

Michel COQUET

***YOGI RAMSURATKUMAR
THE DIVINE BEGGAR***



YOGI RAMSURATKUMAR BHAVAN

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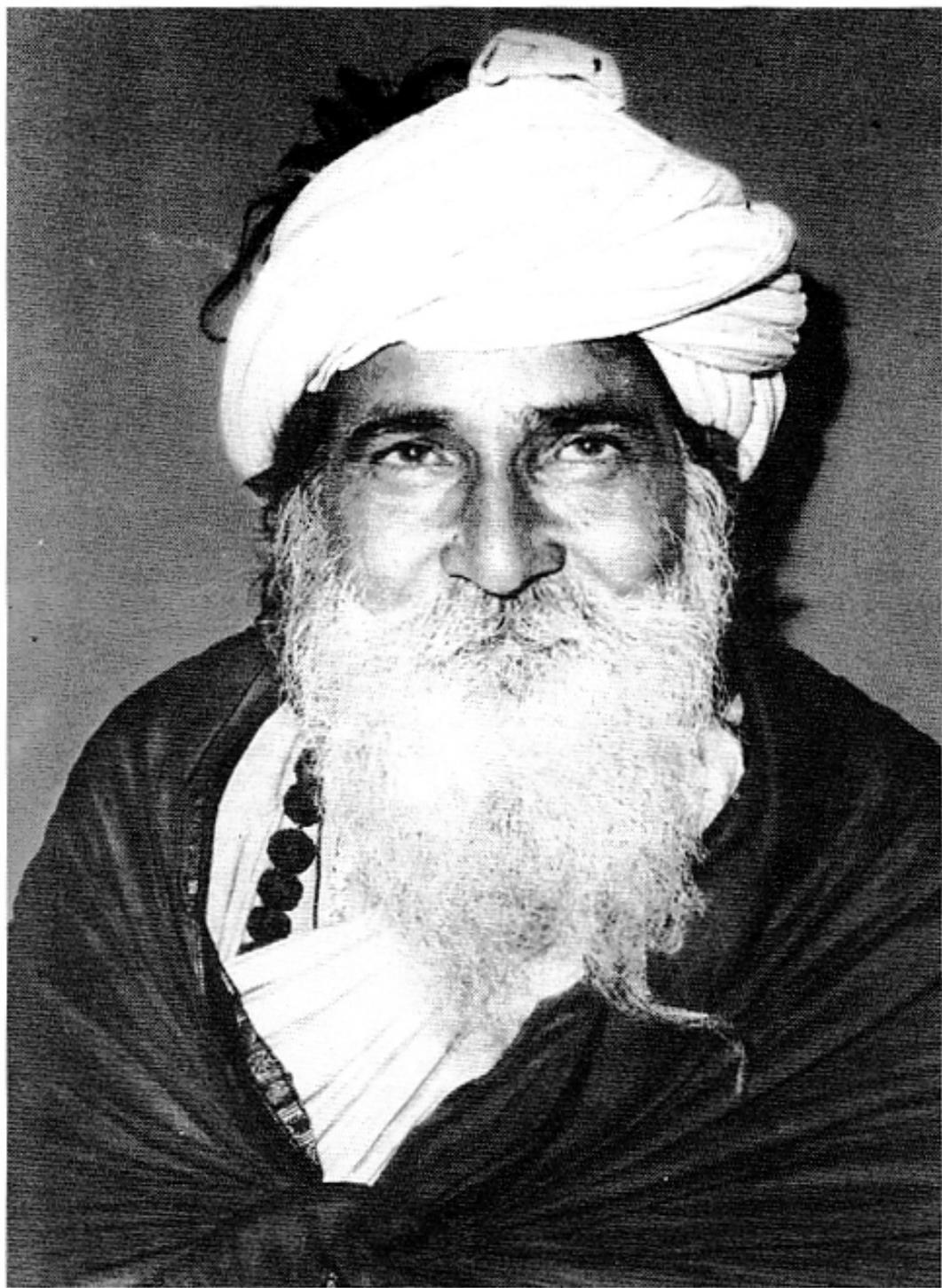
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Translated in English by Gaura Krishna

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YOGI RAMSURATKUMAR, JAYA GURU RAYA

*"When, in trouble, you sing the Name "Yogi Ramsuratkumar",
my Father immediately brings the necessary help.
You can see it by yourselves.
Even this Name belongs to my Father.
This beggar does not exist,
only my Father exists everywhere. This beggar died in 1952,
at the lotus Feet of Bhagavan Ramdas."*

(Yogi Ramsuratkumar)

FOREWORD

To present a spiritual master is without any doubt an exciting task, but how much delicate. This task would not have been led successfully without his grace and consent. The author, aware of the difficulty, has striven to gather a certain number of scattered elements so as to portrait the Master, trying to get as close as possible to reality. The author does not ignore that such a work will always limit the truth of a direct contact, truth that the Master generally expresses in silence. We will never perceive the depth of the Master. That is the reason why the author will simply attempt here to release his message.

May be the reader will wonder about the usefulness of such a work, and to that it will be replied that within the current materialistic and immoral era it may be of some use to testify the presence of an authentic being and a liberating teaching.

As for the biography, the difficulty has come from the fact that this sage, Yogi Ramsuratkumar, although not a silent one (muni), is nevertheless a flawless jnani, which implies a total detachment, an absolute inconsiderateness for his body, for the world, and consequently for his past years. As he himself says, *"this beggar died in 1952, at*

the feet of Swami Ramdas". Indeed, after receiving initiation in the Taraka Mantra from Swami Ramdas, he reached the summits of realization and became a mukhti, a liberated one. When he settled in Tiruvannamalai in 1959, Yogi Ramsuratkumar used to stride along the streets of Tiruvannamalai, begging here and there for his food. His clothing and his mystical madness were neither understood nor accepted, and the Yogi was regularly attacked. Stones were thrown at him, and his life was even attempted on. Some took him for a madman, ignoring that a jewel of wisdom was concealed under his rags. Therefore, Yogi Ramsuratkumar decided to appear in public. For this purpose, he had a short biography written.

It was written by Truman Caylor Wadlington, an American devotee. Unfortunately, very few details are reported as regards his birthplace, family life, education, or other similar elements, and rare are the words of the Master on those subjects.

Besides Truman's work, articles or books written about him relate essentially personal experiences. This is partly due to the fact that the yogi had forbidden anything to be written about his person up to now.

Things are different to-day. The Yogi has begun an important Ram Nam diffusion cycle. An ashram was officially opened on March 26, 1994, after 76 years of life on his own as a simple beggar. As a consequence, this new spiritual activity cycle probably corresponds to a necessity of revealing the presence of the Master

officially. However it remains that the sage, being eternally identical to himself, has only given the author the green light to write the present work, yet without giving him consequent biographical revelations, apart from some enlightenments on some already known subjects. It has been necessary for the author to resume the history of the Master's journey in details, examining all that had been written - that is to say very little - to question those who had known him once, and of course to have himself an intimate and personal experience with this Master.

In the bounds of possibility, the author has striven to keep within the role of a witness in his narration, excluding his spiritual relationship with the yogi as much as possible, with the only aim to alter nothing of the objectivity of the testimony.

Some mistakes will undoubtedly have infiltrated, considering the few elements collected. They should be imputed to the author. As for the best of the work, it can only be the consequence of Yogi Ramsuratkumar's infinite grace who, with love and patience, kept on helping the author with each of his requests. As a conclusion to this preface, I would like to thank in all impersonality (according to their vow) all those who, in some way or other, have contributed to the elaboration of this which I humbly lay at the three times holy feet of a Sage among the Sages, Yogi Ramsuratkumar.

YOGI RAMSURATKUMAR, THE DIVINE BEGGAR

YOGI RAMSURATKUMAR BHAVAN

FIRST PART

*"Ganga and Yamuna mix against the current
: without water, take a bath at the confluence
of the three rivers ".*

(Kabir)

*"As rivers, flowing down, become
indistinguishable on reaching the sea by
giving up their names and forms, so also the
illuminated soul, having become freed from
name and form, reaches the Divine Being,
which is higher than the higher."*

(Mundaka Upanishad)

YOGI RAMSURATKUMAR, THE DIVINE BEGGAR

YOGI RAMSURATKUMAR BHAVAN

CHAPTER I

THE VEDIC INDIA

The presentation of a great Hindu sage like Yogi Ramsuratkumar would be incomplete and hardly understandable if we disregarded its context, and all the more so when this context is called India. India is surely not the only country where great sages and many saints live. We meet them in the heart of all religions, in all countries. They are the supreme blooming every man tends to reach on earth. These freed beings work in all sectors of worldwilde activity, subjectively or objectively. They are present in the world, while keeping out of the world. However, where better than in India could it be possible for a great sage not only to be recognized or accepted, but also to see his message put in practice? India, as we conceive it, that is to say much larger than within its current frontiers, was formed as a nation in the course of successive exodus of Aryas whose penetration and integration have given birth to the large epics of Mahabharata and Ramayana. The nucleus of this Aryan race was originally anchored in Central Asia. The first migration was led by the Manu towards the South, through the strong Himalayan barrier, and they established in the northern territory which took the name of Aryavarta. At its head it had the seven great Rishis,

well known through the sacred literature, as the three great Rishis Vasishta, Bhrigu and Narada. The Indian territory was occupied by ancient black tribes called Daityas and Rakshasas in the literature. The first Aryan migrations had to combat vigorously to impose their science and culture. The Aryans held their philosophical and technological advance from the exceptional teaching they received from the great masters who had already begun to teach them in Central Asia. Among these great instructors, there were the numerous Buddhas who preceded Gautama as well as those Jains named Tirtankaras. The ancient peoples of India maintained particularly in the Dravidian south; they were always inclined to the worship of mother-Earth. They had their own culture, science and art, and their vitality was such that it was not easy for the Aryans to insert theirs. It took the new nation centuries of efforts, wars and sufferings, to reveal at last more glorious than ever before.

The arrival of the Aryas (Aryans) was bearing large hopes, since the great divine masters brought a varied knowledge with them as well as the foundation of the secret priestly language which was going to give birth to Sanskrit in India. They also imported the Veda, or knowledge of all things, namely the divine knowledge - non limited in time or space - whose nature is without any beginning (anaadi) or any end (sanatana). This essential tradition - i.e Veda - is clearly defined in the text of Shiva Svarodaya:

"What the initiated call Veda, is not the book of Vedas. The Veda is what is apprehended through the Vedas. That by which the Supreme Being's nature can be known, is what the one who knows calls Veda. "

These initiates were the great beings who, although incarnated on earth, remained in contact with the divine consciousness. They are those who, through contemplation, reached the power to understand the Almighty's intention and the language of gods (deva-s), a language they would perceive through sounds. This Vedic knowledge was called Sruthi, a word meaning "what has been heard", and differentiates from works produced by the human mind - or Smriti -. Three hundred sages received this fabulous knowledge which later gave the four Vedas.

The Srimad Bhagavatam says this:

"All that occurs in the course of time, in the past, present and future, is but a dream. Such is the hidden meaning of all Vedic writings."

'Dream' means here the impermanence of the world and of the knowledge acquired by the objects of senses. However, before renouncing the world, it was necessary to know and master the laws of this world. These universal laws were taught by sages who transmitted them orally from master to disciple. Since the arrival of Kali Yuga, part of this knowledge has been compiled in the sacred literature: Vedangas, Upanishads, Smrithis,

Puranas and Ithithasas. The ancient history of India reminds us constantly that our scientists only rediscover what were at the base of civilization at the Vedic period. Each science had a great being at its head; for example the art of using sounds or mantrams (Gayatri belongs to it) was given by Rishi Vishvamitra. Rishi Bharadwaja taught medicine and aeronautics. Sage Atreya was the father of medicine, and his techniques were collected by another sage named Charaka. Rishi Agastya taught poetry, astrology, alchemic medicine among other sciences. He was the main master to introduce Sanskrit into southern India. Let us also remain of Asuramaya who was the greatest astronomer in history. As for literature, we all know the names of Valmiki and Vedavyasa. All these Avatars strove to sustain the human evolution feeding it with a universal knowledge and a divine wisdom. It is said that sage Narada had mastered the sixty four categories of knowledge, but could not find internal peace, and another great wise man called Sanat-Kumara suggests him, in the next allegory, to exceed all the worldly sciences and to learn the ultimate knowledge that by far surpasses all others, i.e Atma Vidya. Thanks to this science, man may know the cause of all knowledge, and free himself from the ignorance consisting in believing that God, world and man are different, while they are nothing but manifestations of One Absolute and Divine Consciousness. Yogi Ramsuratkumar has clearly expressed on this subject:

"To tell you the truth, the whole humanity exists only because of the Veda - s, the Veda mantras and the great

Masters. In this ancient holy land, great Masters have come, and always some great Master or other exists here. In fact, this holy Land, Bharata Desam, the Indian nation, is the playground of great Masters. It is our land. It will always be looked after by My Father. We are lucky to be born in this holy land."

BHARAT - THE LAND OF THE LORD

For the Indians, India is an expression of the Divine Mother. She represents their Motherland. The traditional name of India is Bharat. 'Bha' means Bhagavan, the Lord, and 'rathi' means attachment. This land is called Bharat for its people have always had an attachment to the Lord (Rama, Krishna, Buddha, etc.). According to tradition, during the period of the first civilizations on the globe, this was under the responsibility of a sole emperor. Our earth was then called Ajanabha. It took the name of Bharata Varsha with the arrival of a great monarch, Bharata Maharaja. Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu wrote:

"The human being who was born in India has to make his life a success, and to work for the welfare of all the other men."

It very often happens that the western world is astonished at the massive presence of saints and sages in India rather

than elsewhere. The answer to that is again given in the Srimad Bhagavatam:

" This planet counts seven oceans, as well as many islands and lands among which Bharata-varsha is considered as the most virtuous. The residents of this region, Bharata-varsha, have a habit of glorifying the activities of Murari, the Supreme Person, during his several appearances, and among them Sri Resabhadeva. All these activities are infinitely beneficial for humanity. "

Far later, in the course of an unknown period, the Dharma was particularly expressed in one continent only, the Indian continent or Bharata-Bhumi, whose true religion was what was found in the heart of Hinduism, the Sanathana Dharma. In our obscure period, despite Kali Yuga's arrival in the year 3102 B.C., Bharat remains the spiritual hope of the whole world. What is meant by spiritual India is simply constituted by the totality of all those who are spiritually oriented in this country, as well as by the large fraternity of its sages.

This fraternity of sages has to compete to save the world, to show it the true values of spirituality, and to work hand in hand to instruct and love those who have been still in the darkness of ignorance up to now. For some centuries Bharat, as well as some other countries, has given the world a large impetus through the unceasing appearances of its reformers, saints and followers. They all speak the same language, the language of wisdom and heart. All cooperate to a unique intention, and all have

agreed on the importance of combining our forces today to repel what opposes the arrival of a greater light. This fraternity of sages has been called different names. It is the communion of saints who have become perfect for Christians, the hierarchy of Kumara-s, Naga-s, Rudra-s, etc. in India, the Byang-tsiud fraternity in Tibet, etc. What we know is that they are present and serve humanity with the infinite compassion born from their realization.

Yogi Ramsuratkumar has often spoken about India and its sages:

"Bharamata is the Loka Guru, Loka Mata, and She alone will lead the whole universe in the right direction. India will pave the way to the whole universe. We are always progressing. I believe firmly that a great and united future is the destiny of this Indian nation and its people. ... My Father, Lord Krishna, has given assurance to this dirty beggar that in this holy land some great masters will always exist; He will protect them, look after them nicely, at the same time, He will see that this land, holy land, flourishes all the times, in all aspects. My Father, by staying and playing in this holy land, can do everything, anywhere at any time. Swami Ramdas, Sri Aurobindo, Swami Rama Tirtha, Mahatma Gandhi, Bharatiyar and so many great Masters predicted that India's time would come and only India could lead the whole universe. Only India can show the correct path."

MEETING WITH SAGES

We have just mentioned the presence of sages in India, their usefulness in view of a worldwide regeneration. It is equally useful to specify to those who doubt, and in the perspective of this work, that beside the necessity to have a qualified instructor, the meeting with sages is considered as an absolute necessity on the path leading to liberation.

Traditionally, there exist three important conditions to realize God. All three are sustained by Adi Shankara, the great monist. The first one is a human birth. That may sound strange, considering the numerous existences we go through. What is meant by that, is that is an incarnation in which the incarnate thinker has become able to understand the reality of his divine nature, thus taking the firm decision to reach God. Numerous and often allegorical allusions about human soul transmigration into the body of an animal are a way to say that some human births are so much conditioned by animal impeti that incarnation can't undertake any spiritual quest.

The second condition is an intense desire for relief, which those who are committed with a spiritual way consisting solely in getting their duty done well, in acting in accordance with their dharma, do not inevitably have.

The third and last condition is the company of the sages. Many western spiritualists have expressed doubts about this imperative necessity. So, the best thing to do is to quote the sages themselves. Adi Shankara says:

"From the company of saints comes detachment; from detachment, the end of illusion."

Let us also quote the mystical Kabir:

*"Do not lose an opportunity to frequent saints:
By remaining with them, all obstacles dissipate!
Seize this opportunity, it can be unique:
It is a rare chance to be born at the state of man!"*¹

Sri Ramana Maharshi, the rigorous monist, confirms also that *"by the company of sages, the mind melts in its own source."*

Let us eventually mention the holy Rumi:

"The one who desires to sit with God, sits with Sufis."

This preamble, so long as it may be, has appeared to me of some importance if not necessary for a better understanding as well as to situate not only the equally complex and simple personality of Yogi Ramsuratkumar, but also - and particularly - his message and mission. They cannot be dissociated from the sacred land where he was born.

THE CHILD OF GANGA

¹ Kabir, le Fils de Ram et d'Allah, Les Deux Océans, page 134.

Yogi Ramsuratkumar was born on December 1st, 1918 in a pious family of northern India. The village where he was born is situated a few kilometres away from the holy city of Bénarès (Kashi) on the banks of the Ganges.

According to the Yogi himself, when he was young, he was called Ramsuratkumar. When later he received initiation from Swami Ramdas, "Yogi" was added to his name. The term "yogi" drifts from the sanskrit root "yuj", which means "to join". Yoga is the means used by man to unite his human soul to the supreme spirit. He who has perfectly controlled his mind is able to unite to his supreme Self and to reach the state of a yogi.

The Yogi's name includes the syllable "Ram", which is the name of Rama Avatar. "Surat" evokes Krishna Avatar. Indeed, "surat" means «love sublimated in madhura bhava, that is to say the pure love of a chaste woman for her beloved man or husband who is the Lord. Finally, "Kumar", or Kumara, reminds the pure and virgin nature of the highest ascetics. A Kumara is considered as a virgin adolescent and is identified to the divine child, Ganesha's brother and Shiva's son. His name is well known in Tamil Nadu, it concerns Muruga (or Sanat-Kumara), a divine child, eternally young because liberated forever from any bond with earth. His vehicle is a peacock whose tail represents his universality. The peacock is the bird of the supreme wisdom and occult power. A devotee of Yogi Ramsuratkumar, Doctor Sujatha Vijayaraghavan, has given an interesting description of the name of the yogi:

*"When we observe what Yogi Ramsuratkumar has dedicated for, the fantastic, just and merciful remodelling of terrestrial life, it is clear he is truly the holy son or kumara of the eternal Rama, who is the Truth. Born from the spirit or "Surat" of the Unique Atma Rama, who is eternal and exists as Pure Spirit, he is the Yogi, the symbolic bond connecting earth to sky."*²

Despite too few pieces of information which have filtered in the course of private conversations and some too rare revelations made by Yogi Ramsuratkumar, it is possible nevertheless to imagine, without too many errors, the life of this exceptional child living in one of the numerous villages situated along the large holy river. Since his earliest childhood, Yogi Ramsuratkumar, who had an irresistible attraction for the Ganges, has certainly heard time and again the most fantastic legends concerning this river devoted to goddess Ganga. In the course of his long promenades, he may have heard the melodious psalmodies glorifying the sanctifying power of its limpid waters. He may have impregnated himself with texts like the following one, which every renouncing one bears in his heart:

"If the wind that has caressed the waves of the Ganges touches a man's skin, it immediately takes away all the pain that the latter may have committed." (Bhasma)

² The Spiritual Renaissance in India : 1830 - 1980. Dr. Sujatha Vijayaraghavan, Pondicherry University. page 81.

The banks of the Ganges, out of the ideal conditions they offer to those who have renounced the world, are also and especially a transit area for courageous pilgrims who have undertaken the exceptional pilgrimage consisting in departing from Gangasagara (the island of Sagar) in the Gulf of Bengal, and going up the river to its very end, that is 2700 kms, in order to reach one of its two sources: Gaumukh, easily accessible, and Mount Kailash, the abode of Shiva and Parvati. After this journey, if he still has any strength, the pilgrim returns to his starting point, descending the river along the opposite bank, so that individuality definitively merges in the divine ocean. The adepts of the past had identified the big holy cities of the Ganges to the chakra-s of the spiritual and vital body of man. Gangasagara is thus identified to the muladhara chakra, Patna to the Svadishтана chakra, Allahabad to the Manipura chakra, Bénarès (Kashi) to the Anahata chakra (heart), Hardwar to the Vishuddha chakra, Devaprayag to the Ajna center, Gaumukh to the Sahasrara, Mount Kailash to the complete dissolution of the ego in the absolute Parabrahman.

According to Hindu tradition, the Ganges takes its real source from Sutlej river which is fed by a large glacier named Kanglung, situated to the east of Lake Manasarovar. However, it is from the Gaumukh glacier that the holy river appears in India, which then flows down to the ocean. If the Ganges has ever had such a great influence, it is because it is the expression of an occult reality at several degrees. For example, we will speak of the Ganges, not only as a cleanser river for human souls, but also on a cosmological point of view.

As such, it will become the celestial Ganges, that is to say the Milky Way. On the opposite, we will speak of Patala Ganga, an underground river. Of all that, the sages have always known, and the child had, in their august presence, thousands of opportunities to instruct himself.

Along all his youth, the young yogi's main occupation was to play along the banks of the river, which fascinated him by its tranquil strength and serenity. He was moved to tears by the sumptuous dawns and dusks. This nature amazed the imagination of the child, without ever being able to weary it. Goddess Ganga, to whom the river is identified, can also get angry in the rainy season, and so would the young Ramsuratkumar get acquainted with the terrible and often destructive aspect of the Mother. As all those who have strolled on these shores of golden sand in winter, the child was amazed by the sparkling blue waters in the stifling midday sun. Living in constant harmony with nature, he knew how to avoid its obstacles and to seize its opportunities. He particularly liked strolling in the coolness of the night, admiring the reflection of the moon in the obscure and tranquil waters of the river which slowly took time and hopes with it along its perpetual journey. Similarly, during the hot season, he would play, like other children, in the fresh and vivifying waters of the river of love. All these intense emotions favorably fashioned a soul like his and provided him with the essential elements of his future ideals.

According to what we know, the young yogi had a predisposition to solitude and contemplation. He already

possessed this free and independent character which characterized his entire existence, and it was not rare to see him wandering at night along the shores he knew so well. Also, to the great desperation of his parents, he even happened to sleep in the open air. For the child, strolling alone in silence was a way of communicating with the unknowledgeable mystery which slowly unfolded before him. Early in the morning, in the scented air, after a regenerating bath, he wandered along the banks, observing ascetics of all sorts, sannyanis, saddhus, rishis, fakirs, or simple pilgrims walking past. He heard them sing their endless mantric recitations; he saw them assiduous to venerate ancestors or to invoke Savitur by chanting the divine Gayatri. With astonishment and curiosity, he observed them disappear into holy waters and pray with fervor while offering the sacred water to the spirits of the four cardinal points. What could such a child, already feeling he was a son of goddess Ganga's have been afraid of? But it was not the opinion of his parents who strongly worried to see him disappear at night, carefree of the unpredictable dangers. Yogi Ramsuratkumar was very different from the other children, generally turbulent and rowdy. He felt a very particular attraction for pilgrims among whom he made many friends, preferring them to the children of his village. Among those numerous pilgrims, there were holy men with illuminated spirits, right words, determined wills, and hearts full of compassion. He showed them an immense admiration and had for those men and women an infinite respect, recognizing their souls that had dared to give up all and who showed a contempt of death, a love of God and a total independence, things the river

had taught him, but of which he had not yet discovered either the meaning or the value.

Like all children liberated from the permanent contact of silence and nature, he very early got a surprising intuition, a raised aspiration and an exceptional comprehension of his place in the world. Similarly, by listening to the voices of the sages who taught him their sciences and arts, he obtained a thorough knowledge of the mysteries of life, far superior to what children of his age would be able to understand. Nevertheless, the liberty and dream cycle came to an end and it became necessary to begin a cycle of work and scholastic studies, to the great relief of his parents, finally reassured to see him integrate a more normal life for a child of his age. Henceforth, he was going to live the carefree existence of all his school friends. But that judgement was a little hasty. In fact, Yogi Ramsuratkumar, faithful to his friends, and only listening to his heart, continued as much as his free time allowed, his long promenades along the Ganges and his endless discussions with his friends monk and pilgrim.

It was especially at nightfall, under the shimmering stars, when a sweet fresh and scented breeze was raising from the water bank, that Yogi Ramsuratkumar met the holy men, after they had accomplished their rites and prayers. He would sit with them around a fire, or in the vacillating glow of oil-lamps, and would listen, attentive, to their extraordinary meetings, their enthusiastic or dramatic experiences, or simply their evocations of the fabulous exploits of Gods and heros of the past. His imagination

no longer knew any limit, when the pilgrims spoke about the great Mahatma-s, absorbed in the solitude of the snowy mountain of the Himalayas, meditating at the bottom of obscure caves. He frequently heard the pandits speaking with erudition of the ancient myths glorifying Lord Rama and Lord Krishna, or Rishi-s Valmiki, Vyasa and Narada. He dreamt of meeting Shiva on his mountain and of fighting by the side of Hanuman. How many times did he hear speak about the mysterious regions situated in the extreme North from where the source of the Ganges gushes? All these testimonies pervaded the heart of the young disciple with a powerful desire to leave too, and to follow the way of renouncement, which gave him an incomparable joy. During these meetings, or satsangs, he in turn got acquainted with the rough sadhu, with the evenly yogi, the magician sorcerer, the silent muni, the brilliant pandit or the tempered sage. From all of them, he knew how to take the best. He knew already how to listen and he always had for these men in love with God, these pilgrims of the absolute, an infinite recognition that he expressed one day in this manner:

"At least one realized soul should always exist. Happily, this holy land is always protected by great masters. Whatever you do, whether you run the government or business or remain in the top most position, unless you do something to protect the sadhus, the sannyasis and the realised souls, it is of no use. You should try to realize yourself; you should always try to move in the right direction shown by the great Masters. If you have one realized soul, he will show the way, the right path, to the

whole universe, the whole humanity. If you do not protect the holy men, you are doing nothing for humanity. The whole humanity exists because of the sadhus. To tell you the truth, the Law exists only because of the sadhus."

If we have to translate the mood that was his at that time, it is by quoting Kabir that we would get the closest:

*" On the roadside stands the soul, anxious;
As soon as a passer-by approaches, she runs to stop him:
" Tell me, do you know anything about my soul?
Tell, when will she return to join me? "*

His parents, although not rich people, do not seem to have been destitute. The young man, as much by love and compassion towards his sannyasis friends, as by respect of tradition, took beggars and renouncing to his home to feed them. If the pantry of his parents empty, he would always arrange to direct them to another house in the village, where a meal would be served to them. Moved by the vision of these bodies emaciated by deprivations, he would very often happen to sacrifice his own meals. In a nutshell, the young man was in the highest spiritual atmosphere it is possible to conceive, by his parents as well as by pilgrims and the very close presence of the sacred river. It is not surprising, considering his natural inclinations, that this soul already engaged in the effort of liberation, vehemently aspired to rapidly resume the unfinished work to reach the aim he could now get to see with a deeper acuity.

CHAPTER II

"Fly, fly, bird, to your native stay, because you have escaped from the cage and your wings are deployed. .. Hasten to the source of life. "

(Rumi)

"Two birds, companions unite one to the other, are clutched to the same branch. One of them eats a savory fig; the other, without eating, looks intensely."

(Mundaka Upanishad)

THE BIRD OR THE SIGN FROM ABOVE

Yogi Ramsuratkumar is henceforth a twelve year old child seriously committed in a cycle of studies which, although strictly attended, will in no way divert him from what was essential to him and which slowly bloomed within the depth of his heart. It is at this age, said to be important for great souls, that Yogi Ramsuratkumar is to have his first mystical crisis, this famous realization whose depth we cannot probe by words. Here is how he

narrated about what he has kept an indelible memory ever since:

It was the evening; his mother had sent him to get some water from the well nearby. This was no ungrateful task for him, but quite the contrary. As he left the cord run between his fingers, a bird perched on the opposite of the well was bawling with all his throat while watching the adolescent at work. It was night, but the beautiful plumage of the bird flashed under the reflection of the moon. The adolescent had already pulled up the bucket of water when he felt an inexplicable impetus to throw it at the intruder who was breaking the silence of this exceptional night. Although he didn't mean to hurt the bird, it eventually had disastrous consequences. The bird was hit dead. At that very moment, the young man's consciousness was awakened, suddenly revealing him the extreme gravity of his deed. He rushed to the small still warm inert body, picked it up delicately in his hands shaking with emotion, and did all that was in his power to revive it. He warmed it up in his hands, made it drink a little water, but it was hopeless, life had already gone. He prayed with all his heart, his soul crucified by remorse, but nothing happened. He then resigned and did what he had observed so often: he confided the body to the goddess Ganga. For a while, he looked at the floating corpse, until it disappeared, snatched by the obscure whirlwinds of the river. After that, he lengthened on the sand of the river, his eyes lost in the immensity of the sky, shedding tears that had come out to veil the peace of his soul. He cried until exhausted and fell into a deep

sleep. They were his first compassion tears, but they were not to be the last ones.

"No longer laugh, o Kabir, and learn to cry; would you want, without tears, to find Your Beloved! "

This anecdote is an important historical fact in the life of Yogi Ramsuratkumar. It is also, as in the life of all great souls, the symbol of a truth that exceeds a purely human event. Generally, this kind of event represents the henceforth recognized but yet inaccessible Self. The image of the bird is both the origin or Self, and the possible return to this origin. The killed bird tends to demonstrate to the emergent soul that only death and suffering can resuscitate the true Self. That is expressed in the myth of the Hamsa bird figuring in the form of a sacred goose or a white swan, of whom one characteristic is to always return to the place where he was born, at the period of his migration. Similarly, after having gone through the samsara, the sage understands his error and returns to the Father's house (the Atma). How is he to get there? Just by simply reversing the word Hamsa, i.e So-Ham, a double sound representing the pulsatory movement showing the presence of the divine life within all shapes. When inhaling, the yogi is supposed to hear the sound So, and the sound Ham when expiring. If we put the last letters of these two sounds end to end, we get the Pranava OM, the divine Word. Thus, without being aware of it, the man constantly sings: "I am God" by breathing. Taking this reality into account, the ancient Rishi-s made up a wonderful exercise of meditation. During the inspiration sequence, the meditating thinks:

"Who am I?" (Ko-Ham). During the retention sequence, he thinks: "I am That "(So-Ham). And when he expires, he liberates the idea: "I am not this body" (Naham chinta). Then, the Self, thus freed, becomes the Supreme Self, the Supreme Goose, the Paramahamsa. According to his close devotees, Yogi Ramsuratkumar would have gone beyond the Paramahamsa state and would have reached the state of Turiyanatha and Avadhuta. Although the Yogi did not officially go through the sannyasa degrees by means of the traditional initiating rite, he has conquered all its steps up to its perfect realization. Let us quote these steps:

The lowest degree of renouncement is Kutichaka, where the renouncing being who has left his identity and family, lives isolated in a hermitage. We ignore if it was so for Yogi Ramsuratkumar. On the other hand, we know that he passed by the Bahudaka state, where the renouncing being doesn't even have a place to lodge any longer, constantly frequents the higher places. He is a perpetual errant begging for his food. Then he went through the state called Hamsa or Adept, which allowed him to accede to the highest condition, Paramahamsa, a state that is rarely reached, even by accomplished initiates. The Upanishad of the Supreme Goose (swan) has defined its condition:

"The paramahamsa knows this difference. For the one dressed with sky ('s directions), there is no longer homage nor (ritual exclamation) svaha, or blame or praise; let him go in the will of things! No more (the need) to invite neither to dismiss (gods) for this begging

*monk (bhiksu); neither (recitation of) mantra, neither meditation nor devotion; neither object nor absence of object, neither singularity nor no-singularity, neither me nor you, neither universe. The beggar-monk is thus one without-place and his spirit is firm! He has not neither to accept, nor to look neither to consider gold, just as what is price. (He does), it is an obstacle for him; the beggar-monk indeed who sees gold with desire kills the brahman (in him); the beggar-monk who touches it becomes last by caste (paulkasa); the beggar-monk who takes it by desire kills his self. But the beggar-monk that does not look on it with desire, neither touches it nor takes it, all desires deviate from his spirit. In misfortune, he is not shaken; in happiness he is indifferent. He is detached from love and in no way inclined towards good or bad in anything; he does not hate or go wrong. The working of all his senses has pacified; he has settle in himself, in the Self (atman); he knows the awakening to the One who is plenitude and felicity; (he can say): "I am the brahman!", he has accomplished his due, he has accomplished his due."*³

After this digression, let us come back to adolescent Yogi Ramsuratkumar. That event would have been banal for anybody else, but for him, it was a decisive crisis of soul delivering him from the will that pushes man out of his usual field and projects him on the way of the self discovery.

³ Upanisad du Renoncement, Fayar, page 211-212.

Having meditated and discriminated the exact nature of his act, he understood that the drama was not the death of the bird, but the true fact of the existence of the latter. He perceived the cause and effect law more clearly, and had to admit he had given death but could not confer life, and in a lightning way he realized the necessity to exceed this cycle of existence, life and death, and to go beyond this infernal alternation of which he was captive. In order that this comprehension should emerge in his mind, a human event was necessary, just as it was necessary for Siddhartha Gautama who, in the course of his visit out of his protective kingdom, had observed a curved and decrepit old man, then a sick man borne on a stretcher, a dead body and finally a sannyasi. From now on, the future Buddha diverted his thought from worldly pleasures and solely stuck to the understanding of the causes of suffering and death. It was in this state of mind that Yogi Ramsuratkumar was. He henceforth had to seek deeply into himself for what was immortal, indestructible and permanent, beyond the perpetual transformations of this world, the cause of so many sufferings.

All that, he had intellectually understood, and his monk friends had often spoken about it. But this time, he felt it was necessary to go further into his investigation and to realize this grand perspective in himself.

The realization of his act was such that in the course of this existence he will no longer, in thought, word or action, be the cause of sorrow to others. His heart, such a magnificent lotus, just came to bloom in the dazzling light of compassion. Henceforth, perfectly illuminated

about the cause of suffering, he suffered in silence with the whole world.

KASHI - CITY OF LIGHT

Silently, in the secrecy of his being, a light awoke. For Yogi Ramsuratkumar, it was like a voice speaking to him, like a force guiding him. He did not know its nature yet, but knew this intuition was truthful, and he strove to follow its orientations. That voice became even so strong that he no longer resisted and he entrusted to its divine direction. Thus he impetuously felt the necessity to go to the holy and very close city. The reason of that attraction was that most of the pilgrims he had met were going to or returning from this city they called Kashi or Varanasi. Kashi, according to some people, comes from Kasha, the name of an ancient king. As for its other designation - Varanasi - which is already in Mahabharata, it comes from river Varanasi further north⁴, where the city was in the past. The designation of Banaras, better known in the form of Benares, comes from the Pali version, Baranasi. Nevertheless, every true sage will tell you that Kashi is the real name coming

⁴ The Ganges is the river of action which purifies men acting in the world of action. It corresponds to the Karma yoga. Jamuna proclaims the glory of divine love, it is the path of bhakti yoga. Saraswati, that flows within the earth, invisible, represents the jnana yoga, the path of the Self investigation. However, Jamuna and Saraswati are present in Ganges.

from the Sanskrit root "kash", meaning "radiating " and refers to something brilliant. The Kashi Khanda explains:

"Because the light, which is the inexpressible Shiva, shines here, its other name is Kashi."

Kashi only, the divine city of light, could attract this child of light. The city is devoted to Shiva. Nevertheless, it is also called " the goddess who illuminates consciences ", and in this meaning it is identified to Shakti (or Ganga), Shiva's power of manifestation. It is undoubtedly necessary to relate the radiating and regenerating power of Kashi closely to the akashic ether considered as the body of the Divine Mother. The union of Shiva and Shakti is realized within the heart. Many pilgrims come to Kashi to die, because, according to the belief, the defunct's spirit is in that way forever freed from the bonds of samsara. Esoterically, this means that the concentration within the heart confers to the yogi the means to reach the light of the true Self and the death of the ego.

Yogi Ramsuratkumar had reached his 16th birthday when he decided to go to Kashi ⁵. Leaving his family was an

⁵ 16 is generally considered as a sacred number associated to the rhythm of life of Avatars and realized beings in action in our world. For example, the life of Adi Shankara is composed of twice sixteen years. The name of Yogi Ramsuratkumar comprises the designation kumar, or kumara. Now, it must be known that the chaste Kumara - s, well known by hindu tradition, since they received the knowledge from Dakshinamurthi, had a chief, Sanatkumara, known in the Tamil country under the name of Muruga, which is named "the adolescent with sixteen springs" . It's said that gods are always 16 years old,

internal obligation far more than a desire; as always, there was a choice to make, and he made it. That represented a certain amount of courage, because, besides the influence of relatives, there was, as everywhere in India, a very strong ascendancy of society on the individual. Unless the contrary should be proved Yogi Ramsuratkumar has therefore made a flight, since he did not even have the first rupee required for the trip. For him, this was no difficulty. God was calling him, and his faith told him that God would attend to the details of the road.

He directed to the station naturally, not knowing exactly what to do. And there, he had to wait for the divine grace to intervene. It came under the form of a charitable stranger who not only served him a meal, but, hearing about his wish to go to Kashi, paid for his fare. For the young man, the trip was the source of supernatural discoveries. He was delighted by all he could see. A sensation, unknown to him up to then, turned in his head. It was the drunkenness of the freedom of a future sage who would only listen to the springs of his heart from there and then on.

the number of perfection and absolute. In man, it is at the age of sixteenth that the first signs of decline make their appearance. Similarly, when the moon reaches the sixteenth day, it begins to decline. Thus, 16 is the number of stability between two actions, construction and destruction, past and future, etc. 16 is the number of the master which is fixed forever in the eternal present.

THE GOLDEN TEMPLE

It was in the early morning when Yogi Ramsuratkumar arrived in the old city, already crowded and active. The sun had hardly begun to dawn on the horizon, on the other side of the Ganges. From where he was, the river, so large and majestic, seemed to him even more impressive. Hundreds of ascetics, men and women, were standing in frozen water up to the waist. They reached the water by immense staircases named ghats which allowed the access to the harmful river to the ones who lacked vigilance. On ochre stone terraces, all sorts of religious people were installed. It was possible to see hatha-yogi-s performing their asana-s, meditating ones, with their eyes riveted to the rising sun, others reading holy texts, protected by parasols with chatoyant colors. The incense raised to the sky, as mantric recitations. It was an atmosphere of intense exaltation towards the God whom everyone sought to discover, according to his method and capacity. They all respected one another, and a real invocation of love radiated from this holy city. Yogi Ramsuratkumar was overjoyed. At last, he was alone, free, and present in the heart of this Kashi he had desired to see so much. It was his first contact with the absolute. On the edge of ecstasy, intoxicated by such a mystical fervor, he let the internal voice guide him. After having walked along narrow lanes, he reached the Golden Temple, dedicated to Shiva (Vishvanath), in his aspect of Lord of the Universe. This temple has a long history and it is like the heart of the city. In any case, it stayed so until 1193. When Muslim troops devastated the city, the lingam of the temple was immediately put under

cover and worshipped in secret. Several times, the temple was destroyed and reconstructed, and in 1777 it was reconstructed for the last time. Its influence and notoriety come from its marvellous black stone lingam. Here god Shiva is worshipped the length of the five main arathis , from the moment of the invocation of the mantra "OM NAMA SHIVAYA", while making abishekam of the lingam which is covered with flowers and bilva leaves. Although the inside of the temple is rather modest, there reigns an atmosphere of intense devotion and spiritual power. For a long time, two high places have been of vital importance for Kashi. One is the Vishvanath and the other is the Manikarnika Ghat where cremations take place. These two places have always been closely related. As a saying states:

"He who bathes in the Manikarnika has bathed in all the tirthas. He who sees Vishvanath has made all pilgrimages."

DARSHAN OF SHIVA

Yogi Ramsuratkumar went to the Vishvanath Temple. There was no longer any doubt in his mind. He had to go there. When he entered the dark sanctuary illuminated by oil-lamps, he was gobbled in the power of the place. He remained dumbfounded, upright in front of the transcendent image of the God, his mind totally absorbed in His blissful presence. What happened at that moment cannot be described. It was a communion beyond reason

and all literary knowledge. Something mingled between the Self of the adolescent and the Self of the God, and like a Kumara in front of Dakshinamurthi, in the deepest silence he was receiving a revelation about his own nature. The Yogi was obviously not ignorant of the great symbols of the hindu religion. Since his younger age, his father had taught him the comprehension of the texts, notably those of Mahabharata and Ramayana. He had learnt to interpret them, and he knew for example that the five Pandava brothers represented the five positive human qualities which are sathya, dharma, shanti, prema and ahimsa, and that the Kauravas represented the bad inclinations. He knew Lord Krishna was his own Atma and that he himself was, like Arjuna, in the obligation of achieving this victory of the good over the devil. In addition to the religious education of his father, he had acquired a prodigious knowledge with the pilgrims of the Ganges, all faiths mixed, (Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist, etc.), but beyond this erudition, something inside had matured and what he saw released an intense and immediate awakening process. The object of this transfiguration was a linga, a symbol of the transcendental Shiva. The city possesses over 1500 of them, distributed among various temples and sanctuaries. Its true form is a representation of the absolute, what is beyond the triple entity, the individual jiva, the world and God. In the Linga Purana, it is written:

" Siva is without sign, without color, without taste, without odor, beyond the reach of words and touch, without quality, immutable and immobile. "

It is clear that, for the learned man, this symbol is not phallic. It is only so for those who have kept a dual consciousness. For Yogi Ramsuratkumar, this darshan of the linga was both agamya (beyond all reach) and agochara (beyond all comprehension). Before him he had what he had sought desperately, the formless within the form, the nameless within a name, the fundamental emerging from the divine. His mind, captivated and illuminated by such a wonder, had precipitated him in the bottomless abyss of the Self, and although yet incomplete, this second experience was a decisive one in his quest for absolute.

After a darshan of more than one hour, Yogi Ramsuratkumar fell into a continuous rapture state. From time to time, he went on the ghats and, facing the Ganges, he thought of the numerous sages who had come here before him to seek the light. He remembered the most distinguished, like Kapila and Patanjali, Buddha and Mahavira, Adi Shankara, Guru Nanak, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Swami Vivekananda, Swami Rama-Tirtha, Kabir, Vallabhacharya, and, more recently, Swami Trilinga who had lived in Manikarnika Ghat and deceased in 1885 at the age of 280, Ma Ananda Moyi, J. Krishnamurti, etc., etc., their number was incalculable.

Taken by the deeply devotional atmosphere of thousands of pilgrims, touched in the depth of his soul by the beauty of this grand scene at the feet of goddess Ganga, he in contemplation for hours, his look lost within, towards That. When he exited his contemplation, he observed the

pilgrims, the active and courageous dhobi-s or launderers, and a whole world in which the arrogant crows and nonchalant buffalos went with no fear. The Ganges, the incense, the chants, all that was too much for this soul in love with God, and again he entered in ecstasy. These idyllic moments lasted for a week. After that, he felt that internal voice again, that mysterious presence which seemed to guide his steps to a goal he could not understand, but which he entrusted with the confidence of a child. His internal impetus led him to Sarnath, a high place of Buddhism, since it is the place where Lord Buddha, perfectly liberated, came to deliver his first sermon. There, in front of some disciples, Buddha explained that the existence in a body is only suffering, and that the cause of this suffering is in the frantic research of pleasures through the senses. To get the purity of heart, Buddha taught eight means. He also taught the equanimity as compared to oneself, and compassion towards others. He counseled detachment from anything pertaining to the world in order to find the supreme peace in oneself as well as the extinction of the ego, a process by which man finds the access to his real or nirvanic nature. It is natural that in such a place, wholly pervaded by the Lord's vibrations, and by a peace beyond all comprehension, the young man felt again emanations of love for God and compassion for his brothers. There, very near the stupa, he let himself be immersed in the ineffable experience of unity, and penetrated again more into the world of his divine consciousness.

