

The Light of Wisdom
Shri Hans Ji Maharaj
Life and Teachings

'Eternal is he, eternal is his Knowledge'

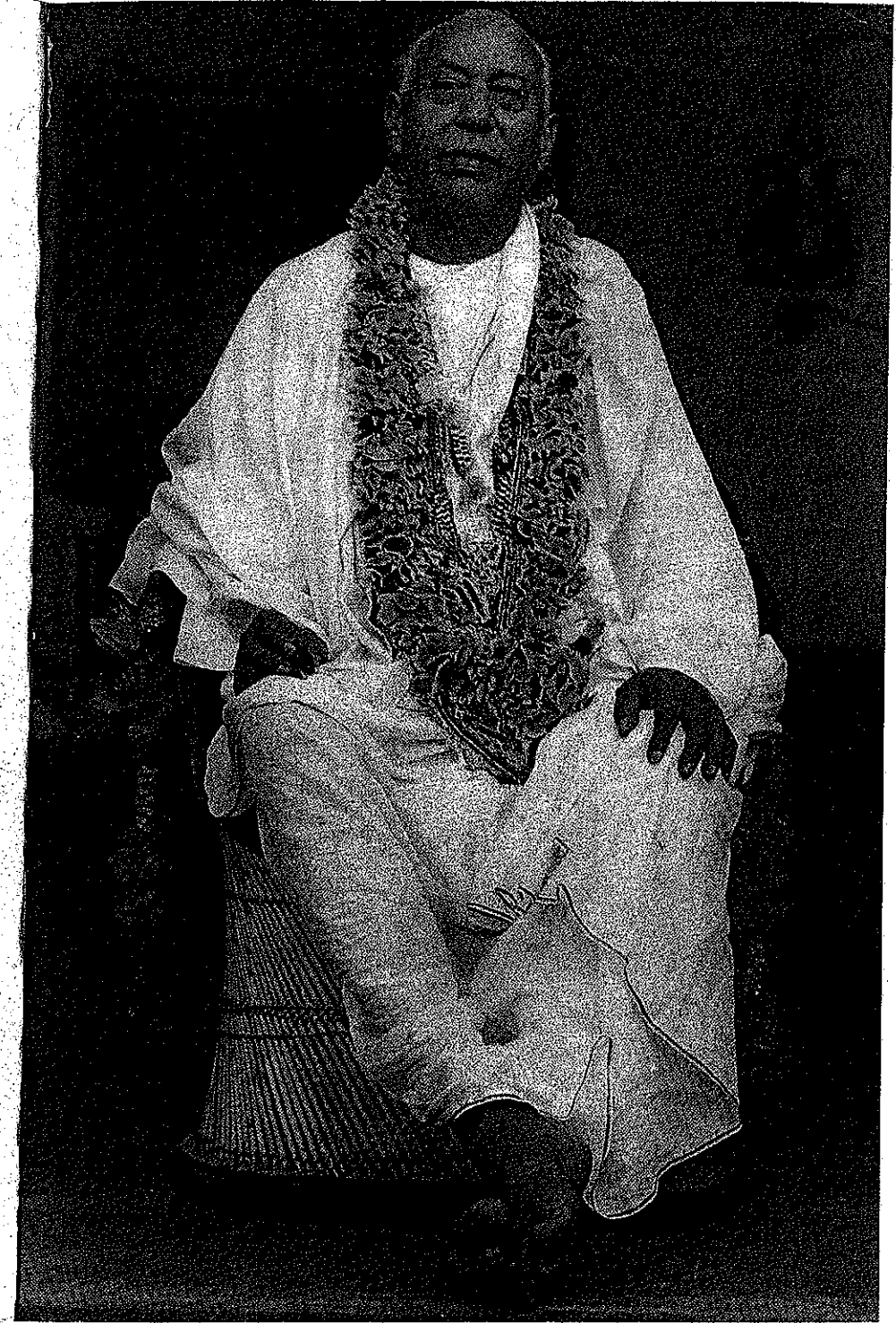
*'To keep their memories of you ever-new,
Undimmed by the mists of time,
When devotees meet, they reminisce of you,
Time after time.'*

* गुरु-वन्दना *

वदे बोधमयं नित्यं गुरुं शंकर रूपिणम् ।
यमाश्रितोहि वक्रोऽपि चन्द्रः सर्वत्र वन्द्यते ॥
ब्रह्मानन्दं परमसुखदं केवलं ज्ञानमूर्तिम् ।
द्वन्द्वातीतं गगनसदृशं तत्त्वमस्यादि लक्ष्यम् ॥
एकं नित्यं विमलमचलं सर्वधीसाक्षिभूतम् ।
भावातीतं त्रिगुणरहितं सद्गुरुं तं नमामि ॥

Invocation

Obeisance to the Eternal Guru, the manifested Shiva,
Who is all wisdom.
He is the source of all happiness,
The true personification of Knowledge.
Subtle like the all-pervading sky, he is beyond duality.
He is the inner essence of everything.
He is the everpresent, all-merciful, unshaken,
Omniscient Witness of the universe.
He is beyond thought and above emotion.
He is not bound by the three forces of Nature.
O Satguru! I bow to you!



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Shri Hans Ji Maharaj

Chapter One

Mahanirvana

'The Light merges into the Light.'

It was 18th July, 1966. The house at 26/96 Shakti Nagar had a deserted air about it. A single light was attempting to penetrate the gloomy darkness. This same house, which now appeared totally devoid of life, had only recently been the scene of a never-ending stream of devotees, whose songs of praise to their spiritual Master had filled the air.

Wondering at the strange silence surrounding the place, I made enquiries and was informed that my beloved Master, Yogiraj Shri Hans Ji Maharaj, was seriously ill and that devotees had been requested not to come to see him. I was shocked to hear this, and involuntarily cried out from the depths of my soul, "Master, we accept any *agya* (order) which you give, but to tell us not to come to see you! Is that *agya* or punishment? Without you we can't live, just as plants wither and die without sunshine and rain. What kind of gardener are you, to first take such great pains to plant the seeds, and then withdraw the life-giving strength of your holy presence just as the shoots of Love are starting to appear!"

I bowed in his direction and sadly returned home. Thoughts raced through my mind. 'Really, we do give Maharaj Ji a hard time. We forget that, after all, he is also a human being and sometimes gets tired or ill.' Then immediately the opposite argument came to mind: 'No! Why should devotees bother him? First he draws us to him, and then complains that we are bothering him!'

Lost in conflicting thoughts of this nature, I reached home, had something to eat and then lay down. It was a scorching summer's day, and sleep would not come. Maharaj Ji is critically

ill! Why, just two days before he had arrived in Delhi on his way to Alwar. He had told me then that he wasn't feeling well, and that his body was simply worn out, but I could never have imagined that he'd be so sick. All that night, my sleep was disturbed by weird dreams and next morning I heard the dreadful news that Shri Maharaj Ji had relinquished his mortal frame. On July 19, 1966, at the holy hour of 3 a.m., the great Yogi had cast off his mortal coil. The Light had merged into the Light.

The news spread like wildfire throughout India. It was printed in the newspapers and thousands of hearts missed a beat. Thousands of eyes streamed with tears. From all over the country, grief-stricken devotees and mahatmas made their way to Prem Nagar Ashram, Hardwar, where Shri Maharaj Ji's last rites and cremation would take place.

So that *premies* (devotees) wouldn't rush the residence trying to have a final glimpse, Shri Maharaj Ji's mortal remains were taken by car to Dehra Dun, where his family lived. Only two or three days previously, he had left Dehra Dun, blessing the premies as he got into his car. Who could have imagined that this was to be the final farewell? But somehow, in their heart of hearts, the premies there felt that, although Maharaj Ji had left for programs many times before, there was something different about his expression this time.

On 16th July, at 6 a.m. he left for Delhi. He stopped on the way at Satlok Ashram, Muradnagar, to give *darshan*. He reached Delhi and left on the morning of the 17th for Alwar, Rajasthan, where premies had arranged a two-day program.

Alwar is about 100 km. from Delhi. Maharaj Ji used to do a satsang tour of Rajasthan every summer. Even the desert winds and the scorching heat could not stop him. He would invariably break out in a heat rash, but he was ready to tolerate any hardship in order to make the devotees happy. He never gave a thought to himself. Of course, he was Pure Consciousness itself. It only seemed that he had a physical body. As he was giving darshan at the Alwar Rest House, it seemed as if he was allowing his cosmic,

infinite Self to be contained by the premies' love in the small space of that building. The hot desert wind was blowing fiercely, and even the birds were searching for a cool place to rest, but the great Master, ascetic that he was, braved the heat, drawn by the premies' love.

As evening approached, the satsang grounds were filling up with people. The atmosphere was ringing with mahatmas' songs, holy and inspiring. Opponents of Maharaj Ji had also arrived. Mahatmas gave satsang. Time passed, but still Maharaj Ji hadn't appeared on stage. The critics shouted, "Call Maharaj Ji! Where is he hiding? Why doesn't he come on stage!" The Alwar premies begged Maharaj Ji to go to the program, saying, "If you don't go, we'll be disgraced!" Maharaj Ji replied, "Why are you bothering me? To save face? Because of a few people who make false accusations? Can't you see that my body is burning like an oven?"

The satsang program came to a close. Shri Maharaj Ji had been unable to attend, as his condition had deteriorated. While everyone was asleep, he returned, on July 18th, to Delhi. Although he was urged to go to Dehra Dun, where he could get better treatment, he shook his head and indicated that he wanted to go to Delhi. When he reached Shakti Nagar he didn't go into his own room, but into a small outer room where Shri Satpal Ji Maharaj, his eldest son, used to stay when in Delhi.

His fever was getting worse. Devotees attending him begged, "Let us call Shri Mata Ji! Let us call a doctor or at least take you to Dehra Dun!" But he would hear none of it. He firmly replied, "No! Don't call anybody. Go! Sit outside and don't let anyone come near me! Send everyone home!" But the devotees insisted, so he allowed a doctor to be summoned, who examined him and prescribed medicine which had no effect at all. His temperature continued rising. Ice packs were applied to his head, but there was no sign of the fever abating. It seemed as if no external remedies would do any good, and Shri Maharaj Ji had already seated himself in a meditation posture. When a Master is consuming his body in the fire of Yoga, what good can external remedies do?

Gurudev sat in meditation and dissolved himself in the Infinite at the sacred hour of 3 a.m. (Brahm Muhurta) on Monday, July 19th, 1966, leaving behind thousands of grieving devotees. When the doctors pronounced him gone, the devotees refused to believe it, because his body was still very warm and moreover, in the case of enlightened yogis, it is difficult to tell at first whether they are dead or in the superconscious state of *Samadhi*.

Shri Maharaj Ji's driver immediately placed the remains in the car and sped to Dehra Dun. A phone call from Shakti Nagar informed the Dehra Dun residence that Maharaj Ji was on his way, and that his room should be ready.

When the car reached the house, the devotees took one look at Shri Maharaj Ji's body and burst into tears. Shri Mata Ji fainted with grief. Shri Satpal Ji was recalled from Mussourie, where he attended school. The residence was plunged into mourning. Even the birds were silent.

Hoping against hope that he would begin breathing again, devotees massaged his body with aromatic medicinal herbs and oils, as is done to Yogis to bring them back from *Samadhi* to waking consciousness. But it was all in vain. Still, they refused to believe that he was dead, and sent for three of the best doctors in Dehra Dun who, after examining the body, said, "It's useless to hope. He is no longer with us." Shri Mata Ji again fainted. When she revived, and began to break her marriage bracelets, a voice from within said to her, "Our marriage is forever. It can never be broken. Complete my funeral rites at Prem Nagar then consign my ashes to the Ganges." So Shri Mata Ji pulled herself together. At first she had intended to throw herself on the funeral pyre, but when Maharaj Ji commanded her not to do so, but to remain behind to take care of the devotees and complete his unfinished work, she told Mahatma Satyanand, "Prepare the funeral. Gurudev hasn't gone anywhere. He has simply manipulated his yogic power to make it seem so. He will return."

Prem Nagar Ashram was Shri Maharaj Ji's labour of love. Its very dust had been purified by the touch of his holy feet. Each and

every tree, from the time it had been a sapling, had felt his loving caress. So it was appropriate that his last rites be held here.

By 3 p.m. on July 19th, premies had reached Prem Nagar by bus, train and taxi. Maharaj Ji's mortal remains had been placed on huge slabs of ice. Standing in line, as silent as statues, devotees filed past to have a final glimpse, to make a final obeisance. As each premie bent to touch his beloved Master's feet, he automatically waited for the familiar "Blessings! Blessings! Stand up!" which now would never come again.

The crowd of mourners increased by the hour. People were sobbing, "What will become of us now? Why has our beloved Lord abandoned us?" Some tried to comfort others, but who wanted comfort! They wanted their Maharaj Ji who, as their friend, had danced and played with them; who, as their Guru, had initiated and guided them and who, as their enlightened Master, had clarified the most esoteric religious mysteries for them. They tried, by their tears, to call him back, he who was their mother, father, friend and all-in-all. They felt helpless and forlorn. What can an orphan do but cry?

On 20th July even the sun, hidden behind a blanket of cloud, refused to shine. Prem Nagar was plunged into an atmosphere of grief and mourning. Thousands of souls cried out in anguish.

The mortal remains of the beloved Master were placed on the sandalwood bier. For the premies, their world was about to be consumed by the flames. Mahatma Daya Bai, who was a close disciple of Maharaj Ji and who was more than 60 years old at the time, related that when she reached Prem Nagar she was horrified to hear that Shri Maharaj Ji's body had already been placed on the bier. She was grief-stricken and silently prayed, 'Oh Master! Won't I be able to touch your feet one last time? How will I be able to reach you through that crowd? Who could be more unfortunate than I?' But what did she see? Shri Maharaj Ji got up from the bier, came over to her and said, "Don't cry. Come on, touch my feet." She bowed and bathed his feet with her tears. Whenever she related this incident, she would begin crying all over again.

The priests began their chanting according to Vedic rites. At 6.20 a.m. Shri Satpal Ji lit the funeral pyre. The body was consigned to the flames. Now Shri Maharaj Ji was hidden from view, forever. The holy dust of his feet, for which premies used to jostle each other, would never be available again.

An unearthly, heavenly fragrance filled the air. After all, this was no ordinary corpse. It had housed one who was the Divine Light and Holy Name Itself! Within an hour, the body had been consumed by the flames, but the premies remained, hands folded prayerfully, rooted to the spot. The curtain had fallen on the earthly drama of Paramsant Satgurudev Shri Hans Ji Maharaj.

21st July: The Dehra Dun house was shrouded in mourning. Mahatmas and premies, tearful and lost in thought, sat around or wandered aimlessly. Mahatma Prem Vivekanand burst into tears and cried, "Mata Ji! We have been robbed of everything. All we had, all we could depend on, was Shri Maharaj Ji. Now what will we do?" Shri Mata Ji was also close to tears, but she composed herself and replied, "Listen, when a child's father dies, doesn't his mother take care of him?" This is how Holy Mother consoled the grieving devotees. The future began to look less bleak. They began to think, 'We are not orphaned. Our Mother's blessing is with us!'

Messages of condolence began pouring in. Here is a selection:

Naugaon Talai

Respected Sister,

When I received the heartbreaking news of Shri Maharaj Ji's untimely demise, everything went black. Could it be true? Am I dreaming or is this one of the Lord's cosmic tricks?

Throughout history, the Lord has embodied Himself—as Rama, Krishna, Balarama, Parasurama, etc. and has relinquished these forms also. Even divine Incarnations had to leave their bodies, as did great monarchs like Shivi, Dadhichi, Moradhvaj, Yudhisthira, etc. Only because I know all this was I able to believe your sad news. Even while I was choked with grief, the words 'Om

Shantih, Om Shantih, welled up from within and I fell to contemplating that the body must return whence it came.

Sister, a divine Power has departed from our midst, the likes of whom we will never see again. The Lord of the universe gave us the opportunity to be with him for a short while. It's due to our spiritual poverty that we weren't able to recognize Him while we had the chance.

Your family priest,
Kulanand Bahukhandi.

4th August, 1966.

Respected Mata Ji,

I received yesterday your letter dated 26/7/66 informing me that Shri Hans Ji Maharaj had left this mortal world for his divine Abode. The physical demise of such enlightened souls is no common occurrence. I deeply regret that I was unable to attend either the funeral or the memorial service. How can I find the words to comfort you? You lived with Maharaj Ji and know everything about him. You must now comfort your children and devotees. When next in Dehra Dun I will come for your darshan.

Yours sincerely,
Chaturbhuj Sharma,
Treasurer,
Uttar Pradesh Congress.

Madam,

I have learned with deep sorrow of your grievous bereavement and I send my heartfelt condolences to you in your sad and sudden loss. May God give you the strength to carry on as well as possible in this sad world. May all be with you and yours in sorrow and sympathy.

Yours sincerely,
Sri Prakasa,
Sevashrama, Varanasi.

July 27, 1966.

Dear Smt. Rajeshwari Devi,

I am sorry to hear of the sad demise of your husband Shri Hans Ji Maharaj. Accept my heartfelt condolences in your bereavement. I join you all in wishing that he finds rest in the all-pervading Absolute.

Yours sincerely,

K.M. Munshi,
Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan,
Bombay.

August 5, 1966.

Dear Madam,

I received your note dated July 20th. On behalf of the staff and students of Cambrian Hall, please accept our deepest sympathies in your recent sad and irreparable loss. We extend our sympathies also to your son Mahipal and the members of your bereaved family.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,

Principal,
Cambrian Hall,
Dehra Dun Cantonment.

Early in the morning of July 22nd, the Dehra Dun household arrived at Prem Nagar. As soon as the family reached the cremation site, where Shri Maharaj Ji's mortal remains had merged with the elements, there was a renewed flood of tears. Once again the place was plunged into sorrow. Shri Mata Ji picked up a handful of ashes from the site and declared, "My children and devotees! This is your hour of trial. Don't give the world cause for ridiculing you! Don't allow them to say that the disciples of Hans fell from the path as soon as a crisis arose. Today you must swear on

his holy ashes that, bound together in unity and love, you will continue on the path he showed us, thus pleasing his spirit. My children! Touch this holy dust and promise that you will follow my *agya* and spread his Knowledge. You are the heirs of this great soul who sacrificed his life and bore all kinds of hardship to spread the message of devotion to God."

On the way from Dehra Dun to Hardwar, Shri Maharaj Ji had appeared to Shri Mata Ji. Now, with power and authority, she repeated to the premies everything that he had told her and added, "Guru is an all-pervading, eternal Power that is always with you. Never think that you are abandoned. Inspired by his blessings, I will devote myself to completing his unfinished work. You must also promise to help me spread his fame and glory. Those who are unwilling to do so are free to go home."

Her inspiring words lifted the thousands of premies present out of the terrible gloom into which they had sunk and filled them with a new hope and enthusiasm.

A Patna premie, Shri Krishan, didn't believe the bad news even after receiving a telegram. He says, "When we received that telegram, many Patna premies went to Hardwar, but I didn't. However, when I sat for meditation, I saw the entire funeral like a movie in the Light. Then I realized that the news was indeed true."

In fact, Shri Maharaj Ji had been dropping hints for a long time, but the premies refused to accept it, totally enamoured as they were by his bewitching personality. For a year prior to his death, he had been dancing and singing, "O mind! This life is like a fleeting fair. The pursuits of life will not last forever." He had been suffering from rheumatism and his feet used to swell, but he never gave a thought to his body and remained as busy as ever with satsang programs. He was also afflicted with arthritis of the knee, which gave him a lot of trouble. One day, he arrived at a program. As he got out of his car, he showed the premies his poor knees and laughed, "See, even divine Masters have to suffer the results of their previous actions! My body is old now and I want to get rid of

it. Then my problems will be over. Old clothes should be thrown out and new ones put on."

Gurudev was not at all attached to his body. Leaving it meant nothing more to him than changing clothes. He had realized his true identity as pure Spirit. Once, at Shakti Nagar, he said, "Don't think that I am this body. Guru is not a body. He is Living Consciousness."

I couldn't help saying, "That's true, but we are very much in love with your physical form, too. We, like Krishna's milkmaids, like to lose ourselves in contemplating your manifested form!"

God, in the form of Holy Name, is omnipresent. Manifesting Himself a body, or relinquishing it, is mere sport for him, but He is like a giant tree, whose shade brings comfort to thousands of creatures, and it is quite natural to love His physical form. Where are those large, lustrous eyes now, which used to brim with love and compassion? Where is that broad, majestic forehead, glowing with spiritual light and power? Where are those alluring locks of long curly hair? Where are those tender holy feet, which premises yearned to touch?

O Death! It is no use begging you to have mercy on us! Did anyone ever escape your clutches? Not only do you snatch the poor from their huts. You don't spare the kings in their palaces, either. Even Alexander, the conqueror of the world, couldn't defeat you. You make fodder of us all. Even Incarnations such as Rama and Krishna, or saints like Kabir and Nanak, whose consciousness was merged in the Infinite, had to yield to your law. They surrendered to you what is yours and dissolved themselves in the Universal Spirit. Great souls never interfere with natural laws. When the time comes, they discard the physical frame like a worn-out suit of clothes.

O Death! Do you think that these great Masters are dead, just because they have left their bodies? You can never reach where they live for Eternity! That land is beyond space and time. Neither sun nor moon shines there; it is illuminated by the self-effulgent

Divine Light. Can your dominion extend that far? Such great souls have actually conquered you! As St. Kabir said,

"I've caught Death and made him my disciple,
I've cut off the ears of Fear.
I meditate on the Holy Name
So to whom should I defer!"

At the command of the Almighty, Who is beyond time, the holy Masters embody themselves forth in this world, then merge back into Him whence they came. Your shadow can never fall on them. They come into this mortal world of their own free will to free other souls from your clutches and make them immortal!

Shri Hans Ji Maharaj, too, has concluded his earthly drama, but as the Holy Name he pervades the universe, and even now, whenever devotees remember him, he appears to them.

Maharaj Ji's cook and personal attendant, Kanheya, received Knowledge in 1951 and has served Maharaj Ji and his family ever since. He was the cook at Kankhal and then at Dehra Dun.

At Dehra Dun, Kanheya used to place a special chair on the verandah for Maharaj Ji, so that when he came out of his room he could relax in it. Some months after Maharaj Ji's passing away, Kanheya was busy in the kitchen, when suddenly he noticed Maharaj Ji standing in front of him, saying, "Kanha! Didn't you put my chair out for me today? Do you really think that I have gone away?"

Kanheya replied, "I'm sorry, Maharaj Ji. I'll just run and fetch it." As he was bringing the chair, he saw Maharaj Ji walking with a cane, as he used to do towards the end of his life. Even now, whenever Kanheya is at Dehra Dun, he puts out Maharaj Ji's chair, hoping that he will come, sit down and call, "Hey, Kanha....!"

Many devotees have had similar experiences, which strengthens their conviction that he is telling them, "Even though you can't see me, I'm right here!"

A few days before his physical demise, Shri Maharaj Ji went to Mussourie to visit his eldest son. He was accompanied by Shri Mata Ji and his other sons, but he took Shri Satpal Ji aside and spoke to him earnestly. Shri Mata Ji saw from afar that Shri Satpal Ji was listening intently and crying, too.

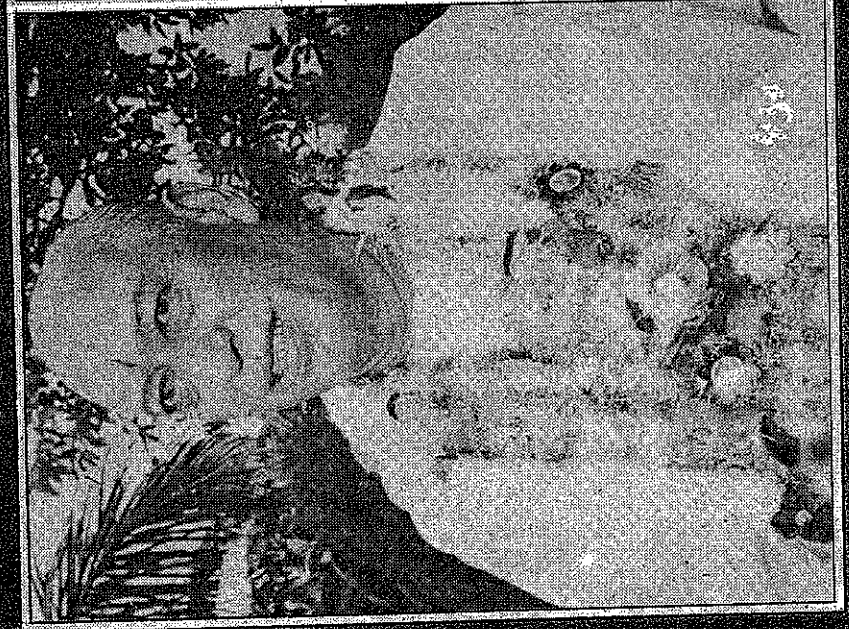
When they returned, Shri Mata Ji asked them what they had been discussing so secretly. Shri Maharaj Ji only laughed and said, "Now I can go in peace. Satpal will finish my incomplete work."

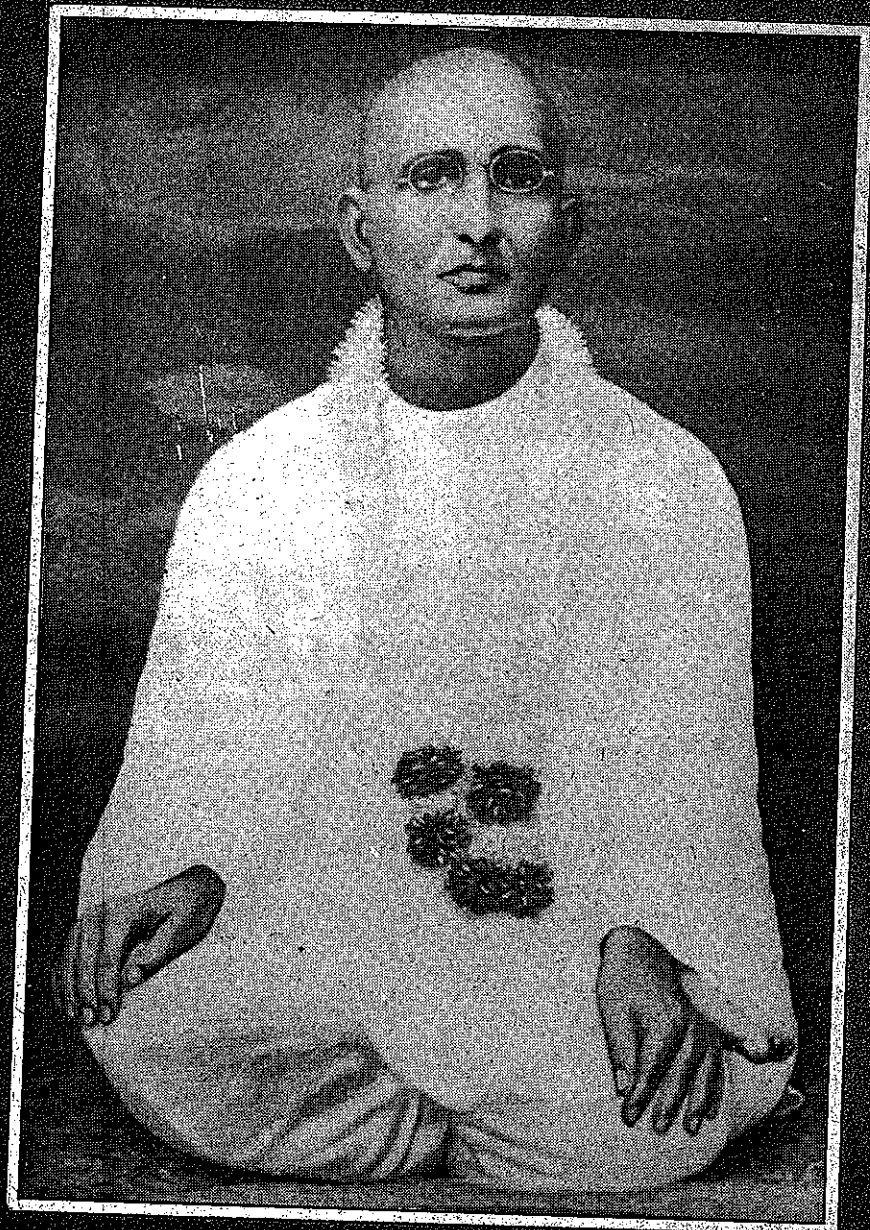
After Shri Maharaj Ji's death, Mahatma Brahmanand went to Mussourie to inform Shri Satpal Ji that Maharaj Ji was critically ill. Young Satpal Ji said, "Why are you hiding the truth from me? Why don't you simply say that Maharaj Ji has gone? He told me everything beforehand."

Shri Satpal Ji Maharaj recalls, "In November 1965 a huge procession was held in Bombay. Shri Maharaj Ji, for the first time, told Shri Mata Ji to sit next to him in his carriage. He also seated me next to him and blessed me. It was then that the thought occurred to me that he was about to bring his earthly life to a close. The thought of separation filled me with deep sorrow."

Shri Mata Ji, who is continuing Shri Maharaj Ji's work, says, "I never feel that he is not here. He still appears to me in the Light. I don't feel that he has gone anywhere. He is right beside me, and it is his power that is doing everything. I'm merely his instrument."

Although Shri Maharaj Ji's physical form is no longer with us, he is still active in a subtle way. He is always there to help and protect. If a devotee calls on him sincerely, he will see him. □





Chapter Two

Introduction to Satguru

Uttarakhand, nestled in the Himalayas, is famous for its spectacular scenery, pleasant valleys, sparkling streams and holy shrines. It is an ancient and sacred area, where saints, sages and Divine Incarnations lived and practised meditation.

During the Brahmanic era which followed the Vedic Age, this area was called 'Brahmrishi Desh' and later, during the time of the Mahabharata War, its name was changed to 'Garh-desh' ('land of forts'). In the 7th century, after Shri Shankaracharya founded Kedarnath and Badrinath shrines, this area became known as Kedardesh. It is the playground of Lord Shiva and the place favoured by sages for meditation and austerities. During Vedic times, Vashishta, Kashyapa, Atri, Gautama, Vyas, Vishwamitra and other sages chose this place for their spiritual practices. The heroes of the Mahabharata, the Pandava brothers, together with Draupadi, received spiritual Knowledge here.

Included in Garhwal are Badrinath, Kedarnath, Gangotri and Yamunotri shrines. The sacred River Ganges rises in its lofty ranges. This is the domain of Lord Shiva, who is worshipped in every house. Situated here, too, was Valmiki's hermitage, where Sita gave birth to her sons, Lav and Kush, and where she, the daughter of Earth, was finally received back into her Mother's lap.

Garhwal is renowned for its peacefulness and natural beauty. This fertile land has given birth to and nourished holy Teachers who dedicated their lives to reawakening devotion, spiritual knowledge, and humanitarianism throughout India.

One such Master in this glorious lineage was Shri Hans Ji Maharaj, who spread the teachings of devotion and universal religion throughout India, and who, posthumously, became

world-famous. He was born in the village of Garki Sariya, in Talai district, Pauri Garhwal, on November 8, 1900, into a family directly descended from Lord Rama. His given name was Hans Ram Singh. His father's name was Ranjit Singh Rawat. His grandfather, Hemant Singh Rawat, was a farmer belonging to the Devshal Rawat clan. 'Devshal' was the title given to the caste who built Durga and Shiva temples and 'Rawat' is a subcaste of the 'Rait' caste, which means 'leader' or 'helmsman', indicating a knightly class with heroic and leadership qualities.

His mother was Kalindi Devi, a very pious and spiritual lady. She worshipped Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvati and had strong faith in them. She regularly visited the temple for prayer and *puja* (worship). Shri Maharaj Ji recalled, "My mother used to take me with her to the temple. Lord Shiva and Parvati used to appear to me there." Even from early childhood he had the desire to see God.

He was, to say the least, an unusual child. His face was always lit up with laughter, like a rose in full bloom. That is why he was given the nickname 'Hansa-Hansa' (*Hansna* means 'to laugh' in Hindi). Like many realized Masters before him, the child did some miraculous things.

Mahatma Satyanand remembers, "Once, at Hardwar, I met a boyhood friend of Shri Maharaj Ji's. We started discussing holy men, and this person, whose name was Umed Singh from Garhwal, told me, 'I have met many mahatmas and holy men, but none of them have ever shown me miracles such as I saw when I was young.'

'I was about 8 years old at the time. One of my playmates was a boy of my age named Hans Ram Singh. We used to call him 'Hansa-Hansa'. He did some amazing things. While we were playing, he would show us Delhi, Calcutta, Bombay, etc. right before our very eyes! Once I asked him to show me what it was like overseas. He blindfolded me and we kept on playing. Suddenly he grabbed me and said, 'Look at those cities! They are all foreign!'

'Once we were sitting beside a river. I heard heavenly flute-like music which entranced me. Even now I try to hear it, but it

doesn't come. Words can't describe the things he showed me. He was a remarkable, extraordinary boy. Whenever I think of him, he seems to appear before me.' At this his eyes filled with tears and his voice choked up. After a few minutes he continued, 'A few years later we were separated. During the First World War I was stationed overseas, and saw again the large cities which I had seen in those childhood visions, so naturally my amazing friend was always in my thoughts. When I returned home I found out that he had gone away and was following a guru. Later I heard that he himself had become a guru with many mahatmas and devotees who call him 'Hans Incarnate'. Indeed, he was a divine, enlightened Yogi. What more can I say? His name describes his personality. Whenever I remember him, there he is before me, laughing. When I remember his radiant face, my heart breaks. Now I am old, but still, sometimes when I remember him, I am a child again, playing with him. When I come out of my reverie, I still see his face everywhere and those memories of our childhood games linger on."

Shri Maharaj Ji had a boundless love for God and was obsessed with the desire to realize Him. Even at a young age he proved himself to be a Yogi of remarkable attainment. Due to impressions and spiritual merit accumulated in previous-lives, he was often absorbed in meditation, oblivious to everything.

On the occasion of Guru Puja, 1966, he recalled his childhood, saying, "I was often absorbed in Samadhi and used to have divine visions. When I told my aunt about it, she replied, "Oh yes, it happens." I would close my eyes and see Divine Light. I would say to myself, 'Others have realized Him. Why don't I?'

After Shri Maharaj Ji had left home, his mother, who had an extraordinary love for him, died of grief, unable to bear the separation. Young Maharaj Ji had often thought of building a bridge across their river so that she could reach home quickly. After her death, the world lost any attraction that it might have had for him. The fragility of life and the grave reality of death occupied his thoughts. He was driven from within to search for truth, so he

left his village and finally arrived in Quetta, Baluchistan, which in those days had a sizeable Garhwali population. He lived there a few years. He went back and forth between Quetta and Karachi, Sindh and Lahore, in connection with his work. He had only an elementary education because in those days education was not available in the hills, although later he expanded his knowledge through private reading.

He was of the opinion that no country should be enslaved by another. A kind of forced labour used to be extracted from the hill people. When the British Deputy Collector went on tour, he, his family and even their personal lavatory used to be carried in palanquins on the shoulders of villagers who'd been pressed into service. Shri Maharaj Ji used to pray, "God, please spare me and my father from this work. Don't let my turn come!" Orders would be sent to families along the route to prepare meals for the English, and anyone who refused was severely punished.

Shri Maharaj Ji always preferred the poor to the rich, yet his greatness was that he could fit in with either. As a child, he liked to visit the elderly and wise and find out what they thought.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, a spiritual and patriotic renaissance was taking place in the social and religious lives of Indians. The younger generation was seized with a new zeal, a national awareness and a passion for debating. Shri Hans Ji Maharaj was very affected by it, and participated eagerly in the new movement.

The Arya Samaj was very active in Lahore. It was the era of public assemblies and theological debates. He was impressed by the ideas and programs of the Arya Samaj. The Indian Congress was spearheading the freedom struggle and Shri Hans Ji Maharaj was actively involved in it, too.

He opposed all the superstition and hypocrisy perpetrated in the name of religion. He had no intention of blindly following traditional Pauranic ideology. The aim of his life was to find the Truth and realize it. Although he was active in the Arya Samaj, he didn't agree with their blanket criticisms of religion and their

general negativity. He was interested only in the Truth and was ever alert to recognize it when it came his way.

In his search for the true spiritual Knowledge, he would talk with people from every religion and sect. He would ask them about their inner religious experiences. He also studied the principles and doctrines of various religions, but none could give him the practical experience he craved. All he got from the so-called holy men was bookish knowledge and dogma, which could hardly satisfy someone like him. 'Until I see You with my own eyes, I won't believe what any guru says' was his motto.

He found the majority of saddhus to be holy men in name only. Then by chance he came across the saintly man from whom he would receive the initiation which would change his life. Under his Guru's guidance he easily realized the deepest spiritual mysteries. He was already a perfected soul—all he needed was the igniting spark.

Once he was sitting in the courtyard at Shakti Nagar with some premies. He was in a cheerful mood. Normally he never spoke about himself when he gave satsang, but would discuss spirituality by quoting from various saints. I happened to be present on that occasion at Shakti Nagar, and ventured, "Maharaj Ji, you always quote from other saints, but you don't talk about your own experiences. I wish you would tell us something of that." Maharaj Ji burst out laughing and said, "Listen, I glorify the saints whom everyone worships, and still people oppose me! If I were to talk about my personal experiences they would skin me alive, as they did to St. Mansur!" I held my ground and said, "Maharaj Ji, I have never seen those other saints. I have seen only you, and due to you I trust in God and spirituality. That is why I want to hear something about you!"

So Maharaj Ji related his own story: "I wandered here and there searching for Truth. I had been seeing Light and hearing Music since I was a child, but I didn't understand why this happened to me. At last my luck changed and I met my Guru Maharaj Ji (Shri Swami Swarupanand Ji).

'I once attended a free feast which was being held for saddhus. I was a member of the Arya Samaj and believed that there was nothing higher than *Aum* and the Gayatri Mantra. On that occasion I heard satsang from the divine Master. It seemed a bit mysterious to me, so afterwards I approached him and asked him what he taught. He gave me the address of his ashram and told me to come there.

'I arrived. It was raining and I was soaked. This ashram had a verandah where stood a bucket and waterpot. When Maharaj Ji saw me, he laughed and told a disciple, 'Wash his feet.' I retorted, 'Why should I get my feet washed! You said that you'd tell me what you have to offer, so please do so.' He said, 'Come tomorrow. I'll tell you then.' I recalled this tale from the scriptures:

'Once, in the course of his travels, St. Narad arrived at a village. A poor brahmin lived there with his family. His wife humbly entreated Narad to dine at their house. Narad accepted. After dinner he blessed her and said, 'May your Guru live forever!' She replied, 'Sir, I have no Guru.' This upset Narad, who cried, 'Oh no! Before I had a Guru I was told that I defiled the very ground I walked on, and now I have eaten food cooked by someone who isn't a disciple! What will happen now?' He got ready to regurgitate the meal. The Brahmin's wife begged, 'Master, please don't! We are very poor and no saddhus have ever dined with us. It is God's mercy that you are gracing us with your presence today. If it is such a crime to be Guru-less, then please be my Guru.'

'So Narad gave her Knowledge of the Divine Light and Holy Name and went on his way. The experience of True Knowledge awakened her spiritually and she plunged into meditation.

'Her husband had gone to bathe in the Ganges. She put his dinner on a lower shelf and her own on a higher shelf. Then she closed the door and sat for meditation. After the Brahmin had performed his ritual ablutions he returned home. He was taken aback to find the door closed. He thought, 'This is the first time this has happened. My wife always greets me at the door. What is going on?'

'He knocked and his wife answered, 'I've put your dinner on the lower shelf and mine is separate. There is a separate jug of water for you, too. From now on please don't touch my food if you don't want me to starve.' The poor Brahmin, quite bewildered, asked, 'Why? What has happened?' His wife explained, 'Today I became Narad's disciple, and he says that it is a sin to eat or drink anything touched by a non-disciple.' The Brahmin sighed, 'Oh God! What have I done to deserve this? Only we two live here. If I should accidentally touch her food, or if she is ill and I have to cook, she would rather starve.' So he told her, 'Very well, my dear. When your Guru comes here again, I'll also become his disciple. That's the only way out of this dilemma.'

'A few days later, Narad returned. The Brahmin was advised by his wife to ask for initiation. He replied, 'First I will bathe in the Ganges to purify myself.' She said, 'There's no need for that. This Knowledge can sanctify the worst sinners! You can bathe afterwards.' She tried to persuade him but he wouldn't listen, and went to take his bath. As luck would have it, he was bitten by a snake and died instantly. Meanwhile, as he hadn't returned, Narad prepared to leave. The wife clasped his feet and cried, 'Master, please wait a little longer! I'll go and bring him right now. He must be on his way back!' She ran towards the river as fast as she could. When she found his body she wept bitterly.

'When she didn't return either, Narad himself went to the river, where he found her. He said, 'My dear lady, crying won't do any good now. If weeping could bring him back, I'd call thousands of mourners here. But he'll never return.' The lady replied, 'Master, I'm not weeping because he is dead, for he must have been meant to die now. But if he had died after receiving Knowledge he would have been spared further births and deaths!'

'I mentioned this story to him and also that saying of Ravanna's: 'Never put off good deeds until tomorrow.' He laughed heartily at this and said, 'Come back tomorrow.' I was furious but I controlled myself by thinking, 'Very well, let's see what he has to say for himself tomorrow. If he can't show me anything special, I'll

debate the scriptures with him and if he can show me Truth, it will have been all worthwhile.' So I composed myself and sat down.

'It's a long story how I arrived the next day. It had been raining and I had to cross a river. Just as I started to cross, my foot slipped and I was dragged under. The thought flashed into my mind, 'If I have to die, why couldn't it have been after I'd received Knowledge? As it is, I'm leaving the world without it.' Suddenly, someone grabbed me, or so it seemed to me, and set me on the other bank. I looked everywhere for my rescuer but nobody was there. Whoever it was had disappeared. I lost my way in the rain but finally made it to the ashram. Guruji greeted me with 'So, you made it here!' I was drenched to the skin. As I bowed to him he took out a white dhoti and shirt from under a pillow and told me to go and change my clothes. I hesitated, because I believed that householders should offer things to sadhus, and not the other way around. Moreover, I had always been a bit awed by sadhus, because when I was young, I was told not to associate with them because they corrupt people and wreck homes. Only after he insisted did I accept the clothes. Then he seated me close to him and said, 'If you want Knowledge, I can give it to you, but you must surrender your mind, body and wealth.' I thought to myself, 'Well, if this is the true Knowledge, what have I got to lose? And if it is not the Truth, or if it is just some mantra, I've still got all my possessions at home. The body is an ephemeral thing and has to die sooner or later, so what if I died here? Even if I get nothing from him, I've still got my belongings.' So I said aloud, 'Very well. If it is the real thing, I'll surrender everything.'

'Then he instructed a premie to spread a mat on the floor of the inner room. He took me inside, sat me down and said, 'Don't reveal to anyone what I tell you. Secondly, you have to surrender everything. Thirdly, two of the techniques should be practised privately and two all the time.' I thought to myself, 'I'll definitely know if it is true or not, and if it's not, I'll expose him.' But aloud I merely answered, 'Yes.' Then he gave me Knowledge and taught

me the techniques. I saw wonderful Light and heard Music also, as I had in childhood. My mind merged with the Holy Name.

'After initiation he asked me, 'Well, is it the Truth or not?' I answered, 'It's true, of course. How could it not be?' He hadn't told me any mantra. He had directly revealed the omnipresent Power which has always been within me and all creatures.

'I had a copy of St. Brahmananda's hymns and St. Ramdas' *Das Bodh*, which I often read. I also used to read the Bhagavad Gita daily. I wondered why I now understood things that up until the previous day had mystified me. Why was it all crystal-clear now? There is a hymn of Brahmananda's which says, 'Day and night turn the heart's pure rosary.' Now I knew what that meant. I had always known that such a power existed, yet I couldn't realize it. So why did I now understand?

'On the third morning after initiation, I bathed, put on clean clothes, and sat in an isolated place for meditation. I made a vow that, if God exists, he'll reveal Himself to me, otherwise I'll die, this body being, after all, perishable. If I am immortal, then I'll reincarnate in some form or another and in future I'll never remember God's Name!'

'So I started meditating on the Holy Name. Instantly I was surrounded by Light and my attention was rivetted upwards. I went straight into Samadhi. I saw God face-to-face. How can I describe the glory of Guru Maharaj Ji and what he does? He still appears to me. But not everyone can experience this. He used to tell me, 'You have reached this stage because of spiritual merits earned in previous births. You will spread this Knowledge to millions.' And just see how many people I have initiated. I have no idea of day or night or what day it is. My only joy is Guru Maharaj Ji's Knowledge and spreading it. He drenches me with his grace. If you do meditation, his grace will shower on you too.

'He has helped me in so many ways. Once I was travelling beyond Simla. It was evening and I thought, 'It is said that every piece of food has someone's name stamped on it. Let's see what I get in this forest.' I reached a dharmshala (a rest house for

pilgrims). As soon as I sat down, a premie descended the hill towards me, bringing fried vegetables, sweet cakes etc. He was returning from his in-laws'. He touched my feet then offered me the food. This kind of thing has often happened to me on trains, too. God gives to everyone according to their deeds.

'I had a close friend, who was opposed to saddhus. I wanted him to take Knowledge, but knew that if I praised it he wouldn't take it, yet without experiencing it how was he to believe? I went to a lot of trouble to bring him along to satsang. It was a Sunday, and a lot of people were present. Guru Maharaj Ji blessed him with Holy Breath and told me to initiate him. My friend was against saddhus so he scoffed, 'When he blew into my ear I was surrounded by Light!' We went home and I, in accordance with Maharaj Ji's agya, explained very carefully each technique to him. It was the most thorough initiation I have ever given. Then I asked him, 'Well, what do you think of this?' He answered, 'This is truly Knowledge of God. I never used to understand the scriptures but now I do. That is a sign of true Knowledge. This Knowledge which you have shown me is within everyone. It is God.' He became a saddhu! I also wanted to become a mahatma, but Guru Maharaj Ji didn't agree. He told me, 'Continue living a family life and preach in white clothes.' So, I am doing as he said."

Shri Hans Ji Maharaj received Knowledge in 1922 or '23 and in 1926 he was commanded to initiate others. He devoted his life to meditation and preaching under his Guru's care and guidance. Near his native village in Uttarakhand, in the area known as Tapobhumi, he practised meditation and severe austerities for several years. Shri Satpal Ji Maharaj plans to build a memorial, 'Hans Smriti', here.

Maharaj Ji lived the life of a devotee who desires nothing for himself and considers himself lucky if his devotion and love pleases his Master. It is a scriptural principle that a devotee who cannot please his Master will never achieve self-realization, and enlightenment is impossible until he follows the Truth in thought, word and deed.

Once, during Guru Puja at Shakti Nagar, I was busy doing service. Maharaj Ji came out of his room and told me, "Even a little service done sincerely brings results, but full realization of Knowledge comes only with total dedication." Indeed, he knew the importance of total surrender, having done it himself. He had endless reverence and unshakeable faith in his own Guru. Guru is not a mere human being. He is the Supreme Personality Himself, the Invisible One, Whom all the scriptures eulogize.

Shri Maharaj Ji continued, "My faith and love for my Guru increased day by day. I would yearn to see him. Once I had to travel a long way by train to see him. I was talking to some fellow passengers about Knowledge and they made fun of me, but I always had unwavering love and faith in him, because I had experienced the benefits of his Knowledge."

Maharaj Ji's life was a model of renunciation and austerity. In the early days he used to wear homespun clothes with cloth cap and shoes. Sometimes he would wrap a towel around his head like a turban. Totally absorbed in serving his master, he didn't return home for several years. He obeyed unflinchingly the most difficult commands of his Master. Even though technically a householder, he lived like a monk. He saw his Master manifested everywhere. Once he told us, "I was standing in front of Guru Maharaj Ji. He told me, 'Move backwards.' I did so and he repeated, 'Move backwards.' But I was right against the wall, so how could I move an inch further? Still, I believed that he could make even the wall move, so I moved back."

In those days, he bore all sorts of hardships. He told us, "I would live on nothing more than fried chickpeas for days at a time, but I never once shirked carrying out his orders."

Shortly before he departed from this world, Shri Swarupanand Ji came to Delhi and stayed at Daryaganj. Some Delhi premies who had been initiated by Shri Hans Ji Maharaj came for the Master's darshan. Bihari Ram and Ho Ram, the first to be initiated by Shri Hans, were among them. Shri Swarupanand Ji stayed in his room and finally most of the premies went home.

Those few who remained, however, had darshan. Shri Swarupanand Ji Maharaj asked them, "Who gave you Knowledge?" Some of them answered, "Shri Hans Ji." The Master said, "Don't go looking for another Guru after I've gone. You follow Hans, because he is in me and I am in him."

Shri Swarupanand Ji relinquished his mortal body in 1936 at Nangli. Various mahatmas contended for his ashrams and proclaimed themselves Guru. A certain Vairaganand, who had supervised the ashrams during the Master's lifetime, gathered the support of some mahatmas and proclaimed himself the successor. They built a shrine to Swami Swarupanand Ji and started worshipping it.

The previous Masters inspire us and should be revered, but just reading their teachings and worshipping a shrine will not kindle the living flame of Knowledge, which they themselves had revealed.

When Shri Maharaj Ji arrived at Nangli, he was shocked by what he saw and, in accordance with his Master's orders, left to spread Knowledge. Some brother disciples urged him to claim what was rightfully his, but he replied, "Does it look good if fellow disciples squabble over spoils like worldly people? Guru Maharaj Ji has given me the eternal, indivisible treasure of the Holy Name, which I will continue to reveal to others, as he told me to do. The more I give it away, the more it grows. Guru-ship is not a business or a throne which can be given to anyone who wants it. This is the Knowledge of perfect self-realization and only he whose mind is perfectly united with the Master's Word, who has completely lost himself in service and whose shell of ego has been totally dissolved, can claim the position of Guru. Only in such a devotee does spirituality blossom perfectly. Just sitting on a throne doesn't make anyone a realized soul. He may be entitled to accumulate external property, but the inner sovereignty goes to the devotee who is in total unison with his Guru." That is why St. Kabir said,

'Gurus who look towards the throne are impostors. They have neither dignity nor substance.'

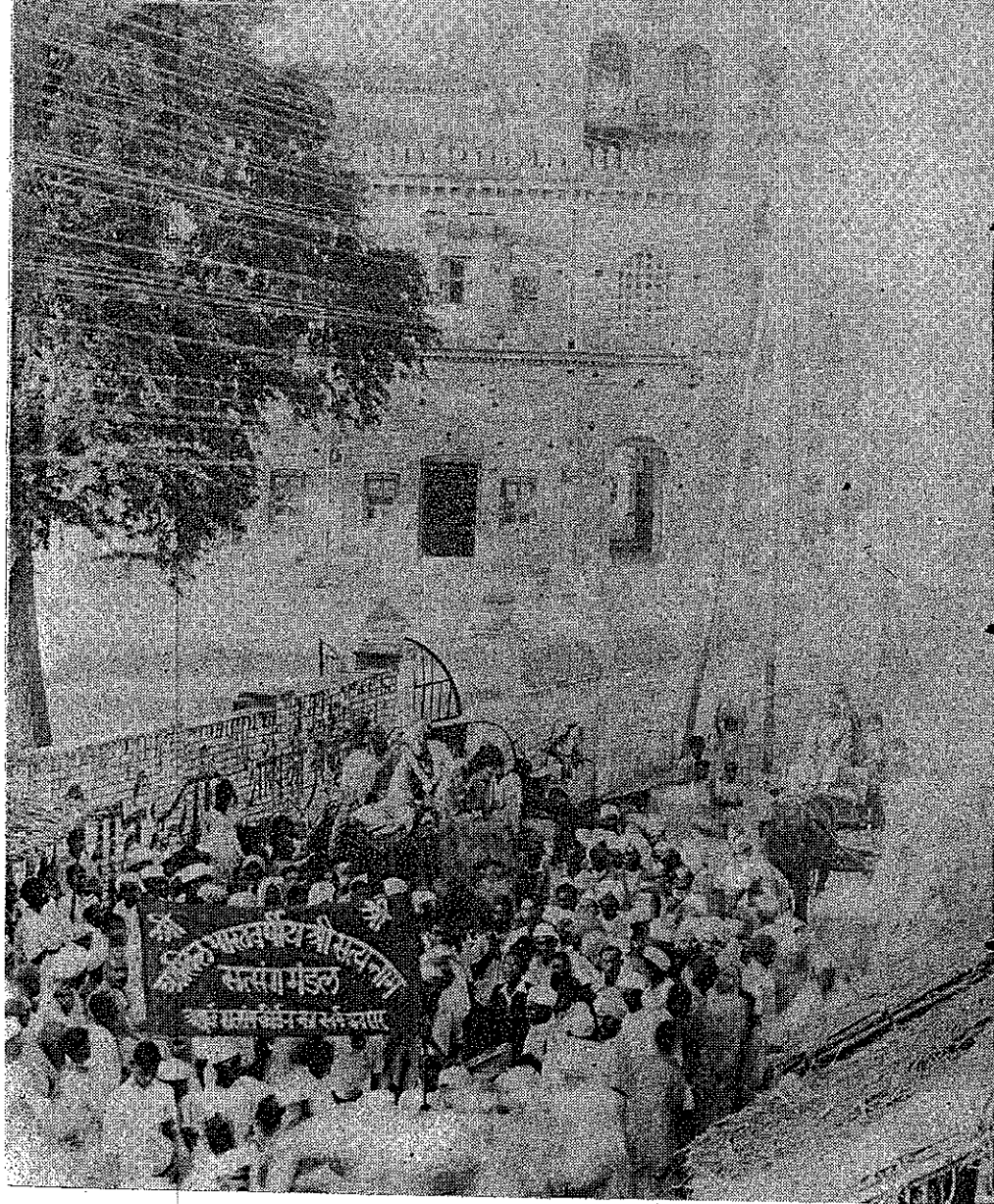
One of Shri Swarupanandji's mahatmas lived in a tiny ashram near Sagagaon, which is about four miles from Karnal, in Haryana. After the Master's death, this mahatma toured the main ashrams of Nangli, Anandpur Sahab and Chakori Sahab looking for the successor. Then he saw Shri Hans Ji Maharaj in meditation and realized that the power now resided with him, so he started looking for him. He finally tracked him down in Pahari Dhiraj, Delhi, and went for darshan. As a mark of his reverence, he crawled the length of Shri Maharaj Ji's street on his stomach. He asked Shri Maharaj Ji to visit his little ashram. He met him at Karnal Station and, seating him in a decorated bullock cart, took him in procession to Sagagaon.

Mahatma Shivdayanandji, who has been spreading Knowledge in Haryana for many years, says, "In 1938 at Sagagaon a mahatma of Swami Swarupanand Ji's initiated me. His name was Atmagyanandji. When he was about to die, he told me that if I wanted to continue on this Path I should follow Shri Hans Ji Maharaj, because he had the Master's blessings and authority in full."

Mahatma Ji continues, "Once during satsang at Dehra Dun, Shri Maharaj Ji said, 'Some people, about 200 or so, have tried to bring false charges against me, but my faith in Guru Maharaj Ji is so strong that I know that, if he is on my side, it doesn't matter if the whole world is against me. No harm could come to me.'"

Shri Jagram, Inspector of Police in Haryana, says, "Shri Hans Ji Maharaj was the embodiment of faith and devotion. His reverence for his own Guru manifested itself in everything he did and inspired me to have the same faith and respect for him." □

Procession in Kankhal, 1951.



Chapter Three

The Early Years

Shri Maharaj Ji came into this world solely to uplift and redeem others. The purpose of his life was to show humanity the path of true devotion and to deliver weary souls from suffering. His own Guru's words, "You were born for the sake of millions", echoed deep within his heart. He was like a mighty tree whose shade gives blessed relief to countless creatures, or like a holy river which cleanses the penitent and inspires them to remember God. He was a living shrine.

He dedicated his life to spreading the same sacred Knowledge which Masters since Vedic times have always taught. When the full blaze of enlightenment illumines the great souls, they become instruments of the Almighty and dedicate themselves to serving Him. They inspire others to worship Him as 'He is. Take the example of Christ, or Guru Nanak. After receiving Knowledge they could not help sharing it. It became their life. They were the instruments of the Divine and their only joy was glorifying Him and preaching the Way of Knowledge and devotion.

Shri Hans Ji Maharaj threw himself into his work. For the first few years his activity was mostly confined to Lahore and Sindh. Like Guru Nanak before him, he revealed the True Name and Light of God to people from all walks of life. He was always on the move and if a devotee was lucky, the Master would turn up and give him darshan, because in those days he had no fixed address. If premies were asked his address they would answer, "He lives in the heart." He had no set program of preaching. He would go wherever devotees called him or remembered him with love. After 1935 he extended his activities to Delhi, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan.

Delhi

Delhi has been India's capital for centuries. In the time of the Mahabharata, it was known as Hastinapura. After the establishment of the Moghul Empire its name was changed to Delhi. At present it is divided into Old and New Delhi.

Being the capital, it has always been the epitome of magnificence and grandeur. History is witness to the many wars and struggles for its throne.

It is situated on the sacred River Yamuna. It adjoins the holy district of Vrindaban-Mathura, the birthplace of Lord Krishna and the scene of his youthful activities. A stream of saints, mahatmas and masters has always passed through Delhi. After Independence, Delhi gained new importance as the capital of the Indian Republic, resulting in its becoming the headquarters of many religious teachers and groups.

It also happened to become Shri Maharaj Ji's base of activities after Lahore. His first Delhi disciple was a humble Brahmin named Ho Ram, a weaver at Delhi Cloth Mills. He came across Shri Maharaj Ji outside Old Delhi Railway Station while Maharaj Ji was getting his shoes repaired. He was telling the cobbler, "Don't use nails. Sew them." The obstinate cobbler used nails anyway. Shri Maharaj Ji warned him, "Look here! Sew them! If you don't I'll kick you beyond the three worlds!" Ho Ram, who was standing nearby, was struck by this, and told the cobbler, "Sew his shoes properly. Why are you nailing them?" He inched closer to Shri Maharaj Ji and observed him carefully. His shoes repaired, Shri Maharaj Ji started on his way. Ho Ram couldn't restrain his curiosity any longer and asked, "What magic is in your kick that it can reveal the three worlds to a person?" Shri Maharaj Ji gave him some satsang and said, "I'm staying at a local dharmshala. Come there and I'll explain it to you fully." Ho Ram's curiosity was thoroughly aroused by this time so he followed Shri Maharaj Ji back to his dharmshala. Ho Ram, a Brahmin by birth,

worshipped in the orthodox Pauranic fashion, which consists of rituals, recitations, fasting, puja, etc. Shri Maharaj Ji asked him, "Punditji, have you seen that Light, that Cosmic Form which Krishna showed to Arjuna after giving him the eye of Knowledge? God is within you, and all beings, so why do you search for Him outside? You are like the old lady who lost her needle inside her house but, because the house was in darkness, searched for it outside under the streetlights!"

Ho Ram asked, "Can I also see God within?" Shri Maharaj Ji answered, "Why not?" and initiated him. Ho Ram plunged into meditation and was filled with ecstatic bliss. Gradually, more D.C.M. employees made Shri Maharaj Ji's acquaintance and were amazed by the things he told them. They had never in their lives seen or heard such a remarkable and saintly man, who could, moreover, impart to them a practical experience of God. They felt a spontaneous reverence for him. They had all practised the conventional forms of Hindu worship such as worshipping idols and chanting the Gayatri Mantra but once they had received Knowledge they realized what devotion really is and began to understand its deep mysteries. Orthodox worship seemed like child's play in comparison.

The first initiated disciples were mostly D.C.M. employees. They included Ho Ram, Radhakrishnan, Totaram, Anurodh Singh, Bihari Lal Gupta, Hari Ram Gupta, Pandit Vishnudutt Kaushik, Dr. Shanti Saroop and Bhagat Ram Gupta. Maharaj Ji personally initiated them. His divine personality had a spellbinding effect on them. They left all their previous forms of worship and followed him around like the cowherd boys used to follow Krishna. In those days, Shri Maharaj Ji was often referred to as 'the Magician' by outsiders.

During one Vaisakhi festival at Prem Nagar, Shri Maharaj Ji said, "Once, after touring Punjab, I came to Nazibabad and put up at a dharmshala, which also had a temple. I secured a room and then asked the temple priest if there was anyone nearby who was

well-versed in the Gita and Ramayana. He introduced me to Shahi Balkishan, saying, 'You know the scriptures. This gentleman wishes to have a talk with you.'

'I asked him, 'Have you studied the Gita?' He handed me a 'Shankar Bhashiya' edition. I opened it at Chapter 11 and asked, 'Have you seen the Light, brighter than a thousand suns, which Arjuna saw?' He answered, 'No.' I asked, 'Then what's the use of studying the Gita?' He asked me to show him that Light, if I could. I discussed it with him a little, then took him into an empty room. I sat down beside him to initiate him, but the fear arose in his mind that I might be trying to hypnotize or bewitch him. Rich people are usually afraid like that. I knew what he was thinking so moved away and explained the techniques at a distance. I had previously told him that if the Knowledge is true, he must dedicate himself and all that he had to it. He immediately replied that he would.

'I took a long time initiating him. When he had thoroughly understood, I left. The more he listened to satsang, the more he began to love the Knowledge and developed such devotion that he was prepared to put all that he had into service. Once I asked him, 'Well, sir! What do you think of this magic?' He replied, 'Maharaj Ji, this kind of magic takes over a person totally!'"

Shri Maharaj Ji's presence was so magnetic that people were automatically drawn to him. Quite often he would laugh and say, "Listen, don't keep visiting me or else you'll catch the 'sticking disease'!"

He used to stay at Delhi's Satyanarayan Gurhwalon Dharmshala near the Red Fort and would hold satsang in the surrounding locality. Sometimes he would stay in a small room at Rao Bagh, near the D.C.M. Whenever premies found out that he had arrived in Delhi, they would inform one another and after work rush to have darshan. In those days, the devotees were a chosen few, and they enjoyed an intimate relationship with the Master. They were the lucky recipients of his mercy and protection, and he took care of them as a mother takes care of her

children. He once told a gathering of premies, "There are two kinds of devotees. The first is like the baby monkey which clings to its mother all the time, and the second is like a kitten, which the mother picks up with her mouth and carries each of the seven times she shifts her home. Seven times, seven chakras. Guru Maharaj Ji, by his grace and mercy, carries the kitten-devotee through all the chakras and takes him to *Satyalo*k—the highest abode of Truth. To reach this level people turn rosaries and chant, '*Bhuah, Bhuvah, Swaha*,' but unless and until your consciousness reaches that plane of Truth, you won't be released from the cycle of birth and death. When the consciousness descends to the lower levels, the individual has to migrate through the 8.4 million species.

'Because his mind is externally rather than internally oriented, he concerns himself with family and possessions, and this is why he can't break free from the cycle of reincarnation. Rivers flow until they reach the sea, and then they stop. Similarly, the soul will continue to reincarnate until the consciousness has reached the plane illumined by neither sun, moon nor firelight, and from where it does not return. When will this happen? When the devotee becomes as dependent as a kitten on the Master. He should not be like the fledgling crow, which thinks that it knows everything and tries to fly off on its own. Such a disciple ignores his Guru's advice and does what he likes."

Shri Maharaj Ji was so charismatic that anyone who came merely out of curiosity became his and didn't want to leave him. His satsang touched the sincere heart. Why try to prove the obvious? When the living embodiment of divine wisdom is right in front of you, of what use is clever wit and showing off?

The humble D.C.M. employees asked him, "Maharaj Ji, can workers like us see God? We've been told that this requires many years of penance and austerities, and that one must renounce his home and property and live in the forest."

Shri Maharaj Ji replied, "Not at all. You can meditate on God anytime and anywhere. Lord Krishna explicitly told Arjuna,

'Constantly remember Me and fight.' There is nothing harder than fighting a war. The soldier must be on the offensive and defensive simultaneously. If Arjuna was told to meditate in such a situation, why can't you carry out your daily duties at D.C.M. and meditate? All the saints have said the same thing—that one who meditates on the Lord's Holy Name at all times, while asleep or awake, sitting or standing, succeeds in all that he does.

'The problem is that you don't know what the True Name is. You can't even imagine it, because it is beyond imagination. When however, by Guru Maharaj Ji's grace, you discover what it is, you'll also say that it can be remembered all the time.'

This inspired in them the faith and bold conviction that they, like the devotees of old, could carry out their worldly duties and at the same time serve God.

Shri Maharaj Ji used to swim, laugh, play and chat with these premies and share their joys and sorrows. If a premie had any kind of problem he would ask Maharaj Ji's advice and, by following it, would overcome the difficulty and practise Knowledge with renewed determination. Maharaj Ji would explain the most profound spiritual mysteries in simple, everyday language to them. He didn't burden them with high philosophy and theological dogma but explained everything in the idiom which they understood. The correct blending of the spiritual and mundane leads to an excellent life. The two are not mutually opposing but rather complementary. Maharaj Ji would develop and illustrate his arguments with simple homilies and practical examples, which even the most illiterate person could understand. Many a time when someone wanted to show off his intellectual knowledge by reeling off scriptural quotations or trying to start intellectual discussions, Maharaj Ji would say, "Hey, Mr Scholar! Is God dependent on your erudition? What's the use of your grand speeches if your audience doesn't understand what you are talking about? Saints always use very plain language so that even the simplest person can understand. Devotion is not at all dependent on learning! Yoga, rites, rituals and recitations are not necessary

for devotion. Devotion, although independent and complete in itself, cannot flourish without satsang. If education or theological studies were necessary, then what would become of the illiterate? It would mean that devotion isn't independent. If only the good-looking could be devotees, then the homely would be left out. If only the highborn could be devoted, then the lowly would be deprived. High-caste Hindus won't let the lower castes into temples, so if devotion means going to temples, these lower-caste people are being excluded from devotion. But Lord Rama bypassed the royal, the highborn and the wealthy. He visited instead the tiny hut of the poor and humble devotee Bhilni, and ate fruit which she had already tasted. She was neither beautiful, educated nor high-caste. But the Lord, the Beloved of the devotees, was drawn by her love.

'If only adults could be devoted, then how could children like Dhruva and Prahlad have seen God? If devotion meant building big temples or giving large sums in charity, then poor labourers would be left out. If only Indians could be devoted, then Americans, Russians, Africans and Chinese would be left out. In other words, devotion is not dependent on any particular country, caste, ethnic group, level of education, personal qualities, age, strength or wealth, and anyone who thinks that it is doesn't know anything about devotion. Cripples, the blind, the infirm, women, men, Hindus, Christians and Sikhs all have the right to be devotees. But worldlings don't know what devotion really is and do anything they like in its name. That is why, in the present circumstances, we don't find one universal path. Hindus worship idols with flowers, fruit and water. They have their own rituals. They fast and go on pilgrimages to Badrinath. They have their sacrificial fires and chant mantras. This is what they think is devotion, but it is not. The Gita, 4:34, says that to know what real devotion is, one has to approach a realized soul, prostrate to him and serve him, then, when he is pleased, humbly and sincerely ask for Knowledge. If what worldly people are engaged in were actually true devotion, then what would be the need to find and

follow the Satguru? You can only know what devotion is when you serve the Master in every way and with whatever you have."

For several years Shri Maharaj Ji held satsang in the company housing of the D. C. M. Premies would take turns to arrange satsang in their houses, and the satsang and singing would go on all night.

One evening, satsang was held at Pundit Vishnudutt's home. Several premies had arrived. Shri Maharaj Ji sat down and said to one of the devotees, "Badri Babu, sing a rain song! Let's see if you can make it rain!" Badri Babu was trained in the ancient art of classical singing, and no sooner had he started singing, accompanied by the tabla, then clouds gathered and it started to rain. A magical atmosphere enveloped the place. Shri Maharaj Ji and the premies were intoxicated by the music. Very soon it started sprinkling. Everyone was sitting on a rug on the verandah and they were getting drenched. At first they were overjoyed, but as they got wetter they disappeared inside one by one. This made Shri Maharaj Ji laugh. He said, "Badri, now sing a song to stop the rain!" Badri replied, "I don't know any!" Maharaj Ji said, "Very well. Cover those sacks of pulse with this rug." As soon as they had done this, the rain eased off and finally stopped altogether.

Pundit Vishnudutt, nowadays known as Mahatma Harinivrittanand, had been involved with the Arya Samaj before he received Knowledge. He first heard satsang at the home of a fellow-D.C.M. employee, Radhakrishnan, with whom Shri Maharaj Ji generally stayed. Still under the influence of Arya Samaj ideas about gurus, he stopped coming to see Shri Maharaj Ji. One day, as he was walking along a back street, he noticed Maharaj Ji on his way somewhere. He tried to slip away unnoticed, but Maharaj Ji spotted him and exclaimed, "Punditji, we don't see you in satsang anymore. What's the matter? What have I said to offend you? You belong to the Arya Samaj. If I have said anything wrong or anti-scriptural, please tell me."

He replied, "No, Maharaj Ji. It's nothing like that. It's just that I've been kept busy with my domestic affairs, so I couldn't come."

Maharaj Ji then said, "Come to satsang. While you have this human life you should allocate some time to satsang. And look, I'm not a heretic! By Guru Maharaj Ji's grace I have realized the Infinite One, Who has been glorified by all the Scriptures. If you don't come to satsang and realize the Holy Name, well, it's your life which is slipping past. It's no skin off my nose! So think about it. The company of saints is a very rare and precious thing. Only by close association with a divine personage can anyone become a real 'Aryan'. Only human beings can realize God and, if you don't, just calling yourself an Aryan won't make you one. To be an Aryan you have to be spiritual. You have to listen to satsang, sit at the feet of saints and talk about God to others. Then you'll realize what the Truth is. Isn't this the greatest thing a person can do? Listen, if you prefer, don't think of me as a Guru. Simply think of me as a fellow human being, a brother. People should relate to each other like that."

Pundit Vishnudutt has never been able to forget these words which completely transformed his life. He still says, "Indeed, Guru Maharaj Ji made me a real Aryan and showed me the source of the Vedas and Upanishads. I could never repay him for his precious gift. Although his manner of speech was simple and artless, no one could ever refute his arguments."

To be initiated by the Guru is the first and foremost principle of the ancient Vedic tradition. However, those who trumpet about Indian tradition or Vedic tradition don't understand that all of it is based on the God-realized Master who thoroughly understands what the Vedas are all about. Just as Plato's Utopia would be incomplete without a philosopher-king, in the same way, the Vedic tradition expands from the implanting of the seed of Knowledge by the Guru in the disciple's heart. The entire Vedic teaching is based upon the imperishability of the soul. Sixteen kinds of rituals are prescribed to guide the individual along the path to liberation and to ennoble his life. Religion is the imperishable Source, the Reality which existed before the individual was born. It makes his life what it is and determines what it should be. The Guru is called

the seer of past, present and future because he knows what karmic capital has accompanied an individual into his present birth. He knows his possibilities and potentials and how, even while working out his karmas, he can become a suitable vessel for God-realization. A true Guru is one who can reveal the yogic method to facilitate this. How can someone who is himself not merged in God-consciousness, or not firmly established in Yoga, possibly guide others on the path to self-realization?

Shri Maharaj Ji used to give this illustration: "Suppose I want to learn English and have a choice between a teacher who himself knows the language and one who doesn't. Whom do you think I will choose? If your *acharyas* and *shastris*, *mandaleshwars* and *mahamandaleshwars* themselves don't know the Holy Name or have never seen the Divine Light, how can they show you? So first meditate and realize yourself and then, by God's grace, you can show others. The Almighty, through the medium of the sages, reveals this Knowledge to others. And, remember what one saint said:

'The first giver is the disciple,
Who offers his all to the Master.
The next to give is the Master,
Who gives him the priceless gift of the Holy Name.'

Of the above-mentioned sixteen rituals one is called *Upnayan Sanskar*, or investiture of the sacred thread, which nowadays has been reduced to a mere formality. Parents take their child to a pundit or acharya, who mutters a few mantras and presents the boy with the thread. Then his investiture is declared complete. The pundit takes his fee and thus earns his keep. Such priests know nothing about spirituality but plenty about making money! They don't even know what the sacred thread represents!

'The scriptures say that our carnal eyes can see the world but not God, even though He is omnipresent, and, if anyone to this day has seen God with his physical eyes, then please tell me who he is. Nobody has, my friends. For that we have a Third Eye, which also

called the Divine Eye or Eye of Knowledge. Through this, God's universal form may be perceived. Lord Krishna and Arjuna lived side by side. They were companions and Arjuna saw Krishna every day. Even so, Lord Krishna told him, 'You cannot see My unmanifest Cosmic Form with your ordinary eyes. I will open your Divine Eye, through which you may behold My Universal Form.' The Gita narrates that Arjuna saw, contained within that Form, all souls and creatures. God in His boundless compassion has endowed every human being with this Divine Eye, but, due to ignorance, in most people it is closed. When clouds obscure the sun it can't be seen, and likewise, because our Divine Eye is closed, we can't see the glory of God, even though He dwells within every heart. Tulsidas said,

'God is within you, but you can't see Him
So your life is meaningless.
You are like a person with cataracts.'

You need a doctor to remove eye cataracts, and similarly you need the Guru to remove your inner cataracts."

Some premies had become so intoxicated with the bliss that comes with meditating on the Holy Name that all they were interested in was seeing Maharaj Ji as much as possible, and getting as much out of service and satsang as they could.

The area where Tibbia College and Liberty Cinema now stand was bushland at that time. Near the site of the Liberty Cinema was the hut of a blind follower of the Kabir sect, whom Shri Maharaj Ji used to visit. Premies, therefore, would go there too. Maharaj Ji said, "Look here! Don't you have anything better to do than hang around here? What do you get out of it?" Premies answered, "Maharaj Ji, your enchanting beauty fills us with rapture. Without you we are like fish out of water." To which Maharaj Ji responded, "Well, if you love me so much, leave home and live with me!" At this they fell silent.

Kabir was an enlightened saint and it is no easy matter to understand his mystical and profound hymns. However, Maharaj

Ji was able to go to the heart of Kabir's teachings because he understood the mysteries which the great saint was describing. He would say, "Just see how great is the glory of the Holy Name and the Master!" Hari Ram Gupta says that in those days one of Maharaj Ji's favourite Kabir hymns was,

'You will know when you have met the true Guru
Because he will deliver you from all doubts and
uncertainties.

You will know you are truly devoted
When you long for Him alone.'

From time to time Maharaj Ji would visit the D.C.M. premises and shower his mercy upon them. They, in turn, served him with heartfelt love, in every way. Gradually they grew in Knowledge and deep spiritual mysteries were unveiled to them. Some of them acquired yogic powers and started exhibiting them. One premie named Balmukund did so much meditation that he acquired these powers. One day, at the D.C.M., a worker's hand got caught in a machine. Balmukund remembered the Holy Name then waved his hand over the injured man's hand. It healed immediately. This miracle astonished everyone. On another occasion he brought some dead mice back to life. This became the talk of the entire Company. Shri Maharaj Ji, however, was totally against such displays. When he heard of this incident he went to Radhakrishnan's house and scolded the assembled premises in general and Balmukund in particular, saying, "Look here! Don't waste what you have earned from meditation like this, or else you'll fall from the Path. The path of liberation is a path of love and devotion, not yogic powers. Exhibitionists who show off their powers can never realize God. Just look at God's miracles! What a wonderful universe He has created! What right do you have to interfere in His work?"

Once, at Radhakrishnan's house, the conversation turned to the topic of realizing God. Balmukund asked, "Maharaj Ji, can I see God just as clearly as I see this lantern on the table here?"

Maharaj Ji answered, "Why not? God is realized in the state of Samadhi." So Balmukund ventured, "Please send me into Samadhi and show me God." Maharaj Ji glanced at him and immediately he went into Samadhi. The next day his wife came and implored Maharaj Ji to bring him out of it. When Balmukund regained normal consciousness, he fell on his knees, weeping. For several days he was oblivious to his surroundings. He was intoxicated with Divine rapture. It took several days before he was able to resume work.

"Shri Maharaj Ji is an enlightened soul; a divine Incarnation; the Lord." Disciples began using such titles when talking about him. The D.C.M. executives heard of it and they also came to listen. However, once during satsang Maharaj Ji lost his temper over something. Those people were confused by this, saying, "If he is a saint, why is he angry?" The actions of holy persons are in a special category. They change their moods for the sake of the devotees' progress.

Radhakrishnan, at whose house Maharaj Ji generally stayed, was a young man inclined towards revolutionary ideas. At that time there were two anti-British movements. The first was open and had the support of the general public. Under the leadership of Gandhi, its ideals were truth and non-violence. The other was revolutionary and clandestine, but would surface occasionally. Radhakrishnan had a connection with a group of revolutionaries known as 'Kakari Kand', who derailed trains and stole any Government money on board. Radhakrishnan was arrested on suspicion and put in jail. When he returned home he told Maharaj Ji, "I missed you very much." Maharaj Ji replied, "Nowadays your mind is into other things. If you sincerely meditated on the Holy Name no one could have led you astray." Radhakrishnan said, "But, Maharaj Ji, the youth of our country should sacrifice themselves for its freedom." Maharaj Ji replied, "That's no doubt true, but remember, only a man of Truth can change the times. Derailing trains won't do it. Only under Mahatma Gandhi's leadership can this country gain its independence. The youth of

India should stand united under his banner of truth and non-violence. You know how active I was in the Congress movement in Lahore! I still encourage people to struggle for freedom alongside Gandhi. How can a country which produces men of that calibre remain enslaved?" In those days Maharaj Ji wore homespun cotton clothes and cap, as a sign of allegiance to the Movement.

News of Maharaj Ji's arrival in Delhi would send a wave of joy rushing over the premies. They would leave their work and rush to be recharged by his satsang and darshan. When he left they would weep, unable to bear the thought of separation, and would count the days until he returned.

He was the embodiment of love and compassion. All he wanted was love. He was not interested in money. He would act aloof towards millionaires but take a poor yet genuine devotee under his wing and exalt him. Such a one was Hari Ram Gupta, who started out at D.C.M. earning 25 rupees per month and living in a tiny house at Telivara.

"It was summer. Shri Maharaj Ji suddenly arrived on my doorstep. I was overjoyed and asked my wife to prepare lunch while I went to the market to buy vegetables. Melons were in season so I asked the shopkeeper to show me his best Lucknow melons. I sampled a slice from each one to see if they were sweet, and they certainly were. I bought some which I had sampled and some which I had not. After Shri Maharaj Ji had taken his afternoon nap, I sliced some melons and offered them to him. He tasted a couple of slices and said, 'These are not sweet at all.' I replied, 'Try these. They must be sweet.' I sliced and offered three melons like this, but he rejected them all. Then it dawned on me what had happened. I said, 'Please excuse me. I forgot that these were the melons which I had tasted at the shop and I shouldn't have offered them to you.' Shri Maharaj Ji laughed and said, 'So! You kept the sweet ones for yourself and offered me the tasteless ones! Here, try these and see for yourself.' Indeed, they were tasteless. At that point I remembered the story of Bhilni who offered Lord Rama fruit which she had already tasted beforehand

to test their sweetness, and how Lord Rama had cheerfully eaten them.

'Shri Maharaj Ji was in a happy mood. He said, 'If I were to give you 100,000 rupees, how would you use it to serve me?' I thought about it and said, 'If you would make my love great enough, then everything I had would automatically be yours.' Maharaj Ji laughed and said, 'You are very cunning! You're asking for both devotion and maya!' Then he said quite seriously, 'Look, leave your job and go into business for yourself.' This I did and by his grace I've prospered enormously."

Shri Maharaj Ji was the home of the homeless, the shelter of the shelterless and the support of the forlorn and downtrodden. He retrieved many straying souls and set them on the right path.

Mahatma Sanwaldasji belonged to a good Brahmin family. He had been religiously inclined ever since childhood, but wasn't sure what religion really is, so to find out he went from one saddhu to another. Finally he reached Balaji Tripathi, whose temple priest was a relative of his. This relative looked after him and tutored him in the Ramayana. Sometime later he resigned and Sanwaldasji found himself in the position of head priest. Saddhus, monks and heads of ashrams all visited the temple to pay their respects, touching his feet and offering him gifts. But in his heart of hearts he was troubled by the thought that simple, naive devotees give saddhus money earned through sweat and toil and those saddhus in turn gave it to him. If he himself knew nothing about God, how could they know? It worried him that he was heading for damnation by deceiving innocent devotees in the name of God. His relative had renounced this illusory glory. Now he too realized that he would have to leave the world one day. So one night he got up from bed, wrapped himself in a shawl and just set out on foot for Gangotri and Yamunotri. Finally, after a long search, he came to the conclusion that there is no such thing as the Name of God and scriptures are the product of priests' and scholars' imaginations, because if God had a name, he would certainly have found it by now.

Just as he was standing by the river contemplating throwing himself in, Shri Hans Ji Maharaj appeared. He had been staying in a bungalow belonging to the Rajah of Tehri, and was going for his usual walk. Seeing Sanwaldasji standing there so dejectedly he asked, "Where do you live?" "Nowhere," answered Sanwaldasji. Maharaj Ji questioned further, "Do you believe in the Ramayana?" Said Sanwaldasji, "I don't believe in anything. It's all lies."

This surprised Maharaj Ji and he asked, "Then what is the truth?" Sanwaldasji replied, "I don't know." Shri Maharaj Ji came to the point. "Would you like to know?"

Sanwaldasji burst out, "How can you show me? I've been everywhere and met the highest so-called saddhus, mahatmas, mandaleshwars and all the rest, and they're all the same. They don't know, either. They say whatever they like and fool innocent people. Lies and hypocrisy is all you find!"

Shri Maharaj Ji suggested, "It's not possible that you've met every single teacher to see if there is a genuine realized soul among them. How would you know one even if he were standing right in front of you? Haven't you heard the saying, 'You never know in what guise God will come to you'? Look, every scripture says that God is within. I'll show you, and if it is the Truth, then believe it, and if not, then don't."

Shri Maharaj Ji then initiated him and told him to meditate. What he saw within thrilled him to the core and banished all his doubts. When he came out of meditation he went to Maharaj Ji's house and stood outside the door all night. In the morning Maharaj Ji found him there. He prostrated to Maharaj Ji, who asked, "Well, how are you?"

Sanwaldasji answered, "Your Knowledge is so powerful that it has swept away all my doubts and confusion. When I came out of meditation and couldn't find you I was very anxious. I looked everywhere for you and finally came here." Shri Maharaj Ji made him a mahatma and sent him to spread Knowledge in Delhi.

The number of premies increased day by day. They requested

Maharaj Ji to hold satsang not only in premies' homes but out in the open in parks and dharmshalas. So Maharaj Ji started giving satsang in dharmshalas, including Satyanarayan Gurhwalon Dharmshala.

Mahatma Satyanand Ji first met Shri Maharaj Ji here, and since that day has never returned home. The saying, 'Knowing You I became Yours' is most appropriate for him. He had been searching for the Truth since childhood and after 12 years of serving saddhus with whatever he had, he had washed his hands of them. His introduction to Shri Maharaj Ji came through a premie, Ram Richhpal, of Bhurhbaral, in Meerut district. One night this premie sang a song which went like this:

"The primordial secret is unlike anything else and one who knows it knows everything."

Satyanandji taunted him, saying, "Are you just mouthing words or do you understand what you are saying?" The premie said, "Indeed I do know." Then Satyanandji saw red. He said crossly, "What do you know! Saddhus and yogis living in Himalayan caves and at the holiest of holy places don't know! Heads of ashrams and temples don't know! They just sing and twist words and their disciples swallow it all, thinking that they've found a genuine knower of God. But in fact they get nothing! Like the Ramayana says, 'A deaf disciple doesn't hear what his blind guru doesn't see.' If you really do understand, then explain it to me."

Ram Richhpal answered, "I don't merely understand. I *know* that primordial Secret. If you want to know too, then come to my place. A mahatma comes there who can explain it properly to you, any way you want, and he can show you practically, too." When he heard that, Satyanandji turned red with fury! "A mahatma! I've already met thousands!" The premie replied, "Okay, you've seen thousands. Then see this one, too." Then he quoted,

'Not all seas contain pearls, and not all trees are sandalwood.'

"The seed of Knowledge and Truth is never destroyed. It is indeed true that there are thousands of impostors around, but there must be some genuine siddhus also. If Truth can be lost, what is keeping the world going?"

The next day Satyanandji went to Bhurhbaral. He sat down in front of the mahatma, who asked him, "How did you find out about me, and what do you want?" Satyanandji replied, "I don't want anything. I'm just looking." He was about to leave when Mahatma Ji called him back and handed him a copy of *Hans Yog Prakash*, saying, "If you know how to read, then read to me from this." Satyanandji said, "No, you read." Mahatma Ji said, "I'm uneducated, so you read and I'll explain anything which you don't understand." Satyanandji got a shock when he heard this. He thought, 'If he is uneducated, how can he explain anything to me?' However, he read aloud this passage which Mahatma Ji indicated:

'There are thousands of names for God in the world but they won't liberate you. Only a rare saint knows the Primordial Name which is remembered silently within.'

Then Mahatma Ji asked, "If the thousands of worldly names existing for God can't free you, then how can the secret Primordial Name? It must be one of those thousands. Which one is it?" Then he explained further, "Any name which can be uttered is merely a descriptive name. The secret or Primordial Name, on the other hand, already exists within everyone. It cannot be expressed in words because it is beyond language."

Then Satyanandji demanded, "Tell me what it is. How can it be remembered if it is beyond speech?" Mahatma Ji answered, "It is the real Guru-mantra, and only Guru can show you what it is." Satyanandji showed him the sacred thread which he wore and said, "I have a guru." Mahatma Ji replied, "Just believing in someone doesn't make him a guru. The true Guru is the Perfect Lord himself! You have to find him and get Knowledge. Then you'll know what the Secret Name is."

So Satyanandji said, "Very well, tell me where I can find the Guru." Mahatma Ji replied, "He is right here, in everyone's heart." Satyanandji wanted a more precise address, so he asked, "Where is the physical Guru Maharaj Ji right now?" The mahatma replied, "I don't know. Ask Richhpal."

In Richhpal's house there was a portrait of Shri Hans Ji Maharaj. Richhpal informed Satyanandji that he was the Guru and added, "Someone sincerely searching for the Lord will find Him in this form. At present he is in Delhi." Satyanandji resolved not to eat another mouthful of food until he found Maharaj Ji. A few days later he reached Delhi. He went back and forth between Yamuna Bridge and Kashmiri Gate. Then he decided to try the Red Fort area. He just happened to sit down on the steps of the Satyanarayan Gurhwalon Dharmshala for a rest. Just then, some men emerged from the building and started discussing something among themselves.

One of them said, "Oh yes, he is indeed a magician! A couple of days ago I saw a fellow prostrate full-length in front of him and didn't get up until he was told to."

Another said, "He's a hypnotist."

A third said, "He must slip people some kind of magic potion! Whoever goes to see him comes back singing his praises! Who knows what he teaches them! In my opinion, he has some kind of spell for bewitching people. Anyone who goes there—man, woman or child—just sits there gazing at him spellbound, and when they leave they walk backwards so that they won't miss a glimpse of him. One day I got caught. I stood there for two hours, turned to stone! Certainly, God has lavished all beauty on him. I too, just stood there staring as if I'd gone mad! His smile is enough to melt stone. It was quite some time before I came to my senses. I turned tail and ran and didn't stop until I'd reached home. Anyone who gets involved with him stops going to temples and starts worshipping him instead! They start believing him to be the Lord! Quite a few mahatmas have taken up with him, too, and they all quote those lines from Kabir about not using rosaries and chanting

mantras. I used to say my prayers every day and chant the Gayatri, but since the day I saw and heard him I've lost all interest. He's confused me so much that I'm almost an atheist. I had no intention of getting influenced by him, but what can I tell you! He says that all mantras are false! If he stays in Delhi much longer he'll turn us all into atheists!"

Satyanandji says, "When I heard that, I couldn't contain myself! I went up to one of them and asked, 'May I go inside?' He answered, 'You can go in but you won't come back out!' I asked, 'So how did you get out?' He replied, 'We're not about to be hoodwinked by him!' I went upstairs and stood by the door.

Some mahatmas and people in white were seated on the floor in front of a string bed. I was puzzled by this—mahatmas sitting on the floor and this seat vacant! Just then a man came in and prostrated full-length in front of the cot. I thought that the Guru must indeed be a magician, who is visible to these people but not to me, because if nobody was sitting on the cot then why was that man bowing to it? I also recalled that nobody stood up until he told them to. I stood by the door for a long time, taking it all in and waiting for the magician to appear.

Then I noticed a photograph beside the cot. It was the same one as I had seen at Bhurhbaral. Just looking at it relieved my fatigue, and I felt sure that I would find the key to certain mysteries here. Then I felt doubtful again, because, after all, this is Kali Yuga and it is as impossible to find real saints as it is for day and night to co-exist. Didn't St. Tulsidas write that in this Age, saddhus, gurus and disciples would be blind, deaf and hypocritical?

All seemed dark but I felt aware also of a ray of light, because it is also written that although this Age is full of sin and ignorance, still it is the Age when liberation can be attained without much effort at all. In Kali Yuga the power of the Holy Name really manifests itself. Isn't it written that there is no other Age to compare with it? If a person has faith and glorifies the Holy Name,

he can be liberated. But what is that Name whose power becomes most apparent during Kali Yuga?

चहुँ युग चहुँ श्रुति नाम प्रभाऊ । कलि विशेष नहीं आन उपाऊ ॥
सोई भव तर कछु संशय नहीं । नाम प्रताप प्रगट कलि माहीं ॥

Tulsidas wrote that the Name is the power behind the four Ages and the four Vedas, but the uniqueness of Kali Age is that, without a doubt, a person crosses the worldly ocean just by singing the glory of the Name. Tulsidas also wrote that the Name would manifest itself to bring Kali Yuga to an end. While I was contemplating all this, I became aware that Guru Maharaj Ji had entered the room. He was wrapped in a towel, having just taken a bath. He stood by the cot combing his hair and then began to get dressed. He was so beautiful, and his body was so glorious, that verses from the Ramayana (in which Manu describes the Lord) sprang to mind. His long curls as he combed them enchanted me. The sidelong glances that he directed at me robbed me of my reason. His gleaming forehead put the moon to shame. He applied the three-pronged tilak mark on it, which glistened so brightly that I was stunned, overcome by his loveliness. I thanked Providence that one such as I, in this day and age, so lacking in devotion and having done nothing in the way of penance, should be blessed with seeing the same Lord, for a glimpse of whom Manu in ages past did severe penance. Was I dreaming or had I died and gone to heaven? Overcome, I began singing to myself,

नमामीशमीशाननिर्वाणरूपं । त्रिभुं व्यापकं ब्रह्म वेदस्वरूपम् ।
अजनिर्गुणनिर्विकल्पनिरीहं । चिदाकाशमहाकाशवासंभजेहम् ॥

'O Lord, God of Gods! Your indescribable brilliance pervades the universe. You are Knowledge; you are beyond birth, death and the three forces of Maya. Quite separate from anything we could imagine, you take delight in Yourself alone. Obeisance to You!

निराकारमोक्षरमूलं तुरीयं । गिराज्ञानगोतीतमीशं गिरीशम् ॥
करालं कमहाकालकालं कृपालं । गुणगार संसार पारं नतोहम् ॥

'You are unconditioned and the Source of *Aum*. O Lord of Shiva! Your Knowledge is beyond language and senses. I know that You are the Lord of the Lord of Death in his terrifying aspect, still you are very kind. Although You are beyond the three aspects of Nature, all virtues are found in You. You are beyond this mortal and ephemeral world. I bow to You!'

'I prostrated to Shri Maharaj Ji, and sat in a corner. All day long I prayed silently, 'O Lord! Have mercy on me!''

Several devotees arrived, prostrated and sat down. They addressed him as 'Lord', 'Master', and 'Maharaj Ji'. At 7 p.m. Maharaj Ji called me over and asked from where I had come, but I couldn't utter a word. Then he gave me some satsang and initiated me. I sat in meditation the whole night. I can't describe the ecstasy I felt. I stayed with him for a couple of days and heard more satsang. Then he told me, 'You have Knowledge now. Go home and meditate.' I replied, 'Maharaj Ji, I was lost, and now I've come home. Don't make me homeless again. I want to live with you and nowhere else.'

He simply said, 'As you wish.' "

Since that day many years ago, Satyanandji lived with Shri Maharaj Ji, regarding himself as the servants' servant in the Guru's household.

A premie from Delhi, Bicchha Ram, recalls, "Once when I was ill, Maharaj Ji sent Mahatma Satyanand to check on my condition. Not only did he cook all my meals, but also prepared almond oil and massaged me. Shri Maharaj Ji and Mahatma Ji liked to get together and cook for the premies. Once, during a satsang program, premies had to be fed, but we had run out of plates and bowls. Someone asked Maharaj Ji what should be done. Maharaj Ji came out of his room and said, 'I'll show you what to do!' He then placed two pourries (fried chapatties) in one hand,

heaped fried vegetables on top of them and started eating, saying, 'See what a marvellous plate God has given us! Learn to be contented and cheerful in any situation.' So the premies, cheering loudly, ate as he had shown them."

Once during satsang, Maharaj Ji said of Mahatma Ji, "On the banks of the Yamuna is a dharmshala where we used to hold satsang. Before Mahatma Satyanand had received Knowledge, he saw my picture in a premie's house in Bhurhbaral and asked, 'Who is that and where is he?' The premie answered, 'He is our Guru Maharaj Ji and he lives in the heart.' In other words, he didn't give an exact address. Satyanand went to Delhi and after a lot of wandering around he somehow or other reached our dharmshala. He heard the sound of music and singing coming from upstairs. He asked someone, 'What is going on up there?' and was told, 'Don't go up there! If you do, you won't come back down! Those people are into magic!' Satyanand didn't believe him. He went upstairs and eventually received Knowledge."

Mahatma Madhudas used to work at D.C.M., but after receiving Knowledge, he became a mahatma. He was a very simple and straightforward person. He devoted his life to spreading Knowledge in Rajasthan and continued serving until his death a couple of years ago. Once, Shri Maharaj Ji appeared to me (C.L. Tandon) in a dream, long after he had left his body, and said, "Many premies have served me well, but no one could massage my feet like Madhudas did." This was not just a dream, but a fact, because Madhudas always used to massage Maharaj Ji and he was fortunate indeed that his service so pleased the Master.

Once, at Prem Nagar, Shri Maharaj Ji called all the mahatmas together and asked each one of them how he regarded himself. They all gave answers like, 'I regard myself as a servant,' or, 'I see myself as a servant of servants.' When Madhudas' turn came, he replied, 'You have made me a mahatma, so I consider myself a mahatma.' Maharaj Ji laughed and said, 'See what a frank answer he gave!'

Madhudasji had a long beard. Sometimes in satsang Maharaj Ji would playfully tweak it and sing Kabir's song about saddhus: 'He grows a beard and looks like a goat!' Madhudasji never took offence. If a devotee can't tolerate everything his Guru says to him, how can he transcend mind?

Shri Maharaj Ji often held satsang on the banks of the Yamuna. He would wear a tall crown, much to the delight of the premies. This, however, evoked opposition. People would taunt him, saying, "So, you've made yourself God! You dance like Krishna amidst your milkmaids and cowherds!"

Once he held a series of satsang programs at the Yamuna Steps. Prominent religious teachers also held programs there, during which a lot of money was donated by very rich businessmen, because these programs had the backing of Chiranjilal, a wrestler who owned one of Delhi's most famous wrestling clubs. On the other hand, Maharaj Ji's satsangs were attended by the common folk.

One day after satsang, Chiranjilal visited Shri Maharaj Ji at his dharmshala near the railway station. Chiranjilal said, "You've been holding satsang but you haven't received any large donations. If you'll listen to me, I'll arrange programs for you and get rich businessmen to donate a lot of money." Maharaj Ji got really angry and said, "Do you think that I want to barter the Holy Name? Listen, the wealth of the three worlds couldn't buy it! I don't give a hoot about your donations and I spit on your money! If that's all you're interested in, go and talk to some fake guru. God prefers the poor and the humble. He is hungry only for love, not money."

Once on his way home from satsang, Shri Maharaj Ji, accompanied by some premies, came across a *Mauni Baba*—a saddhu who has taken the vow of silence. A lot of people were seated around him asking questions, which he answered by writing in the sand. Shri Maharaj Ji sat down near him and prayed, "O God! I know You are almighty and know the innermost thoughts of all. You never make mistakes, so why did You give this Baba a tongue when it appears that he has no use for it? It would've been

better for him to have been born dumb, so that he could have kept perfect silence!" The Baba could contain neither his indignation nor his tongue. He jumped up shouting and everyone laughed. Shri Maharaj Ji said, "Mauni Babaji, silence your mind first. Mere outward silence is useless if inside your mind is ticking over. Lord Krishna called such people frauds."

Shri Maharaj Ji once said in satsang, "Once I was returning from the Yamuna. At the Red Fort intersection I saw a traffic policeman waving his arms this way and that. He went off duty just as we passed by, so I asked him why he waved his arms like that. He answered, 'It's my job. I get paid to do it.' When I asked him why he had a job like that, he said, 'It's a living.' When I asked him what he did with his pay, he replied, 'I take care of myself and my kids.' The point is, whatever a person does—whether he works in an office, or has a shop—is to fill his belly. Some people in the line of duty are sent to fight in places where it snows heavily. All for the sake of the stomach."

When Shri Maharaj Ji stayed in the Satyanarayan Dharmshala, he used to go to bathe every day in the Yamuna, accompanied by premies. He knew how to swim, and enjoyed frolicking in the water with the premies. In those days, Kishan Singh Chauhan from Ballabgarh stayed with Maharaj Ji. He used to go to the river with him. One day, Maharaj Ji told him not to go, but he insisted and went along. He relates, "Suddenly I got caught in an undertow and was being dragged under. Some women sitting on the bank shouted, 'Hey, that boy is drowning!' My ears and mouth were full of water and I was barely conscious. Suddenly some kind of force lifted me up out of the water and put me on the bank. Premies tried hard to resuscitate me but I was unconscious. Then Shri Maharaj Ji told a premie to shout in my ear, 'Kishan! Wake up! Shri Maharaj Ji has left!' This premie did so and immediately I regained consciousness. The premies took me to the dharmshala. Maharaj Ji told me, 'Listen, I told you not to go, but you disobeyed me.'

'In those days, four of us boys lived with Maharaj Ji. He gave us the yellow robes of *brahmacharins* (novices). We used to love singing devotional songs. He would take us with him on satsang tours or send us on our own to satsang. He was our everything, the cornerstone and foundation of our lives. We used to laugh and play, talk and sing and go everywhere with him. That was our life. Our whole existence centred on him. He gave us nicknames according to our traits and peculiarities. He called me 'Bulbulanand' (the nightingale) and referred to me as his private secretary. Bhagwandas was fat and had a sallow complexion, so he was called 'Gulgulanand'. Ram Rattan's two sons were called 'Chatpatanand' and 'Phatphatanand'.

Mahatma Gopaldas lived with us in those days. Once he hit me very hard. I didn't say anything to Maharaj Ji but someone else did. I was sitting with Maharaj Ji when he suddenly said, 'Kishan, has Gopaldas arrived?' I went faint with fear and trembled like a leaf. Shri Maharaj Ji had some premies massage my hands and feet. In the meantime, Mahatma Gopaldas did arrive. Shri Maharaj Ji said, 'Look how petrified he is of you! You've got some nerve beating him!' Mahatma Gopaldas begged forgiveness and prostrated at Maharaj Ji's feet. In those days premies wouldn't stand up again until they were told to. Maharaj Ji didn't tell Gopaldas to get up, and left him lying there. He took me into another room where satsang was going on. He returned after a long time, but the mahatma was still lying there. Maharaj Ji told him to get up and said, 'Listen, this time I'll excuse you, but be careful in future. If, even after becoming a mahatma you behave like a monster, you won't be able to stay here. Kings and Maharajahs have their courts. Prime Ministers and ministers hold conferences. Every President, Prime Minister and Mandaleshwar holds processions. But the Court of the Master is called *Saccha Darbar*—the Court of Truth—because it is here that God's Name and Light are revealed, and the lowly and downtrodden are given shelter. If you persecute anyone here then there is no salvation for you in any age. Out of compassion I gave you Knowledge and made you a

mahatma so that you may share that Truth with others. I never told you to regard me as your Guru—you do that because you feel to. Listen! Without serving and obeying the Master a disciple does not get liberated. So never torment any living thing by thought, word or deed. If this boy had stayed away from satsang because he is afraid of you, it would have been a terrible sin on your part."

Shri Maharaj Ji also used to hold satsang programs at Madhoda's and Chhanumal Dharmshalas. Satsang was held for a long time at Madhoda's Dharmshala in New Bazaar, Delhi. A premie called Udayshankar, an excellent dancer, would perform after satsang for Shri Maharaj Ji and close premies, after everyone else had gone. Kishan says, "I wanted to perform the 'Cowherd's Dance' for Maharaj Ji. I already knew how to sing the part and I learnt the dance routine in a few days. I danced for the first time in front of Maharaj Ji at Jyoti Prasad's house in Pahari Dhiraj. Once, at Allahabad, at the house of a premie called Ramnarayan Singh, I danced the part of Radha, decked out in Mrs Singh's jewellery. Shri Maharaj Ji had several costumes made for me, and so that I could learn to dance properly, took me to Udayshankar's (who was India's foremost dancer) concerts in Kanpur. Maharaj Ji regarded music and dance as divine, as they could express the emotions as no other medium could. In fact, when anyone took Maharaj Ji's shelter, his innate talents blossomed and developed."

