM

TESTS AND TRIALS ON THE ROAD:

When everything is God and nothing else exists besides Him, it is He alone who writes this Autobiography. May all Glory be unto Him!

At last, Freedom, Freedom from friends, relations, Gurus and disciples. At last I had begun in a small way the *Parivrajaka* life, walking on the lonely path of freedom towards the Goal of life, God – realisation.

Wherever you may be, whether amidst a crowd or in solitude you are never alone for there is someone with you eternally, from birth to death and beyond.

Question: Who is *He*?

Answer : *He* is the Indweller of your
Heart, the Self - effulgent Light.

Blessed are they who can recognise *Him* even in the so - called tests and trials of life.

Once the Prophet Mohammad and a disciple were fleeing from his persecutors, who wanted to kill him. The disciple, in all fear said, 'O Master, the enemy is many and we are only two. Surely they will kill us.' Mohammad answered, 'We are not two, but we are three. There is *someone* with us all the time, protecting us constantly. He is God, *the Third One*.'

As I walked alone in the middle of the night I listened to the sound of all God's creatures, especially to the occasional song of a bird. I felt that God is always with me. When I lifted my eyes towards the heavens it was *He* twinkling in millions of stars. When such is the case how can man ever feel that he is alone? God is within and without, above, below and all around, now and always. In the past, present and future, *He* is the Witness of all the manifested worlds.

In the dark, cold and lonely night I would pass by a bullock cart now and then; sometimes a kind - hearted driver would ask me to sit in the cart but I preferred to walk slowly and steadily, feeling God's Presence in every step. Once I walked behind a cart, following in the step of the patient bulls. As a young novice in the life of renunciation I wore neither *banian*, shirt, nor shoes. I walked barefoot feeling free, happy and contented. After walking several miles my feet developed blisters. I stopped to rest on a *pial*, a stone bench in front of a house. I was not only weary but hungry and thirsty as well. Someone gave me a drink of *kanji*, rice - water and both hunger and thirst were satisfied. To keep the body alive and healthy man actually needs very little food.

Lying on the stone *pial* in that lonely village in all freedom and Peace I opened *Ashtavakra Gita* and read a few verses. Then I slept, unconscious of all, for a long time. When I awoke, refreshed, someone fed me. It was none other than *He*, who feeds the birds in the sky and the fish in the sea. May all Glory be unto Him!

After resting, feeling happy with my first day's experiences I took to the open road again without any desire to know where I would be led. I walked slowly because of my blistered feet. As it grew dark I passed by a bungalow in a small town. Someone called out and asked me to stop. As I approached I saw that he was a policeman and the bungalow a Police Station. The policeman probably didn't have any other work at the moment and so he began to investigate me, asking a hundred questions.

Where is your home? Why are you out alone? Where are your parents? What does your father do? How much education do you have? How much money do you have with you now?

I had to answer all his questions one after another patiently. When he heard that I did not have even a single *naya paisa* of money with me he was quite disappointed. Gruffly he said that I could not proceed any further until his Superior came and was

satisfied with my case and allowed me to leave. He gave me a mat and asked me to sleep inside the Police Station. I do not remember whether or not he gave me any food. On my second night of Freedom I was in jail, practically under arrest. This reminded me of *Sri Krishna Janmasthanam*, the birth of the Lord in a prison. In the morning the Officer, a Sub – Inspector came and questioned me and examined my belongings, a *dhoti* in which my three books were wrapped. As they were spiritual books he concluded I was not up to any mischief and apologising for having detained me for the night, he said I was free to go. He even offered me some money but I would not accept it for it was my vow to travel carrying neither food nor money. The Heavenly Father, Who looks after all His children, even the birds which neither sow nor reap was taking care of all my needs.

Glorifying God and thanking the Sub–Inspector, his Constable and the Police Station for befriending me for the night, I left to walk on the path to the Unknown, wishing the Peace of all.

OM OM OM

TOWARDS PURI, JAGANNATH:

How blessed to travel towards *Puri Jagannath!* Puri is the Temple, the body. Jagannath is the Lord, the Light in the temple, When I left home my intention was to proceed first to Puri and finally to the Himalayas. I wanted to know from personal experience if I could bear the rigorous life of asceticism. I walked nearly 300 miles and had some hard and trying experiences as well as some happy ones. This was the carefree life, fully relying on God and not knowing from where and how the next meal would come. If we trust and rely on God one hundred per cent He takes full care of us. As long as the baby is playing with his toys the mother is busy with household work. But as soon as the baby throws aside his toys and cries for his mother, she drops all her work and rushes to her child. Another interesting story on complete surrender tells that Vishnu and Lakshmi were playing chess in Heaven when suddenly Vishnu jumped up and rushed towards the earth. Going

halfway he stopped short, returned to Heaven and continued the chess game. Lakshmi was puzzled by this strange behavior and asked Vishnu to explain. He said, ‘One of my devotees was in trouble and so I rushed to earth to help him. But I saw that he was trying to protect himself by beating back his tormentors, so I left him to his own protection.

I proceeded steadily but very slowly for the blisters on my feet were growing worse and I could barely walk even a few yards. I would request people, especially those who helped me, to repeat the Name of God and to feel His Presence always.

I reached Chatrapur safely, where I had some relations. There were happy to see me and took good care of my blistered feet, giving hot fomentations, rubbing them with coconut oil, etc. They also fed me with good foods to give me strength and sent me by train to Puri for *Darshan* of Lord Jagannath. Even though the devoted relations in Chatrapur wanted me to stay with them permanently, as soon as I was well enough I sent a wire to my relations in Waltair and they sent money for my early return.

My sister, Brother-in-law and friends were all happy to have me back from the wandering life. In all my travels the Chilaka Lake, with its calm waters and small boats on its bosom was a source of inspiration and joy for this lovely, calm lake is one of the most beautiful and glorious spots of enchanting Nature.

After my return to Waltair I began to read spiritual books more intensely and to spend more time in prayer and meditation. I was drawn more deeply within and longed to share my inner spiritual experiences with my classmates and friends. My family was happy because they thought my *Parivrajaka* life had ended with the first experience of cold and hunger. But they were entirely mistaken. My wandering life had only given me fresh stimulus for Sanyasi life that was yet to come.

The ways of God are mysterious and incomprehensible. How true are the words, *Out of the depths, fresh strength.*

May all Glory be unto God.

OM

OM

OM

Chapter 10

INTROSPECTION

MEDITATION :

What is that thing by knowing which everything is known? Go to the Source and realise it within, in Silence. Your personal experience will be the greatest blessing to humanity. Never try to teach others of God without having first a personal experience of your Oneness with the Indwelling Light.

After my return to my sister's home in Waltair, the Rednam Gardens, my spiritual study and meditation grew deeper. I became immersed in an inner world of beauty and Light as I sat beside the ocean listening to the ceaseless chanting of the sacred syllable OM in its waves. Another beautiful scene that gave me indescribable joy was the setting of the Sun behind the hills with all its lovely rays of variegated colours. Every morning the ball of fire, the Self-effulgent Sun rises from the horizon and fills the world with Light, Life and Love. How incomprehensible are the secrets and glories of Nature! Every twinkling star and fragrant flower speaks of the splendour of God. Behold the glory of God not only within but in all of Nature, in all living beings.

In the hills there was a lovely garden with a perennial spring named the Seethamma Dhara owned by one Sannyasi Chetty of Bheemunipatnam. It was used as a public picnic place and students with their teachers and families would often come, especially on Sundays to cook their food and spend a pleasant holiday. My friends and I would go there often and meditate hour after hour in Silence. Sometimes we would climb the hill, going towards the source of the spring. We spent days and nights also in longer vigils of meditation. One day, returning from the hillside I heard that the Maharajah of Bobbili had come and asked about me. Although I did not meet the Maharajah that day, in later years Smt. Lakshmi Subhadra Devi, Rani Saheba of Bobbili and other family members have become devoted friends of the Ashram.

I came to the conclusion that the quest for Peace lay in the solitude of the Himalayas where Sadhus and Mahatmas of every kind spend their lives in meditation and Tapas on the banks of the Holy Ganges. Forgetting my dream of going to America I turned my mind completely to the Himalayas and began to prepare myself for deep Tapas there in Silence. I turned my mind, heart and soul towards the Sublime Heights.

OM OM OM

HOROSCOPES:

Are horoscopes true or untrue? They may be accurate if drawn up by men of learning and God-realisation, but how rare they are! When Astrology is made into a business we cannot expect real truth. My horoscope was written by a village Purohit, a Brahman Pandit whose name was Pulla Kavi, 'Sour Poet'. He said I would live only fifty eight years but I am almost eighty and hale and hearty. He also predicted that as I had *neeti gandamu* I might die by drowning. With this negative and fearful thought planted in my young mind, when I travelled on steamers, especially in storms when the ship rocked like a cradle, I used to remember his prediction. By God's Grace, even though I have crossed many of the oceans of the world, nothing has happened. When we cling to God, He is the unfailing protection of our lives. He knows what is good for us far better than we know ourselves. How good is God! May all Glory be unto Him!

The subject of Horoscope recalls an amusing incident. For sometime there was a devoted elderly man living in the Ashram. He served the visitors, attended Satsang and used to spin on the Charka also. He had woven for me a dhoti from what he had spun. I loved him and he loved me. Time passed smoothly. One day he approached me and said:

"Swamiji, I am going home. Please give me permission."

"Why do you want to go home now, so suddenly?"

"I am going to die in twenty days and I wish to die in my

own house, surrounded by my children and grand-children."

"How do you know you will die in exactly twenty days?"

"My horoscope states that I will die in twenty days, giving not only the date but also the exact hour. Furthermore my son is an astrologer and he has seen my horoscope and confirmed the date and hour of my death as correct."

I laughed at his foolish belief in the prediction of his death verified even by his own son. I smiled and said:

"You are not going to die on that day, twenty days from now. You will live for a long time to come, especially because you are doing God's work in the Ashram, serving His children, selflessly looking after their needs."

"No, no, Swamiji. It is settled that I shall die on that day. Nothing can go against the predictions of the astrologer and my own son as well."

I could not convince him; he was adamant. He left the Ashram with my prayers for his long life. Ten days passed, fifteen days passed; nothing happened, he was not even sick. On the twentieth day, when he expected to die, death did not come. Both he and his son were disappointed. When I wrote a letter congratulating him on his conquest of death he replied that on that particular day he had had some signs of death. The devotee is still alive, healthy and happy.

I have never had any interest in hearing about the dead past or the astrological predictions for the dim future for I am concerned more with the present living moment. Let us cling to the Light in each and every moment so that we may be ready when the call comes. My heart rejoices whenever I hear the divine song of Tukaram:

O God! Let this body go now or remain forever. What I need is only to cling to Thy Feet and allow my mind to merge and dissolve in Thee. Grant me the boon of never forgetting Thee.

May the essence of all Horoscopes be to center ourselves in the Here and Now, in God, forgetting all else and wishing the Peace of all.

May Peace be unto all.

OM

OM

OM

Chapter 11

SANNYASA

TO THE HIMALAYAS:

Sri Kakkirala Rama Rao, his Life – partner Mother Ratnam, and their two sons were a very devoted and loving family in Rajahmundry. When I decided to go to the Himalayas they had special warm clothing made for me for they feared I might suffer from cold on the Himalayan heights. They were unwilling to let me go at all, but as I was determined they allowed me to depart with the promise that I would come again to serve them. They cheerfully bought me a Railway ticket to Haridwar. All those who loved me, family and friends, were sad that I was to leave them.

To my small collection of books I added the works of Swami Rama Tirtha and an old copy of the *Avadhuta Gita*. I had a pleasant journey on the train and got down at Calcutta for *Darshan* of Kali, the Mother of the Universe and again at Banaras for *darshan* of Kasi Viswanath, the Lord of the Universe. At last I reached Haridwar, the doorway to the Heaven of *Hari*, the Lord. It was full of ashrams, hermitages and *matts* of every size and shape, from palatial buildings to thatched huts, all occupied by Sadhus and Mahatmas of various kinds. I walked the distance of about fifteen miles from Haridwar to Rishikesh.

When I reached Rishikesh I had a simple meal of *roti* and *dhal*. Opposite to the Swami Rama Tirtha Library is the famous Swargashram which extends for a distance of two miles at the foot of the Nilkant Hill and has a hundred or more *kutirams* for the use of Sadhus.

I thought that I would surely be able to get a *kutir* by the side of the Holy Ganges in that Holy Ashram and begin my *Sadhana*, *Tapas*. But the *Mahant*, the head of the *Dharma Kshetra* of Swargashram every day receives hundreds of Sadhus and when he saw how young and inexperienced I was he refused to give me *kutir* by the Gange's side. Then I appealed to him to give me any *kutir*, even one far away I wanted only to be alone in Silence.

Hearing my sincere words the Mahant relented and gave me a dilapidated and God-forsaken *kutir* in a remote corner of Swargashram which was infested with scorpions and where Sadhus hesitated to go even in the daytime. But I was so glad to get any place at all that I gratefully thanked the Mahant, Sri Atma Prakashji with all contentment.

As I settled down in that small *kutir* I felt I was the happiest man in the world. With tears of gratitude to God for all His love and protection I slept in deep Peace.

Every day a bell would ring in the Ashram and all the Sadhus would go to the *kshetra* for their ration of *roti* and *dhal*. Some of the Sadhus would take their food in bags of cloth or in *kamandals* of coconut or brass and go to Mother Ganges and there offer a little bread to the fish that swim to the shore to greet them. The Holy men glorify God repeating,

OM! Hara Hara Mahadeva, Sambho Parvati Namah.

As I was tired on that first day I overslept and also my *kutir* was a long distance from the rest of the Ashram so I did not hear the bell calling the Sadhus for meals. But although I was deprived of food I was happy anyway for I was enjoying spiritual food, the Manna of Heaven, alone with Him in Silence. My young heart was filled with joy and contentment for at last the Bestower of all gifts had granted my wish and it was with me now to realise Him, forgetting all the outer world. May all Glory be unto Him!

OM OM OM

THE SACRED DAY OF SANNYASA:

I had tested myself to see if I was ready to renounce the bewitching world of name and form, to take *Sannyasa*. The Inner Voice said that now I was ready. Although I have considered all as my Gurus, from the mother who bore me to the father who took such good care of me to all the friends who helped and encouraged me, still the real Guru has been always the God within, the Indwelling Light.

Although young in age and experience I did not wish to join any order of Sannyasis but only to belong to the Sect of God, the free and the universal one and take *Sannyas* from Him alone. I was also greatly influenced by the life and teachings of Swami Rama Tirtha and longed to follow in his footsteps by feeling the Presence of the Light within.

On that blessed day in the early hours I went to the banks of the Holy Ganges and meditated in deep Silence feeling His Presence within and without, above and below and all around, in the hills and in the sound of the flowing Ganges. At such a sacred moment of ecstasy I discarded the old clothing and put on the new ochre-coloured garments with the promise to God that I would abide in Him forever.

It was a blessed and sacred moment of inspiration when the fish in the water were happily swimming towards me and the birds in the sky were joyously flying overhead singing songs of Freedom and Glory.

May all Glory be unto the Highest!

OM OM OM

THE HOLY NAME OMKAR:

OM or AUM is the first sound, the first manifestation from the Infinite Void. We are born in OM, live and work in OM and merge back into OM at the time of the dissolution of the body. The manifested word comes from the Unmanifested. The study of the works of Swami Rama Tirtha made me realise the full glory of OM. Swami Rama was always chanting OM with divine ecstasy and wrote so thrillingly about the mystic syllable that I too felt inspired.

Through *Purvajanma sukrutham*, good Karma done in the past births I have been repeating OM all these years, both at work and at rest. Everything is OM, the primal sound emanating from the Great Void. Seeing my absorption in OM some of the Sadhus and friends began to call me OM Swami. Later, as some of my dearest *Sadhu Bhais* saw me merged in OM, feeling Its Presence within and without, they called me *Omkar Swami*. The identification was so perfect and complete that I could feel the vibrations of the holy mantram in the very cells of my being and flowing in the very breath. OM dispels all darkness and establishes one in the Self – effulgent Light, the Splendour of millions of Suns.

May the name *Omkar* be a blessing to all the children of God in all religions and nations throughout the world, for it includes all. May the manifested Word merge in the Unmanifested Glory of the Sun of suns and may Peace abide in all the worlds!

May Peace be unto all.

OM OM OM

प्रणवो घनुः शरोह्यत्मा
ब्रह्म तल्लक्ष्य मुच्यते
अप्रमत्तेन वेधव्यम्
शरवत् तन्मयो भवेत्

Pranavo dhanuh Sharohyatma
Brahma tallakshya muchyate
Apramattena veddhavyam sharavat
tanmayo bhavet

(Mundakopanishad 2.2.4)

The Sacred Word OM is called the bow, the arrow the Soul and Brahman its aim. It should be pierced by him whose attention does not waver. Then he will be of the same nature with *Him*, just as the arrow becomes One with the mark when it is pierced.

अर इव रतनभौ समूहत यत्र नदयः
न ऐसोन्तरश्चरते बहुदा जायमानः
ओमित्येवम् ध्यायत आत्मानम्
स्वस्ति वः परय तमसः परस्तात

Ara iva ratanabhau samahata yatra nadyah
Na yesontarascharate bahuda jayamanah
Omityevam dhyayata atmanam
Svasti vah paraya tamasah parastat

(Mundakopanishad 2.2.6)

Within the heart where the arteries enter as the spokes do the nave of a wheel, He moves, becoming manifold. Meditate on Him through the word OM. Let it abide with you so that you may cross the ocean of ignorance.

May all Glory be unto God

OM OM OM

Chapter 12

SWARGASHRAM: I

NEW LIFE:

As I was living an ideal life alone and in a remote place God sent other aspiring souls to take care of me. Once the Mahant came to enquire after my welfare and to see if I needed anything. I replied with grateful thanks, ‘The Lord has given me everything, and above all your protection and love. What more do I need?’ He replied:

"Swamiji, why don't you keep a light in the night for protection against scorpions and other poisonous creatures? I will send you a lamp and some oil."

"Please do not send me any Light for I am contented with the Light within. I long to cling more and more to the Indwelling Light and rely no longer on the outer, transitory lights. I would have remained at home had I wanted the comforts of the world. Bless me, dear Mahantji, to cling to the Inner Light always."

The Mahant, Sri Atma Prakashji was a kind – hearted and dedicated soul. He felt highly pleased with my reply and simple life and we were drawn to each other.

There was also a Tamilian Sadhu who loved me and attended upon me in every way. We would go every day with the band of Sadhus around eleven in the morning to collect our quota of roti and dhal which I put in a *joli* or bag. Then we would go to the banks of the Ganges and partake of it there, feeling His Presence in all Glory and Silence. I took joy in feeding the fish swimming towards me with bits of bread.

Narayana Swami was very devoted and he rendered many services so that I could meditate alone in Silence. One day the Mahant requested me to take meals in the *Bhandara* (feast), in the

Kitchen with him. I thanked him for his courtesy but said it gave me joy to eat outside on the banks of the Ganges. Then the devoted Narayana Swamy offered to bring me my food along with his own to the riverside and we could eat together in the open air. I agreed to this and from that day forward I would go early to the banks of the Ganges and meditate there, gazing at the high ranges of hills and watching the steady and rapid flow of the river with ecstasy.

Even though Narayana Swamy considered himself my *chela* and would wash my clothes and drinking vessel and even sweep the room he was more like a Guru for he would come and sing to me the inspiring songs of Thayumanavar, Ramalinga Swamy and other saints of the South.

How good of God to have sent such a devoted friend to take care of this body so that I could have every opportunity to be alone with Him and meditate in Silence. I feel deeply grateful not only to the All-compassionate God but also to the loving and ideal devotee, Narayana Swamy, who served me so faithfully for so long.

May Narayana bless Narayana!

OM OM OM

THE DEPUTY COLLECTOR:

It had become known among the Sadhus and visitors that even though young I had gone to America. One day a rather heavy man with an air of importance came to my kutir and said he was the Deputy Collector of Saharanpur District. He requested Initiation, *Upadesam* from me but I said that the real Initiation is given by only one, the God within, in the stillness of our own purified hearts. He gave cardamom as an offering. He began to ask many questions, all the while looking around the room. He wanted to know what I had in the cloth which contained my books. Without waiting for an answer he jumped up and began to search through my things. Young and inexperienced I sat silently watching. Finding nothing except a few books he apologised and we talked for a

while longer and then he left, promising to send a basket of fruits as *Guru Dakshina*.

When Sri Atma Prakashiji heard about the visit of the Deputy Collector he warned me to be very careful with such people for the Deputy Collector was really a Policeman from the Criminal Investigation Bureau. As word has spread that I had been to America the police might have thought I belonged to some revolutionary organisation and was learning how to make bombs and other dangerous implements of destruction. In fact, I was interested in making bombs, not Atom Bombs but *Atomic Bombs* of Love and Compassion which embrace all. The *Atomic Bomb* is the only helpful bomb which can bless the world with the Peace that passeth all understanding.

Blessed are the rare and precious souls with consciousness of the Atman, the One, Indivisible God, the soul and goal of precious human birth.

OM OM OM

THE RUSSIAN COUNT:

From ancient times Holy men of every kind have been performing austerities and meditating on the sublime heights of the majestic Himalayas, emanating Peace to the world. With awe and veneration pilgrims from all lands, rich and poor, young and old, come to the sacred places of the Himalayas, seeking inspiration, wisdom and Peace.

The pilgrims offer gifts of fruits, money, etc. to the various Sadhus and Yogis. Some Sadhus, of the lowest sort will dupe the innocent pilgrims for a few *naya paisa*. But the highest type of holy man is contented to live alone in Silence, shunning the perishable wealth and seeking only the imperishable wealth of God-consciousness. The true *Darshan* is but to touch the feet of these rare and few great souls, who live for the Inner Light and are dead to the outer world of name and fame.

One day a Russian Count came to Rishikesh. Money was nothing to him for he was so immensely rich. He had bundles of hundred rupee notes in hand and gave two hundred rupees to the coolie who carried his bags. To those Sadhus who accepted money he was giving a one hundred rupee note each. He was brought to my kutir at the foot of the hill. I was absorbed in reading some verses from *Avadhuta Gita* and he sat silently listening for a few minutes but then, being restless he made a move to go. But I detained him and made him read a few verses from the *Avadhuta Gita* and meditate for a little while. Then, when he was ready to depart he offered his respects, *Pranams*, and said, ‘Oh swamiji, you belong to the *Jnana* type. You need nothing from me for you have everything within you.’

The memory of his devoted and affectionate visit will remain forever in my heart.

May Peace be unto all.

OM

OM

OM

Chapter 13

SWARGASHRAM: 2

THE PRIVATE SECRETARY TO BUNDI MAHARAJA:

It is strange and incomprehensible how God unites kindred souls in a mystical way to serve His children. Though it may not happen immediately eventually the spiritual bond will become manifest. Sri Prabhu Dayal Varman was Private Secretary to the Maharaja of Bundi, Rajasthan. When the Maharaja and Maharani decided to visit the Himalayas and see the various Ashrams and holy men they sent him in advance to prepare the way.

In 1952 Prabhu Dayal Varman, along with his brother Deena Dayal and his son Jagadish Dayal began a branch of Santi Ashram in Bundi and also published a Hindi version of our PEACE under the title *Visva Santi Kalyan*. Sri Prabhu Dayalji was a great student of Yoga and Vedanta and wrote several books in Hindi. In the 1960's we went to visit the devoted Sri Prabhu Dayalji and the friends in Rajasthan in our Peace Van. I remembered while riding through the deserts of Rajasthan how, in my *Parivrajaka* days I walked on foot through the state and enjoyed the great hospitality of its devoted people.

May God's richest blessings be upon Sri Prabhu Dayalji and his devoted family and all the aspiring souls in Rajasthan and may Peace be unto all.

OM OM OM

MOMENTS OF JOY:

The stone rejected by the masons in the construction of a building may become its cornerstone later. Although I was rejected at first and given a dilapidated kutir in a remote corner in the course of time, by my simple and ideal life of renunciation I became the life and soul of Swargashram, loved by all, from the servants to the devoted Sadhus to the kind - hearted Mahantji himself. There were about 200 or 250 Sadhus residing in the ashram. One of them, Dayal Saran Prakashji loved me deeply. He helped the Mahant by

receiving the visitors, making them comfortable and representing Swargashram. He would often sit on the *Gaddi*, the raised seat of the Mahant and teach and preach to the pilgrims who poured in continuously, day after day. Whenever I went to post or receive a letter I would be embarrassed to see the Mahant or Dayal Saranji rising and offering, even insisting that I sit on the *Gaddi*. Only to please them, unwillingly I would take the elevated seat while they sat by my side on the carpet below. I felt not only touched by their love and veneration but also quite unworthy of it all.

They insisted on sending me sugar, *ghee*, almonds, grapes and other fruits and sweets. Narayana Swamy used to bring all these things from the *Kshetra* office and I would share them with him and with the other Sadhus and visitors. As many important people were coming to see me the Mahant gave me a two room cottage with verandah which faced the Ganges. I was more comfortable but missed the silence of my old kutir.

In the Ashrams and Matts of the Himalayas when it is hot the Sadhus make a cool drink called *thandayi* to quench the thirst. They also prepare it especially for distinguished visitors. It is made of soaked almonds, black pepper, *gasagasalu*, poppy seeds and certain other herbs all ground to a paste and mixed with cold milk. The Mahantji used to send me this drink through a servant whenever it was prepared.

Once some sort of intoxicating herb was added to this refreshing drink without my knowledge. There was no change in the taste of the drink but after I had drunk it my body became light and the mind free of all imaginations. It was something like God – intoxication for I forgot the outer world of name and form. I was actually floating in space, rising above body and mind. It was a God-given experience, a real taste of *Nirvikalpa Samadhi* for I lost all consciousness and was in great ecstasy for several hours. Even time disappeared for a day. The memory of it still haunts me with great joy and ecstasy although almost sixty years have passed away. I do not know what I have done in past births to have deserved this glorious experience while still so young, even though it was

induced with the help of a Himalayan herb. May that moment of joy be made permanent in my life of renunciation!

Through introspection I came to the conclusion that although this state was the highest, it should come naturally as *Sahaja Samadhi* and not as the result of taking any herb. I have been grateful always for this state of transcendental bliss experienced so suddenly by His Grace.

There were two caves or underground cells in Swargashram where Sadhus could meditate in seclusion. I too longed to be locked in a *guha* but I was too young for the life of complete aloofness and silence. To satisfy my desire a little I went into the cave of a Sadhu who had been doing *Tapas*, austerities there for a long time. He was also observing *Mounam*, Silence and was not speaking to anyone. To my good fortune, as I continued to sit there patiently for a long time the Mahatmaji, from the depths of the underground cell whispered to me in Hindi, '*Santu*, dear son, what do you want?' I was filled with ecstasy and great joy and replied, 'Only thy blessing.' He said; Go now my child, I am pleased with thee.'

This was one of the most blessed and sacred moments of my life in Swargashram and I shall treasure it always.

Glory to God, long life to the Sadhu Mahatma in the cave and Peace unto all!

OM

OM

OM

Chapter 14

A VISIT TO DEVOTEES

DOUBLE LIFE:

Dayal Saran Prakashji belonged to the *Dasanami* Order of Sannyasins and was considered the second Mahant of Swargashram and called *Mahatmaji* by all the Sadhus. He loved me dearly and considered me his Guru. He requested me to come to his village and meet his people. As I had been away for more than a year the friends in Rajahmundry were anxious to see me and bought me a train ticket and sent money for travelling expenses so that I might come soon to their home. As I longed to serve my devotees I agreed to go to Andhra for a short visit. I took leave of the Mahantji and prepared to go. When Dayal Saranji heard I was leaving for a short time he requested me to accompany him to Rohata in Meerut district his native place and also volunteered to come with me to Andhra to meet my family and friends.

Dayal Saranji was a gifted speaker and would come to Swargashram once a year during the rush of pilgrims and help the Mahant for six months. The *yatrees*, the devoted pilgrims would give generous donations for the maintenance of the Ashram and food of the Sadhus. When Dayal Saranji left the Mahant would help him liberally to take care of the people in his native place.

Dayal Saranji confided to me that he was a married man with children and that he wore the garb of a Sannyasin only when he went to help the Mahant. After leaving Swargashram he would take off the ochre - coloured robes of a Sannyasin and don the usual white garments of a householder, a man of the world.

I was sad to hear of this *double life* but many Sadhus are leading such lives to make a living and maintain their families. At least Dayal Saranji was sincere and had never hurt anyone. The name Dayal Saran was assumed when he came to Swargashram but I think his family name was Sharma, although I do not remember now, with the passage of many years.

During the short stay in his village he was all hospitality and kindness and took me to meet all the people of not only his village but the surrounding ones as well and introduced me as one of the greatest Mahatmas of the Age who, although still so young had been to America and was now leading a simple ideal life in Swargashram. We had *bhajans* and I gave my message in English and someone translated it into Hindi.

Blessed are they who lead, not two lives, *a double life*, but only one life of sincerity and Truth for, that alone leads to God.

IN THE WORLD OF DEVOTEES:

Every wave that rises must fall, and then rise again. Unconsciously I cannot help but compare the reception I received at Pithapuram Railway Station when I returned in failure from America wearing a black suit, to that I received now, a young, tall and slender Swami with fresh and beaming countenance from *Tapas* in the Himalayas.

A rousing reception was given to me by many friends and family members. God's ways are mystical. All were anxious to hear my words of wisdom and receive Initiation, *Upadesam*, from me. I wanted to help and serve them by relating my experiences in the spiritual world. With great joy I remember how I made them all chant God's Name, singing in a chorus:

Hare Rama Hare Rama, Rama Rama Hare Hare

Hare Krishna Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna Hare Hare

Sri Rama Jai Rama Jai Jai Rama Om

Om nama Shivaya Om Shivaya namah

OM OM OM

Every *mantram* begins with the sacred syllable OM and ends with the repetition of OM three times.

I was taken to the homes of devotees in single and double bullock carts and sometimes in procession with the chanting God's name. In those days cars and buses were not available. When quite

young I rode on an elephant through the streets of Pithapuram in a marriage procession. When I travelled through the Rajputana deserts as a Sannyasin I sometimes rode on camels and when I assisted the Tantric Master we frequently went to see patients in palanquins. As a Sannyasin all interest in these outer comforts dropped away.

Whenever any devotees requested Initiation I would never hesitate or refuse to satisfy their spiritual wish. Just as one medicine alone cannot cure all diseases so according to the temperament of the devotee I would give him a suitable mantram. A devotee of Rama would receive *Ramnam*, and so forth. I was deeply touched when the father of this body requested Initiation from me and I tried to serve him in a simple and direct way. At his request I gave him my wooden sandals and coconut *kamandal* as sacred relics of my life in the Himalayas.

Mr. and Mrs. K. Rama Rao of Rajahmundry who had sent for me, my sister and brother-in-law in Waltair, and other relations and friends were all very happy with my silent work of spreading Peace from village to village. Among those who received *Upadesam* from me were my boyhood friends, Sri Tennety Viswanadham, Dr. C. K. Prasada Narasimham, a noted advocate. They were all happy to see me as a Sannyasin.

I was receiving letter after letter from the Mahant and Swargashram friends requesting me to return soon for Mother Ganga and Father Himalaya were extending to me a hearty welcome. All became sad as the time of my departure drew near. They said I was leaving them as orphans in the spiritual life. I requested them to keep spiritual diaries of their daily progress which they could send to me in the Himalayas and I would correct and send them back. Promising to return when they had faithfully practiced their *mantrams*. On an auspicious day I left Andhra for my true spiritual home, the Holy Himalayas.

May all Glory be unto God

OM

OM

OM

Chapter 15

INTENSE SADHANA IN THE SOLITUDES OF THE HIMALAYAS JNANA:

By nature, from boyhood days I have never been a voracious reader. It has been my habit to read very little, and that very little, I try to assimilate and digest. Some people can memorise page after page and *sloka* after *sloka* but it was not given to me to memorise even the important *slokas* of any book. I have been reading the *Bhagavad Gita* since boyhood days and I am ashamed to confess that I still do not recite even a single *sloka* – *verse*, from memory. Though I cannot memorise, yet God has blessed me with the knowledge of the essence of every chapter and every *sloka*. For instance, whenever I write a message, the essence of whatever *sloka* I wish to quote will come right into my mind. Although I do not take joy in giving quotations, in repeating like a parrot, verses from the sacred scriptures of the East and the West sometimes I like to give references to, just to emphasize that what I say or write coincides also with the words of the scriptures and the sayings of Mahatmas, the God-realized souls.

Strange as it may sound, by reading too often the *Ashtavakra Gita* and the *Avadhuta Gita*, I have unconsciously learnt to repeat only one *sloka* from each book. I love to give the essence of these two here:

1. Why do you say *Nenu* and *Vadu*, I and He?
He alone is yourself. Give up this business of
differentiation, calling outer forms as He and She,
I and You. Consider all as ATMAN;
Be eternally happy.
2. अयं सोहमयं नाहं
विभागमिति सन्न्यज
सर्व मात्मोति निश्चित्य
निः संकल्पः सुखीभव
3. Ayam sohamayam naham
Vibhagamiti Santyaja
Sarva matmeti nischitya
Nih sankalpa sukhibhava (Ashtavakra Gita IV - 15)

You are the witness of everything. You are ever free,
One without a second. Being the Light of lights and
ever free from delusion, Maya, to think that there is
Someone else outside of you is the only delusion.
That binds you.

The constant repetition of these two simple verses, which
contain the essence of all religions has helped me in my upward
march of spiritual life. There is another verse in Sanskrit which
has also helped me immensely and I am never tired of repeating it
and sharing it with the aspiring children of God. It is the illuminating
sloka:

देहो देवालय प्रोक्तो
जीवो देवः सनातनः
त्यजेदज्ञान निर्माल्यं
सोहम भावेन पूजयेत्।
Deho devalaya Prokto
Jevodevah Sanatanah
Tyajedajnana nirmalyam
Soham bhavena pujayet

The body alone is the Temple of God; the individual alone
is the Universal. Knowledge always destroys the ignorance of
separation and duality.

Thus, worship HIM with SOHAM Consciousness, with the
consciousness that you are the Universal Energy with each and
every breath.

In those days there was another inspiring book which
contained the illuminating experiences of all God-realized souls.
Its very name is *Jivan Mukti Viveka, Liberation in Life*. What is
the use of having Liberation in death or after death? I should like
to have Liberation Now and Here, while even alive. The study of
that impressive book has been verily a source of great inspiration
to me. As I have already said, I am not one of those who take a
book and read it from the first to the last page in a few hours, or
even in a day or two. Sometimes I read only a few lines and become

absorbed in it. I close the book and meditate in Silence on the essence of those few words. I love to share for the benefit of my Readers only three maxims or sayings, the essence of *Jivan Mukti Viveka* which have helped me a great deal. I should like to call these My Three Mantras, my Scared Affirmations.

GNOSIS, Wisdom: The personal knowledge that all is *Brahman* and nothing else exists besides IT; for IT is ONE without a second.

MANONASANAM, The annihilation of the mind, root and branch. The restless mind is always imagining, even when we sit with eyes closed in meditation. This functioning state must be stopped. There must be no more *Pravritti* but only *Nirvritti*. This helps for Liberation in life.

VASANAKSHAYAM, the Destruction of the *Vasanas*, the Impressions. The *Vasanas*, the impression of not only this life but of the lives of the past must be destroyed, burnt up in the Divine Fire of *Gnosis*. Thus one becomes, *Vijnani*, God – Conscious.

These three Holy States of achievement must be practiced not only constantly, but simultaneously, all at the same time. For example, you do not eat rice alone at one time, or only curry at one time, or drink or eat dhal separately at one time. You mix all these three ingredients and eat them together thus satisfying your taste. This makes for a full meal. Similarly, with *Gnosis*, Wisdom, as your basis or foundation, you should practice to annihilate the mind and destroy the *Vasanas*, the latent impressions, one by one, with the help of the splendour of millions of Suns. This is the Highest Wisdom given in essence in three simple formulae, so direct and illuminating, for those rare and precious souls who are willing to pay the proper price of complete self-surrender to the Divine.

In those days I had very deep meditations with great introspection and sometimes I took long walks in the hills and by the side of the Holy Ganges. I listened to its slow and steady chanting of OM in its flow and also to its loud chanting as it fell from the boulders, covering the stones from the heights as it descended. It was wonderful to sit by the banks of the Ganges all

alone and chant with the Shiva Bhaktas:

Hara Hara Sambho Mahadeva.

I recall two verses from the poet Bhartruhari, who sang with devotion, pathos and love the following:

When will those happy days dawn, when seated in the *Padma* Posture on the pure Himalayan peaks by the side of the Holy Ganges, unmindful of the surroundings, with closed eyes I shall contemplate the Brahman, absorbed in Yoga, while the deer shall fearlessly come and rub its shoulders against my body to pacify its itching sensation?

When will those happy days come when tired of ministering to the whims, pleasures and enjoyments of the body, we shall be chanting the Name of Lord Shiva, seated on the holy banks of the Ganges, its waters glittering in the pervading brilliant moonlight softly playing on it, with silence reigning throughout the night?

BRAHMAPURI FOREST:

Brahmapuri is a thick forest lying at a distance of five or six miles from Swargashram, on the opposite side of the Ganges. Sadhus say that it is a place of thick jungle where tigers, cheethas, wild bears and other beasts of the jungle roam freely and that one should not go there alone. Since I had heard that Sri Swami Rama Tirtha had lived and meditated performing his *Tapas* there, I had a great longing to see that Holy Place of Silence and to meditate there also as Swami Rama had, in the wilderness. To satisfy my longing, the inner urge, on one auspicious day I went towards Brahmapuri forest. I did not see any wild beasts; but only monkeys, who are the living *Hanuman*, the Lord of Devotion who helped and served Rama by crossing the ocean and fighting the evil forces of Ravana, and regaining Sita, the Mother *Prakriti*.

The place was lovely and peaceful. *Brahmapuri* means ‘the town of ‘Brahma’. There was no town there, but only a dilapidated thatched hut by the banks of the Ganges. There were many boulders and fine rocks which tempted me to meditate in silence, as I sat

and watched the steady flow of the Mother Ganges. Thus, several hours passed in ecstasy. It was in one such sacred moment that Swami Rama uttered in ecstasy: ‘Days pass away without food and nights, without a wink of sleep.’ How blessed it is to live in that Transcendental State where there is neither food nor sleep. Indeed, *Brahman* is not only above food and sleep; It is above time, space and causation.

Memory is a queer and interesting state. Certain things we remember even though they happened a long, long time ago. Again, certain things we forget and cannot remember, even though they happened in the preceding days or even recently. Though I go back into my life in the Himalayas and my memorable visit to Brahmapuri, despite my racking the brain, taxing it, I am not able to remember whether I spent that night in the old thatched *kutir* in Brahmapuri forest or not. Since I had gone to such a lonely, charming and inspiring place I must have spent the night in any case, in Silence, meditating on *Soham* Glory.

The word *SOHAM* reminds me of the story of a God conscious soul who repeated *Soham, Soham, Soham* when even in the mouth of a tiger, for such is the Glory of the God – intoxicated life of Divine Ecstasy. All fear comes only in duality. Fearlessness is the outcome of the God – conscious life. It seems that there was once a great Mahatma meditating in the solitudes of the Himalayas. A tiger appeared on the scene. It was hungry. The Mahatma was in deep meditation, unconscious of the presence of the tiger. He was repeating the holy *Mantra, Shivoham, Shivoham, Shivoham*, I am Shiva, I am Shiva, I am Shiva, or *SOHAM, SOHAM, SOHAM*, I am THAT, I am THAT, I am THAT even in the throat of the tiger. What a heart-rending lesson for all Sannyasins who are followers or worshippers of the *SOHAM* Cult of Meditation. This story sounds very cruel and terrible, nay shocking, like the Crucifixion of innocent Lord Christ.

What we need is detachment from the body and identification with the Indwelling Light, the Soul and Goal of human birth, the only Changeless Reality in the world of changes.

In any event during my short stay in the blessed solitudes of Brahmapuri, God did not send to me any tiger for He knew perhaps that I had still to go three times to America and all around the world, and above all that I would have to write now the Autobiography in Lakshmi Vihar, in the cool Nilgiri Hills.

When we are destined to do certain things no tiger dares to approach us. Death has no sting and cannot touch us. As I often repeat, not a blade of grass moves without His Will, not even a tiny ant can bite us without the Will of God. Even though several years have passed, the memory of my visit to Brahmapuri still remains fresh in my mind, in memory, and gives me an ecstatic bliss. As I write now I can still see the Holy Ganges flowing peacefully and the boulders or stones which are like meditation seats. Let us close our eyes and shift ourselves to Brahmapuri forest to meditate now, repeating *SOHAM, SOHAM, SOHAM*; let us merge in the Self – effulgent Light of lights:

May All Glory be unto Brahmapuri, the Destroyer of all ignorance and darkness!

OM OM OM

Chapter 16

BRAHMAPURI TO SWARGASHRAM

Unwillingly I retraced my steps from Brahmapuri towards Swargashram again with Brahma Bhavana, God-consciousness. The body was light, the mind alert and I was almost floating in the air and did not realise that I reached Swargashram in no time at all.

There were hundreds of Mahatmas of various types staying in Swargashram and it had become a holy place of pilgrimage for all the devoted seekers of Truth. Sometimes there were European and American devotees as well and they stayed for months and years, led simple and unostentatious lives and drew the pilgrims towards them. I remember seeing an old American lady who took wheat flour, Atta and other foodstuffs from the Kshetra once a week for the preparation of her simple food. There were many Sadhus who were talkative and here and there I was happy to see a silent one busy communing with the Indwelling Light. I do not know how six long years passed in my stay at Swargashram.

During one of those years the most important and exciting Kumbhamela was held in Haridwar. Kumbhamela is a great festival of Sadhus which comes once in twelve years and is sometimes held at the confluence of Holy Rivers, at places such as Allahabad, Nasik, etc. That year it was held at Haridwar, the Gateway of Hari, Heaven. At the Kumbhamela the Sadhus of every type and stage are represented, with their different modes of worship. Some Mahants ride upon elephants and horses, taken in procession. Then there are the Naga Sadhus, quite naked, with bodies smeared with ashes. They too go in procession. Many Sadhus have their own Holy Fires around which they sit and sometimes chant the Holy Name of God. Sometimes they meditate too. There was no want of Sadhus who were trying to make a little money by exhibiting their powers and thus drawing the people towards them. Beggars of every kind also flocked towards the Kumbhamela in hopes of earning a few rupees.

By nature I was not curious and was always unwilling to

mix with crowds. Although unwilling, reluctant to visit and see such a large congregation of different Matts, Academies, Ashramas, etc, my Sadhu friends pressed me and I went along with them to this glorious feast, this Kumbhamela which consisted of not thousands but lakhs of Sadhus and Yogins of every kind. We hear according to the census taken by the Government, that there are fifty-five lakhs of Sadhus in India, all of whom have renounced the world in order to help and serve His children. We shall leave it to the Sadhus themselves to know just how many of them are genuinely pining for God.

It was Swami Rama who said that if one man alone lives in God then the whole nation can be united through his ideal life of God-consciousness. If by the ideal life of one single man the nation can be united, imagine what would be done if all the fifty-five lakhs of Sadhus lived in God, completely forgetting the outer world of name and form, killing the ego. Leaving aside all the fifty-five lakhs of Sadhus, if only one single sadhu in a lakh making fifty five sadhus, one for each of the fifty-five lakhs, could live consecrated lives of God-consciousness, the world would by this time have become a living Heaven of Peace with no more strife, struggles and war. But I am sorry to see that the vast majority of all these Sadhus are mendicants who try to get free food and clothing and respect from the ignorant public by wearing the ochre-coloured cloth. In the beginning, when I wanted admission into Swargashram, I was suspected of having run away from home because of some trouble. Indeed, there are many who renounce the world because of quarrels with families, wives and children. There are others who renounce the world because of failure in business. Rare and precious are they who renounce the world for the sake of God, who live pining for Him and would never sell their souls for anything in the world. Such Sadhu Mahatmas are the Himalayas of Peace and the Saviours of Humanity, for they set an example to all the seekers of Truth.

Swargashram, the Holy Place of Pilgrimage of all the Saints and sages, was visited by many kinds of devotees. Each day brought

pilgrims of every kind, the followers of different religions, rich and poor, learned and ignorant, aged and young – all came to have satisfaction in the Darshan of all the Mahatmas. Some were very devoted and insisted that we should come and visit their places and sanctify their homes. I think it was Sri Dayal Saranji, helping the Mahant in representing Swargashram, who introduced me to some millionaire devotees from Delhi. They were brought to my kutir and we had Prayers and Meditations.

I do not remember now, how and when I was taken to their palatial home in Delhi but it was Dayal Saranji who took me. Perhaps I visited their lovely home while on my way to Andhra from Swargashram. But I do remember staying in their fine home and enjoying their generous hospitality and love. The name of the eldest brother was Ramakrishna Das and one of the other brothers had a complete set of works of Swami Rama Tirtha which he was reading. It was this which had drawn my mind towards them.

Thus, many varied contacts were made with devotees in the North, South, East and West. Since those days, many devotees from Lucknow, Benares, Delhi, Calcutta, Bombay and Rameswar have invited me to go to their homes and bless them.

Blessed are their devoted and dedicated hearts of consecration:

May God bless them all with Peace!

OM OM OM

Chapter 17

BADRINATH

From the time of my arrival at the Himalayas, I had been thinking of going to Badrinath, the holy place of pilgrimage in the Himalayas. I wanted also to go to Gangothri, the birthplace of the holy Ganges and to Jamnothri, the birth place of the Jamuna river. I longed also to visit Kedarnath the residence of Lord Shiva, Pashupati, the destroyer of all ignorance and darkness. But we cannot go everywhere to wherever our minds happen to wander. Wherever He leads us, according to our *Prarabdha*, Past Karma, there we are taken. I was blessed to go only towards Badrinath. Although Kedarnath, Gangothri and Badrinath are all nearby to each on those heights, branching off the main road at certain points, I was not fortunate enough to see them. I thought that in a way all the birthplaces of holy rivers and even of the holy places themselves were within me. Yet somehow I longed at any cost to go to Badrinath, the holiest place for all Hindus.

It seems that Puja-worship was performed in the Badrinath temple for only six months of the year; for the rest of the time the temple was closed, covered with ice. But let me begin now with my journey to Badrinath and I will write about the temple itself later. I started from Swargashram and I think that I began to walk alone, as usual, on the path ascending to those blessed heights. At some places, for several miles there was a plain road and there was no strain in walking. But as I began to climb the rugged path mounting up the steep hills, there was great strain, with palpitation of the heart as well. In those days there was no good road or pathways, but only a footpath at some places; whereas now it seems that roads are laid and there are even buses running to carry passengers in all comfort.

In those times people were carried in dolies-a conveyance in which one sits as if on a cot, leaning forward, while four people carry it. Generally, only the old and sick pilgrims resort to the dolies; sometimes rich people as well, being unable to walk and

having plenty of money will hire dolies. But whether we go on foot, trudging up the rugged path or whether we travel in a dolie in all ease and comfort, the most important thing is that we reach the heights, the Holy Badrinath, feeling His presence all the way. How blessed and helpful it is to feel God's Presence in every step as we walk!

All along the way, the joyous exclamations, shouts, cries and singing of His Name by the pilgrims can be heard. These give strength, joy and inspiration to all the fellow pilgrims. Listen to the bhajans, the holy songs and also to the chanting of the holy words:

Badri Bisal Ki Jai
Hara Hara Hara Sambho Mahadeva
Hare Rama Hare Rama, Rama Rama Hare Hare,
Hare Krishna Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna Hare Hare
Om Namo Narayanaya
Om Nama Shivaya Om Shivaya Namah

It was soul-lifting to listen to the Holy Mantras when all the pilgrims sang together in chorus. Now and then it was heartening to hear the piercing cries of:

Bolo Badri Bisal ki Jai
Bolo Pashupatinath ki Jai
Bolo Kedarnath ki Jai

Bengalis were singing Bengali songs: Punjabis were singing Punjabi songs: Gujaratis were singing Gujarati songs; Andhras were singing Andhra songs and Tyagaraja Kirtans: it was a holy sight to be witnessed and not described in finite words. It was all beauty, Glory and Divine atmosphere, surcharged with the chanting of the name of God by hundreds and thousands of devoted pilgrims, from all parts of India as they wended their way towards their God, the common Goal of all His children. Here and there were some curious foreigners with their cameras in hand, taking pictures of the pilgrims and the interesting scenery of beauty and charm.

It is very difficult to describe the glory and beauty of the lofty mountain ranges and the rapids of the Holy Ganges as it flows in some places in torrents from the heights. Sometimes it was dangerous when it rained, for the land on the sides of the pathway would slide and slip. When there are landslides along the paths, pilgrims would sometimes be buried under the sudden falling of boulders and earth. Some pilgrims think that if they die suddenly while going to Badrinath they will be led directly to heaven. Often, the very old, even those who can hardly walk, undertake this difficult and strenuous journey in the hope and belief that if they die on the way to the heights, in the attempt to reach Badrinath, the abode of Narayana, they will obtain *punyam*, blessedness and salvation.

From Rishikesh one goes to Dev Prayag and from Dev Prayag to Uttar Kasi and so on, with stages for rest and relaxation. Every ten or fifteen miles there are *chetties*, rest houses and also small shops, where pilgrims can buy their food, mostly wheat flour and potatoes which they cook themselves; and the necessary fuel, firewood and pots, etc; all of which may be purchased at a high price. To mention a word about myself, I carried neither food nor money, nor did I cook anything; for the Heavenly Father, who feedeth the sparrows and the birds of the air was feeding me all along the way at every place. It was wonderful what a great trust I had then and have even now, in the Heavenly Father, the Indwelling Presence in my heart. As I would rest and relax in some thatched hut-kutir, a devoted pilgrim, some perfect stranger would come to me and offer a portion of his food. I used to feel so deeply touched at the Mercy and Compassion of God. Of course in my life and in my religion there are no strangers, for all are the children of One God, the source of all the worlds and the Goal of His children, in the East and the West.

Having read in Swami Rama's life and teachings that Rama walked once forty miles in one day in those rugged hills, I too longed to walk as he did, forty miles in a day. However healthy and strong one may be one cannot walk every day forty miles.

But, with firm determination, ever longing to walk in the blessed footsteps of Swami Rama I walked one day forty miles and on another day forty-four miles a great achievement and a matter of rejoicing for my young heart. Alas! after walking such a long distance, straining myself to the last degree, using every ounce of my strength, I was so weary and tired that I could not walk even one step further. In my boyhood enthusiasm I often went to extremes and suffered sad and bad consequences. My two feet were raw with blisters. There was then nothing else to do but to rest and relax and let the blisters heal. But I did not want to waste my precious time resting, stopping on the way, when I had almost reached the Holy Abode of Badrinath. My state was pathetic and all due to my foolish exertions and over-walking.

Repeating His Name, relying on and trusting in God's Omnipresence, I slowly began to crawl towards Badri Bisal, the Compassionate One, the Knower of all our troubles. It was almost unbelievable how I reached His Temple, slowly, steadily and patiently, crawling on hands and knees, ignoring all physical suffering.

All Glory be unto Badri Bisal, the God of all Mercy and Compassion, for His Innumerable blessings and never-failing protection.

May Peace be unto all!

OM OM OM

IN BADRINATH:

There are certain days and moments which are unforgettable. My stay in Badrinath, though short, remains nevertheless memorable. I must have stayed there three or four days. As many years have passed since my visit to that Holy Place I do not now remember exactly how many days I remained there. Generally the pilgrims and even the Sadhus who visit Badrinath will leave on the same day, for there are no arrangements or accommodation for a comfortable stay in the intense cold on those heights.

Be it cold or warm, the beauty grandeur and sublime panorama of that place and its surroundings are simply enchanting and inspiring. It was surprising to see the flowers of every kind and size which bloom all around and for many miles together. I remember still those beautiful flowers which grew to even a foot, in size. Because it is so cold, there are no trees of any kind but there is an abundance of flowers which blossom on all sides. If there is any living miracle it is to see in such a cold place a perennial spring of boiling water which flows into a small tank and keeps it filled with hot water. Who has done this and how it was done, on the heights of the holy mountain in the intense cold is the mystery of mysteries. May all glory be unto God, the greatest miracle worker!

If there is Heaven anywhere on earth it must be in Badrinath, the holiest place of Inspiration and Peace. But it is strange how I consider, wherever I stay, it is the Heaven of Peace. For instance, I am now in Kotagiri in the Nilgiris which is claimed as the Queen of all hill stations. I consider this as a Paradise on earth and invite all seekers of Truth and Peace to partake of the Peace in this heavenly place. I long to share what I enjoy with all the aspiring children of God. It is true also that what we have within, we behold as well without.

Beside the holy and heavenly peace and beauty of the place, there was another reason for my stay for a few days in Badrinath. The Head of the Badrinath Matt, who is called the Raval and has a position of hereditary ownership- a good, devoted and God-loving soul, felt drawn towards me. He not only loved me but bestowed all tender care upon me and looked after all my comforts. There, in the Holy Temple where no one was allowed to enter, near the Garbhagudi, the holy sanctuary within, I was requested not only to enter within but also to sit side by side with the Raval himself. How good has God ever been to me, His frail and unworthy fettered child, for He gave me respect and even honour in an unknown and strange place. I was able to enjoy steam baths in the small tank in front of the Holy Temple. I was made to take food with Raval

himself. It was no wonder thus, that I stayed for a few days and bathed not only in the hot sulphur waters but also in the great love of the Mahant Raval. I was even requested to stay with the Mahantji not just for a few days but permanently.

It seems that it is for only six months of the year that Puja, worship is performed. When the snow falls the whole mountain and the Temple are covered with snow and ice; so the Mahant and the worshippers must descend. Thus, during the coldest part of the year, for six months the Mahant descends to the Joshi Matt about forty miles below and remains in that somewhat warmer place until summer comes and the ice melts in the warm rays of the Sun. The most interesting and astonishing part of the holiness of the Great Temple is that when the Temple is re-opened for worship the Light which was lit in the sanctuary before the snowfall began is still burning for it has been so, throughout the winter and is flaming brightly when the doors are opened in summer. For this Prathama Jyoti Darshan, the first Darshan the seeing of the Light, many pilgrims will rush in spite of the hardships and the cold.

I do not know how the scientists explain the phenomenon of the Light burning throughout the winter, from the time of the closing of the Temple until it is opened again in the summer. They may offer some explanation, having to do with the Temple being covered by ice and snow and thus sealed. Whatever may be the cause, the phenomenon occurs and thus Science and Religion are brought together. The devotee thinks that it is all a miracle of God for He can and will do anything for the sake of His devotees. The scientist thinks that it is all due to Laws of Nature, the Light being covered over by ice and snow. Anyway, we will leave this intellectual problem to the scientists of mighty intellect. Let us dwell now in the heart of Badrinarayan and taste the Peace that passeth all understanding. It is needless to repeat that there are wonders and mystical secrets that cannot be explained away by the critical mind or the mighty intellect. What are we but tiny ants before God, the infinite Mountain of Sugar?

The devoted Raval was unwilling to let me go, to descend

from him and the sacred sanctuary of the Badrinarayan. In the short period of my stay with him he was kind enough to love me and take interest in my life of devotion and dedication. Unwillingly we parted, chanting the sacred Syllable OM and hoping someday that we might meet again, with prayers for the peace of all.

MORE MIRACLES OF GOD'S MERCY:

(During the journey from the heights to the plains from Badrinarayan to Swargashram.)

I have been always a lonely soul, loving silence and solitude. The Tamilian Narayana Swamy wanted to follow me wherever I went. He wanted to be my real shadow during my travels in the hills as well as in Swargashram. But as I wanted to rely on God fully rather than upon human beings and human help, I insisted that Narayana Swamy, inspite of all his devotion and love, should stay in Swargashram and look after my Kutir and receive the devotees and guests who came there. Narayana, being also a silent soul of meditation, respected my wishes and stayed behind in Swargashram. The distance of 180 miles or so I had to travel alone. Yet I had never been alone, for God has been always with me, walking before and sometimes behind me. There is no place or time when He is absent. I love to repeat always: God is within, without, above, below and all around. Nay, He is interpenetrating the very cells of my being. I feel Him in the rustle of the trees, in the flutter of the leaves and in the very wind itself and in all sound.

