



So Often You have Taken so Many a Form

*So often You have taken so many a form,
And graced this world with Your presence:
I cannot believe, You will not again bless
Your devotees, with Your luminescence.*

*But I am not even a bhakta, my Lord;
Will you not e'er come before me?
I may not recognize any other form, Lord,
Will you appear as Ram, just for me?*

*I depend on You, O Redeemer Divine,
Release me from my bondage so grave:
Immerse me in Thy beauteous being,
O Emancipator! Only You can save!*

*In Your compassion, I perceive Your Divine birth,
May Your grace dawn 'pon my heart:
This innermost core, too, is Thine, O Lord!
Take it now – may we never part.*

कई रूप लिये कई बार प्रभु

कई रूप लिये कई बार प्रभु, भक्तन् को मिलने आते हो।
मैं न मानूँगी भक्तन् को, तुम दरस नहीं दिखलाते हो॥

पर मैं तो पिया तेरा भक्त नहीं, क्या मुझको दरस दिखाओगे।
कोई अन्य रूप पहचानूँ न, क्या राम रूप में आओगे॥

इक तू ही सहारा है मेरा, इस 'मैं' सों पिया तू मुक्त करा।
इसको ही तो पिया मिटना है, अब राम भाव से युक्त करा॥

तव करुणा ही तव दिव्य जन्म, अब मेरे हृदय में आ जाओ।
यह हृदय पिया मेरा तेरा है, निज हृदय को आ अपना जाओ॥

Our Beloved Mother

In Her life and words Param Pujya Ma embodied the essence of Vedanta, which clarifies that 'All are One'. She will always remain a source of inspiration for seekers of all faiths and Her eternal message is 'Love All'.

Arpana celebrates the wondrous life and Living Essence of their Divine Mother and expresses gratitude for Her Presence in their lives in this edition of the Pushpanjali dedicated to Her.

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*Life became Worth Living,
because You Became a Part of it*



26th August 1998

Param Puja Ma,

It is impossible to express in words what I want to place at Your Feet.
But first, Divine Ma, let me place my thoughts before You for the Supreme

Grace bestowed on me – and so many others – by my being brought before You in September 1962.

Since then, Yours has been a pure, eternal flow of one-sided love towards this child, a complete protection, a Divine Light pointing the way towards the first – and only – goal imaginable, the goal to the Lord and Master's Feet, the goal which alone can – and assuredly must – take anyone who determines to go single minded towards it, to permanent, unalloyed bliss.

To the One who is Love and Divinity Itself, and who has come to constitute the only true reason for me to live, I humbly place all that I am at Your Feet. I know I have nothing at all to commend me. I had virtually no spiritual aspirations, no real adherence to truth... and I was full to the brim with a self-righteousness that had no basis whatsoever.

Suddenly that September evening, seeing You, hearing You, and simply being in Your Presence, set about a complete change in my thought processes and priorities. Suddenly from You came a hope that life can be most beautiful simply because it is the Master's Creation; that life can be most beautiful simply because I am surrounded by His Grace; that life can be most beautiful if I even begin to live by the Master's Injunctions and if I try to be sincere, honest and loving; and that life can be most beautiful, if I simply became instrumental in bringing smiles of well-being on as many faces as possible.

Suddenly life became worth living, because You became a part of it, till, gradually You came to become **all** of it. I had, deep down, always been an idealist, and suddenly all that You said and did gave me the ideal to be near You and to live by the simple, beautiful truths You tell of, and manifest.

Suddenly a little, very little, flame of hope and happiness, and aspiration was lit by You, Ma, in my parched heart. Suddenly a sublime strength of conviction began to infuse my being, a conviction that what You tell is the finest way to live; that the eternal values are the way the Lord desires us to live; that the Master is sheer beauty Itself; and that each one, whoever, and wherever he or she is, is the Master's child, and to be cherished from the heart.

Gradually and imperceptibly I underwent a radical change. The process was so subtle that it happened over this period of three decades; I did not seek it at all – it just happened. You did not consciously generate this change I me, **yet it happened** by Divine Grace.

Your sheer force of unseen Divine strength, Your pure love, Your indescribable identification and patience, Your unbelievable forgiveness and Your unbounded compassion brought its natural impact on as insensitive a person as me.

My Divine Ma, You are by far the most beautiful thing that happened to me during a span of innumerable lives. I have learnt from You that this is a perennial story of many *janams*; it must be because it is not a story of this *janam*... What have I made of it, and what will I make of it is to be seen.



Looking at it with honesty, I can only say that over these past 36 years, it has all been an unconditional, unilateral, unending flow of love, of spiritual guidance, of being with me in each bend and turn of my life, holding me close, taking away my emotional burdens and cares, and placing me on a spiritual journey, if only I will take the path.

Let me conclude this letter by placing this, Your little one, at Your Feet. I seek nothing except to be an obedient, honest, sincere servitor. I do not want recognition, I do not want a change in my circumstances because I cannot imagine a more conducive set of circumstances than these for me to do the ONE THING I seek to do, namely to tread the Spiritual Path.

I am deeply conscious that in all we say and do, we represent You Ma; in our respective ways we are Your ambassadors. This places upon us a specially heavy responsibility, that is, to live and uphold the perfect principles for the carrying out of His Name as You have given us.

May we all prove worthy of the Benediction bestowed on us. May love permeate each one of us completely.

Your little one,
Ratti



My Beautiful Mother

USHA SETH



In a reminiscent mood, I recollect a young woman in her thirties fervently looking for a mentor – a guiding light who would steer her through the descent of life into an oasis of peace. Like a rudderless boat, she was tossing on conflicting waves, directionless, seeking a lighthouse to show the way. I happened to be that young woman. I was hit by the purposelessness of my life. The loss of a mother at a tender age was the greatest lacuna of my life. The little child in me longed for a mother in whom she could confide her trivial sorrows, dilemmas and secrets.

God's greatest benediction was that He took me to the doors of the great mother in Madhuban. The last rays of the sun glinted on the window panes, bathing the place in mellow gold. As I entered the room, I saw an angel-like celestial being sitting in her white sari. She smiled at me. Her intent gaze magnetized my whole being by powerful emotions – of seeking, waiting and believing. An aura of serenity enveloped me. She took me in the purity of her divine embrace and a heavenly tranquility fell on me. That moment was the most beautiful moment of my life.

The great moments of life are like molasses, always sweet, never forgotten. She filled a great void in my life. I had found my lost mother at last! Gradually darkness and silence intermingled with something unheard, unseen, untouched. I felt insignificant amidst such beauty. What mattered was that I did not matter. I was engulfed by an enchantment which filled my whole universe with love and light. The felicity of love which engulfed me in its magnificence made everything else seem completely altered. It was a whisper from the other shore, a benediction.