Premies who were close to Maharaj Ji in those days say that they saw his divinity manifest itself in various ways. Sometimes he appeared to them in all his glory and sometimes it just seemed to vanish. When premies recall those heavenly times, they laugh and cry. Only a devotee can understand the greatness of the Beloved. Fools would accuse Maharaj Ji of trying to be a 'Pope' and would oppose him strongly. Once some members of the R.S.S. Youth Wing burst in on a satsang program, ran off with some musical instruments and generally wreaked havoc. A little while later, Shri Maharaj Ji appeared on stage, premies came out of their hiding places and once again the sound of devotional songs filled the air.

Although the dharmshala's manager wanted to file a complaint against the youths, Shri Maharaj Ji refused, saying, "They are just silly young hotheads. What do they know about the joy of devotion?"

By 1942 the Quit India Movement, under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, was in full swing. One day, as Shri Maharaj Ji was getting into a horse-drawn carriage outside the station, he happened to glance at a Government building which housed the Railway Accounts Department. He suddenly said, "That building will soon be in ruins!" And, sure enough, a few days later there was a riot and that building was razed to the ground.

Several times his satsang programs beside the Yamuna were disrupted. He once said, "If you won't let me speak here, there's a whole world out there. I can go anywhere. Who can stop the spreading of God's Knowledge? Wherever I go, my devotees will find me. It's the way of the world to worship the false and oppose the true. The same thing happened to Kabir, and that is why he said, 'If a person speaks the truth, he gets a beating, but not if he tells lies.'"

Satsang and discourses on the Bhagavad Gita were held at Channumal Dharmshala for approximately one month. All expenses incurred were met by a premie, Thakur Tej Singh, who formerly had been an avid Arya Samaj supporter, and who at first had tried to prevent his wife from attending satsang. During this series of discourses, Shri Maharaj Ji explained the mysteries of the Gita in minute detail in his simple, easy-to-understand fashion.

One of his mahatmas, Dayanandji, also lectured on the Gita. How Maharaj Ji found him is a charming story. Dayanand had studied the Gita since childhood. His grandfather had instructed him. He didn't understand the Gita's profound mysteries, so he questioned his grandfather, who replied, "If you can find a Guru like Ramakrishna Paramhansa, you will then understand the teachings of the Gita perfectly." Maharaj Ji says, "From that time I made up my mind to find a Guru. After my grandfather's death we were hard up. My studies had also been terminated so I

decided to go and search for a Guru. After a great deal of wandering here and there, I came across the ashram of a saddhu near Saharanpur Railway Station. I told him that I was looking for a guru like Ramakrishna Paramhansa. He told me, 'You won't find a Guru by spending your life wandering around. It's the Guru who finds the devotee. You should do service. Then you'll get results.' So I stayed with him and served in the kitchen. I also did whatever other work had to be done. One day, as I was reading the Gita and turning things over in my mind, someone approached me and said, 'So, you read the Gita, do you?' I answered, 'Yes.' Then he quoted these lines:

'The Light from a thousand suns could not produce that Light which Arjuna saw', and

'Where sun, moon and fire do not shine, there shines that Supreme Light which is My highest Abode, having reached which, the soul does not return to the mortal world.'

Then he asked me, 'Where is that Light which is brighter than a thousand suns, that self-effulgent Light which shines where other kinds of light do not?' I answered, 'I don't know, nor do I understand any of it.' He said, 'An illiterate man can say that he hasn't read it, and an educated man can say that he doesn't know it, but if you, a mahatma, cannot explain what it means, then who can?'

'I replied, 'I left home to realize these things. I became a mahatma but actually I have no inner experience. Please tell me if you know of any mahatma in this whole wide world who can reveal such Knowledge to me. Did you ever meet such a person?'

'He said, 'I'm always on the lookout for mahatmas and I do find them, but such persons don't stay in one place. They travel around for the sake of everyone. I'll give you an address where you can meet such a mahatma. At Hapur you'll find Babu Shyamsundar Lal. Mahatmas visit him. Go there.' He wrote a letter of introduction for me. Then he took me into the empty

waiting room of the railway station and showed me the techniques for meditating on the Divine Light and Holy Name.

'When I reached Hapur I presented the letter to Babuji. When a mahatma (M. Satyanand) next came there, I pleaded with him to accept me as his disciple. Babuji showed him the letter. When he saw the Master's letter, Mahatma Ji's astonishment knew no bounds. 'Oh! Just see Maharaj Ji's grace!' he exclaimed. 'See how he goes looking for his devotees and pulls them out of the swamp of Maya! Even then, we forget how great he is.' The thing that amazed Mahatma Ji the most was that I didn't recognize Maharaj Ji. Truly it is said, 'Only if the Lord so wills, can a person recognize Him.' Said Mahatma Ji, 'Lord, how much you put up with for our sake! We think that we are searching for you, but actually it is you who goes searching for us, to pull us out of our ignorance and attachment to illusion!'

Shri Maharaj Ji knew a person's innermost thoughts. Mahatma Harinivrittanand tells of one such incident: "After I received Knowledge, I attended satsang but I didn't do any service. Once, Maharaj Ji kept me behind after satsang and told me to take some tents and planks back to the supplier. He placed the goods on my head himself. It was quite a heavy load. I slowly made my way to the tent suppliers'. From time to time I would look behind to make sure that none of my acquaintances was around. It would certainly have been very embarrassing if any of them were to see me just then! With these thoughts going through my mind I deposited the goods at the suppliers' and returned. Shri Maharaj Ji laughed and said, 'Did you see anyone you know along the way? Wouldn't it have been embarrassing!' I was speechless, amazed that he knew what was going through my mind.

Mahatma Ji first saw Maharaj Ji in 1937 and has witnessed many wonderful *lilas* (the cosmic play of the Lord) since then. He says, 'The first time I saw Maharaj Ji he was sitting in the courtyard of Ram Bahadur's house, putting tilak on his forehead. I was awed by his brilliance and the thought occurred to me that the Lord Himself was seated in front of me.

'He treated people according to how they felt about him. He would see into a person's heart and mind and then give satsang accordingly.

'His satsang was very practical. Once, in order to make his point clear, he struck a match and said, 'You have to strike like this (with the Holy Name) to produce Light. The more you strike, the greater the Light you'll see.' When people accused him of projecting himself as Krishna, he would say, 'If I reveal the same Knowledge which Krishna gave to Arjuna, then am I not Krishna?'

Hari Mohan, son of Ram Rattan, a longtime disciple of Maharaj Ji, relates this incident: 'Shri Maharaj Ji liked the way I sang devotional songs. He had me sing every day in satsang. If I missed satsang he would come to my house to find out why. Once my brother and I were going to satsang with two mahatmas. In those days there were saddhus who used to kidnap children. A couple of policemen saw us and their suspicions were aroused. They stopped the mahatmas and demanded, 'Where are you going with those boys?' Even after Mahatma Ji had explained everything, the police took us all to the police station. Shri Maharaj Ji, who had been walking on ahead, stopped and came back. He thundered, 'Why are you harrassing them!' The policemen took one look at him and let us go."

For several years Maharaj Ji gave satsang at the D.C.M. workers' quarters. Jyoti Prasad and his wife Jamuna, both premies, used to go there. Shri Maharaj Ji agreed to their request to come and live with them at Pahari Dhiraj and for a few years satsang was held there. Those were wonderful years, when Shri Maharaj Ji's love and charismatic personality had the premies enraptured. Word about Maharaj Ji was spreading. New people were drawn to him, like moths to a light. Jyoti Prasad's modest home was in Amraoh Singh Lane. It was there that the premies flocked to see the Master and the air rang continuously with satsang and song.

When Bhagat Ram Gupta came to see Maharaj Ji for the first time, he arrived just as Maharaj Ji was entering the room. As

Bhagat Ram bowed and touched his feet, he felt something like an electric shock coursing throughout his body. He was astounded, and thereafter came every day for darshan. One day while Bhagat Ram was fanning him, Shri Maharaj Ji asked, "Why do you come here?" Bhagat Ram answered, "Because my soul recognizes you as divine." A little while later Shri Maharaj Ji said, "Come here and look inside my mouth." Bhagat Ram says, "I was awestruck. Inside Maharaj Ji's mouth I saw the entire Earth with its oceans, mountains, rivers, etc. I saw it all. After staring at this remarkable scene for a while, I was told to sit down. Maharaj Ji gave me the standard initiation. Then he told me, 'If you do service then your power of meditation will increase, but if you don't, you will find it extremely difficult to stay on this path.'"

Maharaj Ji was intoxicated with the Holy Name. He never chased money. He used to say, "God will provide me with something to eat. My job is to spread this Knowledge."

Ram Kishan, a Delhi premie, recalls, "Most of the residents of Pahari Dhiraj belonged to the Jat and Mali castes. They opposed Shri Maharaj Ji and used to heckle the premies going to satsang. One day, a mob armed with sticks marched towards Jyoti Prasad's house. Jyoti Prasad informed Maharaj Ji that local rowdies were on their way to cause trouble. Meanwhile the mob arrived and started banging on the door, shouting, 'Come outside! Today you'll get what's coming to you!' A little while later, Shri Maharaj Ji stood up, wrapped a piece of cloth around his head, took a long stick in his hand, and said, 'Open the door.' As soon as the mob saw Maharaj Ji's awesome appearance, they turned tail and ran. Several of them stumbled and were injured in their anxiety to get away. Soon after, satsang resumed. Shri Maharaj Ji instructed, 'No matter how much someone insults you, stay calm and keep meditating.'

"The next day, on my way to satsang, I stopped at a shop in that lane to buy something to take as prashad. The shopkeeper asked, 'Tell me, how many of you were there when all that trouble started?' I answered, 'About 10-15 premies.' He said, 'That's

strange, because those Jats said that they saw thousands of men there and that's why they were so afraid!' The entire neighbourhood was astounded by this *lila* of Maharaj Ji's and never bothered him again, nor did they say anything against him."

One night after satsang, Jamuna heated some milk for Maharaj Ji, but instead of sugar, she absent-mindedly put medicinal salts in it. Maharaj Ji drank some and said, "Give the rest to the premies." They spat it out immediately, saying, "What did you put in it? It's salty!" Jamuna, in all innocence, said, "I put sugar in it, of course!" So a premie said, "Taste it and see." Jamuna took a sip and realized that it was salty. She ran to the kitchen and said, "Oh no! The sugar tin was next to the salts tin. Now I've given Maharaj Ji salty milk!" She asked forgiveness. Maharaj Ji said, "Look, I eat and drink whatever devotees offer me, because I appreciate their love. However, you should be more careful about what you offer Guru Maharaj Ji. Never mind. Just don't make the same mistake again. If you are careless in small things, one day you may cause real damage. I drank my milk, but the rest of yours is spoiled. And let's see what happens to my stomach in the morning!"

"The relationship between Guru and disciple is very special, and very sacred. It can take various forms, such as master and servant, deity and worshipper or devotee and Lord. If it is not maintained properly it will break. So a disciple should know how to speak in front of his Guru, how to sit and how to converse. You don't know how, yet. It is written in our scriptures that a disciple should not put on airs or laugh raucously in front of his Guru. You should never turn your back on him. You shouldn't close your eyes to meditate while sitting in front of him. If he walks by, you should stand up and acknowledge him with folded hands. You should never come into his presence half-dressed. Your faith and veneration should reveal itself in every little thing that you say or do."

When premies acted frivolously in his presence or displayed vanity, Shri Maharaj Ji would say, "Well, well! So you're putting

on airs in front of me! Pride comes before a fall, you know. One should always behave humbly and sincerely in front of one's Guru. If he behaves arrogantly or deceitfully, even the Guru can't save him."

Once, Ho Ram went for darshan clad only in a towel. Maharaj Ji said, "Ho Ram, don't you have the sense to realize how to come before Guru Maharaj Ji? Go and get dressed." In spite of the admonition, Ho Ram remained seated, so Maharaj Ji took a stick and hit him on the hand. Ho Ram yelped in pain and ran weeping into his own room. That night after satsang Maharaj Ji heard Ho Ram moaning. He called him and said, "Well, why are you crying? Is your hand really sore? Look, I did that for your own good." Then he showed Ho Ram his own hand and said, "See, my hand is swollen too. If you hadn't been so obstinate, do you think that I would've punished you? If I, as your Guru, don't make you understand, how will I be of any benefit to you?"

Lahore and Sindh

Shri Maharaj Ji's fame spread throughout Lahore and Sindh. The 1942 Guru Puja was celebrated there at Rai Bahadur Gaya Prasad's house. Rai Bahadur printed and distributed a four-page pamphlet and sent them to distant premies, whose addresses he got from Shri Maharaj Ji. One of the recipients was Pandit Shankar Lal from Kherpur, Sindh, who had received Knowledge while still in school.

Maharaj Ji gave satsang, and then said, "Listen to some songs, now. I'll be back soon." He went into his room and sat beside a door which led on to the street. He called for the Sindhi premies, one of whom was Shankar Lal. Gurudev asked, "Do you recognize me?" Shankar Lal was silent. Then Maharaj Ji took off his crown and said with a smile, "Don't you recognize me?" Then Shankar Lal laughed. He pranamed and said, in a voice choked with emotion, "Gurudev! Maharaj Ji! When you initiated me I was a schoolboy. Now I'm a teacher! God knows I've searched for you

everywhere. Then suddenly I received this leaflet and came here hoping to see you. Oh Lord! I'm just an ignorant soul, but you shouldn't have neglected me, either." With that, he started crying. Maharaj Ji blessed him and told him to go home and do a lot of meditation. Shankar Lal actively spread Maharaj Ji's message and the Master sent several mahatmas there. A lovely ashram was built at Gambat where Hindu and Muslim premies would worship, meditate and hold satsang together. The Chief Magistrate of that town, Mohammed Pir Ali Shah, used to hold satsang in his home, also. He had a great love for Maharaj Ji, and through him 250 Muslims received Knowledge.

Whenever Maharaj Ji would visit the ashram, the premies would make a beautifully-decorated swing, and Maharaj Ji would swing on it for hours. Then everyone would gather for satsang and darshan, and sing devotional songs in Sindhi.

Maharaj Ji once sent Mahatma Satyanand to Hyderabad (Sindh). He gave Mahatma Ji some premies' addresses and told him to go there and arrange satsang. However, upon reaching Hyderabad, Mahatma Ji found that only one of them, Gobind Ram, was still around. Mahatma Ji showed him an old picture of Shri Maharaj Ji and said, "This is my Gurudev. He initiated you a long time ago in the garden of your house. If you have forgotten how to meditate, I will explain it to you thoroughly." Gobind Ram replied, "He is the Lord of my heart. He gave me Knowledge and lives in me. There's no chance of forgetting him. But where is he now? How can I see him? I always thought that he had come for the sole purpose of blessing me with Knowledge and devotion." Mahatma Ji told him to arrange satsang and Maharaj Ji would come.

Lord Vishnu told Narad, "I am restricted neither to Vaikunth nor to yogis. I am wherever my devotees glorify Me." Jesus Christ also said, "Whenever two or three are gathered together in my name, I am also there."

"Gobind Ram," says Mahatma Ji, "showed me his garden and the room where he received Knowledge. It was indeed a pleasant spot."

There were a few other premies in Hyderabad, including Basant Lal Sharma and Vasudev Sharma. The date for Maharaj Ji's program was decided, and leaflets were distributed all over town. At several places, the premies strung up banners which read, 'Come for the holy darshan and satsang of Satgurudev, the Incarnation of Lord Hans.'

A short time previously, a so-called mahatma, who also called himself 'Paramhans', had been operating in Hyderabad. On the pretext of holding 'Gita-study classes', he had seduced several women and girls and was virtually running a brothel. The citizens of Hyderabad were outraged and had run him out of town. Consequently, several citizens, when they saw Maharaj Ji's banners, assumed that this was the same person. Opposition arose and a public notice was printed in the newspapers which said, 'Citizens of Hyderabad, beware! Hans is coming—make sure he doesn't fly away!'

Such a huge crowd assembled for the program that they could not all fit into the grounds. The audience listened quietly and attentively to satsang. It is impossible to describe how majestic Maharaj Ji looked on that occasion. He said, "I am extremely pleased with whomever it was who placed that notice in the newspapers. I invite him to come here and I will grant him whatever he wishes." No one stirred. Maharaj Ji delivered more satsang then stood up and said, "If I were a statue or a picture of me were placed in a temple, there isn't a person here who wouldn't bow his head or raise his hands in supplication. But I am here as a living human being, so you don't believe me, but after I leave you'll all sing my praises. No great soul was ever believed during his lifetime but now everyone glorifies them."

Kishan Singh Chauhan accompanied Maharaj Ji on one of his satsang tours of Sindh: "In Gambat there was an ashram where Maharaj Ji had often stayed, but this was to be his last tour. The

devotees had made two throne-like chairs for him. Maharaj Ji gave satsang for eight days straight. A huge procession took him from the railway station all around the town to the ashram. The days passed in satsang, darshan and song. In such a blissful atmosphere who had any idea of time! The Sindhi devotional songs were very appealing. The premies called Maharaj Ji *Bhalrhe Bhagwan*, which meant 'Bhole Bhagwan'. They brought coconuts as prashad which Maharaj Ji accepted and gave out to everyone. In those days, Shri Maharaj Ji had long hair and a beard."

Knowledge also spread throughout the city of Lahore. Mahatma Daya Bai accompanied Maharaj Ji to a program there. She recalled, "During satsang he said, 'Now your store of merit has run out.' Nobody at that time, including myself, understood what he meant. A short time later, however, came the partition of India and Pakistan. Then I realized what he had meant."

Shri Maharaj Ji was totally involved in the propagation of Knowledge. It was his life. He wasn't interested in anything else and sank everything he had into it. For him it was *tapasya*. He went from town to town and from village to village on foot, by bicycle or oxcart, offering the Knowledge of the Holy Name to one and all, and anyone who joined him also became involved in this work. Is there anything nobler than spreading the message of devotion? Lord Krishna himself said in the Gita: 'Those who spread Knowledge among My devotees are dearest of all to Me.' Is there any greater service to mankind than giving Knowledge of God as He is, which enriches both this life and the next?

Once, when Shri Mata Ji asked him about the difficulties and hardships of those early days, he answered, "I used to go hungry for days at a time, or make do with chickpeas. It was a matter in those days of giving satsang to one person at a time, in the local park. But I really enjoyed it because, by Guru Maharaj Ji's grace, the harder and more selflessly I worked, the more blissful it was. I never got tired of it, because even the pleasures of heaven can't equal the joy of satsang."

Ballabgarh

Ram Rattan was a premie who spread Knowledge in Ballabgarh. Kishan Singh, who came to Knowledge through him, also lived there. He tutored the children of Mr Hakki, the Officer-in-Charge of the local police station.

Once Shri Maharaj Ji, accompanied by Kanheya, arrived in Ballabgarh and finally found Kishan's home. Kishan was teaching at the time, so was not at home. When he heard the news of Shri Maharaj Ji's arrival, he rushed home. Meanwhile, premies had also gathered there.

There were certain elements in Ballabgarh opposed to Shri Maharaj Ji. They filed a complaint against Kishan Singh, alleging that he was aiding and abetting a Delhi politician who was selling fake Congress Party membership cards. Kishan Singh relates: "Some policemen arrived at my home and took me to the police station. The Officer-in-Charge was surprised and said, 'Chauhan Sahib, why are you here?' The constables told him the charges. I replied, 'He is my Guru Maharaj Ji, my spiritual master. He has nothing to do with politics.' The O.C. said, 'How wicked some people are, filing false charges against holy men. But I am helpless. I must do my duty. Please bring Maharaj Ji here.'"

"I ran home and told Maharaj Ji the whole story. He said, 'Let's go.' He was wearing a dhoti and kurta and looked absolutely glorious. As we were walking along people just started following us and by the time we had reached the police station we had quite a crowd in tow. Shri Maharaj Ji spoke with Mr Hakki, who was a Muslim, and gave him satsang based on the Holy Koran. He concluded by saying, 'I have come here only to spread Knowledge. I go from place to place doing this.' The O.C. was extremely impressed by Maharaj Ji's satsang and his magnetic presence. He begged pardon and said, 'I'm sorry to have put you to such trouble. If you like, I'll arrest your accusers.' Maharaj Ji replied, 'Listen, my friend, I have come to free people from jail, not to put them in it! I simply spread the message of salvation.'"

Bharatpur

Once, after spending a couple of days in Ballabgarh, Shri Maharaj Ji was due to go to Bharatpur, in Rajasthan. The premies went to see him off at the bus station. They waited a long time, but couldn't get him a seat on the bus. Suddenly a brand-new car pulled up. The driver got out and bowed to Maharaj Ji, who asked, "Where are you going?" "Wherever you want to go," replied the driver. "I have come here just for you." So Maharaj Ji went to Bharatpur by car. When they reached their destination, Maharaj Ji sent Kanheya to pay the driver but he had disappeared.

The Bharatpur program was held from 22nd—24th October with great fanfare and celebration. On the 22nd, a grand procession started from the railway station, in which thousands of men and women from all walks of life took part. Afterwards everyone gathered to hear satsang. The Maharajah of Bharatpur and his retinue attended satsang every day. After listening with great interest and pleasure to three days of satsang, the Maharajah received initiation from Maharaj Ji.

A lot of rumours and speculation concerning the program had been rife in Bharatpur. Some people thought that Shri Maharaj Ji was holding an anti-Congress rally or was canvassing votes for himself. One well-off man suggested that it was a fund-raising program. So a lot of people had a lot of different preconceptions, which were laid to rest once Maharaj Ji appeared on stage and delivered a most appealing satsang. Here is an excerpt:

"After a soul has suffered the consequences of its karma during incarnations in various species, God graces it by sending it into a human body so that it can practise devotion and attain liberation. Hanging upside-down in the mother's womb, the child prays to God, 'Lord, save me from this misery. I will remember You all my life.' However, after its birth, the individual gets involved in maya, in illusion, forgets his Heavenly Father, and, rather than meditating on God, thinks only about worldly things."

'We are occupied most of the time with worldly affairs. It doesn't matter whether a person traverses the seven oceans and the seven continents, or whether he is at the pinnacle or political success, or whether he is a master of the arts—these are all ephemeral and last only as long as the body lasts. God can't be realized through these things, and yet it is to realize God that we were given this body. Whatever we do, from the time we wake up until the time we go to sleep, is simply to fill our stomachs. Animals do the same things. If a dog turns up at a feast, it can eat its fill, too. A cat gets milk and cream without having to look after a cow, without having any money and without having to do anything. All animals and birds manage to fill their bellies, and human beings spend their time doing this, too. The traffic policeman waves his arms around like a monkey all day simply for this reason. Once I asked a policeman why he did this, and he answered, 'I do it to feed myself and my family.' I asked another question: 'Do you put as much effort into remembering God?' He answered, 'No.'

'We run after pleasures. We ruin our lives through anger, lust, greed, attachment and ego. The world is composed of five elements—ether, air, water, fire and earth. Each has its characteristic properties. The property of ether is sound. The deer is captured after being lured with music. The quality of air is touch. Elephant hunters dig a deep pit and build a false bridge across it. On one side they place a facsimile female elephant. When the male elephant sees it, he rushes towards it. As soon as he steps on the weak bridge, it collapses and he falls into the pit, where he is kept without food for a few days, then chained and put to work. Thus the mighty elephant, because of the desire to touch, becomes dependent on a puny human being.

'Nobody enjoys pleasures. We think we do, but actually they enjoy us. The great saint, Bhartrihari, said, *Bhogo na bhukta vaymev bhukta*—'Pleasures actually enjoy us, not vice-versa.'

'The moth is drawn to the light and burns to death. The property of water is taste. Fish can do anything in water, but when the fisherman lowers the bait the fish, fooled by its desire to taste

the bait, gets caught on the line. It doesn't even get to eat the bait. The fish forfeits its life for the sake of taste pleasures.

'The characteristic property of earth is smell. The bee is attracted by the fragrance of the lotus, and sits in the flower. When evening comes, the lotus closes up and the bee is trapped inside. In the morning when elephants come to bathe in the pond, they trample the lotuses, and the poor bee gets crushed to death, all for the sake of smell. So if we misuse our precious human life trying to satisfy all the senses, what will happen to us!

'You are so intent on indulging that you don't have time for worthy deeds. But pleasures can be enjoyed in other species, also. You have to go all the way to the market to buy milk, but if you spill some, a dog will effortlessly lick it up. Eating delicacies is not the aim of human life. This life is priceless. What is there that can't be enjoyed in other species? The Holy Name of God can be experienced only in a human existence, and if you don't know it your human life is wasted. I'm talking about realizing the same Light which Guru Nanak described as 'Light merging into Light'.

'A lot of people go around saying, *Aham brahmasmi*—'I am God'. Just ask them, 'Sir, if you are God, show me the Light which Lord Krishna showed to Arjuna.' You'll find a lot of these 'milk-drinking Majnuns' around!

'Once when Laila found out that Majnun was in town, she ordered that he be supplied with free milk. A few days later she received an enormous milk bill. She wondered how Majnun could possibly drink so much milk! She guessed that there were impostors taking advantage of the free milk. The next day she placed a dagger next to the milk jug and told the vendor to announce that Laila had a stomach ache and needed Majnun's heart. All the 'milk-drinking' Majnuns fled, but when the real Majnun arrived and heard of Laila's request, he immediately grabbed the dagger and started to rip open his chest. So people say, 'I am God', but when it comes to practical realities, they know nothing. The seed of truth is never destroyed, however, because the day it is, the world will end.

'The saint Hakikat Ray was about to be executed. When the sword fell from the Kazi's (Muslim judge) hand, Hakikat picked it up and gave it to him, saying, 'Do your duty. The real Hakikat can never be slain.' When the boy Dhruva was wandering through the jungle searching for God, he met Narad, who said, 'This is a dangerous jungle full of wild animals, and you are very young.' Dhruva wasn't put off by this. How did he get such faith?'

'People talk about *Sat Nam*, the True Name. But what is it? They don't have the time to find out. People definitely believe in Rama, but they don't do what he says.

'You spend your precious time stockpiling arms and ammunitions. Why? To kill horses and elephants? No. To destroy human beings. If you appreciated how valuable human life is, you wouldn't do that. You have forgotten your real purpose in life. You are destroying yourself and doing your best to destroy others. You should know what you are meant to be doing.

'You believe the Vedas to be divine, but did you ever think about what is written in them? You have brains, so use them! You don't taste sweetness just by saying, 'sugar, sugar'. Just by talking about meditating on the Divine Light, do you see it? If you don't know what to meditate upon, you can't meditate. You say that you meditate on God, but instead you meditate on the sky, or a tree, a fire or a statue. Is God these things? In the Gita, Lord Krishna says only a human being can reach that state from where there is no return. You can't get spiritual Knowledge after you die and go into another species. Then you'll bitterly regret it.

'You know that when Sikhs visit a gurudwara, they place the dust from the shoe racks on their foreheads, in the hope that if a meditator of the True Name is among the worshippers, then the dust from his shoes will purify them.

'India's heritage is spiritual, but just saying that doesn't make us spiritual. You have to understand what spiritual Knowledge is. It is the Knowledge which gives liberation, which frees the spirit from the cycle of birth and death. You can provide a person with food, shelter and clothing, but you can't release him from birth and

death. Lord Krishna said that spiritual Knowledge changes a man from brute into human. I'm saying the same things as all the saints have said. I'm not starting a new religion. The Truth is the same for all human beings.

'All these so-called mahatmas and holy men who tell you to meditate on some mantra or other are all crooks. If you don't think so, then take me to them or bring them here! They are all Death's ambassadors. Death has sent them to lead you astray somehow so that you won't find the True Name, your precious human life will be wasted and Death won't be denied his fodder.

'A lot of people are of the opinion that we should save religion for our later years, and in the meantime accumulate degrees and occupy ourselves with worldly affairs. Ask them if they are assured of a long life. Nobody knows how long he will live, so if people don't see that Divine Light now, to experience which this body is a rarely-given opportunity, then when will they?'

The Maharajah of Bharatpur provided accommodation for Shri Maharaj Ji. All day long a stream of people of very different ideas and persuasions came and asked all kinds of questions. Maharaj Ji left an indelible impression on that place and all kinds of misconceptions about satsang were cleared up.

Kanheya was Shri Maharaj Ji's personal attendant and stayed in his room. One night after satsang, Maharaj Ji asked, "Kanheya, would you like to see a movie?" Kanheya replied, "No, Maharaj Ji. I've stopped seeing movies since I came into your shelter." Maharaj Ji said, "I'll show you a movie right here in this room. Close the door and draw the curtains." Kanheya says, "I did so. Maharaj Ji was sitting on his bed. He told me to stand in front of him and watch the wall, and on no account to look behind. I looked at that wall and the most unbelievable scenes started to appear—thousands of Krishnas and thousands of his cowherd friends, all dancing. After watching this for a while, I foolishly turned around. Shri Maharaj Ji scolded me, 'What! You disobeyed me!' Then I turned to face the wall but it had gone blank. I begged Maharaj Ji, 'I'm sorry! Show me just once more! I promise not to turn

around!' But Maharaj Ji said, 'Not now. Maybe some other time.' Soon afterwards, we left for Delhi."

Masauta

Maharaj Ji had devotees in Masauta, Prangarh, Hapur, Mainpuri and Bulandshahr, all sizeable towns in the state of Uttar Pradesh. Masauta's Patwari—the district revenue official—Shri Pritam Singh, and the head of the village, Shri Chokhelal (who later become Mahatma Premanand) arranged a satsang program for Shri Maharaj Ji in 1962. All in all, Maharaj Ji did several programs there. To accommodate him and mahatmas, the villagers had built a small cottage. The 1962 program was especially spectacular. A troupe of Krishna Lila dancers had come from Vrindaban. Many Delhi premies had also arrived. Shri Maharaj Ji's procession went throughout the village; the premies shouting slogans about realizing the Divine Light and the Holy Name.

A lot of people in Masauta belonged to the Arya Samaj. In fact, an Arya Samaj college, a 'Gurukul', was nearby, and its senior academics came to argue scriptures with Maharaj Ji.

Satsang had already begun. The air was ringing with devotional songs. A huge crowd had gathered, not just from Masauta, but from neighbouring villages as well. Om Prakash, a Delhi teacher, was discussing Knowledge in a lucid and easy-to-understand fashion, but the crowd was restive and Arya Samaj followers were shouting slogans about Dayanand, their organization's founder. Then a mahatma started to give satsang, but the demand for Maharaj Ji himself to come on stage grew louder. When he finally did come, it seemed as if the sun had come out from behind the clouds. Everyone fell silent, and just stared at his majestic and radiant countenance.

A short while later, a few Arya Samaj youths started heckling and shouting, "All glory to Swami Dayanand!" Villagers told them to be quiet and that it was against all sense of decency to create such an uproar in satsang. They told them to listen first to what Maharaj Ji had to say and then say their piece.

Shri Maharaj Ji said, "You people have come to argue with me, but do you really know the scriptures or do you only want to cause a commotion? I also used to belong to Arya Samaj, and I've heard a lot of debates between them and orthodox Hindus, as well as with Muslims and Christians. Once in Lahore I heard a debate about idolatry. The Arya Samajist quoted,

'You are in the idol and in the flowers, so how can God garland God?'

Then his orthodox opponent countered, 'You are in the bread and in the teeth, so how can God chew God?' Everyone in the audience cheered. In the end, that debate proved inconclusive, because God is a matter of personal experience. If God could be realized by debate then there'd be no need for meditation and Samadhi, and you can't experience Samadhi without spiritual Knowledge, because God is beyond mind and intellect. How did those who said that God is both formless and with form, know this? If this can be realized through debate, then why is it written in the scriptures that God is not a matter of intellect? The soul can't be known through study or reading scriptures. That is why the sages taught that the aspirant should seek a God-realized Guru, please him through service and then receive Knowledge. When, by constant meditation, his mind becomes still, the meditator reaches Samadhi, or the superconscious state. Then he experiences God as He really is.

'What did Swami Dayanandji write? *'Satyarth Prakash'*—'Truth means Light'. God is truth, consciousness and bliss. He is Light, and there is no darkness in Him. I'm simply telling you to see and meditate on God Who is Light within you and Who is called *Bhargo Jyoti* by the Vedas. If you meditate on this 'Bhargo Jyoti' then there is no difference of opinion between you and me. If, however, you say that you meditate on that Light but really don't, then you are not practising what you preach, and if there is any discrepancy between a person's words and actions, he can't know God.

'Tell me, am I contradicting the Vedas? I am offering you the essence of the Vedas, that which is the substance. I am not educated like you; I don't have your academic qualifications. I merely say this: 'The Vedas, scriptures and saints teach only this—to love the Name of God.'

'I'm not saying that I am God. If these devotees say it, then ask them why. I have no wish to be God.'

'Once I was walking through Hardwar bazaar. A Maharashtrian gentleman called me over to talk to me. He asked, 'Are you the Lord?' I replied, 'Suppose that I'm not, and say that I am, then that won't be of any benefit to you. If I say that I am not the Lord, yet really I am, that won't help you either.'

'He was learned in the scriptures. On another occasion, I visited him. He called all his family and relatives for darshan. His son was also a very learned and qualified religious academic, specializing in the Gita. He listened to satsang then examined me closely for the distinguishing marks of an Incarnation.'

'Lord Krishna says in the Gita, 'Know the realized soul to be Me.' The Vedas and Upanishads also say that the devotee should have the same respect for his Guru as for God. If my devotees have that kind of love and faith, what's so objectionable?'

After Shri Maharaj Ji had finished satsang, the Principal of the Sikanderabad Gurukul stood up and said, "I have a question. Why do you call yourself 'Hans Avatar'?"

Shri Maharaj Ji answered, "You are an academic. You define the word 'avatar'." So he said, "*Avatari iti avatar*—one who can take others from mortality to immortality, just as a boat takes us from one side of a river to another, is an avatar." Quick as a flash, one of Maharaj Ji's mahatmas jumped up and declared, "Our Guru Maharaj Ji has given us the Knowledge which takes one across the worldly ocean to immortality. So, according to your definition, Shri Maharaj Ji is an avatar."

Then an elderly Arya Samaj mahatma stood up and said politely, "I request a minute of your time." Maharaj Ji invited him

to come closer and handed him the microphone. The mahatma said, "It's wrong to believe in Incarnations because God is omnipresent. He can't be embodied. He can't come in a human form, because if He did, He wouldn't remain omnipresent. Those whom people call Incarnations can be highly evolved souls, but not actual Incarnations. You believe that Guru is an avatar. There are a lot of gurus around today, so does that mean that they are all avatars? I'm not prepared to believe in this kind of Guruism, because the Vedas say that the real Guru is God. So God is everyone's Guru. We can't call a human being 'Guru'. I'm not saying that we should class Shri Maharaj Ji with those others, because I've heard that although he reveals Knowledge of the Formless God, he himself has never claimed to be the Lord, as you heard him say just now. His ideas are very noble and exalted, and so I request you, most reverend Maharaj Ji, to clear up people's confusion about religion and set them on the right path."

The other Arya Samajists, after hearing one of their mahatmas thus praise Maharaj Ji, grumbled to each other, "What a difference between what he said and what he was supposed to say!"

Shri Gurudev was obviously very pleased. Then he gave satsang for quite some time and the audience listened attentively. Basing their arguments strictly on the scriptures, both he and the mahatmas urged their listeners to experience God, Who is Truth, personally.

The Masautia program lasted three days. Mahatma Premanand, who used to live there, relates an interesting incident: "I took Shri Maharaj Ji to see my farm. Hundreds of premies accompanied him. He went to the pea field, tore off a pod and began to eat the peas. Then the premies invaded the field and stripped it bare. Because of my love for Maharaj Ji and because these premies were my guests, I didn't say anything. As the saying goes, 'These are God's birds and these are God's fields, so, birds, eat your fill.' So I thought, 'This is Maharaj Ji's field and these are his devotees, so, whatever will be, will be.' However, later on at

harvest time, the villagers were amazed to find that my fields produced the best harvest and told me, 'That's your Guru Maharaj Ji's miracle.' I replied, 'No, friends. If a person's heart is pure, then the outcome is automatically good.'

'Maharaj Ji liked to go for a stroll before satsang. During one such walk, he sat down on a small bridge in a field. Premies clustered around him and he gave satsang. It was evening, and just starting to get dark. A snake came out of its hole in the fields and, spreading its hood, stood behind the premies. When Shri Maharaj Ji noticed it, he said, 'Well, now how will you listen to satsang, and what will you understand of it? When you were a human being you didn't listen to me, so now what can I do for you?' The premies turned around to see whom Maharaj Ji was addressing. When they saw the snake they were afraid, but Maharaj Ji said, 'Don't be scared. He'll go away now.' They saw the snake lower its head two or three times to the ground and slither away into the field. The next day, some premies who were strolling through the field came across that snake, dead. It seemed to them that by Maharaj Ji's grace it had left that body and had possibly got another chance as a human being.

Kurukshetra

Whenever there is a solar eclipse, a religious fair (*Mela*) is held at Kurukshetra in the northern state of Haryana. As one such event was drawing near, Shri Maharaj Ji was in Delhi. He asked the premies if any of them wanted to go to Kurukshetra. Some of them, who are still around today, such as Kishan Singh, Ho Ram, Hari Ram and his mother Chandro, and Yukti Ram the ghee vendor, got ready to accompany him. Ho Ram had already bought some land at Kurukshetra during a previous Mela and had built a hut. Shri Maharaj Ji had his crown packed with his luggage. Everyone went to Kurukshetra together by train. In their carriage were two Marwari merchants also bound for Kurukshetra. Maharaj Ji gave them satsang and they were so impressed that they

begged to be allowed to stay at the premies' camp, even though they had pre-booked accommodation.

At 2 a.m. Shri Maharaj Ji woke up Hari Ram and told him to come along. Hari Ram said, "Maharaj Ji, it's two o'clock in the morning. What's there to see now? Everyone's asleep." Maharaj Ji said, "Listen, just do as I say." Hari Ram says that Shri Maharaj Ji started walking and stopped some time later near a blind minstrel, whose eyes were just empty sockets. Maharaj Ji said, "Oh, just look at the mysterious play of karma! He doesn't even have eyeballs. He's useless as far as the world is concerned. Even so, by God's grace, he could still see the Divine Light. He could still remember the Holy Name. Even the most magnificent elephant can't meditate. This is the uniqueness of the human body. No matter what circumstances a human being is born into—even if he is blind, deaf, dumb or lame—he can still, by the Guru's grace, see the Inner Light and meditate on the Name, because God is beyond the senses and is meditated upon by consciousness. Everyone has consciousness, and any human being can learn the technique of meditation, if he wants to. Even if an animal wants to meditate, it can't. So understand right now what I've been saying to you over and over again in satsang: 'The soul which is extremely blessed receives a human body.' You can enjoy pleasures in any species, but you can meditate only in this human lifetime. Meditation is the only earning which you will take with you—the rest you have to leave behind."

The next day at approximately 4 p.m. Shri Maharaj Ji told Ho Ram to fetch a horse. Then, wearing his crown, he sat on the horse and set off around the fair grounds. Hari Ram asked him, "Maharaj Ji, what are you doing? What will we tell people when they ask who you are?" He replied, "Just tell them that I am the King of Satlok!" So the premies followed him, singing, 'Love the Satguru! Nectar will rain upon you!' It caused quite a stir! Everyone's attention was drawn to him, and when people saw his majestic bearing and lustrous countenance, they ran after him as if they had gone mad. Some even swooned as if in a trance. Even the

saddhus, matted locks and all, started following him. Having completed his tour of the grounds, he returned with a huge crowd in tow. Then he sat down and spoke non-stop for two hours. It was inspired satsang, and everyone, awed by his divine splendour, shouted, "Hans Bhagwan *ki jai!*" (All glory to the Divine Lord Hans!)

By this time he was tired. From 4—8 p.m. he had ridden around the Mela grounds on a hot summer's day with a heavy crown on his head. Then he had given hours of satsang. But no one was ready to leave. He called Hari Ram and said, "I'm tired. Tell them to go home now." Finally it started raining, and only then did people get up and leave.

Etawah

The number of centres in Uttar Pradesh state, from where Knowledge spread, slowly increased. Besides small towns like Bulandshahr, Hapur, Masautia, Khurja and Prangarh, there were active premies in cities like Etawah, Mainpuri, Allahabad, Hardoi and Aligarh, and Shri Maharaj Ji was constantly on the move from one to the other for satsang. In 1944, in spite of the fact that there was only one premie in Etawah and he was poor, a huge procession was held there, followed by a very successful program.

The premie had often begged Shri Maharaj Ji to come and give darshan at Etawah. At first Maharaj Ji said, "You've already had darshan and there are no other premies in Etawah, so what would I do there?" But the premie insisted, requesting Maharaj Ji to at least come and purify his house by his presence, and at the same time edify the residents of Etawah with satsang and darshan. Finally Maharaj Ji agreed and sent a mahatma back with the premie to make all the necessary arrangements.

Leaflets were printed and distributed and news of the impending program reached a majority of people. A lot of premies from surrounding districts arrived. It was beyond the means of that lone premie to accommodate them all, but there was definitely

a blessing resting on the community kitchen, because everyone was adequately fed and the food never ran out.

A wonderful procession was held. Some Muslim premies provided fireworks and others provided elephants. This colourful procession was indeed something extraordinary as far as the Etawah townspeople were concerned. The local religious leaders objected to Shri Maharaj Ji's carriage being drawn by sixteen horses. There had never been a procession like it in the history of Etawah! Some people suspected British involvement, while others thought that it must be some kind of new religious organization. So Maharaj Ji became the talk of the town, and a variety of ideas about him, both right and wrong, started going around.

Some Delhi premies had come with Maharaj Ji by train in a specially reserved carriage. Maharaj Ji had brought along a bottle of honey. The premies had brought prashad such as oranges and water chestnuts, and Maharaj Ji was distributing it. The floor was littered with peels. All of a sudden the jar of honey fell and broke. Honey started flowing everywhere. Some spilled on the sheet on which Maharaj Ji was sitting and some fell on the floor. Shri Maharaj Ji started scooping up the honey with his fingers and licked them. He even picked up honey-coated orange peels and licked them. The premies looked on in wonder. Shri Maharaj Ji explained, "You don't know who offered this honey and with what affection. He must have gone hungry to get it for me." He went on licking his fingers for a long time.

Several Arya Samajists as well as disciples of Karpatri came in opposition. Several women premies had come from Delhi and the critics tried to insinuate that Maharaj Ji had led these ladies astray. A crowd of angry people gathered outside his door, demanding that he come outside. By chance, a premie police officer from Allahabad arrived on the scene. He had missed his train home and so had returned. Maharaj Ji said, "Is this your law and order?" He went outside and told the mob, "All your questions will be answered tonight at satsang." Then the premie policeman quietened them down and dispersed them.

That evening, Maharaj Ji told the Delhi ladies to sit on stage, and then told Om Baba to inform the audience about them. The satsang grounds were filled to overflowing. Om Baba said, "These ladies belong to respectable homes. They have come here from Delhi to listen to satsang and so have their husbands." He called the husbands on stage one by one. They told the audience, "We have taken leave from work of our own free will to come here."

Then Om Baba issued a challenge: "Some of you have come to debate the scriptures. Why argue with Shri Maharaj Ji? The most learned among you may ask any question you like of any one of these lady disciples. If they can't answer it, Maharaj Ji will consider himself defeated, but if they can, then you will have to concede defeat. Then you'll be paraded in disgrace around Etawah for having falsely accused a great soul."

Then a couple of people stood up and said, "We feel a bit ashamed to ask, but would Maharaj Ji mind telling us why he is called 'Hans Avatar'?"

Maharaj Ji took the microphone and said, "There are a lot of people in this country called 'Ram Avatar', 'Krishan Avatar', etc. Why don't you ask them why they have such names? Why are you singling me out?"

They answered, "Those are only names—the people themselves are not avatars. They don't claim to be spreading Knowledge of God, so that's why we don't object to their names. But you claim that you give the same Knowledge which Krishna gave to Arjuna, which means that people will regard you as God, and how can that be in Kali Yuga?"

Shri Maharaj Ji answered, "It is the Guru's job to give Knowledge. What else am I supposed to give? If you dislike the idea of Knowledge so much, then stay in ignorance. People who need Knowledge take it. If you don't need it, then don't take it. My only mistake was in coming here, but what else could I do? People here invited me. If I don't give Knowledge you have nothing against me, but I'm in the wrong because I give Knowledge—or have I committed any other offence?"

Then two other men stood up and said, "No, we were wrong. We didn't know anything about you. Please accept our apologies, and do us the favour of giving us satsang. Moreover, please accept our humble invitation to stay here in Etawah for a few days more. We were duped."

Hapur

In Hapur there lived a devoted premie, Babu Shyamsundar, who was a warehouse clerk with the Railways. Shri Maharaj Ji frequently visited Hapur and its environs, and always stayed with Shyamsundar.

Once during satsang there, Maharaj Ji said, "Progressing on the path of devotion is like target practice. During target practice a soldier is given a gun and told how to aim. He is shown the target, on which he has to concentrate and he is the concentrator. When these three—target, concentrator and concentration—are in perfect alignment, he will hit the bullseye, and if they are not, he will miss. It takes a long time, maybe months, to perfect this, yet here, if a person gets initiated in the evening, the next morning he'll say, 'My mind doesn't settle in meditation.' There are three things—satsang, service and meditation. If you are active in all three, then your mind will settle in meditation and won't flicker here and there. There should not be the slightest shortcoming in any of these, however."

Baba Shyamsundar relates, "I was initiated by Shri Maharaj Ji personally. About ten months later, my wife, who was about to give birth, suddenly became very ill. Hours passed, but the baby still hadn't been born. I was very worried, so I started meditating. Maharaj Ji appeared to me and shouted, 'What are you doing? The baby is already dead. Call a proper doctor to have it removed and then get your friend to treat your wife. She'll be all right in a week or so.' I jumped up and ran to my wife. Her face was turning grey and her teeth had gone yellow. I immediately sent for a doctor. She confirmed that the baby was dead, and if I had left it

even half an hour longer, my wife would have died of blood poisoning. I had a friend who was an Ayurvedic physician. He prescribed a week's course of treatment and my wife soon recovered. Then I realized that Guru Maharaj Ji knows absolutely everything and helps his devotees invisibly.

'On one occasion, Shri Maharaj Ji was staying in a cottage near the Nazibabad Lines and Ho Ram Sharma was cooking for him. One day, while Maharaj Ji was eating lunch, 14 or 15 saddhus arrived. Maharaj Ji told me to give them something to eat. I went to the kitchen to inform Ho Ram, who said, 'We are very low on flour. Please bring some more.' I was on my way out the door when Maharaj Ji said sharply, 'Where are you going? Get the food ready, then go.' I didn't think it proper to inform Maharaj Ji about the flour shortage in front of guests, so I returned to the kitchen. I told Ho Ram what had happened and he said, 'Why worry? He who said that will take care of everything.' It was all Maharaj Ji's game. We just kept on making chapatties and the flour didn't run out. All the saddhus ate their fill.

'Once my younger brother said to me, 'Ask Maharaj Ji's permission to start speculating in molasses, because now the rate is just right.' Soon afterwards, while I was massaging Maharaj Ji's feet, I took advantage of his good mood to make my request. He asked, 'What will you do with the money you make?' I replied, 'I'll be able to afford my daughters' weddings.' Then he became angry all of a sudden and said, 'So, you think you're the one doing it all?' 'No,' I said, 'You are.' So he said, 'Well, why are you worried?' He took a small cloth bag full of rupee notes from his pocket and threw it to me, saying, 'There! Go and arrange the weddings!' I trembled and begged his pardon. A minute later he picked up the purse and put it in his pocket. But his pocket showed no difference in size. I don't know where the bag came from or where it went.

'When I reached home I told my brother the whole story, but he went ahead with the deal anyway. As soon as he had purchased the molasses the market started showing an adverse trend and he lost 3500 rupees in two days. He was operating from Musaddilal

Ramnarayan's company shop and the loss was entered against his name. I was very worried about how we could recoup the losses.

'The next day Maharaj Ji was going to Delhi. The train stalled on its way out of the station and his compartment just happened to stop right in front of my office window. He called me and said, 'So, you didn't listen to me. How much did you lose?' I told him, '3500 rupees.' He said, 'Never mind, you'll get it back, but don't do it again!' I thought to myself, 'Well, Maharaj Ji has assured me that I'll recover the money, but I wonder how?'

'Three or four days later, some merchants from Indore came to that same company to purchase molasses. They didn't get the space on the train which they needed to transport the goods and were about to cancel the deal. The owner of the firm sent them to me to get special recommendation. I told them, 'Space is very limited, but I can get it for you by saying that a relative of mine is sending the molasses to Indore.' The receipts were issued and they got space on a goods train immediately. Shri Maharaj Ji's words came true and we recovered the loss.

'Once Shri Maharaj Ji arrived at my home at the Railway Staff Quarters. When I got home from work he took me for a walk. After walking about four or five miles we came across a mahatma's hut. He sat down on a log outside and started giving satsang. Inside the hut an old mahatma with a long beard was cooking a meal. When he heard Shri Maharaj Ji's voice he came outside and embraced his feet. Maharaj Ji accepted the meal he offered and gave me some as prashad. The mahatma also ate. When he had finished he bowed at Maharaj Ji's feet and departed from this world.

'When my son Surendra was about 3 years old, he suddenly fell ill with typhoid, and was in a coma for four days. I sent for all kinds of doctors but he didn't improve. Meanwhile, Shri Maharaj Ji arrived. I begged him, in tears, to relieve my son's distress. Shri Maharaj Ji said, 'He has to go through this himself. It is the result of previous actions. However, if you love him so much, I can make him well again but you'll be in his condition. You can look after him, but he won't be able to look after you.' I requested, 'Master,

please at least bring him out of this coma.' So Maharaj Ji kicked his head and ordered, 'Come out of that coma!' The boy immediately regained consciousness and to this day has never experienced such a condition again.

'Maharaj Ji once visited me at 11 p.m. and sat down on the bed. I requested him to let me prepare dinner for him. He refused and said, 'Just give me whatever you have and I'll eat it with a couple of chapatties.' I replied, 'There's nothing cooked, but I have some chili pickle.' Maharaj Ji said, 'Fine. I'll eat pickle and chapatties.' I cooked some chapatties and offered them to him, one by one. He liked them and asked for more. By 4 a.m. he had gone through 3 tins of flour and a whole jar of pickles! I kept on serving chapatties and he said, 'They're delicious!' Finally, at daybreak, I asked, 'Lord, how long will this *lila* go on?' So he said, 'Now I'm full. Well, I certainly did eat a lot today!'

'Once Shri Maharaj Ji went to Nazibabad and stayed there two weeks. Even so, the premies refused to let him go. When he got into his car to leave, the premies lay down in front of it. So he stayed on another week. Finally, when he realized that there was no way that the premies were going to let him go, he went into his hut and simply vanished into thin air! The premies looked everywhere but he was nowhere to be found. He returned to Nazibabad a month later. When we asked him where he had gone, he replied, 'I had an urgent piece of work but you people wouldn't let me go, so what else could I do? I had to go. Don't be so persistent in future.'

'Once my cow got lost and I couldn't find her anywhere. I prayed inwardly to Maharaj Ji for help. That same moment I saw her standing outside the door. Some time later I saw Maharaj Ji at Bulandshahr. As soon as I touched his feet, he said, 'Why do you bother me so? Am I supposed to go looking for lost cows, too?'

'I invited Maharaj Ji to my eldest daughter's wedding. He came and stayed at the local temple accommodation. The day after the wedding my friend Ramchandra's son injured himself at play. Ramchandra, who is an Ayurvedic doctor, felt his pulse and said, 'He's stopped breathing. I don't know what to do.'

'I ran to Maharaj Ji's room with some water and touched his feet with it. He was resting but he sat up and said, 'What's the matter?' I told him about the boy and he told me to hurry back. I gave the boy the holy water (*charnamrit*) and he took a deep breath. My friend was amazed and asked, 'What kind of medicine did you give him?' I told him not to tell anyone.

'After receiving Knowledge I used to go to satsang with my friend Bhikaram Sharma. His brother started coming along too, but he considered us all crazy because every day we would bow to Maharaj Ji as we arrived and as we left. However, he started doing as everyone else did. Just as he approached him, Shri Maharaj Ji withdrew his feet, saying, 'If people who touch my feet are crazy, why are you doing it?' He told Bhikaram's brother to stand to one side, and after everyone had left he told him to stay the night. He took him into his hut and said, 'You don't know anything about great souls.' He sat him down and threw a sheet over him.

'Bhikaram's brother said, 'What did I see! A celestial plane came and Maharaj Ji told me to sit in it with him. We reached Vaikunth, the heaven of Lord Vishnu. I prostrated myself to Lord Vishnu. Shri Maharaj Ji explained, 'See what is happening all around. On the one hand, people are suffering, and on the other enjoying, while servants of the Lord are enjoying the bliss of service.'

'Lord Vishnu said, 'It is by his grace that you have been able to come here. If he wishes, you may stay.' Shri Maharaj Ji was not willing to do that. I begged Lord Vishnu to let me stay. He gave me a small box containing some powder which He had sanctified and said, 'Whenever you want to see me, dab some of this on your forehead and you'll come here. But on one condition—that you always obey him.' He indicated Shri Maharaj Ji. I tucked the box in the waist folds of my dhoti. Our plane arrived and we returned to earth.

'Shri Maharaj Ji removed the cloth and I was wondering if it had really happened or not. Then I saw that the little box was where I had put it.'

Bhikaram's brother stayed on with Maharaj Ji and lost all interest in worldly things. He had no intention of going home. We tried several times to take him home, but he was unwilling to go, so we finally had to request Maharaj Ji to make him leave. Maharaj Ji ordered him to go but he wouldn't listen. Maharaj Ji repeated his order three times and finally said, 'Leave this instant!' and virtually pushed him out the door. On his way home he noticed that Lord Vishnu's little powder-box had disappeared. He burst into tears and cried, 'I was a king but now I'm a pauper! All because I disobeyed Maharaj Ji.'

The next day he told us the whole story. He added, 'Now, whenever I think of going to see Maharaj Ji, my feet feel leaden and everything goes black.'

That evening I visited Maharaj Ji and begged him to bestow the same grace on me as he'd shown to Bhikaram's brother. Shri Maharaj Ji answered, 'He was a king and now he's a pauper. Do you want that to happen to you?' I answered, 'No.'

Mainpuri

Once, Shri Maharaj Ji went to Dalupur in Mainpuri district and stayed at the home of Pundit Surya Narayan. A lot of premies were present and satsang went on day and night for a week. Food for everyone was prepared in eight homes, and the cooking fires burned non-stop. Leaflets had been printed and distributed everywhere. The atmosphere was beyond words. Neither Shri Maharaj Ji nor the premies had any idea of day or night. The premies totally dissolved themselves in satsang, service and darshan. Drowned in an ocean of heavenly love, they played together. They built a swing and he played on it for three days and nights continuously, as the premies took turns in pushing it. The premies were transported by love and enraptured by Maharaj Ji's enchanting beauty. No one was any longer aware of himself. A premie sang a hymn by the poet-saint Surdas:

"Nothing is greater than love.

It is the reason why Krishna refused Duryodhan's rich food

And ate humble greens at Vidhurani's home.

Lord Rama praised the taste of the fruit

Which Bhilni had already sampled.

Under Love's spell Krishna forgot his majesty

And became Arjuna's charioteer.

Transported by Love the milkmaids of Vrindaban danced

And made Krishna dance, too.

Surdas says, 'I am totally unfit to praise You.'

Then Shri Maharaj Ji gave satsang and said, "Surdas sang in that song that God can be realized only through Love. God is Himself Love. This Love is within everyone, but some people misuse it in sense-pleasures, others misdirect it towards a woman, a son, or money. This kind of love turns out to be the greatest misery, because it is selfish. When a person's selfish desire is fulfilled, that's the end of his love, too. Worldly love is merely attachment and infatuation. Love for God is true love. There are four kinds of devotees, too. First is the person who calls upon God when in trouble. Draupadi remembered the Lord in her distress and He saved her.

'The second kind of love is motivated. This kind of person devotes himself to God with some selfish motive in mind, such as winning the lottery. Such a devotee believes that God is omnipotent, and calls on Him to do this or that for him.

'The third type is the seeker, who loves God in order to know Him. The fourth is the devotee with Knowledge, who, even after knowing God, serves and meditates desirelessly. In the Gita the Lord says, 'The realized devotee is my very soul, and is better than all the others.' This is because he harbours no motives of any kind and is free from fear or any worldly sorrow. He realizes that the purpose of his life is to remember God.

'God follows His devotees around like a cow her newborn calf. He always protects them. So, loving God takes the devotee across the worldly ocean. Loving maya, on the other hand, brings suffering and bondage to the wheel of birth and death.

'When Lord Krishna was still a young cowherd, he killed many demons as mere sport, to protect his devotees! He also showed his four-faceted form and his cosmic form to Arjuna. How? Only he knows. The Lord is willing to do anything for His devotees. People read Gita, Ramayana and the works of saints, but they don't practise the teachings written there.

'What a wonderful world God has made, but people want only the world. They don't want God. Everyone wants to own the world but no one has ever succeeded. Take the example of Delhi. How many people have been slaughtered, how much blood has been shed throughout its history! How many conquerors have mounted the throne, declaring, 'Delhi is mine!' They've all been gobbled up by death, and Delhi still looks as fresh and alluring as a bride. In other words, there is nothing to be gained by pursuing maya. It is only a shadow—you can never hold on to it. The human body is bestowed upon a soul so that it can realize God. God is realized by the person who knows His true Name and meditates upon it. Then lasting peace and happiness are also his."

One of the Mainpuri premies, Anuruddh Singh, received Knowledge in 1938. Shri Maharaj Ji told him to give satsang and initiation to worthy aspirants. However, he went astray and started doing as he saw fit. He came to a satsang program at Dalupur and went for darshan. He prostrated to Shri Maharaj Ji but was not given permission to stand up. Maharaj Ji left him lying there for two days, despite appeals by premies. Anuruddh Singh had mislead simple, sincere premies and had virtually set himself up as a guru. So Shri Maharaj Ji said to him, "You are a guru, so why do you need to lie at my feet? Aren't you enlightened?" Then Anuruddh Singh repented and said prayerfully, "I am merely your disciple." Maharaj Ji replied, "If you still regard me as your Guru, you had better obey my order, which is, not to give satsang or

initiation from now on. If you obey me, it'll be all the better for you, but if you go your own way again, you'll go straight back into the 8.4 million species."

Mahavir Singh, another Mainpuri premie, recalls, "Once Shri Maharaj Ji invited a Krishna Lila troupe from Vrindaban to perform in Suipuri village. He himself danced the part of Krishna, wearing a crown and the golden *pitambari* outfit, eating butter and sweets as Krishna did and playing the flute most delightfully. It was an indescribable scene.

'On another occasion, Shri Maharaj Ji, accompanied by Shri Mata Ji, arrived at Mainpuri. Bachchanlal, a premie, greeted them with an elephant and arranged a big program at Khapari village. Maharaj Ji visited Mainpuri several times. Once he walked through the fields with a premie farmer and gave him satsang as he was ploughing. It is really true what the Ramayana says: 'The Lord incarnates for the sake of the devotees.'"

In March, 1983, Bachchanlal fell ill. Shri Maharaj Ji appeared to him and said, "Go to Hardwar for Vaisakhi." The next day he sent for Mahatma Girjanand from the ashram and told him, "Shri Hans Ji Maharaj has told me to go to Vaisakhi. Tell me, how can I possibly go? I'm at death's door." Mahatma Ji replied, "Shri Maharaj Ji's words can never be untrue. You'll definitely go. Keep on taking this medicine." He gradually improved in health and had recovered by the time of the Vaisakhi program.

On 6th August, Bachchanlal was breathing his last. He told the premies, "Shri Maharaj Ji is calling me. He's telling me we'll go to Hardwar." With that he departed with his beloved Master for his eternal abode.

Hardoi

Hardoi was the birthplace of the famous devotee Prahlad. The pious citizens of the city were blessed with the arrival of another great Master, Shri Hans Ji Maharaj, in December 1951, when he arrived for a satsang program there. Like a monsoon river in flood, a surging crowd of people turned up to welcome him at the railway

station, showering him with flowers to express their love. Then they all proceeded to the house where the official reception had been arranged. The next day, 9th December, a huge procession was held, whose participants included premies and mahatmas from Delhi, Lucknow, Gonda, Hardwar and Mainpuri. At the head of the procession, two youths proudly held aloft a banner which read 'Satnam-Satsang Association, Hardoi'. Next came a premie band, singing devotional songs, on a gaily-decorated float. Next came a horse-drawn carriage carrying mahatmas giving satsang. Then came another group of premie musicians, including Mahatma Shantanand, who sang in his sweet voice.

Then came another group of mahatmas. Then followed yet another premie band from Delhi and Hardwar. Then came Shri Satgurudev in a splendid carriage, surrounded by premies. Groups of devotees standing along the route tried to persuade the premies leading Maharaj Ji's carriage to stop so that they could have darshan. Not even satisfied with that, they produced beautifully-decorated votive trays and started singing Arti.

The procession reached Ramayana House at 6 p.m., where satsang was held. The hall was packed and there wasn't enough room for everyone. Satsang was also held on 10th and 11th from 1—4 p.m. and from 7—11 p.m. The programs were the talk of the town for a long time afterwards. Aspirants were initiated on the 12th and on the 13th the devotees bid a tearful farewell to Maharaj Ji.

After obtaining permission from the Superintendent, Shri Maharaj Ji visited Hardoi Jail and gave the following satsang to the inmates:

"You are here because of your misdeeds. In the same way, the whole world is a jail and we are here because of our past misdeeds. If you had done nothing wrong, would you be here? Some of you are thieves, some are bandits, some are murderers. There are also staff here—those who come only for the salary. People come here for other reasons, too. Occasionally members of the aristocracy come here just to look around. Then there is myself, who has come

neither to look around, nor because of any crime, nor for salary. I have no selfish motive in coming here. I am here only for your sake, to offer you some thoughts which will benefit you spiritually. Saints come into this prison of a world simply to deliver souls from the chains of birth and death.

'Some of you have committed crimes unintentionally, others intentionally, and others by force. That's why you are in jail. Now, the question is, how will you get out of this misery? By meditating on God, Whose power can release us from suffering. So everyone should meditate. Here in this jail you are also made to do some kind of work or other. Saints tell us to work with our hands and meditate on God's Name in our heart. Lord Krishna said, in Gita 8:5, 'If a person dies in meditation, he attains Me.'

'Bad actions yield bad results and good actions can yield only good. Whatever is done, is done, however, and you have to give some thought to the future. If, even now, you start remembering God, your future will be brighter.

'Lord Rama declared that if the pleasures of the world, heaven and liberation were placed on one pan of a scale, and the joys of satsang alone were placed on another, the latter would outweigh the former. How much importance is given to satsang!

'The 8.4 million species of life is like a jail and all souls are imprisoned in it, revolving on the wheel of transmigration. It's only by the grace of God that a human body is bestowed on a soul. What could be worse than having this chance and not meditating? Lord Krishna was born in jail, but at the time of his birth a strange sleep overcame the guards and he was carried off safely to Vrindaban.

'Meditation on God will cleanse you of the sins of your crimes. No father wants bad for his children. Similarly, God is very kind and merciful and has compassion for everyone. He never wishes us ill. But our actions drag us into rebirth in low species such as scorpions, pigs and porcupines. Because of your deeds you have been separated from your near and dear ones, and have to suffer in jail. Everyone in this world has come to suffer or enjoy the

results of their previous actions, and only the person who meditates on God will be freed from this jail. Otherwise, there is no way.

'The sage Valmiki was once a notorious bandit called Ratnakar. He used to rob and kill travellers. One day a saddhu passed that way. Ratnakar stopped him and said, 'Give me whatever you have, otherwise I will kill you.' The saddhu asked, 'Why do you do such despicable things? You should do good. You didn't get this precious human body just to cut others' throats.' The bandit said, 'I've been doing this for years now. It's how I support my family.' The saddhu asked, 'Will those whom you support like this share the consequences of your sinful actions? Would they be willing to go to jail with you?'

'Ratnakar answered, 'Why not? They're getting the benefits, so why shouldn't they be willing to take the risks also?' The saddhu said, 'Well, why don't you go and ask them?' Ratnakar tied him to a tree in the densest part of the forest and raced home. He asked his parents, 'I support you by robbing and killing. Are you prepared to share the consequences with me?'

'They replied, 'We raised you in the hope that you would look after us in our old age but it would have been better had we died, rather than to have to eat food earned in such a vile way. What you do is wicked.' His wife, sons and daughters-in-law all declared their unwillingness to share the consequences of his actions.

'Ratnakar was confused and shaken. Disillusioned, he realized that they saw him only as a source of income. He went to the forest, untied the saint and threw himself at his feet, saying, 'Lord, now you are my only refuge. Please tell me what is best for me. I have well and truly understood that no one belongs to anyone else in this world, and that everyone is motivated by selfishness.' That mahatma revealed to him the Holy Name which is within everyone. This Name is beyond vowels and consonants. It can't be written or spoken.

'If you were to know this Name and meditate on it, then your life would take a turn for the better. You take very lightly this life

which God has given you for remembering His Name. You have misused it. St. Kabir said, 'O mind, think carefully before burdening yourself with too heavy a load (of karma), or you will break your neck.' You have overburdened yourself with sin, and you will have to suffer the consequences. If you apply yourself to devotion you'll be saved from further misery. A mistake committed in the morning and rectified by evening is not a mistake any more. Then you can sleep peacefully at night. Also you are freed from a vicious circle. If you let this chance slip through your fingers, you will regret it.

'If you are hungry, eat up!

No shops are available in the next life.

If you are thirsty, drink up!

You won't get water, either.

Kabir says, Listen, brothers!

Your life is in Death's hands.'

'If you incarnate in a sub-human species, shops won't be available to you. You won't be able to get a drink of water and nobody will bother to offer you one. Even if you are near a well with a rope and bucket, you won't be able to draw water and drink it. Oxen are yoked and forced to work, thirsty or not. They can't relieve their sufferings. So fix your mind on God as soon as you can. No one knows when he will die. Stock up on devotion while you can. Devotion requires neither yoga, yagya, reading and recitation of scriptures, fasting nor pilgrimages.

'Guru is essential for learning how to remember God properly. You have to commune with Him all the time. Only Guru can reveal the secret. So you have to find the true Guru.

'Now I'll tell you the story of a woman, who, even though enslaved, meditated on God. In old Iran, men and women were bought and sold like cattle. They were treated like prisoners and made to work like beasts. Rabia was a poor orphan girl who was truly devoted to God. A wicked man lured her with promises of employment and sold her to a rich man, who made her do whatever

he wanted. Because she was a slave, she had to tolerate it. Her one wish was to be free and be able to meditate in peace, but it seemed hopeless, because the penalty for escaping was death. Even though she was aware of this, one night she managed to escape, but in the dark she fell into a ditch and broke her hand. She thought, 'It's not God's will that I escape,' so she returned and confessed to her master, 'I escaped, but fell and broke my hand. Now I know that I have acted against my Lord's will.' The rich man forgave her and she returned to her work.

'She worked even more conscientiously than before. When her master had no further need of her at the end of the day she would retire to her hut to meditate. One night her master happened to come out of his room. He noticed that Rabia's hut was enveloped by a blazing light. He approached it and when he looked inside he was dumbstruck. Rabia was sitting in meditation and the light emanating from her body illuminated the entire hut. The rich man fell at her feet and said, 'I didn't know that you are such a great soul. I mistreated you and made you work for me. I beg you to forgive me. I am ready to serve you in any way in order to atone for my sins and to repay my debt to you.'

'Rabia replied, 'You are not to blame. It is all my Lord's will. I don't want you to serve me. If you want to please me, give me my freedom so that I can live alone and meditate.' The rich man freed her and she settled in a hut on the outskirts of town. There are many such stories.

'If you meditate you'll be freed from all misery. But if you persist in your arrogance and continue to do the same things, well, you are suffering now and will continue to suffer. It is said, 'humility floats and pride drowns.'

'Once I was taking a bath in the River Ravi in Lahore. I saw some men tying rocks to a child's corpse. When I asked them why the rocks were necessary, they explained that the weight of the rocks would make the body sink. Then it occurred to me, that if a person has the rock of pride tied around his neck he won't be able to cross the ocean of mortality.

'The world is elusive and slippery. You should never think that it is yours. Even though we all know that we have to leave it some day, still people get involved with their job, their business, their office, their Ministry and their families and get pricked by the thorns accordingly. This world is like dry brushwood: when it catches fire it all gets consumed. In the same way, everything here is consumed by Time. Evil character is not bought in the marketplace. It forms by association. A person grows like the company he keeps. In Bijnore district there was a bandit called Multana who used to rob the rich. When the police pursued him, he would scatter money and escape on horseback while the policemen stopped to pick up the notes. But he would use his loot to help the poor. Finally he was caught and sentenced to hang. This was during the British regime and their practice was to grant a last request to the condemned. Multana's request was to meet his mother. She was summoned and as she embraced him he bit off her nose! When asked why, at Death's door, he had added this injustice to his list of crimes, he explained, 'When I was young I once stole an inkwell from school. My mother kept it. I soon got into the habit of stealing some small thing or other every day, and from that I ended up as a notorious bandit. If she had reprimanded me or punished me that first time I wouldn't be standing on the gallows now. I bit her nose as a warning to other parents, to not let their children do as I did.'

'People start gambling or drinking as a joke, or because their friends do it, and gradually turn into real drunkards or inveterate gamblers.

'Iron normally sinks in water, but when combined with wood in the form of a ship it carries thousands of people across water. It crosses the water itself and carries others across. Water doesn't have any price, but when it is mixed with milk it is sold at the same price as the milk. Due to association, the little bits of bamboo mixed in rock sugar acquire the same value as the candy. A person imbibes good traits from good company and bad traits from bad.

Because of unwholesome company, the number of people taking to crime is increasing.

'Only in the human body can you determine your future, so if you want to improve yourself, now you can. If a murderer can turn into an enlightened saint, you can also change for the better. There must be quite a few murderers among you. Meditate on God and associate with the holy and you can also change. Don't brood over the past. It is like the example of the oil stain on the cloth. Instead of wondering how it got there and why, you should think about how to remove it. You've done wrong but now think about how to change. First of all, try to speak civilly and kindly to each other. Don't say anything hurtful or nasty.

'Disagreeable behaviour hurts only the doer. It is said that once Lord Buddha was staying near a town. His fame was already spreading far and wide. One man who couldn't tolerate this went to Lord Buddha and hurled abuse at him. Buddha sat silently and took it all. This only incensed the abuser further. When he finally ran out of steam, he quietened down, and Buddha told him, 'I don't want anything from you. When people visit me they offer fruit and sweets. I keep as much as I want and give the rest back. You are offering me insults, which I choose not to accept. You may take them back.' Then that man felt very ashamed of himself and became Buddha's disciple.

'If you understand the value of satsang you will profit from it. Time is passing and it is up to you how it passes.

'Once a prostitute and her daughter lived in a house at a crossroads. A funeral procession was passing by. The woman said, 'Go and find out if the dead man has gone to heaven or hell.' The girl followed the corpse for a while and returned to her mother, saying, 'He has gone to hell.' Some time later another funeral passed by. The prostitute sent her daughter to find out this person's fate as well. She followed the corpse then returned and said, 'Mother, he has gone to heaven.'

'A hermit had been standing nearby listening to all this. Finally he said to the woman, 'Mother, I have been practising

austerities for a long time but I haven't been able to achieve what you have. Yours is such a despicable profession, so how did you get the power to know if someone has gone to heaven or not?'

'The prostitute replied, 'When the first funeral passed, I sent my daughter to follow it. The pall bearers were discussing the dead man, saying, 'He gave a lot of people a hard time. A real sinner. It's good that he's dead. He deserves to go to hell.' From this we could guess that he had gone to hell because he had led a wicked life. Then the second funeral came along and my daughter followed it also. The mourners were saying, 'He was an angel. He always took pity on the poor and his speech was like nectar. He was the embodiment of piety.' We figured that he had gone to heaven, because he had done good all his life.'

'If you do good, people will judge you well, but if you do wrong, people will remember you with disgust. If you want to be your own best friend, then do good, meditate on God and stop doing evil. A horseman holds the reins. If he sees a ditch or a tree approaching, he pulls the reins in the opposite direction. If he doesn't use the reins he'll have an accident.

'So, we are human beings. This body is meant for action. Action automatically goes on, but it happens through the agency of the mind, so we need to steer the mind away from doing wrong. The reins for doing this is the gift of the Master. The True Name of God is the reins. It is within everyone. If you want to know it, this mahatma is here. He can give you Knowledge of the Holy Name and Divine Light, but it's not something which is given immediately to all and sundry. Only a sincere aspirant is entitled to it.

'The Ramayana says that even a few moments in the company of saints saves a person from thousands of sins. I have been giving satsang for an hour, but it probably seems like only a few minutes to you. You must have felt some peace here, because you have listened very carefully. Learn to be this peaceful all the time. Know the Holy Name and remember it. The Ramayana says that no matter whether you remember the Name lovingly, carelessly,

lazily or angrily, you'll be surrounded by the greatest of good fortune and blessings.

'You people haven't yet understood the value of your human life, so you've wasted it in worldly pursuits. You've robbed and stolen and killed to get some of the world's pleasures for yourselves, but what were the consequences? Locked in jail, unable to go anywhere. Those, for whose sakes you committed crimes, are outside breathing freely, while you are here, putting up with all kinds of hardships. What's the use? But, as you sow, so shall you reap. I came here to tell you how to spare yourselves further suffering. If you reflect upon the truths which I have told you and act accordingly, you'll be released from suffering. Otherwise you'll never be free.'

Mrs Chand Devi of Hathras, in her affectionate description of the Master, says, 'How can someone like me possibly describe the greatness of Shri Hans Ji Maharaj? His glory is infinite. He incarnated for the devotees' sake alone. How beautiful he was! His enchanting face just stole one's heart away. His long curly hair, wide forehead glowing with the Inner Light, and his large eyes were exquisite. He used to appear in different aspects—sometimes as a youth, sometimes old, sometimes very fair-complexioned. Light radiated from every pore in his body. He was the very embodiment of Knowledge, an ocean of compassion, and Love itself. If a poor premie couldn't afford to send his children to school, Shri Maharaj Ji would bear the expenses right up to college graduation. If a devotee's house was destroyed, Maharaj Ji would give him money to build a new one. If a premie was too poor to arrange for his daughter's wedding, Maharaj Ji would take care of the whole thing. He always relieved devotees of their sufferings.

'Once I was with him at Gaya Prasad's house, when a premie arrived by taxi from Bahadurgarh with his son, who was about to die. He placed the child at Maharaj Ji's feet and the boy recovered.'

Shyamsundar Lal's daughter visited him at Hapur with her only son. The child suddenly fell ill and died. Shyamsundar Lal

threw himself weeping at Maharaj Ji's feet, begging him to give the child back his life. At first, Maharaj Ji tried to dissuade him, saying, 'What do I know about these matters?' But Shyamsundar Lal kept on pleading, 'Master, you can do anything. You are the ocean of compassion, so please have mercy on me.' Finally, Shri Maharaj Ji said, 'Very well, let's go.' When he reached the house he said, 'Everyone must stay outside. Only the child and myself should be in the room.' The premies started following him inside, curious to see what he would do. He turned around and shook his finger at them, saying, 'No one come inside! That's agya!' A little while later he emerged from the room, smiling. The child was alive again. Maharaj Ji told Shyamsundar Lal, 'Don't tell anyone about this. I'm strictly ordering you.'

Nitthan Singh is a premie from Prangarh, near Masauta. He fell seriously ill and the doctors declared that there was no hope. Shri Maharaj Ji and about 30 premies were travelling by train at this time. Suddenly the train stopped near Masauta, for no apparent reason. Shri Maharaj Ji alighted from the train and went to Prangarh. The dying premie was breathing his last. Shri Maharaj Ji restored him to life and then resumed his journey.

Kunwar Prahlad Singh, the Rajah of Ustra (Bulandshahr) met Shri Maharaj Ji at the Garhmukteshwar Mela. He listened to satsang and was so impressed that he fell at Maharaj Ji's feet and asked for Knowledge. Shri Maharaj Ji initiated him. The Rajah brought his mother, Rani Balbir Kaur, to a satsang program at Bhurhbaral and invited Maharaj Ji to Ustra. Master and devotees were served dinner, but the premies didn't eat. When the Rajah asked why, Maharaj Ji said, 'They are annoyed. Your mother will have to beg their pardon. Then they'll eat.' Rani Balbir did so. Maharaj Ji smiled. He had staged this little scenario to show the premies the love and humility of the queen, who had no arrogance or vanity at all, and because of whose devotion Maharaj Ji had visited the palace.

Five or six boys sang at Maharaj Ji's programs at Ustra. He used to act like a child with them. One night, after dinner, he called

them and asked, "If I hid myself in this room, could you find me?"

"Of course, they replied. "There's only one room." So Maharaj Ji said, "Stand outside the door and come in when I call you." Soon he called out, "Okay, come and find me!" They looked everywhere—under the bed, in the closets, in corners—but they couldn't find him. Finally they admitted defeat and called out, "Maharaj Ji, we give up. Please come here." Maharaj Ji materialized, smiling, and said, "I told you that you wouldn't be able to find me!" He was very playful and would become like a child among children.

Chanda, from Masauta, says, "Shri Maharaj Ji's grace had no limits. A person could travel to the ends of the earth and it would reach him there, too.

'Maharaj Ji often visited Ustra. The premies would dance and sing all night—no one ever felt tired or hungry. Rani Balbir Kaur used to cook lunch herself and feed Maharaj Ji and the premies with great love. Everyone was amazed that the food never ran out. Rani Balbir herself used to say, 'I don't know where it all comes from. We always have double the amount of flour we actually ground, and twice the ghee which we actually made. It just keeps on increasing of its own accord!'

Chanda's daughter Nirmala, who was then only three years old, displayed an incredible communion with Maharaj Ji. She would say things like "On such-and-such a day Maharaj Ji will go to Masauta, then on such-and-such a day will go to Prangarh and then come here," and she was always correct. She loved Maharaj Ji so much that she would bathe in the water which he'd used for his bath. She had already been initiated and would never meditate for less than two hours at a time. She would merge with the Light within.

Whenever the premies wanted to request Maharaj Ji to play with them, they would send Nirmala to ask him. Once she said, "Master, the premies have decorated a swing for you. Please come!" At first he refused, but she insisted so finally he yielded. The members of the Rajah's family took turns to push the swing

while the ladies sang special songs. Shri Maharaj on the swing sparkled and shone so brightly that it was hard to look at him.

"Once a procession was held in Masauta. At that time Nirmala was dying of pneumonia. She sent her uncle to call Maharaj Ji to give her last darshan. When he got the news, Maharaj Ji jumped down from his horse, breaking an expensive pearl garland in the process. He told a premie to pick up the pearls and meanwhile reached Nirmala, who by that time was deep in meditation. He sat down beside her and waved his hand above her head to bring her back to waking consciousness. He then asked her, 'Do you know who I am?' She replied, 'Yes. You are the Lord.' He then sent for some holy water which he gave her then she died and went to the Lord's eternal abode." □

Chapter Four

Growth and Consolidation of the Mission

Shri Maharaj Ji's fame increased day by day. Premies throughout India were actively spreading the Knowledge. Several young men were so impressed by Shri Maharaj Ji and his Knowledge that they renounced the world to serve in the ashrams or to spread Knowledge as mahatmas. More than a thousand such youths were prepared to forgo the joys of family life for the sake of serving mankind. They lived a life of austerity and renunciation. Like the monks in the time of Lord Buddha, they took total refuge in the Master. Lord Krishna advised Arjuna to give up ritualistic religion and serve Him, and this is what those young men did.

It would be impossible to include the life-stories of all the devotees who have served and are serving in the ashram, so here is a selection.

Mahatma Parmanand Ji has been spreading Knowledge in Kumaon district since 1958. Here is his story:

"In 1953, before I had been initiated, I was involved in an accident near India Gate. I was taken, unconscious, to hospital. Shri Hans Ji Maharaj appeared to me, bathed in the Holy Light, and said, 'You have neglected the work which you were born to do.'

'A little while later I regained consciousness and asked those around me, 'Did you see the holy man who was here just now?' They didn't know what I was talking about, so I guessed that he had been visible to me alone and was somehow drawing me towards him. From that time on I felt disillusioned with worldly activities and was unable to sleep. All I could think about was how to find him. It was an obsession, a kind of madness that possessed

me. I visited all sorts of holy men, but none of them could answer my questions satisfactorily. Then it occurred to me that perhaps I might find, in some mountain cave, a saint or master who could show me the way. I decided to resign from my job and leave everything in three days' time. In the meantime, I met a premie, Balkishan, who had given me a copy of '*Hansadesh*' a year previously. I had told him that I thought his Master was in it only for the money. When we met again he was shocked by my appearance, which had indeed changed. I was dishevelled, unkempt and scantily dressed, even though it was winter. He invited me to come to satsang at Janpath, where a mahatma would be speaking. That same night, Shri Hans Ji Maharaj appeared to me in a dream, emerging from a bluish cave surrounded by light, saying, 'You still don't understand. I am so close to you, yet you think you'll find me so far away.' I asked, 'Lord, how can I find you?' He replied, 'Go to satsang. Then you'll find out.' The next day I went to satsang and heard that Shri Maharaj Ji had arrived in Delhi.

'The next day, at Hari Ram's house in Shakti Nagar, I met Maharaj Ji. He was exactly the same person whom I had seen that day in hospital. He said, smiling, 'So, you've made it here. Where did you think you'd find me? Do you think that I live in the jungle? You can recognize me only through your inner eye. Then you will see me everywhere. Receive Knowledge and meditate.'

'I was initiated in February, 1954. I meditated and found perfect peace. In 1958 I attended the Vaisakhi program at Prem Nagar during which Maharaj Ji said, 'He who spreads the light of my Knowledge is my true devotee.' I was struck by this. When I went for darshan, he asked if I wanted to become a mahatma. I answered, 'I'm not really worthy to do that, but I want to live in your shelter. So I'll do whatever you want.' The next day he called me and said, 'Look, I can hire labourers to do other kinds of work, but Knowledge can be spread only by devotees. So become a mahatma and spread this Knowledge.' He sent me to Kumaon. At

that time there were no premies there but by his grace Knowledge started to spread.

'Later on, I again had the desire to sit in a cave and go into Samadhi. I found a spot 12,000 feet up in the mountains. Shri Maharaj Ji came to me in my meditation and said, 'You really are thick-headed. He whom you seek has been born into my family as Satpal. Haven't you recognized him yet? I have brought all the divine powers with me, so what do you think you'll find here?' He told me that Shri Mata Ji is the incarnation of the primordial Divine Energy and that Shri Bhole Ji is Shiva. I left my cave and went back down the mountain. Later, during the festival of Guru Puja, Shri Maharaj Ji asked me, 'Well, what did you find in that cave?' I answered, 'Master, I found you.' Then he said, 'One day the banner of Knowledge will fly over every land. Satpal will take this task in hand. People may not now understand the greatness of Knowledge, but the day will come when the world leaders will bow their heads at his feet. The Light of Knowledge will spread automatically. You have a golden opportunity now.'

'An acquaintance from Almora accompanied me to Nainital 'to see what your Guru Maharaj Ji is like'. When he came into Maharaj Ji's presence the entire room appeared to him to be bathed in golden light, and Maharaj Ji himself was seated on a golden throne, saying, 'So now you've seen how I am.' This man left the room in tears, saying, 'Your Master really is God in human form.'

'Later, I went to see Maharaj Ji, who said, 'No one understands. They all want something for nothing, yet even if they get it they don't benefit from it. How can you benefit from something if you don't know its value? That can be understood only by right action and right understanding. The Lord belongs to the devotees, not the world, and a devotee is someone who follows his Master's commands and does meditation, service and satsang.'

Mahatma Vichalanand, whose former name was Jorawar, has served in the ashram for many years. He relates:

"I was initiated on May 20, 1962 at Shakti Nagar. After receiving Knowledge I went for darshan. Shri Maharaj Ji just stared at me. I felt a strange stirring in my heart. The same thing happened a while later at Satlok Ashram during Vaisakhi. My service at Satlok was ploughing the fields. It often went through my mind: 'Guru Maharaj Ji comes here and talks to others, but never to me. People say that he knows everyone's heart and mind, so why doesn't he acknowledge me? On the contrary—he never even talks to me.' I had only one wish—that he would say something to me and show me some love.

'One summer's day, while everyone else was resting after lunch, I was sitting in a hut looking through some old books and photos. I went into another hut and sat in a corner to meditate. I was thinking, 'Maharaj Ji, if you'll give me darshan by 3 o'clock, you'll be my Lord forever, and I'll be your devotee. Everyone says that you know everything. If you don't come, then as far as I'm concerned, they're all wrong.' Shri Maharaj Ji arrived at the ashram at 3 o'clock on the dot. He told me, 'It was wrong of you to insist like that. Do you have any idea where I was? Don't do it in future.' After that, never a day went by without my seeing him.

'The ashram owned a cow named Jamana. I used to milk her. Whenever Shri Maharaj Ji visited Satlok, she would give an extra kilo of milk. She continued to do this for the duration of his stay, be it an hour or a week. As soon as he had gone, she would produce one kilo less.'

'Several ornamental trees were planted along the path leading to our temple. I was night watchman at the time and had to keep an eye on them during my rounds. One night I felt particularly tired and fell asleep, thinking that no one would dig up the trees now, but that very night they were all stolen. One week later Shri Maharaj Ji visited the ashram. Laila, the ashram dog, somehow got into the car and tried to reach Maharaj Ji's feet. He shouted at her, 'Go away! All you do is eat and sleep! Don't you ever do a scrap of work?' Her ears and tail drooped in shame. That day henceforth,

both she and her mate diligently kept watch and made their rounds all night. They were never seen to sit down for even ten minutes.

'There is a story about Dattatreya, a devotee who learned life's lessons from observing a snake, a cat and a kite, amongst others. In the same way, I learned the meaning of obedience from that dog and from Jamana the cow. I'd had a high opinion of myself, but my ego was deflated when I saw the service rendered by those animals.'

Mahatma Atmagyanand, formerly known as Ramcharan, lived in Prangarh. He continued serving at Satlok Ashram until the ripe old age of 96. During his lifetime he related this incident:

"One evening I was going home across a field. I was meditating as I walked along. I stepped on a cobra and it bit me. I continued meditating and reached home. My foot had turned blue but I was otherwise unaffected by the poison. That reinforced my faith in the nectar technique."

Mahatma Vichitrnanand is from Bihar. After receiving Knowledge he was obsessed with the idea of getting his whole family initiated and then spending the rest of his life in the ashram. Then one day he heard a voice from out of nowhere telling him, "Do you think it's up to you whether others get Knowledge or not?" Then he saw Maharaj Ji in meditation. He renounced everything and went to live at Prem Nagar. After doing service for several years he became a mahatma.

Maharaj Ji used the dual method of reprimand and affection to find out a devotee's state of mind. "Once," says Mahatma Ji, "I was ploughing a field at Satlok. Shri Maharaj Ji arrived, so I went for darshan. He shouted at me, saying, 'Is that a devotee's duty? Why did you leave your work?' Seeing that I was afraid, he softened and said, 'Would you like to become a mahatma?' I answered, 'Whatever you say.'"

Mahatma Jairamdas Viyogi was a resident of Ratlam, near Ujjain in Madhya Pradesh. He says, "I followed one sect after another, until one day in 1961 a leaflet advertising the Vaisakhi festival came into my hands. I figured that the function was being

arranged by a high soul because of what the pamphlet said—'He, the everlasting Lord, dwells within the hearts of all beings.' I decided then and there to attend the Hardwar program. When I reached Prem Nagar I saw a long line of devotees waiting for darshan. When he noticed me, Shri Maharaj Ji motioned me to one side and invited me to be seated. My manner of dress must have looked rather unusual, because he asked where I came from and how I had come to hear about the program. He also asked me if I'd been initiated by any other Guru. I answered that I had. He then asked me, 'So what do you want?' I replied, 'I want to be initiated by you, to get rid of whatever doubts and worldly attachments I have left.' He repeated the question. I told him again, 'I want to be initiated by you.'

'What? By me personally?' Then his expression became quite terrifying and he said, 'Attachment is the root of all evil. Throw him out! Get him out of here! He wants me to initiate him!' I was really upset and confused. Maharaj Ji was furious with me. Some premies who were sitting nearby advised me to do as he said, and leave.

'The next day I took my place in the darshan line. Just as I reached Maharaj Ji he got angry again and said, 'Why does he persist in coming here?' Now I was really scared, but I resolved to stay there, even if it meant starving to death. I didn't touch food for three days, and, in a spot where he wouldn't see me, I just stood and gazed at him. I asked mahatmas to tell me what I had done wrong. Then after three days it was announced over the loudspeaker that Maharaj Ji was calling me. I was afraid but still I went. When he saw me he laughed and said, 'So, you get upset over so little! Sukhdev Muni stood for six months at each door of King Janak's palace!' At this, my heart just melted and I fell at his feet. Maharaj Ji sent me to Mahatma Parmanand for initiation. After receiving Knowledge, I went for darshan. Maharaj Ji was in a happy mood and asked, 'You've received Knowledge, so go home now. Do a lot of meditation and tell others about it.' Since then, by his grace, I have been doing just that."

Mahatma Shraddhanand has spent his life in service, managing the ashram at Alwar. Once during a satsang program arranged there, Mahatma Ji brought a lady and her young son to Maharaj Ji. She hoped that Maharaj Ji would bless her son by laying his hands on his head. Maharaj Ji told him, "So! Are you spreading this kind of superstition? If you think that my touching his head will do him any good then bring him here, but first I'll give you salvation with my boot! Listen, only talk about Knowledge. I'm really not interested in this other stuff. Only meditation gives salvation. Don't lead innocent devotees astray with talk of miracles and magic."

Mahatma Paripurnanand tells how one night, at midnight, "Shri Maharaj Ji appeared to me in a dream, wearing a crown and golden robes. His appearance alternated between that of a child and of an old man. He initiated me. Later, when I went to have darshan, Maharaj Ji shouted, 'Get away from me, you miserable sinner!' I replied, 'Master, you can free anyone from their sins, so please free me too.' My premie friend advised me to take Knowledge, so I replied that Maharaj Ji had already initiated me in a dream. My friend had to believe me when I described in detail the four techniques to him."

Mahatma Albelanand was made a mahatma in 1966, just after Shri Maharaj Ji's passing away. He was assigned to Shahjahanpur with Mahatma Darshanand. He says, "I had no idea how to give satsang. Mahatma Darshanandji asked me, 'If you can't talk about Knowledge, why did you become a mahatma?' I answered that it was Shri Mata Ji's idea, not mine. Some time later I sat for evening meditation and then fell asleep. Shri Maharaj Ji appeared to me and said, 'Don't you know how to give satsang? I'll teach you.' So all that night he preached to me, and next morning I found that I could remember every word of it. So I also started giving satsang. Mahatma Darshanand and the premies were amazed. Shri Maharaj Ji came to me nine nights in a row. Whatever satsang he gave me I'd repeat to the premies the next day. From that time on I was able to give satsang. Guru Maharaj Ji's grace turned a

dummy like me into an orator! To this day I remember every word he spoke to me in those 'dreams'.

'He told me the story of the hungry jackal: Once a rich merchant died, and his family consigned his body to the Ganges. When the jackal saw the body floating downstream, he was overjoyed and thanked God for sending him a meal. He followed the corpse until it lodged against a bend in the river. The jackal was just about to start feasting on the head when an elderly jackal arrived and said, 'Don't eat him, my friend. He was a really sinful man. He never in his life bowed his head to God or Guru. His head is nothing more than an empty gourd.'

'So the jackal left the head alone. He took out the eyes and started to eat them. The old jackal advised him, 'Don't eat his eyes, because they were never used to see the holy. They were no more useful than the artificial eyes on a peacock's tail.'

'So the jackal forgot about the eyes and started on the ears. The old jackal advised him, 'Don't eat his ears, because they were never used to hear God's praises. They were just holes in which dwelt the serpents of lust, anger, greed and worldly infatuation.'

'So the jackal didn't eat the ears. He started eating the heart. The old jackal said, 'Brother, he was wicked. His heart held no devotion to God. He was little better than a walking corpse. At least after an animal dies its skin or other organs can be used, so animals are thousands of times better than a human being who doesn't meditate and love God.'

Mahatma Sukhi Bai relates this important incident in her life: "Once I was very badly injured in a train accident. I was taken unconscious to hospital. When I awoke and saw my pitiful condition, I prayed to Guru Maharaj Ji, 'Lord, please take me. It is better to die than to live like this.' I was so badly incapacitated that it looked as if my life was ruined. A little while later I dozed off. Shri Maharaj Ji appeared to me, wearing a crown, and told me, 'I am with you every minute of the day. I care for you as a mother cares for her child. You have nothing to worry about.' My mood changed from despair to hope. After being discharged from

hospital, I visited Maharaj Ji, who said, 'This is your third life. Your first was your physical birth. The second began the moment you received Knowledge and being saved from that accident was your third lease of life.'

Shri Somar Das, a master builder from Doyadih in Bihar, has been serving in the ashram's building crew since 1971. Many years previously, before he'd received Knowledge, he had the following experience:

"I loved to sing devotional songs. Wherever I was—at work, at home or at religious meetings, I'd sing. It was so much a part of me that even my dreams would be full of music and song. One evening I attended a religious meeting in my village. I sang with all my heart and was so absorbed in the music that everyone stopped singing and just stared at me. But I heard a hundred people singing along! I went into an ecstatic mood and fell down semi-conscious. When I reached home, I lay down and just as I closed my eyes my attention was pulled up to the top of my head and outwards. I saw in the midst of the heavens a huge and marvellous tree, laden with leaves and countless fruit. Sitting on the tree was Shri Hans Ji Maharaj (although I didn't know at that time who he was), surrounded by blazing light which spread outwards and covered the sky. I knelt in awe.

'As time passed the experience gradually faded from memory. Many years later, after I'd received Knowledge and moved to Prem Nagar, I saw Shri Hans Ji Maharaj's photograph in the Satsang Hall. I exclaimed, 'He's the one I saw in that vision long ago!'

Mahatma Baijnathanandji, who is at present in Nagpur, used to serve in the Dehra Dun ashram farm. One night in 1971 he was sitting in meditation at about 9 p.m. when Shri Maharaj Ji appeared and reprimanded him, saying, "What! Here you are meditating while the crops are being damaged!" He jumped up and ran into the fields, where he saw a village woman stealthily cutting grass and sugarcane. When she saw him she ran away.

Shyamlal, who since 1968 has lived and served at Dehra Dun's 'Sant Sadan Ashram', recalls how Maharaj Ji helped him:

"I wanted to go from Shahdara to Delhi but found myself short of money. As I was wondering what to do, a gentleman dressed in white approached me and asked, 'What's the matter? Where you do want to go?' I told him and he replied, 'Don't worry. Come with me. No one will catch you. But when you get to Delhi wait until everyone else has gone before you attempt to go through the barrier.' On the way he offered me peanuts. After a while I noticed that he wasn't there any more.

"I got down at Delhi and sat on a platform bench. I waited an hour but the crowd didn't decrease. I was afraid that I would certainly be caught. As I looked around I saw my companion coming from the next platform towards me. I had previously checked out all avenues of escape but the iron barriers around the platform were impassable. Yet he walked straight through and said, 'Go the way I came.' There was now an opening that hadn't been there before. I looked behind but he had vanished. It must have been Maharaj Ji in disguise. Since 1968 I've been serving in the Dehra Dun ashram and my only prayer is that I may be allowed to continue to do so for the rest of my life."

Mahatma Avdhootanandji received Knowledge in December 1963. Some time later as he was meditating he saw "a little star which grew larger as it approached me, filling my entire vision. I saw so much Light that I was afraid, wondering what was happening to me. I called on Maharaj Ji, who immediately appeared in the midst of the Light wearing his crown and holding a flute. I watched him for quite some time. When I opened my eyes neither Maharaj Ji nor the Light was to be seen.

"I attended Hans Jayanti 1966 in Delhi. I met Mahatma Satyanandji and told him that I had not yet met Shri Hans Ji Maharaj. He took me to Shri Mata Ji and told her that I had come from Nepal for darshan. As I pranamed to Holy Mother I saw not

her, but Shri Maharaj Ji! The premies didn't believe me when I told them I'd just been with Maharaj Ji."

Publications and Literature

Shri Maharaj Ji emphasized the importance of literature as well as satsang in spreading Knowledge. His first publication was 'Hans Yog Prakash' ('Union with Light') in 1936. It is a unique work. It was the culmination of years of study, austerities and meditation. It is a true indication of his greatness and universality. He collected selections from all the great saints, sages and philosophers. There are a variety of religious books available, but Hans Yog Prakash deals with all spiritual topics, from the aim of human life to the realization of God, in a single volume. It is like a beautifully-arranged garland of flowers threaded on a single string.

Leaving aside the superficial aspects of religions it gets down to the basics of spirituality as presented in scripture. Maharaj Ji has extracted the nectar of the world's great religious teachings, including the Upanishads, Gita, Ramayana, Bible, Guru Granth Sahab etc, as well as the saints' teachings on devotion and yoga. It weaves together again the wonderful philosophies which have been fragmented and twisted by sects and religions. Thus the reader gains a working knowledge of the great universal religious truths. Knowledge, devotion and yoga are discussed in such simple terms that anyone can understand. The ocean of spirituality is contained in this book. It is spirituality in a nutshell.

In 1952 'Hansadesh', a Hindi-language monthly magazine was launched, so that Maharaj Ji's ideas could be easily available to devotees and the general public. Its aim is to present the deepest spiritual and religious mysteries revealed by the writings of the saints, in simple, easy-to-understand language. It exposes the fallacies and hypocrisies perpetrated in the name of religion and offers a fresh outlook and a new awareness of what religion really is.

Founding of the Ashrams

Shahu Balkishan of Nazibabad was a wealthy businessman who had the deepest respect for Shri Maharaj Ji. He owned a building and a pavilion near Hardwar's Har-ki-Pairi. He had on numerous occasions requested Maharaj Ji to establish an ashram there. Maharaj Ji had merely responded, "Who'll live there? I know all about ashrams. They are the root of dissension and strife. Besides, if I don't feel the need for one, because I am only interested in spreading Knowledge, and my mahatmas are always on the move, who'll live there?"

The Honorary Magistrate of Bijnore, Chaudhury Maharaj Singh, also approached Shri Maharaj Ji on several occasions, reminding him that at Balawali in Bijnore, on the banks of the Ganges, there was a lot of land available and it would make everyone very happy if he were to select a site and give permission to build an ashram.

Shri Maharaj Ji was a free soul, indifferent to worldly possessions. He simply said, "My Guru Maharaj Ji told me to spread this Knowledge. You can see for yourself that I don't settle anywhere. I'm constantly on the move. So why do you want to cage me up in an ashram? All this talk of ashrams depresses me. That's why I won't go to Bharatpur. The mahatma there kept on at me to build an ashram, saying that the Mayor had acquired an excellent plot of land near the railway station for 2 million rupees and was building a dharmshala and that he would like very much to talk to me about it. If that 2 million rupees had been spent in propagation, think how Knowledge would have spread! I told Mahatma Ji, 'My work is spreading Knowledge. Even if I were presented with a house of gold, what would I do with it? I wouldn't live in it, and if I asked that man for the money instead, he'd think that I was just money-hungry.'"

Guru Puja 1940 was celebrated at Garodiya Market. All the premies had gathered there and a fine program was held. Shahu Balkishan approached some of the senior premies, including

Behari Lal, Hari Ram and Yukti Ram to request Maharaj Ji to establish an ashram. This they did, but Maharaj Ji refused to listen.

One day in 1943, Balmukund, Behari Lal, Hari Ram, Om Prakash and others were discussing this topic. They approached Mahatma Satyanandji, saying, "We have repeatedly asked Maharaj Ji to start an ashram, but as soon as we say the word 'ashram' he gets furious. Every time satsang is held anywhere, people ask us where Guru Maharaj Ji lives. Of course we have no answer for that and have to avoid the issue by saying that he is constantly on the move, but that his real home is in the devotees' hearts. People are not going to be satisfied with that, are they? Where will they go to get satsang and Knowledge? So please plead with Maharaj Ji. Maybe he will listen to you."

Mahatma Ji presented his case to Maharaj Ji, saying, "Master, because you don't have any fixed address, devotees have to spend years searching for you. Shankar Lal didn't see you again for 24 years! Where can people go to get Knowledge? Whom can they contact? They wander here and there until finally they get caught up again in worldly affairs and forget. That's why I beg you to open an ashram."

Finally Maharaj Ji capitulated, saying, "As far as I'm concerned, ashrams are nothing but trouble. However, because you all want it, go ahead and look for a suitable place accessible to everyone."

This made the premies very happy. They checked out a couple of sites in Vrindaban and several in Hardwar. Everyone agreed that the place chosen should be quiet and secluded, yet close enough to Hardwar to allow as many people as possible to reach it.

Finally a site between Hardwar and Jwalapur was chosen, where Prem Nagar Ashram stands today. Maharaj Ji approved and sent Mahatma Satyanand and a local Patwari to Hardwar. Mahatma Ji relates, "Guru Maharaj Ji's grace makes everything easy for the devotee. By chance I met a Hardwar bookseller,

Raghnathan Bhargava, who ran a free food distribution centre for sadhus and the poor. He arranged accommodation for me.

