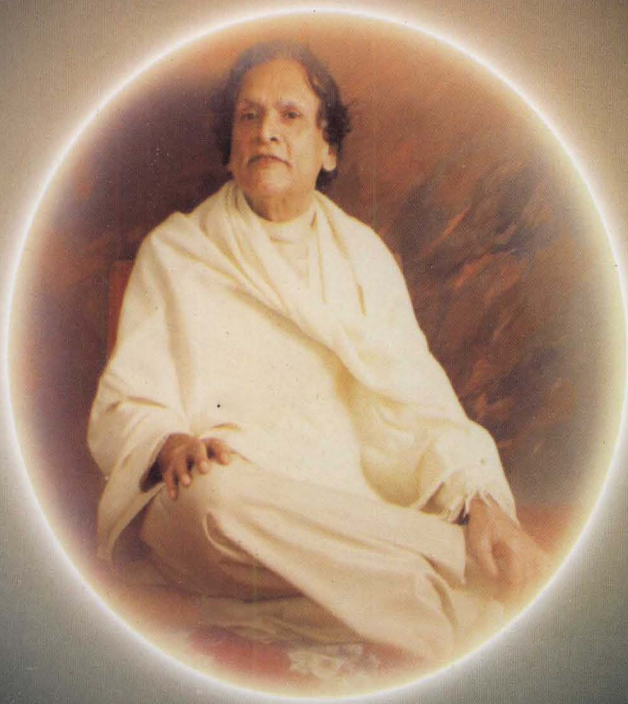


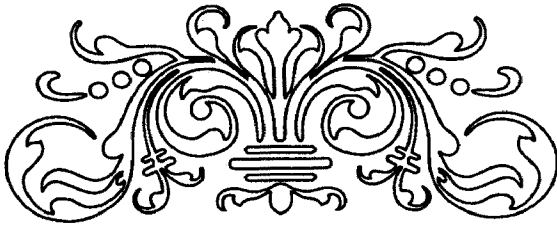
GURUDEV SHREE CHITRABHARU

a man
with a vision



CLARE ROSENFELD

In loving memory of my father
Babulal Juharmal Jain & Mother
Panibai Babulal Jain, Jagatgarh
- Bhavarlal Jain.



GURudev SHREE
CHITRABhANu
a man
with a vision

CLARE ROSEnFIELD

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to all living beings

to all the masters dwelling in the heart of their reality
whose spiritual energy is ever radiating in the universe
for the positive inspiration of all living beings
i bow

to the message of reverence for all life
passed down from master to student
exemplified by the beacon lights of gentle humanity
known and unknown
from all lands, faiths, races, cultures
i dedicate my life

that this mind and heart and hand speak as a whole
in a vibration reverberating from understanding
to share simply and clearly
without distortion or pretension
the beautiful life of a messenger of peace and love
gurudev shree chitrabhanuji

this is my prayer as i embark on this work
may the nectar of truth distilled from the story
of the ripening of one soul's quest
and from his living message
be received and transmitted to you
my fellow beings

may it awaken you to the power of love within you
that you may give forth your yea to life
to the affirmation of self
to your ever-evolving reality
in its oneness with all life

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Foreword

This universe in which we find ourselves is a vast home. There are more planets in our galaxy than there are people on the earth, and this galaxy is only one of countless galaxies scattered throughout space. Of what significance can this small span of eighty, ninety, or even one hundred years be in the midst of this vastness? What can be the ultimate purpose and value of even our finest efforts to accomplish or achieve in the material world?

Gurudev Shree Chitrabhanu posed these questions to his listeners in a recent talk at the Jain Meditation International Center. He then pointed to the answer in a single word: consciousness. Without consciousness, the magnitude of the universe has no significance. Only consciousness can appreciate the majesty of nature; and in that state of balance and inspiration, it encompasses and goes beyond the limits of the world of atoms and molecules. Consciousness, then, is vaster than the vast. Since it is consciousness that gives value to the world and its objects, whether they are vast entities like our Milky Way or tiny fragments like diamonds, consciousness itself must be the most valuable element, for what could surpass in value that which is the source of all value?

Viewed from this perspective, the ultimate purpose of life is to expand, perfect, and liberate consciousness. This is the quest which can bring lasting satisfaction. It is only by freeing ourselves from the darkness of ignorance, from our petty desires and selfish demands, and from harmful emotions such as anger, greed, pride, and jealousy that we can expand our awareness and experience the peace of mind we truly seek. This message lies at the heart of every teaching that has survived the test of time.

To whom or to what, then, do we turn for guidance and instruction along this path toward liberation? Ultimately we

must look within ourselves for the answers, but to begin, it is best to find an example to follow. Books and teachings may help us appreciate and comprehend different philosophies, but if we want the experience of our profound reality, there can be no substitute for the example of a person who is living in harmony with his noblest ideals, who is realizing in his everyday conduct the best in himself, and who is able to lead others to find their way.

For me, Gurudev Shree Chitrabhanu is such a person. I have studied him, his life, and his teaching for almost ten years and have found in his gentle loving approach to living the epitome of reverence, health, courage, and peace. This book is about his life, his transformation, his consciousness. Because he has inspired me and guided me to change my life so that it has become happier, calmer, and more meaningful in every way, I am glad to have this opportunity to encourage you to read his story and let it benefit you on your own journey.

Rakesh (Richard Kleifgen)

Executive Director

Jain Meditation International Center

December, 1981

Prelude

Even before meeting Gurudev Shree Chitrabhanu for the first time, my heart was dancing. Intuitively I knew that this was to be a blessed occasion, a meeting between a seeker and a finder. It was at a retreat Gurudev was leading at Wainwright House that I met him. In the first talk, his very first sentences touched my most vulnerable point.

“Fear is like an empty house,” he said, “You don’t like to go near it. It feels haunted, lonely. Love is like a full house. Whether you hear laughter or tears, it is alive. You feel the presence of living life. Yes, fear is absence and love is presence.”

When the impact of those words struck me, my real inner search began. I started investigating myself, “Do I feel absence or presence? Am I living in fear or in love, in lack or in plenty?”

That evening Gurudev led a “gliding meditation.” I gradually became aware of a warm friendly energy vibrating and melting my heart. All of a sudden my mind interfered and plastered an impression of fear on top of the experience. My meditation came to a halt. Afterwards, I asked Gurudev how I could overcome this habit which prevented me from going further into meditation. His answer has stayed with me ever since.

“What happens when you dive into a pool?” he inquired. I did not know.

“You come right back up!” he exclaimed joyfully.

It was the gist of his message. Don’t be afraid, he was saying. When you meditate, dive into the Self! When you open the eyes, you will be with yourself. No loss, no withdrawal from life, no duality. Such a liberating point of view, yet so difficult to implement. That thought took me out from my slumber. It made me re-examine every aspect of my living. It inspired me to take an honest look at myself and to be

courageous to make changes.

I started to attend his talks regularly. I heard him speak on the hidden power of man. "Don't undermine the power of the human being. We have energy. When a man breaks the gravitational pull and goes to the moon, we applaud it. But what about us? Each of us has this power. When we drop those things which are pulling us down, we can go to that height of the pure real Self."

Why have we not realized this power? Because we have misused it. "Instead of using our innate power to go up, we have used it to protect 'mine' and to churn in the same mire of success, achievement, name, and fame."

Why do we suffer? "To get something which can never be ours. The day you stamp a thing with 'mine' you have made an agreement with suffering. All the emotions, doubts, and projections are born from that. You are worried that someone will come and take away the stamp. Pain and toil are not in life. They are in your distorted perception. You have not come here in the world for that, to labor and suffer for your emotions. You have a higher calling."

Always he uplifted, gave a greater perspective, a panoramic vision. I heard him speak on the dignity of the human being, on the equality of women, on the rights of animals, on the root causes of slavery, war, poverty, and exploitation. He gave series of talks on the dynamics of meditation, the seven centers of energy, the different levels of mind, the nature of pain, numerous ways to live life beyond suffering, in tune with one's Self and in reverence for all life.

He spoke three and four times a week in Manhattan. I attended a few weekend retreats in country settings. I happened to catch sight of a picture of him on a platform in India speaking to a crowd of what appeared to be at least one hundred thousand people. Tears came to my eyes. "He left all that to come here? Such a sage among sages comes across one's path once in a lifetime, if at all. Now I want to study under his guidance. Let me absorb what I can from his wisdom, from his presence." The more I heard him, the more I realized that he was the embodiment of every quality I had always admired in my deepest unspoken dreams.

Each time he spoke I observed in him what one might call a fountain of abundance. He overflowed with an abundance of cheerfulness and good humor which lit up those around him. Every part of his being beamed *maitri*, an open friendliness toward all life, the invisible language of his heart. At the end of his talks, I noticed how so many of his listeners who had entered the room in a state of sorrow, exhaustion, or anxiety felt different, infused with energy, transformed. I heard people whisper to one another, "That talk was meant just for me. It touched on so many things I needed to hear," and "He really shares himself from his life, doesn't he? He is so open."

"How does he talk like that without any notes?" someone asked. Later I discovered the answer. He is dipping into the depths of what he calls the "nectar of consciousness." He transmits through mind and heart the pure authenticity of lived experience. That is the source of his love and compassion. That is why he can pick up the needs of others and speak extemporaneously to their most profound inner core.

I wanted to know how he came into this vast experience of the human condition. I found out that he was not a superman who had descended from the heavens! He was an ordinary human being who had gone through ups and downs, trials and tests. Crises had helped him to take a giant step forward in his life. He had chosen the process of self-investigation. Gradually he had climbed out from the valley of fear and attachment to the mountainpeak of understanding and bliss.

My desire to know more about his inward journey was aroused at Powell House, a Quaker retreat centre where he was leading a two-day retreat with Douglas Steere. When it was his turn to tell briefly the story of his life, he spoke so simply, so openly. It was only a glimpse, but it led to this, to *A Man with a Vision*.

Gurudev said, "Events can make you dull, passive, and escapist, or they can give you strength, understanding, and energy to work out with your life." Gurudev's life story became a means for me to work on my outlook on life and to bring harmony where there was disharmony.

Behind the narrative are glimpses of that which gave an

impetus to Gurudev's inner growing, that which helped bring a transformation in his perceiving and living. By trying to experience the insights of his life in your life, you can gain some clues into the mystery of self-transformation. I hope his story can help you, as it has helped me, to embark on a journey to the real Self, and to live with a vision which carries universal meaning.

In Acknowledgement

It has been a unique privilege to try and transmit the beauty and truth of Gurudev Shree Chitrabhanuji's life to others through the written word. Gurudev was kind enough to allow me to interview him from time to time. These brief conversations yielded a harvest of meaningful insights and experiences. I also gleaned many personal stories from the notes I took during Gurudev's talks throughout the years and from his own writings.

In Half Hours With A Jain Muni, a short first biography of Gurudev which was written by Shri Abdul Hamid A. Baakza and published in 1962, I found a number of significant events which I had a chance to clarify and amplify, with Gurudev's help. Before he expired in 1975, Shri Baakza, out of continued love and devotion to Gurudev, had prepared many notes for a sequel to his first biography. He had sent them on to Richard Kleifgen, longtime student of Gurudev and co-director of the Jain Meditation International Center. Rick started to rewrite and update the material, turning many of them into chapters for the new book. When I expressed an interest in lending my help to this project, Rick generously relinquished the notes, entrusting them into my hands. I am deeply grateful to both Shri Baakza and to Rick for their creative efforts at pulling so many of the threads together. In particular, I admire the way in which Rick exemplified unattachment to the fruits of his labor.

I specially traveled to India with Gurudev and Pramodaben, his wife, and fellow students in both 1975 and 1978 to observe Gurudev in his homeland, to feel the vibrations of the sanctified places where he had meditated and taught for nearly three decades as a monk, and to look at the many scrapbooks and diaries recording in word and picture those years. I learned of the hundreds of instances of social welfare sponsored by Gurudev at the Divine Knowledge Society in

Bombay. I saw firsthand how the Indian people welcomed him back to their villages, homes, schools, and temples with garlands of flowers, sparkling eyes, and receptive hearts. When they saw us, fellow seekers along with them, meditating and absorbing the peace and wisdom and love of the divine presence we felt in their country, they understood and appreciated what Gurudev's coming to America has meant to us.

Friends from everywhere appeared to receive his blessing, some words of advice, a fresh insight. I heard one lovely Parsee woman in her eighties turn to him as she was leaving and say, "Really, Gurudev, I love you so." He took her two hands in his, smiled a radiant smile of love and blessing upon her, and told her simply, "Truly, it is you who are such a loving soul!"

A few fellow students gave me excellent advice, encouragement, and help at different stages. I would like to express my appreciation to Pramodaben. I would also like to thank Paul, our twelve-year old son, whom I admire, for doing the beautiful calligraphy, and his gifted and loving art teacher, Shirlee Brownell, who illustrated the jacket cover of this book.

My heart goes out to my family whose help has been a silent yet potent nurturing: to Henry and Fay Stein, my parents who gave me a head start in writing and who allowed me to be the contemplative nature that I am; to Allan, my husband, who was ever patient and understanding as he watched me give birth not only to this book, but also to myself in the course of the last six years; to Paul and Jill, our children who, in being the joyous and undemanding souls that they are, knew how to share their mom with the universe!

Actually, all of you have injected your living contact into the flow of this story. All have contributed to the fruition of this soul's quest and purpose. It is for these lives and for all life that a barefoot toddler born in the East and brought up in the simplest of lifestyles guided his feet over thirty thousand miles in India and across the seas to Europe, Africa, America and Canada.

I. BOYHOOD

Auspicious Beginning

सिद्धोऽसि बुद्धोऽसि निरञ्जनोऽसि संसारमाया परिवर्जितोऽसि ।
संसारस्वप्नं त्यज मोहनिद्रां मदालसा वाक्यमुवाच चैवम् ॥

*“Siddho si buddho si nirañjano si
Samsāramāyā parivarjito si
Samsāra svapnam tyaja mohanidrām”
Madālasā vākyamuvāchachaivam*

The world over, lullabies are ever a sweet sharing between mother and child. In India, through the ages, in special families, among the first sounds a newborn baby hears are the sounds of the above song, a lullaby in which the mother addresses the invisible soul of her child with great love, understanding, and respect. In this most ancient of lullabies, sung in the Sanskrit language, the mother acknowledges her child's intrinsic quality and pure nature; at the same time, she helps him or her to see clearly the present condition which keeps the consciousness in a temporary slumber and unaware state. The communion occurs on a deep non-verbal level.

The lullaby carries this special meaning:

“O dear sweet soul! You are perfect! You already know what you want to know! You are pure, innocent, without color or bias!

You are free from the world of illusion!

O perfect one! This world is nothing but an ever-ending dream!

So stay awake!”

In this way Madalasa taught all of her children.

It was into the heart of these loving sound waves, passed

down from Madālasā of ancient times to mothers of the new generations, that Rup-Rajendra Shah, a winged soul, a free spirit, the subject of our story, was born. Rup-Rajendra, 'handsome like a king,' was so named for the way he presented himself from the first moment as a majestic and leonine energy. Within a radiant outer form, a rush of Rajput fire seemed to glow along with a cooling saintly peace.

His mother, Chunibai, a soft and gentle woman, and his father, Chhogalal, a man of honesty and great piety, were both highly devout people, of the Jain tradition, as their families had been for generations. They lived as simple folk, in harmony with each other and with life at large. At this point in their marriage, their hearts were longing for the arrival of this baby. They prayed that he would live to be strong and healthy. Only three years before, they had shared the pain of seeing their second-born child, a son named Jaravi, expire after only one year of life, and two years before him their first-born son, Saremal, not live past infancy.

On the twenty-sixth of July, in the year 1922, their dream came true. When the cry of the baby announced a new presence in their world, they wept with joy and knew they had been blessed.

"The greatest gift has come to us, O Lord, I bow to Thee," Chhogalal offered his gratitude to Mahāvīr, twenty-fourth of the Jain Prophets, who is remembered and revered for having exemplified in every aspect of his living a love and compassion which swept past all boundaries and embraced all of life.

"O may my care and wealth and love sustain this child in perfect health and well-being!" As he prayed, Chhogalal rejoiced that he was indeed able to give to his precious son the provisions he would need. In the past few years, the cloth business he shared with his brother in Tumkur had been prospering. Together, they had even been able to open a branch in Bangalore.

Tumkur, where they lived, was in the south, in Mysore state. But, for the occasion of childbirth, as on all significant occasions, they traveled back to their homeland in Takhatgadh, a calm village nestled into a corner wing of Jodhpur state, the capital city of Rajasthan at that time. Since Chhoga-

lal's parents had expired five years earlier, they went to stay with Chunibai's parents who lived in the neighboring village of Pavata. This was the land where they could relax and feel at home. They were elated here where all was unspoiled, natural, and simple. The wildflowers and shrubs were blossoming in vivid colors. The sounds of buffalo plodding along the dirt roads blending with the happy shouts of children and the sweet songs of birds made music to their ears and awakened in them a feeling of spontaneous joy.

They loved this land with all their heart, for they were also attuned to its unique quality. Rajputana, as Rajasthan used to be called, is a land of greatness. On its ancient soil are the Aravallis, mountains sacred to Jains, Hindus, and seekers from many religious disciplines. Pilgrimage places abound, and people who come here to meditate in the temples feel a flowing feeling, a universal dimension of consciousness, a calm and loving energy. They count themselves blessed by the many saints, masters, and spiritual aspirants who left a portion of the best and noblest in themselves whenever they came here to contemplate and teach.

Among the most beautiful of temples, all in white marble, are the Delwara Temples on the peaks of Mt. Abu, and the Temples of Ranakpur in the valley between two of its peaks. These temples were special to Rup-Raj's family as well. They liked to look up at the mountains from their little house in Pavata and feel refreshed by the life-giving vibrations coming from the temples which they knew were not far away. As they breathed in the cool crisp mountain air, they drank deeply of the elixir of pure peace. It was for this that Rup-Raj's family was eager and willing to travel more than fourteen hundred miles, sitting for many days in trains and camelcarts, to reach this land.

This was the auspicious beginning to a new lifetime for an eternally youthful soul. As Chunibai sang the ancient lullaby to her infant son, she planted deep within his being her loving adoration and the seed of a pure and unconditional love. Cradled and nourished in this way from the outset of life, Rup's spirit thrived, his body grew, and he knew the touch of peace.

Within a few weeks, Chhogalal returned to Tumkur and his business, leaving his wife and child in her parents' care. Nine months later, according to custom, he took the long trip back to Pavata to accompany his family back to Tumkur. Three years later, the journey was repeated for the occasion of another joyful moment, the birth of Magi, Rup's little sister.

* * *

Message in the Stars

Rup and his little sister were both brought up in Tumkur in the house where their father had his cloth shop. Tumkur was in a land brimming with tales of chivalry, studded here and there with feudal forts and rajdom's castles. Deeper than changing dynasties and boastings of conquest ran a sure and profound current — a faith in life, a compassion for all living beings, a love for contemplation, an appreciation of the simple non-acquisitive life. In the third century B.C. a great Jain monk, who was also a scholar, Āchāryā Bhadrabāhu, brought twelve thousand disciples to the south after intuiting an on-coming twelve-year famine in the north. From then on, the south became permeated with these living feelings.

Such pure values made their way into the minds and hearts of the villagers and into their everyday life. One who felt a deep respect for them was Rup and Magi's father. Chhogalal was not like other cloth merchants. He lived according to Bhagwan Mahavtr's principle — to earn no more profit than was necessary, to give the surplus to those in need, and to be contented with what he had. In keeping with this outlook, his prices were fixed and fair. Soon the people became accustomed to his unusually straightforward way and no longer expected to bargain with him. They loved him for his honest approach.

There in Tumkur the infant Rup turned into a boy and was brought up unhampered, natural, free. A joyful barefoot tod-

dlar, with eyes of velvet black, he blossomed under the nourishing love of his mother and father. In this way, he grew and his love for his parents grew. It was a perfect childhood.

But one year later, Rup's perfect childhood came to an end.

* * *

From infancy he and his little sister Magi used to sleep by their mother's side at night. But one night when Magi was only one and Rup barely four, they were taken to sleep in their father's bed.

"Where is Mama? Where is she?" Rup murmured in his half-sleep. He missed her nearness and for a while he felt a momentary panic seize him, until gentle sleep took hold once again.

When morning broke, the truth of that confused night dawned upon him. "You'll never see your mother again," he heard the brutal news. His sunshine world was darkened. It felt as if his life had been cut short, eclipsed. Overwhelmed by grief, he turned and fled from the painful sting of those harsh words. But rather than run away and hide, he ran into the arms of solace and understanding. He rushed straight to the good old man, dear friend and neighbor to whom he used to carry all his little tales of joy and woe.

This time it was no small event to complain about. Tears poured from his eyes as he buried his face into the old man's large and roomy shoulder. He unburdened his heart, "O uncle, where has my Mama gone? What is this death they talk about? Please," he pleaded, "please tell me the truth."

As wise as he was kind, the old man gently caressed the small boy's curly locks and held him calmly until his tears subsided. When the waves of emotion began to ebb, he set him down by his side and looked deeply into his eyes. Smoothing Rup's brow with a tender loving touch, he softly spoke to him, "Rup, dear child, look up! Look high above us! Can you see those starry spaces?"

Rup looked up. His friend continued, "Isn't it wonderful — the stars are still shining and peeping at us, but it is daytime and the bright sunlight makes it impossible for us to see them.

But at night we see how brilliant they are! Isn't this a beautiful home? So sparkling and full of light? Well, that is where your mother has gone, to live amidst the stars."

"Can we go too?" Rup implored him. "O won't you take me to my mother?"

"Sweet child, one day we'll surely go there. People who are good and kind and helpful to each other are allowed to stay there. It is nothing but another home made out of peace and bliss. There nobody ever feels like crying. If you will be a good boy, surely your mother will send a messenger to fetch you to her side."

For days the little four-year old turned over in his mind the old man's words. He kept them like a secret treasure inside his heart. He loved his uncle-friend as much as he loved his own father and mother. So he knew he could trust him.

In this way, the trauma became transformed. Instead of weeping over his mother's disappearance, he began to look forward to her resurrection. Instead of focusing his thoughts on death, he looked toward life.

Each night before going to sleep, he waited patiently for her message. He would watch the moon ride by like a queen of the night surrounded by shining admirers, the shimmering stars. He gazed longingly into those sparkling lights from his open window. Night after night he remained mesmerized by the stars until the weariness from waiting would overtake his little frame and drop him into sleep at last. From this early age, he developed a deep love for the stars. Looking up became second nature to him.

There were times when he would lose hope.

Why should she remember me? She must be so happy staying in such a beautiful place. She must have to look at so many bright stars and all that light. Why should she stop to think of me?

The simple words of a four-year old child, a dream of reuniting with mother and yet more than that. The young boy allowed his consciousness to stretch and expand. Whereas one thought brought him pain, another thought brought him peace. The one ignited his human failings; the other revealed his divine qualities.

But when I think of her so much, surely she must think of me! One day she'll run to me and clasp me to her and claim me back again. I just have to be a little patient! After all, with everything so sparkling there, she may not want to come back so soon!

Within the mind there was struggle. There was another voice, a voice of anger and possessiveness.

And when she comes, I'll turn my face away and refuse to talk to her. I'll wait until she weeps and tells me that she's sorry she left me. Then I'll really throw my arms around her and hug her so tight and be friends with her all over again!

The image which wise uncle-friend gave him guided this innocent child's heart to conceive of his mother hearing and responding to his thought. Though this image came and receded as elusively as the stars, it was an inspiration, an invitation to imagine a greater dimension to life.

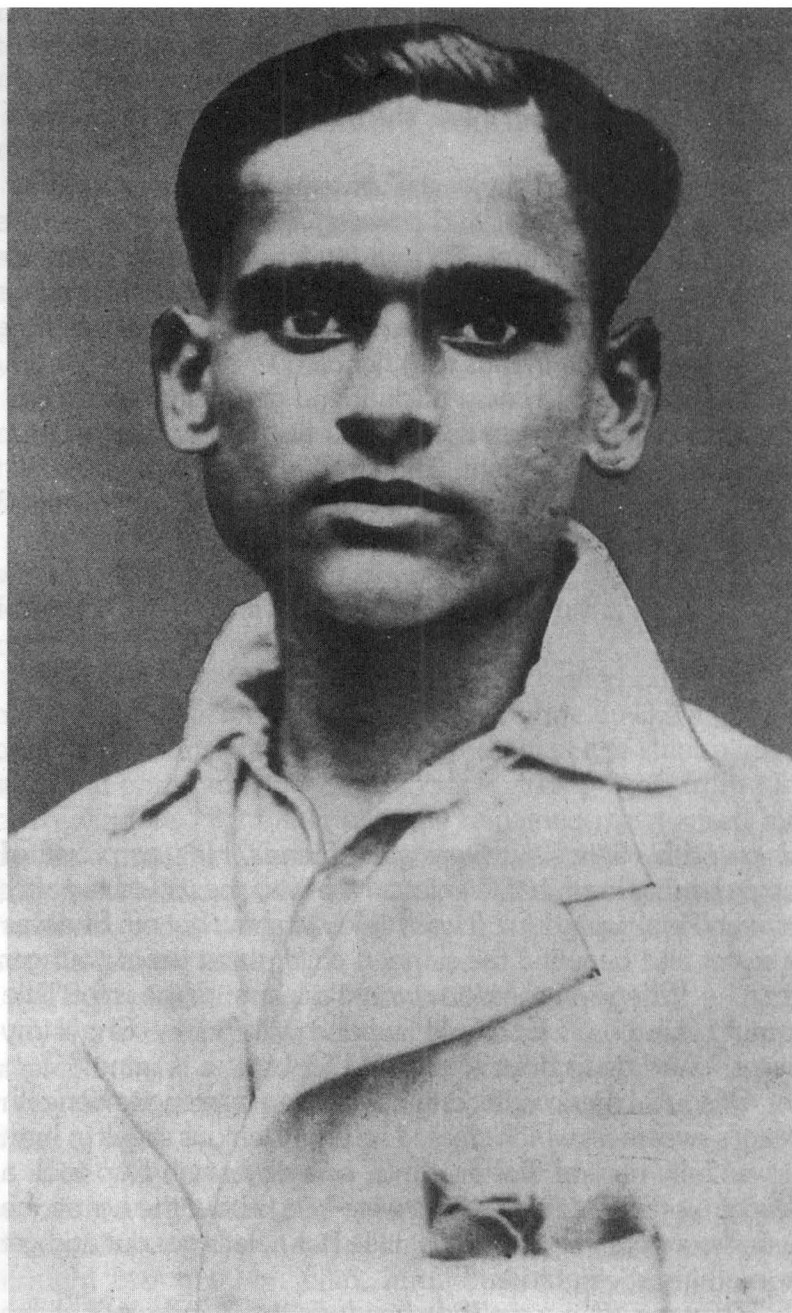
* * *

Rup's Little Sister

Rup and his little sister were great friends. He was proud of being her big brother. He enjoyed the way she would tag after him and look up to him. It was his joy to show her off. She was a sweet and beautiful fair-skinned child, three years younger than he. Whenever someone would ask him, "Who is this little beauty with you?" he would respond with pride, "She is my sister!" And deep down he would feel, "She is mine!"

Of course there were certain annoying tendencies beneath Magi's sweetness which created an angry jealous streak in him. It was only natural. For example, one day when Rup took a few of his father's coins which were lying about the house, he called out to Magi, "Come on, little Behn, let's go out and get something special to eat!"

They ran off to a roadside vendor's stand and spent all the coins on delicious treats. Before returning home, Rup warned



Young Rup

Magi, "Promise not to tell Father, Behn, promise?"

No sooner did they step foot inside the door than Magi, honest soul, blurted out the full truth, "O Daddy, want to know where Bhai took me just now? We went out and ate and ate, sweets and idli dhosa and everything!"

"Where did you get the money, Rup?" his father asked him. "And why go out to eat when we have everything right here?" His father's patience was wearing thin, and Rup received a quick spanking. "If you had at least told me the truth before Magi told me, I would have appreciated your honesty." Rup glared at Magi, pouting and angry. "You'd better not tell on me again," he told her later.

* * *

Little incidents of joy and tears brought brother and sister together until the year 1933, when Rup turned eleven and Magi eight. Widowed Aunt Gajara, his father's younger sister who had been living with the motherless children and taking care of the family, decided to visit relatives in Takhatgadh. Rather than leave Magi behind with her father and brother, Aunt Gajara took her along on the trip.

It was the last time Rup would see his little sister. An epidemic of smallpox struck the small village that she was visiting with her aunt. Magi fell helpless before the fatal attack, along with many other young girls and boys. When the news came, both Rup and his father felt pain carve deep into their hearts. Rup had met the trauma of his mother's departure with the help of the kind old neighbor, his father, and his aunt, as well as with his own hopeful spirit and the soothing balm of time. Though he used to pretend to be a brave and adventurous child, often mischievous too, he was unprepared for this shock. He felt a cavernous void open inside him. All of Magi's shortcomings were completely forgiven and forgotten before the gravity of this event. For a time life appeared senseless to him.

When he was four, he had not been able to empathize consciously with his father whose sorrow had been deep. He had not noticed how for many days he had fasted and closed himself in prayer, until he could take hold of himself again. But

this time, Rup felt both his own pain as well as that of his father. He suffered to see how his father was suffering. It was such a blow that for three days his father underwent a complete fast, taking no food, not even a drop of water. He seemed unable to recover his peace or even the slightest taste for life. Magi had been more than a beloved daughter to him. She was the symbol of his departed wife Chunibai, in all her beauty, both inner and outer.

After the loss of his wife, Chhogalal had emerged from the pain with a clear vision of what remained for him to fulfill, his responsibility to his children. He had taken upon himself a vow, to be both father and mother to his two small offspring. Never again would he take a wife. It was to be a lifetime commitment to *brahmacharya*, celibacy, in order to harness all of his inner energy for the higher purpose of living selflessly for others. He had adjusted his outer life to this newfound commitment. He had reduced the hours in which he kept his shop open so that he could spend more time with his children and with himself in meditation. When friends chided him, he had answered that his material wants were small and that his own peace of mind and the children's need for his companionship were more important.

As a result, the townspeople had made a special effort to bring him their business. There were always customers lined up outside his door before he came to open the shop. In this way, he had time for Rup and Magi. They would spend hours with him, climbing in his lap, telling him their innermost thoughts, giving him as many hugs as he would be willing to take! He gratified their whims and spoiled them to a large degree. They were growing up strong and sure, though at times Rup became overly demanding and willful, but their father felt contented with his decision to focus on these young lives rather than to mourn the irreparable loss of his wife. In this, he proved to be a great inspiration to Rup in his approach to life and living.

But this time, Chhogalal could not get back his peace. Something went out of him when this little life on whom he had poured so much affection was snuffed out. So he took Rup away for a while to a small mountaintop village where

there was a lone Digambar temple. There they had the chance to free themselves from the familiar atmosphere which evoked the continuous memory of little Magi. Father and son came closer and closer together at that time. It was then that Rup started feeling deeply for his father and admiring him wholeheartedly. They stayed near the little temple until the inner wound was less sore and until they felt ready to go back to the business of living again.

But this time, seven years after the loss of his mother, Rup's young heart was not filled with hope. He felt robbed of a living companion, and weighed down by a lurking fear of death.

Unanswerable questions welled forth.

Where did she go? Why did she go? Did she meet my mother? Why do we live if we all have to die? And what is it that causes one person to go and not another? Why did it happen to Magi and not to me? This marked his second investigation into death. It prodded him into a deep search.

* * *

Confronting a Habit

Several months passed. Rup's feeling of loss turned into a kind of loneliness. When he came home from school, it was to an empty house, his own heart into which fear had crept. He trembled to go close to it. Instead of verbalizing his fear, he ran away from it. For a while, as the fear lay smoldering under his conscious mind, he became caught up with another kind of smoldering, smoking. It was as if subconsciously he was looking for something to cover up his loneliness and quench his inner burning, and instead found something which would fan its flames.

It all began when some mischievous friends took hold of young Rup. "Come on!" they urged him. "Come join us in a smoke!" They dragged him off playfully to a secluded spot

behind a huge pile of chaff left from the winnowing of rice. Rup took a puff or two of the forbidden weed and began to cough and cough. His cigarette burned out. One of the boys relit it for him and tossed the match carelessly into the pile of chaff.

In seconds the chaff ignited. The boys fled. No time to think of what they had just done! All they could think of was to run away as fast as they could. Before they were completely out of sight, one or two townspeople spotted them. Because of his father's prominence, Rup was easily recognized.

"O Rup! Young Rup! Do you hear us? Come here, Rup!" He heard someone shouting behind him.

With his child's mind already full of fear, he magnified the deed to monstrous proportions. He was panicky and thought he had done a grievous wrong. He dared not go home that night. He felt painfully alone. All of his companions had run off. He felt abandoned.

What should I do? Quick, let me run away. I can jump aboard a train for Bangalore, and go to my cousins' house for a while.

Whenever Rup made some mischief, he always used to imagine himself fleeing to his relatives for protection. This was the first time he carried out his fantasy.

The train ride from Tumkur to Bangalore was a mere forty miles journey, but the short period of time was filled with mental anguish. The more his mind maneuvered, the more his heart sank. As he fled from one mistake, he kept on breeding more. As he avoided facing the truth, he redoubled the number of lies.

Soon he appeared on the doorsteps of his father's cousins in Bangalore. The family welcomed him with open arms, in the grand tradition of Indian hospitality. They pretended not to doubt the legitimacy of his visit, but naturally they saw right through this twelve-year old's plot.

To be sure, they contacted his father. A couple of days after, as young Rup was figuring out his next move, a messenger arrived to bring the lad back home, to his father.

Father's understanding left no room for punishment. Instead, in a calm and quiet mood, they had a conversation

together. He pointed out to Rup, "Run away from anything and you'll always be chased by it. It's either the chaser or the chased! Just be open and honest with yourself, then you will be open and honest with me. That's the first step to being courageous."

Though his father's gently spoken admonishments penetrated Rup's consciousness at the time, Rup did not stop venturing into mischief. It was as if he had to continue to play with fire, testing the world to give him back his own reflection. By the time he was a teenager, he joined his rebellious pals and became a habitual smoker. To the dismay of his father and uncles, he even smoked haughtily in public.

One day an insight came to him.

Smoking is making me a slave. Why? What is wrong with me? I am restless and exploding inside, but is smoking helping me be less restless? No, it only adds to that. It is a useless and harmful habit. I am going to do away with it. After all, who is in control here, me or my habit? Can't I master my habit instead of allowing it to master me?

It was a daring step, a definite decision. This is how he put an end to his habit. One afternoon he went off alone with fifty cigarettes. He sat down and deliberately began to smoke one cigarette after another. He forced himself to smoke more and more until he became sickened and passed out.

When he woke up, he threw away the cigarettes remaining in the pack and was never again tempted to smoke. He also disengaged himself from his old gang of mischievous friends.

There I did it! I knew it was possible. That wasn't so hard once I made the decision to do it. Now my friends won't like me anymore. Never mind! Without their company and its bad influence, I will be free from their pressure, I'll be free to be myself!

* * *

Facing Fear

"You know about the spirits hovering in this house, don't you?" With the feeling of Magi's loss still fresh in his heart, Rup recalled a neighbor's carelessly spoken words with anxiety and foreboding the night his father was away on a business trip to Bangalore. When he went to bed, he felt uneasy and nervous about staying alone. At last he fell asleep, keeping a big stick beside his bed.

At one o'clock in the morning, Rup woke up with a jolt. Across from his bed, he saw two white figures moving. They seemed to be floating towards him closer and closer. Fear invaded him from head to toe. For a while he could not move.

What shall I do? Oh, how I wish that somebody were here!

But then he remembered two things, the stick and his father's words.

Father told me — "Face your fear and it will be gone." Well, here's my chance. At least I can put up a good fight!

He collected his energy and slowly crawled out from under the covers, picked up the big stick lying on the floor, and took a deep breath. Then, summoning all his courage, he lunged forward, striking a blow at the flimsy floating whiteness before his eyes. Crash! The laundry line collapsed and the so-called spirits fell to the ground! Rup laughed aloud.

So that's what I was afraid of? Two long white cloths hanging up to dry! Now I can go back to bed!

But he did not go right to sleep. He began to admit to himself that he still harbored more fear in his heart. In the dialogue he held with himself, he saw quite lucidly how fear made him feel weak and helpless and that he did not want to feel like that any more.

Whenever I feel afraid, what happens to me? Something makes me tremble and shake. I can't bear it. Well, can I get rid of it or not? I have an idea. I'll make up a scary time for myself and see if I can get through it. When? Next week when it's the black moon. No one would dare be out then. Where? I know! The most fearful place — the cremation ground! That's where

all sorts of spirits are thought to be lurking about. Well, this will be my chance to find out who is stronger, me or them? Anyway, who's to say that they are real?

Before the night of the black moon came, Rup was walking home from school where he had been playing football after class when he met a neighbor and walked along with him. Halfway home they passed a huge banyan tree in the cremation ground.

"Rup," the man stopped to ask, "Do you know about this tree and this place?"

"No, Sir, I don't."

"Well, of all the spirits living in this area, the biggest demon lives in this tree. This creature is so frightening, it is hard to imagine! One day I saw him with my own eyes. I was coming home at night and I spotted him from the distance. Would you believe it — he was ten feet tall! From that day I got such a fright that I never walk by this tree or go near the cremation ground after dark. And you shouldn't either. Come, let's move on! It's getting late. You are with me, so I don't mind, but let's not delay any longer!"

Rup went home and tried to forget about the man's words. He tried to convince himself that it was nothing but superstition. Nevertheless, that night he had a vivid dream. In it he saw a figure exactly like the one the man had described to him. When he woke up in the morning, a doubt crept into his mind.

There must have been some truth to what he said or I would not have had this dream. Maybe certain demons do inhabit certain trees. Especially at cremation grounds. Maybe the demon knew I did not believe in him, so he came to me to convince me he is real!

But Rup was not satisfied with his reasoning. He felt how it revived the embers of fear and anxiety in his mind and body. Instead of giving in, he took his new pragmatic approach.

All right, shall I allow this monster to take over my mind? What benefit will I get? Fear in my stomach and weakness in my limbs! So tomorrow night is the black moon. I will go and see. If he is real, why should he come to me only in a dream? I will go and sit under that tree and if he meets me face to face, I am ready to fight with him.

True to his word, the night of the black moon, he went off to the cremation ground. It was pitch black and no one was stirring, except a few lizards and hooting owls. In the distance, dogs howled and cats whined. Not a single comforting sound or pleasing sight was within range of his senses.

Even to set foot in such a place took all of his courage. He found the banyan tree and sat down beneath it. Inside he was trembling. For the first hour, he had a hard time controlling his thoughts.

What if it is true? What if the demon comes to take me away? What if this place is teeming with spirits? After all, in my house, there were only two cloths hanging on a line, but here is the place where ghosts and demons really like to live.

He stayed his ground. He kept on reminding himself why he was doing this. Nothing would budge him from his desire to rid himself of this residue of fear lurking in his mind.

Be quiet, imagination! You are making me dizzy. You are throwing me into some abyss. If I listen to you, I will never get out. I refuse to listen to you. I will be strong no matter what. This is my chance.

The second hour passed. No demon appeared. No spirit floated past. He stopped clutching his pocket knife so tightly. Little by little, his anxiety began to subside and his tension dropped. He no longer had to hold his concentration in such a taut manner.

He opened his eyes widely in the darkness and looked about. He even looked at a burning corpse without feeling the same horror. His fear began to melt away.

As the third hour neared its end, he began to enjoy a new feeling, an indescribable sense of peacefulness which came from having let go of the grip of fear. He noticed the quietness of the place and the calm of the wise old trees. Replacing the insecurity and apprehension was a light and buoyant sense of reassurance. He smiled and spoke aloud, "Truly there is no fear unless I myself give life to it by believing in it." He found a soft grassy place and lay his head down to rest.

At dawn he went home elated. He had tossed the idea of "haunted" and "spirits" out of his mind.

Now I am convinced. There is nothing in the world which

is more powerful than a human being. Monsters are all in the mind.

It was a small but significant experiment with confronting his own mind. It was his first opportunity to observe the way someone can plant a tiny thought in someone's mind and how, ignited by previous fears, conditionings, and imagination, the thought can become a forest fire, alarming the entire being. Though he was not aware of what he had done on a conscious level, in fact he had taken a very positive step.

* * *

Out of Control

"Stop it! Go away, you big bullies! Oh, somebody please help me!" a schoolgirl cried out. Two older boys were pulling her long braid and teasing her mercilessly.

Rup happened to be on his way home from school. As soon as he saw what the mischievous twosome were up to, he was ready to apply his newfound feeling of fearlessness to the situation. Moreover he thought of his long lost little sister and of how he would have protected her had it been her.

So he walked straight up to the two boys and spoke his mind, "What are you doing that for? This girl didn't hurt you. It isn't nice to tease people like that. Leave her alone."

The boys, who were twice the size of Rup, laughed. They gave him a shove, saying, "And what else are girls for? Why don't you just be on your way, you little coward!"

No sooner did these words pass their lips than Rup felt a burning flame of anger flare up in all his veins. He took their insult to heart, and now he had to throw it back at them. It was the age-old process of action-reaction-interaction. It did not cross his mind that the boys were bigger than him. He did not care that there were two of them and only one of him. Losing control of himself, he picked up a small dry stick by the side of the road, and flogged each one on the back as hard as he could.

The boys were caught completely off guard. They could not imagine that this small boy would be capable of dealing such a blow. Unable to take it, they ran away crying and moaning in pain. Before they were out of sight, one of them threw a stone at Rup. He did not mind. Anger had so completely dominated him that he was trembling in all his limbs. The inner cauldron had erupted and boiled over.

The young girl thanked Rup shyly for rescuing her and ran home. He hardly noticed her. He even forgot about seeing little Magi in her. His only concern had been for his own ego! The insulting word 'coward' still rang in his ears. He could not tolerate it.

Once the explosion and all of its emotional havoc subsided, Rup became shocked at himself. Anger had wrenched control out of his hands and had taken over the reins. He was unable to understand how it had happened.

What kind of person am I? Am I capable of such anger? I couldn't even stop myself. What to do with this angry streak?

No sooner had he prided himself on being in control of his fear than this incident came and showed him that anger and ego knew how to throw him off balance. It was natural. Not until he would know how to stand apart from the mind's inner weaknesses would he be able to overcome them.

At least he was cultivating a good habit — to take a moment or two to reflect on whatever he had just done. Often, too, he was able to laugh at himself.

* * *

One such occasion came when Rup accompanied his father to a wedding feast. On the table Rup's eyes took in the delectable spread of dishes. In particular, there was one which appealed to him more than the others. He could smell the aroma of the special spices the cooks had put into it. His mouth watered as he imagined himself tasting it.

At last it came time for him to eat. He helped himself to a big portion from that dish.

Yes, it is as delicious as I thought.

As he was congratulating himself on his choice, he had a second thought.

This dish is not going to come again, so let me take a second helping!

He had no thought as to whether he had enough room inside his stomach to digest it all. So he took a large second portion.

After a few mouthfuls, he felt too sated to eat more. One more morsel and he felt he would burst! But in his mind, a voice called out to remind him of the rules of propriety — “Don’t waste food. There are so many starving people. Everyone must make their plates clean.”

So he went on stuffing himself in order not to be considered improper by those guests who might have noticed that he was one to waste his food! He could not bear to have anyone cast a disapproving glance at him.

What was the final outcome? You know! He felt so much nausea that he had to run to the washroom and vomit. Later, he realized his folly and was able to poke fun at himself.

If I had stopped with the first helping, I would have kept the food in my stomach. Now I have not only lost the food, but I’ve lost the taste for it as well! I never want to eat this food again!

* * *

The Power of Suggestion

Although Rup did not like to be influenced by others, there was one occasion in which he did not stop himself from trying to influence someone else. It happened the year that he and his friends had a very strict teacher at school. This man was a highly disciplined person and never missed a day of school. In fact, he loaded the boys with so much work that they often wished he would be absent. Then they would be able to take a little rest and have some fun.

One day they devised a plan. Their only aim was to cause

their teacher to miss one or two days of school. Little did they realize the extent to which the power of suggestion could go.

One morning as their teacher walked into the room, Rup asked him, "Sir, are you feeling all right? You look so very tired." His voice showed great concern.

A puzzled look on his face, the teacher answered, "On the contrary, I am feeling excellent today, but thank you for your interest in my health."

One hour later, one of Rup's friends asked this same teacher a similar question, "Sir, you look a little pale today. Are you not feeling well? Your eyes have a drawn look about them."

Again the teacher acted surprised and made a small joke about it, reiterating, "I assure you there is nothing wrong with me."

In a few minutes, a third student came up to him and told him in a solemn voice, "If you don't mind my saying so, Sir, I think you should sit down and rest. I've been noticing that you look extremely fatigued and unsteady on your feet."

This time their teacher could not pass off the remark so lightly as before. He thought about it a little, then excused himself for a few minutes. He went straight to the washroom, studied himself in the mirror, and threw some water over his face.

He returned to the classroom looking a little less energetic than usual, and his shoulders were slumping somewhat. Two or three more students came up to him very quietly and seriously to tell him, "Sir, you seem unusually tired today. Did you sleep at all last night or do you have a fever?"

The poor man's will was broken down. He called on an assistant teacher to take over his classes and went home for the day.

At home, his wife asked him, "What happened to you this morning? How is it you look so pale and tired? You seemed so well when you left the house before school. Do you have a fever?"

Her husband had no desire to talk about it. He only wanted to lie down and rest. He had no appetite for lunch and spent the whole day in bed napping. The following day, his

condition grew worse. He missed three days of school.

He did not feel like teaching again until his friends and family members told him, "Come now! You've had a good rest! There's nothing wrong with you! Now it's time to bring out your usual vigor and stamina."

His mischievous students paid him a visit, sheepishly admitting to him, "Sir, we've missed you very much. You must come back as soon as possible. Our class is not the same without you, and now you look rested and healthy."

Everyone's loving interest buoyed him up. As a result, his health immediately began to improve.

The pranksters saw the serious consequences of what had seemed like a harmless plot, and remained in a subdued state for the time being. For Rup, it was a chance to catch a glimpse of the close relationship between mind and body.

Only one small doubt was introduced into his mind. What happened? It grew as fast as a weed, and turned into a seed for illness. How it happened I don't know, but surely this mind has a powerful influence on our body. If I'm ever tempted to influence someone again, I'd better be sure to plant only the healthiest thoughts. I don't want to be a cause for anyone's weakness or illness.

* * *

Despite Rup's resolve to resist influences and influencing, he remained open and gullible, sometimes at quite a costly price. The first instance of this was a small one. One day he was on his way to school when a man stopped him on the street.

"Hello, young man! Would you like to see your name in golden ink? I will write it for you on your pen."

"You have golden ink?" Rup asked. "Yes, I would love to see my name in golden ink!"

"Then hand over your pen to me and wait while I write your name on it," the man told him. "What is your name?"

Rup in his pride gave the man his full long name, "Rup Rajendra Shah!"

"Very well, wait a few minutes and I will engrave it on your pen." The man carved Rup's name onto the pen, handed it to Rup and claimed his rupees.

Rup was exultant to see his name flashing on the outside of his fountain pen. He paid the man, and rushed off to school, eager to show his classmates.

One classmate told him, "All right, the gold glitters, but what about the pen? Does it still write?"

Rup opened the pen to write. To his dismay, he saw that the nib and pump were gone. The man had stolen away the valuable inner parts of the pen.

"Well, just as I thought," his friend pointed out, "you are left with only the outer shell. Without the inside stuff, the mechanism, of what use is it? It's only a name!"

Rup saw how vulnerable he had been. He felt cheated.

* * *

It was not the only occasion in which he was fooled. When he was a young lad of nearly sixteen years, he spent many after school hours helping his father sell cloth at his shop.

Because Rup's father was honest and fair, the townspeople trusted him. In an emergency people would come with an ornament to mortgage in exchange for its worth in rupees. Each borrower would receive a receipt guaranteeing the safety of his ornament.

Then Chhogalal would make a packet of the ornament, label it, and mark it with the date of the transaction. The person would come back and claim his packet when he was able to buy it back. All the packets remained locked up in a strongbox in one corner of the shop.

One Saturday morning, a long-bearded yogi happened to come by the shop. He addressed Rup, "My son, give me alms, won't you? Pay your respects to this yogi of miracles. Give me one and I will give you ten."

"What do you mean by ten?" Rup asked him.

"Do you have one rupee?" the old yogi inquired. Rup handed one rupee over to him.

The man opened his palm and Rup saw ten rupees there.

Naturally Rup became curious to know how he made ten from one.

"How did you do that?" he begged him to explain.

"Oh, I have so many powers, *siddhis*," the yogi replied

immodestly. "See?" And before Rup could blink, the yogi reached up and plucked a small fruit from the air, as if by magic.

"What else can you do?" Rup inquired of him.

"I can produce ornaments, also," he bragged, and, from his empty hand, a golden ring appeared.

Seeing how he had succeeded in impressing Rup, the yogi invited him to visit him.

"I don't stay anywhere for long," he offered, "but for fifteen days I will remain under the banyan tree next to the cemetery. If you want to, come tomorrow morning. But do as you wish. It makes no difference to me."

The next day Rup's father went out to spend several hours at the temple to practise *samayik* or meditation. Rup came up with what he thought was a good idea. *If this yogi can make ten rupees out of one, then he can make ten gold ornaments out of one, also. So let me take one of my father's packets and ask this yogi to multiply its contents.*

He took the key, opened the strongbox, and removed one of the packets. Then he locked it up again and rushed off to find the old yogi at the cemetery.

He located him sitting under the banyan tree, his eyes closed in meditation. When Rup ran up to him, he opened the eyes.

"What do you want, lad?" he asked.

"If you can make ten out of one rupee," Rup answered, "then can you make other good things multiply also?"

"Of course," the yogi replied. "If you bring rupees or anything, I can make them multiply ten times."

Rup showed him the packet he had brought.

"Well," he said, "I don't want to see what you have inside the packet. Go a distance of twenty trees away, make a hole in the ground, and there bury your packet. Then come back, and we will use special *mantra* so that whatever is inside will start multiplying."

Rup in his greed was ready to follow the old yogi's instructions. When greed invades the mind, it is blinding. One is willing to do almost anything. Rup found a place some twenty trees' distance away where he scooped out the earth with his

hands and buried the packet. Then he returned to sit beside the yogi.

"Now," he told Rup, "close the eyes and let us meditate for a while."

At the end of ten minutes, he announced with confidence, "Now you can go and remove the earth. You will see ten packets instead of one."

Rup's heart was beating with happiness. *I will have so many gold ornaments to give to Father and make him rich!* He ran off to the place where he had hidden the packet and started digging. There was no packet!

I must have forgotten where I hid it.

He ran frantically to a few different trees and again dug in the earth. But he saw that the first place was the right one because it had the freshly dug mud next to it. He was not mistaken. *Let me go back and find the yogi. I will tell him that there has been some mistake.*

He hurried back to the tree where the yogi was sitting a few minutes before. He was gone! Rup, poor gullible child, was horrified and ashamed to think of how he had been tricked.

Now the confusion and regret began.

How can I show my face to my father? What will happen when the owner of the ornament comes to pay his money and claim his ornament? If he finds that my father no longer has it, he can sue him.

It was true. Once a mortgage banker was sued in court, his reputation would be spoiled. Often he was put in jail. Money-lending transactions were entirely dependent on maintaining one's good name.

Rup was baffled and frightened. He did not go home right away. He sought out a friend and told him what happened.

"You fool!" his friend scolded him. "The man was a thief! And there are so many thieves who wear the robes of yogis and swamis but are not real teachers. He must have had some assistant. He knew you were eager to come the next day, so while you were sitting with your eyes closed, the assistant obviously took the packet and ran off with it by the pre-arranged plan."

For two days Rup remained with his friend. His father went

in search of him and at last found him in this distraught state. Rup burst into tears and told him the whole story. Tears ran down his father's face too, as he lamented over this predicament. "How will I be able to show my face to my customers? I am custodian of their wealth. They will no longer trust me," he cried. "What if I am taken to court?"

For three months, father and son lived in the painful anticipation of the day the man would come and claim his packet. By the time that hour was upon them, Rup's father had an idea. He would ask the man if he would like to sell the ornament to him. If the man accepted, Rup's father would save his good name and his livelihood.

"I have no alternative," he confided to Rup, "If I tell him the truth, he will blackmail me for sure. It will mean disaster for this family's survival."

The fateful day arrived. Before the man requested Chhogalal to return his packet, Chhogalal spoke to him, "My friend, I've been thinking, I know you are often in need of money, and I've taken a liking to your ornament. Would you be willing to sell it to me?" The man's eyes grew wide in disbelief. Then they turned greedy. He saw his chance to demand a high price.

"I will gladly sell it to you. Will you accept my price?"

Chhogalal swallowed his pride and agreed. The transaction completed, the agony of the preceding month was over at last.

This crisis turned out to be a field of insight for Rup.

Instead of multiplying my father's wealth and bringing him happiness, what did I bring home? A problem to worry over and empty pockets. How is it I am so easily deceived? I guess I can't really blame the old yogi for fooling me. It was my own greed. I allowed it to drag me into a world of make-believe.

Nevertheless, this sobering lesson inspired him to uncover the mystery of so-called 'miracles' in order to protect himself better from people who knew how to take advantage of gullibility. He hired a professional magician to reveal all his secrets to him. He observed how magic is really a juggler's act, a game of mental gymnastics. The magician taught him how to do his tricks, and once and for all, Rup's curiosity for the world of

magic was quenched. He had no intention of using his new knowledge to impress others; rather, he was now able to warn people not to be deluded as he had been, by magic masquerading in the name of miracles.

* * *

Going Beyond

Once a year in Rup's school, there was a program in which each student spent all day blindfolded, starting with the first waking hours before school and ending with the last hour before bedtime at home. Fellow classmates were assigned to assist each other. In this way, the students came to feel firsthand the feeling experienced by blind people each day of their lives. When it was Rup's turn to spend twelve hours in darkness, he came to feel how bleak life was without access to his eyesight.

When he removed the blindfold, he greeted the day with a new joy. Every leaf, every flower, every blade of grass, every face he looked at appeared with an aesthetic touch. He had received a precious gift, fresh perception, which seemed to divinise each thing he saw. He exclaimed, "I can see the world! How fortunate I am!"

"What are we doing with our eyes?" the teachers reminded the students to ask themselves. "Are we taking them for granted? Are we misusing them?" They were awakened to the dawn of this new awareness each year. They were given these words of a Hindi poet to ponder as well:

"Every night is a wedding,
Every morning is a new year!"

Rup felt the wonder of this. He began to experience living as a celebration.

This day I will greet the beautiful sun the minute I wake up.

And I will live this day with my eyes open. Why should I spoil the day by complaining, blaming, or being sad?

Each evening, he tried to cultivate the habit to ask himself, "Did I waste my day or did I use my time well?" He reviewed the events and feelings of the day and began to grow more and more aware of his part in shaping his own life.

The school's program had another good effect on young Rup. He started to feel compassion for those with less benefits than he had. It brought out Rup's natural optimism. It helped him rise above his own small desires and feel the pain of all who suffered from being handicapped, poverty-stricken, or helpless. He was inspired to lend a helping hand. Through the years, this seed of compassion was ever moist, ready to sprout into the fruit of action.

* * *

Without being consciously aware of cultivating this virtue, Rup became ready to give, spontaneously, without thought of praise or reward, whenever he noticed someone's need. It was his nature.

Such an occasion presented itself when Rup found that one of his teachers was brooding about something. Ordinarily this man was in a cheerful frame of mind, but today was different.

Rup spoke to him after class, "Sir, may I ask, is there something wrong? You seem so downcast today."

"Not really, Rup, not really," he answered, not wanting to burden his student with his own personal problems.

"Please tell me. Perhaps I can help you," Rup offered.

"Well, it is a small matter, but it is troubling me after all," his teacher confided. "You see, my daughter is about to be married, but I do not have enough money to arrange for her trousseau."

In India, in some castes, it is customary before a wedding for the bride's family to provide the trousseau.

Rup told his teacher, "No need to worry. I have a good idea. I think I can help you. I'll be back in about an hour with the good news."

Without telling his teacher his idea, Rup ran home. He

owned one valuable ring and had decided that if he mortgaged it with his father, he could give his teacher the money he needed. When he told his father, he agreed to the idea. In an hour's time, Rup returned with the money. His teacher was overjoyed.

"I will pay you back as soon as possible," he exclaimed.

"Never mind," Rup reassured him. "It is not necessary."

II. DEEPENING SPIRITUAL ROOTS

Inner Opening

From the time that Rup was a young adult, he developed the quality of reverence. Whether or not he was truly interested in the school's required subjects, he cherished a special attitude in his heart.

My schoolroom is my temple. I must treat my teacher with respect and pay close attention to whatever he is saying.

In fact, he became so eager not to divert his thinking from listening to his teacher that a keen power of concentration emerged. His memory became precise and accurate. Through this process of undistracted focusing during class, he discovered that he had hardly any need to study after class. In this way, he gained first ranking in his studies and was an excellent candidate for receiving higher education.

His father wished to send him on to college in Bangalore, but Rup did not want to go. Even though Bangalore was only forty miles from Tumkur, he still held a deep subconscious fear of loss and loneliness. Having lost his mother and sister, he had become very attached to his father and preferred to stay home in the familiar atmosphere with him and with his high school friends. But his father insisted that the change of place would be good for him. Rup bowed to his father's advice and found himself the following year living in Bangalore and pursuing the course of higher studies.

It was not long before he discovered that his father was right to send him away. The spaciousness and beauty of Bangalore's natural surroundings moved him, stirring a new opening within him. He roamed alone down shady lanes and through flowering gardens. He explored woods and found isolated lakes to sit by and contemplate. He gazed in ecstasy at the burgeoning treetops and blue cloudless skies. Nature's voice sang to the poetry of his soul and he was awakened to

the joy of just being.

By deeply experiencing spaces of outer beauty and serenity he glimpsed his own calm inner world. He used his hours after class and during vacations to experience this harmony and to stand as a witness to both — inner and outer beauty.

In that connection, one day he turned his steps to the ancient Jain temple at Sravana Belagula, south of Mysore, about sixty miles from Bangalore. He stood upon the same hill where the great Acharya Bhadrabahu had left his body more than two thousand years before. This was the monk who had spread Jain teachings to the south of India. For Rup, who had no specific urge to make a pilgrimage, it was a trip to see a wonder of the world, the colossal fifty-six foot tall statue which had been carved out of living rock in one single unbroken piece. This image had been the realization of the dream of one man, a visionary sculptor known as Arishtanemi who lived in 983 A.D. Rup had heard of this monumental sculpture and had read a little of the sculptor whose zeal and conviction convinced the king of that time to support him with artisans, material, and the necessary tools.

Rup climbed the steps to the summit of the mountain and walked into the courtyard to stand before the immensely large statue. It was overwhelming to realize that his head barely reached 3s high as the statue's lower legs! He looked up at the image and felt infused with its energy. He felt one with the artist who had not let anything deter him from carrying out his inspired dream.

What is the story behind the statue? What was it that touched the sculptor and moved him to create such a masterpiece?

The statue represented Bāhubali, second son of Ādinātha, also called Bhagwān Rushabha, saintly king and prophet who is revered for having brought mankind out from the Stone Age into the Agricultural Age, leading them into evolution and awareness. *Adi* means first and *natha* means lord; Ādinātha was regarded as first to have exemplified non-violence, reverence, and affection toward all living beings as a way of life. He taught his sons and daughters how to cultivate the land, how to protect living beings, how to read and write, how to over-

come inner weaknesses and discover inner peace.*

According to the story, Ādinātha renounced the kingship in the latter part of his life, handed over the largest portion of his kingdom to his eldest son, Bharat, and distributed the rest to his other sons. In this way, he could reap the harvest of his life by meditating, living simply, and teaching reverence for life and the way to liberation.