A new journey had begun for me – a journey in search of Truth and Light. ‘Ma’ became my mother, friend, mentor, guide – all in one! There is fusion of a saint’s purity, a child’s simplicity and a mother’s compassion in her Personality. She lives for an ideal and motivates her little children to join her in her mission. Her life is an embodiment of the Scriptures – living in tune with the unique spirit. Her spiritual dynamism, her beaming face, her spontaneous love touches a discordant chord in our hearts and tunes it to the Eternal.

Her teachings are simple, with lofty idealism. “Kindle a little candle each day and your life will shine. Offer tiny grains of love to hungry hearts and the sunbeams will brighten the chambers of your heart. Wipe the tears of the sick, be a friend to the friendless, embalm the whole wide world with love. Forget this ghastly thought of ‘my and mine’. Love all, serve all and be a servant of the world. Be a giver like the sunshine, like the rivers, like the flowers – fragrant and beautiful and always smiling. Be an insignificant stone in the temple of service.”

Ma sings her eternal songs to our souls. Her eyes are radiant with the mystery of the Eternal. Her captivating gaze captures the innermost crevices of our hearts.

She overhauled me, cleansed me, whispered great Truths in my being! She filled a great void in my lonely life by giving me a little corner at her feet. Allow me, my beautiful mother, to be a speck of dust under your feet. My heart is full of gratitude for thy benediction. Let me by thy little child, life after life, eternally. ❖



My Humble Privilege

to be at Ma's Feet

KAMLA BHANDARI



I always had a deep urge within me to meet the connoisseurs of religion to somehow answer my small spiritual quest. I got this opportunity in Pune, where Ma had come to stay in 1963. Someone asked her a question and lo and behold! she spontaneously and instantaneously started replying by singing in verse in a most melodious, reflective and sober tone. The thought process was so systematic and relevant that I, for one, was absolutely wonderstruck with not only the scintillating mellow tone of the song,

but the depth of the answer and the beautiful sequence in which the verses flowed. To say the least, I was deeply touched. The next answer was equally precise. All this made a deep impact on my sensitive mind, and there was an immediate decision to continue coming to see her as long as she was there.

On the way back my husband said, “it is surprising that she had memorized so many verses that she sang!” Little did he realize that this was a divine flow by God’s Grace! I later learnt that Pujya Ma had termed it ‘Urvashi’ symbolizing the *apsara* who distracted the sage Vishwamitra from his *tapasya*. Ma had called it ‘Urvashi’ to guard her ever becoming conscious of its exquisite uniqueness and thus taking any personal credit for it even at an unconscious level. For me it was soul-stirring experience. Although Pujya

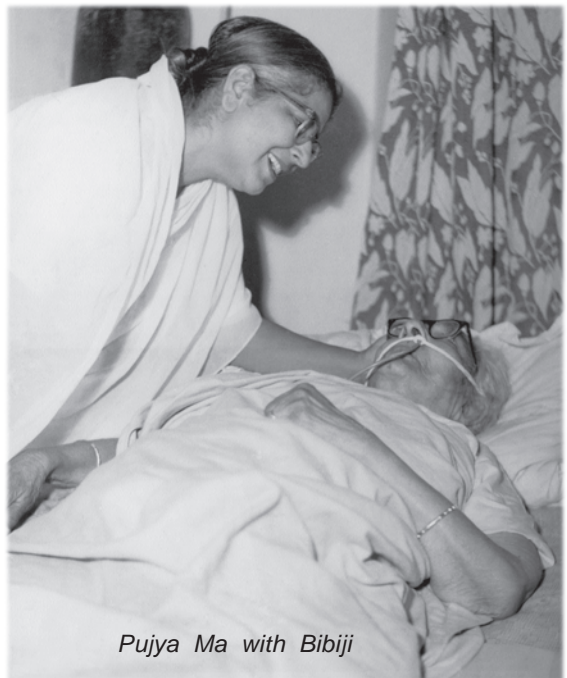
Ma acted like a very ordinary person in her conduct with others, she left an extraordinary impact of divine beatitude. This is how I was affected – absolutely entranced and in rapture over the manifestation of ‘Urvashi’.

Before Pujya Ma came into my life I had a definitely egoistic personality. Since destiny had favoured me in many ways, giving me some kind of position, name and material assets, I had subconsciously started taking credit for all the good things that happened in my life. Since destiny also gave me an opportunity to indulge in some kind of ‘social service’, the image of goodness was stamped in my mind. At my very first two private meetings, Pujya Ma indicated this negative aspect of my personality. Although it came as a rude shock, inside me I knew that she had summed me up quite correctly. But surprisingly it did not draw me away from her, in fact it brought me closer to her since I realized that she knew much more about me than I myself knew at a conscious level.

When I had to leave Pune, I felt I was leaving a part of my heart behind with Pujya Ma. I had sensed her deep love for me, which she had for all the people around her... even though she was aware of my shortcomings and that I had nothing to offer her in return.

My husband’s mother, Bibiji, had somehow intuitively gauged Ma’s spiritual state and had a strong urge to spend the last lap of her life with Ma, who had since moved on to Dharwar. Unknown to her sons, she accompanied her granddaughter, Mrs. Sheila Kapur, to Dharwar. As she got off the train after the long journey, she almost fell into Ma’s arms saying, “It is here that I wish my end to be!”

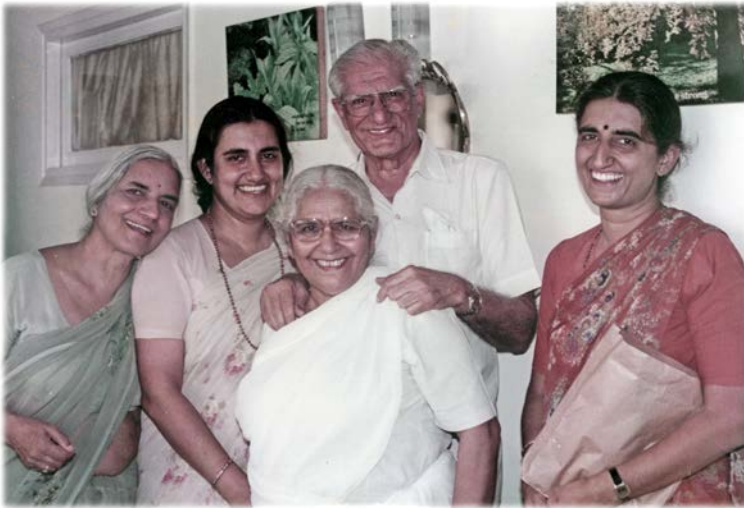
Bibiji’s ill health caused us to rush to Dharwar soon after. Despite being unwell herself, Ma would be carried to Bibiji’s room so as to provide the latter with the spiritual food she



Pujya Ma with Bibiji

aspired for. The spontaneous divine flow 'Urvashi' was so inspiring to witness. One instantly felt transported to a different world! It was a fascinating experience to see how Pujya Ma gradually and systematically tried to wash away all grudges, regrets and any thoughts, actions or reactions that weighed upon Bibiji's mind. Slowly, within the span of about a month, she dealt with all the impressions and *sanskars* that Bibiji was not comfortable to carry with her to her next life. Bibiji left her mortal frame very peacefully and Pujya Ma personally conducted the last rites... with Urvashi flowing all the while. It was an ethereal experience for all of us who were present there.

