

MEMOIRS OF SWAMI ADBHUTANANDA

(Latu Maharaj)

(Swami Adbhutananda, known to the devotees of Sri Ramakrishna as Latu Maharaj, was a disciple of the Master and the memoirs we propose to present here in a serial are a free translation of the Bengali book *Smritikatha* by Sri Chandrasekhara Chattopadhyaya published by Sri Ramakrishna Math, Belur Math.—*Ed.*)

CHAPTER I

The person, whose memoirs we are compiling, was a servant of Sri Ramakrishna, his disciple and a man of the inner-circle — an epithet with which the Master used to term his intimate disciples. The prince of Bengal playwrights, Girish Chandra Ghosh, used to call him 'a stainless saint'; the Bengal novelist, Sarat Chandra Chatterji, saw in his countenance the reflexion of Sri Ramakrishna and was charmed. He was a bright star of the Ramakrishna Order of Sannyasins (monks). Ramakrishna Mission shines with the glow of his perpetual prayer to and unification with the Lord. It is his ambrosial words that have been collected and published by Swami Siddhananda as *Sat-Katha* (A Saint's Talks). It is but natural for all to desire to learn something of a man whose words are so simple, so sweet, so soothing. In order to satisfy this natural hankering we publish these *Memoirs* of Latu Maharaj.

When Latu Maharaj was ordained he was called Swami Adbhutananda, a name by which he is little known. We know him as our Latu Maharaj. His childhood name was Rākh-too-Rāma (i.e. Rama, Thou art his protector — a name that is usually given to a boy whose elder brothers die in infancy).

He was born in a village in the district of Chāpra in Bchar. His parents were poor shepherds. Nobody could think that this kid would ever rise to greatness and hence our diligent search about the details of his nativity ended in frustration. It is our misfortune we are deprived of the delight of observing how the tiny seed was developing through various stages into the giant tree that he became, of how

the sainthood was unfolding itself even from its infancy. For, adult greatness generally peeps through the spontaneous behaviour of infancy and childhood. Of this we are completely in the dark in the case of Latu Maharaj. When we came in contact with him he had long passed his youth — he was an advanced monk, following the rules of a monk's life, he always observed complete indifference to our queries about his ante-order past. If perchance some brother-monks would out of curiosity, ask him about his childhood Latu Maharaj's invariable reply was, 'Aha! what are you doing? Leaving aside talks on the Lord, are you going to waste your time talking about me? Don't be silly. Don't annoy me for nothing.' Saying this he would become grave. To penetrate that gravity and to resume the old talk was a task even his brother-monks would not dare to attempt.

Once Sri Sarat Chandra Chatterji, author of *Saint Nag Mahashaya*, wanted to publish a similar life of Latu Maharaj. At that Latu Maharaj said, 'Look here, Sarat (Latu Maharaj used to pronounce 't' as 'ṭ'), don't, don't write on me! darling, don't attempt any such thing. To write on me! It is tabooed. Write on Sri Ramakrishna, on Swamiji (i.e. Swami Vivekananda). The world will profit by that. Remember the taboo to write on me.' Since that day Sri Sarat's pen stopped writing on him.

One can well realize why difficult it is to write even a modest biography of a person who was so particular about hiding his identity, so averse to reveal anything about his own personality. It needs no mention, there-

fore, that this biography will remain an incomplete production. Whatever attempts we are making towards this end are due to the blessings and encouragement of Latu Maharaj's brother-monks, who supplied the meagre materials of the life in course of their casual talks.

It is customary with the biographers to write down a few words about the parentage and family of the person concerned. We are unlucky about it in this case. All our endeavours to collect just a few facts about them proved an utter failure except the following. Latu Maharaj's father was a poor shepherd, whose family, consisting of wife and himself, could not get even one meal a day. Both of them had to work so hard throughout their life that they died prematurely, leaving infant Latu at the mercy of his uncle. Rākhtoo-Rāma was then not even five. At that age he was deprived of parental love.

This uncle had no children, so he poured his love on Rākhtoo unreservedly and the latter's love-thirsty soul drank of it abundantly. We do not know the name or anything else of this uncle too, except that he was not as poor as the parents, rather he was tolerably well off. Although he earned well he seems to have spent much more. And running into debts he had to sell off his house and all to the creditors and leave the village for good.

As long as Rākhtoo was with his uncle in the village he remained a care-free boy, roaming about in fields and pastures in the company of shepherd boys, sometimes chasing cattle, sometimes playing with the boys. Rākhtoo, however, would be missing very often; after anxious searches he would be found in some neighbouring village, not very near his own. Of course he had to grin and bear scolding stoically. Soon, however, the uncle came to understand that scolding, or even beating, would have no effect on the boy, who would have his own way, come what may. Moreover love played its part. The uncle's loving heart left Rākhtoo a free boy.

'Do you know, I used to move freely with the boys tending cattle! How guileless and

unsophisticated they were! You can't get real joy unless you be one like them.'—once he expressed himself unawares. This is the key to unlock his childhood life. In fact he learnt his life's lessons in the school of nature in the company of guileless shepherd boys. Disregarding, the scorching rays of the summer sun, torrential rains of the rainy season, biting cold of the winter, he wandered about like a frolicking fawn on the uneven grounds full of prickly shrubs. His well-knit, short-statured body followed his mind freely enjoying the beauty, grace and fragrance of the nature around him. He had not the ill luck to enter the precincts of the village primary school; nature provided his schooling. In this school there were no text books, no village school master with a cane in hand, no stern teacher either. There was however, a training—training with an abundance of acts and facts—that fit one to live a noble life, that is loaded with lessons which teach one how to be successful in life's struggles, that make one part and parcel of nature, to be in rapport with her, to be a seeker of her core, whose maddening influence makes one burst into 'O mind dear, call on fervently the Lord of the Universe.'

We came to know of this line of his favourite song when one day, standing on the bank of the Ganges at Dakshineswar, he was humming its tune, unaware of the surroundings; and Sri Ramakrishna passing that way stood still, wrapped in the quiet mystery of his disciple's heart, and blessed him, when the former woke up to his normal consciousness, with the words, 'May this take you to the Lord's haven.'

Thus was his childhood passing gracefully, when a rude shock broke the even tenor of his life. We have said about his uncle's running into debts. His creditors took possession of his house and drove him into the street. He was compelled to leave his native village. Who knew then that the event which appeared as a dire blow of the Furies would really turn out to be a blessing in disguise, so far as our Rākhtoorāma was concerned?

CHAPTER II

If we observe a little minutely we shall find, the human life is guided more by the unknown and unobservable factors than by their opposites. Here, in this case of Rākhtoorāma also, there is no departure from this general rule. When his uncle was extremely worried that very time there came to the village a number of wandering monks, whom he was habitually inclined to entertain. In the course of conversation he got a hint from one of them to come to Calcutta. But he had to meet with very stiff, though loving, opposition when he tried to act up to the suggestion. The villagers loved him well, they would not brook parting from him. They went so far as to persuade the creditors to give him back his house and lands. Further they wanted to create certain facilities for the proper cultivation of the lands so as to enable him to pay off his debts by easy instalments. Demands of love are a little difficult to withstand. The uncle felt it, but ultimately succeeded to snap asunder the tie of love. And we find the uncle and the young nephew wending their weary way towards Calcutta.

What made the uncle take this decision? It was his self-esteem that took a hand in the matter. At his reversal of fortune the creditors chuckled. They wanted to see him humbled and they did it. To live in the village was to do so under their sufferance, which was a bit too hard for him to swallow. So he preferred honour to bowing to love's request. He willingly handed over everything he possessed in clearance of his debts and left the village with a clear conscience.

We do not know the mental condition of the uncle when they left the village. But we heard it from Rākhtoorāma himself that he could not restrain his tears. Once, when expressing sympathy for a man in similar circumstance, he, inadvertantly said, 'Dear, does one like to leave one's hearth and home? I myself shed tears. You have your friends and relatives. I had none. Still I felt so much. It is but natural you feel it so keenly.'

After travelling on and on for days together, when Rākhtoorāma and his uncle reached Calcutta they were dead tired. Not only that, they were dazed too. The uncle had no idea of what Calcutta looked like, both physically and psychologically. It was vast, beyond his conception. They were physically swallowed up. But what hurt them most was the heartless behaviour of the citizens. In the midst of plenty of every kind they found hungry miserables, disdainfully looked down upon as vagrants. In their village there was sympathy for the famished, some sort of help they could generally get there. They had no idea how cruel a townsman might be to an unknown person, helpless and hapless. Nobody inquired about what the other fellow was doing whether he was fasting or turning criminal. Every man, seeking shelter or food, was taken for a useless beggar without any consideration for the circumstances. No wonder simple Rākhtoorāma and his uncle were bewildered for a few days.

But the person whose fire within did not allow him to eat the humble pie of the creditors was not likely to remain inactive and stupefied for many days. He hit upon a plan and went out in search of some people of his own district. And he happened to find out one Phulchand belonging to his own village. The storm quieted down.

This Phulchand was the orderly of Sri Ramachandra Datta in the State Medical College at Calcutta. He succeeded in finding a place for Rākhtoo in his family. Rākhtoo was appointed as a house-boy.

Thus finding a home for Rākhtoo the uncle heaved a sigh of relief. He did not care so much for his own fate as his nephew's. This, however, turned out to be the first and final parting between the two.

Ramachandra's was a hospitable house, noted for the affectionate nature of the members. Rākhtoo soon found the atmosphere very congenial to the development of his character. Ramachandra, master of the house,

had a name as a man of sterling character. He was himself prompt and ever ready for carrying out the orders of his superiors and he expected the same from his subordinates. He showed no appreciation for the peculiar mentality that was fast growing up among the young educated of the day. He no doubt encouraged the spirit of inquiry among them, their questionings and analyses of orders and situations; but condemned their inaction thereafter and regarded it as a sort of cowardice. He possessed a penetrating intellect which unmasked the pride and hypocrisy underlying the verbal modesty and humility. But wherever he found the true ring of the heart his hat was off in an instant, his heart was filled with reverence. He was in fact above all kinds of meanness. Under the guidance of such a master it was but expected that Rākhtoo would develop into a lad of active habits, obedient, honest, and dutiful. Nor did it take long for the family to notice these qualities in their new servant, who came to be called endearingly 'Lāltoo'. We too will hereafter call him by this name.

In the new master's house our Laltoo was to do chares for the lady of the house, and the girls, to purchase greens and vegetables, to take the tiny tots for a walk, to bring the master's lunch to the office, and now and then to collect bills from shops—all of which he used to do with utmost alacrity. Besides he had his personal liking for wrestling and building his body. Some members of the household would not look upon this hobby of his with a kind eye, but Ramachandra, his master, was generous enough in this regard.

Once a friend of Ramachandra brought the matter to his notice and said, 'It is not good to keep a wrestler as a house-servant,' to which Rama's reply was, 'You do not know, wrestling has a controlling effect on cupidity, it becomes easy for one to preserve his seed.' The friend, however, was insistent and said, 'Moreover wrestlers eat a lot.' Rama turned round and carped 'You are yourselves weak and you like weak servants. Should you grudge giving him two full meals? Would you

scorn one like that, simply because he is your servant? Is he not a man that you would treat him as a cat or a dog? Even a dog is given his fill and you want to deprive the boy even of that right! Should that be the relation between master and servant?' The busy-body kept quiet.

Another day another friend of Rama suspected that the boy was pilfering money when sent on buying chares. So he called the boy aside and asked, 'Tell me, lad, how much you have saved today,' thinking he was doing a good turn to his friend. The insult was too much for the boy to swallow. He said spiritedly 'Master, I may be a servant, but know it for certain I am not a thief.' The boy naturally appeared to be cheeky to the friend and the matter was brought to the notice of Rama, who told his friend, 'Please don't suspect him. The boy is not a thief or a cheat. Whenever he needs anything he asks of the lady of the house and gets it.' For a servant in modern times to get such unstinted praise from the master is indeed rare.

Laltoo made a name in his master's house for his forthrightness. Naturally unpleasant words would some times come out of his mouth, as Laltoo's rustic mind would not mince matters. In consequence many of his master's friends got annoyed with him. Rama, however, knew what impelled the boy to be a bit rude—he appreciated the boy's outspokenness, though expressed in a villager's unsophisticated manner. Rama knew also if anyone is to stick to truth and stand for morality one has to be a little rough on many occasions or to part with his honour and deviate from truth. So, Rama, himself a man of strong character, would not pay any heed to the complaints against his favourite boy servant. By this indirect encouragement Laltoo became all the more outspoken and severe in his criticism of others' moral lapses. Wherever he found deviation from truth or an attempt to cheat his master by flattery or other means Laltoo's ax of criticism fell with a sure aim.

Here is an apt description from the pen of

Sri Mahendranath Datta of the peculiar pose Laltoo used to take on all such occasions : 'On such occasions the pose of a wrestler became very prominent. His stiff straight neck turned a little towards the object of his criticism, his chin a little raised, his eyes wide open and shooting fire, walls of the nostrils considerably swollen, fingers closely joined in a fist, his words gushing out in stutters of half-Bengali and half *patois* of Chāpra, would paralyse his target to complete silence.'

In later life these traits became all the more prominent. Never did he, rather could he, like sweet words. Wherever there was audacity or lack of modesty, only there were his protests couched in rude words, no matter whether the persons were the leaders of society or his own brother-monks. He scorned hypocritical reverence, whereas he was indulgent to sentimental outbursts when they were sincere. We will deal with this part of his character in the next chapter.

CO-EXISTENCE OF SCIENCE AND RELIGION

C. R. GOSWAMI

The first man on earth must have wondered at the sight of such natural phenomena as the Sun, the Moon, Rain, Fire etc. Since then countless awe-inspiring things have been explained away by science. Yet even at this day we are delighted at a moon-lit night, and a simple wayside flower keeps us spell-bound for its beauty and perfect workmanship. It is an error to think that in some distant future, when the mystery of everything will be unravelled by science, people will get rid of this innocuous sense of wonder.

What does exactly science do? It explains the process as to how a certain phenomenon works. It gives answers to all 'hows' but never to a 'why'. 'To sum up', writes Sir James Jeans, 'Physics tries to discover the pattern of events which controls the phenomena we observe. But we can never know what this pattern means or how it originates; . . . Our studies can never put us into contact with reality, and its true meaning and nature must be for ever hidden from us.' (*Physics and Philosophy*, p. 16). What has been said about physics applies also to other branches of science. So the search for the ultimate reality: whether there is anything behind the world we perceive in space and time? and other concomitant questions like, whether the world is material or mental?

whether we have a free-will or not? All these go to the domain of religion and philosophy.

Philosophy aims at giving a rational exposition of the totality of reality which includes both the physical and the supra-physical. Naturally philosophy has been interwoven with the contemporary findings of the sciences. Its postulates should not go counter to the discoveries of science. Consequently, remarkable scientific advancements have brought about revolutionary changes in the speculations of the ultimate reality. Darwin's biological theories and Newton's System of mechanics and Law of Gravitation are notable examples.

Physical sciences have taken quite a big stride after Newton — and sciences always shift ground and their postulates can never be absolutely true, their validity always being relative. However, the mechanical explanation of the universe is no longer tenable. What can be the stand of philosophy as a result of the Theory of Relativity and the latest findings on the behaviours of the atom may well be stated in the words of Sir James Jeans, . . . 'the materialist must decide for himself whether the only kind of materialism which science now permits can be suitably labelled materialism, and whether the ghostly remains of matter should be labelled as matter or as something else; it is mainly a question

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CHAPTER III

The time, some of whose events we have undertaken to discuss, was a critical one, both politically and culturally. The East India Company's rule had just ended. After the Sepoy Mutiny India had become a part of the British Empire and was confronted by the ideals of an alien culture. India's culture and civilization, her literature, science, and philosophy were being evaluated by the Western ideals. At that juncture there were clashings of many ideals and there were started many movements. In the midst of all the confusion India was about to lose her moorings. She stood bewildered. In almost all thinking men of the time was raging this question: Can our ancient ideal of life deliver the goods in modern times? Can this way of life take us to the haven? Is there any possibility of realizing the main purpose of our life by following our old tradition? The standards of judgement differing, the means prescribed differed widely. Some were of the opinion that we should weigh anchor and direct our social boat on a new line. Others held that we should incorporate, in our society only those things of the West which would fit in well with our ideal and reject others. Each party thus pulling the sick old society to its own ideal, and carrying on the faintly breathing body of the society, drastic surgical operation of reforms, took the latter more towards death than towards life, made the situation worse confounded—a cry of despair, a babel of confusion rose towards Heaven.

As a reaction to the above two views and the practical steps taken by those parties, invariably accompanied by abusive language, a third party raised its head: an orthodox

party, which would have nothing to do with anything that smacked of alienity, which it equated with madness. They clung to the old inert society of the Puranic age and tried to breathe life into those rites and ceremonies that had gone obsolete and become meaningless. Taking fate to be the sole moulder of society, polity, and religion, they extolled their inaction to all the revolutionary reforms being carried on by rash enthusiasts, as their complete surrender to the will of the Lord; taking the poetic enjoyments in heaven to be the goal of life, they regarded all the ills on this side of life as Lord's testing of their faith and devotion. Stressing on social prohibitions and restrictions rather than on injunctions and thus making life a bundle of inactivities, they were quick enough to take up the axe of ostracism against those who, led by the urge to act, would dare to break or transgress any prohibitions. They looked upon such superstitious customs as 'untouchability' and *Kulinism* (i.e. pride of birth among a few Brahmin and Kayastha families as a license for all kinds of moral transgressions) as obligatory parts of religion; and to be bigoted in the observance of regional, social and family rites and customs as vindication of their honour and manliness. Showy knowledge of the scriptures was extolled to the sky, and place of honour was given to pomposity and traditionalism. It is this group's lack of foresight that was responsible for the breaking away of large numbers of people from the orthodox society and swelling the ranks of the reformists and atheists.

Of these two other groups, one was that of the educated people who were charmed by the glamour of the Western society. Most of

them had lost all faith in Hinduism. According to them everything that was Western was superior and everything that was Indian was inferior. They accepted the Western sciences wholeheartedly and made worldly enjoyment the goal of their life. They scorned renunciation and monkhood and embraced reckless sensual pleasures as the *summum bonum* of life. To them worldly achievements were a goal worth attempting.

The third party consisted of those who, though charmed by the achievements of the Western civilization, did not lose faith in their own hoary culture. They had, however, no love for the current Hinduism. What they had wanted was a reform of the many superstitious rites and customs that had crept into Hinduism, but for this fault they had to suffer the ignominy of social boycott. Among these boycotted gentlemen there were some who were inspired by the Vedic and Upanishadic thought system. Driven out from the old society they started, in various parts of the country, a number of new societies and through these tried to draw the attention of others to the eternal principles of the Hindu society and religion. As a consequence to the propagation of these ideas great reform movements were set on foot. The second party introduced indiscipline and anarchy in society. The third party endeavoured to base society on reason and modern light and bring about a rapid evolution, which was mistaken by others as a revolution.

At such a critical time all felt the need of a wise leader, who could save the social boat from the tempest of these vicious propagandas, steer it clear of the Scylla of narrow egotism and the Charybdis of ignorance and inertia and show the beacon-light of the eternal culture and way of life of immortal India; who could plug the few holes it had sprung in its long voyage by introducing the necessary reforms into it and head it on towards Brahman, the Absolute, its ancient haven; at whose magic touch its dead or dying bones would be infused with a new life, and, strong and

vigorous, would resume its march with joy and hilarity towards its chosen goal. Who can that Captain be? Nobody knew or could even guess that He had come.

From the day the genius of Keshav Chandra Sen discovered the person, the controlling end of the leading string of the Society came to his hand. The diseased society was desperately in search of a good physician; now that it found him, without the least hesitation it resigned itself completely to him. In the plenitude of his power, completely freed from all kinds of bias or ignorance, firmly established in the supreme intuition, he took up the reins of the society in his own hand — his power, there was none to dispute. His calm, all-comprehensive, divine message couched in words simple and straight and sweet withal, his immaculate dealings with all according to rank and position, all mellowed by a transcendent love enlivened with wit and humour easily attracted all leaders of thought and activity, all who cared to think. All such leading personalities came to whirl round him as satellites, with whose aid he wanted to orientate the society toward its spiritual goal. Yet what is most wonderful was that no opposition ever got a chance to raise its ugly head against it; and those who felt proud to have brought about anarchy and iconoclasm in society were seized with remorse, their hauteur humbled. How it came about is beyond our power to describe; but the historic fact is that peace returned to the troubled society.

The person who appeared on the crest of the billow of this age of reforms was no other than Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, the God-intoxicated man of the Dakshineswar Temple. The eternal image of the Indian religion and culture took shape in his personality. It was his message that was broadcast through the lips of many geniuses, multicoloured and multiposed; like the all-carrying surge of an ocean, it submerged all theories born of weak human intellect such as naturalism, phenomenalism, atheism, and agnosticism. It was through his steady light of supreme intuition

that the immortal image of Indian culture and religion was illumined and manifested — the image of eternal Truth, Beauty, and Weal. In his intuitional experience of Truth flashed the message : 'Theories are approaches. As many isms so many paths. The Lord is infinite, infinite are the ways to Him. Faiths are countless paths, all leading but to Him. Given sincerity of purpose and attempt, anyone can reach Him through any one of them. He is without any form and with infinite forms withal — much more is He but who can grasp or express ! For the prayerful devotees He has forms sweet and soothing ; for the rationalist forms vanish in the explosion of knowledge. . . . He the supreme and the finite *jiva* are one in substance and nature — He the whole and *jiva* a part, like fire and its sparks. . . . He is the homogeneous Absolute, He again is the sportive Relative, changing and evading. . . . Between Shiva and Jiva, the Infinite Bliss and the finite amalgam, there is but a difference of degree in power, no qualitative distinction. . . .' In his intuitional experience synthesis was effected between the Sâmkhya and the Vedânta philosophy, between Vedism and Vedantism, between Love and Power. Leading himself the life divine, he taught men of the active and pompous, selfish and envious natures that there was more joy, more peace, more satisfaction in a life where one's own individuality is completely merged in the vast personality of the Lord of the universe and in being oneself converted into a tool in His blessed hand. By his own spiritual practices and results obtained therefrom he showed to straying humanity that when the spiritual forces, sleeping within human bodies, were awakened by spiritual discipline man acquires a simultaneous plenitude of power and wealth, of dispassion and discrimination, of knowledge, love, and selfless activities. He showed also that in spiritual leadership there was no room for envy, narrowness, superstition, guile and wile. A spiritual leader's life was a life of synthesis and broad-mindedness, of inseparable union with God. There, in such

a life, love, holiness, simplicity, and truth was the goal as well as the way of life. It was through his teaching that people came to understand, wherein lies the difference between a man of the world and an all-renouncing monk. He never spoke ill of enjoyment as such, nor did he show any ill-will against the householder. He spoke of the life of a householder as one of social service, and of the life of a monk as one of unattached dedicated service. It was in the light of his life that people learnt to discriminate the true ring from the false, though nobody ever heard him speak ill of any or point out defects of others.

At the advent of this great man, the undying Indian Spirit of research again turned Godward. It was he who awakened in us the inspiration to discard the base tendency to imitate others blindly and to divert our energy into the proper channel. The result was wonderful. A movement was set on foot to bring about a reform, — not in the old training and tradition so much as — in the newly sprouting mode and way of life, that taught our mind, intellect, and sense-organs to be wholly directed to and absorbed in worldly pursuits, that lay to sleep the natural tendency of man to expand and merge himself in the Infinite.

It was the touch of his intuitional power that forced this question to rise in every thinking heart, 'Is it true that the nature that appears to us blind and unconscious is all in all — it produces, preserves and destroys all that we sense and know? Is there nothing else beyond or inside it? Is there no conscious guide or guidance running through it? In the subconscious of many thinking Indians this question was rising off and on. Some of them may be named — they were Dr Mahendranath Sarkar, Dr Rajendralal Mitra, the prince of *litterateurs* Bankim Chandra Chatterji, Pandit Sashadhar Tarkachudamani. Running through their writings and speeches this was found to be the unmistakable keynote. In the hearts of Maharshi Devendranath, Keshav Chandra Sen, Prof. Majumdar, Shivanath, and Devotee Vijayakrishna its ring was heard again and

again. In the picturesque language of Ramachandra Datta the note expressed itself as : 'Will the Lord's existence remain covered with the thick cobweb of poetic words? Is there no direct proof of it?'

Keeping awake this surging doubt in the hearts of the intellectuals of the time, Sri Ramakrishna submitted his earnest prayer to the Mother-universal, 'Mother dear, fulfil Thy promise quickly, bring here Thy marked men.' At this divine call they started coming one by one. They, all of them, came but with one question : 'Is God to be seen? Can He be realized? Does He really exist? Is he with forms or without? Is He Shiva or Vishnu, Kali, Durga or Jagaddhatri? Is God he or she? Is He an image of clay or metal or of pure consciousness?'

The naturalist, Dr Ramachandra Datta, came to Sri Ramakrishna in 1879 and laid bare the doubt that was eating into his vitals. The seer's smiling look solved the riddle in a moment. Anyone who has read the life of the Doctor can vouch for it that the moment he saw Sri Ramakrishna he turned a theist — no argument was necessary. Scriptures have it that a seer, by his very presence instils conviction into whoever comes in contact with him.

The seed of faith in God that was thus sown in the desert heart of Doctor Ramachandra did not dry up but sprouted slowly into a beautiful tree of fragrant flowers and juicy fruit, into divine love and peace abiding. It was not an ordinary change but a complete transformation of personality, a thorough change of heart and out-look, which removes the dryness of intellect and opens itself into an ever-expanding, ever-deepening aspiration for the Infinite. The opening out of sweetness in a personality is always irresistible. These few moments' company of Sri Ramakrishna attracted Dr Datta towards him to such an extent that he who had been dead against accepting a man as *guru* developed a bursting desire for having Sri Ramakrishna as his guide in life in all matters. He went on entreating Sri Ramakrishna for the fulfilment of this

desire, which one day bore fruit quite unexpectedly.

After initiation the intensity of his spiritual practices grew so rapidly that the whole family caught the fire. Even Rākhtoorama, the boy-servant, could not escape it. The boy, illiterate and uncultured as he was — in the modern sense of the term — could not however, grasp the vast concept of Brahman, the Reality. But he found a way out of this difficulty. He accepted his beloved chosen Deity, Sri Rama, as that Brahman and poured his heart's love, white with intensity, unto His lotus feet.

On one very auspicious moment at Rama Datta's house did the boy hear that 'the Lord sees the mind of His devotee, not how he is employed and where he passes his days;' that 'the Lord comes to him who is consumed with the desire to see Him : Him alone and none else;' that 'He does not appear to one whose call is not sincere and all-consuming and who has not purged himself of all wiles and guiles and who has not converted himself into a simple child;' that 'His grace descends on him alone who calls on Him yearningly in solitude and sheds tears for Him.' These thought-bits, heard from the lips of his master Rama Datta made such a deep impression on his adolescent mind that even during the last days of his life he used to repeat them to the devotees with the same intonation, stress, and pause as he had heard for the first time from Dr Datta. Times without number did he repeat them to us, but every time he did so it appeared to us so fresh and sweet that we felt as if we were hearing them for the first time, so much earnestness would he bring to bear on them.

It needed no guess to understand that the boy Lāltoo used to look upon them as the seeds of his *sadhana*. We were however, not so sure about it till we heard it from the lips of Nityagopal, whom Sri Ramakrishna described as one who had reached the goal.

When Lāltoo, though a boy-servant at the house of Rama Datta, was thus secretly engaged in spiritual practices, Nityagopal was stay-

ing with the Datta family as an honourable guest. This man of God was then generally found absorbed in meditation and in the evening sessions he used to converse on spiritual matters, sometimes joining in devotional singing and dancing. We heard about the spiritual *sadhana* of Lāltoo first from Nityagopal's lips, then we started inquiring about it from others as well. The following is what we heard from the second daughter of Rama Datta, which corroborated the fact that Lāltoo was engaged in *sadhana* at this time : ' We used to find Lāltoo in our parlour lying down in a corner,

covered head to foot with a blanket. His eyes were red and often filled with tears ; he used to wipe them off with his left hand. At first we thought he was homesick or thinking of his uncle ; and mother used to console him. He, however, kept quiet and would not utter a word.' Who knows for whom were those tears !

(*Corrigendum* : Please read as Sarat Chandra Chakravarti in place of Sarat Chandra Chatterji on page 222, column II, para 2 of our last issue.)

YAJNAVALKYA'S INSTRUCTION TO MAITREYI

M. K. VENKATARAMA IYER

Sage Yājñavalkya's discourses in the Brihadaranyaka Upaniṣad are justly famous for their depth of thought and clarity of expression. In the third chapter of this Upaniṣad there is the description of a brilliant philosophical debate which took place in the court of King Janaka in which the sage gave ready and convincing answers to the questions that were addressed to him by other eminent Vedic scholars of his time. At the end of the debate he comes out in flying colours and sums up his own position in a very lucid and succinct manner. The whole of the fourth chapter is taken up with his instruction to King Janaka, who was himself a philosopher of no mean order. In the fourth section of the second chapter we read the instruction that he imparted to his wife, Maitreyi, who is described as a '*brahmavādini*'. We may note incidentally that among the interlocutors, who are introduced in the third chapter, there is a lady by name Gārgi who enters the lists with a flourish of trumpets. She tells the assembled scholars that she hopes to finish Yājñavalkya by addressing two searching questions to him, even as a mighty King aims two deadly arrows at his adversary to bring him down. Her

questions are of course very clever but Yājñavalkya's answers are cleverer still. When the latter concluded his replies to the questions with a splendid exposition of the nature of the Highest, which he termed the Akṣara, Gārgi was dumb-founded and advised the other scholars to take their leave in the most graceful manner possible.

One fine morning Yājñavalkya announced to his wife his intention to terminate his life as a house-holder and enter the next order, that of the *vānaprastha*. Before doing so he said that he would divide his earthly possessions between her and his other wife, Kātyāyani, that they might live apart in peace. Maitreyi wanted to know whether wealth would confer immortality on its possessor. Straight came a negative reply from her husband who added that there was no hope of immortality through wealth. Here wealth is symbolic of Vedic rites like *Agnihotra* which can be performed only with the aid of money. Then Maitreyi said that she would have none of it but would rather have a little of his knowledge whereby he hoped to attain everlasting peace. Yājñavalkya was greatly pleased with this answer and proceeded to

MEMOIRS OF SWAMI ADBHUTANANDA

(Lātu Maharaj)

(A free translation of the Bengali book, *Smritikatha*)

CHAPTER IV

We said Lāltoo was engaged secretly in *sādhana*. Great indeed is the result of such mental practices. A person can rouse in himself, by this means, an intense ever-increasing yearning for the Lord. Sri Ramakrishna's homely parables, explaining deep truths, which Rama Datta used to repeat, appealed to Lāltoo as nothing else did. They evoked in him divine love and fervour. His heart pined to see Sri Ramakrishna. Fervour led to anguish and anguish made him restless and raised numerous questions in his mind : ' Eh ! who is this Paramahamsa ? Where does he live — he, whose words are so sweet ? Dakshineswar ? How far is that ? If I implore my master will he not take me but once to him ? ' Seized with intense yearning and unable to contain himself any more, Lāltoo, one Sunday, took courage in both hands and babbled out, ' You are going there, why not take me also ? I will see your Paramahamsa. Will you show him ? ' These simple, loving, imploring words of his favourite boy touched the master's heart and Lāltoo was taken to the temple garden of Dakshineswar that very Sunday.

It will not be out of place here to mention that there are some slightly contradictory statements about the year when Lāltoo first met Sri Ramakrishna. Subodh Babu of Dacca in his *Life of Sri Ramakrishna* has placed it in 1880-81. But we have come to know from quite a reliable source that the meeting took place before 1880. We have it from the second daughter of Rama Datta who said that Lāltoo came in contact with Sri Ramakrishna the very same year her father was initiated by the latter. Dr Datta's initiation took place in 1879, there is no doubt about that. The

French savant, Romain Rolland in his *Life of Sri Ramakrishna*, whose materials were supplied by the latter's disciples, is also of our opinion. He writes that in 1879 four persons were initiated by Sri Ramakrishna. There he mentions the names of Rama Datta and Lāltoo. The book that is published from Mâyāvati has it that the boy met his Master first before 1880. Although there are so many different sources which have placed the date before 1880 still there are some who cast doubt on it. Sri Vaikunṭha Sanyal too has supported Subodh Babu. Sri Durgapada Mitra who has been writing serially a *Life of Sri Ramakrishna*, in the monthly magazine, *Basumati*, is also of the last opinion.

Apart from this difference of opinion about the date of their meeting there is another point of controversy. Some, and among them are Subodh Babu, Vaikunṭhababu, and Durgapadababu, hold that when the two met for the first time there was none present. We have reasons to differ from them. We have this information from two independent sources. First of all we mention what we heard from Sri Ramlal Chatterji, Sri Ramakrishna's nephew : ' One day I saw Ramababu brought a boy-servant with him. He was short-statured, strong and stout. His appearance, though a little plump, was indicative of great strength. I did not know his name then. I saw the lad standing in that western verandah. Ramababu was inside the room, perhaps he was in search of Sri Ramakrishna, who was outside the room. Sri Ramakrishna came to the verandah humming a tune in impersonation of Sri Radhika : " Then was I standing near the door." He went on improvising lines : " I

could not speak to him — to him, my darling. Elder brother (of Sri Krishna), Balai, was there, so I could not exchange words with him. . . .” Ramababu came out of the room evidently hearing the song. By that time Thakur* had reached the verandah. He asked Ramababu, “Is it you who has brought this boy? Where did you get him? He has characteristics of a sâdhu, I see.” Uttering these words Thakur and Ramababu entered the room. But Lâltoo waited standing there. I asked him to enter. He was thinking whether he would enter or not, when Thakur called him in. I did not enter.’

What took place inside the room we had the good fortune to know direct from Ramababu himself. One day, in course of his discourse about the wonderful powers of Sri Ramakrishna, Ramababu gave out the story: ‘When I was bowing down to a sâdhu, having no marks of a sâdhu or a gentleman around him, what thoughts or feelings came to Lâltoo’s mind I do not know. The moment I got up after bowing down to Sri Ramakrishna I found Lâltoo catching hold of the Lord’s feet and placing his head on them. Thakur started talking to me, as if he did not take any note of the boy. Lâltoo, however, got up and stood in front of him with folded palms, all the while drinking in his words. Thakur, as usual, was smiling and talking, but now and then casting his eyes on Lâltoo. He said, “Sit down; why are you not sitting?” Our talk in the meantime touched the topic of a category of *jîvas* who are ever free and never come under the clutches of *mâyâ*. He stated, “These eternally free souls, through all their incarnations, never lose sight of their true nature, of their relation with the Lord of the universe. They are like a fountain whose mouth has been blocked by a stone. A mason, seeking the mouth removes the stone and immediately water gushes out beautifully.” Saying this Sri Ramakrishna, all on a sudden,

touched Lâltoo. At once there was a tremendous welling up of emotions in the boy. He lost all consciousness of his body and the world outside. It seemed as if he had been transported to an unknown region — region unknown to us. All the hairs of his body stood on end, his voice was broken and inarticulate and there was an incessant flow of tears down his cheeks, his lips were quivering violently. With my mouth agape in wonder at this unprecedented surge of emotion in Lâltoo, I was simply paralyzed. When, however, I found Lâltoo went on crying in that state with no sign of abating, I came to myself and interceded with the Master. “That is true, I have no doubt about what you have demonstrated. But would the boy go on crying non-stop in that way?” At this he touched the boy again. In the twinkling of an eye the boy, who was sobbing so violently came round. Still you will not believe in the superhuman powers of the Lord! Will you not still believe that he is an Incarnation of God?’

Ending this topic here let us take to our narration. When the boy’s emotion was controlled, Thakur asked Ramalal to give the boy a little consecrated food. When he partook of the *prasâda* and became quite normal, Thakur asked him to go to the temples.

At the first sight, Sri Ramakrishna understood the inner workings of the mind of this illiterate boy, of the District of Châpra, and of his bright spiritual future — that, by dint of tremendous *sâdhana*, he would reach a spiritual eminence, rarely scaled by others. Therefore, when Ramababu, along with the boy, was making ready to take leave of him, Sri Ramakrishna requested him affectionately to send the boy now and then to Dakshineswar. And to Lâltoo he said, ‘Do come here, my boy, now and then. Do you follow me?’

Lâltoo returned from Dakshineswar but remained absent-minded. He felt no attraction for anything, yet he could not shake off everything and follow his mind devotedly. How doleful and dreary this state of spiritual suspense, this divine dissatisfaction is, is known

* Here and in the subsequent pages of this narration, Sri Ramakrishna is also referred to as Thakur, meaning the Lord.

only to those who have passed through this vale of desolation! We have heard from those who observed Lāltoo during these days that he appeared more like a wound-up clock, going on mechanically than like one with a will to work. His body, unmoved by his mind dwelling elsewhere, appeared to do the round of duties as automatically as pebbles at the bed of a flowing stream move about, being dislodged by the current—works, not his mind, moved his body. It was this boy's buoyant spirit that kept the rooms of Rama Datta's house resounding with the sounds of mirth and merriment before he went to Dakshineswar. At the sudden transformation of his spirit the same rooms appeared gloomy and cheerless—a dead silence, as of dreamless sleep, hovered over them. Before meeting Sri Ramakrishna, he, with indomitable energy and enthusiasm, used to finish his works quickly and engage himself in hearty talks and *bons mots* with his up-country folks. Now he appeared to be a picture of despondency, losing all interest in life altogether. All the people of the household observed this change. Weeks passed by in this way; many more would have passed in a like manner, had he not got back to life, so to say, at the prospect of a visit to Dakshineswar. That day Lāltoo opened his lips, 'Please give me all these. I will take them all there. I have not forgotten the way. I will manage to reach the temple.' This day he went there all alone. It was the spring of 1880. Alone but with the nimbleness of a buck he covered the long distance of six miles, but not quickly; for he could not remember the way rightly. Undaunted he went on asking people of the way and reached the temple at eleven in the morning with the bundle of fruits and sweets for the Master. When he saw from afar the pinnacles of the temple,—and when a little nearer—heard the sweet music of *sāhnāi* and drum floating towards him, his joy knew no bounds. Wending his way through the blooming flower plants and creeper bowers of the temple, he felt himself in paradise. But when his eyes fell on

Sri Ramakrishna standing on the garden path, the boy could no longer contain himself. In one run, should we say in a bound, he came to the Master and prostrated himself at his feet with the welled-up emotion of a devotee. The long prostration over, both of them started towards the temple, conversing on various topics.

