

Meditation

Guru is Brahma, Guru is Vishnu,
Guru is Shiva, Guru is the manifested God,
and I bow to him.
Obeisance to the Guru, who is an ocean of mercy
And God in human form.
His words drive away folly and ignorance
Like sunrays dispersing the darkness.

Invocation

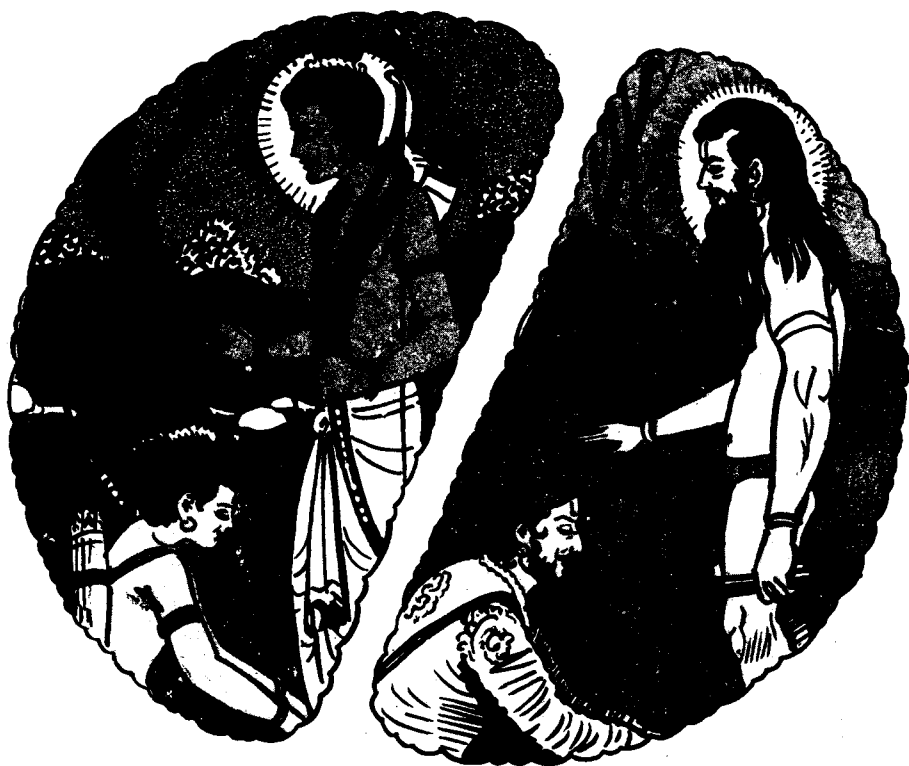
Again and again I salute Lord Vishnu, Lord of all the worlds, Destroyer of fear, Peace itself, Creator of the Creator, the lotus-eyed Lord of Lakshmi, whom yogis see in meditation. He reclines on Shesha, the serpent, and from the lotus of His navel emerges the Creation. He is the Sustainer of the universe, subtler than the sky, the colour of a raincloud, and the splendour of His being outshines a thousand suns.

A True Disciple



The splendour of the sun is its light; the splendour of the moon its silver radiance, of trees, their flowers and fruit, and of a king, his officials' love of righteousness and justice. The crowning glory of a father is a worthy child, and of a mother, a child who is brave, generous and devoted to God. Likewise, the crowning glory of a spiritual Master is a true devotee.

Only flowing water can be called a river. If there is no water there is no river. In the same way, only someone who has a disciple is entitled to be called 'Guru'. The Guru is like the sun, and the disciple is the sunlight. The Master is like a sandalwood tree, and his disciple is the breeze that spreads the sweet fragrance of his fame and changes others into men of Knowledge.



Lakshman held high the banner of Lord Rama's fame. The way in which he served is a lesson in true discipleship. Shivaji completely dedicated himself in service. He spread the glory of his Master, Shri Samarth Ramdas. It was due to Arjuna that the *Gita*'s deep mysteries were revealed to the world. It is the devotee who makes the Lord manifest.

The meeting of a real disciple and the true Master is a great event. But until a disciple regards his Guru as God Himself, he will not be truly devoted, and the elevating Spiritual Knowledge will

not reveal itself to him. When he comes to regard his Master as the Lord, then he will understand the significance of his Master's every action. The greater his love, reverence, and faith, the greater the grace he receives from the Guru. Service is absolutely necessary for grace, but service without love will not yield the highest rewards.

The world is like a market where you can get anything you want. Something which you don't want doesn't have even a farthing's value for you. For heaven or worldly acclaim a man serves wife, children, relatives and deities, but if he would let go of his pride and worldly attachment and render a little desireless service to the Guru, he would gain a lot.

The highest aim of human life is said to be liberation, in which all joy and blessedness is contained. All worldly pleasures put together cannot equal even a fraction of it. Even greater than this, however, is the joy which comes from serving the Master, but only a disciple can understand this. A person who is lucky enough to be able to serve his Guru is indeed blessed, and his life has not been in vain. Everything associated with him—his family, his race, his country—is blessed. His birthplace becomes a shrine. The beloved disciple who dedicates his all in service rises far above the dual bondage of merit and demerit, and is even greater than the gods. Such great and true disciples, who lose themselves in service, forgetting their own existence, have always come into the world and will keep on coming.

Man is primarily a thinking creature. A beast can be forced to work, but the disciple is not forced to serve. He does so of his own free will. The average person serves family and society to fulfill his desires and to gratify his ego, but those who desirelessly and selflessly serve the Master are few and far between. A selfless devotee serves his Guru by body, mind, and wealth, without any kind of selfish motive. No one can ever serve the world desirelessly. A person does not get confused if he has only the one ideal of dedicating himself to his Guru and making this highest work the centre of his life. Then he works towards the goal according to the Master's instructions.

Actions motivated by selfishness only result in passion and hatred, the most bitter fruit of which is birth and rebirth. This is the

greatest suffering. Universal love is awakened by serving the great souls. The more love and faith a person has, the greater his success.

So how should a disciple feel towards his Chosen Ideal, the Guru? What type of service pleases the Guru most? A disciple must know this.

If you ask anyone, "What do you want out of life?" he will answer immediately, "Peace! Perfect happiness!" So to get this, everyone runs here and there, but worldly activities do not seem to be giving us peace of mind. The real source of peace is the Spiritual Master. Unless you throw yourself into serving him, you cannot find peace by any means.

Why have we come into this world? What have we come to do? What are we doing with our lives? You can only answer these questions properly once you have taken refuge in the Master. Only a very fortunate person gets to meet him, and even then, not



everyone can recognize him for what he is. However, even if you haven't yet realized who he is, you can still be greatly benefitted by serving him.

There is no lack of gurus in the world today. How many people just read books and think themselves to be great souls! If you work it out, you'll find that there are more gurus than disciples! These gurus teach different methods of devotion. There are as many devotional paths as there are gurus! Some advocate worshipping Shiva. Some think that sacrificing dumb animals helps. Someone worships a deity, while someone else worships some other power. In the *Bhagavad Gita*, chapter 9, verse 25, Lord Krishna said: "Deity-worshippers reach the deities, ancestor-worshippers reach the ancestors, spirit-worshippers go to the spirits, but My devotees realize Me." What is the way to be devoted to God? Very few people look for the Guru who can show them the right way. The world is full of people who have their own ideas about how to worship God. Some say we should go to temples. Others even break idols as part of their worship! There are many kinds of gurus with many kinds of methods. Some teach some mantra or other and call themselves gurus. But the realized saint reveals the holy Knowledge which is one and the same for everyone.

There is a saying: "Twelve brahmins have twelve different ideas, but twelve carpenters all work the same way." Practical work is always done in the same way, but twelve scholars will interpret something in twelve different ways, and furthermore, multiply their interpretations when explaining them to others! Is this the way to protect religion and keep it alive? Such people are not concerned with salvation. Whether their disciples go to heaven or hell is not their problem. They are busy making profits and benefitting themselves. They talk about meditation but it doesn't mean a thing to them. You cannot have a relationship with God from a distance. God has to be seen.

If you ask them, "You have grown old worshipping and reading scriptures, so have you had a glimpse of God?", those who are full of pride in their fake religion will get angry, point to an idol and say, "Can't you see God right in front of you?" However, we should give a little thought to the fact that, if it is foolish to rely on

the picture of a cow for milk, how can you ever experience the bliss of God-realization from a mere statue? You don't meet your friend just by seeing his photo, so how can you realize God through an idol or a picture?