Bharat, however, wanted to be recognized as *chakravarti*, sole monarch, and demanded that all of his younger brothers act as feudal lords under him. This was unacceptable to them, but only Bāhubali, second eldest brother who was very huge and strong, spoke out in protest.

“We are brothers, O Bharat,” he told him, “and we love you as our brother, but we cannot surrender to you as a monarch.”

Bāhubali’s attitude annoyed Bharat and the two nearly went to war. But rather than risk the lives of many soldiers, they decided to settle their differences between themselves. They selected different kinds of contests. The one to win more than half would win the title of *chakravarti*, and rule the land.

One contest was eye to eye; the first to blink would lose. In another, they held each other by the wrist; the first to bend his arm and lose balance lost. In all these, Bāhubali won. Lastly, they were to strike each other with the fist. Bāhubali told Bharat to take his turn first, because he knew that Bharat would not be able to withstand his tremendous power. Bharat dealt Bāhubali a heavy blow, but Bāhubali could tolerate it and did not fall down. Then it was Bāhubali’s turn. When Bharat looked up at Bāhubali and saw his mighty arm raised high, he trembled and shook.

All of a sudden Bāhubali saw his brother and came to his senses. He spoke to himself in silence with new awareness,

*In *A Sourcebook in India Philosophy*, Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan states that the names of the first two Jain Prophets, Rushabha and Ajitanatha, and of the twenty-second Prophet, Arishtanemi, are mentioned in the ancient *Yajur Veda*, confirming the existence of Jainism previous to the Vedic period (2500 B.C.-600 B.C.).

“O, being the son of the great Ādinātha, the saintly one, what am I doing here competing with my own brother? For what am I raising my hand? Let me instead use this hand to bless myself and become a muni like my father.” And he lowered his hand to his own head and plucked out his hair in the manner of a monk.

Bharat saw this and fell at his brother's feet. “O brother, I was doing everything in ego and ignorance. Now I realize that I too am a son of Ādinātha.”

Bāhubali told him, “You must be the king. Now I know I want only peace.”

Meanwhile, without waiting to see the outcome of the contest between Bharat and Bāhubali, the younger brothers ran off to ask their father what was to be done. “Should we also fight?”

Ādinātha answered, “Fight with your own inner enemies and weaknesses, not with your brother.”

So they became monks along with their father. When Bahuball heard that his younger brothers had become munis before he had, he realized that if he went home, he would have to bow down before them. Instead, he made up his mind to stay in the forest until he became Enlightened.

According to the legend, he stood in one single spot meditating for such a long time that vines grew up around his legs and arms, and birds made nests in his ears. And yet he was unable to reach his goal; that ego which prevented him from bowing before his younger brothers also deterred him from Enlightenment.

In his infinite wisdom and compassion, Ādinātha knew of his son's veil of ignorance and of his tenacity to reach his goal without anybody's guidance. So he sent his two daughters, Brahmi and Sundari, who were nuns, to shake their brother from his slumber and unawareness.

“Come down off your elephant!” they cried out to him.

“What elephant?” He looked about. Suddenly he understood — his ego was his elephant. He took a step — to go and bow down before his father and younger brothers, and in that step, he was Enlightened.

Surrendering to wisdom, he became wisdom. Removing

his ego, he revealed his real strength.

The statue's powerful energy appealed to Rup. It was a reflection of his own youthful vigor and high ideals. It made him aware of the vast power of the human spirit. He pondered its meaning and felt its presence.

This huge statue has a lot to say to us. For years we are told that we are mere mortals, determined by the course of the stars and planets. Well, I do not agree. A chart of my life was made at birth, but have I ever read it? No! Will I ever be tempted to read it? No! Why? Because I will chart out my own life. That is what this image means to me. It is telling — "You are not a pygmy. You have inner strength and willpower. You too can bring out what is hidden in you. But the ultimate power must come from egolessness, from understanding."

After that experience, whenever Rup saw his mind start to become weak, he thought of the statue and envisioned that mighty strength in him. He used this experience to inspire him to feel continually his inner height.

* * *

Struggle for Life

There comes a time in everyone's life when a quest for truth is awakened and the Self is ready to take a definite leap forward. It may be seen as a call to service, a longing for unity, an urge to live for a higher purpose. Often it comes in the form of a test, an adversity, a struggle. It is a process of purification. Matter bows down and spirit comes forth. Like the sun breaking through a darkened sky, our life force evaporates the clouds. Until a flower gives up its protective outer covering, it does not bloom. In the same way, when we stop clinging to weaknesses, we are free to reveal our innocence, our innate beauty and purity.

The process occurs gradually over many years, many lifetimes. Each confrontation, each test lets in a little more light.

Each moment holds the potential for a dynamic illumination, transforming the quality and fabric of one's awareness and living. Each glimpse brings one closer to the ultimate spiritual freedom, *moksha*.

The manifestation of a spiritual cleansing is often accompanied by a physical crisis, even an intense struggle for life. Rup experienced the throes of such a trial in the summer of 1940.

After he had completed his final examinations for his major studies in psychology and all the requirements for his Bachelor's Degree, he returned to his father's house in Tumkur. One evening after taking a long walk through the gardens surrounding the house, he felt a slight pain in the muscles of one leg and also suffered from a headache. He took no particular note of these symptoms.

The next morning when he tried to get up, the slightest movement caused great pain in his joints. He had a fever which shot up higher and higher as the day advanced. In the following days, his condition grew worse. Now and again he lost control of his temper. He could no longer move out of his bed.

The inflammation spread from the fingers to the kneecaps. He suffered from extreme nervousness. The doctor diagnosed the ailment as rheumatic fever. He ordered complete rest and seclusion for Rup.

For hours this normally calm boy tossed and turned with frantic gestures and wild expressions, like a caged animal. He became alarmed at the way his fingers were gnarled and paralyzed. He "was horrified to be seen in such a helpless condition. At times he passed into delirium. Finally he fell into a state of seeming unconsciousness. For seven days he remained in this state. His family was frightened but powerless.

There was no one who could help and there was no one at fault. What we call illness is nothing but the working of a natural law: what we sow we reap. In the language of the ancient masters, it is the law of karma. At some time in our past moments of unawareness of life, when our vision is obscured and we don't see the far-reaching consequences of our every thought, word, and deed, we send out negative vibrations. Through lifetimes, the vibrations may spin, gathering momentum, picking up particles on their way. When these molecules

of karmic matter complete their cycle, like a boomerang, they return to us and land, so to speak, on our laps. That is called illness, suffering the effect of that which we caused another to suffer. In the process, if we become aware of this law, we come to be more gentle with others and with ourselves; we begin to remove indifference and callousness from our hearts. The karmas are not only consumed, but also, the person has taken a step forward into evolution, into understanding.

For Rup, this was the first time he came face to face with his own past vibrations. But he was both unaware of their root cause and without a clue as to how to dispel them. All he could do was endure the pain, or pass into a semi-conscious state. No one knew if he would live or die. There was only one hope, that the power of his own soul, the energy of his life, would emerge and assert itself, melting the heavy molecules away and bringing him back to a state of clarity and health.

* * *

A Spiritual Trial

During his weeklong spell of unconsciousness, Rup dreamed terrifying dreams and saw symbolic visions. Temptation and repulsion waged war before his inner eye.

At first he saw himself as a successful businessman with coffers full of gold and silver. He gazed spellbound upon jewelry of exquisite craftsmanship. From each ornament, he turned away in disgust. Gold bars, dazzling in luster, were before him. He kicked them away contemptuously, watching them turn into bright yellow snakes that slithered away from him.

Hunger and thirst took possession of him. His stomach was so empty that he imagined himself gobbling up a whole basketful of idli-dhosa pancakes. His mouth was so parched that he envisioned a huge tureen of soup, but it was a mirage. A luscious fruit appeared from nowhere. He plucked it and

drew it to his lips, but with one bite his mouth filled with ashes.

At times he felt himself kneeling against silks and satins, soft and cooling to his feverish body. Image after image of luxury, ease, and self-indulgence passed before his mind's eye.

But something in him whispered, "You are to practice penance. You are cleansing and purifying yourself."

Suddenly he asserted his will, gained control of his imagination, and called a halt to fantasies of the senses. Somehow he came to grips with the power of the imagination, realizing how it could, if left to run wild, enslave the mind. Once it was tamed and guided by the Higher Self, image-making could be used as a beautiful tool to uplift and inspire a person to reach a state of exultation and self-appreciation.

Next it was the intellect's turn to tempt him with greeds of a different nature, of a non-sensual quality. An attraction for power, a pride in scholarly knowledge and intellectual thought, a temptation to cling to concepts, words, and ideations presented their deceptive aspects before his consciousness. He saw their shallowness, their bias. He faced each and every one of them, loosening their grip and evicting them, like uninvited guests, out of the door of his mind.

The power of his inner life revealed itself with each challenge. Though Rup was not aware on a waking conscious level of what he was undergoing, from a deep inner space he surrendered to the process of watching, recognizing, and erasing. One by one, he dissipated all the subtle negativities, resentments, and desires which arose from his subconscious.

Memory joined forces with ego. Scenes he had dismissed as events of minor importance in his life gushed forth from the long-forgotten past. Even fragments of incidents casually imprinted on his subconscious reappeared magnified, with three-dimensional clarity, and in color, like a movie slowed down to a series of successive stills.

He acknowledged each event, learned its lesson, then let it go.

In the lonely cell of Rup's heart he felt utterly deserted. In the midst of this night he longed for some companionship. It was denied. Though a rebellious lad and a brave fighter who

was used to holding back his tears, now he wept like a helpless babe.

Tears welled up from a heart aching with the pain of the void and the dryness of a lost soul, and he cried out in desperation: "Come and bring solace to my heart or I die!"

At that instant he heard a familiar voice. Yet it sounded different and strange to him. "My precious boy," it said soothingly. "What ails thee, my child? Just open thine eyes and see who is here." The voice of his mother rang in his ears as if from a far-off land which he had left behind.

He opened his eyes. He saw the room and the people, but not as he had seen them before. He no longer felt that he belonged to this place.

He had a moment of clarity and murmured some words silently to himself. *These good people who hue me are not able to lift me from my pain. I am a sojourner here and I must never forget it.*

"Drink this, my dear. Cheer up! Now things will be better," a friend said as she lifted a glass of fruit juice to his lips. He sipped it slowly. No sooner did he finish it than he fainted away again.

* * *

Glimpse of Freedom

The final stage of the trial began and agonizing tests resumed. This time Rup was still thirsty and envisioned himself holding a bejewelled cup in his hand. Beside him stood a tall jar filled with nectar. He dipped his cup deep into it. As soon as he brought it to his parched lips he found it empty. Again and again he lowered his cup. Always it was empty when he attempted to drink.

Then he heard the electrifying words, "Leave all for me!"

He threw the cup away in the dawn of a new awareness.

Soul alone can quench the thirst of soul. Herein lies the immortal nectar, the living fount of life. Soul alone endures

beyond this world of ever-changing forms. Soul alone transcends the pains and sorrows of existence.

The proceedings were not yet over. After this flash of insight, his mind moved in a different direction. Rites and rituals, symbols of religious devotion came to tempt him. A rosary appeared in his hands, and his nimble fingers began playing over the sandalwood beads. As he touched each bead, to his bewilderment, it slipped off the string and was swallowed up by the dark abyss below him.

The truth of impermanence shone clearly before him.

Nothing is mine! Nothing is thine! Deep within his being he understood and accepted a non-verbal vow of *aparigraha*, the principle of non-possessiveness with regard to both persons and things.

The burden of karmas manifesting as illness suddenly lifted. A beautiful vision, an image of his pure Self, came to him. It was indescribable, and yet in these words of John Milton, there is a resonance which complements his experience:

“Methought I saw my late espoused Saint
Came vested all in white, pure as her mind;
Her face was veiled, yet to my fancied sight,
Love, sweetness, goodness in her person shin’d
So clear as in no face with more delight.”

Again the voice from within, “Leave all! Leave all for me!”

He felt, he knew, he thrilled. His heart leapt for joy to embrace the call to service. His mind was now becalmed. From his soul, full and rejoicing, a song of triumph flowed, which later came into words.

“I leave all riches, they are but dross,
For fame I care not, it’s no loss,
I leave all, yes, on earth’s own sod,
But let me see my Soul, my God,

“Dispel my darkness with Thy Light,
O Light! Thou art my Life, my Sight,

O lead me soulward, upward, higher,
I bow before Thee, hidden Fire,

“I know what pain is all desire,
I empty self of that entire
And set my gaze on nothing less
Than That, deep peace which brings me rest,

“Enlightened Ones! I give Thee now
My all in all, my I in Thou.....”

A large stream of water flowed out before him. It was azure and crystal clear. It was so still and calm that he could see the floorbed of the water. A seed was stirring gently in the slime.

A change came over him so that he had the faculty of double vision; he could see within and without simultaneously.

He perceived that the joy, love, and life he had known before this moment had been merely a husk of this ‘love seed’ about to burst open. The hard crust he saw as his ego formation. The small seedling within had the potential strength to break open the shell-like enclosure and shoot up into the lotus of spiritual fruition.

The seed split open. From winding stem and inner seed a beam of light poured out. Slowly the crown of the unearthly plant appeared. It was a brilliant thousand-petalled lotus. Rup merged with it.

Revealed to him was the simplest yet most profound truth — the oneness of all life. He experienced an exultant freedom. It was a glimpse of that which permeates, penetrates, and irradiates all the forms.

From this height of awareness he experienced that which no words can come close to rendering. The insights which flowed from this supratranscendental state were exquisitely subtle.

He saw that life is nothing but giving. Like the spendthrift lotus which gives unstintingly of its sweet-scented fragrance to all, man’s nature is to radiate the creative life-giving qualities of his loving spirit to all without discrimination.

For a split second he glimpsed the beatific beauty of his Higher Self. Then all passed into silence as he went into a deep and peaceful sleep.

* * *

Aftermath

Rup's return to earth after such a long spell was like a true rebirth. He did not even recognize the faces of those dear ones who had been caring for him. One in particular, a college friend named Usha had stood by him throughout his illness and now remained by his side to help him regain his memory and zest for life.

For hours on end, he would sit stolid and seemingly dead to the outside world. From time to time, Usha would persuade him to utter a word. For days he could only manage to jerk to attention in a sudden lurch, blurt out a few words, and fall back into silence.

It seemed as if he now belonged to another world. In a way, it was true. His earthly encasement had not yet gained the strength to withstand the power of the sublime experience he had just passed through. The struggle for life followed by such a sudden release had been too intense. Moreover, this intensity had been compressed into a mere fifteen days. There had not been time for mind and body to absorb or understand soul's divine vision and awareness. It appeared as if an other-worldly lightning had struck his ego, splitting open its protective shell, nearly blinding him with the vast reality of his own inner light.

Now he experienced a period of transition. He needed to take time to make his mind and body strong and ready to accept his own powerful energy. It could not happen overnight, but gradually his strength was returning.

Little by little, his memory returned, though only partially. At first, he found it difficult and painful to try and remember

any of the details, even the insights. At times, however, certain ordinary things heard or seen would form a link of association with his inner consciousness and trigger a recollection. In this way, an image from deep within him would percolate through and reappear on the surface of his mind. Soon, he was reminded of the ultimate vision he had experienced with its electrifying message: "Leave all for me! Leave all for me!"

As he grew more in touch with his surroundings and began to move his limbs and speak, he became aware of a new urge, a dream — to use his energy in service to a worthy cause. At the same time, the tender friendship between Rup and Usha deepened. The two began to recognize each other as soul-mates. Usha was able to melt away the uneven places disturbing his peace. As he came to know the gentle touch of a pure and platonic love, he felt encouraged and energized to put his dream into action. In part, his eagerness to work was a natural reaction to having spent so many days in bed, in a state of uncreativity, weakness, and inaction. But truly it reflected a genuine change in his consciousness. His struggle for life had sobered and humbled him. He no longer felt bound to the world of personal desires. Such desires had become thinner and thinner. What remained was a genuine feeling for life, for love, for fellow beings.

Thus it was that with Usha's loving support, Rup rediscovered his natural healthy-mindedness and joy, that kind of enthusiasm which William James has called a "cosmic emotion" and which, he found, characterized those persons whom "we find in every age passionately flinging themselves upon their sense of the goodness of life in spite of the hardships of their own condition, and in spite of the sinister theologies into which they may be born."

With this positive energy, Rup went in search of a way in which he could serve life, the cause of freedom, and his nation.

* * *

Violence Breeds Violence

It was late in the summer of 1940. The Freedom Movement begun by Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi continued to gather momentum. At this point in time, the revered old leader was unable to assuage all the fiery tempers and voices of opposition to his gradual non-violent approach.

One of the most vocal of these voices was that of Subhash Chandra Bose. As Congress President in 1938 and 1939, he had made efforts to temper his impatience and work in harmony with Gandhi. But now he was unable to quell his mounting anger and desire for immediate results. Freedom, in his opinion, was not something one begs for or waits for; it was something to be taken. And so he called out for revolution.

When he had presided over Congress, Bose had wanted Gandhi's approval for delivering an ultimatum to Great Britain's government — to ask for autonomy within six months or else call for countrywide civil disobedience. He had grasped the crucial timing of this demand — when Britain was about to plunge into the Second World War. Bose felt it was time for India to look out for herself.

The Mahatma had not been able to agree to such an ultimatum. He had too much compassion for the British to strike at them from behind when they themselves were threatened with war. Bose had had no choice but to resign from the Congressional Presidency.

Now within a month of his resignation, Bose was in the process of founding an extremist wing of the Congress Party, called the Forward Bloc. Through it, he planned to gather together the radical thinkers of the country and mobilize them into action. Completely devoted to his cause, he became at times driven by emotion, and when events turned out contrary to his plan, he became exasperated.

He found support in many of the restless youth who were anxious for instant results. Many of these young listeners were mesmerized by his dynamic eloquence.

"Ideas will work out their own destiny," he had claimed in

1929, “and we, who are but clods of clay encasing sparks of the divine fire, have only to consecrate ourselves to these ideas. A life so consecrated is bound to fulfill itself, regardless of the vicissitudes of our material and bodily existence” This remained his unshakable philosophy throughout his life.

That part of Rup’s nature which nurtured a dream of heroism and devotion to a selfless cause responded at this time to Bose’s eloquence. He was eager to turn his renewed flow of energy in such a purposeful direction. His persistent determination to go his own way found an outlet in this wave of nationalism. Caught up in the tide of emotion, Rup directed himself toward the teeming city of Calcutta to join Subhash Chandra Bose.

In a hideaway in Calcutta, Rup met other young freedom fighters of the Forward Bloc. There they lived and scanned the newspapers for articles for or against Bose’s political views, and worked together at a feverish pace to stir their countrymen to action. One thought prevailed — to free their fellow Indians from the shackles of British colonialism.

For twenty-two days Rup remained in this highly charged atmosphere. One day, one of the leaders of the Bloc told his workers that some explosives were hidden in a certain corner of their shack, in case of some future need. But he had been noticing some British soldiers keeping a more than watchful eye on their whereabouts. He became eager to move to a new hideaway, but he wanted the explosives to be transferred first.

“Let one of the youngest men carry out this errand. It is not likely that the authorities will notice him,” he commanded.

Rup was chosen for this dangerous mission.

Dusk was about to fall over Calcutta when Rup ventured forth. Two British plain-clothes men became suspicious and asked him to stop and be searched. He started to run. But before he could escape, they swung their bayonets wounding him in both legs, across his feet and along his upper right arm. He fell to the ground unconscious in a pool of his own blood.

Years later, when he remembered his feeling during that harrowing experience, he recorded these words in his diary:

“It was the beclouded night of dismay. Dreary was the path. There was no friend, no colleague. None was beside to

hold the beacon-lamp of hope through that darksome night.”

* * *

He awakened in a strange hospital bed. None of his co-workers could come to rescue him or to check on him. They could not afford to reveal their identity. Abandoned in this way, aching with pain, Rup remained in solitude for seventeen days until his deep wounds were healed.

He was not yet allowed to go home. As soon as he was strong enough to walk about, interrogations began.

“Who is your leader? Where is the group you are working with? Why were you carrying explosives? To whom were you delivering them?” Rup refused to reveal any facts, any names. He held firm to his story — that he had been hired by some people to carry the package from one place to another. He claimed to have been working only for the money. The authorities were not satisfied. They tried different techniques on him to tempt him or shock him into giving forth the information.

“Give us the names of your fellow workers and you will have five thousand rupees and your freedom to go home.”

Rup remained unmoved.

They forced him to lie on an ice slab. He did not give in.

They threatened him with shock treatment. He remained unflinching.

They prevented him from sleeping. Still he was stubborn and firm.

What was it that sustained him during that torturous ordeal? From where did he receive the inspiration to remain strong and immovable? Again opening his heart to his diary, he revealed the meaningful insight which emerged during this test of his physical strength and moral courage. He had heard an inner voice speak these words to him:

“You can be your own best friend
And you can be your own worst foe.”

Of that experience he wrote, “That Voice became the guiding-star of my struggling soul... Under the sustaining bulwark of

that Guiding-Star, I started pacing along the deserted road. Ah! See the miracle! A hundred roses sprang up all over the desolate path fraught with thorns! My consciousness bloomed forth with the aroma of those roses in an atmosphere surcharged with compassion!"

A transformation had occurred during the painful moments of his imprisonment. Through suffering, understanding had flooded his consciousness and had enabled his confused emotions to become canalized into a calm and steady stream of compassion. At that point, his tension had dropped, his sense of alienation evaporated, and he felt centered enough to transcend the physical agony he was forced to endure. Truly he became his own best friend.

* * *

With this new sense of self-appreciation and fearlessness, he ultimately convinced the British soldiers to let him go. The day before his release, he heard a heart-penetrating cry coming from the depths of someone's pain. He felt as if his own heart had been stabbed. Then he heard the person weeping and crying.

Who could that be crying in such desperation? It is only five in the morning. Let me find out.

He called out to a guard. "Who is that crying so painfully?"

"He will be hanged today," the guard responded. "At ten o'clock he is going to be hanged."

Incredulous, Rup asked, "But why? What has he done?"

"In his craziness he killed his wife. Now his time has come. Since yesterday he was told, 'Tomorrow will be your day. What wish do you have now?' But he could not speak or ask for anything. All he's been doing is crying."

Rup responded, "Please I want to talk to him. Tomorrow I am to be sent home. So let me say a few words to him. It will be for him to have peace."

In that state, before someone was to be hanged for a criminal offense, he was allowed to fulfill any last desires, such as some special food to eat or to speak to someone. The guard went to the man and asked him if he would like to talk to Rup. Somehow, in his desperation, he agreed.

Rup went to him. He talked with greater depth and understanding than one would ever have expected from a nineteen-year old young man.

"What you've done is done and the punishment cannot be abolished, but can you not now remember some divine name or some inspiring thought? This is what helped me get through all the tortures in this prison. Can you become a friend to yourself?" he asked him gently.

The man cried out, "I don't want to die. I want to live."

"Yes, but now you have to accept this; at least can you not try to leave with peace?"

"How can I leave with peace? I love my life!"

"Then how could you kill?"

"I was in such an anger, I was not in control of myself. I was controlled by fury. I did not know what I was doing when I saw my wife had gone with another man."

"What will you do now? Now is the moment to feel peace."

"No, now I feel death coming in every pore of my body. All my blood feels burnt out."

Rup saw how pale he looked. *The fear of death is bringing death to him sooner than the moment of execution.*

"If there is God, He must help me," moaned the man.

"At that time, why did you not ask — 'O God, help me control my anger and fury'? If you die in this agony and whining, where will you go?"

"I don't know, but all I know is that I want to live. I will be ready to do anything for life. I will be a slave, anything, only let me live!"

Rup saw his fear, his agony, his frustration. He could say nothing more. That day he watched him being dragged off to the place of hanging, he saw how pale and yellow he was, like a skeleton. He appeared lifeless, dead before time.

A glimpse came to him.

Making scars in somebody's life, you are not going to heal anybody's scars. Violence can only breed violence. If violence is your means, then violence will return to you in the end.

Now he realized that by his having taken part in the violent phase of the Freedom Movement, he was responsible for

having invited the scars which he received. In those days and nights of his solitude, he had become rooted in a state of equanimity and peace. He felt the touch of the sun of knowledge, and was now convinced that life was not meant to be used for revolution, but instead for evolution.

This insight did not dilute his dedication to the cause of India's freedom. It turned him in the direction of the evolutionary process and toward one living exemplar, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, whom he came to know affectionately as Bapuji or Gandhiji.

* * *

Message of Non-Violence

At a moment when Rup was seeking absorption of self in the needs of others. Mahatma Gandhi represented that ideal to him. Before meeting the revered leader face to face, Rup's heart opened to him as an externalization of his own innermost feelings.

He signed up to work on a committee of the Provincial Pradesh Congress. For the next year and a half, he planned to become immersed in the non-cooperation movement. At dawn, along with hundreds of students, he was on the streets, moving from village to village. Together they made rounds to awaken the villagers from their slumber, to suggest to them ways in which they could help the cause of freedom.

Leaflets were distributed. They picketed shops which sold foreign goods. They boycotted foreign cloth and urged people to go back to cottage industries and spin their own cloth. The coarse khadi cloth which Gandhiji wore to identify himself with the masses of poor people was cloth which he had spun himself. For half an hour each day, he would spin. It was one of his forms of meditation.

With each turn of the wheel, Gandhi would repeat, "Ram, Ram, Ram," which was his appellation for the Divine Presence. If the thread happened to break, he would know that

his concentration had been poor. It became a signal to him that his single-mindedness had broken.

The day came for Rup to meet Gandhiji himself. It was a meeting which created a deep and lasting impression on him. He was struck by the genuineness of the man. Even at first sight, his presence moved him.

Seeing such a man, now I understand the meaning of having a mission in life.

Rup asked him, "Please Sir, would you tell me from where you received this message of non-violence? How did it arise in you?"

"I will be glad to tell you," Gandhiji responded. "When I was in Africa, I used to think and think, 'How to free my countrymen from the yoke of British rule?' Certain friendships with people and with books awakened me and channeled my life in that one main direction. Always I had the habit of putting whatever seemed right to me into practice immediately, and still I do this, for it is my way of experimenting the truth on myself first. So the writings of Mahavira and other Jain saints had a profound effect on my life. I was deeply influenced also by the words of the Christian Bible, Thoreau, Tolstoy, and Ruskin. In particular, it is thanks to my dear friend, the poet Raychandbhai, that I came to know the Jain Scriptures and Mahavira's teachings."

"What did Raychandbhai suggest that you do?"

"In his letters he urged me in this way.* He said, 'Mankind has not yet realized the essence of Mahavira's message of Non-Violence. You may help them realize it. But first you must believe in it from the depths of your own soul.'"

"Did you believe in it right away?"

*In the following letter, dated October 20, 1894, Raychandbhai Mehta's answer to Gandhiji's question reveals the universality and comprehensive aspects of the Jain practice of Reverence for all Life:

"Question: If a snake is about to bite me, should I allow myself to be bitten or should I kill it, supposing that that is the only way in which I can save myself?"

"Answer: One hesitates to advise you that you should let the snake bite you. Nevertheless, how can it be right for you, if you have realized that the body is perishable, to kill, for protecting a body which has no real value to you, a creature which clings to its own life with great attach-

"At first I had doubts. I questioned him, 'How would I be able to succeed? They have swords and weapons and power on their side, and we are but a handful of bones and flesh!'"

"Never underestimate the power of *maitri*, of love,' Raychandbhai answered. 'One day you will be able to open their hearts and unlock their door. But first you have to be convinced through and through. If you have a single doubt, that doubt will eat away at your effort and destroy it.'"

"So I meditated at Sabarmati Ashram for six months only to observe this in my practice. I questioned myself, 'Do I believe in non-violence or not? Lip service will not be enough.' I went on clearing my consciousness and receiving guidance from Raychandbhai until one day I knew without a trace of a doubt that I was ready. It was as if every inch of me was able to stand up and say, 'I am ready to extinguish the fire of violence.'"

Rup was moved by the manner in which Gandhiji lived what he believed. He observed with his own eyes on many occasions how he extended reverence and love to both rich and poor, to Moslem and Hindu, to Indian and British. Sometimes he happened to be there when he could witness Gandhiji cleaning a latrine with his own hands or calming down a mob of angry villagers. At times he saw him embrace so-called 'untouchables' whom he renamed 'Harijan' or 'children of God.' Sometimes he caught sight of him sitting absorbed in prayer.

Through close contact with this man who opened his heart to all, Rup enlarged his own heart. He began to know from experience what was meant by putting oneself in the place of another.

ment? For anyone who desires his spiritual welfare, the best course is to let his body perish in such circumstances. But how should a person who does not desire spiritual welfare behave? My only reply to such a question is, how can I advise such a person that he should pass through hell and similar worlds, that is, that he should kill the snake? If the person lacks the development of a noble character, one may advise him to kill the snake, but we should wish that neither you nor I will even dream of being such a person."

The above is quoted in *The Jaina Path of Purification*, by Dr. Padmanabha, page 315.

Here is a man who puts someone else first. His action comes from the silence, from understanding. It's as if he is saying, 'Let me be open to the other person's need and desire. Let me understand the environment in which he is moving and growing. Let me overlook his shortcomings, then I'll be able to have patience and boundless love for him.'

* * *

One day Rup participated in a silent vigil with a group of fellow passive demonstrators. Their 'Free India' banner irked the British soldiers trying to disperse them.

"Take down your banner, go home, or we shoot!" they threatened.

The group remained in silence and offered no response. The soldiers lost control of their tempers. They started poking the students with their bayonets which were attached to the muzzles of their rifles. Rup was in the front row and received a deep wound.

The next thing he knew he was in a hospital. There he received the message Gandhiji sent to all of his workers, "You are to practice consistent good will for everyone, for enemy and friend alike. Do not harbor even a trace of ill will."

Now Rup had a chance to test himself. He asked himself questions.

Have I absorbed and assimilated Non-Violence into the very fiber of my being?

Rup knew that still he had not. So he worked on removing fear and animosity. He thought about the soldier who struck him.

After all, it was not his fault. He was goaded by a kind of crowd mentality, a hero-soldier image. I forgive him.

It happened that just as Rup was feeling this touch of compassion, the same soldier felt drawn to check on him. He sought him out in the hospital and awkwardly expressed his regret, "I see the face of my own son in yours and I cannot forgive myself for having wounded you."

"I am glad you have come, for I want you to know that I had forgiven you long before this. So be in peace."

He took Rup's hand and the two were united in a meaningful moment of oneness and forgiveness.

It was incidents such as these which made Rup more wise, more human, until the rough edges were little by little filed away and made smooth. After leaving the hospital, he kept Gandhiji's words at the back of his mind, "I request all of you to do your work with complete conviction, with the faith that moves mountains. Your foundation is love and light, not hatred and fight. Remember there are thousands of British people who have never even heard of India. Why should we hate a whole race just because of the greed of a handful of leaders? Remember your intention is for Satya, for truth."

In this active year and a half, Rup understood more clearly the difference between violence and Non-Violence. *One has to be in a state of Non-Violence in order to see violence. Otherwise, one is too close to it to get out from under its grip.*

* * *

Interlude

The friendship implanted in two hearts did not wane during Rup's many absences to work with Gandhiji. A feeling of presence remained to sustain each of them, to give them a feeling of connection and inner meaning.

From time to time, Rup left his fellow freedom workers to visit his beloved Usha in Bangalore where her father was a medical officer. He spent time with his own father as well, who was still living in nearby Tumkur.

One day Rup and Usha went on a horseback ride together. Stopping by a little stream to let the horses drink, they enjoyed breathing in deeply the fresh and fragrant air and felt joyously the beauty of nature.

Usha was struck by one particularly radiant, blossoming flower.

"Rup!" she exclaimed. "Do you see that beautiful flower? Such as short life it lives, maybe only a day or two, but O Rup, such a full life! It lives in such fullness! Do you know what? Sometimes I wish that my life could be like that — short but perfectly complete!"

"Usha! What are you saying? No need to invite departure before time. Now, let us move on up the river and have a swim."

They mounted their horses again and followed the little stream until it met the wider river. There they stopped, slid down from their saddles, and let the horses roam.

Rup was the first to dive into the water. He made his way across the river and climbed up onto the opposite bank to rest.

Usha called to him from this side, "Rup! Can you hear me? Are you going to swim back? Shall I swim over there?"

Rup called back, "Yes, I can hear you, but just now I am going to stay here. If you want to cross over, then come on! Otherwise, let me be here."

"Well," Usha shouted, "I am coming then!"

She plunged into the water and steadily swam with strong sure strokes until she reached the opposite side.

"You made it!" Rup exclaimed.

Through a radiant smile and drops of water streaming down her wet hair and face, Usha confessed, "Our love makes me strong to do anything. I knew I could make it across."

"Yes," Rup answered, "and while you were on that side and I was on this, I got to thinking. We are two human beings, two separate individuals, separate like the two banks of this river. And that is as it should be, for there is no reason to break the individuality of anyone. But at the same time, we are one, connected. It is the flow of water which unites the two shores. And that is why it is called river — because it has shores to guide and protect it. And we are like that — what unites us is a flow — sometimes we call it love or bliss. Sometimes we call it peace, but it is not possible to name it — only we feel it, and that is the flow of life."

"Yes, dear one," murmured Usha, "I have been noticing that when I am away from you, my mind likes to search out names and forms to pretend you are with me. But when I

surrender to my feeling, then there is only the flow of that feeling, and there is no need for anything else. And throughout my day, I feel I am a stronger shore for being so deeply united."

"O Usha!" Rup exclaimed. "We are learning so much from this river, this life! Let us see that whatsoever happens in our lives, we will not let the water between our shores run dry. Then we won't fall into the trap which other people fall into, letting trivial things take hold of their mind and dry up their love."

"And I too," Usha answered, "would rather drop all in order to continue the flow between us. Everything else may come and go but that feeling will always keep us united."

* * *

Full Circle

It was towards the latter quarter of the year 1941. Rup's work with Gandhiji had taken him to Ahmedabad, in Gujarat State. From there, he went home to be with his father in Tumkur, and later to Bangalore to visit Usha. When he reached home, he found an urgent message waiting for him. Usha had gone to Calcutta with her family for a small vacation and had contracted a dread fever. It was thought to be malaria. Rup leapt up without delay. He was ready to take the next express train to Calcutta. His father urged him to wait for more news. But his heart was pounding and he knew there was not a moment to lose.

He reached her bedside on the tenth and final day of her illness. The depth of their last wordless reunion remained eternally in his consciousness. As she breathed her last breath in his arms, the curtain fell upon him.

A deep anguish pervaded his spirit.

"Once a throbbing life," he murmured, "now she is no more. Where has she gone? Why has she gone? Why? Why?"

The pain carved deep. It triggered other memories long buried in the oblivion of his subconscious. The groundless feeling of utter helplessness which he felt at the sudden departure of his mother flooded him again. He relived the unexpected loss of his little companion, his younger sister. He recalled Usha's own prophetic words as she admired a flower — "Sometimes I wish my life could be like that — short but complete."

He recalled the horror and shakiness he had experienced when three of his college classmates had had their lives cut short through accident or sickness. A dark cloud of fear had crept over him at those times.

His memory was haunted too, by a clear recollection of a sight he had seen that year in Mysore. He had watched a procession of officials, soldiers, elephants, and horses take the second richest and most powerful king of Mysore, Krishnarajwadiar, on his last journey. There on the cremation ground he had seen this man, who had held position, power, possessions, and wealth, turn into a handful of ashes. Then he had witnessed the army, the elephants, and all the regalia turn around after the ceremony and return to the palace, leaving him who had been king abandoned, lying alone upon the pyre.

"He is now nothing but ashes," he had thought, "Is this achievement? He had to go with empty hands."

After his own severe illness, it was as if one life had come and gone. And yet the thread of love had remained to link him to this world, to unite him with life. Now that thread snapped. He had come full circle.

He experienced *vairagya* — turning away from the world. He was no longer the four-year old child who could still look to the stars for their tender promise of mother. This time his turning away had no easy answer.

Where have they gone, my loved ones? Where has my beloved gone? What is the point of living if everything we hold dear departs from us sooner or later?

* * *

III. THE QUEST

The Search

Rup began to see through the dark lens of futility.

Are our lives to be spent merely on filling and emptying the stomach, on collecting and rearranging things? Whatever people have, money, cars, degrees, status, cannot protect them. Still they die. What to do with my degree? What good is all my education? Anytime, I too will go. Yes, and since I am going to die, what difference does it make what I do? When my time comes, it will be without any notice. No one tells anyone in advance. Death could deport me from here at any time.

For a few weeks, his entire consciousness was bleak with these thoughts. His father's cloth shop appeared meaningless to him. He had no desire to work there. He felt a kind of throbbing pain in his heart. Finally it goaded him to seek some solace and understanding. His tears and obsession had drained his energy.

I have to find some answer. This depression is swallowing me up. Somewhere, someone must have a clue to this mystery. If life is nothing but meetings and partings, then why are we here? Is there anything pennanent?

He told his father he was going to spend some time at the ashram closest to his home town, Shri Aurobindo's ashram. He stayed there for a month, but went away disappointed. Sometimes the Master would come on the balcony and greet the students.

I am here for communication to find meaning, understanding, but here, there is distance and mystery. This cannot help me.

So he decided to move on. But first he remembered Gandhiji.

It will be good for me to say goodbye to him and tell him that I am not coming back.

Rup found him in Vardha. "Bapuji," he addressed him, "I

have been through a great searing pain, and it has brought out a personal quest. Now I want to move in another direction.”

“I understand completely,” the revered old leader answered.

“But first, Sir, before I go, may I ask, do you have anything to tell me?” Rup inquired.

“Only this — live in light!”

Three simple words, but such an impact! For the next three days, Rup contemplated these three simple words.

What is behind this simple message? How does it apply to my life?

He took the words deep into his consciousness and let them churn there. He began to watch himself.

Live — am I really living? Or am I going through the motions according to habit? This heaviness in my heart, is it not sapping my energies? I’m not really living yet; I am walking around like a weary man.

It was a glimmer, a peep into the dawn of a new awareness.

Inspired by Gandhiji’s few words and by the urgency of his need to find meaning in life, Rup went to meet again the saintly master Raman Maharshi at Arunachala mountain where he had already gone to meditate on two college vacations. There he felt some quiet moments. Lovingly the master would look at him and exchange his thoughts merely with the eyes. Sometimes Rup would ask him a question. The master would answer him with a smile or with a gesture. At times, he would point to the sky, indicating, “Go up!” At times, he would point to his heart, indicating “Go in!” There was very little talk, mostly the master would keep in silence. Within a twelve-hour period, his students and visitors would be allowed only fifteen minutes to question him. Rup stayed with him a few days just to be in his beautiful presence.

When Rup returned home to his father, he still felt in need of more time to be alone, but he did not know where to go. His first thought was to go to Benares, a holy site, which for thousands of years drew so many seekers and saints.

But his father told him, “Why do you not go to Palitānā? There you will feel the beautiful healing vibrations of

Śatruñjaya. That will console you and help you find peace.”

Rup agreed with him. “Yes, dear Father, I remember it from the times you and I went there on pilgrimages. I would like to go there. And some saint, some sage must be living in that area who can help me to help myself.”

A few days later, he embraced his father and boarded a train for Palitana. As the wheels of the train turned, he heard them as if they were vibrating with the sound of Gandhiji’s words — “Live in light! Live in light!”

Yes, I want to move toward that light. I want to see clearly what I am and illumine all the mystery of life and death. That light must be somewhere. Some day I will find it.

The train slowed down as it came within twelve miles of the town. All of a sudden the flat plains dotted here and there with gnarled and sprawling banyan trees gave way to a spectacular view. In the distance were the soft mounds and rounded hills of the sacred mountain to which he had come. As they rose gently before his eyes, they beckoned to him with a peaceful flowing magnetism, “Come unto me! Have no fear! Your search begins from here! Great discoveries await you!”

* * *

Śatruñjaya

Rising to a height of nearly two thousand feet, Śatruñjaya stands luminous to the inner eye, radiantly mirroring the purity of soul. To all who climb its slopes, it is an inspiration. Even before the temples which crown its summit were built, seekers for thousands and thousands of generations had gone in search of the height of themselves by mounting to its peaks. It is known as a *tirth*, a symbolic bridge of awareness through whose help one can cross the river of life. Here the pilgrim journeys to cross over from the shore of pain to the shore of peace, from the turbulence of bondage to the calm bliss of emancipation.

Śatruñjaya is a *tirth* for its having received the visit of Ādināthā, first *tirth*-builder for mankind.

Śatruñjaya has many names, each one an attempt to grasp in words its limitless significance to the spiritual aspirant: "Height of Purification", "Hill of the Holy Land", "Rock of the Gods", "Bestower of Virtue", "Place of Beatitude", "Fulfiller of all Desires", "Crown of the Earth". By ascending the hill with single-minded awareness, one experiences the meaning behind those names. *Satrun* means inner enemies, mental, emotional, and physical weaknesses which gravitate the soul, weighing it down. *Jaya* is to conquer, to realize your power to release yourself from their grip.

Rup stood at the foot of the mountain and gazed up at the peaks as they melted into the clouds. What awaited him beyond those peaks? He had climbed to the top once or twice before with his father. He had seen with his outward eyes the lustrous city of more than eight hundred stone and marble temples and shrines which reward the devout pilgrim at the end of his climb. Though he had ascended the steps of Śatruñjaya, he had not yet ascended to his inner height. Now he was ready to move forward.

There is a difference between direction and movement. The first has a target, whereas the second can go on for hundreds of years and reach nowhere.

Now he wanted to let go of the old and welcome newness, no matter how ego-shattering it may be. Just as a seed pushes its way out of the hard earth, he felt a powerful urge to remove the obstacles before him, and move steadily toward his goal.

* * *

Barefoot, in loose-fitting white shirt and pants, Rup began the climb. His feet followed the cadence of the sacred mantra his father had taught him.

Aum Shree Śatruñjaya Ādināthāya Namah.

He paused after each repetition to let the meaning of the sound penetrate his consciousness.

Aum Shree Śatruñjaya Ādināthāya Namah. — I open myself to the pure energy of Ādināthā, Lord of himself, in order to overcome my inner weaknesses. I bow to this Great Soul in

order to drop my sorrow, let go of my illusions, and conquer my anger and pain. I want to know life's meaning. I want to know the truth.

He paid homage to Adinatha. His concentration remained intense, his mind clear, his heart open, as he continued to follow the winding path of roughly hewn stone slabs and from time to time, regular stone steps.

He hardly noticed the small square cells frequently appearing to his left and right, housing the *paduka* or sculptured footprints of certain Prophets. These miniature shrines were evidence of the devotion of those Jains unable to afford to build more grandiose sanctuaries, but who wanted nevertheless to express love to their beloved Prophets at this most holy of pilgrimage sites.

Pilgrims of all ages, all faiths, all castes made the ascent at their own pace. Children scurried on ahead of their parents. The elderly walked majestically along with wooden walking sticks. Those who were too weak to use their legs were carried in bamboo palanquins.

Halfway up the hill Rup stopped for a while near one of three halting places built for pilgrims along the way. From here he took in the vast sight of the gentle hills he had just climbed, as they seemed to melt into miles and miles of spacious flat countryside. Greens, oranges, and golden browns alternated as his eyes fell upon cultivated fields and wild grassy plains.

In the distance he could detect little clusters of villages hidden in areas protected by large shady trees. The Gulf of Khambhat and the town of Bhavnagar lay beyond his vision to the east. To the northwest and west, at the farthest point, he could see the six peaks of Mount Girnar, sacred to Jain and Hindu alike, and dedicated by the Jains to Lord Neminātha, the twenty-second Prophet, another exemplar of the life of non-violence. The Śatruñjaya river curved its way to the south, until it met the Talaja and Khokara hills, where many ascetics and wanderers were known to have spent their days practicing meditation in its caves. Some day he too would be meditating in these caves.

By the time Rup reached the summit of Śatruñjaya and entered the gateway to this gleaming white city of temples, he

felt unburdened and light.

The smoothness of the stone pavement felt good beneath his bare feet as he made his way slowly over to the shrines. He met the penetrating and compassionate look in the eyes of the white marble images of Adinatha and was opened to their healing energy.

“Ego goes out and Divine comes in,” a voice within whispered to him. As he exhaled deeply, he relaxed. He felt it as a releasing of the small self, an invitation to the Divine Self. It was a moment to make space for fresh inspiration, to inhale more than the breath — the life force itself, pulsating luminous energy.

It was as if silent songs of ecstasy were still being sung by the ancient sculptors, patrons, and devotees responsible for this great marble city. The countless millions of people who for thousands of years had been drawn there to meditate seemed to have left invisible heartprints of their experiences, vibrant and immortal. For Rup it was an opening, a glimpse into the ocean of Self, and a beckoning towards a higher life.

* * *

Rup spent five days in Palitana making the pilgrimage to the summit each day. On the fifth day, as he was coming down, he caught sight of one Master climbing up. Acharya Bhakti Suri stopped for a moment. The two met face to face. Rup gave him the customary greeting, a bow with palms together, fingertips touching the forehead. Looking up, Rup saw the Master smiling. Young Rup was captivated by his smile and felt warmed by his flowing love.

Perhaps this Master can be the one to soothe my soul.

The next day he went to Molisukhya Dharmashala, the monastery where Acharya Bhakti Suri delivered sermons when he was in Palitana. Rup remained with him for one and a half months, communicating with him, receiving guidance from him, and meditating with him. The Acharya listened to the outpourings of Rup’s heart

The Āchārya told him, “Now it is time for you to become a monk, to renounce all distracting temptations, both inner and outer, in order to concentrate your energy. This is the only way

to lead you out from sorrow and delusion into the bliss of universal consciousness.”

Rup inquired, “What must I do to become your disciple and receive ordination?”

“Seek the permission of your father,” he answered. “You may take *diksha* when you are ready.”

Rup carried with him a new sense of calm and purpose. An intense feeling for renunciation, began to steady his mind, channel his energy, and unify his being.

He called his father to ask his permission. At first his father did not agree. “Rup, we have to think about the family, the business. Please, don’t ask me this.”

“But father, people are dying. We are going to die. I want to get some answer beforehand. You have your shop, but it could not save my mother. You have money, but it could not save my sister.”

There was frustration in his father’s life. “Come home Rup, and we will talk about it.”

* * *

Respect for Father

Rup was the last male of his family line. His aunts, in particular, were eager to see him married. If he decided to enter the monkhood, it would bring an end not only to the reputable cloth business but also to the family name. In a country where ancestral lines can be traced back for hundreds of years, and where extended families of twenty and thirty members may live together at a time, he could not easily dismiss the responsibility of perpetuating the family name.

Rup returned home and faced the resistance of various relatives. One day his aunt appealed to him in tears, “How can you allow our good name to die out? Can you not put your father’s business and the family first in your life? How can you turn your back on those who have cared for you all these years?”

Rup neither accepted nor rejected these protests. He looked at each point of view squarely, and asked himself questions in an utterly candid and honest manner.

Am I really being self-centered? Am I deserting those who love me most? Is it right that I let a name which has been passed down for generations fade into oblivion after all these years?

He allowed these questions to percolate in his consciousness. He restrained himself from giving a quick, impulsive answer. Out of deep respect for his father, Rup agreed to postpone his decision and wait. In the interim period, he worked with his father in the cloth business. It did not take him long to learn all there was to learn about the trade. He envisioned himself doing this work for the rest of his life.

No, it is frightening to imagine doing such boring work year after year. I can understand why businessmen either grow dull or become corrupted. All their efforts are put into accumulating more and more profit. Where is the progress? Where is the growth and expansion of the human spirit? All I see is stagnation.

More questions arose in his mind.

With profit as the motive, how can men of commerce be sure that they will always be strictly honest and fair with customers and suppliers? What is to prevent them from deviating slightly from what they know to be lawful and fair?

His father, on the other hand, was an example of impeccable honesty. By keeping his prices fixed and by opening his shop only a few hours each day, he had not been working to accumulate more and more profit. He felt his income was adequate to support his family and relatives, so he was spending more and more hours in quiet study and contemplation.

Now it occurred to Rup that his father had not been stagnating. He realized that his father would really understand and respect his desire to become a monk; all that was needed was a heart to heart talk with one another. So he went to his father and shared his feelings.

"Dear Father, please hear me out. My heart is not here in this world of business. I've seen that for me, there is no meaning in leading a worldly life. I see no worth in even becoming a millionaire. What does one really need to live? A

place to rest the body, a roof overhead at night, a little food as nourishment, some cloth to cover this skin and bones. At least the monkhood meets these basic needs. What more do I need? I don't have any desire to amass more and more of the same things. And I don't think that you do either. That is why I feel you will understand me. At this point in my life, I can see no other way. There is only one burning need — to remove this pain in my heart and unravel this mystery called death. Otherwise, what is life for?"

"My dear son," his father gently responded. "I have great reverence for your feelings. We have undergone a series of ordeals. We have suffered together. All these things have led us to this moment. I wish it could have been otherwise. But what to do about this family name? It is not so much my concern as that of our family clan. How to ignore their feelings?"

"Oh Father," Rup spoke frankly. "This pain in me longs for peace. It does not allow me to be even in a mood to marry. Such a chance is utterly remote. Besides, don't you think that our aunts and uncles are attached to this tag we call our name because of possessiveness and sentimentality? That's their way of thinking. They can't help it. But should I give my life over to them just so that they can feel a false sense of security? It will only be a temporary relief. The time will come and a new worry will burden them, a new demand will arise."

Rup paused for a moment. A deep feeling for his father welled up from within. Gently he spoke from his heart.

"Please, my dear Father, let me say this. I care more than I can say for all you have given to me. You have always shared with me, from your heart, withholding nothing. I cannot imagine a more loving father in all the world. My feeling for you is no less strong than yours for me. It will be difficult to part from you. But just now, I am in a fragmented state. The master whom I met told me I must concentrate my energy. Through the monk's way of life I will pull myself together. I'll be moving in a positive direction. And so I ask you once again, please understand me and give me your blessings."

His father quietly closed his eyes. He entered a state of meditation. Rup relaxed as he saw a peaceful expression light

up his father's kindly face. The silence and beauty of the moment embraced them.

When he opened his eyes, Rup's father took his son's hands and spoke with deep calm and love in his voice.

"Yes, my dear son, I give you my blessings. I don't want to stand in your way. Let the family's arguments evaporate into thin air! Your longing is real; you must listen to it. I have one suggestion, however. Once you are a monk, it will be difficult for you to set your own time to go on a pilgrimage. You will be in the company of your master and fellow monks. I would like to see you take the time now, before your ordination, to go to one extraordinary place — Pavapuri. There, where Lord Mahavira breathed the last — there you must go before any-where else. For there you will have a connection with that Enlightened Soul to whom you are going to surrender in order to unfold yourself. This will be a blessing for you. I will accompany you on this holy pilgrimage. It will be a blessing for us both."

Father and son embraced. It was the dawn of a new awareness of one another, a new feeling of mutual reverence. It was the beginning of an everlasting friendship. Their differences — in age, in hopes and dreams and opinions, were transcended in that moment. The structure called 'father' and 'son' simply fell away as they became united in a loving space beyond form and definition.

* * *

Ecstasy at Pāvāpuri

Rup and his father made their way to Pāvāpuri. Originally, Pāvāpuri was called Apāpāpuri, or the 'town without pāpa or sin.' It is located in the ancient land of Magadh, now known as Bihar State. This land is regarded as sacred, because it has acted as a silent witness to the sanctified presence of many Jain

Prophets over a period of several thousands of years. From the very roots of pre-history, the mountains, the earth, the places of meditation have been steeped in the vibrations of reverence for life. The atmosphere vibrates with the living experiences of men, and women who have come here to purify their minds and hearts. Ādinātha himself is thought to have taught in Magadh. Of the twenty-four Tirthankaras, three were born here, twenty reached final liberation here, and the last two, Pārshvanātha and Mahāvīr, spent their whole lives here.

Pāvāpuri is a particularly special pilgrimage place for it marks the spot where Mahāvīr delivered his final sermon and where he breathed his last breath, his last gift to mankind. While he walked the earth, Mahāvīr lived as a light, a beacon of inspiration, a blessing to all, an incarnation of love and compassion. That is why the moment of his departure was considered to be a night of darkness for the world. At the time, eighteen Lachavi kings who were in the area of Pavapuri for a federal conference heard that Mahāvīr was giving a sermon. They went to attend it. When he completed his talk, he departed from his body, ascending to the highest point of consciousness, in perfect non-violence, the ultimate Realization of Self. Once the kings saw that Mahāvīr was gone and that his disciples were in a great pain, they declared, “*Bhavatipak gayechate*”, meaning, “Now that Mahāvīr’s bodily lamp is extinguished, let the outer lamp be lit as a symbol of his divine light.” In small villages everywhere in India, Jains lit tiny lamps in his memory. From this moment, in the year 527 B.C., the festival of *Dipāvali*, the festival of lights, came into being, marking as well the beginning of the New Year, because Gauttama Swami, Mahāvīr’s first disciple, became *Kevali*, omniscient.

It was on this sacred festival eve that Rup and his father visited Pavapuri, heading towards the temple dedicated to Mahāvīr. It was nearly the end of monsoon season and the October sky was dark and moonless. All of nature seemed to be hushed. Even the dogs had stopped barking and the owls were keeping silent. Here and there people were seated in quiet meditation, tuning themselves to Mahāvīr and ascending with his ascended soul. Chhogalal let his son go ahead of him

to give him the space to experience this place alone. He followed along slowly, in his own time.

Rup was preparing himself to be in a state of quiet contemplation. He felt a sense of expectancy of what, he knew not. He was not aware of the details of the life of Mahāvīr, but, as a college student, he had been moved by these words which he had come across: “Even as the whole mango tree is contained in the very pit of the mango, even so, in you, O man, is divinity hidden. Rest not until you find it.” This insight had had a penetrating effect on him, and, through the years, had surfaced to inspire him further in his quest for understanding and peace. Now he was about to experience the immortal vibrations of the man who had uttered those words.

As Rup came to the bridge which spanned the lotus-dotted lake and which led to the temple, he experienced something profoundly subtle, sweet and elevating. The water was still and deep. He could see in it reflections of a myriad sparkling stars, thanks to the flames of wicklamps floating on its calm surface. It mirrored too the glowing white marble temple which stood at the center of the lake. Water lilies peeped out from amongst lotus flowers. Rup saw each one as an individual, perfect in its beauty.

With each step, as Rup neared the temple, he felt a buoyancy in his limbs like that of a lark soaring in the infinite sky. Blood coursed through his veins and he felt his whole being igniting as if by fire. A steady *nada* hum tingled in his ears. He was swept on a high tide of joy.

In this exultant mood, he moved as if magnetized by the loving energy inviting him toward the innermost sanctuary. The silent majesty of the place magnified his ecstasy and intensified his awareness. He began to experience a transcendent dimension of consciousness.

As soon as he entered the temple, he was filled with a feeling of deep reverence and peace. Calm and serene, he walked slowly to the alcove where the *pādukā* or footprints of Bhagwan Mahāvīr lay in low relief, sculpted out of marble. He lowered himself to his knees, bowed down, and rested his head before them.

In that single act of adoration, he was transported into a

state of deep rapture, for from between the footprints, a brilliant pencil line of light, as if it were liquid sapphire streaming down from the infinite, sprang up in a clear vision to his spiritual eyes. His whole being opened to it, commingled with it. His small self disappeared in the totality of the experience. It was a moment of doubtlessness, of oneness.

महावीर स्वामी पारगताय नमः

“*Mahāvira Swāmi Pārgatāya Namah,*” he felt himself murmuring. “To the Omniscient One, Bhagwān Mahāvira, who has liberated himself, I open myself, I bow.”

The call to renunciation and service which he had experienced during his illness in a semi-dream state was no longer a dream; it was a reality. As he bowed before the footprints of Mahavir, who had left his princely life in search of the root cause of suffering and the path to liberation, Rup knew he was following in these footsteps. Now nothing would deter him from uncovering the secret of death and finding the meaning of life. His decision to become a renunciate was confirmed by this transcendent ecstatic glimpse. Such a glimpse made the way easy for him; it would be his joy to turn toward the invisible universe of Self. He was ready and open to plunge deeper still.

Love and gratitude to his dear father poured out of him as he thought of how he had urged him to make this pilgrimage. He turned to his father, beaming with love. Silently they embraced.

“Now I must go in search of the Master,” Rup told him.

“Yes,” his father agreed, “and I am going to take you to one who is known as the Master of the masters. Why not go to the direct source?”

“Where is he to be found?” Rup asked.

“At Pālītānā. He is Āchārya Shree Ānand Sāgarsuriji, a living incarnation of Mahāvira’s message.”

Before his father had finished telling him what he knew of this master, Rup’s heart was ready. He was eager to go to Pālītānā and meet him. “Let us go and find him,” he said, “Such a great soul must have found the answers I am seeking. He will be able to lead me.”

Once again, Rup and his father set off on a second pilgrimage, heart and mind bent on Palitana to meet the great Master.

* * *

Meeting the Master

In all of India, there was one Master of great renown. Āga-moddhāarak Āchārya Shree Sāgarānand Surishvarji, who was fondly called Āchārya Ānand Sāgarsuriji or Sāgarānandji, was a monument of wisdom and compassion. He was dear to both scholars and philosophers, to religionists and students of Self. He was recognized worldwide as an expert in Sanskrit and in comparative studies of the Jain, Buddhist, and Hindu Scriptures. He had committed to memory the forty-five books containing all the teachings of Lord Mahavir, called the Āgamas. Each book contained surras or sermons of Mahāvīr. When philosophers and theologians gathered to confer on the subtleties of scriptural meaning, he was always asked to offer his seasoned views. In three hundred years of Jain history, since the great Āchārya Hemchandra, there was no one with his self-mastery and capacity to elucidate the sometimes double and triple meanings of the profound passages of the forty-five Agamas. He was considered to be the final authority.

From the age of eighteen, when this great soul became a renunciate, he had wanted to sit at the feet of one enlightened sage, but this man was recluse and refused to accept disciples. He was an ascetic wanderer or *shramana*, free from all ties with sect, creed, nationality, or religious dogma.

Sāgarānandji was not deterred by this man's refusal to teach him. He followed him and served him in whatever ways he could. By meditating in his presence and by remaining with him, he learned how to live without any outer distraction and came to touch the boundaryless Self within. He experienced Mahāvīr's universal message before ever having studied it in a formal way.

After some years of inner experience, his young and vital mind became eager to undertake a systematic study of the Āgamas. He felt the need to turn to the written utterances of Mahavir to balance his life and to guide him further in his understanding of inner experience. He embarked on this study on his own, continually internalizing the message by meditating and adjusting his actions according to his understanding. Eventually, he found a new lifetime purpose: to share his experiential knowledge of the wisdom of the Āgamas with others.

The first part of his mission was to teach. He gave classes to groups of monks on the Āgamas, and eventually became known and appreciated as the authentic Jain Master of the present time period.

The second part of his mission was the fulfillment of an inner dream. He longed to preserve the Āgamas in as permanent a way as possible. Before him, they had been recorded only on palm leaf manuscript paper. This kind of paper was fragile and susceptible to the dampness of climate. For this reason, the monks who had access to them guarded the precious manuscripts and did not make them available to all. Āchārya Ānand Sāgarsuriji took it upon himself to copy them by hand in order to give them to a printer for publishing in book form. The Āgamas then became accessible to a great number of seekers.