Witnessing the waving of lights before the image in the main temple, tear drops trickled down Lāltoo's cheeks. From there he went to the Vishnu temple. There, especially, the scene of waving lights thrilled him so much that he lost all control over himself, and the temple reverberated with his shouts of 'Victory to Rama, Victory to Rama.' We have heard this from Ramalalda, an eye-witness of this incident.

Ārati (waving of lights etc.) over, the Master asked him to take *prasāda* (take his noon-day meal with consecrated food) in the temple. Born in Bihar, he had scruples to take food consecrated at the Kali temple where animals were sacrificed and offered. The Master understood it and said, 'My boy, in the Kali temple non-vegetarian food is offered; but in the Vishnu temple vegetarian food alone is offered; moreover everything is cooked with Ganges' water. Which food would you take, my boy? But know that there should not be any scruple in taking food offered to a deity. Do you follow me?' Illiterate Lāltoo did not go deep enough and said with the simplicity of a child, 'I will take whatever you will. I will take your *prasāda* and nothing else.'

The Master laughed out at this frankness of the boy and, drawing Ramalalda's attention to it, said, 'Just see how clever the boy is. The fellow wants to have a share of what I will take.'

At meal time the Master seated Lāltoo by his side and went on giving him a portion of everything he was taking. The boy, partaking of it, what he considered to be the holiest, thought himself blessed. His joy was simply inexpressible.

In the afternoon devotees started coming one by one. The Master was engaged in conversation with them. It was evening twilight. The Master looked at Lāltoo and said, 'Evening has set in. Will you not return to Calcutta, my boy? You have spent the whole day here.' He asked again if he had money to hire a carriage in share. The boy without saying anything shook his pocket and the copper coins jingled. The Master smiled at his simplicity and did not say anything.

Lāltoo came back to his master's house at Simla but found it impossible to engage his mind in any work. If any body asked him to do anything he did it, no doubt; but he did it with such a pose of his body that no one was left in any doubt about his utter unwillingness. His master, Rama Datta did not fail to notice it and felt anxious about it. The mistress of the house, though a little hurt at this unservant-like behaviour of the boy, did not say anything.

One day Ramachandra came to Dakshineswar alone and apprised the Master about Lāltoo's lack of interest in all work. The Master replied, 'Rama, dear, it is but natural. His heart pines for coming here. Please send him here one day.'

Accordingly Rama Datta sent Lāltoo to Dakshineswar the next day. What transpired between the Master and the boy, we heard from Kaviraja Mâhaśaya. The latter had been to Dakshineswar that day and had advised Sri Ramakrishna, who was not keeping well, to go to Kamarpukur for a change. We narrate below what he said to us: 'Look here, my boy,' said Sri Ramakrishna, 'I know your intense desire to come here. But for that you should not neglect your master's work. Rama has given you shelter, gives you food and clothing and supplies you with all necessaries. If you do not do his work you will be untrue to his salt. Beware, never be ungrateful.'

Hearing the Master's equivocation the simple boy cried out, and in a voice choked with emotion he laid bare his helpless condition

and said, 'I will no longer serve any one. I will be here with you. I will do your work.'

The Master replied, 'You will be here, you say; but who will do Rama's work? Rama's household is mine. Why don't you remain in that household?'

Still the boy did not understand. Perhaps he would not understand. With glistening eyes he said, 'I will not go there again. I will stay here only.'

The Master smiled and said, 'But I am not staying here. (And showing Kaviraja Mâhaśaya said) They are sending me to my village.'

Lāltoo remained speechless. What could he say after this? But the Master planted hopes in his heart and said, 'Let me return from my village. Then you will come and stay with me. I hope you will exercise patience.'

Lāltoo had gone to Dakshineswar with his heart full of hopes, but he returned to Simla (in Calcutta) with a broken heart. This time, however, he heard a parable from the Master, which sustained him through the period the Master was away from Dakshineswar. Sri Ramakrishna was narrating the story to another devotee; Lāltoo heard it and learnt it: 'Do all your duties in life but keep the mind always on the Lord. Be with your wife, children, father, mother, all and serve them all and well. But know it in the core of your heart that they are none of yours. The maid servant in a rich man's house does all the work assigned to her, even more, caresses the master's children as if they were her own, says "my Hari", "my Rama", but knows in the heart of her hearts that they are none of hers, her house and her loving ones are in the distant village.'

This story brought some consolation to Lāltoo's disconsolate heart. We later heard it from his own lips. But had he any peace? No. Lāltoo suffered his sorrow all alone and unobserved by others. He took care to follow the Master's instruction in letter and in spirit,

though Sri Ramakrishna did not give him any direct instruction. With deep faith and reverence he scrupulously followed the interpretation his wringing heart gave to the story.

And because he always tried to translate into action his heart's response to these instructions it is, that they became lively and inspiring to him. He would not go to logic and philosophy to understand the true significance of the instructions, but without wasting time he would immediately put them into practice and the result brought out the inner meaning more vividly than would have been possible by other ways. The boy's method of approach was thus directly opposed to the modern trend, viz. first to understand a thing fully by the exercise of intellect and then only try to practise it. People noticed this peculiarity of his character from his childhood days. He preferred action to speculation. He would observe how far a particular act would expand his heart, would heighten his personality. He was fully convinced of the efficacy of this method. In later life he was often found to complain, 'You would not do anything, you are, for nothing, teasing a *sâdhu*. Do you think a *sâdhu* or for that matter anybody else, can clean you of your spots, purge you of your defects? Tendencies are yours, you will have to change them by your own exertion. Do you think a *sâdhu's* words or mere logic-

chopping will rid you of them? Have you got faith or devotion? Without them no understanding could be perfect or efficacious. Without practice none could get rid of any evil tendency. . . .'

When the Master was in his native village and Lâltoo was in Ramababu's, how did the latter pass his days? Let us describe his state of mind in his own words: 'Do you know how I used to pass those terrible days of mine? I was beside myself with grief. The pang of separation seemed to be unbearable. I could not stay at Ramababu's. Secretly I would come to Dakshineswar. Neither could I find joy there. I could not enter his (Sri Ramakrishna's) room. Everything appeared void and vacant and lifeless. I went to and around the garden. I sat down on the bank of the Ganges and shed solitary tears. . . . How would you understand my sorrow? I tell you, it is impossible for you to understand it. Ramababu understood a bit of it. He used to console me. He gave me a photo of Sri Ramakrishna. . . .'

Saint Nityagopala narrated to us Lâltoo's state of mind during this time in one pithy sentence, 'Lâltoo's condition was like that of *châtaka* bird, that could not drink any other water except of rain though it would die of thirst.' Does it need any explanation?

It is written in the books of the Vaishnavas: 'God can be attained through faith alone; reasoning pushes him far away.' Faith alone!

What faith Krishnakishore had! At Vrindavan a low-caste man drew water for him from a well. Krishnakishore said to him, 'Repeat the name of Siva.' After the man had repeated the name of Siva, Krishnakishore unhesitatingly drank the water. He used to say: 'If a man chants the name of God, does he need to spend money any more for the atonement of his sins? How foolish!' He was amazed to see people worshipping God with the sacred tulsi-leaf in order to get rid of their illnesses. At the bathing-ghat here he said to us, 'Please bless me, that I may pass my days repeating Rama's holy name.' Whenever I went to his house he would dance with joy at the sight of me. Rama said to Lakshmana, 'Brother, whenever you find people singing and dancing in the ecstasy of divine love, know for certain that I am there.'

MEMOIRS OF SWAMI ADBHUTANANDA

(Latu Maharaj)

(A free translation of the Bengali book, *Smritikatha*)

Chapter V

Lāltoo used to visit, as we have said, Dakshineswar even when Sri Ramakrishna was away at Kamarpukur. He would pass hours in the Panchavati or on the bank of the Ganga, forlorn and desolate. On one such occasion, Sri Ramakrishna's nephew, Ramalaldā (i.e., brother Ramalal), who knew Lāltoo very well, espied him from a distance. He saw the boy sitting still and dejected by the riverside and shedding tears. He thought, perhaps Ramababu, the boy's master, might have taken him to task for some neglect of duty and wounded at heart he was weeping. When, however, he came near and asked him the reason for his sorrow, he was surprised at what he heard from him. Below we narrate the incident in the words of Ramalaldā :

‘I saw the lad sitting by the river side and weeping. Being asked the reason he said, he was feeling very sad at the absence of Thakurji. His idea of Sri Ramakrishna was quite astonishing. He thought there was nothing impossible for Sri Ramakrishna ; he could do anything if he but willed. Under this impression he was calling on him so that he might appear to him physically. He told he had heard from someone that Sri Ramakrishna was eternally present at Dakshineswar and that even when he had gone to his native village he was still present at Dakshineswar and that one could meet him there. With this idea in view the boy had been sitting there right from noon to dusk. Finding it was getting darker I asked the boy to go home. You would be surprised to hear his answer. He said, “I am quite sure Sri Ramakrishna (he used to call him Paramahansa Ma(ha)-saya) is definitely here. I would not go without meeting him.” As many times I said, “no, he has gone home” so many times did

he repeat, “No, you do not know, Paramahansa Masay is definitely here.” At this firm faith of the boy I kept quiet and went away to attend to the evening prayer in the temple. Coming to the temple I remembered that I did not give Lāltoo the consecrated food. So I took some *prasāda* and returned to him. When I went there I found him bowing down by touching his forehead to the ground. Mystified I kept quiet. After a couple of minutes when the boy saw me standing in front of him, he was surprised and asked me “Ah ! where has Paramahansa Masay gone ?” Taken aback I could not answer. I handed over the *prasāda* and came away to the temple.’

How will the common man take this incident ? Believers in mysticism will have reasons to be surprised. Non-believers are sure to reject it as hallucination. Be that as it may, but we have heard similar incidents from the mouths of other ‘inner-circle’ disciples of Sri Ramakrishna ; and among them were some who were then dead against what they termed mystery-mongering. They were not liars, nor had they anything to gain by telling such cock-and-bull stories. Hallucination is something personal. That so many people, at different times and that too with wide gaps would have the same hallucination is something which is difficult to accept.

We, moderns, are guided by reason and rational science. And anything that reason fails to establish, we discard. But has reason no limits ? Can it prove everything ? Are there not elements in our life which we believe very deeply but which reason cannot touch ? After all, the data of reason are supplied by experience — all reasoning is based on these data. Hence reason has no right to question

its very basis. If it does, it cuts at its own roots. And there are experiences and experiences. All do not believe in all kinds of experience. An experience is false or true according as it is sublated later or not. If it is sublated it is false ; if not it is true. Only because a class of people, even though they experience a phenomenon, will not accept it as true or simply because some do not experience while others experience, therefore it is to be rejected—is an argument which, at best may rank as an opinion or a mentality but cannot command the honour of truth. We are not in favour of outright rejection of an experience which compels a normal man to accept it as true and at the same time goes to improve his personality—the proof of the pudding is in the eating.

Moreover, reason or intellection is not the whole of a personality ; there is such a thing as emotion. And emotion is more dynamic than intellection. Heart moves a man more powerfully than his brain. So this peculiar experience of Lāltoo may appear to a man of reason to be false, but to Lāltoo's emotional nature it was more vivid and true than Sri Ramakrishna's stay at Kamarpukur.

There is another factor to be considered. We yearn for a thing which we do not possess ; the moment we get it our yearning ceases, the possession gives us satisfaction. Lāltoo longed for a sight of Sri Ramakrishna, he got it, which he believed to be hundred per cent true. How is it that his desire instead of vanishing or lessening increased ? When Sri Ramakrishna was actually at Dakshineswar Lāltoo's longing was not so intense. During Sri Ramakrishna's absence it is natural that the yearning was intensified. But when it saw its fulfilment why should it increase, which it actually did ? This will remain unaccounted for unless psychology and physiology, and for the matter of that consciousness and matter are made to coalesce in a higher synthesis, in something which is the basic and the guiding principle in both.

Let us, however, return to the life of the boy, Lāltoo. We have inquired of many

persons who came in intimate contact with him. All of them gave us the same picture of his life during this period. 'He was wholly indifferent to food and drink, to work and amusement, even to his duty to his master, Rama. Sleep would give him no respite, work no release from the tense emotion. He felt no urge even for those physiological functions which are necessary for the maintenance of the body.'

This unprecedented change in the boy was painful to his master, Ramababu. He loved the boy dearly. His honesty, simplicity, and devotion to duty had attracted Rama towards him. Now the boy's intense pangs at the separation from Sri Ramakrishna, evoked his admiration. He was charmed by the boy's unswerving faith for his Guru. It is for this reason he would overlook the boy's dereliction of duty.

Himself a devotee, Rama understood well the pang of a devotee's heart. He was deeply devoted to Sri Ramakrishna ; will he not feel sympathetic to Lāltoo ? This love, this pang of separation was common to both. It is but natural that he would be the protecting angel of Lāltoo, shielding him against the cruel criticism of his unfeeling relatives and friends. He saw to it that others would not burden the boy with household duties. He engaged an extra servant during this time, to free Lāltoo from external worries. But had the boy been left without work his mind would have gone on brooding all the more over a situation which was beyond their control and the boy's measure of misery would have been greater. Hence he arranged some light work for him—a work which was conducive to the spiritual unfoldment without being burdensome.

Nityagopal,—about whom we have already spoken—who was staying with Ramababu, had an attack of typhoid fever. Death was playing his grim game with his life. The *Avadhuta* (as he was called) was a saint of a high order. Even when he was practising spiritual exercises he used to have ecstasies every now and then. During these intense surges of emotion he used to have perspira-

tion, horripilation, trepidation, babbling and hoarse voice, agitations like weeping, laughing, being angry, and other *sāttvika* physical changes. Even in the grip of typhoid fever these violent changes used to appear all of a sudden. At this the members of Rama's family got very nervous. After a good deal of thinking Rama decided to engage Lāltoo to nurse him. The boy readily agreed. He was advised to utter the Lord's name in the ears of the patient whenever he would find these *sāttvika* changes in his body. That was the best medicine for that illness, for it is said in the Bhakti scriptures that 'in the Name *bhāvas* abide, in the Name they subside'. This peculiar relation between 'nāma' and '*bhāva*' made Lāltoo's task doubly difficult. For in the course of hearing the Lord's 'name' the *Avadhuta*, no doubt, used to emerge out of ecstasy; but the same continual repetition would take him again to ecstasy. The result was that Lāltoo had to go on taking the Lord's name day and night without a stop. It is clear from this that the Lord creates opportunities for His favourites.

It is not on record how much peace Lāltoo enjoyed by this repetition of the Lord's name. But the scriptures say that incessant taking of the Lord's name removes anxiety and settles peace in the heart. Moreover the scriptures have high praise for the company of sages. Sri Ramakrishna also used to say, 'Keep company of the sages by all means, spare no pains to do so. That is the only sword to cut asunder the knots of worldliness. The sages alone know the antidote to the inebriety of worldliness. Keeping company of saints one acquires love of God, feels yearning for Him, gets the true understanding for communing with Him.' What wonder is there then that Lāltoo transcended all anxiety in the company of such a saint as the *Avadhuta*?

There is one record to testify that Lāltoo did go beyond all anxieties by serving the *Avadhuta*. Mahapurush Maharaj* was a witness to this. One day, in the course of con-

versation he said, 'Brother Lātu served the *Avadhuta* long. It was his nursing that restored life to the *Avadhuta*. After recovery he blessed Lātu Maharaj. Can you fathom the glory of serving saints? They can give a new orientation to man's mind. What power they wield? They can give an upward turn to a low mind and hold it aloft. Have you not seen Sri Ramakrishna's grace bringing about wonderful change in numerous people?'

The *Avadhuta* was ill for four long months. All this time Lāltoo served him devotedly. We give below what the *Avadhuta* himself felt about it. 'I can never forget the whole-hearted service of Lāltoo. Day and night he was by my bed. He kept everything ready beforehand. Whenever I needed anything instantly it was supplied. Never did I find him tired or apathetic. He poured an incessant torrent of God's name into my ears. He never spared himself, he would do all works, even helping me in answering nature's calls—filth was no filth to him. Hearing *Rāmanama* from his mouth I would forget my sufferings altogether.'

In later days also we have noticed, how whole-hearted his service used to be, but of that later. In the midst of this peace of mind, born of service to a saint, Lāltoo gained something more which was a great asset to him. If we do not mention it here we may miss a fundamental factor of his life.

When the *Avadhuta* came round a little, Ramababu used to read the *Chaitanya Chari-tamrita* (Life of Sri Chaitanya) to him every evening. Lāltoo never missed a sitting. There is an exhaustive treatment in this book on the master-servant relationship between the Lord and His devotee and there used to be discussions on it between Ramababu and the *Avadhuta*. Lāltoo was all attention to these talks. Sometimes Ramababu used to embellish his interpretations by quoting Sri Ramakrishna's sayings and parables. This had a great clarifying effect. We give one instance which Lāltoo treasured and narrated to us later:

'Look here. There lived a weaver in a village. He was pious, people loved him

* A direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna and the second President of the Ramakrishna Order.

dearly and had great faith in him. He used to sell cloth in the market. When a purchaser came and asked him about the price of a cloth, he used to say : It is Rama's (Lord's) will, (that) the cost of the yarn is so much. Rama's will, that of labour is this much ; Rama's will, my profit is this much.- Such was the faith of the people in him that they would at once pay the price and take away the cloth. One day it so happened that at night as he was praying to the Lord, taking His name, a gang of robbers, on their way to commit robbery, forced him to accompany them to serve as a porter. As they were returning with the load on the weaver's head, they were encountered by the police. All fled away except the weaver with the load. The poor man had to bear all kinds of humiliation at the hands of the police. But the weaver did not give up saying, 'Rama's will'. He was hauled up in a court of justice. When he was asked to narrate his case—he said, 'My Lord, by Rama's will, I was taking God's name. By Rama's will robbers came and forced me to accompany them. By Rama's will, they committed robbery. By Rama's will, they placed the load on my head. By Rama's will, we all started. By Rama's will, the police came. By Rama's will robbers fled. By Rama's will, I was caught. By Rama's will, I was subjected to humiliation. By Rama's will I am produced before your Lordship.' The judge understood the situation and set the weaver free. While leaving the court the weaver said, 'By Rama's will, I am set free.'

This master-servant relationship with the Lord Lātu Maharaj used to describe in later life so vividly and forcibly that it used to leave a lasting impression on the hearer's mind. 'My child, you are to serve God, not to flatter Him. Does He like flattery as the rich do? Have you not seen the rich surrounded by a host of flatterers? They speak in hyperboles. Do you know why? To get something thereby. But the moment they get something, they leave the rich man and go to some other to play the same trick on him.

They will not feel the least compunction to abuse the first rich man if that would please the second. Thus they would go to a third and a fourth—this is their way. Can you serve the Lord in that way? If you want to serve Him you will have to throw away everything else—property, name and fame, sense of shame, fear of being humiliated. The Lord should not be served with any ulterior motive. Moreover, one should be full of gratitude for whatever little He deigns to confer on us. How silly of us! We don't understand that He has all along been giving us the best, what is most wholesome. But we forget it and Him. We do not serve Him. All our ills are due to this. Can you expect one to rise if one forgets the good turns done to him? We do not see the end of our miseries only because we forget Him.' There are many such talks by Lātu Maharaj on this Master-servant relationship with God. They give us an idea about his conception of this relationship. And this he gathered while serving *Avadhuta Nityagopal*.

We have but a very vague idea about this sublime relationship. To us it is a relic of the old slave mentality. In society we find, no doubt, this noble sentiment being degraded into what they call slave-mentality. But in the spiritual sphere it is a sweet relationship, full of bliss. Here the Master (God) does not claim lordship, nor does the servant degrade his soul by feeling himself a slave. Here the question of superiority or inferiority does not come in. Does a parent or the child suffer from such a sense? Does it raise its ugly head in the conjugal love, or in the relation between true friends, or between a true monarch and his subjects? In all these cases the idea of high or low does not occur—each supplements the other. Even when inferiority or superiority is there the whole relation is saturated with such a surfeit of love that it is also sweetened. In this, neither party wants to have a monopoly of power and glory for his own enjoyment. Here one feels : enjoyment increases in sharing with the other,

and each is ever eager to sacrifice for the sake of the other.

Having thus been initiated into this sweet relationship of servant and master with the Lord, Lāltoo felt that the storm that was raging around him had subsided and peace, the peace born of taking refuge in the Lord, had settled on him. It is this peace which served him as the beacon light and took him to his life's haven. Before this he had no clear idea of the personality and nature of his Lord, unto whom he had dedicated himself for ever and ever. This clarity of vision removed all narrowness from his mind.

Sri Ramakrishna returned to Dakshineswar after eight long months. That very day he visited Rama's house. That was the seventh lunar day of the *Navarātri*, when the Goddess Durga is worshipped. The coming of the great devotee of the Goddess (Sri Ramakrishna) along with Her advent, threw the

circle of Calcutta devotees into an ecstasy of joy and bliss. And Ramababu's temple-house resounded with the notes and echoes of joy.

And Lāltoo's joy! Can it be described? Like the touch of the spring air on trees and plants after the winter chill, Sri Ramakrishna's return brought forth a spontaneous sprouting of new life in Lāltoo. Everyone was struck by his quick movements, loud talks, beaming face and spurt in his activities. With his help alone Ramababu accomplished a lot of work in a surprisingly short time. Through him he sent news of the Master's arrival to all the devotees of Calcutta, made proper arrangements for their entertainments, invited a San-kirtana party, so on and so forth. The boy's ebbing of life's current, all of a sudden, took a sharp turn and burst into a floodtide, as if the *chātaka* bird crying piteously for a drop of rain suddenly espied a sable rain-cloud being pierced by a lightning and overjoyed lost itself.

STRAY THOUGHTS ON THE VALMIKI RAMAYANA

K. E. PARTHASARATHI

The Valmiki Ramayana is like a stick on which sweets are fastened (*dande apoopa*). It is said that this was the first ever poem to be composed. The way the epic came to be written is also wonderful. Valmiki, the great sage, had once gone to a river for his bath where he saw a pair of flamingoes on the top of a tree absorbed in sport. Just then a hunter aimed his arrow at the male bird and shot it down. Valmiki moved by the plaintive cry of the female bird cursed the hunter. And it happened that the curse came out in the form of a verse.¹ The sage however, was

aghast at his own atrocity in cursing the hunter. But Brahma, the creator, appeared before the Rishi, pacified him and said that he would do immense good to the world, if he composed the life of Sri Rama, as already related to him by Narada, in this poetical strain.

Since then bards have sung this poem, pundits have extolled its greatness, folk songs have grown round the characters of the Ramayana so much so that it has penetrated into the very hearts of our people. The progress and prosperity of our country have been intricately bound with Sri Rama for ages now, and today they depend more than ever on the observation of the code of law, that he laid down as can be seen in his character. His story as that of Sri Krishna is a perennial stream of nectar. It is in the words of Saint

¹ मा निषाद प्रतिष्ठां त्वमगमः शाश्वती समाः ।

यत्क्रौञ्चमिथुनादेकमवधीः काममोहितम् ।

—*Ramayana*, 1-2-15.

'O hunter, as you have killed one of the pair of these birds engaged in sport as they were, may you for a long time remain unattained your cherished place of desire.'

MEMOIRS OF SWAMI ADBHUTANANDA

(Lātu Maharaj)

(A free translation of the Bengali book, *Smritikatha*)

Chapter VI

Returning from Kāmārpukur the Master was very busy for some days. Almost daily he was visiting Calcutta, and spending the whole day there, used to return to Dakshineswar late at night. Some days he used to come to Rama's house first and from there he would visit the houses of other devotees of Calcutta. On these visits Lāltoo often used to accompany the Master. On one occasion when Sri Ramakrishna was attending the recital of the *Bhāgavata* at the Jadu Mallick's garden in Dakshineswar, Lāltoo came there from Rambabu's with a big load of fruits and sweets. It was the month of Kartika. The Master said to him affectionately, 'My boy, the night is dark and already advanced. Why should you go to Calcutta? Stay for the night here.' On hearing this from the Master's lips Lāltoo was exceedingly glad, for this was what he had been looking forward to with great eagerness. Lāltoo regarded himself blessed when he saw his long cherished desire being fulfilled so unexpectedly.

That night after the meal was over Lāltoo started massaging the Master's feet; as he was so engaged he felt a sort of maddening effect on his mind. Kedārnāth Chatterji, a devotee of the Master, who was also present that night narrated to us this incident.

Sri Ramakrishna said, 'My boy, are you feeling sleepy?'

Lāltoo : 'No, I am not.'

Master : 'Are you afraid?'

Lāltoo : 'No, I am not.'

Master : 'Are you feeling anxious for someone?'

Lāltoo : 'No, neither that.'

Master : 'Then you are dozing.'

Lāltoo : 'No, I am not.'

Master : 'Why then are your eyes like that?'

Lāltoo : 'How can I know?'

Master : 'My boy, what has happened to you? Why are you staring at me like that?'

Lāltoo remained speechless. A minute later tears started trickling down his cheeks. The Lord said again, 'Why are you weeping, my boy? What has happened to you? I have never seen such a scene before.' Then turning to Kedar he said, 'Just see. This boy is shedding tears without any reason and would not say anything.'

Kedārbābu : 'My Lord, it is all your sport. You have passed on spiritual energy into him. That is why he is so full of it.' That very day Lāltoo was initiated by the Master. Kedārbābu told this to many of us.

How a God-man initiates, is a mystery to us. He alone can describe it who has received it from him. It is impossible for others to understand it. At the divine touch of the Master Lāltoo was carried away by a tidal wave of spiritual joy. We can but guess that under the influence of this bliss he was speechless, motionless, and of steady fixed eyes.

Later on we tried many times to open this topic with Lātu Maharaj; but he would say nothing about it. This much alone we could extract from him : 'He alone knew my mind. And he tested me in many ways, and then he literally poured love on me. It was he himself who showed me . . .'

A devotee : 'What did he show you, Maharaj?'

Lātu Maharaj : 'Fool, can it be described in words or gestures? That was an experience. One who had not felt that experience, not got that vision, not possessed that treasure,

will never understand it, however much one may try to describe it. Do you think the Lord is a contentless word. He is above mind and speech, on the other shore of this consciousness of ours. Words return baffled. Experience is the only way to understand Him.'

A devotee : 'What is that experience like, Maharaj? Do give us a glimpse of that.'

Lātu Maharaj : 'How silly? You have read so much, heard so many things about Him, still the settled ignorance is not dispelled. The Master used to say, "Can one describe what the sweetness of sugar is like? Similarly no one can say how the Lord is."'

Then he would add, 'Again, of what profit is it to hear? Do see Him. Sit down this very moment to know Him. He is sure to reveal Himself to you.'

Thus he would parry our question. Anyway, we were told that even the next morning his eyes were not normal. Up to noon Lāltoo sat motionless, speechless, winkless. At noon when the bell rang and food was being carried to the temples for consecration, the Master said to the boy, 'Hallo! it is noon. Will you not see Mother in the temple? It is going to be closed soon. Go and see Mother. You have come here and will you not bow down to Her?' At this affectionate call the charm, as it were, was broken. Like one just awakened from sleep, he walked with loose limbs and came to the temple door. Having bowed down to the Mother he went for a wash. This is what we heard from Ramalaldā.

Lāltoo stayed with the Master for three days and nights at a stretch this time. These three days and nights the Master would not allow him to sit. He would continually engage him in one work or other. These days he would draw water for the Master's bath, prepare tobacco for him, sweep and dust his room; he was even to go with him to Jadu Mallick's garden to hear the recital of the *Bhāgavata*.

At the end of the three days the Master asked Lāltoo to return to Rāmabābu's house and said, 'My boy, Rām is extremely anxious for you.'

Lāltoo replied in his delightful patois, 'My master (Rāmabābu) will not be angry if I

be here. He has kept another servant. He does not need my service. The other boy will do all his work. I will stay on here.'

Master : 'How strange! Rām will give you your wages and you will stay on here! How can that be? You will get your wages all right, and you will not serve him! From whomsoever you will take wages you should serve him. That is what I understand. You will take money from one and you will serve another! This is rather queer.' While the conversation was going on Rāmabābu, accompanied by his wife, arrived there. Seeing Rāma, the Master smiled and said, 'Rām, see what sort of a boy your Lātu is. As many times I say 'You better go home. They are anxious at your absence,' so many times he giggles and says 'If I stay here master does not take offence. I feel exceedingly sad to leave this place. I will not go.' I implore him to go, but he would not listen. Just see how wrong it is to leave off work and stay on here. Please try if you can persuade him.'

Rāmabābu, wise as he was, understood beyond all doubt that the boy had received the Master's grace. Turning to Lāltoo he said, as if in anger, 'What for are you wasting your time here, lad? Let us go home.'

Lāltoo stood still. There was no reply. Next moment Rāma turned to the Master and said, 'Your love has swallowed up the boy. Why then put me to the cross?' With that divine smile again the Master said, 'What honey is there with me that the boy must stay here? I do not understand it at all.'

However, Lāltoo had to return to Calcutta with his "mother" (Rāmabābu's wife) on that occasion. She employed all her fondness, all her persuasion to make Lāltoo understand that he should stay with them. But Lāltoo kept on saying, 'I will not serve any more. I will not take wages. Please tell master I will stay there alone.' "Mother" also was not to give in so easily, she asked, 'Tell me Lāltoo, what ails you here?' Lāltoo would not answer to that but said imploringly, 'I prefer staying there.' Mother : 'Who will give you food there, and clothing and all

that?' Lāltoo : 'Why? Where is the difficulty? I will serve Him and maintain myself on his leavings. And as to my clothes? You will supply them.'

Mother : 'Bābu may not agree.'

Lāltoo : 'Not so. He loves me so dearly. Why will he not give me a piece of cloth?'

At this childlike simplicity of the boy "mother" could not restrain her laughter.

Now, Rāmabābu had heard from Kedār-bābu what took place at Dakshineswar on that night. He was therefore feeling hesitant to allow Lāltoo, who had received the special grace of the Master, to serve him and his family. This made Lāltoo's work very light.

During this time Lāltoo's allotted work was three-fold : (1) to bring Rāma's presents of fruits and sweets to Dakshineswar, (2) to visit the houses of Sri Ramakrishna's Calcutta devotees and to know how they were doing, and in special cases to communicate the news to the Master, and (3) to inform the devotees of the Master's arrival in Calcutta. Beyond these he had another duty. When the Master would visit any devotee's house, there used to be some sort of festivity and in most cases Rāmabābu, being wise and frugal, was accepted as the general manager of those little festivals. On such occasions he used to send Lāltoo as his forerunner. And Lāltoo used to do ten persons' work in these celebrations. Mahendrabābu (Narendra's younger brother) records : 'Sri Ramakrishna arrived at Rāmabābu's. Lātu came and told us, "He (Sri Ramakrishna) has sent for Loren (Naren)* bābu." Conveying this message he vanished in a moment. After a couple of minutes he returned and said, "Did I not say that He had come and called you there? Why are you delaying?" Brother came out and said, "Yes, we are coming." "I shall have to go," said Lātu, "to a number of houses. Please come sharp. Mind you, if you be late He will be angry with me." Saying this he disappeared as before. He came again about four or five minutes after, and said, "What Lorenbābu,

you are still here?" Brother said, "Ah me! How very impatient! Yes, we are coming. They say of impatient people, 'If they are sent to call a man, they would tie him and drag him.' You are like that." "Do come, quick," Lātu would say, "You have no consideration? He is anxiously waiting for you." Thus Lātu used to drag brother to Rāmabābu's parlour. In between these visits to our house he went to several other houses to call other devotees. As they were coming, we joined them on the way and arrived together at Rāmabābu's.'

Thus Lāltoo had to pass some time more with Rāmabābu. Then arrived the devoutly wished for opportunity to stay at Dakshineswar.

It was the middle of 1881, Hriday, Sri Ramakrishna's nephew and his devout attendant and caretaker, had worshipped Trailokya's (Mathur bābu's son's) little daughter. A Brahmana, the worshipper of Goddess Kali and Sri Ramakrishna's attendant at that, worshipping a girl not of the same caste — was considered as portending evil to the girl and the family. Trailokya was then the *de facto* proprietor of the temple. Hriday was immediately ordered to quit the place and never again to enter its precincts. He had to leave. It was the month of June. Trailokyabābu, no doubt, engaged an up-country man then and there to look after Sri Ramakrishna. But how was it possible for an ordinary servant to take care of Sri Ramakrishna's body when his mind transcended normal consciousness? On such occasions, and they were so numerous, he could not bear the touch of the least impure; such touches would give him excruciating pain. He sorely needed the attendance of a pure soul. Rāmabābu noticed this helplessness of the Master and sent Lāltoo to look after him.

A couple of days later Rāmabābu himself came to Dakshineswar. The Master said to him, 'Rām, please leave the boy here. He is very pure, besides he likes to be with me.' It needed no second request. Lāltoo became the Master's servant and Providence blessed the moment.

* Lātu Maharaj would pronounce the letter N as L. We have retained his pronunciation to give the effect of the original.

Later Lāltoo became widely known as the Master's devoted servant. The Master would affectionately call him 'Lato', 'Neto', or

'Lātu'. The name, 'Lātu' acquired currency. We, too, would henceforward address him by that name.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

IN THIS ISSUE

Brahmachārīni Śarada is of Sri Śarada Math, Dakshineswar.

Sri P. M. Bhaskaran Nambudripad is a research scholar from Madras.

Brahmachari Sudhansu is of the Ramakrishna Order.

The article 'Swami Vivekananda on Sri Ramakrishna' is a collection of Swamiji's stray utterances about the Master.

Dr Viswanath Prasad Varma is Director, Institute of Public Administration, Patna University.

Prof. M. K. Venkatrama Iyer is a retired Professor of Philosophy, Annamalai University.

'The Path of Jnana' is the third instalment of the article by Prof. Braj Bihari Nigam, Head of the Department of Philosophy, Govt. Arts and Commerce College, Indore.

BIRTH CENTENARY OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

The seventeenth of January, 1963 marks the beginning of a year-long world-wide celebrations of the Centenary of Swami Vivekananda, a personality, the like of whom rarely appear on the arena of this world. India has been blessed time and again with spiritual luminaries of the highest magnitude — the Incarnations of God — to stem the tide of unrighteousness and ward off the attacks of materialism, hedonism and atheism. Along with these Incarnations have, in every age, come a band of followers to assist them in their mission. So too in the Ramakrishna Incarnation a select band appeared on this earth to usher in a new age, a new epoch. Sri Ramakrishna, however, was not present in his physical frame to see the spread of his message so widely, but he left it in the charge of his trusted disciples, chief among whom was Swami Vivekananda. He entrusted to him the responsibility of broadcasting his message to the world. And how faithfully the Swami carried out the behest of his Master is more than evident today.

History was made on that memorable occasion at the Parliament of Religions, in

Chicago, when, on September 11, 1893, he opened his lips to convey the message of Hinduism, of his Master, of universal brotherhood, nay of universal Oneness, to that august assembly: The whole congregation cheered his words, 'brothers and sisters of America' with a thundering applause, which took some time to die down. It was a pleasant surprise for the gathering. In this applause we can perceive, how hungry mankind was for some genuine feeling. They were pining, as it were, for some one who instead of sermonizing, could feel for them, could call them his own and be one with them. People were thirsting for that ambrosia of love, and when they received it they went into raptures; they went wild with joy. They intuitively recognized the heart behind the expression and spontaneously responded to it. The differences of race or religion could not intervene there. Swami Vivekananda spoke out of the fullness of his heart and the hearts of the audience received it. It is common knowledge now, how Swami Vivekananda was greeted even when the first day's deliberations of the Parliament were over. People jostled to get a glimpse of him

MEMOIRS OF SWAMI ADBHUTANANDA

(Lātu Maharaj)

(A free translation of the Bengali book, *Smritikatha*)

Chapter VII

It is generally seen that no one ever gets a chance of serving the Divine unless he has combined in his personality four things : good breeding, saints' company, purity, and spiritual practice. It is evident that the boy Lātu had the last three in abundance. But he had not any education—he had not that opportunity. A saint's company he had when he served the *Avadhuta* in Ramababu's house. Purity of heart and mind and body he acquired by the incessant utterance of the Lord's name with concentrated devotion during that time. We can very well say, with that started his spiritual practices as well. However, till then he had no opportunity to learn to read or write, a thing which we usually designate as education. It appears, therefore; rather strange to us that he actually had the luck of serving a divine personality.

It is true Lātu was illiterate, he did not even learn the alphabet. But could we call him uneducated? To answer this question we must have a clear idea of what education is, as also what its aim is.

The purpose of education, in modern times, is to make man literate, to enable him to know a language tolerably well and to be efficient in his social dealings. The aim of the higher education seems to make man think and reason. The popular conception of education is undoubtedly literacy. According to some, higher education must give man the power of imparting knowledge to others and to do research. According to others 'It is to teach them how to use their mind in thinking;' and its standard is : 'An educated man is one who can accomplish things.' The last idea, however, has not been accepted by our Universities so far. But it has generally been accepted by the public.

