

|| Hari om ||

FRAGRANCE OF A SAINT

(પારસલીલા)

**Life-incidents of a Gujarati
Saint Pujya Shri Mota**

Translated And Expanded
By
Shri Hemantkumar G. Nilkanth

Written by
Shri Indukumar K. Desai

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No Dedication Grace Alone

(1st Edition)

The urge was Thou, the language Thou,
'All' this - and - 'I' is simply Thou;
Who then remains to give to Thee ?
And what remains to give to Thee ?

What task was there to **do** for **me**
When every task is done by Thee ?
This "I" - Thy pen - was an implement
To say what Thou Thyself had meant.

If there's something 'good' in it,
That is due alone to Thee;
If there's something 'bad' in it,
That also is due to Thee.

It's Thou - Thy Grace - that works behind
A man that's cruel or is kind;
The former is but a lisping child,
That learns to speak by prattlings wild.

- *Tranalator*

Unrepayable Gratitude

(1st Edition)

Some sentiments have got to be expressed - not for the sake of those to whom the gratitude is due- but for the satisfaction of our own souls.

The following well-wishers of the Ashram, living in U.K. have seen to it that publication of this book is not impeded for want of monetary help. Each one of them have donated £ 25/-. We are very much thankful to them for their noble action.

- 1) Smt. Indirabahen Rameshchandra Chauhan-Bolton
- 2) Smt. Ranjanabahen Pravinchandra Chauhan-Leicester
- 3) Smt. Pushpabahen Arvindkumar Solanki-Leicester
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- 5) Smt. Bharatibahen Harshadbhai Chauhan-Leicester

• • •

Our heart-felt thanks are due to the following devotees of Rev. Mota, who have generously loosened their purse but do not want to be applauded by letting us publish the splendid amounts they have given for resolving the publication of this book.

- 1) Mrs. Madhulikha Dilipkumar Parekh-Cuttack
- 2) Mrs. Reena Hemantkumar Parekh-Cuttack
- 3) Dr. Kailas Kaushal-Chamba, Himachal Pradesh
- 4) Dr. Indira Kailas Kaushal-Chamba, H.P.
- 5) Mr. N. K. Sapolia-Chamba, H. P.
- 6) Dr. Pravin Gupta-Chamba H. P.

-Nandubhai
Managing Trustee
Hari Om Ashram,
Nadiad-Surat

Preface

(1st Edition)

In consonance with the sentiment expressed in "No Dedication – grace alone" thoughts of serviceableness of the book or the kind of reception it may get from the public are irrelevant.

Hence, only the genesis of the book is given here. It supports the translator's faith (nay, his experience according to him) that man is but a card – be it an ace or any other—in the game of solitaire played by the Divine Player and that it is that Grace alone which does everything in this world.

The translator was once in doldrums. He was feeling sore at the thought that his spiritual life, begun well and auspiciously under Pujya Shri Mota's guidance, was visibly heading towards the arid sands of inanity. In that mood of dejection he 'happened' to go to Pujya Shri Mota's Hari Om Ashram at Nadiad. It was just a 'chance' that his eyes fell upon a small book for sale entitled "Paraslila" (Playful transmutations by the philosopher's stone i.e. a sketch of Pujya Shri Mota's life). That fleeting glance buoyed him up at once. 'That's just it', he burst out to himself. "Let me translate It. That will automatically make me remember Him and save my life from this deadlock".

It was, therefore, for his own spiritual benefit that the idea of translation 'sprang up', and he cannot say why – except perhaps to share a happy thought with his oldest dear colleague–but he hied to Shri Nandubhai* at once and told him, "I would like to translate this book." At least in his conscious mind he had at that time no idea of getting the translation published.

But without a moment's consideration, Nandubhai hailed the idea and, what is more, added that he would see to the details of its publication. And there and then he even suggested the name of a typist. But he required a few pages of the translation–manuscript in order to be sure that the typist he had in mind would be able to cope up with the work. Shortly then, the translator gave him the copy he wanted. As is his habit, the translator had made many scratches, words, phrases, sentences were corrected or altered outright in red ink etc. In short, it was a jumble, a jungle, for a novice in typing. 'This he can't do' remarked Nandubhai. "Well then" said the translator, "shall I approach my typist ? He is an old hand." (The translator, Nandubhai knew, had rendered several volumes of "Mahadevbhai's Dairy" in English). He jumped at the proposal, again without a second's thought.

* Personal assistant of Pujya Shri Mota and now Managing Trustee of both his Ashrams-Surat and Nadiad for a number of years.

So that was how the translator's friend Shri. Mahendra N. Bhatt, was requested to say how much, in view of the changed times and the ever rocketing prices, he would charge now. A common typist in a Tata Chemical's Office in Bombay, with a family to support, he could on no account be termed a man of means. But – wonder of wonders – he wrote back to say that his only charge was the publication of his name in the preface, as that would mean for him an uplifting association with Pujya Shri Mota.

That was how the translation was made and printed. Was that, that series of events falling in with bewildering rapidity – the translator's visit of Hariom Ashram in a despondent mood, his casual glance at the book 'Paraslila'. the immediate revival of his spirits at the thought of its translation, his run, so to say, to Nandubhai, the latter's unexpected proposal of publication with all it meant and his suggestion of the name of a typist to boot, his immediate rejection of that typist on seeing the manuscript, the approach to the original typist, Shri. Mahendra Bhatt, the latter's refusal to accept any monetary recompense though not comfortably placed in life – was that quick succession of a number of favourable events merely 'accidental' ?

The translator prefers to see in them all a purpose, a deliberate concurrence of events brought about by the **Unseen Power**. Not to

speak of these so many coming together in a heap, to him no event big or small happens accidentally. He is glad to feel that if he errs in this, he errs in the company of an angel.

"There is a Divinity that shapes our ends
Rough-hew them how we will;"

says Shakespeare.

Nothing need be added to the above except the statement that in view of the conspiracy of circumstances noted above and in view of the spirit underlying them, special attention has been paid in the matter of faithfulness to Pujya Shri Mota. All the same, the translator is sorry for any flaw that might have crept into the book either in its facts, or in their expression in language, or in the mode of the thinking the book presents.

As the book reproduces anecdotes, the chronological order is overlooked at times.

- *Translator*

|| Hariom ||

Submission (1st Edition)

It is obvious that in this age of the dream of one world, where physical barriers are removed by scientific researches and rapid communications take place between the people living in two extreme ends of the world, enthusiastic, sincere and learned section of the devotees of Rev. Shri Mota may yearn for having His abridged biographical sketch in order to let their neighbourly friends, belonging to the language other than Gujarati, know who Mota was. As Rev. Mota always discouraged propaganda we could not respond to such a demand till now.

This book is the story of a man who realises and actually experiences the Truth that God's existence is as much of a reality as our own. Readers will immediately make out that hardly a few persons will have more trying and painful outer conditions than what Rev. Mota encountered. May God give us inspiration from this book in our own life.

This book was originally written in Gujarati by the, then, Prof. Indukumar Desai, now an inmate of our Ashram. It is a happy and fortunate conjuncture that Shri Hemantkumar Nilkanth who has been the first and foremost devotee of Rev. Mota, and a very close and affectionate elderly friend of mine, also widely accepted as thoroughly proficient in rendering Gujarati into

English, by chance, happened to see this book in Gujarati and at once went through it at one sitting only. He was so much overwhelmed with joy that he spontaneously proposed that he would be glad to render it into English. We wholeheartedly welcomed his offer. He has proved himself as a pastmaster in this field of literature by translating into English the historically very important Gujarati Diaries of Mahadevbhai Desai, personal secretary of Mahatma Gandhi. Earlier three translations of Rev. Mota's books namely "To the Mind", "At thy Lotus Feet" and "Life's Struggle" also stand to his credit.

We were surprised that at the age of 82 he fulfilled the whole task like a vigorous young man, though he was suffering from physical handicap.

We consider it our good luck that he did not mechanically render it into English but expanded its subject-matter and added something new. As a result of this, the book has the additional advantage of his rich personal experiences with Rev. Mota. We record here our feelings of thankful appreciation to him for his significant service to Rev. Mota's literature.

We are sure that this little book will be an unfailing source of inspiration and strength for those aspirants who try to walk on the path towards God-Head.

Our sincere thanks are due to those (mentioned on the pages no. IV-V) who evinced great interest and took initiative in publishing this book. But for their willingness to meet with expenses of publication, this edition would not have seen the light of the day.

We are very much thankful to Light Publications Ltd., Gorwa Road, Vadodara-390 003 for their prompt and efficient service in completion of the printing work in a spirit of sincere devotion.

We are also indebted to Shri Sudarshan V. Desai, one of the executives of Alembic Chemical Works who volunteered with a spirit of service for exacting task of proof-reading.

It would be sheer ingratitude if this closes without acknowledgement of heartfelt thanks to Mr. Mahendrabhai N. Bhatt, Borivali, Bombay who volunteered himself for typing honourarily whole manuscript. We understand this is because of his love for Shri Hemantkumar Nilkanth and Rev. Mota.

We also appreciate the love of labour taken by 'Jay' Pancholi, an artist who prepared the design for the coverpage of this book.

We would like to declare solemnly before our Western readers that anything which is earned either by the sale of this book or by any source will be utilized for the upliftment of the down-trodden people of villages under our

special scheme of Rural Development Programme. This fact does not require any emphasis before our Indian readers as they are very well acquainted with social activities carried out by our Ashrams.

6th July 1982
"Guru Purnima"
Tiruchi

Nandubhai
Managing Trustee,
Hariom Ashram,
Nadiad-Surat.

Truths related to planes

From the cradle to the grave, situations of different varieties continue to crop up and pass off in life. True it is that it is none but the Creator, Ordainer and Controller of life and cosmos who inspires, and even goads man to fight his struggles. But before a man accepts this belief as a guide of his conduct, he must first be able to understand correctly his own plane of consciousness; for what is true for one plane of consciousness is not necessarily so for another.

Life's Struggle, 3rd Ed. P. 49

- by Pujya Shri Mota

The Mentality of the humanitarian must change

It is indeed true that the man who gives up his petty longings and selfish interests and engages himself incessantly in humanitarian activities, becomes fitter for the life divine than the man of merely worldly selfish actions; but it is certain that there is disharmony somewhere between the intensity of his desire to realize his ideal and his actual attitude at the time of doing anything in pursuance of the same, if he cannot experience fundamental and elevating transformations in his mentality and an all-round evolution of his life. Where there is disharmony there is uneasiness and where there is uneasiness spiritual progress is blocked.

'Life's Struggle', 3rd Ed. P. 70

- by Pujya Shri Mota

From
"TO THE MIND"

*A collection of 109 verses in which Author
addresses and admonishes the mind to behave
in a manner which will answer to the following
description :-*

*"Let the garland of flowers of love,
Which you weave by constant chanting
Float on the Heavenly Ganges;
Drown your mind and intellect,
Consciousness and emotion
And all your vital powers
In that Celestial River," ... (verse 106)*

*"Each little thing you do,
Do it while immersed
In God-consciousness,
Fix firm your consciousness,
At the feet of your Lord.
Plunge all your vital powers
In that boundless ocean
And like a drunkard, remain
Always steeped in Love." ... (verse 109)*

(1st combined Ed. 1981)

- by Pujya Shri Mota

From
"AT THY LOTUS FEET"

*A book of 109 Verses in which Author sings of
the Lord and His grace as man's all-in-all.*

*No water can wet, no wind can dry,
No gun, no gas can kill;
No devastating fire can bum
The immortal Changeless Thee
Beyond all duals as life and death
Beyond all qualities too,
To That
Lord of my Heart, I Bow. ... (verse 74)*

*Through Thy grace can come to pass
Things that absurd seem,
The lame can scale a mountain high
The dumb can freely speak
To That
Lord of my Heart, I Bow. ... (verse 94)*

(1st combined Ed. 1981)

- by Pujya Shri Mota

PREFACE

FIFTH EDITION

Shri Mota is a multifaceted personality, hence this book has a more to offer than a simple Life Story. The Proven Logic of ‘SPIRITUAL SCIENCE’ established by him is a gift to Human Being. His life is a successful experiment of this fact. This book will guide a reader to understand the spiritual aspect of his own life at micro level. The thinking of own life will develop ‘JIGNASA’ (INQUISITIVENESS) from the bottom of heart which will lead to the path of spirituality.

Everyone’s life is planned as per his ‘KARMA’ of several births. Same way the life of ‘CHUNIA’ (childhood pet name of Shri Mota) was full of struggle. To understand the transformation from ‘CHUNIYA’ to ‘SHRI MOTA’, requires a concentrated reading with deep thinking of GOD’S plan about our own life. This will truly help readers to understand the motto of his own life, progress accordingly, keeping alive the thoughts of ALMIGHTY LORD at every moment of life in his mind.

The first Gujarati and English editions were published in 1975 & 1982 subsequently. The original Gujarati book was compiled by Late Shri Indukumar Desai which was translated and expanded by the able translator Late Shri Hemantkumar G. Nilkanth–(Hemantdada).

Hemantdada had passed a long journey from being colleague and a friend to becoming a devotee of Shri Mota. His 'Grace me -O'Lord' (कृपा याचना शतकम्) in Sanskrit is a mark of total surrender to a Saint.

We are grateful to Shri Karsanbhai M. Patel and Shri Jayantilal Motiram Tamakuwala of Surat for minute proof reading, at this time of Fifth edition.

We take a note of Shri. Shreyaskumar Vishnuprasad Pandya of Sahitya Mudranalaya (P) Ltd., Ahmedabed for his generous gesture to print Shri Mota's books, to help us to keep our cost and selling price as low as possible. We thank all of them from the bottom of our heart.

We release this fifth edition on the auspicious day of "Guru Purnima" (A Holy Day of Guru) - sacred to all devotees, dedicated to the Guru. We humbly offer this Life Story of a great Saint at the Lotus feet of the society.

|| Hari om ||

20-4-2013

Ramnavmi, Vikram Samvat 2069

75th Realization day of Pujya

Pujya Shri Mota

Board of Trustees

Hari Om Ashram,

Surat.

DEDICATION

There are many who has never met Shri Mota, but influenced by his literature. Shri Mota himself, once said, 'to meet me come inside the Moun Room. To understand and change your life read my books' A person highly educated, kind and tender hearted, honest, serving Public Sector Undertaking, at a very high post and still pious gentleman, interested in spirituality is a rare combination to find in today's world.

We very humbly dedicate this fifth edition of 'Fragrance of a Saint' to

**Shri Ashokkumar Singhal
and his wife**

**Smt. Rashmidevi A. Singhal
And their respectable parents
Late Shri Lala Hariram Singhal
and**

**Late Smt. Vidhyavatidevi Singhal
of New Delhi.**

May Almighty God shower His blessings on Singhal family to give them Best Health, Career & Peace of mind in Life.

20-4-2013
Ramnavmi, Vikram Samvat 2069
75th Realization day of Pujya
Pujya Shri Mota

Board of Trustees
Hari Om Ashram,
Surat.

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I AM OMNIPRESENT
- Mota

1. The Sage - A God on Earth

When tyrants' trumpets blow so loud,
Proclaiming their successes proud,
When **dharma*** firmly is suppressed,
And saints and people are oppressed
I then descend, take human form
Uphold the Truth, restore the norm.

The Bhagwad Gita in essence (IV - 7)

One need not confine this divine promise to the resurrection of society at large. Psychic transformation of a depraved soul into a holy one is just as great an achievement, (though less spectacular) as the material uplift of society. In that sense every sage or saint is God in human form. Perhaps it is this that is at the back of the Indian belief that to his disciple the Guru is God Himself.

Saints' Contribution

An unbroken series of spritual lights throughout the millenniums' history of India has repeatedly re-enlivened her all – but – dead culture. Whenever Bharat sank into political slavery, was divided into numerous small states, even principalities, became,

* A versatile word meaning that which sustains, i.e. duty, religion, right or Truth, quality etc.

owing to internecine feuds, a sure chance for a successful invasion and conquest, and thus fell a prey to abject decadence,- religious, social, and political,- these saints quietly carried to every nook and corner of India their message which raised the low spirits of Bharat to its pristine greatness. Many of these saints were born in low, despised castes, but their language wafted the aroma of a high spiritual attainment and won recognition and respect for them even from the elite. Of course it was not without fiery ordeals that they won this high position.

2. Their Exhortation

Their **Kathas** and **kirtans** (legends and stories interspersed with songs) reveal their own devotion to God, total surrender to His behests, and an intense longing for God-realization, as well as words of solace and strength to the multitudes, burnt by 'the three fires*' that flesh is heir to. And those who came to them for self-enlightenment were all, uniformly accepted by these sages without any distinction of caste or creed, sex or age, wealth or poverty, sin or virtue etc. The masses remember with gratitude and

* Physical, mental, and environmental.

reverence these sages of the past and the present, a few only among whom may be mentioned here: Ramanand, a Hindu, and his Muslim disciple Kabir; Nanak, founder of Sikhism, a synthesis of Hinduism and Islam; Rajib, a Muslim devotee of Rama, a Hindu God; Tulsidas, author of **Ramayana** (Life story of Lord Rama) still avidly read by millions; Gyaneshwar, (One Indian Saint) an exponent of the Bhagwadgita in the then despised spoken language Marathi; Nanda, a Pariah saint, (a saint from lower caste community) canonised by the highest caste of orthodox South Indian Brahmins; Lalla, Mirabai, Muktabai and Andaal, all women saints of the North, Central, South and Far South India; and modern sages like Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Ramana Maharshi and Shri Aurobindo, all too well known to need any adjunct.

The subject of this sketch, Pujya Shri Mota, also has by his deeds secured a niche in this unique temple of spiritual fame.

3. Paraslila

As saints are revered in India as manifestations of God, their acts are termed as 'lilas' (spontaneous beneficial acts). Hence the book is entitled **Paraslila** (in Gujarati) (Paras – the philosophers' stone.) And verily

Pujya Shri Mota is an alchemist who has transmuted into gold the base metal of many a human being. "Lila" as he says, "is nothing but the manifestation of divine consciousness."

4. Birth and Heritage

On the 4th of September 1898. in a most backward and obscure village Savli, Dist. Baroda, Gujarat was born a baby in a poor low-caste family of the **Bhavasars** (dyers). The circumstances of the family were so adverse, that nobody could then have imagined a glorious future for the boy. Owing to his fondness for singing hymns, the father, Asharam, was called 'Bhagat' (meaning a devotee) a term used for respect by just a few and contempt (for being an unworldly simpleton) by many. And he was a tobacco and opium addict ! Fire was, therefore, kept bright day and night by him. In search of livelihood, he left Savli for a townlet, Kalol, Panchmahal district of Gujarat. Surajba, Pujya Shri Mota's mother, served as a housemaid in some respectable high-caste Nagar families and it was she who mainly bore the burden of supporting the indigent family. But Asharam saw to it that he himself provided for his opium, tobacco etc. That apart, he

would mostly devote himself to his favourite hymns and addictions. The couple had four sons, the second of whom was 'Chunilal' affectionately shortened into 'Chunia, the hero of this story. The family lived in a one-room tenement with a narrow verandah about 3 ft. broad. It was a slum quarter on a broad street and the neighbours were a tailor and a shoe-maker always steeped in drink and adept in the use of the foulest language. The stench, moreover, exhumed by soaked hides was a constant feature of this dwelling. It was in such a 'dark unfathomed cave' that this 'gem of the purest ray serene' first opened its eyes.

5. An Unforgettable Lesson

A shocking incident, at his impressionable age of 6 or 7, indelibly carved into the boy's mind the fact that poverty meant not physical hardship only but mental torture and infamy. A blessing in disguise, it shaped the whole course of his future life. This was what happened. The cheerful crackling fire incessantly burning in front of Asharam's house was, for policemen in their night rounds, a happy resort for relaxation and friendship with Asharam. One night a Head Constable came there and saw

somebody sleeping on the verandah. In those days there was a Government Order which required 'criminal tribesmen' to inform the police of a visitor in their house. Dropping all intimacy at once, the Head Constable peremptorily demanded of Asharam the cause of the breach of the police order of arrival of the visitor. Tut," said Asharam, "that order is for the criminal tribes, not for us." Hardly had he finished, when he was severely belaboured with slaps and kicks and dragged to the police station. The little boy, Chunilal, was at first stunned at this sudden brutal assault, but soon he recovered and had a brain-wave. With loud sobs and a stream of tears, he ran with utmost speed to the house of Rao Saheb Manubhai,—one of the masters served by his mother—woke him up at that late hour and narrated the gruesome tale. The respected title-holder hastened to the police station, bore down the Head Constable and got Asharam released.

The incident was a great eye-opener to Chunilal. At that tender age he was convinced, once for all, that it was a must for him to be Mota (great) and receive respectful salutations from others, if he wanted to save himself from assaults and

insults, the inevitable lot of the underdog.

The First Step

But education was an indispensable condition for one who wanted to be 'great', he realized. Where were the means for it—for a boy sunk in abysmal poverty ? There was the rub. God's grace, however, never fails to respond soon or late to the intense longing of a good soul. In 1912 A.D. an Anglo-Vernacular school was opened in Kalol itself. The Head Master saw the rich potentiality of the boy and helped him to cover the first four years' course in one and a half. This strenuous study for future greatness, however, did not mean for him any neglect of the immediate problem of poverty. He became a boy-peon of the school at the monthly salary of a rupee and a half and swept the school-rooms, filled water-pots, carried letters from and to the post office and did other sundry work. With all this expense of labour and time, he used to stand first in his examinations and secure prizes. While doing some work, he would, whenever possible, have a study-book with him. This unflagging assiduity and keen intelligence attracted three Nagar teachers, specially Shri.

Ghanubhai, whose pet pupil he became. That was how, ever since his childhood, he spent his time largely in cultured society. That contact continued for long to be his chief stay and support.

Honest to the Core

When he came to the seventh standard, Chunilal, in pursuance of a compelling urge, decided to earn some money to help the family even at the cost of his ardent love for studies. His father, Asharam, was then staying at Godhra, a bigger town, for brighter prospects for his dyeing business. A shopkeeper there was requested to employ Chunilal as his boy. That was done but the salary was not fixed. He used to open the shop, sweep it, wash the sheets and cushion-covers and put things in order. As was his wont he put his whole heart in his work and did it in the best possible way. That did not fail to catch his master's eye. His salary was therefore fixed at five rupees a month—a fairly good amount in those days when things were dire—cheap in India. More responsible work was soon entrusted to him. The boss taught him also 'the trick of the trade' that of giving such a flick on the rod of the balance that the customer got actually about

2 lbs. less than the full weight of 40 lbs. which he was charged for. Brilliant as the boy was in his academic studies he turned out to be a dull student in this fraudulent art and used to give the customer the full weight he paid for. The practice went on for some time unnoticed, ' but one day the bubble was pricked. An irate customer brought back the corn he had bought, charged the shop keeper with cheating him and insisted on the corn being reweighed. When that was done, it was found that the customer had got his due weight of the corn. He went back satisfied, though rather crest-fallen, but the shopkeeper severely scolded 'Chunia' for not using the cunning trick he was taught. The young boy felt hurt, bid farewell to the shop and its malpractices and returned to his books.

But he had to go to Petlad for further studies and stayed with Shri Ghanubhai's aunt, Prabhabahen.* Deep love soon grew up between the two. Prabhabahen became

* Shri Prabhabahen, daughter-in-law of the Dewan of the Cutch State, under whose protecting wings, Pujya Shri Mota, when but a fledgling, lived for many years. In moving terms he has dedicated one of his booklets in verse-form to her. Also refer pp. 139-140

Chunilal's veritable mother and guided him in matters spiritual and material.

A Saint's Holy Company

Shri Janakidas Maharaj, a highly evolved saint, used to visit Petlad occasionally at the invitation of Sheth Rangwala, the owner of a dyeing mill. After the close of the school, Chunilal would often speed to the saint's place and serve him by sweeping it and washing his clothes. He had then no idea of the deep significance of the service of a saint, but he just did it as that was his nature. He did not take liberties with the saint, and attentively listened to the words of wisdom that fell from the saint's lips. All this won the saint's heart. By his power of seeing the future he warned Chunilal of a coming serious illness and advised him to be ready in full trim with his studies for the exam before the illness disabled him and what is more, he directed the Principal of the local Sanskrit Pathshala (school) to bring Chunilal upto the mark of Sanskrit. On his part Chunilal accepted the warning in right earnest and learnt up Sanskrit grammar with the Principal's help and other subjects with that of the guide-books. Then on some

business Chunilal happened to go to Shri Ghanubhai's house at Ahmedabad. There he fell a victim to a deadly illness and remained unconscious for some days. Shri Janakidas Maharaj's prediction thus came true up to the hilt. This and the consequent preparation at the saint's instance naturally made Chunilal gratefully and very lovingly remember Janakidas Maharaj throughout his long illness at Ahmedabad. The doctor insisted on complete rest and no studies, and so Chunilal could not appear at the necessary Preliminary Examination in Petlad. Owing to the soft corner, the Head Master had for his bright pupil, however, he exempted Chunilal and gave him the entrance form for the Matriculation Examination of the University. Chunilal was thus fully convinced that heartfelt service rendered to a saint was never a waste of energy. In later years, during Chunilal's service of the 'untouchables' in Nadiad, he would see Janakidas Maharaj, whenever the latter visited the town; and never did the saint fail to recognize the worth of this **sadhak** (spiritual aspirant). *Whenever Chunilal felt worried over any problem, spiritual or worldly, he would, without a word*

uttered, sit in the presence of the saint, and offer him mentally a heart-felt prayer to show him the way out. And he would always get the right direction from the saint's casual remarks or talks with others.

6. At the Vadodara College

Chunilal passed the Matriculation Examination quite creditably—he was awarded a prize by the school—and joined the college at Vadodara. Prabhavatibahen, 'the mother' already referred to, provided for all the expenses of education and stay. Chunilal too made it a point of honour to be the lightest possible financial burden to the kind mother. His painstaking loving service of the Nagars (upper class community) at Kalol aided him in this his cherished desire. There was a Nagar staying in the college hostel as he was a fellow of the college. At Chunilal's request he gladly accommodated him. In return, Chunilal attended upon his needs, served Nagar students there, made tea for them twice or thrice a day and did other casual work. In order to win the good opinion of his supporters of varying natures, he picked up the art of being very loving and serviceable. On their part, they paid for the individual contribution of Chunilal for

any common social programme. They would even pay for his ticket for a cinema show. But once they did not take him with them to a picture. He was in a pique, but soon had a healthy reaction. He blamed himself for having a sneaking desire to see pictures without having the means to do so. That made him resolve thenceforth to stop visiting theatres altogether.

Hard Life at the College

In order to bring down his food expenses to the minimum, so as to be still less burdensome to his patroness, he used to walk two and half miles to reach a Vaishnava temple (temple of a specific upper class community, yet open for all community) where he could get, at the nominal cost of one anna/(1/11th of a rupee) and a half, a full-meal dish distributed as a **Prasad** (sacred food) of the deity. He had thus to cover five miles just for his meal, but, as usual with him, he continued his study as he walked. This long daily walk went on for about 6 months, till his patroness came to know of it. She stopped it at once.

India in Turmoil

This period of strenuous work but peace at heart and close application to studies was destined to end abruptly.

In the teeth of the unanimous opposition of Indians, including that of the usually cooperative Moderates, the repressive Rowlatt Acts were passed by the Government on the strength of its official majority in the legislature. This flagrant display of the mailed fist shook India out of its age long stupor. A tidal wave of popular resentment surged up. Gandhiji came out of his absorption in his Satyagrah ashram and at his instance a one-day strike with fasting, prayer and a public meeting was announced. The response of the whole country was splendid and generally peaceful, but there were sporadic outbursts of violence, specially in the Punjab, as it was already seething with unrest owing to the oppressive way in which recruits for the 1st **World War** had been enlisted. Martial Law was enforced and gruesome methods were employed to suppress the agitation. The climax was reached at Amritsar, where a public meeting, the prohibition of which was very little advertised, was taken by General Dyer to mean a 'rebellion' and 'to teach the insurgents a lesson', he shot at the only egress of the meeting-place till the bullets were exhausted. The result—a massacre of about 2,000 persons,—men, women and children. Thus the Rowlatt Acts, nicknamed

the Black Acts, the martial law in the Punjab and other places, specially the Amritsar holocaust, the disappointing Montague-Chelmsford Reforms, and the last straw,—the disclosure of a secret treaty that was a distinct breach of the public promise given to Indian Muslims to keep intact their holy Turkish Empire—turned Mahatma Gandhi from a staunch supporter of the British Empire to its inveterate opponent. At a Special Session of the Indian National Congress in 1920, he got his resolution of non-cooperation with the British Government passed by a solid majority. The resolution, among other boycotts, appealed to students to give up the 'slave-breeding' education imparted in Government recognised schools and colleges and join independent national institutions.

Terrific Inner Struggle

Chunilal's heart was stirred to its depth. A terrific inner struggle raged within. The immensity of the stake did not fail to strike him. If he left his college, he would have to bid adieu(goodbye), once for all, to the aspiration (of being 'great') cherished by him all the long while. He would also have to give a severe shock to the members of his

family, who were looking forward to the end of their distressing poverty under the hope that Chunilal would get good job after graduation. The benefactors, moreover, who had helped him till then in prosecuting his studies were strongly against his forsaking the college for, what they felt to be, an unpractical commerical scheme, and it was against Chunilal's sensitive nature, not to pay due regard to their feelings. There was also the question of the stoppage of the material help given by them all throughout. How could he then dismiss as worthless their well-meant advice? How could he be ungrateful to them? At that time of white-heat excitement there were a quite a number of students who were possessed with fanatic zeal and hysteric emotions. They were so swept off their feet, that they did not tolerate any differing view held by their elders and treated them with insolence and contempt. But Chunilal was not one of them. Though he too was sorely affected by the excitement, he had also the coolness to ponder dispassionately over his benefactors' advice. He thought that an attitude of looking down upon anybody was a breach of the principle of non violence, which Gandhiji, the

architect of non-cooperation, insisted upon for everyone to follow. These were his considerations on one side of the question. On the other side there was the **call**, and that sponsored by no less than the Mahatma. It was supported by the premier national institution, the Indian National Congress. His motherland was in distress and disgrace. Whether Gandhiji's scheme would succeed or fail, whether it was fanciful or practical, was not the issue. What should he do under these very abnormal circumstances ? That was the moot point. Was it not his bounden duty to respond to the call, whatever the risk and the loss he may have to face ? If young men did not plunge into the unknown depths of the sea to bring out the pearl of **swaraj**, (independence) who else would or could ? Who else should offer themselves as oblations for this holy **Yagna** (Sacrifice) ? That was the pertinent question he asked himself and he decided to leave the college, come what may. He steeled his mind with the determination to do without the help given him till then, to shut up his books and face starvation, if need be, but to give a fitting response to the country's demand at the

hour of its peril. He could arrive at that finale of the conflict within by repeatedly picturing before his mind the worst possible consequences that might follow his decision.

7. No Delay in Action

That was how immediately after only the majority vote at the Special Session of the Indian National Congress in Calcutta—even before the unanimous resolution only a few months later at its regular annual session in Nagpur—two sons of the soil simultaneously came out of the same Vadodara College, both of whom made a name later on as renowned saints of Gujarat—Chunilal Bhagat and Pandurang Valame honoured later on as 'Mota' and 'Rang Avadhut' respectively. What a coincidence that ! or was it only a 'co-incidence' ?

Chunilal got himself admitted to the National College of the University named Gujarat Vidyapith. But what about his means of sustenance ? The same old story of menial work. He approached the Principal, Shri Gidwani, and took up the work of a domestic servant. In addition he used to buy copies of 'Navajivan' (Gandhiji's Gujarati Weekly) at the rate of 16 copies for a rupee and sell

them for a rupee and a quarter and thus earned half a rupee or three quarters every week.

Leaves even that college

The professors were all men of ability, sterling character, and self-sacrifice, but the atmosphere of the college was then politically too hot for a quiet study. Added to this was an exhortation by Gandhiji himself: "The Congress resolution apart", he said in effect, "my personal object in drawing you out of your colleges was not to provide you a change from the cloistered seclusion of one college to that of another, I wanted and want you to spread out to our villages in order to bring the new light of freedom to their doors. What you did was simply to change your **moha** (infatuation) for one kind of 'degrees' to that of another." The cutting remark went home. It spurred Chunilal to a new resolution. One of Chunilal's principles was to immediately follow up in action a decision once made. He gave up the National College forthwith, took some necessary training at the Swaraj Ashram founded by Principal Gidwani, and began at once to serve a backward 'taluka' (county) Vagra, of the backward district Bharuch. Too many

difficulties blocked his way. He had no experience and no guidance to show him how to win over the villagers' hearts as they often looked askance at any unknown 'outsider'. And he had to provide for his travelling and postage expenses from his own slender purse. He was, therefore, compelled to give up this village service and return to Ahmedabad.

8. Social Service

Misfortune dogged Chunilal's steps in Ahmedabad also. In virtue of his village service, the student who had given up his studies was taken as entitled to the **Snaatak** (equivalent to B.A.) degree of the Gujarat Vidyapith, as village service itself was, in Gandhiji's view, education of a high order. But Shri Vallabhbhai, (later the famous 'Sardar Vallabhbhai'), his chief lieutenant, required a certificate of service from the headman of the village served, before that degree could be conferred. For some reason, probably because he had little fascination for degrees, Chunilal made no attempt to get the necessary certificate. The result was that

* Follower of Arya-Samaj founded by Swami Dayanand Saraswati, a very zealous and bold reformer of Hindu religion and society.

he was treated as a degreeless nobody, with no work on hand.

