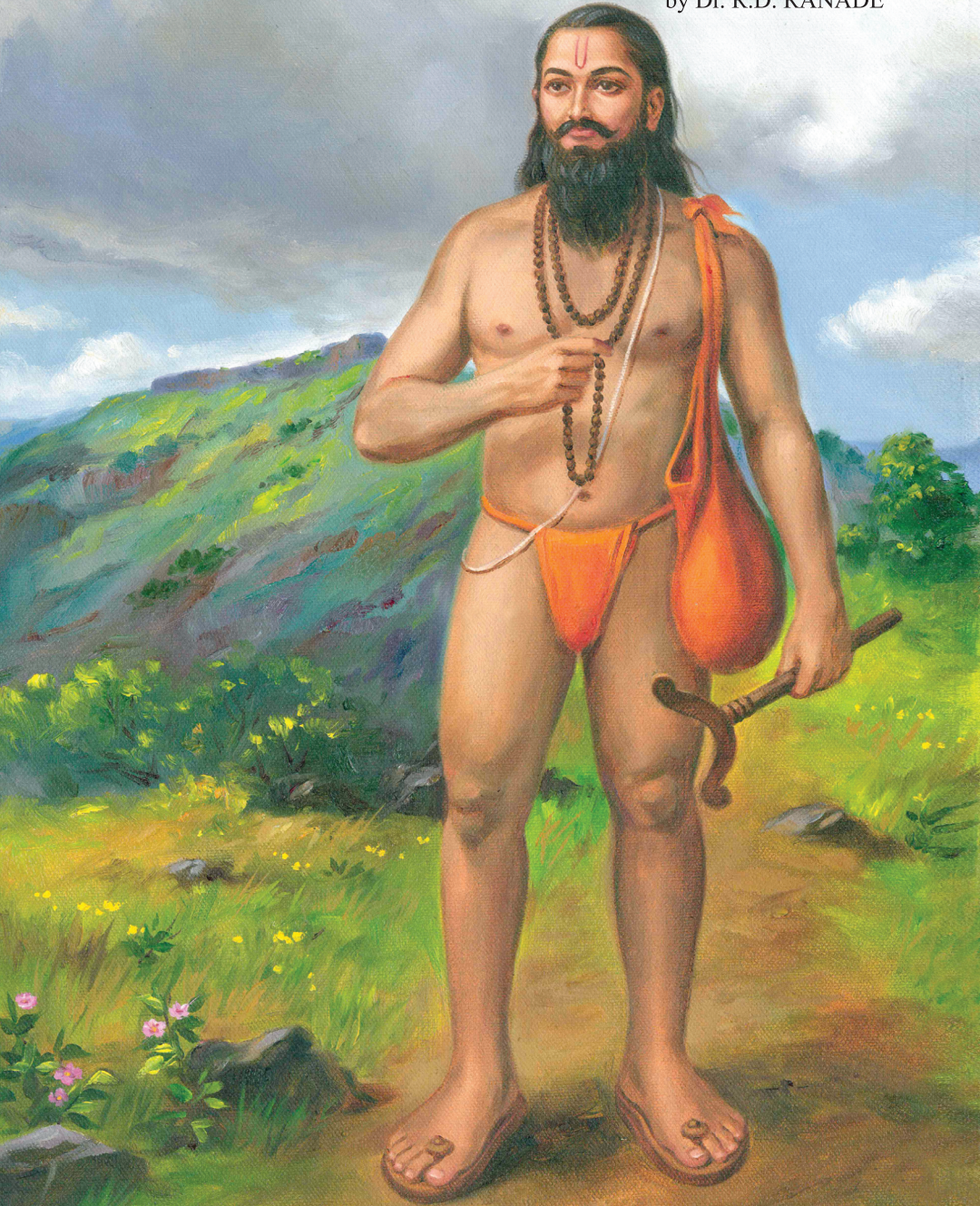


ACTIVISTIC MYSTICISM of
SAMARTH RAMADASA

by Dr. R.D. RANADE



Academy of Comparative Philosophy and Religion. Belagavi, Karnataka



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Prof. Anant S. Bailwad (Professor, Belagavi) and Smt. Menna A. Bailwad has extended their helping hand in publishing this book written by Dr. R. D. Ranade.

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Activistic Mysticism of Samarth Ramadasa

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FOREWORD

Shri Gurudev Dr. R. D. Ranade, M.A., D.Litt. Professor Emeritus of Philosophy, Allahabad University was one of the greatest mystic saints and world renowned Philosopher from Modern India. His Literary work from the books 'The Constructive Survey of Upanishadic Philosophy' to 'Bhagavadgita - as the philosophy of God Realization', have left behind glorious imprints.

Gurudev served as the Vice-Chancellor, Professor, Head and Dean of Philosophy at the Allahabad University guiding and mentoring intellectual luminaries of Modern India. For the Global Family, he had a vision and concern to achieve holistic welfare of human kind through sustained awareness of spiritual unity in diversity.

The Diversities of spiritual faiths were envisioned to be contained by the unity of spiritual reason through the establishment of the Academy of Comparative Philosophy and Religion, Belagavi, Karnataka. Having conceived the ACPR in 1924 at Pune, he proceeded on his mission to deliver the ACPR, Belagavi in 1952, as an immortal heritage to the world at large.

ACPR's Head Quarters is Hindwadi, Belagavi is registered as a Public Trust under Registration No.E-233(BGM)/1952. ACPR publishes an English Quarterly National Journal 'The Pathway to God' along with republication and reprint of original classic philosophical works.

As a fitting tribute to Gurudev and his vision, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, the Philosopher-Statesman-President of India, took pride in volunteering to inaugurate the head quarters of ACPR in 1965.

ACPR is a global gallery where eternity keeps whispering and provides an all millennium venue for the meetings of 'Intellectually inclined' amongst God's Children. ACPR is an unusually divine mansion with its large and open ambience without conferring centrality of radiation to any specific religion, faith, cult or heritage with an open acceptance in the Universal belief of a divine humanity.

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About two years ago when His Holiness Shri Shiddheshwar Swamiji who is (A Spiritual Ambassador to the humanity) of 'Dnyanayogashram' (Jnana Yoga ashram) of Vijayapur visited ACPR Belagavi, suggested the task of re-printing "Mystical Experience of Maharashtra Saints in philosophical contexts" authored by Gurudeo Ranade in five sections to bring it to the comprehension of the layman by incorporating pictures relating to spiritual experiences in the life of these saints.

Swami Ramadas (17th Century), having been inspired by the Sikh Guru Hargobind early in life, he adopted a philosophy of activist mysticism with a mission to restore the Hindu religion in its original form. He wrote volumes of literature including the revered Dasabodh and established numerous Hanuman temples across India to instill faith and fearlessness among the common people. With forceful yet, simple language, his compositions conveyed enormous meanings and the most popular Ganapati arti, 'Sukhakarta Dukhharta, continues to enthrall devotees even today. With the establishment of numerous mutts across the region, he sought to blend spirituality, social development and political independence for the development of a strong Hindu Swarajya, thus becoming the mentor and inspiration to Shivaji Maharaj.

Shri Siddheshwar Swamiji has been a source of inspiration and guidance in this noble task. We appreciate the generous contribution of donors in meeting the cost of printing and a special mention of thanks to M/s. Motilal Banarsidass, the original publishers of the book.

I acknowledge sincere efforts of the artist, Sri Chandrashekhara Ranganekar, for his impressive cover page & illustrations of pictures inserted in the book.

I thank, Shri Ashok Dhond, Proprietor of Impressions Printing Press, Belagavi for his support, concern and promptness in completing the five parts within a short period of time.

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Maruti B. Zirali,
Secretary,
On behalf of Board of Trustees,
ACPR Belagavi.

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CHAPTER I.

Ramadasa.

Biographical Introduction.

1. The Vakenisi Prakarana.

The incidents in Rāmadāsa's life may best be chronicled by reference to a memorandum of events called the 'Vākeniśīprakarana', which was set down on paper by one Antāji Gopāla Vākenavis according to the instructions of Divākara Gosāvī, one of the most beloved disciples of Rāmadāsa, just four days after Rāmadāsa's death on Māgha Vadya Navamī, Śake 1603 (1681 A.D.). It seems that Hanumanta Śwāmī, the writer of the Bakhara of Rāmadāsa, was mainly guided by this short memorandum of events. It is well known how Hanumanta Swāmī wrote a small biography of Rāmadāsa in Śake 1715 (1793 A.D.) and then enlarged it in Śake 1739 (1817 A.D.). The memorandum of events referred to was thus at least a century older than the biography by Hanumanta Swāmī. The credit of having discovered it belongs to Mr. Rājavāde, who had gone to Chāphala a few years ago in search of certain papers relating to the life of Rāmadāsa, where he was fortunate to discover the memorandum of events we are referring to. Let us see how the main events in Rāmadāsa's life may be understood by reference to this memorandum.

2. A brief sketch of Ramadasa's life.

Rāmadāsa was born on Chaitra Śuddha Navamī, Śake 1530 (1608 A.D.), three years after his elder brother was born. While he was yet seven years old, his father Sūryājīpanta passed away. In Śake 1542 (1620 A.D.), that is, when Rāmadāsa was twelve years of age, he ran away

from his house to Tākali near Nasik. There are two stories connected with this incident. One story runs that Rāmadāsa had decided not to get himself married. His mother, however, pressed him very much to marry. For fear of disobeying his mother, Rāmadāsa apparently consented. But just at the time of the marriage ceremony, he ran away from the marriage hall. Thus he both obeyed his mother and fulfilled his intension. Another story tells us that Rāmadāsa ran away because his brother Gangādharapanta refused to initiate him into the spiritual life as Rāmadāsa was yet too young, and therefore Rāmadāsa ran away from his house to find out God for himself. Rāmadāsa practised severe religious austerities at Tākali for a period of twelve years, in the course of which it seems Rāma appeared to him in a vision, and initiated him. Rāmadāsa says about his own initiation :-

साह्या आह्यांसी हनुमंत । आराध्य दैवत श्रीरघुनाथ ॥
 गुरु श्रीरामसमर्थ । काय उणें दासासी ॥
 दाता एक रघुनंदन । वरकड लंडी देईल कोण ॥
 तें सोडोनि आह्मीं जन । कोणांप्रति मागावें ॥
 ह्याणोनि आह्मीं रामदास । रामचरणीं आमचा विश्वास ॥
 कोसळोनि पडो रे आकाश । आणिकाची वास न पाहूं ॥

After having finished his religious austerities in Śake 1554 (1632 A.D.), he devoted the next twelve years of his life to travelling all over the country, and in Śake 1566 (1644 A.D.), he came and settled on the banks of the Krishnā. In Śake 1569 (1647 A.D.), Rāmadāsa obtained an image of Rāma from the deep places in the Krishnā river at Angāpur, and in 1570 (1648 A.D.) he set up that image at Chāphala and began to worship it. Then comes a very important matter. The Vākeniśīpra-karana tells us that Śivājī was initiated by Rāmadāsa in Śake 1571 (1649 A.D.) at Śinganavādī on Vaiśākha Śuddha Navamī, Thursday, and

Hanumanta Swāmī follows the memorandum in saying this. The same memorandum tells us that Rāmadāsa went to Pandharapūr in the month of Āshādha in Śake 1571 (1649 A.D.), and as Tukārāma did not pass away till about a year later, it is very probable that Rāmadāsa may have met Tukārāma, as we have already hinted in our chapter on Tukārāma. In Śake 1572 (1650 A.D.) Rāmadāsa came to live at Paralī. In Śake 1577 (1655 A.D.), so the memorandum tells us, Śivājī offered his whole kingdom to Rāmadāsa. In the same year Rāmadāsa went to Jāmba, his native place, to be present at the last scene of his mother's life. In Śake 1596 (1674 A.D.), Śivājī was crowned king, after which he came to Rāmadāsa at Sajjanagada, lived there for a month and a half, and spent a large sum in feeding the poor. In the same year, Rāmadāsa spent the autumn at Helavāka where on account of the intense cold and damp climate, Rāmadāsa suffered from malaria and bronchitis, from which he was relieved only when he went from Helavāka to Chāphala. When he reached that place, he sent a letter in his own handwriting, thanking his host Raghunāthabhatta at Helavāka, a letter which is preserved and reproduced in the Documents of the Rāmadāsī Sāmpradāya, published at Dhulia in 1915 A.D. Those who would be interested in seeing Rāmadāsa's autograph should consult that volume. Rāmadāsa's brother, Rāmīrāmadāsa, passed away in Śake 1599 (1677 A.D.). In Śake 1600 (1678 A.D.), Rāmadāsa ordered new images of Rāma, Lakshmana and Sītā to be manufactured at Tanjore. The memorandum also tells us that Śivājī gave a Sanada to Rāmadāsa in the same year on Āśvina Śuddha 10, which is entirely corroborated by history, as may be seen later on. In the same year, Rāmadāsa sent Kalyāna to

take charge of the Matha at Domagaon. In the month of Pausha, Śake 1601 (1679 A.D.), Śivājī came to see Rāmadāsa, and then Rāmadāsa told him of his (Śivājī's) approaching death which took place in Chaitra, Śake 1602 (1680 A.D.) Then Sambhājī went with his minister Rāmachandrapanta to see Rāmadāsa in Jyeshtha during that year, and returned after living there for eight days. On Māgha Śuddha Ashtamī, Śake 1603 (1681 A.D.), the images of Rāma and Sītā were brought from Tanjore, and were duly set up at Sajjanagada on Māgha Vadya Panchamī, only after four days from which date Rāmadāsa passed away, giving himself over wholly to meditation on God, on Māgha Vadya 9, Śake 1603 (1681 A.D.).

3. The connection of Sivaji and Ramadasa.

One of the points of greatest importance in the life-history of Rāmadāsa is, as we have already hinted above, his connection with Śivājī. The whole world knows that Rāmadāsa was a spiritual teacher of Śivājī; but at what time he actually became the teacher of Śivājī has been recently a matter of hot dispute. Tradition has hitherto said that Śivājī first met Rāmadāsa in Śake 1571 (1649 A.D.) in the garden at Śingnavādī, about a year after the establishment of the image of Rāma at Chāphala. That Śivājī also contributed some money to the building of the temple in the early years of its progress is also known. That later on Śivājī offered his kingdom to Rāmadāsa which Rāmadāsa returned to him is also known. But what part Rāmadāsa actually played in the political achievements of Śivājī, and at what time the spiritual connection between the teacher and the disciple actually began, have been a matter of contention. Mr. Deva following the traditional

account given by Hanumanta Śwāmī has always argued for Śake 1571 (1649 A.D.) as the date of the first meeting of Śivājī and Rāmadāsa. Prof. Bhāte, who has availed himself of some material placed at his disposal by Mr. Chāndorkar, has argued for Śake 1594 (1672 A.D.) as the date of the actual connection. Now the point of greatest importance for the history of Mahārāshtra is, that if Rāmadāsa initiated Śivājī in Śake 1571 (1649 A.D.), that is, just when Śivājī had passed out of his teens and was only beginning his political career, then the whole development of Śivājī's political achievements must be traced to the inspiration that he received from his master Rāmadāsa. If, on the other hand, Rāmadāsa became the spiritual teacher of Śivājī in Śake 1594 (1672 A.D.), then the history of Śivājī's political achievements could only be very partially traced to the influence of Rāmadāsa, inasmuch as this date is just two years previous to when Śivājī crowned himself King in Śake 1596 (1674 A.D.), that is, only six years before his death. For long, people have held to the traditional date, namely Śake 1571 (1649 A.D.), as the correct date of the connection. But, quite recently, as pointed out above, Prof. Bhāte and Chāndorkar have argued for Śake 1594 (1672 A.D.). There is documentary evidence on both sides, and it is really very hard to come to a final conclusion about the date. Let us however see on which side the greater probability of truth would lie.

4. The recent view about the connection.

To begin with the presentation of the case by Messrs. Bhāte and Chāndorkar, we have to take account of an important letter to Divākara Gosāvī by Keśava Gosāvī dated Śake 1594 (1672 A.D.) which runs as follows:-

" I have duly received the information that Śivājī Bhonsle is coming to see Rāmadāsa. I was myself going to come, but as I have not been keeping good health, I am sorry I cannot come. I have written to Ākkā also ; but she also cannot come. Bhānājī Gosāvī may be there. This is the first visit of the Rājā. You must take to your help some people from the hamlet. They will be of great use to you as there is a dense thicket there. I shall send Trimbaka Gosāvī, Vitthala Gosāvī and Dattātreyā Gosāvī to-morrow. You may have received the two hundred coins from Dattājīpanta for the festival of God."

Now Chāndorkar and Bhāte argue that as this letter mentions that Śivājī is paying his first visit, it must be concluded that Rāmadāsa initiated Śivājī only at this time, namely, in Śake 1594 (1672 A.D.).

There is a second letter on which Chāndorkar and Bhāte mainly rely. This is dated Śake 1580 (1658 A.D.), and is a letter to Divākara Gosāvī from Bhāskara Gosāvī and runs as follows:-

"..... Fifty coins have been hitherto sent with Bhānājī Gosāvī. I hope you will receive them duly. I went to Rājā Śivājī in my itinerary. He asked from what place I came and who I was. I told him that I was a Rāmadāsī, a disciple of Rāmadāsa. Then he asked me where he (Rāmadāsa) stayed and what was his original place. I told him that he originally lived at Jāmba on the Godāvarī and that at present he was living at Chāphala and spending his time in the worship of God. He has ordered us to go out for alms and thus to Celebrate the festival of God. It is for this reason that I am travelling; upon which the Rājā sent a letter to Dattājīpant to contribute two hundred coins to the festival of God".

Now Bhāte and Chāndorkar argue that this letter is

indicative of Śivājī's absolute ignorance of Rāmadāsa's existence in Śake 1580 (1658 A.D.), and that therefore we cannot, according to the traditional date, take Śivājī to have been a disciple of Rāmadāsa in Śake 1571 (1649 A.D.).

Then there are two other supplementary letters from Divākara Gosāvī which are undated, but in the post-script of both of which has been mentioned the fact that Śivājī obtained Paramārtha at Śingnavādī in the Indian year Paridhāvī. Now Bhāte and Chāndorkar argue that this year Paridhāvī comes only in Śake 1594 (1672 A.D.), and not in Śake 1571 (1649 A.D.), which year is named Virodhī. In general, it has been argued on this side that Rāmadāsa was only a religious man. He was hardly a politician. Instead of saying that Rāmadāsa helped Śivājī in the attainment of his political objects, we had rather say conversely that the influence came from the other side, and that Rāmadāsa was made aware of the political condition of the country through Śivājī's exploits (page 118).

5. The traditional view and its defence.

The main answer to these considerations has come from Messrs. Deva and Rājavāde. Rājavāde points out that the letters upon which Bhāte and Chāndorkar base their remarks are not genuine. They are after all only copies, and even thus the dates mentioned in them are open to doubt.

(I) When, in the first letter to Divākara Gosāvī we have referred to above, mention is made of the first visit of Śivājī, Mr. D. V. Apte has pointed out that the first visit must be interpreted as being the first visit to the Matha, especially as in close proximity to the mention of the Matha there is also the mention of a deep thicket, through which a way was to be prepared by the help of the people in

the surrounding hamlet. It is thus that we have to explain Śivājī's order to Dattājīpant Vākenavis, dated 23rd July 1672, that is to say, immediately after Śivājī's return from the visit to the Chāphala Matha, that he should protect by means of his police the people who went on a pilgrimage to the Matha at Chāphala from the inroads of thieves and robbers who troubled the country. Śivājī also in that letter ordered Dattājīpant to remove the molestation of the Turks as well as to place himself at the service of Rāmadāsa in every way.