In early 1965, Pujya Ma and the Arpana family had shifted to Madhuban. She would often come to Delhi and stay with us. She would watch how I



Pujya Ma with the Bhandari family in Delhi

did not let my children do any house work because I felt they were not capable of doing it as I would like it to be done and because I wanted them to concentrate on their studies. Her method was very different. Whereas my

way stunted their development, Ma's method built them up. She believed in giving full latitude, opportunity and freedom to children even at an early age to encourage their initiative and independent handling of jobs. She entrusted them with responsibility, regardless of whether that would mean any loss to her or spoiling of things in any manner. In that process of independent functioning, the children get confidence and their personalities develop in a positive manner.

There were other arenas also where I could not understand, much less appreciate Pujya Ma's way of dealing with people. At that time the Arpana family was small and Ma could devote more time to each member. Their means were not affluent, yet Pujya Ma's generosity was unrestricted. She

would buy presents for all, which did not seem very rational to me. Also most of the people did not do any jobs but seemingly spent so much time in the study of scriptures and writing the manuscripts that had been sung by Urvashi. I, on the other hand, lived purely at a gross plane appreciating only gross achievements.

Quick to discern my disapproval, she said to me, “Wait for 20 years and then make your judgment!” Time has proved that she was absolutely right in her method. She not only created earning capacity in one and all but what is more important, built their characters on a strong foundation. Now they all do selfless service to perfection and are engaged in gross jobs day and night but with a difference! Instead of earning for themselves individually, they are doing it as a joint venture for the organization to be able to help others who are not so well off.

In the world when we do not agree with others on any issue, we not only come in clash with them, but totally reject them, harbouring negative feelings for such people. With time, these get deeply entrenched in the mind, waiting to explode. Pujya Ma disapproves of our behavior patterns and always says “You can agree to disagree”. She never rejects anyone, in fact she bestows so much love on the individual that many of the negative traits get dissolved automatically without one even being aware of the process. I have experienced this personally. I had my own strong concepts on how to deal with my husband, my children and had set ideas regarding social service etc. Ma made it very clear that she vastly differed from my concepts on these issues but since discussion created unpleasantness, she labeled these as ‘banned topics’ between her and me. Yet she loved me ‘never the less’.

During the span of so many years, I have realized how wrong my ideas were, and to the extent I succeeded in



changing my concepts, my relationship with others improved and I myself became a happier person. The whole secret is complete identification with the other individual and trying to see things from the other's point of view. This attitude relaxes one instantly. It is amazing how blind one is to the fact that insistence on one's own point of view and asserting one's ideas only brings tension and unhappiness. Pujya Ma has a 'master play-way' method, by which she succeeds in changing people radically, although this certainly is never her aim.

I had requested Pujya Ma to explain the Gita to me starting right from the beginning. She never ignores a genuine desire of anyone and proceeds



to fulfill it, no matter what it may cost her in taking her away from her other jobs or causing physical strain to her delicate health. So in 1972, when I was with her in Dalhousie, she spent almost 17 hours daily for about 3 months during which time she finished the whole Gita for me. Whilst explaining to me the exact import of every *shloka*, she kept writing the same in her own hand also.

It was really a labour of love! I felt very elated and gratified at having received a personal tuition on an important scripture as the Gita.

It was not even a year after when Pujya Ma one day asked Abha, "You have served me diligently all these years, what would you like me to do for you?" "Ma I would like you to explain the Gita to me", she said innocently. It did not take Pujya Ma a second to spontaneously offer to do the whole Gita once again, explaining it from the point of view of an ignorant child. Yet, as we can see from the masterpiece manuscript produced, that she has taken the context to a scholarly level also.

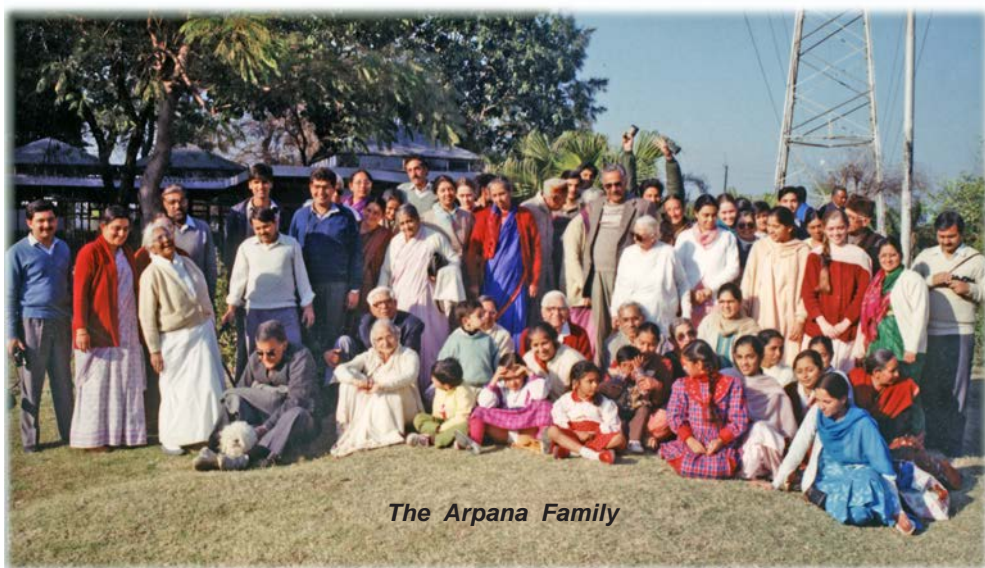
I felt that such a unique exposition of the Gita should be shared with other seekers, so it was decided to get it printed. Pujya Ma never made any suggestions as it did not matter to her even if it was never printed. This shows her complete indifference to getting any credit from the world. In fact, she always said, "I do not know its value, it is for others and posterity

to decide.” And now that the manuscript has been printed, we know from peoples’ observations, what an invaluable masterpiece it is, indeed, it has been acclaimed as a most original exposition of the profound knowledge that the Lord conveyed to Arjuna.

One remarkable aspect of Puja Ma is her instant rising to the occasion to meet any exigency. I have had personal experience of this extremely helpful attitude of hers when I was confronted by serious illness. Not only does she make all the necessary arrangements without wasting a second, her love seems to suck out the pain and her implicit faith in the Lord is fortunately infectious, it gravitates to even lesser folks like me, resulting in giving us courage and strength to go through the ordeal with comparative equanimity and fortitude. It is purely her Grace which enables us to develop that attitude at least for the period of crisis.