But a way out was still left for him. His elder brother Shri Jamnadas was an *Arya-Samajist in thought and action. He had already worked for the Home Rule League, that glimmer of the dawn of the country-wide national consciousness. Under the guidance of Shri Indulal Yagnik (then a right hand man of Gandhiji and later a great leader of Gujarat) he was serving 'the untouchables' of Nadiad. He was thus one of the first few persons in the whole of Gujarat to take up this long-neglected work of social service. But as he was deteriorating in health, Shri Indulal asked his brother Chunilal, to take up his work. Chunilal thus became the Superintendent of the hostel of 'untouchable' students in Nadiad—the first of its kind in Gujarat. Chunilal's younger brother Muljibhai also began to serve 'untouchables' soon after. Three out of the four members (the fourth was too young) of a single family devoting themselves to the service of the God-forsaken 'untouchables'! Verily, a record at least in those days, not only in Gujarat, but probably in the whole of India. Owing to the depressed circumstances of the

family Chunilal had to add to his duty as Superintendent of the antyaja ('untouchables') hostel, the work of the Head Master of the local antyaja school. He thus served two masters—Shri Indulal Yagnik who was President of the Antyaja Seva Mandal (association of services of the lowest born) and the Gujarat Vidyapith which was directly under Gandhiji. He drew in all a salary of Rs. 85/- per month. It was thus a very strenuous work he did then. He was at once the master and the servant of the hostel. With the help of the boys he himself cooked the food, washed the clothes, swept the rooms, and saw that the boys learnt and observed cleanliness. After the first meal he would take the boys with him to the school which other local antyaja students also attended. To induce the latter to go with him to the school, he would daily visit the local antyaja quarters. Neither the parents nor the children had any desire for education. To create the love for it, Chunilal would spend nights in singing **bhajans** (hymns), as even the most backward in India love to sing and listen to religious stories and songs. The friendship thus struck up between him and the young and the old members of the antyaja localities stood

him in good stead and the antyaja school was quite well attended. He would, moreover, take the boys to the town ponds and there, like the high-born, these casteless 'untouchables' would wash clean and bright the vessels and utensils of the hostel and the school. Chunilal thus incurred the displeasure, even anger, of the orthodox caste people, but he stood it all.

Intrepid Answer

But the difficulties of Chunilal did not abate. His patron, Shri Indulal Yagnik, relinquished the charge of the Antyaja Seva Mandal whose quarters were then shifted to Godhra. Chunilal's work simultaneously in two institutions, and the consequent pay from both of them became the object of criticism from some in authority in the Gujarat Vidyapith. A complaint was laid before Gandhiji to the effect that Chunilal was getting too high a salary for a servant of poor India. He was therefore questioned by Gandhiji. "Is it right," he was asked in substance, "for a man to draw such a high salary, when he is out to serve our poor people?" Chunilal narrated the difficulties he was facing. The eldest brother was in

bed with one of the then most virulent and expensive illness, T.B. He had to maintain a family of 6 persons. His mother and brother's wife had to toil for making both the ends meet even after the salary he drew, etc. Gandhiji then. put him the second question, "How can you, at this young age, work at a time for two institutions, each of which demands great physical labour and mental efficiency ?" Chunilal drew himself up. He burst out in English, "William Pitt, the younger, was the Prime Minister of England at the age of 24." Gandhiji laughed. The interview was over. A short time later he was told, "You cannot properly mind two institutions at once," and was asked to select one out of the two. Nobody had examined the proficiency or otherwise of his work. This vote of censure was a bitter pill to swallow. There are times when wisdom is the better part of valour. Chunilal was passing through such a time and, pocketing the insult, he quietly chose to serve the antyaja school at Nadiad. (Time spins its own revenge. Exigencies compelled the Vidyapith to ask Chunilal to resume charge also of the, antyaja hostel. He did it, though for a short

while only. The hostel was closed and the boys were shifted to Godhra hostel under the reconstituted Antyaja Seva Mandal.) Chunilal did feel hurt, but his love of service buoyed him up. He continued his practice of winning the love of the 'untouchables' even after the school hours and lent a ready and sympathetic ear to their tales of joys and sorrows. Men and women, old and young, recognized in him one of their own. Religious stories and songs continued to regale their jaded nerves. Children were sometimes taken out - on foot of course - to some distant place where they would all enjoy their home-made food.

But there was a teacher of the antyaja school who chafed at the fact that Chunilal gave up the hostel work without any protest. He goaded him: "This is a most despicable insult. Why don't you rise up against this papal bull ? You are a coward. No guts to stand up for justice and truth." But Chunilal was already a believer in "balanced and just are God's decrees." Even at that time he felt (though less vividly) what he expressed later in his book, "Life's Struggle".

*"Injustice ! How often did I meet with thee in life !
But God be thanked; He showed me the aim
behind,*

*To mould me into shape.
On whomsoever that grace of God descends
Is saved; out of earth he is raised
And made a man."*

His submission therefore was due to anything but fear. He was convinced that, where necessary, one must bear the cross – even of being undeservedly looked down upon—with quiet fortitude and love unaltered, though unreturned.

That he was no coward is proved by the following three glaring instances taken at random.

Bearding the Caste-lion

Caste-customs hold a very powerful sway even now. And this is a talk of half a century ago. Excommunication means not only disgrace and ostracism, but also practical difficulties to the victim, as well as to his parents and children, so great that many a brave social reformer has been forced to apologize and retrace his step. Chunilal knew this full well. And yet he organised a social gathering of caste and untouchable Hindus in Nadiad. Congress leaders (one of the chief planks of the Congress programme was and is removal of untouchability) and pillars of society - Shri Gokuldas Talati and Shri

Fulchand Shah attended it. The gathering created an unprecedented stir. Despite their high status in society their castes excommunicated those two leaders. This naturally had its effect on Chunilal's lower caste. A move to outcaste Chunilal was set on foot. But God's hand in the form of a venerated hermit—Godadia Maharaj—again came to his rescue, as it did formerly through Janakidas Maharaj. Many of Chunilal's castmen used to frequent the former's place. He dissuaded them. He was held in such high reverence that his word they would not like to thwart. Added to this was Chunilal's uniformly loving and humble behaviour towards the caste elders. For both these reasons they had not the heart to expel Chunilal from the caste. The matter ended, but that he did take the very serious risk of excommunication is certain.

Bullies Laid Low

Some ruffian Muslim boys used to enter class-rooms and harass the down-trodden Antyaja boys studying in their own school in Nadiad. Appeals to the Muslim boys failed; complaints laid before their parents through common acquaintances were of no avail; Urdu teachers in those Muslim boys' school were

requested to control their students, but to no purpose. Even the Kazisaheb, (Muslim priest) the most respected in the Muslim locality, turned a deaf ear. Chunilal was desperate. He hid himself behind a wing of the entrance-door and the moment the mischief-mongers entered, he came out and thrashed those four boys severely. Their cries brought a crowd of angry Muslim adults to the school. The scene of a lonely man against an infuriated mob was enacted. A sudden inspired thought saved him. He stripped himself (except for the little loin - cloth) and, without a trace of fear, cried out; "Here I stand. Beat me, if you like, to your hearts' content. See ! I have bared my whole body." This sudden breath taking reaction and those bold words stunned the crowd. Chunilal quickly took advantage of the silence, recalled his efforts to stop the unprovoked vexation and, seeing some in the crowd whom he had already approached, reminded them of his earnest efforts. The crowd saw the point. Some of the crowd even supported Chunilal's action. The bullying thus stopped altogether. The next day Chunilal, who had to pass through the Muslim quarter to reach the antyaja school, gave these same boys some grams and by his winning manners made them his friends.

Challenge Accepted

The Gandhi-Irwin Pact released civil-disobedience prisoners from the jails and a meeting was held at Nadiad to reorganise the disrupted work of the Antyaja Seva Mandal. The Vice-President, Shri Narasinhbhai Patel, presided. Though aged, he had not lost his old fire. In his youth he was a revolutionary, a believer in the cult of the bomb, and had to suffer exile for many years. For removing untouchability he pooh-poohed, what he termed, the cart-speed method of providing education etc., which the Antyaja Seva Mandal had adopted. His ire was directed also against the digging of wells in antyaja localities, which he thought-not quite wrongly-strengthened rather than removed the bar sinister against the outcastes. "What was wanted," he emphasised, "was for brave high caste volunteers to get their heads broken at the public wells, ponds, temples etc. to establish the untouchables' right of equal citizenship. That is real removal of untouchability. Your method is consistent with your own safety." He had, he must have thought, the support of Gandhiji in this view, since the latter had just recently helped a satyagraha of that type at Vaikorm in South

India. After this fling at the workers, he left the meeting. Chunilal was not the man to take it lying down. There was an exchange of meaningful glances between him and a colleague. There and then both of them tendered their resignations and the next morning went directly to Shri Narsinhbhai's residence at Anand. "We have come," Chunilal said, "to get our heads broken. We have resigned. Now be our leader for a satyagraha at a public well."

Shri Narsinhbhai was astounded at this most unexpected and immediate acceptance of what was in effect a challenge thrown by him. He said he would consult Gandhiji and on his approval call them. For two reasons perhaps Gandhiji demurred. The Ezhuvas in S. India (an untouchable community) were highly enlightened, conscious of their rights and prepared to suffer the worst. Nothing of the kind with the Gujarati untouchables. They would be crushed to atoms, if caste Hindus were red with anger. Besides, he did not want to create any confusion just then. The Gandhi-Irwin Pact had brought the country at the cross roads. The whole Congress had put its faith in Gandhiji. He was invited to the 2nd Round Table

Conference (the first without the Congress had failed). He could do so with honour, only if certain hitches were cleared. He was, therefore, in constant touch with the Viceroy. Clearly, any internal ruffle would lower the Congress prestige, then at its zenith, and harm its interests.

The times were thus out of joint. The programme was cancelled, but that does not in the least detract from Chunilal's attraction for dare-devil deeds. The stakes in his case were quite high. He risked not merely his personal safety but also the maintenance of a whole family.

9. Nasty Disease

Reverting to the earlier times, we find Chunilal in the grip of a nasty disease. Was it epilepsy ? Was it hysteria ? Whatever it was, the causes of the attack were clear. He had seven mouths to feed from his monthly income of 47.5 rupees (Pay Rs. 50/- less Rs. 2.5 Compulsory saving) . He could not buy even shaving materials, and got himself shaved once in a month. The elder brother was in bed with T.B. Not minding all these difficulties, he bought the costly First Class ticket for Bhavnagar and took the brother there for treatment by a well-known 'death-

saver' Ayurvedic expert (expert in ancient Indian Medical Science) in T.B. - with high fees of course. The most unkindest cut, however, lay in the fact that he was repeatedly taunted by his mother and elder brother for 'doing nothing', for being a 'close-fisted miser'. (And it was Chunilal who had, after the brother's death, to repay the debts incurred by the brother behind his back.) At the same time Chunilal had already taken, with the holy water on his palm, an irrevocable oath to serve the country on a modest salary and never to accept any offer of a tempting lucrative job. He was thus in a torturing fix. Intensely he yearned to free himself from the worries of a scrupulous debtor, the insults heaped upon him and the pricks of his conscience, but saw no way to do so. Added to all this was his constant anxiety, lest the untouchable boys whom he used to take to the public pond for washing clothes and vessels were belaboured by some angry high-caste men. Pressed on all sides, he found himself a helpless victim of overpowering emotion and inability to extricate himself from the besetting circumstances. All this preyed upon his mind so heavily and persistently that he began to have fits of unconsciousness. He had even the experience of a sudden onset which

made him fall down from his cycle and see the institution's coins loosely scattered on the road.

Desperate Attempts

Chunital had, it seems, an innate love for solitude. For relaxation from the galling situation, he resorted twice to solitary places on the bank of the river holy Narmada. As all that is, is God's manifestation and more so, as rivers sustain life, they are worshipped in India as God's emblems, as Divine Mothers. And Narmada, with 2 or 3 others, is held in the highest reverence. He made the second trip without a single companion and stayed in the Ranchhodji Temple. In pursuance of his habit he served a **sadhu** (recluse) there. The *sadhu* saw Chunital succumb to the fits and, to bless him for his loving service, said, "Chant the holy name of Hariom. It will cure you." And then followed his prophecy: "After one year, you will happen to meet your Guru." Chunital wistfully reflected; "Mere chanting, a cure for this fell disease ! Impossible. Oh, if only he had given me some potent charm !" (Rambling **sadhus** do something possess charms or effective drugs.)

His gloom sank deeper still. "What a shame," he said to himself. "Only weak - minded, over-sensitive women catch this disease, and I, a young man in his twenties, so effeminate as to be a prey to it ! Better death than this." So he came to the desperate resolve of ending his life. On his return from the Ranchhodji Temple, he came to a high rock, a very solitary place up the river, higher up than Garudeshwar. (name of the hilly sopt on bank of river Narmada) 'Just the site for me,' he thought and down he threw himself from that high rock into the still and deep waters of Narmada.

10. Miracle Saves Him

Hardly did his soles touch the soft cooling water of the holy Narmada, when a cyclonic storm arose. The force of the whirlwind hurled him back on the bank far beyond the spot from which he had sumped.* And in the middle of that huge wave he had the vision of a charming nymph. 'Mother Narmada Herself !' he was convinced.

This vision and the upthrow assured him, "By the (GOD'S) grace I am meant for something." That was turning point of His

* Swami Ramatirth also was once just similarly saved by a wave of the Ganga.

life. Since then there arose within him an urge to turn his life-course Godward and its intensity grew and grew till it became the one and only passion of his life.

Another Prodding Vision

As has been said, Chunilal's patroness was more to him than his own mother, – one to whom he could disclose his deepest secrets. To her he went straight from the place of the above miracle, – but alas ! his want of faith in the potency of chanting the Name continued. God comes to the rescue of his would-be whole-hearted devotee when he persists in his error. Once when Chunilal was on the second floor at the top-end of the staircase, he had a sudden attack and he fell down with a crash, rolling like a stone, to the bottom-end on the first floor. In this semi-conscious state he had the vision of the benevolent *sadhu* whom he had met earlier. "Why won't you even try chanting? What do you lose?" The *sadhu* urged in irritation. Even this vision and the reproach had no immediate effect. Our minds have got to be receptive enough to appreciate a supernatural experience and accept its guidance. Chunilal's was not sufficiently so at that time. All the same the vision was too impressive to

be overlooked and he narrated it to his trusted mother. 'O, Chuniya' she exclaimed. "You are very very fortunate ! Now just go on chanting the Name at all the times – while you eat and drink, walk and talk, do anything whatever or sit at ease. It is sure to cure you." The other person whose word Chunilal believed in, was Mahatma Gandhi. He wrote to him, inquiring if chanting had the marvellous effect of curing the incurable disease. Gandhiji also declared his faith in the supreme power of incantation.

So, at last, Chunilal began chanting the Hariom **mantra** (a potent chant). Thence began his **sadhana**(spiritual effort or process of the elevation of the soul to Life Divine). The chant provided a healthy substitute for his absorption in despondent thoughts. A new interest in life, an enthusiasm for coming out of its groove, courage, moral and mental stamina, and proneness to equipoise, increased day by day and the fits subsided entirely in 3 or 4 months.

11. Guru's Search for the Disciple

Wandering *sadhus* often stayed temporarily on the sands of river Sabarmati at the farther end of Ellisbridge in Ahmedabad. So did a young full-blooded *sadhu* called **Balayogi** (Child Yogi) Maharaj

who used to keep his fire always bright. Much of the time he would be in **samadhi** (a totally concentrated super conscious state in entire oblivion of the body and its needs) and sometimes in a mad state.* 'To all and sundry he would go on muttering this effusion: "*Nadiad Ka Chunilal ko Bolao*" (Call Chunilal from Nadiad). His adoring visitors could not make head or tail of it, but one Shri Nanubhai Kantharia, who came from Nadiad, understood him. On his return to Nadiad he told Chunilal that most probably it was he who was called by a *sadhuji*, (ji - a suffix of respect) Balayogi Maharaj staying in Ahmedabad. Chunilal's innate love for service had indeed brought him rich dividends from two *sadhus* and yet his intellectual belief that *sadhus* were an economic burden on society had not lost its hold on him. But a disturbing question faced him: "How ever could a *sadhu* whom I had not even heard of, know me by name and my whereabouts ?" He tried to forget the vexing question, but the more he tried, the

* Realised souls are said to be in one or more of these states; that of a child (bala). a lunatic (masta). a gruesome filthy person (pishacha), a complete idiot and idler (jada). Also refer foot note page 82-87.

more the question stared at him and robbed him of his peace of mind. At last he came to the conclusion ! "Let me see. There might be some meaning in the call." But again the money block ! Where to get the means for the trip to and fro ? That same Nanubhai Kantharia came to his aid and gave him the required amount. So at last he went to Balayogiji whose deep love was a pleasant surprise. He stayed with Balayogiji for 5 days.

Guru or Superman ?

On the very first day Chunilal was asked to eat all that he was given – too much and too heavy in all conscience ! Sweets weighing about 13 lbs ! The next day and the next and the next, all the first four days, he had to be a ravenous glutton. But wonder of wonders ! No bad effect at all on the body ! During the nights, Balayogiji would let loose his ‘lunacy.’ Like a mad elephant he would rush headlong into the river and jump up and dance for hours, Chunilal was bewildered and did not know what he should do. He tried to do what Balayogiji did. Thus he spent the first four days in complete forgetfulness of the world and his own serious problems. He was in fact in a kind of **samadhi** all the while. He came out of his

supernormal state on the fourth day, and felt that he had but to go back to his own world. Reluctantly he requested the Balayogiji to let him return to Nadiad. "Kal jana" (Go tomorrow) said Balayogiji. On the fifth and last day he was given simple **khichri** (mixture of rice and lentil) to eat, but so full of chillies that in the ordinary course his mouth and tongue would have felt an unbearable burning sensation, got even blisters, but nothing of the kind happened to him. Saints are not miracle-mongers, but sometimes they do perform miracles in order to create faith in the heart of a fit person and draw him to the right path. Usually they do not care to do so, either to show off their powers or accept challenges thrown out by rank unbelievers. These mystic experiences did their work and Chunilal was convinced that Balayogiji was the Guru destiny had decreed for him. Before he left for home, Chunilal offered a silent unspoken prayer to his would-be Guru to deign to visit Nadiad and guide him on the path towards the real goal of life,- without fully knowing the meaning of 'the real goal.'

Many an aspirant has to spend years in search of an able Guru who could lead him to his cherished goal. It is significant that

Chuntlal's case was just the reverse. It was the Guru who sought out the disciple. This happens rarely – chiefly in the case of one having tremendous potentialities lying hidden within him for their fruition.

Initiation

In response to the unexpressed prayer of Shri Chunilal's heart, Balayogiji did come to Nadiad, but without any previous notice. Chunilal was just then at the Nadiad station about to entrain for **Mirakhedi**, a village in the Panchmahal District, to attend the Managing Committee of the Antyaja Seva Mandal. He just chanced to see the Balayogiji. A welcome shower in scorching summer ! Not minding quaint looks of criticism, he fell down prostrate on the platform at the Balayogiji's feet. The latter ordered him to return the ticket. Chunilal was certain that his unuttered desire was fulfilled by the Balayogi Maharaj and that the Maharaj thus gave him a fresh proof of his powers of penetrating into the innermost recesses of a man's mind. He immediately obeyed and came back home with Balayogiji, for whom he spared a room on the upper floor of his house. Balayogiji was at the time at the top of his form—full of the inebriation of Love

Divine. He would cut capers and dance and jump as his fancy caught him. He told Chunilal: "I have come to initiate you. I want, in a beautiful solitary place, a big wholly vacant house on the bank of an unfrequented pond."

A Bombshell

Naturally, this exorbitant demand from Balayogiji seemed to poor Chunilal like a bombshell on him. With tremor in his voice he raised a mild protest, but was met with a stern silencing snub. In a pensive mood, therefore, he set out for the school, smitten with wonder as to how to satisfy those impossible conditions and regain his would-be Guru's grace.

In pursuance of the Gandhian principle of Hindu-Muslim unity, of 'Love thy neighbour as thyself,' he never failed on his way to the school, to accost a friend, a Muslim gentleman, Kasambhai, and salute him in the Islamic fashion of 'Assalaam alayakum.' On that day, however, in his dejected absorption he forgot it. Kasambhai was amazed. "O, Bhagat* !" he cried out ! "what's wrong with you ? What ails you ?"

* Chunilal had adopted this surname, to emulate his father. (Also refer page 79)

Why these knitted brows ? You never silently pass by !"

With a courteous apology Chunilal explained the reason – the fantastic want of his **Murshid** (Guru). Kasambhai laughed "Is that all ? Simple enough. Why, there is my bungalow named 'Hajimanzil. On the road to Dabhan – just the place your **Murshid** asks for." Chunilal's face brightened up, but soon it fell again. "But.....but the rent ?" he faltered; "beyond my means." Kasambhai reassured him. "Don't you worry. Your Olia (a mystic saint) and you can stay there as long as you like. Rent for one such a person as he ! Forget it."*

It was after this most unexpected turn of events that Chunilal saw the reason behind his Guru's 'heartless' (?) exaction and angry insistence on it.

* By and large Hindus and Muslim masses used to live peacefully for centuries. During the first great struggle for freedom in 1857 A.D., they fought shoulder to shoulder against the new rulers. Naturally, however, as in the case of any foreign rule, the 'divide - and - rule policy' was then systematically adopted and selfish communal partisanship fostered. Even then, all along, Hindu and Muslim holy men have always been held in reverence by all.

12. Formal Initiation

On the **Vasantapanchami** day (the fifth of the bright half of the lunar fourth month, Magh, regarded as an auspicious day) in the Vikram year 1980 (1924 A.D.). Chunilal was initiated and his regular *sadhana* under the Guru's direct guidance began. His day-time hours even then were usually spent on the routine, including his schoolwork from 11a.m. to 5 p.m., but the nights were devoted to the Guru. On the very first day Chunilal was asked to concentrate on the spot between the brows,* and seriously warned that no thoughts were to be allowed to occur. In that attempt Chunilal failed, for thoughts are born rebels. They do not cease to come, do what one may. Balayogiji was desperate, He took an iron bar that was at hand and thrust its end at that particular spot. The sudden onslaught made Chunilal entirely unconscious to outer things. When he came to himself, he thought that he had recovered consciousness in about 15 to 20 minutes, but in fact Chunilal had spent three days in a state of complete inner

* Deep concentration at that point by a deserving soul makes it possible to let no thought arise in the mind. The pain makes the concentration easier.

consciousness and oblivion of time, space and body, i.e. in **samadhi**.

'Gurudakshina'

Balayogiji stayed with Chunilal at "Hajimanzil" first, for about a month and a half and then for about two months and a half. As his Gurudakshina (fee for spiritual enlightenment), Balayogiji asked Chunilal to take him on a pilgrimage.* But he knew Chunilal was in financial straits and, going out of his way for one single day, he accepted gifts from those who came to him for **darshan** (holy sight). From that amount Chunilal decided to take his Guru to Dakore – a famous pilgrim centre, not far from Nadiad. Balayogiji would often speak in a cryptic language that went over Chunilal's head, but somehow he pulled on with his Guru. For instance, when they started on their pilgrimage, the Guru asked him to show him 'a crocodile.' 'Wants to see a crocodile ? But why ?' Wondered Chunilal. "Crocodiles, there are in Gomtiji,(a very large

* Formerly, students were not charged anything for any kind of tuition, but after they completed their courses they would give a gift according to their means. Here, in fact, the Guru himself pays the fee for his tutorship.

pond nearby) but not at my beck and call"! And really no crocodile obliged Chunilal by coming up on the surface. With trepidation, therefore, Chunilal pointed out a distant slightly visible floating creature. "You are an idiot", Balayogiji broke out in anger "and want to make a fool of me too !" And he proceeded in a huff. Chunilal was sorely perturbed and, not knowing what else to do, he mutely followed the Guru.

On the bank of the Gomtiji, there was a *dharmashala* (a rent-free lodging house. Provision of such free houses has been traditionally regarded a 'dharma' = duty). At a lonely spot on the verandah behind the back wall of that '*dharmashala*' there stretched out at full length a tall, robust, half-naked man. When they came to him, "See This is a crocodile,"* said Balyogiji. A kick from him awakened 'the crocodile' from his *samadhi*. He opened his eyes, at first suffused with anger at the disturbance, but seeing Balayogiji he softened, and greeted him with a smile and joined palms in the Hindu fashion. Both of them soon fell into a mystic talk. "Where are

* Because he preferred to remain in a lying state in the 'jada', the completely inactive pose of Yogis.

you now ?" asked Balayogiji, "In **akasha** (the sky*)," replied the 'crocodile'. Thus the talk was more or less an enigma to Chunilal who was then only a beginner in **dhyana** (meditation). At the end Balayogiji pointed at Chunilal and said, "I have initiated this boy in *sadhana*. I will soon go away from here. If he is in a fix on any account and comes to you, don't dismiss him curtly. Give him a satisfactory reply." And Chunilal did go to him three or four times thereafter. The visits were all fruitful.

Nathuram's Eccentricities

That adept's name was Nathuram. His habits would look quaint, even repulsive, to a casual on-looker. He was slovenly in dress, strange in action and rough in manners. If somebody gave him some money, he would sometimes eat, not bread but, pungent **bhajias** (small fried balls of gram flour). Sometimes he did not care to eat even **bhajias**, but gave away the whole amount to a bandmaster and enjoyed the bands' music. Who can fathom the mystery of yogis who

* Years after Pujya Shri Mota explained the meaning to a disciple: "My soul is usually in the subtlest region—the sky, especially in meditation."

have gone beyond hunger and thirst, beyond joy and sorrow* ?

13. Final Instruction

When the period of initiation was over, the Guru said, "Dear boy ! Your Guru is Shri Keshavanandaji Dhunivala, not myself. I came to you as it was he who impelled me (by mental telepathy) to initiate you. Go to Saikheda, near Itarsi, in the Central Province, have his blessings and then obey his orders implicitly. But, mind you, make full and proper preparations before you start."

"Proper Preparations"

Chunilal decided to go to Saikheda in pursuance of the above instruction. Carefully he took leave for 7 or 8 days from the Antyaja Seva Mandal and scrapped together enough money for the journey to and fro and his stay there. And then he informed Balayogiji that all the necessary preparations were made. When on inquiry, Balayogiji learnt the details of the preparations, he felt sorely disappointed. Chunilal could not understand this deep regret and prayerfully requested

* Even their anger does good. It is 'harmless', says Rarmkrishna Paramhansa, 'like a burnt rope whose shape remains, but is useless.'

Balayogiji to let him know how the preparations fell short of his expectations. "That's nothing," Balayogiji grumbled out. "Real preparation lies in complete readiness in every way to burn one's boats so that one can obey the Guru's command not to return to the world at all, the moment he orders." It was then that Chunilal realized that he was expected primarily to get his mother's permission to stay permanently with the Guru, if he wanted it, and that he should have faith enough that God would instil enough courage and capacity in his mother and elder brother's widow to maintain the family somehow in his absence.

Mother's Permission

The real stumbling* block lay in securing the permission of his mother who doted upon him. God provides the way specially where there is the will. Providentially just about that time his mother happened to go to Vadodara

* In hoary usage as well as in the scriptures, the mother is held in adoration in India as an embodied form of God. The father takes but the second rank. Hence even Shankaracharya, the celebrated revivalist, extracted by a device his mother's consent before he renounced the world. Hence also the great vogue of worshipping God as Divine Mother, e.g. by Shri Ramkrishna Paramahansa.

to stay for some time with Prabhahaben, his patroness. Chunilal seized the chance. He went to Vadodara and requested Prabhahaben, the mother of his soul, to exert her influence over the mother of his body and persuade her to let him become, if necessary, a full-fledged *sannyasi* (recluse) disciple of Keshavanandji. The mother resigned herself to the will of God. The 'Karma' (present action as a result of acts of the previous birth-births) theory also stood her in good stead. She gave the needed consent.

The Plunge

The next step was to tender his resignation from the Antyaja Seva Mandal. The Secretary, his well wisher, Shri Parikshitlal Mazmudar strongly advised him to desist from that foolhardy course. Not to talk of his personal security, it was sheer madness, he argued, to leave in the lurch his mother, his widowed sister-in-law with her two children, and his two younger brothers who all depended upon him. But Chunilal was adamant. He was convinced that just as, for the cause of his country, a voluntary recruit sacrifices not only himself but his dear family also, one has but to sacrifice everything, including one's family for the far holier Cause,

the quest of God, – the cause of all causes - provided one is consumed with a 'volcanic aspiration' for gaining the goal. Chunilal's attitude is pithily expressed in the following well-known but slightly changed couplet.

"I would not love thee. Mother, so much
Loved I not God still more."

He took the plunge, sped to Saikheda, put up at a *dharmashala*, had his bath, hastened to the Guru and fell prostrate at his feet.

14. Dada, the Unaccountable

The bystanders stood aghast. They cried out "Come back! At once! 'Dada' (the Guru Keshavanandji) will knock you on your head! Beware of his **danda** (thick stick)" Their warning cries were not unwarranted, but Dada did nothing of the kind to Chunilal. Dada would exhibit another disgusting trait. He often burst out not only in a jargon, but would vomit the most obscene epithets. Chunilal was shocked. He was tempted to return at once.

The Saving Grace

Just then the superhuman traits and deep love of Balayogiji Maharaj rose up in his mind. Then followed the thought that

the Guru of an exalted personality like Balayogiji was bound to possess something valuable beyond his ken and that the crowds he saw could not have resorted to him for merely getting abused or beaten. Just at that psychological moment when his mind was, like a pendulum, swinging between doubt and faith, Dada, in the midst of his 'irrelevant' words and abuses, contrived to say something which Chunilal instinctively saw was meant exclusively for his ears. He asked him to watch the faces of persons roundabout when he (Dada) uttered something nasty and told him that some would seem to be growing pale, some happy and that he (Chunilal) should see them in private and find out the cause. For some days Chunilal did so and realized that Dada was merely repeating, like a gramophone record, every word and syllable that the persons concerned used in their troubles or quarrels in their homes. They admitted all that and added that, enwrapped in that volley of abuses lay Dada's charity of heart and acumen in giving them secret and proper instructions to mend their ways or solve their difficulties. Thus Chunilal's doubts were largely but not completely removed.

Memorable Incident

Everyday he could see that those that gathered round Dada formed a medley of people coming from all strata of society – the highest to the lowest – in both spiritual and material spheres. Faces of the rich and the poor, recluses and wordly men, scholars and illiterates, men, women and children were not at all an uncommon sight. But one day he had an extraordinary experience. Without any seeming context, Dada went on dilating upon the relations between Indian princes and the sovereign British Power. He castigated them for adopting the meanest methods to propitiate their earthly Gods – the British overlords. Not content, he exposed the debased character of a particular unnamed Indian Prince. In about an hour, the Crown Prince of Indore came up with a retinue of horsemen. Probably Dada began his chastisement, just when the Prince started for coming to him. Evidently he was in a serious trouble. He laid at the feet of Dada two big trays filled with silver and gold coins and pieces, as his tribute to him. At the height of his wrath, Dada spurned the trays with vigorous kicks, scattering the coins and pieces all around. The horsemen had to cordon off

the ground covered by them. Not satisfied with this stunning insult, he poured a torrent of abuses on the father of the prince, called him a sycophant and a man of vile character. As the prince humbly put up with all that public disgrace, Dada relented after a time. The prince entreated Dada to help his father. Dada said that his father would have to abdicate, but he would be installed on the throne. (The King was gravely involved in the then well-known Bawla Murder Case.) Later events proved the truth of the prediction.

Scholar's Visit

Chunilal saw another elevating sight. Dada was never known for any literary accomplishment, but he began to recite Sanskrit **Shlokas** (verses). Soon after, a scholar came up and recited in Dada's presence the very same *shlokas* and in exactly the same order. Chunilal was so impressed that waiving all fear and etiquette, he ventured to meet the unacquainted scholar. He was a kind gentleman. He said that he would come to Dada for elucidation of some Vedic verses (verses of ancient Indian spiritual tome) and, automatically either immediately or within 10 or 12 days, he would get at their true meaning. The

scholar added, "Nobody knows Him really. He is omnipresent."

Dada's Healing Power

There was a popular belief that Dada's mere darshan could heal diseases. For 10 or 12 days Chuhilal carefully noted the cases of invalids who came to Dada for relief and found that definitely 30 - 35 percent of serious cases were thus cured. These incidents as well as Dada's power to know things that happened far away, as he had already found out, finally convinced him beyond a shadow of doubt that his Guru did possess divine powers, that there was a method in his madness, that his rough handling did nothing but good to those so dealt with.

15. Parting Admonition

After 10 or 12 days' stay in Dada's purifying company, he (Dada) threw a coconut at Chunilal's head, it struck him and a benign tumour grew up*. Then he said, 'You can go home now**'. Continue the

* Milarepa, the great Tibetan Yogi, was treated far more mercilessly by his Guru in order to burn up his past evil karma. See Tibet's Great Yogi Milarepa by Dr. W. Y. Evans-Wentz, Jesus College, Oxford. (Also refer foot note page 108)

** Also refer from whole page 156

work you were doing. Never forget to pray to me. And shed, once for all, your craze for the service of the country. You shall now do everything wholly and solely for the love of God and as your service to Him. No other motive must sway your mind any more. Your work itself has got to be a prayer to Him. Without first freeing themselves from the clutches of attachment and aversion, likes and dislikes etc., those who rush in for service of others are certain to err off and on. Perfectly right action cannot be performed with an imperfect mind to impel it. Let those whose highest goal in life is service to humanity render service in that spirit. You have taken to the spiritual path in search of God. You shall henceforth continue your service not with the object of serving humanity as such, but for serving God through all your work. That inner urge, however powerful, may not at all lower the material value of your service. It will, on the contrary, make you even more efficient than before, if only you heartily follow my injunction. God will then invisibly step in and solve your service-problems definitely in a better way than you could have done by taking guidance from your unaided human

intellect. Gandhiji's watchword **ahimsa** (nonviolence) is excellent, but quite a large number of his followers are not imbued with its true spirit. Leave them to themselves. Mind your own business, concentrate upon the inner self; now be off, and remember me and my advice."