The story of king Surath and the trader Samadhi is told in the *Durga Saptshati*. We are told that Goddess Durga was pleased with Samadhi and gave him the Knowledge which leads to salvation. No one however, talks about this Knowledge, but people simply read and listen to *Durga Saptshati* and imagine themselves saved! They don't try to find the Knowledge of the Truth.

If a person has not dissolved himself in devotion to the Master, or if he has no love for God, then no matter how wise, learned or talented he might be, it's all useless. First a person is a son, then he becomes a father. First a person must have the humble attitude of a servant, and then he'll meet his Guru. How can someone who has never served a Guru become a guru himself? Saint Tulsidas had this to say:

"If a disciple does not serve, he cannot cross the worldly ocean. I definitely believe that a devotee is even greater than the Lord. God is the ocean, but saints are the rainclouds. God is the sandalwood tree, but saints are the breeze that spreads the fragrance."

The ocean has unlimited water, but its saltiness makes it unfit for either drinking or irrigation. However, when the clouds over the sea take out the saltiness and shower fresh water upon the earth, then this same water benefits all creatures. In the same way, God is omnipresent. His Light shines in every heart. His Holy Name is all-pervading, but just knowing this is of little use to us. It is the case of the salty water.

"God is within you, but you don't know it, so your life is in vain. Everyone's eyes have cataracts," said St. Tulsidas.

God never says, "Here I am inside you." That is why very few people realize the divine bliss that is within them. However, when the Master, like those rainclouds, comes and blesses us with the rain of satsang, we are shown the Knowledge of God's Light (also called *Bhargo*, *Chandna*, *Vishwarup*, *Supreme Light*, *Noor-i-lahi* or Divine Light) and His Holy Name (Secret Name, *Hans Nam*,

Pranav Yog, *Laya Yog*, *Hans Yog*, etc.). Once a person receives this Knowledge, he grows in devotion, which is like fresh water, and experiences the highest joy.

The sandalwood tree is full of perfume, but it can't give this to anyone, even if it wants to. But when the wind blows, it takes the perfume from the tree and makes the whole forest smell like sandal. God is like that fragrance. He is within us all, but without Knowledge, we can't experience His fragrance. When the Master, like the breeze, comes our way, he helps us see God within.

There are four kinds of Guru. One is like the touchstone, one is like the sandalwood tree, one is like a flame, and one is like the bhringi wasp. The touchstone, or 'philosopher's stone', is supposed to be able to turn iron into gold, but it can't turn it into a touchstone like itself. There is fragrance in the sandalwood tree, but snakes curl themselves around it. They don't lose their poison, even though they are living so close to the wonderful perfume. A flame or lamp can light other lamps, but it itself lives in the dark. You will never get anything from such gurus.

There is a wasp called 'bhringi'. It catches other insects and stuns them. It encloses the insect in a small mud cocoon and starts to buzz. After some time, that insect turns into a bhringi, breaks out of the cocoon, and starts turning other insects into bhringis. So this wasp makes others like itself. The Satguru, or True Guru, can make any kind of person become as he is, by his Word. Such a Guru really can liberate the soul.

Who can describe the greatness of the Satguru? Even Shesha or Sarada, Goddess of Speech, fail to do so. Who can adequately praise the miracle of his grace? The seeker who becomes a true devotee is really great, and Knowledge yields up its treasures to him.

You may have heard the name of Eknath. He was a great saint. He helped many other souls to wake up by showing them the path of true devotion. He was born in the village of Paithan, in Maharashtra. He was orphaned at a very early age. His grandparents raised him affectionately, but, due to his inner tendencies ('*sanskars*') and the absence of parental love, he lost all interest in worldly things. He longed for true happiness and was

disappointed in the world. He went to temples to worship the idols and to listen to holy legends, but this did not satisfy his hunger. As time passed, his longing to see God increased. He had heard that God can be seen through devotion, and that the Guru shows the way. He also heard that Janardan Swami, the Prime Minister of Devgarh, was a very great and realized soul. Although busy with worldly affairs, he was, in fact, unaffected by them. Eknath longed to take refuge in him and follow his teaching, but, knowing the grief that it would cause his grandparents, he didn't go. His dislike for worldly life disturbed his grandparents, but they also didn't want to discourage him from loving God. At last, love of God triumphed over human attachment, and Eknath decided to go and find his Master.

It was well past midnight and everyone was asleep. Eknath's grandparents were also fast asleep, but he himself was wide awake.



When someone discovers that fire is raging all around his house, he won't sleep, but will try to escape. This was Eknath's condition. He understood very well that this world is like a wooden house engulfed by the flames of desire, yet everyone is sleeping in the sleep of lust, anger, greed, pride, and attachment. He who manages to get out of the house will be saved. Eknath wanted to escape from this fire and find true peace. So he was neither hungry nor sleepy. He had only one thing on his mind: When would the lucky day come when he could find Janardan Swami and prostrate at his feet?



He opened the door softly and went outside. It was dark all around. However, like the stars twinkling in the sky, the longing for his Master shone like a lamp within him. As he walked along, however, the thought of his beloved grandparents sprang to mind, and his eyes filled with tears. But he drove away this weakness, quickened his pace, and left the village.

Even if it is hungry or thirsty, a bird will not be tempted to eat once it finds the door of its cage open. It'll just fly away. Eknath, having escaped from the cage of attachment, was running in search of the Light, finding which puts an end to all suffering. People don't care about the difficulties that face them in their quest for worldly pleasure. In the same way, Eknath didn't care about the difficulties in the dark. Sometimes he fell into a ditch or hit his foot on a rock. Thorns tore his clothes and scratched his feet, but he didn't care about these or any other troubles that might happen to him on the way. The cries of owls and jackals made his heart thump, but this did not deter him. He wanted to reach his Lord as quickly as possible. He pressed onwards.

Next morning when his old grandparents couldn't find him, they ran crying through the village, calling everyone together. There was sadness in every house. When the bird has flown, just



looking at its cage makes one sad. Meanwhile, Eknath was sitting beside a river, taking thorns out of his bleeding feet. He was weary from the journey, but he was getting a glimpse of divine peace. He thought, 'Eknath, you have left the world and hope to find God. You are very lucky even to want the Master's love. If you didn't feel like that, you would've wasted your whole life chasing worldly love. You have to go on! See, the Master is already giving your worthless self grace and love, and is opening up the lotus of your heart!'

He washed his face and hands, and had a drink of water to refresh himself. He looked in the direction of his village and stood up. Suddenly, he remembered his family. He knew very well the misery he had caused by running away. His face fell and once again he was seized by pangs of attachment. Giving up one's loving family may be easy, but forgetting them is not so easy.

Thoughts of his home disturbed him, and this plainly showed on his face. Suddenly, a man rode up who was simply but attractively dressed. He stopped in front of Eknath and asked, "My young friend, what are you thinking about, standing here so early in the morning? Where are you going?"

Eknath looked away from the direction of his village and towards the road stretching out before him. He said, "I have a long way to go."

The traveller said, "Did you know where you were going before you left home? People usually decide where they are going before they set out."

If we are in a strange place and someone sympathetically asks if we are in trouble, he will seem like a dear relative to us. Eknath had left behind his home and family, and now was starting to regard the whole world as his home. Someone who has no selfishness doesn't dislike anyone. Eknath was charmed by the stranger's sympathy, and turned to look at him. Very humbly he replied, "I am going to find my Guru."

"He must be a great Master to have a disciple like you. Who is he?"

"Janardan Swami," replied Eknath with folded hands and bowed head. He did not know that the Master himself was standing



before him!

The stranger dismounted. He was very pleased with Eknath's love and devotion. He asked, "You mean Janardan Swami who is the Prime Minister of Devgarh?"

Eknath again bowed his head in love and respect and said, "Yes, sir. He is my Guru. He is a great and noble realized soul, always gracing the poor and humble. I look to him and to no one else. Have you ever met him? He must be very tender-hearted. Just by seeing and talking to him once, a person couldn't help singing his praises."

The stranger replied, "Yes, I have been lucky enough to have met him several times. But I have heard that he hasn't, so far, accepted anyone as a disciple, nor have I ever seen a disciple of his. I am very surprised to hear that he has made you his disciple."

Eknath said, "You are indeed blessed to have been in the

presence of such a noble soul. He hasn't actually *made* me his disciple, but, from the bottom of my heart, I regard him as my Guru. In fact, I'm on my way to see him. I am sure that when he sees my distress, he will give me his grace. When I see his feet and he places his hand on my head, all my sufferings will be over."

The stranger asked, "Have you seen him yet?"