Another extraordinary feature is that the original group of people who came in Puja Ma’s fold in the beginning have stayed with her all along and are still there. This reflects Puja Ma’s genuine love and sincerity with which she deals with everyone, considering them to be the Lord’s children. She could have attracted masses wherever she went with the invaluable treasure of Urvashi, but she preferred to remain a nonentity, serving a small group of people, fulfilling their aspirations (and these were not always spiritual) in complete identification. What is more, she has shown people the way of application of spirituality in practical life.

(Written by Mrs. Kamla Bhandari on 26th August 1995)



The Arpana Family

Grace Dawns

J.K.MEHTA



I was the sculptor – I cut, I trimmed, I recast. Slowly I chiseled out an idol of perfection. I saw it before my eyes. But it was not me, it was Ma – at whose altar I sit today to worship and adore the statue I once carved. My repeated question to myself today is: Will I ever become that perfect idol or remain a sculptor?

In 1958, I was a renowned Doctor in Jullunder (Punjab), with a happy home and a respectable social status. Qualities of true service to fellow-beings grew simultaneously and needy persons always found a place in my heart. In spite of all this, there was some lacuna – a gnawing feeling, urging me to discover something further. I sought the company of saints and scriptures... and this led me to Raman Maharishi, where I found an anchor. But since no personal guidance was available, I continued to feel the emptiness within.

Gradually, my study led me to certain conclusions and '*sadhana*' for me came to mean the resistance to and curbing down of desires through self-control; renunciation of worldly objects and retiring to the forests to practice austerities in seclusion to achieve God realization. This was '*sanyas*' for me, the highest objective in life. Only today, as Grace dawns, do I realize how wrong and misleading my conceptions were.

I came in contact with Ma when I was called to visit her when she was sick. I discovered that her suffering was based on sheer physical exhaustion born out of caring for and looking after a mentally sick girl. It was her sense of selfless service that impressed me, and evidently, for some time my own virtuous acts paled into insignificance.

So far I had known Ma as a gay, happy-go-lucky person, an arm-chair social worker and very assertive in her views. On 9th March, 1958 on the advice of her sister, Miss Nirmal Anand, I, in consultation with my wife, invited her to our house. We wished to reform her and thought of weaning her away from her present life. Thereafter, Ma started attending my morning prayer. I sat on a high pedestal and started doling out *gyan* in the form of instructions to her by quoting the Vedas, the Gita and Upanishads of which I considered myself to be a connoisseur. She readily complied even though her own outlook and practical life was entirely different to mine. There was no word of protest nor did she contradict my wrong conceptions of spirituality. She identified herself with what I said, knowing that I did not translate those theories in my own daily life. She was the perfect pupil and would even anticipate my thoughts and take action accordingly.

Simultaneously, Ma started her own intense '*sadhana*'. In her own *Mandir*, sitting before the living presence of the Lord, divine prayers burst forth from her like the perpetual flow of the Ganga. I find this enchanting today, but then, I was unaware of this aspect of Ma's and I really marvel at my blindness. On the other hand, I was constantly admonishing her for her show of 'ego'. There was no protest and she offered no defense! To top it all, she started serving our family at the gross level, doing petty jobs as desired and suggested by us, thereby bringing greater concord and happiness in the family. All this was done so unassumingly that we took no notice of her humility and thought ourselves to be superior to her, completely forgetting her worldly status of a Director of Physical Education in the Punjab University.

At the same time we were gloating over our success in the 'reform' that had been brought about. We talked freely about it in our circle of friends and relatives



and only today do I realise how much we defamed her, often in her very presence. All this never made her give us up or even register a protest. Such an attitude of absolute silence and perfect quietude towards her own reputation and condemnation encouraged us all the more to exercise our authority over her.

My type of '*sadhana*' was leading me to indifference towards my family and profession. Though the pinch of neglect was felt, it was condoned as an evidence of my increasing devotion. On the other hand, during the first five years of contact with Ma, the period of her intense *puja*, I observed her taking an increasing interest in our family and all those who came into contact with her. Very often on receipt of a call from my wife, she would leave a verse half sung and drive to our place to carry out our insignificant errand, which occasionally meant many hours.

Even in this period of her intense study, she used to hold coaching camps with 50 to 60 girls staying in her own house. There was an increasing efficiency in the management of her office. She was acquiring an internal quietude in the midst of worldly turmoil, where she was playing her part most effectively, whereas I was finding the world, my duties and responsibilities an obstacle and thus sought solitude by ignoring all! I now see the magnificence of Ma's humility where she had reduced herself to dust to give us a practical example of the one who lives for others.

Her smiles, her compassion and her love remained uninfluenced inspite of our negative treatment. Her endurance, forgiveness, sincerity, humility and her complete identification with others made a tremendous impact on my unconscious mind. The concept of *tapas* (endurance) was changing within me and I was observing the emergence of complete Egolessness – the state I considered to be the highest achievement in life. Another Raman was born! Here was the '*gyani bhakta*' who emerged as the absolute embodiment of the Gita and the Upanishads – the Truth Incarnate before me.

Consistent with my conception of the culmination of *Sadhana*, Ma took long leave and went to Rishikesh – before she left, all Her duties and responsibilities had been discharged towards her family, friends and office.

On the 2nd October, 1962, exactly a month after she left for Rishikesh, I declared to her that she had attained perfection and that She was Bhagwan. She smiled and said: "If you consider that I have achieved my goal, then

you must realize that the practical of this state was my life before I entered your house”. She had given the proof of a true seeker and the method of self-realisation. Now she reverted to her original nature of joy and smiles, carrying the sunshine with Her wherever She went. This is the reason why even Her past associates remark on meeting her now, that she is the same as ever. It took me all these years to climb down from my pedestal.

Seeing a Perfect image of my ideal – another Raman born, an incarnation of Gita, I wanted to come away to sit at her feet so that one day I might become the ‘ideal’ myself. When I spoke of my intentions to renounce the world, she dissuaded me to the utmost from taking any such step. She told me bluntly that Truth can be realized in the performance of one’s duty, in normal circumstances and in our day to day life. Finding me adamant, she started persuading my family to come along with me and would laughingly tell me: “You can’t become the symbol of love by trampling on the love of the ones who have claims on you.” It was only on this account that I brought my whole family with me to Rishikesh.

Years have passed, and for me it has turned out to be a beautiful blessing. Today I realize that my Guru had come in the form of a pupil to teach me as to what a perfect disciple should be. But for this, I would not have been able to see my misconceptions and the true light of *Adhyatam*.❖

(Written by Papaji on 26th August 1974)



The Chosen One

26th August 2004

Dearly Beloved Ma,



Life is beautiful because of You! None other than You has the power or the means to make it so. Your own life is a manifest example of 'A Living Embodiment of the Scriptures...' which You bring to life every moment of the day, by giving them a new meaning. The world is quite oblivious to this, and yet, it is true. You bring all the Scriptures together in their actual Universal form. You, Most Beloved Ma, know this inside out... from within, and You, Beloved Ma, are the CHOSEN ONE and it is Your life that is the CHOSEN LIFE... because it is a life that takes

you straight to the Lord... the Almighty and Merciful Lord!
May the good Lord bless You always!