Sometimes, when I walk alone I look back to see if there is anyone following me, for in front there is someone leading me always. As the Himalayan mountains are full of thick forests and jungles we naturally expect to see every kind of harmful tigers Cheetahs, etc., and also many kinds of poisonous snakes. Hence, the pilgrims usually travel in groups and sing God's Name, even shouting:

Hara Hara Sambho Mahadeva

Badri Bisal Ki Jai

and other Mantras in the hope of scaring away animals, if any and protecting themselves from all harm and accidents. In spite of the repetition of God's Name and all the precautions taken we heard now and then of some pilgrim or Sadhu who had been eaten by a tiger; or of someone else bitten by a snake and dying before any help could come. Such is the frailty of life!

In spite of the warnings which I had received all along the way I walked alone and kept always ahead of the pilgrim group. Sometimes in order to reach a certain place which was my destination for that day, I would walk in the light as well as in the darkness, to reach my goal at any cost. Often I would reach some *chetty*, or halting place and spend the night there, near the groups of pilgrims who were cooking their food and passing the night's halt in rest and sleep in the thatched kutirs or huts. Thus I covered nearly half the distance to Rishikesh from the heights of Badrinath, slowly and steadily, with faltering steps. The pilgrims, especially the poor ones, eat while on their travels, some kind of wheat powder called *satthu* which they mix with good jaggery. It is very tasty to eat but difficult to digest, because it is raw food. Eating it often results in dysentery or diarrhoea.

Because I had been reckless and careless, had eaten and drunk on the way all kinds of water from the hill streams, I was now having loose motions, an attack of real diarrhoea. Here and there along the way, about every twenty-five miles or so there was Government Hospital, especially set up in that busy pilgrimage season to render First Aid to the sick pilgrims. As I was a follower of Nature Cure, I did not think of going to any hospital for medical care and relief from suffering. At one time, I remember vaguely, as I happened to end that day's journey in a village with such a hospital, I slept there that night and the doctor and his staff were kind and courteous to me.

Because of the constant walking without any rest, my feet had once again become weary, tired and badly blistered. They were so raw that I could not walk any further. Fortunately I reached a *chetty*, a halting place for pilgrims. The rich occupied good kutirs

and resting places whereas the Sadhus and the poor had no choice but to accept the dilapidated huts that had been discarded. On a night like that, in my sickness and suffering, with loose motions every few minutes, any shelter, even a dilapidated hut with hardly any palm leaves for a roof, was a great blessing.

Thus, unconsciously I began to think of my chelas or friend, Sri Narayana Swami who had wanted to follow me and to serve me through thick and thin and whom I had forbidden to come with me, with the request that he might stay in my kutir in Swargashram until my return. I was also hungry and weak and without proper food; and I had been having loose motions, diarrhoea, all the day long. As the pilgrims were cooking nice food, bread, curry, dhal, etc., the tasty and delicious smell also came towards my hut. I stretched myself out on the ground and was able to look up through the top of my hut, where there was an open space, for lack of leaves and see all the twinkling stars above. The palm leaves had been blown away no doubt, with the passing of time. In my sick condition I was happy to see the stars in the sky beckoning to me with their light. I saw in the other huts, pilgrims, tired and weary with their walking, serving each other. Some were pressing the feet of the tired ones, some were rubbing oil and shampooing the feet and others were massaging the weary feet to give them relief. Unconsciously, in my sickness and pain I thought within myself, how wonderful and helpful it would have been if I also had a friend or chela to take care of my feet by massaging them to lessen the pain.

Unbelievable as it may sound, lo and behold one of the pilgrims came towards my hut with a *choola*, a stove filled with burning charcoal, oil and hot water and surprised me by saying: “Babaji you must be tired from so much walking. Let me have the privilege of serving you.’ How can I ever describe to you my reaction, my gratitude and ecstasy at this unexpected tender care and protection of the Ever-present and Never-failing Presence of the Omnipresent God! I was filled with tears of ecstasy! My silent friend the great devotee, without my consent or permission, began

to rub oil on my feet and shampoo them in a soothing way. He also fomented the feet with a hot cloth compress. I was no longer on earth with sickness or fatigue but in Heaven with health and Peace, in the lap of God with nothing but tears of joy and gratitude. In the end, the devoted soul pressed all my body from toes to head and gave me a soothing and complete massage. I was so full that I did not have words to express my gratitude. The silent friend and helper left after having given me all rest, relaxation and relief and he thanked me again for the great opportunity that I had given him to serve me. What a great, selfless service! How good is God! May His richest blessings ever rest upon that great, silent helper!

At some other place, in a lonely hut I was hungry and still having motions and I thought I should not eat any solid food. I was so exhausted due to the constant motions that I could not get even a little sleep. After a while, in that lonely place a man appeared suddenly with a charcoal fire and a vessel of milk and he prepared something which he requested me to drink. He said: 'Babaji, please take this glass of Sago. It will do you good in your sick and weak condition.' I had no words with which to offer my thanks to him or to the All-knowing God. I was simply overwhelmed with gratitude and joy at all the Blessings of the Invisible God, for all His Mercy and Protection. Verily, it was He who had been taking such good and tender care of me in the lonely, strange and forlorn places, coming in some form or other to render the needed service in my great suffering. But what I wonder is how He knew that I wanted only Sago at that lonely hour of sickness in the night time. It was both a mystery and a miracle.

Many are such Divine Miracles, unworthy as I am. God takes special care of His lame and faltering sheep. Thus he led me back to Swargashram, my spiritual home, to rest, relax and recoup my health again.

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Chapter 18

DESCENT INTO ANDHRA

CALL FROM RAJAHMUNDRY:

The devoted friends, Mr. and Mrs. Kakkirala, Father and Mother shifted from Pithapuram to Rajahmundry in order to do better business there. It was they who had sent for me once before to come from the heights of the Himalayas to the plains of Andhra-Pithapuram-to spend a few days in serving them and the other devotees and friends. Now, as some years had passed, they again requested me to come and perform some services for all the devotees in Andhra. Once again they made all the arrangements for my return and sent the money needed for the ticket, all travelling expenses and so forth.

I do not remember when I left Swargashram and where I stopped on the way but I do remember a stop at Herdoi at the request of one of the professors of a college there. He was a bachelor, lived alone and was an ardent devotee and follower of Swami Rama Tirtha. Unfortunately I became sick in his home and he cooked sago for me and was taking good care of me, wishing my good health. On the way I must have also visited Buddha Gaya the holy place of Lord Buddha's Illumination, for, I remember sitting for long hours under the Bodhi Tree, the Holy Tree under which Lord Buddha attained Enlightenment. Blessed are the precious moments that I spent alone in Buddha Gaya and especially the hours spent down below in the temple, which looked like an underground cave.

Saranath was also a lovely place with a holy temple and Viharas with many relics of the Buddha. From Gaya I came to Banaras, the holy city of all Hindus. It was inspiring to see the holy Ganges flowing down the plains so majestically, touching the various Ghats of Banaras. I was interested in Harischandra Ghat where there is a burning ground, a crematorium. Those who die in

the holy city of Banaras are burnt there even now and sometimes half-burnt bodies are thrown into the Ganges. Those who die and all their friends and relations believe that death in Banaras will give *mukti*, freedom. I sat for long hours in that ghat and watched the burning of the dead bodies, with the cries of

Hari Bolo, Hara hara Sambho Mahadeva

I roamed also restlessly in the streets of Banaras by night as well as by day. Somewhere in Bankura, in Bengal, I had a boyhood friend, one Rangachary who had sent his pay-his Station master's salary towards my education in the Homoeopathic College in Calcutta and thus deprived himself of the comforts of life. How blessed it is to have even one such faithful friend who is ready to sacrifice all for our welfare. The few days that were spent with my old friend Rangachary are among the happiest days of comfort and Peace in my whole life. There I did not roam about or go anywhere but was content to rest and meditate; and help or serve brother Rangachary and his dear ones and friends.

Thus, via Calcutta to Waltair I went and reached Rajahmundry having sown seeds of Peace and Love all along the way. In Rajahmundry also my time was spent in teaching and reaching all the devotees who visited me every day. Mother Ratnam and Sri Rama Rao spared no pains for my comfort and joy in their large and lovely home at Rajahmundry. One devoted lady named Kamakshamma, a frequent visitor, was always silent and serious and never smiled. She was a disciple of one Parasuram Avadhuta who lived in a burial ground on the outskirts of the town. I heard that when he died he left 25 or 30 thousand rupees in his name, most of which had been given out as loans to various merchants in Rajahmundry for the purpose of collecting good interest. On his last day, the day of his death, I heard that the Avadhuta had three thousand rupees in currency notes under his pillow. No one knew what became of that money.

It makes me sad to think of Sadhus, who are not supposed to touch money, even living in burial grounds, amassing and lending

the perishable money right up until death comes and snatches them away suddenly. When Maya, the delusion is so deep and thick even for Sadhus who have renounced the world, what of the householders who live with wife and children and have a number of relatives also who rely upon their support? May God bless them all with devotion and wisdom, especially the Sadhu Mahatmas who have renounced the world!

When I recall another similar incident which happened in Waltair Ashram only three or four years ago, it makes me sad. A Sadhu came and wanted to spend some time in Peace by the side of the Ocean, on the lovely beach of Waltair Ashram. He was also observing *mounam*. The authorities of the Ashram, the Manager, etc. were happy to give him a separate cottage by the sea-side and they helped the Mouna Sadhu in all possible ways to make his stay comfortable and happy. But he grumbled so much even to get such small things as kerosene and other small articles that we all took him to be a very poor Sadhu, one who knew not from whence the next meal would come. He had only one small tin trunk and everyone thought it contained his valuable books. Unfortunately he became sick and died suddenly and left his only possession the tin trunk in the Ashram. The Ashram people were anxious to give him a decent burial and were trying to get together a few rupees for this purpose, when one of the neighbours said that there was no need to worry over money, when we could find all the money needed by simply opening the tin trunk itself. How did the neighbour know of this? Perhaps he had opened the trunk himself and had seen the contents; and God alone knows if he confiscated some of the money.

At that time I happened to be absent from the Waltair Ashram. Perhaps I was then in the Peace Centre in Kotagiri. Anyway, the trunk was opened easily, for it was not even locked; and to the amazement of the Ashram authorities, the Manager and others, there was a bundle of currency notes amounting to more than twenty thousand rupees! Some of the notes were torn for they were old and ragged. There was some gold also it seems, in the

form of coins. Where did this Sadhu Mahatma get all this precious wealth? What was he going to do with all this money? Poor and naked we came and poor and naked we leave this world. The Sadhu Mouna Mahatma couldn't take with him even a single naya paisa. His disciples, who were like him, rushed in-all worry and hurry-and took hold of the money. I do not know what they have done with it.

As the Sadhu Mahatma died in Santi Ashram by the beach-side, observing silence and doing penance, we suggested and requested his followers (as he had his Samadhi in the Ashram itself) to construct a building, or even a cottage for the use of Sadhus who come to the Ashram to meditate. This along with their prayers and meditations would be good for the soul of the Sadhu Mahatma himself. Our appeals fell on deaf ears however and the money was taken away, along with the trunk. The Samadhi of their Guru was not even respected and taken care of, but was neglected by his own chosen disciples. Even the place of burial was forgotten and the cattle now roam over that ground and leave their droppings (cow-dung).

Later on, when I requested the chelas of the Mouna Guru to do something in his memory, in memory even of his Samadhi they said that their Guru's money had been confiscated by the Government. What a sad ending, even the Sadhus are under great delusion of Maya.

FROM RAJAHMUNDRY TO SAMALKOT:

As I was used to the solitude of the Himalayas, it was trying to live in towns, with the householders, the family people and with all hustle and bustle, although they were all very devoted and looked after all my comforts. The finite man cannot probe into the scheme of life and into the dim future. Yet, everything will be done in harmony with the Divine Law; little things as well as big things fulfilled according to Karma.

Samalkot is at a distance of forty miles or so from Rajahmundry. Some devotees from Samalkot were coming often to see me and they pressed me to come to their place, to spend some days in their town. One rich landlord had a large, vacant place, lonely and lovely and he promised to construct a good cottage on his land for my comfortable stay in rest and Peace. This I thought was a God-sent call and I readily agreed. Thus a nice cottage was built outside the town and I went there to settle for some time. Here I was able to pay more attention to introspection and deep meditation. I remember that in those days my diet was very simple and natural and consisted mainly of coconuts, bananas, milk, etc. and I included also, *kalabandha*, as indispensable.

Soon, devotees of every kind not only from Samalkot but from near and far were coming to me to listen to my words and also obtain initiations. It has ever been my one wish never to disappoint any of the devotees but to help them and satisfy their wishes. As Samalkot is not too far from Rajahmundry my old devotees, the Kakkiralas would come to see me often and spend a day or two with their relations in Samalkot. They also brought with them their little son, Atmaram. Atmaram was becoming more and more attached to me, day by day. Neither the young lad nor I knew then that our destinies were going to lead us both towards America soon. The latent seeds within were certain to sprout some day or other. Every inherent wish or *sankalpa*, impression, when it is good and hopeful to others, will have its day of fulfillment.

In samalkot there is a canal which runs by one side of the town. By the canal-side is the temple of Lord Bhimeswar where I used to go sometimes to enjoy a lonely walk by the side of the canal and a meditation in the Temple, before Lord Bhimeswara. It was really interesting how, seeing my life of contemplation and silence, people never bothered and worried me to cure their diseases or to come to their homes to drive out the devils from the possessed. I too was extremely happy to be left alone to pursue my spiritual Sadhana, living in God and helping others to live in Him.

One devotee, Lakshmanaswamy, who had heard about me, came often to see me from Chintalur, a lonely place in the hills which was to play an important part in my future life. It is at a distance of nearly thirty miles or so from Samalkot. He repeatedly requested me to go over there and start an Ashram; and he promised to give me as much land as I needed for this purpose. I said that I did not wish to be bound by any ties and especially not the new responsibilities of an Ashram and I thus refused to go. He was undaunted not at all discouraged by my refusal to go. Again he came and this time he brought with him a bullock cart. He said that I need not start an Ashram but that I should just go and see that lovely place. He lured me by saying that there was a lovely spring there also-the Mallikarjuna Dhara: from a steep hill flowed that perennial spring of fresh, clear water.

As I wanted just to see that lonely place and also to satisfy Lakshmanaswamy, for he had brought his bullock cart, I agreed to go there just for the day. Imagine my surprise when, after seeing that lovely place I never returned to Samalkot. That lovely place, amidst two ranges of hills was so lonely, without any villages in sight and yet not far away, for it was surrounded by small villages on all sides. It was hilly there, in a forest and it all looked so natural, with wild beauty and silent grandeur that I was drawn towards that place which was destined to become the future Santhi Ashram, the Mission of Peace. It has grown from a wild jungle into a world-wide, International Institution of Peace, with various activities and services and it is a life-giving Abode of Peace to all the seekers of God in the East and the West.

May all Glory be unto God, the Knower and Witness of all the worlds!

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Chapter 19

CHINTALUR

There is an interesting saying in Telugu:

Sthala mahatmayamu, sila mahatmayamu

and it translates as ‘the good fortune of land and the good fortune of stones’. It is said that certain land, although it appears barren and dry at first, if especially destined, will be converted into a holy place of pilgrimage. Thus also with certain stones on the roadside which are destined to become Shivalingas. In Kailas Ashram in Waltair, on the top of the hill, one mason, Ranganayakulu, who was named the man of two tongues by our Sister Sushila Devi because of his lies and failure to keep his words, was engaged in the chiselling of a stone. He used to keep one foot on the stone itself for his convenience while chiselling. Later that same stone was made into Shivalingam, an object of worship for the members of the Ashram as well as for all the devotees who visit Kailas. Similarly, the land nearby Chintalur which was offered to me by the devoted Lakshmanaswamy was a thick jungle with thorny bushes and rugged stones, where wild animals roamed freely.

There was only one tree, a Mango tree in all that land. Because of the fear of tigers, cheetahs and other wild animals, a hammock was fixed on this only Mango tree and I was advised to sleep in it, especially during the night. I was happy to swing in the hammock in the daytime also for I felt *SOHAM* in every swing.

Lakshmanaswamy offered me as much land as I wanted, to start an Ashram. As I have always done things on a large scale I took ten acres of land and began to clear the thorny bushes and stones from it. It looked nice then when we put a fence all around it. Lakshmana and his three brothers spared no pains or money to make the Ashram clean and neat and they were also helpful to the devotees who came to visit. For the use and convenience of the devotees they built a small hut, a cottage with palm leaves, nearby my Mango tree. An elderly devoted lady, by name of Mother Suramma came from Chendurthy and lived in this new cottage.

Strange as it may seem, for the hut was in a barren place and on cultivated land, and within the very hut itself rose a putta, a snake pit, which increased in size day by day. At first, two or three times we removed the mud, but when it persisted in coming up day by day, more and more, we allowed it to remain with the thought that the Snake God, Lord Subrahmanyam might wish to manifest there. By and by Mother Suramma actually worshipped there and considered it as a sacred place of veneration.

There was a devoted cobbler named Venkatesu who was attached to me from the very beginning and did all kinds of odd jobs. It is really astonishing and strange how he was able to predict the great future of the Ashram even when there was not anything yet in the Ashram except a few thorny bushes and prickly-pears and stones of every size. Venkatesu often used to say to me:

Dear Swamiji, by and by, in a few years I see the Ashram extending to the foot of the hill and the whole place electrified ; with cars and buses running to and fro with devoted pilgrims every day.

It has taken nearly fifty years to realise the fond dreams and true prophecy of the devoted cobbler Venkatesu, who is now no more. I should like to have a separate chapter about him because he was so devoted and loving and served me in all possible ways.

Although the Ashram was so still and lonely it was surrounded on all sides by small villages. About a mile or so away was the place of Lakshmanaswamy, Chintalur. It was a small village with only a few huts of the cultivators, the Harijans and some other tenants. There was also the large and impressive building of the Zamindar who owned all the lands and was more interested in squeezing every drop of blood from his tenants than in helping them, considering all the ryots, the poor cultivators as his children. Venkatanagaram is another nearby village with a few huts and there are also the small villages of Potuluru, Vakapalli etc., near the Ashram. To add to all these, there is also the little village of Thotapalli with only a few huts, which is near to the holy spring,

the Mallikharjuna Dhara, the perennial spring which comes down from the hills and flows forth, bathes the head of a Shivalingam in a most natural and beautiful way. I do not know how the inspiring and indeed perfect name of Santhi Ashram was given to this lovely and lonely abode of Santhi, Peace. Perhaps it was God's wish that the Ashram should have such a fitting, loving and sweet name of Silence and Peace to betoken its great future glory.

Lakshmanaswamy was a tenant under a *Mokhasadar* of Venkatanagaram. Seeing that his own tenant had given a piece of land for starting of an Ashram the *Mokhasadar* too donated a few more acres of land in his own name. When the construction work began Lakshmanaswamy and his brothers did everything possible to help the progress of the Ashram. All the ladies of the family were also devoted and sent food for the masons and other workers from their own homes ungrudgingly, day after day, although they were not rich in the goods of the world. Later I was able to realize that they were all taking such good care of me and helping the progress of the Ashram because they had their own troubles with the *Mokhasadar* and wanted some help from me, to influence the Government officials on their side.

We started a little library too and I sent some of the books, such as the teachings of Swami Vivekananda to one Magistrate in Prathipadu. One of the brothers, my friend from Chintalur, instead of just delivering the books and going on his way, began to tell the Magistrate, whose name was Rajan Iyer, I believe, about all the troubles the tenants were having with the *Mokhasadar*. The Magistrate, believing that I and the Ashram were sending him the books with the hope of influencing him in a legal matter, returned the books without reading them. He thought that the Ashram had an axe of its own to grind. All this made me sad and taught me to be careful in the future with the mundane affairs of the men of the world.

As Truth alone triumphs and not untruth, let us trust in God fully and leave the results to Him !

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NAVAKHANDA YOGA OF MASTAN SAHEB

In these days of my Silence and deep introspection in the Kotagiri Peace Centre I do not know why a certain very interesting and holy incident comes back from the time of my stay in Waltair and Visakhapatnam. It may be due to the fact that I am becoming more and more detached from the body than before. Indeed, our real freedom, mukti, salvation lies only in detachment from the body, mind and the world. It is easy to become attached to the physical body wherein we reside both day and night. The average man thinks, because of delusion and gross ignorance and attachment to the physical, that he is the body itself. Only the ripe coconut is detached from the shell. Blessed are they who are detached, like the ripe, dry coconut, from the physical shell for they are truly rare.

Mastan Saheb was considered to be a great soul, a man of God-realisation, by a few educated and cultured people in Visakhapatnam. He spent all his time during the day on the hill where there was a Mosque of the Muslims, a Church of the Christians and a Temple of the Hindus, all on the same hill. When I too saw the different symbols of Holy Worship of these respective religions together it helped me to understand and apprehend the Oneness and Universality of all religions. At such a lovely place of Universal Worship our Mastan Saheb spent his days, all alone in Silence and he even threw stones at the boys and people whenever they came to disturb him. This was only to chase them away for he knew the preciousness of TIME, every moment of it!

Anyway, some people wanted his favours and blessings and were after Mastan Saheb. We heard many interesting stories about him. One of the gruesome stories was that Mastan Saheb was a great Yogi, an adept in detachment from the body, Navakhandayoga. According to texts on Yoga there is one practice of detachment from the body where the practitioner actually

separates the nine parts of the body from each other. Thus, the head, hands, feet, etc., will all be seen in one place, hovering close to each other but not connected in any way. It was said that on certain days our Mastan Saheb would separate himself from his body to such an extent that his head, hands and legs would be separate, detached, from the trunk of the body. Gruesome, fearful and unbelievable as it sounds, I heard this story with great interest from the ardent devotees and followers of Baba Mastan. I have now to verify this with the great Yogis whether there is such Yoga of Detachment Navakhandayoga, where the members of the body, arms, hands, legs, feet, head, etc., can be detached from the trunk in nine parts.

There is a Yogi now at our Peace Centre, Bala Brahmananda Swamy aged ninety-six, who has gone all over India and to the Himalayas and who is now called by the name of Narada of KaliYuga. He has been doing *Bhuloka Sanchara*, travelling all over the world, especially in India, from Cape Comorin to the Holy Lake Manasarovaram, by Mount Kailas in the heights of the Himalayas. Today I wanted to know the Truth from him about this Navakhandayoga, the Yoga of Detachment of the Nine Limbs.

Some of the practices of the Tantrics and Hatha Yogis are very gruesome and blood-curdling, very fearful indeed. I am only trying to share with my readers what I heard in my younger days and not attesting to these, not giving my approval to the facts of these miracles.

As I saw the educated and wealthy disciples of Sri Mastan Saheb following him like his shadows I too felt drawn towards him for his love and blessings. Only in the night time, after all was dark, would Mastan Saheb come down the hill and pass through the streets by the sweetmeat shops. Some devoted shopkeepers thought it their good fortune and privilege if he accepted some of their sweets and other preparations.

One night, while I was standing near Sri Mastanji as he ate some pakodas he ate half and turned to me and offered the remaining portion to me saying,

"Beta, my child, eat this for you have a great work to do: Cling to God ceaselessly".

I do not remember the exact words which he said in Hindi. Even though what he gave me was from his own mouth, he himself had already eaten thereof making it *juta* I considered it as *Mahaprasadam*, Sacred Sacrament. I took it with great joy and considered my life blessed by such Holy Prasad, given by Mastanji unasked for and so unexpectedly. Such is the Grace of God.

May long life be given unto our Navakhanda Yogi, the Holy Mastanji. May Peace be unto all.

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Chapter 21

IN SANTI ASHRAM –IN THE BEGINNING

ALL WORRY FOR A LOIN CLOTH:

These days, as I am engaged so persistently and patiently in writing these chapters of the Autobiography there is one thought that comes from within as a question:

Do you want Autobiography or Ageless *SOHAM*
Consciousness?

The answer comes from within.

I want Ageless *SOHAM* consciousness and with
Its awareness I wish to write this Autobiography.

Let me not do any work as a slave, with drudgery and compulsion. Let me write the Autobiography as a Master. Let me write only when I feel the urge from within. In other words, as not a blade of grass moves without His Will, let Him write whatever it pleaseth Him to write. May all Glory be unto Him on every side and at all times!

In the beginning, in starting the Ashram in such a secluded place, my intention was to spend my time there alone, instead of in any of the homes of the householders. But with the beginning of the Ashram all worry and responsibility also began. This reminds me of a well-known story, *Koupeena samrakshanardham ayam Pata topaha* (Sanskrit version) the story of the Sadhu and his loin cloth. Just to protect the loin cloth, the solitude, I too had to accumulate all paraphernalia and gather in all the goods of the world.

It seems there was once a Sadhu who lived alone in the wilderness and spent all his time meditating in Peace. He had only two loin cloths which were all his property in the world. Unfortunately a rat used to spoil his loin cloth by making holes in them. Then the Sadhu would have to go to the village and ask the devotees for a new loin cloth. Every day the rat would spoil his loin cloth and every day the Sadhu would ask for a new one. When

they saw that this was happening every day the villagers said: oh! Sadhuji, why don't you keep a cat and it will drive away the rats?. The Sadhu thought that this was sensible advice and he henceforth kept a cat. But a cat needs milk every day. He thus had to go to the village again everyday and beg for milk for the cat. Then the devoted villagers suggested that instead of going to the village everyday to get milk for the cat he should keep a cow which would supply him with milk, not only for the cat but for himself as well. The Sadhuji thought that this was a most helpful and sensible suggestion and he immediately secured a cow which indeed gave milk both for him and the cat.

But a cow needs fodder, grass and hay. Thus he had again to go into the village and beg the people for grass for the cow every day. Then the villagers suggested that since there was so much barren land, vacant fields all around his Ashram, he should at least cultivate some of the uncultivated land. Then he would have not only plenty of grass for the cow but paddy as well for his own use. The Sadhuji felt happy with this suggestion and he engaged coolies and started cultivation, first on a small scale and by and by on a large scale. He had to construct sheds to keep all his cattle in and build barns to store his grains. The Sadhu slowly and silently, without his knowledge, became a householder and then a famous landlord with all wealth and property. All from the simple Sadhu with only two loin cloths!

He had to gather in all his goods and construct many barns, houses and other buildings in order to store and protect his different grains and other properties from the rain and the sun. This is how *Maya* covers even the Sadhus and the wise. The Sadhu didn't even have time for his daily prayers and ablutions. His one prayer was corn, cattle and cultivation, to feed and protect all his dumb animals.

Similarly, to keep the Ashram and its dumb animals, workers and some devotees alive, I had to go out into the villages and towns and go a begging to all the old and new devotees ; all in the name of keeping the Ashram alive. It was strange how the tables were turned upside down for, I, who had never begged or

even touched money had now to go from house to house, begging every beggar, all the householders, for money. All this was done in the name of the Ashram; all for a mere loin cloth; all on the plea of being alone with God in Silence.

Certain incidents from those early days I can remember even now. In those days there was not even a road to the Ashram. Bullock carts had to come in and they did so with great difficulty in the deep and rugged paths. Sometimes a cart would tumble, turn over and there would be a resulting accident. Lakshmanaswamy and one of his brothers, Ramamurthy, helped me all along in the progress of Ashram and thus day by day Santhi Ashram became more and more well-known.

Once I had to go to the nearby place, Gollaprolu to get all the provisions for the Ashram, bags of rice and other supplies and a tin of kerosene also, which was not sealed. I do not remember whether it was a dark or a moonlight night but in any case our bulls stumbled and the cart overturned, completely upside down. The sad part is that the heavy bags fell on me but I was more anxious about the kerosene spilling out of the unsealed tin than about my physical body. During the tumbling and even when the heavy bags fell upon my body I kept the hole of the kerosene tin covered with my hand and did not allow any to be wasted to leak or pour out. Until help came and the bags were removed I remained thus, as my one thought was to save the kerosene. After the accident I was happy and even now when I remember this incident I feel glad that I was able to protect and save the kerosene for the Ashram. We reached the Ashram leisurely in the early hours of dawn. We were safe and we glorified God for protecting us and the bulls with no serious harm done to any of us. Such are the inevitable results of *Maya*.

It seems that once the Almighty and All-knowing God was pleased with Narada's devotion and asked the Bard of Music and Spiritual Devotion to choose a boon for himself. Narada was a free soul who roamed all over the world and could fly even into the celestial regions. He made everyone, the people on the earth

as well as those in Heaven, happy with his music and song. When offered a boon he pondered and finally said to Lord Vishnu: ‘Dear God if you want to give me a boon let me have the boon of never getting bound by your *Maya* which makes even the wise and the sage blind. Delusion makes us forget Thee, the real Sun of suns and makes us follow after the passing clouds of the changing world.’

Such are the subtle snares of *Maya*: May the God Lord protect the Sadhus in the Ashram and the householders in the world!

VENKATESU THE DEVOTED COBBLER—AND HIS CHRISTMAS:

Venkatesu the cobbler was a devoted Christian. He had taken Baptism from a devoted Father, a good Missionary. He regularly celebrated the Holy Christmas. As he was not a born Christian but had been converted in the middle of life I asked him why he had changed his religion and become a Christian. He immediately replied that as all the people in his village were getting converted, he too took Baptism. As a Christian he now received some respect and even honour whereas before that, he had only been a cobbler, a mere outcaste. About the Holy Christmas and his celebration of it every year he said that all he had to do was to kill a good, fat fowl and prepare a fine dinner for the Missionary on Holy Christmas Day. Sometimes, if because of sickness or some other reason he was unable to cook, he gave the fowl directly to the Missionary and both Venkatesu and the Missionary were satisfied. That is all the Christmas we celebrate’ said Venkatesu, the ideal devotee of the Ashram, the one who predicted the great future of the Mission of Peace.

Venkatesu was so universal, with a big heart of love and never a fanatic that it used to make me happy just to see him singing Hare Ram Hare Ram with respect for Rama and for all the Gods of all religions. Through contact with the ashram he was trying to understand true Christianity and come closer to the Christ within. I helped Venkatesu to feel that Christ is never outside but in his own devoted heart. Real Christian is Christ Consciousness,

feeling God's Presence within oneself and in one's own purified and devoted heart. I made him feel that Christ has no other body on earth than his body. To be good and to do good, never to kill innocent fowls and birds is real Christianity. Christmas is not killing ducks and fowl and making a feast over the innocent creatures. I felt happy when Venkatesu said : 'Now I understand what real Christmas is and I will not kill any more fowl but will instead pray and meditate on Lord Christ and Mother Mary'.

Blessed are the pure in heart. Verily, the Kingdom of Heaven is within. Heaven belongs to the innocent. Love thy neighbour as thyself. These are some of the important tenets of Christianity, the sayings of the Blessed Christ. I explained to Venkatesu the Sermon on the Mount and translated it into Telugu. He said immediately that as a Christian he had never heard of all these helpful and holy things and that contact with the Ashram had made him realise how blessed it was to be a Christian, ever walking in the footsteps of the Blessed Christ. Verily, Christ set an example, not only to Christians but to all devout followers of every religion in the world.

I have always been free of caste, creed, and colour and nationality distinction from the very beginning. The great love, devotion and trust of Venkatesu made me realise more than ever that the wide world is our home and that all the people in it are our sisters and brothers and that to love, help and serve them must be the only truest and highest religion.

As Venkatesu was very helpful we took him everywhere. He was the gatekeeper at the front gate. He was entrusted with some of the responsible duties and works of the Ashram. Venkatesu, who had lived like a frog in a well was taken later on to Madras, Bombay and other important places, when Sister Sushila Devi came from America, Venkatesu was made the cleaner of the car. After long years of faithful service Venkatesu became old and died, with great love and devotion for the Ashram.

I wondered whether he died as a Christian or a Hindu,

although death is the same to one and to all, to the followers of every religion. The death of Venkatesu reminds me of the death of the great saint Kabir Das. The Muslim claimed him for their religion and the Hindus claimed him as a *pakka*, a true Hindu. The Muslims wanted to bury him with their rituals and with the reading of the Quoran over his dead body. The Hindus wanted to cremate him with all the rituals of Hinduism; with the chanting of the Holy *mantras* from the *Vedas* and *Upanishads*. Both wished the great soul of Kabir Das to rest in Peace in God. Truly people understand that Kabir Das, the great Saint, a man of God realisation is above death and life. Such God-loving and God-intoxicated souls do not belong to any finite religion but to all humanity to all the world. Any such name and memory is a great blessing and inspiration to future generations in every religion.

Thus our Venkatesu died in Peace but the Christians wanted to put him in a casket and bury him in the ground. His sons came to me for my advice and I said that in whatever way Venkatesu wished his burial should be done, it should be done, respecting his last wishes; but no matter how it was done, all present must feel God's Presence then and always and say Prayers for the departed, devoted soul of Venkatesu. Such is the end of all life!

May God bless the devoted soul of Venkatesu with Peace and may He bless all His children in every religion with Peace !

OM OM OM



Swamiji at 22 Years in Meditation



Swamiji did Penance Under this Tree in the Earlier Years

Chapter 22

DEFENDING THE DEFENCELESS

Be it individually in the heart, nationally in the country or universally for the Peace of the world, a spiritual foundation is needed. Life must be based on Love Universal, on the remembrance of the great Law or Truth that is loving anyone we are only loving God and in hurting anyone we are hurting the living Images of God. The state or village thrives where the masters or owners look after the interests of their subordinates or workmen and consider them as their own children, their own family. But in Kali Yuga man has become selfish and arrogant and thinks only of himself, a Mammon-worshipper at any cost and he tries to make money by squeezing the poor and helpless tenants, his cultivators. In the place where I was staying and trying to establish Sri Santhi Ashram so as to bring Peace to the people nearby and thus spread Peace near and far, gradually, all over the world, it made me sad to see quarrels, fights, feuds and the police often coming to harass the people. Money can make and unmake anything. A little bribe to the Police can keep a man behind the bars.

There was a criminal suit pending at that time between the Zamindar and the poor ryots his cultivators. This suit had been going on for years and the Zamindar had spent thousands of rupees and had succeeded in the Lower Courts in getting all those people sentenced to many months of imprisonment each. The case had been carried in appeal to a Higher Court for mercy. As I knew all the facts, for I had been residing there from the beginning, it was too much for me to see such gross injustice done to the poor and helpless people.

The final judgment day was coming on the morrow and the sentences of imprisonment were to be pronounced on not one but thirty people. I went that night to see the Deputy Collector in whose hands lay the fate of these thirty innocent people. He was very devoted and sympathetic. I tried to help him spiritually. I can

still see vividly both of us we sat on the floor in Padmasana while he assimilated what I taught about God. On the next day, to the great joy of all the poor cultivators and to the dismay of the Zamindar the case was dismissed and all the so-called culprits were set free. What a great rejoicing in all the villages all around! Glory belongs to God for all this and I am grateful to Him for using me as an instrument to serve His helpless children in their great suffering and helplessness.

Then there was the notorious ‘Soapnut Case’. It seems that the poor farmers of these lands had stored soapnuts in their fields but the Zamindar came in the night with two Lorries and a lot of rowdies to frighten the people and do worse than mischief. Some of the rowdies were also dressed as a Police Inspector and constables in order to create terror in the minds and hearts of the poor and innocent farmers. The very homes of the cultivators were searched and ransacked and everything was touched; even some of the furniture such as pots, baskets and cots were thrown out and broken as much as was possible. The whole village was in consternation and fear. But all this was only cover-up for the real activity. All the soapnuts from every field and home were taken in bags and loaded on the lorries, all for the profit of the Zamindar at the expense of his poor ryots, the cultivators. I remember hearing also that they set fire to a few of the huts in order to create real fear, confusion and terror in the simple hearts of the poor people. After the terrorists left in the lorries with all the bags of soapnuts, some of the villagers came to me, in the middle of the night and narrated to me all the harassment and trouble they had just subjected to, at the hands of the Zamindar.

Although a Sannyasin, having given up, renounced all the outer affairs of the world, I nevertheless began to think of what my duty was when such gross injustice, harassment and loss were being inflicted upon the poor and helpless villagers by the heartless, cruel and so-called educated people and with the help and co-operation of the Police officials as well. As I too was suffering from the highhandedness and misdeeds of the cruel and the rich, I went the

next day to see the District Collector of Kakinada again. Some of the devotees of the Ashram and my friends were shocked to hear of the sad state of affairs. Unfortunately the Zamindar was a friend of the Collector and also of the big Police Officials. At my request, an inquiry was started and a Deputy Superintendent deputed to mete out justice. Finally he came to me and said that they were not bags of soapnuts but bags of cement that had been carried away in the lorries by the Zamindar and his henchmen. The case was dismissed and the Zamindar was proclaimed as the friend of all. But I was glad to see at least that the poor were not persecuted any further but were left unmolested, due more to the fear of my presence than to any feelings of charity and compassion. Thus the soapnuts were stolen and were not given back to the poor in spite of my efforts and trials. The Zamindar and his rowdies who had dressed as policemen in Police clothing were all let off because of the money and influence of the rich.

There were many other instances such as these in the many years of Ashram life in the Thotapalli Hills, when I tried to help the poor and the helpless. It would take several chapters to narrate all the cases, when I stood by the suffering and the helpless and so I will end this chapter with only one more tale. In this instance I had to intervene to prevent harassment and cruelty in another village among some respectable people. It seems there was feud between two rich families. I do not remember how it started but in the end each family wanted only to harass and give trouble to the other party at any cost, by any means. The head of one family bribed a Police Inspector with a large amount of money and requested his help in persecuting the other family. Thus the Inspector came with a number of his constables and began beating people in the village, in the lanes, dragging people from their very huts and inflicting harm and pain, beating with the cane every man or woman whom they saw and all for no reason. When one man rebelled he was beaten black and blue until he had many cuts and bruises. He was also kicked with the heavy Police boots.

After all the havoc and misery of the Police raid, the suffering man was brought to the Ashram. It made me very sad to see his blood oozing from the deep cuts made by cane and boots. This time it was a case of Police harassment resulting from a big bribe. As it was too much for me to see such cruelty and injustice in broad daylight I went once again to Kakinada to the Headquarters of the Police. The District Superintendent of Police was devoted Muslim and the terror of all crooked people. People were afraid even to approach him. As one of my influential friends had introduced the Ashram and my work to him, the Superintendent received me very kindly in his office. For a minute I was silent in his presence and then said calmly:

To me all is God. As He is Omnipresent. I am in His Presence. In speaking anything to anyone I am only speaking in the Presence of God-to God Himself.

He was deeply touched by my conception of God and wanted to know what he could do for me. I narrated the whole story and the present situation carefully, with full details. After having heard me patiently the Superintendent said:

“Swamiji, I am sorry for what has happened. You can go now and I will do the needful looking into the matter personally and immediately.”

I felt happy to have done my part and I glorified God. I offered my thanks also to the Superintendent, the biggest official in Kakinada and then left for the Ashram in Peace.

It was a happy surprise to hear that as soon as I had left, the Superintendent rushed to Prathipadu in his car and inspected the Police Station. He saw the files of the case and then suspended the arrogant and cruel Police Inspector who had accepted the bribe and done such a wicked act as beating the poor and innocent. Some others who had also taken part in the tragedy were also suspended. From there he proceeded to the Tuni Station and took with him all

the records of the case. When I heard that the Police Superintendent was camping at Tuni, I did a good thing by rushing there immediately with the man who was suffering with all the deep cuts and wounds all over his body, as a result of the beatings. The Superintendent saw the sad state of the injured and suffering man and asked whether any Doctor's Certificate had been taken. When the man replied that he had not even been examined, the Superintendent himself sent the man to nearby doctor in Tuni with a note that a Certificate of his cuts and bruises be given. Now the tables were turned upside down and it had become a Police Case, with the Superintendent of Police taking action against some of his own subordinates for their violence and misuse of position, law and justice.

I think that the the Inspector was dismissed and the others were given severe warnings. Thus everything was corrected and set right. In this way I became a friend of the poor and helpless more than ever and an enemy of some of the rich evil-doers. No one can serve both good and evil. To this day I am glad that I was able to play my part and that God gave me the opportunity to serve His harassed and helpless children in their great trouble.

All Glory belongs to God, the Dispenser of all Justice, who punishes the wicked and protects the good.

OM OM OM

THE IDEAL GURUKULA

THE CALL OF THE HIMALAYAS - THE SEEDS OF GURUKULA

Inseparable connection with God or Divine Energy, the ageless *SOHAM* makes one strong, happy and full of the Peace that passeth all understanding. The least disconnection with sources, the Reality, the Almighty God, the *SOHAM* Energy, makes one depressed, disgusted, miserable, lifeless and soulless. I wrote the last chapter dealing with mundane things, ‘defending the defenceless’, the helpless and this has made me sad and depressed. In the first place, it is a waste of time to go back into the dead past and contact again men of the world, the Police and Judicial Authorities and to speak to them and appeal for their help to the poor and helpless. Anyway, let the past be buried now and let us live in the Living Present, filling ourselves with the Universal *SOHAM* Energy. One outcome of defending the defenceless, the helpless, was that it brought them all nearer to the Ashram and they were able to help the progress of the Ashram in so many ways by digging wells, constructing gates and putting up kutirams and other buildings for the use of Ashram members and the various visitors. All Glory belongs to God and we are only His chosen instruments. Whatever is to be done by us must be done and He knows what is best for you, for me and for the Ashram nay, for the whole world!

Someone once said that God did not make the world imperfect for the finite man to mend it. So, leaving all needless worry, let us trust in God more than ever and center ourselves eternally in Him. Anyway, contact with the people of the world and all the outer activities in the name of the Ashram and its service made me somewhat sad and disconnected with God, the Source. Hence there was a longing to go back, at least for some time, to the Himalayas and forget for a time the Ashram and all its activities of delusion. Thus I decided to obey the Inner Call and return to the sacred Himalayas. There was also an outer call from the Holy

Himalayas and Mother Ganges, from Sri Atma Prakashji, the Mahant of Swargashram and from some of the Sadhus, Swamis and Yogis and especially from the Gurukula children-Viswamitra, Vasishtha, Kasyapa and Tara, the youngest. They were to have a part to play in planting the seeds of Gurukula in my life, in the very beginning.

They were all extremely happy to see me back in the Holy Himalayas. I felt not only the Holy Ganges and the ranges of hills, but even the trees and plants, all the birds and flowers too, were happy to see me back in the solitude of my early meditations. While I sat by the side of the lovely Ganges and listened to its holy song of the sacred syllable OM in its silent, soothing and even flow some of the fish came towards me as if extending their love and a hearty welcome too. How blessed it is to live in God and commune with all Nature and feel Oneness with the hills, rocks, stones, with all the plants and flowers and with all the fish in the water and the stars in the sky. In the cool breeze and in the warm sunshine it is all He. Verily, every being on the face of the earth is a moving Temple of God. All homage be unto all the living Images of God in the East and the West, in all religions and in all nations! Indeed, all is God and nothing else exists besides Him, for, He alone pervades and permeates the whole universe from the tiniest atom to the biggest planet!

My old friend, Narayana Swami of the South had been patiently waiting for me in Swaragashram and he was overjoyed to see me. He was truly an emblem of service and devotion without expectation of any reward. Even to this day I think of how he did so much and took such wonderful care of this body and its physical needs. I feel dissatisfied with myself, for, I did practically nothing for him. After the Ashram was established in Andhra, Narayana came and spent a few months with me, sharing the hospitality of the Ashram and spending his days in prayer and meditation. My only consolation has been that Santhi Ashram served him and gave him an opportunity to perform his Sadhana spiritual practices in silence and peace.

Day by day, as I realised the preciousness of time, I spent more of my time in the holy and lonely places of solitude for meditation in the open air by the side of the Holy Ganges. Silent walks by the side of the Ganges, watching the fish jump from the water as if to say ‘Hello! How do you do?’ meditation on the lovely stones and boulders that invite one to sit on them and the Lakshman Jhoola Bridge, where there are several Ashrams with aspiring Sadhus and Yogins meditating and doing Tapas. Within these are some of the worth-while scenes, the tableaux which bring inspiration and joy even now, when I think of those blessed days of peace and beauty.

Often I was in the company of the learned and aspiring Sadhus for hours together and we communed in Silence. Once I visited the Ramakrishna Mission in Kankhal and also the famous Gurukula there. I remember spending a day or two watching the hundreds of Brahmacharis and the working of the Gurukula. It was there, in Swargashram and in the Himalayas that the seeds of the first Gurukula which was to be soon started in Santhi Ashram, (Andhra) were planted.

The four boys of Swargashram –Viswamitra, Vasishtha, Kasyapa and Tara were becoming more and more attached to me day by day and they expressed a wish to follow me to Andhra and stay a few years with me in order to learn English. The devoted Mahant, Sri Atma Prakashji was also anxious to send the boys with me, for, if they learned English they would be more useful to the progress of Swaragashram. As there were many visitors who came to Swaragashram from the South and knew no Hindi and as few workers and members of the Ashram knew English, there was often a breakdown in communications. Thus we all thought it would be most beneficial for the boys to learn the English language. As the Mahantji had been all devotion and kindness to me and had taken wonderful care of me, considering me as his own and as he had given me the highest respect, making me sit on his Gaddi, the Spiritual Throne, I too wanted to show my gratitude for all the good that he had done and was doing for me and for all the love

which he had showered upon me. Thus I took the four boys with me to Andhra. All arrangements were made by the Mahantji for our comfortable journey and we visited friends of the Ashram along the way.

We reached Waltair safely. All were interested in seeing the four Gurukula boys, for, they were fair and devoted. They sang beautifully holy songs and looked verily like Rishi children. Indeed, they were the children of Rishi for they had been born in the Holy Himalayas and nourished in an Ashram, in Swaragashram itself.

May God be praised for all His richest Blessings!

THE SEEDS OF GURUKULA (OUT OF THE DEPTHS) :

As I had stayed for six long years in the Himalayas, in Swragashram it is no wonder that I was not only drawn towards that Ashram but wanted to start a small Swargashram in Thotapalli Hills on a miniature scale and also have there a small Gurukula of young children. Kankhal is connected to Haridwar, the 'Foot of Hari'. The Lord. Near Kankhal is a place called Kangri and there exist two very famous Gurukulas, one Rishikula and the other Gurukula with nearly a thousand boys in each. One belongs to and is run by the Arya Samaj and the other by the Orthodox Hindus. It was most inspiring to see all the boys with *samidhalu*, dry sticks with which they light the fire and perform Homa, Offering to God along with the chanting of Vedic Mantras. It was truly a heavenly sight, to be seen but not described by finite man with his finite words. I considered this scene of the Gurukula boys performing the Homa, Fire Offering as one of the glorious scenes of Paradise. Thus the seeds of Gurukula were sown in my tender young heart quite early, when still a youth, performing Tapas in Swargashram. I too wanted to have a Gurukula, even on a small scale in the Thotapalli hills Ashram.

Thus God gave me the four Rishi children so that I might start Gurukula in Andhra. It was rather a great responsibility, as well as a trying and an uphill task. For a Gurukula, efficient and

selfless teachers who love children are needed. Apart from the food itself, devoted people are needed to cook for the Gurukula children and to love them as their own. The Gurukula was fortunate enough to get the services of Sri V. Narasimham, one of my old classmates and a member of the 'Academy of Religions', our old boy-hood organisation. His life-partner was equally helpful and they both served the Ashram day and night, identifying themselves completely with the work for many years. We were also blessed to have the free services of a Headmaster, a retired experienced teacher, a devoted and dedicated soul, who was to train the children and develop their spiritual faculties.

But unfortunately the second teacher was a man of the world and a smoker too. It was all so new and Ashram was without funds from the very beginning, never knowing whence the next meal would come. Yet the Good Lord somehow took care of His work from day to day. This second teacher made friends with two of the Rishi boys whom I had brought from Swagashram; not only was he smoking but he silently allowed the two boys also to smoke. He sent them to the villages to get beedies, cigarettes, etc. It was too much for me to see such sad things. How could it be an Ideal Gurukula like those in the North when such things were going on? It was very disappointing to see the boys going down just because of the cunning of the second teacher. There were also a few more boys who came from the nearby villages and joined the four Rishi boys to compose the Gurukula. If I could not give the boys the education in English which was desired by Sri Atma Prakashji, I had the feeling that I was at least spoiling them with smoking and other corruptions and bringing them down from the heights of the Holy Himalayas to the Depths of Andhra ! How sad !

Along with this disappointing state of affairs there was also the never-ending problem of lack of funds and every day brought new trials. Since the boys, instead of receiving a good and proper education, were being ruined by the evil influences of the second teacher, I thought it best to send back, the Rishi children to their own home in the lofty Himalayas. To add to all this, one of the

boys fell sick and had high fever. I was too young and without any experience, especially in the line of education and hence, on a sad day I thought it best to discontinue the Gurukula and disband the teachers as well as the children to return to their own homes.

To this day, I remember with great sorrow and disappointment how I could not even get a little money from any of the old and new friends and devotees of Ashram in order to pay for the Railway fare for the four children from Andhra to Rishikesh. To my regret and shame I had to send a telegram to Sri Atma Prakashji, the Mahant and ask him to send some money so that the boys could return to him. He rushed a telegraphic Money Order and with the help of this I was able to send the children safely back to Swargashram. I feel sad even now to remember the departure of the boys, for, one was quite sick with high fever and I should have sent an escort with them or at least have accompanied them myself. But I did neither and let them go all the way to Rishikesh in the train alone. All this was the greatest disappointment, this colossal failure of the first Gurukula, which was to be an Ideal Gurukula like those in the Himalayas! I felt that I had misused the trust and confidence of Sri Mahantji and had sunk to the very depths in having had to ask him for money for the boy's fare, not paying even for the journey myself and without even sending an adult with them, when one of the children was so ill.

Man proposes and God disposes. I had desired to do so much for the children since I had brought them from such a long distance. It was a grievous disappointment for the children, Sri Mahantji and for myself as well. After nearly forty years or so, even now, my heart becomes sad and heavy when I recall this unfortunate incident. Again, as during the time of my dejection at Eillis Island, the wise and soothing words of Abraham Lincoln gave me some consolation:

Out of the depths, fresh Strength,
Out of the dark, new Light,
Even in the gloom, we are on the way.

Later on, another Gurukula was started in the Waltair Ashram with fifty boys. Although it was run successfully for nearly two years it was eventually dissolved for the same reasons as the first one faced a worldly-minded and self-interested teacher who was more concerned with smoking and allowing the boys to smoke, than in educating and turning them towards the spiritual life.

All great works must have their tests and trials. Yet our duty and ideal should be to try again and again until we succeed. He who admits defeat is beaten. When I was refused entry into America, although it was my first great disappointment, I was not beaten. Slowly and silently and unconsciously God was preparing me for my return to America, as a Bearer of Light. Verily He knows what is best not only for each individual but also what is helpful and best for the progress of each nation and for the Peace of the world. Now, as I had never given up hope of returning to America, God brought new connection and influential organisations, as well as loving devotees to help me in order that I might return to do His Work.

Similarly, I was not discouraged by the utter failure of the first Gurukula. Every desire, if it is for spiritual good, to benefit His children must be fulfilled sooner or later and thus I hoped someday to have an Ideal Gurukula with Ideal Teachers which would be the greatest blessing of God to Santhi Ashram, Andhra Pradesh and to the whole world!

OM OM OM



Gurukula Students at Mother Ashram



Prayer Hall at Mother Ashram

THE SECOND JOURNEY TO AMERICA (1923)

THE ROSICRUCIAN'S :

In America the Order of the Rosicrucian's is one of the largest and most famous of organisations and it has branches in all the great cities of the U.S.A. Even in those days, with all their schools, Meditation centers and publications, they were worth millions of dollars and commanded respect all over the world. I believe they are still carrying on this great work. They are interested mostly in occult subjects such as Telepathy, thought transmission, speaking with the dead and with the living and above all, in awakening the hidden powers in man, the Living Image of God.

I do not remember now how they came into touch with me and with Santhi Ashram in Thotapalli Hills but in any case the Founder and President, who was called the 'Imperator' of all the Rosicrucian Societies started to write to me very loving letters and extended an invitation to me and a hearty welcome to visit all his Rosicrucian Centers throughout America. How God unites kindred souls to glorify His Name and serve His children! His ways are incomprehensible for the finite man. The Imperator was kind and generous enough to offer to pay all expenses for a trip to America, including First Class fare from India to America, a round trip. He sent me a programme of all the work I would have to do in America inspecting all the different centers as a guest of honour in all the great cities. You will be surprised to know that at such a young age I was made 'The Holy Father' of all the Rosicrucian Centers.

The respective Founders and Presidents of the different centers received my name and address from the Imperator and began to correspond directly with me from such place as Philadelphia, Tampa, Chicago and Los Angeles and from many other cities in California and throughout America. I became all puffed up and elevated by all these Holy Designations which they

bestowed upon me. I was beside myself, unable to know what to do with the Holy Father ship. I was in tears of ecstasy at the boundless love and limitless blessings and honours conferred upon me at such a young age, so unexpectedly by the Merciful and All-knowing God. Many of these new friends sent love-offerings to the Ashram and invited me to America as a personal favour to them all, for, I had been made the 'Holy Father' of all the Rosicrucians. Some of them were among the most important Government officials, Senators, Governors, prominent lawyers and famous doctors of America, in those days. It all seemed like a fairy dream. How bountiful and innumerable are the Blessings of God, even on His little children!

There was especially from Philadelphia, one Mother Mariya Entriken and her husband Mr. Ralph Entriken who, through my *purvajanmasukrutham*, past connections in past births, took a special liking for me and considered me as their own child. They wrote very affectionate letters to me and invited me to their own home. Although they were faithful and devout Rosicrucians their great love for me moved them to write personal letters requesting me indirectly not to connect myself with any organisation but to remain a free soul wherever I might be. They were also kind enough to offer me all the expenses towards my passage to America and travelling money as well. How good and over-kind is God ! All this was unbelievable and like a fairy dream !

Atmaram, the little boy, the son of Mr and Mrs Kakkirala was only twelve years of age at that time but he was becoming day by day more drawn towards me. At such a young age, with great affection for me he joined me and spent hours of his time in prayer and meditation. Just a passing thought came into my mind that it would be interesting to take Atmaram to America and give him a chance to travel and see the U.S.A. However it was not easy to take young children, minors, to America without their parents. The Immigration Laws were very strict and they did not allow entry of children without parents. But as I had taken a fancy to this idea I made little Atmaram write letters to Mother Maria and Brother

Entrioken. Both of them, as they were childless, felt deeply drawn towards Atmaram and towards me. Immediately they sent a letter requesting me to bring Atmaram also to America along with me and they promised to provide all the necessary papers affidavits, etc., for our entry into that great land of civilization and freedom.

We were all so elated and elevated by the unexpected blessings of God from every side, from perfect strangers whom we had never even seen. I was no longer on earth but practically flying in the sky at the unexpected and happy turn of events. As if by magic, by God's special Grace, I was now able to visit America again, for the second time, but now with all honour and respect; no longer as a student to learn but as a Master of wisdom to teach and preach. I recalled the wise words uttered on Ellis Island:

When asked of his plans if permitted to land he replied in his sing-song voice that he came as a Bearer of Light and for the benefit of humanity.

I am never weary and tired of repeating that all Glory belongs to God and I strive to be worthy, more worthy of all His blessings. Truly it was He alone who led me towards strange lands and new people so as to share their love and hospitality.

Atmaram's devoted parents also were happy that their young son was going with me at such a young age to foreign lands for, this was a rare and great opportunity not just given to any child in India. Although we received all the money we needed for our passage and expenses from Mr. and Mrs. Entrioken in Philadelphia the parents of Atmaram did not spare themselves in giving money and all possible help towards the great, long voyage to America. Atmaram was happy and excited at the prospect of travelling on the high seas and visiting foreign lands, seeing all the strange people of all nations. He did not mind leaving his parents to follow me wherever I went. He busied himself with having new suits stitched and he even bought a European hat which suited his young head. He looked very interesting in the little Western suit and hat.

May God bless the Rosicrucians and their 'Imperator' who were used by Him to pave the way and to lead me in all Glory and Homage to America for the second time !