In the last quarter of his life, the Āchārya was the spiritual guide for four hundred monks, including Āchārya Bhakti Suri whom Rup had met earlier at Palitana. At the same time, he engaged himself in the realization of his last great dream — to have the Āgamas engraved in stone. In this way, future generations would be able to know the exact and genuine version of Mahāvīr's words. Arguments over wording would thereby be prevented. It was a seven-year project, involving artists, architects, scientists, and engravers from many parts of India. All the utterances of Mahāvīr, all the stanzas of deep insights were to be housed in a special temple called the Āgamamandir. One such temple was to be built in Surat; another one in Pālītānā, about two hundred fifty miles from one another. In the temple at Surat, the Āgamas were being engraved on

copper plates; in the Agamamandir at Palitana, on marble slabs. They were then to be framed in glass and placed along the inner walls of the courtyard enclosing the temple.

Only after this great project was completed would the Acharya withdraw from the world of study and research to enjoy the bliss and peace of uninterrupted meditation.

* * *

It was an auspicious time in both the Master's life and in Rup's life for them to meet. Arriving in Pālītānā, Rup and his father inquired as to where to find the Master. They were told he was in Babu Panalal Dharmashala, at the foot of Śatruñjaya. From the train station, they set off directly. Upon arriving at the Dharmashala, they told one of the monks that they had come to meet the Master. He agreed to meet with them at four o'clock.

During the hour of waiting, Rup's excited mind experienced a kind of quiet soothing. In a receptive mood, he became aware of a flow of beautiful energy in and around him. He had heard about the unique qualities of the Master, but now he was experiencing something deeper than all the information he had received. Even before meeting him, he felt a great reverence for him. This feeling made his mind pliable and open to the non-verbal message being offered.

The moment came and Rup entered a small room. He reverently bowed before the feet of the Master. Waves of joy and awe filled him, as he looked up into Āchārya Ānand Sāgarsuriji's eyes. Something was stirring deep within his being. Wordlessly, the Master had penetrated to the heart of Rup's consciousness. In this experience of connection, a profound confidence welled up from his depths and he knew what it was to trust someone completely. Experiencing that trust, it became all of a sudden easy for him to drop for a while the confusions and complications of mind. In a timeless flash, his inner emptiness gave way to a fullness. Desires and doubts fell away and he felt rooted in fearlessness.

It was a temporary peep, an insight into the infinite world of consciousness. From the deep clear center within, he realized the meaning of this moment.

Here I am, grounded in confidence and trust, and here is a man, the embodiment of knowledge and wisdom. I have come home.

It was love at first sight!

“Now tell me, dear soul, why you have come.”

Rup remembered once again his pain and his quest. His soft black eyes smarting with tears, he brought forth his voice to say, “I am here to know the secret of death. First I lost my mother, then I lost my sister, later I lost my beloved friend, and now I have lost my peace. I have come to find peace.”

The Āchārya smiled to see before him a young man with a quest.

“It is good you have come. And it is good you are not carrying dogma and opinion with you, only a real longing for truth.”

There was a space of silence. Then he asked Rup, “But will you be satisfied with temporary answers?”

Rup replied, “I am looking for that which is permanent and real, nothing else.”

“And do you know where you will find that permanent, that real?”

“I do not know,” Rup answered honestly, “but to find that, I am here. I am ready for anything.”

“Yes,” continued the Āchārya, “these blows in your life have sharpened your quest. It’s a blessing in disguise. Your quest has not come from dry intellectual discussion or from blind faith; it has taken birth in the depths of sorrow. Do you know that when pain is moist with living feeling, it can be used as fertilizer to bring forth the beautiful harvest of your reality? That is the meaning of Enlightenment — to find yourself. You will draw the sparkling treasure from your own Self. Why not have the experience of your own life?”

Rup felt a deep tremor of ecstasy in his being. The words of this, ancient and eternally wise soul touched him deeply. He was suffused with love and light from without and within. For a moment duality ceased.

“I request to become your disciple,” he spoke simply.

“Yes, dear soul,” answered the Āchārya, “I welcome you as my disciple. Under my guidance, you will listen to my words

and read the books of the saints, but the answer will not come only from these sources. I can give you the maps and put up the milestones, but you have to walk the road yourself. Dive deep into your Self. The key to the quest lies with you, in your own practice.”

“For that I have come,” Rup whispered.

“Then, with the permission of your father, you may take some time to train for the monkhood and then join the Shramana Order,” he told him.

Rup turned to his father who was sitting silently in the back of the room. His father nodded a silent approval to them both. He was too moved to speak. In his own heart, the inner life was moving, growing. Within the year, it would change the direction of his life as well. Meanwhile, he returned to his shop in Tumkur, while Rup remained at Pālītānā with his new Master.

* * *

Rup’s Quest

For Rup, certain glimpses which had occurred in his childhood and young adulthood had revealed a depth greater than his years, and yet, it took the painful blows and crises in his life to reignite his quest and set his feet firmly upon a purposeful path. Though this path fell within the framework of the itinerant life of a Jain monk, yet the real framework was his own soul’s hunger for meaning and peace. What mattered to him was not a label or a religion, but a courage to conquer and persist. That he had in abundance.

At this point, his quest lay hidden in a well of emotion. He had no thoughts of attaining some vague notion of salvation. Rather, it was his personal anguish which called out for solace and truth. He saw that the meditative retreats he had taken at various ashrams had been only shallow experiences. There he

had collected only temporary props. They were unable to help him stand on his own two feet and accept the challenges of life. The glimpse he had experienced at Pāvāpuri was real, but it had faded away, like a morning dream. What he needed now was to take a step toward himself.

The Āchārya's words kept on reverberating in his consciousness. Their appeal lay in the promise that indeed there was an answer to his questions, and that, in time, it would reveal itself from within his own being. Again and again his teacher verified that the treasure sought for lay within. Outwardly, the monkhood would free him from mundane demands, but the real disengagement would take place over many years of self-study and on deep inner levels.

Āchārya Ānand Sāgarsuriji told him not to be in a hurry. He gave him the example of Mahāvīr for his inspiration. Mahāvīr took twelve and a half years of austerity, self-inquiry, and deep contemplation to reach the ultimate answer. Only when he had attained complete Self-Realization and omniscient understanding did he break his silence and share his discoveries with others.

Rup kept the story of Mahāvīr in the forefront of his mind. It helped him realize, too, why the Āchārya was devoting so much time and energy to building the Āgamamandir to house and protect the utterances which came from Mahāvīr's living experience. Rup remained at Pālītānā to study with his new-found teacher and to serve him in numerous ways, running errands, helping him write letters to the various artisans, scientists, painters, and architects, inviting them to participate in the great project of engraving and housing the Āgamas. He felt elated to remain in the presence of his Master and to be useful to him in small ways throughout the days. In this period, he felt his sorrow come and go, depending on how busy the Master kept him!

Moreover, he was able to observe firsthand how the Master lived and moved in uninterrupted peace and joy. He noticed that he was a silent egoless worker, unaware of his virtues. The longer he spent in his presence, the more he felt the rightness of his step and the promise in the path he had chosen. At times, he had a chance to ask him questions. He

learned to ask not in haste, but out of deep introspection. Each time there would be a pause, a space in which both could ponder, question and answer.

“Now,” the Master told him, “take this insight and digest it. Don’t rush off to find a counter-answer. See if what I said fits you or not. Answers are tailorings. They must fit your consciousness, your understanding, your quest.”

“What about the Scriptures? Should I study them?” Rup asked.

“No, not yet,” the Master told him. “First you have the experience of your own life.” Rup reflected on the Master’s advice.

If I take the Scriptures from thousands of years ago and apply them to the present, it is like putting the clothes of a big muscular man on to a tiny man. I would stumble, because the size would not fit me. So the Scriptures are beautiful utterings. They can give me guidance and inspiration, but they are not coming from my experience. I am on a different dimension. Answer is in living.

Āchārya Ānand Sāgarsuriji told Rup to study his own mind. “Watch its motives, needs, and desires. Find out what you want from your life. This search is always toward the infinite. You have to keep on going further and further, until you realize the ultimate. So take all the temporary answers which come to you and ask yourself, ‘Will I be satisfied with these things?’ If you are hungry and go on eating snacks, then you won’t enjoy the real dinner. So small answers kill your appetite, and you are not in a position to enjoy your reality.”

Rup looked forward eagerly to the day of his initiation or *diksha*.

Here is a man to whom I can surrender my life and yet he does not ask me to surrender to him, only to be aware of my motives, and to discriminate between my needs and my reality. How loving he is! He does not create distance between himself and others. He has no facade. He lets me see him in all ways, from all directions, in all dimensions. I am convinced through and through, this is a man of love and wisdom. He is able to put his finger on even the small things of everyday

life which disturb, and he knows how to say just the right word to inspire me to help myself.

* * *

Preparation for Initiation

It was the month of January 1942, when Rup embarked on another period of preparation for the monkhood. Āchārya Ānand Sāgarsuriji sent him to Bombay to train under his main disciple, Pannayas Shree Chandrasāgarji. During this time, Rup had the occasion to watch the monks and verify whether or not the rigorous life style of an itinerant monk would suit him. At the same time, the group of monks watched him and saw whether or not he was of the caliber to withstand the difficulties and testing times which came in the life of a monk. In this training, he was to attempt to adapt both body and mind to the demands of the monkhood. After initiation or *dikshā*, Rup would walk with this company of six monks to Ahmedabad and Pālitānā where he planned to rejoin Āchārya Ānand Sāgarsuriji to study closely with him, as well as with his main disciple.

Rup observed many of the rules of the monk's daily schedule. He began his day at 4:30 a.m. Along with his new teacher and the five monks, he greeted his first waking hours with forty-eight minutes of meditation. By 6:00 a.m. all were ready to begin their walk from Bombay towards Bordi, a seaside village where Rup's initiation was to take place one month later. At dawn, when the monks could perceive the lines on the palms of their hands, it was time to move. According to tradition, Jain monks spent two days in each village, and sometimes up to five days in one town. They usually stayed overnight in an empty building or cloister near a temple. It was called an *upāśhray*, where monks, nuns, and spiritual pilgrims were welcome to go and rest and meditate. *Up* means close, and *āśhray* means to reside. Here was a place to stay close to oneself, in peace.

Only during monsoon season from July to early October did they reside in one place and not travel elsewhere. The origins of this rainy season retreat called *chātur māś* lay in the Jain monks' dedication and commitment to *ahimsā*, the practice of non-violence and reverence for all life. They were aware that if they were to continue walking from village to village during this wet season, their feet might crush tiny insects and worms. By remaining in one place, they avoided harming even the smallest life forms.

The monks' way of life recognized only the bare minimum of needs. *Parigraha* or external possessions were reduced to two sets of cloth, a simple wooden alms bowl and a cloth to clean it, a small pot for water, a mouth cloth or *muha patti* which was used to avoid inhaling small insects and other micro-organisms in the air, a small soft broom or *rajoharan* to sweep the floor at night, a walking staff, and a book to study the sacred *Āgamas*.

Rup had experienced in his twenty years the perpetual flux of the external world, the impermanence of persons, places, and things. By leading the wandering monk's life, he now turned this ever-changing quality to a positive purpose — to renounce attachment to that which had no immortal value and to learn how to welcome change as a natural process of life. During these months of preparation for the monkhood, he came closer to seeing that only in meditative glimpses could he touch that which was impervious to change. Though he felt these glimpses to be as fleeting as the light of a firefly, still they left an indelible imprint upon him.

By the time Rup and the company of monks reached Bordi, Rup had memorized four books of *Āgamas* in which the disciplines for Jain monks were presented. In particular, he absorbed what were called the eight steps of "Mother": three *guptis* and five *samitis*. These rules were designed by Mahāvīr to protect the soul like a mother protecting her baby. They were minute in detail and required precise adherence.

Gupti means to conceal. Just as a tortoise withdraws his limbs into his shell at the onset of harm, so the monks learned how to withdraw their senses from potential violence by utilizing the three *guptis* to keep mind, speech, and body under

control. Body or *kāyā* was said to be sheathed in *kāyāgupti*. Word or *vachan* was sheathed in *vachangupti*. Mind or *manas* was sheathed in *manogupti*. By means of careful scrutiny of one's thoughts, words, and actions, the consciousness was free to develop keen awareness. In this way, the monks could consciously transcend pain and pleasure, commit no violence, take in no harmful vibrations, and dwell in their own eternal nature. It was a lifetime process, a journey into the evolution of consciousness, a commitment to growth and life itself.

The last five of the eight steps which served as models to the monks were the five *samitis* or ways of being careful. Through their observance, one took care not to harm either oneself or any living being. There were five specific awarenesses: to be vigilant when one moved from place to place, when one used words, when one received or picked up articles, when one placed articles, and when one disposed of waste. The monks made sure that they did not crush any life form underfoot or hidden in a vessel. For example, before washing his bowl, a monk would inspect it first with his eyes. If an insect had found its way into the bowl, he would allow it to crawl out or he would apply his soft broom to brush it away lightly before using a cloth to clean the bowl. The point was for the monks to be reminded not to be insensitive or callous to life, and not to cause pain through harsh, egotistical, deceitful, or untruthful thoughts, words, or actions.

Rup saw that the conduct to be followed by Jain monks as well as by lay people sprang from one mighty seed, the seed of *ahimsa* or non-violence. He learned that this was the very essence of Mahāvīr's teachings. In particular, he discovered that one of the first gems to emerge from Lord Mahāvīr's meditations was his realization, "I am life, and I want to live. That is my soul's quest. What is true for me is true for every-one. Everyone wants to live. So I should not think or say or do anything which goes against life and living."

Rup saw that *ahimsā* was not only a principle, but more accurately, it was a living perception, an inner understanding, and a guiding force in life. He recognized it to be the foundation stone upon which Gandhiji's non-violent resistance movement was based. It was *ahimsa* which had opened his heart

like a mother to the whole world. Rup wanted this seed to blossom and flourish in him also. He wanted to feel the touch of life, so that he too would drop his outwardly protective layers, like those on a growing plant, and become as compassionate as those exemplary beings he held before him as models: his father, his master, Lord Mahāvīr, and Arihantas of all times and places.

To move in this direction, during this preparatory period, he chose one stanza from the *Yogashāstra* of Achārya Hemchandra on which to meditate and ruminate daily.

आत्मवत् सर्वभूतेषु सुखदुःखे प्रियाप्रिये ।
चिंतयन्नात्मनोऽनिष्टां हिंसामन्यस्य नाचरेत् ॥

*Ātmavat Sava Bhūteshu
Sukh Dukkhe Priyāpriye
Chintayannātmāno anishtām
Himsāmanyasya Nācharet*

“All living beings have souls like you. As you like to be happy and do not like to be unhappy, so all beings like to be happy and do not like to be unhappy or in pain.

“If you remain in this awareness, dwelling in your soul, you will not be able to harm, hurt, kill, or cause pain to any living being, including yourself. So you will do to others only that which you would like others to do to you.”

Rup was not daunted by the rigors of the monks’ itinerant life. It exhilarated and inspired him. As he became more aware of the seed of *ahimsā* within, he became convinced that by following this life style, he would eventually lift the lid of his unawareness and sorrow and reach that understanding and freedom for which he longed.

* * *

Day of Initiation

It was February 6, 1942. The day of Rup's initiation or *dikshā* had risen. Long before dawn could reveal the lines upon his palms he was absorbed in meditation. For four hours he entered deeply into himself, thinning out the remaining distractions which might have deterred his mind from turning completely inward. He was cutting the cords which bound his soul, in order to give himself totally to the path of Self-Realization.

From the *upāśhray* at Bordi where Rup was meditating, one could see the sparkling sun-fused waters of the Indian Ocean. Outside in the compound, villagers were gathered eagerly awaiting the moment of initiation. Though they did not know Rup, the occasion of a *dikshā* was an inspiring moment for all people who revered the teachings of Mahāvīr. The air was clean and crisp, and the villagers, as well as Rup's father, were radiant with expectant joy.

Yet there was no hurry. The moment of readiness for initiation was an internal one, dictated by the soul of the seeker himself.

There was one moment. Rup felt upon the crown of his head a soft touch, an opening, a suffusion of his being with the universe. Inner world was ready for outward ceremony. He rose and slowly made his way to the cell where his teacher awaited him.

Panniyas Shree Chandra Sagarji asked him: "How is your meditation?"

Rup told him of the feeling at the top of his head, as if a divine finger was gently resting there. His teacher agreed, "The moment of *dikshā* has come."

Without breaking his meditative mood, Rup went out to the compound to greet the villagers. Eyes lowered, somber and singleminded, in humble recognition of the light indwelling in all, he stood at the center of the circle, placed his palms together, and raised them to his forehead as he greeted each of the people in turn. Each one responded to him, echoing his gesture of respect which resounded with the purpose of the

occasion.

As Rup stood before his teacher, Pannayas Shree Chandra Sāgarji spoke to him: "Now you are entering upon a different path. You are accepting a new life. It is a rebirth for the soul. Far behind you is the world of need and greed. The vast world of spirit lies open before you.

"Explore deeply within your being. Open your consciousness to the treasures which await your inward eye. You are becoming a *nirgrantha*, one who unties himself from the outer world.

"You are entering upon a lonely life. And yet though you are physically alone, you are one with all. You are leaving your personal family. Now the souls of the entire universe are your family. You are alone in body, but you are interconnected with all in spirit.

"Be diligent in removing the *karmas* along your path and you shall reach your quest, the full unfolding and liberation of your real Self."

Rup proceeded to accept fully each great vow or *Mahāvratā* put before him.

"I accept *Ahimsāmahāvratā*, to refrain completely from *himsā* or violence and to cultivate *Ahimsā* or Non-Violence in my every thought, word, and deed. Let me not be a cause of pain or harm to any living being. Seeing the life in all, I vow myself to protect that life in all."

There was silence as each of the souls gathered there meditated on the vow of *Ahimsā*.

"I accept *Satyamahāvratā*, to refrain from telling that which is untruthful or that which would cause pain to anyone. Those words which I do speak let them be truthful."

Again silence followed to permit all to ponder the meaning of Truthfulness.

"I accept *Asteyamahāvratā*, to refrain from taking that which has not been offered to me. I will accept with joy that which is offered. Let me accept only that which I need, no more, no less."

Monks and villagers meditated on the vow of Non-Stealing.

"I accept *Brahmacharyamahāvratā*, to practice celibacy in

order to let all my thoughts flow in the direction of the divine. Rather than wander in the realm of sense demand, I will free my mind to focus on lifting my energy for a higher purpose. Seeing a man or a woman, I will respect and revere the soul behind the mortal frame.”

Silence fell upon them again as they reflected on the purpose of Celibacy.

“I accept *Aparigrahamahāvratā*, to untie myself from all attachments, internal and external, and to renounce all non-essential possessions.”

The monks chanted sacred *mantra*.

Rup left the circle for a few moments to present himself to the barber who shaved off his hair, symbolic of his renunciation of worldly concerns and of the removal of the “grass” of ignorance. All was shorn except five hairs at the top of his head. These five were plucked out one by one by Panniyas Shree Chandra Sāgarji who told him: “These five hairs symbolize the five bodies in which the soul transmigrates.* With the plucking of these five hairs, you are uprooting your karmic bindings and all five bodies and you are reminded of the five *Vratas* as you proceed on your journey.”

It was a consummate moment. Deep within his being the new monk felt instilled with deep fervor and an unshakable conviction that he was on the right path.

“Rup-Rajendra, you are given the spiritual name of Munishree Chandraprabh Sāgarji — the Ocean of the Beams of Moon. May you find that cooling source of light within your Self and shed its beams upon the living beings of the universe. “

*According to Jain teachings, the soul is always dwelling in several kinds of bodies until it purifies to the finest degree, emancipates from its ties with all matter, and experiences *moksha*. The five types of bodies are as follows: (1) *audarika*, that which can be burned, cut, or destroyed; (2) *valkriya*, that which can assume various forms, large or small, thick or thin, one or many; (3) *aharaka*, that which can be produced only by a monk who knows the fourteen *Purva* texts; (4) *tajjasa*, that which is made of electrical energy, causing the body to glow with light and causing various bodily functions; (5) *karman*, that which constitutes the total aggregate of *karmas* at any given time.

Munishree Chandraprabh Sāgarji looked with silent love upon his father. His father was moved by his initiation.

Within a few months of returning home, living without his son proved meaningless to him. He began to reflect seriously on his life, and on becoming a monk as well.

* * *

IV. STRUGGLE AND GROWTH

First Experiences

It was a beautifully mild and pleasant morning. Munishree Chandraprabh Sāgarji began his first day as a *muni*. The glow from the day of initiation continued to warm him from within, and he was an eager and serious aspirant. He focused his morning meditation on *ko-aham?* or “Who am I?” By continuing to repeat *ko* with the in-breath, *aham* with the out-breath, he took a plunge into his subconscious, daring to churn it up and confront what arose. When he found temporary answers, old habits, greeds and buried resentments, he used the phrase *na-aham* — “not I”. The secret, he was taught, lay in not identifying with his past conditionings, but to peel them away, just as one peels away the layers of an onion, and to have faith that eventually he would come to *so-aham*, the sweet inner core.

After meditation, it was time for him to join Pannyas Shree Chandra Sāgarji and a few other monks on the daily *vihār*. All were barefoot, as was customary, and carried the small broom, the monk’s bowl, and a walking staff. They walked until mid-morning, completing nearly twelve miles. Some of them walked in silence, at a pace of nearly three or four miles an hour. Some of them pondered a Sanskrit *mantra* which their teacher gave them. The silence permitted them to become attuned both to the rhythm of their moving limbs and to their state of mind. The more they walked, the more clear and spacious their minds became. At the same time, they remained keenly aware of the path which they scrutinized as they proceeded, taking care not to tread upon any unsuspecting creature with their bare feet.

Arriving at a village, the monks went to a few houses to receive alms or *bhikshā*, their first daily meal. The *gauchari* practice of the monkhood required them to refrain from cooking or preparing food for themselves. Since they had re-

nounced possessions, including money, they never even picked up a fruit if it was lying unclaimed on the ground. They ate only if food was prepared and offered to them.

In this way, an interdependence was experienced between laypeople and monks. The former offered food to the monks, rejoicing in the opportunity to give and share. Their deeds were called *punya* or right action, for they caused the giver to experience increased happiness and positive results in the future. The monks accepted the offerings with the awareness that this sharing on the part of the laypeople allowed them to pursue their chosen path as renunciates.

Into their wooden vessel or *pātra*, people placed *asavajja vitti*, faultless food, that is, food untainted by violence or bloodshed in its procuring. The monks accepted only vegetables, grains, fruits, nuts, milk, and yogurt to sustain their bodies in health and life. They never touched meat, poultry, fish, or eggs. To them, the vegetarian diet was an integral part of living the message of the Jinās, *ahimsā*, non-violence and respect for all life.

In Munishree Chandrabrah's family history, for more than seventeen generations, all were nourished on the pure vegetarian diet. As he pondered this great benefit to his life, he realized how the innocent vibrations of the vegetable kingdom permitted the body to remain clean, the senses in order, the mind clear, and the soul at peace, in the knowledge that it was not disturbing anyone else's peace.

On young Munishree's first day as a monk, upon arrival at a village where the monks were to remain for a couple of days, he went off on his own to ask for *bhikshā*. He approached a mud hut and greeted the woman standing in the doorway. "*Dharma-lābh!*" he called out. This customary greeting of a Jain monk means "May you prosper spiritually!" But the woman was not a Jain and did not understand why he was there. All of a sudden he was overcome by shyness and did not have the heart to explain to her what he needed. He was not used to asking for alms and, rather than ask openly for food, he returned to his fellow monks at the *upāśhray* with an empty bowl.

"Where is your *bhikshā*?" one of the monks asked him.

“The woman whose hut I went to did not know what I wanted. I was shy.”

Then his teacher explained to him, “There is no need to be shy. After all, all living beings depend upon one another for their needs and survival. It is a reciprocal blessing. See how as a muni, you bless the giver with spiritual nourishment, while the one who offers food provides you with physical sustenance which allows you to continue to practice. Giving someone a chance to give is itself a blessing.”

* * *

After a month, the new muni was accustomed to asking for alms. On one occasion, he met a woman who was unable to disguise her shock that this healthy-looking handsome lad should have chosen to be a monk. She asked, “Why did you choose this kind of life? You are so young. You have such shining eyes! You must have such a promising life ahead of you.”

He answered, “When death may come at any time, I must use my life to find my life. All promises are merely hopes. I seek what is immortal.”

“Is your mother living?”

“No,” he replied demurely.

“Just as I thought!” the old woman exclaimed. “No mother would allow a boy like you to become a *sādhu*. I would have turned anyone else away, but when I look at you, I feel like you are my own son.”

She turned to go in the house. He smelled the aroma of freshly baked bread. She reappeared with a whole loaf of millet bread and handed it to him with a large lump of ghee on it. “I would not give my own son as much ghee as I am giving you!” she told him tearfully.

The young *muni* smiled good-naturedly, gave her his blessing, and departed. It would not be the only time that his childlike innocence, honest charm, and robust handsome appearance would open the heart of a skeptic and win his or her trust.

* * *

At the *upāshray*, the monks sat on the floor mats and shared the food they had collected.

Before eating, in silence, they attuned themselves to the meaning of food with a special prayer:

अहो जिणेहिं असावज्जा, वित्ती साहूण देसिया ।
मुक्ख साहण हेउस्स, साहु देहस्स धारणा ॥

“Aho Jinehim asāvajjā
Vitti sāhuna desiyā
Mukkha sāhana heoosa
Sāhu dehassa dhāraṇā.”

“Oh Great Conquerors, who have mastered your senses, What a wonderful Teaching has come from you! You have taught us to nourish the body with only that food which is innocent, pure, benign, and healthy, for it does not carry the vibrations of pain or bloodshed. You have taught us that we eat to sustain the body, and that we sustain the body for one purpose only: to allow us to reach Enlightenment and experience the liberation of Soul.”

They ate with the fingers of their right hand, in an attitude of quiet and non-attachment. Munishree observed the process of eating.

Each morsel of my food is being absorbed by my saliva and digestive juices and turned into nectar. My body cells are turning this food into energy. I am in tune with this nourishment as a means to bring out my life. Through this touch with life, may my body become a fit vehicle to carry me to moksha, and to receive and share the quintessence of truth with a loving heart.

A monk was to see his body as a vehicle or a temple in which he dwelled; he had to keep it in good condition. At the same time, it remained ever in partnership with soul, its master. The monks were taught neither to give it undue attention and excessive care nor to do anything which would harm or exhaust it. Both extremes were viewed as a result of being

overly attached to body and not seeing it for what it is. When no one offered the monks *bhiksha* on a particular day, they remained in a state of equanimity, if they had developed the proper attitude toward the body. Then they were able to transmute hunger pangs into the positive spiritual practice of fasting.

Munishree learned that the detached attitude the monks developed towards the body did not diminish their appreciation for it. He meditated on the Jain view of life as an ever-evolving consciousness. He saw from the tiniest life form to the most developed that the forms were becoming equipped with more and more refined means with which to sense the world. From one-sensed beings whose only sense was that of touch to six-sensed beings whose senses include touching, tasting, smelling, seeing, hearing, and thinking, consciousness has been evolving. He marveled and rejoiced at the positive *karmic* process which led their souls to coming into human birth.

Munishree began to realize that from the day he asked, “Who am I”, from that day, his evolution into higher consciousness began. He was continually reminded that the human body was the best and only vehicle to take him to the pinnacle of evolution. He had found the right path to Self-Realization. From here his genuine humanhood was developing. From here his inner perfection would reveal itself.

In the next six months, he and his teacher and fellow companions were planning to walk through the villages of the states of Maharashtra and Gujarat on their way to the city of Ahmedabad. From there they were to make their way to Pālītānā to rejoin Āchārya Shree Shree Ānand Sāgarsuriji, their Gurudev Master.

* * *

Beginning Hurdles

For our young *muni*, all the practices he followed as an itinerant monk were colored by his personal focal point — to lift the blanket of sorrow weighing on his heart and to remove his fears about death. Again and again his mind slipped into the past. He could not let go of those events which had made such a big impact on him.

Will I ever find my loved ones again? If evolution is the purpose of life, then why do we meet? What is the point of meeting if at the end of the road we have to part? Is there something invisible which makes my body alive or am I nothing but an empty shell?

Apart from his daily routine of walking, collecting alms, and eating, most of the time he had to himself. Now that he had renounced home, family, career, and possessions, one would imagine that he would have been feeling light as a feather, unburdened by responsibilities. But instead, time often hung heavily upon him. Psychological hurdles reared their heads. He was either lost in longing to meet his loved ones again, clinging with all his might to his memories of them, or he was beset by fear.

Nothing could save them from the grip of death. Then nothing can save me either. My turn could, come at any time. And when it does, where will I go?

He remembered how as a child he had proved to himself that he was fearless and brave, but now he saw that he had been fooling himself. One was not fearless until one had conquered the root of all fears, fear of death. At other times, his feeling of melancholy and impending doom would give way to anger, cynicism, and a sense of futility.

What am I doing here? Who knows what tomorrow will bring? Why don't I just grab something before it is too late? That's what most of the people in the world are doing; why didn't I decide to do the same?

That is when the mental claustrophobia would begin. Now that he was a monk, his outer freedom was curtailed. Before

he had become a monk, he had been free to go wherever he wanted and to stay out as late as he desired. Now he had to ask permission to go somewhere. And the permission would not automatically be granted. His teacher, Panniyas Shree Chandra Sāgarji, would question the students before they were about to go out to collect alms or to accept the invitation of a villager to go to his home. “Where are you going? For what reason? How long will you be gone?” were questions commonly asked to the monks.

Munishree consulted his teacher and told him what was happening.

“I cannot meditate. I am restless. My thoughts are monstrous. They are driving me crazy. And at night my dreams are claustrophobic. I cannot even get good sleep.”

His teacher understood and told him, “Yes, this happens. People want peace, but when their chance comes to have it, they get pain instead. As soon as you come closer to what you thought you wanted, you want something else. That is the nature of the mind. It jumps around like a monkey. It doesn’t want to sit still.”

Munishree agreed, “Yes, and when I take time for myself, all my old thoughts jump over my chest. It’s as if they had been waiting for this moment to demand my attention.”

“Please see that they are merely old habits, conditioned reflexes, which have made themselves at home in your mind. They are like servants. Just as an old servant knows the weakness of his master, so your old habits know your weak areas. If you are kind with them, you are not kind with yourself. You cannot have both — singing and eating! So evict them and make room for yourself!”

“What should I do to discipline my mind?” Munishree asked him.

“In order to guide this river to your reality, you need the banks of disciplines around you. But I am not going to impose on you how many times you should eat, how many hours you should sleep, how often you should study, meditate, or go out, or how many times you should fast. See your desires and start using *viveka*, your sense of discrimination, to see the difference between your soul’s quest to know and commune, and

your mind's desire for ephemeral things. When you know the difference, you will be governor of yourself."

"But when I sit, my memories bring me pain. This pain in my heart makes me want to jump up and run away. At times I cannot bear it."

"Sooner or later we have to face our thoughts. Why postpone?"

"Are you telling me that when I really feel pain, I should go into the root of the pain and stop avoiding the pain?"

"Yes, dear soul, it will bring out your real inner color, the color of your heart. You came to this path moist with feeling. From here your quest began. Don't run away from it."

Munishree was moved. Together they sat in silence. He remembered what Āchārya Ānand Sāgarsuriji had told him the first time they met: "These events have given birth to your quest. You can turn them into fertilizer for your growth." Munishree understood more clearly that he now had a choice. He could look upon his pain as a stumbling block or as a help.

"Yes," his teacher answered his silent pondering. "You can turn this knowledge into experience. Now you have emotional upsurge, fluctuations of mood, and fantasies of mind. It is your experience. There is no need to deny it. Accept all the weaknesses for the time being. Don't suppress anything. In meditation, three things may come: fear, anarchy, and temptation. You stay with *So-aham*, in your center. 'I am Divine, I am Truth. I am Love.' If you identify with the past fear, you are dwelling with that. Instead bid it farewell. If you leave your stand in the present, you can be thrown off balance. Then you will cling to straws. Only watch the waves and remember that what you want is a state of no ripples. Then you will be able to see to the bottom of your consciousness."

"But when I watch, I become nervous, restless, and impatient. "

"This week take time only for relaxation of the body. Whenever you have a chance, do *śavasana*, the corpse pose, and practice letting go. Whenever the muscles contract, let them go. One by one, relax each part of the body. You take deep breaths. Let the breaths come into a rhythm. You will see, when you relax from head to toe, you will start feeling

mental peace. So the first step in your training is to have connection with your body and form a new habit — to allow the body to let go. In this way, all the cells are rejuvenated and revitalized. Watch the stomach and chest enlarge as you inhale, watch them collapse as you exhale. This helps open the veins and instead of a contracting feeling, you will feel the flow of energy throughout your body.”

* * *

Throughout the first years, Munishree followed his own program of meditation. He studied Āchārya Hemchandra's *Yogashāstra*, until he found a system which worked well for him. From various sources, he drew the most sound and healthy elements. Always before sitting in meditation, he took three or four preparatory steps. The first was to relax the body, either in a sitting position or in a reclining position. As his awareness became more and more keen, he became capable of isolating different parts of the body and dropping the tension in each one. Later he turned this practice into a means for self-healing. He focused light, energy or breath like a laser beam on any ailing part.

The second step was to see himself in a pleasant mood. He realized the importance of this step.

If I carry irritation or grudge into my meditation, I am consuming my inside energy. Anger, hatred, depression, and irritation are forest fires; they burn my own house and my hour of peace and joy is lost. I can step back from these things and see my image calm and serene. In this way, he filled his body inside and out with equipoise, with a spacious feeling of well-being and balance.

The third preparatory step was to watch the breaths. At times it was useful to count them. At other times, it was beneficial to feel the connection with the universal breath.

I am breathing in oxygen, prāṇa, universal energy from the plants and trees and vegetable kingdom. I am inhaling the breaths of all the Perfect Souls in the universe who breathed the same air as I am breathing. I am bringing into my body all the nutrients I need to sustain my body, rest my mind, and nourish my soul. When I exhale, any toxins, tensions, negative

thoughts which I don't want, I am breathing out. They are leaving my consciousness. I remain with myself, pure unpolluted loving energy.

The fourth step he followed was to lift his energy from the base of the spine to the top of the head. This was particularly important for Munishree who was suffering intermittently from melancholy and depression. He discovered through observing himself that when the energy was locked up at the base of the spine, there also sorrow and depression were locked up.

I have to unlock this lock and awaken the dormant energy for my health and well-being. Otherwise, instead of mastering my lower self, I will be dominated by it.

Every morning before sitting for forty-eight minutes in meditation, Munishree followed the proper procedure for raising the energy with the *Hrim* mantra. *Hrim* means "Cosmic Energy" or "Universal Consciousness." The seat of this cosmic awareness is located at the top of the head. It was that precious energy which he had felt just before the moment of initiation. It indicated that momentarily he had risen above his petty self and had experienced a taste of expansion into the Higher Self.

What is possible for a few minutes, why should it not be possible for longer? In this way, he encouraged himself.

He repeated the *mantra* about five times before moving into a silent meditation for the rest of the hour. In between each *Hrim* he paused to give himself space to feel the level of his energy and to enjoy the experience of peace pervading his whole body.

* * *

The company of monks arrived at Pālītānā in time to celebrate the installation of the Āgamamandir with the Master. Within a few months of his *dikshā*, the Master told him, "You are here to have an intensifying time. You are not here for temporary peace or occasional 'high' meditations. You are meditating to transform your whole consciousness and penetrate the deepest part of life. Small things of mind take away your energy. Here you have the company of so many monks. They are with you for twenty-four hours a day. If you constantly talk with them, you will postpone your inward journey and dilute

your awareness. That is why I suggest that you take a vow of silence. It is an ancient Jain practice. The word *muni* derives from *mauna* meaning contemplation in silence. It also means oneness. Through silence you experience oneness. Your inner ears open and you dive into yourself. It will bring out such an energy that can burn many *karmas* hanging over you. It will not be easy. Are you willing to do it?"

Munishree was eager to accept the challenge. "I gladly surrender myself to your guidance."

From that moment, the vow of silence was taken. The Master explained, "Your silence is for the purpose of finding the meaning of life. Like Bhagwan Mahāvīr, you will keep silence to study the motives of your mind, and to purify your speech. Let it be a lock on the lips of excitement. It is not a rigid rule. A few words you will continue to speak. When you have questions we will talk with one another, and you will continue to study with Panniyas Shree Chandra Sāgarji. Whenever it is essential to speak, choose one word rather than many, or indicate your answer by writing it on a piece of paper. From time to time, I will call upon you to give a talk to the villagers, to share from your experience. But for the most part, you will be in *vachangupti*, keeping a watchful eye on all your thoughts, feelings, intentions, memories, dreams, and actions."

Munishree felt a new commitment to his inward journey. Keeping silence appealed to him, because he did not have to accept anyone's word on faith; he was eager to have his own experience and conduct his own self-inquiry. He bowed to his teacher and went to meditate in a quiet corner of the monastery where they were spending that night.

* * *

In and Out of Silence

We are all walking the path to inner perfection, to self-revelation. For some, it is a conscious journey, accelerated by

an inner longing for that ultimate peace which is our birthright as human beings. For others it is a more arduous struggle, in and out of life crises which mature and ripen the soul. Whatever the path, sooner or later, all must come to know their reality, their Self, luminous, blissful, radiant. This is the beautiful destination of all mankind, of all forms of evolving living beings. Let the delusions be gone! Let dry desires drop away like dead leaves! Let your journey awaken!

Within three months, Munishree Chandrabrah's father, Chhogalal, felt this inner longing to grow and go further.

"I am earning money for what?" he asked himself. From that moment, his journey took a forward stride. He went to Pālitānā to find his son and tell him his decision to take *dikshā* and become a monk along with him.

The new *muni* asked his father, "You are ready to give up everything? It is not just because I am a monk that you want to become one, is it?"

"No, my dear son, I feel the time has come. This is the time to see what my life is all about. My love for Bhagwan Mahāvīr's teachings knows no bounds. Now I want to study them in my experience, to feel them in depth."

The Master was delighted to accept him into the monkhood. At his *diksha*, he gave him the name Muni Chandrakant Sāgarji, which like Chandrabrah, was another beautiful version of "Ocean of the Beams of Moon."

Afterwards, the Master turned to young Chandrabrahaji, "Now you will have a great test."

Munishree asked, "I do not understand. What do you mean, dear Guru?"

"Now that your father is with you, you will create a new home, a comfortable nest. Your father and you will want to talk. So you will have to have even more silence with him than with anyone else! It will not be a barrier. It will help you both to grow in your own light at your own pace without holding each other back."

So father and son agreed to keep silence with one another.

They enjoyed each other's company in a fresh new way. They felt the joy of the itinerant life, the freedom to walk and chant, to meditate and rejoice in the delicate patterns of living

nature. The worries of everyday life fell away from them. If they received food, they ate; if no food came, they fasted. They neither went high nor low; they exulted in the feeling of inner balance and equanimity. They lived the life of no demand; as a result, they came to love one another deeply and unconditionally. The mutual reverence they experienced for each other helped them to grow and blossom as well as to confront and uproot habits and conditionings as they arose. Wherever they went, the villagers admired these two soul brothers and felt for them a great respect.

* * *

Munishree's silence was not without its moments of trial. At times, he noticed how the silence intensified his greatest inner enemy, anger. He had heard his teacher give many talks on anger, hatred, jealousy, and self-pity.

"When you give life to emotions, they become alive," Ānand Sāgarsuriji taught. "Without electricity, bulbs don't light up. In the same way, if you don't give energy to your negative emotions, they won't get fat. The less self-knowledge, the more fattening of the emotions."

There was one monk in their group who had a domineering personality. He was large in body and irreverent in attitude. He was senior to Munishree, because he had become initiated one year ahead of him. Munishree was trying to ignore him, but in his heart, he held resentment towards him. Although the silence helped him swallow his urge to argue with this monk, inside he was accumulating a mountain of straw. At any moment it would ignite.

That moment came on the last day of a nine-day fast, the Ambil fast, in which the monks abstained from green vegetables, butter, oil, salt, spices, and sweets. According to custom, on the tenth day, forty-eight minutes after sunrise, the monks could break their fast by reciting prayers and *mantras* before an ancient symbol called the *sthāpanāchārya*. The symbol which resembled a five-pronged pitchfork represented the five pure elements in the universe: the *Arihantānam* or Conquerors of all weaknesses; the *Siddhanam* or Perfect Souls, the *Ayariyānam* or Masters; the *Uvajjhāyānam* or

Teachers; and the *Sāhunam* or Saints. Bowing before the symbol was an act of renewed commitment and reverence for those who had traveled the Path first and had lit the way for others. These five were called upon as witnesses to the monks' work toward self-refinement and purification.

On this day, one by one, the monks completed their forty-eight minutes of silent meditation and came into the hall to wait their turn to recite the mantras before the *sthāpanāchārya*. Young Chandraprabh was waiting patiently while Chandra Sāgarji chanted before the symbol. All of a sudden, before his teacher had had a chance to complete the prayers, the monk for whom Munishree felt distaste came in the room, walked over to the *sthāpanāchārya*, and snatched it away to put it in front of himself.

Munishree was so offended that he forgot that he was in silence! He reacted abruptly to what he perceived as an act of flagrant disrespect to his teacher. He blurted out, "What are you doing? Don't you see our Guru has not completed his *mantra*? You can't take the symbol away like that," and he snatched it back out of his hands.

The fellow monk sneered at him and gave him a push on the shoulder. All Chandraprabhaji's suppressed feelings exploded. Anger blinded him and within seconds, they started to have a fist fight. Finally, young Chandraprabh grabbed him by both shoulders and threw him several yards away. He landed up against a wall, bruised. With that, the blows came to an abrupt halt.

Their teacher kept silence over the incident. He allowed his disciples the space to see what they had done.

Munishree Chandraprabh was horrified at the havoc his anger had caused.

I have changed the clothes but I have not changed my inside nature. Inside there is an angry wrestler. I am deceiving myself. It is a deception to act like a calm monk on the outside and to bum like a volcano on the inside.

The tears started flowing. In that flow, his consciousness was bathed and cleansed. He felt the burning congestion become extinguished.

उवसमेण हणे कोहं माणं मददवया जिणे ।

मायं चज्जवभावेण लोभं संतोसओ जिणे ॥ (द. ८:३८)

*Uvasamena hone koham mānam maddavayā jine,
Māyam chajjavabhāvena lobham santosao jine.*

“You remove anger with calmness.

You remove ego with humbleness.

You remove deceit with straightforwardness.

You remove greed with contentment.”

A voice from within reminded him of this powerful *mantra* his Master had taught him earlier.

Coming in touch with his navel center, the *Maṇipura chakra*, where his anger lodged, he realized why he had disliked his fellow monk for being domineering. It was because something in him had also wanted to dominate and control. Once Munishree Chandraprabh saw this weakness in himself, it occurred to him that he had been projecting it onto others. He was experiencing that truth which lay at the heart of Jain philosophy — that no enemies exist on the outside: all so-called outer enemies are really projections of our own inner world.

I don't have command over my own thoughts, my own dreams, even my anger, why should I try and have command over others? What right do I have to impose my will on anyone else? Instead, why should I not work towards controlling myself?

In this way, Chandraprabhaji started asking himself probing questions.

Do I have the seeds of violence nesting in my consciousness? What are they? Competitiveness, grudge, ill will. Why did these come on the surface?

Reviewing the recent episode, he saw that he had been offended by his fellow monk because instead of seeing the other as an individual, as a life, he had seen him as a usurper and as one who was insulting his Guru.

I put out an extra emotion, possessiveness. Like glue, I applied 'my' to the situation and turned the teacher into an

object. Then the object became more important than anybody's feeling and I was ready to fight for it. I acted like those misguided people who are ready to kill for land or for religious dogma or for a bunch of bricks and stones. I thought I was protecting my Gum, but instead I was fighting for my own sticky emotion.

He recalled a story of what had happened to Gandhiji one night while traveling in a third class compartment of a train. He had been sitting in the crowded dimly lit space perspiring along with the other people when his seatmate began singing a song in praise of Gandhi.

"Oh, hail to the great Mahatma, he is doing everything for our liberty!" the man sang out without realizing that the man whom he was praising in his song was sitting next to him. While he was singing, every once in a while, he would give the unrecognized Gandhi a jab with his elbow, indicating that he wanted more room for himself on the crowded bench.

Gandhiji had said nothing, but only thought to himself, "He is singing my song, but he is also giving me a sharp elbow! He cannot see me as an individual."

At dawn, when the train pulled into the station, the man looked out of his window and noticed a huge crowd of people waiting there. Then he caught sight of the features of this meek and bony man who had been his forbearing seatmate and whom he had been unable to see in the weak light of the overnight train.

"Oh my God!" he cried out when he realized his blunder. Immediately he bowed at Gandhiji's feet. "Forgive me, I always worship you in my dreams, but I did not know you in reality."

Munishree Chandraprabh drew a lesson from this recollection.

I too was coloring reality with my emotions. When I saw my fellow monk with these colored glasses, I was callous and unaware. Now can I not see him as he is, a fellow aspirant, a living life, the same as me? Can I not see him with compassion instead of judgment?

He remembered the words of Mahavir which the Master

had often quoted, “*Kshamā Virasya Bhūshanam — Forgiveness is the ornament of the brave.*”

What does that mean? That bravest is he who knows how to drop violence from his consciousness and forgive even his enemies.

Munishree made up his mind to take that step. He sought out the monk with whom he had fought, took his hand, and in silence, looked into his eyes. He gave him complete forgiveness and asked him to forgive him. It was an act of courage, a moment of trampling on the ego and opening himself to the flowing stream of *maitri*, amity and friendship.

In this way, he brought the incident to a close and removed the taste of animosity and bitterness which had taken hold of his consciousness. He made up his mind to start giving space to all.

If others want to push or grab, let them. I will not stand in their space. Let me be with myself. That is why I am here, to give space to everyone, including myself. Without space, how can anyone grow?

* * *

He went to his Master for guidance. “Guruji, I want to be rid of anger once and for all. It is a thorn in my consciousness.”

“Sometimes it takes another thorn to remove the first thorn,” the Master answered. “Your fellow *muni* has helped you remove the thorn. He has become your guru in this case.”

Munishree nodded.

His guru continued, “Moreover, you had a *karmic* debt with him. Now it is over.”

Together they recalled one episode from the life of Mahāvīr. One day a cowherd had asked Mahāvīr to watch over his cows while he went into the village. Since Mahāvīr was keeping silence, he neither accepted nor refused, so the man assumed that he had accepted to guard his cows from thieves. When the man returned in a few hours, one cow was missing.

“You thief!” he accused Mahāvīr and started striking him with a stick.

Mahāvīr remained in *ahimsā*, in silence. A few minutes later, the cow wandered back from where it had been, and the

cowherd saw he had been wrong. Even when he stopped being angry at Mahāvīr, Mahāvīr did not react. He knew that there had been a *karmic* debt between them from a past life and that now he had paid it. In his mind, he did not accuse the man for being ignorant or cruel. He remained in his equanimous center, unperturbed throughout.

The Master suggested, “Already your insights have taken you deeply into the heart of anger. Continue your investigations. Keep watching. Whenever anger comes, see from where it sprouts. Practice seeing it as nothing but a big bubble of air coming out from the mind. Bring it to the surface and watch it burst.”

Munishree deepened his investigation of anger. He became vigilant of the slightest pang of annoyance or irritation in his body. He saw how it generally originated with a feeling of heat in the navel. If it was allowed to continue, it would reach a boiling point, like water. He went to the root of the emotion. He made several discoveries.

Anger is nothing but a strong mechanism of survival which is inborn in the very fabric of this human body. It is an impulse which has been carried from lifetime to lifetime. It's part of the legacy of my animal nature. For an ant about to be deprived of his sugar, it takes the form of biting. For a bee about to be robbed of his honeycomb, it is stinging. For some human beings, anger takes the route of tears or escape. For others, like me, it jumps into fight.

It sprouts from frustration. When I want to get something and I'm thwarted in my attempt, I am frustrated, and whoever is in my way becomes my enemy. It's like being hungry when the door to the kitchen is locked. The person who has the keys turns into the foe. It is nothing but wrong perception — seeing through the distorted lens of need and greed.

But anger means himsa, violence, the desire to kill. And I am on the path of ahimsā. I have a choice. I am not an animal. I can transcend this tendency. Why should I condemn myself to the prison of instinctive consciousness and automatic conditioned reactions?

When he talked this over with his Master, he was pleased. “Yes, that is the secret, to remind yourself, constantly and

consistently, of why you are here, to lift yourself from lower to higher, to prevent any outer influence or inner habit from disturbing your peace and blinding you to the blessings of the universe.”

After a period of silence together, he added:

“But most of all, to remove ill will, you learn to love yourself. To dissolve anger and guilt, you forgive yourself. To put a stop to destructiveness toward yourself or toward anyone else, be forever gentle with yourself.”

Munishree became inspired. “If men could carve beautiful sculptures out of stone, why should I not carve a beautiful Self of love out of my life?”

“Yes, my dear disciple,” the Master smiled upon him, “You will do it. You are doing this now.”

From this point onwards, Munishree noticed that anger never again took hold of his consciousness. He had penetrated its facade; it lost its purpose, its intensity. He had learned how to master this powerful energy.

* * *

Purifying the Consciousness

A momentum was injected into the transformation of Munishree Chandraprabh’s consciousness by his following an ancient practice called *tapah*. This Sanskrit word takes its name from the intense heat applied by the goldsmith in removing dross from gold. When it refers to a spiritual discipline, it indicates a spiritual heat energy which helps in developing the divine qualities of the soul. In other words, the alloyed element or that which devaluates the consciousness is removed or burned out. Once a person’s motives are pure and innocent, he becomes what he truly is, solid gold, pure Self, unpolluted consciousness.

According to the Jain tradition, *tapah* is of two types, external and internal. The first includes those practices which

other people can observe, while those of the second kind are experiential, not noticeable to the outer eye.

Young Munishree experimented with both kinds in order to keep his body, senses, and mind clean, and to strengthen his power to burn away any weakness, delusion, distraction or fear.

One form of external *tapah* which he and his father engaged in was accepting voluntarily physical hardship with a positive cheerful spirit. At one time, they decided to stay at Pālītānā for four months in order to observe *navvānu* — the practice of ascending Mount Śatruñjaya ninety-nine times. To some, this might have appeared to be a rigorous discipline in the hot and humid weather. But as Munishree Chandra-prabh discovered, all *tapah* depended on one's attitude. They had enthusiasm to climb. They knew that it was healthy for their lungs and body limbs. They felt what a good feeling came from taking in fresh oxygen, building their muscles, and opening themselves to the pure vibrations of the sacred mountain. Every morning they prepared themselves for the climb. They anticipated it with joy for they knew it was hastening the shedding of their *karmas* and bringing them sound health. So a feeling of vigor and celebration accompanied them each morning as they observed this form of *tapah*. Each time they made the ascent, they felt more and more light, more and more blissful.

This was the positive attitude which Munishree took toward all forms of *tapah*. In this way, he avoided falling into the trap of asceticism or self-punishment. He always kept the purpose in mind and watched how the discipline made him stronger and healthier.

Fasting was another kind of external *tapah*. For the monks, fasts varied from one day to several weeks, but each one observed fasting according to his individual metabolism. At times, a fast meant renouncing certain kinds of food such as milk, butter, honey, green vegetables, and sweets. At other times, it meant to refrain from all kinds of food for a limited period of time and to drink only boiled water. Certain fasts recommended eating less than what was needed to assuage one's hunger, or choosing to limit one's intake to only one

meal a day or to only one or two varieties of food a day. For some, it meant to fast without water for several days at a time. A number of devout laypersons used to fast every other day, and reserve the uneaten amount of food for the poor and starving. The main idea was to make a conscious effort to quieten the demands of the unrestrained senses and greedy mind, and to see the value in limiting one's need.

Munishree saw many positive aspects of fasting. First, it cleansed the body and sharpened the awareness. Fasting one's desire for food, he noticed, had a good effect on fasting one's craving for praise as well as the need to control others. But for him, the most valuable aspect was that by fasting one was giving the gift of fearlessness to the entire kingdom of living beings, including the plants. On the days in which he refrained from taking grains and green vegetables, he felt what joy it was to give all living forms a rest. This focus on loving all life turned fasting into a means to experience oneness with all.

Fasting was not a time to suffer and carry a long face! He liked the admonition, "When you fast, oil your face!"

A third form of external *tapah* was to live for a period of time in a lonely place, such as a cave or a mountaintop or a jungle, free from all distraction and disturbance. Munishree followed this practice from time to time for the purpose of deep introspection.

* * *

For him, the real essence of *tapah* came to be giving up selfishness, or fasting his personal desires in favor of another person or a higher purpose. To him, service was the most meaningful form of internal *tapah*. He never thought of it as an endurance test for self-salvation or spiritual gain, but always it came as a natural outgrowth of his love for those who inspired him and out of his compassion for all life. He served his fellow monks by collecting alms for them when they were tired. He gave them a massage when they were ill. He took over their small chores if they were unable to carry them out. In doing all this, he was completely unaware of any particular virtue. This natural joy in being of help to someone was another form of internal *tapah*, namely, to renounce all feelings of "I" and

“mine,” to give of oneself without expecting any reward or credit.

Munishree made a habit of always giving first preference to someone else. In that way, he transformed work into a divine service. He felt the effects of service as a burning out of the ego and a purification of his heart. He served his father by complying gladly to whatever he asked of him.

Each day after receiving alms, sponging their bodies, and taking a short rest, the monks would be available to the villagers for advice and help. Later they would give darsan to a large gathering of the people. *Darsan* carries the special meaning of giving or receiving a vision of divinity. It was sharing in a unifying experience. The guru or one of the monks would lead a meditation, chant sacred *mantra*, or give *pravachana*, a talk in which the people would experience directly the insights and pure vibrations. After the people had had a chance to eat dinner and complete their evening tasks, a final *darshan* was offered outside under the natural light of the moon and stars. Though electricity was sometimes available, it was not used, out of respect for the life of insects who would have flown into it and burned.

* * *

Sitting Close to the Master

Little by little, silence taught Munishree supreme patience with himself and others. The mindmade differences between him and other forms of life began to melt away. The tendency to refute what another was saying was quelled. The rebellious mind drowned itself willingly in the fathomless well of silence. Silence became a beautiful means for him to empty the mind and open the heart. Once he made a spacious roominess inside, he made his vessel worthy to receive the nectar of wisdom. That was one of the first lessons his Master gave.

“Empty yourself and clean your vessel. Without first clean-

ing your vessel, whatsoever is poured in will become mixed up, polluted. The purest of milk will not be potable in a dirty glass. It is a question of cleansing, purifying, readying the inner world to receive the best.”

There are as many paths of self-refinement and preparation as there are individuals. All the trainings Munishree received were designed to cleanse the senses, purify the speech, and refine the mind. In particular, he followed three major steps: *upanishada* — sitting close to the master and learning from his exemplary life, *upāyoga* — becoming aware of how to live in awareness of life in the present moment, and *upāsanā* — memorizing and absorbing the essential meaning of ancient stanzas and utterances. These steps helped him to peel away layer after layer of illusions, burdens, subtle desires.

The process of training was both gradual and direct. It was intensified by his experiencing it all in silence. It was a process which resorted neither to extreme methods of breathing nor distorted attitudes toward the objective world. It neither despised nor praised; it neither rejected nor idolized.

Upanishada means to sit close to the teacher. It is not an attitude of worship; rather, it is an attitude of reverence and inspiration. The student stays in the company of one who has emancipated from the lower self. He derives constant inspiration from his life.

Since initiation, Munishree had been accepted into the Master’s inner circle. He had been leading the itinerant life side by side with him. In this way, he was under his watchful eye and loving guidance twenty-four hours a day. At the same time, he was able to witness how each of his Master’s actions and words were permeated with the beautiful fragrance of awareness of life.

He observed the compassionate way in which his guru communicated, with a word or a gesture or a loving look. He noticed the care he took when he ate his meals, cleaned his bowl, or sipped tea. He admired the natural way in which he took rest, breathed deeply, and did *yoganidra*, the sleep in which only the body was inert while the consciousness was in an alert state of awareness. He experienced the deep peace and bliss emanating from his guru when he meditated. His

teacher's life became an open book from which he learned to live in reverence and awareness, inspired to live in contact with the world but not bound by it.

* * *

As Munishree's love for his teacher grew, he wondered whether he was creating too great an attachment to him. Soon after initiation, one of the main *bhāvanās* or reflections the monks were given to ponder was called *asarana*, the unprotected state. His guru taught, "See that whatever you are leaning on is unable to protect you. People and things are ever-changing, ever-moving. How can you depend upon them? They are castles in the sand."

So Munishree meditated on attachment, on dependency.

I have renounced home, possessions, worldly achievement. I am not attached to food or comfort. When I disconnect from everything, what is left? My memories. I am clinging to my past. What if I let them go too? There is my father. I love him more than anyone in the world. Without him, what would I do? Life would be a void. There is my love for my Master. Is this connection an attachment? Must I let it go too?

He went to his teacher, "What about my attachment to you, Guruji? Do I have to give that up also?"

The Master answered, "Teacher is not an attachment. He is your inspiration. He is the powerhouse. In order to light your light, you must have continuous connection with the source of electricity. When the time comes, you are your own powerhouse. Then there is no more need. In the meantime, you keep this model in your heart. Guru is called death, he removes all the clutter, all the lesser demands, all the old dependencies.

"And you must know, the relationship of master and student is undying, it is the pure relation of soul to soul. That is not attachment, it is reality. It is *nitya*, permanent. It is *sharana*, your inner protection in this world of change."

At another time, he explained to his student,

"When a man goes to a doctor for some help to relieve constipation, what does the doctor do? Gives medication. The patient may protest, 'Already there is too much stuff in my

intestines. How can I add another thing?’

“The doctor explains, ‘Yes, but when you take my medication, it works like this. Along with the sticky residue, the medication itself is flushed out. Nothing will remain and you will feel free.’

“The guru is your medication. He helps you remove your debris! Once it is gone, you are no longer stuck to him either!”

Munishree laughed.

How light he is, my Master, how down to earth! He takes the part of a guru, but he remains free like air, unattached to the role he is playing.

This lightheartedness was evident on many occasions.

Once the Master asked his student to walk on his back, for his muscles were sore.

“How can I walk on my teacher? It is an act of irreverence!” Munishree exclaimed.

The Master was amused, “Yes, but not to obey teacher is also an act of irreverence! After all, it is the need of the body for massage, not the claim of the ego for false respect!”

* * *

The departure of his loved ones remained foremost in Munishree’s mind. The uncertainty he felt at the prospect of the departure of his father and his master disturbed his peace and pressed him to meditate often on the very thing of which he was afraid.

The Āchārya gave many ways to meditate on this. Once he told him to go into another room and meditate for twenty-four minutes on his teacher. When the time was over, he asked him, “Well, where was your teacher while you were meditating?”

“You were in another room!”

“Yes, departure is nothing but a change of rooms. When I go, it will be a little ahead of you. One goes first, the other follows: in the end, they meet. Where can we souls go? The whole universe is meant for our evolution.”

Sometimes his master would take him to the temple and they would meditate together on the symbolic meaning of a candle.