Judged by the above standards, Lātu could not be accepted as an educated person. Could

he? Firstly, Lātu did not learn the alphabet, far less any language. But if we judge him by the higher standard of education we cannot exclude him from the category. For, in him we find an intense thinking power with wonderful sequence of thought. Though illiterate he had been able to carry out such a revolutionary reform in the world of his thoughts and sentiments that very few of us, in spite of our vanity, can claim to possess.

Lured by the false ideal of modern education we are, no doubt, forgetting its higher purpose. For we have started taking the outer paraphernalia of education as education itself. Even in the matter of learning and teaching philosophy, epistemology, etc. we are getting accustomed to bring in extraneous matter and finish our discussions with them without touching even the fringe of the main topic. Philosophy has been reduced to linguistics, as if all the philosophical problems are problems of language, not of pressing thoughts. We are about to forget, that education is concerned with the development of the inner man, not with bringing information of the outer world nor with analysing and classifying the external objects; that it is the reformation and orientation of our thoughts, emotions and volitions; that given the inner development outer circumstances will adjust of themselves or with a little effort. This deplorable condition of ours is due to the fact that in our curricula of studies there is nothing to teach us how to enter and know our inner self. The present system of education busies itself with matter and material things only. We suffer because our educational system has lost sight of the real thing—the thing that blooms forth as life and consciousness, the thing that organizes the configuration of atoms, the thing that builds, changes and disintegrates shapes and sizes of material things.

Trying to adjust themselves to the current political theories of the various countries, our educational systems have had to squeeze themselves to such an extent as to become dead and wooden, artificial and pompous. This sacrifice of education at the altar of politics and efficiency has brought us to the brink of total annihilation. We deeply feel that our inner experiences are daily getting weaker and vaguer; that being denuded of the noble qualities of the heart like kindness, sympathy, affection, reverence, and devotion, our life is getting lighter and more superficial. We shudder to think where it will lead us. This characteristic weakness of modern education has a crippling effect on our personalities. This was well-known to Sri Ramakrishna. Hence in order to show the true purpose of our ancient Vedic education and to hold before our eyes some ideal products of that system he took upon himself the task of educating, according to that old system, some so-called educated, uneducated, half-educated and thoroughly wrongly educated people. Lātu Maharaj was one such uneducated boy who was trained in the old school of thinking by Sri Ramakrishna.

In order to educate Lātu, in the true sense of the term, Sri Ramakrishna adopted a novel method—novel to the moderns; but in fact which was the old eternal method of India. It was this method that drove off ignorance from the heart of Satyakāma Jābāla; that brought the knowledge of Brahman to devoted Nārada. This method was current throughout India all through the ages. Only through the inevitable action of the law of destruction its applicability became extremely limited in modern times. In this method there is no exuberance of learning and teaching, nor excess of rites and ceremonies. It does not teach man to run after worldly pomp and power in this life or life hereafter. Its only concern is with the supreme need of human life, viz., the knowledge of one's own soul.

According to most people, the hereafter and the soul, and therefore the knowledge of them, are one and the same. It is not so. There is in fact a world of difference between

the two. The knowledge of the hereafter is concerned with that of the gods and goddesses, the mystic syllables concerning their invocation, their rites and ceremonies, the Vedic and other sacrifices, etc. The knowledge of the soul is concerned with that of the ultimate substance and with one's becoming that. In the knowledge of the hereafter there is need of money and materials, in that of the soul neither. In sacrifices for going to various abodes of enjoyment in the hereafter, the germs of desires for enjoyment remain fully potent, though latent for the time being. In the quest for knowledge of the Self they are to be burnt to ashes first and then dispassion for all kinds of enjoyment and dedication to the Lord are to be devotedly cultured. The hereafter gives one the covetable wealth of fine enjoyments, intellectual, moral and artistic; the knowledge of the self makes one realize the Self by removing one's false identification with non-self. The wealth of the hereafter, like that of this world, is destructible and temporary; that of the self is permanent, immutable. The aim of the latter is not possession but becoming. This is why trickery, cleverness, simulation has no place in this; here the entire personality of man is to be trained and transformed, his body, sense-organs, mind, intellect are to be simultaneously cultured and thoroughly purified.

In order to give Lātu this kind of training Sri Ramakrishna caused him to be brought to himself. He used to say, 'Saplings are to be hedged round or else the cattle may destroy them.' To prevent this, he accepted Lātu as his personal attendant and kept him under his direct supervision.

One day addressing his devotees present at Dakshineswar Sri Ramakrishna said, 'Look here. So many educated people come here. This lad Lātu, keeps their company. Will he remain as illiterate as that? Will you not try a little and see if he can read and write?' Then turning to one devotee, he said, 'Well, kindly purchase for him a first Bengali Primer.'

The next day the devotee returned to Dakshineswar with a first primer. Sri Rama-

krishna started giving lessons to Lātu. Recognition of vowels went off all right. In two days Lātu completely mastered the sixteen vowels. The third day the lesson on consonants started hopefully but came to too sudden a stop and that was a stop for the whole life. Lātu was shown the first consonant क 'K' and asked to repeat the sound as 'kaw' as the Bengalis pronounce. Lātu being a Bihari by birth, pronounced it as 'cut' with 't' omitted, as is done in almost all the states of India. The Master's omniscience did not know it. He was thoroughly convinced that the pronunciation was 'kaw'. To Lātu क (aw), was all right, he pronounced it to his master's satisfaction, but when 'K' is prefixed to 'aw' it automatically became 'cut' with 't' elided. As many times the Master would say 'kaw' so many times the pupil's Bihari pronunciation would prevail over it. There was a peal of laughter from both. Then reason followed, as if that would have some effect : "क" is kaw ; if you put 'ā' after it, it will become what you pronounce. If without 'ā' you pronounce it as kā (little knowing that there is a difference between 'cut' with 't' elided and Kā) how will you pronounce it when ā is added to 'Kaw' ?' Innocence excelsior ! A sweet combination of gravity and levity ! Another continuous laughter followed, the pupil and master joining heartily when all reason so sound and simple as to obliterate distinction between reason and its antithesis, failed to bring about any change in the situation. The book was closed once and for ever. 'It is enough for you,' said the Master, 'Like Master like pupil.'

We are to pause a little and think about this rather extraordinary phenomenon, viz. Lātu's inability to acquire literacy even under the guidance of such an expert teacher as Sri Ramakrishna. Let us analyse the situation. Sri Ramakrishna not only possessed all the qualities of an expert teacher, viz., patience, knowledge of the subject to be taught, the capacity to make the subject-matter interesting, knowledge of how the pupil's mind works, but, over and above all these, the rare quality

of love which is the universal solvent of all knotty problems. What about the pupil ? Lātu had modesty, devotion, sincerity of purpose, energy, tenacity and intellect. His intellect may not be extraordinary but it was certainly more than average. So the student was also not lacking in anything to deserve outright condemnation. It may appear that Sri Ramakrishna had not the requisite amount of patience or tenacity to continue teaching the boy ; or it was his ignorance of the true pronunciation of the consonants that was the cause of his anger at what he considered the student's inability to pronounce correctly and this anger was the immediate cause of stopping the teaching. The whole argument involves the fallacy of non-observation. Neither the pupil nor the teacher got angry or lost patience, for they kept on laughing, which showed they were in good humour. In all actions of Sri Ramakrishna we find ample evidence of his tenacity and good humour. There is no reason to treat it as an exception. Again it was not a fact that he was ignorant of different kinds of pronunciation in vogue in the country. For, before his boy-disciples came to him Sri Ramakrishna had been in intimate contact with the *sādhakas* and *siddhas* of all sects and denominations, and had been instructed by many into their secrets. And these people came from all parts of India. Again it is the same Sri Ramakrishna who successfully taught so many people such a variety of things and among those other pupils of his there were variedly developed intellects. And taught by the Master, Lātu himself mastered so many things that blessed his life. Why should there be failure in this case of literacy then ? There must be some deeper meaning to this. To us it appears that the Master wanted to set a noble example in this modern age of non-belief and cynicism by keeping Lātu absolutely illiterate, while at the same time endowing him with the highest spiritual attainments, which were a despair and wonder to many of his other disciples, noted for their intellectual acumen and scholarship.

(To be continued)

MEMOIRS OF SWAMI ADBHUTANANDA

(Lātu Maharaj)

(A free translation of the Bengali book, *Smritikatha*)

Chapter VII—(Continued)

The Master knew that most of the Indian villagers were illiterate, but they were sincere, honest believers. There was no possibility of these people knowing God by the study of scriptures ; but their purity, sincerity, large-heartedness, etc. have made them fit recipients of this knowledge. Should they go without it ? There must be some method fit for this class of people through which they can get this knowledge. With Lātu as the medium the Master showed us that method. Lātu was a boy of immaculate character, hard-working and emotional. The Master, a great teacher that he was, has shown us, in the course of his training up of Lātu, how to educate such people. Such people should not be taught in the stereotyped method of reading and writing ; that would be sheer waste of time, it would neither be easy nor efficacious. To demonstrate this to us, the Master led Lātu through illiteracy to greatness — kept him fully illiterate and blessed him with the highest and brightest realizations of the spiritual world.

The above is our interpretation of the situation. Below we quote some passages, in corroboration of our view, from the diary of a devotee giving us Lātu Maharaj's own view on the subject, of course expressed indirectly in the course of conversations in Vāraṇasi and at the house of Balarambabu at Calcutta.

He said : ' Can you imagine in how many ways the Master used to teach me ? What pains he took to educate me ? He used to send me to Loren (Naren). I used to sit quiet there, hearing the interminable discussions Loren used to have with his visitors and friends. Again the Master would set Loren and Girishbabu to argue about many things. Loren was a firebrand, would not care for or

spare anybody. I would hear attentively what Loren used to say, for, on my return I had to report to the Master what I had heard. Sometimes he would test me and say, " Loren said such a thing and you kept quiet ? " What did I know then. Could I hold my own against Loren ? But the Master would not leave me. He would say, " You have heard so many things here, and still you did not contradict him ? You ought to have said, ' If He has not done who else has ? ' " — Why ? Loren says, ' Nature has done all that. '

Master : " Can nature do all these tricks ? Effects must have causes. Wherever there is power there is a wielder at the back. " ' The Master used to teach me in this way. There was no end to his teaching. '

A devotee : ' What else did he teach you, Maharaj ? '

Lātu Maharaj : ' What else ? He used to teach me to be inebriated. '

The devotee looked blank, at which Lātu Maharaj would mystify him humorously, ' It was not an ordinary inebriation, it was a right royal one. He taught us divine inebriation. Worldly people teach their children how to bib the strong drinks or to smoke a cigar or how to lose oneself completely in lust and wealth or to run non-stop after name and fame, power and position. But the Master taught us inebriation in Brahman. That is the deepest inebriation, compared to which all other inebriations are what tea is to a strong drink. ' The devotee understood what Lātu Maharaj meant and asked, ' How did the Master teach you this inebriation ? It is certainly not like the inebriation of opium that you make a pill of it and swallow it down, and the pill will do the rest. ' Lātu Maharaj : ' Ah !

What humour! Darling, no swallowing or drinking is necessary in divine inebriation. A touch or a vision is enough; or should I say, to be in his company is to lose oneself completely in divine intoxication.'

A devotee: 'Do excite it in us, Maharaj. Do arrange for ferrying us across this turbulent river of worldliness.'

Lātu Maharaj: 'Ah! The ferry is there. But can you get at it all at once? From the lowest intoxicant you will have to work your way to the highest. They start with tobacco, and rising step by step through *bhāng*, hemp, *charas*, come to wine and end in opium. When one reaches that height he hankers no more for the lower grade intoxicants. Similar is the case with the people engrossed in worldliness. What are the intoxicants after which you run? They are name and fame, power, pelf and lust. Are they not? When you get over them, then alone you can aspire after the divine inebriation. Once you lose yourself in it, all others will appear as stale and dirty. If you want that intoxication come away. Sit down here. You will have two square meals; but you will have to lose yourself in taking the Lord's name incessantly and devotedly. Trickery will not do. "All mental angularities," Master used to say, "must be rounded first."

The devotee: 'What are those angularities, Maharaj? Please tell us.'

Lātu Maharaj: 'Don't you know them? That is the witchery practised by *māyā*. Just see what you do and how contradictory it is! You like to enjoy the world, and at the same time you will cry fie on it! This is what the Master used to call mind's main angularity.'

* * * *

From another day's diary:—

'Will you believe? The Master himself pulled me out of this quagmire of worldliness. What was I? An orphan, a non-descript. He literally poured his divine love into me. Had he not bestowed his love on me I would have gone on serving earthly masters and would have converted myself into a donkey; my whole life would have been spoilt. Was it not he who used to teach me everything? I was

an ignoramus. How should I know of all these? He would tell me, "Look here, my boy. Keep your heart absolutely pure. Let no dirt enter it."

The devotee: 'What is dirt, Maharaj?'

Lātu Maharaj: 'Don't you know? Dust, sand, and all that.'

The query remained in the devotee's eyes. Lātu Maharaj continued, 'You didn't understand it? Egoism is what he used to refer to as "mind's dirt". Have you not noticed it? How entangled a man becomes through this? "My child", "my wife", "my wealth",—this "my", "my", "my", is the thread with which man weaves his net that ensnares him. You must have noticed how "bound" they become by such thoughts.' Just at this time a fly was caught in a cobweb. Seeing that he burst out into a loud laughter, and addressing his audience said, 'Look, look, *māyā* exactly does this—a joy-ride on a whirligig? or a whirl in a whirlpool? Have you seen the white foam in a whirlpool? How beautiful it is? It covers the water below. What is foam? Dirt, wind and water. This combination covers the water, the main thing, the pure thing. This is the nature of impurity. Dirt does not allow reflection on a mirror. You are to clean the dirt to see the reflection of your face. The Master therefore used to admonish, "Purify your heart, clean your intellect; be pure to reflect Reality." He would hammer it into our brains! (Pointing towards his own heart) "Keep it true, never allow any desire to enter it. When the desires will trouble you beyond a point pray to the Lord, take His name, call on Him. He is sure to save you. When this also has been rendered impotent, when you cannot even take His name run up to the temple and sit down there or run up to me."

* * * *

Another quotation from the same diary and we close this chapter.

'Whatever you see in me are all due to Master's grace. Do you think a fool like me would have had the heart to engage himself in arduous practices? What did I know of

them? He it was who gave me all that. I wanted to serve him, that I took as the goal of my life. But he, of his own sweet will, taught me all the practices. I had absolutely no idea of what they were like. He told me about Ramji and His affairs.'

The devotee : 'What is meant by "Ramji's affairs"?''

Lātu Maharaj : 'One day I was massaging his legs. Suddenly he asked me "can you tell me, my boy, what your Ramji is doing now?" I was taken aback and was thinking "what do I know of His affairs?" When, seeing me silent, he said, "Your Ramji is passing an elephant through the eye of a needle."'

The devotee : 'What did he say? Passing an elephant through the eye of a needle? What does it mean, Maharaj?'

Lātu Maharaj : 'You don't understand it? I was an insignificantly small vessel. And he was pouring his infinite grace into it!'

The devotee : 'Is "practice" such a thing as can be poured from one vessel to another?'

Lātu Maharaj : 'It can be. But not by anybody and everybody. It is possible only for a person who has seen God, who is immersed in His bliss; not for one who had not undergone the practices himself and had not realized God.'

The devotee : 'Maharaj, do pour out some practice into us.'

Lātu Maharaj : 'How foolish! He could do it. Do you mean to say I also can do it?'

Another devotee said with great earnestness, 'To be sure, Maharaj, you can. Be merciful to us. Let us be blessed with some spiritual achievements.'

Lātu Maharaj : 'You are all unanimous about that one thing. As long as you are here you feel you can spend the rest of your life in spiritual practices. But the moment you reach home you become different and would say, "what a tiresome, dry-as-dust work this spiritual practice is? Leave it and enjoy life." At your house to acquire money is the only practice. For it you spend day and night. And it is but right, you get what you work

for. You do not want God, you do not get Him.'

The devotee : 'Can you deny, Maharaj, that a householder cannot live without money.'

Lātu Maharaj : 'Yes, I know it too well. I know this too, you get what you aspire after and work for. If you want to do spiritual practices you will have to leave all other works. He (Master) used to say, "You will get whatever you will ask of Him." But if you want Him sincerely all other hankerings must be quieted down.'

The devotee : 'Maharaj, it is a fact we cannot call on Him. Does He hear the feeble calls of these wretches that we are?'

Lātu Maharaj : 'Yes, they do reach His ears. But those calls of yours ring and reverberate with but one note "money", "money". But the day these ringings of money, fame, power, etc. will cease totally — that day He would have already come to you. The Master used to say, "Yoga (union with the Lord) lessens in direct proportion to the hankering after enjoyment; and with enjoyment sufferings increase." Day and night he used to din it into our ears : Be always united with Him, be ever wakeful in Him. In the midst of work call on Him, even in sleep take His name. And engage yourself to your utmost in His work, in His service.'

* * * *

Lātu Maharaj's training and its mode can be summed up in one sentence. Be ever united with Him. In other words, keep your mind ever fixed on Him, even in sleep. It strikes one if the Master was not hinting at what Lord Sri Krishna said in the Gita, viz., know that by service to the Lord, by bowing down to Him, by asking humbly for the resolution of your doubts.* In simple words the method of training we are discussing in this chapter pinpoints to this : the union of the inner man of the teacher and the taught; the two should be *en rapport* with one another.

*तद्विद्धि प्रणिपातेन परिप्रश्नेन सेवया ।

In this method what happens is : The Divine touches and the human is maddened—the human heart opens itself to Truth, Purity, Sincerity. Here there is no ratiocination, but

direct apprehension of the Ultimate by the heart. The first word of this teaching based on realization is service of the Truth, not disputation about It.

HOW TO DISCIPLINE THE INDIVIDUAL?

U. C. JAIN

A disciplined mind is the product of right and adequate knowledge of life and its various relations. Only he who knows what the world is, what man is from within, can rise above the animalities of life and lead a life of purpose and lasting utility. Every man comes to this world in the form of a bundle of good and bad propensities. It is the social institutions, in which man's process of education goes on till the end of his physical existence, that make him a man or a brute. If the education imparted in the institution is improper, inadequate and lop-sided, children grow into bullies, slaves and brutes. On the other hand proper, complete and right education replenishes the world with adventurous, sincere, dutiful and virtuous human beings. The prevalence of an ideal system of education brings a veritable heaven upon earth and makes life worth living. Life is death, if it is not utilized by the possessor in making efforts to attain immortality. Keeping the above definition in view we can say that there are three types of persons : those who die young because of ignorance ; those who die untimely because of death ; and those who use every moment of their lives in quest of lasting peace and happiness, by leading a life of purity, integrity and righteousness, and conquer death and live for ever.

Discipline for a child signifies 'abiding by the rules of the social institutions governed by sane and wise elderly persons' ; discipline, for grown up persons means 'leading a life inspired by the ideals that enable one to attain peace and happiness'. A disciplined man always keeps his passions under his subjugation ; his actions are governed by the dictates

of an alert conscience. Disciplined minds stand firm and unflinched amidst the trials, turmoils and temptations of life. They are very seldom swayed by their whims and caprices. They are like an ocean unaffected in its magnitude by the turbulent rivers that empty into it. Lucidly speaking, a student or a child who obeys his parents and teachers and acts upon their reasonable pieces of advice can be called disciplined. Discipline does not mean regimentation but regulation of life in accordance with the code of fundamental principles of human life. In spirit, these principles are universal and rigid but, seemingly, they are flexible and are liable to nominal modifications. No society will tolerate the students who are lethargic, frivolous, flippant, indolent, and foppish. Similarly no nation can prosper, if the persons comprising it are dishonest, idle, and selfish. It is the persons who love 'work' more than 'life', 'man', more than 'money' and, 'truth' more than all the ties of the world, who can lead their nation to peace, power and prosperity.

These days the problem of indiscipline among the students requires an immediate solution, as it is resulting in many evil consequences. There was a time in India when pupils honoured and revered their teachers. They always remained ready to sacrifice even their lives for the sake of their 'Gurus'. On the other hand teachers loved and looked after their pupils as their children. Their sincerity, purity of heart, saintliness of ideals, their ways of life and methods of teaching were *par excellence*. They took teaching to be their 'Dharma of life'. They dedicated their whole lives to the cause of education. A student in their pre-

MEMOIRS OF SWAMI ADBHUTANANDA

(Latu Maharaj)

(A free translation of the Bengali book, *Smritikatha*)

CHAPTER VIII

In the cultural education of India there are three important noticeable elements — prostration at the feet of the Guru, searching questions, and devoted service to him. Without this ‘prostration’ our education is not, cannot be, complete. And yet it is not quite clear what is meant by ‘prostration’. We record below what we heard from Latu Maharaj at Balarambabu’s house* about this ‘prostration’ and how the Master initiated him into it.

One day, a rich devotee of Latu Maharaj saluted him, as is usually done in Bengal, by raising and joining the two hands above his head. At this Latu Maharaj said, ‘Look here, Sir, one should bow down to Sadhus and monks and to gods and goddesses. He (the Master) used to say, “This sort of axe-raising salutation brings no merit.”’

Another devotee present on the occasion was amused at this and asked with a laugh, ‘What is this “axe-raising salutation”, Maharaj?’

Latu Maharaj : ‘The kind of salutation that you usually do by touching the forehead by joined and upraised hands is what he termed “axe-raising” salutation. One day Girish Babu saluted Sri Ramakrishna thus. Immediately the Master bent himself at his waist and saluted Girish. We were witnessing the scene. At this Girish bent himself lower and saluted. The Master lowered himself still more. This competition ended when Girish fell flat on the ground and bowed to the Master. Then Sri Ramakrishna blessed him. It is for this Girish Babu used to say, “This time Master conquered the world with humble salu-

tation. As Krishna, he conquered the world with the sound of his flute ; as Chaitanya with the Lord’s name ; in this incarnation by bowing down to people.”’

The rich devotee : ‘Maharaj, we did not know ; all do like that ; we have learnt from them. We did not go deep into it, please excuse us.’

Latu Maharaj : ‘Who says you have committed any wrong? Remember what the Master used to say, “Between equals do what you have done ; but to one who is superior to you in learning, intellect, spiritual practices, name, fame, or power you should bow your head low and salute. And him, to whom you have prostrated, you should revere, attend to what he says and carry out his instructions and orders faithfully and literally. Before him you should be humble.” The Master often repeated, “My boys, your lips should move in obedience to your thoughts and emotions ; and prostration should follow the reverent heart. Showy bows carry no merit.”’

Another incident which will explain how the Master was giving him lessons in this virtue of ‘prostration’, we mention here as we heard it from Latu Maharaj at Kāśī. He said : ‘He (Sri Ramakrishna) was never tired of dinning it into our ears, “My boys, learn, learn to prostrate at others’ feet, then all arrogance, egoism will vanish.” One day at Dakshineswar a devotee started showing disrespect to the Master. When he reached the climax I could not bear it any longer and gave him a bit of my mind. He was cut to the quick. The Master understood it. When the devotee left the place the Master said to me, “Should you use such harsh words to a devotee ; to

* Which we call ‘a temple’ because of its deep association with many *lilas* of our Master.

those who come here? Do you know how they suffer in the world? Sometimes they use unworthy words. If you take them seriously and wound their hearts by harsh words where will they go for solace? To keep company of holy persons and to use harsh words! Never say anything which wounds one's heart." Do you know what he did next? He asked me to go to the devotee the next day and beg pardon of him. Accordingly, I did go there; but instead of begging pardon I gave another heavy dose to him, and came away — his bitter words to the Master rankled in me so much. When I returned, goodness gracious, do you know what he asked me? "My boy, did you convey my salutations to him?" I was flabbergasted. He added, "Go at once, and convey my respects to him." I had to go to him again. When I conveyed the Master's respects to him he burst into tears. At this I also felt deeply. When I reported the matter to him, he said, "Now at last your offence has been pardoned."

The above two incidents are enough to make us understand clearly that in order to rid Latu Maharaj completely of his egotism the Master initiated him into the cultivation of the virtue of 'prostration'. Bowing down to all makes a hash of our arrogance and tends us towards humility. What other lessons in humility did the Master teach Latu Maharaj we narrate below: Of course the interpretation is ours. They however, admit of other interpretations as well.

Latu Maharaj accompanied the Master to the house of Surendranath Mitra, whom he called Suresh Mittir. There was a sort of festival also on the occasion. Surendra purchased a thick beautiful garland of sweet-scented flowers for the Master. When, however, it was put on the Master's neck he threw it away. Surendra's sorrow was unbounded. He went on crying fie on himself. The Master, who did it deliberately, and saw its purpose served, quoted a story from *Bhakta-māla* to illustrate the proper attitude a devotee should have, when he wants to offer something to a

saint or God. He made it clear to all present that a gift to be accepted must be offered in all humility, the heart must be cleaned of all arrogance and egoism. Surendra understood his fault, looked small and shed tears of remorse. Sri Ramakrishna started singing *kirtana* (i.e. a kind of devotional chorus surcharged with emotion), took the audience to a higher level of spiritual experience, picked up the same garland from the ground and put it on his own neck and continued singing improvising lines, the ideas expressed in which melted the hearts of the hearers: 'See, I have put on this garland of shining moons and orbs'; 'the garland that is wet with tears of devotion'; 'the garland that is soaked in the nectar of love divine; . . .'

Later on Latu Maharaj narrated this story to us with his comments which have thrown some light on his own life. 'Suresh Mittir was one of the few suppliers of the Master's needs, divinely dispensed; still he did not accept his gift. But only when his egotism was washed away by tears of remorse, did the Master put on the garland.' This event took place in June 1881. The following event which happened in December of the same year at Manomohan Mitra's house gives us an inkling into Latu Maharaj's spiritual practice and spirit of service.

'You know I had been to Manomohan Babu's residence many times, but the time I accompanied the Master everything appeared new and strange. That time a good number of devotees were present. *Kirtana* created an atmosphere as if spirituality was solidified there. But many of the neighbours were so. They were egotistic. The idea that they were good singers, dancers, etc. was manifest in them. They were all counterfeits. Master sat long there. When the *kirtana* stopped Master remarked "When you take the Lord's name you should bow down to the Name."

A devotee asked, 'Maharaj, we could not follow the meaning of the Master's words. It appears very strange — to bow down to the name!'

Latu Maharaj : ' Do you think because you do not know something therefore that thing does not exist ? Master used to say, " Before starting *japa* you should bow down to the Lord's Name. You are to take refuge in Name. The Name and the Named are same. If you pray humbly to the Name it reaches the Named rather quickly." '

Latu Maharaj further remarked, ' Look here. The Name is the power, the Named is

but God, a manifestation of that power, which is the Reality. The Power is to be worshipped, meditated upon, in order to realize God, the embodiment of power.'

How apt and effective was the Master's extraordinary method of teaching Latu Maharaj to be humble and to rid himself of all traces of conceit ! Equally wonderful are Latu Maharaj's understanding and realization of them.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

IN THIS ISSUE

' Prasthanā Traya and its background ' by Swami Vimalananda, President, Sri Ramakrishna Advaita Ashrama, Kalady, is the second instalment in the series.

' Sri Harsha ' is from Mangalore.

Dr. K. B. Ramakrishna Rao, is Professor of Philosophy in the Mahatma Gandhi Memorial College, Udipi.

Br. Vidya Chaitanya is from the Ramakrishna Order.

Sri Kesava Rao is from Madras.

Mr. M. G. Corson is from Carpinteria, California.

Sri Rama whose nativity the Hindus all over the world will be shortly observing had for his consort Sita, the paragon of virtues. Sri M. V. Sridatta Sarma in his article ' Sita ' has brought out her different attributes most tellingly.

' Freedom and Decision ', by Sri Dharmendra Goel, of the Punjab University, Chandigarh, is a paper read out by him at the Santiniketan session of the Indian Philosophical Congress, October 1961.

ABOUT OURSELVES

One more year is coming to a close with this issue. On this occasion we would like to convey our thanks to all our subscribers, contributors and advertisers for having extended their co-operation and hope they will do so during the years to come.

As already announced in the special advertisement sheet of the last issue we propose bringing out a bumper issue in commemoration of Swami Vivekananda's Birth Centenary,

which is presently being celebrated all over the world, in the month of August, 1963. Therefore, the May number, which usually used to be our special one, will be an ordinary one.

With this issue also the first page serial compiled by Sister Savitri, a German devotee, will come to an end. From May onwards a fresh serial in Sanskrit, which was so dear to Swamiji's heart, with English translation will begin.

MEMOIRS OF SWAMI ADBHUTANANDA

(Latu Maharaj)

(A free translation of the Bengali book, *Smritikatha*)

Chapter IX

We have seen in the last chapter how the Master initiated Latu in the virtue of bowing down (to all and sundry). Along with it he taught him the true spirit of service. One day the Master told Latu Maharaj, 'Mind you, Latu, don't be led away by the exterior. By serving this body, a set of bones and flesh, you will not profit. But if you serve the one residing within it, you would get everything.'

What 'servant' Latu said on that occasion we came to know from Senior Gopalda (Swami Advaitananda*). We give below *verbatim* what the latter narrated to us; only those portions put within brackets are ours:

Latu: 'Who is there within it? I don't know.'

Master: 'The Lord is within it! It is Śiva who, as Jiva, lives within the body.'

At this Latu kept quiet. Then, as if with greater emphasis, the Master said, 'Latu dear, look here, don't forget him (pointing towards his heart). Would you be able to obey him implicitly? Never, never forget him.' Hearing this a strange change came over Latu Maharaj. With folded hands he lisped out, 'You love me so much, you show so much kindness to me; is it possible for me to forget you? If I do not obey you it would be a blatant act of ingratitude. I would, without questioning, carry out all your orders. I can never forget you.'

Master (smiling): 'I am not referring to my words, but of the words from "here" (pointing to his heart).'

Latu replied 'I do not know anything of "here". Kindly explain it to me.' Hearing these words of Latu, the Master turned towards Senior Gopalda and said, 'Gopal, just

hear what Latu says. He says, "Explain the words 'of here'." Is it possible to explain the words "of here"? Just tell me, is it possible? What a strange importuning is this!'

(At this serio-comic act of the Master) Gopalda said, 'Why, That is known to you. Why should you not reveal it?'

(At this) the Master, (as if embarrassed) said, 'How strange do you talk! The nature of "here" — should it be revealed?'

(Senior Gopalda, undefeated, replied) 'We have gathered round you only for this — to know what is this "here". If you keep it a secret from us how are we to know?'

Master (smiling): 'Not now, not now. The "here" is not to be made known now. When the time will come all of you shall know it.'

It is not quite clear why the Master bound down Latu with the promise of absolute obedience even before initiating him into the practice of divine service. We presume, however, that in this practice the guidance of a *guru* is essential and that if the disciple fails to obey the guru implicitly, the efficacy of the method is nullified. Hence Sri Ramakrishna got him to promise obedience at the outset. The Master used to say, 'The best guru is he who, finding the disciple slack or unwilling to carry out the instructions, even uses force and extorts obedience.'

A *guru* is necessary in all spiritual practices, more so in that of divine service. It needs no repetition. A spiritual novice, dedicated to the service of the Lord through work, without the aid of an expert guide is like a boat without a rudder; the boat goes on being tossed and buffeted by the waves and driven whither-soever the wind takes it. The novice fares the same fate in the ocean of numerous works;

* A direct monastic disciple of Sri Ramakrishna.

he loses sight of the end, viz. realization of God, the life divine. In works, philanthropic or other, there is a sort of intoxication; it makes man mad; he forgets the goal. Activities create an impetus, a rage, which takes man off his feet. He gets tired, entangled and restless. Sri Ramakrishna saw that Latu was a *sattvika*, that he had a good measure of longing for the Lord. He did not want to throw the boy into a vortex of activities in his unripened stage. Hence was the warning, 'See, my boy, you do not forget the "here".'

Latu, a true servant of Sri Ramakrishna that he was, remained, throughout his life, true to the letter of his promise. Not a day passed with Latu when he forgot the Master, not a day when he transgressed his injunctions; not for a moment was he ungrateful to the Master. It was so, not only at Dakshineswar, not only during the Master's lifetime; but long after Sri Ramakrishna's passing away, Latu had that one idea, one inspiration, one aim — to follow the Master implicitly, not to forget him even for a moment.

Thus getting a promise from Latu not to forget him, the Master made an indelible impression on the former's mind that the Lord's servants should not forget the Lord even for a moment. Latu lived the life, ever in remembrance of God; but the Master kept the secret of his identity to himself — he did not let Latu know that the Master was That. Still he gave sufficient hint that if he did not give the Master up he would reach God. The Lord's servant, Latu, started his spiritual practices with the fullest reliance and dependence on the Master and remained steadfast in it to the last. His steadfastness was so thorough and wonderful that in later days his *gurubhais*, brother-disciples especially Narendranath (Swami Vivekananda) said, 'Of all of us Latu alone has truly caught hold of our Master, we are simply echoing his words.'

We would never have understood that it was ever possible for a man to surrender and depend on another so absolutely had we not seen Latu Maharaj actually doing it before

our very eyes. It is easier for a man to sacrifice his life for another — that is but a single act in life — than to completely wipe out one's individuality and merge himself in another and continue to pass the whole life in and for the other. It is indeed an extraordinary phenomenon, unparalleled in spiritual history.

* * *

Since the day Latu Maharaj was admitted into the service of Sri Ramakrishna this idea, that he had no other go but to depend wholly and solely on the Master became deeply impressed on his mind. He got this deep impression even before he stepped into youth, in his adolescence, as a result of which his inner conflicts were at a low ebb all the time, and his egotism, that he could achieve anything by dint of personal efforts, was wiped off fully. Generally we depend for our progress and welfare on the exercise of our own understanding, hence our aspirations are circumscribed by the expanse and orientation of our reason. Naturally we cannot rise above that. If the outlook is changed and the understanding widens our aspiration also becomes vast. The common man, hard pressed by worldly needs, deliberately narrows down the circumference of his intellect, makes the angle of his vision more acute. But those who are generous in outlook and are detached, who have not allowed themselves to be bound down to worldly needs can very easily enlarge and deepen their intellect and consequently their aspirations are raised higher, are made to cover wider areas. At the fag end of his adolescence when Latu Maharaj was going to be initiated into the life of divine service he too, like all others, had to face the problem whether he was to be guided in life by his own intellect or by another intellect sharper and universal. Had he been one like us, proud of our own powers and intellect, it would have been difficult for him to opt for what he did.

But Latu was different — he was illiterate and emotional, which made it easy for him to choose the path of self-surrender, thereby to save himself from being overwhelmed by inner

conflicts. All the educated devotees of the Master, whether of the inner circle or outer, accepted the Master after having passed through a period of conflicting doubts. They, all of them without exception, tested him on the touchstone of their intellect, some going so far as to declare him to be a mono-maniac. What is so striking with Latu is that the

thought of testing the Master never crossed his mind. Whatever he told Latu, the disciple believed fully, whatever he was asked to do he did without a question. Like a child to its father, Latu resigned himself completely to the Master and enjoyed a calm that is denied to others.

(To be continued)

NOTES AND COMMENTS

IN THIS ISSUE

'Prasthanā Traya and its Background', is the third instalment of the serial by Swami Vimalananda, President, Sri Ramakrishna Advaita Ashrama, Kalady.

Swami Vijnananda is from the Ramakrishna Order. In a short compass he has brought out 'the life and message of Swami Vivekananda' in a forceful manner.

Brahmachari Sudhansu is from the Ramakrishna Order.

Sri N. K. Krishnamurti is from Madras.

Sri N. Padmanabhan is from Madurai.

'Universal Education' by Brahmachari Vidya Chaitanya, of the Ramakrishna Order is the second and concluding part of his article.

LET US LEARN TO THINK

India has been independent for more than a decade and a half now, still our ways and modes of thinking have not become independent. That initiative to manifest the creative and critical faculties is still lacking in us. The slavish mentality of looking to the West for approval in matters which concern even our daily life has not left us. It is more so in the case of religion, manners and customs. We see through their eyes, and we learn through their tongue. We assess the value of our scriptures too through the views of people not brought up in the tradition and who judge everything from their own standard and whatever anyone of them writes whether it is derogatory, unhelpful or harmful to us, we do not stop to think, but swallow it lock, stock and barrel. And there have been some journals in India who specially take interest in condemning everything indigenous and never lose an opportunity to laud to the skies the books that speak ill of

our customs, ways of living and the like. They even surpass the comments in the books in their vindictive criticism and recommend such books as the holy manna.

Our ultra-rationalists may then ask 'Are we to swallow whatever is dictated to us by old, out-moded scriptures?' Far from that. What we ask is to cultivate the God-given faculty of discrimination. Rationalism does not mean throwing over-board whatever smacks of antiquity, and taking in whatever smells of modernism. Throw away the dross by all means but first try to learn what is dross and what is gold. We do not throw away gold simply because it is old. The patterns of ornaments may be renewed but we use the same old gold for them.

Again all of those who would advise us through their literature, how wrong we are, do not do so with a well-meant intention. They have always some axe of their own to grind. It is not given to a casual observer to

MEMOIRS OF SWAMI ADBHUTANANDA

(Latu Maharaj)

(A free translation of the Bengali book, *Smritikatha*)

Chapter IX (continued)

Whoever would accept service as his approach to God will have, at the very outset, to efface his personality fully. No one can really serve or nurse another if he retains his selfishness, for through that will enter considerations which would thwart the high ideal to be realized. We take the path of service to be an easy one, but if there is no love behind it — love that kills selfishness — the path turns out to be weary and desolate ; service becomes a burden, it appears monotonous and painful, it creates no end of worries. The servant is-torn between hope and hopelessness, because his self counts on profit and loss. When profit is not sighted service becomes mechanical, wooden. That kind of service cannot improve man anyway. But where heart is wedded to service it becomes heavenly ; the servant, not being tied to anything, not thinking of any gain or of any danger, is easily lifted up and finds himself covered by God. It is for this the Master engaged Latu in loving service to him. He taught him : ‘ Look here, my boy, don’t be swayed by any hope of return or motive ; give yourself completely up to Him. You will get everything if you do not let go your hold of Him. If you do, cravings will remain or even increase, but only to tantalize and make you unhappy.’