BON VOYAGE TO AMERICA:

As we had received all the necessary papers and affidavits from our friends in America, it was very easy to get our Passports and have the Visa stamped on the Passport by the American Consul General in Madras. To obtain these Passports and Visas, a lot of preliminary preparations were necessary. We had had to produce health certificates and also certificate of fitness or worthiness for entry into America; and that we were not going to America as beggars or paupers but as well-to-do, wealthy people with influential connections both in India and America. When I approached the noted physician, our Dr. Dinaker Rao, the Head of King George Hospital, he looked at me reverently and after a thorough examination he wrote a testimonial, or rather, the health certificate stating that I was the best specimen of human being God has been too good to me in all ways, everywhere, in little things as well as in big affairs.

We had to secure several health certificates as well as property certificates which attested to the fact that we belonged to wealthy families and were going to America at the request of friends, upon special invitation. Further, the devoted Mother Mariya and Brother Entriaken, besides sending all the funds that we needed for our passage, gave also affidavits and other papers to the Government of the United States stating that in case we should be without funds necessary for our return trip to India, we would not become a public charge, for, they would be only too happy to bear the expense of sending us back, paying for ship passage from America to India.

Thus we were all happy and contented as we got ready and made all the necessary preparations for departure on our long voyage. Atmaram's parents provided us with papads, dhal, cakes,

pickles and chutnies, etc., for our use on the steamer as well as in America. The ship we took must have been one of the sister steamers to *The City of Banaras* and *The City of Baroda* for, it had a similar name although I do not remember it now. Anyway, we booked our passages and bought our tickets in the great city of Calcutta. Atmaram, though so young, was always looking after my comforts and serving me in all possible ways. Because he was afraid of the long voyage and the rough sea weather and likely storms, one devoted Ayurvedic Doctor provided us with special ginger pieces and digestion powder.

It was a happy day when we left Calcutta harbour. We had to travel on the big river for a whole day. It was interesting and inspiring to see the great river merging finally into the limitless waters of the Ocean, the Bay of Bengal. By God's Grace we had a safe and smooth sailing. As the steamer was both a cargo ship and passenger vessel there were only a limited number of passengers on board. Thus we were happily able to spend our time in Peace and Silence. I do not remember whether there were any other passengers on this trip besides ourselves, except for one lady who was going to England. She was very much interested in Atmaram, as were the crew of the steamer. Many wondered what, at such a young age Atmaram was going to do in America. Some thought he was going to read and study at one of the great universities of America.

As our ship had to stop at every port for loading and unloading, we sometimes spent three or four days in port. Atmaram and I were happy to land at these different places and have walks in the streets. We watched the people and observed their customs. Atmaram was darker than I and was often taken as a native, an inhabitant of the port, where we were. All were very much interested in this little boy with his European hat, short trousers and little boots. He was like a Lilliputian journeying towards the giants in America.

Some of the English stewards on the ship found fault with me for giving Atmaram, a mere youngster, a spiritual basis of

prayers and spiritual study rather than allowing him to play football, badminton, tennis and other games. He certainly could play games also but the foundations of Spiritual Life, with prayers and study was most essential in those tender years. When they found fault I replied that this was just the difference between the East and the West; in the East the goal is to give spiritual food, even to little children and thus lead man towards the Inner Life of devotion to God, from the outer; whereas In the West all emphasis is placed on outer attainments and pleasures and religion is only considered as one among many activities and not as the very foundation of life. Little Atmaram was keenly interested in every port: Colombo, Aden, Port Said, Naples, Genoa, Marseilles and Gibraltar in seeing all the vendors who came to the steamers to sell their wares. Sometimes he would bargain with them and buy some little things, all in broken English.

Throughout all our long voyage of forty four days or so, God took wonderful care of us and there was never any sickness of any kind, except for a little sea-sickness when the ship rocked in stormy weather. At last I had *darshan* of Ellis Island again and this revived in me, the old, sad memories. But this time Brother Ralph Enriken was there on Ellis Island waiting for us and he had already informed the Immigration Officials that two wonderful personages were coming all the way from India and that it was a privilege for America to receive such saintly souls. Thus, after they saw all the necessary papers, the Immigration Authorities allowed us to go with Brother Enriken, to land In New York City! From there we covered a distance of one hundred miles or so to Philadelphia, the City of Brotherly Love, on a comfortable train with cushion-seats and other amenities. Brother Enriken made both of us happy and comfortable on the train and we reached his home safe, all by the brotherly care of Sri Ralph.

May God bless Mother Mariya and Brother Enriken with His Richest Blessings !

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Swami Omkar with Atmaram



Swamiji at Young Age

CHAPTER 25

IN THE HOLY SANCTURY OF MOTHER MARIYA

Of all the blessings in my life Mother Mariya has been the greatest. By the time we reached her lovely home she was not in the hall or the front room, the reception room, to receive us but was waiting upstairs for us in her Puja room, the Holy Sanctuary. The incense was burning, giving out a holy fragrance and the room was dimly lit with a blue light. Our meeting was too sacred for words. Mother Mariya embraced me and there were tears of ecstasy in her tender eyes. I too was deeply touched with her Divine Love and our meeting was too sacred to be described in these finite words. It was a holy moment of rebirth for me also and we were no longer bound to the earth but were carried away into the regions of the heavens. Thus we spent a long time, in complete forgetfulness of body, mind and world, lost in Divine Ecstasy, feeling only His Presence within, without and all around. Later on Brother Enriken joined us with Atmaram and then we had a short prayer by Mother, glorifying God for all His richest blessings and above all for bringing us safely from far away India into the Sacred Bosom of Mother Mariya in America.

Mother's Holy Sanctuary was very edifying and it was here that Mother Mariya spent hour after hour in fervent prayers and deep meditations, often forgetting to take nourishment for her body. Her devoted life had been from the very beginning unusually sacred and mystical, for, God had been leading her step by step and had blessed her with many spiritual signs and mystical symbols. Usually, in her deep contemplation God would give her some mysterious symbol and later she would write everything down on paper and give diagrams and explanations. It was in one of those blessed moments that she felt from within, as if listening to an Oracle, to the Inner Voice of God, that she had a child in far away India who would be the comfort and consolation of her closing years. Thus, feeling the Divine Urge from within she sent for me and provided all the funds needed for my journey to America. I remember Mother Mariya as the great, boundless Mother who even

sent warm clothing all the way to India so that I would have a comfortable voyage across the ocean. Thus, from the very first day that she had heard of me she had been looking forward with great joy to my coming to America, to my entering into her great Mother's heart so that I might begin my real work of spreading Peace near and far in the devoted hearts of all the people in the East and the West.

About our first contact, at this Holy Meeting, it was too sacred to be written in these little words. I really felt that I had a new birth with the holy touch of the Divine Mother's Blessings and Love. Certain Divine things are too sacred and I feel it even somewhat sacrilegious to put any, on paper, for, the man of the world can never understand the Holy and Incomprehensible Secrets and Mysteries of the Spiritual Realm.

Mother Mariya believed strongly and sincerely with all her heart and soul that I was her own child, from her own body, God, in His Infinite Wisdom and Compassion had given to Mother Mariya mystical signs and proofs of her spiritual connection with me although I had been born, in one sense, in far away India. But it was Swami Ram who said: 'Births of Breath are as many as waves on the Sleepless Sea' and I felt that in all those millions of births I must have been the child of Mother Mariya not only once but several times. Thus have we all been related and inter-related with the entire humanity as well.

If it were not for this mystical and incomprehensible relationship where is America and Philadelphia and where is Santhi Ashram in the wilderness of Thotapalli Hills? Who is the Divine Mother Mariya? Who am I but one obscure individual, a simple Sadhu with the great longing to live an ideal life and serve all His children in the East and the West? It is truly wonderful how I was drawn from my boyhood days unconsciously towards someone who was waiting for me and how finally, though I failed in the first attempt I succeeded, all by the grace of the unseen powers of God, in returning to the bosom of the Holy Mother Mariya.

The Mother who gave birth to this body in distant India died when I was still too young to know her. I never knew what Mother's Love is. But here, now was the illuminating, heart-touching and inspiring love, the Sacred and Divine Love of Mother Mariya, blessing me so that I might truly know what is Mother's Love. As I have already said, it was the beginning of a new birth for me, the moment I met Mother Mariya. I was actually adopted as her own baby. I was too sacred for the world, too pure to mix with all the people of the material world. Thus I was given the chance to spend most of my time, hour after hour, alone in the Holy Sanctuary of Mother Mariya. Often she would join me and we would both have deep meditations.

Atmaram quickly became the little 'chum' and friend of Brother Ralph Entriken. They were always together, going out hither and thither and talking of the things of India and America. They left Mother and me to our Prayers, Meditations and Spiritual Communications with Divine Experiences. As I was too holy and sacred to Mother Mariya no one was allowed to see me or to disturb my precious time except for a few select devotees and personal friends of Mother Mariya who were permitted to enter the Shrine of Mother Mariya and join us in meditation.

I, who had loved silence and solitude all my life was transported through my good Karma to the regions of blessedness and ecstasy by this unexpected and never-dreamt of change of events which gave me the opportunity to spend all my time on the Heights of Spiritual Bliss and in the Depths, bathing in the Fathomless Love of Mother Mariya. I loved the Holy Life of Silence and Solitude so much that I was most unwilling to come out of the Sacred Sanctuary of Mother Mariya, much less go out into the streets of Philadelphia !

May God's richest blessings ever be upon Mother Mariya, Brother Ralph, Little Atmaram and all the children of God, all over the world.

Verses of Inspiration

By Sister Saraswathi Devi

The gulf that exists between man and God is only in the mind. If humanity could but realise this great Truth, God would reign in full Glory here and now. It is man who has cast aside God, and it is never God who has cast man aside.

Man feels that he is inferior to God and that God is superior to man, instead of realising that whatever God is, man can attain to that same perfection. Whatever man is, God has ordained. So where can there be separation? Once humanity gets a glimpse of the Truth, the Light of Heaven will shine in all faces, for, man will then realise his Oneness with the Father in thought, word and deed.

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CHAPTER 26

SRI MARIYA ASHRAM

Sri Mariya Ashram was started not in the name of an individual but in the name of *Parashakti*, the Mother of the World, the Universal Power which is the basis of all the world and for the good of all, to serve His children in the East and the West, irrespective of the man-made differences of caste, creed, colour and nationality. It was established on the Universal foundation of One World, One Religion and One God. Brother Ralph Entriken was an engineer, draftsman and architect and he himself drew the diagram of the Universal Symbol of Sri Mariya Ashram which included the symbols of Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Zoroastrianism, Jainism etc. None of the older religions or sects were excluded; all the religions of the East and West were represented in the Holy Symbol of Sri Mariya Ashram. We also included in our prayers, study of all the new religious organisations such as the Rosicrucians, Theosophists, New Thought, Christian Science, Bahai and others. How wonderful it is to consider the wide world as our home and all the people in it as our sisters and brothers and to love and serve them as our Highest Religion.

On an auspicious day Sri Mariya Ashram was founded and I felt from within that I should bless Mother Mariya and Brother Ralph Entriken by giving them spiritual names chosen according to their temperament. We performed a simple ceremony in the Holy Sanctuary of Mother Mariya and on this occasion even little Atmaram was allowed to enter and be present in the Holy Temple. God, through this instrument, was pleased to bless Mother Mariya with the spiritual name of Saraswathi Devi and Mr. Ralph Entriken with the name of Brother Suryananda. Mother Mariya, Srimati Saraswati Devi was made the President of Mariya Ashram and Brother Suryananda agreed to be its Secretary.

There were some others who became office bearers and members to serve the Sri Mariya Ashram and to help propagate its sacred and high ideal of spreading Peace from heart to heart, near

and far, having first instilled it in one's own purified heart. The most essential and powerful motto of the Sri Mariya Ashram was:

It is the Individual Peace which paves the way towards Universal Peace; so establish IT first in your own heart, then spread IT in your home, radiate IT in your community and thus let IT vibrate from heart to heart until IT pervades and permeates the whole Universe through your pure and ideal life of PEACE.

I still remember the names of the office bearers and devoted members who helped to find the Sri Mariya Ashram on that auspicious day in 1923, with hopes and prayers to create Goodwill among nations and Peace on earth. Miss Emma Woods was a devoted and dedicated soul who helped by typing all my messages, for she was both an experienced typist and a stenographer. Often she would take notes in short hand during our meetings and make copies the next morning in neat, clear and good typing. Miss Helen Patterson was another devoted and consecrated soul. She was a teacher and had wide experience. She served the Ashram by correcting and improving the messages, rendering them into better English. She was a dedicated soul and she offered all her saintly life to God and served all His children. Mrs. Freda Klauder was another devoted soul of ripe wisdom and experience. An elderly German lady, she had immigrated from Germany with her husband and two lovely children. They were all most devout and consecrated their lives to the Sri Mariya Ashram. Although they were considered to be millionaires in wealth, in the material goods of the world, they were more truly millionaires in devotion and wisdom, for God always came first in their devoted lives.

Mrs. Giles was another lady who was full of sympathy and along with her daughter Miss Doris, helped and served the Ashram. Mr. and Mrs. Mallory who were numbered among the most wealthy and aristocratic families of Philadelphia were also interested in Sri Mariya Ashram and often attended the meetings. It was they who were the hosts of the noted Dhan Gopal Mukherji, the famous writer and lecturer and disciple of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa Deva, the world renowned Sage, whom I was soon to meet. Many

other devoted ladies and gentlemen , brothers and sisters came to the meetings of the Sri Mariya Ashram regularly and each helped and served the cause of Peace according to his or her capacity. Mother Saraswati Devi and Secretary, Brother Suryananda tried to make all the members and visitors feel that Sri Mariya Ashram was not just the property of any one individual but belonged to all the aspiring children of God in every religion.

Mother Mariya and Brother Suryananda were worried though, to see me always confined to the Puja room upstairs where I would spend all my time, hour after hour in Mother's Sanctuary, absorbed in God. Sometimes I wrote down my inner spiritual experiences and these were highly appreciated both by Mother Mariya and Brother Ralph. For reasons of health, especially on Saturdays and Sundays little Atmaram and I were taken out in their comfortable car for long rides in the woods or into some lovely park where it was lonely and silent. On these occasions Mother would prepare some good and tasty food for us to enjoy in the open air and we had lovely and healthy picnics, side by side with indispensable prayers and deep meditations in silence.

Brother Suryananda taught the young Atmaram some prayers, especially the Common Prayer and little Atmaram's Prayers were highly appreciated at our weekly meetings by the devoted audience. Thus, day by day our meetings progressed and more and more people attended them. The hall became so full often that some of the visitors had to stand for want of room. How Good is God!

May God's richest blessings ever be upon our Divine Mother Mariya Iona and her devoted and dedicated husband, Sri Ralph Entriken; on Srimati Saraswati Devi whom we used to call with all respect and veneration, by the reverential name of MOTHER and Brother Suryananda as also on all the dedicated Officers and other Members, Visitors and all friends and well-wishers of the Sri Mariya Ashram.

This is my ardent prayer.

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Chapter 27

IN MARIYA ASHRAM - FIRST YEAR

LIFE IN PHILADELPHIA:

The blessed hours that I spent in the Holy Sanctuary of Mother Mariya will remain precious and memorable always, even now after a lapse of nearly forty years have passed away. Mother Mariya and Brother Entriken however, were becoming anxious and worried for they thought that I might become too spiritual for I was always meditating alone in the silence of the Temple. They were afraid that I might become unfit for the world. I hardly came down for meals any longer. Mother would have to force me to come down and eat my food. I was unwilling to take part in the table conversation for I was deeply absorbed in my own intense meditations. Sometimes I would request Mother, Brother and Atmaram to take their meals without me and then I would take my food later on, leisurely, alone but this would annoy the whole family. After deliberation it was decided among themselves that this disorder or malady of not eating proper food at regular hours might be cured by taking me out on long trips and excursions and thereby I would be prevented from meditating any longer all alone in the Holy Sanctuary of Mother Mariya, in the Temple, upstairs, for hours and even days on end.

Thus I was silently drawn towards sight-seeing, I was happy to see all the lovely places. At first we went forth in the comfortable car of Brother Entriken for short trips. Later we began to go on longer journeys. Imagine going out for a ride, an outing of 200 miles and sometimes for distances of 300 and 400 miles, to and fro. As any constant habit becomes a part of nature after a while the longer the distance the more I used to like it. Little Atmaram also liked the long rides. When the distance was too great we would return around midnight, feeling weary and tired.

It is really interesting how, after so many years, I can still remember that the name of the car was 'Studebaker'. Atmaram would help Brother Ralph Suryananda with the washing and

cleaning of the car after our long outings. Both of them were becoming more and more friendly and affectionate, day by day. Thus as Mother and Brother did not have any children of their own, Mother truly loved me as her own child, a part and parcel of her own flesh and blood, while Brother Entriiken was growing to love Atmaram as his own son. Strange and incomprehensible are the ways of God. How He unites kindred souls belonging to different lands and races into one family by inseparable love and understanding so as to do His works and serve His children!

While I was in India preparing to go to America for the second time as a Swamiji, I read the Life and Works of Swami Vivekananda here and there. I was most interested in his long ochre robe and turban. Hence I too got two long robes in thick *khaddar* and had them dyed. A friend in Peddapuram who sold and made silk clothing, had a valuable silk cloth made for my turban, to be used during my stay in America. When I landed on Ellis Island wearing this same coloured turban on my head it some what overwhelmed Brother Entriiken. All the people were looking, not at me but at the turban and some of the passengers and immigrants were heard to whisper among themselves, he is a Hindu.

Especially when passing through crowded streets, people would turn back with curiosity to see more and more of my turban. It was amusing to many people and especially to the children, but Mother and Brother felt embarrassed and did not like me to be a sight in the busy and crowded streets of Philadelphia. To avoid crowds and strange situations, they, with great difficulty, made me give up the wearing of a turban in public streets and made me put on only the usual Western hat. Unwillingly I would fulfil their request out of respect and would wear some cap or other. I also wore a clerical coat with the high, closed neck, so that there would be no need of a necktie. Often, in public meetings and in Churches I wore my long robe with the turban as well. By and by, later on I did not care to be looked at with amusement, like an animal in the Zoological Gardens and I tried to be one with the Americans by wearing simple dress. There is a saying: *‘When in Rome do as*

Romans do’.

Thus, months rolled by and we were always busy with devoted visitors, aspiring students and all those who came more and more to our meetings. It made us all happy to see so many aspiring students. Atmaram got most of his coaching from Brother Suryananda and I also added my suggestions and instructions. Small lectures were taught to him which he memorised and repeated at all the meetings. These little talks were very interesting to the public for they were given by a little boy from a far away land whose native tongue was a language different from English. Mother Mariya also gave me some hints as to how to interest and captivate the devotees with my talks and spiritual aspiration.

Mother Mariya and Brother Ralph had talked among themselves of how wonderful it would be if they could only persuade me to join, even for a few months, one of the Theological Colleges in Philadelphia for a course of study in the Gospels, New Testament, etc., so that I might qualify as a fully-equipped Missionary. They thought then that after this course of study in the Missionary College there would be no one more learned and divine than I. Thus I was coaxed and persuaded to join the Theological College.

It was a great college which specialised in the training of Missionaries. I was taken and introduced to the Reverend Fathers. The Principal of the College was very much interested in me for it was the first time that a Hindu mystic, a Swami had ever joined a Christian Missionary College to study and learn the precepts, the teachings and the life of the blessed Christ. To satisfy Mother and Brother and because of the love and interest that the Principal and his staff were showing me I attended the College regularly for a few months and took notes on the lessons every day. When I returned from the College I would read these spiritual notes to Mother and Brother and they would really be elated to the skies at my great progress. One day, to my joy and surprise the Reverend Principal approached me and said; ‘Dear Swamiji, we are pleased with your industrious study and patience but I am sorry to let you

know that after watching you carefully all these months, your simple life of study and meditation, we feel we have nothing more to teach you. On the contrary, you have so much to teach and give to us'. When I told this good news to Mother and Brother they were happy and satisfied and allowed me to spend more of my time in the Holy Temple of Mother Mariya, alone in Silence. Mother Mariya also would join me there for deep meditations.

Little Atmaram also was not allowed to be idle. He too was made to join a school, a Public School. All the teachers and students were very much interested in him for he was so young, and short too. Sometimes, I remember that he used to go into the market, to a shop and offer a few cents and ask: 'Please let me have a couple of pretzels.' The shopkeepers were very amused and interested to see this youngest of Hindu boys asking for such a food and sometimes they would give him extra 'pretzels'. I think they were prepared with wheat. Anyway, Atmaram used to like to eat the pretzels very much.

Mother and Brother were extremely happy to see the silent and steady progress of both of us, within and without. And the good work of the Mariya Ashram was also highly appreciated by those in Philadelpha and near and far, by God's Blessings and Grace.

May Peace be unto All:

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DHAN GOPAL MUKERJI:

Each one of us is gifted with a special favour from God. Dhan Gopal Mukerji had the gift of oratory. When he spoke, thousands listened with bated breath. He was not only an orator and lecturer but a gifted writer as well. His books are interesting and amusing and some of his animal stories are very entertaining to children. Even the learned and wise become absorbed in Mr. Mukerji's books for he knew the art of drawing the mind into the spiritual realm through words. Dhan Gopal Mukerji had been

fortunate enough to have been a disciple of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa Deva, the well known sage of Bengal and he wrote a masterly book with the captivating title, *The Face of Silence*. Who else had the Face of Silence other than Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna Parmahamsa? As a young student Dhan Gopal had gone to America, studied and settled there and even married an American lady known for her love and sympathy towards Mother India.

Gradually Sri Mukerji became famous for all the inspiring lectures which he gave regularly in all the big cities of America. My friends told me that he had been giving lectures on India and its Culture and Philosophy for the past thirty years in the large, spacious auditorium, the Town hall of Philadelphia, one of the greatest cities of the U.S.A. During his visit each year he would stay with the family of Mr. and Mrs. Mallory, the millionaires, as their guest. While I was in Philadelphia Mr. Mukerji gave one of his series of lectures and Mother Mariya and Brother Enriken took me to see all the crowds of people and also to have an idea of the sort of lecture that was given. The great hall was so overcrowded that there was hardly any room for people even to stand. The lecture was very interesting and full of stories from Indian Civilisation and with illustrations from the lives of the Saints and Sages of the East.

After the lecture I was introduced to Brother Dhan Gopal Mukerji. We felt drawn towards each other and he promised to come and see me at my residence in the Sri Mariya Ashram. Later on we heard from Mr. Mukerji's hosts the following conversation.

Hosts: Dear Mukerji, we have been listening to your interesting lectures year after year but why have we never felt such Peace as we did last night, in any of the lectures in the past.

Sri Mukerji: It is just because of Presence of Sri Swami Omkar at the meeting.

I felt deeply touched when I heard these loving words which had been uttered by Brother Mukerji with his highest appreciation of my Silence and deep respect and veneration for me. As he had promised he came to see me with Mr. and Mrs. Mallory, his hosts.

He requested me to chant some Vedic Prayers for he was very fond of Sanskrit verse. But I did not know then, and even now, many Sanskrit slokas from memory. Anyway, I chanted the famous sloka -

ब्रह्मानन्दम् परमसुखदम् केवलम् ज्ञानमूर्तिम्
द्वान्द्वातीतम् गगन सदृशम् तत्त्वमस्यादि लक्ष्यम्
एकमनित्यम् विमल मचलं सर्वधी साक्षिभूतम्
भावातीतम् त्रीगुण रहितम् सदगुरु तं नमामि

Brahmanandam parama sukhadam kevalam Jnanamurtim
Dvandvateetam gagana sadrusham tatvamasyadi lakshyam
Ekam nityam vimala machalam sarvadhee sakshi bhutam
Bhavateetam triguna rahitam sadgurum tam namami

and explained the meaning. We should worship the Guru of Gurus who is the Indwelling Light, the one without second, and the Heart of all the Universe. Mr. Mukerji felt deeply touched and fully satisfied with my chanting and explanation of this one inspiring *Guru Mantram*, the *sloka* which contains the essence of not only Hinduism but all religions. Then we had a little deep and refreshing meditation. After the meditation Brother Mukerji gave me some of his wise and ripe words which expressed the great love and feelings of his devoted heart of dedication.

Swamiji, we all speak because we cannot be quite. It is only fools who talk and talk. The wise are always silent. What is the use of your talking in your present advanced stage. May your great service be in Silence.

I felt deeply touched with his wise words of ripe wisdom. Mr. Mukerji's thoughts on that day have ever since, in all my future

life, been a source of joy, strength and inspiration. Whenever I had to speak much, and even now, I would recall his wise words.

We all speak because we are fools and cannot be silent.

What is the need of your speaking. Dear Swamiji ?

Thus, Sri Mukerji has been one of my silent Gurus for he gave me the greatest lesson of all, on SILENCE.

The Hostess, Mrs. Mallory, had a devoted sister in Chicago, Mrs. John Hayward, who had been a Turth-seeker for many long years. Mrs. Mallory had written to her sister to come immediately to Philadelphia for there was a Holy Man from India whom she should meet and whom Dr. Mukerji highly respected and venerated. This sister rushed to Philadelphia and had her first interview with me. She became a life-long student and well-wisher of the Ashram. Eventually she established another Peace Centre in Chicago with the help and co-operation of her talented husband, the lawyer, John Hayward. These two devoted and dedicated souls were the cause, the source of the establishment of the Peace Foundation, registered with the State of New York on the memorable day of 12 February, 1938.

Mr. Mukerji paid the highest tribute to the Sri Mariya Ashram and its silent work. He offered congratulations to Mother Mariya, Srimati Saraswati Devi and to Mr. Ralph Enriken, Brother Suryananda, the Secretary of Sri Mariya Ashram for bringing me from the solitude and seclusion of Thotapalli Hills, in far away India to busy America to teach the restless Westerners of the Glory of Silence and Peace.

Strange, shocking and sad as it sounds, Mr. Mukerji, with all his great work of lecturing from one end of America to the other, for so many long years and I am sorry to have to mention now had a gruesome and heart-rending end to his precious life. God alone knows whether it was due to domestic worries or to some other troubles but anyway, Mr. Mukerji, in spite of all his culture, education, learning and wisdom and also of his being the great *chela* disciple of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, the 'Face of

Silence' nevertheless hung himself in his own apartment from one of the beams of the ceiling which led to the roof. What a gruesome and sad experience, what a shocking death and end to the precious life of a great lover of India and a most learned and cultured soul who did so much to represent all that is best highest in India to the restless West! Even now, though many years have passed, it makes me sad and my heart becomes heavy whenever I think of the heart-breaking end of Mr. Dhan Gopal Mukerji. The Divine law is so incomprehensible, inexorable and yet so natural too. It operates in the lives of all, the learned and the ignorant, the rich and the poor to the exact point of a mathematical ratio.

May the great soul of Brother Mukerji rest in God in Peace, however cruel and sad the end may have been. He was a great soul and he did much good not only for India but also to the West, bringing harmony and understanding between the East and the West.

May the loving Spirit of Brother Mukerji rest in God, in Peace, eternally.

OM OM OM

CHAPTER 28

IN MARIYA ASHRAM - SECOND YEAR

Atmaram and I had come as tourists and tourists were only allowed to stay in America for six months according to the rules and regulations of the American Government. With influence and good reasons for remaining longer, the stay may be extended for another six months. Thus, after the first Visa Mother Mariya and Brother Enriken obtained for us from the Immigration authorities a six month extension on the grounds that Atmaram was studying in a school and I was preaching and teaching as a Spiritual Teacher. During our stay in America we were always busy, day and night, helping all the seekers of the Truth. Some devotees, aspiring souls used to come long distances, hundreds of miles and they would often spend a week or two in Philadelphia to receive instructions in meditation. I tried to help and serve them all according to their needs and temperament and I made them keep spiritual diaries also which I said were compulsory, indispensable for all *sadhakas*.

Strange and interesting as it may sound, even now after so many long years of spiritual experience I still keep a spiritual diary and write in it every day patiently and faithfully for it helps me to grow spiritually, inwardly by means of introspection and self-examination. At the dawn of every day fresh resolutions are very helpful for spiritual growth. Daily writing in a diary is very helpful for the diary is like a looking glass, a mirror and shows all the faults and weaknesses. The Spiritual Diary may be considered as one's own Guru, the real Inner Teacher who leads one, step by step in a silent and steady way towards the Heights of God-Realisation.

In all my life in the U.S.A. and in India not only did I request my students to have prayers and meditations but I also requested that they might keep spiritual diaries of their daily progress. I set an example by writing regularly in my own diary. Mother Mariya and Brother Suryananda respected my helpful suggestion and they too began to keep spiritual diaries. It was laborious, truly hard

work to go through all the diaries of the aspiring students and write remarks and suggestions for their future progress. But all of this is practical and helpful and unless we pay the price for whatever we want in this world, we shall never obtain it. This unfailing law applies both to the material world as well as to the spiritual world of God-realisation. I should like to add here a message which was written at that time, to thoroughly explain the purpose and benefits of the Spiritual Diary.

BENEFITS OF KEEPING A SPIRITUAL DIARY

On reading the biographies and autobiographies of the great, one finds that they faithfully kept diaries and recorded the heights and depths of their rich experiences. As a means of careful introspection, self-analysis and the watching of one's own soul, self-growth there is nothing better than a faithful record of the various experiences and adventures of life's journey homeward. If we examine the lives of famous souls such as Lincoln, Swami Ramananda and other illuminating souls both in the East and the West we find that they also kept diaries to serve as a stimulus and help in attaining the ideals of their lives.

The benefits of keeping a spiritual diary are invaluable. They cannot be comprehended by those who have never kept a diary. Through the help of a diary one can try to purify oneself and improve day by day in every way. Life will be presented as a mirror which portrays all the good and bad points in their true colours. As usual we want things without having to pay the price for them. We cannot spare even five minutes every day for self introspection through a diary and yet we want God-Consciousness to come by itself. If at all we make a start, we become tired in a week and some seemingly important duty prevents us from continuing the diary for days and weeks at a time and generally the effort is gradually given up.

There are others who imagine that they have realised all that there is to be realised and that they have nothing further to learn by keeping a diary. A perusal of the lives of the holy ones, heroes, sages and saints will however reveal that the self-discipline

attained through writing a diary regularly has paid heavy dividends in their uphill ascent. It leads them gradually from the finite to the Infinite by the purging process, through keen introspection. The diary will be a constant companion, silent friend and inner teacher to the seekers of Truth.

How to keep a spiritual diary? What are the points to be noted therein? How are we to start it? To begin with, any ordinary notebook will do. One need not wait because one cannot procure a regular printed diary. The diary would generally cover the following five main points daily:

1. SELF DETERMINATION

The first thought on waking from sleep should always be of God. During sleep nothing was known. The world was completely forgotten. You wake up to life anew. Every nerve vibrates vitally as consciousness of the world returns. What is causing this change? Think of God by whose power you feel so full of life. Do you wake up with the thought of God every morning?

Why begin the day with thoughts of worry or hurry? Should there be perforce a mundane thought, the very next one should be one of God. A thought of the finite must give way to a thought of the Infinite God. On waking one should not leave one's bed immediately but should remain there at least for five minutes. Feeling His Presence one should make a determination to spend the whole day, every single minute of it, in carrying the Presence incessantly, helping and serving others as far as it lies in one's power to do so, recognising God in everyone equally.

2. MORNING MEDITATION

Meditation, posture, steadiness of mind and spiritual elevation-one should select a posture wherein one can sit for a long time comfortably. Concentration and meditation should be practiced not less than fifteen minutes at a time. One should write in the diary whether the posture was steady or unsteady, whether the mind wandered or remained focussed and make note of spiritual experiences, if any. They are sure to come with progress.

3. CONTINUOUS CONSCIOUSNES

One should note whether a continuous flow of the Divine Presence was felt throughout the day, in all the activities of daily life. The secret of success in spiritual life is only in carrying the same unceasing flow of God-consciousness throughout the day. When once we feel It, we know that It is always there. It cannot disappear. It is ever there like the sun behind the clouds. What we need is only to recognise It in every moment of our lives and dispel all the clouds that obscure Truth, with the help of perfect God-thought.

One should be true to the spiritual diary. Weakness should not be ignored but triumphed over through severe self-analysis, followed by right determination. If one forgets the Presence for a number of hours it has to be confessed in the diary with an earnest resolve not to do so again in the future. Thus one should strive day by day to keep the sublime state, continuously aware of God's Presence.

4. EVENING MEDITATION

Meditation and the progress made since morning meditation, spiritual experiences:-

When I say spiritual experiences I do not mean allowing the mind to fancy and see strange forms or lights or hear imaginary sounds. I speak only of the attainment of Peace, poise and power. As Truth is the Infinite Light there in nothing to see or hear for Truth is all in all and it is One without a second.

Meditation is a subtle process and hardly susceptible to regular practice without marked progress. There should be silent and systematic growth in each and every meditation for each is a step forward and upward. Do not give up the posture or meditation until even a little progress has been made. Everything lies in the firmness of your determination. A sincere soul with resoluteness will surely win laurels of success in every undertaking. What is needed is only a correct start, unflagging determination for self-improvement and sincere striving to reach the goal, whatever be the cost.

5. SELF-EXAMINATION

Closing the day with self-examination, before retiring to bed feeling God's love pervading the whole being:-

The last thought should always be a God-thought. One should never close one's eyes to sleep with thoughts of worry and anxiety. One should spend at least five minutes again in self-analysis and in surveying the days work. It should also be seen very strictly whether one has been true or not to the good resolution made in the morning. What is wanting has to be made good penitently. The strength of a soul is not in falling down or in forgetting the Presence but in rising and remembering God each time there is a fall or forgetfulness, with renewed zeal.

The best time for writing a diary is just before bedtime. However it can be written at any time. It is very helpful if a record is made as soon as an occasion presents before a blurring of the impression with regard to thoughts, words and deeds. It is well always to carry the diary about in one's pocket or bag.

It is quite essential that meditation should be practiced at least twice a day. There are souls who practice it thrice and four times a day. There is no harm but it would be helpful if we practice it often. Yet, at the same time why overdo it if there is any strain? It should come as naturally as breathing. Then only one enjoys meditation. One should make it a point never to sleep without meditating at least twice a day and without writing in the diary.

Dear readers, immortal treasures are hidden within yourselves waiting only to be manifested. Wake up from your sweet slumbers and try to manifest them. Simple things such as writing a diary with self-examination will surely lead towards perfection. Simply because the instructions are given in simple words, free from technicalities and elaborate mystical terms, their importance does in no way lessen. Even as an experiment try to write in a diary for a month or two and you will be surprised at the marvelous results.

When once you begin the diary let not your enthusiasm fade nor your spirit wane. I have known some people who say that

they are above time, space and causation and hence they do not need a diary. How very easy to utter empty words! If there are some who have reached the highest state of perfection I offer my homage to them in all devotion. But so long as we have not attained the goal of life, the Kingdom within, the *Nirvana* or *Samadhi*, we must strive and struggle on, resorting to help of every kind; not disdaining the use of a staff or a compass in the form of simple guidance to lead us upward.

I have known also many others who neglect to write in their diaries every day through laziness or pre-occupation with outer activities and then once a week or a fortnight they struggle hard to fill up the pages of the diaries with something or other. Diary writing of this nature will not help us in a practical way. Instead of singing any more laudatory lays about the writing of the diary it is better now to realise the great benefits to be derived there from. Theory without practice is a mere burden to the intellect. Let us therefore make a beginning and start writing the Spiritual Diary from today forward with a firm resolution and a fervent desire to grow silently, physically, mentally and spiritually.

It would afford me much joy to serve you, dear Truth-seekers, by giving any other details about the writing of a diary. So far the subject is complete in itself. Hence, let us enjoy its benefits from today forward and make an unshakable determination in this new season of dedication and consecration to promise God that we will strive to express His Light and Love in every moment of our lives. As the new era is near at hand let this very day be the basis for a real start in earnest, to grow inwardly and walk ever in the footsteps of the sages and saints.

May the Spiritual Diary be a corner stone in the erection of the imperishable structure of our spiritual lives! This is the prayer of your brother Omkar.

May Peace be unto all!

OM OM OM

My hobby even in those early years was the collection of spiritual books. In Philadelphia there were many second-hand book stores where books of every kind are bought and sold. One of the biggest of the second-hand book stores was Leary's, a shop nearly five or six stories in height and contained all kinds of books on every subject. Sometimes I was even able to find valuable books in Sanskrit and there were translations of the Vedas, Upanishads, Quoran, Pitikas, etc.,. The ordinary books were thrown in heaps on the floor and in bins for there were too many to be sorted and arranged on the shelves of the book-cases. Each book had a price written on it for the ready reference and convenience of the prospective buyer. On the books heaped on the floor was a sign in large letters. Any book 10 cents. If they were bigger and better books the sign read: Any book 25 cents.

Whenever I was free from the students and visitors it was my hobby to take my meals early and then go for a visit to Leary's book store where I would look at book after book and select some of the valuable ones, some of which were rare and out of print, for my collection. The owners and workers of the big book store did not know the worth, the great value of some of the highly and illuminating and instructive books there, such as the *Panchatantra*, *Jivan Mukti Vivekam*, *Brahma Sutra*, etc.,. And the price marked on these books was very reasonable. Here and there I was also surprised to see some of the most precious books such as the works of Swami Vivekananda, Swami Dayananda and Sir John woodroffe. I was interested too in the inspiring books of O.S. Marden, James Allen, Larson and others, well known in the West.

Hour after hour would be spent in Leary's reading and selecting many valuable books. By evening the clerk had tabulated the price list and I would pay the money, the total sum for all my selected books. A big bundle would then be made which was usually so heavy that I could not carry it even as far as the bus stand. Somehow though, because of my great love of books the bundle would seem light and was easy to be carried. Mother Mariya and Brother Ralph Enriken would be sitting at home anxiously

awaiting my safe return and when they would see me coming home weary tired with the weight of the heavy bundle of books they would give me a mild scolding and tell me that I should not do such reckless things. Sometimes some of the students would be watching for me with their diaries in order to get further instructions for their study. I would patiently help them in their spiritual needs in spite of the wearisome day in the bookshop. I was never too weary or tired to help and serve any of my devoted flock for they trusted me and relied upon my guidance. Thus, month after month passed in silent service and at the expiry of our Visa extensions Mother and Brother had to get further extensions from the Immigration authorities who had been always kind and considerate towards us.

The attachment to the Mother Ashram was deep and intense and even though I was in far away America my mind was busy thinking acquiring of all the inspiring books for the library in Thotapalli Hills. Not only did I select books but bookmarks, Holy Pictures, illustrated books and even folding tables and chairs, all for the use of the Library in the Mother Ashram in India. Mother and Brother would laugh at some of the odd things that I would bring home now and then in order to transport back to India.

Little Atmaram received pocket money from Mother and Brother and from that amount he was buying interesting little things. In our meetings in the Mariya Ashram we kept a love-offering' plate in the hall in which visitors and members often placed donations of dollar bills and silver coins. But all my teachings and lectures have ever been as free as the air one breathes and the sunshine that one enjoys. There has never been any fixed fee for any course of study or teachings.

One interesting incident comes into my memory as I look back into the life of the Mariya Ashram. One of the old students brought a new and aspiring pupil to join one of my lecture classes in which spiritual instruction was being given individually and collectively. The new student asked the old student whether one had to pay any fixed fee for the course of instruction. The old student

replied:

No. No. Swamiji never asks for any money. All his teachings and courses are as free as the air. But when you see him and listen to his lovely voice of Peace you feel like laying your pocketbook and all your money at his feet.

Sometimes we were taken to the lovely homes of some of the noted students and spiritual leaders of the various denominations in order to give discourses there. Some of the lectures which were arranged for and held in churches were especially illuminating and were highly appreciated by the Church authorities as well as by the large audiences.

All Glory belongs to God and the credit to Mother Mariya and Brother Suryananda for all their selfless services of Love :

May Peace Be unto All:

OM

OM

OM

Chapter 29

RETURN TO INDIA

PREPARATIONS FOR THE RETURN TO THE MOTHERLAND :

There has been always only one Motherland for me and that Motherland is the wide world. Blessed is the life of the one with a Heart of Universality, who is so unlike the one who confines himself to a particular religion or nation and sits in his own self created well of ignorance, crying at the highest pitch of his voice :

My well is the biggest well in all the world! Even the Ocean is smaller than the well of my religion or nation.

Thus there are many people who sit in their little wells and take joy and pride in arguing that nothing is greater than their own religion or nation. Some 'orthodox' people may not like to appreciate my words of universality, for I proclaim that all the world is my home and all religions belong to me and that I am not bound to any religion or nation.

The world is my home. All the people in it are my sisters and brothers. To love and serve them is my highest religion.

This has always been from the beginning, the basis and foundation of my spiritual life. As our mind, inner belief and love of humanity is, so also are people from every part of the world drawn to us. If one lives for oneself and confines oneself to the body of flesh and blood one will not draw to oneself anyone from either near or far. But if the vision is great and if it includes all of humanity then all the people in all religions and nations will naturally be drawn. This is an unfailing Divine Law.

A living example is our Santhi Ashram which was founded in 1917 as an Abode of Peace for all the children of God in all the religions of East and the West. Because it belongs to all, people of all castes, creeds and colours flock towards the wide and high gates of Santi Ashram, the Universal Home. Although it is really too early to add here, I feel like including the poem of Sister Sushila

Devi for it emphasizes the Universality of Santi Ashram which is the Common Property of all the aspiring children of God all over the world. Here is Sister Sushila's inspiring and memorable poem:

O! Come to Santi Ashram
Abode of rest and love,
To visit, stay or meditate
And find the Peace that's incarnate.
The gates are wide,
There's room for all,
We welcome folks both great and small.
Come to your garden full of flowers
High lovely hills to sooth the eyes
At Santi Ashram where Peace abides,
There wild birds fill the air with song
And learned Sadhus linger long.
They will share with you the Truths so dear
That makes mere man a Saint or Seer.
Then flock to Santi Ashram
The Universal Home.
The gates are standing now ajar
To friends from near and far.

OM OM OM

As there was much work to be done in the Mother Ashram in Thotapalli Hills and all the devotees were calling for our return to India, Atmaram and I began to make preparations for the journey to the East. Brother Ralph Entriiken, Sri Suryananda busied himself with the important arrangements for our comfortable return on the steamer. Mother Mariya, Srimati Saraswati Devi felt very sad and heavy however and had been depressed for days at the very thought of my leaving her all alone and going back to India. Both she and Brother Suryananda resolved to settle in India. It was decided that Atmaram and I would go in advance and make everything ready

for their coming. They would sell their home, furniture and settle all their property and follow us, for they wanted to dedicate their consecrated lives to the progress of Santi Ashram, the Mission of Peace, for the welfare of the Mother land, *Bharata Bhoomi*, India.

BOUNDLESS LOVE OF MOTHER MARIYA:

Mother Mariya and Brother Ralph were so kind and thoughtful that they had even opened a separate bank account in my name and all the Love-offerings and donations which were put in the collection plate in my name after the meetings, were deposited in this savings account. Although this money was for my own personal expenses they nevertheless bought the steamer tickets and gave us pocket money for expenses during the voyage. I do not remember now either the name of the steamer or where we boarded, in Philadelphia or New York Harbour.

Even before we left Mariya Ashram in Philadelphia Mother Mariya wept and wept for her heart was nearly broken. Her face became swollen and there were constant tears in her eyes. This made me sad and heavy too for she truly had an unparalleled sacred and Divine Love. May the Almighty Lord keep me ever fully worthy of the boundless love and affection of Mother Mariya, in the past, now and always is my prayer.

OM OM OM

Several friends and old devotees of the Mariya Ashram came to the steamer to see us off on the long voyage to India but Mother Mariya was too sick, sad and heart-broken to allow us to leave her and she remained confined to her lovely, sacred and Holy Temple, weeping all alone. Later she wrote hundreds of very affectionate and pathetic letters out of the depths of her tender and broken heart for she was greatly moved by this separation of the God-given son from the Divine Mother. All her letters are too sacred for publication, for the curious eyes of the material world to comprehend for this was the Divine Love of Mother Mariya. God-given Son was one of her letters which we published in Peace.

Truly, Divine Love is infinite, boundless. The Love of Mother Mariya cannot be described in words, for it was not of the earth but of Heaven, of God's Love. The taxi came to take us to the station but I was still with Mother Mariya in her Holy Sanctuary. She was weeping and her lovely face was swollen and wet with tears. My heart was nearly broken and the tears gushed from my eyes too. I almost wanted to cancel my passage and forget India and Santi Ashram and stay always with Mother Mariya at least to give her comfort and consolation in her closing years. Alas! It was not to be so. God's ways are mysterious and incomprehensible and work ceaselessly through the Karma of deeds done in the past of individuals. To console and comfort the tender heart of Mother Mariya I told her unconsciously, repeated the following memorable but pathetic words -

‘Mother, do not weep for I shall come back to you’!

With these life-giving words Mother allowed me to leave her and come down from the Holy Sanctuary. I joined Brother Ralph and little Atmaram who had been waiting for me in the taxi with the taxi driver. They were all anxious lest we should miss the train which was to take us to the steamer.

TO THE STEAMER AND AFTER:

It was all like a dream how the taxi brought us to the train in great Railway Station of Philadelphia and how the train brought us to the steamer. In the harbour of the port many old and new friends awaited our arrival with gifts of Bon Voyage basket, greeting cards and other presents. I do not remember anymore the names of all those dedicated souls who were so devoted to us. It was time for the departure of the steamer and from the port the bell was ringing which signalled the visitors to descend from the steamer. Brother Suryananda was very sad, even in tears at this separation from his little pal, Atmaram. With a fond embrace, hugging him again and again, Brother Ralph Sri Suryananda, the secretary of the Sri Mariya Ashram, departed from the steamer and left Atmaram and me alone on the deck. As the steamer slowly

began to leave the harbour we could see Brother Ralph waving his handkerchief and several friends and members of the Mariya Ashram also, waving to us, all wishing us both a Bon Voyage, a safe journey to far away India.

The name of the steamer was the *S.S. Unicorn* and it belonged to the British India Navigation Company Ltd. It was chiefly a cargo transport flying between America and India and it accommodated a limited number of passengers, eight or ten at the most. People who want fun and excitement never travel on these slow cargo ships for they prefer the fast steamers which carry hundreds of passengers and provide entertainment. Only missionaries and those who love Silence and solitude prefer the comfortable and lonely cargo ships so that they can spend their time in prayer and meditation, watching the lovely sunrises and inspiring sunsets. So many years have passed that I do not remember any longer whether Atmaram and I had any fellow passengers or whether we were the only travellers on that long sea voyage. Sometimes when we were alone we used to feel as though we were the owners of the whole steamer and the monarchs of the whole world.

Even though we were now returning homeward to Mother India after having spent some of the happiest days in Mother America in selfless service, joining in friendship with so many strange and new devoted sisters and brothers of various nationalities our hearts were heavy at the very thought that we had left Mother Mariya behind in her great sorrow. Mother had been kind enough to give us fifty Steamer Letters which she had written patiently and thoughtfully so that our long sea voyage would be interesting and inspiring. I had been requested by her, not to open and read all the letters in a single day but to open one at a time, day by day as indicated by the date on the letter and meditate on the contents of that letter. The letters were very inspiring and contained many quotations from the Blessed Christ, Bhagawan Krishna or Lord Buddha.

Mother Mariya had also given us many gifts of clothing and some souvenirs for the devoted parents of Atmaram and for the members and workers of Santhi Ashram. From the Captain of the steamer to the crew, including all the cabin boys, all were devoted and attentive and tried to make every day of our long voyage happy and comfortable. The kitchen people, the Bengali cooks, were extra kind and made for us special vegetable dishes and soups for we were vegetarians. We used to have some kind of pudding every day and there were ice-creams too. Atmaram and I were fond of boiled potatoes and butter, toast with jam and ice cream. Sometimes when the sea was rough in the stormy weather and the ship rocked like a cradle we were confined to our cabin and slept for long hours in our berths. Atmaram was more lively than I and would even walk on deck when it stormed and the ship tossed up and down, rocked from side to side. In such stormy weather the tables, chairs, etc, had to be tied down with wire so that the plates, glasses, cups and other articles would not slip or tumble to the floor and break, causing damage to the ship. Each berth also had affixed to it a spittoon in case one had to vomit because of sea sickness. Every steamer was also required to carry a registered doctor, a qualified physician and a trained nurse to take care of the personnel and the crew and any passengers who might become ill during the voyage.

Then there were the weekly compulsory life-boat drills. All the people on the steamer, including even the ladies were required to wear life-preservers and to attend the drill on deck when a siren was blown and a bell rung. All had to be at their respective posts. Each person was also assigned a life-boat and given a seat therein. This was done to avoid confusion in time of danger, when the ship might meet with an accident and begin to sink in the wide ocean. Thus, our daily life on the ocean was very interesting and amusing, in spite of the stormy weather sometimes. Often we used to watch the breaking waves when the sea was calm, as they came towards our steamer. It was also interesting to watch the fish as they came up from the ocean and danced above the surface of the water. The limitless waters of the vast ocean also had their own

moods, sometimes boisterous and sometimes waveless. It was fearful when the ship rocked and rolled and shifted from side to side with the force of the mountain-high angry waves. It was lovely and enchanting when the Ocean was like a calm lake, without any waves at all.

During our long voyage on the ocean I was requested to give my message of Peace to the staff and crew of the steamer when the weather was calm for all of them were devoted and loving. I also read Mother Mariya's Steamer letters every day, a letter a day as had been desired by Mother Mariya in her deep love and Adorable Presence, which followed us at every step of our long sea voyage.

May all Homage be unto Mother Mariya and her
Boundless Divine Love.

OM TAT SAT OM

Chapter 30

IN MADRAS HARBOUR

Blessed is the life of the one who has many devotees who love and serve him throughout the world. Although I had lost when quite young the mother who gave birth to this physical form Mother Ratnam, with her life of dedication, was a real mother to me. From the very beginning of Ashram life she offered her little son Atmaram for Gods work, to serve His children. Although she had two sons, Kamaraju and Atmaram she told me that I was her third son and that her property would be divided into three equal shares for her three sons. The very thought of her love and dedication, her gift of one third of her wealth, to the Ashram, the Mission of Peace, has been a source of joy not only to me but to everyone who has heard of Mother Ratnam's devotion. She has been ever a devoted and consecrated mother. Both she and her husband, Sri Rama Rao have over the years generously contributed to Santi Ashram in Thotapalli Hills.

Mother Kamala Devi Tombat is another Spiritual Mother who has adored me with all her heart, mind and soul from the very beginning. Her husband, Sri Ananda Rao was a noted advocate in Madras . Both of their talented children have been great devotees and I am happy to have known them since they were babies. Manorama is the cultured and educated wife of the late Sri Narayana Rao, the famous Judge who passed away a few years ago while holding a post in the Secretariat of Mysore Government. He was simple and gentle and as devoted to Santi Ashram as is his loving wife Srimati Manorama Devi. The second daughter is the noted and talented musician, Sushila Rani, the life partner of Sri Baburao Patel, the editor of the well known magazine, Mother India. Sushila Rani always has been so simple, devoted and spiritual that her parents offered her to Santi Ashram to serve the cause of Peace. Both she and her devoted sister have their M.A. and have devoted their lives to the Peace of India and the world. Sushila's life, although dedicated to God's work has been destined to work in another field of service, in art and music. A similar case is that

of Atmaram, who was offered to Santi Ashram and the cause of Universal Peace and even accompanied me to America and studied for some time in a school there. Although he was given a firm spiritual foundation God intended his life to be fulfilled in other work. Although it was a great disappointment for me in the beginning I am glad now to see Atmaram as a merchant prince with a devoted wife and lovely children. Indeed, God's ways are incomprehensible.

From the very beginning I was blessed to have many spiritual mothers. Besides Mother Kamala Devi and Mother Ratnam there was my adopted sister Venkayamma who took care of me while I attended school in Visakhapatnam and is as devoted today to Santi Ashram as are Mother Ratnam and Mother Kamala. Another Mother was Suramma, an old Brahmin lady who came from Chendurthy and stayed in the first thatched hut in Santi Ashram. There was also Santi Mouna Devi, Mother Mariya and many other mothers in America. But there are too many mothers to mention here and I shall tell about them all in a later chapter, Legacies and Bequests. Dr. Frissholm, who visited Santi Ashram once in its early years and who wrote in the visitors book, '*Santi Ashram and Swami Omkar are not two but One*', left the Ashram a legacy upon her death in California many years later. Vida Reed Stone, whom I named Veda Devi, was a great soul of wisdom. Although she never met me or saw Santi Ashram I was deeply touched when, upon her death a few years ago she left in her will a bequest to Santi Ashram. It was this God-given gift which helped to build our *Jnana Guha*, the Cave of Wisdom. But I shall tell more about this later.

Some people, in ignorance think that they have already done too much for God and given enough charity and that they need give no more or serve God and His children. Everything that we have comes from God and as such it belongs to Him. Everything that we have must be offered and dedicated to His Service alone, for even the last pie belongs to God alone. Blessed is the amount, be it large or small, which is offered for the good of all mankind.

It is sad to see fanatics who believe that money should be used only for their own church, in the East and the West and that it should never go anywhere else in the world to serve any of the least of His children in other religions. They are merely frogs of ignorance who live in finite wells and consider their religion and beliefs, the best and highest in the world. Thus, man evolves from ignorance into knowledge, from narrow-minded views into the broadness of Universal Understanding. There is truly no happiness in selfishness. Happiness lies only in selflessness. Blessed are they who can see the Sweet Face of God in every form, whether in the religions of the East or those of the West. Verily, everyone is a living Image of God.

It was one of the happiest moments in our lives when our steamer reached Madras harbour and anchored at one of the piers. There on the platform we saw the figures of Mr. and Mrs. Ananda Rao and their daughters awaiting our arrival with garlands of flowers, extending a hearty welcome to us. I think Mother Ratnam also was there having come all the way from Rajahmundry to receive us and see her little son Atmaram again. It was considered to have been the greatest opportunity and blessing for a young lad, especially one so young as Atmaram to have not only visited America but to have studied in one of the schools of the great city of Philadelphia. Atmaram was especially blessed for when I gave my message upon invitation at some of the greatest churches in America, it was little Atmaram who gave the prayers from the hindu scriptures to all the seekers of Truth assembled there. After our long voyage we were happy to reach Madras safely and to be again in the comfortable home of our Ananda Rao and Kamala Devi, the oldest devotees and well-wishers of the Ashram. We enjoyed Bhajans and the music of this devoted and spiritual family and their friends. It was strange and interesting also that after having been on the steamer for so many weeks for a few days after disembarking, while walking on the earth we felt a moving, a swaying of the heart as though we were still on the rocking steamer in mid ocean.

We were taken all around the city of Madras and to all the places of interest and made comfortable with delicious foods and above all with the spiritual feasts of prayers and bhajans which were held every evening in Mother Kamala's home. As are the parents, so are the children. The two daughters have naturally inherited the musical talents of the mother and imbibed the spiritual qualities of the parents. To this day they are all devoted and loving and consider Santi Ashram as their own spiritual home. During our short stay in Madras also, I remember that some public meetings were held as well as the daily bhajans and satsang. What a difference and contrast there is when I compare this grand welcome to the cold and indifferent welcome I received when I returned from America the first time as a helpless, poor and lonely refugee who had been refused entrance into America and cruelly turned back at Ellis Island and helplessly locked in a steamer bound for India via London.

By the time we reached Santi Ashram great preparations had been made to welcome us and there were welcome addresses, garlands of flowers; and all the Ashram was decorated to greet us. All the members, devotees and their children were waiting in the Ashram and were very happy to see us. There were also dozens of pathetic and affectionate letters awaiting our arrival from the loving Mother Mariya. She had been writing to me from the very day that we had left Philadelphia. Her thoughtful gift of steamer letters had also given me joy and inspiration every day throughout the long sea voyage. One of these letters, rich in simple love, was published in our Peace Journal and I should like to include it here.

GOD-GIVEN SON

My Precious God-given Son,
Given to me without stain or blemish.

God spoke and said :

‘Son, thy calling to earth is to heal and bless the lonesome heart of mother. Her heart is sacred since you have left her for she has always prayed for a ‘son’ and it was you who answered her prayers.