'The land we wanted to buy was right on the banks of the Ganges canal, and quite far from the road, which meant that we also had to acquire additional land to provide an access road. Bhargava supplied the name and address of the owner of this land and set up the sale, but at the last moment, the owner, Guru Prashad of Rawalpindi, backed out, saying that the land belonged to his wife and she wanted to sell it only to someone who would plant gardens and hold satsang. I told him that this is what we do. He replied, 'So, I don't have to take anything from you. You can just stay here.' I agreed. When I approached him about registration he told me that the price of the land had quadrupled. He turned out to be most dishonest, but I wouldn't take no for an answer. I even went to Rawalpindi. I warned him that deception doesn't pay, but he evaded the issue. Finally I had it out with him at his relative's house in Delhi. The relative persuaded him to let us have a quarter of the land for four times the original price. The original block was going for 4200 rupees, and he sold us a quarter of it for 5,000 rupees!

'Between our two blocks was some land belonging to the Muni Mandal Ashram. The head of the ashram, Mandaleshwar Achalanand, also beat around the bush when I approached him. I gave him a piece of my mind, too. Finally he got angry and said, 'This is my land and I won't sell it at any price. What are you going to do about it?' I replied, 'It's your land, you say, but let's see you take it with you! Look at you, an old man about to die, and still you don't have any sense.' I tried to reason with him, but he said, 'This is all useless talk, and only good for fooling householders.' I upbraided him sharply and left.

'A week later I returned to Hardwar only to discover that the Mandaleshwar had died and his successor had sold the entire block except for the land where our access road was to be. He refused at first to take payment from us, but finally accepted one-third of the original price.'

Spread across 15 acres, Prem Nagar today is a holy place, a shrine where pilgrims come to pay their respects. Thousands of devotees come here for the annual Vaisakhi festival in April. Shri Maharaj Ji's encouragement, the selfless labour of thousands of premies and the tireless effort and supervision of Shri Mata Ji have built this ashram. It is situated on Jwalapur Road, three kilometres from the railway station, between the three townships of Hardwar, Jwalapur and Kankhal. It is Shri Maharaj Ji's dream come true.

In 1948 while the purchase of the land was being settled, Shri Maharaj Ji told Mahatma Satyanand, 'If we manage to get this land, from here to the street we'll construct a long driveway, bordered by beautiful gardens. We'll build seven arches along it. After passing under the seventh, premies will have darshan of their Lord. Over there we'll build a huge satsang hall. Inside will be artistically-presented quotations from all the great Masters. Situated in the driveway gardens will be fountains, benches and flowerbeds with all kinds of flowers. The pathway will have raised borders on which will be printed quotations from all saints and scriptures concerning love, devotion, service, Knowledge, religion, etc. Premies will read these as they walk along. Then they'll purify their minds in the holy stream of satsang and have darshan of the Master.'

This ashram has a delightful history. Forty years ago there were only five acres of rocky scrubland. Nowadays it is as beautiful as a bride in all her finery.

After 1950 the premies got together to level the land and construct a hut where Maharaj Ji and some premies lived. This area was crawling with scorpions and snakes, but still Maharaj Ji lived there and worked on the ashram. A few years later a two-roomed house was built for him. Gradually the ashram took shape and premies from all over India would take leave from their jobs and go to Hardwar to lend a hand, taking advantage of a golden opportunity.

Near the main gate was some hollowed-out land. It was also acquired and within a couple of years had been filled in. Here a

stage area could be built large enough to hold an audience of thousands.

Mahatma Dharmanandji was formerly known as Deen Dayal and worked as head gardener at Delhi's Lady Hardinge Hospital. Here is his story:

"I received Knowledge in 1944 in Delhi, but I first saw Maharaj Ji at Kankhal. My daughter-in-law, Jamuna, was a devoted premie. One day she informed me that Maharaj Ji was constructing an ashram at Hardwar and wanted me to go there to plan the gardens and supervise their planting. She congratulated me on this great chance to do service and gave me Shri Maharaj Ji's Kankhal address. Kanheya met me at the door and invited me in. Shri Maharaj Ji was upstairs taking a bath at the time. Presently he came downstairs clad only in a towel. He sat down on a string bed. He was still a bit wet from his bath. The drops of water on his long curly hair shone like pearls, or so it seemed to me. He had the physique and bearing of a Yogi.

'I told him why I had come. After lunch I went with Mahatma Satyanand to inspect the land. It was rocky and overgrown. There were mounds of earth and big holes all over the place and it was covered with tough undergrowth. After surveying the whole area I designed a rough layout and presented it to Maharaj Ji in the evening. He approved and asked when I could start. He was so awe-inspiring that all I could mutter was 'Yes.'

'In those days there was a well and Mahatma Brahmanand used to turn the wheel to draw water. I needed water for the gardens, and wondered how I could bring it from the well. I decided to build a sloping channel so that, as the waterwheel turned, the water would course along it to the gardens. I was very pleased with myself and couldn't wait to show my handiwork to Maharaj Ji. When he arrived I told him, 'I have constructed this ditch and now the water can reach the garden.' I was expecting him to praise me but he didn't even look at my ditch. On the contrary, he said, 'If I had known what a numbskull you are, I would have had someone else do it.' I was stunned, and answered, 'Master, I'll

rebuild it however you want it.' He dismissed me, saying, 'Oh well, let it remain as it is.'

After he had left, Mahatmas Satyanand and Brahmanand came and told me how pleased Maharaj Ji was. I replied, 'Mahatma Ji, are you joking? He's very angry with me.' Mahatma Ji insisted, 'We're telling you the truth. He even went so far as to say, 'Could you do as well? Could anyone else have done it as well as he did?' Then it occurred to me that Maharaj Ji had spoken harshly to me only to puncture my pride. I realized that it had all been for the best.

'I used to take leave from my job and go to Prem Nagar to continue my work. Every Saturday I'd go from Delhi to Hardwar and work all day Sunday then come back Sunday night. All day we'd work, filling in holes, levelling inclines, hoeing and digging, and sending 8-inch scorpions and huge snakes scurrying from their holes. But they never bit us and we never killed them.

'All we ever ate were wild greens and thick chapatties, because there were plenty of vines on that land. The chapatties were as thick as your hand. After a month this began to taste as good as halvah and pourries to us.

'Finally the land was ready and holes were dug for the mango trees. Maharaj Ji sent me to Saharanpur to buy saplings and a variety of flowering plants. Before going I informed him, 'I'll do the planting but they'll need water, so please make the necessary arrangements.' 'Don't worry,' he said. 'I'll take care of it this evening.' We planted from sunup to sundown and in the evening it rained enough to water the plants. As the rain got heavier, I ran into the hut. Maharaj Ji said, 'See! I've watered your plants!'

'In 1952, three months before Vaisakhi, Shri Maharaj Ji said, 'I'm planning to hold a big festival here. I want you to adorn this ashram like a bride. How much money do you need for flowers?'

'I replied, 'It's all right. I have enough with me.' Maharaj Ji insisted that I take money from him but I refused, because in those days I had a good income and wanted to donate the flowers myself. Besides my regular job, I had a small nursery business. However,

when I reached home I found that something had gone wrong and the business had collapsed, and now I had no other source of income. Fixing my mind on Shri Maharaj Ji, I carried on. I bought a truckful of potted plants of many varieties which I had to send to Prem Nagar a week before Vaisakhi but I was so short of money that I had to borrow 40 rupees from Behari Lal. Anyway, I loaded up the truck, paid the driver his 80 rupees and started off for Prem Nagar. I was down to my last 70 paise, which I figured would just about cover the cost of tea on the way. As I was leaving, my wife complained, 'What are we supposed to eat? Stones?' 'Trust in Maharaj Ji,' I replied, 'and make do somehow.'

'Soon after I reached Prem Nagar the postman arrived with a telegram. He asked Maharaj Ji, 'Does anyone named Deen Dayal live here?' Maharaj Ji handed me the telegram and said with a smile, 'I can't read English, so I don't know what it says.' I read, 'Return quickly.' Maharaj Ji gave me 20 rupees and told Kanheya to drop me at the railway station. I was quite annoyed, wondering what had happened. When I arrived home, my wife said, 'Just after you left, your friend Ram Nath the contractor came here. He handed me a cheque for 350 rupees and 750 in cash, and had me send that telegram, because he needs plants within three days!' I was overjoyed and said, 'Well, now do you believe in Guru Maharaj Ji? He gives everyone what they need.'

'Once I went to Kankhal on the occasion of Raksha Bandhan. I was carrying a small package of tinsel bracelets. When I met Shri Maharaj Ji he asked what was in the parcel. He took it from me and opened it. When he saw the bracelets he held out his wrist and told me to tie them. He called his little sons Shri Satpal Ji and Shri Bhole Ji and had me tie them too.'

'Once I was involved in an accident and my leg was broken in three places. After being discharged I went home and wrote an anguished letter to Maharaj Ji. A few days later he suddenly arrived on my doorstep. My leg was in plaster, of course. I wanted to pranam but he told me not to get up. He came over to my bed and put his foot on my head. I said to him, 'Master, I'm told that

this leg won't heal.' He replied, 'Don't listen to such rubbish! Don't worry. You'll be all right.' As he left he blessed me and said, 'You'll be all right, you'll be all right', and within two or three months my leg had healed.

'I remember he said during one Vaisakhi, 'Several rich men have offered to build this ashram, but I'd rather give all of you the chance to do service.'

After Shri Maharaj Ji's passing away, Shri Mata Ji undertook the task of completing the ashram. Now Prem Nagar's satsang hall is the largest in Hardwar. It would be hard to find anywhere such a big hall which doesn't have columns.

As soon as a person enters the main gate, he feels an aura of peace and blessedness. He passes under the seven arches, symbolizing the seven chakras or centres of cosmic energy in the human body, traversing which the individual's consciousness is united with the Supreme Being, represented by the ashram's Shiva fountain. The tree-lined avenue has raised borders, bearing quotations from great saints and masters. The ashram's beauty is enhanced by a variety of trees and flowers, and approximately 250 types of roses. On the eastern extremity is the Ganges, on the banks of which Shri Mata Ji had bathing steps constructed in 1979. She also constructed in Maharaj Ji's memory an exquisite marble shrine. Even the soil of this singularly beautiful ashram is holy, because every nook and cranny bears the footprints of Shri Maharaj Ji and Shri Mata Ji. Shri Maharaj Ji's voice still seems to ring in the air. Once a person enters this tranquil and fragrant environment he feels that, at least for the time being, he is in heaven. Automatically he goes into an introspective and meditative mood.

A craftsman who worked on the building of the shrine tells of an experience he had there:

"Although this happened several years ago, I still remember it as if it were yesterday. We four had been sent to Prem Nagar to build the marble shrine. I was apprehensive, not knowing what kind of people were there and what went on. We arrived at 7 p.m.

on a winter's evening. We were met at the gate by a mahatma wearing a turban and walking with a stick. I couldn't see him clearly in the dark, but he reminded me of Swami Vivekananda. I told him that Balbir Singh had sent us from Delhi to work on the shrine, so he let us in.

We were allotted Room No.1. We had dinner and slept. The next morning we started our work. My job was to engrave verses from the Ramayana around the base of the shrine. From time to time premies would come and chat, observe our work, and talk about Shri Maharaj Ji. During evening Arti I would go and watch them to see what they did, but I didn't mix with them. I was wary of them, being a Sikh and very attached to my religion. Mahatmas would sit with me on the lawn and give satsang but it had no effect on me. One day it occurred to me, however, that if I didn't get out of there soon, I'd be converted! Still it was such a peaceful place that I had no wish to leave. I had never seen such an enormous rose garden. It was all as peaceful as could be. I liked to go for early morning walks in the garden then sit by the river.

One day I was sitting at the shrine, working later than usual. When it became too dark to work I just stood there for a long time, staring at Shri Maharaj Ji's statue, wondering what he was like, this man whose fame had spread so far?

Early one morning, about 4 o'clock, I felt someone grab my ear and force me to sit up. I opened my eyes and saw Shri Hans Ji Maharaj standing there, dressed all in white. 'Get up and remember the Holy Name!' he ordered. Indeed, I found myself remembering the Name. It was a 'Name' which I had never known before. It was reverberating with every breath I took. I was completely absorbed in meditation. I tried several times to stop but the experience kept on going, and I saw a remarkable vision which I can't describe. I thought that I must be dreaming, but when I opened my eyes it was still there, so I realized that I wasn't dreaming. I sat like that until 7 a.m. I went and told a mahatma all about it and he assured me that it was real, and added, 'You are incredibly lucky. I have never heard of anything like this before.'

'The following day our work was finished and I returned to Delhi. I had received everything I needed.'

Indian ashrams are traditionally places where saints and sages practised meditation and where the highest knowledge was passed from Master to disciple. The ashram represents purity, virtue, spirituality, high ideals and sharing of the highest wisdom.

The aim behind setting up an ashram is not merely to provide a retreat, but also a centre of learning, similar to the Christian monastic ideal. Traditionally, students receive initiation, learn to serve selflessly and study the scriptures. Then, after receiving the Guru's blessings, they leave to face life's trials.

Indian ashrams are centres of learning, similar to the medieval European monasteries. Prem Nagar is not just a place to do service. It is also a meditation centre. The Master never forgets the devotee who spends his life in service. In their satsangs, Shri Mata Ji and Shri Satpal Ji Maharaj often mention such devotees. The devotee who is thus remembered by the Master is indeed fortunate. Be he mahatma, ashram resident or householder, the premie who serves sincerely is always in the Master's heart. One Vaisakhi during satsang, Shri Mata Ji recalled:

"One Muslim brother, named Vikram, served for many years in the ashram. His service brought him so close to us that we had complete trust in him. He came to the ashram when Satpal Ji was only six months old.

'When we first bought the land at Hardwar it was dotted with huge roots, and Shri Maharaj Ji gave Vikram the service of digging them out. I wondered how such a skinny man could dig out those huge roots. Shri Maharaj Ji answered, 'He'll do it, because that's the service he's been given. If he's weak in devotion he'll abandon the task and leave, but if he's firm he'll carry on and this service will purify him and strengthen him physically, too. I don't think that he is weak. He'll turn out to be trustworthy.' Digging out all those roots made him strong inside and out. He became a master of all trades. There was no service that he couldn't do. He was adept in

construction, carpentry, ironwork and farming. His loving service brought him very close to Shri Maharaj Ji.

'One January day we visited Prem Nagar. Vikram wasn't wearing a sweater and was shivering, although he said that he wasn't feeling cold. Shri Maharaj Ji immediately took off his own sweater and made Vikram wear it. In other words, that devotee had, by his service, captured his Lord's heart. Such a devotee is never forgotten, not even for a moment.'

'One of our mahatmas was Daya Bai. She was very active in the Quit India movement. Her husband was a school principal. Her home lacked nothing. She used to eat from gold and silver dishes. When she received Knowledge she told her husband, 'I've found the true Master. What's the use of sitting at home any more?' She arranged satsang programs and was very active in spreading Knowledge. Her relatives thought that she was crazy. That's the way the world is—people think that anyone who follows a Master must be mad, yet they consider themselves to be quite sane! But everyone is mad—some are mad about money, some about husband or wife, some about children. This world is a madhouse. That is why saints said that being crazy for God is the best kind of madness.

'She herself did a lot of service and she encouraged others to do so. She donated many ceiling fans to the ashrams. Good work is always remembered. She left her body very peacefully and was cremated on the banks of the Ganges at Hardwar. When it was time to extinguish the fire, a gentle rain came out of nowhere and put out the flames. There were no clouds in the sky.

'So this is how devotees are. People will always remember the great work they do. If a devotee remembers God from the depths of his heart, he never goes astray. You should be inspired by Daya Bai's example.

'We always cherish the memory of devotees who did good work, whereas those who did evil are despised. The Master embraces the devotee who regards himself as the devotees' devotee

and the servants' servant. That's the remarkable thing. He loves the devotee in whom there is no ego or vanity.'

On another occasion, before a huge audience at Delhi's Ram Lila Ground, Shri Mata Ji had this to say about the late Behari Lal:

'There were very few premies at the time when Behari Lal took Knowledge. Throughout his life he served selflessly. He would supervise the catering for all the big festivals. As time passed and he became very old I told him to rest, but he would say, 'Mata Ji, I'm still quite strong. I can supervise and arrange everything from my chair. Even though I have to remain seated, I can get a lot done.' Two months before the start of any major festival he would leave home and involve himself in the preparations. This festival reminds me of him. He may not be with us physically, but he is here in spirit. I can see him before me right now. A person's family can forget him after he dies; his memory may fade for them, but the Master always cherishes the memory of his devotees.

'Service is vitally important for spiritual evolution. Shri Hans Ji Maharaj used to remind us how, in the old days, masters would initiate disciples only after they had served for many years, so that when they received Knowledge it immediately blossomed in them. A carefully-prepared field has greater potential for bearing harvests, whereas seeds won't germinate in an inadequately-cultivated field. However, merciful as he is, and because the times are so bad, Guru Maharaj Ji gives Knowledge to anyone who has done a little service and heard a little satsang. If, by merely receiving Knowledge you could control your mind, there wouldn't be any need for service and satsang. So first we initiate you so that you'll believe that this is the real thing. Then you do service and meditation, and if you don't, you won't grow in Knowledge. Tulsidas said that if a devotee doesn't serve, he can't cross the ocean of worldliness. There were always some premies who didn't come to satsang or do service, and to them Maharaj Ji would say, 'Should I coat this Knowledge with honey for you? If you could get salvation and control of mind just by getting initiated, why did great devotees give their lives in service? Were they stupid? Listen!

The more you serve, the better you'll meditate. If you don't serve, how do you think you'll be able to meditate? Only those who lose themselves in service get liberation."

Once a mahatma named Bodhanand Shastri made the mistake of saying on stage, "I've come here to Satlok Ashram to have Maharaj Ji's darshan. That's my service." This moved Maharaj Ji to set the record straight about what constitutes service:

"A devotee, like a servant, is one who serves. First study what the saints had to say about service. Read the stories of the ten Sikh masters. See how they served. So, you think coming here once a year is all there is to service, do you? The path of service is the highest and most difficult. Lord Krishna Himself cleared away dirty plates after the Rajsuya ceremony.

"You should understand how Hanuman got the power to fly. If Hanuman, Lord Rama and Lord Krishna has such power, then you and I must have also. It's said that God is within you like fragrance is within flowers. And it's not just a matter of serving just once. It takes lifetimes of service, but you just concentrate on serving in this life. At initiation you promised to dedicate your mind, body and wealth. What service have you done? It is written,

'Even if you gave everything you owned to the Master, it still wouldn't equal what he gives you', and,

'Even if you give your head in exchange for the Knowledge, it would still be a bargain.'

'Once you've given the head, the body is automatically given, and all your worldly connections are related only to the body. But you people! You'd sit in Samadhi in front of the Master and say that you are doing service!'

'Only a few devotees have actually put in the effort to build this stage, and the rest of you are sitting here like lords. It means nothing to you where all this came from and how it was erected.

'The role of a serving devotee is very hard, and one can be a master only after having served. No one can be a father without having been a son. That's the way it is. It's a natural law. First be a

servant, a devotee, then be a master. Now, I'm not saying that you should serve *me*. I don't need it.

'Everything is expensive nowadays, and you'll say that you are short of money. But I assure you that if you dedicate some of whatever you have in service, it'll be to your advantage. I'll illustrate my point:

'Once upon a time, a splendid sacrificial rite was held. At the same time elsewhere, there were two starving men. One had not eaten for 24 days and the other for 18. Someone gave some food to the latter, who immediately gave it to the other man, considering his need to be greater. A grain of rice fell on the ground. A mongoose arrived and lay down on that spot, and half his body turned golden. This mongoose happened to arrive later at the abovementioned ceremony which was being held by Arjuna and his brothers. The mongoose rolled in the dust, expecting the other half of his body to turn golden, but nothing happened. So he declared, 'I've heard so much about the significance of this ceremony but actually it's nothing.' What did he mean? A lot of money had been dedicated in that ceremony but it was from the Royal Treasury, which was filled with other people's money anyway, so it didn't mean all that much. On the other hand, the sacrifice of the man who has little or nothing means a lot, and brings great spiritual rewards.

'Your mind will be drawn towards service when you dedicate your physical and material resources. Service is never in vain. If you don't attain perfection in this life you'll be reborn as a human being next time. Knowledge is eternal and imperishable, so you'll get the chance to serve and meditate again. Guru is the Lord of souls, so he again draws the embodied soul to himself and finds a place for it. The disciple who criticizes his guru or who turns his back on service will never get salvation and will have to revolve life after life in the cycle of birth and death. Someone who tries to buy his Guru's affection will be sorry. So don't try. Guru is not interested in your money. He only wants your love.

'Money used in devotion is money well spent. A sensible devotee is he who uses his intelligence in spreading Knowledge. When people high up in the social hierarchy serve saints then humbler folk are inspired to do likewise. A man is ennobled, not degraded, by service. It's very rare to get the chance to serve someone who meditates on the Holy Name.

'You should dedicate your all in serving the Guru, but if you can't, you should at least dedicate ten per cent of your income in service and two hours daily of your time for satsang. If you can't do that much, you won't progress.

'Guru encourages disciples to serve because he knows that it will uplift them. All the supernatural powers are at the Master's command, but instead of using them he gets his disciples to work, because it is for their own good. Just talking about service isn't the same as doing it. When a disciple understands the mercy of the Guru in allowing him to do service, he does it eagerly. Guru's grace is something very great. A true disciple obeys his Master and thereby achieves enlightenment."

In 1958 Shri Maharaj Ji bought land at Muradnagar, not far from Delhi, beside the Ganges canal. Today, Satlok Ashram covers 100 acres. In 1965 Maharaj Ji addressed a premie congregation:

'People think that I'm uneducated, but I am master of a science which nobody else in India knows! Look! This is a map of Satlok Ashram. Here I am going to build temples of all religions. Hindu, Jain and Buddhist temples, Christian churches, Sikh gurudwaras and Muslim mosques will all be there. The world's major religions all believe that God is Light and that His omnipresent Light and Name are within all beings. I'm talking about the same Light and Holy Name and urge people to know and realize them. Satlok Ashram is being built so that people can take Knowledge and have a practical realization of these universally-accepted beliefs. You should all participate in this meritorious undertaking in whichever way you can."

Although religions may differ in external details such as rituals, from the spiritual viewpoint they are all talking about the same thing. Therefore, in order to clarify and focus upon the common factors which unify religions, he wished to build the temple of all religions to foster the spirit of unity and religious tolerance. After Shri Maharaj Ji left the world, Shri Mata Ji took up the project and is endeavouring to get it realized as soon as possible. The cornerstone has already been laid.

In accordance with Maharaj Ji's plan, the Shri Hans Higher Secondary School was opened in 1969 by Shri Mata Ji. It takes students from Nursery to Grade 12. Thousands of local children have received the benefits of education here. The school lays emphasis on ethical and spiritual education in addition to the regular syllabus.

Besides the school, the ashram maintains a charitable hospital and dispensary, where every day, more than 100 patients receive medical treatment. Shri Mata Ji is keen to develop this facility and extensions are underway.

During satsang Shri Mata Ji emphasized the importance of ashrams:

"An ashram is a place where the devotees do whatever service is assigned to them. This is very beneficial for them. Even Lord Krishna chopped firewood for his Guru. King Daleep tended cows. The devotee's body may be mortal but through his deeds he lives forever. Lord and devotee dwell together eternally, in another form. Successive generations revere their memory.

'Besides learning the lessons of spirituality, devotees learn skills also. Orphans, widows, the poor and the elderly find shelter there. There is a school for the children. Premies learn masonry, carpentry, electrical and other construction skills. If they are assigned to the printing presses they are taught typesetting, printing, layout, binding, etc. Some go on to develop writing skills which they use to make spiritual ideals available to society. Others learn agricultural or horticultural skills.

"The sum total of ashram residents and mahatmas is more than 2,000. They lead lives of renunciation and non-attachment. The Indian Government is promoting family planning on a large scale, making use of medicine, operations, etc. We however, show people how to control their desires through Knowledge. This is a very successful method of family planning!"

"So ashrams do a lot for people. I don't want people to stay unskilled and ignorant. I want to see them skilled, efficient, wise and spiritual benefactors of society. Our Maharaj Ji inspired us to be devoted, active and wise. This is how society is improved."

Siyaram of Ferozabad relates this interesting incident:

"I attended Vaisakhi 1964 at Satlok. Maharaj Ji said in satsang that the meaning of 'Murad' is 'wish', so anyone coming to satsang at Muradnagar would have all his wishes fulfilled. A fellow premie from Ferozabad, named Khetpal, decided to test this for himself. He was childless, so he prayed, 'Guru Maharaj Ji, please give me a son. Then you may take him back.' I immediately interrupted him, saying, 'What have you done? You've asked for something and then negated it.' He replied, 'Listen, things like that just don't happen. I was only joking.' But Guru Maharaj Ji's words came true. Khetpal's wife had a son, bringing great happiness to the home. However, when the child was six months old, he died. That premie got exactly what he'd asked for, so I told him that there was no use grieving. Then he regretted his lack of faith, saying, 'If I'd thought that a son really would have been born, I'd never have asked for the second part of that wish. It was wrong of me to doubt Maharaj Ji.'"

Industrialist Keshav Dutt Dholakundi of Gwalior has been a loyal and devoted disciple of both Shri Hans Ji and Shri Satpal Ji Maharaj. He accompanied Shri Satpal Ji Maharaj on his historic march from Badrinath to Delhi. He has also received civic awards for his services to his city.

Before receiving Knowledge, he was obsessed with money and having a good time. His parents and younger brother had been initiated but he would have nothing to do with it. Anyway, at the

insistence of his parents, he attended satsang. An army officer's wife sang a very sweet devotional song which had a great effect on him. He says, "It jolted my slumbering sense of discrimination, and transformed my attitude. I decided to please my mother by receiving Knowledge and serving Maharaj Ji. She used to tell me that Knowledge was the Truth, to which I'd reply that I would find out for myself who Shri Hans Ji Maharaj was and what kind of power he had."

"At all events, my wife and I took Knowledge together. I saw Maharaj Ji in meditation and also had various glimpses of the Lord's *lila*. Wishing to see Maharaj Ji in person, I went to Muradnagar, where he'd said that all wishes come true. I was thrilled just by seeing him on stage. I felt that I was in heaven. Very early next morning I stood in line for darshan. The line was very long and it was two hours before my turn came. Just then Maharaj Ji got angry at someone and got up and went inside. I thought to myself, 'Look what a miserable sinner I am! I came so close to his feet yet couldn't touch them.' However, a little while later he reappeared in a happy mood, his face blooming like a rose. He said to me, 'Were you sad because you couldn't do pranam? How many of you have come from Gwalior?' I was in seventh heaven! I was unable to utter a word and just gazed at the glorious splendour of the Master's beautiful face. He very lovingly placed his hand on my head. A mahatma told me to do pranam, and this brought me to my senses. I told Maharaj Ji that only we two had come, and he said, 'You two are quite enough! Do service and give satsang. My blessings are with you.' Indeed, his very presence was entrancing!"

Shri Maharaj Ji at first lived in a small house near Hardwar Railway Station. After buying the Prem Nagar land, he shifted with his family to the Kankhal house, where Shri Satpal Ji Maharaj was born in 1951. About a month after his birth, some premies went to Hardwar to bathe in the Ganges on the occasion of Kartika, and took advantage of the opportunity to have darshan. In the course of their conversation about the newborn child, Shri

Maharaj Ji said, "Now the sun has risen and all the stars will be eclipsed. He'll spread Knowledge all over the world and a-hrams will spring up everywhere." Shri Satpal Ji Maharaj was born on September 21st, 1951, the spring equinox. His horoscope shows him to be very pure, devoted to his father, of highly-developed intellect and the embodiment of the Yoga of the discerning mind. He would be devoted to the spiritual ethic.

Every year since then, the birthdays of both Shri Hans Ji Maharaj and Shri Satpal Ji Maharaj have been celebrated annually. Shri Maharaj Ji himself told Shri Satpal Ji, "You are perfect. You don't have to become anything. You will complete my unfinished work."

Once, at Kankhal, Shri Maharaj Ji told Kanheya to fill Shri Satpal Ji's bathtub with water. Then Shri Maharaj Ji started to wash the child himself. Kanheya exclaimed, "Maharaj Ji, let me do it." Maharaj Ji replied, "Oh, Kanha! Don't you realize who he is?" Kanheya answered, "I believe him to be a divine incarnation." Shri Maharaj Ji answered, "The person who serves him is dearer to me than my own life."

In December 1954 a procession for Shri Satpal Ji Maharaj was held, starting from the Red Fort in Delhi. Hari Ram, Behari Lal and the Delhi premies organized it. A magnificent float had been constructed. Shri Maharaj Ji, Shri Mata Ji and Shri Bhole Ji were to follow in the car. Because of the crowd, the car had difficulty reaching the float. Shri Mata Ji was uneasy at first, but Shri Maharaj Ji only said, "He was born for this. Thousands upon thousands will follow him." He lifted Shri Satpal Ji out of the car and placed him on the float. He blessed him and with his own hands placed a crown on his head.

Sarjawati, a premie from Nazafgarh, had this experience in meditation long before the procession took place: "Shri Maharaj Ji appeared with Shri Satpal Ji on his shoulders, smiling and saying, 'Look! I've brought the Lord here for you. Bow to him!' Shri Satpal Ji put his foot forward and I did pranam. I asked, 'Is he really the Lord?' Maharaj Ji answered, 'What do you think he is? A

fake? I've brought the true Lord who will enlighten the world!' When, in 1954, I saw the procession I exclaimed to myself, 'Why, he's the one whom Shri Maharaj Ji told me is the Lord!'"

Shri Maharaj Ji lived for several years at Kankhal, which is right beside the Ganges. Once the river flooded and the marketplace was four feet underwater. The residents of the area approached Mahatma Brahmanand and pleaded, "Please ask your Maharaj Ji to do something to stop this flood!" Maharaj Ji stepped out of his house and walked barefoot through the market. The floodwaters immediately started receding, and within two days had completely disappeared. This remarkable coincidence was the talk of the bazaar, and the general consensus was that the goddess of the Ganges had come to touch Maharaj Ji's feet, and having done that, returned. Although Mahatma Ji refuted this, saying that it was just an act of God, some people had their own ideas.

Shri Maharaj Ji used to amuse himself by setting premies at odds with each other and then watch them battle it out. Kiran Saxena recalls how once he started a quarrel between herself and her friend, Tara. Then Shri Mata Ji stepped in and said, "What are you quarrelling about? He set you up for this, so that he could enjoy a good argument!"

On April 3rd and 4th, a 'Parliament of Religions' was held at Shivananda Ashram, in Rishikesh. Scholars and teachers from home and abroad participated. Shri Maharaj Ji was also invited. Here is an excerpt from his speech:

"Since yesterday I've listened to every speaker call this function an all-religions conference, but no one has yet suggested how they can all be united. What is religion? Did you ever stop to consider that, in the same way as the same sun shines upon us all, so there is only one Reality which has always existed, exists right now and will always exist, and which our scriptures call 'truth, consciousness and bliss'? Almighty God is described as being the ultimate truth, consciousness itself, and bliss, and is one and the same for all.

'Yesterday a speaker was explaining something by quoting from the Bhagavad Gita. It's not for me to say who is learned in the Gita and who isn't, but in this instance I feel that the speaker hasn't understood the Gita at all, because if he had, he'd have seen that Light which the Gita describes as being brighter than a thousand suns:

'The light from a thousand suns could not equal that Light which Arjuna saw.'

'Only someone who has seen this Light can show it to others. If he is incapable of revealing that Light, yet claims that he understands the Gita, don't you think that he's an impostor?

'Suppose I want to learn English and two people offer to teach me. The first has studied English and the second hasn't. Now you tell me, which of them would be able to teach me? Any sensible person would say that the man who has studied the language would be the one to teach me, while the other man who hasn't could never teach me anything in a million years. Likewise, someone who hasn't seen the Divine Light himself cannot show it to others. So aren't those of you who haven't seen the Light yet tell others to see it, frauds and impostors?

'I can see myself in a clean mirror. However, even if I have a mirror and I'm not blind, yet still I can't see my face, what do you think is the problem? You'll say that there is insufficient light, or no light at all. Right!

'Similarly, you can't see God because of your inner darkness, even though the mirror of your mind may be clean. God is within you, so any external techniques to reach Him only serve to mislead, not enlighten you, but you can't see God until you can meditate on the Inner Light.

Lord Krishna said,

'Where sun, moon and fire don't shine, there shines the Supreme Light, which is My highest abode. Once the soul reaches that, it doesn't return.'

'The Lord showed Arjuna that place which is self-effulgent Light. We also have to realize it. Only then will we be able to free ourselves from the cycle of birth and death.

'We all study Gita and recite it to others, but what's the use if we don't make efforts to realize, in this very life, that Light described in the Gita?

'There are basically two types of theology—the Muslim-Christian type which doesn't believe in reincarnation, and the Hindu-Buddhist type which does. Now, if there is no such thing as reincarnation, believing in it won't cause it to become a reality, and, conversely, if there does exist such a phenomenon, then not believing in it won't free you from being caught up in it. However, Divine Law is one and the same for all. If you don't see the Divine Light, which the Koran called *Noor-i-lahi*, while you are alive, how do you think you'll be able to see it once you are shut up in the grave or when your soul ends up in the body of a dog or donkey?

'Last night people were singing the hymn, 'Come to us, Krishna, playing Your flute.' Now, I humbly ask you, from where are you asking Krishna to come? Is there any place where He isn't? He Himself explains in the Gita, 'All beings are threaded on Me like flowers on a garland.' So what's the point of the flowers shouting, 'Come, thread, come to us!?' God is in your heart. So from where do you expect Him to come? God is within, so the technique to realize Him must also be within.

'People like to go to the cinema. They say that they enjoy themselves. The pleasure is an inner feeling—it isn't a property of the screen or the pictures. Watching the film concentrates the mind, so you feel happy. Whenever your mind is concentrated on something you feel happy. The happiness is not in the objects themselves.

'To realize true bliss you have to concentrate your mind. Cleanse your mind of impurities. All the saints say this. If your house is dirty inside, you'll never get it clean by sweeping outside. You are dirty on the inside, yet you're using techniques to purify yourself on the outside. This won't get rid of your mental

impurities. You have to find an inner technique, one which can purify your mind.

'The scriptures talk about four kinds of speech. *Baikhari* speech is the speech which we normally use, *madhyama* sounds come from the throat, and *paschyanti* sounds from the diaphragm. However, only the *para* or transcendental sound purifies us inwardly and concentrates the mind. The rest are produced externally. You won't see God until you realize the para-sound.

'I also heard some people chanting '*Hare Rama, hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare; Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishan, Hare Hare*', claiming it to be the '*Mahamantra*' (Great Mantra) which can liberate the soul. You don't know Truth yourself and lead others astray! What could be more fraudulent than this? The Great Mantra has no beginning and no end. It is the '*Mantra*' on which Lord Shiva himself meditates and which he reveals to others for their liberation.

'You yourselves have never bothered to find out what the Mahamantra is. You've never humbled yourselves to ask anyone. Puffed up with pride in your own learning you call anything that comes to mind, the Great Mantra. See how the so-called gurus and mahatmas of today deceive people! Some of them call *Aum* the Great Mantra and tell others to chant it, yet they never stop to think that all these chants and spells are a product of our speech. They come into existence only when we utter them, and when we stop, they come to an end. So how can they be the Great Mantra?

'I humbly urge you all to know what is the Great Mantra or para-sound, which is the ultimate form of devotion described in the Gita. However, it can't be known without Guru. Who is a real Guru? *Gu* means 'darkness' and *ru* means 'light', so Guru is he who can lead you from the darkness to the Light.

'The scriptures mention four kinds of light—sunlight, moonlight, firelight and Divine Light. Other species can also see the first three kinds of light, but only man can see the fourth type. That is why the Ramayana declares, 'The soul which receives a human body is extremely fortunate, as it is rare even for the gods to

get and all the scriptures sing its glory. It is just right for spiritual practices and is the doorway to liberation.'

You can put all the ingredients for making halvah in front of an idol and invoke the deity to come and cook it, but it won't be able to do so. No creature, whether airborne, aquatic or terrestrial, could cook that halvah. Only human beings can. If you throw food to fish, crows or dogs they will eat it. All creatures can eat, but man alone can cook. Likewise, only in a human existence can the soul meditate on the Divine Light and Holy Word (which is the Great Mantra). Human beings in the past have meditated on the Light, people are meditating now, and people in future will also meditate on it.

'So-called great mahatmas dance around saying, 'Hold on to your foot for Rama, keep one hand in the air for Krishna, and the other on your back for God.' I ask you, is this devotion? Which scriptures ever called this devotion? Could you do this as your last breath is leaving your body? Knowing the Name which is the same for all and which can be remembered all the time, and meditating on it is real devotion.

'The Gita says that those who worship elementals and spirits go to that plane after death; those who worship ancestors go to the ancestral plane, while those who worship the Lord go to Him. So, if while you are alive you haven't experienced God's True Name and Light, how will you be able to go straight to Him when you die? In chapter eight of the Gita, Lord Krishna says,

'At the time of death, he who leaves his body remembering My omnipresent Cosmic Form undoubtedly attains Me', but

'At death, a person will only be able to remember that which has preoccupied him throughout his life. So at all times and in all situations remember Me and fight. If you surrender mind and intellect to Me you will realize Me.'

The Lord's commandment is, 'Constantly meditate on Me and at the same time carry out your worldly duties.'

'Guru Nanak also says that the Light of the soul is to merge in the Universal Light. If you haven't seen that Light practically while you are alive, do you think that by reading about it you'll be able to merge in it when you die? Guru Nanak also taught his disciples to 'meditate on the Holy Name while standing, sitting, sleeping or awake, and you'll be successful in all that you do.' We listen to what the saints have said and even quote them, but we don't often wonder what kind of meditation is possible anytime and in any situation.

'St. Kabir also said, 'You twist a rosary in your hand and mutter with your tongue, but your mind goes in all directions. This is not meditation.' You may well think that twisting a rosary is meditation, but it is not. Kabir further says, 'Ages have gone by twisting rosaries, but still you don't know where the mind goes. Throw away the external rosary and turn the Inner one.' This verse is studied in schools. The usual interpretation taught is, 'Throw away the external rosary and divert the mind away from sense-stimuli'. However, the teachers don't ask their students if they have actually diverted their minds, nor can mind be diverted just by saying so, or without knowing what the Inner Rosary is. Devotees use hand-rosaries but they don't know anything about the inner rosary.

'Yesterday a mahatma told us that there is only one religion, which is to leave all religious practices and take refuge in the Lord. The Gita says, 'Abandon all other religions and take refuge in Me, and I will save you from all your sins.' It's easy enough to say, but I ask you, where do we go to grasp His Feet? God is within the heart. His Light, Form and Holy Name are all within us. Taking refuge in Him means knowing His Light and Name as they exist within you and meditating on them."

Whenever he stayed at Prem Nagar, Shri Maharaj Ji turned everything into an occasion for satsang. He explained the most profound spiritual mysteries to the resident premies and mahatmas in very simply terms.

On one occasion, he taught: "There are four kinds of liberation:

Salok, which means being freed from non-human births and being born as a human being,

Samipya, which means associating with the holy and listening to satsang attentively,

Sarupya, which means realizing one's Self by the grace of the Satguru,

Sayujya, which means being initiated by the Guru into the Knowledge of Divine Light and merging oneself with that Light. In that state, all distinctions of meditator, meditation and object of meditation, disappear. Very few are lucky enough to achieve *sayujya* liberation."

At this point a premie said, "Maharaj Ji, we devotees want nothing more than to always be with you in your embodied form and to serve you."

Maharaj Ji replied, "That's a very noble ideal. Worshipping the Teacher is regarded as being even greater than *sayujya* liberation. People worship various past masters and construct temples in their name, but they don't know where those masters are now! Listen, if they taught that 'light merges into Light', they themselves must have merged in it! When you meditate on the living Master you meditate on all the masters and divine Incarnations, because they are that Light. God's unqualified, formless Energy is reflected in the Guru. That is why it is said that saints are the mirror of the Absolute.

'A premie said to me a little while ago, 'Maharaj Ji, I used to see you but now I don't.' I replied, 'Well, I'm sitting right in front of you. Don't you see me?' He answered, 'I don't mean that kind of darshan. I mean inner darshan. I don't see you in meditation any more.'

'What confusion! What vanity! You have a bit of experience and you think that you are enlightened. If you could see me in meditation all the time, what would be the need to see me physically? But what you don't realize is that without the physical

Guru Maharaj Ji's grace, how can your inner eye be opened in the first place? Listen! The inner and outer Maharaj Jis are one. You can only serve the physical Master and it's service that will liberate you. When you're enlightened, what service will you do? If you follow your own mind you won't see me inside or outside."

Siyaram the churan-seller relates from his own experience how Shri Maharaj Ji looked upon everyone equally. For him there was no such thing as high-born or low-born. He was totally above such petty distinctions. During one Vaisakhi program, premies from all castes were working together in the kitchen. Ten Brahmin premies starting making a fuss about it, saying, "We are pundits. Do you expect us to eat food cooked by you?" At the time Shri Maharaj Ji was on stage giving satsang. However, he knew what was happening and summoned those ten premies immediately. He gave them a thorough scolding, saying, "Are you trying to cause class tensions among the devotees? In my Court there is no high and no low. Those premies meditate on the Holy Name so they are quite pure." He then quoted,

"A leper who remembers the Holy Name is of great worth, even though his skin is dropping off. Of what use is a whole and handsome person who never meditates?"

During Vaisakhi 1952 some local youths armed with sticks stormed Prem Nagar to cause trouble. Shri Maharaj Ji came outside and wanted to know what all the fuss was about. Those boys jeered at him, saying, "You call yourself God, so show us a miracle! Then we'll believe!" Shri Maharaj Ji answered, "Look, I haven't set myself up as anything, nor do I perform miracles. My only miracle is satsang, so if you want to listen to satsang go and sit in the audience and I'll show you whatever miracles you like. If you still don't believe me and persist in causing trouble, I'll show you the miracle of calling the police and giving you a taste of jail, because entering anyone's ashram and disturbing the peace is just not proper." They were obviously impressed, because they went to satsang.

Maharaj Ji soon arrived on stage and said, "First listen to what I have to say and then you may ask any questions you like." His satsang was so inspired that those youths listened attentively. Suddenly he stood up and said loudly, "You want a miracle? I'll show you a miracle! I'll transport anyone interested to Paradise, right now! All those who want to go, please raise their hands. The scriptures say that only a soul which has a lot of merit can go there, but I'll take any one of you there, and you don't even have to leave your body!" Those youths just sat there, staring sheepishly. Amazingly enough, Maharaj Ji waited for five minutes and not one of them raised his hand. Then Maharaj Ji quoted,

"When God summoned him to heaven, Kabir wept, because he knew that no heavenly pleasure could ever match the joy of satsang."

Then he continued, "I was willing to take you to Paradise but none of you wanted to go. What greater miracle than that could you ever hope to see? You just don't understand the greatness of the saints. You doubt and threaten a real saint yet revere and serve impostors. Your eye of wisdom has been blinded."

Vijay Singh Prajapat of Ladpur village in Bulandshahr relates an interesting experience:

"I and my wife Bidyapati received Knowledge together. One day, after a quarrel, I left home and went to Prem Nagar, where I started doing service. About five days later, Shri Maharaj Ji arrived and asked, 'What are you doing here?' I was thrown right off balance and all I could say was, 'I came here a couple of days ago. I don't have any family.' He smiled and said, 'You also don't have any real sense of renunciation, nor are you devoted enough to live here permanently. Tomorrow you must leave. Your wife will be with you only two more years. She is grieving for you. Whenever she tries to meditate she bursts into tears.'

'I didn't go. Three days later he returned and scolded me, saying, 'Your wife hasn't touched food for three days. She's dying on your account, and you're still here!' He told a mahatma to put

me on the next train. When I reached home I found my wife lying in bed. She really had not eaten for three days. Everything was as Shri Maharaj Ji had said. Moreover, just as he had foreseen, she died within two years. Really, he did know everything."

Mahatma Satchitananda Bai describes an amazing event which happened at Prem Nagar:

"We were all doing service, constructing a road and filling in holes. Shri Maharaj Ji used to work alongside us, carrying dirt and throwing it in the well. We used a bucket to draw water and he would help us. I used to give water to the premies as they worked. Sometimes Maharaj Ji would not let me do it, but would serve them himself.

"One day we expressed the desire to visit Rishikesh, Har-ki Pauri and other places of interest. Shri Maharaj Ji said, 'If I show you all those places right here would you still want to go?' We answered, 'No.'

"A little while later he reappeared, dressed in a yellow dhoti and a garland of flowers, and climbed up on the roof. Almost immediately we noticed that every leaf on every bush in the ashram was emitting a wonderful fragrance. Wherever he went, multicoloured light spread out all around. One side of Prem Nagar was lit up with a shimmering radiance and when he turned to the other side, playing his flute, the whole place resonated with heavenly music. Then he conjured up the entire scene of Rishikesh's Laxman Jhula!"

Delhi premies arranged a satsang program at the Constitution Club, which was attended by various prominent politicians. The theme of the program was, 'How can mankind be saved from nuclear annihilation?' Coinciding with the program was the release of a booklet called 'Atom Bomb', which was distributed to all Ministers and Members of Parliament. They were invited to attend the Constitution Club function to hear about a simple solution to this problem. Addressing the audience, Shri Maharaj Ji said,

"I will tell you the solution to the nuclear problem but due to lack of time it will have to be theoretical rather than practical. Today's leaders are much cleverer than me, and they have to bear the entire responsibility for their countries. Still I wish to ask them, 'Are those weapons being manufactured for peace and prosperity's sake?' No! Their sole purpose is to kill people. If you can't give life to a person, at least don't ruin it. A gardener gets angry if flowers are picked without permission, and similarly, God can never be pleased with our mad race to destroy the planet. The Superpowers are engaged in an arms race. What has the world done to them to deserve this?

I can tell you how to avert this disaster. Only saints can show you how to find true peace and happiness. What can an impoverished man offer others? Our culture and tradition teaches us to feed our guest or neighbour first, even if we have to remain hungry ourselves.

"This world is like a village and all countries are like different families in it. We are full of goodwill towards our own relatives but we should go beyond this and see how we can serve others, as one human being to another. We should stretch out our hand to these other families, to share their joys and sorrows. We should forget all about class and race. I ask you, to which class did you belong before you were born? What is our duty towards others? If we were to constantly keep these thoughts in mind, how could there ever be a threat to our safety? If the Great Powers were to spend as much money on alleviating poverty as they do on manufacturing nuclear weapons, they would be truly great. The poor would bless rather than curse them.

"Now I'll tell you how to avert the threat of nuclear destruction. First, we should question whether it will actually come to pass or not. If it is a real possibility, we should try to find a solution which will benefit us all. If it won't happen, the problem doesn't arise.

'What is a nuclear bomb? It is fire, and we should beware of fire. Fire's job is to burn. The fire has to be cooled down. Can it be? Yes. How? Consider the case of Prahlad. He was bound to a red-hot pillar, yet not one hair of his head was singed. The heat was cooled down. Meera was given poison. As she drank it, she remembered the Holy Name and the poison turned to nectar. You've heard all this before, but did you ever try to find out how they did it? How was poison turned to nectar? By the Name of God, and nothing else. These devotees knew the greatness of the Name. Meera acknowledged that it was the Name that turned the poison to nectar. So I'm telling you to know and meditate on this Name, which is within you. If you do, no harm will come to you. Those bombs will explode before they can even be dropped. So what do you have to fear from them?'

A member of the audience who was impressed by this visited Maharaj Ji next day at Rai Bahadur's home. He asked a premie, "If I were to throw burning matches on your Maharaj Ji, wouldn't he burn like everybody else?" The premie repeated this to Maharaj Ji, who said, "Tell him to come here early tomorrow morning and see for himself. By the grace of my Guru Maharaj Ji, I have perfect faith in the Name, which is so mighty that I could hold the sun in my hand! What's a tiny box of matches to me?" The premie relayed Maharaj Ji's message and told him to come the following day between 8 and 9 p.m. for his practical demonstration.

The next day at the appointed time, Shri Maharaj Ji sat for meditation and waited for that man to come but he didn't have the nerve to show up.

Before the abovementioned conference took place, some premies assembled at Rai Bahadur's house to write invitations and prepare leaflets. They worked far into the night. Shri Maharaj Ji came out of his room and sat down with them, saying, "See, you are serving selflessly, without any motive, and you are remembering the Holy Name. When a devotee takes refuge in the Master and follows his commands, he can become truly desireless."

Allahabad

The confluence of the Ganges and Yamuna at Allahabad is known as 'Prayag', and the place where it joins the mythical underground stream Saraswati is called 'Triveni'. From time immemorial it has been the destination for pilgrims, the place where sages, hermits, siddhus, kings and emperors came to worship and perform sacrificial ceremonies. It is regarded as the holiest of holy places. Although it is the seat of Hindu culture, tradition and theology, it is a cosmopolitan city, a melting pot of various religions and cultures. It was also the ideological centre of the Independence Movement. Several great leaders and patriots were either born or lived here. Formerly the city was known as 'Ilhavas', or 'the place where God dwells'. It was changed to 'Allahabad' during the Moghul period. Whatever metamorphoses it has undergone, the fact remains that it is still regarded as the home of the gods. It is still regarded as the cultural and intellectual centre of India, and wields considerable influence. Lord Rama visited there and stayed at the sage Bharadwaj's ashram. Tulsidas and Kalidas lived here. Kabir and Ramananda used to visit. Here, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu met Ballabhacharya. St. Malukdas was born here. It has also been the birthplace of political giants such as Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya, Pt. Motilal Nehru, Jawaharlal Nehru, Rajarshi Tandon, Lal Bahadur Shastri and Indira Gandhi.

Ever since ancient times, the annual midwinter Mela has been held here. The full Kumbha Mela (every twelve years) and the lesser Kumbh Mela (every six years) are held here, and are attended by millions of devotees.

Shri Maharaj Ji had many devotees in Allahabad, and from time to time would go there for satsang. He attended the 1954 Kumbha Mela, where a premie camp was set up at Jhoosi. He used this campsite as a base for virtually non-stop satsang. A spectacular procession was arranged for him, starting at the Jhoosi camp and winding its way through the main streets of Allahabad. Wearing

his crown and Krishna outfit, he attracted vast crowds who thronged the streets and overhead vantage points for a glimpse.

Many premies took advantage of the occasion to attend the festival. One of them was a lad called Hari Shankar who loved Maharaj Ji very much. He had wanted to attend the festival, but his family's financial situation didn't permit it, so he was left behind at home. Heartbroken, he fervently prayed to Shri Maharaj Ji to somehow enable him to go there. The all-knowing Master heard his prayer. Two days later two mahatmas arrived at his house and said, "You have to come with us to Allahabad. Shri Maharaj Ji has called you." When the boy went for darshan, Maharaj Ji gave him nuts and raisins as prashad and said gently, "Well, Hari, your father returned to Delhi yesterday." The boy replied, "You are my real father. Why should I concern myself with what other people do?"

Premies who attended that festival say that the joy they felt there was absolutely indescribable. Shri Maharaj Ji would sit on the dirt floor of the camp kitchen peeling potatoes with the premies.

One day while he was wandering around the festival site with some premies, Shri Maharaj Ji came across some people singing at the top of their voices, "Come to us, beloved Krishna, wearing your crown!" He stood there watching them then said with a smile, "See how foolish people are. They sing themselves hoarse calling on Krishna yet even though he's right here they don't recognize him. St. Surdas was right when he said, 'To whom can I explain these things? Everyone's blind.' They wouldn't know Krishna even if he were standing right in front of them."

Some time after the event, Maharaj Ji was discussing the Kumbha Mela. He said, "One day a mahatma belonging to another organization visited our stage and asked for permission to speak. I granted it, saying that people here are always eager to hear the Truth.

'He exhorted the audience to practise the prescribed rituals, saying that only then will Knowledge dawn, because just shouting

'Light, Light!' won't give anyone spiritual insight. So we shouldn't go around talking about Light. He tried very hard to convince us but no one listened to a word he said."

Replying to that mahatma's speech, Maharaj Ji said, "You call yourself a mahatma yet you deceive people. If it is impossible to see the Divine or fourth kind of Light, then why is it written in all the scriptures that we can? If there's no way that we can see it, then what's the use of reading the scriptures at all?"

'To put it quite simply, the highest thing a human being can do is receive initiation from the true Guru and see the Inner Light. Guru reveals that fourth type of light. So see it first then meditate on it, then you can worship properly and in full awareness of what you are doing. The Gayatri Mantra is all about meditation on the Light; but just chanting this mantra won't get you anywhere.

'We held a splendid procession. I rode on an elephant. We had trucks equipped with loudspeakers. The mahatmas sat in those trucks and gave satsang. Premies distributed leaflets along the way. A rickshaw went ahead of the procession bearing placards which proclaimed, 'Experience the Light which Lord Krishna showed to Arjuna!' and, 'Know the Holy Name on which you can meditate even while you sleep!'

'During the festival I met a Bengali gentleman who had been an engineer during the British regime. He told me, 'For six years I've wanted to see this Kumbha Mela, because so many holy men come here. I'd hoped that maybe I'd find out from them a devotional path which would redeem me yet be easy to follow. I have never been of the opinion that a ritual bath at Triveni would give me salvation. I came here convinced that I would meet a realized saint.'

'When he heard satsang he knew immediately that he'd found the Truth, and he moved into our camp. After two days of satsang he asked for Knowledge and he and his family received initiation. As we were about to depart for Allahabad City, he told me, 'Maharaj Ji, I can't bear the thought of leaving you. I want to stay with you always. Nowhere else even remotely appeals to me.'

'I asked him, 'You're quite old. Haven't you had any other Guru?' He replied, 'No, but when I was little whenever my mother's guru would visit us my mother would place my head at his feet. When I grew up I believed in Goddess Kali, as do most Bengalis.'

'I explained to him, 'Call on that Power however you like. There is only one Supreme Energy which resides within everyone and everything. Knowing this Energy is the real and highest Knowledge. All other types of knowledge are just for filling one's belly. We pray to this Energy, 'You are my mother, you are my father, you are my brother and you are my friend. You are riches, you are wisdom, you are my all, my Lord, to me.' Mother Kali is Herself that conscious energy which dwells within all beings. She is Light."

When, during meditation, he saw Kali in the Divine Light, he told Maharaj Ji, "Master, I want to renounce the world and serve you. I realize that the Light you have shown me is Divine, and without the Guru's grace cannot be known. I know that even if I were to meet Lord Krishna he'd only show me the same Light which you have. Shri Krishna incarnated in a body of flesh, and so have you. How am I to know that you're not Krishna? He showed Arjuna this Light and Indivisible Name. St. Kabir showed this same Light and taught the same threefold path of service, satsang and meditation. I feel from the bottom of my heart that you are Krishna. Nobody else could love us so much.

'Conquered by Bhilni's love, Lord Rama visited her and taught her the nine steps of devotion. You are Lord Rama for us. You've shown us what we really are and we have found heavenly peace. I've met great political and religious leaders but none of them could show me the Light and True Name. Master, I can't offer you anything. Even if the wealth of the three worlds were mine to lay at your feet I could never repay you for the priceless Knowledge which you have given me."

During one of his Kumbha Mela satsangs, Shri Maharaj Ji said, "If I were a stone and a sculptor made a statue out of me, then

I'd be put in a temple. People would dress me up, stick a flute in my mouth, offer me food and ring bells. Then everyone at this festival would be highly delighted, even though I wouldn't be able to show you the Name and Light about which I am now speaking. Still, pundits and priests would prostrate to me and worship me. However, unfortunately God made me a human being! Those idols you believe in can't show you Light. If you don't believe me, try them and see. I can show you Light, yet you don't believe in me!

'The Lord said, 'I manifest two kinds of natures—conscious and non-conscious. Consciousness is omnipresent and is the activating power in all action. Insentient beings don't move, talk or understand anything. That is why we worship consciousness. Once you get this precious human body you should believe in consciousness. The Ramayana says that this body is rare even for the gods to get. Yet we worship deities and consider ourselves lucky to be able to do so. We consider ourselves to be very devoted. Tell me, does that make sense to you? What are you doing, and what should you be doing?

'The human existence is the gateway to three planes. If a person does wicked deeds he suffers in hell. However, when he realizes the Holy Word and Divine Light—now, it's not just me, but Lord Krishna who says this—he goes to the Supreme Abode, which is Light, from which he never returns to revolve in the wheel of birth and death:

'Where sun, moon and fire do not shine, there shines the self-effulgent Divine Light, reaching which a soul does not return to the realm of birth and death.'

This is liberation, which is realized through the Truth. Some disciples take Knowledge and complain that they are not progressing and that the mind doesn't settle in meditation. They quote the example of King Janak but have they totally surrendered everything as Janak did? No! They merely repeat, parrot-fashion, that they have given their mind, body and possessions to me, yet actually they dedicate everything they have to serving themselves

and their family. They have never served me, even in a dream, nor do they have any desire to see me, so how can they expect to grow in Knowledge? You can only evolve spiritually in a human existence. So you shouldn't waste your priceless human life. Only the extremely blessed souls see God.

'If I dressed up as Lord Rama with a bow and arrow (but couldn't kill Ravanna even if he stood right in front of me) everyone would say that they've had a great experience of *darshan*. Instead, here I am telling you to realize what Lord Rama was talking about, and you doubt me. You worship Rama and Krishna in your temples and watch the drama of Ram Lila. Why don't you ask the actor who plays Rama if he can reveal to you that Light which the Ramayana says shines 24 hours, or that Name which can be meditated upon even while you are asleep? You believe an idol which can't show you anything, to be God, yet you get confused if I wear a crown! It's remarkable that you think more of an idol than you do of me.

'People think they see, but actually they are blind. They don't use their brains. Krishna is also depicted wearing a crown. He is regarded as the Incarnate Lord because he revealed Light to Arjuna. I'm telling you to see that same Light, and I even show you how, but you don't believe me. St. Tulsidas said that worldly people's vision is obscured by cataracts. People beat away on their drums and sing, 'Come to us, Krishna, come!' Ask them from where he's supposed to come. He's in your hearts, my friends! See him there! That's the aim and culmination of human life.

'God is always depicted in human form. People can only visualize Him in a human form, and, indeed, that is how He appears on earth.

Footnote: It is traditional for a king, who is supposed to uphold the ethical and moral traditions of a society, to wear a crown. Similarly, in India, the great Masters who uphold the strict code of spiritual ethics have been honoured with a crown. The Christian scriptures call the spiritual master 'the Anointed One'. The ancient sages taught that the Guru should be regarded with the same respect as for God. To carry on this tradition of respect and as a symbol of his spiritual authority, he wears a crown.

'You don't understand at all. Listen, I don't ask anything of you. On the contrary, Guru is the giver! He just keeps on giving, asking for nothing in return. He gives you something so priceless that the riches of the three worlds can never match it. I'm willing to serve any intellectual or mahatma who has realized the Name and the Light. The Ramayana and Vedas tell us that a human birth is extremely rare and only in this existence can the soul realize God. Why are the intellectuals and so-called mahatmas of today so blind? That is why they worship matter. Scholars everywhere hold what they call satsang, but what satsang can they give if they haven't realized the Truth (*Sat*) which is called consciousness and bliss? If they haven't experienced it themselves how can they show it to others? Knowledge of God and satsang go together, and without satsang one can't get Knowledge.

'To whom do people bow nowadays? To a forehead smeared with sandal paste, to matted locks, to a shaven head, to dyed robes. They bow to someone who doesn't see God within yet wraps himself in saffron robes. They bow to someone who doesn't do as the Lord has commanded but worships a stone idol and calls that devotion! Tell me, where in the Ramayana is it written that this is devotion?

'Devotion has nothing to do with mouth, hand or forehead. It is a condition of the heart! Yes, the scriptures *do* say that. Devotion of the heart needs no candles and lamps. The Ramayana says that meditating on the Divine Light—which needs neither oil nor wick to shine—is real devotion. What can a blind person reveal to others? There are all kinds of teachers each telling you something different. There is only one sun which shines on us all. The same water quenches everyone's thirst, because these are God's gifts. So how can there be different Gods for different people? No! God is One. He also has only one Name. The Vedas, Puranas and saints have said the same thing: that a person whose mind is tuned to the Holy Name does action successfully, while action performed otherwise is in vain.

'People make a lot of noise about action, knowledge and worship. They say first do action then worship. People don't have Knowledge, so how can they know the secret of action? Tulsidasji said that in Kali Yuga there is no understanding of devotion or action. The only refuge is *Ram Nam* (i.e. Holy Name) Those who themselves don't have spiritual Knowledge yet exhort others to action and devotion are blinded by ignorance. Throughout the ages the scriptures have glorified the Holy Name, which is the sole prop of the age in which we live. This is the Name which Krishna instructed Arjuna to remember at all times.

'So many so-called 'gurus' are wallowing in ignorance. They will even tell you that *guru* means someone who can lead you from darkness to the Light of Knowledge. But if you question them they'll tell you to content yourself with pious works because you cannot see that Light which Arjuna saw. They'll teach you some rituals, tantras or mantras.

'However, St. Kabir unequivocally declared, 'All tantras and mantras are false. You can't get salvation without knowing the Holy Name which is the inner essence of everything.'

'As far as I'm concerned, whatever you are chanting is fine, but ask yourself, where does your mind go while you are chanting? Your lips chant something, your fingers turn a rosary, but where is your mind? In the chant or in the rosary? Are you like the typesetter who leaves an imprint where he places a letter? In Delhi I saw a string of light bulbs on a single wire. Only every alternate bulb was lit. Are you like that? Does your mind go round in circles from various chants? Where do you fix it?

'All of them—scholars, academics, 'world-teachers', *Bhagatacharyas*—are going around in circles. They just pick out any word from the Vedas, call it a mantra and initiate people. It's all a fraud. They are wasting their own time and others'. They'll tell you, 'Just repeat *Om namah shivai*, water peepal trees, offer water to the sun, go to a temple and your mind will be purified. But do they ever stop to wonder which scripture teaches that this is the way to purify mind? The mantra which will control your mind is

not written in any scripture, because it has nothing to do with vowels and consonants. Only the living Master can reveal it to you. You read Ramayana but you don't understand it.

'Guru is God in human form. His words dispel the darkness of ignorance and fascination with worldliness in the same way as the rising sun puts an end to the night. Various objects shine at night but they can't get rid of the darkness. Similarly, none of these tantras and mantras will get rid of your ignorance. Only the Knowledge of Name and Light and the path of devotion taught by the Satguru can do that.

'Without Guru's grace one can't attain liberation, nor can the mind settle in meditation. That is why the living Master is served. So don't put off until tomorrow something good which you can do today. This is the advice which Ravanna gave to Lakshman. We read this in the Ramayana, but when it comes to the noblest action a person can do, we say that we'll do it tomorrow, and meanwhile spend our days shortchanging others and selling them adulterated goods. We don't postpone doing that! You should reason that, if you delay in doing something wrong, and you were to die during the night, you'd have the weight of one less sin to carry with you! Or do you consider meditation a spurious action which should be postponed?

'After having received a human life, and the company of saints, the individual who doesn't cross the ocean of worldliness is ungrateful and akin to a suicide case, says Tulsidas. Any action done without devotion is in vain.

'Realize the Holy Name. Realizing God is the one and only religion of mankind. These days the real meaning of religion has been lost. It has been truly said, 'like king, like subjects'. If the people in power don't know what religion is, how can you be expected to know?

'People will label you as Hindu or Muslim according to your hairstyle and dress. That's religion nowadays. Is religion rattling off a few verses of scripture and posing as an enlightened being? If letting your hair grow long ensures salvation, then most women

must be enlightened. Really, God gave you brains but you don't use them! Only direct Knowledge of God will liberate you.

'Everyone glorifies Krishna. Temples and Gita-Institutes are constructed, but who understands what Krishna taught? He, and every other Master for that matter, taught that only human beings can meditate on Divine Light and thus reach God's Supreme Abode. They never said that donkeys or dogs could do it. Realize the Holy Name and the Light! Only Guru knows how to remove the cataract of ignorance which is obscuring your inner vision. Even Rama and Krishna, whom you revere as God, had Gurus. So receive the Knowledge of Name and Light and make your coming into this world worthwhile.'

Delhi

In the early years, Shri Maharaj Ji used to stay in Rai Bahadur's house in Pahari Dhiraj, near the Fire Brigade Station on Bara Kambha Road.

One day, Rai Bahadur happened to hear Shri Maharaj Ji's satsang. He requested Maharaj Ji to hold a weekly meeting at his house. At first, he didn't understand Maharaj Ji's cryptic words. When the Master asked him if he had Knowledge, he replied, "What do you mean by Knowledge?" Shri Maharaj Ji explained, "Have you ever been shown God as He really is?" Rai Bahadur had to reply that he hadn't. Maharaj Ji continued, "That's what I mean by Knowledge. Experiencing God as He is. People follow the prescribed orthodox rituals and their ideas of God are moulded by tradition. They meditate on things which are figments of their imagination. Every scripture says that God dwells in the hearts of all His creatures, so why do you resort to external methods of worship and meditation? That's how I can say that you don't have Knowledge. If, by the grace of some realized soul, you'll be revealed Knowledge of God's omnipresent Form, you'll be able to meditate on Him easily."

After he received Knowledge, Rai Bahadur became exceptionally devoted to Shri Maharaj Ji, and he asked him to live

in his house and thus provide the opportunity for service. During the next ten years, Maharaj Ji stayed there whenever he was in Delhi.

After 1950 Knowledge really started to spread far and wide, and in addition to weekly satsangs held in various Delhi suburbs, satsang could be heard daily in more than ten large parks in different parts of Delhi. Branches of the Mission opened all over Delhi, which were the bases in their localities for propagation. Satsang meetings were addressed by mahatmas and huge programs for Shri Maharaj Ji were arranged from time to time.

Shri Maharaj Ji also lived for awhile at Jagdish Saxena's house in Karol Bagh and then at Hari Ram's place in Shakti Nagar. Around 1960 he bought the modest house at 26/96 Shakti Nagar and settled there. This was the focus for the Delhi premies and a constant stream of them came for darshan.

Knowledge spread in leaps and bounds throughout Delhi and after 1960 Maharaj Ji's fame spread all over India as well. A network of Divine Light Mission branches criss-crossed the country.

Whenever the Master stayed in Delhi for several days at a time, small groups of premies would get together and entertain him with religious dramas. One winter's evening after satsang, Kiran Saxena and her husband Jagdish Chand dramatized the story of Krishna and Sudama. Kiran describes it thus: "I played the part of Krishna and my husband played his friend-devotee Sudama. Shri Maharaj Ji gave him the nickname 'Murliwala' because he used to play the flute. Anyway, Shri Maharaj Ji was enchanted by his acting and exclaimed that he really looked and acted like Sudama!

'My husband's constitution has always been rather weak. That evening he caught a chill, and by morning had a high temperature. I asked Maharaj Ji if I could take him home, but he told me to call the doctor there. Maharaj Ji had a reservation on the train to Hardwar but he cancelled it and stayed on in Delhi. We stayed in his house for four or five days. My husband's condition

worsened. He became very weak and had long spells of delirium. I informed Maharaj Ji that the treatment wasn't working and that his condition was deteriorating. He replied, 'Well, it's time to call in another doctor!' Off he went, took a bath and changed his clothes, and, wearing his crown, reappeared in our room, saying, 'Look! The doctor has come!' When I told my husband that Maharaj Ji had come, of course he tried to touch his feet, but, being so weak, all he could do was fold his hands to show respect. Maharaj Ji told him not to get up. Then he felt his pulse and said, 'Don't worry, you'll be all right. Just take whatever medicine the doctor prescribes.' We did as he said and by morning the fever had somewhat abated. By Maharaj Ji's grace and care he was perfectly all right within a few days."

Premies had unshakeable faith and extraordinary love for their Master. When they were confronted with any difficulty, they remembered him and he never failed to help them. He loved his devotees more than anything else. Not loved, *loves*. He still protects whomever calls on him. Guru is eternal. That power never dies. Once, some premies told Maharaj Ji that they wanted to celebrate his birthday. He replied, "If you commemorate someone's birthday, one day you'll have to commemorate his death as well, because whatever is born has to die. Guru, on the other hand, is eternal. What has birth and death got to do with him?"

Chaudhury Suraj Mal Tavathya was 7 years old when he first saw Maharaj Ji during a program near Meerut, but it was a lasting impression. He says, "I even remember the song he sang. I can't describe how his face shone at that time. After satsang a villager said, 'Maharaj Ji, if you'll give me Knowledge right now I'll give you 100 rupees!' Maharaj Ji smiled and said, 'My friend, if you think God's price is 100 rupees it means that He can belong only to the rich, and the poor and needy can't see Him. But no, it's never like that. He belongs to the poor and the weak.' Although I didn't get Knowledge until 1962, the image of his wonderful, enchanting face stayed in my mind."

'I had ten days' leave so I went to Shakti Nagar. When I asked for Knowledge, he smiled compassionately and replied, 'You've been looking for me for a long time. That's why I came here yesterday!' Later he called me into his room and initiated me.

'I was in the army. In November 1962 during the Indo-Chinese War, our tank battalion was sent to the border. The Chinese had blocked our path by blowing up bridges. They started firing at us. My companions abandoned their tanks and fled for their lives. I stayed on in my tank alone, firing as long as my ammunition lasted, all the while meditating and remembering Shri Maharaj Ji. A little while later I heard over the wireless that a cease-fire had been declared. I believe that it was Maharaj Ji who made me stay inside the tank. I returned safe and sound while all my companions had been shot down as they fled."

Whenever Kamla Bai tells the story of how Shri Maharaj Ji saved her life, she can't help crying. She says, "How could I ever forget his wonderful love?"

'Before I received Knowledge I used to have the greatest respect for my sister-in-law. She held a strange fascination for me. It was as if I were under her spell. After initiation I began to take more and more notice of Shri Maharaj Ji and she turned against me. When she realized that I was no longer under her influence and followed the guidance of someone else, she started poisoning her brother's mind against me, and said that I was visiting other men. He forbade me to go to satsang but I sneaked out anyway. When he found out, he was furious. He called me immoral and a disgrace to the family. He said that he would get rid of me. So saying, he poured kerosene over me and set fire to me. Just as the kerosene was igniting, Shri Maharaj Ji appeared and put out the fire with his own hands. When my husband realized that I would not burn, he begged forgiveness. I was admitted to Lady Hardinge Hospital. None of my relatives bothered about me. Only premies visited me. One night in my sleep I heard a premie saying, 'Here, take this prashad. Maharaj Ji has sent it to you.' I stretched out my

hand and someone put pourries and sweets in it. I sat up but no one was there. Choked with sobs, I started to meditate on Maharaj Ji.

'My father-in-law also used to harass me, but after he died, his spirit appeared to my husband in a dream and warned him not to interfere with me, because I was following a true Master.'

Mahatma Angira Bai, who is nowadays spreading Knowledge in Sikkim, was born in Kankhal, Hardwar. She says, "However, because I was young and ignorant I never recognized Maharaj Ji, although I saw him several times in Kankhal. I just assumed that he was a big businessman! When I got married I moved to Delhi. One day I happened to see him as he was passing by in his car. Light was pouring out of him and filling the whole car! Then I understood that he must be a great master.

'Mahatma Purnanandji gave me Knowledge in 1951 but because I could relate more to Mahatma Ji than to Maharaj Ji, I decided that Mahatma Ji was my guru. But Guru Maharaj Ji knows everything, because a little while later he singled me out from a group of premies and called me into his room. He reinitiated me.

'I sometimes saw him as a child, sometimes as an old man. He could change his appearance to play with the devotees.

'Once my husband poured boiling water over me and my whole chest was burned. Soon afterwards I found out that Maharaj Ji had arrived for satsang in a nearby park. I raced there and as soon as he glanced at me my burns were completely healed. He has appeared several times when I've been in trouble and saved me, although I often haven't recognized him at the time.

'Once I was very ill. My husband didn't bother about me once. I lay in bed thinking, 'My Lord is testing me, otherwise why am I suffering so?' Then one morning a few days later, a Brahmin came to my house and said, 'You look very ill. What's the matter?' I told him and he gave me some medicine. I felt much better. Three days later I discovered that the 'Brahmin' had been Maharaj Ji!"

Hazari Lal relates, "In 1953 there was a terrible flood and a railway bridge 100 km. outside Delhi had been rendered unsafe. I was part of a gang of labourers sent to repair it. We were crossing the river in a boat when a sudden storm blew up and the boat started sinking. The boatman shouted, 'Save yourselves if you can!' I jumped out but got sucked into a whirlpool. As I was going under, I saw a man dressed in white with a radiant face. He picked me up as a mother picks up her child and carried me to the riverbank, then disappeared. This happened before I received Knowledge, by the way. Time and again his glorious countenance seemed to appear before my eyes, and I developed a strong faith in God.

'In 1965 some premies gave me satsang and took me to meet Shri Maharaj Ji. As soon as I saw him I recognized him as the one who had saved my life three years earlier. I couldn't take my eyes off him. When I bowed to him he smiled and looked at me thoughtfully. Then I wasted no time in receiving Knowledge.'

Mrs Tara Devi of Trinagar relates, "One day in 1963 as I was cooking, the cottage next to mine suddenly caught fire. I hastily evacuated all my belongings, but my hut and others were spared. I thanked Shri Maharaj Ji from the bottom of my heart. A few days later some premies told me that Maharaj Ji wanted to see me. He asked me what had happened so I told him the whole story. He said, "See, because of one devotee, many houses were saved."

Kripal Singh of Bijnore was sleeping on his thatched roof when a sudden squall blew up, tearing off a neighbour's roof and threatening to dump it on his house. However, somehow or other, it landed in a tree and he was unharmed. He said to himself, 'Guru Maharaj Ji has gone to a lot of trouble today to save me!' He recalls that several times, when neighbouring houses caught fire, his was unharmed, much to the surprise of the whole village.

Mahatma Akhandprakashanandji relates what happened when he was preaching in Muzaffarnagar district: "In a local village lived a carpenter who was very devoted to Shri Maharaj Ji.

Once his son was possessed by an evil spirit and became very ill. The spirit said through him, 'You have stopped worshipping me so I'll kill this boy and take him with me.' Shri Maharaj Ji at that time was at a satsang program in Panipat, so the boy's father went there and begged him to put an end to their misery. Shri Maharaj Ji started shouting at him so loudly that the premies waiting for darshan dropped their prashad in alarm. Meanwhile, 50 miles away, the evil spirit vacated the boy's body, shrieking, 'I'm on fire! Leave me alone! I'll never come here again!' By the time the boy's father had returned, his son had fully recovered."

Mulyabai of Gwalior is very poor. She recalls how Shri Maharaj Ji helped her in distress: "I was employed as a farm labourer. We were busy harvesting. Suddenly, I fell very ill and had to stay in bed for 4-5 days. I remembered my Lord and prayed, 'I'll lose my pay. How will I make ends meet?' Shri Maharaj Ji appeared in my dream, blessed me and said, 'Don't worry. You'll be paid the full amount.' I didn't really believe that, because if I didn't sign the daily register I wouldn't be paid. At the end of the month we collected our wages. The clerk told me, 'The register shows that you came to work every day. You'll get a full month's wages.' I couldn't believe it! Who had signed in for me while I was ill? Immediately I remembered Guru Maharaj Ji's blessing and I inwardly thanked him with all my heart."

Ram Singh Chauhan recalls, "Once I needed 5000 rupees. I asked Shri Maharaj Ji, but he said, 'I'm not running a business here!' I replied by quoting a line from a hymn: 'There is no giver like you and the whole world begs from you.' He answered, 'It's good to see that you have such faith.' The next day a wealthy businessman visited me and handed me 5000 rupees, saying, 'Do what you have to do and pay me back later.' My joy knew no bounds. It happened to be the day of Id, the Muslim festival, and some Muslim friends of mine were celebrating it. I told them, 'Today I'll offer Allah something.' I bought a box of the finest sweets and went to Shakti Nagar. Shri Maharaj Ji took one and gave one to me as prashad, asking, 'Well, is your business taken

care of?' I humbly replied, 'We poor people are lucky that you are here. If we can't get anything done now, when will we?'"

Shri Jagram, who is these days a Police Superintendent in Haryana, has long been a devoted disciple of Shri Maharaj Ji. He recalls, "Maharaj Ji had an extraordinary charisma. He could just attract people. Whenever I was in his presence I would feel remarkably exhilarated, almost, one could say, intoxicated. Once I was going by car to satsang. A devotional song—'There is no one for me but Giridhar Gopal'—was playing on the radio. Listening to it I went into deep meditation and totally lost myself in the vision of Shri Maharaj Ji. When our car reached our destination, my companions shook me and interrupted my meditation. I sighed, 'How could you do this to me? You've brought me back from heaven to hell.'

'Some time ago I was stationed at Karnal as an inspector. The widow of a military serviceman was being harassed by her brother-in-law because of some land. She filed a complaint at our station. One officer after another was assigned to the case but justice was not done and she was very dissatisfied. Finally in desperation she approached the Superintendent and pleaded with him, 'For the last time I beg you to help me. I've heard that your Inspector Chaudhury Jagram is very honest. Please let him investigate. If he judges me to be in the wrong, I'll resign myself to it and not bother you again.' The Superintendent handed the case over to me. I went to her village incognito so that I could find out the truth for myself. Her brother-in-law was a very influential man in those parts. His word was law in that village and he had spies all over the place. When he found out that a police officer in disguise had arrived to investigate, he sent his henchmen to kill me. This was in 1965 during the Indo-Pakistan War. He spread the rumour that I was a Pakistani agent and sent his men after me. They beat me up so badly that they assumed I was dead, so they threw me in a well. The news spread like wildfire through the village and when the widow heard about it she came to the well. She recognized me, raced to the nearest police station and reported the whole thing.

The Sub-Inspector there happened to be a colleague of mine. He and several constables hastened to the village but in the meantime the woman's brother-in-law had hauled me out of that well, thrown me on to the back of a camel and was taking me away from there, no doubt to finish me off once and for all. He was apprehended by my friend the Sub-Inspector and so I was saved. While all this was going on, I had an amazing experience. Shri Maharaj Ji accompanied me in the form of a radiant child who looked exactly like Shri Satpal Ji Maharaj, and it was he who protected me. Those gangsters were amazed that I could've survived such a beating. They wondered what Power was protecting me. My Superintendent told me that he would file charges against them, but I replied that He Who protects had saved me and that I had no desire for vengeance. Besides protecting me, Guru Maharaj Ji heard the plea of that poor widow. The Superintendent decided that she had full rights to the disputed land. He summoned the brother-in-law and warned him in no uncertain terms that if anyone in that village ever bothered her again, he would not get out of it alive."

Mahatma Akhandprakashanandji relates the following incident showing how Maharaj Ji protected him:

"In 1964 Mahatma Atmagyanand Ji and I were sent to Muzaffarnagar. One day as we sat on the outskirts of a village, a man came up to us and told us all about the place. He informed us that a certain Chaudhury Harvansh was very devoted to God and would help us in our work. We visited him, but as soon as we started talking about Knowledge and meditation he flew into a rage and ran inside to get a stick to beat us. We thought, 'That's it!' and started meditating on the Holy Name. Just then a Muslim neighbour of Harvansh's, who'd been working on his house, came over and said to Harvansh, 'Before you beat them up, you'll have to deal with me first! Let's see you try!' They started fighting. We intervened and said, 'Why are you arguing on our account? We're leaving!' So Guru Maharaj Ji protected us through that neighbour. The villagers told us, 'It's amazing that he spared you. He's never

yet let any saddhus escape without a beating.' We replied, 'We have a very powerful protector!' "

Dhandevi of Pakbara, in Muradabad district, recalls, "Once my little son fell very ill. At that time Vaisakhi was being celebrated at Hardwar. I bought some medicine prescribed by a doctor. Then it occurred to me that I should not waste time with the medicine but take my son to Shri Maharaj Ji. I felt sure that he'd be able to cure him. I immediately caught a train but just as we reached Prem Nagar my son went into a coma. I was desperate and asked various people to take me to see Maharaj Ji, but no one paid much attention. Finally I approached a mahatma, who made fun of me, saying, 'Look! She's just arrived and is already making a fuss! She wants everything all at once!' But Shri Maharaj Ji heard my prayer. He had seen everything and scolded the mahatma, and said, 'Send her here.' I bowed and placed my son at his feet. He told us to get up, and I said, 'How can he stand up again?' But Maharaj Ji picked him up himself and dropped some water into his mouth. Then he said to me, 'See, he's laughing! Here, take some prashad and go rest.' Then my son fully regained consciousness."

Sargeant Tej Singh of Bharatpur is in the Army Medical Corps. He says, "I received Knowledge in January 1960. I felt great peace and joy, but wondered how I'd be able to meditate, as I was very sickly. I suffered from hereditary spherocytosis which caused anaemia and frequent fevers. The army doctors had tried everything, but it seemed that I was a hopeless case. In 1966 I had to undergo a dangerous operation. As I was lying on the operating table prior to being put under anaesthetic, I prayed to Maharaj Ji, 'Lord, it's hard to get a human birth in the first place, and I've been lucky enough to find you. Who knows if I'll see you again? There's a good chance that I won't survive the operation.' As the anaesthetic began to take effect, I heard a voice saying, 'Do you have firm faith in Guru Maharaj Ji?' I replied that I did. Then Maharaj Ji told me, 'Don't worry. You'll soon recover.' Then I lost

consciousness. I survived and recovered so quickly that even the doctor was amazed. I've enjoyed good health ever since."

Banwari Lal from Resham Majri, Dehra Dun, was riding his bicycle to Prem Nagar to attend Vaisakhi 1964. He swerved to avoid an oncoming car and was hurled into a ditch. But, by Maharaj Ji's grace, neither he nor the occupants of the car were hurt in what should have been a fatal accident. Later, in satsang, he was amazed to hear Maharaj Ji describe the entire event, saying, "It would've looked bad if a devotee on his way to satsang were hurt in an accident!" Then he said, "When a devotee belongs to the Lord, the Lord Himself becomes his!"

Describing an amusing incident, Banwari Lal says, "I and two others went to Maharaj Ji's house at Dehra Dun for darshan. We were given a room in which to rest. Later that evening a premie brought three glasses of milk for us. We drank and drank, but the glasses remained full. When we just couldn't drink any more, we prayed, 'Lord, forgive us, but we don't understand your *lila*!' Then we continued drinking and this time the glasses were emptied."

Ram Gulal Singh of Kunhera village in Bijnore had a very personal experience of Maharaj Ji's omnipresence:

"One day, about 25 years ago, during the Indo-Pakistan War, a friend and I were travelling by train to Darbhanga in Bihar. My friend told me that two men in our compartment were Pakistanis and reported the matter. The station master, however, wanted to detain us also. Luckily the two suspects were apprehended by some other people so we were released. My friend was unwell at the time and had a bottle of medicine in his pocket, which fell and broke as we entered the waiting room. I picked up the pieces and went outside to throw them away. It was midnight and my action aroused the suspicion of a bystander who asked me what I had thrown away. I told him, but he didn't believe me. He went to the police and accused us of being Pakistani agents also. He claimed that I had been sneaking around in the middle of the night

poisoning the water supply of the trains and was seen throwing away a broken poison bottle. The police surrounded us and interrogated us. We told them our story but they didn't believe us. Then I noticed an out-of-the-way water pump and asked to be allowed to get a drink of water. When I reached the pump I called on Maharaj Ji with full concentration. He appeared in front of me dressed like a police officer and asked what had happened. I told him the whole story. He reprimanded the policemen and said, "They are innocent citizens. What do they know about Pakistani agents!"

Shri Maharaj Ji was very partial to the poor. One day an old lady waved a ten-rupee note in front of him, saying, "Take this, sir." She said it three or four times. Finally he turned to her, took the money, tore it to shreds and burned it. The premies nearby were so alarmed that some of them dropped the fruit or flowers which they were holding. Seeing their fright, Shri Maharaj Ji's heart melted. He picked up the fallen fruit and started eating it. He explained, "Maybe you think that I don't have any money. Well, I'm not money-hungry. All I want is your love. I prefer poor people because they donate their hard-earned money in service. Now, this old woman is very rich. She's treating me as if I'd never seen a ten-rupee note in my life! I really don't like the way such people make a big show out of donating money."

Shri Maharaj Ji loved his devotees like a father loves his children. Shrichand Jogi recalls an incident at the home of Hari Ram: "Shri Maharaj Ji asked me what I did for a living. I told him that I beg. He simply said, 'Beg if you have to, but don't use trickery and lies to get money out of people.' Previously I had done just that, but he showed me the proper way."

A New Delhi premie, Devi Ram, says, "Shri Maharaj Ji fulfilled my every wish. I got whatever I asked for. He always helped me." Another Delhi premie, Ramdas Marken, said, "Maharaj Ji's satsang cleared up any doubts that may have been lingering in my mind. Listening to his satsang was a great pleasure

for me. During satsang he would look each premie straight in the eye so that they would listen attentively. He would radiate love as he spoke. Quite often, he would keep on speaking until two or three o'clock in the morning."

The spreading of Knowledge took a more organized turn with the formation of the *Divya Sandesh Parishad* ('Divine Light Mission'). Once, a large program was organized at the Gita Institute in Kamla Nagar, during which Maharaj Ji said:

"People generally regard God in one of two ways—as unmanifest and undifferentiated, or as manifest and qualified. Swami Dayanand was of the opinion that God is without form and unmodified, and beyond the reach of senses and imagination. However, even though He is invisible and beyond mind and intellect, He has been realized by devotees down through the ages. How? He definitely can't be known by means of mind, intellect or senses. It's also just a concept to say that He is without form if you haven't had the experience. You can say that He is experienced in the state of Samadhi. Now, Samadhi means the union of meditator, process of meditation and that which is meditated. The eight steps of yoga are *yam, niyam, asan, pranayam, pratyahar, dharana, dhyana* and *samadhi*.

"The seventh step is meditation. So if God is formless, how can you meditate on Him? You may try to conceptualize Him as something very subtle, like the sky. However, the sky is qualified. Its colour is blue and it is associated with sound. So if you try to substitute the Unconditioned with the conditioned, you'll actually be meditating on the conditioned! So how will this enable you to meditate on the Absolute, Formless God? You're still meditating on something within the realm of Maya. So where should the mind be concentrated? If you don't know, you won't be able to concentrate, so how can you reach the state of Samadhi? Furthermore, until you reach this state how can you say that God is formless and unconditioned? So that's the mistake people make when they speak without the authority of practical experience. Embodied devotees worship an embodied deity. In other words,

we see all kinds of statues in temples. Priests tell us to come and view the Lord. However, Lord Krishna himself said in the Gita, 'Arjuna, you cannot see My real Form with your ordinary eyes. I will give you the Eye of Knowledge. Then you will see Me as I really am.' So if we can't see God through our physical eyes, what is it that priests are showing us in temples?

'There is a hymn by a devotee who believed that God is unconditioned and formless:

'You are present in the idol and in the flowers,
So how can I offer God to God?
You don't possess arms, chest, feet or forehead,
So where should I adorn You?
You are ever-pure, unmodified and omnipresent.'

If God has no senses, how can He hear your prayers? So let go of your petty arrogance and selfishness and realize the Truth, then judge for yourself what Reality is and how God may be known as He is.

'God is Almighty, omnipresent and the source of all virtues. He is the Creator, Sustainer and Destroyer of all worlds and is the Lord of all. It is He who does everything. It is His power which enables the sun to illumine the world. The moon and the stars shine by His Light. Air and fire are energized by His command. In short, God is not separate from His qualities. The quality and its possessor must be one and the same, but only seem separate when we talk about them. It is only a verbal distinction.

'For example, the sea is not separate from its waves, nor is the sun separate from sunlight. Is atomic energy something separate from the atom? No. The atom and its energy are the same. Fire has two characteristic qualities: light and the energy to burn (heat) and they can't be separated from the fire. Likewise, the universe is the expansion of God, and He is contained within it. The huge banyan tree is contained in a tiny seed, and as the seed expands to become a growing tree it permeates the entire tree. God pervades everything in the same way. The world is ephemeral and unstable. It is

changing every second. The phenomenon which never changes, which is homogenous and which can never be increased or diminished, is what we call God, Allah, Ishwar, Paramatman, Wahe Guru, etc. That Energy condenses itself into atoms to build the universe, and that same Power splits atoms apart again. Can the atoms ever be separated from their energy? How can a pervaded object be separate from its pervader? So people say God is formless but they don't know anything about God or His Energy.

'You read Gita and Ramayana and revere them, but because your eye of wisdom and knowledge is closed you don't understand what you read, so you are not getting the benefits from them that you should. So how will you acquire wisdom? St. Tulsidas said that without satsang it's virtually impossible to have the discerning wisdom which will lead you to perceive Truth. Without God's grace you won't meet a true saint; without a saint or Guru you can't receive true Knowledge and without Knowledge your devotion will be only imitation.

'You will suffer or enjoy the results of your good and bad actions after you leave this body. For example, one horse is harnessed all day and has to suffer the whip, while another creature of the same species lives in a fine stable and attendants are employed to look after it. Or take another example: a stray dog is kicked around and beaten with sticks, while another dog sits with a king on his throne. Naturally you'll say each got the rewards of his previous deeds. So we can infer from this that we will suffer the results of actions done in this life in our future lives. On the other hand, the results of satsang are immediate. The Ramayana says that satsang is so powerful that crows are changed into cuckoos and cranes into swans. In other words, a transformation of character takes place. The crow's voice is harsh and unpleasant, while everyone likes the cuckoo's voice. If someone who doesn't know what he is talking about and simply caws like a crow listens attentively to satsang, his cawing will be changed into the sweet voice of truth. Crane-nature will be changed into swan nature. If you mix water and milk, a crane will either drink the mixture or

leave it, whereas a swan has the ability to separate them and drink only the milk. So if a person dives in the Ganges of satsang he can extract the substance of life, leaving aside the superficial and non-essential. The greatness of satsang is no secret.

'What a wicked person Valmiki used to be! He used to rob and murder travellers. However, he was transformed by satsang and merged his mind in meditation. Satsang is that which reveals the Truth. Just talking and listening is not satsang. Telling stories of saints and masters without knowing the Truth they revealed is not satsang. Ordinary people don't have the key to unlock the secrets hidden in these stories.

'Once Narad, the story goes, visited Lord Vishnu in Vaikunth. Lord Vishnu greeted him and enquired about his travels. Narad said, 'Lord, I've been travelling around Earth. I've found that a man who doesn't have a wife, children, money and home is miserable, yet those who do have all these are extremely miserable. One person is indulging in pleasures is unhappy, while another is unhappy because he doesn't have access to these pleasures! Everyone is miserable there! Is there any way to make Earth people happy?'

'Lord Vishnu answered, 'That's a very noble thought. There is a way.' Then he taught Narad the *Satyanarayan* technique and said that whoever practised it with faith and devotion would get whatever he wanted in the world and after death would achieve the highest state.

'Narad went to Kashi. The first person he instructed in this secret was a brahmin beggar, who consequently was showered with wealth and good fortune. The next initiate was a woodcutter who also attained great happiness. On the other hand anyone who misused the technique or disobeyed Narad's teachings got nothing but trouble.

'Priests today tell these stories so why don't people become happy? The reason is, that they don't know what it was that Lord Vishnu taught Narad. They only tell stories about it. 'Satyanarayan' means the True Name which dwells within all

beings. Anyone who meditates on that is freed from misery and death.

'Our mythology describes a struggle between the gods and demons for a jar of Nectar which emerged from fourteen jewels. The gods took the jar and ran away with it. During their flight, the Nectar fell upon four places—Nasik, Allahabad, Ujjain and Hardwar. People visit these places but they don't find any Nectar there. They don't experience it just by listening to tales about it, nor do the storytellers. So where is that Nectar? You had better think about it while you are still alive. Actually Nectar is a property of that all-pervading Name. If you meditate upon it you will experience Nectar and become immortal.

'Lord Krishna opened Arjuna's eye of Knowledge and showed him His Cosmic Form. If your Divine Eye is closed, how will you see God? You can't see Him with your physical eyes. People these days twist rosaries and chant 'Ram-Ram,' 'Om namah shivai,' etc. but did you ever wonder what is that Name, by remembering which Hanuman had even the Lord at his command? You won't be able to realize God's Power until you know this Name. That is why I keep telling you to find a real master who can show you the Holy Name and Divine Light. Then you'll see God within and you'll understand how He is unconditioned and how He also manifests with attributes. If this Knowledge could be revealed to you just by reading scriptures, why do those same scriptures glorify the Guru? Knowledge is impossible without Guru."

Untouchability and caste was one of the most controversial issues of Shri Maharaj Ji's day. Here is what he had to say about it:

"Karpatriji is a very well-known religious teacher these days. He says that untouchables should not be allowed in temples, because they defile them. But the Ramayana says that Hanuman became so pure and holy that he had even the Lord at his command. If someone of such humble birth could be purified by the Holy Name, can't untouchables also be purified by worshipping God? To help a man up after he has fallen is to be

truly humane, not to kick him when he's down: We call those who clean up after us low-born and vulgar, but mothers clean their babies after the baby has dirtied itself, so why don't you call them untouchables? In God's sight all are the same, so who are you to decide who is high and who is low? God's Holy Name is the redeemer of sinners. If God's Name is not holy, then how can the most vile and degenerate of sinners ever hope for redemption? How could they ever be uplifted? The Name of God is revered by all religions as holy and sacred. If, by his entry into a temple, an outcaste or low caste person could defile God, then he is greater than God because he has been able to make the Holy unholy and the Pure impure.

'Lord Rama visited Bhilni's humble hut and ate fruit which she had already tasted. Was the Lord contaminated by that? Well, all of you who believe in Lord Rama! What's happened to your brains? If you and your priests and teachers behave like that, is it any wonder that these people become Muslims or Christians? If you won't let them into your temples, what else are they to do?

'You call them 'untouchables' because they clear up dirt, but you're the ones who produced that filth!

'Some teachers call themselves World-Teachers (*Jagat-Guru*). Why? They are guru to a few Indians so they presume to call themselves World Teachers. Actually, the *Jagatguru* is the person who has the power to redeem the whole world—not just Hindus, but Muslims, Christians, everybody. Guru is God in human form. But the custom nowadays is to make some object, such as a flag, a guru. Intellectuals claim that a human being can never be a guru. However, *gu* means darkness, and *ru* means light. Guru dispels the darkness and reveals the Light. A flag can't do that, so why make it your Guru? But you don't believe in the living Master and worship a flag or a book.

'I'll give you an example from the scriptures. The sage Bharadwaj's son was opposed to regarding any human being as a guru. He started practising austerities on his own. Indra tried his best to make him understand, but the boy wouldn't listen. One

day, Indra disguised himself as a Brahmin and sat by the river throwing sand into the water. The boy saw this and exclaimed, 'Hey, brahmin! What are you doing?' The 'brahmin' answered, 'I want to build a bridge.' The boy was amused and asked, 'Did a bridge ever get built like that? That sand can't withstand the current. It'll be just washed away.'

'Indra replied, 'Right! A bridge isn't built by throwing sand into the water, and likewise, Knowledge is impossible without a guru.'

Satyadevi, a Delhi premie, experienced the power of satsang: "One day, in 1956, I decided to go to satsang, which was being held at Company Bagh from 5-7 p.m. I prepared dinner and put it aside.

'Some time after I'd left, my husband came home. Not finding me at home, he found out from the neighbours where I'd gone. He came to Company Bagh, took the key from me, and went home. After dinner, he locked the door and went out somewhere. When I returned home to a locked house, I was in a fix. My three children were crying for dinner. I sat on our roof and started to do meditation. Then it occurred to me to break the lock. However, when I went downstairs I found that the lock had already been opened! So I went inside and fed the children. That night, Shri Maharaj Ji appeared in my dream, saying, 'Come to satsang every day. No one can stop you.' "

Ramphal, a retired postman from Rohtak, says, "In my village every month, on the night of full moon, people belonging to various religions would gather together. On one such occasion they started debating and I spoke about Guru and Knowledge, basing my argument on the scriptures. Various people challenged me, but by Guru Maharaj Ji's grace I won. That same night, while I was in deep meditation, Shri Maharaj Ji appeared in the Light and said, 'You dimwit! Don't demean Knowledge by arguing about it with fools. You can't wash coal white even if you use a ton of soap! If people are not willing to listen to you, then give satsang to the trees and the birds!'"

On 27th March, 1954, Divine Light Mission organized an 'All-Religions Conference' at Delhi's Constitution Club. It was attended by representatives of various sects and religions. The Secretary of D.L.M., Rai Bahadur Gaya Prashad, said, "This conference has been arranged under the auspices of Divine Light Mission, which has actively been serving the public for a long time now, by arranging satsang programs and functions. We believe that religion is something highly beneficial to everyone, so why do people fight so much about it? We sent invitations to many prominent religious and political leaders, several of whom said that they would attend. Others replied that due to prior arrangements they couldn't come, and some even asked for donations! It's disappointing that an organization which is holding such a conference should be asked to send donations before invitees attend!"

After the other participants had addressed the audience, Yogiraj Shri Hans Ji Maharaj said:

"Three points are under discussion here:

1. Which religion benefits everyone equally? Which religion can everyone believe in?
2. How and when can a person see the Divine Light described by all the Scriptures?
3. Which is the easiest method, common to all religions, of stilling the mind? What is the only Name which can concentrate mind?

'Why was it necessary to convene this conference? So many major religious leaders and scholars do so. I met some Russians who informed me that they don't believe in any form of religion. When I asked them what they did believe in, they answered that they believe in peace. But you have to understand what is peace and how to get it. We feel peaceful if we get a glass of water when we are thirsty, food when we are hungry, or employment when we are looking for work. Peace is dear to us all. However, there are two kinds of peace—external and internal, or, in other words, temporary and lasting. Food, clothing and shelter will give

temporary feelings of peace, but won't get rid of mental anguish. Religion is the prescribed action-necessary for achieving eternal peace. A son's duty is to obey his father. A father's duty is to steer his son along the right path. A husband's duty is to protect and care for his wife, and the wife's duty is to serve her husband in any way she can.

'These days, politicians say that we shouldn't bring religion into politics. This means that Krishna was wrong to instruct Arjuna in spirituality in the midst of battle.

'There is no real religion nowadays. People have forgotten what religion really is. For Bombayites, Bombay is their religion. For Lahore residents, it's Lahore. For Christians, religion means believing in Jesus Christ, for Muslims it's believing in Mohammed and for orthodox Hindus it's worshipping idols and reading Vedas. But no one stops to wonder why so many religions exist in the first place. What is the origin, the seed of all religions? Where do they all come from? I preach the True Dharma, the universal religion, which embraces all mankind.

'Because of his devotion to Truth, a celestial plane came to take Harishchandra to heaven. He said, 'I have to repay a debt to my employer. I'll go to heaven only if he can accompany me.' The angels turned to his employer and said, 'You actually don't deserve it but due to his righteousness you can come too.'

'That man said, 'I keep pigs. Only if they can come with me will I go.' The angels then said to the pigs, 'How could you ever hope for such a fate? Anyway, because of Harishchandra's piety, you can come too.'

'The pigs asked, 'Will we get swill to eat in heaven?' The angels replied, 'In heaven everyone drinks Nectar.' The pigs refused, saying, 'Then heaven's not the place for us!'

'The point of the story is, that a person who wallows in sensuality like a pig in filth regards liberation as nothing, and will risk his life to get the petty pleasures of the world.'

Although Maharaj Ji used to travel a lot, giving satsang in towns and villages, still the Delhi premies were fortunate enough

to have him with them most of the time. He himself had no idea of time. He enjoyed himself only when he was with his devotees. Shri Mata Ji says, 'He was like a stranger to his own family. I and the children would pine for months to see him. When he finally did come home it was like a festive occasion for us. He was like a guest in his own house. He'd ask, 'Why do you always make such a fuss over me when I'm home? Aren't I just another member of this family?' I'd reply, 'If you are a member of this family, why don't you celebrate family occasions with us? You're just like a guest here. You stay for a couple of days then you're off again. You'd rather be with your devotees than with us.'

'I asked him, 'Why do you wear that crown and Krishna outfit?' He laughed and said, 'You don't understand! I dress up because it makes the devotees happy. Then they see it all in meditation. Whatever I do is because the devotees wish it. I don't have any desires of my own.'

'I'd often complain, 'You're never home and you've dumped the children in boarding school.' Once, little Satpal Ji said to me, 'Mummy, you've left me in this boarding school and I'm cut off from your love.' So out of affection and pity I gave him some pocket money. When Shri Maharaj Ji found out he said, 'Is this your love? Do you think that I don't love him? Couldn't I have sent him money? That's how children get spoiled. Do you think he's the only one in that hostel? Don't other kids live there too? Don't their parents love them? In any case when children grow up they have to stand on their own two feet and get over their emotional attachment to their parents.'

Shri Maharaj Ji laboured indefatigably. Shri Mata Ji recalls, 'One day, during Guru Pujan 1966, I went into Shri Maharaj Ji's room and told him that some premies had requested darshan and charnamrit. He surprised me by saying, 'Why don't you give them darshan and charnamrit? After all, you are their Gurumata.' I replied, 'There's a lot of difference between your charnamrit and mine.' He answered, 'What are you talking about? What's the difference between you and me?' I said, 'Maharaj Ji, if something

should go wrong you'd say, 'Well, you started giving people your charnamrit.' He replied, 'That's where you're wrong. You have to take the lead in spreading Knowledge. You must start looking after these devotees. I want you to go everywhere, give darshan and satsang. You'll have to do it sooner or later!'