A Cure and its Amazing Aftermath

On his return from Saikheda, Chunilal took the first opportunity to see a co-worker. Bhagvatprasad, lying in bed at the Dufferin (now Sayaji) Hospital in Vadodara. He was a patient of T.B. of the testicles. The cure, if any at all, was wholly disappointing. Chunilal narrated his own experiences of the patients at Saikheda and coaxed Bhagvatprasad : "Go to 'Dhunivala Dada'. Why may you not be among the 30 percent successful cases ?" But Bhagvatprasad was wavering. Chunilal then offered to pay his railway fare both ways. If Bhagvatprasad returned disappointed.

Bhagvatprasad went to Saikheda. And the result: The most amazing. All his inhibitions were swept off. Completely cured, he forsook all his worldly connections, became a whole-hogger disciple of 'Dhunivala Dada', stripped his whole body to the skin and never returned.

In tune with 'Dada' Bhagvatprasad used to note down everything Dada cared to say in connection with Chunilal. Now, Chunilal never slept in his own house. He spent his nights in solitary and dangerous places such as the crematorium of Nadiad or rendezvous of thieves. Naturally, in places such as those, there were times of stress and strain for Chunilal. From the deepest depth of his heart he would then sing devotional songs largely of his own creation. By God's grace Dadaji, a clairvoyance heard these prayers in Gujarati and though he did not know that language, repeated them **verbatim**. Pleased with Chunilal's fervour he would exclaim, "How saturated with deep feelings, his prayers are ! It is because of his intense earnestness that they reach my ears." When Chunilal visited Saikheda later on, Bhagvatprasad would show him the prayers which he had written down. Not a word was found altered from the original composition.

16. I Am That*

During his first visit, Chunilal was surprised at Dadaji's effusion: "I am Saibaba of Shirdi, I am Upasani Maharaj, I am Tejuddin

* "Thou art that" enjoins a Sanskrit aphorism. तत् त्वम असि

Baba. I am the Swami of Akalkot." (They were all well known saints of India. Two were Muslims.) Chunilal could not, at first, believe in the truth of that claim. Many years after, however, when he had grown into a highly advanced *sadhak* state, he had graphic visions of those saints and could discern his Dada in their hearts. It was then that he saw that Dada's utterances were not hollow boasts and that by self-realization the saints were identical in spirit. That broadened his outlook. Without any constraint he met them and rose in spiritual stature by the meetings.

17. Quaint Marriage

"Indians love whom they marry; Europeans marry whom they love." This maxim was appropriate in "Bhagat's childhood-days. He was not consulted at the time of his betrothal. The elders – his mother and elder brother – arranged it, as early betrothal was regarded prestigious. (Even child-marriages were quite common—perhaps a legacy of the still earlier times of near anarchy and frequent raids. Early double relationship made two protecting families for the child couple. The girl, however, went to live in her husband's joint family, when she became a teen-ager.)

When Bhagat's fiancée came of age, the question of his marriage cropped up. Bhagat had already hitched his wagon to the star of self-realization. He clearly saw the incompatibility of the many additional responsibilities of married life with the single-track life-course he had chosen. That was how the trouble – even the tussle – started. Bhagat was firmly against the marriage. Mother firmer still for it. She, too, had a strong case on her side. Mother love visualised her son in his old age sorely beset, bereft of all the physical and mental comforts that come from the ministrations of the loving wife and children. With that premonitory fear was added the one that her son's refusal to marry would mean her loss of prestige in her caste and so the prospect of her other sons remaining unmarried much against their will. Naturally, Bhagat's opposition shocked her and she wanted to avoid this sad contingency. This 'tug-of-war' (in love) went on for a while. Mother's fear–cum–love sharpened her resourcefulness. She appealed to Godadia Maharaj, whom Bhagat adored and succeeded in winning him to her side (probably because Godadia Maharaj could see into the future, as did

Janakidas Maharaj earlier). Thus doubly armed she flung a piercing dart, "if you won't learn to obey your loving mother who toiled and moiled for you, is it possible for you to obey your Guru's commands ? Godadia Maharaj also agrees." The arrow struck his heart. Bhagat found himself in a dilemma. "Well," he relented at last, "who knows, it may be the Divine-Mother speaking through Mother. So I must submit."

The turn of events showed that behind the apparent cruelty of the Divine Mother lay Her deep love and concern for Bhagat's spiritual progress.

Bhagat went to Ahmedabad as the bridegroom, but his chagrin at having to marry and increase the debt could not fail to express itself. He refused to hire a carriage or engage a coolie – he protested he was a debtor – and proceeded to the father-in-law's house in a marriage-procession in which the bridegroom was carrying a load on his head ! Verily, a sight hardly, if ever, met with in middle-class marriages ! And when his hand was joined with the bride's in the "**chori**" (the square – space improvised for marriage-rites and bounded with decorated pillars), the intensity of the tussle within and the

powerful divine consciousness awakened in consequence made him fall into a *samadhi* or what might appear to others a fit of unconsciousness.

It is best to leave to the reader's imagination the loving mother's feelings at the sight of that quaint procession and this grotesque climax of unconsciousness in the **chori** itself.

The Sequel

That was the way Bhagat got married. The divine intercession also followed its own mysterious way. The bride was not keeping very well on the marriage day. She fell seriously ill immediately thereafter and died within two or three months.

Before the newly-wed could thus even come to live with her husband, she was spirited away and a green flag was given to Bhagat's train proceeding fast towards Self-realization.

The Divine Conjuror's Trick

The Almighty thus performed three beneficent acts at one stroke:

- (1) Bhagat's growing desire for facility in his spiritual pursuit was granted.
- (2) His mother saw, by the scenes at the

marriage, the unwisdom of forcing Bhagat to marry and her prestige in the caste remained unimpaired. In fact her third son did get a bride of his caste.

(3) "But the poor wife ?" - one might be tempted to protest. No. "We have eyes and see not." A poet had and saw :

*"Ere sin Could blight or sorrow fade,
Death came with friendly care;
The opening bud to Heaven conveyed
And bade it blossom there."*

And, if death itself seems to us a calamity, this second point will be more easily acceptable. The world-minded girl was saved from the living death of the life-long company of the crazy God-minded husband who would prefer for his sleep the hard ground of a crematorium to a cosy bed at home. History gives many instances of the tragedy of a grossly unequal marriage.

The Divine Pledge

For meeting the expenses of his elder brother's long and fatal illness and his own marriage, Bhagat had to approach a rich aunt for loans in instalments which came to a sizable amount. Repayment of the debt, even in parts, posed an insoluble problem. His income had no chance of increment. He had

taken the vow of Harijan service and so of never taking a lucrative job. The aunt, moreover, was short-tempered, exacting, and impatient. Bhagat had to pass by the aunt's house on his way to his antyaja school.

As was his wont, he would loudly sing hymn as he walked. He could not, therefore, pass by the aunt's house without attracting her notice and that again would not fail to rouse in her veiled resentment at the unpaid debt. Gently in the beginning, in louder tones as time passed, she would demand payment. Bhagat's way would be to request her to be patient. (His past experience had strengthened his hope in God's ultimate help). One day her patience was completely exhausted. She blocked Bhagat's way, and very loudly spat out vile abuses. The double - edged dagger (Sword) of her tongue cut Bhagat to the quick. Head bent down, face crimson with shame, he kept quiet. Silence only increased her fury. Her voice rose to a high pitch.

Quarrels and loud outbursts always attract a crowd, many in it to enjoy a free entertainment. Bhagat could not bear this public disgrace. At last words escaped his lips, he did not know why ! "I will pay you back in four days."

That was an amazing promise publicly given and the aunt could find no excuse for a further volley. She became silent, the crowd dispersed, but Bhagat fell in deep despond. 'How ever could he keep his plighted word?' he wondered. 'When struck, the lion gives out the loudest roar.' Bhagat had but one place to send his roar of pain to. To God he prayed and prayed from the poignancy of his lacerated heart. He chanted one single hymn over and over again. "Poetry can never be adequately rendered in another language," says the Oxford Concise Dictionary. Still less the outpouring of an elevated soul. But something is better than nothing. Hence this attempt, specially because of the ordeal and of the parity between the saint-poet and the singer.

*"No devoted soul has known
That God has failed, left him alone
In his distress and dire need,
If, by bhakti, that's his need.
That is what the Vedas say,
Test that pledge yourself you may."*

Then follow breath taking examples from ancient and medieval history to prove the truth of the above. The song ends:

*"If he but pray, then God will take
All his burden, him will make
A happy bird, a singing lark
Says Premaldas*, His humble clerk.*

Its fulfilment

As if to repeat the glorious instance of the Gujarati Saint Narasinh Mehta of the 15th century given among others by Premaldas, God came to the rescue of this Gujarati 'Bhagat' of the 20th century also. In about four days only, Bhagat received a money order. Eyes full of tears of joy and gratitude to the Lord, Bhagat ran to his aunt, prostrated at her feet and gave away the amount.

Different Reactions

This really significant event attracted practically no notice in the case of Bhagat's acquaintances. The aunt concerned with money alone, was only happy at her nagging of Bhagat and Bhagat was indelibly impressed by that miraculous aid. Years after, when he built 'silence - rooms' for aspirants, he enjoined that this hymn was to be sung at the beginning and the end of their silence periods. Almost all the aspirants have realized

* A devotee poet of this poem.

during their silence-periods the truth of the pledge.

Contrary Characteristics

This spurt of a promise first in words and its fulfilment in dead fact afterwards has been given a poetic expression in a Sanskrit couplet by Bhavabhuti. (ancient poet of Sanskrit language) Being quite relevant, it is quoted here.

लोकिकानां हि साधूनां वागर्थमनुधावति ।
ऋषीणां पुनराद्यानामर्थो वागनुधावति ॥

It means: Thought first and then its result in words is the way of ordinary good men. Utterance (without prethought) first and then its result in actual fact is the way of exalted sages.

A Curse or a Boon ?

Though Bhagat tried his best to be constantly in tune with God by various methods, prayers, meditations, incantation etc., he found himself unable to do so for more than 16 hours a day. It was a divinely ordained, saved from the grave incident that brought about the much-desired at-one-moment.

The Antyaja Seva Mandal opened in 1928 a new Ashram to provide free food, residence, and education to antyaja (untouchable) boys

at Bodal, a small village in Kheda District, Gujarat. The opening ceremony was performed by Shri Vallabhbbhai Patel*. It was a gala day that ended with a feast. What with the preparation for the occasion and what with the service at the feast etc., the workers, tired and jaded, could go to sleep only after midnight. Within an hour they were roused by a commotion. One of them, Bhagat in fact, was chanting very loudly, 'Hariom. Hariom,' to assuage the agony he was suffering from. For the night rest he had gone a little away from the crowd. Two seniors, Thakkar 'Bapa' (Bapa - father; of the down-trodden Bhills and Antyajas) and Shri Shrikant Sheth, Vice-President of Bhil Seva Mandal, also went to rest and they slept on both the sides of Bhagat. Strange, that a deadly viper had chosen the man sleeping

* Later he was .entitled 'Sardar' by the people. He made a name in history by saving India from becoming a huge Balkanised region. When India became independent in 1947, about 600 subordinate native states also were given complete independence by the British rulers with just the non-chalant advice to join with either Bharat or Pakistan. Sardar Vallabhbbhai, however, adroitly managed to amalgamate almost all of them into one compact Bharat - after a 'police action' against one big state for robbing Bharat's railway trains.

in the middle for his venomous bite. Strange still, that the victim, instead of giving way to howls and tears, was uttering very loudly and incessantly the chant 'Hariom', intensely absorbed in the chant he was hardly conscious of anything else. Popular remedies were tried. They failed. Snake-charmers came. They could do nothing. Somebody suggested the use of neem leaves. If they tasted bitter, there was a hope of recovery. Bhagat said he was accustomed to eating neem leaves and would not even otherwise find them bitter. Quick medical aid was impossible in that small village or nearby. No vehicle to take him quickly to the nearest railway station, eight miles away, was available. After therefore, he was taken to the Missionary Charitable Hospital at Anand. Dr. Cook was well-known all around for his very loving and serviceable nature. (The people honoured him by arranging a public function when later he retired.) He extracted the poison. He was a devout Christian and could understand the significance of the chant. He said the patient was able to keep up his life for that long time only by the grace of God invoked by his chant. The poison, he

declared, was otherwise deadly enough to kill any man in no time.

Even this near – resurrection of Bhagat has an unhappy aftermath. For many years he had to take a cold bath thrice or four times a day to cool his body. And yet this anecdote is an example of God's favour in His unique way. The very instant of the bite Bhagat had a brain-wave. (Who sent it but God ?) He was immediately reminded of a pertinent observation of Mahatma Gandhi made many years earlier. The Mahatma had stated that it was of superb importance to see that a snake-bitten man did not lose his consciousness. Even beating him repeatedly to save him from stupor was a merciful non-violent act. This sudden remembrance made Bhagat resolve to keep up his consciousness at any cost. Hence his do-or-die attempt at loud incessant chanting, and hence its culmination in that constant uninterrupted remembrance of God which was so much after Bhagat's heart. Was this snake-bite then a calamity, a curse ? It was in fact a boon. Bhagat had gone to Bodal only to attend the celebration. He returned to Nadiad loaded with the gift of a great fillip to his spiritual progress.

Memorable Struggle

Two years after, in 1930, Gandhiji made the historic march on foot to Dandi to offer 'satyagraha' (civil disobedience) by making contraband salt at the sea-shore there. Chests of tea dropped in the sea at Boston heralded the advent of freedom for the Crown Colonies, now the U.S.A. This breach of the salt law at the Dandi sea-shore was similar in significance in consequence of that great civil disobedience movement, that rebel chief and sworn enemy of the British Empire Mahatma Gandhi, was invited for a parley at the Round Table Conference in London and the King Emperor himself called him for an interview. Both these facts are really the turning point in the history of the Indian struggle, as the harbinger of the unique event of disarmed, impoverished, disorganised, schismatized heterogeneous India winning independence from the mightiest well-armed, disciplined, British Empire and that mostly by non-violence, a method unprecedented in the history of the world.

The Round Table Conference however failed just then. Mahatma Gandhi's imprisonment soon after brought about in 1932 the resurgence of the civil disobedience

struggle, and greater harassment of freedom-fighters. All that explains why even workers in the social field came out to join the civil disobedience movements. Bhagat seized both these chances. His mother gladly allowed him to plunge in the frays. Bhagat, however, was eager for them for a reason quite different from what it was in his joining the 1920-21 non-cooperation movement. Then, like others, he too yearned for the political freedom of his country. In 1930-32 he jumped in the movements in order to have a quiet time for his spiritual quest, undisturbed by distractions that his duties to his family and to antyaja boys inevitably demanded. Jails conveniently provided, for those who cared, sufficient leisure to concentrate on their favourite topics. Jawaharlal Nehru, for instance, wrote all his books in jail. The civil disobedience movement of 1930 provided Bhagat the chance of rising to a greater degree of fearlessness also. He attended a meeting held in Dehwan, a small state near Kheda District. The Thakore Saheb's sepoy fell upon the members of the meeting with **lathis** (long and thick wooden staffs). Bhagat was one of the two workers of the Antyaja Seva Mandal beaten severely. By God's grace,

however, both of them were saved from permanent injuries. And then he went to jail in 1930 where, owing to the overcrowding of civil disobedience prisoners, no work could be taken from them and Bhagat could spend his time in chanting 'Hariom'. He did all that so quietly that his colleagues, preoccupied with political thoughts and talks, did not notice it. Only one of them, this translator, observed that his lips were always moving silently. After a persistent inquiry from him, Bhagat explained that he was chanting 'Hariom' mantra. Then, about 10 days before the Gandhi-Irwin Pact released— all civil disobedience prisoners, he was transferred to Visapur Jail near Ahmadnagar. In 1932 the Government, as has been stated already was much more stringent. At that time Bhagat was sent to Yerawada Central Prison. Prisoners, kept in a long line, were made to enter singly through a window in the first prison door. As soon as the prisoner came in he was hurled by the warder inside with such violent force that he either stumbled along to the second entrance door or fell down midway. It was nothing less than a severe battering. As Bhagat saw this from a short distance, he heard a Voice: "**Do tratak**"

(Yogic method of captivating the mind of a person by fixing on him a steady loving gaze). As he was coming nearer the first door he heard the Voice twice or thrice. He obeyed this supernatural instruction. The result was much happier than he had hoped for. Entirely dropping his ferocious demeanour, the warder looked kindly on him, allowed him to walk to the second door without doing him any harm and recommended him to his superior officer for the grant of a special wheat diet. The latter was surprised. He questioned Bhagat, "Are you a magician?" "I know no magic," Bhagat replied with a winning smile, "save that of devotion to God and so of selfless love for all." The officer was pleased and granted him the recommended wheat diet. Bhagat, however, used to give it away to an ailing fellow-prisoner and take in return his common diet of jowar roti (unleavened bread made of a cheap cereal).

Crucible

It was once during these periods of turmoil that, from the paucity of workers outside jails, Bhagat had to officiate both as Superintendent of the Harijan Ashram at

Navsari and as Secretary of the whole Gujarat Harijan Sevak Sangh.*

His duties at the Harijan Ashram at Navsari alone were onerous enough. As Secretary moreover he had to look after the finances and management of the Sangh's

* "Antyaja Seva Mandal" and "Antyajashram" were changed into "Harijan Sevak Sangh" and "Harijan Ashram" in 1932. Mahatma Gandhi gave this new name to 'Antyajas' to raise their social status. The word 'Harijan' has a historical background. As early as in the 15th century Saint Narasinh Mehta, belonging to the highest sub-caste even among blue blood Brahmins, went to antyaja quarters where he sang devotional songs. He was, therefore, outcasted. He retorted in a song saying that those who kept away from 'Harijans' (men of God) were wasting their precious lives and running after tinsels. Gandhiji picked up that expression after his historic 'fast unto death' in Yerawada Central Prison in 1932. An agreement annulling separate electorates for Antyajas (for that would have created bad blood and schism among Hindus and consequent very severe oppression of Antyajas) made between caste-Hindu and Antyaja leaders and endorsed by the "British Government ended his fast and saved his life. Earlier also, for accepting an Antyaja family as inmates of his Ashram, he had faced ostracism and his Ashram had come to the brink of an empty chest owing to the withdrawal of support by caste-Hindus. The God-send rich donation through a reformer millionaire had saved the Ashram.

institutions. In addition a new problem faced him. The town was then under the subordinate Vadodara State. The Ashram was situated at a solitary place nearly a mile from the town. Before Bhagat took charge, the Ashram was already used by civil resisters as a very convenient resort for their secret plans to fight the British Government. Bhagat himself had already gone to jail and suffered severe *lathi* blows. Civil resisters naturally, therefore, had expected all possible aid from the Ashram and from Bhagat, their comrade-in-arms.

But Harijan Sevak Sangha, with its branch Harijan Ashram at Navsari, was avowedly and strictly an institution devoted solely to the social service of Harijans. The C.I.D. (the detective police) had begun to suspect that the Navsari Harijan Ashram had become a centre of anti-British activities. Bhagat saw that the Harijan Ashram and the Harijan Sevak Sangh had got to be saved from the possible heavy hand of the Vadodara State under pressure from the paramount British power.

He had, therefore, to take a firm stand against his own men, his political co-workers. For this courageous insistence he incurred

their displeasure, but cleared the air of the Ashram.

18. Miracle Saves Him

All this disturbance had its inevitable effect upon his mind. He was ill at ease and feeling that he was steadily but surely losing ground, declining from the high spiritual state he had come to. And that consciousness only intensified his agony. It seemed to him impossible to extricate himself from the maze into which he saw himself caught. During this period of his quandary, he happened to go with his Ashram boys on a short trip to Supa Gurukul* a few miles away. They padded the distance and encamped on the sands of the river nearby, as the shades of the evening had begun to fall heavily, when they reached the river. Wooden sticks were collected and a cheerful fire lighted to keep a watch over the luggage. Elder boys kept awake in turns for the purpose. Bhagat kept the vigil all

* Guru's family. A reforming sect of Hinduism. Aryasamaj, has established these institutions where students are lodged, boarded and educated. They are modernised copies of the Ashrams of the Gurus of the past. Zealous, self-sacrificing Aryasamajists conduct them.

along, of course with his unintermittent silent chant. After midnight the climax was reached in the entrancing beauty of the environment. The stars in the heavens above shone brilliantly. The river, as it flowed, sang a melodious song. The soft touch of the gentle breeze quieted the mind. The sight, the sound, the touch together played the part of a lullaby. Nature had gone into something like a *samadhi*. That had its overpowering effect on Bhagat, but in a way different from the usual somnolence or sleep it produces. His silent chant of 'Hariom' on the background of his mind affected by the superb scene completely subdued all ripples of disturbing thought or sensation and he fell into a state of *samadhi*, wherein there was full Self-centred but no outgoing consciousness.

And then it happened. 'Is this a dream?' he wondered. 'Is it a projection of my unconscious mind?' - 'Auto-suggestion?' - 'An apparition?' 'What is it?' A vision that my deep love for my Guru has conjured up? He asked himself, for he saw something in his wide-awake state which his mind could hardly believe to be true. It was the three dimensional form of his Guru, Balayogiji, who

had given up the ghost years before ! And the amazement increased when words came out of that form, "I have come to warn you. Be more alert still. Try not to forget God, whatever happens, whatever be the intricacies of your outward contacts. But this above all. Don't you worry. God will never fail to look after all your needs,—spiritual and material." Bhagat was dazed. Balayogiji at once sensed it and added, "I am no phantom. I am Balayogi come in flesh and blood to alert you and enliven your drooping spirits. I am as real as the dead body of a dove buried here." And then, drawing a circle round that spot, he vanished as suddenly as he had come.

Bhagat was left in a state oscillating between faith and doubt.

It was but natural. The whole thing had occurred in a flash and was too fantastic to be acceptable at once. And yet he was fully awake when he saw the form and heard the words of his late Guru ! Fortunately the Guru had left a cue to resolve his doubt. He woke up two or three elder boys and asked them if they could see with their lamps any circle drawn on the sand. They found It. Then he asked them to dig out the portion within.

After going about 4 feet deep they came to the water level. They were asked to continue. About a foot deeper, and then, lo and behold! There it was - the dead dove. They brought it out. Though buried in water, the snow-white bird was quite dry.

All the doubts of Bhagat were set completely at rest.*

19. Naked Fakir

Once when Bhagat** was in an 'untouchable quarter on his usual round to persuade the children to go to school with him, somebody told him that a naked man was lying in a farm a little away from there.

Bhagat went that way and saw him from a distance. Churchill was mistaken. "Naked Fakirs", half covered like Gandhiji, could be seen in plenty, even in their own motor-cars, in the hot climate of S. India. But this was 24 carat gold in nudity. Not a shred of clothing on him !

* One of those boys was questioned afterwards by the translator. He attested that Bhagat had asked them to see if there was a dove, before it was actually brought out.

** Chunalil is referred to as Bhagat henceforth as he had already adopted that surname and, by now, was popularly called Bhagat. (Also refer Page 41)

Bhagat sensed that the stark naked man could be no other than a lunatic, or a yogi who had overcome dualities such as heat and cold, respect and contempt, disgust and fondness. He took about 2 lbs. (a liter) of milk in a specially cleaned vessel and, approaching the naked man with reverence, prayed to him to deign to drink the milk. The naked man sat up, quaffed the milk and again stretched himself. His behaviour convinced Bhagat that the man was indeed a Master. A feeling of devotion sprang up in his heart. In the language of silence he prayed to him to confer his grace on him and grant him the power to remain incessantly employed in his heart in the pursuit of his spiritual aim, no matter what he was doing outwardly.

The naked fakir immediately responded to this unspoken prayer. He asked him to provide him a lodging in a Muslim house. The demand created two problems: how to take a wholly naked man in a locality inhabited by men and women and where to find the house of a Muslim prepared to accommodate such a Greek model. Here again his loving manner of greeting Muslims came to his help. He remembered the

friendly Hakimsaheb. To him he went and told him everything, without reserve about the Olia*. Though a Muslim, the Hakimsaheb agreed to let the stark naked *Hindu Sadhu* stay in his single room on the first floor, if nothing untoward happened and so if he was not compelled to drive him out. Bhagat agreed. The other problem was solved more easily. He successfully beseeched the *sadhu* to let him wrap a strip of sack-cloth round his waist. Then in a hired carriage they both went in the twilight to the Hakimsaheb's house. Though the *sadhu* was bulky in size and heavy in weight, he went up the staircase with wonderful alacrity. Bhagat had already swept the room, brought an earthen vessel filled with drinking water, spread a thick cotton mattress and set a long cotton-stuffed spherical cushion for resting the back on. With bricks and earthen tubs half-filled with dust, he had also improvised a latrine for the *sadhu's* use. Shortly after they came to that room, Bhagat left and returned with unleavened millet breads, some cooked vegetable and milk. The fakir took the food, but did not care to wash his hand and mouth. Bhagat cleaned them with a wet

towel. Then, after some fear of a repulse, he massaged the fakir's body. In the mornings also, the fakir would neither wash his teeth and face nor use the earthen tubs. He evacuated his bowels and bladder at different places on the floor itself. He was a 'pishacha' adept.* Bhagat would remove the dirt and then plaster the soiled places with a mixture of cow-dung and clay and water. (Old styled Indian houses have their floors plastered with that mixture and decorated with semicircular contours on the plaster. Being a bad conductor of heat and cold it helps, and does not harm the health of the person who squats on the floor.)

Control Over Nature's Calls

What made Bhagat open his eyes with wonder was the fact that during the fakir's stay, there was a period of 4 or 5 days when, while he ate and drank (water) to the fill, he did not ease nature at all, and yet that had no effect on the health of his body or the serenity of his mind.

The Olia said hardly anything to Bhagat personally but in his absence talked freely with the Hakimsaheb. It was from the latter that Bhagat learnt that the Olia was the

* Refer footnote on page 37-97.

famous Upasani Maharaj of Sakori (in Maharashtra very near to Shirdi.)

Invitation

After about 12 days' stay, Upasani Maharaj said he would like to leave. Bhagat took him in a carriage and asked the driver to carry them along the road to Uttarsanda. A little beyond the outskirts of Nadiad, Upasani Maharaj stopped the carriage, got down and proceeded on foot. Bhagat paid the fare and hurried to overtake him. They walked some distance in silence. Then Upasani Maharaj said "Come along, I am going to Sakori." Chunilal demurred: "My hands are tied up and means limited. Keshavanandji has asked me to stay at home and serve my family. It would be a higher *dharma* (duty) for me and I would gladly be at Sakori for some time, if you be so gracious as to :

- (1) 'satisfy my intense desire to be forcibly reminded of you and see you in a constant vision;
- (2) accelerate my progress towards the Goal;
- (3) provide money for the whole journey.'

Response

Upasani Maharaj said nothing and departed. Some time passed. One day when Bhagat was following his routine of singing hymns as he walked, he came to the following self admonishing lines (in Gujarati) exactly when a visitor was coming out of a Vaishnava temple; "You are certainly not true Vaishnava. Why are you strutting, you coxcomb ?" The visitor (wrongly) saw in it a hit at him, was enraged, and stinging slap on the face was Bhagat's reward for singing in those lines ! Uncanny are the ways of God and His emblem a saint ! Those same lines proved later on to be God-send !

Bhagat received one day (after the above incident) a letter requiring him to go to Bardoli to offer civil disobedience. On that same day he was strongly and repeatedly reminded of Upasani Maharaj and actually saw him in vision. And as he was walking along singing those very same lines, another Vaishnava, who was waiting for him near the same temple, stopped him and gave him Rs. 45/- ! (He had been watching Bhagat and growing in reverence for him. Impelled by something within, he gave away that amount to Bhagat as a gift.)

Strange Sight

That was how Upasani Maharaj granted two primary desires of Chunilal and enabled him to go to Sakori. The sight of Upasani Maharaj was a fresh evidence of his very abnormal ways. Bhagat found him sitting, like an animal in a zoo, in a cage which he had got constructed for himself. He learnt that the Maharaj had already been in it for some time last and was to remain in it nobody knew how long. (In fact, his self-imprisonment lasted for months. Not for a moment did he come out during the period !)

20. An Ordeal

Bhagat had his bath and prostrated himself before Upasani Maharaj from outside the cage. He was asked to sit at a little distance. He did so and was at once absorbed in his *sadhana*. After about 5 or 6 hours, he had an urge to go to a lavatory. He tried to get up, but failed. He imagined his legs had grown stiff, but found them supple. He could not slide sitting down and not stand up. And everything else about the body was quite normal. Bhagat was in a fix. There was the nature's call and also his utter inability to get up and go to answer it. He

had the only recourse for a man of his type – to pray. He prayed fervently and managed to pass about two hours more. But the ordeal also grew in severity as time passed. It was a regular tug-of-war between Bhagat and nature. Half an hour more in intense absorption in prayers. Consciousness then returned and with it the now almost unbearable pressure of nature. Again he forced his mind to turn to prayerful meditation. Then, during the absorption this time, he realized in a flash that it was all the contrivance of Upasani Maharaj who wanted him to follow his track of the 'pishacha' yogi.

Purification

With this intuitional revelation all the inhibitions of Bhagat were swept off in a trice. Freely he eased his nature there and then. The result was unimaginable. He found himself sitting in a short time in a pool of urine mixed with faeces about four feet in diameter - and all that though he had nothing to eat or drink for the past four days!

And this copious easing continued. The loathsome sight naturally infuriated some people. They began to pelt him with small

pieces of stone to drive him away. Upasani Baba, the root of the whole mischief, went on quietly looking at the scene as a detached spectator. But a girl of about 13 tried to pacify the people and save Bhagat from harassment. (He learnt later on that the maid was the future renowned 'Godavari Mata', the worthy successor of Upasani Maharaj.) All this, however, had practically very little effect on Bhagat's *samadhi*.

At the end of the fifth day, Upasani Maharaj gave him some hot water to drink. The excretions continued for 2 or 3 days more. Bhagat was then given a piece of dry unleavened bread. After 11 days he had a lunch that he could now stand up. He tried and succeeded. That meant the end of his *sadhana* under Upasani Maharaj. He washed his defiled body and dirty clothes, cleaned the place where he had sat with a shovel, water and wet cloth, and, bringing some sandalwood oil from the market sprinkled it profuesely over the place to make it emit fragrance in place of the former stench – but even then all along like a sleep-walker, in a state of half-samadhi. He then requested Upasani Maharaj to let him return to Nadiad. After half an hour Upasani Maharaj gave the

permission and added. 'You have come up to a higher stage. You will not fall from it.'

With the grant thus of Bhagat's third prayer, he left Sakori for Nadiad.

21. Dhunivala Dada or Upasani Maharaj ?

Bhagat already knew and, after his realization of the self, often told others that the 'Guru' was not merely a visible person of three dimensions, he was in reality the **chetana** (Divine Consciousness) that manifested itself in that form. He felt, therefore, no compunction in taking Upasani Maharaj to be but another form of same **chetana** that had revealed itself in Dhuniwala Dada's form, Upasani Maharaj was, therefore, in essence the same as his Guru, though the Maharaj wore the mask of another bodily form and though the ways and approaches of the two differed in visible practice. That attitude helped him in two ways. *He did not at all feel that his loyalty to his Guru was in the least impaired by his entreaty to Upasani Maharaj to help him in his progress in sadhana. His outlook moreover broadened. He could appreciate the worth of other religions, other saints and sages of all times and climes, and other Gurus and their circles that were*

his contemporaries. He saw the truth in the vedic aphorism which says that wise men express in different ways the one and the same Truth – the one and the same Entity. He felt himself all the more fortified, when it struck him that Swami Vivekananda had stormed the session of the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893, by quoting the Sanskrit lines meaning:

Owing to a variety of tastes people take to different paths, long or short, but they all reach the same destination – Thyself,– just as rivers running from different directions meet the same one ocean.

From this attitude of essential identity of the two, Bhagat could have even the vision of his Guru, Dhunivala Dada, during one of his concentrated looks at Upasani Maharaj. That personal experience reaffirmed to him the fact that his Guru, Keshavanandji, was not at all indulging in idle exaggeration when he said, "I am Upasani Maharaj. I am Sai Baba. I am the Swami of Akalkot etc."

Divine Intercession

Those six years in Nadiad were very fruitful in his progress in *sadhana*. There were striking evidences also of the helping hand of God. As has been already stated, he

never spent his nights at home but resorted to solitary even dangerous places. The object was to continue his *sadhana* without any disturbance from the noises of the town and the polluting vibrations of the undivine thoughts and talks of the townsmen. One night he happened to go to a thicket of babul trees, which was, he found later, rendezvous of thieves. Some of them looked askance at his presence nereby. They browbeat him and even threatened to murder him. He did not wish to bolt, as he would look small in his own eyes, if he did. He, therefore, appealed to God for help by silent, fervid prayers. The result was that some others among the thieves themselves intervened and he was allowed to stay on.

But the next night ?

His faith in God had gained a fresh impetus by the first night's experience. He was by no means an erudite scholar in Sanskrit, but the Gita he had chewed and digested. And the Gita places **abhaya** (fearlessness) as the first requisite, among others, for a man worth the name. So he went to the same place with greater courage in his heart and deeper faith in God - with the same successful outcome. Thus by self-

experience, he found the Hindi saying "If you are manly, God is sure to help," to be literally true. This habit turned into nature by long practice.