Little did I know when first we met, that the Lord was bringing me into His fold and that You would show me the way! When I think of You, I feel the Lord Himself came and held my hand to take me onto His Path and tell me that this is the life worth living and that there is no other life in this world or the next... so be it. Only You Beloved Ma could have saved me



from myself - I who was used to only drowning in self indulgence, was all of a sudden shown the Light in the darkness... and my very world changed!

Our parents... Papa and Mama (may God bless their souls) will ever remain indebted to You Beloved Ma for embracing us all and taking us into Your shelter of Truth and Love and Purity. We can only bow our heads and offer ourselves in complete gratitude life after life - for being our Saviour, our Mentor and our Guiding Hand. Our hearts, our minds and innermost being, all will sing Your praise... no matter which life we are in. You will forever reign Supreme... birth after birth. Such is Your Glory - the Light of Truth and the power of Love.

Your purity shines out like a million suns and the beauty of His Nature that is the core of Your life and very Being, draws each one of us out of our darkest corners to behold the Light that is Yours and to bask in the sunshine of a LIFETIME.

Beloved Ma, You have graced our lives with Your Mercy and Benevolence and we in turn can only give of our impure selves and feel redeemed by Your very presence. If there be a Paradise on earth, it is THIS... it is THIS... it is THIS!

Because of You Beloved Ma... who has touched us, and we have all grown into better human beings... less than this, our depraved minds would never have fathomed the depth of Your Love for all those around You... both near and far, enemies and friends, relations and associates. For You, it is all ONE UNIVERSAL GIVEN TRUTH – to be taken as it is! You will always be my Guru, Friend and Redeemer, and MY ALL. I remain as ever, the dust of Thy Lotus feet... and also wrapped in Your fond embrace...

We wish You a Very Very Happy Birthday and a long life...for our own sakes!

Reva

This was Reva Bhandari's last offering at the feet of her Beloved Guru... she also says herein, "Our hearts, our minds and innermost being, all will sing Your praise... **no matter which life we are in.**"

She passed away on 4.10.2004, but left this enduring tribute at the feet of her Divine Mother, her Guru... her All.



Amazing Grace – How I met Beloved Ma

MARK HENDERSON BEGG



How can I ever forget my first meeting with you Ma! It was the summer of 1974. I had rented a one room annex in Dalhousie to devote myself to ‘meditation’ of the variety which involves sitting for many hours in concentration. This happened to be an annex of Anand Bhawan, your parents’ house, which had already been rented out to someone else. Since I refused to vacate, you offered me a superior room at Vashishta House at no extra cost. This in itself was strange to a suspicious person like me. Even more surprising, I regularly received a pot of milk at my doorstep and no one would let me pay for it!

One day, someone asked me to come to the main house to share an English style meal with the family. Thus it was that I first met you. Then we started our discussions in a small way at the lunch and dinner table. How memorable were those moments! You seemed so ordinary, like a beloved elder of a close and loving family group. I felt a very warm and friendly atmosphere and... something which I couldn’t quite define.



I still remember those mealtime conversations, in which I was asking you questions about Yoga, Vedanta and methods of meditation while you were ever so gently guiding me towards Jesus Christ and the Bible, which I had rejected outright. At first I was resistant, but your description of His life and teachings was so original and fascinating! You suggested that I start studying the Bible so we would have more to talk about at our dinner meetings... and that's how I was drawn to reading the New Testament.

Master, how hard You have to work to convince such unbelievers as I, that You are here, that You never went away, that I have only to call Your name and You will answer, just as You promised when you had Your resurrection. You went through so much just to teach me, You went through such extremes of pain and degradation for my sake, to save me from my sin and ignorance.

Lord, I can only know You truly by performing what You said, what You would have done in my circumstances. You want me to become a living embodiment of what You have demonstrated through Your life. You had to come as a living example so that I could watch You in every normal circumstance of life, see perfection manifested in all situations.

Who could have resisted the beautiful vistas you were opening up before my very eyes, Ma? You brought Christ to life as I had never seen him before.

You always gave credit for the very smallest step taken by a child! On one occasion I helped in making a wooden sunshade for your window. Although I was very clumsy in carpentry, yet you were all praise. You said my willingness to do this job had helped bring me into the family. At every stage you worked to build up my confidence.

When you were all leaving for Madhuban, I had still not made up my mind whether to continue with my meditation course in Dalhousie or not, so you left the house keys with me, suggesting I come down to Madhuban

when I was ready. Here was I, a foreigner, whom you had only met a month before, and here you were entrusting the house keys to me! You gave me a small job of making an inventory of the crockery, just to give me a feeling of belonging and responsibility. How hard you worked to give me a feeling of security in so many ways.

You gave me what I had been searching for, something really satisfying with which I could come to grips on an intellectual basis. You gave me a strong draught of Urvashi, and I found the taste so intoxicating that I could not do without it for long!

Whilst all this was going on, I was the unconscious witness of the practical application of what you were telling me in those twice daily *satsangs* at meal times. I saw an unostentatious generosity towards the needy who



came to you for all kinds of practical assistance; I saw a person who could bend her hand to any and every kind of job and I saw a love which I had never experienced before at work in a practical context.

When I was told about the Ashram at Madhuban, I could not somehow reconcile the happy, carefree family group, the ‘crazy gang’, with their very ordinary way of doing things, with my concept of what an ‘ashram’ should be.

Only when this mind becomes silent, will You become manifest. You have shown me what this means – to blame no one, to remain contented with whatever I get, accepting all as the Lord’s Grace, because everything belongs

to him. To see the Lord in all, and let the sense of separation and duality be removed. Then I would be able to say, as you do, that everywhere is home and nowhere is home.

The whole world belongs to such a one, and he sees the Lord everywhere. This is the person whom You have described as “dear to You”. Let my only dharma be to meet You, let me make You my goal, and my mind become filled with faith. Then I will seek You alone, and become dear to You, through Your Divine Grace.

After you left I toyed with the idea of staying on and completing my meditation course but your words kept returning to mind. You had said that my basic attitude had to change before I could hope to reach the higher flights of meditation; that first my reactions and negative thoughts would have to be silenced, which can only happen in ordinary situations where the mind is provoked, and hidden traits come to the surface.

I realized that if I were to continue with my ‘sitting meditations’ I might achieve some peace of mind but only until I had to face stressful situations again. Thus it was that I decided to make the trip to Madhuban to find out more about these unusual people whom I had met through what seemed to me to be a pure coincidence. Ma had called them ‘the crazy gang’. I didn’t know quite what to expect.



Ma with some of her crazy gang members at Dalhousie

Urvashi – a Universal Religion

SHEILA KAPUR



The world comprises of many religions – backed by as many scriptures and as many Godheads. Each one has a lot to say. But the base remains uniform – the field on which they operate is a human being. More often than not, religions tend to segregate humans into groups and cliques – rather than become a unifying factor.