Below we give an idea of what Sri Ramakrishna meant by service, as Latu Maharaj understood it. And Latu’s was the most faithful picture of the Master’s sayings and doings, for he never allowed his own intellect to intervene. Whatever the Master said or did he himself explained to him. Sometimes he asked the disciple questions at which the latter would say, ‘ What do I know ? You yourself explain it to me.’ And the explanation was not only

treasured in the mind but was acted up to and lived thoroughly. When he narrated anything it was all quotations of the Master’s words.

‘ Do you know what he used to say ? To feed man is in a way serving the Lord. He is in all creatures. It is He who reveals Himself as hunger. Whatever you offer to that fire is offered to Him — is it not ? ’

To this a devotee queried ‘ Yes, in a way it is. But do we feel it ? When we feel hungry we eat ; when we feel sleepy we sleep. We think ours is this hunger, ours the sleep. Do you then say that this sense of mine is God ? ’

Latu Maharaj : ‘ Yes ! You say you feel hungry, feel sleepy. Well who is this “ you ” ? What is this ? Is it hand or feet, body or mind ? Whence has come this peculiar sense in you ? ’

Devotee : ‘ I do not know that. What I am I do not know. But this I feel too truly that the hunger or sleep is mine, that I want this thing or that ; that it will please or displease me.’

Another day :

Latu Maharaj : ‘ Look here. To give anything to a man is to serve the Lord. If a man gives away something and does not want anything in return — name or fame, power or pelf, heaven or any kind of return from the man, God is pleased with him. Know it for certain, whatever you give here is virtually a service to Him. But if you do it in a clever way — with some motive behind — it will not reach Him.’

Devotee : ‘ What is this “ gift in a clever way,” Maharaj ? ’

Latu Maharaj : ‘ When do we call a man clever ? When his work satisfies or fulfils

some motive — isn't it? But such motivated action cannot cheat God — He simply refuses to accept it. It is they themselves who are thus befooled.'

Devotee : ' Why say " they are befooled " ? On the contrary they get their desired things done, as we generally see. They are undoubtedly clever fellows, not fools.'

Lātu Maharaj : ' Look here, what would you call one who wins at first but loses at last? Would you call him a clever fellow or a fool? Clever is he who wins the game. Isn't it? '

Yet another day :

Lātu Maharaj : ' Hear what he used to say. Whatever you do ultimately reaches Him. You feel if you do a thing surreptitiously the Lord will not know it. Fools, what cleverness will you show Him — One who is running this big show of the universe? Whatever you do — good, bad or indifferent — will reach Him without a doubt. The whole thing — have I not said? — is His show, His sport. He said, " Before we start a work, call on Him, remember Him ; in the midst of work whenever you get a little leisure, call on Him again ; and when the work is done call on Him once again, whoever can do this need have no worries." '

Lātu was a *sattvic* boy, naturally inclined towards God. But after all a boy, unripe yet. Lest he should busy himself at that age with humanitarian activities and forget God or the relation of work with God, the Master took special care to protect him against this danger. He did not teach him, in the language of the scripture, the three kinds of service — service with the body, by word, or with mind. But he led him, through hints and words, to the most important of them by implanting in him the proper mental attitude towards all action. He used to take Lātu on different occasions and situations, to various places, to the residences of devotees and noted people ; would show him people of various types, analyse their works and attitudes, and warn Lātu against possible pitfalls.

Chapter X

We will narrate in this chapter a few important incidents of Lātu Maharaj's life, depicting his practice of the servanthship of the Lord. Just a few, for they are numerous and all are equally important, each unfolding the beauty of an aspect of this really wonderful life. We will describe below only those which, in a special way, deepened his servanthship ideal and helped him to understand the nature of the Master.

Lātu Maharaj often used to say, ' To serve anyone my dear, is a really difficult job. He who has failed to serve his parents — can he serve his guru? If it is ever possible for one to look upon his guru as one's parent, then only, not before that, will one be able to serve the guru to some extent. " Some extent " is the expression. How often has the servant to bear with harsh words, abuses and threats? He (the Master) never spared us. Had we taken those occasions to heart, could we have served him? ' Numerous were the occasions when such expressions would escape his lips.

One day Lātu filled a bucket with water for the Master to bathe, but placed it on a spot which was not very clean. The Master noticed it and said, ' You fool, is it not water for bathing? Why does a man take bath? To become pure in body. Isn't it? If you place that water for bathing in a filthy place will it serve the purpose? Can impurity make one pure? Yes, I know water is Narayana, the Lord in His purifying aspect. Notwithstanding that can you offer dirty water to the Lord? There are waters and waters. One you can use for worship, another for washing clothes and dishes, a third for washing your face. There are different kinds of water for different purposes. There are waters which you can neither use for drinking nor for worship.' This conversation was recorded by a householder-devotee who was present when Lātu Maharaj narrated it.

Another incident : For some years Sri Ramakrishna could not touch any metal. When he was in that state it happened some-

times that Lātu carried the metallic water vessel when the Master wanted to wash. One night the Master went out without saying anything to anyone. There was none present — neither Lātu nor Harish. Referring to this incident Lātu Maharaj said later, ‘Do you know what happened that day? I had been counting beads but could not concentrate my mind, and had to get up. I returned to the Master’s room. When I did not find him there anxiety seized me. I cried aloud “Where are you?” It struck me that he might have gone out for a wash. I took the water vessel and went towards the woods in the north. Do you know what he said to me on return? “If you were to serve anybody you are to be very careful about his wants and requirements. Then only you will benefit thereby.” Can you imagine what he said to Harish that night? “You are meditating, my boy. But the person on whom you are meditating, cannot get a jug of water even! What benefit will you derive from such meditation?”’

A third incident: The real nature of service was revealed to Lātu through this incident. The Master amply brought it home to him that service did not merely mean physical nursing. He said, ‘Look here, my boy; if someone offers the Lord anything good that he got by begging that also is a piece of service.’ And he narrated a story from *Bhaktamālā* to substantiate it. We omit the story.

One day Lātu heard the Master expressing his desire to have a picture of Sri Gauranga, the Great Lord. The very next day Lātu came to Calcutta, got a picture as desired from Rāmabābu and hung it on a wall of the Master’s room. When the Master’s eyes fell on it he was overjoyed. He said, ‘Did you, my boy, ask it from Rām? How did he feel it when you asked? Did you ask it in my name?’ Lātu said in reply, ‘No, I did not take your name.’ ‘Then?’ ‘I said, “Will you kindly give me a picture of Lord Gauranga?”’ ‘Did you say like that? How did Rām react?’ ‘He said, “Go and ask your mother (Rāmabābu’s wife).”’ Master was full of joy and

praised Lātu; but he warned him not to ask anything of anybody in his name.

A fourth incident: Lātu was sent to Sarat Maharaj’s house. Sarat’s mother would not let Lātu go without taking his lunch. Lātu returned to Dakshineswar quite late, in the afternoon. The Master asked him if he took his noonday meal or was fasting. Lātu said, ‘Sarat’s mother gave me quite a heavy meal. Hence this delay. She is a first class cook. She prepared such a nice *chachchadi*¹, I had never before tasted such a dish.’

Master: ‘Is it so? And you took such a dish all alone? Did not bring any for me?’

Lātu flushed in shame and hung his head down. Seeing him in that condition the Master added, ‘Do one thing. Tomorrow go to Sarat’s house a little earlier, get *chachchadi* prepared by his mother. and bring it for me.’

Are we to suppose that the Master who had thoroughly conquered all desires felt tempted to take *chachchadi*? It appears to us that he wanted to teach Lātu the true spirit of service.

‘Do unto others as you want to be done by.’ One is to serve the Lord with, what one feels, best things. In order to make Lātu understand this, he was made to walk six miles, come to Sarat’s mother, bring *chachchadi* from her and offer it to the Master. The Master, who naturally extols others’ qualities, tasted the dish and said, ‘You are perfectly right, my boy; I too had never tasted such *chachchadi*. Sarat’s mother must be a pure heart; or else she could not have prepared such nice dishes.’

Fifth incident: This day Lātu presented a bouquet of fresh flowers to the Master. He got it from a Brāhmo devotee. The Master admiringly looked at it and said, ‘Anything that turns man’s mind towards the Lord is a fit present for a *sādhu* (holy man).’ Saying this much he went into ecstasy.

Sixth incident: In those days Holy Mother (Sri Sarada Devi, Sri Ramakrishna’s consort) used to stay in the Nahabat (concert room) to the north-east of the Kali temple. Her modesty was so exceptional that although she

¹ A Bengali curry preparation.

had been living there for so many months, in a room so close to the Master's, none of the devotees could ever see her, many did not know of her existence at all. Golap Mā and other women disciples of the Master had not as yet come to Dakshineswar. Holy Mother was passing her lonely days, all to herself. One day the Master saw Lātu meditating, on the bank of the Ganges, motionless as a log. He called him aloud and said, 'Fool, little do you know that the very object of your meditation is inside the Nahabat; and she is not getting an assistant to knead the dough for *chapati*.' Lātu flushed and looked small. One thing here is rather odd. The Master had never before asked Lātu to serve Mother. When today he was asked quite unexpectedly to serve her he regarded himself blessed and with quick steps appeared at the door of the Nahabat along with the Master. The Master addressed the Holy Mother and said, 'This boy is pure in heart; he will knead the dough, roll *chapatis* and do other chores for you.' The incident throws light on two things — how the Master was taking Lātu up through the path of service and how the boy Lātu had already purified himself sufficiently by 1881 so as to be able to serve the Holy Mother. There is a third hint in it. The Master showed Lātu that one who would tread the path of service should not only serve the Master wholeheartedly but devote himself to the services of the dear ones of the Master too.

Later on when he was living in Vāraṇasi he referred to this incident and said, 'Ah! We cannot conceive of the difficulties Mother had to pass through during those days. In that too small a room she passed months and years; nobody knew this. When she used to take her bath in the Ganges no one knew. I have never seen one so seized with the passion for dispassion. How blessed am I that the Master took me to her who made my life fruitful! To serve her? What could I do? On the contrary it was she who bound me down with love celestial. She had nothing to expect of us; it was through her grace that we obtained her for a mother.'

All the above incidents took place in 1881; the following were in 1882.

One night when Lātu was fanning the Master he was dozing — the poor boy had worked hard throughout the day. His great love for Sri Ramakrishna would not allow him to spare himself. The Master smiled and said, 'Lātu, can you tell me, my boy, if the Lord ever sleeps?'

Lātu was taken aback. Surprise writ large on his face, he said, 'I don't know.'

The Master replied gravely, 'My boy, all go to sleep; in the whole world of creatures all are subject to sleep: Only the Lord cannot sleep. If he does there will be darkness throughout the world; it will be destroyed. Day and night He is wide awake and is serving His creatures. Because He serves thus unceasingly it is that the creatures can sleep so confidently.' At this Lātu said, 'What, the Lord serves His creatures without a break, and the creatures sleep, having accepted His service?' The Master: 'Exactly, He lulls creatures to sleep and Himself keeps awake watching over them.'

What took place later Lātu Maharaj did not tell us. Something too grave must have taken place. For, just telling us this much he became unusually grave and stopped talking. A scene, too intimate, too sacred must have flashed before his mind's eye, which made his figure sweet and sad. The devotee waited three long hours, expecting the silence to break. At last, baffled but not disappointed, he left Lātu Maharaj to enjoy his sweet reminiscences.

* * *

Lātu accompanied the Master wherever he went; he used to carry his things of hourly needs. Once he forgot to take these things and accompanied the Master to the house of a devotee. Reaching there Lātu remembered what he had done and brought it to the notice of the Master. The Master, however, did not spare him. He took him to task and said, 'Hallo Lātu, are you so forgetful as that? Things of hourly needs—even such things you have forgotten to bring! Look at me. Every

now and then I am carried away by divine fervour, so much so that I cannot properly take care of the cloth I am wearing. Even then I never forget to bring those things. If you forget like that how can we . . . ?' The Master did not complete the sentence. Lātu's eyes were brimming with tears, the boy was trembling. Rāmabābu was sitting in front. Lātu helpless, looked at him and said, 'I will never forget like that. Please ask him' The boy could not complete the sentence, emotion choked his voice, he broke down.

Most of the devotees present never saw the Master in such a grave mood. They could not take it lightly. A couple of minutes passed by. Rāmabābu and Manomohanbābu recovered themselves and earnestly interceded in favour of Lātu. The Master cooled down and forgave Lātu for the time.

* * *

Lātu has accompanied Sri Ramakrishna to the house of Jñāna Chowdhury. Many devotees, including Pandit Gauri² of Indesh, are present. This is Lātu's first acquaintance with the Pandit. Lātu got a very valuable instruction from him which he narrated as follows : 'Do you know what the Pandit told me ? "There is a good deal of difference between knowledge acquired by study of books and one got by actual experience. One cannot get rid of one's ignorance by study. As long as the Lord's light does not descend on a man he cannot have true knowledge. When that light comes all darkness disappears ; what the Reality is in Itself is revealed."'

(To be continued)

² Pandit Gauri was the first among the Pandits who accepted Sri Ramakrishna as an Incarnation of God. And the Master showed his grace to him by taking away his occult powers which made him invincible in all discussions, but were proving an impediment to his spiritual progress.

GAUTAMA BUDDHA

BHUPENDRA NATH SARKAR

The great Buddha in the words of Dr S. Radhakrishnan, typifies for all time the soul of the East with its intense repose, dreamy gentleness, tender calm and deep love. Buddha has nothing but warm admiration for the prophet of the soul, the true Brahmin, who was required to say, 'Silver and gold have I none.' It was his privilege to start a religion independent of dogma and priesthood, sacrifice and sacrament, which would insist on an inward change of heart and a system of self-culture. That Buddhism is alien to Hinduism has been repudiated by the great master himself, who admits that the dharma which he has discovered by an effort of self-culture is the ancient way, the Aryan path, the eternal dharma. Buddhism, one may say, is a return of Brahmanism to its own fundamental principles.

Early monastic Buddhism is akin to our yoga practices. We are supported in our contention by Dr. Nalinaksa Datta and Sri Tarak Chandra Ray. The artificial aids taken by an adept are mainly : (i) *ganana*, i.e. counting, which is not to exceed ten ; (ii) *anubandhana*, i.e., following the course in its three stages viz., beginning, middle and end ; and (iii) *khusana*, i.e., watching the points of contact ; navel, heart and nose-tip. By these aids the adept soon acquires the *patibhaganimitta* (concept) and develops *appana* (fixation of the mind) and in some cases the body of the adept becomes so light as to rise up in the air (*kumbhaka* of the yogis). At this stage the external inhalation and exhalation cease, but there is internal inhalation (*prāṇāyāma*), to which then the adept's mind is directed. He should sit cross-legged, keeping

MEMOIRS OF SWAMI ADBHUTANANDA

(Lātu Maharaj)

(A free translation of the Bengali book, *Smritikatha*)

Chapter X (continued)

Since 1882 the devotees have been celebrating the Master's birthday. All expenses were borne by them, especially by Suresh Mitra and Rama Datta. On this occasion, as afterwards, Lātu had no end of works. After the hard day's labour, when Lātu was about to take a little rest Manmohan Babu sent him on a chare. He finished that gladly and quickly. That was hardly done when Sri Ramakrishna asked him to go to a devotee's house. The devotee could not come, due to pressure of work, to join in the celebration. So the gracious Master sent consecrated food to the devotee through Lātu. Even this did not irritate Lātu. He came to the devotee's house but did not return that night to Dakshineswar. He spent the night there. We record below the conversation Lātu had with Narendranath the next day :

Narendra : 'I find you so early in Calcutta, how is that? When did you come? How is the Master?'

Lātu : 'Yesterday we had a nice celebration there. Why did you not go there? He inquired of you many times. Let us go there together. He wants to meet you.'

Narendra : 'I have no time to go there now. My examination is drawing near. Can I afford to waste time in the company of that madcap of a Brahmin?'

Lātu (a little surprised) : 'Whom are you referring to as a madcap? The Master, I am sure, is not the target. For who else but he can keep his head cool under all circumstances?'

Narendra : 'Yes, Yes, I know all that. He is so cool-headed as not to be able to take care of the cloth around his waist; with a little surge of emotion his hands and legs bend and twist; if anyone utters the Lord's name he starts dancing violently; he goes to

all places, among ladies and gentlemen bare-bodied; he has no sense of self-respect. Then again there is jugglery in him; one he hypnotizes, another he mesmerizes; so on and so forth.' Then all on a sudden Narendra changed his tone and said softly, 'Well, you stay with him day and night. Is he always found surcharged with divine fervour? Does he not sleep at night?'

Lātu : 'I have been with him day and night over this long period. But I have never seen him behaving improperly or hypnotizing or mesmerizing anybody. If you have heard anything like that it is all misrepresentation. I have stayed with him over months. I have never heard anyone dubbing him as a madcap. On the contrary, many big folks are nowadays coming to him. The other day Keshab Sen came, and that other gentleman with a long flowing beard. That day he held a long conversation with Keshab Babu.'

Naren : 'Can you tell me what the topic was?'

Lātu : 'That day Master conversed on meditation and contemplation on God. That day he praised you highly. Keshab Babu also talked about many things.'

Naren changed the topic and asked Lātu, 'Well, tell me if Rākhāl goes there or not.'

Lātu : 'Yes, he goes there. Even passes one or two nights in his company. Master loves him dearly. He makes him sit close to him and feeds him and cuts jokes with him. The other day he took him to Mother and said, "Here is your child, accept him, please." Mother too was very glad. Master gave us sweets to eat.'

Naren : 'He spoke of Rākhāl as his child?'

Lātu : 'True. I have heard it myself.'

We heard this conversation from the lips of Mahendra Datta, Narendra's second brother.

* * *

One day, lunch over, Sri Ramakrishna asked Rākhāl, his spiritual child, to prepare a betel-roll for him. He said, 'Rākhāl dear, there is not one betel-roll left; do go and prepare some for me.' Rākhāl replied, 'I do not know how to prepare rolls.' Master:

How strange! To prepare betel-rolls — does one undergo apprenticeship to learn it? Go, prepare some and bring them here.' Still Rākhāl showed no sign of making a move. Lātu got annoyed at this. Rākhāl took no notice of his annoyance. On the contrary, as if to tease him all the more he again and again disobeyed Sri Ramakrishna. Lātu's patience was taxed. In the presence of the Master he told Rākhāl, 'What are you doing, Rākhāl Babu? Should one speak to him that way? Will you not carry out his orders? And you are arguing with him? You are not showing good manners.' These angry words of Lātu fanned Rākhāl's ire, and he blurted out, 'If thou thinkest like that why dost thou not go and do it thyself. I will not do it. I have never done it in my life. Today I am not going to do it; no, not even at his request.'

At this Lātu's anger reached a high pitch and he went on saying inarticulately many things in his half-Bengali and half-Hindi language.

The Master was enjoying the scene and in order to share it with his nephew Ramalāl, called him there. When he arrived there the Master said laughingly, 'Just see the fight between the two. Well, tell me who is a greater devotee — Rākhāl or Lātu?' Ramalāldādā understood the joke and said, 'I think Rākhāl is the superior of the two.'

This remark of Ramalāl's threw Lātu into a paroxysm of rage and he stammered out, 'Ah! what a judgment? He disobeyed the Master, and he is a greater devotee!'

These angry words made the Master laugh and he said, 'You are right, Ramalāl. Yes, Rākhāl's devotion ranks higher. Just see how he is smiling and talking.' And pointing to-

wards Lātu he added, 'And how terribly angry he is! A real devotee — can he show anger before the Lord? Anger is Satanic. Anger makes love and devotion take wing.'

Lātu was cut to the quick. He shrivelled up like a leach thrown into lime. Hearing those words of the Master, he was seized simultaneously with shame and pique, and with pathetic eyes dropping tears, said 'I will never again show anger before you. Please excuse me this time.'

Seeing tears trickling down Lātu's cheeks Master said, by way of consolation, 'You know, my boy, Rākhāl is right. (Showing his body he said) This fellow (i.e. the individual called Ramakrishna) felt a desire for chewing betel. So it was possible for Rākhāl to disobey. If the One that is inside that (viz. the Lord) felt like that Rākhāl would not have the guts to say "no".' Anyway, Lātu was at last asked to prepare the betel-roll. We heard this story, from beginning to end from Ramalāldādā.

Later on the remarks that Lātu Mahār passed on this incident throws a flood of light on the insight of the Master. Said he 'You know, Rākhāl was to be our sovereign. So the Master would not ask Rākhāl to do small chores.' Let us record in this connexion another incident in Rākhāl's life. One day Rākhāl was asked to anoint oil to the Master's body, Rākhāl took the phial of oil in his hand all right. But something crossed his mind. All on a sudden he got down from the verandah and started walking away. We heard the Master say, 'You want to go? Let me see how you can.' Rākhāl made for the gate straight, reached it, stopped as suddenly as he ran back to him. Master asked, 'How now? Can you go away?' Rākhāl started weeping.

* * *

Pratap Chandra Hazra hailed from a village adjacent to Sri Ramakrishna's native village, Kamarpukur, and was known to him. He came to Dakshineswar in 1882 and stayed there for a long time. He was a sādhak too. But his ideas about religion were those of a common orthodox Hindu. According

him religion consisted of worship, counting beads, putting on marks of sandal paste on the forehead, and the like. And, one who does not do these cannot be called a religious man. Hazra found that the Master practised none of these. So one day he proceeded to give him advice gratis and said, 'Well Gaddhar, you should not conduct yourself that way. If you go on like that you will lose all respect people are showing you now. If not for anything else, at least to please people, you can take the rosary and like me count beads. So many people come to you, if they see you doing *japa* they will know you are doing something and are not a vagabond.'

The Master laughed out, and calling Lātu, Harish, Gopal, Ramalālā and others, said, 'Have you heard what Hazra says? He is asking me to count beads. But now I cannot do all these. He says if people do not see me observing these conventions they will cease respecting me. What do you say to that? Is he right?'

Hearing this the Master's attendants got wild. Harish said, 'Please don't pay any heed to his words. He comes from a village and his intellect smacks of rusticity.'

Master : 'Don't say like that. Who knows if Mother is not speaking through his mouth?'

Harish : 'What do you talk, Sir? As if Mother could not get a better man to convey Her message to You!'

Master : 'No, no, you don't know. Mother does teach man in that way.'

In this talk what struck Lātu most was 'Mother does teach in that way.' For in later days how often did we not hear him repeat *verbatim* this incident with emphasis on that sentence!

We would like to digress here a little to give an idea of what Lātu Maharaj thought about this queer personality that was Hazra. Lātu Maharaj used to say 'The angularities of Hazra were not rounded. While counting beads he would think of worldly affairs. On account of this, he could not make much progress. But he contracted Brother Naren's friendship and that gave him salvation. . . .

After the Master's passing away he took it into his head that he was an Incarnation of God, even one greater than the Master. . . . One day it so happened that Hazra felt a desire to massage the Master's feet. When he proceeded to do it the Master withdrew his legs. He was piqued. He went out and sat with a long face. At last the Master called him in and allowed him to massage his feet. That was the only occasion when he served the Master. . . . One day Hazra had a strong desire to give religious instructions to people. Whoever came to Dakshineswar that day was called by him to sit down and hear his discourse. He said, "Ramakrishna is not in the garden. What do you gain by going to him? Come and sit down and listen to me." But what was strange not one sat near him. Only one wanted to sit. Him also the Master beckoned to come away. How deeply did Hazra feel it! . . . Hazra and brother Naren were chums, so to say. He prepared tobacco for Naren, and engaged himself in discussions with him. Brother Naren would say jokingly, "You are not an ordinary man, I see. You have reached the goal of life. I have seen very few people counting beads like you. And what a rosary you have? How big are the beads, how shining? I do not know of a greater man of realization than you." Hearing this he became all the more egotistic. He would say to us, "What would you understand of me? Your Naren is the only one who has understood me correctly. Even your Ramakrishna could not understand my greatness." Such was his egotism. This is how man falls from religious eminence. . . . Hazra used to repeat *Soham* and count beads. He was given to much argumentation. Hence the Master warned us against mixing too much with him. He would say, "He wants to preach views contradictory to ours. Don't go to him. Yours is the path of devotion, his of dry intellect. What would you do with that?" . . . One day Hazra danced during devotional singing. Naren made fun of that.'

(To be continued)

MEMOIRS OF SWAMI ADBHUTANANDA

(Lātu Maharaj)

(A free translation of the Bengali book, *Smritikatha*)

(Continued from the July issue)

1882

The Master, accompanied by Lātu, had come to Balaram Babu's residence. This was the first time that Lātu had come to Balaram's. Balaram Babu used to dress himself like a Sikh, with a big turban. So it was but natural for Lātu to mistake him. He said: 'Look here. When I first saw him I could not take him as a Bengali. He did not wear dhoti and chaddar as the Bengalis do. He had a long stick in hand, a big turban on the head and a long flowing overcoat-like thing, covering his entire body. He grew a long beard, but he was very lean and thin. We had to go to him very often.'

Now let us narrate what Lātu Maharaj said of this gentleman. We string together in a narrative what we had heard from Lātu Maharaj on different occasions.

'The Master used to say, "It (Balaram's house) is our Baghbazar fortress." Daily worship of Lord Jagannātha was regularly performed there; so he (the Master) regarded the food at Balaram's as very pure. There was a sort of miniature car festival in his house. He used to feed the devotees on such occasions very devotedly. He (Balaram) used to keep account of the Master's visits to his house. I have heard it said that it numbered as much as a hundred times. . . . Balaram now and then visited Dakshineswar. Master said, "Balaram belonged to Lord Gauranga's inner circle people," — the Master saw him in Lord Gauranga's company of *sankirtan* singers (in a vision). . . . Balaram used to take the Master to the *zenana* (inner apartments). His brother, Harivallabh Babu did not like it — they (the ladies of the house) observed *pardāh*. Our Girish Babu was intimate with Harivallabh.

He came to know of this and once called Harivallabh to meet the Master when the latter was there. Harivallabh came and took his seat in front of the Master. Can you guess what happened? Both of them shed profuse tears. There was no talk, mere weeping. I could not understand anything. Later, once I went to Cuttack to know this. But Harivallabh Babu kept it to himself. Balaram Babu used to feed the Master's devotees, for which he saved money by curtailing other expenses. His relatives used to call him miserly — how would they know his purpose? I had no idea of how rich he was. One day I saw him occupying a bed that appeared to me to be too narrow and too scanty. I told him, "This bed, Sir, is too short for you, please make a better one." Do you know what he said in reply? He said, "Of earth this body is made and down will it go to earth. But the money thus saved will be utilized in serving the *sādhus*." I was stunned. How great was his desire to serve *sādhus* can be well guessed from this spontaneous reply of his. . . . His daughter's marriage was celebrated with great *eclat*. He had no intention to spend so much for it. He used to say, "to feed one's relatives is as good as feeding ghosts", quite a useless affair. At last he pressed Yogin, to take something. When he did it, Balaram Babu was satisfied. I heard it from Brother Yogin that Balaram Babu told him, "Today I have spent so much on provisions but my heart is crying. If you take something of it I will be gratified." Brother Yogin had to yield. . . . He used to love us very dearly. I stayed long in his house. Many of our brother monks used to visit his house. Rākhāl, Sarat, Yogin, Tārak, Mahim, Kālī — they were almost the daily visitors to his

house. And he used to mix with them very intimately.'

'One day Balaram Babu hired a carriage for the Master from Baghbazar to Dakshineswar at twelve annas only — it was so cheap. But the Master had to undergo many difficulties. At one place one wheel got detached from the carriage. And the horses played mischief. If they were whipped they galloped off and when the smacking stopped the horses stopped moving also. In this way, when he reached Dakshineswar it was very late at night. The Master used to crack jokes over this incident.'

Another incident : 'Balaram Babu invited many of us to lunch. Rākhāl was there too. It was getting inordinately late and Rākhāl fell asleep. All of us finished our meal, Rākhāl was still sleeping. At this the Master told a story : "Once a man came to witness a theatrical performance. He brought a mat under his arm-pit. He found out that it would take some time before the performance would start. So he spread the mat and fell into a deep sleep. When he woke up he found everything was over and the people were all gone. He felt sorry that he could not witness such an interesting play. What would he tell his people when he reached home? So he questioned people about the subject of the play and gathered all relevant information about the performance, and started talking to people about the quality of the play. Emboldened he talked even to them who saw the fellow snoring all the while the play was going on. They said, 'Fellow don't brag. Have we not seen you snoring throughout? When did you see it?' The fellow got angry and said, 'A rascal alone would say like that.' Blows followed words."

A devotee : 'What does the story signify, Maharaj?'

Lātu Maharaj : 'Ah simpleton? Don't you understand this? You have read so much and you do not understand this simple thing?'

Devotee : 'No Maharaj, we have failed to understand it.'

Lātu Maharaj : 'He narrated the story

referring to his children. "You have come here to this world to witness the Lord's sport. Don't fall asleep. Be ever wakeful in the practice of religion. Without an all-out attempt to realize the Lord you will not enjoy the fun of the sport. Quarrels will ensue. One will say 'The Lord is like this' another 'No, He is like that'. And then they will come to blows. Do you not see what shiploads of theories about the Lord come out in print every day? And what a noise over them! But those who have practised religion and have realized the Lord have no quarrels. All of them say the same thing, sing the same note. All quarrels are among the followers of the founders of religion. It is they who twist and torture their words and passages."'

Lātu Maharaj was an eye-witness of many events that occurred in Balaram's house. We narrate below just a few of them. It was here that Lātu saw Rākhāl Maharaj dancing in ecstasy for the first time. It was here he saw Avadhūta Nityagopal standing transfixed in ecstasy for hours together when Sri Ramakrishna brought him back to normal consciousness. It was here that the Master shed tears for the first time hearing Naren's songs. It was here that Lātu heard Master saying to a Tantric that there were such worthless persons who could never cast away doubts about their *gurus*. If you want to be a disciple of somebody you should have faith in what he says, whatever might be the quality of the *guru*. Again about the Tantric practices he said : 'Now-a-days in this Kali Yuga these Tantric practices are beset with dangers. It is not for anybody and everybody to start practising them. Tantric practices are for the brave alone, for people who have absolute self-control. Those alone who are pure in heart succeed in these practices.' It was here again that the Master saw Girish Babu for the first time. Tulsi Maharaj also came in contact with the Master for the first time here. Younger Naren, Harinath and many others did the same here.

1882

The attendant Lātu had accompanied the Master to the house of the devotee, Prāṇakrishna Mukherji, whom the Master called 'the fat Brahmin'. Prāṇakrishna used to visit Dakshineswar very often, and would invite the Master to his house now and then and celebrate the occasions with devotional music and feasts. The peculiarity of these celebrations was that Lātu, unlike those in other houses, had not to work hard or at all. At Adhar Sen's house also Lātu was free and could enjoy the Master's talks. It was at this 'fat Brahmin's' house that Lātu could have an intimate talk with Bāburām (Swami Premananda) for the first time. About a week prior to it Bāburām had come to Dakshineswar, but Lātu, busy with the multifarious duties, could not get acquainted with him. Lātu Maharaj narrated the incident thus: 'It was at his (Prāṇakrishna's) house that I and Bāburām of Āntpur got acquainted. Bāburām was then very young, fair-complexioned and beautiful, though a little thin. The Master loved him dearly. I have heard, his mother made a gift of the boy to the Master. How wonderful! A mother can part with everything but her child! But look at this lady's greatness. She handed over her child to the Master for the child's spiritual enlightenment. It is a great good fortune to get such a mother. Do you think a mother like that is an ordinary lady — one who can bless the child and say "Be a monk and attain God" and part with him? She has herself attained salvation, to be sure. Such mothers do not like that their children should suffer the pangs of a worldly life. They think, "Let us suffer, let the children be free."'

Now let us return to what Lātu heard the Master say at Prāṇakrishna Babu's house. 'There I heard the Master say, "A servant of the Lord should be very watchful over lust, anger and greed. Look at Mahavira (Hanuman). Under the influence of anger what a ghastly act did he not do — he burnt the capital Lanka, almost to ashes with the fire of his tail! Anger is such a horrible thing." He (Master) used to say, "What can he not do,

one who has practised self-control?" Often did we hear him say, "Never allow any latitude to lust, anger and greed," and would add, "But the rascals are tenacious, would not leave man easily. So the best way to deal with them is to turn them so as to be helpful in the realization of God. For example: say to lust, 'Fellow, don't leave me, do one thing. You want fullest communion with one. Isn't it? Commune with the Lord, who is the most beautiful, most lovable.' Tell anger, 'Look here, show your strength by restraining the desire for "woman and gold". There demonstrate what power and fury you possess.' When such desires would come to you thunder out so that those mean fellows might take to their heels, and leave you alone. Similarly when greed will assail you, say, 'Comrade, you are most welcome. But why crave for petty things? Run after the Lord whose powers and treasures are infinite. He is the fittest object of your attainment.'"

'One story about the "fat-Brahmin". That day, the audience was a little more. Some were praising the "fat Brahmin". The Master enjoyed their conversation for a while and then said, "what wonder is there that he would cherish such love and regard for me? I have greased his palm." Bewildered, they at once looked at him. The Master smiled and said, "You know I blessed him and he had a child. Since then he started inviting me and celebrating the occasions with festivities." Referring to this, the Master said he bribed Prāṇakrishna.'

A devotee: 'Is it not very strange that the Master who had himself renounced "woman and gold" would pray for somebody else's son?'

Lātu Maharaj: 'What of that? What harm is there to pray like that? The purpose of creation is to know the creator. If getting a son one calls on God — and it is quite possible — is not one benefited thereby?'

The devotee: 'We are married people. Why cannot we call on God? Most of our difficulties are because of having a large number of children. That is why we cannot call on God.'

Lātu Maharaj : ‘Yes, that is true in cases like yours. But that is because you are too engrossed in worldly matters to remember God. If, however, you train up the whole family, children and all, and call on Him along with them all your difficulties will vanish, and the children will also be blessed.’

Another devotee : ‘Maharaj, you are a monk, you will not understand where the shoe pinches. How hopelessly involved we become with our children and grandchildren you cannot conceive of. I sit for meditation and a child starts crying. I start praying, another child cries out “Pa food, hunger”. I open the Gita, at once a third asks me to help him with his lesson. Am taking a little rest, wife orders to catch the baby. Even when sleeping, we are not free ; a child cries out, “Pa, piss”. Now tell me, Maharaj, with all these obstacles, how can we call on the Lord?’

Hearing all these, Lātu Maharaj said, ‘Well, there’s a difference between your household and that of the ‘fat Brahmin’. He was so rich, a Zamindar. People like him are not to bother themselves for bringing up their children, they engage nurses. Our Master played that trick to bring him round to God. He blessed him so that he may have a child, and out of gratitude he turned towards God.’

The devotee : ‘Maharaj, the Lord alone understands His sports. We don’t.’

Lātu Maharaj : ‘How would you? First engage yourself in spiritual practices ; then you will understand everything — what are the obstacles in one’s spiritual path, how will they be removed, and all that.’

During his apprenticeship as a servant of the Lord, Lātu Maharaj learnt many lessons. Below is an instance of his idea about holy places, which he learnt from the Master : ‘When one visits a holy place one must hear its history, how the place was made holy, what special manifestation of divine grace occurred there. As one hears these stories one’s mind gets attached to the Lord and the heart overflows with love divine. And when you go to such places you should perform certain duties enjoined by the scriptures. To pass a few

nights at a place of pilgrimage is as meritorious as keeping company of holy men. These places are meant for performing spiritual practices — prayer, meditation, austerities. Whoever engage themselves in these practices are rewarded with quick results — the atmosphere is so favourable.’

We then come to the topic of Vidyasagar. Lātu Maharaj heard high praises of Vidyasagar from the Master, and his heart purified by his service to the Master, got so much attached to Vidyasagar that he waited several days on the street in front of the college, that bears his name now, to have a glimpse of his face. Not only that, whenever Lātu Maharaj would come to Calcutta he would make it a point to see Vidyasagar once. After waiting for several days when, at last, he succeeded, in seeing Vidyasagar he saluted him in all humility but did not talk to him. We quote Lātu Maharaj’s own words :

“When he met Vidyasagar, Master said, ‘At long last I have come to the ocean.’ Do you know what Vidyasagar’s quip was? ‘Then take some saline water from it’ — was his reply. Master’s repartee went one step higher. Said he, “Dear Sir, it is not an ocean of saline water that I have come to, but an ocean of nectar. You are an ocean of learning, of knowledge, not of ignorance’ . . . I used to sit by the wayside to catch a glimpse of Vidyasagar — many days passed but I could not succeed. Luckily one day I saw him. Know for certain that the sight of such persons imparts merit. Very rare are persons so charitably disposed as he. In this Iron Age charity is the greatest virtue. He practised this virtue to the utmost. Is it any wonder that he transcended all weaknesses? . . . During his life time many did not understand him, consequently they called him an atheist. In fact he was not. Master used to say ‘He is a worshipper of the Vast’. What kindness to the poor and the uncared for! How secretly did he help them! No one could know about his charitable deeds. . . . Look here. There was no trace of egotism in him. Just imitate that. He was such a great scholar, so rich ; his social position was so

high. Name and fame, power and position, wealth and scholarship, which man aspires for, he had in abundance. And with all that how freely did he use to mix with all and sundry, how his purse remained open for the poor and the needy! Nobody ever heard him speak about his charity. If somebody would speak ill of him he would say to him, 'Dear Sir, did I ever do a good turn to you? It is but natural for you to speak like that.'