He had another continually happy experience. At that time he used to resort to the crematorium of Nadiad. An old woman there supplied wood for the cremations. After some nights she felt drawn to Bhagat and in motherly kindness she provided him with drinking water in a pot and even a regular cup of tea ! God's intercession again !

Contact with Saints

As a man progresses in any field of activity, his zest for and insight into the work also increase. In the midst of his exacting occupations in the social services of the family, the school and the untouchables, he grew more and more on the alert for his spiritual service to the Self or God. Off and on, therefore, he went to the local Santram Temple where *sadhus* used to put up for a while. Of course, many of them were not enlightened souls, but some were certainly so. Bhagat cultivated both silent and vocal contact with them. That helped him and by the grace of God he could find a way out of his immediate problems, both spiritual and

social. "One step enough for me" was the attitude he adhered to.

Sadhana in Solitude

Those were ennobling times when earnest souls strove to gain their goals, of *swaraj*, (Self-rule) of social service or, for a very few, of spiritual uplift and, to say the least, Bhagat was definitely one of those very few. He, too, rarely took any casual leave from his work and even Sundays were no holidays for him. But after the injustices and shocks he had received,* his innate unconscious yearning took a definite turn. His life's centre of gravity now became the quest of the divine. He used to take one month holiday every year to resort to solitary places. Sometimes in his meditations he would have a specific hint as to where to go through the actual vision of the site. He did not at all worry over the question of food-supply, but left the matter entirely to God. If he felt hungry and there was nothing to eat he could be content with only water. Even 4 or 5 days without any solid food did not, in that super-normal state, create a craving for it. But God sent food through unknown villagers afterwards.

* (Refer instances pp. 20 to 25)

22. White vs. Black Magic

It is not only 'sages who have seen charms in solitude'. The underworld apart, there is another class of men with an equally grim determination, but without the sages' noble impulse, who frequent crematoriums, graveyards and other lonely places. Mankind is prone to succumb to temptation and hence spirits are invoked by special rites even by men of the upper strata of society. In one of his retreats, Bhagat chanced to come across a Brahmin Pandit who used to supply him food daily. They rarely exchanged words but the Pandit took down his address before he returned home.

Accordingly, one day the Pandit paid a surprise visit and accompanied Bhagat to the crematorium to spend the night there. From the Pandit's talks and the materials he took for his *sadhna*, Bhagat realized that the Pandit practised black magic and wanted him to collect some money in order to enable the Pandit to perform some necessary rites for a higher state in black magic. Of course, the Pandit promised a rich reward for the trouble of the collection. But Bhagat* did not fall into the trap and said point-blank to the Pandit that he was totally averse to black

magic. In view, however, of his help in the past, Bhagat gave him the fare-charge for Ahmedabad and sent him away.

But this incident was an object lesson to him: if black magic can concretize its object (a spirit), the object of one's uplifting attempts, i.e. the Self or God, was bound to be achieved through the white method of *sadhana*. That gave him a fresh spurt in it.

Black magic also is very powerful. Seeing Bhagat's fitness, one such magician, after demonstrating his power of turning filth into a sweetmeat, asked him to stay with him permanently. He refused. The magician was furious and threatened dire consequences. Bhagat, unperturbed, left him. As he proceeded some distance he had a sudden attack of a whirl in the brain, fell down and became unconscious. Wholly unattended, he would have died there. But some sadhu 'chanced' to come there and he nursed him back to health. Bhagat was left in wonderment whether the sadhu was not his Balayogi Maharaj himself in another form.

* Some such magician, Bhagat said much later, had offered to make him in witchcraft so great an adept that he could influence the Viceroy's brain and gain *swaraj*, (Self-rule) "Why don't you do that your-self?" asked Chunilal and the temptation was nipped in the bud.

The difference between black and white magic lies chiefly in the motivation. While the saint performs 'miracles', his object is entirely unselfish and beneficent. The magician's is either money, fame, power for himself or harm to someone else. In the end, however, just as untruth is finally overcome by truth, black magic cannot harm or harass for long a man sincerely struggling to elevate his soul. And 'as you sow, so you reap' is not a myth, it is itself a potent charm.*

23. At "Dhuvandhar"

Among the many falls of River Narmada there is one called "Dhuvandhar" (Dhuva – smoke or vapour, dhar – fall or stream) from the white screen of vapour produced by the fall from a 100 ft. above. On the left side of the fall, there was an extremely small cave, which Bhagat was directed in meditation to resort to for his *sadhana*. Bhagat started for the place, but on the way his pocket was skillfully slashed and the purse stolen.

* The great power of black magic is shown by Mr. W.V. Evans- Wentz M.A. D. Litt., D.Sc.. Jesus College, Oxford, in his book 'Tibet's Great Yogi Milarepa', and by Dilipkumar Roy in 'Pilgrims of the Stars' available at Indiranilaya' Shri Hari Krishna Mandir, Ganesh Khind. Poone - 411 006.

Friendless and moneyless, he managed to go to Jabalpur, and became a menial of a rich philanthropic tobacco merchant, Shri. Mohanlal Hargovandas. It was nearly at the end of his short term of service that Shri. Mohanlal discovered - through his wife's perception - that the menial was not of the common kind. On inquiry, he learned what Bhagat was doing. Since then he began to send a small monthly donation to the Antyaja Seva Mandal as a token of his appreciation of Bhagat's worth. That monthly donation continued for a very long time.

Armed with just sufficient money gained literally by the sweat of his brow, Bhagat then proceeded to the almost totally inaccessible and dangerous cave just near Dhuvadhar. He spent 21 days in that cave, without food for a few days in the beginning. Then somebody began to supply him food in a basket attached to the end of a rope which he swung dexterously enough to reach Bhagat's hands.

Discipleship of Upasani Maharaj ?

Once, when he was on his one month leave he went to a place in the Central Provinces. It was a natural waterless deep pit that became his residence there. It did not

deserve the honorific of even a 'cave'. There he spent about 25 days with only his stools and urine as his food and drink. Nobody had asked him to live that way, but it 'came to him' that he should do so. Though this method of overcoming all sense of dualities like preference and aversion etc. is not an indispensable requisite, this *sadhana* of the 'pishacha' type* does help some aspirants.

As the book (in Gujarati) is meant to bring out only the salient features of Bhagat's life, the chronological order has been overlooked. One cannot definitely say, therefore, whether this period preceded or succeeded his contact with Upasani Maharaj.

24. Gandhi Ashram, Sabarmati

Some time after the divine help Gandhiji shifted his Satyagraha Ashram (institution in search of truth) to an extensive plot near Sabarmati, about 4 miles from Ahmedabad. But the Ashram was fated to have a chequered career there also. "In his stern selfexamination." Gandhiji discovered that the Ashram did not deserve the name 'Satyagrahashram' as the inmates were not sufficiently imbued with love for the pursuit

* See footnote on page 37-82

of truth. He, therefore, gave it the humble name, 'Udyogamandir' (Industrial Home) and reserved the name 'Satyagrahashram' to the small open ground "hallowed by the daily morning and evening prayers."

Even as 'Udyogamandir' it had a short life. The year 1930 saw the civil disobedience movement as an answer to the disappointing report of the (all-White) Simon Inquiry Commission, the death of a great popular leader, Lala Lajpat Rai, from a severe *lathi* charge, the growing general repression, and the intensifying urge for freedom in consequence. Mahatma Gandhi, the chief leader, almost completely vacated his 'Udyogamandir' and, with 80 companions, started on foot for Dandi to break the salt law. Ladies and children of the Ashram were accommodated by friends in their own homes. Only a very few Harijan ('untouchable') families continued to live in their apartments.

Before leaving it, Gandhiji had written to the Government to attach his Ashram also, as it had done so with other national institutions. For reasons best known to it, perhaps the odium that the Government would incur for confiscating the Ashram of the most widely-known living saint in the

world, the Government did not touch it at all. The Ashram thus remained a no-man's land, –a deserted village, for about 4 years. Gandhiji, even after his release from jail, would not return to the Ashram, as he had taken the solemn vow 'no return till *Swaraj*' (Self-rule). And as the Ashram houses and lands were increasingly deteriorating from entire neglect, he gifted away the whole Ashram property to the Gujarat Harijan Sevak Sangh. His erstwhile 'Satyagrahashram' and then 'Udyogamandir' officially became 'Harijan Ashram, Sabarmati.' Owing to its historic value, however, it is still popularly called Gandhi Ashram.

His Self Abnegation

The Gujarat Harijan Sevak Sangh was re-constituted after the comparative stability that followed the second wave of the civil disobedience movement of 1932. Shri. Parikshital Majmudar and Bhagat were appointed Secretaries of the H.S. Sangh and the newly - gifted Harijan Ashram was made the head-quarters of the Sangh. Bhagat, therefore, began to live with his mother, his widowed sister-in-law, and her son in one of the many vacated houses of the Ashram. Though both, Shri Parikshital and Bhagat

were appointed full-fledged Secretaries on a completely equal footing, Bhagat chose to play the second fiddle. Sri. Parikshitlal was always in the limelight. For any work for Harijans it was he who met dignitaries and common people, both official and non-official, and thus caught the eye of the public. Bhagat confined himself strictly and voluntarily to the quiet unobtrusive work of the office. He was at once the cashier, the accountant, the peon or the clerk, who would go to banks for deposits and withdrawals, and the typist.

He wore a dress, too, which was anything but impressive. Shorts which reached only the upper parts of his legs and a towel round his clean - shaven crown were the only things he wore owing to the heat his body due to the snake-bite. His manners also conformed with his deliberately unattractive, if not repulsive, appearance. Throwing all decorum to the winds, he would hail a friend at a distance from him with a very loud shout. He would bow to the little Harijan girls of the Ashram-hostel with a laugh "**Kalka-Mata Kripa kario.**" (Mother Divine, Shower Thy grace on me or save me from Thy wrath.) Of course the little girls did

not understand its meaning, much less its significance, but they laughed in response as much at him as with him at this strange address. When, sometimes, they saw him going to the lavatory to ease his nature, they would bawl out, 'Don't go.' Bhagat would then meekly submit and return to his office-work. At that the girls would giggle but he wouldn't mind.

Though in his office-work he was quite efficient and energetic, all this outward behaviour naturally made people rate him low. They even thought he had a loose screw or was an idiot. An irate senior follower of Gandhiji once went to the length of calling this man, in the high position of a Secretary of the Harijan Sangh comprising the whole of Gujarat, an ass ! His colleague also, thought nothing more than an equal in official status, sometimes treated him as if he was the boss and Bhagat only an underling.

25. Total Surrender

He had valid reasons for such apparently eccentric behaviour. That was one way to put down the overweening ego. He was training himself to look upon every creature as a manifestation of God and to obey His behest,

however grotesque or painful. That was why he would not ease his nature, if a little girl asked him to desist even in a joke. By his voluntary meek submission to rebukes and insults, he cultivated the spirit of equanimity, of refusing to lose his temper and of rising above the temptation to return tit for tat. He would, therefore, avoid as far as possible offering even an explanation, much less a defence, to justify his conduct. He could also by such self-effacement go on with his **sadhana** in the seclusion that non-entity provides. Not only did he thereby drive out the very common but degrading urge to be jealous of the rise of his peer, but even have the large-heartedness to rejoice in it.

Examples

Here are some actual incidents in his life which reveal his spirit of self-effacement and total surrender in him.

I

In response to his castigation as an ass, he did not rejoin but let off his steam by writing a poem for his personal edification. He admitted in it that he was indeed an ass in as much as he did not remember his Maker to the extent he should.

II

A similar but much later incident. Gandhiji began in 1942 the fiercest struggle of his life to win freedom for India. In a memorable resolution of the Working Committee the executive head of the Congress, asked the British Government to 'Quit India' and the people to put up a fight which it called the 'Do-or-Die' movement. That resolution, moreover, called upon every one to be his own leader, as Gandhiji expected his own and all other leaders' immediate arrests. As anticipated, all the leaders were immediately hauled up, but that only heightened the tempo of the agitation which was at its zenith at the time of the incident.

Bhagat had before then given up his service in the Gujarat H.S. Sangh and already begun to guide spiritual aspirants that came to him. But he saw that Parikshitalal, his former colleague, was quite undeservedly interned very shortly after the 'Quit India' movement started. (He had confined himself strictly to his Harijan Service.) The work of the Harijan Sangh was, therefore, seriously suffering, specially financially, as his successor did not command any influence over the

public and could not secure donations. Thus the work, so dear to Gandhiji's heart and a powerful leverage to real freedom, had come to its bottom, and the institution, which not only Bhagat but his elder brother earlier and younger brother later had served for many long years, was becoming moribund. On his own, therefore, in obedience to the Voice within him, Bhagat came out of his seclusion in South India and began single-handed to collect donations for the Gujarat H.S. Sangh in Bombay. Though he, too, was not a public figure, he had the faith that God would guide and help him, as events proved. He did.

During this (apparently) self-imposed task of rescuing Harijan Sevak Sangh from inaction, he happened to visit a rich Gujarati gentleman just when Swami Anand, a senior follower of Gandhiji, was present. Bhagat's request to the gentleman to contribute his mite for the Harijan Sevak Sangh excusably infuriated him—owing to the country's tense prevailing situation. "What !" He thundered, "This collection at this hour when every paisa and every ounce of energy ought to go to the Great Fight ! Sheer nonsense !" Bhagat's reaction to this vehemence was complete silence. But this time he wrote a poem and

sent it to the enraged Gandhian leader. He stated in it that human beings were only puppets in the hands of the Divine Power and everyone should be allowed to do what he felt to be-God's ordinance for him.

This serenity and gentle response of Bhagat to the frenzied rage of the leader converted him. In reply, he quoted the following couplet of Lord Gouranga (a famous medieval saint-leader):

तृणादपि सुनीचेन तरोरिय सहिष्णुना ।
अमानंदमानदेन कीर्तिनीयो सदा हरिः ॥

*He who worships Lord Hari
Humbler than a worm should be;
Be as forbearing as the tree,
And honour them who scoffers be.*

and said that Bhagat possessed those characteristics.

Shri. Nandubhai has preserved this letter.

III

During his first contacts, Shri. Nandubhai was wonderstruck at the sight of Bhagat typing something in English. "O", he said to himself, "he knows enough English to be able to type - and so fast !"

IV

Years ago, when no S.T. Buses were plying and scant, if any, regard was paid to the

convenience or safety of travellers by private bus-owners, Bhagat and the translator happened to go by a railway train to Versoda and Andarpura, villages in tiny Indian states in N. Gujarat. Earliest possible return to Ahmedabad was imperative. They, therefore, walked to the nearest bus-stand about a mile away. Though it was a starting station, passengers were already packed like sardines in it. The footboard was overcrowded so were the mudguards. The only option was to sit on the open - to - the - sky roof of the bus. When the bus started, the persons there had to be very alert. They had to bend on one side or the other, to save themselves from the overhanging shaft-like branches of trees that the bus would pass headlong by. And Bhagat and the translator were warned that only two days earlier a passenger had to be hospitalised for a serious wound in his chest from the piercing end of a stiff branch. But necessity compelled them. They sat on the roof but Bhagat appeared beset with fear. "Bhagat ! What's this ! Why be afraid ? Let's take it as a part of the game." the translator exhorted him. Years after, he realized that it was nothing but a deliberate show on

Bhagat's part to hide his fearlessness and be under-rated.

V

What is essential for the cultivation of humility is the spirit of immediate and whole-hearted obedience to any order, however unpleasant or unwise. It demands nothing less than a soldier's discipline which eschews all questioning. 'There is not to reason why, there is but to do and die' as was done by the Light Brigade of horsemen immortalized in a poem.

Bhagat followed this practice to such an extent as to excite the urge to make him a butt of ridicule and cut practical jokes with him. In the Harijan Ashram there was a teenager, Mohan, the son of Shri Narharibhai, an old colleague of Gandhiji. With all a teenager's exuberance he gave a handful of dust to Bhagat by way of a present on his birthday and asked him to swallow it. Without a moment's hesitation, he gulped it down.*

* One is reminded of the Catholic St. Bernadette, a mid-19th Century French saint-lady, who gobbled a lump of earth at the dictates of the Divine Mother, Mary, and thus opened up a healing spring at Lourdes.

VI

Once even an elderly gentleman, Shri Nathakaka, was tempted to put Bhagat's spirit of obedience to a test. They were sitting in the Harijan Sangh's office room and there was no outsider. "Bhagat" ! he said, "if I ask you to take off your clothes and become naked just now - **in the Office ?**" Hardly had he finished, when Bhagat got up and began to untie the string of his shorts. The tester himself was scared. "Stop, Stop", he cried out. "That's enough. You have proved your mettle."

VII

After all these instances, it is superfluous to add that Bhagat never winced, when his doting mother called him by the diminutive pet name 'Chunio' in the presence of his superiors or subordinates. But the following is unusual. Shri Lalbhai, the elder brother of Shri Jivanji Desai (Manager of Gandhiji's Navajivan papers and the press), would, with all the warmth of a loving elder, hail Bhagat, the Superintendent of the Harijan Ashram, as "Chunia", in the presence of the Ashram boys, whenever he passed by the Ashram on his way to Navsari. And Bhagat would

respond without flinching in the least. During the last hours, when Shri. Lalbhai was lying in his bed, he yearned to have Bhagat by his side. Bhagat of course sped to him and Lalbhai died happy and peaceful.

Madcap's Love

His apparent eccentricities did not end there. Intense, disinterested love for a friend, he knew, was a stepping stone to love for God. Cultivation of love for an individual **with the definite object of deepening his love for God** was, therefore, one of the chief activities of Bhagat's inner self. Even those who are advanced souls, however, are, owing to incidental causes, subject to moods - to upsurges and quiet flows of love in their hearts. One of Bhagat's ways in order to cultivate love was to take, the tide of love at its flood, and at once implement the idea that that moment suggested.

One night Bhagat was sauntering on a solitary road in Nadiad. All of a sudden, he did not see why, a feeling of love for the translator, who was at Navsari, miles away from him, rose up in his heart. An inner call to go to him came to Bhagat. Right at that moment he started to go to .the Nadiad Station. With no money in his pocket to buy

a railway ticket and, with his primitive dress of shorts, nothing on the upper parts and a strip of cloth round his head, he jumped into a compartment of the train that was just then going to Navsari. By God's grace no railway authority, either during the journey or on the platform of the Navsari station, harassed this ticketless traveller* looking like a vagrant deserving arrest. Nor did any policeman catch him as he walked at night for 3 miles to reach the Navsari Harijan Ashram. With all the boisterous gusto of a schoolboy, he met the translator and other colleagues, stayed there for just a few hours, and hurried back to his duties at Nadiad - equipped with money and a mood of satisfaction as his thirst of love was quenched (for a while, but only aggravated thereby).

This immediate, apparently whimsical action out of a spontaneous outburst of love continued even after he had grown into "Mota" - a 'Guru' with a highly reputed position in life. Once when he was in Tiruchirapalli in the home of the senior partner of N. Gopaldas & Co., a very

* This 'dishonesty' is justifiable only under God's command.

respectable firm of jewellers there, he rushed out of the house in a semi-nude state, completely unmindful of the fact that he was thereby jeopardizing not only his own but the reputed Company's prestige.

At Kumbakonam, too, where the same Company had its branch, Bhagat, then also respectable both in position and age, became a four-footed animal - 'a horse' - and carried on his back the baby boy of the firm's partner in the Big Street and bazaar of the town. Even Bombay, when it was perhaps the most Westernised and refined city in India, did not deter him. He and the translator once got into a local train. Though a third class compartment (now second) it carried some of the high but not affluent society of Bombay. As the compartment was crowded, Bhagat had to stand in the gangway near one of the ending doors. From there he chanced to see a former co-worker seated on the last opposite bench. Owing to the distance, Bhagat shouted at the top of his voice, "Hello ! Shambhai ! How do you do ?" The passengers, specially the elite, were shocked at this rude breach of etiquette and gaped with deep disdain at the door. But the rustic, wholly unconcerned with their contemptuous looks, repeated the cry and

gazed at the co-worker with love and laughter in his eyes. Shambhai also, the co-worker, was a sport. "O.K.", he replied with nearly the same loud voice and laughed.

Selfless Service

To revert to his life at the Harijan Ashram. The H.S. Sangh had no permanent funds to rely upon. Its financial position was always precarious, more so because it was not one of the outlets for the charities of the orthodox rich. Bhagat had a family of four to support. He drew only a modest salary. All the same, to help the Harijan Sevak Sangh, he added to his official work, heavy enough in all conscience, the task of teaching two girls of a neighbouring family and gave away the whole tuition fee of Rs. 35 per month to the Sangh.

Concern for a friend

Bhagat's rush to Navsari to meet the translator was not just a solitary instance that clearly revealed his deep love for him. Though he (the translator) had left the Harijan Sangh, his colleagues of the Sangh continued their close contact with him. Among them, however, Bhagat's solicitous regard for him was specially remarkable.

Owing to his weak digestion, the translator found by experience that it was not advisable for him to take his meals at the common mess of the Gujarat Vidyapith which he was then serving as a teacher. He tried self-cooking with the help of a loving student, but that too was found unworkable.

Bhagat, who lived in the Harijan Ashram about a mile and a half further away from Ahmedabad, would take the chance, whenever feasible, to halt at the Vidyapith to meet the translator on his way to or from the city. As was his wont, from the entrance gate of the spacious courtyard he would shout out the name of the translator, whose room was on the first floor of the opposite side of the courtyard. During one of these visits Bhagat found his friend in a dejected mood. On inquiry he came to know of the friend's difficulty in the matter of his food supply. "That's nothing," Bhagat cried out in solace. "Put up with me. You will get all the attendance of loving family. You may walk or go by a bus to the Vidyapith and return, as the Ashram students of the Vidyapith do." And the translator did accept this timely loving offer and had the satisfaction of having meals suitable to his constitution.

Bhagat and the family were accustomed to go without milk altogether, except their morning and afternoon tea, but he insisted on providing milk at the evening meal to the translator, while both of them dined in company, because of his weak health and long habit. And of course the translator was required to pay what would just meet the additional expenses.

Love's Miracle

Deep love for others, proceeding not from egoistic attachment but from ardent love for God, the source of all Love and Power, sometimes produces incidents that may be characterised as supernatural. It was in 1937, even before Bhagat received the divine commission to guide others on the spiritual path, that one such incident happened.

At that time the translator was living with his sister at Sirohi in Rajasthan as an invalid trying to recuperate his health. He requested Bhagat to give him the pleasure of his company for a short period. Bhagat complied. There was a balance in the house and the translator happened to get himself weighed on the day of Bhagat's arrival. The same balance showed that within 3 days that Bhagat spent with him, he had gained 1.5 lbs. in weight. This increase

of half-a-pound per day in the weight of an almost chronic invalid that the translator was in those years was too extraordinary an event in his life to be ever forgotten.

But his mind cramped up by his reasoning faculty was at times tempted to attribute to his joy at meeting Bhagat the true explanation of the extraordinary phenomenon. A later incident of which also he was an eye-witness, however, cleared the doubt. They were then staying in Tiruchirapalli with Shri. Gopaldas of N. Gopaldas & Co. Mrs. Gopaldas was in a rather bad state of health and so in low spirits. Bhagat - then Shri Mota already - asked her to get herself weighed. Some two or three others followed suit. Shri Mota did not perform any rites or chant mantras (magical formulas), nor did he withdraw into silence or maditation. All the same when he asked them only after about 3 hours to get themselves weighed again, it was found that everyone had gained by 2 or 4 lbs. Mrs. Gopaldas was naturally happy at this unbelievable increase in her weight in a very few hours.*

* In his Autobiography of a Yogi Sri Yogananda gives two such instances of bewildering increase in weight.

Single-minded Devotion

During Bhagat's stay in the Harijan Ashram from 1934 to 1939, the translator found (as he too then often lived in the Ashram) that Bhagat was never engaged in reading a newspaper- not even a religious treatise and in a discussion of any sort. Bhagat could be seen, however, to have with him, even in his office, a slate and a slate-pen or a loose piece of paper and an ink-pen. On it he would write down, even during short intervals of spare time, a whole **bhajan** (a hymn), or some parts of it, of his own creation. As his sole object was God-remembrance for himself, he was never fastidious in the matter of its output as a piece of literary art.

All this was rather irksome to his friend, the translator, a man of varied tastes, with an itch for discussion on any subject, interested in refined literature - including novels -, in social service, and above all in the burning problems that then faced the country. In a friendly way, therefore, he called Bhagat 'groovy' (literaly, a **kupamanduk**) i.e. a frog in the well that never knew the wide world outside-. But man is a bundle of contradictions. "Whenever I see you Bhagat,

I am reminded of God" sometimes remarked this same objector. "That's very fine - for both of us." returned Bhagat. (This shows that even at that early period, Bhagat radiated invisible waves of spirituality that crept into the inner self of others.)

But Bhagat was right in his one-track mind. What is needed for the attainment of any high objective is one-pointed attention as the Bhagwadgita enjoins in the following couplet:

व्यवसायात्मिका बुद्धिरेकेह कुरुनन्दन ।
बहुशाखा ह्वनंताश्च बुद्धिः व्यवसायिनाम् ॥

"O, Arjuna, one pointed is the mind that attains any aim. Those whose mind is spread out in many directions fail to gain their goal." (Chapter 2 Shloka 41)

That was how though Bhagat, who had read nothing but the Bhagwadgita could extract from that single book the quintessence of all philosophy and satisfy theological - minded inquiries, when they came to him after he was known as 'Mota'.

26. Vision of God-in-Form

Outwardly quite active still in his service of Harijans and his family, Bhagat was going, like a pearl-diver, ever deeper into the sea of

the Self. An experience he had in 1934, during his days of obscurity as simple 'Chunilal Bhagat' clearly shows this. It has been narrated in Gujarati as a reminiscence of his past life by Pujya Shri Mota himself.

There are events in the lives of saints which cannot be satisfactorily expressed in language even by the saints themselves. Shri Ramkrishna Paramahansa tried it more than once but failed.

This event was of that type. When, therefore, the person directly affected can express it only in halting terms, it becomes doubly a venture on the part of the translator to describe it in a foreign language, since, moreover, he has had no such personal experience himself. But such experiences of pith and moment have got to be given in a biographical sketch - if it is to be worth anything. Here, therefore, is what Shri Mota said (in Gujarati):

"Lord Krishna did not appear to me in any form ever seen by me. Nor had he the characteristics of an earthly body. All the same He possessed a form full of entrancing beauty and charm. It was an inconceivably vast Ocean of Beauty. That form was so captivating that it is impossible to imagine

anything that can compare with its boundless power of attraction. The form was mellow but not transparent, as shining as polished marble, but not with a flute on the lips and other charming things associated with Lord Krishna. It was a very lively form of dark blue colour. Not at all static like a marble statue, but full of frisk and frolic. In a moment it would come quite near, in the next fly far away. It would seem sometimes to be getting into my 'self', touching its finer elements like the mind, the heart, etc. and doing something which at first was uncanny. Then I felt it was doing some repairing work there. Now it would be felt as stationing itself in the centre of the astral lotus between the eye-brows and now in the uppermost astral lotus-**brahmarandhra**-on the top of the head. But it could also be seen seated in the Heart lotus.* My whole being appeared to have a fiery red glow shining extremely brilliantly. I saw that while I myself was subjected to all these subtle transformations, I had become a passive witness also of that

* Patanjali's Yoga Sutras mention 7 astral lotuses. The Divine Energy coiled like a serpent in the lowest astral rises till it reaches the *brahmarandhra*. That makes a man a Self-realized soul.

other 'I' so treated. Then again my 'I' - not the little ego, but the Self in me - seemed to be expanded into infinity. From the very beginning of this experience, I had an intuitive conviction that it was the Absolute in the form of Lord Krishna that I had the vision of. He looked so deeply loving, so amazingly sweet, so exceedingly gentle and smooth to touch, so perfectly soft that I was thrilled to the depth of my being. All the hair on my body bristled up. The body itself with its mass altogether lost seemed suspended in mid-air. The whole vision was vivid enough to be indelibly carved on the tablet of my mind. It has, like the aftermath of a flood, left permanent beneficial effects."

It disappeared as suddenly as it had come. The same vision appeared twice or thrice afterwards.

Tit-bits

Two casual chats, at first sight trivial, are given here, since they have deeper significance. 'Chunibhai', once said the translator during their days of comradeship in the Harijan Ashram, 'let's make a mutually profitable bargain. You give me your devotion for God in return for my flair for poetry.' Obviously an impossible exchange, at least

there and then, and the proposal was made in a humourous vein, but it shows that even at that time Bhagat had reached such a high stage of devotion as to make him respected as a devotee of God at least by some.

Bhagat's reaction was characteristic. He simply laughed away the compliment.

Another day, the translator made another proposal: 'You point out my fault when you find one and I will do the same with you.' "This time Bhagat's reply was clear and emphatic. "No, please. Nothing of the kind. I won't find any fault, in you.'

The proposer was a bit disappointed then, but he saw Bhagat's point later on. "Turn your searchlight inwards; do see your own faults, but not those of others", is a must for a spiritual aspirant. He should never forget the Biblical admonition against seeing the mote in another's eye and not the beam in his own.

God Saves Him

The Lord in his Bhagwadgita: ('Song Celestial') gives the following solemn promise:

"I bear the fullest burden of those who worship Me, thinking on Me alone and nothing else, ever attached to Me and provide them all

that they need spiritually and in every other way" - (IX - 22.)*

The way that Bhagat could repay his debt to his aunt, already noted earlier (on page 62 'The Devine Pledge' to page 65 Different Reactions), is an instance in point. Here are two more anecdotes in which he was saved from serious danger to life. They were reported to the translator by Bhagat himself nearly at the time they happened.

Once, when he was going to Ahmedabad for his Harijan Work, he got into a bus from the Harijan Ashram Stand. Very shortly before the bus started, he happened to hear a talk between two passengers. Referring to a past event one of them uttered the words: "So I got out of the bus immediately." Apparently without rhyme or reason, that very moment, Bhagat saw through the brick wall that it was God's command to him to leave the bus. He did so at the first stop and took the next.

* ("But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added upto you." (Mat. 6.33). Also "Imitation of Christ": "He will provide for thee, and be thy faithful procurator in all things, so that thou needest not to trust in men." [Mahadev Desai's translation (slightly altered) and footnote in his book.' **The Gita Accordig to Gandhi**, p. 270.]

When he arrived at the Gujarat Vidyapith by that succeeding bus, the sight he met with made him thank his Maker profusely. The bus he had discarded was damaged and lying in disarray, the stranded passengers were in confusion and some of them were injured. It was during his tenure of office as the Superintendent of the Harijan Ashram, Navsari, that the second incident of divine intervention happened.

With several elder boys of the Ashram he started on a bicycle tour to Nasik. Fast and furious, the trippers in their zest cycled on and on till it was very dark. In the midst of this frenzied rush, Bhagat felt a sudden call to halt. At his bidding all of them got down there and then and rested for the night under a tree nearby. The next morning showed that all of them were on the brink of a disaster. A yawning chasm, invisible in the dark, made by the latest rains was just waiting to devour them all, if their cycles had sped only a few feet forward.

27. Healing by Spiritual Power

In his book 'Pilgrims of the Starts' Shri Dilipkumar Roy narrates an extraordinary incident which he terms a miracle - in the

life of Smt. Indira, his daughter - disciple. She was saved from a near- death illness by the spiritual power of Shri Aurobindo, her Guru's Guru. Shri Aurobindo had expressly asked his disciple Shri Dilipkumar Roy to be constantly on the attendance of Smt. Indira without fail. Shri. Dilipkumar was thus made a syringe, through which Shri Aurobindo injected his spiritual curative power into Indiraji.

On her part Indiraji had such marvellous faith in her Guru Dilipkumar and her Guru's Guru Shri Aurobindo, that she did not allow any doctor to treat her.

Her refusal to allow any doctor to treat her was not based solely on her very deep faith. She had some sad former experiences - and her trained nurse in attendance in those cases agreed - that no doctor could diagnose her disease of spasmodic attacks of blood-vomiting and then unconsciousness and so none could give her a proper treatment.

A similar incident, though not on all fours, happened in a case treated by Pujya Shri Mota in which the translator was personally involved.

The latter's friend and nephew-in-law, Shri Purendra, turned out to be so allergic to an allopathic medicine, that, on his return late after mid-night from seeing the gorgeous lights of Bombay in celebration of the Swaraj day of August 15,1947, he fell seriously ill, lost consciousness and exhibited symptoms of sinking rapidly. An expert Ayurvedic physician was called. He gave a powerful dose. He said, the patient would revive in 3 or 4 hours. The expectation failed. Another equally powerful dose of that very effective medicine succeeded, but only after full 15 or 16 hours. And then also the patient simply opened his eyes. The physician's regular treatment of the disease then began. It had to be continued for months. For several days he visited the patient twice a day. All the patient's limbs were provided warmth from heated bricks judiciously kept all around. A masseur was also engaged. After recovery the physician stated that the **bastiyantra** (excretory mechanism) had nearly collapsed and that would have meant death or paralysis-in-bed for life.

The translator was in continuous attendance on his friend. Pujya Shri Mota was not rated at that time according to his

deserts. Even the translator, his disciple since 8 years past, did not appraise him at his true value. There was, therefore, no question of the patient's, or anybody else's faith in Pujya Shri Mota. When he was asked by his Guru to remain by the bedside of the patient, the translator thought that the instruction was merely to let the patient have some company, to keep him a little in good spirits.

About a month passed with the patient making a quite satisfactory, unremitting, progress in health. A chastening incident that made the translator open his eyes then followed.

Pujya Shri Mota happened to arrive for a short stay at Vile Parle, only 2 miles from Khar where the translator was on his friend's attendance. Contrary to his wont, Pujya Shri Mota refrained from asking the translator to meet him, even for an hour or two, though he was so near. But the latter could not resist the temptation of going to see his 'friend, philosopher and guide'. Pujya Shri Mota was distinctly displeased at this unwanted meeting, but did not ask the translator peremptorily to go back to Khar at once.