Family disruptions these days are a very common problem, causing a lot of distress. Any Teacher, Guide or Light, be it spiritual or otherwise, is most sought after in these dark ages of Kaliyug.

I have been in close contact with Pujya Ma, our Divine Mother, for the past 33 years. As a very ordinary person of the material world, I was smitten with the common place problems visiting any household. Far from being a religious person, strictly in spiritual terms, I was caught up in family problems

on one hand and my own reservations and non-communicative instincts on the other – thereby suffocating me fully.

When Ma stepped into my life, to me she came as an understanding friend, as a fascinating companion, as a recreating conversationalist, as a most sympathetic human being, who put me at ease directly. I could never visualize at that point Her Luminosity as a Godhead or any remote links with a so-called Religion – which in my experience that far was nothing but a hoax pretext practiced by cunning people who could dominate others under that false banner. Apart from that Ma's spontaneous flow in verse on any subject, making descriptions so explicit in such easy terms yet so scientifically methodical, would sweep me off my feet.

The novelty value behind any elucidation she would give was another matter of great wonderment to me. I thought I was well read, well-travelled and all the rest, but I had never come across anything like what Ma had to disclose – each day of the year, for years together – on any and every topic! All that penned down in black and white, and subject to dissection and verification by any learned soul meant a lot in terms of the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Gita.

A super-psychologist par excellence! She knows the texture of minds threadbare. It leads me to describe her as an *antaryami* – one who abides in your interior and thus has a total



glimpse of your thoughts. In fact, she knew me inside out, my hidden thought that never came into my speech would be ventilated by her – to my utter surprise! Outwardly she looked as ordinary as a friend and good companion... yet she was so extraordinary, so indispensable with each day you were in contact. In short, she mirrored me in every thought, word and deed and seemed to know me far beyond I knew myself.

The very turning point in my life, which was not only a revelation but an embalming panacea for my mental state, was the explanation of the *karma* theory. She proved it to me that all the good and evil I have reaped in this life is my own doing. All the fault really lay with me and in no other whom I was always condemning. How soothing this was is unimaginable – as it took out all the bitterness from my life for persons and situations.

‘Yog kshem’... she proved this *shloka* of the Gita to the hilt by managing all my affairs from the gross to the emotional to the intellectual and beyond. At the physical level she took care of all my family responsibilities, and on the subtle aspect, she engrossed me in Urvashi, wholly and solely, so that emotions do not go negative. That was an exercise over the years that penetrated deeper and deeper researching into the Self... The more I studied Ma’s own words, the more I could see her life personified in those thoughts. Ma lived that life of the Scriptures, she is Gita Incarnate.

I adore my good luck for this contact with such a Divine Being. She is fully supportive of my efforts and pulls us up to reach higher in order to safeguard that communion with her. What greater Grace can any religion or scripture shower on ordinary human beings?

Researching the Self also means viewing my handicaps and lacunae in moment to moment living. This review affords the stability ‘*samta*’ and acceptance of every situation in life, without perturbation. Today I know what will be, will be. This acceptance, even in times of stress and attachment-related adversity, is Ma’s total benediction for which I cannot thank her enough.

‘Yo yatha mam prapadyante’ ... this *shloka* of the Gita is a clear indication that no two people are alike, since their birth is conditioned by their seed, born of *sanskaras* and varied accumulations of the past. Param Pujya Ma, representing the Cosmic Mind, is able to penetrate each category, with a total over-view of our internal build-ups, defects and deficiencies, as well as the aspirations we carry. She has plugged in all her time, energies, methods and capabilities to serve us at our levels. This is her total identification with another on one hand and on the other, her total negation of self-interest, self aggrandisement or even any firm concept to cling and adhere to. As a servant of the Divine, she plugs in to harmonise each individual according to his/her need. To her, each drop of humanity, be it any hue or colour, be it saintly or demonic – is part of the same ocean of Universality.

The methods and labour are hers, the beneficiaries are us. Her ironing out our insides – putting all our inharmonious elements in place – is conducive to our Internal Peace, Quietude and Stability quite naturally. Without our knowing, the *raag dvesh* cycles stop revolving and one is able to peep within oneself as in the



clear waters of a lake. This internal Insight is a total benediction that exposes what we are actually and what we can or cannot do. Our aspirations no more follow a bumpy path and life becomes constructive within the limitations of our basic seed restrictions. The external world bothers us no longer.

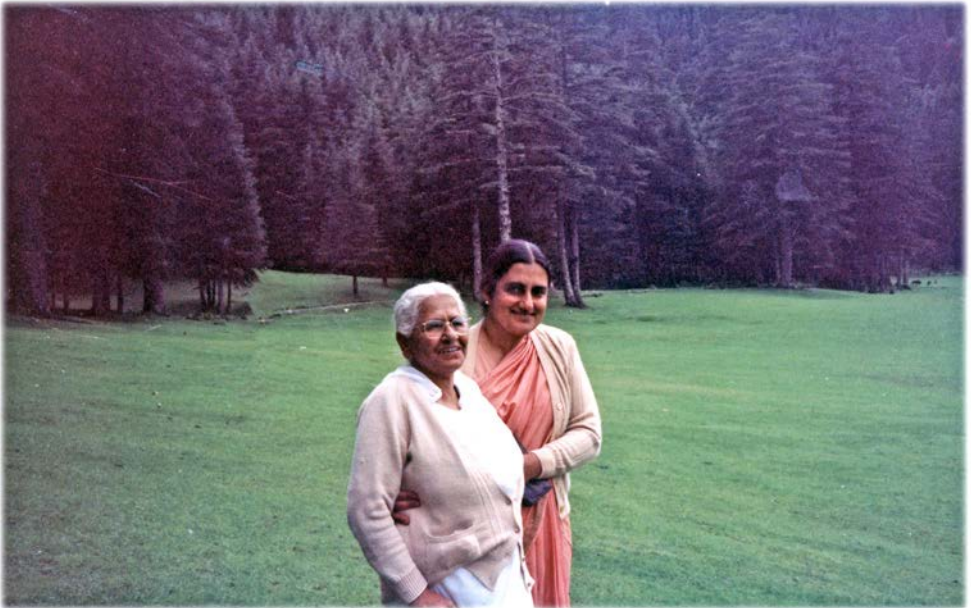
What greater research can humanity crave for? Ma's methods and her spontaneous flow of unthought of pre-meditated expositions run into thousands of pages in black and white, which are indeed the tenth wonder of the world – which is yet unadvertised and little known except for the very fortunate ones.



*“If you are attached, you cannot discriminate,
you cannot do justice, you cannot be honest.
Your decisions will not be based on the truth,
but on your likes and dislikes.
When you are attached to people and things,
you are detached from the Truth.”*

~ Param Pujya Ma

You fill my Life with Beauty



Beloved Ma,

If this life became merely a glorification of Thy Name and Thy Love, it would indeed be blessed. You have been to me a Compassionate Mother, an infinitely dear friend and my most precious Guru.