LAST YEARS OF STUDIES

On the one hand, we ignore everything about what happened after this exceptional week, spent away from his family limits, how he was welcomed by his parents, etc. What we know, on the other hand, is that he resumed his studies and the usual course of his existence normally. In 1937, his classical studies were over and, as he showed a great zeal and was very gifted, his father pushed him to undertake higher studies. If it is possible to-day to judge by his command over English, his deep knowledge of the history of the world or of western as well as oriental literature, it seems certain that he completed his university cycle and was a professor for some time. Ramdas himself says about him:

*" He is a B.A. (Bachelor of Arts), B.T., and was a teacher in some high school."*⁶

" According to Swami Vimalananda, Principal of Sivananda Tapovanam, Madurai, the Yogi did have his higher education too in Lucknow. About 30 years ago, when the Swami met the Yogi in the Tiruvannamalai railway station and entered into a conversation with him, sitting in a railway compartment, the Yogi himself spoke about his higher education in Lucknow. » Indeed, we know now that Yogi Ramsuratkumar graduated as "Bachelor of Arts" at Allahabad University, which was at the time famous for its numerous scholars and the

⁶ The Gospel of Swami Ramdas, recorded by Swami Satchidananda.

intellectual activities developed. He also graduated as "Bachelor of Education" at Patna University. The deep erudition and knowledge of the Yogi, especially his deep understanding of the literary, historical and philosophical works of the east and the west, his superb command over the English language and his ardent interest in reading, especially daily newspapers even so nowadays, clearly point that he must have had a brilliant educational career in the portals of Lucknow University." ⁷

The future Master was in possession of large personal qualities. He possessed a brilliant memory, a strong, quick intelligence and an unusual intuition. He was concerned by all branches of science, but, deeply in himself, he remained strangely detached. He had none of the ambitions expressed by his comrades, and during all those years of studies, he passed by sometimes painful consciousness crises. The internal call gained victory step by step over the one of the terrestrial existence which seduced the majority of his class-companions. It was probably at that period that Yogi Ramsuratkumar got married. All we know is that a girl was born from this union ⁸. The young man, respectful of the customs and of the will of his parents, consented to this marriage. But, who can resist the call of God?

⁷ Glimpses of a Great Yogi, Prof Rangarajan, page 14/15.

⁸ His ex - wife and daughter came to visit to the Yogi when he installed in Tiruvannamalai. He counselled them to go to Ananda Ashram where they remained during three days, before they left for ever in Bihar.

The Vedic system, in every respect perfect for the whole humanity, has established a progression of stages through which one proceeds; this is called ashramas. A unique law allows to go beyond the rules and obligations of these different stages. It is the real inner call, coming from the soul. The Upanishad of sage Maitreya says this:

" Those perplexed who confine themselves to castes and ashramas obtain fruits according to their acts, but men who renounce the law of castes (and of ashramas) take part in the felicity of the Self. "

It was vain to want to imprison this free soul in the narrow collar of a society, so perfect as it may be. Yogi Ramsuratkumar was already established in the Self and had built there the foundations of his future abode. So, when leaving his home, he did not transgress the path of the married in any way, as all the great sages prove it who, one day, have to go through this test; and in respect, Buddha is a flawless example.

A spiritually oriented man will have a big interest in progressing within the family frame, but it is at a higher degree that the disciple gets ready to go through high initiation which implies a total availability, with a view to a radical, physiological as much as psychical transformation, and this is nearly unrealizable in the context of family life. In this very precise and very rare case, marriage is strongly inadvisable. In the Gospel of St Luc, the Master Jesus told to Pierre: *" Verily I say unto you, there is no man that hath left house, or wife, or*

brethren, or parents, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this time, and in the world to come, eternal life. "

Christ invited a disciple to abandon all and to follow him. That has to be correctly interpreted: The Christ in question is the Self, and the world is the ego. Human responsibilities already fathered in the bosom of our human society can be left only if the call is coming from the Self and not from an even spiritually oriented personality. Yogi Ramsuratkumar, while normally attending his studies, had remained faithful to his habit of meeting renouncing ones and pilgrims. Henceforth, he spoke to them as equal, because his comprehension of the liberating doctrine was that of a spiritually mature man. The seekers of the truth he met were, like him, they were moved by the same inspiration, and among them he had some very intimate friends. One of them was a monk Yogi Ramsuratkumar often met. They had known each other for years, and a mutual and very strong feeling of fondness and respect had bloomed. His friend was a venerable man wearing long hair and a magnificent white beard. He had a noble attitude which imposed respect and a heart of infinite tenderness. This sage, having broken away from the world, lived in a very modest hut on the banks of the Ganges. His spiritual experience was real and he stood for the young yogi as an inexhaustible source of inspiration.

Days are often very hot in this desert and dry region, and the numerous ascetics like to join around a fire in the evenings and indulge in silence the delights of some

breeze behind and under the shimmering stars. During one of those unforgettable evenings a shade veiled the mind of the Yogi for a moment. That night, instead of letting himself go to the intoxication of a conversation, he felt some sort of tumult inside him. He was no longer satisfied. He had the frustrating feeling to have reach the depths of intellectual investigation, and which could no longer bring him peace. No other word, no other text could satisfy him, and what he was truly looking for, his friend could not give him, because what he was looking for was secretly buried in the heart of his heart. This is what he had just managed to realize, in an incredibly lucid manner. He knew that, from then on, all his efforts would have to converge to the unique objective, of realizing the Self and discovering God.

His friend understood what had happened in the disturbed soul of the young man. He saw the fruit of illumination ready for a complete maturing, and felt that then, nothing but the grace of a guru could bring him what he was desperately in quest of. The old man was perhaps sad to leave such a friend, but he knew that the law of detachment imposed not to retain - even in thought - the one who was on his way to the objective. His advice was direct; he eventually said :

*" Go alone, immediately, and find what you are seeking.
"*

Yogi Ramsuratkumar then explained to the old sage about his desire to go to Pondicherry to meet great Yogi Sri Aurobindo Ghose, whose name was already famous

in Kashi. The monk was delighted and advised him to also visit another fully realized Master who lived in the south of India. This was Sri Ramana Maharshi, as Yogi Ramsuratkumar discovered later.

It is certainly impossible to understand the importance of such moments if they are not experienced. These moments are so intense that they lead you to the edge of chasm while pushing you to further your way. The only imperative: at any cost, go ahead, with a unique restriction in mind, never return, never turn back. Hope is ahead, death is behind. Having made this difficult decision which he knew was irrevocable, he was seized by an inexpressible sensation of joy, not devoid of this terrible anguish of the unknown every man feels at the dawn of revelation. He knew the power of love and peace that the communion with the Formless brings. But, similarly, in his heart of hearts, he lived with the world's misery and sufferings, and he was he was leaving this world to awake even more and so return to instruct it and awake it in its turn. In his vision, he saw thousands of souls tied to terrestrial existence, and he understood that only a free man could liberate them. With his eyes veiled with tears, he stood up and scrutinized the horizon, and, in a heart-rending feeling of agony, cried to God:

" Years of this short life have passed, and I am not yet by Your side. Is all I have learnt by religion only fancy? Why is it not possible for me to see You? I am Your child,

*I belong to You. O, Father, take me, I will know how to serve You. "*⁹

Didn't God say once: "*Make a step towards me, and I will make some hundred towards you.*" This time, the real pilgrimage had begun. Yogi Ramsuratkumar knew that he would not stop again before he had reached his objective. The disciple was ready, and the guru, without his knowing, irresistibly attracted him. As soon as he had made his decision, neither anything nor anybody could hinder his pace to the other bank. This happened one night, in 1947. He was exactly 19 years old.

⁹ Yogi Ramsuratkumar, *The Godchild, Tiruvannamalai*, by Truman Caylor Wadlington, page 30.

YOGI RAMSURATKUMAR, THE DIVINE BEGGAR



" There are on earth some supremely good, serene and magnanimous beings, who as naturally as spring, exert around them some charitable influence. They have crossed the ocean of births and deaths, and by pure generosity, they help their similar to cross it in their turn. "

(Adi Shankara)

*"The root of meditation is the Guru's form.
The root of adoration is Guru's feet.
The root of mantra is the Guru's word.
The root of liberation is the Guru's grace."*

(Guru Gita, 76)

CHAPTER III

TRIP TO THE SOUTH

During the years before his great pilgrimage, Yogi Ramsuratkumar had often wondered what the best attitude was to adopt to realize God. Was it necessary to give oneself up totally to the divine will, or to act accordingly to one's own consciousness? This question was now useless, as his own consciousness was so much linked to the intuitive and divine impetus developing

within him. And while keeping on acting, he was totally detached from the fruit. He would say :

" Your only right is the sole action and not the fruit that derives from it. Do what you think is right, but do not wait for the result. "

This time again, under the impetus of his soul, this body was going to act again and this action he never had to regret was going to lead him to the feet of the great Yogi, Sri Aurobindo. About this long journey, Yogi Ramsuratkumar has given no precise indication, but we can imagine it was not so easy. In November 1947, he reached the Pondicherry ashram.

SRI AUROBINDO GHOSE

Sri Aurobindo was born in 1872. He was a man of genius in all the meanings of the word, a sage whose intuitive and intellectual abilities seemed to draw from the very source of Brahma's mind. At seven, he was sent to England by his father, and he received a very good general education there. Back to India, he followed Sister Nivedita's (Vivekananda's disciple) suggestions, and entered the Movement for Freedom of Motherland. After a public career, he was committed to spiritual life and received a vision of Lord Krishna, followed by many other experiences. In 1910, he settled in Pondicherry. At that time, his message had already attracted an immense crowd of devotees, from India as well as from the West. On November 24th, 1926, all the devotees had gathered

for darshan. At the end, Aurobindo told them in confidence that he had reached the summit of the spiritual quest. He revealed the congregation that on this exceptional day, the Supra-mental had come down on earth. From that day on, the great Yogi went in solitude, henceforth giving darshans only scarcely. This exceptional day was declared one of the four annual days for Aurobindo's public darshan, and the very last one of which took place on the 24th November, 1950.

From the day of his arrival, Yogi Ramsuratkumar had kept only one idea in mind: to be accepted by the Master as a disciple. But the period of narrow master-disciple contacts had gone because Aurobindo was practically invisible. This was a disappointment for Yogi Ramsuratkumar, but that did not disarm him and he followed the ashram work. This work consisted in enforcing in one's daily life the precepts written by Aurobindo in his numerous works, all of that on a background of meditation, the finality of which being to awake the consciousness not only to the divine reality, but equally to the reality of the spirit within matter. Yogi Ramsuratkumar worked hard, studying and meditating. Nevertheless, the physical absence of the Master was felt. All along the period he lived in the ashram, he unceasingly kept on deepening the essence of the truth that emerged from the synthesis of yoga-s taught by the Master. He had the opportunity to confront his own theories with those of other disciples, and that was full of teaching. In the course of his stay, he got acquainted with a young bramachari, a disciple of Aurobindo's. A brotherly fondness bloomed between them. One day, the

disciple suggested to Yogi Ramsuratkumar to visit another sage who, according to him, resided in the city of Tiruvannamalai, at the foot of the holy mountain of Arunachala. This sage of sages was nobody else but Sri Ramana Maharshi, and at that time he understood the advice bestowed by his old friend in Kashi referred to that instructor. He considered this suggestion as a divine sign to which he had to obey, and immediately left for Tiruvannamalai, where he discovered what his soul was aspiring for, a daily present Master, living at the foot of a mountain dedicated to Shiva in his fire and light aspect.

ARUNACHALA, THE MOUNTAIN OF FIRE

Regarding this holy hill, we read this under T.K. Sundaresa Iyer's pen :

*" Of the five great high places (Panchabhutasthala), Arunachala stands at the center. Of the six support places (sadaadhara), Arunachala is the navel. Of the four places which confer liberation (muktisthala), Arunachala has the reputation of granting deliverance at its only thought. Arunachala has all the requisite qualities of form, place of pilgrimage, and high place - all attributes of the perfect place to confer liberation. "*¹⁰

In southern India, five lingas are venerated. Each corresponds to one of the five elements:

¹⁰ At the Feet of Bhagavan, page 95, T.K. Sundaresa Iyer.

1. Prithivi Linga (earth) lies in Kanchipuram.
2. Apas Linga (water) lies in the Jambukeshvara temple, on Srirangam island at Trichy.
3. Tejas Linga (fire) lies in Tiruvannamalai, and is nothing but the Arunachala mountain.
4. Vayu Linga (air) is situated at Kalahashti.
5. Akasha Linga (ether) is at Chidambaram.

Arunachala represents the spiritual fire of wisdom and the Shiva Purana takes it into account in these words:

" This hill without any root or summit will be miniaturized to be seen and adored by the world. .. If we look at it, touch it and take it as the object of our meditation, it liberates from rebirths all the living beings. "

Again, Yogi Ramsuratkumar found himself in front of the symbol of transcendence and divine immanence, the external form of which aroused such an impression in him that it induced him to internalize so much that he forgot the world. The mountain splendor assured him of a divine protection and showed him the objective to achieve.

Arunachala is not only a mountain-symbol or a myth. Indeed, in this blessed place, great freed ones came,

siddhas, yogis and jnanis. Among them, numerous were those who reached liberation thanks to the mountain transforming power. Let us quote, among a lot of other names, Adi Shankara, Jnanasambandhar, Arunagirinathar, Virupaksha, Guhainamasivaya, Isanya Gnana Desikar, Seshadri Swamigal, Gnanananda, Sri Ramana Maharshi. The mountain is also the object of a 'circumambulation' rite (giri pradakshina) whose efficiency in this place is attributed to the very particular magnetic and spiritual radiation of the mountain, radiation which was recognized by Ramana Maharshi himself. The text called Arunachala Mahatmya says this:

" I proclaim that the residence within a radius of three yoganas (that is to say 48 kms) around this mountain will suffice in itself to burn all defects and to undertake the union with the Supreme. "

According to a tradition also confirmed by the Maharshi, siddhas have their residence in the depths of the mountain. When studying all the exceptional attributes of Arunachala, we understand why Yogi Ramsuratkumar settled eventually in Tiruvannamalai at the end of his large journey through India,

SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI

When he came to Tiruvannamalai, Yogi Ramsuratkumar discovered an exceptional site and an authentic Master, which was not very common, even at that time. Sri Ramana Maharshi was born in Tiruchuli, on December

30th, 1879, with the name of Venkataramam. Only far later a devotee gave him the name of Sri Ramana Maharshi. Not long before the age of 16, Venkataramam heard about Arunachala. At the evocation of this name, his mind no longer knew any rest, and if there was any desire left, it was to visit the holy place. Meanwhile, he lived an internal experience which simply confirmed the near and definitive death of his ego. Having made up his mind to only live in God, he left the world, including his family, and walked towards Arunachala which he reached in 1896. His very first visit was for the holy of holies of the big Arunachaleswar temple. There, he immediately got to the supreme knowledge of the Self, and a life of total detachment followed. The Maharshi was in a samadhi state nearly all the time. In turns, he lived in the temple or in several caves in the mountain, the most famous being Virupaksha and Skandashram. In 1922, he accepted to go down, near the grave of his mother, where the present Ramana Ashram had developed hereafter. Sri Ramana Maharshi was a flawless jnani who mainly taught through silence, far more than by words. The only method he would recommend for realizing the Self, was a constant investigation into the Self nature (Atma Vichara). This method consists in asking the question: " Who am I? " One then concentrates on the answer : "I", as the sensation of being. It is a direct, immediate approach, and, we must say, it is not easily accessible for the largest majority of seekers who are still attached to the spiritual attributes of the world.

Yogi Ramsuratkumar, despite his attraction for the Master, stayed in his presence not more than three days. The reason is that, at the end of this time, a man completely unknown to him, presented him a newspaper where the name of another giant of spirituality was mentioned. If this instructor had not been what he was, it is strongly probable that the Yogi would have remained with Sri Ramana, but at the invocation of the name, his soul shuddered and, listening to this only voice, he decided to go to the ashram situated in Kerala immediately. It concerned the Master Swami Ramdas, familiarly called Papa Ramdas.

SWAMI RAMDAS

Vittal Rao, later known under the name of Swami Ramdas, was born on April 10th 1884 in southern Kannada, very close to the Indian Ocean. Vittal's father, Balakrishna, was a deeply religious man. He had an incarnation of Vishnu, Vithobha of Pandharpur, as a divinity of election. His wife, Lalita Bai, gave him ten sons and three girls. When she died, he went to stay with his eldest son. One day, at Udipi, by the big Krishna temple, he felt attracted by a renouncing one sitting under a tree. He went to see him and received initiation into the great Rama mantra.

His son Vittal, the future Ramdas, started studying at the age of six. With a rather independent and willingly jokerlike nature, he failed all his examinations successively. At the age of sixteen, he tried to fly to

Bombay to work there, but was sent back home to his father. Nevertheless, as he was extremely gifted in the artistic sphere, he was finally sent to the School of Fine Arts in Madras, where he got an engineer degree. Vittal was interested in English literature. He read the works of Shakespeare, Burke and Carlyle with great interest, but also the writings of Vivekananda and Rama Tirtha, which were an echo to his own reflections and convictions. At the explicit request of his family, he married Uma Bai, in 1908. And in 1918 he decided to set up his own business, creating a small dyeing firm which even showed some growth. All along this period, Vittal joined in the no-cooperation movement launched by Mahatma Gandhi, and became a fiery nationalist, that is to say he understood the importance of India as a nation bearing the torch of the world's destiny. In 1919, while his wife was suffering from smallpox, he prayed for a long time in front of the photography of a sage - Sri Pandurangashram Swami - and the illness eventually healed completely. That was the beginning of a new existence which was going to lead him to the summit of achievement. Despite the recriminations of his wife and his daughter, Ramabai, he began to transform himself into what he truly was. He would constantly sing Rama's name and even devoted a large part of his nights to it. He imposed on himself an extremely ascetic discipline of living. At that time, his father being aware of what was happening, conferred him the initiation into the Ram mantra. Vittal was entering this well known mystical crisis which provides whoever lives it as much joy as agony. He later wrote that it was "a terrible period of anxiety and tension". In this desperate state of misery, a cry gushed out of Ramdas

heart. "Where can one find relief? Or find peace?" His complaint was heard, and in the void of his heart there was the sound of a voice: "Do not despair, trust Me, and you will be freed." It was Ram's voice.

On December 27th, 1922, taking the opportunity of the absence of his wife and daughter, he left the family house for ever, and found himself in the holy city of Srirangam, on the banks of River Caveri, one of India's seven sacred rivers. There, he became sannyasi and prayed Ram to sustain him in his attempts, because from then on "this life would be entirely devoted to meditation and the service of Sri Ram. He would then observe an absolute chastity, considering all women as his mother. He would sustain and feed his body with the food he would beg for." At that moment, obeying Ram's order, he took the name of Ramdas, which means: the servant (das) of Ram. In his preface of "Pilgrimage Notebook", Lizelle Reymond writes:

" For Ramdas, the stage of sannyasa was only an aspiration of the heart - because his internal renouncement derived completely from his submission to God. It is said in Hindu scriptures: " Whoever has renounced the world goes far from men and lives without any roof or fire, possessing no more than his alms bowl, his shepherd's crook, and in order to receive his God, his kamandalu. Ramdas wanted to bear the sign of his own purification, the sign of his consecration. The symbol of that was the lustral water of a river - a new Jordan - into which he dived and threw all he still possessed. Rama's voice sang within his heart: "You are

My beloved", while the worshipper hid his eyes in confusion in front of the magnitude of God.,

When Ramdas got up, he had become a disciplined being in a new state of consciousness. People said around him: "This man has lifted the veil of ignorance." Birds settled on his shoulders, wild animals had mercy on him, and snakes slipped around the heap of dried herbs on which he slept in caves ".¹¹

After having become sannyasi, Ramdas went to Tiruvannamalai, at the Ramana Maharshi's feet, and settled in the present Banyan Cave where, for twenty days and twenty nights, he constantly sang the name of Ram, or Ramnam. This was for Ramdas the beginning of a long pilgrimage which was going to lead him throughout the country, from south to north. In the course of this journey, by the magic of the Self, disciple Ramdas became a freed living, a jivanmukta. At the end of his long progress, he came back to Kanhangad, where his brother, Ananda Rao, had had a modest ashram built. Besides his brother two disciples were already living who would never leave Ramdas from then on, and who directed the ashram after the death of Ananda Rao. These were Ma Krishnabai and sannyasi Satchidananda Swami. Anandashram is today, as many devotees say, a place which is so difficult to find but even far more difficult to leave.

¹¹ Carnet de Pèlerinage, page 11, Swami Ramdas, Albin Michel.

The meeting of Yogi Ramsuratkumar with this third realized one, did not seem to be different from the other two. He did not understand before much later the underlying cause of all those events. At that time, this peaceful teacher with a childish laughter raised in him no particular affinity. Yogi Ramsuratkumar briefly explains his first meeting with Ramdas:

"This beggar was not impressed with Swami Ramdas as he had been with Ramana Maharshi and Aurobindo. This beggar was not able to understand Ramdas at that time. He understood immediately that the other two Masters were spiritual giants. With Ramdas, however, it was different. It was a kind of reaction... He was living luxuriously and people were serving him like a king."¹²

Today, we know the story of Swami Ramdas, of his terrible tapas, his devotion to Ram, and his faith which enabled him to confront thousands of dangers and to support conditions that only an accomplished adept could endure.

When he appeared, young Yogi Ramsuratkumar saw nothing in Ramdas but the apotheosis of the final victory, the result of terrible austerities now useless to him. The veil of Maya, although subtle, was still hanging over the Yogi's mind, keeping him away, at a distance from the final initiation. However, the essential contact had been established, the father and the son had met.

¹² Yogi Ramsuratkumar, the Godchild, Tiruvannamalai, Truman Caylor Wadlington, page 35.

A bit disappointed, he envisaged to go back to the north. Perhaps he made his way towards Kashi. But he did not find anything there to quench his thirst for absolute, so he decided to return to the south where his soul was unconsciously attracted. According to his own words:

*"In 1948, this beggar went again to the South. He went first to the Aurobindo Ashram but could not stay there. Then he went to Tiruvannamalai and stayed for about two months with the Maharshi."*¹³

Which better place than Arunachala could suit this soul at the threshold of realization? As it sometimes happens, the future liberated one had got in touch with very great instructors who sustained him in his final quest and took an active part in his initiation. In this precise case, number 3 was certainly not the result of pure chance. At the lotus feet of Sri Ramana, Yogi Ramsuratkumar was going to penetrate even further the process of awakening which he was engaged in. Each day was spent in good account to reach, through meditation, an always higher point of self consciousness. At that time, Yogi Ramsuratkumar was already endowed with a big psychic sensitivity and entered spontaneously the deepest samadhi states. An example of this sensitivity has been given by L. Ramani in «The Mountain Path »:

¹³ Yogi Ramsuratkumar, The Godchild, Tiruvannamalai, Truman Caylor Wadlington, page 36.

" Some incidents touched him deeply. At Sri Ramanashramam, after puja was performed at the Mother's shrine, the arati tray used to be presented to Bhagavan. One day, he took some kumkum (sacred red powder) from the tray as usual. The Yogi happened to be first to take kumkum, just after Bhagavan has touched it. The mere touch of the same tray put him into an ecstatic state. "

At darshan-s time, Yogi Ramsuratkumar was attentively listening to some rare teachings given by Sri Ramana. In the morning and evening, the Yogi used to sit in the meditation hall, in the presence of the sage who was most of the time immobile and silent. The pure Vedantin never gave initiation in mantra-s or in anything which required any ritual. Conversely, in his presence, something would happen. Several testimonies of consciousness awakenings, provoked by the Maharshi with the help of his look, have been recorded. One day when Yogi Ramsuratkumar was sitting very near the Master, he had the very clear impression to be looked at. He came out of his meditation and saw the kind gaze of Sri Ramana. Truman has summarized this exceptional moment very well:

"Ramsuratkumar looked down timidly, but only a moment lapsed before he raised his head once again. Meeting the Maharshi's gaze he went into a visual rapport with him and completely lost himself in the timeless wonder of that godly soul. He felt as though he existed during that short while not as his solitary physical body but something far greater, far more

*glorious and vast. He sensed that he had lived before in forgotten times and that the great seer peering into his eyes knew the wonders of the many lives past and those to come. this experience had tremendous impact on him, and he learned of the noble countenance and power of those who discern within themselves the infinite heavens of space."*¹⁴

From that day, Yogi Ramsuratkumar's life was, more intensely than ever before, devoted to the continual practice of hard austerities and to an unceasing quest of his self. For every adept who is getting ready to go through a greater consciousness expansion, the internal training work is intensified, the knowledge accumulation is accelerated, the initiate henceforth having access to the very spring of this knowledge with the help of an intuition as easy to use as the mind. The life of whoever is getting ready for the final crucifixion of the ego is usually a life with major sacrifices and sufferings. It is the life of the man who endeavours to reach the great liberation and even, from an exoteric point of view, and to the layman's eyes, this life will appear ever so intense, difficult and painful. The adept has indeed laid everything down on the sacrifice altar, and even his personality, as perfect as it has become, is eventually devoid of everything. He has renounced friends, money, reputation, fame in the world, family, even life, and particularly all the desires that may attach us to the

¹⁴ Yogi Ramsuratkumar, The Godchild, Tiruvannamalai, Truman Caylor wadlington, page 36/37.

world. Yogi Ramsuratkumar recognizes the essential necessity to get rid of all of those forever:

" It's only if people have no desires that they have peace (Para-Shanti). Buddha had reached it, he called it nirvana. Swami Rama-Thirtha, Ramakrishna, Vivekananda, and my Guru Swami Ramdas have reached it. To obtain Para-Shanti, the mind has to be constantly oriented to the lotus feet of the Lord. We need the help of Mahatmas. "

It would be vain to speculate on what occultly happens in the mind and body of whoever goes through the immolation of his individuality. For, if he reaches that stage, it is because he already is a conscious and advanced adept, and we only perceive the external events of his life, which are not easy to explain. As the Thirukkural says:

" All attempt to evaluate the greatness of ascetics is comparable to that of wanting to evaluate the number of deads in the world "(since its beginning).

The soul of Yogi Ramsuratkumar was ready to merge in the big glowing fire of Cosmic Consciousness, and each second was infinitely precious, each action or thought had to be illuminated with the help of discriminative wisdom. Meditation was no longer a posture or a matter of time, but the capacity to remain in constant contemplation in his own reality.

YOGI RAMSURATKUMAR, THE DIVINE BEGGAR

In 1948, Yogi Ramsuratkumar visited Swami Ramdas several times consecutively. But, each time, he got the same impression. The Yogi explains:

" It was Ramdas himself that at that time prevented the aspirant to recognize the unfathomable wisdom and the power of the Master, this time - there and the time before also. "

The time had not yet come, and Yogi Ramsuratkumar was again on his way to the North.

According to Swami Vimalananda, the Yogi spent part of his time in sanctuaries at the Ganga springs, very particularly at Rishikesh where he remained in company of great Master Swami Sivananda Saraswati:

"On April 14th, 1950, when this beggar was moving somewhere in the Himalayas in search of Masters, Maharshi passed away. In the same year, December 5th, 1950, the other great Master Aurobindo, also passed away. This beggar felt a type of restlessness that he had lost the golden opportunity of keeping company with those two great Masters." ¹⁵

The next remark shows to what extent his relationship with these two lights of spirituality was intimate and decisive and which privilege was his:

¹⁵ Yogi Ramsuratkumar, *The Godchild*, Tiruvannamalai, Truman Caylor Wadlington, page 39.

*"Most men wouldn't like to say they had three fathers, but this beggar had three Fathers. There was much work done on this beggar. Aurobindo started, Ramana Maharshi did a little and Ramdas finished."*¹⁶

He understood the grace he was granted for having met them, but now he knew that he had to conquer his final victory by himself. Like a lot of people before him, he felt a big void. He had the feeling (humanly speaking) to have missed a unique opportunity, because these two Masters had raised him at a higher level of consciousness. I would like to quote here an article by Ilaya Raaja about his search for a third guru:

"Reminiscing on the time spent in Bhagavan's Presence (Sri Ramana Maharshi), the Yogi said: "Once a sadhaka asked a list of questions. One of the eight questions, along with Sri Maharshi's reply, was translated into english for the benefit of a few beggars like myself, seated nearby. The question: "If the Guru drops his body even prior to the sishya having succeeded in his sadhana, is it necessary for the sishya to seek out a living Guru to guide him further on ? " The reply: "Not necessary. He can continue in his sadhana and guidance would continue."

When one of them ventured to ask the Yogi why in that case he had gone to Swami Ramdas after Maharshi's passing, he graciously replied: "I had begun to see that a

¹⁶ Yogi Ramsuratkumar, The Goldchild, Tiruvannamalai, Truman Caylor Wadlington, page 51/52.

Higher Power was expressing Itself, using me as an instrument. Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi was a principal influence in shaping this beggar to this state. After His passing away, I did not see any conflict in going to Swami Ramdas. It was Swami Ramdas who initiated me and gave me this madness!"

Yogi Ramsuratkumar added: "The inner life of saints like Sri Aurobindo, Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi, J. Krishnamurti and Swami Ramdas is far far removed from what we can externally perceive of them. They operate rooted in the Eternal Infinite which can never be "known". There is no individual there to report differences!"

With the time, Yogi Ramsuratkumar discovered that, similarly to an awakening of his consciousness, some powers had developed inside of him, but they were still, to a certain extent, inaccessible to his will. He experimented a lot of modified consciousness states, and received many knowledges to which he granted only little importance for the time being. Even so, he clearly sensed the blooming of considerable new forces within his being. He had understood that everything was to take place within this existence, and that he had to put all the odds on his side. He consequently had to find the one who would become his Guru, and by whose grace the last stage could be cleared. In order to achieve this objective, he had renounced everything, applying the following stanza of the Tirukkural literally:

*" They reach mukti, they who have truly renounced all.
Others are trapped in the fine thread of births by illusion.
" 17*

AT THE GURU'S LOTUS FEET

In the West, the guru has his unquestioning and his detractors, opinions vary. A freed guru cannot be a simple teacher, neither an expert in one specific art or knowledge. He cannot be but the incarnation of Brahmananda, the Supreme Beatitude. This Supreme Beatitude transcends all material, moral, religious, and even spiritual aspects of existence. Another characteristic of the freed guru is kevalam (the ultimate), which means he has also transcended time and space. He is also jnanamurti, the wisdom incarnation, the infinite, the never manifested and always unique. The true wisdom, as referred to in a sacred scripture, is the vision of Unity; it is the vision of one's own nature, and the guru is consequently no longer perceived as a human person, but as an incarnation of God. The guru has tasted the nectar of realization and "knows" by experience that he is of divine nature. Let us take an example:

In the Yajur Veda affirmation, « Aham Brahmasmi", we can find the word "aham" which, beyond its common acception, also means "witness", the witness of the whole, the absolute. It is Atma and it is its very form. In fact, "Aham Brahmasmi" means that the Atma-witness or

¹⁷ The Thirukkural, A Sri Kasi Mutt Publication, n°348.

the I in me is Brahman itself. The word "guru" contains 'gu' coming from "gunatita", the one transcending the three gunas, and "ru", coming from "rupavarjita", meaning « who has no form ». "Gu" also evokes the darkness of ignorance. Consequently, the guru is the one who, once he has transcended the three gunas, is enabled to dissipate the darkness of ignorance. The reason for this is that once he has fulfilled himself, he knows himself as the divine Self, his body being nothing but an effect of Maya, nothing but a vestige which - once born - will eventually have to die. But, nowadays, it is this vestige that is researched and adored. For those who doubt the value of a guru, I would like to point out that all the great beings have had a teacher, objectively incarnated or not. Sri Ramana Maharshi was attracted by Shiva Arunachala; J. Krishnamurti had been trained and educated in his youth, and what he rejected was not the guru himself but the meaning that Westerners and theosophists of the first degrees gave him. Jesus was instructed by Essenes and had several guru-s in the East. It was the same for Buddha Gautama, Tsong-Khapa, Shankaracharya, Ramanujacharya. All of them, while penetrating within themselves in search of their Selves, accepted qualified teachers' advice. The guru is to the advanced mystic what the mother is to the child. Therefore, if such great souls have recognized the necessity to be guided, it is a lack of maturity, if not of humility, to reject this precious opportunity. The true guru does not do anything but direct the disciple towards the inside world. He is not the cause of realization, but a useful condition for this realization, and because he has himself tasted the water of Eternal Life, he has made

himself able to lead us to the source which flows in the heart of every man. Once this point is understood and realized, it is possible to proclaim, as Ananda Moyi Ma did:

" There is no difference between God, the guru and the Self. "

Similarly, for this other great freed one - Swami Ramdas - the authentic and rare guru is God incarnate on earth, with the only objective of liberating man from the ignorance that makes him believe that he is nothing but this body. He also said:

" The guru is greater than God. God can well give you some things you need, but if you ask him for your liberation, He has to take the form of a guru to realize your desire. "

Is a guru absolutely necessary to all seekers? To that frequent question, it can be replied that all depends on the spiritual maturity of the person. We can suggest an answer, taking man's principles as an example. Generally, what is called man, is nothing but his mind by which he asserts he is a man. If this mental principle (manas) is oriented towards God, it abandons all interest in the world and seeks light and love. In this way, he slowly comes, after several existences, in touch with the second higher principle called buddhi, which is similar to the soul according to western philosophies. Buddhi is the vehicle of Atma, the Spirit, which implies its importance. Christians call it christos, and Buddhists, buddha. It is

indeed the Son of the Father, the savior within every human being.

When a man acts by means of manas and buddhi, he can still differentiate God, the guru and the Self. Once this stage reached, his best guru lies in all forms in the world, thanks to which he further awakes by the development of the virtues of his soul through personal efforts. It is a period of accumulation of all that is beautiful, right and good.

The next stage is where buddhi - once freed from manas - recognizes the reality of Atma. The consciousness now enters the stage called transcendence, when God is recognized as the unique cause of all that exists, apart from pairs of opposites such as spirit-body, real-unreal, etc. Such a state of consciousness shows that the disciple no longer seeks by himself, because his self is denied as a separated entity. He simply gives himself to the Self, trying less hard to do than to be. It is the complete detachment of all relation with the ego and the world. The guru is then no longer perceived as different from oneself, and he consequently becomes a non-conditioning factor in favour of realization. At that time, the grace of a guru will be an indispensable assistance.

Once more and for all, Yogi Ramsuratkumar decided to visit Swami Ramdas. It was in 1952. But, this time, the omniscient guru was waiting for him. He knew the great disciple was totally ready. The passing away of the two other teachers was a sure sign that he could now be

acknowledged by his disciple. Yogi Ramsuratkumar describes the reception of his guru as follows:

"Then one thing very important, it was the third chance to visit Ramdas. The two great Masters had passed away. This beggar thought to himself: "Let me try again to visit Ramdas, for he is recognized as a great sage." So in 1952 this beggar did not go to Tiruvannamalai, nor did he go to Pondicherry, for the Masters were not there. But this time Swami Ramdas turned out to be an entirely different person. At the very first sight, Ramdas could tell a number of intimate things about the life and mission of this beggar which nobody but this beggar knew.

Not only that, but the Master started to take a special care of this beggar. This beggar felt that he had come to a place where he had a number of well-known intimate friends. This beggar began to feel from the environment of the ashram that Ramdas was a great Sage, a truly great Sage. It was then that this beggar first understood the great Master. Ramdas is the beggar's Father." ¹⁸

At that time, external appearances were of no importance for Yogi Ramsuratkumar. Thereby, he always refused to wear the traditional attributes of the renouncing one, namely the ochre dress and some accessories such as the stick and the bowl for alms. "The false sadhu wears the same dress as a sage", Kabir said. A real internal transformation was only of importance to him, as

¹⁸ Yogi Ramsuratkumar, *The Godchild*, Tiruvannamalai, Truman Caylor Wadlington, page 40/41.

opposed to any external ceremony. Nevertheless, one day he saw Swami Ramdas initiating a devotee and, seeing her getting ready, he suddenly had the intuition that it would be necessary for him to go through this rite too.

At the final stage of destruction of all separating and individual feeling, the initiate is to be found confronted with the last one of the major dualities he has to vanquish, namely spirit and matter. In the course of his past existences, he had to solve the unceasing problem of the pairs of opposites at all levels. Then, he entered the path of the happy medium, and gradually freed himself from the world of sensations in focalising his mind in the light of the soul. Thus, he has managed to dissipate the mirage of the great heresy which consists in the sense of separativity. One last illusion was still to be solved: the elimination for ever of the veil separating the real from the unreal. This time, the illuminated mind is no longer going to discriminate, but pure intuition will, as a far greater power than the mind. This is here an expression of the buddhic principle that will have to be the object of a complete awakening. Before this awakening, the initiate is perfectly aware of the divine immanence. His eyes are now wide open, which paradoxically implies "the obscure night of the soul" and the impression of being an isolated entity deprived of any help. This irremediably leads to a terrible time of conflict between the jiva and the Atma. Ramdas, who had lived that experience, explains :

" Some days, all was clear to him, he had the impression to be in the highest heights, and knew he was a son of

God. While at other times, he was pulled from his pure ecstasy downward in the depths of the abyssal darkness. "

THE SUPREME INITIATION

Although the higher initiation only concerns the soul level, that expansion of consciousness frequently happens to be concretized on the physical sphere by a ritual or a ceremony. The guru then acts as a transmitter of a triple power precipitated in the subtle body of the receiver. Yogi Ramsuratkumar perfectly knew the importance of the transmission by an authentic guru. At the time of these events, Swami Ramdas had the opportunity to talk about it. A devotee asked him :

"Is there any difference between the mantra given by a saint and that taken by oneself without any initiation ?"

Papa : "When the guru gives you initiation, he imparts spiritual power to you with the mantra. You miss this otherwise. This is Ramda's experience. Before he was initiated, he was repeating "Ram, Ram". Guruji gave him "Sri Ram jai Ram jai jai Ram". After repeating the guru mantra for some time, Ramdas found that though the previous mantra gave him some degree of peace, the Guru mantra proved far more effective and resulted in higher experiences which he had not had before. His mind became still very quickly." ¹⁹

¹⁹ Gospel of Ramdas, page 372.

Yogi Ramsuratkumar felt a deep and urgent need to receive this initiation. He spoke about it to Swami Satchidananda, who was the secretary of the ashram at the time. The former no longer remembers what happened exactly, but he admits he suggested to speak directly about it to Swami Ramdas who would inform of what had to be done. Swami Ramdas did not initiate anyone in the traditional order of sannyasins, but he happened to give him initiation in the famous mantra he had himself received :

"SRI RAM, JAI RAM, JAI JAI RAM".

About ten days had already gone since the arrival of Ramsuratkumar, and a spiritual contact had been established between the Master and the disciple, without any necessity to speak. After having applied to Ramdas, the latter remained in silence for a moment. He seemed to seek the just reply in himself. Then he smiled, slowly turned towards the Yogi, and looked at him straight in the eyes. Then he observed that the fruit was mature, that the disciple was now ready to receive the supreme grace.

"So, you want initiation? Sit down!" commanded Ramdas.

And, according to the rites, he initiated him in the Ram mantra.

"What was to transpire then and there was a vivification of the centres (chakras) of the inner man, a radical elimination of all impurities, and a sudden influx of

*energy directed through the Master and accompanied by a release of latent spiritual fire within the disciple. The initiation would throw him into the cosmic dimensions of the Divine Mind and open doors to fields of activity and realms of consciousness hitherto unknown to him. "*²⁰

These moments are mysterious to the eyes of who observes appearances, but they are, all in all, quite similar for all the initiates who have had to go through this realization stage. Swami Ramdas has given a description which must be quite close to the experience lived through by Yogi Ramsuratkumar at the time:

*" As a light that suddenly shone, (the initiation) destroyed the darkness inside, woke him, and put him on the path. After that, he felt he did not do anything by his own will. God made him do all. He felt he was possessed by God, and could not live the ordinary life he had lived previously. He was completely under God's control and was inspired to dedicate Him his entire life. He could not call anything his, he could not even say that his life was his, because all belonged to God. God transformed and purified him in such a way that He could possess him completely, make him His and absorb him in His transcendent and all powerful being. "*²¹

²⁰ Yogi Ramsuratkumar, The Godchild, Tiruvannamalai, Truman Caylor Wadlington, page 55.

²¹ Ramdas Speaks, volume IV.

After the transmission of the mantra, Swami Ramdas asked the Yogi to sit and sing it all along the next twenty-four hours non-stop. The power of the Master, together with the divine force of the mantra henceforth rooted in the consciousness of the initiated disciple, had precipitated the wisdom and will fires in the Yogi's body and brain. Swami Ramdas, who attached a great importance to the awakening power of this particular mantra, said to his disciples:

" Direct your look in yourself and realize the glory of Atma. The key which opens the door of this inside spiritual kingdom is the name of Rama. "

He also stipulated:

"Sri Samarth Ramdas assures the aspirant that if he takes "Sri Ram Jai Ram Jai Jai Ram" 13 crores of times, he will have the vision of Sri Rama. The mantra mentioned by Samarth Ramdas is without "OM". The mantra Ramdas gives you is "Om Sri Ram Jai Ram Jai Jai Ram". "OM" has untold spiritual power. Hence Ramdas, from his own experience, tells you that by repeating this Mantra with "OM" six crores of times, you will attain salvation. Repeat the mantra at all times until the target is reached. You need not keep count of the Mantra. When it reaches six crores you will automatically realize Ram - the Supreme Self. Chanting His name is the way to make Him manifest Himself in you. The meaning of "Om Sri Ram Jai Ram Jai Jai Ram" is as follows:

Om = Impersonal Truth

Sri = Divine Power

Ram = God who is both Truth and impersonal.

Ram represents the Purushottama of the Gita who is at once Purusha and Prakriti and also the supreme, transcendent One beyond both.

Jai Ram = Victory to God.

Jai Jai Ram = Victory, Victory to God.

"God who is at once Truth and Power, Impersonal and Personal! Victory to Thee; victory, victory to Thee! »

When God is victorious in your heart, all darkness born from ego-sense disappears. There is then nothing but a feast of immortal joy and peace for you. " ²²

After having received the mantra, Yogi Ramsuratkumar was in a deep state of contemplation, entirely absorbed in Ramnam. He was one with Ram, he was becoming Ram. There was no longer any soul, or personality, but an 'out of time' being whom nothing could any longer retain away from the central reality. The experience which he was going through was connected neither to form, nor to consciousness-witness, but consisted of a pure identification with Brahman. This had become possible thanks to the surrendering of jiva's will as well as of the illuminated will of soul. Technically speaking, the process was the causal destruction of the body (karana sharira) by the divine fire. This process is described in Kaivalyanavanita as follows:

" By the very rare fire of true wisdom, the body of avidya (causal) will be reduced in ashes. "

²² Thus Speaks Ramdas, Anandashram, Kanhangad - 670 531.

Sri Ramana describes it this way:

" A jnanin has his causal body (karana sharira) completely destroyed. The sthula sharira (physical body) no longer exerts influence on it and rests, in practice, devoid of any interest. " ²³

What is destroyed is not the soul consciousness, but its individual body which, during thousands of lives, served as a vehicle and was the cause of the presence of a reincarnating ego. Now, the great yogi saw rapidly the individual "I" becoming absorbed again in atmic unity. During the following days, the son of Ganga and Ram had become a true bhakta. He could be seen dancing joyfully, constantly singing Ramnam. At times, he knew sudden illumination lightnings alternating with devotion and pure love waves that emerged within his consciousness and pervaded his heart, making him cry with a hardly endurable emotion. As days passed, the sense of "I" disappeared, so that he could no longer speak in the first person, he could only speak about this vestige of himself as "this beggar", a word through which he defined his appearance. As Truman says:

"In the course of only seven days and seven nights the yogi made the great exodus from the kingdom of man to the Kingdom of God."

²³ L'Enseignement de Ramana Maharshi, Albin Michel, page 454.