(2) As regards the second letter to Divākara Gosāvī, in which Śivājī inquires as to the whereabouts of Rāmadāsa, the question has been explained by saying that Śivājī was a very shrewd man, that he would not lend an easy ear to every beggar that came, that having inquired of the so-called disciple of Rāmadāsa who had come to beg in the name of the Saint he satisfied himself that he really was a disciple of Rāmadāsa, and that he thus convinced himself that any bounty given to him would be spent in the cause of Rāmadāsa. Śivājī is thus supposed to have merely feigned ignorance, and thus tested Bhāskara Gosāvī as to whether he was really a disciple of Rāmadāsa.

(3) As regards the two other letters from Divākara Gosāvī referred to in which mention is made of Śivājī having obtained Paramārtha at Śinganaṅgādī, it has been pointed out that the mention of Śivājī's having accepted Paramārtha occurs only in the post-script of the letters which may consequently be a later addition, and that what actually happened in the year Paridhāvī referred to was not that Śivājī was initiated for the first time into the spiritual life by Rāmadāsa, but that he was given certain further instructions which would help him to go onward in his spiritual life. For these reasons it has been pointed out that

we cannot rely too much upon the documents referred to, as helping us to fix Śake 1594 (1672 A.D.) as the first year of the meeting of Rāmadāsa and Śivājī and of the latter's initiation at the hands of the former.

(4) As regards the objection that Rāmadāsa had no political motive at all, and that his politics was influenced by the career of Śivājī, we have to note how strongly Rāmadāsa felt about the political condition of Mahārāshtra. We can see from the opening sections of our review of the Dāsabodha in the next Chapter, how Rāmadāsa bewailed the condition of the Brahmins in his day, and how he bewailed the supremacy of the Mahomedans who destroyed Hinduism wherever they found it. We also know how Dāsabodha XVIII. 6 may be understood as constituting a piece of advice which Rāmadāsa gave to Śivājī. We are told how the name of Tulajā Bhavānī, the patron Goddess of Śivājī, has been mentioned there, and how it is said that she would always protect Śivājī: only he must be always on his guard. These references in the Dāsabodha are strongly supported by some of the other utterances of Pāmādāsa in other places. We know very well that the establishment of the image of Tulajā Bhavānī in one of the greatest of Śivājī's forts, namely, Pratāpagada, in Śake 1583 (1661 A.D.) at the of Rāmadāsa betokens very strongly the influence which Rāmadāsa must have exercised on Śivājī and his fort-keepers even at that time. If Rāmadāsa initiated Śivājī in Śake 1594(1672 A.D.), as has been contended, the establishment Tulajā Bhavānī at Pratāpagada at the hands of Rāmadāsa would not have probably occurred. Moreover, if we look at sentiment which Rāmadāsa expresses in the homage he pays to the deity at Pratāpagada, we can see how he implores the Goddess just to advance the righteous cause of Śivājī: "I ask only one thing of thee, my Mother. Advance the cause of thy King in our very sight. I have heard often that

thou hast killed the wicked in times past, but I now implore thee to show thy real power to-day". This shows how very strongly Rāmadāsa felt about the political condition of his time and how he wished the cause of his religion to prosper at the hands of Śivājī. To crown all these things, Rāmadāsa has left us a body of verses called Ānandavana-bhuvana, the "Region of Bliss", in which he gives free vent to his political sentiments. The "Region of Bliss" is the Apocalypse of Rāmadāsa. He see ahead of his times and sees the wicked being destroyed, the virtuous being supported, and the reign of Bliss coming into existence. Let us see what Rāmadāsa's vision was. "A great evil has fallen upon the Mlechchhas. God has become the partisan of the virtuous in the Region of Bliss. All evil-doers have come to an end. Hindusthan has waxed strong. Haters God have been destroyed in the Region of Bliss..... The power of the Mahomedans is gone..... The Mother Goddess who had bestowed a boon upon Śivājī has come with a bludgeon in her hand, and has killed the sinners of old in the Region of Bliss. I see the Goddess walking in the company of the King, intent upon devouring the wicked and the sinners. She has protected her devotees of old, and she will again protect them to-day" (27-43). These utterances make evident how very strongly Rāmadāsa felt about the miserable condition of Mahārāshtra in his day, and how instead of being influenced by Śivājī, he may have himself served as an inspiration to Śivājī's exploits.

(5) A very relevant Sanada which has been discovered by Mr. Deva in which Śambhu Chhatrapati, that is to say, Sambhājī, the son of Śivājī, has made over to Vāsudeva Gosāvī, one of the greatest disciples of Rāmadāsa, certain lands, is dated Kārttika Śake 1602 (1680 A.D.), in which a reference has been made to another Inām Sanada to Vāsudeva Gosāvī by his father Śivājī dated चंद्र पंचवीस, जिल्हेज,

सन इहिदे, सबईन अलफ्, that is to say, Vaiśakha Vadya 12, Śake 1593 (1671 A.D.), that is to say, about a year before ever, according to Chāndorkar and Bhāte, Śivājī was initiated by Rāmadāsa. Mr. Deva points out the very great improbability, nay even the absurdity, of supposing that Śivājī was not initiated by Rāmadāsa till Śake 1594 (1672 A.D.), while he had made over to Rāmadāsa's disciple Vāsudeva Gosāvī a piece of Inām land in Śake 1593 (1671 A.D.).

(6) Finally, that most important document in which Śivājī sums up his relation to Rāmadāsa, dated Śake 1600 (1678 A.D.) Āśvina Śuddha Daśamī, reference to which has been already made by us, goes also a very long way in pointing out that Śivājī must have been initiated by Rāmadāsa many years before that date, thus making it highly impro-bable that he was initiated in Śake 1594 (1672 A.D.), that is, only six years before the Sanada, as Messrs. Chāndorkar and Bhāte suggest. The document reads as follows :-

" Obeisance to my most high Teacher, the father of all, the abode of all bliss. Śivājī, who is merely as dust on his Master's feet, places his head on the feet of his Master, and requests: I was greatly obliged to have been favoured by your supreme instruction, and to have been ordered that my religious duty lies in conquest, in the establishment of religion, in the service of God and Brahmins, in the relieving of the misery of my subjects, and in their protection and help, and that I should seek to obtain spiritual satisfaction in the midst of this duty. You were also pleased to say that whatever I wished from the bottom of my heart would be fulfilled for me.

Consequently, whatever business I applied myself to, whatever intentions I cherished in my mind, for example,

the destruction of the Turks, the creating of fastnesses by spending enormous wealth in order to assure the continuance of my kingdom, have been fulfilled for me by the grace of your Holy Self.

Then, whatever kingdom I earned I threw at your feet, and bethought of applying myself all the while to your service. Then you ordered me that what you had already asked me to do by way of my religious duty was alone the service of your feet.

Then, when I implored that I should enjoy the close proximity of your company and should see you often, that somewhere a temple of God might be established and the spiritual tradition made to grow, you were pleased to live near about in the caves of mountains, to establish the image of God at Chāphala, and to spread your spiritual instruction far and wide.

Then, when I implored that now that the deity at Chāphala had been established and that the Brahmins and the guests had been entertained, that buildings had been erected, and that ceremonies were being performed, I should be ordered to assign lands for the upkeep of these, you were pleased to say ' What is the use of this all ? But if you are really determined that you should serve God, then you might assign whatever lands you please according to your convenience, and should extend them only as your kingdom would grow'. Hence, wherever the Images of God were established, therever I assigned my lands.

Then, when I again implored that I intended to make over wholly 121 villages to the temple at Chāphala, and eleven Vitas of land in each of the other 121 villages, and when I said also that I intended to give eleven Vitas of land for the continuance of worship in each of the places where God's image had been established, then you said that all these things might be done in course of time.

Consequently, I have at present assigned the following lands for the service of God..... I take upon myself punctually and without fail to present at the time of the annual religious festival of the Deity all the corn that may be grown on these lands, or else an equivalent amount of money in cash. Dated Rājyābhisheka Śake 5, Āśvina Śuddha 10". This letter is a formidable barrier to the interpretation of Śivājī's initiation as having taken place in Śake 1594 (1672 A.D.) Śivājī who passed such a Sanada in Śake 1600 (1678 A.D.), traces the whole history of his connection with Rāmadāsa, which scarcely could have taken place in the short period of six years that may be said to have elapsed from Śake 1594 to 1600 (1672 A.D. to 1678 A.D.). Moreover, it tells us that Śivājī had come into contact with Rāmadāsa since the foundation of the temple at Chāphala, that is to say, since Śake 1571 (1649 A.D.). Thus, this letter presents a formidable difficulty to those who would push the date of the meeting of Śivājī and Rāmadāsa to about a quarter of a century later. The question arises- Shall we accept as true the letters of Divākara Gosāvī upon which the arguments for a later date of the meeting have been based ? It is highly probable that the earlier date is the more correct date; but we shall await some new discoveries for the final decision in the matter.

6. The works of Ramadasa.

Of the works of Rāmadāsa, the Dāsabodha is, of course, the most important. It is the outcome of the fullest experience of the world by a person who had attained to the highest spiritual experience. It is prose both in style and sentiment; but it is most highly trenchant in its estimate of worldly affairs. It seems that originally only seven Daśakas of the Dāsabodha were written continuously. This is evident

from the way in which Daśaka VII. 10 ends. If we read the 42nd verse, we shall find that it says सरली शब्दाची खटपट । आला ग्रंथाचा शेवट । येथें सांगितलें स्पष्ट । सद्गुरुभजन ॥ This is almost a peroration of the work. If we examine the part of the Dāsabodha we have referred to, we shall find that VI. 4 was written in Śake 1581 (1659 A.D.). From a letter of Divākara Gosāvi to Bahira-mbhat Gosāvī from Chāphala, we see that Rāmadāsa had retired to a solitary place in the valley of Śivathara in Śake 1576 (1654 A.D.). This letter also tells us that Rāmadāsa had determined to spend about ten years on this work. How many years he actually spent, we do not know. But just as VI. 4 can be seen to be written in Śake 1581 (1659 A.D.), similarly XVIII. 6 also refers to an incident in Śake 1581, namely, the death of Afazulkhan, as may be seen from the opening sections of our review of the Dāsabodha in the next Chapter. In any case Śake 1581 (1659 A.D.) seems to be a very important year in the composition of the Dāsabodha. There are two authentic editions of the Dāsabodha : one printed from the manuscript of Kalyāna at Domagaon Matha by Mr. Deva, and the other printed from the manuscript of Dattātreya, Kalyāna's brother, at Śirgaon, by Mr. Pāngārkar. This latter was discovered by Mr. Pāngārkar at Gwalior where the descendants of Dattātreya had repaired. This edition is dated Śake 1606 (1684 A.D.) i.e., just three years after Rāmadāsa's Samādhi. The highest thanks of the Marathi-speaking world are due to these gentlemen for their having discovered these two original manuscripts of Rāmadāsa's work. Mr. Pāngārkar claims that his manuscript may even be an earlier recension than the manuscript of Mr. Deva. The Pāngārkar edition reads डहुळेना ना वितुळेना, while the Deva edition strikes off वितुळेना and writes निवळेना instead. The Pāngārkar edition reads सहळ सृष्टीच वर्तती

कळतो वायो; the Deva edition strikes off everything after सकळ सृष्टी and writes instead ची वर्तती गती सकळ तो वायो. As the Deva edition is in possession of all the readings of the Pāngārkar edition and makes corrections here and there, Mr. Pāngārkar is inclined to argue that his edition may be taken to be an earlier edition. Howsoever this may be, we thank both these gentlemen for having given us the original texts. Of the remaining works of Rāmadāsa, the Pathetic Verses of Rāmadāsa (करुणाष्टकें), the Verses addressed to the Mind (मनाचें श्लोक), and the Pseudo-saints (जनस्वभावगोसांवी) are very important. The first shows in abundance of what a mild texture Rāmadāsa's mind was made. Very often he calls upon God from the very depths of his heart. As the Dāsabodha shows the rigorous logic of Rāmadāsa's intellect, his Pathetic Verses show at the same time that his heart was full of the highest devotion and emotion. His Verses addressed to the Mind are also very trenchant *bon mots*, full of the observations of the world, and full also of the highest spiritual advice, worthy in fact of a very high place in Mahārāshtra literature. Janasva-bhāvagosāvī, the Pseudo-saints, a work of about seventy verses, is also a very shrewd and trenchant work which probes into the nature of sainthood and exposes mercilessly all the weak points of the Pseudo-saints. " Vainly do people believe everything that they hear. They throw away jewels and gather dung-cakes..... Who can help these men if they wander like blind cattle ? Wherever we see now, there are the so-called Saints, and in their company, people have mistaken the nature of real Sainthood..... Some say that their Guru partakes of dung..... Others say that their Guru lolls on a dunghill..... Some say that their Guru lives in a cemetery..... Some say that their Guru makes the serpents dance..... Some say that their Guru disappears at pleasure ; and that he makes even

inanimate objects walk like animate ones..... Some say that their Guru rides a tiger, uses a serpent like a rope, and defies death for thousands of years..... Some say that their Guru has lived for ever..... Some say that their Guru turns earth into sugar..... Others say that their Guru knows whether a pregnant woman is going to give birth to a male or a female child..... Some say that while their Guru was sitting in Samādhī, he went from the east to the west..... Some say that their Guru makes women of men, and makes them men again..... He eats food in quantities, and yet passes no excreta..... Some say that their Guru turns himself into a tiger and kills other tigers..... Others say that their Guru was buried alive in sand, and woke up again from the sand after a number of days" (3-63). Thus in a very rationalistic manner does Rāmadāsa dispose of the ordinary notions of Gurudom. It may even be seen how in the passage, we have quoted above, there is a reference to the myth of Chāngadeva and Jñānadeva, one riding a tiger with a serpent in his hand, and the other making a stone-wall walk like an animate object. Miracles do not constitute spirituality, says Rāmadāsa, and such stories are not a true indication of spiritual greatness. Spiritual greatness lies only in the knowledge of the Self-Ātmajñāna-which Rāmadāsa is never wearied of praising.

7. The Contemporaries and Disciples of Ramadasa.

Of the contemporaries of Rāmadāsa, Rāmīrāmadāsa, the elder brother of Rāmadāsa, was the most respected. He was born three years earlier than Rāmadāsa, and died also three years earlier. He has written the works entitled Bhaktirahasya and Sulabhopāya and some other miscellaneous poems. Even though he did not come

actually into the Rāmadāsī tradition, we can say that Rāmadāsa must have influenced him. Kalyāna, the greatest of the disciples of Rāmadāsa, was sent to Domagaon to look after the Matha there, as we have already seen, in Śake 1600 (1678 A.D.), and he lived there supervising that Matha till Śake 1636 (1714 AD.). After Rāmadāsa's death in Śake 1603 (1681 A.D.), Rāmadāsa's bones were preserved at Chāphala for a number of years to be later taken over to the Ganges. One of the greatest miracles connected with the life of Kalyāna is that the very same day on which Rāmadāsā's bones were taken out from Chāphala to be carried over to Benares via Domagaon, Kalyāna also left this world at Domagaon, so that those who brought Rāmadāsa's bones, when they came to Domagaon, found to their great surprise that Kalyāna was also dead, and therefore they carried the bones of both the teacher and the disciple together to Benares. Kalyāna never engaged himself in any contro-versies about the Matha at Chāphala or Sajjanagada. On the other hand, two of the other greatest disciples of Rāmadāsa, namely, Divākara Gosāvī and Uddhava Gosāvī, busied themselves in such a controversy. Divākara Gosāvī was asked by Rāmadāsa, even while he was living, to look after the affairs of the Matha after him ; while he asked Uddhava Gosāvī at the time of his death to do so. This was probably the reason of the quarrel between Divākara Gosāvī and Uddhava Gosāvī for the management of the Matha. The quarrel went to Sambhājī, who after calling in witnesses, gave his decision in favour of Divākara Gosāvī. Uddhava Gosāvī felt very sorry at this decision, went to Tākali in Śake 1607 (1685 A.D.), and fasted and prayed there for fifteen years till Śake 1621 (1699 A.D.). Vāsudeva Gosāvī,

whose name has been already mentioned in connection with the Sanads both from Śivājī and Sambhājī, was also a greatly respected disciple of Rāmadāsa. He was once beaten by Rāmadāsa for having disclosed certain secrets about the spiritual life. But Vāsudeva Gosāvī was so very obedient and respectful, that he threw himself before Rāmadāsa and would not stir an inch unless his Master had told him that he had forgiven him. Dinakara Gosāvī, yet again another disciple of Rāmadāsa, was a great poet and has written the 'Śvānubhava-Dinakara'. His Matha was at Tisgaon in the Ahmednagar District. It seems that he had studied many of the earlier writers of Marathi before him and his account of Yoga in the Svānubhava-Dinakara reminds us often of the 6th chapter of the Jñāneśvarī. Venūbāī and Akkā were the two female disciples of Rāmadāsa. Venūbāī was the author of the "Marriage of Sīta" and had a Matha at Miraj. She died in the presence of Rāmadāsa, and has Samādhī at Sajjanagada. Akkā, who lived forty years after Rāmadāsa, was instrumental in building the great temple of Rāma at Sajjanagada. She also has her Samādhī at Sajjanagada. Giridhara, who traces his spiritual lineage from Venūbāī and Baiyābāī, had the benefit of having seen Rāmadāsa. We know that he was about twenty-five years of age when Rāmadāsa took Samādhī. He was also told by Rāmadāsa to perform Kīrtanas. His Matha was at Bīda. His work, the Samarthatpratāpa, which chronicles the events in Rāmadāsa's life is very valuable, because it is a story of an eye-witness. It seems that this work was written about half a century after Rāmadāsa's death. It is in Giridhara's Samarthatpratāpa, XVIII. 36, that we read the reference to "the death of Afzul Khan, the betterment of the Matha at

Chāphala, and the establishment of Tulajā Bhavānī at Pratāpagada" in Śake 1583 (1661 A.D.):- समर्थे आकारपूर्वक यवनास मारविलें । मग चाफळक्षेत्र उभें केलें । श्रीतुळजा माउलीसी संस्थापिलें । जाउनी पर्वतीं प्रतापगडीं ॥ According to Giridhara, it seems that the inspiration for the killing of Afzulkhan came to Śivājī from Rāmadāsa himself; but we must remember that this statement was not made till after half a century after Rāmadāsa's death. In any case, it shows us the traditional way in which the relation between Rāmadāsa and Śivājī was understood. Finally, there is a work called Dāsaviśrāmadhāma bearing the authorship of Ātmārāma which gives the story of the Sāmpradāya of Rāmadāsa, It is a huge work, though a late work. The narrations in this work naturally have not the authenticity of Giridhara's Samarthapratāpa. It is full of miracles about the life of Rāmadāsa. We should go to it not for the stories connected with Rāmadāsa's life, but for the traditional teaching in the school of Rāmadāsa, which it perfectly embodies. In any case, Rāmadāsa's Dāsabodha is itself a great history of the doings and thoughts of the Saint. It is a piece of Rāmadāsa's autobiography, as the Gāthā of Tukārāma constitutes his. A great man's life consists not of the miracles connected with him, but verily of his thoughts and utterances. It is from that point of view that the Dāsabodha is remarkably valuable as giving us the spiritual autobiography of Rāmadāsa.

CHAPTER II
The Dasabodha.
I. Introductory.