I have faltered often, but each time you have lifted me up in your arms of Love and with your Words of divine wisdom and taught me to view life in a different dimension.

Today as I look back at the past, I marvel at your patience - and the persevering love which time and again saved me from myself - which has been witness to the transition from an illiterate ignoramus to a stage where I can at least aspire to seek the elementary rungs of spiritual life.

I can only venerate Thy Divine Feet whose footprints have left upon the arid sands of my life an indelible mark of what divine living is...

I can only extol Thy Divine hands with whose touch I have grown from ignorance to a desire to be acquainted with the beauty of egolessness - the silence - the bliss in which you abide.

I can only worship each word that leaves your lips - which is indeed Divinity Incarnate and which ignites within my heart a desire to be more like you want me to be...

I can only pray to the Supreme Lord that each moment of this life and indeed of each subsequent life be devoted to the Spirit that inheres in You.

Can I do aught else on this glorious day of Thy birth except to raise my hands in thanksgiving to That Ever Gracious Lord of all Who has filled my life with Thy beauty?

Thank you

- ~ For everything you have taught me so lovingly...*
- ~ For the Love you have given me so magnanimously...*
- ~ For your very Presence in my life -*
- ~ For it is my life's greatest benediction!*

Your very own

Abha



An Ode to my Mother

CONNIE



How can words express what the heart wants to say?
Words form in the depth of my being,
Bubble, rise but then fall again,
Lost on the way, from heart to lips.

An image slowly forms... a picture beyond description
Beyond all earthly beauty, benign, filled with Divinity.
Sparkling eyes, brimming over with Love and Joy and Compassion.
Lips from which fall jewels,
That are priceless beyond the imagination of man.
A countenance which radiates light... all in white!

This is the person I wish to describe.
My Mother, my Saviour, my Guide!

She is the one who has led me, on every pathway of life.
Carrying me in Her arms, when I would tire or stumble.
Flying with me to cross every mountain.
With me on Her shoulders, She would cross every sea.
All of this She has done for me!

From teddies to computers,
From nursery through college...
From daisy chains to roses,
From nappies to dupattas...
From a lisp to a song,
From stumbling to dancing...
From toddling to running,
From tantrums to maturity...
From milk teeth to wisdom teeth,
From scribbling to poetry...

...O Mother, You have led me!

From sunset to sunrise, and sunrise to sunset...
From raindrops to rainbows, from summer to winter...
From childhood to adolescence, and then further...
From tears to smiles, from infatuations to love...
From ignorance to gratitude...

...O Mother, You have led me!

Mother, Your Love is boundless!
Like a river, with you its source, Your Divine Love does flow...
Overflowing, brimming over, every boundary, every limit.
Engulfing the universe within its waves.

Washing over our dusty, barren hearts,
Cleansing them and making them new.
Washing away pain and all sorrow,
And leaving behind only the residue of joy.

What have we done to receive such Love?
What have we done to partake of such bliss?
What have we done to be blessed with Your presence?
What have we done that we are Your children?

We are undeserving and ungrateful children.
But still You go on giving and giving and giving.

Today on this day of Your birth.
What can I ask for but this.
That your Love I may imbibe just a particle of.
And Your presence be with me forever.



The Fragrance of Love

~ A Tribute to Dr. Mrs. Susan Gaiind



Rare are the souls who think of others over and above themselves!

Dr. Mrs. Susan Gaiind, beloved wife of Dr. Raghunandan Gaiind, Chairman Arpana UK was one such beautiful person. After bravely battling cancer for the past couple of years, she breathed her last on the 19th of August 2020.

She leaves behind in the hearts of each one of us in the Arpana Family, a beautiful fragrance of love, generosity, care, and an inner spiritual strength, which we all experienced through the decades we were together.

Our memories of her include her extremely warm hospitality when Param Pujya Ma, along with a small group of the family travelled to the UK and stayed with them at their beautiful home... the Manor House at Milton Keynes. She was the perfect host, according her utmost loving care to

Param Puja Ma and stretching herself to her limits to help in every possible effort to accomplish the purpose of that visit.

Hers was a silent but extremely strong and steady support for Arpana as she stood by her dynamic husband, Dr. Raghunandan Gaind, contributing to his heartfelt efforts to support Arpana's Medical and other social welfare endeavours.

It was also a privilege to be witness to the extreme love and care which she lavished on her exceptional husband, Dr. Raghu Gaind... always by his side... always tending to his every requirement and taking care of him through his physical travails.



Dr. Raghu Gaind with Param Puja Ma

All of us at Arpana offer our heartfelt tribute to this wonderful human being, whose passing away has, indeed, created a great void in the fabric of Arpana. May God grant peace to the departed soul. We at Arpana, lay a wreath of gratitude to honour our dearest Susan Gaind as she travels onwards to her new destination in God's plan!



"The one who performs selfless actions is grateful to the recipient of the fruits of such actions, because the other has melted his heart and given him a taste of his own compassion."

"Selfless people do no favours to the unfortunate and the downtrodden. They accept them as the messengers of the Lord and the children of the Master."

~ Param Puja Ma

Love Letters to Her Lord...



~ A Blueprint of the Aspirant's Path

From the 2nd reading of the Srimad Bhagavad Gita
by Param Pujya Ma

“You are not this body... You are the Atma...”

This is the central theme of Lord Krishna's discourse to Arjuna on the battlefield of Kurukshetra. Despite this irrevocable Truth of life, man continues to feel secure in his 'body self'... pampering it, sustaining it and indulging it in every possible manner. In the process, one loses sight of Atma Self and begins to place all one's stakes only in the service of the body... closing one's eyes to the inevitable end!

Param Pujya Ma, in Her precious conversation with Her Divine Lord, opens our eyes to the true picture... “Even if you believe that you will die, why do you worry? Each jiva has died in the past, is dying now and will die in the future. To die is a natural outcome of birth. Death is definite and will happen. The fate of a human being cannot be changed. What will be will be. But why do you die of fear moment after moment... day after day? If death is a peaceful slumber, then what are you afraid of?”

Then, She also points out... “Everything is His gift. Every sorrow is an opportunity for cleansing ourselves within and every joy is a test! O mind! Come, cleanse yourself. God knows if you will get this opportunity again!”

How precious, Mother, are these pointers You highlight... these are our veritable ‘signposts’ to live by!

ABHA BHANDARI

In Continuation...

Chapter 2

न जायते म्रियते वा कदाचिन्नायं भूत्वा भविता वा न भूयः ।
अजो नित्यः शाश्वतोऽयं पुराणो न हन्यते हन्यमाने शरीरे ॥२०॥

Bhagwan says:

This soul is neither born, nor dies at any time. Having been in existence before, It does not cease to be. It is eternal, constant and ancient. It is not slain when the body is slain.

Shloka 20

You think you have understood this... but only on paper! This is a play of your mind!