The initiate was becoming a Master and was reaching the state described by Sri Ramana as follows:

*" Here is what the realization of the Self consists of. At this moment the knot of the heart (hridaya-granthi) is totally sliced. The false ideas due to ignorance and the everlasting and ominous inclinations which constitute the knot, are volatilized. All doubts are dissipated and the servitude of karma comes to an end. It is like that, in his work Viveka-chudamani, that Shri Shankaracharya depicted the samadhi state or transcendental trance which is nothing but the unlimited felicity of liberation, without the ghost of a doubt and beyond the duality. He has also indicated the various means allowing to access to this state. The realization of this state of liberty out of duality, constitutes the summum bonum of life. He who Alone has effectively conquered it earns himself the title of jivan-mukta (liberated alive) and not he who has only an intellectual and theoretical knowledge of purushartha, the supreme end of all human life. "*²⁴

The mystical exaltation of the yogi was only one of the manifestations caused by transformation and transmutation. As opposed to these devotional impetuses, there were some moments when he would feel immersed in a peace without any waves, and would remain immobile in the state without second (nirvikalpa samadhi). Very recently, Yogi Ramsuratkumar has declared, about this period:

²⁴ L'Enseignement de Ramana Maharshi, Albin Michel, page 301, paragraphe 310.

" This beggar ceased to exist in 1952. After that, a power has pulled him here and there. Even now, this beggar is controlled by that same power, the power that controls the whole universe! This beggar has no consciousness! No mind! All has been washed away! No thought, no planning, no mind to plan. No senses of good and evil! Swami has killed this beggar, but life has come. Millions and millions of salutations at the lotus feet of my Master, Swami Ramdas! The same madness still continues. He has initiated this beggar in Ramnam and has asked him all the twenty-four hours. This beggar has begun to do it, and in the space of a week, this beggar has got this madness. "

Concerning this madness that characterizes freed beings, let us quote the Upanishad of wandering monk Narada:

*" Like Svetaketu, Ribhu, Nidagha, Rsbha, Durvasas, Samvartaka, Dattatreya and Raivataka, they are without visible signs, their practices are invisible, they behave like children, mad men or spirits: not at all insane, they behave as insane. "*²⁵

The presence of the Yogi did create some swirl within this quiet ashram. Yogi Ramsuratkumar was now in a state of intense spiritual tension, and his search for internal freedom was often expressed by a contempt of the world contingencies and laws. His ecstatic bounds of devotion towards Swami Ramdas and Krishnabai were

²⁵ Upanishad du Renoncement, page 285, Fayard.

not to the liking of all the ashram devotees, and the Yogi's entire-tempered and uneasy character, brought unavoidable collisions with some old and close devotees of Ramdas's. The one who was known at that time as the Bihari Baba involuntarily created some troubles in the ashram. Recently, Yogi Ramsuratkumar revealed that, at that time, nobody seemed to understand his terrible internal suffering. His behaviours, the neglected looking of his appearance, and his unconventional manner of dressing, did nothing to facilitate his integration into the community.

Swami Ramdas had an aim in view for this outstanding yogi, and it definitely reminds us of a similar situation between Sri Ramakrishna and his disciple Vivekananda. Towards his guru, Yogi Ramsuratkumar felt no attachment but an excessive and easily understandable devotion. Swami Satchidananda was the witness of it. According to him, his devotion was so intense that he followed the Master step by step, being unable to leave him for one moment. Swami Ramdas had nothing against this attitude, but he reasonably feared it would be badly accepted by the other devotees of the ashram. Yogi Ramsuratkumar remembers and narrates:

" One day, Swami Ramdas was returning from a devotee. He had the habit to sit beside the steps, very close to the tree, in front of Anandashram. He stood there. Then this beggar ran and brought a chair. Then Swami Ramdas said: " There are a number of people who can do this work, it's not for you! "

In this way, Swami Ramdas clearly indicated to his disciple his future mission. He would have, as Vivekananda did, to sacrifice his life and contemplative peace, and to devote his time to spread the light of dharma and to serve the world. Yogi Ramsuratkumar understood the allusion. No longer had he got any of his own will, and the will of his guru was the one he could accept, because it stemmed from the divine consciousness, as his was now, and both made one and only. He had consequently become a flawless instrument in the hands of God and was, from then on, able to serve the divine plan. Yogi Ramsuratkumar said about it once:

"The greatest work in the whole universe is only to be a good instrument in the hands of the Masters, the gurus. Our aim should always be to serve our masters faithfully and always think of him in whatever condition we happened to serve our country. Swami Ramdas, my Master, is among the brightest stars of the whole universe. He will guide us in the way in which He wants us to serve our nation, beloved country, Our country. Our nation will prosper in every field of activity."

After approximately two months, Swami Ramdas made him clearly understand the time had come to leave. The Yogi prepared immediately to leave the ashram for good. He accepted this decision and did not wish to make the mistake consisting in inconsiderately enjoying a peace which he alone would be participating in. On the other hand, it was not necessary that this cut between the high spheres of the divinity and the plan of the human effort should be visible. He had reached the state of nirvikalpa

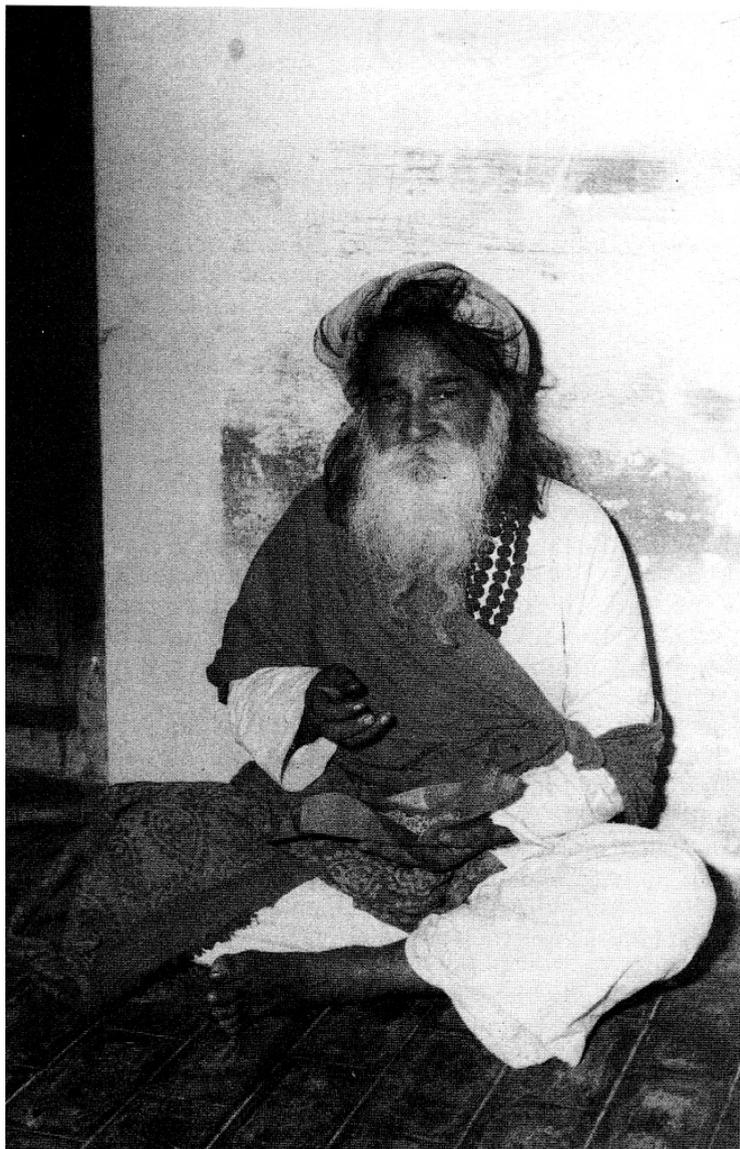
samadhi, which one can enter and leave. The state he now had to reach was one of permanent absorption - sahaja nirvikalpa samadhi -, a state in which a man can act freely in the world, being perfectly unconscious of his body. What is called liberation (mukti or moksha) is the recognition of the Self. It can be gradual (krama) or instant (sadyas). In the first case, it is the consequence of different stages along one's lifetime (ashrama). And in the second case, it spontaneously bursts out at a certain time in one's life. I ignore what it was exactly like for Yogi Ramsuratkumar, but it is necessary indeed to point out that, although liberation is instant as regards the consciousness, a longer period is always necessary so that the energies of the sheaths should adapt to that new dimension. The crude but subtle vehicle - if it keeps on - has to go through an adaptation stage that can last for months, and perhaps for years. We can find a good example of this law in J. Krishnamurti's and other great sages' lives.

According to Yogi Ramsuratkumar, Master and disciple discussed for a short while, then the latter stood up to leave. It was then that Swami Ramdas enquired about his destination. The Yogi had never thought about it, but his answer was spontaneous: " Arunachala! "

That concluded a triangular journey to the ashrams of three divine light torches. Indeed, when Sri Aurobindo came to Pondicherry, he was considered as a Master, entirely devoted to the study of Veda-s, and he was said to be in contact with Brahma-Shakti. We know that Veda-s emanate from Brahma, the supreme Intelligence

or Mahat. Aurobindo always accorded a great importance to the Supra-mental, and it is as a Raja Yogi that he entered the illuminated sphere of Universal Intelligence. Sri Ramana Maharshi was mostly a manifestation of Shiva-Shakti, and like Arunachala, the mountain of light, Ramana represented what transcends the mind. He incarnated the ideal of the jnana yogi. The one who was to represent Vishnu-Shakti was Papa Ramdas, a pure bhakti yogi. Thus these three great realized souls awoke, in the Yogi's consciousness, the three main Shakti-s of Will (Ichcha-Shakti), action (Kriya-Shakti), and intelligence (Jnana-Shakti).

YOGI RAMSURATKUMAR, THE DIVINE BEGGAR



" Having abandoned all desires, firmly established in unity, the Parama-Hamsa has only one stick, the stick of knowledge. "

(Parama-hamsa Upanishad)

"O believers, here is the wonderful sweet extract from the Veda-s and Puranas: the sweet name of Rama.

Come, all of you, and share it!

This sweet of Rama is found in a lot of shades, and heals all evil. It does not cost you anything.

Come and take it, o believers."

(SamarthRamadas)

CHAPTER IV

SEVEN YEARS OF ERRANCE

Yogi Ramsuratkumar has evoked his great departure in just a short sentence that would let one think that he was getting ready to serve God by serving the world:

" The emancipation (the deliverance) was not the end for this beggar. Rather it was the beginning for him. "

Sri Ramakrishna said that, after "the conquest of samadhi, the "self" can reside in a man, either as a servant or as a worshipper - Shankaracharya kept the ego of vidya - of knowledge - to instruct the others." It was apparently for Yogi Ramsuratkumar as much as a worshipper as as a servant that he kept part of his individual self. The service of God is the guru's role, serving the guru as God is the disciple's. This necessity to act for the welfare of the world can be found in many sages' lineages, notably in Samarth Ramadas's who proclaimed a new slogan , after his realization:

"Dil Me Raam, Haath Me Kaam" = "Rama in heart, and work at hand."

because, for Ramadas as well as for Yogi Ramsuratkumar, serving people is serving Rama. Similarly, before realization, and in the purpose to realize Jnana, two things are extremely important, specially during Kali yuga; they are name and charity (nama and dana), annadanam (gift of food), and harinamam (the name of the Lord Hari). With those two qualities used as the two wings of the Hamsa bird, every sincere disciple will reach the heavenly realization.

Again, a certain time is sometimes necessary for the physical vehicle of the follower to adapt to this new consciousness dimension and to the newly deployed energies. It was in the course of those seven years spent travelling through the Indian continent that the Yogi inwardly reached total awakening, externally expressed by his final destination, Arunachala. What he did all

along those seven years, nobody knows exactly. In the north, he visited the springs of river Ganges and the Himalayas, Girnar and Mount Abu in the state of Gujarat. He went through India from north to south, and then came back south, visiting all the high places he came through them. He behaved like a begging ascetic. For the reader who is not familiar with this kind of spiritual discipline, let us quote again the Upanishad of wandering monk Narada, as this sage is the perfect prototype of the freed ascetic who keeps wandering as Yogi Ramsuratkumar used to. In this quotation, Narada asks Brahma - the Creator - about the meaning 'discipline of the ascetic':

"Brahma, the Father, praised him and replied: - Who is detached stays at the same place during rains, the eight (other) months he moves alone without fixing in a place. Such a frightened one, the begging-monk has not to remain in the same place, nor has he to accept what obstructs his departure. Let him not cross a river with the help of his hands, neither climb to a tree, nor attend festivities in honour of a god. Let him not take his food in a same place. Let him pay no visible homage to a god. Let him reject all that is not the Self. Let him eat like a bee, become emaciated, without any stoutness; let him reject clarified butter (ajya) as blood. Taking some food from an only (house) must be for him like (taking) meat; (taking) a fragrant ointment as an impure ointment; molasses as to be born in the least of castes; a garment as to use a bowl where are remains; an oil-bath to link to a woman; to rejoice with a friend as (to take) urine; (to hold all) inclination as beef-meat; known gods as the hut

of an out-caste; the woman as a snake, gold as a poison; a place of meeting as a cemetery; the capital of a kingdom as the kumbhipaka hell, the food of an only house as (taking) the (ritual) food for a dead. " 26

The text is much longer, but this extract already gives us an idea of what a true ascetic can endure, although Yogi Ramsuratkumar can't be related to any of the sannyasi-categories, because for him, as Sri Ramana puts it:

"Renouncement is pure knowledge (jnana vidya), and not the ochre dress or the shaved head."

If we want to go any further, with the Vedic texts as a witness, it is even stated that renouncement in the course of Kali Yuga can only be interior, which is what Kabir has confirmed in a poem:

*" Why put on a saffron garment as if it were an actor's ?
What's the use of rubbing one's body with ashes and
wrapping oneself in some rough cloth? "*

And that is true to the choice of Yogi Ramsuratkumar who always preferred to dress in rags and to follow the conditions of those who live above the rules and conventions, were they those of traditional renouncing ones. In this sense, he can be identified to adepts who have reached the aim and form the avadhutas category. The Upanishad describes the main characteristics as follows:

²⁶ Upanishad du Renoncement, page 311.312, Fayard.

"'a' because imperishable (aksara), 'va' because worthy to be venerated (varenya), 'dhu' because destroyed (dhuta) is his bond with the world of transmigration, 'ta' because he is what which provides (the great words as)" You are that "(tattvamasyadi-laksya): for that, he is called avadhuta. "27

THE DIVINE BEGGAR

For such beings, the rites are entirely internalized. We know that Yogi Ramsuratkumar did not care about having any bath for forty years, and in the same respect we could also quote an important rule concerning ablutions. For a simple bahudaka sannyasi bahudaka, a bath must be taken three times a day. For the hamsa, only once. And, from paramahamsa, no bath is prescribed. Another important point to which Yogi Ramsuratkumar accords a great importance is the begging of food. The real meaning given to begging has to be understood this way: In fact the true beggar is the one who seeks God, which has nothing to do with the beggars who have to beg for their food because of karmic debts. However, the Yogi is no judge on the matter, only considering that the spirit of fraternity would have to express itself in the sharing of wealth from the richer to the poorer. The reason for begging cannot be judged. God alone knows the heart of the poor. The Thirukkural says:

²⁷ Upanishad du Renoncement, page 258, Fayard.

" More repulsive than to beg is to eat alone because one does not want to spend one's savings. " ²⁸

We often hear sannyasi-s saying, as they beg, that they are « anatha », that is to say a person without a guardian, without a support. For Yogi Ramsuratkumar, this is not true, because God is present behind every beggar to sustain him. He is the eternal support (natha) and God alone, being obliged to sustain himself, can be called "Anatha". The problem is that, in order to see God behind every person or any condition he comes across, the renouncing one must be in a total surrender state and have total faith in the Lord. Yogi Ramsuratkumar teaches this:

"The most essential and important thing in our life is that we should have faith in God, absolute faith in God. If we do not have Guru Bhakti and faith in God, whatever we may possess is of no use. If we have Guru Bhakti and the Blessings of the Guru, then it is more than sufficient and it is more than what we can possess materially in this world."

Kabir has given a wonderful example of the attitude a beggar must have, because he also was poor and would

²⁸ The author of Thirukkural is the sage Thiruvalluvar, called the wise poet of pariahs. He belonged himself to the caste of weavers. Although his work is supposed to date from more than thousand years, some believe he is still alive and active, looking after and protecting the Sanatana Dharma of places where he is generally, namely the mountains of Tirupati and Nilgiris.

beg for his food. One day, the king, who knew about his sanctity, had some gold and provisions sent to him. When Kabir was informed about it, he exclaimed: *"Who did the king send all of that for? "And it was replied: "The king sends all these things for you, knowing you are anatha" (without support)". And Kabir replied: " I am not without support, Rama is my natha or master. Therefore you can't say I have nobody to sustain me. Rama only has nobody to sustain him. Therefore take this gold and these provisions back to him."*

So, Yogi Ramsuratkumar, rich of this faith and surrender to God, kept singing in the solitude of the southern desert plains, or on the high summits of the Himalayas, the famous prayer of his master Ramdas:

" I go, such a beggar, in the vast world, singing the sweet name of Sri Ram".

One of the aims of Yogi Ramsuratkumar's mission was, as he says himself, to demonstrate the necessity to move as far back as possible, the frontiers of distress often caused by ignorance, poverty being an immediate consequence of this ignorance but no fate. However, many incarnate souls are young and inexperienced, and some painful existences will be necessary for their awakening. Meanwhile, they suffer, and, as he says, we have to bring a minimum comfort to all those who are dying from starvation. For the Yogi:

" Each one must have a minimum of comfort, the essential thing being not to attach. Poverty for absolutely

nobody, but the prosperity for each one and for all, both materially and spiritually, that would have to be our aim.
"

Along these seven years of wandering, he visited the extreme north of the Himalayas. He has himself revealed that he was searching for great Mahatmas and that he met some in caves. From these higher contacts with those who control the world, he could establish the precise foundation of his future mission of a silent teacher. In this respect, with his humor we know, he defines the nature of that role, perceived more as an internal action than as an external activity:

*" My Father assigns tasks. All, we only do His work. To Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi, Swami Ramdas and Sri Aurobindo, he gave the task to teach. To this beggar, He has not given this task. To have faith in the words of these only Masters is the task appointed to this beggar. Thus, I have faith in the writings, in the words of these Masters. That is sufficient for this beggar. "*²⁹

ARRIVAL IN TIRUVANNAMALAI

At the beginning of spring 1959, Yogi Ramsuratkumar finally arrived at the foot of the sacred mountain of Arunachala, in order to settle there definitively, as he had

²⁹ The Mountain Path, Jayanti Issue, 1990, page 144, extracted from the article of Ilaya Raaja.

told his guru. The trip was difficult, he had to support the worst conditions and his state of health was not at its best. Recovering some strength was now necessary, so he made his way directly to the ashram of Sri Ramana where he stayed for some time. After having recovered all his vigour, he moved towards the railway station and took refuge under a tree (punnai) ³⁰. This tree, under which he lived for ten years, and which no longer exists today, was just thick enough to protect him against the rain in the cold season or against the terrible sun in the hot season. Nevertheless, he remained astonishingly indifferent to all that concerned his body, in which he seemed completely uninterested. He was also seen staying in some caves in the mountain, notably in the banyan one where Swami Ramdas came to sing Ramnam. He happened, at times, to settle in the Big Temple, in the shade of the ramparts or near the sacred tanks (tirtha). In his rags, with his fan, his coconut, and all the papers, letters or newspapers he accumulated, the beggar did not always have a cordial welcome. To the eyes of the common man he would appear as a madman, respecting only his own rules. He listened only to this internal force that led him here and there, a force to which he had totally yielded. For his close devotees, he was absolutely unpredictable:

"A true worshipper of God, who has widely drunk at the divine love cup, is like a drunk man, and he can't be

³⁰ For the Yogi, the tree was the symbol of his entire evolution. The trunk of the existence represents the yoga karma, branches, leaves and scented flowers are the bhakti yoga. Mature fruit are the apotheosis of all yoga-s, that is to say the jnana yoga. The rest at the foot of the tree represents the final liberation.

asked to observe the rules of conveniences, " Ramakrishna said.

A little later, he found refuge under the veranda of a stall on the roadside. Of course, he was never preoccupied with his food, and he happened to fast for several days. But, indifferent as he might be, he wandered in the city, often at night, constantly singing the name of God. For the common mortal, his behaviour was incomprehensible, or even strange and whimsical. One could see him, at times, sobbing in intimate communion with the misery of his brothers, while at other times, he would dance in ecstasy, reciting the sweet name of Ram. Sri Ramakrishna had also undergone severe critics about his strange behaviour. A godman for some, a mad man for others, Sri Ramakrishna, who knew very well what was thought of him, said to his disciples:

" If you have to become mad, be mad of love for the Lord, and not for things here below. "

Yogi Ramsuratkumar wandered at the mercy of the spiritual impetuses which would appear within himself, detached from the world and out of the essential. But, what could the fact of being poor mean for this Master? Generally, men live in this world to discover or accumulate material wealth. Yogi Ramsuratkumar is a prince who renounced this world. Here is his unique wealth.

Once, I got acquainted with a westerner, a devotee of another teacher's, who had known Yogiji well, after his

return from the seven years of wandering. She felt no particular feeling for this beggar, and I asked her whether, even so, she recognized him some virtue. Immediately, she replied : " *One cannot deny his infinite generosity, and his authentic powers.*" This generosity is a characteristic of this great yogi. He always reveals it, never hesitating to sacrifice his time, his comfort, or his security to ease or protect those who need it.

As he was considered by some as a holy man, increasingly numerous were those who came for his blessing. And, as his graces were generally followed by positive effects, one began to recognize him and to need his company. However, the Yogi, who is not a man of compromise, was in no way looking for disciples, and he never claimed to have done anything by himself. And those who stuck to him, without vacillating in their faith because of his behaviour, were authentic seekers; today, they are among his closest disciples.

He was sometimes quietly sitting on the steps of the chariot's mandapam, or by a crockery merchant, in front of the temple, or even at the foot of the tree facing the station. There, he would receive his devotees whose number kept growing. At other times, he would welcome them by the inside wall of the Big Temple. This situation was so uncomfortable for those who had come to see him, that several of them managed to get him a small residence. Sannidhi Street (in front of the chariots mandapam) was bought on February 3rd, 1977, and the Yogi entered it on the 15th of the same month. But, after a first formal occupation, he continued as previously for

the next six months, and only at the end of this period, he began to live there permanently.

Like all the sages at all periods and under all latitudes, who have not been afraid of speaking out loud of the divine reality, about the supremacy of love upon hatred, or of light upon darkness, years ago, Yogi Ramsuratkumar had to endure real persecution. His life was attempted upon several times and some also tried to hurt him in different ways. Once, as one example among others, someone put some broken glass in his yard, knowing that, early in the morning, in full darkness, the Yogi was in the habit of going to the bathroom. When he walked in the street and sang Ramnam, he was sometimes insulted by hateful people who would throw stones at him. Nevertheless, in the most serious cases, he would always have a strange protection that saved him from the most critical situations. Those persecutions were perpetuated by some extremist groups of atheists and materialists for whom a Mahatma represented a danger, because his aim was to instruct people, to awake them, to make them responsible and capable not to be influenced by these groups whose only value is material. These jealous and aggressive persons still name themselves sadicats. And even if those persecutions are over today, those persons are still very numerous.

*
* *

"ALL I KNOW IS RAMNAM. FOR HIM THERE IS NO NEED FOR REALISATION, VISIONS, EXPERIENCES, OR ANYTHING ELSE. CHANT THE NAME ALL TWENTY-FOUR HOURS ! I DO AS ORDAINED BY MY MASTER. THAT'S ENOUGH FOR THIS BEGGAR!"

(Yogi Ramsuratkumar)

RAMNAM - THE UNIVERSAL MANTRA

In 1954, Swami Ramdas, undertook to travel round the world in the company of Ma Krishnabai and Swami Satchidananda. During his five month trip, Ramdas dispensed the message of love and universal service. He had not come to convert to his faith, but to incite the beings in love with spirituality to progress with strength, courage and patience, along the path they would choose by themselves. In Switzerland, Ramdas was received in the house of John Herbert to whom so much is due, concerning the coming of some teachers and the translation of some Hindu texts. When in France, Ramdas was welcomed by the Sri Ramakrishna ashram at Gretz³¹.

In 1955, all the devotees and friends of Swami Ramdas Anandashram, decided to celebrate the twenty-fifth birthday of Ma Krishnabai's renunciation by collecting,

³¹ Centre Védantique Ramakrishna, 77220 Gretz, France.

for the occasion, a very important amount of money which was to be given to her. As it could easily be expected, the holy Mother refused it and asked if thousands of repetitions of Ram mantra could be sent to her instead of the thousands of rupees.

This technique is called "Likhit Japa Yajna", the invocation of the name of God in writing. Swami Ramdas has explained the efficiency of this method.

" Singing the name of God gives a durable peace, the mind becomes still and serene. Those who write Ramnam during two or three hours each day reach the same result. This practice releases a coordination of view, mind and gesture which obliges the mind to cease wandering. You liberate then this divine power, hidden in yourself, which masters thoughts and controls actions. "

" Written japa (which consists in writing non-stop the adopted mantra) is an excellent process with a view to a rapid concentration. You write and your eyes are fixed on your handwriting. Otherwise, if your eyes are closed, the mind runs in all directions; and if they are opened, the view amuses the mind and japa becomes mechanical. Therefore, if you maintain your mind on the japa, it is said that by writing the japa once, it is mentally repeated five times. It is Mataji's experience: when she writes Om, Shri Ram, Jai Ram, Jai Jai Ram, she repeats it five times silently. Attention and eyes are fixed on what is written, with the result that there is a large profit to this process.

However, Ramdas has never practised it. He has always repeated Ramnam orally. " ³²

PRACTICE OF RAMNAM

An entire lineage of sages has perpetuated the practice of the recitation of Rama's divine name, as an awakening and liberation technique. Swami Ramdas and Yogi Ramsuratkumar are representatives of this lineage which goes back to the Rama Avatar himself, and as Yogi Ramsuratkumar's mission nowadays is to spread it through the world, let us consider not only the value of the constant recitation of the divine Name (namasmarana), but also and mainly the quality attributed to this individual Rama mantra.

The constant recitation of one of the numerous names of the Lord, whatever the form chosen, is called japana-masmarana. Any instructor competent in the spiritual sphere will tell you that the major objective of the incarnated man is to free himself from his desires and attachments which keep him irresistibly submitted to the infernal round of reincarnations. Lord Krishna teaches it in the Gita:

" Don't believe, Arjuna, that what your senses impose on you is reality, be not influenced by them. "

³² Entretien de Hadeyah, Swami Ramdas, Albin Michel, page 331/332.

The process of liberation also implies the non-production of karmic effects, and one of the first rules to respect in the view to reach this step, is the decentralization of the mind from the external world of temporary existence, so as to absorb this mind into the pure contemplation of the Self. The mind constitutes the main obstacle, and, without a measure of detachment from the worldly pleasures, it is impossible for the mind to be stabilized on the abstracted permanence of the Self or to feel the joy of tasting the nectar of internal peace beyond all sensual emotions. The internalization of the mental consciousness very often begins through reflection and prayer. Then, a time comes when meditation becomes a natural state. Whereas pratyahara (the withdrawal of senses) and dharana (concentration) are still based on an effort of the mind, meditation is normally the no-effort stage i.e. the stage of an absorption into the thought of God. This means a mind at a stage of perfect rest and a total abandon of any activity such as imagination, memory, reflection or analysis. The mastered and purified mind then becomes as limpid and translucent as the surface of a mountain lake, and it is in this absolute rest state that the higher part of that mind, called buddhi or soul, interpenetrates it in the form of a luminous radiation, conferring it wisdom, love, intuition and discrimination, the qualities all together through which Atma may be known, and, from the spiritual man he was to start with, one may become divine.

In the course of meditation, those abilities will get sharper and, so crude as they may have been, they become subtle, so much so that the individual becomes

able to experiment the consciousness of unity. The mind, by which the consciousness identifies with the body, becomes blurred, and the absolute appears as the real and natural state. The person is then close to the liberation.

Our mind is a vast memory conditioned by thousands of years of contact with the crude world. Just as sugar can dissolve in water and mix, the Spirit similarly merges in matter and the difficulty for man lies in separating sugar from water. This will be achieved by provoking the evaporation of the water of desires in order to retrieve the sugared substance of beatitude (ambrosia or amrita). As every meditating one knows, the mind, active and motive by nature, revolts when we force it to stabilize on the immobile and silent nature of the Self. This is the reason why the first attempt to calm consists in fixing it on a divine element which has a minimum movement. This movement is the one of prana, active in the respiratory action (inspir = So. Expir = Ham). These two sounds, O and M, represent life within form. The Pranava Om is the Word of God and concentration on this sound becomes a wonderful meditation.

Within the context of bhakti yoga, in which the form of the Lord is worshipped, another method has proved itself efficient. It consists, here again, in keeping remembering the Presence of the Lord by singing His different names and attributes. It is called kirtan. Collectively, these devotional songs are called "samkirtan" and consist in singing the glory of the Lord, not faintly, but with the heart; it must be the spontaneous manifestation of an internal ecstatic state, together with a complete oblivion

of the external world. A kirtan like this only can be called samkirtan or bhajan.

The main thing in these techniques lies in the constant remembering of the Presence of the Lord, and, in this obscure cycle, it is possible to simply recite it, instead of singing it. This practice is called namasmarana.

The first manifestation of God at the dawn of creation showed in the form of Shabda Brahman, a very subtle and divine sound. It is the Word or Pranava OM. From it, the very first form arose, the form of linga. And, in this perfected form, the numerous images (Avatara) of the Lord emerge.

So, the disciple always begins with the worship of the concrete form of the God he has chosen (Rama, Krishna, Buddha, Christ, etc.), and, thanks to this form, he will eventually penetrate into the without-form, by simply invoking the Name of the form, the Name through which he transcends the attributes and becomes himself an expression of the Word. When the mind is saturated by this recitation of the divine mantra, the ego can be engaged in some profane task, it will still continue to sing. After activities, one recovers the consciousness of the chant and it is then possible to resume meditation. On the other hand, when the mind is not particularly concentrated, it is attracted by all sorts of objects and is submitted to the desires aroused by them. Through the concentration on the internal chant, all these aggressions or suggestions are no longer perceived and lose their

effect; this reinforces the power to cut oneself off the world of form.

At the beginning, the mantra is sung aloud. Its strength then acts on the physical body. Thereafter, it becomes silent, and the lips only will move. This affects the subtle body positively. Eventually, the Name is evoked mentally, and this awakens the divine light. At the beginning, it may be a good idea to use a rosary (mala). This is called japa-namasmarana. At work, or when travelling, the simple namasmarana will be sufficient. But, with this practice as well as with all others, it will be necessary to remain vigilant. Kabir tells us:

" While the rosary slips in the hand and the tongue moves in the mouth, the mind runs to external objects. That is not Simran (the Word). "

The greatest sages on this planet have asserted that, in this age of extreme materialism, this practice is the most useful to the larger number. And, as a matter of fact, Hindus, Buddhists, Christians or Muslims all know and apply this recitation of the names of God. Jalaram Bapa writes:

" Sing Ramnam and do your duty. That will be sufficient in this Kali yuga. "

Kali yuga has become Kalmasha yuga, the age of impurity; and the greatest service it is possible to do, to oneself and to humanity, is to act in the world by singing the name of God unceasingly.

Bhakti is the essential basis of spiritual success. Of course there are several kinds of bhakti practices. However, namasmarana-bhakti is undoubtedly the best. In this gloomy age, Ramnam is the safest way to emancipation. Jayadeva, Gauranga, Thyagaraja, Tukaram, Kabir, Ramdas, were all great bhaktas, and all of them reached the lotus feet of the Lord by the only recitation of the Name. For the great christic(al) yogi, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, *"japa means silent repetition of the names of the Lord when we are sat in a solitary place. Who continues that repetition with piety and concentration can be sure to arrive one day to the divine vision, to the realization of God."* For his part, Kabir tells us that when *"deprived of the help of the Word, nobody can rise, whatever the means to which we resort, when we contact the Word, we meet the Lord."*

Among all the techniques offered to the aspirant, this one is the easiest and the most efficient, because it is continual and safer. Another positive element has to be explained here: it concerns the moment of our passing away. We all know that, at this ultimate moment, the last thought that rises determines the conditions of our future incarnation. This is the reason why, if we keep singing the Name of God with love, faith and surrender, no other human thought will find its way in, and the passing will become a most privileged moment to reach the highest summits of realization.

Reciting the Name on and on is like rubbing two pieces of wood against each other until they start burning. Ma Ananda Moyi said that *"when we pronounce the mantra*

the prescribed number of times, at one time or another, fire will light. Fire exists everywhere, but we don't know at what time the rubbing will suffice to make a flame spark. Therefore be always ready." In other words, we must never forget the One who is invoked, whatever we might be busy doing.

" Not only in this Kali yuga, Sai Baba advises us, but also in precedent yuga-s (periods), Krita, Treta and Dvapara, namasmarana was the secret to free oneself from slavery. "Among the yajna-s, I am namayajna "(among spiritual offerings, I am the offering of the Name). Reach the aim by namasmarana. Each being must reach the aim, whatever the slowness of his step or the roundabout path by which he is going. To reach rapidly the aim, without passing by the big travel trials or stopping from one caravanserai to the next, from birth to birth, it is necessary to learn a special sadhana (spiritual discipline), the easiest and the most rapid is namasmarana. To evoke the Divine in you, there is no better method than namasmarana."

" Have the Name of the Lord on your lips, that will distance internal and external darkness. The Name of the Lord has vast potentialities. Namasmarana is the best means. But you don't believe he can heal or save you. Here is the tragedy. There is no shortcut towards the grace of the Lord. Namasmarana is the surest road. "

BY THE DIVINE NAME OF RAM

According to Swami Vivekananda's words:

" Rama, the ancient divinity of heroic times, the incarnation of Truth, of morality, the ideal son, the ideal husband, the ideal father, the ideal king, this Rama has been presented to us by the great sage Valmiki. No language can be purer, more chaste, more beautiful, and at the same time simpler than the language in which the great poet has depicted the life of Rama. "

Lord Rama, who preceded Krishna, is always identical in essence to the other Avatar-s of Vishnu, and his strength has not decreased in India where He remains one of the most beautiful manifestations of Bhagavan, the incarnated Lord. This name of Rama possesses the power of God himself, and many liberated souls have taught us the power of its invocation as well as the depths of its meaning.

The Rama Mantra : "OM SRI RAM JAI RAM JAI JAI RAM" is extracted from the Ramarahasya Upanishad which was made popular at the end of the 16th century by the Marathi saint Ekanath. Thyagaraja, who came to southern India to sing the glory of Rama and spread the Ramataraka mantra said :

"Ramanamam Bhajare Manasa" (o mind, take the holy Name of Sri Rama and sing it).

In this chant, Thyagaraja explains that the divine Name of Rama is made of two sounds: RA emanating from Narayana (Vishnu), and MA emanating from Namasivaya (Shiva). Thus, the divine Name of Rama is a representation of God for Vishnu's devotees as well as for those of Shiva. As for Sri Sathya Sai Baba, he has shown the identity between the sound Aum and the name of Rama:

" Both of them produce the same result. While the Aum is the very basis of all the Veda-s, Rama is also the basis of all creation. The three important aspects of Agni, moon and sun contained in the name of Rama are synonymous of Ida, Saraswati and Bharathi, and are the basis of the whole world. "

The names of God are many, but God is One, and each religion, in its way, has known how to invoke the Divine through a Name and a form. When everything is going wrong, in times of suffering and danger, the child calls his parents. Similarly, but at all times, we should also call our Father so that He comes and saves us from our ignorance. This technique requires no particular intellectual competence in itself, but it requires a real aspiration to love and commune with the Divine. A poem by Kabir expresses it nicely:

" Weak is my intelligence, by caste I am only a weaver, but I have found a treasure in the name of Ram. "

Kabir was not the only one to have sung the name of God. Surdas, in hindi, Ramalingaswami, in tamil,

Purandaradasa, in Kannada, Thyagaraja, in Telugu, and hundreds of others did so. When the guru's grace is spoken of, isn't it in fact revealed by his Word? Anyway this is what Guru Nanak asserts when he writes:

" It is by it (Word) that the light of God is made obvious."

And Sri Ramana also says:

"The Word IS God".

The efficiency of the constant recitation of the Word was magnificently described in three stanzas of the Guru Nanak's Jap-ji. Here is the fifth stanza:

*" By communing with the Word, one becomes the receptacle of truth, understanding and true knowledge;
By communing with the Word, one obtains the same advantages as ablutions accomplished in the sixty-eight holy places of pilgrimage;*

By communing with the Word, one earns the esteem of learned people ;

By communing with the Word, one reaches sahaj samadhi state.

O Nanak, Its devoted worshippers are living in a perpetual ecstasy, because the Word erases all sins and all sufferings. " ³³

For his part, Sri Chaitanya wrote:

³³ Jap-Ji, Guru Nanak, Editions Présence, page 154.

" The Name of the Lord is indeed very powerful. It will bear fruits one day, even if we don't notice it immediately. It is like a seed put for a long time on the cornice of a building. It finally falls on the ground where it germinates and bears fruit, while the house itself is perhaps no more but ruin. "

Each religion lies on a Name of the divine Lord. The Hindu religion worships several. Since Yogi Ramsuratkumar, on the steps of an entire chain of spiritual Masters, admits that the Name of Rama is of an entirely exceptional power; let us see some of its characteristics.

Let us quote the Rama-Purva-Tapini-Upanishad (1, 11-13) in the first place:

" As all constituting the nature of the big banyan is contained in a tiny seed, similarly the whole universe, movable and immovable, is contained in the verbal seed Rama. "

Jagadguru Shankaracharya Chadrasesharendra Saraswati of Kanchipuram wrote :

"Rama's Name has the unique distinction of being known as the Tarakantra. Uttered even unconsciously, and much more so consciously, it rescues one from the ills of life and confers salvation. Saint Yagaraja made continuous Rama Nama Japa ninety-six crores of times. Sri Rama blessed him by appearing before him and

conferred on him the power of poesy and music by which he celebrated his ishtadevata and attained salvation. Rama Nama is the mantra which Siva is said to whisper into the right ear of every man dying in the sacred city of Kashi. It is by uttering that mantra that every dutiful Hindu son speeds the flight of his parent's soul when it is about to leave its body."

Sri Sathya Sai Baba has always accorded a major importance to namasmarana and most particularly to Rama's Name:

" What is the internal meaning of the name of Rama? The three syllables R, A, and MA indicate the three causes of human birth, namely, committed sins, experimented problems, and our own ignorance (papamu, thapamu, ajnaanamu). Ra is the root-letter of Agni. Aa represents the moon. Ma is the root-letter of the sun. What does Agni mean? Agni destroys everything and reduces it in ashes. The letter R has the power to destroy all sins committed by man. The letter A (symbolizing the moon) has the power to low fevers suffered by man and to give him peace. Ma represents the sun getting rid of the darkness of ignorance and conferring the illumination of wisdom. Thus, the word Rama has the triple power to destroy sins, to confer peace and to get rid of ignorance.
" ³⁴

For Swami Ramdas,

³⁴ Sanathana Sarathi, n° 52, may 1989, page 123/124.

"This Name makes man pass from human to divine. The divine Name is the unique panacea of physical, mental and intellectual diseases which have come to the world through the feeling of diversity. .. The divine Name purifies the mind from its ego and desires; it floods the whole being with joy and light. The heart which has seized the Name becomes the very heart of God; it opens the sluices of infinite love and universal vision. In others words, it blesses the man by the supreme vision of God, in the universe and beyond."

" By a constant remembering, you awake to that Self consciousness. What a man thinks, he becomes it. When our thoughts are dispersed and wandering here and there, we forget who we are, but if we concentrate them on the name symbolizing Him, we become one with God. Thus, modulating His name is converting all our thoughts and losing us in our real Self. It's like that that saints and great sages in the whole world have been able to declare boldly: "I am He ", after having realized the mystical experience.

Do you know Mansur? He was constantly singing "I am God, I am God. " His individuality merged in the universal Truth. Among Hindus also, there are Brahma-jnanins, as they are called, who proclaim constantly: "I am Brahman, I am God." There is there neither sacrilege nor blasphemy.

Japa having never to stop if we want to discover God, Ramdas had to leave all activities, so as to be able to devote to it. God made him reduce to a minimum amount

of food and sleep. In fact, for months, He did not sleep at all and knew long periods of fast. But the name of God rolled continually in his mind. He was led in caves and jungles where he remained sitting night and day singing His name and savoring it like nectar. God is our beloved, and the name of the beloved must necessarily be the nectar of the worshipper. The sound of the name grants its heart to the beloved and fills it with its sweetness. God and the worshipper become one; guru and disciple become one. Here is the effect of japa.

When we are sat, silent, in a quiet place, we can inwardly commune with God and invoke Him easily; but when it is necessary to pray in the din of the world, it is necessary for us to invoke Him aloud. He hears us, of course, even when we pray mentally, but when we do it loudly, we neutralize the external noises. In fact we pray Him with the words and feelings He put in ourselves, because we are nothing before Him. The invocation coming from the heart brings us very near to Him, but the worldly noises are an obstacle to the silence of the heart; therefore it is necessary to search for a still, solitary place where, communing with Nature, we can commune with God through it. God answers us, for He is within us and always ready to speak to us and we can speak to Him like to a friend, provided we give up ourselves completely to Him. " ³⁵

³⁵ Entretiens de Hadeyah, Swami Ramdas, Albin Michel, page 115/117.

Sri Sadasiva Brahmendra, a great bhakta as well as a jnani, says this, speaking to his tongue:

"O my tongue! Drink the nectar that is Ram Nam. It will ward off every evil from you. It has distilled into itself everything that is delicious. It is the sure remedy for the ills of birth and death, of fear and sorrow. It is the quintessence of all the Vedas, Sastras and forms of worship. It contains in its womb the entire created universe. Even the worst sinner will be purified and reclaimed if he utters that name. It ranks equal with Pranava Mantra and is chanted even by the sannyasins of the highest order who dwell in the meditation of the Supreme Brahman. Suka, Saunaka and Kausika have all delighted to sing in their prayers." ³⁶

SWAMI RAMDAS MAHASAMADHI

On July 25th, 1963, after a shorter nap than usual, Swami Ramdas said to close devotees :

"Ramdas no longer needs sleep, he will sleep on this evening. "

Through these words, he was peacefully announcing the end of his stay on earth. Eventually, at 6.15 p.m., he had a heart attack, and one hour later he died in the middle of

³⁶ Tattva Darsana, 9th annual number 1993, page 32. This issue was entirely dedicated to the Rama Nama, and contains series of articles on this Avatar.

Ramnam chants which continued the next days. A short while after his passing, a radiation of peace and perfect serenity illuminated the face of the Master and flooded all his circle with an inexpressible beatitude. At the news of his death which was broadcasted on the radio, crowds of people flocked from all over India. Ramdas's ashes now rest in a mausoleum (samadhi) built at the bottom of the Bhajan Hall. For fourteen days, Krishnabai distributed rice to all the poor people in the neighbourhood. A thousand came on the first days, there were twenty thousand of them on the last days. The messenger had become one with the object of his worship, and his message was now going to radiate all over India.

MEETING OF TWO SAGES

In 1972, Yogi Ramsuratkumar got in touch with the great jnani, Swami Gnanananda. Very little was known about the past of this great adept, and the early times of his life are as mysterious as are those of Yogi Ramsuratkumar's. His birthdate is uncertain. It is advanced that he was born in January in the year 1814, in the village of Mangalapuri, in the land of Kannada. His parents were both brahmins, their names were Sri Venkoba Ganapati and Srimati Sakku Bai. He was called Subrahmaniam and received the brahmin cord from his parents at the age of five. One thinks he left his family at about eleven or twelve. As he was dozing on the banks of the sacred river Chandrabhaga, he was woken up by an old brahmin who congratulated him for the sincerity of his quest and

revealed him that his guru was in Pandharpur. He followed this holy man's illuminated advice and learnt that a great master was living in that city; his name was Sri Swami Sivaratna Giri of Jyotimath, one of the four monasteries established by Adi Shankara. When he met the guru, the latter immediately realised the high degree of his realization and accepted him as a disciple, so he gave him the name of Pragnana Brahmachari.

When Pragnana Brahmachari reached the age of 32, his guru initiated him in the order of Giri and the disciple was given the initiatic name of Sri Gnanananda Giri. A short while later, he retired to the Himalayas to accomplish intense ascetic practices. He spent several years at the springs of Ganga, at Gangotri, and even made the great pilgrimage to Mount Kailash. Then he visited whole India on foot, through Nepal, Burma and Sri Lanka. It's a little before the end of the last century that he went back to southern India. According to his disciples, he was then nearly a hundred years old.