1. Internal evidence for the date of the Dasabodha.

There is an important internal chronological evidence in the Dāsabodha, which points to at least a portion of it having been written in the Śaka year 1581. In Dāsabodha VI. 4, we are told that the year of the Kali age, in which the work was written, was 4760, corresponding to the Śaka year 1581. Also, it must be remembered that Afzul Khan was killed by Śivājī in the very same year ; and in Dāsabodha XVIII. 6, we have, according to tradition, the advice which Rāmadāsa offered to Śivājī on this occasion. The reference to Tulajā Bhavānī, who was the patron Goddess of Śivājī, as well as the general tone of the advice which Rāmadāsa imparts, namely, the advice to a Ruler who had to carry on his kingdom in the midst of Mahomedan oppression, make it evident that the Samāsa must have been written by Rāmadāsa for the sake of Śivājī himself. One does not know, however, whether the whole stretch of the Dāsabodha from VI. 4 to XVIII. 6 was written during one year. Probably it was not so written. Most probably the original Dāsabodha was concluded at Daśaka VII. 10, as the 42nd verse of that Samāsa, as has been already pointed out, has a tone of peroration. If that be the case, the later Daśakas must be supposed to have been later on added to the original Dāsabodha either by Rāmadāsa himself or by his pupils under his direction.

2. Ramadasa's advice to Sivaji.

What is the advice which Rāmadāsa imparts to Śivājī

in the Samāsa above referred to ? He tells him " to adorn his body not by clothes and ornaments, but by shrewdness and wisdom". He tells him that God feels proud of him, and particularly the Goddess Tulajā Bhavānī; but that he should undertake his enterprises with great care. He need not give advice to a man who is already on the alert..... The Mahomedans have been spreading oppression throughout India for a long time, says Rāmadāsa ; hence Śivājī should be always on his guard. When God once calls a man His own, one cannot imagine what he may do. His justice, his forethought, his ready wisdom, and his knowledge of other peoples' hearts are all of them the gifts of God. His efforts, his alertness, his courage in the nick of time, his great prowess are all of them the gifts of God. His fame, his power, is greatness, and his incomparably rare qualities are all the gifts of God..... A discrimination between matters which pertain to this world and those which pertain to the next, perpetual wakefulness about all matters, and forbearance with all are the gifts of God. To spread the cause of God, to protect the Brahmins, to help one's subjects, are all of them the gifts of God. Those, in fact, who re-establish the kingdom of God are all of them the incarnations of God (XVIII. 6. 9-20).

3. The miserable condition of the Brahmins in Ramadasa's time.

In a general way, Rāmadāsa was so much convinced of the bad condition of Mahārāshtra at his time that he felt the necessity of a reinvigoration of religion in his own day. He bewails very much the bad condition of the Brahmins. He tells us that people of low character have acquired supremacy over those who were prized as spiritual teachers..... The Brahmins have lost their intellect..... They

have fallen from the high pedestal of spiritual teachership, and have become the disciples of those who are worthy to become their disciples. Some follow after the Mahomedan deities. Some voluntarily embrace Maho-medanism..... The lower castes have attained to spiritual teachership : the Śūdras are demolishing the social status of the Brahmins. The Brahmins, unable to understand this work of destruction, are yet retaining their social arrogance. The Mahomedans have robbed them of worldly kingdom on the fields of battle. The kingdom of the spirit has fallen to the lot of the base people in society, and the Brahmins are nowhere. They are vainly fighting among themselves..... We are verily the same Brahmins, says Rāmadāsa, and we have to reap the fruit of the actions of our ancestors. What have the Brahmins of to-day done, asks Rāmadāsa, that they should not get even food to eat, and he appeals to the people to say whether this is a matter of fact or not ? Finally, he tells us that we need not blame our ancestors in vain. " Let us lay all the blame at the door of the bad luck of the Brahmins", says Rāmadāsa, and he requests the Brahmins to forgive him if he has spoken harsh words to them (XIV. 7. 29-40). In a general way, he tries to exhort them to come to the standard of true Brahminhood, and to acquire supremacy both in worldly and spiritual matters.

4. The way to get rid of difficulties is to meditate on God.

One of the chief ways of accomplishing whatever one desires is to devote oneself to "Upāsanā", that is to say, to know the true way of meditation on God. " He, who does not know God, is an evil man : he is a Durātman, says Rāmadāsa, that is to say, the Ātman is removed from him..... When we become assimilated to God, then Prakriti

begins to change her nature..... Where God's knowledge is present, there also is success..... One should think on God constantly in one's mind. How shall His spouse, the Goddess of Wealth, depart from one who always thinks on God ? God is indeed immanent in the whole universe, and we should worship Him as everywhere..... This is my Upāsana, says Rāmadāsa, which surpasses logic, and takes one beyond the pheno-menal world to God Himself" (XV. 9. 18-29).

5. Ramadasa's description of his own faith.

Rāmadāsa elsewhere describes at greater length and in more personal terms his devotion to Rāma. " Raghunātha is indeed my family deity..... He is the great God who has relieved the gods from their sufferings. We are His servants, and through service have attained to knowledge..... Rāma does indeed kill evil men, and support His devotees. Such a miracle can be seen at every step in our life. Whatever we may desire from the bottom of our heart shall come to take place by the grace of God, and all obstacles will come to an end. By Meditation on God is acquired Illumination. By Meditation on God, Greatness is attained. Therefore one's first duty ought to be meditate on God. This is indeed a matter of one's own experience. Set thyself to perform thy duty by meditating on God, and thou shalt surely succeed. Only thou shouldst suppose from the bottom of thy heart that God is the real agent and not thyself..... If thou regardest thyself as an agent, thou shalt land thyself into many difficulties ; on the other hand, if thou believest that God is the real agent, then shalt thou attain to fame, and to greatness, and to power " (VI. 7. 21-36).

II. Metaphysics.

6. What knowledge is not.

At the opening of the metaphysical section in Rāmadāsa, we have first to take into account what he does not regard as constituting knowledge. A man, who knows the past, the future, and the present to the smallest detail, is supposed to be a wise man, says Rāmadāsa ; but really he is not a wise man. Knowledge of all the sciences is not real knowledge. To distinguish a good horse from a bad one, to know the various classes of animals, to have a knowledge of all the kinds of birds, is not knowledge. To know the various metals, to know the various coins, to know the various jewels, is not real knowledge. To know the various kinds of seeds, to know the various kinds of flowers, to know the various kinds of fruits, is not real knowledge. To know various words, to know various languages, is not knowledge. To speak straight away, to have ready wit, to compose poetry extempore, is not knowledge. To know the art of singing, to know the art of dancing, is not knowledge. To know the various kinds of pictures, to know the various kinds of instruments, to know the various kinds of arts, is not knowledge. All this is only skilfulness and not knowledge. It looks as if it is knowledge ; but real knowledge is different from these. To know what is going on in another man's mind is regarded as knowledge, says Rāmadāsa ; but really this is not knowledge. That knowledge, by which a man attains to liberation, is of a different kind altogether (V. 5. 3-37).

7. What knowledge is.

Then Rāmadāsa goes on to discuss what knowledge really is. Real knowledge, he tells us, is Self-knowledge - Vision of the Self by the Self. Real knowledge consists in

knowing God, in cognizing His eternal form, in distinguishing the real from the unreal. Where the phenomenal world hides itself, where the "pañchabhautika" is at an end, there alone is knowledge. Knowledge goes beyond the mind, beyond the intellect, beyond all argumentation. It goes even the Beyond, and beyond the highest stage of speech. It is good to give advice to others that they should meditate on the supreme sentence, "That art thou " ; but this does not mean that they should take a rosary in their hands, and count the sentence in their minds. What is wanted is meditation on the substance of that great Sentence..... Difficult indeed is that knowledge by which one attains to one's Self, to one's original Form, which is self-born and eternal. That indeed is the Form from which all this comes out. That is indeed the Form, by knowing which all ignorance comes to an end..... When we begin to know our Self, then indeed shall we be omniscient. All partial knowledge will then be at an end..... This is the great knowledge by which sages of the past have crossed the ocean of life. Vyāsa and Vaśishtha, Śuka and Nārada, Janaka and Vāmadeva, Vālmīki and Atri, Śaunaka and Sanaka, Ādinātha, Matsyendranātha and Gorakshanātha - all these great sages have attained to this knowledge. By the happiness of that Knowledge, the great God Śiva sits nodding in bliss. That is the Knowledge, which has made saints and great men. That is the Knowledge which is immanent in the knowledges of the past, the present, and the future..... Mythologists do not treat of this Knowledge. The Vedas fail to attain to it. But by the grace of the Guru, I shall tell you what that Knowledge is. I know neither Sanskrit nor Prākṛit. My Sadgurunātha alone resides in my heart. By his grace, indeed, I can dispense with all Sanskrit and with all Prākṛit. By his grace, I can dispense with the

study of the Vedas, and the study of all kinds of Learning. My Guru's grace has fallen upon me without any effort on my part. Greater than the works in Marāthi are the works in Sanskrit. Greatest of all the works in Sanskrit is the Vedānta. Greater than the Vedānta itself, higher than it, and subtler than it, is the instruction of my Guru. By his instruction, I have reached contentment. The instruction of my Guru is my Vedānta. The instruction of my Guru is my final intellectual theorem. The instruction of my Guru is my personal conviction. By the words of my Lord, I have attained to complete contentment. This indeed is the secret of my heart. This I now intend telling thee if thou listenest to me for a while. The disciple here became confused. He fell at the feet of his Guru and then the Guru began to speak : Indeed the meaning of the expression ' I am He' is beyond all description. The teacher and the disciple become one in that meaning. Remember, my disciple, that thou art verily the Godhead. Entertain no doubt, no illusion, about it. Of all kinds of Bhakti, Ātmanivedana or Self-surrender is the best. When the elements have vanished, when the Prakriti and the Purusha have both been resolved in Brahman, when the phenomenal world has come to an end, the Self itself vanishes, being merged unitively in the Godhead. The sense of creation is then at an end. There is supreme Oneness. There is eternal identity between microcosm and macrocosm..... If thou but forget test thyself in thy Guru, why needest thou be anxious at all that thou wilt not reach this end ? Forget thy difference from the Guru, says Rāmadāsa. Now, in order that this experience of unison, says Rāmadāsa, should remain indelibly in thy mind, meditate on thy Guru. By that meditation, thou shalt attain to complete satisfaction. This indeed is Self-knowledge, my pupil! By that, the fear of existence shall depart for ever.

He who regards himself as identical with his body merely commits self- slaughter.... Nobody indeed is bound. People have been vainly deluded by the illusion of identity with body. Sit in a quiet place, and seek spiritual rest in thy Form. By that means, wilt thou grow in strength. When thou hast attained to Self-knowledge, then will complete dispassion fill thy mind. Do not vainly delude thyself by saying that thou art liberated, and give loose reins to thy senses. In that way thy spiritual thirst shall never be quenched.... I tell thee, finally, says Rāmadāsa, that whatever thou searchest that thou shalt be (V. 6. 1-G4).

8. Self-Knowledge puts an end to all evil.

Whatever sins a man may have committed, whatever miseries he may have been suffering from, Rāmadāsa tells us, that if he meditates on the Name of God, all his sins and miseries would come to an end. "The body is made of sin, as sin forever is its lot. If one entertains desires inside the body, what can external means do ? Let the body be shaved as many times as one pleases in places of pilgrimage ; let it be subjected to all kinds of compunctions in holy places; let it be purified as much as you please by different kinds of clay ; let it be burnt as much as one wills by heated copper-signs ;..... let a man eat as many balls of cow-dung as he likes ; let him drink as many pots of cow's urine as he pleases ; let him wear any kinds of rosaries and garlands he likes; whatever holy costume he may put on, his mind is filled by evil and sin ; and in order that the evil and sin may be burnt, Self-knowledge is necessary. Self-knowledge is more powerful than all religious vows, than all religious charities, than the different kinds of Yoga, than the various kinds of pilgrimage. There is indeed no limit to the merit of a man who has seen the Self. For him, all sins are at an end. That

eternal Form of God, which has been described in the Scriptures, is indeed a Form of the knower himself. When one reaches that, merit transgresses all bounds. These are matters of experience, says Rāmadāsa, and a man who does not attain to this experience, toils in vain, Oh ye men of spiritual experience, determine that this knowledge shall abide in you forever by the grace of God. Without it, there would be everywhere grief and sorrow " (X. 10. 59-68).

9. Images, not God.

Rāmadāsa with a true insight tells us that howsoever much images may satisfy the beginner in spiritual life, they cannot satisfy the advanced thinker: in fact, we have no right to call them God. "When an image made of stone breaks some day, his devotee feels sorry at heart, weeps, falls prostrate, and cries. Some gods are in this way destroyed even at home. Some gods are stolen away by thieves. Some gods are shattered to pieces by the iconoclasts. Some gods are dishonoured, others thrown into water, others made the foundation-stones of buildings. People cry in vain : ' The evil-doer has come and has disfigured the places of pilgrimage. We vainly believed that there was a great power in those places of pilgrimage. We do not know how this should happen'. People imagine that gods can be made by goldsmiths. Others think that they can be made by those who cast iron ; still others suppose that they can be cut out of stones. Infinite thus is the number of deities that may be found on the banks of the Narmadā or the Gandakī. People do not know the real God. They worship the black round pieces of stone or copper-pieces, or marble-pieces, and place them on the altars at home. The god that was made of silk has been now torn to pieces, and the devotee seeks after the god made of clay. He supposes that his god is a great

Being who supports him in times of difficulty..... This fool, who is under an illusion, does not know that the true God cannot be found in metals, in stones, in clay, in pictures or in wood. These are all matters of imagination..... The true God is to be found elsewhere " (VI. 6. 33-45).

10. Four ascending orders of the Godhead.

Rāmadāsa next proceeds to differentiate the conception of the Godhead into four different aspects. He tells us that people follow various paths and worship various kinds of gods which could be classified under four general heads. In the first place, people worship images made either of clay or of metal, or of stones. Secondly, people worship the incarnations of gods, meditate on them, worship them and hear their praises. A third set of people worship the inner Self of all, who fills the world, who is regarded as the Seer, the Spectator, and the Intelligent. Finally, there are those who meditate on God as the Immaculate and the Changeless Being, and in that way try to become identical with that Being. Thus, says Rāmadāsa, there are those who worship the images, those who worship the incarnations, those who worship the Self, and those who worship the Absolute. He tells us finally that he who would worship the Immaculate, would himself become the Immaculate; while he who would worship the Changing, would himself undergo change. The real swans, he tells us, are able to distinguish water from milk. In that way shall we be able to find out the true God (XI. 2. 28-39).

11. The true God is the pure Self who persists even when the body falls.

After a criticism of the worship of images, Rāmadāsa goes on to tell us where the true God is to be found. When

we become convinced that the real God is not to be found in clay-images, which are worn-hipped and forthwith thrown away, we should try to find out the God who cannot be thrown away, who inhabits all bodies, and leaves them at pleasure..... All people have an inner desire that they should be able to see God ; but they do not know the way to Him. We cannot call any being God which does not stand the test of thought..... When great men die, people make their images and worship them. It is impossible by manufacturing ink that a man may become a wealthy man. Blind faith is mere ignorance. By ignorance we shall never be able to reach God..... We must throw over the illusion which prevents us from seeing God, and try in various ways to find Him out. We should go by the path of spiritual meditation and first-hand experience..... Untruth is every where untruth and cannot be compared with truth. Our mind naturally looks downwards. We should reverse the process and make it look upwards..... That alone should be regarded as the final reality which persists when the body falls (XX. 9).

12. Knowledge of the true God can be communicated to us only by the Spiritual Teacher.

In a different place, Rāmadāsa reviews again the various kinds of gods, and tells us that knowledge of the true God could be imparted to us only by a great Spiritual Teacher. The true God, he says, is not made of gold, or silver, or brass, or copper. The true God is not a painting drawn on a wall. The true God is not the different kinds of stones found in rivers, or the moon-stone or the sun-stone. The true God is not copper pieces or gold pieces worshipped at home..... The true God is the Seer. He is One. From Him the many have sprung..... People vainly worship deities in their households or go hunting after the

gods in places of pilgrimage or yet try to find them in the different incarnations; but they do not know that these incarnations are dead and gone. Yet others regard Brahmā, Vishnu and Maheśa as gods ; but they do not know that the true God is beyond all qualities. There is neither place nor measure of the true God and any external worship of Him is useless..... People vainly follow the various deities ; and they do not know the Supreme God..... He can be known only by the eye of spiritual vision. We should see Him, and abide in Him. We should become identical with Him by constant meditation on His name..... This is indeed a subtle process and can be made known to us in an instant's time by a great Spiritual Teacher (XIX. 5).

13. God, identified with the Inner Self.

This God, says Rāmadāsa, is indeed the Inner Self. Rāmadāsa dissuades people from vainly following after the many god . " Images take us back to gods in the places of pilgrimage. The gods in the places of pilgrimage take us back to incarnations. The incarnations take us to the three deities, Brahmā, Vishnu, and Maheśa - the Creator, the Preserver and the Destroyer of the world. But the highest God is only He Who presides over all these gods. He is the Inner Self ; He is the real Doer ; He is the Enjoyer; it is by Him that the whole world is being moved. People miss this immanent God and follow vainly after other gods, and then they come to grief, because they are not able to find God in outer images. What is the use of mere wandering at random, they ask, and then they keep company with the good; for, in the company of the good, has God been attained by many men (XVIII. 8. 1-13). It is this God who has transformed Himself into the various deities of the world. In Him are all powers centred. He is the real Enjoyer of the greatness and

glory of the world..... People have vainly looked after the externals and have missed the God who is immanent in them. Indeed by incalculable merit alone can a man know the movements of this God. By meditating on Him, all sin would be at an end. They who have looked inside, have been saved. They who have looked outside, have all gone to perdition (XVIII. 1. 16-24).

14. The superstitious and the rationalistic in Ramadasa.

After all this philosophical discussion of the true nature of the Godhead, it seems somewhat strange that Rāmadāsa should have lent support to certain superstitious ideas. The whole of IX. 8 of the Dāsabodha is devoted to an exposition of the superstitions among men. Rāmadāsa tells us that even though people may die, they may come to birth again by being thrown down from heaven, whereas many we see born with their hands and feet hurt. When a man has been dead over three days from the effects of a serpent's poison, a conjurer can yet raise him up. Many people have raised the dead, says Rāmadāsa and have brought people back to earth from the kingdom of Death..... Some have taken one birth after another and have consciously entered into other people's bodies..... All gods and demons have indeed, says Rāmadāsa, windy forms. Deities and demons possess a man, and by proper spells can be driven out of the body. By calling up a spirit in the body of a man, one may know hidden treasures, one may know the solution of difficult problems. Of wind indeed are the different tunes in music constituted. By these tunes lamps are lit, and clouds are made to descend on earth..... By the power of Mantras, deities may be made to manifest themselves. By the power of the Mantras, all sorts of magic can be made possible (IX.

8. 6-33). Elsewhere also, Rāmadāsa tells us that the deities exist as windy forms. Gods and goddesses, deities and spirits, are really innumerable, and they all exist in the shape of windy forms. Taking on a windy form, they enter into various bodies and become apparent to people's vision or hide themselves at pleasure (X. 3. 9-10). If men can hide themselves and show themselves, asks Rāmadāsa, shall we deny that power to the deities ? Gods and deities, spirits and gods, show increasing power..... The goblins also live in windy shapes and throw eatables in the midst of men. Do not suppose that all these stories are false. For almost all people in the world have had personal experience of them. If men can take on a new body, shall we deny that power to the Godhead ? Brahmā, Vishnu and Maheśa are indeed windy forms, and from them the whole universe has sprung (X. 4. 24-28). Rāmadāsa also tells us elsewhere that all these gods and goddesses, deities and ghosts, wander upon the surface of the earth in windy shapes and change their forms at will. They affect only ignorant men, he tells us, and they have no power over Saints, because the Saints have left no desire in them. It is for this reason, says Rāmadāsa, that we should attain to the knowledge of the Self (X. 9. 20-22). Over against this explanation of deities, including among them Brahmā, Vishnu, and Maheśa as windy forms, Rāmadāsa elsewhere offers another explanation that they exist only in consciousness. Vishnu, the preserver, he tells us, is only the principle of knowledge in us ; Rudra, the destroyer, is the principle of ignorance; while Brahmā, the creator, is a combination of knowledge and ignorance (X. 1. 26-31); from which the corollary is, as Rāmadāsa puts it, that Brahmā, Vishnu and Maheśa do not exist objectively but are only subjective embodiments of the principles of creation, preservation, and destruction (X. 2. 1-2).