Then one day the hour for parting came and again there was no son to bless the home. The lonesome heart, the empty chair, the voice that once she heard had left the fireside. In reality it seems the world has come to an end. There are no more beautiful sunsets. There are no more beautiful stars in the sky overhead. Even the rose garden has dried up and gone to weeds. There is no more chanting of OM. There is no more chanting of OM.

Life has lost its luster; there are no more Goodnight Prayers for the moon and stars have been covered over by heavy clouds and tears are dripping from the sky overhead for a heavy storm is on the way. Thus the days are gloomy, the stars have gone to sleep and there is no light from the moon. It seems as though the sun shall never shine again.

So the world moves on

The world moves on

Without a son

From Mother's Heart

- Mother Mariya

God giveth and God hath taken away.

AN OFFERING TO MY SON OMKAR

Glorifying God for all His richest blessings and His unfailing protection and feeling grateful to Mother Mariya, Mother Ratnam and Mother Kamala and to all the members and devotees of the Ashram we settled in Peace, in Santhi Ashram: the Abode of Peace, for some time to come.

OM

OM

OM

Chapter 31

THE MASTER WITHIN

Although it is too early to include it here, I remember an article which I wrote and which appeared in our Peace Journal of February 1933. It came out of some of my experiences in India and America and it brought hearty congratulations of the old schoolmaster who once reprimanded me by a sharp rap on the hands for taking pickles to train drivers.

THE MASTER WITHIN

I am never tired of repeating that the Master of masters is ever within. I plead and beg all to love and worship the Inner Master instead of outer masters. I pray and request one and all to concentrate and meditate only on the Master of humanity, who is the Indwelling Presence in every heart.

But alas! I do not know what is wrong with some of my friends. In spite of my repeated appeals they still cling to and worship the outer masters, imaginary masters, ethereal masters, astral masters and spirit masters. I do not deny the existence of all these masters. They may exist in ether or air or atleast in one's own mind. I am not here to denounce the masters. My point is, why not worship the One Master of all masters, who is the life and soul of the very universe.

It touches my heart with sadness when I see the wrecks of innocent lives in the name of masters. How many poor and deluded souls are wasting their precious lives, with sleepless nights and restless days in trying to contact some of these pitiable, finite and illusory masters. Dear readers, you must excuse me for calling these masters finite. Are they not finite and pitiable for they are masters who are yet unable to attain to the Highest of the highest and merge and dissolve in God; and instead, lead lives separate from Him and hover over some snowy peaks and other imaginary places.

Our Ashram gates are open to one and all, for, the Peace Mission is the common property of all the children of God. I wonder why some of these masters do not come to our Thotapalli Hills? Perhaps they may not like silence and solitude and above all the company of those who pine and worship the Highest Lord, instead of pining for them? Nevertheless, our love goes outwards to one and all, whether they are masters or slaves, fools or saviours, spirits or angels, for God is Love.

It is my weakness to have bitterness against the very word 'contact'. Deluded souls restlessly engage themselves in contacting masters in some form or other. Contact is possible only in separation and duality. There is nothing to contact in Truth or God, for He is One without a second. Hence contact is ignorance, delusion, weakness and childishness.

When Truth is pervading and permeating our very beings, filling the whole universe, instead of recognizing Truth why grope in the mire of darkness and ignorance, contacting the masters? Pray, give up contacting forms and names! In the Name of God give up contacting spirits and elements! Cease from contacting in the name of Truth, entities and other hobgoblins which have been given the most astounding names. Assert and recognize the Nameless One, the Formless One, the Giver of your lives and the Soul of your dreams, the God and Ideal of your existence. I am afraid the masters and their deluded worshippers may not relish my thought but I have the consolation that my Sweet Beloved, the Indweller of my heart, the Master of masters loves and sympathises with me for my firm conviction of Him as the One Presence. When we were mere children we were happy to waste time playing with little toys of name and forms. Shall we remain forever as mere deluded children worshipping entities, elements, spirits and other finite masters?

One of my devoted and earnest friends told me the other day that he has forbidden the worship of any kind of master in his lodge. I felt highly pleased with his words but then he ended the sentence by saying: 'except Lord X'. How pathetic! When we

have given up the worship of all other masters why cling to this Lord X ? Why sell our souls to this particular master? Who is the Source of this Lord X? Why not worship the very source and fountain-head of Master X?

In the Bible we read that our God is a jealous God. If we make a graven image of any master, or worship any lord except the Living presence He will visit upon us in the form of iniquities. He will never forgive us. It is blasphemy to worship anything other than the Highest Truth. Away with masters, lords, finite masters, common masters. Let us have enough strength to worship only the Lord of all lords and Master of both the visible and invisible worlds!

If we want to taste the Peace that passeth all understanding, to drink the Nectar of Immortality it is not in the hands of these entites and spirit masters, but it rests with the Indweller of our hearts, the Sweet Beloved, who is patiently awaiting us, abiding within alone, to bless us with the highest state of Nirvanic Bliss. Once when I mentioned in the ordinary course of conversation to a friend that I had a deep meditation that day, he immediately asked me whether I had gone to the 'Lodge'. What sort of a 'lodge'? Is it on land, in the sky or on water? Am I to waste my precious time by meditating, visiting and hovering over these lodges? My Lodge is within me, in the Sacred Sanctuary of my heart. My Lord is ever abiding in the stillness of my heart. I need not chant incantations or passwords, invoke special spirit-aid to soar into the cold, icy regions to meet my dear Lord who is ever with me and within me. In the stillness I feel Him and in activity I see Him, manifest. I live, work and breathe in Him for we are inseparably One.

This master business is flourishing well, far and near, in both the East and West in spite of the exemplary lives of ideal Saviours. What can be the cause of this spectacular brilliance, empty, which lasts but for a moment, like fire-works? The cause is simple for, the mind is ever restless and unruly and always strives to grasp contact with some master or other in the outer world. To live in and still the mind is the work of master-mind and not the

work of the worshippers of masters. Inward gaze is impossible for all the followers of masters and lords.

Be still and know that I am God. This stillness can be known and realized only by a Christ, a Krishna or Buddha-by these rare few who have become the Masters of all masters. Shall we walk in the footsteps of these saviours or shall we be caught in the quagmire of darkness and be lost in the slime of astral planes and other spirit-worlds?

My heart's sympathy goes out towards all those deluded followers and second-hand worshippers; ask their worshipful lords and masters not to lead the ignorant and undeveloped children of God, the blind sheep, from the Center of Truth, but to help them to rely upon their own self; and not to allow them to blindly contact the finite masters and neglect the Living reality of the One Presence in the stillness of their own hearts. I extend my love to all, both to the worshipped and to the worshippers and I stretch forth my arms to the whole of humanity with the earnest and entreating request to be true first to the Indwelling Presence, the Lord of lords, the Master of masters, the Highest of highest, the Sun of suns, who is the Source and Soul of the very universe. May He, Who is the Interpenetrating Presence, the substance and the Over soul of both the microcosm and the macrocosm lift the veils and open our eyes to the true vision of the Sweet Beloved in all stillness, who is inseparably, eternally and indivisibly One with us. May Glory be unto Him both in the manifested and unmanifested forms in stillness and activity. May silent adorations be unto the Great Master of masters who is ever within us, as one without a second.

May Peace be unto All!

OM OM OM

ASHRAM WORK IN MADRAS

By God's Grace and the fervent prayers and sympathies of all the devotees and friends Santi Ashram was progressing day by day in every way. We started another Gurukula, a medical clinic and arranged facilities for some aged men and women. Then, as now, we badly needed funds as well as selfless workers to keep the Ashram and its works alive and to serve all the devoted visitors who came from near and far and even from abroad to find rest and peace in Santi Ashram. Several friends in Madras, knowing of the poverty of the Ashram and its selfless works invited me to come and visit them so that they could receive spiritual instruction and also introduce some of their wealthy and influential friends and acquaintances to the Mission of Peace. One friend, especially, a veterinary surgeon, a family friend during my days of study at the A.V.N. College in Visakhapatnam had been happy to watch my silent life of devotion and dedication for several years and he was now anxious to do his part.

At that time he held an important position in a Veterinary College as a doctor and professor and he longed to interest his colleagues in the selfless services of the Ashram. At his repeated requests I went to Madras with two of the *gurukula* boys to represent Santi Ashram and to collect funds for the maintenance of the various activities and to keep the Ashram lively. As the house of the veterinary surgeon was too small to accommodate all of us we stayed in the comfortable home of his friend, a wealthy *Dubash*, manager of an English firm. *Dubashes* always have many connections with rich merchants; and the merchants and business men are usually obliged to them for many favours and hence respect the least wishes of the *Dubashes*. Thus, although some of these merchants never cared to see our faces, much less give us any money, they were nevertheless obliged or compelled by the mere presence of the *Dubash* to contribute money to the Mission of peace. This *Dubash*, one Nammalwar chetty was very much interested in

our Ashram and its silent, universal work although he was not particularly interested in spiritual things. Because our veterinarian friend had spoken highly and represented the great work being done in the wilderness of Thotapalli Hills Mr.Chetty felt from within that he also should do something for the good of the Ashram. Thus God works in mysterious ways and uses even the men of the world to help His cause of peace and it was thus that Mr. Chetty promised to take us to some of his rich customers.

It was surprising to see that some of these businessmen subscribed Rs. 500 and Rs. 250 each without any hesitation whatsoever. Mr.Chetty himself set a good example for his friends by donating, at the top of the subscription list Rs. 500 in the name of his late mother. We were taken to one very rich merchant with a generous heart of charity and when we requested him to give us money to buy a printing press in his name to print our monthly journals, Peace and Santi the goodhearted man readily agreed and gave us Rs. 1500. In those days -and even now-I had hesitated to touch money. Thus, when the devoted merchant gave me such a large amount in the form of currency notes I requested him to give the sum to Mr. Chetty. The merchant was kind enough to place the currency into the hands of our Mr. Nammalwar Chetty.

The readers of this Autobiography will be surprised to learn that the old, inherent nature of Mr. Chetty prevailed and that he never gave the Ashram that generous amount of Rs. 1500 or his own donation which had been offered in the name of his late mother. Later on, the loss of this great sum and the crookedness and duplicity of Mr. Chetty made me very sad for I had trusted the man and allowed God-given charity to be used for other purposes, misused. Although Mr. Chetty did help the Ashram in some ways and when he felt devoted he even visited the Ashram, but yet his mind always wandered towards outer things and he wanted to use the Ashram to obtain for himself a little name, fame and esteem. The gesture of not touching money has its advantages and benefits, especially for Sadhus and consecrated souls but I realised from his sad, personal experience that it has its disadvantages too, for we

lost that great sum of Rs.1500 which would have bought us a printing press. Even to this day I feel sad when I think of this incident and I consider the loss of the money as daylight robbery.

As all hands belong to God He rewards the losers in some form or other. What was taken from one hand was returned by another hand. Thus He made some dedicated devotees and well wishers of the Ashram, especially after my innocent trust had been violated and my confidence denied, to offer a similar amount so that the Ashram could buy a printing press. Through a well-wisher of the Ashram and also a friend of a press owner we bought a second hand press. Like fools we were again duped for a rotten old press was given to us and in our inexperience we accepted it. Somehow, by God's Grace we were able to have the old press repaired and the worn type recast and thus we began our work of publishing the journals of God's Word, spiritual messages, simple and inspiring poems, booklets and articles, in spite of all our difficulties and disappointments.

During one of my later visits to Madras I tried to get back the stolen money by observing a fast in the home of Mr. Chetty, the hard-hearted, *Dubash*. But even my fast could not soften or touch the cruel hearted, materialistic *Dubash* who lived for himself; alone and sold his soul for a mess of pottage. It was also during a later visit to Madras that I was taken to meet the Maharajah of Bobbili, to represent Santi Ashram and obtain his sympathy for our work for he was considered as a most enlightened ruler and also the author of books on Hinduism, etc. He listened patiently to us and then we had a lovely talk in which he asked many piercing questions. He was kind enough, at the time of our departure to give a love-offering for the maintenance of the Ashram and he promised to visit us in the future.

Although the old Maharajah Saheb never did visit the Ashram I was happy to receive his loving and devoted letters, more than forty years ago, as I look back now. The old Maharajah could not visit the Ashram. His son, the successor to the throne of Bobbili

also could not visit the Ashram. But both of them passed away having done many good deeds. God's ways are mysterious and incomprehensible for He has made the grand-children of the Bobbili Estate the ardent devotees and well-wishers of the Ashram today. In Santi Ashram, Thotapalli Hills we are blessed to have the palatial mandir of the Bobbili family which has been named after Lord Krishna. The present family members both women and men have been the most loyal and devoted friends and well wishers of the Ashram. They consider Santi Ashram as their own spiritual home and their devoted lives have been the greatest asset and blessing to the Ashram, the Mission of Universal Peace.

In doing God's Work, when it is concerned with the welfare of the world we face both good and bad experiences. Once in Madras I was taken to the home of a wealthy Chettiar, a noted contractor. On that day, whether it was the *raahukalam*, the hour of ill luck or whether the Chettiar was suffering from constipation or some other complaint, he in any case shouted angrily at us and said that he would never see or allow beggars in his house. We departed in silence, disappointment and shame at the unkind words of the Chettiar. Later, feeling sad and worried over the hasty and angry words of the Chettiar I wrote to him a loving letter and represented the work of the Ashram for the good of all God's children in the East and West. Readers of this Autobiography will be surprised and happy to read that the devoted Chettiar completely changed and became a life-long friend of the Ashram and even wrote a letter of apology for his hasty words. He sent Rs. 10 to the Ashram as a monthly contribution for all the rest of his life since the time of that sad incident. After 30 years of association with the Ashram, helping its silent work in so many ways the devoted Chettiar passed away leaving a dedicated son who now follows in the footsteps of his father, the faithful Sri Numbermal Chettiar.

It is truly glorious, or rather incomprehensible how God has kept me still healthy, well and happy and has taken away some of His most noted and influential sons, the Maharajah of Bobbili,

his son, Sri Rajah Saheb and several merchant princes, doctors, etc, in India and in foreign lands as well. Yet, He keeps me still alive for reasons best known to God Himself. My one ardent prayer is not for longer life, but that I may make this life, every moment of it, more useful and helpful to all His children in the world.

May Peace be unto All :

OM OM OM



Swami Omkar with Anandarao Family at Chennai



Swamiji near Nayagara Falls

Chapter 33

THIRD VOYAGE TO AMERICA

Mother Mariya , the President of the Sri Mariya Ashram in Philadelphia, with all her boundless love had been writing to me ever since I had left her, sending letter after letter, pathetic and heart-rending letters with the request that I return home to America. She was kind enough to arrange my passage from India to America and she sent money for expenses I might meet during my travels. Both she and Brother Suryananda, the secretary of the Sri Mariya Ashram were always too kind, loving and generous. All the hundreds of inspiring and affectionate letters of Mother-Mariya will make in themselves a great spiritual volume, a short Ramayana to help all the aspiring devotees, the seekers of Truth, if they are ever published.

The Mother Ashram Thotapalli Hills was progressing day by day in every way and my presence was needed there more than ever to help the growth of the many new activities of selfless service. Yet, the great call, the incessant and pathetic call from Mother Mariya drew me back to the shores of America. Thus I neglected the Ashram and everyone and everything in India and prepared again to return the devotees in America for the third time. Besides all the constant letters and telegrams from Mother Mariya and Brother Suryananda which urged me to return to my real home in America there were also messages from many old and new friends from California, New York and other states bearing the earnest request that I come to America to help and serve them.

The tender farewell address of the devotees of Santhi Ashram tells all about the activities there and the welcome article of Brother Suryananda relates all the details of my safe arrival and joyous reception in America.

FAREWELL ADDRESS

To His Holiness Sriman Swami Omkarji Maharaj President and Founder Sri Santi Ashram, The Mission of Peace , Thotapalli Hills, East Godavari District, Andhra Pradesh, India.

May it please your Holiness,

We, the Members of Sri Santi Ashram and Mission beg to offer your Holiness, on the eve of your departure from our midst our most respectful and heartfelt salutations and appreciation in our own humble way of all that you have been to us.

Your Holiness, when we were informed of your decision to start for America for the third time on your apostolic mission we were no doubt much pained at the news, yet we have had to reconcile ourselves and feel joyful at the thought that you are only temporarily leaving us and that you have also to share with the Brothers and Sisters of America, in compliance with their earnest desire and request for all that is best and brightest in the realm of religion. We watched with much love and deep interest your many-sided activities in America for nearly a year and a half last time. We know that you have spread, broadcast, through teachings and publications, the fundamental ideas and ideals which are taught in all the great religions and philosophies of the world, the perception of Truth at all angles and through all perspectives. Verily you have waved the banner of Toleration, Freedom, Harmony and Peace to one and all.

Your Holiness, after your last safe and successful return from West into our midst in 1926 you have selflessly worked with all your might for the physical, intellectual, moral and spiritual welfare of the entire humanity in general and for your countrymen in particular, as evidenced by your publication of the beautiful book, *Mother America* your founding of a Medical Dispensary, an Educational Vidyalaya, a Printing Press, the two monthly journals of Life, Light and Love, '**Peace**' in English and '**Santi**' in Telugu,

the Ashram Post office, Santi Ashram Road, all on a firm basis. Sri Santi Ashram is set amidst natural scenery, with hills and dales, beautiful gardens and trees and is completely removed from all the distractions, turmoil and bustle of the world. Your childlike and peaceful personality, your sincere fostering of a Spirit of Truth by the eternal ties of love and gratitude, in foreign people, your inspired utterances and original way of handling religious and philosophical problems, your invaluable work in opening foreign branches; all those cannot but leave a great impression on our minds and also in the minds and hearts of all others who have had the privilege of association with you. We are deeply indebted to you for all your love and labour.

Further, your numerous friends and followers, Sisters and Brothers of America, Mother Saraswati Devi and Brother Suryananda, (Mr. and Mrs. Entriiken) of the Sri Mariya Ashram, Philadelphia and in particular, have laid us under a deep debt of gratitude and sincere thanks for all their innumerable token of cordiality, greetings, gifts, help and cooperation which they have given you in appreciation and admiration from the very bottom of their hearts. Our words fall short in expressing our inner love for you. We trust with every confidence that the American devotees will evince renewed and great interest in Mission of Peace on this, your third voyage to America than before.

It is the earnest and intense prayer of us all that your Holiness shall be abundantly blessed with long life and sound health so that you will be able to carry on your high and noble work in the future, with vigour and vitality and that you will be able to return safely and soon from the West to our midst with the Sunshine of Joy, Love, Unity and Peace.

We beg to submit ourselves, Your Holiness.

Your respectful followers and ardent admirers, the Members of Sri Santi Ashram. The Mission of Peace.

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(Peace Oct. 1928)

SWAMI OMKAR IN AMERICA

It will be a great joy for all the thousands who are interested in Sri Santi Ashram, Thotapalli Hills, East Godavari District, India to learn that His Holiness, Sriman Swami Omkarji, the President of the institution has safely landed on these far distant shores of America, making this his third visit to our country.

It was a great pleasure for the writer to meet His Holiness at the steamer, the *S.S. City of Baroda* upon its arrival in Boston, Friday October 26, 1928. I was only a short time after the steamer docked that we were on our way, passing through New York City, to the Sri Mariya Ashram in Philadelphia, Pa. We arrived here the same evening by 10-30 p.m. after having travelled by train a distance of some 300 miles from Boston. What a joy it was to greet our beloved Swamiji once again. What a joy it is to so many here in America to have him with us for he is Universal Love and Peace personified !

Upon leaving the vessel at Boston the officers of the ship and the passengers bade Swamiji farewell and wished him good luck and Godspeed on his Mission. They had all come to love him. No one leaves Swamiji's presence without feeling the love and super consciousness which radiate from him. This is something not soon forgotten when once experienced.

If there is one in the world today who has reached the highest state of spiritual realisation it is Swamiji. There are many, many here in America who are waiting to meet and greet him after patiently awaiting his return. We, here in America appreciate the sacrifices that Swamiji has made to come here and serve us and to bring to us the Universal Message of Peace and Truth. He expresses in his life that which he teaches and everyone who sits in his presence can feel the influence of the great soul manifesting through his physical form. We wish to thank those dear souls, our Brothers and Sisters in India who in numerous ways have made it possible for Swamiji to leave his native land and come again to America;

this through their sacrifices that Brotherhood between the East and the West shall be more firmly established and more solidly cemented together in the Universal Spirit of Love and Tolerance. Those who are interested in the furtherance of this great Universal Work of Sri Santi Ashram, East Godavari District, India, which is reaching all parts of the world and of which Sri Mariya Ashram in Philadelphia is a part and branch, are invited to correspond with Brother Suryananda, Secretary, Sri Mariya Ashram, 128 North 61 st Street, Philadelphia, Pa., U.S.A.

- Brother Suryananda

May Peace be unto all

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Chapter 34

IN MARIYA ASHRAM AGAIN

I was happy to be once again in the Sri Mariya Ashram, in the heart of Mother Mariya. Mother received me with tears of extreme joy and ecstasy in her Shrine of silence. We had a deep and loving meditation and gave grateful thanks to the Almighty for safe return and reunion in His Name, with prayers for strength to serve His children in the West. In the statement by Brother Suryananda printed in the previous chapter he relates how he came to Boston, one of the large and important seaports of America to meet me and how we travelled in all comfort, due to the loving care of Sri Suryananda from Boston to Philadelphia, to the Mariya Ashram, the heart of Mother Mariya. The empty chair was no longer vacant; it was once again occupied. There was now a sweet voice by the fireside. The world had begun to give forth new life. The beautiful stars in the sky overhead sparkled and shone again. The sunrise and sunset were glorious. The dried up rose garden with its weeds began to bloom anew. There was the incessant chanting of the Holy Word; the Mystic Syllable OM reverberated throughout the house; the atmosphere was filled with sacred vibrations and thus Peace was spread from the home, the heart of the Mariya Ashram to the town of Philadelphia and then near and far, all over America.

I am never weary or tired of repeating that it is the *Individual Peace which paves the way towards Universal Peace*. When we establish It in our own hearts it naturally spreads, flows forth both near and far like the fragrance of a sweet smelling flower or the radiance of a self-effulgent star. For the establishment of Peace within, in one's own heart, the writing of a spiritual diary every day is most essential. But the *Maya* of delusion is so thick and dense that man gives all importance to the unreal and passing things of temporary life and none to the real and permanent, the Goal and Soul of his precious human birth. What makes me sad and anxious is that man, because of the *Maya* wants things without paying the

proper price. He wants God, God-realisation now and here without surrendering himself to God. How ridiculous and unreasonable!

Everything in the world is simple direct and scientific for all follow the Divine Law of sowing and reaping. This Law operates in the lives of all men, the believers as well as the non-believers. Through the good fortune of having sown spiritual seeds early, both because of *purvajanmasukrutham*, karma of good deeds in past births as well as those of this life, I had started to keep a spiritual diary while even a boy in the teens, all by His blessings. All those diaries which I wrote during my visits to foreign lands are very helpful now in the writing of this Autobiography. But it has been rather an uphill and arduous task to go through so many pages and penetrate into the past of fifty years and dig up these facts of daily life.

Washington D.C. is the Capital of the United States of America. I had completely forgotten that I had ever visited this city, that I had been invited there to speak by some of the enlightened souls, the elect of that land of civilization. Recently, while referring to some of the oldest diaries I found to my happy surprise in the spiritual diary or book for the year 1929 that I had been taken by Mother Mariya and Brother Suryananda to Washington D.C to give a lecture as prearranged at the Rosicrucian Lodge there. My subject for the evening was ‘Meditation’, one of my favourite themes. Mother Mariya and Brother Suryananda had been Rosicrucians from the very beginning and it was through the Imperator of the Order that they had come to know of Santi Ashram and my spiritual life. Inspired, they had started to write to me and our communion had lasted for some time until they finally drew me towards their devoted and dedicated hearts. It was because of their love that we were able to establish the Sri Mariya Ashram in 1923 for the benefit of all His children in the East and the West.

Hearing of my return to the Mariya Ashram in Philadelphia, friends and devotees from near and far began to correspond with us and some of them even came to take the course of lessons in

meditation and other spiritual practices. A few ardent and devoted souls, some of whom were already spiritual teachers with students of their own would come long distances of even thousands of miles and stay in the hotels of Philadelphia just to attend my course of lectures and meditations. Perhaps some of these had come from Washington D.C. to attend my classes and had been inspired to arrange for a meeting in the Nation's Capital so that I might meet and speak to all the devotees there. Although I do not remember the exact mileage, the distance between 'Philadelphia and Washington D.C. must be about 300 miles. As it was too far for us to go in the family car Mother Mariya and Brother Suryananda arranged for us to travel to the meeting by train, in the comfortable first class compartment.

In commemoration of my visit to the Washington Rosicrucian Lodge, the members performed one of their secret Rosicrucian ceremonies which was very solemn and sacred and reminded me of the *pujas* of the temples of the East, with the offering of flowers, the burning of candles and camphor which were waved before the altar as the fragrant incense burned. After the holy ceremony I was asked to give my spiritual discourse on, 'meditation'. I do not remember now whether it was Mother or Brother who introduced me to the learned audience and paid the highest tribute to my silent and life-giving work which paves the way to Universal Peace by first establishing it in the individual heart. The very entry in the diary for March 17, 1929 tells the important details:

I was very much touched with the hospitality of Brother Kinmet the President of the Rosicrucian Lodge. The initiation was very impressive and inspiring, especially for beginners. I did not prepare my discourse on Meditation quite well for want of time but God was on my side and it was a complete success. Spoke for more than 45 minutes and wonderfully touched the hearts of all the members of the audience. O, the stillness was so deep that all could almost feel His Presence. Everyone felt inspired and uplifted.

Mr. Edgerton, who stood as the candidate for Presidency of the U.S.A. that year was also present and he said to me after the discourse: 'Dear Swamiji, your talk from beginning to end was like the Song of the Soul'. Another Sister said that she had never known what God was until she listened to me. Many others also paid glowing tributes to my message for I had tried to lead them all into Silence. A few of them shed tears of ecstasy and wiped their eyes with handkerchiefs.

My all Glory be unto God and may I strive to be more and more worthy of all His Blessings and Mercy.

After doing our good work, Mother, Brother and I returned home safely. We were happy and contended with the privilege of selfless service to God's aspiring children.

Although the following message, God, was not the talk I gave that evening, it is so apt that I should like to include it here. (July, 1929)

GOD

That which is not spoken in speech but that whereby all speech is spoken, that which does not think but that whereby the mind proceeds to think, that which does not perceive with the eye, but that whereby the eye receives the sight, that which does not hear with the ear but whereby the ear hears, that which does not breathe the breath of life but whereby the life itself is maintained know thou this, that is the Absolute, not this that people worship.

The knower of the Absolute explains thus the immutable. It is neither within dimensions nor atomic, neither short nor long. It is not red, not sticky, not light, not dark, neither air nor ether. It has no relation, no taste, no smell, no eye, no ear, no speech, no mind, no light, no life, no mouth, no form. It enjoys nothing nor is it enjoyed by anything.

The eye has no access there nor has speech nor mind. We do not know It, The Absolute, nor the method whereby we can learn of It. It is other than the known as well as the unknown; so indeed we hear from the sages of old who have explained it thus.

The sun does not shine there, nor the moon nor the stars, nor even these lightnings, least of all the fire; everything becomes enlightened in the Light, the whole of this shines through its lustre.

These are some of the noblest and most sublime thoughts of the sages of India, in so far as words may be taken into consideration in expressing the Highest or Absolute Truth. Now, coming down from the lofty heights of our Absolute State or Incomprehensible Glory let us examine a few common statements to understand the truth from our everyday practical life.

As we are now concerned with the kingdom of the World, let us consider only a simple statement such as the king and his kingdom. In what way is the king related to his kingdom? It is beautiful to be a king and to live always in the kingdom. Whether we know it or not we are all kings in the kingdom of God. It is great, nay inspiring to feel that we are all kings in the kingdom of God. But this is only an elementary state. This is not the highest state. For the king may be banished or dethroned in his kingdom for the kingdom is separate from him. Although most of us belong to this first state of the king and his kingdom it is not satisfying the highest Truth for the Highest Truth is never two but one and it cannot be divided or separated although the king may be separated from his kingdom.

Let us try to rise a little higher from this dual state and consider a better or higher state such as that of a bright, self-shining star. What is the relationship of the brightness to the star? We cannot separate the star from its light or glory as we have separated the king from his kingdom. This example represents more closely our true life for the star can never be separated from its brightness. Yet even though this state is most appealing and uplifting, it does not represent the Absolute Truth does not show our inseparable

relationship with God. Indeed, it is true that the light or brightness is a characteristic of the star and cannot be separated from it even by the mighty intellect. Still, the brightness or light is an attribute of the star, whereas God or Truth is beyond all attributes or qualities.

So in order to represent our highest and most exact relationship with God let us take this final case—a snake in a rope. Once, going along on a road a dark night I saw something in the darkness which filled me with fear. It caused a shivering all throughout my body. In spite of the fact that I knew the holy statements of the Vedas and the Bible. When it is a matter of life and death and we are to bid a adieu to all our near and dear ones, when we are in the throes of pain and suffering we need more than statements. We need the Stillness of a Christ, the wisdom of a Krishna and Nirvana of the Buddha.

While I was in this state, which seemed to be the threshold of death a friend with a lantern fortunately happened to pass by. Lo! to my amazement it was not a snake that I saw in the darkness, a sight which had thrown me nearly into the jaws of death but only a bit of rope which resembled a harmful snake. How unjust and meaningless were my fears over the piece of rope! Yes, it is the mind that makes us a slave or a master, a devil or a God.

In a similar way we have been always the harmless rope and never the harmful snake. It is the snake idea that makes one restless and miserable. The snake never existed in the rope. It existed only in our imagination. Hence, we have to suffer. One has to reap what he has sown, be it recklessly or diligently. Two things together cannot exist in our minds; we must see either the rope or the snake. Similarly we cannot serve both God and Mammon; nor can we place two swords in one sheath. We cannot serve God and the world. All this conflict and agony has been caused only because we mistake the rope for the snake.

As long as you are sure it is a rope, the snake idea will never come into your mind, but once you forget the Living Truth

of the rope there immediately springs into your mind the hissing serpent to make havoc in your whole life. Hence I love to repeat the statement that *Forgetfulness of God is death*. Be it even for a moment let us not die, let us not mistake the rope for the snake.

Now dear, Sacred Ones, if we understand this illustration of the snake in the rope we will be able to understand our exact or real relationship with God, without the need of any more statements or words. A rope is always a rope, be it in the past, present or future. Even when it was through ignorance mistaken for a snake it was only a rope. Your ignorance cannot turn a rope into a snake. Here, in this statement the snake is no longer an attribute of a rope as in the case of the bright star or the kingdom of the king. The snake is a false concept. It never existed except in the mind, in the false imagination.

What a beautiful illustration is this! The snake in the rope represents our individual relationship with the Almighty. This alone represents our Absolute Consciousness. We have always been the loving rope and never the dreadful snake. In the past we have been the Truth. In the present we are the Truth and in the future we shall be the Truth. Thus we must be certain of the existence of the rope; and the snake –idea can never dare come near us. We shall stand on the firm rock of our stillness and not on the sandy shores of vain repetition; we shall not fail to shine in the full glory of Absolute Consciousness. This Consciousness is beyond the finite but it is not unconsciousness. How can words explain it? It is something which must be realized from within.

This reminds me of the highest conception of God or Truth given by the saints and sages of the East, by their very Silence and stillness in a great assemblage. In that great spiritual land of the hoary-headed Himalayas, under the canopy of the star-lit heavens, enjoying the cooling rays of the full moon sat a number of sages by the side of the crystal waters of the Ganges. They were great souls who had realised the Truth in the depths of their inner consciousness. While thus assembled they tried to discover the

solution to the mystery of the creation of the world. They also were solving the intricate problems of life and death and thus they entered into the source of the all manifestation. They had come to the point at which they had to understand the Highest Law of God, whereby knowing which everything will be known. ‘What is that state by realising which everything will be realised? They tried to express the inexpressible. They tried to manifest the Unmanifest. They made efforts to enter into the incomprehensible.

At first one said that an incarnation such as Krishna or Vishnu is God. Then the question was raised: Who is the source of the incarnation, be it Krishna or Vishnu? They said that the source is *atman* for He is the Eternal Principle of intelligence in all living beings. It is also called by the great name of *mahat* or the Greatest of the great. What is beyond this *mahat* was the next question. One replied: It is *avyaktam*, the Unmanifest. What is beyond that great state of *avyaktam* or Unmanifest? Was the next question. Then one great soul answered: Beyond the *Avyaktam* is *Purusha*, the Lord of Lords, who fills all and pervades and permeates all space. Beyond *purusha* there is nothing. That is the end. That is the goal.

What is this *Purusha* and how can one understand it? All of them in one voice said: It is nothing but *santi* the Stillness, the Glory of Perfection. One there hesitatingly asked: What is this *Santi* ? As if to answer this great question of questions all of them entered into *Samadhi*, the Holy State of Stillness where there is nothing but *Santi*, the inaudible and unutterable Peace both within and without.

Dear Sisters and Brothers, shall we also enter into the Blessed State of *Santi* or Peace for just a moment so that we can make our lives fruitful? A glimpse of that Great Stillness is more than a mountain of talk. Talk is on the surface and Peace is in the depths of one’s being. Let us now forget for a moment the words which I have spoken and rise even above listening. Let us merge within. Make your minds waveless. It is Stillness within and

without. It is *Santi* the Universal Peace. This is the state which is our birthright.

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Shall we call this Blessed State where there is neither the one who talks nor the one who listens by the sweet name of the Almighty God? Name cannot alter this Holy State of Universal Peace. *That which exists is One and sages have called It by various names.* We are that ONE, we are to realize this Truth and learn to be calm, unruffled and waveless in the lake of our minds by our very stillness. If we could only remain forever in this state of Peace what a blessed life should be ours. Our life would be the life of the All; in all, no longer an individual life but a Universal life. But alas, the delusion of the snake idea creeps into our mind at a time when we are off our guard. The thief enters when we are not watchful, so we must be ever watchful, every moment of our lives, giving no room for any delusion. If not, our state of God will be reversed. Need we mention what happens when the snake idea replaces the rope idea? A perpetual state of misery and restlessness results and the great word of God is reversed.

God is reigning in Full Glory in the State of Selflessness. In simple words, it is Selflessness alone which is God-consciousness. Selfishness is the outcome of body-consciousness. Two things can never exist in one state. Either be a living God or a dead corpse. We are told, where the 'I' is the Infinite is not; where the Infinite is, the 'I' is not. Once again, going back to our first statement, where the rope is the snake is not and where the snake is the rope is not.

May we deepen our understanding about the non-existence of the conception of the snake in a simple rope; May the consciousness that we are nothing but the Truth, in the past, present and future help to dispel the clouds of imagination and thus make us shine in full Glory of Stillness, with the realization of the

nothingness of matter, mind and personality. May the Blessed Stillness alone reveal its own Self-shining splendour to each and every one, in the precious moments of our Peace! This is my constant prayer. In conclusion I should like to recite those beautiful words of Stillness, Perfection and Fullness:

Om Purnamadah purnamidam purnat purnamudachyate
Purnasya purnamadya purnameva vashisyate

This is full and that is Full. Full comes from Full.
Taking away the full from the Full, the Full remains forever.

What a great joy it is to feel that we are ever full, in work and in rest, throughout our, lives. May we be ever full and complete with the Glory of God, with each and every heartbeat, in each and every moment of our lives. May we inhale and exhale nothing but Fullness or Perfection with each and every breath!

OM OM OM

Chapter 35

A TRAMPING EXCURSION IN PHILADELPHIA

Freedom belongs to the tramps, to those who follow the Inner Voice and do as they feel from within and not to the so-called civilised who run after the crowd and walk in the footsteps of the slaves of fashion. Blessed are the pure, childlike and simple. One day, in the early hours, in spite of the drizzling I felt like going out to roam in the streets and parks of Philadelphia like a tramp, forgetting the past and ignoring the dim future. How blessed it is to live in present moment, to forget all responsibilities and self ordained works and live even if only for the time being, a carefree life. The following message, A TRAMPING EXCURSION will give a glimpse into my carefree and child-like attitude even though I was in the ever busy, highly civilised America. This is from the Peace of August 1930 and gives a glimpse into my life during those days of teaching in the West.

A TRAMPING EXCURSION IN PHILADELPHIA

It was a dark and cloudy day. The sun in the sky was hidden by clouds and mist but the Sun in me strove to shine in full glory. I wanted to go out and share Nature's life. As if the very elements were against me it began to rain in torrents, however my soul could not be confined to walls and cage-like rooms, it wanted the freedom of the open air. So, wearing my old shoes and an old hat I started on a tramping excursion. To start out on the life of a tramp I first filled my pockets with almonds and ground nuts and began to shell and eat them as I walked, with childlike exuberance, enjoying the rain. I could not help but sing as I faced the blessed rain.

It's not raining rain to me.
It's raining daffodils.
It's not raining rain to me,
It's raining roses.

O, who can describe the Glory, the Divine Recklessness of the forlorn lovers of nature! Passing through a number of streets I finally reached George's Hill in Fairmont Park. To make my excursion complete I had bought little ice-cream and I ate it with my lunch in the rain. Then I climbed the steps which are near the hill and repeated the sacred syllable OM with every step.

O Glory! My happiness was in full swing, I was one with all nature! Tears of ecstasy filled my eyes as I looked with love at everything around me. On the pathway I beheld a little worm slowly creeping and I thought that someone might step on it; so I helped Brother Worm to pass into the grass from the pavement. Is not all life one and the same? Adorations be unto the Universal Life, whether it is in the form of an angel, a man or a worm! It was raining rain outside and it was raining Peace inside.

As I passed near a beautiful, tall tree I saw a bench at its foot and I felt tempted to have my lunch then and there. Even though the rain was pouring on the bench and it was completely wet the temptation to sit in the rain on the wet bench was irresistible, so, spreading a handkerchief over the bench I sat on it with all contentment and joy. It is Peace within and without, Glory above and below and Illumination all around!

The birds were singing for me, the flowers were blooming for me; and the winds were blowing for me; it was for me alone that the rain was drizzling with flowers of joy. Verily, I felt that the Kingdom of Heaven was near at hand almost unconsciously I stretched out my hands to feel the Presence in the very ether. I could not help but watch the millions of blades of grass and compare them to the physical life of man. All flesh, all forms and names are no more than mere blades of grass. Alas, the glory of man is no more than the flowers or the blade of grass. Surely the grass shall wither and the flower fade. How a man runs after his own shadow and forgets the Life Divine! I was almost afraid to step or walk, even on the blades of grass in the glory of my Oneness with all Creation. Unconsciously I repeated the following words:

Live on, my sweet blades of grass: Bloom on, ye tiny flowers! The God who made me has made you also. He is the Creator of both of us for He is All-life. So I will not trample on you. Live on, my precious ones.

After silently finishing the ice-cream and eating the nuts I continued tramping along the footpaths in the park. At one place I saw that the tyre of an unfortunate man's car had burst and since he did not have a spare tyre he stood looking into the sky with a broken heart and a sad face. Peace be unto him.

Verily, every day has its own beginning and also its ending. How unsteady and uncertain is the life of man, like a drop of water on the lotus leaf. Still, man runs headlong in mad haste and hunts his own shadows of imagination. How few are they who run after God and crave for the Peace which passeth all understanding!

By the time I reached Horticultural Hall I was a bit tired and very wet; so I sat on one of the benches and faced the beautiful and gigantic trees which are in rows on either side of the entrance. In the middle are water ponds with flower beds. The view was simply grand and covered a vast area. Here and there were beautiful works of art, statues surrounded by a carpet of grass.

My joy was simply incomprehensible, for it was a sight for angels to envy. Still the rain poured on: Here and there stray birds flew by and sang songs of freedom. My happiness was so complete and full that even the happiness of emperors and kings could not compare with it. Who is the happiest man in all the world? It must be I, the Universal I and not that of the individual. For I am one with my All in all. It was stillness within and without. From the tiny blade of grass to the mighty tree, all Nature is at-Oneness, without end. My body was relaxed. I felt for a time that I did not have any body. I wanted to be sure about my bodylessness. When I looked at myself I saw the long, heavy overcoat. As I was not conscious of the overcoat, so I was not conscious of the physical body. Indeed, the body belongs to me as much as the overcoat and no more. Both are related to me in the same manner.

In that great Glory I was tempted to merge within myself. O Glory, Glory, Glory! I felt that I was none other than the living Truth, inseparably one with the Father in Heaven. I turned to see on my right side, on the Throne of Glory, my Blessed Christ, Lo! He was not there, but I felt him in the throbbing of my silent heart. Where is the Kingdom of Heaven if it is not here, in the stillness of one's sacred heart?

My breathing became steady and then still. I felt in that great stillness that every breath is a new life. What a wonderful thought! *Every breath is a new life!* How are we using these precious lives? Ah, let us be careful of these Holy Breaths or Births. Entering still deeper within myself I found that I create a world with each and every breath. Glory! Glory! Glory! Who can understand the splendours of Soul Consciousness! These are inner secrets of the Soul which are revealed only to men of God-Realisation. It is in the Song of the Soul that one learns the great secret that every breath is a separate life and that every heart-beat is a new creation.

The Perfection was so great incomprehensible that the rain even ceased its drizzling and the sun began to shine on the horizon of my Cosmic Consciousness in full Glory!, bathing the manifested and the unmanifested in His Sunshine. May All Glory be unto God. The Presence was so intense and deep that automatically my hands stretched out and I repeated unconsciously with Christ: 'Come unto me, ye heavy laden, ye oppressed and depressed of all religions and nations for I am the way, the Life and the Resurrection'.

It was getting dark and the guards were preparing to close the doors of the Hall; so I went inside to see and enjoy again the beautiful flowers and trees. As I entered I greeted the statues with love, kissed the flowers in unity, embraced the creepers in Perfection and gazed at the tall trees in awe. I bowed my head in respect to give greetings to the fish in the glass tank. Ah! how these so-called inanimate and soulless things speak and breathe life into

the heart of man! Eyes have they, yet they see not, ears have they yet they hear not. Man is dead to Nature's Life and alive to dead matter.

Thus, while occupied in exchanging greetings of love with each and every plant and object I heard the whistle blow and I had to come out of the Hall. Yet I was again tempted to sit on the same bench and face the spacious and glorious view in front of me. Are not these tall and shady trees mine? Are not these beautiful flowers the expressions of my blooming love! The earth, sky and others are mine alone: What is there that is not mine? Who can dare to come and stand in the way of my blessed enjoyment? Who can separate me from my dear and near ones? Who can prevent me from sharing my love with my all in all? The world is my Home and its people are my Sisters and Brothers and to love and serve them is my religion.

What a glorious state it is to feel God's Presence in each and every breath. As I watched my breath, which is birth, I remembered that a letter from a dear Sister, which contained a poem was in my pocket. I opened it and read the poem:

The Breath of God

Breathe on us Breath of God
Till we are wholly Thine.
Till all this earthly part of us
Glows with Thy Fire Divine.
Breathe on us Breath of God.
Fill us with life anew,
That we may love that Thou dost love
And do what Thou dost do,
Breathe on us Breath of God,
So we shall never die,
But live with Thee in Perfect Life
Of Thine Eternity.

As I read this soul-stirring poem I became one with the All Breath, the Cosmic Breath. It began to get dark and the rain continued to pour in torrents. I wanted to sit there forever but I had the feeling that the rain might stop and that I might miss an adventure. Thus I made a move and walked on and on, feeling Oneness with all Life, recognizing the Sweet Face of my Beloved in every face until I finally reached home, quite wet, drenched. Thus ended the Excursion of a Simple Tramp.

As I changed my clothes I felt the same state of ecstasy and Oneness. I lay down on my bed and lost myself in the full Glory of Millions of Suns-Splendour. How can I succeed in describing my inexpressible Peace, the Supreme Peace!

O verily it is inexpressible Peace, Supreme Peace: It flows from me in rivers and torrents. It gushes out in my thoughts, words and deeds. It is Peace in my very sight and breath: May All Homage be unto Peace which is eternal and All-embracing?

As I was called for supper I came down from my Divine State where Heavens declare His Glory and the firmament reveals His handiwork. I wondered whether my tramping excursion was after all a dream. Perhaps, who knows? The world itself is a long dream and consists of two kinds, day and night dreams. What is not a dream in this world of all dreams?

Even if my excursion was a dream it was anyway a most pleasant dream.

May All Glory be unto the Dreamless One.

May Peace be unto All.

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Chapter 36

HAPPY DAYS AND SOLID WORK IN SRI MARIYA ASHRAM

Sometimes one feels like seeing all the beautiful things which are outside, glorifying Nature. Again there are times when one does not even feel like opening his eyes, for it is all within, God is within. There are times when one feels like writing and writing allowing the flow of words to pour forth like the torrents of a river or the rapids of Niagara Falls. Sometimes the words, the inspiration is dammed up and nothing will come, either from within or from without. One does not feel like touching a pen. When a lark or a nightingale sings of its own accord it is so melodious, but when a bird is forced to sing the melody is like that of a crow's cry. In this world no one is free of moods. One does everything according to mood. Blessed are they who have risen above moods of every kind for such souls are very few, rare and precious.

Whenever I write any of the chapters of this Autobiography the question often comes to me, 'Is the writing of an Autobiography more important than the feeling of God's Presence?' Of course the awareness of God's Presence must come first and foremost, before the writing of a thousand autobiographies. What is more, as not a blade of grass moves without God's will and Presence it is He Who writes. Let Him write then, and let us try to be His instruments. May the instruments be pure, selfless and entirely dedicated to God so that He can express through it the Highest in a simple and natural way. It is the mind, the mood that makes all the difference, whether one stays in the lonely caves of the hoary-headed Himalayas or in crowded cities, the busy towns of Philadelphia, New York, New Delhi and others. When the mind is detached from the body and the senses and given to the Light within, it is the same whether one is in the Himalayas or in the 'bustling cities' of the East and the West. What is most important in this precious human birth is pining after God, working, living and breathing for Him and loving and serving all His children.

Through *purvajanmasukrutham*, good karma of deeds done

in past births God gave me a Spiritual Mother, Mother Mariya, who lived, worked and breathed for my welfare day and night and considered me her all in all, her own spiritual child. There is not the least exaggeration when I write that I spent some of the happiest days of my life in Philadelphia in the Mariya ashram branch, in the Shrine room of Mother Mariya, where I bathed in her deep and great Love. She watched not only over my health but also over my spiritual life and progress with Mother's love, tender care and affection, hour after hour, as I sat absorbed in deep meditation in her Shrine Room. Lost in intense contemplation of His Light, with all the outer things and necessities of life such as eating and sleeping forgotten, Mother would sit downstairs and worry about my welfare.

Often she also would meditate with me hour after hour in the Holy Room of Silence and Peace. But when it was time for breakfast, lunch or dinner she would be anxious that I open my eyes and come out of my meditation and descend from the Shrine Room to the dining hall below so that I might eat some food for the nourishment of the body. In her great love, Mother would prepare tasty and healthy dishes and then sit and wait for me to come down, worrying also that the food was getting cold. Often we had argued, tussled over my irregular meals. Sometimes, when I stayed upstairs too long and did not come out from the Shrine Room, Mother Mariya, in her great compassion and love would bring a glass of fruit juice or milk and feed me herself. I would drink unwillingly, sometimes mechanically, for I was unconscious of the outer world. Such were the happiest days of my blessed life in the Sri Mariya Ashram under the holy protection of Mother Mariya. Her Love can never be described in finite words. When I travelled, even in the middle of the ocean Mother would send wireless messages, radiograms with prayer for my welfare quite often and she was kind enough to provide for a paid telegraphic reply. How good, kind, generous, loving and considerate she was always! Mother Mariya wrote in an article a contribution to our Peace Journal, some inspiring thoughts on Mother's Love. Here is an excerpt.

There is no love like Mother's Love. It is more than the love of a Mother cat for her kittens, a Mother hen for her little brood, a human Mother's love for her child, or the Love of God for the Only Begotten Son. It is Mother's Love just the same even though the manifestations are different in expression. The essence which permeates this great force which we call and understand as Mother's Love is the same in every creature's heart. Oh, the mystery, the unfathomable depths of Mother's Love! No priest or scientist has ever been able to describe or analyse its great secret for it is an attribute of Heaven. Its rays spread over all creation and pierce the vaulted minds of men, making life sweeter, nobler and more beautiful.

There is no heart so tender as Mother's
There is no voice so sweet as Mother's,
There is no love so true as Mother's,
There is no sacrifice so great as Mother's,
There are no arms so gentle as Mother's,
There is no heaven so dear as Mother's,
For in her heaven all is forgiveness, love and Peace.

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In those blessed days I lived, nay floated in a happy world of my own, basking in Mother's Love, filled and surrounded, permeated and pervaded by Mother Mariya's Love. Her simple words of affection and compassion have been the joy, strength and life giving inspiration of my existence. Every letter of hers has been a source of wisdom and joy to me. Mother used to write to me almost every day, both day and night. Some of her loving letters became wet with her sacred tears and the words, as the ink was moistened, were shaky and unreadable. She also collected my inspiring thoughts from the letters which I wrote to her during my absence from the Mariya Ashram. She made them into two lovely notebooks with the title, *Soul of Omkar* and presented them to me.

I hope, in memory of Mother Mariya's deep and infinite love, that someday they will be published as a book, for they are her loving and patient work, of selfless Mother's Love.

Thus, as those happy days passed, all that I wanted was only to be fully worthy of Mother Mariya's high expectations of me for, she, Brother Suryananda and hundreds of devoted and aspiring students looked to me for guidance and help and considered me as the Living Messiah of the Age. Having heard of my arrival in America again letters of appreciation and congratulations for my safe arrival in the U.S.A began to pour in from friends and devotees. Many sent requests that I visit their various towns to give my Message of Peace, for they longed for the privilege of hearing in the Truth Universal. There were also many invitations from Churches, Temples and various spiritual organizations asking me to give my helpful message to their devoted congregations. Thus it was my blessed privilege and a God-given opportunity to help and serve many of the aspiring souls of America, regardless of colour, creed or denomination by sharing the Message of Peace at famous churches, Unity Centers, New Thought Societies, Bahai Groups, Sufi Meetings, Rosicrucian Lodges, Theosophical Societies and with families and friends in private homes.

It was touching also to see the many devoted aspirants, rich and poor, young and old, the highly evolved souls who came from near and far, from long distances of hundreds of miles, from the states and cities of America such as New Jersey, Minisota, Florida, California, Washington, Illinois, Hollywood, Los Angeles, Portland, Oregon, Denver, etc., to attend the Peace Meetings. Many of those who came to Philadelphia were teachers of Truth, heads of spiritual organizations, religions, churches and centres and they came for further instructions and more meditation. In all the meetings the practical side of the spiritual life was always emphasized, concentration, prayer, selfless service and meditation on the Highest. I became known among the American devotees as the 'Peace Swami' for, in those holy days and even now, my one thought aim and aspiration has been to lead all who came to me

for instruction from the unreal to the Real, from the finite to the Infinite and from the mortal to the Immortal.

It was my wish never to disappoint any of the least of His children who fully relied upon me, trusted me as their ideal friend and teacher and who depended upon me to lead them towards the Peace that passeth all understanding. Thus, when many spiritual teachers with their own congregations came to me seeking to clear their doubts and experience deep meditation I always tried to help them, generally not with finite words but by leading them into meditation. I have ever believed that it is Meditation and Silence which dispel all the passing clouds of weakness and ignorance for it is the Light which dispels all clouds, be they thick or thin.

Whenever any spiritual organisations or individual wrote and requested me to visit their town to speak I left all the arrangements to mother Mariya and Brother Suryananda for they knew better than I, the particular people, their interests and their towns. Often they would take me in their comfortable Studebaker Car to serve the devotees. During all our Meetings, whether in the Sri Mariya Ashram or in homes, churches or halls Mother and Brother sat on my right and left hand sides introduced me and served me in many ways. I was their All in all, their own baby and spiritual child and to serve the devotees by spreading Peace throughout the world was life's ideal, the soul and goal of precious human birth for both of them.

All Glory belongs to God. May Peace be unto Mother Mariya and Brother Suryanandaji and all.

OM OM OM

Chapter 37

THE MESSAGE OF NIAGARA FALLS

The Lord is in His Holy Temple
Let all the earth keep silent before Him.

Here the Lord is in His outer Temple, hence let the whole world behold Him in activity. Glory be unto the majesty of the Niagara Falls. Adorations be unto its self-shining and unceasing flow of splendour!

Where am I now? I am in the Divine Presence and so my speech is dumb, senses withdrawn inwardly, mind dissolving, the body is becoming numb. I force myself to write something of the Glory of these falls. I gazed at the Falls in deep silence, with tears of ecstasy in my eyes. Let me listen rather to the message of the Falls.

THE FALLS SAY:

Dear child of God, my message to you is to pour out, to pour out all that you have in a continuous and never ending flow of service, never seeking any kind of reward. Pour out, not now and then, but always. Pour out your love not only unconsciously but also consciously. Remember that God will never be your debtor. The more you give the more you will have. The simple way to have more is to give what you already have.

As an image of God, you can afford to give Infinite Love and Eternal Peace. Peace and Love are your own birthright. Do not withhold these precious gifts as a miser would. Share all your perishable and Imperishable riches with the whole of humanity.

Bathe the world in Peace and Joy
Drench humanity in Health and Glory.

A giver is always respected and a beggar is always shunned. Look at me! I give, without seeking any reward and without any

motive. I give because, I cannot keep. Behold how the whole world gazes at me in awe and admiration! How beautiful is the Giver! So my sweet child be a giver of Peace, love, harmony, bliss and glory.

Recognize only your true glory, your real splendour and shine on as the Sun of suns, bathing the wide world in your simple love which is contended to live as love.

Pour out, pour out for you cannot keep! Give out, give away for you can afford to give. Give unceasingly. Pour out unconsciously, for our joy is in giving and never in holding. Accumulation is misery, sharing or giving is joy. So, one who gives is a living God and the one who keeps is dead, a mummy.

If you have nothing else to give, offer your last drop of blood and flesh and thus be an ideal of living sacrifice and giver of joy blessedness. For it has been said, that it is more blessed to give than to receive. Hence, the happiness of both the receiver and the giver is yours. For verily, you are the receiver and the giver in the highest aspect.

So my child, go forth now into the wide world with my message of giving, unceasingly, unconsciously. This is my unspoken message to you, the Message of Service in the out pouring of Love.

As I assimilated this I sat still and felt Peace within and without. I felt the stillness in the very roaring sound of the Falls. The message was overwhelming to me; I was filled with a new spirit. I want now to give and give not words and thoughts alone but my very life and soul. All that I have physically, mentally and spiritually belongs to the whole of humanity. Oh children of God! Here are my flesh, blood and bones. Here are my mind and intellect. Here are my heart and soul. Pray do come and share my Infinite

Love. Please render me the favour of accepting my Love. Do not spare me, for every atom and cell in this being belongs to you. I keep life in this form only for the purpose of sharing all that I have with you. My creed can be summed up in one word, GIVE. And this is the Message of the sacred Niagara Falls.

Oh beloved, Niagara, how I love you! Glory be unto you for the living message you are giving to the whole world.

I moved on, retracing my way with unwilling steps, but I carried the true spirit of sharing my heart with all. No longer were my feet on the earth. I walked on air.

I embraced the hills and rocks caressed the plants and trees whispered with the cool breeze; and have shone with the life giving Sun.

I smiled with children, exchanged my heart with sisters and brothers in loving oneness as they passed by me.

I am giving and giving whenever I sing and chant the sacred syllable OM, not to a few but to one and all in creation.

I am a new being now. The Niagara has given me a new birth or rebirth, from which I can pour out Floods of Light, Streams of Glory, Rivers of Life and Oceans of Peace!

Glory! Glory! Glory!

All Glory be unto the Niagara Falls. I am the Child of the Niagara, the Giver of Life, Light and Love.

NOTE: - This message was written by Sri Swami Omkar when visiting several years ago, the Wonderful Niagara Falls in America where thundering grandeur brought on a state of God-Consciousness and sacred ecstasy. Written in the form of a message,

his thoughts of inspiration at that time have been widely appreciated both in the East and the West and many reprints have been required. Miss Elisabeth Achelis, known as the New World Calendar Lady, has had this message printed in the form of a large scroll-taking it to be document worthy of preservation and has given it to the various Churches and Peace Endeavour Groups in and around Buffalo, where it has been received as a truly Cosmic Message from a great and universal soul. Our hearty thanks go forth to Sister Elisabeth Achelis for thus sowing Seeds of Peace.