“Know the nature of the wax, to melt and move downward. That is body. Know the nature of the flame, to move upward and merge into the element of fire. That is you, your life. One helps the other continue its journey. While they are together, do not despise one and glorify the other. Take care of body. It is your living temple, a *premamandir*, a temple of love. It is the best vehicle to take you to Enlightenment.”

He told him to meditate on the deathless state. “There is no death. Mahavir never even used the word ‘death’ in all his talks. There is only the ageless deathless state. Until you experience that, you will remain vulnerable to fear, doubt, and limitations.”

Munishree meditated on his father.

His body will go, but our connection will remain. We are investing in that which cannot die. Each time we walk, eat, meditate together in awareness, we are adding to our unity. Out of this present, the future is born.

He applied these insights to himself.

What about me? I also will go. Am I ready? If I had to depart today, would I feel I had fulfilled my life and found the answer to my quest? No! But I am using every moment to move towards that. I am sure the answer will come. I am not looking back.

Munishree saw that all the great masters had found the answer by going inside. Step by step, he went deeper into himself to know that which could only be known when mind and senses were quietened.

His Master always said the right thing at the right time to inspire him.

“You cannot find without merging. When you merge, you really find. Ask yourself, ‘What stops me from merging?’ Ultimately you have to give up everything. Why not have that experience now while you are alive? Why wait until the end of the journey?”

Munishree saw that if he had to depart without experiencing this, then this was the real loss.

If willingly I give up now what in the end I have to leave behind anyway, then that surrendering becomes the true gain.

All the teachings, inspiring words, *mantras* were like an

elevator. They lifted him to that height where there were no words. Each step brought him closer to that which was nothing but pure life. Though he could not maintain an uninterrupted state of joy and peace, he experienced it in glimpses. With each glimpse, he understood in his experience the meaning of merging.

The drop is not different from the ocean. If I try and hold onto my drophood, I am vulnerable to being dried up by the sun at any time! When I jump into the ocean, I gain the whole ocean!

* * *

Once his Master had a fever. That day he decided to take only tea or juice. Munishree went to get tea for him from the woman nearby who loved to offer food to the monks. When he returned with the tea, he watched his teacher drink it with the same composure and pleasant smile that was ever lighting up his face.

Within five minutes the woman who offered the tea came rushing up to the *dharmaśala*, calling out, "Wait! Oh, forgive me! I made a mistake. Instead of putting sugar in the tea, I put salt. When I drank the tea which was left in the pot, I noticed it. The salt and sugar containers are right next to one another and look so much alike. Oh, what a terrible mistake!"

Munishree told her, "It is over now. Never mind about it. I will ask the Acharya a little later."

He went to his teacher and asked, "Sir, have you noticed when you drank the tea that it had salt in it instead of sugar?"

His teacher smiled, "Do you think I did not notice?"

"Why did you not tell me? I could have gone out for fresh tea."

"Well," he answered cheerfully, "sometimes, I have to see how this salt tastes! Every day I drink with sugar, so today I had the privilege of a change of taste! And it was a small mistake. There was no need to make the woman feel guilty for it. After all, every day she offers tea. Can I not discount the one time she forgot what she was doing? Why not remember instead the hundreds of times she gave me service?"

Munishree was moved by his teacher's generous

approach. He took it into his own life and practice.

This is a beautiful example for me. It will help me keep balance and feel compassion. Instead of holding a grudge and remembering someone's mistake, let me forget the mistake and remember only the good service. What a perfect way to keep the consciousness flowing and clear!

* * *

At times Munishree felt that he could not follow certain of the monks' rules even though they had been sanctified by centuries of tradition. The first instance came in his first year as a monk. The *munis* were required to avoid the excessive use of water, for in water, life abounded. Through its use, myriads of tiny organisms would be harmed and deprived of life. That resulted in the rule that monks were not allowed to bathe. To clean themselves, they were to use a wet cloth and do the best they could to remove dirt.

After deep thought, young Chandraprabh presented his view to his teacher, "Man cannot live in this body without doing some violence to life. It is inevitable, and in my heart, I long to minimize my part in it. But in order to maintain my body in health, I need to keep it clean. Without a healthy, clean body, it cannot reflect a good image of myself. To me cleanliness is more important than following the rule prohibiting bathing. If it means my having to leave the monkhood in order to do this, I will do it, though I would prefer to remain."

Munishree observed his Master's flexible manner of thinking. He was willing to see his young disciple's point of view. It was *anekantauada* in action, relativity in thinking. If non-bathing was distracting his student from his path to Self, then it was not conducive to his growth. The Master was not one to impose rules in a strict way upon his disciples. Therefore, he decided that it would be all right for Munishree to use one bucketful of water each day, provided it was used carefully and sparingly.

Later Munishree happened to read this story.

Once there was a disciple who went to the well to draw water for his Master's bath. When he poured the water into his Master's bucket, he saw that it was too much. So he spilled the

rest of the water out without thinking. His Master saw, but it was too late to stop him. He admonished his disciple, "Why did you throw out the water?"

"It was too much for your bath, Sir," he answered.

"Yes, but what about the plants? There is always some thirsty life around. You could have given a life something to drink instead of throwing it away on the barren soil. Now go and meditate on each drop of water. See how precious it is."

The student took these words seriously. He spent hours and days meditating on them. At last, he went to the teacher. "Now I am no longer this name you gave me. I am Drop of Water. I am a precious drop of energy. Not a drop is to be wasted in this process of life. I am using each drop to guide my life to the ocean, to my destination." The teacher's words had penetrated his consciousness and transformed his life. Now he saw the meaning of preserving and not wasting water, energy, life.

The young Munishree understood better why monks were careful to conserve water in order not to harm a life unnecessarily. Whenever he used the water for his personal cleanliness, he remembered this story and took only that which he needed, not a drop in excess. In the same way, he came to use his energy wisely, carefully, for the preservation of life and for directing himself to the answer to his quest.

* * *

Once the Master admonished the monks for a small transgression. That night he got up and shook his students.

"Wake up!"

"Master, what is it?"

"I could not sleep! I want to do *ālochana*."

Usually it was the student who confessed a mistake before the guru. This time it was the guru who wanted to bow before his students.

"For what do you want to do *alochana*, Master?"

"I used harsh words today. I chastised you."

"But what you said was good for us."

"It was good for you, yes, but not for me! I could not get rest! I must ask your forgiveness."

Students and Master forgave one another. There was harmony. A deep feeling of oneness, of love united them. Munishree felt once again the nobility and beauty in his Master.

Here is a genuine person, no holy humbug, a man of truth and outright honesty.

* * *

When the Āgamas were printed on paper, they were able to be distributed to the monks to learn by heart. One day the Master gave his students a challenge. "I will give each of you one hundred twenty stanzas to learn by heart. You have three hours. At the end of three hours, the one who comes closest to knowing them all will receive this Āgama-Mañjushā."

The Āgama-Mañjushā was a special box in which to hold the Scriptures or Agamas. Though the monks were supposed to have dropped greed from their consciousness, each one wanted to be the winner.

During the three hours, they each sat in different places in the same room and concentrated on memorizing the one hundred twenty stanzas.

How could they remember so many stanzas? The amount of interest and love they had for them determined how well they could remember. It happened that Munishree came in first, reciting without mistake one hundred ten of the one hundred twenty stanzas. He was the recipient of the beautiful Āgama-Mañjushā. He was so happy to be the winner. After all, it was an honor to be the one who recited the Scriptures which his teacher had taken seven years to have carved in marble.

But by evening one of Munishree's closest friends, a sincere student and diligent monk, was depressed. Though his memory was equally sharp and his intelligence equally high, he had lost faith in himself.

"Come, let us go for a walk," Munishree gestured to him.

"No," he answered, "I am not in the mood. I have nothing. I realize I am worthless."

"Why do you think in that way?"

"I could not remember even eighty stanzas and you re-membered one hundred and ten."

Now Munishree saw why he had lost reverence for his own Self. He stopped to question himself.

What shall I do to lift him up? My effort has put him down. If being the winner has put him down, I might have ignited the fire of jealousy in other hearts as well. What to do with that glory which carves pain in somebody else's life?

So he took the box and went straight to his teacher to give it back.

"Guruji, please take it back. It does not give me any knowledge. It only gives me ignorance to put others down. It is closing my eyes and making me blind in ego."

He made up his mind then and there not to enter any competition in the future, for he saw how it made the ego swell and create inferiority complex in others.

The next day his friend came over to him, "Why have you given the box back to our teacher?"

"Any victory which makes you down has no meaning. My need to win did not help me to see this until now."

That day his teacher came over to him and gave him a big hug. He told him, "That was my ignorance to put you in this competition. Even the teacher can make a mistake and create a competition among the students. What we have to see is that our gift of knowledge not be a cause to tears but a means to wipe away tears."

Again Munishree was in admiration before his teacher, for he saw that he knew how to admit when he had made a mistake. From that moment, Munishree observed that one of the best results of his silence was knowing how to use language not to hide but to reveal the truth. From the time he ceased to work at camouflaging his anger, ego, and greed, these three began to drop from his consciousness. He made a number of observations.

Anger, ego, and greed were helping me protect my lie, my camouflage. I was afraid to see my lurking greed and subtle ego. For a long time, even silence helped me cover up what was there. Now that I don't care about protecting my mask, I can drop it. I can feel the bricks and plaster of my inner structure fall apart and leave me in a beautiful roomy space.

After that, he started to feel a new power and strength.

In Awareness

The second and perhaps most significant way Munishree came in closer touch with himself was through *upayoga*, the yoga of awareness of life. *Up* means very close, and *yoga* means unity. *Upayoga* means to stay in close unity with your own Self and to cultivate reverence for life. It is the king of the yogas, because all of the other yogic disciplines are absorbed into this one. *Upayoga* requires vigilance. It is a practice in which you watch closely each thought you send out, each word you utter, each movement you make. The idea behind it is this: the more you scrutinize your motives, words, and actions, the less likely you are to do harm to another. The less harm you cause, the less pain and suffering come to you. Once you cease once and for all to sow the seeds of negative events, the less you are bound to the cycle of birth and death which thrives on unawareness. Little by little, *upayoga* leads you closer and closer to living in ecstasy and peace with yourself and with all.

Munishree practiced this philosophy in detail based on the following stanza from one of the *Agamas* called the *Dasavaikali Sutra*:

In it, the disciple questions the Master:

कहं चरे कहं चिट्ठे कहमासे कहं सए ।
कहं भुंजंतो भासंतो पावं कम्मं न बंधई ॥ ?

*“Kaham chare kaham chitthe kaham āse kaham saye?
Kaham bhuñjanto bhāsanto pāvam kammam na bandhayi?”*

“How must I walk? How must I stand? How must I sit? How must I sleep? How must I speak and eat so that I commit no harm, accumulate no new karmas, and cannot be bound by anything, thus ending the cycle of birth and death?”

The Master answers in the following way:

जयं चरे जयं चिट्ठे जयमासे जयं साए ।

जयं भुंजतो भासतो पावं कम्मं न बंधई ॥ ?

“Jayam chare jayam chitthe jayam āse jayam saye
Jayam bhuñjanto bhāsanto pāvam kammam na
bandhayi.”

“When you walk, walk with awareness. When you stand, stand with awareness. When you sit, sit with awareness. When you sleep, sleep with awareness. When you speak and eat, do so with awareness so that you cannot commit any harm, you accumulate no new *karmas*, and are not bound by anything, thus ending the cycle of birth and death.”

* * *

Munishree took each line into his meditation and into his living.

When I walk, I will walk with a beautiful awareness. Walking with carefulness, I will not fall down or trample on any living creatures. Let me always walk with a purpose, knowing beforehand where I am going and why.

Munishree took time to walk alone in silence. He came to enjoy deeply the gifts of nature and his own company. He felt the living touch of fresh earth under his bare feet. He meditated on the miracle of that soil from which the plants and trees sprouted and blossomed. He was in tune with nature’s voice, feeling the rhythm and harmony of the seasons. He practiced moving in that space of awareness in which he replaced tension with inside relaxation and felt each movement of his limbs to be an experience in lightness and joy.

The *upāyoga* of walking gave him another insight. He saw that like a child learning how to walk, he was learning to get up and move onward. The life of a monk was teaching him the art of not clinging — to the past, to people, to places, to shortcomings, thought forms, or mistakes. Through this awareness of walking, he felt himself to be an ‘eternal traveler’ moving closer and closer to the unknown, to the mystery of life and to

the transformation beyond death which was at the heart of his deepest question.

* * *

The second lesson in *upayoga* was “*Jayam chitthe* — when you stand, stand with awareness.” Munishree learned to stand in balance, with the spine erect so that he could feel his energy moving in an uninterrupted flow from the lowest vertebra to the crown of the head. All the nerves of our body are connected along our spine at seven centers or vortices of energy. When we stand straight, we are opening these centers and removing the blocks. There are a number of instances in the Jain tradition of the great prophets meditating in the standing posture. Munishree practiced this meditation. His teacher told him, “In standing, you are presenting an image of yourself to yourself. Let it be a noble image, no less than divinity itself. Lift yourself to the level of the *Arihanta*.”

So Munishree focused on becoming in tune with the Conquerors of inner weakness. “*Aum Namo Arihantānam*,” he repeated, “I bow to the Conquerors in order to conquer myself.” He felt himself standing as tall as a tree, remembering that in the womb of the tiny seed lay the promise of the mature and mighty tree. In this posture, he meditated on awakening the seed of potentiality, to remove it from slumber, from *avidya* or ignorance. He saw his human form as a means to take him higher and higher until a point was reached in the meditation where he felt *kayotsarga* or the melting of the form. In tune with his noble Self, with the Conqueror within, he felt weightless and light, buoyant and blissful. Experiencing this experience, he came closer to believing in his inherent perfection.

* * *

Munishree meditated further. *Jayam āse. When I sit, I will sit with awareness.* Before sitting down on any seat or on the earth, he examined it first so as not to harm any living being by mistake. In the sitting posture, he focused on bringing his breathing, his heartbeats, and his pulses into harmony. Then he attuned himself to the purpose of any action he was en-

gaged in while sitting. Whether he chose this posture for meditating, for breathing exercises, for eating, or for communicating, he formed the habit of keeping his spine straight.

The body is nothing but a series of habits, and poor habits can be unlearned by replacing them with good ones. Habits follow one another like a chain, so it is to my benefit to cultivate the right ones consistently, in a sequence.

* * *

The fourth lesson was “*Jayam saye* — when you sleep, sleep with awareness,” in a state of deep peace and bliss. Before taking rest for the night, Munishree followed the Jain practice of clearing out from the mind any negative imprints left there during the day. It is a form of *pratyahara* or withdrawal of the senses from the world, called *praktikramana*, withdrawal into one’s inner being in order to examine one’s mental slate.

Reviewing the day, he would ask himself, “Have I harmed anyone in my thoughts? Have I harmed anyone in my words? Have I harmed any life in my actions? Did I encourage any harshness or violence in myself or others? Did I impose my thoughts on another? Did I try to manipulate anyone? Was I greedy today? Whatever I spoke, was it the truth? Did I take anything that was not offered to me first?”

If he had indulged in any unfriendly, critical, or selfish thought, he recognized it to be a form of *himsa* or mental violence. If he had used a harsh word, it was a form of verbal violence. If he had stepped on insects, seeds, grass, or green leaves, he acknowledged the carelessness and became alert not to repeat it. By asking himself these probing questions, he reinforced the five vows he took at his ordination.

The way of *upayoga* taught him how to erase any *karmas* which had accumulated during the day through *pramāda*, neglect. It was the way of forgiveness:

He recited the sacred stanza of forgiveness:

खमिअ खमाविअ मइ, खमह सव्वह जीव निकाय ।
सिद्धह साख आलोयण, मुज्झ वइर न भाव ।।

*“Khamiya khamāviya mai khamaha
Savvaha jiva nikāya*

*Siddha sākhā āloyena
Mujja vaira na bhāva.*”

“I forgive all souls,
May all souls forgive me,
May the *Siddhānam*, the Perfect Souls, be my witnesses
That truly I bear no animosity toward any living being.”

Whenever there was any friction between him and someone else, Munishree would go to the person and ask his forgiveness. If, however, a memory reminded him of an unresolved situation, he would do one of two things. If he could locate the person, he would write him a letter to clear the matter and offer or ask for forgiveness. If the person was not available, he would meditate on the person and send him good will and forgiveness vibrations. In this way, he could start the night afresh in a clear state of consciousness.

* * *

For example, one night he remembered a small incident that had happened the year he went to work for Gandhiji in Calcutta. At that time, he had had a small trunk of belongings from his college days which he had left in safe keeping with a college friend in Bombay. In it were the accessories of his youth, an English suit, a camera, some colognes and rings collected over the years.

Once he had become fully engrossed in the Freedom Movement, he had had the idea to sell his belongings and give the money to the cause for which he was working. So when he passed through Bombay again, he had asked his friend to return the box he had left with him.

“What box are you talking about?” his friend had asked him, pretending to know nothing about it. Rup had seen his pretense and at first he felt himself getting tempted to confront his friend with being a liar. But having been under the guiding influence of non-violence, something in him stopped him from reacting. He had spent a few minutes talking it over with his friend, without quite reaching the verge of arguing when he had had an insight.

Being angry, I am not going to convince him that he is lying to me. There is no proof to show him that he has my things. Never mind. I have lost my belongings, but why should I lose my peace along with them? At least let me keep my balance.

In the end, Rup had shaken his friend's hand and told him, "All right, it happened more than a year ago. I must have forgotten."

"Yes," his friend had answered, "you must have forgotten where you put it."

"So," Rup said before going on his way, "I am glad not to quarrel with you. *Khusha Raho* — be happy!"

In this way, he had untied himself from the incident and freed himself from the animosity connected with it.

But now in his meditation as a monk, he recalled the incident, and a leftover feeling of shock at having been betrayed by a good friend crept over him. He realized he hadn't completely rid himself of feeling some connection with that past incident after all. So he took care to recite the forgiveness stanza until he felt his whole consciousness to be filled with the soothing vibrations of forgiveness. Then he focused on his friend and said, "I wish you well. I forgive you beyond the shadow of a doubt. May you find your real Self some day."

A few months later, this same college friend found out where he was and came to the monastery with a few of his belongings and some rupees.

Munishree welcomed him. "You have come here? I was recently thinking of you and sending you vibrations for your peace and happiness."

"I want to give you back your things and some rupees for what I used up. Before you came to claim your belongings, one day I was moving from one house to another when I saw your bag, opened it, and came under the temptation to sell your costly things. A few of them I kept for myself. Now I can't live with myself until I pay you back."

Munishree told him, "Never mind. I never wanted any of those things for myself. I had only wanted to sell them and use the money for a good cause. Now you can take them and sell them and give the money to some worthwhile place. But

tell me, how is it you decided to come and reveal the truth to me?"

His friend confessed, "Your approach was always penetrating me. It created a different atmosphere. Your willingness to drop the matter and stay calm even though you lost your costly things gave a different example before my eyes. I saw you in a new light. That made me repent and see myself. Then recently I felt you so strongly that I had to find you and get rid of that part of me which is low. I want to be like you."

Munishree held his friend's hand. "Thank you. You have done a good thing. Now you are free from guilt and shame. I forgave you long ago, and admire you for taking the courage to come and speak frankly to me here."

His friend went away happy, light, and unburdened, and Munishree marveled at the power of positive vibrations.

Freeing myself, eventually my friend came to understand freedom. So if you are free, sooner or later, you are able to free someone else. This universe works so precisely. It is wonderful.

This awareness of the importance of forgiveness made the *upayoga* of sleep meaningful to him. When he had cleared his mind before sleep, he enjoyed the depth and peace of *yoga-nidrā*, and those hours in which both body and mind were in deep slumber became fewer, yet more concentrated and intense. That happened when he no longer had to work out restlessness and unresolved problems in dreams. His dreamless sleeps were deeply restful and rejuvenating.

Sometimes, in a quiet state of *yoganidrā*, something would dawn upon the surface of his mind. In his third year of the monkhood, someone gave him a gift on his birthday. He did not have a chance to open the present before he went to bed, but he had the thought, "I wonder what is in the package." During the night, his mind's eye opened the package, saw that it was a book, and read certain pages. The next morning he got up and opened the gift. He saw exactly what he had visualized in his mental film. It was a small glimpse, but he realized that when the mind is uncluttered, the unknown reveals itself and becomes known.

* * *

This small incident triggered his memory of a childhood glimpse. One afternoon when Rup had come home from school, he had gone to his desk and studied his lessons. It had been a hot summer's day and it had been difficult for him not to doze off to sleep. He had noticed by the clock on the wall that it was four o'clock. Soon afterwards, he had put his head down and fallen asleep on the pages of his books.

When he had awakened, he had seen by the clock that one hour had already passed. He had felt more refreshed and ready to make more sense out of his lessons. But when he had picked up his book again, he had had the distinct sensation that he had already read it. Though his body had been in slumber, the witness within had been awake and had been going through the pages of the book. In that moment of picking up his book again, like a flash, he had recalled a series of mental images, succeeding one after another like a series of stills. In these images, he had pictured himself preparing this homework. He even had recalled the precise words on the pages.

At the time he had been momentarily puzzled, but he had not paid much attention to it. It had faded away quickly. But for a fleeting moment, he had been awakened to the fact that there was something in him beyond his mind and physical senses.

Now as a seeker whose main focus was on getting to know all aspects of his inner world, he asked himself the questions he hadn't known how to ask as a child.

Who was sleeping? Who was reading? Who is now remembering? If I was asleep, how could I have continued to read? Is there more than one of me? Which me was watching the dream? Was it really a dream or was it knowledge dawning on the screen of my undisturbed and uncluttered mind?

* * *

The upāyoga of sleep led Munishree into a study of dream and reality. He found that when his subconscious held onto resentment or fear, those particles in his mine would take a form and create a monster or an imaginary incident. These formations, he realized, were what most people call dreams or nightmares.

But when he had cleared his mental slate, an insight, an inspiring message, or foresight would come. This, he realized, is what was meant by premonition or intuition. It reflected the power of soul to assert itself and transcend all limitations of mind, time, and space.

When he experienced this state of receptivity and openness, at times he would catch a vivid glimpse in living color of a face or an event from his distant past or from his coming future. He began to discover that the sequential continuum we call events in time was accessible to his memory, for the soul is consciousness itself, the eternal witness capable of storing all the imprints of the past and of holding in a kind of blueprint or codified form all the future imprints. He found also that if his stomach was heavy from undigested food at night, his sleep would be punctuated by many many dreams. The vibrations of the food itself were the cause of the creation of mental formations.

He began to realize that he could observe and watch his dreams, thoughts, and emotions like a spectator in a theater. He experienced little by little what is called double awareness - to feel a feeling fully and to watch oneself feeling it at the same time. In this way, one could know simultaneously the condition one was in temporarily and the ultimate freedom one was in permanently. By identifying with his free soul, Munishree came to assert his power and discard anything which disturbed, invaded, or covered him.

This awareness brought him closer and closer to his life force. That is why *upāyoga* means the awareness of life, of that transcendent pulsating force which animates our form and makes us grow. From time to time, Munishree tasted the joy of immortality.

Before the moon and stars were thrown into the sky, I was there! Before the sun and all the planets appeared, I was there! Sat, Chit, Ananda — I am Indestructible Essence, I am Infinite Knowledge, I am Infinite Bliss! I was, I am, and I will be!

Each glimpse was momentary, but had its cumulative effect. Each helped him sluff off the old and give space to the new. Each deepened his understanding of life's meaning and his purpose in pursuing his quest. He still had a long way to go,

but fueled with faith in inner experience, he was ready to move forward into the unknown horizon.

* * *

The fifth lesson in *upāyoga* concerned awareness of eating. “When you eat, have the vibrations of *upayoga*. Eat with grace and ask yourself, ‘Why do I eat? Is it only to fill up the body or is it to nourish the body?’ Munishree thought this over. *We are nothing but vibrations. What we take into our body transforms into vibrations and affects our feelings, our speech, our health, and our communications. We absorb not only the food, but the vibrations of the one who cooked it as well. That is why I accept only unpolluted food and bless it as a means to turn my body into a living temple of light to serve all life.*

Munishree witnessed an example of this law of vibrations in his own group of monks. Once one quiet studious monk went to collect alms, ate his food, and immediately went to bed. At noon, he was still sleeping, so his teacher came and asked him, “Why are you sleeping now? It is noon.”

His student who was normally very pleasant and reverent in his manner answered gruffly, “I am tired. I want to rest for two or three more hours.”

His teacher thought, “He does not usually talk this way. Usually he gets sound sleep at night, not in the daytime.” So he addressed his student again. “In the daytime, you are sleeping four hours?”

The young monk became defensive, “You always find fault with me, Sir.”

Then his teacher knew what had happened. His student was under the influence of a different vibration.

So he asked, “Please tell me, from where did you collect your food this morning?”

“From this house down that street,” he answered.

So his teacher went to that house and asked the owner, “Please will you tell me from where you bought your grain?”

The owner admitted, “To tell you the truth, the priest at the local temple was selling the rice and fruit which people placed in front of the statues last week. He was selling it to the poor people at a cheaper rate and I thought, ‘Why should I not also

buy this rice at a cheaper rate and save some money?' Why do you inquire, Guruji?"

"My student is not keeping well today, so I thought it must have been the impact of the grain he received today. Please be careful of the quality of the food you buy and offer to your family as well as to the monks. It must be for your nourishment, for your healthy living life."

In this way, the Master discovered that not only was the student suffering from the heaviness of the inferior quality of stale rice, but also from the vibrations of greed which the rupee-pinching owner had experienced at the time of buying, cooking, and offering it.

Munishree learned to use the *upayoga* of eating as an occasion to watch closely which foods he could digest easily and which foods he could not. He observed the way in which his digestive and eliminative system worked until he saw the minute interrelationships among various parts of the body. He found that the system needed at least three hours of space between meals in order that all food be completely digested. He used the practice of fasting to cleanse the body and give the digestive system a rest.

* * *

The sixth lesson in *upayoga* was "*Jayam bhāsanto* — when you talk, watch your communication with awareness. Be aware of each thought before you verbalize it. Then no harsh or bitter word can pass from your lips. Use only those words which bring honor and glory to life. The words you use for others come back to you. If you want to know the noble or ignoble character of a person, only listen to his manner of speaking when he is in a mood to argue or fight."

In silence, Munishree watched the way in which people often exchanged only words without feelings. It was as if people interacted as strangers at the inn, meeting and parting without any deep connection. He was particularly aware of this, because in silence he had built up a great well of feeling and energy within. He had conserved so much energy which he normally would have expended in words that when he did emerge from silence, his words were accompanied by an

unusual potent vibration and forcefulness. At first he almost did not recognize his own voice. It felt like it was coming from the depths, and it gave him a new confidence in himself.

It was none other than the cultivation of *simhavrutti*, or the quality of the lion, as the ancients called it. It was the transformation of his self-image from a timid lamb to a fearless lion. From time to time, he was able to bring out this roaring quality. It was the special gift his teacher saw in him from the beginning — his capacity to speak from his heart and build a bridge between soul and soul with his eloquent and meaningful words. That is why the Master asked Munishree to break his silence to give talks to the villagers.

He made several observations to himself.

Words are my companions. They come from my feelings. They have energy, color, and the power to affect both the nerves and the emotions. With the right image, I can bring joy to someone's heart. The color will come on the cheeks. If I use the right word at the right moment, I can stir someone's emotion and bring a feeling of vibration. If I use the wrong word, it can cause someone to turn pale and feel shaken. So in my silence, I am going to learn each word all over again, select the right word, and before applying it to someone else, let me apply it to myself. Let me see how it tastes and sounds. If I feel a good vibration from the word, then others will too.

He discovered that the best time for people to keep silence was when they were angry or feeling superior to someone else or in a mood to crack jokes. In all three occasions, he noticed both in himself and in others the way words spoken in unawareness hurt others' feelings. He noticed how in silence the mind was sometimes tempted to voice out a subconscious need to put someone else down and pierce that person's joy. Any time this happened, he consciously cultivated the art of appreciation.

He liked to remind himself of the story of the poor monk who was unable to fast when all the other monks were fasting. The story went like this. The monk sat down to eat his rice while all the others were secretly gloating that they could fast so many days, but that he could not. They exchanged gossip with one another, "See him? Not even on this special festival

day does he stop eating! What a glutton!"

But the monk went on eating one grain at a time in complete awareness. With each grain, he meditated on each of his fellow monks, appreciating them one by one for their ability to fast and keep such a strict discipline. One by one he thought about them, saying to himself, "How strong he is, how single-pointed and self-controlled he is!" He continued in this way until he had finished each grain of rice and had appreciated each one of his fellow seekers.

From a distance, his Master had been intuiting what was happening. Just as he took his last morsel, the Master came in the room and told his students, "Bow to his feet! He has become Enlightened." They were confused and surprised, but they did not dare to disobey their Master. So he told them, "While you were gossiping about him and making petty comparisons, he was appreciating all of your good points. By the time he took his last morsel, he became Enlightened!"

* * *

Munishree practiced *upayoga* daily in order for it to become second nature to him, an aware way of life. Still there were moments in which he felt discouraged. He did not see himself getting any closer to what he kept in the back of his mind as his goal — Enlightenment. Sometimes he became impatient with his progress.

"Guruji," he addressed his teacher, "It is already four years and I have not seen into the mystery of death. I have not found out where my loved ones went. I have not reached Enlightenment!"

The Master smiled, "When you feel your muscles contract, let them go! You are creating too much tension. Enlightenment is not far away, dear soul. It is closer to you than your own breath."

Munishree understood.

I have been trying too hard. Too much effort, makes the goal twice as elusive as before! Too much intensify clouds the awareness.

His teacher reminded him, "Mahāvīr said, 'Once one takes the first step to go there, one is already there.' You are already

there. Little by little you are catching up to where you are already!"

The Master continued, "This is the path in which haste is not possible. It takes years and years to grow an oak or a mango tree. It took Mahāvīr twelve and a half years to develop one hundred per cent awareness and understanding. What you need is deep conviction in the Self and in the method to reach that. Always be vigilant and you will see divinity dwelling inside the breath of your breath."

Munishree reflected. *Yes, I was in a hurry. A person who is in a hurry does not see. Always he keeps his eye far away. He does not see the ground on which he walks or the garden in which he moves. He does not look into the body in which he dwells nor does he see his own mind by which he thinks. I was in a state of delusion.*

Munishree felt his tension melt away and his vision expand with this meaningful interchange with his teacher. He began to feel a deep patience with himself. He saw that his growth was a process rather than a final goal. When he shifted his perspective from the distant goal, he stopped chopping his life into fragments, favoring this experience over that one. Likes and dislikes dropped down, and he cultivated a wholistic participation in life.

By keeping aware of the small moment to moment awareness, he sharpened his attunement to the deepest insights which flashed upon his consciousness at any time, in any place. He stopped his mind from classifying and categorizing these flashes of insight as culminating points or as indications that he was at last enlightened. Instead, he experienced them as sparks, as heights of vision in which his whole being felt united, in which his soul caught sight of its true Self. Each glimpse was perhaps a mini-enlightenment, but more important, it was leading him deeper and deeper into himself and closer and closer to that center where ecstasy and omnipresent life are continually felt. In these cumulative experiences, he was gaining a multitude of angles with which to view and respect his life.

He came to see that there was no true Enlightenment until he would have put an end to duality in his life. He wanted to

close the gap between moving in one direction and resisting it by moving in another direction. He wanted to feel he was living and speaking in harmony with his thinking. He saw, as Mahavir did, that still in certain places, people were preaching universal love and at the same time practicing animal sacrifices. He saw in the world around him the tremendous gulf which cavern-like lay between theory and practice, between soul and mind, between word and deed.

What others do, let them do. But I will not Hue by two standards, one for me, and one for other living beings. Does not all of life vibrate on the same frequency as my own? Let ahimsa guide me as I practice all the disciplines of yoga — upāyoga, hathayoga, bhaktiyoga, jñānayoga, karmayoga.

All the yogas became practical means for him to live in reverence for life. The Master always gave him a fresh approach with which to live the teaching in clarity, “Feel that whatever you are doing has to be done. It is urgent and vital to your growth. In the process, notice that what you do for yourself is benefitting someone else. That will become a bridge between life and life.”

* * *

Finally, the stanza on upāyoga concluded with the line,

“Pāvam kammam na bandhayi — in this way, you are not bound by any karmas, you are not governed by unfulfilled desires and unresolved problems, you are not sowing the seeds of leftover needs to form a new cycle of birth and death. All karmas are brought to an end and with that, rebirth.”

Munishree felt that upāyoga was truly a liberating awareness.

I can Hue in my body, with my feelings, with my thoughts, with the world at large without being bound by any of them. And if I Hue in hue, peace, joy, and awareness, why should I worry about what is to come? Tomorrow is a dream, today is a reality. Instead of living in dream, why do I not Hue my reality? Yes, upayoga is my reality, my divinity. Yes, it is closer to me than my own breath! It is my living life itself!

* * *

Meditating on the Teachings

Munishree Chandrababh Sagarji was undergoing a transformation. In the process, he made a wonderful discovery. He saw that all of the negatives in his mind and emotions were merely energies turned round in the wrong direction. By stopping and recognizing whatever condition he was in without running away from it, he found he could enact a change of direction. He could transmute any vibration into a positive energy. In this way, he melted, refined, transcended, or re-moved stumbling blocks in his consciousness. He now knew that the course of his life and growth was in his own hands. He gladly took this responsibility. It was none other than ex-periencing for himself the great hope inherent in Bhagwān Mahāvīr's teaching — that man is a living conscious energy and that this energy has the power to change anything in the material world.

The young *muni*'s relationship to the teachings he received, read, or heard was as internal as his relationship with his Master. All served as catalysts for his growth. He tested each truth on himself; nothing was accepted blindly. It was a process of absorption. Just as he was internalizing the beautiful presence of his teacher into his consciousness, so he soaked himself in the teachings, stanzas, poems, and stories of those prophets, seers, masters, and saints who had conquered their weaknesses and shared their insights with mankind.

He read from the Buddhist, Hindu, Yogic, Parsee, Christian, Jewish, and Islamic traditions as well. Some he could read in the original Sanskrit, Prakrit, Hindi, Kannad and English.

When a stanza rang true in his heart, he often felt it releasing something he had been holding inside. Anger fell away when he bathed his consciousness in the stanza of forgiveness. Like the hull of a flowerbud, his fear began to drop as he opened his heart to love and lived the teachings of *ahimsa*. Everything he learned and everyone he met helped him thin out the shell of the ego until he would become one with his own soft reality.

Munishree noticed that ruminating the teachings followed the same law as that which turned herbs into a paste in Ayurvedic medicine. The process was one of constant friction. Many people took turns grinding and rubbing the powder until the molecules of the herb were broken down and it was transformed into a potent medicine. It was called *bhasma*, powerful, because the power of the atom had been brought out. The more hours it was subjected to this grinding, the more potent. Munishree discovered that meditating on the truths which came from the depths of someone's inspired heart helped him bring out his energy. In this way, he collected the strength needed to grind what was on the periphery of his consciousness until it was transformed.

One phrase from the ancient masters spoke directly to his discovery. "Believing in your perfection becomes a cause to your perfection." Munishree was elated by this insight.

People who call themselves sinner are stuck there. If I see myself imperfect, limited, conditioned, how can that become a cause to my Enlightenment? That is why Mahāvīr said, "Take time and remember what you are." Concentrating on my inner value makes my worthiness come out. Meditating on my life makes my energy emerge.

Achārya Ānand Sāgarsuriji used to say this in another way, "Always internal thoughts are externalized." The young *muni* reviewed the truth of that statement in his life. He saw that when his mind dwelled on thoughts of death and loss, his living felt bleak, empty, and meaningless. He would be prone to fear and nightmare. At such times, he was governed by the obstacles in his mind instead of being in a position to govern them. They were like ashes covering his flame of knowledge. If he continually stirred them up, he gave them energy and power over him.

Now with the help of *upanishada*, *upayoga*, and *upāsana*, he was coming out from feelings of lack and loss to feelings of plenty. He was moving from what he called "poverty consciousness" to "prosperity consciousness." Instead of focusing on his limitations, he started to see himself as limitless. Instead of calling himself unlucky, he thought of himself as blessed. Instead of allowing his mind to pull his energy downward, he

directed it upward toward higher consciousness.

This feeling was reinforced by his meditating on the following beautiful stanza which had first been uttered by Bhagwan Mahavir more than twenty-five hundred years ago.

चत्तारि परमंगाणि दुल्लहाणीह जन्तुणो ।
माणुसत्तं सुई सद्धा संजमंमि य वीरियं ॥

*“Chattāri param-aṅgāni
Dullahāni iha jantuno
Mānusattam sui saddhā
Sañjammami ya viriyam.”*

This stanza reminded him to appreciate “*chattāri param-aṅgāni*,” four supreme gifts, which were “*dullahāni iha jantuno*,” difficult to attain. First was “*mānusattam*,” the gift of having been born into a human birth so that he could bring out his humanity. This point helped Munishree reflect upon his positive qualities rather than dwell on his weaknesses. Whenever he realized he was getting in touch with his life and with life around him, he became elated and happy. He resolved to use his life and every good thing which came into it as a nourishment.

How can I make my humanness blossom? I will become the gardener to my own thoughts. I will weed out the negative elements and take care of the genuine flowers. Such thoughts will give life to my life and fragrance to all.

He meditated on the second and third gifts, on: *sui* or the longing for wisdom and *saddha*, his love for truth. These two were great indicators of his quest. Becoming aware of these gifts became another reason to foster self-appreciation and to build self-respect. He came to realize that this longing to grow and free himself from limitations was the result of work in many previous lives. Now in this life, he had the chance to complete the journey.

Munishree had deep faith in the path he had chosen. By steeping himself in the stanzas which meant the most to him, he developed the inner force to put them into practice. This step was the fourth gift, “*sañjammami ya viriyam*,” the inner vigor to integrate the teachings into one’s life. He learned that

the greatest *viriyam* is not muscle power to knock somebody down but rather, inner strength to put into practice what one understands.

Even with regard to the vows and rules he was observing as a monk, his teacher emphasized the importance of rediscovering those vows from within. In general, *charitra* or right conduct flowed from understanding the deep meaning of *ahimsā* which Mahāvīr stated simply as follows: “Refrain from those things which are harmful to life and do those things which are helpful.”

The suffocation Munishree had felt from time to time in his training disappeared and gave way to a feeling of freedom. He had a new attitude toward discipline through his understanding of *upāyoga*. Disciplines, he saw, freed him to conserve and direct his energy, to feel his life, and to penetrate the reality of existence.

* * *

Among the forty-five books of Mahāvīr’s utterances which Munishree absorbed and studied, the fifth book known as the *Bhagavati Sār* gave him meditations on non-violence and how to regard life with reverence and love. Among the most far-reaching of Mahāvīr’s statements are the following two, which Munishree found deeply illuminating.

The first one is:

णत्थि अणूदो अणं आयासादो अणूणयं णत्थि ।
जह तह जाण महल्लं ण वयमहिंसासमं अत्थि ॥

Natthi aṇūdo appam āyāsādo aṇunayam ṇatthi
Jaha taha jāṇa mahallam ṇa vayamahimsāsasamam atthi.

“There is nothing so small and subtle as the atom nor any element so vast as space. In the same way, there is no quality of soul more subtle than *ahimsā* and no virtue of spirit greater than reverence for life.”

Munishree saw in his meditation that when he withdrew deeply into himself, what he found was the subtlest feeling; it was none other than *ahimsā*, for at those times, there was no ego, no desire to go out from himself, to move, to fight, to

question, to cling. And when he emerged from that depth, renewed and clear-minded, he felt expansive and loving, filled with that spacious feeling of reverence for all life.

The second statement clarified the purpose of all his disciplines and practices:

सीलं वदं गुणो वा पाणं णिसंगदा सुहच्चाओ ।
जीवे हिंसंतस्स हु सव्वे वि णिरत्थया होति ॥

Silam vadam guṇo vā ṇāṇam ṇissaṅgadā suhacchāo
Jive himsāntassa hu savve vi ṇirattayā honti.

“All our humaneness and moral character, all our vows, virtues, and knowledge, all our practices to give up greed and acquisitiveness towards things and sense objects are meaningless and useless unless we have non-violence and reverence for life in our heart.”

Munishree went deep into the philosophy, asking himself why *ahimsā* was the topmost of all of the qualities and practices. He investigated his subconscious to locate and uproot any vestiges of ill will or subtle violence nesting there.

If I do not practice ahimsa in my thoughts, then all my renunciation, vows, and virtuous deeds are only a facade. If they appear on the surface but do not arise from within, then my consciousness is merely hollow. But I am here to respect life. All my vows are meant for life. That is why I am practicing these disciplines. That is where I am moving in my search.

He learned that in the more than four thousand years of Jain history, the main premise of the Jinas was to save life and to serve life. Killing was never justified for any reason. That is why Jains had never engaged in animal sacrifice at any time in history nor in any ritual involving the taking of life.

People who do not know how to live with reverence are not able to allow others to live. Their destructive quality tantalizes, becomes a tentacle, and reaches into others' lives. Not knowing and appreciating the value of life, they are filled with fear and anxiety. Fear of attack invites attack. They send violence out from their mind, words, actions, and gradually this permeates in the universe.

Now he understood why his father had never imposed his

philosophy upon him as a child. Any form of imposition was an act of violence. He had been brought up in an atmosphere of non-violence and with a living example of reverence for life. Moreover, his father had not preached to him about Jainism. As a child, even into his teens, he had never formally studied the main points of Jain philosophy. His father had allowed him to discover the art of living for himself. For this manner his father had of honoring his son's inner space, he was deeply grateful.

* * *

He began to think of his land of birth and his upbringing. It occurred to him how fortunate he was to have been born on the ancient soil of Rajasthan. He conceived a longing to return to this land and feel for himself the pure and gentle atmosphere of his first nine months of life. Something in him called out to that origin-point. He wanted too to know the nature of the people who lived there and to recall the mother he had known for such a short time.

How blessed I am to have been born to such pure healthy loving parents, who lived a natural unspoiled life and who have given to me their deep feeling of reverence for life.

He turned his meditation to his nearest and dearest one, his father. He began to see him in a new light.

My father is life, as I am life. Truly this soul is more than father. He is a loving energy, a universe unto himself, and ever caring to help me grow.

He recalled the conversations they had had about his time of birth. "That you would live was our deepest prayer," his father had said to him. "After seeing our first two children expire in infancy, we placed all hope in you. When we heard your first cry, we knew it was a blessed moment."

He remembered how moved he had been by their heart to heart talks together. Now he saw the wonder of birth.

It is life coming alive! It is the invisible becoming visible! How glad I am that I chose this dear soul as my father!

He meditated on his life in the womb, re-experiencing the cocoon-like home surrounding his consciousness before it had emerged into the world. He marveled that the tiny seed in the

womb contains the blueprint of an entire life. He studied Jain Scriptures to become aware that each soul carries from birth to birth *samskāras* or imprints, *karmas* or particles of matter which surround it. These particles or vibrations are responsible for creating a form, skin texture, all the physical, mental, and emotional attributes. They even account for the number of breaths a person will take in one lifetime, and are called longevity *karmas*.

“What determines which *karmas* adhere to which soul?” Munishree asked the Master.

He explained, “It’s the law of the universe. What you give, that you receive. It’s a question of the kind of vibrations you send out. Whatever you send out comes back to you, so that in your body, in your mind, in your psyche you experience that which you caused another to experience.”

Munishree meditated deeply on this point.

So what I want to invite, I must start preparing now. The blessings I am receiving now are the result of my previous vibrations. So what I think, that I become. What is true for me must have been true for my mother, my sister, and Usha. Their departure followed this universal law. And the same law must be working to bring us together again.

Now he saw that his childhood dream of reuniting with his mother and his young man’s longing to rediscover his beloved were more than whims or fantasies. They were indicators of both his personal quest and the universal law of vibrations. They were pointing him in the right direction — toward unity in the light of love. Little by little he came to a profound realization.

The longing of lovers to meet is the longing for inside unity. I have not yet experienced that unity with my Higher Self; that is why I still cherish a feeling to meet my beloved once again.

The Master told him, “When you experience the Self in fullness, all your quest will be drowned in the nectar of that experience. So long as you have any fear or desire to get something from outside, so long you will not experience that joy in fullness, in permanence.”

Munishree led himself back into his early years. He thought of those first four years while his mother was still alive. They

were a time of complete spontaneity, of uninhibited freedom.

Those were the years in which I soared, a bird-heart, through the fathomless night. My days were filled with dreams and smiles. Where is that songbird now? It must be somewhere hidden in me!

As an aspirant, he felt the meaning of his aspiration in a new way. It was none other than to go back to himself, to return to his original nature, to let it blossom fully. For that he had to lift the burdens still weighing from time to time on his mind.

* * *

To help him break through lingering feelings of melancholy and intermittent frustration with his progress, he selected one stanza to recite. It gave him vastness of vision, a sense of equanimity, and the way to disidentify mind from soul.

एगो हं नत्थि मे कोइ नाहमन्नस्स कस्सइ ।
एवं अदीण मणसो अप्पाणमणु सासइ ॥

*“Ego aham natthi me koyi
Nāha mannassa kassayi
Evam adina maṇaso
Appānam anusasayi.”*

“I am alone. Nothing belongs to me.
No one and no thing can I call my own.
In this way I keep my mind above self-pity.
By soul alone am I governed.”

It was a meaningful step to freedom. He saw that if nothing belonged to him, then at the same time, he too belonged to nothing.

There is nothing in the world I can possess. That means that nothing in the world can possess me. I don't want to be possessed. In the same way, no one wants to be possessed. Oh, this is the very principle of ahimsa, to live and help let live. So, belonging to no one makes me a part: of everyone. Belonging to no place makes the whole world home. Being alone in the real sense is being all one.

Munishree began to realize that his father was a living example of this stanza. He had always admired him for his high-minded principles and gentle manner with others. But he saw that he had been equally strong in his personal life as well. He remembered a story his father had told him about a moment in his life when he had been put to the test. It happened two years after he had lost his dear Chunibai. At times a heavy loneliness used to settle on him and he would long for the companionship of his departed loving wife. He had told his son this poignant example from his life.

“One day I left you and Magi in the care of Aunt Gajara. I had to go to Bangalore to buy some new colored cloths. I stayed overnight in a guest house. That evening a lovely young woman was sent to my room. She was hired by the guest house to take care of anything I might request. She poured me a drink of water and offered to give me a massage.

“I told her, ‘No, my daughter, thank you, just let me be in peace. Go now.’ She was as innocent in heart as she was young in years. It was her job to sleep upon the mat outside the door to my room.

“In the middle of the night, she woke herself up to ask, ‘Sir, have you need of anything? I will gladly give you whatever you ask.’

“Again I had to tell her, ‘Thanks, dear child, please go out and let me sleep. There is nothing I need.’

“I responded as my honor told me, and deep within my heart was the true love of my wife. I bowed before the Arihantānam to overcome any inner temptation. I repeated ‘*Aum Namo Arihantānam*’ until I felt myself merging with all the Conquerors from all times and places. I envisioned the lives of those who had mastered their senses and the mind. The life of Mahavir inspired me. I glimpsed a state which was sheer inner bliss.

“In the morning I got up joyful and lighthearted. I felt such a clean and subtle feeling, a silent ecstasy. From that moment on, there was no regret, no turning back. I saw that love could be sifted out from lust. I became eager to return to you children and pour upon you my purified and boundless love.”

Munishree came to understand more and more that the

teaching did not tell one to withdraw from life, to deny living, to give up feeling; rather, it taught how to know one's motives and how to reduce one's dependency on outside things. His father had experienced a sense of lightness and freedom. Why? Because he had conquered his need and had come to depend on himself. With the removal of desire, the pain was removed. With the removal of pain came the real experience of his life. With this homecoming to himself, his father had felt a surge of energy and well-being. With this energy, he knew what to do — to dedicate his life to a higher purpose, in this case, to the raising of his two small children.

* * *

Always Munishree had liked to keep someone in his life as a model to him of meaningful living. In his school days, he had admired one teacher who liked to lift two students up onto his shoulders at the same time, saying, "Do you want to be like me? I came from only one drop! Only one drop of energy has made this one strong human being! It is easy! The secret is this: conserve your energy, be single-pointed. Don't waste your energy here and there in so many different directions. Wasting energy, you go many miles and end up nowhere; investing it, you make something out of your life."

In his years with Gandhiji, as Rup, he had been moved by the inner conviction which radiated from this fragile-looking man. He saw that the real meaning of any teaching is how much you practice it. He admired his father as a living example of what he believed.

Munishree was inspired to intensify his search, to go deeper within to find that truth of living he admired in those who lived the teachings.

Let me build my willpower, my power of truth and non-violence. I am nothing but a presentation of my consciousness. If my conviction in ahimsa is pure, unpolluted by doubt or fear, then my life can become a joy to myself and a gift to the world. It can make room in somebody's heart to forgive, to stop inflicting pain, and to start living for life.

* * *

As he decided to emerge fully from the cocoon of small concerns and personal obsessions with death, loss, and his past, he took the arrow, his mind, straight to the target, Self.

His Master explained, "You bow to the Arihanta in order to take the biggest stride of all, to bow to your own Self. It is the most difficult and brave step for an aspirant. What starts with bowing to the outside masters ends with bowing to yourself."

So Munishree practiced seeing himself in the light of the Arihanta. He followed the steps given in the ancient Pindasta meditation, designed to help a person create a beautiful and transcendent self-image.

First he meditated on lifting his energy from the base of the spine through all of the energy centers at the pelvis, navel, heart, throat, and brow region to the top of the head. Then he glided into the following meditation.

I am rising upward from the crown of my head. Surrounding me is a huge calm lake. There is nothing in sight, only vast smooth water. It is completely rippleless. Now I see a long and powerful stem stretching above the surface of the water. Tremendous green leaves crown the stem. In the center of the leaves is a beautiful white lotus.

It is a huge lotus with one thousand petals. Each petal is perfect. Each petal is the personification of beauty. I will climb onto the petals of the lotus. But first I ascend seven steps. With each step, I pause to drop weaknesses and burdens. With the first step, I drop fear, insecurity, and clinging. I see that I cannot hold onto any thing forever. I let go. Let me transform these gravitating energies into confidence and balance, knowing that true security lies in trusting the Self.

With the second step, I remove lust and craving for gratifying the demands of the senses. I withdraw deeper into the source of these misplaced energies and feel that here is a springboard for creativity and service. I allow this creative feeling to lift me higher. On the third step, I drop anger, any need to control or manipulate. Let me replace them by flooding myself with a feeling of forgiveness and affection for all living beings.

With the fourth step, I remove anything which clutters my inside space, all false ideas of superiority and inferiority. I

enlarge my sense of spaciousness and extend hue and a light heart to all universally. I feel the reciprocity between me and all of life. On the fifth step, let the differences between 'I' and 'Thou' dissolve. The expansion radiates outward infinitely. Impurities in speech are removed. The goddess of wisdom sits in my consciousness. On the sixth step, the last traces of dry mental desires and unclear motives are cleared away. Now those thoughts which I think and those words which I utter shall ring with the truth of experience. The mind is now ready to open to highest consciousness.

I climb the seventh and last step. I feel purity. I feel clean, as if I have shed my skin, outer coverings and limitations. Now I am free to take a leap onto the lotus of perfection.

Now I am standing lightly upon the petals of the lotus. In the center of the huge lotus, I see a beautiful throne. Seeing it, my breaths are completely stilled and quiet. It is a throne of golden white light. It is vibrating with life. It is beckoning to me. It awaits me. It is my seat. It is the seat of the Arihanta, the Conqueror. I am the Conqueror. I deserve to take my seat there.

Now I move to take that seat. I am there. I am accepting my reality. I am revering my true quality. I am revealing what I am. I am in the ecstasy of myself. I carry that inner knowing wherever I go. Now I am free. Nothing can bind me. Everything good in me is blossoming as the radiant heart of the lotus. I am this. I am Arihanta. I am. I am that awareness.

* * *

Moving Messenger

Āchārya Ānand Sāgarsuriji was observing how Munishree was emanating the beautiful vibrations of special inner qualities. He saw him coming closer and closer to revealing his reality, and perceived what the young muni himself did not yet know, that his Enlightenment would become a cause for many thousands to come onto the path of Self-Realization. According to the law

of *karma*, those who for at least three previous births have been living and breathing one dream — to free themselves and all souls from ignorance and suffering, invite those *karmic* atoms which equip them with the qualities and talents needed to realize this dream. The Master saw these qualities in his disciple: tenderness of heart, rhythmical and eloquent voice, physical beauty, softness of skin texture. They were present in him for one purpose — to lift souls from their pain and bring them to reverence for themselves and for all life. He saw that Munishree would become a beacon, a lamp to ignite light in thousands of hearts. Once he had mastered himself, he would be *Arihanta*. He would take the lead in building a bridge between man and his ultimate reality, between man and all living beings. He would become a bridge-builder.

That was the path which Munishree was walking, though he was unaware of it. That is why his guru decided that he would serve himself, his master, and the people at the same time by giving talks and answering the people's questions. In this way, his special grip on language would be perfected, and his sharing would be a means for him to clarify his insights, to become more aware of his hidden lifetimes' dream, and to move the people toward their own reality.

At times it was difficult for Munishree to imagine himself giving a talk, because it meant that he had to emerge from days and days of silence. His voicebox was not used to being brought forth, and his mind was not used to functioning at a conversational pace. But he did not hurry himself or attempt to change his pace. As a result, his talks were born out of the depths of meditation. He had become sensitive to the intrinsic meaning of words and selected only those which resounded with positive vibration and purpose. His words flowed forth like a powerful stream of soothing music.

From the time that the Master designated that Munishree give talks to the villagers, the young monk found a new joy in the itinerant life. Arriving at a village after the daily walk of ten or twelve miles, he would exclaim, "What? Here already?" Not only did he love to walk, but also he was energized by its new purpose: to share and communicate with the people. Offering his insights and exchanging feelings with them ignited the fire

of his being. He came to see the whole country as his monastery. For him, this was creativity in action. His elated feeling was contagious, and he made a kind of intimate contact with the souls of his listeners. They felt he was speaking to them gently as their friend, as a friend to all life.

* * *

In the years in which Munishree studied Sanskrit and Prakrit grammar with a sage from Benares, most of his walking journeys with his father and guru were in the area between Pālītānā and Cambay. In Cambay, he was asked to talk to the young people who were apathetic and irreverent toward their religious heritage. The elder Jains became filled with wonder as they watched a positive change take place in their sons and grandsons, daughters and granddaughters, within the space of one evening. He spoke these words to them:

“Namaste to you, young men and women, charioteers of ardent youthfulness! Yes, do you know what you are and what you hold in your hands? You command the ocean of youth! At its bottom, immense jewels of life are shining, waiting for you to discover them. Will you dive in? You won’t get those riches by yawning and daydreaming by the shore. To fetch them you have to dive into the fathomless deep. Do you have the courage to do it?

“You are so vigorous, strong, and daring! Of course you have the courage to take the plunge. What will happen when that youthful vigor of yours wanes? Then you won’t be able to reach the treasure even if you want to. The dreams of the timid and weak are never realized. I entreat you to take the challenge because now you are strong. The moment is now. This is the unique time. This moment is fleeting. It will never return.

“The flowers of today’s blossoming youth wither on the morrow. Buoyant steps of today will feel heavy tomorrow. Stand up, my friends, today, even now, and mobilize all your energies towards some definite aim in your life.

“Indulgent living is not natural. It is artificial. Luxury is not real happiness. It holds only sorrow and worry in store. Lust is like bait to deceive you and lead you into the valley of death.

“The strength of a disciplined life lies in its ability to point

you to the mount of ascension. Life demands action, deeds that will raise society from lethargy and suffering and which will immortalize your soul. Who is more worthy or more favored than you, O youthful souls, to engineer such feats?

“Who can show more zest for life than you? The old can give wise counsel born of their experience, but it is given long after the youthful force of life is already spent. They may have high spirits but they can no longer undertake such daring deeds as you can. They may feel for the spirit of adventure, but they can no longer afford to be bold and venturesome.

“Enthusiasm, manliness, high-mindedness, daring, these are qualities of youth. Man ceases to be young when he ceases to seek security in risk. Man ceases to be alive and vibrant when he settles himself into a safe routine for the sake of pleasure or profit or custom.

“You can borrow wisdom from the past, but at the same time, be active and zealous to initiate good and fruitful work. Benefit from positive advice, but know that it is you alone who can harness the force to actualize your own dreams.

“This is your time! Tomorrow is deception! Who can tell what the morrow has in store for you? Can you be sure that you will open your eyes to meet the dawn of your imagination? Make the best of today! Are you fascinated with pastimes? Are you merely watching the dance of life and being dazzled by the glittering parade of fashion? Don’t be deceived by appearances. The secret of life is not hidden in the paling splendor of this passing show.

“You are born to be great. Do not squander your greatness in idle talk, in gossip, in empty laughter, in a hollow life.

“O charioteers of youth! Let the brilliance of your achievements so enlighten the world that the poets shall extol your name in their songs! If a sculptor can carve a beautiful form out of stone, why do you not create a masterpiece out of your own life?”

At the close of the evening meditation, a universal *mantra* was chanted for the healing and welfare of all living beings:

सर्वे भवन्तु सुखिनः सर्वे सन्तु निरामया ।

सर्वे भद्राणि पश्यन्तु मा कश्चिद् दुःखभाग् भवेत् ॥

“*Sarve bhavantu sukhinah*
Sarve santu nirāmayā
Sarve bhadraṇi paśyantū
Mā kaśchit dukkha bhāga bhavet.”

“May all living beings be happy.

May all living beings be free from disharmony, disease, and ailment.

May all perceive that which is good, beautiful, and truthful. Let no being be a victim of any pain, suffering, torture, or killing.”

Aum Shanti Shanti Shanti — Aum Peace Peace Peace.”

The skeptical young people were deeply moved. They saw for the first time that Jainism was not a dry religion; it was meant for conquering one's lethargy and apathy; it was meant for living life. From that day, their quest was stirred and they began to move in the direction of finding meaning in their lives.

The group dispersed. The *munis* returned to the *upāśray* to practice their evening *praktikramana*, to erase any unpleasant vibrations, and to invite the Divine Presence into the clean shrine of their inner being.

* * *

During the four months of *chāturmās* or the rainy season retreat, the monks studied closely with their guru, receiving guidance and practicing the right meditation which was conducive to each one's individual growth. When the skies were completely blue and clean, they would start out on their walking journeys once again. One *chāturmās* was spent in Ahmedabad, the city in which Gandhiji had established his Satyagraha ashram.

The Second World War was raging and India's independence movement was reaching its culmination. The youth in Ahmedabad were restless and angry. Munishree's guru asked him to meet with them.

He spoke from his own experience in both violent and non-violent phases of the freedom movement. His main message was this,

"I learned long ago that when one gives violence, one can only expect violence in return, no more, no less. I have scars to prove it."

He pointed to the scars across his feet and left leg. "After getting caught up in the violent phase of the freedom movement, I was imprisoned and tortured. It was a time of seeming alienation for me. But that pain put me to the test. It was given for my understanding. I saw that I had invited that pain myself. It dawned on me that even the smallest anger and violence in the mind can create a bigger violence. The tiniest speck of resentment and frustration can end up in killing and war. Think for a moment where your angry thoughts are leading you."

They responded, "Yes, but Gandhiji's way is so slow. How can it bring us freedom soon?"

"Gandhiji's way is the way of Mahatma whom he read and absorbed into his own life. He is convinced that non-violence and friendship for all are the only means which can terminate the entire cycle of violence and war. Those relatives who go on telling their children of the wars their forefathers fought breed even more dissension. They sow the seeds of more grudges. Who will extinguish this fire except those who see that this fire is consuming their own energy and corroding their own hearts? Who will remove the bitter taste from the mouth except those who see that in retribution and revenge there is no gain?"