"No, sir. So far, I haven't been lucky enough."

"But you are very young."

There is no guarantee that I will live long. Therefore, I am anxious to take his shelter, untie the knots of worldly attachment, and know the Truth."

The stranger enquired, "Have you experienced anything of the world?"

Eknath replied, "No, nor have I experienced the Reality, but, by my Master's grace, I will know them both."

"Brother, the path is very difficult and complicated. Will you be able to make it?"



Ekknath said, "But the Guru makes a hard path easy. Someone who has the Master's grace can even cross the ocean in one leap!"

The man laughed and said, "You are very courageous, but Devgarh is very far from here. How can you go all the way there on foot?"

Ekknath said, "If a person really wants something, he doesn't notice the distance or the problems on the path. The object of his desire may be ever so far, but it is always in his heart and before his eyes."

The stranger asked, "Won't you ride there?"

Ekknath said, "I am going to my Guru. For me there will be no turning back. So why shouldn't I go barefoot? Just by thinking of him, I will reach there easily. All I have to do is keep on going."

The stranger was very pleased with Ekknath. He thought, 'This boy has plenty of faith, love, enthusiasm and devotion. If he can keep this up, he will definitely reach his goal.' He said aloud to Ekknath, "My boy, I've seen your courage and single-mindedness, and my heart tells me that you will succeed." So saying, he went on his way.

The road was no doubt long, but this didn't concern Ekknath in the least. His longing for his Master was the horse on which he rode. He didn't stop to rest, nor did he notice the hardships of the journey. For days and nights together, he kept his goal before him and at last he reached Devgarh. When he saw the city from afar, his face lit up and all his weariness vanished. He had reached his destination! He asked for Janardan Swami and reached his office. The Prime Minister was reading official documents: Ekknath went inside softly, and the Prime Minister did not know that he had arrived. With a heart full of love and devotion, Ekknath prostrated himself, and, standing in a corner, just stared. When the Prime Minister looked up, Ekknath's surprise knew no bounds. 'Why, he is the person I met on the river bank!' His body trembled and his eyes filled with tears of love. 'Oh, Master!', he thought, 'Even though you are so great, you hide your nobility! But how can the sweet smell of musk be hidden by a mere veil?' He kept his thoughts to himself, however.



Suddenly the Minister looked up, and, seeing Ekknath standing there, smiled. Ekknath ran, threw himself at Janardan Swami's feet and wept bitterly, bathing his Lord's feet in tears. They were not ordinary tears, but tears of love. The Ganges traverses the Himalaya and, after passing all kinds of obstacles such as rocks and forests, reaches the sea and merges in it. Ekknath had overcome the obstacle of worldly attachments and had reached his Master. These were not tears, but flowers raised in the garden of his faith and love. With these flowers he adorned the feet of his Lord.

Janardan Swami lovingly patted him on the head and said, "So, you have finally arrived! My son, the road must have been full of hardships."

Ekknath answered, "Maybe, my Lord, but they are all over and done with. Now that I have come into your holy presence, I no longer feel any sorrow or tiredness. All I want is to attach my mind

forever to your holy feet.”

The Prime Minister said, “But I am a family man. If you want initiation, you should make some monk or hermit your guru.”

Eknath said, “To my mind, I have found my enlightened saint, Yogi and Lord. That’s why I have come all this way. You may be the ruler of Devgarh and a learned scholar, but you are also a Yogi of the highest order, a true renunciate, brave and kind. You are the greatest Guru, you are everything. I see all this in you, my Master. You are the epitome of justice and impartiality. One who doesn’t discriminate between Hindu and Muslim, who sees no difference in others, is a great soul. It doesn’t matter whether he wears monk’s robes or not. Everyone bows to such a Master, and all come begging to him.

He is the Lord of Heaven, Earth and Hell, and all the gods sing his praises. If I leave such a Master, to which penniless man should I go begging? Someone who comes to your door yet returns empty-handed is really unlucky. A person with a jaundiced eye sees everything yellow. However, if your grace rests on someone, he comes to your shelter and cannot help expressing his gratitude. Who says that you are a householder? You are like the lotus which lives in the water yet doesn’t get wet. You are like the flower which attracts the bee, but not the blood-sucking leech, because a leech has no use for its beauty and perfume. The veil of delusion has fallen over the eyes of the person who sees you as merely a family man. People who themselves are burning in the flames of lust, anger, envy, and passion see you as being caught in the same, just as people sitting in a boat think that they are stationary and the world is moving past.”

“Amazing!” exclaimed Janardan Swami. “Such faith and love alone have brought you here. But, my son, think about it. I am the Prime Minister of this kingdom. Guru is said to be all-knowing and the Indweller of all, but I am the Minister of a land which has boundaries. So where did you get the idea of making me your Guru? So far I haven’t accepted a single disciple.”

Eknath said, “Master, in the eyes of others you may be a King’s Minister, but to me you are the King of Kings! Guru is the Lord of

the universe! The hearts of all creatures is his kingdom. You take various forms to remind erring beings like myself of the eternal Truth. Someone who has received your grace sees you as you really are. You are completely free, but at the same time, you are under the control of devotees who truly love you. You incarnate yourself because they want you to. You are Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva—Creator, Preserver, and Destroyer of the universe! The spider spins its web then sits in the middle of it, and in the same way, you manifest a body for yourself, yet remain absorbed in your Self. O ruler of all! Those who give up their cunning and deceit and take shelter in you, see you as you really are. There is no way in the whole world, except through you, to get salvation. What to speak of ordinary creatures—even Brahma himself gets confused by what you do. You may be anything, but you are my everything. I have no other support in this world. My place is at your feet.”

You cannot argue with humility, faith and love, but even so, Janardan Swami said, “Very well. If you are so set on being initiated by me, first of all you must prove yourself worthy of initiation. Are you prepared to be tested?”

Eknath bowed his head and said, “How could I ever be fit to take a test? I will simply do whatever you want. I am a puppet, and will dance as you pull the strings.” So saying, Eknath prostrated himself at his Guru’s feet then stood before him with hands folded.

This world is insubstantial, but we are deluded by ignorance and look for the substantial in it. Led by the nose on the string of hope, we wander around and around. Only a real hero can snap this string. Although it is a weak string, a person must be very strong to break it. A black wasp is strong enough to bore holes in wood, but gets trapped by the softness and fragrance of the lotus and gives up its life without trying to escape. Similarly, because of delusion and worldly attachments, we cannot loosen the bonds of hope and expectation.

One person in a million takes on the role of disciple, in order to break free. Accepting a guru is nothing so great, but remaining a disciple all one’s life is a different matter. Many people start out as disciples, but very few stay that way. People give a little money as a

donation and think that they are great devotees. They make so much in business, they spend thousands on their children's weddings and they themselves lack nothing, yet even so they claim that everything they have belongs to the Master!

Parents give birth to the body. A person who serves and honours his mother is serving the earth and honouring all the natural and supernatural forces. He who serves and honours his father makes the Creator happy, but he who serves and pleases his Guru makes the Lord of the Universe his own. It is said that serving the Guru is serving God.

This is why it is also said that Guru is even greater than parents. Our parents give us our body, but then we have to suffer all kinds of physical and mental problems. Parents cannot save their son from reaping the fruits of his actions. However, when Guru gives Knowledge to his spiritual child, he gives him a second birth, the spiritual birth, and frees him from *karma* and the wheel of birth and death. In our previous births we had different parents, and we were separated from all of them, but the Master never leaves us. He is our true father and mother. A person who has received the highest birth—the human birth—but does not serve Guru or turns against him, will never find peace and happiness, and will never get salvation.

Service to the Guru pleases all gods, ancestors and saints. Honouring him is acceptable to all the gods. Service is the highest action and religion and is the way to liberation. He who hates his parents will suffer hell, but he who hates the Guru who has given him the holy Knowledge will never find a place in heaven, earth or hell. We can never repay the debt we owe him.

Only the person who is devoted to his Guru has the right to be called a disciple. A disciple who doesn't want to serve and dedicate himself is not really a disciple, although he may call himself one. There will never be a lack of people who give donations, but a disciple who surrenders himself is truly rare. You will find plenty of gurus who live off donations, but a Guru who can really liberate the soul is also truly rare.

It is the Guru's duty to give the True Knowledge and help the

disciple grow on the path of peace and realization. It is the disciple's duty to first and foremost renounce all worldliness and try to please his Master by loving and faithful service. In this lies his welfare and salvation.