- Sister Sushila Devi

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Chapter 38

SOLID WORK ALL AROUND

SERVICE TO OTHERS:

In those blessed days of spiritual glory my one thought was to help and serve others. My only wish and aspiration has been never to allow anyone who has come to see me, either as a seeker of Truth or as a critic who wished to discuss the superiority of the religions of the East or the West, to go from me without helping and serving them in some way or other to grow spiritually. Both now and then I prayed with intense longing for ways in which to help all the devotees, for, many came from faraway places and sacrificed both time and money. I had forgotten to think of myself long ago. Then and now my one and only thought has been of others and how to serve them. Here is an inspiring poem which has guided my life and I hope will be appreciated by my loving readers:

OTHERS

Lord! Help me to live from day to day
In such a self-forgetful way
That even when I kneel and pray
My prayers shall be for OTHERS.

Help me in all the work I do
To ever be sincere and true
And know that all I would do for YOU
Must needs be done for OTHERS.

Let self be crucified and slain
And buried deep; and all in vain
My efforts be to rise again
Unless to live for OTHERS.

And when the work on earth is done
And my work in heavens begin,
May I forget the the crown I've won

While thinking still of OTHERS.
OTHERS, Lord, yet OTHERS
Let this my motto be;
Help me to live for OTHERS
That I may live like THEE.

In this simple poem the author prays, works and lives only for others. He asks us also to slay, to destroy and to crucify the little self and live only for others. Even in Heaven he requests us to think of others and thus live, work, breathe and die for others. Service to others is essential in the beginning on the spiritual path, for it leads to God-realisation slowly and steadily.

The path of Truth can be reached only through service to others in a simple and direct way. No doubt it is rugged, steep, thorny and narrow at first, but as we keep on serving others without any expectation of any reward, the way leads us finally to the Heavenly Portals of Peace, Joy and Blessedness. Service to others is the Foundation. Meditation is the Structure. Cosmic Bliss is the Pinnacle. One step leads to another. But in the Glory of God, in the Highest State, there is no such thing as others, for all are the living manifestations of the One, Indivisible God. In serving any of the least of His children, we are only serving ourselves and Him, the One without a second. In those days my one thought, my only thought was how to help and serve all those trusting, devoted and aspiring souls who relied upon me with such love, trust and confidence. For their sake, to help them in a practical and simple way, I merged within and meditated deeply in order to find simple and direct means to serve them. In the moments of intense introspection, I devised and planned four helpful Initiations, that lead step by step in a most direct and easy way, from devotion to God-realisation.

Until their Initiation every aspirant was required to keep a Spiritual Diary and note their daily practices and spiritual progress. This was quite essential. It was not enough however just for the students to keep a daily record; the diaries had to be collected every

week and read carefully and corrected by me. Thus I worked hard, often till past the midnight hours, closely reading and checking the diaries, noting the practices of the students and their spiritual progress. I would also make suggestions and comments to help them in their meditations and *sadhana*. All this reading of diaries was a hard and laborious work; and as I sat up late, patiently correcting the students' records, Mother Mariya would sit by my side, her heart sad and heavy over my tedious work. In spite of all my strain or because of it, I rejoiced to see each week the silent and steady progress of many of the students. Those who lived far away from the town were requested to send their diaries by mail; and after correcting them and giving further instructions and suggestions, I would send the diaries back to them. Thus the responsibility of the teacher is great and heavy if he really wants to help and serve pupils.

A NEW PEACE CENTRE IN NEW YORK:

SUSHILA RATNAM AND SANTI :

It is interesting to note that ladies are usually more devoted than men in religious and spiritual matters, in both the East and the West. Mother India has been famous for its saintly Mothers of sacrifice; and selfless service of women of Godliness who have set especially an example of chastity. The pure and dedicated lives of Sita, Damayanthi, Maitreyi and Sarada have inspired people all over the world, not only in the past and the present; but also, for all time to come.

Santi Mouni Devi was the spiritual guide and music teacher of the Rani Saheba of Lakshminarasapuram, a place about 25 miles distant from the Ashram. She was a highly spiritual and talented lady and played beautifully upon the *vina*, the noted stringed instrument of India, loved by Goddess Saraswati. Santi Mouni Devi was also the daughter of the Dewan of Mysore, one of the most advanced and cultured states of India. We were happy to have her with us often at the Ashram and she and some of her lady

students would give musical concerts for our benefit. The Rani Saheba and her family also visited the Ashram in those days. At that time Santi Mouni Devi was about 75 years of age, highly cultured and a great lover of the simple life of the Ashram. She longed to make Santhi Ashram her permanent home in the closing years of her life. She has ever had a big place in my heart.

Ratnam, as many of the readers already know is the Mother of Atmaram, the little boy, whom I had taken with me to America on my second voyage. Her family, all of its members have ever been devoted to the Ashram from the very beginning. Sushila was the talented daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Ananda Rao, Mother Kamala Devi Tambat, the oldest devotees of the Ashram. She was such a devoted and gentle child that her parents wished to offer her to Santhi Ashram, with her simple and dedicated life. Often young Sushila stayed in the Ashram alone with me, after her parents had returned to Madras. God knows what is best for each and every individual and no one can predict the future of another's life. We are happy that little Sushila studied well and has become an M.A. And also famous for her classical music. She is also the life partner of Sri Babu Rao Patel, the Editor of the well-known magazine, *Mother India*.

As these three devoted ladies have been ever near and dear to the Ashram as well as to my heart I tried to keep their memory fresh always by giving their names to the three devoted ladies in America, who loved and adored me and considered me as their all in all. Mrs. Nivem was Sushila, the child; Miss Dayton, Ratnam, the sister; and Santhi Devi, the Mother was Mrs. Jean Lilly, (Santhi). Thus God blessed me with a spiritual child; a devoted sister and a loving mother in New York City; as well as Mother Mariya in Philadelphia and a host of brothers and sisters throughout America.

These three ladies of New York City were rich, educated and very devoted. They attended my weekly lectures in Philadelphia often; and used to come all the way from New York in a taxi, a distance of more than a hundred miles. After the meeting

they would return to New York again that evening, and reach home safe after midnight; thus they sacrificed their time, money and sleep for God. They were also devoted and they kept on trying to persuade me to come to New York, the biggest city of skyscrapers, to start a branch of the Peace Centre there. Mrs. Lilly, Santhi Devi offered her comfortable home for the Peace Meetings and agreed to bear all the expenses, for she was rich not only in wealth but in devotion. Many devotees, came to the Peace Meetings, not only from New York but from Chicago, Denver, San Francisco and other distant places to listen to my simple message of Peace and love, in which the need and innocence of establishing Peace in one's own heart first, so as to pave the way towards Universal Peace was always emphasized.

I have always felt deeply grateful to Sushila, Ratnam and Santhi Devi, the loyal and dedicated devotees, the Trinity of my life in New York City, for they helped to spread Peace far and near among their devoted friends and relations and they made my stay in that great city, comfortable and successful. Large meetings were arranged in the spacious parlour of Mrs. Lilly and many famous people of the day, such as Sri Swami Bodhanandaji, the *Guru Bhai* of the renowned Swami Vivekanandaji, the Reverend Sohrab, President and Founder of the Bahai Centre in New York; and many other reverend Brothers and Sisters were kind enough to attend. As so many people attended the Peace Meetings in New York regularly, I agreed, at their requests, to start a Peace Centre in New York.

Mr. John Hanrahan, a devoted advocate, along with his friends was very much interested in the Message of Peace and they were all anxious to have a permanent Peace Centre in the City of Skyscrapers. It was the greatest wonder in those days to see all the tall buildings of New York City, some with 25, 30 and even 50 stories in height. It is said that the tallest building has nearly 150 stories. Many people, rich and poor, young and old attended our meetings. Some were talented musicians, noted philosophers and great scientists. One musician, Carmela Ipholito

of Italy was one of the students and helped us at the Peace Meetings, by playing beautifully on her costly violin. She told us, that it was, so very rare and antique and would cost lakhs of rupees; in fact, that it was priceless, beyond material value. In any case her music on the violin was divine and soul-stirring.

We made many journeys to different places and I remember visiting the home of Mother Thea Torrison in Auburn, New York along with many devotees. Count Iliya Tolstoy, son of the famous Late Leo Tolstoy, a great spiritual soul attended our Peace meeting, with Nadine Tolstoy, his wife. I remember that after the Peace meeting and prayers the Count Iliya Tolstoy took me aside and told me that I would never be a good orator for I 'swallowed' my words in my ecstasy. He asked me to roar like a lion and not chew the words for they were all expecting big things from me. Many years later, after the death of Gandhiji, Count Iliya wrote to me and said that now that Gandhiji was no longer in his body, all were looking to Santhi Ashram, the Mission of Peace, to sustain the world spiritually in days of chaos and trouble. For years and even now all these devotees of America and other lands have kept in close touch with Santhi Ashram and rendered the greatest, silent help of spreading Peace in the world.

I felt grateful to all the Mothers, Brothers, Sisters and Children, who were devoting their time and energy to the Peace Centre in New York City, so that it might be successful. Again, over ninety percent of the audience were women and here and there only, a few men were to be seen. Mother Mariya and Brother Suryananda travelled all the way from Philadelphia to New York and took part also in the Peace Work there, although they were sad at heart at my separation from them. On an auspicious day the Peace Centre was inaugurated in the greatest city of the U.S.A. Here is an account written by Mrs. Jean D. Lilly, our Santhi Devi which was published in Peace, January, 1930. Truly she was the real Founder and President, with her great heart of devotion.

A NEW PEACE CENTRE IN NEW YORK

Mrs. J. D. Lilly, 420 Riverside Drive, New York City writes:

Our Beloved Swamiji, Sri Swami Omkar is doing wonderful work here. We have established a new Peace Centre in New York City and it is growing all the time. Before he leaves for India we shall have a larger Peace Centre. He has endeared himself to everyone and has brought the Message of Peace that we have been waiting for, for so long.

This is the second Peace Centre opened in America.

May All Glory be unto God!

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THE OCEAN'S MESSAGE

Atlantic City, New Jersey is a well known beach resort, close to both New York City and Philadelphia. Mother Mariya and Brother Suryananda often took me there for rest and we had deep meditations on the white sands, facing the ocean. It was in Atlantic City that I first met Swami Yoganandaji and we became life-long friends. He visited me while I was in the city of New York and also came to me see me in India at Waltair Ashram. His beautiful and inspiring songs have always given joy to one and all, who have heard and sung them. Once just a three lines, song, has been the inspiration of my life and has been translated into Telugu by Smt. Lakshmi Subhadra Devi, the Rani Saheba of Bobbili and her devoted sister, Smt. Saraswati Devi who plays on the *vina* and sings beautifully. In English the lines are:

I will sing Thy Name
I will drink Thy Name
Until I get all drunk,
Oh! with Thy Name.

I remember one amusing incident of those days in Atlantic City. Swami Yoganandaji came to the beach for a day and as the resort was crowded he could not find a place to stay. I offered to share my room with him but as there was only one cot, both of us had to sleep on it. At the hour of dawn, when we arose, he asked me smilingly: 'Swamiji, did I snore in my sleep? I hope that I did not disturb your sleep; I replied: 'Dear Swamiji it was not like snoring at all, but like something I have never heard in all my life, a big sound coming from such a huge engine. I took it for some kind of *Yogic* exercise and I watched it all the night.' In his sweet, loving way he roared with laughter at my words. Later on he cooked some Indian curry and other dishes and we partook of the meal in His Name. He always had a kind word, a loving joke and a thoughtful suggestion to narrate to friends, students or audience,

whether the occasion was a large meeting or a simple meal with a few friends.

Thus, as I sat on the beach in Atlantic City, singing His Name, drinking His name, becoming all intoxicated with His Name and listening to the ceaseless chanting of the Mystic Syllable OM by the waves of the mighty Ocean, the Ocean spoke to me and gave me its message of Peace and Wisdom. Here is the message, written in 1929 and published in our Peace Journal that year.

THE OCEAN'S MESSAGE

On a bright Spring day, resting on the glistening, white sands in Atlantic City, surrounded by Nature's glory, the blue sky as canopy, cool breezes caressing, my *Atman*, the Inner Self began to commune with my own ageless friend, the great ocean.

I said to the Ocean: O mighty Ocean, you are in the East and the West, the North and the South. In your endless travels by day and night, you are expected to meet the Lord of Love, the Creator of both you and me and all of us. Will you ask Him, how soon I shall have liberation from the dual life of finite consciousness? I crave my birthright, which is beyond the senses and incomprehensible, the Only Reality.

The Ocean answered: My little friend, blessed is the heart that craves Salvation, I am happy to answer your question, for the sweet Beloved One, the Lord of Creation is not separate or away from me. Behold, He is dancing in the very waves of my bosom. Can you not see and feel His Presence now? Listen to the solution to your problem, here and now.

Can you count all these numberless waves that have been rising in me day and night from time immemorial? If a man is restless, egoistical or selfish, he must take as many rebirths as there are waves in me. Even after passing through so many innumerable rebirths, should he continue to cling to the ego or his little self, he

shall fail to reach the heart and Soul of life which is life's only goal. Be not discouraged by this Truth, for it has a bright side for the man who lives a Life of Selflessness. If a man is pure, innocent, without the consciousness of 'I' he can realise God at this very moment, facing Him in all places, throughout, all time.

Draw closer to me. Take a plunge into me. Merge in me. Behold! in the depths of my bosom there are neither ripples nor waves. Assimilate that wavelessness, my friend. You will attain liberation immediately. In the Glory of that wavelessness you are already liberated. Recognise this great motionless state and be silent. *'Be still and know that I am God'*.

Listening to these sacred words sinking deep within me and becoming a part of me, I became silent, waveless, motionless, and even breathless - One with the Presence of God. Adorations be unto the Silent Glory of the Ocean.

Bowing my head once again in deep reverence, I asked another question. O Great Ocean, what is your message to the East, the West, to the whole world? What is your message to the children of the Infinite?

The Ocean, facing me in its majestic, silent repose replied: Dear Child, Image of God, which every being is, my message is yours, take it and make it known to God's children everywhere.

1. Universality of Existence:

'That which exists is one and sages have called it by various names'. For example, consider me. I am nothing but a mass of water and yet I am called by many names all over the world. On one side I am called the Pacific, on the other side, the Atlantic. In one place I am the Indian Ocean and in another, the Arabian Sea.

There are so many names for me and yet these names can never change me. For 'I am' what 'I am'. I am water within, I am water without, I am water all around the world.

In the same manner God is universal. God cannot be found through names and forms. There is no Christian God, Hindu God, Buddhist God and so forth. God is one without a second, God is the Peace that passeth all understanding. Peace therefore belongs to those who recognise His manifestation in all His Creation. He is the One Presence in every faith. So let the foundation of religions be the basic Truth of His Universal Existence.

2. Separation is Death and Unity is Life:

For example, take one of my waves; so long as the wave feels that it is separate from me its doom is sealed; it becomes finite, ineffectual and insignificant. When once it recognises its inseparable Oneness with me, behold, all that I have belongs to that wave, I am the wave and the wave is the Ocean.

With the Creator I am everything and without Him I am nothing. If a man separates himself from the Universal Energy, though he may be the wealthiest and the greatest man in the world, nevertheless, when he projects his empty intellect, he appears only as a sepulchre containing dry bones. His separateness makes him weak, sick, finite and corruptible; he is a mortal, susceptible to death and decay. Hence man's freedom under all conditions lies in his recognition of inseparable Oneness with Almighty God, expressed in the Universal Energy of All Life.

As there is not a time when the wave is away or separate from me so there is never a moment when man is separate from God. The wave rises in me, remains and dissolves in me. So it is that man rises in God, remains in God, is drawn back again into God. Thus, in his greatness, man becomes continuously the perfect image of God through the decree of his Divine Heritage. This is the desire for expression, for progress, which exists in every living human being.

3. Merge Within:

Often men desire God constantly but they are not willing to pay the price demanded by their desires. How often is the desire

to fulfill the needs of the Spirit, lukewarm, because it is covered over by too much exterior activity? For the desires and longing of the Spirit in man to be gratified, his needs must pay the price in the coin of sincerity, earnestness, patience and perseverance. This is not difficult if he has eyes with which to see clearly and the simplicity to feel intensely the living moment that continually wraps him within and without in beauty, power, service and love.

To see clearly, to feel the intensity, the deep meaning in each moment, which is what beauty expresses-and every moment has something new-one has to pay the price in selflessness and thus acquire the power to exchange freely and with feeling, the Love Divine, inherent in each and every precious moment.

Merge within and you shall feel and know the way of sincerity. Merge within that you may obtain soul-stirring thoughts in the Great Consciousness of Silence. Such thoughts are preventives against shipwreck. This is only a phase of the infinitely far-reaching ecstasy known only by plunging into the depths of one's own being. One should not be discouraged if he does not realise God in a single meditation. A pearl diver plunges into me again and again until he succeeds in obtaining the precious shell that contains the pearl. God is there. He is never dead, absent or away. So, let every man plunge into his inner consciousness, until he knows his own 'still, small voice' and realises its true meaning, which is none other than Truth, a reflection of the One Substance. In the bliss of Silence, souls meet throughout the worlds. Time and space are no longer an obstruction. Through this sublime communion the ageless souls of men feel and know God. The law, 'like attracts like' opens the way to all-consciousness. This is the way of Life, Light and Love. It may be carried through every moment of activity. It is the Law that brings illimitable power for joy and happiness. Merge within and 'know thyself' 'then carry the Inner Light and its mission continuously through the seconds of existence darkness cannot withstand it. Carry the light, follow the light, merge within and charge it again and again ceaselessly.

4. Forbearance:

The one doctrine of my message is summed up in that one word: Forbearance. Look at me. Not-with-standing the eddies, ripples, waves, I am the Ocean. In winds and gales, tempests and storms, I bear silently, retaining my identity of infinitude. I dance in the ripples and the waves. I sing continuously the sacred syllable OM in the roaring of my waves. On the surface there may be disturbance but in the depths of my being, there is only deep stillness. What are these disturbances to me? Clouds rise and clouds disappear, only to reveal the same sunshine ceaselessly. Let the waves rise and fall. In my depths I am unconcerned except for my happiness at their smiles and their wild play. For I know the glory of the Changeless State centered within myself. I am the abundant supply from the storehouse of God, never ceasing, ever living, ever loving, always ready to bear silently the changing days and seasons.

Peace is not attained by fretting; it is attained only by those who can bear to love. If I am able to bear all things in my bosom how much more should you be able to bear as you are the closer child of God, the nearer image of Truth? You, who are the so called man, are the Light of the world. Can you not bear everything? What are the shadows of criticism or of condemnation? Is not the Light stronger than the shadows? How can you, the Light be offended or insulted by shadows? As all such things merge and dissolve in me, so let all these shadows, great and small also dissolve in your Light.

As the Light of the world, be like the Sun. Burn on and give forth Life, Light and Love. Let no shadows touch or disturb your Glory. Hide not your Light for you can afford to smile at death. For after all, is not the whole world merely a bubble in God's Infinite Glory? What else can you find in yourself but Life, Light and Love? Think well. What else are these but the one Eternal Truth. Merge within yourself. Feel your Spirit's meaning and glory and Forbearance will be understood.

5. The Various Aspects of the Waves:

My friend, have you not watched the innumerable waves in me? Have you never stopped to think that each wave has a special message of its own? Look at the calm and peaceful waves and compare them with the restless and roaring waves. Watch their different aspects. Some are loving and soothing waves. Some are boisterous and fearful waves. There are jealous waves, envious waves, and sorrowful waves, wicked and life-devouring waves. These are the waves that must be controlled by conscious intelligence before they can do harm. A dangerous wave may be the means for taking hundreds and even thousands, of lives, if not controlled by man's conscious intelligence.

My friend, the waves that are in me are not so powerful and therefore not so dangerous as the waves that are in man. What are my waves compared to the waves of thoughts that inhibit the mind of man, causing sickness, sorrow, pain and death and all the numberless woes of the world !

Who is responsible for all the unrest and turmoil in the world? None other than man. By thought he rises and by thought he falls. By thought he builds and by thought alone he destroys himself and others. As the face is reflected in a mirror, so in a similar way, whether he knows it or not, every thought is reflected and carries its energy and does its work in a silent manner. It is a natural law which cannot be changed or affected whether we believe in it or not.

How can anyone expect Peace in the world so long as man is not free from the thought-waves of selfishness, pride possessiveness, "I" ness, egoism and other forms of ignorance ? Thoughts that are negative can do no good and they should be controlled by positive and constructive thoughts which create good. As the positive thought is stronger than the negative, the negative must give way to the positive. It is by following this law that each man has the power to be free. It is an actual practical law which

dominates every iota of life and form. The positive effects the negative and absorbs it into its own strength. Finally, in emancipation even the good thoughts will merge into that waveless state of calm, restful, ecstatic mind that asks for nothing but gets all that the deep longings in man have ever prompted him to desire. Only the man who seeks no reward can ever be, verily rewarded. To seek reward is selfish and therefore makes for separation. To the extent, one seeks reward from on High, to that extent, his being is isolated. Love is selfless and is unconscious of all selfishness. Love attracts love. One is loved according to his selflessness. Love is boundless and does not exist in limitation. It is man's satisfaction, it is man's completion, it is man's reason for being. It is man's boundless Divinity. To know it, man has first to become boundless, lose all possessiveness, all egotism-which means separateness. Then alone, he can know unity, know togetherness, know the boundlessness of his whole nature fulfilled. The God of every religion is the God of Love, God is Love. Only through Love may one sense the meaning of God, may one be emancipated. Peace belongs not to those who fret but only to those who can bear to love.

All of this is only a part of the Truth; man realises in the stillness. It is the Truth for which he hunts through the shadows in the darkness of his ignorance. It is the Peace of selflessness, the Peace of Love, that rises above the waves of thought into the boundlessness, to completion.

Whether one follows the path of action through streaming humanity or the path of knowledge or the path of devotion or the path of yoga into union for the final liberation, it is indispensable that the restless mind should converge within, into restfulness and calm, concentrated wavelessness-Tranquility.

This is the essence of every religion on the face of the earth. All homage to those who have mastered their minds and gained the Peace Profound.

Beloved One, we have exchanged Love-I, the Ocean and you, the Image of God. Go forth with this Living Message of Truth. Go forth as master of your mind, for you are the Infinite Life, Endless Light and All embracing Love.

As I listen to the five-fold message of the Ocean - Universal Existence, Unity of life, Illimitable Being of Inner Light, Forbearance, verily, as the synthesizing aspects of the whole, there came from within and from without the Glory of Wavelessness. In Silence I lost myself in that Great State of Consciousness, the common heritage of man.

At last I opened my eyes. They were filled with tears of ecstasy and gratitude and I looked into the Soul of the Ocean and promised to convey its Message in all sincerity and earnestness to the children of God, irrespective of the differences of religion and nationality.

My Beloved Sisters and Brothers of all creeds and faiths, I humbly offer this Message of the Ocean as I received it, for your assimilation. As it inspired and strengthened me, may it do the same for you all. This is the prayer of your own Brother and well-wisher.

May Glory be unto the Ocean and its Creator, who is inseparable, indivisibly and eternally One with the whole of humanity.

OM OM OM

Chapter 40

IN SANTI ASHRAM – THOTAPALLI HILLS

Although I was thousands of miles away in America the link with the Mother Ashram in Thotapalli Hills was never broken. All the branches in America looked to the Mission of Peace in India as a baby would look to its Mother. Many of the American and other foreign students expressed a wish to visit Santhi Ashram and some even thought of leaving the west permanently to settle in India and serve the Mission of Peace there. Many did come to visit but it was only Sister Sushila Devi who came and devoted her life for serving God's children, in America, India and all over the world, for several years.

Sri Swamy Rajeswarananda came to the Mother Ashram from Madras and became editor of Peace in my absence. He brought also the young and devoted Brahmachari Mahadevan who is now the highly esteemed Chairman of the Philosophy Department at the University of Madras. His translations and commentaries on the works of Sankaracharya have helped countless aspiring souls to tread the narrow and rugged path of *vedanta*. The devotees who remained in the Mother Ashram during my journey helped the Ashram to grow and truly made it a blessing to all God's children, by His Grace.

It has been said that though human effort may be compared to a man trying to cool himself on a sultry day with the help of a tiny palm fan; Gods effort or blessing is like the cool, lovely breeze which blows of its own accord, profusely and fills all space with its coolness. Thus, the great progress made by leaps and bounds day by day was not accomplished by human effort but by the special blessings of God. Santhi Ashram was established with the intention of its playing an important part in changing the history of the world in its spiritual life. The Mission of Peace seeks to unite man with man, community with community and nation with nation, thus bringing to the individual, the great life giving and Soul-awakening Truth of One World, One Humanity and one God. The Fatherhood

of God and the Brotherhood of Man have been the basis and foundation of Sri Santhi Ashram, the Haven of Peace, from the first day of its establishment in the wilderness of Thotapalli Hills.

Jungles were cleared; forests were converted into Abodes of prayer and meditation for the benefit of all the seekers of Truth in the East and the West. Great and learned souls from both far and near visited the Ashram and appreciated its silent work and they made best use of the solitude and silence of the Ashram.

His Holiness, Swami Narayan, the direct disciple of Sri Swami Rama Tirtha Maharaj wrote the following words in the Visitors' Book :

Visited the Ashram and surveyed it most carefully and found it to be a suitable solitude. My heart was full of joy when I roamed about, both in the Ashram and the hills outside of it. The efforts of the establisher of Shanthi Ashram are most praiseworthy and deserve the attention and help of every lover of solitude, especially the sincere devotees of Swami Rama.

The Reverend Tapasvi Anagami Mynn, Principal, Mahayana Buddhist Mission, London wrote:

The jungles have been turned into beautiful gardens where true love, joy and unbounded happiness can be collected and felt in one's body, soul and spirit.

Sri Velu Mudaliar, Advocate and President of the Taluk Board, Peddapuram wrote:

The Ashram is a training ground for the young, a beacon of hope to the middle-aged and a real refuge and consolation in life to the aged people.

The Reverend Arthur Scott, B.A.B.T.H.E., Canadian Baptist Mission of India, Tuni commented:

I hope that many who come to this place will find true rest of soul and go forth to bring others to find the same rest. Speaking for myself and for all the

true followers of the Lord Christ I rejoice to say that I have found that rest and forgiveness of sins and complete satisfaction for my soul.

These are only a few of the various and loving opinions and impressions given by all types of men and women of depth and understanding, from India and abroad. High appreciation of the silent and solid work of the Ashram came after only a few short years of its beginning and is due to the bountiful blessings of God, who cares for His children and leads them ever closer to Him.

OM OM OM



Shivalayam - Vishwanath Mandir



Jnana Guha

SLIPPING ON ICE**THE SADDEST ACCIDENT:**

How finite and limited is the knowledge of man! He does not know what is going to happen from one moment to the next. Anything may happen at any moment. Perhaps it was Sunday. I was preparing to leave for our New York Peace Centre, from Sri Mariya Ashram, for I was to give a discourse in the evening. It had also been advertised in the newspapers and many eminent scholars and famous people such as Sri Swami Bodhanandaji, Head of the Ramakrishna Mission in New York had also been invited to bless the meeting with their presence. I was thus anxious to get there in time, if not a little earlier, for Mother Santi Devi, Sister Ratnam and Child Sushila were all anxiously awaiting my arrival and had made arrangements for a large reception before the Peace Meeting in the New York City Centre. How true are the words that man proposes and God disposes. Usually Mother Mariya and Brother Suryananda took me in their car to the various Peace Meetings, where I would deliver the Message of Peace to the devotees, but on this occasion they were either busy, tired or otherwise engaged and unwillingly I had been allowed to go without them. Thus, on that day I left Sri Mariya Ashram alone, except for the Presence of God.

In spite of the Presence of God whatever is destined to happen will certainly happen. Even Angels and Gods cannot violate or escape the law of *karma*. Although man is considered to be the master of his destiny, he is compelled to reap what he has sown, be it in this birth or past births, to the last particle. I was happy that day to be going on a good mission of service and that I would be meeting all the old and new devotees, the students. It was a great privilege to share the Message of Peace and Love with all the devoted and aspiring souls in New York City that Sunday evening. But God or my past *karma* decreed it otherwise. The taxi came to

take me to the Philadelphia station. From there to New York the distance was only a hundred miles or so and I was to be in the New York Peace Centre by 10 a.m. Some of the friends and devotee were waiting to receive me at the station in New York.

In some parts of America the cold is often so severe that the very water in the buckets becomes frozen into hard ice. All the pavements of the streets become covered with sleet, which is halfway between snow and ice. When the temperature drops, the sleet freezes into ice on the ground but it looks like water. Sometimes there is snow as well, which falls on this sleet and ice. The snow is very lovely, especially when it falls not only on the pavements but on the buildings, trees and blankets, covering everything in a crystalline whiteness.

On that day, early in the morning, as I left for the New York Peace Centre there was no snow but only sleet which is easily mistaken for rain water. As I came out of the house, the Sri Mariya Ashram, I saw that pavements were wet but I thought that it was only rain and not the treacherous and slippery sleet. Lo and behold! As I came down the steps and put my foot on the pavement, I slipped and fell down. But thinking that I had merely slipped, misplaced my foot in a puddly of water, I got up and stepped forward in an attempt to reach the waiting taxi. Again I fell down on the sleety and slippery pavement. This time, however I was not able even to rise up. The taxi driver rang the door bell and called the attention of Mother Mariya to this unexpected and unfortunate accident. Unfortunately Brother Suryananda was absent. I think that he had gone away on some business-matter. Mother Mariya was alone and was shocked and sad over this sudden and unhappy accident. With the help of the taxi man and with great difficulty I was taken, or rather carried inside and then was taken upstairs to my room where I was stretched out on a comfortable bed.

Usually in the winter season in America, there will be thousands of such slipping accidents because of the sleet and ice. To avoid such accidents, men and even ladies put on over their

shoes a special rubber shoe or 'rubbers' to prevent them from slipping. Sometimes even the automobiles slip in the cold and stormy weather and it is necessary to cover the rubber tyres of the cars with certain kinds of chains so that the cars will not skid on the icy and slippery roads. These roads and pavements are specially dangerous when they are in the steep or hilly places of the town.

Because of inexperience I did not wear the rubbers on my shoes that day and hence I had the fall on the slippery pavement. Mother Mariya was a trained, registered nurse and she knew what to do in such emergencies. She immediately called on the phone the family doctor, who came and examined me and said that an X-Ray should be taken of the hip-bone, for it was probably fractured, it was a serious accident and the doctor said that only an X-Ray would show the nature and extent of the damage and whether I would have to stay in a hospital for several months to be relieved of the pain and to reset the bone. I felt sorry and disappointed to hear all the pessimistic predictions of the family physician. What could I do? What cannot be cured or remedied must be patiently endured.

Mother Mariya was all attention and kindness and brought everything to my bedside and even tried to feed me with some nourishing food. As the hip- bone was broken there was perhaps also some pain but I do not remember now its exact intensity. An accident of this kind in America requires much expenditure. Mother Mariya and Brother Suryananda were not rich enough to afford to pay huge amounts of money for X-Rays, nurses, doctors, hospitalization and medicine, which were necessary. As I saw their depression, I too became discouraged and depressed.

God knows what is best for each and every one of His Children. He knows even the falling of a sparrow or the crawling of a tiny ant. Everything is always for the best. Perhaps I was running after too much, in the name of outer Peace Centres, drawn by the love and devotion of all the wealthy and dedicated ladies, who were my ardent students. In any case, this was a test for my

friends in America to see if they would stand by me in my suffering and need and take care of me until I could again take care of myself and stand on my own legs. I then requested Mother Mariya to call immediately on the phone to New York and inform Mrs. Jean D. Lilly, the President and Founder of the New York Centre, about the sudden and most unfortunate accident I had, when about to enter the taxi, waiting to take me to the station.

It is needless to mention that all my students were shocked and depressed to hear of the accident and especially our Santi Devi, Ratnam, Sushila and other active workers and members of the New York Peace Centre. Verily, God alone knows what is best for the least of His children. Not my will, but may Thy Will be done Oh! God! always!

May Peace be unto all !

ALL THE WAY IN AN AMBULANCE TO THE NEW YORK PEACE CENTRE :

It must have cost Mrs. Lilly a great deal of money to have hired an ambulance to take me all the way from Philadelphia to New York City, to the Peace Centre in her own home. Ratnam, Miss Dayton, Sushila and Mrs. Niven also came with our Santi Devi, in the ambulance to take me back with them in all comfort to New York. How very kind and good of them! Mother Mariya was very sorry, in fact heart-broken , not only over the fracture of the hip but also for the fact that I was going from her; and that some strangers had come to take me away from her now, at the time when I was sick and most needed mother's love and care. She was all dressed up in her nurse's uniform for, as I have mentioned, she was a registered nurse. Yet, conditions were such that I needed constant hospital care, the continued assistance of doctors and nurses and all this costs a huge amount of money. Realising all this Mother Mariya resigned herself to God's will and helped me down to the waiting ambulance in which we were to depart for New York.

I was unable to move, to take even single step and was thus carried down in a stretcher and placed inside the comfortable ambulance in a reclining position. Opposite to me sat the devoted Santi, Ratnam and Sushila, watching me with sad faces and heavy hearts. With closed eyes and smiling face I meditated and gave grateful thanks for all the comforts and blessings of God, the Compassionate One, whoever watches and protects not only me, but all Creation. He was there when I slipped on the ice, for He is the Eternal Witness of all the world. Blessed are they who can recognise Him in both pain and joy, in all the tests, trials and tribulations that are inevitable in life. Thus passed our long journey of over one hundred miles, in silent prayer and devoted praise of all His blessings.

As this accident happened in the month of December , 1929, over forty years ago, I no longer remember how I was taken up to the large apartment, whether in the electric lift or by stairs, carried by the devotees: but anyway, I was placed on a comfortable bed in the luxurious home of the ever devoted and motherly Santi Devi. A few people of wide experience said that I should be taken to a hospital for better, constant and efficient treatment. But my loving devotees said that I was too holy to be kept in a hospital, even in a special ward, in a separate room. Furthermore, there was one of my students, a noted Spanish doctor, Dr. Del Valle who lived with his devoted wife Mary, in the same apartment building as Mrs. Lilly, on a lower floor. Both he and his wife were taking instructions from me in meditation.

As they were both receiving spiritual guidance so freely, they thought it was the greatest opportunity of their lives to be able to repay me, show their gratitude in some way by serving me during this time of pain and suffering. Thus Dr. Del Valli insisted that I should not be taken to a hospital but remain in Mrs. Lilly's home and he said that he alone would take full responsibility and attend on my case. If necessary he also promised to bring in some of his esteemed colleagues for advice and suggestions. Thus it was decided that I should remain in the large apartment and in fact

that it should be turned into a hospital for my sake, with no pains spared, for finding money, for my comfort and welfare.

Two devoted nurses were engaged to care for me, day and night. X-Ray apparatus was brought in either from a private doctor or from some hospital by Dr. Dei Valli. As he was my student he was given full charge of my case and we all had complete confidence in his efficiency and left everything to him. He and some of his doctor friends examined my hip-bone and took X-Rays. To the sad disappointment of all, it was found that I had a double fracture of the hip. My falling twice on the steps, perhaps, resulted in the double fracture.

As I am one of those who believe in the Divine Plan, knowing that nothing happens by chance, I was contented and even tried to be happy, in spite of the pain. I tried to make the best use of this accident and forced rest, confinement to bed, not for a day or two but for months to come. There was a note of sadness in my heart for all the trouble and expenditure I had caused to my friends, devotees and well-wishers and especially to Santi Devi who was taking tender care of me, for she considered me as one of her own children. It costed every week more than a thousand rupees just for the day and night nurses. All the ingredients for the plaster cast were brought and the whole of my left leg, up to the abdomen was put into complete plaster cast. I was unable to move to either the right or the left. Such an ordeal! Yet,, by God's blessings and mercy, all the while, I tried to be cheerful and I requested my friends and students not to be sad and worried, but to keep on smiling and feeling God's Presence, for, this was a great opportunity to be alone with God, for them as well as myself.

When they heard of this sudden accident, friends, devotees and students began to pour in both day and night to express their sorrow and sympathy for me in my great test and trial. I was in bed and the constant flow of visitors was a great strain; even the doctors and nurses objected to it and the nurses grumbled. Finally visiting hours were fixed in the afternoon. What made me sad and

worried in all the ordeal was the conversation and gossip of some of the people, for they would narrate details of all the accidents they had known from personal experience or had read of, in the daily newspapers. As I know the preciousness of time, this sort of negative talk and sympathy made me worried and gave me more pain than the pain of the fracture itself. I passed through a bit of strain in those days and thus dictated some of my thoughts in the form of suggestions for the visitors. Several copies were typed and each visitor was given a copy before being allowed to come in and see me stretched out on the bed in the plaster cast.

Fortunately I am happy now to discover one of those old typed copies and I should like to reproduce it here, word for word for the use of my loving readers now, for it contains a helpful message for all times to come, to every aspiring devotee of God.

SUGGESTIONS FOR VISITORS

Please do not come to see me with mournful looks and long faces; lay them aside outside the room or in the electric elevator.

Come bringing the best in you.

Come smiling, wearing a happy countenance.

Do not tell of the accidents that occurred to your grandfather, grandmother, etc., and of all the woes and sorrows of your life in the world.

Please do not repeat all the sad accidents, aeroplane and train crashes and other wretched and cruel things from the daily newspapers.

If you must speak, speak about God. If not, be quite. Do not disturb His Sweet Presence by your idle words and empty thoughts.

Beware of what you say or think in the room of the one who needs your sympathy and love.

Sweet Visitor, God bless you for the privilege of your visit.
May you carry from this quiet room Peace that passeth all
understanding, Happiness that knows no change and Eternal Health,
which is your Divine Heritage.

May Peace be unto all!

Peace Centre
420 Riverside Drive
New York City

Swami Omkar
20th December 1929

OM

OM

OM

Chapter 42

IN THE CAST IN SILENCE

It has been always my nature to make the best of every experience be it happy or sad, bad or good. Blessed are they who can convert their stumbling blocks into stepping stones. I was more concerned with spiritual life of the devotees and in trying to feel God's Presence ceaselessly, than in the pain and the heavy cast from the toes to the navel. The passing clouds of these slips, fractures and casts are bound to pass away sooner or later. That which remains is only the Indwelling Light, the goal and soul of the Individual as well as the Universal.

The kind nurses, Doctor Del Valli and the devoted Mrs. Del Valli, the other doctors and all the devotees were very kind and most attentive to me. They considered me as their own, a part and parcel of their lives. The devoted visitors and faithful student, who came to see me from near and far, were too many and it was a great strain for me, for, more than half of my body was in cast. Of the students in the New York Peace Centre, Mr. John Hanrahan, a noted advocate was one of the most loyal. He not only attended classes regularly but came to see me almost every day, whether there was a class or not. He lived in one of the suburbs of the city at a distance of about five miles and committed to work every day. Our meetings used to last often until 9 or 10 p.m. and our generous hostess, Mrs. Lilly used to invite Brother Hanrahan to stay for supper. After his supper, you will be surprised to know that Brother Hanrahan would give a wonderful massage to my whole body for he was interested and an adept in Nature Cure treatment-Massages, Baths and other helpful and natural ways to keep the body healthy and well. Thus, as I lay in bed in the casts he gave a good massage all over the body that was not covered by the cast and was careful to leave untouched that portion in the cast for it was not to be moved or touched in any ways.

It is difficult to believe, but true that an important advocate gave his time, night after night to give a good and loving massage

to my body. He often stayed until midnight hours to render this service and return home only around 2 or 3 a.m. making a long journey to the suburbs. How very good, kind, and loving of devoted Brother Hanrahan to have been so interested in me and the Mission of Peace, especially during those days in the cast. His magnetic and powerful massages were given with the repetition of the sacred syllable OM, hour after hour. Brother Hanrahan also helped at the Peace Meetings and sometimes read out my Peace Messages to the audience. He arranged to have my messages typed in his office and did other odd jobs, just like a devoted and faithful *chela* of the East, a typical disciple. How good is God. Truly He has been too kind to me.

Although hours for interviews have been fixed in the afternoons, I often had to see devoted visitors at other times also. When doctor friends, or ardent devotees, people from long distances, or the old and infirm came, I could not ask them to go away and come only at the visiting hours. As I lay in bed in the cast, the Peace Meeting would often move from Mrs. Lilly's parlor into my room itself and a limited number of people would sit on chairs around my bed. One of the devoted nurses, Miss Victoria took very good care of me and considered me as her own brother, friend and preceptor. She offered her selfless services to the cause of peace and was very anxious to come to India and dedicate her life to Santi Ashram, the Mission of Peace. Besides attending upon me as I lay on bed, she also looked after all my correspondence, read aloud my letters, wrote replies to devotees in America as well as in India. She was blessed with the spiritual name of Seva Devi, the Goddess of service for she was all service, both day and night. Many people in India such as Mother Ratnam, mother Kamala Devi and Santhi Mouni Devi, the daughter of the Dewan of Mysore who was also a Divine Musician-all loved Seva Devi for all her selfless service to me and because she offered her life to the Cause of Peace-Sri Santi Ashram.

I tried to make the best use of my forced rest or stay in bed in the heavy cast, for I have ever longed to make the best use of

every precious moment of every day, by growing spiritually and merging in Him, the Indwelling Light. I thus began a Forty Days' Silence and spoke not a word in spite of the cast and all the strain involved in it, for full forty days. During this time of silence, whenever I wanted anything to be done, I would write on a piece of paper, my request. For Westerners it was rather difficult to understand this silence, especially during sickness, when I lay in a heavy cast. Sometimes there was strain and misunderstanding, for my loyal and faithful nurse. But somehow, after the first day or so, God made it easy and convenient not only for me but for all the devoted visitors and my devoted nurse too.

In the night time a Spanish nurse, a plump and devoted lady came and took care of me as a night nurse. She enjoyed telling me of her pet, a large python which lived with her in her apartment as a companion. It was so big that people in other apartments were afraid of it and protested that such a large-sized snake, a python should not be kept in a house at all, especially in a heavily populated and highly civilized city like New York. But the python was actually harmless and gentle. It was amusing to hear that the great python also slept with the nurse, for they loved each other intensely. Verily, where love is there God is, whether it is expressed through dumb animals or through human beings.

As I spoke within myself, in introspection during those forty days of silence, some helpful thoughts came to my mind.

FORTY DAYS OF SILENCE

Dear child, why do you need forty days of silence to recognize Him? Is He not present NOW in this present moment? Art thou not ashamed of thyself for ignoring Him now ? How faithless thou art. Hast thou no belief in the Living God who is throbbing in thy heart now? Thou dost not need forty long days of Silence to recognize Him for He is present with thee now and He is none other than Thyself, the One, Universal Self, the Indivisible *atman*. Instead of forty days, why not forty hours of Silence? Why even forty hours to recognize Him? Can't thou not recognize Him

and realize in forty minutes. That too is a long period. What about forty seconds? When the Beloved, the Self-effulgent Light is shining in you now, how can you wait even for forty seconds? Arise and awake from thy deep slumbers of aloofness and separation.

Behold, He is with thee now, with thee? Nay, in thee, in this present living second. Let thy motto be now or never. I give thee one second of time in which to recognize the Light, to merge in IT, in THAT which is Timeless, Spaceless and Causeless! Be at Peace. THOU ART THAT: TAT TWAM ASI.

Om! Tat! Sat! Om!

STILL IN THE CAST :

Blessed were the days that were spent in the cast, feeling His Presence and observing Silence too. I wanted to fast for I have been always fond of fasting, but my doctors, friends and well wishers did not allow me even to think of fasting, for I was in bed in a cast. Thus I satisfied myself with the silence of forty days during the period of confinement to bed in the Cast.

Many came with sad and long faces to console me and sympathise with me for they considered me a patient in bed with sickness and pain. But I was truly the happiest and healthiest man in all the world, in spite of the cast. Therefore, when they saw me cheerful, happy and contented, they soon forgot their sorrows and depressions and became cheerful with me. When the visitors left my room after a little meditation in Silence, they had radiant faces and happy hearts filled with Peace and Love. In the Silence I remember that I wrote on slips of paper such helpful thoughts as the following, according to the temperament and devotion of the visitor and then presented him or her with that spiritual instruction.

Hearty Welcome into the Presence of God

- I. Deeply grateful for your kind, thoughtful visit.
- II. What can I do for all your Love ?

- III. Please do not leave me or this room without filling your devoted heart with Love and Peace.
- IV. Let us meditate now in Silence.
- V. Kindly carry the Light with you as you go forth into the world of activity.
- VI. Let us merge within now in deep Silence and forget the body, mind and world.
- VII. You are in the Light; The Light is in you; You are the Light.
- VIII. May you feel the Light within and without for IT is pervading and permeating the very cells of your being.
- IX. Please repeat now and always, OM ! OM ! OM ! with every step, as you walk.
- X. May God bless you and may you feel His Presence ceaselessly.

OM OM OM

Such were some of my thoughts and aspirations which I shared with the devotees and visitors who came from near and far to console and comfort me during my happy days of Life in the cast.

My room was always filled with bouquets of lovely flowers, lilies, roses, chrysanthemums and also with delicious fruits, apples, oranges and grapes, spiritual books and other things. The westerner, like his brother in India, the East, as a rule will never come empty handed but will always bring some small gift of fruits or flowers. It has been said that one should never go with empty hands when visiting a temple, a Sannyasin, a spiritual soul or a king. In India devotees usually bring coconuts, bananas and flowers, as offerings. Once in America, after her initiation and meditation, a devoted lady asked me how much she had to pay. I replied smilingly that my teaching were “as free as the sunshine you enjoy and the air you breathe”. She lovingly answered, “O Swamiji, we must pay for what we receive. If not, what we receive from you freely,

without payment will not be helpful and beneficial to us.” Thus my friends, pupils and devotees were very generous always.

All were not however rich in the goods of the world. I tried to help those who were poor and in need of help with a little money which they could take back to their homes. On some occasions devoted people with heavy family responsibilities were not even able to find money for taxi-fare or bus-fare to enable them to come and see me. Under such sad conditions I was privileged to help them by keeping at hand an envelope with some money, usually a few dollars in it. The envelop would be sealed, with written instructions on it that it was not to be opened until the recipient reached home. In serving any of the least of His children, we are only serving the one, Indivisible God. How blessed is the giver! Here is a lovely poem on *dana*-giving, which I should like to share with my devoted Readers.

GIVE GIVE GIVE

That which you hold will turn to dust.

Give while you live; Give you must.

Else what you hold tightly in your hands

Will vanish through your fingers and be lost.

Give and there flows a mighty fountain through
the land.

Hold and there is nothing; nor the power to Give.

Here is another inspiring poem which has
been near and dear to my heart.

Our Lives are Songs

God writes the words

And we set them to music at leisure.

And the song is sad, or the song is glad

As we choose to fashion the measure.

We must write the song

Whatever the words,
Whatever its rhyme or meter.
And if it is sad we must make it glad
And if it is sweet, we must make it sweeter.

As it is now the Holy Christmas Season, December, 1929,
let me close this chapter with one of the inspiring Prayers of Sister
Sushila Devi.

Saviour of the Holy Face
Fill up with Thy Love and Grace.
Comfort us, Thou Living Breath
On earth, from despair and death.
And with faithful heart, O Christ,
May we keep with Thee our Tryst,
Running well the Godly race
To Thy Goal, Thy Holy Face.
Amen

May Peace be unto All.

OM OM OM

Chapter 43

HOLY CHRISTMAS IN THE CAST

My life has been blessed with many mothers and several sisters not only in the East but in the far away West also. They have considered me as their own child and brother. As we love others so they love us. If there is one yard distance from me to another, there is the same distance from the other to me. If I keep a thousand miles distance between myself and others, there will be the same thousand miles of distance between others and myself. The Divine Law operates scientifically, in the same way for one and all, at all times. *Love and be loved* is a great law that applies to all the people in the world. If we have love in our hearts, then we will feel love in all the world. If we have hatred, bitterness or difference in us then we will face the same wherever we go.

During those Christmas Days of the year 1929, over forty years ago, you cannot imagine and I cannot describe to you the great love bestowed upon me by all the pupils, students, friends and members of the Peace Centre in New York and in all America, as I lay in bed in the cast. Santhi Devi, Mrs. Jean Lilly did not spare any expense or energy to make this Christmas the happiest of my life. A large Christmas Tree was specially arranged in my room and decorated with electric bulbs of different colours and sizes. A good photographer was brought in, on Christmas Eve and a large photo was taken of the tall Christmas Tree with all the illumination of its bulbs. It was on the right side of my bed. Mother Santi Devi and Sushila, my child sat on the bed, nearby me. There was a beautiful photo of Christ on the left side of the bed that sacred night so that His memory would be fresh and ever green. It was not exactly a photo but a famous painting of Christ which I brought back to India with me and that same painting now hangs in the Sushila mandir in the Mother Ashram in Thotapalli Hills. So that my readers may have a clear idea of my thoughts and feelings on that Christmas night. It is my wish with that picture be printed in this Autobiography to glorify Christ and His Holy Birth. The leg that was in the cast could also be seen, although it was

covered by a quilt.

Miss Victoria Ferguson, the nurse who cared for me during my sickness and confinement to the cast, became an ardent devotee and disciple of Santhi Ashram, the Mission of Peace. Because of her selfless service and dedication she had been given the name of Seva Devi and she was preparing to go with me to India to take part in the activities of the Mother Ashram at Thotapalli Hills. She also contributed several articles of her experience to our Peace Journal for she was an ardent Christian. To give my readers an idea of my life during those blessed days in the cast, spent in Holy Silence I am happy to reprint here an article written by Seva Devi which appeared in Peace, October, 1930. The very name of the article, 'Swamiji on the Bed of Roses, is inspiring. Let Seva Devi, my nurse speak to you in her own loving words:

SWAMIJI ON THE BED OF ROSES

(Sister Seva Devi, The Peace Centre , New York)

On a beautiful day, many years ago a man with his companions journeyed from Jerusalem to Damascus when suddenly a light shone around him. He fell to the earth, heard a voice, obeyed and Saul of Tarsus became Paul, one of the greatest men of all ages; but not until after he had retired to Arabia for a season and had spent much time in meditation and being alone with God. How often history has repeated itself and the great saints have been permitted to come apart, nay away for a season in order that they might give to the world a greater message. Why are holy men permitted to be ill ? The poem of Dr. Prost answers this.

Afterward

No chastening seemeth joyous;
Nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth
The Peaceful fruit of righteousness
Rain, Rain,
Beating against the pan;
How endlessly it pours,
Out of doors.

From the blackened sky:
I wonder why ?
Flowers, flowers,
Upbringing after showers,
Blossoming fresh and fair
Everywhere:
Ah, God has explained
Why it rained :

Yes. God explains why these temples wherein dwelleth the Soul must be present as a living sacrifice, wholly acceptable unto Him.

Nearly two thousand years ago, while shepherds watched their flocks by night, a star appeared out of the East; the Wise Man came: and out of the East they are all coming. Christmas Night, 1929 in New York City : a Wise Man lay in bed in a cast, but that Blessed Story was given a fresh, new meaning as the doctor, students and friends sat around the bed. In the stillness, the beauty of His Presence, the Meditations, I feel sure that each of us felt that He was being born again : that He permeates and pervades our very beings. Holy Night : Silent Night :

During all of Swamiji's stay in bed, he has kept up his work giving Initiations, having Meditations with students and at all meetings his spiritual messages are never to be forgotten. In the New Testament we read where Jesus the Christ went into the mountains for a period of Forty Days. On other occasions He departed there to spend time in Silence and communication with God. Forty days in Silence in America? Impossible. Yet, such was the case with our Swamiji. A number of great spiritual souls came to meditate and would come from his room speechless, their eyes filled with tears. They had entered the Holy of holies and all desire for speaking, except of spiritual things has disappeared. Only as we burn out the dross and talk with God in Silence can we become fit vehicles to be used by Him.

And ever thus his silent work in America goes on. The

world does not understand his spiritual love, yet they are dying for it. To live as he does, to speak as he does, to give as he does, is not for the masses but for a few. Throughout the ages his work will go on and many will rise up and call him blessed. To India and our Peace Mission we owe a debt of gratitude which can never be paid, for giving him to us, for a reason. And I say humbly, yet reverently, that for months I was privileged to care for him and I feel indebted to him and to India. He has given much and to him shall be given in abundance.

A PRAYER COMES TO ME FOR ALL OF US

Stir me, Oh stir me, Lord. I care not how !
But stir my heart in passion for Thy Love !
Stir me to give, to go but most to pray.
Stir till with Thy Presence each soul will move.
Stir me, Oh stir me, Lord, Thy Heart was stirred,
By Love's intensest fires, till Thou did give
Thine only Son, Thy best beloved one,
Even to the dreadful cross, that I might live;
Stir me to give myself back to Thee,
That Thou can't give Thyself again through me.

Note:- In the above title, "Swamiji on the Bed of Roses" the Swamiji referred to is none other than our beloved and blessed Sri Swami Omkar, President and Founder of Sri Santi Ashram, the Mission of Peace. He had a very bad fall on ice, December 2, 1929 and fractured the left hip. He feels a bit better now. We humbly express our deep gratitude and sincere thanks for all the innumerable tokens of cordiality, love and help which he has received at the hands of his numerous friends and followers in America, especially during the trying times of severe pain and suffering.

GREATFUL THANKS TO SANTA CLAUS :

Do you know who Santa Claus is ? Everybody in the West knows Santa Claus. In India some people may know of him, especially those children of God who belong to the religion of

Christianity. Santa Claus is the friend of all the little children and gives gifts and presents of every kind to children young and old on Christmas Eve. I do not know why, when he brings the gifts he puts them in stockings, but in any case all the little children look forward with great joy to the visit of Santa Claus and wonder and guess what sort of presents and precious gifts they will receive at Christmas time. As I was loved by several mothers and sisters and considered as their child, I too received many kinds of small and big presents, gifts from Santa Claus and more than ever, because I was in bed in a plaster cast.

I shall ever be indebted to Mrs. Jean D Lilly, our Santhi Devi, for the huge amounts she spent at the time of my sickness to make me comfortable in every way. She must have spent more than three lakhs of rupees to take care of me, while I was in the cast and she paid for, both the day and night nurses : X-Rays, medicines ; she took care of all the guests and devotees and all the many expenses in my name and the name of the Peace Centre.

The most precious gift of that Holy Christmas Eve was the costly movie picture camera and projector. At some time or other I might have said that a movie picture camera would be most useful in the Mother Ashram to spread its silent work. Perhaps Santhi Devi had heard this and in her generous love wanted to do even more for the cause of peace. Along with the camera she also bought a projector, screen and all the other odd little things which are essential for the making and showing of movies in the home. It was a 16 m.m. film camera and we still use it today in the Mother Ashram. Our Santhi Devi was also kind enough to buy many reels of films which were most interesting. One of the films was the 4000 feet, three reel silent film “Uncle Tom’s Cabin”, the famous story of slavery in America during its early years. Another beautiful film which she gave to Santhi Ashram was “The Fight between the Cobra and the Mongoose”. There were some Indian films too. God alone knows the huge amounts of money it must have cost Santhi Devi to buy all these generous gifts to make me happy for Christmas besides all the expenses she bore so liberally and

cheerfully during my illness. As she considered me as her own child and felt it the greatest privilege to take good care of me in every way she spared nothing to make me happy and contended.

She was too good; God has been too good to me from the beginning to the end, in spite of all the so-called tests and trials such as the breaking of the hip-bone by the fall on sleet, which was actually a blessing in disguise, for it brought many friends closer to my heart with all their deep sympathy and love. In the Peace Journal of June 1930 appeared the following article of grateful thanks to all the devoted American students, friends and devotees.

Greatful Thanks and Acknowledgements

On behalf of our Mission of Peace, we request all our American Sisters and Brothers to accept our heart-felt gratitude and thanks for the great, memorable services and help they have rendered during the period of the fall of our Swami Omkar on ice which resulted in the double fracture of the hip bone on 2 December, 1929.