"One day Sri Ramakrishna narrated an incident from Vidyasagar's life. During those days he brought a veritable hornet's nest about his ears by his advocacy of widow re-marriage. He was sitting and leisurely smoking in a grocer's shop when there came a Brahmin pundit, who engaged himself in a random talk with the Vidyasagar. He did not know that the person to whom he was talking was none other than Vidyasagar himself. In the course of the talk the topic of widow re-marriage cropped up and the pundit was beside himself in rage and went on abusing him in filthy language. Among other things he said, 'if ever I happen to meet him I would beat him to death.' Vidyasagar maintained his smile in spite of the provocation and quietly asked if he knew Vidyasagar. Just mark his patience and good nature. Can you do like that? If you give a penny you make the market hot with trumpeting. And look at his charity. He gave so much and his left hand did not know what his right was doing. He was indeed a divine personality, eh! Our Master used to say, 'In the next birth he will come with even greater powers . . .' What do you know of the sorrows of widows? He understood it, felt it very deeply; and gave such a tough fight for it that even the Viceroy had to intervene in his favour! And what would you have done? At best you would have shed a few idle tears. There the matter would have rested . . . You talk of charity? Ancestral money is squandered in the name of charity to get high-sounding titles from the government. But to earn honestly and then to give unstintedly is rare indeed!

Blessed is he who does it. (The person Lātu Maharaj was talking to was himself a trustee of a big estate.) . . . Vidyasagar, Keshav Chandra Sen, Vijaya Goswami, Mahendra Sarkar — they are not fools. All of them were great scholars. They all recognized the greatness of our Master; they honoured him highly. They did it not for nothing, they must have been struck with something unique in him. Men respect noble qualities wherever they see them manifest. Vidyasagar had another great quality. He held his mother in high esteem. It was his mother's blessings that brought him success in every one of his undertakings. One who does not revere one's mother is not worth a penny. Do you think such a man will ever realize God? One who fails to obey his mother will fail also to carry out the orders of his guru. How would there be progress in his spiritual life? Citing Vidyasagar as a shining example of charity he (Sri Ramakrishna) taught a good lesson to the heads of Indian monasteries. He said, 'Just look at this wonderful householder (Vidyasagar), his renunciation and service. He gave away all his hard-earned money. And you are all sannyasins, you cannot give up the hoarding propensity?'"

We have heard from Lātu Maharaj, while he was living at the Balaram Mandir, that the Master went to attend the great celebration at Sinthi in the year he first paid his visit to Vidyasagar. From this we conclude the time of this visit to be the year 1882. We can cite another incident to corroborate this statement. In a talk the Master said that he saw Acharya Shivanath Shastri for the first time at this celebration. From M's record in the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* we know that our Master attended the Sinthi celebration on October 28, 1882.

Lātu Maharaj: 'Keshav Babu and his party used to celebrate their annual function in the company of the Master with great pomp at the garden at Sinthi. Great personages used to be invited.'

(To be continued)

MEMOIRS OF SWAMI ADBHUTANANDA

(Lātu Maharaj)

(A free translation of the Bengali book *Smritikatha*)

(Continued from the previous issue)

“It was there, at Sinthi, that I saw your Acharya for the first time. Master loved him dearly and used to say, ‘If a hemp-smoker sees another hemp-smoker both become exceedingly glad; when I meet you I am as glad as that.’ But Shivanath Shastri used to avoid him. . . . One day he was to come but he did not turn up. Do you know what was the Master’s remark on this? ‘He said he would come but he did not act up to his word. This is bad indeed. To break one’s promise! In this Iron Age to speak the truth is the greatest austerity. One who is not strict in the matter of telling the truth can never reach God. Slackness in this respect spoils spiritual progress outright.’ One day the Master asked Shivanath, ‘Well Sir, is it a fact that you told somebody that I have become mad? Day and night you think of nothing else but worldly things and you have kept your brain all right; and I, who think of God alone, have gone off my head! What logic is this?’ Still he must be regarded as above the common run of men. In the midst of his multifarious duties he stuck to God. Very few indeed can do it.”

Beni Babu used to have such functions twice a year; and every time he used to invite the Master. There used to be prayer meetings and congregational singing of devotional songs. Lātu Maharaj accompanied the Master to this place thrice. At the end of one such function Beni Babu wanted to send a big basket of sweets with the Master for Rāmlāldā. The Master following the sannyasin’s principle of improvidence, refused to take it. Undaunted, Beni Babu sent it through somebody. He truly loved the Master.

* * *

Now we come to 1883. Accompanied by Lātu, the Master went to Mani Mallick’s resi-

dence. The Master used to count Mani as one among his special devotees. “One day he said to Mani, ‘Look here. You are very calculating. A devotee’s attitude is something different. Whatever they earn they spend — of course in good cause — depending on the Lord for the morrow.’ Whenever Mani would come to Dakshineswar the first question the Master would ask him was how he came. This the Master did because from his residence Mani would come walking up to Garanhata — quite a good distance for a man of his social standing. From there he would share a hackney carriage with others and come to Baranagore, and then would walk the rest of the distance to Dakshineswar. The Master never forgot to have a funny dig at him by asking how he came. On summer days his face grew crimson. One day the Master told him, ‘Mani, why do you take so much pain quite unnecessarily? You could hire a carriage yourself and come.’ Do you know what he replied? He said ‘If I hire a carriage now, my descendants will like to have a carriage and four. Do you not say yourself, “Householders have to earn and lay by so that they may give in charity and bequeath to children and grandchildren, otherwise they will ~~course~~”?’ . . . Once Mani went on pilgrimage. Returning, he met the Master and narrated his experience in those places. In the course of his talk he remarked, ‘But *sadhus* are pests; they give a lot of trouble to the pilgrims by their insistent begging.’ At this the Master retorted, ‘What! How much do they want — a penny or two? That also do you grudge them! With such a mind one should not go on pilgrimage. Charity is an important part of such visits. *Sadhus* don’t earn themselves. So they ask of others. You will monopolize all the enjoy-

ments of the world, and they would be denied everything! Do you mean they would subsist on air only?' . . . There was a great scarcity of water in brother Rakhal's native village. The Master asked Mani to dig a tank there. . . . Mani Mallick lost a son. Coming direct from the cremation ground, he entered the Master's room and broke down. The Master sang a song, Mani's grief was much assuaged. . . . Mani used to spend a good amount in giving education to poor students. . . . The Master once said to him, 'In old age man should retire to a solitary place and engage himself in prayers and vigils. Then he will be rewarded with divine love.'

* * *

It was in the year 1883 Lātu came in contact with Adhar Chandra Sen, a great devotee of the Master. In later years Lātu Maharaj used to speak highly of Adhar. We collect them here :

"The Master used to take us to Adhar Babu's house in Beniatola, Shobhabazar, Calcutta. He used to call Adhar's house his parlour. Adhar Babu used to invite devotees very often to his house and hold celebrations there quite frequently. His mother too was a great devotee and used to send the seasonal fruits to Dakshineswar for the Master. You know the Master could not take gifts sent by anybody and everybody. But the Master used to hold as very pure, things sent from Adhar Babu's house. In one such celebration, Adharbabu forgot to invite Ramababu, who naturally took offence. Master came to know of it. He called Ram to him and said, 'You know, Ram, Rakhal was asked to invite all the devotees. And it was he who forgot to send you an invitation. He is but a boy. Will you take offence at his fault?' When, however, Adhar came to know of this omission he, a man of such a position, at once, came to Ramababu and apologized. Mark his lack of egoism! . . . Rakhal used to eat cooked rice at his house, at which some orthodox disciples remarked, 'Rakhal should not take cooked rice at a goldsmith's house.' The Master heard of it and said, 'What! Such a remark from a

devotee? Does he not know that devotees have no caste, that they form a class by themselves? Food at a devotee's house is very pure.' . . . There, at Adharbabu's house, I saw your novelist Bankim Chatterji for the first time. He had a long talk with the Master. He was a clever man and came to test the Master. Ultimately he had to admit defeat, and, while taking leave said, 'Sir, you will have to come to our house once.' But something happened and he did not send a formal invitation. So the Master did not visit his house. . . . For some time Adharbabu used to visit the Master every day. One day, do you know what he said? 'Tell me what occult powers you have.' Master laughed and said, 'You want to know my occult powers? Why, I put to slumber those Deputy Magistrates, (and Adhar was one) for fear of whom people shake in their shoes.' . . . He asked Adharbabu not to ride horses, but he did not heed it. He had a fall from the horse and died. When the news of his passing away reached the Master he said, 'One by one my parlours are being closed. This shows the owner also is to go now.' . . . Adharbabu used to invite great professional singers of devotional songs. It was in his house I heard first the songs of *Chandi*. I was charmed when Rajnarayana sang them. . . . Adhar used to send his carriage to take the Master to Kali-ghat. The Master used to enjoy the company of devotees of that place also. . . . Immediately after coming to Dakshineswar and prostrating at the feet of the Master, Adharbabu used to fall asleep. Many got annoyed at it. Do you know what the Master replied to their criticism? 'What do you know, you rogues? This is Mother's abode—abode of peace. They come here and sleep—they don't talk about worldly matters. Is that not a hundred times better? They get peace of mind.' "

* * *

1883. Today the devotees are celebrating Sri Ramakrishna's birthday. Last year the devotees celebrated it for the first time. (Lātu Maharaj did not give us any date. We affix it here according to the *Gospel of Sri Rama-*

Krishna by 'M' who has given a detailed description of it. For fear of repetition we would give below only what is not mentioned there).

'The Master asked me to bring some Ganges water for his bath. I brought only one bucket. He said that was enough. After taking bath, he went straight to Mother's temple; and we engaged ourselves in cooking. About 150 people were present. Manomohanbabu brought a band of Kirtanias from Konnagore. The Master joined them in singing and dancing. He asked us also to join. The place was the Panchavati. That day in the course of his talk he said, "What do you think? I am not merely a Sannyasin but the King of Sannyasins". The poor were fed that day with what remained.'

* * *

1883. 'One day Brother Rakhhal fell ill. Do you know what Master prescribed for him? Said he, "Rakhhal, do one thing. Take Jagannath's *prasad*. You will get cured." Rakhhal did it and lo! he was cured. Such is the miracle of Jagannath's *prasad*. You of little faith, you don't believe in this. The Master used to instruct us: "Before your meals, take a grain or two of Jagannath's *prasad*."'

* * *

1883. 'Suresh Mitra used to invite the Master and his devotees every year during the Annapurna Puja. Most probably the Master went there thrice. Suresh Babu used to pay great attention to the Master, but every time the Master and others had to wait until late into the night for partaking of *prasad*. So once the Master said, "Look here. None goes hungry when Mother Annapurna comes. That's true. But some get food in time, others very late. Very late at night. Those who get it in time think that Mother is gracious, those who do not get it in time think that they are deprived of Mother's grace. But know it for certain Mother is not partial; people understand Mother's grace according to their needs and intellect."'

* * *

1883. 'Look here. One Dashahara day the Master asked us to worship Mother Ganga. He said to Rakhhal, "Mother Ganga is truly a goddess. Today we will worship her." Brother Rakhhal did not then look upon her as a deity. Rakhhal expressed it frankly. In order to infuse faith in him the Master narrated an incident. One day as he was strolling on the bank of the river, he too was assailed with doubts if she was a goddess. At that moment he heard a continuous sound of blowing of a conch inside the river, but he could not see anything. When, however, the sound came nearer he saw a boy blowing a conch and walking ahead and a goddess following him. Then all doubts about the deityhood of Ganga permanently vanished from his mind. Brother Rakhhal, when he heard this, remained agape with wonder for some time and said, "We did not know all this; to us she was as good as a river, a stream of flowing water, and the boatmen dirty its waters." This annoyed the Master who said, "Beware, never dirty its waters." Since then never did anyone see Brother Rakhhal dirtying even the bank of Ganga.'

* * *

1883. 'That year I accompanied the Master to witness the famous celebration at Peneti (Panihat). Bhavanath, Rakhhal, myself and others went by Ramababu's carriage. Other devotees also went. It was there that I saw Navadvip Goswami for the first time. The Master joined him in *kirtana* (devotional singing and dancing). There we too—we who were accustomed to see the Master in *bhavasamadhis* (ecstasies) every now and then—got afraid at the intensity and duration of his ecstasies. His breathing stopped altogether. His face, eyes, chest, etc. became crimson, the palm of his hand too. Seeing him in such *bhavasamadhi* people made a rush towards him to get the dust of his feet; and it was a hard job for us to protect him against that rush. Everybody wanted to touch the Master and we would not allow it; but nobody would hear us. There was about to be a fracas. At this Ramababu told us aloud,

“Lātu, do allow them to touch him, let them be blessed.” But we could not lead ourselves to follow his instruction, for had we not seen him many times, groaning with pain when all kinds of people would touch him during *samadhi*? But Ramababu insisted; so we took the Master out of the crowd with great difficulty into the outer parlour of the building. But the crowd followed there too; people were mad. Ramababu saved the situation by collecting a handful of dust and getting it touched by the Master’s feet and distributing it to all. Then was it possible for us to give some relief to the Master... Next year too we went there, but this time, by boat. The Master asked if Mother (Holy Mother) would like to go also. She said, “No”. At this the Master was glad and praised her highly and said, “Had she gone there people would have criticized us. They would have said: Look there, the hamsa and hamsi, the monk and the nun. She has a fine intellect.” This time the Master sat with all

to partake of *prasad* and having taken it danced in glee raising both hands.’

‘At the close of the Vaishnava celebrations there was a custom to give some money to the Vaishnavas in recognition of their spiritual merits. Generally it was limited to a rupee or two. Once the authorities wanted to pay rupees five to the Master. He, of course, refused to take. But without his knowledge, they made Rakhal accept it. Rakhal purchased sweets and mangoes with the money and came to Dakshineswar with a big basket of fruit and sweets. The Master was naturally annoyed with him and said, “I had rejected it; Rakhal took the money, let him do whatever he likes with it. I have washed my hands off it.” And softening a little he turned to Rakhal and said, “You know, without my permission you should never accept anything from anyone. Acceptance of anything by you is as good as my accepting it. Beware of it. Birds and monks are not to hoard.”’

(To be continued)

WHAT IS MAYA ?

(Continued from page 417)

asked him to accompany him. The cobbler hesitated thinking that he would be a misfit, but the priest assured him that no one will know about his identity if he but kept silent. The cobbler agreed. At twilight, while the priest was sitting at prayers in the house of his disciple, another brahmana came and asked the priest’s servant, to bring his shoes. True to the behest of his master, he made no response though the brahmana repeated his orders. At last, getting annoyed, the brahmana angrily said: “Sirrah, why don’t you speak? Are you indeed a cobbler?” The cobbler hearing this, began to tremble with fear, and looking piteously at the priest, said: “O, venerable sir, I am found out. I dare not stay here any longer.” So saying he took to his heels. Just so, as soon as *Māyā* is recognized, she flies away.’

Māyā is powerful no doubt but it can be overcome, says the Vedantist, by those who take recourse to Brahman. Sri Krishna says in the *Gītā*, ‘This My divine *Māyā* composed of the *gunas* is very difficult to be crossed. Those who take refuge in Me alone can go beyond it.’⁸ Christ too said the same thing, ‘Come unto Me, ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.’ *Māyā*, therefore, can be transcended only by realizing the Lord, or Brahman, the true Reality. Until then whatever we may think or do we are still in *Māyā* and simple denying it would not help matters.

⁸ देवी ह्येषा गुणमयो मम माया दुरत्यया ।

मामेव ये प्रपद्यन्ते मायामेतां तरन्ति ते ॥

MEMOIRS OF SWAMI ADBHUTANANDA

(Lātu Maharaj)

(A free translation of the Bengali book, *Smritikatha*)

(Continued from the previous issue)

1883. 'About two months before the Durga puja once the Master took us to Jadu Mallick's residence at Pathuriaghata. Jadu Mallick was an old acquaintance of our Master. I saw him at his garden many times. There he started worshipping the deity Simhavahini. The Master, accompanied by us, went to see the Devi. After seeing the Divine Mother, the Master went to meet Jadu Mallick. Mallick, bare-bodied, was then lying flat on a marble-topped table. When he saw the Master, he said, with manifest joy, "Come, come, younger Bhattācharya. (He used to call the Master that way — elder Bhattācharya being Master's eldest brother, Sri Ramkumar.) Nowadays you are not to be seen this side, the Divine Mother has come, so you have come to see Her; that has reminded you of our existence." At this the Master, as if in a pique, replied, "What sort of man are you? Mother has come and you did not let us know of it?" Not to be defeated Jadu Babu retorted, "Look here younger Bhattācharya, don't play the rogue. I am yet to see one who keeps more news about Mother than you. It is only day before yesterday that Mother had come, and hardly had she settled Herself down than here you come. When did you give me time to send news to you?" Smiling, the Master said, "That is all right. Now bring Mother's *prasād* for me. Should I go away without taking anything here?" Jadu Babu, even in that lying posture, asked someone to bring *prasād*, which was immediately brought.

'The Master remained standing near the door, and the moment *prasād* was brought, he took it and went straight to the waiting carriage. He was about to get into the carriage, when Jadu Mallick said, "Would you not

meet my mother?" Hearing this the Master, standing there, cried out, "O Jadu's mother, where are you? Will you not give me a glass of water?" Hearing the Master's voice, Jadu's mother came downstairs; and the Master took the glass of water from her hand, sipped once and got into the carriage. When the carriage started the devotees of the Master complained, "Sir, you should not come to such rich people again. These people had not even the courtesy to ask you to sit down! Why should you come to such people to invite insults?" At this the Master laughed and said, "They are worldly people. Day and night they are mad after worldly affairs. That in the midst of it all they should worship 'Mother Universal' is itself something worth noting. You do not do even that much. Why should you bother whether they invited me to take a seat or not? You came to see the Goddess, you have done that. Moreover you have taken the *prasād*. Is that not enough? How are you to understand the workings of their minds? Have you come to see the owner of the house that you should feel insulted at his not offering seats to you?" The critics were all silenced. . . . In this way the Master used to test us. He would say, "If you want to be a *sādhu* kill your ego first. You must not mind honour or insult."

Lātu Maharaj told us many things about Jadu Mallick on different occasions and at different places. Some of these had occurred before Lātu Maharaj came to the Master. He had heard them from others and used to narrate them to us. We give them here :

'One day the Master told Jadu "Well Jadu, why do you keep yourself surrounded by a band of flatterers? Why do you keep

their company so often?" Jadu replied, "They come of good families. They cannot beg. They are here to get something by way of favour. Where will they go if I drive them away?" The Master said, "Still I say don't mix so much with them. You may come to trouble." Jadu replied, "Well, younger Bhattācharya, if one is to be worldly one has to be surrounded with a batch of flatterers too." . . . One day the Master said, "Jadu you have amassed enough for 'here', what have you laid by for the 'hereafter'?" Without turning a hair, Jadu said, "Why, you are there, younger Bhattācharya, to ferry us across. It is in that hope that I have driven away all anxiety about it. If you do not do that much who will again call you the Deliverer of the fallen? It will bring discredit to your name. Don't, don't forget me on the last day. . . ." Jadu Mallick had amassed a great fortune, still he wanted more money. One day the Master said, "How strange it is Jadu, you have hoarded so much still you want more!" He said, "Younger Bhattācharya, do you really think covetousness ever abates? Just as you cannot give up your longing for the Lord, even so a man of the world can never give up his desire for more wealth. Again, why should he give it up? You are mad after the Lord, I am mad after His plenitude." Hearing this the Master was exceedingly glad and said, "If you have understood it in sooth, you need have no worries Jadu; tell me, do you really believe it? Or is it just a cant?" Jadu said, "Is it unknown to you, younger Bhattācharya, that nobody could hide anything from you?" . . . One day the Master told him, "Well, Jadu dear, formerly you used to call on the Lord devotedly, what has happened to you that you become so absent-minded while taking His name?" Jadu's prompt answer was, "Ever since I saw you I don't feel like calling on the Lord. I feel when I take his name I cannot set my mind to worldly affairs. So I have become indifferent to Him and have concentrated my mind on earning wealth, on looking after worldly matters." Do you know what the Master said in reply to that? "Don't go

so far as that. What joy is there to go round and round with blinkers over one's eyes like the oilman's bullock?" Jadu's retort was, "The inexorable law of Karma. Can you deny it?" . . . One day Jadu's mother was feeding the Master in an inner apartment. Seeing it was getting late Devendra Majumdar was getting annoyed. At that time we were all called there for taking refreshments. When we returned I was surprised to see Devenbabu catching hold of the Master's feet and shedding profuse tears. A few days after I asked Devenbabu the reason for his sorrow. Devenbabu said, "Dear Lātu, what shall I say? Bad thoughts came to my mind. I doubted the Master's character. When we went inside to take our refreshments I saw Jadu's mother feeding our Master with her own hands and was being bathed in tears. That made me understand that her attitude towards the Lord (and our Master whom she looked upon as no other but the Lord Himself) was that of a mother towards her child. And my wicked mind took it to be so bad as that! Master knows the inner working of our minds. So he cleared my doubts that way" . . . One day Hriday came to meet the Master. As he was prohibited from entering the precincts of the Kali temple, the Master took him to Jadu Mallick's garden. . . The Master used to go now and then to Jadu's garden for a stroll when there was a crowd at the Dakshineswar garden. He used to take brothers Naren, Rākhāl, Bhavanāth and others for private talks on spiritual matters to Jadu's garden. I have heard that it was at this garden that the Master gave Naren a taste of spiritual experience. Whenever Jadu used to come to his garden he would request the Master to come there and to sing a few of his soul-enthralling songs. Sometimes he used to bring a songster whose songs the Master immensely liked. One day this gentleman sang a song in front of the Master, from Girish Babu's *Chaitanya-Lilā*. Hearing this song the Master felt a desire to witness that theatrical performance.

1882-84. 'During the Durga Puja the Master used to visit the houses of devotees. On the *Saptami* day he would visit the houses of Ramababu and Sureshbabu, on the *Ashtami*, those of Keshav Babu, Adharbabu, Ramababu and others; on the *Navami*, he used to stay at Dakshineswar and would not go anywhere. Once he went to Adharbabu's at about 10 p.m. On the *Dashami* day he generally visited Navakumar Chatterji's house at Dakshineswar itself. On the *Ekadashi*, the devotees used to come to Dakshineswar. . . I have heard, as long as Mathurbabu lived the Master used to spend all these days at his residence. After his death he stopped going there. On the Kojagari Lakshmi Puja day your Keshav Babu used to come to the Master at Dakshineswar. He was accompanied by a large number of his followers. . . Once the Master entertained Keshav Babu and his party with puffed rice and coconut-scrappings and with "something that grows inside a palm fruit" (perhaps the

kernel inside a green palm fruit). He took these simple things with joy in the company of all. Such a great man and there was no pride in him! On the Kali Puja night they used to illuminate the temple, every nook and corner of it, including the bank of the Ganges. That day, before he went to worship Mother Kali, Ramlal used to get permission from the Master, who would be in his own room. At night the Master used to go to the temple. The whole day and night the Nahabat used to send vibrations of enchanting music to all sides. . . Once the Kali Puja fell on a Saturday night. The Master told us to perform *japa* the whole night. He said it was a very auspicious night, and would give success quickly. He himself went on singing songs till very late into the night. . . On the Jagaddhatri puja day he used to take us to Manomohanbabu's house. There, on one occasion, a man played on *khol* (a type of mridanga) so enthrallingly that the Master went into samadhi.'

(To be continued)

THE GREAT EQUATION

(Continued from the previous issue)

S. K. GUPTA

Aaruni: As I said, the plan and pattern of the previously dissolved universes lay in a seed state in that Eternal Principle. It designed to unfold it, to regenerate the universe according to plan. To achieve that end, It compounded the triple subtle principles in such a way that one of these predominated while the other two remained secondary in all objects so that these are designated by the properties of the predominating entity. Thus, Fire or Energy, would be that object in which the principal ingredient is Energy and so on. It is through this synthesis that the subtle becomes gross — the imperceptible perceptible. Thus appeared the Virat — the Vast — the Cosmic Structure and then other material bodies according to Its Idea, design or plan. The Sat, the Spirit, the Eternal Principle

radiated Its light on these objects, reflected Itself on these, as does the sun on clear water. Let me emphasize that every material object is synthetic, the compound of these three primordial entities, Fire, Water and Earth.

Swetaketu: How does this chemical composition become perceptible sir?

Aaruni: You conceive fire by perceiving the colour of the flame. It is only colour that comes in contact with your sense of sight. The fire that you see is the synthetic fire. It appears principally as red but has also white and blue tinge (white heat, blue flames). Now red is the colour of the original principle of energy, white is the colour of the original principle of liquidity and blue or black is the colour of the principle of solidity. Bereft of this sensation of triple colour, the concept of

unagitated manner by any individual. Tolerance is a basic quality of great value which we as a nation could boast to possess. But this quality is also gradually fading out owing to perhaps too much of modernism. It should not however be forgotten that this spirit of tolerance alone can save us from many a misdeed and unhappiness.

Rabindranath Tagore said, 'We can never go beyond man in all that we know and feel.' It is therefore essential that human consciousness should develop. This gradually deepens and widens the realization of the immortal being, the perfect, the eternal. Man can

realize God after having reached a stage of perfection whether through love or other means.

To quote Tagore again, 'The man whose inner vision is bathed in an illumination of his consciousness at once realizes the spiritual unity reigning supreme over all differences. He realizes that peace is the inner harmony which dwells in truth. He knows that beauty carries an eternal assurance of our spiritual relationship to reality, which waits for its perfection in the response of our love.' In brief, to be humane, and morally perfect is the first step in religion and that is the religion for the common man.

MEMOIRS OF SWAMI ADBHUTANANDA

(A free translation of the Bengali book, *Smritikatha*)

(Continued from the previous issue)

1883. 'Once he* went to see Keshav Babu at his residence. He was then ailing. When Keshav heard that the Master had come he came downstairs. Seeing him the Master said, "This time I fail to understand Mother's will." Keshav Babu passed away in a few months. Another time when he had been ailing the Master had vowed green coconut and sugar to Mother Siddheswari and Keshav Babu got over, and the Master had fulfilled his vow.'

'Members of Vijaybabu's and Keshav Babu's parties once went to Mani Mullick's residence (for celebration?). There the Master came to know of Keshav's serious illness. Hearing about it the Master became sad and serious and did not join in singing or dancing. How he loved Keshav Babu! Whenever Keshav Babu came to the Master he used to sit in front of him with folded hands. What deep faith he had in the Master's words!'

In *Sat-katha* many things about Keshav Chandra Sen have been narrated, so we desist from repeating them here.

We have heard that the Master used to visit, in the company of Lātu, Sri Jaygopal Sen's house. We have not heard much about Sri Sen from the lips of Lātu Maharaj, except that during the summer he used to send for the Master and the devotees iced *sharbet* of water melon, *bel* fruit, and ice-cream. Sometimes he would send such large quantities of these things that even after the devotees had partaken, there used to remain a good quantity. This he would send to the devotee Navakumar Chatterji at the village of Dakshineswar.

'Will you be surprised to hear that the Master took Baburam, Rāmalāldā, and myself to the Dakshineswar village to witness an open theatrical performance? It was in the house of a devotee. The proprietor and the actors of the party were all good people. They held the Master in veneration. Next day they paid a visit to the Master at the temple garden and regaled him with a number of devotional songs. Master was exceedingly glad and said, "When you have composed songs of such fervent devotion, you have nothing to fear, your aus-

* Sri Ramakrishna.

terity has borne fruit." ' And Master asked Ramalal to write down the songs.' To whom Lātu Maharaj referred as the proprietor of the party it is difficult for us to guess. Maybe he referred to Nilkantha. He told us about another theatrical party : " Look here. On a Kali Puja night one theatrical party gave a performance. I sat up throughout the night. So did the Master. The theme was of a wonderful lover who loved his beloved so dearly that he himself dug a tunnel from his own room to that of hers. Look at the intensity of that love ! Did not our Master say ' You will see God when the intensities of the three kinds of love will combine into one.' "

One devotee intervened and said, ' What are those three, Maharaj ? '

Lātu Maharaj : ' One : A man's love for his beloved ; two : parents' love for their children ; three : a drunkard's love for the drink.' (*The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, however, enumerates the third as ' a worldly man's love for his possessions.')

' Ramababu purchased a garden near Calcutta to convert it into a hermitage. One day the Master took us there. The road was too bad for a carriage. So the Master walked the distance. He met a *sādhu* on the road and started talking with him for a long time. We became impatient, some went there to call him back. Then the Master came to Ramababu's garden by way of the *sadhu*'s hermitage. Ramababu had planted a circle of basil plants, seeing which the Master was very pleased and said, " Ram, it is a fine place for meditation. Come often and meditate here." That day Ramababu entertained the Master and the devotees with sweets and fruits — fresh and dry. From there the Master went to Suresh Mitra's garden. There we very often went, and Sri Mitra used to have parties of devotional singers.

' From there the Master went to Ishān's (Ishan Chandra Mukherji) house. At that time there was an assembly of pandits. Many composed funny Sanskrit couplets. Once there was a peal of laughter. Master said, " What's going on there ? Let us too share your joy." At this

one of them explained the last couplet, whose purport was poverty was the greatest joy-killer. Another explained the same couplet as " The thought of God is the highest thought." Ishānbabu enjoyed feeding the Master with a large number of side dishes, — once with a variety of pickles.'

' Once I accompanied the Master to Ishān's where Pandit Śaśadhar (Tarkachudamani) was staying. He asked the Pandit if he had been commissioned by the Lord to preach. Further he said that without the Lord's command nobody could preach Him, and that people would not pay any heed to the person's words who was not so commissioned. The Pandit kept mum. In a few days the Pandit paid a return visit to Dakshineswar. Since then he used to visit the Master at Dakshineswar and Calcutta. Once Ishān spent some time at Bhātpara exclusively in prayer, counting beads, etc. and came direct from there to Dakshineswar. The Master seeing him remarked : " Hello Ishān, mind must get purified first, when that is done it takes but little time to get purification of the body, and when both are achieved austerities become effective. If you fail to effect both simultaneously your austerities will be half-hearted." '

Once a devotee purchased something at an unusually high price for Lātu Maharaj. At that Lātu Maharaj narrated an incident from Jogin Maharaj's life. ' The Master asked Brother Jogin to purchase an iron vessel for cooking, which Jogin readily did. When the Master examined it, it was found to have a crack. At that he said to Jogin " What is this ? When you pay for a thing will you not examine it properly ? You must see if it is in order, if its weight is proper ; and in the case of a thing for which the seller, when asked, makes an extra allowance you should not forget to ask for that also. The seller is there in the market not to earn merit but to get as much for his commodities as he can. So you must enquire in several shops to know the price of the article. You will, no doubt become a *sadhu*, but is it any reason that you will have to be a fool as well ? " Our Master

was a *Paramahansa*, prince among the *sadhus*. But look how he instructs ! He was perfect in everything. You are a house-holder, you are to maintain a family. Should you spend so much on me, a *sadhu* ? It is mere waste. Do I need such things and in large measures ?'

About Jogin Maharaj (Swami Yogananda) Lātu Maharaj narrated another incident, which we presume, occurred during this time. So we incorporate it in this chapter.

'One day a gentleman abused the Master in the presence of Jogin Maharaj who said nothing. You know there comes a time in everyone's life during his spiritual practices, when he cannot oppose anybody nor criticize any, far less quarrel or fight. Jogin was in that state. So though it pained him he kept quiet. The Master also knew Jogin's state. But in order to teach us how to behave under such circumstances, would you believe what he said ? "Jogin, how strange it is ! The fellow abused me right and left and you did not say a thing to him ! Do you know what the scriptures say about it ? If you are able you should inflict physical punishment on one who abuses your *Guru* ; if you are unable to do so you should leave the place forthwith." Jogin sat pondering over it.'

In this connection Lātu Maharaj narrated another incident that occurred at Dakshineswar, but it did not concern Jogin Maharaj. We are inserting it here in order to show how the Master's instructions differed with different persons. The incident is about Niranjan Maharaj. 'Niranjan was in a boat. The moment he heard a few passengers speaking ill of the Master he started rocking the boat rather violently. The passengers got terrified. The critics stopped their criticism in fear. Niranjan also calmed down. When he came to Dakshineswar, he narrated the incident. The Master got annoyed with Niranjan and said, "Fool, you were about to drown them all ! What is this ? Anger rising so high as that ? Maybe, one or two, criticized me. But what had the others done that you were going to punish them *en masse* ? Did you think what would have been the condition of all the passengers had

the boat sunk ? Beware ! never do such things again. What kind of justice is this—to punish twenty for the fault of one ?" Niranjan's eyes were wet.'

A similar incident happened, not at Dakshineswar but at Naren's Calcutta house. We heard it from Lātu Maharaj's lips at Balaram's house. We record it here as it was an incident of this period of Lātu Maharaj's life.

'An advocate called the Master an "idiot". Naren was not a boy to let the matter go. There ensued a heated debate. But the man would not yield to arguments. Then Naren laughed and said, "Well sir, he is but an illiterate villager. What wonder is there that to you he would appear as an idiot ?" At this the advocate laughed and departed. When he went away I said to Naren, "How now, Lorenbabu ; how could you pocket the insult ? Such irreverent words he applied to the Master and you bore them away ?" At this Naren smiled and said, "Don't you understand ? To contradict him was to waste our valuable time. I agreed and the fellow went away satisfied. Why waste our breath in arguing with one who is spiritually a blank ? You know how I revere the Master. You know my mind well." I, however, remained unconvinced and went on revolving it in my mind, "How could Lorenbabu give his assent to that ?" Loren understood what was going on in my mind and said, "Brother, don't be angry with me. I will never act as that before you."

'At Dakshineswar Jogin was entrusted with keeping Mother Kali's *prasād* (consecrated food) for the devotees. One day it was late and the *prasād* was not sent to the Master's room. So he himself went to the manager to inquire about it. At this Jogin thought, "He has not been able, I see, to transcend the habits of a priest—to get a portion of the consecrated food." When Jogin was thus musing within himself what do you think the Master, who knew the innermost thoughts and feelings of all, told him ? "Look here, my boy, Rāsmani has left such a huge property for this temple with the idea that *sādhus* and devotees of the Lord will be

maintained with it. What ever little comes here serves her purpose. The rest is taken by others for their mistresses. When devotees like you, who come here, take a portion of the *prasād* that bears merits to the Rani.”’

‘Another incident in connexion with brother Jogin : At the importunities of his parents he had married ; but he felt sad at heart and for shame could not come to the Master. Coming to know of this, the Master sent a man instructing that he should tell Jogin to pay off the money the latter owed him. Hearing this Jogin came, quite mortified, to the Master to pay off the few coppers he owed ; but the Master did not allow the topic to be raised at all ; instead, he said, “What my boy, what if you have married ? Why do you not come here ? Have I not married myself ?” In this way did the Master keep contact with his boys. Oh ! his love for us !’

‘If Loren (Naren) babu would not come to Dakshineswar for just a few days the Master would send for him. On one occasion he instructed the messenger thus : “You see, you should tell Naren I am not keeping well. This broken hand is giving a lot of trouble. Perhaps the bone is broken, so he has asked you to come to Dakshineswar.” Just fathom if you can, the depth of the love the Master had for Loren.’

Below we give a few more instances of the probationer’s life of Lātu Maharaj during which time the Master was teaching him how to serve the Lord, how to become his servant in the true sense of the term. These instances are of the period when the Master broke his hand. In this connexion it is useful to know how Lātu Maharaj used to chronicle his life’s events. He, as we have mentioned before, could not give us any dates or even years, but used to relate events to certain occurrences in the Master’s life. Thus the events of his servanthip period would be related to three important occurrences in the Master’s life. The first period includes the years up to the

Master’s visit to Vidyāsāgar, the second, up to when the Master broke his hand ; the third, up to his residence at Shyampukur i.e. up to August 1882, January 1884 and August 1885 respectively. Now we start with the incidents, in Lātu Maharaj’s own language.

‘Once as the Master was walking absorbed in thought on the bank of the Ganga he got entangled in wires and fell down, and this dislocated a bone of his hand. Dr Madhu was called. He bandaged the hand, having set the bone in position. With his hand bandaged, he would say to whomsoever he met, “Look here, Sir, Ram says I am an Incarnation of God. What do you say ? Does ever a divine incarnation break his hand ?” People would naturally give all kinds of opinions. For example “M” the author of *the Gospel of Sri Ramakhisha* said, “If it is possible for God to incarnate as a human being, then according to the laws of that divine sport his hand also may break.” Not only did the Master ask like that, but he would show his anxiety also and ask all and sundry how he would get cured. This would annoy Rākhālbabu. One day Rākhālbabu spoke to Devenbabu in a complaining mood, “Please don’t talk of medicine in his presence. He would believe in your words and would change medicines. This continual change of medicines would not cure him. Rather say, ‘Continue the medicine you are taking.’” One day the Master said, “I will no more take medicine. It will get cured by itself. . .” And it actually so happened that the medicine phial fell down and broke . . . His hand having been broken we could not celebrate his birthday that year in the month of Phalguna. We did it when his hand was completely cured . . . And do you know it was during this very time, when his hand was bandaged, that Keshav babu passed away. Hearing this sad news he told us, “Do you know by this Mother showed me that Keshav belonged to this group.”’

(To be continued)

of Evil. It was Jesus Christ who said, 'Heaven and Earth shall pass away but my words shall not pass away.'⁴ It was he again who said, 'For all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.'⁵ Aggressors are bound to perish if they persist in their evil career. Mankind is crying for safety, solace and salvation. Let the

great and good men of the world seek His guidance so that the Buddha and the Ramakrishna Paramhansa may be enthroned and righteousness may prevail.

⁴ *Gospel of St. Mathew*, 24. 35.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 26. 52.