I am like a poverty stricken maiden. I weave dreams like a ‘Sheikh Chilli’! I feel I am eternal... that I will live till eternity and that no one can kill me... they can kill only this body. But when I awake from my dream, I find myself in the same tattered garments... the same thoughts of what I lack... constantly stricken by hunger... both of the body and the mind. O Ram! Pray tell me... will all my songs, my poems, my endeavours go to naught? Will they remain

a figment of my imagination? Will I roam this spiritual world on the plane of my imagination... constantly diving into the water of the Gita like a duck again and again... and re-emerging as dry as ever? Or will I be bathed in the hues of the Gita some day?

You say that unfulfilled *sanskaras* take birth again and again for fulfilment. When will my *sanskaras* be fulfilled? Ever since I have sought Thy refuge, I have lost all my peace and tranquillity. Sadness has begun to dawn. Frustration has begun to cast its shadow ever since I have understood my weaknesses and

inabilities. I understand what You say... but I cannot give it the appreciation it deserves in my life. Of what avail all my study if I cannot give You practical shape? O Ram! I will die of frustration! Pray quieten the kingdom of my mind. When the heart is torn from the world, and it does not even attain You, when I am not able to acquire even the preliminary requirements stated by You in the scriptures... then what shall I do? Come! Sit before me and explain these Truths to me.

He is Eternal and all else is false. How can I experience this? You try to establish a relationship with me constantly... why can I not move forward towards Thee to do the same? I do not merely want to accept Your Truths... I want to live them. O Lord! Give me the strength! Death may come any moment. Will I never know Thee? How unfortunate I am... You Yourself say that You are always with me. You are so close to me... yet I cannot know Thee... why this dichotomy?

Can there be a greater misfortune than this... that I shall die without knowing Thee? O mind! I fall at your feet... do not waylay this weak maiden any more. Do not take me towards the world to dance at the music created by these objects of enjoyment. Allow me to introspect. Allow me to meet with That One... grant me His vision just once. To whom shall I complain? I shall plead with my Ram not to be so merciless!



वेदाविनाशिनं नित्यं य एनमजमव्ययम् ।
कथं स पुरुषः पार्थ कं घातयति हन्ति कम् ॥२१॥

Bhagwan says to Arjuna:

O Arjuna, son of Pritha! A person who considers this Atma to be indestructible, eternal, undecaying and unborn, how can such a person be said to kill somebody or have him killed?

Shloka 21

Alright Ram! I am beginning to call myself ‘indestructible, eternal, and unblemished!’ I understand that those who believe this Truth, cease to fear death. They know that they cannot kill nor be killed. But Lord, this is only a play of words. Tell me O mind! Will you ever become grounded in the reality of the Eternal Atma? Birth and death are only a change of garments. You have read this many a time. You have also ‘lectured’ on this Truth many a time! But Ram, tell me when will I actually experience this Truth as I walk the path of spirituality? Take away my potential to argue... and cogitate... until I realize this Truth within, do not allow me to even talk about it.

I am steeped in sadness. I can see that the body bids me dance to its many nuances... sometimes at the beck and call of duties of this carcass, sometimes for those I call ‘relations’... sometimes for the accumulation of wealth and recognition... sometimes to avoid defame! But all my problems



are connected with this ‘I’. All my life, I have endeavoured to please this body and its relations. O foolish mind! Awaken! Come to your senses! Have you not understood? All these are merely ‘worshippers’ of this perishable body. Consider only That one to be your friend, who enables you to bond with the Eternal. At least know That Indestructible Eternal Atma... the Unborn One. Then clarity will dawn regarding gain and loss, fame and defame, relationships, and regarding who dies and who is born.

वासांसि जीर्णानि यथा विहाय नवानि गृह्णाति नरोऽपराणि ।
तथा शरीराणि विहाय जीर्णान्यन्यानि संयाति नवानि देही ॥२२॥

Bhagwan now further explains the secret of birth and death through an example:

Just as a person sheds old clothes and puts on new ones, similarly, the Atma casts off the worn out body and adopts a new body.

Shloka 22

Right! This body is like old, worn clothes. But then Ram, tell me, what is the purpose of this body... so that I can benefit from this knowledge before this present set of clothes tear. It has only two choices – sense enjoyments, or attainment of the Atma Self. One is called the path of *Shreya*, and the other is the path of *Preya*. But we choose to be like hen-pecked husbands dancing to the tune of the sense enjoyments... the world!

Your immense agonized desire for the world, purely for body satiation, is what creates new *sanskaras*. These *sanskaras* are normally sorrow giving for they lie as a memory in the mind and heart. When the organs of sense perception and enjoyment diminish, sorrow emerges... when what the mind desires is not attained, sorrow emerges... if the desires are attained, even then sorrow emerges at the thought that one could lose those objects of enjoyment!



O Intellect! You know this, but you do not understand it! O mind! You at least understand this fact... have mercy on me! Why are you immersing yourself in sorrow and at the same time, reinforcing my bondage with the world? This body is becoming the instrument of my downfall.

Have you now understood how else this body can be used? O carcass! Take me towards Ram! All other paths are degrading. They will only lead to my destruction. I must merge with That Atma... That Truth. I must stay at Ram's feet. Therefore O mind... O intellect, take me towards HIM before

this body disintegrates... before these old clothes tear, allow me to meet with my Beloved!

Or else, I do not need this body.

Then allow me to live with abandon. I come to Thy feet for two minutes to cry there... but the moment I leave the threshold of the temple, I am immersed in the service of this body. Then of what use this body? It degrades and humiliates me every moment. O Lord! Let all my endeavours be towards my only goal... the meeting with You. Let all my desires, wants and longings be merged into one continuous longing for Thee – let there be only one thought... of You! May every thought help me to draw closer to You. Only that moment is fruitfully spent, which takes me closer to You. All other moments are a meaningless waste of time.

O Ram! If my body mind and intellect do not go towards Thee, pray take them away. Give me another body only on the strength of those thoughts, concepts and values of mine... those *sanskaras* which take me persistently to Thy feet, never to leave again. Or else, bring about a change in this present body and mind... somehow, conflagrate within them such a strong fire of desire for Thee that all desires for worldly enjoyment are burnt away.

I have now awakened. I am experiencing the pain of distance from my Beloved. Change these thoughts and circumstances... this body and its faculties which do not support my spiritual mission. Pacify this body, so that it no longer collects any more *sanskaras*. O Ram! Have mercy! You are my only support. The world is constantly beckoning me to go in the opposite direction. I fear that I may not leave Thy threshold. Take me away Lord, where no one else, nothing else exists apart from Thee and Thy devotees.

You have just told me the means to meet with Thee in the Upanishad.. (Kath 2.2.10,11) You have clarified therein that I can know you through perfect control of the organs of perception and action; i.e. through *yoga*. If this be the means to reach Thee, then take me towards its achievement. O Lord! Take my spiritual practice... my *sadhana*, in Thy hands! ❖

