

In Search Of Papa

(An Inner Exploration)



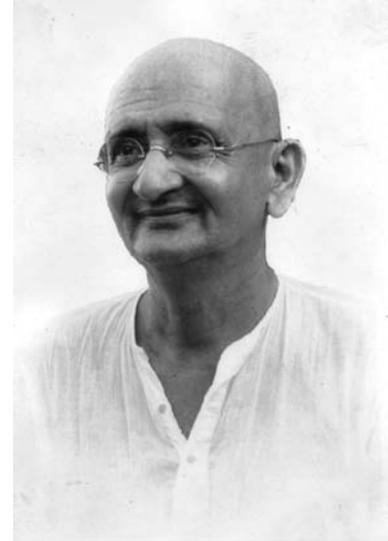
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Introduction

From the moment we are born into this world, we start our quest, in fact, a series of quests that defines who we are – for the loving embrace of the mother, for the love and care from the beloved ones, for the extended arms of the well-wishers who guide us from the dark to the light, for the answers to myriad questions haunting our young minds, for the solutions to the perplexing problems we face at every turn and twist in our lifelong journey, for the true meaning and purpose of life, for peace, happiness and harmony within, around and everywhere, and most importantly, for a communion with the Divine, which alone can make us find whatever we search for in our mortal life.

‘In Search of Papa’ is an earnest attempt to delve into the blessed life and ennobling spiritual teachings of our Beloved Papa Swami Ramdas, the Founder-Master of Anandashram, who, with a burning aspiration and total dedication sought for, and ultimately found the Highest in life, and lived a



beatific life in constant communion with the Divine, whom he loved to call as “Ram”.

In quest of God, Papa wandered all over India, from the deep South to the far North, unmindful of the creature comforts of the earthly life, solely banking on the Great Provider. As a wandering monk, often, the sky was his roof; wild streams quenched his thirst; total strangers fed him in unknown places. Indeed, no one was a stranger for him; for he beheld beloved Ram in everyone and everything, on the way; he shared unreservedly his depthless love and boundless compassion with one and all. He wanted everyone to attain the summum bonum of life which he himself had discovered thanks to his ‘Beloved Ram.’

His teachings are evidently like a pole star eternally guiding all those who wish to take to the spiritual path, in quest of the Most High. In the light of his teachings, he wants us to dive deep within for direct perception and experience of the Divine. He says: “Through mere superficial churning of thought, Ramdas' words cannot be understood. You can throw light on them only when you bring with you the blazing torch of your own perfected experience. Experience is gained by diving into the depths of your mind. Mere assertion of the Truth is not realisation. Realisation means direct perception and experience.”

Every search or enquiry is a learning process, no matter how it culminates. So is this one that we embark upon. It is not meant to be an academic pursuit or a dry intellectual exercise; it is our sincere response to Papa's ardent exhortation: "Be God, lead others to God". How to live up to this divine call is the sacred task before us and this is one such attempt.

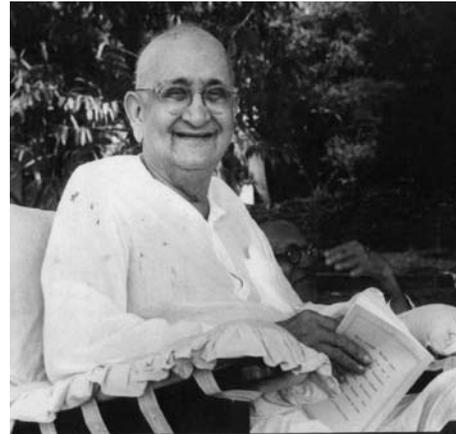
This booklet has five parts: Roadmap, Revelations, Learnings, Conclusion, and Life Sketch. 'Roadmap' describes the search in detail – what purpose it serves in our spiritual progress, and how this journey is conducted. 'Revelations' are the search results – what is being revealed as we enquire further into Papa's life and message. 'Learnings' are the 'take-home-messages' that we will gather as we experience the revelations. 'Conclusion' captures the summary of the whole journey and the roadmap for going further forward; and the 'Life Sketch' section provides a brief profile of Papa Swami Ramdas.

Roadmap: The Purpose & Process Of The Journey

What We Search

When we happen to hear about Anandashram what comes to our mind is the arresting, captivating, and bliss-radiating picture of the founder saint Param Pujya Swami Ramdas, endearingly addressed by his innumerable devotees as Beloved Papa. Those who have been associating with the Ashram for a while do have a fairly good idea about Papa's life and message, and have undoubtedly been benefitted by this contact.

But the search to know the core content of Papa is an essential for those who aim for spiritual heights. Bees run after flowers because of their fragrance and appearance first, but rest content only by enjoying the nectar held within. Similarly, devotees are attracted to Papa's bliss-radiating form first, but the real joy can be had only by knowing the core of his being.



Why We Search

This search is an inner churning and an inward journey to explore a little deeper into the hitherto unknown or less understood facets of Papa's life and teachings.

It is like milk getting processed to make its core content – the ghee; milk turns into curd, which gets churned into butter, and later gets converted into ghee. Milk needs to be used fast whereas ghee lasts very long; it adds flavour and enhances quality to whatever it is added to.

Papa exhorts: “Behold God within you and then behold Him everywhere, as all the manifested worlds. Don't adhere to the lower planes and seek satisfaction there”.

How We Search

The journey towards the core of his being starts from identifying the uniqueness of his approach to spiritual life. Here is an example:

If we look closely, we find that right from the very start, Papa has not followed any established pattern such as mastering scriptures, serving or staying with a spiritual preceptor for a considerable time, or joining a spiritual institution or mission.

This has been clearly brought out in his own words: **“Ramdas never joined any organization for his spiritual growth. Guru within him mysteriously guided him and made everything easy for God-realization. Then he found that the best rules to be followed were those which this inner Guru set for him from time to time. It is clear that our guide in such matters must be the Guru within us and not without.”**

Just like a tree brings out a beautiful flower in a wild forest not nurtured and nourished in a traditional way, Papa also scaled the heights by not relying on the traditional ways.