There was always a stream of premies coming in and out of the Shakti Nagar residence. Once Mahatma Anandi Bai went there to inquire when Shri Maharaj Ji was expected in Delhi. Mahatma Satyanand told her, "Send a telegram and call him!" Bai Ji says, "I burst into tears. I couldn't sleep the whole night. All I could do was cry. The next morning I went again to the residence. Mahatma Ji said, 'Maharaj Ji arrived last night at 9.30 and was asking about you. It looks as though he received your telegram!'"

Parmeshwari Devi had a brush with death: "One day I became very ill. Five *yamdoots* (angels of death) wearing long robes, came to take me away. I started crying, but they insisted, saying, 'We won't leave here without you. Come along.' Suddenly Shri Maharaj Ji appeared and told them, 'No, she's not going yet.' The five replied, 'She belongs to us.' Maharaj Ji told them, 'I'm her Guru, not you. Leave her alone.'"

Karnail Singh is a police inspector. He and his family are Sikhs. He says, "When I received Knowledge, my family opposed me, saying, 'No Sikhs belong to that organization. Your Guru is a non-Sikh.' Anyway, by his grace, my wife and daughter finally received Knowledge. One day when we went for darshan at Shakti Nagar, Maharaj Ji said, 'Now you are real Sikhs. Guru Nanak Dev had a beard and I don't. That's the only difference between us.' This cleared up my wife's doubts and my whole family became very devoted to Shri Maharaj Ji."

'One day some premies who had gathered at Shakti Nagar were singing devotional songs. The neighbours objected. At first Maharaj Ji told them to stop singing. As soon as the neighbours went away, the singing started again. The neighbours returned and warned them, 'You people are really annoying us.' When they had gone, Shri Maharaj Ji said, 'Right. Tomorrow I'll show them who

I am.' The next day, a Sunday, he dressed up in his crown and Krishna outfit and, flute in hand, started dancing down the street. He danced as far as the intersection. All the neighbours were staring at the spectacle. Then he climbed on the roof. He played one note on his flute and started dancing again. We were amazed to see all the neighbours dancing on their roofs!"

Purn Babu, an accomplished violinist, used to play violin at satsang programs. He had a very practical experience of Maharaj Ji's grace: "One day I was involved in an accident and broke my right hand. The doctors told me that I would never play violin again. I was in despair. That same day Maharaj Ji visited me and said, 'Don't worry. Your hand will be all right by Guru Puja. In fact, I want you to play at that program. You'll play like Tansen and Ravi Shankar!' I went to Guru Puja and, at Maharaj Ji's command, started playing. To my great surprise, I played better than ever!"

'Shri Maharaj Ji's prophecies always came true. In 1960 at Sapru House I played at the same program as Ravi Shankar. There was a gap in the program, so my violin teacher told me to play a solo. I went on stage and played. The audience called for an encore! I recalled what Maharaj Ji had told me several years before. He had assured me, 'Whenever you remember me, I'll come to you, and no one will be able to stand in your way.'

'I had a strong desire to travel overseas. This wish also came true. A patron took me abroad, at her expense. We toured many countries and several concert recitals were arranged for me. On my way back to India, I suddenly found myself thinking how nice it would be to run into Shri Mata Ji or Shri Bhole Ji, as at that time they were overseas. How lucky for me that Shri Mata Ji was returning to India and happened to be sitting in the seat in front of mine! She talked with me throughout the journey."

Once at Shakti Nagar, Maharaj Ji said, "Even after receiving the true Knowledge, you have to practise it and develop indifference for worldly things. Don't think that you can reach Samadhi all in one go. That's dangerous. If your car is travelling at

90 m.p.h. and you suddenly apply the brakes, the car will overturn and be smashed to pieces. There's a saying, 'Slow and steady wins the race'.

'If a gardener tends his plants, they bear fruit at the right time. He first plants the tree, waters and fertilizes it, and when necessary weeds it and prunes it. He protects it from extreme heat and cold. Then when Nature decides that the time is right, the tree is covered in fruit. The tree doesn't blossom the same day you plant the seed. You have to be patient. People take Knowledge and come back the next day saying that they are having difficulty meditating. You are initiated so that you can begin the process of tuning your mind to the Knowledge. But even before that, satsang, service and getting into a routine of meditation are necessary. You become like the company you keep. What your friends say sticks in your mind. You always think about whomever it is you serve. If a person has spent his life serving his family and continues to preoccupy himself thus after he receives Knowledge, can he all at once bring his mind under control? Following the Guru's commands tames the mind. For example, you want to stand up but I tell you to remain seated. On that occasion you have conquered your mind. Commands are given to disciples and if a person can't obey them he is not a disciple nor can he ever conquer his mind. Some people are afraid that if they get involved in service and devotion, their worldly affairs will suffer. But devotion never adversely affects anything. People who think like that shy away from service and never understand its sweetness. Devotion is something eternal and immortal. St. Kabir said, 'Nothing done in the way of devotion ever goes astray. Even if it takes a hundred lifetimes, you will reap the rewards.'

Jeet Singh Jaggi of Bhimtal (Nainital) describes Maharaj Ji's mercy:

"I arrived in Delhi on 11th April 1962 and spent the next three days living in parks and attending satsang. The first day's program was at Ramlila Ground, the second at Nicholson Park and the third at Ajmal Khan Park in Karol Bagh. On the 14th I went to Shaktinagar. The darshan line stretched down the stairs and along

the footpath. Slowly it inched forward and I found myself at the door of the room where Shri Maharaj Ji was sitting. That room had two doors—an entry and an exit. Premies were admitted one by one. Two premies sat at Maharaj Ji's feet taking offerings and giving out prashad. Being slow-moving and passive by nature, I took rather a long time bowing. Suddenly someone pushed me to one side. I felt another push and found myself outside the room, without having been able to do pranam. I was very angry, but as I glanced back inside, what did I see? No room, no doors, no premies, but open grounds with a satsang stage and Maharaj Ji beckoning me towards him. As I approached, that scene disappeared and again I was back in the room with two doors and the two premies. Shri Maharaj Ji held up his hand to halt the advancing line and asked me where I was from and how long I'd had Knowledge. Then he chose a big red apple and gave it to me, saying, 'You must be hungry. Eat this then drink some water. Don't go home alone—there must be some other premies from your district.'

'My heart burst with happiness. I met two mahatmas from Ramnagar, near Nainital, who came up to me of their own accord. How can I describe Shri Maharaj Ji? He was the ocean of love and mercy.'

In November 1961 the premies arranged a huge 'Peace Conference' at Gandhi Grounds in Delhi. Shri Maharaj Ji announced that if world leaders would experience the Divine Light and Holy Name within themselves and if governments would assist in spreading this Knowledge, not only would world peace become a reality within a single year, not only would all mankind be united, but a tremendous transformation of human consciousness on a global scale would take place.

On November 16th and 17th a giant procession wound its way through the main streets of Delhi. More than 50,000 people assembled to hear him speak on 18th and 19th. Religious teachers and leading intellectuals from all over India addressed the

conference. Also participating was an American cleric, who said, "I'm ashamed to say that, even though I am a disciple of Christ, I haven't seen the Divine Light about which He spoke. Only now do I realize that I haven't understood the real essence of Christianity."

A leading English daily, 'The Statesman', reported on the procession:

"A huge congregation, including more than 200 saffron-robed saddhus, gathered on 19th November at Gandhi Grounds. The purpose of this conference was not just religious. It was to discuss how mankind may avoid the annihilation which now looms large. The conference has been arranged under the auspices of Divya Sandesh Parishad.

'Speaking from a flower-bedecked stage, these saddhus threw light on the causes behind the frightening world situation. They claimed that the United Nations and world leaders are incapable of averting disaster. They further claimed, 'We can establish peace within one year', because peace is a personal matter, and peace is attained by individuals. Just halting nuclear tests or holding disarmament conferences won't bring about peace. War begins in man's mind and peace can only be brought about by a fundamental transformation and improvement in human consciousness, and this in turn can happen only when an individual sees the Divine Light and meditates on it.

'They further said that going to temples and mosques is unnecessary for this. What is necessary, however, is meditation on one's real self. The Inner Light has been described in world scriptures such as the Bible, Koran and Upanishads as eternal and self-effulgent. It has the ability to purify the human heart. A person who meditates on this Light will not be harmed by nuclear blasts. They claimed that one and a half million Indians have already experienced this Light.

'More than 10,000 people, of whom a large proportion were women, sat quietly beneath a canvas canopy gaily decorated with lights and bunting, and listened attentively to the mahatmas and

spiritual Master Paramsant Satgurudev Shri Hans Ji Maharaj, who had just arrived from Hardwar.

"Thousands of disciples from all over India are participating in this two-day conference and are being accommodated in more than 100 giant tents especially erected for this event. Delegates include people from all walks of life, including a senior district official, several police superintendents and inspectors, and officers of the Central Investigations Department, as well as humbler members of the public."

The same newspaper reported on November 20th:

"Three thousand men and women, whose aim is to establish world peace within a year, paraded in a huge procession through the streets of Delhi on Thursday and Friday, holding aloft silk banners and distributing leaflets. They did not shout slogans of any kind, nor did they denounce anyone. They did not solicit funds in any way. Participants from various parts of India, dressed in their regional costumes, added a dash of colour. A large company of saffron-robed saddhus walked along quietly. When asked their objective by press reporters, they politely refused to break their silence.

'Women sang hymns from Ramayana and Gita. The really impressive thing about this procession was that, in contrast to political and other types of processions held in Delhi, there were no outbreaks of violence or trouble. Whether or not the organization's patron, Paramsant Satgurudev Shri Hans Ji Maharaj, the Convenor of this conference, can achieve world peace in the space of a single year, there is certainly no doubt that there was perfect peace and accord among his disciples. Their way of living in the tent city at Gandhi Grounds was exemplary. Loving service is the basis of their tolerance and endurance. Those among them who are barbers by trade cut hair free of charge. Those who know how to cook, especially the ladies, prepare the meals under hygienic conditions. A free canteen is operating and no one is seen taking more than he needs. This tent city appears in many respects to be a

holy city where pilgrims and sadhus bask in the sun and absorb the peaceful atmosphere.

'Paramsant Satgurudev Shri Hans Ji Maharaj, directing the world's attention to the possible extinction of mankind, said, 'Peace and happiness are mind-related. They are not acquired through money or material possessions. The only way is through stilling the mind. Since this is something internal, it is foolish to search for it outside. Mind is concentrated by meditation on the Divine Light which shines in the innermost self. Remembering God's True Name purifies the mind. This Name, which pervades the entire animate and inanimate creation, can be remembered continuously. It is not something verbal. It cannot be written in any language. It has the inherent ability to purify the mind. It can immediately transform a person. It makes pacifists out of the most aggressive and violent. Meditation on it replaces anger, violence and hatred with feelings of real love and equanimity.

'A flame is necessary to light a lamp, and surgical instruments are necessary for an operation. Similarly, a living Master is necessary for imparting the Knowledge of Holy Name and Divine Light.

'The first and foremost step towards world peace is for the individual to take refuge in a living realized Master, please him, and with his grace and assistance, experience the Divine Light and constantly meditate on the Holy Name.

'Unlike the guest speakers, Maharaj Ji did not just offer concepts and wishful thinking to the audience. His discourse was solidly based on practical knowledge of spirituality and psychology. One and a half million people throughout India claim to be having a practical experience of that Divine Light and Name. The delegates who flocked to Delhi are living proof of that.

'So if world leaders sincerely want to establish peace in the world they should come to the Master and experience this Light within themselves, then in planned fashion disseminate this Knowledge, said Shri Hans Ji Maharaj. Then world peace is possible. Otherwise, destruction is inevitable."

Here is an extract from Shri Maharaj Ji's speech of 19th November, 1961:

"Religion protects devotees and is the source of indescribable joy, but people don't understand what religion really is. Spurious and false religions have cost millions of lives. These religions have turned men into enemies, yet still people believe in them. What passes for religion nowadays neither protects anyone nor gives everlasting peace. Recitations and lectures are held all over the place. People study Granth Sahab, Koran, Gita and Bible. Stories are told from the Ramayana. But I want to ask every one of you: What is your state of mind while you are doing all your fasts and rituals, pilgrimages and prayers, chants and sacrifices? They are not the way to concentrate your mind. Lord Krishna said that someone whose mind is not under his control is neither a yogi nor a sannyasi. There is a Punjabi saying, 'If you've conquered your mind you've conquered the world.' Saints and mahatmas have always said that none of these external practices will control mind.

'Our Mission's main objective and, indeed, the ultimate religion of man, is this: to show people the universal, as well as easiest, method of conquering the mind. Once you have conquered your own mind you have conquered the world. This technique is not at all related to any external practices. It is already naturally existing within every Hindu, Christian, Muslim and Sikh. It is glorified by the Vedas and every other great scripture and it is this technique which all the saints and Divine Teachers have urged man to know. I can show you this technique, practically. When people hear this they demand, 'Well, tell me what it is!' But revealing Knowledge just like that wouldn't be to anyone's advantage. If it were, I'd tell you right now. The process of revealing and realizing Knowledge is described in all the scriptures. Only a sincere aspirant should be initiated, and so that people can turn into aspirants we arrange these programs. The Gita, 4:38, describes how to receive Knowledge:

'Go to a realized saint, prostrate to him, serve him sincerely and guilelessly and ask for Knowledge.'

If you approach in this manner, I'll definitely give you Knowledge. Shri Krishna initiated Arjuna, showed him His Cosmic Form, and told him to meditate continuously. If my initiation isn't like this, then definitely don't believe me. But you have to do something to receive Knowledge. First you have to let go of your ego and concepts and take refuge in the living Master.

'Sukhdev Muni was said to have been a yogi from birth, but to receive Knowledge he had to go to a Master, in this case, King Janak, who didn't initiate him right away. He kept him waiting six months at each gate of his palace. He didn't receive Knowledge until he was egoless. I address a question to philosophers and intellectuals the world over: If you haven't realized this Knowledge, who's going to suffer? Just studying books and delivering lectures based on concepts and philosophy doesn't make anyone a realized soul. Vice-President Radhakrishnan is a very highly-regarded scholar and intellectual and is an authority on the Gita. I sent him a letter in which I posed the question, 'What is the *Rajvidya*, the 'Sovereign Science', which Lord Krishna revealed to Arjuna, and how can we see God's Cosmic Form?' He wrote back that a person should lead a religious life and that's all that is necessary. That's the state of knowledge and philosophers today. He explains the importance of pious behaviour, it gets printed in the newspapers, and that's it. Is that enough to make people walk the strait and narrow? Will that change people's character immediately? People talk about righteous conduct but they don't tell us how to turn an unrighteous man into a righteous one. No one needs to be taught how to fall, but he needs a ladder to climb up again. How can people ennoble themselves? They have degraded themselves, so how can they pick themselves up again? Dishonesty, deception and corruption are rife. People are characterless. Everyone knows that our sojourn in this world is only a brief one. We all want to live in peace, but what is real peace? How can we get it? No one can tell you that. I asked the Russian Ambassador if he believed in God. He replied, 'I don't, but my mother does.' I asked him if he believed in peace, and he answered

that he did. I suggested, 'What you call peace, we call God, because God is peace. Peace, bliss and God are synonymous.'

'Once I met Shri Prakash, a very learned man who was active in the Independence Movement. He told me, 'I thought that Independence would usher in a golden age for us, but it's turned out exactly the opposite. The situation is getting worse day by day.' I replied, 'And why not! The intelligentsia don't know the Truth nor act upon it, and think that lectures alone can change people. How can that be? Only when the eye of wisdom is open does discernment dawn on a person. Then he can follow true religion and work for his soul's salvation. Only then can he bring cheer and prosperity to himself and others. You sow the seeds of hatred. To win votes you propagate class-discrimination. Then you say that we should do away with the caste system. Tell me, how can it happen? You don't harvest mangoes by sowing cactus.'

'I also had an interview with Pant Ji and Jagjivan Ram Ji (who were from opposite ends of the social spectrum). I told them, 'You want to get rid of the caste system. You both are Federal Ministers. Marriages can take place between equals. Why don't you set an example and unite your families through marriage?' They merely laughed. Is that the way to get rid of caste? Just laugh it away? Listen! You people talk about the Kingdom of Rama being re-established here. What about the teachings of Rama and the example that he set? He bypassed the ashrams of the great rishis and visited Bhilni's crude hut, where he ate berries which she'd already sampled.

'I've met most of our top leaders and members of the intelligentsia and I'd hoped that maybe what I say would sink in; that they'd be interested in Knowledge and practise it. This would be for the common good because people always follow the leader. How quickly Buddhism spread once Emperor Ashoka became a disciple!

'I went to offer these politicians something, but they, being greedy for money and fame themselves, thought that maybe I

wanted something from them! I once met V.K. Krishna Menon. In those days he'd address the U.N. for hours on the Kashmir problem. During our conversation I broached the topic of spirituality which, after all, is my field, by saying, 'There are three kinds of light, which everyone can see. However, how can we see the fourth kind, which is called 'Divine Light'? He laughed and said, 'I'm afraid you've come to the wrong person. You should talk to Radhakrishnan. I have no interest at all in these things.' See how mistaken he is! If the nation's leaders don't understand the significance of human life, what hope have the masses got? There's a saying: 'Like king, like subjects'.

'Someone wrote me a letter urging me to spread the message of non-violence. I just don't shout 'Non-violence! Non-violence!' I spread Spiritual Knowledge. All these mahatmas propagate non-violence wherever they go. I know how to change violence to non-violence. I have the technique. All these premies from Bihar used to eat meat and fish. Their local mahatmas gave them Knowledge and they stopped eating flesh—even before they'd met me. I never told them to do it. They just naturally developed an aversion for these things.

'A huge conference was held recently on the topic of non-aggression. The President and Prime Minister attended it, and so did several foreigners, but apart from lectures and speeches there was nothing else to it. Will a mere speech make people non-violent? Is this all it takes to establish peace in the world? I was also invited, but wasn't given a chance to speak, because they knew I'd let the cat out of the bag!

'Our Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, is doing a lot for this country. Once, before Independence, I met him through one of our mahatmas who'd been an army captain. I gave him satsang. He told me, 'I'm too busy serving my country and trying to make it free. Why don't you go and preach in the marketplace? I'm sure people will know something good when they hear it.'

'A wise farmer doesn't just scatter seeds in his fields, nor does he plant seeds in July-August. First he ploughs the land

thoroughly and sows the seeds at the appropriate time. Aspirants who come to us first must hear sufficient satsang and are initiated only when they have a proper understanding. If an initiated devotee practises meditation, he'll feel peace. You can see for yourself how peaceful it is here.

'Politicians themselves don't have peace of mind, so how can they bring peace to the world? They don't have the means to do it. Our leaders are stockpiling weapons just like other countries are doing. But will peace come as a result? Will dam-building, increased grain production, industrialization and space flight bring peace? If it were possible, then definitely it would've happened by now. These things increase tension and unrest. These external things actually rob a man of his peace. Peace is something internal, and is achieved by proper concentration of mind.

'Our President says in his speeches that without spiritual Knowledge peace won't come to the world, but what *is* spiritual Knowledge? Just talking about it or writing about it doesn't mean that people will get it.

'Four 'graces' bless the human being. The first is God's grace which gives us the human body in the first place. A lot of people think that a human birth is the result of previous meritorious lives. But if God hadn't designed the human frame in the beginning, where could it have come from? We are human beings now. When did we accumulate the prerequisite good merit? Someone has just completed an elephant life, another a lion life, or another an incarnation as a dog. What action in those lives could possibly have entitled the soul to a human life? Those species are only for enjoyment or suffering. Only a human being can create karma. So it is by God's grace that the soul gets a human body.

'The second grace is the scriptures, which keep us on the right track. It's the scriptures which tell us, 'Without Guru none can cross the ocean of mortality, even if he be equal in status to the Creator, Preserver or Destroyer'. A human being may have these powers, but still without Guru he won't get liberation.

'This Holy Name is so powerful that even the most evil person will be purified and redeemed by meditating on it. Hanuman meditated on this Name and so had the Lord at his command. This Name can't be written or read. People think that this Name is *Ram*. They're not using their brains. The Ramayana tells the story of Valmiki, who previously was known as Ratnakar, a dangerous bandit who lived before Lord Rama's time. Once he met a saint who took pity on him and revealed the Holy Name to him. Ratnakar absorbed himself in meditation and the bandit turned into a sage of the highest order.

'What's the use of just studying scriptures? You have to realize the Name and Light which are within you. If you are studying scriptures but die in the same state of unawareness, what's the use? The scriptures are screaming at you to find the living Master, because without him you'll never discover the True Knowledge.

'The third grace is the grace of the Guru. The Ramayana says, 'Obeisance to the Guru, who is an ocean of mercy and God in human form. His Word dispels the darkness of ignorance as sunbeams dispel the night.' Only the sun has the power to turn night into day, and only the Guru's Word can dispel the darkness of attachment to the world. What is this Word? It is realized in the depths of the soul.

'God is within you, but you can't see Him, so your life is passing in vain. You are like a man who has cataracts.'

'People say, 'Meditate on whichever name of God you like, because all roads lead to the same place. All rivers flow into the sea, so chanting any name will lead you to God. But that's wrong! You can't meditate on these other names all the time, even while you are awake. You definitely can't remember them continuously while you are asleep or dreaming. They are not the real Name. They are mental fabrications.

'The fourth grace is the soul's own. Lord Krishna said that the human mind can be the cause of either bondage or liberation. It

can be its own friend or its own enemy. The person who doesn't strive for liberation while he has a human body is his soul's worst enemy. If he receives Knowledge but doesn't practise meditation, he again has to go through the process of transmigration. A real human being is he who actively pursues the path of liberation.

'We need these three to be alive—a head of state, a doctor and a spiritual Master. A living leader, such as our Prime Minister, can help you with your material difficulties. What help can a former king or administrator give you? So what will you get from worshipping him?

'Secondly, we need a living physician to cure us. Will a patient be cured by seeking help from a dead physician or by praising him? Only a living doctor can cure us.

'Thirdly, we need a living spiritual Master. Jesus Christ and Mohammed were great Masters. They gave Knowledge to the people of their time. Lord Rama, Lord Krishna, Lord Buddha and Guru Nanak were able to explain spirituality to people. But they are not here now to enlighten us. We can only read their scriptures. Only a living Master can reveal living spiritual Knowledge. But we should also know how to recognize the true Guru. *Gu* means 'darkness', and *ru* means 'light'. Guru is he who turns darkness into light. Lots of people complain that they have a guru but they don't see Light. If night doesn't turn into day when the sun rises, then when will it? If you have a guru but are still in the dark, when will your darkness turn to Light? The Guru is he who has himself realized God and can make others realize Him. There are plenty of gurus around. People call these imposters, who give you a necklace to wear or a mantra to mutter, or who recite scriptures and perform rituals, 'Guru'. But the scriptures clearly state that the Satguru reveals the Inner Light and shows the disciple how to merge his mind with the Holy Name. He is not just someone who speaks from a stage. He imparts practical realization as well of the Name and Light which will liberate you. Liberation is not easily achieved, no matter how many methods you many try. The way to

prevent mental fluctuations from arising is to discover the object of meditation revealed by the Master and meditate on that. I'm showing people how to realize the Divine Entity within themselves. Wonderful communication facilities are available to us today, but they are misused. Of what advantage is a radio to people? A few vulgar songs, and that's all. But if radio were used as a medium for satsang and devotion, not only our country, but the whole world would benefit enormously. But who thinks of spiritually-beneficial things? I would like to have the chance to give satsang on radio. Within a short time a change would be noticeable. I wouldn't say anything against the government. I don't wish to get involved in politics.

'Raja Mahendra Pratap Singh suggested that I run for Parliament. I replied, 'I'm already called 'Maharaj'. I don't need to stand for election.' I've already initiated political leaders, such as Raja Mahendra Pratap Singh and Dr. Rajendra Prashad. I've given satsang to Subhas Chandra Bose. I've never stopped working for the good of this country. I firmly believe that the world has always looked to India for spiritual inspiration and still does. It will continue to be so. Only spirituality can uplift India. Slavishly imitating other countries will never make India great."

Aligarh

Shri Maharaj Ji visited Aligarh district several times. Knowledge spread not only in the city itself, but throughout the surrounding countryside. Following their Guru's example, mahatmas travelled throughout the area on foot, putting up with all kinds of difficulties as they spread the Master's message in village, town and city.

The first Aligarh premie was Pandit Damodar Das, who was very devoted. His mother died in 1948, at 6 p.m. He told his fellow-disciple Chiranjilal that he would not dispose of the body until Shri Maharaj Ji arrived. His neighbours ridiculed him, saying, "He's completely nuts about this Hans Ji Maharaj!"

He sat for meditation. The next morning at 4 a.m. Shri Maharaj Ji arrived in a horse-drawn cart and called out, "Damu, come here! Where's that Damu?" Chiranjilal woke up and was astonished to find Shri Maharaj Ji outside. He ran and told Damodar, who rushed outside. Shri Maharaj Ji gave him a thorough scolding, saying, "Now shall I take away the corpse for you? Should I do your duty for you? Listen, do you know how far I had to come once I got your call?"

Kiran Saxena's mother was a resident of Aligarh and a neighbour of Pandit Damodar Das. The two families were in frequent contact. She used to ask Damodar, "Why have you put that man's picture instead of God's on your altar?" Damodar answered, "He's my Guru, and Guru is God in human form. It is written, 'Guru is the Preserver, Guru is the Creator, and Guru is the Destroyer. He is God in human form.'"

Kiran's mother used to make fun of him, saying, "How can any man be equal to God?" Once her son fell ill, and no treatment seemed to be effective. In desperation she asked Damodar Das for his advice. Naturally he told her, "If you sincerely and humbly pray to Guru Maharaj Ji, he can do anything." She replied, "If your Guru can cure my son, I'll believe him to be God, and I'll worship and serve him to the day I die." It so happened that the boy recovered. She then trusted Maharaj Ji implicitly from that day forth.

Vidya Devi, an Aligarh premie, used to worship gods and goddesses. She would eat only after reciting the Gayatri mantra and reading from the Gita. After receiving Knowledge, she immersed herself in meditation. She recalls, "My youngest son objected to my going to satsang, but when he received Knowledge he totally changed. He then told me, 'Mother, go to satsang every day, because this Knowledge is the real thing.'"

'Once Guru Maharaj Ji visited our house. My joy knew no bounds. He asked me to sing a devotional song. Then, after dinner, he prepared to leave. I and my family ran after him. As he got in the

car. I started crying and asked him when he would return. He answered, 'Where do you think I am going? I'm always with you.'

Mahatma Girjanandji was a resident of Mansingh Sarai, Aligarh. He left his wife and children to become a mahatma, but the problem of getting his daughter married continued to plague him. His wife told her troubles to the other Aligarh premies, especially Ramesh Chand Saransh, who was in charge. Mahatma Ji also continued to worry about his family. One day he mustered up courage and told Maharaj Ji all about it. Maharaj Ji replied, "Do you think that you are the only one who can arrange this marriage? Do you think it can't happen without you?" A little while later the marriage was finalized, but a few details remained to be worked out. The local premies came to the rescue and the girl's marriage was celebrated with much pomp and festivity. The neighbours were astonished and said to one another, "Well, if you want a grand wedding for your daughter, become one of Shri Hans Ji Maharaj's mahatmas! The wedding will take care of itself!" Some time after the wedding the Aligarh premies brought the bride for darshan. Shri Maharaj Ji said, "God can do anything. All He needs is your love."

In 1958 Ramesh and some other Aligarh premies went to Hardwar for Vaisakhi and at the same time asked Maharaj Ji to send them a mahatma. That same evening during satsang Shri Maharaj Ji said, "Premies keep asking me to send mahatmas, but mahatmas don't grow on trees!" Just before returning to Aligarh, Ramesh went to take leave of Maharaj Ji and apologized for bothering him. The Master smiled and replied, "There's no need to apologize. You ask for mahatmas. If you were to ask for me then I would come, too!" Of course the premies were delighted.

A satsang program was held on 27th and 28th October, at the Aligarh Ramlila Grounds. During his satsang, Maharaj Ji sang a song which began: 'You've received a precious jewel but you don't realize its value'. Then he continued:

"What is this jewel? You must have heard of the Kohinoor diamond. It's supposed to be the most valuable diamond in the

world. The British stole it from India. They cut it in half to adorn the crowns of their King and Queen. It's not even something which can be eaten! It's just a stone which shines in the dark! It neither nourishes the body nor cures diseases. Yet men are posted to guard it day and night. In spite of all their efforts to keep the diamond, look at how many monarchs have had to leave it behind! How many kings have come and gone, whose treasuries were full of diamonds, pearls and precious stones! But sooner or later they all departed empty-handed. What use are those jewels to them now? Actually, the human body is a priceless jewel. It's the real philosopher's stone. You can make with it as much gold as you like. Only once you've got this body can you hoard diamonds and pearls. Elephants also get decked out in jewels and the finest fabrics, but what good does it do the elephant? Human life is regarded as the best of all.

'Gods and demigods can't eat the sweets you offer them, let alone cook them themselves. Try it and see for yourself. So it's a pity that, in our ignorance, we waste our human existence, which even the gods long to have, on building up family and possessions. The human life is meant for meditation and liberation, and not using it for this purpose is tantamount to suicide. It doesn't matter how prominent they were, everyone who came into this world had to leave it, and all their wealth can't guarantee them a human life next time. In our day and age also there have been eminent judges, businessmen, kings, emperors and noble people like Mahatma Gandhi. All had to go. Mahatma Gandhi was able to evict the British from India without having to resort to violence. One word from him was enough to collect millions of rupees. How many homes were destroyed, how much innocent blood was shed in the cause of freedom! But even this wasn't sufficient to bring about the hoped-for 'Golden Age', or *Ram Rajya*. Gandhi died without seeing this dream realized. All the wealth in the Treasury couldn't save his life, because a human body is something that you cannot buy. It isn't bestowed as a result of any good deeds that you may have done, either, although many people seem to think so. They're

not really to blame, because if a blind man says that he can't see anything, he's quite right in saying so, while if a sighted man says that he can see, he's also correct. No man, no matter how great, made this universe. Mahatma Gandhi didn't make it. It was created by the primordial Energy of God. If this Energy hadn't designed our body, how else could we have got it?

'Nevertheless, the human form of life is the only one in which you can create karmas. Animals can't do this. But people don't understand. They read about it, but they don't think deeply.

'We have all enjoyed in other bodies, or suffered, according to our previous actions, but this present life is for devotion, worship and meditation. You will automatically suffer the consequences of your actions in other life forms, but this human life is meant for meditation, for remembering God's Name.

'That's why the song says, 'Now this jewel has come into my hands'. Now you have the chance to know God's true Name and meditate on it. You definitely have to leave the world someday. Don't forget that. Profit and loss are in God's hands—you and I can't do anything about it. Mahatma Gandhi used to say that he'd live to be 125! But death caught him unawares. If he'd known in advance he could have prepared himself by doing puja or meditation. King Parikshit had seven days to prepare himself for death after being cursed by the sage's son. He handed over his kingdom to another and sat beside the Ganges. 88,000 sages gathered to hear Sukhdev Muni's satsang. Parikshit asked Sukhdev, 'I have only seven days to live, so please tell me how I can achieve liberation in such a short time.' Sukhdev replied, 'Your Majesty, seven days is quite enough. If a person remembers God with his last breath, he is freed from the bondage of future births and deaths and is liberated.' So the king devoted the precious little time he had left to meditation and satsang. You also have to die one of these (seven) days, so disentangle yourself from the world and devote yourself to God and meditation.

'Death has caught hold of you; who else but Guru can save you now?'

'Only Guru can protect you. True Knowledge has always been given by the Satguru alone. He releases you from your sins. Without him you can't achieve salvation or have the practical revelation of the soul and God. Great heroes and extremely rich people have lived in this world, but only the person who follows the true Guru and devotes himself in service achieves the state of liberation. Guru is the bestower of liberation. Those who oppose him or are indifferent are bound to be involved in something worldly, because devotion to Master and devotion to matter don't mix! If a person is attracted to maya, then sooner or later he will fall from devotion.'

Ramesh Chand recalls, "On the evening of the 28th, a certain element who were envious of Maharaj Ji's increasing popularity came to disrupt the program. About 9 p.m. they started causing a commotion. Premies sent me to ask Maharaj Ji to come on stage. I relayed the request, but Maharaj Ji refused, saying, 'It's nearly 10 o'clock. I gave satsang last night and the premies have had darshan.' When I requested him again, he exclaimed, 'Listen, if I go and people throw stones at my car, it won't bother me, but you premies won't be able to tolerate it and there'll be trouble. Then what will you do from then on? Spread Knowledge or squabble? If I don't turn up tonight, people will say that I was afraid and ran away. So what? Krishna ran away from battle seventeen times. This is nothing new.' Even so, I pleaded one more time. Immediately he started scratching vigorously and said, 'Just look at my hand!' I saw that his whole body, not just his hand, was covered in a rash. I said, 'You can't go out in the night air in this condition. Cover yourself and lie down. I'll bring some medicine.' At 11 p.m. satsang ended and the mahatmas came back to my house. I went upstairs with some homoeopathic medicine but I found that Maharaj Ji was completely all right and was asking the mahatmas about the program. He gave us satsang until 1.30 p.m. and then departed for Delhi.

'One year, Maharaj Ji's program was held during the 'Numaish' season—the time of year when the circus comes to town and carnivals and exhibitions are held. Maharaj Ji went to see the circus. Afterwards he gave the circus people satsang and asked them, 'What is the Light (*Noor*) of Allah?'

'Maharaj Ji was giving darshan and the devotees were filing past. He spotted one man whom he told to leave the line and stand to one side. He stood there for quite some time. As the darshan line was coming to an end, the man started trembling and said, 'Maharaj Ji, please forgive me. I am nothing but a common criminal. I came here with evil intentions. I was talked into it by some people who gave me a dagger and sent me here.' He gave Maharaj Ji the dagger and fell at his feet, weeping bitterly. Maharaj Ji explained, 'Brother, we all have to die sometime, so why load yourself up with sin?' He gave the man some prashad and advised him to change his attitude."

Ramesh continues, "There was a premie called Babulal who had doubts about Shri Maharaj Ji and the Knowledge. He wrote down his questions on a piece of paper and took it with him to the Vaisakhi program at Hardwar. During his satsang, Maharaj Ji answered all Babulal's questions. Babulal was very pleased but thought to himself, 'I'll only believe 100 per cent when Shri Maharaj Ji performs a miracle.'

'The next day at noon Maharaj Ji set out for a walk from the fountain to the main gate. A lot of premies followed him. On the way he pointed upwards to a beehive swarming with bees, and said, 'What would they do if we disturbed them?' Everyone, including Babulal, laughed. The next day Maharaj Ji again went for a walk. He stopped beside the same tree and pointed upwards. This time there was no sign of the hive or the bees. This astounded Babulal and his faith was cemented.

'On one occasion Shri Maharaj Ji was at Nandigarhi near Hathras. Nearby is a small village, Sandila. Chandadevi, a premie from Sandila, requested Maharaj Ji to visit her village. He arrived there the following morning in a bullock cart, accompanied by

premies and mahatmas. At 2 p.m. he said, 'Okay, let's go back to Nandagarhi.' Premies wondered, 'How can we possibly travel in such heat?' Maharaj Ji told them, 'Listen, just tell everyone that I'm coming, too.' He sat in the cart and off they went. A premie had brought an umbrella to shade Maharaj Ji, but the Master said, 'Close that thing. What good will one umbrella do?' As soon as the premie closed the umbrella, the sky clouded over and a cool breeze started blowing. Singing and playing devotional songs, they continued on their way.

'Once I went to Dehra Dun to have darshan and to fix a date for a satsang program. The date was decided and Maharaj Ji said, 'I've done something for you, now you do something for me.' I said, 'Just name it.' He gave me an order slip and said, 'Go to Hardwar and give this to Mahatma Satyanand. Tell him that the cement he ordered is waiting at the station for him.' I did this and Mahatma Ji said, 'I've only just placed the order. It wouldn't have reached the office yet. How can the cement have possibly arrived?' Still he went to the station and produced his slip. The clerk confirmed that the cement had been delivered and Mahatma Ji was amazed."

Shyam Lal, who for many years now has been known as Mahatma Prem Vivekanand, relates, "In 1955 I spent a week at Prem Nagar but didn't get to see Shri Maharaj Ji. I was very dejected. I had to leave because of urgent business at home. All I had with me was 30 paise. I bowed to a photograph of Shri Maharaj Ji and put the money in front of it. I was wondering how I would reach home, but left it up to Maharaj Ji to look after me. I walked to Jwalapur Station and sat down on an embankment. I thought about returning to Prem Nagar. Presently a stranger came and sat down beside me. We engaged in a little small talk. Then he asked me to mind his luggage while he went to buy a ticket. He soon returned and said, 'Come on, the train is due.' I replied, 'You go. I don't think I'll be able to catch this train.' He said, 'I've also bought a ticket for you. See, I have two! I know you, although you don't know me.' So we ended up travelling together and he bought

me meals and refreshments all along the way. I felt greatly indebted to him, so when we reached Aligarh I invited him to dine at my house before going home. I reached home and sent someone to pay the rickshaw driver. Meanwhile, the stranger had vanished. We looked everywhere but couldn't find him. I had the feeling that it was Guru Maharaj Ji who had seen me home safely."

Before becoming a mahatma, Shyam Lalji was in charge of the premie volunteer corps, who supervised the facilities and crowd control during programs. He recalls,

"I was standing near the stage, wearing my volunteer's sash. Maharaj Ji asked me what it was. I told him and he said, 'Are you a volunteer too?' I answered, 'Yes.' He said, 'Well, what are you doing here? Go and stand at the back!' I did so.

'A Muslim premie, who had just been initiated, was singing a Muslim devotion song—'You have to show me the Light of Sinai', and pointed towards Maharaj Ji. Then I saw a radiant light surround Maharaj Ji and spread out all over the stage. After it had faded I wondered if my eyes had been playing tricks on me. However, when I asked some other premies if they'd noticed anything unusual, they replied that they'd had the same experience.

'On another occasion Maharaj Ji called me in my capacity as the leader of the volunteers and said, 'Tonight you have to make sure that no one can enter or leave the satsang area.' I picked my most trustworthy volunteers and told them that on no account were they to leave their posts.

'Shortly afterwards, Maharaj Ji came on stage wearing his crown and the audience went wild with joy. The poor volunteers on duty said to me, 'What should we do? If we go for darshan we'll be disobeying Maharaj Ji, but if we stay where we are we'll miss everything and be miserable!' All I could say to console them was, 'If Guru Maharaj Ji knows everything then he'll hear your prayer.'

'Just then Maharaj Ji told the audience, 'Sing some songs. I'll be back soon.' He left the stage, still wearing his crown, and went to each one of those volunteers and gave them darshan."

The Aligarh Show is attended by huge crowds every year. Maharaj Ji's satsang was always held at this time, and it became an annual event, too. One year, after the program, the premies asked Maharaj Ji to come and see the Show, as it is renowned throughout India. Maharaj Ji was in a lighthearted mood and agreed. Wherever he went, people stared at him. A couple of Aligarh premies were showing him around. First of all they visited the Hall of Mirrors. Maharaj Ji sent everyone into fits of laughter by pulling funny faces in front of the mirrors. Then he visited the other exhibits and sideshows. He watched a young man perform daring feats on a motor cycle and mused, "Just see the risks people are prepared to take, just to fill their stomachs." A premie asked, "Is it possible to meditate even while doing what he's doing?" Maharaj Ji replied, "Why not? It all depends on practice and how much meditation you've already done." Another premie said, "This year the Show has been unique. Usually it rains on the closing day but today is the last day and nothing has happened!" Maharaj Ji said, "It's not far off!" And indeed, the sky soon became cloudy and within an hour it was pouring with rain.

One year, the Holi Festival was celebrated at Modinagar. A platform was constructed, from which Maharaj Ji threw powder dyes and water on the crowd below. Jagdish Jindal from Delhi recalls, "I sneaked in under the platform and had a good shower in the holy water coming from his feet. I drank some, too, and was in ecstasy. Overcome with a sense of love and gratitude for my Master, I grabbed his feet. As I did this, his anger burst on my like a bomb: 'Idiot! What do you think you're doing! What if I fell...!' The premies trembled. Maharaj Ji left the stage and went into his room. I thought to myself, 'Is this all I get for my love and reverence?' When Maharaj Ji came out of his room in the evening, I apologized. He replied, 'Do you think that 'devotion' which knocks me over would please me? Think about it.'"

Mr Jindal, who works for the Delhi Metropolitan Corporation, has been a devotee for many years. He says, "Shri Maharaj Ji was the greatest thing that ever happened to me. I have

never met anyone who could come anywhere near him. The first time I saw him it seemed the most natural thing in the world to prostrate to him. Although this was the first time I'd met him in this life, I felt as if I'd known him for a long time."

Shanti Devi from Modinagar says, "Whenever Maharaj Ji travelled between Dehra Dun and Delhi, he would stop for a while at my house. His love for my husband and me was very special. However, my father-in-law was against him and would scold me, 'You're giving everything in the house away to those saddhus!' Yet, towards the end of his life a miraculous event happened which changed his mind totally. He told me, 'I apologize for speaking ill of your Hans Ji Maharaj. He really is a very great soul. I don't know how I could have been so wrong.'

"When I first received Knowledge I was obsessed by the thought: 'How did Mira Bai make Lord Krishna appear to her?' One evening I went into my room to sing Arti. Suddenly the room was full of light and there stood Shri Maharaj Ji wearing a crown!"

During a program at Bulandshahr a *brahmachari* (one who has taken the vow of celibacy) came to hear satsang. After he received Knowledge, he was given the traditional yellow robes of the brahmacharis. It went to his head and he started to think of himself as a great devotee. He was able to give satsang in three languages—Hindi, English and Sanskrit. Some time later, during the first night of the Bulandshahr Guru Puja, Shri Maharaj Ji told him to give satsang. He stood up and spoke in three languages. The second day, Maharaj Ji again told him to give satsang, but he found that he couldn't say a single word. Shri Maharaj Ji said, "Brahmachari Ji, you are a very learned scholar, so say something! What do people like you understand about the grace of the Guru! Puffed up with your intellectual vanity, you think you're the one who's doing everything!"

Lucknow

Uttar Pradesh is the largest state in India. Shri Maharaj Ji's Knowledge had reached every district in U.P. and satsang

programs were often held in its capital, Lucknow. The Lucknow daily, 'Navjivan', described the program held on 27th February, 1961, thus:

"A two-day function has been arranged by the Lucknow branch of the Hardwar-based Divya Sandesh Parishad, headed by Paramsant Satgurudev Shri Hans Ji Maharaj. Addressing the audience, Shri Hans Ji Maharaj said, 'Man, through his science, has extracted more and more secrets from the womb of Nature and has put them to work in inventions that are surprising even him. Even though man has control over the resources of Nature, he still lacks mental peace. He has forgotten the very basis of life itself.' Quoting from different scriptures, he declared that the source of true peace and happiness, which people try to gain through external means, lies within human beings themselves. The mind is something internal, and the way to control it, which is meditation on the Divine Light and True Name of God, is also within, but one can't experience them until the Divine Eye is opened, and only a true saint can do that.' Speaking out against parochialism, Shri Maharaj Ji advised people to decide on the path to salvation and translate it into action in their daily lives."

Another large program was held on 2nd and 3rd December. The 'Navjivan', which is the paper owned by the Nehru family, carried this report in its 3/12/61 issue:

"Today the founder of Divya Sandesh Parishad, Paramsant Satgurudev Shri Hans Ji Maharaj, headed an enormous procession arranged by the Parishad. Approximately 1,500 people—men, women, boys and girls—from all parts of India participated. These people, dedicated to the cause of serving humanity, wore Divya Sandesh Parishad sashes and held aloft posters of past saints and masters. Mahatmas riding on elephants and horses carried 'True Name' and 'Divine Light' flags. A special attraction was the City Montessori School students' band. A special carriage had been constructed for Shri Hans Ji Maharaj. He halted at certain intervals to allow townspeople to offer flowers at his feet."

Footpaths and buildings along the route were thronged with spectators.

'The procession ended with a public program at Aminabad. Shri Mahavir Prasad, M.L.A. presided. On the first day of the two day 'Assembly of Saints', arranged by the Divya Sandesh Parishad, Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and Christians sat together to try and learn from Maharaj Ji's speeches the secret of human unity. Shri Hans Ji said that people seek *Khuda* and *Ishwar* outside when in fact He dwells within everyone. Like all other natural phenomena, the way of devotion is one and the same for all mankind. We should shun groups which try to fragment society in the name of religion. During his 'Chairman's Address', Shri Mahavir Prasad praised Shri Hans Ji Maharaj's philosophy, which, if followed, he declared, would put an end to mutual animosity and also make individual liberation possible.'

The English daily, 'Pioneer', carried this article in its 4/12/61 issue:

'Addressing the audience at the 'Assembly of Saints' arranged by the Divya Sandesh Parishad at Animadhaula Park today, Shri Hans Ji Maharaj said that the source of real peace is within every human being. Neither national unity nor world peace can be established through materialism. Peace and equanimity are related to Spirit. Peace is impossible for the person whose spirit is not still and tranquil. Politicians and royalty scoff at this basic fact and this is the reason why the world is still very far from its goal of peace. He said further that inner peace comes only from experiencing the Divine Light personally. The goal of Divya Sandesh Parishad is to open the Third Eye of mankind and show everyone the Inner Light. For the Parishad, national unity is not just a theory, but will occur of its own accord as the Knowledge of the Divine Light spreads. By revealing this Light to people of all castes and creeds, and thus threading them on the string of brotherly love, the Parishad was presenting a practical example of national unity.'

Shri Ram Babu Saxena, a former resident of Lucknow, is a very senior devotee who has been serving in Shri Maharaj Ji's

ashrams for many years. He received Knowledge in 1948. Strangely enough, although he had been visiting saddhus and mahatmas since childhood, it was through his mother that he received Knowledge. She told him, "Son, why go here and there getting involved with these saddhus? Right here in our neighbourhood is one of Shri Hans Ji's mahatmas, who can reveal the true Knowledge and can show you God within yourself." Ram Babuji says, "That surprised me. At first I thought that some saddhu or other had duped her, but I was impressed by her staunch faith. I received Knowledge on 1st. January, 1948. I saw a radiant figure dressed in white in my meditation. The mahatma said, 'He is our Guru Maharaj Ji. He dwells in every heart and through his *Yoga-maya* (power of illusion) comes into this world to liberate souls.' From then on I was obsessed with the idea of seeing Maharaj Ji.

'One of my school teachers told me that he had seen Maharaj Ji, dressed in a crown and the yellow Pitambari robes of Krishna, in a procession at Allahabad Kumbha Mela. He added, 'He is a matchless personality.' I first saw Maharaj Ji during Vaisakhi at Prem Nagar. He was as shining in the flesh as he had been in my meditations.

'In 1956 a satsang program was arranged at Piwari village in Badaun district. It was held outside the village in a park and thousands of people came. Maharaj Ji arrived in a bullock cart. It was a dry and scorching day in May. The road was unpaved so dust was billowing all around the cart. Maharaj Ji looked just like the full moon in all its glory, sailing through silvery clouds. Simple accommodation was provided in the form of a rather basic, but spotless, whitewashed hut. Maharaj Ji cheerfully stayed in this humble dwelling in the middle of summer. He gave satsang and darshan for two days to the premies, most of whom were poor. His love for the poor was phenomenal. Their pitiful circumstances would cause his heart to melt in compassion and his grace and darshan would help them overcome their difficulties. That is why Guru is called *Hari*—the Vanquisher.

'One day' in 1958 Shri Maharaj Ji arrived unexpectedly in Lucknow. He stayed at Suraj Rani Vanchu's home in Kesarganj. This old lady had an extraordinary love for him. When she found him there she was transported with joy. She cooked curry for him but absentmindedly put in too much chilli pepper. Maharaj Ji ate it and gave some to Mahatma Madhudas, saying, 'Give her some of this as prashad but don't say anything.' The old lady tasted it and her nose and eyes started watering. So spicy! She went to Maharaj Ji and started weeping, saying, 'Maharaj Ji, I made a mistake—I was so out of my senses! How on earth did you eat it?' Maharaj Ji said, 'The tears that came from eating it were tears of love. You ate it and cried tears of love, too!'

'Maharaj Ji's darshan was magical. I'm sure that it improved my eyesight, which had always been very weak. That's why I stared at him unblinkingly. The other premies thought it a bit weird, but I saturated myself with darshan. Just as gazing at the rising sun is good for the eyes, so gazing at Maharaj Ji strengthened my eyes. Indeed, he was like the rising sun for me.

'Premies enjoyed his love, but I also enjoyed his reprimands! Once he was angry with me, and as I was bowing to him he kicked me in the lower back. It was definitely a unique experience. Firstly, it cured my chronic back pains and secondly, increased my ability to sit longer for meditation. When I first received Knowledge I had been barely able to sit to meditate. I couldn't even sit long enough to finish a meal!'

Once, satsang was held at Banali Dari, Lucknow. About 500 people walked from Patna to participate in the program. St. Kabir said, "Go on foot to see a saint. Every step you take is equal to thousands of yagyas." Shri Maharaj Ji also said, "The further you go for satsang, the more you will benefit from it."

He continued, "Satsang is most essential for self-transformation. It can change even the worst sinners. The results of satsang are immediate. It was satsang that changed the bandit Ratnakar into the saint Valmiki. You should go to satsang daily, serve Guru Maharaj Ji with your body, mind and resources, and

meditate on the Holy Name. Then you will reap the benefit. Think of service, satsang and meditation as a tripod. If one leg breaks, the whole thing is useless.

'A lot of people think that if they get involved with service and satsang their worldly affairs will suffer. Not at all. A person who devotes himself sincerely to God never suffers in any way. Prahlad was devoted to God and ran into opposition from his father, who tormented him in every way, but nothing could unsettle him. This is the glory of devotion.

'Samadhi results from merging the mind in the Holy Name. The joy of samadhi is indescribable. It is the 'light merging into the Light'. The Name can take the mind to the highest stages of consciousness. A kite flies with the help of a string. It is lifted aloft by wind currents. In the same way, with the help of the Holy Name, the mind soars above the six lower spheres—*bhuah*, *bhuvah*, *svahah*, *mahah*, *janah* and *tapah* to the seventh, *satyam*, the abode of Truth, the ultimate. I wear myself out telling you all this over and over again, simply so that you may understand and make a success of your precious human life. Human beings can do anything. This is the *karmayoni*, the form in which we can work to determine our future. So wake up! Think! We see people dying every day. We also don't know when our turn will come. Then what good will remorse do you? St. Kabir said that this body is like a glass jar. If the jar breaks, everything slips from your hands. So don't put off until tomorrow that which you can do today. St. Kabir also said, 'You say that you'll do today's work tomorrow and when tomorrow comes you postpone it again. Before you know it, you've missed your chance.'

'Meditation means joining your consciousness to God. Parents hold their baby's hands as they teach it to walk. Whoever becomes mine, I'll definitely take safely across, whether I hold his hand or he holds mine.

'There is no such thing as ignorance. It is simply the absence of Knowledge. Yesterday I was absent, but today I am present. So where has my absence gone? There is no such thing as absence. I

exist; I have form and personality. Similarly, darkness is the absence of light. There is no such entity as darkness. Darkness automatically disappears for the person who receives Knowledge and Light from Guru Maharaj Ji. He lights the lamp within you. I unlock everyone's inner door and place the luminous jewel of the Holy Name in their hearts, so that they see Light inside and out.

'First you should listen to satsang. Secondly, you should think about it and decide whether or not it is the truth. Realize the truth and put it into action. Meditate on it non-stop.'

At this point, a woman in the audience started making a noise. Maharaj Ji said sharply, "Look, I'm telling you how to meditate constantly and how to devote yourself to God, but people don't understand. You can chatter at home, but the chance to hear satsang is rare!

'The Lord loves His devotees. He is in their power. There are the trios of Beloved-devotee-devotion and Knowledge-knower-known. But if you don't know God's true Name, how can you meditate and devote yourself to it? Only a person who devotes himself is a devotee. Devotion doesn't come from mind-bending exercises. People nowadays are caught up in mantras, tantras and books, and are impressed by totally false definitions of the Unmanifest and Manifest Forms of God. They don't know anything. They follow like sheep and believe whatever they hear. This is not idle condemnation. It's something to think about. What is the Essence, the Indivisible and Imperishable?

'Something indivisible can never be divided. If it could be, then how would it be 'indivisible'? Indivisible is the Name, and the mind can't be controlled without it. St. Kabir said:

'If you don't know the Name, your mind stumbles in ignorance. If you don't find the Name, the way out of transmigration, you'll keep on revolving. You twist the rosary with your hand and mutter with your mouth, while your mind flies in all directions. This is not meditation.'

'None of our learned academics or philosophers can explain this couplet of St. Kabir's:

'You've been turning rosaries for ages, but still you don't know where the mind goes. Throw away the external rosary and turn the inner.'

What is the rosary of the heart? Similarly, our leading intellectuals deliver fine speeches on Ramayana, but they don't know the meaning of this single line of Tulsidas:

'The soul, being part of God, is imperishable.'

Can any intellectual explain to you how the soul is a part of God? They are only interested in external rituals and ceremonies. Prominent swamis tell you to meditate on a stone and say that it will open your inner vision. Shame on people who are not interested in seeing God within themselves and allow themselves to be so misled by selfish crooks that they believe pebbles and stones to be God! My friends, first you should see for yourself, *then* believe what a guru says. Think first then tell me honestly, where does your mind go while you are doing *pūja* and all the rest of it? Meditation is supposed to concentrate and still the mind. If these external methods don't do that, then what's the use of practising them? The Knowledge which Guru Maharaj Ji reveals is eternal. It can never be destroyed. The Name which I reveal has not been made up by anyone. It makes Brahma, Vishnu and all the sages what they are. It is the True Name, *Satyanam*, *Akhand Nam*, (indivisible Name) *Pavan Nam* (Holy Name), *Ram Nam*. With my Knowledge you can understand all scriptures perfectly. It unravels all their mysteries. Take Knowledge and see! You'll also be able to understand what all the saints and scriptures are saying. I don't give any mantras. I give you a direct experience—the same Knowledge which Rama, Krishna, King Janak and the ancient sages revealed. The rest is up to you. If you want to realize it, providing you stay in this body long enough, you can do it. On the other hand, you can get involved in the false and unreal, if you

so desire, but you're the one who'll suffer. If you realize the Truth it will be all the better for you.

'Religious teachers and intellectuals tell you that *Aum* is the Name of God. But *Aum* is a verbal sound, while the Holy Name is said to be beyond speech. Because *Aum* is verbal it can't be chanted at the very last moment of life. At that time, only the letterless Name can be recollected, because it is beyond speech.

'There are four kinds of light—sunlight, moonlight, firelight and Divine Light. The first three kinds can be perceived by all creatures, but only human beings can see the fourth. The Vedas call it *Bhargo*, the Upanishads call it *Jyoti*, the Gita calls it *Paramdham* (the Supreme Abode), the Bible calls it *Light*, the Koran, *Noor*. The Ramayana calls it *Sahaj Prakash* or *Param Prakash*, and the Granth Sahab calls it *Chānda*. But is only described by the scriptures. These are only writings, whereas the actual Light is within you, and the one who can show it to you is called 'Guru'.

'Lord Krishna explained in the Gita that nothing done in the way of devotion ever perishes, so even if you don't achieve liberation in this life, you'll be reborn as a human being to carry on your devotion and thus attain salvation. To such a person all opportunities are easily available in the next birth.

'You all know that now we are suffering or enjoying the results of previous actions. Everyone is aware of his present actions. The future is based on the present. A person can determine his present actions. The future is based on the present. So a person can determine his own future. That is why I am advising you to dive into Knowledge and devotion, because it will improve this life of yours and the next.'

When in Lucknow, Maharaj Ji used to stay at Rameshchand Gupta's house. A branch of Divya Sandesh Parishad was opened there. Previously the family's financial situation had been quite strained. Mrs. Gupta recalls, "At first we lived in a rented house. One day Shri Maharaj Ji arrived unexpectedly and I had no food at all in the house. As I was wondering what I could offer him, he

opened a package and said, 'What's wrong? Don't you have anything to eat here? Don't worry, I'll give you something.' He gave me delicious parathas and fried vegetables. Since that time we have never been short of food. His grace has provided us with enough for our own family and for any mahatmas who come here. He has made this prayer of Kabir's come true for us:

'O Lord, just give me enough to feed my family. May I not be hungry and may no sadhus ever go away hungry from my house.'

Once in Lucknow a premie presented Maharaj Ji with a carefully-wrapped package of banana peels, saying, "Please accept these. I know that you are fond of banana peels. In Dwapar Age Vidurani offered you some." Maharaj Ji exclaimed, "What? You're just showing off and calling it devotion! At the time when Vidurani offered banana peels by mistake to Lord Krishna, He was not aware of what He was eating, nor was she aware of what she was offering. Oh my! What a situation that was! Both were so transported with love that they forgot themselves. On the other hand, you are well aware that you are offering peels and I am also. So tell me, can you really offer them or I eat them?"

Once Maharaj Ji was going via Lucknow to Patna. The premies had not been informed, but one very devoted premie dreamt about Maharaj Ji, who told him by which train he would be arriving the next day. That devotee told all the other premies. Some didn't believe him, but many did, and arrived at the train station with flower garlands. When the train pulled into the station the premies were amazed to see that Maharaj Ji actually *was* on the train. He stood at the compartment door and gave darshan to everyone. The atmosphere of rejoicing spread across the platform and, hearing the premies' shouts of praise, the other passengers stood up to have a look at Maharaj Ji. The premies were all in tears, and out of their minds with joy. Maharaj Ji asked, "Who told you that I was coming?" They replied, "We got your telegram!" Maharaj Ji said, "What? I didn't send any telegram." The premies

said, "We got your 'inner telegram' of the heart." Maharaj Ji just smiled. Shortly afterwards, the whistle blew and the train started moving. The premies stood behind on the platform and gazed at the train until it was out of sight.

Ram Babu recalls, "One night after satsang, Maharaj Ji was talking to a few premies. He said, 'There was a premie called Dhannumal from Sindh who loved me very much. Some time in 1944 or '45 he moved to Lucknow. I don't know his address. Find him and invite him to satsang.'"

"Some of us were out selling books. We just happened to go towards Maviya and just happened to notice a three-storey building with the name plate 'Seth Dhannumal'. We knocked at the door and a tall, strapping elderly gentleman opened it and asked, 'What do you want?' We told him that we wanted to meet Seth Dhannumal. He said, 'I am he.' We said, 'Your Guru Shri Hans Ji Maharaj is here in Lucknow and was asking about you.' He was astounded and exclaimed, 'What? Is Hans Bhagwan really here?' This was the first he'd heard of him in 14 years. He was overjoyed and hugged us. He started crying and said, 'It is his infinite grace that he remembers an insignificant devotee like me after all these years!' The next day he arrived at Kesarganj. As soon as he saw Shri Maharaj Ji he fell at his feet, weeping. Shri Maharaj Ji told him to stand up and patted him consolingly on the head. Maharaj Ji had a great love for his old devotees. He never forgot their service and love and at the right time would appear to give them darshan and satsang. □

Chapter Five

Devotees' Personal Memories

Shri Maharaj Ji's grace and divinity still reflect themselves in the premies' memories of him. Who was he? What was he? What was he like? The premies' personal accounts of him can help provide the answers. Premies from those days still carry the treasure of indelible memories locked safely away in their hearts:

"I still seem to hear the sound of your footsteps. Sometimes it moves me to smiles, sometimes to tears."

Maharaj Ji's parental affection, his charisma and the Divine Light he revealed brightened his devotees' lives. He was for many the symbol of hope, peace, support and spirituality. How many perturbed and weary souls found rest and renewed power just from coming into contact with him! Even today, they never tire of glorifying him.

Shri Rampal Sharma, of Pakharpur, Meerut, says, "Shri Maharaj Ji was always very pleased if a lot of people attended satsang, because he knew the edifying effect it has on a person's life. He used to say, 'When I see a large audience listening attentively, I pour out my heart to them in my satsang.' Every time he gave satsang he would quote these lines from Tulsidas' Ramayana:

'A soul is very fortunate to receive a human body, which is very rare even for the gods to get and is glorified by all scriptures. It is just right for spiritual endeavour and is the gateway to liberation.'

When anyone asked him why he quoted these lines all the time, he would reply, 'Because you haven't yet realized what it means, nor have you put it into practice. When finally you do

understand, there'll be no need for me to repeat it all the time.'

'I remember one Vaisakhi at Muradnagar. The Arya Samaj had set up their stage near ours and were verbally attacking Maharaj Ji. He said, 'Look! Those Arya Samajists are my real missionaries. They publicize me even more effectively than you do! From the bottom of my heart I bless them!'

Satchitananda Bai recalls, "I used to go selling *Hansadesh*. One day, I didn't manage to sell any, so I was feeling disheartened. Suddenly a gentleman came up to me and said, 'Don't feel bad, Bai Ji. I'll buy up all your magazines.' And he did. I'm sure he was Maharaj Ji."

One of the mahatmas says, "Once at Shakti Nagar Maharaj Ji asked me, 'Are people coming to your satsang or not?' I replied, 'Master, it's not in my power to spread Knowledge. You're the one doing it all, because I'm neither educated nor very experienced. I just tell people what I've seen.' Maharaj Ji said, 'Just do as I say and meditate. That will help you in the end; none of this intellectual knowledge will. Never try to build yourself up. Pride comes before a fall. Meditate, and stay safely within the fortress of *agya*. Guru Maharaj Ji will take care of the rest.' I ventured, 'Nothing is possible without your grace.' He answered, 'I'm always ready to give grace, but you have to be a fit vessel to receive it. If the electric current exceeds a bulb's capacity, the bulb will fuse. So Guru's grace can work only by the 'grace' of the receiving soul."

Shri Ram Singh, a Delhi barber, recalls, "I received Knowledge in 1960. Several times Maharaj Ji blessed me with the opportunity of giving him a shave. Once I thought to myself, 'How lucky I would be if I could give Maharaj Ji massage.' One morning at Shakti Nagar I got my chance. Some close devotees were massaging Maharaj Ji. I asked one of them to let me have a chance, too. When he noticed me, Maharaj Ji sent everyone else away, saying, 'He'll massage me.' I massaged him very carefully and lovingly. I was meditating, and my hands seemed to move of their

own accord. He said, 'When you massaged my head, I heard music. I'm really enjoying this.'

Sukbir from Jalalabad, who was a local official in the Congress Party, said, "There was something wrong mentally with my son, which affected his learning abilities. I was very worried about it, so I went to Satlok Ashram to see Maharaj Ji. Luckily for me, he was sitting alone on the verandah. I told him my problem. He replied, 'Why are you worried? He'll learn okay.' This cheered me up and actually, by his grace, my son improved and soon was able to study by himself. He enrolled at Maharaj Ji's school in Muradnagar. Nowadays he has a good job." The residents of Jalalabad have assisted greatly in building the school and are always willing to do whatever service is asked of them.

Natthu Singh of Muradabad says, "In 1960, Maharaj Ji came to Muradabad for satsang. After the program the premies made their various ways home. Maharaj Ji also had to catch a train. When he reached the station he went to the Station Master's office to make enquiries. At first the Station Master didn't take any notice of him. Then Maharaj Ji just shot a glance at him. The man immediately jumped up and prostrated. Maharaj Ji said, 'Don't let your position go to your head and make you forget your duty.'"

Mulakraj, from Kota, Rajasthan, has been Maharaj Ji's devotee for many years. He used to live in Delhi. "Once," he says, "I and my family were going to Hardwar by bus for Vaisakhi. As we passed through Muradnagar I had an extraordinary vision. Wherever I looked I saw Maharaj Ji's face. He seemed to be seeing which devotees were coming from where. As I was telling my wife about it, our bus swerved to avoid a cyclist and overturned. Many passengers were injured. Suddenly I burst out laughing so people thought that maybe I'd received a head injury! After all the passengers had been evacuated, only my daughter was missing. We found her sleeping under one of the seats! Of all the passengers, only we four were unharmed. We finally arrived at Prem Nagar at 2 a.m. As we approached the ashram buildings, Shri Maharaj Ji came out of his room, asking, 'You weren't injured, were you?'

From then on, I firmly believed in this saying of St. Kabir's: 'No one can harm him whom the Lord protects.' "

Shivcharan of Mandola, Ghaziabad, recalls, "Once I was waiting for a bus at Kashmiri Gate Terminal. I decided to do some meditation in the meantime. My mind was concentrated in the Light and as Maharaj Ji appeared I lost all body-consciousness. I have no idea how long it was before I came to and found an acquaintance shaking me, saying, 'What's up? Have you been drinking?' 'No,' I replied, 'Not that artificial stuff. I drink the real thing.' "

Ram Narayan, a D.C.M. employee, says, "I attended a satsang program at Baroda. Maharaj Ji said, 'I want to rest for a while. Sit outside my door.' After he had shut the door, I decided that it was a good time to go and sell a few copies of Hansadesh on the streets. I was fond of doing that. Some Baroda premies came looking for me later in a jeep, and brought me some food. Apparently Maharaj Ji had already eaten and, not finding me anywhere, had sent people out looking for me. When I returned he said sharply, 'So you want to go hungry, do you? I'll teach you!' Then he said more gently, 'Look, never go hungry, even if you have to beg. Your hunger makes me sad.' "

"I worked the night shift at D.C.M. One night, having just returned from Hardwar, I was exhausted. I told my partner to watch the machine while I took a nap. I lay down beside an old iron chest. As I was dropping off to sleep, I had the feeling that a snake was nearby. I opened my eyes and there it was, but it had Maharaj Ji's head and crown, and was saying, 'Go to sleep and don't worry. I'm in the snake, too!' "

Mahatma Paripurnanand recalls, "One day a group of troublemakers arrived at Shakti Nagar, shouting, 'Come outside! Where are you, 'Hans Bhagwan'?' Mahatma Madhudas went and told Maharaj Ji, who said, 'Okay, send them in one by one.' At that time he looked so enchantingly lovely that those ruffians automatically calmed down. It was like water putting out a fire.' "

Hari Bhajan Narayan Gupta, the manager of a sugar mill in Kashipur, relates, "In 1964 my wife was travelling by train from Allahabad to Kashipur with our two young daughters-in-law and their children. Some hooligans got on at Lucknow and started menacing them. My wife was very scared; so, closing her eyes, she prayed to Maharaj Ji for help. Soon the train stopped at a station and who should get on but Maharaj Ji! When my wife saw him, she was greatly relieved. He asked her for a drink of water, which she gave him together with a snack. Meanwhile, the hooligans didn't dare open their mouths. Shri Maharaj Ji said, 'I saw you so I came here.' The thugs left the train at the next station and Maharaj Ji the station after that. My wife had no idea where he went.' "

Saraswati Gupta of Muradabad recalls, "Whenever Shri Maharaj Ji arrived at Gaya Prashad's house, the rooms seemed to just light up. He shone like gold, and had a dazzling effect on the eyes. Whenever I think of him I start crying, wondering where that wonderful stealer of hearts has gone. Yet, whenever I call him, he hears my prayer. Three or four times he has come. He is very much present even now.

"He was always cheerful, no matter where he had to stay. He would go everywhere on foot to give satsang and the love he showed his disciples was beyond all description.' "

Mahatma Kabiranand says, "I received Knowledge in 1966. Six months later, in meditation, I saw Shri Maharaj Ji's Universal Form. It thrills me still whenever I recall it. After this cosmic vision I lost all interest in worldly things.' "

Kirpal Singh says, "Once I was sleeping on a well. Suddenly an evil spirit overpowered me. My hands, feet and tongue couldn't move and I was shaking with fear. Suddenly I saw Shri Maharaj Ji standing beside the well, saying, 'You've forgotten the Holy Name.' As I tuned my mind to the Name, the ghost became afraid and left me alone.

"I am a poor man, with a wife and three children. I have a tiny shop which barely makes 150 rupees per month. But, by Maharaj Ji's grace, this always seems to be enough and we never run out of

money. There are rich people in my village who complain, 'Even with all my money I have trouble making ends meet, but somehow Kirpal Singh manages okay. What's his secret?' I laugh and quote, 'Misery rules the world. Meditating on the Holy Name is the only joy.' "

Bhavani Dutt, an ayurvedic physician and professor, says, "One day I reached the Shakti Nagar residence, only to find a mahatma at the gate saying that I couldn't see Maharaj Ji. So I sat down near the gate. The mahatma told me three or four times to go away but I stayed put in the hope of seeing Maharaj Ji. A little while later Shri Maharaj Ji came out of the house and reprimanded the mahatma, saying, 'I've been watching you. This poor fellow has come a long way to see me. You people strut around thinking yourselves to be great devotees. Actually you're an obstacle in my work.' Then Maharaj Ji invited me inside.

'I didn't like to ask Maharaj Ji any questions personally, but I always found that any questions or doubts that arose in my mind were always automatically answered in satsang. Before taking Knowledge I had been into mantras and tantras. I left all that after initiation, but when I went home people insisted on my using them. I found that whenever I did invoke them I got instant results. This confused me greatly, because in satsang this verse from Kabir was always quoted:

'Tantras and mantras are all false, so don't be fooled. Without knowing the Word which is the inner essence of everything, you can't cross the worldly ocean.'

Soon after, in satsang, I inwardly expressed my doubt. Maharaj Ji immediately explained that mantras may be effective in the worldly sense, but they can't give liberation."

Basant Lalji, from Haryana, formerly worked at Delhi University but for many years has been serving in the ashram. He says, "One day, some time after I had received Knowledge, I had to visit some relatives. The next day was a Sunday and I felt anxious somehow to get back to Delhi. Even though my relatives

tried to detain me, a strong force was pulling me back. When I reached Shakti Nagar, I discovered that Maharaj Ji had just arrived in Delhi. When I went for darshan I felt an extraordinary peace. My anxious heart became calm. It seemed to me that Maharaj Ji had pulled me to Delhi to give me darshan.

'His personality was truly amazing and unique. He was the living manifestation of the Holy Name—he was totally merged in it. He had no idea of day or night, date or season. One evening he asked me, 'What day is it today? What's the date? How is the weather?' I was amazed, and seeing him gave me some idea of the condition called *videhi* (complete transcendence of body-consciousness). Maharaj Ji was the practical proof of Knowledge. No matter who came to argue or discuss with him, his irrefutable arguments and total faith would make them bow."

Mahatma Yogeshwaranand says, "Even as a child, I was totally disinterested in the world. I wanted to know God. When I grew up I served in the army. After receiving Knowledge I became even less interested in worldly things and, without getting discharged from the army, became a mahatma and started spreading Knowledge. The punishment for going AWOL was six months' jail. Even in jail I gave satsang and several prisoners received Knowledge. Shri Hans Ji Maharaj used to appear to me in jail and give me satsang."

Rajender Thapa was born in Nepal, but since the age of nine has lived and served in the ashram. He studied until 10th grade at Shri Mata Ji's school. He helped with the research and collation of this book. He says, "I had the overwhelming desire to have darshan of Shri Hans Ji Maharaj. One day, I lay down after meditating. Suddenly I saw Shri Maharaj Ji. He was giving satsang at Prem Nagar about the importance of faith. The vision was so vivid that I felt that I was actually there with him. I'd forgotten that he'd left his body many years before. At one point he said, 'Can you jump across this river?' Nobody dared, of course. So he said, 'I'll show you how.' He leaped across the river in a single bound. Then I returned to normal consciousness. It seemed to me

that he was explaining that the heroic devotee who is faithful and diligent can clear the river of Maya."

Chandrabahadur Hamal has been serving in the ashram for more than fifteen years. He used to be in the army. He had his first encounter with Maharaj Ji while stationed temporarily at Lucknow. Here is his story: "One Sunday some friends and I were off duty and wandering around the market. As we neared Gulabi Bagh we saw some kind of religious gathering. I asked someone, a premie, what was going on. He explained, 'This is satsang and Shri Hans Ji Maharaj, whom you see on the stage, is our Guru.' I asked, 'What do you mean by 'Guru'?' He explained using the example of the four Vedas, saying, 'Each Veda represents and glorifies a technique of meditation, and those techniques Guru Maharaj Ji reveals to us.' I asked if I could have darshan and was invited to join the line. As I was approaching him, Maharaj Ji looked at me. His eyes were as brilliant as a cat's eyes in the dark. A beam of light flashed from his eyes into mine. I didn't get a chance to talk to him, and the next day was transferred to Kashmir. In Srinagar I stopped for a glass of water. As I lifted the glass I was surprised to see Shri Maharaj Ji in the water! He was wearing shining white clothes and was holding a Bhagavad Gita. Then something happened to me. I started seeing him everywhere—in stones, leaves, tables, in the river, everywhere. I walked around as if in a trance, and people thought that I had gone mad. I tried telling them what was happening to me, but no one would listen or try to understand. By now one thought alone obsessed me—how to meet Maharaj Ji and take Knowledge.

A couple of days later I suddenly fell ill. Depressed, I complained mentally to Maharaj Ji, 'If you are the true Guru, why are you letting me suffer like this?' Then I fell asleep. I dreamt that Guru Maharaj Ji came to me with a small bottle of medicine. He told me to open my mouth, and put three drops on my tongue. Then he went away. When I awoke, I found I was perfectly all right again and had regained my strength. Naturally, my reverence for him increased even more and I felt even more drawn towards

him and detached from the world. By this time, people decided that I was a hopeless case and should be discharged. They sent me to the Company Commander who asked, 'Why are you carrying on like this? Why do they all say that you are mad?' I answered, 'Sir, what is a crazy man like? Do I seem crazy to you? Am I neglecting my duties? God does with us as He wishes, whether the world may call us crazy or not.' Luckily the Major was a religious man and had his own guru, so understood my mood. He declared, 'This man is not crazy. He is simply in love with God. Anyone who calls him mad is himself mad.' Then he told me, 'I'm transferring you to light duties at Jammu Rear Camp. You can carry on your devotions there.'

I settled into my new routine and several days passed. One day I was on sentry duty at the gate. A man came up to me and asked me the time. I was very impressed by his gentle and polite manner. I told him, 'It's 4:15. Where are you going?' He answered that he was off to buy vegetables because his Guru Maharaj Ji had just arrived. I asked, 'Who is your guru?' He replied, 'Shri Hans Ji Maharaj from Delhi.' My heart leaped in excitement as I asked, 'You mean the one with curly hair who did a program at Lucknow's Gulabi Bagh?' 'Yes, that's him.' I was so happy that I burst into tears and embraced him. He seemed like an angel sent from heaven. I got his address. I took four days's leave and went for darshan. Maharaj Ji was sitting on a chair, surrounded by devotees, who were gazing at him like Chatak birds staring at the moon. When I prostrated, he asked me where I was from and why I had come. I answered, 'I want to receive Knowledge and devote myself to you in every life to come.' He smiled. His smile was so loving and meaningful that my heart was shot to pieces.

On 18th May, 1955, the wealth of the world became mine. I felt that Light was just pouring out of me like rays from the sun. Shri Maharaj Ji initiated me personally. I saw him in the brilliant Divine Light, wearing a golden crown. This is the Light which the Bible calls 'Divine', and I saw it within myself.

"When my leave was up and I had to return to my unit, I wept bitterly. Shri Maharaj Ji said tenderly, 'There's no need to cry. You've found me. Now go back to your duties and do a lot of meditation.'

"I returned, but had no taste for worldly life. I tried to get discharged from the army and succeeded in 1967. By 1969 I had settled my family affairs and came to live in the ashram, where, by his grace, I have been ever since. I humbly request brothers and sisters the world over to find this Knowledge and make their lives truly worthwhile."

Recalling another incident, Chandrabahadur says, "After receiving Knowledge I was stationed for some time in Nagaland. I gave a lot of satsang to my fellow soldiers but only two were interested. They came with me to Dehra Dun. Maharaj Ji received us on the verandah. His sons were playing nearby on the lawn. One of my companions was confused by this. He asked me later, 'How can he be the Lord? He's a family man!' I reassured him that he would understand everything once he received Knowledge. Maharaj Ji told us to eat and rest then go to Hardwar. On the way, my friend plied me with questions which revealed his doubts. When we reached Hardwar a couple of hours later, we were astounded to see Shri Maharaj Ji sitting in a chair giving satsang to ashram residents. How could he be in two places at once? We asked Mahatma Premanand who told us that Maharaj Ji had been there at least two hours. My friend had no more doubts!"

Kamla Devi, from village Bahuva in Dehra Dun district, has been serving as a teacher's assistant at Satlok Ashram's school for ten years. Here is her story:

"One night when I was ten years old, I dreamed that I was walking through a trackless jungle. In front of me was a high mountain and the road going up it was nearly impassable. It was so narrow in places that I had to crawl on my stomach. At the end of the track I saw a hut. A saddhu was standing in front of it. Something about him made me feel joyous. I took a step forward and prostrated at his feet. He told me to stand up and I burst into

tears. He took me by the hand and gently helped me up. He asked, 'Daughter, what do you want?' I looked at him. He was wearing a yellow dhoti and scarf and held a waterpot in one hand. I said, 'Lord, I don't want anything. I only want to be with you.' So he said, 'Don't worry. The doors of the *Darbar* (Court or congregation of the Master) are open for you. Your wish will be fulfilled.' Then he vanished. I again started weeping and the dream broke. My mother asked me why I was crying. She asked me if I had a stomach ache. I answered, 'No.' From that time on I lost all interest in the world. I used to see him in dreams and visions, but didn't know who he was. Once he appeared to me while I was cutting grass and danced with me. I only realized who he was when I received Knowledge and came to Satlok Ashram, where I saw his photograph. I asked a premie who he was, and he told me. I exclaimed, 'That's him! He's the one whom I've been seeing all these years!'"

Mahatma Akash Bai Ji, a native of Ali village in the Himalayan district of Pauri Garhwal, has a charming story to tell, which shows not only Shri Maharaj Ji's divine personality, but his compassion as well. Bai Ji, now well advanced in years, has been spreading Knowledge for more than fifteen years, but at the time she was initiated, she was bringing up six sons and a daughter. She relates:

"My eldest son lived in Delhi and invited me to stay with him. This was many years ago. Everything was very strange and unsettling for me there. We Garhwali village women always veiled our faces and never spoke to men. But here in Delhi, women were walking around openly and confidently and speaking to anyone!

"My son's landlady, Vidyawati, was a premie. She took me one day to satsang at Company Bagh. I had always thought that God was worshipped in temples by external rituals, but these premies and mahatmas were saying that the real worship is within. I was curious to know how that was done.

"Soon I was longing to receive Knowledge. Vidyawati also gave me satsang and explained a lot of things to me, seeing that I

knew nothing about Knowledge and meditation. She also said, 'Guru Maharaj Ji is from Garhwal. He can talk to you in your own language.' I had been wondering how to communicate with him, because although I could more or less understand Hindi, I couldn't speak it. Also I was painfully shy and modest, as Garhwali women are, and was totally unaccustomed to speaking to anyone.

'Maharaj Ji arrived soon afterwards in Delhi, so Vidyawati took me to Shakti Nagar for darshan. When Maharaj Ji was informed that a Garhwali lady had come and wanted Knowledge, he told a mahatma to send me in. I hesitated, overcome with embarrassment, so Mahatma Ji said again, 'Come inside, Shri Maharaj Ji wants to speak to you.' I went in the room and virtually hid behind a chair, my face averted and eyes closed. Maharaj Ji observed me, saying, 'Come here. Where are you?' I moved to within two feet of him. He was sitting on his bed with his feet on the floor. I refused to open my eyes, so he said very gently, 'Why don't you open your eyes? Look at me! See who I am!' When I did finally open my eyes, I was astounded. All I could see of him was from the knees down. The rest was nothing but light. Light filled the entire room. I closed my eyes in awe but the same brilliant Light was inside, too! Inside or out, all that was visible was this wonderful Light. For half an hour this continued. Finally Maharaj Ji assumed his human form and asked, 'Well, did you see me? Did you see who I really am?' He continued, 'Because of your good karma you've been able to see this form of mine. But you still have to know the technique of meditation.' I said, 'I won't go back to Garhwal. I've wiped all that from my mind.' And indeed, I had forgotten home and family. My only desire was to receive Knowledge and share it with others.

'Guru Maharaj Ji asked, 'Do you have anyone at home? Tell me the truth, now. Don't lie to me. If you have no family at all, then stay here, but if you have, you'll have to go back. Who'll look after your husband?' I told him the situation. He replied, 'So how can you even think of staying here? Until children get married they need their mother. Moreover, if you don't go, it will bring shame

on you, your family and on me. You have a karmic connection with your family, and you have to work it out. So go home, meditate, and serve your husband.'

'I was plunged into misery. I knew that I had to go, but when would I be able to see Maharaj Ji again? Garhwal was so far away. A few days later, I asked Vidyawati to take me once more to Shakti Nagar. There were about ten ladies waiting for darshan. Maharaj Ji called us in. I sat right at the back, gazing intently, trying to capture an image of his heavenly form to take with me. I did pranam, gazing up at him with my hands clutching his feet. His feet were radiating light. I actually saw his toenails shining like diamonds, emeralds and sapphires. He said, 'You must go. When your family responsibilities are over, come back. The door of the Darbar is open to you. This Darbar will keep on growing—it will never shrink.'

'I went home but was in such turmoil that I couldn't sleep. At 3 a.m. I sat for meditation. Just as the clock struck four, I started to feel drowsy. Suddenly Shri Maharaj Ji appeared, tall, robust and magnetic. He took me in his lap as a father would his daughter, stroked my hair and said soothingly, 'Why are you crying? I am always with you. My name is 'Hans', and Hans is omnipresent. I am in everyone's heart, but come only to those who call me with love. So go home and meditate.' Now I felt totally at peace. I was ready to go home. I discharged all my responsibilities faithfully over the next eleven years and when I was free I became a mahatma, by his grace. Shri Maharaj Ji was always ready to shower his grace.'

Vishnu Sahai, from Delhi, says, "In 1962 I went to Muradnagar for satsang. An acquaintance and I went for a swim in the Ganges. He dared me to swim across the river. I told him that I wasn't a strong swimmer, but he said, 'Don't worry. If you run out of breath, I'll catch you.' I innocently trusted him and started swimming. By the time we'd reached the middle of the river I was gasping for breath, so he caught my hand. Very soon, however, he said, 'If you keep hanging onto me I'll drown too.' I let go of his

hand, thinking, 'What's the use of us both drowning?' and resigned myself to Guru Maharaj Ji's care. As I was going under, I found myself remembering the Holy Name, and suddenly I was imbued with a remarkable new strength. Just then, I noticed a rubber tyre floating near me. I grabbed it and reached the river bank. I lay gasping for a while on the shore, because my ears, nose and mouth were waterlogged. When I opened my eyes, there was no sign of the rubber tyre. There is no doubt that Guru Maharaj Ji gave me a new lease of life."

Delhi premie Jai Gopal says, "One year I went to Bulandshahr for Guru Puja. After satsang Shri Maharaj Ji told everyone to quickly leave the stage area and go to their tents. We wondered why he had said this. Then a sudden and violent storm blew up. The stage tenting collapsed and rain poured down. Then we realized that Maharaj Ji had saved us from possible injury."

Another Delhi premie, Hari Kishan Jain, says, "On one occasion I visited my village. My brother's daughter-in-law became possessed by a deity from time to time and in that state she was its oracle. Whatever she said always came true. My brother invited me to ask her anything I liked. I showed her a copy of Hansadash, asking, 'Whose photo is this?' She replied, 'The living Perfect Master. He previously incarnated as Lord Krishna and he is your Guru. You were his disciple before, but you didn't reach salvation, so you have again incarnated with him.' After this, my faith and reverence for Maharaj Ji increased even more."

A Haryana premie, Ganga Ram, recalls, "During a program at Karnal, Maharaj Ji called me into his room. He was staying at Ram Diwaya's house and was asking me about his host's family. I happened to mention that Ram Diwaya's brother, Lakshman Das, didn't have a son. He blessed Lakshman Das, whose wife bore him a son a year later. Maharaj Ji named the child 'Guru Prashad'."

Maharaj Ji held programs throughout Haryana. In 1961 he gave satsang at Ramana Ramani. A premie, Jagatram, whom other premies nicknamed 'Jagtu', recalls, 'I had received Knowledge but my movements were very much restricted by my family. However,

I firmly made up my mind to attend the Ramana Ramani program, whether my family allowed it or not. On my way to the town, I met two villagers and asked them, 'Is this where Shri Hans Ji Maharaj's satsang is being held?' They laughed derisively and said, 'Yes, he's waiting for you!' The way they spoke about such a great soul hurt me. About half an hour later I reached satsang. Shri Maharaj Ji arrived, dressed in tight-fitting pyjamas, coat and cap, and carrying a cane. The thought crossed my mind, 'Jagtu, your Guru is an old man!'

'After satsang Maharaj Ji called a certain mahatma onstage, reprimanded him and announced, 'Whoever has received Knowledge through this mahatma must get reinitiated.' I was taken aback, because this was the mahatma who had initiated me.

'Shri Maharaj Ji got up early the next morning to go to Delhi. A rickshaw had been sent for, which was to take him to a car waiting further down the road. Maharaj Ji didn't wait for the rickshaw, however, and started walking. I followed him. He seemed to be walking casually while I was running to catch up with him, but the distance between us didn't narrow at all. The rickshaw brought up the rear. We covered at least a quarter of a mile like this, but no matter how hard I ran I could not catch up with him. Then I gave up and said to myself, 'Jagtu, you were thinking that Maharaj Ji is old, that's why he played this little game with you. It is as if he is saying, 'If you are young and I am old, then catch up with me!' Meanwhile, Maharaj Ji had reached his car and driven off to a dharmshala to give darshan. Huffing and puffing, I reached there later. Maharaj Ji's face was as ruddy as a youth's. When he saw me, he smiled. I thought to myself, 'Baba, I agree! You aren't old—you're young!'

Ganpat Ram from Ramana Ramani says, "I was lucky enough to serve Maharaj Ji personally when he came here in 1961. The day before he left, he said, 'I'm very pleased with your service and love. Meditate and spread this Knowledge. I'm leaving in the morning.' When I heard this, my heart broke and I burst into tears. I said, 'If

you leave, how can we survive?' He said, 'You have some understanding. Am I ever far from you? I am with you always.'

'After his car had gone only a short distance, it got bogged down. Four or five of us ran up and freed it. Maharaj Ji stood beside the car and gave some satsang. He said, 'How many people have received my love and satsang, yet only you few followed me this far.' He blessed us and went on his way.'

Ram Singh from Haryana says, "Maharaj Ji was simple, straightforward and guileless. Like Haryana's Jats (a predominant caste there) he was dauntless and not afraid to call a spade a spade. He never hesitated to say what he knew to be true.

'Once a program was held at Khekra. Some Haryana premies had come to attend it. Maharaj Ji was resting after lunch. I had the strong urge to touch his feet. I quietly entered his room. He sat up and said, 'What do you want?' I bowed to him. He said, 'Okay, okay. Now you can go.' I replied, 'No, Maharaj Ji. Please come with me. Some premies have been waiting for a long time downstairs.' He said, 'Very well. Tell them I'm coming.' So he came downstairs and gave darshan, saying, 'Just look at this! Devotees these days force me to give darshan. The Lord has to yield to their demands when he sees their love.' "

Shri Maharaj Ji also spread Knowledge in India's scenic border state of Jammu-Kashmir. He would endure all kinds of difficulties to reach his devotees and give them darshan. Jagdish Saxena, who was employed by the Public Works Department, was transferred from Delhi to Madhopur near Pathankot. Neither he nor his wife Kiran wanted to go there, because they would miss satsang and darshan. Shri Maharaj Ji consoled them, saying, "What is there to be sad about? Your going there will benefit other souls. Give satsang and you'll feel at home there. Come to Delhi from time to time and I'll go there, too." Jagdish Saxena rented a house in nearby Sujanpur and Kiran started satsang there. Every prominent guru and mahatma has an ashram in this area. Kiran says, "I publicized satsang but when word got around that I was a disciple of Shri Hans Ji Maharaj, opposition arose. But, by

Maharaj Ji's grace, I patiently explained about Knowledge to them and not only did Maharaj Ji's fame spread, but several people were initiated. Then my husband was transferred to a village called Bhaddu, the road to which was very rough and practically impassable.

'Once, while we were in Delhi, we requested Maharaj Ji to come to Sujanpur and a date was fixed. The premies gave him a rousing reception. Maharaj Ji was moved by their love and gave wonderful satsang. My husband could not attend the program because of his job. Suddenly Maharaj Ji asked, 'Where is Bhaddu?' I replied, 'It's very difficult to reach because the rains have caused landslides. Even the good military-built stretch of road is blocked. After dark no vehicles go up there.' Everyone advised Maharaj Ji not to go, but he refused to listen, and said, 'You're only interested in saving your own skins. I'll go alone.' He picked up his bag and left. Mahatma Ji, Bhagatji from Delhi, a Sujanpur premie and myself followed him. He reached Madhopur and went by bus to Katucha, where he asked a local shopkeeper how to reach Bhaddu. The man replied, 'You can't go there at night. Spend the night in the hut behind my shop and in the morning catch any vehicle going to Bhaddu.' Just then a Government jeep came by. Maharaj Ji hailed it and climbed inside. There was hardly any room but Maharaj Ji put up with the inconvenience and reached Phentar. The jeep would go no further so he started climbing up the mountainside. The love of the Bhaddu premies was pulling him up that lonely and dangerous mountain road.

'Satsang was being held at Jagdish's house. Premies were singing, 'The Lord of the universe is hungry only for love.' When Maharaj Ji heard this, he guessed that satsang was going on somewhere nearby, and followed the sound to Jagdish's house. The premies sang the last line of the song:

'Devotees beg You to come and give darshan; You are the Lord of the universe and hungry only for love.'

Then they bowed their heads. When they looked up, whom should they see but Maharaj Ji himself! Their joy knew no bounds. Their tears bathed his feet and the surrounding hills rang with their shouts of praise. In this blissful atmosphere of rejoicing and celebration, the premies danced.

'Maharaj Ji spent the night there. The next morning he went for a walk with Jagdish Saxena and his landlord. On the way back, the landlord intentionally started taking the long route. When Jagdish pointed this out, the man said humbly to Maharaj Ji, 'Master, no great soul has ever come here. But now you are here, so please come and sanctify not only the people but the very stones of our locality.' So Maharaj Ji stayed a couple of days longer and gave a lot of satsang. Meanwhile Kiran's group, who had been forced to halt overnight, arrived at Bhaddu.

The premies of Bhaddu and Sujampur cannot sing Maharaj Ji's praises enough. When they remember him, Amrita Rani, Ratna Devi, Sardi, Pyarilal and Jagdish the schoolteacher say, "We can never forget his loving-kindness. He put up with a lot of inconvenience to come and give us satsang."

Shri Ram Kishan Gupta is a Minister in the Sikkim State Government. Both he and his wife, Asha, are premies. Mrs Gupta, who took Knowledge in 1959, recalls, "I was encouraged to take Knowledge by my mother-in-law, who was very devoted to Shri Maharaj Ji. In 1962 during the Indo-Chinese border war the families of high officials were being evacuated from Gangtok. I was also advised to go, but I didn't want to leave my husband, and my children were very young at the time. All the same, I was scared and prayed to Maharaj Ji to protect my family. One night after meditation, he suddenly appeared to me and said, 'Don't be afraid. I love my devotees in the same way as you love and take care of your children.' Then he blessed me.

'I had always cherished the hope that he would one day come to Gangtok and grace my home with his presence. My wish was finally fulfilled in 1978 when Shri Satpal Ji Maharaj came to Sikkim and stayed with us. Just as he entered the house, I heard

Maharaj Ji's voice, saying, 'Well, I've granted your wish. See, I have come to your house.'

Major Prithvi Singh Sambyal and his wife have tremendous love and faith for Shri Maharaj Ji. Whenever the Master visited Jaipur he would stay with them. Mrs Sambyal had a very practical demonstration of his omnipresence:

"Shri Maharaj Ji protected me in the same way as Lord Krishna protected Draupadi. My husband, an army officer, was often away from home. I stayed in Jaipur with our young children. The army provided us with a couple of servants. One of them tried to assault me. I was petrified and immediately my mind flew towards Shri Maharaj Ji, who suddenly appeared before me bathed in brilliant light. My attacker couldn't see him, however. When he found himself held back by an unknown force, he got scared and ran away. Shri Maharaj Ji consoled me and when I had calmed down, vanished."

Shri Jaydev Sharma runs 'Hans Photo Studio' in Karol Bagh, Delhi. He never tires of praising Shri Maharaj Ji. Recalling one incident, he says, "In 1950, when I received Knowledge, my family had a photographics shop. I loved satsang so much that I went to every program I could. My relatives were very much against it. They gave me an ultimatum—either leave the shop or stop going to satsang—and gave me a week to make up my mind. I replied, 'I don't need a week. I'll tell you right now! I can leave the shop tomorrow but I can never leave satsang.'

Shri Maharaj Ji happened to be in Delhi at the time. When I went to see him, he said, 'Close the door and don't let anyone in.' He then took 100 rupees from under his pillow and gave it to me. Even though I protested, he insisted and told me that it was prashad.

'On the way home, I got talking to a friend and told him my family troubles. He asked me if I had any other store in mind. I told him about a shop (the one I now have) which I liked, but the owner wanted a 3000 rupees non-refundable downpayment and I didn't have that much money. He asked me how much I had in my pocket

and I told him that I had 100 rupees. He took me to the shop's owner and gave him my 100 rupees as a deposit. He supplied the rest the next day and the shop became mine.

A week later Maharaj Ji asked me if I had given my shop a name. When I replied that I hadn't given it much thought, he suggested that I call it 'Hans Photo Studio'. One month later came the day of the grand opening. I had arranged everything for the ceremony. The night before, at 11 p.m. Mr Jain and Deshraj knocked at my door and told me that Shri Maharaj Ji was in Delhi and was coming to my shop at 8 o'clock the next morning. When I asked how he had found out about the ceremony, Mr Jain said, 'As we were about to leave, Shri Maharaj Ji asked us why we were going so soon. I told him about your shop's inauguration, and he asked, 'What time should I come?' I replied, 'You name the time and we will tell Sharma right now.' He decided upon 8 a.m.'

'The next day at 8 a.m. Shri Maharaj Ji arrived and sanctified my shop with his presence. I tell you truly, when the Lord wants to give, his bounty knows no bounds. Since that time, my business has continued to flourish.'

Ratanlal Garg first heard about Shri Maharaj Ji from a classmate at school. When he saw him for the first time, he found Maharaj Ji to be everything he'd expected. In 1946 his family opened a business in Hyderabad and were moving there. He and his brother were to leave Delhi on the 3.30 p.m. G.D. Express. Ratanlal says, "My brother went straight to the station, but I wanted to first have darshan and go with Maharaj Ji's blessings. I went to his residence but was told that he was resting. The curtain in front of his door was drawn. I sat down outside the door quite anxiously, firmly resolved not to leave until I'd seen him, no matter what happened. Suddenly he pulled aside the curtain and came out of the room, saying, 'How long have you been waiting here? Go, go quickly!' I prostrated, received blessings and prashad and hurried to the station. I was 20 minutes late, but surprisingly the train was still at the station. Just as I climbed aboard, it started to move. No

one seemed to know the reason for the delay, and I silently thanked Maharaj Ji."

Recalling another incident, Ratanlal says, "An old lady used to bring fried chickpeas as an offering to Shri Maharaj Ji. As soon as she would take up position outside his door, he would draw aside the curtain and take her offering. He would eat a few peas and hand back the rest to her as prashad. I saw this happen many times and I used to think how lucky she was, and how much love she must have had, because Maharaj Ji was always eager to eat her chickpeas."

Yuktiram, a long-time devotee, says, "There is no describing the blessings and favours Shri Maharaj Ji showered on us. My old mother was seriously ill. My younger brother, Balwant, ran to Jai Bahadur's house to call Maharaj Ji. When he heard the news he immediately left his dinner and took a taxi to our house in Delhi's New Market. As soon as they walked in the house, Balwant said, 'Ma, look who's come!' She opened her eyes a little and murmured, 'Guruji! Guru Maharaj Ji!' and closed them again.

'Maharaj Ji had taken off his shoes and left them at the door. Balwant said, 'Master, please leave your shoes on.' Maharaj Ji told him to be quiet and sat down. He asked for some Ganges water. He took a cardamom from his pocket and dropped it in the water. He then placed a spoonful in my mother's mouth. He said, 'Look, this moment comes to everyone, but it is your mother's good fortune that she is remembering the Holy Name.' The following night, my mother completed her earthly existence. At the same time, satsang was going on. Maharaj Ji suddenly said, 'A premie's mother has died,' and abruptly finished the satsang. Some premies soon arrived at our house. I asked them how they knew as we had not yet informed anyone. They told us, 'Tonight at about 9 o'clock Shri Maharaj Ji told us that your mother had died.'"

Manohar and Suraj Prakash, both carpenters, served at Dehra Dun and Prem Nagar for many years. Suraj Prakash relates, "In 1959 I was making chairs at Prem Nagar. Suddenly I got an urgent telegram calling me home. I told Maharaj Ji that I would return

within one week. I prostrated to him and to Shri Satpal Ji Maharaj, who was 5 or 6 at the time. Little Shri Satpal Ji gave me a flower. When I arrived home I found my wife seriously ill. I put some petals from that flower in a glass of water and gave it to her to drink. She got some relief from her pain, so the next day I put the rest of the petals in water and she drank that. Within two or three days she had quite recovered."

"The main driveway at Prem Nagar was being constructed," recalls Manohar. "We filled the holes with stones, but when we tried to use the roller on them it tipped over and fell in a ditch. We all got together and tried to get it out, but couldn't. Shri Maharaj Ji laughed and said, 'Guru Maharaj Ji, I'll distribute 21 rupees' worth of prashad if you'll get our roller out of there!' We tried again, but still no luck. Maharaj Ji joined his hands prayerfully and said, 'I'll make it 51 rupees!' Still we couldn't dislodge it. Then he offered 101 rupees. We redoubled our efforts and extricated it. Everyone was very happy. Maharaj Ji ordered 101 rupees worth of *laddus* and distributed them as prashad to the ashram residents."

Manohar further relates, "We were serving at Dehra Dun. A rich premie visited Maharaj Ji and donated a large sum of money. Maharaj Ji blessed him. The doubt crossed my mind, 'Maybe Maharaj Ji prefers donations, because we are serving too, but he doesn't bless us like that.'

"That evening we were sitting with Shri Maharaj Ji. He said, 'Indra and Satchitananda both have died.' I asked him what he meant, because they were still very much alive. He replied, 'You don't understand what I mean. Those two premies have dissolved themselves in service. They have no idea if it is day or night. When the bell rings, they eat, and then go back to work, day or night. When someone has no thought for the world, isn't he dead to it? Right! Now, you tell me, which of these is the better devotee—the one who serves by giving money, or the one who has dedicated everything he owns and puts his body, mind and soul into service?' I thought about it and said, 'The devotee who totally loses himself in service has to be better.' Maharaj Ji said, 'Then why did you

think that the one who gives money is better? Best of all is one who, by Guru Maharaj Ji's grace, spreads Knowledge and inspires others to walk the path of devotion. I can hire skilled labourers to do what you do, but only a devotee can spread Knowledge. That is why Lord Krishna said, 'He who inspires others in devotion is dearer to Me than life itself.' "

Mrs Revati Saini, from Pahari Dhiraj, relates, "My father was very ill, so I was looking after him. One night, Shri Maharaj Ji appeared in a dream and said, 'Your father promised to finance a garden at Prem Nagar but hasn't done anything about it.' When I told my father about my dream he had a letter written to Maharaj Ji begging forgiveness and asking for help to redeem himself.

"That evening a mahatma came to our house. My father was unconscious. Mahatma Ji sat with him. That night I had another dream. My father was telling me to quickly send for the doctor. I hurried to the clinic but it was closed. I returned in despair, and was amazed to find a doctor at my father's bedside. The doctor announced that my father would die at any moment. I wept and asked if there was no hope of saving him. The doctor went into the next room, in which Maharaj Ji had often stayed. I followed him and was amazed to see that the 'doctor' was actually Maharaj Ji! I fell at his feet, crying, 'Maharaj Ji, this is no time for your tricks!' He laughed and said, 'I'm not joking. When a person has to come, he comes, and when it is time for him to go, he goes.' "

Mayadevi of Mainpuri district recalls, "Once a satsang program for Shri Maharaj Ji was arranged in our district. Right then I fell ill. I was in despair, because even though the program was so close, I still wouldn't be able to attend. I lay there, crying to myself. Suddenly I heard a knock on the door, and Maharaj Ji entered my room. He took hold of my wrist and declared, 'You're not sick! Your pulse feels fine. You'll have darshan, don't worry. Open your eyes!' I opened them and saw the room was filled with a brilliant light, and there stood Shri Maharaj Ji in front of me. I started sobbing with emotion. Hearing this, my mother came and asked me what was wrong. I told her everything.

'Once, at Hardwar, Shri Maharaj Ji called the premies—about 250—to the fountain, then fed them sweet rice with his own hands. The premies kept on eating and he kept on serving, but we didn't run out of food.'

Mr P. Singh of Nagaland bought a copy of the Hindi edition of this book during a satsang program in December 1985 at Siliguri. He read it avidly and one line in particular—'Maharaj Ji appears to the devotee who calls him sincerely'—stuck in his mind. He meditated then fell asleep. At 4 a.m. he woke up, and as he lay there with eyes closed, he had an amazing experience: "I saw the sun rising and from it emerged Shri Hans Ji Maharaj, shining even more brightly than the sun! Then I heard someone say, 'Get up! It's time to meditate!' I sat to meditate and burst into tears of joy, grateful to have had this glimpse of the Master."