MEMOIRS OF SWAMI ADBHUTANANDA

(A free translation of the Bengali book, *Smritikatha*)

(Continued from the previous issue)

"As long as his hand was bandaged the Master did not go anywhere, but confined himself to the temple premises. At noon he would call Rāmalāldā and hear the Rāmāyaṇa recital. In the evening they sang *kirtanas* and the Master would join them, sometimes he would sing too. In the morning he used to sit on the verandah of his room. . . . One day Sharat babu and Shashi babu came. The Master used to love Shashi dearly. He would ask him to pass some nights there with him but Shashi would not. Once the Master said, 'Sharat belonged in his previous incarnation, to Jesus's group of disciples.' . . . One day a new boy devotee came from Calcutta. (He was Gangādhara Maharaj, Swami Akhandananda). He was rigidly orthodox and would cook his food himself and eat. He would not take even the consecrated food of the Kali temple. Once the Master invited him to take his food in the temple. At first he would not agree. Later, however, he yielded but did not touch fish. Observing this, the Master said, 'My boy, what harm is there in taking betel roll or fish? One can keep his mind fixed on God even after taking all these. . . . One day Haribabu (Swami Turiyananda) came to Dakshineswar and the Master invited him to come to him now and then, especially when others would not be there. Haribabu used to come to Dakshineswar early morning and would go away before others would come. Sometimes,

however, he would come at noon and would depart before dusk when others were expected to come."

'One day during this time, Surendrababu came to Dakshineswar with a mat and pillow under his armpit and said he would stay there. For four or five days he did stay there. Soon after, he had to leave for fear of his wife. His wife would not allow him to stay out at night. The Master understood his situation and said, "Suresh dear, your wife is upset at home. You take away your mat and pillow and go home. You need not pass days and nights here. These people are here to look after me. It is sufficient if you would come here, spend some hours and go home, as you used to do before. That will be quite enough for your enlightenment."'

'Loren's father died the same year the Master broke his hand. Naturally, busy with making arrangement for the household Loren could not come to Dakshineswar as he used to do. So the Master would send us oftener to his house. And Loren babu used to be very happy whenever we would go to him. There were difficulties on all sides; even the relatives, who had been the recipient of all kinds of help from Loren's father, turned against him; but brother Loren did not yield to anything. Looking at his face, nobody could ever guess that he was passing through difficult times. Whenever he used to meet me he would ask for detailed information of Dakshineswar. He

would sometimes ask me to prepare well a *cheelum* for smoking. Then as he was smoking, he would talk inspiringly to me, as if he was lecturing.'

A Devotee : ' Was he lecturing ? On what topics, Maharaj ? Do speak a little to us about them. It would indeed be a treat to us.'

Lātu Maharaj : ' Treat indeed. But only to hear and not to do a hundredth part of the penance that he performed. What do you say ? What Loren babu used to tell us then, nobody — none of us — ever thought about them. Do you know what he used to say ? " As long as I do not see God I would not believe that there is such a thing as God. Neither would I have faith in the Master's words nor in the magic that he played on me in showing God saying, ' Look there is the Lord.' I am not to be duped thus." Another day he said, " If your God is so kind as you depict Him to be, why is then so much pain and misery in the world ? Your God is extremely cruel ; His only business is to put man to trouble. I would have nothing to do with such a God." Some other day he would talk on some other topic. He would say, " Look here, Leto, what the Master says, strange to say, all tally with the scriptures. He has not read any scriptures, how do they tally ? This is something which I fail to understand. He is illiterate, how does he know all that. I tell you, Plato* don't leave his company. If you live with him you will see how great you will be." Do I remember all those inspiring talks ? They are too numerous. Whatever I heard from him I used to repeat to the Master. He said once, " When the dark night of doubts passes away the morning twilight of devotion makes its appearance."'

' One day (it was before the Master broke his hand) a tough and heavy Punjabi Mussalman wrestler came to fight with Hanuman Singh, the wrestler of the Kali temple. The new wrestler looked a giant, did hard physical exercise for fifteen days, and consumed meat, ghee, milk in large quantities.

His strength and appearance assured his victory — everyone was convinced of that. Hanuman Singh came to the Master one day to receive his blessings. The Master told him, to reduce his diet and physical exercise and to take refuge with Mahavirji (Rama's faithful servant and strength deified) and go on repeating his name. " If Mahavirji is pleased " said the Master, " enemies are defeated in a trice." Hanuman Singh had unbounded faith in the Master and he acted up to his advice and won the bout easily. Just see the power of the Divine Name. The Master repeatedly told us that there was no power greater than that of the Lord's name.'

' One day the Master saw Rakhai Babu and myself wrestling in the temple premises. Rakhai babu was a practised wrestler and was quite strong. He used to wrestle in Ambu-babu's gymnasium. In our bouts in the temple neither Rakhai babu nor I could defeat the other. Seeing this the Master said laughingly, " Ah ! You are wrestling in the manner of the mythic fight between the Elephant and the Tortoise — both are equal, none can defeat the other."'

At this a devotee questioned, ' Maharaj, did you wrestle all along at Dakshineswar ?'

Lātu Maharaj : ' No. He asked me not to wrestle ; so I stopped.'

Devotee : ' Why did he prohibit you from wrestling, Maharaj ?'

Lātu Maharaj : ' I was getting lean and thin. Observing this he said, " You are getting reduced, stop wrestling. Hard meditation and wrestling cannot go together. If both of them are done to excess health will break down." After that I never wrestled. Occasionally just a little trial of strength to keep fit.'

' During the Master's last illness, Kaviraj Mahendra Nath Pal visited him. While leaving, the latter gave five rupees to Ramalal. The Master did not know of it. At night I observed he was tossing about in the bed. I went on fanning him for a considerable time, yet his uneasiness did not abate. At last he asked me, " Go and call the rascal Ramanelo (colloquial in both anger and affection) ; he

* Narendranath used to call Lātu Maharaj as Plato in fun referring to his illiteracy but the strong common sense.

must have done something wrong. Or else how is it that I have no wink of sleep?" It was about 1 or 2 in the morning. When I brought Ramalalda to the room, the Master said, "Rascal, go at once and return the money to the person from whom you have taken it." Ramalalda had to go to the Kaviraj's house that very night, wake him up from sleep and return the money. Wonderful! Isn't it?"

'One day, during the Master's illness, Bhavanath, Rakhai, Loren, and other brothers started cooking in big vessels, rice, dal and other dishes near the Panchavati. When cooking was over and the brothers were sitting in a line to partake of the cooked food offered to the Lord a Baul came and was going to sit with us. The Master did not allow him to do so. Loren babu said, "Please allow him to sit, we have cooked enough, we shall not run short." The Master would not yield but said, "No, no, it is impossible. When you have finished your lunch and if there be something left then only will he get anything. He can never be allowed to sit with you." When we finished our food he told us, "What merit has he earned that he will sit along with you? During one's period of spiritual practice one must exercise discrimination about taking food with others."'

'Once Ramababu was bringing a basket of *jilapi* (a kind of sweet) for the Master, but on the way he gave a piece to a beggar-boy. That day the Master could not take Ramababu's *jilapi*. He said, "Mind you, Ram, whatever you will bring for 'here' (i.e. me) you must not give any part of it before it is offered here. To offer a portion of a thing to one is as good as offering the whole of it to him; and a thing once offered to one cannot be offered again to another. And you know it well, that I cannot take anything without offering it to Mother."'

'During his illness Tārakbābu (later Swami Shivananda) came one day to Dakshineswar. He brought from Vrindavan some gram, the holy dust, the holy earth (for marking the sacred sign on the forehead), offered garland and other things. Seeing the Master's hand bandaged and in splints Tārakbābu asked, what the

matter was. In reply the Master said with a smile, "While I was enjoying the beauty of 'uncle' moon I got entangled in the wires and fell down and was hurt. This is its hang-over." Tārakbābu again asked whether the bone was dislocated or broken. At this the Master said in a complaining tone, "What do I know, my boy? But this much I feel that these people have bandaged me — in all parts of my body, as it were and would not allow me to call on Mother freely. They will not allow me to free myself from the bondages. Do tell me if one is bound like that can one call on Mother? Sometimes I feel 'Let me throw off all these and be a free man again.' But again it strikes me — no, this also is a fun and play; in it also there is joy." Tārakbābu added, "But if you will you can be free this very moment." The Master exclaimed, "Eh! Indeed!" And then he kept quiet for sometime, and added, "No, a disease is to be patiently borne away. Those who are coming here with selfish desires will all run away, thinking, 'He cannot cure himself what will he do to us?' Thus they will not bother me any more." Next moment, he said, as if to himself, "Mother, what a nice trick you are playing." Then he started singing; and singing he passed into *samādhi*.'

'One day a man too much engrossed in worldly matters came to the Master and started talking on worldly things. The Master said, "Don't, don't talk of such things here. (Pointing to the Manager's room) Go there." The fellow went there. Then the Master told me to sprinkle Ganges water on the place where he had sat. "The fellow," he said, "is a bond slave to 'lust and lucre.' He has polluted the earth on the spot seven cubits deep. Sprinkle Ganges water profusely."'

'One day Girishbabu came to Dakshineswar dead drunk. Noticing this the Master asked me to see if he had left behind anything in the carriage and to bring whatever I would find there. I went and saw there was a bottle of whisky and a tumbler. I took them and returned to the Master's room. Looking at the bottle of whisky, all present laughed aloud. At that the Master said, "Keep them aside. They will be

of use, when he will come to his senses." Just see how liberal he could be for the sake of the devotees !'

'Another day Girishbabu brought Dāna (demon) Kali (Kalipada Ghosh) to Dakshineswar. The Dāna was a beastly drunkard, would not give a farthing for the maintenance of the household, spend away everything on alcohol. But he had a divinely chaste wife. Many many days back she once had come to the Master — so I have heard — and asked for some medicine or magic-spell to cure her husband of the malady. But the Master, without doing anything himself, sent her to Holy Mother. Holy Mother understood the joke and sent her back to the Master. Thus she went back and forth thrice. At last Holy Mother took pity on her and gave her something — She wrote the Master's name on an offered bel-leaf and gave it to Dāna's wife and asked her to take the Lord's name as heartily and often as possible. Accordingly the wife went on devotedly taking God's name for twelve years. It is for this that the moment the Master saw Dāna for the first time he exclaimed, "Here at long last comes the rogue after roasting the wife for twelve long years!" Dāna Kali gave a start but said nothing. Then the Master said in a soft tone, "What do you want, gentleman? Tell me." Dāna was such an irrevocable rogue

as to say, "Can you give me, Sir, a little wine." Master: "Yes, I can. But the wine of this place is very strong. Will you be able to stand it?" Dāna thought it might be genuine Scotch whisky. So he prayed for a little to wet his parched throat. The Master said, "Not so, dear. It is not Scotch whisky, it is the unalloyed causal spirit. This thing cannot be given to one and all. All cannot stand it. If you take it but once you will not like foreign liquor any more. Are you ready to give up that spirit and take the one supplied here?" Dāna thought a little, Lord alone knows what; and then said in all earnestness, "Do give me that liquor which will keep me intoxicated throughout life, do give." Immediately the Master touched him. Ah! what crying! What profuse shedding of tears! All of us tried to stop him but failed. What an upsurge of emotion! One day while going by a boat on the Ganges the Master wrote on his tongue the sacred *mantra* of his chosen deity. Later on he became a great devotee of the Master and spent lots of money in the Master's service. Just see if one's wife is so chaste as that she does not shrink from undergoing the hardest penance for her husband. Because of his wife Dānakali got salvation.'

(To be continued)

THE GREAT EQUATION

(Continued from the previous issue)

S. K. GUPTA

Aaruni: Look at that beehive, my son. The swarm of assiduous bees cull juice from different flowers and make honey. The heterogeneous collection is transformed into a homogeneous whole. Can the individual ingredients discriminate themselves? Can the juice of the mango blossom, for instance, know that it is from a mango tree and not from a jackfruit tree? The juices, whatever may be their individual qualities sweet or sour, brackish or bitter,

are unified in honey. Contrarily in an assembly of human beings, each individual knows his identity, that he is the son of so and so and the grandson of so and so. Why is this difference? In the case of honey, the many have merged into one and all distinctions have been eliminated, while in the case of the crowd, the individuals retain their disparateness. In the state of unitive existence, in deep sleep, death or dissolution, all distinctions are wiped out.

MEMOIRS OF SWAMI ADBHUTANANDA

(A free translation of the Bengali book, *Smritikatha*)

(Continued from the previous issue)

‘When the bandage was removed and the bone was completely set, one day the Master came to Ahiritola to witness the Puja performed by the local public. While coming in a carriage he saw some women on the streets ; they were dressed finely and were waiting at their doors. Casting his eyes on them, he could only say, “Mother, you have dressed yourself so nicely,” and he was off in deep *samadhi*. Those who were in the carriage never saw him passing into trances. They thought he had an attack of epilepsy and went on crying for me in a loud voice. They asked the driver to stop the carriage. It took him quite a time to come out of the trance. Then the carriage started again.

‘Another incident — it was about Bhupati-babu (Bhupati Charan Chatterji). When he came to Dakshineswar the Master was anointing oil and making ready for bath. He came and sang a song. (Another devotee gave us two lines of this song, which we give here.) “Who is as good a ferryman as Hari (the Lord)? He ferries us across the ocean on the boat of his two lotus feet.” The Master passed into *samadhi* and in that state placed his foot on Bhupati’s shoulders and said, “Take it, take it.”’

Now we are coming to a topic about whose date we are not sure. Our guess is, it might have occurred in 1884. The Master was returning from Calcutta to Dakshineswar. Inside the carriage were seated the Master and Ramalalda and at the top by the side of the driver was sitting Lātu Maharaj. When the carriage was passing through Cossipore the Master said to Lātu to ask the driver to stop the carriage. When it stopped he told Ramalalda, that he was extremely hungry. ‘Have you got some money?’ said he, ‘then go and purchase some *kachauri* with the flavour of asaphoetida from Phagu’s shop.’ Ramalalda

went for the purchase and Lātu went to a bush for a couple of minutes. At any rate their absence would not be for more than five minutes. When they returned they did not find the Master in or near the carriage. Both of them started in search of him. In a short time Ramalalda saw him walking away with vigorous strides, quite unconscious of anything. Lātu Maharaj narrated to us what he had heard from Ramalalda.

‘Ramalalda went on calling him at the top of his voice but the Master heard him not and strode on. At last Ramalalda started running to catch him. He caught him and said, “Where are you going? Come home.” The Master appeared not to have recognized Ramalalda, and looked puzzled. Then Ramalalda, as if to bring him to his old memory, said, “Did you not ask me to buy hot *kachauri* from Phagu’s shop? And where are you going now? Won’t you take hot *kachauri*?” It is only then that he returned to the carriage. Since this incident one or other of us would always be with him. Never did we leave him alone.’

That year, after the Durga Puja was over we played *golokdham* * at Dakshineswar. At

* On a piece of paper are printed in separate squares most of the Hindu places of pilgrimage with some pictures thereof, and some mythological places, good and bad including heavens and hells, as well as brothels, bars etc. Each player’s piece is moved from ‘house’ to ‘house’ as the number of tiny shells in the throw of seven of them show their bellies up; e.g. if three show the piece moves to the next third house. But in most of the houses it is written if a piece moves into it, it will go either up or down, to another house; or if when there, the player’s throw indicates three, or four the piece will move down or up to another house. Thus each piece goes on moving up or down till at last it reaches *goloka*, the highest Vaishnava heaven. If a piece once goes to the ‘house’ of hell it cannot come out unless the player throws ‘one’ which is quite unusual. If however at the very first throw of a player all the shells show their bellies he at once goes to *goloka*—he is the first to win the play.

the first throw Lātu got seven and reached goloka at once. Lātu was overjoyed to such an extent and made so much noise that the Master appeared there, and highly pleased at Lātu's joy, asked him not to play again that day.

‘One day, we were accompanying the Master to Calcutta ; when the carriage was passing through Cossipore the Master saw, in a bar, some people drinking and singing. Seeing this he passed into a trance and was about to get down. Placing one foot on the foot-board he became unsteady like a drunkard. At this two people were going to catch him. I told them not to do that and added that he would himself be steady and normal and would enter the carriage again. He is under the safe protection of one who never fails to do the needful under any circumstances. They heard me and the Master got into the carriage. You know when a man is in trance or *samadhi*, impure persons should not touch his body, if they do, he feels excruciating pain. We saw it many times in the Master.

‘Look here. The Master would take us to the theatre. There Girish Babu used to regard him with great respect. He used to pay a rupee and Girish would reserve a box for him, big enough to seat three or four persons. Girish would, moreover, engage a man to fan the Master. Girish Babu used to come upstairs, to meet and talk with him. Once it happened like this. Girish was tipsy. He implored the Master to be reborn as his son, so that he could serve him most intimately. “In this life, I could not serve you. Promise you will fulfil my desire to serve you as my son. You must promise.” The Master said, “What a request? Why should I be your son? How virtuous was my father!” This angered Girish Babu who, under the influence of liquor, went on abusing him right and left. I also lost temper at that and was about to raise my thick stick when Deven Babu forbade me to do that. Said he, “When the Master himself is bearing it all why should you get irritated?” I stopped, but I was beside myself in anger and had I not thus been prevented I would

have beaten Girish Babu that day. When we were returning to Dakshineswar in a carriage Deven Babu told the Master what I was about to do. At that the Master turned to me and said, “Were you going to do that my boy? To lay hand on Girish's body! Did you not notice that even after such a barrage of abuses he fell flat on the ground in obeisance when we were returning? Can you find on earth a man of faith as great as he?” I heard him again and again imploring Mother, in Girish's behalf, not to take offence at Girish's behaviour. “He is but an actor in a theatre, what will he know, Mother, of your glory!”

‘When other devotees heard of this incident all naturally got annoyed and asked the Master not to go to him again. Rama Babu too heard it. Next day he came to Dakshineswar. The Master immediately narrated the incident and asked for his opinion on the matter. Rama Babu said, “Revered Sir, the mythical serpent Kāliya told Sri Krishna, ‘My Lord, you have given me poison, where shall I get nectar to offer to you?’ Girish Babu is exactly in that predicament. Where will he get nectar, Sir? Why should you be annoyed with him?” Hearing Rama, the Master said, “So Rama, let us go to him even now in your carriage.” At once the Master, accompanied by myself, Rama Babu and two other devotees, started for Girish's house. Here Girish Babu was seized with remorse, day and night he had cried and cried, he had taken no food. When he heard in the evening that the Master had come, he ran downstairs shedding tears, and prostrated at his feet and would not get up. At the repeated request of the Master he got up and went on babbling for some time. Then I heard Girish Babu say, “If today you had not come, my Lord, I would have understood that you were not yet above praise or blame, that you were not worthy of being called a Paramahansa, that you were only one of us, cheating people under the name of a Paramahansa. Today have I understood without the shadow of doubt that you are no other but That. No more will you be able to by-pass me. No more will I leave you. Now, this very

moment, do I take refuge in you. Do tell me, you have accepted me, you have given me salvation."

'Even after this incident the Master went to Girish's theatre, and that along with us. One night they were staging *Daśamahavidya*. (This play was named later as *Dakshayajna*.) The moment Girish Babu, acting his part said, "I will no longer keep on earth the trace of the name of Śiva," the Master cried out "What does the rogue say? (Turning to a devotee seated near) What's your opinion? We must not hear such things. Is this the education he is imparting to the public?" These words of the Master reached Girish's ears. He came in the dress in which he was acting the part and requested the Master to hear a little more, just a little. The Master repeated, "What trash you have written, 'I will not allow Shiva's name to be taken on earth?'" Girish said, "This is to pander to the public taste." The Master stayed on a few minutes.

'I have heard of another incident taking place in the same theatre. One night when the play was over Girish took the Master to the dressing room. Girish asked all the actresses (who were all prostitutes — during those days none but they were available for acting female parts) to take the dust of his feet, adding "Do take it. All your sins will be washed off." When they were about to touch his feet the Master said, "If you do it from a distance that also will do." But they would not hear. Some of them did touch his feet. Returning to Dakshineswar he told us, "Hello! my feet are burning." Hearing this Ramalalda brought Ganges water and washed his feet with it. Then the burning sensation abated. He could not bear the touch of impure persons.

'Once some Marwari devotees invited him on the occasion of the *Annakuta*. (I do not know the date.) Master took us also there. It was, that year, a big thing. There was such a concourse of men, women and children that when we finished our lunch it was five p.m. Then the Master took Ramababu and two other persons in the carriage and drove to Dak-

shineswar. It was the Dewali night. That part of the town was brightly illuminated. He asked Ramababu to purchase a *chillum* worth one pice.†

'A woman devotee came one day and said to the Holy Mother, "I am very poor, I cannot afford always to bring something for the Master. Today I have prepared some sweets for him and brought it here. Will you kindly take them, to him?" Mother said, "He has already finished his lunch. He does not take anything after that. Why, my daughter, have you brought it so late?" This set the lady weeping. Soon after the Master came there with unsteady steps, merged in *bhava-samadhi*, took the things from the devotee's hands, partook a little of it and gave the rest back to her. He then turned to me and said, "Henceforth, my boy, whatever things are brought for me should be taken first to Naha-bathkhana, i.e. to Holy Mother and then distributed among the devotees." A devotee asked, "Maharaj, why did the Master make such a rule?" Lātu Maharaj: Why? It is because during his illness all kinds of people used to come to him. Many of them were not pure, nor did they give presents without motives. It happened like this. I gave something to him during his lunch. He at once cried out, "Whose is this thing? Uh! that fellow's — he is a miser to the marrow. He has sent this with the motive that his son be cured." Saying this he threw the thing out of his dish. Such turned out to be daily occurrences. He used to send all things to Holy Mother so that their bad effects could be obviated by her touch or look.

'Once it so happened that there was swelling in his legs. He was still at Dakshineswar. Mahendra Kaviraj asked him to take lemons. Brother Yogen used to bring two fresh lemons everyday. Master would take them daily. But one day he could not take them. Yogen was astonished. On enquiry it was found that

† Note: The Master was of opinion that persons bring their products and manufactures to a fair for sale and show, and that people who could afford should purchase something by way of encouraging the producers.

from that day the garden had been leased out to another man for a year. As the Master was given to truth he could not take the lemons that day, for the permission to take the fruits had been obtained not from the new lessee but from the old owner, who, after the leasing out, had no right over the fruits.'

In this connexion Lātu Maharaj narrated another incident, which we give below :

'One day the Master saw a ripe mango fallen under a mango tree of the garden. He could not pick it up. He told one of us, "Hellow! there is a mango there, why don't you pick it up and give it over to the manager?" The manager, however, did not take it, he asked the man who brought it to him to eat it.

'On the occasion of the Master's last birthday celebration at Dakshineswar during his lifetime Narottama sang *kirtana* there. There was quite a crowd then; about 250/300 devotees took prasada that day. That day, when the Master touched Loren babu he (Master) passed into *samadhi*. Since that time there was a division among the devotees of the Master. In one party there were Rama, Girish, Manomohana, Kedar and others. They used to call the Master an Incarnation of God. In the other group were Balaram, Kishori, Suresh, Pranakrishna and others. It was on this occasion the Master made it known to the devotees that Māyā was no other than Īswara Himself. "The creatures and creation are but He. Jivas are His manifestations. Avatars also are His manifestations but with a difference. But ultimately all are He, all are one... The same one who Incarnated as Rama and Krishna has Incarnated this time (showing himself) as Ramakrishna."

'One day he paid a visit to Girish's residence. That day he had a long conversation with Girish's brother, Atul babu. There during the meal he gave curds to Loren babu from his own dish.

'After the death of Loren babu's father the family had to undergo terrible privations. At last they wanted to arrange for his marriage which would fetch a handsome dowry. Hear-

ing this the Master took me with him and drove to Loren's house. Loren babu said, "I was going out but saw you coming, by the Tala turn, so I did not go out." The Master asked, "How did you see us?" Naren explained it. You know, if a man is engaged in sincere *sadhana* many occult powers, such as telepathy, television come to him. Loren babu saw us in that way. Hearing him patiently the Master quietly said, "You should not express these things to others. This is only the beginning. Many more things will come, but keep them all to yourself." The Master took him into the carriage and brought him to Dakshineswar. Among other things the Master said, "Mother brought you down here for me. Marriage is not for you. You can't marry." Loren babu said, "I can no longer see their miseries — mother, brothers, and sisters are in the terrible throes of penury. I cannot bear it any more." The Master said, "Did you not go to Mother for this? But you could not ask for the removal of their miseries, instead you asked for discrimination, dispassion, devotion and all that. Tell me what I can do. Any way Mother will see that your family will not suffer from want of bare necessities." The moment these words came out of the Master's lips Loren babu said, "Then I will never marry. Take it from me." "What do you say, my boy?" said the Master, "Mother has shown you to me in the guise of a *sadhu*. Can it ever turn out to be false?" A devotee hearing this, told Lātu Maharaj, "But maharaj, we have heard that Narendranath was brought here on our earth from the region of the unmanifest, that he was a part of Rishi Nara. And we have read that a light travelled all the way from heavens to Calcutta and Narendra was born of it. Never did we hear that the Master saw him in the guise of a *sadhu*."

Lātu Maharaj said, "Once in Keshav babu's house Narendra was playing the part of a *sadhu* in a theatrical performance. When he appeared in that dress the Master stood up in his seat and observed him closely and said, "How wonderful! How precisely do they

tally!" He went on calling Loren babu out by name. Loren babu was unwilling to come out in that dress. But Keshav babu said, "When he is calling you what harm is there if you come down?" When Loren babu came near, the Master caught hold of his hand and gleefully said, "One day Mother showed you in this dress. How exactly does that tally with this appearance of yours!"

Hearing this a devotee said, "Maharaj, you speak so many things about the Master which we do not find written in any book."

Lātu Maharaj said, "Bah! Do you think like that? Can all things he said be ever put in writing? The Master's moods were infinite. Infinite are his utterances in those moments. Is it ever possible for anyone to record them all? The few that one heard and understood have been put in black and white. In fact there is no end to his utterances. There was a never-ending flow of words gushing out of his mouth. Take for example the case of Lord God. From time immemorial devotees without number have been saying wonderful things about Him. Have they been able to describe Him even to their satisfaction? Similar is the case with our Master."

A few more things about Narendra that we heard from Lātu Maharaj we narrate below. We are not sure about their dates. We simply narrate them here.

'One day — will you believe? — they were

cooking meat at Dakshineswar. The Master came there presently and asked them what they were doing. When they said, they were preparing a mutton curry for Narendra, he said nothing and went away. Do you know what the Master used to say about brother Loren? He would say, "Naren will have to be engaged in tremendous activities. Let him take good food, otherwise how will he be able to cope with the works that are waiting for him? . . . In him the fire of *jñāna* (Knowledge of Brahman) is ablaze. Whatever he will take he will digest; nothing will harm him." It is for this reason that whatever his Marwari devotees would bring he used to give to Narendra. . . . One day Loren said to the Master, "I am no believer in a God who would be pleased with meat and wine and would be angry if they are not offered." (The reference is to Mother Kali). The Master said, "Today you are not honouring Her, but mind you, there will come a day when you will pay your homage to Her. All the miseries that you are suffering from are due to your not accepting the Mother, Śakti." A day did come when Loren babu accepted Mother. The Master was beside himself with joy when he heard that Loren had accepted Mother. Would you believe, the Master after Loren babu's acceptance of Mother, prayed to Her for the welfare of Naren's family?'

(To be continued)

NOTES AND COMMENTS

IN THIS ISSUE

Swami Nikhilananda is the Head of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center, New York. An author of many books his articles have also appeared in the *Vedanta Kesari*.

Swami Premeshananda's article "Swami Vivekananda and Indian culture" is the last instalment of the series.

Dr Anima Sen Gupta is Reader in Philosophy, Patna University. In her article "Ethics of the Samkhya Philosophy" she succinctly but forcefully brings out the basis

of ethics in the Samkhya system.

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MEMOIRS OF SWAMI ADBHUTANANDA

(A free translation of the Bengali book, *Smritikatha*)

(Continued from the previous issue)

Now we shall narrate what we heard from Lātu Maharaj about Rakhāl Maharaj (Swami Brahmananda).

‘Once Rakhāl Babu took a little of the food meant for the Master. When the latter came to know of it he said, “What’s this Rakhāl? How could you take it before it is offered to ‘Mother’? And you know I do not eat, anything without offering it to Her.” . . . After Rakhāl babu’s marriage Manomohan babu brought them — the bride and the groom — both to the Master at Dakshineswar. The Master blessed them and assured the bride saying, “Be not afraid, I will not, snatch away Rakhāl from you. On the contrary I will send him to you now and then.” He then asked them to go to Nahabatkhana, i.e. to Holy Mother and whispered into my ears to ask Mother to put a coin into the bride’s hand and see her face.* Mother did what she was asked to do.’

A devotee : ‘Why so, Maharaj? Putting a coin into her hand and seeing her face?’

Lātu Maharaj : ‘Ah! What intelligence! Why do you forget that Rakhāl babu was, the Master’s (spiritual) son? Do they see the daughter-in-law’s face without presents? Don’t you observe it at your home?’

A devotee : ‘Yes, that I know. But the Master was a Paramahansa, above all rites and customs. Why should he observe these social rules of householders?’

Lātu Maharaj : ‘This is his uniqueness. He observed the said rules and regulations rather in detail. Did he not say, “If I break one rule,

you (disciples) will throw the whole set overboard?” And again, “If I observe all meticulously you may follow a few perfunctorily.” . . . True to his words the Master used to send Rakhāl babu home now and then and would not allow him to be with him for a long time at a stretch. But when he would return the Master would ask him to have three sips of Ganges water first as a purificatory rite, then to proceed to the temple of Kali. . . . The day the Master heard that a son was born to Rakhāl babu he said, “That is the end of his destined enjoyments. Now he will have to work for Mother’s Lila.” . . . We too observed that just after that Rakhāl babu’s visits to Dakshineswar became much oftener. And the Master asked him, to be engaged in prayer and meditation and counting beads incessantly, which he did.† During this time Rakhāl babu passed through a peculiar mood commonly found among children before their teens. If the Master showed love to any other boy devotee Rakhāl used to get piqued. Observing this the Master said to him, “It is easy for a *sadhu* to renounce other things. But to give up the desire for being the most beloved of one he loves dearly is rather difficult.” But Rakhāl babu transcended that also. It is for this reason that Brother Loren once said, “Rakhāl is superior to all of us in spirituality.” The Master was exceedingly joyous the day Rakhāl would be at Dakshineswar. That night he would take all of us into his room and ask us to meditate together. But later it was changed; we would be asked to go to different places in the garden and meditate separately.’

‘1885. Senior Gopal cherished the idea of getting initiation from the Master. But he could not express it to him before others. Per-

* It was the custom in Bengal, when the bride arrived at her father-in-law’s house after the marriage, which took place at the bride’s father’s house, the elderly lady relatives of the groom each at a time, would remove the veil covering the bride’s face and implant a kiss and put some coins and other presents into her hands. This is what is known as ‘Seeing the bride’s face’.

† More of this will be related in the Chapter on Lātu’s spiritual practices.

haps he was shy. (The Master generally did not give formal initiation but would communicate spiritual power by touch or mere will). One day Gopaldā found the Master strolling all alone in the garden. He took this opportunity, came to him quickly and (as I found him) knelt down and catching hold of both his feet started shedding profuse tears. The Master pulled him up by his hands, Gopaldā still crying like a child. What the Master told him I could not hear but since then, we found Gopaldā invariably joining in the *kirtana* in the Vishnu temple.'

* * *

'Look here, one day Brother Harish gave us a very nice idea which we have treasured devotedly. He said "Everyone has to get his cheque passed through the Master to be honoured by any bank."'

A devotee : 'What is the idea behind it? I don't follow it.'

Lātu Maharaj : 'Yea! You know of one kind of bank, namely of money. But there is another kind—of grace, which you do not know. There come on earth in a particular period of time some saints and gurus without whose grace no one can attain divine love. Brother Harish regarded the Master as one such. Just as one deposits money with a bank, and on the strength of this the bank issues cheques, so the inner circle of devotees deposited their spiritual practices with the Master, who incarnated with them and issued the cheques of grace to them.'

The devotee : 'Of what spiritual practices are you speaking, Maharaj? Those that you performed at Dakshineswar or others that you did in previous births?'

Lātu Maharaj : 'Do you think austerities, however intense, performed in one life can take you to God? Dhruva, that prince of devotees, got a little vain when he had the vision of Lord Vishnu with what he thought as just a funny effort of his one life. Narada understood it and took him on a travel, in the course of which they came to a spot with a high mound. On being asked Narada said, "Don't you know? It is a mound of bones of

your bodies of previous incarnations." "Ah!" said Dhruva, "I had to come to the earth so many times!" Thus did his vanity vanish. So I say one life's austerities are quite inadequate for realizing God. Life after life one has to go on performing austerities for His sake. All these remain deposited with Him. When at last the accumulation is deemed nearing adequacy the Lord's grace descends on the devotee. He gets not only the capital but interest too.'

Devotee : 'What's capital, what is interest?'

Lātu Maharaj : 'Interest is the grace of a competent guru. When this is received devotees are beside themselves with joy. Then, with renewed vigour they start performing austerities to get back their capital. When the Lord is realized with the grace of the guru, that is the realization of the capital.'

Devotee : 'Ha! It is like having an insurance policy. The 'Life policy' is there, there is the endowment; over and above them you have the payment of a bonus!'

This made Lātu Maharaj laugh.

'Once the Master took us to Bhadreswar. The journey was by boat. We hired four boats. There was a fanfare of Khols, cymbals, bugles, horns, etc. Hearing our loud singing of Lord's name there was quite a big crowd on the other side of the Ganga. People, went on offering basketfuls of *batasā*. There we were guests of Śiva Acharya. There a pundit went on arguing against the existence of God, thus confusing the minds of devotees. Seeing this Master told him, "It is after undergoing a good deal of labour that a man comes to believe in God. And you, being a pundit are raising doubts in their minds about God! What kind of scholarship is this my dear?" The pundit said in reply, "Don't, don't think so, Sir; I was only cutting jokes." But, the Master understood that he was not in earnest. So, as was his wont under such circumstances, he touched the pundit all on a sudden and said, "Alas! Your inside, I see, has become all wooden, dry as dust. This life of yours is totally lost. Having read the scriptures, you have learnt hypocrisy." The pundit stammered and left the meeting.'

In this connexion Lātu Maharaj narrated the Master's conversation with Gauri Pandit of Indesh (vide *Lilaprasanga*). 'Thus did the Master used to punish the hypocritical pundits,' said Lātu Maharaj.

'Ramababu once fell seriously ill. But his faith in the Master was so great that he would not call a doctor. The Master came to him and said, "Rama, what is this? In illness everybody calls a physician, that is the general rule. Why should you not do it?" Do you know how Ramababu reacted to this? "I do not know of a physician," said he, "greater than one who has cured me of the high fever of worldliness. The holy water touched by your big toe will cure me of this illness too." At this the Master smiled and called on the devotees to advise him to go for a doctor. But Ramababu remained true to his faith. The holy water mentioned by Ramababu did cure him of his illness. Such was his faith in the Master!'

'Once Girishbabu's son had an attack of cholera. Physicians failed to cure him. Girishbabu sent a man to bring water touched by the holy feet of the Master; the Master sent water consecrated by the touch of the Mother Kali's feet. Girishbabu sent away the physician and the boy got cured with the holy water. Do you know faith works miracles?'

'Master went to Devenbabu's house at Nimu Goswami Lane, Abiritola. His throat disease had then just started. At that stage it was found that if he took ice the pain lessened. So he used to take ice often. One day he asked a boy (Swami Ramakrishnananda) to buy ice for him. The boy was poor, he used to come

to Dakshineswar on foot. He went on foot to the town at Shyambazar purchased ice and covered it so nicely in a towel that he could bring the entire piece intact to Dakshineswar. The Master was very glad and said, "The proverb goes, 'That fellow is a miser to the marrow between whose fingers water does not run off.' But I see you are not only not miserly but munificent, although water (melted ice) did not run out of your palm even in this hot sun."'

A devotee: 'The Master called Śaśi Maharaj "munificent"?''

Lātu Maharaj: 'Tell me who else but he should be called "munificent"? Do you forget that brother Śaśi begged for us and fed us when we were absorbed in meditation and prayer? He who can feed so many out of love — would you not call him "munificent"?''

(But more of Śaśi Maharaj in the Chapter on Lātu Maharaj in Baranagore and Alam-bazar Math.)

'Listen, when the Master's throat disease went on aggravating, Ramababu, Girishbabu, Manomohanbabu and Sureshbabu wanted to bring him to Calcutta. Then brother Baburam used to stay at Dakshineswar. Master asked his opinion about it. He kept quiet. Seeing that Narenbabu, who happened to be present there, said, "I think the suggestion is good. If you stay in Calcutta it will be easier for us to come and attend upon you as also for the doctors to call on." Vaikunthababu was asked to search for and hire a suitable house. In three or four days he fixed a house at Baghbazar.'

Later events will be described in the next chapter.

CHAPTER XI

When Lātu Maharaj came to serve the Master he was in his critical teens, a period of life when the surge of emotions was violent, when attraction for enjoyments was natural and unsuspected, and therefore emotions got free reins. Moreover he came from a class of society where morals were loose, drinking was universal, glasses passing from father's hands

to son's, and vulgar words and deeds were not deemed censurable. It was no small matter for a boy coming from such society to turn his mind away from all temptations and pass his days at Dakshineswar in scaling the heights of renunciation and austerities under the watchful eyes of the strict disciplinarian that the Master was. This was undoubtedly due to the potent

influence of holy personages, especially of the Master. It was this influence which kept Lātu wide awake to his defects and diligently work for their eradication. His determination to rid himself of all weakness was so thorough that no austerities to him ever proved too difficult to go through, no obstacles too hard to surmount. A word from the Master promptly evoked a promise, churned out of the depth of his personality and the promise was stoically kept to the last breath.

The Master came to know that Lātu's village society allows drinking. So one day, when Lātu was alone with him the Master said, 'Look here, my boy, to try to meditate under the influence of liquor and to have intimacy with a woman for a *sadhu* (monk) are both nothing but self-deception. Liquor and "woman and gold" raise doubt about the existence of God. If a *sadhu* falls under the influence of either his spiritual progress is ruined for the life.' These words opened his eyes. 'The secret desires that now and then peep in my heart and are not allowed to raise their heads,' thought Lātu in amazement, 'are all known to him, I see. He must be knowing the inmost thoughts of all who come in contact with him. It is useless to try to hide anything from him.' Henceforward Lātu was seen, bringing the slightest puff of thought rising in his mind immediately to the Master.