Experience tells us, says Rāmadāsa elsewhere, that Brahmā, Vishnu, and Maheśa do not exist objectively, but that God alone exists, Who creates the Creator, preserves the Preserver, destroys the Destroyer (IX. 7. 10-12) a sentiment which in his "Verses addressed to Mind" Rāmadāsa reiterates when he inquires as to Who must be the creator of the Creator, the preserver of the Preserver and the destroyer of the Destroyer? All these deities, says Rāmadāsa, must be sublimated into the one Godhead who alone is real, who alone is eternal, who alone is immanent in the whole universe.

15. The power of Untruth.

Indeed, the reason why we do not perceive this reality is that Untruth has a very great power over us. What is untrue appears to us to be true. What is true appears to us untrue. In this way does the whirligig of delusion deceive us. Many people have told us the way to get at truth and yet untruth has fastened itself upon us. It has gone into our very hearts and has waxed strong. On the other hand, truth has hidden itself though ever present. The scriptures, the sciences and the mythologies have narrated to us in various ways the nature of truth, and yet the Ātman who is the ultimate Truth, is hidden from us. The truth remains hidden though existing, and the false appears to us though it does not exist. In this way does the power of untruth deceive us (VII. 10. 1-5).

16. Creation is unreality: God is the only reality.

The way to get at truth from the region of untruth may be characterized as the way from Creation to God. The first illusion existed when this world did not exist, when creation had not been, when the Universe with its seven coverings had not come into being, when the gods Brahmā, Vishnu and

Maheśa did not exist, when the earth, the mountains and the oceans had not come into existence. The various worlds, the stars, the sun and the moon, the seven continents, and the fourteen heavens were created only later..... The thirty-three crores of gods did not exist then..... The twelve suns, the eleven Rudras, the nine serpents, the seven sages and the incarnations of God all came later. The clouds, and the first man, and the various beings, were created only later..... The five elements which constitute the world, we should avoid as unreal, and then we can attain to Reality. As only when the threshold is crossed does one enter into a temple, similarly, when the phenomenal world is crossed, does one attain to the Real (VIII. 4. 47- 58).

17. From the Cosmos to the Atman.

By the great power of his imagination, Rāmadāsa tells us how we must go from the contemplation of the Cosmos to the contemplation of the Ātman. Is it not by the power of God, he asks, that the Sun moves across the face of the sky ; that the mist in the universe showers immense rain ; that clouds as large as mountains rise up in the sky and hide the disc of the sun ; that the wind terribly moves through them; that, like the servant of Destruction, it dispels the clouds and sets the sun free; that thunderbolts shoot on the earth; and that all beings in the world are filled with fear ? Wonderful it is that God has set one element against another thus restored equipoise to Creation. Infinite thus are the ways in which the Ātman expresses Himself. It is impossible to know them all. The mind reels in the contemplation of them. This indeed is my faith, says Rāmadāsa ; only those who have devotion in them can know what it is. Its infinite power surpasses the imagination of even the Creator (XX. 8. 23-29).

18. The cosmological argument for the existence of God.

Elsewhere, Rāmadāsa gives a true cosmological argument for the existence of God. " He indeed may be called God", says Rāmadāsa, "who is the Supreme Agent; who creates rows of clouds and produces nectar from the disc of the moon; who gives light to the sun ; who sets limits to the ocean ; who has appointed the great serpent for the sustenance of the world ; who has created the stars in the intermundane regions;..... who manifests Himself in the incarnations of the Creator and the Preserver and the Destroyer of the world. A godling on the altar of a house cannot possess the power of creating the world. Innumerable indeed are the deities on earth, none of which can create the sun and the moon and the stars..... The true God is indeed He who creates the world out of waters, and who sustains it without a prop. God creates the earth, from the bosom of which the stones are produced; and these stones are regarded as gods by those who do not know. The true God is indeed He who lived before creation, just as the potter lived before the pot.....We must remember that He who creates the world must necessarily exist before the world. He who pulls the strings of an idol cannot be identical with the idol itself..... Similarly, he who has created the Selves cannot himself be regarded as the Self. God is thus different from both the world and the Self..... He is indeed the Supreme Ātman, who fills the whole world inside and outside. He is immaculate. He is changeless. That changeless Being should never be confused with the changeful Self. To say that God comes, and God goes, is indeed folly. God cannot be born, and God cannot die. God produced birth and death, and is different from either of them (VIII. 1. 8-50).

19. The relation of Body, Soul and God.

God is thus different from both body and soul. The body is made up of gross elements; the soul is of changeful qualities ; the changeless Brahman is different from either. By intuitive experience we must come to distinguish between the changeless, the changeful, and the gross. When the Soul leaves the body, then indeed can we see how the gross body falls to the ground. What is gross falls to the ground ; what is changeful passes away. The body comes to be inhabited by the soul, and thus creation moves on. What is due to the soul is wrongly attributed to Brahman. When the Saints who have attained to spiritual experience meet each other, they verily enjoy solitude, and their talk determines the nature of Brahman (XX. 7. 12-24).

20. The Four Atmans as ultimately one.

It is indeed through mistake that people suppose there are four different Ātmans. The Ātman is really one. It is supposed that the four kinds of Ātman are the Jīvātman, the Śivātman, the Paramātman and the Nirmalātman..... That Ātman who fills the body is called the Jīvātman; that Ātman who fills the universe is the Śivātman ; that Ātman who fills the space beyond the universe is called the Paramātman ; while that Ātman who has no spatial connotation whatsoever, who is pure intelligence, and who is free from all taint of action, is called the Nirmalātman. It is on account of the difference of environment that the Ātmans are supposed to be different; but the Ātman is really one, and full of bliss (VIII. 7. 44-53).

21. The Highest Principle must be reached in actual experience.

Call the highest principle the Ātman or Brahman as

you please, the real business of the spiritual aspirant is to apprehend that principle in actual experience. It is quality-less, and yet it fills every nook and cranny of the universe. It is a principle which remains eternal in the midst of change and destruction..... It is a principle which is beyond all imagination, and which is untouched by any illusion whatsoever. What comes to be and what passes out of existence must never be confounded with what can never become or pass away..... It is indeed a principle which is open to spiritual insight, and one who attains to it should remain alone to himself, and thus assimilate himself to the Divine. It is beyond what the eye sees and what the mind imagines. It is both beyond the physical and mental. That principle is both inside and outside. It is infinite. It is distant and near..... As to our knowledge of this principle. We should depend upon our own spiritual experience. We must not be under compunction of another man's opinion ; because another man's opinion is incompetent to lead us to God. If a doctor's medicine proves useless, we must give up the doctor ; otherwise the patient will not survive. He who knows the King personally will never commit the mistake of calling another man a King. He who knows God, will himself become God. The Brahman is indeed beyond all restrictions and beyond all fatuities. Restrictions and fatuities are on this side ; God is on the other side of existence (XIV. 9. 11-28). The practical way, according to Rāmadāsa, for the realisation of this God, we proceed to narrate in the next section.

III. Mysticism.

22. Exhortation to Spiritual Life, based upon the evanescence of the world.

Rāmadāsa begins by exhorting us to the spiritual life by

calling our attention to the evanescence of all existence. "We do not know what accidents may befall us. As birds fly away in various directions, so our wealth and wife and sons will fly away from us..... As soon as the body falls, the Self may migrate to a worse existence, for example, that of a hog or a pig..... In thy previous existences, thou hast suffered immense pain, and it is only by exceeding fortune thou hast been relieved therefrom..... One's mother is of no avail, one's father is of no avail, one's sister and brother are of no avail, one's friends and wife and sons are of no avail. All these follow thee, only if they derive happiness from thee..... Thou bearest their burden in vain for the whole of thy life, and will ultimately abandon thee..... If thou wert to die at this moment, thou shalt fall off from God as thou art centred in egoism. Thousands of mothers, fathers, sons, daughters thou hast had in thy former births..... Thou followest after mean people for filling thy belly, and thou flatterest them and praisest them. Thou sellest thy body to him who gives food to thee. But thou forgettest God who has given thee birth..... Sinful and mean are those who follow sensual enjoyment, leaving God..... He who wishes to have eternal happiness should follow God, leaving away the company of men, which is the cause of sorrow " (III. 10. 39-63).

23. In this mortal fair, the only profit is God.

In the same strain, Rāmadāsa tells us elsewhere that in this mortal fair the only profit that we should seek is God. " Mortal things remain in this world and nobody can take them away for a future existence. Hence we should grow indifferent to all things, and give ourselves up to contemplation, by which the infinite profit of God will be attained. There is no greater profit than the vision of God, and one can attain to it even while carrying on the ordinary duties of life. Many meritorious men like King Janaka

have lived and ruled erewhile. Similarly are there many meritorious men to-day. But death cares not for the King, and will not leave him even if he offers lakhs and crores of rupees. Life indeed is a dependent variable, and we have to suffer all kinds of pain and anxieties while living. In this mortal fair, the only profit is God, who alone compensates for all its sufferings " (XII. 8. 28-34).

24. Spiritual value of the body.

Rāmadāsa also elsewhere points out the great spiritual value of the body while it is yet living. It is only when the body is sound, that one can attain to God. The real end of bodily existence should be God-vision. " Blessed indeed is the body, for whatever true desire we may harbour while we are in this body shall come to fruition. By the help of the body, some have gone by the way of devotion, others of a more ascetic spirit have resorted to mountains and caves, some are under-taking pilgrimages, others are living with a full confidence in the power of God's Name..... Some by teasing their body to an inordinate extent, and by the power of their devotion, have attained to the reali-sation of God..... Some travel across the sky, some have been united with light or water in the Universe, others yet again have become invisible though living; some have assumed many forms, some while sitting are seen roaming in various places and oceans ; some are able to sit on dreadful animals, others are able to move inanimate objects, -Rāmadāsa here probably refers to the incident of Chāngadeva and Jñāneśvara, - some by the power of their penance have raised dead bodies..... Very many powerful persons have lived erewhile, who have been in possession of Siddhis..... Some have gone by the nine-fold path of devotion; some by secret meditation have reached the highest heaven; some have attained to the world

of the deity they have worshipped, others have lived near it, others have attained to its form, and yet others have become united with it. If these are the advantages of living in the body, how shall we adequately glorify its greatness ?..... Animals cannot have this open way to God; in the human body alone is one able to attain to God. It is only by taking on a human body that men have become saints and sages and devotees..... We should utilize our body for the benefit of others, and should live only in the shape of fame. If the body is lame, or if the body is cripple, it cannot be of any service to others. If the body is blind or deaf, it can neither see nor hear;..... if it is weak and diseased, it is as good as useless. If the body is subject to epileptic fits and possession by spirits, no good shall come out of it. Hence, if the body is strong and without any disease or defect, it should be forthwith utilised in the service of God" (I.10.1-32).

25. The extreme misery at the time of death.

If the great spiritual value of the body is an argument why man should turn it to good account for the purposes of God-realisation, the calling of our attention to the great misery at the time of death is another argument why people should rise from the contemplation of those miseries to a determination of turning it to good account. Rāmadāsa tells us that Death is a great leveller. There are innumerable miseries at the time of death. A man may enjoy all kinds of happiness during life, but the final torments he cannot suffer. The body is loath to give up the ghost, and the misery of death makes all people go a-panting. Howsoever broken-limbed he may be, he must live in that condition till he meets death..... His beauty is of no avail; his bodily strength is of no avail; he must die in the midst of suffering. All people have equally to suffer at this final scene of

life..... The final scene is the most difficult one while a man is passing off like an extreme wretch (XVII. 6. 26-32).

26. The Power of Death.

Rāmadāsa tells us elsewhere how Death is all-powerful. The servants of Death keep stripping every man and take him to the home of Death. Nobody can indeed save another from the clutches of Death and all people have some time or other to undergo the trial..... Death does not take Power into account; Death does not take Wealth into account; Death does not take Fame into account. Death does not say this is a King; Death does not say this is an Emperor..... Death does not say this is a learned man ; Death does not say that this is a man of a higher caste. Death does not take proficiency in music into account; Death does not take knowledge of philosophy into account. Death does not say that this is a Yogi; Death does not say that this is a Samnyāsin ; Death does not say that this is a Great Man..... Some have just begun to tread the path of Death, others have gone half-way, others yet are about to reach the destination..... Death shall never leave you if you want to escape his clutches ; you can indeed escape by no means whatsoever from Him. Death does not say this is a place of birth ; Death does not say that this is a foreign land. Death does not say this man has given himself over to fasting. Death does not take the gods into account. Death does not take the incarnations of God Into account..... By carefully considering this, one should prepare himself for the realisation of the true end of life, and even though one may die, one should live in the form of fame..... Gone are the people of great glory ; gone are the people who defied death for a long time ; gone are the people of great fame ; gone are the people of warlike exploits; gone are the people

born of noble families. The protectors of men have passed away. Those who inspired the intellect of men have passed away. The philosophers who lived by logic have passed away..... Gone are those who have wielded the sword; gone are those who have benefited others ; gone are those who have protected people in all ways. Gone are the assemblies of men ; gone are all the logicians ; gone are all the ascetics.... All these are gone, says Rāmadāsa; only those have remained, who have realised the Self, and become united with Him (III. 9. 4-59).

27. Leave away everything and follow God.

The outcome of all this teaching is that we should leave away all considerations of the body, of life, and of all things dependent thereon, and follow God; for God is the only good. " Leave away everything and follow Him. Then only will you come to realise the secret of life. God has created all happiness, but people forget Him, and hunt after the happiness He has created. God Himself has said in the Bhagavadgītā : 'Leave away everything and follow Me' ; but people turn a deaf ear to what He has said. Hence it is that they suffer all kinds of grief. They long for happiness which they cannot get. Fools they that follow after other happiness except that of God..... A wise man should behave differently, and should see God Who is beyond the world. What can be lacking to a man who has seen God ? Discrimination leads to happiness; indiscriminateness leads to misery ; choose whichever you will " (XIII. 7. 21-29).

28. God can be realised even in this life.

The justification for this exhortation to the pursuit of God consists in the teaching about the possibility of His realisation even during this life. " By discrimination is man

able to encompass the end of his life without leaving the activities in the world. This is indeed a matter of experience, says Rāmadāsa. Vast is the difference between experience and logic, between credit and cash between mental worship and actual realisation. We should never trust people when they say that God will be realised some day during the long evolution of our lives. God must be seen forthwith, and even while the body lasts. Immediately must a man be able to attain to God, and to free himself from the coils of doubt. In this life, one can get away from the world and attain to liberation by being united with the Godhead. He who doubts this shall go to perdition..... To be bodiless though living, to do and yet not to do, to be liberated even during life - the secret of these things can be Known only to those who have attained to that state" (VI. 9. 24 - 33).

29. The Bound man.

In general, says Rāmadāsa, mankind are really in a bound state. They pass their life without devotion, without knowledge, without meditation, without the company of Saints, without Self-knowledge. They hug worldly life to their heart and are disgusted with spiritual life. They give themselves incessantly to the censure of the Saints. They are bound by the chains of bodily affection. Their only rosary is the rosary of coins. Their only contemplation is the contemplation of women. Their eyes are given to see wealth and Woman ; their ears are given to the hearing of wealth and woman ; their contemplation is given to the meditation on wealth and woman ; their body and speech and mind, their intellect and wealth and life, are all given to the worship of wealth and woman. These alone make their senses steady. Wealth and woman are their places of pilgrimage. They are the end of their life, both spiritual and

physical. They indeed waste not a single minute, and contemplate incessantly the cares of worldly life. These indeed, says Rāmadāsa, are the Bound (V. 7. 37 - 44).

30. The necessity of a Guru.

How can such men ever hope to have enlightenment ? Rāmadāsa says this would be impossible in the absence of a Guru. "The Brahmins as Brahmins have efficacy in the social order ; but without a great Guru we cannot attain to our intimate treasure. Without a Guru we can never attain to real knowledge..... He who has a desire to see God should move in the company of the good, for without the company of the good, God cannot be attained. One may practise any Sādhana one pleases ; but it would be all useless without a Guru..... Even though one may study the fourteen sciences and attain to all kinds of powers, both physical and mental, without the grace of the Guru one cannot realise the Self. Contemplation and concentration, devotion and worship, would be all useless without the grace of the Guru. Without the grace of the Guru, one moves on like a blind man, floundering and falling into pits and ditches as he wends his way. As one able to see a hidden treasure when the proper collyrium is applied to the eye, similarly the light of knowledge shines only by the Word which the Guru imparts. Without a Guru, one's life would be useless. Without a Guru, one has only to sink in suffering. Without a Guru, the storms of the heart shall never be appeased. By the protecting hand of the Guru, God would reveal Himself..... All the great men that have lived in by gone times, all the Saints and Sages of old attained to realisation only by the power of the Guru. Rāma, Krishna and all the Saints and Sages of by-gone times, devoted themselves wholly to the service of their Master..... In short, those who

wish to attain to liberation can attain to it only by the help of a Guru, and in no other way " (V. 1. 19-44).

31. The Guru gives the key of the spiritual treasure.

The efficacy of the Guru consists in the revelation to the disciple of the true way to God. He indeed gives us, as Rāmadāsa puts it, the key to unlock the door of spiritual experience. " What the mind cannot attain can be attained through the power of the Guru. The treasure-house may be full of treasure ; but it is all shut up, and one cannot go inside it unless one has the key in his hands. What this key is, is known to the disciple with the help of his Master. The Grace of the Master is indeed the key which illumines the intellect, breaks open the door of dualism, takes us to infinite happiness, and lands us for ever in the supersensuous state. That state is beyond the mind ; that satisfaction is beyond all desire. Imagination cannot imagine the superconscious condition. It is beyond what the most potent word can express ; it is beyond all mind and intellect; it is beyond all things of the world. It is for this reason that one should dissociate oneself from the world, and reach spiritual experience. Only he who has attained to spiritual experience, will be comforted by these words of mine, says Rāmadasa" (VII. 2. 12-19).

32. The Guru is greater than God.

If we compare the greatness of the Guru with the greatness of God, says Rāmadāsa, we shall arrive at the conclusion that the Guru is greater than God. " He who regards God as superior to the Guru is a fool. His mind is set merely upon power and glory. The Guru is immortal; Godhood is evanescent. Before the greatness of the Guru,

the greatness of God is as nothing. He must be a bad disciple who regards his Guru and God as of equal count. In his heart, delusion dwells. God is made God by men by the power of Mantras ; but the Guru cannot be made even by God. The power of God is the power of illusion ; the power of the Guru carries every thing before it " (V. 3. 40 - 46).