When after two nights the translator returned to the patient, he met with a shocking surprise. In the patient's health there was for the first time, a definite setback. He learnt that it had begun very shortly after he went to Vile Parle and in spite of all the treatments continued without the slightest negligence. (The translator's niece, Saraladevi, moreover, who lacked nothing in the qualities essential for a loving, careful, and intelligent attendant was all the while present).

The moment he saw the patient in a relapse, it flashed in his mind that the real purport of his Guru's instruction to remain by his friend's bedside was to convey through him the healing power of the exalted soul-force of his Guru. The translator then remained with his friend, the patient, all along till his complete recovery, till the end of his convalescent period at a sanitorium in Nasik. Again the progress in health was entirely non-stop. There was no other dent in it – except the one synchronising with the translator's absence from the patient's beside-either before or after it. That convinced the translator that his Guru had played a major, but secret, part in his friend's

recovery. Faith is another tremendous spiritual power but that also was entirely lacking in this case, at least at first, even in the translator's heart, not to speak of others concerned.

But a far more memorable instance of Pujya Shri Mota's spiritual power of healing was exhibited in the case of Sri Babubhai Tamakuwala. In an unexpected way he came suddenly into Pujya Shri Mota's contact and began to revere him as his Guru of supernatural spiritual powers. Being the head of a family - concern of tobacco-dealers and also the eldest brother among its partners, he it was whose voice weighed substantially in all matters, domestic and professional. But to the consternation of the partners as well as his other relatives, one day it was found that he had a severe gnawing pain in his head. Doctors were summoned at once and they diagnosed the case as one of meningitis – a disease that was about a quarter of a century ago dreaded as always fatal, with rare, if any, exceptions. And the disease then took just a few days to bring about the patient's death. The pain in the head was also unbearably frightful. The only silver lining in the dark cloud lay in the fact that

Shri Babubhai, his wife, and brothers were already within the circle of Pujya Shri Mota. The attendants rushed to him to save Shri Babubhai from certain death. (The doctors had unanimously declared his life to be of an extremely short duration.) "Well," said Pujya Shri Mota, "God may save his life through This Jiva's* intercession, but on one condition. After his recovery Babubhai must be released entirely from all responsibilities that his position as the head of the family and seniormost partner of the firm entails. He must thenceforth devote his attention wholly and solely to *sadhana*." As the only alternative to the acceptance of this condition was Babubhai's certain and complete disappearance from the world, his wife and others agreed to abide by the condition imposed. After this acquiescence, Babubhai began to recover and in quite a short time the pain in the head, as well as the disease, disappeared.

But man is liable to succumb to temptation. Babubhai once went to Ahmedabad to discern the quality of a particular kind of tobacco, as he was an

* Pujya Shri Mota was accustomed to use the expression
आ जीव (This Living Being) for himself.

expert in that art. The result was a relapse in his health, a return to the distressing headache and all that. God's grace again brought back his recovery. Since then he is devoting his whole attention to *sadhana*.

28. Vicarious Suffering

Allied to the power of healing physical ailment, but perhaps greater than it, is that of vicarious suffering. What it really means is best explained in the following quotation from the book *Autobiography of a Yogi (Saint)* by Paramhansa Yogananda: (saint author)

"By a secret yogic method, the saint unites his mind and astral vehicle with those of a suffering individual; the disease is conveyed, wholly or in part, to the yogi's fleshly form. Having harvested God in the physical field, a master is no longer concerned with his body. Though he may allow it to become diseased in order to relieve other persons, his mind, unpollutable, is not affected. He considers himself fortunate in being able to render such aid. To achieve final salvation in the Lord is indeed to find that the human body has completely fulfilled its purpose; a master then uses it in any way he deems fit..... The

spiritual law does not (necessarily) require a master to become ill, whenever he heals another person. Healings ordinarily take place through the saint's knowledge of various methods in which no hurt to the spiritual healer is involved. On rare occasions, however a master, who wishes to quicken 'greatly his disciples' evolution, may then voluntarily work out on his own body a large measure of their undesirable karma (fate regulated by past action).

There have been such occasions of vicarious suffering on Pujya Shri Mota's part. The translator himself is an instance in point. In 1962 he had an attack of fever and bronchitis. X-Ray revealed that, 'much more serious than both, there was a patch of tuberculosis. Injections for it were given. After only 30 injections another X-Ray photo was taken. The specialist, to whom his doctor took the translator, declared that no more injections were necessary. (All the same the family doctor gave him more injections, to be doubly sure of his complete recovery.) When the translator, fully cured, went to the Hari Om Ashram, Nadiad, the first thing he learnt was that just at the time of his injections, Pujya Shri Mota had taken some

8 or 10 injections for the same disease.

The translator once just casually remarked to Pujya Shri Mota, 'In our circle, there seem to be cases of spondylitis.' Soon it was found that Pujya Shri Mota himself had spondylitis and the disease grew till at least three of the lowest disks of his spine were slipped. While the others got themselves operated upon, were relieved of the pain and became fairly normal. Pujya Shri Mota firmly banned any operation on himself and suffered the pain till his last breath.

As early as in 1939, the translator saw Pujya Shri Mota coughing and vomiting blood in order to relieve his niece's last hour pains. With her death his trouble also disappeared.

The translator moreover, personally knows two persons to whom Pujya Shri Mota, very shortly before he gave up his body, had said that he would take upon himself the whole load of their sins.*

A noteworthy example of Pujya Shri Mota's physical suffering in sympathy and

* This is not an entirely novel procedure-though it is certainly quite uncommon. The book Tibet's Great Yogi Milarepa refers to that Yogi as one who had taken upon himself all the sins of his Guru. (Refer foot note page - 146)

help happened in 1943. Immediately after the demand by the Working Committee of the Congress to the British Government to 'Quit India', all the members of the Committee and Mahatma Gandhiji were locked up in different jails.

After the failure of some correspondence from the jail with the Government on the question of granting freedom to India, Mahatma Gandhi went on a fast of 21 days. In a few days virulent germs began to grow in his kidney. The most exalted souls of India, known and unknown, felt deeply concerned, as on his life hung the fate of India's peaceful transformation into a free country. Shri Mataji (Mother) of Shri Aurobindo's Ashram at Pondicherry cancelled all engagements and went into *samadhi* on that fateful day.

Pujya Shri Mota also could not remain a passive spectator as he specially was a freedom-fighter and had braved and received *lathi*-charges on his own body. In deep sympathy with Mahatma Gandhi, his own body was attacked with the same disease. He was then staying at Tiruchirapalli with Shri Gopaldas. The latter immediately consulted a pathologist. The doctor's examination disclosed the same poisonous germs as had affected the Mahatma.

But God is great. That critical period in Mahatmaji's life was soon over. He was completely free from the disease, and so was Pujya Shri Mota.

Of course Mahatma Gandhi was himself a powerful storehouse of 'soul force', and as he did not intend to shed his mortal frame at that time, he could set aside the physical laws of health. All the same it cannot be gainsaid that India's elevated souls also contributed to the happy termination of the fast and definitely one of those souls was Pujya Shri Mota who even suffered from the same disease as that of the Mahatma.

Predictions

"A worm corrodes a whole Empire,
Sucks armies dry like a vampire",
Says Nanak, "where stretched out a plain
In a moment rolls the mighty main.
In rivers rise up isles and hills
What can't be done, if God but wills ?"*

Thus said Guru Nanak, the great founder of Sikhism, a synthesis of Hinduism and Islam.

* Mahatma Gandhi, when he returned to India from S. Africa, was indeed a worm before the mighty British Empire. The original song in Hindi was sung in 1920 or so during his visit of the Punjab.

And the translator ventures to add:
The saint is a God-man on our earth.
Ever expanding in power and worth.

Hence, with our limited intelligence, though predictions appear to us, ordinary human beings, as 'Believe-it-or-not' miracles, they are nothing but the Divine Mother's wonderful works performed through these saints-Her specially beloved sons. They are thus none but the emissaries of God on this earth and the sole object of their life, continued after Self-realization, is to awaken us from our eon's (aeon's) sleep of ignorance. That is why they can - if they wish it, or even without it, if God wills it, - see the Divine Plan in relation to those at least who are within the limit of their magnetic field. Hence their power of prediction which seems to us miraculous. Here are two among other predictions of Pujya Shri Mota, which have come true in later life.

Shri Vajubhai Jani, one of his earliest disciples, an M.A. in Sanskrit, held a respectable post as Educational Inspector in a state in Saurashtra. He got more and more attracted to *sadhana* as his chant of 'Hariom'

grew. In a few years, his aspiration grew so intense that he wished to resign and devote his whole time to spiritual pursuits. His wife also agreed with him. Repeatedly he appealed to Pujya Shri Mota to give him the necessary permission and repeatedly the Guru refused. When pressed further still, Pujya Shri Mota agreed, but set a time-limit. He asked Vajubhai to tender his resignation **after** 1957. Shri Vajubhai was hale and hearty at that time, but soon developed two tumours which, under pathological examination, proved to be cancerous. The couple had to rush to Bombay for treatment at the Tata Hospital.

Visitors at his bedside were astonished at the sight they met. A pad of wet clay had to be applied constantly all over his head racked with intense pain, and yet in the midst of it he seemed quite composed and chanting *Hariom* almost incessantly.

The treatment at the Tata Hospital failed and he gave up the mortal coil in 1957, before the year indicated by Pujya Shri Mota ended. No comment is necessary except perhaps the fact that it was Pujya Shri Mota's invisible inspiration that made Vajubhai remain so serene and chant *Hariom* so continually.

Mr. X (the name is not given as the case is still pending) has, rather had, a bosom-friend. He promised the friend to accept his son as a partner in his concern and then informed Pujya Shri Mota of the proposed partnership. Pujya Shri Mota at once remarked that X would come to grief thereby and advised him to desist. As, however, he had already given the promise, X accepted the friend's son as a partner. The result, litigation, if private arbitration fails. X has definite proofs of the unhealthy practices committed by the friend's son. The consequence was the loss to him of a staggering amount. By God's grace, however, he has been able to ride the storm. Some other personal deals, made after the rupture, have come to his aid.

Solution of a Riddle

Vajubhai's death may raise the question, why, if Pujya Shri Mota could save Babubhal from the jaws of meningitis, he could not save Vajubhai his much earlier and more intimate disciple. In other words why Jesus Christ 'saved others, Himself He could not save.' Jesus Himself supplies the answer :
"Thinkest thou that I cannot pray to my Father, and He shall presently give me more than

twelve legions of angels ? But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be."*

Saints are, to put it in Pujya Shri Mota's words, God's horses controlled and directed by the reins held in His hand. And like trained horses saints never question even in their minds the wisdom of the Divine Guide. They simply obey His dictates, whatever they be. Ma Aanandmayi's (-"Joy-filled Mother", a popular title) favourite expression: "**Khayalme nahi ata (He or She does not come within the purview of (my) intuitive idea for spiritual help)** is perhaps the best explanation in the matter.

Moreover, as has been already stated, the saint's activities are mainly to help others in their spiritual evolution. Behind even the material gains bestowed upon others by the intercession of saints is this their innate desire for the everlasting happiness of those they help. If Babubhai was given a new lease of life - a material gain - it was to accelerate his spiritual progress towards that consummation. If destiny was allowed to play

* Matt. 26:53 - 4 (Bible)

its role in Vajubhai's case, death probably in his case was necessary for the same purpose of spiritual progress.

Here is another consideration on the question posed. The infinite is beyond the reach of the limited intelligence of man, whatever his spectacular achievements in the fields of gross physical sciences be. Physical sciences lose their material nature and get absorbed in metaphysics, when physicists try to go deep into the root of their subjects. 'Mysterious Universe' says one eminent scientist; "Man the Unknown" cries another, a Nobel Prize winner, in admission of the inadequacy of scientific research made so far, in that direction.

But it is this very mystery that inevitably draws man's attention and awakens intense curiosity to know the ways of the Infinite. And since saints are God's most perfect images on earth, they cast a similar spell by their uncommon performances. Their actions too are, therefore, "mysterious" to the ordinary man.

Mother's Resurrection Resurrects Him

The news of the demise of his spiritual mother* was a bolt from the blue to Pujya Shri Mota. The fact that she sped away without casting a parting blissful look on him rankled in his breast. He sent a long telegram expressing both his deep grief at his own bereavement and his sympathy for the survivors. Neither that nor the passage of time relieved him of the hidden pang of the sudden separation.

All the same he kept up his spirits and alacrity of service. Man is a bundle of contradictions. Contrary qualities like love and hate for one and the same person are sometimes evident in a man. In this case, however, the well-known Sanskrit couplet of Bhavabhuti is more applicable: "**Harder than an adamant, softer than a flower, who can gauge the heart of a super-man ?**"

But does God ever fail to extract a dart hidden in the heart of his beloved devotee ? Saints of all times and climes and all scriptures proclaim that He rushes to his rescue. It was not very long before Pujya Shri Mota's grief was assuaged - and that most unexpectedly.

* Refer footnote on page no. 9.

He happened to go to Bhuj, the capital of Cutch, the spot hallowed by many- a-loving memory of his Mother. What hidden emotions the place awakened in his heart only he could say - perhaps not even he, as man is often unaware of the deep stir in his heart.

There he once strayed to a lonely hill. He came to know that it was visited by tigers at night and nobody was allowed to linger there after nightfall without the state's permission.

His long practice of spending nights in solitary places had already become a part of him. It had made him belong to the caste of brave souls of whom Sir Walter Scott pithily remarks :

*".....If a path be dangerous known
Danger's self is lure alone."*

That very ban on remaining on the hill at night became for him an irresistible urge to sleep just there. As a spiritual aspirant, moreover, he knew that cultivation of fearlessness was an indispensable requisite for progress in *sadhana*. He would not therefore miss a chance of testing the strength of his courage and, by further practice, enhancing it.

He got the state's permission, as he was

then moving among influential people.

When the night advanced, he stretched himself and lay wide awake. In a short time, however, an amazing sight made him sit up. He rubbed his eyes to be sure. Yes, it **was**, it really **was** his dear dear 'Mother' ! In response to his latent but ardent and unfilled desire, she had come to make him fully happy again.

It was not an apparition that he saw. She was present there in flesh and blood. She appeared exactly as she did when life was animating her body.

She even talked with him as in the past. Pujya Shri Mota asked her to squat and, when she did so, enjoyed also the old privilege of cosily putting his head on her lap and lying full length.

When he raised his head a little to turn sideways, she vanished as instantly as she had appeared.

But that meeting made Pujya Shri Mota have a sigh of relief. The hidden pain disappeared.

Referring to this incident years later, he said, "it was not a phantom that I saw then. Neither was it a dream nor an experience in the semiconscious state of somnolence. It

was indeed a mystic supernal experience, but that need not raise a doubt about its reality. I saw her, as undoubtedly as I am seeing you just now, and in flesh and blood.

29. His Place Among Spiritual Giants

The superb experience of 29th March, 1939 brought him to that spiritual height which an individual requires to reach for his own personal salvation. That is the stage after the attainment of which a man gets the fullest freedom to become or remain, active or passive, or partly so.

As the Bhagwadgita says (III - 17- 18) "But the man who deeply loves the Self (atman), all whose longing is quenched in and by the Self, is fully content with the Self alone, for him no action exists (is inevitably necessary). He has no end to serve, nothing to lose or gain, by doing, or not doing, anything. And he has no want which he would like to acquire from anybody or anything whatsoever."

Some of these Self-realized persons, therefore, remain entirely unknown, some partly so, while some shine in full splendour before the world. Govindacharya, Nivriddhi, and Ramkrishna Paramahansa were spiritually

not a whit less great than their far more famous and active disciples, Shankaracharya, Gyandev, and Vivekanand. That shows that fame or the number of adherents or high scholarship is no criterion to evaluate the spiritual greatness of any saint.

Pujya Shri Mota remained, more or less, through his whole life.

"A violet by a mossy stone

Half-hidden from the eye".

His activities were almost wholly confined to Gujarat, a small state in India.

But the ways in which he revealed himself, as will be shown later, indicate that in spiritual attainment he took his rank among the foremost spiritual geniuses of India.*

The New Phase

It was from total obscurity that he came forward as a guide to teach the highest of sciences - that of spiritualizing men of clay. This revolutionary change in his life began soon after the memorable day, 29th March, 1939, when, on request he accepted on 6th July, 1939 the burden of guiding a disciple. Others followed, but gradually. This new phase had many repercussions. The man, who used to

* Refer footnote on page no. 232.

take his seat on a back row, to be unobtrusive and reticent, suddenly comes forward, throws to the winds all his past reserves, and with superb self-confidence becomes a leader. That was a metamorphosis which some of his old associates saw with amazement, even consternation, as they could not then place him in their minds. But far more than that were the facts that not only was he helped and guided by mysterious forces more than ever before, but he himself now began to represent and use these forces. In other words not only did he and others see miracles performed in his aid, (e.g. monetary aid to let him travel by air to Karachi in 1940) but he himself became a miracle-worker.

30. Miracles

Here are just a few of those that he performed: In a very few hours, he increased by 2 to 4 lbs. the weight of some persons. To let some women enjoy some function or have an entry into a temple for *darshan* he postponed the time of their menses. When he was on a pilgrimage to reputed holy shrines in the Himalayas, he saved his companions from being drenched by rain by his loudly audible prayers to God. He lighted fire without a match-stick or any such

igniting material. Some of those who came to him were surprised to find that he knew even their inmost thoughts, their carefully guarded secrets. Even transference of other people's troubles to his own body began since 1939. The relevant case that of his dying niece, has already been given.*

The Why of it

There is a modern school of thought which decries miracle-workers. Its extreme adherents doubt even the authenticity of miracles. To them, those who believe or spread such canards are dupes or deceivers, This matter requires a deeper thinking than is usually given to it. All the great religions of the world without exception have among their believers men and women miracle-workers. And their miracles are attested by very reliable sources.

One of the greatest leaders of mankind, Jesus Christ, supports the performance of miracles. He says: "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe." (John, 4-46) There is a Gujarati proverb which seems to clinch the issue: "Where a miracle, there an obeisance." And common sense tells us,

* See footnote on page 132.

"Without an obeisance, no emulation."

One should probe the question why there is such a solid support to the performance of miracles. Then, again, what really is a miracle ? That a man's voice could be heard thousands of miles away would be regarded as a miracle formerly, but now it is an everyday affair. Then came television and so on. Science is ever on the march. What many of us now dismiss as improbable or impossible, because it appears to them miraculous, is quite likely to be accepted as true with the advance of knowledge.

That apart, as Pujya Shri Mota asks, "Is not our existence itself on earth, our body itself, a miracle (even innumerable series of miracles) ?" But because the fact is of too common an occurrence, we attach no importance to it, learn nothing from it. That is why, when God wants to awaken some people from their ignorance, He performs miracles through the agency of holy men. **A miracle is an exceptionally loud noise to attract the hearer's attention to God.**

All saints firmly believe in the existence of a Divine Power that permeates the universe, controls and impels its working. Their belief, they affirm, - and everyone who

knows a saint is convinced that he is not boasting, - is based on personal experience. They even challenge mankind to test the truth of their affirmation by a personal experiment. Only, they say that scientific experiment demands, like others, total absorption in it to the exclusion of any serious thought on any extraneous thing. If the experiment is made with all one's soul and heart and mind, the man who makes it is sure to agree with saints and believe in the existence of the Supreme Power and also to possess the same extraordinary powers which saints all over the world possess. They possess these powers because they are in tune with the Divine Power which flows into them unobstructed. The manifestation of that power is called a miracle by the world at large, but even saints exhibit it only when, and only to that extent to which, they are impelled by the Divine Power to do so, and for reasons known only to the Divine Power and sometimes to the exhibitor when that Power does not sanction it, no new miracle can be performed or an old one repeated.

To The Sangh's Succour

It could hardly be termed an obligation that the Harijan Sevak Sangh had conferred

on Pujya Shri Mota by providing him an employment. Even if it was such, he had, by his indefatigable labour, intellectual and physical, and the monthly aid of Rs. 35 obtained from a tuition, already paid that debt to the full.

After the transformation of his life of an humble worker in the social field to that of the exalted one of guidance of spiritual aspirants, it would not have surprised anybody if he had said good-bye to H.S. Sangh and forgotten it. Nobody would have blamed him for it. But he had for the Sangh the love of a student for his alma mater. He was grieved to find the Sangh in a distressed state in 1942.

The freedom struggle in that year had affected the Sangh adversely. Though its Secretary, Shri Parikshital Majmudar, had strictly eschewed any political activity for many years past, he was arrested on suspicion and detained in the Nasik Jail in August 1942. As he was the soul of the Sangh, the gap his absence made was poorly filled and the Sangh suffered in both its financial and managerial aspects.

Pujya Shri Mota did not remain an indifferent passive spectator of this sagging condition of the Sangh. Not only did he

himself come out of his seclusion at Tiruchirapalli and go to Bombay to collect funds, but he asked the translator to look after the management of the Sangh.

31. Experiences during collection of funds

I

It was no easy job for him to collect funds for Harijan work. He was practically a nobody in Mumbai. He had even in Gujarat always remained behind the curtain. His new role in life as a spiritual guide was still unknown to the public. Those days, moreover, were days of hectic political activity. Social service was shunted to the back-ground. The Government was alert in search of freedom-fighters, many of whom had gone underground and discarded Khadi for carrying on their work safely. Pujya Shri Mota, however, stuck to Khadi, which had become long since the badge of national workers. He was, therefore, looked upon with suspicion - specially by the low-grade constables. He was once even arrested and taken to the Marbawdi Police Station in Mumbai for inquiry. As it was not uncommon even before the investigation, he

was roughly handled by the police. By God's grace, however, the head constable was sensible. He believed in his **bonafides** and set him free without further molestation.

II

He had only printed receipt-books of the Sangh with him. But his demeanour did not arouse suspicion and he could secure subscriptions. One businessman, however, questioned him: "How am I to know you are a genuine worker and not a crook ?"

Pujya Shri Mota saw the point. Immediately he went to Poona, where "Thakkar Bapa", the President of the All-India Harijan Sevak Sangh, then happened to be. He knew Pujya Shri Mota very well as a veteran, honest, and earnest servant of the Harijans. The moment Pujya Shri Mota spoke of this difficulty, he took up the pen and wrote a gushing letter authorising Pujya Shri Mota to collect funds for Gujarat Harijan Sevak Sangh.

God's grace helped him further. **Janmabhumi** is a Gujarati daily of long standing and wide circulation. It was then edited by Shri Karsandas Manek, a graduate of Gandhiji's University and a friend of Pujya

Shri Mota. He published Thakkar Bapa's authorising letter at a prominent place in his paper. That set all doubt and Government's suspicion at rest.

III

All the same, he had a queer experience. Once he approached an influential businessman. Instead of paying his amount outright, the merchant put down on paper Rs. 500/- and started a list of promising donors. That was heartening. Large sums were promised and collected. But that leading influential businessman, the most generous contributor on paper, gave Pujya Shri Mota not Rs. 500/- but only Rs. 100/-!

That was a shocking surprise. When he was asked the reason, the businessman said, "I put down Rs. 500/- in order that others might contribute relatively and more liberally. I wanted to give you only Rs. 100/- !" The tone and manner of the donor convinced Pujya Shri Mota that no verbal persuasion or argument would succeed. He did not bandy words with the merchant, but did not also accept the Rs. 100/- offered.

A strange device for a strange impasse. Pujya Shri Mota pitted against that rock-like

firmness a silent, persistent, *satyagraha*. He would present himself at the opening time of the concern, sit quietly on a bench for visitors, get up, lovingly, respectfully bow to the merchant when he came, and go on writing letters to spiritual aspirants. Before the closing time also the merchant found him writing something, as he stood up to bow to the merchant. This went on for full 7 days. As the uniformly loving and courteous behaviour of Pujya Shri Mota had already softened the merchant, he allowed his curiosity to break the ice. "What ever are you writing all along ?" he asked. He was given the latest letter to read. That letter opened his eyes. "O," he exclaimed, "you seem to be a holy man - talking of God with such assurance !"

All his opposition evaporated. He gave the promised amount of Rs.500/-.

IV

Some well-dressed prostitutes once met him in a railway train. On casual inquiry they learnt that Pujya Shri Mota was collecting a fund for the Harijan cause. "Will you (deign to) accept our donations ?" they asked. (Some people refuse to accept money earned

that way. They term it unholy and harmful to their cause.) Pujya Shri Mota agreed. They went on further, "Will you (please) come to our place and get the money ?" Without flinching Pujya Shri Mota said 'yes' even on that point. On the fixed day he went to their despised quarter and accepted their contributions. Their faces gleamed with delight, as they were so sympathetically treated by a member of the class that usually shunned them. In this regard for despised Pujya Shri Mota is not alone. Many saints as well as social workers have been considerate to them. But the very fact that they are very .generally sneered at shows that such sympathy is undoubtedly a quality of a high order and only exalted souls possess it. This heart-felt fellow-feeling is an alchemic agency. History shows many instances of criminals of the worst sort becoming angels among men.

V

His encounter with a distinguished follower of Mahatma Gandhi during this collection for a social cause in the midst of very high political tension has already been given earlier.

God's Chosen Soul

Cases of spiritual aspirants, who do not themselves go in search of a Guru, but whom the would-be Guru himself seeks, are rare indeed. Pujya Shri Mota is among those recipients of this exceptional grace. It was first Pujya Shri Balayogi who came to Ahmedabad and went on speaking to one and all, "Call Chuni Lal of Nadiad." So they met and Pujya Shri Mota's *sadhana* began. At another important stage also, Sai Baba deliberately seeks him out at Karachi. (Refer page 159)

Let the period immediately preceding this second occasion be first explained to bring out the import of that eventful meeting.

The World - a Relentless Teacher

No matter how hard and painful the situation is, which one is born to or brought later into, it be may the best and the most helpful to his spiritual progress. For, as the poet says, "Balanced and just are God's decrees." If he suffers terribly, it may to brand some lesson deep into his being. He should view his circumstances in that light, refuse to grumble at them and put them to be best

the use he possibly could.*

That was the maxim which Pujya Shri Mota generally followed. That was why, though he pined for Self realization, he did not discard his dependents but accepted the more thorny path of living at home.** A very honest aspirant that he was, he saw the ultimate sweets of strenuous work. He, therefore, chose to live on the bare minimum necessary for the sustenance of life, and allowed neither himself nor the members of his family, including his mother, any escape from hard, sweated toil. As it is a common trait of human nature of love, ease and

* This is one face of the diamond that truth is like. Another facet reveals that discontent against one's adverse situation is a *sine qua non* of progress and change into better and more helpful circumstances. To give but one example: It was discontent and unrest which the national leaders of India aroused in the torpid contentment, in which Indians used to live, that brought about their freedom. The same holds good for the progress spiritual or material, of an individual also. Of course one has got to possess discrimination, as to when one must remain content with, and when to chafe at his environment.

Pujya Shri Mota was fully aware of this aspect of truth also. Hence his unique service in providing silence rooms (retreats) for world bound people.

** Guru Keshavanandaji also had asked him to return home. See on pp. 54

comfort, this insistence on hard labour by all members was at times resented, but he did not yield on that point.

God Extricates Him

God, however, contrived to free him from the routine of office work and family responsibility, when his *sadhana* came to the proper stage for much greater absorption in it.

God's Weird and Benign Way

Long before this release he had decided to leave the family for greater concentration on his *sadhana*, when he was able to heap up as his savings Rs.2.000/-. That amount he would give to his mother for her maintenance in his absence. In those days of cheapness it was possible to do so-thriftily of course - from the interest on that amount.

His savings piled up to the longed - for amount of Rs.2.000/-in 1938.

In that same year he had a severe attack of dysentery with bloody evacuations and had to spend quite some days in a hospital. When discharged, convalescence became an unavoidable must for him. His colleagues and the family had but to spare him and let him

go away for a long stay at Karachi with his patron Shri Parsadbhai Mehta, Manager of the Scindhia Navigation Company there. The ties between the two were so close that he was 'Bapu' (father) to Pujya Shri Mota and the former called him 'Chunia'-the affectionate diminutive by which his mother referred to him.

32. Mother's Demand

Mother knew her son's yearning for intensive sadhana and instinctively felt that the son's departure for a long stay at Karachi meant practically his severance from her and the family. She, therefore, took a promise from her son that he would be present at her bedside in her last hours on earth and only then allowed him to leave for Karachi. Pujya Shri Mota on his part had the satisfaction of giving her Rs. 2.000/ before he left the home for 'good'.

33. The Turning Point

Karachi soon became the spring-board which provided him an impetus for his great leap to the final stage of realization. He had already experienced **saguna samadhi** (vision in a trance of God-in-form), and now the time was ripe for the final consummation of

nirguna samadhi (experience of the Unnamable. Incomprehensible Substratum beyond name and form.) A Master with experiential wisdom along can endow a disciple with the spiritual power necessary for crossing the big chasm, that separates even a highly elevated **jiva** (individual soul with limited powers) from **Shiva** (the cosmos, Almighty etc.). Self - realized Masters are always in the search of these very few disciples of such rare merit.

Sai Baba in Karachi was such an adept and he sought out Pujya Shri Mota as stated on page 155. That glorious day, rather night, for him was one that preceded the last night of the year 1994 of the Vikram era (1938 A.D.). For sadhana of white and black (pure or benevolent and selfish or wicked) mysticism that last but one night of the Vikram year is regarded as specially helpful. Pujya Shri Mota, therefore, went to a lonely mound (previously inspected and chosen) on the vast stretch of sand lying between his house in the Clifton Colony and the sea. As it was very lonely and unfit for human habitation, it could be a resort for *sadhana* by only daring souls.

Pujya Shri Mota first gave away his purse to Babu and then with only a single blanket

went to the hillock. Shortly after he sat there, he was astounded to hear a sudden, loud and angry voice. Some person, tall, strong and grim-looking ordered him in a stern peremptory manner to quit the place forthwith.

"But why ?" asked Pujya Shri Mota.

"Get out. It's Not for you. It's for God-mad mystics ('maston', ke leeye)" the man thundered.

"Well, then, I go further on quite near the edge for my sadhana."

And he stood up to go there. That infuriated the man. He threw a very big stone at Pujya Shri Mota, but in such a way that it just touched the hair of his head and passed away harmlessly above him. This very close but harmless, proximity and the size and weight of the stone made Pujya Shri Mota feel intuitively that the thrower was really a 'God-mad man' himself.

Without wasting a second, at once he fell prostrate at the feet of 'the Master', as he saw him now in that light.

With lightning speed the adept's wrath turned into love and sweetness, and he said. "I have come to take you to a higher stage, but I had to create faith in you for me. Now,

do one thing. Bring me a packet of cigarettes and a match-box."

Highly delighted at the revelation of having an unexpected encounter with a 'God-mad' person, Pujya Shri Mota began to walk fast towards his house for the money needed.

"Hay, Hey, where are you going ?" The Muslim saint's voice stopped him abruptly.

"To my home for the money."

"Tut tut. With money any Tom, Dick and Harry can buy. Bring them without money."

That was a tall order. It put Pujya Shri Mota in a quandary. But a saint's orders are orders and have got to be obeyed. 'Oh, my blanket is the clue' it struck him. He felt relieved and decided to give the blanket as a security and get the things.

But soon he found that it was a problem difficult to tackle even that way. He turned right about, went to a shop that was just on the sea-shore, and knocked at the closed door. (It was one of the darkest hours of the night). The shop-keeper drowsily opened it, the demand was made, the things given, but in the half - inclined mood of a man startled from the heavenly bliss of sleep, that great natural tranquilizer. When, therefore, instead

of cash, a blanket was offered in security for future payment, he grew wild. In a high tone and stinging words he demanded the things back and would have even snatched them away.

At that nick of time comes a man from behind the shop, that is, from quite the opposite direction and tells him, "Here's a rupee for the cigarettes, Sai Baba has sent me." The shop-keeper mellowed and accepted the payment. Pujya Shri Mota returned to the Sai with his blanket still with him and the cigarette packet and the match-box. The mystery why a man should come from that long distance from the Sai and from just that direction which he and Sai Baba faced and in pursuance of the Sai's instruction, any contact with whom was impossible. Pujya Shri Mota could solve, only by regarding the Sai as an adept of no mean order.

Then the Sai asked him to sit in **sukhasan** (a convenient pose for sitting) and told him if he saw anything noteworthy. As he did not, the Sai asked him to fix his gaze on him. Pujya Shri Mota then saw a streak of radiant rays of light issuing from the Sai and then merging into him. And though the rays were copious and brilliant, they were

not burning, they were soothing and pleasant.

Pujya Shri Mota was again made to sit in the same comfortable **sukhasan**. The Sai stroked him on his chest with his fingers and passed them in a continuously touching line going up to the nose and beyond, to the middle of the forehead, where also he gave another stroke. An electric current passed through Pujya Shri Mota's body, from which also emanated the same kind of a streak of light. That was a thrilling experience, but through the Sai's strokes and touch.

He was then asked to go through the same process on his body, but now with his own fingers. He did so and had the same marvellous experience. Then the Sai asked him to repeat the same process for the third time on **Ramanavmi** (the 9th day of the 6th month, Chaitra, which is celebrated as the birthday of Lord Rama). The first two processes, by the Sai and by himself, were for the purification of his body and his senses.

34. Who Was That Sai ?

As Pujya Shri Mota was narrating his wonderful experiences to Bapu and his circle the next morning, his eyes casually fell upon a tiny photograph set in the ring of one Mr.

Sharma. "Whose is this photograph ?" he inquired.

"Sai-Baba-of-Shirdi's."