Revelations - On The Path

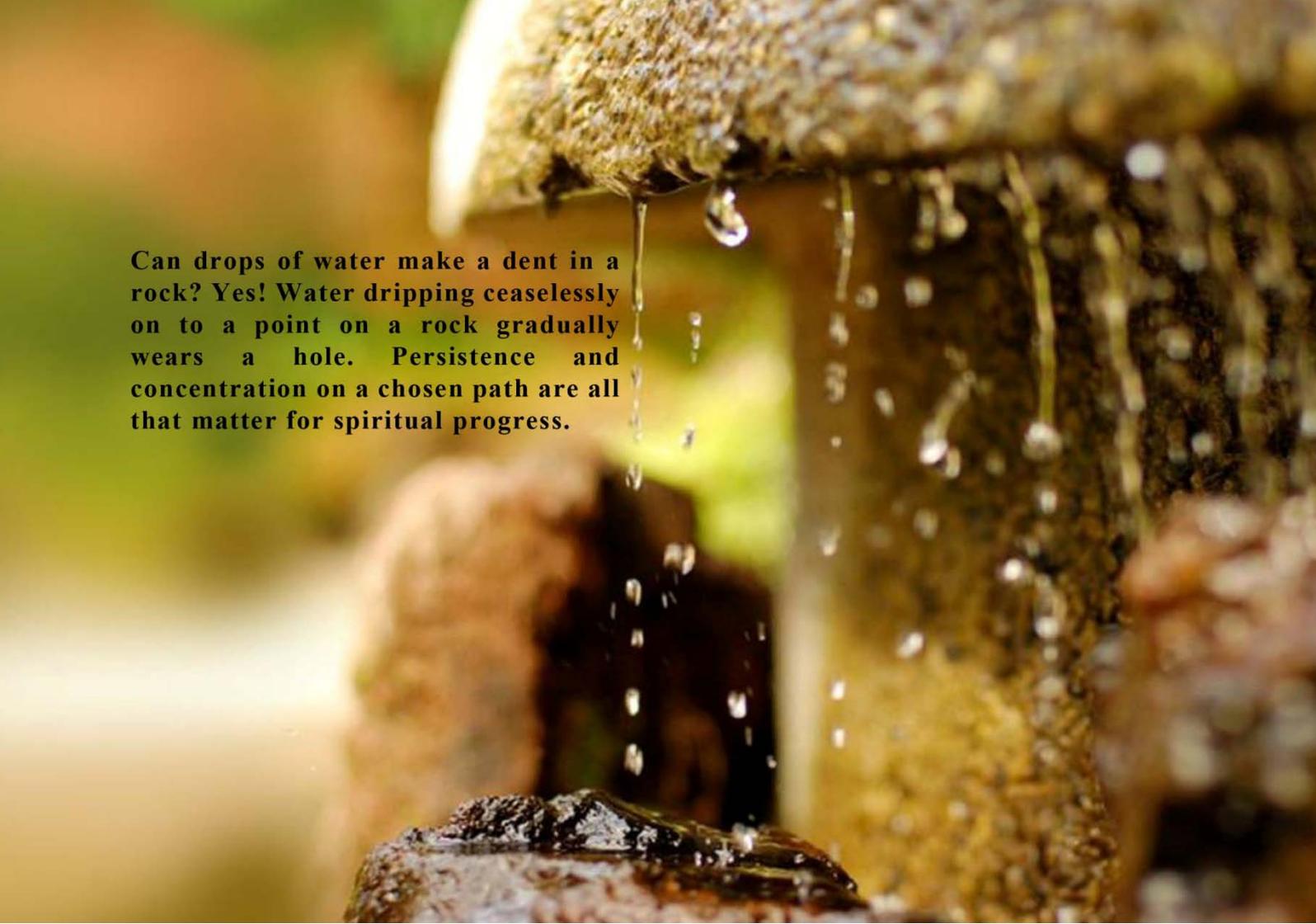


1. Sticking To One Method In His Sadhana

“Ramdas, through a ceaseless repetition of the divine Mantram, side by side with the concentrated meditation on the all-pervading, eternal, ever-blissful, in-dwelling God, had attained freedom and peace even before his advent into the world as a mendicant”. ^{LRI}

Normally, spiritual aspirants spend a lot of time pursuing quite a few methods due to lack of clarity of understanding, often leading them to frustration, while in Papa’s case, from the very beginning, he could unwaveringly stick to one particular method of chanting the Divine Name, and his pious endeavours were crowned with a grand success in such a short period of time.

Papa was, from the beginning, very clear that the God he was seeking was within and that everything was happening only by His Will. This clarity and conviction got stabilised in him within a short time because of remembering God through chanting of His name ceaselessly and contemplating on His divine attributes simultaneously.

A close-up photograph of water dripping from a porous, brown rock. The water is captured in mid-air, creating a series of small, clear droplets that fall towards a dark, wet rock surface at the bottom. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green and yellow, suggesting a natural outdoor setting. The lighting is warm, highlighting the texture of the rock and the clarity of the water.

Can drops of water make a dent in a rock? Yes! Water dripping ceaselessly on to a point on a rock gradually wears a hole. Persistence and concentration on a chosen path are all that matter for spiritual progress.

2. Unflinching Reliance On God

“God arranges all things in His own way and at the time He appoints.”

Faith is sincere acceptance that we don't know, and trusting implicitly that God does. Beloved Papa had this rock-solid faith and trust in the Divine all along; it was unflinching and unconditional. He was very clear that his sense of individuality purely rested on God and God alone who is the cause of everything, and hence the burden of life rests solely on His shoulders

Here is an instance. Soon after the Ashram was established, devotees were eager to mobilise funds for its upkeep. But Papa told them to stop those plans, but accept the funds only when voluntarily offered. Later, when the Anandashram Trust was set up no provision was made for a corpus or fixed deposit so as to rely only on God and not on anything else.



Have you ever seen a pepper vine or any other creeper, growing unsupported? They can't. They rely totally on the mother plant, tightly wrapping their tendrils around it for support and sustenance. Total reliance on the Divine means accepting that He knows and we don't. When someone says "I'm self-made", God must be laughing!

3. Harmonious Blending Of Jnana, Bhakti And Karma

“Devotion by itself is not the whole thing. Knowledge by itself is not the whole thing and also action by itself is not the whole thing. Combine these three in your life and manifest the all round magnificence of your Being.”^{TV38}

The fact is that, for success in any walk of life and activity, all these three elements – devotion, knowledge and action – are essential. First of all, before doing anything, one should have a clear idea (jnana) of what exactly is to be done. Next, how efficiently and lovingly (bhakti) it can be done, and finally, the systematic method of executing (karma) it with single pointed earnestness is also necessary. Hence, all these three can be likened to the three legs of a tripod (of life). If any one of them is impaired, it cannot stand firmly. To cite another illustration, a bird, in order to live a perfect life, should not only have two sturdy wings (bhakti and jnana) to fly freely in the sky, but also strong legs to move while on the ground.

Even during his sadhana days, Papa was not only chanting incessantly with fully inward awareness, he was also involved externally in various acts of love and compassion. He thereby exemplified that devotion, knowledge and dedicated actions should go hand in hand.

For a sip of quality tea, all the ingredients -- water, milk, sugar and tea leaves -- should get blended proportionately. One component alone wouldn't do. Moreover, to prepare such a drink, one should have (1) the knowledge and skill of preparing the same and the needed ingredients, (2) total dedication and love to maintain the quality and (3) finally, the act of preparing. Similarly, our Sadhana has to be a blend all the three -- Knowledge, Devotion and Action.



4. Sannyas Essentially Is Internal

“Mere external renunciation is of no avail. To assume Sannyas in the hope that by taking merely that step you would realise God, is perfectly wrong. Sannyas is not a thing to be received from, or given to, anybody. It is a dedication of our entire being to the Lord and His service. It is a spontaneous wave of aspiration rising from within our own heart. So receiving initiation from any external Guru can make the disciple only an apparent Sannyasi, struggling through tedious and painful courses of Sadhana undertaken because of the established rules and regulations, observed all through with the growing ego-sense at the base of it”.^{LRI}

Papa was very emphatic that adoption of Sannyas – the monastic life, should be backed by an intense spiritual aspiration and great inner longing, signifying complete detachment from the sense objects and a total indifference to worldly pursuits. The mind must be free from the hankering for sense pleasures and the body liberated from selfish actions done with a view to gain any fruit or personal reward, with one and the only prayer to the Almighty Lord of the Universe to take one under His complete guidance, eliminating the ego-sense. So, Sannyas does not mean merely an external paraphernalia of shaving the head, or growing the beard, donning orange robes and observing certain vows. Though Papa did wear ochre at one time, later he reverted to white.



Butterflies are common in our gardens. But how many of us have seen the incredible transformation those leaf-eating caterpillars have undergone to become vibrant butterflies? It happens silently inside their cocoon, invisible to the world outside. Similarly, renunciation is an internal process – an inner transformation.

5. Outgrowing The Conditionings

“An institution is the garden where every facility for the cultivation of the soul might ultimately transcend the institution for the higher, true and complete vision of life – just as the tree outgrows its fence and spreads its branches freely in the air, or as the pupil outgrows the school life for that of the world.” ^{IVG}

Spiritual aspirants join Ashrams, Monasteries and such other institutions solely to deepen their spiritual quest and hasten the inner exploration. It is quite possible that in many cases, as time passes, other priorities are likely to crop up unawares, and the goal is, unwittingly, lost sight of. This can naturally be detrimental to the spiritual progress, crushing the inner evolution of a novice.

So, while living in such institutions, we should always be on guard and be alert of the purpose for which we have joined the commune. All our involvements should be fully directed towards the final goal of realizing God. In other words, our aim should be to remain firm and steadfast in our spiritual pursuit – in delight and joy, in all places, in and out of Ashrams or institutions – in the best as well as the worst.



The saplings planted on the roadside are protected by a fence. But once they grow into large trees, they don't need the protection anymore; they have now outgrown the fence. Similarly, one has to transcend the institutional crutch, to rise higher in the spiritual ascent; that however does not mean denying or discarding them, as they continue to be relevant and helpful for many aspirants who take resort there.