Suppose you are going shopping. If you don't pay the full price, you won't get the thing you want. In the same way, only by dedicating your all can you make the Master your own. You are mistaken if you hold back yet think that the Master is yours. Cheating may work in the market, but the Master recognizes only truth and sincerity. If serving is what is necessary, then only service will work. If it weren't necessary to give your all, then it wouldn't be necessary to mention it, nor would there be any need for the many references to it in the scriptures. If one could be a disciple without doing service, why would it be necessary to talk about it?

Eknath had come to his Guru after having broken all ties. He never even dreamt of going home. Three years passed, and he was so absorbed in service that he didn't notice the time passing. Day and night were the same to him. Would a hired servant ever work



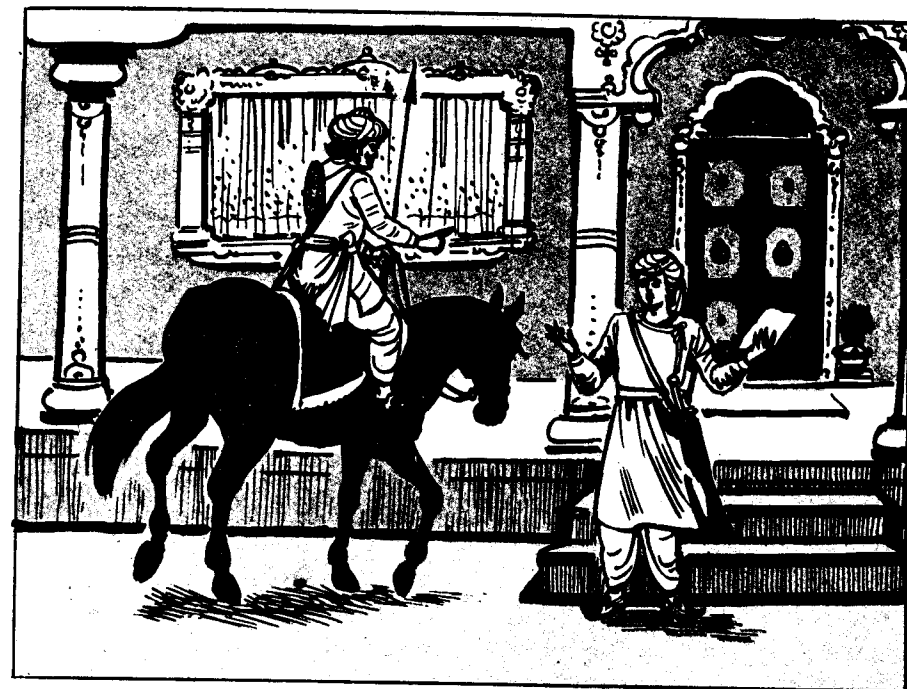
like that? However, Eknath had totally surrendered to his Guru. He was constantly busy—bringing water, cleaning and polishing utensils, washing clothes or feeding the Master's children. On top of all that, Janardan Swami placed the whole burden of the office on Eknath's shoulders. He had seen his ability and had no worries about handing over the work. Everything was done the way Eknath wanted it. All the employees took their orders from him alone. They didn't have to ask the Prime Minister about anything, because they had confidence in Eknath and were satisfied with his way of doing things. His loving attitude had endeared him to one and all. He listened carefully to the troubles of even the humblest people and solved their problems as quickly as possible.

Thus, in the hearts of the people, Janardan Swami and Eknath had equal place. Eknath never let any complaint reach the Prime Minister. He was always ready to do the humblest task, yet he never left his own work to others. Everyone worked according to their own abilities, but Eknath's special quality was that, even though he had the most important responsibilities, he never felt the least proud. He was always self-effacing, and felt that his Master was constantly testing him. He thought that if he passed, he would break forever the bonds of birth and death, but if he failed, he would have to go on being born and reborn.

Everyone is afraid of exams. Even the student who studies hard 365 days a year is nervous at exam time. When the day draws near, he gets butterflies in the stomach like everybody else. Eknath's heart sank at the thought of a test, but when he caught his Guru's gracious glance his courage revived. He firmly believed that, no matter how difficult the test, he would surely pass. But that which we fear most must surely come to pass, and at last the day of Eknath's test arrived.

It was early morning. Janardan Swami was alone in his room meditating. Eknath was on duty outside the door, making sure nobody entered.

Whether by chance or by the Master's design, a man on horseback approached Eknath. He had come a long way. Eknath became alert at the sound of hooves. He signalled the rider to halt at a distance so that the sound would not disturb the Master. Eknath



said softly, "Don't make a noise, and explain why you have come."

The man dismounted quietly, bowed to Eknath and handed over an envelope with the Royal Seal on it. Eknath said, "When the Prime Minister has finished what he is doing, he will come outside and I'll give him this."

The rider said, "This is an urgent Royal Decree. Please deliver it immediately."

Eknath said, "The Master is meditating. When he has finished I'll give it to him."

The messenger said, "This is the King's document, and it is very urgent. Please, you have to disturb the Prime Minister and give it to him."

Eknath replied, "That is absolutely impossible. Not even Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva have the power to do that, let alone me!"

Hearing this, the man turned pale, so Eknath asked, "Is this letter so very urgent?"

The messenger replied, "If it wasn't extremely urgent, would I be so crazy as to insist that you interrupt the Prime Minister's meditation?"

Eknath turned the envelope this way and that to examine it and said, "What is it that cannot wait even a little while?" At this the messenger trembled and cried excitedly, "You must send this letter in now! If you insist on refusing, I myself must go to him!"

Eknath exclaimed, "What are you saying! This is the King's letter, but even if His Majesty himself were to come, I couldn't let him inside, because that is my Guru's order. I, being his disciple, cannot disobey him, no matter how great a catastrophe is about to happen!"

When the messenger saw that there was no way that Eknath was going to let him go inside, nor would he send the letter, he said softly, "My friend, the King has ordered that no one but the Prime Minister be told the contents of this letter. But you leave me no choice. I have to tell you. Listen! Our enemies have invaded us, and right now their armies are marching on the capital. Because of a slight blunder, the kingdom will fall into their hands. Our armies are ready to fight, but will not attack without the Prime Minister's orders. So the King is calling for him, urgently. You have wasted so much time talking. It is vital that this letter reach him. Who knows what has happened in the meantime! Well, I have done my duty. Now it's up to you." So saying, he mounted his horse and galloped away.

His words still rang in Eknath's ears. The kingdom will fall! Our city will be ruined! What have I just heard!

He put the letter on the Prime Minister's file and sat by the door, but he was deeply worried. He wondered whether to interrupt the Master's meditation or not. Then the thought came to him: "Eknath, you are really stupid! Everything belongs to the Master, so what is one little state to him?" But even this didn't console him. The next idea that occurred to him was that the Master would be angry if he were disturbed, and that would be the end of Eknath! All the forgotten lessons would have to be drummed into his head again, and the Master might even say, "Eknath, how you have

misused my teachings!"

He sat down, but conflicting thoughts disturbed his mind. "O Master! What should I do? I can't figure it out, so please help me!" The idea then came to him that everything will work out for the best, and after all, nothing can stop the Master's work. So, free of anxiety, he sat down, but there was to be no relief. Troubled thoughts again flooded into his mind. He was oppressed by worry. He thought, "If anything happens to the kingdom, the Master will say, 'Eknath, you don't realize the value of time. You should have let me know about such an emergency. I was sitting in meditation while the kingdom was being destroyed. Is that your devotion? And in exchange you want the holy and supreme Knowledge!'"

He was feeling more and more depressed, and all the while the Master sat in deep meditation. Sometimes Eknath thought it best to disturb him, then again he thought it best not to. Meanwhile the all-knowing Guru sat silently.

Eknath couldn't figure out what to do. Bowing his head to the ground did not help. He prayed to be shown which of the two alternatives to follow. When a person is surrounded on all sides, all he can do is cry, and Eknath's tears fell like rain on the ground.

The sound of artillery reached his ears. He jumped up, his face pale. But what to do? He had no idea. Time was running out. In such a crisis, there isn't a servant who would hesitate to obey orders. Eknath turned once more towards the room but his Master was meditating as deeply as ever.

'All sense of self is lost when one merges in the one beyond self.'

At that stage, the soul merges with God, but the ego only disappears when all mental fluctuations stop. He whose mind is directed outwards acts selfishly and suffers accordingly. Many people practise methods which are wrong and do not check the mind, but, puffed up with pride, they imagine themselves to be great devotees.