Satyaram Yadav from Ludhiana, Punjab, says, "I was initiated in October 1971. One night, about a month after receiving Knowledge, I was at my post (I am in the Railway Police) near Kali Pahari Station Signal Box. Towards the end of our shift, my companion lay down to rest. I also lay down, remembering the Holy Name. Suddenly I saw a faint light away in the forest. It advanced gradually towards me, increasing in size and brightness as it did so. I saw a hut and a saddhu sitting in meditation. I was quite alarmed. I had never seen anyone like him. As the light reached its peak intensity, the apparition came right up to me. I jumped up in fear. The other sentry asked me what was wrong. I didn't tell him, but was trembling in fear. Our shift ended and we returned to headquarters. There, on a wall calendar, I saw a picture of that sage, and written underneath was, 'Satgurudev Shri Hans Ji Maharaj'. So Guru Maharaj Ji makes the impossible happen.

'Once I had to return to Jalandhar to resume my duties. When I reached the bus stop I discovered that my watch had stopped and I was nearly an hour late. My train was due to depart at 2:45 and it was already 1:50. It seemed unlikely that I'd be able to catch the train as the bus was crawling along at a snail's pace. So I started

meditating on the Holy Name. Just then a bus coming from the other direction stopped us. Someone in it told our driver, 'Hurry up. There's an unauthorized bus ahead of you picking up your passengers!' Our bus took off at top speed and I reached the station in time to catch my train. I wondered who that man was, who'd told my driver to drive faster. Maharaj Ji can go anywhere, even the middle of the jungle, to help his devotees in distress!"

Ratan Singh of Rajlu Garhi, Haryana, says, "Maharaj Ji freed me from all worldly cares and whenever I face problems he appears to me to help and encourage me to meditate and have patience.

'Once I was facing legal action in the village court. It seemed that the verdict would go against me and I would be ostracized, as is the custom. My daughter was getting married the following week and if I lost the case the wedding would be called off. The groom's family were very worried and begged me to settle out of court. I was in a dilemma.

'Then Maharaj Ji appeared to me and told me not to worry. The verdict went in my favour. My prosecutor and his supporters were fined 500 rupees each. It so happened that his son was getting married and that wedding was cancelled!

'Maharaj Ji's voice was magnetic. On the thirteenth day after his passing away a satsang tape was being played at Prem Nagar. I was standing outside on the street. I completely forgot that this was the day of the memorial service. I headed towards the stage to catch a glimpse of him. It seemed strange that he was speaking but was nowhere to be seen. Suddenly he appeared in front of me and said, 'Idiot! That's a satsang tape that you can hear!'

Rammurti Devi of Pilkhuva writes, "Near my town is a village called Makimpur. In 1960 satsang was arranged there. I didn't have Knowledge but was curious to see what Maharaj Ji was like. I thought to myself, 'If he is the True Guru, he should make my husband go away for three days!' When my husband came home that evening he announced that he had to go away on business for three days! The next day I took the children and went to

Makimpur. Maharaj Ji called me inside and gave me prashad. The whole room was shining with brilliant Light!

'After satsang I had to return through the forest. It was pitch dark and I wondered how I could possibly reach home. I closed my eyes in fear and prayed to Guru Maharaj Ji, 'If you are the true Lord, please help me.' When I opened my eyes I found myself back in my town with electric lights shining all around. I reached home easily and safely.'

Maharaj Ji could alter his appearance at will and often appeared in several places at once. Patram of Modinagar experienced this:

"Satsang had been arranged at Modinagar and a swing had been decorated for Maharaj Ji. He sat on it and started swinging. When I arrived I saw a child wearing a crown on the swing so I assumed that it was little Shri Satpal Ji Maharaj. When he got down from the swing I was amazed to see that it was actually Maharaj Ji and not a child at all!

'The three-day 'Hans Jayanti' program was held that year on 8th, 9th and 10th November. On the 9th, a grand procession was held. Maharaj Ji sent the premies on ahead and he himself followed in his car. The procession started from Old Delhi Railway Station and went past the Red Fort and Connaught Place. Whenever premies felt tired, Maharaj Ji would go to them and give darshan and they would feel refreshed immediately. As we passed the Red Fort I felt very tired. I remembered Maharaj Ji and there he was all of a sudden in front of me! My fatigue vanished. When I looked again, he wasn't there. I asked the premies around me where he'd gone. They laughed and said, 'Why, he's a long way behind us!' Then some other premies reported having seen him up ahead. That day Maharaj Ji appeared in several places at once, just like the incident in the Ramayana when Lord Rama returned to Ayodhya and appeared in multiple forms to give darshan to all the citizens."

When Chalti Devi of Rohtak asked for Knowledge, Shri Maharaj Ji told her to come to satsang that evening and then she

would receive initiation the following morning. However, she fell asleep and missed satsang. When Maharaj Ji asked her the following morning why she hadn't attended satsang, she told him the reason. He laughed and said, "She's telling the truth! I'll give her Knowledge!" and he himself initiated her.

Sometime later she and some friends went to a program a few kilometres outside Delhi. It was late at night when they returned. Only after they'd gone about 12 kilometres did they discover that they were on the wrong bus, and they were left standing in the middle of nowhere. She recalls, "What could I do? I prayed inwardly to Maharaj Ji and said, 'You've gone to satsang and left us here!' At that moment a brand-new bus appeared. Its only occupants were the driver and conductor. The bus stopped and we boarded it. When we told the conductor our destination he replied, 'Don't worry. I'll drop you wherever you have to go!' I'm sure Maharaj Ji brought that bus himself, otherwise where would a bus come from so late at night in such a deserted place?"

'Once at Ramlila Ground during the first day of a satsang program, a storm sprang up and it seemed that the tents would be blown away. Maharaj Ji said, 'Right! Tomorrow all of you have to do a lot of meditation so that the storm won't come again, and if it does, I'll understand that you didn't meditate.' The next day the weather was fine and Maharaj Ji announced in satsang, 'My premies meditated today! That's why there is no storm.' I thought to myself, 'But I didn't meditate!' Immediately he said, 'Some premies are thinking that they forgot, but I didn't forget!' Then he continued, 'A devotee should spend a tenth of the day in meditation and a tenth of his income in service.' Since that day I've done as he said."

Rupdevi of Faizabad writes, "Once I had to catch a train at Mainpuri, but the platform was too high for me to climb onto. As I stood there wondering what to do, a man dressed in white appeared and lifted me onto the platform, saying, 'Here comes your train!'"

He helped me into the train. When I turned around to thank him, he'd disappeared. It was Shri Maharaj Ji who came to my aid.

'Once my daughter was gravely ill, and there seemed to be no hope of saving her. But I had strong faith in Maharaj Ji and vowed that if she recovered I'd take her for darshan. She immediately took a turn for the better and I fulfilled my vow.'

Mansingh of Khol village in Haryana, recalls an incident which suggested to him that Maharaj Ji was no ordinary man: "It was 1955 and I was 12 years old. Shri Maharaj Ji visited my uncle, and as he was about to leave, a person raced up to him, crying, 'A black snake just bit me. Please save me!' Shri Maharaj Ji was holding a marigold, which he gave to him and told him to sniff. The man did so and immediately had an attack of diarrhoea, which flushed out the poison."

Shiv Govind Prashad Verma, a lawyer from Gaya, Bihar, once went to Hardwar for Vaisakhi. When he went for darshan he was informed that Maharaj Ji was taking a bath and in the meantime he should wait. Maharaj Ji had sent for a sofa for Shiv Govind to sit on, but the lawyer declined and sat on the floor, as he felt that here he was a devotee, not a lawyer. A little while later, Shri Maharaj Ji arrived and said, "What are you doing sitting on the floor? You're a lawyer!" Actually, he was pleased, as he had been testing Shiv Govind.

Maharaj Ji started talking to the assembled premies. Just then a premie named Bhagirathi entered. As soon as he saw him, Maharaj Ji ordered a mahatma to fetch some saffron robes, which he gave to Bhagirathi who, puzzled, asked, "What am I to do with these?" Maharaj Ji answered, "You're a mahatma now! You give initiation, so these robes are necessary." Bhagirathi's wife burst into tears and begged, "Maharaj Ji, please don't! Who'll take care of me?" Then Maharaj Ji scolded Bhagirathi and took back the clothes. Bhagirathi was amazed that Shri Maharaj Ji knew that he'd been initiating people without permission.

Shiv Govind continues, "Whatever Maharaj Ji said was a blessing in itself and if a person was wise he'd obey. Once we went to Delhi for darshan. Maharaj Ji told us to have dinner before leaving as we wouldn't find food anywhere outside. We declined, feeling that it was improper to take food from the ashram, so we only took a tiny bit as prashad. Later when we tried to have dinner we couldn't find a single restaurant that could offer a decent meal, although we wandered the streets for hours. We ended up eating chapaties with salt and had to get through the night with that."

Babulal of Qutab Road, Delhi, says, "Since the day I first saw Maharaj Ji, in 1950 at the Garhmukteshwar Mela, I daily decorated his photo and sang Arti. One day, after so doing, I saw Maharaj Ji step outside the photo and then I started seeing him everywhere! I saw him in my neighbours so I gave them halvah as prashad, money and new clothes. A cow came by and rummaged in my flour bin. I saw only Maharaj Ji and offered all the flour! A little while later a mahatma visited me and told me that Maharaj Ji wanted to see me.

'When I went for darshan, Maharaj Ji said, 'Well, you've given things away to everybody else, so at least give me something, too!' My eyes were filled with tears of love and I couldn't say anything. Then Maharaj Ji told the assembled premies, 'This is the state of absorption in the Lord—when you don't see anything else except Him.' Then he placed his hand on my head and I came back to normal.

'My wife was standing in the darshan line during one Vaisakhi, holding a small flower garland. When she saw the beautiful garlands that other premies were offering she felt ashamed and thought, 'Master, how can you accept this poor garland of mine!'

'That very moment Maharaj Ji beckoned to her and said, 'Put your garland on me!' Then I really understood that the Lord comes for the poor.'

'Once I really wanted to attend the Kumbha Mela in Allahabad but my financial situation wouldn't allow it. I thought to myself, 'Let's see if Maharaj Ji graces me or not!' Later, he called me and said, 'Don't worry, you'll go to the Mela.' He took me with him! He sent a mahatma back to Delhi, saying, 'His son sings very nicely. Go and bring him here.' I certainly enjoyed that Mela! Maharaj Ji used to sit with us on the kitchen floor and shell peas. How blissful it was with him!'

'During satsang at Guru Puja 1966 the lights suddenly went out and then came back on a little while later. Maharaj Ji said, 'How dark it was when the lights were off! Similarly, one day soon it'll seem very dark but then the Light will come back and shine brightly everywhere!' No one realized then that he was talking about his impending physical demise. Within a month of that program we discovered what darkness was! But the Light did return as he said, and see how Shri Mata Ji and Shri Satpal Ji Maharaj have spread this Knowledge!'

Describing that last Guru Puja, Patram of Modinagar says, "Maharaj Ji gave satsang for hours during the day. Then he returned in the evening and spoke some more. Satsang went on all night. Several times he left the stage but he always returned soon. He would have the premies laughing and crying. Then he would cry himself and wipe his eyes with a handtowel. Then again he would go away and return. It seemed that he didn't want to leave satsang. We never saw him again. A few days later he passed away."

Kalicharan of Chanikapa village in Mainpuri recalls, "One day at Prem Nagar Shri Maharaj Ji was giving satsang to about fifteen premies. He asked us, 'Would you obey me implicitly and do whatever I told you?' We answered that we would. Then he stood up and headed towards the Ganges. He entered the water and so did we. The water parted, leaving a dry path, along which Maharaj Ji walked. When I glanced behind I saw nothing but water all around, but where we were walking was completely

dry. Suddenly, we saw ahead a wonderful palace, unlike anything we had ever seen, or could hope to see. It had a huge hall which was decorated for satsang. It was filled with premies waiting for Maharaj Ji. Their clothes were very strange, the likes of which I have never seen before or since. Maharaj Ji held a two-day program there, and the things we saw and the joy we felt could never be described. Then we returned to Prem Nagar, by which route I still haven't been able to figure out.

'Once I attended satsang at Muradnagar. I saw Maharaj Ji sitting on stage giving satsang. A minute later when I reached the main building there he was too, giving darshan. I ran back and forth between the house and satsang, and, sure enough, he was in both places at once!

'A premie came up to him and offered him a glass of milk. He was standing about 2-3 feet away. Maharaj Ji put out his tongue, which became so long that he was able to drink the milk from that glass which was more than two feet away!'

Lakshmi Prasad Subba was born in Nepal and educated in Darjeeling. He says that from childhood he wanted to know God. There is an expression, 'Hans has flown away,' which means that someone has died and that the soul has left its cage. He wanted to know what that 'Hans' is, which keeps everything alive.

He had a tutor who was an Arya Samaj pundit. This pundit did all the prescribed rites and rituals and chanted mantras. Lakshmi Prasad did the same, but didn't feel any peace, and his desire to know Truth increased. He asked his tutor, "What is 'Hans'?" His tutor replied that if he kept on doing the traditional rituals and chanting, he'd one day see God. Lakshmi Prasad says, "It then occurred to me that this man had spent his life doing these things but had never mentioned that he'd seen God, so how would I? All he ever said was, 'Believe, believe.'"

Punditji had a small library. One day I read about 'Hans Avatar' and my desire to find him became even stronger. The

pundit quoted all kinds of verses about Hans but could not help me any more than that.

'One day some Christian missionaries came to our neighbourhood, saying things like, 'Do you have peace? How can sinners like us see God?' I became interested in what they had to say. I went regularly to church and read the Bible, but after a while it dawned on me that they too were only saying, 'Believe, believe.'

'I read, 'In the beginning was the Word', and 'without the Word nothing was made that was made'. I asked the priests about it, and they replied, 'Our Lord Jesus knew all this, but people like us have to just read the Bible and believe it.' This didn't satisfy me, so I started visiting other sects and groups, including the Kabir Panthists, Nirankaris, Vaishnavas, Naga Panthists, Brahma Kumaris, etc. I read Gita, Tripitaka and Koran. Not having found what I wanted, I became an atheist. I decided that God doesn't exist, or, if He does, where is He and what does He look like?

'In 1971 a satsang program was to be held in Siliguri. Posters, banners and flags proclaimed 'Hans'. Mahatmas from Hardwar came and a huge program was held. I happened to be passing by when I heard a song which stopped me in my tracks:

'No matter how many religions you follow,
In Kali Yuga the only real Way is 'Hans Nam'.

The word 'Hans' attracted me and I stopped to listen. Mahatma Ji was saying, 'Do you know that 'Hans' power which keeps all beings alive? If you want to know, then come to us.' My curiosity was definitely aroused. I spent several months listening to satsang, but didn't take Knowledge. After all, maybe they also couldn't give what they claimed, or maybe they lure people then get a hold on them. So I watched and observed everything.

'One night I had an amazing dream. A brilliant Light came down from the sky towards me, expanding as it approached. It

was more radiant and beautiful than I can describe, but at the same time it was cool and soothing. As it reached the ground it took the form of a divine being. I prayed, 'Lord, Hans Bhagwan, you can do anything. Please save me.' Just then the divine being re-ascended into the sky.

'Early next morning I took prashad and went to Mahatma Ji to ask for Knowledge. I told him about my dream and he replied, 'That was a dream! Now I'll show you in real life!' He then initiated me. I saw the same brilliant Light descending from the heavens. From it emerged a glorious divine person with long hair and lustrous face, wearing a black coat and white dhoti. Around him were past holy Masters—Buddha, Jesus, Vishnu, Shiva, Krishna, Rama, etc. When I described it to Mahatma Ji he exclaimed, 'You've seen Shri Hans Ji Maharaj! He left his mortal body in 1966, but is always with us in some form or another.' Since that day, I've had deep faith in Maharaj Ji and the Holy Family."

Mahatma Rameshwaranandji went through a similar crisis of faith: "For ten years I chanted, twisted rosaries, fasted, went on pilgrimages and attended religious meetings. I was getting nowhere. One day in Kanpur, I was sitting dejectedly in a park, musing, 'For ten years I've been wasting my time. God does not exist, it seems.' As I sat with eyes closed, Shri Hans Ji Maharaj appeared to me, surrounded by glorious Light. I felt very peaceful.

"The next day on my way to a religious gathering I heard one of Maharaj Ji's mahatmas giving satsang and saying, 'God is to be realized practically!' This interested me and I started coming to satsang. But as time passed and I didn't get Knowledge, I stopped coming. Then Maharaj Ji appeared to me in a dream and asked, 'Why have you stopped coming to satsang?' So I resumed going. When I was initiated in 1962 I saw Maharaj Ji in the Light.

'Some time later I went for darshan. Maharaj Ji was alone in the room, and he appeared to me in the same way as I'd seen that first day in the park. When he saw me he laughed and said, 'So, you've had darshan!' I fell at his feet in tears.'

Jay Narayan of Shanti Nagar, Delhi, received Knowledge in 1952. He believed Knowledge to be perfect, but not Maharaj Ji. He felt that serving God was the highest thing. "But," he says, "Guru Maharaj Ji knows everything. One day he discussed that very subject during satsang. He said, 'If you serve me, you're serving me, but serving God is serving me as well!' This cleared up my doubts. Later in satsang he said, 'So, you want to test me to see if I am true or not, do you? Did I test you to see if you were worthy of becoming my disciple or not? I just accepted you as you are.' He said the same thing at four different programs, but only on the fourth hearing did it sink in. I had never told anyone what I thought, so how did he know? Then I understood that he really is perfect and knows everything.

'In 1956 I was working as a clerk for a building contractor in Karol Bagh. I was supposed to start work at 8 a.m. but because it took me more than two hours to walk to work I never started before 10 or 10:30 a.m. One day the contractor asked the head clerk, Rajendra, 'I've given you an assistant but still the work isn't getting done. Why?' Rajendra replied, 'That new clerk is a clerk in name only. He never starts work before eleven o'clock, so how will the work get done?' The contractor decided to come early the next day to see for himself, because he was satisfied with my work and suspected jealousy on Rajendra's part.

'I left home at 7:45 as usual and walked as quickly as I could. Suddenly a truck stopped beside me and the driver asked, 'Why are you in such a hurry?' I replied that I had a long way to go and had to be at work by eight o'clock, so he offered me a ride. He dropped me right outside my office at eight o'clock. It occurred to me only later that he hadn't asked where I was going nor had I told him.

'The contractor saw me entering the building on time and said to the senior clerk, 'You complained that he never comes to work before eleven o'clock. Well, look at the time now! If you keep on blaming others for your own ineptitude you'll have to go!' I felt bad at having put Maharaj Ji to all that trouble (for the truck driver was surely he) and since then have tried to arrive at work on time.'

Mahatma Fakiranandji was nicknamed 'Ramayani' by Shri Maharaj Ji because he knew the entire Ramayana by heart. With deep emotion he recalls these events:

"Shri Maharaj Ji, the Supreme Father, loved the Ramayana. Several times I was fortunate enough to see him at the railway station as he passed through Patna on his way to somewhere else. He would always tell me to recite something from the Ramayana, and then sit down on the platform. With my gaze fixed on his lotus feet I would sing the 'Invocation to the Guru' and verses praising devotion. I would sing with great gusto, which attracted a crowd of travellers. Often, when I looked up at him, I would notice tears trickling down his cheeks.

'Once I was at Dēhra Dun just before the festival of Navratri. Shri Maharaj Ji and Shri Mata Ji were sitting on the verandah. Maharaj Ji very tenderly told me to recite something from the Ramayana in praise of devotion. I fixed the mental image of his feet in my heart, closed my eyes, and sang with deep feeling. About ten minutes later I heard him sobbing. I looked up and saw that his handkerchief was drenched with tears and that he was weeping. So was the Holy Mother. So naturally I started sobbing too. Maharaj Ji gently chided me, saying, 'Now don't you cry, too!'

'Later he said, 'I want you to recite the entire Ramayana with commentary for Navratri. You are a pundit, a Ramayani, and most importantly, a devotee. So do this with all your heart.' A few days later, at the start of the nine-day Navratri period, a room by the rear verandah was prepared. It had an altar with nine candles which burned non-stop. Shri Maharaj Ji and Shri Mata Ji

themselves attended the reading. Maharaj Ji wondered how I could complete the entire book within only nine days. I replied, 'Master, I am in your shelter. Definitely it will be done, and as per regulations.' This pleased him and he presented me with a new dhoti, shawl and scarf. I completed the reading in accordance with the prescribed regulations within nine days. Maharaj Ji was very much moved by this and blessed me lovingly."

Shri Bhole Ji Maharaj, second son of Shri Hans Ji Maharaj, presents these two glimpses of the Master:

"Shri Maharaj Ji was totally and completely a divine personality. How could we ever describe his divine play?

'Once our family returned to Dehra Dun after Shri Satpal Ji's birthday celebrations at Hardwar. Some premies from Patna had asked for permission to visit our home at Dehra Dun, so they also turned up. This was during the time of the Indo-Pakistan conflict and total blackout was observed at night. Maharaj Ji told the premies to sit on the lawn and sing songs and that he would come presently. The neighbours panicked when they heard the singing and called the police, who arrived and asked what so many people were doing there. Shri Maharaj Ji informed them that we had just returned from Hardwar and that these people were our guests and would be leaving in the morning. This satisfied the police and they left. However, their van hit a ditch and got stuck. Shri Maharaj Ji told the premies to extricate it, saying, 'See! If so many people hadn't been here, who would have freed their van for them?'

'On another occasion, during the summer vacation, we accompanied Shri Maharaj Ji to Alwar for satsang. As we were driving along, another car tried to race us, so Maharaj Ji told our driver to slow down and let him overtake us. 'Everything should be done steadily,' he advised, 'like the tortoise who beat the hare in the race.' A little further along the road we came across the same driver. He had run over a little boy and killed him. Maharaj Ji said, 'That child was due to die today, and if we had overtaken that driver, we would have been the ones to cause the accident.' So Maharaj Ji saved us from that tragedy." □

Chapter Six

The Wave of Propagation in Bihar

Prahlad Mittal was a Rajasthani premie who had a business in Bakhtiarpur, about 60 km from Patna. He first invited Shri Maharaj Ji to Bihar in 1958. Maharaj Ji sent Mahatma Narayanandji and Mahatma Satyanandji there to make all the necessary arrangements. The first program was held in Bakhtiarpur, followed by programs in Khagrihiya, Barh, Barhiya and Saharsa. Mahatma Narayanandji recalls,

"After the program in Triveniganj, some troublemakers armed with sticks came to force Maharaj Ji to leave the place. Probably some of his opponents had put them up to it. The poor premie, in whose house we were staying, was very upset. The mob stood outside for a long time, heckling and daring Maharaj Ji to come outside. After a while, Maharaj Ji appeared and said, 'So you want a fight, do you? Forget about the sticks—just come here and touch me! Then you'll find out who Hans Ji Maharaj is! But I warn you—touching me will be like touching a live wire!' Not one of the mob dared to come forward.

'For me, the most unforgettable incident concerning Maharaj Ji occurred at Chauraha village. Maharaj Ji went there by bullock cart and gave satsang. The entire village sang Arti to him. A very poor premie lived in that village and Maharaj Ji visited him. Some rich ladies from the nearest town brought food and started cooking it. Maharaj Ji said, 'I didn't come here to eat. This devotee's love pulled me here.' The premie fed Maharaj Ji chapatties, porridge and a rural concoction called *sattu*. Then he showed Maharaj Ji around his village, through dirty lanes that stank. When the time came for him to leave, the premies decorated the bullock cart and took him to the railway station. Practically the whole village turned

out to farewell him and all were in tears. It seemed that Maharaj Ji was moved to compassion, because a few miles further down the road he suddenly said, 'Go back. I'll stay one or two more days in that village.' The villagers were overcome with joy. Maharaj Ji stayed in the same thatched hut and in the evening he went for a walk in the wheat fields, picked some ears of wheat and ate the raw grain. He gave wonderful satsang in the field, and later on gave satsang to the villagers, saying, 'Your love is so great that it forced me to stay here.' "

Although Maharaj Ji's first visit to Bihar wasn't until 1958, within a few short years Knowledge had spread like a tidal wave to every district of the state, and from 1960 onwards there was more publicity about him in Bihar than anywhere else. It seemed as if Maharaj Ji's advent in this, the land of Lord Buddha, had sparked off a spiritual renaissance. The thirsty people drank in the nectar of his satsang and saturated themselves in Knowledge. Many young men renounced the world to serve in the ashram or become mahatmas. Between 1960 and 1965 Maharaj Ji toured the entire length and breadth of Bihar and held programs in many places. His mahatmas, especially Brahmanandji, Satyanandji and Fakiranandji stepped up the pace of propagation. Satsang programs were held in many different places daily. Thousands of people took Knowledge and Maharaj Ji's programs, both large and small, were held.

In November, 1960, at Gandhi Grounds in Patna, the local branch of Divya Sandesh Parishad held a two-day program, during which Maharaj Ji said that increasing materialism will ruin humanity. Warning the nations which think exclusively about scientific progress, he said, "The highest material achievements will turn out to be the means of man's destruction. The Divine Masters and great saints showed the world the way to true and lasting happiness, which is the Knowledge of God. For ages to come it will remain the only way to prevent the human race from destroying itself."

Thousands of people had assembled to hear him, which was most unusual for religious gatherings in Patna. About 200 delegates from other states also attended the program. Shri Maharaj Ji said that Bihar had always held a leading position when it came to spirituality, and that the rays of spiritual Light had spread out from here to the world. All the great Masters had, at one time or another, travelled around here.

Then he raised a question: "We are busy day and night satisfying the body's demands, but what is this body for, when all is said and done? It is vital to answer this question properly and unequivocally. All the enlightened Masters, seers and philosophers have in some way or another accepted the fact that this question can be answered only through experiencing the Light of God, and only someone who has himself experienced this Light can reveal it to others. Only someone who has risen above the material realm and reached the spiritual can experience this Light."

Mahatma Adhintanand was formerly known as Sitaram and lived at Jagobind, Patna. His story goes like this: "Once, Maharaj Ji was going from Patna to Barh for satsang. The idea occurred to me to invite Maharaj Ji to grace my house with his presence, as it lay on the road to Barh. He said that he would definitely come. So I took permission to go home immediately to prepare a welcome. He arrived at 2.30 p.m. I was waiting for him with a garland. He opened the car door, went straight inside and sat down on a seat which I had especially prepared. I offered him milk and sesame cakes. He blessed me then left. I ran down the road after his car like a calf running behind its mother.

'I loved to go around the streets selling Hansadesh. One day I was standing at Mukama Station with a banner on the wall behind me. I was ringing a bell and chanting slogans like 'Become dharmic and save Dharma', and, 'Don't burn ghee, eat it!' because at that time, due to a supposedly adverse planetary configuration, a lot of people were doing sacrifices to ward off the effects. So a lot of ghee was just going up in smoke, so to speak.

'Maharaj Ji's car just happened to pass by. Seeing me, he pulled up and sent a premie over to me, who asked, 'Aren't you afraid, saying things like that?' Not knowing who he was, I retorted, 'Go and tell those men who kill other people to be afraid! Guru Maharaj Ji has given me the Truth!' Then that premie said, 'Maharaj Ji is outside and is calling you.' I ran over to him and presented him with a tiny bottle of perfume. He asked, 'You are out spreading Knowledge all day. How do you support yourself?' I replied, 'By your grace I am never short of money,' and I showed him the purse in which I kept my money. He was very pleased with me and took off the garland that was around his neck and put it on mine. The car drove off and I stood there shedding tears of joy.

'Before I heard about this Knowledge I so longed to know God that I used to write down the main verses from the Gita, Koran and Hanuman Chalisa, drop them in milk and drink it in the hope that their wisdom would pass into me. It was this craving which brought me to Shri Maharaj Ji, who revealed the secrets of spiritual Knowledge to me.'

In December, 1961, a huge procession was held in Patna. The main dailies reported it. 'The Searchlight' reported:

'10th Dec., Saturday: A magnificent procession in honour of Shri Hans Ji Maharaj passed through the streets of Patna early this morning. The likes of it have not been seen in a long time. Women participated in large numbers and with an enthusiasm unmatched by any previous procession, either political or religious. In many respects it was an excellent procession, which will long live in the memory of Patna residents. Whatever the reaction to it may be, all the spectators were ecstatic. The half-mile long procession displayed colourful banners. More than a dozen elephants, ridden by mahatmas, and a couple of camels, headed the procession. Mahatmas sang devotional songs and shouted the praises of Shri Hans Ji Maharaj. Participants who were unable to walk the whole distance brought up the rear in rickshaws. Last of all came Shri Hans Ji Maharaj on a magnificently-decorated carriage drawn by snow-white horses. Maharaj Ji's hands were raised in blessing.

Three or four mahatmas stood behind him. After winding through the main streets of Patna, the procession terminated at Gandhi Ground where it turned into a satsang function open to the general public.'

The 'Hindustan Samachar' reported:

'Shri Hans Ji Maharaj from Hardwar, the founder of Divya Sandesh Parishad, addressed a huge gathering here today. Speaking from a flower-bedecked stage, he offered a solution to society's present predicaments. He said that only Knowledge of the Divine Light can bring peace, because it changes human consciousness and behaviour.'

Another Patna daily, 'Indian Nation', reported the satsang itself:

'The founding saint of Divya Sandesh Parishad, Shri Hans Ji Maharaj, said here today that only the Divine Light can save the world from destruction.

On the first day of the two-day Conference at Gandhi Ground, the purpose of which is to investigate the natural means to avoid extinction of the human race and to put an end to the world's conflicts, Shri Hans Ji Maharaj addressed a huge audience. During his sagacious speech, Shri Hans Ji Maharaj said that serious people, due to confusion and wrong thinking, are trying to find peace in ignorance. They look for peace in the multiplicity of material things and for love in fear and hatred. But all this is in vain. Peace can only be realized when man's behaviour is transformed by his knowing the Divine Light and meditating upon it.

'For this, it is not necessary to go to temples and mosques, he said. The Divine Light, which scriptures call imperishable and self-effulgent, is a Power which can purify man. He said with firm conviction that if a person meditates on this Light, he can't be killed in war nor can a nuclear bomb affect him.

'The audience of more than 30,000, the majority of whom were women, sat beneath tenting adorned with streamers and flags. They listened quietly to the speeches of mahatmas and

learned guest speakers. Shri Hans Ji Maharaj is a famous saint from Hardwar.'

Shri Hans Ji Maharaj gave this satsang:

"Only following the real and natural religion of man (*Manav Dharma*) can bring peace to this strife-torn world. The basis of Dharma is love. In present times, due to a proliferation of dogma and theologies, there is trouble in many places, and this is basically because some individuals set themselves up as gurus and religious authorities and turn people against each other, taking them even further away from the Truth. People have become bloodthirsty. This is truly something to think about, because the same Power has created us all, although we call It by different names. Air, water and sun are utilized in the same way by all human beings. We are all born and we die in the same way. So why is there a necessity for so many sects and religions? Just like all other natural laws, there must be one natural religion, acceptable to Hindus, Muslims, Christians and Sikhs alike. Divine Masters such as Guru Nanak, Jesus Christ, Buddha, Mahavir, Rama and Krishna taught the universal religion of brotherly love, but nowadays because we have forgotten this religion we are becoming more and more parochial.

'A small amount of grain can be ground in a village mill, while in towns there are huge flour mills where tons of grain can be ground daily. A poor man eats dry bread and salt, while a rich man eats a variety of dainty dishes. Both go to sleep at night. Both experience the same state of consciousness, regardless of whether they sleep in a palace or on the ground. Both wake up and go to the bathroom in the morning. Both expel waste. You can think of the poor man who eats soup and bread as a small wastemaking machine and the rich man or monarch with his great variety of delicious foods as a big wastemaking machine.

'I've seen silkworms feeding on mulberry leaves. They eat green leaves and produce silk. It is called a silkworm because that is what it produces. So what should we call a creature that produces only waste? What's so bad, then, about calling man a wastemaking machine?

'Having filled his belly, man chases sense-pleasures. If you take a maggot out of filth it will die, so it makes its way back to the same filth. People are like this. Village pigs don't just run around for the joy of it—they are out looking for garbage to eat. The same applies to human beings. They labour from dawn to dusk and whatever they do is in connection with food—regardless of their rank or job. According to the saint Surdas, our situation is no better than a pig's. He reckoned that we are ungrateful and said so in one of his songs."

A premie from Muzaffarpur, who witnessed the procession, recalls, "It is impossible to describe how radiant and majestic Shri Maharaj Ji looked on that day. Even casual observers were amazed by the lustre of his face. The procession passed through market areas and reached Gandhi Ground at about 3.30 p.m. Maharaj Ji's satsang was so powerful that it created quite a stir throughout the city."

The program was chaired by the Justice of Patna. Maharaj Ji said during satsang:

"The judge is like God. He should be of the opinion that if a person cannot create another human life what right does he have to destroy it? Instead of the death penalty he can give life imprisonment so that the criminal has a chance to redeem himself. So don't condemn prisoners to death. If you can't give them life, what right do you have to kill them?"

The next day, premies lined up early in the morning for darshan. Until 9 a.m. they had the chance for service and darshan. From 9 to 10 a.m. Maharaj Ji held a question and answer session. He gave such clear and incisive answers to the most difficult questions that intellectuals and scholars who came to test him were not only satisfied, but definitely amazed by his power. From 3-5 p.m. he gave satsang at Gandhi Ground. The audience of 40,000 people listened quietly as he shed light on several topics, including the eightfold path of Yoga:

"Many people think that they get benefit from chanting the Gayatri Mantra. But they don't understand the fundamental

meaning of this mantra nor do they know why this mantra is regarded as the most important of all the Vedic mantras. You know that the Gayatri is the third mantra of Chapter 36 of the Rig Veda. Why hasn't the same importance been accorded any of the mantras from Chapter 1 to Chapter 36, including the first two mantras of Chapter 36? Have they all been written in vain? But everyone has his own understanding.

'St. Kabir condensed all the teachings of the scriptures into this couplet:

'Meditation on the Holy Name brings happiness and sorrow flies away. Meditate on the Name and become one with God.'

The entire Ramayana is summed up in this verse:

'The Vedas and all scriptures agree—meditate on God to the exclusion of all else.'

'Likewise, the Gayatri Mantra sums up the Vedas. It says:

'I meditate on the Light of God, the Omnipresent, the Foundation of all, the Doer, the Sustainer of all, Who is Truth, Consciousness and Bliss Itself. O Lord, remove my mind from everything else and fix it in Your Light.'

'People repeat this, but they have never seen this Light, even in a dream. In my opinion, your mouth is sweetened only when you eat sugar, not by chanting, 'sweet, sweet'. So don't say over and over again that you meditate on this Light when you don't! Find that Light within yourself and meditate on it, then you'll get the real benefit of this mantra. Just chanting won't do it!

'It's said, 'It's sweet to talk but bitter to do. But if you would stop talking and start doing, the bitterness would turn to Nectar.'

'The seventh step of the eightfold path of Yoga is *dhyana*—meditation, and the eighth is *samadhi*, the state in which one realizes God. But perfect Samadhi depends on proper meditation. If you don't know what God is, if you don't know what to meditate upon, how can you meditate and how can you devote yourself? You meditate on your wife, or child or home and you devote yourself to

them. Meditation on anything other than God is still Maya. All the scriptures say that God is Light, or *Noor*, or *Param Prakash*, or *Bhargo Jyoti*, etc. If you have never seen the Divine Light you will have to meditate on products of Maya. Without knowing what to meditate on you can't meditate and there can be no union of meditator, meditation and object of meditation. Without the union of these, Samadhi is impossible. A light won't go on until you press the light switch. Only when you see the omnipresent, effulgent form of God and meditate on it are you entitled to call yourself a devotee. You think that God has gone somewhere, or died. That is why you meditate on other things instead of Him. So know and meditate on Him, Whose form is Light, Who is omnipresent and for Whom the Gayatri Mantra says, 'I meditate on Your Light'. When you can meditate on it you will have no awareness of your body at all. When you are in such a state of meditation you no longer have any idea of where you are or what you are—whether you are Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist, young, or old, or whether it is day or night. You aren't aware of anything except Light, Light everywhere. This is called Samadhi, or union of the meditator, meditation and meditated. God is all bliss, and the real experience of this bliss comes only in Samadhi. Anything else which we call blissful is actually sense-pleasure and is temporary.

'So those who have seen this Light and know the Holy Name should meditate regularly. Lord Krishna, even after having revealed His imperishable Cosmic Form, instructed Arjuna that the mind can be vanquished only by practice and non-attachment.

'When a person's mind is directed towards worldly things, he becomes more and more discontented and unhappy, and when he directs his mind away from these things and towards the soul, unhappiness vanishes and he finds perfect peace. You may ask, why can't worldly things give us peace? It is because everything to do with the world is changeable and ephemeral. Today we are healthy so we enjoy life and the body is a pleasurable thing for us. But as soon as we fall ill, the body becomes a source of misery. If we have a lot of money, we are happy, but if it gets stolen or our house

burns down then that wealth becomes a source of suffering. Having a child makes us happy, but if it dies we are miserable. Spouse, home and kingdom are causes of suffering. The soul is eternal—the body dies but it doesn't. It is not small because its body is small and it doesn't grow bigger as the body grows. Weapons cannot harm it. It is neither dark nor fair. If a person directs his mind towards the soul, he cannot suffer in any age. Now the question arises—how to direct the mind away from worldly things and connect it to the spirit? Unlike worldly things, the soul is not gross. You can't see it with your eyes or hear it with your ears. It can only be known by experience. But everyone ignores spirit and races madly after the world. Everyone's attention is connected to worldly things, and that's why nobody has peace of mind.

'There is the story about the brahmin who dreamt that he'd killed a cow. In his dream he performed all kinds of penances and rituals to expiate the sin, but he was not relieved of his misery and it seemed that he would never be freed from that sin. Suddenly the dream broke and he thought, "Whew! All night I was in misery and despair. I didn't kill a cow! It was all in my mind!"

'Just like that Brahmin, we are trying to alleviate dream-misery with dream-methods like chanting, fasting, austerities, pilgrimages, scripture readings, etc. but they are ineffective. You want to relieve your sufferings but associate with the very things which make you suffer! Mud can't be cleaned by more mud."

Mr B.D. Sharma, a professional magician, remembers how Maharaj Ji helped him: "I received Knowledge in 1961. I had arranged a magic show in Patna but due to the sudden demise of Bihar's Chief Minister my show was cancelled. Maharaj Ji's three-day program was about to take place. I was very worried and prayed, 'Master, how can I support myself? How will I be able to see you and take part in the procession?'

'That night I dreamt of Shri Maharaj Ji. He told me, 'Why are you so worried? Why don't you visit the Rajah of Hardwar?' I answered, 'I've been there already.' He said, 'Just go!' and disappeared. The next day I went to the Rajah and gave a half-hour

performance. He enjoyed it and gave me 151 rupees. This solved my financial problems and allowed me to go to Patna for the program.

'Once I went to Dehra Dun. In those days I was having difficulty finding work. Maharaj Ji asked, 'Aren't you working these days?' I replied, 'No.' He told Shri Mata Ji to bring me a dhoti, kurta and scarf. Then he said, 'Now go and get some programs together.'

'Immediately work started coming my way and I was making good money. I even did programs for the Drama Division of the Government Information and Broadcasting Department. I don't know what magic was in those clothes Shri Maharaj Ji gave me!"

Dr Chandra Kumar Prashad, a retired doctor from Bihar, says, "My father and my wife tried to persuade me to follow a guru. I stubbornly refused, but the first time I saw a photograph of Shri Hans Ji Maharaj something happened to me and I decided that he and nobody else would be my guru. I was devoted to Lord Shiva and used to talk about Him so much that people thought that my mind had become a bit unhinged. My son took me to a psychiatrist at Ranchi Mental Hospital, who declared that I was not sick, but was going through a 'sudden strong inclination towards God'. My longing for God was not satisfied until I met a mahatma in Patna and received Knowledge."

Nagnarayan Singh, who works for the Bihar State Transport Co. recalls that one night in September 1963 Shri Maharaj Ji arrived unexpectedly at midnight and announced that satsang and darshan would be given the next day. When Nagnarayan Singh went for darshan, Maharaj Ji gave him prashad and asked him a few questions. Nagnarayan Singh says, "As I stood there talking to him, it occurred to me that he was getting very old, and my eyes filled with tears. Maharaj Ji then told me to go to satsang. When he came on stage he looked no more than 25 years old! I was overjoyed. I just gazed at him and didn't hear a word of satsang.

Later on he asked me, 'Did you listen to satsang?' I replied, 'Yes.' Then he asked, 'Well, then, what did I say?' Then I admitted, 'Master, I don't remember a single word. All I could do was look at you!' Then he said, 'Naganarayan, in this Court, always stay in third class (i.e. be humble). Don't try to sit in first class, and whatever you wish for with love I will give.' "

Knowledge spread in waves through the major towns, as well as villages. Premies and mahatmas held satsang all over the state. The 'Satsang Diary' section in the 1962 volume of Hansadesh reveals just how many regular satsangs were organized throughout the state. Thousands of people came to hear mahatmas speak.

Mahatma Brahmanandaji said during an afternoon satsang on 1st. January 1962:

"In the same land where Prince Siddhartha renounced his palace and royal luxuries to find Truth, nowadays so-called mahatmas are bent on strangling Truth in their mad grab for power. Our history shows that formerly rulers sought counsel from enlightened sages, but now politicians offer their respects to impostors. No one hears of real sages and mahatmas anymore. In such dark times, Shri Hans Ji Maharaj has come to show the way to salvation."

A premie, Nirmal Kumar, said in a satsang at Punpun, "If politics and science are not infused with spirituality, moral and ethical standards fall and people become killers."

Chhote Lal Gupta of Punpun, Bihar, describes Maharaj Ji's arrival there in 1960: "We went to the station with an elephant to greet Maharaj Ji. However, he alighted from the train one mile before the station, right in front of the house where he was to stay. We asked the train driver and guard who'd stopped the train. Neither of them could explain how it'd stopped. Meanwhile, back at the house, Maharaj Ji looking for us.

'He gave three days of satsang. The programs were well attended and the local people were very impressed. The roof of the house in which he was staying had been temporarily joined

with the roof of the adjoining house and covered with a tent. Maharaj Ji dressed up in his crown and danced there like Krishna. The joy and love of those days was beyond description.

In 1961 some Patna premies attended a program in Bombay. One day we went sightseeing. Somehow I got separated from the others and had no idea how to get back to our accommodation. So I closed my eyes and decided to go wherever I was 'led'. I found myself at Borig railway station. A lot of trains were coming and going, and I didn't know which one to catch. Again I closed my eyes and entrusted myself to Maharaj Ji. I sat down in one of the trains. Then a young man who very much resembled Shri Satpal Ji Maharaj sat down next to me and asked, 'Are you lost?' I answered, 'Yes. Do you know me?' He replied, 'I saw you earlier, outside the house on Agra Road where you are staying, talking to some people.'

'I replied, 'But I didn't see you there.' He laughed and said, 'Probably you didn't, so that's why you don't remember me.' I asked him if I was in the right train and he assured me that I was. He told me to get down at Ghatkopar station then take a rickshaw. I asked him to accompany me. He did so, and explained to the rickshaw driver where I had to go. I asked him to come with me but he replied, 'It's not necessary now. The rickshaw driver knows how to get there.' I got into the rickshaw and when I looked around I couldn't see my friend any more. When I next met Maharaj Ji, he laughed and said, 'Well, Lala, how did you manage out there?' I replied, 'Master, it's impossible for me to describe your *lilas!*'

On 2nd. January, 1962, Shri Hans Ji Maharaj arrived in Patna by the Upper India Express to a tumultuous welcome. An unprecedented crowd had gathered on the platform and outside the station to get a glimpse of him. Perched on benches, overhead bridges, roofs and rafters, thousands of people awaited his arrival excitedly.

Speaking that night at satsang, Shri Maharaj Ji said, "Bihar is the holy land of Lord Buddha, Lord Mahavir, Guru Govind Singh

and King Janak. It is from here that the message of peace spread to the world. Nowadays, all over the world, human beings, apprehensive of scientific inventions, crave peace. I am spreading the same Knowledge throughout Bihar and India which Lord Buddha, Mahavir and Guru Govind Singh spread. Divine Masters appear on earth from time to time for this purpose. So it is the duty of Biharis to cooperate once again in spreading this Knowledge, thus causing a tidal wave of peace, unity and brotherhood to engulf India."

Mahatma Fakiranandji, whom Maharaj Ji used to call 'Ramayani', says that when he received Knowledge he experienced an explosion of infinite Light. Although he was an official in the State Secretariat, he used to walk barefoot to satsang. He recalls, "Once I prostrated to a picture of Shri Maharaj Ji. Suddenly there stood Maharaj Ji himself in front of me!

'During 1963 Guru Puja I was on gate duty. Maharaj Ji arrived and as he walked past I was overawed by his brilliance. A little while later, he summoned me, saying, 'Call Ramayani here.' I asked Nirmal, 'Did you tell Maharaj Ji that I know the Ramayana?' He answered that he hadn't. I wondered how he knew. When I bowed at his feet, I saw his nails shimmering and glowing like diamonds.

'Maharaj Ji's next program after Patna was to be held at Muzaffarpur, about 100 km away on the other side of the Ganges. A lot of premies were going to accompany him, so they'd booked a steamer. I really wanted to go too, but due to circumstances I couldn't. But I don't know what force was drawing me, because early in the morning I just left home and made my way to the wharf. The steamer was already drawing away from the jetty. I took a flying leap and somehow landed safely. People standing on the bank were amazed and said, 'That man isn't even afraid of death!'

'Maharaj Ji was wearing dark glasses and a white shawl and his long curly hair was fluttering in the breeze. He was the very picture of charm. His charisma was compelling. I had only just

received Knowledge and hesitated to approach him, but anyhow I made my way to the front and started fanning him. He glanced sideways at me and said with a smile, 'Well, well! Ramayani is here!'

'The steamer was on its way and premies were singing merrily. The atmosphere was joyous and carefree and full of love. Maharaj Ji said, 'Listen, if you stay in the boat of the Satguru's Holy Name, you will cross the worldly ocean, just as we are sitting in this steamer whose captain is taking us across the river.'

'We reached Muzaffarpur, where Maharaj Ji was given a grand welcome by a huge crowd. Later Maharaj Ji told me, 'Ramayani, recite something from the Ramayana!' So I started singing: 'The soul, being a part of God, is imperishable...' Maharaj Ji called me into his room and said, 'Look, don't just sing it, explain it also.' Then he told me to sing that evening at satsang. I was delighted. That evening, I sat with the musicians. Maharaj Ji arrived soon after. His movements were graceful and flowing and so centred, and light radiated from every pore of his body. I gazed at him unblinkingly, like a partridge staring at the moon. I stayed like that, as if turned to stone, throughout satsang and Arti. I got up only after some premies roused me. Whenever I closed my eyes I saw Maharaj Ji in the same way inside. I saw the same scene in the sky. I stayed in this blissful condition for several days. The entire Creation seemed Hans-permeated to me.

'Maharaj Ji returned to Patna by car and we followed by train. Whenever I closed my eyes I saw satsang going on and my joy knew no bounds.

'After Patna, Maharaj Ji went to Ekangar Sarai, accompanied by a lot of premies. What a wonderful scene it was! A light rain was falling, as if to clean the streets in advance. All the townspeople came out to see him. The lanes and roofs were thronged with people. No one was aware in the slightest of the mud and slush. Thousands of people sang Arti. Ladies waved votive lights, which looked like twinkling stars. It reminded me of the grand Arti to the Ganges at Hardwar.

'It was a two-day program and an enormous crowd assembled to hear satsang. Some Arya Samajists also came to debate with Maharaj Ji, who simply said, "If you believe in *Aum* then meditate on *Aum*. I have no intention of arguing and debating. Actually, you have some doubts about *Aum*, so that is why you argue. If a person doesn't have firm faith and determination he can't progress spiritually. So first make your faith strong and unshakeable.'

'One September, some of us went to Prem Nagar for Shri Satpal Ji Maharaj's birthday. Satsang was held in the evening. Maharaj Ji wanted to know where I was. When someone told him that I was ill with a high temperature, he came straight to my room and said, 'Ramayani, I'm the Satguru but I'm a doctor, too!' He gave me some powder to swallow with tea. The next morning I was perfectly all right.

'Once, about 400 premies walked from Patna to Lucknow to attend a satsang program. We would go wherever satsang was held, so in love with Maharaj Ji were we. My boss was annoyed with me and said, 'You're always taking leave! Spare a thought for your job and your family!' I replied, 'Sir, you may take it out of my pay, but please grant me leave.'

'I always liked to stand at the very end of the darshan line because the joy and bit of self-denial which went with waiting for darshan was very special.

'After I received Knowledge, I lost interest in everything else. I used to give satsang during the lunch break. One day, some opponents tried to disrupt my meeting. They came at me, hurling abuse, while I was talking. I thought, 'They're going to attack me!' and started meditating. Immediately Shri Maharaj Ji appeared to me, surrounded by Light, saying, 'What? You're afraid?' When I opened my eyes I saw that my opponents had sat down quietly, so I continued my satsang."

During satsang at Muzaffarpur in 1964, Shri Maharaj Ji said, "The world is changeable, slippery and impermanent. What you see today can be completely changed by tomorrow. Still, worldly people think that this world and its enjoyment is all that there is, so

they run after these pleasures, oblivious to what is good or bad for them.

'India used to be a subject nation. A lot of sacrifice and hard work was necessary for us to become free. Our leaders used to tell us that once the British had gone our land would be peaceful and happy. Well, the British left, but no one is peaceful or happy. Now they say that when our country is more developed and industrialized, when we are self-sufficient in foodstuffs and when we manufacture our own motor vehicles, aeroplanes and nuclear bombs, we'll be happy. But countries like America and U.S.S.R. are developed and prosperous and don't lack anything, but they threaten other countries with their nuclear weapons. So if they are affluent, why are they not peaceful? Those who have everything are agitated and those who don't have are unhappy. If the rich nations haven't succeeded in finding peace and happiness, when will they? When the bombs explode? The affluent countries flaunt their wealth, but will we be peaceful and happy when we are just as affluent? If they haven't achieved this state yet, how will we?

'Those who torment the world and cause the most damage are called 'great'. Hitler, who plunged his country into the holocaust of war is called a great leader. Napoleon did likewise. The world calls those men 'great' who kill the most people. But one who behaves like that is a devil.

'A person is born in an affluent family in an affluent country. He gets the best upbringing and education. He has the best of everything. He becomes a top scientist earning the highest salary. Then what does he do? He designs a bomb to destroy as many people as possible. This is his gift to mankind. He is what is called a great man. Man turns into a monster, and misusing his intelligence, starts with robbery and works his way through manufacturing pistols, guns, machine guns, tanks, etc. right up to atomic bombs which will wipe out not only millions of human beings but lizards, rats, dogs, cats, buffaloes, snakes etc. as well. This is the glory of the brilliant man. Science has reached a peak so develops these bombs. Suppose they explode them. They'll

damage the planet. If they don't explode them, what's the use of manufacturing them? If they went to a village and tried to sell them, no one would offer them a penny, because who is prepared to pay for his own death?

'The potter loads up his cart with clay and goes to market. On the way there'll always be someone who'll offer him a few pennies for a bit of clay to clean their hands, or to level their courtyards. The potter fashions beautiful toys from his clay. He sells them to support his family. But listen, scientists! In exchange for your bombs you wouldn't even get one meal! So much for your education and your knowledge! If you wanted to fly in the air you could've become an eagle, and then there's no danger of crashing nor need of petrol. If you wanted to race cars you could've become a deer and run races. Instead of using tractors to plough and dig the land, you could've become a mouse or a pig. Think reasonably and honestly, now. Have your inventions brought peace to mankind? You've used your brains and knowledge to terrorize mankind.

'People visit the Delhi Exhibition and see all kinds of technological marvels. I even saw on display a plastic man whose nerves and blood vessels were visible. Also I saw talking robots. But they can't do everything that a real human being can. The power of reason belongs only to God-created man. Material things and technology have definitely made man's life easier, but haven't brought him peace of mind.

'Our businessmen give thousands and thousands of rupees to other countries to buy machinery for manufacturing artificial vegetable oils. Firstly, that money has gone into foreign hands and secondly, several thousands more have to be spent to pay the foreign technicians who come here to work the machines. We give that consultant our peanuts, mustard, corn, sesame and cotton seed to make his oils. You don't get the chance to serve a cow, nor do you eat real butter and ghee. Agencies and shops are opened to publicize this artificial stuff, which causes all kinds of bronchial and other complaints, to cure which we have to buy medicines from our trading partners. More money sent overseas. Employers

make a profit and pay their workers a pittance. They spend their profits on foreign cars and clothes, and so their money again goes overseas. Real, pure ghee becomes a rarity, and even should one find it, along come those enemies of mankind, the learned priests, and throw it all in a ritual fire. Our leaders, industrialists and intelligentsia mouth patriotic speeches about promoting and uplifting the country, while in fact they ensnare the country and its citizens in a net of disease and hardship. There are heaps of broken machinery rusting and wasting acres of land. Our 'top' men weaken the earth by digging holes to build iron and coal mines in which hundreds of people are buried in disasters. Workers slave away day and night. They never get any edifying company so they lack direction in their lives. Like their wealthy employers, they look for enjoyment in rubbishy entertainment. They are dissatisfied and express it in strikes and riots. Machines render thousands unemployed, and this causes all kinds of mischief. Envy and antagonism, rather than love, increases among people.

'India used to be called 'The Golden Bird'. Has it become an iron one now? Or was it always an iron bird dipped in gold, and which our leaders again want to gild? However, if it always was a genuine golden bird, then it must be now, too. Humbled and impoverished by unemployment, we look to other countries, while our own country has more wealth than most other countries can match.

'Our leading citizens will be able to see clearly only when they get the right company. But how will wasting time in hollow entertainments improve their minds or enable them to reason for the welfare of the citizens? Now, I'm not against scientific development at all, but we should think about the consequences, because we are the ones who will reap them. He who digs a ditch to trap others ends up falling in it himself. You make plans, but what's the use if you die in the meantime? So why manufacture all those destructive weapons?

'God is described as being Truth-Consciousness-Bliss. Remembering God brings peace and happiness. God Who is bliss

is within everyone, so peace and happiness will also be found within. Pleasures are likened to a blazing fire. When ghee and herbs are thrown into a fire it flares up even more. Similarly, showiness and artificial decoration stoke the fires of desire. The dog gnaws on a bone. His gums bleed and the taste of blood delights him. The dog is the most faithful creature. He lies at his master's feet and licks them. However, if the master tries to take that bone away from him, that same faithful dog will not hesitate to bite.

'Worldly things are like the dog's bone. Everyone gnaws at them. But, if we could experience happiness directly from the source within ourselves, all these other things would reveal themselves to be insubstantial. Buddha, Gopichand and Bhatrihari rejected their kingdoms because they realized the real bliss within themselves. A great man doesn't hoard possessions—only the lesser one does that. Lions never save anything for later. They eat their fill and leave the rest. Hoarding means restriction and bondage.

'Once Dattatreya noticed a kite pick up a piece of meat from a butcher's shop and fly away with it. Other kites pursued it and stabbed it with their beaks. Exhausted, the kite dropped the meat. Another kite flew off with it and the same thing happened to it. It also ended up dropping the meat to save itself. The other birds fell to fighting over the meat and finally none of them got it. The piece of meat was left lying as before. A state is like that meat. Kings die fighting over it, and none of them gets to enjoy it completely.

'Stealing is against the law. The offender gets punished. He can also be shot. Even so, robbery increases day by day. Selling imitation milk is an offence punishable by a fine, still trading goes on because dealers make more profit than they lose in fines. This is the result of ignorance.

'To get votes politicians pretend to be very humble. They tell you that all they want is to serve you and if you vote for them they will work for your welfare. However, when they become Minister or President no matter if you want to see them about their own or

the country's welfare, they say that they don't have time. Why don't they have time? Because they are too busy giving speeches and interviews, or attending meetings, opening ceremonies and shows. They believe in Mahatma Gandhi and say that they are working for the good of the country. Mahatma Gandhi wanted to re-establish *Ram Rajya*—the ideal state. Are they pursuing this goal?

'St. Kabir says that the world is a shop, where everyone comes to buy and sell. A person who meditates on God quadruples his capital, while someone who desires only the perishable things of this world wastes his. A person who doesn't meditate wastes his life.

'Hindus, Muslims, Christians and Sikhs are all made by God. Ask any of them and they'll all say that the same God created us all. If the Lord of all is One, then His Name must also be One, but people have forgotten it and fight each other over the different names which they use.

'Children are taught these names when they are 2 or 3 years old. Does this mean that before we learned to say *Ram*, *Allah*, *Krishna* or *God* that God didn't exist for us? After all, we should know the Name which we remembered before we were born, and which saints say is beyond vowels and consonants. Whether you know it or not, that Name is within every heart, but can't be realized without the Master."

The premies of Bihar had boundless faith and reverence for Shri Maharaj Ji and they witnessed many wonderful *lilas*. Shri Jagannath Prashad of Bhagalpur says, "Maharaj Ji knew everything that was going on inside a person. I was initiated in 1964 and a few days later I was lying down for my afternoon rest when suddenly I heard a voice saying, 'Meditate!' I was wide awake, by the way. Although I hadn't yet seen Maharaj Ji, I felt sure that this must be his voice. Sometime later I went to Vaisakhi at Satlok Ashram. When Maharaj Ji started giving satsang, I

realized that his was indeed the voice which I had heard. I was thrilled with love. When I went for darshan, he smiled and said, 'So, have you come from Bhagalpur?'

'One night I was sleeping soundly on the verandah of my house. Suddenly Maharaj Ji's voice called to me from within, 'Wake up! A thief is breaking into your house!' I opened my eyes and saw that a thief was indeed scaling the wall, but ran away when he noticed that I was awake.'

Acchelal Sharma of Begu Sarai tells, "It was 1957. I was quite young and had neither seen Maharaj Ji nor received Knowledge. My father ran a small lumber business near the Nepalese border. One day I did something wrong and my father threatened me with dire punishment. I ran away into the forest. I ended up in a dense part of the jungle where not even a bird was to be seen. I came to a scary mountain river which was quite black in colour. I followed it for a couple of miles looking for a place to cross. I was remembering God for all I was worth. Finally I saw a half-submerged rocky ledge. I took off all my clothes and tied them in a bundle on my head and gingerly crossed the river. I got dressed and was about to set off again when all of a sudden I saw a godlike person dressed in white standing in front of me. I trembled with fear, wondering who this could be in the middle of such a dense jungle. I approached him slowly and stood in front of him with folded hands. He looked like a king, with his long hair and great round eyes. He scolded me, saying, 'You silly boy! You don't realize how dangerous this river is. In it live animals which come out of the water and drag a man in! Go! Today you have been given a new lease of life.' Then he showed me the way out of the forest. When I turned around to look at him, he'd disappeared. I reached home, but his memory stayed with me.

'I went to Patna to live with an uncle. Several years later I attended a satsang program there. As soon as Maharaj Ji came on stage a shock wave went through me and I recognized him as the holy man who had once shown me the way out of the forest.' □

Chapter Seven

Shri Maharaj Ji in Bombay

From 1960 Shri Maharaj Ji started spreading Knowledge in Bombay, the largest commercial centre in India. During the remaining years of his life, his fame spread quickly all over the metropolitan area, as well as to the neighbouring cities of Poona, Nasik, Ahmedabad and Baroda. Mahatma Ramanandji was one of the first mahatmas to be sent to Bombay. Mahatma Ji, from a high Brahmin family, has been spreading Knowledge throughout India since 1956. An energetic and disciplined mahatma, he automatically impresses everyone he meets. This simple and straightforward man was the first mahatma to be sent to Bombay. He was acquainted with Kedar Kandelwal, an Alwar merchant with a business in Bombay. He stayed at his house first and from there started distributing literature and giving satsang. The first person to take Knowledge was a Marwari lady, Gita Bai, and gradually the other members of her family followed suit. By Maharaj Ji's grace and the mahatmas' hard work, Knowledge started spreading quickly throughout Bombay.

Bombay is also the centre of much religious activity, and many gurus and mandaleshwars are active there. They know how to give eloquent discourses on Gita and Ramayana. Into such a city, whose residents are sure to be impressed by intellectual sophistication, came Shri Maharaj Ji's simple saddhu, who stressed only one thing: "If you want to hear lectures about Gita and Ramayana then go to the other gurus, but if you want to know what Lord Krishna revealed to Arjuna, then by Guru Maharaj Ji's grace I can show you this True Name and Form of God which you so far have been seeking in temples and holy places. I myself am from a Brahmin family; I've done all the rituals and recitations that

you do. But, can you honestly swear that you have seen the Divine Light? Have you ever meditated on that Name which can be remembered constantly?" Mahatma Ji's artless and sincere manner impressed people and one by one they came to him for initiation. A merchant's wife in Nimanbari took Knowledge and started holding regular satsang meetings at her home. Naturally the new premies wanted to meet Shri Maharaj Ji. Mahatma Ji relayed their request to Maharaj Ji, who accepted.

A premie who accompanied Shri Maharaj Ji to that program gives this eye-witness account: "Shri Maharaj Ji left for Bombay by train on 12th January 1961 at 4 p.m. Thousands of premies saw him off at the station. At various stops along the way, devotees had gathered for darshan. We premies on the train spent a very blissful trip talking about Maharaj Ji and singing his praises.

"The train arrived on time the next day. A huge crowd had turned out to welcome the Master. Premies had arranged accommodation for him at Kopar. Satsang programs were held both there and at Bhanushali every day, from 14th to 20th. Extra satsang was held from 5-7 p.m. at Madho Bagh and on 21st and 22nd January at Ville Parle. The programs were attended by local dignitaries, such as the Speaker for the State Parliament, Shri Pagai, the Mayor of Bombay Shri V.L. Desai, and the former U.P. Governor Shri K.M. Munshi. At the Bhanushali program the audience was moved to tears as Maharaj Ji recounted the glory of India.

"The remarkable thing about the Bombay programs was that, although huge audiences attended, they listened very quietly and attentively. Maharaj Ji was very impressed by their respectful attitude and praised them to the hilt.

"I was lucky enough to hear virtually non-stop satsang there in Bombay. On 23rd January an aged gentleman received Knowledge and became a mahatma the same day. Another gentleman, from Gujarat, a well-off businessman, was so impressed that he renounced worldly life and became a mahatma. He went to preach in Nasik."

Gita Bai, the first Bombay premie, recalls, "I used to pray first thing every morning, 'Lord, You are the Beloved of Your devotees. As Krishna, You visited Vidur's house and ate banana peels. O Lord of the forlorn! When will You visit my house? On that hallowed morning I will adorn Your holy feet with the flowers of my love and veneration and count myself blessed.'

"My golden opportunity came in 1961 when my revered and holy Master Shri Hans Ji Maharaj arrived for the first time. The beloved Lord, in the shape of my Master, was my honoured guest and the thirst of lifetimes was quenched.

"There was such magic in Maharaj Ji's satsang that a rich merchant who heard the satsang and read the pamphlet 'What is Truth?' offered to buy up all the literature at our bookstall and distribute it free. He said that the pamphlet had really opened up his eyes. Maharaj Ji replied, 'Money dedicated in spreading Knowledge is money well spent. If you really want to do that, then well and good. Or you could get it printed in large quantities and distribute it all over Bombay.'

"Satsang aside, a stream of people came throughout the day to meet Maharaj Ji. Knowledge spread quickly in Bombay. Mahatmas and Bais were sent to give satsang at various places."

Mahatma Ramanandji gave Knowledge to a Gujarati lady. She had a marvellous experience of Light and even after she'd gone home all she could see was Light, whether her eyes were open or closed. She returned to Mahatma Ji saying, "My head feels as if it is about to burst! All I see is this Light, wherever I look. I can't sleep, I can't do anything!" Mahatma Ji wondered what kind of *lila* was going on. He thought, 'I've given Knowledge to thousands of people, but I've never seen anything like this.' The lady returned several times to him, saying, "Mahatma Ji, I'm going crazy. Please turn it off." Mahatma Ji decided to write a letter to Shri Maharaj Ji. After he had written a couple of lines, he heard a knock at the door, and there stood Maharaj Ji!

Mahatma Ji, much relieved, said, "Lord, you've done me a great favour by coming here. I was in a dilemma."

Maharaj Ji asked, "Well, what's wrong?" Mahatma Ji told him the whole story and meanwhile the premie herself had arrived. She prostrated to Maharaj Ji and prayed, "Master, please take this Light away! My head is bursting!" Maharaj Ji said, "Just look at this! Everyone wants to see such Light and you want me to take it away. Very well, turn your right ear towards me." He blew into her ear. The Light faded away and she returned to normal. This happens to meditators who have a good stock of merits from previous lives. When they take Knowledge the mind becomes introverted and tremendous physical and mental changes take place. People practising other disciplines can be harmed, but Guru Maharaj Ji's grace removes all potential dangers and difficulties on the path. That is why it is said that without Guru's grace a person can't succeed in Yoga or meditation. The natural Name is already within everyone and when a person finds it his 'spiritual door' is opened. If this door is open, the person is most fortunate, and if it isn't, then no matter how wealthy, good-looking or majestic he may be, his life is in vain.

Once a premie asked Maharaj Ji, "Is this Name God?" Maharaj Ji explained, "The huge banyan tree comes from a tiny seed. At first nothing is visible in this seed, but everything—leaves, branches, trunk, flowers, etc. is contained in it. When it is planted in fertile ground, it germinates and a shoot appears and gradually that seed turns into a huge tree. It bears fruit and more seeds. So it is with God and the Holy Name. Guru Maharaj Ji sows the seed of the Name in the field of the devotee's heart. It manifests itself through meditation. So God is within the Name and God is the Name. It's a matter of experience and is realized through meditation. But, if you don't meditate, how will you understand?"

After Bombay, Maharaj Ji held programs in Nasik. The first was held at the Military Centre and was attended by thousands of soldiers and civilians. A premie who accompanied Maharaj Ji relates, "It seemed as if Lord Krishna himself was onstage teaching the lessons of the Gita.

The second program was held near a Sikh gurudwara, and the Sikhs were afraid that it was meant to oppose them, but when Maharaj Ji started talking about the true Guru, true devotion and *Satnam*, quoting Guru Nanak to illustrate his point, they all came out of their gurudwara to listen, and some, who were interested in realizing for themselves this Name, which they call *Satnam*, later received Knowledge. Actually, people from a cross-section of society received Knowledge."

Maharaj Ji said in Nasik, "The Lord said in the Gita: 'I don't take on anyone's good or bad actions; everyone has to suffer or enjoy the consequences of his own deeds.'

'We are experiencing the results of our previous actions now, and we will experience the results of our present actions in the future. Farmers harvest whatever crops they sow, and the next harvest is determined by the kind of crops they plant now. The body is the earth and the soul is the farmer, and whatever the farmer decides to plant determines the next harvest. People pray to deities for release from their various physical, mental and spiritual sufferings, but, as St. Tulsidas said, 'Even if it were possible to churn water and extract ghee, or oil from sand, it is absolutely impossible for the soul to cross the mortal ocean without meditating on God.' The way to get rid of all sufferings has been described by the saints of all ages:

'Meditation brings joy and banishes sorrow,
So meditate and merge in God.'

If you meditate you will indeed experience the highest joy. Meditate on the Holy Name if you want liberation. If you want to see God, then meditate on His Name. As Guru Nanak said, 'It is Kali Yuga, so meditate on the Holy Name.' Plant the seed of the Name. Wheat, chickpeas or any other seeds must be sown at the right time, but you can 'plant' the Name anytime and it takes root immediately in the field of the heart. The Name, to meditate on which you were born in this world as a human being, is revealed by a true Master. So weed yourself of all vanity, dedicate yourself

body and soul, and harvest the wealth of the Holy Name. That Name is in your heart, but without the grace of a saint you can't realize it.

'Mohammed in his time revealed the True Name of Allah and through his messengers, propagated it. Jesus Christ revealed this Word. The saints and prophets of every religion taught meditation on the same Name, but because people don't have a practical experience of the Truth, they think that there are many Names for God.

'Ravanna taught two basic truths—if a good thought enters your head, put it into action immediately, because who knows if the chance will come again. On the other hand, if you think of doing something bad, postpone it. Suppose you get the idea of killing someone and you postpone it until the following day. If you die during the night you will be spared the terrible consequences of a terrible action. The highest action anyone can do is to be devoted to God and to serve the Master. If you postpone doing this, you're the one who'll regret it."

B.S. Dhiman, a Nasik premie, who works for the Government Printing Office, says, "In 1961 I saw Shri Maharaj Ji for the first time, on the platform of Nasik Railway Station. As soon as he stepped down from the train, a huge crowd of people surged like a tidal wave towards him. I stood back and watched it all. As Shri Maharaj Ji passed me I bowed to him. He threw a garland on me and told me to come with him. A Sindhi premie had provided accommodation at his home in Gandhi Nagar. A crowd of thousands was waiting there to welcome him. I was totally astounded by the size of the crowd. A few days later, Mahatma Sukhanandji initiated my wife and me. Soon afterwards, about 25 premies made plans to go to Hardwar on the Punjab Mail. I filled out quintuplicate forms, but the clerk said that I wouldn't get any berths. Three days later I went to check and was told that 12 berths had been allotted. As for the remaining twelve, I would have to get special recommendation from the General Manager in Bombay. The next day I went back. The clerk called me aside and asked,

'What's your connection with the G.M.? You've got all 25 berths!' I figured that this was Guru Maharaj Ji's doing and answered, 'I don't know your General Manager. My Master, for whose darshan we are going to Hardwar, has 'recommended' me!'

'Something equally surprising happened on the return journey. We broke our journey at Agra for sightseeing. We then booked our 25 berths on the Punjab Mail and filled out the forms in quintuplicate. Again we were told that it was difficult to get even one berth, and we were asking for 25! The next day there was no news from Agra and we were worried. Nevertheless, we went to the station on time, and just as the train pulled in a conductor called out, 'Dhiman and party—25 berths!' The premies began to dance and sing for joy because for us it was a miracle, but one which we thoroughly understood.

'In 1963 Maharaj Ji came to Nasik with his family. He stayed four days at my house then rejoined Shri Mata Ji and the children at Gandhi Nagar. Maharaj Ji gave satsang in his room until 2 a.m. Then he told me to sleep on the verandah and make sure nobody came into his room. As he was closing the door he again said that he himself would open it when he was ready. I woke with a start at 5 a.m. I temporarily forgot his agya and opened his door. What I saw dumbfounded me. Shri Maharaj Ji was lying there in the form of a child! I was afraid and shut the door. Shortly afterwards, he opened the door and, seeing my fright, laughed and said, 'So, you're already awake?' My heart burst with love."

On 27th January, Maharaj Ji was to leave Nasik for Bombay as this is the easiest route to Baroda, where a program had been arranged. The Bombay premies requested another program and even though he was pressed for time and had had virtually no rest, Maharaj Ji consented and a program was arranged at Ville Parle on the 28th. The program was duly held and the same night Maharaj Ji left for Baroda.

Speaking on the Ramayana, he said, "People think that the 'Mahamantra' which Lord Shiva reveals to souls at Benares is this:

राम रामेती रामेती रमे रामे मनोरमे ।
सहस्र नाम सातुल्यं, श्री राम नाम बरानने ॥

(The Name which pervades every being and in which Yogis merge themselves, cannot be equalled, even by thousands of other names.)

But this is not the real Mahamantra because it has a definite beginning and end. 'Maha' means great, and 'mantra' means that which controls the mind. But the above mantra is neither the greatest nor will it control the mind. The Name which resides within every being is equal to thousands of others, as Tulsidas explained, 'The Natural Name is equal to thousands of others, and is remembered by Shiva and Parvati. Due to it Lord Shiva is the abode of blessings and happiness, even though he looks inauspicious.' Lord Shiva taught Parvati the single Name which is equal to thousands of others. Everyone chants names with their mouths, but Lord Shiva instructed Parvati to remember the Name deep within herself. So where is the agreement between what Lord Shiva said and what people do? If *Ram-Ram* is believed to be the Name equal to a thousand others, then what's the value of all the other names which people remember? But people repeat whatever they like. What do they know of the importance of saints and satsang? They get deceived in the same way as they deceive. Tulsidas also said, 'The results of satsang are immediate. One dip in it is enough to turn people of crow-like natures into swans. This is nothing to be surprised about, either. The glory of satsang is no secret.' Ajamil and Ganika remembered the Holy Name and attained the supreme state. But people now don't know the greatness of the Name. They are led astray by people like the editor of the Kalyan Press, who write rubbish like 'Repeat any name you like, as they are all names of God.' They even change the meaning of verses such as

उल्टा नाम जया जग जाना । बालमीक भए ब्रह्म समाना ॥

(Valmiki meditated on the reverse Name and became one with God.)

They don't understand what is meant by 'reverse Name' and write that Valmiki meditated on *Mara-Mara*. But such blind fools don't think for a moment that Tulsidas could just as easily have said that we should meditate on *Mara-Mara*. Thus they lead people astray. They even leave out verses whose meaning they don't understand! If you could achieve liberation by chanting any name, then what is the need for the Guru? This man is himself preaching his own opinions, and telling others to chant mantras, yet says that one doesn't need a Guru! They are all messengers of Death, sent to mislead people into wasting their precious human life.

'If chanting *Ram-Ram* leads to liberation, then parrots in their cages chanting this should also be free, and if this is so, then what is the uniqueness of the human body? Why did Lord Rama stress the importance of having a human life and not wasting it? Was he talking in vain? No, not at all! St. Kabir also said that the thousands of worldly names for God won't liberate you. Only the True Name can do that, and it is known only by following the Satguru. Parrots can't chant this Name. Only human beings can know it and meditate on it. No name or mantra or tantric spell has ever succeeded in controlling the mind, nor will they. That is why Kabir called them all false. If liberation is attained through any mantra or name, what was the need for Lord Shiva to spread the 'Mahamantra'? Because this is the only thing which can control the mind and liberate the soul.

'Many people call *Hare Rama Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare, Hare Krishna Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare* the Mahamantra. But the title 'Mahamantra' is given to the mantra which is beginningless and endless. Says Kabir, 'The Primordial Name is the root and all other names are branches. No one can cross the worldly ocean without knowing this Name.' St. Brahmananda sang,

'Meditate on the Name of God.
It is the Deliverer.
It sustains everyone,
And is the Divine Dispenser.'

This Name is already within everyone, so that is why it is remembered internally.

'People think that R-A-M is the Name of God. Couldn't have Tulsidas said straight out that 'Ram' is the Holy Name? Hindus have remembered 'Ram' only since his birth in Treta Age. Krishna came later, in Dwapar Age, and only since then have people chanted 'Krishna Krishna'. Only since this time have temples been dedicated to them and statues of them worshipped. People don't stop to wonder which name was remembered *before* the advent of Rama and Krishna. The devotee Prahlad lived before Rama's time. So on which name did he meditate? On which name did the sages of Satyuga meditate and teach others? Bhilini had been a devotee long before she met Lord Rama. Her guru was Matang Rishi, who lived and meditated in the jungle before Rama was born. So which name did he reveal to her? If the Name is a common thing, why did Tulsidas write, 'How can I sing the glory of the Name? Even Lord Rama couldn't praise it adequately.'"

Satgurudev left Baroda on 31st January for Ahmedabad and gave satsang there for three days. Some Muslims also attended satsang and Shri Maharaj Ji explained that if a person sincerely wants to meet *Khuda* (God) he has to take the shelter of the *Auliya* (spiritual Master), who shows the true path to Allah. The aspirant has to break through the barriers of sectarianism and realize God within the shrine of his inner Self. Those who limit themselves to glorifying certain sects or religions can never realize God.

Dr. B. S. Rathore and his wife, Jebel Bai, have been active premies from the start. Jebel Bai recalls, "After I had received Knowledge I meditated every day. However, it surprised me that whenever I would meditate on Light, a man dressed in white would appear. I thought that he was trying to disturb my

meditation, because as yet I had not met Maharaj Ji. But once I saw him clearly I realized that he was the one whose picture I had seen in the room when I received Knowledge.

'Since childhood I had read scriptures and counted rosaries. Once, while I was turning the rosary it occurred to me that although I had spent a long time worshipping and turning rosaries, Lord Krishna had not appeared to me. I'd heard that he gave darshan to Meera Bai, so why not to Jebel Bai? This thought upset me greatly. Then after receiving Knowledge I saw Maharaj Ji in many ways. My mind became pure and peaceful. Shortly afterwards, Dr. Rathore also received Knowledge.'

A friend of theirs, Dr. Sohan Lal, who didn't have Knowledge, accompanied them to Satlok Ashram for Vaisakhi. After seeing Maharaj Ji he said, "He definitely is a divine Power. How radiant his face is! I saw rays of light streaming from it and I was seeing him for the first time. But divine personalities are not ordinary men. He's the reason why so many people have come here." Even though he saw Maharaj Ji from a distance, he experienced that spiritual charge.

Dr. Goyal, of Bombay Hospital, once carried out some tests on Shri Maharaj Ji and was astonished. He said, "I have examined thousands of prominent people but this was the first time I'd ever seen anyone from whose every pore light just streamed out. When I touched him I felt an inexplicable joy. In his presence I felt myself to be his servant, not his doctor." The result of serving a great soul was that Dr. Goyal became recognized as the leading heart specialist in Bombay. Shri Maharaj Ji was very pleased with his care and treatment.

"One day," says Jebel Bai, "we took him sightseeing. We were heading towards the Gateway of India when he suddenly went into a meditative state. Presently he opened his eyes and said, 'Let's go back.' Dr. Rathore said, 'But we're nearly at the Gateway of India.' But Maharaj Ji insisted, so we went back home, only to find hundreds of devotees waiting outside for darshan. When they spotted Maharaj Ji their faces lit up like closed lotuses coming back

into bloom. While he was giving darshan, Shri Maharaj Ji said, 'See, Jebel, these premies have come a long distance to see me and they have to return. They have come just to see me.' It was those premies' love that had drawn him back. Devotees are happy only when they see the Lord, and likewise the Lord is happy only among his devotees. The bond between them is one of soul.

'In 1963 certain opponents of Maharaj Ji conspired to defame him. They filed false allegations with the intention of disgracing him in Court. At that time Shri Maharaj Ji was in Bombay. We admitted him into hospital so that he wouldn't have to appear in Court. When he asked, 'Why have you dumped me here?' we replied, 'Maharaj Ji, a summons has been issued for you from Delhi Court.' Maharaj Ji said, 'But I'm not ill, and when the doctor comes and examines me he'll know that there is nothing wrong with me and it'll look as if I'm faking it.' He was admitted in the morning and the doctor was to come in the evening. Mahatma Ramanandji stayed in Maharaj Ji's room. A couple of hours later, Mahatma Ji heard groaning. He jumped up and asked Maharaj Ji what was wrong. Maharaj Ji's tongue was extended, his eyes were bloodshot and his body was burning like an oven. The doctor came and took his temperature. It was 104. We couldn't sleep the whole night for worry. We told the doctor that Maharaj Ji had to go to Delhi because of a Court summons. The doctor wrote out a medical certificate and said, 'He can't go anywhere in this condition.' "

Maharaj Ji was ill for about a month. Sometimes his condition would worsen and his eyes would be totally bloodshot. When he finally recovered, Mahatma Ji asked him, "What happened to you all of a sudden? You were sleeping soundly that first day there."

Maharaj Ji explained, "While I was lying there, I prayed to my Guru Maharaj Ji, saying, 'My reputation is in your hands now. People have filed false charges against me. I'm not sick. These premies will send a false medical certificate. The whole thing is lies!' As soon as I lay down again, my fever began and that is why I

am in this state. Guru Maharaj Ji saved my honour by making me really ill."

Some premies suspected that someone may have cast a spell on Maharaj Ji. A pundit was consulted who said, "Definitely someone has done something to him. He'll only recover when the spell is lifted and you perform the crossroads ritual." The necessary ingredients were purchased and the pundit taught us the mantra which was to be used. Mahatma Ramanand, being a Brahmin by birth, took this task upon himself. The ingredients were put in an urn which had to be placed at a crossroads at midnight. Mahatma Ji asked, "Who will come with me?" but everyone was scared. Finally he said quite crossly, "Look! I'm coming too! Do you think a ghost will eat me?" At last he and another mahatma were ready to go. It was raining heavily and a strong wind was blowing. Just as Mahatma Ji was leaving the room, a sudden gust of wind slammed the door loudly, and Maharaj Ji groaned. By now, Mahatma Ji was trembling, too, and wished that he was back inside. Summoning up his courage, and remembering the Holy Name, he made his way to the crossroads while the other mahatma held up an umbrella. They placed the urn at the crossroads and carried out the ritual according to the pundit's instructions.

When they returned, Maharaj Ji asked, "Well, were you scared?" Mahatma Ji admitted that he had been. Maharaj Ji said, "So that's all your faith amounts to! You were afraid to go as far as the crossroads, yet King Shivaji didn't hesitate to bring lioness' milk for his Guru. How much faith he had!"

While Maharaj Ji was in hospital, the Bombay premies got a chance to serve him, but at the same time, their faith was tested. Dr. Rathore and Jebel Bai were new premies, and Dr. Rathore worked in the hospital where Maharaj Ji was being treated. His friend, Dr. Goyal, whose experience of Maharaj Ji was mentioned earlier, said, "It seemed to me that his body was not solid at all, but a mass of energy. Light just streamed from him. I never used to

have much faith in God, but, having seen Maharaj Ji, my faith is renewed."

While in hospital, Maharaj Ji would describe amazing events to come. Once during satsang he said, "The thought crossed my mind: 'Guru Maharaj Ji, why am I suffering like this?' Then Maharaj Ji appeared to me and said, 'Devotees always suffer. Look what Prahlad had to bear. But don't worry. No harm will come to you.' And truly, he protected me in every way. The case against me fell through. Those people had to apologize publicly, and I didn't even have to appear in Court once! Listen, my friends! Maharaj Ji continues to look after me!"

"After a month in hospital," says Jebel Bai, "Maharaj Ji was very weak, but within a couple of months had fully recovered and his appearance was as sparkling as before. We saw him assume different forms. Sometimes he looked like a child, sometimes like a robust young man, and sometimes old. His appearance changed from one to another like sunshine and shade.

'Maharaj Ji wanted to return to Delhi. He stayed here for an extra day but didn't give darshan. I told my husband, 'Tell Maharaj Ji that you couldn't get a ticket for him so that he'll have to stay and give us darshan.' Dr. Rathore refused, saying, 'I can't lie to Maharaj Ji.' So off he went to try and secure a plane ticket. Meanwhile, Maharaj Ji called me and said, 'Listen, Jebel, don't try to stop me.' I thought that Doctor Sahib must have told him what I'd said. Then he said sternly, 'Who are you to stop me? If I can't go by plane I'll drive or walk! I have to go. Other devotees are calling me. You're not the only ones, you know!'"

Harilal Maurya of Rohi, Varanasi, was in Bombay in 1965. His factory was on strike, so he passed his time going from saddhu to saddhu. He says, "I always carried a book of St. Brahmananda's hymns in my pocket. I particularly liked these two hymns—'Day and night turn the heart's pure rosary,' and 'O saddhu, I have seen a great wonder!'" No one could explain what they meant. One saddhu told me that only someone of the stature of a Satguru could explain these highly mystical poems. It seemed there weren't any

real saints left in the world. Then by chance I heard Shri Maharaj Ji speak at Azad Maidan and was amazed when he started discussing those very poems! He added, 'I can reveal that same wonder!' My hopes rose. I followed the premies back to the dharmshala where they were staying. I saw Maharaj Ji dressed as Krishna. As I sat in my corner, I thought to myself, 'He's a human being but he's acting like the Lord!' That very moment Maharaj Ji glanced at me and as his penetrating gaze rested on me I heard a voice from within saying, 'He who is playing that part is indeed Krishna!' Tears came to my eyes and I regretted that thought, and wasted no time in receiving Knowledge."

Pushpa Muraka received Knowledge but at first her family wouldn't let her visit Maharaj Ji. However, whenever he was in Bombay he would drive past her house so that she could come downstairs and have darshan. She says, "I can never forget the love he gave us. He was prepared to put up with anything to give his devotees darshan."

Durga Behn, who received Knowledge in 1964, recalls, "Shri Maharaj Ji was the Incarnation of Love. Love just radiated from him. His eyes would fill with tears of love. When I would recount his glory back home in South Africa, my listeners would also weep.

'I followed many gurus before I met Maharaj Ji and received true Knowledge. I used to belong to the Kabir and Guru Kutti sects. Swami Visheshananda, Guru Nityananda, Gita Bharti and Swami Sivananda were also my gurus. They instructed me to chant Gayatri and other mantras, but these didn't give me peace of mind. So I started searching for the True Name. At Gita Bharti's place I met a premie who told me about Shri Hans Ji Maharaj. After listening to a few days of satsang I received Knowledge and started serving mahatmas.

'I attended the 1965 Vaisakhi at Satlok Ashram. Maharaj Ji came on stage and said, 'A lady called Durga from South Africa is here. She sings very well. She should come on stage and sing, because nowadays it's Durga Puja season as well!'"

'I hesitated, because I didn't know any Hindi songs—only Gujarati. While I was standing onstage wondering what to sing, this song just came out of my mouth—*Yeh prem sada bharpur rahe Gurudeva tumhare charanon mein*. After I had finished singing, Maharaj Ji had his photo taken with the Maharani of Jaipur on one side and me on the other. The next day he called me and asked, 'Well, what do you think of this Knowledge? Do you understand it or not?' I replied, 'I'd chanted a lot of mantras but I've only just discovered what spiritual Knowledge *really* is!'

'After Vaisakhi I spent a few days at Dehra Dun. Maharaj Ji gave very inspiring satsang and told mahatmas, 'I know who this soul is!' Later he called me into his room and said, 'The whole world lacks peace. The world is on fire and Knowledge is the only way to extinguish the flames. So go to South Africa and give satsang. When you find worthy aspirants, give them Knowledge. Knowledge has disappeared from the rest of the world. It is essential that people be reawakened.' He gave me satsang for an hour and then called another person into the room. He then told me, 'Now I want to see how you'll give Knowledge. Initiate him.' I replied, 'Maharaj Ji, I'm too shy to do that in your presence. I've sat with mahatmas many times during Knowledge sessions so, by your grace, I know how to give Knowledge.'

'I returned to South Africa and spread Knowledge in Johannesburg, Pretoria, Cape Town and Natal. A Gujarati academic, who gave Gita lectures, was impressed by satsang. He met me and said, 'It seems that you have brought some yogic powers with you from India.' I replied, 'Not yogic powers, but Guru Maharaj Ji's grace and blessings.'

Maharaj Ji's last great program was the 'Yagya for World Religion and Knowledge' in Bombay during January 1966, at Azad Maidan (Freedom Grounds). It was the largest program ever arranged by the Bombay premies and preparations were made at the national level. Maharaj Ji said several times that anyone who missed this event would regret it. Many people from other states attended. Mahatmas publicized it all over Bombay. An enormous

crowd assembled to hear Maharaj Ji speak. Heads of various religious groups presented their ideas. On the final day of the program, the Governor of Maharashtra, Dr. Chariyan, gave the Chairman's Address. The Governor of Uttar Pradesh, Mr. Vishwanath Das, was also present.

Addressing the huge audience, Shri Maharaj Ji said, "I am the complete Incarnation, having come with 64 divine powers. Listen, all of you stumbling in the darkness of ignorance! You are totally confused about what religion is. Intellectuals and scholars with their grandiose interpretations have led you all over the place. So come to me! I'll redeem you. I'll give you the true Knowledge and free you from all worldly bondage and attachments.

'Don't waste your rare and God-given human life in worldly indulgence! Only Guru Maharaj Ji can liberate you from the bonds of death!

'Never mind. If you fall, you can stand up again. Don't be afraid. Just keep on going, no matter how many times you may stumble. Once you have turned to me and taken refuge in me, your salvation is assured. All you have to do is firmly attach yourself to the Holy Word. I myself will draw you upwards. Meditate on this Divine Light and Holy Name. I've closed the doors of hell for you!

'The true Guru is he who can explain what religion really is. Religion means seeing God face-to-face and knowing His eternal Name. The one who can reveal such Knowledge is the Perfect Master, the Satguru. No one else in this world apart from him is perfect."

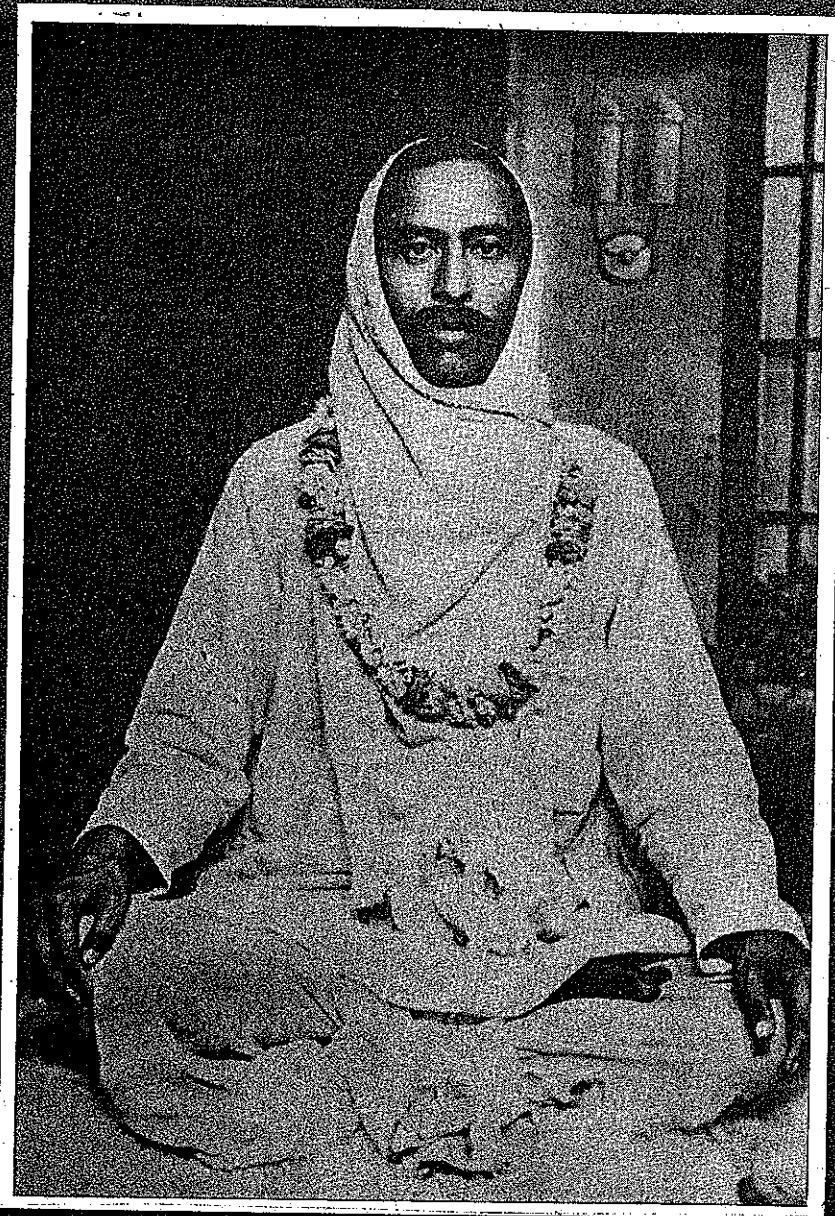
To mark this occasion, a spectacular procession was held in which thousands of people participated. Maharaj Ji wore his crown and golden robes and rode in a huge carriage. He made Shri Mata Ji wear a crown and seated her beside him. He seated Shri Satpal Ji Maharaj on his other side, and blessed him. This was Maharaj Ji's indication to the premies that Shri Mata Ji and Shri Satpal Ji were the same as he himself and were to be venerated as such. Kishan Singh Chauhan of Ballabhgarh, dressed as Hanuman, stood

behind Shri Maharaj Ji. The procession was certainly a sight worth seeing.

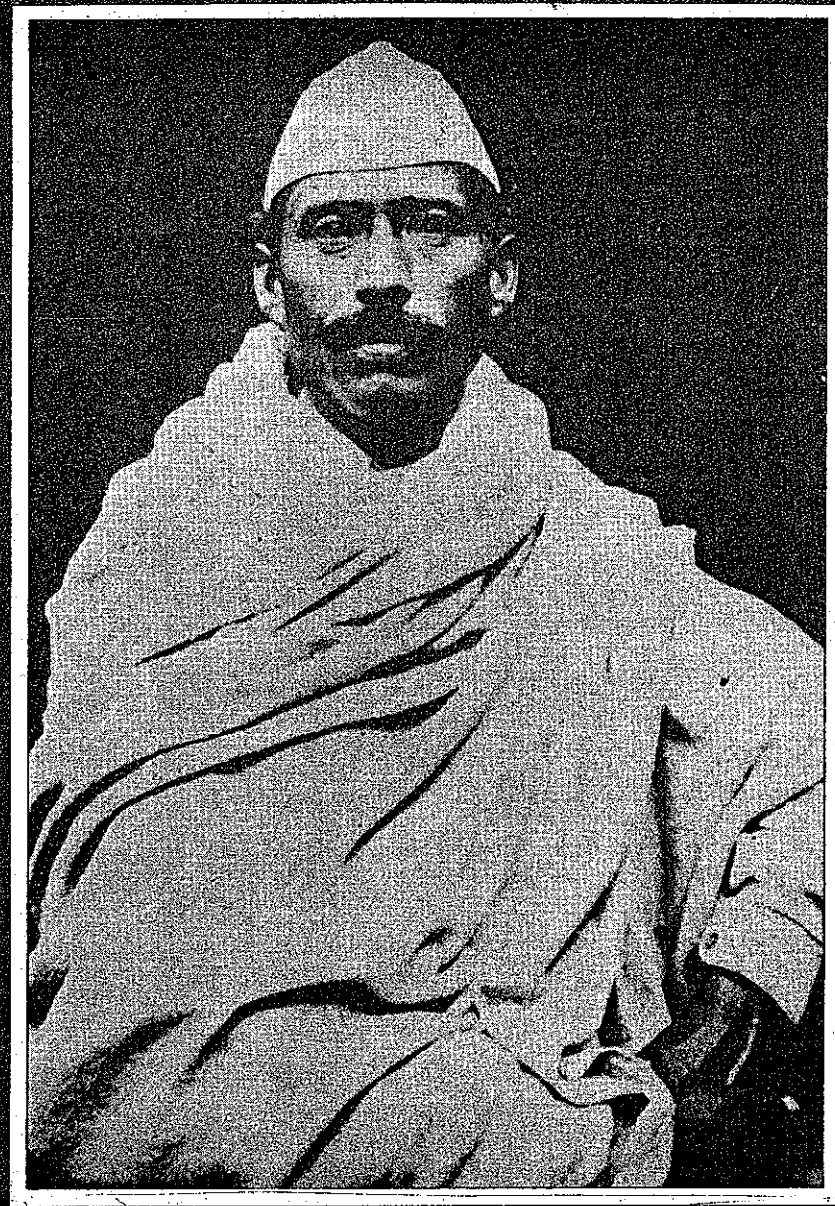
Maharaj Ji stayed at Pushpa Muraka's house, and the out-of-town premies were accommodated elsewhere. Maharaj Ji was not happy with this arrangement and said, "Why did you separate me from my premies? I'd rather be with them! I'm happy only when I'm with them." A few days later Maharaj Ji got ready to return to Delhi. Jebel Bai recalls, "I wanted very much to prepare some holy water (charnamrit) from Maharaj Ji's feet and worship him at the same time. One of the mahatmas scolded me, saying, 'So, you think you're a great devotee, do you?' I stormed upstairs in anger and burst into tears. Soon Maharaj Ji called me inside and said, 'Why are you crying? Go ahead and make charnamrit.' I replied that I had sent the ingredients home, thinking that I wouldn't get a chance. So Maharaj Ji told me to come back in the morning before he left.

"The next day at 6 a.m. I arrived at Pushpa Muraka's place. Maharaj Ji came out of his room and sat down on a chair. He said, 'Jebel, whatever you have to do in the way of worship, do it right now. You won't get this chance again. You won't see these feet again!' And that is exactly what happened. A few months later, Shri Maharaj Ji left his mortal body. I can still hear him saying, 'Jebel, whatever you have to do in the way of worship do it right now. You won't get this chance again. You won't see these feet again!'" □

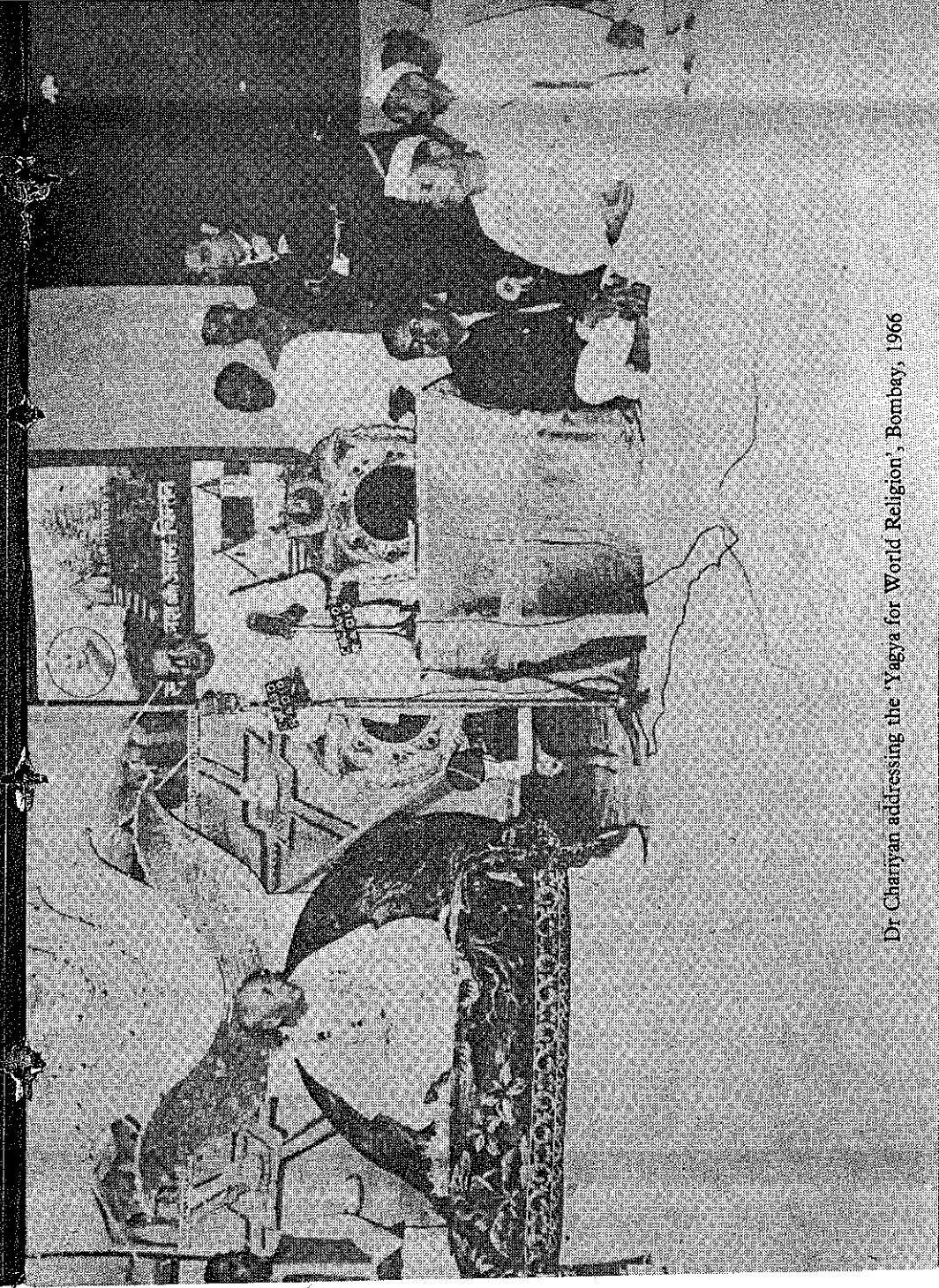




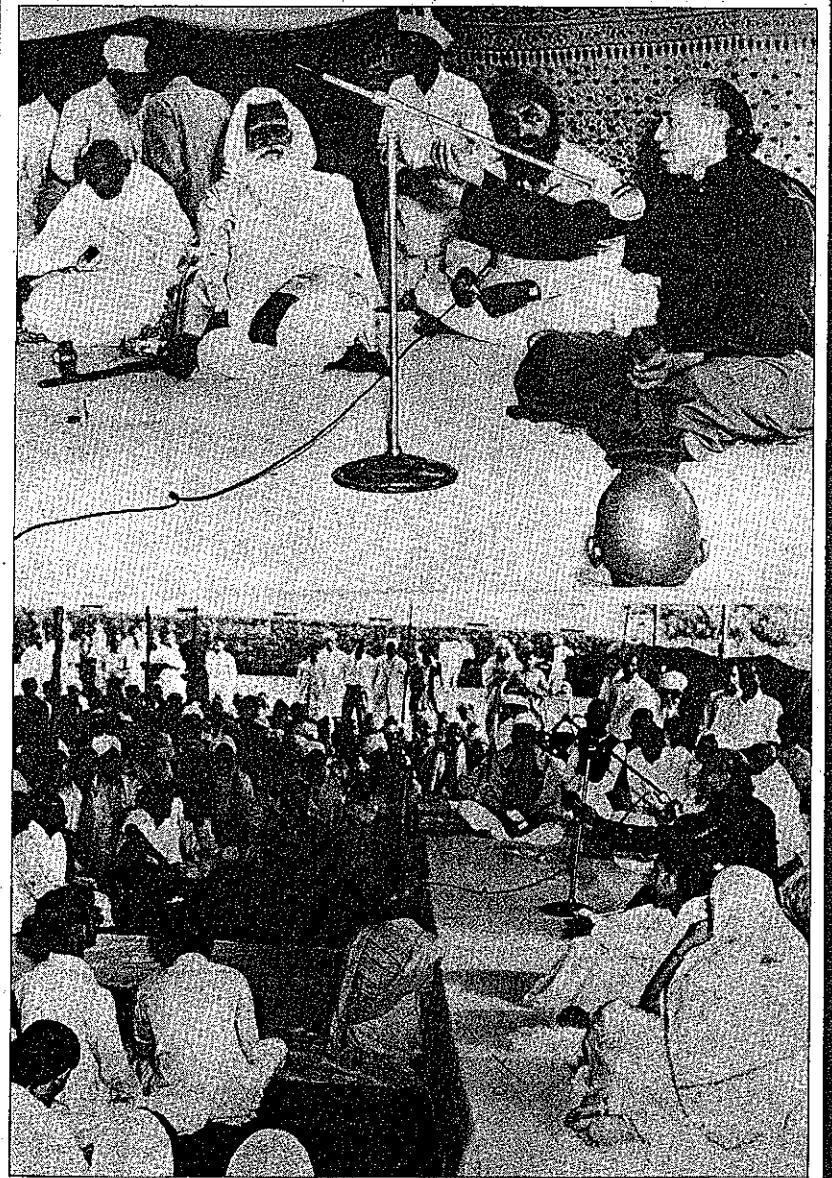
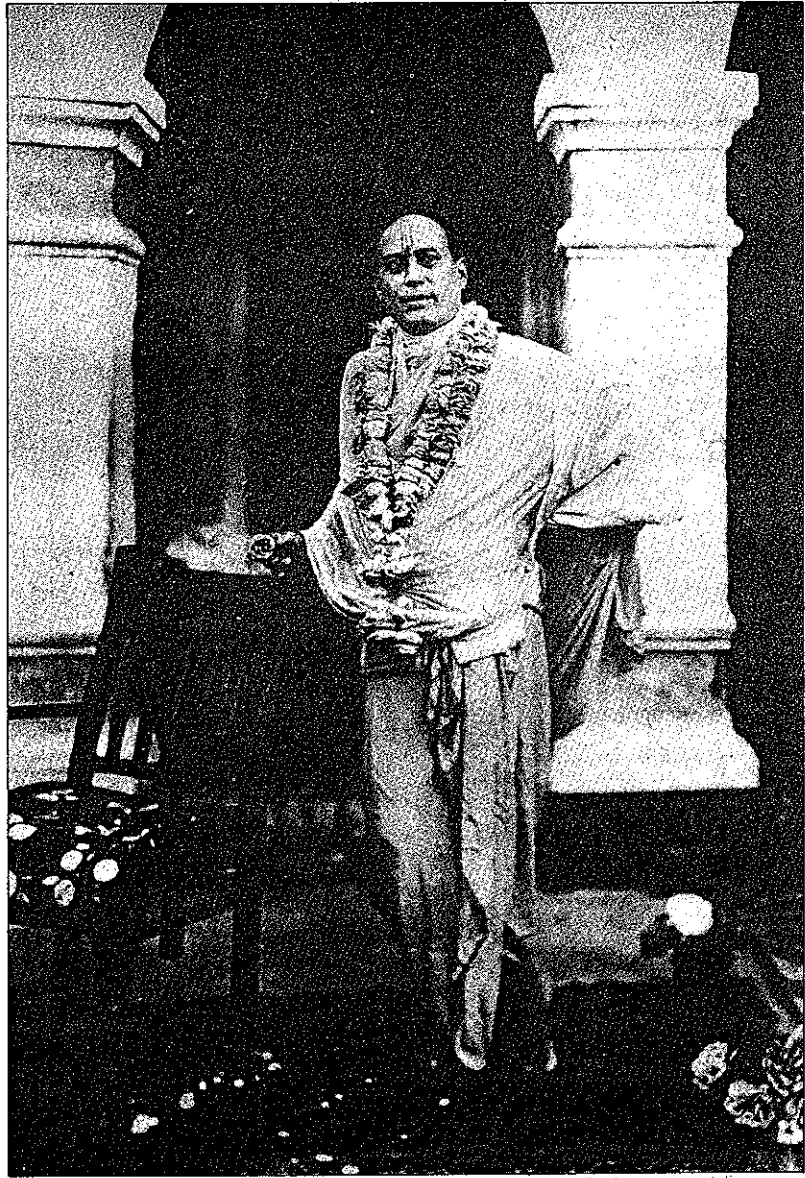
On his life of meditation and asceticism.