6. No Need Of Any Intermediary

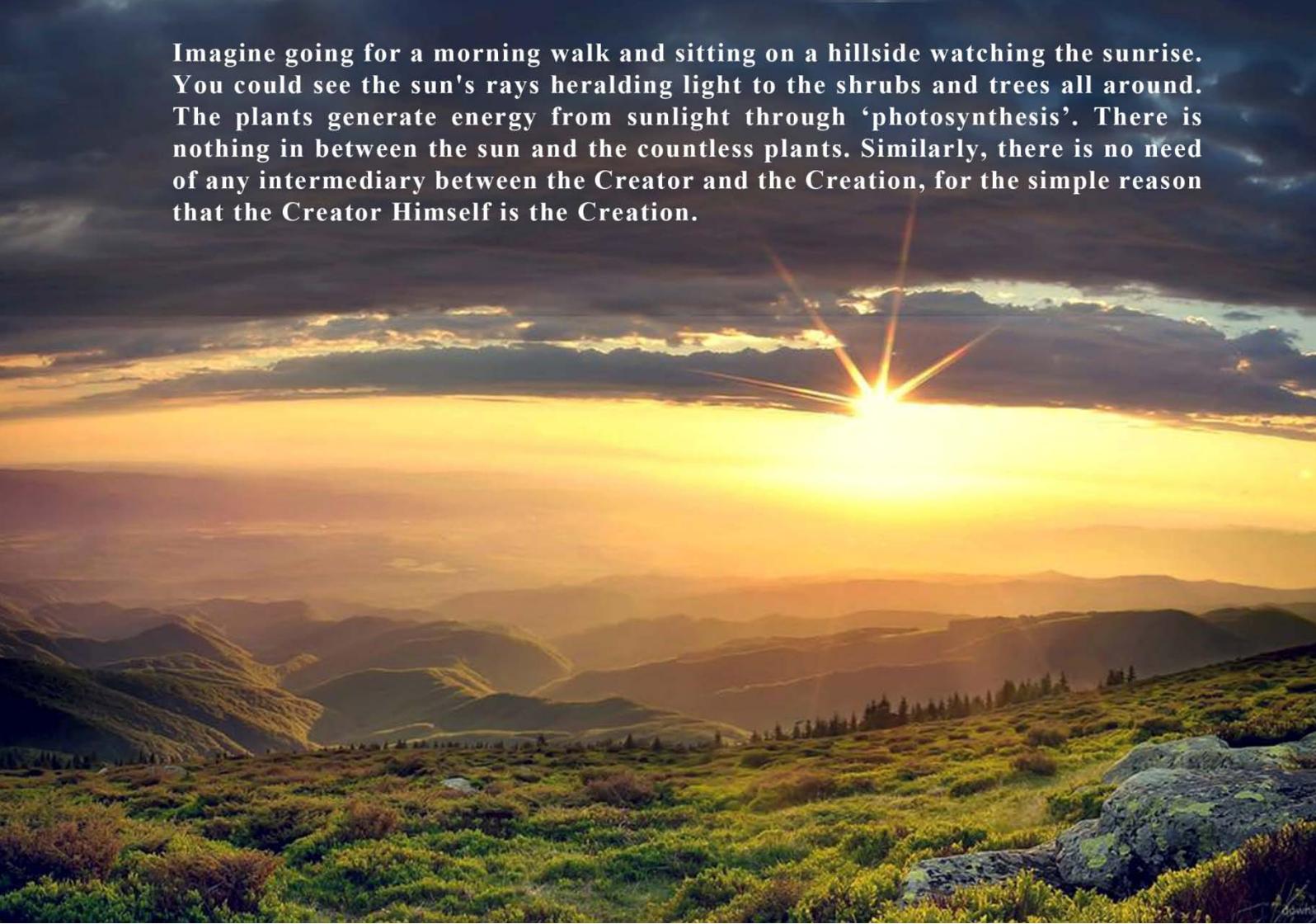
“God does not need an intermediary for carrying out His commands. If you think that God can speak through Ramdas, He can speak through you as well, because you cannot accuse God of partiality. Switch on your wire for a direct communication within. Why do you deny Him in your own heart?”^{LR2}

God is present in equal measure in every being and thing, however small or big, however great or insignificant; His majesty and splendour are reflected in their entirety and perfection everywhere. Whether we know Him or not, adore Him or not, ignore Him or not, He is ever with us and within us. Why not we therefore look within to discover His Eternal Presence?

Though Saints and Sages are ever ready to guide us towards that Divine Destination, we need to discover it by dint of our own steadfast, diligent and devout Sadhana.

However, to understand that there is no need for an intermediary, we require a spiritual mentor whom we call as Guru. A map no doubt will give us lot of valuable guidance on our journey. But it won't transport us to the destination. One has to gather all the guidance and help needed and tread the path spiritual oneself towards the Goal Supreme.

Imagine going for a morning walk and sitting on a hillside watching the sunrise. You could see the sun's rays heralding light to the shrubs and trees all around. The plants generate energy from sunlight through 'photosynthesis'. There is nothing in between the sun and the countless plants. Similarly, there is no need of any intermediary between the Creator and the Creation, for the simple reason that the Creator Himself is the Creation.



7. Commitment Towards The Creation

“The liberation and peace of the individual is surely based upon his or her contribution towards the collective human happiness and harmony.”^{DL2}

When we emerge from our mother’s womb, we do not bring anything with us. All that we need and all that makes our life comfortable are provided by His two creations, namely Mother Nature and Society. In other words, we exist because of these two facets of life which succour us all through our physical existence. So, how can we think about ‘me’ (the individual) only? Should we not therefore evolve from the ‘individual’ to the ‘universal or ‘me’ to ‘we’? This imperative need is highlighted by the above words of Papa.

No one is an island by himself; everyone is part of the whole, hence interdependent and interconnected, and in fact intimately related to each other, in every way - physically, physiologically, psychologically and ultimately in our spiritual essence -- the Atman or the Pure Being. An aspirant cannot therefore isolate himself from the rest of the creation. So, whatever spiritual discipline we are engaged in should enable us to harmonise with the rest of creation by contributing in any manner, for the betterment of one and all, near and far. Gradually we should be able to transform all our actions into an ardent worship of the Lord of the Universe, by way of our unconditional love and service to all His creations.

The incense stick exemplifies the end and aim of all our spiritual pursuits, by generously contributing to the collective well-being, harmony and happiness of the entire creation. One can feel the gentle and sweet aroma percolate into the atmosphere around, spreading the fragrance all around. So also, our Sadhana should enable us to harmoniously blend with the entire creation, motivating us to enhance our contribution in all possible ways, for the betterment of all around.



8. Spirituality Not To Be Construed As An Escapism From The Workaday World

”Be dynamic, imbued with the power and glory of God. In the name of religion do not aim permanently to live the life of the recluse and say all activities are wrong.”^{TV38}

Papa never encouraged anybody to take to contemplative life as an excuse for evading the duties and responsibilities of the day-to-day life.

One must also serve one’s fellow-beings in a selfless spirit. “Love thy neighbour as thyself” does not mean that love should only be felt in the heart. It must also be shown in action, in the form of relieving distress and rendering help to one and all, in all possible ways. To serve man is to serve God. Only when the work is done in the spirit of Karma Yoga – as worship, does it give joy. It should be done as perfectly as possible, with great care and love, never in a careless, clumsy, irregular, or half-hearted way. Our inner divine qualities must be made to manifest in all our outer conduct.



Children love to play with the spinning tops – the wooden toys with a metal point, set in motion by pulling a piece of string wrapped around them. Even as they spin rapidly, they appear to be motionless -- as in a state of deep meditation. Similarly, one can also lead an intensely active and fully productive life, even while pursuing a contemplative, spiritual journey.

9. Thrust Only For Direct Self-Experience

“You must have a Sadhana which is independent, i.e., not dependent upon external condition, form or environment”. ^{GE1}

Whatever Papa wrote or spoke sprang up from his own direct inner experience and clarity of understanding rather than from the study of any scriptures or academic texts. Time and again, he exhorts the aspirants not to let themselves conditioned by any external factors, and urges them to look within and commence an inward journey so as to gain their own direct spiritual experience. This naturally gives the aspirants the necessary clarity, confidence and conviction in their spiritual pursuit. “So what he writes on this subject is based upon his own experience. Saints and Shastras are secondary to him...”^{LS1}

Obviously, anything gained from outside cannot be our own; it can, at best, serve as a second hand knowledge. So, the royal road to true knowledge is our own direct experience and understanding from within, on which we can safely bank upon always. Our daily life is a rare opportunity given to us to test the true knowledge that we have gained by dint of our self-imposed discipline. We have thus to make it our own by testing and proving it. Until then, it cannot be our own – as a part and parcel of us.

Though all vegetables in a garden thrive because of the common factors like water, manure, air and Sun light, each of them become unique and exhibit their distinctive taste and quality – the bitterness of bitter guard, the sourness of green tomato and the pungency of chillies. Similarly, spiritual aspirants should aim at bringing out the uniqueness inherent in each one of them, not being swayed by the outer conditions or environment.