Munishree was the peer of these young people, in his twenties, outwardly youthful, but inwardly seasoned in wisdom and experience. They started to listen to him.

Still they asked, "But if we jump in and fight the British now, while their attention is focused on the larger war, we have a chance to win and stop this exploitation from dragging on longer."

"Where is the gain in which mothers lose their beautiful sons? Where is the gain in which wives lose their sweet husbands? Where is the gain in which sisters lose their brave brothers? Those who are defeated on the battlefield are dead, and those who call themselves winners are themselves defeated, for they have externalized their own self-hatred and made enemies of themselves and others."

Slowly their anger extinguished. They became silent and reflective. They came to understand the vicious cycle of violence, and the far-reaching value of *ahimsā*.

The young people were moved. The effect on both Munishree and on his listeners of his moving from silence to words, and from solitude to group experience, was a positive and dynamic one. Interacting with these young people was a means for him to turn his meditation into action and to become truly genuine with himself. He learned how to communicate with others at their level of understanding and to lose his petty self in their needs. Each group of villagers became a new family, a temporary laboratory in which he had a chance to test his forbearance, his compassion and his inspired insights.

He closed the meeting with the young people by telling them, “Every morning Gandhiji offers a prayer. He lives with the idea, ‘If I do not give breakfast to my mind, what right do I have to give nourishment to my body?’ Wherever he is, before writing at least twenty letters, walking miles and miles, and meeting many villagers, he makes prayer his first priority. I am going to recite one of his favorites which became one of my favorite subjects of contemplation as well:

न त्वहं कामये राज्यं न स्वर्गं नापुनर्भवम् ।
कामये दुःखतप्तानां प्राणिनामार्तिनाशनम् ॥

*“Na twaham kāmaye rājyam
Na swargam
Na punarbhavam
Kāmaye dukkha taptānām
Prāṇināmārtināśanam.”*

“Not for any kingdom do I long,
Not even for the kingdom of heaven,
Not even for freedom from the endless cycle of birth and death;
For one and only one thing do I long —
To free living beings from their burning pain and suffering,
And to wipe away their tears.”

“When I used to meditate on these lines, I realized that I

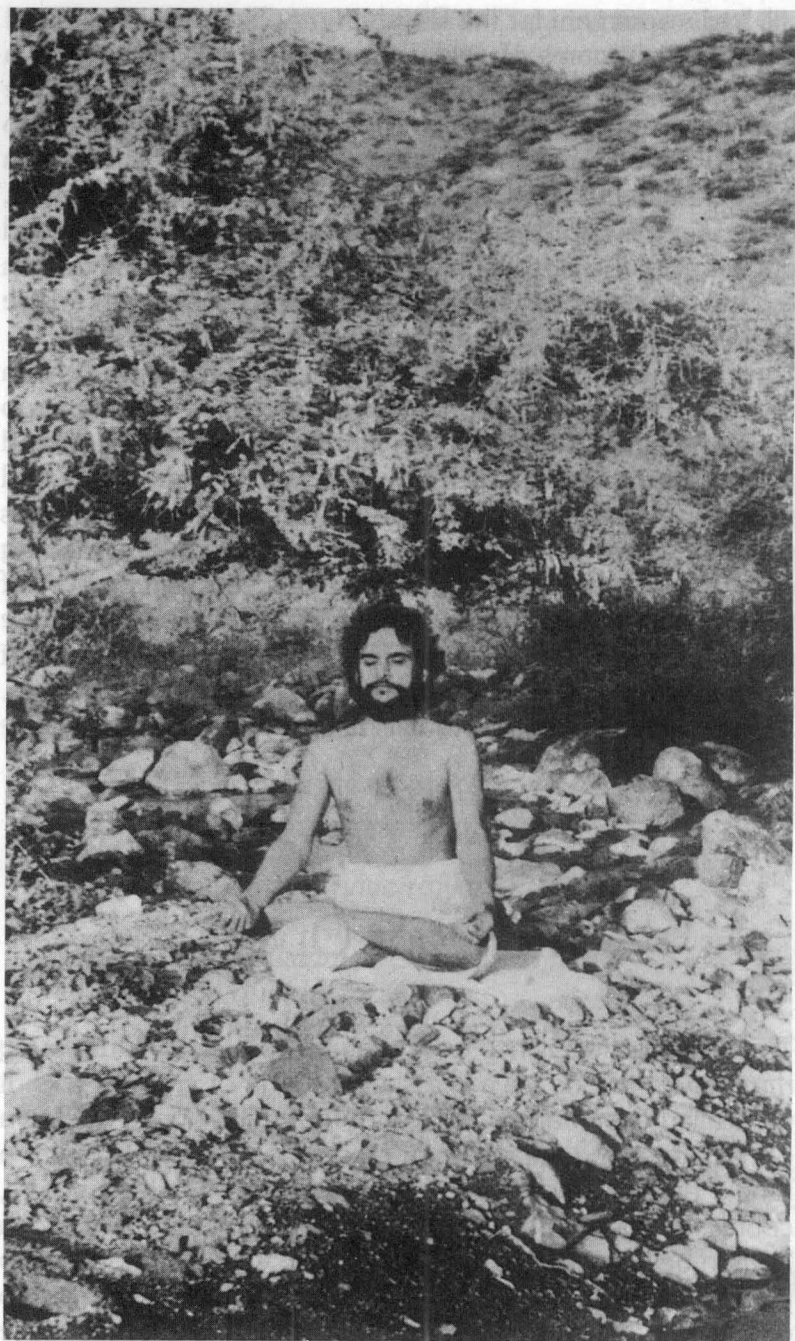
still had resentment for the British in me. That was why I used to have nightmares of soldiers coming to kill me. My own animosity became personified and came back to me in the form of fearful events in which I was victimized. So I thought to myself, 'If I am here to wipe out the tears of suffering, how can I go on holding hatred inside? How do they go together? No, hatred pushes compassion out. I am a hypocrite.' So I decided not to recite the prayer until I had removed this hatred from my heart. I started working on this level. This is what I advise all of you to do.

"See that you are here to request freedom, but not with revenge. The British are suffering from greed, so we have to go on hammering on their greed with our non-cooperation and non-violence. Eventually they will come to themselves and understand that until they give us freedom, they themselves will suffer from enslavement. Be patient and work on clearing your own consciousness first. It will be of great benefit to all of you. Sooner or later human consciousness must evolve to the point of realizing non-violence. If we are not moving in that direction, then it is due to our weakness and lack of exertion. But we are each capable of it. It is imperative that we realize it."

* * *

The Door Opens

The five years of silence were drawing to a close. Our young *muni* knew of one cave-like shelter made of craggy rocks. It was called *gupha* and was located four miles above the town of Palitana along the slopes of Mount Satrunjaya. This was a jungle area known to be frequented by cheetahs, vipers, cobras, scorpions, bats, and many other forms of life of which human beings tend to be afraid. In fact, wild animals were so plentiful there that the former Maharaja of the state used to choose that spot for his hunting expeditions even in those days.



Meditating in nature

It was here that Munishree decided to meditate intensively for three days. Why did he select such an isolated wilderness? He had decided to put himself to the test.

Now I want to see, am I living for formulas or am I living for life? How deep has this teaching gone? Is it knowledge or is it knowing? Now is the time to separate the husk and the grain. Do I genuinely feel life? Or am I still living in fear of annihilation? All my studies have taught me to believe in the indestructible power of soul, but inside don't I still have some fear in my heart? Now I want to see whether I am pretending or not.

For that, he had to put his mind into that state where it could confront all of its leftover fears. Once and for all, he was determined to break all psychological complexes, fears, and inhibitions and free himself from all limitations.

This is the moment. If not now, then when?

From early morning till late at night, Munishree sat on the rocks outside of the caves in a lotus posture and meditated. At night he spread his cloth on the rocks inside one cave and alternated between resting in *yoganidrā* and meditating until morning. On the first and third day, he descended into the village several miles below to collect his food. He then returned immediately to his mountain retreat.

Sometimes he watched wild animals moving nearby. As he watched, he observed his mind, how unafraid it was becoming. He felt as if some extra inner strength was being released to give him balance. Confronted with the possibility of being devoured or bitten by an animal, he was able to pinpoint clearly the source of all his fears of loss, annihilation, or death — as misidentification.

Oh, until now I have been identifying with my body. I have been depending on this ephemeral house instead of on the life dwelling inside. I have been confusing outer with inner, the periphery with the center. But outer is only a support system to allow inner to reveal itself. Without my Self, this outer would not function.

In his meditation, he consciously withdrew from identifying with all of his outer dependencies. Like a tortoise, he pulled into himself. From here, he was able to watch layer after layer of dependency drop away. That vague mist of insecurity which

used to float at the bottom of his subconscious began to evaporate. What had been obscured for a long time became in this way visible. Like a laser beam, he penetrated to his reality. It was a great leap, a severing of the cords of attachment to matter and mind.

What I used to think of as me is only a shell; it is destructible. The real bird is inside! I am not things! I am no-thingness! I am life! The real T will remain. Where can it go?

As inner exultancy replaced past fears and concepts, he experienced a new sense of love and reverence for the entire kingdom of living beings. All the creatures around were seen through an eye of newness.

All these multicolored forms, all these uniquely designed shapes — tiger, cheetah, snake, insect-bodies are all housing the same as me. They are holding life. They are nothing but vibrant energies growing and evolving in their own course. They have no intention to harm me. Why should I have assumed they are dangerous? There are so many millions of wild animals in the world; if they were vicious by nature, would they not have already devoured the whole human population? It's only a concept of fear, and life is not that.

From the vegetables to the highest forms of consciousness, he saw how each had its own place, its own timing, its own evolution. In this way, his heart opened. He became deeply sensitive to life. He felt his heart vibrating on the same frequency with all. Like the wings of a butterfly, it pulsated and soared in the infinite sky. From that day, he appreciated what it meant to have been a lifelong vegetarian and what it meant to protect all of life as one's own.

It is no longer me against them. It is all one! We are united by life. Oh, what a beautiful world it can be — if life gives to life out of feeling for life and if everyone stops limiting each other to a concept or a label or a form.

* * *

Munishree had reached a new plateau of awareness. Soon after his cave retreat, one morning just before dawn, something started churning from deep within him. Some unnameable alchemy was taking place. It felt like the blending of all

that which he had absorbed and studied up to that moment. Just as sweet creamy butter emerges out of the churning of milk, so a subtle and exquisite feeling began to well up from his depths. It gave him the sweet taste of lightheartedness and joy.

As he attuned himself to this liberating feeling, he went out from the *upasray* into the dew-kissed air of pre-dawn. He stood in open-eyed meditation watching the mist paint a light veil over the distant mountains of Śātruñjaya. Behind the mist, he could see the glow of the coming dawn. All of a sudden, mist vanished and all was nothing but a pinkish orange glow. In close touch with his inner response, he felt in perfect harmony with the macrocosm. The subtle joy grew brighter and clearer. As the sun arose triumphant out of the mountains, inner glow became more and more intense, bathing him within and without in a blazing clarity. And wordlessly he knew he had at last torn away the last veil covering the mystery of death.

It was only the beginning. By the time he and his father set out on their walking journey to the next village, the blissfulness he had been incubating burst forth. All his limbs were dancing. Ecstasy flowed through his body and he sailed through the motions of walking. The thrill of joy was so intense that his body could hardly bear it. Under the impact of that kind of spiritual explosion, some people lose balance, but Munishree Chandraprabh Sāgarji did not. For the unprepared person, it might have been like going from midnight to the noonday sun without first adjusting the eyes gradually and readying oneself to see it. For such a person, this experience would have been too powerful, blinding.

But for Munishree, this was the fruit of his austerity, the maturation of his silence, the ripening of his seasoned soul. All his meditations, investigations, and flashes of insight had prepared him for this. Like the cool wetness of earth which corrodes the hull of a seed so that it can open its heart and grow toward the sun, in the same way, the teachings, trainings, and years in the inspired presence of his Master and loving father had little by little thinned out the shell of his ego so that his reality could emerge and reveal itself. In this way, he had prepared body and mind to bear the power and joy of his

converged energy of Self.

It was a prolonged glimpse, some dots in time, yet it sang of all eternity. How long it lasted did not matter, for it opened up the whole inner world to his vision. Inwardly he knew that he was in a state of *ahimsa*. No desire to possess, no need to hold, no feeling to be in control. It was a height of demandlessness. One realization bubbled up from this wellspring of inner bliss.

Oh, I was clinging to my mother, sister, friend! Now I have let that need drop! There is nothing but love! Nothing but life! Nothing but pure consciousness! All I had to do was open the door which I thought was closed! It is all open space! I am here, a rising sun, hanging in infinite space, finding my home in the infinite sky! The whole universe is here vibrating in my awareness!

Such moments are the teachers of truth, the engravers of knowledge on the consciousness of soul. Clear and vivid, the power of this ecstatic experience was enough to lift him once and for all from his sorrow and confusion and quest.

His father did not know what to make of this son of his. He saw him laughing, smiling. He was used to taking care of him and could not imagine why he was acting like an intoxicated person! Later he sought out the Master's advice.

"Don't worry," the Acharya told him. "It is ecstasy. When sorrow is lifted, a person feels lightness. He floats in newness." "But he is singing, laughing and giggling like a madman!"

The Master reassured him, "There is nothing wrong, dear soul! Your son now knows he is immortal. He is experiencing the real ecstasy of soul. From this day he is a free soul while living in this body. He has thrown light on that sorrow which had been burdening him. Now that condition has been dissolved. The clouds are lifted. He feels light. This is his great achievement. Now he feels and knows what he really is. That is all. The mood will pass, but the deep insight will remain to fuel the rest of his journey in this life."

It was true. With the removal of his sorrow, Munishree was experiencing the ecstasy and tenderness of his natural spontaneous Self. Like a flower, his whole being was surcharged with softness and fragrance. Possessiveness had evaporated

from his consciousness; now he knew that just as he had his space to grow and evolve in this limitless universe, so all souls had their own space to grow and evolve.

* * *

The exultant mood lasted three hours.

In the immediate aftermath of this vastly freeing experience, Munishree felt his mind receive and transmit the understanding he had gained. A whole chain of insights followed one upon the other.

There are no opposites. What I used to see as opposites are really complements. Winter seems to be opposite to spring, but without decay, how can there be newness? The resting state seems to be opposed to the waking state, but without rest, how can there be awakening? Death appears contrary to life, but without transformation, how could there be ever-evolving life?

Each is adding to life to fulfill the cycle of completeness. Oh, what beautiful complements they are! See what happens in nature! Leaves, branches, petals decay and drop down to earth. Millions and millions covering the ground! Where do they go? Immediately rain and wind and earth make a beautiful chemistry, a magical alchemy, and nature's forms start corroding and turning into fertilizer for new plants. Isn't this process of life miraculous?

All takes place under the ground, hidden to our eye, but such an active vibrant transition it performs! Into the roots of trees and plants and fields of grass decaying matter goes. And what is the result? Springtime! New life! Yes, winter is a blessing to spring, decay is a bringer of new fresh forms.

The insights flowed faster. He became more and more exultant.

The whole day people work and meet, receive so many thousands of impressions. Not a single moment goes by in which the senses are not being bombarded. They make demands on the mind. Desires come and brain is overloaded. Energy goes out in search of 'I want what I want when I want it!' What result comes? Exhaustion!

But gentle sleep comes and takes away all fatigue. Soul is

given a rest from the demands of mind. Rest rejuvenates. It is a pause, a space, making room inside for soul to reveal its fresh feelings of love, forgiveness, peace, and joy. In the morning there is awakening. Out of that is born creative action, meaningful use of energy.

At the heart of these realizations was the one which transformed his entire being. Now he saw clearly that death pertains only to body not to life.

There is nothing to be afraid of. Death is a partner of life. It is only a transition, a transformer. It is a nurse, exchanging this for that, taking away the worn-out garments and bringing fresh ones. It is a universal kindness.

Inside the seed of life is safe. The seed goes underground, breaks its form, but after the right time, sprouts up again. Before it can sprout, it has to die. So my mother dropped the form I knew but has sprouted somewhere in another form. Magi left her body, but is now in life blossoming somewhere. Usha's body was taken by disease, but shedding one existence, has come into new life. Oh, death, you are like winter! You appear severe, but no, you are gently preparing us for another loving mother's care. We are taken like babies from one breast to the other. In between, we cry and feel lost. But truly you are taking us from emptiness to fullness.

Oh, the harmony of life! This is *ātmā*. This is *is-ness*. How can anything destroy this immortal essence? *'Aba huma amara bhae na mareng* — Now I have realized I am immortal, ever in life, never to die.

From where did fear spring? From mind. Mind knows that every minute it is dying. That is why I had fear. While I was identifying with mind, fear of death was inevitable. Now I know I am not body, I am not mind. I am soul! Now sorrow can touch me no more. Fear cannot grip me. I am free!

Yes, old particles of mind and matter, old sorrows, fears, and resentments, you are long since buried, turned over in the moist soil of my living consciousness, and now you are revealing your real meaning — to fuel my quest and help me transcend all. Like two legs, they move, these beautiful complements of life — winter and spring, restful state and waking state, death and rebirth, matter and soul.

They move one after the other to create some friction and help us grow. Oh beloved peace! Oh life! I am Thee! I am here! I see nothing but unity in all this diversity!

Munishree began to feel a quiet and flowing energy. He went for a walk by himself in the woods. As his bare feet touched earth, the softness of the mud felt as a gentle caress to him. A fresh breeze touched his eyes and cheeks, and he felt cleansed. He walked slowly past trees and bushes, plants and flowers, and was penetrated through and through with the clean fragrance emanating from them. All of nature was shimmering. He saw the richness of green, vivid and vibrant with life. Each moment was *apurva*, as if for the very first time. Each moment was complete. Each moment was a touch with immortal essence. He was living, in the poet's words, in "eternity's sunrise."

Eventually his euphoria calmed down, but the flow of indestructible energy could not be contained. It had to spill over into the hearts and souls of all mankind. The feeling to share and communicate his joy and insights revealed his deep connection with life at large. He felt like a mother filled to the brim with sweet milk. He would burst if he could not give out of his fullness.

"Since you receive more than any other form of life, naturally you will want to give more," Mahāvīr's words sang in his heart and spoke to his ecstasy. Out of this buoyancy was born his love for life, his inspiration. From deep within, his life's mission began to take shape.

"Now," his Master told him, "Now you are free to teach the world."

V. AVAKENING

Transforming

Munishree Chandraprabh Sāgarji had become best friends with his mind. Gone were the days when his mind had bred one desire after another. Now he knew how, with watchfulness and inner guidance, to turn his mind into an obedient servant rather than a demanding master. Little by little, he had come to stretch the mind and expand himself.

Mind likes to contract the infinite, but I am here to expand the finite and reach the infinite.

After having enlightened his sorrow and penetrated the secret of death, what he found was life. He saw that tears shed for one's small self waste energy and gravitate the mind. So long as he had felt lack, so long he had felt imperfect, incomplete. Along with that were sown the seeds of pain and discontent, either putting oneself down or up, or indulging in criticism of others. The height of peace he experienced gave him the certainty that never again would he suffer from selfish demand. There was no joy in fighting to get or gain something; on the contrary, joy, he found, was in giving. His purpose began to unfold — to help someone in need, to awaken a slumbering consciousness, to share his thoughts, to lift a helpless creature from pain, to work for life. Now he sang to himself, "I live for life, for other, for Thee, O Beloved Higher Self!"

Five years after taking the vows of a monk, he was experiencing the essential meaning of the Sanskrit word for monk, muni. *Muni* carries a deep meaning — one who is inspired or ecstatic, a sage, a seer, one who has renounced the outer world to ruminate and contemplate his inner reality. This is where the monkhood led our muni, into spiritual ecstasy with which to inspire himself and others.

Excavating his depths, he came to the core of his being. He found himself, his life. Though a man is not his name, now he

became the essence of his spiritual name. Chandraprabh Sāgarji means — Ocean of the Beams of Moon. It was as if he became one with moon herself, emanating the vibrations of soothing and cooling peace. His was the full moon of consciousness. Gone was the pain of striving, of struggling to reach upward. Now he remained in his own state, the eternal ocean behind the transitory. He could enjoy the natural flow and ebb of the tides of living without being disturbed or thrown off balance. It was not a state of being detached from life or numb to feeling. On the contrary, he became increasingly sensitive to life; at the same time, he knew how to remain a witness to his feelings without being bound or enslaved by them.

Once Munishree had lifted the lid of sorrow and touched his reality, he came in tune with the Tirthankaras before him. He felt like them, a transmitter of the ecstasy and beauty of the inner life.

Until this moment, he had been sharing his insights with his father and teacher privately, with the villagers on the occasions when he gave talks, and with his own soul in a diary. Now he felt the overwhelming urge to embrace all of humanity. That is why he began to send his writings to be published in spiritual magazines and different newspapers. Now that he had broken out from the limitations of mind and conditioning, he felt that only the heart was his home, not four walls. From the chariot of his writings and teachings, he would help people remove the bars of sectarianism, petty thinking, and emotional distortion in which they had imprisoned themselves, and inspire them to catch a vivid glimpse of their own inner treasure.

Munishree submitted his first ecstatic utterances incognito. He did not sign his writings with his long religious title, His Holiness Gurudev Munishree Chandraprabh Sagar Mahārajji. He decided to cut it short.

If experiences are to echo in the human heart, why limit that resonance by the signature of a religious title? No, let me select a pen-name instead, one which goes beyond all sect, creed, and tradition.

The name he invented was “Chitrabhanu,” meaning essence of the sun, the life force animating the sun itself, divine

consciousness, universal truth. It symbolized the truth, blinding to those unprepared to look at it, but not to the courageous seeker. Such a one can look at it directly without being dazzled or deterred. And so, the moon-like peace of “Chandraprabh” revealed its life-giving source, the radiant sun, and merged into the loving energy of “Chitrabhanu.”

The name was relevant to the purpose of his writings — to remove the darkness of negative, ignorant thinking, to burn away clouds of delusion and despair, to offer a fresh enlightened approach to living: His first sharings were received with enthusiasm, especially by the widely read Sandesh newspaper. People loved the freshness of his thinking, the poetry of his prose, the authenticity of his experience. But who was the man behind the words? Who was behind the pen-name? Everyone wanted to know.

After several months, they uncovered the secret; it was none other than Munishree, who had observed the silence, and whom people fondly called Gurudev, meaning Divine Master or Revered Teacher. From now on we too will call him Gurudev in this narrative. It was not long before he became well-known as the dearly loved guru walking the villages of Gujarat Province.

* * *

The Power of Love

Once Gurudev was walking alone through a forest in Girnār known to be the abode of many wild animals, especially lions. Along his journey, he heard about a man who had tamed a lion. He went in search of this man. Along the edge of a river, he noticed the lone hermit.

“Are you the man who has the miraculous power to tame a lion?”

The man smiled, “It is no miracle. It is the power of love.”

“The power of love?” Gurudev asked.

"Everybody speaks about it," the man replied, "but they don't live it I don't speak, I live."

Our *muni* stood before this wisp of an old man in admiration. "May I stay with you for a few days?"

"I would be honored. In the evening you will see this lion and I will introduce him to you."

Evening closed day casting its last rays of golden hue upon the forest scene, and true to the old man's word, the lion appeared. Gurudev watched the way the man caressed him and placed a bowlful of milk before him. Then he heard him say "Go, my son."

"What is this?" he asked him. "You are treating him like a son?"

"He is my son," was the man's simple reply. "Love neutralizes the destructive instinct. That is the power of love."

"How is it that this lion first came to you?"

"Once a hunter came in the forest and shot him. He was struck in one front paw, but though he was bleeding, he jumped up and escaped. Finally behind my hut, he fell down exhausted. A lot of blood had gone from his body, and he was very weak. I was just coming back from my walk when I saw this half dead lion, wounded and dying of thirst. I thought, 'What shall I do?' Well, I know something about herbs, so I collected a few herbs, washed his wound, made a bandage with the herbs, and brought him some milk. I knew I had nothing to fear from him because my heart had gone out to him. I genuinely loved him, and love begets love. And so it happened, he opened the eyes and licked the milk. I caressed him and we built a friendship. He looked into my eyes and I looked into his. For two or three days I took care of him, then he was gone. But every evening he comes back to visit."

Gurudev felt the deep feeling in the man's words. It was a living example for him. For those who trust one another, living being to living being, there is nothing but flow, the beautiful flow of unconditional love.

* * *

Soon after, Gurudev had a chance to experience a comparable experience of his own. One evening he and a small group

of *munis*, including his guru, lost their way. They were unable to reach a village by nightfall. Since *muriis* were not allowed to walk after dark so as not to harm unseen creatures underfoot, they stopped their *vihar* and slept out in the open under a tree. It was a beautiful night, and the nearly full moon shone its beams down upon them.

In the middle of the night, Gurudev felt something very heavy slithering across his chest. Instantly alert, he flung off his shawl, along with whatever was weighing it down. The cover fell to the ground with a loud thud, and a hissing sound was heard. The noise awakened the others who immediately jumped up and ran a safe distance away!

A large cobra was seen lying in front of Gurudev, its hood flaring, its beady eyes sparkling in the moonlight. It had fallen from a tall anthill near the tree where the monks had chosen to sleep without noticing the anthill, a favorite home for cobras. Gurudev's first reaction was a tremor of fear in the body, but his awareness was stronger. Immediately, it gave him poise and calm in this moment of trial. He started reciting softly "Aum Namō Arihantanam, Aum Namō Arihantanam." Within a few seconds, as he was emanating a deep sense of peace and awareness, a subtle exchange of feeling began to flow between two living beings, one a man, the other a cobra. Soon the serpent deflated his stiff neck and moved away to continue his journey. Gurudev was imbued anew with reverence and awe before life.

Now I am convinced beyond doubt that life has nothing to fear from life. Life in all forms can detect the noblest of attitudes, the flow of loving kindness. In this flow, both man and animal lose their initial fear as well as their instinct to defend themselves. They will not become aggressive unless they are provoked or caught unaware by mistake.

Later Gurudev recorded some thoughts in his diary:

"We have all heard the warning — beware of the snake! It is poisonous and dangerous. But what of a man who forsakes his humanity? Is he not more dangerous than a cobra? The snake strikes in ignorance when he feels threatened. A so-called gentleman will inflict his wounds

knowingly and with great care, pretending all the while to be polite and concerned for his fellow men. Such a wound is truly painful and most difficult to heal.”

More than twenty times Gurudev met cobras and other wild animals on his walking journeys in the wild. Once he was even about to step down on one when something inside stopped him in the last moment. His foot dangled in the air! The deeper awareness which had prevented him from unwittingly harming life gave the cobra just the space he needed to move out of the way quietly and without aggression.

Gurudev began to realize that fear between different forms of life is not normal; it has to be taught. A negative experience or a word of warning is what conditions a person from childhood to fear animal life.

It is natural to love. When life is kind to life, there is a kind of mutual recognition. And that flow echoes in the universe, and the universe sends back manifold the vibrations of love and protection.

* * *

Fearlessness

Gurudev, his father, and seven fellow monks were journeying from Dahod into Malwa when an incident brought out their faith in life. The track zigzagged through a mountainous district inhabited by the Bhils, a jungle people, some of whom were known for robbing the village leaders and unwary travelers.

The people of Dahod advised them to keep an escort to guide them through the forest.

“The sadhus with an escort!” They laughed at the suggestion. Without giving it a moment’s consideration, off they went to confront whatever lay ahead.

They felt elated as they contemplated the beauty of the valley. They took shelter under a huge banyan tree at noon

where some village people served them food. Then they took a rest.

When Gurudev ended his meditation, he caught sight of some seven or eight Bhils coming from a distance. They were equipped with bows and arrows. The moment his eyes fell upon them, the air became charged with the sweet fragrance of his universal feeling. Gurudev lovingly called out to them, "Come, my brothers, come here! Let us talk with one another!" The men were open like innocent children. The Bhils told him of their love for the trees, hills, and dales of the district. They laughed over their booty and plunder and boasted of their hiding places.

When the talk turned to highway robbery, Gurudev told them how afraid the village people were of them. "We were warned not to go into these hills without an escort. The people fear you very much."

The leader of the Bhils laughed and explained, "We do not rob the people. Only the rich of the town deserve to be robbed, the ones who fear the poor and deprive them of their rightful earnings by their oily tongues and superior wits. These rich people show no pity for the poor. Why should we be merciful to them?"

He tried to explain to them that their philosophy was distorted. "If someone robs you of your money, how can you be at liberty to rob him? That is not justice. Two wrongs don't make one right. Justice is when both sides agree with one another." The Bhils did not agree. At times Gurudev could not follow their words as they spoke in their coarse jungle dialect. So he smiled and remained quiet. Before going on their way, they volunteered to return in the morning to accompany the sadhus to the next village.

"The jungle track is rough, Maharaj, so be sure and wait for us! We will be back!" They parted in peace. Gurudev watched them go with their strident steps. They were ill-clad in only torn dhotis. They knew only the law of the jungle, but their hearts were uncontaminated, and their senses keen and natural.

If only they were given the right sort of knowledge, if only they were treated with sympathetic understanding! Gurudev talked this over with his father as they disappeared from sight.

Early the next morning, ten stalwart Bhils presented themselves to the group of monks. It was a victory for faith in man's innate goodness. Together they walked and chatted happily. Before leaving, they exclaimed, "Do you think we would ever molest you sadhus? God forbid! You have a claim on our gratitude. Lo, Gurudev, Maharaj-ji! See there! We have reached the village. Now we will depart. Ram! Ram! Do please come over to our side some day and remember us!"

Though Gurudev remained troubled by their illogical brand of justice, he felt sure they were moving slowly toward the light.

At least the wild tribes of the jungle have respect for goodness. Some day that glimmer of respect will glow fully and lead them out from their ignorance into knowledge. May it be so.

* * *

The Miracle of Life

For more than twenty years, Gurudev served his teacher. He revered him as his inspiration, his inner guide, his friend, as one and the same as the Higher Self enshrined in his heart. Because Gurudev had freed his heart of demand and burden, he was able to dedicate himself to the teaching his master's life represented to him, reverence for life. They continued to walk and share the itinerant life together. They usually spent the four months of *chāturmās* separately. From time to time, Gurudev went off to meditate by himself, or with his father.

Once when his Master went to someone's bedside to chant some *mantra* and give his blessings, Gurudev noticed that he did not use the special healing *mantra* he normally used when someone was ill. He asked him, "Guruji, why did you not use the healing *mantra* today?"

"Today I myself have a high fever. In this state, how can I heal? I am not in a position to create the highest vibrations, so I

refrain from this. After all, we are open channels, the transmitter and the receiver. I have to be completely healthy or I will transmit fever or sickness.”

Gurudev explored with him the whole subject of healing oneself and others. He learned that there was not only one way or one approach, but that of supreme importance was the purity of the healer’s body and mind as well as the use of *mantra* in helping converge the thoughts, remove impurities, and draw the healthiest energy from the universe.

“A person who sustains his body on food which has been procured through bloodshed or violence, do you think he can heal? He may transmit some energy, but along with that he transmits the polluted vibrations of the trembling fear-ridden animal at its time of death. The point is to give from life to life directly. If there is mud adhering to the vessel, how can you make the sweet milk inside clean and drinkable? So the healer’s body must be empty of negative vibrations. He must take only the purest of food, vegetables and fruits. And his mind must be empty of ego.”

Gurudev asked, “What is the proper attitude of the person transmitting healing energy?”

The Master told him, “First of all, you have to see that both the person in need of healing as well as you are open; otherwise healing cannot take place. If the sick person does not want you to help him and still you try and heal, it is a kind of trespassing. You empty yourself of every shred of ego in order to become a vehicle of living love, compassion, and good feeling. You cannot say, ‘I am going to heal.’ No, it is the pure vibrations of universal energy working in nature which heal. As soon as you say, ‘I have healed,’ you take the sickness in along with the credit. Naturally, the other person may express gratitude to you, but something in you that is waiting for his appreciation must go.”

Gurudev commented, “So it is a very delicate thing. You tell yourself, ‘It is not me. The healing flow is coming through me. I am nothing but a bamboo reed.’ Someone else creates the breath and makes the music. The bamboo flute merely transmits it. The flute has to be hollow, so do you.”

The Master answered, “Yes, whether you heal through

chanting *mantra* or by meditating face to face with someone, at the same time, no matter how many miles apart, or whether you use a healing touch, in all methods, you must be pious, pure, and clean. If your flute is stuffed with ego, you cannot create healing vibrations. You say, 'I am empty. Let the universal breath be created and pass through me.'

Gurudev came to appreciate deeply the Sanskrit language for its compact expressiveness, its clarity, its multiplicity of meaning, its perfectly arranged tones and rhythms.

Here is a language which has not changed in thousands of years of existence. Why? Because it is so perfect. The meaning and rhythm of each syllable are so exactly in tune with the universal energy that to change it would be to dilute its power.

He asked his Master, "How can words trigger the healing process?"

He explained, "Words are atoms, and atoms are connected with conscious energy. When conscious energy meets atoms, the atoms become animated."

"And the atoms of *mantra* are animated because they are carrying the authentic living experience of the saints and prophets who originally uttered them. Their breaths have impregnated these words with love."

"Yes, and healing *mantra* create new vibrations of animated atoms which act like a magnet attracting the positive atoms of health prevailing in the universe. These healthy atoms cancel or deflect the negative atoms which create ill health."

Then Gurudev inquired, "How does this work on a physical level?"

The Master answered, "Even the slightest atom has four characteristics — *rūpa* (form), *rasa* (taste), *gandha* (smell), and *sparsā* (touch). All of these act to create a subtle taste or smell, a sense of touch, or rainbow vibrations. According to the specific nature of the ailment, they will work towards dissolving the vibrations of disease. What is unhealthy is purged out and what is lacking is added. It works both ways.

"While the person is being healed, he is taught to understand the cause of his illness. You tell him, 'Your sickness was because of your previous *karmas*. Now it is your duty to live a

life in which you burn out *karmas*, not take on more. You are able to take precautions by being aware of the contents of your mind, of the words you send out, and of your actions. Stop becoming sticky to things and you won't acquire *karmas*. Learn to live like a lotus, above the mud and water, keeping your face turned toward the sun."

* * *

Gurudev began to unearth the volcanic energy hidden within him and to channel it in tune with life. Little by little, he became so sensitive to others' needs and so singlepointedly focused on life, that every atom of his being became animated with reverence for life. People experienced in his presence a profoundly soothing energy. It felt like a healing balm emanating from his being. It was none other than the experience of the qualities of his real Self. In his presence, others were brought into touch with their own Self. He was experiencing what Bhagwan Mahāvīr said, when he was about to leave his body,

"Ekkam jāne, sawam jāne — Knowing one, you know all."

But there were people who could not conceive of the fact that hidden in them, as in all living beings, the same loving energy existed. They were not aware that in them was an infinite healing power capable of being refined and directed for the evolution of their own consciousness. To them, there was only the mysterious and the unanswerable. So they put the unexplainable phenomena into the only category they knew — the supernatural or the miraculous.

Many people who met Gurudev even in those early years were ready to attribute miraculous powers to him. Several events lent credence to their belief and endeared him to them. One such moment occurred on the last day of *Paryushana*, the eight days of forgiveness culminating the rainy season retreat. It took place in Dasada in 1948. Gurudev was leading the traditional procession through the town. There was one spot near an old tomb which Jains always avoided whenever they held processions for fear that some evil might strike them. Moreover, a butcher, who was half-crazy and thought to have

been possessed by a genie, lived there, confirming their fear.

Gurudev decided to teach the people that superstition should be eliminated totally from the mind. Therefore, he led the *Paryushana* procession right to the dreaded spot, straight to the tomb and the insane butcher. As the group approached, the butcher, who had been suffering pain for a long time, howled and screamed. The villagers shuddered.

Gurudev felt deep compassion for him. He stopped, walked up to him, gave him his blessings, and quietly recited some soothing words. Immediately the butcher became calm. He was brought back to his senses. Not only that, he experienced such a flood of deep gratitude to Gurudev that he came to him after a few days and told him that he wanted to give up his ancestral livelihood as a butcher. Moreover, he vowed never to take animals as his food for the rest of his life.

It is no wonder that the people were incredulous before such an event, witnessed by their own eyes. And yet, Gurudev told them, "All sickness is a disconnection from love. As soon as we connect ourselves back to that force which is flowing within our own selves, we recover our health, our life, and our wholeness. Hidden in all living beings is this loving energy. Each of you has the infinite capacity to heal yourself. There is no mystery which cannot be penetrated. There is no miracle. The real miracle is life itself — When you get in touch with that which is beyond mind, the healing process starts."

* * *

If we share this perception of health and healing with Gurudev, we will be able to understand how the following experience could take place.

It was the end of *chāturmas*, this time in 1949, again in Dasada. He was about to change his place of residence when he walked past the palace of the town's chieftain, Mohammed Khanjee, and saw this leader standing on his balcony sad and helpless. Gurudev looked up at him and blessed him.

The chieftain came down and paid his respects to him, but was unable to stop sobbing. Eventually, as the *Muni's* deep compassion and patience touched the man's consciousness, he calmed down enough to reveal the cause of his sorrow.

“It is my ten-year old son. He is suffering from a tumor on the thyroid gland. The doctors have diagnosed it as incurable.”

Gurudev remained buoyant and light as he listened to him. He blessed him again and told him with confidence, “There is no need to worry. All will be well. Here, you take this and apply it to your son’s tumor.”

Gurudev gave him some *vasaxep*, a powder made of sandalwood, saffron, and camphor. This was sacred powder, passed down through the ages from Bhagwan Mahāvir to his closest disciple Gauttam, and from him to his main disciple, and so on until the present day. Each time a new powder was made, a minute portion of the previous powder was added to it. In this way, the new *vasaxep* remained potent and blessed, carrying the vibrations and atoms of the original molecules sanctified by Bhagwan Mahāvir himself.

Within two days, the boy’s tumor completely disappeared. There was no recurrence. As a result, the people created a legend around the ‘Miraculous Muni’

Again Gurudev denied possessing any power other than that which all living beings held. “The real healer is a person’s faith in his Higher Self,” he explained. “Each of us is *ārogya* — pure health. Believe in your healthy loving nature and you will bring out your healing energy.”

Gurudev was becoming nothing but a monument of living love. His presence turned the abstraction of love into a concrete experience. He felt no animosity towards any living being. By moving in this natural flow with the universe, he was able to act as a catalyst, helping a sick person get in touch with that universal energy of love and light which could heal. Gurudev inspired such trust and confidence in people that whoever tapped this reservoir of love became convinced of the reality of his or her own health. The person had to get better and better. At the same time, the *vasaxep* powder served as a tangible healing agent carrying the blessings of the Muni and giving the person an opportunity to do something visibly active to heal himself or herself.

* * *

After the next incident, a story about the Munimaharaj's miraculous powers began to spread throughout the countryside of Gujarat.

One day he was walking in the area of Cambay when several people who knew of his whereabouts came rushing to find him. A man had been stung by a scorpion and was writhing in the dirt road in pain and agony. Gurudev followed the people immediately to his side, and chanted *mantra* which calmed him and freed him from pain.

The *mantra* he chanted was one which evoked the health of all living beings:

शिवमस्तु सर्वजगतः परहितनिरता भवन्तु भूतगणाः ।

दोषा प्रयान्तु नाशं सर्वत्र सुखी भवतु लोकः ॥

Śivam astu sarva jagatah

Parahita niratā bhavantu bhūtagaṇā

Doshāḥ prayāntu nāśam

Sarvatra sukhi bhavantu lokāha

Blessings be to the entire cosmos.

May everyone be completely engrossed in each others' well-being.

May all weaknesses, faults, illnesses, and *karmas* be removed and evaporated.

Everywhere let everyone be in peace, prosperity, health, and bliss.

When Gurudev saw how the people were misunderstanding what he considered a natural capacity within each individual to heal, he pondered the subject.

Most people are ignorant of their inherent divinity. Those of a superstitious frame of mind are ready to create a fairytale around me without gaining insight into themselves. There is always the danger of my falling into subtle pride. And there are always people ready to fan the flames of this ego. Where does it end - in a subtle desire for name and fame. This could stunt my continued spiritual growth. Now I must redouble upāyoga and prevent this from happening.

In the ancient writings, he read one story, relevant to his situation. It told of a man who was able to heal. Anyone who

came into his presence was healed. Originally, he was unaware of his power, but as more and more people were healed, he realized that he had some power. He realized that those whom he healed came into his consciousness and tempted his ego to take credit and feel pride. So he went into meditation and asked himself, "How am I able to heal others if I cannot even heal my own ego?"

Then he made a request to the healing power within him. He asked, "O healing power, I beg you, please, from now on, let anyone who comes to be healed in my presence be healed by my shadow. Then I will not even see who is being healed and that person will not come into my consciousness."

He reached that state of egolessness in which he had no need to make any effort to heal; from then on, the shadow became the healing influence. Once he had removed ego, his energy was so dynamic that anyone who came into his shadow would be healed. It was non-verbal healing.

In this way, Gurudev resolved to free himself from ego and the potential attachment to *siddhis* or powers which arise naturally from a cleansed and clear consciousness. From then on, he consistently observed silence concerning his special gifts. He paid hundreds of visits to the sick, the aged, and the dying in homes and hospitals, but he never gave the impression that he was healing anyone. He spread peace-giving vibrations wherever he went.

Whenever he had a chance, he demystified the whole subject of healing. He taught people how to help themselves. He told them how to find out what had separated them from health. He gave them the right *mantra* to chant and suggestions as to herbs or medications or special foods. He went to the root of the matter.

"Realize that illness is nothing but the echo of your own vibrations. Tell yourself, 'Once I gave pain, now that kind of pain is coming back to me. I accept my part in this. I have to experience what I caused another to experience, so I will not repeat this again.'

"When you stop blaming outside things for illness, fifty per cent of the illness is gone. Then you take the next step. Bathe yourself in *samatha*, in forgiveness. Ask whomever you

offended to forgive you, as you have forgiven others, including yourself. When your forgiveness is complete, the inside energy will come out.

“Feel you are health, you are life, you are love. Focus on that and touch the ailing part with your healing vibrations. Dwelling in a feeling of generosity, forgiveness, amity, and awareness, your pain will disappear, the illness will drop down, and your thoughts will stop creating negative vibrations which invite future disease.”

* * *

During monsoontime in Ahmedabad, Gurudev gave talks in which he helped people understand the law of radiation in life.

“There are countless layers covering our soul corresponding to the countless lifetimes we have lived. In meditation and awareness, we go on peeling. In the wrong company, we take on more layers; in the right company, we go on removing them, one by one. One thing happens, our inner radiation comes out. There is a law of radiation beneath our life. It is like the diamond. As you clean it and polish it, more radiation glows. You are able to live on your own strength. Another thing happens — in the universe, harming elements are not able to harm you. You are protected by your life, by your purity, by your light of love and non-violence.”

One of Gurudev’s students experienced the truth of this law in her own life. For years, she and her husband had been attending Gurudev’s talks and building inner awareness. A few years later, the wife decided to take her daughter on a pilgrimage to Satrunjaya. First they planned to take a bath in the holy river Shatrunji Nadi. It was ten or twelve miles to the river, so the mother rented a bullock cart. After the first six miles had been covered, the driver of the cart became greedy and filled with lust. He started plotting how he could kill the old woman, then take away her daughter and her ornaments. While he was conniving in his mind, the mother started feeling some un-usually pulsating vibrations. At first she could not understand what was going on. So she started meditating on “*Namo Arihantānam*” without knowing the cause of the alarming feeling which had come over her. Then the driver stopped the cart.

“Why are you stopping?” she asked him.

“I will show you,” and took a big axe.

Naturally she felt a great fear pass through her body, but immediately, she thought, “There is not another way but to surrender and die in peace.” She dropped her terror, came to herself, and surrendered.

But when the cartdriver was about to hit her, the axe slipped from its handle and fell into a bush behind the cart. The man cursed and went to retrieve the axe from the bush when a cobra reared its head from behind the bush and bit him. He took his hand back with a scream, saw the hissing cobra, and fell to the ground unconscious. Within fifteen minutes, he was dead.

When the woman related this story to Gurudev, she confirmed, “What I have learned has not gone in vain. Miracle is nothing but what you live. You are right, Gurudev. It is our inner radiation coming out. Now I see how it works in the invisible world. We don’t notice it, and when it comes to our attention, we call it a miracle, a sign. But now I share your conviction — it is nothing but life uncovering itself.”

* * *

In the Face of Fire

According to custom, to celebrate the end of a rainy season retreat, the members of one family would invite the teacher to their house to give a talk and receive a meal. In 1952, Gurudev and his father were invited to the home of a family who had a cloth factory. They planned to spend one night there before moving on and taking up once again the itinerant life. In the afternoon of that day, a crowd of townspeople gathered outside of the family’s house which was a weaving factory to hear Gurudev deliver a talk. A tent had been set up for the occasion to protect everyone from the strong sun.

That night the monks slept in a room on the third floor.

The thirteen family members stayed on the second floor. No one occupied the first floor which housed the handlooms and weaving equipment. Without warning, in the small hours of the morning, there was a blazing fire. Gurudev's father was the first to hear shouts of "Fire! Fire!" The first floor was already engulfed by flames. The second floor was being threatened. The only two men in the family became panicky and rushed up to the third floor ahead of the women and children, battered down the door of the monks' room, forcing it open. This was the only room with a small balcony, the only avenue of escape.

Below the balcony was the tent which had been set up that afternoon for the talk. It could have been used to support all of them if each one jumped carefully and lightly onto it from the balcony. But the two men were in such a fright that they leapt hurriedly over the railing, ripping the canvas as they landed on it. It could not be used in rescuing the nine women and two children who remained trapped within, along with Gurudev and his frail old father.

The staircase was now burning. The women and children came rushing up to Gurudev's room. Huge tongues of fire were spreading rapidly. All were shouting loudly. Outside some people from the cinema across the street set up a ladder under the balcony, but it fell short of reaching it by five or six feet. Gurudev looked intently at the women, children, and his father.

We will all be consumed. There is no way out but to jump, but to jump is to invite death.

All of a sudden, his energy mobilized and he knew just what to do. There was no time to lose. Though *munis* were not supposed to touch women, immediately he began lifting each woman and child over the balcony railing, lowering them down one by one until each could get a secure footing on the ladder and continue down on her own. He had to hold them wrist to wrist with one arm, while the other arm was used to brace himself and hold onto the balcony. Regardless of how heavy or light in weight (and there was one who was more than double his weight), he held each one with all his strength as she dangled down searching with her feet for the support of

the ladder. Then he turned and lowered down another, and still another, until all the family members were saved, as well as his father.

Last of all, he swung himself over the railing, but just as he was about to touch the ladder with his feet, one mother screamed, "My child! My baby! He is not here! He must still be inside! Oh, please save my baby!"

Gurudev was already hanging from the ledge, his fingers nearly ready to let go. But the mother's cries pierced his heart. All of his inner energy gathered itself once again to give him the superhuman strength he needed to swing himself back up onto the balcony again. He rushed in and found the lost toddler who had been wandering around in a daze. He had been in the bedroom instead of staying out on the balcony, and in the excitement, had been forgotten. With the child in his arms, Gurudev ran back to the balcony and handed him down to his mother. Again, he swung himself over the railing and down.

As soon as he reached the ground, he collapsed and became unconscious. The townspeople gathered him up and took him to the *upasray*. For three hours, he remained in that state. His hands, arms, and shoulders were all badly swollen. When he came to his senses, his back was causing him excruciating pain and he found out that he had a crushed disc due to the abnormally heavy lifting, twisting, and stretching.

But he was not discouraged. He kept his positive mental approach alive.

I am life, I am energy. Within me is the same healing power that is in nature. I am not apart from nature; I am part of nature. And that natural energy which allowed me to lift and rescue the people is the same energy which will heal all of these small ailments.

He observed a program of resting his spine and keeping it straight. He meditated on gathering and sending his energy to the specific area where he felt pain. He tapped the energy of the universe through his breath and felt the *prāṇa* of all life aerating and energizing his spine. He opened his heart to the rays of the sun and concentrated on letting its warm healing light soothe and heal all the inflamed nerves and strained

muscles. In particular, he attuned himself to the universal vibrations of *mantra*. “May all living beings be free from disunity, disease, and ailment,” he repeated, orienting his mind toward the well-being of all, not only of himself, but including himself as part of the whole.

Gradually, he was ready to move into gentle yoga postures, and within six months, he healed his back completely. The doctors who had recommended that he have an operation on his spine were amazed. One abnormality remained, however, and still does to this day, a slight tremor in his right hand whenever he exerts it to write.

Someone asked him, “How did you get the energy to lift so many people, and one who was more than twice your own weight?”

“I don’t know how I did it,” he answered, “but at that time, there were no mental calculations. I did not stop to think, ‘Will I be able to do it?’ or ‘What will happen to me if I do this?’ The whole concentration was on the need to save. All I knew was that everyone had to escape from this fire. The power of this conviction came into my arms and gave me the strength I needed. That energy is in all of us, only we are not aware of it. Most of the time it remains dormant, hidden. Sometimes a crisis brings it out and we are amazed. It is our birthright. We have to experience it. We have not to wait for a crisis to recognize it. We start focusing on it now singlemindedly, with a whole heart, in order to put it to use in making our life creative, dynamic, and meaningful.”

* * *

Compassionate Outlook

Gurudev rose before dawn every morning. During one *chāturmās* in Ahmedabad he went out daily onto the balcony outside of his room to meditate in the fresh cool air. He cherished this hour of solitary reflection before the day’s activities and formal prayers began.

One day as he rose after his meditation, he happened to notice a young woman looking up at him from a window in the building across from his *upasray*. He raised his hands to greet her in the natural Eastern way — touching hands to forehead, palms together, which means “Namaste” or “I bow to the Divine Light in you.” After a moment of startled hesitation, the woman returned the silent greeting. For three mornings, this exchange took place, bringing a pure and gentle joy to both the *muni* and the woman.

Before long, another *muni* noticed the exchange. He hastened to warn Gurudev, “Do you know what you are doing? Don’t you know that that woman is a prostitute? I advise you to put an end to this unseemly relationship at once.”

Gurudev passed the day pondering the meaning of appearance and reality, deception and honesty. That night he decided to accept his friend’s advice. So the next morning after his meditation, he turned his back and walked from the balcony without the slightest glance toward the nearby building.

However, his usual feeling of complete tranquillity evaded him that day. Questions kept on forcing their way into his mind.

Even if she does sell her body, was I not bowing to her soul, not her body? Does she not hold divinity within her just as do any of us living here? I do not even know what circumstances led her to this condition. Do I have a right to judge her? Do I have a right to judge any person? What after all is the meaning of amity, purity, and compassion? Can I continue to feel and express these qualities if I reject such a person?

He meditated in this way, winnowing the chaff from the grain, discriminating between what was true and what was untrue. He was willing to confront himself.

Was I not partly afraid of what others might say if they found out about my morning greeting to her? Indeed, I have insulted her by accepting my friend’s advice. This closed-mindedness is a subtle form of harmfulness.

The inner debate ceased and peace returned. The next morning after meditation Gurudev looked again to the window and cheerfully offered his greeting as before. The lady seemed particularly glad to return his gesture. Still he did not feel that

the situation was clear. So when he happened to meet her on the walkway as he returned from the temple that afternoon, he spoke to her without hesitation, apologized to her, and explained the entire story to her.

She responded by opening her heart to him. She told him, "Seeing you every morning sitting so calmly and then receiving your warm greeting gave me inspiration to change my life completely. I made up my mind to stop drinking and earning my living in such a degrading way. But yesterday morning I too was not at the window, so I didn't even know that you had not sent your greeting. The night before I became very depressed and again drowned my sorrow in wine. I became drunk and went back on my resolve to change my life. Some men met me and I accepted their offers. Somehow after that night of despair, my strength and willpower steadily returned. I woke up fully renewed after a deep and restful sleep. When I saw you this morning it gave me the heart to continue and reaffirm my decision to look for a new and healthy way of living."

Gurudev knew of one weaving village where she could get a job in cottage industries. He helped place her there, and from then on, she led a productive healthy life, and came to respect herself again.

In his diary, he wrote out of compassion,

"Does the way seem too long? Are the clouds dark and threatening? Take heart, O weary traveler! There's no cloud so dark that it has not a silver lining; there's no night so black that a star is not shining somewhere!"

Gurudev began to take interest in the lot of prostitutes, in spite of criticism from fellow monks. From this one example of how one person's positive thinking could affect another person's entire life, he saw that it was possible to influence many such women and help them become aware of their power to throw off the shackles binding them to degrading conditions. He encouraged them to lead new and wholesome lives.

He observed how the unenlightened mind can be deceived by appearance. In one of his talks, he spoke to this point.

“Seeing weaknesses in others, we become critical and antagonistic. We judge. What do we get in compensation? Pain, alienation. When you judge others, you move away from people instead of getting closer to them and understanding them. We have no right to go into somebody’s life and find fault. We may say, ‘This person is not living up to my standards,’ but who knows? That person may grow from that way. There are people who grow through pain and suffering; that becomes their course. Then they receive a jolt and that changes their life and they find the real path.”

* * *

Saint and Outlaw

Once Gurudev halted his *vihār* in Dasada in the state of Gujarat. The town and nearby areas were often terrorized by thieves when they were bored with their jungle hideouts and were looking for something to do.

One evening Gurudev addressed a gathering of people out of doors. There was a deafening sound of horse’s hooves and from out of nowhere the ringleader of one gang of thieves galloped into sight. He stopped short in the cloud of his own dust and listened for a few minutes. Then in a flash he was gone! Before jumping onto his fiery horse, he uttered a loud imprecation disrupting the meeting and striking terror into the hearts of the villagers.

The simple townspeople trembled with fright. They could not tear their eyes from the rider. Jewo Reval was his name and his formidable figure seemed to threaten their very existence. Gurudev’s strong and cheery voice and unperturbed manner soon cleared the air and brought them back to themselves. The meeting continued in peace.

Early the next morning Gurudev was out walking through the wooded hills surrounding the village. It was a glorious morning. Birds’ chirpings rippled through the crisp air and

insects hummed their melodies. As he approached the top of a slope, the figure of Jewo Reval accompanied by his dog loomed up from behind a boulder.

He hesitated before the *muni*, then bowed slightly in reverence to him. Gurudev looked upon him intently. He raised his hands to give him the blessing “*Dharma-labh* — May your spirit prosper.”

Then in a soothing and gentle voice, he asked him, “Who are you, brother?”

“I am Jewo Reval, the famous outlaw,” he stammered. “Do you not recognize me?”

Gurudev silently gestured to him to follow as he walked a few yards ahead to a large banyan tree in an open clearing. Golden sunlight filtered down through its branches, making circular patterns on the earth where the pair seated themselves opposite one another. Jewo’s dog rested contentedly by his side as his master gently stroked him.

At first Jewo put on airs and blustered, “Don’t you know how dangerous I can be? Aren’t you afraid of me?”

Gurudev calmly responded, “Why have you not harmed me? I feel no fear in your presence.”

Jewo became a bit confused. Finally he answered, “Well, I would not harm you because you do not try to exploit people. You don’t make any demands on me. So I have no reason to hurt you.”

Gurudev assisted him with kind words and gestures to unload his heavy heart. He saw that Jewo had suffered pain, neglect, and injustice in his life. As a result, he had found satisfaction in disrupting what he viewed as a corrupt and hypocritical society. He discovered that Jewo’s life had not been so different from that of Robin Hood!

Instead of a talk between a sinner and a saint, it was a dialogue between two currents of energy, one embittered, the other loving.

Gurudev asked him, “Have you ever felt love for anyone or anything in your life?”

Jewo replied with a scornful laugh, “Not ! I do not know what is love. What have I to do with love? I have no need for love. Who gave me love so that I could love?”

"Then," the *muni* pointed out, "how is it you are caressing your dog so tenderly? Some feeling there must be deep within you."

"Oh, the dog is different," Jewo explained. "He is loyal and faithful to me. I can always trust him to help me and stay with me."

Jewo began to warm up to the *muni* and admitted, "Yes, once I was in jail and I got the news that my granddaughter was dying. I felt at that time a tremendous emotion and great frustration. I heard that her last words were 'Grandpa, grandpa,' for she longed to see me again. We used to be pals, and I was not allowed even to attend her funeral."

Jewo began to sob. Gurudev waited patiently and lovingly for the emotion which surged from him to subside. He accepted all his outpourings with kindness and compassion. He had known how to ask just the right questions to help Jewo see that really he was capable of love. He helped him understand the cause of his pain and to stop blaming the conditions which brought bitterness, fear, and weariness with life.

At last Jewo admitted, "I am tired of living in hiding and I don't want to go on inflicting misery on other people. I try to appear strong in order to hide my fear. I've thought many times, 'How to start a new life?' I would like to do something which might somehow benefit others, but everyone knows me as a ruthless and violent criminal. No one will trust me. So I don't see how I can change my life."

Gurudev was convinced of Jewo's honesty. He reassured him, "Be patient, I can help you make a new life for yourself. I will talk to some people for you."

Later he explained the situation to the chieftain of Dasada. He found him willing to hire Jewo as a one-man police force to protect the few wheat fields in that village.

Once it became known that Jewo was the law-enforcer, the other bandits in hiding were frightened away and the problem of thievery and terrorizing ended abruptly! Jewo gained the admiration, and even the affection of the people and is still leading a positive useful life today.

Gurudev commented in his diary,

"The discourse of a teacher can take effective root only

when the primary urge for self-development exists deep within the listener's own being, be it even in an infinitesimal form. Then would that tiny seed of inner longing invariably sprout forth into a blossom."

Now, whenever Jewo has a chance to tell people his story, he speaks tenderly of Gurudev, "He is the one who made me a human being."

* * *

Liberation from Prejudice

In his walking journeys, Gurudev met many fine, noble, and liberal-minded persons who were eager to grow. At the same time, he came across some limited and narrow minds. It pained him to see instances of prejudice and sectarian thinking. He saw that for a person to categorize himself as higher or lower than anyone else was a form of violence. Such an attitude violated the dignity of the individual; moreover, it invited those *karmas* which would place the person in a position to be discriminated against in the future and experience the suffering he himself was causing.

Whenever it was possible, Gurudev tried to melt away such mental walls and barriers. In his talks to the people, he often told them, "The realized state is not the monopoly of a handful of saints. It is open to all who long for that and who work for that. Everyone is worthy to experience his or her own innate divinity." He felt this way even before he became a monk, when he was still called Rup-Raj.

* * *

Once as a young college student, Rup was taking a train from Bangalore to Tiruvennamalai to spend time meditating at Arunachala, the ashram of Ramana Maharshi. Sitting next to him was a very well-dressed gentleman. He and Rup struck up

a conversation in the course of which he let Rup know that he was highly educated, with a Master's Degree to his credit. After they exchanged views on a number of subjects, in particular, philosophy and religion, Rup wanted to see if he could help the man break his mental habit of categorizing everything. He could not help noticing the narrowness in his seatmate's thinking and sometimes pompous air. Without being judgmental, he put the man to a test.

After an appropriate pause, he asked him, "Excuse me, Sir, may I know what caste you are from?" There was a stunned look of surprise on the man's face.

"You mean to say you don't already know? I am a Brahmin,* of course," he replied hastily.

When the man returned the question to Rup, he was shocked when Rup answered that he was a Harijan.

"What?" the man exclaimed in disbelief. "You, an untouchable?"

Rup replied with a straight face, "I am what I said."

"Then you must know that you cannot sit next to me here on this seat. I am a Brahmin. You are forbidden to sit with me," he stated with a look of disgust, and moved toward the far end of the bench.