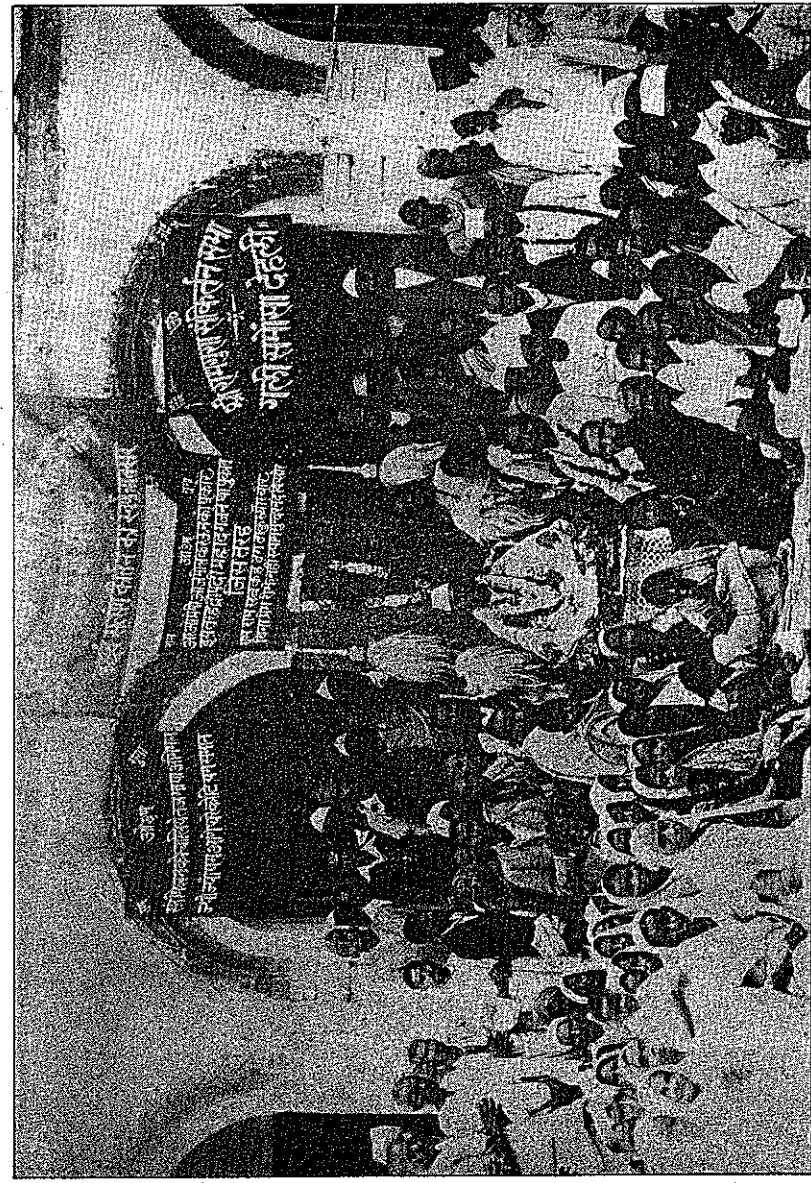
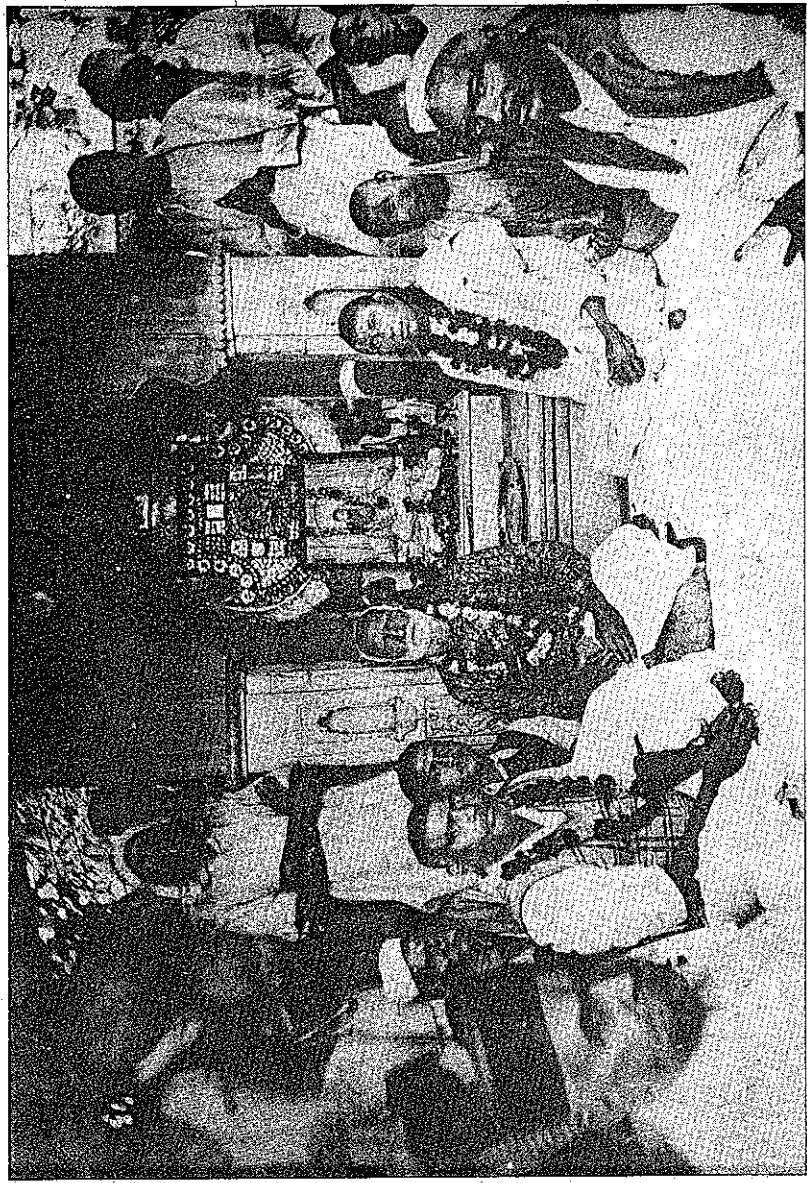
As a student of Buddhist faith and the Freedom struggle.

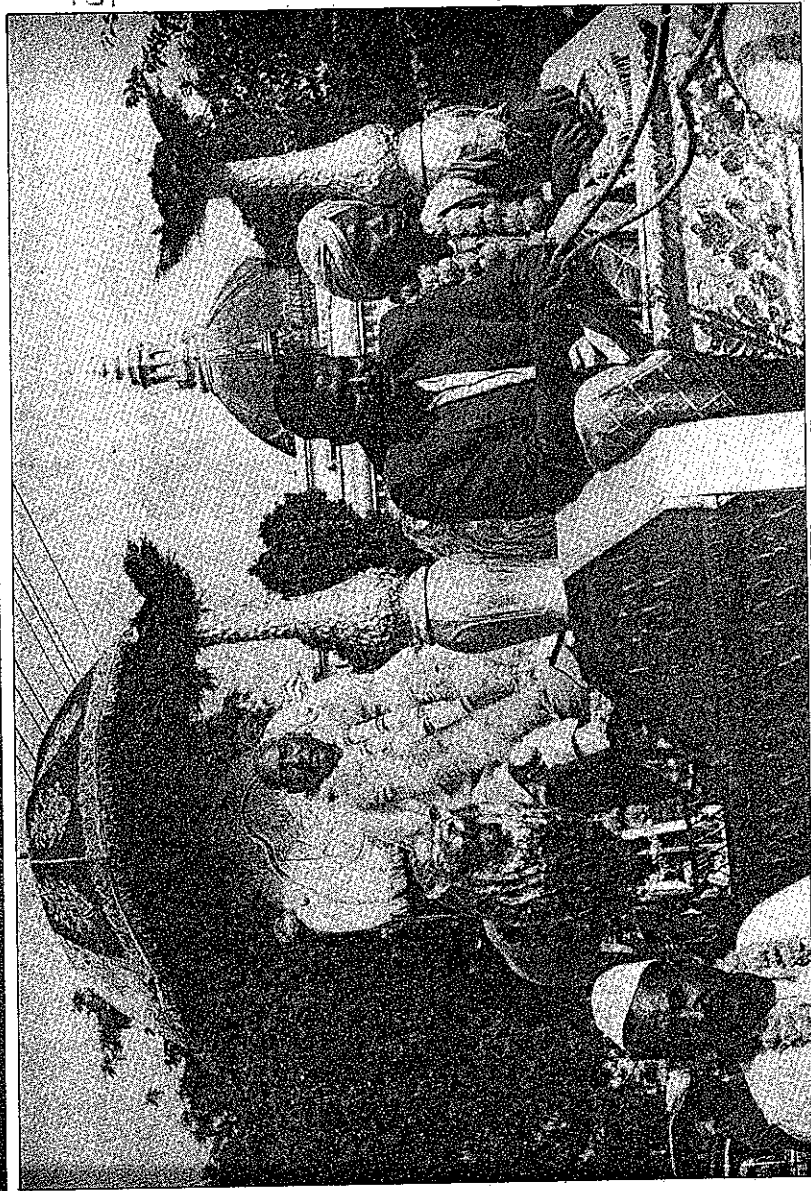


Dr Chariyan addressing the 'Yagya for World Religion', Bombay, 1966

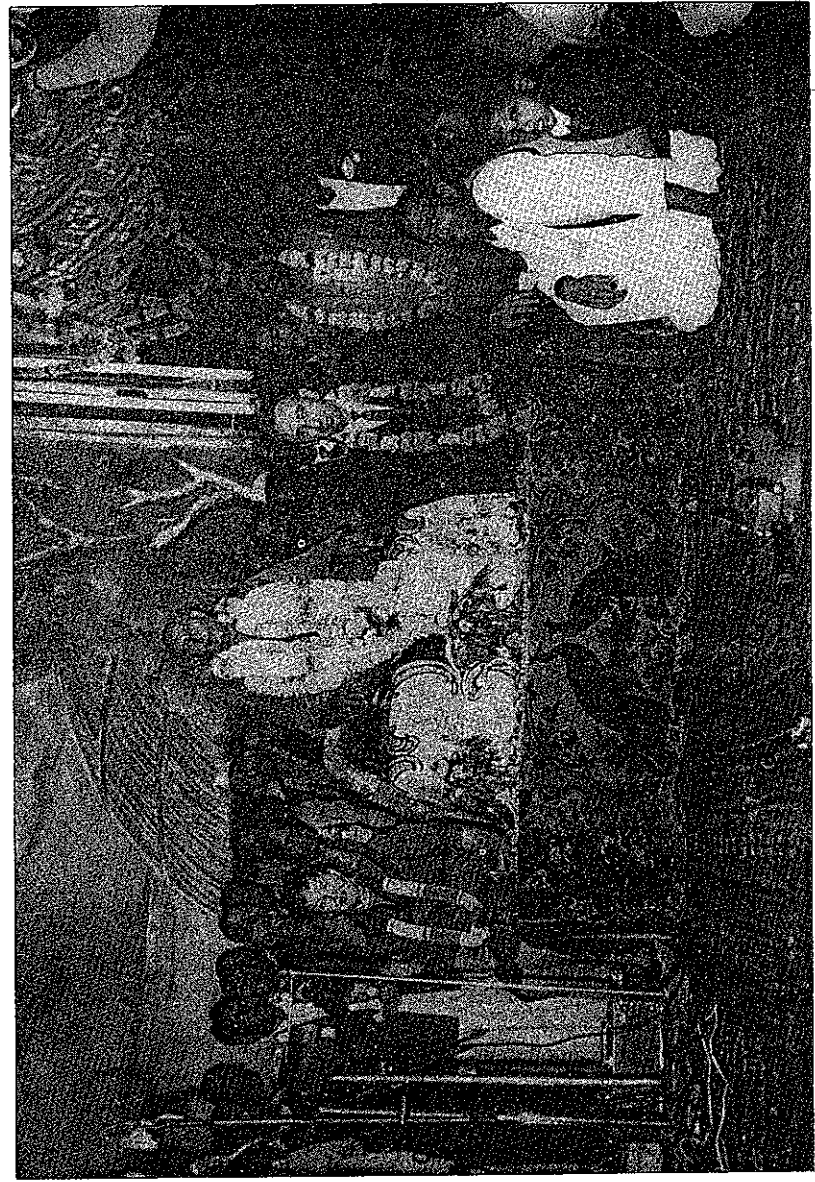


Addressing the All-Religious Conference

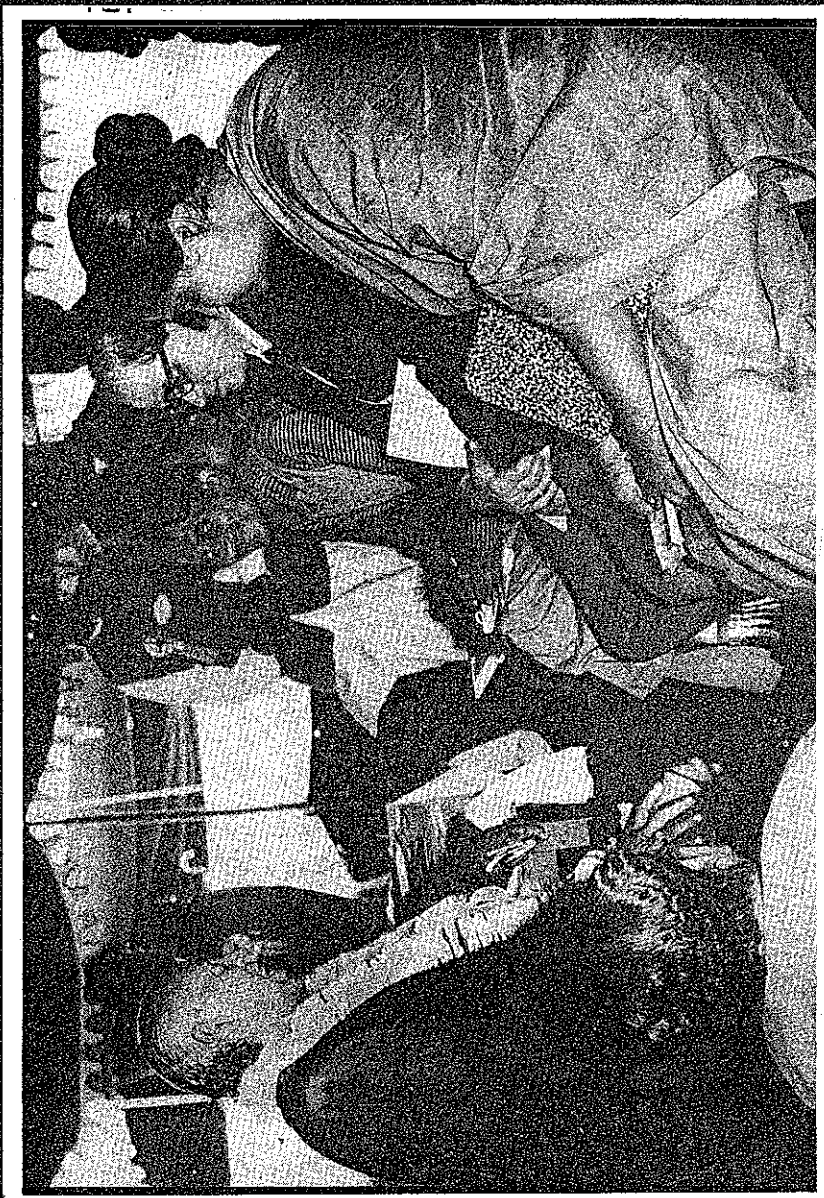




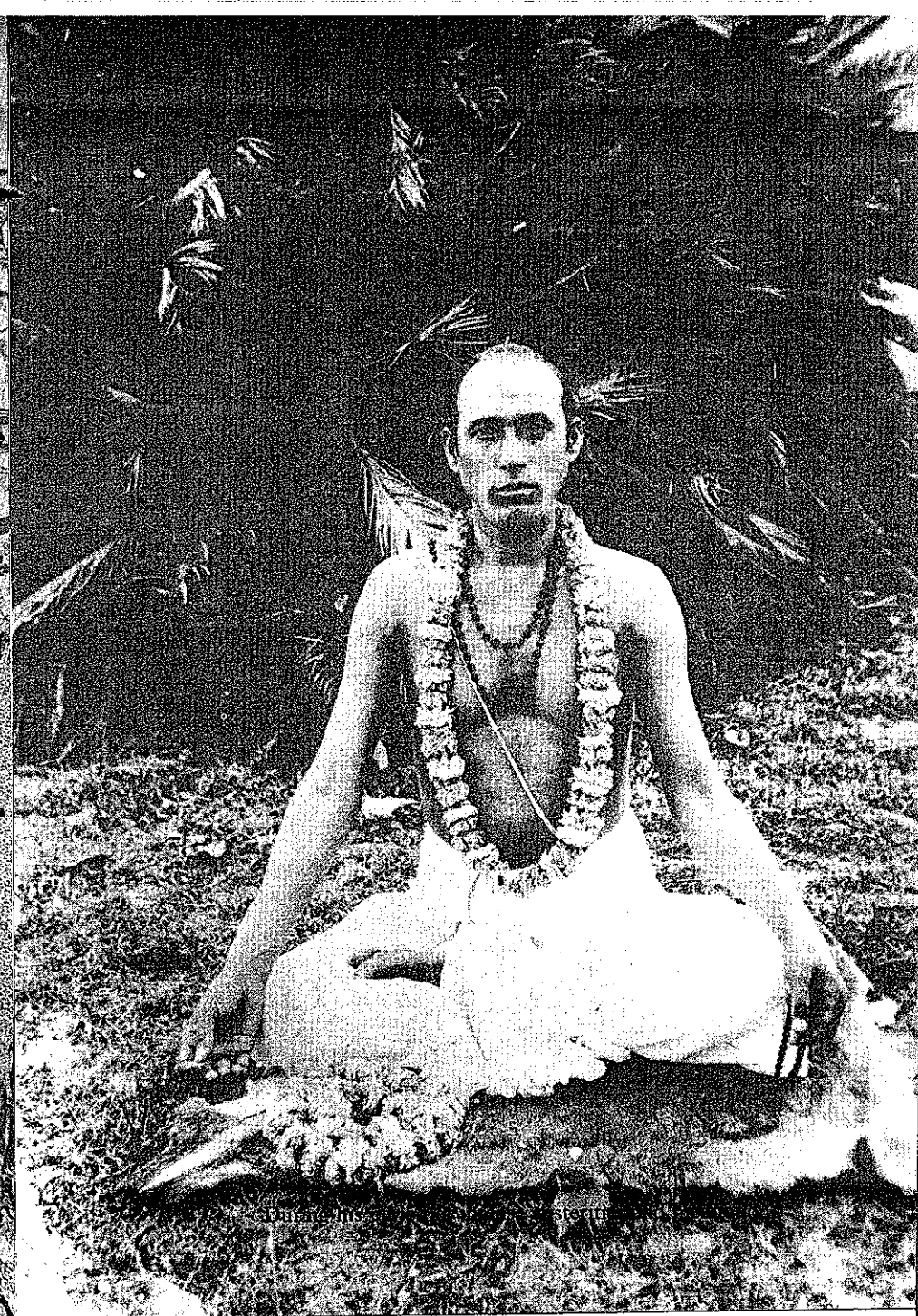
Procession in Lucknow

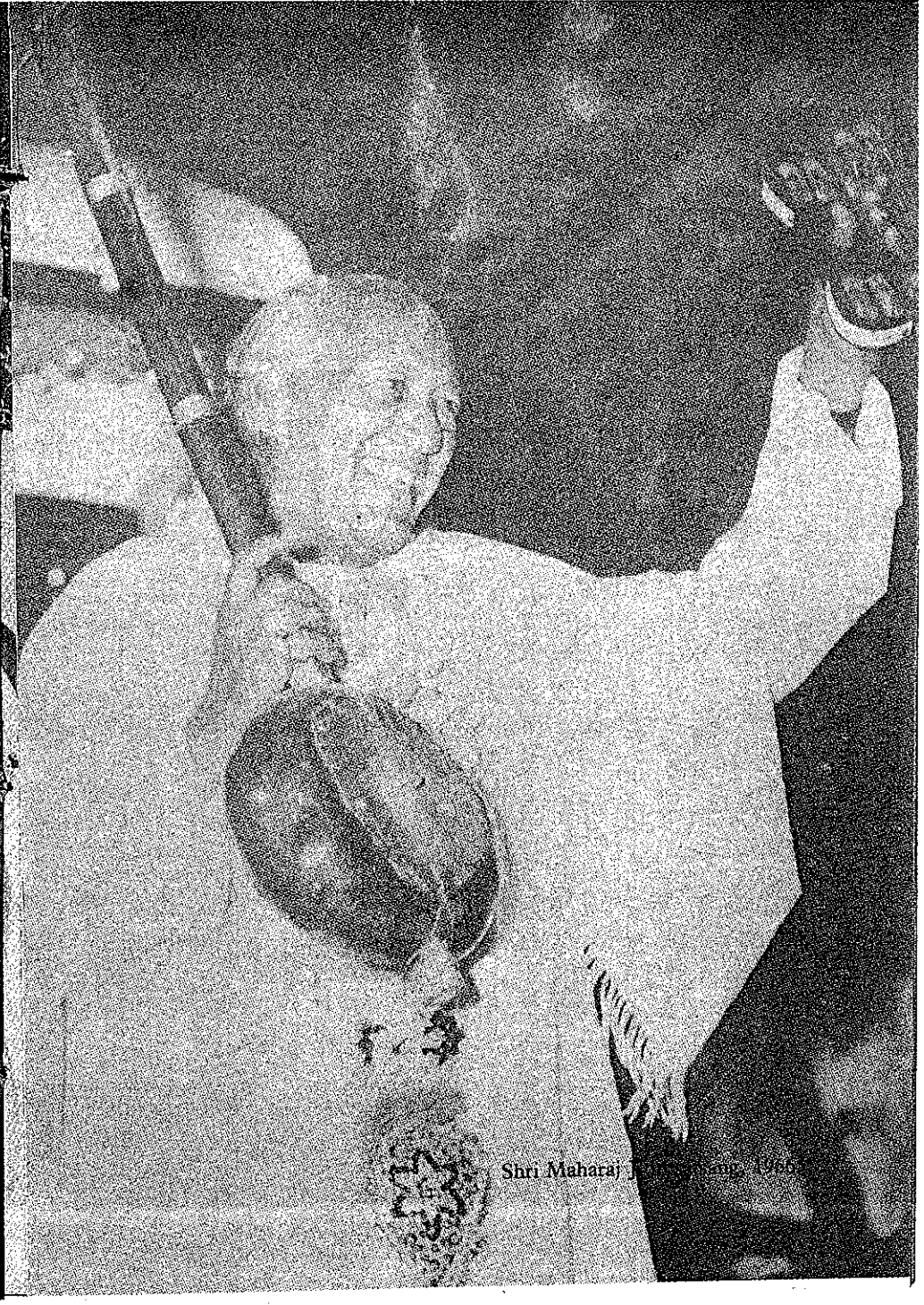
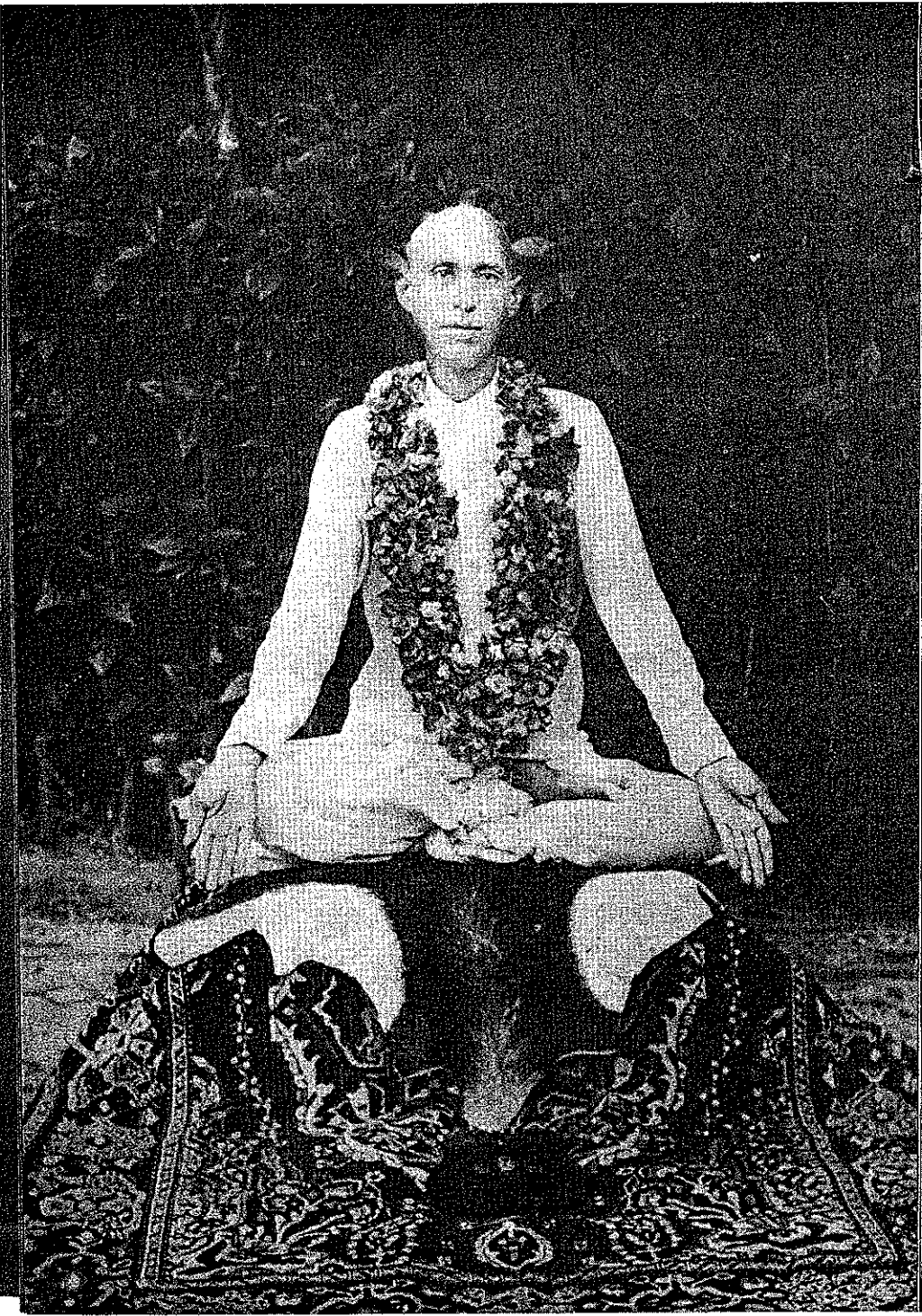


With American missionaries, Delhi

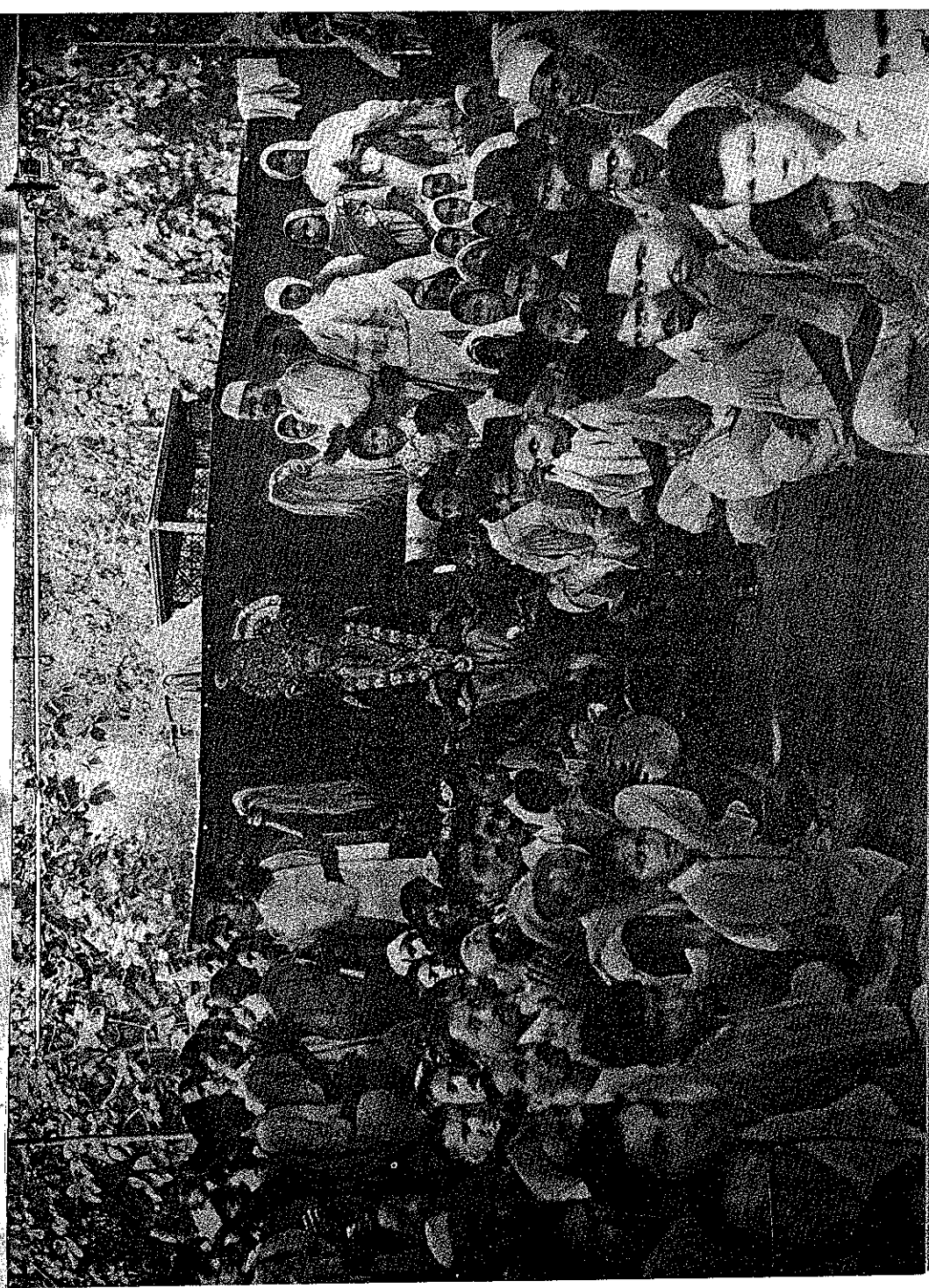
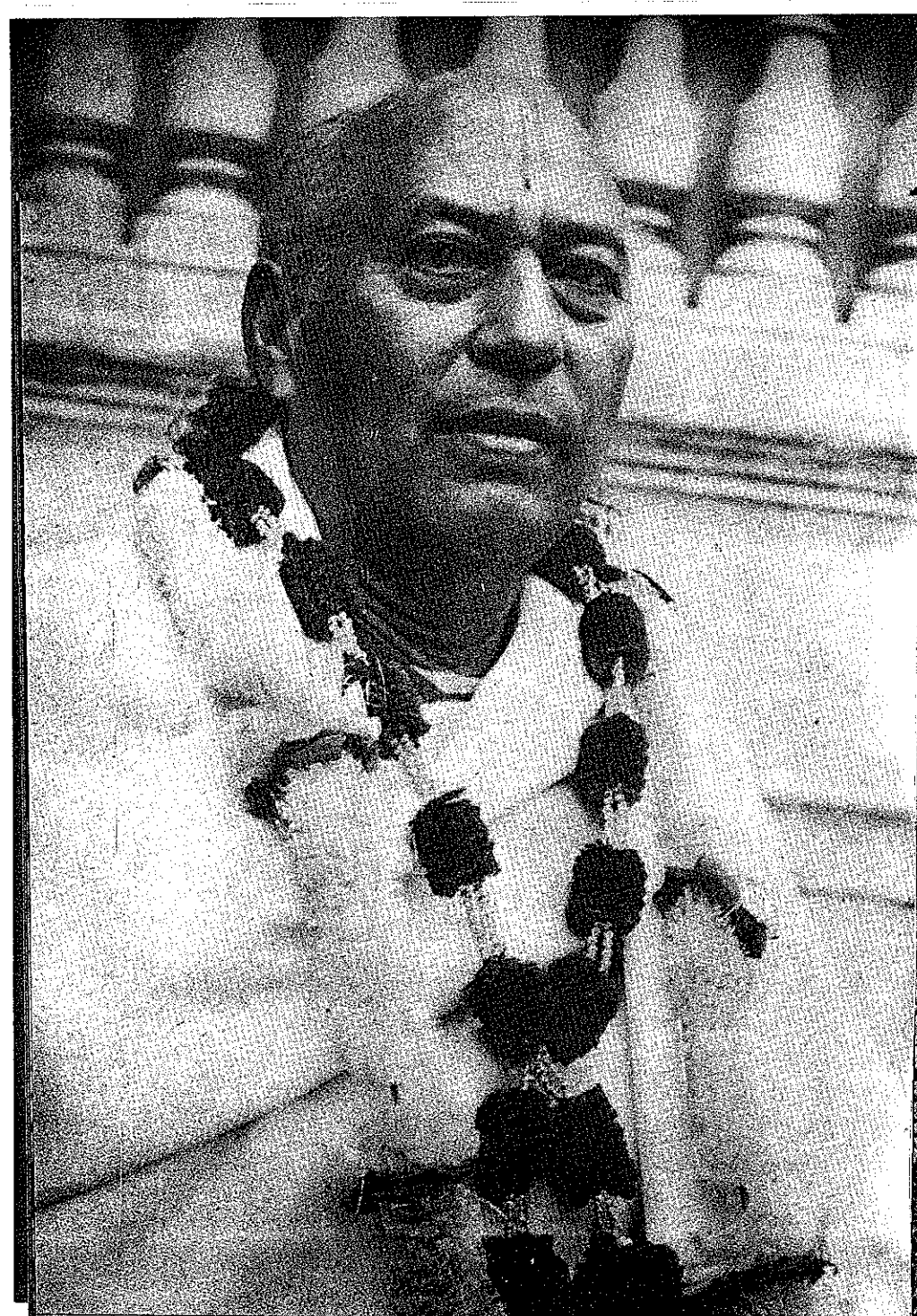


With members of the Press



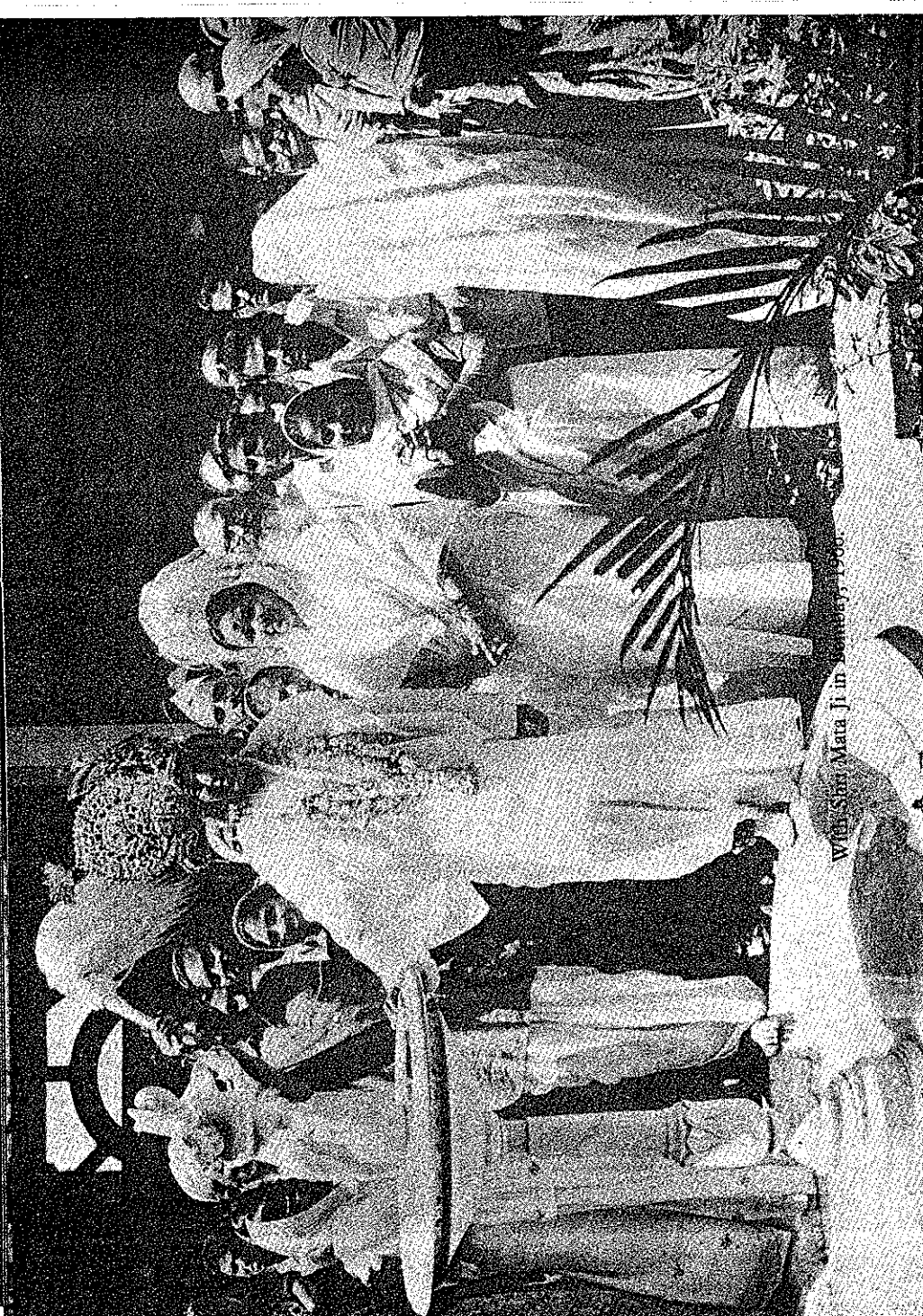


Shri Maharaj J... 1966

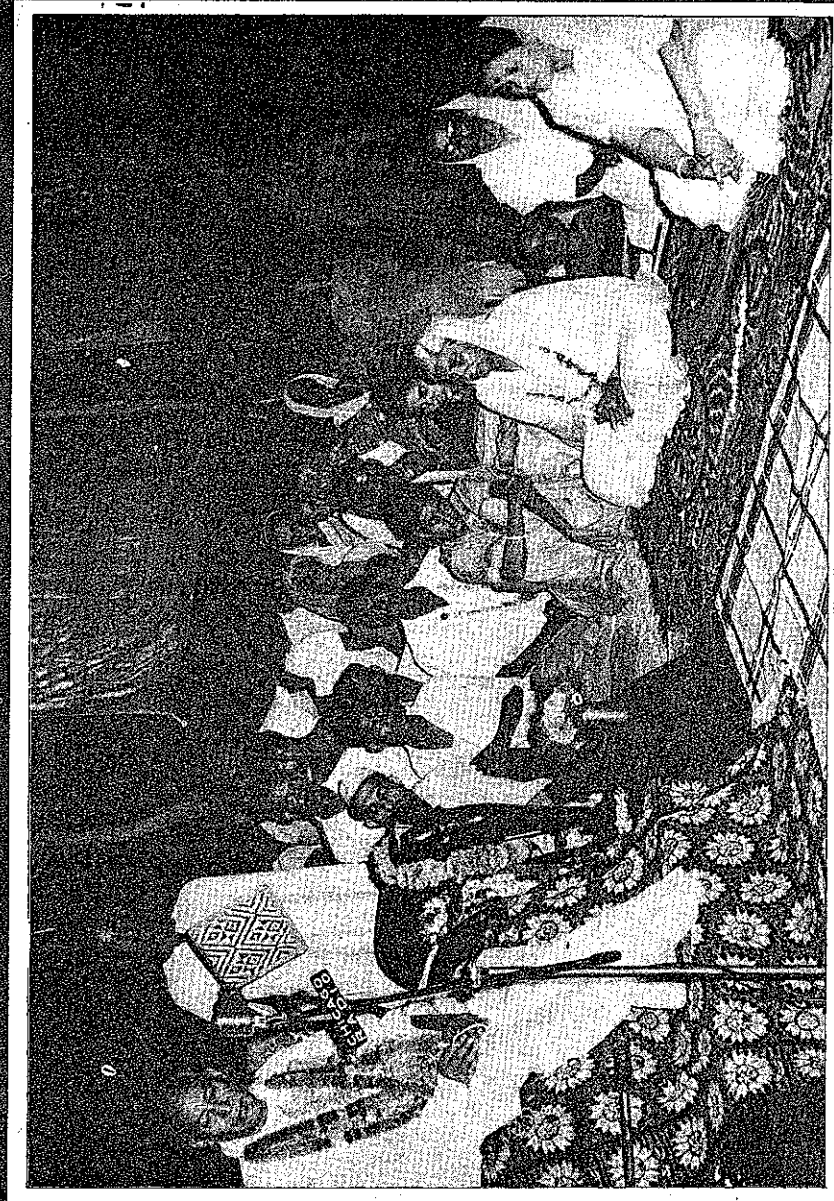
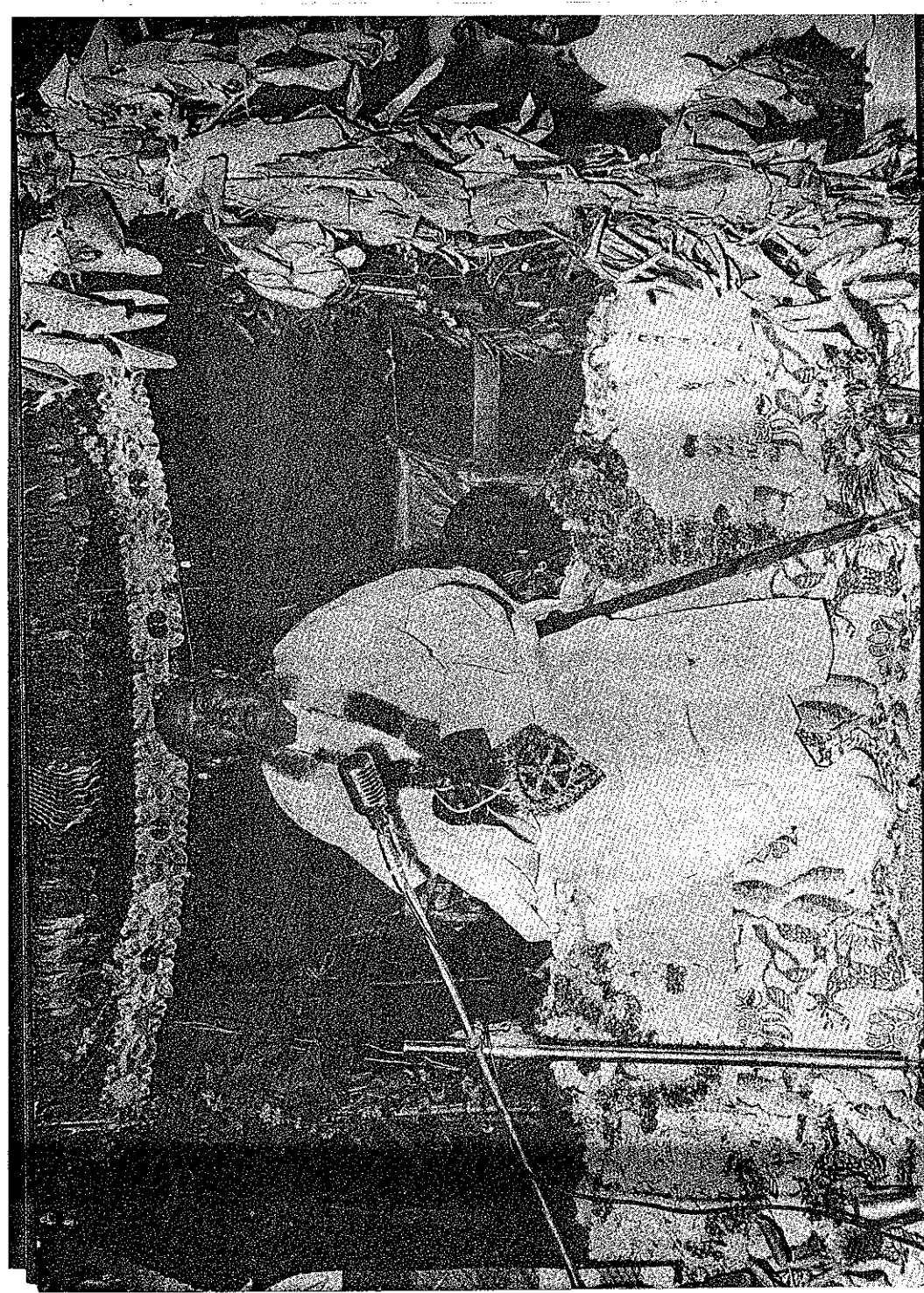




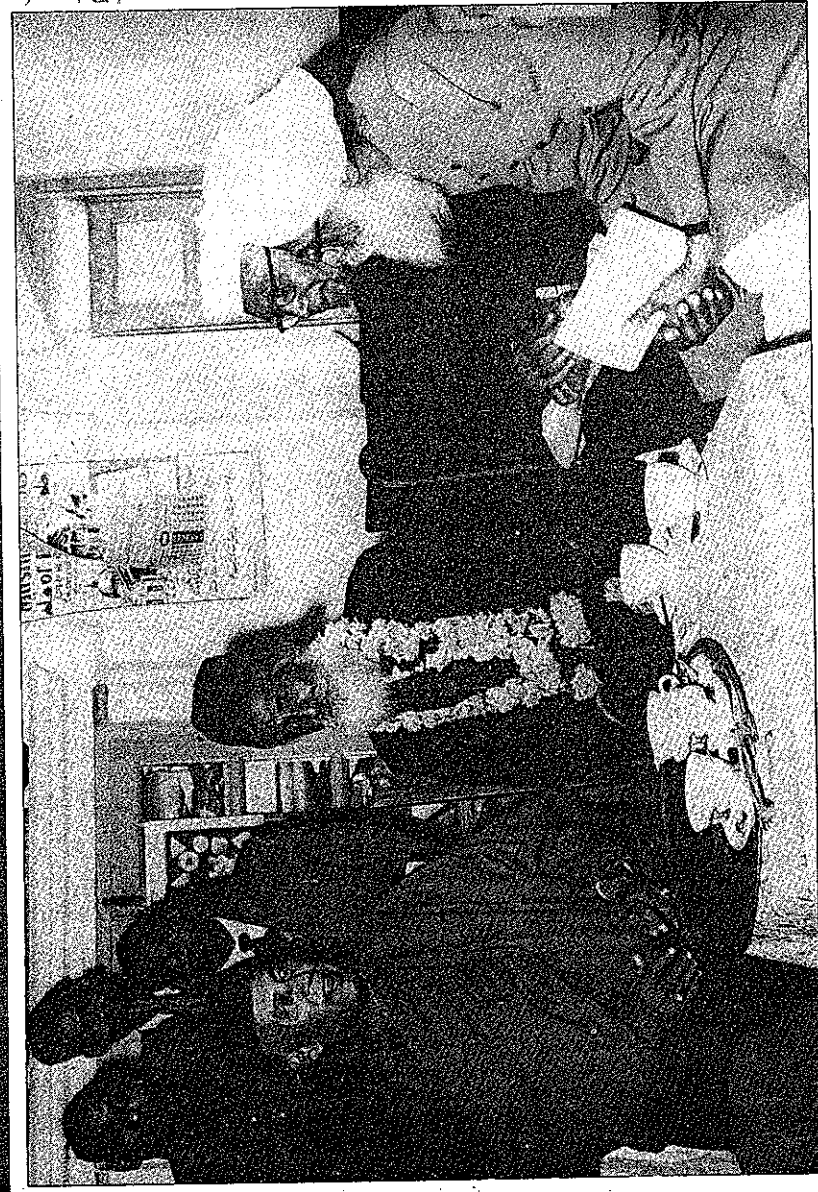
Early photo in Lahore.



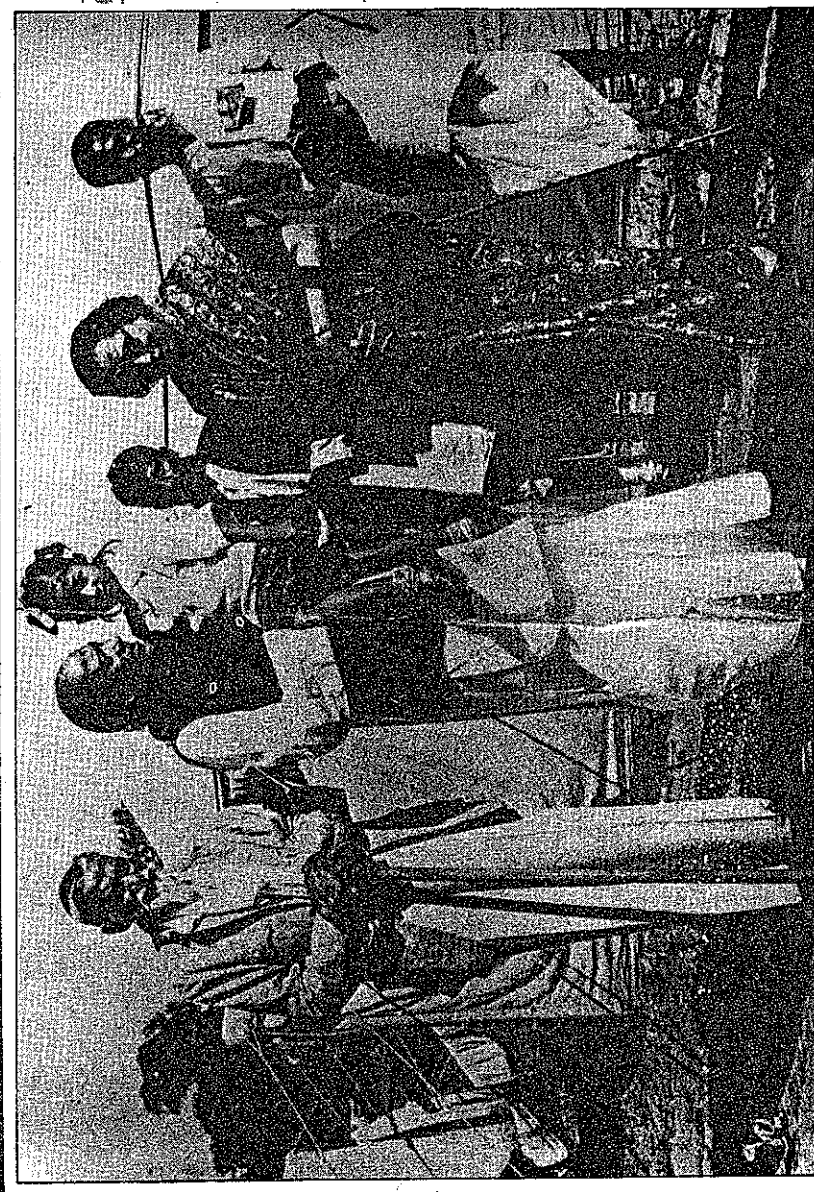
With Sris Mata Ji in Bombay, 1906



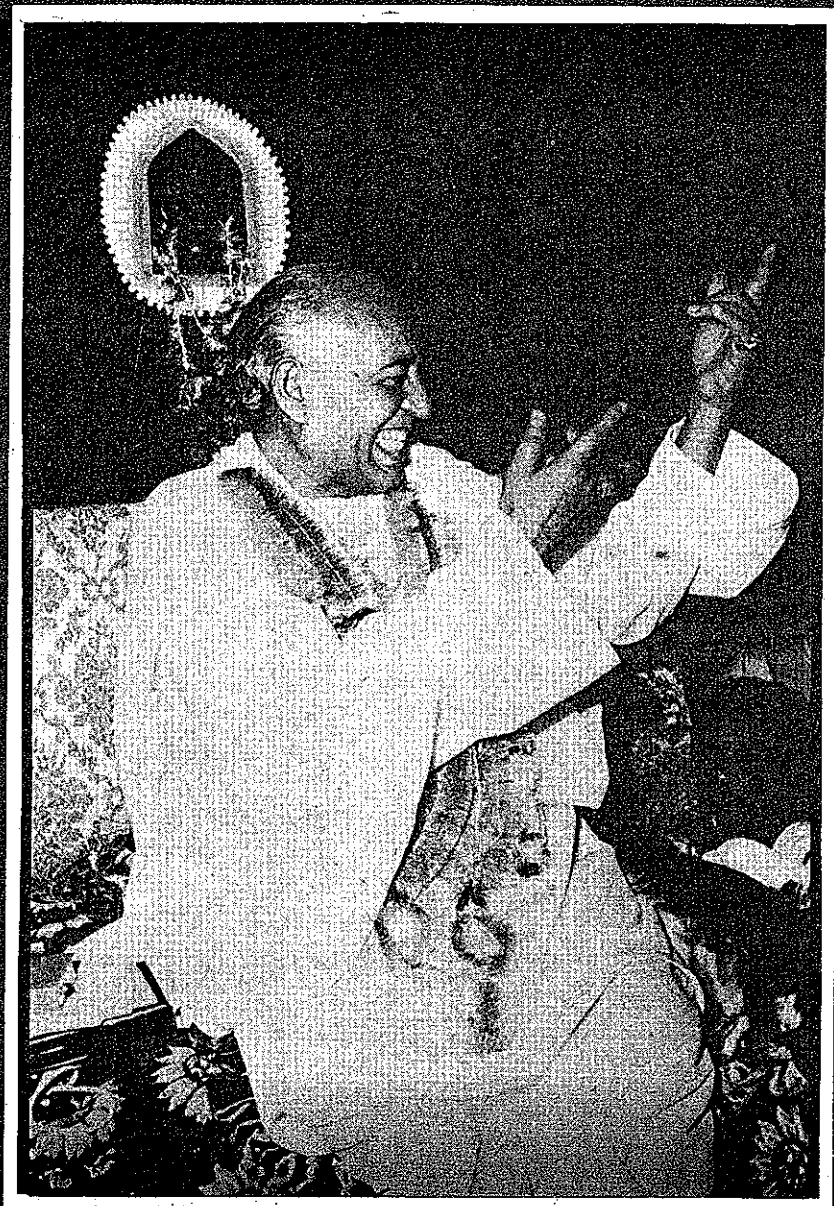
Sun. Maharaj Ji and Sar. Mum Ji in Sagar, Poon Nagar



With Muslim, Hindu and Sikh leaders

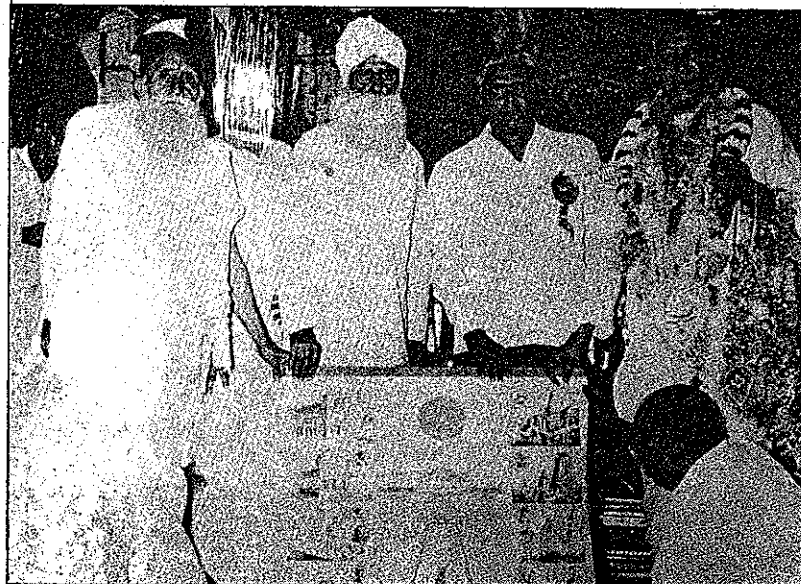


With Maharaja Atindra Pratap Singh and Maharani (Shri Maharaj) Jai
 Holung, Shri. Sarda J. Mahara



With young Shi Biao fu

With Shri Mata Ji

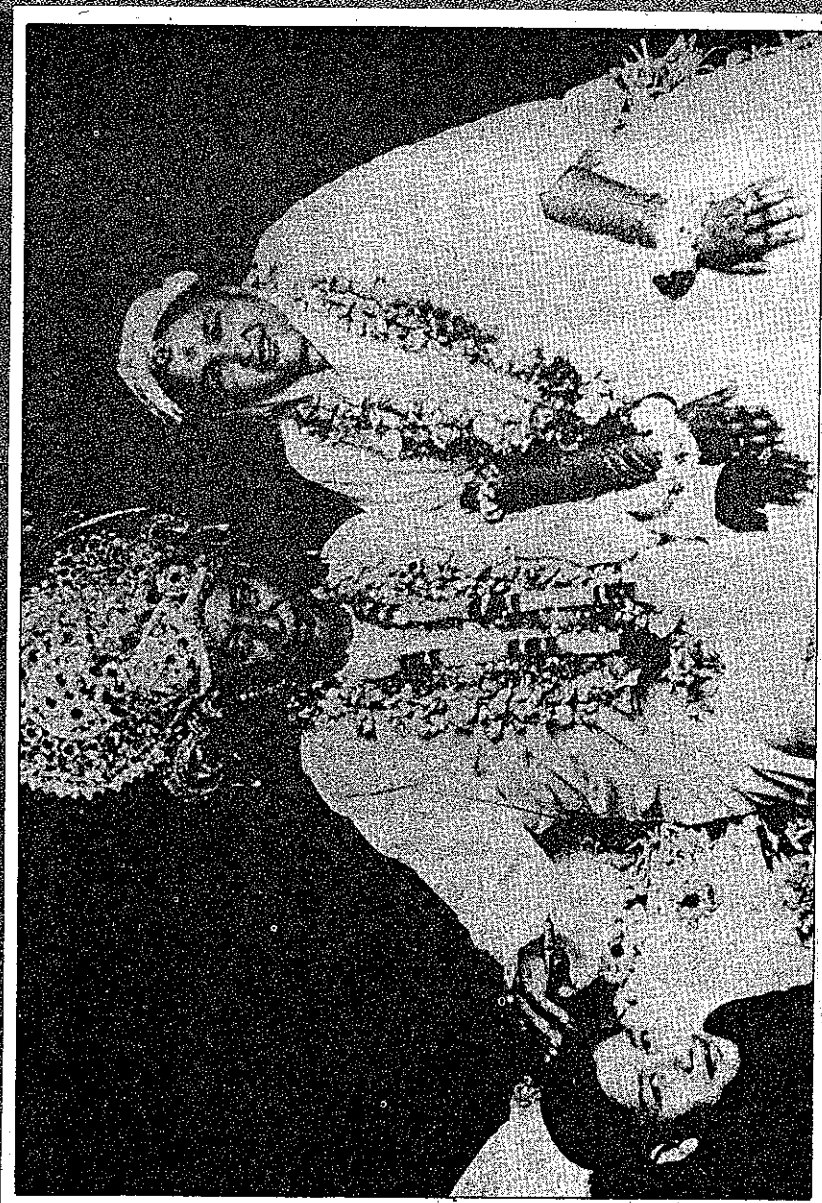


With proposed plan of Sadok Ashrams, Temples of All Religions

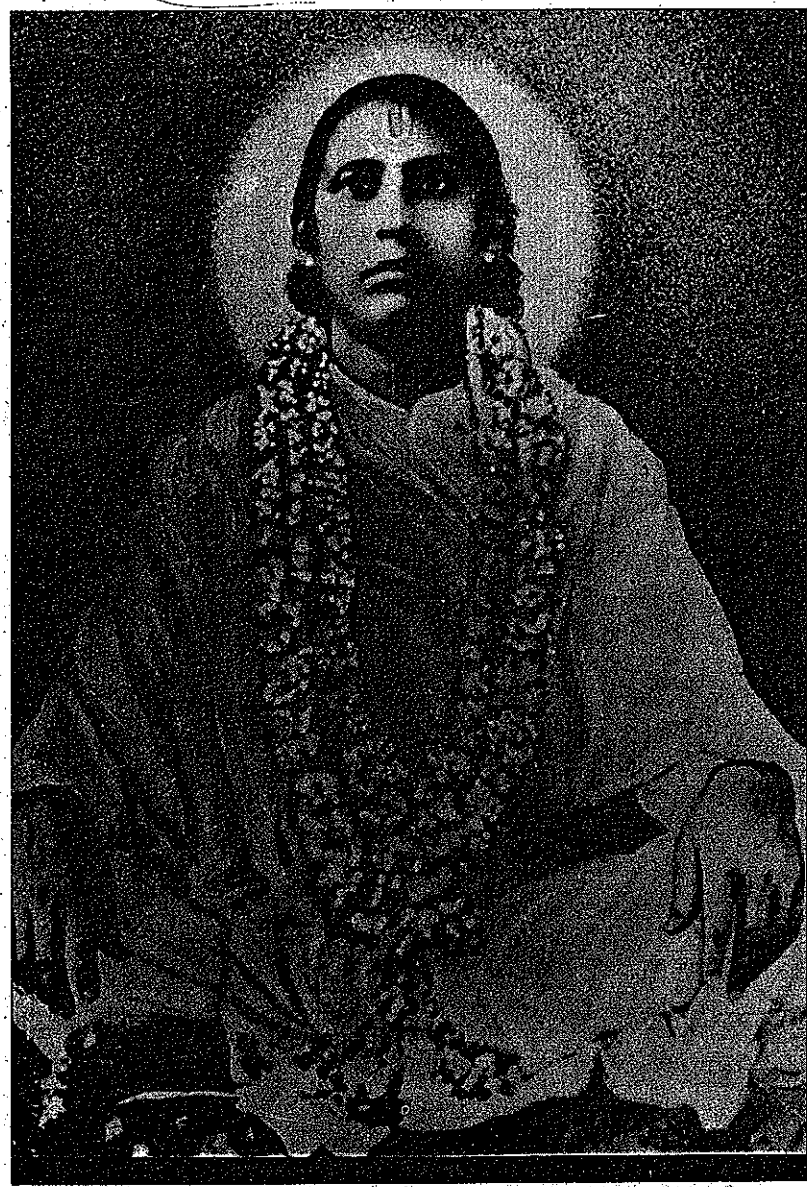




Shri. Vaidya, J. M. & Co. Nagar, Ashram, Haridwar



Blessing, Shri. Sappal, Jawahar, Bombay, 1966



Chapter Eight

Shri Maharaj Ji on the Gita and the Yoga of Desireless Action

Shri Hans Ji Maharaj was the greatest Yogi of his time. It is no exaggeration to call him '*Yogiraj*'—the king of yogis. He was the perfect example of a desireless Karma Yogi and was the living embodiment of Yoga. Although he used to quote most scriptures, he tended to base his discourses on the Bhagavad Gita and the Ramayana. They were his favourite scriptures and his basic references.

There are different views regarding the philosophies discussed in the Gita. Some great commentators, such as Shankaracharya, interpreted the Gita from the Vedantic angle and advocated the path of meditation and renunciation. Bal Gangadhar Tilak, in his monumental work *Gita Rahasya* held that the main theme of the Gita is Karma Yoga. Shri Hans Ji Maharaj, however, offered to the public the synthesis of meditation and action—the practical path of self-realization as taught in the Gita. It was his opinion that the profound mysteries of the Gita and its underlying meanings can never be understood unless one is taught by a realized preceptor. He used to pose the question: "What is the Knowledge that Lord Krishna revealed to Arjuna in the latter's perplexed state? What did he give him that induced such a transformation of character?" Until we humbly and sincerely inquire about this Knowledge from an enlightened Master, we can't realize the *Rajvidya*, the Third Eye and the Universal form of God, nor can we understand the Gita's basic message. Only a

realized spiritual preceptor can bestow the practical Knowledge through which the Gita can be properly understood.

We hear from all sides nowadays, 'Work selflessly!' Our statesmen exhort the masses to work for the benefit of society without any selfish motives. It is a sound principle, because only through desireless action can the individual soul be released from the cycle of transmigration and attain liberation. If an individual performs actions motivated by desire for rewards, he will remain chained to the wheel of birth and death and will have to suffer all kinds of misery as he goes through the various incarnations determined by his previous actions. But how can one know that he is doing desireless action? What change occurs in him the day he actually begins to work desirelessly? If we could act desirelessly from the day of our birth, there would be no more need for people to go around telling us to work without desire for reward.

Many Hindus do something then say, "*Krishna arpanamastu*" (I surrender my actions and the results thereof to Lord Krishna). Is action really surrendered to Krishna, however, just by saying so or by uttering some mantras? If it were so, then the pangs of hunger could be alleviated just by verbally surrendering our appetite to God. Only when we no longer suffer hunger or thirst, (and not simply by saying that we have surrendered these) can we say that these in reality have been given to Krishna. Otherwise, nothing is achieved just by saying 'I surrender my actions to Krishna'. This is only imagination and self-deception.

In Treta Age lived a great king called Janak who was an enlightened soul. In spite of being a king, he was called 'Janak Videhi', or one who has transcended body-consciousness. What is important for us to know is how he was able, in the midst of his royal responsibilities, to achieve God-realization. Which method did he practise? Being a king and a householder, he had to perform all types of worldly duties, so how did it happen that all his actions were performed desirelessly? Why was he called Videhi?

Once he felt tense and restless and couldn't sleep. He tried various methods to ease his tension but failed. It was past midnight before he finally dozed off. He dreamed that his enemies had conquered his kingdom and he had fled into the jungle. He was terribly hungry and begged some food from a village woman. She told him that she had no cooked food to offer him but gave him rice and pulse to cook for himself. He could not light a fire properly because the wood was damp. He had to blow on it several times before it ignited properly. The smoke made his eyes water. Being a king, he was unaccustomed to this kind of work and had no idea how to cook but, goaded by hunger, he managed to half-cook the food. He put it on a leaf to cool. Just then, two bulls locked in combat came by and trampled his meal into the ground. He was plunged into grief and wept bitterly. At this point, his dream broke. He woke up and pondered, 'What does it mean? A few minutes ago I was weeping for a morsel of food and now I am back to being a mighty king. Which of these two states is true? Am I dreaming that I am a king, or was I dreaming that I was a beggar? Right now I can recall vividly my dream-misery, but at that time I couldn't remember being a king living in magnificent splendour. Nor was I aware of sleeping on a luxurious bed.'

The very next morning he proclaimed that whoever could satisfactorily answer his questions would become the royal preceptor and would receive the entire kingdom as a reward. He had a huge pavilion constructed for receiving those who were willing to attempt to answer his question. A gatekeeper guarded the door, allowing entry only to candidates. Inside, there was a tall golden throne for the successful candidate who would be the king's guru. On a lower level were rows of seats for the holy men, pundits, academics, scholars and intellectuals who would attempt to answer the question. Each contestant was informed beforehand that a wrong answer would lead to imprisonment until such time as the right answer were provided by someone else. Anyone who, after daring to sit on the throne, gave the wrong answer, would pay with his life.

The great learned men of the time, the mahatmas, mandaleshwars, ascetics, etc. congregated here, each hoping to become the royal guru. One contestant after another failed to satisfy the king and was sent to prison. Not one contestant dared to sit on the throne.

King Janak had only one question: "Is this true or that true?" Everyone tried in his own way to give a satisfactory answer. They gave answers like "This world is unreal and God alone is real." They quoted the Vedas and other scriptures but such superficial answers could not resolve the King's doubts. At this time Ashtavakra had not yet been born. His father was one of the unsuccessful candidates who ended up in jail.

The years passed and this was kept secret from Ashtavakra. One day his playmates teased him that he was the son of a jailbird. This upset him greatly and he asked his mother the reason for his father's imprisonment. His mother told him the whole story and added that his father could be freed only when someone else gave the correct answer. Ashtavakra exclaimed, "I will answer the king's question and free my father!" His mother protested that if the greatest scholars and mahatmas couldn't answer the question correctly, how could he? But he replied, "Mother, don't worry. By my Guru Maharaj Ji's grace, I will be sure to give the right answer. Please give me your blessing. I'll be home in no time at all with Father." His mother tried her best to stop him, but in vain, and was finally forced to let him go.

He arrived at the entrance to the contest hall. As he was about to go inside, the sentry stopped him and said, "Don't go inside, my boy, or you'll end up as the king's prisoner." Ashtavakra replied, "I'm not going to be a prisoner. I'm going to answer the king's question. It is written above this door that anyone is eligible to try. If you refuse me entry I'll have no alternative but to complain to the king." That sentry was not like the soldiers around nowadays. He was a servant in the court of a wise king. He humbly replied, "Young master, who am I to stop anyone from going inside? I only want to warn you, because if great academics and holy men, who

say things like 'I am God' have failed to answer that question, how can you, a mere child? But, if you still want to go inside, then be my guest!"

Ashtavakra went straight up to the throne and sat down. He was, by the way, deformed from birth and his body was crooked in eight places. The whole Court burst out laughing at his disfigured appearance and jeered, "He hasn't come here to become the royal guru, but has already made himself guru!" He also laughed and addressed the king: "Your Majesty, what sin have I committed that forces me to be a part of such a rabble? Why have you called this assembly of cobblers? Could a cobbler possibly answer your question?"

The king was shocked. He humbly asked the boy, "Sir, this is a congregation of the highest academics, brahmins and holy men in the land. Why have you called them cobblers?"

Ashtavakra answered, "Look, Your Majesty! They laugh because all they see is my deformity. Who but a cobbler knows if skin is good or bad? A brahmin is someone who has realized Brahman! A true saint perceives the same soul equally in a priest, a cow, a dog and an outcaste. Bodies can be dark, fair, thin or fat, but not the soul. It is the same in all. Sugarcane is knotted on the outside, but inside the juicy fibres run straight and smooth. So what do you think? Are these people cobblers or not?" Everyone fell silent. The king composed himself, and the hope dawned in him that this child would be the one to answer his question and calm his troubled mind.

The king's minister stood before Ashtavakra and started to read the king's question. He got no further than "Sir, King Janak's question is..." when the boy interrupted him, saying, "Sir, does the king not have a tongue of his own? Is he dumb? Is that why you are reading on his behalf? Advocates are needed only in places which don't deal in truth. If someone's house is robbed, who feels sorrow? The lawyer? Is that just? Sir! Does the same apply here or not? Is this the Court of Truth or not? Here the question 'What is Truth?' is being resolved, so whatever the king has to ask, let him

come forward and ask himself!" King Janak prostrated himself at Ashtavakra's feet and sincerely asked, "Master, I want to know if the waking state is true or if the dream state is true."

Ashtavakra replied, "Neither is real." Janak had felt that one of them must be real and true, but when he heard both of them declared to be unreal, his confusion and doubts increased. He was more perplexed than ever. He reflected silently for a while, then said, "Then what is real?" Ashtavakra said, "God alone is real. He is Truth, Consciousness and Bliss itself. His Light and Holy Name dwell in the heart of every being. Fire, sun and moon don't illuminate the True God. He is irradiated by His own self-effulgent Light. Scholars search for this truth in their books, while ascetics and hermits search for it in forest and mountain. Some wander around naked in search of it. Some think that truth can be realized by standing in freezing water and thus giving the spirit a hard time. Renunciates go on pilgrimage and bathe at all the holy places in search of it. Such people think that cleansing their bodies of grime and sipping Ganges water is realizing the truth. Others attempt, although in vain, to discover truth through sacrificial rituals and throwing aromatic herbs into a sacred fire. One thinks that by giving up a certain thing he'll find truth, while another thinks that by appropriating that same thing he'll find it. But truth is not realized by any of these methods. You have a strong and sincere desire to know truth, so first tell me, what will you give as a dedication?"

By this time, the king was convinced that here was the Guru who could show him true Knowledge. He said, "Sir, I promised from the start that I would offer my kingdom to whomever could reveal me the truth. So I surrender my entire kingdom at your holy feet."

Ashtavakra replied, "Because you haven't met any real saints, you're still under the delusion that the kingdom is yours to give. This kingdom existed before you were born. Your father, or someone else before you also considered it to be his, and now you think it is yours. You spend a lot of money improving and

developing it, but one day you'll have to leave it behind, as your predecessors did. Then your heir will also think that it is his property, but he too will have to leave it one day. However, the kingdom actually belongs to the subjects, who, for their own protection, appoint someone to be king. You probably consider your wife and children to be yours, but, just as pilgrims come together for a short time to bathe in a river, and then go their separate ways, so too do people come together as a family only temporarily. Often family members live far away from each other, so they are separated even while they are alive. So you can't claim even your family to be yours. Death will separate you from them. We are born in a body, but it doesn't last forever. You have to leave it when you die. The surviving members of the family burn the body or bury it, or, in some cases, it is left to jackals, vultures, crows and worms to gorge upon. The body is made from the dust of the earth and finally, somehow or other, goes back to the source. So, Your Majesty, offer something which is truly yours alone!"

The king did some hard thinking. Finally he said, "Sir, my mind is mine alone, so now I offer it to you." So saying, the great King Janak bowed his head to Guru Maharaj Ji's feet. St. Kabir said,

"If you have surrendered your mind,
You have surrendered everything.
Someone who has conquered his mind
Is the real champion.
Kabir says, God is realized
Only when you go beyond the mind."

Mind can be the cause either of bondage or liberation. Only mind connects us to worldly things. A person who diverts his mind from worldliness and attaches it to the feet of the Master is assured of salvation.

He achieves the highest state even while alive. Any guru who teaches that liberation or supreme peace is attainable only after death is encouraging a wrong kind of faith.

To achieve the highest state of awareness, effort is required. If liberation could be achieved without any effort then everyone could be liberated, but the path to liberation involves a lot of work. Easy to say, but hard to do.

Janak's dream-hardships had jolted him into realizing that everything in this world is unreal and transient. Ultimately the best thing is to renounce this unreal cosmic illusion called maya in order to realize Truth because, even if realization of Truth were not possible, we have to leave this world of maya anyway when we die.

King Janak had previously decided that he would become the disciple of the Guru who could show him the Knowledge of God, or the Ultimate Reality, in as much time as it takes to mount a horse.

Ashtavakra took Janak into the forest and told him to put one foot in his horse's stirrup. Then he said, "Your Majesty, to whom does your mind belong?" Janak answered, "Gurudev, it is yours." Ashtavakra revealed to him the omnipresent Holy Name which dwells deep within the Self and said, "The True Name is the indestructible, immortal Word of God. It is the immutable, almighty Power of God. It is the best possible way to realize God as He is. So now I command you to fix your mind, which you have surrendered, on this indwelling Name at all times. If your mind is constantly united with the Name, you will achieve liberation in this very life."

Janak fixed his mind on the Holy Name and Ashtavakra went away. He wondered if he should put his other foot in the stirrup or not. Then it occurred to him, "I have surrendered my mind to Guru Maharaj Ji, so if he has told me to keep it on the Name to the exclusion of all else, what right do I have to think about anything else?" So, he tenaciously fixed his mind on the Word and, standing with one foot in the stirrup, went into Samadhi. He lost all outer awareness and achieved the state of total transcendence. Thus he was able to disconnect his awareness from the body. When Ashtavakra returned he brought the king out of Samadhi and said,

"Now go back and, understanding the kingdom to be mine, rule it wisely and at the same time keep your mind in the Name. Then nothing you do in this world can have a binding effect on you." This is the method which releases one from the bondage of action. But such sacred Knowledge cannot be achieved without the Guru.

निरबंध बंधा रहे, बंधा निरबंध होय ।
कर्म करे करता नहीं, कर्म कहावे सोय ।।

Anyone who thinks that by not doing anything he is freed from the consequences of action is totally bound by the cord of that very act of 'renunciation'. But someone who is 'bound' by the Guru's instructions, i.e. works according to the instructions of his Guru is actually working properly. He has to work, but he is freed from any consequences.

Arjuna threw down his bow and refused to fight, saying, "Krishna, I prefer to beg rather than win the war through the heinous sin of killing my kith and kin." The ensuing dialogue between Lord Krishna and Arjuna comprises the scripture known as the Bhagavad Gita. The same Arjuna who was disgusted with the world and who wanted to refrain from action, thinking that it would cause misery, after listening to Lord Krishna's teaching actually fought so bravely and so well that his exploits are still eulogized.

Arjuna wanted to renounce actions and be a non-doer, because he feared the sin that would accrue from fighting. Lord Krishna explained to him that no one can escape sin simply by not doing action. Arjuna was a knight, whose duty was to uphold Dharma and protect the righteous, by war if necessary. If he were to retreat from the battlefield he would be labelled unrighteous and sinful. A person usually performs actions governed by his temperament and according to his status in life, but he can escape the burden of doership if his actions are done with a desireless mind established in Yoga. Lord Krishna revealed to Arjuna the method or Yogic technique which frees one from all types of sin, by

rendering him a non-doer even in the midst of hectic activity. The Gita was written for the benefit of all mankind. However, it is a grave mistake to think that just by reading Gita one is freed from responsibility for his actions. While reading the Gita it remains for us to ask ourselves what was the method shown to Arjuna by which he was unstained by the sin of killing. Guru Nanak also declared that it is essential to know what the Holy Name of God is, because it disconnects a person from the world even while he is living in it, just as water rolls off a duck's back.

The Gita discusses the technique or Name remembering which renders a person a non-doer even while doing action. It enables him to live in this world unaffected by maya and finally releases him from the bondage of transmigration. Such a one merges with the Divine Light.

Both good and bad deeds bind the individual. After enjoying the rewards of our good actions in what may be called 'heaven', we have to return to this mortal world. We must suffer punishment for our bad deeds. Both actions therefore bind us to rebirth, the only difference being that one may be called a golden chain and the other an iron chain. Dirty clothes won't come clean if washed in dirty water and similarly, actions and their culpability cannot be eradicated by doing more actions. The mind becomes pure only by performing unmotivated action and devotion.

We light a lamp to remove darkness so that we won't experience any difficulties. We can injure ourselves in the darkness of night, but with the sunrise we can clearly see where we are going. According to the Gita, one should perform actions in the Light of Truth, to save himself from the staggering repercussions of actions performed in the darkness of ignorance. So to extricate himself from the quagmire of actions, a person must humbly request a realized soul to teach him the Yoga of desireless action.

Desireless action implies unmotivated action or action done with no hankering for results. Being employed but not wanting salary, running a business without desiring profits, cultivating crops without desiring a harvest, digging a well without desiring to

find water, governing a state without desiring the obedience of the public—are such contradictory ideas what is meant by desireless action? Lord Krishna revealed the Yogic technique by which a person, even while engaged in action, can be released from the karmic bondage of those actions:

नेहाभिक्रमनाशोऽस्ति प्रत्यवायो न विद्यते ।
स्वल्पमप्यस्य धर्मस्य त्रायते महतो भयात् ॥

“Through the Yoga of wisdom one does not shed actions, but the results of one's actions cease to be binding. With even a little practice, through wisdom one is freed from the fear of birth and death.” (2:40)

This Yoga has no adverse effects. Hail destroys crops. There is no harvest and the farmer's livelihood is lost. If anything goes wrong with a business, it becomes worthless. When a person dies the money which he has saved from his salary passes into another's hands. On the other hand, the seeds of desireless Yoga are never destroyed, nor does practising this Yoga incur any sin. In other words, a little practice of this Yoga releases one from the wheel of transmigration and bestows the highest joy. If a person's mind is steadied in this Yoga, which is actually the essence of religion, he is no longer confronted with obstacles or difficulties. This most sacred Yoga is above virtue and sin because it is eternal, imperishable and extremely subtle. It is unaffected by the three forces of maya—*sat*, *raj* and *tam*. Just as a lamp placed in a windless room lights the whole room, so the finite mind expands by identification with the infinite Divine Light. Then the three *gunas*, or forces of maya, cease to be an obstacle in his path and in fact help him along his way.

Therefore a sensible person realizes that it is to his advantage to abandon all other methods and follow this universally-accepted, most rewarding and beneficial Yoga. So he becomes desireless in his actions. On the other hand, an ignorant and undiscerning

person wastes his precious human life in other pursuits which are delusory and insubstantial.

People of limited vision who don't know the Reality practise rituals according to their religions and waste their time worshipping Nature. They do everything with an eye to results, just as a gardener cultivates trees in order to enjoy their fruit. The main desire of such people is to be reborn in this world over and over again so that they may enjoy pleasures and the consequences of action. They do not think that there is anything higher than sensual pleasure. All they ever talk about are gross pleasures. They possess an inferior intellect and lack discrimination. They never think about realizing God or being devoted to Him. They never think about the soul nor wonder what it is. Such fools call the great enlightened souls, who show others the way to self-realization, crooks and impostors. Just as garlic is crushed and made into chutney, so do these people waste their God-given human life in sensual pleasures. The human body is the vessel containing the nectar of immortality, but people are content to load themselves up with a burden of karma in order to experience the fruit of actions. This human existence is achieved by a very fortunate soul and a great stock of merit acquired in previous lives. So it is a pity to waste such a golden opportunity in lesser pleasures, but the ignorant never realize why they were granted a human body in the first place. This is like a hungry man labouring hard to buy food then selling it to earn money, thus remaining ever hungry. People waste the God-given human existence which is the gateway to salvation, by practising rituals in order to achieve the fleeting pleasures of heaven or earth. Is it wise not to aim for eternal peace rather than temporal or even heavenly pleasures?

A wise person follows only the path which will lead him to his destination and ignores the rest. Similarly, we should read and extract wisdom from the Gita and follow the Path, or method, which will take us to God.

Most people do not understand the significance of virtue and sin. They allow themselves to be enslaved by the desire for sense

gratification and indulge in actions which ought not to be done. They encounter difficulties every step of the way. On the other hand, a meditator no more desires worldly pleasures than a worldly person would desire to eat his own vomit. Those great ones who are settled in the Self, act humanely towards all beings. Free of deceit or ulterior motives, they work for the sake of all. Just as the sun sheds its light equally upon all, so a realized soul gives Knowledge of the Self to all and saves them from the sorrows of life. A realized soul sheds his benign grace on all creatures, whereas the performer of rituals, caught in a net of desires, is full of his own importance and tries also to involve others in the quagmire of ritual. Enlightened souls, on the other hand, have risen above the dualities of joy and grief, happiness and sorrow, and are blissfully content in the Self alone. A person who has full control over his senses can never be the prey of sorrow or mirth. Such persons are called the great ones of this world. A person who does actions under the sway of the senses can rightly be considered to be no better than an animal. It is incumbent upon everyone to consider how this state of affairs comes about in his or her own life. Even a practitioner of Yoga who thinks he has renounced sense-indulgence can be tempted. If even a remnant of desire lurks in the subconscious, it can flare up and wreak havoc. The mind has a thousand ways to trap the meditator. Supernatural and yogic powers also are a dangerous distraction from the strait and narrow path of self-realization. The branches of a tree can be cut, but as soon as they get water, they sprout and bloom again. In the same way, submerged desires rise up from the subconscious mind to the conscious given an appropriate opportunity. So the devotee must renounce desire for worldly indulgence once and for all with firm determination. A single drop of poison can be fatal, and even an iota of passion can undo all the progress achieved thus far. A person of unsteady mind gets trapped in the web of the tri-faceted maya. Once you get sucked into the quicksand of maya and the more you kick the deeper you sink but if the mental fluctuations are

kept under control by Yoga, then even the desire for pleasures gradually dies away.

When the senses are subjugated and the mind settled in the Holy Name, then only may one feel that he now is well on the way to Truth. Just as a tortoise extends its limbs and withdraws them at will into its shell, so a person whose senses are under his control can make them obey him. On the other hand, a person whose mind flits from one sense-gratification to another knows no peace and can be regarded as ignorant and truly lacking in discrimination.

The Gita says that Yogis are awake in Divine Ecstasy contemplating God, just as surely as worldlings are asleep to it. Yogis are well and truly dead to the world, or asleep to the sensual desires which other people strive so hard to fulfill. In other words, desires are like the darkness of night to the Yogi and meditation is the light of his day. The reverse is true for sensual persons. For them sense-gratification is day and meditation and devotion is night.

Rivers continuously flow into the ocean, which nevertheless remains calm and serene. Similarly, a Yogi of tranquil mind and determined intellect is not ruffled or affected by intrusion of desire. It doesn't matter to him whether pleasure comes his way or not, as he is settled in the Self. He is free from likes and dislikes, and even if his sense organs are busy with their stimuli they make no impression on his mind. He doesn't react. He is no more tainted by desires than are the rays of sun and moon contaminated by touching the earth. He is always perfectly contented, finding a never-ending source of bliss within himself. Soldiers stay awake guarding their country's frontiers. Travellers stay awake waiting for their trains, and thieves stay awake to commit theft, but none of them can be called a Yogi, just because they stay awake. Many so-called holy men in India wear saffron clothes or roam about naked, but they can't be called Yogis, either. A Yogi is someone who has tuned his mind to the Word of God and united it with that Word, and whose mental fluctuations have been immersed and stilled in the Divine Light of God.

Staying up all night for sense-gratification is worse than sleeping. It's better for all concerned if lions, snakes and thieves remain asleep, because as soon as they wake up they cause trouble. It's better, however, for travellers and devotees to remain awake, because the traveller will reach his destination safely and the devotee meditates on God. Actually only the devotee within whom burns the fire of Divine Love can truly be considered awake. The darkness of delusion and attachment no longer exists for him. He is the Beloved of God. True Yogis and devotees realize the importance of Knowledge, listen to discourses about it, discuss it, think deeply over it and meditate on it within themselves.

God is beyond Death, while maya is Death itself. People who chase maya are bound to the wheel of birth and death. Maya and soul have existed since the beginning of Creation but so far very few embodied souls have managed to transcend the greed for maya. Just as pure ghee is all-pervading in milk, yet invisible until extracted, so too is God omnipresent in the cosmos, but cannot be seen with our carnal eyes. After butter is extracted only a residue of whey is left. In the same way, the individual, through meditation on the Holy Name, unties the knot of self and maya. He leaves maya behind and extracts the divine Essence within himself.

The world is the manifestation of the three gunas and the five elements. Those who worship the elements can never know anything beyond them. Not knowing God, Who is beyond maya, they can only worship and contemplate maya. But nothing can be hidden from the Satguru. It is only through his intervention that the all-pervading cosmic energy in the form of the Holy Name and Divine Light can be known. He reveals the Knowledge through which the individual can turn his back on the unreal things of the world and unite with God as He is.

Lord Krishna told Arjuna, "You are in Me, and I am in you. I know the secret of this, but you don't. I am beyond maya, therefore it cannot bind Me, but you think only of maya and thus are chained. If you concentrate your mind on the Inner Light and Holy Name, you can be disconnected from maya and escape the

wheel of birth and death. You can become one with Me." If someone in our day and age is transmitting the same Knowledge which Lord Krishna showed to Arjuna, is there any difference between him and Krishna? The Lord Himself said, "There is no difference between Myself and My realized devotee; he is in Me and I am in him." A disciple who serves such a Master with reverence, love and sincerity is a devotee in the real sense. Satguru is the Seer of Truth, the real man of Knowledge. If he doesn't possess the true Knowledge of God, then who does? Indeed, there are plenty of so-called religious masters who simply teach a mantra or rituals, but these are not entitled to be called 'Guru'. They cannot give you salvation. God is omnipresent, but can be known only through Satguru's Knowledge. The actual path of devotion is knowing Him and merging one's mind in Him. The disciple who has a determined will recovers the mind from wherever it wanders and fixes it in God's cosmic form. The wanton mind is forever flitting from thought to thought. God has never yet been seen with our ordinary eyes. He can only be meditated upon within the self.

We all like to see only pleasant things. A beautiful flower in full bloom delights everyone. We all like to listen to sweet and refined speech. Everybody wants to be noble. The same soul pervades everyone and that is why we all have the same aspirations. Nothing is nobler than the soul, but people tend to look for perfect joy and satisfaction in maya, rather than in the soul itself, which is the source of that joy.

Souls who find favour in God's sight are graced with a human body, but it is bestowed only so that we can strive for spiritual perfection. Is God to blame if people misuse this body and waste it in indulgence?

If a Guru is ignorant of something, how can anyone else be aware of it? Moreover, how could he be called a Guru? Only a perfectly realized and all-knowing seer can be rightfully called a Guru. He rids the inner self of its ignorance just as the sun rids the sky of darkness. The sun is self-luminous. It needs no other source of illumination. Satguru is also self-luminous. He actually is the

infinite and omnipresent Light. He reveals to his disciples this Divine Light.

बन्धे बोधमयं नित्यं गुरुं शंकर रूपिणम् ।
यमाश्रितोहि वक्रोऽपि चन्द्रः सर्वत्र वंद्यते ॥

St. Tulsidas sings in praise of the Master, "Obeisance to the Guru, who is the eternal, infinite Knowledge, beyond birth, death and limitations. He is the manifested Shiva, the Saviour of the soul, on whose forehead rests the crescent moon, universally adored. The full moon can be eclipsed, but not the crescent moon. Death eclipses everything. Only Guru Maharaj Ji is out of his reach.

बह्मानन्दं परम सुखदं केवलं ज्ञान मूर्तिम् ।
द्वन्द्वातीतं गगनसदृशं तत्त्वमस्यादि लक्ष्यम् ॥

'Shri Guru Maharaj Ji bestows divine bliss which is the highest joy. He is Knowledge itself and its very embodiment. He is completely beyond all duality and is even finer and subtler than the sky. His sole aim in coming into this world is to reveal the Knowledge of God to lost souls and thus ferry them across the worldly ocean. Obeisance to such a Master!'

एकं नित्यं विमलमचलं सर्वाधीशसिद्धि भूतम् ।
भावातीतं त्रिगुण रहितं सद्गुरुं तं नमामि ॥

'He is the eternal, pure, infinite, immutable One, the Witness of all beings, the Source of wisdom. He is totally beyond thinking and imagination and the three gunas. Again and again I prostrate myself at his feet.'

Most people have no inclination to hear about the soul. They think that they were born only to satisfy their selfish desires and must use everything they have, including their life, to this end. They can't conceive of anything higher than this. Such people are a burden on the earth. Trees are better because at least they give

fruit, shade and wood, but a human being who is a slave of his senses neither does himself nor anyone else any good, and harms the environment as well. Such persons will even enslave others to satisfy their own cravings. Lord Krishna explained to Arjuna, 'If a person experiences his soul, if he unites his mind to the infinite Cosmic Word, then his mind and sense organs will automatically detach themselves from indulgence. For such a person nothing remains to be done.' Even so, great souls do act, but for the sake of others. They have no selfish interest in anyone. If those who, living in a world of unreality, refuse to stop spreading lies, how can an enlightened soul be expected to stop spreading truth? The difference is this: the realized soul is untainted by the effect of action (although he engages only in truthful and pious activity) whereas those who wallow in lies and drag others down, must suffer the consequences.

A person who has brought his mind under control and has become one with God, does not adversely affect others' minds. Even when temptations present themselves, his senses don't respond, whereas the worldly person of uncontrolled mind falls into the trap as soon as the temptation comes along. Those who are under the sway of the forces of Nature are caught in the net of responsibility for their actions, but not someone who is beyond the pull of Nature and whose mind is settled in the Holy Name. Every creature acts according to its nature, characteristics and tendencies. It's not something which can be manipulated. A person acts virtuously because of the effect of his previous good deeds. Guru Nanak, Tulsidas, Dhruva, Prahlad, etc. had accumulated good merit from previous lives, whereas Kamsa, Ravanna and Duryodhana were influenced by their previous evil karma. It was Prahlad's nature not to turn away from God even if it meant great suffering. However, most people run a mile as soon as a minor calamity befalls them, forsaking truth and Dharma. They'll betray for a pittance what they know to be true.

Knowing, through the grace of a realized soul, the indwelling God, the Ultimate Reality, and attaching the mind thereto is

Dharma. A person of sattvic nature meditates on the Holy Name. A rajasic person cannot be a desireless devotee, because all his actions are motivated by the desire for results.

Lord Shankaracharya's mother wanted him to marry and become a householder. He intended, however, to renounce the world and work for the salvation of others. He asked for her permission to do this, but she would not agree. One day he went with her to bathe in the river. Suddenly a crocodile grabbed him and started to pull him under the water. His mother shouted and screamed, but in vain. When he reached the middle of the river, he called out to her, "Give me permission to renounce the world then this crocodile will let me go." His mother reasoned that it was better than letting him die, so she agreed.

Samarth Ramdas, the Guru of Shivaji, got married under pressure. In the middle of the ceremony, he jumped up and ran away. There are many similar stories of devotees who, from childhood, were disenchanted with the world. On the other hand, a person dominated by *tamoguna* will, even when young, begin a career of lies, hypocrisy and double-dealing.

A sattvic-natured person loves to listen to satsang and serve his Guru. A rajasic person is preoccupied with his family and possessions. A tamasic person is interested only in sensual indulgence and in sleeping. The desireless and selfless devotee has transcended the quagmire of activities and is merged in God.

Lord Krishna advised Arjuna, "Stop being tormented by attachment and desires. Become egoless and settled in the Self. Never let the thought of doership cross your mind. Whatever you do, always think that all actions are Mine and occupy your mind with meditation. Then you will not be affected by the chains of good/bad action." Never worry about success or failure, because these are in God's hands and whatever will be will be.

Arjuna and Krishna were close friends. Whatever Arjuna did, he did according to Krishna's instructions, knowing him to be the Lord. That is why he was free from karmic responsibility. But what about us? Lord Krishna isn't with us today. So how can we do

everything at his command? How can we be freed from the clutches of karma?

People do not know what devotion really is. They think that selfless devotion means worshipping a statue. They think that this will save them. However, Lord Krishna said that no matter how many scriptures you read, or how many deities you worship, without practical Knowledge it is all a waste of time.

नाना शास्त्रं पठेन लोके नाना देवतं पूजयन् ।
आत्म ज्ञानं बिना पार्थ-सर्वं कर्म निरर्थकम् ॥

Only a person who doesn't care for worldly things and does meditation can be perfectly free from karmic bondage.

श्रेयान्स्वधर्मो विगुणः परधर्मात्स्वनुष्ठितात् ।
स्वभावनियतं कर्म कुर्वन्नाप्नोति किल्बिषम् ॥
पस्वधर्मे निधनं श्रयः परधर्मो भयावहः ॥

'It is better to do one's own duty rather than another's; only by doing one's God-given duties can one attain liberation.' (18:47)

Seeing another's duty induces fear. One's personal religion, or religious duty is to do spiritually-based actions. All else is secondary. Joy and sorrow correspond to the degree of maya's influence on the soul. A person is happy when he gets the object of his desire and miserable when he doesn't, and will put up with anything to obtain it. Unrighteous action in order to satisfy desire causes fear. This is why envy, or looking at another's duty, is called fear-inducing. On the other hand, meditation never causes fear in any way. Sin is another name for fear-inducing action. Anyone who remembers the Holy Name is instantly released from all kinds of fear and sin.

Many people have the erroneous idea that stopping all activity frees one from incurring sin. Actions done through ignorance cause misery and fear. However, the ears can't stop hearing, the eyes can't stop seeing, the nose can't stop smelling and the tongue can't stop tasting. It is our likes and dislikes which give rise to the

thoughts, imaginations and doubts which are the basic cause of birth and death.

If a person carries out his own duties faithfully, not even a shadow of fear crosses him. Doing one's duty requires neither fasting, pilgrimage nor rituals. It fulfills all one's dreams. That is why doing your own duty and behaving righteously is most advantageous.

Arjuna listened attentively to what the Lord said, then asked, "Lord, if someone has turned his back on maya and has no other wish than to be absorbed in meditation on You, under whose influence, then, does he commit sin?"

The Lord answered, "Arjuna, the culprits are lust and anger, which are spawned by Rajoguna. Realize that they are your worst enemies. Fire will never be extinguished by adding more oil and dry wood." In the same way, sense gratification and indulgence will never satisfy lust. Lust is as tyrannical as death, and tries in every way to obliterate Knowledge and wisdom, like smoke around fire, clouds in front of the sun, or water covered by moss. When the sun of Knowledge is obscured by the clouds of lust and anger, the mind becomes dark with ignorance. Once a person falls victim to the pangs of lust, even gaining the universe will not satisfy him. Everyone dances to the tune of lust and anger. Just as snakes coil themselves around sandalwood trees, so lust and anger are part and parcel of the human body. They rob us of our wisdom and devotion. These thieves live deep within us, and from time to time venture out of their den to wreak havoc.