'It so happened one day that as I was passing by a grog-shop at the Cossipore turn, while going to Ramababu's house, all on a sudden I felt very bad. I could not understand why. I could not concentrate my mind on anything. Immediately on my return to Dakshineswar I brought the matter to him (Master). "It is the smell of liquor," said he, "that brought about that mental depression in you. Never have a smell of such things."' To what extent Lātu carried out this order of the Master is best expressed by the incident narrated by Ramababu. One day Ramababu told the Master, 'What a queer order have you passed on that lad? To come to Calcutta the poor boy has to walk eight miles by detour.'

The Master could not recall what peculiar

order he had passed on the boy, as a result of which he was put to such trouble and said perplexed, 'What have I told him? What strange order have I passed on him? No, I can't recall any.'

Ramababu: 'Have you not asked him to avoid the smell of liquor? In doing so he avoids those portions of streets where there are grog-shops. And the result is he has to walk eight miles to come to Calcutta.'

Hearing this the Master became very grave, and calling Lātu said, 'I have asked you not to smell liquor. Does it mean you are to avoid streets having liquor shops? Pass by such shops, they will not affect you. When you do so only remember me, desire for drink or for any intoxicant will never rise in your heart.'

In carrying out the orders of the Master to the syllable Lātu showed superhuman determination and industry, not only in the above case but in eradicating all the natural animal instincts that stand in the way of man's higher evolution. Lātu was crowned with success in many a circumstance where stalwarts are carried away by the strong current. Man by nature is a slave to the threefold desire of enjoying good food, good sleep and sex pleasure. But nobody who has not conquered these three greatest enemies of man could ever realize God. People have a queer idea about austerities. Real austerities are indefatigable attempts at the conquest of these three. Lātu's energy never failed him in this.

We have seen above to what extent Lātu went to avoid the smell of liquor. Below are a few incidents illustrative of his attempts at controlling his diet. Lātu was practising wrestling and was habitually doing violent physical exercises. His early aim of life — we have it on the authority of Mahendranath Datta, second brother of Narendra — was to be a wrestler of the first rank. These people, wrestlers, are naturally inclined towards taking substantial food in large quantity. Lātu was no exception to that. We have gathered that at Ramababu's house he used to have delicious dishes, quite substantial. And the quantity he consumed was large. When he

came to Dakshineswar delicacies stopped all of a sudden. But to satisfy hunger he had to increase the quantity. He was, however, roused to his senses by the conversation he heard between Yogen Maharaj and the Master.

‘Once brother Yogen expressed his desire to serve the Master at night. The Master asked him what he took at night, to which he said, “Chapatis of one pound of flour and potato-curry of half a pound”. Master said “Lord save me! You need not serve at night. I will not be able to supply such food to you. Better take your night meal at home and come here to serve if you like.”’

Lātu Maharaj continued :

‘You know I was a good eater. Chapatis of flour of two to four pounds were nothing to me. But the day I heard the above conversation I was roused to the sense that those who want to pray and meditate at night must eat very little. I at once decreased the quantity of food. For a couple of months I had some trouble, later I got inured to that. Then I found that even if I wanted to I could not take more. One day the Master observed me taking my food and remarked, “The quantity should be reduced still further.” I started reducing it, so much so that I used to feel pain in the stomach. The Master understood it and one day said, “My boy, don’t go to that extreme. What is necessary for the maintenance of the body should be given it. If you don’t, it will again hamper your prayer and meditation.” He used to train us thus. It was difficult for us to escape his observing eyes.’

A little earlier Lātu and a number of other devotees were invited to dinner at a devotee’s house. As it sometimes happens, a sort of competition in eating started, and Lātu consumed a huge quantity and was praised for that. When the host devotee came to Dakshineswar the next day he narrated the previous night’s incident and praised Lātu’s power of consuming food. When the devotee went away the Master called Lātu aside and said, “Hello! You should not repeat it in future. During day you may load your stomach fully. It will not harm you so much. But at night

your food should be just light refreshments.” The Master thus used to instruct Lātu in various ways about his food habits, following which in a couple of years his normal diet, we observed it later, became surprisingly meagre.

The small quantity of food Lātu used to consume during this period attracted the attention of other devotees; and its praise reached the ears of the Master. One day the Master was present when Lātu was taking his noon-day meal and found it was inadequate for keeping his body fit for work and spiritual exercises. So the Master asked him to take his food, along with himself, and used to pour ghee, into his dish with his own hand. This went on for some time. But nature did not cease to take retaliation for transgressing her laws and Lātu had to suffer from various physical ailments for some time at Dakshineswar. We will return to this topic a little later.

Along with restraint in diet the Master taught him how to get mastery over sleep as well. We have it on authority that since his childhood Lātu was a heavy sleeper. Moreover he started wrestling and taking violent physical exercise. As is usual with wrestlers, he became habituated to sleeping long hours. When he came to Dakshineswar to live with the Master his work increased. Naturally he used to fall asleep early evening. One day the Master noticed it and said, “What is this? It is hardly dusk and at this mystic hour you are sleeping! I have never seen a spiritual aspirant behaving in this way. During these hours they should lose themselves in the thought of the Lord. And you are sleeping! Get up, quick.” These words woke up Lātu from sleep and as one guilty of a great offence, he hung his head in shame. Great was his remorse, which, unlike others, who would have repeated it later, made him forthwith promise to the Master: ‘Never will I sleep during these hours.’ This promise he kept up to his last breath. Even when he was dangerously ill, in later life, somebody was always to help him sit straight during evening hours.

(To be continued)

tesvara Temple at Tirupati executed with great delicacy and being contemporary works bespeak the king's devotion to God Sri Venkatesvara to whose temple he made substantial improvements.

Accounts of travellers like Paes and Razak described the paintings at Vijayanagar Court which proved that painting attained a high degree of perfection in the time of Krishnadevaraya. Speaking of a chamber in Krishnadevaraya's palace, Paes says that there were designed in painting all the ways of the life of the men who had been there, including the Portuguese so that the king's 'wives' could understand the manner in which each one lived in his own country, even the blind and the beggars. At the entrance to the king's residence were two images painted life-like and drawn to their respective manner. One of them represented Krishnadevaraya's father, and looked in the painted figure as a dark gentleman of fine form and a little stout, while the other

was the painting of Krishnadevaraya himself. The outer walls of a particular chamber within the palace were decorated with the figures of women with bows and arrows like Amazons. The hall where the women within the palace practised dancing was studded with painted sculptures ; and the design of these showed the different positions at the ends of dances to remind the dancers of the postures in which they had to stand after a particular dance. Paes speaks also of a painted recess where the women clung on with their hands in 'order better to stretch and loosen their bodies and legs'. Abdur Razak too while describing the avenues formed by the houses of nobles and dancing girls, says that the figures of lions, panthers, tigers and other animals were so well painted before them, that they seemed to be alive. The *Pārijātāpaharaṇamu* a work of Mūku Timmanna dedicated to Krishnadevaraya, also mentions the paintings of birds, swans, doves, parrots and other domesticated animals in front of these houses.

MEMOIRS OF SWAMI ADBHUTANANDA

(A free translation of the Bengali book *Smritikatha*)

(Continued from the previous issue)

Once at the Baranagore Math Lātu Maharaj was suffering from a serious attack of pneumonia and Sarat Maharaj was attending on him. Being a medical student, Sarat Maharaj was in favour of following the physician's injunctions strictly and would not yield to Lātu Maharaj's request to make him seated during the evening hours. At this Lātu said, 'Leave off all those idle talks about your doctor's injunctions. What do they understand? It is my Master's order and it shall be obeyed, under all conditions. If you do not help me sit up, mind you, I shall have to take the help of Mahavirji (Sri Ramachandra's faithful servant).' Even this had no effect on Sarat Maharaj. For some reason, however, he had to leave the room for

a few seconds. When he returned he was confused to find Lātu Maharaj sitting up in his bed. Seeing this Sarat Maharaj remorsefully and in a tone of loving complaint said, 'Lātu, brother, should you have done like this in this condition of your body? The physicians requested you and us repeatedly not to do anything like this. Should we not follow their advice when ill? Have we not heard the Master say that during illness one should be guided by the advice of the doctors? And have we not seen him strictly following their injunctions? Do you not remember that doctors once asked him not to take water and how obediently he followed it? Why then, brother, do you go against their injunctions?' But Lātu Maharaj brushed aside all these and

said, 'I do not know arguments. It is his order and it must be obeyed.'

A similar incident occurred much later at Vārānāsī during his last illness. At that time too he carried out the Master's word. Nobody could ever think that in such a physical condition any human being, could ever sit up, unaided. And this was what he actually did, so strong was his determination to follow the Master's orders to the letter. Unique was the Master, wonderful, was his disciple!

Yet another incident, which happened when the Master was in his physical frame, shows how he trained Lātu Maharaj in the spiritual practices: Lātu fell asleep, not in the early part of the evening but in the first quarter of the night. The Master could not brook that too. He not only woke him up but rebuked him sharply. 'If in the very first quarter of the night,' said he, 'you fall asleep when will you meditate? It is still not yet nine, and you sleep like a log. On the contrary you should have meditated the whole night, and not have felt that the day broke. Instead, your eyelids are heavy with sleep in these early hours of the night. Have you come here only to sleep?'

It was enough. Lātu's inner being cried shame on himself, and for the rest of his life Lātu left sleeping at night. 'How to express to you the deep sorrow that seized me at these words of the Master! I felt what a donkey I must be that having had the unique opportunity of enjoying the company and guidance of such a saint I was wasting my time in sleep! I went on whipping my mind, and having splashed water on to the eyes and face walked briskly for some time on the bank of the Ganga, and when the body got heated sufficiently I returned and sat near him. But Oh the insistence of sleep! Again I dozed. Again I went out for a walk. Thus did I fight sleep the whole night. Next night also the struggle continued. It was indeed a hard struggle, I suffered a lot even during the day. I did not however give up. Continuously the battle raged on day and night. Night sleep was completely brought

under control. Not so, however, sleep during the day.'

After two years' hard struggle Lātu conquered sleep—in the sense that he could keep his body perfectly fit for meditation and prayer with as little sleep as he liked and at any hour of the day he liked. Sleep at night, of course, was completely forsaken for life.

Sarat Maharaj (Swami Saradananda) has borne witness to this fact of Lātu Maharaj's conquest over sleep at night. He writes, 'Whether in the company of the Master or later, after his passing away, Lātu was invariably seen praying and meditating the whole night and sleeping during the day. The utterance of Lord Sri Krishna in the *Gīta* that "A man of perfect self-restraint remains wide awake during what is night to others, and sleeps during day when people are wide awake;" was made literally true in Lātu Maharaj's life . . . What is more wonderful was that although he remained awake throughout the night he never slackened in his service to the Master during the day.'

At the simultaneous attempt at controlling food and sleep, we are told, Lātu grew lean and thin, and in the two years of his stay at Dakshineswar he once suffered from an attack of dysentery and another time from agonising burning sensation over the whole body. On the latter (when it exactly happened is not known) occasion the Master asked him to besmear his body with the mud from the bed of the Ganga. But for these two lapses Lātu generally enjoyed good health during the period in question.

Now we come to Lātu's struggle to overcome the third natural propensity of all creatures—the sex urge. The person who fought so tenaciously the other two not so dangerous enemies to spiritual progress is not expected to leave alone the deadliest foe. It would really be interesting to note what he did, and how he was instructed by the Master, to eradicate this most dangerous passion. Once, while staying at Balaram Mandir, he gave us an inkling into this. 'Do you know how the Master would

warn us against being familiar with women ?' said Lātu Maharaj, ' " Those who want to realize God must be extremely, cautious about mixing with women," the Master said one day in the course of his conversation with us about spiritual practices. And he himself explained what he meant by being " cautious about mixing with women ". Said he, " Do you know what the phrase means ? It includes among many others the following : to sit and talk with women, to hear their talks, and to think of them when alone ; to talk about them and to derive pleasure from such talks ; to keep some things belonging to them and secretly looking at them ; to catch hold of their hands or to touch any part of their body—all these are to be avoided scrupulously. Do you follow me ? Those who want to see God face to face must avoid all these as deadly poison. Those who want to know God must observe strict celibacy ; trying to know God without the preservation of the seed is like a child's cry for the moon. They can never have a clear idea of God, far less know Him. What happens is this. The preservation of the seed gives firm faith in the decision (that all powers inside the body or outside are God's power). And when that comes man lives in the unbroken consciousness of having his being in Him." '

Hearing these words of the Master a devotee said in despair, ' Maharaj, is it ever possible for man to act upto the instruction, to be so austere as that ? To live in the world and not to think of woman ! A man will not hear a female voice, will not see a female form, will not talk with women—to practise such extreme stoicism in a worldly life is undoubtedly an absurd proposition.' The reply that Lātu Maharaj gave to the devotee eloquently expresses the rigour of his austere life of this period. ' You men with family ', said he, ' think it is impossible. But there have been born hundreds of great souls who have demonstrated in their lives that, given determination, it is after all not a very tough job. There were hundreds, before whom women did not dare to come, who were absolutely free from attraction to women. The Master used to say the

Great Śuka and his tribe were all *urdhvaretas*, i.e., by keeping the seed unspent and holy they acquired a power with which they built a strong and highly sensitive nervous system and a keen and capacious brain, which made them veritable dynamos of higher powers. The puny thought of " woman and gold " could never cross their minds, desires for enjoyment, of any kind we know of, were burnt to ashes. And when hearts are barren of attractions how are imaginings regarding women possible ? Where there are attractions, imaginations run riot. Stop imaginings about " woman and gold " and you will see you have conquered them. But how to stop imaginings ? Will it be done of itself ? Not so, my dear, one is to keep oneself completely immersed in the ocean of Lord's name. We have experienced it in our lives. There is an intoxication in taking the Lord's name. When that drunkenness comes nothing else can have any attraction for you. Everything else becomes stale and insipid. An intoxication of bliss covers up the whole personality, pervades the whole being. Compared to this all thoughts of " woman and gold " are paltry nothings. The Master used to say. " Before the bliss of Brahman millions of the so-called supreme joys of the world dwindle into hollow insignificance." '

From the above conversation it is but evident that the Master asked Lātu Maharaj to take the Lord's name incessantly in order to rid himself of the sex urge. Youth tends towards sense enjoyment. To keep one's mind fixed, during this period of life in the remembrance and utterance of the Lord's name, day and night, unceasingly is easy to say but very difficult to practise. Those who try to follow it find where the difficulty lies, why it is well-nigh impossible ; others take it lightly. This struggle between a man's unbroken dedication to the Lord through constant remembrance and his natural sex and other urges for enjoyment is unique in the sense that the source of both is the same mind and heart, that they come in various guises so that the friend is indistinguishable, on many occasions, from the foe ; and that they derive their strength and susten-

ance from the same ego, whose leanings are sudden, violent and capricious. Rare indeed is the personality who is endowed with such a high degree of 'discrimination' and 'dispassion' as to make him successful.

Our Lātu Maharaj too could not escape this inner struggle. But, aided by his will-power reinforced by 'discrimination' and 'dispassion', he stormed the fortress of delusion and razed it to the ground. When once he made up his mind to conquer a temptation or rise above a weakness of his character there was no austerity hard enough to deter him from undertaking it for achieving his end. This was his peculiar trait; and it is due to this that he could succeed in the practice of unceasing remembrance and utterance of the Lord's name, which gave him perfect control over all passions and temptations. To practise this he had to struggle hard. We have mentioned of his control of food and sleep and punishing himself in many other ways. In fact so strong was his desire to make his character whole, that the question of sparing himself in any attempt never crossed his mind. Success attends such endeavour. In answer to a devotee's question he detailed the process he followed in the manner noted below.

A devotee: 'Maharaj, monks are in the habit of saying that to reach out to God one should give up all attachments to "woman and gold"; but how is it possible for householders like ourselves who are virtually living surrounded by all manner of temptations and attachments? We do not find a place in our mind whereon we can stand and fight them—every-pin-point of it has been taken up by them. There is no chance whatever to fight them. How to fight? Temptations are so strong that they are sure to drive away the moral acumen with which we are to fight. They will not allow the noble qualities any quarter to wax strong, they would nip them in the bud. You ask us to take Lord's name; alas! passions sweep our will clean of it. You talk of discrimination? Why, it is itself coloured by them! Its edge gets blunted, striking against them. In fact the fortress has already been

occupied by the enemy. Now tell us what we can do? This is the critical situation we are actually in. Were you in such a situation, tell us then where in your heart could you get room for Lord's name and "discrimination"?'

Lātu Maharaj: 'You have but one excuse — "How can we take the Lord's name?" You don't know that if you start taking it, even as a very bitter pill, it will make its way into your heart and mind, by its own potency. Is anybody to be told that our mind is inebriated with passions, that they lead us by the nose, as a bull by its nose-string? It can't be gainsaid that they are the greatest rogues, our deadliest enemies. This is what Sri Krishna told Arjuna, isn't it? But he said this also: "Cultivate dispassion, O Arjuna, towards the objects of temptations — practise it daily, hourly." These unceasing attempts will make the mind quiet. The more the mind will run after the tempting objects the greater should be the determination to understand the consequences of yielding to the temptations. Discrimination should start thus: "Are not these objects fleeting? Today they are, tomorrow they are not." Be satisfied with the bare necessities. Why should you hanker after more of these transient things? If you go on filling your heart with these fleeting spectres where will you find room for the Abiding? Do you think that the sum of any number of transient things can equal the permanent, that you go on hoarding the impermanent? The Abiding is but one, which is Brahman. Anything other than that is a jack-o'-lantern. Thus should you discriminate, make the infatuated mind understand by repeated suggestions. Continue doing so despite failures; you will see you are gaining in strength and the enemy losing ground day by day.

'You know that story: Sri Rama once presented a fine necklace of pearls to Hanuman, who examined it closely, going so far as to break one pearl with his teeth. He found there was no name of Rama written anywhere in it. He threw the necklace away deridingly. Lakshmana observed it and taunted, "Look at the monkey! What would he know the worth

of the pearl-necklace? He has spoiled the precious thing." At this Rama said, "Why not ask the reason of Hanuman himself?" When asked, Hanuman replied, "In vain did I look in it for the name of Rama, why then keep a worthless thing on one's body?" This is what is known as "discrimination". One should discriminate in this way. To keep the edge of discrimination ever sharp is true austerity — a very difficult process indeed. Thus does one give the toughest fight to passions and temptations. This incessant struggle again strengthens dispassion and discrimination. Thus mutually strengthened they build up a character like that of granite, which in turn makes further fight easy, nay a matter of joy.

'Dirt from outside enters through the windows, our sense organs. The very first thing that one should do is to check its entrance. How to do it? Write out a notice "no entrance" on the windows and see that the notice is respected. The trespassers should be immediately handed over to the police, "discrimination". With the aid of the police clear your house of all the undesirables. In that well cleansed shrine, the heart, spread the seat for the Lord, and when He comes and takes His seat then, and not before does the fight come to a victorious end.

'You should know, however, that the seeds of all desires are there inside the mind. Water is supplied by the sense organs within the body and the objects without it. This leads to a bumper crop of thistle. They should be weeded out, their seeds should be destroyed. Then in their stead should be planted the seed of Lord's name, which will grow apace. Now it is a bumper crop of thistle, then it will be of the Lord's name. The two cannot grow together. Our Master used to quote: "Where there are worldly desires there the Lord is not; and where the Lord is there the worldly desires crop not."'

A devotee: 'I have a doubt, Maharaj. Do you mean that the sense organs are to be brought under control first and then the Lord's name is to be taken?'

Lātu Maharaj: 'That too is possible. But then "Name" has power to burn the seeds of desires to ashes. Did not the Master exhort, "Wearing the armour of Name vanquish worldly desires"?'

Devotee: 'How can Name conquer desires, Maharaj?'

Lātu Maharaj: 'How silly! Desires dare not approach the orbit of Name. Name has such a potency that once a man takes to It, desires cannot raise their heads. Name (or Word) is the Lord Himself, the true Reality. When one meditates or concentrates one's mind on It, the mockeries and imitations disappear like mist at sunrise.'

Devotee: 'That may be true during the waking hours. But desires assail us in dreams as well. How can one save oneself from their attacks during those hours when one loses control over oneself. That is a potent danger, we must know how to protect ourselves from that.'

Lātu Maharaj: 'Name is powerful enough, forsooth to protect us even during those hours of our helplessness. If you sincerely take the Lord's name during the waking hours it will have its reflex action even in dreams and it will guard you, without fail in your dreams too. Name acts during sleep also. He who has got used to taking Name does it in dreams and deep sleep. One breathes in dreams and deep sleep, is it not? Even so Name continues its work in these states too. It prevents bad dreams from cropping up. If, by chance, one starts dreaming a bad dream Name forces the dreamer to wake up and thus saves him. This protecting armour of Name works unceasingly day and night.'

We give below some excerpts from the diary of this devotee about this topic. They are quite illuminating.

Lātu Maharaj: '... Why, these are simple words. Why should you fail to grasp their significance. Look here, desires, attractions for enjoyment, are there already in the mind. Sometimes they rise to the surface of the mind, sometimes they dive so deep in it that one is

led to doubt their existence in the past, far more so in the present. As you come nearer to the Lord all these complexes leave their hiding places and appear in their true colours. As your body and mind become pure and holy these weaknesses, results of actions of hundreds of previous births, start floating like bubbles on

the surface of the mind, as if driven by the heat of the Word (Name). That is their last-ditch fight. The same heat of the Name forces them completely out of the body. They are put to rout. How can they cope with the forces of the Name ?'

(To be continued)

INTIMATIONS OF ADVAITA IN THE GITA

P. SANKARANARAYANAN

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'The Bhagavad Gītā is the most elusive book,' said our late Professor P. N. Srinivasa-chari, 'spoken by the most elusive God.' This classical text-book of our religion and philosophy has been interpreted differently by different saints and scholars who have taken it upon themselves to expound it. This is not to be wondered at. Because the Gītā is the milk of the Upaniṣads drawn by the divine Cow-herd, and the Upaniṣads themselves have been understood variously.

The main theses respecting the Gītā are that it prescribes the way of *karma* or the way of *bhakti* or the way of *jñāna* for liberation and self-realization. Each of these views has its own advocate. It would also appear that even before the time of Śankara, the earliest known commentator on the Gītā, there have been many who have expounded it at variance with its real purport. Says Śankara at the beginning of his *bhāṣya* :

'This Gītā Śāstra which is the essence of all Vedānta is difficult to understand. To know its meaning many commentaries have been written on it. But they are all against the spirit and the substance of the Gītā'.¹

Śankara, therefore, proceeds to explain the Gītā from the point of view of Advaita Vedānta as indicated in the following invocation of the sacred book :

'*advaitāmṛta varṣinīm bhagavatīmaṣ-
ṭādasādhyāyinīm
amba tvām anusandadhāmi satatam
Bhagavad-Gīte bhava dveṣinīm.*'²

The thesis that the Gītā is *advaitāmṛtavarṣini* does not take away the efficacy of the *sādhanas* of *karma* and *bhakti*, which are auxiliary to the *paramasādhana* of *jñāna* for self-realization. Applying the six-fold criteria for determining the main purport of a work, it will be crystal clear that in tune with the Upaniṣads and the Brahma Sūtras, the Gītā too, teaches the lesson of Advaita as the final truth.

Let us take first the *upakrama* and the *upasaṃhāra* : the beginning and the conclusion. The Gītā starts with Arjuna's *viṣāda* or grief over the killing of those near and dear to him. He himself pleads ignorance of what his duty

मप्यत्यन्तविरुद्धानेकार्थत्वेन लौकिकैर्गृह्यमाणमुप-
लभ्याहं विवेकतोऽर्थनिर्धारणार्थं संक्षेपतो विवरणं
करिष्यामि ।

¹ तदिदं गीताशास्त्रं समस्तवेदार्थसारसंग्रहभूतं दुर्विज्ञेयम् ।
तदर्थविष्करणायानेकैर्विवृतपदपदार्थवाक्यार्थन्याय-

² O Mother, O Devi of eighteen Chapters, O Bhagavad Gita, Thou bestower of the non-dual wisdom and severer of the worldly bonds, I seek Thee.

MEMOIRS OF SWAMI ADBHUTANANDA

(A free translation of the Bengali book *Smritikatha*)

(Continued from the previous issue)

LATU MAHARAJ (in another place) : ‘Do you know these passions and temptations are extremely clever fellows ; not only do they take possession of the mind of the person but of its arms as well — arms of the mind are the five “organs of action” and five “organs of knowledge”. It is for this reason that we find the moment a desire for enjoyment arises in the mind the appropriate sense-organs are already excited to carry out the order immediately. Eyes want to enjoy beauty, ears to hear music of the voice, hands to grasp objects, legs to reach them — the sense organs become so much excited that they appear as if to jump out of the body. The enemy keeps all the sense organs feverishly alerted, the moment an opportunity arises the enjoyment of it has become a fact. And the mind — do you know how it acts? It paints romantic pictures with imagination. This imagining, you know, is the deadliest enemy of man. It is the greatest tempter. It is imagination, which tempts man by painting glowing pictures of sense pleasures, which virtually kills conscience. Losing its guidance man embraces the temptations with an abandon. So I say if you want to conquer temptations cease day-dreaming and creating false notions about enjoyments.’

Devotee : ‘But how to stop imaginings? This hydra-headed monster has a frightening growth ; all attempts, honest and tearful, prove of no avail.’

Lātu Maharaj : ‘The trick is this. The connexion between objects of enjoyment and sense-organs is continual throughout the waking hours. You have no control over that. Eyes will see, ears will hear. But you have the power to disconnect your conscious mind from it. Don’t allow it to strengthen the other connexion. That will weaken the agitations, but

will not kill them outright. The Master would say, “Three factors are required to know a thing;—the object, the sense-organ, and the mind.” If one of them is lacking there would be no knowledge. If one of them is prevented from joining, knowledge falls through. We have no control, as has been said, over the other two. The connexion between the two is every moment’s occurrence. Yes, we can shut our eyes or put cotton into our ear-holes. But these are of little avail. The moment such foolish control is off the sense-organs connect themselves with their objects with avidity. But the case is different with the organs of action and the mind. The organs of action are under the control of the mind, and the latter can be, brought under the control of the intellect or reason by dint of practice and “discrimination”. Hence our attempts are to be directed towards this. If we can control either the mind or the organs of action, we become masters of ourselves. In that case all the three factors will be there but their impelling force will be in tight reins. Even the organs of knowledge, in spite of reflex contacts will lose their driving force. The safety of an all-time control of the intellect will have an integrating effect on the personality. But intellect or reason — whence will it get this force? It must get something positive and abiding to cling to in order to withstand the attraction of sense-pleasures. That is the Lord Himself. From Him came both force and joy. Without Him discrimination becomes dry and slack.’

In another place the diary has the following : ‘It is Name, the force of Name, alone which turns the natural tendency of the mind to run after sense-pleasures, towards higher things. Mind’s day-dreamings and imaginings to create a world of romance are stopped at the start. My boys, who knows where the mind

stays ? It is through its creation of doubts and images that we become aware of its existence. When there are no doubts and images in the mind, when their creation ceases through its absorption in the Name, mind becomes absolutely pure of all dirt, all externalities. And in that pure mind flashes the Reality, the Sat, our own real nature, the All-pervading Almighty.

We take the liberty of quoting another passage from the same diary :

‘Master used to say, “You know spiritual practice is like pole-climbing. If the pole is greased you cannot climb. The oily effect is to be counteracted for the climb. The attraction for silver and sex is the grease. Unless its effect is nullified no practice is possible. Dispassion and renunciation are the chalk-powder to nullify the slipperiness and to make climbing possible.” But are dispassion and renunciation so easy of attainment ? Mind should be made to understand the evil effects of sense-enjoyments, and that repeatedly. It should be taught again and again the results of noble thoughts, sentiments, and acts. Even then they by themselves are not powerful enough to counteract the tremendous natural tendency to run after the externals. The mind must be given some pleasanter experience to be absorbed in. Nothing noble is, however, pleasant at the outset. It is made pleasant by repetition and association. Repetition of the Name and its association with God, the source of all abiding joys, create the experience necessary for neutralizing the dangerous natural tendency. This repetition of Lord’s name must be continuous. Throughout the waking hours one should have an unbroken inebriation in the Lord’s Name. And an hour or two only should the mind be allowed to be engaged in worldly matters. What you actually do is just the reverse of it. If you follow this advice you will find that worldly affairs are powerless to drag the mind out. But, I am sure, you will say, “How is it possible for us, householders, to devote so much time to it ?”’

A devotee once asked Lātu Maharaj, how lust could be brought under control, rather be driven off completely. Lātu Maharaj replied, ‘Do one thing. Keep a photo of the Master.

Whenever the fell urge would come, look at it intently, prayerfully. You will see all unworthy desires have vanished. Do it.’

To another devotee he said, ‘Do you think passions and desires leave us so easily ? Constant remembrance of our guru or Chosen Deity is a great help in this matter, I should say, the most powerful means to its achievement. One who has this has advanced far enough towards the goal. It is the Lord who will give you the proper wisdom and will to turn the passions to your advantage. Depend on Him, have unbroken faith in His words, you will see He will give you the strength to conquer them ; He will create circumstances, favourable to your growth. If you take refuge in Him with heart and soul all your difficulties will be removed. But your dedication must be wholehearted.’

The disciple : ‘Maharaj, we have not seen Him, how can we dedicate ourselves to Him ? We do not know the method. Will it do if we say, “Lord be kind to us, bestow your grace on us”, and keep quiet ?’

Lātu Maharaj : ‘My boy, He is showering His grace unceasingly. Your very life is dependent on it. Very good, you say, you do not know Him. Granted, but you know His name. Why don’t you advance with the name as your only guide ? Is it not a fact that you send your application to the manager of a firm without seeing him ? You know him later during the interview. And what do you write in your application ? Stating your qualification, you promise unswerving obedience to him and pray for the favour. All this you do without knowing him. Don’t you ?’

Disciple : ‘Yes, Maharaj, we do.’

Lātu Maharaj : ‘Do the same thing with the Lord. But this application is not something to be *sent*. It is to be written in the pages of one’s own mind, which the Lord sitting within it reads. But the drafting must be factual. Our prayers must be sincere, our words must ring true. When we say, “May we not forget your name ; I have taken refuge in you ; kindly make me your servant ; remove all doubts that you are our Master, Guru, father, mother,

everything, that I am your son ; find me my auspicious path ; save me from your bewitching Māyā ; I have not seen you, only heard your name ; my Lord, make me your own," we must mean it wholly, fully. Then only He might one day deign to bestow His grace on you. When that auspicious moment comes all your hard, soul-burning attempts would come to an abrupt end. Nothing more will remain for you to do. He will take full charge of you and guide you on to the goal, give you your destined work to do, to show you the method ; and lead you to its fulfilment.'

Another day he told a devotee, 'Look here, as long as there is egotism in a man, his desires and passions will not leave him, he is under their grip. So, first of all, burn the fellow fully. All your troubles will end.'

A devotee : 'How will egotism go, Maharaj ?'

Lātu Maharaj : 'What is egotism ? "I am superior to others." This sense, is it not ? Try to make it small, look small. Whenever this sense of superiority will come, think in this wise : "You fool, are there not men much superior to you in this and other respects ? Compared to them, how small you look ? What are your powers ? How often you have failed ? Have I come to this world of my own accord, or have I been led here by the nose ? These men around me — have I gathered them or have they come drifted by circumstances. This firm or business that has made me rich and enabled me to give opportunities to thousands to earn their living — how have I come by it ? Have not circumstances conspired and helpers joined to make it a success ? Am I not but an insignificant factor in the matter ? Can I afford to be vain ? I have come to this world impelled by Him, I am still here by His orders. I shall have to quit it the moment He wills. What right have I — I, so wholly dependent on Him, on His created circumstances, on his created persons — to be proud of anything ?" If you look at your egotism in this light it will surely vanish in shame. Do you follow me ?'

It is but reasonable to hold that a *sādhu*,

who, in later life, used to dilate on the above topic so often and so emphatically must himself, during his *sādhana* period, have followed them scrupulously and derived immense benefit from it, must have conquered his passions and desires by following them. For *sādhus*, unlike scholars, guide others in the light of their own experience. Lātu Maharaj eradicated his passions and desires by unceasing repetition of the Lord's name.

It was indeed a fact, as all of us have observed that he was a perfect master of his passions. But he had to work through many impediments, shed bitter tears in the course of struggles with the Enemy. Below we give a few instances in his own words.

'Look here, one day I was so overwhelmed by these fell desires that I had to run to the Master and save myself. Taking of Lord's name appeared impossible, mind rebelled against it. The moment I appeared before the Master, he understood the situation and saved me. Later he consoled me saying, "Yes, they will come and go ; but you must not give up taking the Lord's name."'

Another instance. That day too Lātu's power of discrimination and dispassion were again and again being rendered useless. The Master himself appeared at the spot and helped him out of the danger. We give below what was reported to us by Senior Gopal (Swami Advaitananda, a monastic disciple of Sri Ramakrishna).

Maharaj : 'Lātu was the most guileless of us all. He was the one who could make a clean breast of his weaknesses to the Master. He never hesitated to tell of those weaknesses which others would never tell. One day Lātu gave up meditation and stood up on his *āsana*. Lātu's eyes were in floods and went on muttering something which nobody understood. Exactly at that time the Master appeared there. And Lātu's crying increased tenfold. Master said, "Look here, my boy, go in deeper solitude and spread your *āsana* there, so that no woman's eye may fall on you."'

Third time also Lātu, in course of practising austerities, was on the point of being over-

whelmed, when he heard a heavenly voice thundering 'Are you not his child?' 'There was an onrush of fresh strength, all illusions vanished in a trice. Long after the Master appeared and said, "You are luckily saved, my boy, today."'

With unswerving faith in the Master's words Lātu trod the difficult path of Brahmacharya; his reliance on the Master never for a moment flagged. And the Master's idea of Brahmacharya materially differed from the orthodox belief. Brahmacharya, with him, not only meant preservation of the human seed but its sanctification by continuous remembrance that one was immersed in Brahman-śakti, the power of Brahman. This conviction becomes permanent in one who has developed a genuine love for the Lord's Name; for the Word is God. Hence Lātu crossed safely the turbulent sea of Brahmacharya by the boat of the Lord's Name.

One day the Master asked Lātu, 'What do you think of (when you take the Lord's Name)?' The question was put to Rākhāl Maharaj also who was present then. Describing the incident Rākhāl Maharaj, gave us an idea, by the way, of Lātu Maharaj's attitude at that time. 'Lātu at first kept quiet. When the question was repeated, he said he took the Lord's name and remained soaked in its joy. The Master replied that it was not enough and that along with the utterance of the Name he should think and meditate on the idea behind, the *Namin*.' How Lātu practised meditation is the subject of the next chapter.

The above are hints regarding Lātu's struggle for controlling palate, sleep and sex urge. Below are a few of his attempts to kill his egotism. Here in the practice for the conquest of egotism also, he followed the Master's words to the letter, without playing the dangerous game of personal interpretation of those words.

One day Master told him, 'Look here, my boy, *sādhus* live by begging, on alms. Subsisting on alms is a great help in killing one's

egotism.' This kindled in Lātu a desire to go for alms, but he could not broach the topic to the Master for some time. At last the Master himself told him to go, seeking alms. So Lātu starting at forenoon returned in the afternoon, bringing with him a good quantity of food. At this the Master said, 'My boy, you should accept only what you need for the day. Things got by begging should not be stored for the morrow. Remember this.'

Another day: 'When we were going for begging the Master, as usual, warned us. "Bear in mind, my boys, some will heap abuses on you, some will bless, some will give money. Accept all with equanimity." I and Rākhāl babu started, having saluted the Master. The first house before whose door we stood and begged created a trying circumstance for us. With frowns on his face, a gentleman came out showering abuses and imprecations. Among many things he said, "Look at these fellows with such strong and stout bodies. They to beg! Get out from here." Rākhāl babu broke down at these words. He did not know what to do. I went on consoling him. "Did not our Master warn us. What of that if one abuses us? The Master asked us to accept all, praise or censure. Let us go to another house. But Rākhāl babu became so much ashamed that it took me quite a few minutes to take him away from the spot. Next we went to a widow's house. She said, "Dear boys, what fate has driven you to beg? What ails you?" When we explained to her why we were begging she became very pleased and blessed us that our life's aim be fulfilled and looking at the Sun-god prayed for our success. Then we went to many more houses, from where we got rice, pice and other things. We laid all these things before the Master. He asked us how we fared that day. We narrated everything to him. When he heard what that old widow said looking at the Sun-god, he said, "The old lady was right. There's a connection between the Sun-god and here (i.e. me)."'

(To be continued)

MEMOIRS OF SWAMI ADBHUTANANDA

(A free translation of the Bengali book, *Smritikatha*)

(Continued from the previous issue)

ONE DAY a devotee asked Lātu Maharaj why the Master used to regard the food got by alms as so pure. 'Between food earned by the sweat of one's brow and that by begging which one is purer?' — he pointedly asked.

Lātu Maharaj: 'If any one earns his bread by dint of his honest labour, without at the same time being a servant to another, then that food is the purest. There is no doubt about it. Next to that in purity is that food which one gets by begging. It is better to beg than to serve others. Do you know why? In service you lose your independence, you are bound to do what your master bids you to. Whereas in begging you retain your independence. But independent business is the best of all. Do you know why they praise food got by begging as very pure? First of all, he who gives alms gets some "merit" by charity. Secondly, he who receives alms learns to look upon praise and censure with equanimity, learns to conquer the ego. It is for this reason that he (the Master) used to praise so much the food got by *madhukari*.'