The man expected Rup to leave the compartment, but Rup did not get up. Instead, he sat calmly, allowing the man to remain with his uncomfortable thoughts and steaming hot feelings.

*The Brahmin caste was regarded as the highest class. Dating from the Vedic period, the Aryan social code divided society into four main castes: (1) the Brahmins, or priests and scholars; (2) the Kshatriyas, or warriors, kings, and rulers; (3) the Vaisyas, or traders, merchants, and farmers; and (4) the Shudras, or workers, peasants, and all kinds of manual laborers.

The last subdivision of the Shudras were considered outcastes or 'untouchables.' Mahavir was the first human being to make efforts on their behalf, to inspire others to respect them as fellow human beings, and to give them free access to the teachings and the monkhood. It was not until Gandhiji that efforts were again made to remove the idea of 'untouchability' from prejudiced minds. In this spirit, he gave them a new name, 'Harijan', meaning God's people, or children of God. He admitted Harijans into his Satyagraha Ashram near Ahmedabad in 1915. In 1924, he started a newspaper called *Harijan Bandhu*. Eventually, he influenced the Indian government to abolish the caste system. This took effect legally in 1949.

After a space of nearly twenty minutes, he spoke. His words came from a feeling of compassion and understanding. Without anger or criticism, he explained, "For all these miles we have been enjoying each other's company. We've just been chatting together and exchanging ideas. Now you refuse to talk to me any more. You want me to move out of your sight — all of this turnabout in your attitude simply because I say that I belong to a certain group. Does a label make a man? Where is your feeling for life? Where did your previous feeling of friendship and generosity towards me go?"

The man was in a difficult position. If he answered Rup's questions, he would be inconsistent with his refusal to speak to him again. But, in keeping silence, he could not defend his position. He remained in a frustration, struggling with his thoughts. He became flushed and restless. One part of him wanted to forget the differences he believed to exist between them. Another part remained suffocated by his lifetime habit of categorizing people by labels. How could he drop those concepts which his religious background had planted so deeply in his mind and which had been upheld by the caste system in India for nearly three thousand years?

Rup eased the man's discomfort. "Sir, really I beg your pardon. I am a student on my way to an ashram to study and practice meditation. I am a Jain by birth. My father is a very pious man with high moral standards."

Once again, the man changed his whole approach. "What? Your father is a pious Jain and you are really a college student? Well, that is different." He continued the conversation, "But tell me, why did you not tell me the truth the first time?"

Rup answered, "I wanted you to see that I am the same person regardless of whether or not I carry the label of Brahmin or Jain or Harijan or any other category. Why should we allow small concepts and sectarian beliefs to limit us? They are only boxes, adjectives; they have no bearing on who we really are. Now that I have used a different adjective to introduce myself, this time an acceptable one, your whole attitude has changed again. Now I want to know, will you be my friend regardless of the outer description? If you are really the reli-

gious man you say you are, can you not transcend the form and live in the essence of the teaching?"

Rup had breathed a breath of fresh air into this man's life. He sat very still, reflecting on Rup's words.

"I hope I did not offend you, Sir," Rup told him gently.

The train was pulling into the station where this man was to get off. Before he stood up, he took both of Rup's hands into his own, looked into his eyes, as if into a mirror, and spoke to him in a subdued tone, "Bless you, child of God. You have given me something. I shall not forget it." Then he went out of the compartment and on his way.

* * *

When Rup became a monk, he read Mahāvīr's own words revealing the Jain attitude toward caste. In Chapter XXV of the *Uttarādhyaṇa Sūtra*, Mahāvīr tells the story of the monk Jayaghosha who had been a Brahmin before becoming initiated as a Jain monk and who, as such, was now free from caste identity. Jayaghosha was completing a one month's fast and going out for alms when by chance, he approached a house in which a Brahmin, Vijayghosha, was preparing a sacrificial offering. When he saw Jayaghosha, he turned him away, refusing to give him alms and explaining, "This food is meant only for Brahmins who are well versed in the *Vedas* and well grounded in the sacrificial science. They are the ones who deserve charity because they save themselves and others."

The monk became neither upset nor disappointed. Instead, he calmly stated the qualities of a "true Brahmin," indicating that Jains take the word 'Brahmin' in a different sense, in its essential meaning irrespective of the labels of birth or heredity. Here are Jayaghosha's exact words:

"He who is exempt from attachment, hatred, and fear, and who shines forth like burnished gold purified in fire, him we call a Brahmin.

"He who thoroughly knows living beings, those which move about, those which do not, and does not injure them, him we call a Brahmin.

"He who does not take anything that is not given him, be it small or large, him we call a Brahmin.

“He who is not defiled by pleasures just as a lotus grows on the water and yet is not immersed in it, him we call a Brahmin.”*

According to the Jain teaching, the meaning of life reveals itself in expansion, in including all in one’s love and well-wishing. The experience of liberation arises naturally from the moment one drops all concepts and biases. Then one feels the fullness and completeness of life, of one’s own nature: *ananta jñān*, infinite wisdom; *ananta darsan*, infinite vision; *ananta virya*, infinite energy, and *ananta ananda*, infinite bliss.

* * *

Wherever hypocrisy, prejudice, or discrimination had taken hold, Gurudev threw a light to expose the root causes of such attitudes and to help people remove them. He observed that those Jains who had not gone into the depth of Mahāvīr’s teaching were sometimes speaking and acting in ways influenced by the caste system. They were not aware of how their minds had absorbed the cultural influence, but when they were put to the test, at times subtle biases surfaced.

At this time in Bhavnagar, in 1956, people from all walks of life were attending Gurudev’s talks. One group, called the Bhavsars, were following the practices of Jainism. On the last day of the eight-day festival of forgiveness, even those who had not fasted during the seven previous days usually fasted and kept silence. That evening, Gurudev performed *Samvatsiri Pratikraman*, the ‘stepping back from all kinds of unawareness,’ as listed in the *Kalpa Sutra* which Gurudev recited in its entirety. At the end, there was *kshamāpana*, the chance to forgive everyone, including oneself, and to ask others for forgiveness.

The next day, the people were planning to break the fast in a feast called *Swāmi-Vātsalya*, in celebration of affection for all

*This story is quoted in *The Jaina Path of Purification* by Dr. Padmanabha. It is because of the emphasis on animal sacrifice and the caste system that Jains and Buddhists through the centuries have not accepted the authority of the *Vedas*, in which these practices are spelled out. However, they appreciate the beauty and wisdom expressed in the *Upanishads*, which form the basis for the Vedānta philosophy.



Offerings



Indira Gandhi, Gurudev and his father Muni Chandrakant Sagarji.

fellow beings. Gurudev heard that the Bhavsars and Jains were planning to have separate feasts. He thought that this, too, must be a day of unity. So he invited both to join together for the occasion. Some of the Jains were reluctant to agree. Gurudev helped them penetrate their hidden prejudice and gain a more panoramic vision, with this talk:

“Jains have always seen the caste system as a mental projection. It has nothing to do with a person’s reality. Each living being holds the precious seed of divinity. Each is inhaling the universal breath. Caste and creed stifle life. Should we let these ephemeral labels limit our feeling for life? Let all have free access to their heart’s calling. Let us share as brothers and sisters.”

His words built a bridge and restored harmony. The devoted Bhavsars shared in the feast along with everyone else. It was a moment of joy. From that day, mental barriers of that kind faded into oblivion, and in Bhavnagar, till the present time, mutual respect and understanding prevails.

* * *

At the end of another rainy season retreat, this time in Botad, Gurudev and his father had a new occasion to evaporate the clouds of rigid thinking. Among Gurudev’s devotees were a large group of the potter caste. Gurudev and his father accepted their invitation to take a meal prepared by them, and to bless and sanctify their homes. The potters also requested the privilege to host the large morning gathering of monks and laypeople which would follow the meal. This gathering would mark the end of the retreat and the new start of the itinerant portion of the monks’ life.’

The occasion had been traditionally celebrated according to local custom in the home of a wealthy Jain patron. To change this custom presented a controversial moment to the Jains of that community. Gurudev and his father, who were so moved by the goodwill and genuine enthusiasm of the potters, were eager to respond to them with matching enthusiasm. Gurudev did not allow any tension to build up. Instead, he gave a talk which swept all into an experience of unconditional love:

“Mahāvīr asked himself, ‘Am I holding anything in my consciousness which could cause pain to another? If so, let me uproot it.’ He found that what causes pain to another causes pain to oneself, and that what gives peace to another gives peace to oneself. He did not want anyone to adhere blindly to tradition, but rather, to think for himself and be aware of the right focus in each situation. That focus was this: Is it helping or harming? To respect people’s sincere feelings and nourish the seed of divinity, isn’t this the way to help life? To follow custom without regard for someone else’s feeling, isn’t this the way to harm life? Helping each other to grow, we help ourselves to grow.”

Once the people caught a glimpse of this purpose, they became eager and willing to make the occasion an auspicious one. In the humble huts, the poor people of a traditionally low social caste revealed themselves to be inwardly rich and generous. Their offering turned into a joyous feast. It gave them deep satisfaction to be able to honor Gurudev and his father and to distribute to the wealthy Jains the traditional good-omen gifts of coconuts. The monks in turn gave them their benediction and blessed their homes.

For many of the Jains, the heart of Mahavir’s teaching came to life for the first time. They were unexpectedly captivated by the bubbling joy and genuine feeling shown by these simple honest people. Through such a unique gathering, the potters themselves gained a fresh sense of self-esteem and self-appreciation which proved to be a meaningful impetus for their continued spiritual growth.

* * *

Living Examples

Gurudev spent many hours cheering the sick, and bringing peace and solace to people everywhere he went. He observed that when volition was lacking, the person’s body began to

disintegrate correspondingly. As soon as someone realized that he could no longer use this body for anything, he either prepared himself to leave it willingly, as a bird leaves the nest, or he became weaker and weaker in mind as in body. For example, after the Indian people won freedom from the British, Gandhiji is known to have told his niece, "Now I have no desire to live into the hundreds, as I used to. My mission is over. I would rather depart than see our brothers fighting each other in this way." In despair over the violence which had broken out between Hindus and Moslems, his will complied in a way with the event which took his life.

On the positive side, Gurudev had contact with one octogenarian, who until the age of fifty-three had been beset by illness at least once a year. One day, he told Gurudev that the truth had dawned upon him. "What I want to do I can do," he had thought. From that moment, he had made up his mind to take care of his body, and, in particular, to remove negative thoughts from his mind. One by one, he had started replacing certain thought patterns with healthy and inspiring thoughts. He had taken hold of his life and had begun organizing his time. He had sorted out how many hours to spend in meditation, what kinds of food would be best for his nutrition, how often to go out for a walk and engage in breathing practices. After that year of positive effort, he never again became sick. He remained in excellent health until his last day when he left his body in his nineties.

He left his influence on his son. Following in the healthy mindprints of his father, his son, who is now in his seventies, became convinced that he too could maintain himself in excellent physical, mental, and spiritual health. He told Gurudev, "If my father could live until ninety, I will not live less!" He also used his wealth to have the famous Manilal Nanawati Hospital built in Bombay in honor of his father.

On several occasions, Gurudev witnessed men well into their nineties or more leave their earthly existence in a state of perfect peace and composure. One of these was one of his teacher's teachers, Acharya Siddhisuriji, who lived to the age of one hundred five years. He observed how he was aware of the precise moment in which he was to depart. He watched

him sit in meditation until, in the ecstasy of *samādhi*, he left his body. Such living examples convinced Gurudev that old age and sickness are only concepts; they are not certainties.

If one leads a healthy life, takes the right kind of nutrition for body and mind, where is there room for decrepitude and old age? These two are not inevitable after all. And I have seen with my own eyes men who did not believe in death, who transcended and transformed, whose last breath gave a profound sense of the continuity of life and consciousness.

It was good that he had these occasions to witness firsthand living examples of what he had glimpsed in his own meditations. He had a new admiration for the simple villagers themselves who, at someone's departure, never used the words "loss," "gone," or "died," but instead, used the Gujarati expression *pāchothayo* which means "become again." Thanks to their intuition and trust, the people believed in continuity. Instead of feeling someone's disappearance, they had the certainty that the person had gone on to another state.

* * *

In the year 1956, when Gurudev and his father and a few other main disciples of Āchārya Ānand Sāgarsuriji were staying in Bhavnagar, they were informed that their guru who was at Surat was preparing for final departure. He had stopped taking food, and was accepting only a certain amount of liquids each day. For three days, they were told, he was sitting in the same lotus posture, in deep meditation.

Gurudev felt his vibrant presence continually. No matter how clear he was in his mind that his guru's present mission was over, upon hearing the news of his final departure, Gurudev felt in his heart a kind of void, a deep inner pain. His soul knew the truth, but his heart missed his guru's physical presence. He meditated and saw that though there was never a moment of discontinuity of spiritual presence, still, on a physical and emotional level, he felt absence. At the same time, he watched himself feeling his feeling. Through this process, he came back to himself.

He realized, too, that it was a loss not only to him but also to all those who had been seeking his light. *In his embodiment*

in this life, he gave inspiration to innumerable souls. He imparted knowledge and wisdom to thousands. His way of blending wisdom, creativity, compassion and scholarliness was unique. In hundreds of centuries, history has not produced such a man.

The feeling of void subsided, and Gurudev again felt the pure spiritual presence of his beloved guru as fresh as the morning breeze. At times, he felt as if he were sitting in the same room with him. The illusion of duality ceased.

* * *

The Immortal Song

We went to root ourselves in the core of our being. There we can experience our living energy, the sap of our life. From the heart of this inner universe blossom all the petals of our outward activities. As such, each thought, each word, each deed can reveal a beautiful fragrance emanating from within. Those who came in touch with Gurudev enjoyed such divine fragrance, and still do.

In the life of all, however, there are times of imbalance, of either too much activity risking the loss of inner peace, or too much inactivity risking the loss of connection with the world at large. At this time in Gurudev's life, he felt that the scales weighed too much on the side of activity — talks, writings, meetings. Though the heart was continually eager to share and give, he realized that outer demands were beginning to engulf him and that he needed to take time for himself.

He decided to make his way with his father to Mt. Abu to experience there the hallowed vibrations of the land of his birth. Before his Enlightenment, Bhagwan Mahāvīr was known to have wandered and meditated on this mountain.*

*After Mahavir, many Jain Masters from the fifth century B.C. to the present came here. Prehistoric references to Mt Arbudagiri or Mt. Arbudachal, as Mt. Abu used to be called, are found in the oldest hymns of the *Rigveda* and in the epic narrative *The Mahabharata*.

Now as Gurudev and his father climbed to the peak of this holy mountain, they felt the omniscient presence of this apostle of peace and non-violence, and became deeply attuned to his vibrations. At the same time, father and son felt the power of love emanating from their past connection with this place. It enveloped them. In silence they felt this journey as a true homecoming.

Out of devotion to his son, Gurudev's father arranged to collect food for his son so that he could be free to meditate uninterruptedly for seventeen days. The young monk took his simple meal under a tree, following the practice of *ekāsan*, eating only once a day, in one sitting, and in one place. In this way, he was spared the need to think about food, and the body's needs would disturb him as minimally as possible.

In those seventeen days he felt a deep inner ecstasy. The words of Bhagwan Mahāvīr rang in his ears — *maitri*, *pramoda*, *karuṇā*, *madhyeṣṭya*, amity, appreciation, compassion, equanimity. Each word touched something inside him. He meditated on the essence of each one.

What is maitri? What does it mean to feel amity and friendship for the entire universe of living beings? Does my consciousness embrace all and exclude none?

The answer came in the form of a universality of feeling. Gazing at the loving eyes of the images of Ādinātha and Neminātha in the Delwara temples, he felt his soul expand infinitely. All boundary lines melted away. He experienced a vast inner space, as if the heartbeats of the universe itself were pulsating within his own heart. A steady stream of love for all life filled his being. He explored the meaning of *pramoda*, appreciation.

Do I feel from my depths appreciation for all those great souls of all times and places who have shown the path and led the way to Self-Realization?

He opened himself to a new flow, a flow of reverence for the great masters who not only rose above their inner weaknesses, but who also bequeathed to mankind their insights and ever-living vibrations of perfection and peace. He stood in admiration before the shining lights in his life. He thought of his fellow monks and other genuine seekers, simple virtuous

laypeople. His heart went out to them all and he rededicated his life to them.

He meditated on the story of Neminātha, the twenty-second Tirthankara, who had had the courage to call a halt to his own marriage procession when he learned of the plans for his marriage feast. Upon seeing many different animals tied up and in cages along the side of the road, Prince Nemi asked the charioteer, "What are all these animals doing here?"

The charioteer answered, "Don't you know? They are for your wedding feast."

The Prince Nemi was shocked and dismayed. "In order for me to marry, so many lives have to be lost? No, better not to marry than to do so at the cost of so many helpless innocent lives."

He ordered the charioteer to turn around. His bride-to-be Rajul who was watching from above, on a balcony, did not understand. When she heard of his change of heart, she went to him and asked, "You are kind to animals but you are not kind to me?"

Gently Prince Nemi encouraged her to stretch her vision and see through the eyes of understanding.

"Where is our kingdom, dear? Is it the ever-changing world of things, where everything comes and goes, where people fight and grab and exploit? Can we not have that kingdom which is permanent? Come with me into the homeless life. Renounce palace and possessions, and seek the truth of your own life. We will meditate together and help one another to grow."

Rajul followed him and became his disciple. The story was beautifully depicted in white marble, carved upon the columns, walls, and ceilings of the sacred Delwara temples, in which Gurudev took *darśan* and meditated many hours. He was inspired by the purity of Neminātha's love and compassion.

Am I experiencing genuine compassion for those who are in pain and for those who in causing pain are inviting their own pain as well? Do I feel for those who are impoverished in heart and in body? Can I put myself in the place of all suffering living beings?

The endless panorama of mankind's suffering and self-inflicted pain, as well as the countless ways in which animals were tortured and killed, stretched out before his inner vision. The aeons of generations it would take for all to evolve and be lifted out from their ignorance and indifference moved him deeply. Tears sprang forth from his depths, and he prayed that this feeling never run dry.

In his diary, he wrote, "Even as a man practices penance and renunciation, his heart must be ever full of the milk of human kindness; else it will shrivel."

For him, the pain of others was real. He would never permit callousness or neglect to cover over this genuine feeling of *karuṇā*, compassion.

Finally, he realized *madhyestha*, equanimity, to be the queen of these four virtues. He wanted to remain in balance at all times, throughout all confrontations, tests, and trials.

Here is the greatest lesson to learn, for without equanimity, I cannot be of help to anyone.

* * *

As he sat by a brook meditating, all of these thoughts came as wordless realizations to him. He tasted the real meaning of each of them.

Now his own words flew from his heart. He uttered them aloud. Without composing a poem, a poem was composed. Without formulating a tune, a melody emerged. It poured into expression as he took up the pen and diary he always carried with him.

He jotted down the words to what became 'The Immortal Song.'

*'Maitri bhāvanu pavitra jharaṇu
muja haiyāmā vāhyā kare
śūba thāo a sakala viśvanu
evi bhāvanā nitya rahe'*

May the sacred stream of amity
flow forever in my heart,
may the universe prosper
such is my cherished desire.

*‘Guṇathi bharelā guṇi jana dekhi
haiyu māru nrutya kare
e santanā charaṇa kamalamā
muja jivananu arghya rahe’*

May my heart sing in ecstasy
at the sight of the virtuous
and may my life be an offering
at their feet.

*‘Din krūra ne dharm vihonā
dekhi dilamā darda rahe
karuṇā bhini ākhomāthi
aśruno śubha srota vahe’*

May my heart bleed at the sight
of the wretched, cruel, and the poor
and may tears of compassion
flow from my eyes.

*‘Mārg bhulelā jivana pathikane
mārg chindavā ubho rahu
kare upekshā e mārgani
toe samatā chitta dharu’*

May I always be there to show the path
to the pathless wanderers of life,
but if they should not hearken to me
may I bide patiently.

*‘Chitrabhānuni dharmā bhāvanā
haiye sou mānava lāve
vera jheranā pāpa tajine
maṅgala gito e gave’*

May the spirit of goodwill
enter into all our hearts,
may we all sing together
the immortal song of brotherhood.

More and more the feeling of these words settled in his consciousness. They ignited with the fire of inner life.

When he returned to Ahmedabad, he asked people for donations to help him open animal houses for the wounded and uncared for animals, and to initiate medical dispensaries for the poor people. Gujarat state experienced the surge of his energy and people became eager and generous in their help.

One day Gurudev was singing his poem aloud to himself. One professor, Mr. Desai, came to see him. By chance, he heard part of the song and asked him, "From where does this poem come?"

"Oh, it is a song which came to me at Mt. Abu. I sing it to myself and it inspires me in my life."

"Please, will you sing it for me from the beginning?"

He gladly complied. The professor was deeply moved.

"You must allow it to be printed. This will be a prayer for many people, especially because it is completely free from any dogma, from any particular religion or sect or deity. It mentions no gods nor goddesses. It is nothing but pure feeling. It carries a great message to life."

Thus it was that Mr. Desai arranged for it to be published. It was turned into a record and came to be sung in countless homes and hearts. At certain *dharmashalas*, you could hear its strains blasting through the loudspeakers, bringing joy to all around.

One day in his broken English, Gurudev translated it. Another time, one of his students tried his hand at retranslating it. Then his close disciple Mr. Baakza changed a few words here and there. In this way, the message went on spreading across the country, eventually to become known across the continents, a musical ambassador of universal love and peace.

* * *

A Tender Parting

Even after years of spiritual practice, no matter how well prepared someone is for the departure of a loved one, when the fact hits, it is a different thing. For as long as Gurudev could remember, there was one human being who had always been everything to him. That was his father. His father had been both mother and father to him. He had been his friend, guide, and spiritual brother. Together they had borne the loss of his little sister. They had lived through his mischievous days as a rebellious and sometimes too gullible child. They had gone on pilgrimages together. Thanks to his father, he had found the right Master to guide him. On the meaningful day when Gurudev had met Ācharya Ānand Sāgarsuriji for the first time, his father had been with him. He was the only family member to have witnessed his initiation into the monkhood. After that, his father had found worldly life meaningless and, inspired by his son, had joined the monkhood himself. For seventeen years they had been inseparable soulmates, walking, learning, and teaching together. Because of this deep bond he felt with his father, he had consciously spent many meditations preparing himself for his father's departure.

Throughout the last few years, his father had been in good health. He was bony, and rather frail-looking, but he had remained strong enough to continue the miles and miles of daily walking which were part of their itinerant life. He was in his sixty-ninth year, and there was no reason to suspect that he was nearing his time of departure. But Muni Chandrakant Sagarji had had signs that morning. When he was meditating on a picture of Bhagwan Mahāvīr, the eyes began to open and close. There was some hidden connection, some message that his own consciousness was giving which caused the eyes to blink. He knew, he felt, but he did not say.

It was July 26, 1959, the morning of his son's thirty-seventh birthday. To offer their love and greetings, many people had gathered at the new *upasray* in Navrangpura, a suburb of Ahmedabad, where Gurudev and his father were

staying. At 9 o'clock, according to custom, one of the monks was to lead the prayers and give a talk. On this day, Gurudev's father chose to be the one to give the talk in honor of his son's birthday. He spoke of the departure of Bhagwan Mahāvīr and of the effect of this moment on his closest disciple, Gauttam, who was already in his eightieth year. He spoke with deep conviction and ecstasy in his voice which only he fully understood.

"Bhagwan Mahāvīr and Gauttam had a deep and abiding love for one another. The day Bhagwan Mahāvīr was to leave his body, he knew that Gauttam could not take it. So he sent him to another town to teach the people. When Gauttam heard the news that his beloved master had departed, he broke down in grief and despair. In that pain he went deep into himself.

"Ultimately, from the heart of his grief came a realization. 'I am in sorrow because of my attachment for my master's dear and divine embodiment. But he has not gone away from me. Ours is an eternal union. Our communion is undying. Mahāvīr's life was the gift of *ahimsā* to mankind. Now I must carry on his work.' Through this revelation, Gauttam broke through the last *karmic* veils and attained *kevaljñān*, omniscience.

"So when someone departs, there is no reason to be sad. We must know that we are *atma*, we are indestructible life energy. Think of the person who departs as moving onward along the path into his eternal journey. He is going to find his new life."

Everyone was deeply moved and inspired by these words, in particular Gurudev. For such a message to have come on his birthday was meaningful. He began to think in this way.

Birthdays are really milestones. They are leading us closer to the day of departure. But for one to whom departure is a final reward, it is an occasion to celebrate!

Though his father's words were a gentle indication of what was to come, it did not occur to him that his father was conveying a special message to him.

Muni Chandrakant Sāgarji had cherished a dream. He had wanted to see a new temple built which the people of Navrangpura could use for meditation and *svādhyāy* or self-study.

That afternoon, the town leaders came to propose a special plan for the temple project. Muni Chandrakant Sāgarji saw his dream coming closer to becoming a reality. The day passed in joy.

An hour or so before sundown, it was time for the monks to take their last meal of the day. Muni Chandrakant Sāgarji offered his son a drink of water. It was a final gift from father to son, a last act of silent communion, a gesture of which only father was quietly aware. After a light supper, the two sat together with a small group of students to watch the setting sun. A little while later, he told his son, "I am feeling a little tired and there is some pain here in my chest."

"Here," his son offered gently, "why do you not put your head in my lap and rest?" While he caressed his father's chest, his father began to chant slowly and almost inaudibly,

*"Aum namo arihantāṇam
Aum namo siddhāṇam
Aum namo āyariyāṇam
Aum namo uvvajhāyāṇam
Namo he sauva sāhūṇam
Eso pañcha namukkāro
Savva pāvva panāsaṇo
Maṅgalānañch savvesim
Padhamum hauai maṅgalam."*

In a few moments, he opened his mouth and lay still in his son's arms. "He is gone," said one of Gurudev's students who was a doctor.

"What are you talking about?" Gurudev asked him a little sharply.

"It is over. Your father has expired," he told him.

Gurudev could not grasp what had really happened. He felt a little anger. Just one minute before, his father had been alive. One moment later, he had felt a little pain and was gone. It was too much to bear. For hours he remained in a daze, confused. Then he fell into a deep and troubled sleep.

For three days he felt waves of intense emotion and grief. He kept watching, experiencing, recognizing, and accepting

the depth of his inner feeling. It was never his way to suppress his humanness. Nor would he allow himself to become defeated by it. He continued to meditate on this event which opened more than anything else the whole mystery of life to him. By staying closely in touch with himself, he was able to turn the experience into a profound realization.

The source of my tears is really a desire to cling to my father. But his mission is over. He has gone for another work, and the relation I had with him will remain. He has gone from my eye's vision but not from the universe. Always I will cherish his beautiful life and go on sending him my loving vibrations. My vibrations will succeed in reaching him, but not my tears.

All of a sudden the words spoken by his father in the morning talk about Gauttam came to life for him. This understanding began to fill his consciousness and the mantle of despair was lifted. He came back to himself.

Then he remembered vividly something his father used to tell him when he was younger, "If I die in restlessness or a lot of pain, then you will know that my spiritual practice has meant nothing." In his youth, as Rup-Rajendra, he used to think that these words grew out of pride and vanity. But now he thought differently.

The way he left his body, so peacefully, now I know what he was trying to tell me. Seeing the calm exit he took from this world, I wonder, is this death? Is this that terrifying event which people dread and fear all their lives? Why do people wear black and walk about with downcast eyes? Surely if one learns how to live, it becomes a calm and peaceful departure into the infinite universe of life, a gentle setting sail onto an eternal sea.

After the initial blow and the intense emotion which overcame him in the next few days, Gurudev was able to return to his steady ground of truth. He had made a daily investment in his precious consciousness; now the depth of his treasure, his understanding rooted in the experience of life and the ancient wisdom came forth to uplift him and give him balance. The experience carved an even deeper space within him out of which was born an even greater feeling for mankind's pain and a tremendous faith in the potentiality of life.

Within a short time, the members of the Jain community

of Navrangpura and Ahmedabad made Muni Chandrakant Sāgarji's dream come true. They constructed the temple and named it Navrangpura Mandir. For those in search of an oasis of calm, it provided a quiet space to study and meditate silently. The donors invited Gurudev to stay in Ahmedabad, to live and teach in this center.

Partly from the dynamic outer change in which he had to think of living his life without the company of his father, the young *muni* began to feel profound forces of inner change. He saw that his mission did not lie in remaining in Ahmedabad nor in continuing to lead the life of a rural monk. Now he felt a new freedom to move in directions which previously he did not consider actualizing out of regard for his father who was more traditional-minded than he. New vibrations, unknown feelings, the urge to respond to suffering humanity in a reformist humanitarian way, all were beckoning to him.

His heart turned towards Bombay. Though the people of Ahmedabad kept on urging him to stay, he decided to make his way to India's most modern, industrialized, and materialistic city. The men responsible for the new temple pressured him to reconsider, but to no avail.

* * *

VI. REVERENCE FOR LIFE

Inspiring the Prisoners

It was the eve of Gurudev's departure for Bombay. He was scheduled to give a final talk to the prisoners of Sabarmati Jail the next morning. A small incident occurred that evening with regard to where he would sleep. Very few people lived near the prison, and, at the last minute, the only place available was a nearby stable. The chieftain, Pratapsing, who was in charge, was distressed by this, but Gurudev declined to go elsewhere.

In the morning, on the way to the talk, he admitted to him, "Oh, Gurudev, I was so worried about your comfort that I could not sleep a bit last night!"

Gurudev smiled, "You should not have burdened yourself. I slept as sound as a baby until daybreak. When you have peace of mind, it does not make any difference whether you sleep in a stable or a palace."

In his talk that morning, Gurudev's loving voice and penetrating insights affected his listeners deeply. Guards and hardened criminals alike were heard weeping. At other times, gales of laughter filled the air. Gurudev spoke directly to their plight.

"The first thought that struck me as I entered the gates of this jail was—are we not all in some way prisoners? Some are behind prison bars. Others are prisoners of their own passions. From these bars some day you will be liberated. But what about the chains that bind you to greed and lust? Can you break them? Whether you are king or beggar, saint or outlaw, these chains are the hardest to break."

He recalled an incident from his life. "Once I was in my uncle's house looking out of the window. The window was covered with several bars, but I did not notice them because my mind was engaged in watching a parade pass by on the street below. When the procession was over, I became aware of the bars.

“Why did I not see the bars before? Because I was engrossed in some purpose, to watch the parade. Mahatma Gandhiji was a prisoner in this very jail, but because he had a purpose, a fresh way of thinking, he never saw the jail’s bars as bondage. Though the world called him a prisoner, he was a free man. He used to say, ‘I am not in a prison; I am in a palace!’”

Gurudev told the inmates how Gandhiji had used his time and energy to teach the other prisoners how to weave khadi cloth. “When the officials would not permit him to teach, in those hours he would keep silence. Every moment of his time was put to the best use. Two and a half years later, when the Viceroy intervened on his behalf and officials came and told him, ‘Gandhiji, you are free. You may go home now,’ he answered, ‘What? I cannot go now. Still there are eight days to complete my course for these men. I will not go yet.’

“The officials were confused. ‘Then you have to pay rent in order to stay!’ they insisted. Ultimately, they compelled him to leave. So what I want to say is your attitude, your purpose, your meaning, is what makes you see bars as bars, or, as challenges to bring out your energy for a positive cause.”

* * *

In particular, Gurudev was concerned with helping the men realize that once they were freed from the jail, they were free to live a new life without the slightest trace of revenge or anger toward those who had sent them to jail. He reminded them, “It was your own unrestrained emotions that brought you here. Don’t shift the blame onto others. There are no old scores to settle. Revenge is a poison. Don’t let this poison spoil the rest of your life. Throw it out. Let it go. Erase, forgive, and forget.”

He then gave the example of Koshalraj whose small kingdom was about to be invaded by a neighboring king Kashiraj who could not control his greed for more land and power. At the prospect of war, rather than subject his people to bloodshed, Koshalraj decided to abdicate and leave the kingdom to Kashiraj and spend the rest of his days living as a poor man in the forest. Though Kashiraj became king, he remained unhappy, because he was filled with envy for the way in which the people continued to love and revere their former king. He

tried to steal their hearts away by giving them feasts, processions, and charity, but to no avail.

One night he set out incognito to hear what the people were saying about him. When he heard them praise Koshalraj for his noble example of forgiveness, love, and compassion, he became infuriated. He decided to do away with his rival once and for all. He announced that he would reward anyone who captured Koshalraj dead or alive with a thousand pieces of gold.

One day a poor man happened to enter the forest where Koshalraj and his wife were leading a meager but contented life. He told him of his great need for money to pay for his daughter's wedding. He was in search of Koshalraj because he had heard of his generosity and thought he might be able to help him. He was unaware both of the reward upon Koshalraj's head and of the identity of the person with whom he was speaking, Koshalraj himself. But Koshalraj had heard of the reward from a stranger who had passed through the forest earlier. It occurred to him that if he himself took the poor man to Kashiraj, he could present the reward on his head to the poor man and lift him from his burden.

At this point, Gurudev's words were penetrating, "The life of one who lives with love and compassion forever in his heart is like a rain cloud. The cloud bursts bringing joy and life to the creation. Those who are born to be immortal know full well that the soul is more valuable than any of their worldly possessions, and that to lift the soul to the highest level, no renunciation is too great."

Thus it was that Koshalraj parted from his wife, consoling her tenderly, and went into the town, taking the poor man with him. Bowing low before the envious king, he turned himself in. The whole court, including the king, were amazed and speechless. The poor man, who had just discovered who his unknown guide was, fell on his knees sobbing. He no longer wanted" the money. It was at too high a cost.

The story continued. "Koshalraj spoke in a gentle but clear voice, 'I will die sooner or later like the rest of mankind. If by my death I can benefit someone, I do not mind dying a few years earlier.' His simplicity, his magnanimity touched every-

one. The whole court rose to its feet and burst into a thunderous applause of 'Long live Koshalraj! God bless our King and Father!'"

Kashiraj's heart melted and he asked Koshalraj for forgiveness. "Forgive me for all my meanness, for all my cruelty to you. I was blind with jealousy, but the scales have fallen from my eyes and now I can see you for what you are. You are God's messenger to mankind. You have been sent to enlighten us, to show us the path of virtue. I can now understand why your people are so devoted to you and why I can never take your place in their hearts. It is because of your boundless love for them. Love begets love, and they love you with all their hearts. Love conquers all, even hatred and jealousy and enmity. I stand repentant before you and beg you to take back your kingdom and let me go back to mine."

Having already renounced the world, Koshalraj had no desire to return to a life of power and wealth. He requested that Kashiraj remain as king and that he, Koshalraj, be allowed to stay and work for the well-being of the people. "To feed the hungry, to tend the sick, to console the bereaved, that would be his work till the end of his life."*

* * *

This story had a powerful impact on one of Gurudev's listeners in particular. Immediately after the talk, one of the inmates asked to see him privately. The man who made the request had been charged with murder.

Gurudev went to his cell. The guard remained hovering. Gurudev asked him to leave them alone. "You are not afraid?" the guard insisted. "This man is a murderer."

"No," Gurudev answered in calmness. "I will talk to him alone."

When the two were left in peace, the man begged him to help him. "I am not guilty," he blurted out. Gurudev led the man into seeing another aspect. He asked him, "In your life, have you not hurt anybody?"

The man repeated, "I swear to you, I have not killed this

The entire talk soon came to be published in a book first in Gujarati, later in English, under the title *Bondage and Freedom*.

man.” Again Gurudev asked him gently, “No, I am not asking you whether you are guilty of this crime. I am inquiring whether in your life you have ever caused pain to somebody. I will not tell anyone what you tell me. Don’t be afraid.”

Then the man opened his heart. “A few years ago, somebody raped my wife and I became furious and killed him, but I was not proven guilty for that murder. Now I am found guilty for a crime I did not commit.”

“Sometimes it comes from the back door,” Gurudev told him. “That is the universal law. It is beyond our human mind to grasp, but the universe works like a computer. Invisibly, like a wave, a vibration is sent out in the universe. It touches its mark and makes its way back again to give us the experience of what we did to someone else. It always happens. That is why we have to be aware of the consequences of each thought, word, or action before we send it out in the world.”

“What shall I do?” the man pleaded.

“Now you work for your inner freedom. Pour the waters of forgiveness on all your anger. Clean out your mind and heart of all the burning elements. Realize like Koshalraj that sooner or later, all must die, but that if you go with forgiveness in your heart, you go as a free man. There are people who live imprisoned by their fears or their hatred or their attachment to wealth, and their lives are not really lived. They are dead before time. And there are those who ennoble their lives by freeing themselves from every petty thought and every resentment. Then, though they may have to face physical danger, they remain free. Such people are truly awakened and alive.

“Live on this level, my friend. What counts is inner liberation, not outer, for outer remains outer, while inner freedom is real.”

* * *

On this same morning in Bombay, the citizens of Bombay were happy to read in a Gujarati newspaper the following jubilant announcement:

“The learned Master, great orator Muniraj Gurudev Shree Chandraprabh Sāgarji (Chitrabhanu) who has attracted thousands of men and women with his fluent and charm-

ing speeches for the last ten years in Gujarat and Saurashtra, is coming to Bombay. The itinerant Dignity has left Ahmedabad on his *vihār*. He will be halting at Sabarmati, Nadiad, Baroda, Broach, and Surat to deliver public lectures. Bombay City will have the inestimable opportunity to listen to him."

* * *

The Flying Fish

Before setting foot on the island of Bombay, Gurudev had to cross a river by means of a railway bridge. Most people went by train. The tracks of this bridge were sometimes slippery, so he moved along them slowly, carefully placing one foot in front of the other.

About midway across, his eyes fell upon the body of a small fish lying flat on a transverse railway bar. He assumed that it had just fallen from the fish van of a recent train. Though it appeared to be dead, his heart went out to it, and, in the hope that it had only temporarily lost consciousness and not its whole life, he lifted it gently up with his walking staff and tenderly lowered it into the river below which was flooded with high tide from the nearby sea.

Instantly he saw the fish dip into the water, and less than a second later, leap out of the water and sail through the air! For a moment it appeared to be flying!

Gurudev stood still in wonder and amazement. Tears came to his eyes. A thrilling tremor passed through his body. He had to take hold of the iron railing for support. He went into a deep feeling of compassion. How many moments he remained in such a profound ecstasy, he knew not.

*The fish leapt before my eyes out of sheer joy in living!
How sweet is life! Truly this universe is nothing but harmony.
All I did was give a touch of love and that became a living food.*

Immediately the element of water came and gave its nutrition, and what happened? Joy and energy sprouted forth!

Together, all had cooperated to plug the little creature back into the universe. He marveled again and again at the universal harmony which had brought the little fish back to life. He then imagined the big catch to which it had once belonged. He felt pain for those helpless fish who were victimized by the millions every year, and, at the same time, he felt a deep compassion for the fishermen who daily did their job in ignorance of life, unaware of the pain they were inflicting on the fish and were inviting upon themselves.

* * *

As he continued his walk into Bombay, he passed by the suburb of Bandra. From the distance, he saw huge black vultures flying about. Then he heard some moans and screams which struck terror momentarily into his heart. They came from a huge building. Then he understood. This was a slaughterhouse.

So even in the land where the cow has been sacred for thousands of years, beloved for its gift of milk to the people and its help to the farmer, still it is unprotected. It is not anyone's fault; it is the result of greed for profit, gross ignorance of the preciousness of life.

He had a flash recollection of an incident with his father. Once as monks, when they were staying in a suburb of Ahmedabad called Merchant Society, his father had noticed a badly wounded donkey. Its wounds were oozing, and it seemed to be dying of thirst and hunger. He called upon some students to collect the freshly cooked rice which was meant for his own meal and to offer it to the donkey. He watched it eat the rice and felt compassion well up within him. He also asked the people to bring some oil and balm and apply it to the donkey's wounds, carefully wrapping it in a bandage.

Remembering this incident of his father, Gurudev was inspired with a new thought.

My father felt pain even for a donkey, giving his own food to help sustain it in life. It is an unbroken chain of reverence for life, a flow from the lives of the great Arihanta till now. I am

tuning into this *immortal stream of which my father was a part. May this flow never run dry in my heart; may it gather momentum as it moves into eternity.*

* * *

Fragrance

For Gurudev, the reward of all his years of contemplation and self-discipline was to fall in love with life itself. He gave from his life to life out of the plenitude of his joy, and this, to him, was itself a daily experience of freedom—infinite energy, awareness, balance, and bliss. Gurudev saw the pinnacle of Self-Realization as an occasion to celebrate the journey into evolution as if he were starting out freshly, in newness:

“The time comes in the life of each of us when we are ready to put our practice to the test. Monks can no longer ignore the plight of the working world by wandering the countryside or living in a cave or contemplating on top of a mountain. That has its own time period. Once we feel the resultant peace, then we have a challenge to accept—to share with others and help alleviate the suffering of living beings. Our strength emerges only when we are able to synthesize the contemplative life and the life of action.”

In his first year in Bombay, Gurudev walked through the suburbs to feel the tenor of the people. He observed people in misery, whether in poverty or luxury. He felt the plight of those victimized by discrimination, prejudice, or exploitation, whether they were humans or animals. It was the nature of his compassion to feel the pain of others as vividly as if it were his own.

The little fish he had rescued continued to dance in his mind. The impact of the slaughterhouse was fresh in his heart. He knew that before he could have an effect on saving these victims of man, he had to go to the root of man's own

suffering. Before conditions could change, he saw that people had to change.

People are unhappy because they are caught up in their own cocoons. They cling to mental concepts and old habits. Their lives become mechanical. No fresh thinking, no connection with life at large. How to lift them?

"The first step toward reducing the suffering in the world is to stop inflicting pain on one's own self. How to stop? By having an attitude of reverence for your own self. Take good care of this body which houses your precious life force. When you take harmful things into your body and mind, it shows you do not have love for yourself. And who will love you if you do not first love yourself?"

He pointed out that this universe is nothing but an echo point. "There is a mutuality between you and the universe. Not a single moment goes by without your receiving a gift from the universe and the help of someone's helping hand. Believe in yourself! Trust your own limitless capacity to do what you want to do! Do not wait for any outside savior! When you bring out the noblest in you, there is nothing you cannot overcome. Together, we can help each other to grow and remove the causes of pain in the world."

He liked to tell the story of the little boy who heard a voice as he went wandering in the mountains.

"Who is it?" he asked.

"The voice answered, 'Who is it?'"

"The boy became frightened, but to hide his fear, he bellowed, 'I am stronger than you!'"

"And the voice repeated the same words.

"So he cried out, 'You must be some devil!'"

"Again he heard, 'You must be some devil!'"

"Now he was really frightened, so he ran home and dove into his mother's arms sobbing, 'Mother, mother, there is a devil in the mountains.'"

"How do you know that?" she asked him.

"Because he told me so."

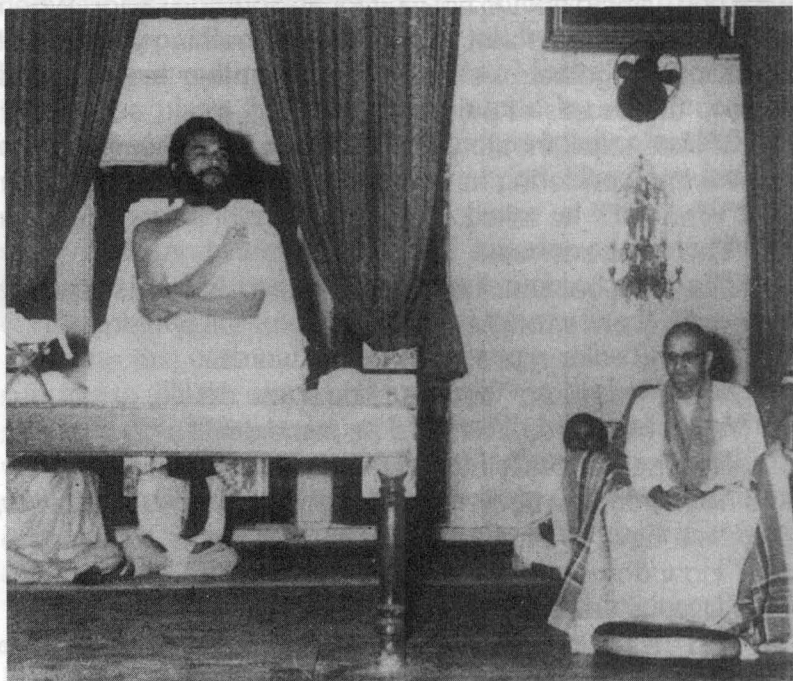
"But the mother was wise. She took her son back up into the hills and told him to call out, 'You are God!'"

"The boy called out, 'You are God!' When he heard his

own words echo back, all his fear melted away and he was smiling.”

* * *

Within a short time, Gurudev became known as a man who lived what he taught, who was a humanist at heart and a true friend to all life. Not a day went by when he did not give a talk. The many languages he knew—his native Kannad, Telugu, Gujarati, Marathi, Hindi, Rajasthani, Sanskrit, Prakrit, and English, he used as bridges to unite men and women of all traditions and cultures in the feeling of reverence for life. People from Hindu, Brahmin, Mohammedan, Jewish, Buddhist, Christian, Jain, and Parsee backgrounds as well as philosophers, writers, artists, social workers, potters, businessmen, politicians, and workers of all castes flocked to hear him speak. Many begged him to speak in Gujarati, for in that language, they said, his words were “sheer poetry.” It was the spontaneous poetry of his heart. Once the Swami Ramdas who



Swami Ramdas at Gurudev's talk

attended Gurudev's talk in Bhavnagar expressed it in this way, "Even more than your words, the love you radiate when you speak has touched my heart."

If Gurudev had been an orthodox monk, he never would have left the *upasray* after dusk, but he gave many evening talks to comply with the times in which people were free from their work. He took his teaching to the people rather than wait for them to come to him. Crowds formed by day and by night, both in the bazaars and in the open fields, eager to hear him. He continued to lead the itinerant life, walking to every talk, spending a night or two at one or another of the more than fifty Jain centers in and around Bombay. His walks from one spot to another often turned into parades.

Scholars, religionists, and teachers invited him to speak at their colleges and universities. People of different faiths invited him to their own places of worship to talk about the principles of their own religion. Hindus of all sects asked him to celebrate special holidays with them.

The Parsees, who are worshippers of Zoroaster, invited him to speak to them on *ahimsa*. Major Rustom Bamji introduced him with these glowing words, "I have often attended Gurudev's lectures and I have hardly seen such a self-sacrificing spirit as he has. People from everywhere respect and love him. He has such an obliging and forbearing nature. Today he will draw from our own Gatha to tell us of the evolution of soul, for he is a profound student of all religious scriptures."

Gurudev centered his talk on the symbol of light, fire, which Parsees keep in their houses of worship without allowing it to die out.

"The light which you worship is truly the light of compassion and love. It illumines man's understanding and enlightens the world. Its nature is *ahimsa*, for it hurts none and imparts life to all. It neither burns nor consumes anything; it remains ever in its own nature, undying and immortal. This is the real meaning of Zoroaster's teaching. It is not the worship of fire. Rather, it is the revering of God as light, as a pure symbol of the divine.

"Zoroaster himself said, 'O God! How I would love to give

shelter to innocent animals and rear them myself! To him, cruelty could not exist in a heart bathed in golden light. He has directed us to listen to spiritual teachings in order to generate *shrosh*, a force powerful enough to lift us from mere sensual living to the level of lasting peace. When you feel that force, live by it. Live by that golden light which floods the heart. Let this light be your joy and you will bring happiness to the world."

Gurudev told the Parsee people how much he admired them for their sweet cordial relations with all and for their generosity. He prayed that they extend their love and help not only to man, but to bird and beast as well.

* * *

The Harijans of Bombay had heard of how Gurudev and his father had befriended the poor and low caste people of Bhavnagar and Botad. They invited him to speak to their colony at Cama Hospital compound. Gurudev was delighted to have an occasion to help them remove the myth of untouchability which had made such a stain on their lives. Preceding his talk, there was a rousing session of devotional singing and chanting. Afterwards, in pindrop silence, Gurudev told them.

"You are living proof that the wealthy and educated have no special advantage when it comes to divine worship! You are overflowing with *bhakti* and this love and music come straight from your hearts. It shows you are Harijan; this godhood is your birthright. Accept it, treasure it, trust in it."

He related to them the story of a great sage who was a follower of Bhagwan Mahāvīr. Whenever people would taunt him about his name, Metaraj, which represented his low caste, suggesting that he would be better off changing it, he always told them, "I am not troubled about my caste. I am convinced that my virtues will change me for the better, whatever my name and caste." In time, Mahāvīr initiated him as a monk with the name Metarya Muni.

Gurudev told the Harijans, "Brothers, never imagine yourselves to be low or inferior. If you lead an honest life, in harmony with all living beings, you cannot be low. Live your life in such a way that your children may gratefully remember

you for your sweet pure life.”

Of one mind and heart, hundreds of people stood up and told Gurudev of their decision to stop taking alcohol which was spoiling their family harmony. Many were inspired to renounce cruelty to animals as well. It was a moment of elation and rejoicing, awakening in these formerly downtrodden people a new conviction in their own self-worth and in the way to use their energy for life.

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As more and more people became inspired by Gurudev as a living example of his trans-religious message, it became evident that for everyone to be able to hear him, a microphone was necessary. No monk in his group had ever sanctioned the use of such a device. Gurudev became the first to make use of one.

The Mayor of Bombay, leaders of the Maharashtra State Government, and congressmen often attended Gurudev's talks. They also invited him to speak to the public on their platforms. One such occasion was Republic Day, marking the day India became an independent republic. The Minister of Information and Broadcasting, Shri K. K. Shah, in his introduction of Gurudev to the public, expressed the way everyone who came to know Gurudev felt about him, "... a universal man, a citizen of the world. That is why hundreds of people are ever eager to listen to him. His sympathy extends to all. His compassion for those who seem unpromising and unattractive draws them to him. His celebrating Republic Day on Princess Street with us tends to purify our public life."

Thanks to the microphone, many outwardly unpromising people benefitted from hearing Gurudev's street rostrum talks. One day, Gurudev gave a long and moving talk about Upagupta, the Buddhist monk who, upon appreciating the beautiful soul in a famous dancer, helped her to see herself with respect. At the end of her days when her youth, beauty, and energy had been spent, nobody was willing to be her friend. The king had even compelled her to live in a hut at the outskirts of the city. She was sick and suffering from skin blisters. Upagupta, whom she had met and longed to love in

her youth many years back, was now ready to keep his promise. It was the full moon and he went to her. He took her head in his lap and washed her sores and gave her soothing healing vibrations. The former dancer was moaning, "Now I don't have anything to offer you." His reply taught her the truth.

"No, at that time, you had something to offer which was only ephemeral, which was not really you. My need is not that. Mine is the need of the soul. That soul is what I love." Upon hearing these words she wept, washing away her shame and low self-esteem. Under the benign rays of his love, she recovered and became Upagupta's disciple.

It happened that some women, living lives of prostitution, and lacking in self-respect, overheard Gurudev's talk. When they heard this story, they too wept as the dancer did. They later sought out Gurudev and asked him how to change their lives. Gurudev was glad to help them find a new place for themselves in weaving, sewing, or other cottage industries, and in particular, to give them the chance to discover their own inherent divinity.

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Toward the end of 1962, India was being shaken by a border skirmish with the Chinese. In 1965, the Pakistani army attacked India. At these times, Gurudev inspired people to understand the root causes of war.

"Wars are not fought by national governments. They are fought by you and me every time we compete for something which is not our own, every time we cling to a concept, dogma, or ideology. The real enemy is within the unenlightened mind. Those who will not face this enemy despise themselves. They are the people who initiate wars. What we see as an outside war is really an expulsion of their own self-hatred onto the world at large.

"In the process, there are many innocent victims, widowed women, orphaned children, peace-loving citizens, unprotected living beings. It is this majority who bears the brunt of the suffering and carries the painful scars of war. With these innocent victims in mind, I appeal to you for funds to provide for

their hospitalization, rehabilitation and protection. No one can afford to be complacent at such a time.”

* * *

While Gurudev was a spiritual leader to whom people of all faiths and castes turned, at the same time, he was a beloved leader among the Jains themselves. Taking the example of the revered Jain Āchārya Vijay Vallabhsuriji who had begun to bring together Jains of the four major groups* before he expired, Gurudev encouraged the Jains of Bombay to drop minor differences of opinion about rules and to live in the spirit of reverence for life.

Over the years, many holidays had been celebrated in separate monasteries. Thanks to Gurudev’s outpouring of goodwill, the four groups enjoyed coming together for all special occasions. Though Gurudev was an independent thinker and an iconoclast of sorts, even the orthodox-minded monks came to love and respect him.

In 1963, there was an exceptionally large gathering of Jains, monks and laypersons, on the Azad Maidan to celebrate Mahavir’s birthday. That same year, Gurudev decided to open Mahavir Jayanti to the public by holding a second celebration in the evening on the sands of Chowpatty Beach away from its parochial setting. It was the first time that thousands of people joined together to honor this compassionate soul who was born on their land.

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A significant number of Gurudev’s listeners began to change their lives. They understood that they alone were responsible for their own thoughts, words, and actions. Gurudev taught them how to clear their consciousness of negativity, as he had done during his years of self-study. Little by little, sincere seekers watched the positive effect of their new attitude and self-discipline bring them increased joy, peace, prosperity, and health.

From these seeds of harmony, a healthy tree of peace and

*The names of the four groups are Śwetāmbar, Digambar, Sthānakvāsi, and Terāpanth.

love grew and flowered, radiating its fragrance throughout Bombay. It was at this time that Gurudev wrote in his diary.

“Here am I with my *rajoharan*, I’ll clear the land of thorn and thistle, I’ll scatter good seed and water it with holy water and nourish it with compassion from my own life.”

* * *

Voice for the Voiceless

In the second and third years of his stay in Bombay, many dedicated people wanted to help Gurudev work for the protection of life and the prevention of unnecessary suffering wherever it existed. A number of municipal corporators who had the power to vote in Bombay’s municipal government were eager to lend their support as well. This was a positive step because at this time, government leaders were proposing new means of income which would increase violence to life: the export of meat, leather, and other animal products to countries abroad, and the building of more slaughterhouses. Some politicians encouraged people to engage in meatpacking as a trade. Gurudev organized protest meetings to offset these trends in thinking.

Gurudev shared his point of view in a gentle, unblaming manner. He felt that it was unawareness of life and Self, not deliberate cruelty, which was at fault. The conditions in the slaughterhouses were unknown to many of his listeners. For some, it was the first time they had imagined the frenzy of the animals, their mute agony, as they watched their fellow beings slaughtered ahead of them, the pain of a calf, piglet, goat or chick torn away from its mother, and the sorrow in the mother’s heart as well. For others, it was the first time they had given thought to the extremely unsanitary conditions prevalent in an abattoir.

“One visit to the slaughterhouse where these innocent

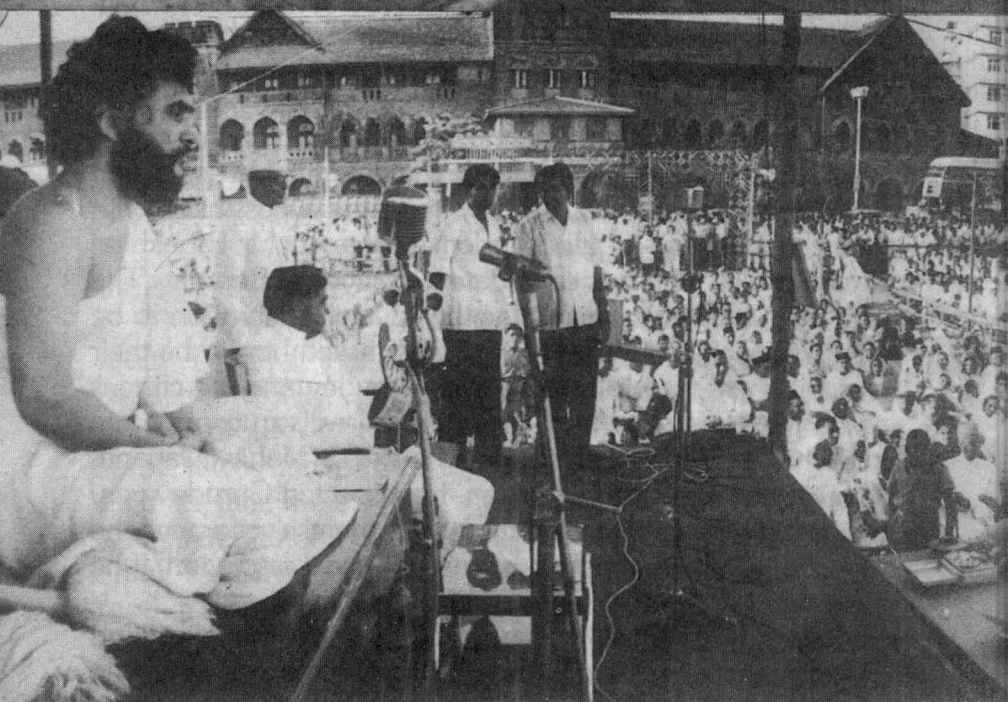
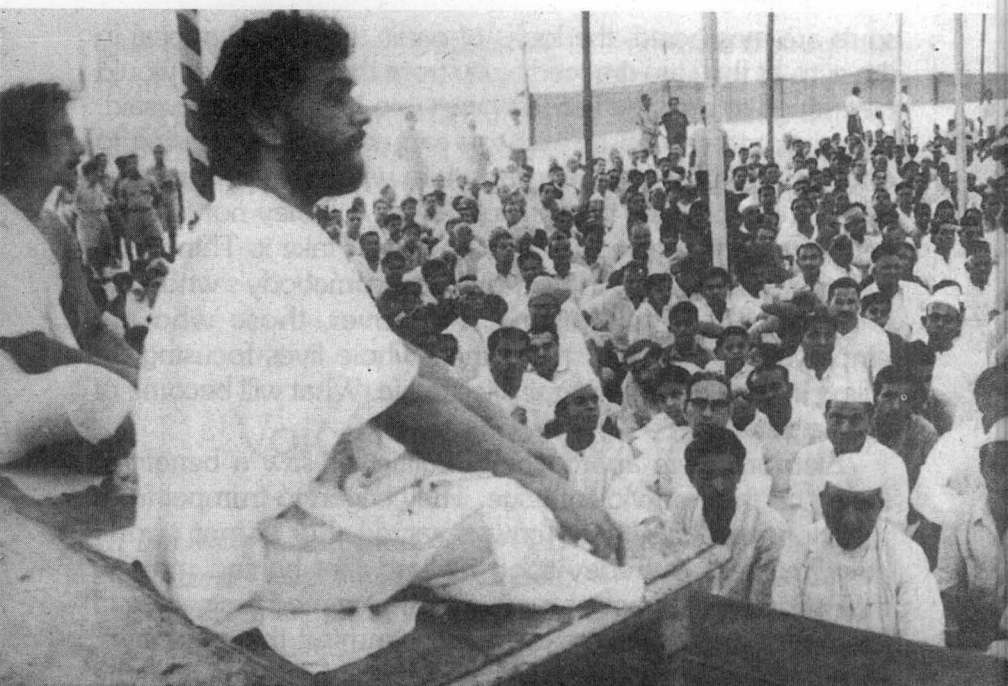
souls are massacred, the looks of panic, the dumb appeal in the eyes as they are dragged away from their dear ones would be enough to melt the hardest heart into love,” Gurudev said. “Any income earned in this way can never be a blessing to anyone. Mahāvīr said, ‘Do not take what you cannot give back.’ If people take the lives of others, will they not have to pay? You cannot give back life. So do not take it. Think of it, for a few minutes’ joy to the tastebuds, somebody’s whole life is destroyed. Is this justice? Moreover, those who are employed in this way spend their whole lives focusing on killing instead of on loving service to life. What will become of such a person?”