10. Transcending The External Prop

“Hanging on always to an external prop in spiritual matters hampers his (aspirant’s) progress, because his vision lacks the flexibility for expansion and universalization. The centre of interest becomes cramped and localised, while his aim should be to comprehend and realize the infinite nature of Truth.”^{IVG}

Because of Pujya Mataji’s exemplary reverence for and adoration of her Sadguru Papa, holding him in divine esteem, addressing as the ‘Lord of the Universe’, many treat him as God himself and therefore being satisfied with reverence to his external form and attributing everything to Papa. It is true that this simple faith is not detrimental to one’s spiritual progress -- sentiments and emotions based upon simple faith do give some joy, contentment, guidance and protection. However, if such outer adoration is not accompanied by a constant awareness of the omnipresent ‘Pure Being’ that Papa essentially is, it can very well pose an impediment, delaying the devotees march towards the Ultimate.

Papa wants us to rely solely on the inner Guru, though the outer Guru may awaken us by his touch, thereby turning our mind towards God within us. Papa never insisted nor encouraged the spiritual aspirant to focus only on the personal form of the Guru, though serving a Guru with all love and devotion, and right attitude, might help the Sadhana to some extent.

Scaffolding for a building under construction, is only a temporary, external support, made of wooden planks and metal poles. It is removed when the construction is over. External support may be good for a while, but not forever. A Guru is very helpful for the initial impetus and growth of an aspirant but sooner or later one has to totally rely on the Guru within.





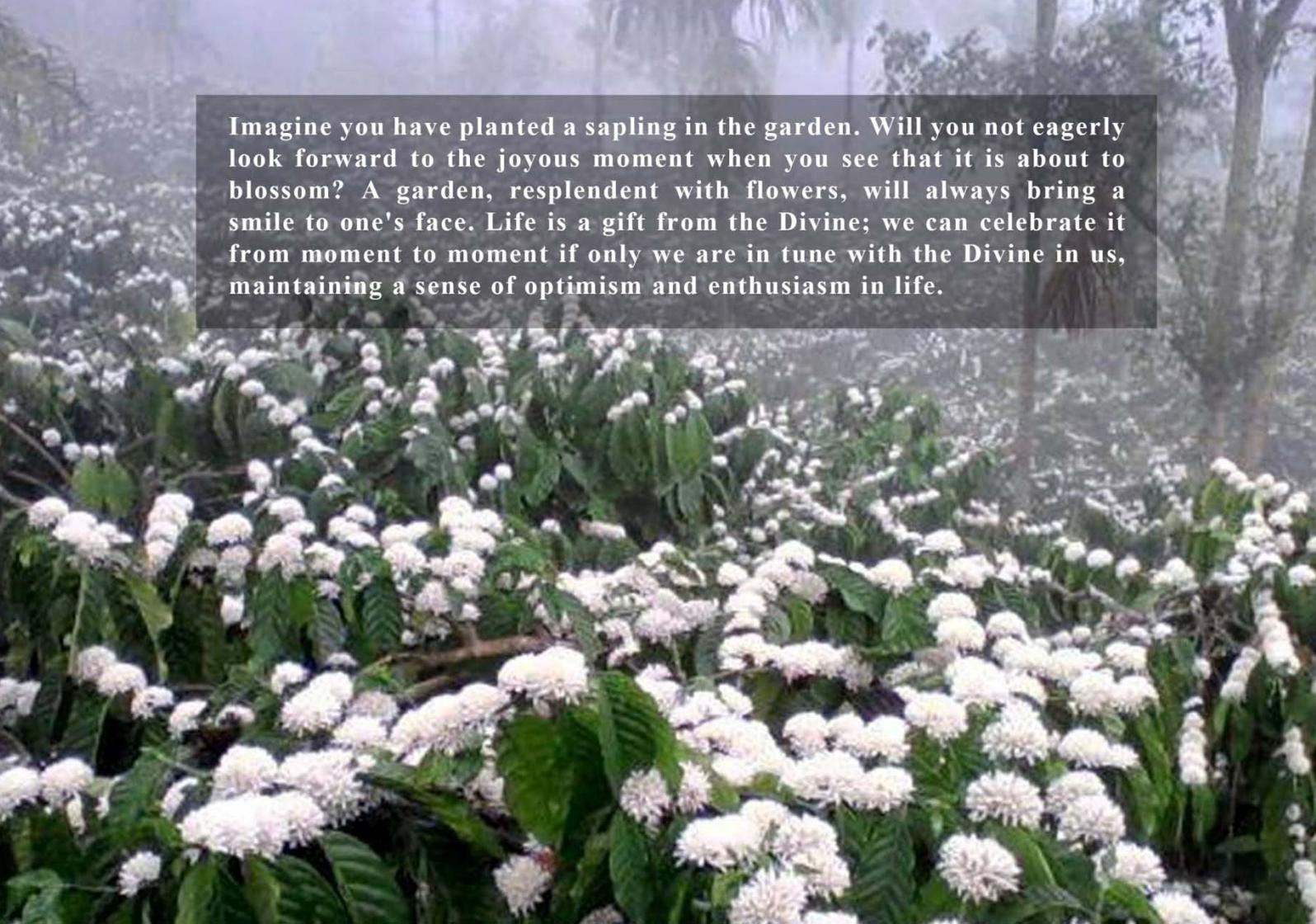
Revelations – At The Summit



11. Joy Is The Aim Of Life

“The outlook of the true aspirant is optimistic. His eyes see only beauty, goodness and love everywhere. In every happening he discerns the seed of hope and achievement. In this way, he conquers the moods of depression that seek to subdue him. His face is bright and cheerful. He takes life and all that it brings for him, not seriously. His heart is light. He enjoys a joke and gives himself away to a hearty laugh. He is frank and playful like a child, and creates a jovial atmosphere wherever he is. Joy is His nature. All through the thoughts, words and acts, should run an unbroken stream of His remembrance, and this is supreme joy. When you at last reach His feet, and lose yourself in His glorious being, you yourself become joy.”^{DL2}

All the above characteristics were amply demonstrated in Papa’s life, at all times -- whether he was conversing with devotees, addressing a large gathering, or handling Ashram affairs, and there would invariably be roar of laughter as he related, in his own inimitable style, experiences, observations or incidents from his own life. ‘Joy’ implies the perfect awareness of the fullness of one’s True Being which is in fact the Absolute – abiding wherein one is naturally and spontaneously still, serene, calm, collected, peaceful, self-contained and self-contented -- there being no inadequacy whatsoever. Being firmly grounded in that Eternal Abode of Ananda (abiding bliss) which is self-evident, self-existent, and immediate, we have attained the summum bonum of life; there is nothing more to be achieved.



Imagine you have planted a sapling in the garden. Will you not eagerly look forward to the joyous moment when you see that it is about to blossom? A garden, resplendent with flowers, will always bring a smile to one's face. Life is a gift from the Divine; we can celebrate it from moment to moment if only we are in tune with the Divine in us, maintaining a sense of optimism and enthusiasm in life.

12. Non-Dual Awareness Does Not Mean Absence Of Duality

“Even after reaching this great height of the all-comprehensive vision of the Reality in which all diversity is dissolved into one, the God-realised soul assumes a position separate from the great Truth. He calls himself the son, child, servant or devotee of God.”^{PP}

Papa considered Bhakti as the initial step on the path Divine. Bhakti implies an intimate relationship of the devotee (Bhakta) with the Lord (Bhagavan). Traditionally, the Lord is looked upon as an adorable deity, while Papa had the same Bhakti towards the Lord who was in fact a veritable embodiment of Love, Knowledge and Power.

Papa maintained all through a blissful, dual relationship with God, as a child or servant, even after realising his oneness with Him, and all his actions, great or small, bore the stamp of love, for love was his being and love was his life, so much so in that Love Supreme he found total self-fulfilment in life.



Have you ever seen a potter's wheel where a clump of soft clay is shaped into a fine mud pot? What happens to the mud then? It is gradually formed into a shape that has some utility, though the substance remains the same clay. So also, Beloved Papa, even after abiding in the non-dual awareness, continued to serve humanity, in what appeared to us as a state of duality.