In the course of his numerous and distant travels, he met the greatest adepts of the time. He confided to Père Henri le Saux (Swami Abhishiktananda) that he had even met the great Sai Baba of Shirdi. On another occasion, he mentioned several other meetings, with Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Swami Vivekananda, for example, or with Ramalinga Swamigal in Vadalur, Sri Aurobindo in Pondicherry, and the great Tamil poet Sri Subrahmania Bharatiar. Gnanananda also mentioned that, during his stay at Sampath Giri Hills, around the year 1910, he frequently visited Sri Ramana Maharshi who was a

young man lost in meditation in the Virupaksha cave at Arunachala at that time. He is likely to have stayed for about thirty years in Attiyampathi (district of Salem), from where he visited several regions. Then he settled more permanently in Siddhalingamadam around the years 1944/1945. His spiritual powers were immense and acknowledged by everybody.

"Once when Siddalingamadam was severely affected by famine and drought, the villagers importuned the Swami for his grace. Jokingly he ordered them to bring many pots of water from the nearby well and pour it over his head. Even before a few pots were thus poured, the sky became overcast with thick dark clouds. It poured and the heavy rains continued unabated for many days bringing prosperity and plenty to this region thereafter."³⁷

In 1954, thanks to the generous assistance of two devotees, a piece of land was bought, on which a modest ashram was built and was given the name of Sri Gnanananda Tapovanam. The site was not found just by chance, as the city of Tirukkoilur was sanctified by many temples and by its connection with a number of ancient sages.

The contact between Gnanananda and Yogi Ramsuratkumar lasted no more than two years. They met episodically, because when he came, Yogi

³⁷ Sadguru Gnanananda, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay 7, page 15/16.

Ramsuratkumar also visited another ashram, of lesser importance, the one of Siddhalingamadam. When he would meet Gnanananda, the Yogi would never appear as an instructor, but as a simple modest and humble devotee. Just before his passing, which happened on January 10th, 1974, Gnanananda recommended to all his devotees and close disciples to follow Yogi Ramsuratkumar from then on.

These two instructors had a close brotherly, perhaps occult relationship. They endeavoured to keep it discreet, as is proper. This is explained partly by the fact that the reputation of Gnanananda was already very far-reaching and that the law imposed not to shadow it because of the presence of any other teacher. However, at the time of his passing, Gnanananda transmitted a part of his reputation to Yogi Ramsuratkumar as he gave him his fan as a confidence and love symbol. During the time of their relationship, both sages had long and deep conversations, namely about the necessity to help regenerate the Sanathana Dharma, and, in that perspective, they set up a real plan of action.

"These two saints came to a firm resolve sometime in April 1973. On 27th of April, 1973, Swami Gnanananda Giri presented to Yogi Ramsurat a country hand-fan and a staff as insignia of the 'commandership' that the former wanted the latter to take up. On 29th of April, 1973, the devotees around these saints witnessed a "mock operation". Swami Gnanananda Giri cried out, "One, two, three, shoot!" Ramsurat, affectionately called Ramji by the devotees, rushed towards the saint and knelt in

front of him in Veerasana like a Chief of Army holding a gun in his hand saluting a Head of the State. Then both of them burst into a roar of laughter. It was just an indication of their resolve to employ their spiritual powers for the emancipation of the Motherland from the shackles of ignorance, stark materialism and utter selfish pursuits of the so called leaders of the society. During the Navaratri season in 1973, Ramji sent a statue of Mahatma Gandhi to Swami Gnanananda Giri as a mark of their resolve to serve the nation. After the attainment of Mahasamadhi of Swami Gnanananda Giri, on 10th of January, 1974, Yogi Ramsurat stayed in the Tapovanam till 14th of August, 1974. He has not visited the ashram afterwards." ³⁸

However Ramsuratkumar remained a busy and omnipresent master in a lot of spheres, always ready to help his disciples when in trouble. Here is an example of his large disposal:

A devotee, who was living approximately fifteen miles away, prayed intensely so that his house could receive the grace to be touched by the holy feet of the Yogi. Answering this secret prayer, Yogi Ramsuratkumar hurriedly left Tapovanam and went straight to the devotee who could then receive the wished blessing.

³⁸ Glimpses of a Great Yogi, V. Rangarajan, Sister Nivedita Academy Publication, page 37/38.

Pon Kamaraj also gave another example of the Yogi's mysterious actions, which was accredited by Gnanananda himself:

" A Gnanananda Swami devotee residing in the Tapovanam of Tirukkoilur had left to make his ablutions in the river Pennai. His legs were jammed between two big stones in the river and he was unable to be released. He shouted for help. Several devotees arrived and tried to release his legs, but in vain. Meanwhile, the level of water began to rise and the devotees lamented to be in such a situation. Bhagavan, answering to their complaints, precipitated to save the devotee, saying: " This beggar has a work to do. " Bhagavan, after having gone once round the devotee prisoner of the rocks, returned on the bank and told him to return on the shore when his legs will be released from the rocks hold. The devotee fell at the feet of Bhagavan. When this incident was narrated to Gnanananda, the former said: "We have by our side the strong Bhimasen Yogi Ramsuratkumar."

As it seems, Swami Gnanananda discovered the great saint of Kanyakumari called the Divine Mother Mayamma. Mother Mayi, as she is familiarly called, passed on February 9th, 1992 (her birth date is unknown). For most people and devotees who were in an intimate relationship with her, the saint was well over a century old. Mother Mayi lived in a total renouncement, feeding on uncooked fish and alms. In the yard of her house, she used to maintain a horde of dogs she had gathered. She was actually acknowledged as an accomplished saint thanks to one of the dogs. In fact, one

of them had been run over and the animal's intestines had ruptured. The dog was brought to Mother Mayi who made a quick bandage with some pieces of cloth. The dog was immediately healed. Mother Mayi was part of this fraternity of sages who are active for the spiritual regeneration of India and for the propagation of its universal message. Mother Mayamma greatly inspired Sadhu Rangarajan, which resulted in his creation of the Tattva Darsana review. In one of the 1992 issues, an article is devoted to the Mother. Sadhu Rangarajan writes in his editorial: "*It was the divine Mother who directed this sadhu, in the beginning of the eighties, to his disksha guru (guru initiator), Yogi Ramsuratkumar Godchild Tiruvannamalai.*"

On September 26th, 1976, the divine Mother went to Tiruvannamalai. She met Yogi Ramsuratkumar, the one towards whom she sent so many truth seekers. That encounter took place in front of the Big Arunachaleshwar Temple. On this occasion, she offered him some sacred food (prasada). She remained sitting, inside the temple and was engaged in silent communication all night long with the Yogi, who was outside the enclosure. On the following morning, they exchanged some jokes telling each other, in Hindi: "*Kam jaldi karo*" (Do the job quickly). The Mother then left for Kanyakumari.³⁹

³⁹ Kanyakumari, as its name indicates, is dedicated to the virgin Goddess, to the divine Mother, and as the city is situated at the most southern point of India, it has been identified to the Supreme Shakti, Kundalini in its three manifestations. In the same manner, in Kanyakumari, at Cape Comorin, three seas which humbly prostrate at the sacred feet of the virgin Goddess, the sea of Bengale, the sea

She spent the last days of her life staying at the foot of Yercaud hill, in Salem, where her mortal remains are today.

When did Yogi Ramsuratkumar's great work really begin ? Nobody really knows. However, several intimate devotees of the Yogi's are convinced that his mission began in 1976, the day he was 60, when his birthday was celebrated for the first time ever. On that occasion, a blessing message was sent by another great soul, Jagad Guru Shankaracharya of Kanchipuram, Sri Chandrasekarendra Saraswati.

SISTER NIVEDITA ACADEMY

One of the active disciples of the Yogi's is Professor Sadhu Rangarajan. This man has obstinately imposed himself the task of spreading Sanatana Dharma. For many years, he has devoted himself to internal research and, on top of that, his erudition and sense of organization make him the ideal man to spread Yogi Ramsuratkumar's message. In twenty-five years of active

of Oman, the Indian Ocean, are meeting. This place inspired a number of great saints, such as Mahatma Gandhi and Swami Vivekananda who came here to pray to the Mother on December 25th, 1892. He had there the illumination of his future mission and took the decision of devoting his life to the service of his motherland (Bharat) as well as propagating the teaching of the Veda-s in the West. On this rock, some meters away from the shore, the Vivekananda Rock Memorial was built.

experience he has lived within institutions like Chinmaya Mission, Viswa Hindu Parishad, Vivekananda Medical Mission, and Vivekananda Kendra whose objective is to spread the eternal and spiritual values of the Motherland (Bharata varsha). His progress and aims entirely rejoin the Yogi's as well as Swami Vivekananda's. In 1977, he created Sister Nivedita Academy whose main activities can be mentioned here :

Mission of the Academy

Sister Nivedita Academy was founded with the object of promoting the ideal of Hindu spirituality, thought and culture, in India and abroad, letting people know about Ayurvedic and Yogic methods of healthy living, and setting up centres for these purposes.

1.- Indian way of thinking and culture course.

It is a course for laymen and women. Regular classes are held in the Academy and eminent scholars are invited to deliver lectures on important aspects of the Indian way of thinking and culture. The Academy also offers a postal course for students from all over India and abroad.

2.- Yogi Ramsuratkumar Youth Association.

A branch of the Academy involving young people in social and spiritual activities. It carries out a mission of help to the needy and poor patients. Its activities include visiting patients in hospitals so as to give them spiritual solace. It organises oratorical competitions for students in

the view to inspiring spiritual and patriotic fervour in them. It organises Veda classes, daily satsang, mass prayers, etc. With the blessing and grace of Yogi Ramsuratkumar, it has spearheaded the International Ramnam Mahayagna and its aim is to provide spiritual discipline for Hindus, both in India and abroad, as well as to achieve the goal of universal peace and harmony by chanting 15.500 crores (155.000 millions) of Ramnam Taraka "Aum Sri Ram Jai Ram Jai Jai Ram", a cause dear to Poojya Mataji Krishnabai of Anandashram, Kanhangad. Centres have been created in India for the noble cause of fulfilling Poojya Mataji's dream.

3.- Yogi Ramsuratkumar Indological Research Centre.

This centre was set up to guide serious aspirants wishing to dive deep into the spiritual culture and heritage of this holy land. The Centre owns a collection of 5,000 books and issues of rare spiritual, religious and cultural journals, and press clippings of articles on various topics.

4.- Publication of books.

Here are some titles :

- . Vande Mataram, by Sadhu Prof. V. Rangarajan.
- . Rationale of Hindu Festivals, by Skandanarayan.
- . Glimpses of a Great Yogi, by Sadhu Prof. V. Rangarajan, on the life of Yogi Ramsuratkumar.
- . Experiences with Yogi Ramsuratkumar, by Haragopal Sepuri.

- . Tiruvannamalaiyil Oar Kuzhandai, by T.PM Gnanaprakasham.
 - . Did Swami Vivekananda Give up Hinduism ? by a Hindu (G.C.Asnani).
 - . The Origin of the word Hindu, Premnath Magazine.
 - . Poems of a broken heart, by Lee Lozowick.
5. Tattva Darsana, quarterly review.

This magazine is devoted to philosophy, religion, culture and science.

6. Hindu Voice International.

Review devoted to social, cultural and spiritual events, and to activities in the Hindu world.

Besides his various activities, Sadhu Rangarajan's duty is to let the multitudes know about the value of Ramnam. Yogi Ramsuratkumar said once : « *Papa Ramdas has given initiation to this beggar, and wanted this beggar to go on spreading Ramnam. When this beggar gave initiation to Rangaraja, he expected Rangaraja to leave him to spread Papa's work.* »

THE TEMPLE OF THE WORD

A devotee named Pon Kamaraj, who took refuge beside Mayi, the saint of Kanyakumari, had the darshan of Yogi

Ramsuratkumar for the first time. He was a great barrister in Nagerkoil, and was suffering from a terrible disease. All the doctors had given up hope, and his death seemed certain. As a last resort, he came to see the great Yogi, on Mayi Devi's advice. When he returned home, to the surprise of everybody, and mainly of the doctors, the disease had entirely disappeared. After this miracle, he decided to devote his whole life to the service of the Yogi.

In 1987, Yogi Ramsuratkumar's birthday celebration took place in Nagerkoil ⁴⁰. Pon Kamaraj was one of the organizers. Several high personalities, among whom the ancient governor of Kerala, Sri Rama Chandran, presided the opening of the celebrations. After the ceremony, Pon Kamaraj visited Yogi Ramsuratkumar in Tiruvannamalai. As the latter blessed him, he said to him: " You took a lot of trouble ", and at the same time he gave him a parcel packed in a Kashmir shawl, asking him not to open it before a week. After the time had passed, he opened it and found a few books and letters from some devotees with their addresses. He wrote to them immediately and immediately received positive replies, notably one from Lee Lozowick, an American who was the head of a community and who committed himself in participating in the 1988 Jayanti. Yogi Ramsuratkumar's birthday was celebrated , for the first time publicly, in Madras, under the auspices of Sister Nivedita Academy, on January 1st, 1988. Important personalities from all horizons were

⁴⁰ Nagerkoil is situated 24 kms away from Cape Comorin. A Shiva Nataraja temple of the 8th century can be found there.

present. The following week, the Yogi Ramsuratkumar Youth Association (a branch of Sister Nivedita Academy) was inaugurated by Lee Lozowick, an American devotee from Arizona. Pon Kamaraj, for his part, also wanted to organize an activity with a spiritual purpose. It was called Ramyam, a combination of Yogi Ramsuratkumar's and Mayi Devi's missions. The purpose was very specific. Due to the fact that Yogi Ramsuratkumar was recognized as a realized being, as well as Ramdas, the invocation power of his name became a way of realization for his devotees, and Ramyam had the vocation of spreading the name of the Yogi.

To concretize his idea, he took the initiative to have a temple built in Kanimadam, in his own village situated five kilometers away from the Kanyakumari Cape. The temple bears the name of Mantralayam, which means, "the temple of his name". And, therefore, the mantra that is sung there is the name of Ramsuratkumar. This is the way the torch that was held very high by Swami Vivekananda, whose memorial is very close, was again raised by the constant recitation of the Yogi's name and the love he brought into the hearts of his numerous devotees. Pon Kamaraj writes:

" On the opening day of the thatched Mantralayam, while devotees were singing devotional chants dedicated to Bhagavan, which were being recorded, Bhagavan made his presence be felt in a subtle form by singing: "Sri Ram Jai Ram Jai Jai Ram ", that was indeed recorded on the tape."

Although in this case as in any other venture, Yogi Ramsuratkumar remained completely outside the working site, he blessed the willingness of the people participating in the construction of the temple and infused on them his strength and ideals in order that this instrument could spread the perfume of compassion and the desire of liberation all over the world.

There is another ashram, called Ramji ashram (Yogi Ramsuratkumar is also known under the name of Rami Swami in Tiruvannamalai) at Kumara Koil near Kanyakumari. The building of the ashram was started by a sannyasi, Om Prakesh Yogini. She and a young brahmachari look after this ashram. There again, it is a purely personal venture, and Yogi Ramsuratkumar only blessed those who courageously took the initiative. He remains the witness who encourages and blesses, without ever participating himself in those actions although he recognizes them as very useful in our present Kali yuga.

On April 26th, 1988, the 104th jayanti of Swami Ramdas was celebrated. This had to take place in the Banyan Cave, where the Master meditated after he had received initiation in the Ramnam. There were many guests, including Sadhu Rangarajan. He came on the eve to visit the Yogi and he had a long and interesting conversation with him before going to the cave. The next day, while devotees flowed to the Banyan ashram for the celebration of its seventh birthday (parallel to the 104th birthday of Swami Ramdas), there was a sudden tumult provoked by the unexpected arrival of Yogi Ramsuratkumar who went

YOGI RAMSURATKUMAR, THE DIVINE BEGGAR

straight to Sadhu Rangarajan and invited him to sit on the terrace that overhangs the cave. Several devotees sat round them and, for a long time, Yogi Ramsuratkumar spoke about India and spirituality in general. Then Swami Sundaraman, who was in charge of the cave (of the ashram) at the time, informed the group that the ceremonies were going to begin. As usual, the Yogi refused to make a speech and he walked down to the cave close to the place of the ceremony, along with Sadhu Rangarajan. In this place blessed by the presence of Ramdas, they sang a bhajan and Sadhu Rangarajan spontaneously asked to receive initiation. Yogi Ramsuratkumar accepted without the slightest hesitation and to the disciple's ear he murmured the Taraka Mantra, which he had himself received from Swami Ramdas.

Concerning this initiation, Yogi Ramsuratkumar said recently:

" Generally, this beggar does not initiate anybody, but on that day this beggar was on the mountain. There was a feast, there were people. He (Sadhu Rangarajan) had come and asked this beggar to initiate him. Generally, this beggar does not initiate anybody. Nevertheless, this beggar did it on that day."

YOGI RAMSURATKUMAR 76TH JAYANTI

Since 1976, Yogi Ramsuratkumar's birthday (Jayanti) is the occasion of a great religious feast for all his devotees.

On this memorable day, they seize the opportunity to gather to pay homage to the Master and to accomplish His divine will as they make the regenerating power of the sacred Word echo through the whole world. For example, let us take the jayanti on the 1st of December, 1993.

Mani was in charge of the whole organisation of the ceremony. It was celebrated in Madras under the auspices of « Yogi Ramsuratkumar Youth Association » (Y.R.Y.A.). The function started with the traditional rites and Vedic Homas organised by K.N. Venkatraman. Only after that, the Ramnam repetition began, from dawn to dusk, that is to say from 5 am to 5 pm; it was conducted by C.C. Krishna, in an atmosphere of great devotional fervour, around the portraits of the three symbolising light - Papa Ramdas, Mataji Krishnabai and Yogi Ramsuratkumar, although he leaves Tiruvannamalai only very scarcely-.

In the evening, there were bhajans sung by the mothers of Navasakti Bhajan Mandali of Annanagar, Southern Railway Mahila Sangam, Srimati Minakshi of Erode and Master Prasad.. Sri Somasundaram of South Africa played harmonium.

Dr C.V. Radhakrishnan, the president of Y.R.Y.A., welcomed the crowd gathering. Sri C.C. Krishna and Sri B. Mohan, were invited to speak. Sadhu Rangarajan, in his benedictory address pointed out the need to spread the Ramnam Movement far and wide for an effective return to peace.

After this address, there was an exhibition of Ramnam likhit japa's notebooks. Those books, full of vibrations of fervour, came from several countries, especially from France, African countries and Switzerland. C.C. Krishna was honoured for the work he was doing in France and in Africa.

Among the foreign personalities, one could record the presence of Balarama, representing Lee Lozowick who just arrived in Madras at the end of the Jayanti ceremony with nine members of his community. On this occasion, the publication of his work entitled « Poems from a broken heart » by Sister Nivedita Academy, was formally released by C.C. Krishna who represented the French speaking countries and to whom we owe the first French translation of « Glimpses of a Great Yogi » written by Sadhu Rangarajan.

MA KRISHNABAI MAHASAMADHI

Mataji Krishnabai, who was far more than a simple disciple, reached mahasamadhi on February 12th, 1989. With all the love of a mother, thinking and living only for the well-being of her sons, she vowed to make the Ram Mantra echo through the whole world. Her vow was to sing the mantra a hundred and forty billion times. However, she could not reach that number because of her early passing. Yogi Ramsuratkumar then picked up the torch, for the welfare of the world.

YOGI RAMSURATKUMAR, THE DIVINE BEGGAR

Yogi Ramsuratkumar has been literally breathing in and out the divine mantra for the last three decades, ever since he was initiated by Swami Ramdas. Aware of the dangers of the current times, his intention is to reach the 155 billion Ramnam fixed by Mataji Krishnabai within this generation.

In India, and in many western countries, thousands of devotees have begun the recitation of the Name, alone or in groups. Yogi Ramsuratkumar says:

"Yagnanam japayagnosmi, among sacrifices, I am the sacrifice of Japa, says Lord Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita. Canting of Lord Rama's Name is a great sacrifice and participating in this mahayagna is equal to receiving the initiation from my Master, Swami Ramdas, himself. My Father will bless all those who participate in this mahayagna and all welfare will accrue to them!"

In today's India, Yogi Ramsuratkumar is one of the greatest fervent supporters of the recitation of Ram's name, and so in the purest tradition. When Yogi Ramsuratkumar speaks of the Lord's name, he does not grant it with a particular form. He goes beyond it, and he dives into the very essence of the Word (Vak), down to the roots of the divine truth the living bearer of which is every single man. According to his words,

" You read Kabir, Tulsi, Appar Swami, Manikkavashagar Swami, - how they emphasised Namasivaya. Don't forget it! This is your heart, this is your soul whether it be Om Nama Shivaya, Om Namo Narayana whether Rama,

Shiva or Krishna, whatever name you chose, whatever form you choose, doesn't matter. But remember the Lord with any name, with any form of your choice. Just as when there is heavy rainfall, we take an umbrella and go on doing our work in the factory, in the field, wherever we go for marketing and catching hold of the umbrella, we go though the rain is falling there. But still we work - still we work, do our work. Similarly we have got so many problems all around. The divine name is just like an umbrella in the heavy rainfall. Catch hold of the Divine Name and go on doing your work in the world. This beggar begs of you and this beggar has received all he has begged of you. So I think none of you will shirk away, when this beggar begs of you "Don't forget the divine Name ". This beggar prays to His Father to bless all who have come here. My Lord Rama blesses you! My Father blesses you! Arunachala blesses you! It doesn't matter to me what name it is. All the blessings of my Father for all of you! well, that is the end. That is all."

Within the context of this modest biography, it came to the author's mind the idea to ask Yogi Ramsuratkumar for a particular message which could enrich the work. Here is what he replied :

" This beggar has no message to give. If you want a message, you have to see Swami Vivekananda, Rama Krishna, Sri Aurobindo, my Master Swami Ramdas. But the Father has given the world a Name, Yogi Ramsuratkumar! Those who sing this name, will see all

their problems resolved, whatever their difficulties may be. This name can free people. That's all. "

This reply was a teaching in itself, as well as a message, keeping in mind that the value of the intellectual messages contained in any literature, is only the container, and what has to be searched for is the content. This will not be carried out with the brain, but with the heart, not through reason but through intuition. The message made me understand that it was necessary to renounce the accumulation of information and to aim at transformation. In that perspective, is there anything better than the constant communion with God the Father, through the invocation of His divine Son. Yogi Ramsuratkumar is this son become Word, and his oneness with the Father ensures his devotees the possibility of a liberation, within the limits of their own will to reach it. As Devaki, a close disciple of the Yogi's, told me one day:

" It's so simple to sing the name, and to receive immediately the grace of the Master. "

Yogi Ramsuratkumar often says :

" When you sing the name, Yogi Ramsuratkumar, while you are in trouble, my Father brings immediately the necessary assistance. You can see it by yourselves. Even this name belongs to the Father. This beggar does not exist. The Father alone exists, everywhere. This beggar is dead in 1952, at the lotus feet of Bhagavan Ramdas. "

Once, when the Yogi was in an advanced state of mystical ecstasy, he cried:

" Go and spread this name, Yogi Ramsuratkumar, on the entire surface of the earth. It is the gift of my Father to humanity. Scatter it here and there. "

An authentic teacher, by his spiritual nature, is a bearer of a transfiguring Word and therefore can become a liberating guru. This is why it is considered indispensable to keep close to a Master, without whom the disciple cannot know the sound which illuminates the spirit, because, as Bilawal says:

"The Word of the Master makes the divine light manifest."

Let us conclude this chapter with these eloquent words by Swami Shib Dayal Singh Ji:

" The guru is the one who loves the Word. He worships nothing but the Word. Who is practising the Word is a guru of the highest competence. Therefore roll in the dust of his feet and fond humbly to him."

PART II

" O, Father, You are in my heart and nobody can know You but me, your Son."

(Akhenaton)

*"From the unreal, lead us to the Real,
from darkness, to light,
from death, to immortality."*

(Yajur Veda, I, III, 28)

CHAPTER V

ENCOUNTER WITH A MASTER

Before going on any further, I wish to specify that my personal experience with Yogi Ramsuratkumar is not unique. I only refer to it in order to give a clearer description of the atmosphere which prevails around the Yogi and to emphasize the way His grace reveals and shows every present person the impediments of the ego and the means to escape from them. No privilege is granted to any disciple more than to the others and the author's experiences only account for a minute part of all the graces granted by Yogi Ramsuratkumar to all those

who come and see him, were they advanced disciples, simple aspirants, or men of willingness in quest of love, light and peace.

It commonly asserted that God's intentions are inscrutable. They were so once again, as my encounter with Yogi Ramsuratkumar was not the fruit of any personal intention. Some other will than mine directed me to that yogi out of the ordinary. The train of events began when I was suggested to lead a spiritually minded party trip to India. I had yet renounced to take part in that kind of party trip, being aware, through my own experience, of the fact that the gates of the great truth are as narrow in India as anywhere else, and that the presence of a group considerably decreases the opportunities to penetrate the spirit of Hindu wisdom. Anyway, there was an opportunity to serve, a hand held out by destiny, which perhaps might allow the achievement of an intention in which I was going to be an instrument. There could also be one or several persons in the party for whom this trip was going to be the beginning of a real spiritual quest or the right time for an experience they had been preparing for and expecting for a long time. I must admit there was also a true delight for me once more to go treading along the pilgrimage routes through the holy land I considered as my soul's homeland, just as France represents my body's. I also had the great advantage of getting the opportunity to make up my own route which was to take us through places I wanted to see again and others I only knew through reputation. So that this trip should be more a pilgrimage than a tour, we had decided to keep in the

southern India and to save time and fatigue. As most participants had never been to India, the visual aspect could not be neglected. Therefore I selected highly spiritual places which also presented a vision of the beauty and of the high level of culture this antique civilization had reached. All of us ardently wished this pilgrimage to be above all centred on internal research. We did not want an experience of India from the outside, we wanted to realize a real communion with the soul of this sacred land. In order to achieve this objective as far as possible, I suggested to arrange to meet three authentic instructors, three gurus recognized to have reached a high degree of Self realization. In the first place, we would go to Puttaparthi, the big ashram of Sathya Sai Baba, which I knew well as I had been there often and have written a few texts about it. After Puttaparthi, as our route was going through Kanchipuram, I planned a meeting with the Shankaracharya. Finally, having heard of Swami Premananda, a famous yogi living near Trichy, I decided to include it in our programme.

So the pilgrimage began with a stay in Puttaparthi which, I hoped, was going to inaugurate a trip under the best auspices. After that, our coach took us to Tirupati, a temple devoted to Venkateshvara, Lord of the seven hills. The next stage was through Madras, with a stop at the world Theosophical Society centre. Our local guide was a young Indian, learned and courteous, called Savitri. Unfortunately, she had to leave us to rejoin her husband who had fallen seriously ill. The last evening, she invited us all to a bhajan party. As she could speak very good French, I offered her a work on Sai Baba whose fiery

devotee she was. She was so happy that she wanted to give tit for tat, although I would generally accept no material present. She rushed into another room and came back, radiant, with a photograph rolled in her hand. "Where do you project to go, after Madras?" she asked me. I listed the main cities, such as Pondicherry or Tiruvannamalai. At the evocation of this city, her face lighted up and she held out the picture to me. "Go and see this great saint, she advised - he is an authentic realized one I regularly meet; go there, I won't tell you more."

Two days had passed since we had left Madras. We got the darshan of the Shankaracharya of Kanchipuram and prayed on the grave of Sri Aurobindo. On the third morning, our minibus dropped us in Tiruvannamalai. Our party was expected at Sri Ramana Maharshi's ashram situated south of the holy mountain. After a quick wash and a little rest, we did pradakshina, a ritual consisting in circumambulating, keeping the mountain to the right hand side. Towards the end of the evening, the members recovered full freedom to do whatever they wanted. I had already been to that city often, not only for the spiritual and mysterious radiation that emanated from the mountain, but also to live in Sri Ramana's ashram whose main technique called Atma Vichara, i.e. an investigation on the nature of the Self, I used to follow.

After years of contact with India, from north to south, the first instructor with whom I established a spiritual and deep relationship was Sri Sathya Sai Baba. This relationship eventually led me to a powerful

internalization which resulted in my reading and practicing the teaching of jnana yoga, as it was formulated by Sri Ramana with whom I felt a great affinity, although he was no longer in this world. Both of them had raised to a higher dimension which I had not been able to reach by myself in the course of long years of spiritual practice. Anyway, my attraction for India was particularly strong, although I could not really identify the source of this attraction. Nevertheless, there it was and I felt a real joy in submitting to it.

As we were very close to Arunachaleswar Big Temple, my friend Georges, who was the group organizer together with me, decided to visit the famous saint recommended by Savitri. Strange as it may be, on my previous stops in Tiruvannamalai, I had never heard of this holy man named Yogi Ramsuratkumar. At that time in October, the sky was heavily loaded with large clouds, and the rain, although quite light, was continuous. It was not difficult to localize the Yogi's abode as everybody knew him there. It was situated in a small lane named Sannidhi, in front of the Big Temple main entry. The Yogi's residence was next to others, but it had a more ancient aspect. Just on the front, an open gutter collected the rainwater as well as all sorts of rubbish. To our surprise, we noticed that the front of the house was used as latrines by passers-by in a hurry who were probably unaware of the identity of the inhabitant of the place. The openwork door looked out on a veranda closed by a small wall halfway-up with a grille on top of it, by way of windows. After having climbed the three stone steps, we walked into the tiny and obscure veranda. After some time of

adaptation, our eyes got used to the darkness, and we could see a strange looking man sitting up very straight and completely motionless. We did the usual prostrations in our clumsy manner and put the offerings at his feet, and he then invited us to sit down in front of him. The wait was long, not because we were impatient, but because the Yogi scrutinized us directly in deep silence, and we did not know too well the right attitude to adopt. In the veranda, in front of the Yogi the visitor can see a large and thick ancient door opening on his private room. On his left, a small room extends the veranda in a right angle, under the window-grille; it can sit no more than six or seven persons because of a heap of rubbles and rubbish piled at the back end. Lots of dried flower garlands were hanging from the grille. The Yogi was sitting against the left hand wall of the veranda. On the other side of the lane, there were some tinning shops the noise of which allowing a very relative silence. Some of us have later on mentioned that the gutter released a nauseating smell, but, as far as I am concerned, I have never noticed anything of the kind. The atmosphere was often hot and heavy, but entirely pervaded with a salutary magnetism releasing a subjective fragrance of sanctity.

The encounter with a sage is always a fascinating moment when fear and respect impose a silent internalization on the mind. Even so, it is difficult to prevent the mind from analyzing, scrutinizing, comparing, from being surprised or doubting, and even from often glorifying of being in front of such an exceptional person. Although my mind was less peaceful than usual, I had the intuition of being truly in front of a

celebrity out of the ordinary. But, in order to be able to really realize that, reason had to be united with intuition to allow a concession-free investigation. Anyone knows it is impossible to describe a sage, because his facets are many and his behaviour indescribable. Let Lord Krishna give us his description:

" After many rebirths, when he knows that I am all what Is, the cause of all causes, the man with a true knowledge gives up himself to Me. Rare is such a Mahatma. "

(Bhagavad Gita, 7 - 19)

And today, as I write those lines, as far as my personal experience can help, I am convinced that Yogi Ramsuratkumar has the dimension of such a Mahatma.

We had been in front of the Yogi for approximately one hour and he would briefly glance at me several times, but he seemed particularly concerned by my companion. I took that opportunity to look at him with more attention. All that had been said to me about this holy man would fit in a few words: « that dirty beggar smokes all the time ». Although I am in no way interested in the external looking of a man, the reader will allow me an exception, the time for a brief description.

The Yogi was sitting in a highly dignified attitude and he was impressive with his green turban and his sumptuous white beard. He reminded me of one of those ancient Rajput proud warriors. At first sight, he rather has the profile of a native of northern India. Everything in him

evokes highness, courage and purity. What impressed me most was his penetrating glance, a powerful and direct glance which was never to turn aside easily, even when facing the sun. An impression of strength emanated from him, which could surprisingly and instantly turn into an impression of infinite sweetness, of paternal tenderness. He was looking serious, but more often than not, smiled, and an almost perceptible light would radiate from his noble face. The Yogi was sitting with his legs crossed, on a dirty piece of cloth, on the bare ground. As he was looking at my friend, straight in the eyes, I seized the opportunity to carry on watching him. His clothing was rather heterogeneous and was nothing like what we commonly see traditional renouncing ones dressed in. Instead of the ochre dress, he was wearing a dhoti which had probably been white once, as well as various other cloths rolled around him, with a large blanket on top of it all. With various large rudrakshas⁴¹ round his neck, he definitely looked like a beggar who would have dressed up with all he had been able to beg for. Such saints are not few in India, and their attitude can be so close to the abnormal and their look so similar to that of vulgar beggars that more than one have never been recognized as saints. Among the best known one, let us mention Chatti Baba, Karim Baba, Chacha, Kullar Shah, Kabir, Hazrat Baba, Hazrat Baba Jan, Vittoba Swami, Seshadri Swamigal or Mayamma, etc. I could also notice that, instead of the classic alms bowl, he would use a half-coconut, and by way of a danda or stick, he would hold

⁴¹ The rudraksha is a dried berry of the plant *elaecarpus ganitrus*, which, threaded, serves as rosary (mala) for the recitation (japa) of the divine name in the course of meditation.

something made out of two fans tied together. When someone would come and see him, or when he was with his devotees, he often happened to raise the fan at the level of his head and to fix him straight and deeply in the eyes, while his left thumb and forefinger would glide quickly along an invisible rosary. He would then seem to enter a state of consciousness in which the visitor's soul and his own would only be one and only.

Yogi Ramsuratkumar never refers to himself as a yogi or a Mahatma usually, but as a simple, dirty and ignorant beggar. And, to tell the truth, his shabby looking has remained faithful to his past way of life and to the habits of a renouncing one. Seeing him, sitting in front of me, radiating and entirely stamped with peaceful wisdom, it was impossible to deny that he had been, in the course his life, a beggar in quest of the Truth that lies buried deeply in the heart of the universe. According to those who know him intimately, he now quenches his thirst from the lively springs of the Truth he generously distributes to all those who have a true thirst of God. Those who keep criticizing his appearance today should realize that it is a thousand times harder to survive for someone relying on alms and dressed in rags, as millions of poor people do, than for those who wear the traditional sannyasi dress and towards whom giving alms means a blessing that incites to generosity. According to his own words, Yogi Ramsuratkumar, never counted on human generosity, but on God's. And, as he explained once, he never remained without receiving food for more than three days. The Yogi even went far beyond all that constitutes the appearance of a renouncing one. In fact,

he has raised himself far high beyond all rites and all systems. He no longer belongs to this world. And he is so because, he has realized his own divinity and he possesses a steadfast faith in the divine omnipresence. As a consequence, why should he mind wearing rags and being covered with the dust from the ground, since he can now, just as Kabir, shout to his detractors:

" I often changed clothes, it is the last time I coat some."

As to the fact that he lived almost forty years without a single bath, it actually was the least of his preoccupations. Moreover, I will have, one day, the opportunity to be in his arms, and it's the fragrance of a rose I shall be able to smell, the fragrance of the love that transcends all terrestrial conditions. And, to quote holy Kabir again,

*" To wash, scour oneself;
what's the use of all of that?
How many saints in this world
who are beyond pure and impure? "*

Another characteristic of this beggar's is his habit to smoke cigarettes, particularly Chaminars, which he smokes the sadhu's way. Although I am not a smoker, I have never been indisposed by his smoking. After a long while of silent mutual observation, the Yogi's attention had slackened, and he smiled and asked us our names and occupations. Then, after he had given us his blessing, we were dismissed. As I was walking out, I particularly kept in memory an unusual, almost magical atmosphere, and a

look through which I felt I could see a glow full of greatest truths.

During our short stay in Tiruvannamalai, I came back again to see the Yogi. He was having a nap. He was lying on the bare cement ground. I sat down and waited, but I did not have the time to be able to stay until he woke up. And, willy-nilly, I had to leave without telling him good-bye. At that time, the street gate was permanently open, and the Yogi was not submitted to the rigorous regulation of visits, as it is the case nowadays, considering the ever growing number of devotees.

FATHER AND SON TOGETHER AGAIN

The year after, in May 1991, I went to Tiruvannamalai again, but with my wife that time. I hardly knew anything really about the Yogi's life, or about the habits and rules governing satsangs and darshans. It was nearly 2 p.m. as we were about to reach the gate, and we heard a strong and loud voice notifying us to come back at 4, as it was the usual time for darshan.

Darshan means vision, but the vision referred to here is always spiritual, even if it happens, more often than not, by means of a physical form. This form can be a light, a guru, a statue of a divinity, a mountain, a river or a sacred tree. The idea of darshan is that the physical eye, despite its coarseness of perception, transmits what it has seen to the mind, and what is imperceptible and spiritual

can thus penetrate the consciousness of the observer and purify him.

It was June already, and the heat was hard to bear. In order to get a little cooler while waiting for the due time, we went into the Big Temple precinct and stopped in the shade under a majestic tree (illupai). The place was ventilated and looked on one of the sacred tanks of the temple. It was an ideal site for meditating and getting ready for the meeting. After some too brief moment of relaxation, a young Brahmin of the temple proposed to show us round. We were happy to accept and the time passed very rapidly. At the meeting time, the young Brahmin showed us the way and walked along with us up to the Yogi's gate. A small crowd was already waiting in front of the steps. So we took our turn and waited patiently. My spouse was called in first. After the usual prostrations, she deposited her offerings and waited. The Yogi pointed his hand to the place where she could sit. I was happy to see her sitting in front of the Yogi. This meant it was possible for us to stay in his presence. Yogi Ramsuratkumar made me sit next to my wife, on her left. Usually, some other available places are taken by regulars, that is to say ten persons or so. And once they've all taken their places, the unceasing procession of visitors starts.

The rite is immutable. Anyone invited in has to leave his shoes outside. He comes in the veranda and places his offerings beside the sage and then can do a prostration, which varies according to everyone's religious inclinations. The Yogi's blessing is given in the form of a

small slap on the back (rather rarely to women), while he pronounces the Ram vowel. Then he gives the devotee a fruit (prasad) he has blessed. According to the case, it can also be a flower, a delicacy, or anything else. If you have nothing special to ask, you leave the place immediately, unless the Yogi intimates you to stay, and the next person waiting by the gate is called in.

However, this day was a blessed one, as there was not a single living soul under the veranda, and even Sashi, the young boy who acted as the Yogi's bursar, had gone back home. We were then allowed us to stay for about three hours in private. The sage was in all respects identical to what I had felt during my last visits. He seemed far, very far, impersonal although so close at the same time. I seemed not to exist for him, and I wondered whether he recognized me. This thought came through my mind, because the Yogi often - and on purpose - gives the impression not to recognize those who come to see him. That way he avoids all forms of egocentric reaction, such as self-satisfaction for example. Sitting comfortably in front of the Yogi, we could observe him in detail. He looked particularly happy. He laughed up his sleeve, with his eyes sparkling with happiness and benevolence. Among the signs which characterize him, from the observer's viewpoint of course, I had forgotten his laughter. When he laughs, all the present hearts laugh as one and the whole world seems to explode with joy. I never heard such a laughter, such a childish, sweet and divine laughter. It is a contagious one that liberates you from any anguish, doubt, sadness or suffering. His spontaneous childish laughter is the very expression of

his Shakti, of his love power which purifies our mind, where all our limitations are stored.

Ma Ananda Moyi was well known for her inexhaustible laughter, which is an effect of the mystical ecstasy fathered by the devotion towards God. Swami Ramdas was also known for his communicative laughter. At his sight, the Yogi had, as it seemed, conquered the real happiness which alone possesses the one who has renounced the world. Renouncing the world totally is, as it is said, as tedious as it is to live in. In this case, why not choose the former solution which will lead us to God and will free us from all sufferings for ever.

" The desire to live is the messenger of death. " Sri Nisargadatta said.

Man has the desire to enjoy the world to find a joy, which is but a vague reflection of the Ananda of his true nature. The suffering man proclaims injustice, but, if there was no misfortune in this world, who would seek God? Suffering is not the fact of the God of love, but of the ignorant ego standing at a distance from his creator. Suffering proceeds from this separation. Consequently, the thinker's duty is to remain unceasingly critical about the true nature of what he Is, admitting and then realizing he is not that ego identified with a body, but a spark of the Supreme Being. Sri Ramakrishna used a nice phrase to explain this necessity of a constant discrimination between real and unreal to orient the consciousness suitably.

" As the snake is distinct from and can cast off its skin, similarly the Spirit is distinct from the body. "

To the one who has chosen the Spirit, real and permanent happiness is assured. Yogi Ramsuratkumar is entirely free from all desire of enjoying whatever in this world of deceitful illusions (money or position) and, like Vritrasura, he must have prayed in these words very often :

*"I do not desire enjoying favorable conditions of happiness offered on in Brahmaloaka, Swargaloka, or even Dhruvaloka, and even less on the earth or on the inferior planets. My unique desire is to return to God, in my original abode."*⁴²

His long quest has made him realize that durable happiness does not rely on material objects. Wordly objects in themselves are not the seat of any pleasure, but our mental projections, attachments and identifications to these forms are the cause of our pleasures. And, as worldly objects are bound to change and be destroyed, pleasure varies, one day or other.

" Whoever researches the eternal Joy, Guru Nanak says, has to go in search of the omnipresent Spirit (Naam). "

The Yogi's permanent beatitude proceeds from this spirit.

⁴² Srimad Bhagavatam, canto 6.

As opposed to the first time, the Yogi's interest seemed to focus on me. His good smile very quickly tuned into the free and spontaneous laughter of an ingenuous child. The Yogi was sitting majestically, and his burning glance dived into mine. This situation is not painful, generally, if it does not last too long. In the present case, we had been looking at each other for approximately thirty minutes already. This experience reminded me of a similar situation between J. Krishnamurti and Susunaga Weeraperuma. At the first meeting, Krishnamurti sat down and silently fixed her in her eyes. This is the way Susunaga describes the scene:

" His face was very close to mine and he began to look intensely in my eyes. It is with a prolonged attention that his glance was concentrated on my eyes. I was as exposed to the powerful radiation of a projector. First of all, I felt an impression of uneasiness. Then I felt weakening and, taken by dizziness, I had a failure. I diverted from him and looked in veranda and garden direction. I had hardly begun to look by the door that I was obliged to turn again my look towards his face, for his eyes were magnetic. I realized that I had not succeeded to take my mind off by looking elsewhere. Therefore at that time, I looked at him right in the face. The I realized that his piercing eyes were still observing me, keeping an eye on each of my movements and gestures, as if my entire spirit was the object of a rays X research. I began to perspire. I was vaguely aware that something for a long time deeply crystallized in my psyche was now dissolving. The spirit seemed, as it

*were, unloading its burden and becoming prompter in its capacity of perception. We remained sat in silence for approximately twenty minutes, which seemed to me as twenty tedious hours. And during this lapse of time, without telling anything, Krishnamurti continued to look at me straight in the eyes. "*⁴³

My own attitude was not to look down, not because of any bravado or pride, God forbid, but very simply to close myself to the light I had constantly clamoured for. It is a well known fact that the sage scrutinizes the soul through the look and builds up a relationship through which his grace can flow. I only strove to be present as Self and relatively absent as ego. But, at that precise moment, and with such conditions, my mind was hard to control. It would have liked to know what was happening beyond this silence from which it was excluded. We remained eyes in eyes, and I was really afraid not to succeed in "being", quite simply, because what the Yogi was doing in front of me was disconcerting. Indeed, in addition to his observation, he took his fan in his hand, he raised it at the level of his eyes, and then he seemed to get even more deeply into me, into the heart of my unconscious obstacles stopping the truth from appearing to me in its full plenitude. At other times, he looked above our two heads and seemed to be chasing away some obscure and invisible presence, waving his arm in wide movements. All this lasted for about an hour and half, in silence.

⁴³ Krishnamurti, tel que je l'ai connu, Susunaga Weeraperuma, Buchet /Chastel, page 39 / 40.