Our special thanks and deep gratitude are due to Mrs. Jean D. Lilly of New York who never hesitated to spare neither money nor time in providing all comforts and conveniences of life, making her home a veritable hospital for our Swamiji's stay. Our thanks are due to Dr. Del Valli and his devoted wife and to Miss Victoria Furguson, the trained nurse, who have set the bone and nursed Sri Swamiji during the period when he was confined to bed for several months.

We offer our gratitude also to Mother Mariya and Brother Suryananda for all the care they have taken and love they have bestowed on Sri Swamiji from the beginning.

We cannot conclude without offering our heartfelt thanks to Sri Swami Yoganandaji Maharaj, the President and Founder of Yogoda Centers in America and the Editor of "East and West" for his great affection and love towards our Swamiji and for all the attention paid to him.

In our humble way we offer our thanks to the following friends and the several members of the Peace Centers in America for filling our Swamiji's room daily with flowers and for all their loving visits and letters of devotion :

Mrs. E. W. Niven	Mrs. Dorothy Gray
Miss Ruth Dayton	Miss Emma Woods
Mrs. Freda Klauder	Miss Matilda Trenkphoil
Miss Helen Patterson	Miss Blanche Hosp
Mrs. E. W. Newcomer	Miss Mary Yerkes
Countess Nada Tolstoy	Miss M. Williams
Mr. Chauncey B. Blair	Mrs. Mary Del Valli
Dr. George Ehrline	Mr. and Mrs. Torrison
Dr. W. Washington	Mr. Mortz Emery
Dr. Henry Gross	Mrs. Otto T. Mallory
Dr. E. H. Grove	Miss Madline King
Mrs. E. B. Hogan	Mr. and Mrs. Seitkin
Miss Grace Brown	Miss Sarah Smith
Mother S. Burns	Captain Joe

And to the numerous other devoted friends who loved and cared for Sri Swamiji.

Manager,
Sri Santi Ashram

(On behalf of the members of the Mission of Peace, India)

Grateful thanks to all the old and new devotees, not only in the West, but in the East also!

May peace be unto all !

OM OM OM



Holy Christmas in the Cast - Nurse, Mother Mariya & Swamiji



Sister Sushila, Swami Omkar with Devotees at Rangoon

Chapter 44

A NEW PEACE CENTRE IN LOS ANGELES

By ourselves we cannot move even a blade of grass but when it is God's Will or Wish, the very mountains can be moved. It was wonderful how the Cause of Peace spread far and near, from East to West in those blessed days in America. Although staying in the East coast, I received frequent calls from the West coast to visit and establish a Peace Centre in Los Angeles. As many spiritual and eminent people urged me to visit California and give the Message of Peace I atlast consented to undertake the long journey of more than three thousand miles from New York to Los Angeles.

Dr. E. H. Grove was one of the oldest doctors in Los Angeles. He had known Swami Vivekananda from the very first days when he had visited America, in the famous and epic days of Parliament of Religions. He had also known Swami Rama Tirtha, and had become an ardent follower of Swami Vivekananda and Swami Rama Tirtha, following Vedanta. Dr. Henry Gross was another esteemed doctor from Los Angeles who made all the arrangements for establishing the new Peace Centre in California. When the call from such devoted and eminent personages came, I felt that I should accept the invitation for it was really God's command. Thus, in spite of the recent accident I accepted the invitation. Mother Mariya of the Philadelphia Peace Centre accompanied me to West, to help in the new work of opening the Los Angeles Centre. The Doctors Grove and Gross and other devotees there, made all the arrangements for my journey and comfortable stay in Los Angeles. They also rented a large apartment for me near the new Centre. To give all the details of our new work in Los Angeles, let me include here the article that was published in Peace, December 1930.

OUR WESTERN BRANCH IN AMERICA

Dr. Henry Gross, President, Peace Centre, 1111 South Alvarado street, Los Angeles, Calif writes to us as of August 28, 1930.

Our class has over forty students and they are beginning to meditate, most of them, over an hour already in this short space of time, with the three Initiations, that we have received so far. This is rather wonderful and very pleasing to all of us and particularly to our beloved Swami Omkar, that so many are doing so well, especially in keeping continued God-consciousness.

We are steadfastly reminded of this in the wonderful demonstrations of our Beloved Swami Omkar and particularly at the last lecture of August 24. "The Presence of God", where he made every student feel the Presence, as well as those who were there for the first time only. It was stillness and silence so perfect that one could not help but realise the presence which was peaceful and blissful.

Another letter also from the Doctor to the Editor, Sri Swami Rajeswaranandaji appeared in the same issue.

Sri Swami Omkar in America

Second Centre of Sri Santhi Ashram

Dr. Henry Gross, Los Angeles, California, U.S.A. writes to us under the date of July 22, 1930.

It is with great pleasure that I write this letter to you and I have this day sent to you \$ 1,000 as a goodwill Love-Offering donated in commemoration of the arrival of our own beloved Brother, His Holiness Sri Swami Omkar, in the West, the Golden State of California and the City of Los Angeles, July 19, 1930.

He gave his initial lecture for the opening of his Four Initiations on July 19 and 20. These two days will always be celebrated in commemoration of his arrival and the establishment of the second centre of the Sri Santhi Ashram branches in the United States of America. It is my sincere wish that someday there will be a possibility for me to visit you all for a considerable time as we are now one with our Creator and our Initiations make us closer in relation than ever before, for doing the Universal Work that you have so ably established and carry on successfully, enriching,

ennobling and peace-creating in its mission.

And finally, what the famous Doctors Grove and Gross wrote in Peace September & October 1930 will give further details of the helpful and substantial work done in the new Peace Centre in Los Angeles.

Sri Swami Omkar in the Western Branch, U.S.A.

Since Sri Swami Omkar has come in closer contact, exchanged his heart and ideas as regards the work to be done in order to establish the Western Centre in the United States of America, you will hereby find tabulated, the entire work of the Four Initiations and the time and dates, when given. We hope you will avail yourselves of the opportunity to be in the continuous Presence of God. Do not make any other engagements for the times and dates given herewith, which will complete the work of our beloved Brother Omkar in Los Angeles. He will return immediately to Philadelphia and then back to India.

As mentioned before, the lectures and initiations given by Sri Swami Omkar are as free as the air or the sunshine. Any goodwill love-offerings are for the perpetuation of the work of the Mission of Peace, which is the common property of all seekers of Truth, irrespective of caste, colour or nationality. So your sympathy and co-operation are requested.

- First Lecture : “What have I to teach ? First Initiation.
Meeting of Second Group with “First Initiation Exercises” to join First Group.
- Second Lecture : ‘Meditation’, ‘OM’, Exercises for Relaxation of Body, Mind and Soul.
- Third Lecture : ‘Santi Ashram-Peace Mission and its Universal Work’.
- Fourth Lecture: ‘Sacred Syllable OM’. Second Initiation.
- Fifth Lecture : ‘How my Faith meets Man’s Needs’. Questions and Answers, Silent Meditation.

Sixth Lecture : ‘How Christianity meets the Needs of Man’.
Third Initiation.

Seventh Lecture : ‘The Presence of God’. Doubts will be cleared,
Silent Meditation follows.

Eight Lecture : ‘Recognition of God’. Fourth Initiation

Ninth Lecture : ‘Parting Message’. Reception

May Peace be Unto All.

- Doctors Grove and Gross

For further information apply to Dr. Henry Gross, IIII South
Alvarado Street, or phone Dunkirk 5469.

OM TAT SAT OM

MOTHER JAGADAMBA—MRS. E.B. HOGAN :

As I have already mentioned in the earlier chapters, I have been blessed with many mothers and numerous sisters and brothers both in the East and the West. Jagadamba is another mother from the West who took good care of me while I was in California and served the students in the new Peace Centre of Los Angeles. During the course of lectures I stayed in a comfortable apartment nearby the lecture hall which had been rented by Doctors Grove and Gross for my stay. The doctors spared no pains to make me happy and comfortable in every way, even in the outer things. But the real contentment and happiness which knows no change lie only within, in the stillness of one’s own purified heart.

Mother Mariya also was with me and she took good care of me and helped in all possible ways the work of the new Peace Centre, although she was sorry to be so far away from the Sri Mariya Ashram, the first Peace Centre in Philadelphia. Miss Anna Blessing was a devoted soul in Los Angeles who helped me with the correction of the diaries and other important work. She was alone with none of the commitments of family life and was thus anxious to dedicate her life to the Mission of Peace and accompany me to India to stay permanently. There were several other brothers and

sisters, devoted and dedicated, who offered their lives for the progress of the cause of Peace. Their names are too numerous to mention but my heart feels grateful for all their selfless services and interest in the Peace Centre. My grateful thanks go out to all of them.

Mrs. Hogan, Jagadamba, lived in Hollywood but she attended the Los Angeles Centre meeting regularly. She wanted also to establish a Peace Centre in her own home. She had a Negro maid, named Grace Brown in her home. She too was very much attracted to me and devotedly took special care of me, feeding me with delicious dishes of every kind, prepared purposely to give me health. She called me by the affectionate name of 'My Boy' to the amusement of all the students and friends. Miss Grace Brown was a great psychic and predicted wonderful things of me and our Peace Work in the U.S.A.

In New York, in the home of Mrs. Lilly there was another 'colored maid', a Negro lady by the name of Sarah Smith ; and she also called me by the sweet name of 'My Boy '. I was happy to be the boy the child of not only the white people but of the black also. Miss Sarah, the Negro maid in the New York Peace Centre was so devoted to the Mother Ashram, the Mission of Peace in India that when she heard that a devoted family in the Ashram died by fever and that many people were very sick on account of it, without money to buy clothing, medicines or food, she offered the little money she had. She kept a Penny Bank, a small pot with a slit in the middle and she hoarded all the little pennies and small coins in that bank, saving them bit by bit so that she could one day buy herself an overcoat. It gets very cold in that region of the United States in the winter and the temperature often falls below the freezing point. She must have heard me telling Mrs. Lilly about the deaths in the Manikyam family and about the sickness and poverty in the area, but she surprised me when she approached me with her Penny Bank and said:

My Little Boy, I am sorry to hear of the fundlessness of the Ashram in far away India. It will give me joy if you will kindly

accept this little money that I have been hoarding for a long time. It will make me more happy to feed some of your starving children in your Mission in India than to buy for myself a new overcoat here in America.

I was deeply touched by her love-offering and accepted it with grateful thanks. When we counted all the pennies and silver coins it amounted to almost ten dollars, enough to buy thirty thousand quinine pills for all the sick and poor in the ashram and neighbouring villages. She was so happy to hear this that she promised to send ten dollars every year. It is needless to mention how deeply touched I was at her loving words of sympathy and her great and generous sacrifice. The money was rushed to the Mother Ashram in India in the name of Mrs. Sarah Smith, the maid of Mrs. Hean D. Lilly, one of the wealthiest women in America. When the ladies heard of Sarah's noble sacrifice they were deeply moved and Mrs. Hayward gave Sarah one of her costly fur-coats as a present. Thus, if we give to others, God himself will provide for us. Thus were made some of the sacrifices of love and selfless service by even the servants and poor people in America, who appreciated our silent work and wanted to aid their brothers and sisters in India. All Glory belongs to God !

As I saw the great heart of universality in Mrs. Hogan, I thought she should be blessed with the spiritual name of Jagadamba, the mother of the world, to the great joy of both herself and her numerous, devoted friends. Hence, on an auspicious day, a small ceremony was held and Mrs. Hogan became Mother Jagadamba. She had a daughter named Virginia and a son named Leeland. Both loved me like their own brother and served me in every way, often taking me in their car to the beach or to some other lovely and lonely place. Master Leeland, although young was a good mechanic. In those days, while yet a boy he had bought a second hand car for five dollars which he repaired himself and then used for outings. Imagine buying a car for five dollars in those times, less than fifteen rupees ! He often invited me to come out with him in his little car but Mother Jagadamba forbade me to ride in it

and take any chances with my life.

Many children became my friends, my little ‘pals’ ; they flocked around me and were drawn towards me, in every Peace Centre in the U.S.A. In a photo taken in the Peace Centre in Los Angeles there is a little boy sitting on my lap. It is interesting that I can still remember his name. It is Bobby. His parents were insurance agents and sold land. They became my students at the Peace Centre. Later on I had a sad experience with the parents of the little boy Bobby.

Jagadamba lived in Hollywood, the heart of the movie centre. As many of you know, Hollywood is the centre and home of some of the biggest and most famous movie stars. It is interesting that God chose such a noted place and made me a His instrument, to open Peace Centre there at the desire of Mother Jagadamba and all her cultured friends. She was one of the ardent students at the Los Angeles Peace Centre who attended all the classes regularly and assimilated all the messages. She insisted that I should start a Hollywood Peace Centre in her comfortable home, on a lovely hillock. God’s ways are mysterious and incomprehensible.

In those days I had a craze-mania to start Peace Centers wherever there were devotees who requested my help in making their homes, communities and cities, into Peace Centers. In Reading, Pennsylvania, Minnesota, Minneapolis, Chicago, Seattle and many other places, Peace Centers were started in the homes of faithful and loving devotees on a small scale and they have been a temporary blessing to many aspiring, spiritual souls.

All glory belongs to the All-knowing and All-wise Creator of the worlds, the One Who is the source of all the Peace Centers in the East and the West:

May Peace be Unto All:

OM OM OM

Chapter 45

SILENT WORK IN CALIFORNIA

A NEW PEACE CENTRE IN HOLLYWOOD:

Hollywood, the famous city of the cinema industries with all its beautiful buildings and homes of noted cinema stars lies on sloping hills, only a few miles from Los Angeles. In fact it is not disconnected with, or separate from Los Angeles ; but rather stands away from the lovely homes of the millionaires and the ‘stars’ scattered over some distance dotting the hills. There was no need to establish another Peace Centre in Hollywood, for, we had one already in nearby Los Angeles, under the guidance of the eminent doctors Grove and Gross who were most kind, attentive and efficient too in their great work of spreading Peace near and far.

As I write now, there is before me a beautiful and costly book the Holy Bible, called the *Red Letter Testament* with the name Swami Omkar in gold letters on it. This was a precious gift from Dr. Henry Gross, the President of the Los Angeles Peace Centre, with the loving words given below, typed on a piece of paper and pasted inside the Holy Book, to signify his devotion. Although thirty seven years have passed, the typed words look as fresh as though they were typed but yesterday and the Bible itself looks new. In highest homage to the loyalty and devotion of Dr. Gross, I am happy to reproduce here what he wrote in the book so sincerely and artistically too.

OM PEACE PEACE PEACE

To My own beloved brother;

As we continuously breathe, live, think, move and have our being

IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD

We ask this day, Your, Birthday

OUR FATHER

In the Name of Our Lord Jesus Christ for perpetual
LIFE ————LOVE—————LIGHT

To Shine in All

The New Peace Centers of your Creation.

GLORY GLORY GLORY

Accept my hearty congratulations, sincere best wishes and continue to perpetuate Peace with greater ability to establish New Peace Centres everywhere, Your Noble Work.

With billows of LOVE to echo and re-echo in your consciousness forever.

OM SHANTHI OM SHANTHI OM SHANTHI

Los Angeles Peace Centre
October 10, 1930

Your Brother
Dr. Henry Gross

Some of the readers of this Autobiography, especially the old devotees may be anxious and curious now to know why the birthday was celebrated in October instead of January which we observe these days with pujas, prayers and meditations. I have always been one of those who consider every day as my birthday and I pay no attention to the particular day of this birth; I always try to live in the present moment, burying the dead past and ignoring the dim future. Thus, the years passed away with the observance of October 10th as the birthday. Then one day a copy of the old horoscope was found by someone at home and it was sent to me. It was discovered that the birthday was not in October but on twenty first of January. Since then twenty first January has been observed with ekaham repetition of God's name ceaselessly and with *kotipatri* and *lakshapatri pujas*, the worship of Lord Shiva with a crore and a *lakh of bilva* leaves which are sacred for *puja* to the Lord. Imagine the joy of worshipping God with a million holy names.

My readers will be surprised to learn that although I stayed in Hollywood and Los Angeles for more than a year I never went even once to see any of the well known, the world famous movies, for I was fully absorbed in the creation of Peace Centers in the hearts of aspiring devotees. To this day I remember with heaviness of heart, how I disappointed and made sad Mother Mariya in not going with her to see a famous movie, a Holy Play of the Life of Christ, even after she had made all the arrangements and bought tickets in advance. On that day I preferred instead, to go on a long ride of a hundred miles or so with Mother Jagadamba and her children. But many times since then, I have felt sad for having disappointed Mother Mariya over such a small thing and after all that she had done for me.

On an auspicious day the new Peace Centre in Hollywood was inaugurated and many learned and important people of both Hollywood and Los Angeles took part in the opening ceremonies, along with doctors Grove and Gross, Mother Mariya and all the students of the Los Angeles Peace Centre. It was a great success and a great joy to everyone who was privileged to take part in the function. Mrs. Hogan's social acquaintances including many relatives and friends who did charitable deeds - all graced the occasion and partook of the Feast of Peace. After my usual simple and direct Message of Peace, several eminent scholars, scientists and movie stars also spoke with appreciation of the Peace-Work and of the great need for spreading Peace from heart to heart for the Peace of all, so that permanent Peace might be established in the world. It was a happy day of rejoicing for all those who attended the opening ceremony of the Peace Centre in Hollywood. After the Prayers and Meditation, Mrs. Hogan entertained all with delicious refreshments such as coffee, tea and ice cream. We had weekly meetings and many new and old devotees, as well as aspiring souls from far off places attended our classes at the new Hollywood Centre and derived great benefit.

Dr. Grove was a great, successful and noted Naturopath in Los Angeles and he had a large sanatorium of his own. Although

more than eighty years in age he was as energetic and bouyant as a young man. His sanatorium had a solarium which had been constructed in a novel way, on wheels, so that it could be moved all around during the day, to allow the direct rays of the sun to fall on the patients. He also had other moving buildings, shower baths, sun baths and a room for massage which was next to his office. It was all something to be seen and not described in words. Dr. Grove used to treat and cure chronic cases which had been given up as hopeless and incurable by the Allopathic doctors. For every treatment Dr. Grove received twenty-five or thirty rupees but he was generous enough to give a concession to poor and deserving people.

As for me, since Dr. Grove had been one of the oldest students of the renowned Swami Vivekananda and was now an active member and organiser of the Los Angele's Peace Centre, he offered all his services and the full use of the global sanatorium to me free of any charges. As I had a fall on ice and had broken my hip-bone, the wonderful sun baths, massages and other nature cure treatments of Dr. Grove did me immense good. I have ever felt deeply grateful to Dr. Grove and Dr. Gross and to Mother Jagadamba of the Hollywood Peace Centre, for all their tender care and affection for me.

May Peace be Unto All.

IN THE SANTA SUSANNA HILLS :

The Santa Susanna Hills consisted of a small and beautiful valley surrounded by hills and it lay at a distance of about forty miles from Hollywood. Where is Santi Ashram of Thotapalli Hills in India and where are the Santa Susanna Hills of California in the United States? It is interesting how Santi in India and Santa in America sound so much alike and how they both played an important part in my spiritual life. A lover of Silence always longs for solitude. Although I ever tried to do my part and serve all the old and new friends and students of both Peace Centres in Los

Angeles and Hollywood, Jagadamba saw that I was becoming weary and tired and even yearning for Silence, my life's soul and goal.

In a happy moment she remembered that she had a cabin, a small home in the lovely valley of the Santa Susanna Hills; and she told me that she would like to take me in her car just to see the place; and if I liked it, I could stay there and enjoy all silence and great solitude. She also told me that it was not too comfortable and convenient there for it was not provided with the amenities of life such as flush toilets and refrigerators. I do not remember now whether it had an electric connection or whether I had to use a kerosene light during my stay there. Anyway, I spent some of the happiest days of my life there, all alone in silence. Food was not easily available and so I lived on a raw diet of fruits and vegetables which were provided by Mother Jagadamba. Usually on alternate days she would come in her car and bring food and all that I needed for the care and nourishment of the body.

As I had had a double fracture of the hip it was most uncomfortable to sit on the floor and bend the legs. To attend to the calls of nature during those days of convalescence and recovery I had to use a raised commode. I needed the constant care of someone or other even while staying in a modern home, to say nothing of this small and remote wooden cabin. Jagadamba provided me with a good commode and it was placed in one corner of the cabin. I was not able to walk about easily but had to use two walking sticks, with which, I walked about in the cabin and outside to look at the beautiful ranges of hills. Jagadamba was so motherly that she used to come almost everyday to bring me food and especially to clean the commode. She used a strong disinfectant (lotion) to avoid smell, so that the commode could be used often until she came. Who else would do so cheerfully and lovingly such menial work as cleaning a commode? Rudyard Kipling once said that East is East and West is West and "the twain would never meet" or be united. But in the great, selfless service of Mother Jagadamba where is East or West? Where love is there is no work

in the world which is lowly or menial. Mahatma Gandhi had set for all of us a living example when he began to clean latrines and considered it his greatest privilege. Anyway, I feel my life has been blessed, for I have had dedicated mothers such as Mother Mariya, Mother Jean D. Lilly and Mother Jagadamba as well as the other mothers and consecrated souls of the East and the West.

The distance from Hollywood to the Santa Susanna Hills was long and I was fortunate to have very few visitors. Thus I was able to spend my days and nights in perfect silence and solitude. Since I was blessed to be alone with God, I made the best use of my precious time by having constant prayers and deep meditations. I wrote some inspiring messages while there in the lovely Santa Susanna Hills. The illuminating Peace Prayer was conceived of, in the Holy Himalayas and it took full shape in the Santa Susanna Hills. Later, Mother Jagadamba published it as a separate booklet on behalf of the Hollywood Peace Centre and it was and has since been a source of great inspiration and strength to thousands of aspiring devotees, to the devoted children of God in all the old and new religions of the East and the West. The Peace Prayer has now been reprinted many times and has been translated into many languages, all over the world.

Another helpful and inspiring message which paves the way to World Peace, Universal Peace and which was highly appreciated by many devoted souls in the East and West is the simple Message of Peace. Mother Jagadamba published it also from the Hollywood Peace Centre. The autobiography would be incomplete without this message; so it is included here. It begins with Peace Prayer which may be repeated any number of times for the Peace of the individual as well as for the Peace of the Universe. The very repetition of the Prayer helps one to feel God's Presence.

PEACE PRAYER

Adorable Presence, Thou who art within and without, above and below and all around; Thou who art interpenetrating the very

cells of our beings; Thou who art the Eye of our eyes, the Ear of our ears, the Heart of our hearts, the Mind of our minds, the Breath of our breaths, the Life of our lives and Soul of our souls, Bless us, dear God, to be aware of Thy Presence Now and Here. This is all that we ask of Thee. May all be aware of Thy Presence in the East and the West, in the North and the South. May Peace and Goodwill abide among individuals as well as communities and nations. This is our earnest prayer, May Peace be Unto All.

OM OM OM

THE MESSAGE OF PEACE

(For the establishment of Peace on earth)

Dear Friend, I love you because God is Love. My soul craves to help and serve you, for in serving you I am serving God. Peace is needed for the establishment of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. What is your contribution to World Peace? If our hearts are devoid of Peace, our lectures and sermons for the Peace of the world are a mockery in the face of God.

In spite of daily sermons and prayers in churches and temples there is unrest everywhere. In many a nation there are signs of bitterness, hatred and war instead of Harmony, Love and Peace.

The Golden Rule “Whomsoever ye would that men should do unto ye, even so do ye unto them”, is to be practiced in our relationship with individuals and with the sister nations of the world and should not remain merely a myth or motto.

Religion should not be a cloak used as a garment on special occasions, but should be lived in our daily lives, each and every moment. We are to manifest it in all our thoughts, words and deeds, whether we are in church or home, for religion is the realisation of God’s Presence in us.

The harvest is great and the labourers are few. In the name of God, in the name of Truth or Love will you not help the world, by establishing Peace in your own heart first?

Please do not fail to give your help and sympathy saying: 'I am neither a statesman nor a member of the United Nations'. Yes, you are a Statesman in the Garden of Peace. You are a Member in the Kingdom of God. Your Birthright is Peace. Your Divine Heritage is Universal Love. Hence, it is your duty to work for Peace with an all-embracing heart of Love.

Pray! Come forward now with all the strength of your heart and soul to prevent war and establish Peace on earth. 'United we stand, divided we fall.' Remember that unity is life and separation is death. Hence I plead and beg you for your cooperation.

Irrespective of differences in nations or religions, whether you are President or Peasant, Emperor or Labourer, Priest or Layman, I request you now to contribute your quota by first establishing Peace in your own heart, for *It is the individual peace which paves the way towards universal peace.*

Our Peace must be based upon the understanding of God, the universal energy, the basic principle of creation and not on mere treaties signed by politicians to serve their individual purposes or national needs.

Where is Peace that passeth all understanding if it is not in unity with God, who is our all in all? Recognise the presence of God within yourself. Is He not throbbing in your heart? Lo, He is here; merge within and feel, feel, feel. By recognizing God in your heart, you can behold Him in everyone, irrespective of creed; colour or nationality, for everyone is a child of God.

Beloved one, will you not render a little service for me? If you will, please feel the presence of God, not tomorrow or when you go home or to church, but right now in this moment, at this place and you read this message.

Behold: He is shining in your eyes. Can you not see Him? ‘Having eyes see you not?’ Pray, utilise your eyes to behold Him, your ears to listen to His still, small voice, your hands to serve Him, your words to glorify Him, your heart to express Him, your mind to merge in Him, and your soul to recognise Him.

This is all that I ask of you, my fellow –worker, to make the whole world, God’s creation, an Abode of Peace, remembering always the great Truth that *The service of man is the service of God*. This is the Highest Worship of God.

May floods of Harmony, rivers of Peace and oceans of Love flow from you towards the whole of God’s creation the whole of humanity for the good of the world; and may the indweller of your heart bless you with peace and long life. This is the prayer of your own Brother Omkar!

OM OM OM

Chapter 46

THE VISIT OF THE MAHARAJAH OF PITHAPURAM

One day, as I was spending my time in the lovely Santa Susanna Hills all alone in silence and seclusion, enjoying Peace within and writing some inspired messages, Mother Jagadamba came to my cabin excited and happy with a newspaper, the Los Angeles Herald which contained a photo of the Maharajah of Pithapuram.

Pithapuram is the place where this body was most probably born. In those days a Maharajah meant some great and unapproachable deity. At the time of the coronation of the Maharajah of Pithapuram, I was a little boy of nine or ten years, or perhaps even less, for I no longer remember the exact date of the coronation. The one thing that I do remember is that the whole town was in ‘*gala*’ appearance, fully decorated with arches and flags and there were processions going about the town with music. The palace of the Maharajah is in the very town itself and surrounded by a large mound of earth which acts as a wall to prevent outsiders from entering the precincts of the palace. As little boys were not allowed within the big gate, I remember clearly how I and some other little boys climbed the great mound of earth and looked eagerly at the procession which passed through the palace grounds, with its bright colours, music, dancing and other entertainments. We were oblivious to the hot sun.

I marvel how much things change with the passing of time! How Maharajahs become beggars and beggars become the richest people, even Maharajahs, with the passing of time. I who as a little boy could not enter the palace or its grounds to see coronation of the Maharajah but had to see it by climbing a large parapet wall, had come to Hollywood, California to render spiritual service meditating in Santa Susanna Hills and establishing Peace Centres in Los Angeles and Hollywood with many ardent American devotees. And now, the very Maharajah of Pithapuram had come with the Maharani and all the members of his family on a foreign

tour to Hollywood. It is impossible to foresee the destiny of people; and the way in which events change is truly incomprehensible. It is remarkable how I can still vision myself to this day, after the passing of more than sixty years, as a little boy peeping over the parapet wall of the palace, so inquisitively to see the grand procession and coronation; and now, so strange to see myself as a Swami living in silence in the cabin of Mother Jagadamba in the Santa Susanna Hills. She came excitedly to see me, waving the newspaper and telling me the details of the visit of the Maharajah.

As Jagadamba was anxious to see the Maharajah and Maharani and their children, I wrote to the Maharajah and invited him and his party to our Peace Centre in Hollywood. He was lonely in the far of Hollywood, far from his palace in Pithapuram; and he thus readily accepted my invitation and a day was fixed for his visit. He came one evening to the Peace Centre with some of his family members and they all felt pleased with our silent work in America. Jagadamba was kind enough to invite the Maharajah and his family for dinner in her home. A date was fixed and they came, nearly twenty in all and the dinner was a grand success. I can still see the Maharajah and Maharani, their two sons and five daughters and other distinguished guests, Jagadamba's family and friends, all enjoying the rich repast which she so generously provided. She arranged also to have some Indian dishes such as curries, papads, vadiyams, prepared; and it was a rare treat for the Maharajah and his party to have such a fine dinner so far away from home. As she had heard that Maharajah was a meat-eater, Jagadamba had got prepared by Grace Brown, her good Negro cook, and one of my students at the Hollywood Peace Centre, some non vegetarian dishes also for the Maharajah.

Then we had a spiritual meeting; some messages were read out and meditation followed. Later on in the evening Jagadamba took us all in a number of cars of her friend to the Hollywood Bowl where wonderful musical concerts are given; thousands of people gather in the open ground to listen to the famous music of celebrated musicians, on all kinds of musical instruments. With

Jagadamba's influence special tickets were bought and comfortable arrangements were made to seat the whole group near the large music stage. It was a memorable night that shall not be forgotten. I think the Maharajah and his children visited us once again, for to this day there are two small photos in our Ashram album, of myself with the Maharajah and another with his two talented sons, Sri Yuvarajah Rama Rao Bahadur and Sri Raja Kumar Surya Rao Bahadur.

It was the good fortune of the Sri Santi Ashram that in later years Sri Surya Rao, the Raja Kumar became a part and parcel of the Ashram. An ideal devotee, he took great interest in and care for the silent work of the Mission of Peace. He was also the President of the Ashram for three years and helped to spread the cause of peace near and far. His father, the Maharajah himself was a great *Brahmo*. Although he did many charitable acts for several institutions and in spite of all his great interest in and appreciation of our universal work of Peace and also his visit to the foreign branch in Hollywood, Santi Ashram was not included in his charities with all his generosity.

The Maharajah was blessed with a spiritual, devoted and God loving wife who had great respect and veneration for the Ashram. After their return to India we were invited to their palace for a visit. Sister Sushila Devi was also in the Ashram. The Maharajah sent us a special and most comfortable car and when we reached Pithapuram they all received us with great respect and honour. After prayers with the Maharajah, Maharani and the children and after having a dinner we all went to Uppada, a beautiful sea resort about twenty miles distant from Pithapuram. Pithapuram itself is also about twenty miles from the Ashram. When we left them all, the Maharajah gave the manager of the Ashram Rs.100/- as a donation. After my return to the Ashram I became sick and had high fever for more than two months. Some orthodox people said it was due to evil eyes of people.

In any case we had a pleasant time with the Maharajah and Maharani and their party in Hollywood. Many interesting accounts of the Maharajah were published in the news-papers of Los Angeles relating to his devoted life of charity and public service to the deserving. But the Maharajah was so orthodox that he never allowed any photographer to take pictures of any of the ladies of this party. Thus ended in all success the visit of the Maharajah, whom the little boy of eight had to see, by climbing a high parapet wall on the day of his coronation. Through the mystery of God, events were changed and the Maharajah himself had to come to Hollywood, U.S.A. to see the Swami, the founder of the Peace Centres.

As already mentioned the Maharani was a saintly lady who was well-known for her great devotion to God and for her service to women and children. She loved our sister Sushila Devi very much. She spent most of her time in performing *puja*, the worship of God and she used to have many candles lighted before her deity and also the waving of camphor and the burning of incense. One day the saddest thing happened. As she was having her *puja*, with many lights, her sari caught fire and she was burnt to death. What a shocking calamity, a sad end for such a saintly and God-loving lady, to die worshipping God! Inexplicable and intricate are the laws of Karma. May the devoted and dedicated soul of Chinnamamba, Rani Saheba of Pithapuram rest in God, in Peace. This has been the prayer of all the members of Santi Ashram as well as of her friends, relatives and admirers of her saintly life.

OUR THAMMU:

I have already mentioned that Sri Surya Rao Bahadur, the Raja Kumar, became a friend of the Ashram and helped the cause of peace in so many ways. He was also President of the Ashram for three years. The workings of *karma* are strange and mysterious, for who would have ever expected that we would meet in Hollywood, U.S.A. when we both had grown up in Pithapuram, India? In any case, our Thammu was an ardent devotee and it was a sad and great shock when he left the body. 'Our Thammu' was a

message I wrote at the time of his demise and it was later printed as a booklet with a picture of us together and many beautiful quotations on death and its meaning, were given in this booklet on him. In memory of Thammu I would like to include herein some passages from that message, with silent prayers for the peace of Thammu and for his devoted wife and children who ever revere his consecrated life of service to others.

The Passing Away of Our Beloved Thammu

Thammu is the Rajakumar of Pithapuram. He is a Thammu, brother not only to me but also to you and to everyone in the world. I had the joy of meeting him when he was a young boy. He came to the U.S.A. with his parents, Sri Rama Rao Bahadur, the yuvarajah and all the family members while I was there. He has been dear and near to my heart always because he has been a real Thammu to me more than to anyone else. The name of his residence is Omkar. He keeps a small photo of Omkar in his ring which he wears always. He keeps a photo of Omkar on the altar in his *puja* room. In his devoted and dedicated heart also he has installed Omkar.

He has always been a healthy and strong person with good and simple habits, even though he was born in a royal family as a prince. Recently I heard that he had been sick and a telegram was sent by his devoted life-partner, Srimati Padmavathi Devi asking for my prayers and then there was another informing us happily that he had begun to improve by God's Grace. But this morning two telegrams were received, one from Madras and another from Bobjee, an ardent devotee of the Ashram informing us of the shocking news of the passing away of our beloved Thammu. It is really unbelievable. I feel Thammu's presence now closer and nearer, more than ever. He is standing by my side with folded arms in all devotion. He is there, waving in the fragrant flowers as if saying: I am with you always; Thammu is alive. His spirit is in us. He can never die. The four statues of Gandhiji, Buddha, Christ and Sri Krishna in front of my Nirvana Mandir console me with the following message:

Gandhi : Thammu is there, still serving the sick and poor through so many welfare organisations.

Buddha : Thammu has annihilated the ego and hence he is here enjoying Nirvana.

Christ : Thammu is childlike and the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to children. He has come to me now.

Krishna : Thammu is in me and I am in Thammu. Thammu is immortal. My devotee is never lost.

Thammu was like a Hanuman to me for he helped the Cause of Peace in all possible ways. The scriptures teach us that Anjaneya or Hanuman is a *Chiranjivi*. *Chiranjivi* is the one who is above death and lives eternally. Thus I feel that Hanuman—Thammu also is eternal and lives for ever.

Verily, there are two kinds of people in this world.

I. Those who are dead even though they are alive, for they have forgotten God, the Light within and live only for the little self, as a burden to Mother Earth.

II. Those who are alive even though dead, for their dedicated lives of selfless service are the greatest blessing to all the world.

I cannot believe that Thammu is dead. The very thought hurts me. The thought that Thammu is alive, that he is now with me more than ever in the Ashram, which has been dearest and nearest to his heart, gives me joy, strength and consolation. Is not our blessed Sister Sushila Devi's spirit with us, working and helping in all the Ashram activities now? Similarly, our Thammu also is with us, helping his Ashram now, more than ever. By the way, Thammu had the highest regard for Sushila Devi. Hence I feel his spirit has joined the loving spirit of Sushila Devi and both of them are helping the cause of peace now for the good of the world.

To me Thammu is alive now more than ever. May all those who really love Thammu, continue to love him, finding Thammu in the sick, the poor and the helpless, for our dear Thammu has

entered into the hearts of all these forms and requests our love, service and sympathy for the good of all. Above all, our simple Peace Prayer, which has been dear and near to the heart of Thammu unites the dead, the so-called departed with the living. It makes us feel the presence of God as we repeat it; so let us repeat it as often as possible and wish the peace of our beloved Thammu. Let us invoke God's richest blessings on his compassionate and all loving spirit.

It was our dear Thammu who had the Peace Prayer printed as a book mark at the time of the marriage of his dear daughter Chy. Chinnamamba and distributed it to his royal friends and to the citizens of Madras. What a thoughtful, memorable and lasting gift is the Peace Prayer, as an inspiring and helpful book mark: strange are the ways of *maya*, the thick delusion in the ever changing world. We do not seem to realise fully the great love of our dear ones while they are with us, alive. It is only when they leave us physically, that we realise and regret their great loss and deep love, alas, when it is too late.

The great future of Santi Ashram, the Mission of Peace had been always foremost in the heart of Thammu. Whenever we passed through Madras we were his guests and he arranged Peace-Meetings in his lovely home and invited all his relations and friends for the meetings. Thammu's close friends, the Rajah Saheb and the Rani Saheba of Siva Ganga were once introduced to us and they were kind enough to take our entire Peace Party to their home. It was Thammu who made the Maharajah of Pudukkottah, a life patron of Sri Santi Ashram. Thammu has done much for the Ashram and wanted to do much more for the Cause of Peace. Busy as he was, he attended Waltair Ashram Committee Meetings and had time to spend with me in Kailas, on the top of the hill, during my days of Silence. He treated the Ashram children as his own children and took them for outings, gave them ice cream, biscuits and sweets. Chy. Jnaneswari has been his favourite child. Thammu was also a good athlete and fond of dumb animals too for he loved all God's children.

Even on the letter heads and envelopes of our Thammu, one finds the sacred syllable OM in Sanskrit and the inspiring words, *God is Love*. He was fond of music and animals. On his letter head was the picture of the Goddess Saraswati with her *vina* and also the holy cow with its calf and the lovely Lotus. Thammu was always considerate about and thoughtful of my welfare. It was touching to see him telling our Chy. Jnaneswari and Chy. Santi and other members, in the following loving work:

As I am far away in Madras I am not fortunate to serve our Swamiji personally and look after his needs; but as you are privileged to be near him, I request you on my behalf also, to serve our Master in every possible way.

He always addressed me by the precious and sweet name of Master.

I long to forget my sorrow in doing something worth while and helpful to keep the memory of our beloved Thammu ever fresh and lasting in Santi Ashram. May God bless all the friends, relations and well wishers of our dear Thammu with His richest blessings of peace in their great sorrow. May His Blessings comfort and strengthen the members of the family and the children especially of our Sri Surya Rao Bahadur, the Rajahkumar of Pithapuram, in their irreparable loss and great bereavement. Above all, may the compassionate and loving spirit of our dear Thammu, even in his disembodied state, ever abide in Peace with God.

May Peace be Unto All!

Loka Samasthah Sukhino Bhavanthu.

OM

OM

OM

STILL IN HOLLYWOOD

I am unable to remember the names of the two devotees who played an important part in my life in the Hollywood Peace Centre. They were in the group photo taken of all the students of the Los Angeles Centre. The life and activities of both centers were never two but one. All that I can tell my readers is that they were the parents of the little boy Bob, who sat in my lap in that photo. Both the father and mother were in the real estate business. This means that they act as agents for people who wish to sell property such as land and houses. When the agent is successful, he often gets a commission from both the seller and the buyer. Thus, there are many ways of making a living of keeping the wolf of hunger at bay, as they say in the West.

Perhaps in those days, during the Great Depression, business was not too good for them, for one day my two friends, my own students fixed their eyes on me and said:

‘Dear Swamiji, why don’t you start another Peace Centre, a little Ashram of our own in the lovely Santa Susanna Hills. It will be for the good of all the devotees near and far in America and we will show you all the lovely places of silence and solitude, where you can meditate and forget the world’.

The idea, the very proposal was most alluring to me for in those days I was land-crazy, fond of getting more and more land for the Ashram and eager to start as many Peace Centers as possible everywhere in the world, in the East and the West. Now as experience and wisdom have grown a little, I am no longer anxious to start branches or Peace Centers on land but rather I wanted to see them established in the devoted hearts of all the children of God, known and unknown. Verily, it is from the individual heart alone that Peace must flow ceaselessly towards all creation. What a grand and noble aspiration. Yet, not my will but may His will be done. Anyway, in my advanced years, or old age as some call it,

this is what I aspire to do both day and night and especially when devotees come to see me. I do not wish to allow anyone to go from me, after seeing me, without starting a Peace Centre in his or her devoted heart.

My sole aspiration these days is that whoever comes to the Ashram, whoever takes some of my time, must fill his or her heart with Health, Peace and Love; and with added strength carry Light, Life and Love with them to share not only with their dear ones at home but with all the people with whom they come into contact, at work or in rest. The simple ideal or motto of Santi Ashram from its beginning over fifty-four year ago has ever been the same.

LIVE IN GOD AND HELP OTHERS TO LIVE IN HIM :

How blessed and peaceful the world would be if all the children of God could live in God and help others to feel God's Presence. The ideal is very lofty and grand but it is rather trying and difficult to achieve for '*Narrow and rugged is the way that leads to Heaven and broad and smooth is the way that leads to Hell*'. Thus, many are called but few are chosen.

Earlier I mentioned the expression "land-crazy"; and I should like to make it clearer by recounting the illuminating and simple story, told by Count Leo Tolstoy, '*How much Land Does a Man Need?*' There was once a man like me who was land-crazy. In my case also I started first with ten acres and then acquired a few more and then more and more until now Santi Ashram spreads out over 200 acres of land. The difference between me and the man in the story is that I have been getting more and more land, not for myself but for the Ashram, for all the devotees of the Peace Centers throughout the world, whereas the man in the story wanted more and more land only for himself.

Here is the essence of the story:

It seems a certain man was not content with the land, God had given him. He was fond of getting more and more land. He would sell the land he had at a profit and go some-where else and buy more land at a low price. Someone came and told him there

was a place where he could have as much land as he could have ever dreamt of, without paying a cent, a paisa or a kopek. The man became so excited, so enamoured of the idea that he sold all his land and proceeded to the place where he could get all the land he had ever wanted. But the man who owned the vast, immeasurable tracts of land, gave to our land-crazy man, on one condition:

You can have all the land that you can circumscribe from morning to evening, all the way walking. The important condition is that you must return to the place from where you started before the sun goes down below the horizon.

The man was happy with this simple condition and he readily agreed, at sunrise he began to walk. He walked and walked in the hot sun without rest, for he wanted to cover a great distance before returning to his starting place. His insatiable desire for land kept him walking and walking, further and further even though weary. Then when he turned to look around he saw the sun setting behind him. He began to walk in great haste to return, in time to the place where he had started early in the morning. He walked and walked and then began to run and his heart began to palpitate. The goal of his pursuit was in view, but alas, the sun was setting. He ran and ran with all his might and reached at last his destination, where he fell alas, dead. He covered several hundred ‘acres’ of land but in the end he lost his land, money, family and children having lost life itself.

In the end, after all, how much land did the land-crazy man want? Not hundreds of acres of land but only six feet of land to cover his body, when they buried him in the ground for his *samadhi*. Such is the fate and end of all.

As I also was ‘land-crazy’ I allowed my two real estate friends to take me in their car to look at silent and beautiful places which might become future Peace Centers. We went so far that the car had to travel on a rugged road. Then we had to walk still further to see the land, the silent lovely and inspiring spot which was to

become the future Peace Centre, the real Abode of Peace for all the devotees in California and the U.S.A. The whole area was lovely, and in fact California is noted not only for its scenic places but for its healthy climate as well.

Because of the accident, the fall on ice in Philadelphia, I was unable to walk about freely but had to use two hand sticks, one in each hand. Thus, with the help of the two canes and sometimes with my friends holding or supporting me, I was able to go about. Even now from this distance to Thotapalli Hills I can still see myself hobbling about in the Santa Susanna Hills, as I tried to select a suitable site. The view from the top of the hills was glorious, thus surroundings enchanting and I longed to establish a real Abode of Peace for the benefit of all the seekers of Peace in America and in Canada too, for some Canadians also had been coming to our Peace Meetings.

Some aspiring devotees from Canada had requested me to go there to start a Peace Centre and I did go as far as the border and almost entered the country. But at the last minute, for some technical reason I was not allowed to enter Canada. The Immigration authorities said that my passport allowed me to enter Canada but if I did so, I would not be allowed to re-enter America. Strange Immigration Laws; Hence, to the disappointment of my Canadian friends, I was refused entry to Canada.

Now, returning to the heights of our Santa Susanna Hills, where the scenery was gorgeous, I was enamoured of the place and responded to the help and sympathy of my real estate friends, who requested me to select as much land as I wanted. I went around the land, hobbling with the help of my two canes and selected a good place for Abode of Peace. There were natural stone benches and deep cut tubs, so that one could take a bath when it rained. There were lovely open places with a panoramic view where one could have sunbath and meditate. I simply loved the place. The second time we went, we took a surveyor and the land was measured and surveyed. Some sort of registration-deed, a *patta* was given to me and they took from me the price of the land.

In those days, during my stay in America, whatever my students, friends and well-wishers of the Ashram would give as love-offerings for the help they received in classes; and from the meditations and initiations would be divided in half. Half would be deposited in the bank account which Mother Mariya had opened in a bank in Philadelphia and the other half of the money would be sent to India to keep the Mother Ashram alive. Thus, with the money saved carefully in the bank account I was able to buy the land in the Santa Susanna Hills. Jagadamba also encouraged me in this new undertaking, for the new place-Abode of Peace is near her little cabin in the Santa Susanna Hills. This project also was sponsored by her 'real estate' friends. Imagine my sad surprise and disappointment when I heard, some years later that the land selected and bought for the Abode of Peace had never belonged to my friends, who so easily sold it to me. As they had been in need of money, they had simply showed the land, belonging to someone else and encouraged me to buy it. How man always disappoints!

But in the long run no one ever repents for having done good. Truth alone finally triumphs. Later on, I came into contact with the prominent lawyer, Mr. John Hayward of New York, who was well known in America and had friends in every state. When he heard of the sad affair and duplicity, he wrote to some of his friends, important lawyers in Los Angeles and requested them to straighten the matter. They scolded the two real estate agents, my friends and students and arranged for the return of almost all the money that I had paid them with complete trust. Mother Jagadamba was silent, kept mum, throughout this whole transaction.

Later on while I was observing *mounam* in Kailas she came to India and was the guest of prominent leaders, from the Prime Minister to the Collector; and she stayed for a week in Kailas. The glory and enchanting beauty of that Ashram on the top of the hill was greatly appreciated by her and she helped in the silent work of the Ashram. Although it was not the will of providence that Santi Ashram should have an Abode of Peace in the West, in Santa Susanna Hills, ; still God gave us, out of the fullness of His grace,

a glorious Abode of Peace in India, in the form of Lovely Kailas Ashram, facing the ocean on three sides and a range of lovely hills on the fourth side, welcoming all the seekers of Peace in the East and the West to share its Silence and Peace.

May Peace be Unto All !

OM

OM

OM

Chapter 48

ADIEU TO CALIFORNIA

The silent life in California was a great blessing to many an aspirant, to the seekers of Peace. Peace Centres in Los Angeles and Hollywood helped many to meditate and find Peace. I was also often invited to give discourses and exercises in meditation in different homes and in Churches too. I always paid attention to individuals and helped aspirants to meditate regularly and to keep a spiritual diary. Every week I corrected the diaries and patiently gave the students practical hints and wise suggestions for their spiritual progress. My stay in the Santa Susanna Hills was wonderful, except for the mistake in buying land for an Abode of Peace for all the seekers of Peace in the world, from people who did not actually own any land, in those lovely hills.

As my two students, who were trying to support themselves by selling real estate had no other work, they got me interested and then sold to me some land that never belonged to them. As money spent or rather given for God's work, buying land for an American Ashram, really belongs to Him, it was He alone who, after I was led into a snare, finally helped me out by getting back most of the original amount after a few years had elapsed. God takes care of His children when they trust Him completely, in spite of all the pitfalls and tribulations.

I will ever be deeply grateful to all the friends and devotees in the U.S.A. for all their sympathy and high appreciation of my silent work there. Here is a poem or rather a tribute sent to me by one of the American admirers.

To Swami Omkar

The highest comes out of the East.
It has ever been and shall forever be so.
The highest rolls silently, billowing West.
It has ever been and shall be ever so.
The highest comes illuminatingly, benignly.
It has ever been and shall ever be so.

The highest comes exhaling divinity,
It has ever been and shall ever be so.
The highest comes, it breaks in quite joy.
The highest comes gloriously, scattering gems,
The highest comes as healing balm.
To my awaiting soul, chanting Requiems.
So comes the Sun of suns, to all and to me
Blessing, Amen, with Peace and Divinity

- An American Admirer
(Peace 1930)

Here is another tribute by one of the noted citizen of America, one
of the ardent student of the Los Angeles Peace Centre.

MOTHER INDIA

O Mother India, though outraged
And trampled upon by ignorance
Your gentle heart will never cease to love
Misguided spirits in their false concepts.
A land where Silence, Sacrifice and Peace
Have Holy Temples made roofless huts
Can never lose its place in minds of men
Whose spirits dwell on planes of higher thought.
A land where worldly wealth is looked upon
With wild reproof, for hate is not thy way.
Forever will remain beloved by all
That seeks not splendor's gaiety and play.
Dream on, O Mother India, the mists
Will clear, revealing there a higher trance
That God has placed upon His fickle earth
To safeguard it from evil's deadly lance.

With Love to Swami Omkar
- Anatole Robbins

And finally, here is a short and helpful message written while in the Santa Susanna Hills. It was greatly appreciated by all the students, for it is a practical experience and leads, one step at a time into Silence.

The Inner Voice

Hush, hush, hear thy Soul's Inner Voice! Dear Beloved, so long as you are busy with the outer things you can never hear thy inner voice. Dear One, are you not tired of those outer things? Will you not try to hear thy Inner Voice? Do you want to hear thy Inner Voice with all thy heart and strength? If so, pray do come and stay with me for a while. Make thy body comfortable and steady. Think no more of thy plans and duties. Pray do sit for a while calmly to hear thy Inner Voice. By hearing this Inner Voice alone thy heart's thirst will be quenched but never by running hither and thither with feverish haste after shadows and hobgoblins. Thy Inner Voice is ever ready to commune with thee. But it is a pity that thou art not responding to the voice that is within, ever busying thyself instead with the various voices of the world.

O dear tiny senses, pray draw your activities within, even for the time being, O dear mind of mine, pray stop thy worthless wanderings even for a while and hear thy Soul's Inner Voice-O little ego, pray dissolve thyself in thine own inner consciousness to hear thy Inner Voice.

When every sound is hushed and everything is dissolved, there speaks the Soul's Inner Voice in all its Divine Glory, in the depth, of the innermost recesses of the Omnipresent Self. O dear ones merge more and more within, there to hear thy Soul's Inner Voice, for this alone is thy own dear Divine Birthright.

Hush, hush, hear thy Soul's Inner Voice, hearing which one raises above birth and death. May all be blessed with the inaudible and inexpressible Voice of the Divine Self the *Atman*.

OM OM OM

Let this chapter, my 'adieu' or goodbye to the California Peace Center be concluded now with the parting messages which I gave at our last meeting.

Parting Message

My Own Indivisible *Atman*, in the form of, Sisters and Brothers:

On this day of parting, I stretch my arms and take you all into the fold of my Infinite Love, which expects not any reward but is contented to live as Love ; that Love which knows neither parting nor meeting, wherein abides the peace that passeth all understanding and the glory that shines in the splendour of millions of Suns.

I am the Sun of suns !

OM ! OM! OM!

O GLORY ! GLORY ! GLORY !

It is Light within and without. It is illumination above and below and it is splendour all around. Let us feel, feel, feel and dissolve in this inexpressible peace.

My blessed ones, you have received the key of Self-Reliance in your First Initiation; the key of Speechlessness in the Second Initiation; and the Key of Dissolution of mind, or control of thought in the Third Initiation; and you have obtained the Divine Key, *Soham* which has opened all seals awakened all centers and finally led you into the Kingdom of Heaven, where you are face to face with God or Truth.

Behold his Glory!

OM! OM! OM!

Here there is neither seeking nor striving; all search is ended all doubts are cleared, all questions answered; all speeches ended; all sermons completed, all talks finished and all egoism destroyed.

In supreme silence, the eye hath seen the full Glory.

OM! OM! OM!

O Sacred Birds of Freedom, soar on the wings of *Soham* in the skies of glory, breathing the sacred syllable OM, the life and soul of your existence. Fly my Birds of Freedom, over hills and dales, over hamlets and towns, carrying your message of Life, Light and Love. Spread your wings of *Soham* far and near. Give shelter unto all the weary seekers of Truth, scatter flowers of joy, hope and peace everywhere.

Deny not your blessings either to the poor or suffering or to the so-called sinful, for all are your own. Stretch your hand always to bless but never to hurt or strike in thought, word or deed. Gather the manifested into the unmanifested. Draw the whole world with a single breath of your Divine *Soham* Glory, Godspeed, my Divine Birds of Freedom;

Lo; I am with you always until the end!

OM! OM! OM!

My friends, I am privileged to share with you my three sacred flowers from the Tree of Divine Life. You are inhaling the fragrance of that sweet flower, UNIVERSAL LOVE. Inhale the same fragrance in all your trying conditions of outer life. The second flower is ETERNAL PEACE. May we be filled and saturated with the fragrance of Peace and share it with the whole of humanity; Let us repeat with our Lord:

MY PEACE I GIVE UNTO YOU

The third precious flower is SUPREME SILENCE, allowing the manifested world to dissolve into the Unmanifested.

May this Blessed Day of Parting ever remain as the Great Day of our Resurrection, wherein we are united never to be separated again in the Silent Glory of Supreme Silence.

May Peace be Unto All!

Glory ! Glory ! Glory !

OM! OM! OM!

Soham !

THE PEACE CENTRES

This simple message on the importance of Peace Centers speaks for itself and so I love to include it now in the midst of all the work done in America to establish Peace Centers; and before my return to India with Sister Sushila Devi where we continued to establish more branches of Santi Ashram, more Peace Centers in the devoted hearts of the Eastern devotees.

PEACE CENTRES

Blessed is the one who is free from all longings. Peace profound belongs to the one who has risen above all longings. Yet so long as we have a body and live in the world there is some longing or other in the name of service or God! It has been my longing since my boyhood days to start 'Peace Centers' not on land but in the hearts of the aspiring individuals in the East and the West. I am one of those who firmly believe sooner or later that it is the *Individual Peace that Paves the Way to World Peace*. Hence, the ideal of Sri Santi Ashram has been :

It is the Individual Peace that paves the way to Universal Peace; so establish it first in your own heart, then share it in your home, radiate IT in your community and thus let it vibrate from heart to heart, till IT pervades and permeates the whole universe through your pure and ideal life of peace.

This is one of the happiest moments of my life, for God has afforded me the opportunity of establishing Peace Centres in all of your devoted and dedicated hearts. If there is anything that makes me sad, it is only when I fail to enter into the aspiring hearts of devoted souls such as you, to establish Centers of Peace.

How blessed it is to convert our dedicated hearts into Peace Centers and to allow Peace and Love to flow ceaselessly in rivers and torrents, not only towards our dear and near ones but also towards the whole of humanity.

Infinite Peace covers everything.
It does not exclude anyone.
Love Universal includes all.

Do not love but live as love has a deeper significance. It is easy to love but to *Live as Love* is the grandest thing. It is a most sublime state. In loving, we may love a few people who are dear and near to our hearts and neglect or forget others. But when we live as Love, Love being Universal, One without a second, there is not the least possibility of forgetting or excluding anyone.

Love universal excludes none.
It covers all!
Words create confusion, relativity-duality.
Silence creates Souls-Souls of Cosmic Consciousness.

In the first place is there anything like ‘others’ in One Self effulgent Light? The man who thinks that he is serving others is ignorant. Others exist for the ignorant, in ignorance. When all is God, the One Supreme, Indivisible *brahman*, where are others in it? In serving anyone we are serving the One Self.

In helping you I am helping Myself.
In loving you all I am loving Myself.

Adoration be unto the One Indivisible Atman, which is shining in all of you, sparkling in your very eyes: How close, nay inseparably one is God. He is the Breath of our very breath. If you could only recognise Him in the stillness of your aspiring hearts and feel Him in your very breath, inhaling and exhaling Peace with each and every breath, there is no need for any of you to come to me or to this Peace Centre, for the real Peace Centre is within you, awaiting your recognition now.