33. The ineffability of the greatness of the Guru.

If the Guru is so great, it follows that no words can be adequate to his praise. " The greatness of the Guru cannot indeed be described. It is beyond the power of everybody. The Vedas themselves have said 'Neti, Neti'. How then can a fool like myself be adequate to know the nature of the Guru ?..... If one cannot know God actually, one has to make an image of Him ; similarly if I cannot really praise the Guru, I will praise him by illusion. The Guru is indeed superior to the sun. The sun dispels darkness, which yet comes back again ; but when the Guru has swept off the rounds of birth and death, they do not recur..... The Guru is indeed superior to the touch-stone. The touch-stone makes gold of iron, but cannot turn it into a touch-stone itself ; while a disciple of the Guru becomes the Master himself. In respect of the greatness of the Guru, we cannot cite an ocean in comparison, because it is full of salt water; the mountain of gold, because it is after all stone ; ether, because the Guru is more subtle than ether ; the earth, because it will vanish in the great conflagration ;..... nectar, because nectar cannot prevent the circle of birth and death ; the wish-tree, because the Guru's grace is greater than whatever wish can accomplish..... All the gods are ultimately subject to annihilation ; but the Guru can never be annihilated..... My only adequate praise of the Guru is

thus that he cannot be praised. The subtle conditions of the mind, the subtle mind alone can know " (I. 4. 1-31).

34. The Characteristics of a Guru.

Even though, thus, theoretically the greatness of the Guru is ineffable, yet Rāmadāsa tries to characterise it in positive terms. " The miracle-monger is called a Guru", says Rāmadāsa, " but he alone is a real Guru who leads to liberation..... He who instils into our mind the light of the Self and dispels the darkness of ignorance, he who brings into unison the Individual and the Universal Selves - he alone is entitled to be called a Guru. He alone who relieves people of the sufferings of existence, and takes them out of the meshes of illusion, is entitled to be called a Guru..... He who does not bend the mind of his disciples Sādhanaward, who does not teach them to control their senses, should be avoided even though he may be had at a pie's cost..... One who is able to speak with cleverness on the Advaita doctrine, and yet is sensual, can never deserve the title of a Guru..... Hence he alone can be called a Guru who has no desires left in him, and whose determination is as steady as a mountain. The primary characteristic of a Guru is that he possesses immaculate Śelf-knowledge, and the satisfaction of a determinate life in the Self. To add to these, he must have extreme dispassion, and his actions should be beyond censure. With him, spiritual discussion must be a constant pastime; for him, the distinguishment between the false and the true must always take place. He uplifts the world and becomes an exemplar for the various kinds of Bhakti. He who leads people Sādhanaward and establishes Sādhana on a firm footing - he alone can be called a Guru. Inwardly, there must be Self-illumination; outwardly, there must be devoted Bhajana, whereby alone

he leads his disciples to spiritual happiness....., Hence knowledge, dispassionateness, devotion, rightful conduct, Sādhana, spiritual discussion, meditation, morality, justice and th observation of the mean constitute the chief Characteristics of a Guru "(V. 2. 44 - 53).

35. The Characteristics of a Saint.

From the consideration of the Characteristics of a Guru, let us pass on to what Rāmadasa regards to be, in general, the Characteristics of any great Saint. "When a man has tasted of the sweet spiritual nectar, his very body begins to shine. But what is his internal condition? How shall we know that a man has reached Self-knowledge? He alone may be said to have reached the end of Sādhana who has attained to the realisation of the Self..... When the Self is attained in direct vision, the body seems to work in a region of phantoms. There are, however, certain characteristics of a Saint which we must mention. The first characteristic of a Saint is that he is always looking at the Self, and he is outside the world even though he happens to be in it. When the Self is seen, he ceases to care for worldly life and engages himself in teaching others the knowledge of the Self. Another characteristic of the Self-realiser is that his Sādhana is a Sādhana without any scope for doubt. His mind becomes motionless, and is one with God..... Whether his body rests motionless in a place or moves away, his Self is always motionless. He alone is entitled to the name of a Sādhaka, whose heart is fixed on God..... When a person sits upon a throne, kingly qualities come to him of themselves. Similarly, when a man has seen the Self, the qualities of a Siddha come to him of themselves. No amount of mere practice is able to produce these qualities. But the aspirants obtain them only when they have reached

the Self..... A Saint is he who has left no desires in him, and has no anger in him; his desires are centred in the Self, and his treasure is the Name. When one is shut up on all sides by one's own Self, one is always merged in bliss, and no arrogance is possible in such a man. A Saint has no reason for logic-chopping, nor does he show hatred, jealousy or hypocrisy towards others..... What value has he for the world, if the world is to him ultimately unreal ? When he has seen the Self, he has no reason for grief, or infatuation, or fear. God indeed is beyond these, and the Self becomes assimilated to God. His egoism comes to an end, and his heart is set upon the eternal..... A Saint never cares for what is going to happen ; for living as he does in the Self, he knows that all will be well for him. A Saint is a man of supreme insight, for his vision is set upon God. He is immaculate, because he holds in vision the spotless Brahman. In fact, the Saint has attained to the highest of all qualities, namely, the abiding life in God. That indeed is the primary characteristic of the Saint" (VIII. 9. 1-54).

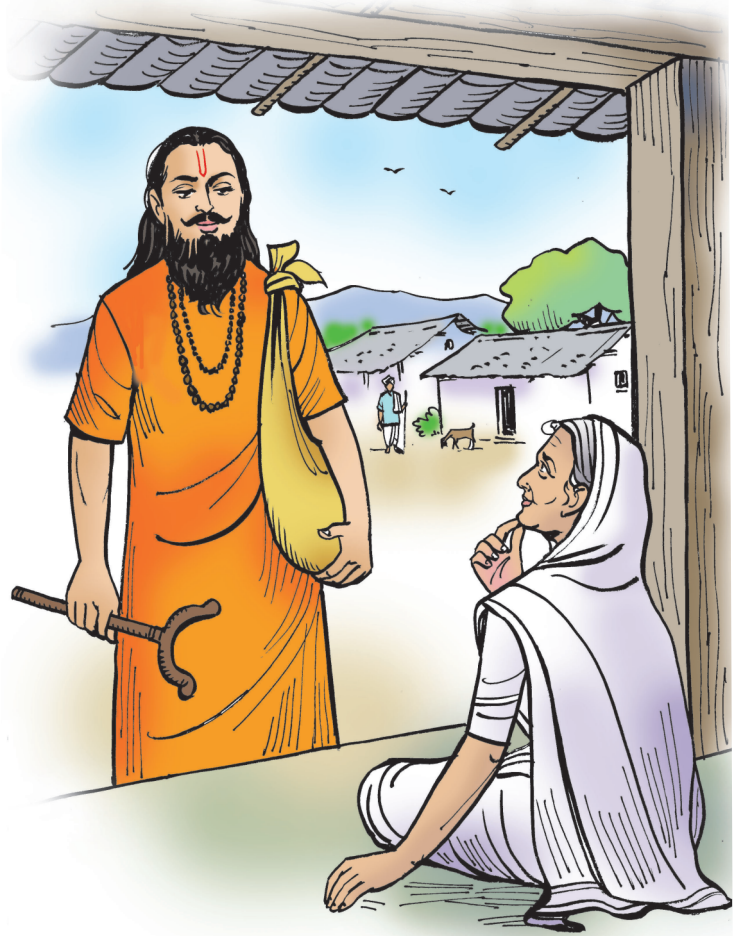
36. The Saints confer a vision of God upon their disciples.

The Saints have in them the power of giving what nobody else can give. The esoteric knowledge of the Godhead, which is impossible to be attained by men, becomes possible only by contact with Saints. Nothing really stands between us and God, and yet we are not able to see Him, because our sight is not properly directed towards Him. Those who have sought to understand the nature of God have failed. Those who have prided themselves on their power of observation are deceived in the case of God-vision. God, indeed, cannot be shown by a lamp, nor can he be found out by means of light. For God's

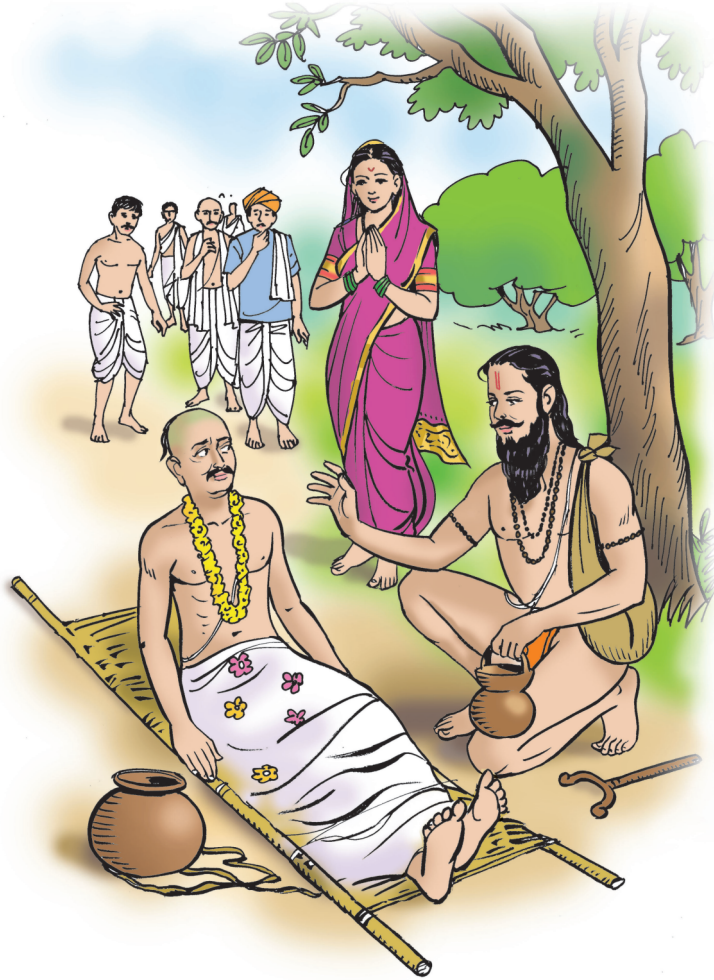
vision, there is no collyrium that can be applied to the eye to make Him visible. Nor can God be revealed in the searchlight of the Sun, or in the pleasing light of the Moon..... Such a God can yet be shown by the Saint to the Seeker. The Saints indeed teach us the way to God, who is beyond the region of illusion..... They are the abode of bliss. They are the root of satisfaction. They are the source of rest. They are the end of devotion..... They are the home of ecstasy. The Saints indeed are truly the rich; for they possess in their hands the keys of the spiritual treasure. The spiritually poor have been made by them spiritual Kings of men..... Emperors and kings have lived erewhile, but none of them has been able to make a grant of God. The Saints confer a boon which nobody else can confer. There is no limit to the greatness of the Saints, for it is on account of them that God reveals Himself (I. 5).

37. Description of an Assembly of Saints.

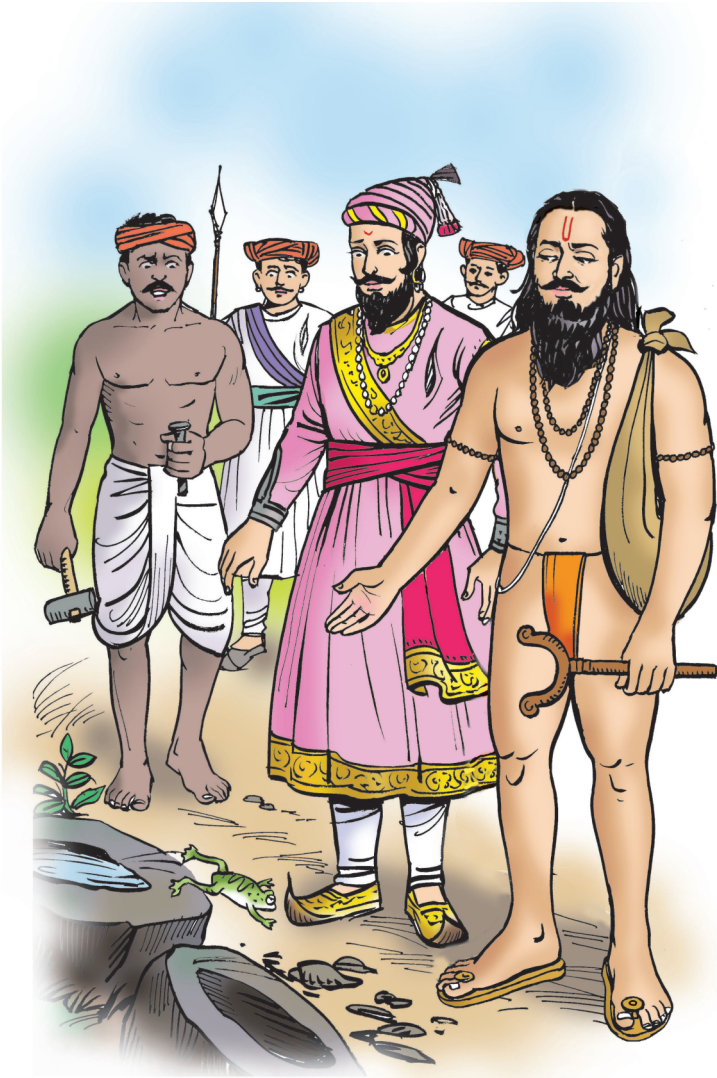
In a famous passage, in the first Daśaka of the Dāsabodha, Rāmadāsa gives us a mystic description of an Āssembly of Saints. " I bow to that Assembly", he says, " where God stands in joy. God does not live in the heaven or in the heart of the Yogins, but only where the devotees sing His praise. Blessed is that Assembly, where the devotees are filling the heaven with the sounds of God's name. Blessed is that Assembly where the devotees are singing the greatness of God, and sounding their cymbals in praise of God, and narrating His great qualities and exploits. Blessed is that Assembly where satisfaction of various kinds accrues, where all doubts are set at rest, where God's form stands motionless before the mind. Blessed is that Assembly where Saints have attained to the knowledge of the Self, and the knowledge of God. Blessed



The young Narayana eloped from the wedding and began performing a strict penance. On his return he uttered “Jai Jai Raghuveer Samarth”. His mother, shocked, asked someone to give some alms to the mendicant. Ramadas said, “Am not a Gosavi you think of” and prostrated before his mother in all his humility.



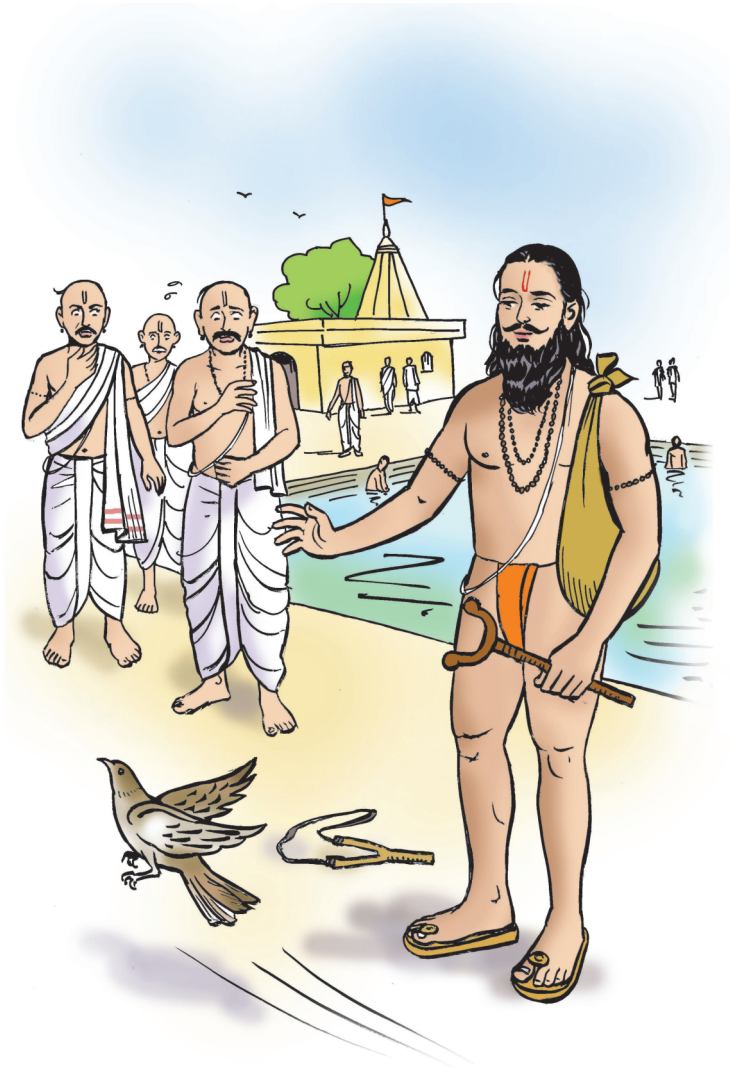
A pious woman following the funeral procession of her husband, prostrated at Ramadasa, evoking the words of blessings, “Astha Putra Soubhagyavati Bhav”. Sadhvi looked askance, “Maharaj, is this blessings for this Birth or the next?” After sermonizing the situation swami Ramadasa made her husband alive again. The couple had ten sons in the course of time.



On noticing Shivaji's pride of power, Ramadasa asked him to break open a huge rock upon which a small frog jumped out from the inner space of the rock. To everyone's astonishment, Ramadasa explained that the lord himself is the real sustainer of all.



Ramadasa Swami dictating the Dasabodha while Kalyana writing the same.



Pointing at a kite (a bird of prey), Brahmins asked Ramadasa to “Aim at it”. Swami aimed and threw a stone killing the bird. On being asked to repent, Swami sprinkled water on the bird. The bird flew again.

are they, for they know the future, as they have known the past. In them is all peace, and forgiveness, and compassion..... The beloved of God are indeed gathered together in that Assembly, irrespective of their worldly or ascetic lives, irrespect-ive of their being young or old or men or women. Their central bond is devotion to God. I forever bow to that place, says Rāmadāsa, where this Assembly is singing the praises of God " (I. 8)

38. The Saint does not perform miracles: God performs them for him.

As to whether the Saints can perform miracles or not, Rāmadāsa is of opinion that we cannot attribute to the Saints any miracle-mongering. It is not they who perform the miracles : it is rather God who performs them for the Saints. " Incarnations of God, and Men of great spiritual illumination have lived erewhile. They were indeed liberated after passing away from this mortal existence and yet there is a power which we may say lives after them. If it were to be objected that these great Saints thus manifest a desire *post mortem* for the fulfilment of their disciples' wishes, Rāmadāsa says that the power which is thus exhibited is yet not due to any physical desire. We must consider how it is that miracles take place even after the Saints have left off their body. What wonder is there if the miracles happen after the death of these Saints, if they have happened during their life ?..... The Saints have not moved from their places, and yet people have seen them away from their places. What shall we say to miracles of this kind? The only answer is that it is the devotional character of the people themselves that enables them to perceive these miracles. The great Saints of old have been liberated, and they do not live in their astral bodies to fulfil their

disciples' wishes. Their power spreads around simply because they have led a life of merit. It is therefore that we should lead a life of meritorious deeds, and devote ourselves to the worship of God. We should not forsake the right to follow the path of what is not rights" (X. 7. 1-12).

39. Power and Knowledge.

But it is not for the sake of miracles that spiritual knowledge is to be prized. It is not right to set one's heart upon power; for spiritual illumination is something different from power. "When we hear of the powerful actions of ancient Saints who had become one with God, we think that our bare spiritual illumination is of no avail, as no strength or power is connected with it. Those who harbour a desire for power in this way are only hunting after an illusion. They have not yet become desireless. Many intelligent men of old have been led astray by this desire for power. Rare indeed is the Saint in whose mind no desire whatsoever reigns. His mind is set upon something which others cannot reach. That eternal treasure, which ought to be open to the vision of all, is yet not seen by them ; for they love their body, and are thus led astray from the path of God. Considerations of power and prosperity fill their mind with egoism. They leave off the pursuit of eternal happiness, and vainly follow after the ideal of power..... Whatever desire there may be in man, except the one for God, will only contribute to his ultimate ruin. When the body falls off, the considerations of power will also cease, while God will have ever kept Himself away from the aspiring soul " (V. 2. 33 - 43).