Pujya Shri Mota burst out! "Oh ! It was he then who guided me last night."

He had a further confirmation, when, some years later, he accompanied Bapu to Shirdi and saw a big photograph of the saint, showing the same features and dress as he had seen him in. At the sight, moreover, of Pujya Shri Mota in Shirdi, a Muslim advanced disciple, Abdullah by name, ejaculated, "Oh ! You are one of us ! You belong to our family !"*

* Shirdi owes its rise from a petty village to a townlet solely to Sai Baba. Buses regularly ply between it and Mumbai. Nasik etc. to enable people to have the *darshan* of his remains interned in the house, specially erected for it, by a rich Hindu disciple, as he is revered equally by Hindus and Muslims. As the result of a compromise in a dispute between the two regarding the place of his body's burial, everyone, a Hindu or a Muslim, is allowed to worship Sai Baba in that Hindu's house according to his own, Hindu or Muslim, rites. The dispute had lasted more than 36 hours. Sai Baba's dead body all the while remained completely unsullied, though exposed to natural decay. (It was neither embalmed nor encased.) Even after more than 60 years since he cast away his body in 1918, he continues, sometimes taking even a human form as in the above instance, to help persons in their spiritual or material needs.

Ordeals

Sai Baba's love for Pujya Shri Mota was not of a cooing, goody-goody, kind. It was like the goldsmith's ways of purifying gold by heating it in a crucible till it melted and the alloy was burnt up or separated. The following shows this kind of love.

In pursuance of the principle of Hindu-Muslim unity Pujya Shri Mota observed a fast in Karachi in the month of **Ramzan**. (holy month of Islam) At its end he went to a *maidan* (open ground) to do **namaz** (Islamic ceremony of prayer) on the *Id* day.

Of course, he did not know the words of the Islamic prayer, but he imitated the physical actions of the Muslims and mentally uttered his own prayer. When the namaz ended, just by chance his eyes fell upon his Guru, the Sai. At once he fell down prostrate at his feet. The Sai raised him up and said, "Go home naked from here."

The order meant his going, as naked as his mother bore him, seven miles, through inhabited streets of a flourishing town like Karachi, tramping it for 2 hours under the increasingly hot sun of approaching noon-

time, and with a body then under medical treatment for indisposition. But the worst of it all was the distinct possibility of his arrest as a madcap or a vagrant of suspicious character, his lock-up in jail, and the consequent policeman's severe thrashing there. But Pujya Shri Mota did not mind it and immediately faced it all. He gave away all his clothes to Shri Kalyanpur, a man who knew and could understand the ways of mystics, and started on his queer march. As soon, however, as he began it, his mind soared into the celestial region of abstraction into the Self, and he was unaware of what he was physically doing.

Only twice he came down to the earth. On the first occasion a sergeant imperiously asked him to stop. Pujya Shri Mota cast a fierce glance at him and shouted out in a higher tone, "kya hai ?" (What's the matter ?) That subdued the sergeant and he stammered. "Kuch nahi, Saibaba, Id Mubarak." (nothing, Saibaba, greetings for the Id.) He proceeded and passed unmolested even the Governor's house. Then it was the Guru, the Sai, who stopped him, in a close

embrace, said he was surchagred with love for him and gave him Rs.5/- to break his fast of the Ramzan month. (He used to take only milk then.*)

II

Pujya Shri Mota once went alone for a walk on the sea-shore. All of a sudden he heard a voice in his heart. He had no doubt that it was not a figment of imagination, but that he did hear the voice of his Guru. It commanded him to go on walking into the sea. With all his clothes on him, he immediately obeyed. Offering his prayer mentally to his Guru all the while, he went on and on into the sea, till the water rose

* The translator was then staying with Pujya Shri Mota at Babu's house. As he had himself a taste of rough handling by the police, he was really worried over the safe return of Pujya Shri Mota, when at about 11.30 a.m, Shri Kalyanpur came up on a cycle with Pujya Shri Mota's clothes and stated that under the Sai's order he had started to pad it for home without a shred of cloth on him. At about 1 p.m. he shouted, head upraised, from behind a pile of sand between Clifton and the sea, to bring his clothes to him. When he returned with clothes on, he was very hot and dead-tired. He allowed us, therefore, to massage his legs etc.

At the time of the next incident also the translator was staying at Clifton in Pujya Shri Mota's company.

up to his mouth. What happened afterwards he did not know, as he then lost consciousness. When he returned to his senses, he found himself lying between the sea and his home at Clifton, but far from both. As his clothes were not very wet when he returned home, the only inference that he could come to was that he must have lost consciousness for quite some time.

Thrilling Experiences

A series of miraculous incidents thus happened during Pujya Shri Mota's stay in Karachi in November- December 1938. A reliable testimony of the truth of an event is the first-hand report of an eye-witness. Like the former two, the translator was, by God's grace, present at the time of the following events also.

Just before the translator went to Karachi, he was taking yogic physical exercises under an expert's guidance. In a casual talk that expert declared, "I can go into *samadhi*. whenever I want to. I would show it right now. If anybody gave me Rs. 10,000. "The translator was so eager to see a man in *samadhi* that he would have given him

Rs. 1,000/ - there and then, but there was no question of his giving ten times that amount, when he himself did not possess it.

But very shortly afterwards he went to Karachi. Those were days in Pujya Shri Mota's life when, intentionally or otherwise, he often went into *samadhi* on the spur of the moment. During an exciting talk or environment one had to sit beside or behind him to save him from a fall and hurt himself. Hence, the translator had the superb satisfaction of seeing a person in *samadhi* a number of times without having to spend a **paisa** for the glorious sight.

If he was not seen later on in *samadhi* (meaning loss of outward, and fully indrawn consciousness) it was because he had by then reached the stage of **sahaja samadhi**, i.e. the stage when a man keeps up outward consciousness, but is inwardly immersed in the Self. His every thought, his every gesture, his every word, his every act, is an expression of his constant divine consciousness. If even then he seems to err, it is because the ways of God Himself are often baffling and so are those of His viceroy. But, howsoever apparently unpleasant, or wrong, they are always good in their final effect.

But at that period when he went into *samadhi*, his eyes were open but absolutely still, so still as to look bright and lifeless. The whole body also was rigid like a statue. Babu had read some spiritual literature and he stated the name of this *samadhi* as '**shambhavi mudra**' (a pose of the body wherein the eyes are open and can see but see nothing, but the mind is wholly introvert).

X X X X X

Once, when it was Sunday, Pujya Shri Mota had a sudden desire to go to the town. He even expressed it and Chitra, Babu's younger daughter, blurted out in jest, "May be your Sai Baba is calling you." But somehow he did not go. When he went to the town - market the next day, he saw the Sai standing just at the spot where the car stopped. "What a chap you are !" Sai Baba broke out in love's offended tone "O My God! I waited and waited for you yesterday. Had to give away in charity in your name all the sweets and fruits I had brought for you!"

One is most free with the person with whom one is most bound, says Rabindranath Tagore. That bond of love loosened Pujya Shri Mota's tongue : 'Yes, I too felt like coming over here, but the urge was not

strong enough. You should have called me with greater force and I would have been drawn to you."

"All right," returned the Sai mollified. "Go, and buy your things from the market." When Pujya Shri Mota returned to the car, he saw the Sai with a big basket of fruits and a smaller one of sweets. Both of them were put into the car, and with others the translator had the pleasure of enjoying those gifts, but alas ! without appraising them at their full real value.

X X X X X

Bapu believed in entertaining guests. And in the Sai he saw a unique guest, whose presence even for a short time would sanctify the house and its inmates. He, therefore, asked Pujya Shri Mota to give the Sai an invitation to tea. But Pujya Shri Mota did not know the whereabouts of the Sai. Whenever they met, it was the Sai who had presented himself before him and he never knew from where the Sai came. There was the rub. Bapu however had read spiritual lore enough to know the way out. He said, "Sit in meditation with a view to go into *samadhi*. When you are just about to lose your outward consciousness, think of the Sai

and you will see him. Then invite him to tea." Pujya Shri Mota followed the instruction literally. On the point of going into *samadhi*, he did see the Sai but far away, walking along the sea-shore and going still further away. When he pleaded with him to return and have tea at his Bapu's house, the Sai said, 'You want me to have tea. Well, here I take it.' He made a gesture of pouring tea from a cup into a saucer and drinking it. And on and on he receded.

X X X X X

Shri A. V. Thakkar, a member of the Servants of India Society and popularly known as Thakkar Bapa (father), was at those times a well-known figure. He had for many years past befriended the lowly and the lost - Bhils (aborigines) and Harijans (untouchables). Mahatma Gandhi himself had, therefore, a very high regard for him, and he opened in December 1938 a fund to honour him on his seventieth birthday.

Pujya Shri Mota was at that time in Karachi, practically, but not officially, retired from his service as Secretary of the Gujarat Harijan Sevak Sangh. All the same owing to his close connection with Thakkar Bapa in his service of the Harijans, Kurangi, Bapu's

elder daughter, repeatedly suggested that Pujya Shri Mota should contribute something to the Thakkar Bapa Fund. Pujya Shri Mota saw the validity of the suggestion, but having no money of his own and loath to take anything from Bapu. He could do nothing. God, however, intervened.

Bapu's family, and the translator, were once proceeding by car to meet Mr. Chagla, then the Mayor of Karachi. Owing to some hindrance the car had to stop at a place. From the car Pujya Shri Mota saw on the road something like a piece of paper rolled up. To know what it was, he got down and brought it into the car. With the words 'for your use' on it, that rolled up piece of paper contained a five-rupee note.

X X X X X

In this context the following incident that happened long after is given here.

For some reasons Pujya Shri Mota badly wanted some money. Accompanied by Shri Hasmukhbhai, head of the branch of N. Gopaldas & Co. at Kumbakonam, he was once going to meet a sannayasi living in a temple on the bank of Kaveri. As they were walking, Pujya Shri Mota picked up just casually, the stray bundle of a rag lying on

the street. On examination the content was found to be too valuable to be wrapped up in a rag lying like that on a street. It was a necklace of gold, with the same instruction as above given along with it !

35. Towards the Summit

Kurangi and Chitra, the two daughters of Sri Parsadbhai did not attend regularly any educational institution-school or -college, because they lived with their only living parent, Sri Parsadbhai, and he had to serve the Scindhia Navigation Company first in Burma and then at Karachi.

The redeeming feature lay in the fact that the Banaras Hindu University, allowed private students to appear in its examinations. The girls, therefore, read for these examinations at home under efficient private tutors, but they had to go to Banaras for appearing in their respective examinations.

There was a hostel for girls there and they could put up in it. According to the rule then in force, however, a guardian also had to stay with them.

After several months' stay at Karachi, Pujya Shri Mota, therefore, went to Banaras in March 1939 and put up in a house within

the premises of the hostel as the guardian of the two girl students. The three started for Banaras earlier than the due date purposely. They went from Banaras to Kanpur for a short stay with the girls' uncle there. At Allahabad Station they learnt that Mahatma Gandhi was there on the platform. Since the very moment when Pujya Shri Mota bowed down to him, he began to feel inwardly a peculiar kind of local pain. Soon it extended to his body also.

Though then also he continued to do everything his position required, there was a distinct change in his attitude towards his activities. While formerly he did them with hilarity and laughter and with his whole mind put into them, now he found himself doing them equally efficiently, but without feeling any avid interest in them and with his mind all the while thinking of the Self.

36. The Great Day

During this period of Pujya Shri Mota's stay in Banaras, Ramnavami, the day on which he was asked to go into meditation in the way prescribed by the Sai at Karachi, fell on the 29th March, 1939. As stated earlier even before the advent of that day, i.e. since 13th March, Pujya Shri Mota had begun to

feel some queer pain. On that day, the 29th March, its intensity grew to a frightful stage. He had experiences of his bodily afflictions becoming acute during the night, but this time even during the day the pain would have become a torture, if the mind had not been remaining in an exalted state of consciousness.

At about 10 minutes to 1 a.m. somebody shouted 'Hariom' near his house. Pujya Shri Mota could at once perceive that the loud shout was meant for him. He responded with the same 'Hariom', went downstairs and opened the entrance door. A completely naked *sadhu* with a thick growth of curly hair was standing before him.

The *sadhu* said he had come at the instance of his Guru, who lived on the opposite bank. The Guru had asked Pujya Shri Mota to go with the *sadhu* forthwith to stay with him. Pujya Shri Mota demurred. He said he had two girls in his charge and would not leave them in the lurch. All he could do was to go to the guru at night and return to the girls as soon as possible. The *sadhu* did not accept this condition. He said that Pujya Shri Mota would come to grief,

unless there was with him a kind understanding lady of mature age or his Guru at the time when he meditated according to the instruction of the Sai at Karachi.

Pujya Shri Mota did not heed this serious warning and refused to accompany the *sadhu*.

He was by that time so accustomed to unearthly events that he did not for a moment wonder how that *sadhu's* Guru, living in Banaras, could know the instruction given him secretly at Karachi by the Sai. Nor was he the least worried over the likely disaster which the *sadhu* had portended.

Quietly, bidding the *sadhu* good-bye, he went upstairs and began to meditate in pursuance of the Sai's instruction.

With the frankness characteristic of a letter to a close friend on 6.4.1939 he wrote (to the translator) what happened on that memorable night of 29.3.1939:

"Hardly when the meditation had begun, there was the experience that the whole consciousness was coiling itself up and getting concentrated (at one point). An awareness that the mind, the body etc. were only accessories and separate from the Self

grew more and more distinct and convincing.”

“Within a very short time there arose the feeling that very hot streamlets were flowing in the central part of the head and an unbearable burning sensation spread throughout the body. Outward consciousness was all but lost altogether, with the result that the body fell down on the ground. The tongue was parched, even scorched. Even now it is dry and hot. At that time even the chest was burning hot. The whole portion of the body from the abdomen to the private part was burnt black and some of it is still festering. The whole body in short had grown extremely hot.”

God Intervenes

“Even Kurangi (the elder girl) had no inkling of all this at first. But by God's grace, she had to wake up suddenly to ease herself. She saw me lying unconscious, brought me back to consciousness, and took very tender care of my body. The graver effect of all this lasted two days.”

God's grace did not end there.

“Some days back we had happened to meet here in Banaras, one Shri Balakrishna

A. Pathak who, we had learnt, was the Principal of the Ayurvedic* college here. As I was a Gujarati and in the company of Kurangi and Chitra, grand daughters of the well-known poet Narasinhrao Divetia, he had felt an innate sympathy for me, and had at once made this spontaneous offer: 'You seem to be very weak and ill. Let me examine you.' He had made a careful examination and already begun to treat me, completely free of charge of course. I had simply to go to him. He was surprised at the aggravation of burns and he had all but cured me of them."

37. Experience of the Formless

In that letter of 6.4.1939 Pujya Shri Mota simply stated that he could not make out the significance of all that had happened to him on Ramnavami Day, (i.e. on 29.3.1939).

"And I feel no desire to know it either. There is a completely unintermittant (divine) consciousness and concentration on the Goal. Waves of etherial joy and awareness of the Self continue to surge throughout my being like the ever-flowing waves of the sea. It is an experience which no language can describe."

* Of the indigenous medical science.

Later on, he said it was his experience of "**Formless Entity**" (**Nirvikalpa Samadhi**) but in that letter he simply states. "A firm, living, indubitable faith has grown up that the Heaven of Bliss is sure to be attained. All the same there is no 'thus far' no restricting limit to this holy pilgrimage. As the Sanskrit saying goes, 'From perfection (poorna) grows perfection.'

Why did he declare his experience of 29th March as of "nirvikalpa samadhi" later on and not in that letter written only a week after the event ? This is how the translator understands the point, 'nirvikalpa samadhi' means a trance in which there is total loss of outer consciousness and inwardly a mere awareness of the Self. The meditator, the meditation and the object of meditation, all submerge into some inconceivable state of existence. Pujya Shri Mota was probably not content with even that connotation of the term, 'Nirvikalpa Samadhi'. By his standard real 'Nirvikalpa Samadhi' is nothing less than '*Sahaja Samadhi*' (Natural state of Awareness in which outer consciousness is quite alive and active, but at the same time there is the constant inner consciousness that his Self is perfectly the same as the Self

Supreme, whose manifestation is omnipresence etc.) As the effects of that night's supernal experience began to be perceived more and more tangibly and convincingly, he felt he was omnipresent etc. Hence that belated statement that that night's experience was essentially that of '**Nirvikalpa Samadhi**' (Formless Entity.)

It is interesting to note here that even after he had experienced that same highest trance state, Swami Yoganand also asked his Guru : "When shall I find God ?" and the Guru had to quell that doubt, by saying among other things, 'You have found Him.'*

Remarkable Anecdotes

During his stay at Banaras in 1939, there were two remarkable anecdotes of Pujya Shri Mota's life.

I

Before going to the famous Kashi Vishwanath Temple, the sisters took off their ornaments and gave them to Pujya Shri Mota for safe custody. He simply put them in one of his shirt-pockets and accompanied the girls to the Temple.

* Autobiography of a Yogi p. 153, Fourth jaico impression, 1971.

The next day the two girls and their girlfriend decided to enjoy a cruise in a boat on the river Ganga. When Pujya Shri Mota was changing the previous day's shirt for a new one for the occasion, he was shocked to find that there was a slit in his shirt-pocket and all the ornaments were stolen during their visit to the Temple.

Though it meant a loss of some hundreds of rupees, be it said to the credit of the girls, that they made light of the whole affair and remained indifferent and cheerful and enjoyed the boat ride. But Pujya Shri Mota was inwardly feeling very sore about the theft and blaming himself for failing in his duty as the custodian of the jewellery.

That was a period in his life when he went into *samadhi* even unwittingly, if something happened that intensified his devotional spirit. That incentive was supplied by the third girl in the company. The falling shades of the evening, the murmurings of the wind, the soft ripples of the river, and the lapping sounds of the boatman's oars, made the girl rise to the occasion and she sang a very melodious deeply moving *bhajan* (hymn).

Losing all outward consciousness, Pujya

Shri Mota at once flew to the heavenly bliss of *samadhi*. But before he reached that state, the thought of the theft and with it a sense of faulty behaviour were persistently hammering his mental awareness. The result was unexpected and uncanny. The scene of the thief slitting the pocket and stealing the jewellery vividly flashed upon his mind. In that drama graphically enacted in his mind, he said to the thief: 'You shall rue the hour when you stole those ornaments, give them back to me.' And then he told the thief how he could be located.

The next day the two girls and Pujya Shri Mota went to the place where their examinations were to be held. When they were on the balcony of the first floor, they saw somebody wildly running towards them. He had run so fast that he was gasping for breath, when he came up. He could simply sign to Pujya Shri Mota to come down to him. When Pujya Shri Mota met him, he said, "Do please take back all your jewellery. My whole body is burning as by a fire. I simply can't bear this terrible pain. Do please be kind enough to save me."

When asked how he was able to find out

Pujya Shri Mota, he said he was feeling the burning sensation since the previous night and that in the morning not only Pujya Shri Mota's figure, but his whereabouts etc. were distinctly visible to him and he had simply to run to meet him.

In deep gratefulness Pujya Shri Mota looked up to the heavens above. Then fixing his eyes on the thief he said, "This is all the marvellous contrivance of my Lord. Take a pledge never to steal within the precincts of the Kashi Vishvanath Temple and resolve mentally to honestly keep it. You will soon be cured." In the presence of Pujya Shri Mota the thief immediately took that solemn oath. Pujya Shri Mota on his part mentally prayed to God to remove the man's pain. Very quickly it subsided and then disappeared altogether.

II

Is the famous epigram, "More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of," a mere poetic fancy - without any substantial truth in it ? The following actual event in Pujya Shri Mota's life shows that prayer is a powerful force. It **can** bring down divine grace to the common affairs of a

human being. (Of course that prayer must be worth the name, must come out from the deepest depth of the heart.)

Pujya Shri Mota once happened to be on the horns of a dilemma during his stay in Banaras. He was in the city as the guardian of the two daughters of Shri Parsadbhai. How keenly he felt any remissness in his duty in that respect has already been seen in the preceding incident. But he was not allowed to rest and perform his duty quietly. Another difficulty suddenly reared its head.

He received a telegram from his younger brother, Muljibhai, to the effect that his aged mother was dangerously ill. As shown earlier he had promised her that he would present himself before her, when she was about to die. But he was in Banaras on a post of duty which he could ill afford to neglect. He, therefore, wired to Shri Parsadbhai at Karachi to send somebody to relieve him of the charge, so that he could be by his mother's side in her last hours. Shri Parsadbhai's telegraphic reply was no solution to the difficulty. He said that Pujya Shri Mota could leave the daughters with somebody else in Banaras itself and proceed to Nadiad. How

could there be anyone in that far-off town, Banaras, so closely acquainted with him that he could entrust the charge of the two daughters to him ? So it came to this : He had got to be in Banaras on the one hand and on the other be physically present by his mother's bedside in order to keep his plighted word. Pondering over the problem, it flashed upon him that both the purposes could be served, if his mother had a vision of his bodily presence at her bedside in Nadiad. That would satisfy her and she would die happily.

For this extraordinary, almost impossible, occurrence he had only one recourse - prayer to his beloved Lord. To Him, therefore, he prayed and prayed, like a baby that would not stop crying till its mother came up.

For three days he prayed fervently, sometimes internally while outwardly doing some work, at others with all the concentrated intensity of an agonised soul. Food he had no relish for. Sleep he could not have, - at the fear lest his mother might die restless and hankering after him. He strengthened his appeal by saying "Lord ! It's not for **my** satisfaction that I pray. I only want my mother's wish granted and so my

promise kept."*

On the third day electric lights suddenly went off. That he at once recognised as a symbolic coincidence. That meant that his mother had breathed her last breath. His prayers, therefore, ended then.

'Was his prayer granted ?' that was the question that then faced him. Instinctively he did feel that it was. But he wanted its confirmation. In two or three days a letter from his younger brother, Muljibhai, informed him that their mother, a very short time before her death, had ejaculated : "See ! See ! Mulia, Chunia has come. Is sitting by my feet ! Gently passes his hand over mine."

Though Muljibhai did not see anything, she **had** the vision which Pujya Shri Mota had prayed for and did feel happy at her son's presence by her deathbed.

A strange way to keep up a promise !

Which of the Two ?

Genuine inquirers in spiritual matters may wonder which of the above two examples revealed greater spiritual power. The

* Even Bhagwan Ramana Maharshi, specially known for his detachment, had offered prayers for his mother's recovery from her first illness.

answer is difficult to give - by the inexperienced. This is only an intellectual pyrotechnic display. It is given in order to stimulate in those serious readers even greater earnestness to know, by self-experience, those deep things that alone really count for in life.

At first sight it appears that the grant of Pujya Shri Mota's very extraordinary prayer to let his mother see him in a vision was the acme of his spiritual power. It brought down on earth a unique event and was moreover a brilliant example of God's omnipotent power.

But the vision, glorious and spectacular as it certainly was, appeared before that person who was unconsciously not only very receptive to her son's prayer - filled telepathy, but was herself very eager to see him. It was, therefore, in a sense a marriage of two loving minds. The mother also took (unconsciously) a recognisable part in bringing about the happy consummation.

Everything is the reverse in the case of the recovery of ornaments. The thief was anything but mentally co-operative and receptive. He had wrested the jewellery by a trick. He would never have returned it, but

for the severe chastisement that God inflicted on him. As God was not even appealed to in this case, it shows how dear those who love Him are to Him, how eager He is to be their prop and support, eager to come to their succour, make their thought - waves reach antipathetic persons and compel them to do things entirely against their will.

That is one aspect. The other is the fact that Pujya Shri Mota actually **saw** (in meditation), as in the present, the performance of that action which had happened more than 24 hours ago.

They say that an individual living today on a star about two thousand light - years distant from our earth can see the events of Lord Jesus Christ's life actually happening before his eyes. Pujya Shri Mota's being must accordingly have reached a place more than 24 light - hours distant from the earth to enable him to see a previous day's event happening before his very eyes. (It may be remembered here that the sun is only 8 light - minutes distant from us.) At least to that extent he showed himself to be omnipresent and omnipotent.

The translator, therefore, definitely opts for the theft case as of greater significance.

Some Early Personal Experience

The river is boisterous and riotous at the start of its journey towards its destination, the sea. It cuts its course through the many hills that block its march - running round some, passing over some others, even piercing through some to make a valley for its onward march. But after some part of its journey, it becomes more and more sedate and silent, though it gets richer in content.

That is a happy similarity between the river's course and the progress of a spiritual aspirant. In the early stage, he is bursting with enthusiasm of a new convert, cuts a dash of poems if he has a flair for literature, becomes a zealous propagandist, in season and out of it, and advertises his Guru's attainments as well as his own in super abundance. Years pass and he grows deeper and wiser, is wary of giving out to all and sundry the very extraordinary and bewildering experiences he has.

As Pujya Shri Mota is no more here in bodily form, the translator has not hesitated to publish now all those 'miracles', whose authenticity he does not doubt. But the following are just a very few of his own

personal experiences with regard to Pujya Shri Mota.

The translator was then a novitiate - and so like the river, in exuberance.

There is a Sanskrit verse :

पवित्रौ वाऽपवित्रौ वा सर्वावस्थां गतोऽपि वा ।

यः स्मरेत्पुंडरिकाक्षं स बाह्याभ्यंतरः शुचिः ॥

In whatever state he be, pure or impure, the man who remembers the Lord is sanctified, both inside and out.

Reminded of this verse, the translator once went into a latrine to ease himself, a place usually considered polluted. But there he offered some prayer - mentally - to God. The latrine, besides, was some fifty yards away. All the same as soon as he returned, Pujya Shri Mota burst out : 'You were offering prayers ? In the latrine (of all places) ?'

Spiritual contact with Pujya Shri Mota had given the translator a strong further push to his innate urge to compose poems in Gujarati. And many a verse he scribbled without caring for their merit (or otherwise) as poetical pieces. His one object then was to use his natural instinct as a means for his spiritual progress. [In fact, years earlier, when he was a colleague at the Harijan

Ashram in Bodal, Pujya Shri Mota, (then Chunibhai of course), had advised the translator to compose poems on spiritual topics only, and he had accepted the friendly advice.]

So, one day, he wrote a verse bemoaning his fate : "I will go on dropping petitions in the Post Office and never mind it if you simply throw them in the Waste Paper Basket without casting a glance at them. I will not rest,

"Till turns to me Thy smiling face

And grants my only wish – Thy grace."

Hardly was the ink dry – not figuratively only, but literally also – when in comes Pujya Shri Mota from somewhere and says: "Now what's all this about throwing petitions in the post office ?"

Entrancing as the above facts are, the following is even more so:

The Hariom Ashram at Nadiad had then already began to function and the late Shri Kuberdas, proprietor of the Bharat Bhuvan Hotel, was then the prop. of the Ashram. Probably Pujya Shri Mota was very intensely thinking of him who was 3 miles away at his hotel. Whatever the cause, he spoke out

to the translator: "What's this that I am hearing ? Kuberdas's radio switched on ?' And really, for about 5 minutes, not only he but the translator also distinctly heard the blaring radio. At that very secluded spot and in those early times there was not the ghost of a chance of anyone carrying a transistor. (And one or two others disclaimed hearing anything.)

That is an unforgettable instance that surpasses even clairaudience. In this case, not only the clairaudient's, but other ears are made to hear the sound made 3 miles away.

38. Holy Fraternity

There is honour among thieves and brigands. They would not divulge the names and places of their nefarious (riff-raff) co-workers even under the third degree. There is a still stronger but secret bond of unity among holy people, in spite of their varying outlooks and activities, and that for the noble purpose of doing good to as many as they possibly can.

This was clearly brought out in the silent give – and – take between Pujya Shri Mota

and Pujya Shri Aurobindo of Pondicherry Ashram.

Till February 1943, no child below ten or so was allowed to enter even the open courtyard by the side of which Pujya Shri Aurobindo lived on the first floor. His *darshan* as well as Pujya Mataji's was, therefore, entirely out of the question.

Now, under Pujya Shri Mota's instruction some of us including Shri Nandubhai's son, aged less than four, went to Pondicherry for the *darshan* of Pujya Shri Aurobindo and Mataji. Pujya Shri Mota (who was far away) wanted even the little son to have the benefit of the purifying *darshan*. He, therefore, asked the translator to send an appeal to Pujya Mataji to let the baby boy have the *darshan*.

When sages want something done, circumstances conspire to help them. The boy, being very young, was very susceptible to a holy environment. It so happened that in the house of a disciple of Pujya Shri Aurobindo, he fell down from a swing about 3 feet high, on the floor with the face downwards and so striking against it.

All the same, he did not shriek or cry. That was very remarkable. This and other points in the boy's favour were written in

the appeal to Mataji, who very kindly granted *darshan* to the baby boy. He it was, who through Pujya Shri Mota's influence, thus opened the flood-gate of children coming in increasing numbers into the erstwhile forbidden courtyard.

Pujya Shri Mota on his part had written a prayer in verse form entitled **Shri Charanaravinde*** (charana – feet – aravinda lotus, which literally mean "At the Lotus Feet" but It was the covert transposition of "At the feet of Shri Aurobindo = arvind".)

Next year, owing to the earnest desire of Pujya Shri Mota Shri Nandubhai succeeded in letting even his servant, 'Parameshwar', have the holy *darshan*. That too was an innovation for persons of the lower class were not then allowed to have the *darshan*.

This Pujya Shri Mota contrived to get two novelties introduced in the working of Shri Aurobindo Ashram, without any tangible approach by him to that sage.

Recall of the Departed Soul

Let the first instance be that wherein the translator himself was made to play an important role. After the family came under

* This poem appears in Pujya Shri Mota's 'Punit-Prem-Gatha' (Poems on divine love).

his protecting wings, Pujya Shri Mota asked the widowed mother of Shri Nandubhai to perform the **shraddha*** of her late husband, as she was an orthodox Vaishnava (follower of Lord Vishnu).

And he asked the translator to be the **de jure** officiating priest. The latter, therefore, sat all through the ceremony by the side of the actual performer. As the ceremony proceeded, the subtle atmosphere around became more and more tense and purified. At last a "person" with a fairly long white coat appeared in a vision before the translator. He felt at once that the apparition could not but be that of the deceased. But his only photograph which the translator had seen was the one that showed him in a black shorter coat. When the ceremony was over, the translator narrated his experience and wondered why the coat he had seen was white and long, not short and black. He was told that the departed spirit usually dressed himself in a long white coat. The translator was thus fully convinced that the invocation made in the **shraddha** had brought about

* A invocation ceremony to help the departed soul in its journey forward and to express the love and reverence of the bereaved for that soul.

the actual presence of the disembodied soul – a feat by no means usual in **shraddha** ceremonies.

Chitra lost her mother when she was about seven - the age when the loss could be deeply felt, but without the solace that a greater age naturally provides. When Pujya Shri Mota was once at Karachi with her, she had a spasm of inconsolable grief and wept incessantly. The sight moved him in sympathy to the depth of his soul and, unwittingly, words came out of him that she would be able to see her mother. Of course he had but one remedy for any ailment that afflicted him. He prayed to God and after some time the girl saw the mother's form, who assuaged her grief.

Nanubhai plunged into the 'Quit India' movement, but with immediately dire consequences for himself. As he was involved in a dangerous but unavailing conspiracy, he was arrested and released under the secret watch of the C.I.D. (detective police) His colleagues therefore adroitly sent him away to Madras (Chennai) and then to Kumbakonam. He was thus entirely cut off from his relatives and given a new name, Kantilal, to wipe off his past completely.

There the bare news, third or fourth hand, reached him to the effect that his sister was dead and gone. As he loved her very much, he was agonized at the thought that he could not see his sister in her last hours. Fortunately for him Pujya Shri Mota was staying where he did, i.e. in the house of N. Gopaldas. As Kantilal soon saw the spiritual greatness of Pujya Shri Mota, he opened his anguished heart to him. The latter asked Kantilal to go into silence in a dark room for some days and remember God as best as he could. On the third evening he did see some figure, but got afraid. Pujya Shri Mota buoyed up his spirits and then the next evening he saw his sister quite as she looked during her lifetime. He was thus consoled and satisfied.

Foresight and Considerateness

Though not at all well-placed in life at that time, our Mr. 'C' became a partner in an industrial enterprize in Bihar by paying Rs. 5,000. He had already come into the range of Pujya Shri Mota's circle, but he informed him of the deal after it was confirmed and the amount given. Pujya Shri Mota at once saw the dismal future of the venture. He was therefore anxious about the safety of 'C's

money. As Pujya Shri Mota had enough contact with the senior partner also, he wrote to him, 'C's loss is my loss. If your enterprize fails, please see that 'C's money is returned to him in full."

The foreboding proved to be completely true. 'C' had to go to Bihar with the only object of winding up the concern. From the investment of a large sum, 'C' could recover only about Rs. 6,000, i.e., he got back just the amount he had given and the interest on it.

When Mrs. Gumansing was passing through her fifth month of pregnancy, her husband suggested that she should go into one of Pujya Shri Mota's 'silence rooms'*, so that the coming baby might be imbued with holy **sanskaras**.** As both Mr. & Mrs. G. were Pujya Shri Mota's disciples with an experience of a stay in a silence room, Mrs. G. gladly agreed. Pujya Shri Mota was approached through the post and he complied with the request.

After a short time, the couple were shocked at the blunt peremptory cancellation of the permission, specially as no consoling

* A unique innovation by Pujya Shri Mota to help spiritual aspirants. (See pages 204 to 207)

** Embedded impressions capable of germination into incidents in life at the proper time.

reason was given. There was, however, no other go for them except to submit to the ordinance of their Guru as well as they could.