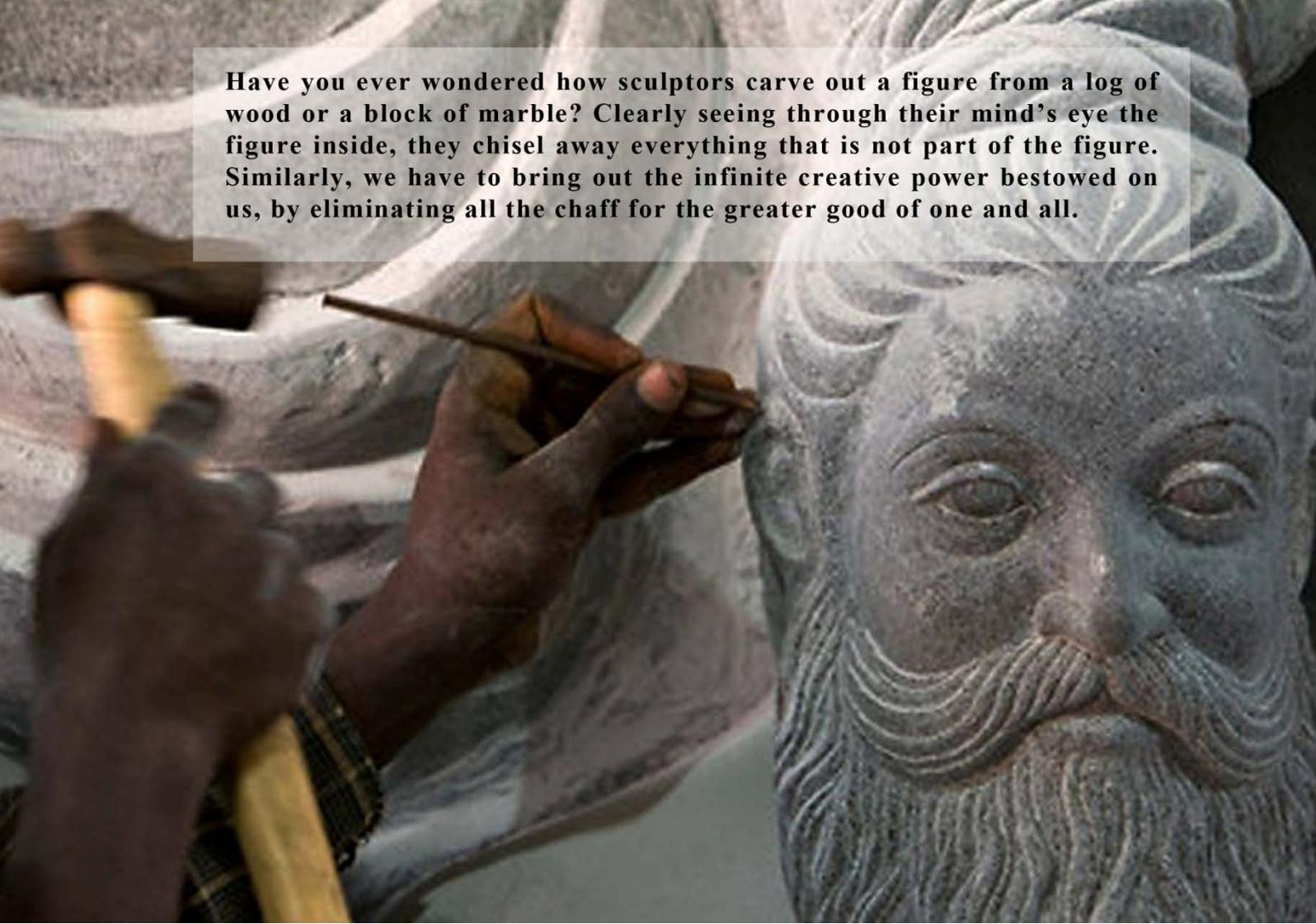
13. Being Original And Creative

“Be the light unto yourself and in your own original way manifest the magnificence and power of your enlightened life. Be highly creative and set free the infinite power that is within you.”^{DL1}

The Creator has endowed His children with immense potentiality for creativity, and also ability to bring it out in the form of discoveries and inventions, for improving the standard of life and living of one and all.

Every creation is unique and hence our effort should be to realise our uniqueness and manifest it in our workaday world. If we look at the universe, we find that there has been a steady march for the betterment in all fields and walks of life, because of the revelation of the varying potentialities endowed to so many human beings.

Have you ever wondered how sculptors carve out a figure from a log of wood or a block of marble? Clearly seeing through their mind's eye the figure inside, they chisel away everything that is not part of the figure. Similarly, we have to bring out the infinite creative power bestowed on us, by eliminating all the chaff for the greater good of one and all.



14. Individual Will Has No Place In One's Life Spiritual

“Really, man has no will of his own. There is only one Divine will at work everywhere and in all. It is a mistake to think that we, as individuals, have got any power to do anything. God is behind everything.”^{TS}

When we closely observe, we find there are several biological functions, movements and changes that are going on constantly within the human body, such as respiration, digestion, blood circulation and so on. We know very well that these are not done by us as individuals and that there is a Supreme Power which alone is responsible for all these inner movements and that the same Power is also responsible for all our outer movements. Bereft of that Power, the sense of individuality cannot exist.

Papa thus makes the individual clearly understand that spiritual progress means a gradual attenuation of ‘me’ and ‘mine’ – of self-centeredness, ultimately transferring the assumed ownership of all emotions, thoughts and actions to the Real Owner.



Puppetry, an ancient art form in India, is often performed on stage stage where puppets, playing different roles, are controlled by the puppeteers. Puppets can't play by themselves; their actions are in the control of their masters who pull the strings attached. Similarly, our life is in the hands of the Divine and, as such, the individual will has no place in the spiritual life.

15. Spiritual Enlightenment Transforms Complexity To Simplicity

“Life is the expression of Atman; and though seemingly two, they are one.” LR2

How do we convey the sublime spiritual truths in a simple, clear and candid manner? You’ll find the answer in Papa’s teachings. On every complex topic related to our life and conduct, his thoughts are crystal clear; his message is simple and hence easily understandable by one and all. It is no academic exercise for him but unfolding of his own unique experiences he gained in the course of his life, culminating in a grand vision that the world is nothing but the manifestation of God. In other words, as he points out above, life itself is a grand manifestation or the Self, though apparently two, they are really one.

Here, Papa conveys some practical hints for us to understand the profundity of the ‘ATMAN’. Though the Life Force is indescribable, the presence of the same is quite palpable to one and all. The individual existence solely depends upon the Universal Life manifesting in and through the five elements -- earth, water, fire, air, space, and also plants and trees, gases, metals, minerals, vitamins, and so on. In other words, the arena for the organs of perception and action of an individual are provided only by the Universe. Hence it can be surmised that the Life Force within us is the individualized and localised expression of the self - same Universal Life or Spirit.



If you have ever opened a electric switch box at home, you'd be amazed to find how complex it is; plenty of colourful wires are criss-crossing all around. The same switch when suitably covered, looks very simple and easy to operate. Similarly, Papa could convey complex spiritual themes in a simple manner, easily understandable one and all.



16. Not Bound By Any Limitations Whatsoever

“Ramdas does not belong to any creed or sect. If he had belonged to any particular creed or sect, his freedom would have been limited.”^{RS4}

Papa knew full well that bigotry and clinging to any creed was also a impediment to Sadhana. For instance, every individual is enjoying the benefit of the discoveries and inventions made by persons belonging to various times and climes, different creeds, sects and countries. That being the hard fact of life, how can we constrict ourselves with any particular segment of humankind?

An aspirant should also be open to the teachings of all mahatmas, saints and sages; one can learn from every one of them. It is worthwhile to remember here the significant words of Gandhiji: “I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the culture of all lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any.”

Have you ever seen a bird in the sky, bearing a passport as it crosses to another country? They enjoy the fullest freedom of movement, not at all bothered about man-made barriers, borders and boundaries.

Similarly, Papa and all other mahatmas and saints belong to the whole world, and are not circumscribed by and limited to any particular group or sect. Blessed with a universal in vision, they are totally free in their communion and interaction with the world, without let or hindrance, or any binding whatsoever.



17. Acceptance Of Everything As It Is

“There is no disorder in the world.....Everything is as it should be.”^{GV}

Apparently, it may be difficult to accept these words, but commensurate to the intensity of our efforts to discover the Divine Presence within, in the form of Pure Love, we will gradually realize that behind all the seeming disorder, conflict and unease seen outside and inside, there lies a perfect order and rhythm, because all things happen only by the will of the Supreme, who is nothing but love, harmony and peace, and who determines things and events only for the ultimate good of all.