Elections were approaching. Politicians saw a benefit in taking up this non-violent issue. They began to trumpet from their loudspeakers, “The cow is sacred. Let us not permit cowslaughter.” Gurudev soon realized that behind most of their effort was the power motive. So he warned the people to beware of opportunists and to keep in mind the real issues. After the elections, he was not surprised to find that the politicians allowed these concerns to fade from public view.

* * *

Out of reverence for Mahāvīr’s exemplary life, Gurudev kept a great dream in his heart—to have the slaughterhouses closed on Mahāvīr Jayanti. In 1964, this became a possibility, with the help of a liberal-minded Moslem gentleman, Mr. Eshakbhai Bandukwalla, who was candidate for Mayor of Bombay. The Citizens’ Committee organizing the Jayanti celebration to be held once again on Chowpatty Beach asked him to be their chairman. Before the election day, Gurudev and the citizens asked Mr. Bandukwalla if he would be willing to advocate publicly the closing of the slaughterhouses on Mahāvīr Jayanti. Though he was not a vegetarian, he respected Gurudev very much and answered that if the butchers themselves agreed, he would be glad to support this plan as a legal resolution, if he became Mayor.

The day of election came. Mr. Bandukwalla invited Gurudev and a few members of the Committee to the building where the election results were to be announced. In a separate



Celebrating Mah



anti Day with all.

room, he arranged for them to meet with the butchers of Bombay.

It was the dawn of a powerful moment. Already the idea to close the slaughterhouses had been floating in the air in Bombay, and the butchers were well aware of the purpose of this meeting. Many came with confused feelings and some resistance. Some felt that they would not agree to spare smaller animals such as goats, sheep, and hens. But when they met Gurudev eye to eye, they melted. They felt the power of his love. Even before they heard his gentle tone of voice and his request, they received his message. They agreed unanimously to spare all the twenty-two thousand animals which would have been, killed within twenty-four hours in Bombay, and to cancel the quota as well. Thus, the number of animals to be slaughtered the day after Māhāvīr Jayanti would not be doubled.

Two butchers expressed their feelings to give up their livelihood completely. Gurudev assured them that he would help them find a new way to earn their living without engaging in any form of harming life.

In the meantime, in a nearby hall, a huge crowd of people was cheering the newly elected Mayor, none other than Mr. Bandukwalla himself. Gurudev moved immediately from his meeting with the butchers to the hall of celebration. The place was jumping with color and movement, sounds and fragrance. Joyous supporters were embracing the Mayor. Elderly matrons were climbing up on chairs to garland him. Little girls all dressed up with ribbons in their braided hair were hoisted onto shoulders to touch hands with him.

Through this jubilant mass of humanity, Gurudev and two disciples slowly made their way. As they stood before the Mayor, Mr. Bandukwalla instantly paid his respects. He removed his shining golden turban, folded his hands in reverence, and bowed before the Master. The crowd was quietened as Gurudev gave the new Mayor his congratulations and blessings.

Then he informed him publicly of the positive outcome of his meeting, "Mr. Mayor, I am glad to tell you that the butchers have just agreed unanimously and wholeheartedly to refrain

from slaughtering all animals on Mahāvīr Jayanti.” This statement brought out further rejoicing, and the Mayor responded with genuine enthusiasm and resolve.

“I am deeply grateful to you, Gurudev, for greeting me in this way and for uniting us all in the one vision all humanity must have, *ahimsa*, caring for all life. As my first declaration in office, I pledge to support and promote with all my heart the proposal to which the butchers agreed.”

True to his word, the new Mayor turned the proposal into law. On April 6, 1964, the thousands of people celebrating Mahavir Jayanti experience an added joy, an extra buoyant feeling in the knowledge that all the slaughterhouses in Bombay had been closed. It was a gift of breath and sunshine, of love and fearlessness to nearly twenty-two thousand creatures.

The celebration on Chowpatty Beach was an unprecedented one. Although four thousand chairs were set up, along with carpets spread out on the beach for another thirty thousand people, these arrangements turned out to accommodate only a fraction of the crowd. Well over one hundred thousand people were present that day. It was a day of exuberance. On the platform, Gurudev was joined by the Indian Home Minister; Mayor Bandukwalla; the Chief Minister of Maharashtra State, Shri V. P. Naik; leaders from Calcutta and Madras, representatives from foreign countries, and well-known philanthropists. Mr. Naik presided over the gathering. He gave a glowing tribute to Gurudev for his perseverance in opening Mahavir Jayanti to people of all backgrounds, castes, and creeds.

Gurudev spoke to the people simply and lovingly of how happy he was to be able to share with them. “I have always felt that just as sunlight and air and water are free gifts to the universe, even so the pure teachings of Mahavir are universal gifts. Like nature’s gifts, they are indispensable to all of us, to all living beings as well as human beings.”*

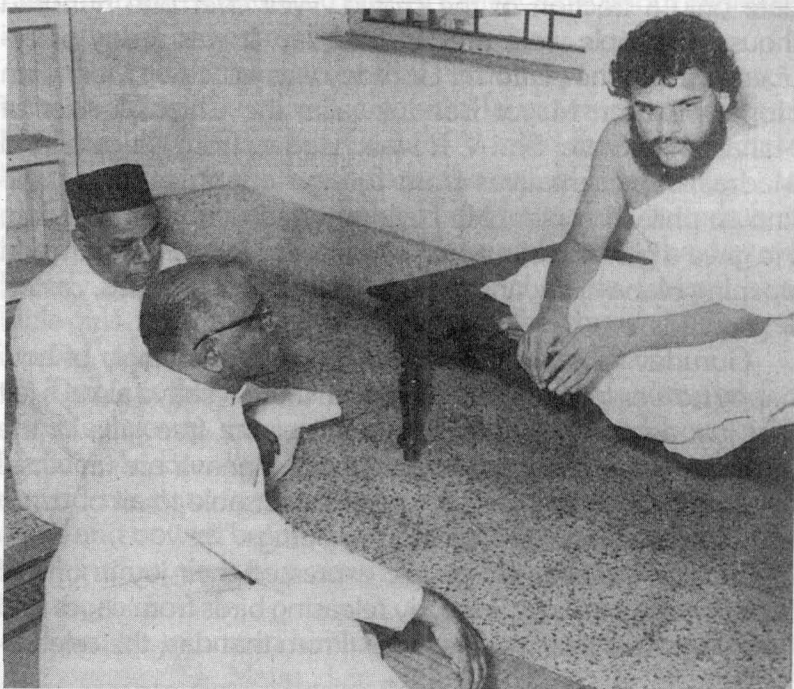
Jubilant in spirit, the people expressed their joy in one of their favorite symbolic ways, by releasing birds from cages and watching them soar into freedom. From that day, the celebra-

*The talk which Gurudev gave on that day later came to be published in his book *Ten Days Journey Into The Self*.

tion of Mahāvīr Jayanti took momentum. In the years which followed, an ever-increasing number of people participated in making this an annual event of intercommunal fellowship. In addition to being a day when animals were given freedom from the slaughterhouse, it also became an occasion in which all great teachers were revered, for Gurudev urged everyone to remember not only Mahāvīr, but all great souls who gave to the world the message of non-violence and love for living beings.

* * *

The men and women working with Gurudev realized that much work remained to be done. Had they thought of the number of animals slaughtered daily in all the towns and cities worldwide, they might have given up hope. Instead, they took Gurudev's attitude that one step at a time was enough, and that to help even one person become truly sensitive to life was a great blessing.



Mayor Divgi and Gurudev.

In the next year, with patience and deep conviction, caring individuals worked with Gurudev to convince the municipal corporators to vote favorably on a new bill: to close the slaughterhouses on a total of eight holy days a year. In addition to Mahāvīr Jayanti, Gurudev suggested Buddha Jayanti, Krishna Jayanti, Rama Jayanti, Gandhiji Jayanti, Shivaji Jayanti, Samvatsari or the Day of Forgiveness, and Divali. In this way, people would become reminded of the sanctity of life both by acknowledging the rights of animals to live and be free from harm, and by revering India's great teachers of the past who believed all life to be sacred.

Mayor Bandukwalla had retired before the bill came to be passed, but his successor, Mayor B. P. Divgi was an enthusiastic supporter. With the great help of Mr. Jivraj Mehta, Chairman of the Municipal Corporation, the bill was passed after many hurdles on July 23, 1964. Mayor Divgi was so elated by this legislative triumph that he ignored all custom and protocol to rush straight to Gurudev at the Shantinath monastery and deliver the good news to him in person.

Thanks to this bold decision on the part of the Bombay Council, a clear precedent was set for resolutions of this kind to be passed in other city and state governments throughout India. In one city, Radhanpur, a decision to close the slaughterhouses for nineteen days each year was turned into law.

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Now Gurudev and fellow workers faced an even greater challenge—to try and stop the national government from establishing new slaughterhouses in major cities country-wide, to convince them to call a halt to pig breeding which had begun in 1964, and to reverse a plan to set up more than one hundred meatpacking plants and ten bacon factories in smaller cities. Also, in 1965, the proposal of exporting meat, leather, and other animal products which had been dropped a few years earlier was being reconsidered.

In February, Gurudev organized a deputation of Bombay citizens to speak to the President and Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri in New Delhi. The meeting was fruitless.

Gurudev then sent personal invitations to leaders of all of the major religious and cultural groups to take part in a first All Religions Ahimsa Conference on Chowpatty Beach. On April 25, 1965, a massive crowd from all communities gathered together, with one person from each group speaking out their voice and their choice. Whether or not people were vegetarians, all joined hands to condemn the government's new plans. One question aroused people of all faiths - how could the Indian leaders ignore their nation's rich spiritual heritage of *ahimsā* in favor of earning profit at the daily cost of thousands and thousands of animals' lives?

Shri Gajadhar Somani, member of the Central Legislative Assembly, initiated a resolution to draft a formal protest to the Central Government. All religious leaders seconded it. The crowd voted unanimously for it. An AH Religions Ahimsā Committee was formed. They discovered yet another injustice. Automatic slaughtering machinery was about to be installed in one of the Bombay abbatoirs.

This would enable butchers to more than triple the number of animals to be sliced in one day. Fresh protests were sent to the Indian President as well as to the Prime Minister. Prime Minister L. B. Shastri was in favor of calling a halt to the plans, but unfortunately, he expired in 1965 while on a visit to Tashkent, Russia.

Thus, although agreement was reached to close slaughterhouses legally on eight holy days of the year, in the years to follow, the mechanism of habit, profit motive, and ignorance of life prevented a change in the course of events. Slaughterhouses increased and automatic machinery came to be installed. It was a time to test one's patience, one's compassion, and one's determination not to give up working for life, no matter what the outcome. It was a time to remember Shree Chitrabhanuji's lines from the 'Immortal Song,'

"May I always be there to show the path to the pathless wanderers of life,
But if they should not hearken to me, may I bide patiently."

* * *

Dreams

Again and again this moment won't come,
This moment will not come again,
Again and again, this present so precious,
Use now or the moment's in vain,

The way that you know, in that way you do,
Do that which makes Indweller pleased,
No rule can I give but find your path in you
And that Goodness in you will be pleased.

Birth after birth the seed that you sow
Of ecstasy never will cease,
Continue evolving, continue to grow
And the harvest of bliss will increase,

For body and wealth and youth we're obsessed,
But these are illusory forms,
Gone in a breath, let us know how we're blessed,
Flow with *Prāṇa* and weather life's storms;

For *Prāṇa* is Life, more precious than wealth,
More precious than body and youth,
Use as a means not an end wealth and health,
Then your living will take you to Truth.

When this body drops down, what meaning has wealth
And all the things that you store?
Why would you want to be called an old miser?
Why do you hoard and store more?

Again and again, this moment won't come,
This moment will not come again,
Again and again, this present so precious,
Use now so your life's not in vain.

In his early years as a monk, Gurudev used to inspire himself by reciting this ecstatic poetry of the seventeenth century Jain monk Anandghan. Now, as a teacher, he again sang his poems, this time as a reminder to all that body, youth, and wealth were as fleeting as the moment. He inspired the young and strong to stop clinging to shadows and make-believe, but instead to use the body as an instrument for a meaningful purpose. Wealth, too, was to be understood as a transitory blessing, the natural outcome of one's previous acts of selflessness. It was not meant for unlimited accumulation and for self-aggrandizement. Instead, it was for sharing, just as a farmer shares his harvest.

When people understood the gist of his message, they opened their hearts and gave to various causes. It was not only money; it was understanding. They put themselves in the place of those who were suffering and could not help but be moved.

For example, early in 1963, a group of enthusiastic young men opened a one-room medical clinic to provide free health services for the poor in Malad, a suburb of Bombay. Supplies soon ran low. Space was inadequate. The men were not discouraged. They knew of Shree Chitrabhanuji and went to him for advice. Gurudev recognized the purity of their intention and suggested that they present their situation to Mr. Jayantilal Mangalla Sheth, trustee of a local Jain Society. Mr. Sheth was glad to respond with a very generous donation. Other philanthropists heard of the project, and additional thousands of rupees poured in. A new building was able to be constructed.

From a few inspired young men with a dream, a Health Home was formed. At its official opening on May 26, 1963, Gurudev went there on his *vihar* to give his blessings and a talk. He told the story of a poor woman who had fallen ill with an infection. The doctor had urged the village sheriff to be sure that she received medicine. Otherwise, he warned, the disease would surely spread.

"Nobody cared enough to take the doctor's advice and give help to the poor woman. Gradually, she wasted away and died. But by now, the germs which had infected her had

spread all over the neighborhood. It became an epidemic. When the woman was alive, she was despised and ignored, but when she expired, all the villagers became her partners and shareholders of germs in illness.

“The Health Home is a living example of people who care. You are shareholders in health and life. The compassion and cooperation which made this dream come true is a benefit to all and a blessing to you. To live is good. To live vividly is better, but to live vividly together is best. United in this project, you are discovering what it is to live vividly together.”

After the talk, inspired listeners gave another forty-six thousand rupees on the spot. After that, donations continued to be given unceasingly.

* * *

In the same month, a group of residents from the Krishna Nivas apartment building asked Gurudev to help them solve a problem. In their compound, there was an open courtyard where schoolchildren played. It had come to be littered with debris and rubbish. They told Gurudev,

“We fear for the health of the children who play there. We have appealed to the other residents to help us clean the area, but to make it sanitary once again is an overwhelming task. We don’t know where to begin.”

To Gurudev, cleanliness was “next to godliness,” and no work was lesser or higher than any other. He reminded the residents of the story of the Greek hero Hercules whose tremendous task it was to clean the Aegean stables. He pointed out that even though Hercules would get up each morning with fresh vigor and wash the stables until they were spotlessly clean, by evening, they would again be dirty.

Again and again he would clean them until one day he conceived of a good idea—to connect the water system he was using to the nearby Aegean Sea. From then on, the water flowed in continuously and kept the whole area clean. Gurudev inspired the residents to ask themselves.

“What is our Aegean Sea? It is amity. When we let the stream of amity flow in our hearts, we are linked to the ocean of love, the real source of cleanliness. Then we want every-

thing in ourselves and in our environment to be clean and in its place. When we feel this divine touch, we don't want to collect anything—in our thought, no dark element, in our word no harshness, in our actions no callousness or negligence, and in our surrounding no disharmony.”

Gurudev organized a group of willing students to help the residents clean up the accumulated garbage and debris. Within one month, the work was completed. From then on, they did not allow the area to deteriorate again.

* * *

A Bombay life insurance executive, Mr. H. Mehta, was greatly disturbed by the wastage of food he observed at banquets, receptions, and parties he attended among affluent friends and associates. Returning home at night, he saw hungry children and their indigent parents begging or sleeping on the streets. He was moved to action. He thought he could perhaps begin by collecting leftover food and then distribute it among the poor.

He went to Gurudev for his blessings, guidance, and assistance. Gurudev told him that his beautiful humanitarian dream would invite the right vibrations to make his plan a reality. Within a short time, Mr. Mehta found other people who were equally distressed by the situation of the street people. Together they cooperated and formed a group called Sanjivani, which means New Life.

Today Sanjivani is still Mr. Mehta's mission in life. With headquarters in his own apartment, he and his wife arise each day at 5 in the morning, and, along with several hundred volunteers or “social brothers and sisters,” as he likes to call them, distribute food, blankets, medicines, and clothing to the homeless and indigent of Bombay's streets. Their support comes entirely from donations.

* * *

“O Lord, when would that dawn rise for me that I could do something for others?” It was the vision of a child, but one day, the dream assumed shape. The child turned man and found that he was afflicted with tuberculosis, but the enthusiasm for

an ideal sustained him and he was cured. In illness, he was inspired with the thought of having a hospital built where hundreds of patients could be cured of T.B.

This was the origin of the world famous Sarvodaya Hospital in Bombay. As it grew to accommodate two thousand patients, it became known as the unique hospital where patients became well on the basis of a strict vegetarian diet. World Health Organization officials came from far and near to observe how within fifteen days to three months' time, patients became free from disease without ever touching meat, fish, or eggs in their diet. Shri Kantibhai, the man with the dream, was a practicing Jain. He and his wife Kusumben dedicated their lives to supervising the hospital and making for the patients a special daily *haluah* from sesame seeds, almond meal, ghee, and whole wheat flour. It was a very strengthening food.

In Kantibhai's life there was an unresolved problem, a fear stemming from the prediction of an astrologer that he would not live past the year 1969. He sought out Gurudev's guidance. Gurudev suggested that he have a temple built at the entryway of the hospital. It could be dedicated to Pārśvanātha, the twentythird Tirthankara who lived in 850 B.C., whose teaching of non-violence and compassion was followed by Mahāvīr's parents, and who/was known and revered for his special healing vibrations. In the ancient books, it was said, "At the mere mention of the name Lord Parsva, disturbances cease, the *darśan* of him destroys all fear of rebirth, and the worship of him removes guilt and sickness."

In this way, the doctors, nurses, and hospital personnel could become inspired in their work and bathed in the positive healing vibrations. Patients, their families, anyone seeking seclusion from the din of the city could meet there, meditate, and find peace. Its doors would be open to all.

Gurudev asked Shri Kantibhai to take the advice of his student, K. D. Shah, who was a very fine engineer and architect. He designed a spacious and airy rotunda where people could sit in peace and feel as if they were still out of doors. An exquisite statue of Parsvanatha, all in black marble, arrived from Kadambagiri.

In April 1969, Gurudev was invited to bless the statue

before it was installed in the shrine. Thousands of people gathered round as Gurudev tuned himself to the highest vibrations of the perfected consciousness of Parsvanatha. Within a few seconds, everyone witnessed a marvelous phenomenon. As Gurudev chanted the special *mantra*, a liquid started to flow from the statue's eyes. Then it began to emit this moist nectar called *ami* from all over its body. It was as if the image had become a living breathing entity, melting with love and compassion.

Everyone was amazed. Gurudev told Shri Kantibhai, "If the energy of soul can melt even a marble image into compassion, then why do you not melt the fear of death? It is nothing but a mental projection. Let this be a sign that your fear is over."

Shri Kantibhai was moved. From that day, he worked on keeping his mind from falling into the valley of weakness and fear. His faith in Parsvanatha and in Gurudev remained foremost in him, and he saw the year 1969 go by without any incident.

Meanwhile, news of the phenomenon spread rapidly throughout Bombay. Thousands and thousands of people filed by to witness with reverence and awe the *ami* continue to flow for a full twelve hours. For three days, there was a continuous festive spirit in which vegetarian meals were offered freely to the public.

* * *

The Divine Knowledge Society

"To stir men's hearts, to vivify their imagination, to arouse them out of complacency, and to bring them out from their little selves into the Higher of which they are capable," this was Gurudev Shree Chirrabhanuji's personal meaning and gift; this was the spine of each new endeavor. It became evident to a number of Gurudev's colleagues, admirers, and students that

an organization to coordinate the many projects he was inspiring was inevitable. They envisioned a place which could act as a receiver and transmitter of the message of universal reverence, love, and compassion, a center which could represent not only Jain ideals, but those of positive-thinking individuals from many different approaches.

With this in mind, on March 2, 1964, Gurudev and fellow workers founded Divya Gnan Sangh, the Divine Knowledge Society. A space which welcomed both silent meditation and outspoken action, it became known as an other-oriented nucleus, reaching out through talks, publications, and social action to those in need of physical aid as well as to those hungering for spiritual nourishment.

In its capacity as a publishing house, the Society acted as a transmitter of Gurudev's universal message by publishing twenty of his books in Gujarati. It arranged for the translation of some of his books into Hindi and into English as well. The first of the English translations was called *The Fountain of Inspiration*, fifty-two meditative insights, one for each week of the year, springing forth from the young *muni* in his early years of introspection. Others were: *A Rosary of Pearls*, *To the Citizens of Tomonow*, *Bondage and Freedom*, *Lotus Bloom*, *The Beacon*, and *Inspiring Anecdotes*.

Each successive book reflected the unfolding of a spirit, mellowing and deepening in experience and understanding of this beautiful gift of human life. Like "footprints in the sands of time," these became Gurudev's heartprints on the consciousness of humanity. The invisible reverberations of the printed word are cherished in the hearts of the wise and absorbed into their lives. In this way, they become impervious to time and space, transcending everlastingly.

Gurudev encouraged an open flow of communication at the Society. It became a place for people to hear Gurudev's daily talks and to exchange a variety of personal views on ethics, religion, and philosophy. Many energetic young people were drawn to this friendly atmosphere. They participated in debates, sometimes winning a book or a scholarship for higher learning. Gurudev was glad to help students pursue an interest and continue studies in a particular field. Many of them worked

on putting together a monthly magazine which received articles from philosophers and scholars of Sufi, Hindu, Christian, Zen, Tao, Parsee, and other traditions, in addition to the Jains. *Divya Gñān*, or 'Light of Knowledge,' as the journal was named, had excerpts from Gurudev's talks and meaningful quotations from philosophical writings from East and West.

Divya Gñān spread its positive vibrations out into the universe and, in particular, acted as a bell calling for volunteers to lend support to people and groups in need of help. Each issue gave dynamic suggestions as to how readers might give service. In this way, the Divine Knowledge Society was able to build up both an endowment fund and a resource of selfless workers who were ready to lend immediate aid in any emergency, large or small, in any part of India.

Spiritual knowledge was continually channeled into practical endeavors to relieve suffering in everyday life. A chain of charity works, animal shelters, and relief centers were initiated. Whenever drought, famine, earthquake, or flood struck, the Society had the capacity to rush to give aid, always in the spirit of unconditional love and compassion.

Gurudev lived in the main room of the Divine Knowledge Society, which was located on Walkeshwar Road, not far from Chowpatty Beach where he used to give so many talks. The room was sparsely furnished with a desk, chair, bookshelf, and cot. This change in his life-style permitted him to use a sixteen-hour day in peace, meditation, writing, and service. He always rose long before dawn and meditated along with the rising sun. He liked to take a walk through the beautiful Hanging Gardens nearby. After a small breakfast, he gave a daily talk, met with people to share his thoughts and advice on the wide range of welfare activities. Students and families would come for instruction and blessings. A disciple would bring him his noon-time meal. After rest, yoga, and meditation, he would immerse himself in more meetings, writing, proofreading, or personal correspondence. In the evening, after a small repast or just a beverage, he brought his work to completion and sat out on the balcony overlooking the Arabian Sea. He usually retired at 11 p.m., but oftentimes he remained on the balcony for many hours meditating and contemplating late into the night.

During the years in which Gurudev gave his energy and inspiration to The Divine Knowledge Society, the Society had a deep impact on men and women's lives throughout India.

* * *

Humanitarian Relief Work

The first relief fund was started by Gurudev in 1966, when the state of Bihar was desperately suffering from famine due to drought. On November 28, Gurudev was walking to the house where he would stay now that the rainy season retreat was ending. One of his disciples accompanied him, telling him of the recent famine in Bihar. Moreover, he suggested to Gurudev: "If you want to ask the people for help, I will be glad to start by offering five thousand rupees." With this in mind, Gurudev started his talk as follows:

"I have just heard that the people of Bihar are suffering from famine. Men, women, and children are dying of starvation, thirst, and fatigue. They haven't even the strength to dig a well. And here we are about to celebrate the end of *chāturmas* with a feast. Can we think of a way to share our feast with our brothers and sisters in Bihar? One person has already begun by offering five thousand rupees."

A newspaper reporting on Gurudev's talk stated, "Within ten minutes of the talk, a sum of fifty thousand rupees was donated." The figure jumped by more than twenty thousand rupees within a week. Mr. Baakza wrote, "It was like manna raining from the heavens."

At this time Shri Jayaprakash Narayan, one of Mahatma Gandhi's closest disciples and an authentic worker for social equality throughout his life, heard of the collection made on behalf of the people of Bihar. He contacted Gurudev immediately. He was very moved that people so far from the state of Bihar should care enough to collect such generous donations for them. He went to Bombay to consult with

Gurudev as to the best way to make use of the money.

Shree Chitrabhanuji did not delay. He heard that conditions in Bihar were deteriorating. The famished were feeding on roots, some of which were poisonous unless they were first soaked and boiled repeatedly for several days. He offered a team of twenty of his students to be sent to Bihar with dried beans and grains to open and run five huge kitchens. J. P., as Jayaprakash was best known, took charge of the money and supervised the project. Each kitchen fed three hundred people. Thus fifteen hundred people could be accommodated in one single day. Volunteer workers from Ahmedabad, from Sadvichār Samiti or Right Thought Committee also came to help. Other international organizations such as Care sent vitamins, high protein preparations, and medicines to the stricken people.

J. P. and his wife Praphavatidevi came to The Divine Knowledge Society again on January 27, on March 17, and on April 23, 1967 to help raise more funds for food, high protein tonics, vitamins and medicines and to make more decisions. The Chairman of The Divine Knowledge Society, Kantilal

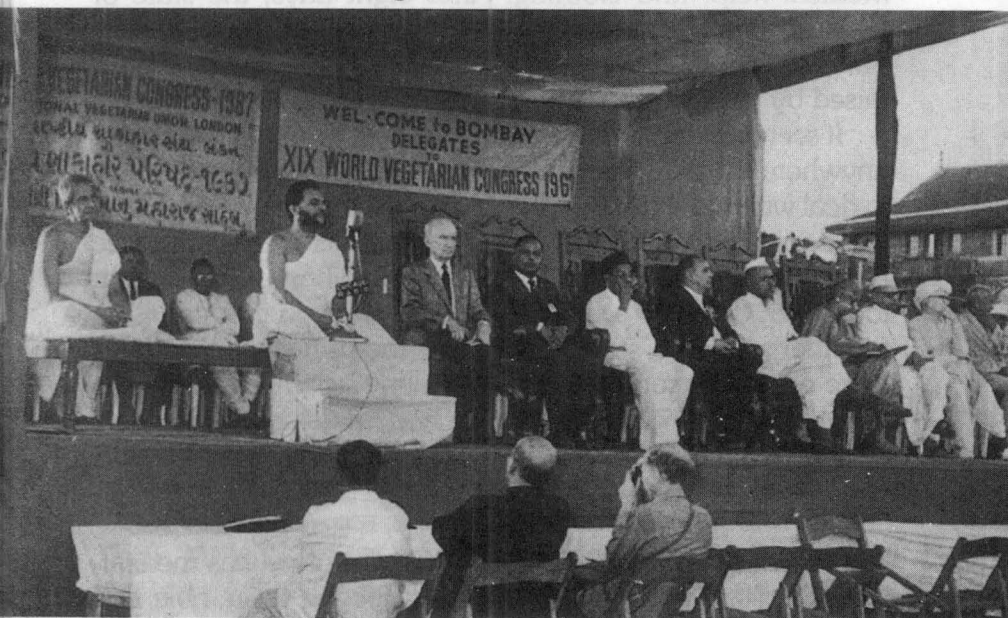


Shri Jayaprakash Narayan with Gurudev

Nahlchand himself was inspired to give fifty thousand rupees. Within the first two months of the crisis, a total of ten lakhs rupees was collected. It was decided that the students would be able to continue to run the five kitchens for at least six months. In March, Shree Chitrabhanuji had an idea. Addressing the Jain Sangha, he suggested every Jain set aside a handful of grains every day until Mahavir Jayanti, for the Bihar relief.

The April 23rd meeting coincided with Prani Maitri Din or Animal Friendship Day. It was a huge public gathering on the seashore of Chowpatty where money was raised for both people and animals. On that occasion, J. P. Narayan inspired many people with his moving words, "On this day of friendship to animals, we feel that when people are kind to animals, naturally they must be kind to human beings. When people are starving, how can we afford to remain in luxury?"

As a result of this meeting, grass shelters for starving cattle in Rajagraha in Bihar were given support along with the kitchens for starving people. J. Mankar, General Secretary to the Humanitarian League and Vice President to the World



World Vegetarian Congress in Bombay

Vegetarian Congress, was given The Divine Knowledge Society's donation of ten thousand rupees toward this cause. When J. P. tried to thank Gurudev for helping his people, Gurudev saw it in another light, "What we do for your people we do for ourselves. Removing their pain we remove our own."

* * *

J. P. and Shree Chitrabhanuji met again in July 1967, to try and ponder ways to make a permanent organization to bring about a change in national thinking. What was needed was a permanent reserve both of foodgrains and funds as well as self-help on the part of the Bihari people to be assured of an alternative to future famines.

No sooner were the Bihari people in a more stable situation than the Gujarati people faced a similar situation. In particular, the Adivasi or aboriginal people living in Dharampur and Bodili districts found themselves in dire distress. They were eating leaves and roots until Gurudev decided to set up immediately four kitchens, supplying food, children's milk, medical help, and clothing. After eight days, the state of Gujarat took over the relief centers and the revered leader Shree Ravishankar Maharaj supervised the usage of the funds raised by Gurudev for the famine victims.

It seemed that Gurudev came to know of people in distress anywhere in India. Immediately his mind was active as to how to deal with the situation. If it occurred in Gujarat, he entrusted the donations and supervision over to octogenarian Shree Ravishankar Maharaj. If it occurred in Bihar, J. P. Narayan took over. Gurudev's students worked under their supervision together with the suffering people themselves. Sometimes there were four sources providing many helping hands:—the leader, the state government workers, the students, and the people.

* * *

One evening on December 11, 1967, Gurudev was meditating. All of a sudden his whole body began to tremble and shake, for no apparent reason. The only explanation he could think of was that there was somewhere an earthquake. The

next morning he confirmed this. In the town of Koyna, south of Bombay, an earthquake had surprised the inhabitants and many many lives and homes were swallowed up. Again, Shree Chitrabhanuji raised funds to rehabilitate the villagers. The Jains of Kamatipura placed fifteen thousand rupees at his feet. Bhor Industries supplied clothing. Gurudev sent a team of helpers under Shri K. K. Modi to distribute the necessary items, to open dispensaries, and to organize the rebuilding of broken roads, homes, and schools. It was a joint effort in which the state government of Maharashtra, Gurudev's students, and the people put their energies together.

In 1968, the people of Gujarat and nearby Surat suffered from a torrential downpour of rain and overflowed rivers. Many homes were washed out. The village of Kavas was drowned completely in a flood of the river next to their homes. Under Shree Ravishankar Maharaj's guidance, the money donated to The Divine Knowledge Society was used to rebuild the entire village on a hillside so that the river water would not be able to reach it again. The state contributed the building materials freely, while The Divine Knowledge Society hired laborers to help the people rebuild homes, schools, and water pipes. Grateful for all this loving assistance, the people renamed their village *Suvās*, meaning fragrance.

* * *

Opening to the West

The message enshrined in Gurudev's books was beginning to reach out to other parts of the world, in particular Europe, America, Africa, and Asia. His recent book *The Beacon* was being used as a textbook in courses of philosophy and religion. From M. I. T., Professor Huston Smith wrote to Gurudev, "I appreciate the gesture at cross-cultural understanding which *The Beacon* represents and I am sharing it with my students." The Divine Knowledge Society became a place where

Gurudev made himself accessible to all. Those who came into his presence commented on how refreshed they felt both in body and spirit. They were delighted to find no stuffy piety; instead they experienced his buoyant carefreeness, his expansion of consciousness; it was contagious! This feeling remained with them hours and sometimes days after having had an interview with Gurudev.

Even some members of the New Zealand cricket team asked to meet with him. They had heard of his physical stamina and spiritual strength and were curious to see how these two blended in one person. They asked him, "How is it you can maintain such vitality and remain so robust without ever eating meat?"

Gurudev smiled and suggested, "Look at the power hidden in a tiny seed! It pushes its way up through the hard earth. It throws off its hulls in order to grow. The vegetable kingdom absorbs the sun's great energy and provides human beings with all the nutrients we need."

They continued, "But isn't it natural to eat meat? After all, the rest of the animal kingdom feeds on each other."

Gurudev explained, "First of all, I know that I want to live. The cow also wants to live. If I take away its life in order to live my life, how can that be natural? Why should the cow have to die for me? Why should I not die for the sake of the cow? If you're in the jungle and a cannibal comes along and grabs you and says, 'Hey! I want you for my dinner,' though it is natural for him, would you consider it natural? Would you allow yourself to be eaten?"

The men sang out, "Definitely not!"

"It shows it is not natural," Gurudev concluded, "because you try to escape. To prey on anybody's life is not natural. To live, to feel life, to support life, that is natural."

"What is the purpose of life?" they inquired.

"To realize what you are. To reach that, you take a direction, a universal approach of unconditional respect for yourself and others. You stop doing anything which hurts or distracts you from your growth. And you move toward that which helps you bring out your love, peace, understanding, and inner beauty. You become aware of a greater goal beyond and apart

from your immediate interest in sports.”

“How can you be contented with such simple living, with only two pieces of cloth to cover your body?” they asked.

“I have found that the less I need, the less dependency, and the less dependency, the less pain. And the less pain, the more happy. Happiness is in one’s mental attitude, not in possessions.”

Gurudev gave the men a copy of *The Beacon*. They bowed their heads as he blessed them, and left deeply moved.

* * *

Serious students from Spain, England, Australia, Germany, France, and Eastern Europe came to Gurudev for guidance and direction.

An engineer from Czechoslovakia who was working in Goa came to the Fort Upasray to study with Gurudev whenever he had a chance. Once he sat out in the open terrace of a house where Gurudev was spending the afternoon and went into a deep meditation. Though there came to be a heavy downpour of rain, he did not move from his spot. When Gurudev was ready to leave, he looked for his student. He found him drenched, still out on the terrace, oblivious of the pounding rain.

Gurudev laughed. “Come, Jaroslav! Enjoying *samādhi* in this rain? You are living proof of the laws of the universe!”

Jaroslav came in. “What do you mean, Guruji?”

“You get the secret of that on which you pay complete and whole attention. In all walks of life, that law works. Focus on the Self and it opens its heart. Your energy surges and you have inspiration for life.”

Gurudev related to him a story from his own life. “When I was in my teens, my father once asked me to do the *sāmāyik* meditation, but I had just finished my homework and was sleepy. I told him, ‘I don’t feel like it. I am going to bed.’ Fifteen minutes later, a friend came by and woke me up. ‘Hey! Let’s go to the movies!’ All of a sudden I wasn’t sleepy any more. We went to the movies and didn’t stop chatting until two in the morning. The next day I started thinking, ‘I am not honest. I told my father I was tired but kept myself awake for what I

liked to do. When there was something I didn't want to do, I collapsed. Why?' That is when I realized that energy sprouts from one's attitude. We have energy where there is a deep interest. And see how our interests have changed! Once we wanted to run out to the movies; now we love to go in to be with ourselves!"

* * *

After seven years of searching in vain for spiritual knowledge, a young man from Spain discovered Gurudev in Bombay. Each time he had met a renunciate or self-styled teacher, he had been disappointed. When he met Gurudev, he was struck by his different approach. Gurudev did not offer him any promises or solutions. He taught him how to meditate and investigate his mind. He faced him in the right direction, toward his own inner divinity. He told him, "There is no particular saint wearing certain cloths or robes. Everyone is a saint who adorns himself or herself with beautiful thoughts. I always say this: saints are those who are adorned with beautiful thoughts.

"The power of thought is great. Even in the worst of conditions, think the best. Select each thought. Let each one be valuable to you. Preserve it. Mesh yourself with it. Wear it and see what blossoms out of it in your life."

In the few weeks he spent with the Master, Manuel never missed the daily lectures which were given in Gujarati. Though he did not know the language, he tuned himself to the vibrations of love and peace. He loved to bask in Gurudev's presence. Before returning home to Spain, he buried his head in Gurudev's lap and wept like a child.

Later Gurudev sent a copy of *The Beacon* to him in Spain. When he received it, he wrote to Gurudev, "I feel it is really the Spirit speaking to man. Every time I read it, tears come to my eyes. It puts me beyond space and time and I feel in communion with the Self. Often I visualize the Self in different forms of which you are one. Sometimes I feel very deeply that it would not be much longer for me ... before Realization."

* * *

One day Gurudev was walking back from collecting alms

along the Marine Drive. He noticed a forlorn-looking foreign girl and greeted her with a friendly "Hello!" She was glad for the greeting because, as she explained to him, "I have lost faith in humanity. Ever since I came to India, I have come across the wrong people and have been robbed of nearly all my money. Now I cannot even afford to stay in a hotel."

Gurudev arranged for Sorella to stay at one of his students' homes until she regained her peace. She requested to study meditation with him. He helped her to understand why she was finding herself in this predicament.

"Whatever we send out returns to us. We receive what we give. If we give out fear or hatred, that is what we get back. Send out love and friendliness and that will return to you."

"Then what happened to me, the thievery and other things, was because of my own invitation?" she asked.

"Yes, this world mirrors back our own reflection. Now you start building positive thoughts and self-appreciation. Your life will change."

"What determines whether or not we can erase an action we have done in the past? Is this possible?"

Gurudev answered, "We have the power to erase the past, depending on different things. Certain kinds of *karmas* are very sticky, like permanent glue, almost impossible to erase. Their density is determined by how intensely one has put one's heart into the act. For example, in certain restaurants, they keep snakes and other small creatures in glass boxes. People point to their choice, watch it being fried before their eyes, and cherish the food with praise and gusto while they eat. The taste so absorbs them that they are blind to the pain they caused to a life."

Sorella asked, "What if the person realizes that he has been holding the wrong attitude and regrets the act?"

"That brings a hopeful point. I met someone who felt great regret at having been an instrument in war as a recruiting officer. Had he known of the philosophy of non-violence, he said he would have worked in that direction. By acknowledging his past ignorance, he was able to move on from the guilt, do something to serve, protect, and help life, and erase the vibrations of violence. But I met another man who had been a

pilot and had dropped many bombs at night when people were sleeping. When I asked him if he repented for that, he said, 'Not at all, they were our enemies. It was my duty to bomb them. They got what they deserved.' I told him, 'That is your belief. Not all share that belief, least of all the victims, many of whom were innocent women and children. And all sons are dear to their mothers, whatever the nationality.' He had no feeling for what he had done. In fact, he was glad. Such a person perpetuates violence in his consciousness and often becomes the victim of self-violence before the *karma* can be erased."

Sorella asked Gurudev what she could do to help a friend who had received such a shock from bombs exploding in her backyard during the war in Germany that she has not been able to forget it. "Whenever the month comes in which the explosions took place, for fifteen days she shakes and trembles. It happens like clockwork every year. When the fifteen days are over, she comes back to herself."

Gurudev suggested, "First you be calm and aware of yourself through your own meditative practice. That will help her also. Help her to see that she is living in the 1960's and that what happened then is not happening now. Little by little, she will disidentify."

Before returning to Munich, Sorella told Gurudev, "These days of unselfish help and kindness have restored me to myself. You have given me back my faith in mankind and in the evolution of consciousness, the greatest gift anyone can bestow on anyone."

As more and more Europeans and Americans were uplifted by Gurudev's insights into the human heart, he found that he too was inspired and exhilarated by his contact with them. He liked their practical approach to problems, their direct unpretentious way of addressing him their questions. He sympathized with the longing they expressed for a more spiritual environment. He saw in them a deep quest to change their lifestyles and to practice meditation. Meeting with them seemed like a breath of fresh air in his life. He felt undeniably new openings within.

* * *

VII. THE UNIVERSE AS HOME

A Feeling to Share

At the same time as Gurudev had been uniting his fellow countrymen as one human family, a dream to promote mutual understanding among the religions of the world was birthed in America. Mrs. Virginia Prout shared her idea with Mrs. Judith Hollister, who then shared it with such leaders as Eleanor Roosevelt, Prime Minister Nehru, Pope John XXIII, Dr. Radhakrishnan, and Sir Zafrulla Khan. Eventually, representatives from sixty-six different nations and from all of the world's religions supported what became a non-profit educational corporation called The Temple of Understanding. With the purpose of achieving "universal recognition of the underlying Oneness of the Family of Man" and creating a "Spiritual United Nations," the Temple enthusiasts sponsored dialogues, publications, exhibits, and Spiritual Summit Conferences, the first of which was held in 1968 in Calcutta.

Nearly eighty religious leaders, scholars, and students came together to apply spiritual insights toward building a more open global-minded society in which war, poverty, prejudice, and unrest would diminish and vanish. Through Shri B. K. Birla and Shrimati Sarla Birla, Chairman of the International Committee, Gurudev became known to the Conference organizers. His great stature among Indians of all faiths, his non-sectarian ecumenical approach made him their choice to represent Jainism. But when the invitation came to him, he was unable to accept.

He sent his disciple, Kumari Vatsala Amin, who was a lawyer, to represent him and to read one of his discourses. Miss Amin's dynamic presentation inspired many of the delegates there to know more of Jain philosophy and practice. One of them, Thomas Merton, highly respected spiritual leader, writer, and monk of the Catholic faith, wrote of Vatsala in his *Asian Journal*:

“Vatsala Amin, the young Jain laywoman from Bombay who presented the Jain message at the Temple of Understanding Conference, is an extremely beautiful and spiritual person. I was very impressed by her talk, and this evening had a long and good conversation with her. We talked about meditation and her Master, Munishri Chitrabhanu, whom I would like to see if I can get to Bombay. And about her desire to live in solitude in the Himalayas, and her project of doing so

“Vatsala Amin: great soft intelligent dark eyes. A white sari. Vivacity and seriousness, warmth, spiritual fervor. She meditates on a picture of her guru, preferring the one in which his skull and chin are shaved. Jain gurus shave once a year. ‘If he can be so perfect, so can I,’ she reflects. Today she left for Bombay. I on my part am impressed by her purity and perfection. She gave me a garland, like a lei, made of sandalwood because I was her special friend. She gave another to Sister Barbara Mitchell from Manhattanville.”

One of the Moslem leaders, Shri Rashid, who had attended the Conference, made a special trip to Bombay to meet Gurudev before going on to Israel. He asked him one great question which had been disturbing him.

“Gurudev, if religion is a means to lift us to God and to bring us peace, why is there discord among the peoples of the world?”

Gurudev answered, “Man treads upon the earth which is one yet parcels it into portions which are many. He names them hamlet, village, province, or country. Then he slinks away quietly to take shelter in his own corner. The same man who limits himself can also fly at a great height. From above, we can have infinite vision. The vast boundaryless space stretches before us and we can see the land in wholeness, with its dividing lines blotted out.”

“Why does man make these divisions? Where does the idea of ownership come from?”

“From the ignorance of the lower mind. The unenlightened mind generates the concept of ‘mine’ and ‘thine.’ But

soul is not fooled by this illusion; soul does not recognize the dual nature of anything. A Hindu carries his water home as does a Muslim. What happens when the mind interferes? It is labelled Hindu water and Muslim water. When a cool breeze blows into your face and caresses your heated brow, who can say 'This is my breeze, no other man has any claim on it'? True understanding resides in the unified vision of the soul."

Shri Rashid told Gurudev, "My heart is dancing with joy! You are an angel sent by God! You are a messenger of God!"

Gurudev took his hands in his and said, "There is no difference between man and man. Like souls are found in you and me and everyone. It is only a question of progressive realization. When we remove the soot, the same flame lights up in all. Yes, I lay stress on this - let all live for this wonderful moment of illumination, to strike the divine spark inside one's self and celebrate life."

* * *

In 1969, Shrimati Sarla Birla invited Gurudev to become a member of the Temple's International Committee. Plans were made for the Second Spiritual Summit Conference to be held in April of 1970 in Geneva, Switzerland. This time, Mrs. Hollister and Mr. Peter Dunne, Executive Director of the Temple, requested Gurudev's participation in person. The Birlas urged him to accept, "It is an international conference. It is imperative that you attend! The time has come for East to meet West!"

In the thousands of years that the Jain philosophy and practice have been known to exist in this time cycle, no *muni* has ever crossed the borders of India. Initially, the reason for not traveling was a natural one. To journey long distances would have required the use of a vehicle. In those days, that would have meant exploitation of an animal. Thus, monks always traveled by foot. The rule perpetuated, even into the days of modern means of transportation, when no animal would have suffered harm. Also, since conversion has no part in Jain teachings, there was never any thought or desire among the Jain monks to go beyond their borders to missionize, as the Buddhists and Christians have done.

Now, two years after sending his disciple to the First Spiritual Summit Conference, Gurudev decided to send himself to the Second. The thought of going forward to the West and contributing to a beautiful exchange elated him. A feeling to be open to the Western thinkers as well as to share Mahāvīr's philosophy of non-violence with people who had never heard of it brought out his natural buoyancy and optimism. He realized that he would be offering people who, out of fear, clung to weapons as a deterrent to war, the chance to discover a real alternative, the way of reverence for life.

Gurudev was young and handsome, full of inspiration and charisma. The public announcement of his decision aroused a lot of controversy. Many who loved him were afraid to let him go. They did not want to lose him, even for a short time. For others, Gurudev was too revolutionary a thinker. They were concerned that the teachings and the rules might become diluted in the West.

There were also a great many Jains and non-Jains who understood Gurudev's clear intention and higher purpose. At a time when the world was in a desperate need for direction and guidance in the way of peace, here was a man who could communicate that leadership, and that vision. They were as eager as he was to see him move toward building a bridge of understanding among people from all parts of the world.

* * *

One night, a few days before Gurudev was to leave, one elderly gentleman who used to attend Gurudev's talks regularly came to see him late at night. He was in his seventies, and when he knocked on his door, Gurudev was surprised to see him at such a late hour.

"What brings you here, my friend?" he asked.

"Gurudev, I have one request," he said.

"Come and tell me," Gurudev said as he invited him in.

"But first you know I love you, yes?"

"Yes," Gurudev smiled, "I know."

"I have not come to argue with you."

"Yes, I know."

"I have come to tell you that you are taking a step without thinking."

Gurudev asked, "Without thinking? Why?"

He answered, "Here four million disciples you have. Such a high post you hold. You are living such a glorious life and you have so many friends. You are going to Geneva for what? Who knows you? You will repent. I am not in a position to give you advice, but I felt it, so I hope you will listen to an old man's advice. You are going to the land where there are strangers."

Gurudev smiled, "Thank you for your advice. They are strangers to you but they are friends to me."

"They are friends? You have not gone to Switzerland. You have walked for all these years as a monk. Here in India you have never crossed the ocean."

Gurudev explained, "You don't need to cross the ocean to make friends. Friendship isn't in crossing the ocean; friendship is in consciousness. If you are a friend to yourself, you are a friend to all. To me, there are no strangers anywhere in the world. I see everywhere friends. But thank you for telling me what was on your mind. Some day, I think you too will be glad that I decided to take this step."

* * *

March 29, 1970 was the epoch-making day in which Gurudev became the first Jain monk to put on shoes (rubber sandals) and travel in a vehicle (van and plane) to go to the West. An ocean of people came to Birla Krida Kendra to hear his last talk before departing for the airport. Mr. Bharade, Speaker of the House of Legislature, hosted the gathering. In his send-off speech, he expressed his joy that Gurudev was to become an ambassador of the spiritual wealth of the East.

After Gurudev's talk, it was clear that hordes of people were going to try and prevent their leader from stepping foot into the van and going forward to the West. The crowd started shouting. Mr. Bharade's police escorts invited extra help to cordone off the building. Gurudev remained in his loving and balanced mood. He turned to his close disciples who were standing with him: Shantilal Zatakia and Nirmalabehn Zatakia, Kantilal Nahlchand, Rikhabhchand Sanavi, Kumari Vatsala Amin, and Mahabanoo Kotwal, and said, "Come, let us confront them. They will not do any harm."

Shantilal, who was to accompany Gurudev throughout his stay in Europe in the hope of being helpful to him in all matters, disagreed, "To pass through this sea of people will be impossible."

The police would not permit them to go out from the building until they had arranged for a van to escort Gurudev from the back door to a friend's house where he was to relax until departure time at 1 a.m. Eventually, the mob dispersed. In the meantime, ten busloads of people went to the airport to block off the entry! By the time Gurudev arrived by a different route, the building had been cordoned off and the crowd unable to gain access to it.

Undaunted by the mass demonstration, Gurudev left India in ecstasy and calmness. Neither praise nor blame disturbed him; he saw that they were temporary waves and would go back from where they came. His own commitment to life and readiness to meet the unknown were firm. New friendships awaited him. Bound to none, he was freeing himself for all. The past had no power over him. It was a step taken in joy and awareness.

Some one asked him, "How do you feel about going to the West?"

"As if spiritual wings are lifting me to participate with the world!

* * *

East Meets West

When Gurudev alighted from the Air India plane in Geneva on the morning of March 30, many people greeted him with joy, "You have brought us the sunshine, Gurudev! We've had rain all week!" The Birlas, Judith Hollister, and Peter Dunne who had gone to Bombay to invite Gurudev personally to the Conference were among the members of a reception committee to greet their distinguished guests. Shri N. M. Shah, who had been living in Geneva for years, and his daughter Daksha

invited Gurudev to stay in their home. Gurudev's student Sorella had come from Munich, and his French disciple Gilbert, who was known as Swami Hamsānanda, had brought twelve of his students from France to meet Gurudev.

After having received some telegrams from Bombay, the organizers of the Conference became aware of the controversy and of what personal courage it took for Gurudev to challenge tradition and risk the disfavor of his own colleagues. They felt an even greater appreciation for this messenger of Reverence for Life and decided to give him the privilege of opening the Conference.

* * *

The next day, Judith Hollister introduced Gurudev to the colorful array of scholars, religious leaders, and representatives of the many different religions. After relating to them the situation previous to his coming to the Conference, she said, "Here is a man who shares in mankind's quest for world unity. It is this dream which has led us to him and him to us."

All eyes turned to the figure draped in two plain white cloths walking with calm dignity to the dais. In the grace of his movement, an equanimity and joy radiated from his being and penetrated the hearts of the people there. His eyes were brimming with unconditional love. The audience drank in this feeling. They could not help but feel how intoxicated he was with inner bliss.

Gurudev chanted the sacred Navkāra Mantra invoking the energy of all Realized Souls to bless the people, the place, and the auspicious occasion. Accompanied by his French disciples, his deep and sonorous voice resounded in the core of consciousness of each one there and reverberated throughout the lofty hall of the Continental Hotel. This was the beginning of a vibrant communion which would little by little melt away the boundaries between East and West.

The audience was mystified at hearing Europeans chant the nine-line Navkara Mantra in the ancient Prakrit language. Later, many sought an explanation. Gurudev told them, "I am reaping today in Switzerland the harvest of the seed I sowed ten long years ago in India." He was referring to Swami

Hamsānanda* and other students who had visited India at that time on a spiritual quest.

The theme of the Conference was 'The Practical Requirements for World Peace.' Gurudev's turn to speak on this question came on the second day.

How to speak to these distinguished scholars and religionists in English? My English is so limited and I have never spoken at great length in English before. Let me forget all this and turtle myself to Mahavir and his living message.

He closed his eyes, calmed his mind, and tuned to the light and love of Mahavir. From deep within, the words in English welled forth. He began by saying, "I believe in the practice of non-violence more than in the preaching. I would share with everyone what I have experienced through practice. Friendliness to life, this is my message, for with friendliness, one cannot harbor hatred. And without hatred, how can there be room for war and conflict and killing?"

He spoke directly to the topic of peace, "Self-hatred sows the seeds of war. How to stop them? The Jain solution is to sow the seeds of peace, to transform one's emotions and channel them into the river of devotion to life and reverence for all, including oneself. By living a life which reveres the sanctity of animal and bird life as well as human life, one cultivates an attitude of non-harming, for anyone who would refuse to harm a helpless creature would also naturally refuse to participate in war." Gurudev singled out women who, as mothers, "can shape the future generations by inspiring in

*Monsieur Gilbert, as he was then called, stayed at some āshrams, but as sometimes happens, fell into the hands of someone who took advantage of him and relieved him of his modest means with which to travel back home. Gilbert was left quite shaken, but when he came across Gurudev in the Nemināth Temple of Bombay, his faith in the innate goodness of man and in meditation was reignited. Gurudev arranged for The Divine Knowledge Society to lend him the money needed for the return journey. Once in France, Gilbert sent back the amount he had borrowed and spent some time in caves and mountains training body and mind, and ruminating the insights received from Gurudev. At the end of this period, he was inspired to open several āshrams in Southern France where kindred souls might benefit by his guidance and discover themselves in the peaceful solitude of the mountains.

their children ideas of love and peace.” To replace the current destructive focus on competition, he brought out the Jain principle of *anekāntavāda*, a non-dogmatic approach to life in which other points of view are appreciated as complementary elements. “Different angles of vision enrich us and bring us to a more complete understanding of one another. Thus, rather than attack others for not agreeing with us, we have to join hands. A single blade of grass is weak in itself, but when many blades are united together in a rope, they become too strong for even the biggest of elephants.”

* * *

Throughout the week, both inside the Conference halls and outside in the Swiss countryside, people in the hundreds came to see and hear the Jain Muni. “What is Jainism? When was it founded? Why have we never heard of Mahavir? What are its fundamental principles?” Gurudev corrected the many myths in people’s minds. In particular, he was asked how the demonstration in Bombay on the part of those trying to prevent him from coming to the West could be reconciled with the Jain teaching on non-violence. Gurudev answered, “Whenever a new light is thrown on the essential truths of a religion which has become encrusted with age, custom, and sectarianism, there is bound to be opposition. It was a challenge to my unflinching trust in my experience.”

Among Gurudev’s many afternoon visitors, one was Shri G. D. Birla who happened to be in Switzerland at the time and who had heard of Gurudev’s coming from his son B. K. Birla. G. D. Birla, a well-known and dearly loved philanthropist as well as a leading industrialist of India, had been a long time supporter of Mahatma Gandhi and his cause. Now he was eager to meet the man whom he had admired from afar as one who lived and practiced the philosophy of non-violence. He longed to receive some insight from him in person.

His appointment was for 3 p.m., but he arrived early. Since Gurudev always kept silence till then, no one informed him that his visitor had come. At 3, Gurudev opened the door and saw the mature gentleman sitting there. “Oh, please come in! I have kept you waiting.”

But his visitor only smiled and said, "The wait was useful. I have already received what I came for. In the time I was here, I became aware of my peaceful vibration. I let go of my tension. In letting go, I experienced such a feeling. It is inexpressible. It was such a deep peace. For that I came here. And for that I thank you from the bottom of my heart."

Gurudev took his hand and between two hearts there flowed a stream of mutual reverence and love.

* * *

One afternoon Sorella drove Gurudev to meet the friend about whom she had told him while in Bombay. She was sure that he could help her. When the problem had been aired, Gurudev showed the woman some techniques of meditation and suggested some ways to overcome the yearly attack. He told her, "Before the month when the painful memories return, you must start working. From right now you start. Tell yourself that what happened in the 1940's is not happening now. You are living in 1970. You see now as now, and then as then. You stop identifying with the past. When you stop identifying, you will stop bringing the past into the present. But first, you deliberately bring the incident into your mind, and when you are about to relive it or identify with it, repeat to yourself 'Na-ham, Not I' with your breath. 'Na' with the inbreath, 'ham' with the outbreath. In this way slowly you will disengage yourself completely from this event. And when the month comes, you will be ready to face it with transcendent awareness."

She took his words to heart. From that day she started working seriously on that level. Later, when Gurudev was back in Bombay, she wrote to him telling him that that year, when the trembling feelings started to come, she had gathered all her concentration, all her understanding, and all her energy, and had said, "Na-ham. I am not that. That was in the past. I am in the present. I do not accept these trembling feelings. I do not allow this attack to come over me any more." She had conquered. Her burden lifted, she expressed her deep gratitude to Gurudev for his guiding light.

* * *

A Hollywood producer who happened to be staying at the same hotel in Geneva read of Gurudev in the local papers. Seeing his picture, he was aware of a sense of magnetism in him. One morning he sought out Gurudev's secretary, Shantilal, and invited him to take tea in his room. He elaborated a plan he had to promote Gurudev in America. He explained that he could arrange a nationwide speaking tour. He was willing to split the financial returns fifty-fifty with the Master.

Shantilal listened politely, then asked, "Why do you want to undertake this project?" The producer replied, "It is a sound business venture. This is my line, to produce and promote films, and I want to try my skill with an Indian holy man. When I saw your Master's picture and met him briefly, I was convinced that this would work."

Shantilal thanked him quietly, and explained gently, "I do not like to discourage you but this Master is not the kind of man who would be interested in such a plan. He has no desire for wealth or fame. He has come to the West only to help people from all parts of the world to understand one another better and to realize their purpose in life. The thought of commercial success does not enter his mind."

The producer was disappointed, but saw clearly that there was no point in attempting to persuade Shantilal to reconsider. The two men parted with a feeling of friendship and goodwill, each a bit wiser, though in different ways. Later, Shantilal realized that he had answered for Gurudev without even thinking to consult him about the idea. When he told Gurudev about it, Gurudev smiled and told him, "Congratulations! You have done just the right thing. He does not understand what is right, but does only what will sell. You handled the man's feeling with patience and sensitivity."

* * *

To the spiritual person, it makes little difference whether one meditates in a church, mosque, temple, or out in the open air. Before the final day, all of the Conference delegates assembled in the ancient Cathedral of St. Peters. After some silence, he who opened the Conference with the Navkāra Mantra closed the day of prayer by chanting some verses of 'Bhaktāmar,'

stanzas on immortal love and devotion, and offered prayers for the peace and wellbeing of everyone in the universe, including all life forms.

“The happiness of the individual is only a part of the happiness of all. The universe is one ecological whole. What we do has an effect on the farthest corners of the world. That is why in our prayers we include all and exclude none. In this way, we do not deny to anyone the right to live and enjoy life, and in the process of wellwishing, blessings shower upon us from all directions and our life becomes a blessing to the world.”

* * *

Journey Through Europe

During the Conference week, local Swiss and British newspapermen interviewed Gurudev. His message was broadcast by The Voice of America and the B.B.C. Before leaving Geneva, some of the delegates from Oxford and Cambridge Universities invited him to speak to their students and friends in England. Also, the Jains who had been studying or working in England for years and who still cherished the seeds of a quest sown in their childhood in India invited Gurudev to revive their quest and inspire them. Gurudev was glad to accept.

But first he consented to a journey through France. Gurudev and Shantilal set out with Swami Hamsānanda on what would be no less than a two thousand-mile trip through exhilarating Alpine scenery, winding autobahns lined with dark forests of pine and fir, foaming rivers rushing down to clear water lakes below. All of nature seemed to be echoing the Navkāra Mantra to which each of them was deeply attuned.