A month or so passed in this chagrin, when all of a sudden Mrs. Gumansing began to suffer excruciating pain. The doctor advised her immediate entrance into a hospital. There also the pain did not abate, as she did not respond to the medicines given. As a result of this unbearable torture, she lost all outward consciousness as a prelude to her sinking totally. Just at that critical moment of suspense she had, as suddenly as the infliction of the pain, a glorious vision of a brilliant white light in which she distinctly saw the figure of Pujya Shri Mota clad, as he used to be then, only in shorts.

The unbearable pain abated at once and soon she was completely cured. On intimation of Mrs. Gumansing's experience, Pujya Shri Mota wrote that the couple must have now understood the reason for his stern refusal to Mrs. Gumansing to enter into his silence room and that he did present himself at the hospital at the critical time.*

* Narrated to the translator by Mrs. G. herself in the presence of Mr. G. who attested to the facts of the incident. Mr. G. has preserved this letter of Pujya Shri Mota confirming the truth of Mrs G. 's experience.

"Gifted by God"

A remarkable instance of the unique service rendered by sages and saints was provided by Pujya Shri Mota many years ago. The translator is personally aware of all its ins and outs, but for the sake of decorum symbolic names Mr. A and Mrs. A are given.

A lost his mother in his early childhood and was brought up by the lady of a friendly family. Naturally there grew up between the two deep love of mother and son relationship. This harmonious atmosphere was rudely disturbed, shortly after A got married. The mother's instinct of possessive love got the upper hand over her charity of heart and the new-comer, the wife, became the target of her displeasure. Fuel was added to the fire when it was found that the wife did not bear a child even after the lapse of some time. As it happens in Hindu society, she was blamed for it and so banished to her father's house. There she lived, a helpless abandoned wife.

Those were the times when polygamy was not prohibited and the old but unjust custom of his caste allowed A to have a second wife, with the first living and

discarded like scrap. That idea was in the air.

But uncanny are the ways of God. Just then A happened to come in contact with Pujya Shri Mota, as the inner man in him was yearning for spiriual unfoldment. Gladly he went to a solitary place in Pujya Shri Mota's Company. The subtle but powerful influence of Pujya Shri Mota's presence and the new environment of the place opened A's eyes to the wrong he had been doing to his wife. Immediately on his return to Gujarat, he brought back his wife to his house at the Harijan Ashram where he was staying. A storm arose at the house of his 'mother', but he remained firm.

After years of agony scales were thus turned in Mrs. A's favour, through Pujya Shri Mota's grace. Like troubles, blessings also come, not in single spies but in battalions. Soon after the happy event. A was given the respectable post of an Inspector of Schools in a state of Saurashtra, where the couple went and lived.

The wife alone is not always the one and the only cause of childlessness. The husband's physical constitution also is at

times defective. The dead facts were that parentage was physically impossible for this couple and society held Mrs. A responsible. In spite of her retrieval, she felt unhappy still on that score. Pujya Shri Mota was, therefore, not satisfied with the mere restitution of Mrs. A's position in the home. Though it was physically impossible, he wanted her to be free from the stigma of barenness. In a year or two after her return to her husband, a son was born to her. Pujya Shri Mota himself gave him the significant name - **Devadatta**-meaning "gifted by God".

Devadatta lived only for about 2 years and a half. He came to the earth as if only to remove his mother's disgrace. Even in infancy he showed distinct signs of a spiritual leaning. There was a temple on the walls of which the miracles performed by a local saint, Lala Bhagat, were shown in paintings. Just to divert the mind of the crying infant and soothe him, A, with a stick in hand, once took him to that temple. The baby was very pleased and became immediately quiet. From then on, he would

continue crying and pointing at the stick A had carried to the temple to suggest his desire to go there. He would not stop howling till his wish was fulfilled and he was taken there. Verily he was 'Devadatta', a highly elevated soul, a 'yogabhrashta'* *jiva* as Pujya Shri Mota remarked. His period of life was very short because, Pujya Shri Mota added, he had probably to complete a very small part of his *karma* before he could go to the Lord of Bliss.

39. His Silence Rooms

In appraising the position of Pujya Shri Mota in the firmament of saints, it has been stated that though circumscribed practically within the limits of Gujarat, the channels in which his services flowed and his instructions regarding his mortal remain entitle him to be ranked among the most brilliant of those stars.

The first and foremost of the services is, in the translator's view, his unique

* Fallen from yoga. The Bhagwadgita says that a person who once begins to walk on the spiritual path never falls from it permanently. Owing to his (temporary) fall, however, he goes to heaven to enjoy the fruit of his good deeds and when they are thus exhausted, he returns to the earth for further progress from the stage from which he had fallen previously.

innovation of silence rooms. There have already been ecclesiastical retreats, specially in Catholicism, but the difference between the two is great, so great that Pujya Shri Mota's rooms deserve the name of an original contribution to the spiritual world.

A person who wants to devote his or her whole time in *sadhana* for a fixed number of days, gets, when his turn in a queue comes, an entry into a specifically constructed dark room. It has the barest minimum of ventilation. There are a bathroom and a latrine within it. Electric lights are provided but only for reading or writing spiritual literature and for physical needs. Introspection is a must for any self-perception and self reform. The darkness of the room helps the man in turning the mind's searchlight inwards, since in a closely-shut dark room the senses largely **lose** their characteristic power of making a man an extrovert. Letters to and from people outside are banned except for an urgent unavoidable necessity. Food also is provided by a special contrivance. In the front wall there is a big hole with a sill and two doors opening inside and outside. An attendant opens the door on his side of the wall, puts the food on the

sill and closes the door. The aspirant then opens the door on his side and takes the food inside. This makes it impossible for him to see a human face during his whole stay in the dark room. An aspirant thus enjoys all the advantages of that kind of solitude for which earnest seekers of truth used to resort in ancient times to woods or caves in a mountain. Added to this is the supply of all the amenities which have become indispensable in modern times.

Silence rooms thus provide an easy means to go into the Self for some days and then come out on life's stage with fresh vigour and a new outlook gained from concentration on God. There is no ban on any kind of worship. Persons belonging to all the creeds and both the sexes have, in thousands, taken advantage of this facility. An extremely negligible number among them have come out before the expiry of the period they had fixed and thus failed to pass through this ordeal. For, an ordeal it is - specially for the numerous novices who have spent their lives outside among loved ones and others and have been always engaged in doing some concrete work. When Shri Ambubhai Purani, a distinguished follower

of Pujya Shri Aurobindo, learnt that a person already inside a silence room was going to spend 51 days there, he was amazed and remarked, 'Unless the spiritual guide of the person so closely confined for so long a time is a great adept, the inmate would go mad in such stark solitude.' The fact that one of the most stringent punishments in jail was (or is ?) to confine the offender in a solitary cell supports this view. But the highest number of days spent in a silence room is 388 days. The credit of this treat goes to two persons - a young Canadian of 24 years and a Panjabi young man popularly known as Maunibaba.

Yes, the secret of this phenomenal success of thousands of persons taking strict silence in these silence rooms of Pujya Shri Mota, and of some in staying inside for many days or repeatedly, lies in the fact that the rooms are surcharged with a powerful spiritual atmosphere which Pujya Shri Mota has subtly infused into them and which have become the mainstay of new entrants or long-time users.

40. His Ashrams

The Ashrams owe their origin to necessities for silence-rooms that arose from

time to time. Through Shri Nandubhai partners of his firm, N. Gopaldas & Co., - all his relatives - came in Pujya Shri Mota's contact. Shri Nandubhai, specially, had both *the necessary urge and the easy* circumstances that made him wish to take as much advantage of Pujya Shri Mota's subtle guidance in a silence room as possible. An Ashram at Kumbakonam was, therefore, constructed first of all others. There is a specially well-provided silence room at some distance from the residential building there. Earlier, silence rooms were improvised at different places, - at a bungalow in a colony far from Tiruchirapalli rented by Shri Nandubhai, at another disciple's (Shri Vajubhai's) house in a townlet, Sayla, at Mirakutir, hallowed by the stays of Pujya Vinobaji and Gandhiji's devoted English follower Mirabahen, in Gandhiji's Ashram at Sabarmati etc.

Before deciding on Kumbakonam as the location of his Ashram, Pujya Shri Mota, with the monetary support of Shri Nandubhai, had tried to establish an Ashram first near a village, Sinor, on the bank of Narmada, and then in a villa in Triuchirapalli. But both the attempts were given up - probably because

the subtle (mental) atmosphere was not fully congenial.

In that second attempt he had asked for donations from those who knew him. Even though his resolve to collect Rs.1,00,000/- in donations was fulfilled, he returned to the donors the amounts they had subscribed, because the idea was temporarily given up. But the necessity persisted. Kumbakonam was far away. Improvised silence-rooms did not provide full expression, to Pujya Shri Mota's ideas of supplying the spiritual and material needs of the aspirant. (At the places mentioned above silence rooms had to be opened for providing food and putting and taking out vessels that contained excreta and these had to be cleaned by attendants. Though others were there, Pujya Shri Mota never disdained to take a part in doing all these things. (He even initiated those acts.)

To meet the growing demand two Ashrams were constructed at Nadiad in 1955 and Surat in 1956, with a single silence room in each. Since the Ashrams have this charming convenience for persons busily engaged in worldly activities to spend some quiet time in self-improvement, their

popularity has been consistently increasing. The result is that the Ashrams now possess 18 silence rooms in all and yet the period during which any silence room lies vacant is rare and short, even after 34 years of Pujya Shri Mota's physical departure from the world.

Much more need not be added about these Ashrams. In the beginning all the activities of persons outside were meant exclusively to serve the needs of those inside the silence rooms. Pujya Shri Mota then used to remain outside the silence rooms and employ his powerful mind to help the persons inside. With the passage of time the need for his physical vicinity and concentration on the inmates of silence rooms grew less and less. He, therefore, directed his energies to other ways of service. The Ashramites who used to exclusively cater for the needs of the inmates have followed suit and now help Pujya Shri Mota's other activities also.

41. Wordly Activities

A God-minded person confines his activities usually to giving spiritual help to people. He delivers sermons, organises mass

hymn, singing or meditation, narrates incidents in the lives of saints, etc.

Pujya Shri Mota directed his service also to down to - earth material needs of society. Though not the first among saints in this matter he is definitely one of the few who have done so. And some items of his activities in these fields bear the stamp of originality.

Origin Of These Activities

Pujya Shri Mota was once sitting under the large bunyan tree in his Hariom Ashram at Nadiad. That was one of the places resorted to by him during his period of *sadhana*. His initiator in *sadhana* Pujya Shri Balayogi was with him at that time. Pujya Shri Mota often sat on a swing under the cooling canopy of that big bunyan tree, but this time old hallowed memories were suddenly revived and he was lost in a reverie. In that mood he again saw his Guru in his human form. The Guru asked him to collect ten million rupees before his life-time ended and spend them on definite objects that raise society from its inertia to healthy activity. Ten million rupees ! That was too staggering an amount ! He expressed his

doubts, but the Guru assured him, "You can and will succeed."

From then onwards, i.e. from 1962 to almost the end of his life on earth in 1976, he made strenuous efforts to collect money and spend it after activities of social uplift.

And Pujya Sri Mota had the satisfaction of seeing his Guru's prediction accomplished and his efforts for that end successful. More than ten million rupees were given to him and used after these activities before he breathed his last.

Those Activities

To give the reader an idea of the variety of these activities, here is a hurried glance at them. He gave away these millions of rupees for the encouragement of:

- (1) Cycling, swimming and boat-races, physical culture of boys and girls through outdoor games;
- (2) Organization of skilled doctors' free medical services to the poor for operations **en masse** of afflicted eyes and teeth;
- (3) Publication (in Gujarati) of encyclopaedias, books of knowledge, picture books for children and elder boys, of the Vedas: of literature that lights up '**guna**' and '**bhava**' (virtues and noble emotions);

- (4) Promotion of fine arts like singing, dancing, drawing and painting, sculpture, etc.
- (5) Relief work in flood or famine-stricken areas.

In fact hardly any field, progress in which helps society, has been overlooked by Pujya Shri Mota, and some of these activities like publication of encyclopaedias, standard books on grammar and etymology are certainly original (in Gujarati).

Of course, ten million rupees for these numerous fields of public service are only a foundation stone, but they show that Pujya Shri Mota did his best to draw public attention and philanthropists' money to many neglected or forgotten fields of service.

His last social service is perhaps the greatest. Awards others do give, the Government also does, relief-works have been carried out by many others - individuals and institutions; helps to poor students, submerged classes etc. are not new. But Pujya Shri Mota's heart burnt specially for the poor villages. Gujarat possesses numerous villages having primary schools, where children sit in *dharmashalas* (free public guest-houses), verandahs of private houses, the precincts of the village temple. Pujya Shri

Mota, therefore, was intent on seeing that there was not a single primary school that did not have at least one room exclusively used for teaching children.

The public has hailed this activity. It is carried out even now and with ever-increasing vigour.

Traditionally, since centuries past, liberal – minded people have been freely spending money after temples and *dharmashalas* and they can be seen in innumerable villages, but even a single room in them for their own children to sit and study in is an uncommon sight. Pujya Shri Mota's donation attracted Government subsidy and local aid and hence more than 10,000 school rooms are already constructed. (31-3-2010)

A Perennial Stream

In the 14 years of this last period of life, spent after encouraging various activities, ten million rupees were collected. But in only 3 years after his demise more than ten million rupees have already been received and spent after the one project of school rooms in villages. The current figure amounts to rupees 15,25,00,000 - received and spent on various projects (31-3-2010).

Donations given to Pujya Shri Mota that began as a tiny trickle have thus gone higher and higher, and now it is not even a rivulet, it is a river flowing with an ever greater content. Even the physical absence of Pujya Shri Mota has not retarded its rate of growth. On the contrary, as shown above, there has been an increase in it. It is interesting to go into the reasons for this continuous progress in the amount of donations given to Pujya Shri Mota during and after his lifetime.

India has always venerated, not its intellectual giants, not its conquerors in war (except those that have, in the language of the Gita, reestablished *dharma* i.e. religion), not its great scientists or adventurers, but its saints and sages. Once the people came to know of Pujya Shri Mota's spiritual altitude, they began to venerate him and thought that his holy footsteps in their houses would purify them and their dear ones. Money began to be rained on him, and then poured, to make him accede to their earnest plea to visit their homes.

That was one reason. The Government also, seeing the perfect integrity with which the amounts were collected and spent after

worthy objects, gave special concessions to donors in the computation of their income-tax. And as it happens in the case of many saints, the air spread thick - and certainly not without basis - that money given to Pujya Shri Mota was repaid many times over in the form of happiness,; both material and spiritual.

Erection of school-rooms in remote villages is by its nature an idea that catches the fancy of those who wish to spend money on deserving objects. For several years past Pujya Shri Mota's devotees and friends have been celebrating, during and after his lifetime, three gala days to honour him. Collections made on these days have made significant additions to the funds. For instance on the single day of 20th Sept. 1980, which celebrated his birth, Rs.16,00,000/- were collected.

42. Prolific Literature

This is the third direction of service in which Pujya Shri Mota made his mark before he left the world.

After his initiation into *sadhana* his longing for Self-realization grew more and more intense, till it became the hot burning

lava of a volcano, to use his expression for that gnawing urge. People, therefore, found him loudly singing hymns on his way to and from his school for Harijan Children. Like the mediaeval Gujarati saint, Narasinh Mehta, he soon became the target of sneer by many and admiration by a few. Some mischievous boys jeered and hooted him and even pelted him with small brickbats. Neither daunted by this harassment nor puffed up by high regard, he persisted – with the curious result of a resounding slap on his cheek—once and a present of rupees at another time.

Probably it was this hymn-singing that developed in him an itch for composing hymns for his personal edification. He had at that time one single goal to gain – that of 'seeing' or 'finding' God, i.e., of Self – realization. Though sweet and touching, the hymns that already existed did not serve his purpose fully. The saints who composed them ventilated their own needs and referred to their own situations. And he wanted something in verse form that hit the nail on the head for his own uplift.

Once the start was made hymns came to him with increasing ease. An effort, even laborious at first, grew into a natural habit

with him and he came to the stage when Milton's line, "Then came easy my unpremeditated verse" was applicable to him. These outpourings also grew more intensive and extensive, as time passed specially since, in the later period of his *sadhana*, he successfully carried out his resolve to compose two hymns daily.*

Besides these compositions in verse form there are two other types of his literary output. One is that of letters in prose to different disciples to suit their needs. They are so framed as to appeal to the common man. The other type is that of treatises in verse form on spiritual topics like faith, infatuation, action, attachment and disgust, longing for God, Guru, etc.

The first two kinds of literature were published simultaneously or in quick succession. Then there was a gap of several years. When he was convinced that his word

* 'Manane', Tuj-charane'. 'Hridaya Pukar' etc. belong to this his *sadhana* period. The first two, translated into English verses as "To The Mind", and "At Thy Lotus Feet", are available at Hariom Ashram, Surat - 395.005 and Hariom Ashram, Nadlad - 387 001. Another translation in prose form entitled LIFE'S STRUGGLE is also for sale there.

was powerful and it went home, and that the inquirers were serious in their quest, he shed light on abstruse subjects in verse form.

All these creations come to as many as 154 books in all-in verse and prose. (31-3-2010)

That means thousands and thousands of lines in verse form and thousands of letters and some essays in prose. And the whole literature deals with subjects of permanent, not ephemeral, interest and value.

A Niche In The Spiritual Shrine

The literature he has created in verse and prose has one clearly recognisable trait - simplicity in expression. In the early creations in verse his one and only object was his own progress towards Self-realization. He never cared to embellish those verses in order to conform to the strict standards of poetry. He wrote them down simply as his spiritual frenzy impelled him at the moment. The letters he wrote were for guidance in spiritual and worldly matters as much to the public at large as to his disciples and earnest seekers learned or otherwise they too were, therefore, never written with an eye to high literary attainments. When he wrote verses on abstruse subjects, he wanted to make them

easily understood by one and all and they were effectively simple.

To estimate the worth of his literary output it is best to rank him with Akha Bhagat. (Bhakta Poet) This worthy predecessor of the mediaeval age wrote profusely in verse form and yet he said of himself:

"Don't reckon among poets the man of spiritual (experiential) knowledge."* (अनुभवी)

Like him Pujya Shri Mota carved a niche for himself in the spiritual shrine through literature.

A Worm Becomes A Giant

A low-born rustic baby starts his life under the derogatory nomenclature "Chunia". He becomes "Chunilal" as he joins college or as he throws away material prospects for the service of Harijans. Several terrible psychological shocks and from them a pestilent disease make him desperate. He tries to commit suicide by drowning, but is miraculously saved. That convinces him that

* A literator once commented that a spiritual leader like Pujya Shri Mota should be 'desireless' (and not insist on seeing that his donation was properly used). To him he said, "Now please, don't meddle in things you don't know. Have you seriously tried to be 'desireless'? Only then you can know what it means. Do I not keep away from your literary field?"

God intends him to become, what the iniquity and the inhuman treatment meted out to his father had made him in childhood resolve to be, 'Mota - great'.

The Power that saves him from death brings about circumstances that make him deserve the appellation 'Mota' in more and more ways. First, he actually became Mota of his family after the death of his elder brother as the oldest male survivor and staff and support of the family. Then his fame as a devotee of God spread in Nadiad and he began to be respectfully regarded and addressed as 'Bhagat' (devotee) by at least some people. **When disciples gathered round him, he became 'Mota' in their eyes though he was not given that name. When not only Shri Nandubhai but his mother and brothers - the whole family practically - came under his magnatic charm. Nandubhai's mother affectionately called him her son and 'Mota' as he was the oldest among her sons. That appellation stuck to him since then and everybody began to speak and think of him as Mota.** After the establishment of his Ashrams at Kumbakonam, Nadiad and Surat and at Naroda, he began to be regarded as 'Mota' by quite a large number of people. As

his philanthropic activities grew and the press began to notice him and his activities, he became far more well-known and strode on the stage of Gujarat as a colossus.

God thus granted his aspiration to be 'Mota' 'the great' to the extent that made him satisfied at the fact that the dream of his childhood was realized.

And why his perfect contentment at that—extent only ? Because :

(1) In his advanced stage of *sadhana* he recognised the truth of the following well-known poet's line :

"Fame (is)the last infirmity of noble minds";

(2) (a) He was thereby sailing in the same boat as Dhruva who began his *sadhana* to gain a kingdom, but asked for nothing more than devotion when the Lord appeared before him;

(b) Swami Vivekanand wanted to pray for material security for his starving family, but actually prayed for devotion, when he came face-to-face with the-Divine Mother;

(c) Shri Aurobindo, who took to Yoga to make India free, soon transcended that aim for the much higher one of

"poorna yoga" (perfect – total yoga). That patriot i.e. sage even dissuaded Shri Ambubhai Purani from further pursuing his efforts for India's freedom and appealed to him to join him. And yet he celebrated the advent of *swaraj* because his earlier effort in that direction had succeeded.

The Beginning Of The End

In his intense desire to give to the world all that he had, he used to burn his candle at both the ends. He made his life one long consistent sacrifice of heart, mind and body. Specially since he began the practice of vicarious suffering, he developed quite a number of diseases. Regardless of the inexorable laws of nature - though he knew the consequences - he persisted. His body thus became a museum of diseases - to speak of it figuratively.

He had asthma since his youth. A very poisonous serpent-bite in 1927 made him a chronic sufferer from heat in the body. He had to bathe in cold water thrice or four times a day. He used to feel acute pain in his head from even a slight breeze and had to wear a big round turban. Vicarious

suffering added to these troubles and spondylitis, urinary trouble etc. made their home in his body. With advancing age and ceaseless travels the body began to give him excruciating torture. Though he did take some medicines, he refused to be operated upon for any disease.

But the relieving feature was his state of super-consciousness. It had become a part of his nature. When he engaged his mind in composing verses or in spiritual talks that consciousness rose to a higher pitch and that alone kept his mind above the very painful pressures of the body's ailments.

Nobody ever saw his face fallen. He always appeared completely composed, even laughed hilariously at times.

He appeared before the public for the last time in 1975 during the celebration of the day of his Self realization and announced that public celebrations of the festival days were no longer to be held and he would not stir out of the Ashram thenceforward. Visitors were then allowed to meet him in the Ashram for just a few minutes and only during specific hours.

43. The Race of Death

Even after this announcement he kept up his habit of going to the South where in his presence the Guru Poornima Day* used to be celebrated. His visits of Surat and Nadiad Ashrams alternately were also continued as before.

And all the while the diseases and old age infirmity (he was nearly 78 at the end) tolled on him and his body began to extract its price.

For the first time, in July, 1976, he dropped his regular visit of South India to observe the Guru Poornima Day there. He had already announced that he would retire to a secret refuge and refused to meet anybody thenceforth. But according to the previously fixed programme he was to start for the quiet secret stay in the morning of the Guru Poornima Day from the Surat Ashram. Hence his devotees there requested him to let them celebrate that day and give him their meed. He agreed to wait till 7.30 a.m. only. Under torrential rain and in the early morning a large number of devotees managed to come to the Ashram 8 miles

* Full-moon day of Ashadh, the 9th month of the Hindu year near about July, when everyone adores his Guru.

away from the city. They performed Guru – Puja (worship) and offered prayers and their mite of money. At 7.30 a.m. sharp Pujya Shri Mota left the Surat Ashram for Vidyanagar (his intended resort) near Anand in Kaira District to stay with a devotee couple there.

Owing to the unusually heavy downpour many tunnels had overflowed. Pujya Shri Mota's car tried several routes but all roads were unpassable and he returned to the Surat Ashram at 12 noon. The next day again the same attempt was made. This time he could reach Vadodara, but had to stop there for the same reason of water flowing over roads in the city. He went to Shri Ramanbhai Amin, the famous proprietor of Alembic Chemical Works, and with great difficulty at last reached his Ashram at Nadiad.

The Last Flicker

There was a serious crisis in his health at the Nadiad Ashram. On 16th July 1976 the prostate trouble grew deadly and for 36 hours there was no discharge of urine. The rain had made the Ashram a peninsula unfordable on three sides. Wading through knee-deep water on the one side left crossable. Dr. Kantababen (wife among the devoted couple she wanted to go to Vidyanagar) brought Dr. Virendrabhai, the well-known urologist,

who too had to wade through water. He put a catheter. Nearly 3 litres of urine had accumulated in the receptacle, when Dr. Virendrabhai came again the next day on 18th July.

On the 19th July Pujya Shri Mota asked for a letter-head of the Ashram and wrote the following memorable letter:

44. To All Those Concerned

"I, Chunilal Asharam Bhagat, alias Mota, resident of Hariom Ashram, Nadiad, in full consciousness hereby declare that I wish to cast off my material form – the body—at my discretion and free will. It is a victim of many diseases and cannot now be used for the good of the people. There is not the slightest chance of its recovery from the diseases. It is therefore best to give up the body cheerfully and voluntarily. I will do so when I feel that the proper moment has arrived.

My body should be cremated at a solitary quiet spot very near the place where it dies. Not more than six persons be there. No crowd should be allowed to collect at the dying place. That is my definite and clear instruction to my attendants. The bones should be immediately consigned to the

nearest river. No construction in brick-and-mortar to commemorate my name. Whatever amount is collected as a tribute to my departed spirit must be spent away in building rooms for primary schools in villages."

- Chunilal Ashram Bhagat,
alias Mota.

19-7-1976

At 11 a.m. he wrote 3 letters, **one of which** is specially significant as his parting exhortation:

"Guru Maharaj (epithet of respect-a very shining being) is not just a common living being. If for his own sake, on his own initiative, he wants it or if someone else calls him and wants it, he comes to his help and solves his problems just as he would, if he were bodily alive."

In the **second** letter he expresses his gratitude to all those who helped him and ends with the prayer:

"May God do them good in every way."

In the **third** letter he expresses the motivating sentiment behind his writings and the purpose of his simple style.

45. The Body's Last Refuge

The decision to give up the body voluntarily had thus been taken on 19-7-'76.

According to the programme already near Vadodara fixed he was to go on 22-7-'76 to Fazalpur, where Shri Ramanbhai Amin had a bungalow at a secluded spot on the bank of the River Mahi. In spite of his perilous health and the fact that it was raining cats and dogs, he was determined to keep the programme as best as he could.

On 21st July Pujya Shri Mota took a round in his wheel-chair and passed by each and every one of the trees and shrubs in the Ashram to bid his final adieu to them. This meaning of the round, however, became clear only after his departure.

On 22nd July morning four persons held a tarpaulin over his head to see him brought safely into a car. Dr. Mrs. Kantabahen's Fiat preceded him as a pilot car. The very second the approach road was passed and they came up to the main road, all the electric lights of the Nadiad Ashram went off. It was a symbolic gesture and an inmate even ejaculated, "Mota has now gone for ever."

On reaching Fazalpur Shri Nandubhai followed Pujya Shri Mota's instruction already given him. He told Shri Ramanbhai: "Pujya Shri Mota wants to cast off his body in this your bungalow, but only if you heartily

approve. If you don't, he will proceed to his Surat Ashram."

Shri Ramanbhai: "Take this house as legally mine, but really his. His will is my will." Shri Ramanbhai left for his office.

In view of the incessantly heavy rain and so of difficulty in cremation, Shri Nandubhai suggested that death might be postponed for about three days. Pujya Shri Mota burst out in English to emphasise his point of a stern refusal, "**This is not a matter of discussion.**"

At 3 p.m. (22-7-76) Shri Ramanbhai Amin was asked in a phone to come up to Fazalpur (from Vadodara). After his arrival Pujya Shri Mota sent hurriedly Shri Ramanbhai's children who came to greet Mota, back to Vadodara.

Under his instruction Pujya Shri Mota was taken into a room at 4 p.m. Only 6 persons – Shri Nandubhai, Mr. and Mrs. Ramanbhai. Mr. and Mrs. Ram (Dr. Mrs. Kantaben) and Shri Rajendra – were then present and they were called into the room. He told them, "You may sit in the room or go out, just as you please. Nobody should speak to me or touch me. Let my catheter remain with the body – it is my 'life-mate'. If you sit here you may chant the name of Lord."

All the six decided to stay on in the room and chant the name of God, each according to his or her predilection.

Intense quiet till the last moment. Pujya Shri Mota got more and more indrawn. Even during his short stay at his Nadiad Ashram, and specially after he left, he had not expressed little concern over his Ashrams or those dear ones whom he was shortly to leave. And now he seemed getting more and more aloof – merge in the Self.

At 00-30 a.m. Dr. Mrs. Kantabahen felt his pulse. It was irregular at 30 to 35 beats a minute.

Earlier, Shri Nandubhai had a hunch that in alignment with Pujya Shri Aurobindo, Pujya Shri Mota also would give up the body at 1-30 a.m. (on Friday the 23rd July). He did so; and no wonder. Outwardly unconscious, a Self-realized person keeps up his divine consciousness and all that it means to the very end of his body's death. Is it not natural, therefore, to conclude that Pujya Shri Mota at once **knew** what Shri Nandubhai thought, but did not say in words ? And would he fail to actualise in dead fact even the unspoken thought of one

of his nearest and dearest ones ?*

An Appraisal

The concept of *Ishta Deva* (chosen or of beloved deity) is very broad-minded. It allows everyone to choose any God and regard Him not only as the highest among others but also as the Absolute and at the same time it understands and allows another to put some other God in that very same high category.

The translator likes to apply this concept to the evaluation of saints also. To him Pujya Shri Mota is the best and the tallest, above the best and the tallest spiritual towers that stand in India. As shown on page 143-144 fame, popularity, scholarship, the expanse of the field of work or any such tangible means is no proper criterion for judging the spiritual greatness of an elevated soul. What really counts in the matter is the inner

* This reminds the translator of a similar incident in Pujya Shri Ramana Maharshi's life. Very few minutes before the Maharshi left body, an attendant-doctor thought that the Maharshi's throat must be very sore and parched. If he had some water to drink, it would lessen the suffering. Immediately after this thought crossed the doctor's mind, the Maharshi opened his lips and water was poured into the mouth. The doctor's desire was thus fulfilled. (Ref.F.N. Page 144)

Being's quality, not its quantity, and evaluation of quality is bound to differ with every mind.

Everyone is, therefore, free to form his own judgement and it is (relatively) true for him.

Just as a devotee of Lord Shiva venerates Him as the Highest because he is 'Ashutosh' (easily pleased) or of Lord Krishna as the Highest because He is 'Poorna-Avatar' (perfect manifestation of God, who descended upon the earth to reestablish *Dharma*), so also the translator has a valid reason to regard Pujya Shri Mota in the way he does.

And this is the 'valid reason'. All the well known saints and sages **without any exception** have been buried or cremated in a blaze of glory - with great fanfare. Pujya Shri Mota alone **insisted** on the quietest possible cremation and the disposal of his bodily remains in the quickest and most matter-of-fact manner - like that of the humble common man.

Verily, he was original in his thoughts and deeds to their very end. In that self-effacement he stands alone among his peers.

The translator's obeisance to Him.

X X X X X

"Why then a final note prolong
And lengthen out a closing song ?"

(Sir Walter Scott)

The translator considers it worthwhile to prolong the closing song for the reader's consideration on two important points. (1) Pujya Shri Mota's forte and (2) His parting message. The reader is of course rightly free to form his own judgement because, like Truth, Pujya Shri Mota was a diamond with many facets and none could see all of them.

His Forte

Was he a *karmayogi* ?* There are very clear indications to make one think so. He did not renounce the world, did not wear the ochre robe, either as an inquirer after Truth or as a **gyani** (a man of experiential wisdom). Far from that, he went on doing some work or other to serve the world and raise it to a higher level. He gave up the body only when the incurable and debilitating diseases convinced him that it was no longer possible to extract any work from it.

In this age of 'action', Pujya Shri Mota was certainly not behind those great souls

* A man in tune with the Eternal through action.

who worked incessantly. Look at the mountain of work that he put in before he realized the self and after it !

But it is a healthy exercise to look at other aspects of his being. If he did not give up the world outright, he was willing and fully prepared to do so and desisted from the course only at his Guru Shri Keshavanandaji's behest - an example somewhat similar to that of the **sannyasi** (hermit) father of those famous saint-children, Nivriddhi, Gyandev, Sopan and Muktabai.

And he had such intense zeal to reject everything else in the quest of God, that though under irresistible pressure he married, he lost consciousness on the bridegroom's seat itself !

And God, seeing his intense unwillingness for marriage, kindly showered His grace on him. He carried away his wife to heaven before she could even come to live with her husband.

Then, fully aware of the great hardship he was putting his family to, he gave up college, joined non- co-operation, refused a very comfortable job actually offered to him, and took the solemn vow of poverty.

As soon as he could collect, from his very meagre income, just enough to let his aged

mother keep her body and soul together, he gave up his service and his family for good and became a *sannyasi* without the ochre robe. Like many other God-mad men he thus sacrificed his family at the altar of his pursuit of Truth.

Was he then a **sannyasi**, a renouncer, without the signifying robe ? after Self-realization he referred to himself as an 'anubhavi' (one who has experienced the Self). Verily, he can as well be termed a *sannyasi* as a *karmayogi*.

But the translator thinks that primarily he was a man of love. As a student, as a co-worker, even as a Guru, he had to meet with rebuffs and insults quite often* and yet his love for his offenders never abated. He conquered his castigators at last. He lived in his life the Shakespearean adage :

"Love is not love that alters,
' When it alteration finds."

He was a **bhakta** (a devotee, i.e. a lover of the Lord) more than anything else. The one appellation he himself adopted for him

* His humility was at first interpreted partly in earnest as that of a despicable villain by an elderly gentleman, but his love won and ultimately he replied to that charge by successfully doing his all to prolong the latter's sinking life.

was the surname, 'Bhakta' (Bhagat).

Specially in later times everyone that came in his contact was indelibly impressed by the deep and boundless love that he had for each and everyone.