In other words, wherever and whenever there is unalloyed love and consequent peace and harmony, there is least scope for any disorder whatsoever

This becomes possible only by raising our awareness from the constricted individual level to that of the limitless and universal, by beholding through the vision of ‘Universal Love’. Then will we be able to make out order everywhere, just as we can enjoy the beautiful panoramic view only from the hilltop and not from the plain.

Can we see any order or pattern in the vast array of things around us? Does it not seem like chaos and confusion? But, if one looks down from an aircraft, there seems to be a pattern and design. When we start looking at things in their totality, not in fragments, we come to accept things as they are, not as we want them to be.

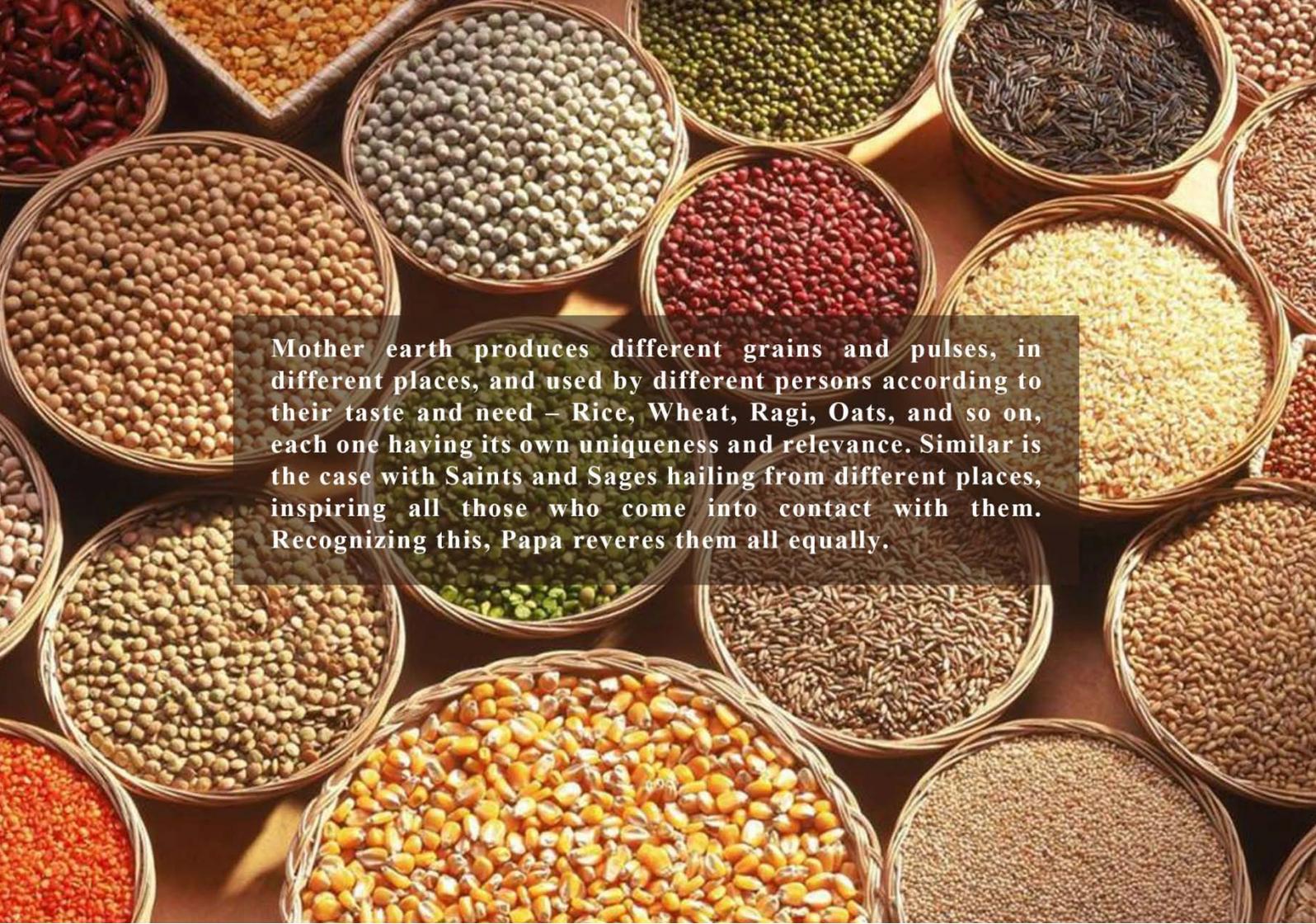


18. All Spiritual Teachers Are Revered Equally

“Ramdas had realised the unity of all religions, and his love and admiration go out to all the spiritual teachers equally. He is at once the servant of the Almighty, and a child of saints. How blissful it is to feel and be conscious of this truth!”^{IVG}

Since time immemorial, there has been a galaxy of souls standing out as distinctly different in their nature, temperament and vision from the common run of human beings. These are the Saints and Sages, Avatars and Prophets of the world, whose outlook on the life of the world is of a rare value and significance to the spiritual aspirants. Whilst the human beings are generally characterised by a limited, circumscribed, individualistic view of life, these renowned personages are invariably endowed with a universal vision which clearly reflects in all their thoughts, words and actions.

Thus, the vision and mission of every spiritual personage hailing from different walks of life and times and climes, is to guide all those who approach them in all earnestness and aspiration, to accelerate their progress on the spiritual path. So all of them are equally revered and honoured by one and all.

The image shows a variety of grains and pulses arranged in numerous woven baskets. The grains include yellow corn, white rice, brown rice, and various pulses like red lentils, green lentils, and chickpeas. The baskets are arranged in a circular pattern, creating a rich, textured background. A semi-transparent text box is overlaid in the center, containing a paragraph of text.

Mother earth produces different grains and pulses, in different places, and used by different persons according to their taste and need – Rice, Wheat, Ragi, Oats, and so on, each one having its own uniqueness and relevance. Similar is the case with Saints and Sages hailing from different places, inspiring all those who come into contact with them. Recognizing this, Papa reveres them all equally.

19. Equal Outlook On Traditional And Non-Traditional Approach

“Man cannot conceive of God, who is infinite and eternal. God is beyond name and form. The instrument, which we have to make use of, in trying to comprehend Him, is the mind. And the mind can think only in terms of name and form. So, if we want to concentrate our mind on God, we have to give Him a name and a form.”^{DL2}

Though Papa did not follow the traditional path, including image worship, rituals, etc., except constant chanting of the Divine Name, he never undermined nor looked down upon any of them. Moreover, many find it difficult to comprehend the nameless and formless reality straight away, while quite a few have scaled the divine heights through the traditional path also.

As Sri Vinobaji has rightly pointed out: “The Saguna devotee serves the form of the Lord through his organs whereas the Nirguna devotee thinks of the good of the whole world. The former appears absorbed in outward service, but his mind is absorbed in the contemplation of the Lord. The latter does not appear to be rendering any concrete service, but he is certainly rendering a great service from within.”

Though there is no image worship or other such traditional practices in Anandashram, it does support them elsewhere.



Most of our gardens are full of flowering plants. We often water them, nurture with manure and prune them, in some cases. Do the plants blossom only in the parks and gardens? No, you'll find amazing variety of flowering plants in the wild forest as well.

Similarly, God can be worshiped either as the impersonal or in His personal aspect, with name and form. Here, Papa's approach is inclusive and unbiased. Though he always highlighted the impersonal aspect, never did he condemn or look down upon the traditional deity-worship.