40. Characteristics of a Disciple.

The true disciple is therefore he, whose heart is not set upon power; who has a firm belief in characteristics of a the

words of his master ; who has merged himself in the personality of his master; who is pure and spotless; who is of an ascetic temper, and observes the mean in all matters ; who is distinguished by a capacity for effort; who is endowed with great insight, as he has been able to visualise the invisible Ātman; who devotes himself to the service of humanity; who is jealous of none; who has great courage and moral determination; who does not spare himself any pains in the pursuit of the spiritual life ; who knows the ways and means of the development of Paramārtha ; who has suffered great pains, Physical, mental and moral; who by the power of the pain has set his heart upon the Eternal in an utter disgust of the evanescent world;... for whom considerations of wealth and prosperity are of no significance ; who has his heart purified by repentance; whose mind has been made tranquil by the words of his master ; finally, whose pure devotion knows no backturning, even though the heavens might fall upon him (V. 3. 19-51).

41. The causes that contribute to Liberation.

It is indeed the qualities of a disciple that ultimately bring liberation to him from the turmoil of the worldly life into a vision of the Spirit. If the question be asked - What time does a disciple take to attain to liberation in the company of the good, Rāmadāsa tells us that the disciple attains to liberation instantaneously by the grace of his Teacher, almost as instantaneously as iron becomes gold under the influence of the touch-stone, or a drop becomes one with the ocean. Men of insight attain to liberation in a moment's time. It is the quality of the intellect of the disciple which leads him on to liberation. To add to his intellect, he must have an unmitigated faith in his master, and must have renounced all bodily egoism. Those indeed need not enter

upon a great Sādhana who are naturally clever, or have a firm intellect, or an attitude of trust (VIII. 6. 41-50).

42. When Sattva predominates.

In general, we may say that a man who wishes to reach God, must have within him the predominance of Sāttvika qualities ; for they alone lead a man Godward. How shall we know that the Sāttvika qualities predominate in a man ? Rāmadāsa tells us that " when Sattva predominates, a man feels greater and greater love for God. He forgets all the miseries of the worldly life. He comes to know the way of devotion. He has an intense desire to engage himself in the spiritual life..... He loves the narration of God's works. He transforms his original qualities for the service of God..... He loves the Saints more than himself, and is not ashamed of doing small things for the sake of God..... He leaves aside everything else, and engages himself in devotion to God. His heart is filled with intense devotion. His body experiences horripilation through intense spiritual emotion. His eyes stare at God. He always utters the name of God, and beats his hands like cymbals..... He becomes weary of all, and loves only the spiritual life ; and in times of great calamity, his heart rises with great courage. For enjoyment, he has no inclination. He is indifferent to everything for the sake of God. He never allows any guests to walk away without being properly cared for. His mind is not disturbed by the accidents of worldly life. He has left off all happiness for the sake of God. His mind may move in the direction of sense, but he has forever within him the ballast of Spirit. His determination stands unvanquished by adversities, or by hunger, or by thirst..... His one desire is to live after death by fame..... He devotes himself to the service of others, and gladly undergoes all the trouble for

the funeral ceremony of a man who dies in a foreign land..... His heart rises within him when he sees a Saint..... and by his grace he becomes capable of showing to others the Pathway to God " (II. 9-79).

43. The power of the Name.

Hitherto, we have merely considered the moral preparation of the spiritual aspirant. The driving power, however, for spiritual life is given by meditation on God. All Saints, both Indian and Christian, have laid stress upon the efficacy of the Name in fulfilling the ambitions of the spiritual aspirant. " We should always meditate on God", says Rāmadāsa, "and utter His Name ; for satisfaction lies in the uttering of God's Name. We should never forget to meditate in the morning, at mid-day, and in the evening and should at all times give ourselves to the uttering of God's Name. We should never forget God's Name, whether we may be merged in happiness or in sorrow, in dejection or in anxiety. At the time of joy and at the time of calamity....., at the time of rest and at the time of sleep, we should always utter the Name of God. Whenever difficulties overtake us, whenever we are down with the worries of life, we should meditate on the Name of God. While walking or talking or doing our business, while eating or enjoying, we should never forget the Name of God. During prosperity and adversity, in days of power and greatness, at all times, we should never forget the Name of God. If prosperity succeeds adversity, or if adversity comes after prosperity, at all difficult times, we should not leave the Name of God. By the Name of God are all our difficulties dispelled, and all our calamities swept away. The demons and goblins, the spirits and ghosts, have no power before a devout meditation on God's Name. Poisons have no effect, nor are any magical practices of any

utility, before the Name of God. The Name of God takes us to an excellent state after death. In childhood or in youth, in old age or at the time of death, we should always remember God..... The great sage Vālmīki was liberated even though he uttered the Name of God contrariwise, and he was able to predict the life-work of Rāmachandra. By meditation on God's Name, Prahlāda was saved and was rescued from all calamities. The outcast Ajāmila was made holy by the Name of God. Even stones have been saved by the Name of God. Innumerable devotees have crossed the ocean of life by the power of the Name. Sinful men have become holy. There are a thousand and one names of God. It matters not which name we utter. If we only utter it regularly and continuously, Death shall have no power over us. If a man does nothing but only utter the Name of God, God is satisfied and protects His devotee. Holy indeed is the body which is given to the utterance of God's Name. By the power of the Name, mountains of sins are destroyed. The power of the Name is ineffable, while numerous persons have been saved by the power of the Name. The great god Śiva himself has been relieved from the torments of poison by the power of the Name. There is no distinction of caste in the utterance of God's Name. Small men as well as great men, the dull as well as the intelligent, have been saved by the power of the Name. Finally, we must take care that while we utter the Name of God, God's Form is also present before us " (IV. 3).

44. We should meditate on God, for God holds the keys of success in His hands.

In a general way, Rāmadāsa commends the meditation on God, as God, he says, ever holds the keys of success in His hands. " God is the protector of all beings, and of all worlds..... Where God is not, nothing can be, and all the

beings on earth would be as good as ghosts. Where God is not, one would meet with Death. Without God, there can be no life..... Hence it is, that one should always meditate on God. Meditation gives us great support. Without it, we cannot get victory in any work that we undertake. Where God is not present to support us, we would be routed by anybody whatsoever. Hence the necessity of Upāsanā" (XVI. 10. 23-33). Elsewhere, Rāmādāsa tells us that no undertaking can succeed unless it is backed up by the presence of God. " When we recognize that God is the real doer in the world, Egoism cannot possess us..... God is the only reality; the self is an illusion..... Only he who has ascended to the top of experience can testify to the truth of this" (XX. 4. 26 - 30).

45. The power of Disinterested Love of God.

There is another side to the problem of the love of God. We may love God not only because He may crown us with success in our under- takings but because He is Himself worthy of our highest love. " There is no comparison whatsoever to a disinterested love for God. It also requires great worth in us to be able to love disinterestedly. Desire indeed may bring the realization of the fruit; but disinterested love brings God Himself nearer to us. One may choose, as he likes, between the fruits of one's actions and the realisation of God ! God can bring any fruits to whatsoever; but a desire for fruits stands between ourselves and God. Hence the necessity of a disinterested love of God. Great power comes out of a disinterested love for God which slights the realisation of any fruits. What the devotee has in mind, God brings to fruition of His own accord. There is no necessity for the devotee to take any thought about the matter. When the devotee's disinterested loved is

coupled with the great power of God, Death itself cannot stand the onslaught of the combination " (X. 7. 19-26).

46. Śravaṇa as a means of spiritual development.

In order, however, that a man's mind may be set on God, it is necessary that he should give himself to the reading, or hearing, or meditating of spiritual literature. Śravaṇa is indeed a very important means of spiritual development. "Śravaṇa creates devotion. Śravaṇa creates dispassion. Śravaṇa purifies the mind. Śravaṇa produces mental determination. Śravaṇa wards off egoism. Śravaṇa gives internal satisfaction. By Śravaṇa, our doubts are resolved. By Śravaṇa, our difficulties come to an end. By Śravaṇa a man's mind craves for God. Śravaṇa keeps off bad company. Śravaṇa drives away all infatuation. Śravaṇa creates spiritual insight. Śravaṇa endows us with tranquillity.... Śravaṇa creates repentance. Śravaṇa leads the aspirant onwards in the path of God..... Where there is no Śravaṇa, the spiritual seeker should not remain even for a single moment. He who does not love Śravaṇa - how can he love the realisation of God ? By regularly devoting ourselves to Śravaṇa, we would be able to reach the goal of our life. As we take food and water day after day, so we should devote ourselves to Śravaṇa time after time. He, who disregards Śravaṇa on account of idleness, shall surely miss the end of his life. To give scope to idleness is verily to cut at the root of all search after God " (VII. 8).

47. Requirements of a true Kīrtana.

Like Śravaṇa, Kīrtana is another means of spiritual realisation. Only, we must know the requirements which a true Kīrtana must possess. A man who engages himself in

Kīrtana should not give himself to a description of beautiful women, or to a narration of sexual passion. When a man describes the beauty of a woman, he is at that very moment affected by the sexual appetite and loses his moral courage. The contemplation of a woman is indeed a great obstacle in the path of the aspirant. Man's mind is capable of harbouring all sorts of sentiments. If he harbours the sentiment of love engendered by the contemplation of the beauty of a woman, how will he be able to meditate on God ?..... On the other hand, a man whose mind is fastened on God can fill his Kīrtana with spiritual bliss, if he but meditates on God for a moment. When his mind is fixed on God, he will have no sense of the presence of people about him, and he will fill his Kīrtana with delight by dancing with composure and without sense of shame. The knowledge of Rāgas and the knowledge of Tālas, the knowledge of languages and arts, and a musical voice, are one thing; and true devotion is another. A true devotee meditates upon nothing except God. While he is giving his mind to the contemplation of the arts, he cannot give it to God..... The arts indeed stand between him and God, if pursued for their own sake. Just as a serpent may stand between a man and a sandal tree, or a ghost between a treasure and a seeker, similarly a practice of music without meditation on God is an obstacle in the path of spiritual progress. On the other hand, twice blessed is he who keeps his mind on God, as well as performs Kīrtana according to its rules " (XIV. 5. 21-37).

48. A devotional song is an inspired song.

Rāmadāsa elsewhere describes how a man, whose mind is devoted to God, engages himself in Kīrtana. "He

looks upon prosperity, woman, gold as vomit, and contemplates God alone. His love of God increases from moment to moment. He does not allow a single minute to be wasted without the contemplation of God. At all times, his heart is full of the fire of devotion. When God has taken secure lodgment inside a man's heart, whatever he does is indeed the worship of God. The mouth merely gives out the inner love of his heart, and he dances in joy for the sake of God. His bodily consciousness is at an end, and his doubts and shame vanish..... He sings and dances without reserve. He is not able to see men, for wherever his eye is cast, he sees only God..... What words come out of an intense devotion in such a man's heart may alone be regarded as words of true inspiration" (XIV. 3. 22-34).

49. The use of Imagination in Spiritual Life.

Śravaṇa and Kīrtana are, however, the external manifestations of a heart full of love. But The method that Rāmadāsa prescribes for him who wishes silently to carry on a meditation on God may be set down as follows. The first obstacle in the path of every one who tries in silence to reconcile himself to God is the up-springing of variegated mental impulses, which destroy the one-pointedness of Yogic endeavour. Rāmadāsa duly recognises the power of Imagination, and tells us that when it grows powerful, it creates objects which never exist. "All of a sudden, It brings fear in our mind ; all of a sudden, it makes our mind steady..... Imagination is the cause of rebirth ; Imagination is the cause of liberation..... The way to the conquest of Imagination lies in a determinate endeavour to reach God. In that way, all doubts will come to an end, and the riddles of Imagination will be automatically solved..... One kind of Imagination kills another, as by the help of one deer we

are able to catch another deer..... Pure imagination is that which is centred upon one Reality. Impure imagination is that which reflects upon duality" (VII. 5. 21-38). In another place also, Rāmadāsa tells us the same story. "The only way to get rid of Imagination is to go beyond Imagination. Before the eternal Reality no illusion can exist, and self-experience is able to put an end to all Imagination. This is at least a relieving feature of Imagination, says Rāmadāsa, that it can be made to imagine God, and when it is led Godward, it loses itself in the Unimaginable. When we imagine the Unimaginable, Imagination evidently comes to an end. God is not like an external object, so that He can be made perceptible to sense. The knowledge of God, says Rāmadāsa, comes to us only through the medium of a Spiritual Teacher" (VII. 3. 47-52).

50. False meditation and true meditation.

In a famous place, in the 14th Daśaka of the Dāsabodha, Rāmadāsa tells us the nature of true meditation. True meditation is a meditation on God ; false meditation is a meditation on any other thing except God..... People vainly concentrate their mind on an image, says Rāmadāsa, for their spiritual development. Whether one should meditate on the Self or the not Self, on the Immutable or the Mutable, one should clearly take thought beforehand. The body is verily a temple, and the self is the image therein. Considering these two, which would you prefer to fix your mind upon ? No imagination of an image would be of any use whatsoever unless one knows the inner way of devotion. Imagination leads to new Imagination and people become vexed by a contemplation of gross objects..... The spiritual aspirant thus becomes disturbed in his mind. The

only index to true meditation is, that the mind in the process of meditation should be affected by no doubts whatsoever. What is the use of that meditation which is carried on by a broken mind on a decomposable object?..... True meditation consists in the unification of him who meditates, with Him who is meditated upon..... This is a matter of experience, says Rāmadāsa ; but people vainly follow the beaten path. Fools they that do not know the truth from the untruth. They raise vain cries and talk about useless matters. When a man was engaged in meditation, and when, in the process of meditation, he found the head of the image he was meditating upon a little too tall, he was advised by his spiritual teacher to remove the crown from the head of the image, and thus to put the garland round the neck of the image. Fools both the teacher and the disciple, says Rāmadāsa ! They could not imagine that the garland itself could be made so extensive as to include both the crown and the head, so that it could be thrown easily round the neck of the image. The flowers were imaginary flowers, and the garland was an imaginary garland. Why should we not imagine the garland to be as long as we please ? What need for arguing with these fools? They have no intellect, says Rāmadāsa..... It is unfortunate that these quacks administer vain nostrums to patients, and murder them in silence. There is only deception, and no knowledge with these men. It behoves us, says Rāmadāsa, to go to the root of the matter, and to rely upon Self-experience alone " (XIV. 8. 24 - 49).

51. The Aspirant.

Rāmadāsa has indeed a very high opinion about a Spiritual Aspirant. From the beginning of his spiritual pilgrimage to even the attainment of God, a man,

according to Rāmadāsa, leads only the life of an Aspirant, or a Sādhaka, as he calls him. " An Aspirant is indeed he who has gone in all submissiveness to his Teacher and has been instructed by him on the path to God. When his Spiritual Teacher opens out to him the pathway to Ātman, the shackles of his worldly existence are destroyed ; and yet he performs Sādhana in order to be convinced of his liberation. He seeks the company of the Saints in order that his doubts may be dispelled, and he tries to bring his spiritual experience on a par with the teachings of the Śāstras, as well as with the teachings of his Spiritual Teacher..... He throws off his bodily egoism and centres his heart upon Ātman..... The Aspirant indeed is he who revives the lost tradition of Ātmajñāna. He has once for all bade good-bye to evil actions, and has been multiplying virtuous actions in order that he might ultimately get lodgment in the Form of God..... With a firm determination, he tries to merge himself in the Ātman..... What the eyes of ordinary people cannot visualise, what their mind cannot imagine, he tries to realise in his own experience. What cannot be expressed by word of mouth, what would ordinarily dazzle the eye, the Aspirant tries to realise on his own account..... Where the mind comes to a standstill, where logic is of no avail, that the Aspirant tries to apprehend by the power of his own spiritual experience. The Aspirant tries to become one with God..... He has found out the root of both God and Man, and has immediately become one with the Ideal..... In a superconscious state, he has seen the Self for all time, and brought the Aspirant's life to completion..... When this mental attitude is firmly fixed in him, he begins to lead a different life in his outward actions. He leaves away all

passion and anger, all vanity and jealousy, all shame and pride of family. He has dispelled all doubts,..... cut off the shackles of death, and has once for all destroyed the round of births and deaths " (VI. 9. 3-41).

52. The Friend of God.

Higher than an Aspirant Rāmadāsa regards what he calls the Friend of God. "The Friend of God binds his love with God's love, and behaves only in a manner which would be approved of by God. In that way, indeed, the friendship between him and God grows. God likes the devotion of men, their narration of His exploits, and their loving songs. We should behave exactly as God wishes us to behave..... We should give up our happiness in order to attain the friendship of God, and must not mind sacrificing ourselves for His sake. We should forget the pain of worldly life, and should always engage ourselves in meditation on God..... In order to secure the friendship of God, we should not mind even if we were to lose our nearest relatives. We should ultimately sacrifice everything to God, including even our own life. It matters not if we lose all in order to gain the friendship of God..... When the devotee so intimately loves God, then God becomes anxious for the welfare of his devotee, and rescues him as he rescued the Pāndavas from the burning fire-house. That God may remain in a friendly way with us depends upon our own way of behaving with Him ; for, the echoes of our words come in the very manner in which we utter them. If we solely devote ourselves to God, God becomes solely devoted to us. If the cloud does not send drops into the beak of the Chātaka, the Chātaka does not give up longing for the cloud. If the moon does not rise to give nectar to the Chakora, the Chakora would

nevertheless be longing after the moon.... We should never relax our affection to God. We should call God our Friend, our Mother, our Father, our Learning, our Wealth, our All-in-All. People say that there is nobody to help them except God ; but they do not really believe this from the bottom of their heart. Our affection towards God must be a real affection, and we should hold God fast in our mind. We should not get angry with God, if what we desire is not attained. We should always succumb, without grumbling, to the will of God. Then easily will God have compassion for us. Can we compare the compassion of our mother with the compassion of God ? The mother may kill her child in times of adversity; but we have never heard or seen that God has killed His devotee. God has ever been a protective adamant to those who have submitted themselves to His will. God will justify the devotee. God will save the sinful. God will come to the help of those who have no protector.... God will succour men from all calamities, and will run to their help as He did to the help of Gajendra..... God knows how to maintain His friendship, and we should only seek after His affection. The friendship of God is unbreakable, and the love of God is undiminished.... Hence we should be friends of God, and communicate to Him our inner most desires..... In the same way in which we love God, we should also love our Spiritual Teacher" (IV. 8).

53. Atmanivedana : Self-surrender.

There is a type of devotion to God which Rāmadāsa calls Ātmanivedana, which implies entire surrender of the Self to God. This he regards as the highest kind of Bhakti. "At the time of the Great Worship, they even sacrifice one's head to God: even so intimate is the Bhakti called

Ātmanivedana. There are really few devotees who attain to this state ; for God would save them in an instant's time..... Ātmanivedana consists in finding out who the Devotee is, and then what is meant by God. Ātmanivedana is attained when we have properly investigated the nature of Self and God. When the Devotee realises God, he becomes one with Him, and the distinction between God and Devotee vanishes. A Devotee is called a 'Bhakta', because he is not 'Vibhakta', that is, separate from God..... He alone, among the Saints, is worthy of bestowing salvation upon others, who regards God and Devotee as one. When the Devotee sees God by being His Devotee, then all the qualities of God are immediately seen in him" (VIII. 8. 9-24). The first step to Ātmanivedana is the study of spiritual literature. The next step is the service of the feet of the Guru. Then, by the grace of the Guru, Ātmanivedana takes place. When this kind of Bhakti is attained, God begins to shine in His native purity, and a Devotee knows himself to be Ātman. By virtue of that knowledge all griefs of the worldly life vanish. The Devotee leaves off forever all considerations of birth and death. The round of his births and deaths comes to an end. God and Devotee become one, and the contact with the Good ends in a first-hand knowledge of God" (VI. 2. 39-45).