Suddenly, everything changed. The Yogi seemed to have discovered something (perhaps in my past), and at that moment he burst out in a large laughter. I felt slightly vexed but, after all, it only concerned my ego, and I admit there was actually some laughing matter about it. In spite of the circumstances, I tried to keep as serious as possible. The Yogi raised his hand and traced some invisible signs in the air, concentrated more deeply, and then guffawed again behind his beard. It was clear, that what he was seeing was not sad. The peals of his laughter were prodigiously contagious, and all three of us eventually burst out in an endless uncontrollable laughter. When we consider it seriously, this technique has finally proved itself, and every psychologist will tell you that laughing is salutary, as a means of liberating from psychic and emotional tensions. After this relaxation, we felt a wall between him and us had been pulled down forever, and a kind intimacy had built up naturally. From time to time, he would delicately open his packet of cigarettes; he would smoke one with precise gestures, and then start looking at me again straight in eyes. The only thing that seemed always active in his immobile and stable attitude was the permanent movement of his left hand fingers gliding along some invisible rosary. Face to face, we looked at each other intensely, without any concession, without any veil or false modesty. I offered myself to his investigation, until I could no longer feel the discomfort of a cumbersome I. That resulted in establishing a new, more internal and less artificial means of communication. Entering silence may be expressed through a new language, the language of the heart.

Some time had past, and the atmosphere was now quite relaxing. The Yogi seemed to be close to ecstasy. He chanted something sounding like a mantra, and then he started talking to us.

" You're wasting a precious time with me", he said in an interrogatory and mischievous tone. Of course, we denied vigorously and, but, without listening to our comments, he retorted us he was only a bad beggar. I thought I was right when adding that he actually was a good beggar. That was enough to release his uncontrollable laughter again, and ours as well soon after his. Once we had recovered some calm, he asked me what I was exactly expecting. I could have replied in a carefully studied sentence, but I just gave this trite reply: "I have come for a little more light". By way of a reply, he laughed. What a strange old man, I thought. I just couldn't define him, but I knew that it was only natural, because I had learnt for a long time that an accomplished sage only can understand another sage. In this small dark and dirty veranda, I felt marvellously well. My whole being was pervaded with an indescribable peace, which I rarely felt elsewhere, and this sensation was the guarantee for me that the man I had in front of me was authentic. This did not at all mean I would not try to go any further. Quite on the contrary, I was willing to see it through so as to be able to be fully convinced and to admit what was said about him.

The Yogi had resumed his observation, our looks kept on each other. Again, he seemed to scrutinize the endless horizon of my past. I did not oppose and rather did my best to offer no resistance. I contented myself in being aware of one single thing: being here and now. The gates of my soul were wide open. While we were still observing each other, a little mouse was trying to make its way from the heap of rubbles to his private room, which was bound to cross the area between the Yogi and me. But, at each attempt, it was stopped by a friendly but rapid gesture of the Yogi. That seemed to amuse him a lot. After five or six attempts, the mouse succeeded in thwarting the barrage, provoking a row of laughter on either side. In fact, the atmosphere, while being infinitely serious, was definitely not sad.

As a result of the serious accident I had in the course of a martial art training session in Japan, my knee usually was a real torture when I had to sit for several hours, legs crossed, on the bare ground, without my inseparable zafu (cushion that heightens the meditating one during the zazen meditation). But, to my surprise I felt absolutely no pain all along this meeting. My mind was exceptionally lucid, which proved to me that Yogi Ramsuratkumar used none of the occult arts -such as hypnosis or magnetism- that fascinate the beginners on the path so much.

He starting talking again and he asked us our names. It was a habit of his. He often used to ask for names and first names to be repeated, so as to know the right intonation to produce and, perhaps, their etymology. Let

us try to discover the reason for this. In the hindu tradition, God is called Brahman, and is considered as neutral, i.e with no gender. In man, he is called Atma, and then can be considered as a strength of realization. As Renou said very rightly, "it's a mystery supporting its revelation in itself." Then, there is the Word of God, Vâk. The male Brahman can be said to possess a creative power. Vâk, or Word, is the essence of the universe. It coexists with it all along the time of manifestation. It is the sound AUM which is found, palpitating, in the heart of every living form. According to the order of the renouncement degrees, it is stated that in the first two degrees the word has to be renounced (chatting having been already excluded for a long time) and has to be replaced with a mantric recitation. In the next two degrees, Hamsa and Paramahamsa, the mantra has to be meditated only. And in the last two ones, turiyatita and avadhuta, there's no longer anything to do. For them, doing is replaced by being. In other words, one goes from the male Brahma to the neutral Brahman, or from the manifested to the non-manifested. At this stage, the mantric word has been internalized to such a point that the adept has become an incarnation of the Word. The Pranava OM pervades the whole universe, and any form is but the simple modification of the basic substance (feminine) (Akasha), vibrating at different levels according to the divinity's intentions. Thus, by the power of naming darkness and light, God established the first distinction between subject and object. Therefore, what is used to name an individual is highly important to a Master.

To my greatest surprise, the Yogi invited me to sit by his side and began a strange spiritual regeneration session. At that time, I was in a very good health, apart from a congestion of sympathetic ganglions at the back of my neck and between my shoulder blades, as a result of perhaps too intensive meditation practice. The consequences of it would range from a simple stiff neck to burning sensations in the lower part of the spinal column which paralyzed the lower part of my back. The Yogi, who was touching my spinal column at that moment, moved his head his look was as if he was to say: " I see, I see ". Then, he took my pulse and observed my fingers carefully several times. What I can testify is that, from that day on, all these pains and congestions disappeared definitively. During this strange treatment, I watched my wife. We had been sitting for approximately three hours and she remained concentrated and impassive all the time. The Yogi's hand was on my back again, his palm towards the left side, at the top of my shoulder blades, when, I realized my consciousness was gradually modifying although nothing had truly changed externally. I saw the Yogi's face somewhere else and differently. It was really him, but it did not really resemble him. He was Hindu, but he no longer had the same face. Then, as I could feel it, my perception penetrated deeply inside the Yogi just as something heavy would slowly sink into deep waters, and I suddenly remembered. I could recognize this man, for he was my father. Further again in the past, I clearly realized the bond which had united me to him. The recollection was becoming even clearer. That time I was fully aware of what I had been at that time as an adolescent aged 16

or 17. At that moment, I started to feel an extremely strong feeling of love towards him. The recognition of that part of my past grew proportionally to the awakening of a feeling of intense fondness, which I had very rarely felt towards any other human being. I could feel my heart swelling and tears of happiness gushing from my eyes. Then, all of a sudden, the experience stopped at the precise moment when he removed his hand from my back.

A patch of the veil had perhaps been taken off, revealing me an ancient relationship, perhaps giving me the cause why I was there by his side. Still shattered by what had just happened, I turned my head round to look at the Yogi, and he burst out laughing. He took me in his arms and fraternally tapped on the back, as if to tell me: " It's all right, it's all right !! " I was overjoyed and, as in Jounyad's poems, my soul was singing:

" I was languishing to see you, but having seen you, a sudden joy has invaded me, and I have not been able to prevent my tears to flow. "

I would not pretend this was an experience of reminiscence, even if it has all the characteristics of one. But, beside the intellectual interpretation, if what I lived through was an authentic recollection, then I measure the Yogi's wisdom, as he stopped the progress of my recollection just in time. Indeed, in the perspective where I would have truly been his son, I might have felt an uncommon love for him, and a complete reminiscence would have made me completely dependent on his

current form. And parting from him would have meant considerable pain, because a new attachment would have been fathered, which is obviously not the right objective for a liberated one.

After a three hour and half long tête-à-tête, Yogi Ramsuratkumar offered us some prasad and gave us an engraving of himself. He stood up and accompanied us to the door. As we walked away, yet very upset, I could see the venerable sage waving us goodbye. My emotion was only natural, and I just could not dare to turn my back to him. There was now an intimacy between us, which I will keep deep in myself. I waved to him, and as we reached the end of the narrow lane, we turned towards the Sri Ramana Ashram.

Yogi Ramsuratkumar is not what we commonly call an instructor. He is a sage who speaks little, when it comes to transmission. But, in his ordinary contacts, he approaches all the spheres of science. He does not go in for politics, but keeps informed about worldwide events through daily newspapers. He does not teach on a religious basis, although he says he belongs to what lies in the heart of all religions, Sanatana Dharma. He does not teach a particular yoga, but insists on the importance of reciting one of the Names of the Supreme Lord. As Swami Ramdas, he does not confer initiation to a mantra and gives little esoteric advice. Nevertheless, all his closest relations agree and admit that surprising conversions and deep transformations take place in his presence, and that his blessings do not go unheeded; in other words he has the gift to breathe spiritual

regeneration into souls using the power of the Word a vibrant expression of which he is. Although Yogiji does not initiate anybody, except Sadhu Rangarajan, something emerges through him according to the three traditional forms of transmission. The first one is called sparshan, transmitted by the touch. The second one is called drik-diksha, it concerns the transmission by the look which transfers more illumination to the receiver's soul, as it is made aware of itself, entailing the activity of the virtues inherent to its nature. Finally, for those who are open to a more abstracted truth of the spirit, there is the initiation conferred at the higher mind level (buddhi); it is called dhyana-diksha. This kind of initiation has nothing to do with a mediocre ritual. It rather concerns a consciousness expansion that goes beyond the rational mental limits. In my opinion, it is right to say that Yogi does not confer any initiation, but that inwardly, even beyond of his own will, he is first of all an initiator, and you can't tell what is happening when the Master touches you, or fixes his eyes on you, or remains indifferent and silent.

From then on, I have often wondered about the reason and meaning of this wonderful experience. And, even if I am not interested in the past or the future, it is nevertheless true that I had to get the measure of this experience right, in order not to leave it aside, among all the things we store in the granary for pleasant souvenirs but to make it the matter of a sincere investigation. What caused the reminiscences could be easily analyzed through Yoga and Tantra sacred texts. It would be possible to speculate and say that it had something to do

with a diksha called varnamayi, an initiation during which the guru activates some of the chakra-s of the subtle body by means of a mentally sung mantra and of a touch. But, in fact, would all that be of any use if the subject of the experience does not know himself, or if the ego remains present, speculating on and on on an experience stemming from maya, as all those related to the past. To all of that, I prefer the attitude consisting in internalizing the experience until it is fully dissolved into the absolute of the Self. As Swami Ramdas evokes marvellously:

" Renounce to your individual self. God alone exists and is All. Even your sadhanas do not belong to you. No matter what we do, it is His action. It's Him who is in us, who is outside us, who is everywhere. He is both the actor and the spectator. He is All. "

THE MIRROR GURU

In a certain sense, the radiant and divine being who animates the beggar's body, that is to say the one who really bears the name of Yogi Ramsuratkumar, is the true guru. Advanced believers who meet him can discern his greatness through his subtle way of awaking them. Yogiji adapts to the capacity of each visitor (from the aspirant to the initiate), and thus expresses thus different facets. For the circumstance, he will be able to become an anugraha guru, an instructor teaching by means of grace, awaking the disciple by a simple glance or a touch. In that kind of awakening, he will never use any sacred texts, his

objective being to purify the disciple's heart and thoughts. He can, if necessary, become a kachchapa guru, a teacher inspiring his devotees through a simple glance, allowing them to reach a high degree of spiritual experience. Yogi Ramsuratkumar glance is a typical example; those who have benefited from it are many. He gives each one according to his faith, distributing food to empty stomachs and graces to those hungering for God, through the same prasada. For the advanced disciples, those who have solved the trivial problems of their daily life, who hold the vision of the divine plan and liberation as their unique goal, Yogiji becomes then a darpana guru, a pure reflecting mirror in which the pacified mind of those few elected people will be able to perceive the nature of God. To reach this aim, it is necessary to have understood the meaning of the surrender at the guru's feet. It is not a matter of losing one's free will, or sense of responsibility, but of getting a total confidence in the guru, in order to be able to abandon to him one's limited will, desires, fears and ambitions. What the guru wants is something belonging to us and which we hoarded in the mists of time. This offering to which he aspires is our ego. In order to reach that stage, confidence, love and faith are indispensable.

" Faith is all. Where there is faith, there is God ", the Yogi often said.

Following many other sages, he also recognizes the indispensable necessity to have a guru, or at least to meet advanced beings, because the experience at the feet of a sage is comparable to no other sadhana.

Yogiji said once:

"By remembering people from here, this beggar, or rather his Father, can transform them. Because for all those who are sitting in the presence of this beggar, there will be a transformation."

YOGI RAMSURATKUMAR BHAVAN

" Rain water doesn't stay on heights, it flows along the slope down to the lowest point. Similarly, God's grace resides in the heart of the humble and flows out of the proud. "

(Sri Ramakrishna)

"My heart has become capable of all forms. It is a prairie for gazelles and a convent for Christian monks, a temple for idols, and the Kaaba of the pilgrim, the tables of Tora and the Koran book. I profess the religion of love."

(Ibn'Arabi)

CHAPTER VI

NEXT MEETING

Year 1992 was very special for me. It was a bit like a stage to achieve after long and almost solitary years of sadhana, although I had often been to India. This time, I felt a precise internal call from which I did not wish to escape, despite the ever delicate adaptations we have to establish within our social life. I was not at all aware of the origin of that call, but I knew I had to go to Tiruvannamalai. This is the reason why I arranged a trip in June. I had to complete a work I was writing about Arunachala and, as I wished to remain in Sri Ramana's aura, I decided to settle in his ashram. As I already said

before, although I have studied and practiced zazen in the course of my stay in Japan, my understanding of the nature of the Self arose with the reading of Sri Ramana's teachings and, by his grace, Advaita Vedanta became my *raison d'être*. Accomplishing Arunachala pradakshina would make me particularly happy and furthermore, as I love silence and nature above all, I would have the opportunity to be in an ashram situated just at the foot of the holy mountain, an ideal place to practice the investigation on the nature of Self.

After a trip without any mishap, I arrived in Sri Ramana Ashram. The people in charge had very nicely allowed me to stay for the whole month, and had attributed to me the room number 16 situated just at the back of the ashram, at the foot of banyans.

Before my departure, I had a strange dream in which I was indicated a cave, with the assurance that it was available for me. As I do not grant a big importance to dreams (perhaps I should), I forgot about it immediately. Nevertheless, one day, while I was behind the ashram, very close to Agastya tank, a young man named Konjivi who was aware of my wish to find a tranquil and free cave, proposed me to visit one which was situated at three quarters' walk, in the western part of the mountain. To my great surprise, this cave was the one I had dreamt of. The cave had been cemented here and there so as to protect it from moisture during the rainy season. It was spacious and particularly silent. This cave being not easily accessible to anyone who does not know the bramble covered path leading there, I was almost sure not

to be importuned by passing tourists, and I decided to spend a few nights there when circumstances were favorable. This time I had come on my own, because of a big need of inner solitude. Something was emerging from within my consciousness, and I had to remain extremely vigilant. Usually, I never invite students to isolate that way, because it very often means a kind of disguise of the ego self-proclaiming sannyasi, ascetic, or other. A lot of other things are required besides an ochre dress, a silence vow and a cave, to be able to claim oneself detached from the world. In my case, it was quite different, and it had to last for some time only. Willing to remain mentally free more than anything I had arranged no program for that stay, apart from the two daily darshans with Yogi Ramsuratkumar.

My first visit took place under a torrid sun. The heat was hardly bearable and the dryness became dramatic, as it had lasted for several years already. Yogi's abode was within half an hour walk from Ramana's ashram . I got there, with my arms loaded with bananas, a fruit I generally choose because it is then convenient for Yogiji to redistribute one by one to the numerous poor people who come and see him late in the evenings. Nothing had changed, except that the darshan was a bit stricter. Sashi, the young boy who acted as the sage's bursar was at the gate, controlling entries and exits. Except for visits, the gate was locked. As I wished to remain by Yogiji, I arrived half an hour earlier. On the road, I had seen many ravens shaving past the ground, and this is, as I was told by locals, the sign of the monsoon. Indians even say they know its imminence from the sharp shout of peacocks.

When I arrived, Yogiji had no particular reaction. Remaining indifferent to my presence, he signed me to sit down. When I visit such a celebrity, I generally do my best to adopt the suitable attitude, which is described by Swami Ramdas:

" When we go to a saint, we have to close our mind and to open our heart. It is necessary to open the window of the heart in order the subtle influences of saints could penetrate. "

The small veranda was on two levels, and, as usual, I sat down in front of the Yogi, but slightly to his left, where the ground is at a lower level, leaving the higher side to visitors of some importance. More, it is necessary to know that sitting at the same level as a holy man is not traditionally authorized, even if, after all, Yogiji grants no importance to it. On my right, three persons could sit facing the Yogi, as well as two on my left, on the gate side. Facing me, in the small room, three or four devotees could sit, with the possibility for them to see Yogiji. On the opposite, those who were placed at the back, by the heap of rubbles, were in the frustrating position of being unable to have his darshan. All along this visit, the three devotees placed in front of me were three women close to the Master, among whom one, always white dressed, was nobody but Devaki, today's Mother of the ashram. It was generally her to give the signal of the recitation of Yogi's Name in the following words:

"Yogi Ramsuratkumar (3 times)

Jai Jai Guru Raya

Yogi Ramsuratkumar (3 times)

*Jai Jai Guru Raya.*⁴⁴

In my consciousness this mantra had of course raised the question why Yogi Ramsuratkumar accepted his own name to be sung, rather than the Ramnam of Swami Ramdas. The answer to that delicate question gradually came out in the course of the days spent with the saint. I understood that the devotees of a guru or of a divinity have to venerate one or several attributes of this supreme consciousness; they have to do so while keeping in mind that Brahman is the unique and supreme stage, in order to get to that abstract and still inaccessible ideal. These attributes will then take various forms, such as the sun, the form of the Divine Mother or the form of gods such as Parvati, Ganesha, Shiva or Muruga. However, in all cases, if the devotee is correctly instructed, he will not forget that the adored form is only a pretext to get to the unique and Formless one day. This may have left some orientalist westeners who are not very well familiarized with Sanathana Dharma, with the idea that Hinduism was a polytheist religion, while this plurality of divine forms is the recognition of an immanent god and those numerous deified forms were established to satisfy the multitude of awakening characters and degrees. It is the same for Yogi Ramsuratkumar's devotees who wished to sing the name linked to his present form. The Yogi let them have their own free choice, since he is now one of

⁴⁴ "Jai Guru Raya" can be translated by: " Victory to the king of teachers ".

the elect, a son of the universal Father's to whom he has fully identified himself, in such a way that the son's mantra is in no way different from the Father's mantra.

Once everybody has taken their place in the small veranda, the gate is closed for some time, interrupting the visitors flow for a while. It is always a moment of deep contemplation and communion between all. This moment is particularly looked forward to by those to whom it is a great joy and a privilege to be there. Yogi Ramsuratkumar often takes advantage of this moment of respite to light a cigarette. As this habit seems to be misunderstood by those who meet him for the first time, I would like to comment on it briefly. Once someone has freed himself in the course of this life, he is said to have stopped the karma wheel for ever. However, the revolution of the wheel is carried along by its own impetus, and the body (as opposed to the spirit which is detached forever) keeps the inclinations and habits which were its until the end of its life. Similarly, sufferings resulting from previous karma can be imposed again to the Master's body, but not at all to his consciousness which is henceforth pure and freed from any relationship with the world. As for the fact of smoking, it is part of those terrestrial habits, and one cannot judge the quality of a human being from this detail. It must be remembered that, despite their greatness, H.P. Blavatsky, Dada Maharaj, Swami Ramdas, Sri Nisargadatta, and many others were heavy smokers. Aspirants generally have a dualistic consciousness; they judge and exclude what looks unsuitable to them. As for the disciple, he will be inclusive, and his intuition will enable him to feel that the

glow of the divine wisdom, inside the body of a realized one, can deactivate the effect of a few cigarettes, or of an even more harmful element, as acid or a violent poison.

Yogi Ramsuratkumar, in his infinite modesty, sketches this situation with humor:

" I am not a sadhu, sannyasi or a Mahatma. I am only a beggar, so I want to smoke. "

As a conclusion on that topic, I would like to quote the words of a close devotee of his - Sadhu Rangarajan:

"He is a chain-smoker, but he burns to ashes the fetters of Karma that bind his devotees, who is he? ... The place where he stays is always littered with rubbish. But he is the great launderer who washes the sins of devotees who throng around him."

When the gate is open again, visitors are introduced one by one. Men generally prostrate full length, while women kneel down. Westerners may find it strange to see devotees prostrating in front of a sage. They must keep in mind that it has nothing to do with worshiping any personality. After all, this act is in no way different from the genuflexion of a Christian in front of a bishop and the kissing of the stone he wears at a finger. One prostrates here, not in front of a beggar dressed in rags, but in front of his spiritual form. It is an act of deep humility and infinite respect towards the one who has reached the recognition of his divine nature. As a complement to this subject, let us quote a text from the Srimad Bhagavatam,

a jewel of literature which shows the way to worship the Lord, and perfectly defines the deep meaning of this attitude which a bhakta alone can understand. The quoted text is a prayer of the great sage Kardama:

" Your feet, like the lotus, represent the sure vessel allowing to cross the ocean of material ignorance. Alone beings deprived of their intelligence by the illusory energy will venerate these feet in view to obtain some insignificant and momentary sensory pleasures, accessible even to those who are wallowing in hell. Nevertheless, my Lord, such is Your goodness, that even to the latter you show Your mercy. " (Chant 3)

From where I was standing, I could easily watch and feel the exchanges between Yogiji and the numerous visitors. Those days were the source of very rich teachings. The day I arrived, Yogiji asked me my name three times in a row. I have already explained the internal meaning of this practice. Here is now the external meaning: according to what I have been able to understand, it is matter of pure stratagem used towards those who come with a true desire to seek light, in order that they should appear to him without any disguise and in full innocence. Every single thing confided to the guru must be heardable to everybody. Whoever comes to the feet of a teacher has to leave his ego and illusions outside, because what he is to be given lies beyond the senses. The grace can only work efficiently if a real state of confidence and surrender is created between the Master and the visitor. As a matter of fact, I could often see him force middle or upper class people to express the nature of their problem aloud.

Once I had given my name and surname again, Yogiji lingered on the former which he strove to pronounce as well as possible; he seemed to be greatly amused by this exercise. Then he was suddenly serious again and, addressing to the present devotees, he told them about me: "No! His name is Shiva Shankar, my Father blesses Shankar!" This proved he had recognized me perfectly. A few months before, I had actually written an article about him, which was published by Tattva Darsana and I had signed it in my Hindu name. Moreover, I did appreciate what he declared, because the initiatory name symbolically represents the nature of the Self that is to supersede the personality little by little. Together with some fruit offerings, I had thought I was right to bring him a beautiful picture of Mount Kailash, but he completely ignored it, perhaps just because of the pride I could still feel of having been able to do this fantastic pilgrimage. But Yogi Ramsuratkumar is a destroyer of ego, he is as terrible as Kali-Durga together, and he immediately gave the photograph to one of his devotees. After this small interlude, he dealt with somebody else.

The evening had come quickly. Yogiji looked at me and asked me if I had already had the opportunity to enter his private room (the other room, as he used to call it). No, I replied, and that was all. I knew very well that such questions, used by zen masters and sufis, may sound of very trivial importance, but actually they are never fortuitous when they emanate from the spirit of an illuminated one. In the present case, it was evident that the private residence meant the cavern of the heart, the inner sanctum of the temple, while the small veranda

where we were represented the mandapa which always stands before the inner sanctuary. This is the way the sage tells you about things which apparently sound trivial, but which the intuitive listening of the heart only can seize. That afternoon spent at the feet of the sage had been a real enrichment for the spirit; however my western stomach, used to plain but more copious meals, tormented me. Yogiji would not hear of it and he did not let me leave before 8 hours. I was then unable to have my meal at the Ramana ashram, as it was served between 6.30 and 7.00 p.m.

PRASAD

When you are in the residence of a sage, the custom commands you to wait for him to let you leave when he wishes. It is so with Yogi Ramsuratkumar. When it was time to leave, we would all be on the alert, wondering who would go first, the last ones to leave being of course the privileged. Before we went, he would give prasad with the remaining offerings, it would be a fruit, or flowers for women. Everyone would make his prostration, receive prasad and blessing, and would leave the place discreetly.

Prasad is a very ancient and well known rite throughout the East; it was transmitted to the Middle East via fraternities of sages, such as the Essenes for example. It is recorded that they used to bless the bread and wine before the meals they had together. Thus, thanks to sanctification, these material elements would become a

physically as well as mentally purifying food. This rite was maintained in the Christian Church in the form of the communion with the two species. Prasad is first of all what the believer presents to the divinity. In the Bhagavad Gita (IX - 26) we can read:

" If a bhakta offers me a simple flower, a leaf, a few water or some fruit, and his offering, I will accept it. "

The purpose of this offering consists in expressing one's love and devotion. Material offerings themselves are only of a very little importance. The value of the act entirely relies on motivation, and those who come with their arms full of offerings, but with impure hearts, will perhaps be refused in. No one can buy a sage. Yogiji has found his plenitude inside himself, he does not need anything, and what he requests is never material. When he gives prasad back to the devotee, that prasad is no longer a fruit or a flower, but an active and sanctifying virtue.

Before leaving, Yogiji, who had certainly perceived the plaintive grumbles of my stomach, gave me a beautiful mango, the fruit which I knew was the symbol of knowledge (jnana vidya) in the Hindu religion.

It was the 7th of June already, and I now felt perfectly integrated in the group of ancient devotees. I had coated the traditional dhoti, a simple piece of cloth round the waist, because it is not only comfortable but it would allow me to walk round without being related to a Mlechchas (outcaste, name given to all foreigners). The morning had been tedious and tiresome. That afternoon

darshan had finished earlier, by 6.30 p.m.. While striving to be internalized in the witness-consciousness, I could not prevent from watching the personalities who were walking in a procession before Yogiji. They were of various origins. Many persons with a higher social status were from Madras. There were some rare Westerners. But, generally speaking, I can say that all the social classes were represented. As someone walked in, I felt an intuitive impression of his problem or character was building up in my spirit. I would at once look at Yogiji to try to analyze his own perceptions. Several times, I felt my thoughts were close to his. A real complicity developed between him and me through a silent dialogue which I could clearly understand. I suppose it was the same for all the close devotees in an harmonious union with the Master. That day, we had the visit of two well educated ladies. They sat in front of the Yogi. Immediately after the usual prostration, the woman who was the further away from me, introduced her friend and explained that she felt terrible pain in the lower part of her back, and that nothing and nobody had been able to help. Indeed, the poor woman had sat down somehow or other and showed him through desperate signs that she could hardly move because of her pain. Yogi Ramsuratkumar had a quick glance at her, but concentrated on the other woman; he questioned her and let her speak abundantly. This conversation lasted for half an hour at least, until the Yogi suddenly turned his eyes to the invalid lady and said to her, with a bloomed smile: "You're feeling better, aren't you?" At that moment I saw the woman give a gasp, on hearing the attention was on her. Her sad looking face suddenly

illuminated. " O, Swami, she said, I can't feel any more pain". And there she was, looking overjoyed, twisting her back to show she was healed. Then she had that unavoidable attack of tears. She threw herself at the feet of the Yogi, distraught with thanks. Full of an infinite compassion as he can be, he whispered her : "Ram, Ram, all this is the blessing of my Father." In the numerous cases when his blessing proved right, Yogi Ramsuratkumar always rejected any eulogy and attributed it to his Father whom he probably associates to Swami Ramdas as for the human aspect, and to God as for the real cause of all that is realized around him; and as he says again and again :

"All these who come to the door of this beggar, the Father watches they don't quit with empty hands."

This was the typical attitude of the one who has known the climax of ecstasy and who has become closely acquainted with the Self. Having achieved the objective as he was initiated by Swami Ramdas, he associates the divine Father and the initiatory Father as a whole. As anywhere else, there are here also some cases when the karmic law does not produce a recovery. In this case, he will say:

" If the Father does not take our trouble away, he gives us at least the strength to stand them".

Despite the constant research of a perfected equanimity, the crossed leg position on the cement had put my ankle on edge and I could feel a nasty pain in my knee. It was

already more than 6 p.m., and again my mind started to wander around the evening meal which was certainly going to be served without me. At the very second when this thought germinated in my mind, Yogiji dismissed everybody. There were not more than four of us, when my turn came. He gave me a banana and a big bag of candi sugar. As I was receiving prasad from his hands, he kept my hands in his and we remained silent for some long minutes. I kept silent and communed, blessing these wonderful instants with all my soul. The great holy Rumi has said :

"In the presence of God, two" I " cannot be together."

Aware of this duality, the I strove to leave only one feeling and only one love. His gesture was greatly simple, beautiful and deep. I was invaded by a sweet peace, to which I abandoned unreservedly. As I write these lines, I remember what Tulsi Saheb said:

" Clean the room of your heart so that your soul can reside. "

Those outstanding moments are always too short, but I could estimate their importance. Before leaving, Yogiji asked me again how I was given the name of Shiva Shankar. He made no comment, letting me meditate on the meaning of his question, which I begin to discern.

The 8th of June was an exceptionally hot day. We were all sweat soaked, and could hardly breathe. The evening however ended exceptionally. The small veranda was

darker than ever; it was bathed with an unusual light and the atmosphere was heavy and humid. The foreseeable storm was ready to spread its kindnesses on the arid soil. From time to time, a flash of lightning striped the sky, followed by a roll of thunder. Yogi Ramsuratkumar was more radiant than ever. All our looks converged to him, with attention and devotion. His eyes, directed to the sky, were just like two sparkling diamonds. The atmosphere was electric, and the rolls of thunder sounded nearer and nearer, announcing the imminence of the rainfall. The lane was now entirely deserted. An unexpected, pleasant and captivating silence prevailed throughout the city. All of us felt that being there at that precise moment was not fortuitous. Our small group started striking up the mantric recitation, but it was interrupted all of a sudden. Yogiji had just given the leaving signal. His look, blazing with love, was directed to me, and in the intensity of this peculiar atmosphere, I was supremely vigilant to all that might happen. Yogiji, without moving his body, held out his arm with his hand wide open in my direction, as a blessing sign. I closed my eyes, and something happened inside me, the nature of which cannot be translated with words. When I opened my eyes again, he put his hand down and asked me about the nature of my occupations in France. I told him again that I wrote books. He asked me how many of them had been published and a number of other details. Each of my replies was punctuated with a concerned or surprised "Oh! oh! ... ". These onomatopoeias echoed just like a real symphony inside me. I adored the sound of his voice which had the ingenuousness of the one of a child, and the firm assurance of the one of a teacher. After some moments of

silence, Devaki asked him to tell us something. The Yogi no longer seemed ready to dismiss us. He knew we were receptive and in perfect harmony with him. The atmosphere which was prevalent at that moment is indescribable. Due to the fact that Yogi Ramsuratkumar very scarcely speaks about the doctrine, everybody was attached to his lips, and we were all in the traditional state of sravana (the silent listening inside, and attentive outside), the attitude that allows a correct reception of what is taught by the guru, and contributes in developing the intellectual (discriminating) understanding of the truth. The next stage is the reflection one, then comes investigation, and finally comes a meditation on what has been heard. This is the way to a deeper truth, and the eventual stage of meditation-contemplation will be reached, provoking, in time and hour, the realization of this truth. However, if the soul is awoken and if intuition -which is its language- is present, sravana can become the cause of an immediate awakening.

Yogiji smiled and whispered:

" What can this poor beggar say? "

He looked at me smiling and told me point-blank:

"You want some material!"

It was not a question, but an affirmation. Indeed, the wish to write a book devoted to him had already germinated inside me. I answered I would perhaps have loved to, but I particularly expected a spiritual experience from him.

He looked at me more directly again and said for the benefit of the whole group: " He actually wants some working elements too." Effectively, Yogiji had clearly read in my thoughts, because on that day I had felt the very strong desire to take a picture of him for this possible work. Yogi Ramsuratkumar became silent again. All of us looked towards the lane, because the storm had just burst out in an impressive deluge. It is not in my nature to ask questions. But one of them was burning my lips, although it was not of an extreme importance. "Yogiji, could you recommend me some serious writings about you?" He replied: " Nothing interesting has ever been written. It's not important; you have already got all you need". After one more silent pause, he carried on: "My Father blesses you», he said fixing me for a while. After that, he dealt with the women and, at 6 p.m., he offered them prasad in the form of flowers. This time, they were not the last ones to remain by the Yogi, and I noticed a shade of resentment in their eyes. We were no more than three, Yogiji looked outside and asked Sashi, who is always sitting by the door, to go and see whether my sandals were still there, because the lane was now but a real river sweeping everything away. He leaned out and saw they had gone. Yogiji looked at me, sorry, and confirmed: " Your sandals are lost! ". I tried to understand the veiled sense of this trivial event ⁴⁵ while letting him know I did not really care. His eyes crackled with joy, he handed a full parcel of sugar candi to me, and gave me a long blessing. Quite sore and

⁴⁵ Generally, sandals represent past actions.

scatterbrained with a strange mix of peace and fatigue, I walked out of the dark veranda which had become a luminous revelation sanctuary for me.

As I was walking out of his residence, I had the surprise to see my sandals, alone, well put away in a small corner where they could not be taken away by the water. I inwardly thanked the one who had had the graciousness to care for them, and within a few seconds I was soaked to the skin by a beneficial hot rain.

It was not that easy to walk back to the ashram. The water was running down the mountain slopes and flooded the streets of the city. I was glad to see that it was also filling up the sacred tanks, and that it was going to bring joy to all peasants and citizens. The following day, a big feast was to be prepared, and this water was a blessing for all.

The morning of the 11th of June was absolutely wonderful. Being of a rather morning nature, I left for the mountain very early. It was as if I had been in the sumptuous paradise of Indra. The rain had washed the sky clear which was of an immaculate blue colour. Rocks and trees in blossom were still wet and they scintillated with all their lights. The sacred tanks (tirthas) were full up with clear water, and a symphony of multicolored birds was rendering a joyfull homage to the holy and ever greater mountain. Today was the day the Hindus of Tamil Nadu honour particularly. The city was ready to celebrate Lord Muruga's birthday, which was to take place the next day. Although seeing happy people fills

me with elation, especially on religious occasions, I generally avoid all crowds whatever as they are too often affected by a noisy feverishness. That time again, I chose to spend the day in the tranquil solitude of the cave. Before nightfall, I came back to Ramana ashram for the evening service. Kunju Swami was the most ancient living disciple of Sri Ramana Maharshi's, his health was at his lowest and I would go and see him as often as possible because our khuti-s were close to each other. Two or three persons of the ashram looked after him. His body was now out of condition, and his soul close to its liberation. Om, a sannyasi of American origin, was often by his side. But today, Kunju was alone, and when he happened to be on his own, my friend Mani and I would discreetly make for this affectionate absence. That evening, the Swami was lying on his straw bed in the open air. He took my hand and put it on his heart while Mani was singing hymns dedicated to the Lord Muruga whose fervent devotee he was. Watching the old man, I remembered our first meeting the year before, but he was now on the threshold of the great mystery. I could well feel we were living through the last moments of his terrestrial life and I visited him as often as I could. This man I have known very little, represented to me the perfection of what a disciple must be, and by his side, I have found the strength and courage to proceed even more firmly on the thorny path of renunciation and sacrifice. Nothing was sad in this last good-bye. A form disappears, another one replaces it, i.e the Self which remains unaltered eternally, as it is not submitted to worldly laws. Kunju Swami had endeavoured to realize this ideal, and there was no regret to affect his

consciousness. On the 7th of August, 1992, at the age of 96, Kunju Swami reached Mahasamadhi.

LORD MURUGA'S BLESSING

In the Hindu tradition, Muruga is given different names, such as Subrahmaniam, Karttikeya, or Sanat Kumara. He is the brother of Ganesha, the popular elephant headed god. Muruga is the son of Shiva, and Ganesha, the one of his spouse Parvati. If the cult of Ganesha is largely spread throughout India, the one of Muruga is a lot less because of his eminently esoteric meaning.

In the context of symbolism connected to man's principles, it can be said that Ganesha is the deity of the mind in its two aspects, the inferior one (manas), and the superior one (buddhi). His mission and cult is to allow believers to pass from the concrete and material mind to the discriminatory and intuitive mind. Therefore the cult of Ganesha particularly applies to aspirants living the worldly existence, often within a family.

As regards Muruga, it's not possible to speak of a cult as such, but rather of a practice, which leads to the dissolution of Buddhi into the pure Atma consciousness. That practice is the prerogative of the renouncing ones who have taken a vow of chastity, what is generally expected from those devoted to the higher liberation techniques. Once one knows the real meaning of gods and goddesses of India, one appreciates the big religious festivals in a completely different way.

After lunch, I kept sitting at the foot of the banyans. When I happened to do so, I would always share some delicacies with a family of monkeys. They knew it well and came to sit quietly close to me, the chief first, a big and very clever male. Monkeys provoked innumerable damages in plantations, and I could easily understand they could be the object of severe reprimands. As far as I am concerned, I feel such a love for nature, for its fauna and flora, that I never miss the opportunity of establishing an affectionate contact with the third reign of nature. Hardly had the troop of monkeys gone back to the trees that I began to think of Lord Muruga, with a peacock as a vehicle, just as the swan is Vishnu's one, and the mouse, Ganesha's. I thought God was far beyond all personification, but that, as the vital breath, He appeared through all natural forms, and could thus intervene to bless or protect a believer. For a few minutes, I prayed very strongly in order that Muruga should come and grant me the grace of the sign of his omnipresence, on that day devoted to God under his form. After approximately ten minutes, as I had already forgotten about my prayer, the silence was interrupted by a real pitched battle between monkeys and peacocks. One of the latter ones was attacked and put to flight towards me and then quickly stood still again. This peacock came gently to me while I was watching him with great interest. Slowly, he kept making his way towards me and stopped just in front of me, no further than 3 yards away, fixing me straight in the eyes. Although the peacocks of the ashram are tamed, that behaviour is unusual for them. Our looks did not leave

each other and, suddenly, he gave me the most beautiful present; he deployed the bony fan of his sumptuous tail on which multiple eyes appeared, as the symbol of the omnipresence of Lord Muruga. At that moment I understood that the peacock, which is symbolically his vehicle, was going to answer my prayer and was giving me his darshan. He stood motionless and I even had the time to go and get my camera and to take a magnificent picture. I was deeply moved, because, once more, I could observe that the grace of God is everywhere, wherever a sincere prayer is formulated from the very depths of one's heart.

In the evening, my friend Mani, who was very religious, came to pick me up on his way to the Big Temple as he wanted to make a wish between 4 p.m. and 6 p.m.; according to the custom, a wish formulated at that time will be granted. To be nice to him, I went along with him, and after the Big Temple ceremonies, we joined in a group of believers who wandered round the city singing Muruga praises.

The next morning was a new moon day, an auspicious day for all believers. The day before, a passing ascetic had shown me the top of the mountain and advised me to go and receive the darshan from the silent yogi (muni) who had established his abode years ago and lived on roots, and quenched his thirst from the springs in the mountain. I knew the muni didn't like to be disturbed in his sadhana, but during the days of the festival he made an exception and blessed the pilgrims. Therefore I left at 5 a.m., a delicious time for an easy ascension from the

Skandashram, and at 6 a.m., I was facing the small hut the muni had built. He gave me some almonds, made me taste a hot drink I was not able to identify, and, after a few minutes of meditation, dismissed me in imposing ash on my forehead. As I was climbing down the mountain, I planned, with some pilgrims of the city, a night giripradakshina. Early in the afternoon, I had already gone through all the shops in the city in search of a long white cotton shirt. When I went to darshan, I was very surprised to observe that Yogiji was wearing the same. It was the first time I saw him wearing an immaculate white shirt which, by the way; only remained so for a few days. In the course of darshan, a close devotee used to bring him a fresh coconut, the milk of which he would drink out of his own shell. After that, he began to have a look, among the offerings, at what he could give to the numerous visitors who were growing impatient in front of the gate. That afternoon, the atmosphere was rather joyful, and we had a good laugh. At a certain time, Yogiji looked with attention at the party of three women, and then turned to me. And, of course, he started laughing in his beautiful white beard, his eyes sparkling with an entirely childish malice. Everybody was happy, and the good mood in his presence could easily turn into ananda. Yogiji became serious again and seemed to look for something around him again; then, spontaneously, he blessed us one after the other with his hand opened, doing it more and more quickly several times in a row; then he had another roar of laughter, holding his beard in his hand. No! He absolutely refused to be an object of adoration! He knew very well that he had to play his role, but, at the first convenient opportunity he would re-

centre our consciousness on the eternal Presence of the Father.

" I am nothing, what can this poor, dirty and smoking beggar ! The Father blesses you, He does everything, but this beggar doesn't do anything! "

The Father is everything to Yogiji. Once, he also said this:

" When the Father makes this beggar happy, it's well. When he makes him cry, it's well also.. Whatever the state in which the Father puts this beggar, that's well. It's the truth of the Father. No matter what arrives, it's perfect, for the Father is perfect. Any thought, any movement, any action, any word of this beggar is directed by the Father. This beggar is living for Father's work. This beggar will live for the Father, and will die for the Father. " ... Whatever you do, think that you are doing it for him; you can be eating, walking, doing some work, or anything else, think you are doing it for him. Then there is no more need to think of the future, to plan, he will take care of you. The Father loves all of you. He loves everyone, looks after everyone, takes care of everyone; when you are living with the Divine - with the Father, is there anything to fear ? There will be no discouragement (melancholy, dejection); the Father is all, all is the Father. There is only an alone existence, it's the Father's".

A visitor entered with dignity. He knelt down, with his offerings in his hand and, talking to the Yogi, he said:

"Swami, I 've come here humbly to seek light." Yogiji laughed and threw a lump of sugar to him and showed him the door with his finger: " If you want any light, go back outside, it is full of light; it's dirty and dark in here." We were all surprised at his reaction. Once the visitor had gone, Yogiji made a brief comment in Tamil about the man's expectations, and everybody laughed a lot, but me as I could not understand Tamil. Yogi Ramsuratkumar is, apparently no longer submitted to the mirages of appearance, and his soul is in perfect communion with every visitor, whose expectations he can immediately perceive. Very often, even before someone has climbed the veranda doorsteps, he can tell his close devotee what the visitor is coming for, giving details which prove right later on. He can read in the hearts as clearly as in a book. All along the afternoon, undoubtedly talking for my attention, Yogiji spoke a lot about the complete uselessness of writing anything about his person, and as he was talking he guffawed in his beard while looking at me out of the corner of his eye. No doubt he knew the work was germinating in my mind and he wanted me to understand that the message was more important than the messenger. I was already convinced of the very relative value of literature - even though spiritually minded - which brings the substance of faith during to the aspirant in his first steps, but becomes inefficient when it comes to the direct experience of the realization of the truth. All this is very well described in the Amritananda Upanishad:

"Read, study, and unceasingly meditate Scriptures; however, once the light has shone within you, drop them, as one drops the brand which served to light the fire."

Tiruvannamalai was in feast and there was now a small crowd waiting in the lane. The flow of visitors was continuous. They all wanted to get the saint's blessing on that auspicious day. The time allowed in front of Yogiji was quite short and nobody could keep in long prostration as Yogiji would then give tap on the visitor's back with a "Ram, Ram" meaning: "That's O.K, you can leave now". Taking advantage of a lull, one of the devotees who comes to see him very regularly, asked him if she could sing some poem she had written for him. He listened with the greatest seriousness and simply declared: "Very good". A small group came and asked him the authorization to inaugurate an hospital which would bear his name. Yogiji asked them the name of the city, and answered: "It's no use giving it the name of this beggar; you'd better give it the name of the city where it is." He blesses all the social or spiritual ventures which he has often inspired, but he remains totally independent from them. He is never interested in either glory, or money. The world is dead to his eyes.

THE DARSHAN

As for the shorter visits, the encounter with the saint can be called darshan. But, for regulars who stay for longer moments, it is mainly a satsang in the course of which silent truths are transmitted. This does not at all means

darshan is less efficient, for the notion of time does not come into consideration in these encounters, and some brief seconds may be as determining as several hours. The few examples of darshans (and satsangs) I have been able to observe, can't, by far, give a complete panorama of all the situations and, more, the way they will be understood is inevitably conditioned by the author's mind (the knowledge he has acquired, his intuition, but also his limitations and mirages). Only the most apparent aspects, in other words the least important, of those encounters can be described; the essence remains beyond words and concepts. Nevertheless, through some situations, the attentive reader will perhaps be able to imagine the quasi-magical atmosphere which is prevalent around a sage.