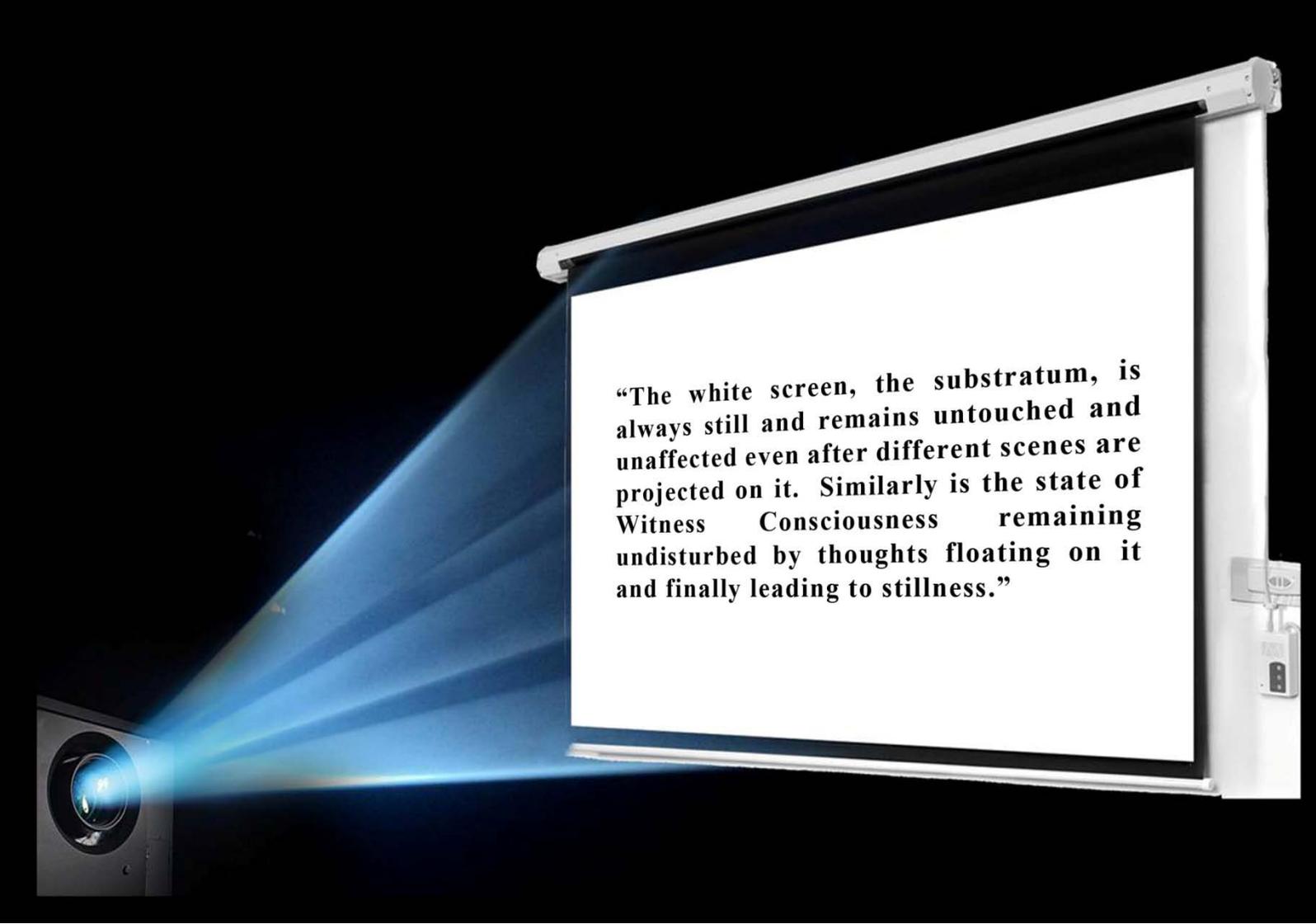


20. Witness Consciousness Dissolves The Mind

“Really, to stand apart from mind and watch its activities, is a blissful exercise. The moment the dissociation becomes complete, that is to say, one's identification with the watcher or the witness becomes perfect, that very moment the mind dissolves, and you attain Samadhi, i.e., absolute peace and bliss.”^{SR}

As Papa points out time and again, through a constant and conscious practice of mental chanting, thoughts drop off by themselves, resulting in perfect stillness of mind, and culminating in the pre-eminence of the witness consciousness.

Papa further clarifies thus: *“Be a witness to all movements. Detach yourself from them and become the observer of them; then you will realize that you are the eternal witness and the body is not yourself. The watcher is the real you – the Self Immortal.”*

A projector screen is shown against a dark background. A bright blue beam of light from a projector on the left illuminates the screen. The screen displays a quote in a serif font. The quote reads: "The white screen, the substratum, is always still and remains untouched and unaffected even after different scenes are projected on it. Similarly is the state of Witness Consciousness remaining undisturbed by thoughts floating on it and finally leading to stillness." The screen is mounted on a silver frame with a control panel on the right side.

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Learnings: Message To Take Home

- Though at the start, the attempt may seem to be an outward journey, as we proceed we will find it is purely an inward journey.
- The path is as important as the final destination of the journey.
- Identifying each uniqueness paves for expansion or universalisation.
- Reverence for the outer form will become genuine and not superficial.
- This search will give a better understanding of the word 'SEER'.
- Gaining more clarity of the following quotation of Papa: "The world we live in is a school in which observation and experience offer us immense possibilities for self-improvement, nay, the world itself is Guru or God."
- As aspirants, we will not suddenly form an opinion based upon the outer appearance, because we realize that we have seen only a fraction of the personality or the object.
- This journey will enable one to get clarity on the various aspects of the relationships between the Ideal and person; spirit and matter; the path and the goal; the sadhak and sadhana; the Guru and the disciple; and the ephemeral and the eternal .

Conclusion

This search to know more about the quintessence of Papa Swami Ramdas is an ongoing journey; here, it just comes to a coma, not a full stop. This search could unearth some gems from the huge mine; much more can be found if we continue our exploration. To sum up, this search offers to an aspirant on a spiritual path, some salient guidelines which are given below:

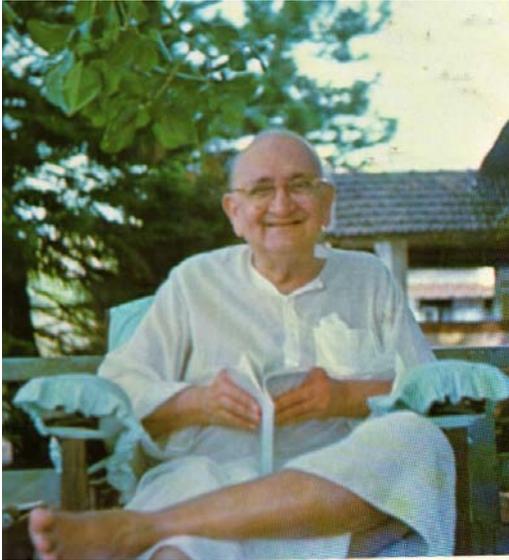
- Only by undertaking the inward journey and freeing ourselves from all sorts of conditionings can the move towards the Ultimate become a reality. Beloved Papa says: “For realizing the Truth no external paraphernalia is necessary. The day will come when one has to leave all these behind, and go to meet the Eternal in the perfect nakedness of your Spirit, shedding all make-believe forms, customs and traditions.”
- The uniqueness identified in Papa’s life is a reflection of the same uniqueness within us. It is like a musk deer, wandering around in search of the enthralling musk (Kasturi) and finally realising that it is within, not outside. “When you see greatness

in others, the same greatness is in yourselves; when you see littleness in others, the same littleness is in yourselves.” says Pujya Mataji.

- The search has no end until the searcher – the sense of individuality – realizes the Papa-factor as the Reality within. This has been corroborated by beloved Papa himself while addressing the devotees: “Papa-Mataji is in everybody’s hearts, God is in everybody’s heart and you are in everybody’s heart.”
- May this search be instrumental in hastening the spiritual progress of every aspirant, through continued exploration of Papa’s life and teachings.

SWAMI RAMDAS

- A Life Sketch -



Sri Swami Ramdas, who was known in his pre-sannyas life as Vittal Rao, was born at Hosdurg, Kanhangad, North Kerala, on Thursday, 10th April, 1884. It was a day of the full moon and it happened to be Hanuman Jayanti, i.e. the birthday of Hanuman, the greatest devotee of Sri Rama. This happy synchronization seemed to augur very well for the great future of the child born that day to Srimati Lalita Bai and Sri Balakrishna Rao. The one remarkable thing about him that people who saw him then observed, was the extraordinary lustre of his eyes.

Vittal was not over-fond of school or books, and so he came in for a large measure of his teacher's wrath. He often played truant, but in vain did he hide himself in the bathroom or in the loft of the cow-pen, for his ubiquitous teacher was well aware of the favourite haunts of his recalcitrant pupil. His High School career too was marked by extreme indifference to studies and supreme dislike of textbooks. Although he refused to be cramped by the school curriculum, he became a voracious reader and read all the books of general interest he could lay his hands upon. His taste for literature enabled him to acquire even at so early an age a remarkable facility in his English style. His intelligence even as a student was of a high order. Whatever he read once he made his own. He was even then a good conversationalist and had inherited from his father an unequalled sense of wit and humour. He would raise roars of laughter in his listeners by the unique manner in which he related incidents from his own life or observations. Whatever be the situation he was placed in for the time being, it was the lighter side of it rather than the serious one that appealed to his keen sense of the comic and the ludicrous in life.