People praise peace, without knowing what it is. They praise hard work as being the greatest thing, and thus spend their whole lives carrying the burden of work along with them. Some people think that *yagya* (sacrifices) is best of all. Others glorify patriotism

or call themselves servants of the people, yet they don't do anything helpful. But Lord Krishna has said, "He who is a devotee of the Guru is My best devotee." A baby bird is totally dependent on its mother and doesn't have a care in the world. Until it leaves the nest, its mother is its sole support, and the entire burden is on her. Similarly, for those who are in the shelter of the Master, it is the Lord Himself who is doing everything. When a person has taken shelter in God, he doesn't fear making a mess of things. Pride is found especially in selfish people, and they care only for *maya*, but those who want to do the highest work care only for the Lord. Passion and hatred are products of *maya*, while the Guru is the giver of supreme peace.

Thinking thus, Eknath reflected that the Master was telling him the Lord does the devotee's work himself. If he disturbed the Master he would be very annoyed. Suddenly an idea occurred to him. He jumped up and ran to the Master's room. He put on Janardan Swami's own armour, mounted his horse and set off in



the direction of gunfire.

A short while later, the army of Devgarh entered the capital cheering in triumph. Eknath returned as quickly as he had left. He hung up the armour on its hook, tethered the horse in the stable and again took up position outside the door.

Soon after, the Master finished meditating and came outside. From all sides he heard, "Hail to our Prime Minister! All glory to our Prime Minister!"

All the citizens were discussing him. They were saying, "How able he is! Even though he is an old man, you should see how he wields a sword! He showed himself to be more heroic than any youngster! The enemy would've sacked our city, but our Prime Minister foiled them completely. They all had to retreat!"

Janardan Swami listened quietly to all this, but he was very surprised. Who had wielded the sword? Who retreated? Was this some kind of joke?

As he walked on he heard many people talking like this. He stood behind them and listened. One man said, "Today he was just



amazing with the sword! I never dreamed he could fight like that!"

Another said, "During the battle he looked totally different. It seemed like a god in disguise had come among us. What feats of magic he performed! The enemy soon fled from the battlefield, but true to the spiritual code, he did not pursue them."

A third said, "You are talking like a child! Our Prime Minister is a realized soul, the greatest of God's devotees. What is there a man cannot do, if God is with him? Flying in the sky or making fire cool is easy for him. I have heard, that at the same time as he was seen fighting, he was meditating in his private sanctuary."

As he walked away, a man noticed him and said, "Look! He himself was standing there listening to our conversation! Who knows how many disguises he uses in the course of running the state! Really, a Yogi can do whatever he wants!"

Then Janardan Swami understood that Eknath had done all this. He thought to himself, 'I was sitting in *samadhi* and he did not disturb me. He put on my clothes and routed the enemy. What a promising boy! Any ignorant servant would have thought, 'Let the city be ruined, if that is what is to be', but he regards every piece of state business to be service to me. That's how a devotee should be.'

He went into the palace and embraced Eknath, saying, "My son! You are blessed your parents are blessed to have given birth to such a son and I am blessed to have you as a disciple."

At his Guru's sweet and loving words, Eknath's eyes filled with tears of joy. He said, "Lord, what are you saying! How could I defeat the enemy? You did it all. I was only your instrument. But I am guilty of desecrating your clothes. Now they are not fit for you to wear. All I can remember is putting them on. I have no idea what happened after that. When I took them off, I came to my senses. I realize what a big mistake I have made. I am too ashamed to ask forgiveness, but only you can forgive me."

The Master was very pleased by Eknath's fidelity and humility. He said, "My boy, now I am old. You take over the Prime Ministership. You are young and able. The employees and citizens all love you very much. When I tell the King what happened, he will be very pleased and ready to appoint you. My word will be enough.

Tell me, do I have your permission to go? I am ready."

Eknath fell at his Guru's feet and started weeping. Again he begged forgiveness and said, "O Lord, what are you saying? What crime have I committed that you have to say this and I have to listen? I have never even dreamt of such a thing. What is all this about the Prime Ministership? I don't want the kingship of the three worlds if it means I have to stop serving you. Let me stay at your feet! This much I beg of you."

Janardan Swami again embraced Eknath lovingly and said, "My boy, you have passed the first test in my school, but only after your second test will I initiate you."

Listen, if you want to earn life's greatest reward, if you want to make your life worthwhile, then, like Eknath, you should obey your Guru. If a child stays close to his father, he can walk all around the carnival and come back home again. In the same way, you will cross the worldly ocean. You should love your Master as Eknath loved his. Brothers! Be careful! Be careful!! Be careful!!! Never think of





leaving your Guru.

Time passed. In anticipation of his next examination, Eknath was even more alert and worked even more enthusiastically. He was so busy that he had no idea of day or night.

One morning, after he had swept and finished polishing the utensils, he was about to draw water for the Master's bath. He wanted to do this before the Master arrived, but suddenly there he was before him! Eknath was very happy to see him so early, but wondered why he had come so soon.

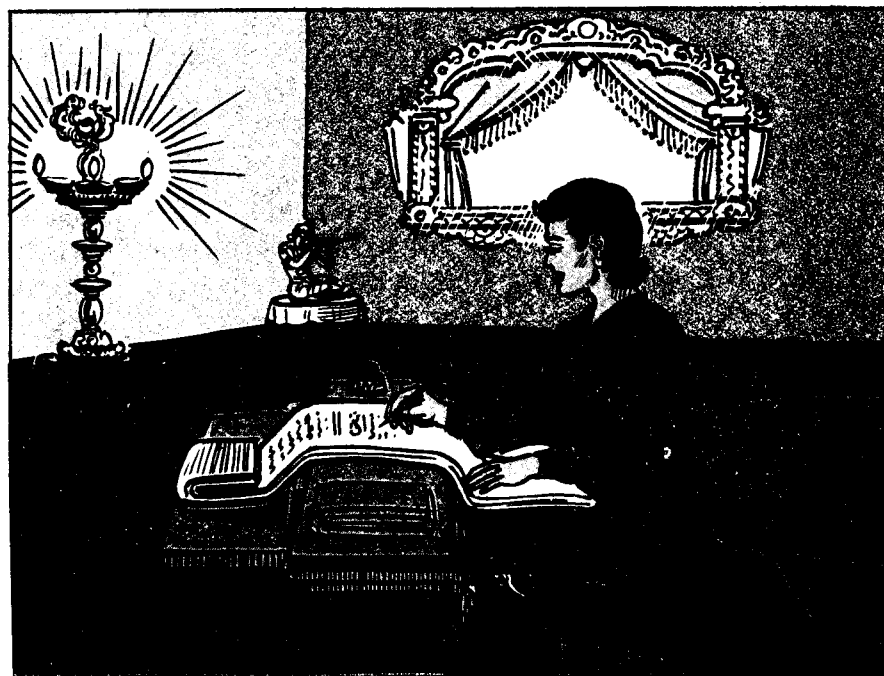
Janardan Swami said at once, "My boy, the new year starts tomorrow, but the accounts have not yet been finalized. You must work on them today and tonight, because tomorrow the King must see them. For such an able servant as you, this is not a hard job. Forget my bath—I'll bring the water myself. Go and prepare the books."

Eknath went to the office and started work. The sun rose and set but he did not raise his head once. The office boy lit the lamps then left. Eknath felt neither hungry nor tired. He was so absorbed

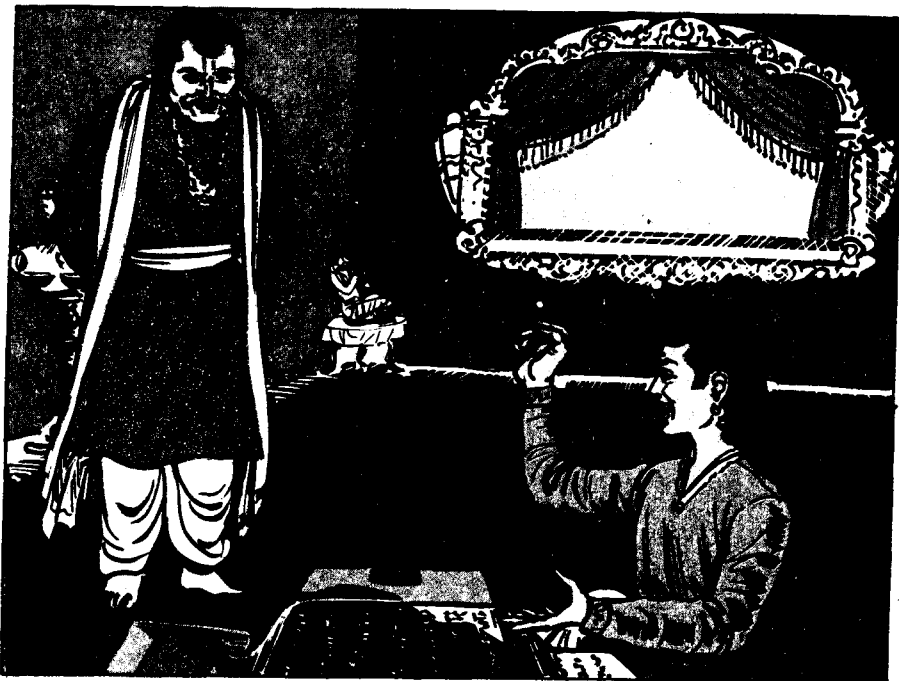
in his work that he was as still as a statue. His one aim was to finish the work before sunrise.