He emphasised more than anything else 'guna' and 'bhava' - high **quality** in virtue and sentiment. Both **karma** (action) and **sannyasa** (renunciation) were dry as dust to him unless they were saturated with **bhava** (the healthy sentiment of love).

46. 'Dead and Gone' ?

Even a casual visit to the famous Ashrams of the South - Pondicherry, Ramanashram, Anand Ashram, - shows us that the inmates there are convinced that their Guru, Shri Aurobindo, Shri Ramana Maharshi or Shri Ramdas Swami is vigorously alive though the body is in the grave or was cremated long ago.

It is only 34 years since Pujya Shri Mota left the world. What he said in one of his last three letters.* about his 'Gurumaharaj' has proved true in his case also.

Many of the devotees can attest that their knotty problems have been solved, that

* See page 228.

they have been extricated from tangled webs in a surprising manner. And that is why the silence rooms are rarely empty and amounts collected have even grown after his demise.

As if this is not sufficient, there have been two tangible cases within the translator's knowledge which prove that Pujya Shri Mota is not 'dead', can never 'die'.

He says in one of his farewell letters:*

"Guru Maharaj is not just a living being. If, for his own sake – on his own initiative– he wants it, or, if someone else urgently calls him and wants it, he comes to his help and solves his problems just as he would if he were bodily alive."

These words have been proved true up to the hilt in the following two cases. The first given here shows the truth of the second alternative and the second that of first.

In the first case the statement is made by a very responsible person, a man who knows what's what, Shri Vaikunthbhai Shastri, an ex-mayor of Surat Municipal Corporation. He affirms that during his silence-period he felt a dire need of Pujya Shri Mota's guidance. Pujya Shri Mota, therefore,

* See page 228.

resurrected before him in flesh and blood, exactly in the same human body as he had before it was cremated. And it was not a mere vision. Shri Vaikunthbhai had a fairly long talk with Pujya Shri Mota. He answered all the queries of Shri Vaikunthbhai including that about his late father as well as about the worldly problem that faced him.

The second case is that of the translator himself. The translator did not pray for Pujya Shri Mota's guidance, was not even thinking of him. He was at that time just awake from sleep, but fully awake, and in the peace that follows sleep.

Suddenly he heard Pujya Shri Mota's voice. "Go on along your path of grace." As he had a weak body since his infancy, the translator felt himself incapable of the exertion necessary to cope with his earnest desire for *sadhana*. He had, therefore, desperately clung to the path of grace, insisted that (Pujya Shri Mota's) Grace alone was his only hope and refuge, not his effort. In his later years however Pujya Shri Mota laid greater and greater emphasis on the aspirant's efforts. Thus there was a tussle: the translator could not see his way to put up

any effort worth the name and relied on Pujya Shri Mota's grace alone, in spite of Pujya Shri Mota's repeated exhortations.

At last, four years after his physical separation from the world, Pujya Shri Mota suddenly put the translator at his ease. He came to him invisibly but said distinctly in his own voice that the translator could unhesitatingly proceed along the path of grace. To convince the translator that it was he personally that was giving this very valuable spiritual guidance and that it was not the projection of the translator's mind, Pujya Shri Mota used the word '**anugraha**' for '**grace**', whereas the translator **always** thought of '**kripa**' as meaning grace. And Pujya Shri Mota used 'tame' (you in plural) as he used to do and not 'tu' (singular) which was used by way of an answer from the translator's own heart.

As a personal testimony is regarded as very authentic, this personal instance has been given.

May both these tangible instances instil greater hope and faith in the hearts of all of us !

|| HARI OM ||

The last writings of Pujya Shri Mota

To Whomsoever It May Concern:-

I, Chunilal Ashram Bhagat, alias Mota, resident of Hari Om Asharam, Nadiad, hereby declare that of my own freewill and pleasure I desire to give up my physical body. My body is ridden by many diseases and now cannot be useful in public welfare works. There is no hope of any cure for these diseases. Therefore it would be good to give up this body willingly and gladly for me. And I shall do so at the appropriate time I think fit and proper.

My last rites should be performed in a quiet and secluded spot near the place of my death in the presence of six persons do not call many people during the last rites is my order to my sevaks or volunteers.

The last remains of my body should be immersed wholly in the river.

Build no monument or memorial over me. After my demise whatever money pours in, in my name, utilise the same for building school rooms.

***Sd. Chunilal Asharam Bhagat alias
Mota***

Dated 19-07-1976

Shri Mota decided on 19-07-1976 to give up his mortal body which fact he communicated to Shri Nandu Bhai only. He asked Nandu Bhai to inform Shri Raman Bhai Amin about his decision, and ask his permission for giving up his (Mota's) body at his farmhouse at Fazalpur after reaching his place. And if he was reluctant to give permission to do this then they will go back to Surat Ashram for giving up his body. The Surat Ashram is six miles away from Surat city. After reaching Fazalpur Shri Nandu Bhai informed Shri Raman Bhai about Shri Mota's desire to give up his mortal body at his farmhouse. Shri Amin was stunned. But the next moment composing himself he said, 'This house belongs to Mota. He can do as per his will.

Early in the morning Shri Mota removed his wristwatch and neck chain of beads, and gave to Shri Rambhai Patel for passing on to Shri Nandu Bhai. Normally he would give such articles to those near him for safekeeping, but never to Shri Nandu Bhai. This sounded strange to Shri Nandu Bhai so he went to Shri Mot.

Shri Mota declared that he would start the process of giving up his body about 4

o'clock that day. Thereafter nobody should touch him nor call him.

Shri Nandu Bhai said, 'Please wait for two-three days. It is raining very heavily. It might hamper your last rites.' Pujya Shri Mota forcefully replied, 'If you cannot perform my last rites, then flow away my body into the swelling waters of the river. **This is not a matter of discussion now.**'

The inmates of the ashram usually have their lunch at 10 o'clock. Shri Mota that day did not take his meal. The rest had their meal as usual. Shri Raman Bhai Amin went to office and returned at 3 p.m. Shri Raman Bhai Amin's children were at Fazalpur. Shri Mota talked to them, asked about their welfare. Whenever Shri Mota came to Fazalpur the children would meet him and then depart. Today the children departed after meeting him. They were not informed about the decision to Mota to give up his body. Shri Mota was sleeping in the varanda. The farmhouse was called 'Hari Smriti'. A marble plaque bearing the name was nearby. Shri Mota called for it, held it in his hand and touched it to his heart and bowed to it. About 4 o'clock he ordered persons around him, 'Take me inside the room'.

After being taken to the bedroom he called Shri Nandu Bhai to his room and handed over some papers that he had written before 3 o'clock. He had written these pages lying down on his side. Apart from this he also gave him some letters. He talked with Shri Nandu Bhai for five or seven minutes. Then he called five others into his room, 1) Shri Raman Bhai Amin, 2) Smt, Dhiraj Ben Amin, 3) Shri Ram Bhai Patel, 4) Smt. Dr. Kanta Ben Patel, 5) Shri Raju Bhai Patel. Shri Nandu Bhai asked Shri Mota to remove the catheter attached to his body for collection of urine.

Shri Mota replied, 'No, do not remove it. It is my life partner said And From now on nobody should touch me nor call me. If you want to sit outside you may do so.' Thereafter he closed his eyes at 4-20 p.m. Shri Nandu Bhai sat on a stool by his side near the head, and started chanting 'Hari Om'. A little after eight hours he had a feeling that Shri Mota will give up his body finally about 1-30 midnight.

Dr. Smt. Kanta Ben Patel coment the pulse beat of Shri Mota at 12-30 midnight. The pulse beat had dropped to 30 – 35. About 1-

25 a.m. the pulse beat stopped altogether. About that time lips of Shri Mota parted a little. The information that had to be given to the others Shri Nandu Bhai started writing.

The farmhouse of Shri Amin stood on a high rock near the river Mahi. The embankment built around the house had been washed away the previous year. The steps leading to the river from the farmhouse had been widened to two and half feet this year. Previous to this the path leading to the river from the house had been narrow. But now that the path had widened, it was easy to carry the body of Shri Mota with two men in the front and two men at the back. His body was given a sponge bath. No scented sticks were burnt. No sandalwood was available.

Firewood pieces were collected and piled up for a funeral pyre by the manager of the farmhouse. About 6-10 in the morning, his body was finally placed on the funeral pyre (23-07-1976). Shri Raman Bhai Amin lit the funeral pyre. The body was finally reduced to ashes in two hours and ten minutes. The remains of the body, ashes and bones, were consigned to the river with the help of a spade as the wish of Pujya Shri Mota.

The last words written by Shri Mota written on 22-07-1976 were:

1) I express my gratitude to those who helped me or who did my work. May God bless them and return their service with goodness.

2) We have never kept anything secret. We have written everything frankly and in a simple style what the learned scholars, poets have never written before. We have never written by ourselves. We have written at the instance of somebody's suggestion after he agreed to pay for its publication. We have written what in Gujarati literature has never been thought of or written. (Nimitt, Sraddha, Jignasa, Shri Sad Guru, Bhav, Ragdvesh, Swarth etc.). May all credit and praise for this go to God only. We have never written after thinking, all came spontaneously. All these were written in a short time and that too after money was received for their publication.

3) With all zeal we have worked, we have never known any disappointment or frustration, we have carried out whatever fell to our lot, we have executed Guru Maharaj's orders with joy and love.

The last great words penned by Shri Mota on his Guru Maharaj are as below:

Intense love for God's Name

Thy Beloved Name we shall chant with great love in our heart,
Thy Beloved Name we shall sing in many different ways,
Thy Beloved Name we shall utter with much dedication,
We shall never give up the helping hand of Thy Beloved Name. 1

In the terrible, dark and fierce raging storms of life,
When no path is seen in the intense darkness,
When ups and downs of life confront us every moment,
May Thy dear Name be our sole companion in our mind and heart. 2

In our life's daily duties, dealings with others,
In our every act, eating, drinking, waking or talking,
Whatever else we do, interacting with others,
May Thy dear Name be our sole companion in our mind and heart. 3

In the difficulties that confront us, in our cares and worries,
In our daily strife and quarrels, in our every pain and hurt,
In our dark confusions or when overcome by problems,
May Thy dear Name be our sole companion in our mind and heart. 4

In all our thoughts, our mind's out going tendencies,
In mind's passions, sins, subliminal's unseen impressions,
In mind's sports and pranks, mind's plays and attitudes,
May Thy dear Name be our sole companion in our mind and heart. 5

In all our body's movements, in all our organs,
In every pore of our being, in our heart's flowing blood,
In every nerve of our body, top to toe, in our body's nine gates,
May Thy dear Name be our sole companion in our mind and heart. 6

In all six tastes of life, in all life's sweet smells,
In heart's awareness, Buddhi, chit's impressions, the vital,
In all our affection, feelings, love and delight,
May Thy dear Name be our sole companion in our mind and heart. 7

The sole support of Mother who keeps at heart,
 With extreme love the child calls out to her,
 And departed from her, cries out plaintively,
 Thus let Thy Name be sung with fervour and joy. 8

In life's every obstacle, and in every colourful event,
 In every warp and weft of life's fabric,
 Whatever the pattern and texture of my life,
 May Thy Sweet Name be woven into that with all love. 9

In the talk of my relations, friends and their thoughts,
 In worldly deals with men, in my every action,
 Even when busy with my wife and children,
 Even then may Thy dear Name, O Lord, fill my heart. 10

As the rising of the beloved Sun dispels all darkness,
 So by Thy Grace life be flowered and evolved,
 May each nerve be infected with the zeal of Thy Beloved Divine Love,
 May our life shine as the reflection of Thy Divine Love. 11

In every warp and weft of our life's fabric,
 May we be dipped and coloured with Thy Love,
 May we be hammered with Thy Name into a Divine being,
 By Thy Grace may my life so be offered unto Thee O Lord. 12

The glory of Thy Name many saints and poets have sung,
 What can a poor man like me sing of Thy greatness?
 Like a glow worm before the Sun, like a puddle before the sea,
 Like a piece of glass before a diamond, I am truly nobody. 13

-Mota

(Gujarati Prayer : 'Smaran Bhavna' - Translator : **Babu Sarkar**)

PRAAYER

I pray and bow at Thy Feet

*Lord, ever keep me in the Haven of Thy Holy Feet,
I pray and bow at Thy Feet.*

*O, Beloved, ever indwelling in my heart,
Thou Lord of my heart's precious Lotus,
Thou renowned dear and faithful Lover.....(1)
I pray and bow at Thy Feet.*

*I open to you my heart's inner feelings,
My mind still remains intransigent, rebellious.....(2)
I pray and bow at Thy Feet.*

*Removing all obstacles from my life,
Take me home into Thee, dear Lord,
And make me mad for Thee only.....(3)
I pray and bow at Thy Feet.*

*O, Beloved, I know of no means,
But only the flowers of my heart's agonising love,
And these I scatter at Thy Holy Feet.....(4)
I pray and bow at Thy Feet.*

*Wherein is a child's strength?
If there be any it is in his helpless crying;
By that force of crying I want to cross over To Thee.....(5)
I pray and bow at Thy Feet. - Mota*

*(Gujarati Prayer-'Prabhu Sharan Charan Ma Rakho Re Pavle Lagoo...'
Translator : Babu Sarkar)*

॥ HARIH AUM ॥
CLOSING PRAYER
ĀRTI

Aum, give me Refuge O Lord, at the Haven of Thy Holy Feet,
Save this fallen soul, lead him by Thy hand, clasp him to Thy heart.....(1)

Let my mind, heart and speech be revealed by my action,
May Thou unify by Thy Grace, my mind, speech and heart.....(2)

May our heart's love pervade in our dealings with all,
Even where insult is done, let there only love prevail.....(3)

May we attempt by Thy Grace, to change our lower instincts
Into nobler ones, so we may be worthy of Thy Holy Feet.....(4)

May my mind's thoughts and tendencies of the vital
And intellect's all doubts dissolve at Thy Holy Feet.....(5)

To appear to others as we truly are at heart,
Let our being be open, so others can know us truly and well.....(6)

Give me the will not to do otherwise,
Contrary to what is truly in my heart O Lord.....(7)

Wherever there are Virtue and Nobility, let my heart there abide
May Virtue and Nobility flower and blossom in my heart.....(8)

May the instincts of the vital and the mind merge and melt in my love for Thee
And may my adoration for Thee ever surge, dance in delight and joy.....(9)

Aum, give me Refuge O Lord, at the Heaven of Thy Holy Feet

- **Mota**

(Gujarati : Aarti - Translator : *Babu Sarkar*)

IMPORTANT INCIDENTS IN LIFE OF SHRI MOTA

Birth : 4-9-1898 at village Savli Dist. Baroda (Vadodara), corresponding to Hindu Vikram Samvat year 1954 in the month of Bhadrapad on the 4th day in the dark phase.

Name : Chunilal

Mother : Surajba

Father : Asharam

Family Surname : Bhagat

Caste : Bhavsar

1903: Migration of family to Kalol village. Dist. Panchmahal.

1916: Father's demise.

1905-1918: Broken, interrupted education, with hard manual labour to support his family.

1919: Passes Matriculation Examination.

1919-1920: Years in Vadodara College.

6-4-1921 : Gives up college education.

1921: Joins Gujarat Vidhyapeeth.

1921: Leaves Vidhyapeeth to take up service of Harijans.

1922: Frustrated by Epilepsy Fits attempts to suicide by jumping from the over hanging rock of Garudeswar into river Narmada, miraculously saved by Divine intervention, cured of the diseases by continuous chanting of 'Hariom' on the advice of a saint.

- 1923: Composes two Gujarati spiritual poems :
Manane (To The Mind) and Tujcharne (At
Thy Lotus Feet.)
- 1923: Initiated by Pujya Shri Balayogi on Vasant
Panchami Day i.e. 22nd January, 1923
Monday at Hajimanzil, Nadiad. Visits Shri
Keshavanandji Maharaj-his supreme Guru,
at Saikheda, Madhya Pradesh, under Shri
Balayogi's advice. Starts sleeping at
crematorium at Nadiad as a part of his
sadhna. And Harijan Seva during the day
time as dedication to God.
- 1926: At the main wedding ceremony goes into
samadhi – trance.
- 1927: On snake bite at Bodal Harijan Ashram,
starts chanting 'Hariom' to avoid
unconsciousness, results in automation of
'HARIH AUM'-effortless-non stop chanting.
- 1928: Publishes 'Tujcharne' ("At Thy Lotus Feet")
in Gujarati
- 1928: Out of sale proceeds of the book
undertakes a pilgrimage to the Himalayas.
- 1928: Advent of Shri Upasani Maharaj at Nadiad,
He goes to Sakori near Shirdi, Maharashtra
on his advice. Passes 7 days in a state of
samadhi-trance on his own waste matter
spread all around him.
- 1930: Realization of Sagun Brahm-state in ascent
of Divinity with form-the blue form of
Shri Krishna.

- 1930-1932: Years spent in various jails in Sabarmati, Visapur, Nasik and Yaravda, not for the service to the country but only for furtherance of his *sadhna*, endures hardships and police beatings as a test for his courage, wrote a treatise on the “Shrimad Bhagwad Gita” in a language simple enough for school students to understand - called “Jeevan Gita”.
- 1934: Realisation of Sagun Brahm - State in ascent to Divinity with form - the blue form of Shri Krishna.
- 1934-1939: Visits the *aghorī sadhu* in the Himalayas, spends sometime alone in a cave behind Dhoovadhar (New Jabalpur) waterfalls in Madhya Pradesh, Sits on the rock in the middle of 3 circles of 21 fires of cowdung cakes each in the hot month of Chaitra (April-May) with bare body and passes whole period of 21 days on juice of soft-tender-neem leaves for cultivation of Brahmacharya on the bank of River Narmada. Has vision of Sai Baba of Shirdi instructs him on the final meditation to liberation – Mukti, in Karanchi (Then a part of one India)
- 1939: On Ram Navami Day, corresponding to Samvat year 1995 has the experience of formless God, in Kashi-Varanasi 29-3-1939. Commencement - State of ‘Omni Present’

- (mukta dasha). Resigns from Harijan Sevak Sangh. (Publication of 'Manane' (To The Mind) Gujarati Edition composed in 1923.
- 1940: Travel by air on command from Sai Baba on 9-9-1940 from Ahmedabad to Karanchi.
- 1941: Mother's demise.
- 1942: Collects donation from Mumbai for Harijan Girl's School of Gujarat even though had resigned from H. S. Sang, Endures police beatings to experience state above physical consciousness.
- 1943: Experiences transference of Gandhiji's urine infection into his own urine during Gandhiji's long fasting. State of Tadatmya. (experience of unity oneness 24-2-1943.
- 1945: Pilgrimage to the Himalayas, - extraordinary experiences on the way.
- 1946: Harijan Ashram, Ahmedabad, the beginning of Solitary Silence (Moun Ekant) in Mira Kutir.
- 1950: Establishes his first Hari Om Ashram at Kumbakonam, in South India on the bank of river Kaveri.
- 1954: Starts temporary Moun room in a hall of Kurukshetra crematorium near Rander, Surat.
- 1955: Establishes Hariom Ashram at Nadiad on the bank of river Shedhi. 28-5-1955.

- 1956: Establishes Hariom Ashram at Kurukshetra at Surat on the bank of River Tapi 23-4-1956.
- 1962-1976: Commencement of social service work through Hariom Ashrams. In the field of education, Literature, Bravery in youths, such as mountain climbing, sea swimming etc. Declares awards for scientists for research work of space science, salt water, agriculture, medicine etc. Constant travelling in spite of the body being afflicted by many vicarious sufferings. Publishes number of volumes on spiritual science based on his own experiences.
- 1976: Gives up his body in the presence of six persons at Shri Ramanbhai Amin's farm house at Fajalpur, on the bank of River Mahi, near Vadodara. Commencing the process to Abandan the mortal coil at 4-20 p.m. on 22nd July and ending at 1.35 a.m. on 23rd July 1976. Orders by his will not to construct any monument or memorial for him, instead instructs to construct school rooms and in the remote backward villages with the money collected thereafter.

|| Hariom ||

FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF SPIRITUAL STRUGGLE / SEEKING (*SADHANA MARMA*)

1. Continuous and conscious utterance of God Name with whole awareness by mouth or in mind, with frequent introspection of its continuity and sincerity and meditation on the region of the heart.
2. Surrender every moment of both good and bad, without reservation, to the Lord.
3. Be ever just a witness of life, maintain self awareness always, avoid building a chain of thoughts; let there be no unwanted continuity of thoughts.
4. Ever observe silence both of speech and thought, and maintain self-surrender to the Lord with whole conscious awareness.
5. Give up all obstinacy, self-centred responses, self opinions, self insistences, except your insistence of God Remembrance or God Thought. Cultivate humility to the utmost. Try to remain thought free as much as possible, maintain silence and peace of mind.
6. From your depths of heart pray to Him with all yearning, longing, with pain and anguish, reveal unto Him all your joys and sorrows, and by thus opening of your heart and self to Him, build close and intimate relationship with Him. Allow no thought or worry to agitate your mind. Be ever free and empty of all bothers in mind.

7. Whatever work or responsibility fall to your lot, look upon them as God-send for your good and discharge your duties without grudging but with all love and willingness. All that happens in our life is for our own good. Behind all such occurrences there is a secret purpose for our own good in plan or intention of Lord.
8. Live within, look within, ever live self aware in your inner world. Never get involved in extraneous matters.
9. Service to man consider as service to God. One who receives service from you does you favour of giving you an opportunity to serve. Lord gives us and we give back to the Lord. We are not doing any obligation to anybody. What then is truly mine in this world? All comes from the Lord and goes back to the Lord. Where is the question of labelling any thing as mine?
10. Whatever you do – talking, working, giving or receiving – do consciously so that it gives a fillip or an impetus to our life's major purpose of spiritual seeking. While reading or writing keep alive this motive, cultivate this practice assiduously of self-awareness in all your actions.
11. Seek and search for the origin of all your mental tendencies, the source of all thoughts.

Examine them, observe them as they arise without any attachment or involvement.

12. Beauty, Art, Loveliness, Grace, Purity in any form that pleases or touches us deeply is a Blessing of Lord. Whatever noble emotions or responses they may evoke in us, we must pray unto Him to awaken those noble thoughts and emotions in us for our spiritual advancement.
13. Do not allow any noble emotion or feeling to go a waste, nor get involved in them, but use them for your spiritual progress. Be dispassionate in such cases.
14. While eating or drinking pray for descent of energy of consciousness into your being and while easing or throwing waste matter out of your body, pray that all your weaknesses and failings fall of your body.
15. Give up all conceptions of the gross (world), think only of the subtle (self), purify your mental inclinations or tendencies, have only pure and noble thoughts and feelings of love.
16. The Lord resides both in the animate and inanimate. Experience oneness of spirit with all beings.
17. Always see the better side of every being or thing. Never pass judgement on any being, never hastily form or give your opinion on

any being or matter. Avoid discussions or arguments. Never insist on your opinions or ideas (as being right or correct), see good in others also, in their motives and actions; show generous and charitable broad-mindedness in your dealings with others. Cultivate love for all freely. You have to transform or change your nature from its very roots. Keeping that before your eye of mind never become a slave of your nature, go above it; give up all attachment to fruits of actions. The root cause of every sorrow or injustice suffered by you, is in your ownself, be certain about it. Heighten your love, faith and adoration for your chosen Guru or Master. Let there be a confluence of trinity desire for what is good (for you), renunciation of what is unwanted and self offering in you. Let there be cheerfulness and joy ever in thy heart. Ever involve the twin qualities of personal effort and Grace (of God). Keep Remembrance of Lord alive in your heart at the beginning, middle and end of every action. Keep your mind ever still and unmoved. Be ever vigilant to keep your mind free of personal likes and dislikes, love and hate, use all your spiritual experiences, awaken them, in your daily living, your relationships. There is no fleeing or running away from any situation in life, however

difficult; whatever befalls, accept it as blessing of Lord with grace. Never compare anybody with anybody else. Favourable or unfavourable situations are figments of imagination. All situations are really favourable to the true spiritual seeker, all truly helpful. Have only one silent desire in your heart to be a perfect instrument of God, to be ever one with Him.

18. Actions in themselves have no importance or significance. Only true and intense feelings in your heart for the Lord have any value or meaning in life. Cultivate the habit of deep introspection for the Lord while performing any action.

-Mota

GLOSSARY

[A]

Abhay	: Fearlessness
Adhar	: Base
Aham	: Egoism / Self pride
Ahinsa	: Non-Violates-
Ajapajap	: Effortless non-stop chanting jap
Akasha	: The sky
Anubhav	: Believed after self experience.
Anugraha	: Grace - Krupa
Aryans	: Name of tribe
Ashram	: A centre of religious study or meditation, Monastery
Ashutosh	: Easily pleased - used for Lord Shanker.
Atharva ved	: The forth of the four vedas (one of the an- cient spiritual volumes of Hindus)
Atma Bodh	: Self realization
Ayurved	: Ancient medical Science of India

[B]

Bhajans	: Devotional songs; Songs in praise of Glories of God.
Bhagawad Gita	: Teachings of Lord Krishna to Arjun on the battle field of Kurukshetra.
Bhakta	: Devotee
Bhakti	: Devotion, a deed performed in praise of God.
Bhava/Bhavana	: An emotion of love-longing; natural state of being.
Brahm	: The Supreme being; The universal Spirit.
Brahma	: Name of God - God of creation - one of the Trinity.

- Brahmacharya : Control of senses - celibacy
 Brahmins : A Caste performing religious ceremony.
 Brahmrandra : A point on the central top of skull - source of life
 Buddhi : The Faculty for understanding perception - Intellect.

[C]

- Causal Body : Accumulated unfulfilled desires and past impressions cause of life.
 Chakra : Seven governing points located in Spiral Cord as per Hindus Spiritual. Bioscience-Patanjali Yoga Sutra. The Divine energy coiled like a serpent a lowest point rises till it reaches the top - the Brahmarandhra - on the top of the head.
 Chetna : Dvice Consciousness
 Chitt : Sub Conscious Mind.
 Chori : The Square space provided for marriage ceremony.

[D]

- Dana : Charity; Donation
 Darshan : Holy Sight
 Dharma : The System marked with faith in God-religion.
 Dharmashala : a rent free lodging house.
 Dhronacharya : The preceptor of the pandavas and Kaurvas.
 Dhyana : Meditation; One Pointed concentration - attention.

[E]

- Eklavya : Name of a devoted disciple who offered his carrier in service of Guru-Master.

[F]

Fakir : A Muslim religious mendicant - ascetic.

[G]

Gargi : Name of a lady master of Upanishad and Vedas (Tomes of Hindu spirituality)

Gross Body : The existing body with five elements. - Human body in physical form to maintain life.

Guna : Qualities - Three qualities - energies of nature - satwa-; rajas, tamas.

Guru : A preceptor - guide; Spiritual Teacher

Gurudakshina : Fee for spiritual enlightenment.

Guru Maharaj : Spiritual Master

Gyan : Knowledge - Spiritual knowledge

Gyandev : Name of a Saint.

Gyani : Knowledgeable Person; a man of experiential wisdom.

[H]

Hari : Symbolic name of God; God Krishna; God Vishnu.

Hath yog : A type of yogic Sadhna.

[J]

Jap/Japa : Chanting of God Name; Mantra.

Japa Yagna : Contineous chanting of God name.

Jeeva (Jiva) : Individual Soul with limited powers.

Jeevan : Life Span

[K]

Karma : Action - deed; fate regulated by past actions; inevitable results - good or bad of past actions.

Kirtan : Singing devotional song with music.

[L]

Lakshmi/Laxmi : Goddess of wealth / wife of lord Vishnu.

[M]

- Mahabharat : A Symbolic war between positive and negative forces in which possitive forces win the bottle.
- Mahakali : The Goddess Durga in her frightful form.
- Mahatma : A glorious man.
- Mahesh : Name of God - God Shankar - God of distruction one of the trinity.
- Maitreyi : Name of a lady master or spirituality.
- Mantra : A word of miraculous power; A potent chant.
- Mathura : A Place of Lord Krishna Child hood in Uttar pradesh one of the states of India.
- Maya : Illusion, illusion by virtue of which one considers the unreal universe as really existant and distinct from the supreme spirit; Prakruti as directly responsible for creation. A creation by power of God.
- Mira : A queen of Mevad state, India - attained realization of Lord Krishna.
- Moun Mandir : Solitary silence room
- Moun Room : Solitary silence room
- Moksha/Mukti : Having attained Salvation.
- Mursid : Gura.

[N]

- Nama-Smaran : Reciting - the name of God - deity - chanting Lord name.
- Narshinh Mehta : Resident of Junagadh - Gujarat - India.
A devotee of Lord Krishna who attained realization.

- Nirvan : Spiritual salvation.
 Nivedan : Report of Self feeling, thinking, experience, etc.

[P]

- Patanjali : A tome of yoga practice written by Guru Shri Patanjali.
 -Yog sutra
 Physical Body : The existing body with five elements.
 Pragna : Intelligence - wisdom.
 Prakruti : Nature - temperament - Physical and constitution qualities.
 Pran : Animate power of life
 Pranayam : A kind of Spiritual Practice involving deep breathing.
 Prarabdha : It is a result of Previous deeds it may be good or bad/Destiny
 Prem : Love
 Purohit : Family Priest – Sacrificial Priest
 Purush : Atma - Soul
 Purusharth : Efforts for achievement

[R]

- Rag : attachment; fondness; cupidity.
 Rajas : Greed, ego, hyper activity, virtues-the second of the three fundamental qualities - properties of human nature which governs the human behaviour
 Ramzan : The ninth and holy month of the Hijri era-Islamic Calender.
 Rasa : Interest - likes.
 Ravan : A King-Symbolic Character of negative forces.
 Roza : The Fasting days for Muslims in the month of Ramzan.
 Rushi/Rishis : A Sage / Sages

[S]

- Sacred Thread : The thread of holyness worn across chest by Brahmins.
- Sadguru : Spiritual Master.
- Sadhaka : A Spiritual aspirant
- Sadhana : Efforts for emancipation - to realization
- Sakshatkar : Realization of a state or stage in ascent to Divinity. There are two states - SAGUN and NIRGUN. The first is with form and second is without form.
- Samadhi : (i) Deep Concentrated meditation.
(ii) Samadhi is of two types, Savikalp, that is with the seeds of thought and Nirvikalp, that is without the seeds of thought. Beyond both is Sahaj Samadhi Which is unbroken and spontaneous, resulting in the calmation of the Supreme. Where all efforts end in ease and life is lived only for the Divine peace.
- Sanskar : Engram - Deep impression retained with the chitt-sub conscious mind
- Sanyasin-Sadhu : Hermit / Recluse/Ascetic/mendicant monk.
- Saraswati : Goddess of learning and knowledge.
- Satwa : Calm, Pious, gentleness - the first and the best virtue of the three fundamental qualities - Properties of human nature, which governs the human behaviour.
- Satwik : Pious
- Shakti : Strength
- Shakti Pooja : Worship of Goddesses of energy.
- Shastras : Scriptures, Gospels.
- Shrimad Bhagwad Gita : Teachings of Lord Krishna to Arjun on the battle field of Kurukshetra.

- Shrimad Bhagwat : A tome of various births of Lord Krishna (Vishnu) to save the devotees from evils.
- Shrimad Shankra : A tome proving existance of God by process of elimination.
- Charya's Vivek
-Chudamani
- Suba : The administrative chief of a province.
- Subtle Body : Mental Body carrying experiences of old desires and impressions
- Swaraj : Independence

[T]

- Tadatmya : Oneness
- Tamas : Anger, Laziness, inactiveness virtues, the third-last of the three fundamental qualities or Properties of human nature. Which governs the human behaviour.
- Tantra : Occult.

[U]

- Upanishads : A tome explaining the deep meanings of Hindu Spirituality.

[V]

- Vaidya-Vaids : Doctor of Ayurvedic Medicines
- Vedanti : One who has studied vedas indeep.
- Vedantic : related to vedas.
- Veds : Tomes of Hindu Spirituality
- Vishnu : Name of the God, Who nourishes all living beings. One of the Trinity.
- Vrindavan : A Place of Lord Krishna Teenage

[X-Y-Z]

- Yagna : Ceremonial Performance of Sacrifice
- Yams-Niyams : Rules to be observed in life.

Yog-Yogshastra- : Means of Practice uniting the soul with
Yogmantra- the supprime being-Divine.
Yog Vidya
Yogi - Yogins : an ascetic

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English Literature of Shri Mota

(Translated from Gujarati to English)

1. At Thy Lotus Feet (Tuj Charne)*
2. To The Mind (Manane)
3. Life's Struggle (Jeevan Sangram)
4. Shree Sadguru (Shri Sadguru)
5. Fragrance Of A Saint (Paraslila)
6. Vision Of Life Eternal (Jeevan Darshan)
7. Revered Saint Shree Mota (Life-Work-Massage)
8. Religion and Society
9. The State of Being (Bhava)
10. Spiritual Science
11. The State of Human Soul During And After Death
(Mrutue Samaye Ane Mrutue Pachhi Jeevatmani
Sthiti)
12. The Instrument (Nimitta)
13. Self Interest (Swartha)
14. Inquisitiveness (Jignasa)
15. Shree Mota (Shri Mota)
16. Rites & Rituals (Vidhi Vidhan)
17. Mota For Children (Balakona Mota)
18. Jap Chanting (Namsmaran)
19. Against Cancer (Cancerni Same)
20. Grace (Krupa)
21. Faith (Shraddha)
22. Human To Divine (Bhagat ma Bhagwan)
23. Prasadi (Prasadi)
24. On The Path Of Silence And Solitude
(MounEkantni Kediae)
25. Silence Room-A Gateway to Heaven
(Mounmandirnu Haridwar)

*Note : In breakets (...) * indicate Title Name of Gujarati Book*

HARIH AUM