54. Four different kinds of Liberation.

As regards the doctrine of Liberation, Rāmadāsa teaches us that there are four kinds of Liberation possible. "The first kind of Liberation is called Salokatā; that is to say, a Saint is supposed to obtain this kind of Liberation when, after the death of his body, he is lifted up to the region of the deity whom he worships. Secondly, when the

Devotee, after death, lives in close proximity to the Deity, that kind of Liberation is called Samīpatā. Thirdly, when the Devotee reaches the Form of God without, however, acquiring the ornaments Śrīvatsa and Kaustubha, and without Lakshmī, then he may be said to have attained Sarūpatā. There is, however, an end to all these three kinds of Mukti; for as soon as one's merit is exhausted, the Devotee is thrown down from above to be reborn on earth. Hence, the fourth kind of Liberation alone is real Liberation, namely, what may be called Sāyujyamukti. When the world will come to an end, when the earth with its mountains will be reduced to ashes, when the gods will disappear, when the three different kinds of Liberation will cease to exist, then God alone will remain to be united to the Godhead, and that state alone would be called Sāyujyamukti " (IV. 10. 23-29).

55. The Saint is already liberated during life.

The Saint, however, need not care for any of these kinds of Liberation. He attains to Jīvanmukti, that is to say, he is liberated even during life. The Saint has seen his own Self, and has thus reached the end of his spiritual endeavour. "This has filled his heart with satisfaction, and his mind has become one with God..... He has thrown his body in the stream of fate. Illumination has dispelled his doubts, and he cares not whether his body lives or dies. He has realised that his body is a fatuity. Holy is the ground where his body falls down. Places of pilgrimage become purified when the Saint enters them. Other people think that their body should fall on the bank of a holy river. But the saint is eternally liberated. He does not care whether the time of his death falls in the Uttarāyana or the

Dakshināyana. This is indeed a delusion for which he does not care. He cares not whether he leaves his body during the bright half of the month or not; whether he dies in the presence of a light or not; whether he will die by day or not; or even whether he may remember the Name of God at the time of death or not. All these things are of no avail to him, for he has been liberated during life..... Foolish people say that he alone is a blessed man who meets with a 'euthanasia'. They falsely imagine that God meets a man at the time of his death. They never turn their life to good account, and they expect to see God ! A man who does not sow corn should not expect to reap it..... Hence a man who does not give himself in his life to the contemplation of God shall never reach a holy end. Even if he meets an easy death, he will really go to hell, as he has never entertained devotion towards God..... Blessed is the body of the Jīvanmukta, whether it falls in a desert or in a cemetery. People foolishly imagine that the Saint has not met a good end, if his body lies suffering at the time of death, or is eaten up after death by dogs..... The Jīvanmukta has never been born at all. How can he then suffer death ? By the power of his discrimination, he has destroyed forever the round of births and deaths. By the power of his contemplation on God, his illusion has come to an end..... He is dead while living. He has killed even Death itself. Birth and death do not touch him. He appears like other men while behaving with them ; but he is really different from them. For, he is that immaculate Ātman who is untouched by anything sensible" (VII. 10. 7-31).

56. Sadhana necessary at all stages.

As to the question whether Sādhana is necessary after

God-realisation, Rāmadāsa gives two different answers. In the first place, he tells us that Sādhana is necessary at all stages, and that even though a man may have reached the end of spiritual life, it is still necessary for him to continue his Sādhana. At another place, he tells us that Sādhana is unnecessary after God-realisation. According to the first, he says that a man who questions whether he should perform Sādhana after God-realisation is subjecting himself to a delusion. "Sādhana indeed is a necessity of the body, and so long as the body exists, it must be subjected to Sādhana. A man who wishes to continue in Brahman without Sādhana is only giving scope to bodily egoism and idleness. As those who pretend to seek the spiritual end are in fact seeking the material end ; as those who pretend to give themselves to meditation are in fact giving themselves over to sleep ; similarly, those who consider themselves to be liberated are giving scope merely to idleness and arrogance. Hence, to suppose that it is not necessary for one to perform Sādhana is only to cut one's own throat by one's own sword. Such a man, though liberated, is yet bound. He arrogantly feels that if he performs Sādhana after God-realisation, he would be called merely a Sādhaka. That fool does not know that even the great gods perform Sādhana " (VII. 7. 54 - 71).

57. Sadhana unnecessary after God-realization.

In opposition to this statement, we are told elsewhere by Rāmadāsa that Sādhana is really unnecessary after God-realisation. "If a man has attained to the ideal of Sādhana, what can Sādhana now do for him ? If a potter has become a king, why should he keep asses ?..... If a Saint has become one with God, why should he now subject himself to

Sādhana any more ?..... The poor man has become a King ; why should he now speak of poverty?..... How should the Vedas obey the order of the Vedas ? How should the sciences study the sciences? What is the place of pilgrimage for pilgrimage itself? Nectar cannot taste nectar. The infinite cannot comprehend another infinite. God cannot visualise another God..... Of what use if the practice of Sadhana after the attainment of the end ? How should the object of meditation itself meditate ? How should a superconscious mind take cognisance of mind? " (IX. 10. 17-26.)

58. The criterion of God-realisation.

What now, asks Rāmadāsa, is the criterion of God-realisation ? How may one know that he has reached God in his spiritual experience ? Rāmadāsa tells us that "only then can a man be supposed to have reached the end of his spiritual life, when he has personally known that all his sins have come to an end ; when he has known that the round of births and deaths has come to a stop ; when he has known both God and Self, and when he has experienced the extreme surrender of Self to God; when he has known the stuff out of which the world is made; and when he has known who has been responsible for the creation of it. When a man still entertains doubt about these matters, then his pursuit of the spiritual life has been in vain. He has merely merged himself in doubt without any experience. This indeed is the secret of the realisation of spiritual life. He who says this a lie is a vile man. He who believes this is a lie is still viler. God alone stands sponsor to what I say. The glory of my Upāsana consists, says Rāmadāsa, in teaching this knowledge. If you call this a lie, you might as well call God a lie. Hence I say again that the end of

spiritual life will be attained only when one comes to know who the All-doer is" (X. 8. 21 - 28).

59. The Spiritual Wealth.

Rāmadāsa now proceeds to give us certain characteristics of mystic experience. "The wealth of the spiritual seeker is indeed a hidden wealth. Servants cannot know the entire extent of a treasure. They only know the external appearances. Real wealth has been hidden inside, while what appears is merely tinsel..... Spiritual experience is indeed like wealth deposited inside a lake which is filled with water. People only look at the water, but are unable to get at the treasure. It is only the Sages who know the value of spiritual experience. Others give themselves over to visible things. It is a law of nature that some carry merely logs of wood, while others wear rich jewels..... The Sage is in possession of the inner spiritual treasure ; others, who want to satisfy their appetite, follow after philosophical opinions. The treasure which cannot be seen by the physical eye can yet be seen when the proper collyrium is applied to it. Similarly, God, who is hidden to the sight of ordinary men, can be attained only in the company of the Good. When a man is allowed to come in the presence of a King, he becomes a rich man ; similarly, when we enter the company of the Good, we immediately attain to God " (VI. 9. 1 - 20).

60. Contradictions of Spiritual Experience.

Indeed it is in the nature of all mystical experience to appear contradictory. "As soon as we begin to be aware of it, we forget it. But as soon as we forget it, it comes within the ken of our consciousness..... When we go to see God, we miss Him. But we see God without going anywhere to

meet Him. This indeed is the virtue of spiritual Epochē. When we try to realise God, He cannot be realised. When we try to leave Him away, He cannot be left. We are connected with God forever, and the connection is unbreakable. God always is, and when we begin to see Him, He moves away from us. But when we do not look at Him, He immediately appears before us. The means for His attainment are only the means for His disappearance, and the means for His disappearance are really the means for His attainment. Only that man can know the meaning of this, says Rāmadāsa, who has attained to spiritual experience himself" (VII. 7. 19-23).

61. God rewards His devotee according to his deserts.

A spiritual seeker, however, has only to depend on himself for the attainment of God. For "according as his inner emotion is, similarly does God manifest Himself to him He knows the inner feelings of men. If a man tries cheat to God, God will first cheat him. God behaves with men only as they deserve. He gives satisfaction to His devotees only according to the quality of their devotion. But as soon as there is any deficit in their sentiment, He also moves away. The image of our face that we see in a mirror is exactly like our face. If we stare at the image, that also stares at us. If we bend our brow, that also bends its brow. If we laugh, that also laughs. According as our sentiments are, similarly God behaves with us and He rewards us only according to our worth" (III. 10.13-19).

62. Mystic reality as a solace of life.

In various places in Dāsabodha, Rāmadāsa gives us

descriptions of mystic reality in different aspects. " Mystic experience is a sealed book to many, for verily they do not know the secret of the company of the Good. The mystic way is not like other ways. These only promise and never fulfil. The mystic way points out the inner secret of the revealed scriptures..... Only the Sages can know the secret path in the heavens which leads to God..... No thieves can take away the treasure of spiritual experience. There is no fear to it from a king, nor any danger from fire, nor can a cruel beast ever pounce upon it. God cannot move, and will never miss His place. He is unmoved, and remains at His place for all time. This inner possession shall never change if time changes, and shall never increase or diminish during æons of time..... It cannot indeed be seen except by the grace of the Guru..... Before spiritual experience, everything that comes within the ken of the five elements appears as false and mean..... When this spiritual experience gets secure lodgment in us, our doubts will be dispelled to the confines of the universe, and the visible world will cease to exist..... It is impossible accurately to describe the worth of this spiritual experience. By this experience the greatest sages have attained to inmost satisfaction..... He who attains to this experience can save other beings..... He is a King of the spiritual world. He who has it not is a beggar..... This spiritual experience can be obtained only on the strength of the merit during the whole course of our lives, and then shall the supreme God reveal Himself to us " (I. 9. 2-24).

63.Reality beyond the influence of the Elements.

Mystic reality is elsewhere described by Rāmadāsa in the manner of the Bhagavadgītā as "that which the

weapons cannot pierce, which the fire cannot burn, which cannot be moistened by water, which cannot be blown away by wind, which can neither fall down nor wear away, which cannot be manufactured, and which cannot be hidden. Reality, says Rāmadāsa, has no colour. It is different from everything that we can mention, and yet it exists at all times. It may also be seen that it is omnipresent. It fills the universe and yet is subtle. Physical vision can scan whatever is presented to it; but what is subtle cannot be open to vision. The Guru tells us that what is sensible is useless, and what is hidden is valuable..... What the Sages and Gods fail to attain, the Sādhaka tries to accomplish..... This Reality can be attained only by spiritual meditation. It is neither earth, nor water, nor fire, nor wind. That indeed deserves the name of God. But ordinary people have each of them a god in their village " (VI. 2. 15-27).

64. Mystic description of Brahman.

Elsewhere also, Rāmadāsa devotes a whole Daśaka to the description of the immaculate Brahman. " Brahman is more spotless than the sky. It is as formless as it is vast..... It extends above all heavens. It exists below all worlds. There is not the smallest part of the universe which it does not occupy..... It is quite near to us, and yet it is hidden. We live in it, and yet we do not know it..... It penetrates the earth, and yet it is not hard. In fact, there is no comparison to its softness. Softer than earth is water ; softer than water is fire ; softer than fire is wind ; softer than wind is ether; and softer and subtler than ether is Brahman. It pierces the adamant, and yet retains its softness. It is indeed neither hard nor soft. It does not perish with the earth ; it is not dried up with water; it is not burnt in fire ; it does not move with the wind ; it exists in the sky, and yet cannot be

known..... Wherever you cast your glance, it is before you. You in fact see within it. It is both inside and outside. Where we feel it is not, it immediately manifests itself..... Whatever object we may take in hand - it is nearer to us than the object. Only he can know this secret, says Rāmadāsa, who has had spiritual experience himself..... One sees it while reading. It enters into the very alphabets of a book. It enters into our eyes and lives softly. When we hear words, it is there. When our mind thinks, it is there. It indeed fills our mind inside and outside. As we walk, we feel it at every step. When we take anything in hand, the Brahman stands between us and that object..... It can be seen by intuitive and not by physical vision. Only those who have had inner experience can understand what I say..... Their ignorance is at an end. Their knowledge is at an end. Their super consciousness is at an end. That is the Eternal Brahman which puts an end to all imagination, and which can be experienced in solitude by those who have devoted themselves to it" (VII.4).

65. Final characterisation of Brahman.

Finally, we have that excellent description of Brahman in the last Samāsa of the Dasabodha. "If we try to catch hold of Brahman, we cannot catch it. If we wish to throw it away, we cannot throw it. Brahman is anywhere, and everywhere. As we turn ourselves away from it, it presents itself before our face. By no means whatsoever could we turn our back on it.....Wherever a being goes, he will find himself circumscribed by the sky. It would be impossible for him to go beyond the limits of the sky. Similarly, wherever one may go, one is inside Brahman..... In order

to visit places of pilgrimage, we undertake long journey. But we need not go anywhere to see God. We can see Him wherever we are. When we stand or when we run away, Brahman is with us. As the bird, which soars up in the sky, is surrounded on all sides by the sky, similarly does Brahman envelop all beings..... The Brahman is always before all beings. It is inside and outside. It fills the whole universe. To its immaculateness, there is no comparison. In all heavens, in the celestial worlds, from Kāśī to Rāmeśvara, it fills every nook and cranny. It fills all this space at once. It touches all, and abides in all. It cannot be soiled by clay. It cannot be carried away by the flood even though it may appear on it. Simultaneously, it is before us and behind us. Simultaneously, it is to our right and to our left. Simultaneously, it is above and below..... It is a refuge of solace to all saints, to all good men, to the gods..... How can we reach its end?..... It is neither gross nor subtle. There is nothing which can be cited in comparison to it, and it cannot bring solace unless it is seen by intuitive vision. It is all enveloping, and yet it is not all-enveloping; because there is nothing outside it which it can envelop" (XX. 10.1-23).

IV. Activism.

66. The Ideal Man is a practical man.

We now come to Rāmadāsa's ideal of the practical life of a Saint. In fact, all the previous discussion was undertaken to prepare the way for Rāmadāsa's description of the Ideal Saint. Rāmadāsa tells us often in his great work that he has practised the virtues which he is preaching to others, and that the ideal of life which he sets forth before others is the ideal which he had realised for himself. According to Rāmadāsa, the Ideal Man is a practical man. "The fool looks only in one direction, but the wise man looks in all..... He has

indeed identified himself with the Ātman, and cannot therefore be regarded as limited. He looks all round, and is famed everywhere. He is known to young and old alike. He does not put on only one kind of dress. The ornament of dress he does not regard as an ornament at all. The ornament of fame he regards as the only true ornament. The Sage does not allow even a single minute to be wasted in vain. He moves away from people of his acquaintance, and finds out new men every day. People test him to see whether he entertains any desire ; but he has none. He does not look at anybody for any length of time. He does not speak much with anybody. He does not live long at any place. He does not tell people whither he goes. He does not go where he says he will go. He does not allow his condition to be imagined by others. What people think about him he tries to falsify..... What people have a desire to see, he does not care to see..... He does not allow his heart to be searched. He does not live without the service of God for a single moment. People, who form wrong notions about him, are in course of time led to correct their notions themselves. The Sage has done a great thing indeed, when people examine him and he stands the test of all. He lives in solitude, always gives himself to meditation, and spends his time usefully in the service of God along with other men. He cultivates in himself the best of qualities, and teaches them to the people. He collects men together, but in secret. He always has some work to do, and leads people to the service of God. People then submit themselves to him, and ask him what they should do. Unless we undergo a great deal of trouble first, we cannot realise any great end..... We should examine various people, should know for what things they are competent, and then either hold them near or keep them at a distance. It is only when we assign proper work to proper persons that it is well accomplished. Unworthy men cannot

accomplish any work at all..... We should believe in people only when they do their duties heartily. We should always reserve something which we can call our own. This is a matter of experience, says Rāmadāsa. I have first done all these things, and then have advised others to do them. You may accept any of these things if you think they are good. A great man must be able to create great men. He should fill them with wisdom, and spread them broadcast through, various lands " (XI. 10).

67. The spiritual man demands only the service of God from his disciples.

" An Ideal Man, who has regulated his life, becomes known to all. All people will now try to please him..... A man should never allow his peace to be disturbed by the evil words of others. Great indeed is the Saint who mixes with evil men..... If we pursue fame, we cannot get happiness; and if we pursue happiness, we cannot get fame. We should never injure the hearts of others..... If we forgive them, our greatness is not mitigated..... A Saint should give himself to intense devotion, and should cultivate the highest qualities. Then will people come searching for him. Such a great-souled man alone should gather people in the name of God. If he were to die suddenly, who would carry on the service of God after him? I have determined, says Rāmadāsa, not to ask anything from my disciples. I ask only this thing of them—that they should worship God after me..... In order that we might be able to gather people together in the cause of devotion, we should have two qualities: in the first place, we should have the power of illumination by which other peoples' hearts might be conquered ; secondly, we should act exactly as we speak, for it is only then that our words would have any value..... We should take people along with

us, should teach them gradually, and lead them to the realisation of the end of spiritual life" (XII. 10. 14 - 41).

68. The Ideal Man moves all, being himself hidden.

Then, again, Rāmadāsa goes on to tell us certain other characteristics of the Ideal Man. " The Ideal Man loves to put forth effort, enters boldly on any enterprise, and does not shun work. He can live in the midst of difficulties, bear the brunt of action, and yet keep himself away from contact with it. He is everywhere, and yet nowhere. Like the Ātman, he hides himself. Nothing can take place without his mediation; yet he is not himself seen. He makes people act without himself being seen..... Those who follow the instructions of a wise man themselves become wise. That is the justification of the existence of a wise man. He always supports the right cause, and never gives himself to unrighteousness. In the midst of difficulties, he knows the way out. A man of courage is a great support to all. This indeed is what he has become through the grace of God " (XL 6. 12-19).

69. The Ideal Man does not displease anybody.

One further characteristic of the Ideal Saint is that he never displeases anybody. " He tells the truth, and behaves in the right way. Great men, as well as small- all have a regard for him. If the Ideal Man were not to forgive people for their ignorance, he would merely bring himself on a level with them. If pieces of a sandal tree are not rubbed on a sandstone, they would not produce a fragrant scent, and then they would be on a par with pieces of other trees. What can people know, so long as they have not known the superior qualities of the Ideal Saint ? When these qualities come to light, the whole world is filled with good feelings towards him. When the world is pleased, that is to say,

when God in the world is pleased, nothing can be wanting to the Ideal Saint..... Good behavior with others leads to happiness. If we speak bad words, they are echoed back on us. We need not teach other people how to behave ; we should teach ourselves. If we meet a bad man, and if the limits of forgiveness are reached, then we should leave the place in silence. People have various kinds of knowledge, but they do not know the hearts of others. It is thus that they make themselves miserable. We must remember that we have to die some day. Hence it is that we must try to please all " (XII. 2. 15-26).

70. The Ideal Man Pleases all.

Rāmadāsa does not give merely a negative rule that we should not displease anybody, but he tells us positively that we should try to please everybody. " What is censurable we should avoid. What is praiseworthy we should practise. We should fill the world with good report..... We should avoid evil qualities, and cultivate the good..... The one rule of life should be that we should try to please all, and gradually make them holy. Just as one tries to please a child, similarly, we should try to please the people. Wisdom consists in giving satisfaction to the hearts of men..... We should never call a fool a fool. We should never point out his defects. Only then can a Saint conquer the world. There are various situations in which a Saint may find himself placed. He should always try to assimilate himself to the hearts of all beings. He alone is a great Saint who gives satisfaction to the minds of people ; for, it is only then that people flock to him in numbers " (XIII. 10. 20-29).