Even though Knowledge is pure and bright like a clean mirror, it can get covered by grime, like dust on a mirror, and the more you try to remove the grime the more compacted it becomes. To satisfy desires there arises in the sense organs the will to act. This causes the mind and senses to act in ways which further increase attachment and avarice. Tulsidas said that lust and anger lead us into hell, and they cannot be controlled by force. The harder you press rubber, the more it bounces back. Hatha yogis

can be tormented by lust and anger, but mind is automatically pacified by meditation on the Holy Name.

Lord Krishna told Arjuna to first conquer the senses and destroy lust, as it is the number-one enemy of yogis. Someone who can do this can conquer the world. It is very wrong to think this is impossible, because saints have done it.

Mind is more powerful than the senses. Intellect is more powerful than mind, but by far the most powerful is the soul. When mind and intellect are united with the soul-force, lust and anger are automatically eradicated.

Krishna told Arjuna to pick up his bow and kill his relatives. That doesn't mean that he is advocating killing, or that he advises us to do likewise. He is telling us to be detached from everything. Arjuna had to fight a war, whereas we have to battle our negative thoughts. We have to divert and disconnect attention from the things of the world and direct it towards God. This is what the saints and sages have done, and have advised others to do. Krishna's bow represents the Holy Name which we have to aim at our fluctuating minds. Of the eighteen battalions present at the battle of Kurukshetra, eleven belonged to Duryodhana and seven to the Pandavas. The battle of Mahabharata rages within us, too. On one side is the army of the ten organs and the mind, plus a horde of sinful thoughts. On the opposing side are Knowledge, meditation, remembering the Holy Name, service, satsang, non-attachment and meritorious actions. A person whose senses are drawn towards indulgence and vice is unrighteous, whereas someone who is inclined towards spirituality is righteous.

The weapons in this battle are the eyes, which should be used to see saints; the ears, which should be used to hear satsang; the mouth, which should be used only to praise God; the feet, which should be used for going to satsang and the hands, which should be used for serving the Satguru. One who, free from censure, totally diverts his mind from sensual indulgence, will be able to shoot the 'arrow' of the Name. Victory will be his.

Actions done in darkness do not yield good results, as a rule. It is also very difficult to find an object in the dark. That is why we illuminate our houses at night. Similarly, as long as the heart is in darkness, all our actions will cause misery and bondage. However, when the heart is illumined and transformed by spiritual Knowledge, all our actions lead us to liberation. You won't see God, even though He dwells in your heart and even though you serve Him. St. Kabir said that serving God throughout the four ages will not equal the result of a moment's service to the Guru.

हरि सेवा युग चार है गुरु सेवा पल एक ।
ताके पट तर ना तरे सन्तन किया विवेक ।।

People don't know what devotion really is, yet consider themselves to be devotees. They have never seen God as He is, yet claim to know Him. But lies won't benefit anyone in this life, nor is there any hope for the future life. Those who recite the Gita think that this is devotion and Knowledge and that salvation is assured by chanting 'Radha-Krishna' and worshipping statues. But nowhere in the Gita are these practices recommended. Similarly, devotees of Rama worship his statue, read Ramayana and chant 'Ram-Ram'. Vedic scholars study Vedas, chant 'Aum' and the Gayatri Mantra, perform yagyas and call this Knowledge and devotion. So which one of these is correct? Is this enough to take the human soul to the stage where it is meant to be? Did Lord Krishna instruct his close disciple Arjuna to do this, even though none of these can be done during battle?

Whether people believe it or not, the fact of the matter is that only Satguru can reveal what is true Knowledge and devotion. Whether a person searches for the Satguru or not, the fact remains that without his grace, the individual soul cannot cross the ocean of mortality. Anyone, anytime can practise the yoga or the devotion which Lord Krishna taught Arjuna. Successful practice of this yoga does not depend on caste, creed, age or time. It can be practised simultaneously with any worldly activity, and actually

liberates the practitioner from the bondage or consequences of action. The Lord says

इमं विवस्वते योगं प्रोक्तवानहमव्ययम् ।
विवस्वान्मनवे प्राह मनुरिक्ष्वाकवेऽब्रवीत् ॥
एवं परम्पराप्राप्तमिमं राजर्षयो विदुः ।
स कालेनेह महता योगो नष्टः परंतप ॥

"I taught this imperishable and eternal Yoga to Vivasvan. He taught it to Swayambhu Manu, and Manu taught it to his son Ikshavaku. Like this the royal sages in succession knew it. But this yoga has been lost for a very long time."

This is, true yoga, to know which disciples served their Masters all their lives. This is the yoga which Nachiketa asked Death to teach him. But very few people anymore know about this original yoga. People call anything they like 'yoga'. To get peace of mind they go to temples, mosques and churches and sing hymns, say prayers and perform rituals. Meetings, conferences and *yagyas* are held for world peace, universal brotherhood and justice. However, instead we find lies, hatred, deception, duplicity, corruption, mutual distrust and enmity. Human beings have become bloodthirsty beasts. Our duty is to practise this yoga, which will give us peace and make our lives meaningful.

Lord Krishna continues, "Arjuna, I have described the greatness of this ancient Yoga to you, because you are My devotee and beloved friend. This is the Supreme Yoga—it is the ultimate mystery."

Arjuna listened to Krishna's teaching but had some doubts. Most people tend to keep their doubts hidden, and this is the cause of a lot of trouble. They find neither peace nor salvation.

Arjuna was Krishna's relative and close friend. Moreover, or maybe even in spite of this, he had unshakeable faith in Krishna. He didn't hide his feelings at all, and to clear up his doubts he asked, "Lord, you were born only a few years ago, while Vivaswan

was born long, long ago, so how can I accept that you taught him this Yoga at the beginning of Creation?"

Krishna explained, "You and I have been born many times already. You do not remember but I do, because my birth is not that of ordinary souls. They are forced to take birth because of previous karma, whereas I, although birthless and imperishable, and the Lord of all beings, incarnate of My own free will by manipulating My *maya* (Nature)." So why does the Lord incarnate? He explains, "Whenever the true religion declines and ignorance and wickedness increase, I incarnate in human form. To redeem the pious and destroy the wicked, I come from age to age."

"Although birthless, I take birth; although beyond action I act, but My birth and actions are divine. Those who realize Me in essence, attain Me and need not be reborn." Those who have realized the Lord as He really is, are freed from the cycle of action-reaction.

You must have seen pictorial representations of Krishna. He is sometimes depicted riding a horse and brandishing a naked sword. People probably interpret this to mean that he uses the sword to slaughter the wicked, but there is a deeper meaning to it. Using the sword of Knowledge the Lord destroys the evil and ignorance in man, bringing to an end the Kali Age and ushering in the Satyuga (Age of Truth) in which people will no longer be selfish and will work for the highest good. When a person becomes pious and holy, for him Satyuga has arrived. A person's tendencies and impressions are not changed by death. The impressions dominating him at his death determine the course of action he will pursue in his next life. The Lord means, that when people forget God and engross themselves in insubstantial and intransient things and call this religion—in other words, when mankind forgets what religion really is and follows wrong paths, the Lord incarnates to reintroduce true spiritual Knowledge and devotion and to eradicate unrighteousness and ignorance. True Dharma is established and all falsehood is destroyed.

There are two types of Incarnations. The first is the *Nimitt Avatar* who comes for a specific purpose, such as Rama, who came to destroy Ravanna, or Krishna, who came to destroy Kamsa. The second is the *Nitya Avatar*, the realized saint who is always present on earth in some form or other to redeem straying souls. If he were not here, then Knowledge would vanish from the world. The *Nimitt Avatar* slays the wicked, whereas true spiritual progress comes through the saint, the *Nitya avatar*, who, by revealing Knowledge, changes a disciple's subconscious store of impressions and tendencies, thus freeing him forever from the bondage of birth and death. The Lord says, "There are many who, free from attachment, fear and anger have taken My shelter, been purified in the fire of Knowledge and attained Me. As others remember Me, so I remember them. For those who think that I am far away, I actually am very far away, whereas I am always with those who regard me as dwelling within themselves. Someone who realizes this secret does not wander in the world of mortality. People who worship deities to fulfill their desires will get what they want, but they won't realize Me and will continue to transmigrate through other species. So, Arjuna, always meditate on Me alone in order to reach Me, because only by those who aspire to realize Me are actions done for Me."

What is action? What is inaction? Even the intelligent go round in circles over this! They don't know the action which frees the individual from attachment and worldly bondage. They think that they are working desirelessly, but actually are enmeshed in the web of action. So the Lord says, "Arjuna, I will tell you how to work so that you can be free from impurity and worldly attachment. You should know which action to perform, and which not to, because the secret of action is deep. He who sees action in inaction and inaction in action has actually understood this mystery."

All creatures act according to their individual traits and nature, but arrogant man thinks that he is the doer of action, and this is precisely why he is bound by their effects. On the other hand,

someone with Knowledge realizes that the soul is the witness and nature is the doer. Those who don't know the soul and work only to please the senses are called sinners.

He who does not worry about action and has no attachment to results, whose every action is desireless and unmotivated, dedicates his every action into the fire of Knowledge and, free from care, meditates on God. This is karma yoga—the yoga of desireless or dedicated action. A real karma yogi, even while acting, is a non-doer. He is unconcerned about his physical body and is saturated in spiritual bliss. When a person continually gives up the desire for sense and mental enjoyments and meditates continually on God, all his actions are desireless. On the other hand, if a person renounces action but inwardly still harbours desires for pleasures, or, if he serves society out of vanity and ego, all his actions are motivated and he imprisons his soul still further.

Now where is that Knowledge which the Lord revealed? Where is that Knowledge which is called the imperishable yoga and which Janak and other royal sages practised? If it were available from books then everyone would know it, but books can do little more than glorify it. Many people think that Krishna gave this Knowledge only to Arjuna, and nowadays it is unavailable. They don't ask themselves whether it is available anywhere today. But the point is, if this Knowledge is no longer existing in the world, and if nobody possesses it, then how can it be imperishable? Knowledge is imperishable, but can't be known until the Guru who can reveal it is found.

Lord Krishna tells the aspirant how to receive Knowledge:

तद्विद्धि प्रणिपातेन परिप्रश्नेन सेवया ।
उपदेश्यन्ति ते ज्ञानं ज्ञानिनस्तत्त्वदर्शिनः ॥

"Go to the realized seer, prostrate and sincerely ask for Knowledge. When he is pleased by your service the Master will reveal the Knowledge, by practising which the mind quickly loses its desires and delusions. Then you will see your Self within all

beings." When an aspirant has the grace of the Satguru, the sunrise of Knowledge dispels the darkness of his ignorance.

People read Gita, Ramayana and Srimad Bhagavatam but don't ask for the Knowledge which Krishna gave to Arjuna. The purpose of reading scriptures is to seek out that Knowledge. Gurus and religious preceptors should definitely receive that Word which can control the mind. Only human beings can ask and realize. Other species cannot.

Lord Krishna says, "Even if you are the worst of sinners, this Knowledge will free you from all sin. As wood disintegrates in fire, so are sins consumed in the fire of Knowledge." Roasted seeds cannot germinate and when the seeds of karma are roasted in the fire of Knowledge, they lose the ability to fructify.

Just as the sun can be compared only to the sun, and the moon only to the moon so Knowledge can be compared only to itself. Knowledge cannot be explained by anything else. The pure-minded experience this Knowledge within themselves. It has nothing to do with the senses and it is wrong to call anything perceived via the senses 'Knowledge'.

A person who practises Knowledge will gain mastery over his mind and senses and find everlasting peace. However, someone who has no faith in Knowledge or who doubts it, causes his own downfall, i.e. he remains bound to the wheel of birth and death. He is neither happy in this world, nor does he find peace in the next. He falls short in both.

If a person has no desire to receive the highest knowledge or, after getting it, doesn't practise it, he is in a miserable position. Cows and goats eat grass and give us milk, which we ingest and promptly defecate. A dead animal's horns, skin and bones are useful, but a human corpse only takes up space in a graveyard. In other words, it is useless. The human body is meaningful only if it is used to meditate on God.

Arjuna had another question, so he asked Krishna, "On the one hand you praise the yoga of action, and on the other the

renunciation of action, I don't really understand this, so I'm confused. Please tell me conclusively which is better."

Krishna replied that both renunciation and the yoga of action lead to salvation as both lead to God-realization. Those who regard renunciation and desireless action as separate are just ignorant, because in both cases meditation is vital. Know that those who wear holy robes but don't meditate on God have fallen from the goal. Renunciation doesn't mean dying your clothes saffron and having your ears pierced. He who doesn't see any difference between renunciation and karma yoga is a true knower of God, but even so, the path of renunciation is much harder for the average person than the path of action.

Surrendering all desire for worldly possessions and relationships is true sannyas, or renunciation. Just repeating 'I am God' does not make one a renunciate. Firstly, it has to be understood what *sannyas* really means. Someone who doesn't miss things which he doesn't have, nor clings to those which he has; who feels neither attraction nor repulsion for anyone is a real sannyasi, even though he may be living a family life. On the other hand, a person who renounces the world, claiming it to be nothing but misery, but whose mind is still drawn to it, has to suffer, and is not free from the bondage of action. Someone who practises desireless karma yoga i.e. who meditates on God while doing all his actions, soon realizes divien peace.

When a person totally disconnects his mind from worldly attachments and, as directed by the Satguru, meditates on the Holy Name, his mind is cleansed of the dross of thoughts and imaginations and rests in the Spirit.

How can a blind man directed by another blind man reach his destination? He'll go round in circles. He won't be able to go beyond this world. Caught up in self-praise and pride in his rites and rituals he doesn't think about Truth or realizing it. He also doesn't consider that he will have to suffer the results of his actions in future births over and over again. This subject is so profound that its mysteries are not understood just by dressing up like a

hermit. Only through contact with a great soul can one have full and perfect understanding of these matters.

When a person's mind, body and senses are under his control and he has no desire for material rewards, even if he does actions their consequences do not bind him. The realized soul, while eating, talking, sleeping, breathing, taking and giving, understands that he doesn't actually *do* anything and that his organs are simply reacting to their natural stimuli, because his mind is in continual communion with the unchanging Spirit. Therefore, it is not drawn towards anything else. Such a great soul, like the lotus flower, lives in the world but is untouched by it.

A person who shuns ostentation and practises the inner yoga is unaffected by anything of the world. He doesn't work just for himself, but for the good of all beings. Ordinary people desire results for themselves but the true yogi has no desires or expectations. God, the Source of creation, is beyond action, so the great soul who, through meditation unites his consciousness with God, also transcends action and its results. Seated in his physical vehicle, he is a spectator of the worldly drama. God does not create the doership of action, nor actions and their consequences. The creature itself, according to Nature as well as its own traits and character, engages in action. The Lord does not take upon Himself anyone's good or bad actions. Everyone has to suffer the consequences of his own actions himself.

Spiritual insight dawns only when the mental apparatus is centred and this occurs through meditation on God's True Name, the same imperishable Name glorified by all the scriptures. It has more power to destroy sins than sins have to destroy man.

Why do people chant sacred names? They do it to remove their own impure tendencies and defects, but the names they chant unfortunately don't have such power. The Name which does have this ability is the one meditated upon by the great devotees and masters of all times. However, people who don't know the True Name remember other names yet expect the ultimate reward described by Lord Krishna. Those who meditate on the Secret

Name within and renounce all desire for external pleasures experience the highest divine bliss because they know very well that pleasures gained through the senses ultimately lead to misery and reincarnation. Getting the chance to enjoy pleasures makes the average person happy while losing it makes him unhappy. That is why the wise give up all desire and expectation for sense pleasures and remember God alone. Just see for yourself. Have sense pleasures ever made anyone truly and permanently happy? The joy they seem to offer is like a mirage, but still people chase them. They ridicule meditation, satsang and devotion and as far as they are concerned spiritual bliss doesn't exist. Maggots are happy living in excreta and pus. What do they know of the fragrance of flowers? Owls can't look at the sun, and people engrossed in physical pleasures can't experience the spiritual Light within. The wise person who has full control over his mind and body and who can withstand the onslaught of the impulses of lust and anger, etc. experiences the joy of the Spirit. Not for him desire-born misery! He unites himself with the Inner Light and is liberated. Such a yogi is ever-free.

The scriptures say, and it can be seen also, that the entire phenomenal world is due to consciousness. Only as long as consciousness remains in the body does a person feel hunger and thirst, hot and cold and the natural urges. Suppose someone says, "I don't know anything." Even though he hasn't experienced his own faculty of awareness, he is aware of *something*—i.e. that he doesn't know anything.

The conscious soul is extremely subtle. It is not a subject of the mind, intellect or senses. Eyes cannot see it nor tongue taste it. That is why it is called imperceptible. The Unmanifest Form of God cannot be realized through any external object or means. If it cannot be known externally then it cannot be contemplated externally. So where should the mind be concentrated? Desireless action is impossible while the mind entertains any worldly thoughts. Without desireless action God-realization is impossible

and without knowing God a person can't achieve true peace even in a dream.

We have five sensory organs through which we perceive the world and five organs of action for doing work. We can force the organs of action to stop working but our sensory organs can't stop functioning. Suppose someone renounces action and calls himself a sannyasi. He may not eat regular food but he'll have to drink milk or at least eat fruit. He may not sleep on a bed but he'll have to sleep on the ground. He may not wear clothes but he'll have to warm himself beside a fire. He'll have to do something or other to maintain his body, so what has he actually renounced?

Everyone can't do the same work. One grows crops, another weaves cloth, another makes clothes, another makes shoes. The idea is that everyone works together to fulfill the community's needs. But one should meditate as he works. All these necessities are for the body only, and only while consciousness inhabits a body is there any connection with the world. But if one isn't conscious of his own consciousness and thinks that material things are all there is, what has he gained by being born as a human being?

It doesn't matter where you go, the five desires stay with you and putting on holy robes won't get rid of them. Instead, you should forget entirely these desires and, wherever you are, concentrate on the Unmanifest God. The omnipresent, omniscient, imperishable, indivisible and living God is within everyone, but just calling Him absolute and unmanifest doesn't provide a focus for the mind. That is why people go to gurus. God is indeed all-pervading, but just by chanting 'Ram' or 'Aum' His omnipresence is not realized. But most people are not interested in knowing what is beyond Ram or Aum, even if it is suggested to them.

People call someone who merely gives them a rosary or a sacred thread 'Guru', but rosaries can break and the thread rots and has to be changed. These things don't accompany you when you die. They remain behind with the body. Mosques, temples and churches collapse. The paper on which sacred texts are written rots

from moisture or dissolves, or it can be burned or blown away. None of these things can be called imperishable. People can forget mantras and prayers. There is something to be known beyond these, something which fire cannot burn, water cannot dissolve, air cannot blow away, sun cannot dry out and weapons cannot injure. Is any of the abovementioned methods the imperishable Knowledge which Lord Krishna revealed to Arjuna and which he instructed everyone to realize? Can these mentally-fabricated things take you to the Imperishable and Eternal?

Lust, anger, avarice, attachment and vanity are the five enemies which cause us nothing but misery, and drag us down into unrighteousness and wickedness. The natural and easy way to overcome them is meditation on the Holy Name. It doesn't cost anything and you don't have to go to a particular place to find it. You can meditate on it wherever you are, and whatever you are doing. The Name has the power to avert the inevitable. By its power St. Tulsidas and Jesus Christ were able to raise the dead and St. Gyaneshwar could make a buffalo recite Vedic mantras. Meditate on the Name and see how it fills you with Divine bliss. You will be disconnected from all worldly ties. You will see God and no longer crave the things of the world. Spiritual Knowledge or soul-realization is the highest science. Tulsidas said that someone who abandons the easy path of the Name for other more complicated and difficult methods is like the person who throws a magic cow out of his house and goes looking for milkweed. The Holy Name, which can fulfill every wish, gets rid of all sufferings and bestows liberation, is within everyone, but still people practise all kinds of external methods to get eternal peace and happiness. They won't get anything. People look for happiness in material things, which will eventually disintegrate into the elements from which they came. Peace and happiness are attributes of Spirit alone.

The mind should be concentrated on the Inner Light at the point between the eyebrows and on the Name within the breath as it flows through the nostrils. There are 100 major subtle nerves or

'pranic channels' within us. The most important, the Sushumna, travels through the spine to the forehead, where it meets with the Ida and Pingala, two other important nerves. This point is called *Triveni* or *Hardwar*. Here stands the chariot of the Lord. Below this point is the dominion of maya and above is God. As the mind ascends through meditation on the Holy Name, the bliss-permeated God, Whose Form is self-effulgent light, is realized. On the other hand, a person whose mind travels downwards into maya has to suffer transmigration.

God's supreme abode is not illuminated by sun, moon or fire. The glow of a candle or firefly is eclipsed by sunrise, and sunlight itself pales before the blazing Light of God. It is His Light which illuminates these lesser lights. In short, the entire Creation is energized and illuminated by this Light. Knowing the living Divine Entity within unties the knot between the Self and maya and destroys the delusion that the body is all that we are. True yoga is the method by which mind can sever all its worldly connections.

Arjuna obeyed Lord Krishna's command to fight, and due to his obedience his mind was disconnected from worldly illusion and fixed in God. If a disciple follows his Master's commands and is regular in service, satsang and meditation, his mind will also be detached from worldliness and tuned to the Holy Name.

People donate large sums in charity and social service and think that this will benefit them. Actually, deep down, they are motivated by the desire for praise and recognition. Anyway, it is better to use one's money for humanitarian projects than waste it. However, the disappointment and wounded pride engendered by lack of public recognition invalidates their good work.

Lord Krishna said that all creatures, from ants to elephants, existed in disembodied form before being born in this world and will exist like that after they leave it. The incarnated condition is only a temporary intermediate stage, but even so people get obsessed with titles, appearance, caste and social standing. They never give a thought to what our title, caste, or appearance was before we were born.

Two factors are involved in creation. The first is insentient maya or 'material nature.' Fire, water, ether, earth, mind, air, intellect and ego belong to this category. The second is the spiritual element or life force. Bodies can be large or small, but the spiritual entity within them is the same. It has no caste, name or appearance. No creature's physical body is permanent. All have to leave one body to take another. Caste, appearance, knowledge, virtues, time or country change and none can escape this. Still, people don't abandon evil actions and worldly infatuation to meditate on God! The reason for this is that people are aware of death only for a short time. When they see a funeral the world seems unreal and selfish to them. However, as soon as they turn their backs on the crematorium they return to their worldly affairs and consider this to be real. Someone who is constantly aware of the reality of death loosens the knot between consciousness and matter and becomes free from birth and death. He is the wise seer. Such people regard this world as an inn or a way station, so, detaching their minds from it, meditate on God, the unchangeable and eternal Reality. Ordinary beings are obsessed with material pleasures to the very end. When an ox is no longer fit for work it is turned loose, but human beings hold on to avarice and attachment until the very moment they die.

* If a person gets stuck in maya at any stage along the way he can't reach God. The consciousness has to attain the level of *Sachkhand* or *Satlok*, the level of truth, but how? Trains, buses and planes don't go there, because the route is entirely internal. People reach holy places by road, but the road to God is not like that. Only the subtle consciousness can negotiate this inner route. If you throw a kite in the air it will fall down again and if you throw its string that will also fall down. But if you tie the two together, both can fly upwards. The kite can reach a great height but if the string snaps the kite will fall into a lake, a river, a tree or somewhere else. The kite flier can control his kite by reeling it in, because he is holding the other end of the string. Similarly, Guru Maharaj Ji makes the consciousness ascend, but, if a disciple turns his back on

his Guru, his consciousness will descend again. If he disconnects himself from the Guru, who knows into what low state he can fall! So a disciple should never try and deceive his Guru.

God in His omnipresence may be compared to the sky. Just as the sky is the same for all people, regardless of social class, so God is one and the same for all people. There is no separate God for separate castes. Even the Creator has a limit, but the all-permeating Divine Energy can never have an end, so by realizing it, the soul attains liberation. However, as long as it remains separated from God, it will have to keep reincarnating. So how can it be united with God? How can the mind and intellect experience the imperceptible, unmanifested God Who is beyond the senses? If the mind could achieve this state on its own then everyone would have done so by now. It's a big mistake to think that the mind is or will be united with God by our going on pilgrimages or to temples and churches. The mind of a temple goer is more concerned with the ritual of temple-going than with God.

Until the kite and the string are tied together by someone they remain separate, and until he flies them they don't fly. In the same way, the Word or Holy Name exists within everyone but Satguru unites the individual's consciousness with it, and he alone can make the consciousness ascend above maya. But God, unlike the kite, and consciousness, unlike that string, are not gross entities. They are extremely subtle, and the knot which unites them, i.e. the Holy Name, is also extremely subtle. Only when consciousness is united to the Name is the mind purified, and God is seen only by the pure mind.

Roads are built for man and beast to walk along. However, whenever the beast sees a patch of green grass or a leafy tree, it will stray from the road to indulge its greed. The Divine Masters have given us the path of the scriptures to follow, but, animal-like, man disobeys their instructions and goes off the road to roam around satisfying his desires. Man builds wells so that other people and animals may drink, but animals can't draw the water out of the well by themselves. They can only quench their thirst after someone

has drawn the water for them. Similarly, only a Satguru can explain the hidden meanings of the scriptures. Man can't understand them of his own accord.

Are the scriptures or the saints to blame if we prefer to disregard their advice and get ourselves caught in the brambles of maya?

In the Gita Lord Krishna says that the highest action a human being can do is desireless meditation on God. If he can't do this, then what else can he do desirelessly? Renunciation of objects does not necessarily mean desirelessness. So-called yogis and sannyasis may not use fire for warmth, yet they eat cooked food! They won't touch money yet they ride around in gold and silver palanquins! Their walking sticks have golden or silver knobs! Isn't that hypocrisy? But blind humanity calls such hypocrites saints, popes, renunciates and monks. However, a true renunciate has no desires at all, and this state is achieved when the mind meditates on nothing else except God.

Liberation is achieved only when the will is surrendered to God and there is a total absence of mental fluctuations; in which state there is neither desire for pleasures nor attachment to actions and results.

So each person should carefully consider what is best for himself. Devotees such as Dhruva and Prahlad, whose attention was totally rivetted in God, were their own best friends. On the other hand, someone who turns away from God does as much harm to himself as if he had cut off his own limbs. No one else in this world is a friend or enemy. When his mind is in perfect tranquil equilibrium, a person doesn't consider anyone to be his friend or his enemy. A person in total control of his mind and senses perceives the same soul within all, and feels the same towards all. He works for the sake of all and speaks well of all. However someone whose mind and senses are out of control, makes friends and enemies in order to protect his own interests. Heat and cold, pleasure and pain, respect and disrespect are immaterial for the person whose mind is totally tranquil. He

doesn't even feel disturbed by great suffering. For him, gold and mud are the same. He is aware of nothing except God. The superior yogi is he who regards equally friend and foe, the indifferent, the hateful, the brotherly, the sinner and the saint.

Then Lord Krishna says (6:10-12), "Abandoning all expectations, how should a yogi keep his consciousness stilled in meditation? He should prepare a seat in a pure place; and, placing his hopes neither high nor low, with his mind and senses under control, practise Yoga." The place where the saintly ones live becomes pure because their presence can turn hell into heaven, whereas the company of the wicked can turn heaven into hell.

A place can be considered pure if, by sitting there, our thoughts turn to God. Mosques, temples, churches and pilgrimage spots are regarded as holy, but are they really if we sit there and our minds still engage in worldly thoughts? We should also ask ourselves what Lord Krishna means by practising Yoga. If you sit in a lonely place but continue to think about worldly things, what is the use of being there? You can think about worldly things anywhere. The mind gives rise to myriads of thoughts. Just as you can't see your reflection in a dirty mirror or in moving water, similarly God cannot be seen by an unsteady mind. The mind's coating of impurities and filth causes its haziness. The unsteady mind is like the waves in water, but when it is attuned to the Word of the Guru, all its shortcomings and imperfections are removed. Lord Krishna continues:

समं कायशिरोग्रीवं धारायन्नचलं स्थिरः ।
संप्रेक्ष्य नासिकाग्रं स्वं दिशश्चानवलोकयन् ॥
प्रशान्तात्मा विगतभीर्ब्रह्मचारिव्रते स्थितः ।
मनः संयम्य मच्चित्तो युक्त आसीत मत्परः ॥

"Keeping the body, head and neck straight, not looking around but gazing at the start of the nose, he should merge his mind in meditation. Keeping his mind away from worldly affairs, the yogi should meditate on Me." (6:13)

People normally interpret the word अग्रभाग to mean the tip of the nose. Actually, अग्र means the origin or starting point. The point between the eyebrows which Hindus decorate with sandalwood paste, is actually the origin of the nose, the 'agrabhag'. One has to close the eyes and meditate on the Divine Light within. The way to do this is fully explained by the Satguru. Another word which causes controversy is the word *brahmacharya*. It is made up of two words, *Brahm* (God) and *aacharan*, (behaviour). One whose mind is fixed in God is entitled to be called a brahmacharin. You'll find a lot of people calling themselves 'brahmachari' but very few who think about nothing else except God. There is only one way to achieve the highest bliss and it does not require sannyasin's robes, because the Yoga of the soul has nothing to do with external physical techniques. What it does require is love for God.

Lord Krishna further says, "A yogi whose mind is free and who is eternally in meditation attains supreme peace and bliss. This yoga is not achieved by eating too much or too little, by sleeping too much or too little. It is perfected by regulating one's diet and conduct and attempting to perform right actions."

Some people hardly talk at all, while many talk too much, and about useless things. Some undergo severe fasting while others ruin their health by standing in icy water or by sitting near a fire in the middle of summer. All they get out of this is physical discomfort.

A candle burns brightest in a sheltered place. The consciousness of a yogi is described as being as steady as the flame of a candle sheltered from the wind. His consciousness is unflickering in meditation because the wind of desires and craving can't disturb it, even though maya tries to tempt him and make him fall from his path.

The ultimate stage of yoga is the union of meditator, meditation and that which is meditated upon. The object of meditation is God, sustained concentration on Him is meditation and the person who does this is the meditator. So if a person thinks

only about worldly things when he tries to meditate, how can he ever reach the goal? If the object of a person's meditation is acquisition of worldly things, that is what he will ultimately get. His mind can never be fixed. A blindfolded ox turns a millwheel all day and thinks that he has trudged miles, but in the evening when the blindfold is removed, he finds that he is at the same place where he started. Similarly, people fool themselves with their hymn-singing, rituals and chanting, thinking that they have progressed, when actually they have not.

People worship idols as God, but these statues are man-made and will break one day, whereas God is unmade, changeless, and indestructible. People talk about God but meditate on perishable objects. Some will say that they meditate only on the cosmic form of God, but this form is described by scriptures as being consciousness and universal Light. A candle is necessary for viewing an idol in a sanctuary, because you can't see in the dark. So how can that idol be God? Do you need a candle to see the sun? So should you need a candle to see the Light of lights?

As far as the mind and senses extend is all maya. Meditating on anything of the world is meditation on maya. An unsteady mind can never meditate on God. If a spiritual practice does not tame the mind, it cannot be called yoga or devotion. It is incomprehensible how people who are not in love with God can call themselves devotees. Yoga means uniting the mind with God. So Krishna says,

यत्रोपरमते चित्तं निरुद्धं योग सेवया ।
यत्र चैवात्मनात्मानं पश्यन्नात्मनि तुष्यति ॥

"When the mind is concentrated in the practice of Yoga, experiencing the Spirit, it is content in the Spirit. When the intellect is free from the senses it experiences the bliss of the Spirit and does not wander from the Spirit. Someone who achieves this is a yogi.

There is no benefit greater than the spiritual, because it bestows peace. The yogi abandons all thoughts of meeting and

separation and is not upset by these, and, knowing what is the highest duty of human beings, realizes that his true welfare lies in practising the path of spiritual Yoga.'

Keeping the mind aloof from the senses and in full control, abandoning any motivation and craving, the meditator should over and over again practise the Holy Name, not thinking of anything else. This will be difficult at first, but gets easier with practice.

When a rope rubs again and again against the stone wall of a well, it makes a groove in the stone. The child in school today, if he studies diligently, will become the professor of tomorrow. Practice is a great thing. It can achieve anything. A baby is born not knowing anything—it learns everything later. If a person meditates on the True-Name over and over again, one day he will definitely realize God. By meditation on the living Spirit even the non-living intellect can achieve Knowledge of consciousness.

The Gita tells everyone to meditate within, to concentrate the mind within. But people are blind. They forget the instructions of the divine Masters and busy themselves with rites, rituals, etc. which are all external. They have no idea what Yoga is or on what to meditate. Although the heirs of immortality, they become the victims of Death.

The technique which can be practised non-stop is real devotion. None of the external practises which people call devotion can be practised non-stop. You can't sing when you are tired. You can't continue your pilgrimage when your feet are worn out.

The roots of a tree are underneath the ground and its branches are above, but Krishna describes the world as being an inverted tree, with its roots in the air and the branches spreading downwards. Those who go towards the root find peace and liberation while those who get caught in the branches of lust-anger-avarice-attachment get nothing but trouble and reincarnation.

The world has two elements. One is the unreal, changeable, insentient *apara prakriti* (material nature) and the second is real, unchangeable and conscious. Out of millions, very few people

have a desire to know Reality and very very few have any understanding of it. Even those who talk about truth run towards illusory things. Man is born in maya, he grows up in it and his grabbing for it keeps him restless and unsteady. Eventually he dies in it.

All creatures run towards the impermanent and die doing so, but it is like chasing a shadow, which you can never catch.

The body is material and insentient while the spirit is conscious. The world is as changeable or impermanent as a dream. So how can consciousness and bliss be found therein? People waste their lives adorning the body and forget all about the Spirit. They even doubt its existence! Even those who have some desire to know it go about this in external ways. But, just consider this—how can consciousness be known by the non-conscious?

The kind of body a soul receives is due to its previous actions, and it enjoys or suffers accordingly, but in a human body the soul has a chance to break free of all karmic bondage, by taking refuge in the Lord.

The mind will try to distract us from our true path and entangle us in desires, but the mind itself has to be directed towards God. Lord Krishna told Arjuna,

मय्यासक्तमनाः पार्थ योगं युञ्जन्मदाश्रयः ।
असंशयं समग्रं मां यथा ज्ञास्यसि तच्छृणु ॥

“Devoutly practising Yoga without confusion and with your mind attached to Me, you shall know Me fully.” (7:1)

Atmayoga, or the Knowledge of the soul, is the highway to liberation, bringing relief from all sorrows and detachment from the world. The mind can be the cause of liberation or the cause of bondage. When the devotee's mind is fixed in God, worldly misery can't affect him. So, a person should give all his love as well as his mind to God. Then Krishna tells Arjuna, 'For the fortunate person who changes himself through serving a great soul, the door of liberation is open.' However, only by the singular grace of God does one meet a true saint, because the majority of people are swayed

and misled by grandeur, opulence, youth and power and in order to get something for themselves are quite prepared to deceive others. Such persons never once think about saints.

Shri Krishna said, “out of thousands, very few master this yoga and of these barely one knows Me in essence. I am the living Light and Consciousness within all beings, but very few yogis ever realize this, because beings stuck in the illusory infatuation of maya don't know Me as the living Soul of all.”

‘Fire, water, air, earth, ether, mind, intellect and ego is my eightfold ‘material nature’, which enchants everyone and entangles them in all kinds of suffering as well as repeated incarnations. Secondly, my *para* nature or Divine Nature is that which energizes and sustains the entire universe. All beings are created by these two natures of Mine. This entire universe is threaded on Me as beads on a string.”

The string of a necklace is unseen, and likewise the all-knowing, omnipresent, indwelling Spirit is not visible to our ordinary vision, although it is the power by which the eyes see, by which the ears hear, by which the nose perceives good and bad smells and by which the tongue tastes. Within the myriad varieties of bodies in this world is a single Power. The body is like a nest, in which live two birds—God and the soul. The soul, due to ego suffers, while God, being beyond action, is merely the Witness. The soul suffers the results of good and bad actions done previously. When the subtle Divine Power, which is beyond mind, senses and intellect and which energizes and sustains all, leaves a body, that body becomes a corpse. The living, conscious entity is called God, Atma or Shiva. It is all-pervading, like the sky. The sky is not wet by water nor soiled by mud, and similarly, the soul is pure and free of imperfection. Atma Yoga means taking refuge in the Master, knowing the soul and then uniting the mind with it.

Just as all physical actions take place through the agency of breath, so all activity in the universe happens through the universal breath, the energy of God. But people prefer the darkness of ego

and attachment. The highest type of devotee is he who knows the omnipresent form of God and sees the divinity within all beings.

The Lord says,

न मां दुष्कृतितो मूढाः प्रपद्यन्ते नराधमाः ।
माययापहतज्ञाना आसुरं भावमाश्रिताः ॥

“People who don’t know Me as the Imperishable beyond the effects of Sat, Raj and Tam, are deluded by maya and do not find release from the world, because My maya is extremely difficult to transcend. Those devotees who constantly meditate on Me, cross it easily, but dull and devilish people whose wisdom is obscured by maya, do not meditate on Me.”

He then describes four categories of devotees. The first is he who remembers God in distress. The second has some kind of ulterior motive for remembering God, such as winning the lottery, passing exams, or getting a promotion. The third type is the aspirant who wants to know God, and the fourth, the superlative devotee, is the one who knows God and meditates on Him for His sake alone. The Lord says, “Such a *gyani* is My very soul, because he is in Me and I am always in Him.” By serving and associating with such a realized soul, other people can attain salvation. Serving the enlightened is actually serving God.

Lord Krishna then explains that whoever remembers God at the time of death, undoubtedly attains Him, because the future existence of an individual depends upon his last thought as he leaves the body. But he will remember only that which has preoccupied him throughout his life.

Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and Christians all turn rosaries while chanting some name or prayer, but while they are doing it their minds can be elsewhere, and if you spend your time thinking about worldly things that is what will come to mind at the time of death. So to reach the state of being able to transcend worldly thoughts at the time of death, the Lord recommends “At all times remember Me and fight. In this way, with mind and intellect dedicated to Me,

you will undoubtedly attain Me.” No one can say that it is impossible to meditate constantly, because no work is more demanding than waging war, as Arjuna had to do. One who practises the Yoga of meditation and does not allow his mind to wander outside in the world realizes the Supreme Person of God.

“The person who remembers God—Who is omnipresent, inconceivable, the basis of all, the all-controlling, far beyond darkness and ignorance, more brilliant than the sun and more subtle than subtle—and who, calm at the time of death through devotion and the power of yoga, stills his breath between the eyebrows, attains God.”

Lord Krishna then talks about the Divine Word, which he says, (8:13) is ‘beyond Aum’, describing it as “the supreme, the aim of all Knowledge, which knowers of the Vedas call indestructible and which Yogis enter into after much trial and to know which they maintain strict brahmacharya.”

The word ‘Aum’, which many believe is the Holy Word, has a beginning and an end. It is composed of two vowels and a consonant and means the all-pervading, all-controlling and all-sustaining essence of everything. So that Power has to be known, which sustains even the tiniest creatures. A-U-M represents the three states of awareness—waking, dreaming and deep sleep. These three mental states can be experienced by non-human as well as human beings. When we are in the state of deep sleep, we forget everything which happened in the waking state. Upon awakening, our old memories reassert themselves and we say, “I am so-and-so from such-and-such country.” But what is the Reality beyond time-space-caste, etc. which exists throughout the past, present and future?

Aum, Ram-Ram, Allah, God are products of certain cultures. Just by saying ‘Aum’ the mind is not concentrated nor is the all-permeating Reality known.

“He who, closing the doors of the senses, stilling his breath between the eyebrows and meditating only on God’s eternal form,

leaves his body, achieves the highest state and does not have to return to the world."

"To the yogi whose consciousness does not wander and who constantly meditates on Me, I am easily attainable. Those mahatmas, having achieved the Yoga which bestows the highest powers, do not have to be reborn in this world of suffering." On the other hand, a person who still retains desires has to return to this mortal world, even from the highest heavens.

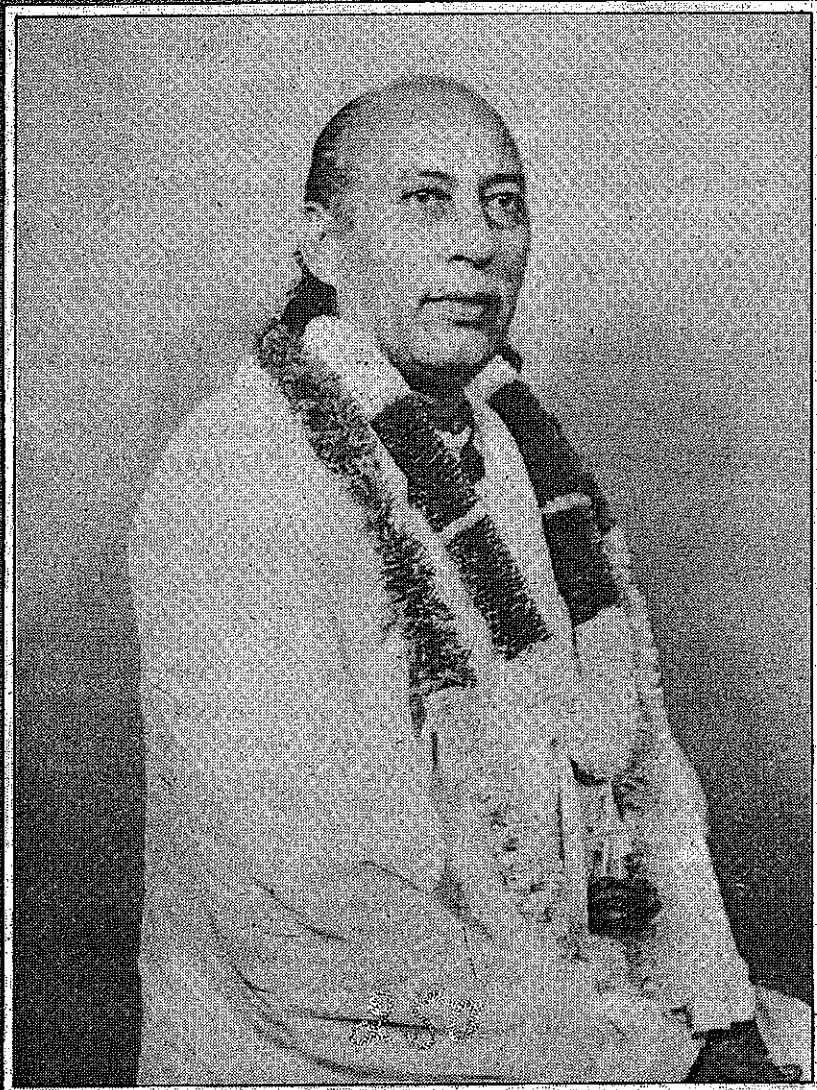
Satyuga, Treta, Dwapar and Kali comprise one cycle. One thousand such cycles equals a single day of Brahma and another, one night of Brahma. When a hundred years of such days and nights have passed, Brahma also becomes inactive. In other words, the Creator from whom you, I and all creatures have sprung, must also meet his end sometime. Understanding this, a sensible person doesn't crave anything of this world nor rejoices at the destruction of anything. This visible creation arises from the subtle body of Brahma at the dawning of his 'day' and at 'night' again enters into it. But that which remains even after Brahma has become dormant is called the indestructible Word of God. It is beyond the three powers of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva and is not destroyed even at the time of universal dissolution. Realizing this eternal, imperishable God is the only way to liberation, from which the soul does not return. This state is described by the Lord as His supreme abode, where sun, moon and fire do not shine, but which is illuminated by the self-effulgent Divine Light, the same Light which energizes every creature.

There are two paths along which the soul may travel after it leaves the body, depending on whether it has to return to the world or not. The first is the 'bright path', shining like the sun or the moon in the bright phase. In other words, the Light of God. If a yogi leaves his body merged in this Light he attains God. The second is the dark path, smoky and like the dark fortnight of the lunar month. The soul which travels this path—which means that it is not meditating on God—has to be reborn in the mortal world,

even though in the meantime, due to accumulated merit, it enjoys a spell in the heaven worlds.

These two paths, the bright and the dark, or that of Knowledge and that of ignorance, are eternal. The yogi who understands this does not fall into the snares of the world, but remains all the time contented and absorbed in meditation. So Lord Krishna advised Arjuna, "At all times and on all occasions be in Yoga in order to attain Me."

The spiritual merit gained from realizing the mysteries of Atma Yoga surpasses those of mastering the Vedas, performing rites and rituals and giving alms, because the pleasures gained from these will come to an end sooner or later. So the wise yogi aspires, through meditation, to realize only God, and shuns both the vain hopes of this world as well as those actions which ensure heavenly pleasures. And in the end he does indeed attain the Almighty God. □



Chapter Nine

Ramacharitamanasa and the Greatness of 'Ram Nam'

Shri Maharaj Ji revered the Ramacharitamanasa as an incomparable scripture. It is also known as 'Tulsidas Ramayana' and is full of the glory of the Holy Name, which it refers to as *Nam* or *Ram Nam*.

Once during satsang, Shri Maharaj Ji described the greatness of the Ramayana:

"I was talking to an American devotee called Mr Stoke. In the course of our conversation he said, 'Maharaj Ji, being a Christian, I have studied Christian theology extensively. My uncle was a Buddhist monk so I have also read all the Buddhist texts. I have also read the Koran, Vedas and Upanishads. I have also studied the Gita and other Hindu scriptures, but I have never found any scripture to compare with Tulsidas' Ramayana.'

'I answered, 'But most Indians regard the Gita as the highest scripture, and it has been translated into many languages.' He said, 'The Gita, Vedas and the rest are all included in this single couplet from the Ramayana:

श्रुति सिद्धांत यहि उरगारी । राम भजो सब काम बिसारी ॥
बेद पुरान संत मत एह । सकल सुकृत फल नाम सनेह ॥

'The Vedas, Puranas and all saints agree that one should abandon all desires and meditate on the Holy Name.'

'The Ramayana deals with every possible aspect of human life, from the prenatal stage to after death. Rama displayed ideal behaviour in all stages of his life.

'King Dasaratha one day realized that he was growing old yet still had no heir. He expressed his fear to his Guru, Vasishta, saying that if a king dies without a royal successor, anarchy and injustice can break out in his kingdom, and he has to bear the karmic burden of that. So he asked Vasishta for a solution. The Guru arranged a special *yagya* so that the king would be granted a son. In due course, four sons were born. The Ramayana teaches how parental love should be, what filial duty and obedience is, how a guru should be, how a friend should be, how a king should be and how a younger brother should serve the elder. Nowadays, brothers are at each other's throats over the most trivial matters, but Bharat rejected the kingdom offered to him and went barefoot into the jungle to bring back his elder brother, the rightful heir. The Ramayana describes what devotion is, what true Knowledge is, what God is, what satsang is, what *Ram Nam* really is and what being devoted to the Holy Name entails.

'The Ramayana deals with all those things. It is recited and read in homes throughout India. Millions of rupees are spent annually in producing plays and exhibitions depicting the exploits of Lord Rama. Still, people don't understand its secret meaning, because for such insight, a Guru is necessary.

'At the very least, anyone who reads the Ramayana concedes that Rama was the ideal man, and that is why he was given the title *Maryada Purushottam*. 'Purushottam' means the highest, or ideal man, and 'maryada' means the strict code of spiritual and moral ethics which a spiritual man must follow. Lord Rama himself never departed from this code of virtue and righteousness and was the embodiment of it. If everyone would follow this spiritual code then we would be living in *Ram Rajya*, the ideal state, and everyone would be happy, even the birds and animals, as they were during Rama's reign."

Pandit Jamuna Prashad of Bombay used to arrange *Ram Lilas* dramatizing Lord Rama's life. Shri Maharaj Ji was impressed by his productions. Jamuna Prashad invited him to see his play and to

deliver a series of discourses in conjunction with it. This resulted in many days of satsang. Shri Maharaj Ji said,

"I bless Pandit Jamuna Prashad and similar men of wisdom and devotion, whose efforts have popularized the story of Lord Rama. One day this *Ram Lila* will take place in everyone's heart. It is not just another play or spectacular. If you would really understand the Ramayana, your human life would be a success. Scholars and intellectuals read the Ramayana, but how can children and the uneducated understand it? Only by seeing such dramatizations. Then they can learn what Lord Rama did, how he unselfishly obeyed his father, and how he and his brothers treated each other. They can see what a wonderful devotee Hanuman was, and the great faith which enabled him to uproot an entire mountain to bring a certain herb for his Master.

'We should give some thought as to why Rama's deeds are celebrated. The earth has seen several Divine Incarnations, as well as many great prophets and saints, so why are Rama's deeds in particular so eulogized? Because from his life and actions we can learn how to live properly and cheerfully. Today's politicians and religious leaders don't understand this. You have seen how politely and considerately Rama dealt with everyone. Even we could get to talk to him. He hasn't gone anywhere. You wouldn't believe it if I told you of my own recent experiences and what the Lord has done for me. I'm not joking. That is why I say that he can definitely appear.

'You won't find another work like Tulsidas' Ramayana. When common folk and children see Ram Lilas they can understand why Rama, the Supreme Person, bowed to the sages and hermits, and how he treated each and every person with consideration and respect. They see this and it leaves an impression on them. So see how important these productions are! Scriptures teach us three main things—don't steal, don't lie and don't commit adultery. If everyone would practise this, what a wonderful world it would be! If we would truly be inspired by Lord Rama's life, then all the fighting and discord would come to an end.

'So much money is spent on presenting these plays, but it's going up in smoke! People sit patiently in the sun for hours waiting to see the show, but they are deaf to Lord Rama's teachings. They see a little singing and dancing, they eat some refreshments and go home, thinking that they are great devotees. But do you ever think about what is actually being taught in the Ramayana? Lord Rama said,

बड़े भाग मानुष तनु पावा, सुर दुर्लभ सद्ग्रंथहि गावा ।
सधन धाम मोच्छकर द्वारा, पाइ न जेहि परलोक सँवारा ।।

'A soul is extremely lucky to receive a human existence, which is difficult even for the gods to get and which is praised by all the scriptures. It is just right for spiritual endeavours and is the gateway to liberation.'

Only by the great mercy and grace of God does a soul receive a human body. Only in this existence can it find the way to perfect peace and joy. A person who, even after getting this rare opportunity, wastes his life in sense-pleasures and idle pastimes is described in the Ramayana as an ungrateful wretch, a sinner and a spiritual suicide case.

'How did Lord Rama, who was wandering alone in the forest, manage to defeat the mighty king Ravanna, who had a great army, fabulous wealth and a city of gold? Nowadays the corrupt and dishonest are called politicians, but Lord Rama, strictly adhering to truth and righteousness, managed to defeat such a powerful king. How? Rama first warned Ravanna, 'Give me back my wife. I don't want to fight with you. But if you refuse, your family will be wiped out to the last man.'

'The description of Rama's 'victory chariot' gives an insight into Rama's nature. He and Ravanna were on the battlefield ready to fight. On the one hand was Ravanna, riding in a splendid chariot with an army of cavalry, infantry, chariots and elephants. Opposing him was Rama, without a chariot and with a ragtag army of humble devotees. Vibhishan (Ravanna's brother who was

Rama's devotee) noticed this and out of loving concern asked his Lord how he could possibly defeat Ravanna?

रावनु रथ विरथ रघुवीरा । देखि बिभीषण भयउ अधीरा ।।
अधिक प्रीति मन भा संदेहा । बंदि चरन कह सहित सनेहा ।।
नाथ न रथ नहि तन पद त्राना । केहि बिधि जितब वीर बलवाना ।।
सुनहु सखा कह कृपानिधाना । जेहि जय होइ सो स्यन्दन आना ।।
सौरज धीरज तेहि रथ चाक्र । सत्य सील दृढ़ ध्वजा पताक्र ।।
बल बिबेक दम परहित घोरे । उमा कृपा समता रजु जोरे ।।
ईस भजन सारथी सुजाना । बिरति चर्म संतोष कृपाना ।।
दान परसु बुधि सक्ति प्रचंड । बर बिग्यान कठिन कोदंड ।।
अमल अचल मन त्रोन समाना । सम जम नियम सिलीमुख नाना ।।
कवच अभेद विप्र गुरु पूजा । एहि सम बिजय उपाय न दूजा ।।
सखा धर्ममय अस रथ जाके । जीतन कहूँ न कतहुँ रिपु ताके ।।
महा अजय संसार रिपु जीति सकइ सो वीर ।
जाके अस रथ होइ दृढ़ सुनहु सखा मतिधीर ।।

Vibhishan was disconcerted when he saw Ravanna mounted on a chariot and Lord Rama without one. So much love for the Lord flooded his heart that he felt afraid for his safety and, bowing to his feet he spoke tenderly, 'My Lord, you have neither a chariot nor even shoes to protect your feet, nor armour. How then, can you expect to conquer this mighty hero?' Then the all-merciful Lord replied, 'Listen, my friend, the chariot which leads to victory is unique. Diligence and fortitude are its wheels, truth is its enduring banner and right conduct is its standard.'

'Meditation on God is the expert driver, non-attachment the shield and contentment the sword. Charity and good works is the sharp axe, determined intellect is the fierce lance and highest wisdom is the sturdy bow.'

'A pure and focussed mind is the quiver whose arrows are control of senses, tranquillity and steady endeavour according to spiritual laws. If someone doesn't have such a chariot he can't win.'

"There is no other equipment which can lead to victory. My friend, he who possesses this chariot of spirituality will not have an enemy in the world to conquer. Anyone who possesses such a strong chariot can even conquer that terrible, invincible foe, the world (in which the individual soul has been wandering since time immemorial.)"

"The Lord owns this chariot, and this is what he used to wipe out Ravanna's entire line, and, incidentally, spread his own fame far and wide."

When Shri Maharaj Ji talked about Bharata's self-sacrifice, renunciation and love, his eyes would fill with tears. Such a remarkable character is rarely found, even in scriptures. Rama had left in exile. Bharata, his younger brother, went to bring him back. Rama noticed the approaching crowd and asked Lakshman, "What is all that noise? What is causing that cloud of dust?" Lakshman saw that Bharata was approaching and told Lord Rama, "Bharata is very devious. He plans to kill you and thus be assured of an unopposed reign." But Rama had full faith in Bharata, and said, "Is that what you think of Bharata? If you covet the throne, I'll take it from him and give it to you."

Bharata arrived and said, "Come home and I'll go into exile in your place." But Rama explained, "If I let you do that, we'll both be disobeying our father, because he ordered you to rule and me to live in exile for fourteen years. Moreover, an elder brother is like a father, so I order you to rule in my stead for fourteen years." Bharata answered, "I can't go against your orders," and, taking Rama's wooden sandals, placed them on the throne and ruled, in the capacity of a caretaker, for 14 years.

Hanuman was a devotee who served Lord Rama well, but even he fell victim to pride, regarding himself as a great devotee. So Rama sent him ahead to Ayodhya to find out Bharata's condition, because

नहीं कोउ अस जनमा जग माहीं । प्रभुता पाइ जाहि मद नाहीं ।।

"There has never been yet a person born in this world who did not succumb to pride after being in a position of authority."

Hanuman left for Ayodhya. He saw Bharata sitting and meditating on Rama, saying, "If Rama doesn't arrive this very day, how will I survive? How lucky Lakshman is. Lord Rama took him along, but, knowing my deceitful nature, left me behind. If the Lord doesn't come today, I will leave this world." Hanuman observed that Bharata was drowning in an ocean of misery due to separation from Rama. Seeing such love and devotion cured Hanuman of his vanity. He thought to himself, "He is so devoted that he is pining for Rama like a fish out of water."

Said Shri Maharaj Ji: "Academics are doing research on the Ramayana. Sushil Muni wants to open a research institute on non-violence. Our leaders all talk about character-building, yet day by day fraud, corruption and dishonesty are on the increase. If the things they talk about were possible just through talk, then there's be no need of meditation, satsang and service. Sita herself lived in the sages' ashrams. She shared her husband's joys and sorrows. But women today don't model themselves on her. They relate only to superficial glamour and this is the impression which the children absorb. But is this our heritage? Didn't our scriptures teach satsang, service and meditation? So why don't the leading figures in our society do this? People model themselves on their superiors. Ram Lila dramas are produced so that the children will follow the example set forth and mould their lives accordingly. Did those academics and scholars who are researching the ancient scriptures ever try to find out the nature of the magic circle which Lakshman drew around Sita and which Ravanna couldn't penetrate? If they could discover that, then we could encircle our country with it and no enemy could bother us, nor would we have to spend as much as we do on arms and military forces. This money could be used to eradicate poverty instead. But our motives have changed and we'll experience the consequences accordingly."

Once during satsang, Shri Maharaj Ji said, "Our leaders don't come to me to ask about the mysteries of the Ramayana, but invite

foreign engineers here to do research. Yet the Ramayana holds so many research-worthy things. For example, how did the *yagya* work, which resulted in a son being born? What was its secret? What is the science by which the body stays strong and healthy without food and the intellect increases in sharpness? The Ramayana talks about a line which enemies cannot penetrate. There is a way to make stones float. There are weapons which kill the target enemy then return to the sender. There is a knowledge which turns bandits into enlightened sages. Why isn't research done into all this?

'As well as being the biography of Lord Rama, the Ramayana contains a host of profound spiritual mysteries which are expressed in a most simple and delightful manner. The Ramayana is read in every home. There are pundits who have mastered it to such an extent that they can discuss a single verse for days. Yet even so they don't know the secrets of the Name. Indeed, how could they know? They don't come to satsang nor do they take the shelter of the Master. When Guru Vasishta asked Lord Rama, 'How are you?' Rama answered, 'By your blessings I am very well.'

'It can be any scripture. We read them but we don't understand what we read. The scriptures themselves won't ask us if we have understood or not, or what we have understood. You need a living Master to explain the scriptures to you. You want a living son and a living wife, but to get the highest wisdom you think that you don't need a living Teacher. You want to attain the highest spiritual states by reading scriptures or believing in a past Master. That's where you are wrong. I invite anyone to explain the meaning of this line from the Ramayana:

ईश्वर अंश जीव अविनाशी ।

'The soul, being a part of God, is imperishable.'

In what way is the soul a part of God? You think you are learned in the Ramayana. You call yourselves devotees. But you

don't pay any attention to what Lord Rama is actually saying. This evening a Ramayana scholar visited me. I asked him what the Name is. Quick as a flash, he answered, 'Ram'. Then I quoted a couple of verses and he responded, 'I don't understand.' How could he understand, when it is written,

बिनु सतसंग बिबेक न होई । राम कृपा बिनु सुलभ न सोई ।।

'Without satsang spiritual wisdom is impossible and without the Lord's grace a person doesn't get to hear satsang.'

Instead of knowing what 'Ram Nam' is, they chant, 'Ram, Ram.' Suppose I ask someone, 'What is that doctor's name?' and he answers, 'Doctor.' I will object, 'But I've been calling him by that name. I want to know his real name.' It's like that. I ask, 'What is the Name of Rama?' and people say, 'Ram.' But I've also been using that name. I want to know his real name. The name of the physical person who took birth as Dasaratha's son was Rama, but what is his real Name? What is the Name which is eternal and dwells in every being? Tulsidas wrote many couplets and verses glorifying the Name, so that readers would correctly understand its secret. In some places it is called *Ram Nam*, in others, *Mahamantra*, *Uta Nam*, or *Pavan Nam*. People think that 'Ram' is God's Name. Did Tulsidas so misjudge people that he didn't clearly write that the Holy Name is 'Ram' so meditate on that? Rama lived in Treta Age and only from that time did people start using the name 'Rama'. Krishna lived later, in Dwapar, and only since then have people used 'Krishna', also an adjectival name, as the Name of God. Only since then have people worshipped statues of them. But they don't consider that in Satyuga, before Rama and Krishna, people must have remembered a Holy Name. Which Name did Dhruva and Prahlad, who lived long before Rama, remember? The Ramayana says,

चहूँ जुग चहूँ श्रुति नाम प्रभाउ ।
कलि विसेषि नहि आन उपाऊ ।।

'The Name's influence permeates the four Vedas and the four Ages, particularly Kali Age in which there is no other means of salvation.'

If the Name pervades the four Ages, do you think that it changes from Age to Age? We say that God is eternal and undifferentiated. So how can His Name change from time to time? But we don't know how to reason properly and practise whatever form of devotion takes our fancy.

I've seen editions of the Ramayana whose commentaries and explanations of the esoteric verses dealing with the Name are completely wrong. Their meanings have become meaningless and so people are confused and misled. For example, one verse says,

उल्टा नाम जया जग जाना । बालमीक भए ब्रह्म समाना ॥

'Valmiki remembered the 'reverse Name' (*Ulta Nam*) and became one with God.'

The commentary states that Valmiki chanted *Mara Mara*. The verse says, 'reverse Name', so how can the commentator assume that this is 'Mara Mara'? The word 'Rama' does not even appear in this verse, but the commentator puts 'Rama' in place of 'Name'. If this is not blindness, then what is? If he understands 'Ram Nam' to be 'Ram', then why doesn't he think that *Hari Nam* is *Hari*? Why doesn't he call the Mahamantra 'Hari'? But who's going to question him? It is also written in the Ramayana that a human body is bestowed only rarely and even the gods long for it, yet you people worship gods and goddesses and get others to do likewise. You are heading for hell and taking others with you. It's all ignorance.

'My humble supplication to all of you who love the Ramayana is, that if you can prove to me, by quoting actual verses from the Ramayana, that Ram Nam is 'Ram' then I'll show you the sun in the palm of my hand! However, Tulsidas glorifies the Name. He does his best to simplify its mysteries and he proves that it is eternal, holy and the indweller of all. He even goes so far as to say

that it is greater than God and His incarnation, Rama. Why does he praise it so much? He could simply have said, 'Meditate on 'Ram Ram'', but instead he writes,

कहाँ कहाँ लागि नाम बड़ाई । राम न सकाहि नाम गुन गाई ॥

'I have no words to describe the glory of the Name. Even Rama himself couldn't praise it adequately.'

So Rama himself couldn't praise this Name enough, which leads to salvation.

राम एक तापस तिय तारी । नाम कोटि खल कुमति सुधारी ॥

'Lord Rama only redeemed Ahilya, the sage's wife, whereas the Name has redeemed millions.'

There is a snake which is supposed to possess a luminous gem, but it uses its glow only to catch insects. Similarly, the jewel of Ram Nam is in every heart, but people use its light merely to indulge in the senses. Although the Name which is capable of bestowing the highest joy is within every heart, all creatures suffer misery."

Glorifying the Name, Shri Maharaj Ji used to pose this question: "Who is the greatest?" He would give the example from the Ramayana of Ravanna, who considered himself more powerful than anyone, yet Bali held him in an arm-lock for six months. So Bali was greater than Ravanna. Yet even greater than Bali was Lord Rama's arrow, which killed him. Even the arrow was not the greatest. Greater was Lord Rama, who shot the arrow. Even greater than Lord Rama is his Name. He had to go wherever devotees were remembering the Name. But it's not the Name, but the devotee who remembers it, who is greatest of all.

राम भालु कपि कटक बडोरा । सेतु हेतु भ्रम किन्ह न थोरा ॥

नाम लेत भव सिंधु सुखाहे । करहु बिचार सजन मन माहीं ॥

'Lord Rama collected an army of bears and monkeys to help him build a bridge to Lanka, and they completed it after a lot of

effort, whereas by remembering the Name, the ocean of misery simply dries up.'

That is why Tulsidas advises us to determine carefully what this Name is, which is even greater than Rama.

ब्रह्म राम ते नाम बड़ बरदायक बरवानि ।
रामचरित शत कोटि महँ, लिए महेश जिय जानि ॥

'The Name is greater than both the Unconditioned form of God and the Conditioned form of Rama. It bestows boons on the bestowers of boons. Lord Shiva, understanding the essence of the scriptures, remembers this Name within himself.'

नाम प्रसाद शंभु अविनाशी । साज अमंगल मंगल राशी ॥
शुक सनकादि सिद्ध मुनि योगी । नाम प्रसाद ब्रह्मसुख भोगी ॥

'By the grace of the Name, the eternal Lord Shiva is the storehouse of blessings, even though he looks inauspicious. Yogis and sages like Sukhdev and Sankadi enjoyed divine rapture through the grace of this Name alone.'

निर्गुण ते इहि भांति बड़, नाम प्रभाव अपार ।
कहउ नाम बड़ रामतें, निज विचार अनुसार ॥

'The glory of the Name is infinitely greater than that of the Absolute Unmanifest God and even greater than the manifested Divinity' (Rama). Elsewhere he says that both the Divine Forms—the undifferentiated Absolute and the manifested form with attributes—are inexpressible, unfathomable, eternal and incomparable. In his opinion, however, even greater is the Name because it is the foundation of both. He says, 'This work of mine which I wrote for the joy of my own spirit, contains one merit—it praises the Name of Rama on which Lord Shiva and Parvati ever meditate.'

बंदउँ नाम राम रघुबर को । हेतु कृसानु भानु हिमकर को ॥
विधि हरि हरमय बेदपुरान सो । अगुन अनूपम गुन निधान सो ॥

'Obeisance to the Name of Rama which is the source of sun, fire and moon. It is the Creator, Preserver and Destroyer themselves and the vital breath of the Vedas. It is beyond attributes, peerless and a mine of all virtues.'

Describing the significance of the two energies of the Name, he says:

आखर मधुर मनोहर दोऊ । बरन विलोचन जन जिय जोऊ ॥
सुभिरत सुलभ सुखद सब काहू । लोक लाहु परलोक निबाहू ॥
कहत सुनत सुभिरत सुठि नीके । राम लखन सम प्रिय तुलसी के ॥
बरनत बरन प्रीति बिलगाती । ब्रह्म जीव सम सहज सँधाती ॥
नर नारायन सरिस सुभाता । जग पालक विसेषि जन त्राता ॥
भगति सुतिय कल करन बिभूषण । जग हित हेतु बिमल बिधु पूषण ॥
स्वाद तोष सम सुगति सुधा के । कमठ सेष सम धर बसुधा के ॥
जन मन मंजु कंज मधुकर से । जीह जसोमति हरि हलधर से ॥

'Both the letter-sounds are extremely sweet and attractive, and control the devotee's mind. They are like the eyes of the alphabet', i.e. all consonants and vowels are uttered with the help of these two sounds. 'They dwell forever in the heart of a devotee' and 'they are easy to remember'. The initiation given by a true saint is one and the same for all races and classes of people. Muslims and Christians wouldn't easily take to chanting 'Ram Ram'. So how can anyone say that chanting 'Ram Ram' is easy for everyone? The Lord Who was Rama is in everyone's heart, so His Name must be too. Tulsidas says that these two sounds are as dear to him as Rama and Lakshman. 'If these sounds are uttered vocally, they become separate, whereas they have a natural affinity as intimate as that of the soul and God. They sustain the universe and bestow liberation on the devotee who remembers them.'

'They enhance devotion in the same way as earrings make a beautiful woman even more lovely. They are the mainstay and support of the world. They are as beneficial as the sun and the moon to the world.' The moon induces sap production in plants and the sun matures it. 'They are like the satisfaction in taste and like nectar in giving rewards.' St. Kabir, in one of his many hymns praising the Name, said,

'Ascending, descending, circulating with the breath.
A worldly man doesn't understand this mystery
And passes his life in vain.'

The Ramayana says,

समृद्धत सरिस नाम अरु नामी । प्रीति परसपर प्रभु अनुगामी ॥
नाम रूप दुई ईस उपाधी । अकथ अनादि सुसामुद्धि साधी ॥
को बड़ छोट कहत अपराधू । सुनि गुन भेदु समुद्धिहि साधू ॥
देखिअहि रूप नाम आधीना । रूप ग्यान नहि नाम बिहीना ॥
रूप बिसेष नामु बिन जानै । करतल गत न परहि पहिचानै ॥
सुमिरिअ नाम रूप बिनु देखै । आवत हृदय सनेह बिसेषै ॥
नाम रूप गति अकथ कहानी । समृद्धत सुखद न परति बखानी ॥
अगुन सगुन बिच नाम सुसाखी । उभय प्रबोधक चतुर दुभाषी ॥

'Names are not separate from their referents. They are as closely related as Master and devotee. In fact, at the level of spirit they are one. Similarly, Name and Form are the two attributes of God. Actually, the Name and its Referent are one. Both are timeless and eternal and can be rightly understood only by a wise meditator.'

The names which people generally chant and the forms on which they meditate are not eternal, because Lord Rama lived in Treta Age and Lord Krishna in Dwapar. So on what did the devotees in Satyuga meditate?

'It is a major error to judge one superior or inferior to the other. The mystery of Name and Form is realized only by a saint.'

Form is known through the Name. Without knowing the Name, the Named, i.e. God's true Form, cannot be realized. After a statue is finished it is given a name. But even if you don't know what God looks like He will automatically appear to you when you meditate on His Name. So let go of all your confusing concepts and meditate on the Name. 'The mystery of Name and Form is inexpressible,' says Tulsidas, 'but is simple and a source of delight' once it has been clarified by the Satguru.

'Many people believe statues of stone, wood, clay or metal to be the manifest form of God, while others say that we should believe in God as attributeless and formless. However, meditation on the Name resolves both these fallacies. It acts as a translator between the two aspects of God and brings them together in the same way as an interpreter can bring together people who speak different languages.

राम नाम मनिदीप धरु, जीह देहरी द्वार ।
तुलसी भीतर बाहेरहूँ, जौ चाहसि उजिआर ॥

'So install the shining jewel of the Holy Name on the threshold of your heart if you want light both inside and out.'

The Hindi word *mani* is used here. This is a fabled jewel which shines continuously, day and night. The Holy Name, too, shines all the time. Remembering the Name illuminates the inner lamp, which goes out when you stop meditating.

'Upon his return to Ayodhya, Lord Rama addressed his subjects thus :

औरउ एक गुप्त मत, सबहि कहउँ कर जोरि ।
संकर भजन बिना नर भगति न पावइ मोरि ॥

'I will tell you a secret. Without Shiva-meditation a person cannot call himself My devotee. If a person ignores Shiva yet wants to be My devotee, he is simply ignorant and dimwitted.'

Actually, 'Shiva-meditation' means the meditation which Shiva himself practises:

महामंत्र जोइ जपत महेसू। कासी मुक्ति हेतु उपदेसू॥
 नाम प्रभाउ जान सिव नीके। कालकूट फल दीन्ह अमी को॥
 नाम प्रसाद संभु अविनासी। साजु अमंगल मंगल रासी॥

'The Mahamantra is meditated upon by Shiva himself and which he imparts at Kasi to bestow liberation. Shiva knows full well the power of the Name, by which he turned poison into Nectar. By the grace of the Name he is eternal and is a storehouse of blessings.'

'All the names for God which exist in the world have a beginning and an end. None of them is the 'Mahamantra' (Great Mantra) which has no beginning, middle or end.

धुवै सगलानि जपेउ हरिनाऊँ। पायउ अचल अनुपम ठाऊँ॥
 नाम जपत प्रभु कीन्ह प्रसाद। भगत सिरोमनि भये प्रह्लाद॥
 महिमा जासु जान गनराऊ। प्रथम पूजित नाम प्रभाऊ॥
 अपतु अजामिल गजु गनिकाऊ। भए मुकुत हरि नाम प्रभाऊ॥

'Dhruva remembered the Name and attained the highest place in the heavens. It was because Prahlad remembered the Name that the Lord showered His grace upon him and he became the crest-jewel of devotees.'

नाम राम को कलपतरु कलि कल्याण निवासु।
 जो सुमिरत भयो भाँग तें तुलसी तुलसीदासु॥

'The Holy Name of Rama is a wish-fulfilling tree, the source of blessedness in this Dark Age. By meditating on it, Tulsi was transformed into the devotee Tulsidas.'

In his 'Ramacharitamanasa', Tulsidas tried his best to describe thoroughly the meaning, characteristics and nature of the Name. Shri Maharaj Ji said, "Even so, it amazes me how scholars, pundits and academics can still think that Ram Nam is simply 'Ram'. Tulsidas describes the Name as being inexpressible, indescribable and languageless. God's Name is secret and easy to

comprehend but unable to be uttered because it is not something which can be spoken in any language. It is beyond the senses. It can be remembered only by means of the soul. Ram-Nam is the very foundation of creation. It makes the sun shine. It gives light to the moon and is the origin of fire. It is the primordial cause of the entire universe. It is eternal and all the scriptures glorify it. Not only Hindu scriptures, but any scripture which contains the teachings of a divine Master all eulogize a Name or Word which exists uniformly within all beings and pervades every atom of creation. So it is omnipresent. It is not bound by space and time. God and His Name are one. There is no difference between the Name and the Named. The Named is experienced and known only through the Name. The True Name creates and sustains the universe. It is greater than both the manifested and unmanifest

God, because it acts as an interpreter and allows both to be realized. It is within everyone. It is the panacea for all ills. It is the wish-fulfilling tree which grants whatever is desired. It takes care of you in this world and the next. It alone has the power to eradicate the darkness of the Dark Age. That is why, in Tulsidas' opinion,

नहि कलि करम न भगति बिबेकू। राम नाम अवलंबन एकू॥

'In this Age of Kali neither devotion, right action nor wisdom is possible. The Name is the only resort.'

Such a Name is revealed only by the Satguru. This is his Word, which dispels ignorance as sunlight gets rid of darkness and fills the heart with the Light of Truth, Consciousness and Bliss.

बंदउँ गुरु पद कंज कृपा सिंधु नरूप हरि।
 महामोह तम पुंज जासु बचन रवि कर निकर॥

'I bow to the holy feet of my Guru who is the ocean of mercy and God in human form. His word dispels ignorance as sunlight dispels darkness.'

Shri Maharaj Ji used to say, "Hindus believe in Ramayana and Gita but what they call devotion is not mentioned as such in either of these scriptures. They worship idols, go to temples and offer water, count rosary beads, recite scriptures, go on pilgrimage and bathe in holy rivers. I'm not saying that you shouldn't do these things, but, after all, human beings have the power of reason, so we should use it to determine whether all these things which we do are actually purifying our minds or whether we are just closing our eyes and following blindly. The embodied soul is surrounded by a film of impurity. Can we get rid of it by external means? What's the use of doing these things if neither your mind is stilled nor you are enlightened? Describing devotion, St. Tulsidas says,

राम भगति चित्तमनि सुंदर । बसइ गरुड़ जाके उर अंतर ॥
राम भगति मनि उर बस जाके । दुख लवलेस न सपनेहुं ताके ॥

'Devotion to Lord Rama is a beautiful and shining crown jewel. Through devotion the inner Self shines with Light Divine and the darkness of ignorance is destroyed. A person in whose heart the jewel of devotion shines is never unhappy, even in a dream.'

The word *mani* is used again here for three reasons. Firstly, it is said that the possessor of the mani jewel never becomes poor. Secondly this jewel shines continually day and night. Similarly the person whose heart is a shrine of devotion will never suffer poverty. Thirdly, poison can't have any effect on the possessor of this jewel. The Light of Knowledge shines like this jewel and the person who experiences it cannot be affected by the poison of maya.

'Tulsidas described in detail the noble character of Shri Rama. The Lord visited the ashrams of the great sages and also visited Matang Rishi's hermitage, where Bhilni lived and served. Matang Rishi had promised her that Lord Rama himself would visit her. When he finally did come, she remembered her Guru's prophecy. As she gazed on the beautiful person of the Lord, she

was out of her mind with love and joy. She could not utter a word. She offered him delicious roots, bulbs and fruit, which he ate cheerfully. Waves of love surged through her heart. She said, "How can I ever glorify you? I am lowborn and dullwitted, too." The Lord replied, "Shabri, I recognize only the relationship of devotion." He went on to explain to her.

जाति पाति कुल धर्म बड़ाई । धन बल परिजन गुन चतुराई ॥
भगति हीन नर सोहइ कैसा । बिनु जल बारिद देखिय जैसा ॥

'Irrespective of caste, kinship, lineage, piety, reputation, wealth, strength, accomplishments and abilities, a man lacking in devotion is worth no more than a cloud without rain.'

Then the Lord describes the nine steps of devotion

प्रथम भगति संतन्ह कर संग । दूसरि रति मम कथा प्रसंग ॥
गुरु पद पंकज सेवा तीसरि भगति अमान ।
चौथि भगति मम गुन गुन करइ कपट तजि गान ॥
मंत्र जाप मम दृढ़ बिस्वासा । पंचम भजन सो बेद प्रकासा ॥
छठवम सील बिरति बहु करमा । निरत निरंतर सज्जन धरमा ॥
सातवैं सम मोहि मय जग देखा । मोतैं संत अधिक करि लेखा ॥
आठवैं जथालाभ संतोषा । सपनेहुं नहि देखइ परदोषा ॥
नवम सरल सब सन छलहीना । मम भरोस हियैं हरष न दीना ॥
नव महैं एकउ जिन्ह कैं होई । नाहि पुरुष सचराचर कोई ॥
सोइ अतिसय प्रिय भामिनि मोरैं । सकल प्रकार भगति दृढ़ तोरैं ॥

'The first step is the company of saints, the second is a fondness for hearing about Me. Humble service to the feet of the Satguru is the third step, while the fourth is singing My praises with a sincere and guileless heart. The fifth step is remembering the Name with unwavering faith. The sixth is control of the mind and senses and, with contentment and evenmindedness, desisting from the various temptations of the world. The seventh is seeing the world to be nothing but Me and regarding the saints as even greater than Me. The eighth is regarding profit and loss with equal

detachment, being contented with whatever you get, and not even dreaming of seeing another's faults. The ninth is being straightforward and honest in all one's dealings and relying on the Lord alone. Whoever has even one of these virtues is extremely dear to me, but, Bhilni, you are blessed with all nine.'

'Our leaders regard casteism and parochialism as a curse, and quite rightly so. God's laws apply equally to everyone, but due to wrong ideas of caste and religion, feelings of separation and discrimination keep on growing and make people into mutual enemies. Conferences are held to discuss caste eradication, but will they be able to solve the problem, even though we all believe in one human race and the brotherhood of man? Learn a lesson from the life of Shri Rama! He went to Shabri's hut rather than all the high sages', ate the simple food she offered and showed her the greatest love and respect. The land which produced a scripture of the magnitude of the Ramayana is miserable! If people understood the message of the Ramayana and acted accordingly, not only this country but the whole world would enjoy the utmost happiness.' □

Chapter Ten

Scriptural References to 'Hans'

In Hindi, *Hans* refers to the life-principle, the Supreme Energy which creates and energizes everything in existence. It is perfect beingness, perfect consciousness, and perfect bliss. It resides within every creature as soul. 'Hans' has the secondary meaning of 'swan', and in Indian spiritual literature the soul is often depicted as a swan, which flies away from its physical cage at death.

All scriptures glorify 'Hans'. It is the ultimate mystery, the secret of secrets. Someone to whom the mysteries of Hans are unveiled achieves the bliss of liberation. Hans is the secret phenomenon in which the entire universe is contained.

प्राणिनां देहमध्ये तु स्थितो हंसः सवाच्यतः ।
हंस एव परं सत्यं हंस एव तु सत्येकम् ॥

Hans is the ultimate Truth, the imperishable, permanent entity which dwells within every being. Hans is Energy itself.

एको हंसो भूवनस्यास्य मध्ये स एवाग्निः सलिले सन्निविष्टः ।
तमेव विदित्वाऽतिमृत्युमेति नान्यः पन्था विद्यतेऽयनाय ॥

"The one Hans pervades the terrestrial sphere in the same way as fire is present within water. Realizing it, the devotee conquers death." (Sveta. Upanishad)

In 'Hans Upanishad' it is written:

सर्वेषु देहेषु व्याप्तं वतंते यथा अग्निः काष्ठेषु तिलेषु तेलमिव ।
तं विदित्वा न मृत्युमेति ॥

"The spirit, dwelling within each being as fire is latent in wood and as oil is in sesame seeds, naturally remembers 'Hans-Hans'. He who realizes it transcends death. Hans is the invisible Gayatri; it is Shiva and Shakti. It is the Mahamantra; the bestower of boons to those powers who grant boons to others. Creator, Preserver and Destroyer are at its command. Saints and sages who meditate on it attain the ultimate state."

तस्मान्मनो विलीने मनसि गते संकल्पविकल्पे दग्धे पुण्य पापे सदाशिवः
शक्त्यात्मा सर्वत्रावस्थितः स्वयंज्योतिः शुद्धो बुद्धो नित्यो निरञ्जनः
शान्ततमः प्रकाशयतीति वेदानुवचन भवतीत्युपनिषत् ।

"God is realized through meditation on 'Hans'. Merit/demerit, sin/virtue cease to exist when the mind, with its thoughts, imaginations and doubts, is dissolved in Hans. Then we are illumined by the all-pervading, self-existing Light, the Shiva-Shakti, the pure, eternal, stainless Self. This is what the Vedas say."

"Hans is the God of gods, the Supreme and Almighty. It creates Brahma the Creator, sustains Vishnu the Sustainer, and destroys Shiva the Destroyer. It is the Swan which lives in the Manasrovar Lake of Shiva's heart. How could it ever be described? Even the Vedas say of it, 'No end, No end.'"

"Devotion to Hans is the quickest way to Self-realization. The life-breath is realized to be Hans itself. Countless sparks are contained in a fire's blaze and are dispersed in all directions. In the same way, the solar, lunar and terrestrial spheres emanate from the minute pores of 'Hans', the universal centre of consciousness, and in time dissolve back into it. This cycle of emanation and dissolution is perpetual. Only the 'Hans' is eternal, unchanging, omnipotent and omniscient. Devotion to it alone brings liberation."

हंस एव परं वाक्यं हंस एव तु वैदिकम् ।
हंस एव परोरुद्धो हंस एव परात्परम् ।।

"Hans itself is the superior and greatest mantra. The purpose of the Vedas is to glorify Hans. This most powerful of all powers is also the most subtle and is imperishable."

हंस हंस वेदे वाक्यं प्राणिमां देह मास्थितः
स प्राणायानमो ग्रन्थि रजये त्यामि धीयते ।।

"The Grand Mantra, 'Hans-Hans', is perpetually intoned (throughout the universe). Hans dwells in the cave of the heart of all creatures. When a meditator discovers the meeting place of the inhaling and exhaling powers of the breath, automatically he finds the 'unchanted chant' of Hans taking place. This is the level, naturally, where one has the vision of Hans."

हंस हंसेति मंत्रोऽयं सर्वे जीवेश्च जप्यते ।
गुरु वाक्यात् सुषुम्णायां विपरीतो भवेज्जपः ।।

In the 7th chapter of Raghav Bhatt's 'Dakshina Murti Samhita', are some very clear references to the Knowledge of Hans—"The secrets of the Hans Mantra":

वषिष्ठश्चासेः भवेत् प्राणः षट् प्राण नाडिका मताः ।
षष्ठि नाड्या अहोरात्र जप संख्या ऋमो मतः ।।
एक विशांति साहस्र षट् शताधिक मीश्वरि ।
जपते प्रत्यहं प्राणी सात्त्वानन्द मयी पराम् ।।
उत्पत्तिश्च जपारम्भो मृत्युस्तस्य निवेदयेत् ।
विना जपेन देवोऽपि जपो भवति मन्त्रिणः ।।
अजपेयं ततः प्रोक्ता भव पाश निकृन्तनी ।
एवं जप महादेवि प्रत्यहं विनिवदेयेत् ।।
कपूर द्युति संराजत् सहस्र दल नीरजे ।
नादात्मके ब्रह्मरन्ध्रे जानीहि परमेश्वरि ।।

"In 24 hours a person breathes 21,600 times, which means that 'Hans-Hans' is remembered 21,600 times daily by the soul. The manifestation of this mantra in a body is called 'birth', and its

becoming latent is called 'death'. This natural, automatic remembrance goes on without our chanting it consciously. It energizes each and every cycle of respiration. The conscious attention given to this 'Hans Mantra', which is intimately connected with the breath, is called *ajapa jap*, or unchanted chant, and by consciously tuning into the natural mantra, all attachment to the world is severed and the highest state attained."

The Kathopanishad says:

हंसः शुचिषद् वसुषद् होता अतिथि दुरोण सद् ।
बृहच्च तद् दिव्य मचिन्त्य रूपं सूक्ष्मात् च तत् सूक्ष्मतरं विशाति ।
दूरात् सुदूरे तदिहान्तिके च पश्यात्सर्वहेव निहितं गुहायाम् ॥

"In the pure heart the divine Hans reveals its holy Light. Hans itself is the sacrificial fire and the oblations offered. It is omnipresent and most subtle of all. It is not realized through speech or mind. The only way is through the Guru's grace. To the fortunate soul on whom rests this grace, the Guru imparts initiation and realization. The humble devotee who serves the Guru sees the Divine Light of Hans within himself."

Yogis and tantriks have described precisely and clearly the step-by-step method of awakening *Kundalini*, piercing the six chakras and realizing the 'Hans' power in the crown chakra or 'thousand-petalled lotus'.

हंसाभ्यां परिवृत कमलैर्दिव्यैर्जगत् कारणं ।
विश्वत्कीर्णं मनेक देह निलं स्वछन्दमानन्दकम् ॥

"Hans is the soul in all creatures, beautiful as a lotus, and for the purpose of redemption assumes various bodies. 'Hans' is the bestower of bliss, imperishable and indivisible. It is truth-consciousness-bliss, the all-perfect, eternal Redeemer."

विश्व व्यापि, देवमूलं नित्यं परं निष्कलं ।
नित्योद्दु सहस्र-पत्र-कमलं लुप्ताक्षरे मण्डपे ॥
नित्या नन्द मयं सुखे कनिलयं नित्यं शिवं स्वप्नम् ।

Describing the nature of the Perfect Guru, this verse says that he pervades all the worlds, is pure, eternal, beyond illusion. He is realized through singleminded devotion, is Knowledge itself, eternally awake, the Dweller in the thousand-petalled lotus, eternal bliss, most excellent, Divine Light itself, self-effulgent and present in every heart. Obeisance over and over again to such a Master.

अथ हैनं गार्ह पत्यो नुशशास, पृथिव्यग्निर नमदित्य इति ।
य एष आदित्ये पुरुषो दृश्यते सो हमास्मि स एवाहम् ॥
स य एतमेव विद्वनुपासते पठते पापकृत्यां लोकी भवति ।
सर्व मारयुरेति ज्योग्जीवति नास्यावर पुरुषाः क्षीयन्ते ।
उपवयंतं भुजामोडस्मिन्नय लोक भुष्मिश्चय एतमेवं विद्वानुपस्ते ॥

Garhpatya, initiating Upkosala, tells him, "Earth, fire, food and the Sun are my abodes. There I dwell, but the sun-like Supreme Person, *Hans Soham*, I am He, indeed. He who realizes and meditates on Him, destroys his sins, reaches old age and lives in glory, the possessor of the world. He does not perish. I protect him in this world and the next." (Chandogya Up.)

स्वप्नेन शरीरमग्निं प्रहत्या सुप्तः सुप्तानभि चाक शीति ।
शुक्रमादाय पुनरति स्यान्म हिरण्यं पुरुष एक हंस ॥
प्राणेन रक्षन्वरं कुलायं बहिष्कुलायादमृत श्चरित्वा ।
स ईयते मृतो यत्र कामं हिरण्यं पुरुष एक हंस ॥

The Brihadaranakya Upanishad says that Hans, the Divine Light, the Supreme Being, in the sleeping state of an individual, dreams, and when the person awakes, experiences the world and gains worldly goals. Due to birth, he gets a place to stay in this world or the next. This self-effulgent, radiant Hans nourishes the nest of the human body through the vital breath and the Lord of the breath, the Nectar. When he leaves the body, he roams free and achieves his immortal form. He goes where he likes, unfettered. This Divine Entity dwells within all.

हंस शुचिषद वसुरन्तक्षि सद्गोता वेदिष तिथि दुरोणसत् ।
नृषद्वरस दृतसद व्योमसद अबजा गोजा अरतजा आद्रिजा अरतं बृहत् ॥
उर्ध्व प्राणमुन्नयत्यपानं प्रत्येगस्यति मध्ये वामनामासीनविश्वदेवा उपसते ॥

"Hans is the Discerner, totally Knowledge-permeated and Knowledge itself. It dwells in all purity and resplendence in the firmament, at the altar, and is the Divine Guest. It dwells in the valiant and in the noble, and is worshipped at the domestic altar. It dwells in the sacrifices, it dwells in space. It manifests in all that is born in water, on earth, on the mountains and of sacrifice. It is the True and the Great.

When this Power enters a body it draws the breath upwards and casts it downwards. All the senses minister to Him, the Adorable, Who is seated in the Manasrovar Lake of the heart." (Katha Upanishad, 5.)

हंसविद्यामृते लोके नास्ति नित्यत्पसाधनम् ।
यो ददाति महाविद्यां हसाख्यां पावनीं पराम् ॥ २६
तस्य दास्य सदा कुर्यात् प्रज्ञयापरया सह ।
शुभ वाऽशुभमन्यद्वा यदुत्तं गुरुणा च ॥ २७
तत्कुर्यादविचारेण शिष्यः संतोषसंयुतः ।
हंसविद्यामिमां लब्ध्वा गुरुशुश्रूषया नरः ॥ २८
आत्मानमात्मना साक्षात्ब्रह्म बुद्ध्वा सुनिश्चलम् ।
देहजात्यादिसंबन्धान्वर्णाश्रमसमन्वितान् ॥ २९
वेदशास्त्राणि चान्यानि पदपांसुमिव त्यजेत् ।
गुरुभक्तिं सदा कुर्याच्छ्रेयसे भूयसे नरः ॥ ३०

"There is no other way than the Knowledge of Hans to realize the Eternal. The person who imparts this supreme science should be served wholeheartedly and with full awareness. The disciple should accept any command which the Guru gives and carry it out cheerfully. Having received Knowledge from the Guru and seen the soul through the soul, let go of caste, dependence on scriptures,

status, etc. without hesitation, and please the Guru. This is the way to liberation."

हंसः शक्ने रथिष्ठनं चराचर मिदं जगत् ।

The entire animate and inanimate creation arose through the power of 'Hans'. This power is 'eternal and primeval. *Hans tatsushushtva tadevanu pravishat*—after creating the universe, Hans resides within it. Sages realized that 'Aum' was not the ultimate—the 'Hans' entity is even more subtle and secret than 'Aum', and this entity is described in the Vedas as *sa rashtha sa paragati*.

When a person practises the Hans-mantra and delves into its secrets, he discovers the juncture of the ascending and descending breaths and there he sees for himself the Divine Light of 'Hans'. At this point remembrance of Hans mantra becomes automatic.

The Upanishadic sages were of the definite opinion that

हंस विद्या मृते लोके नास्ति नित्यत्व साधनम् ।

"The only way to break through the bondage of birth and death to achieve liberation is the Knowledge of God (Hans). It is impossible to reach the indescribable state any other way."

The sage Narad declared that for devotion to Hans no external paraphernalia such as flowers, incense, oblations, etc. are necessary. Hans is seen through devotion of mind. Hans, the dweller in the heart, is beyond even *Turiya*, the superconscious state. The most secret Hans is seen only at the level of *Nirvikalpa*, beyond all thought and imagination.

The Vedas, Upanishads and Puranas as well as other Indian scriptures talk about 'Hans', albeit esoterically, and say that it has been worshipped since time immemorial. It is the Word about which the Bible says, "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God." Its naturalness, profound secrecy, and intimate, unbreakable connection with life is described in many verses. The ancient sages declared, *Hans*

prano rabhedah—'Hans and the life-breath are the same'—thus establishing that life is Hans-permeated.

Hans is described in the Ramayana as the father and mother of all life, and as being greater than both the unconditioned, unmanifest Absolute, which is all-pervading, and the manifest Personal, which incarnates from time to time. How?

अगुन सगुन दोउ ब्रह्म स्वरूपा । अकथ अगाध अनादि अनूपा ।
मोरे मत बड़ नाम दुहंते । किये जेहि युग निज बस निज बूते ।
ब्रह्म रामते नाम बड़, बरदायक बरदान ।
राम चरित सतकोटि मह, लिय महेश जिय जान ॥

God has two aspects—*Nirguna* (absolute and unconditioned) and *Saguna* (manifested with attributes). Both are unfathomable, inexpressible and incomparable, but Tulsidas, author of *Ramacharitamansa* (also known as 'Tulsidas Ramayana'), says, "In my opinion the Holy Name (i.e. Hans) is greater than both, as both are at its command. This is the Name which Lord Shiva chose out of millions of names, to enshrine in his heart. This is the power which enables the bestowers of boons to bestow."

विधि, हरिहर जाके ध्यान धरत हैं मुनिजन सहस अठसी ।
सोई हंस तेरे घट भीतर अलख पुरुष अविनाशी ॥

"That Hans, meditated on by Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva and the 88,000 sages, is within your heart. He is the invisible, the imperishable."

व्यापक एक ब्रह्म अविनाशी । सत चेतन घन आनन्द राशी ॥
अस प्रभु हृदय अछत अविकारी । सकल जीव जग दीन दुखारी ॥
नाम सप्रेम जपत अनयासा । भक्त होहि सुद मंगल बासा ॥
जपहि नाम जन आरति भारी । मिटहि कुसंकट होहि सुखारी ॥

"God is omnipresent, imperishable, the One and only. He is truth, consciousness and bliss. Even though He dwells in every heart, all creatures suffer misery and want. However, the devotee

who meditates on the Name is naturally saturated in bliss. The greatest sorrows are turned into joys."

कलि केवल मल मूल मलीना । पाप पयोनिधि जन मन मीना ॥
नाम कामतरु काल कराला । सुमिरत समन सकल जग जाला ॥
राम नाम कलि अभिमत दाता । हितु परलोक लोक पितु माता ॥

"The devotees of Kali Age are of impure mentality and their minds wallow like fish in an ocean of sin. The wish-fulfilling tree of the Name manifests itself as Hans, the destroyer of delusion. Remembering this Name brings an end to all the fears and perplexities of this world. It is one's father and mother in this world and his benefactor in the next."

नाम राम को कल्प तरु, कलि कल्याण निवास ।
जेहि सुमिरत भये भाग से तुलसी, तुलसीदास ॥

"Hans, the Divine Swan in the Lake of Shiva's heart, and in whom the yogis' minds dwell, manifests, like the wish-fulfilling tree, to save the devotees in Kali Age. By remembering the Name, Tulsi became St. Tulsidas."

सुधा सुरा सम साधु असाधु । जनक एक जग जलधि अगाधु ।
गुण अवगुण जानत सब कोई । जो जेहि भाव नीक तेहि सोई ॥
खलहुं करहि भल पाय सुसंगु । मिटहि न मलिन स्वभाव अभंगु ॥
लखि सुवेश जग बंचक जेऊ । भेष प्रताप पूजियत तेऊ ॥

"True saints and impostors can both be found in this Age. The true and the false resemble nectar and poison. Though born in this world of the same Heavenly Father, they are as different in character as the lotus and the leech, which both spring from water. Although everyone knows what is good and bad, a person pursues only that which appeals to him. A wicked person will do good actions if he associates with good people, but his basic nature won't change. Even impostors, worthless characters totally lacking in spirituality, are venerated on account of their holy robes."

कालनेमि कलि कपट निधानू । नाम सुमिरत समरथ हनुमानू ॥
 उघरहि अंत न होंहि निबाहू । काल नेमि जिमि रावण राहू ॥
 राम नाम नरकेशरी, कनककशिपु कलिकाल ।
 जापकजन प्रह्लाद जिमि, पालहि दलि सुर साल ॥

“These impostors put on saddhu's robes and deceive people. But the Holy Name puts an end to their game. Just as Vishnu manifested as Narsingh to destroy the demon king Hiranyakashipu, so Holy Name manifests itself in a human form to bring an end to the Kali Age itself. The Name protects the devotees who remember it, just as Narsingh protected Hiranyakashipu's son, Prahlad.”

स्वयंभु मनु अरु सत रूपा । जिन्हते भई नर सृष्टिअनूपा ॥
 करहि अहार साक फल कंवा । सुमिरि ब्रह्म सच्चिदानन्दा ॥
 उर अभिलाष निरन्तर होई । देखिय नयन परम प्रभु सोई ॥
 अगुन अखण्ड अनन्त अनादि । जेहि चितवहि परमारथ वादी ॥
 नेति नेति जेहि वेद निरूपा । निजानन्द निरुपाधि अनूपा ॥
 शंभु विरंच विष्णु भगवाना । उपजहि जासु अंस ते नाना ॥
 ऐसहु प्रभु सेवक बस अहरी । भक्त हेतु लीला तनु गहरी ॥
 जो यह वचन सत्य श्रुति भाषा । तो हमार पूजिहि अभिलाषा ॥

“Syambhu Manu and Satrupa performed severe penances to gain a boon from the Lord. Living on fruit and roots, and meditating on the Divine, they ever craved to see with their own eyes Him Who is indivisible, infinite, attributeless, beginningless and endless, on Whom meditate devotees of the ultimate Reality, which is Bliss itself, undifferentiated, and totally incomparable. The Vedas can only describe it as ‘no end, no end’. However, even such a Lord is subject to the love of devotees, and for their sake assumes a human form to play out His drama among them. This is the same Lord, from a particle of Whose being emanate a number of Brahmas, Vishnus and Shivas.”

प्रभु सर्वज्ञ दास निज जानी । गति अनन्य तापस नृप रानी ॥
 मांगु-मांगु बर भइ नभ वाणी । परम गम्भीर कृपामृत सानी ॥
 श्रवण सुधा सम वचन सुनि, पुलक प्रफुल्लित गात ।
 बोले मनु कर दण्डवत्, प्रेम न हृदय समात ॥

“The omniscient Lord, seeing the devotion of the royal couple, said, ‘Ask for whatever you want.’ His voice was full of compassion and as sweet as nectar, and when they heard it they were thrilled with love. They bowed and said,

सुनु सेवक सुर तरु सुरधेनु । विधि, हरि हर बन्धित पद रेनु ॥
 सेवत सुलभ सकल सुखदायक । प्रणतपाल सचराचर नायक ॥
 जो अनाथ हित हम पर नेहु । तो प्रसन्न होइ यह बर देहु ॥
 जो स्वरूप बस शिव मन माहीं । जेहि लागि मुनियतन कराहीं ॥
 जो भुसुन्डी मन मानस हंसा । सगुन अगुन जेहि निगम प्रसंसा ॥
 देखहि हम सो रूप भरि लोचन । कृपा करहु प्रणतारति मोचन ॥
 दम्पति वचन परम प्रिय लागे । मृदुल विनीत प्रेम रस पागे ॥
 भक्त वत्सल प्रभु कृपा निधाना । विश्वबास प्रगटे भगवाना ॥

‘Hear us, O Lord! In granting Your devotees’ desires You are a wish-fulfilling tree and are like a mother to them. The dust from Your feet is adored by the Creator, Preserver and Destroyer. You are easily accessible through service and are the Giver of all blessings. You protect those who take shelter in You and are the Lord of all creation, both inanimate and animate. O friend of the forlorn, if You have any love for us, be pleased to grant us this boon. Let us feast our eyes on that form of Yours which abides in Shiva’s mind and which is sought by sages; which dwells like a swan in the Manasrovar Lake of the sage Bhusundi’s mind and whose manifest and absolute forms are glorified by the Vedas and the saints.’ Then the Lord, full of affection for His devotees, revealed Himself.”

बाम भाग शोभित अनुकूल। आदि शक्ति छवि निधि जगमूला।
जासु अंश उपजहि गुण खानी। अगनित उमा, लक्ष्मि, ब्रह्मानी।

“On His left shone His Primordial Energy, the Mother of the universe, the All-beautiful and All-virtuous; from a fraction of Whose being emanate countless Lakshmis, Umas and Saraswatis, and Who shines like the full moon.”

शरद मयक बदन छवि सीवा। चारु कपोल चिबुक दर ग्रीवा।।
अधर अरुण रद सुन्दर नासा। विधुकर निकर विनिन्दक हासा।।
नव अंबुज अंबक छवि नीकी। चितवनिललित भवानी जी की।।
भृकुटी मनोज चाप छवि हारी। तिलक ललाट पटल दितकारी।।

“The Lord’s countenance, which resembled the autumn full moon, was the very perfection of beauty. Lovely were His cheeks and chin. His teeth, nose and red lips were charming. His smile put to shame the rays of the moon. His eyes were as beautiful as lotuses in full bloom and His loving glances stole the heart away. The tilak-mark on His forehead (representing the three psychic nerves of Ida, Pingala and Sushumna) shone with divine lustre.”

कुण्डल मकर मुकुट सिर भ्राजा। कुटिल केश जनु मधुप समाजा।।
उर श्री वत्स रुचिर बनमाला। पदिक हार भूषण मनि जाला।।
केहरि कंधर चारु जनेऊ। बाहु विभूषण सुन्दर तेऊ।।
पद राजिव बरनी नहि जाहीं। मुनिमन मधुप बसहि जिन्ह माहीं।।

“A crown adorned His head. His long curly hair looked like a swarm of bees. His breast was decorated with a garland of flowers and a sandalwood necklace. His shoulders were broad and strong and His arms long. His lotus feet were indescribably glorious and shone with heavenly light.”

अंसन सहित देह धरि ताता। करिहउं चरित भक्त सुख दाता।।
आदि शक्ति जेहि जब उपजाया। सोउ अवतरिहि मोरियह माया।।

“I will incarnate Myself in your line with My Energies. My deeds will be a source of delight to My devotees. My Primordial Energy, the Mother of the universe, will embody Herself, too.”

That Eternal Power, which, as Hans, pervades the universe and energizes every being, manifests Itself to bring heavenly joy to devotees and the pure-minded and to bring erring humanity back to the path of Truth. This is the Divine Law, because only that Power can give Knowledge of Itself. So the Lord uses his Nature to embody Himself in human form. Whenever devotees have called upon Him, the Lord has come as a human being.