One afternoon, a forty year old Brahmin, dressed in a dhoti and stripped to the waist, walked into the veranda. He clearly was very sure of himself, proud of his strength and science. His face was the one of an arrogant man, convinced his spiritual authority allowed him to get away from the most elementary rules of courtesy. Once introduced, he got in front of Yogiji chanting mantric invocations high and loud in Sanskrit. He deposited his offerings, saluted and, without being invited, sat down facing the Yogi, no further than a few inches away from him. During all that time, Yogiji had showed no reaction and kept waiting patiently, maybe because of the visitor's brahmin status. The man went on, still not waiting for Yogiji's invitation, explaining who he was, where he came from, and so on. Yogiji listened silently, looking down, when, suddenly, at the amazement of all, he lied

down with his face turned towards the wall for a short nap. The man was astounded; he looked at us, no longer knowing the right attitude to adopt. We could feel he was baffled. But he quickly recovered and opted for a new series of invocations, always higher, always louder. Generally, Sashi's duty is to air Yogiji. But, there, at the height of the most rudimentary politeness, the man took the fan off him and started to air the Yogi with all his strength. The situation became rather comic, but could not last eternally. One of the close devotees of the Yogi's, who did not seem to accept to be put in the shade by this intruder, thought the best thing to do was to start the recitation of the mantra of her heart, the one of Yogi Ramsuratkumar. Despite her efforts, she could not cover the brahmin's powerful voice, so our small group, in complicity with her, struck up the mantra and the man had to surrender. However he kept on airing the sleepy Master, with always the same strength. This went on for no less than half an hour. The man was now staring at us with a sneer of self-satisfaction and nobody was dupe of his feelings towards us. As suddenly as he had fallen asleep, Yogiji stood up again, very straight, without a touch of anger, but showing an unexpected strength. He ordered him to give the fan back to Sashi, gave him a few prasad and dismissed him immediately. The man did not expect that and, clearly surprised, he lept to his feet, held his head up proudly, and left without saluting or turning back.

Yogi Ramsuratkumar does not always have easy visitors. Here is another example. Once, a small party with one guru and two disciples visited him. The guru walked into

the veranda as if a lion, introduced his disciples, his ashram and so on. Then, without waiting for the invitation, he also sat down in front of the Yogi, and very close to him. As in the previous case, he began to sing hymns with all his strength and vigor, in so loud a voice that people could certainly hear him from the street. Yogiji, keeping indifferent and perfectly immobile, waited patiently for the end of that rather eccentric presentation. For their part, the guru's disciples were watching Yogiji with a provocative and impertinent sort of look. As soon as they had come in, I had felt their bellicose intention, and I was ready to intervene if necessary. Yogiji glanced at me furtively, as if to test my reactions. I felt a total complicity with him. After half an hour, he finally burst out laughing, and ordered the three men, in a decisive tone, to leave immediately. Incidentally, the party guru glanced at me, and his look was very clearly showing his real nature. Once they had gone, Yogiji said to us: " *Nobody understands this beggar.* "

Talking about this kind of persons, Devaki once asked Yogiji: "Sometimes, people come and covered with blessings from you, but because of their lack of sensitivity and comprehension, they go as far as abusing from you before they leave, simply because you have not answered all their requests! Why do you keep helping and blessing them?" And she got the following reply from Yogiji: " *Do you ask the sun why it pours its light on all objects? It is simply its nature.* "

We certainly were in a negative astrological cycle, because, in the afternoon, there was one stranger visitor, a well dressed average sized man, carrying a brief case. He was very cheerful and gave a good general impression. Yet, Yogiji granted him no look as he walked in. The man settled quietly in front of the Yogi (as if that sort of behaviour was to be the rule). He had not saluted and seemed to be less interested in Yogiji than in the circle. Outside, the crowd of visitors was getting rather impatient. Therefore he was signified that he could not stay any longer. But, after having received the prasada, he kept sitting, determined as it seemed, not to move an inch. What happened then can fit in few words: two flashes of lightning gushed from the Yogi's, and there was so much power in his shakti that the man did certainly get the vision of Narasimha (the lion-Avatar) as, he stood up at once and dashed out. Since that day, I have realised that I could not be of any use for the Yogi in a situation of conflict. That is part of the non-ego lessons.

Yogi Ramsuratkumar may sometimes show what the superficial watcher might call anger. It's nothing of the kind. Once, he shouted someone out and almost beat her. The Indians and European devotees who were there, were deeply disturbed by such a state of mood, as he usually is very kind. Noticing their emotion, Yogiji then revealed to them that because of his past karma, this man was going to be in serious trouble within the next two days. However, thanks to the incident which had just happened and touched him deeply, his karma was going to be weaker and would not handicap him. According to

Yogiji, this devotee was to come back within the following days. A realized one has a great influence on a devotee's karma, and many of the behaviours that may seem strange to us, result from the necessity of acting for the best, with means our reason will find it impossible to understand them. Yogiji taught, for instance, that the offering made to him symbolized the negative karma. When he gives it back, in the form of prasada, the karma has been removed temporarily or definitively. Yogiji, however, does not always take the offering, as I happened to see it, which means that the person in question is not inwardly ready to abandon the cause of his karma.

In the course of days, I have seen many visitors pass, from the simple curious to the fieriest devotee, and I always had the impression that the Yogi was never wrong about their real intentions. Very often, I saw him retain people who, through modesty or timidity, were ready to leave without having revealed to him the tragedy that had led them here. Usually, during the first hour of darshan, devotees bring their offerings such as delicacies, various fruit, flowers, or perhaps a little money. At the end of the afternoon, every single thing is redistributed to the most deprived, to women, children, and to the elderly. Yogi Ramsuratkumar, who knows better than anybody else what hunger means, never lets anyone leave without having given him anything. Among the unceasing flow of visitors, persons of some rank in the social hierarchy could always be seen. A banker came once to ask for his blessing because he had the construction of a clinic in view. Famous writers bring

him their works. Students ask him for successful exams. Officers of rank implore his protection. Learned persons ask him questions they cannot solve. And even physicians require his assistance. They are all identical in the Yogi's opinion. The only things that count for him are sincerity and love of God.

As said before, Yogi Ramsuratkumar does not have any method or yoga of his own. He does not give any regular teaching, he does not confer initiations, but he recommends what every accomplished being considers as essential: the constant memory of God's Presence, through the constant recitation of his holy Name. When his devotees ask him if he has any visions or siddhis, he systematically replies : " *All I know is Ramnam*". In a sense, he is a pure bhakta. But his vision of unity makes him a pure jnani too, who brings everything back to the unity of the Father, to Brahman.

" Only my Father exists. There is nothing else, nobody else, in the past, present, or future! Here, there, everywhere! There is only my Father! There is only one alone existence, the existence of my Father. It is the only life. An only existence, indivisible, total, absolute. Nothing is separated, nothing is isolated. My Father is all, all is in the Father! Unity is perfect. "

". .. No matter what a saint does, he never does it for a human being alone, or a specific group of persons, but for the whole humanity, since all things are connected in the world. Every single movement, every single gesture of a pure soul are based on and rooted in the Totality."

" The presence of a perfect being can change the whole atmosphere. This very presence will give value to the life of so many people. For the whole world, there is only one sun, and see how many benefits it gives to the whole world! "

Yogi Ramsuratkumar sees the Father's hand all over the entire creation. As a bhakta, he recognizes the divine transcendence, just as he also recognizes the divine immanence as a pure jnani. As an example, let me quote an experience Mataji Devaki happened to live through:

"Once, when I was seated in the Big Temple, during the festival of Arudra Darshan of the Lord Shiva, that commemorates an exceptional moment when he danced all specially for his spouse Parvati, as well as for the seven great Rishis, I was taken by an internal impetus to ask the next question to Bhagavan: "Bhagavan, will Shiva (I think of course of Yogi Ramsuratkumar) dance for us today?" Bhagavan remained silent for some seconds, and then said: " So, you want to see the dance of Shiva! " Suddenly, he raised his eyes and looked at a tree the leaves of which had started to hum in the breath of a breeze, and said: "See, Shiva is dancing!" Then, he pointed his finger to a caterpillar crawling on the ground, and said again: " Look, Shiva is dancing! " At that moment, a bird came flying past in the sky, and Bhagavan said: « See, Shiva is dancing!" With a beautiful smile, he concluded: "Shiva dances everywhere around us! "

What matters to the Yogi, is to recognize that anything that happens is the Father's will, be it a joy or a trial:

" All that happens is the Father's grace, the Father's Will, the Father' lila, the lila of the Father is perfect because the Father is perfect. "

It's no use fearing anything. His advice is clear: surrender completely to God. Gnanananda said: *"A true disciple has no sadhana to accomplish. He only has to completely surrender to his guru."* To a judge of the supreme Court, Yogi Ramsuratkumar said once : *" You don't need to do any pujas or to practice dhyana, offer your work to Him, He will see to the rest. "* For the Yogi, all that may be out of the Father can only be illusion. Some visitors behave as ignorant. They contemplate him as one contemplates a beautiful tree in bloom, admiring his splendor, but they forget the glory from which he was born. Sri Nisagadatta said:

"If you meet a sage who has discovered his real nature, you will not need to accomplish any spiritual discipline. His teaching will constitute a mirror and reveal to you the original nature that is yours."

Yogi Ramsuratkumar clearly perceives the maturity and the internal awakening of his devotees. And, for some, he may recommend a seva-sadhana. Here is the advice he gave doctor Radhakrishna: *" Doctor Radhakrishna does'nt need another sadhana. He treats his patients with so much care. He writes no prescription without thinking of God beforehand. Once he said: " When the invalid is*

in distress, the doctor is in distress. " Such is his attitude. Doctor Radhakrishna does not need any more sadhana." Besides, Yogiji never prescribes rituals which might be hard to carry out or texts that might be too erudite to study. His advice rather is to remember the omnipresence of the Father through the singing of his Name.

According to the calendar, the day was Saturday 13th of June, and nothing here was disturbing the regular rhythm of daily darshans. In the middle of the afternoon, a group came with the intention to send an important amount of money to the profit of a social activity. Yogiji looked thoughtful. He kept thinking for a while and then murmured: *"Send the money? Of course you can send some, if you like the idea, but this beggar has nothing to do with all of that, he is completely independent."* We could feel he was not worried but deeply present in himself. After a pause, he confirmed again: *"This beggar wants to remain outside of that sort of activities, do what you want."* Things did not go any further, and the devotees left, greatly blessed for this service action.

The visitors' procession did not only consist in persons coming to ask for help, far from it. There were also the numerous devotees who came here to thank him for having realized their prayers. On that occasion, they would bring a large garland of flowers, several kilos of fruit, and often a beautiful scarf. The richest ones would sometimes deposit an envelope containing money. The emotion was always very sharp, and the recognition tears were sincere. On each of these occasions, Yogiji would look uncomfortable to be glorified like this. He used to

turn his head quickly and declare: *"No, no, this beggar is for nothing in it. All what happens is through the grace of my Father. You must thank **Him**."* Once the garland was taken off Yogiji's neck, it used to be hung at the window grills. And most of the offerings were given back to their owner, except for some fruit which would be distributed to poor people later in the evening.

Once, while Yogiji was in a distant mood, looking apparently indifferent to visitors, he nevertheless seemed to have a reaction when a little girl arrived and quietly deposited her offerings at his feet. She made her prostrations, hardly aware of the presence of the sage, yet very interested in us. The child did not realize that Yogiji had inverted the roles. It was now his turn to bow in full humility, and he touched her feet with his hands, and then he imposed them on her forehead with the greatest seriousness. This scene reminded me that in his time Swami Ramdas, seeing the maturity of a great soul, had publicly paid homage to her. This pure soul was called Dharam Devi, and she was only eleven years old. Let us read from the one who was to become the Mother of the ashram, Mataji Devaki. She has also given a moving testimony of the Yogi's devotional and humble attitude:

"I have many times observed Bhagavan prostrating to devotees who do so at His feet. Once a group of devotees of the Paramacharya of Kanchi called on Bhagavan and He first fell prostrate at their feet. Bhagavan is a bhakta of Paramacharya. I was able to realize that only Bhagavan could be a perfect bhakta.

When devotees came from Aurobindo ashram or Anandashram, Bhagavan would tell them: "You have come here to give darshan to and bless this beggar." He thus proved Himself to be the embodiment of humility, the spiritual tradition of this Holy Land. I have seen Him prostrating even to those who fail to do so to Him. Once, He held with both His hands the feet of a person with a bloated ego. After the person left, a devotee asked Bhagavan why he did so. Bhagavan replied: "This beggar could help him only by touching his body and heart somehow. That gentleman would not prostrate before this beggar, but it is not difficult for this beggar to fall at his feet. Somehow, in his interest, this beggar had to do so."

Another unique characteristic of Bhagavan is to make devotees of other great Mahatmas to sing the praise of their respective gurus. When the devotees of Sri Ramana come to Him, He will make them sing songs on Bhagavan Ramana, discuss about Ramana, and make them read several times articles on or passages from Ramana. When devotees of Sri Ramakrishna come, He will make them speak of the trinity - Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother Sri Sarada and Swami Vivekananda - and hear with devotion their narrations. When a devotee of Pagal Harnath comes, Bhagavan will speak about Harnath. Once, a devotee of J. Krishnamurti asked Bhagavan to give him a photo of Bhagavan. Bhagavan simply told the devotee to follow the path of J. Krishnamurti steadfastly. I have enjoyed seeing Him dance in ecstasy singing "Om Sri Ram Jai Ram Jai Jai Ram", along with devotees of Anandashram. To devotees of Sri Sathya Sai Baba, He

would ask for Sai bhajans and make them read the Guru-purnima lecture of Sri Sathya Sai Baba and hail it as the "Voice of God" .

I never heard Him denigrate anybody at any time, for He could never find any fault with anybody. When someone tries to harm Him in ignorance, He will say: " That is Father's Will! Whatever happens is for good only, for my Father is blemishless and whatever He Wills is blemishless. » Thus, He will teach the devotees around Him, through His own conduct, the greatest lesson of 'Saranagati' - the spirit of total surrender to God. »

Yogi Ramsuratkumar has reached a high degree, a vision which can be qualified as transcendental. However, there is another facet to his personality that his intimate devotees only have the privilege to experiment; I'm talking about his humor. Here are two anecdotes on this subject; the former is from the Indian Express and was written by Ilaya Raja. The author explains how he was introduced to the Yogi by a friend:

"This is the musician wizard of South India, Sri Ilaya Raja, a deeply spiritual man. He has taken Bhagavan as his Guru. He is able to quote many passages from Bhagavan's « Talks » at random. He has heard about your greatness. He thus see only Bhagavan in you. He... » Before further words come out, the Yogi interrupts the long introduction; a peel of laughter emerges from him. He almost cries out: « Oho! Raja can see Bhagavan in this beggar. So he is great! This beggar

can see Bhagavan only in Bhagavan. Oho..... He goes on laughing for a few minutes ... »

In India, as well as in France, everybody knows the proverb : " Such the master, such the dog ". In times past, Yogi Ramsuratkumar used to have a dog he liked a lot, and this one returned it him well. Once, he called his dog, whose name was Sai Baba. A passing western visitor, a devotee of Sathya Sai Baba's, was extremely shocked. He was very angry and he said to the Yogi: "Maharaj, if one day I have a dog, I will call him Yogi Ramsuratkumar." The Yogi burst out laughing and replied: *"If you call your dog Sai Baba, he will be full of joy, peace and love, but if you call your dog after the name of this beggar, the dog will bite you and will be constantly discontented because this beggar has a very bad temper."* And he laughed again.

GRACE (KRIPA)

What we have just described regarding the darshan atmosphere was of course only the external envelope of an invisible contact between souls, which, of course, can't possibly be transcribed, as it can only be a direct personal experience lived through at the Master's feet. However, when you are the witness of such an atmosphere, you inevitably wonder what happens beyond the perceptible, beyond conventions. Which consciousness, which strength or energy is the deep cause of joys, tears, states of peace or sudden illumination? What is underlying the miraculous

recoveries, the granted prayers, the dissolution of doubts and of multiple problems? In India, you will simply be answered that the cause of all that is the grace of the guru. In an ashram, the heart of which is made alive and radiating by the presence of a holy one, grace is constantly present, and only the one whose ignorance circumscribes it to the narrow limits of time and space is responsible for not receiving it. Devotees often happen to come by the Yogi and ask him for his grace. Those who do so are generally aspirants but no learned disciples, because doing so is the same as a fish wanting to quench its thirst in the ocean. Sri Ramana Maharshi said:

"Since the Self (Atma) means God (Ishvara), and since grace means Its Presence, there is no moment when the grace does not shine."

That is the supreme explanation of the grace.

However, sufferings will remind us that grace does not appear in everybody, and this can only be the consequence of the major obstacle which is called the mind. In this precise case, the sage can intervene, and, if the karma does not oppose, confer, on his devotees, the grace to have their mental stabilized, internalized, pacified, in other words purified. If the pupil has done his job properly, the presence of the Master, the power of his love and will can repel both inclinations of the mind, i.e the rajasic tendency (too active) and the tamasic tendency (too inert), so that the mind gradually becomes a passive instrument for a higher perception (buddhi-Atma) in the state called sattvic or balanced.

Some visions, beatitudes, sensations of pure love at the feet of an experimented sage can be explained that way. The disciple has experienced a state of grace, he has duly practiced it in himself, then the experience disappears, but from then on he will always know how to reproduce it, so as to make it a permanent state. As the yogi-s says, once one has tasted the divine nectar, he will find the world insipid, and through this new mental orientation, the real appears more clearly behind the unreal.

In some other cases, what is called grace is a gift transmitted by the guru to a devotee in a specific intention. Talking about that, the question remains: Is there really anything that could be transmitted? Yes, is probably the right answer, if we position ourselves, not in the pure consciousness but in the world of energies (shakti), and the proof of this is that yogi-s, during their periods of asceticism have to isolate from the ground during their meditation so as to preserve this spiritual energy. Similarly, the authentic sadhus cannot touch the hands of any other man because they would lose a little of that strength (partly concentrated in their hair). Vedantins do not deny the reality of that, but do not use it, which does not prevent its power from appearing in the world and in every being, be it a Vedantin or not. We can find a proof of this transmittable energy in the Gospels. There is the description of a woman who had been affected by a blood flow for twelve years. She came up to Master Jesus from behind and touched his coat. The latter was surprised and cried:

"Someone has touched me, for I felt some power going out of me."

The word «power" translates the word "dynamis" used in Greek papyruses, and it corresponds to the Egyptian "ka", a strength the great priests of Egypt used to communicate to those they initiated.

The grace which is dealt with at the moment consists, for the guru, in impregnating the subtle body of the disciple with part of his own shakti. Generally, this strength is only transmitted to those who have proved, in the course of this life, they will not use this power in a selfish manner. They must feel enough love so that the power that is transmitted to them should only be used for spiritual purposes and for the service of the world. Thus, the power he acquires will allow the receiver to lead a group of pupils or servants, to spread the dharma, to instruct the world, and to be helpful with all forms of miseries. It will be useful to him, without his desiring it, to develop, in himself, intuition, courage, love, a discriminating intelligence, and all the virtues that will conduct his actions in the world while he still remains a witness from outside the world. In a more material manner now, the guru's grace can protect from an accident, displace a karmic debt or heal a serious sickness. The transmission of the grace can reveal itself in a thousand ways and each one will receive what is suitable for him, according to the unknowable intentions of the Omnipotent.

In the course of all these days, which were ever so intense and rich although often inaccessibly deep for my understanding, I always felt, very strongly, the inner call that had pushed me to come to this place I already feel so dear to my heart. Experiences went on, one after the other in a rapid succession, and I felt I needed some time for a deeper introspection. This required a suitable place, and I naturally chose the cave where I would find full silence and solitude, and the only activity I would keep, was the darshans with Yogiji.

THE EXPERIENCE IN THE CAVE

Although not very high on the mountain, the cave, which was situated on the southwest side of the mountain, offered an exceptional view on the large plains of the region. It was an ideal place to watch a wonderful sunset every evening. Right in the middle of the holy mountain, the place was truly magical. It was Monday the 15th of June, after darshan; that evening I could feel darshan was producing a strange effect on me. My right arm was shaking in a tremble I couldn't control (it was the effect of shakti, according to an Indian friend). I had decided not to go to the ashram but to leave directly for the cave. I eventually got there, although I took the wrong way several times. All goat paths look identical, but only one leads to this cave, and the thorns prevent you from trying to take any shortcut.

Spending some time in a solitary cave only provides provisional contentment. My purpose was different.

More than thirty years of sadhana had preceded this decision

At sunset, it was gradually getting dark in the cave, and a light haze slowly appeared, giving life to nightly shades. I had been advised not to remain on my own as some renouncing westerners had been attacked by some bands. According to some people, these attacks had been committed by racists, but others blamed plunderers. All that was far away from my preoccupations. I had ever trusted God, mainly when I was not left any choice. As far as plunderers are considered, I tend to consider that the worst ones are not a few ignorant men, but rather our senses:

"Senses are as plunderers, because they force you to spend money in vain." (Srimad Bhagavatam)

Indeed, when they are not controlled by a rigorous mental discipline, the senses can actually be identified to plunderers. They loot the most beautiful virtues the soul may have acquired and lead any human being to disaster. Therefore, if I had to be vigilant, my attention would rather be turned towards my senses. At the entrance of the cave, on the left, there was a beautiful flat stone, slightly higher than the rest of the ground. I sat down on it and began the silent recitation of my mantra. Except for the squeaks of some bats hanging above my head, the silence was almost total. The next morning was a wonderful. I was a little numb when I woke up; I had not been visited, even not by a royal cobra the darshan of which I used to dream of getting.

In the afternoon, I arrived at Yogiji's early and I had to wait in the sun, so that within less than a quarter of an hour, my feet were bathing in a puddle of sweat. In the course of the satsang, Yogiji stood up and went to his private room. Back from there, he gave me a small book which he prefaced it with an Om as a signature. It was the bibliography written by the American writer, Truman Caylor Wadlington, and entitled: "*Yogi Ramsuratkumar, the Godchild, Tiruvannamalai*". I thanked him as I left, but he protested: " *No, no, this beggar doesn't give anything, it is my Father who gives everything*". And I replied immediately: "It is true, but the beggar and the Father are one and only." The time to leave came soon. I was surprised to hear him call me (he usually signed to me): "Michael!" His eyes were pervaded with an intense fondness. He took my hands for some time and imparted to me a peace I took with me to my cave, as a very precious treasure.

Wednesday 18th of June. I had spent one more night in the mountain, and I meant to stay there all day, that time. But, early in the morning, I just could not resist it and there I left for the 10 a.m. darshan. When I arrived, there were already three women, some westerners who had taken sannyas, a Finn named Kirsti (Sivapriya), Om (already mentioned here above), and a woman from Spanish origin. The three of them had been visiting the Yogi for several years. Yogiji had a funny look at me. I tried to absorb myself into the sensation of being, as deeply as possible, while my mind, although not absent, was letting the visitors pass by without a feeling of any

particular interest, without any excited or intellectual reaction. After some time like this, everything around me lost most of their luminosity, relief or interest. I was content with being satisfied with my situation and felt prepared to whatever could emerge from the Self-consciousness at any time. Although we may know that we have to balance the gunas or matter qualities, it is never easy to do it, even when in a highly privileged place. It is a constant conquest to prevent the mental consciousness from leaning to the right (rajo-guna) or to the left (tamo-guna), and to keep it perfectly balanced (sattva-guna) up to the point when the opposites cancel each other. Adi Shankara himself asserted it:

"Atma's reality reflects in sattva."

Being the serene and equanimous witness of the impermanent world, such was my attitude at that moment. Therefore the morning went without my taking any real notice to the visitors. After darshan, I gave up the idea of climbing back to the cave and I stayed at the ashram to work on a manuscript. In the course of the afternoon darshan, Yogi Ramsuratkumar spoke about the doctrine of no-duality longer than usually. At a certain time, he blessed us, then, in the following minutes, he seemed deeply upset not to be able to find the right words to describe infinity. He would have wished to see us realize the Self here and now, but better than anyone else, he knew it was useless attempting to give any description.

"My Father is all, he murmured in a hardly audible voice, he is indivisible, he is everywhere omnipresent."

His look was illuminated and contemplated the Real:

"This beggar is nothing ". ..

After some minutes of silence, he added:

"Isn't it a sin to venerate this beggar?"

Truman has reported Yogiji's beautiful words about his consciousness of Absolute:

"I am infinite, and so are you and so is everyone, my friend. But there is a veil, there is a veil. Do you follow me? You can only see an infinitesimal part of me. Just like when a man stands on the seashore and looks out over the great ocean, he sees only a fraction of that vast ocean. Similarly, everyone can see only a small part of me. The whole cosmos is but an infinitesimal part of the real man, but how can a man see the whole cosmos?" ⁴⁶

A very learned man entered the veranda. When Yogiji asked him what he wanted, the man replied, in English: "I'm seeking light, and Swamiji is that light." The Yogi had a small reaction, and answered tit for tat : " This dirty and ignorant beggar cannot bring you anything." But the visitor did not seem to be touched by these words. He

⁴⁶ Yogi Ramsuratkumar, The Godchild, Tiruvannamalai, Truman Caylor Wadlington, page 69.

insisted on staying, and Yogiji understood the man was prepared to receive a little bit more of the light he was asking for. He consequently allowed him to seat in front of him, and they talked until the end of darshan. When it was the time for us to leave, Yogi Ramsuratkumar looked at everybody smiling, and, as a prasad, he gave me a big mango.

In the evening, I felt attracted by an irresistible impetus, so, I went to the cave taking a light blanket with me. I sat down to meditate on the rock which formed the roof of the cave because the sun had not yet gone down and I didn't want to miss that exceptional moment. I had to remain vigilant because a troop of monkeys had agreed to pilfer my blanket and some other small objects. At nightfall, despite a cloudy sky, I had the privilege of a splendid sunset. The night and its silence soon fell on the mountain. That evening I felt calm and trustful, far more than usual. I imagine it was simply because of my presence in this wild nature where I do feel better than anywhere else.

As soon as the night had come, I descended inside the cave and began my meditation, sitting on my favourite flat stone. In order not to fall asleep, I used a 108 bead rosary. By 11 to 11.30, I felt a totally unusual immense tiredness. I lied down and kept telling my beads. At this very moment, something unusual happened. The consciousness-witness began to see the mind slipping from waking to dreaming state. While remaining perfectly lucid and aware of the event, I realized the body was asleep, and at the same time I saw the dream

unfolding in front of me. Then, the dream ceased, and the body woke up. This time, the I-witness experienced the waking state, that is to say it found itself in the cave. Still lying on my side, I resumed my recitation, perfectly aware of the presence of my rosary, which didn't fall at any time. Again, and without losing consciousness, I felt a dream appeared on the consciousness of my mind. I kept conscious all the time. I felt that at any time, with a single will effort, I could have put an end to the dream, but I didn't and I let it unfold.

After that dream, the I-witness experienced something I'd like to try to describe, while I know that my description can only be a pale reflection of it. I started to feel a vibration inside my head; it was imperceptible to start with but slowly grew and appeared in the form of the Om sound. The sound was not heard, but seen as a Sanskrit vowel, in a dazzling white color. I saw the sound, and heard the form. The sound, which was very sharp, was increasing so much that I was convinced something irreversible was to happen if I let it grow. I felt death at the end of the experience, and naturally, without any true conscious will, I stopped the phenomenon. Facing the eye of consciousness still awake, the experience seemed to dissolve and I found myself back in the cave.

After that experience, the perception of waking and dreaming states by the I-witness kept on until the morning. As it seemed to a certain extent, I had experienced what is called the consciousness continuity in the course of two modifications of the mind, and all this without losing the consciousness-witness at any time.

After a serious reflection, I came to the conclusion that the essential had escaped my notice, I mean the perception of the consciousness-witness during the deep sleep state (without dream). That night, I was the witness of an event, but in the future, I would need to make the witness disappear, by forcing it into the contemplation of itself, the being then eventually having to merge into the non-being.

Since that experience, the particular inner call has died down, which does not in any way prevent the spiritual power of that mountain to attract my soul up to its unavoidable dissolution. All this may have been the result of the convergence of several factors, but, as for me, it is obvious that Yogi Ramsuratkumar had something to do with it.

Saturday 20th of June. There were already some people in the veranda when I came to take my usual place. After the first set of visitors, as she was ready to leave after blessing, a lady felt the desire to stay and she had a look all around her but, unfortunately, none of the places was left empty. She looked so disappointed that I gave her mine and settled by the rubble heap. After about ten minutes, Yogiji asked me to go back to my place, and the lady was sorry but had to take mine. Three or four devotees had come to explain to Yogiji they intended to build an ashram which would be dedicated to him. Yogiji could not but let them understand he didn't quite like his devotees to carry out that sort of venture, preferring them to have their pujas in already existing temples or ashrams. Anyway, he added, a sadhana can take place

anywhere. In other words, his opinion was that it was a waste of time and money.

A week before, three important questions had come to my mind. I wanted them to be asked about to Yogiji by Devaki whose function was mostly to read him the mail and to translate the visitors' requests to him clearly. The day after I had decided to ask my questions, I discovered the first answer while reading the official review of Ramana ashram, The Mountain Path. At the evening darshan, I got the second answer from a visitor.

Today, I was ready to ask my third question; it had nothing to do with metaphysics, as the question was asking him if he would let me take a picture of him. Everybody knew he didn't like that and would only accept it on special occasions. I was nevertheless ready to try. A few minutes before I decided to ask my question myself, a visitor walked into the veranda and, without any permission, took his camera out. "NO!" the Yogi shouted loud enough for the poor man to run away, and for me to realize I had just got the answer to my third and last question. I thanked Yogiji to myself to have given me the answer without being submitted to the humiliation of a refusal. This is the way things happen at the feet of a sage.

THE SECRET ENTRANCE

Sunday 21th of June. Sri Ramana Maharshi had never liked occult or metaphysical speculations. He was a silent

Master, far more busy internalizing his disciples than stimulating already too fertile an imagination. He nevertheless revealed surprising things about Arunachala. According to him, this mountain was hollow, and was used as an abode for a great fraternity of sages, yogi-s, siddhas and Mahatmas. According to him again, these Immortals would sometimes leave their home and would go, invisible, round the mountain. A tunnel leading to the centre of the mountain had even been discovered at the Adi Annamalai Temple, and later on, Sri Ramana even discovered the entrance leading to the heart of the fraternity. According to his assertions, thus confirming some sacred documents about it, the entrance situated to the north was marked with a big banyan, at the foot of which was the invisible guardian, Arunagiri Yogi. As he was once having a walk towards the north, Sri Ramana saw an abnormally large leaf and decided to climb and look for the tree it was from, which he eventually discovered. But, before he got there, he stepped on a swarm of bees and decided to give up his investigation, considering this incident as a sign forbidding him to go any further.

Sometimes later, Kunju Swami and a small group of disciples decided to walk on his steps in great secret. The attempt was an eventual failure which could have been dramatic. As for me, I should have learnt the lesson from those numerous warnings. The conclusion of my own research which obviously aimed at discovering that famous concealed entrance, was a stupid accident : as I was climbing the most abrupt part of the mountain, my foot slipped and, as I was nearly thrown into empty

space, I had the reflex to jump aside and to grasp an old cactus (a thornless one). I ended with a knee covered with blood, multiple contusions and an inguinal hernia.

In the afternoon, I was nevertheless at my usual place at the feet of Ramsuratkumar. After two hours, my pains had increased, and the observer of those small sufferings was finding it quite difficult to keep in a perfect equanimity. I mentally implored Yogiji to dismiss me. It was not 6 p.m.yet. Two minutes had not gone when he asked Devaki the time. I have a sight of relief; this time again the Yogi had received my message. Nevertheless, a lesson is a lesson and, as opposed to his habit, he let me go last, not without having eased me with the balm of his love.

Tuesday 23th of June. After listening to Vedic chants and attending the Mother's puja, I left the Ramana ashram for darshan. I was going on for some surprise there. On that day, Yogi Ramsuratkumar sent everybody back, and this time I could also have the taste of a frustration, just as all those who come to see him and sometimes cannot sit by his side. It is always salutary not to anchor in habits, as it tends to make us lose the very value of the moment and the ability to perceive the truth behind daily events. The mind has to acquire the capacity to adapt immediately to all situations, with a total availability. Such is the golden rule for anyone who wishes to live at the feet of a Master permanently, for no one can apprehend the causes of his actions with reason and logic.

During the three days before I was to leave, Yogiji's attitude towards me was different. He seemed completely indifferent to my presence, and very far from my egotistic preoccupations. The end of my stay was near and I had to get ready to go back to France, for a training course I had to organise before I could come back to India in August, with my wife and daughter that time. The departure was planned for Monday morning. So it was my last darshan and, on that occasion, I had bought a beautiful garland and some fruits. When my turn came, I knelt down and immediately announced him I was leaving the next morning. Unconsciously, I was surely expecting a special blessing. Nothing of the kind. His reply was direct, and he said with the greatest seriousness: "It's all right! You may leave. My Father blesses you!" Without even a smile, he gave me a fruit and showed me the door with his finger. It was a shock for the ego not to have even been able to stay while I was among the first persons to arrive. But on my way back to the ashram, still thinking of what had just happened, I realized how much this goodbye would have been painful if we had parted effusively, whereas the present separation (which, in itself, is only an illusion due to the identification with the body) had been relatively serene. After all, the process had to be seen through so as to be able to experience that nobody leaves nobody, and that only the separating ego had imagined a separation, while at the Self level we had been intrinsically united and would be so forever. It was one more lesson I had not learnt from books, but from the very heart of action. As I was walking away from his modest abode, I felt I could hear the Yogi's voice murmur to my ear: "No

attachment, keep away from any connection with the ego and the world, the eternal Father alone counts in and by whom we are one."

I saw Yogi Ramsuratkumar again in August 1992, although the physician has strongly advised me to have my hernia operated immediately. I completely trusted the divine compassion and I firmly hoped that it would be OK for one more month. Indeed, it all went marvellously, but at the end of August, an emergency operation was necessary. The recovery went on without any problem and, my wife and I planned to go back to India again in February 1993.

YOGI RAMSURATKUMAR

"To reach the Divine Mother in the mystery of Her svarupa, you must see beyond the symbol representing her and, by submitting all your actions to her Will, reach the nirguna aspect of God. "

(Swami Ramdas)

"O, Ram, the whole world is a comedy, and you are one spectator. You make Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva dance as if they were puppets. Who can know You while they can't themselves penetrate the mystery of Your nature?"

(Tulsidas Ramayana)

CHAPTER VII

MAHASHIVARATRI 1993

There is one festival I particularly like; it is the one of Shiva or Mahashivaratri's great night. That night is exceptional because it is , in the whole year, the very moment when the moon has hardly any influence on minds, and, in the old days, sages understood that when concentrating on God all night, it was possible to reach

an exceptional degree of harmony with the Self. At that time, some are even definitively liberated.

Whole India was mobilized to celebrate this very shivaite night. This year again, my wife and I had decided to go to the ashram of a siddha-yogi who, in the course of that night, materializes lingas with the mouth (Lingodbhava). We planned to leave Paris on the 11th of February, and, that year, the famous night was between the 18th and 19th of February, so we had a few days to visit Yogiji.

The first morning was devoted to the favorite rite, the pradakshina of the mountain; and in afternoon, I rushed to the sage's residence. Although we got there early, a group had already gathered. Just after 3.30 p.m., Sashi, who was already inside, began to let visitors in. Most of them had a busy program and couldn't stay long, so I was quite happy to find my place free. That time, some friends and pupils had come with me, and it was soon obvious that it would be impossible for everybody to sit. So the group had to split in two parties, those who could stay longer on the first day today would only pop in at the next day's darshan. Yogiji did not ask me my name, this time, and he carefully looked at every person in the group. After half an hour, he concentrated on me. He screwed up his eyes and a smile of infinite tenderness appeared on his lovely face. The whole afternoon went on like this. Towards the end of the evening, he asked me where my daughter and my wife were. When the time came to receive prasada, he kept my hands in his for some time, and again I was granted this particular grace he had so often offered me.

On the following day, some Spanish friends, among whom there were Béatrice and Carmelo, two old friends of mine, joined our group. All of us got to the gate quite early. Yogiji was informed by Sashi that we were there and he let us in immediately. For more than half an hour, he fixed his eyes on me, and threw a quick glance at the others from time to time. After some time, he asked me to come and sit by his side. I sat on his right, and I then knew what I had to do, to keep quiet and to wait. But I didn't know what to do with my left hand. He noticed it and he firmly placed it on his right knee. We were truly very close to each other, and I had no idea of what was going to happen. Yogiji, without being preoccupied with my states of mind, moved his hand along my backbone, then along my arm, and he carefully looked at my left hand. He did so several times, stopping when visitors walked in procession in front of him. When he blessed them, Yogiji would sometimes use my left arm which he raised as he generally did with the fan. Despite this uncomfortable position, I felt absolutely no fatigue. All this lasted for a very long time and the Yogi gradually slipped to another state of consciousness all along the evening darshan. I had never tried so hard to get rid of any mentalizing, of any will or knowledge, as fully cut off myself and absorbed as I could be. Although I would sometimes lose hold, and because of the external conditions, my objective was only very imperfectly achieved. As the Yogi's state changed, I would feel something like as a powerful electrification all through my body, which resulted in an increasingly strong tension. Yogi's fingers were very running along the

invisible rosary quickly. His glance was no longer turned to the outside and his being was quivering in a divine ecstasy, the vibrations of which pervaded all my being. All that lasted for nearly two hours, after what Yogiji asked me to resume my place.

The third day was quite similar. This time, while the group waited patiently at the gate, Yogiji himself came to let me in and he immediately seated me by his side. Then my friends and some devotees came in in their turn. This evening was unforgettable as far as I am concerned, because Yogiji did not only repeat all he had done the day before, but he seemed to amplify it. At the end of the darshan, Yogiji seemed to be unconscious of the external world again. I was very close to him, my hand on his right knee, when suddenly I felt entirely impregnated by his person, his grace, his energy. Actually, my right thumb too was vibrating at the same rhythm as the Yogi's, and I was just unable to control it. I began to be bathed in a same consciousness. I could not explain the way we were united. It was an indescribable comfortable state, but at the same time I was as electrified. I felt shivers running along my spine and my eyes were burning. Béatrice, my friend Carmelo's wife, who was by my side, saw all the hairs of my arm standing on end under the effect of the powerful strength the Yogi was imparting to me. I then felt that, with very little effort, it would be possible for me to lose the consciousness of the external world. A hardly bearable -although not unpleasant- emotion pervaded my heart and liberated me from any feeling of fear. It was like bhaktibhava, as Ramakrishna called it. Several times, Yogiji touched my

back, and I experienced a less paternal but more mystical relational affinity with him, a relationship that was free from any connection with the body or the appearance. I just can't give any better description of the impressions I could feel all along that unforgettable evening. Just before the end of the darshan, Yogi Ramsuratkumar was rather smiling; he had resumed his usual state. He asked me for the date of my departure. I replied I was to meet my wife at Swami Premananda's ashram the day after. He asked this question several times, always with a large smile. Just before we left, he smiled at me, and his eyes were just as mine, they were gleaming with joy; but I thought I could see a veil of sadness temporarily shading their gleam. It was probably a projection of my own human feelings. We stay side by side for some more time, and then he whispered to me very kindly: "It's all right, it's all right, my Father blesses you." Once everybody had gone, I felt I was as if a drunkard, hardly able to stand on my legs. The tension had been extreme, and it would not have been possible for me to endure any more of it. I was quite vibrating outside and incredibly serene inside.

On the last day, we decided to go to the darshan in the morning and to devote the afternoon to the visit of the Big Temple. As we arrived, Yogiji immediately made me sit by his side and did all the same as the day before. When it was the time to leave, he asked me to come again for the evening darshan. At exactly 3.30 p.m., I was in front of the gate. Sashi let me in, and I took my place by the Yogi's side. That time, we had the opportunity to talk. In the course of our talk, he asked me if I knew

Krishna well, he who is in charge of the Ramnam movement in France. The evening was wonderful; hand in hand we were united by love and truth bonds. Time flew too quickly. Again, he asked me the time of my departure and had this sad smile. We no longer wanted to talk; silence became the language of our communion. In those last moments of true serenity, I measured how great and inaccessible Yogi Ramsuratkumar was. As a true sage, he does not attach devotees to his person, but rather plunges them into their own nature. On the way back from Tiruvannamalai, on the coach which was taking me to Trichy, a thought coming from Maharayana Upanishad sang in my soul:

*"In the crypt of the heart
where the shining mystery dwells,
Only penetrate those who renounce themselves."*

SUDAMA - THE NEW ABODE

Apart from the fact I was ever so happy to see Yogiji again, I came back to India in 1994 in the view to completing my biographical documentation about the Yogi. I had a month and a half, a short but sufficient time to arrange to visit some great south Indian teachers with my two fellow travellers, Laurent and Stéphane. Our arrival in Tiruvannamalai was planned for the Monday 21th of February. I had previously been informed by Devaki that the 26th would be an exceptional day in Yogi Ramsuratkumar's history since his ashram was going to be inaugurated officially.

In November 1993, Yogiji had contracted a bad fever which lasted for a full week. Devaki and some other close devotees then insisted that the Master should not resume the insalubrious Sannadhi Street house and that Sudama should be his abode. He finally surrendered to their petitions and accepted. It allowed him to receive a larger number of devotees at darshans and to better channel the growing flow of his visitors. Henceforth, the small Sannidhi Street veranda, which was so dear to my heart, was closed. The site of the new residence is not hard to find. In fact, when leaving Sri Ramana ashram, you go up the street on the left heading for the city, and, within a few yards on your right, you find another part of the ashram with the library and some accommodations for the devotees. You walk up a path along the right side of that block, and turn into the second path on the right. From there, within some thirty yards, you can see a leaf canopy installed in front of the house to protect the waiting visitors from the sun.

The house is on the left and on the front door, you can read "Sudama". Morning darshan is at 10, and afternoon ones at 4.

No later than on the Monday, we immediately went to the darshan. Many devotees had come from various Indian provinces and the queue was already very long. One of Yogi's devotees, whom I had seen before, had replaced Sashi at the entrance door. Just before the darshan, she would inform the Yogi of the number of persons and of those he was supposed to know. Then, she would follow

the Yogi's indications and let some persons in priority, before the rest of the crowd of the devotees. From where I was, I could distinctly hear my name, and Yogiji let me in immediately. By his grace, I was granted with that special attention during all darshans. As usual, I made my offerings and prostrated, before sitting against the back wall, on the Master's left. Devaki was on his right. It was now her definitive and official place. Facing me, two rows of devotees could sit. The veranda was far more spacious, and stretched in a right angle (in a half-T form). It was next to the house front, and the longer and narrower part could sit some twenty persons.

As in a lot of Indian houses, the veranda was entirely protected by grilles. It was all clear and the flowered garden, just outside, sent us its fragrances and its bird chants. I carefully watched Yogiji, who was but identical to himself. The Yogi had momentarily discarded his fan and alms bowl which he had replaced a roll of plaited string as a new attribute. From time to time, what he stood up and, holding it in his hand, he would walk past through the group of devotees again and again, which he did not use to do before. Some Westerners were there, and I could easily imagine their astonishment when they saw the Yogi carry this strange thing.

Actually, a lot of them didn't come back the next day. On Tuesday the 22nd, at the morning darshan, we were there with another writer, Sir Haragopal Sepuri, who had just written his second work about his experiences with Yogi Ramsuratkumar. In front of him Yogiji had a heap of books this man had brought with him. He suddenly took

the things in hand and asked all the present devotees who wanted one. Almost all of them bought a volume, and Yogiji autographed them. Then, he collected the money he gave it all to the writer who meant to offer it to him. But the Yogi refused firmly, decreeing that this man would need this money and specifying that any effort deserved a salary.

Later on, a devotee brought a big painting of Arunachala which was to decorate the new ashram. Then an old lady came in who could hardly walk. Yogiji asked the man who was with her about the nature of her pain. Then, applying directly to the old woman, he asked her to walk up and down and he watched her with a sustained attention. After that, he asked for a chair for her to sit down.

A bit before the end of the darshan, Yogiji offered me a card to invite me to the ashram inaugurating ceremonies which were to be presided by Swami Satchidananda, the present head of Swami Ramdas's Anandashram. After having given me the invitation card, he said with a showing look at me: "This person wants to film this beggar, and although he will come near Indra Tirtha the day after tomorrow, there will be the initiation of nine young people. This beggar has been invited, thus he will be able to film this beggar at will."

The afternoon darshan went on in peace, and we even had the opportunity to attend a traditional music concert by four musician devotees. The darshan had made some slight adaptations owing to the growing crowd of

visitors. Apart from some exceptional occasions, one would no longer prostrate when leaving (I am talking here about the people staying under the veranda, not about passing visitors).