The clock struck midnight as he finished his work. But, when he added up the totals he found a difference of one paisa. He added the accounts all over again from start to finish, but the difference was still there, and this worried him. He added again, and a third time, and by this time most of the night had passed. People were starting to wake up, but sleep had not even touched Eknath. He was too busy. With each passing minute he grew more and more anxious, wondering where the mistake was.

The Prime Minister also woke up and got out of bed. He glanced in the direction of the office, and noticed the light still burning. He realized that Eknath was still at work. He quietly left his room and reached the office. The watchman was dozing by the door. The Prime Minister peeped in the office and said softly, "Eknath, my boy!" He didn't get an answer so he moved forward and called a little louder, "Eknath!" but just as before, there was silence, as if Eknath were asleep.



He entered the office. He stood in front of the lamp and his shadow fell on the books, but Eknath was not at all aware of his arrival. He continued to be absorbed in his figures.



The Prime Minister stood like that for one hour, but Eknath was not aware of anything except his books and figures. Suddenly he shouted, "I found it!" He had found the error of one paisa. He corrected the books and put them back in their places. When he looked up and saw his Master standing there he was most surprised. He rose and prostrated at his feet. The Master asked, "Are the accounts ready?"

"Yes, Master. Today is my lucky day. Usually I don't see you until much later."

His Guru replied, "I've been standing here for over an hour. I also called you several times, but you didn't hear me."

"I heard nothing, Master."

The Master said, "My shadow fell on the books. Even then you could see the numbers?"

"Lord, I really did not know that you were standing there. The figures seemed to be shining somehow." He looked at his Master's face in astonishment. Janardan Swami sat down and said, "Have you been working like this since morning?"

Eknath replied, "I did not notice when the day finished and the night began."

"Didn't you feel hungry, thirsty or sleepy?"

"Not at all, Master."

"What have you been doing all this time? What did you find that made you so happy?"

"A difference of one paisa was outstanding. It had to be found."

"You went to so much trouble for one paisa? Why, that's no difference at all!"

Difference is difference, Master, whether it is of one paisa or 100,000 rupees."

The Master's face really lit up. He laughed and said, "You have



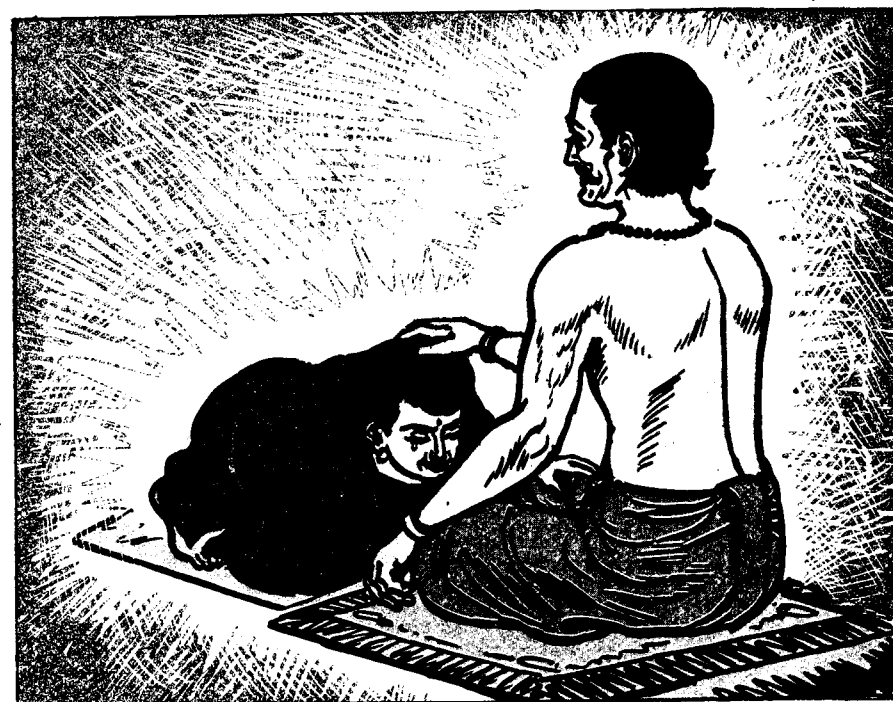
made me very happy, my boy. The test was difficult. People who think themselves great renunciates and monks could not have passed such a test. You have a real desire for the truth, so you passed.

'You have come from so far away. You left your homeland and family. You have renounced family life, and day and night have served me in every way. You have true love and faith. You were even ready to risk your life on the battlefield, but you were victorious and made my reputation shine. You considered the Prime Ministership to be nothing. You wanted to push it aside because you know that nothing is greater than service. Even though you have done so much, you keep on thinking that you are incapable and stupid. Even though I recognized your determination, pure love, faith, devotion and spirit of renunciation from the start, I did not initiate you at once, because I first wanted to see from your actions whether you had real concentration and staying power. Someone who is enthusiastic but lacks concentration also cannot reach the goal.

'I came, called you several times, stood in the way of your light and cast a shadow on your books, but you were so absorbed in your work that you could even see in the dark. Because your service is so sincere, light came from your heart and lit up the numbers. I am proud to have such a disciple. The devotee is the crowning glory of the Master. God is everywhere and lives in every heart, but simply knowing this is not enough. A great devotee makes God manifest Himself. There are many who give initiation and many who receive it, but only he who spreads the true Knowledge is actually worthy of being called a disciple.'

When the Guru is pleased, the joy of the devotee knows no bounds. Eknath was beside himself with ecstasy, because now he was reaping the harvest of his years of service. He had left his home for this. Now he was about to get his desired reward.

Janardan Swami said, "Son, I have one more thing to ask of you. Today you put so much effort into finding an error of one paisa. I ask that in the same way, on the path of devotion, you will overcome even the smallest errors that crop up in life, and that you



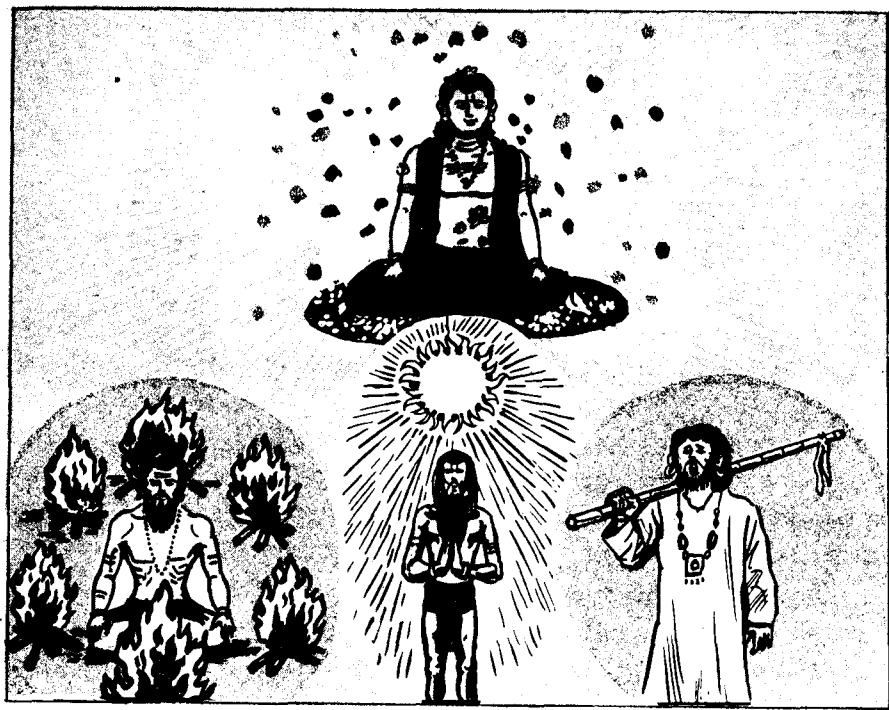
will keep your mind free of even the most trifling defects. Go, bathe and rest. Your trials are over. Now I will show you the path to the soul. You will travel on the same path as the saints and sages, and you will make the Lord of the Universe your own."