They stopped first in Lyon, third largest city in France where Gurudev met many students of philosophy, many of whom had become vegetarians and were eager to hear

Gurudev speak on *ahimsā*. That night, after giving a talk, Gurudev was given a small room in a quaint hotel. Shantilal had left a basket of fruits for him. It was a beautiful clear night. Spring was on its way and a gentle music could be heard from a nearby spot Gurudev was charmed by everyone's kindness and by the atmosphere of the place.

Then there was one moment. It was so peaceful, so deep that for two or three hours he forgot where he was and what he was doing. He merged with light, joy, peace, ecstasy. Later, he tried to find out what had created such a transcendent state. Ultimately, he concluded, "There is no answer. All the different aspects of experience are gliders; they took me to myself. These are the moments of *nirvāṇa*, of the pinnacle of experience - being with oneself, that is all, and that is everything. What more could anyone need?"

* * *

Above Lyon, they drove to Hamsananda's *ashram* Centr'Om, where his students bowed to their guru's guru and welcomed him with "Namo Arihantānam" which was how they greeted each other instead of saying "Bonjour!" The cleanliness and discipline of the *āshram*, the plain living style, the high thinking and great respect each one had for the Navkāra Mantra made Gurudev realize that Mahāvīr's universal principles could be observed anywhere, even in a land thousands of miles away from the land of his birth. The ambiance was reminiscent of an ancient Jain temple, conducive to meditation.

It was in the solitude of two fine caves in the mountains above the Centre that Hamsānanda had meditated in the years following his meetings with Gurudev. He now led his guru here, installing him in the seat of the Master and placing himself at his feet. Gurudev invited the students to chant the Navkāra Mantra with him and addressed them briefly, "I am elated to see how you have risen above all transient distractions and pleasures to seek the ultimate happiness, the realization of the inner spark of Self. You have the great benefit of living at the very heart of nature in tranquility. May you resolve here and now to attain the highest spiritual level in this life and spend every moment in a joy that radiates from a deep rever-

ence for all life. I confer upon Hamsananda now the title of Āchārya, for he is one who lives as an example of what he teaches.”

Hamsānanda bowed his head as tears of joy streamed down his face. All were in ecstasy at this unique moment in the history of their āshram.

The journey progressed still further into the heights, partly on foot, to reach Mandi'Om where only a handful of men lived like hermits. There were only a few small chalets nearby, no modern facilities or electricity. Upon seeing how moved Gurudev was by the profound quiet of the mountains, Āchārya Hamsānanda offered, “Gurudevji, will you not accept this āshram as your future abode for meditation and grace us with your spiritual presence and insights?”

Gurudev thanked him for his genuine and spontaneous offer. With lightness, he expressed his feeling, “Some day I would like to return here to breathe this air of serenity, but now I am a bird flying freely in the air. How can I call any one place home when I feel the whole universe as home?”

At the third āshram in the mountains, Gurudev found a surprise gift awaiting him. Vidya, one of the students, greeted him with a bow and a cape of snow-white wool which she had specially knitted for him by chanting “Namo Arihantānam” each time she took a stitch. She had completed the shawl in only three days' time.

Gurudev gave more discourses at Yoga Institutes in Marseilles, Lyon on a return visit, and Paris. Hundreds of young people came to hear him. Sixteen young women who were studying yoga at the Institute in Paris requested that Gurudev bless them. At a small gathering, clad in white saris, the eager devotees bowed before Gurudev to receive the sacred *vasaxep* powder through his hands.

The day before Gurudev and Shantilal left Paris for London, Gurudev and Swami Ranganāthānanda of the Rama-krishna Mission gave talks to a large audience at the Centre D'Etudes et De Recherches. One could have heard a pin drop in the room. Many said that it was the first time in their lives they had ever been so moved.

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In London, Gurudev was greeted by thousands of Jains and non-Jains who had traveled over long distances to have Gurudev's *darśan* and to attend his discourses. There were thunderous cheers of "Jai Mahāvīr!" and "Jai Chitrabhanuji!" Shri Dahyabhai Meghani was delighted and grateful to be the host for Gurudev and Shantilal during their stay.

During his week in London, Gurudev gave seven public lectures. Most of his talks were given in English, for his fellow countrymen felt that his lucid insights should be available to more than just the Indian population. Two of the lectures were arranged by the Hindu Mission and the Hindu Center of London to celebrate the occasion of Mahāvīr Jayanti. Outside of London, he spoke at Oxford and Cambridge Universities as well.

At that time, an old friend, Mr. Jean Grimple, art historian and writer, who had come to Gurudev's Sunday discourse in Bombay several years before, invited Gurudev to meet the grandson of the renowned Charles Darwin. His host was eager to exchange views with this philosopher from India. In the few hours spent together, Mr. Darwin saw evolution from a fresh angle of vision. In this light, he became inspired to try a vegetarian diet for at least two years.

The cold and damp weather in England did not bother Gurudev. He met his steady schedule of talks, some of which were televised by the B.B.C. A special program took place through Radio Canada as well.

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Often Gurudev was on the move from early morning one day till late afternoon the next. Even the robust Shantilal could not always keep up with him. One morning he told Gurudev that he would have to take one day of complete rest. Gurudev told him, "You will be all right. See how you feel in fifteen minutes." Then he left the room.

"To this day I don't know what happened," Shantilal recalled, "but within a few minutes I felt like a normal man again and was able to keep pace with Gurudev the rest of the time!"

The vast halls where Gurudev spoke were crowded to

capacity by a great variety of people. After one of the talks, one Englishwoman sought out Gurudev to request him to speak to a group of young men and women, who, in those days, were called 'hippies.' Gurudev went to meet them. Seeing their lack of self-appreciation and loss of meaning in life, he felt their pain and spoke to them freely. He asked them, "What made you lose respect for conventional society in general? Why have you turned to drugs as a solution? Drugs will only ruin you in body and in mind."

"Ruin us in body and mind?" retorted one angry young girl. "What is left to be ruined in us? Statesmen the world over pack off our young men to fields of battle to gratify their craze for power. They are indifferent to the suffering of the women who are left behind. Our parents are so busy making money and spending it on their pleasures that they have no time or feeling leftover for us. And as for our teachers, being helpless to solve their own problems, how can they help us to solve ours?"

Seeing how attentively and patiently Gurudev was listening to her, she continued her tirade. "Because of the greed of the business community, there are thousands of unemployed, loitering aimlessly, despite the growing affluence in this country. How will you draw them away from their money-mindedness to the path of Enlightenment? And not only that, the priestly class as a whole is ignorant of the social conditions of today. Priests are concerned only with their monasteries and converts. All they do is spread the 'word of God' in their own dogmatic way. Are they not as worldly as any of us? How can you explain their lust for power and fame and even wealth which they pretend to despise? How is it possible for them to show us the right path? Why should we listen to hypocrites?"

"No, there is nothing left in us to be ruined. We don't care for the opinion of society. Why should we? Society has not shown us any sympathy, any understanding. It has no right to criticize us. What do we care for the standard of morality, the conventional lifestyle of those who mean nothing to us? So we will snatch our pleasures wherever we find them; it's only natural."

Gurudev felt the agony of these young people. They were

like rudderless ships tossed by the waves and gored by the sharp rocks. They needed guidance, some beacon that would lead them back home again, to themselves.

"Friends," he said in a voice vibrating with feeling, "Friends, you resort to all these things because you have not tried to understand the meaning of life. We have all come into this world for freedom, not for stagnation; for evolution, certainly not for ruination. This freedom, this evolution, can only be possible through achieving equanimity of the mind. With hatred and criticism in your hearts, you are stuck where you are, binding yourselves in a negative way to those for whom you have no respect. You are living your lives only in reaction to their way which you have rejected. Where is there any clear thinking here? Where is there some strength of purpose, some values?

"How long can you rely on your L.S.D.? The trips you take are just trips, brief by their very nature. The voyage of life is a serious business. It is for keeps. It is an eternal journey. Only the inner light of understanding can pilot you to your destination. We are not here for temporary pleasure. There is something beautiful, something permanent awaiting us. Escapism is useless; it is negative; it takes you away from your reality. Instead of running away and despising the world, go into yourselves and contemplate seriously, 'Why have I come into the world?' and 'Who am I?' If you embark on this quest, you will never again be bored, disillusioned, or lonely. You will drop your anger without the aid of drugs. You must come out from this circle of action and reaction. Then you will see what you are. When you realize that you are more than what you have so far experienced, you will attain a calmness and compassion that will lift you. From that height, you will be able to understand the pain and misery of those whom you now see as hypocrites and exploiters. You will be in a position to help them and inspire them rather than simply hate them.

"I like your honesty. Now use that honesty to find out truly what is at the honest core of yourselves, the heart of life itself."

The young people surrounded him, wanting to know more. They asked him to spend at least a few weeks with them. But Gurudev could not stay. He told them to use what

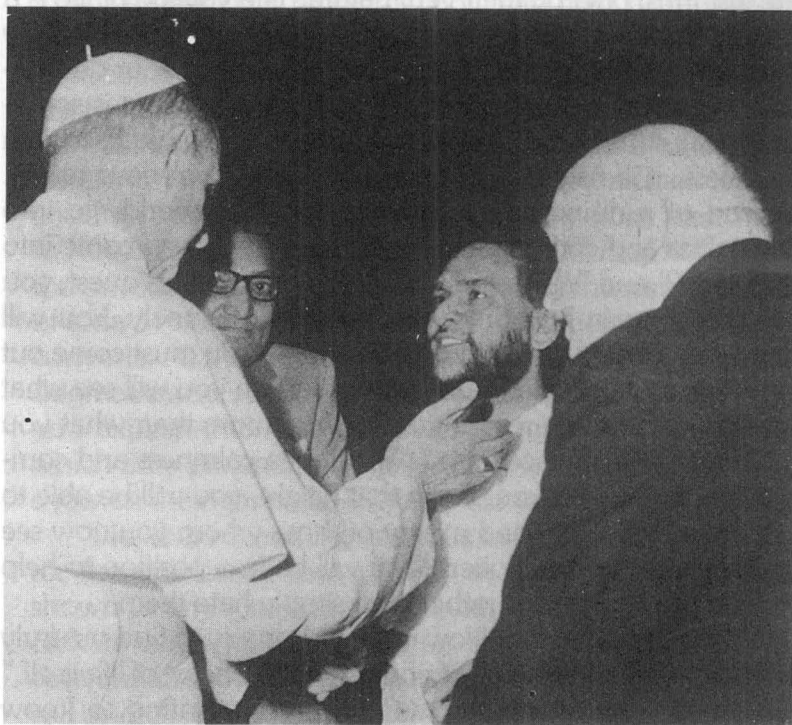
they had heard from him as a bell to wake themselves up and to be reminded that it was up to them to continue the process by serious self-investigation.

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From London there was a brief visit to Amsterdam and Munich where Gurudev gave two more public talks and met former students who had studied with him in Bombay.

The last stop was Rome where Gurudev had an audience with Pope Paul VI. For the first time in the West, Gurudev was truly shocked by what he saw - the pomp, the extravagance, the luxury and wealth encasing the Vatican and the Pope.

In his interview, Gurudev broached several controversial topics which several Conference participants had urged him to discuss with the Pope once they knew he was scheduled to meet with him. He asked the Pope if, in view of the tremendous burden of poverty and suffering brought on by



Gurudev and Shantilal greet Pope Paul

the population explosion, he could see the value in allowing people to practice contraception voluntarily. "After all," he said, "we should recognize the right of the unborn to be well-born." He also mentioned the subject of allowing priests to marry. Pope Paul did not want to discuss these topics, for he did not intend to change his mind from earlier pronouncements. But it was a cordial meeting, and the two souls parted with a feeling of friendship.

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After six weeks in Europe, Gurudev felt a natural detachment from the sectarian fold and from national boundaries and an opening of himself to life at large. He returned to Bombay refreshed and imbued with a greater sense of unity with all souls. He had witnessed his philosophy in action, "to go out of T and see the whole world as T, to have an extension cord of *maitri* which gives a direct connection with all of life." What he had given out in genuine feeling to others had returned to him manifold. New inspiration was burgeoning in his soul.

Now I see what it is like to circulate freely in the world, to share what I have gained in my life without fearing what people will think or how they will react. Many people have changed during these six weeks, but I also have changed a lot.

* * *

Envisioning the End Before the Beginning

Monsoon season was approaching. Gurudev decided to spend this *chaturmas* in Thana, a suburb outside of Bombay where the people had known him and loved him since his early days as a novitiate. They felt honored to welcome him back to their *upasray*. There, in his restful and relaxed meditations, he took time to be with himself, to see his life, and to free himself to choose what was conducive to his continued growth.

When the water is calm, you can see what is at the bottom. It allows the depth to reveal itself.

In those four months of quiet contemplation, he saw clearly what was meant to unfold in his lifetime. He envisioned how all the various parts of his life would fit together and come to completion.

He realized first that *ahimsa*, non-violence, and reverence for life was the very texture of his thought and feeling, the gist of his life, the conviction behind his word and deed.

I am born for peace and peace is my life. I do not want to be the cause of anything which is going to disturb the peace and cause quarrel.

Once the tree outgrows the fence, it no longer needs its protection. It is blossoming in its own nature. Now Gurudev felt appreciation for the formal disciplines of the monkhood; through them, he had learned the value of austerity. He had had time to meditate and know himself. It had taught him to go beyond the small self and suffer for the people. It had been his school, his supportive fence. But now he was ready to go further, to live the message without any outer dependency, framework, or identity. He had a vision. Now he would follow it.

The vision which had inspired him to go to Europe became clearer and clearer. He realized that for many lifetimes he had cherished a deep deep compassion for mankind and all living beings. That had helped him in this lifetime to refine and cleanse his heart and live in a pure state of reverence and

love. This, he knew, was everyone's hidden quest; behind the pursuit of pleasure and happiness was this cry for peace.

But the majority of mankind were not able to experience it. They were still suffering from vindictiveness, violence, and revenge in even the smallest details of their daily lives. As a result, they were unknowingly perpetuating war and violence in the world. In his clear state of awareness, Gurudev saw that what he had been sharing with his fellow countrymen, he had the capacity to share with all. There was no need to limit this universal teaching to one nation. He felt ready to respond fully to the need he perceived in the world at large. Through his example and inspiration, people would move toward ending the subtle forms of violence to which they had grown accustomed. They would see new options to living, new choices and alternatives to competition, conflict, and war. With understanding, they would find that a state of reverence could be a way of life for them, and an expression of their inmost reality.

At the same time, as an outcome of Gurudev's own joy, balance, and peace, his sharing would be as nourishing for him as for those whom he would meet. It would serve as a means for him to continue to evolve and meet the challenges of life by using the gift of his power of communication.

Without creating any unnecessary commotion or public controversy, Gurudev made a decision. Inwardly, he renounced his high position and post, and detached himself from the monkhood. By his actions people would come to know his decision. The first thing he planned to do the following summer was to visit the many Jains living in Africa who had been waiting for years for Gurudev to accept their invitation. They had even asked him to settle among them and become their spiritual leader. Previously, the time had not been ripe. Now Gurudev knew that the time had come. He also decided to accept an invitation to attend the World Vegetarian Congress to be held in September of 1971 in The Hague.

* * *

The next thing he saw was a kind of seed thought which had been recurring in brief glimpses for nearly seven years. He had not allowed it to surface because his subconscious was holding it back. It came in the form of vibrations he had been feeling in the presence of one longtime student, Pramoda Shah. He had felt from the beginning a deep connection with her. It was a very tender and loving feeling. Now he saw the reason for this affection and the purpose of her coming into his life. The relationship was nothing but a continuous thread of love flowing from its deep root in the time of his youth. The girl whom he had cherished as his soulmate during his college days and who had expired of malaria was again in life, in the form of Pramoda. He saw that she had come back into his presence because of the powerful *bhogāvali karmas* which connected them. Now that he had transcended the boundaries of tradition, sect, and country, he freed the vibrations of love to come forth. They emerged in such a flood that he knew that this was a commitment to accept, a process to complete, an aspect of his life to fulfill.

Another glimpse came to him. For a long time, floating on the surface of his consciousness, in dream and vision, he had seen that two children were to enter into his life. It was as if they had been knocking on his door and requesting to become a part of his world. He knew that they had been related to him for many lifetimes. Now he saw the way in which they would fulfill this relation: they would come as his own two sons. Together they would grow. Through them, he would experience the joys and trials of fatherhood; through him, they would complete the process of their spiritual evolution. The family he envisioned would open itself to the universal family and share with the world the beauty and truth of a life lived in the light of Mahāvīr's teaching.

Gurudev was watching from the vantage point of the eternal present. In this way, he was able to observe the past, present, and future events in his life as in a slow motion continuum, from seed to flower to fruit. In his state of calmness, this vision came as a direct insight from his soul. He had something meaningful to share from his own life; now was the moment to give forth. What was right for his personal growth

would become a blessing for the universe as well.

* * *

Flowing in the depth of feeling, Gurudev spoke to Pramoda when she came to Thana with her family to pay her respects to him. He told her of the glimpses and visions he had had.

For the first time Pramoda was able to speak straightly and openly to him from her heart. For the last seven years, she had been experiencing the same deep feeling, but because of reverence for her teacher and commitment to her higher quest, she had kept her distance. She had not uttered anything. She had always sat at the back of the audience to attend his talks. Whenever she had a chance to help Gurudev with various tasks and errands, including putting together the Divine Knowledge Society's monthly magazine, she always served him in a silent selfless way. She was quiet by nature, and from the days of her childhood, she had already cherished the spiritual quest. As a young girl, she had been happier reciting Jain *mantras* in Sanskrit and teaching herself Jain chants than going out into the social world.

When, according to Indian custom, many proposals came to ask her hand in marriage, she resisted all temptations. Her outstanding beauty, her excellence in English, her musical talents at playing the sitar, her high birth in a wealthy, cultured, and respected Jain family attracted many proposals. But her parents saw how strong and true their daughter's quest was and did not press her to marry. At the same time, out of love for her parents, she was not ready to become a nun, though she longed for the life of renunciation.

Thus it was that when Pramoda met Gurudev, she knew that she had met him not for binding, but for freeing. For eleven years she had been following his path of inner awareness. With his inspiration and exemplary life at the forefront of her mind, she completed her B.A. in Psychology at Jaihind College, and was growing in understanding and attunement to herself and to all life. Now when she received Gurudev's personal vision of their life together, she responded with profound joy and deep understanding of both their *karmic* connection and higher purpose.

“Oh, I will be glad to do anything if I can remain in your presence. There is no greater inspiration in my life than you and now I know that I will always be moving on this pure and clear path of Reverence for Life. Oh, now my life will be enriching and meaningful and complete!”

Thus they agreed that their life together would ever be guided by their dedication to the evolution of their own consciousness and by their commitment to life at large. Together they would move toward that pure state of love which knows no demand, no conditions. Through their example, many people would stop giving and receiving pain. They would discover their potentiality and meaning and come to see, as Gurudev saw, that “even in darkness there is light, even in grief there is joy, even in death there is life, and even in love there is freedom.”

* * *

They waited until late springtime to marry, a little before Gurudev planned to go to Africa. Out of compassion for those people who had been angered by his revolutionary step of traveling to the West, Gurudev decided not to make any public announcement. He thought, “In their way of thinking, I am taking an entirely radical step. While they are still percolating in emotion, they would not understand. Is it right to stir their violence and put people’s lives in danger just to show the boldness?” He knew that one day, their emotions would subside and their thinking become clear. Then they would be ready to receive this news.

The marriage ceremony was witnessed by only two close friends. It was a *gandharva* marriage in which five symbols were exchanged. First, they lit candles, symbolizing the illumination they were bringing into each other’s lives. This was an occasion in which to see one another as divine light and to shed that light on others. The second symbol was incense which they burned to represent their intention to consume their *karmas*, purify their consciousness, and move like the smoke, upward into higher life. Their presence, too, would bring a pleasant fragrance wherever they moved.

As they exchanged the third symbol, a flower, they under-

stood its message—how it opens its heart and brings out all its beauty in color, softness, tenderness, and perfume. They placed the fourth symbol, the *tilak*, a spot of color, on each other's forehead. With this gesture, they symbolically opened the eye of wisdom for one another and became aware of each other's divinity. Fifth, they garlanded one another, seeing their lives as an example of unity in diversity, and of diversity in unity. Flowers, like individuals, are each unique and stand separately; at the same time, in a garland, as in a marriage, the different elements come together as one, united in a higher purpose.

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Bridge-Building

The Visa-Oshwal Community is a group of Jains who, along with many other Indian people, came to Kenya at the dawn of the twentieth century. After having waited many years for Gurudev to visit them, at last they saw their dream come true. Gurudev arrived on July 4, 1971 and stayed with them for fifty-two days, reigniting their quest and feeling for life. He spent most of the time in Kenya where the largest number of Jains were and still are living. He made tours to towns in Uganda and Tanzania as well. In all three countries, his visit received great publicity. The Jains were overjoyed to welcome Gurudev and to share him with their friends. Everywhere his talks attracted many thousands of people. A number of diplomats and politicians were eager to be photographed with him.

His main theme was *maitri*, “the religion of friendship.” He said, “What the world needs more than ever is the feeling of *maitri*, for without this kind of unconditional love and generous approach toward oneself and others, there is no peace or contentment. And without peace, there is nothing but competition. One who is driven by inner greed enslaves himself.

He has no personal freedom. He does not see that he is dependent on his want. Moreover, his pleasure is taken at the expense of someone else's pain; his wealth is bought at the cost of someone else's poverty. Where there is a heap in one place, there is a pit somewhere else. What will stop man from continuing the momentum of greed? A new set of eyes. The eyes of love through which to perceive his own inner richness and create a new world. The eyes of *maitri* through which to see people of all nations, races, and faiths, including himself, as one universal family."

A philanthropic community, the Jains have been an



Gurudev's visit to Nairobi

integral part of Kenyan life. They run educational institutions, welfare projects, as well as businesses and industries. After Gurudev's visit, their feeling for their fellow Africans deepened. As a result, they opened the Visa-Oshwal Eye Clinic which provided free medical care, transport, food, and accommodations for over eight hundred patients with eye problems. Many doctors from India came to Kenya to offer their services voluntarily.

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From Nairobi, Gurudev flew to London where he spent a week addressing groups and giving interviews. The talks Gurudev gave to Western audiences as well as to the thousands of Asians living in the vicinity emphasized the value of blending the technological advances of the West with Eastern philosophical wisdom. One had the means without a clear direction, while the other had a direction without the means to implement it.

"Any one approach to life, by itself, is unbalanced and one-sided. When we understand the polarity of the East exploring the secret of soul and the polarity of the West exploring the secret of atom, our knowledge becomes complete. Those who see nothing beyond atom strive only for material achievement and end up where they began, in the composition and decomposition of molecules. Seeing man as a machine, they risk their own annihilation. Equally myopic are those who neglect the study of atom for an exclusive interest in soul. They risk becoming engulfed by poverty, indifferent towards progress, and callous towards suffering living beings. By synthesizing the two modes of thinking and living, modern man can attain the peak of evolution and the perfection of his humane qualities."

* * *

Gurudev's next stop was The Hague. The talk he delivered at the World Vegetarian Congress made a powerful impact on his listeners, and eventually was published in the book *Bondage and Freedom*. Always glad to help even one or two people take a positive step in their lives, he began by saying, "The

purpose of this conference will be fulfilled if at the end of it even a handful of men and women decide to become vegetarians. “

He shared his feelings on the vegetarian way of life from a variety of points of view: spiritual growth, morality, health, aesthetics, and ecology. He said, “Food is for the sustenance of life. Our diet should be such that the body remains clean, the senses retain their ability to perceive what is aesthetic, the mind is at peace and the soul is not hindered in its pursuit of the sublime. Hence he who wishes to attain spiritual sublimity must take food which is pure and untainted with blood. It is the food we take that sustains the body and it is the body that houses the mind and the mind which gives form to our thoughts. If the body is sustained by meat and other food which are the product of violence and bloodshed, how can you expect your mind to generate thoughts which are pure and noble?”

He pointed out, “Man is Nature’s eldest son. Is it not the duty of the eldest child to protect his younger brothers? Man is forever civilizing himself and improving upon Nature, and so, even if he finds animals killing each other, it is his duty to prevent it as far as possible, or at least, not add to it.” Moreover, the animals which man takes for food are themselves vegetarians, and extraordinarily strong as well.

Gurudev related meat-eating to war. “As long as there is this streak of cruelty and violence in man, so long will the world be troubled by wars and revolutions. Today one would kill an animal for food. Tomorrow the same person would kill a human being for land or money or power. Once one has started killing, where will be the end of it? How can man stop inflicting pain on his fellow men if he does not first learn to be kind towards his dumb fellow creatures? The path which leads from savagery to true civilization is the path of tenderness and compassion for all life.*

*George Bernard Shaw shared this point of view. When he was asked why he refused to eat at a banquet in his honor, he answered, “I am a human being, and not a graveyard for dead animals.” He wrote the following poem “On War.”

“We are the living graves of murdered beasts,

He told his listeners a story which an American writer, Mr. Brown, had related to him from his own life. Mr. Brown had noticed two mice walking along, each holding one end of a straw in their mouths; one was a little ahead of the other. Without thinking, he had picked up a stone and had hurled it at them. "The voice of 'civilization,' our so-called civilization, told him that this was the right thing to do—if you see a mouse or a snake or any other creature which may be going its own way without doing any harm, you hit it with a stick or a stone!" The stone killed one of the mice, the one in front, and when the other one did not run away, but instead began running around in circles, Mr. Brown picked it up. Imagine his horror when he found that it was blind. "With a gasp he realized the meaning of the piece of straw which each of them had held. The mouse he had killed had been on a mission of mercy ... leading its blind brother. This incident proved to be a turning point in Mr. Brown's life. It led him to reflect on the laws of Nature and his deed by which he had violated these laws, and he decided there and then to become a vegetarian."

Gurudev also spoke to the question of some who claim "that if all human beings were to become vegetarians, there would be an acute shortage of food supply. But do they really believe that the change will take place overnight? It will be slow and gradual, spread over several decades, and meanwhile would it not be possible to bring under the plough the millions

Slaughtered to satisfy our appetites.
 We never pause to wonder at our feasts
 If animals, like men, can possibly have rights.
 We pray on Sunday that we may have light
 To guide our footsteps on the path we tread.
 We're sick of war, we do not want to fight --
 And yet - We gorge ourselves upon the dead.
 Like carrion crows, we live and feed on meat.
 Regardless of the suffering and pain
 We cause by doing so. If thus we treat
 Defenceless animals for sport and gain
 How can we hope in this world to attain
 The Peace we say we are so anxious for?
 We pray for it o'er hecatombs of slain
 To God, while outraging the Moral Law.
 Thus cruelty begets its offspring—War."

of acres of land which are unfilled all over the world?"

Lastly, Gurudev suggested, "Human beings ask for mercy of their Creator; but the man who has lived mercilessly on the flesh of animals "all through his life, with what face can such a man ask for mercy from God? May I suggest that we all keep in our minds these famous lines of the immortal Coleridge:

'He prayeth best who loveth best
All things both great and small,
For the dear God who loveth us,
He made and loveth all.'

* * *

From The Hague, Gurudev flew to America, stopping for one or two days in New York City, Chicago, and Los Angeles, and lastly, to Hong Kong. In each place, he gave talks which were arranged by various schools.

* * *

Making Friends in America

In late September, Gurudev flew to America as a delegate to the Third Spiritual Summit Conference to be held primarily at Harvard Divinity School October 11 to 14. Though he had become a citizen of the universe, still he continued to live as a monk without possessions, including money, even while traveling. He also wore a simple pair of white cloths he used to wear in India. When he arrived at Kennedy Airport on September 11, 1971, he was penniless. The people who were to meet him could not find him right away. Gurudev thought of calling them. He found a telephone booth. A young woman noticed him and asked if he needed help. He did!

She showed him how the coin box worked and asked him to give her a dime so that she could dial for him. He told her he did not have a dime.

"That's all right," she said, "just give me a dollar and I'll give you change."

"No," he explained, "I do not have any money. All I have is my airplane ticket."

"You have no money with you at all? And you traveled all the way around the world?" The woman was astounded. She was even more impressed by his calm and unperturbed manner as he met this challenge. She wanted to know more about him and what had brought him here.

He told her of the talks he had been invited to give, that The Temple of Understanding sponsoring the Conference had provided him with his ticket, and that as a spiritual teacher, he never kept any money. Just then Dr. Sethi, President of the Jain Society of New York, and Pravin Koradya, arrived to greet Gurudev and take him to Dr. Sethi's home. Within the week, Gurudev would give talks at the Consulate of India and the West Seventy-Second Street Yoga Center in Manhattan, and at Loyola College in Washington, D.C.

Before they left the airport, the young woman requested all the details of Gurudev's scheduled talks. She intended to secure time off from her work in order to fly to Boston. True to her word, she went to hear him at Harvard Divinity School and later, when he spoke in the New York area.

* * *

The Third Spiritual Summit Conference was co-sponsored by The Temple of Understanding and by Princeton Theological Seminary as an educational outreach in the form of seminars, informal seminars at schools and colleges along the East Coast and at formal meetings at Harvard Divinity School. The workshops preceding the Harvard Conference were led by one or two representatives of various religions.

The first stop in this series was at Wainwright House in Rye, New York, where a group of men searching for the spiritual foundations of their existence had formed the Laymen's Movement. Gurudev and Swami Rāngānāthānanda shared the leadership of the Oct. 1-3 contemplative weekend retreat. They then spent two days with students at Manhattanville College at Purchase.

One woman who met Gurudev at the Wainwright House retreat wrote of the effect he had upon her during those days:

"I went to Wainwright House deeply disturbed by the illness of one friend and by the death of another. As Gurudev spoke, I began to feel restored and revived. He advised us to glide into meditation. It is said that things come to us when we are ready for them. Probably I was prepared for Gurudev by the summers in my adolescence when I sat out in the garden of my parents' home reading Lao-Tse and Omar Khayyam, Shakespeare and Tolstoy, Tagore and books on cosmic consciousness. As I looked at the narrow, provincial world around me, with people giving over their whole lives only to acquire a few possessions and whose minds were prejudiced against other races and religions, I thought, 'I love not them the less, but I love these Chinese and Indian philosophers and poets the more!'

"Gurudev is indeed as he calls himself, 'a sojourner of the infinite.' In his creamy white tunic, with his powerful leonine presence, he looks twenty years younger than he is and emanates such a serenity and joy in living that many individuals including myself are drawn to sojourn with him and would be glad to in the next life as well! He is always with his presence, his inner divinity, but at the same time makes himself accessible to everyone. It is good not to have to go to the Himalayas, so to speak, but to have the Himalayas come to New York!

"How many of us know anyone who is leading a fully satisfying and creative life, with both the exterior and interior modes flourishing? How many of us know someone able to cope with and be strengthened by opposition, who is at peace with himself, with others, and with the earth? Whom do we know who accepts suffering and wrongdoing as a challenge to our growth in awareness? Do we know anyone who is living richly and roundedly, who is both able to give in his receiving and receive in his giving? Such a one is Gurudev Chitrabhanu. Right now what our scientific western world needs desperately is exemplars. Gurudev is a model of humanity who can restore our hope and confidence, who has developed fully the dimensions of his life, who is an inspiration for our being and becoming and who is able to communicate his experiential

depths for the benefit of all.”

Mrs. Elizabeth Cattell, who wrote these words, became a lifetime friend to Gurudev and Pramoda. She offered to share her small apartment in Manhattan with them. A Quaker from birth, she also introduced Gurudev to the Quakers who, in 1974, invited him to open the Friends’ General Conference in Ithaca, New York, and to lead a retreat at Powell House with Douglas Steere.

* * *

The formal meetings of the Conference at Harvard Divinity School on October 11-14 stood out as a high point in interreligious communication. Distinguished ministers, priests, rabbis, holy men, scholars and seekers met as brothers and sisters concerned with “Religion in the Seventies” and how to usher in a new age of optimism, friendship, and serious inquiry into the meaning of life.*

Right from the beginning of his talk, Gurudev punctured the bubbles of dogmatic thinking and sectarianism. He related a quarrel among four blind men at an eye clinic. One asserted that the window pane next to him was red, another insisted that it was green. All four argued for a different color on the

*They came from near and far to represent Jainism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism, Zoroastrianism, Confucianism, Taoism, several African religions, Judaism, and Christianity. Besides Gurudev and Swami Ranganathananda, Swami Chinmayananda and Father Masson flew from India. From the Middle East were Rabbi Ezra Spiahandler and Dr. M. Kamel Hussein. Dr. Wei Tat arrived from Hong Kong, Reverend Marcus Braybrooke from England, and Chogyam Trungpa Rimpoche from Colorado.

Noted American delegates included Professor Harvey Cox of the Harvard Divinity School, Reverend Krister Stendahl, Dean of the Harvard Divinity School, Reverend Dr. Lowell Ditzen, Director of the National Presbyterian Center in Washington, D.C., and Dr. Huston Smith, Professor at M.I.T. Other Western religious groups represented were the Society of Friends, the Unitarian Church, the Universalist Church, and nearly all other Protestant denominations.

Messages of support and prayers poured in from around the globe—from U. Thant, Secretary-General of the United Nations, Princess Poon Diskul, President of the World Fellowship of Buddhists, Dr. Eugene Larson Blake, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, and Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, philosopher, author and former President of India.

authority of someone else's word. Gurudev observed, "A trivial quarrel, no doubt, but I ask you, have not men of different religions argued with the same intolerance and vehemence over the centuries?" The argument among the blind men ended when one man who could see told them that the window pane was multi-colored. In the same way, Gurudev said that religious intolerance could end if everyone recognized that truth is multi-faceted and that religions are like different flowers in the same garden, each giving off a unique fragrance.

To clarify the ancient principle of non-acquisitiveness, he told the story of a monk who became Enlightened upon observing a pack of stray dogs chasing and eventually mauling one dog who had a bone in his mouth. "Bleeding from the wounds, the dog dropped the bone and was left in peace. No sooner had he dropped the bone than another picked it up, and he too, met with the same fate ... Contemplating on this ugly incident, the *muni* realized the truth. So long as the dog clung to the bone, he had to bleed for it; the moment he gave it up he was left in peace. 'Does not man bleed mentally and spiritually to gratify his lust for acquisition and would he not attain serenity if he renounced it?' thought the *muni*."

Writing about the first day of the Conference, a reporter from The Boston Globe was exuberant: "Hit speaker of the day was a youthful-appearing Saint of the Jain religion of India. Munishri Chitrabhanu told his listeners that they shouldn't depend on God, but upon themselves.... 'All the prayers in the world will not stop the Vietnam War,' he said, 'but President Nixon could do it with one word. See the power of man. Man is Master of the cosmos... he can do and undo. If he won't face this fact, we shall waste each other's time. Man has become so powerful that he commands the world. What we Jains are after is to perfect man.'"

* * *

One of his current students met him at that time. She corroborated this impression of Gurudev's dynamism. Heidi Overby, who had been meditating with Theosophists in those years, found herself in Harvard Square on October 11. Upon seeing a sign announcing the Conference, she wandered over to the

hall which she found overflowing with people. She recalled, "Gurudev stood out in his person. There was a vitality, a virility. It was not the same as physical strength; it was more than yogic power. It was a feeling of energy, well-being, and health itself."

Later, when she went along with hundreds of other students to Harvard's Sanders Theater, she heard him speak again. At another time, a room was set up with booths at the Holiday Inn so that individual students could talk informally with several of the religious leaders. There they spent hours listening to the young people's views and concerns for the future. It was this spirit of openness that drew Gurudev closer and closer to students in the West. During these exchanges at Harvard, Gurudev's vast wealth of experience began to be appreciated.

Heidi asked Gurudev, "How does one get to study with you? Do I have to go all the way to India?"

Gurudev answered, "I will be living in Chicago for a while. You can come."



Governor Francis W. Sargent greets delegates to Third Spiritual Summit Conference

"Is there something I should do first? Is there any special way I should approach you?" she asked.

His answer melted her heart. "You do like a child. Child never asks if he can climb on mother's lap. He just comes over and climbs up!"

* * *

On the final day of the Conference, the delegates were taken on a bus tour of Boston ending up at the State House where Governor Francis W. Sargent greeted them and received their blessings. Returning to Harvard, they initiated a Final Declaration to set up a 'Hot Line' for interreligious communication. Harvard's Reverend Mr. Price then conducted a joint ecumenical service in Harvard Memorial Church. The delegates offered prayers for understanding, openness of heart, and the restoration of peace on the planet, bringing the formal Conference to a moving conclusion.

The informal conference continued at schools, colleges, and churches along the East Coast. On October 15, Gurudev, Swami Ranganathananda and Swami Chinmayananda addressed students at the Greenwich Public Schools. In the evening, a rabbi, a Catholic priest, parents, and faculty members joined in panel discussions with them. Mrs. Hollister arranged for Greenwich radio announcer, Mrs. Betty Karp, to interview Gurudev.

Betty was eager to learn what the basic principles of Jainism were. She asked him to explain the law of *karma*.

Gurudev answered, "The universe is governed by the law of vibrations. If we hate or act in a cruel way, we invite thousands of small particles from the cosmos to come and bind our spirit. When we act out of love and goodness, we build good vibrations and invite positive healthy particles from the universe. That creates a field of love and health around us. In this way, we determine our own bright future."

"What is rebirth?"

"Rebirth is a chain of lives in which you reap the fruit of deeds you have sown in the past. When we commit a blunder, we suffer for that, but when the *karmas* are over, again we come to a higher awareness. We refine our desires, complete

our work, and fulfill our lives until we experience a state of inner completion, perfection. That is called liberation. We all are evolving toward that point."

"What are the common denominators in all religions?"

"That quest for higher consciousness. All teach that we must reach something divine, something subtle. The quest for the light is the same; the means are different."

Betty noticed how Gurudev took a moment or two to allow each question to sink in before he would answer. It seemed as if something would start to click inside and then he would begin to talk. She recalled, "Just sitting across the table from him for the very first time was an experience. I could feel this energy. It was a kind of push and pull magnetism. I heard things which were to become a very deep part of my understanding, my life, and it felt right."

On October 19, Gurudev spoke on 'Jain Transformation in Thought and Action' at Princeton Theological Seminary. The next day, he and Swami Ranganathananda spoke to students at Sarah Lawrence College, and a few days later, on October 24, Gurudev addressed the New York Universalist Unitarian Church. It became the first of many engagements with that liberal-minded institution.

* * *

Having concluded his speaking tour for the Temple, Gurudev flew to Chicago where Pramoda had arrived one day before. It was a joy for them to see one another again after such a long absence. The past four months in which Gurudev had traveled to Africa, Europe, and America had brought tremendous changes in both his inner and outer life. He adjusted to each change with enthusiasm, ease, and a wellspring of energy.

For the next three months, he and Pramoda acclimated themselves to day to day living in the United States, and awaited the birth of their first child. A former disciple and his American wife were kind enough to share their home with them. It was during that time that Heidi came to Chicago to study with Gurudev. It was far from anything she had expected. According to Heidi, "It was like falling into an Indian family of sixty! I'd hang out with him, do laundry with him, be

helpful to Pramoda. Once in a while Gurudev would teach me some prdnidyama, some yoga, some meditation.” Simply by spending mornings with him in this casual way, Heidi absorbed the gems of his philosophy as naturally as a child absorbs the culture of his family. She accompanied him also whenever he gave talks to the Indian community in Chicago.

Early in 1972, Gurudev accepted an invitation from various religious leaders to preside over a large interfaith meeting to be held on Chowpatty Beach. At the same time, he took the opportunity to share with the students and trustees of the Divine Knowledge Society the clear purpose of his mission and the various decisions he had made. With his characteristic straightforwardness, compassion, and balance, he spoke to them. Those who had objected to his traveling abroad and who were shocked to learn of his marriage calmed down. They realized that it was a best occasion for the rest of the world to be exposed to *ahimsā* and to be guided in the way of reverence for life. Once they saw through his eyes, their demands on him subsided and their hearts began to melt again with love and understanding.

He arranged for others to take over his work and to supervise the ongoing projects requiring the Divine Knowledge Society’s sponsorship and other organizations’ help. Later, by means of a long open letter which was published in the newspapers, he let the public know that he had resigned from his post and had moved into a new life as a universal and free human being to share the message of non-violence across the oceans and around the earth.

Before Gurudev had left for India, he and Pramoda had agreed to move to New York after the birth of their child and to accept Elizabeth Cattell’s open invitation to live with her in Manhattan. Rajeev was born on January 26, coinciding with the twenty-fifth anniversary of India’s independence. When he was six weeks old, Pramoda flew with him to New York. They were greeted at the airport by Elizabeth who was delighted to offer her home and her heart to young mother and son. Together they awaited the return of Gurudev.

* * *

In Eternity's Sunrise

A man in spotless white tunic and long white skirt strides buoyantly up the street. He has been in America for nearly ten years. The father of two young sons, he and his family live in a small apartment. He takes a brisk walk every morning, rides the subway, perspires in the summer and wears extra layers of clothing in the winter! He lives in what some consider to be the most hectic and competitive city in the world. Amidst blaring horns and neon lights, in a land of both poverty and plenty, he leads the life of a householder, not so unlike any of us. And yet there is a difference.

The difference lies in his attitude.

He greets each dawn with joy, with respect. "Life itself is a miracle," he says. "Just to wake up after having been submerged in sleep is a wonder. Each moment is a precious golden coin. We cannot buy it back by any means. It is waiting to be enriched by our inner investment." Gurudev is present to the potency of here and now. He has sifted out the best from his past. Now he is drawing continually from the inexhaustible wellspring of his energy to celebrate life in the present, and to shape, with an artist's touch, his future.

"No future is born without the mother of the present," Gurudev explains, "and the present moment remains in your hands. So who is the force determining your course? It is you!" To him, living here and now is neither an existential nor a haphazard experience. It is "using here-now as a platform on which to stand firmly and see the wholeness of eternity in even a fraction of a moment."

* * *

When Gurudev returned to America in March of 1972, his energy was brimming, but he knew how to conserve and channel it, and to just be. "The future does not come in big flood," he observes, "but only in small drops of moments." It is precisely because of this non-dogmatic approach that receptive hearts with interest and quest were drawn to him and



Mother Teresa and Gurudev

wanted to come closer to him. It gave them a chance to stop for a while the congested whirlwind of their lives and to breathe freely. "Meditations" he told them, "means to take your foot off the accelerator! See yourself, be yourself, and free yourself! If you are in motion and turbulence, how can you see?"

In his presence, students absorbed the great art of his living, the art of giving space. In the *New York Times*, a correspondent once compared Gurudev to Pope John XXIII because he "opened the windows of his faith and let the fresh air in." From his first day in the West when he hardly knew a single soul, Gurudev began to find scores, and before long, hundreds of friends. Those who came to him in the early years all reiterated in different words the same observation, "He never tried to push anything on us. When a decision needed to be made, he always asked us, 'What do you think? What would you like? What is your idea?' He did not have any preconceived plan."

Gurudev did not need a plan. The ideal of Reverence for

Life was so sound, healthy, and evident that by its own power, as in a plant of nature, it grew and multiplied.

Gurudev comes from a lineage of Masters whose greatest gift to mankind was the sharing of this thought through their exemplary lives and numerous talks. Gurudev has given close to ten thousand talks in his forty years of teaching, perhaps two or three thousand in the last ten years alone. Why does he use so many breaths, so much energy? To lift a sinking spirit, to gladden a sorrowful heart, to shine a ray of awareness into a clouded mind. It's the very fabric of his enlightened consciousness. "Savvijiva karu shassana rassi," is the air that such a compassionate soul breathes, "Let me inspire every living being to come to his own nature and to the teaching of reverence for life." It is a dream but not an impossible one. If everyone were to revere and embrace their own lives, they would stop abusing both themselves and others. They would focus on life rather than death, on unity instead of alienation, on peace instead of pain, on fullness instead of lack.

This inspiration is at the heart of Gurudev's life in America. Someone asks him, "What do you think of America?" He observes, "America is a young land with a youthful energy. It is not so burdened with concepts, conditions, and a long history. This energy has made many advances in science and technology which I admire. But it can burn itself out if it does not get a clear direction, a real teaching, in the light of Reverence for Life." Gurudev is here to point this energy into the right direction, to help prevent a Third World War. Continually, he asks people to ask themselves, "What is the purpose of man's achievement if it ends only in war and violence? If we go with the empty hands, what is the meaning of our living? What does man bear at the end of the journey? Man bears his Enlightenment. He is friend to all and enemy to none. He goes with a light heart. He had touched his life and is ready to go at any time. He knows, 'I am life. Wherever I go, I go with life.' That is the fragrance he carries with him everywhere."

From the beginning of his stay in America to the present, Gurudev has come to be known to a wide variety of people associated with institutions of higher learning, global-minded organizations, and many fields of interest. Many of them in-

vited him to speak to them.* He taught several courses at the State University of New York at Purchase. His courses all focused on the implementation of spiritual values in everyday life: 'Aspects of Eastern Wisdom in Contemporary Life,' 'Applied Comparative World Religions,' 'Upāyoga The Yoga of Awareness.' He has been the keynote speaker for the Quakers at their Annual Friends General Conference in 1974, at a World Conference on Religion and Peace held at Catholic University in Louvain, Belgium, and at a Conference on World Community at Cornell that same year. He has spoken at many schools: The Westover School, Kent, Ethel Walker, The Emma Willard School, Choate, Edgemont High School, St. Paul's School, Fordham University, and others. For several years, he spoke on Friday evenings at the West 72nd Street Yoga Center. From time to time, he led retreats at Ānanda Āshram in Monroe, New York. In 1973, in a space dedicated to universality and peace, The United Nations Chapel, people from all over the world became aware of the life of the father of non-violence as Gurudev led the Mahāvīr Jayanti celebration there.

During these years, many of Gurudev's students availed their apartments to him so that he could give talks there, and organized vegetarian dinners in their homes to introduce their friends to Gurudev and Pramoda. Now they were inspired to create an organization which would reflect Jain values. They wanted to share with others the great privilege they felt in being able to study with Gurudev. They called their project

*He has spoken to such diverse groups as follows: New York Theosophical Society, New York Center for the Association for Research and Enlightenment, Spiritual Frontiers, New Jersey State Bureau of Researchers in Neurology and Psychiatry, Unity Fellowship of Westchester, Unitarian Society of Rutherford, New Jersey, New Jersey Society of Parapsychology, Norfield Congregational Church in Westfield, Connecticut, Westchester Ethical Humanist Society, Ethical Culture Society of Queens, Medgar Evers University in Brooklyn, New York, Drew University and Caldwell College in New Jersey, Koinonia Foundation in Baltimore, Maryland, Wainwright House in Rye, New York, Vedanta Center in Cohasset, Massachusetts, School for the Blind, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Harvard Divinity School, in Cambridge, Massachusetts, Brockton Art Center in Brockton, Massachusetts, Pendle Hill, Pennsylvania.

New Life Now.

By the summer of 1974, the places where Gurudev was speaking three and sometimes four times a week were not able to accommodate the number of seekers. Several committed students searched for and found an ideal space for a meditation center. A former nursery school at 120 East 86th Street went through dismantlings and painting. Within one year, the Jain Meditation International Center opened its doors to the public.

* * *

J.M.I.C., or The Center, as it came to be called, has become an oasis of calm, a space in which to discover one's inner space. By word of mouth, by means of an ever-expanding tape and video-tape program of Gurudev's talks, and through the books Gurudev has published since coming to the West,* people learn of the man whose talks can inspire them to turn their lives around completely and discover their meaning.

Gurudev wears the galaxies on his brow while grounding his feet in the common sense of every day. An "eternal traveler," he calls himself, "on a sojourn. We stop somewhere overnight and move on. While we are here, we live as lamps, illumining both ourselves and others. We live as a fresh breeze, giving a gentle cooling touch, and flow on." If he wanted to, he could retire to a jungle retreat or a mountaintop, but he comes with a message which he himself exemplifies: "Don't run away from life! Fulfill what is meant for you with a willing heart! If you fight with the world, the fight remains with you, in you, corroding you."

*Books published in English in India by the Jain Meditation International Center:

Jain Master Speaks to One World
Ten Dans' Journey Into The Self
Sense Beyond The Senses
The Philosophy of Soul And Matter
The Miracle Is You

Books published in America by Dodd, Mead, and Company:
Realize What You Are: The Dynamics of Jain Meditation
The Psychology of Enlightenment: Meditations on the Seven Energy Centers
Twelve Facets of Reality: The Jain Path to Freedom.

In the year and a half he and his family lived with Elizabeth Cattell, she said, "I never once saw him lose his peace, joy, and equanimity."

In particular, Gurudev is a friend. William Blake expressed it in these simple lines:

I looked for my soul
But my soul I could not see,
I looked for my God
But my God eluded me,
I looked for a friend
And then I found all three.

Gurudev's genuine concern, love, and compassionate caring for each of his students cannot be measured. It is a unique and noble model of friendship, one which uplifts, supports, and encourages a person to dynamize his or her life toward a positive purpose. Students come from all parts of the United States to hear his bi-weekly talks and to attend his monthly retreats. They fly in from Florida, Minnesota, Indiana, California. Some have driven eight or nine hours from Pittsburgh and twelve or more hours from Toronto to attend a retreat with him. A few people have even flown all the way from Brazil just to have an opportunity to meet him and absorb some of his insights. Many of his longtime students originate from coun-



Opening of the Jain Meditation International Center

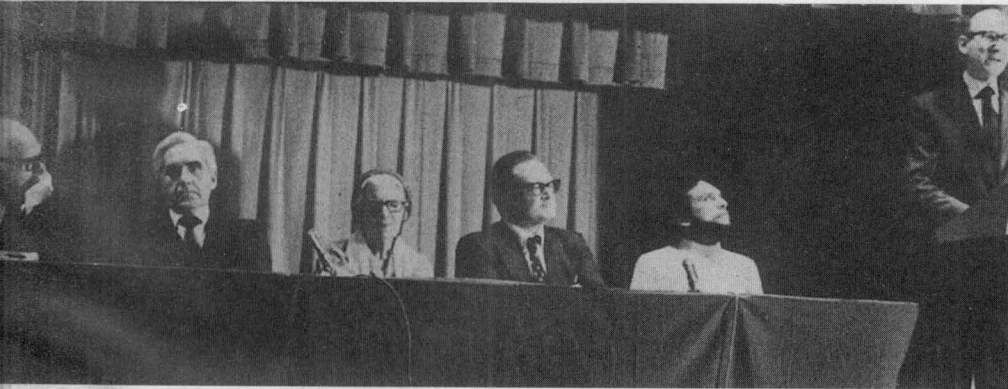
tries in Europe, Asia, North and South America, and Africa.

The hundreds of Jain people who have made new homes in the United States, England, and Kenya have enjoyed hosting Gurudev's talks. In 1980, on a return visit to Kenya, Gurudev's daily talks given in a six-week period were attended by seven thousand or more people of the Asian and African community. During that time, the Visa-Oshwal group raised money for the handicapped and crippled people in Kenya. President Moi was deeply moved to receive the check from Pramodaben's hand. He asked Gurudev to bless him so that he could "serve mankind more and more."

When Gurudev blessed him, placing the *tilak* on his forehead, by chance, cameramen were there recording the event for television. From then on, wherever Gurudev went, the people recognized him from the television screen and called out, "Jambo! Good to see you!" or "There's the man who put his hand on our President's head! Won't you please put your hand on my head also?"

* * *

It is nearly 7.30 p.m. At the Jain Meditation International Center, students are sitting in silence in the main hall. A few people are still in the small meditation room next to the library and tape room. Preceding Gurudev's talk, composers and musicians take up guitars, flute, drum and sometimes violin and piano to share insights through their own songs. An inner quietude, a feeling of pleasantness prevails. After each song,



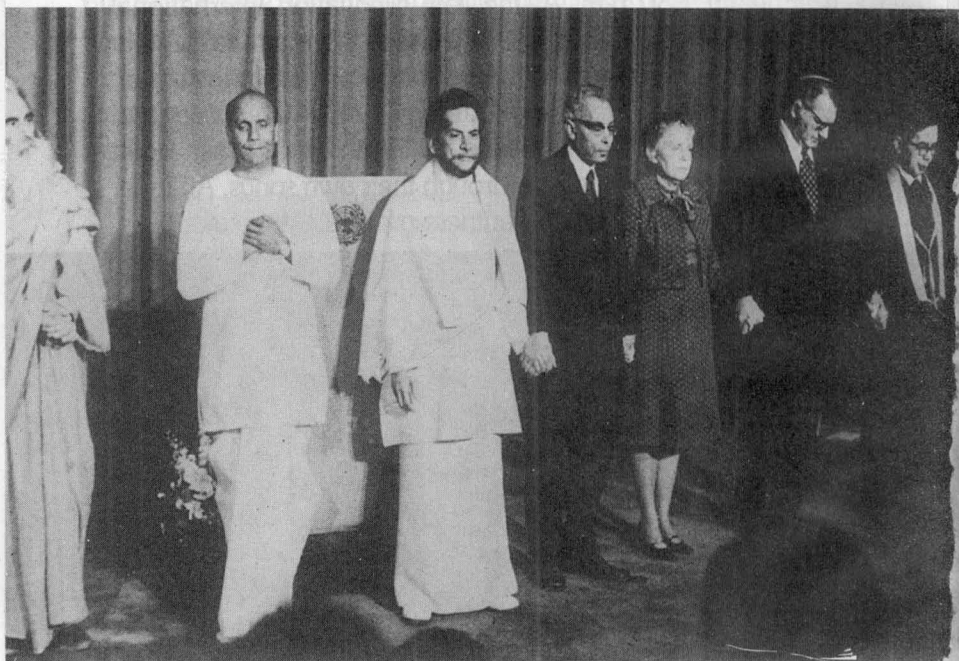
World Peace Day, Kurt Waldheim speaks

there is a long pause to allow listeners to remain in a meditation.

At 8 o'clock, the instruments are put away. Everyone waits in a receptive mood. Those who come for the first time relax and look about. Some people they see with eyes closed; others with eyes open. There may be a feeling of strangeness, of wonder.

Gurudev steps lightly through the audience and sits down gracefully on a small folding chair on a raised dais, tucking his feet beneath him. His eyes sweep across the room. As he raises his hands in "Namaste" to all, people return his greeting. He gazes into a focal point in mid-air, concentrates his energy, and closes his eyes. As everyone shares in a few minutes of silence, he draws the warp and woof of people's innermost thoughts, dreams, aspirations, and anxieties into his awareness. These become the threads he will weave into the tapestry of his talk.

Gurudev does not believe in short cuts. To free oneself from unhappiness, possessiveness, and pain is not "instant



Spiritual Leaders in the U.N. unite for peace

coffee.” It is a process of cleaning. “Just as the rough stone becomes smooth in the company of the gentle water, so all the rough edges of your heart will grow smooth in the company of the right teaching, the right teacher, and fellow aspirants.” Some philosophies tell you not to think, to blank your mind, but the Jain Masters encourage thinking. “Whatever we see in the world which is beautiful and useful is the result of inspired thinking. Thinking and living are two wings. You cannot fly on only one. As we go on thinking ‘How can I make my life beautiful and meaningful?’ our living changes. As we go on making changes in our living, our thinking changes.”

Gurudev is a consciousness committed to selftransformation. His talks, which are his own meditations spoken aloud, transform him; in the process, they transform his listeners. As he penetrates his own heart and shares his deepest concerns, he penetrates others. There is a transcendent unifying effect. It is possible for all souls to be brought to the same frequency, to vibrate in unison and merge as one.



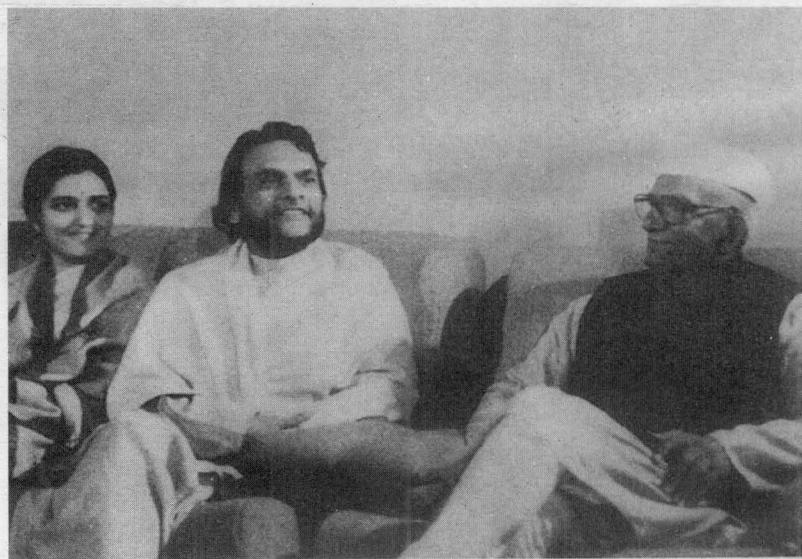
Gurudev blesses President Moi of Kenya

The boundaries of teacher and student, you and I melt away in the experience of the music of life.

For this experience, Gurudev is not only grateful to the ancient Masters who handed down their insights to mankind, but also to his students themselves. "You are the breaths," he smiles, "I am the flute. Thanks to you, the music can be brought out." To Gurudev, each of his students has a place in his consciousness like "safes in the sky!" As he helps each one find the missing key, untie the ties and unlock the lock, there is freedom, freedom to experience life in its formless eternal dimension.

Each student has a unique story, a drama to work out personally. Transformations have been occurring subtly, on deep inner levels, eventually to manifest in budding smiles, light hearts, and acts of egoless service. Gurudev encourages commitment, not to an ideal, goal, or concept, but to one's own growth and to the sanctity of life itself.

Those who are inspired to go deeper into experience accompany Gurudev on a three-week pilgrimage to India. Every fall since 1973, Gurudev has led about twenty to forty students to the sacred mountains, temples, and villages where



Gurudev and Pramodaben visit former Prime Minister Morarji Desai

he walked and meditated for so many years. In the pure meditative atmosphere, everyone has a chance to leave rut and routine behind, to drop the past, and catch a glimpse of the reality of Self. Far from familiar surroundings, they have a chance to spread their wings and sail beyond the horizon. They enjoy for a time "homelessness" which allows them to find their way to the real home, within themselves. Free from clinging to past and future, they look up into the golden pink of the sunpainted sky and every inch of themselves stretches to feel the poignancy of each moment. Objects take on a fresh glow. At night, a silver crescent of a moon hangs like a smile, like purity in the infinite space, and one says to oneself, "Here at last I can breathe. Here I am finding my meaning. Here I am revealing the sweet simplicity of life."

When an Indian villager at Mt. Abu asked Gurudev, "Why did you go there?" Gurudev answered simply, "I went there to bring them here!" It is no wonder. For his students, a living experience replaces the old props, the attachments to name, nationality, concept, and creed. They return to America imbued with a greater sense of purpose, a deeper conviction in the reality of Self, a renewed love for all forms of life. They begin to share Gurudev's feeling that the whole universe is a friendly place, that everywhere can be home.

Many of them have opened their own centers where meditation, yoga, vegetarian nutrition, and the teachings of MahavTr can be taught and experienced.

Gurudev is one of the great indomitable spirits of our time whose vision and energy are inspiring human beings worldwide to awaken to what they are and to realize the gifts they have to contribute to their strife-torn world, and to the living beings with whom they share one planet. As Gurudev has said, "It is the need of the hour to unite in the bonds of friendship and understanding. It is now up to us whether we want to create the vibrations of love or hatred, of peace or war, of forgiveness or anger. At the time of our departure, the vibrations which we have created are going to accompany us. So let us give something noble to the universe, something which can ennoble our spirit with reverence for life and give hope to each other for our progress into evolution."



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