71. The Active Saint should retire, should set an example, should be courageous.

Then Rāmadāsa proceeds to give further character-

istics of the Ideal Saint. "The Ideal Saint is known everywhere by the power of his devotion. People know him, but they do not find him, and they do not know what he is doing. People from various lands come with a desire to see him. The Ideal Saint pleases all, and fills the minds of all with discrimination and good thoughts. There is no limit to the disciples he makes. All of these he leads on the spiritual pathway..... Whatever he knows, he teaches the people and makes them wise. Whenever they get into a difficulty, he is ready to help them. He makes the minds of all pure and holy. What one can do oneself one should do immediately. What one cannot do oneself, one should get done by others; but on no account whatsoever should the service of God be relaxed. We should first do, and then get everything done by others. We should first discriminate, and then should ask others to do it. If the Saint grows weary of people, he should go to a new place..... His Sainthood would come to an end if he does not practise spiritual meditation every day..... So far as he can engage himself in activity, he should do it. But as soon as he cannot, he should wander anywhere he pleases in contentment..... If he care for fame, he cannot get happiness. If he wants happiness, he cannot get fame..... One should never lose courage in the midst of activity: how would one be able to reach the end of his life in that way? Life is indeed a miserable affair. By the power of discrimination, however, one can make it good; and as soon as one makes it good, it fades away..... The greatest thing of all is that the Saint should never give up courage" (XIX. 10. 8-29).

72. The Master is found nowhere.

Rāmadāsa insists from time to time that the Active Saint should not meddle much with the affairs of society.

He should hide himself, and let other people talk about him. He who wants to gather people together should always take resort to solitude. There, one gets to know the internal condition of men..... Whatever people have in mind, the Saint knows already. Hence nobody can come, and deceive a Saint..... He should engage himself regularly in various forms of devotion, thus never leaving any scope for inferior kinds of work..... He who depends on another spoils his work. He alone is a good man who depends on himself..... One should take the central thread in his hands, and get details done by others. If one wants to collect a number of men, one should have great strength of mind..... One should know what people are wicked, but should not say openly that they are so. They should be given even greater importance than good men..... An Ideal Saint should not be seen anywhere, and yet people must talk about him from place to place. In order to meet a fool, one must set a fool. In order to meet a dullard, one must set a dullard..... In order to meet a fool-hardy man, one must set a fool-hardy man. In order to meet an arrogant person, one must depute an arrogant man. A boisterous man must be met by a boisterous man. When equals meet equals, then a splendid encounter takes place. All this should be done, but the Master should be found nowhere " (XIX. 9.)

73. Activity should alternate with Meditation.

One of the most important teachings of Rāmadāsa about his ideal Sage is that his activity should alternate with meditation. He should lead an intensely active life for some time, and should immediately en-gage himself in intensive meditation. In that way, both his meditation and his activity become strengthened. "He who cannot

undertake active work should not engage himself in active work. He should compose his mind, and remain silent..... If by his activity he only brings grief to other people, he should not engage himself in that activity at all..... Indeed, activity leads to good results as well as bad results. When people have an element of devotion in them, we must support it. We should never expose their hypocrisy..... The place of complete rest is only the Ātman..... There, all anxieties come to an end. The mind becomes content, and the unapproachable life of God becomes ours by the force of meditation. Indeed, the Self is not affected by any environment. People come together by accident, and part from each other by accident..... We should spend some time in intense activity, and some in silent devotion. In that way, the mind becomes tranquil and powerful " (XIX. 8. 19-30).

74. Further characterisation of the Active Saint.

" Wherever the Active Saint goes, he is liked by all. He has indeed the fire of devotion in him, and nobody can withstand him..... When people are eagerly waiting for him, he presents himself suddenly before them..... Wherever the wise man is, no quarrel can arise. He does not say one thing to a man's face, and another behind him. All people are ever anxious to meet him. He never troubles the hearts of people..... He always engages himself in conferring obligations on others. He is pained by other peoples sufferings, and becomes happy in their happiness. He desires that all people should be happy. As a pater-familias cares for all the members of his family, similarly the Sage cares for all..... If his body is reproved, it does not matter to him : for he never identifies himself with his

body..... When people know that he forgives their faults, then they come and support him. All people regard themselves great but the Saint alone is a great man. He is courageous, and he is noble ; and the depth of his mind cannot be measured " (XIX. 4. 5-31).

75. The Active Saint must fill the world with God.

As the Saint has pledged himself to the service of God, his one business is to fill the world with God. "If he should ask anything of anybody, he should ask him to continue his devotion to God..... People would be spoilt if one has a Turk for his Guru and Chamārs for his disciples. Hence, one should collect together Brahmins, should respect the assemblies of Devotees, should search after the Sages..... One should become famous on earth by desiring nothing..... One should always merge oneself in the narration of God's exploits, so that people may always be attracted towards Him. The light that one spreads must be like the light of the Sun. The Sage should know the inner motives of men. Men who live in his company should immediately mend their manners, and those who are round about him should engage themselves in incessant meditation. Wherever he goes, he should behave like a guest; people should desire that he should stay with them. He should, however, not stay there for fear of becoming too familiar..... No fame is attained without intense virtue of some kind..... One does not know when the body may fall. One does not know what calamities may befall us. Hence, we should always be on the alert, should do all that we can for spiritual life, and fill the world with the holy name of God. What we can do soon, we should do immediately. What we cannot do soon, should be done after mature thought. There is nothing that does not come within the ken

of reflection. Hence, we should give ourselves to incessant thought, and always find new remedies. Unless a man retires to solitude, he cannot find the way out. In utter silence, we should reach the Ātman, and then no difficulties will present themselves before us " (XIX. 6. 11-30).

76. Autobiography of the Active Saint.

Finally, Rāmadāsa supplies us with a piece of an autobiography for the life of an Active Saint. He tells us how in his time the Mahomedans had oppressed the whole land ; how he gave himself up to the life of a Saint, and became the support of all on account of his great spiritual power. " Many people have now become Mahomedans ; some have fallen on the field of battle ; many have lost touch with their native language, and have become proficient in foreign tongues. The bounds of Mahārāshtra have been curtailed. People are engaging themselves in politics. They do not find time even, to take their food. Many engage themselves in a life of warfare, and by the pride natural to that life, they engage themselves day and night in war topics. The merchant is carrying on his commerce, and cares for nothing but his belly. Various sorts of philosophical opinions have prevailed. Many kinds of atheistic schools have sprung up. Wherever you go, you find false teachers. Others have divided themselves as followers of either Śankara or Vishnu. Confusion reigns everywhere. People are merely following the bent of their desires. They cannot distinguish right from wrong..... Many people attend Kīrtanas, but nobody cares for mystical experience. Mystical knowledge has been hard to get at..... It can be attained only by him who has a piercing insight, and who does not waste a single minute. A man of

insight as he is, the Sage is respected by all. He knows many passages by heart, and with the power of his memory makes straight the path of spiritual life. He knows the hearts of all, and knows various ways of illuminating them. He says little ; and saying little, he attracts the hearts of all. On the strength of his own mystical experience, he levels down all philosophical opinions, and compels the people to leave their beaten paths. He speaks pointed words, and by the power of his indifference, immediately takes leave of the assembly. When he has gone away after speaking words of spiritual experience, people naturally feel attracted towards him. They leave away all beaten paths, and go in all submission to him. But he cannot be found in any particular place ; and as regards his dress, he looks like a beggarly man. His great power lies in his work in silence. Indeed, his fame and name and power know no bounds. He engages people in spiritual service from place to place, and himself goes away from their midst..... He goes and lives in mountain valleys where nobody can see him, and there he meditates for the good of all. In difficult places and among peculiar men, he always maintains the regularity of his spiritual life. All people in the world come to see this spiritual Saint. His motives cannot be fathomed. He determinately engages people in a politico-religious life, and multiplies disciples through disciples, so that they ultimately grow numberless. What power he exercises on earth is exercised in silence. Wherever he goes, he finds numberless men believing in him, and he engages all in spiritual life. Whatever place he visits, he makes people sing aloud the greatness of God, while he brings his own spiritual experience to their help. The end of human life consists in realising such an ideal, says Rāmadāsa. I am describing it to you in a few brief words." (XV. 2. 3-30).

77. God, the Author of the Dasabodha.

We might conclude this survey of Rāmadāsa's teaching in the same words in which Rāmadāsa concludes his great work, the Dāsabodha. Rāmadāsa is convinced that it is not he who has composed the Dāsabodha, but that he is only an instrumental cause for the display of God's activity. He thanks himself that he has been able to reach the end of spiritual life. "The end of my spiritual life has been attained. The purpose of my life has been fulfilled. The Impersonal Brahman has been reached. All illusion has come to an end. The nature of the phenomenal world has been traced..... What I had seen as in a dream has been dispelled in the state of spiritual wakefulness. The secret of spiritual life has been ineffable..... The round of births and deaths has come to a close. The completion of this work, the Dāsabodha, has been due to the grace of my Lord, the son of Daśaratha, who is proud of His devotees. This work has been divided into 20 Daśakas, and 200 Samāsas. He, who meditates on them, will gradually come to know the secret of spiritual life. There is, however, no need of praising this work; for what matters is first-hand experience. The body is made up of elements, while the Ātman is the All-doer. How shall we credit a man with the production of this work ? God indeed does all things..... The body is made up of elements, and these disappear in the final resort. We should leave off all delusion, and take recourse to the thought that it is God who does all things " (XX. 10. 26-37).

CHAPTER III. General Review and Conclusion.

1. God-realisation and Activism.

The most characteristic feature of Rāmadāsa's teaching may now be seen to be activism. Rāmadāsa, more than any other Saint of the Maratha School, called peoples' minds to the performance of duty, while the heart was to be always set on God. Rāmadāsa tells us time and oft that the first thing that a man should do is to believe in God, and the next thing is to do his duty to himself and to the nation. For, Rāmadāsa tells us that it is only when our efforts are backed by devotion, that they are likely to succeed : समर्थाची नाही पाटी। तयास भलताच कुटी। याकारणें उठाउठी । भजन करावें।। No wonder that, with this teaching, he helped the formation of the Maratha kingdom as no other Saint had formerly done before. It is indeed true, as the late Mr. Justice Ranade said, that even pacifist Saints like Nāmadeva and Tukārāma laid the moral foundations on which Rāmadāsa later reared his politico-religious edifice. It is not given to each and every one to achieve all things on earth. While Nāmadeva and Tukārāma went one way, Rāmadāsa went another. While the first called back the attention of men from irreligion to religion, the other raised upon the foundation of religious faith an edifice of national greatness. For that matter, we are not to suppose that Rāmadāsa alone is of any consequence so far as the political destiny of Mahārāshtra was concerned, and that Tukārāma and Nāmadeva preached only a pacifist doctrine which ruined the kingdom. The controversy is a very old one, dating from the days of the Bhagavadgītā, as to the value of knowledge and works. Such conflicts can be resolved only when we

cancel them in a higher synthesis, as the great German philosopher Hegel said. We want both knowledge and works as we want both religion and national greatness, and it is from this point of view that Tukārāma and Nāmadeva were of as much use to the Maratha kingdom as Rāmadāsa himself. It is merely exhibiting bad blood to discard any one for the sake of the other.

2. Ramadasa and Christianity.

A very painstaking writer has recently produced a work on "Rāmadāsa and the Rāmadāsis" in the English language, and we cannot commend his assiduity and earnestness, and on the whole, his fair-mindedness too highly. Mr. Deming has utilised his opportunities of a stay at Satara, and has produced a book in the " Religious Life of India " Series, in which he has gone into the smallest details about the life and history of Rāmadāsa and his school. Though, however, the book is, on the whole, praiseworthy, in the last Chapter, Mr. Deming harks back to a comparison between Rāmadāsa and Christianity, and as is usual with his class of writers, ends his volume by pointing out the superiority of the teachings of Christianity over the teachings of Rāmadāsa. In the first place, he tells us that Rāmadāsa makes a confusion between a personal and an impersonal view of the Godhead (p. 200), and that, even though in modern times a justification has been given for a reconciliation of the personal and the impersonal by saying that the first concept belongs to the sphere of Religion while the second belongs to the sphere of Philosophy, Mr. Deming inclines the beam in favour of the first and rejects the second, all the while oblivious of the fact that a Philosophy of Mysticism might concern itself neither with the Personal nor with the Impersonal, but with

the Trans-personal, meaning thereby that the category of personality has no place in a Philosophy of Mysticism. Secondly, as is again usual with his school, Mr. Deming points out that Rāmadāsa's conception of salvation was negative instead of positive (p. 204), meaning thereby that Rāmadāsa dwelt too much upon the ills of life rather than upon the joy consequent upon a life in God. Now, any man who will read Rāmadāsa's works carefully will see how time and oft he insists upon the beatific element in life, thus giving the lie direct to the theory that he takes merely a pessimistic view of salvation. In the third place, Mr. Deming points out that Rāmadāsa's view of Incarnation is only a plausible one, in which God merely seems to become man instead of becoming man in reality, meaning thereby that God in the Hindu scheme plays merely the dramatic role of an actor instead of actually personifying himself in the world of men (p. 207), - a view with which no writer on the Philosophy of Hinduism can agree, inasmuch as, throughout Hinduism, Incarnation is regarded as a verity and a fact, and not as a mere appearance. For, are we not told in the Bhagavadgītā that God incarnates himself time and oft in the world of men whenever religion comes to an end and irreligion prevails? In the fourth place, we entirely agree with Mr. Deming when he points out that the Ethics of Rāmadāsa and the Ethics of Jesus were absolutely on a par, for "like Rāmadāsa, Jesus spoke of purity, unselfishness, truthfulness, sympathy, patience, humility, the forgiving spirit, and other motives in the heart, - traits, which, like Rāmadāsa, Jesus actually personified in his own life" (p. 210). In fact, the teaching of both Jesus and Rāmadāsa seems to be absolutely alike in this respect, inasmuch as both of them practised the virtues which they preached,

and preached them only after they had practised them. Fifthly, we may also agree with Mr. Deming when he says that with Rāmadāsa the ideal of caste was yet predominant, while Jesus preached " a Christian brotherhood of the most democratic type, regardless of colour, race, wealth, culture, or any other distinction " (p. 212). Rāmadāsa's justification, however, would be that spiritually all people were equal in the eyes of God, while socially there might be differences owing to traditions of racial evolution. Sixthly, when Mr. Deming speaks of the difference between the Svāmī and the Christ, inasmuch as the Svāmī seemed to enjoy prosperous circumstances at the close of his life, while Jesus bore the Cross, we have only to remember that these are accidental circumstances over which man has no control, and that each was playing out his rôle where God had chosen to place him. Finally, when Mr. Deming speaks of the narrow geographical outlook of the Svāmī and the mere contemporary background of his vision, while Christ's message was timeless and universal in its nature (p. 21.6), he is entirely mistaking the fact that all mystics, of whatever lands they may be, preach a message which is timeless and universal, and that if Rāmadāsa's teaching as outlined in the previous Chapter seems evidently to be of the mystical type according to the criteria of Mysticism to be elsewhere discussed, then his message can never be only either localised or of mere contemporary value. In fact, Rāmadāsa's mystical teaching, like that of the other mystics of the Maratha School, was as timeless and as universal in its nature as the teaching of any other mystics of any other lands or times.

3. Bhakti and Rationalism.

The doctrine of Bhakti which these Saints of the

Maratha School taught in their Spiritual Literature has been held in such high esteem by rationalistic writers like Prof. Patwardhan, that one wonders how these could keep to their rationalism, while applauding the Bhakti doctrine of the Saints. " Here we have a literature that takes us from the bewildering diversity of the phenomenal world to the soul-consoling kinship of the ultimate realities. Here is a literature that subdues all the bestial instincts of man, and reminds him of what he truly is and what he is to seek..... If to discover the uncommon in the common, the unfamiliar in the familiar, the unknown in the known, the supernatural in the natural, the infinite in the finite, and the one in the many, be an element of the Vision Romantic, unmistakably we have it in the literature of the Bhakti school..... Here we have the Romance of a Light that never was on sea or land ; of a Dream that never settled on the world of clay ; of Love that never stirred the passion of sex..... Here is the romance of piety, of faith, of devotion, of the surrender of the human soul in the Love, the Light, and the Life of the Ultimate Being ". If all rationalism could be so eloquent of the merits of Bhakti, one would by all means be such a rationalist.

4. The Philosophy of Mysticism.

The philosophic aspects of mysticism we have hardly any time to enter into in this volume. It has been a matter of very great difficulty to those who entertain a barely theistic view of the world how at the same time a mystical view could be sustained. It is no wonder, therefore, that we find that many an acute critic has landed himself into contradictions when the question of the reconciliation of theism and mysticism has arisen. Thus, while Dr. Macnicol calls into question "the audacity of that pantheistic speculation which makes God feel the necessity of a

devotee, as it makes the devotee feel the necessity of God ", he is at the same time led elsewhere to recognise the claims of Mysticism where both dualism and monism become one. Thus, though he says that " the resonant note of thankfulness which throbs in the 103rd psalm is outside of the knowledge of Maratha Saints who venture on the contrary to say that God is their debtor", and that "such an audacity is beyond the reach of the Hebrew or Christian penitent, unless his conscience is overlaid with pantheistic speculation as that of Eckhart", he also feels it necessary to recognise elsewhere that " not in the Monism of Śankarāchārya, nor in the Dualism that is satisfied to remain two, but in a Spiritual Experience that transcends and includes them both, is peace to be found ". This is exactly the problem of the Psychology and Philosophy of mysticism. It is too wide a problem to be attempted in this historico-analytical work. For that, another time and another place may be necessary. How the mystic criterion of reality compares with the idealist, the realist, and the pragmatist criteria, how the mystical faculty of intuition compares with intellect and feeling, how we may reconcile the phenomenal and the noumenal elements of human experience, showing man simultaneously to be a denizen of two worlds, the one human and the other divine, - which alone can make it possible for him to realise the divine in the human, - shall form the subject of a forthcoming work on the " Pathway to God ".

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telling us that God incarnates time and oft among men (p.92).

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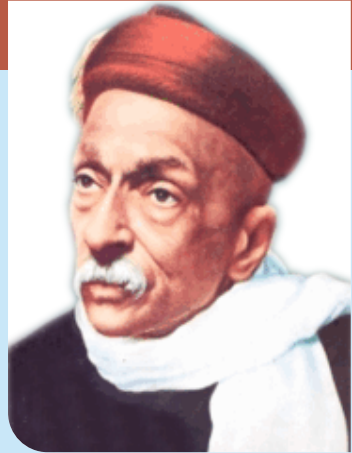
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The International Institution, ACADEMY OF COMPARATIVE PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION (ACPR), BELGAUM is founded by him. ACPR is the global call for "Awareness of Unity" given by the modern Prophet, Gurudev Dr. Ramachandra Dattatreya Ranade. Having conceived the ACPR in 1924 at Pune, he worked and processed on his mission to deliver the ACPR Belgaum, in 1952. ACPR Belgaum is his immortal heritage to the world at large. ACPR's Head Quarters is in Hindwadi, Belgaum, and its Branches are running all over the world spreading message of Dr. R. D. Ranade. As a fitting tribute to the great founder and his vision in the ACPR, Belgaum King-Philosopher-Spokesman of India, President Dr. S. Radhakrishnan took pride in volunteering to inaugurate the Head Quarters of ACPR building at Belgaum in 1965. ACPR is a global gallery where eternity will keep on whispering.

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