I long to help you to help yourselves.
I long to serve you so that you may learn to stand on your own feet.

The essence of my life’s teaching has been summed up in the following three short sentences:

- I. Do not rely on me.
- II. Do not rely on any others.
- III. Rely on the Indwelling Light which is awaiting your recognition, pervading and permeating the very cells of your being, Now and Here.

As we think, we become. What we sow, we reap. Man is the master of his destiny. As thoughts are things, let us raise our thoughts to God, who is never aloof or separate from us.

How blessed it is to consider the wide world as one's own home and all the people in it as sisters and brothers and to love and serve them as one's real religion.

In my world, there are neither *chelas* nor *gurus*. All are the living images of the loving God, the One Indivisible Light. It is needless to report, that I am not trying to make disciples out of you. I am only longing to help you all, each and every one of you to express and manifest the inherent Light which is ever present in all the images of God.

When I speak of God I am not speaking of the God, who is far away in the heavens or confined to a religion or nation. When I mention the name of God it means to me the God, who is interpenetrating the very cells of your beings, who is sparkling in your very eyes now and here and Who is the Mind of your minds, Heart of your hearts, Breath of your breaths and Life of your lives and the Soul of your souls.

Be true to the Self-Effulgent Light within yourselves, which is your Divine Heritage and the True Birthright. If you are untrue to yourselves, if you cannot rely on or recognize the light which is nearest and dearest to you, how can you be true to others or to all the outside names and forms, even to the biggest personalities and *avatars*? Self-Reliance is the beginning, middle and end of religion, I bow in adoration to the souls of Self-reliance. Self-reliance gives Pence, Poise and Power. Self-reliance gives Health, Longevity and Bliss. There is nothing in this world that a man of self reliance cannot do. All things are possible for him, for self covers everything. He is the Lion of Vedanta-the end of Knowledge.

Dependence, be it on any big form or name, is weakness slavery and ignorance. The Man of Self-reliance roars like a lion. The man of outer dependence bleats like a sheep. It is my one aspiration to see you all roaring like lions, pouring out your love on one and all, sharing your peace with the whole of humanity. Peace belongs to the giver and never to the beggar. Be givers of Life Eternal, Light Infinite and Love Universal !

In spite of all the Philosophy and Religion, if man is still miserable, he is the cause of his own misery. If he is happy he is the cause of his own happiness. Are you happy or miserable? If you want to be miserable think of yourself. If you want to be happy think of others. The way to be happy is to make others happy.

Let the happiness of others be our happiness.
Let the health of others be our health.
Let the Peace of others be our Peace.

May I be allowed now to end my message by entering into your consecrated hearts with the chanting of the Vedic Prayer, the Peace Chant:

ॐ द्यौ शान्तिः अन्तरिक्षं शान्तिः
प्रथ्वी शान्तिरापः शान्तिरोषधयः
शान्ति वनस्पतयः शान्तिः विश्वेदेवाः शान्तिः
ब्रह्म शान्तिः सर्वे शान्तिः। शान्तिरेव शान्तिः ।
सामा शान्तिरेधि । ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः
(यजुर्वेद 36.17)

May there be Peace in Heaven,
Peace in the Sky,
Peace across the Waters!
May there be Peace on Earth.
May Peace flow from the herbs, plants and trees !
May all the Celestial Beings radiate Peace !
May Peace pervade all quarters !

May Peace be Unto All !

OM OM OM

Chapter 50

RETURN TO INDIA - THIRD TIME

SISTER SUSHILADEVI, THE IDEAL DEVOTEE:

It is high time that I introduced Sister Sushila Devi, Miss Ellen Saint Clair Nowald to the loving readers of this Autobiography for she was a part and parcel of Santi Ashram for over twenty-five years. At the time of my third journey to America she lived in the state of New Jersey, which is between New York City and Philadelphia, at some distance from both and thus she did not at first hear of our Peace Centers and their silent work. Later, when she did come to know of our Peace work she attended meetings regularly and came from a long distance without feeling inconvenience to do so. From the very first meeting, as soon as she heard my message, the message of establishing peace in the individual heart and thus spreading it far and near, all over the world, she was drawn to the great and silent work of the Ashram and she dedicated her life to the Cause of Peace.

From the very first meeting she began to help silently in all possible ways, the Peace Work both in America and in the Mother Ashram in India. In those days many aspiring souls came into my life and promised to dedicate their lives to the Mission of Peace. They offered to come all the way to India to serve all the Brothers and Sisters of the East and the West. Of all these devoted souls Sister Sushila Devi was the only one who was able to make the sacrifice, leave all her kith and kin and earthly possessions to follow me to the far away India, in spite of the remonstrances of her aged parents and sister and brother who all loved her, adored her, for she was the youngest child of the family. They belonged to the church of the Seventh Day Adventists, a well-known Christian church and among the members of their community; they were highly respected for their good works, devotion and disciplined lives. But our Saint Clair Nowald was above all sectarian missions, for she had been blessed with a heart of universality and great compassion for all.

I was happy to see that in her very name was the holy word Saint. Saint Clair dedicated her life to God and followed in the footsteps of Mother Mary. As she also was dedicated to God and His children it is no wonder that her parents had also given to our Sushila Devi the holy name of Saint Clair at her birth. When I met her, from the very first, I felt from within that she should be blessed with the sweet name of Sushila Devi for it has been of all names the nearest and dearest to my heart. The very meaning of the name Sushila is one who is blessed with purity, compassion and love and all the good qualities of a holy and dedicated life. On an auspicious day Miss Saint Clair Nowald, amidst prayers and meditations was given the spiritual name, the holy name of Sushila Devi with the invocation of God's richest blessings upon her, so that in her devoted life she might bring Love and Light to all the children of God in the East and the West.

As I have mentioned many other students wanted to come to India to serve the Ashram but by the time we actually started, one by one, they had dwindled in number, with some plea or other and promises to come later on to join the Ashram in Thotapalli Hills. Two other aspiring souls, truth teachers did try though to come with us. One was Miss Oliphant, a tall elderly lady, by birth, an English woman. She had been for many years a teacher and although she had then retired and was living in seclusion the spiritual life, she nevertheless tried to boss everyone, to teach them. She was an ardent follower of the Ramakrishna Mission in America and having become drawn to the high ideals of the Mission of Peace and its selfless services she decided to dedicate the remaining years of her life to Mother India.

Miss Oliphant and Sister Sushila had many differences between themselves and Sushila resented being bossed or always treated like a young girl, a mere student of Miss Oliphant's. Anyway Miss Oliphant booked her passage with us as far as Japan, because we could not find accommodations on a steamer directly to India. Another elderly lady, also a Truth seeker and one of my students came along with us to Japan, as a companion to Miss Oliphant.

She also, like Miss Oliphant wanted to dedicate her life to God and the service of His children. Unfortunately she fell sick in Japan and she and Miss Oliphant eventually returned to America.

We boarded in San Francisco one of the large and well-known steamers of the Dollar Line. The busy and restless life of the ship was not however conducive to my silent life of prayers and meditation and Sushila Devi also was not too happy with all the activity of the life on the steamer. Somehow we adapted ourselves to our environment and made many fellow passengers friends and well-wishers of Santi Ashram, the abode of Peace in India. Some of the passengers even expressed a desire to come to India and spend some time in our lovely place of Peace.

OM OM OM

IN THE LAND OF CHERRY BLOSSOMS –JAPAN

Japan is often called by the lovely name of the ‘*Land of Cherry Blossoms*’. The trees were in full bloom and gave us joy and inspiration. For want of a good steamer connection directly to India, to land in Madras we had to stay in Japan for some time, nearly a month. I do not remember now the name of the large town where we stayed for such a long time but it was a health resort, popular with large numbers of tourists. We engaged these rooms large and comfortable in a noted and luxurious hotel. It must have cost Sister Sushila Devi a great amount of money for she generously paid all the expenses during our long sojourn in Japan. Miss Oliphant, the elderly, tall English teacher, having been a teacher all her life was busy most of the time in teaching something or other to everyone whom she met.

As we had no work to do, for we were strangers and know very few people, Sister Sushila hired a taxi by the hour and we took long drives through the countryside of Japan. Although we did not hold any large public meetings in Japan, we did meet with small groups of individuals and we shared our thoughts and prayers with all aspiring devotees. There is one incident which I still

remember even now. I never took coffee but at the urging and repeated requests of Sister Sushila Devi, I finally agreed to try it for the first time. As the stomach was sensitive to coffee, I began to vomit. Sushila felt very sorry then and arranged a long, long drive through the lovely hills and fields of Japan. It was interesting to see all the Japanese women, men and children working in the rice fields so industriously. Japan is also called the 'Land of Rice' for their main food then and now has always been rice. The long journey, the drive in the Taxi on the picturesque mountain roads was very refreshing and we returned safely, with feelings of joy.

After we reached the hotel I went to my room. As I opened the locked door with my key, which I had taken with me, it was a sad surprise to see a man already inside the room, ransacking one of my trunks and looking into all the books, papers and especially the letters. When I asked him, why he had opened the door of my locked room and why he was searching through my things, he replied that thinking it to be his room he had mistakenly entered my room. As he had been caught, so to say, red-handed, searching one of my trunks, he felt confused and left the room in haste. When I complained to the proprietor of the hotel about this audacious and crooked act by one of the citizens of Japan, a living disgrace to the honour of that noble land, the proprietor was not very concerned and merely smiled and said that the intruder had most probably been a CID agent-the Criminal Investigation Branch of the Police Department. He added that as long as we were not connected with politics and subversive parties we need not worry in the least. Nevertheless the proprietor did say he was sorry and would investigate into the matter and take action if necessary. He also promised that such a thing would not be repeated.

By God's Blessings and our good *karma* we spent some of the happiest days in Japan in rest and meditation as if to prepare ourselves for the great work ahead in the future. We were never tired of watching the Cherry Blossoms or the other lovely flower trees. Sister Sushila Devi also wrote some beautiful thoughts on Cherry Blossoms. How blessed it is to be in harmony with all

nature. To the God-loving souls who are blessed to see Him, not only in man but also in bird, beast, plant and flower, life is glorious and full of joy and peace. Saints such as Saint Francis were in constant communion with God and saw Him in the birds and beasts which used to flock around him without any fear. How blessed it is to love all creation and to be loved in return by even the animal and birds.

Our stay in Japan shall ever remain fresh and alive. The citizens of Japan also were kind and loving to us. They are a hard working and God-loving people and their land is filled with beautiful Pagodas, Temples and lovely statues of Lord Buddha in sitting and standing poses. Japan brought us nearer to the Buddha's life and to his great compassion.

May all glory be unto the Buddha, the Lord of Compassion.

May Peace be Unto All !

OM OM OM

Chapter 51

WELCOME HOME TO MOTHER INDIA

LANDING IN MADRAS HARBOUR:

‘For everything the time must come’ is a well known saying. I also often repeat that not a blade of grass moves without God’s will. There has been a standstill or delay and a silence in the writing of this Autobiography in the last month. Nearly a month has passed without my writing even a single chapter but there is an ardent wish that this body should not go, or that death should not come, until the Autobiography gets completed. As no one else in the world knows the ins and outs or details of my life and inner thoughts. God has given me a lease of life so that I may complete the Autobiography. Then the passing thought sometimes comes: ‘What if the Autobiography is not completed? Is it essential to the world? Are there not already enough Autobiographies? All is vanity, vanity and vanity’. It is very difficult to rise above vanity of every kind and become completely centered in God, forgetting the outer world of name and fame. Not my will, but May Thy will be done, O Lord!

Pujya Ramananda Tirtha Swamiji also, while he was in the Ashram requested me, to complete the Autobiography. He has even written from Hyderabad and reminded me to continue writing the Autobiography. Thus by His Grace I have started to write again now, in the early hours of dawn at the beginning of the holy month of December. I have always considered December holy because of the birth of the blessed Jesus Christ. May the Christ spirit express itself in all of us. Whenever I look at the picture of Christ unconsciously I hear his holy words, *‘Come unto me’*. Blessed are they who rush into his hands to be freed of all sins, worries and anxieties of every kind. It is helpful to consider every day as the last day of one’s life and every moment the last moment of one’s life. In this way one can make the best use of every moment of the day. May every moment of this life be useful and helpful to all His children in all the East and the West.

Returning now to the landing in Madras Harbour I can still see that vision of the many devotees, friends and well-wishers of the Ashram greeting me, as the steamer reached the dock. Mother Kamala Devi and her three talented daughters, Manorama, Sushila and Sumati were waiting for my arrival, anxiously looking at the steamer and waving their handkerchiefs. The pilot slowly steered the steamer into the harbor and finally it was anchored at the end of one of the docks. The friends of the passengers rushed to the ship and climbed the ladders. It was all a state of excitement with all the reunions, medical examinations, customs, etc. I no longer remember the name of the cargo steamer which I travelled on, from Japan to Madras; but it had a limited number of passengers and voyaged on it slowly so that I might have as many days of rest and relaxation as possible on the steamer. The sunrises and sunsets were glorious and inspiring.

My fellow passengers came and bid me adieu, said their farewells and promised to come to the Ashram at their earliest convenience. As usual, as on every steamer on which I travelled, there had been spiritual discourses and meditations to help the passengers and all the crew, from the captain to the cabin boy. Whether I travel on steamer or on a train, whether on the ocean or land, I have always remembered one helpful and inspiring motto;

Scatter roses of love as you go by

For you may not tread this path again.

Thus, on the way from Japan to Madras I knew that I might never travel on this steamer again with these passengers and so I tried to do my part by sharing my Message of Peace and Love with everyone with whom I came in contact, both on the steamer and during the stay in Madras, with Mr. and Mrs. T. Ananda Rao and the many old and new friends and devotees of the Ashram. Thus, both on ship and on land there were daily prayers, *bhajans* and meditations. At the end of every *satsang* in the evenings we wished for Peace for all the children of God in the world repeating Loka Samastha Sukhino Bhavantu – May Peace be unto all !

OM TAT SAT OM

SRI SWAMI OMKAR'S RETURN TO INDIA

As it is rather difficult to dig into the dead past and remember the life of more than forty years ago, I was happy to find in Peace, August 1931 an article entitled, 'Sri Swami Omkar's Return to India' and I should like to reprint it here, for it gives all the details of the name of steamers, dates and recounts the meetings with devotees wherein the Message of Peace and Love was shared with all.

Sri Swami Omkar's Return to India

Sriman Swami Omkarji Maharaj left the American shores on the 19th of March 1931 and travelled from California to Japan on the *S.S. Rio de Janerio* of the O.S.K. Line, after a stay of nearly three years in the U.S.A. on the third trip of his Vedantic Mission to Western countries. Though he was very much handicapped by the unfortunate circumstances of the fall on ice, which resulted in the double fracture of the hip bone and confined him to bed for nearly six months he, was, by the divine spirit able to open this time, four new Peace Centres in different places in America. Along with him have come five of his American devotees and admirers. Four will follow shortly and the fifth, Sister Sushila Devi is presently in Japan awaiting steamer accommodation to India so that she may join the Ashram. On board the ship Swamiji Maharaj delivered lectures on 'The Inner Life of Christ' and the 'Soul of India' as well as lively talks on Vedanta. Several passengers and in particular the first class passengers too showed much interest. Peace and other literature and copies of 'Mother America' were distributed freely. After a short stay in Japan he left for Singapore by the *S.S. Cormorin*. Here he attended by invitation the services of the Salvation Army. Finally he left Singapore for Madras by the *S.S. Rohna* where also he conducted lectures on 'Aid to Humanity' and other Vedantic subjects. Almost the whole of the crew and passengers took much interest in the teachings and out of their own enthusiasm incense was burnt and prasad distributed. On the morning of 6th of June, 1931 at 6 a.m. several devotees and members of the Ashram and Mission of Peace waited at the Madras harbour

to receive Swamiji Maharaj. The ship touched the wharf at 7 a.m. All the eager expectants, after seeing Swamiji Maharaj felt as if the Rohna had hidden him in her womb of Peace all these three long years and just delivered him to sooth their wounded feelings. A wave of overwhelming joy passed through all and the intoxication of love of faced completely the pangs of long separation. Thus, through his radiant looks and heavenly smile fresh Life, Light and Love were infused into all. After having spent a few days in Madras Swamiji Maharaj reached Sri Santi Ashram on the 10th June, 1931. The weather was pleasant and the climate soothing on that memorable day and the innumerable flower and fruit trees of the entire 30 acres of garden, having drunk deep the nectar of the monsoon, dressed themselves in lovely garb and greeted the newcomer. The members and inmates expressed their great joy and presented welcome addresses. About fifty people were fed in honour of the safe return to the Ashram of Sri Swamiji. The whole gathering chanted hymns in praise of the Lord. May Peace ever reign in its splendour in the hearts of humanity.

OM OM OM

WELCOME ADDRESS

To His Holiness Swami Omkarji Maharaj
Founder and President, Sri Santi Ashram
The Mission of Peace, Thotapalli Hills, E.G.Dt.
May it please your Holiness,

We beg to offer Your Holiness our most cordial welcome on this occasion of your safe return into our midst after a sojourn of nearly three years in America for the third time. Our deep sense of gratitude for the lofty way in which you have carried out your apostolic mission in America and for the many laurels which you have won cannot be adequately expressed in words. We have watched with great admiration your selfless activities in America, spreading Peace and broadcasting through the press and pulpit and most of all through spiritual insight, the eternal and universal ideals of the religion of peace. By your Mission of Peace and Love you

have cemented the East and the West together, thus falsifying the poet's lay:

East is East and West is West
And never the twain shall meet.

The sweet charm of your person the divine beauty of your soul and the unique power of your inspired talks, all of these have made you dear and near to the hearts of the people of both West and East.

Your Holiness, the news of the fall which you sustained on ice, which resulted in the double fracture of your hipbone on December 2, 1929 made us all very anxious and crushed all our hopes, marred all the joys of life. The deepest prayers of our hearts went forth to the Almighty, imploring Him to restore your health. It was a great matter of relief to us when we heard of your gradual recovery through the kind help and loving care of our American Sisters and Brothers in general and Mrs. Jean D.Lilly in particular which has placed us under a deep debt of gratitude to them.

With the joy of Allness and the bliss of Oneness we delight ourselves to offer our warmest welcome to Sister Saint Clair Nowald, Sushila Devi who has followed you to India. We wish her well in every way and we thank her sincerely for her intense love and ardent desire to serve our Mission of Peace. We trust more than ever now, she will feel the whole universe as her home and the inhabitants as her very Self.

It is the earnest and intense prayer of us all that your holiness shall be abundantly blessed with long-life and sound health to enable you to carry on your high and noble work in the future with renewed vigour and redoubled vitality.

We beg to remain
Your ardent admirers and dear devotees
The members and inmates of Sri Santi Ashram
OM OM OM

Chapter 52

SISTER SUSHILA DEVI'S ARRIVAL IN COLOMBO, CEYLON

I should like to begin this chapter with a Prayer, perhaps the first one that she wrote upon her arrival in India.

Prayer

Immortal Vien whence life doth spring
Teach us now our hearts to bring
To that state which knows no fears
Where we shed ecstatic tears.
Grant that we, that realms behold
In our loving hearts unfold
Of which saints and sages sing,
'How stupendous is this thing'.

Om Tat Sat Om

It was a happy day when we received the telegram that our Sister Sushila Devi had booked passage on a Japanese steamer and would land in Ceylon. Santi Ashram was blessed to have a comfortable Willis Car, a gift of some American devotees which I had brought back to India the second time. We wanted to make the best use of the car, the Peace Car by going in it to receive Sushila Devi. Mother Ratnam and Atmaram joined me in the car along with another ashramite and the devoted and faithful driver, Baram. As it was inconvenient to take the car across the waters that separate India from Ceylon we left the Peace Car in Madras with some of our oldest devotees of the Ashram.

We left Madras on the train and travelled as far as Cape Comorin and then boarded a steamer bound for Colombo. Sister Sushila Devi was extremely happy to see us all. After a stay of three days, during which we showed everything that was to be seen to Sushila Devi in Colombo, including its beautiful pagodas and lovely beach, we started for Madras where our Peace Car and devoted friends waited anxiously. We must have stayed nearly a week in Madras, enjoying the hospitality of the Ashram devotees

and visiting all the sacred places in and around Madras, such as the holy temple of the Goddess Minakshi at Madurai. This great temple is known for its artistic sculpture and grandeur, with its hundreds of stone pillars and fine craftsmanship. They say that the great and holy temple was not built by human beings but by *devas*, celestial beings. In any case, by whom so ever the temple was built, Sushila Devi enjoyed her visit immensely. The food was new, the language was new and even the dress and customs were new to her. She tried to adjust and acclimatize herself by eating only simple and natural food such as salads, raw vegetables, and fruits and milk and by wearing the *sari*, the dress of Indian ladies. She wanted to be a part and parcel of Mother India not only in thought but in appearance also, appearing like a true Hindu lady in a *sari*.

The Welcome Address given to Sister Sushila Devi and her own lovely reply are so complete that they speak for themselves; far better than my own finite account of her arrival which occurred more than forty years ago.

Welcome Address

To Our Noble Sister Ellen Saint Clair Nowald
Sister Sushila Devi
May it please our Blessed Sister,

We, the sisters and brothers of Sri Santi Ashram, the Mission of Peace earnestly offer you with all joy, a hearty welcome into our midst from the far away land of your American home.

We cannot adequately express our joy at the happy news of your starting with His Holiness Swami Omkarji Maharaj, to the holy Ashram and with great interest and devotion, to take up the divine work at the command of the Almighty in the Mission of Peace, Sister Sushila, we observe in you the high ideals of saintliness mingled with love, extending and animating the whole universe. May your noble and holy ideals reign unceasingly in your infinite heart and drench all beings so that they may bear the

work of youth and spirituality, which is already on your forehead and join with the smile of heaven which is on your lips.

We take this opportunity to express our deep sense of gratitude and sincere thanks for the innumerable tokens of cordiality, help and cooperation you have extended to Swamiji Maharaj, ever since you came into contact with his unfathomable Divine Love. In particular our thanks are due for all the help you have rendered His Holiness on the long voyage to India.

We pray earnestly and intensely that the Divine Lord may bestow upon you abundant energy combined with sound health and long life so that you may carry on the high and noble work of this Abode of Peace.

We beg to remain
Your sisters and brothers
of Sri Santi Ashram, the Mission of Peace

This chapter would be incomplete without the reply of Sister Sushila Devi, which is full of sympathy and appreciation of Mother India.

Reply

By Sister Sushila Devi Miss Ellen Saint Clair Nowald
to the welcome address presented to her at Sri Santi
Ashram on 18 June, 1931

Beloved Sisters and Brothers of India, I am deeply moved by the great goodness of God and your own loving kindness that my heart is so full that there is small space for words. However, are not words ever poor and few and totally inadequate to express sentiments profound as mine at this lovely welcome celebration! From the very hour of my landing in Ceylon, your hands have been warmly extended to greet me. How surprised and glad I was to see Swami Omkarji, Mother Ratnam, that emblem of sweet womanhood and Atmaram, her dear son, who came forth with garlands of jasmine and camphor to meet me at Colombo and later, in Madras. Mr. Anada Rao, Mother Kamala Devi and their

three sweet little girls who entertained us with unstinting hospitality, giving me a rare insight into the ideality of a charming Indian household. Other friends from Sri Santi Ashram who came to Madras made the remaining part of the journey happy and comfortable in every way, for which I am grateful indeed. At the home of Mr. Rama Rao and mother Ratnam in Rajahmundry , where we were lovingly received and spent several happy days it was an unforgettable sight to see the devotees stream in the wide open doors, day and night, to see our Swamiji, bringing offerings to his feet. And here again at this beautiful Peace Mission you benevolently assure me of being welcome in India and even express gratitude at my accompanying Swamiji from America. Let me tell you, dear ones, it is I who am grateful beyond expression and never cease to marvel at, why I was so blessed to accompany so sublime a soul as our Swamiji to such a sacred place and to find these gathered so many hearts devoted to the service of one another, God and humanity. It is indeed a privilege.

From the moment of my contacting Swamiji at a New York gathering, deep within I realised that I had found a God-conscious being; such a one I had long sought to guide me in the difficult way known as ‘The Path’. Here is one who with tears of ecstasy told of the God who dwells within and the possibility for the pure in heart to attain His Kingdom, the Pearl of Great Price for which Jesus bid us sell all; the Samadhi of Krishna; the Nirvana of Buddha; where all is Peace, Light and Bliss. This Heaven, Samadhi, Nirvana, our Swamiji having tasted, he desires to share with the whole world. I am full of gratitude to be therein included. Oh ! What more is there to be said, than that I am happy to be here with you, for the opportunity to grow spiritually and perhaps be of some service to humanity and that I love and again thank you, each and every one.

OM

OM

OM

(Peace July 1931)

IN SANTI ASHRAM - WITH SWAMIES AND YOGINIS

What had once been the thickest of jungles, where wild beasts roamed and people were afraid to walk alone in the dark of night had been converted now, all by God's grace and special blessings into a Garden of Angels. Now instead of wild beasts, mahatmas of various types and angels of every kind walk in lovely avenues lined with trees and fragrant flowers and reside in peaceful *kutirams*, meditate in silence on hillocks and give prayers for the Peace of all in the East and the West. It is almost unbelievable, how the early predictions of the old, uneducated cobbler, the devoted Venkatesu have come true. He used to say often:

Swamiji, I see the whole Ashram filled with *kutirams* and palatial buildings and cars going to and fro on the lovely avenues of the Ashram. Bus loads of pilgrims come regularly from distant places too.

Thus, we often have school children on excursions come to join us in *bhajans* and prayers. The school children and teachers come with large groups from various schools and colleges to listen to the Message of Peace of Santi Ashram and benefit themselves, families and communities by prayers and meditations. Sometimes even hundreds of pilgrims, on All-India Pilgrim Tours include Santi Ashram in their spiritual pilgrimage, for they consider the Ashram a holy place, where dwells the Peace that cannot be bought for any amount of wealth in the market place.

Distinguished personages such as His Holiness Sri Swami Narayan, the direct disciple of Bhagavan Swami Rama Tirthaji, Maharaj, the Gurudeva of our Pujya Swami Ramananda Tirthaji also have visited the Ashram and blessed it by staying for a few days in appreciation of its silent work. Sri Swamiji came once, while I was away in America and again came for a longer stay while Sister Sushila Devi was in the Ashram. He had the highest appreciation for her dedicated life of service to God's children.

Sri Swamiji loved the Ashram so much that he took joy in giving wise suggestions for its progress in the wilderness of Thotapalli Hills. Once during my absence, while I was away he came and delighted in taking long walks, especially towards the perennial spring, the Mallikarjuna Dhara. Even now, at that sacred place one can hear the songs of the lovely peacock and other beautiful birds of plumage. In those lovely hills of silence even now one can also hear the roar of a wild beast now and then. Sometimes it makes one sad to hear that a cheetah has attacked a cow or a goat.

Thus, the wild jungle, infested with wild beasts was converted into a Heavenly Place of Prayer, Meditation and Peace, all through God's Boundless Grace and Incomprehensible Blessings. God alone knows what is best for every individual as well as for every place. What can a finite man, with all his finite knowledge of finite science in the finite world truly know? Blessed are they who can trust in the all-knowing wisdom and infinite love of God and allow their tiny minds to merge and dissolve in His Omnipresence, Omnipotence and Omniscience.

His Holiness, Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj, the founder of the Divine Life Society, Rishikesh, Himalayas was another great soul, who not only blessed the Ashram with his presence but also stayed for some time and kept in close touch with Santi Ashram until his very demise, his, *Mahasamadhi*. It is the good fortune of Santi Ashram that Swamiji did his Tapas, austerities and prayed and meditated here even before he established the Divine Life Society which has branches all over the world. Yet he was ever simple, child-like and loving and he loved me as a part and parcel of himself. Once, like a little child, during his stay, as a baby would ask its mother he said:

Swamiji, let us have some *idlees* today; Please
ask the workers in the kitchen to prepare them.

I was always deeply touched with his great overwhelming love. He was a great musician, nay a Divine Musician and always gave Soul-awakening *bhajans*, at the requests of devotees in the area, both rich and poor, to give many inspiring talks, prayers,

music and meditations in the towns and also the gardens of the *zamindars* and other hospitable and devoted souls. During these congregational meetings Swamiji would draw hundreds of people by his holy and inspired *bhajans* and he was so generous that whenever any of our hosts or other devotees gave him any love-offerings, he would immediately give the money to Santi Ashram for its use and progress. Santi Ashram was truly blessed to have been considered his spiritual home from the very beginning. Here is an article from one of the old Peace Journals which gives a full account of our activities in his name in those days.

Our Peace Activities:

With the happy New Year Sri Swami Sivananda, doctor, author, orator, poet and philosopher of Swarga Ashram, Himalayas, visited us. He was accompanied by Swami Swarupanandaji and Swami Atmanandaji, who joined him in spreading vedanta, all along the way to Santi Ashram through a series of philosophic and unique song services.

Since their auspicious arrival the neighbouring villages have been vibrating anew with their chantings followed by Sri Swami Omkarji's beautiful, soul-stirring peace messages. Swami Pranav Anandaji, Kumari Sushila Devi, Sister Broenniman, Brother Sarangapani, our devoted manager and Brother Purna Chaitanya Narayana and Suryarao also accompanied them and helped in a silent way.

Attention to the spiritual needs of these villagers was accompanied by medical care and the free distribution of required medicines. Sri Swami Sivanandaji invited all sufferers to avail themselves of the free medical attention ever offered at Sri Santi Ashram.

We are grateful to the respective *zamindars* of these villages for their hearty welcome and all the arrangements so whole heartedly carried out. Her Highness, the Rani of Lakshminarasapuram and the members of her household are most gratefully remembered for their gracious invitation and help in

arranging a large meeting, offering their lovely garden for this holy purpose and aiding our peace cause in so many practical ways. Srimathi Santananda Mouni Devi also charmed and inspired us thereafter at her unique Girl's School, where the children exhibited their useful arts and talents.

Brother D.Seshagiri Rao Pantulu, another benefactor and friend of Sri Santi Ashram invited, entertained and arranged a meeting at Kakinada Satyalingam Charity Boy's School. The boys listened attentively and devoutly to Sri Swami Sivanandaji's *Rama mantras* and to Sri Swami Omkarji's peace message, for they recognised in the Swamijis two dear big brothers. We inspected the school and were impressed with the happy, orderly atmosphere and the various arts of the boys. In several Kakinada homes also meetings were held and Brother Kotha Venkataratnam and Sri Pydah Ramakrishnayya are greatly remembered for their hospitality.

Kothapalli village also invited us to give our message of Peace and Love. The people listened in a receptive and kindly attitude to the high philosophical truths of the singers and speakers. After this another meeting was held in Uppada beach under the open sky as the waves sang OM OM OM Along with us.

May God be praised for His loving kindness through all our loyal friends who have helped so faithfully the dear cause of Peace.

OM TAT SAT OM

(Peace Feb 1933)

During Swami Sivanandaji's stay in the Ashram one scene would often come to my mind and gives great joy, apart from the memories of his lonely walks, lovely silent meditations and inspired *bhajans* with music and ecstatic dancing. While I was in America some years earlier, I wrote a long article named the 'Philosophy of Pain' and several copies of it were typed by the devoted Miss Emma Woods. I am sorry, this message which is helpful and even inspiring has never been printed; but in those days and now I have been more anxious to express my thoughts in words for rarely devoted

souls to read, than in having many copies printed and distributed to many. There are quite a few manuscripts which are, if they are ever to see the light of day, in print which will prove beneficial and soul-awakening to spiritual aspirants. I am sorry to add here, through the neglect and carelessness of some of the lazy people in the Ashram, some of these valuable papers have been eaten away by white ants.

Books may be attacked by white ants, valuable writings may be eaten away and destroyed; but there is something that can never be touched by all the white ants or bookworms in the entire world, nor can it be rusted or stolen. That thing is the *Atman*, the Indwelling Light, the Oversoul, the *Soham* Glory. May all Glory and Homage be unto That Incomprehensible Light of lights, the Self-effulgent Splendour of Millions of Suns!

To return to Swami Sivanandaji, the scene which I remember so clearly occurred once, when he was feeling indisposed and I gave him a copy of 'The Philosophy of Pain': in three parts. Later on I went to his small *kutir*, his dwelling place in the Ashram. He was lying on a mat on the floor, his legs stretched out, deeply absorbed in studying the copy of my manuscript. He was so inspired that he was taking notes and helpful hints from 'The Philosophy of Pain, that he never even noticed my presence in the *kutir*. When he lifted his eyes and saw me he got up with great joy and embraced me with ecstasy. Thus we lived together in great understanding and bliss, not as two but as one mind, heart and soul. To me Sri Sivanandaji Maharaj is still alive. It was my good fortune and privilege to have listened and to listen still to his divine and spontaneous songs of inspiration and God-consciousness. Indeed, such great souls of God-realisation and divine ecstasy are never dead, even with the passing of the body, for they are eternally alive and immortal.

During all the past fifty-four years of Ashram life many saints and sages have visited Santi Ashram, Thotapalli Hills and also our Waltair Branch. The other day from the latent memory arose of the visit of one Yogini who came two or three times to

visit the Ashram with her disciples and blessed us all with her wisdom and love. She was a middle-aged woman and the only clothing she wore was an old blanket wrapped around her body.

Once the Yogini Chinnamma and I were sitting under the cool shade of the Mango tree. I was writing something with my finger in the sandy earth, perhaps the sacred syllable OM. The Yogini said: What is it? Why do you write? This was a great lesson to me, that one should be motionless. It is only in that complete, motionlessness silence that one merges in *samadhi* alone.

Another outstanding incident of those days occurred during another visit of this Yogini. I used to spend a great deal of time, hour after hour, alone in silence, lying on the ground in meditation in the *guha*. Once, of her own accord the Yogini came and was lying beside me. After some time she rose and left. Later on I heard that she told one of her disciples “He has mastered all that is to be mastered”. It gave me great joy to hear her kind words although I felt it was her great love for me which made her speak so highly of this humble instrument of God.

And finally, of all the memories of Swamis, Sadhus and Yoginis there is one more Sadhu Mahatma, a Hindi speaking Swami from the Punjab, Swami Brahmananda who came once to visit the Ashram and stay to meditate in one of the small *kutiram*. He can never be forgotten. He had spent many years in *tapas* in the Holy Himalayas and was a saintly soul. He will never be forgotten by me or any of the ashramites, for he brought to our attention the song of a certain divine bird that seeks its beloved with the piercing and heart-rending cry of “Piu Kaha? Piu Kaha? Where is the beloved? Where is the beloved ? This holy cry of the bird filled and reverberated all over the Ashram and the surrounding hills and can be especially heard to make its plaintive and beautiful cry, “Where is the beloved ? Where is God? “ during the mango season.

From somewhere, from the distant hills where the holy bird cries and repeats, ‘Piu Kaha’, where is the beloved? The answer comes in silence:

The beloved is within, in the stillness of your own
purified heart.

A second reply comes from another bird, perhaps its soul
companion:

Eyes have they, yet they see not.
Ears have they, yet they hear not.

Until this holy Swamiji opened our eyes and attuned our
ears to this Holy Song of these divine birds, the little Pipiha, we
were, both deaf and blind to the sacred music of the divine birds.

May all Homage be unto the Holy Swamijis, Mahatmas,
Yoginis and other Saintly Souls, who have blessed Santhi Ashram;
and to all the aspiring children of God throughout the world; and
to the holy birds and creatures of the earth, sea and sky!

May peace be unto all!

OM OM OM

Chapter 54

SISTER SUSHILA DEVI

The lives of Great Men all remind us
We can make our lives sublime
And departing leave behind us
Footprints on the sands of time.

- Longfellow

‘Great Men’ refers not only to men with grey hair but also to the young, devoted and child-like souls such as our Sister Sushila Devi. I have known grey-haired people who were superstitious, domineering and selfish and what is more, they would kill you, not with swords but with words. They are talking –machines and waste our time and are also very orthodox in their fixed views and beliefs. Some of them are the outcastes of the outcastes for they follow blindly the philosophy of aloofness and ‘don’t touchism’. To be great is not to be old with grey hair. One can be great while still young if one possesses a tender and compassionate heart, with a fervent craving to serve the Lord in all His manifested forms from a tiny insect to a great saint.

My purpose now is not to eulogise Sushila Devi but only to share with all my loving readers of Peace and now with his readers of this Autobiography what I have gained and learnt through my close association with her of several years both in America and India.

We will begin with the subject of the dogs and cats of the Ashram as our sister is very fond of them. Even before her arrival we never illtreated them. We fed them often, especially when there was surplus food. But we never actually entered into their lives, never felt their sorrows and joys as ours. Since Sushila’s advent, with her infinite love and ideal life of selflessness, the dumb animals have become near and dear to us. We too can see God shining in their tender eyes, throbbing in their innocent hearts and expressing Himself in all their movements for He is the soul of every being that lives and breathes.

Having eyes, see ye not? Having ears, hear ye not? People who are caught in the mire of worldly activities and whose time is occupied by life's duties are not expected to see in a cow or dog anything more than mere flesh and blood. But it is not so with our Sister Sushila. Strange as it may seem, these dumb animals used to talk and express all their joys and sorrows to our Sushila Devi. Understanding their troubles she took care of them in accordance with their particular needs. Sometimes it was washing the sore eyes or cleaning the puss and dressing the wounds, or washing them with carbolic soap and warm water. When they were thirsty, hungry sick or even healthy all these animals used to wend their way towards our Sushila, to get relief and treatment. Sushila Devi worked hard, slaved and served all these helpless creatures both day and night, always with a smile, for she recognised the One Divine Presence in all of them!

I shall never forget one of the most touching instances of her selfless labour and infinite love. Those were the days of sickness and death for the cattle, for some disease attacked their hoofs and they were dying in great numbers in the Ashram and all the surrounding villages. How patiently and faithfully our Sushila served all those helpless cattle all through that season of pestilence. It was nearly midnight when one of the little calves that had been attacked by the terrible disease began to walk with painful and faltering steps towards Sushila's cottage. As it could not walk, it fell down at a distance from the cottage and our Sushila was awakened by its moaning cry and suffering. At such a dark hour Sushila prepared hot water and went to the calf. She sat by its side, consoled it, put its head in her lap and caressed it. There, alone under the stars she washed the hoofs and removed the worms and then bandaged the wounds. Then she took the calf inside her place and made it rest and sleep, arranging for it a soft bed. Only the Almighty, the Indweller of every being is the witness of similar touching scenes as this. May Sushila Devi live long to love, serve and glorify Him!

Sushila always avoided sitting in a horse carriage or a

bullock cart. When it was unavoidable she used to sit as if on pins and needles and requested the driver not to drive fast and hurt the animal. Such is her tenderness towards life as a whole. Many times, while going through towns, whenever she saw a cart driver whip an animal unsparingly, Sushila would tremble with fear and cry with pain as if she herself had received the lashes. Often it reminded me of Buddha's mercy and compassion towards all dumb animals.

Once Sushila became the mother of four little mice. While I sat one day in front of my *kutir* the mice came towards me one after another, all four of them. I searched for their mother but in vain. So I gave them to Suhshila, the Mother of all helpless creatures and dumb animals. She took tender care of the little ones, putting them in a cardboard box and feeding them affectionately.

Many times at night, while doing work, she would put out the light for fear of killing moths and grasshoppers for the lizards always laid in wait for them. She was never tired of catching one after another of these insects and putting them outside her room in the dark night.

Once, when Rammy, the dog was attacked by a cheetah our Sushila not only snatched the frightened animal from the very mouth of that terrible creature but also tenderly nursed Rammy to life again. When I saw it on the night of the accident . Rammy was a mass of flesh, bathed in a pool of blood. Sushila watched over and took care of the dog, the whole night until the doctor came to stitch the wounds the next day. Even to this day I remember with shame how I was supposed to help Sushila attend on the dog, but like Peter I denied Him thrice or even more times before the cock crew, for I was over powered with sleep. Each time I awoke I saw with shame and remorse Sushila Devi consoling and caressing the dying Rammy. But she forgave me for she knew that I had overworked the day before.

As Rammy's life was uncertain because of its bad wounds,

the Ashram doctor took it to the hospital. By the blessings of God and the special care of our doctor aided by the silent prayers of Sushila, the dog got better. Sushila went once to see it. The reunion of Sushila and the faithful Rammy was the most touching sight to be glorified but not described in finite words. Sushila shed tears of ecstasy and Rammy clung to her embrace with an expression of love and gratitude. There was neither Sushila nor Rammy but only a conflagration of undying flame of selfless love. It was a memorable sight to witness. May all homage be unto the selfless love that seeks not the least reward, where one finds joy not in loving alone but in living as love itself.

Sushila's services were not confined to the animal kingdom alone, for she extended her love and sympathy to all the sick and suffering of the Ashram and to the village poor. For want of space I cannot give even the outstanding instances of her labours of love. When one of the gardeners of the Ashram was wounded she served him for more than a month, regularly she went to his hut morning and evening to clean and dress his wounds. People of all classes, rich and poor, old and young, healthy and sick, flocked around her for advice and relief. Like a ministering angel, even in moments of utter exhaustion she was patient, sweet, loving and ever ready to help and serve one and all.

Once, around midnight a poor farmer came running to the Ashram in tears, for his daughter was dangerously ill. Immediately our Sushila rushed with her small bag of medicines. She washed the patient with warm water, changed the dirty clothes and gave her some of her own, which she had taken for that purpose. She gave hope to the parents and then returned to the Ashram in the early hours of dawn. It is no wonder that the villagers looked upon Sushila as a Goddess of Love, Mercy and Compassion.

But Sushila was not only a loving nurse with a big heart, who took care of animals and sick people. Her activities not just confined to sick beds and the physical plane but also to other work of the Mission of Peace. She was all in all in the Ashram. She was the clerk and stenographer and answered the heavy inland and

foreign correspondence. When visitors came from America and Europe she would cook and wait on them like a servant. She was the Secretary of the Ashram and received the visitors and represented the silent work of the Mission of Peace. She was the disciple of all liberated souls and a convincing teacher for seekers of Truth. Thus, our Sushila's days were spent in selfless service, physically, mentally and spiritually.

When we were invited to the various towns to convey our message of Peace and to represent the Ashram, Sushila took the lead as an outstanding figure and drew all hearts towards the one centre of Truth through her selfless life of infinite love. Once in a gathering of highly cultured and spiritual souls, she made everyone forget their forms and names. One and all began to shed tears of ecstasy for they forgot their little selves in the name of God, the living embodiment of Universal Love.

Sushila's message of love and gratitude which came in the form of her everflowing ecstatic tears makes one remember the beautiful words of Washington Irving.

There is sacredness in tears. They are not the mark of weakness but of power. They speak more eloquently than thousand tongues. They are the messages of the overwhelming grief of deep contrition and of unspeakable love.

It was an hour of stupendous hush and infinite tranquility, where only Immortal Silence reigned. No one was able to speak or move for a long time. It became dark and everyone departed without even the usual saluting words. There was an enshrouding Silence. It was a most sanctified day of sacred memory, not only to me but everyone present in that meeting, for all had, had a touch of His love in stillness.

What the Missionaries could not do with all their toils of many long years of hard life in India our Sister Sushila Devi succeeded in doing with her unostentatious, unassuming, simple life of love, ever walking in the footsteps of the blessed Lord Christ.

Even the most orthodox Hindus of the highest caste adored and worshipped her and even took her into their Sanctum of sanctums, the highly consecrated *puja* rooms. It touched my heart to see in some homes that the spiritual people realised and recognised in Sushila the presence of their ideal deity, the Goddess of their worship. Can there be anything more touching than to recognise Truth, the Impersonal God, through Universal Love, forgetting all castes, creeds, colours and nations? Verily, where Love is, there God is.

Great and respected souls such as His Holiness Narayana Swamiji Maharaj, the chief disciple of Sri Swami Rama Tirthaji and many other venerable Swamies and Yogies of the Himalayas, the Guru of the Maharajah of Kashmir and a host of other spiritual people not only loved our Sushila Devi but paid glowing tributes of deep respect and adoration for her silent, selfless, simple and ideal life. She has the highest place in the homes and hearts of many devoted souls and worshippers of God whom she visited throughout India.

It is needless to write here how we miss our Sister, the life and soul of the Ashram, I miss our Sushila Devi. Everyone and everything in the Ashram missed her. All the friends of the Ashram all over India miss her. It touched my heart to see a dog now and then going to the cave where Sushila used to stay and moaning for her return. Even the little boys loved and adored her with all the strength of their innocent hearts. Whenever they see me writing they ask: 'Swamiji, are you writing to Sushila Devi? If so please convey our pranams.' One day a little boy came and said, 'Swamiji, I am learning geography.' I asked him why and he said, 'Only to follow Sushila's route and to know where she is now.' Can there be any more glorious tribute paid than the deep love of these children for our Sushila's life of service to the Ashram?

Since her departure from the Ashram heavy clouds have been hanging over us and it has rained ceaselessly, as if the very heavens have been shedding tears. Often there is nothing to eat in the Ashram for the workers and for the cattle. Anyway, we are all

devoid of hunger, for our hearts are sad and heavy. After all, man does not live by bread alone, but by the bread of life, which is Love Universal. We have the consolation that the dark clouds will be dispelled again by the early return of our Sushila to the Abode of Peace with the sunshine of her love. Then we will all be happy and He will surely provide us enough to eat for the workers in His Vineyard. On behalf of the members and workers of Sri Santi Ashram I want to express my deepest gratitude to our Sister Sushila Devi through the Peace Journal for all the manifold services she rendered in every field of work and above all for filling the whole Ashram with the fragrance of her Universal Love and Selfless Life.

America, the land of wealth is blessed to have given birth to such a simple, spiritual soul of renunciation and love. India is blessed to share her humble life of infinite love and the Ashram is blessed to have the privilege of her selfless services. You, my loving readers are blessed to read of the life of this God-consecrated souls. In conclusion, it is needless to say how richly I too am blessed to be her humble brother and spiritual companion, to have the privilege of walking hand in hand, climbing the steps to Heaven with Sushila, towards the Sacred Throne of Peace, Glory and Illumination.

OM OM OM

To conclude this chapter of tribute to Sister Sushila Devi, I should like to add here a review of her book, “Mystic Prayers and Poems’ which was published and reviewed by the Swarajya, a leading daily news paper in Madras in the same year, 1933.

Mystic Prayers and Poems

By Sushila Devi

(Ellen Saint Clair Nowald)

This book is a collection of Sister Sushila Devi’s beautiful song and mystic poems which she has poured forth into the pages of Peace while staying in Santi Ashram, Thotapalli Hills. Sister

Sushila Devi belongs to that rare band of young spiritual aspirants who are not bound by race or nationality, in whom divinity the one primary urge in human beings to selfless service expresses itself in boundless love for all beings. Born in America, she came to India fascinated by oriental spiritual wealth and stayed for several years. Her writings are not new to readers of Peace. Living in seclusion and silence in the hills she has devoted her entire time to spiritual development. We earnestly wish that in the flux of time she shall prove a Besant, in establishing a strong link between India and America and promoting greater understanding between these two nations.

The present book, containing a collection of her rarest gems of composition is her first contribution to spiritual literature. It may well be said to be her first gift to the world. It is given only to a few to enjoy divine ecstasy; it is given to fewer still to express it in song and poem. Sister Sushila possesses these two gifts to an extraordinary degree. Her experience of perpetual ecstasy of divine peace and joy finds outlet in these pages; each line mirrors her purest and most innocent nature. The songs are aptly compared to a garland of flowers, each flower is very fragrant, very vibrant with love and life. Where can the beauty of such lines as :

Alas! I have no gift to lay at Thy lotus feet of Light,
 Only a little white rose of undying faith.
 Wilt Thou accept it Lord of my love!

to be found except in the pages of Tagore's Gitanjali? Her songs are not mere outbursts in moments of ecstasy but are pregnant with deep thought and rich spiritual experience.

They read like a page from the *Vedas* and may well serve for a daily morning prayer and worship. Sushila Devi is America's present to India; may we hope she will be India's gift to the world.

OM OM OM

(Peace 1933)

Chapter 55

HAPPY TO BE IN THE MOTHER ASHRAM

My heart longs to share with the loving readers of this Autobiography one of my favourite meditations with a wish for Peace, the goal of precious human birth, for all.

Meditation

(An easy exercise for all earnest souls)

Let us meditate on the great thought, which is a living fact or truth that forgetfulness of God is death. Each time that we forget God we are in the hands of death.

Contrary to what most people think, death is not merely an extinction of physical life and the burial or burning of the body. Real death is forgetfulness in the living truth which is the only reality.

What else can be death but to forget the Life of our lives, Breath of our breaths, Soul of our souls and the Sun of suns, who is the Interpenetrating Presence of every atom of the vast Cosmos?

If forgetfulness is death, then the awareness of God or Truth must be Life, the Life that never changes and which is the same from eternity to eternity.

So let us meditate now on this Living Presence which is throbbing in our hearts as well as in the burning hearts of the great planets. Let us recognise Him now and never forget or deny Him in the name of passing shadows of name, fame and earthly riches or glory.

May all homage and glory be unto this unseen but ever-present and all-embracing Presence.

Hari Om Tat Sat

(Peace June 1935)

In those blessed days many visitors and devotees came to Santi Ashram to pray and meditate. Not only did we have many

aspiring souls from India but also from Europe and America. Whether from the East or the West, Santi Ashram has ever been the Spiritual Home of all seekers of Truth. I should like to share here some articles and poems of our Brothers and Sisters from foreign lands who came and helped the Ashram with their devotion and silent prayers.

From the Himalayas to Sri Santi Ashram

Brother A. Holmes

There is no shrine that man hath built
Can e'er compare with these majestic hills.
Here Thou dost sit unbounded,
Here Thou dost shine unhindered
Day and night !

- Swami Paramananda

Those who have gazed upon the beauty of the eternal snows and pine-clad slopes of the Himalayas, those who have seen the snow glow red in the rays of the setting sun and who have watched with approaching darkness, specks of light spring up from the distant hamlets, those who have tramped the valleys and roamed the deep forests, where even shy nature has her sanctuaries, those whose eyes have feasted upon the mystic hues at daybreak, who have felt the lure of the ever-beckoning heights, who have drunk deep, utterly abandoning themselves to the ravishing beauty of Himalayas must ever feel a slight sadness when the time comes to part to bid adieu.

It was with deep gratitude and bowed head that I caught the last glimpse of the ranges from my carriage window as the train sped on its eastward journey, carrying me to an adventurous future and on to my destination, Sri Santi Ashram, to which His Holiness Sri Swami Omkarji had invited me some three years ago.

As I am a vagabond at heart and wander to many places it would require too much space in these valuable pages to narrate all that I have encountered on the way. So I must ask the reader to skip a distance of two thousand miles and come with me directly

to Sri Santi Ashram.

Reaching the Ashram in the nocturnal hours I was not able to see much; however, after what seemed but a buried interval daylight came and with it, my first real glimpse of the Ashram. I breathed the words, what a relief as the whole surroundings sunk into my thirsty soul, where trees and quietness told me that here I could rest and live in Peace.

It did not take long until I had a pleasure of meeting Dear Sri Swamiji whom I had first met some three years ago. It was a happy moment to feel his spontaneous love and affection and he greeted me with words of homely welcome. I felt that deep gratitude which all must feel, for those whose lives are dedicated to the universal helping and uplift of others. During these happy moments I also had the pleasure of renewing acquaintance with Sister Sushila Devi, a no less noble soul, a writer of mystic verse and one whose whole life is a poem of meditation.

After this happy meeting I returned to my *kutir* to find my humble needs being more than amply catered to. After the conclusion of these trivialities I found myself wandering round the Ashram with appreciation for its beauty, the worship hall, the free dispensary, the press, library and finally the many beautiful spots, hemmed in by trees and flowers of every description. As I glanced around I thought of all this beauty tucked away in a valley surrounded by glorious hills and was again reminded of the lines by Swami Paramananda:

Thou dost dwell
In the hearts of the forest deep
Where flowers try to hide Thee
In their perfumed breath.
Thou dost abide in trees and shrubs
Where raindrops bathe
With their rhythmic fall.

I hope in that one solitary ramble round the Ashram I made up for all those who do not know of its existence. I thanked every tree.

Since having, in my own humble way, become a part of the Ashram I am afforded the opportunity of seeing more of dear Swamiji's life. I see more and more the depths of his spiritual nature, the great humility he bears at heart and the flame that consumes him in that one great desire to share his Peace with one and all.

As I listen to his quiet voice, I sense the spirit of the past carried into the present and with deep mystical conviction know that this sacred soil ever whispers the eternal message of its buried sages on, on to the greater realisation!

Gratitude wells up in the heart as days pass in this beautiful Ashram, where Peace and quietness speak of something different and where every day lived, seems a day set aside in the soul's calendar, set aside for the beloved in one's own heart.

OM OM OM

(Peace 1936)

Nicolas Roerich:

We rejoice greatly at the beautiful letters and messages that this noble and great companion of humanity sends to our Swamiji and Sister Sushila Devi which they keep in heart and mind with reverent love. His fiery mystical poems and messages will continue to grace the pages of Peace. The very thought of this beloved *rishi* has ever been a source of inspiration and deep-rooted joy to all, who silently strive and march under the 'Heavenly Banner of Peace' to the new age.

Ashram News: Peace 1935, September

New links in the Universal Garland of Peace

Brother Holmes:

We are very happy to welcome to our Abode of Peace our Brother Holmes who is living the life of a *sadhu* with keen understanding of all its sacred principles of self-denial and self-conquest; sharing our simple vegetarian fare and wearing a *sadhu's*

plain attire, in loving meditation, peace, silence and service. We feel that he is a great blessing not only to our Ashram but to the universe at large.

Sri Venkata Rao, B.A. and Family:

Another happy and auspicious event for Santi Ashram is the consecration to the Cause of Peace of Brother V.Venkata Rao, pundit and exponent of theTulsidas Ramayana, the proficient and inspired reading of which has earned him the name of the ‘Andhra Tulsidas’. Vistors spending a season of rest within these gates will enjoy the discourses, *bhajans* and hospitality of Brother Venkata Rao, who is an emblem of service, devotion and universal brotherhood. May God bless him!

Rev. Arthur E.Massey:

We are happy to announce that Brother Arthur E.Massey, author poet and elect Brother of the Cause of Peace is also to be welcomed soon into our own Abode of Peace. He has long been serving the great cause in England and now wishes to offer his life to devotion and service in Mother India which has need of such universal and God-imbued souls, who bear a message of brotherhood and love in their very lives, just as the west has need of Indian saints who live as well as preach the high vedic truths. A warm welcome awaits Brother Massey in his new chosen home in the East, Sri Santi Ashram.

Welcome to Dr. Balsey and Party:

The contemplated visit of a group of fifteen American visitors escorted by Brother Balsey, M.D. is awaited with glad expectancy in November. Dr. Balsey and many of these dear ones are devotees and friends of our Swamiji whom he contacted on his Apostolic Mission to America. May these precious souls find in India full realisation of the great Truth which they have glimpsed through the silent effort and faithful work of the messengers from India. A hearty welcome awaits Brother Balsey and party to Santi Ashram.

Visitors from America:

We are happy to have visitors from far away America to share our Christmas Peace and Joy. Blessed Swamiji's beautiful message of Christmas morn was much appreciated by all and made the new born Christ stir in every listening heart. It always gives our Swamiji a deep and nameless happiness when loving souls realise the sweetness of Peace in the Ashram, for this is the purpose to which his sacred life has ever been devoted. He feels his labour rewarded in the peace and joy of others.

Thus our prayers go forth for our dear visitors who have expressed such heartfelt gratitude in their short stay with us. May they ever continue to feel Infinite Peace as they journey through India, which ever holds forth a beautiful light to those who come seeking the priceless treasure called Peace Profound.

OM

A Visit to the Abode of Peace

Beloved Brother Swami Omkarji,

Beloved Sister Sushila Devi,

In Sri Santi Ashram, the blessed Abode of Peace, within and without, though we have been with you but a short week we have experienced the Peace of God, the Peace that passeth all understanding. Timeless, Spaceless Causeless Peace, the Peace of Absolute Unity in a Love Divinely Perfect, of all that is manifested within.