Even though pebbles are found everywhere on the roadside, they can never be as valuable as jewels extracted from deep inside a mine. Gold is rare, so its value is also high. Iron is readily available, and is extremely useful, but people prefer to own gold because it is more valuable.

A devotee of the Master and a beloved of God is extremely rare, and that is why such souls are glorified. Devotees of *maya* don't count. Most people are greedy for *maya*, and are very happy when they get it, but the Master is hungry only for loving devotion. Love, respect, and faith are necessary for pleasing him. He who is truly devoted to his Master receives his love in return.

The Guru was pleased with Eknath's service. He had tested him and was convinced of his devotion, so he filled Eknath's soul

with the glorious Knowledge of God. Nachiketa had also wanted this Knowledge and nothing else, so he could not be tempted by Yama's boons of worldly wealth and grandeur. People try in every way, unsuccessfully, to get this supreme Knowledge, but without the Guru's grace, it can't be realized. If the disciple receives the Knowledge, practises it with firm faith, and serves his Guru with deep respect, he will realize his soul. Once God is realized, confusion, fear and ignorance no longer exist.



What can be said about Eknath's great fortune on that day! He easily received that which is rare even for angels. The Divine Light illumined his heart, and his whole being thrilled. The eight holy qualities became his, and he was drenched in peace and bliss. In his intoxication he glorified his Master:

"O Lord! Until today I was caged by delusion, attachment, confusion and bothered by troubles, but, by your grace, I have been rescued from drowning in the river of desires and ambitions, and have been set on the other shore. I have been born and reborn over

again, but, Master, you have shown me the eternal Holy Name and have made me immortal. Now all I pray is that my attention never leaves your holy lotus feet."

People try in many ways to get total happiness, but no one ever finds it. A loving devotee may not get anything material, but pleases God, which is, after all, the greatest wealth. Lord Rama was happy to eat the berries which Bhilni had already tasted. Lord Krishna ate banana peels offered by Vidurani and raw rice given by Sudama. Wealth, beauty, and qualifications are necessary to please the world, but these things will not help you please the Lord. He is hungry only for love. The Master will not go near anyone who doesn't have love.

"How can I praise the grace, mercy, and goodness of the Master? If all the mountains were reduced to charcoal, and made into ink by mixing with the oceans; if the entire earth was made into paper and the branches of all the trees into pens; and if the Goddess of Speech herself should tell me what to write, then day and night for eons I would be writing his glory and still I could not do it properly."

On that day, Eknath was exalted by the Knowledge which uplifts the soul and gives true happiness. Even these days, people try in all kinds of ways to get this Knowledge, which is the way to union with God. Someone roasts his God-given body by sitting in the middle of five fires. Someone else ties his hair in a knot and stands naked in the sun, while yet another tears his ears or carries a bamboo pole around. But this is not the way to true Knowledge. When, by the Guru's grace, the disciple receives the Knowledge which is realized within, then throws himself into meditation and service, his soul will naturally merge with God. He will be free from all worldly sufferings and will find infinite, unending peace. When a person's mind is filled with God, all doubts vanish. Someone who reaches this state also becomes one with the incarnation of God, the Spiritual Master. On the other hand, those who follow other paths may not even get to see the true Master.

How fortunate was Eknath! Why not glorify his holiness! Even the angels long to see and serve the Master as he did, but don't

get the chance. The Divine Light shone brightly in his heart and he was filled with peace. As his every pore resonated with the Holy Name, Eknath's years of sacrifice bore fruit. He said, "O Lord of the Universe! In your mercy you have shown me who you really are. I have no more vain hopes and desires! The Nectar of the Name has completely cooled my heart. A fish flounders when it is taken out of the water, but I was drowning in an ocean of attachments and burning with desires. How can my feeble tongue describe your greatness? Even Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva are ashamed of their efforts to praise you. Therefore, I simply ask you to give me the wisdom to always be your humble servant. I don't want anything else."

Worldly people think that there are many ways to get liberation. However, just as light is the only way to dispel darkness, and heat is the only way to remove cold, it is a fact that the only way to liberation is devotion to the Guru. A devotee never feels any difficulty because that which experiences difficulty, namely, the mind, is always attached to the Master's feet. So how could such a devotee feel sorrow or difficulty? Pure love and faith in the Master will break all bondage, just as an elephant easily breaks lotus stalks. This is how it is for the disciple who serves cheerfully and meditates on the Holy Name. If, even after trying, the mind doesn't settle in meditation, then one should throw oneself into service. While working, the mind should meditate on the Holy Name. Service and meditation should thus be balanced. As the disciple progresses in service and devotion, he will feel more and disinterested in worldly things and the longing to see God will increase. When one really and truly longs to see God, meditation will become natural for him. Every second of his life will be for meditation.

The Guru's grace is for all, but can only be fully realized when the disciple has absolutely no desire for anything in this world. This happens when one has faith and reverence for his Guru's teachings, but faith and reverence themselves come through service. A person who abandons the anchor of service and tries to free himself from sin by any other means is wasting his time. We try to restrain our senses but we cannot. We try and stop bad or dirty thoughts but we cannot. Ascetics hope to subdue the mind through different



austerities, but they cannot. Serving Guru is also a type of sacrifice or austerity, and the disciple who serves will be able to stabilize his mind and restrain all his senses. The devotee who surrenders all his hopes and longs to see God is free from care and rests in Yoga.

Lord Rama taught Vibhishan: "If a person, even if he has been the scourge of all Creation, comes seeking my protection and surrenders his hypocrisy, vanity, attachments, and trickery, I quickly make a saint of him. The threads of affection which bind him to his parents, brothers, children, wife, friends, relatives, and money are twisted into a rope which he uses to tie his mind to my feet. He then looks on all with an equal eye, impartially, with his mind free from desires, joy, sorrow, and fear. Such a saint is part of my heart, as greed is of a miser's."

He continues, "Saints are dear to me, and for their sake alone I incarnate myself. Those who worship my personal and qualified form, who firmly walk the path of spirituality and who are determined to do good to others, are firm in their vows and are devoted to saints. Such are as dear to me as life."

God always lives in the heart of the devotee who has rid himself of all ego, who worships the Master—God incarnate—and who places his mind at his feet. All creeds and scriptures discuss in one way or another the need for the Master. All scriptures praise devotion. This testimony of devotion inspires us to become good devotees and to serve. Until a disciple becomes a servant, he won't get the desired results.

Eknath had already dissolved himself in service. So when he received Knowledge it blossomed in him. He served even more lovingly and conscientiously. His love for the Lord grew day by day. He forgot all about the world and cleansed his heart of all desires, thus making it a sacred shrine in which he saw his Master 24 hours a day.

When he had first met Eknath on the river bank, Janardan Swami had told him that enthusiasm is necessary and must be kept



up to the end. Well, now that time had come.

"Keep that first love up to the end, then you will be free and will free thousands."

One day, the Master told Eknath: "My boy, I have revealed to you the Nectar which has freed you of worldly desires and taken you to heaven. It should be shared with others. Everyone is asleep in the awful sleep of folly and delusion, and they are burning up with desires. Go and reveal the Holy Name to them and give them relief. Although I am very pleased with your service so far, I will be even more happy if you spread this message of devotion and put people on the right path. People wander from one holy place to another in search of this Nectar. Visit these places, feed the people this nectar of devotion, give them Knowledge and rid them of their concepts. They think that simply going to a shrine, bathing, and worshipping statues is devotion. In exchange for trifles, they are wasting this precious human body, which is rare even for the angels to get. Give them Knowledge and explain the value of human life. A dip in the river of satsang can change a crow-like person into a swan. Show them God, Who is all Truth-Consciousness-Bliss, so that they can make a success of their lives. Noble people work for the good of others. Most people are only concerned with their own selfish pursuits. A great soul, a *mahatma*, is concerned with the welfare and salvation of others, and nothing else. So, my child, get ready for your pilgrimage!"

Allahabad (Prayag) is called the 'queen of holy places', but we have been shown that the company of saints and being with the Master is in fact the greatest of all holy places.

Sahjo Bai said, "Greater than all the holy places is the Master's feet, infinitely holy. There is no place in the whole universe which can compare with this."