When the darshan ending time approaches, Yogiji asks Devaki, with the help of some other devotee, to give fruits to everybody, and then everybody leaves the house directly.

On Wednesday the 23rd, our small party (Laurent with a movie-camera, Stéphane, and myself) went to the place where the nine Brahmins were to receive initiation (upanaya). This ceremony was complex, and a Brahmin, qualified for the sacred texts, recited in the microphone what the future initiates had to do or say in the course of the ritual. There was head-shaving, a bath, a symbolic meal, and the delivery of the cord, while each initiatable lad's preceptor recited the appropriate mantra.

Then, after having turned round the sacrificial fire, each disciple received the Gayatri mantra. The place was situated in the south of the Indra tank and a large tilt of cloth had been set up to protect the guests from the sun. We were expected and, after the usual purification, we were given our places. The ritual had already begun and we had to wait for one more hour before Yogi Ramsuratkumar arrived with Devaki. Yogiji had sat just in front of a child of one of his close devotees', who had the privilege to get a very special blessing during the ceremony. My friend Laurent, who dealt with the video camera, enjoyed himself to the full because Yogiji had

rarely authorized his devotees to take a film of him. Yogiji was aware of our intentions and gracefully made things easier. Several times he stood up and blessed the crowd, walking several times in circles within the enclosure where the future Brahmins were standing. The crowd became silent and meditated.

In the course of the morning, several important personalities came to sit by his side, notably Sri Ventakaramam, the President of the Sri Ramana Ashramam. Eventually, by midday, Yogiji left the place and went back home.

At the afternoon darshan, I was not the only one to feel a clear modification in my consciousness. With others, we experienced a peace which appeared with the feeling of being detached from worldly activities. In such a state of mind, the communion with the Yogi was permanent. In the course of the darshan, Devaki and two other devotees sang hymns dedicated to Yogi Ramsuratkumar.

While Yogiji conversed with Devaki, he started laughing up his sleeve and made some allusions to my ancient doubt as to the fact of knowing which one of the two mantras had to be sung in priority, the one of Ram or the one of the Yogi. "No more doubt?" he let out to me, smiling in an accomplice way. "No more, Yogiji, I replied". And he burst out laughing again.

He quietly lit a cigarette and invited Devaki as well as the other two women to resume their chants which we all found very beautiful and inspiring. There was nothing

special worth of notice on Thursday the 24th, except perhaps that Devaki who was aware of the fact that I was looking for witnesses having had experiences with the Master, and was always vigilant to people's needs, be it her guru's or his devotees', introduced me to Sir G. Sankara Rajulu, who was rector of Madurai University and an intimate disciple of Yogiji.

She mentioned that he was a very serious man, indicating that I would have to be very careful as opposed to some devotees who had written about Yogi Ramsuratkumar including a large part of their own desires and imagination into their works. Yogiji himself has warned people against an author who was undoubtedly sincere, but not objective enough as for the spiritual and psychic phenomena the witness of which he claimed to have been in the Yogi's presence. We are here in a sphere where prudence and discrimination are required if one wants to get as close to the truth as possible.

Sir G. Sankara Rajulu arranged to meet us the same evening and allowed us to tape his numerous and exciting anecdotes. He was an open, nice and intelligent sort of man, who had formerly known Swami Sivananda of Rishikesh, and Sri Sathya Sai Baba very well, and who was consequently able to appreciate the greatness of Yogi Ramsuratkumar.

Friday 25th of February. I arrived very early in order to be among the very first ones. As it sometimes happens, events occur in the opposite way to what we desire. Such was the case on that special day. We were actually

informed that Yogiji was not in his residence but was expecting us in the small stoned temple built on the piece of land of the new ashram. It was within a ten minutes walk, but in the opposite direction, so that I eventually was the last one in the queue. My friend Laurent and myself had to face the facts, the room was packed and there was no place left. At that moment, a devotee, whose duty was to place people, came to us and invited us to follow him and to sit, somehow or other, just in front of Yogi Ramsuratkumar.

A mother, who had been a devotee for a long time, came to deposit her baby at his feet very naturally. Yogiji played with for a while. It was a very moving scene to see; the pure child had his eyes riveted in the Yogi's. He finally handed the child back to the mother and prepared to bless the devotees. He stood up, with his roll of string in his hand, and began to walk back and forth along the narrow way the devotees had cleared for him. He was spinning the string along with a movement of his wrist, and hardly refrained from laughing. Yet that strange rite always comes to a moment when the Master resumes his usual seriousness, which everybody can feel immediately.

Once sitting again, he started to bless the devotees again holding the cord circle in both hands and in lifting it ahead of him towards the devotees. This time, everybody laughed, because the situation was quite funny. As far as I am concerned, I did not have the time to join the collective joy as the meaning of the symbolic perfect circle held by the Yogi suddenly gushed from the very

depth of my consciousness. From the place where I was, his face seemed to be at the centre of the cord circle, and I had a direct comprehension of the deep concealed meaning underlying this rather seemingly derisory gesture. In the circle of that cord, I saw the game of the phenomenal world that attracts or repels, confers joy or pain, makes us laugh or cry. The cord circle represented the samsarical cycle, but, in the background figured by the Yogi's face, there was the divine Presence which is eternal, free from any possible alteration, and confers the supreme peace and beatitude. Through the cord circle, the Master gave me the opportunity to experiment his particular way to teach and transmit the truth we have to try to perceive, beyond his voluntarily grotesque or childish gestures and attitudes (as we qualify them when referring to our objective knowledge and rational intelligence). If ever our mind is purified, if we let our love and intuition reveal freely, without any a priori or judgement, then the beggar's external appearance disappears, revealing, beyond the mirage of form, a scouring, slicing and liberating truth.

That truth penetrates you as a laser ray straight to the very heart of your being and becomes all yours. Yogiji even went further and, still smiling, he put the roll of cord on his head, intermingled to his already badly adjusted turban. This time, I smiled to him because, beyond this coronation, I saw the depth of its meaning. From that day, I found nothing strange or incongruous in his manners.

After some bhajans, Yogi Ramsuratkumar stood up, holding the coconut and the fan this time, and he walked through the crowd of his devotees again and again, while performing large gestures with his hand, as if to repel negative form-thoughts he was alone to perceive. That time, smiles gave the place to adoration. Yogi Ramsuratkumar sat down again, close to Devaki who was just like a mother, ready to make for the slightest of his needs. While we were singing bhajans, I saw Yogiji holding his head high and asking Devaki several times where the camera was. Devaki didn't understand and replied there wasn't any. In fact, Yogiji was thinking of my friend Laurent who generally carried the camera. This meant it was going to be possible for us to film. Sir G. Sankara, who had already guessed what was happening, suggested to my friend to take his taxi in order to fetch the camera which we had left at the ashram. A few minutes later, they were back and a very nice film was on its way at the end of this magnificent darshan.

In the afternoon, visitors were invited to gather in his house again. The crowd was numerous and we preferred to give our places to the numerous devotees, as some of them had come a long way to meditate at the Master's feet. More, the inauguration had to begin at 3 pm the next day, and some preparation was necessary for this exceptional event.

BIRTH OF AN ASHRAM

For 76 years Yogi Ramsuratkumar has remained completely independent and has kept outside the Indian material society. Under the pressure of many disciples, he agreed on the building of an ashram.

In fact, when the objective form of the Master is present, the devotees are easily able to maintain their devotion and to concentrate their aspiration towards Him. But when this body disappears and the Master operates from the subjective sphere in his subtle form, then the ashram truly becomes His body, a perfect and attractive centre for all aspirants all over the world; and in many cases (let us remember what happened after the mahasamadhi of Shirdi Sai Baba and of many others), the Master's efficiency without any manifestation takes a lot more considerable proportions than when he was alive. The real meaning of the ashram is less in what appears from outside than what is perceived through the heart and intuition. Moreover, speaking to C.C. Krishna, Mataji Devaki says: « *Krishna, Bhagavan said that this is not an ashram. This is a spiritual centre which, in the future, will become one of the most important spiritual points on Earth and will radiate everywhere. With time, it will come to realization in an imperceptible way, and people will not be aware of it!* »⁴⁷

Devotees were now coming by hundreds, and it was necessary to channel their devotion, as well as to take care of all those who, at the price of big sacrifices, came to visit him. More, we must not forget that the ashram is

⁴⁷ RAMA NAMA, n° 12, december 1994, page 14).

a true school of mysteries, with its degrees and its tests. Advanced disciples, as well as neophytes, were going to be able to find the security of a holy place there, as well as the means for a spiritual furtherance. Most of the time, the former have only very little connection with the material organization, even if they participate very actively. Their aim is the expansion of their limited consciousness in the Universal Consciousness. But, having acquired a group consciousness, they know and envisage their liberation only in parallel to the liberation of their brothers. Love, when it blooms, obliges man to awaken in order to awaken his brethren.

Generally aspirants have not reached this stage of consciousness yet. They have the special duty to discipline their personality, to tame their passions and to control their senses. To reach that point, the material activities of an ashram will prove to be of a capital importance because all their actions, words and thoughts will be devoted to spiritual realization.

Therefore, in an ashram, two realities go side by side; the visible one is the material ashram, the means to reach the goal; the invisible one is the inner ashram, the high level of integration, the communion of divine ideals focusing on and in the guru's consciousness - this is the point of subjective activity for those who work consciously at the level of their soul. In both cases, the guru's power of manifestation - or shakti - is preserved, concentrated and radiated throughout the ashram. Thus, those who will enter the inner heart of the spiritual ashram will have to have sublimated all the reactions of the selfish

personality, such as criticising, jealousy, envy, ambition or hatred, in other words, anything connected to man's inferior life, either through discipline (sadhana), adoration, or discrimination,.

THE SYMBOL OF THE MOTHER IN THE ASHRAM

I'd like to speak about the one who is now the heart of the ashram, just as the guru is the will (or the concentrated intention) of it. I mean Mataji Devaki who, during this inauguration, has become the official Mother of the ashram.

In an ashram, the three great principles of the Trimurti are harmoniously expressed. The guru represents the Will aspect of God (Shiva), the Father, according to the Christian terminology, i.e the immobile point of unity, synthesis and reintegration.

Then come all the members of the ashram, representing the son aspect, consciousness or love-wisdom; the power of Vishnu expresses here. This means a mass of consciousness in action awakening to the reality of the central Unity. One will find there some units of mentalized consciousness as well as others which are already spiritual. This all together represents a continuous expansive strength which, in terms of consciousness, proceeds from the outside to the inside, and in terms of energy, from the inside to the outside. The corresponding Christian symbol is the one of the Son who, once the perfection of a Christ reached, becomes a Savior for the world. So as to reach that perfection, it has

been necessary for him to be fed by the Mother before leaving her, and then, once aware of his aim, he went to the Father's residence.

This is what a disciple does in an ashram; there, he is fed with knowledge and experiences through which he goes on striving to step from the periphery to the centre, until he manages to make himself one and only together with the guru's will. The ashram can be compared with the material world, Prakriti, the substance, while the Mother is the Shakti giving life to that substance. As for Christianity, that great principle is inverted. Mary, as Jesus' mother, is the material world substance (akasha) and, she is often illustrated standing on a snake or a dragon which, at the origin of Christianity, was the symbol of the vital strength (prana) giving life to worlds. We have here the Brahma of the Hindus or the Christian Holy Ghost composed of a double polarity: the one of the substance (akasha = tamas), and the vital strength (prana = rajas). That is why the master who builds an ashram never omits to represent Shakti, either by the nomination of a feminine disciple, or by means of a statue of the Divine Mother in one or the other of Her numerous manifestations.

The Mother must be the subject of our complete love and adoration, be it the mother who gave birth to us, our mother-land, or the Divine Mother. For ashram devotees, the Mother is the great consoler; she is love in action and the voice of wisdom.

All gods have a Shakti or a feminine complement. Shiva is associated with Parvati, Vishnu with Lakshmi, Brahma with Sarasvati. Therefore teachers themselves will naturally show that power of manifestation within their ashram symbolically or specifically. One will remember such examples as Krishnabai in the Swami Ramdas Ashram, Mother in the Aurobindo's, Sarada Devi in Ramakrishna's, and today, Divya Mataji in the ashram of Swami Premananda. Consequently, the ashram of Yogi Ramsuratkumar has to be directed and vitalised by the Mother's energies, represented by Mataji Devaki.

DEVAKI MATAJI

I got acquainted with Devaki Mataji at the time when she used to visit the Yogi in Sannidhi Street everyday. She was one of the closest devotees of the Yogi's. She was the first person to help and advise me when I decided to undertake the writing of this work. At darshan, she would always arrive first, and wait outside the gate patiently. When visitors began to lose patience, or forget about the purpose of their coming and chat, she would start reciting mantra in order to re-centre the group's consciousness on the reason for their presence in such a place. She was always dressed in white, and her devotion and great simplicity were remarkable.

Devaki Mataji was born on the 4th of January, 1952 in Thanjavur, in the delta of river Cauvery (Tamil Nadu). Her parents, S. Ranganathan and Sundaravalli, belong to the Brahmin caste of Tamil Vaishnava. She is the sixth

child of a large family of eight - seven girls and their eldest brother. Brilliant in her studies, she excelled in whatsoever activities she undertook. She has been entirely devoted to Lord Krishna since a child. Collegiate education endowed her with the trappings of modernity. The wordly life of her family members and her peers had only a marginal influence on her.

Although distracted now and then, she rarely swerved from the path of her spiritual seeking. The Ramakrishna Mutt very often provided her refuge, for meditation and further learning of the life of a sadhak. Her wide readings about the lives of saints, her conversations with sadhaks established her in the life of a sadhak, and all her spare time found her pursuing things spirituals. But her sadhana required a direction, a focal point, as it were, because she knew that the numerous Swamijis she had met till then could not supply her with the required guidance.

Devaki was desperately looking for this master, at Gangotri in Himalayas, for example, and in high holy places such as Brindavan, as she did not know he was living in Tiruvannamalai, only four hours away from Salem, the city where she lived herself. At Sarada Devi college, which was devoted to Sri Ramakrishna's ideals, she met Sadhu Rangarajan and in the end got involved in spiritual activities, taking an active part in the world movement for the propagation of Ramnam, and she even incited several colleagues and pupils of hers to join in.

In October 1986, while she was preparing for an examination (M.Phil) at Madras Presidency College, a student of her friends, who had some knowledge in astrology, predicted to her: *"You will get soon a great man as your preceptor. Your life will totally change thereafter. A very rare opportunity is awaiting you!"* Devaki heard about Yogiji, for sure, but, as she herself says, the time had not come yet.

Unable to control her aspiration, she went to Ramanashramam with two colleagues during Christmas feasts. It was about 7 o'clock in the morning when they reached the ashram. Because of a power failure, the ashram was plunged into darkness. Mataji narrates:

"My heart broke when I could not see, in the deam light of the oil-lamp, the picture of Sri Ramana which was placed in the meditation hall of the Ashram, into which I entered. "Oh, Sri Ramana! Is there darkness here too? Will I never see in my life-time a god like you or Sri Ramakrishna? Will there be no light in my life? "I wailed in distress and lo! In the next two minutes, the power came splashing light everywhere. I felt as though the merciful eyes of Sri Ramana were uttering something! Bliss surged in the heart."

In an article, Devaki also explains:

"I had the courage and good fortune of knocking at the doors of that house near the temple car, one the Sannidhi street, only in the evening of 27th December 1986, though I had reached Tiruvannamalai three days earlier,

on 24th itself. (Later, I came to know that December 27 was the sacred sannyasa Day of Swami Ramdas, the guru of Bhagavan). It was a pleasant sight never before seen by me when that Divine Person opened the doors and came and stood before me. My mind rolled and fell at His feet. Without knowing the reason, tears trickled down my eyes. It is impossible for ordinary people like me to describe so beautifully as Sri T.P. Meenakshisundaram has done in his "Sri Ramji Akavall" (Hail Sri Ramji), the Divine Resplendence which surpassed the unkempt hait and soiled gard of Bhagavan. That wonder called Yogi Ramsuratkumar took us inside the house and made us sit. There were some other devotees too. He came and sat before me and asked in a compassionate voice: "Do you want to say anything to this beggar?" The same eyes that I saw in the picture of Sri Ramana three days earlier! The same compassion an kindness! The same light! Controlling my tears, I said slowly: "I want to see God." "Oh! Devaki wants to see God!" He spoke aloud and after a minute's silence, continued, "Devaki will see God. She is a pure soul. Devaki will see God!" My colleague told him: "Swami, we do not know whether we are pure or not. Because these words come from your mouth, from this moment we have become pure." That was all! With a big hum, with face turned into red and eyes sparkling light, raising both His hands, He blessed us continuously for ten minutes.

All the three of us sat there spell bound, experiencing a vibration in the body and immersed in a Divine feeling. When He came out and saw us off, our mind became light and a divine peace reigned over it. There was a sense of

fulfilment that we had stumbled upon something which we were searching and searching through births.

The next day, in the early morning, when a lady (who had accompanied me to Tiruvannamalai) and I were waiting for a bus in front of Ramanashram, a person looking like a beggar exits came out of the Dakshinamurthi temple which was on the opposite side and rushed towards us. My friend who got scarred, moved a little away. When I stood motionless, the man, who rushed towards us, stood a little away from me, perambulated me and ran back into the temple. This amusing incident seemed to be significant. However, during the next fifteen days, I was immersed in such an intense peace that I was not able to think about anything. A peace that was not affected by happiness, sorrow, disappointment, anger or anything else. Everything that happened around seemed to be scenes in a dream. Attending to the classes or engaging myself in the college work was more brisk than ever! Those subtle theories in Physics, which required intense study for an hour, could be understood even by a cursory glance for 10 minutes! Tremendous change! The peace was so natural that even the change was not cognized!

Now and then, the face of the Swami would appear before the mind's eye. A blissful sweetness will pervade. And then intense peace! The greatness of this experience could be realized only when this peace started waning and old habits started raising again their heads. I was able to understand what happened to me only when once again anger, weaknesses, pleasure, disappointment, inefficiency, etc. started gripping me again. Mind felt

such agony like that of a calf separated from the cow. A burning feeling drove me again and again to Yogishwara. For seven years, I was running towards Him again and again for His darshan. Realizing that it was an unquenchable thirst, on the 15th of July last year, I once for all gave up my job and obtained the good fortune of being ever in His presence and service. I stand enchanted in a corner, in front of that ocean of mercy whom Sri T.P. Minakshisundaram calls "The Shiva who descended from the Heavens to save the Earth." All the tests, sufferings and pleasant experiences in the last few years were the leelas of Bhagavan to make me perfect.

When I resigned my job at last with His permission and reached Tiruvannamalai, it was 11 O'clock in the night. Along with the tiresomeness of journey there was also an anxiety in the mind : "Oh Yogi Ramsuratkumar! For You I have come giving up everything and everyone. Will You not accept and welcome this one ?" To the moment I got down from the bus and stood in front of Ramanashram I heard sacred music to the accompaniment of musical instruments. I turned with surprise and found a big crowd moving from the same Dakshinamurthi temple, holding lamps in their hands and chanting sacred hymns. A Professor known to me emerged from the crowd, came towards me, and said: "Amma, namaskar! Welcome to you! We are happy to see you. It is the auspicious hour marking the beginning of the month. We have just completed puja in the Dakshinamurti temple and are on our way to perambulate the Sacred Hill." She took leave of me. What an immense compassion is that of the

Swami! Who can He be other than the All-pervasive Ultimate Reality!

The next morning, when I went for the darshan of Swami, He called me who was sitting somewhere behind the audience, made me sit by His side and asked me with a laughter of an innocent child : "When you stepped down on this soil yesterday night, what happened?" Happiness surged in my heart when he burst into waves of laughter. »

She had to face quite a few ordeals; they were the food for her will and faith. They were the inescapable portal for the one who was to become the Mother. And even when she was still a physics professor, she continued to adore her guru with sincerity, even when her naive adoration was laughed at. Today, she feeds the precious body with the love of a mother for her child, she deals with his mail with zeal, watches every single move, and every single thought of the guru's, fetching straight from his heart, beyond his words, the jewels of truth he wants to transmit. Every single word the Master produces is written down carefully. When Yogiji gets up at 1 o'clock in the morning, Devaki does too. When he gets up again at 3, Devaki gets up again. Shade of his shade, in her there is a soul who has managed to surrender at the feet of the guru completely, and who is slowly absorbing into his consciousness, entirely devoted to his service.

Yogi Ramsuratkumar, after having duly tested her, declared that this exceptional devotee would become his eternal slave from then on. When Yogiji declared that

openly, he meant this disciple had definitively devoted her ego to the service of the Self, that she was ready, whatever would happen, to dissolve her individuality into the universal. In other words, the ego-Devaki would then be the slave of the Self-guru, such is the deep meaning of Yogi Ramsuratkumar words regarding her.

Devaki is my eternal slave.
My father has sent ~~to~~ her into
this world with the sole purpose of
serving this beggar in his entire
work.

yogi Ramsuratkumar
Tiruvannamalai

As Devaki Mataji wrote me, if she is at the Master's service, it does not mean He is at all dependent on an external assistance; Yogiji had actually lived on his own in a completely autonomous manner for a large part of his life. But, it is an immense privilege for a disciple, to be by an instructor permanently. It is a reward that marks the necessity of a particular spiritual training, one of the prerogatives of which is the proximity with the

teacher. In one of her letters, Mataji also wrote to me: "At each time, I realize what it is to live with a great soul, how much each of his words, gestures, actions is a teaching, a blessing, one more step on the way to my purification." Recently, Yogiji said to her: "When you serve this beggar, you serve the entire cosmos. You see, Devaki, when you water the roots of a tree, the energy you provide it with goes up to the very end of each branch, of each leaf, of each stem, of each flower and fruit. Similarly, when you serve this beggar, your service spreads in the entire cosmos".

In the course of many satsangs, I have often been surprised to see to what extent Mataji was at everybody's disposal, thanks to her innate relational sense, her open-mindedness, and her erudition together delicately veiled behind a natural humility. In many occasions, visitors formulate their requests awkwardly, timidly, fearfully, and often in a foreign language. Devaki then retransmits it clearly to Swamiji, with a luxury of details while the visitor had only sputtered some hesitant words. In Mataji, there is a great intuitive sensitivity that allows her to feel everyone's needs as I have often had myself the opportunity to experiment it. Devaki Mataji has not been chosen by chance and, has her modesty to suffer, if she has the responsibility of Mother of the ashram today, this privilege of hers is only due to her merits, which everybody recognizes.

SWAMI SATCHIDANANDA

After having taken our evening meal at the Ramana ashram, we were surprised, as we walked out, to come across an unusual crowd. They were celebrating, with chants and music, the arrival of Swami Satchidananda who was coming to inaugurate Yogi Ramsuratkumar's ashram. A procession of devotees was following the Swami to the door, and all wanted to prostrate at his feet.

The night had come; we discreetly followed the small procession marching towards the part of the ashram where we were accommodated, just across the road. We did not at all know that Yogiji was already there, ready to welcome the representative of Anandashram. Their meeting was full of great simplicity and fondness. Yogiji, with his usual humility, humbly touched the feet of Satchidananda in whom he saw a former fellow traveller, but also a being who was at the service of his initiatory Father, Papa Ramdas, for a long time. Then, it was Swami Satchidananda's turn. That was a moving meeting. They remained for some time, sitting side by side in the room which was attributed to them; Yogiji was holding his hand affectionately. They certainly had a lot of things to tell each other, and as several high personalities came to the meeting, the party went on very late in the night. Our bedroom was situated just behind theirs, but my companions and myself thought it was wiser to go to bed for some hours before the inauguration ceremonies which were to begin at 3 a.m.

No later than 2 am the next day, the three of us were on the spot. For the circumstance, a canopy had been fitted, as well as several large tilts, to protect devotees from the

sun, because the program was to last all day. In the stoned room used as a temple, which was the only building of the new ashram, a small brick altar had been set up for the Brahmins to perform Ganapati homan, a sacrificial fire meant to consecrate the ashram under the best auspices. A favorable lunar cycle had also been chosen since the Moon was full, and the astrological period was the one of Pisces.

At 3.45 a.m., Yogi Ramsuratkumar and Swami Satchidananda came to attend the beginning of the ritual. Then both of them went out for the inauguration of the foundation stone by Swami Satchidanandaji Maharaj. At 4.15 another ritual was performed: the navagraha homam. Then, there were bhajans from 5 to 7, with Madhurananda Swamigal, all this punctuated with numerous speeches. Then, everybody was offered some refreshment.

When Yogi Ramsuratkumar and Swami Satchidananda came back on the dais, they were several personalities with them. There were there three heads of big ashrams which had belonged to three great Mahatmas. Swami Satchidananda represented Swami Ramdas, Sri T.N. Ventakaramam represented Sri Ramana Maharshi, and there was Swami Chakrananda, from Sri Ramakrishna Mutt (Trivandrum). We could also see Sri Perumal Raja, Krishnagiri and Poojya Om Prakesh Yogini, the ashram of Sri Ramji of Kumara Koil, Mataji Devaki and Sadhu Rangarajan. Swami Satchidananda gave a speech inspired from the recollection of Yogiji's intense devotion for Papa Ramdas, and he also mentioned his

own association with the Yogi, whom he had not seen for 40 years. He spoke about Swami Ramdas's and Mataji Krishnabai's lives and missions. They all spoke and, when the microphone was presented to Yogiji, he announced simply: "This beggar is not good at for speeches, he can only say: "My Father blesses everybody here."

At 12.45, all the devotees left for lunch. Then, at 3.30 p.m., there was a blessing by Swami Satchidananda, as well as testimonies of several eminent personalities who evoked their experiences with Yogi Ramsuratkumar. At the end of the day, Yogiji, sat on the dais, became drowsy and seemed completely indifferent to what was happening around him. I was standing at the foot of the dais, just in front of him and I felt a big sadness for this Master who, day and night, made himself available for the welfare of the thousands of his devotees, whatever his own difficulties might be. At that very moment, I felt an infinite compassion as I saw him like that, exhausted and exposed to the often uncontrolled avidity of his devotees. Then, without holding up his head, Yogiji opened his eyes and looked at me. Spontaneously, I asked him mentally to share his burden. Everybody comes to take the best of what he can give, but too few are those who accept to carry even the slightest part of his cross of trials. He smiled at me, and then seemed to fall asleep again.

After several personalities had spoken, there were still bhajans and a cultural program which let us admire traditional dances of southern India. At the end of the

afternoon, Swami Satchidananda made his good-byes to the Yogi discreetly and left the meeting. At the end of the evening, the departure of Yogi Ramsuratkumar officially ended that wonderful day.

TEST OF FAITH

After those intense hours, I felt the need for a bath of silence. So I left on my own and decided I would go the Ramanashramam to meditate in the room reserved for this purpose. As I was leaving, I was accosted by a friend. We discussed for some time and, as I was to leave eventually, a power failure had thrown the most complete darkness over the place. I was rushing for my shower when my foot missed the step; I stumbled with all my weight on my right ankle which had already been affected by some long hours of sitting posture. The sinister crackling and the huge swelling announced a serious sprain, perhaps a fracture. Someone helped me to walk to my bedroom where I had plenty of time to think about that new and interesting experience. Was it there an answer to what I had asked Yogiji by the end of the evening? If so it was, I then had a true reason to be satisfied and happy. The pain was considerable and, when my both friends were back, they insisted on my calling the doctor of the ashram. I had an injection and was advised to go to Bangalore hospital the next day. The night was that comfortable. More, I had planned to meet my wife at Madras airport on the 2nd of March, and

that project, along with many others, was likely to be cancelled.

On the Sunday, the 27th, I was forced to rest for the whole day. At the morning darshan, Yogiji was informed about the accident by my friend Laurent. He commanded him to take me to him the next morning at 10 o'clock on the dot.

The place of the meeting was the room of the new ashram again. On Monday the 28th, a rickshaw took me to the door. I entered somehow or other, supported by a pilgrim bamboo stick (a souvenir from a trip to Himalayas) Stéphane had lent me. I limped painfully up to Yogiji who had stood up when I arrived. When I got close to him, he kneeled, took my ankle in both hands, and asked me to tell him where exactly the pain was. He concentrated for some minutes, stood up again and asked me to walk without the stick. I had a first attempt, and I limped so that most of my weight should be supported by the sane ankle. But, with an impatient if not reproaching like tone, he insisted on my dropping the stick and told me to walk normally, in other words he was telling me to show a less timorous faith. He insisted on my walking up and down faster and faster, which I did step by step in a total confidence. Then, he stopped me and asked me whether it still hurt. In fact, to my surprise, I felt I could then walk fully normally and without any pain.

Yet, I could not help some sort of apprehension, which was only natural after all, because the ankle was still dramatically swollen. Yogiji sat down quietly and invited

me to do so. That was a very beautiful darshan, without any other incident, except perhaps for a new realization, a new light through which I was able to understand a new rule, in a flash of my intuition, and the ever so peculiar way of his. Actually, a few minutes after I had sat down, he stood up to bless the devotees and walked back and forth, doing exactly what he had prescribed me to do a short while before. He walked faster than usual and with large steps, looking as decisive as the one who knows perfectly where he is going. And, as I was watching him, my consciousness awakened spontaneously. Yogiji was in the process to show me the way a disciple has to proceed on the path leading to God, that is to say without any fear, hesitation, or any attachment, but with a total confidence and faith. I understood very clearly that I had not been so.

Faith is a fundamental for the Yogi. He says:

"In this universe, all is connected, the sun, the moon, the stars, trees, stones, you and me. All this altogether is ONE. Wherever we work, we participate in the totality of the cosmic activity. We only do what is good for the whole cosmos. And if anybody has a steadfast faith, no matter what happens to him, even his failures will do him good in the end."

This was a new and prodigious lesson; it is not realized by the mind, but by the grace of the spirit in the melting pot of the corporal experience. In the afternoon, my foot was still swollen, but I could not feel any more pain. The next darshan was to take place in his house, at Sudama.

Sadhu Rangarajan was sitting by his side, and I felt very happy for him because this renouncing one's work well deserved that exceptional privilege.

On the 1st of March, Laurent and myself went to the room of the new ashram early in the morning in order to record Sadhu Rangarajan's experiences. After that session of work, the three of us went to Yogi's house for the 10 o'clock darshan. When it was time to leave, Yogiji asked Devaki Mataji to put together all the gifts of money that had been deposited by devotees, which did not generally account for a large amount. The collection oddly amounted to 108 rupees, an eminently symbolic number. Sadhu Rangarajan was the happy beneficiary: "For your association", Yogiji said as he gave him the money.

The police had invaded the city of Tiruvannamalai because, as it was said, of some threats towards the Prime Minister of Tamil Nadu who was expected. To celebrate her arrival, the city had been decorated, the pradakshina had been cleaned up, and the place where she had to speak was situated at a few hundred meters or so from Yogi Ramsuratkumar' ashram. The entire city was in effervescence.

The chief of the police had established his headquarters in some houses surrounding our bedroom, and we were the only three foreigners in the middle of all those soldiers and policemen. Of course, owing to those exceptional conditions, the darshans also took a completely new appearance. The Indian policemen were

mostly Hindu, and many of them visited the Master. Because of their occupation, they entered the veranda with a stiff, tough, or at least excessively serious looking face. There were there officers of rank and simple soldiers. But all of them had at least the great merit to come and kneel at the feet of the holy man, which could hardly be imagined in the West. Yogiji was of a particular and moving tenderness towards them. He took their hands, looked at them for a long time, blessed them with insistence, giving them sometimes a friendly and virile slap on the back, which eventually made them cheer up. Their faces gradually relaxed and a pale smile replaced a mask of professional impassiveness. A glow of hope, a reviving faith seemed to awaken in those men's eyes. Few resisted Yogiji's infinite compassion. Their procession did not stop until 6.20 pm. They were all invited to stay, but, owing to their duties, they left after a few minutes and made room to their companions. As I came in, I gave Yogiji a picture of Papa Ramdas. Several times in the course of the darshan, he contemplated it with love and touched his forehead with it in veneration.

On the 2nd of March, the whole city was ready to celebrate the visit of the Prime Minister who was to arrive on a helicopter. We went straight to Sudama, where Sadhu Rangarajan was to come. As the day before, policemen were numerous at the darshan.

Behind the large iron door, a crowd was getting impatient and excited and they even eventually drummed aggressively for the door to be opened to them. Tension was growing minute after minute, and Yogiji, very calm,

continued his work without taking much notice to that, keeping indifferent to those manifestations.

Among the visitors, there was a man with a banal little request. He had been robbed, and expected to get some assistance from the Yogi who, immediately, retorted him: "Why do you tell this poor beggar about it when the veranda is full of policemen; you should ask *them* for help!" The present policemen slackened and smiled heartily as they saw the effect of that reply on the poor visitor, who no longer knew which way to turn round. Nevertheless he went back with Yogi's blessings.

Sadhu Rangarajan was sitting by Yogi. The latter had taken his hand and silently administered him what I would call a spiritual treatment. One of my very old French friends came for the darshan. I knew he had serious problems and I prayed Yogiji mentally to give him particular assistance. Nothing distinguished my friend from the few westerners who were there, and no one knew about our relationship.

After a few minutes, Yogiji went in a deep internalization state, and, as he often does for some, he regularly turned his head to look at him. During the following hour, Yogiji looked at us alternately, as my friend and I were not sitting close to each other. At the end of that investigation, Yogiji dedicated a smile to my friend who did not seem to be indifferent to it.

Mataji mentioned that the lady devotee outside who was letting people in, had to stand the heat of the sun which

was already very high in the sky. Yogiji retorted she would suffer a lot more by his side.

At 11.30, the police officers saluted and walked out; so did my friend who was then identified as my friend and received a cordial blessing. In the distance, we could the helicopter land, and Yogiji insisted on Sadhu Rangarajan's going to the ashram to check everything was going on well.

Once he had gone out, he called me so that I received the benefit of his close spiritual treatment. Unfortunately, this moment was shortened by violent knocks on the iron door and bursts of voices. Visitors and numerous curious people were getting overexcited. The situation could have taken a bad turn, so Yogiji stood up to pacify the spirits of those who were so impatient to see and touch him. After a quarter of an hour wait, as he was late coming back, Mataji advised us to leave and not to come back until the next darshan. Outside, the Yogi was blessing pilgrims who all wanted to be first and rushed to touch his feet. Sadhu Rangarajan tried his best to prevent the crowd from knocking him over, but he alone could not oppose to that noisy overexcited and aggressive mass, in their excessive manner to hoard a blessing. Yogiji tried to return to the house, but the crowd was circling them and blocking the way. Then the Yogi took things in hand. He asked Sadhu Rangarajan for his bamboo stick, lifted it and walked through the crowd who, at once, made way for him and moved apart. As he walked into his house, Yogiji told Devaki that his stick

had acquired some power. It was, he said, the attribute of ancient Rishis, which was endowed with a great power.

In India, Thursday is the day devoted to the guru. Early in the morning, we worked at the book again with Sadhu Rangarajan. It was the 3rd of March, the darshan was quieter than the day before. The city had resumed its usual rhythm and in the garden surrounding the house the usual symphony of the numerous birds could be heard again.

As for birds, one of them used to come in the afternoon, for some brief minutes. This bird was of a very rare kind, and, when it was there, one used to let Yogiji know immediately. Everybody was then invited to keep silent in order not to scare it away. Meanwhile, Yogiji would cautiously stand up and approach it as close as possible so as to be able to watch it at leisure. On that day, Mataji asked me, through signs, whether I had my camera with me. As I replied negatively, she made me understand that it would be a good idea to bring it.

At the end of the darshan, Yogiji asked two westerners who had come for the first time to stay by him, together with my friend Laurent and myself. We then had the privilege of having lunch in the Mater's private residence. During the meal, Yogiji asked me whether I had been there already and that reminded me of an identical question he had asked me in the previous abode. That time, I had the intuition that I was no longer limited to the veranda of the temple, but that I could finally enter the inner sanctum. All along the meal, Mataji looked

after the Yogi as a mother looks after her child. She protected him with a large green napkin and, just as a trustful child, he let her feed his body. At the end of the meal, the mail was delivered. Mataji opened the letter which contained poems by Lee Lozowick. He had already published a small poetry work entitled: "Poems from a Broken Heart". Yogiji, who liked these poems a lot, had some of them read to him by Mataji. After a very simple, but very good meal (Mataji is also a very good cook), we resumed our bedrooms, and waited for the afternoon darshan.

A 4 p.m., Yogi Ramsuratkumar let me in. A californian friend, a devotee of Sathya Sai Baba's who came to see the Yogi regularly, was before me. She knelt in front of him as she walked in, and asked him whether he had actually received the audiotape of bhajans which had been sent to him. Mataji confirmed that he had not only received it, but he had also listened to it with the greatest attention. She explained to us that, when he heard the bhajans, his face was transfigured and that he and she had felt the invisible Presence of Sai Baba. Then, it was my turn to come in. Immediately, Yogiji invited me to come and sit by his side. A lot of people were coming again on that day, because lots of them had arranged a longer their stay; the peak hour was between 4 and 5 pm. In the course of those interviews, many students came to ask him for his blessing so as to be able to pass an important examination.

Several couples asked him for the grace to have a child. Then a couple appeared; the woman was at her worst.

After the husband has explained the nature of the problem, Yogiji asked the woman to eat a banana he was holding in his own hands, making sure she did not touch the skin of the fruit. Such a strange way to heal is quite common with the Yogi. For example, a devotee approached the Yogi once and told him that, according to doctors, he had to avoid all strongly spicy food for several years. Yogiji burst out laughing and told him: "Well, let's eat some!" And he asked him to go and buy a packet of pepper powder. The devotee was astounded. On the way to the market, the man panicked as he thought that if Yogiji made him swallow any pepper, he would not stand it. He eventually was unable to go against the Yogi's instruction; so, he bought a packet of pepper powder and took it to Yogiji.

The Yogi poured the powder into his coconut and, mixing it with water, he said: "Let's drink it now!" One can easily imagine what the devotee's disarray was like and everybody was expecting the mixture to be drunk by the sick man. But it was Yogiji who drunk it all in one go. After that, he started running and jumping here and there, producing a lot of noise. Then he suddenly calmed down, turned to the devotee, and said: "It's all right now; from now on you can eat spicy food." And, indeed, by the grace of Yogiji, this devotee is in good health, and can eat spicy food. This is the way Yogi Ramsuratkumar sometimes takes his devotees' karma and suffers their pains so that they get rid of them.

Later on in the afternoon, a man left the place sobbing. Then, a couple came to thank Swamiji to have given

them the grace of a child, while the woman was sterile. Then an old woman, full of adoration, knelt down at the Yogi's feet and implored his spiritual support so as to reach the realization of the Self. The flow of devotees only decreased late in the evening. When everybody had left, Yogiji let me go in my turn, after having transmitted me his grace. All along the darshan, he had acted on my back and held my hand.

Some time in the afternoon, on Friday the 4th of March, the bird came into the garden. As usual, Yogiji looked very happy; actually this bird seems to be the same as the one he killed once but thanks to which he had a vision of truth. According to him, when this bird flies away, it seems to him that his soul is liberated and also flies away in a wonderful ecstasy. That time, Laurent had his camera with him and could take some photos of the bird.

Among the devotees, there was a woman who had written very pretty devotional chants in the honour of Yogi Ramsuratkumar. After the recitation of a mantra and some chants by Devaki, this woman was invited to sing what she had composed. Her devotion was great and her voice, splendid. Everybody listened, their hearts pervaded with a sharp and beautiful emotion.

Saturday 5th March, in the afternoon. An idea had germinated in my mind. Since the previous evening, I had been thinking I needed to insert a special chapter in my book to present Devaki Mataji. But I did not have any detail about her life at that time. My two companions and me had agreed to formulate our request. As I usually

got in first, and because my English is rather unsure, we had planned that Stéphane, who followed close behind me, would ask the question to Yogiji. The scenario was well prepared. But, at the moment when I stood up, after the salutation, and before Stéphane has intervened, Yogiji said to me smiling: "It would be a good idea to write something about Mataji in your book." Once more, the Yogi showed us his omniscience and to what extent he was in harmony with those surrounding him. No barrier exists between him and his devotees.

Sunday 6th March was our last day. By noon, Yogiji let everybody leave except us, my wife and her brother Arnaud, Laurent and myself. And Yogi Ramsuratkumar invited us for lunch. Once the meal over, Yogiji invited me to come by his side, and Mataji came to sit at the feet of the Master who was hardly aware of our conversation and was working secluded in that world which I did not know but I could feel. That time, I could ask as many questions as I wanted to Mataji, and she told us about the Master's life, explaining us in detail many particularities of the Yogi's. For example, the fact that he goes to bed early and gets up in the middle of the night to read the newspaper or his mail, to meditate, or to simply smoke a cigarette. She mentioned that Yogiji slept and ate very little. She also told us about her spiritual relationship with the Master and approached many subjects the Yogi usually abstains from evoking. I also wished to ask the Yogi a question about the last year's experience of mine, when I had the vision to have been his son in India, in another life.

Although Yogi Ramsuratkumar did not take part in the conversation, he seemed to come out of his state at Mataji's request and, after having listened to the question, he looked at me straight in the eyes showing a big strength and said: "People have all kinds of experiences. This experience is your experience, it is a real experience for you, you can therefore write it in your book." He repeated that several times and Mataji made me notice that Yogiji was never interested in experiences of the past, and, with a large smile, asked me if I had well understood what the Yogi meant without speculating on what, to him, was pertaining to the past and so was of no interest to him. I nodded in agreement, and we approached some other subjects.

After one hour of close contact with the Yogi, I was in a peculiar state, sharing between an objective consciousness which was taking full advantage of the information Mataji had transmitted to me, and a subjective consciousness to which I was brought by the silent but active Yogi. My eyes were burning, as if I had a serious fever, and my body was totally electrified. These symptoms were typical; I always felt so when the Yogi administered me his strange treatment.

At the afternoon darshan, Yogiji showed us some beautiful pictures taken during the inauguration. He insisted on my choosing some. He regretted not to be able to give me more, but said the official photographer was coming the next day with another set of better quality pictures. Yogiji walked us to the door. I could feel he was sorry about the pictures, but we had planned

to take the first coach to Trichy at 5 o'clock, and so we made our good-byes to him.

On Monday 7th of March, the group (there were now 7 of us) decided to rent a minibus, and the departure was arranged at 7.30 am. Nobody knew about it actually, except the driver. Nevertheless, just after having eaten our breakfast at the ashram, a devotee came to pick me up telling me that Yogi Ramsuratkumar was expecting me at his home. My wife, Laurent and Arnaud decided to come along with me. Yogiji was at the door waiting for us. We were allowed in and he asked Mataji to make some coffee for us. Everybody sat on a mat in the veranda, and the Yogi showed us all the pictures he had received. I presume that he had called the photographer, who was a devotee of his, and who had travelled 9 hours by bus overnight to bring us the pictures. He told me to choose some, then asked the photographer whether he had the originals. As he said yes, he looked at Mataji and said to her: "Let him keep them all!" He looked at me and asked me whether it was enough. Rather constricted, I replied that it was a lot too much, and he burst out in his incomparable laughter. Then, he took me by his side for half an hour of silent communion. After this blissful moment, we left discreetly, keeping in our heart these feelings of fondness, tenderness, love and recognition all together. The truth is also realizing that nobody ever leaves, nobody is ever left, and that we are eternally living in the consciousness of the Father; this divine Son of his being the surest guarantor for us to live through the definitive experience one day.

YOGI RAMSURATKUMAR, THE DIVINE BEGGAR

YOGI RAMSURATKUMAR BHAVAN

"After so much tapasya, I knew the highest truth is this one : "He is Present in all beings. All are his multiple forms. There is no other God to seek. He only worships God who serves all beings."

(Vivekananda)

"I am without activity and without change, without parts and without forms, Absolute and eternal. I have no other support than myself. I am one without a second."

(Adi Shankara)

"Thus have you to consider this world flowing by: As a star at dawn, a bubble on the running water, the glow of lightning in a summer cloud, a lamp which is vacillating, a ghost, a dream."

(Prajnaparamita Sutra)

CHAPTER VIII

DEVOTEES' EXPERIENCES

When asked whether he has any visions, or if he possesses any siddhis, Yogi Ramsuratkumar always replies: "All I know is Ramnam", and anything that may

appear as grace around him is his Father's will. Nevertheless, spending even only a few weeks or months in his Presence is enough to realize that this divine beggar possesses the power of granting prayers, transmitting the Vision, healing mourners, conferring peace and love. Therefore the author has thought it might be interesting to include here some experiences some close devotees of Yogi Ramsuratkumar's have lived through. Those experiences, if they were put all together, could have made up a thick volume, but this was not my purpose.