Your hospitality has overwhelmed us, you have given beyond our capacity to receive and utilize. And the memory of these few days, now passed, shall be with us forever as a beautiful, perfect picture of divinely humble bliss. We have seen with our own eyes the pure, white spiritual light emanating from you and illuminating the whole room with its glorius effulgence. This, to us is actual evidence of Reality of the indwelling and all-penetrating spirit that you are.

We realise that the whole world is constantly blessed by you with this marvelous spiritual treasure, in silence, for in yourself you have realised that the individual, the cosmic and the infinite are one and inseparable.

You have given to us the greatest initiation of your own free will and accord. You have made the Silence a living, ever-present and Omnipotent Reality. What more could anyone ask, seek or demand here or hereafter?

Our love we cannot express in words, like leaves on a tree, though they be the very lungs of the tree, only in the precious fruit in which is the seed of the whole tree, so is that seed the word, the word that was, is and shall forever be, God, the infinite of all power, substance, all intelligence and all love.

More power to you both in doing the great work of heaven here on earth, where it is so much needed. Our blessings and prayers shall be ever with you and this blessed Abode of Peace, Sri Santi Ashram.

Very truly yours in every good endeavour

Santi Ashram
December 25, 1935

Dr.J.A.Balsey, M.D.
Mrs.Grace C.Spahn Hahn
Mr.Baird T.Spalding and Party

INDIA

By John A.Balsey, M.D
To the Land of the Rising Sun I come,
OM MANI PADME HUM !
My refuge is in Thy Holy Word OM.
My refuge is in Thy Kingdom OM,
My refuge is in Thy Omnipresent Good,
In Thy Universal Brotherhood.

OM OM OM

To Wisdom's Height and Life I come,

OM MANI PADME HUM!

The Jewel is in the Lotus, Rise Mighty One!

Rise and Shine, for thy Light has come,

On earth as in Heaven, Thy Will is done.

OM MANI PADME HUM!

Below as bove,

The Dewdrop melts into Thy Sea of Love.

OM SANTHI SANTHI SANTHI OM.

Om TAT SAT OM

Chapter 56

DESIRELESSNESS

I bow down my head with deep devotion to the lotus feet of those sacred souls who have attained that perfect state of desirelessness, who have passed through the fiery process of renunciation and discrimination. Somewhere I remember having written that angels wait with bated breath and reverence for the privilege of serving desireless souls. And what about the majority of people who are filled with manifold desires of every kind? It is said that the devils turn around such people and laugh at their numberless desires. How pathetic is the pitiable condition of the slaves of desires. Now dear readers, please tell me whether the angels are waiting on you or whether the devils are laughing and turning around you? Are you a master or a slave of impulses and desires?

Divine recklessness, great poise and infinite peace, which are the outcome of desirelessness, can never be understood by the slaves of desires. One who is without desires is perpetually happy regardless of the circumstances of life, the conditions of profit and loss and climatic changes. How blessed and perfectly happy and contented are they who are desireless!

This reminds me of the beautiful story of 'The simple Sadhu and the mighty Emperor'. The Sadhu sat basking in the sunshine on a slab of stone, almost naked. The Emperor, who was bedecked with jewels and diamonds happened to pass by and was struck with the simple life and contented look on the happy face of the man of God. Briefly, the Emperor requested the Saint to accompany him to his native land and promised him jewels, wealth, power, etc., but the saint refused and with a laugh said that everything was within him. The Emperor's pride was hurt he raised his sword in anger and said he would kill the Saint. At these threatening words the Sadhu laughed heartily and said, 'You never uttered such a lie as that, O King. How can the sword cut, the fire burn, the waters wet or the wind dry me? Even death cannot touch me': As

he said these words he continued to laugh. The Emperor felt ashamed of his haughtiness and greed and prostrated at the feet of the Sadhu and begged forgiveness.

This short story illustrates not only the full glory of desirelessness but also the wonderful achievements of those who are masters of their senses and minds. Who is the greatest man in all this world? Not he who is the mightiest or who possesses the greatest wealth but only he alone who is completely liberated from the mire of subtle desires. The one who is the least in the kingdom of the world is the first and greatest in the kingdom of God.

Desires are so subtle and invisible that they draw even the minds of consecrated and dedicated souls towards the seemingly bright state of darkness and delusion. It will not be out of place to narrate here another interesting tale of a Sadhu. Although I have mentioned this story before, as it so beautifully illustrates the subject of desirelessness and how it reaches even Sadhus the men of God that I should like again to relate it here.

There was once a Sadhuji, the picture of renunciation, who lived as a recluse alone, outside of a town. All his worldly prosperity consisted of two loin cloths, *koupeenams*, and each day wearing one and washing the other by turns. These loin cloths were the misfortune of our Sadhuji as this tale of the Loincloth shall show. It soon happened that the rats discovered the extra loin cloth and made holes in it. He went immediately to the villagers and asked them for a new loin cloth. This happened several times and the villagers soon requested the Sadhuji to keep a cat which would chase away the rat. The calamity of the rat was removed with the advent of the cat, but the little pussy cried and needed milk every day; so the Sadhuji soon returned to the village begging for milk for the cat. Then the people advised him to get and keep a cow and even gave him one cow for his use. This was sensible. Now he had milk not only for the cat but for himself as well. But every day he had to go the village and get hay or fodder for the cow. His friends felt displeased at seeing him so often and having to supply him with quantities of hay daily and they said, 'Look Sadhuji, there

are many lands laying waste around you, why don't you cultivate some land and then you will have not only fodder for your cow but also grains for your own use? Who could say that this was not a wholesome and sound advice?

So the Sadhuji began to cultivate the lands and soon engaged a number of coolies and servants. He worked hard both day and night and had flourishing crops every year. He had to construct buildings, sheds for people and cattle and other animals and barns for storing the crops of hay, grain, etc. Slowly and steadily silently the barren and uncultivated spot on which the austere Sadhu used to perform his *tapas*, meditation in Peace, became a wealthy estate with many fields, labourers, animals, buildings and all the other things needed for successful life in the world of form and name.

After a number of years the Guru of the Sadhu, who had left him in that wild spot many years before, came to see what spiritual progress his disciple had made. But the Guru could not recognise the place. He wondered whether his eyes were deceiving him. Instead of a barren and wild spot he found a luxurious and cultivated estate. Finally, to make sure he was in the right place he enquired of someone with the question: 'Sir there used to be a Sadhu here with a loin cloth. Where is he now?' They replied that the Sadhu Mahatmaji was in his palatial home with his wife and steward, in the inner sanctum, busily engaged in the management of his estate. The Guruji applied for an interview and at last was led inside the palace and admitted into the presence of his *chelas*, the disciple. Behold! The master recognised the disciple and the disciple saw the master; and all in a flash felt his former life of freedom, when he was only the owner of loin cloth. He felt ashamed of himself and prostrated at his master's sacred feet, saying 'Father, forgive me, I have come to a complicated state through delusion. It was only to save my loin cloth from the rat that I have acquired all this paraphernalia.'

This story has ever reminded me of the state of the Ashram. But at least we have the consolation that our Ashram is the common

property of all His children in the East and the West. What is more, we have neither hay for the cattle nor barns for hoarding fodder and food for the workers. We do not have even a single pie of funds. The point to be emphasised in this story of the Sadhu and his Loin Cloth is the subtlety of desires and how one thing leads to another unconsciously until one finds himself like a spider caught in its own web. Desires are all important and most essential to those who lack deep perception and the keen discrimination to realise the terrible grip they are in. They thus dig their own graves with their own hands.

If I have ever had a desire in this life it is only to be desireless. All desires are fulfilled sooner or later for those who are sincere. As every bud is bound to blossom in the fullness of time so every desire, selfish or selfless is bound to blossom or bear fruit sooner or later. The Peace work that we were engaged in made it impossible to be free from begging and thus I had to write personal letters to friends, requesting them to support the Ashram and help spread its Message of Peace. Often I found myself in tears. When and how soon shall I be freed from this despicable state of begging has been my only prayer.'

This recalls also the well-known story of the Sadhu who came to a great king and requested alms. The king asked the Sadhu to sit, wait until his *pūja* had been attended to. As the Sadhu sat and waited in the king's chambers he heard the king praying: 'O Lord, give me more lands. Give me more wealth, Give me more children.' The Sadhu quietly got up and left the palace. When the king finished the *pūja* he went to meet the Sadhu's requests. But when he saw that the Sadhu had left, he was quite surprised. He sent messengers to find the Sadhu and bring him back. When the humble Sadhu returned the king asked him, 'O Sadhuji, why did you not wait?' The Sadhu replied: 'O King, I could not help but overhear your prayers. When you are begging the Lord for so many things, how can I beg of you, who are only a beggar yourself. Therefore I left and decided to petition to the Lord directly to beg of Him rather than from you.'

O Lord, if Thou art listening to our prayers, pray listen now to our hearts' only prayer and lift us from the mire of delusive begging. Even for the sake of illusive public works and humanitarian activities make us never again to stretch our hands to the miserly rich, who would rather lose their lives, than part with their perishable wealth. Bless us to understand that desirelessness is another word for completeness, or perfection. It is only when one is perfect and full, *purna* then he is completely desireless. Help us O Lord, to be perfect even as Thou art perfect! This is all that we ask of Thee !

HARI OM TAT SAT OM

SELF SURRENDER

(While glancing through the old Peace Journals this message was found. As it is so apt and perfect here I should like to add it now for the help of my loving readers.)

A mendicant Sadhu was born in the lovely regions of the Holy Himalayas where Sadhus, Mahatmas and Sages of every kind and stage live and meditate to reach the goal of life, Self-realisation. He was on a visit to our Santi Ashram last month. In his *bahudaka* or wandering state travelling by foot all over sacred India he happened to pass by our Ashram and came to stay for a day or two. The Ashram's natural beauty and grandeur made him prolong his stay. His life is simple and free from all wordly possessions and he can carry all his material property on his own back: a *dhoti*, a thin blanket and a book or two.

He does not accept or keep money, yet the good Lord provides him with all the necessities of life as he wanders from place to place. He has surrendered himself to the All-Knowing Providence of God. As the Master Christ admonished his disciples:

Get yea no gold nor silver nor brass in your purses,
no wallet for your journey, neither two coats, nor shoes
nor staff; for the labourer is worthy of his hire.

Nobody knows how long he will stay in any one place. When

anyone asks him, 'How long are you staying here. Swamiji?' he smiles and says that he does not know his plans for the future for only the Lord knows. He himself does not know what he will do on the morrow, for he has fully resigned himself to the Lord, without caring or worrying over the uncertain future.

The carefree life of this Mahatma reminds one of the blessedness of self-surrender. It is only a man of self-surrender who can readily forget the past and ignore the dim future and live in the living present, the precious moment. Now is his only time.

A man of self-surrender is compared in the scriptures to a dry leaf. It does not have a will of its own. It does not know which way it will be blown. The grace of God blows in the form of the life-giving breeze and it follows or rather is blown about according to the direction and velocity of the wind. Such is the life of a devotee who has completely surrendered his little self to the holy will of God. He does not care to know each and every thing. Lord knows what is best for him and that same Omniscient God alone looks after all his needs.

We read in the lives of the sages and saints of India how, when devotees were absorbed in doing God's highest work, namely contemplation, God would come in some form and do the material work of his devotees. Such a one was Kabir, the great saint and a weaver by caste. He was supposed to make his living by weaving a cloth every day. While at work he used to forget himself in the contemplation of the Lord and by evening, by a mysterious intervention his particular cloth would be completed and ready for sale.

Such is the Infinite Love of God towards His children who completely trust and surrender to Him. If there is happiness anywhere, the happiness that knows no change, it is only in Self-surrender. One who has surrendered himself to God alone is free from worry, suffering and the restlessness of life. It is only a Soul of Self-surrender who can take joy in repeating:

O Lord! Let others be great and famous, let me

remain humble and insignificant, innocent; let me forget all else and love Thee and Thee alone.

Dear Friend, are you sad and heavy, worried and depressed? Do you have any difficult problem to solve? Is your life, like a heavy cross, hard for you to bear? Do you want to be free from all your physical, mental, financial and even spiritual worries and struggles? If so, there is only one way of all the saints and sages. Its door is ever open for you and for one and all. It is Self - surrender. Through the lovely portals you will be lead into the Presence of God, where it is All Light.

Surrender yourself for your Individual Peace. Let the nations surrender themselves for the Universal Peace. Above all, the Lord knows what is best for you, for the Eastern and Western World, so let, us have the strength to fully surrender ourselves to His All Knowing, Wise, Will or Providence. The place to surrender ourselves is where we are, Now and Here.

It is the tenacious self which is the root cause of all trouble and disturbances, within and without, individually and universally. It is not so easy to annihilate it, so let us offer it to His Services. Let the little self be completely surrendered Now and Here!

May Self-surrender and Peace abide among individuals and Harmony and Goodwill among nations.

Om Tat Sat Om

This present theme recalls to my mind the beautiful thoughts expressed by a great soul of renunciation about the glory and blessedness of possessing only a piece of loincloth.

The Five worthy Stanzas:

1. Blessed are they who are contended, wearing a *loincloth*, contemplating always the essence of the *Upanisads*, satisfied with the food they get by begging, being free from sorrow and desire and ever enjoying the Indwelling Presence.

2. Blessed are they who are contented with a *loincloth* taking shelter under tree, without stretching their hands even for food, never desiring not only wealth but even a simple cloth to cover their bodies with.
3. Blessed are they who are contented with a *loincloth*, rising above body consciousness, ever beholding the Infinite in the finite, recognising nothing but God within or without, above or below, or all around.
4. Blessed are they who are contented with a mere *loincloth*, enjoying the Inner Bliss, feeling joy as a result of perfect control of their senses, thus meditating incessantly day and night on *Brahman*.
5. Blessed are they who are contented with a mere *loincloth*, chanting ever the sacred syllable OM and who go begging for alms for their maintenance.

OM OM OM

WORK IN THE VINEYARD

FRUITFUL DAYS IN ELURU AND AROUND:

Arriving at Eluru at the request of Brother Anjaneyulu for the anniversary celebrations of a beautiful Temple and *Dharmasala* which he had built and endowed, the Ashram party was lovingly received. Swamiji was garlanded and entreated to leave the auto and ride in a carriage drawn by white horses. The eager throng anxiously awaited his Darshan.

The Hindu people always long to behold even the face of one of the elect brethren, for they feel a state of elevation at the very sight of a sweet and God-imbued Presence. It took great persuasion to induce our self-effacing Sri Omkarji to drive thus publicly through a main street, accompanied by a band of *bhaktas* and musicians to the waiting assembly of nearly one thousand devotees at the *Dharmasala*.

The keen attention of the huge throng of people at the various meetings at Eluru was very heartening. It showed that the Lord was preparing souls as never before, to receive the Message of Peace and Self-reliance, when given out from the heart in a simple, direct and unique manner such as Sri Swamiji has. It gives hope and promise of a future of Peace Centres all over the world, where groups will dedicate themselves to the great work of spreading the gospel of Peace which they have first realised in their own hearts. The friends in Eluru were very eager to have such a Centre to work from, at an early date. May their Prayers be fulfilled in the near future!

From toil-worn and down-trodden harijans to princes of luxury, the inspired word calling to self-reliance has a wondrously appealing note and beckons to the hidden divinity in each soul to express itself. Very briefly, the seed-thoughts of our Swamiji's talks at the various gatherings arranged for the purpose are here given. Each one counted as the Cosmic Cry of every Bible and Sacred Scripture, namely the Call of the Universal to its own. Truth-

seekers will find in them food for deep contemplation.

May the dear readers of Peace now feel very near to the Indweller of their Heart of hearts as did the spell-bound audience when Swamiji spoke personally, for his Prayers and Blessings ever go forth in boundless love to each one of you and to the whole world. OM OM OM

CRAVING FOR GOD

Man can never be called a human being until he manifests his Divinity. The great need of the day is the sincere craving for God, with whole hearted self-surrender. It is not those who respect the name of God but those who do the will of God, by serving man who alone can enter into the Blessedness of Heaven.

PRAYER

Prayer is the first step and meditation is the next step, hence they are inseparable. Prayer is a connecting link that unites man and God. We should deserve what we pray for. Think of the boy who prays hard to God without touching his books, to make him succeed in his examination. ‘Not only should we pray for what we are worthy of but also for the Highest Truth’, said he patting the heads of the little ones who flocked around him. When I was presented to him, showered on me his kindness. As I led him to Swamiji’s cave I enquired about his wants. They were the simple ones of a true ascetic.

We exchanged spiritual experiences and the two Swamis related interesting adventures of their years of wandering in the Himalayas and the roof of the world. Then he blessed Swamiji and me. We all felt profoundly moved and sensed an electric presence sweeping the cave, all Silence.

The following evening stands out among the rare treasures of memory. A gorgeous Indian sunset spread midway over the heavens. The hallowed Peace that pervades Peace Valley seemed intensified and was only rippled by a lonely peacock cry from the green jungle hills. Under a great spreading tree sat the blessed twain Sri Narayanji and Omkarji and around them gathered their

many devotees and *Chelas*. Their orange robes and faces were luminous in the fading light.

Fragrant petals kept dropping from the flowery arbour above, like a silent benediction. The discourse was on the meaning of the sacred syllable OM. Sri Omkarji asked the elder sannyasi how Sri Swami Rama Tirtha used to chant OM and Sri Narayanji began to chant and echo reverberated from the mountain-side. He asked everyone present to take up the irresistible note till wave on wave of the mystic sound rolled and fell in a blended chorus of voices. A subtle presence of glory seemed to enfold us. A *Brahmachari* in the temple garden, farther away answered by blowing the same sound from a conch shell. This seemed to be a sign for Great Heart to tell us the wonderful allegorical Vedic Creation Story. How far back on the dim stories of time the first primeval life inhabited a right-coiled conch shell and how that little life perished and the empty shell washed up on those pre-historic shores, was breathed into by the wind and thus produced the first sound, OM. That is why the conch shell blowing is a part of hindu temple worship and even in the Song Celestial; the *Bhagavad Gita* we read that the heroes of *Kurukshetra* blew the conch shells to cheer them in battle.

With allegories and enchanting stories, the gifted narrator held us all spell-bound. After praying together we went on our various ways and a full moon led our path. Let us not try to fool ourselves or God anymore with words, praises and prayers. Let us purify ourselves from all the dross of selfishness and enter into our own world where God is waiting for us patiently from time immemorial.

Meditation is the key that opens or unlocks the secret doors of the very Kingdom of Heaven, Nirvana, Samadhi or Peace. Hence let us begin our meditation with four periods a day and end them in a ceaseless flow of unbroken consciousness by recognizing the Presence all through the day and night.

Let us chant the sacred syllable OM to dispel all weakness,

selfishness and ignorance in every form and instill the divinity both within and without, as we meditate now on the Indwelling Presence.

May Peace be unto all

OM OM OM

SOWING SEEDS ALONG INDIAN ROADS

- Sister Sushila Devi

Reaching Swargashram we were made very welcome and given a comfortable house on a hill which gave wonderful views on all sides from the windows and verandahs. Our Swamiji's heart glowed with happy and tender memories, filling his face with great Light as he beheld old, familiar surroundings. After sporting in the waters and sunning ourselves on the smooth rocks we dined on chapaties, dhal-soup and big plantains. Fruit and vegetables are rarities in these far retreats and it must surely be heavenly manna bestowed by the Grace of God that keeps the hundreds of holy men alive and fairly well on the vitamin-scarce fare which is freely doled out at the various Ashrams by the kindness of certain rich merchants and princes.

Soon various Sadhus and Yogis began to call on Swamiji, some of whom had known him and loved him as a youth when he was there among them for six fruitful years of close communion with the great beloved of his hearts. It thrilled one's soul to hear these gentle Himalayan priests paint vivid beautiful word pictures of those past memories woven with many an anecdote of the holy youth's God-imbued life there. Once, a Yogi who had about him the atmosphere of heaven itself spoke very rarely but told of Sri Omkarji's inner radiance which soon caused him to be known and honoured through the region by his brother sadhus as well as by the visitors who were lucky enough to find him in his forest haunts, sitting at the Feet of the divine one, in rapt meditation.

He spoke of one Russian nobleman who had passed that way and who was so rich that he rewarded all who did the slightest

service with hundred rupee notes. Hearing of the youthful Sadhu Omkarji, he sought out in a cave, high in the silent mountains, the soul who retired there for long periods all unafraid of the forest denizens who roam in such place in search of prey. Finding him at last, rapt in meditation, the Russian brother tarried with him, waiting for recognition. Swamiji soon spoke with him and answered his questions. The nobleman was so charmed and found so much peace from his hour with Swamiji that he left in great ecstasy, relating his happy experience to all whom he met.

Many other friends spoke of Swamiji with reverent love and said it was wonderful what he had accomplished in these few brief years since he had left them in creating so fair a garden of silence as Santhi Ashram in Thotapalli Hills for seekers of Peace from any nation, of any creed or colour, offering them pleasant retreat in which to commune with the indweller of their hearts, be He Tao, God, Brahman, Jehovah, Allah, Buddha or Ahur Mazda, In all We are all One and the basic principles of all religions are the same.

By kind arrangement of Sri Swami Sivanandaji and the good interpreting of Swami Swarupanandaji, on one memorable day our Swamiji spoke to the hermits, monks and yogis of the adjoining country who flocked in large numbers to hear him, from their various retreats.

It is no easy talk to address souls of this kind, saints, sages and philosophers of various schools. Our Swamiji met the occasion with poise and calm and God touched his tongue as it were with a holy flame and God's Mighty Spirit was felt by all for the message came forth in stirring words that vibrated the cords of the hearts of the elect company. The theme was 'Let one man alone live in God and the whole world may be regenerated'. Every heart was stirred when he said: "Here we are, the world calls us saints, sages and mahatmas. If we are really such, then why does the world go on in such darkness, cruelty and pain? What are we doing? Where is our light shining? The World is athirst and hungry for the nectar of Truth and the bread of life. We are His avowed priests and the

trusted keepers of the ancient flame. Let us then really feel it burning within, recognise it in our hearts and beings and give it forth to the whole of creation. The countless children of man, the supplicating multitudes are looking up to us to give them one touch of true love, one crumb of the bread of life, one drop of that Brahmic Bliss that endows the mortal with an eternal Godhood, glorious beyond all word or thought.

O! Let us then awake and arise from our slumbers and lethargies, throw aside our little differences of cult and sect, rivalries and jealousies. If they yet abide in the hearts and beings we have long since offered to God alone and to His all-consuming love fire, let us purge ourselves wholly.

Asserting and manifesting our divinity here and now let us renew our sacred vows and be entirely worthy of our sun-garments of orange and other outward signs of our priesthood. Let us indeed be living Beacon Lamps and set the world aflame with sweeping lights of Love, Peace and Unity.

OM OM OM

(Peace Oct. & Nov. 1935)

MEMORIES OF A GREAT HEART

- Sister Sushila Devi

One auspicious day, when my life had already blended with that of India, Santi Ashram and the lives of many Indian sisters and brothers the glad tidings came that Sri Swami Narayanji was soon to arrive in our little Eden of Peace, Santi Ashram. As it was dedicated by Swami Omkarji to the memory of Sri Swami Narayan, the great heart naturally took warm interest in its progress and felt this lovely corner of God's Vineyard to be a part of his own work. He also was very fond of Sri Omkarji. His letters of advice and inspiration came regularly.

Soon, through the wide white gates, with their universal symbols strode our beloved great heart amid the glad clamor of the welcoming crowd. He was a tall, majestic figure in a rough

robe of golden-red and he walked with a firm, and erect carriage which accentuated his height. Void of outer beauty one could not help on seeing Sri Narayan Swamiji but be aware of his beauty of soul, which shone forth from a mind deeply immersed in Nam.

(Peace March-April 1938)

SELF RELIANCE

No more reliance on forms and names, on teachers and masters, on books and shrines. Learn to walk on your own feet. Rely on the interpenetrating Truth which is pervading and permeating the cells of your beings. Be true to the Indwelling Presence. The essence of all religions can be summed up in one word, Self-Reliance. To be true to the God of our hearts is the only real responsibility and thus we shall be a blessing to Mother Earth and not a burden.

PRACTICE OF THE PRESENCE

Practice of the Presence of God, not now and then but always is the only simple, natural and direct method of feeling God's Presence and Love Now and Here.

Let us practice to feel His Presence not only when we meditate but even when we work, not only when alone but even when in crowds and not only when all is well but even when all is ill. His Presence is the only reality and the sooner we recognise this the better it is for us and others.

HARIJANS

Hari is the God of the Universe, hence we are all harijans. Our joy and freedom lies not in calling certain people harijans, but in considering ourselves as harijans. Those alone are the real outcastes who are selfish and cling to form and name, separating themselves from God's common children. Those who are selfless, simple humble and loving are all of high caste, the fair children of God.

MEDITATION IS THE KEY

It is not body consciousness but God Consciousness, which is the key for the Highest.

God is felt first in the heart, then in the Ashram and finally in the whole world. What we have within we behold without. How wonderful it is to consider the whole world as our Ashram, Abode of Peace. The real Abode of Peace, Ashram is in every heart. First establish the Ashram within and let Peace flow in torrents and rivers towards humanity, for it is the *Individual Peace that paves the way to Universal Peace*.

When the body is healthy the mind is restful and when the mind is restful the Soul is realised in stillness. Health plays a great part in the realisation of God. However busy we may be whosoever we may be, one and all should set apart a portion of the day, especially the early hours, for physical exercise.

There is nothing new to be thought. If you could only practice what you have, what you have will grow. The God for whom you have been searching and seeking here and there is abiding in your hearts now and sparkling in your very eyes. Pray recognise Him Now and Here and take Him with you into the activities of your lives and express Him. Thus, His Love, Peace and Presence will be multiplied.

God is living in all of us but He is expressing Himself only in humble simple and devoted hearts. Verily, where Love is, there God is! As we are all the manifestations of the one God, let us fill our hearts with Love and recognise Him in each other, knowing that in serving any of the least of His children we are serving only God.

OM OM OM

Chapter 58

OUR TUNI BRANCH

Dr and Mrs. G.Apparao have been among the oldest devotees and well-wishers of the Ashram. They lived in those days in Tuni, a town about twenty miles distant from the Ashram, where we have many merchant devotees. The children of Dr. and Mrs. Appa Rao were very devoted and they clung to me whenever I went to their home. One of them, little Hannu followed me to the Ashram and remained for nearly two years and even now returns to the Ashram now and then. His parents offered him to me to serve the Ashram and do God's Work as a Messenger of Peace, for he is a spiritual child. But after about two years in the Ashram, living a highly devoted life the parents became afraid that their son might become a sadhu and so they took him back to the town and joined him in a school there. Now little Hannu is Hanumantha Rao, an important engineer with great wealth but he is nevertheless as devoted as he was as a child.

His brother G.Narasimha Rao is the noted architect of the Krishna Bridge and of the famous Nagarjunasagar Dam works. Now he is in America as a special advisor to the United Nations. Thus, as the parents are, so are the children. One of the daughters, Raghava also clung to me so that the family predicted she would never marry but would dedicate her life to the Ashram and God. They used to call her Yogini. Such are the dreams of childhood days. Now Raghava is a wealthy lady with much property and many children and grand children. But she is still devoted and has an Ashram of her own in her village, the Sri Viswanath Ashram.

The eldest daughter, Nanaji and her husband are also devoted. The youngest daughter, Jaya is a wonderful musician and I am especially fond of two of her songs:

Shantamu leka, saukhyam ledu (Without peace there is no solace)

Manasu swadhinamaina, manujunaku (whose mind is under control)

How true are the words of the first song! Without Peace there is no happiness. The other song also contains the essence of Vedanta, the end of Knowledge:

For the wise man who has controlled his mind, what need is there for the repetition of all these *mantras* and *tantras*?

Verily, he is shining in the full Glory of God, rising above all rituals, *pujas* and worship of outer forms. May all homage be unto such *sthitapraghnas*, the God realised souls. OM !

I remember that during my stay in Tuni during one of our visits to the branch ashram I had a sad and unfortunate accident. We went one day to visit an old saintly lady, mother Suramma. She was eighty years old then and she had been the first lady to stay in the Mother Ashram living in a simple hut in which rose the holy *putta* a snake pit of Subrahmanyam, the snake God and performing *tapas* with prayer and meditation. Now she was infirm, no longer able to walk or see and I went to visit her to make her happy. While we were in her home some people saw a big scorpion on the wall. They were frightened and wanted to kill it. To save the scorpion from death, even from harm before my very eyes I told them not to do such a thing, not to harm it in any way for I would get rid of it in a gentle way. I tried to take hold of the tail of the scorpion and take it outside, where it would be safe. Unfortunately however I did not hold its tail firmly and it gave me a nasty sting which gave severe pain. Certain little incidents can never be forgotten; they are remembered until the end of one's life. The severe pain lasted more than twenty four hours in spite of all the hot and cold fomentations and other measures to relieve the agony of the scorpion sting. We had a car outside and so several times the current of the battery was applied to my aching hand, but with no result. The severe pain continued all day. What cannot be cured must be endured patiently. Sometimes when we try to do good, to help and protect, it is strange that what results is pain and disappointment.

The Headmaster of the Tuni High School was a very devoted friend who visited the Ashram often. It had been his continued request that I give a lecture in his school for all his colleagues and devoted students. The public was also invited and a large meeting was held. When I spoke, there was pin drop silence. It was a day of rejoicing for me and for the founders and members of the Tuni branch, for I had been able, by the Grace of God, to enter into the hearts of the devoted young students as well as into those of their loving teachers with my simple message of Peace and Love.

OM OM OM

May all Glory be unto God! May Peace be unto All!

Harijan Seva at the Tuni Branch:

‘Outcaste’ was a message which later was published as a booklet by the Mission of Peace, Sri Santi Ashram, during those days of the renaissance of the outcastes in India by Jaati Pitha, the father of Bharata, Sri Mahatma Gandhiji. Huge funds, crores of rupees were collected by Mahatmaji in the name of the Harijan Fund for the education and progress of the depressed people of India. In those days Mahatmaji lifted the outcaste up and into the very image of God by giving them the name of Harijan, the man born of Hari, God.

In the booklet "outcaste", the essence of vedanta, the Highest Truth was brought out in the statement that truly the only outcaste is the one, who recognises caste, who thus erects a prison wall around himself and calls himself superior and others inferior. Such a one alone is the most pitiable creature, the real and only outcaste.

In Tuni at our branch ashram we had some devotees who came from the outcaste or rather the harijan families. They attended all the meetings and *bhajans* regularly and gave up eating of meat, fish and other non-vegetarian foods and vowed never to drink intoxicating beverages. Thus they set an example to all their families and castes. They were very clean and neat and like high caste

Brahmins they bathed every day at dawn and wore the caste mark of the high born, of the worshippers of the Avataras Rama, Krishna and others, according to their own choice and by their own freedom. Verily, all names lead only to the one goal, the goal of *satchidananda swarupa* the one Existence, Knowledge and Bliss Absolute.

It was a touching and memorable sight when one day a band of sixty devotees from the outcaste, the Harijan Community walked all the way to the Mother Ashram in Thotapalli Hills from the village of Tuni. As they walked all the forty miles by foot, they sang spiritual songs, doing *bhajans* and repeated the name of God. I still remember this incident with great joy although more than thirty-five years have now passed away, how all these devotees spent a happy day of bliss, doing *bhajans* and making all the members and visitors of the Ashram very happy with their spiritual love and dedication.

Now I shall leave to my loving readers the Ashram news of April 1935 Peace Journal for the knowledge of all the good news and details of the founding of the Tuni Branch and the *harijan seva*. As I sit now on the heights of Kailas with my inseparable companion Rami by my side, it seems that thirty-five long years have passed away like a flash of lightening. Blessed are they who can live in eternity moment by moment. Where is time, past, present or future unto such, who see eternity centered in God, the Unknown Beyond, the Incomprehensible, the Creator of all Creation.

Now to the Peace Journal, Ashram News:

Our Tuni Branch:

In memory of the Centenary Celebration of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa we are happy to have opened on Sunday the 10th March, 1935 a branch of our Santhi Ashram at Tuni and to have commenced work on an organized basis forthwith. Its present activities are as follows:

1. Daily Prayer, worship and meditation in the branch home morning and evening.

2. Weekly meetings with inspiring public lectures by our Swamiji or other great and learned souls.
3. Ladies' Association for the diffusion of Light and Knowledge among women.
4. Free Dispensary Service for the poor *narayanas* by Dr. G.V.Appa Rao, L.M.P.
5. *Harijan* work through weekly meetings with lectures on sanitation, devotion, etc., with *bhajana* and worship.

We are grateful to Mr. and Mrs. G.V.Appa Rao, who form the life and soul of our Ashram Branch. We are also grateful to Mr. D.V.S.Ross, Advocate, Mr. V.Venkata Rao, Mr. Pydah Sri Ramakrishnayya, Zamindar, Kakinada, and Mr. T.Venkaji Rao of Paper Mills, Mr. and Mrs. Rama Rao and to all the devoted teachers of the Tuni High School for their active co-operation and sympathy in the promotion of our infant work at Tuni.

Harijans to Sri Santhi Ashram :

A band of sixty people, both young and old started in a Bhajana Pilgrim Party from Tuni and came all the distance on foot on Monday, the 25th March 1935 and spent the day and night in a most useful and uplifting way, under the experienced leadership of Brother T.Venkaji Rao. They took vows never to drink, never to eat flesh and never to kill animals but to try to be clean and gentle always.

We are also grateful to Mr. Papa Rao, the devoted merchant of Tuni for sumptuously feeding this selfless band of *harijans*.

Let us conclude this chapter with the following interesting article by the Headmaster of the Tuni High School:

Sri Swami Omkar at Tuni:

By Sri M.Veerabhadra Rao, B.A.L.T

Sri Swami Omkar, who has visited America several times and has established the Sri Santhi Ashram near Thotapalli Hills, about ten miles from Durgada Station in the East Godavary District

was here last Sunday, 10th March by special request and presided over the celebrations of the Hundredth Anniversary of Ramakrishna Paramahansa. The Swamiji and party were guests of Dr and Mrs. Appa Rao Naidu garu. After the said function was duly celebrated the Swamiji and party were prevailed upon to stay for a week and every evening thoughtful and inspiring sermons on ‘Bhakti and Jnana’, both in English and Telugu were delivered.

Every morning there was a well-attended meditation and prayer gathering also at the doctor’s quarters and then Sri Swamiji would give a quiet talk in Telugu. While here, at the desire and request of friends Swamiji opened a Branch of Santhi Ashram for Tuni and neighbourhood in the spacious quarters of Dr. Appa Rao. The band of devoted friends of the Ashram here have been inspired by Swamiji to direct, organise activities to the social and spiritual uplift of the so-called ‘untouchable classes’. He personally conducted some night meetings at the Panchama village. Presiding over a special meeting at the Rajah’s High School Hall he gave a lucid address on ‘OM and Peace’ and gave away prizes to students who had scored the highest marks in the recent Ramakrishna Paramahansa Competitive Examination held for the two districts of Godavary. Challa Viswanadham, Form V secured the first prize from boys and B.Rajaratnam, Form IV, the first prize for girls.

May the Swamiji’s commendable endeavours to diffuse spiritual light and knowledge with peace, in the hearts of the people at large be attended with success more and more.

Om Namō Namaha!

Om Tat Sat Om

Chapter 59

IN THE EAST AGAIN

Our Swamiji:

Before leaving for America our revered Swamiji was advised by his physician friends to have an X-ray taken of his hip which was injured by the fall while last abroad and which has again, begun to give discomfort. An X-ray showed that the bone had never been properly set. On examination and consultation the devoted and renowned Doctors Kini, Dinakar Rao advised an immediate operation. They all marvelled how Swamiji has been happily running about on a bone only supported by muscle tissue for the joint has been completely out of the socket.

We were all deeply affected by the news and by our beloved Swamiji's philosophic attitude in the face of this ordeal. His article, 'In the Cast' gives a full account of his hospital experiences and operation which we are truly thankful to record, promises to be a complete success. Sister Sushila Devi ever ready to silently minister, where there is most need, ministered to Swamiji with her healing care and loving presence.

We all feel that the Omnipotent has chosen to work through the scientific skill of our good Dr. Kini and his colleagues to restore our Swamiji so that he may go about freely and firmly on his Mission of Peace and Compassion. May all his friends, admirers and devotees in the East and the West join us in affirmative thoughts and ardent prayers for his welfare!

OM OM OM

(Peace March-April 1936)

Our Distinguished Visitors :

It was with great pleasure that Swamiji and Sister Sushila received the visit of Swami Yoganandaji, the well known lecturer and philosopher who has been active both in India and abroad spreading Yoga. Loving thoughts were interchanged, prayers were offered and the great savants of humanity parted with mutual

benedictions and good wishes. We were happy also to meet his loving brother and devoted American *chela*, Mr. Wright.

Om ! Tat ! Sat ! Om !

(Peace May-June 1936)

In The Cast

It is a stroke of luck or a dispensation from the hands of the Goddess Fortune that has brought me to the special ward of the King George Hospital, Vishakhapatnam to enjoy a period of blessed peace and rest. I feel unworthy of all the rich blessings heaven is pouring down upon me in golden showers day by day. I can even keep my tryst with Mother Nature from my bed for I lie facing a window that looks out to a picture of great beauty. The big open windows gives a lovely patch of blue sky and a range of hills picturesque with tropical trees and shrubs. At dawn the sun comes with a golden smile of bright rays, dancing over my bedspread and in the evening the sun sets just where I can see it over a rim of hills; while not far off the Bay of Bengal booms out OM, OM, OM in its dashing waves, sending a salt tang in its passing breezes which is like a greeting to me. I am overwhelmed with feelings of gratitude and love at the overflowing kindness and the attention of all the many good doctors and devoted nurses and their selfless and never, tiring services.

It was on the fifth of March, when I was taken after four days of grooming and preparation of all sorts to the Operation Theater and given anesthesia. I started to Inhale and Exhale Peace. I became formless and the last thought was of the glorious Light of lights, one stupendous wave of Infinite Light enfolded me till I became one with it.

When I opened my eyes still in a state of indescribable ecstasy Sister Sushila Devi, the great blessing of my life as well as of the Mission of Peace was bending over me smiling, congratulating me on the success of this experience and the operation. It seems that I was given anesthesia for forty-five minutes. A long cut as made and a part of the bone chipped with a chisel and hammer.

The bone was properly set again and the flesh sewn up. The whole leg was then encased in plaster from toe to the heart. Thus ended my formidable sounding operation, the *Subtrocanaric Osteotomy*.

Here I am now with the new addition of my cast like a tortoise in its shell, enjoying Peace and longing to greet all my friends and loving readers of Peace in the East and the West. Full twelve pleasant days have passed away and you will hardly believe me, when I tell you that my re-set bone, the deep cut and the stitches have not given me the least pain in any form, at any time in the so-called anxious days of this ordeal. When God is with us what can be against us? May all Glory be unto the Indivisible and Infinite Lord of mercy and compassion!

To me there has always been but one kind of real pain, the pain of separation from the beloved, the Indweller of the Heart, and the Great Interpenetrating Presence of the whole universe. What can be more painful than to deny and forget the very life and soul of existence? All other temporary pains when compared to the death-like anguish brought on by aloofness from God or separation from Truth are mere passing clouds.

Even if there were to be a little discomfort it would be nothing but meanness on my part to complain or grumble, when there are nearly four hundred patients, sick people lying around in this hospital. Some of them are suffering from the most excruciating agonies. What wonderful work these big-hearted and spiritually-minded doctors are engaged in, day and night, ceaselessly serving the Lord in the form of the sick, the deaf, the lame, and the blind.

Facing this great mass of human misery and the mortal suffering all around, marking well the scientific and immediate help all these sufferers are receiving, I feel like a mere babe or tiny child before these selfless, energetic and life-giving doctors' specialists in every form of medical science. Speculative religion with parrot-like platitudes and affirmations will not knit displaced or broken bones. It needs great competence, study and intelligent diagnosis of a surgeon. Is not a dedicated doctor divinity's finest

instrument for good in this vale of tears? Does not God also perform His miracles of healing through such a one?

How very blessed are these priceless moments that one spends oblivious of not only the plaster cast but also of the physical cast, the body ! It is unspeakably glorious to rise far above all sheaths. Freedom and health belong only to those rare souls who are free from the imprisoning restraint of every kind of cast or sheath.

The very word cast brings relative thoughts of the synonym caste and its far-reaching problems as well. The slaves of caste, those who suffer from the soul hampering weight of caste prejudices and class restrictions are really more to be pitied than those who are temporarily confined to a plaster cast for a brief time. The one is constructive while the other is destructive and detrimental. *Do not become an Outcaste by recognizing Castes.* Do not be enslaved by circumstances and self-pity, by the mind dwelling unduly on either a plaster cast, if fate decrees one, or even on the body, cast of flesh and bones. Both have only their temporary utility, serving an end.

I was taken down from my sanctum of peace today for a ride on a stretcher once again to the Operating Theatre. The kind and good surgeon made a door in the cast just where the stitches were. The cut was clean and the healing perfect and the stitches were soon deftly removed. I was then wheeled into the X-ray Department; here the newly set hip bone was again X-rayed. Soon and to our great joy the good news we had breathlessly anticipated, the result, of the photo came. The Radiologist, a loving and the devoted soul the Head of the X-ray Department announced with the ecstasy, to the great joy of all that the setting is splendid! Just what the surgeon had wished to accomplish had taken place. The good doctor was beside himself with joy and Sister Sushila was overwhelmed with deep feelings of the ecstasy, for one of her dearest dreams and ardent hopes was taking shape. I had tears of gratitude in my eyes as I lay there on my back witnessing all. The tears that did not come when I went through all the ordeal of the operation and when the stitches had been removed came now to

give vent to my heartfelt, irrepressible gratitude for all the bountiful blessings of the Almighty as the complete success of the operation was announced. My soul burst into a magnificent crying: 'Glory be unto God!' When our surgeon came to me with a beaming face and contented heart I murmured softly, 'Hearty congratulations to you dear doctor.' He was quite modest and unaffected and had lovingly, trustfully left the results to God.

Here I am once again in my special ward, my Sanctum of sanctums, enjoying the benediction of the cool sea-breeze, accelerated by a big ever-revolving fan and the life giving rays of the Sun. Every day I watch the glorious sunset from my 'bed of roses' as I lie in great comfort on a soft mattress, as the golden ball sinks behind the purple hills bringing a sense of unutterable Peace. Ah! Thus I want the little self to sink and fade into oblivion.

The surgeon said when leaving me, 'Dear Swamiji, I am proud of you. My job is finished and your job now begins. You must remain quietly in the plaster cast for another thirty days and then sixty days more in a splint.' Thus I must lie flat on my back without moving to the left or the right, even in my dreams.

Now, as I have many leisure hours, I write these innermost thoughts of my heart and send them forth to vibrate as my love and Peace to all my dear friends in the North, South, East and West and on all planes. Dear readers of Peace, I long to stretch forth my hand and touch your heart and say 'Peace be unto you'. Help your country and help the whole of humanity by feeling His Presence, not only now and then but always!

I and several thousands, nay millions of sick and suffering patients in this and other hospitals the world over need your loving and affirmative thoughts and silent prayers. Pray ceaselessly for the recovery of the sick and for the redemption of the fallen, for the succour of the poor and needy and for the general Peace and welfare of the whole of creation and thus establish Peace on earth and good-will among nations.

I am grateful to dear Dr. Lillian Daniel for having invited

Sister Sushila Devi and myself to America and for having made all arrangements for the journey and sojourn there. The day is not far when I shall be in America, no longer limping but walking erect and straight and sharing my love and Peace with all the lovers of Peace.

My message would be incomplete if I failed to express my appreciation to all the staff of the King George Hospital and the most gracious Mother Superior Anastasia, Sister Sushila Devi, R. N., the selfless, the patient and silent helper, to the nurses deft and friendly and to all the other obedient and devoted attendants in the hospital.

In the conclusion my heart craves to express my deep gratitude to the indweller of my heart, the silent witness of all the passing phenomena, the great Divine Healer of healers, who is never absent and is ever-present, throbbing in the heart, beating in the pulse and flowing in the breath and shining in the Soul.

Dear Friends, join me in this silent prayer as you read this message wherever you may be, even if only for a minute.

Prayer

Thou the infinite light burning in the little mortal heart as well as in the immense Sun's heart, Bless us to feel Thy Presence now in the stillness of the Sacred Sanctuary of our innermost being, so that we may be a blessing unto Thee and Thy children, and not go on day after day in a state of living death as encumbrance to Mother Earth.

Bless us with the continuous vision of Universal Love and dedication to selfless service. This is all that we ask of Thee.

May Peace abide in the North, South, East and West.

May Peace be unto All !

OM

OM

OM

Chapter 60

IN WALTAIR ASHRAM

How true are the words that not a blade of grass moves without God's will. The last chapter of this Autobiography was written in Kotagiri Peace Centre on the last day before we left that lovely place to return to the Mother Ashram in Thotapalli Hills. In spite of my longing to write and the pressure from friends and devotees to continue my work, I have not been able so far to write even a few words and a full twenty days have passed away. It is now Saturday, July 22 and we are to leave the Waltair Ashram, where we had come on a short visit to return to Thotapalli. Although I brought my note book and for reference, the first copy of Peace, 1928, it is not until, now that I feel the urge from within to sit down and write a chapter of this Autobiography. And tomorrow we shall leave.

I like at times, often to meditate on the lovely thought:

Work kills none but worry kills multitudes.

Lethargy makes one dull and sad, activity brings life and enthusiasm. I sit now facing the rising Sun as it comes up above the horizon of the ocean with my Autobiography notebook and pen in hand. Little Rami sits with me and we watch the Sun as it rises and floods the world with its light. The beauty glory and light all around above and below, the chanting of the sacred syllable OM by the waves and the music of the birds, the melody of life all make me rather silent with awe and admiration and I don't want to waste precious time, scribbling these finite thoughts. In the greatness of chanting the immortal *Gita*-the Song Celestial in its *Mahatmyam*-it is that one feels most inspired by a certain verse which glorifies God's greatness and mercy. Its essence is:

I meditate on the glory of the Lord, the life, Soul and Goal of all creation; He who can make the dumb speak and the crippled to climb mountains.

This verse has been ringing in my ears since the last few days, for as I look towards the glorious view of the ocean there in front of the Sushila Mandhir, obstructing its view is the building of bathrooms and latrines constructed by the Municipality. It is the greatest handicap, disappointment and even failure to my life's work in the Waltair Ashram to see latrines in the place, where there should be a Temple of Silence with a Shrine, room of meditation. The citizens of Vishakapatnam, the Municipal Council Members and the Municipal Commission run after the fleeting clouds of name and fame and prefer to have bath rooms to Silence and God.

Man always disappoints and it is only God, who never disappoints but fulfills the selfless desires of His innocent children for the good of the world. Thus, a similar building which had been constructed several years before to the left of the Ashram was washed away by angry waves of a cyclone from its very foundations. It is too much for any of us to request the Chairman of the Municipality, who has a friend and well-wisher of the Ashram as well as one of the Committee Members of the Mission of Peace, to prevent the building of bathrooms in front of the Ashram. We ought to have objected to the very idea of bathrooms and changing rooms anywhere near the Ashram for this land has been sanctified by the holy presence of Sri Pujya Vinobaji, who was kind enough by himself to lay the foundation stone for a Temple of Service, Prayer and Meditation. I feel sad to think that our Sri Viswanatham, the friend of all, blessed to be the President of the Mission of Peace, has allowed such a thing to be done in front of the Sushila Mandir, one of the oldest, in fact the first building in the Waltair Ashram., In my absence and while Sri Vishwanathji was also away, it was all done in a hurry, overnight at the instigation of some low-minded people who are not able to see the progress and great work of the Waltair Ashram. To set it right the things that have been done in spite and thoughtlessness, cannot be done now by the finite man. It looks as if it is almost impossible and yet, for God, all things are possible.

As He removed the first building that was constructed

several years ago, caused it to crumble and wash away from its very foundations, so God will now see that this second building also is washed away. The second building was subsequently washed away in the Cyclone of 1970. Although it takes time, my boyhood dream of giving to the world an Abode of Peace, a Shrine of Silence for all devotees of every religion in the East and West, instead of latrines and changing rooms shall someday be realised. May His Will be done and may we be fully worthy of all His blessings, more than ever trusting Him with complete self-surrender. Not our will be done but may His Will be done, now and always, on earth and in Heaven, forever and ever.

The lovely hill Kailas has become holy but it has been so long neglected that it looks almost God-forsaken with its dilapidated buildings and ever-growing shrubs. It is really unfortunate that none of the members of the Ashram, from the President to the Committee Members are able to take any interest in the upkeep or progress of Kailas, the most lovely, lonely and charming place of inspiration for all the seekers of Peace in the world. Still, it has been my one ardent desire to make this wonderful, holy place of prayer and meditation into a World Abode of Peace. The story of how Kailas, during World War II a Radar Station and war base-was saved after the war and obtained from the Government and how it was converted into a Peace base shall be told later in another chapter.

I should like to mention here that out of all the 55 Lakhs of sadhus, sanyasis and yogis there has not been found even one single sadhu who longs to spend his time in rest and Peace in the glorious Silence of the God-given Kailas so that the goal of precious human birth may be realised. All are anxious to visit Kailas but no one is anxious to stay and meditate there or to work for its progress. How fickle and restless are the minds of even the sadhus who prefer to wander here, there and everywhere, instead of sitting in Peace in one place and feeling God's Presence in a simple and direct way. Kailas is so glorious and heavenly that I often exclaim in ecstasy that one need not offer prayers or even meditate there for one is already in the presence of God. One is blessed to feel His presence

in a simple and natural way, for God is there, on Kailas, pervading and permeating the whole place even though He is certainly everywhere else, for He is Omnipresent.

Dr. C. V. Ramani, the talented daughter of Dr. C. K. Prasad Rao, my boyhood friend and classmate and well-wisher of the Ashram from the very beginning even from the days in Chendurty is a great devotee of the Ashram and ever walks in the footsteps of her beloved father. Whenever we go to Kailas Dr. Ramani and Sri B. G. M. A. Narasingha Rao, a well known lover of workers and labour unions, provided us with two jeeps for the journey to Kailas. The road up the hills is narrow and rugged, full of thorns and stones. How true are the words, *‘Narrow and rugged is the way that leads to Heaven,’*

On the 20th of July we went in two jeeps to the lovely Kailas. We were blessed to have our Pujya Swami Ramananda Tirthaji also with us. Sri Narasingha Rao, who is a good reader, read to us the inspiring message of ‘Ageless Soham’. Sri M. Appa Rao, a devotee of the Ashram provided us with tiffin, *prasadam*. Our Santhi as usual broke a coconut at the Shivalingam and distributed *Prasadam* to all the devotees present and to the two gardeners who are in charge of Kailas but who have neglected to do their part in keeping Kailas neat and clean. Our Rama Tirtha Swamiji of Yagnavalkya Ashram was also visiting Kailas with us that day and he humorously remarked that the two gardeners, instead of doing their work to beautify Kailas were like two lazy rishis who lie with their backs to the wall and eyes closed to all the outer work. Thus God took us safely to Kailas and brought us back safely down the hill to the Waltair Ashram again.

There is also a place called the Nirvana Ashram, on the beach side, about five miles distant from Kailas on the Northern side. It is another lovely place for meditation and silence where one can listen ceaselessly to the holy chant of the sacred syllable OM by the great ocean. Our peace van took us there yesterday (31st July) and we had a walk of about a mile through the fields in the hot sun and then a picnic with rest and Peace at the lovely

Ashram. By His grace we were able to set matters right at Nirvana Ashram and the return safely to Waltair Ashram, where many devotees patiently awaited our arrival.

Glorifying God for all His richest blessings we had prayers and *bhajans* with the devotees and gurukula children, and we wished Peace for all.

OM OM OM

WALTAIR ASHRAM, BY THE BEACHSIDE (17-12-1967)

It gives me joy now, as I listen to the sacred music of the ocean to write some of the chapters on Waltair, Ashram established over thirty-five years ago. One of the helpful mottoes in the Ashram is :

The Ocean is praying,

Why don't you pray, O Man!

Another inspiring and helpful motto is:

Every wave is a Prayer

How blessed it is to make every thought of ours a prayer. As I sit now by the side of the ocean and hear its sacred music of OM in the sound of the rising waves it reminds me of the inspiring poem, '*Sagar Sangit*', the Song of the Ocean which was composed by two great patriots and spiritual leaders of India, Sri C. R. Das and Sri Aurobindo. With the fond hope that my readers will enjoy it, I shall include it here.

Sagar Sangit

Voiceless are the great heavens:

There is stillness everywhere.

Evening sheds on all thy body

A vast Peace and an infinite quietness.

A Shoreless Sea.

Wordless art Thou today -

A sea of peace and purity.

Thy silent anthem in this peaceful evening

Keeps living and glowing in Thy soul,
Its light and its ecstasy:
And all Thy body in that bliss dwells,
And all the littleness of joy and grief sinks within.
Death and time have paused, arrested at thy feet:
Deep, unbreathing, with eyes fixed motionless
A Yogin has indeed formed his mystic seat within thy breast.
I have seized only a glimpse but I could not reach;
With folded hands I wait.
Make me one with Thee.

OM OM OM

Waltair is considered a health resort, for it has one of the finest beaches in the South. As we had relations in Waltair, the Rednam family, I came and stayed here for several years during the time of school, in Visakhapatnam. Many happy days were spent on the beach in Waltair, meditating in Silence. Then, when Sister Sushila Devi came to India we used to come with some of the ashramites and gurukula children to the beach especially during the summer months to avoid the severe heat of the Thotapalli Hills. During that time our devoted host was Sri .Purushottham Naidu, a wealthy and philanthropic man who had a palatial home in the large and lovely Rednam Gardens. He was also a skilled Ayurvedic Doctor and he prepared himself many valuable medicines from herbs and plants which he distributed freely among the poor. He would try also to obtain from *sadhus* and wandering monks all the secrets of Ayurveda and his simple medicines helped and served many of the sick and suffering. His home used to be filled with people waiting to see him and have his devoted treatment.

By God's grace I had earlier been led away from all healing, physical, mental and spiritual. My mind was no longer interested in treating the sick with medical preparations but in going inward with prayer and meditation. In those days - and - I now I felt more than ever, that He is the Doctor of doctors, the Only Changeless Reality. It is vanity and a waste of time to dwell on the mundane things of the world. God alone knows what is best for each soul.

Let us pray to Him and He will cure us of all our ills and sufferings.

While we stayed with Dr. Purushottham Naidu, Mr. Purushottham Pantulu, one of his patients was drawn towards my silent life and the ideal work of Sister Sushila Devi and he offered his selfless services to the cause of peace. On an auspicious day he said:

Dear Swamiji, I long to offer you a piece of land by the Ocean. Why don't you start an Ashram Branch there for the benefit of all and especially the foreign devotees?

I was pleased with his helpful suggestion and Sister Sushila Devi and I went to see his land on the beach. We were thrilled with the lovely spot with the bay of Bengal on one side, the Rishikonda and Kailas Hills on another side and a long range of hills extending back. I felt that this was a God-sent gift and command and I agreed. Mr. Purushottham Pantulu gave us the land, nearly two acres, as a gift and it was registered in my name. Thus we started the famous Waltair Ashram.

I do not remember now how I came in touch with the famous surgeon Dr. M. G. Kini, the bone specialist. He was drawn towards me and I was drawn towards him. He felt deeply touched by the great spirit of compassion and service of Sister Sushila Devi who had come from far away America to serve the children of India. The Maharani of Vizianagaram was one of his patients and friends and thus we were introduced to her. We were taken to Srimati Vidyavathi Devi's palace, where we had prayers and meditations. It was a happy surprise the next day when Dr. Kini came with a bank draft for Rs. 300/ from the Maharani Saheba, so that we could begin our work in Waltair Ashram. How incomprehensible are God's ways! How He unites kindred souls from strange lands, in His Infinite Wisdom so that they may do His work of serving the children of East and West is beyond man's limited knowledge. Thus we began our humble work in Waltair Ashram, as if by God's command, in a silent way. Let me close now with the following

appeal to all the seekers of Peace in the world:

Everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters of Peace and drink deep the Nectar Divine. What shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own Immortal Soul ?

May Peace be unto All!

OM OM OM