As could be expected, Vittal lagged behind in his studies, with the result that he could not get through the Matriculation examination. He then joined the School of Arts and took a course

in drawing and engraving. Though his progress here was remarkable, as the future prospects that this course held out were none too bright, he discontinued the course and joined the Victoria Jubilee Technical Institute of Bombay and took up the Textile Engineering course. At the end of the three years' course at the V. J. T. Institute, Vittal Rao received his diploma in Textile manufacture.

When he was employed as Spinning Master in a cotton mill at Gulbarga, he was married to Rukmabai in the year 1908, and a daughter, Ramabai, was born to him in 1913.

After a chequered career of several years he finally came down to Mangalore in 1917 and joined his father-in-law in his business. It went against his grain to stoop to any of the 'tricks of the trade'. Inevitably this led to a clash with his father-in-law and he soon severed his connection with the business and started his own business in dyeing fabrics and printing sarees. But he was too honest to be a businessman and the financial condition of the business began to drift from bad to worse. His domestic life also was none too happy.

Throughout his life in service, brief periods of employment were followed by longer periods of unemployment and idleness. Before he had hardly settled down at one place depending upon the appointment he had secured, circumstances so seemed to work up that he lost the

post for no fault of his and he had once again to embark on the quest of securing some fresh means of livelihood. Thus, for him, continued domestic felicity was not to be, and the sweet pleasures of a home of his own were denied to him.

Slowly and imperceptibly, external circumstances were helping Vittal Rao's spirit of dispassion gain an added strength and impetus. Every evening he spent an hour at the house of his brother, Sitaram Rao, whose children would be engaged in Bhajan before the image of Sri Krishna. During the Bhajan, Vittal Rao would lose himself in a blissful state of self-forgetfulness. It was at this time that Vittal Rao started chanting the Lord's name 'Ram' and the repetition of the name brought him great mental peace and joy. He kept up a ceaseless flow of the blessed name on his tongue and its humming would automatically issue from his lips even when he was at work or was walking in the streets. He gave up the night meal and other petty comforts of the body. His wife got thoroughly frightened at the strange turn her husband's life was rapidly taking now. No persuasion, appeal and protest either from her or from his child could induce him to alter the course he was now made to follow, because he felt very strongly that he was set upon this path by that Highest Power which he was struggling to attain and realise.

At this stage his father came to him one day and gave him initiation of the holy Mantra, Sri Ram Jai Ram Jai Jai Ram, assuring him at the same time that if he repeated the Mantra constantly, he would be blessed with eternal happiness. This was a great moment in the life of Vittal Rao. His progress from then was quicker and so was his detachment from the world. He was preparing himself for the final plunge.

Very soon (in December 1922) he bade good-bye to his worldly life and left Mangalore. Two days later he reached Srirangam. There, after bath in the holy Cauvery, he changed his clothes to ochre, took the vows of Sannyas and assumed the name 'Ramdas' (servant of Ram) as commanded by his Master, Ram. Shortly afterwards he was standing in front of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi praying for grace. Bhagavan nodded his head as if to say that he had showered his grace on this earnest aspirant. Now the new Swami Ramdas' whole body trembled with emotion. On leaving the Maharshi he went to a cave in the Arunachala Hill and spent twenty days in constant chanting of Ram Nam, taking only a little rice which he himself cooked. At the end of this period he was blessed with a new vision. He saw his beloved Ram everywhere. In that ecstasy he embraced anything and anybody he saw. He was literally God-mad. In that condition he travelled all over India visiting holy shrines and Mahatmas. A year

later his wife and daughter, coming to know that he was staying in the Ashram of Sri Siddharudha Swami at Hubli, went there, and with the permission of Sri Siddharudha Swami, took him back to Mangalore. But Swami Ramdas, instead of accompanying the mother and daughter to their house, went straight to the Panch Pandava Cave at Kadri. He stayed there for over three months. The stay was very significant in that it afforded Swami Ramdas an opportunity for undisturbed meditation and enabled him to get higher experiences. According to him, he first entered the state of Nirvikalpa Samadhi while he was in the Panch Pandava Cave.

Again his wanderings took him many times to all parts of India and he had a large number of admirers and followers. Vivid descriptions of his itinerary as a mendicant have been written down by him in his own lucid style and published as *In Quest of God* and *In the Vision of God*.

After a few years' wandering Swami Ramdas came to Kasaragod and started a small Ashram. It was here that Mother Krishnabai first came into contact with him and after a couple of years chose to dedicate her entire life to his service and mission.

It was God's will that Swami Ramdas was not to continue in that little Ashram long. God prompted some miscreants to create trouble which made Swami Ramdas and Mother Krishnabai, submitting to His will, leave the Ashram for good. Soon after, Anandashram in Kanhangad came up, and the opening ceremony of it was done on 15th May 1931. Though it was started in a very humble way, the Ashram has considerably expanded over the years. Anandashram has been a very powerful spiritual beacon, and thousands of ardent devotees have been visiting it every year, carrying home with them the torch of light, love and service lit at the feet of the Great Master.

Swami Ramdas, whom his devotees and followers lovingly called Papa, was bubbling with joy always as the result of his realisation of God in all His aspects and the consequent opening of the floodgates of joy in his heart. He reached the heights of realisation by taking to the chanting of the Mantra, Om Sri Ram Jai Ram Jai Jai Ram (Om was added by him after he got initiation of the Mantra). This constant chanting of the Mantra enabled him to remember and feel the presence of God within him and everywhere about him and to realise that the entire universe was the form of God. This naturally brought him to the absolute state of surrender, i.e. accepting that whatever happened, happened by the will of God, and he

finally realised his oneness with the Supreme Being. He therefore taught everybody who sought advice from him to take to the chanting of God's name constantly and submit to His will in all matters. This practice, he assured them, would bring eternal happiness. And they had no reason to doubt the authenticity of this statement because he himself was a living example of what spiritual heights Ram Nam could take an aspirant to.

Swami Ramdas and Mother Krishnabai visited many places in India at the invitation of devotees every year from 1949 to 1957. Wherever he went, Bhajan with the chanting of God's name was the main feature. He was not inclined to give long lectures though he gave short talks and answered any number of questions that were put to him on spiritual subjects. In 1954 he undertook a tour around the world where many friends from the European countries, America, Japan, Malaya, Singapore and Ceylon had the rare opportunity of meeting him and conversing with him. He wrote many books in English and started in 1933 a monthly called *The Vision* to carry his message of Universal Love and Service based on cosmic vision.

The universality and largeness of his outlook can be seen from one of his frequent utterances, quoted below:

“Ramdas does not belong to any particular creed. He firmly believes that all creeds, faiths and religions are different paths which ultimately converge at the same goal. The very sight of a Mohammedan reminds him of Mohammed; of a Christian, Jesus Christ; of a Hindu, Rama, Krishna or Shiva; of a Buddhist, Buddha; of a Parsi, Zoroaster. All the great teachers of the world are from one God – the First Eternal Cause of all existence. Whether it be in the Gita or the Bible or the Koran or the Zend Avesta, we find the same note insistently ringing, viz. self-surrender is the supreme way to liberation or salvation.”

Swami Ramdas entered Mahasamadhi on 25th July 1963 at the age of 79. Though not present in flesh, he continues to inspire and guide his spiritual children and earnest aspirants wherever they are, and his work divine goes on.

REFERENCE

AF – At The Feet Of God

DL – The Divine Life (1 and 2)

GE – God Experience (1 and 2)

GR – Gospel Of Swami Ramdas

GV – Glimpses Of Divine Vision

HA – Hints To Aspirants

LR – Letters Of Swami Ramdas (1 & 2)

MI – Mantra Initiation

PR – Poems Of Swami Ramdas

PP – The Pathless Path

RS – Ramdas Speaks (1 to 5)

RH – Swami Ramdas On Himself

RT – Swami Ramdas' Talks

SR – The Sayings Of Swami Ramdas

TS – Thus Speaks Ramdas

WM - With My Master

IVG – In The Vision Of God

TV – The Vision # (Vol)



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