The Ramayana of St. Tulsidas says, "The company of saints is a living shrine, the root of happiness and blessedness."

At the feet of the Master, everything is included—fasting, giving alms, pilgrimages, everything. Eknath had already dived into the waters of this holiest of holy places, so there was no need for him to go on pilgrimage and bathe in sacred rivers. He was not

sent there because he wanted to see them, but because the Master wanted others to bathe in his holy words. An obedient disciple who does such a pilgrimage for others is indeed blessed.

So, according to his Guru's orders, Eknath visited various holy places, such as Dwarika, Jagannathpuri, Rameshwaram, Hardwar, Badrinath and Manasrovar, spreading the message of Truth. He gave Knowledge to those who had the proper love and faith, and started them on the path of devotion. At last his travels took him to Pandharpur. A huge crowd had gathered there on the day of *Guru Purnima*, to bathe in the Chandrabhaga River and pay their respects to Lord Vitthal. They bathed, worshipped, sang devotional songs to the idols, gave alms and thought themselves most fortunate. They thought that just doing this much gave some meaning to their lives.

The great devotee Namdev and others were also there. When



Namdev heard that Eknath had come, he gathered all the devotees and took them to see him. Knowing him to be a great devotee of the Lord, they prostrated to him. When he saw Eknath, Namdev's eyes filled with tears, which Eknath wiped away with his own hands. Whenever devotees meet, they automatically start talking about God.

Eknath said, "Beloved devotees of God! Today we have come together from far and near at Lord Vitthal's door, so that we may grow in spirit. But many unlucky people come here and leave empty-handed. Actually, when a soul has incarnated through the 8.4 million species of living things, and comes into a human body, it becomes entitled to see God. The soul can't be seen in any other species. When a person takes the holy bath of satsang, his sins are

washed away. Now you have a golden opportunity. If you want, you can clean all the dirt from your mind. My heart is filled with joy at your love. You can also have a chance to see the true Master.

'By the Master's grace, my mind is totally free of doubt. He has shown me the One Reality behind the entire sentient and insentient Creation. This Reality is always with me. In word and deed I am aware of Spirit and nothing else. Now, I would like you, too, to have my Guru's grace, and see God within yourselves. Your lives will then be successful.

'When the demon Shankhasura stole the Vedas from Brahma, the Lord took the form of Matsya, the Divine Fish, killed Shankh sura and recovered the Vedas. When the gods had been



defeated by the demons, to help them churn the ocean, the Lord took the form of the Divine Tortoise and supported Mt. Mandra. The demons were overcome and the gods and Varuni were given Nectar. When Hiranyaksh took earth away to Hell, my Lord killed him and saved the earth. He also took the form of Narsingh to protect Prahlad. The Lord, The Satguru, takes various forms from age to age to share with devotees the Nectar of devotion. My Lord will keep on coming, too, to show the True Way.



'The Satguru, Shri Janardan Swami, is truly the Lord Vitthal himself. The seeker's every wish comes true if he dives with faith, love, and respect into the holy waters of his satsang. Such a disciple will be freed from the bonds of sin and will be liberated. When a

person comes to the shelter of the Master, Who is all compassion, forgiveness and peace, he gets the right to salvation and devotion. I have toured all the holy places, but find that there is no place like the lotus feet of the Master for purifying the mind. If a person bathes there, he will cross the ocean of birth and death. Each holy place has its own special importance, but in the Master's feet is contained the qualities of all of them. So come to the Master and bathe in his Eternal Name. Dive into the river of Nectar and you will feel eternal joy. I have come to take you to the Supreme Light and show you God as He really is.

'Lots of people get the chance to visit holy places to bathe,



meditate, give alms and charity. But even if you go to all the shrines and give away alms you won't get the same result and benefit that you would from meditating just once on God within yourself.'

'Only a real fool would throw away a touchstone and go looking for pebbles; or cut down a wish-fulfilling tree to plant a cactus; or turn a magic cow out of his house and wander in search of milkweed. What is the use of trying to make someone like that understand? Could such a person give up his stubbornness and receive Knowledge? Never!

'There are two types of people in this world: the first heeds the words of a saint, gives up his evil ways and practises the path of devotion. The second type is the idiot whose consciousness will never wake up, even if he gets Brahma, Vishnu, or Shiva as Guru. Such people are devoted to lifeless things like idols, but they won't follow a living Master.

'If someone has a magic cow which can fulfill all his wishes, will he go begging for food? If he has the cool shade of the Tree of Paradise in his garden, will he inconvenience himself by sitting in the sun?

'Within everyone is the 'magic cow' of Holy Name. If a person meditates on it, all his wishes will come true. Even though the touchstone of Holy Name is closer to us than anything else, we still grope in the darkness of *maya*. The unfortunate do not search for it, but waste their efforts on useless things. In fact, the Holy Name of God is the touchstone and the fulfiller of all desires. When a person experiences the bliss of meditating on it, he regards even liberation as insignificant, not to mention worldly things! So if you really want something great, go to the Master. You will be given the jewel of Holy Name, which will free you from the poverty of attachment.

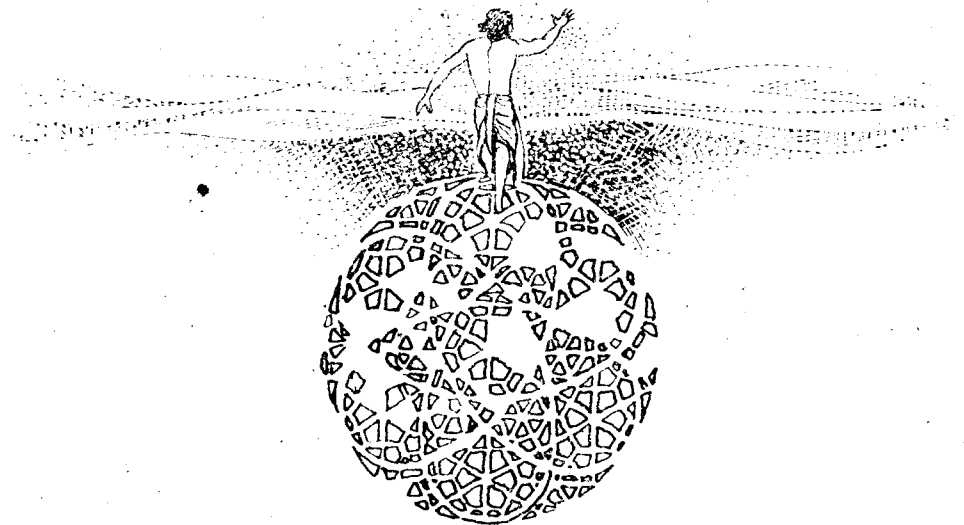
'The touchstone of Holy Name is in us all, but it has been covered by the dirt of ignorance. Fire reduces a heap of wood to ashes, and the Name burns up all desires and defects. But this fire gets lit only when the Master blows away the ashes of confusion with the breeze of satsang. Then the jewel of Holy Name starts to become apparent. The wise and discriminating person immediately picks up this jewel, and then the Divine Light sparkles and shines in



the shrine of his heart. Fools don't appreciate the value of this jewel and throw it away. They turn away from the Light to eat the vermin of desires and passions. Even though they have received the Name, they waste their lives chasing worldly things and in foolish pursuits."

What Eknath said was Knowledge in a nutshell, full of blessings and wisdom. People bowed their heads at his feet and prayed, "Revered Sir, if there is such a thing as this Holy Name, and it is the simple way to be free from the hassles of birth and death, please show it to us and give us the gift of devotion to the Guru. Get us out of these worldly entanglements, and put us on the other shore of this ocean of misery. We came to bathe in the Chandrabhaga River, but are getting the chance to dive into the Manasrovar Lake! We would be fools to waste this opportunity."

This liberated saint lived for the sake of others. His purpose in life was to purify and enrich the world through Knowledge. His intention in coming to Pandharpur was, as his Master commanded, to set others on the path of true devotion. He initiated the sincere seekers, taught them about service, satsang and meditation, and then went on his way. As he left, everyone's eyes were full of tears.





People who learn something yet don't respect the teacher, who receive the True Knowledge from the Satguru yet don't try in thought, word and deed, to please him, will not get anything from the teaching or the knowledge, nor will they be happy. It is the Guru's duty to give the True Knowledge and help the disciple grow on the path of peace and liberation. It is the disciple's duty to forge ahead, renounce all worldliness and try hard to please his Master by loving and faithful service. In this lies his welfare and salvation.

—*Shri Hans Ji Maharaj*