Such a one was Shri Hans Ji Maharaj, through whom this Divine Power redeemed thousands upon thousands of souls. □



Chapter Eleven

Knowledge and the Bible

Christ left no written records, and the first Gospels were completed many years after his departure from the world. The Bible has been translated, retranslated and edited so many times that it is surprising that any of Christ's original message managed to survive. Even so, the Bible offers a wealth of information proving that Jesus Christ imparted a technique of spiritual insight to his disciples, as did Rama, Krishna, Guru Nanak, Buddha, Lao Tzu, Kabir and countless other Masters before him and since.

Christ himself, although he claimed, "I have not come to destroy the Law but to fulfill it," actually offered a radical departure from the tradition-bound, fear-and guilt-ridden, priest-dominated religion of his day. Based on his own practical realization of God, Jesus presented a dynamic, joyful, soul-liberating Gospel to man and woman, Jew and Gentile alike. Although he was criticized for initiating women and non-Jews, Jesus never hesitated to reveal the Word of God to all who sincerely sought it. Indeed, the Gentiles received him far better than his own people, the majority of whom eventually rejected him and clamoured for his execution. On the other hand, the faith of a Roman centurion led him to exclaim: "Verily, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel."

The universality of his teachings was a boon for mankind. Jesus declared: "God hath sent his Son into the world, not to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved." St Paul instructed the Ephesians: "Now therefore are ye no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God."

The scriptures of the world's religions are mostly the words of past spiritual masters who, without regard for their own safety or comfort, boldly preached the Truth to one and all. They come to show man where he is going wrong, and the path which he should follow.

"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace, that publisheth salvation," declared Isaiah. Christ was the highest expression of the Love-dominated Teacher, not only preaching that the Kingdom of Heaven is within, but actually mapping out the route to God-realization, and giving practical instruction through his own perfect life: Jesus emphasized the role of the Master, the one who holds the keys to the kingdom of Heaven. He did not hesitate to declare: "No man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

Throughout Jewish history, a succession of prophets, culminating in the Master Jesus, had received direct revelation from God and then taught the people.

The Master shows the disciple how to experience the Holy Word, which is the Breath of Life within himself. The initiation of Saul by Samuel is one instance of this:

"Samuel said to Saul: 'Bid the servant pass on before us (and he passed on) but stand thou still awhile that I may show thee the Word of God.' Obviously this Word is something to be imparted in secret, and only to a worthy disciple. It must be something more than a mere set of teachings, because, after a short while: "...when he turned to go from Samuel, the Lord gave him another heart...a company of prophets met him and the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, and he prophesized." Saul had received some kind of Divine Power, the 'Word', which St John tells us was in the beginning: "...and the Word was with God and the Word was God." This Word is the active, creative Energy of God.

The Master Samuel had, in turn, also been initiated into the Word, because there had been a time when "Samuel did not yet know the Lord, nor was the Word of the Lord yet revealed to him." Now, Samuel had lived in the Temple since early childhood, and

had been instructed in Jewish doctrine. So what was that secret Word which he had not yet discovered? Sometime later, however, "The Lord revealed Himself to Samuel at Shiloh by the Word of the Lord." The Word Itself was the means by which Samuel saw God. How could a mere set of teachings bring about a face-to-face revelation?

Samuel's other illustrious disciple was the royal sage David. The Old Testament describes his initiation, or 'anointing', thus: "Samuel anointed him and the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward." Again, there had been a spiritual transmission through the medium of the God-knowing Master.

Jesus Christ never contravened the precepts of the eternal path of spirituality. When he presented himself for baptism, John protested: "I have need to be baptized of Thee, and comest Thou to me?" Jesus explained: "Suffer it to be so, for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness." Jesus knew that others would look to him for guidance in all spiritual matters, so he taught them in the most practical way—by living the perfect spiritual life in their midst.

Jesus taught that the Kingdom of Heaven is within the consciousness itself, and is not a place in the sky. "He opened their eyes that they might understand the scriptures." He promised, "Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." He made the scriptural mysteries accessible to the average intellect. He taught simply and clearly, often using parables and homilies so that ordinary folk could understand the intricacies of the spiritual path. He showed them what religion really is. As one of his Apostles later declared: "I be rude in speech, but not in knowledge." What did Jesus impart to these rough, uneducated fishermen that enabled them to become saints, revealing and discussing the most profound spiritual mysteries in all corners of the Roman Empire? Through Jesus, they had "access by one Spirit to the Father," who gave to them "the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him, the eyes of (their) understanding being enlightened."

What is Baptism?

Two kinds of baptism are mentioned in the New Testament : water baptism and the laying on of hands. The Apostles made quite a distinction between the two, which comes through very clearly in the Book of Acts. Laying on of hands resulted in the initiate's being filled with the Holy Ghost, i.e. he was now able to contact and experience God within himself.

Water baptism survives in the church to this day. It is the first baptism which the newborn child or the born-again adult Christian receives. Then comes confirmation, during which ceremony the Bishop lays his hands on the head of the confirmer. Both ceremonies are merely ritual, a reflection of the two baptisms mentioned in the scriptures. The confirmer experiences either nothing at all, or, at most, a sense of awed reverence, according to his faith. Certainly he does not experience the mighty Word as the early Christians did when the Apostles laid their hands upon them, nor does he see the self-effulgent Inner Light.

John the Baptist said from the start that he was not the Lord of whom the prophecies spoke. He clearly stated : "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear. He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit, and with fire." Fire means the Light of Knowledge. This Knowledge is indeed like a fire, because it burns the seeds of Karma (sins), frees the disciple from his lower nature, and purifies the mind so that it can dissolve back into soul.

Jesus prayed to God : "I have manifested Thy name unto the men which Thou gavest me out of the world." Only a living Master can manifest that Word. John never claimed that he could do it. His water-baptism was a symbolic cleansing, a preparation for the real baptism to follow.

After their ordination by Jesus, and having received his Grace, the Apostles were filled with a remarkable inner strength and an urge to preach that could not be contained. Peter spoke with

such authority that on the Day of Pentecost alone 3000 were baptized.

Chapter 8 of Acts mentions an incident which very clearly shows that there are two baptisms, only one of which is the real thing :

"When the Apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the Word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John, that they might receive the Holy Ghost for as yet He was fallen upon none of them ; only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus."

This water baptism had been carried on by the Apostles during Jesus' ministry. Jesus preached, and the Apostles baptized the converts. Later on, however, in Acts, the Apostles "laid their hands upon them, and they received the Holy Ghost." Obviously water-baptism was merely symbolic, while the laying on of hands transmitted spiritual power to the initiate.

After Saul had been blinded by the brilliant Light of his vision on the way to Damascus, he was sent to Ananias for initiation :

"Ananias, putting his hands on him said, 'Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus that appearest to thee on the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.'"

A similar incident, in Acts 19, shows the need for a living medium for transmission of the spiritual power which can open the inner door of consciousness :

"Paul, finding certain disciples (at Ephesus) said unto them, 'Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?' And they said unto him, 'We have not so much as heard that there be any Holy Ghost.' And he said unto them, 'Unto what then were ye baptized?' And they said, 'Unto John's baptism.' Then said Paul, 'John verily baptized with the Spirit of repentance, saying unto the people that they believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ.' When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, and when Paul laid his hands upon them,

the Holy Ghost came upon them, and they spoke with tongues, and prophesized."

Only a living saint can bestow the true baptism, through which the disciple sees Light, drinks Nectar or living water, hears celestial Music and fixes his mind on the Divine Word. Christ was indeed such a Master, but he was not the only one. A perusal of the great scriptures of the world shows that Lao Tzu, Guru Nanak, Kabir, Mohammed, Zoroaster, Elijah, Buddha etc. were also true Masters. It is the Master's touch that opens the third eye, or door of consciousness within the disciple. Then he can start the long journey back to the Source, the Almighty Father.

"Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God, he hath seen the Father." As Lord Krishna said to Arjuna: "You cannot see Me with your carnal eyes; I will give you the Eye of Knowledge." Indeed, in our ordinary state of consciousness, we don't have a hope of seeing God. This experience only comes when consciousness transcends mind, intellect and senses, and is aware of nothing else except the Holy Name. This is why a living Master is so essential, but it is not easy to recognize him. Thousands of people heard Jesus speak, but most of them ultimately rejected him.

So the spiritual baptism is not symbolic. It is a practical experience, a transmission of power from Master to disciple, after which a total transformation occurs in the awareness of the faithful devotee. He enters a new dimension in an inner, infinite world, which was hitherto closed to him, and he understands mysteries which he had never understood before. Says St Peter, "Christ, according to his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue."

Thus the rough, unlettered fishermen became wise, experienced saints. For all who receive the Grace and Knowledge of the Master, their journey changes from one of groping in the dark, of floundering in uncharted waters, and frustrated hard

slogging to a path with an assured and attainable destination and a scientific tried-and-true method. This Knowledge is full of blessings and has no bad side-effects:

"The visitation of all who walk in this spirit...shall be healing, great peace in a long life, and fruitfulness, together with every everlasting blessing and eternal joy in life without end, a crown of glory and a garment of majesty in unending light." (Dead Sea Scrolls, Community Rule).

Knowledge and Wisdom

"And I will bring the blind by a Way they knew not; I will lead them in paths they have not known. I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight."

—Isaiah 42:16

Before discussing Knowledge, let us see what is ignorance. According to Isaiah, it is total non-awareness of God's indwelling and infinite Presence, and therefore the awareness only of the finite ego:

"Thou (man) hast said, 'None seeth me.' Thy wisdom, thy knowledge, it hath corrupted thee, and thou hast said in thine heart, I am, and none else, besides me." Knowledge here refers to intellectual knowledge and book-learning, such as priests and pundits accumulate, and which acts as a most effective barrier to true spiritual experience. Such a person becomes so vain that he forgets that the source of his intellect, his knowledge and his life itself is God. He puts God at a safe distance from himself, so that he can carry on comfortably, safely insulated by his concepts and rituals. Not for him is the path of True Knowledge, which involves the *unlearning* of all concepts and emptying oneself so that the 'THAT WHICH IS'; the 'I AM THAT I AM', can be experienced.

Paul, writing to the Corinthians, stresses the dangers of spiritual ego: "If any man think that he knows anything, he knows nothing yet, as he ought to know." When Socrates, the great Greek

Master, was praised for his wisdom, he sincerely wondered why he was so admired, saying, "I know that I know nothing." Humility and openness are a must. The path of Knowledge is very subtle. Only a person who can "cast down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God" can forge ahead. How is this to be done? By "bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." This is possible only by praying for Grace and by bringing the mind back every time it wanders astray and fixing it on the Divine Word.

Once a person has been shown how to meditate on the secret Word and Divine Light, he can dive into the Knowledge described by the Bhagavad Gita as the *sovereign science*, "knowing which nothing remains to be known." St John, from his own experience, said the same thing: "The anointing which ye have received of Him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach thee, but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth.... Ye shall abide in Him."

Daniel said, "There is a God in Heaven Who revealeth secrets." The ancient prophets did experience God, face-to-face. There are several references in the Old Testament to this transcendental Knowledge, mostly in Proverbs, Isaiah and Psalms, which are the inspired utterances of men of Knowledge.

Right at the start, Proverbs defines the source of pure wisdom: "The Lord giveth wisdom, out of His mouth cometh knowledge and understanding." Wisdom here refers to the highest wisdom, which comes from spiritual insight. Proverbs 19:2 warns: "that the soul be without knowledge is not good." In the normal process of accumulating empirical knowledge, the mental faculties alone are involved. Getting a Ph.D normally has nothing to do with soul (except, of course, that mind and intellect are energized by soul). So what sort of knowledge could the soul acquire? Only that which comes straight from the Lord, unfiltered by mind. This knowledge is the property of the soul; it comes from the soul's realization of itself: "The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord, searching all the inward parts of the belly." God is Light, and this

all-conscious Light is in us also. When a disciple meditates on that self-effulgent Light, which is his soul, all the inner mysteries are revealed to him, just as a candle illuminates the darkest room. That a process of deep meditation is involved is indicated by these passages from Psalms:

"Commune with your own spirit upon your bed, and be still." As the meditator deepens his meditation, his mind automatically slows down and eventually stops, dissolved into the profound stillness of the Word.

"I remember Thee upon my bed, and meditate upon Thee in the night watches." The Psalms which directly mention spiritual knowledge (also called 'wisdom', or 'the Law') were composed by King David, who, it will be remembered, had been initiated by Samuel. David, who had been a humble, uneducated shepherd boy, knew what he was talking about when he said, "The Law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple." This finds an echo in the words of the great Indian saint, Kabir: "By practising Knowledge, even a moron can become wise." The 'Law' which King David was talking about must be something other than the theology and tradition in which the priests were trained, because it is perfect. How can a written law be perfect, if it gives rise to debate, interpretation and counter-interpretation, as did the Jewish law—or any theological doctrine, for that matter. Also the priests of that time were far from perfect. Psalm 99 hints that this Law is a hidden, much higher, transcendental kind of wisdom: "I have more understanding than my teachers, for Thy testimonies (revelations) are my meditation." In other words, true wisdom is revealed by the Holy Spirit during meditation.

This is not ordinary knowledge; it is something inner and secret. Only a person who "dwelleth in the secret place shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." In the sanctuary of the heart, the soul sees its own pure, self-effulgent Light. Lights which are lit in the sanctuaries of temples represent this Inner Light, like a kind of dim memory of something once known, but forgotten.

The Book of Proverbs glorifies Holy Knowledge, which it calls 'wisdom'. That this is no ordinary knowledge is indicated by the fact that it is called 'eternal, and existing with God forever.' Proverbs says, "When He prepared the heavens, I (Wisdom) was there. When He appointed the foundations of the earth, I was by Him, as one brought up with Him."

Proverbs 8:23: "I was set up from everlasting, ere ever the earth was." St John wrote that in the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God. Divine Wisdom comes from realization of that Word.

Proverbs 3:19: "The Lord by wisdom hath founded the earth; by wisdom hath He established the heavens." Ordinary wisdom, even of the highest intellectual order, cannot create Heaven and earth. The wisdom referred to here is the highest Knowledge, the Knowledge of the Holy Word, which God used to create Heaven and earth. There is a parallel to this in the Bhagavad Gita, when Lord Krishna says: "In the beginning I gave this Knowledge to the Sun," meaning that God energized the creation through the Holy Word. In Ecclesiastes, the Preacher says: "The excellency of Knowledge is that wisdom giveth life to those that have it." True Knowledge is the Knowledge of Life, the realization of the Life-Source Itself, and nothing less, so naturally it will give not only renewed life in this earth-existence, but eternal life as well. It is no wonder that King David said: "Such Knowledge is too wonderful for me, it is high, I cannot attain unto it." Under normal circumstances, a person cannot attain it, but through the Grace of a Master, plus the disciple's own sincerity and effort, the mysteries of Knowledge unravel themselves.

Jesus exhorted his disciples, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect." It seems virtually impossible. How can we know what spiritual perfection is? It is something which the finite mind cannot grasp. Only by communion with something perfect can perfection be attained. We become like the company we keep, so if the mind can be attuned to

the Perfect Vibration, which is the Primordial Word, then we can become perfect. A perfected soul is one who has realized the Word and is in constant communion with it. It takes us beyond our thoughts, concepts and desires. Perfection can be realized by an imperfect (i.e. ignorant) being only after he has become perfect himself. That is why Jesus stressed the need for the second birth, the awakening of the spirit, without which one cannot enter the kingdom of heaven, even though that kingdom is within everyone. If someone has himself not realized perfection, how can he show another what it is and how it may be attained?

In the Jerusalem of Jesus' day there were many eloquent orators and priests who were well-versed in the Scriptures, but only Jesus could reveal the Word which is eulogized in those Scriptures. Even several of the learned members of the ruling class, including Nicodemus, came to Jesus, asking the secret of eternal life. Jesus would ask them: "How is it that you, being a teacher of the people, be ignorant of these things?" These priests and intellectuals had a theoretical knowledge, a *concept* of perfection, but they had no practical realization of it, nor could they impart that experience to others. Jesus explained that true devotees "worship the Father in Spirit and in truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship Him." Only someone who can experience the 'Spirit of Life' is free from sin and death. The 'Law of sin and death' is the law of Karma, which Christ expressed thus: "As ye sow, so shall ye reap." According to this Law, a person's previous actions determine his present life and circumstances and his future life is determined by whatever he is thinking and doing now. Sin, which is anything that diverts us from continual remembrance of God, results in impressions being embedded in the subconscious mind, and the more impressions of a worldly nature that we accumulate, the further away from God-realization we are, which is spiritual ignorance or 'death'.

1 Corinthians, Chapter 2 explains very clearly that spiritual Knowledge is supra-intellectual wisdom:

"But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God hath ordained before the world." Here, Paul is saying the same thing as Proverbs, quoted earlier. This Knowledge is a mystery because the normal state of awareness cannot grasp it, and it is hidden, deep within the soul, but regular and deep meditation unearths all divine mysteries. Meditation is essential, which is why Paul wrote to Timothy: "Wherefore I put ye in remembrance, that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands." The treasure is indeed within but we have to dig it up with the spade of meditation.

"..which none of the princes of this world knew, for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." Only by receiving and realizing Knowledge can one truly recognize the Master. Thousands of people heard Jesus and observed his flawless life, but very few understood Who he really was. And this is how the holy masters are generally treated. Very few people realize who they are, and then, only after receiving Knowledge. After initiation, Arjuna, who hitherto had been the friend of Krishna, addressed Him as the Lord of the Universe, and the Master of masters, whereas just across the battlefield was waiting an army of kings, ready to wage war on the Lord.

"For it is written, eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." This Knowledge cannot be experienced by the senses. Love, sincerity, initiation by the Master and faithful practice make the tree of Knowledge grow and blossom.

"But God hath revealed them to us by His Spirit, for this Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." Because this Spirit is God and of God, It becomes the searchlight by which the meditator sees all. The bestowal of this Spirit, or, rather, the bestowal of the Grace by which It may be experienced, starts from the time when the Master lays his hands upon the disciple.

"For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so, the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit of God, that we might know the things which are freely given to us of God."

Man is called the 'crown of creation' in all scriptures because of his unique reasoning faculty, his refined sensitivity, and his ability to achieve the state of superconsciousness, which no other creature on Earth can do. However, until one has received the Holy Spirit, until his inner door is opened, he cannot experience anything higher than the realms of the physical and the intellectual. Although all human beings have this inbuilt capacity as a birthright, not all are at the stage of development where they can realize the Spirit, or even wish to!

"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned."

This is the crux of the matter: the soul can realize itself only by means of itself. Mind, senses and intellect are not the means for realizing God, although in the process the mind is so purified that it ceases to be an obstacle. After initiation, the devotee has the chance to be a "partaker of the divine nature", but it involves a lot of effort: nothing less than to "pray without ceasing." Now, how can anyone who has to live and function in the workaday world possibly do that? How can he recite the Lord's Prayer if his mind has to be on his job? But prayer here has nothing to do with recitation of words. It means uniting the mind with the Holy Name while the intellect gets on with whatever work it has to do. Indeed, the longer the mind can be kept in the Word, the sharper and clearer the intellect becomes. Shri Maharaj Ji uses the analogy of a bicycle rider to illustrate this point: his feet are pedalling, his hands are grasping the handlebars, he is noticing the scenery and enjoying the cool breeze on his face. He is chatting with his pillion rider also. He is doing all these things, but his mind—his

attention—is on the road. Similarly, the various parts of our being carry out their duties, while the mind is on the Word.

St James describes the Knowledge thus: "The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy." How similar this is to the passage in the Bhagavad Gita which says, "This Knowledge is the purest and highest and is the sovereign science. It is experienced directly, it is easy to perform, and is imperishable."

In all Scriptures, including the Bible, four aspects of this Knowledge are described. Although in reality not separate, they can be regarded as four gateways to the ultimate, total experience of Divinity, and there are techniques to experience them. These aspects are Divine Light, Holy Name, Celestial Music and Nectar. The Bible says something about each of them. Before discussing these four aspects individually, let us see what one of the marvellous hymns from the Dead Sea Scrolls has to say about this secret Knowledge:

"My eyes have gazed on that which is eternal,
On wisdom concealed from men,
On Knowledge and wise design hidden from the sons of men.
God has given them to His chosen ones
As an eternal possession,
And has caused them to inherit the lot of the Holy Ones.
Hear, O you wise men, and meditate on Knowledge."

Divine Light

"And that God Who is the Light of all lights and beyond all illusions, and Who can be known as He is through practical Knowledge, is present in the hearts of all."

—Bhagavad Gita, 13:17

There are physical kinds of light, such as sunlight, moonlight, firelight and electric light, which both man and animals can see. However, there is an inner, non-physical Light, or the Light of

Consciousness, which only human beings can see, and that too, after the Third Eye, or inner door of perception, has been opened. Ezekial cryptically mentions this Third Eye as follows: "The Spirit lifted me up between the earth and the heavens, and brought me in the vision of God to Jerusalem to the inner gate towards the north...and behold, the glory of the Lord was there.."

When you go to the movies, you see various images reflected on a screen by the power of the projector's light. But, if you turn around to the source of the movie—the projector—you see only light. This light is the manifestation of a current of power running through the projector. Similarly, Divine Light is the primordial manifestation of the energizing Word. Because it shines, the entire universe is projected, and because that same Light is within us, making us aware beings, we can perceive the plurality of created images. However, when the instrument of perception is turned back towards its Source, it sees radiant, self-effulgent Light, the 'Glory of God.'

The Ramacharitamanasa, Upanishads and Gita define this Light as the '*Swaroop*' or Form of God. In the Bible, the same thing is written, only the words 'Face of God', or 'Image of God' are used. Here are some examples from the Old Testament:

Psalms 4:16: "Lord, lift up Thy countenance upon us..."

Psalms 31:16: "Make Thy face to shine upon Thy servant.."

Psalms 67:1: "God be merciful unto us and bless us, and cause His face to shine upon us."

That God manifests as Light is clear from this verse from Psalms 104: "(Thou) coverest Thyself with Light as with a garment."

Most Christians believe that man cannot see God and live, but Psalms contains a reference to meditation on that Light: "In Thy light shall we see light." This Light is infinite, as God is infinite.

St Stephen saw God: "Stephen, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God."

St Peter "fell into a trance, and saw heaven opened."

Isaiah saw God and cried, "Woe is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips... for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts." But he did not die.

That Light can be seen, but to see it in all its intensity, purification is necessary, because only the pure in heart can see God.

"This Light no man can approach unto" wrote Paul to Timothy. But Paul saw it! However, it is true that the uninitiated usually cannot see it. If they did, they would be, as Paul was, blinded. Even the amount of Light the initiated devotee sees varies according to the individual's capacity to receive the experience—a condition determined by devotion, faith, purity and degree of concentration. That Light, as it is, is brilliant and beyond imagination, as is described in this passage from the Essene Gospel of St. John:

Jesus says, "I am sent to you by the Father, what I may make the light of life to shine before you. The light lightens Itself and the darkness, but the darkness knows only itself, and knows not the Light. For your eyes are used to the darkness, and the full light of the Heavenly Father would make you blind.... When you can gaze upon the brightness of the noonday sun with unflinching eyes, you can then look upon the blinding Light of your Heavenly Father, which is a thousand times brighter than the brightness of a thousand suns. Believe me, the sun is as the flame of a candle beside the Sun of Truth of the Heavenly Father."

When Arjuna received Knowledge from Lord Krishna, he also saw blinding Light: "The light of a thousand suns could not produce the Light which Arjuna saw." (Gita, 11:12)

This is the Light that St. John describes as the Light of Life, "which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." John the Baptist was sent to "bear witness of that Light" which embodied itself as Jesus. Christ urged his disciples to wake up and realize while they had the chance, because he wouldn't be with them in the flesh forever: "Yet a little while is the Light with you. Walk while

ye have the Light, lest darkness come upon you, for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he walketh." This darkness is the darkness of ignorance. For the devotee who meditates on the Divine Light, the path is automatically crystal-clear. Indeed, there is a Light which is the source of all understanding, and it can be seen. Meditation on the Light changes a person's nature, purifying him and freeing him from the bondage to the lower, sensual nature. "We all, with open face beholding in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." By the Grace, which is the Spirit of the Lord, the devotee is so purified that his consciousness merges with the Supreme Light.

In both Old and New Testaments, a 'holy mountain' or Mt. Zion, is mentioned. This is the Supreme Abode described in the Bhagavad Gita: "Where sun, moon and fire do not shine, there shines the Supreme Light, which is My highest Abode."

The Psalmist says: "Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined."

The Divine City described in Revelation is the Supreme Abode, which "had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it, for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the Light thereof." Christians don't accept any scripture other than the Bible as true, but who could find any discrepancy in the above quotations?

This Light is constant and eternal; it needs no source of illumination other than itself. The Hindu scripture, Ramacharitamansa, says: "The Divine Light shines day and night. It doesn't need lamp, wick or oil." Compare this with this verse from Revelations:

"And there shall be no night there, and they need no candle, neither light of the sun, for the Lord God giveth them light."

For the devotee who does so much meditation that his mind merges in the Light, Isaiah promises this state of felicity:

"The sun shall no more by thy light by day, neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee, but the Lord shall

be unto thee an everlasting Light, and thy God thy glory. Thy sun shall no more go down, nor shall thy moon withdraw itself, but the Lord shall be thine everlasting Light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended."

Nectar

'I drink the Nectar that is within my mind,
The Lord's Name is revealed to me,
And uttered through the Guru's Word.
Then my mind is ever imbued with the Lord's Love.
And I drink the Essence of the Lord.'

—Adi Granth (Sikh Scripture)

Ambrosia, Nectar of the Gods, Elixir of Youth. These are some of the epithets for the well-spring of life, the Holy Nectar, which flows within everyone, but which so few manage to experience. The Fountain of Youth and Immortality, to find which explorers sailed to distant lands, actually exists within everyone. In the ancient Upanishads, it is written that the devotee who can drink this Nectar is immune to poison and snake bites, and has control over his own death. The great saint Mira Bai was unaffected by the poison with which her enemies tried to kill her. In St Mark's Gospel we read that the Apostles had been endowed with the same immunity: "They shall take up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them."

Christ knew all about this Nectar, and he had the ability to open that well of living waters within others, as is seen from his conversation with the woman at the well in Samaria:

"If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldst have asked of him and he would have given thee living water.

"Whosoever shall drink of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst, but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up unto eternal life."

Some isolated references to Nectar appear in the Old Testament, in Psalms and Isaiah. Psalm 36 says: "With Thee is the fountain of life."

Isaiah's joyous invitation to come and drink of the Nectar shows that he had discovered something wonderful, which was also quite natural and experienceable:

"Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? ...eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself."

This Nectar flows from a 'well' situated deep within the crown of the head, or the 'centre of the heavens'. This river is described in Revelations thus: "And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb..."

"...Let him that is athirst come, and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

When the disciple meditates on the Knowledge revealed by the Master, he begins to drink from this well of Nectar deep within himself:

"He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." The word 'belly' here means the innermost depths of one's being, not the physical region of the abdomen.

People go to church and partake of the wine of Holy Communion, completely unaware of the Divine Wine within themselves, which would enable them to have *actual* communion with God!

Holy Name

"Those who meditate on the eternal, unmanifest and omnipresent Word, which is beyond mind and intellect, attain the Supreme Abode."

—Bhagavad Gita, 12:3

What is the Word of God? What is the Holy Name? Is it 'Jehovah'? Is it 'Jesus'? Is it 'Bible'? Hindus say that it is 'AUM', even though their sacred scripture, the Bhagavad Gita, says that there is a Divine Word *beyond* Aum (Ch. 8:13). The name 'Jesus' has been called the Holy Name only since the Master's incarnation. Before that, Jews called upon 'Yahweh'. However, St John says that "In the beginning was the Word," which means that this Word existed long before there were human beings to formulate words and languages. The only thing which existed in the beginning, and scientists will agree, was *energy*. Einstein's formula, $E=mc^2$ established the relationship between matter and energy. When an atom bomb explodes, matter is transformed into energy, manifesting itself as light, sound, heat and radiation. This energy comes from the atom. At the level of the extremely minute sub-atomic particles, the distinction between matter and energy becomes blurred. As we are composed of atoms, this same energy must be within us. Indeed, a study of any of the great visions described in the Bible, whether Isaiah's, or Ezekiel's or St John's, reveal the experience of the four aspects of Divine Energy: Divine Light, Divine Word, Divine Sound and Divine Nectar. Anyone who practises meditation after receiving Knowledge, will experience them, too.

Even though the Bible has been translated, re-translated and edited by scholars and clerics who hadn't any experience of this Divine Word, or of the Knowledge that Jesus gave, still the fact that this Word is something beyond time, space and language comes through quite clearly.

In the Book of Isaiah, God said: "So shall My Word be that which goeth forth from My mouth: it shall not return to me void, but shall accomplish which I please and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." This obviously refers to a Force, a Creative Energy which God projects for the purpose of creation.

Zechariah also refers to this Energy: "The Word of the Lord for Israel, saith the Lord, stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundations of the earth, and formeth the spirit within him."

How could this possibly refer to a set of teachings revealed *after* the foundation of the earth?

In which language did God speak the Word? What is the Word which the soul speaks? A little consideration of these questions will lead to the logical conclusion that this Word has nothing to do with language, but is the supreme, primordial Energy of God.

In which language did God speak the Word? What is the Word which the soul speaks? A little consideration of these questions will lead to the logical conclusion that this Word has nothing to do with language, but is the supreme, primordial Energy of God.

Psalm 33:6 says, "By the Word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth."

In Hebrews 3:5-7 Paul writes, "By the Word of God the heavens were of old...But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same Word are kept in store." This Word is something eternal and unchanging, whereas religious teachings change, even if only slightly, according to time and place. YAHWEH and JESUS are different names, so they both can't be the abovementioned unchanging Word.

This Word is mentioned in all Scriptures. Guru Nanak said, "This earth is the Word, the sky is the Word, Light is the Word. The whole Creation emanated from the Word which dwells in every heart." Is there any difference between the ideas expressed by this Indian master and the above Biblical verses? None at all. So why can't Christians accept that the experience of God is not limited to a few Masters in the land of Israel?

This Word is Life itself. It is all-conscious Energy. It contains all attributes, yet itself is attributeless. It manifests itself in the multiplicity of living beings.

Isaiah said, "O Lord: Thy Name is from everlasting." Elsewhere in Isaiah it is written: "I will give them (says God) a name better than those of sons and daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off." This Name, which the

Master revealed, "is much more excellent than the angels." So this Name is better than any earthly or heavenly name. As words are nothing but vibrations, it follows that the Holy Name is much more excellent than any earthly or heavenly vibration.

The Holy Name contains in itself all virtues. It is higher and purer than anything we can imagine. Being absolute purity, goodness and righteousness, the experience of it is the yardstick for determining what is relative virtue, goodness and righteousness.

The Psalms eulogize the virtues of the Name:

"Holy and reverend is His name."

"As for God, his Way is perfect; the Word of the Lord is tried." It is faithful, unchanging and constant.

"Let them praise Thy great and terrible Name, for it is holy."

"Thy Word is very pure, therefore Thy servant loveth it." It is great beyond imagination, yet lovable also, and one who meditates on it is filled with love. Power and Love are the hallmark of all divine Masters, and Jesus exhibited them both.

"Thy Word is true from the beginning." That which we normally call 'truth' is relative truth, which we discern through reason and experience. However, the Absolute Truth, the Truth by which we can judge all other truths, is known only by experiencing the Infinite Word, the Power which is the source of all and which is Pure Consciousness. St John also says: "Thy Word is Truth."

It is omnipresent and omnipotent. It is also omniscient: "The Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than a two-edged sword, and is a discernor of the thoughts of intents of the heart." This is the same two-edged sword which St John during his revelation perceived as coming out of the mouth of God. "Man does not live by bread alone but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Only when a disciple dives into the depths of his inner being can he tune into the Primordial Energy, the Word which God continually utters in him.

This Word is dependable, unchanging, and a never-ending source of strength, as expressed in Proverbs 8:10: "The name of

the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it and is safe."

This is the Power by which Christ derived his authority to teach, and which gave such convincing authority to his words. Every power in the universe is subject to this Name, so it was easy for Jesus to cast out evil spirits, but the common people who had no idea what the Word is, could only wonder how he did it: "And they were all amazed and said, 'What a word is this! For with what authority and power he commanded the unclean spirits, and they came out.'"

"And they that know Thy name will put their trust in Thee, for Thou hast not forsaken them that seek Thee," says the Psalmist. After experiencing this Word, there can be no doubt about the existence of God or His omnipresence.

"Remember the word unto Thy servant, upon which Thou hast caused me to hope," says Psalm 119. "My soul fainteth for Thy salvation, but I hope in Thy word." Remembrance of the Holy Word is the ancient, eternal, simplest and foolproof path to liberation, because it completely controls the mind. It renders inactive the karmas and impressions which are embedded in the subconscious mind, and which are the seeds of sin and misery in this life and rebirth after this present tenure of earthly existence is over.

"Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." This is easy enough to understand. How can a finite word, which has a beginning and an end, free the soul from the constrictions of duality and take it to infinity? St Kabir, the famous saint who lived more than 1500 years after Christ, said exactly the same thing: "There are thousands of names for God in this world but they can't bestow liberation. Only a rare saint knows the secret Name which is remembered silently within." On the other side of the world, the Chinese sage Lao Tzu wrote: "The name which can be named is not the True Name; the Tao which can be expressed is not the everlasting Tao."

"Thy Word quickeneth me." The Word is Life Itself, so experiencing it will cause the entire being to vibrate with renewed life and power. Meditation on the Word gives the feeling of total regeneration from top to toe, literally.

"Forever, O Lord, Thy word is settled in heaven." The aim of meditation is to lift the consciousness above all lower levels and to fix it permanently in the 'heavens', the inner celestial sky which is above mind, senses and intellect.

"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." Meditation on the Word makes the devotee's path clear before him. He is no longer confused about the direction in which he should go, or which decisions to make. All the fluff of duality, uncertainty, doubts and hesitation which are the products of the mind, are dispelled by the sharp sword of the Holy Name, just as clouds are dispersed by the wind.

It is no wonder, then, that the Psalmist wrote: "I rejoice at Thy word, as one that findeth great spoil." People search everywhere for this divine treasure which is within us all along. Now this raises the question of how this Word can be found. If it is within us, why doesn't everyone know what it is? Why do religions quarrel about what is the real name of God? In Psalm 91 it is written: "I will set him on high, because he hath known my name." Everyone, in the whole world, knows at least one name for God. Why, then, isn't everyone set on high? That mysterious Word, which leads the soul to union with God, is not so easily known, unless one finds the Master who can reveal it. Jesus was such a Master. Hardly a chapter of the Gospels goes by without a reference to this Word. Jesus placed the highest importance on it, having fully experienced it himself. He realized its potential. This is why, in the first line of the Lord's Prayer, we find the praises of the Word: "Our Father, which art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy Name."

In St John's Gospel, 12:28, Jesus prays: "Father, glorify Thy name." Then there came a voice from heaven, saying, "I have both glorified it and will glorify it again." Jesus himself was the Word

made flesh, and he demonstrated in his own life, crucifixion and resurrection the glory of the Word.

St Paul discusses at great length the virtues of the Holy Name. He wrote to the Colossians: "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom... and whatsoever ye do in word and deed, do all in the name of Lord Jesus." This implies a constant remembrance of the Holy Name. Guru Nanak also said this: "Remember the Name while standing, sitting, sleeping and awake, and you will do everything perfectly." That constant remembrance or meditation is necessary is also illustrated by the command: "Pray without ceasing." It is impossible to remember a spoken word 24 hours a day in the midst of life's cares and duties. But it is possible to remember the True Name, the Perfect Vibration, at all times, even during sleep. It takes a lot of practice, of course, but the time comes when constant remembrance, or union of mind with Name, is automatic, no matter what the external circumstances.

Paul wrote to Titus of the need for "holding fast the faithful Word, as ye hath been taught." Whenever the mind wanders, it must be reined in, and re-attuned to the Holy Name. Here, the word 'faithful' is used, implying something which is dependable, constant, and unchanging, and this describes the Name exactly. It is always there, whenever you need it, and, providing you know how to contact it, is a source of strength and solace.

Christians will argue that this Word is the Gospel, but a clear distinction is made between the two by St Peter: "The word of the Lord endureth forever, and this is the word by which the gospel is preached unto you."

Paul wrote to the Romans: "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

St John wrote: "John, who bore record of the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ." In Chapter 19 of Revelation he wrote: "I saw heaven opened and beheld a white horse, and he that sat upon it was called faithful and true. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns and he had a name written

which no man knew, but he himself. And his name is called the Word of God." Now, the Gospel was preached all over the world. What was that Word, that name, which only the Son of God knew, and which evidently is not written in the Gospels?

In Chapter 22 of Revelation it is written: "And they shall see His Face (Divine Light) and His name will be written on their foreheads." Why on the forehead? Because this is the seat of the Third Eye, the door to superconsciousness, the gateway to Jerusalem, the Supreme Abode.

The Book of Revelation is the saga of the individual consciousness' purification and struggle to rise to self-realization from the abysmal ignorance into which it has fallen. To him that overcomes, "I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God, and I will write upon him my new name." This echoes Isaiah's prophecy: "And thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name."

It should be obvious by now that the Holy Word is glorified by the Gospels, but is not written in the Gospels themselves. Nor is it written in any scriptures. It is the living Word of the living God, revealed to living men by a living prophet. Truly, the presence of a living Master in the world is an indication of the unfathomable love of God. Over and over again His prophets are rejected, still He keeps on sending them, to awaken the sleeping consciousness of man so that he might attain full awareness of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Divine Music

"Yogis, sacrificing their hearing and other senses into the still fire of the breath, offer the Word and subjects of the senses into that fire, and this gives rise to the Divine Music."

-Bhagavad Gita, 4:26.

"Without any musical instruments, and without players, drums, flutes, guitars, bells, conches and cymbals play day and

night. A deaf man is entranced by this Divine Music and finds peace, forgetting his existence."

-Brahmanand, a 19th Century mystic.

Vibration, which is energy in motion, produces sound. The Perfect Vibration therefore produces the perfect sound, which is also called the Divine Music. All the visions recorded in the Bible are accompanied by sound and music, in the midst of which speaks the 'still, small voice'.

From Ezekial: "Then the sound of the cherubim's wings was heard even to the outer court.

'Behold, the glory of the Lord came from the way of the east, and his voice was like a noise of many waters.

'And as they went, I heard the noise of their wings, like a noise of great waters.

'I also heard the noise of the wings of the living creatures that touched one another, and the noise of the wheels...and a noise of a great rushing."

St Kabir, the Indian mystic, had much to say about this Divine Music. Here is one of his many verses on the subject:

"The whole sky is filled with sound... the middle region of the sky, wherein the Spirit dwelleth, is radiant with the Music of Light."

The Book of Psalms also contains references to these divine sounds, for example:

"The voice of the Lord is upon the waters, the God of glory thundereth."

The most graphic description of these heavenly sounds, of which earthly music is but an echo, is found in the Book of Revelation:

"I was in the spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet."

'I heard the voice of many angels.'

'When the Lamb opened one of the seals, I heard, as it were, the noise of thunder.' The saint uses the term 'as it were' because

the Divine Music is pure and so delightful that earthly sounds are merely an approximation.

"When he opened the sixth seal, lo, there was a great earthquake."

However, there is a state even beyond these sounds, when the highest level of consciousness is reached:

"And when he opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour."

The divine orchestration finds mention in the writings of all great Masters. As St John went from experience to experience, as recorded in Revelation, he heard various kinds of sounds. Here is another instance:

"And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder, and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps."

So the experiences of Divine Light, Music, Nectar and Holy Name are all mentioned quite clearly in the Bible. They are omnipresent phenomena which can be experienced by a devotee who achieves the required level of consciousness through meditation on the techniques of spiritual insight revealed by the Master of the time.

The Master holds the keys to this inner kingdom, and once the inner door is unlocked for the devotee, he can penetrate the mysteries of his own soul, and experience the marvellous things which the saints have described. □

Chapter Twelve

The Root of all Religions

Shri Hans Ji Maharaj spent his whole life not only teaching religion, but revealing to people the practical knowledge of the experience which is the essence, the core, of all religious teachings. He believed that there is only one true religion for all mankind, which is inborn, natural, eternal and most secret. This is the natural and unbroken path of spirituality, which has been taught by the Masters of all times and lands, and which leads the soul to union with God. Realizing it is the birthright of every human being and his duty, too.

In 1960 Raja Mahendra Pratap arranged a satsang program during which Shri Maharaj Ji gave a very clear exposition of what true religions, or *Dharma* really is:

"There is only one human race. We are all called 'man' or 'human beings'. As far as I am concerned, there is only one Dharma for all mankind. No great Master ever taught stealing, cheating or telling lies, nor does any modern religion. So why are there separate religions? They are all branches of the same root, but due to their ignorance of this root and their own selfish motives, people create all these different sects. In my opinion, remembering God is religion and forgetting Him is irreligion or sin. The basis of Dharma, and the essence of it is realizing the conscious life-entity which is contained within every speck of Creation, which dwells within every being, and which is called *Ishwar*, *God*, *Allah*, *Wahe-Guru* and various other names. Science explores matter, and Dharma explores consciousness. The same scientific principles apply throughout the world and in all languages, because they are natural laws. In the same way, the essence of Dharma is a natural phenomenon and applies to all human beings.

It cannot be different for different people. The principal aim of every great saint was to clear up the confusion and ignorance perpetrated in the name of religion.

“Only a living realized saint can reveal the phenomenon which is the spirit of religion. We have to ask ourselves: What was the actual religion of those Masters, on whose names religions have been propagated? Was Guru Nanak a Sikh? Were the ancient rishis Hindus? Was Mohammed a Muslim? Was Jesus Christ a Christian? Whenever a great Teacher appeared on earth, he was never believed by the theologians, scholars or religious leaders of the time, but after he had left this world those same people built statues of him and compiled scriptures about him and used them to confuse people. Now they sing his glory loud and long. They hesitate to accept the great soul when he comes before them, but build up sects in his name after he has gone, and feather their nests in the process. The living Master always gave a practical experience of the Knowledge which is the core of religion, yet people want to get that same Knowledge from the Master's portrait or scriptures, but it is impossible. Only a living Teacher can reveal that Knowledge. People bow to idols of Rama and Krishna and believe them to be God, but the Satguru, who is the living embodiment of Knowledge, who is eulogized by all scriptures and who is the destroyer of ignorance, is always accused of being a heretic. People don't believe that the Lord can incarnate Himself. Rama, Krishna, Christ, Buddha, Guru Nanak, etc. all came as human beings. You can believe them to be whatever you want, but the fact remains that they were in human form and they spoke the language of their times. Most of their contemporaries refused to believe in their divinity. Very few actually served them and fully believed in their teachings, but they were the ones who benefitted. But now that they have gone we cannot ask their statues for the living Knowledge, nor can they give it. We can't understand the mysteries of Knowledge from their scriptures, nor can they make us realize those things which the Master made his disciples understand while he was alive.”

On many occasions and during many satsangs Shri Maharaj Ji explained very succinctly what religion really is. Here are relevant excerpts from those satsangs:

“Lord Krishna instructed Arjuna, then opened his Third Eye and showed him his Universal Form. He revealed to him the imperishable phenomenon which he called *Rajavidya*, the Sovereign Science. Nowadays, a lot of people study the Gita, but do they see that same Universal Form of the Lord? Is their inner vision unveiled? Listen! Only a living Master can reveal living Knowledge. Non-conscious matter cannot do that. Whatever is being perpetrated in the name of religion today is merely devotion to material objects and insentience. How can anyone teach devotion to Consciousness if he himself doesn't know what Consciousness is? Consciousness cannot be known without a perfect Guru, but as religious leaders and fanatics deem it degrading to approach the Satguru, they carry on in their own ways, promoting their individual sects and teachings and advancing their own selfish aims all in the name of a previous holy Master. So humanity stays fragmented in groups and people are ranged against each other. Those who foster parochialism are the lethal enemies of mankind. Man's condition nowadays is truly peculiar. Depending on how I wear my hair, I'm a friend of Rama and a foe of Allah, or vice-versa. That's religion today! If I can reel off a few quotations from scripture I'm regarded as a man of spiritual wisdom, but is reciting scriptures parrot-fashion religion or spiritual insight? Even a parrot can repeat 'Ram-Ram', 'Allah-Allah' or 'Wahe-Guru, Wahe-Guru.' Does that mean that the parrot is wise and spiritual?

“Each and every sect flourishing today regards itself as the true benefactor and friend of mankind. As well as the main religions of Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism, Buddhism and Jainism we also have Kabir Panthists, Dadu Panthists, Radha Soamis, Brahma Kumaris, etc. Each major religion has divisions. Followers of every sect believe themselves to be the only true devotees of God and their founder to be the only true Master.

However, does anyone stop to think about what is gained by following these sects? There are two ways in which a person may profit—physically or spiritually. People may well be gaining something financially or materially from following a particular group, but spiritually they are not getting anywhere. If we study these groups' ideologies in an unbiased and sensible fashion, we will have to concede that they all used the name of a past prophet, saint or divine Master, and have gone into business for themselves. Someone makes a living by displaying a Teacher's statue to the public, another promotes himself by getting people to sing the names of past Masters, someone else thinks that reciting the Master's words is the real way to save mankind. But the point is that no one is following the instructions laid down by those Masters in the great scriptures of the world. Everyone just follows like sheep.

'I am an Indian. My body is made from the same earth as yours. As a fellow human being I desire the well-being of this country, and not only this country, but of all people throughout the world. Dharma is that which gives salvation. I am revealing the same true Knowledge which each realized Master revealed in his own time to all aspirants, without discrimination. Our leaders don't have time to hear about spirituality or to know it. They are busy trying to eradicate untouchability. They talk about building up moral character, about unity and cooperation, but they don't know how to remove that sense of separateness which poisons man's mind. Only spirituality has the power to do that. I am teaching the Dharma which benefits and liberates everyone, because it is the same for everyone. Only by receiving the Knowledge of God's Holy Name and Light from the Satguru and meditating on it can one achieve liberation. This is the eternal and imperishable religion, the true Dharma. All other religions change. I am presenting the truths of this eternal religion to you. Religion is for human beings, and I regard you all as fellow human beings. Only man can talk about spiritual wisdom and realize it. That is why all the Teachers and scriptures emphasized the importance of

the human existence. The Ramayana says that such an incarnation is rare even for the gods and is the doorway to liberation. Guru Nanak said, 'Friends, now that you are human beings you had better meditate on the Holy Name.' Muslims call the human frame *asharfulmulkat* and English-speaking people call it 'the crown of creation.'

'There are three types of people in the world. The first and best type are those who behave like a winnowing fan. In other words, they sift and discard the chaff, the non-essential and flawed and retain the kernels of goodness and virtue. The second category of people are like the mortar and pestle. They grind up everything—the essential and the superficial both—and take in both. The third type are those with no discerning faculty, who are like sieves. They let the non-essential through and block the essential. The wise and prudent are those who are revealed the seed of religion by the Satguru, consolidate their experience of it and make their lives meaningful. But human beings are not humane anymore. They look human but act like wild animals. Man thinks only of how he can cause the maximum suffering to his neighbour. The most powerful nations are busy manufacturing the most powerful bombs to kill the most people. Man is not meant to do that. A humane person is always concerned for the welfare of others. So if people don't work for the sake of other people, who do they think will do it? Birds and animals?

'People talk about religion and God-realization and praise at the top of their voices the previous holy Masters, but they do the exact opposite of what those Masters taught. So what was the use, in the long run, of all those great souls' coming into this world, if people have become more and more bloodthirsty? People act no better than dogs. A dog won't let a strange dog enter his street. Human mentality has become just like that. Even though Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists, Sikhs and Christians have all been created by the same God, whom they all call the Lord of the world and Sustainer of all, and even though they have names for Him, still

moulvis, padres, pandits, priests and other religious brokers tear this world apart with their quarrelling.

'Hindus consider serving and worshipping cows to be part of their religion, while Muslims regard killing and eating cows to be part of theirs. Hindus wear a sacred thread, while Muslims consider this sacrilegious. The majority of Hindus worship idols while Muslims are totally opposed to this. Millions of people have been sacrificed on the altar of religion. The partition of India was due to religious differences.

'Is this religion? If a religion can't protect and save us it doesn't deserve to be called religion. True Dharma brings people together and increases their mutual love, but that which passes for religion nowadays only sets people against each other, resulting in bloodshed.

'God's laws are the same for all. Everyone's body is made from the same five elements. Everyone is born and dies in the same way. Everyone's eyes are for seeing. Everyone's ears are for hearing. Everyone's hunger is relieved by eating and his thirst by drinking water. The same sun and moon shine on us all. This proves that God, Who runs the entire Creation, has made one set of rules for all people, no matter what their religion or country. God's laws are the same for all. The only difference is the way we express them in our various languages and dialects. But calling something by different names doesn't mean that its properties change.

'Water is called by different names, but its thirst-quenching property doesn't change. In the same way, giving different names or definitions to the Supreme Power does not make His intrinsic Nature, His real Form, different for different people. Sugar tastes sweet to everyone, and similarly, the thing which is the true essence of religion brings joy and bliss to everyone, protects everyone and can liberate everyone.

'If you go into it carefully, you will find that all the holy Masters realized the True Reality themselves and inspired others to realize it too. They gave others the Knowledge by which they

could do so. That which Prophet Mohammed called *Ilahi-Noor* and *Pak Nam*, Guru Nanak called *Chanda* and *Sat Nam*. Christ called it *Light* and *Word of God*. In the Ramayana it is known as *Param Prakash* and *Ram Nam*. The Gita calls it *Universal Form* and *Akshar Brahm*. All the Masters in their respective languages taught others to know the same Truth. Nothing is superior to religion in bringing peace and joy to the human heart and spirit. Religion is the only thing which engenders mutual love, affection and tolerance between people. It keeps them from wrong-doing. Religion is the power which is the benefactor and deliverer of all, and to this day it has not been to anyone's detriment, nor will it ever be, to follow the path of Dharma. That is why all the saints and divine Masters, in their own languages and time, urged others to realize the one and only Truth.

'Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Zoroastrianism and Buddhism are the six major religions of the world and their principal scriptures are the Rigveda, Koran, Bible, Torah, Zend Avesta and Tripitaka. Any impartial and in-depth comparative study of these holy books reveals that they are all talking fundamentally about the same things. We find similarities in their stories, parables and sayings, and it seems as if they have all sprung from the same source. They all offer succour and peace to the suffering soul. However, the religious middlemen of all countries, whether pandits or priests, moulvis, padres or lamas, have used their countries' unique customs, habits and languages as the foundation for starting a multiplicity of sects. It is all pure selfishness. The followers of any sect are supposed to believe only in that sect's teachings and read only its scriptures. Calling such narrow-mindedness 'faith', they stay far removed from the truth. They call the believers of other religions heathen and so they fight. Instead of the peace and happiness promised them, all they get is hate, suffering and intolerance. When such a situation gets too much out of control, a great saint or Divine Messenger appears on the scene in whichever country has the greatest need of him at the time. Then, of course, the followers of that land's prevailing

religion oppose him. The followers of any religion should open their books and see how their prophet or Teacher was persecuted. Christ was crucified, Mohammed was persecuted by Kureşh, the High Priest of Mecca. Shams Tabriz was skinned alive. St. Mansur was crucified. The priests of Benares plotted to kill Tulsidas. Kabir and Guru Nanak were thrown in jail. Rama and Krishna were exiled. Many attempts were made to kill St. Meera Bai.

Divine Teachers incarnate when the Truth becomes obscured by ignorance and lies. No matter what obstacles come in their path, they don't stop until they have completed their mission. They don't teach anything new or strange, but resurrect the true teachings and spread them anew."

Zoroaster, the prophet of the Parsees, said, "I believe in and revere all Masters before me. They were all pointing the way to righteousness."

Lord Buddha said, "There have been several Buddhas prior to me and there will be others after me. I have come to spread anew the Light of old."

The Jain Masters said, "Tirthankars keep on coming into this world to teach people the same True Way."

The Bible says, "There is nothing new under the sun." Jesus also said, "I have not come to destroy the scriptures, but to fulfill them."

The Koran says, "The Koran is that self-existent Truth to which all scriptures testify, so they are all true." (Bakrah 91) and "And nothing has been revealed to you which has not been revealed by the divine messengers of yore." (Hamim 43)

So the wise person listens to the living Teacher, verifies his teachings by the holy books of his own religion and, ignoring all opposition, pursues the path of Truth. Such people have always profited from the presence of the living Master, are profiting now, and will always profit. On the other hand, those who don't listen carefully to what the Master says don't reap any benefit, so they turn against him. Then, after he has departed from this world, they create a new religion in his name and lead people astray.

Shri Maharaj Ji continues, "People say that God is seen through faith and reverence. Fine, but their faith should be in the Truth. Untruth doesn't lead to Truth just because we sincerely believe in it. For example, all the saints have taught that the world is like a dream. Even if a person believes that and passes his life serving that ideal, he can't realize God. Caustic lime and sugar both are white, but if you believe the lime to be sugar and try to eat it, you'll blister your mouth. So true faith means knowing the Truth as it is, then trusting it and adhering to it. Not knowing what the Truth is, people trust blindly in showy rituals. Blind faith is not enough, because people follow ritual and dogma but no real impression is made on their hearts and minds. They are not satisfied inwardly nor are their minds under control. Lord Krishna said that if a person's mind is not under his control he is neither a yogi nor a sannyasi. He is just a hypocrite. Hypocritical devotion never lasts. For example, suppose you think that going to temples or bathing in holy rivers is devotion. If you come down with a fever you can't visit temples or bathe in rivers. If you are paralyzed you can't throw oblations into a sacred fire. The same applies to Namaz, the Muslim system of prayers, and others. None of the devotional practices which people do is true devotion, nor do the scriptures deem them imperative? Followers of orthodox Hinduism believe statues of Rama and Krishna to be God. They bathe and dress them. They offer them food. But if those statues cannot eat, what is the use of giving them food?

Many Hindus worship Shivalingams as Shiva Himself and pour Ganges water on them, saying that the Ganges springs from the matted locks of Lord Shiva. But if this is so, then what difference will a single pot of water make? But people don't know the inner meaning of all these things, nor do they care. They follow these rituals blindly, just for show.

Once Guru Nanak visited Hardwar. He saw a devotee throwing potfuls of water at the sun. He asked him what he was doing. The man answered that he was offering water to the Sun god. So Guru Nanak turned in the other direction and started

throwing water. The devotee asked, 'What are you doing?' Guru Nanak replied, 'My farm is in Punjab, so I am watering my fields.' The devotee was bewildered and asked, 'But how will the water reach that far?' Guru Nanak replied, 'Well, if the water you threw can reach the sun, which is much further away than Nankani, I thought that I could easily water my fields from here.' This opened the man's eyes and made him think.

'Guru Nanak sang in one of his hymns that if a person goes even to a holy place with evil intentions, not does he not only not cleanse himself of sin, but comes back with ten times more!

'St. Kabir was once invited by some pilgrims to accompany them on their tour of holy places. Kabir could not go, but gave them a bitter gourd and asked them to dip it a few times in the water wherever they took a ritual bath. So those pilgrims took the gourd with them and visited all 68 holy places, dunking the gourd wherever they themselves bathed. When they returned they gave it back to Kabir, who ground it in to powder and distributed it. Accepting it as a saint's prashad, they ate it. Kabir asked, "How does it taste?" They answered, "Sir, it is very bitter." So Kabir explained, "If, after all that washing, the gourd couldn't lose its bitterness, how could your minds lose their impurities?"

'In other words, just bathing in a river won't purify mind. Only meditation can do that. If bathing was all that is necessary for salvation, why aren't frogs and fish, which take birth, live and die in the Ganges, liberated? If ritual washing brings salvation, then where is the need for following a Guru and doing meditation? What is the need for service? The scriptures all say that a person who wishes to know the mysteries of the Spirit and who wants to purify his mind must let go of every kind of vanity and take refuge in the Master, serve him sincerely and honestly in every way and prostrate to him. When the Master is pleased, the devotee should humbly ask for the secret Knowledge. Sahjo Bai said,

अइसठ तीरथ गुरु चरणन पर्वी होत अखण्ड ।
सहजो ऐसा धाम नहि, सकल अण्ड ब्रह्मण्ड ॥

'There is no place in the entire universe, including the 68 places of pilgrimage, holier than the feet of the Master.'

What is the Nectar of Immortality and where is it to be found? At the holy places? People go there to worship the gods who supposedly drink the Nectar, but just following tradition blindly won't do you any good. Now, if you immerse yourself in the Ganges of satsang you will definitely find out how to drink that Nectar.

People go for the whey and ignore the cream. Meera Bai said,

माखन-माखन संतन खायो, छछ जगत बरतानी ।

'Saints eat butter while everyone else content themselves with the whey.'

'The 'butter', or Nectar, i.e. the essence, is the Holy Name of God. It is also called the True Name, the 'nectarful Name' or the 'immortal Name'. Saints knew how to experience this Nectar, which is why they meditated on the Holy Name. The rest of the world extracts the buttermilk and throws away the butter. The whey has no substance—the essence of the milk is no longer in it. Those practices which people consider devotional in fact are as insubstantial as whey. As long as there is full cream milk, there is butter, and as long as there is butter there is also whey, but they are integrated and can't be distinguished, nor do they separate of their own accord. First you have to heat the milk, then cool it, and let it form curd. Then you have to churn it to extract butter. You melt the butter to get ghee. The ghee doesn't contain whey. The whey has been part of the mixture up until this point. If a drop of whey falls into the clarified ghee it will be expelled with a spluttering sound.

'The Holy Name is like the butter, the essence interwoven with the whey of maya. Meditation is the churning by which the ghee of divine bliss is extracted. That is why all the saints have instructed us to meditate on God and realize His true Name

within. In the Ramayana it is written, 'The Vedas, Puranas and all saints agree, love the Holy Name which is the giver of everything.'

'People buy pictures of divine Teachers, take them home and worship them, but it doesn't occur to them that all these pictures are products of some artist's imagination. If those artists have never seen God, how can they portray Him correctly? You will find temples to 'Bharat Mata'—Mother India—all over India. Bharat Mata is portrayed as a woman and people worship her statue. But it's useless to try and find that woman because you won't find her. It is simply a statue which certain persons have sculpted for reasons of their own. All the idols of Rama, Krishna and other deities are the products of an artist's or sculptor's imagination. But people follow the priests mindlessly and believe the statues to be God. They waste their lives in vain hopes and expectations, getting nothing at all.

It is written in the scriptures:

'Meditation stems from the form of the Guru,
Worship stems from his holy feet,
Mantras stem from his word,
Liberation stems from his grace.'

All the scriptures teach that we should meditate upon the Guru and worship his feet. Guru explains the substance of the scriptures and by his grace reveals the Divine Light which shines where sun, moon and fire do not. Guru Nanak described it as 'the Light merging into the Light'. When you know that Light, you too can merge in it. A lot of people think that this Light cannot be seen. If it can't be, then is everything written about it in the scriptures false? My message to the people of this world is that they must experience that Light which the various scriptures have called *Noor*, *Chanda*, *Bhargo* and *Divine Light*. When the sun rises the darkness vanishes, along with the fears and difficulties experienced in the dark. Similarly, once a person experiences the Divine Light and Name, he is released from all sufferings. Only the sun has the power to banish night, and only the Guru's Word has the power to

remove your inner darkness. This Word is called *Shankar Bhajan* and *Mahamantra* in the Ramayana and *Pak Nam* by Muslims. This is the real devotion. But people get fooled by external glamour and eloquence which are in fact artificial. People who indulge in such showy displays of devotion try to fool even God, whom in fact they don't even know.

'Not just one religion or sect is stumbling in the dark. The entire human race is. Hindus think that going to holy places and worshipping idols is devotion. Muslims think that saying prayers and visiting Mecca-Medina is devotion. If Hindus don't like the idea of going to Muslim holy places and vice-versa, it means that this type of devotion is sweet for one and bitter for another. Devotion is supposed to bring joy to everyone, so can it suit some and not others? Moreover, no Master or saint to date has ever called the abovementioned practices 'devotion'. Muslims greet each other by saying *salaam*. Hindus say *Namaste* or *Ram, Ram*. So no single practice applies to everyone.

'On one of their festive occasions, Muslims make paper models of the tomb of Imam Hussein and then bury them. Every year on Dussehra Hindus spend millions of rupees making huge effigies of Ravanna and then burning them. Every year millions are spent to acquaint the public with the personality and deeds of Lord Rama, yet nobody learns anything. Rama and Krishna were divine Incarnations, so after all, whatever they said and did must have been for the sake of mankind. People regard Guru Nanak as a great saint. Muslims regard Mohammed as a highly-elevated prophet of God. He must also have worked for the sake of mankind. However, their followers are all antagonistic to each other. So what did these great Masters say was the most beneficial thing for mankind, and which also would suit everyone just as sugar tastes sweet to everyone?

'Statues of deities are not alive yet still there is a peculiar ceremony which Hindu priests perform. They mutter a few mantras and perform a certain ritual and then assure the people, quite wrongly, of course, that the statue's *Pran-pratishtha* or 'life-

investing ceremony' is completed. If pundits have the power to infuse life into a statue, why can't they bring their dead relatives back to life? 'Pran-pratishtha' means worshipping the life-breath, so if that idol is actually lifeless, then what is being worshipped?

'Not one or two but all people have cataracts over their eyes. God dwells in us, but everyone seeks Him outside. All the rituals, recitations, etc. are external. Will a statue of a child or a statue of a cow fulfill your needs? If a stone cow can't give you milk, how will a stone idol make you realize God?

'One young girl, a premie, got married and went to live with her in-laws. She was a very obedient and conscientious girl and got along well with her new relatives. One day her mother-in-law took her to a Devi temple. Outside the temple was a huge stone lion. The girl thought that this was good opportunity to educate her mother-in-law. She stood back from the statue and pretended to be afraid of it. Her mother-in-law tried to reassure her but the girl would not walk past it. Finally the mother-in-law walked up the statue and waved her hand above it, saying, 'See, daughter, it's only a stone lion. It can't do anything.' Then they went inside the temple. The mother-in-law prayed to the statue of the goddess and asked for a boon, and told the girl to do likewise. The wise girl said, 'Mother, if that stone lion couldn't do anything, how will this stone goddess give us anything?' The old lady got the message and finally received Knowledge.

'There are learned pundits and scholars who are experts in the Gita. They will talk for months about a single verse! Thousands of rupees are collected for building Gita temples with statues inside, but people forget about the essential thing which will liberate the soul and which the Gita is all about.

'Some people in Ahmedabad got together and built a magnificent Gita Temple. It had a statue of the Bhagavad Gita symbolised by a woman. As the temple's popularity increased and crowds of devotees came to see it, neighbouring priests and pundits became jealous. They claimed that it was a sacrilege to represent a book, which taught God-realization, by a statue. They

brought in some top pundits from Benares to present their case. These pundits went to the priests of the Gita Temple and said, 'You did a wrong thing by building this statue. The Gita is a book about Knowledge, so why did you represent it by a woman?' The priests replied, 'You've gone to so much trouble to come all the way here. You could have thought about this petty issue back there in Benares. You people have built Ganga temples all along the Ganges from Badrinath to Calcutta. Inside those temples the Ganges is represented as a woman. Thousands of pilgrims go there to worship and offer donations. You get people to come and worship your statues, so why shouldn't we do likewise?' The pundits had no answer to that, and retreated to Benares.

'Many people say that all I do is denounce and criticize and that I don't believe in religion. However, I'm telling you to believe in the one indivisible God Who is absolute Truth, consciousness and bliss, Whose Name is one and the same for everyone in this world. This is understood through meditation. St. Kabir said, 'You twist the rosary beads in your hands and twist your tongue in your mouth, but your mind flies in all directions. This is not meditation.' No external practice can control the mind, so they are not beneficial. If they can't control your mind, how can they liberate you? Liberation comes only when the mind is totally concentrated. 'If you have conquered your mind you have conquered the world.' The tendency of the mind is to run after sense-pleasures. It flows outwards via the senses and believes what it sees and hears. You should always keep a check on the mind to see where it is going. It is very restless and wilful. It brings suffering upon itself. It doesn't remain steady for a moment. It goes wherever it wants. Service, satsang and meditation don't appeal to it. All it wants is worldly pleasure and that's all it thinks about. Fluctuations arise in it constantly like waves on an ocean, and a little worship or scripture-reading is not going to still it. All a person's learning or intelligence can't control it. After all attempts fail one finally has to take refuge in the Satguru.

'The elephant is a mighty animal. It is so strong that it can uproot trees. But that elephant, which can break iron fetters, can be led around by a thin goad. The mind has often been compared to an elephant. Meditation on the Holy Name controls it instantly. The Name has the power to concentrate and still the mind. So, if a disciple has faith in the Name, and lets go of his hopes in worldly pleasures, his mind will definitely come under control.

'The velocity and changeability of the mind is amazing. Sometimes seeing a woman excites it, then sometimes it wants to renounce everything and live in the wilderness. There is only one remedy for it, and that is to constantly remember the Holy Name. Mind, speech and attention are steady and under control in the state of meditation on the Name. Any kind of meditation during which the mind is able to run off towards sense-objects is neither meditation nor worth doing.

'Gita 8:7 says, 'Remember Me constantly and fight.' Turning rosary beads, saying prayers, singing hymns or performing rites and rituals cannot be non-stop actions. But the Lord taught to remember Him constantly. How can that be possible? The Bible also says, 'Pray without ceasing.' Guru Nanak says the same thing: 'Remember the Name while standing, sitting, asleep or awake and you will be successful in all that you do.' So know that technique which you can practise even while you are asleep, and even at the time of death when your mouth will remain either wide open or shut tight. You give plenty of thought to everything else that you do, but none to what you will do as you are dying, when your throat is constricted, you can't utter mantras and your senses are failing. What will help you then? Go and ask your priests and teachers and if nobody else can tell you then come to me.

'If you believe that God is omnipresent, why don't you want to know His omnipresent Name? If everyone would know this Name which already exists inside them, then all those sectarian quarrels would be over. People read books but this indivisible, uninterrupted Name is not found in them. St. Kabir said that

vowels and consonants are connected with Maya and this True Name is not in them.

'We consider someone wealthy if he has a lot of gold, silver and jewels, but in one sense he is merely a pauper, because he will have to leave it all behind when he dies. The truly wealthy person is he who has the treasure of the Holy Name and meditates on it. Everything else has to be left behind. During the partition of India and Pakistan, people had to flee, leaving all their possessions behind. The petty princes lost their states. But the earnings from meditation will go with you.

'Once a Christian priest told me that no one can see God in this life. I replied, 'Very well, so who wrote the Bible? Living or dead people? If living people wrote it they must have experienced something, or did they make it up? Is the Bible a pack of lies, then?'

'I met an American priest and spoke with him at length. I told him, 'There are three kinds of light—sunlight, moonlight and firelight—which all creatures can perceive. But have you seen the fourth light, which the Bible calls the Light of God?' He answered that nobody can see this Light. I told him, 'Then your Bible must be wrong, because it records the experiences of people who saw that Light.' I met another American priest, a Bishop, who came to India in 1961 to attend a religious conference. I asked him, too, if he had seen that Light. He replied, 'Sir, I only have read the Bible. If there is something beyond that, I don't know it.'

'Whether you call it water, *jal*, *neer* or *pani* ti substance is the same and the different names have the same connotation. Muslims call God *Khuda*, because He is self-existent. ('*khud*'). Hindus call Him *Paramatman*, because no soul (atman) is greater than He. They also call Him *Ram*, which means 'the all-pervading'. God is the All-Good. My point is this: know Him as He really is within yourselves and unite your mind with Him. If you don't do it now while you are alive, when will you do it?

'All the religious sects in the world are products of man's ideas. God has no religion. He creates only human beings. Men, on

the other hand, distracted by the variety of physical differences and languages, have built up the barriers of parochialism. Because they don't understand each other, they become antagonistic.

'Some English boys and some Indian boys went to the same school, but they didn't understand each other's language. One rainy day an Englishman's car bogged down in the mud and he couldn't get it back on the road, so he called the boys over to help. They all pushed together and managed to free it. The man was very pleased and gave them 20 rupees. The English boys said, 'We will buy mangoes,' and the Indian boys said in Hindi, 'Hum aam kharidenge', but because they couldn't understand each other, when in fact they had said the same thing, they fell to quarrelling. Luckily someone who knew both languages came along. He listened to both sides and took them to a mango vendor. He asked the English boys, 'Do you want mangoes?' and they replied, 'Yes'. He asked the Indian boys, 'Kya tum aam chahte ho?' and they answered, 'Ha'. So he bought 20 rupees' worth of mangoes and distributed them. All the boys went home satisfied.

'The same thing applies to God and the various names we give to Him. If you ask a Muslim, 'Who created the world?' he'll answer, 'Khuda.' If you ask a Hindu, he'll answer 'Paramatman.' God created neither Hindus nor Muslims. He made human beings, all the same. Due to their lack of understanding, people create religions. If the same Creator made us all, why do we have to create so many differences among ourselves? The differences are all man-made. Now the problem is, how to resolve them? Only devotion can do that, but only the Satguru can teach the universal devotion.

'There was a Muslim saint called Mansur. The story goes that his sister, Shibli, used to visit a holy man for satsang. Her father was suspicious and tried to stop her, but she refused to listen. One day Mansur followed her to find out where she went and what she did.

'Shibli reached the holy man's hut. Several other people had also arrived and satsang went on for quite some time. Mansur

stood behind the hut listening to what the man was saying and observing what was going on. After satsang, the saint told the devotee who was distributing prashad, 'There is a suspicious-looking person standing behind the hut. Give him some prashad, too.' When he heard this, Mansur came out of hiding, fell at the holy man's feet and begged forgiveness. The saint said, 'My son, here we talk about devotion to God. You should also come and enrich your life.'

'Mansur attended satsang daily and became the saint's disciple. His father didn't like the idea of both his children visiting the saint. He had tried to save his daughter and now his son had fallen into the man's clutches. One day he said to Mansur, 'My son, what has that man taught you that has made you become his disciple? I am your father, after all. I have the right to know.' Mansur replied, 'Father, only the Master can reveal it. I also used to think that our ritual prayers were useful and could make us realize Khuda, but I was wrong. Really, only a saint can show the way to Him.'

'The person who wants to realize God must think of Him alone, all the time. There is only one way to realize God, as St. Mansur said,

If you really want to see God face to face,
Remember Him with every breath.
Neither fast nor die of hunger.
Neither go to mosques nor prostrate yourself.
Break the chalice and be intoxicated with Love's wine.
Sweep the cave of your heart with the broom of Love.
Shake off the dust of 'mine' and 'thine'.
Transcend duality.
Drink not from the cup of I-ness,
Rather, drink deep from the cup of Thy-ness.
Break the rosary! Throw the books in the river!
What is the use of scholasticism?
Consign this intellectual vanity to the flames.
Don't think that God is far away.

You are neither Hindu nor Muslim.
 Mansur says, 'O Kazi! Live not on unearned bread.
 Great and true is the Name of God..
 Preach this truth to all.'

'People throughout the world believe in Rama, Krishna, Buddha, Jesus Christ, Mohammed, Guru Nanak, St. Kabir, Tulsidas and other saints, but they don't follow their teachings. If a son believes in his father but doesn't obey him, who would call him a worthy son?

'A hundred wise men agree' is not just a saying, but is a fact. That is why all the saints emphasized the importance of knowing and practising the one universal and true religion. They taught the True Path to illuminate everyone's lives, just as the risen sun gives heat and light to all.

'All the Masters taught man not to steal, lie, or commit adultery. If everyone could practise just these three principles, the world could be peaceful and happy. The saints all said that if an aspirant wants to realize the purpose of his human existence, he must receive Knowledge of the Holy Name and Divine Light from the living Master and practise meditation. Fulfill all your worldly duties and along with that, serve the Master. Now, a lot of people accuse me of heresy. That's all right. Everyone else tells you to twist rosaries, read scriptures, do puja and go to temples. I'll bet I'm the first to tell you to look within yourselves!

'If an enlightened soul talks about the Truth, the world calls him a heretic and a fraud. This much I do say: if you realize that what I am saying is the truth, believe it, and if not, forget it. There is only one religion. Even if a million followers of mine talk about 'Hans Ji Maharaj's religion', they're all wrong. I preach unity and show the practical way to realize it. No great soul ever came to start a new religion. They come to reveal the eternal, original and imperishable Truth which is the same for all mankind.' □

Chapter Thirteen

Shri Hans Ji Maharaj's Message to World Leaders

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Everyone can see for himself what is happening in the world today. Those who are supposed to be the leaders of mankind are engaged in their own selfish pursuits. They all meet each other and hold conferences to solve the problems of food and shelter confronting their nations.

But who took care of us during our nine months in the womb? Who protected us? Who produced milk for us in our mother's breast? Who caused our teeth to emerge and who provided us with different types of nourishment?

Our leaders hold all kinds of conferences in their concern to provide food and shelter, yet at the same time they manufacture nuclear bombs! Nor will they live to see the outcome of their mad arms race. Hiranyakashipu, Duryodhana, Bhishma and other such powerful warriors didn't. Contemporary dictators such as Hitler, Stalin and Lenin didn't. Leaders such as Roosevelt, Chamberlain and India's 'Iron Man' Sardar Patel didn't, nor did Mahatma Gandhi, who, through his campaign of truth and non-violence was able to evict the British from India. If they didn't survive, how will their successors? It is impossible for anyone to live forever. We all have to go through the portals of Death. Food, clothing and shelter are for the maintenance of the body, but what is the purpose of the human body? Is it just to spoil fine silk, wool or pashmina fabrics? Is it just to turn milk, cream, fruit, cereals, desserts and bread into excrement? We ruin the environment by building on it. Even after we die, money is wasted on coffins and memorial services, and good land is used up for graveyards, tombs and mausoleums. Is

this the purpose of human life? To waste natural resources? I humbly request politicians, gurus, saddhus, mahatmas, mandaleshwars, Jagatgurus, mullahs, padres and priests: if you don't realize the Truth, which the Vedas and other scriptures instruct us to know, while you are alive, how will you when you are buried under the ground or when your soul passes into another species?

Before India was free, our respected leaders were obsessed with the idea of evicting the British. The British gave us our freedom and left, and now our top people are busy with our country's welfare and development. Unfortunately they don't know what real welfare is. All the scriptures and all the great masters of the world urged people to know the Truth, otherwise the human lifetime passes in vain. They said,

आहार, निद्रा भय मैथुनादि,—सामान्यमेतत् पशुभिः नराणाम् ।
ज्ञानं हि नराणां अधिकं विशेषं, ज्ञानेन हीना पशुभिः समाना ॥

'Eating, sleeping, fearing and reproduction are common to both man and beast. A man without Spiritual Knowledge is no better than a beast.' Because of fear, for instance, man has manufactured destructive weapons like the atom bomb.

अर्ब-खर्च लौं सम्पदा, उदय अस्त लौ राज ।
तुलसी जो निज मरण है, आवै कौन कज ॥

'Your kingdom may stretch from sunrise to sunset, and your wealth may be incalculable, but if you can't take it with you, then what's it all worth?'

Tulsidas has this to say about someone who owns the world, but doesn't remember God:

भजन करन को आलसी, भोजन को होशियार ।
तुलसी ऐसे जीव को, बार-बार धिक्कार ॥

'Shame on those who are lazy when it comes to meditation but active when it comes to food.'

These are the kind of people that Surdas called thoroughly ungrateful:

मो सम कौन कटिल खल कामी ।
जिन सुन्दर तन दियो, ताहि विसरायो, ऐसो नमक हरामी ॥
भर-भर उदर विषय को ध्यावे, जैसे सूकर ग्रामी ॥
हरिजन छोड़ि हरि विमुखन की, निशिदिन करत गुलामी ॥
पापी कौन बड़ो है मोते, सब पतितन में नाभी ॥
सूरदास को ठौर कहाँ है, सुनिये श्रीपति स्वामी ॥

'Can there be anyone as sly, bestial and sensual as I? How ungrateful I am, for I have forgotten Him Who bestowed this precious human body on me. Constantly trying to satisfy my hunger, I run after desires like a village pig after refuse. I serve the men of the world, forsaking the men of God. Surdas says, 'Hear me, Lord!

Can there be a place in Your heart for one such as I?'

Such people are no better off than pigs. There are willing to bow and scrape any number of times to fill their bellies, but they never remember, even in a dream, that Great Power which gave them their body. Is what everyone is busy with, the aim of human life? In the Bhagavad Gita, 4:34, Lord Krishna said,

तद्विद्धि प्रणिपातेन परिप्रश्नेन सेवया ।
उपदेक्ष्यन्ति ते ज्ञानं ज्ञानिनस्तत्त्वदर्शिनः ॥

'Seek the enlightened seer, the knower of the soul, prostrate to him, ask him for Knowledge and when you have pleased him with your service, he will reveal to you the Knowledge.'

That Knowledge, to receive which the Gita says you should prostrate and ask a great soul, is the Knowledge of the Name of

God. All other scriptures say the same thing. Lord Krishna says further:

तस्मात्सर्वेषु कालेषु मामनुस्मर युध्य च ।
मय्यर्पितुमनोबुद्धिर्मा मे वैष्यस्य संशयम् ॥

'Arjuna, at all times remember Me and fight.'

Guru Nanak said the same thing:

उठत, बैठत, सोवत, जागत नाम । कह नानक सद् भये, तिन्ह के काम ।

'Remember the Name while standing, sitting, asleep or awake, and you will be successful in all that you do.'

This Name, which can be remembered even while you are asleep and dreaming, is beyond vowels and consonants. This is the same Name which Dhruva and Prahlad, the devotees of old, remembered and which Lord Shiva always remembers:

महामंत्र जोड़ जपत महेस् । कासी मुकुति हेतु उपदेस् ॥
नाम प्रभाउ जान सिव नीको । कलकूट फलु दीन्ह अमी को ॥
महिमा जासु जान गनराऊ । प्रथम पूजियत नाम प्रभाऊ ॥
सुमिरि पवनसुत पावन नाम् । अपने बस करि राखे राम् ॥

'Lord Shiva Himself meditates on the Mahamantra and reveals it to the people of Kasi to ensure their salvation.'

It is called Mahamantra because it has no beginning or end. On the other hand, all other mantras have a beginning and an end. This is the Name by which Shiva is said to have turned poison into Nectar. This is the Name, by meditating on which Hanuman had even Lord Rama in the palm of his hand. This Holy Name is within every being. God is in every heart so His Light (Form) and Name must be, too.

घट में है सूझे नहीं, लानत ऐसी जिन्द ।
तुलसी या संसार को, भयो मोतियाबिंद ॥

मृगनाभि कुंडल बसे, मृग ढूँढ़े वन माहि ।
ऐसे घट घट ब्रह्म हैं, दुनियाँ जाने नाहि ॥

'God is within every creature, but if a person doesn't see Him, his life is in vain. He is like someone with cataracts over his eyes. The musk deer searches everywhere for the source of the scent which emanates from its own navel. Similarly, God is in every heart, but people don't realize.'

Guru Nanak said,

काहे रे! वन खोजन जाई ।
सर्व निवासी सदा अलेपा, तोरे ही संग समाई ॥
पुष्प मध्य ज्यों बास बसत है। मुकर माहि जस छाई ।
ऐसे ही हरि बसत निरन्तर । घट ही खोजो भाई ॥
अन्तर बाहर हरि को बासा, यह गुरु ज्ञान बताई ।
जन नानक बिन आपा चीन्हे, मिटे न भ्रम की काई ॥

Why are you searching for Him in the jungle? He is everywhere, He dwells within all, exists everywhere and is with you like the fragrance of a flower which permeates the entire plant. God is in everything, so look for Him within. The Guru unravels the mystery of how God exists both inside you and out. Without the Guru you can't realize yourself. The moss of confusion won't be removed.'

Lord Krishna said in the Gita, 15:6

न तद्भास्यते सूर्यो न शशांको न पावकः ।
यद्गत्वा न निवर्तन्ते तद्धाम परमं मम ॥

'There is a place beyond the light of sun, moon and fire, reaching which the soul never has to return.'

In other words, it is liberated from the wheel of birth and

death and is freed from all worldly sufferings. Humanity's welfare lies in knowing the real purpose of life.

When will you realize that Light, which is called by different scriptures *Bhargo*, *Param Prakash*, *Noor*, *Chanda*, *Divine Light*, etc? When you are in your grave or reborn in another species? If you haven't been able to control your mind and still it while you are alive as a human being, do you think you'll be able to after you die? This can be achieved only by living human beings if it is to be achieved at all, because animals can't practise such techniques. Most people think that stilling the mind is extremely difficult, and so did Arjuna:

चञ्चलं हि मनः कृष्ण प्रमाथि बलवद्दृढम् ।
तस्याहं निग्रहं मन्ये वायोरिव सुदुष्करम् ॥

'O Krishna! The mind is restless, wayward and stubborn. It seems to me to be as difficult to control as the wind is difficult to stop.' (Gita 6:34)

Lord Krishna answers,

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

'Undoubtedly, the mind is restless and difficult to control, but it can be through non-attachment and practice.'

So now we have to consider which method should be practised and to which things we should be unattached. Does non-attachment mean living in a forest or in the mountains? Will so doing control the restlessness of the mind? Saints and mahatmas have always instructed that the mind should be contained within the Self, and that its fluctuations should be prevented from arising, but people put their minds into purely external techniques such as pilgrimages, prayers, rituals, going to temples, churches, mosques and gurudwaras, reading scriptures, etc. People flock to Mecca,

Medina, Mathura, Badrinath, etc. but these are all external. The abovementioned practices can never bring the mind under control. People don't know the correct internal technique for controlling mind, and so they are caught up in the external. But, as a saint said,

सुमिरन सुरति लगाय कर, मुख से कुछ ना बोल ।
बाहर के पट देय कर, अन्तर के पट खोल ॥

'Merge your mind with the Holy Name, there's no need to say anything. Close the outer doors and open the inner.'

Going anywhere or chanting anything is nothing more than physical exercise! Hindus sing in Arti :

ॐ जय जगदीश हरे
तुम हो एक अगोचर सबके प्राणपति ।
किस विधि मिलूं दयामय तुमको मैं कुमति ॥

'You are imperceptible, the Lord of all that lives. How can a person such as I possibly see You?'

They mouth the words, 'Lord, You cannot be perceived through the senses,' yet when they see an idol they say that they are seeing God! Lord Krishna himself said,

न तु मां शक्यसे द्रष्टुमनेनैव स्वचक्षुषा ।
दिव्यं ददामि ते चक्षुः पश्य मे योगमैश्वरम् ॥

'You cannot see Me with your ordinary eyes, therefore I give you the eye of Knowledge through which you may see My Divine Form.' (11:8)

People chant mantras such as the Gayatri, but where is it written in the Vedas that these mantras have to be chanted? The Gayatri Mantra says, 'O Lord, I meditate on Your Light.' So if they don't see that Light, what is the use of reciting the mantra? St. Kabir said,

कहते हैं करते नहीं, मुँह के बड़े लबार ।
तिन्ह के मुँह काले होंगे, साई के दरबार ॥

'Those who talk a lot but don't do anything are just idle babblers. They will be disgraced in the Court of God.'

Having received a human body and then losing it to go into an inferior species is a disgrace in itself. No scriptures or rituals can save you from suffering then. No Divine Master ever taught that these external practices are necessary. Three things are necessary for knowing Truth. Firstly, the words of the Scriptures, such as this reference from the Ramayana:

नाम प्रभाउ शम्भु अविनाशी । साज अमंगल मंगल राशी ॥

'Shiva knows thoroughly the power of the Name, because of which He is the font of blessings, even though He looks inauspicious.'

All the scriptures glorify the Name. Secondly, the words of the Guru:

बन्दऊँ गुरु पद कंज, कृपासिन्धु नररूप हरि ।
महामोह तम पुंज, जासु वचन रवि कर निकर ॥

'I bow to the Feet of my Guru, who is the ocean of mercy and God in human form. His word dispels ignorance as the sun disperses darkness.'

Thirdly, the Guru's Word revealed within the Self. If it is not already existing there, then it is not the True Word. The True Name is that which is praised by the scriptures, explained and revealed by the Guru, and which is already present in the Self. Guru Nanak said,

एकरो सुमरो नानक, जल थल रह्यो समाय ।
दूजा कहे सुमरिये, जमते ही मर जाय ॥

'Meditate on the One Word which permeates land, water and air. Why meditate on any other word which has a beginning and an end?'

This Word permeates earth, water, air and all creatures, but only human beings can know what it is. So the saints and scriptures of all creeds teach us to search within and realize. You won't find it outside. Mantras and tantras all are creations of man. St. Kabir said,

मंत्र तंत्र सब झूठ हैं, मत भ्रमो कोई संसार ।
सार शब्द जाने बिना, कोई न उतरसी पार ॥
शब्द बिना सुरति औंधरी, कहो कहाँ को जाय ।
द्वार न पावे शब्द का, फिर फिर भटका खाय ॥
सहजे ही धुन होत है, हर दम घट के माँहि ।
सुरत शब्द मेला भया, मुख की हाजत नाहि ॥

'All mantras and tantras are false. Don't anyone be fooled. You can't cross the worldly ocean without knowing the Name which is the essence of all. Without the Name, the mind is lost in the dark...Without finding the 'exit' of the Name, you have to continue revolving in the cycle of birth and death. The most natural sound is within you all the time.'

He further said,

माला तो कर में फिरे, जीभ फिरे मुख माँहि ।
मनुवाँ तो दसों दिसि फिरे, यह तो सुभिरन नाहि ॥
माला फेरत युग गया, पाया न मन का फेर ।
कर का मणका डार दे, मन का मणका फेर ॥

'You twist the rosary beads with your fingers and twist your tongue in your mouth, while your mind flies in all directions. This is not meditation. Ages have passed turning rosaries, but still you don't know where the mind goes. Break the external rosary and turn the inner.'

If tantras and mantras can't control your mind, what is the use of repeating them? If all the scriptures say that we should experience the Inner Light, but you have never seen it, does this mean that the scriptures are wrong in saying that there is a Light which is not the light of sun, moon and fire?

So many meetings, marches and assemblies are held. The top people of every country are busy formulating grand plans and projects for the welfare of their people. But what is it which will truly benefit all mankind? All the leading personalities of the world should get together to decide what is Truth and rid the world of all the cheats and frauds.

Everyone talks about Yoga, but what is it? They don't know what it really means. *Yama, niyama, pranayama, asana, pratyahara, dhyana* and *samadhi* are the eight steps of Yoga. But I ask you, if the object of meditation is unknown, how is meditation possible? Then *samadhi* is impossible and the highest Reality is known only in the state of *samadhi*. All else is in vain, and if not, someone please tell me on what we should meditate so that the mind may be brought under control. Lord Rama said,

बड़े भाग्य मानुष तन पावा । सुर दुर्लभ सब ग्रंथन्हि गावा ॥
कबहुँ कि करि करुणा नर देही । देत ईश बिन हेत सनेही ॥

'A soul is extremely fortunate to get a human body, which is rare even for the gods to get.'

A lot of people read the Ramayana and learned academics give their interpretations of it. So if they understand that this human form is rare even for a god to get, why do our religious teachers waste their precious life worshipping deities? Obviously they don't understand. Lord Krishna said, (Gita, 9:1-3)

इदं तु ते गुह्यतमं प्रवक्ष्याम्यनसूयवे ।
ज्ञानं विज्ञानसहितं यज्ज्ञात्वा मोक्षयसेऽशुभात् ॥
राजविद्या राजगुह्यं पवित्रमिदमुत्तमम् ।
प्रत्यक्षावगमं धर्म्यं सुसुखं कर्तुमव्ययम् ॥

अश्रद्धावानाः पुरुषा धर्मस्यास्य परंतप ।
अप्राप्त मां निवर्तन्ते मृत्युसंसारवर्त्मनि ॥

'Arjuna, to you who does not find fault in others, I will reveal this most secret Knowledge knowing which you will be free from all suffering. This Knowledge is the purest and greatest of all sciences and secrets. It is experienced directly, it is easy to perform, and is imperishable. But someone who has no faith in this Knowledge, instead of attaining Me, wanders around in this mortal world.'

This Knowledge is called the sovereign science and is more secret than anything else. Vedantic scholars teach us to say, *Aham Brahmasmi*—'I am God'. You are God, but you have forgotten yourself. But the point is, if God has forgotten Himself, then who'll remember? Realization of God is the object of spiritual practice, not the means. The Lord Himself called this Knowledge easy to practise.

The Ramayana says,

भक्ति स्वतंत्र सकल सुख खानी । बिनु सतसंग न पावहि प्राणी ॥

'Devotion is independent and a mine of joy, but is impossible without satsang.'

Those without faith cannot realize Him. Once God is realized, there is no longer any question of having faith. Faith is necessary in spiritual practice.

The Gita, 11:12, says,

दिवि सूर्यसहस्रस्य भवेद्युगपदुत्थिता ।
यदि भाः सदृशी सा स्याद्भासस्तस्य महात्मनः ॥

'The Light of a thousand suns could not produce the Light which Arjuna saw.'

So if you don't see this Light while you are a human being, will you be able to see it if you are reborn as a pig, a donkey or a dog?

न वेदयज्ञाध्ययनेन दानेन च क्रियार्थिन तपोभिरुग्रैः ।
एवंरूपः शक्य अहं नृलोके द्रष्टुं त्वदन्येन कुरुप्रवीर ॥

‘(My Cosmic Form) cannot be seen by practising rituals, nor by charity, fasting, austerities, studying Vedas nor practising techniques.’ (11:48)

नाहं वेदैर्न तपसा न दानेन न चेज्यया ।
शक्य एवंविधो द्रष्टुं द्रष्टुंवानसि मां यथा ॥
भक्त्या त्वनन्या शक्य अहमेवंविधोऽभर्जुन ।
ज्ञातुं द्रष्टुं च तत्त्वेन प्रवेष्टुं च परंतप ॥
मत्कर्मकृन्मत्परमो मद्भक्तः संगवर्जितः ।
निर्वैरः सर्वभूतेषु यः स मामेति पाण्डव ॥

‘Neither by Vedas nor by charity, austerities nor rituals can this four-faceted Form of Mine be seen as you have seen it. (11:53)

‘Only by singleminded devotion can I be seen, and in reality known and even entered into, as I can be realized only by Love.’ (11:54)

‘Only he who works solely to attain Me, who is surrendered to Me in word, thought and deed, who is devoted to Me and who feels neither attachment nor hostility to any being, only such a person of singleminded devotion can realize Me.’ (11:55)

St Tulsidas said,

कहहु भक्ति पथ कौन प्रयासा, योग न मख, तप, उपवासा ।

‘Yoga, yagya, chanting, fasting, austerities, ritual worship and recitations, etc. are not necessary in the path of devotion.’

I urge and encourage everyone, throughout the world, to know and practise this true devotion (whether one realizes it via dedicated action or by Yoga) by which we can achieve true peace. □

Chapter Fourteen A Divine Personality

Shri Hans Ji Maharaj worked tirelessly for four decades—from 1926 to 1966—spreading the Knowledge of God throughout India. The majority of Indians, influenced by Western education and culture, had all but forgotten the meaning and significance of *para vidya*, the transcendental spiritual Knowledge which grants the soul liberation. The illiterate masses were trapped in the vise of superstition, idolatry and rituals of the Pauranic tradition. The last century had seen the rise of reformist groups such as the Arya Samaj and Brahmo Samaj, which attempted to eradicate the social evils and superstitions which had flourished in the name of religion. These organizations, however, remained by and large social reform movements which didn’t place any particular importance upon spirituality and realization of the Para Vidya, even though this Knowledge is glorified in the Vedas, Upanishads and other scriptures. The Mundaka Upanishad mentions two types of Knowledge — Para, or Knowledge of God, and *apara*, or knowledge of anything lesser. In verse 1-1-5 it says,

तत्रापरा, ऋग्वेदो यजुर्वेदः सामवेदोऽथर्ववेदः, शिक्षा कल्पो व्याकरणं निरुक्तं छन्दो ज्योतिषमिति । अथ परा, यया तदक्षरमधिगम्यते ॥

“Rig Veda, Yajur Veda, Sama Veda, Artharva Veda, as well as phonetics, rituals, grammar, etymology, philosophy and astrology constitute the lower or *apara* knowledge, while the higher, or Para, is that by which the Eternal and Imperishable is realized.”

The sage of the Taittiriya Upanishad praises the Para Vidya, saying,

एष आदेशः । एष उपदेशः । एषा वेदोपनिषत् ।
एतदनुशासनम् । एवमुपासितव्यम् । एवम् चैतदुपास्यम् ।।

"The Knowledge which I have transmitted to you is my commandment. This is my advice to you, this is the essence of the Vedas and the sovereign secret. This is the injunction of the Vedas and other scriptures. Practise this Knowledge and live according to it." (11-6)

Shri Hans Ji Maharaj revealed the practical knowledge of the Para Vidya, which had well-nigh vanished from India, to all aspirants irrespective of caste and creed.

It is possibly too soon to arrive at a precise evaluation of the contribution of his personality and teaching to the modern scene. Undoubtedly, however, history will testify that this unique spiritual giant cleansed religion of the dross of ritual and superstition that had obscured it, and enlarged the mental and spiritual horizons of millions of men and women. He revealed to all aspirants the spiritual entity within themselves. He offered to the public the foundation which underlies all religions and which is itself the unifying factor. He claimed that ritualistic and ceremonial aspects of religion which make them all seem disparate are actually merely the sheath which encloses the sword. A realized soul appreciates the value of the sword itself and not the sheath.

Religion has become almost a non-entity. The mushrooming of sects is due to ignorance of the Truth. These sects oppose each other. Is this Dharma? Is this true religion? Any religion which can't protect us is not religion at all. Man's natural religion teaches love and brotherhood. What is known as religion today is actually destructive, dividing people into warring groups and promoting discord and strife.

The educated of the world make even more of a mess of religion than the illiterate. These 'educated fools' whose knowledge extends only as far as the scriptures, are like the 'leaf-counters' immersed in trivia who fail to eat the mangoes. That is

why Shri Hans Ji Maharaj denounced them as 'educated parrots', who talk about religion while having no inner experience of it. Shri Maharaj Ji used to illustrate his point with this story:

"A mahatma taught a parrot to say, 'The hunter will come, he'll spread a net and throw some seeds, but don't get caught.' He released the parrot back into the flock and soon all the parrots had learned the same lines. One day a hunter did come and throw a net and seeds, and all the parrots, chanting the same lesson, flew into the net and were caught. This is man's predicament. He talks about God but is caught in the net of Maya."

Maharaj Ji always quoted great masters such as Guru Nanak, Shri Ramakrishna and St Kabir, because they were realized souls and true religion is a matter of realization. At first, Shri Maharaj Ji's teachings mostly affected the urban lower middle classes as well as farmers and agricultural workers from the villages. The Brahmins, the priestly class, either opposed him or regarded him with supercilious indifference, since, in their opinion, he had no formal knowledge of Sanskrit nor displayed any form of academic erudition. He spoke the language of the common people. The educated upper classes were also not attracted to him because they were engrossed in the pursuit of material happiness.

Maharaj Ji's love for the poor was proverbial. He loved them for their simplicity and humility. As Lord Rama said, "Only the pure in heart, in whom there is no guile or duplicity, can attain Me." Jesus Christ said, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

Shri Maharaj Ji did not for a moment wish to start a new sect or creed. He often said, "There is no greater traitor than the man who tries to set up a new sect in my name. I've come to unite people, not to start a new religion. Dharma is the original and eternal thing, while religions, new or old, are the root of contention."

He initiated thousands upon thousands into the true Knowledge and gave their lives new meaning. He sowed the seed of humanity in their hearts.

In the last two or three years of his life, Maharaj Ji was all dance and bliss. Like Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, he was in a state of divine ecstasy. Divinity manifested in him to such an extent that no one who came within his ambit could fail to have a spiritually elevating experience. He was the ocean of immortal Nectar in human form and upon the devotees who loved him with all their hearts, he, overflowing with love and compassion, showered this Nectar, saturating those thirsty souls.

He concluded his earthly drama on 19th July, 1966 and merged back into the Infinite whence he came, but even now his immortal words still ring in our ears:

"Never mind. If you fall you can stand up again. Don't be afraid. Just keep on going, no matter how many times you may stumble. Once you have turned to me and taken refuge in me, your salvation is assured. All you have to do is firmly attach yourself to the Holy Word. I myself will draw you upwards. Meditate on the Divine Light and Holy Name. I've closed the doors of hell for you.

"The true Guru is he who can explain what religion really is. Religion means seeing God face-to-face and knowing His eternal Name. The one who can reveal such Knowledge is the Perfect Master, the Satguru. No one else in the world, besides him, is perfect." □

Glossary

Acharya—a teacher, especially of scriptures.

Agya—the command of the Master.

Agya chakra—'Third Eye'; the centre of spiritual energy between the eyebrows.

Ajapa jap—the unchantable mantra.

Akhand—indivisible.

Arti—hymn of praise sung morning and evening.

Arya Samaj—an influential socio-religious reform movement started in 19th century by Swami Dayanand.

Asana—seat; bodily posture.

Ashram—hermitage; a retreat for spiritual practice.

Atmagyan—Knowledge of the soul.

Aum—the mystic syllable symbolizing God.

Avatar—a Divine Incarnation.

Baba—old man; respectful term of address to elders.

Bai Ji—a lady mahatma.

Bhagavad Gita—the great Hindu scripture written in the form of a dialogue between Krishna and his disciple, Arjuna.

Bhakti—devotion.

Brahm(an)—the Absolute Reality.

Brahmacharya—vow of celibacy.

Brahm Muhurta—the holy time between 2 and 4 a.m. most suitable for meditation.

Brahma-Vishnu-Shiva—Creator, Preserver, Destroyer—the Hindu Trinity.

Brahmin—the priestly caste.

Chakras—the centres of spiritual energy along the spine.

Charnamrit—sanctified water in which the Master has dipped his feet.

Das Bodh—the classic work of St Samarth Ramdas dealing with all aspects of devotion.

Darshan—the sanctifying and elevating presence of the Master.

Dharana—sustained concentration.

Dharma—righteousness; the innate and natural religion of all human beings

Dhyana—meditation.

Giridhar Gopal—epithet of Krishna.

Guru Granth Sahab—holy scripture of the Sikhs.

Gurudwara—Sikh temple.

Guru Puja—festival honouring the spiritual Master, held on the full moon day in July.

Gunās—qualities; the active forces of Nature.

Gyani—a realized soul; one who has Knowledge of Soul.

Hanuman Chalisa—a forty-couplet text praising Hanuman.

Holi—spring festival (commemorating Prahlād's victory over his wicked aunt, Holika) during which Indians throw coloured water on each other.

Ida—psychic nerve current flowing in the left nostril and along the left side of the spine.

Jiva—the embodied soul.

Kali Yuga—one of the four Ages in a cycle of Creation. The other three are Sat Yuga, Treta Yuga, Dwapar Yuga.

Kazi—Muslim judge.

Lakshmi-Uma-Saraswati—the consorts of Vishnu, Shiva and Brahma.

Mahanirvana—a realized soul's passing from the body into eternal Samadhi, i.e. physical death.

Mahatma—*lit.* 'great soul'; a devotee who has taken the vow of renunciation and who is empowered by the Master to initiate others into Holy Knowledge.

Manasrovar Lake—the holy lake in Tibet.

Mandaleshwar—the head of an ashram; an abbot.

Mantra—incantation.

Marwari—a Rajasthani caste; wealthy business community.

Maya—the illusory power of God.

Moksha, mukti—liberation.

Nirguna—attributeless.

Nirvikalpa—without any mental fluctuations.

Niyama—observances.

Patwari—village notary or accountant who registers land transactions and revenue.

Pingala—the psychic nerve current flowing through the right nostril and along the right side of the spine.

Prakriti—Nature.

Prana—vital energy; life-force.

Pranayama—control of breath and prana.

Prashad—sanctified offerings to Guru or deity.

Pratyahara—disconnection of the senses from their stimuli.

Prem—Divine Love.

Pundit—brahmin who is learned in scripture, rituals, astrology, etc.

R.S.S.—'Rashtriya Swayam Sewak Sangham'—a quasi-political party.

Raksha Bandhan—Hindu festival during which girls tie special bracelets on their brothers and ask for their protection. Devotees do the same with their Guru.

Ramayana—the great Hindu epic portraying the life of Rama, originally written in Sanskrit by the sage Valmiki.

Ramacharitamansa—vernacular rendition of the Ramayana by Tulsidas.

Saddhu (sannyasi)—Hindu holy man; a renunciate.

Samadhi—the superconscious state in which God is realized.

Satguru—the spiritual Master who can reveal the True Name and Light of God.

Satsang—*lit.* 'company of Truth'; fellowship of devotees of the Satguru.

Shabri—another name for Bhilni, the devotee of Rama.

Shastri—a degree, roughly equivalent to B.A., awarded for proficiency in Hindu theology.

Sushumna—psychic channel in the spine through which spiritual energy is directed to the Sahasradakamal chakra in the crown of the head.

Swayambhu Manu-Satrupa—the Adam and Eve of Hindus.

Tansen—famous musician in Akbar's Court.

Tapasya—sacrifice or penance done to gain spiritual merit.

Tilak—the sign of Ida-Pingala—Sushumna drawn on the forehead.

Veda—the ancient revealed scriptures of the Hindus. There are four—Rig, Sama, Yajur and Artharva Vedas.

Yagya—sacrificial ritual during which oblations such as herbs are offered to a sacred fire.

Yoga—union of the individual consciousness with God and the spiritual path for attaining this.

Yogi—practitioner or adept in Yoga.