Let's start with four close disciples of the Yogi's, acknowledged for their seriousness and intellectual integrity. First of all, Professor V. Rangarajan; I have already mentioned him several times. Here is the way Sadhu Rangarajan described his experience during his first contact with Yogiji:

"I am a devotee of Mother Mayee", I replied and paused, too disturbed in my mind to talk any further. The Yogi put down the cigarette in his hand and took up his fan. Holding it by the side of his right ear he peered into my eyes. I felt as though an electric current was passing through the nerves of my body; I was being transported from my physical body to another realm. Perhaps the Yogi noticed that I was chanting within myself the Gayatri mantra, unable to bear the penetrating vision that beamed forth from his glowing eyes. With a gentle smile he put down his fan and told me : "You need not take medicine, but you can take honey; honey is not medicine!" I was baffled! How did he know that I was,

under the grace of Mother Mayi of Kanyakumari, being cured of a lung disease without the aid of medicines and by the mere performance of agnihotra ? I at once fell prostrate at his feet."

After this contact, Sadhu Rangarajan had many evidences that this Yogi was a great realized one. And, lately, he told us the wonderful story of what happened to him four years ago, in 1991.

SAVED BY HIS HOLY NAME

It all began on the 19th of October, 1991. At that time, the sadhu was on a tour in northern India propagating the Ramnam recitation. That day, he was exactly in the holy city of Allahabad, on the banks of river Ganges. And, as it must be, he planned to go for his ablutions. In an isolated place, he took off his clothes and joyfully got into the purifying water, began his prayers to goddess Ganga and immersed three times in the water, as required by tradition. At a sudden the sand hillock on which he was standing collapsed and as he could not swim, he was carried away by the flow which is quite powerful in that area. This site being nearly deserted, it took a few pilgrims some time to notice what was happening just in front of them. Panic-stricken, the Sadhu tried with all his might to get back to the bank, but his efforts were vain. The current deported him far from the bank. The Sadhu, who could not swim, tried to keep his head out of the water, and to lift his arms to indicate his position.

During these crucial minutes, he remembered the Presence of his guru, and mentally told him: "Very well, if I am to die today, so be it!" And he started singing the Name of Yogi Ramsuratkumar. He immediately felt the effective presence of the Master by his side. The Sadhu, in the course of the interview, specified that he then had the impression to float, to be sustained by the surface, and that his fear immediately disappeared. He could then feel some hands grasping his hair and arms. He could then see a fisherman boat which rapidly came to his rescue. Hands hoisted him onto the boat and he was taken back to the shore. Still shocked, he heard one of the people exclaim: "Thanks God, if we had arrived one or two minutes later, you would be dead!" Once on the bank, it took him a few minutes to realize he was still in this world. He soon wanted to meet his saviours, but the fishermen had mysteriously disappeared.

He immediately wrote to Yogi Ramsuratkumar from Allahabad, posted his letter on Saturday the 19th, but, as the next day was a Sunday and that several days were necessary for the letter to reach its destination, it was obvious that the Yogi would not be immediately informed. At the time when this happened, the Sadhu's children, Ch.Vivekanandan and Kumari Nivedita, had come to visit the Yogi. They told him their father was currently visiting the north, and was at that time in Allahabad. Immediately, Yogiji made an hand gesture, and asked the present persons for silence. He stood up abruptly, went to a corner of the room and came back with a bunch of flowers he gave the children, telling them to leave for Madras immediately and to offer their

mother the bunch of flowers. The children didn't understand the reason for such behaviour, but obeyed the omniscient guru immediately.

They did not understand what it meant until a few days later, when they received the letter evoking the accident. Immediately at the end of his long tour, Sadhu Rangarajan came to see Yogiji who, at the end of the darshan, let him come by his side and asked him why he had a bath at this dangerous place. The Sadhu answered he only wished to bathe in a tranquil and solitary place. Yogiji then replied he should never do that again, and as he took his hand, he asked him: *"Do you think that this beggar has saved your life? When you were carried by waters, you have called Yogi Ramsuratkumar, but Yogi Ramsuratkumar is not the name of this beggar, this beggar is dead at the feet of Swami Ramdas in 1952. The name of Yogi Ramsuratkumar is the name of my Father, and when you have called Yogi Ramsuratkumar, it's my Father who was present. If this beggar had had the capacity to save you, he you would not have authorized you to bathe yonder. But by calling the name of this beggar, it is to my Father you have applied."*

Yogiji will never declare he is the one through whom the most wonderful things can be accomplished. In his total impersonality, he returns everything to his Father: "Father Ramdas is always with this beggar", he says. As a pure jnani, he only recognizes one truth, which is hardly perceptible to those who only pay attention to his human form. In his work (Glimpses of a Great Yogi),

Sadhu Rangarajan has brought two interesting testimonies of Yogi's lilas:

"Yogi Ramsurat showers his grace on the devotees through sight, thought and touch. Once a devotee sought the help of the Yogi to recover a sum of one hundred thousand rupees which he happened to lose. The Yogi consoled him by telling that he would get back the money within a particular period. When the devotee did not get it within the specified period, he approached the Yogi again. The Yogi coolly remarked that there were great masters in this land who could recover even a needle fallen into a sea, but he was after all a poor beggar. Yet, he said, he would pray to his Father and he wanted the devotee too to have implicit faith in the grace of the Father. After sometime, to the utter surprise of the devotee, he got back the money.

Two devotees of the Jagadguru Shankaracharya of Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham, Sri Chandrasekharendra Saraswati, visited Kanchipuram to have the darshan of the Paramacharya. After the visit, they wanted to have the darshan of Yogi Ramsurat about whom they had heard from this author. They came to Tiruvannamalai and knocked at the doors of Yogi Ramsurat's abode. The Yogi came out and looked at them for a moment. Then he immediately prostrated at their feet to their utter shock and surprise. Smilingly the Yogi told them: "You have come here after seeing the great Acharya. What is there in this beggar to see? My Father blesses you! You may

*go." Even before the visitors could recover from their shock, the Yogi had gone back into the house.*⁴⁸

THE RAIN MAKER

The second personality quoted hereafter is doctor T.I. Radhakrishnan, whose experience has been related in Tattva Darsana (November 1993 - January 1994), published on the occasion of Yogi Ramsuratkumar's 76th birthday:

"Dr T.I. Radhakrishnan who is well-known as the Chief Organiser of the Atiraatra Yagna held at Kundur, President of the Srauta Shaastra Parishad, Secretary of the Vyloppilli Memorial Committee, Chairman of the Panampilli Memorial Trust and Patron of Trichur Kathakali Club is also deeply interested in spiritual matters. He narrates certain important events which became a turning point in his life.

There was a meeting on April 16, 1990, to discuss the ways and means to make the Atiraatra at Kundur a success. There were only 12 days for the starting of the Atiraatra. It was at that time that Swami Nityananda Giri of Gnanananda Tapovanam came to Trichur. As the President of the Atiraatra Committee, I called on him to seek his blessings. He said: "I am wearing ochre robes. Doctor is wearing white clothes. This is the only difference between us. There is a Yogi in the garb of a

⁴⁸ Glimpses of a Great Yogi, Prof. V. Rangarajan, page 41/42.

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beggar in Tiruvannamalai. His Name is Ramsuratkumar. If you go and meet him and take his blessings, there will be no difficulty at all to make the Atiraatra Yagna a grand success."

Tiruvannamalai is 440 kms away from Trichur. When I pointed this out to him, he said that the distance was not a problem. Swami Nityananda Giri insisted that I must go to Tiruvannamalai and take the blessings of Yogi Ramsuratkumar.

Impelled by an intense urge of the mind, despite a little hesitation, I started from Trichur, on one Saturday night. Next morning, I reached Tiruvannamalai. When we went and knocked at the iron gate of the Yogi's abode, a boy came and opened. We informed him that we are coming from Trichur to seek blessings for the Atiraatra Yagna. The boy informed the Yogi, returned and told us: "Swami will meet you in two minutes time."

After two minutes, the door opened. We went in and sat. The Swami came.

The Swami gave us, from a coconut shell in His hands, the divine liquid called madhuparka (honey). This liquid is given only on occasions of very auspicious nature, filled with divine powers.

That great Yogi, aged above seventy, looked at my face and asked me: "Are you Dr Radhakrishnan?"

I nodded my head in the affirmative.

He placed a packet in my hands, held both my bands together and started doing some mantra japa...

At first, I did not feel anything special. But after ten minutes, I felt as though an electric current was passing through my body. I just looked around, I was wondering whether there was any wire with insulation removed, anywhere in the neighbourhood. I doubted whether I was sitting on some electric contact. But there was no evidence of any such thing. After twelve minutes, I felt that for about one or one and a half minutes, I had lost my consciousness...

The Yogi then patted me on my thigh and said: "This beggar has been praying to his Master to bless you and the Yagna and He has done it. What you are doing is very dear to the heart of this beggar. Now you can go to Kerala. Don't waste anytime in Tiruvannamalai." We immediately returned.

Yogi Ramsuratkumar lived under a punnai tree (Alexandria laurel) for ten years, and still lives like a beggar. A man who has not taken bath for forty years! He changes his clothes twice or thrice a year. If anybody brings food, he will take. But he won't wash his mouth and his only possessions are a stick, a palm leaf fan and a coconut shell. He now lives in a room which a devotee constructed and gave him. Till now, he has no Ashram, nor Sishyas. Some devotees come, take his blessings and return.

According to our assessment, the Atiraatra Yagna at Kundur concluded very successfully. After that I again went to Tiruvannamalai.

When he met me, Yogi Ramsuratkumar said: "Doctor, if we sit here, we can't talk undisturbed. After sometime, the devotees will start crowding up. Therefore we will go to some other place."

I nodded my head.

He got up. He walked towards the house of a devotee by name Ganesan. I followed him. Ganesan is the editor of the famous Mountain Path, a journal published by Ramanashram, and the grandson of Ramana Maharshi's brother.

"You brought good rains in Kerala by conducting Yagna. Why is it that we have not had rains in Tiruvannamalai for the last ten months? Why don't you bring some rain here also?" Ganesan asked me jovially.

Impelled by some unknown inner urge, without even stopping to think for a moment, and without any hesitation, I replied: "Why should you doubt? In the next seventy two hours, you'll have a heavy rain here. At least for two hours... "

As soon as I finished, I looked at the Swami. "Swami, I have uttered nonsense. You must kindly help me out", I said apologetically.

Hearing that, the Swami burst into laughter like a boy. Laughing and laughing, he fell on my lap. He lay there for two minutes. Then he went out. He was gazing at the top of the Arunachala Hill on the border of Tiruvannamalai, for more than twenty minutes and then hastened back. He said: "I fell uncomfortable. I want to lie down." Even before a mat was spread for him to lie down, He rolled on the ground.

After sometime, the Swami looked intently at the sky. Suddenly, the initial signs of rain appeared...

When the rain started, He said : "I'm very tired. Please take me to my place."

I took him to his abode.

"Doctor, you need not stay here any more. This rains is only in Tiruvannamalai...", He said.

Without any delay, I started from there. When we crossed the boundary of Tiruvannamalai, there was no rain. But there was heavy rain in Tiruvannamalai for two hours.

That day, before my returning, the Swami asked me jovially: "Doctor, if I fall sick, will you come hear and treat me?"

I immediately agreed that I would treat him. Then only I remembered the distance between Tiruchur and Tiruvannamalai. When I pointed it out to him, the Swami said: "The distance is not a problem."

That year, in the month of August, the Swami was indisposed. I had the privilege to go to Tiruvannamalai and treat him. I consider it as a great fortune. After that, I have been calling on the Yogi every month. Sometimes, I go there to see him more than once in a month. He has made a tremendous impact on my spiritual life.

The first scientific research workers are the great rishis of this land. The Nobel Laureate, Professor Linus Pauling, has given a crisp and simple definition of science : "Systematised knowledge is science." If we accept this as the yard stick, we can claim that India has got very rich spiritual science.

I, who have absolute faith in Spirituality, am a scientist.

To me, a student of science, the experiences in the spiritual field were mere superstitions until I came into contact with Yogi Ramsuratkumar. This contact was a great experience which became a turning point in my life. Yogi Ramsuratkumar is a supreme example of the Truth that by purifying the mind through Eswara Nama Japa, and by raising the mind and body through the practise of Yoga, one can bring them to the path to God realisation. ”⁴⁹

PEACE REDISCOVERED

⁴⁹ MANORAJYAM Malayalam Weekly, le 21 octobre 1993 -
Repris par TATTVA DARSHANA.

The third personality, today a close devotee of Yogi Ramsuratkumar's, is Sir G. Sankara Rajulu, who granted us with several interviews and explained us his first encounter with the Yogi.

"I am native from a small city close to Tiruvannamalai. The very first time I came to see Swamiji was on the occasion of a promotion to a position localized in Tiruvannamalai, position I not at all wished, preferring working near home. As Yogi Ramsuratkumar was already very famous, I came to ask him for his help. All of that happened in 1977. Despite my step, I found myself in the position of Tiruvannamalai. The college I was going to manage was the theatre of serious problems. Hardly two month earlier, this college had known strikes. Pupils were overexcited and aggressive, and serious perturbations had been committed. I did not know yet anybody and was alone as a responsible. In such conditions, the reopening risked to degenerate. Therefore I spoke of that to Swamiji in explaining him there would be certainly violence problems inside both of the college sections. He put one of his garlands of flowers around my neck and advised me to make what had to be made, with a total faith.

On the opening day, I had this total faith in the grace of the Yogi. Therefore I opened the college, made the call of students in the large entrance and, despite the danger that meant, gathered all the students, explaining them that I was new, that I wished with all my heart to put back this college in activity but, to reach that, I needed to get a chance. It was a real miracle because, for the first time

for a long time, students listened calmly and accepted to resume their studies. Police had asked for assisting at the opening, but I thought not wise to proceed at the opening in the police presence. Therefore I asked them to remain on waiting near the Ramanashramam situated at approximately 1,5 km and to intervene only in case of an extreme emergency.

By noon, Yogi Ramsuratkumar sent someone to call the college to know whether all was fine. I replied, very happy, that everything was functioning perfectly. Swamiji asked me to come on seeing him at the darshan of 4 P.M. and there, told me that henceforth I would be inspired by his Father, especially concerning the instruction which had to be given and the manner to well manage the totality of the establishment, “the important”, he told me, “was to remain always honest and right. “

Since this day, the college runs in peace and harmony. As for me, I have taken the habit, after courses, to go to the feet of the great Yogi. Some months after, my prayer came true, since I was appointed very near my native city.

THE PRESENCE OF RAM

The fourth personality is V. Ganesa, in charge of the Mountain Path, the official review of Sri Ramana Maharshi's ashram, and a fiery devotee of Yogi Ramsuratkumar's. The article which has been included

here with his authorization, appeared in the December 1992 issue.

"That happened in 1991. Once, while I was with Yogi Ramsuratkumar, he asked me: "Did you not receive a letter from Germany?" I replied that not. Some days after, he asked me again the same question. This time, I could not restrain my curiosity. "Can I know why Swami asks me this question?" He answered me while laughing: "Because Ganesha has to go to Germany!" The next day, I received a letter from my dear friend Charles Madigan who invited me to go in Germany.

Before to leave for Germany, I came on seeking the blessing of the Yogi and told him: "Again, one makes me leave. I don't like that. I am alone, Swami." He touched my head and said: "You are never alone, Ganesa! This beggar is always with you. He will be with you, wherever you go. Blessings of my Father are with you. Leave, now!" Tears of gratitude gushed from my eyes.

It was a direct flight for Frankfurt. From the airport, my friend Mr. Folker Gausmann drove me to Bonn, for meeting there Marlis Hibschenberger. While the car was running on the turnpike, the moment of the departure with the Yogi came back to my mind. I opened my eyes and looked around. On my left, there was a truck, and on the right, a big car, both of them moving at the same speed. My attention was attracted by the names of these vehicles: "Brahma" for the truck and "Ram" for the car. (The initiatory mantra of the Yogi is: Sri Ram Jai Ram Jai Jai Ram. He pronounces always the name of Ram,

pecially when people prostrate at his feet and when he blesses them in saying the holy name of Rama). The two vehicles were level with us for a long time. I was disturbed.

And, in Bonn, Hamburg, Frankfurt, wherever I went, in basement or on billboards, there were always huge advertisements proclaiming the name of Rama: " Begin your day with RAMA, the margarine! " When I landed in Boston (from Germany), a Westerner stopped me at the airport and asked me: "Are you Indian?" When I told him: "Yes", he asked me with devotion: "Do you know the saint who lives in southern India, Yogi Ramsuratkumar?"

Yes, the Yogi accompanied me all along this trip. »

THE OMNIPRESENT GURU

Perumal Raja is a devotee of Yogi Ramsuratkumar's; he goes to the Yogi's darshan every year, and then walks back up to Tirupati, an important pilgrimage site. On one of his visits, Yogiji gave him a ten paisa coin and told him to throw it as an offering in the inner sanctum of Tirupati temple to ask the main divinity of the temple who was the beggar of Tiruvannamalai, and then to give the answer back to him, whatever it might be. The devotee did so, and in his zeal, he even forgot to take off his sandals by the entrance. In an intense emotional state, facing the temple divinity, he threw the coin into the offerings tank and prayed from the very depth of his soul:

"O, Lord, who is this beggar?" And suddenly, Perumal heard a voice in the Temple answer his question: "Nenutan, nenutan", which means in Telugu: "Really, I am, really, I am". This showed the devotee that the main divinity in this high place was, in essence, in no way different from the inner reality of Yogi Ramsuratkumar.

In the course of another trip of Sri Perumal Raja's, in 1974, Yogiji let all the devotees leave at the end of the darshan, but prevented Perumal from leaving, and he asked him to remain by his side. The devotee was surprised and wondered why Yogi Ramsuratkumar prevented him from going. After he had waited for some time, he began to feel terrible intestinal pains and had barely the time to run to the toilets where he felt sick; he vomited so much that that he fainted on the spot. He was somehow taken back to the Yogiji who looked after him with great care and tenderness. When the devotee began to recover, Yogiji explained him why He did retain him beside him. He said to him: *"If I had let you leave on the desert road, nobody would have come to help you. "*

Omnipresence is the gift of those who have definitively liberated themselves from the world of forms. Sri Pon Kamaraj gives us here a brilliant illustration:

"A devotee from Madurai, having heard of Bhagavan's glory, decided to go on foot to Tiruvannamalai for receiving there His darshan. While he walked singing the name of Bhagavan Yogi Ramsuratkumar, an old man accosted him and gave him some fresh mangoes telling him: "My son, the walk has tired you. Eat these fresh

mangoes." The devotee replied: "Honoured Sir, you know that walking has starved me and you offer me these fresh mangoes." The old man insisted on him to eat them. Having eaten them, the devotee felt fulfilled, for they were not only tasty but had also pacified his hunger. He walked again some miles then was stopped by an other good soul who told him: "Friend, you seem tired. I have some milk at home. Come to share them with me." This generous man brought the devotee in a wild field where there was no trace of human habitation, excepted his own house. The devotee drank the milk offered by this good soul and resumed his journey. While approaching Tiruvannamalai, an other good soul told him to come on taking meal in his house. The devotee reached Tiruvannamalai in great joy. When he arrived at the door of Bhagavan, Bhagavan blessed him and, bringing him inside His abode, gave him something to eat. The devotee began to cry with gratitude and devotion in eating the food offered by Bhagavan. What did Bhagavan give him? Bhagavan gave him these same fresh mangoes, milk and a copious meal. The devotee was truly moved in realizing that Bhagavan, in his infinite mercy, had come in the form of these good souls to take care of his trip."

HEALER OF SOULS AND BODIES

Yogi Ramsuratkumar is also known for His miraculous recoveries. Mataji has wrote:

« I have been keenly observing how He deals with and solves the various problems and worries of devotees who

come and sit at His feet everyday and seek His counsel. Many come for relief from diseases. The Yogiraj, who always takes gooseberry as panacea and health tonic, gives anything as medicine and removes illness of devotees by His compassion. This Lord of Medicine not only administers sugar candy or banana fruit as medicine, but once He even made a devotee, who does not like buttermilk, to drink buttermilk daily and get relieved of his illness. Sometimes He makes one smell odourless flowers and get cured of illness. »

Here is another exceptional example of a recovery, related by S. Sitaraman:

« A lady devotee from Virginia came for darshan with a male friend. We were also there for darshan. The gentleman was suffering from acute cancer and doctors lost hope in him and he was near to his grave. Luckily the lady told him about Swami and his abundant spiritual powers and asked him to chant the name Yogi Ramsuratkumar which he did faithfully for several months. To the surprise of many, he was saved and brought back to life. »

The only recitation of the Name had operated a miraculous cure and the man came to thank the Yogi for his complete recovery.

THE CONSOLING FATHER

For his numerous devotees, Yogi Ramsuratkumar is a Father and one of the most important effects in His Presence is a feeling of peace, a tranquillity of mind that leads you to detachment. Sadhu Rangarajan gives us here an example:

"A Moulwi Muslim, whose the unique son was accidentally dead in the prime of life, was overwhelmed with pain and came to see Yogi Ramsuratkumar, the saint who always sings "Aum Sri Ram Jai Ram Jai Jai Ram", the taraka mantra received by initiation from his Master Papa Ramdas. The Yogi made the Moulwi sit by his side on a piece of torn mat on which Himself habitually sat. He put his hand on the Moulwi's shoulder, patted it gently and consoled him for some time, silently looking him in the eyes. Then, slowly, the Yogi asked him: "Do you go to the mosque at this time?" the Moulwi replied: "Yes". "Do you do Namaaz regularly?" "Yes" . "Then, my Father will take care of you, my Father will give you the peace of mind ". Having received the touch of the appeasing hands of the great Indian mystic during about half an hour, at the moment to leave, the Moulwi declared, eyes filled with tears of joy: "Hamari Dil Khush Ho Gayi Hai Maharaj" - Master, my heart is now happy and pacified".

THE DIVINE INSPIRER

The intimate and close contact with a sage never goes without any consequence, and the effects of this contact will inevitably depend on the qualities of each one as

much as on the inclinations acquired in the course of past existences .

Just as Lord Muruga inspired the Tamil poetry to his devotee Arunagirinathar, similarly Yogi Ramsuratkumar has awakened in some people some spontaneous poetical inspiration. The devotee concerned here is Sri K. V. Jagannatham, a fiery devotee of Lord Muruga's to whom he identifies Yogi Ramsuratkumar. He had once the desire to come and sing a poetry at the feet of the Yogi who blessed him.

The former began to sing and some exceptional thing happened. Indeed, the poetical chants that exited spontaneously his mouth were entirely new. The present devotees began to write down the words quickly, but it was impossible to get them all. It was also decided to tape them. This devotee came again to the source of his inspiration regularly. When he came, he would sit by the Yogi, who tapped him friendly on his back. The only thing to do was then to listen to the uninterrupted wave of divine chants. He wrote more than a thousand poems, and only the very first ones, which could not be recorded, were lost forever.

As Jagannatham was the publisher of a newspaper named Kalaimagal, he published the whole lot of the poems in several works. The first volume was published on the 1st December 1978, for Yogi Ramsuratkumar's birthday. The second one was published in 1980 and includes 207 poems. The third volume was published in November 1980 and includes 150 poems. The fourth volume,

published in 1981, contains some 401. And it is in March 1982 that the fifth volume was eventually published.

This case, although exceptional, is not unique since Sri Mr. P. Periaswami Thooran was also inspired; he also wrote poems after his encounter with Yogi Ramsuratkumar. These poems were recorded and sung by professionals of great reputation who recognize that, when they sing them, they feel transported in a deep state of ecstasy, and a spiritual strength impregnates them.

SAVED FROM SUICIDE

A devotee of Yogi Ramsuratkumar's once happened to get down to complete depression; he decided to commit suicide in a small bedroom of Tiruvannamalai. Having taken a maximum dose of poison, he fell, unconscious, in his bedroom. At the first glows of the day, the devotee recovered consciousness and realized he was still alive. Convinced he had been saved by the Yogi, full of immense devotion and gratitude, he wanted to go and see Ramsuratkumar to throw himself at his feet. But, to his very great surprise, Yogi Ramsuratkumar in person came to see him and, taking him by the shoulders, exclaimed: " Would you dare to die? Since the day you came to see this beggar, you have been in my jail. Come on! Climb up that mountain, and jump, and let us see if you die! " Yogi Ramsuratkumar has thus saved a large number of his devotees, whether they are aware of it or not.

THE HORSE SAVED FROM A PIT

It is quite common to see the great realized ones of this world act for the welfare of the animal world. Sri Ramana Maharshi had a cow, Sri Sathya Sai Baba has his elephant, Mother Mayi, her dogs. The love of a Mahatma makes no difference between the various forms of the creation and, to his mind, the same life animates the tree, the animal and the human being. Concerning Yogiji's compassion, here is an anecdote we were told by Sadhu Rangarajan.

Once, Yogi Ramsuratkumar woke up his devotees at 2 o'clock in the morning. At that time, he had no shelter to be accommodated and the devotees had to carry along, sometimes on their heads, heavy parcels where the letters were stored, as well as newspapers and all the things he would keep. He advised them to bring also the jute and cord cloth. On their way to the place which alone Yogiji seemed to know, he asked them to sing: "Ah, ah! Oh, oh!" Of course, several of his disciples were schemed, and others thought he had gone mad. The Yogi directed them to the station. At that time, there were not so many houses as today and nature was still very present. They eventually arrived in front of a large pit full of water and mud, from which indefinable sounds were emanating. At a closer look, the devotees discovered that a horse had fallen into it. Devotees were immensely happy with the omniscience of their Master and the love he felt towards animals. They tied ropes around the horse, but could not lift it out. Then, the Yogi went walking three times round the pit, and then commanded to pull the animal out while others were pushing it, and the horse was then lighter to

lift. Fully happy to have recovered its freedom, it ran away and disappeared in the countryside.

THE RAIN STOPPED BY YOGIJI

Numerous great saints have acquired a power on the elements of nature, and Yogi Ramsuratkumar has often demonstrated this ability. There is, for example, the story of a devotee named Thiru Kumari Ananthan who had to organize a meeting and a procession to the congressional Committee of the Tamil Nadu in Madurai. The city had been under the rain for several days, and no lull was forecasted. Therefore the devotee went to pray Yogi Ramsuratkumar who blessed him and promised him that no obstacle would interfere during the meeting and the rain would stop completely. All that was promised came true. There was not a single drop of rain in Madurai until the end of ceremonies.

MEETING WITH THE SHANKARACHARYA OF KANCHIPURAM

A devotee narrates:

"In the early 1980' when H.H. Paramacharyal of Kanchi went on a Pada Yatra, I had the opportunity to serve Him. Later, I was living in Tiruvannamalai and often sought the presence of H.H. Yogi Ramsuratkumar. Whenever I went to Kanchipuram for darshan of Paramacharyal, He asked me whether I met 'Visirimattai

Swamigal'. He usually called H.H. Yogi Ramsuratkumar 'Visirimattai Swamigal'. All the times I used to say "Yes", because whenever I went to Tiruvannamalai I met Swamiji in His abode. After I replied "Yes", Paramacharyal would close His eyes and remain silent for a few minutes.

On the 1st December 1985, I went to Kanchipuram to have the darshan of Paramacharyal. At that time He ordered me to go to Sri Ekambareswar Temple in Kanchipuram to attend two Vedic Homas and take the Homa prasad to Swamiji. According to His Divine Order, I attended the Vedic Homas and took the Homa prasad for Swamiji. I arrived with the prasad at Swamiji's abode in Tiruvannamalai at 10 pm, but He was not there. He was sitting inside the big Temple. When I saw Him, I ran up to Him and gave Him the Vedic Homa prasad and explained to Him about this prasad. He immediately touched the prasad with His eyes, kept the prasad on His head for a few minutes, and then distributed it to devotees.

Two months later, on 26th February 1986, I went to Kanchipuram to have the darshan of Paramacharyal. However, this time he did not ask about Swamiji. Directly, He ordered me to go to Tiruvannamalai and take Swamiji to Govindapuram to have darshan of H.H. Bodhendral's Adhistanam ⁵⁰. So I returned immediately

⁵⁰ This Shankaracharya constantly sang Rama's Name, and even nowadays Ramnam is consitously chanted in Govindapuram. Govindapuram is situated near Thanjavur.

to Tiruvannamalai and told Swamiji about Paramacharyal's wish. When I told Him that, Swamiji closed His eyes and then said: "WHEREVER ACHARYAL IS, THAT IS GOVINDAPURAM FOR THIS BEGGAR".

After 10 minutes, Swamiji got into a car and called me to accompany Him. He instructed the car driver to proceed to Kanchipuram. We arrived at Kanchipuram Sri Mutt at 4-30 in the evening. I ran into the Mutt and told Paramacharyal's personal attendant that Swamiji had arrived. When Swamiji entered the darshan hall, Paramacharyal got up and came close to Him and stood in front of Him. They looked at each other and raised their arms, palms facing out. They stood like that for a few minutes. At that time there were about 20 devotees present, who were fortunate enough to witness the Holy Meeting of these TWO GREAT SAINTS OF THIS KALIYUGA. Paramacharyal told the devotees present that Swamiji is "A DESCENDANT OF THE SUN".⁵¹

OMNISCIENCE

Omniscience, even when partial, is not the prerogative of all the saints. And, as I have experienced it myself, I can assert that in many occasions Yogi Ramsuratkumar has clearly read in my heart. In either of the following examples, Yogiji shows he knows what all his devotees

⁵¹ Tattva Darsana, First Decennial number, 1994, page 22,23,24.

are doing or thinking, even if they are far from him, and he shows that nothing can be hidden from him.

We know how sensitive Yogiji is to the problem of beggars, for having been one of them all his life long. Once, a beggar visited some close devotees of the Yogi's living in Madras. The housewife provided him with food. One week later, the beggar came back again, and again the housewife fed him. As he came for the third time, the brave woman lost patience and repelled the beggar, giving, as a pretext, the reason that he was unceasingly importuning her. The beggar went without telling anything. Several months later, this woman came to see Yogi Ramsuratkumar at one of his darshans. Then he repeated several times in a row: "Nobody likes the presence of beggars, and one should not come and disturb people again and again." This immediately reminded the woman of her own words and she regretted bitterly what had happened.

Ilaya Raja has written - in the Mountain Path, December 90/January 1991 - an interesting experience. A group of westerners decided to visit Sri Ramana Maharshi's ashram, and to meet Yogi Ramsuratkumar with a list of questions to ask him. The Yogi received them cordially, but asked them to come back the day after. So, they came back with their questionnaire in their hands. Yogiji read the first question aloud: "We would like to be initiated in a mantra by a competent person. Would you, please, suggest us whom we have to go and see?" The Yogi retorted immediately: "This beggar feels that you should

be initiated by Sri Swami Vireswarananda, President of the Ramakrishna Mutt of Calcutta."

Before he could go on, the group prostrated before him and confessed: "Swamiji, please, forgive us, we have learnt by others you were a great siddha-purusha, we wanted to test the veracity of your greatness. We are just back from Calcutta, and we have jst been initiated by our guru, Swami Vireswarananda. The Yogi's face illuminated and, with comprehension and benevolence, he said : "No, have no remorse, you have the right to test this beggar. Didn't great Master Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa say that one should fully test a Mahatma from all angles, before accepting him as a guru ?"

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* *

CONCLUSION - C.C. KRISHNA'S⁵² MESSAGE

By way of conclusion, I will leave the pen to my friend Krishna who was also granted the grace to meet Yogi Ramsuratkumar, his Master and who goes to His feet every year. He has been entrusted with the charge of spreading the practice of Ramnam throughout France and the French speaking countries. Our common work will be one more stone for the spiritual edifice it is today vital to build all over the world and which should mobilize the disciples in love with Truth, from all spheres of spirituality,

« ALL I KNOW IS RAMNAM »

Brethren and sisters, it is indeed an important event for the seekers of Truth speaking our language to see the publication in French of a work about a most ineffable being, Yogi Ramsuratkumar. Such is the existence of this saint among the saints, unknown treasure hidden in the womb of Mother Bharat up to now, but revealed here at last. And the publication of this biography just at the time of the exteriorization of the Yogi's mission is no coincidence.

⁵² Later, Gaura Krishna.

Sage among the sages, Yogiji is a being who has joined the universal Soul, he is the living example of the aim to reach. In Yogi Ramsuratkumar, the Self alone is shining. Therefore he says that Yogi Ramsuratkumar does not exist (as individuality), that this name is the name of His Father (the individuality absorbed in the Totality). He has become the Temple and the Divinity within. True Light which is, like the Sun, simply content to **be**, He is the universal witness, never involved in the movement but giving life to everything. Liberated alive. But more than that, he said once that realization had not been an aim for him, but only a beginning.

May be you have passed through inner experiences (and in fact every experience is internal); you may have read a lot of readings too, in order to keep connected with the interior, you may have absorbed the greatest philosophies and reached the Advaita Vedanta, nevertheless this is still nothing as it keeps within the limits of mental understanding and does not open to true realization. But being in the very presence of someone who has reached the Absolute is an experience, and it leaves far behind all readings as well as other things. All temples are behind, for the Temple itself is here. The embodiment of Wisdom, Knowledge, Humility, Love. You reason no more about Advaita, you are with Advaita.

The Soul is searching for Him, He who has no ego. In the presence of Yogiji, you can feel Jesus' words: « If you want to become like Me, renounce thyself » and again : « Leave all and follow Me », and again: « Be like those little children who are coming to Me. » Yogi

Ramsuratkumar is the incarnation of this path and of this accomplishment.

Yogi Ramsuratkumar! What a power in this divine Name! How weak the words to express Yogiji! Who could express Music through words? Yogiji is divine music which beams and what is felt is not expressed, cannot be expressed, cannot be explained, but « is »! The soul communes to his radiance and his Light comes to illuminate the being. My Father blesses, he is always blessing, in the deepest and largest meaning of the word. Like the Sun.

And there is something peculiar with Yogi Ramsuratkumar. He doesn't teach with words. He doesn't do long speeches which, afterwards, are put in books and sold. He is. The true teaching is not mental, it is beyond the mind, where true realization begins. It doesn't reside in the fact of storing words, in an intellectual possession; it is in the being, in the effective realization. Yogiji does not speak to the intellect. He has come for a higher stage. Moreover, he says everything has already been said by the greatest beings who have wandered round this planet, particularly Bharat, and it is enough to go back to the teachings of the rishis and, nearer to us, of those great lights. Why should we repeat?

The only important thing is the effective realization. And this Light, within Kali Yuga, comes to show us the path leading to realization, the way that suits this time, and contains all teachings, all philosophies, all sadhanas, all sciences :

« This beggar died in 1952 at the lotus feet of his Father Swami Ramdas. From this time, nothing else exists but my Father. Only my Father. My Father alone. My Father alone exists. He is in all and He is doing all, this beggar has nothing to do. My Father is all. He is in all and all is in Him. He is in everything and every thing is in Him. There is nothing else than my Father (Looking at the present people and at the things): I see only my Father here. He is the past, the present and the future. Only God came in the form of Ramdas. When Ramdas left his body, there was only God. This beggar doesn't exist. This beggar has no body, he has no mind. He doesn't exist. Only my Father exists. Yogi Ramsuratkumar is not the name of this beggar. It's the name of my Father. Therefore this beggar wants hear it to be sung! »

And Yogiji has said: *« All I know is Ramnam ».*

And you become aware of the fact that all philosophies, all sadhanas, resolve, as a matter of fact, in the Name, in the Divine Name. And Ma Devaki told me: *« Bhagavan said that he brought nothing new. But He said he has given the Name to the world. ».*

Thinking and speaking are inseparable. There is thought only when there is language, there is language only when there is thought. That is the expression of the mind. A child does not speak, so he does not think. He merely is and feels. Therefore the sentence: *« Be like those little children »*, beyond any thought, and one will note that Yogi Ramsuratkumar's behaviour is specifically like the one of a child, therefore He is named *« Godchild*

Tiruvannamalai ». It is by means of repeating: « John, come here, John, do that, and so on », that the child becomes somewhat hypnotized and imagines he is inseparable from the form 'John' or from the name 'John'. As soon as the mind comes into play, the veil of Maya appears. « We become what we think of ».

Name and form are inseparable. As soon as we think « John », the form of « John » appears. As soon as the form of « John » is thought of, the name appears. The name is nothing but the creation of a thought, of a word (the Creative Word), as a dream is real so long as it lasts, but reveals afterwards as being nothing but an illusion. If we see in the sentence of Descartes: « I think, therefore I am », « I think therefore I am as an ego », that is nothing but hypnotism and pure illusion.

If one wishes to find Oneself again, beyond the ego, beyond ahamkrti or individuation, we must consequently annihilate all thoughts, and on that account form, and that is the process of meditation. Or we must concentrate on a single thought or a single form, the form of All. And, as the name is inseparable from the form, we have to concentrate on the Name of All so as to become All, the Self again.

« *All I know is Ramnam* »! This is how every sadhana is summarized. And this is the reason why all the great saints of Bharat insisted on the repeating of the Name. Krishna says: « *Among all the sacrifices, I am Japa* ». And from the Vedas: « *We mortals consider Your Divine Name greater than yagnas, tapas, etc. Let us all sing*

Your Divine Name! » (Rig Veda- VIII - 11/15). The Name is the Alpha and the Omega. Through it the creation, through it the dissolution.

Moreover, there is something very important and quite peculiar in the repetition of the Name, which makes all the great Indian sages recommend it, from the rishis to today's sages. They see it as the best spiritual discipline for the Kali Yuga in which we live. In fact it is the only sadhana to be practicable at any time and in any place, as it allows, in a world in which everyone seems to be running after time, to have the mind focused on the Divine nearly all the time. Yogiji offers us this possible realization.

But why is it particularly Rama's name? « 'Rama', this two lettered mantra is greater than even 100 crore mantras » says Skanda Purana. When, at the end of the recitation of the thousand names of Vishnu, Parvati asks whether, among those thousand, there is one greater than the others, the God's answer is that reciting the only name of Rama is equal to the recitation of the thousand names of Vishnu. But it is no use repeating here what was said before in the middle part of this work.

« *All this beggar knows is Ramnam!* ». Yogi Ramsuratkumar would never have encouraged the writing of this book if it had been about Him only. « *Yogi Ramsuratkumar doesn't exist.* » So why write a book about Yogi Ramsuratkumar? Especially since he does not speak of his past life and since he recently gave to those who would try to search into that past the warning that

they would be destroyed. « *Yogi Ramsuratkumar is the Name of my Father* ». Yogiji has actually authorised the publication of this book for the only sake of Rama, which is the name of the Universal Consciousness.

The purpose of this book is the message more than the messenger, so that Ramnam may spread all over this world in the depths of Kali Yuga, and provide everyone with the means for realization. Its aim is not to be just one more book which would only be one more opportunity to read and to let minds grow more important. No, reading this book should provide a guide leading to a real realisation which can be truly lived through and practised; it should lead to a « to be », to the dissolution of our illusion, of the veil of Maya. It opens on an effective practice, on the Ramnam sadhana.

Even more, for Ramnam is not only a sadhana for one's own realization. Through its vibrations containing the universal thought of the All, it benefits everybody. In 1982, Mataji Krishnabai said in her 'Prayer to Purushottam Papa': « *Now the world situation has further deteriorated and conflict and unrest are on the increase. Your Name alone can counter-act such antagonistic forces and create waves of peace to flow all over the earth. ... In order to realise their oneness with You, devotees have to expand their vision by serving the entire universe, which is Your own form ...All without exception, can use their mind in Your service, i.e., they can chant Your Name more and more...* » and Mataji had launched the Ramnam Mahayagna for a worldly peace, choosing, as a life long mission, to make the entire world

echo the divine mantra. Yogi Ramsuratkumar took over this mission and wishes the objective planned (155 billion mantras) would be reached within the present generation. And what he tells us shows how far this sadhana can be the support of realization. : « *Chanting Lord Rama's Name is a great sacrifice and participating in this Mahayagna is equal to receiving initiation from my Master, Swami Ramdas, Himself.* »!

In this land of Bharat - India - at all times the spiritual master of the World, Ramnam has ever been practised. Nowadays, its vigour seems to be wonderfully reviving which perhaps goes along with the awakening of true Hinduism, sanatana dharma, the Eternal Law. Centres now exist all over India. Taking part in an akhand Ramnam (singing Ramnam from dawn to dusk), for example, is an internal experience with an inestimable richness. The tree is growing, branches are developing and one of them is now reaching France and the French speaking countries, where it is now going to unfurl. However, Yogi Ramsuratkumar has given his warning, saying that in European countries the work to achieve is 'himalayan'.

Those few words making up a conclusion are, in fact, nothing but an introduction, an invitation to go further and deeper into this sadhana, and even into its intellectual explanation to start with. It is your servant's only duty, and he gives you the following address:

YOGI RAMSURATKUMAR INTERNATIONAL
ASSOCIATION

421, rue Edmond Simon
59870 - VRED
FRANCE

The word 'association' is nothing but a word. 'RAMA NAMA' is a little monthly magazine and the link between all the people practising Ramnam.

Let us eventually add that the Ramnam path is open to everyone, whatever his race, religion or other purely illusory factor of difference may be. This association's main purpose is to get our fellow men who are true spiritual seekers to know where to go as there are facing dogmas, sects or unreliable books about occultism, and to show them the universal and multimillennial Ramnam path, given by the greatest sages who have been wandering all over this planet, as the easiest and most practicable way for everyone.

Many more persons that we may think are in this case, especially because of our current world's crisis. So many people are feeling lost in this imbalanced world. This way, they will be able to find a simple and free way, and also help the spiritual evolution of our planet, without renouncing anything in their system of thought. This path is universal, and as one of the greatest Masters in this world said:

*« For where two or three are gathered together in my
Name,*

YOGI RAMSURATKUMAR, THE DIVINE BEGGAR

there am I in the midst of them. »

YOGI RAMSURATKUMAR
YOGI RAMSURATKUMAR
YOGI RAMSURATKUMAR
JAYA GURU RAYA !

AUM SRI RAM JAI RAM JAI JAI RAM !

YOGI RAMSURATKUMAR BHAVAN

YOGI RAMSURATKUMAR, THE DIVINE BEGGAR



**YOGI RAMSURATKUMAR
WITH SWAMI GNANANANDA**
(Ch 'Meeting of two sages')

YOGI RAMSURATKUMAR, THE DIVINE BEGGAR

YOGI RAMSURATKUMAR BHAVAN

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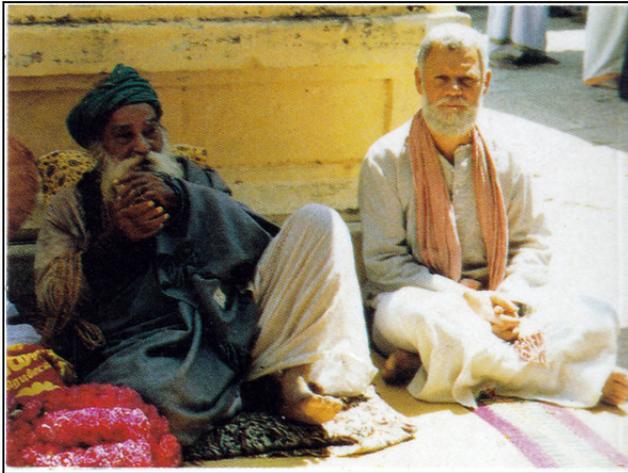
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YOGI RAMSURATKUMAR, THE DIVINE BEGGAR
OF TIRUVANNAMALAI

Yogi Ramsuratkumar was born in 1918, on the banks of the Ganges. As soon as a young child, he gave up the family way of life to devote himself to the spiritual experience through which a man finds the spring fo his divine nature within himself. In 1947, at the age of 19, he met his first teacher, Sri Aurobindo. Far later, by Sri Ramana Maharshi's side, he got to some degree of awakening. In 1950 eventually, at the transitional period between the two giants of the hindu spirituality, he got acquainted with the person who was to become his guru, Swami Ramdas of Kanhangad. After his initiation to the divine Ram mantra, in 1952, Yogi Ramsuratkumar reached the highest degrees of Self-Realization and, after a seven year long pilgrimage throughtout India as a simple beggar, he eventually and definitely settle in Tiruvannamalai, at the foot of Arunachala, the sacred montain of Shiva.

His ashram was inaugurated on the 26th February, 1994, in Tiruvannamalai. His mission is simple. It consists in awakening his disciples and spreading the practise of the constant repetition of the divine Name of Ram, perpetuating in that way the work done by his guru Swami Ramdas.