The devotee: 'Maharaj, *madhukari* and begging — are they the same?'

Lātu Maharaj: 'There's a slight difference, but that is important. *Madhukari*, (literally) means begging as the bee does. The bee goes about sipping nectar from flower to flower — just a little from each. A *sādhu* doing *madhukari bhiksha* takes just a handful from each house. He is debarred from accepting more from any house. What happens is this. People do not give without asking for any return. When they give sumptuous alms to a *sādhu* their demand on the latter's merit is great. And the *sādhu* willy-nilly loses so much of his merits. But if he takes just a little, refusing more, naturally the alms-giver's demand for any return is reduced almost to

nothing — he might be ashamed to think of a return for such a paltry gift. It is for this reason *madhukari* is considered to be so pure.'

The devotee further asked, 'Maharaj, when the Master used to send you for *madhukari bhiksha*, did you not feel that your mind strayed away from spiritual practices? Was it not an obstacle to spiritual progress?'

Lātu Maharaj: 'Wonderful. Is not *madhukari* itself a part of spiritual practice? Is it something different from spiritual practice? During *madhukari* many people pass remarks, mostly uncharitable; sometimes they speak very harsh words. A man who can keep his balance of mind under such provocations must have advanced far enough in his spiritual path, must have controlled attachment, hatred, etc., must have a high degree of dispassion in him. For a *sādhu* begging is a great training. As long as a man suffers from pride and egoism he cannot beg. It is for this reason that scriptures enjoin that *sādhus* must beg their food. One who accepts alms as the Lord's gift and one who offers it as to the Lord Himself — both of them are spiritually benefited. The *sādhu* learns to depend on the Lord. It is to bring this dependence on Him that the Master insisted on our going for alms.'

The devotee: 'But there are other ways of developing dependence on the Lord. Why then insist on this humiliating *madhukari*?'

Lātu Maharaj: 'True, there are, other methods. But this act of *madhukari* is more direct and therefore more effective. Do you know why? Procuring food by this kind of begging does not depend on the beggar. It depends on the charitable disposition of the giver, which does not come very easily. When the Lord bestows His grace on a man then only that disposition comes, and the man is

prompted to part with something. Sometimes it is seen that a rich man refuses to give alms and a poor man gives what is beyond expectation. This shows getting alms depends on the Lord's will. If He does not will it one cannot get even one slice of bread.'

One day when Lātu went for *bhiksha* in the dress of a Brahmachari a few Calcutta youths taunted him. Talking among themselves one said, 'Look at the fellow coming for alms. He belongs to the Paramahansa's battalion. These fellows will later become monks and live as parasites on us. Sir rogue, if you want to pray to and meditate on God why, pray, hang on the society, why not go to the Himalayas? Can you concentrate your mind roaming the streets of Calcutta?' Lātu, as usual, reported this to the Master, who expatiated on the glories of the Himalayas and other places of pilgrimage and on how one's prayer and meditation bear fruit rather easily at those holy places. Hearing this the desire to go to these places and be engaged there in *dhyāna* and *japa* arose in Lātu's heart.

Lātu, however, kept it a secret to himself, never divulged it to anyone, even to the Master. But the all-knowing Master came to know Lātu's secret. 'One day', said Lātu Maharaj, 'when I was massaging Master's legs he came to know this, and said, "My boy, where will you go leaving this holy temple and its consecrated food? Don't allow your mind to be agitated on this count. You know well how hard it is to get food by begging; how much roaming you will have to do. If, however, you feel the desire is too strong to be controlled, better go to Rama's place and engage yourself in prayer and meditation there." Following his advice I went to Calcutta, but Calcutta lost all charm for me. I was so free near him; that freedom was unattainable at Calcutta. So after three or four days' stay I came back to Dakshineswar.'

Lātu returned, but could not grasp the full significance of why he had to. So the desire for going on pilgrimage remained; and this agitated his mind. The Master was not slow to understand this. One day he told Lātu,

'Why not go elsewhere for sometime? You have been here for quite a long time.' Lātu was very glad to get the permission without asking for it, but did not know where to go. At last he asked the Master to fix the place for him. Master said, 'Well, why not go to Baburam's native village? He is there, you will not have to bother about anything.'

So Lātu went to Antpur. He was hardly there for twelve days when he started feeling like fish out of water. We give below Baburam Maharaj's description of it. He narrated, 'When Lātu went to Antpur for the first time he started telling us from the very first day that he was feeling very bad there. At first mother thought that he was feeling uncomfortable, because proper attention was not paid to his convenience, some unexpressed need has not been met. And she went on urging me to find out what that was, so that he might stay on comfortably and engage himself in his spiritual practices. I, however, knew the real cause — it was the Master's absence. It is not possible for an attendant of his type, one who has given himself up completely to him, to remain away from him even for a day. One day he burst into tears before us and said, "I must go back to Calcutta tomorrow positively." Seeing him crying piteously mother did not object to his leaving us.'

When Lātu returned to Dakshineswar the Master asked, 'How is it, my boy, you have returned so soon from there?'

Lātu humbly said, 'I could not feel easy there.'

Master: 'Why so? The place is so nice. Baburam's mother is a great devotee. She feels so happy to serve *sādhus*. Even such a place you did not like?'

Lātu: 'I don't know. I was feeling extremely bad at your absence. I could not concentrate my mind, meditation and prayer became impossible. I felt a deep vacuum in my heart.'

Master feigned surprise and said, 'How strange! I have never heard such things that one can or cannot concentrate one's mind at

a certain place. What has a place to do with concentration? Is the Lord present here only and not elsewhere? To take the Lord's name — why should choice of place come in? Wherever you will sit, mind must get absorbed immediately into it. That will indicate you have developed real hankering for it.'

Lātu looked small and said, 'You were not present there.' 'Suppose I am not there,' said the Master, 'Will that be sufficient reason that your mind will not feel like meditating or praying? What are you speaking of, my boy? Shall I be with you eternally?'

Lātu felt like crying and said between sobs, 'Without you my life is a mass of ruin; make me such that you be eternally with me; let there be not a moment's parting.'

Master laughed out and said, 'Look at the rogue's prayer!' Now Lātu's patience gave way; he burst into crying. All restraint was thrown to the winds. Seeing this condition of Lātu the Master said affectionately, 'Have patience, my boy, have patience.' (The above is from Ramalaldā's reporting.)

One may ask, 'What is the significance of this enactment of a drama? The Master could have directly imparted this lesson to his beloved disciple. Why did he take such a round-about step?' Lātu Maharaj himself provided the answer in the course of another talk. We reproduce below what he said on that occasion. Said he, 'The Master does not bestow his grace on his disciple all at once. He makes him go on places of pilgrimage and meet people of all kinds. When the disciple's confirmed faith brings him back to his guru, then only the Master confers his grace on him, not before that. When the disciple returns to his guru after a long absence he understands the Master's worth, how deep is the guru's love for him which he fails to understand if he is always with him. When this grace is once received there remains nothing unattainable for the disciple in the spiritual domain. After roaming about, away from guru, in holy places the knowledge dawns upon the disciple that guru is the totality of all holy places; then all doubts about the love and power of

the guru vanish for ever; before that doubts of some sort or other linger on. When all doubts vanish, faith in the guru becomes unshakable.'

Many labour under the impression that the guru initiates a disciple into the mystery of spiritual *sādhana* without subjecting him to severe tests. It is not a fact. He graces the disciple after prolonged tests. Even after initiation the guru keeps a strict eye over the disciple's devotion and austerities. To such a disciple who with whole-hearted devotion and unsparing austerities carries on his *sādhana* the guru imparts higher secrets. Those who, out of laziness or lack of faith in the guru, are indifferent to their practices are naturally refused admittance to higher truths. Guru's grace depends on the intensity and devotion of the disciple. Lātu Maharaj used to say, however, that if the disciple takes one step forward, the guru takes ten such steps. What the guru wants to see is honest exertion on the part of the disciple. Another bit of thought which he was never tired of repeating is that the guru initiates the disciple in some *sādhana* but the disciple himself is to clear all the obstacles in the path; of course the guru is there to help but the disciple is to work. A disciple who leaves everything to the guru and would not himself do anything, has to wait a long time for his progress. A true guru wants that the disciple should exert himself and by dint of his industry rise higher and higher and realize his goal. Good disciples also want to proceed by self-exertion on their path of *sādhana*; they of course, take the guru's guidance and grace; they do not like to reject him, nay, they make the guru their chosen deity and thereby reach the goal. Thus there develops a unique relationship of love between the guru and the disciple. In this relation the disciple wants to know the deeper man in the guru, and the guru wants to take the disciple to the realization of his chosen deity. In this hide-and-seek play of love between the two, the disciple becomes saturated with the personality of the guru. And the guru assumes the shape of the chosen

deity. That is, as the disciple's mind is imbued with the guru's personality, the guru, in order to fulfil the heart's desire of the disciple, deliberately soaks his personality with the disciple's chosen deity; thus the understanding of such a guru results in the realization of the chosen deity. During this time the disciple thinks and meditates on the guru in and out of himself. It becomes impossible for the disciple to bear a moment's separation from the guru. But the guru in order to create a crisis in the disciple, keeps the latter a little away from him — fulfilment after the crisis is the sweetest experience. This critical, eve-of-the-fulfilment period of the disciple is extremely agonizing.

When Lātu Maharaj was in this critical period of his life the Master sent him away to Antpur. Having arrived at Antpur, not before it, Lātu came to know of his mental condition. Lātu then was full of guru and had not acquired patience sufficient to withstand the pang of separation. Hence his agony.

The Master wanted to teach him this very lesson — he was a Master of Masters. And as such he wanted that his beloved attendant might understand and realize God by understanding his (Master's) real nature and having known this proceed further to the highest realization. Lātu had no idea of this at that time.

When Lātu returned from Antpur, he found to his utter grief that the Master would not allow him to serve. The earth slipped away from under his feet; he did not know what to do; he would retire in solitude and shed bitter tears. One day in the course of conversation with a devotee it came out of his mouth thus :

'When I returned from Baburam's village, I felt the Master was avoiding me in all possible ways. He ceased giving me spiritual instructions also. All work that I used to do, he was getting done through Yogin, Baburam

and others. He was so severely indifferent to me. I found myself deserted and helpless. What was I to do except crying and praying inwardly, "Pray, don't keep me thus away from you, draw me ever nearer to you." Many days thus passed by, there was no break to his indifference. Then one day I broke down, ran to (Holy) Mother and unburdened my heart's sorrow to her. Mother consoled me. Her grace — is it ever possible for me to forget? It is she whose intercession brought me the Master's grace.' We would have occasion to refer to this in the next chapter.

Ever since Lātu came to Dakshineswar it was his habit to see the Master first in the morning, bow down to him and then come out of the room. Early morning he would meditate on him and finish it with a prostration and then start his daily routine of work. One morning when he opened his eyes to see the Master he was not there. He started calling him aloud, "Where are you, sir?" Hearing Lātu's voice the Master cried out, 'Coming, my boy, coming'. As long as he did not enter the room Lātu kept his eyes covered with his palm. When the Master entered the room Lātu removed his hand from the eyes, saw him and bowed down to him.

Another similar incident: That day also Lātu started crying out for him when he could not find him in the room. That day, however, the Master asked him to come out. When Lātu came to the western verandah he saw the Master searching something in the garden, and asked, 'What are you searching there, sir?'

Master: 'Yesterday X bought you a pair of black slippers, one is there, but the other is not to be found. So I am searching it here, if per chance some dog or jackal might have brought and left it here.'

Hearing that the Master was in search of *his* slipper Lātu gave a start and cried out, 'Come out, sir, come out. You to search for my slipper! Ah me!'

(To be continued)

MEMOIRS OF SWAMI ADBHUTANANDA

(A free translation of the Bengali book, *Smritikatha*)

(Continued from the previous issue)

FROM EVEN there the Master said, 'What do you say, my boy? It was a brand new pair; you used them but once. Would it not be of any further use to you?'

Lātu's anxiety, at these words, reached its climax. Highly agitated he cried out, 'Do come away, sir. Calamity will befall me if you continue the search. Are you to search for my shoes! Ah me! What a bad day it is for me! I know not, what crisis I shall have to reckon with today.'

Hearing these anxious words of Lātu, the Master remarked smilingly, 'Such incidents, my boy, do not constitute a bad day. A bad day is that which passes without taking the Lord's name.'

At this time Lātu's daily routine was as follows: First, immediately after leaving the bed he would see the Master and bow down to him. When not at Dakshineswar he would draw a mental picture of the Master and bow down to it. Next, after finishing his wash he would come to the concert room to Holy Mother, prostrate before her and finish the chores for her, including carrying of Ganges water. Having finished the first round of chores, Lātu used to go to Hanumant Singh's gymnasium for wrestling. Later, however, he stopped wrestling at the orders of the Master, and utilized that time in *japa*. Whenever he could snatch a little time from amidst his work he would be found walking or sitting alone in a quiet place and taking the Lord's name or humming a line or two of a devotional song. Two of his favourite songs were: (1) 'Mind, pray, pray to Sita and Rama — not for aught but the bare necessities, viz. rice and water to quench hunger and thirst and a piece of cloth to cover shame. But go

on taking his name all the time.' (2) 'Mind, Rama's name is the abode of bliss. Go on taking it ceaselessly.' When he had to go somewhere, this repetition of the Lord's name and singing would continue as he went on the streets. Next work of his was, to bring Ganges water for the Master's bath and anointing him with oil. Having finished bathing the Master he would himself go to the Ganges for a bath. Then clad in wet cloth he would visit the temples one after the other and prostrate before the deities, which finished, he would put on a dry fresh cloth. He would then sit down for *japa* till lunch i.e. up to a little over eleven. When the Master's lunch was over he would start fanning him, and would not leave the room until the Master asked him to do so. After his lunch he was asked by the Master to go to the Śiva temples or to some lonely place on the Ganges. Spending some time there, Lātu used to sleep a while in the afternoon. It is for this reason Lātu was rarely seen in the afternoon session of the assembly of devotees. Just a little before dusk Lātu would go to Holy Mother for further chores. Those finished he would come and sit near the Master. Next he would go to the temples and witness the *āratrikam*, after which, during the last few years, he would join singing *kirtana* in the Vishṇu temple. Some days he would join the *kirtana* in the Master's own room. After the night meal he would massage the Master's legs, and in summer fan him for some time. When the Master would fall asleep or ask him to go he used to leave the room.

The Master used to direct him to some definite place in the compound of the temple for spiritual practices and Lātu used to pass whole nights there in meditation and *japa*. He

used to return to the Master's room half an hour before sun-rise. Some days the Master would ask him to take the Lord's name loud-

ly and he would do that. Thus did our anchorite Lātu pass his novitiate days happily at Dakshineswar.

CHAPTER XII

THE LAST chapter was devoted to Lātu's spiritual practices, in which connexion we said Lātu's approach to God was through the Logos, God's name. Through the devoted repetition of the Lord's name he approached the Lord Himself. We also related there that the Master asked him to think of the Reality behind the Word. In this connexion he, we are sure, must have taught him how to do that. Unfortunately for us that valuable advice is lost, for neither Lātu Maharaj himself nor any of his *gurubhais* (brother-disciples), has left us any hint regarding that — no, not even a distant hint in the course of conversation. The little details about Lātu Maharaj's meditation and other practices that we depict here in this chapter are all taken from the notes of conversations on those topics. Pity of pities is that the notes are scanty and desultory.

The greatest question in matters of spiritual practices is the 'object of meditation' So we shall take up this question first.

Yes, the object of meditation is undoubtedly God. But there are forms and concepts of God. So devotees, at the time of meditation, sometimes get confused. Which one of them is one to start with? This question naturally arises in the minds of spiritual aspirants. It is exactly this question that was put to Lātu Maharaj once by a devotee at the house of Balaram Babu. And he got the following reply from him :

'Siva, Kāli, Vishṇu — whichever form you may meditate upon ultimately you will reach the same Godhead.' The devotee : 'Yes, no doubt we have heard it many a time from many a person. Still we find it difficult to accept it, we do not know why?'

Lātu Maharaj : 'You know. Very often people used to ask the Master such questions.

To one of them he said, "Whichever form your heart likes you should meditate on that. All forms are His forms. They vary according to the mental make-up and attitude of aspirants. What is best suited to you may not be conducive to another's progress. You progress with your form, let others progress with theirs. You should not have repugnance against any on that account. Śiva, Kāli, Hari — all are forms of that One."'

The devotee : 'We can somehow accept that the forms of various gods and goddesses may be ideal forms of one Godhead. But what about our earthly gurus? Are we to accept them also as forms of God and meditate on them? That is rather difficult to swallow. Will meditation on them take us to God?'

Lātu Maharaj : 'Oh yes, it does take us to Him. Do you think gurus are just men like you and me? Guru is *Satchidananda*, that Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute. Do you know who is a genuine guru? One who has seen God, always abides in Him. Others are imitation pearls. Since the real guru has his being eternally in Him there is no difference between him and God! It is for this reason that scriptures are unanimous in declaring guru and God as one, Brahman.'

The devotee : 'Maharaj, what is the fate of one who cannot get a genuine guru, rare as they are?'

Lātu Maharaj : 'What do you think of them? They too will surely reach God — but a little late. But on no account should such people be indifferent to the instructions imparted by such gurus. They should have no doubt about the instructions. For if one cherishes such doubts one will not find out the Guru of gurus. Even if the mortal gurus are not so competent their instructions will not have any bad effect on the progress of the disciples, provided they themselves are

sincere seekers of God. For seated within their hearts, the Guru of gurus, looks at their sincere efforts and will guide them on to the goal.'

Taking the cue from Lātu Maharaj, the devotee said, 'Then, Maharaj, one can take the help of any guru and proceed on his spiritual path — that's your opinion. Is it not?'

Lātu Maharaj: 'Yes, they will reach the goal. But in all such cases the disciples will have to work much harder, they have to make many detours and digressions. The Master used to say "In cases where the guru is incompetent it is troublesome both to the guru and to the disciple." But, if the disciple does not lose faith in the guru he will surely see God, today or tomorrow. Do you know why? The holy syllable he imparts to the disciple is His name and it has been given in sincerity. Hence it cannot but bear the desired fruit. The potency of the syllable remains there, no matter who imparts. If the disciple is not slack in his practice he is sure to see God. But it is necessary that one takes initiation from a guru and devotedly practises meditation and then one is bound to be blessed with the vision of God.'

The devotee: 'If one meditates on the *mantra*, the holy syllable imparted by the guru, will one see God? And if, instead of that, one meditates on the form of the guru, will one be also blessed, Maharaj?'

Lātu Maharaj: 'Yes, he will realize God by meditating on the form of his guru. But he should not accept any and every pose of his guru, he should take that one when the guru is in union with the Lord.'

The devotee: 'Why so, Maharaj?'

Lātu Maharaj: 'Don't you follow it? Then the Lord appears in the guru. At that time the Lord inside the guru exerts a pull, so to say. This pull or attraction, makes for the progress of the disciple. It is for this reason the Master used to tell us, "Look here, my boy, before you start meditating just for a moment think of this (himself). If you do so you will remember the Lord easily.'

It appears probationer Lātu got this hint from the Master; and this illiterate emotional probationer made rapid advance by accepting the form of the Master as his object of meditation. We have never heard that the Master gave Lātu Maharaj any other *mantra*. Moreover from the excerpts of a talk given below it leaves little doubt that Lātu Maharaj took Sri Ramakrishna's *samādhi* pose as the sole object of his meditation.

One day Lātu Maharaj spoke to a disciple of Rākhāl Maharaj: 'Some days the mind remains in such a condition that whatever it sees then makes a deep impression on it. I have seen the Master entering *samādhi* many a time; but his *samādhi* of one day has made an indelible impression on me. Other *samādhi* poses of his do not compare with this. That day even the complexion of his body was totally changed. The face expressed such an abundance of mercy and imparted fearlessness to such an extent that it cannot be described in words. Even now I cannot forget it. The meditation pose of his that has been printed cannot compare with that. Only four of us were blessed with that vision.'

Rākhāl Maharaj's disciple: 'Who are the others, Maharaj, who were present at that time?'

Lātu Maharaj: 'Myself, Rākhāl, Bhavanath, and brother Yogin.'

Rākhāl Maharaj's disciple: 'What was the topic that sent the Master into that ecstasy?'

Lātu Maharaj: 'He wanted to show us how we should express our pang at separation from Him; and the result was that.'

The disciple: 'How long was he in that state?'

Lātu Maharaj: 'Not for a long time; just 10 or 15 minutes.'

Who will tell whether Lātu Maharaj spent his whole life in meditating on that pose of the Master? But this much is true that this meditation was the main prop of his spiritual practice.

One day an initiated devotee (Lātu Maharaj never initiated anybody) asked Lātu Maharaj : ‘Maharaj, can we proceed in our *sādhana* with the idea that the *mantra* of our Chosen Deity is separate from Himself?’ The devotee loved the figure of Mother Kali but his family guru initiated him in the *mantra* of Lord Viṣṇu. This explains his queer question.

Lātu Maharaj : ‘Settle your mind down with determination on any divine figure it likes most. There is no need of asking these questions of me. If your mind likes a divine form dive deep into it ; if it likes a *mantra* (name or mystic syllable) do dive in that. What matters is “diving” and tenacity. If you don’t have tenacity you won’t have your realization. And as long as you don’t see Him your doubts will linger.’

A devotee : ‘Which to hold on, Maharaj, I can’t decide.’

Lātu Maharaj : ‘This doubt and vacillation has swallowed up forty years of your life. When will you pray and meditate. The Master used to say, “It is good to start your spiritual life before thirty.” If you start early, you get more time ; isn’t it? With impaired health austerities are impossible. There is time yet, tarry not, start immediately.’

A devotee : ‘You are encouraging us, Maharaj. But what hope is there of success if we start with this rogue of a doubting mind? Will He reveal Himself to us if we approach Him with doubts? Do you not say, Maharaj, one is to approach the Lord with firm conviction?’

Lātu Maharaj : ‘Ah, how is it possible for you to be above all doubts about Him even from now? Simply have some sort of belief in His existence and proceed with your practice. Don’t talk of firm conviction now. For the present it is enough if you believe He is your guide, it is His power that moves you. But what is He, how He acts, etc. are problems that will be solved long after, when His grace will fall on you. Regarding these one should not be guided by one’s own intellect. He should have faith in his guru and be

guided by him ; without his guidance no one can understand these in the beginning. The Master would say, “Do you know what *guru* is? He is a comrade, he takes the disciple by the hand and leads him on to God.”’

A devotee : ‘Guru leads one to God?’

Lātu Maharaj : ‘Yes, it is *guru’s* grace that leads the disciple on to the Lord. Have firm faith in your *guru*, he will straighten up all the bends and angles of your mind. Do you know what a genuine *guru* does? He takes the Lord in front of the disciple. Having done that he becomes an observer, and sees how nicely the disciple is coming up to God. And a good disciple — do you know what he does? He renounces everything and passes his days in unbroken remembrance of the Lord and in His service. And a bad disciple? Why, he ends all his efforts only there, with the first vision.

‘You know, once the king of the gods and the king of the demons, both went to Brahmā to know Brahman. Brahmā instructed both. Satisfied, both went away — the king of the demons to his kingdom and he propagated what he understood to be the Truth and lived steeped in sense-pleasures. But the king of the gods had doubts, returned to Brahmā, begged for further instruction. Pleased with his earnestness, Brahmā instructed him again and again till the Truth flashed in his heart. In the war that ensued between the gods and the demons the latter were worsted because they did not know the Truth . . . so you see bad disciples do not carry on their *sadhana* and do not get the whole Truth ; good disciples are not satisfied with sprinklings of vision ; unrelentingly they practise austerities and in consequence get the integral truth — the Lord of the Universe.’

The devotee further asked : ‘What is better, Maharaj, to be rid of all doubts — to call on the Lord and pray to Him or to discriminate between the permanent and the impermanent?’

Lātu Maharaj : ‘The Master used to say, “Who can know God through discrimination, through logic. Infinite are His powers

and splendour. Too much logic-chopping confuses our intellect and understanding, leading, not unoften, to atheism. It is better, therefore, that one goes on calling on Him with a yearning heart." He (the Master) used to say, "If you get drunk with one bottle of wine why should you bother to know how many barrels of wine are there in the grog shop? If your thirst is quenched with one glass of water why should you rack your head with calculating how much water is there on the earth?"'

A devotee : 'Whom to call on, Maharaj — the guru or the Lord?'

Lātu Maharaj : 'You may call on either, it is just the same. The guru and the chosen ideal are the same, you should keep it in mind. During the period of spiritual training the probationer should not make any distinc-

tion between the two. As you proceed all these will be revealed to you. It is but natural that one who would not practise would be assailed with all kinds of doubts. And doubts are at the root of all evils. Have you seen cows? You go on beating them, they lie down at your feet and get the beating. You should be like it. Whatever the difficulties, whatever the tortures, you should follow the guru and say "I am thy bond slave and thou art my kind and generous master". Then alone you will get at the goal.'

The devotee : 'Then, Maharaj, we shall have to proceed with the belief "Guru's grace is all in all" in this matter. Am I right?'

Lātu Maharaj showed to the devotee the same path which he himself had trodden, viz. "Guru's grace is all in all".

(To be continued)

NATURE OF THE SOUL

SWAMI GNANESWARANANDA

THE MOST important and really the most fundamental truth that Vedanta philosophy teaches is that the soul is omnipotent, omnipresent, that it is infinite in its nature, and that it is Absolute existence, Absolute knowledge and Absolute bliss.

Now, if we accept such a proposition what conception can we have regarding our soul? The first thing is, we have to know that it is not bound by any space or time. When you say 'my soul' you cannot think about it in terms of a little something which is implanted within the body. It is all-pervading, exists in all times, occupies all space. So, in fact, you cannot say that your soul and the soul of Christ or Buddha, or even of the smallest insect, are different. You cannot use the plural noun for the word, soul. There are no souls. There is only one, and when you have reference to that one soul, you call it, in the language of Vedanta, Brahman. If you find this Sanskrit expression difficult to remember

let me substitute the word, God, with a little qualification. God is your soul; your soul and God are one; but you have to understand this expression, God, as connoting a Reality which is all-pervading, and whose existence is not bound by time or space.

Now what is the nature of such a God, formless and all-pervading? We said that it is Absolute existence, an all-pervading Reality which is not bound by the limitations of time, space or causation. If you think of form, you have to place it in space. Then it will be bound by the limitations of space; it will not be all-pervading. As soon as you admit the limitation of space you admit the limitation of time, so it could not be immortal. Then what is this formless Reality, this essence of existence?

Let us analyze this expression, 'essence of existence'. We say that these flowers, this vase, this table, and we, exist. What is the essence of your or my existence? What is it?

MEMOIRS OF SWAMI ADBHUTANANDA

(A free translation of the Bengali book, *Smritikatha*)

(Continued from the previous issue)

ANOTHER DAY a devotee asked Lātu Maharaj in Balaram Babu's house : 'Why should one meditate on one's *guru* who is but a human being?' To this Lātu Maharaj replied, '*Guru* is not a human being, but the Lord Himself. This is the reason why man reaches the Lord, the Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute, through meditation on the *guru*. You may look at the problem from another point of view. *Guru* is a great devotee of the Lord with whom he is in communion many times a day. So if you meditate on him, it is as good as meditating on the Lord, for inside the man there is nothing else but God — this is what our scriptures also say, "The Lord, His Book, His devotees are one."'

Another devotee : 'Is it absolutely necessary for spiritual advancement to have a *guru* ?'

Lātu Maharaj : 'If you are in earnest about spiritual practices you should have a guide, a *guru*. But you can accept the Lord Himself as your *guru*, if, of course, you have so much faith in Him. But it is better to have a man as your *guru* ; mark, what do you do when you feel thirsty? You go to the nearest tap of drinking water, isn't it? A human *guru* is the nearest available guide.

The devotee : 'Yes, Maharaj, we really do so.'

Lātu Maharaj : 'You surely, do not go to an ocean, which is infinite, so to say.'

The devotee : 'Right. If we get water near at hand, why should we go to an ocean?'

Lātu Maharaj : 'Human *guru* is like a river and the Lord the ocean. When you have spiritual thirst you should quench it by going to the river, the *guru*. Nobody else but such a human *guru* of great devotion can slake our spiritual thirst so easily.'

From the above it is easy to guess that

Lātu Maharaj himself used to slake his spiritual thirst by keeping his mind dipped in unceasing remembrance of the Master. It is not merely shallow remembrance but deep meditation. Through this deep meditation on the Master he reached that ocean of nectar, the Lord Himself, almost unawares.

The Master knew Lātu was of emotional type. For this, he led him through the easiest and most efficacious of the emotional methods of reaching God laid down in the scriptures and current among the *sādhakas*. It was reverentially taking and singing of Lord's name, all alone or in congregation. Himself singing the Lord's name, the Master created a taste for it in the heart of this dear disciple of his. Here we present two tell-tale incidents we heard from brother Ramalal and another from Swami Subhodananda.

'One day a few devotees of Konnagar came to Dakshineswar and started congregational singing of the Lord's name in the Master's presence. The Master himself joined in it a little later and asked Lātu also to do the same. I had never before seen Lātu joining such congregational singing. Lātu was seated in a corner. At the Master's call he too joined and soon started dancing. When I saw him dancing, I got apprehensive as to who would take care of the Master's body when he would have ecstasies. Dancing for a long time Lātu got tired and fell down. The Master saw it and started singing Rama-nama (name of Rama) dancing around his prostrate body. I had never before heard the Master singing Rama-nama so sweetly though I spent all my life in his company. One devotee of Konnagar caught the contagion and could not utter the name, so surcharged was he with emotion. At last he fell prostrate at the Master's feet, unable to contain himself. I have heard that the

Master initiated him that day with the *mantra* of Raghunatha. Had you heard the singing of Rama-nama of that day you could not have forgotten it in your life.'

'When the Master saw that his boy-disciples were singing *sankirtan* morning and evening he felt a desire to pray to Mother Kali for their spiritual welfare. Accordingly he said, "Mother, be it Thy will that these kids of yours may taste a little of ecstasies and trances." Hardly two days had passed when I found in them surges of spiritual emotions. Inside the Vishnu temple, in the evening, Lātu was found during *kirtans* to go into ecstasies and to yell with such force that the whole temple reverberated with it. Sometimes he used to dance overwhelmed with emotion. One day when he was thus dancing and yelling the Master entered the temple. When the priest of the temple saw him he asked the Master to join the *kirtan* so that no imperfection of any kind be there. Do you know what answer he gave to that: "There is nothing to add to it."'

'Another day, in the evening, *kirtan* was going on in the Master's room. As the devotees were singing they became overwhelmed with emotion. The Master joined in the *kirtan*; and it was through his ecstasies that others felt a surcharge of heavenly bliss. Some were beside themselves with joy and were crying, some were laughing, some dancing; none of them knew what they were doing or what was going on. Some stood still all on a sudden, as if they were all painted on a canvas; some fell down and started rolling on the floor, made holy by the dust of the feet of such devotees. I (Swami Subodhananda) was present there. I was no believer in such expressions of sentimentalism. I determinedly sat there like a cynic to observe and expose what appeared to me but a fake show. All went away after some time. I was still sitting in a corner all alone. That attracted the Master's notice. He said, "Hello! how is it you are still sitting there?" "I have something to ask of you, sir," said I. "In this *kirtan*, I have observed, so many lost

their normal consciousness in ecstasies. Will you kindly tell me, who among them had real trances?" To cure me of my cynicism, as it were, he kept mum for some time, and then said calmly, "Today Leto (Lātu) alone had the fullest measure of it; others had sprinklings."'

From the above narratives it is clear that Lātu chose *sankirtan* to be his especial path; and in it did he derive that secret call without which spiritual awakening is impossible. No one can have the real taste in taking the Lord's name without this 'secret hint'. Not only that, even faith in Lord's name does not grow. Without it, the *sadhaka* does not understand that he is progressing in spirituality at all. This 'secret hint' is on the one hand a great help in the *sadhaka's* spiritual path and on the other creates that sweet and bitter divine discontent. On the one hand, it creates an all-consuming yearning for communing with the Lord, on the other it takes away all urge for sense enjoyments, and plants seeds of renunciation in the heart. It is generally seen that this 'secret hint' brings about a new outlook and change in the *sadhaka's* life. In that state, his mind, intellect and sense-organs keep tryst with it, day and night; in the expectation of meeting the Lord, the *sadhaka* throws himself with an abandon into the bliss of spiritual practices, often exposing his body and mind to the extreme rigour of penances. This was exactly the condition of Lātu. Thus seeing Lātu frittering away his energies in the excesses of dancing and crying, the Master one day said to him, "My boy, too much dancing and weeping is no good. It has a diminishing effect on ecstasies and trances. If you cannot control and hide your emotions they would not be deep. So beware."'

Lātu, as usual, tried to follow up the Master's warning, but failed for some time though he succeeded at last. For these expressions of emotion not being fake in his case, they would come out of the depth of his being; and as such they could not be shaken off so easily. The Master himself used to say, "These outbursts of spiritual emotions

are like an elephant in rut, hopelessly uncontrollable ; when they enter this house of a body they throw everything within it topsy turvy." Probationer Lātu was in that condition then. He was sometimes seen reeling with emotion, sometimes again extremely restless. One could observe his sincere attempts at bringing them under control but his failure was equally evident.

During those days the Master was heard to repeat, "Boys, don't be monotonous. Our attitude towards the Lord is symphonic in character ; it is of many instruments and notes, of contrasts and close relations. It is a feast of many dishes and varieties." The Master took especial pains to inculcate this ideal in the minds of these boy-disciples of his. It is for this reason that he led them through all the yogas — Jnana, Bhakti, Karma and Raja — discrimination, devotion, work-as-worship, and mysticism, though he used to select one of these as the dominant characteristic of the disciple's personality and to activate his spiritual energy through that mainly. He would say "Once the Kundalini is awakened, this spiritual energy is made active, you get everything — divine love, knowledge, union, even pleasure, though of a finer type." In order that Lātu may have various kinds of spiritual experiences, the Master graciously awakened his Kundalini power. The incident below is from the lips of Rākhāl Maharaj (Swami Brahmananda).

'One day during the early mystic hour (*Brāhma-muhurta*) Lātu, following the Master's orders, woke us up. The day was yet to break. We hastily took our wash and sat down to repeat the Lord's name. Said the Master, "Today dive deep into the loving repetition of the Lord's name." Saying this he started singing. "Wake up, Mother Kundalini, wake up" and went round and round us. He went on singing and we were doing *japa*. All on a sudden, apparently without any cause, my whole body had a violent shake. Leto cried out "Uhu!" At that the Master pressed his hands on his shoulders and pinned him down there and said, "Don't, don't

get up, remain in the posture you are in, don't move." I observed Leto was feeling great pain. But Master would not allow him to get up. After some time I saw Leto lost his normal consciousness. The Master was still singing the song — he sang it that day for more than an hour. Thus even through songs he used to transmit spiritual powers to us.'

It is easy to guess from the above-mentioned incident that the Master awakened Lātu Maharaj's Kundalini that day through song. Scriptures say that this awakening of Kundalini is the door to all kinds of spiritual experience ; without this no vision or experience is possible. The Master would say, "After great deal of endeavour this awakening comes. When Kundalini is roused it starts from the Muladhara plexus and passing through Svadhishthana and Maṇipura reaches the Anāhata opposite the heart. Then the base propensities that have their sources in the lowest three plexus are transcended, and the mind thus freed from mean emotions is oriented towards the Lord or Ātman and sees 'Light'. Amazed at this new experience it cries out, 'Ah! Ah!'"

That Lātu Maharaj had this sort of experience is borne out by the incident narrated by Brother Ramalal. 'One day at noon the Master sent Lātu to Śiva temple for meditation. Lātu lost himself in meditation there. It was late in the afternoon and Lātu was still in the temple. So the Master sent me there in search of Lātu. Entering the temple I saw him bathed in perspiration ; but quite unaware, he was sitting motionless, deep in meditation. Without disturbing him I returned to the Master and reported what I saw. With a fan in hand the Master went to the temple, asking me to bring a glass of water. When I entered the temple with a glass of water I saw the Master fanning Lātu. At the fanning Lātu's body started shaking, as if it was a lump of cotton. Then the Master said, "My boy, it is evening twilight ; when will you set the lamps and light them?" Hearing the Master's voice Lātu slowly came back to normal consciousness. He opened his eyes.

Seeing the Master fanning him he looked puzzled. The Master told him sweetly, "You have perspired profusely, take a little rest first and then leave your seat." By that time Lātu was fully normal; and seeing the Master fanning him got ashamed and cried out, "What are you doing, my Lord? Will it not bring disgrace on me? What is this topsy-turvy business you are at? It is I who am to serve you, not you me." Melted with affection the Master said, "No, my boy, I am not serving you but Lord Śiva who was in you. Shall I not serve Him? In that unbearable heat He was feeling oppressed. Well, did you know that He entered into you?" Lātu replied, "I—I don't know anything. Gazing at the 'linga' I saw a wonderful light. I remember this much that the light flooded the whole temple. After that I lost myself." Hearing that the Master said, "Well done, my boy. Many more visions will come to you. Now, drink this glass of water." Lātu got up from his seat and drank water.

Since that day whenever Lātu sat for meditation he would see this light. The following incident was narrated to us by Yogin Maharaj.

'One day as I was sitting in the Master's room I saw Lātu coming. It was evening. He entered the room and prostrated before the Master, who asked him, "How is it you have come away so soon?" Lātu said, "I could not lead my mind to taking the Lord's name." The Master asked the reason. Lātu said, "Don't know why. Other days when I sit for meditation or *japa* I see something and the mind gets concentrated. But today nothing appeared and I tried hard to concentrate but failed." The Master said, "Something special must have happened." Lātu then came out and said, "Today when I was going to the temple it occurred to my mind that if Mother would appear to me today and ask me to pray for some boon what should I ask for?" At that the Master said, "Here you are, my boy. Can one do *japa* with the mind infected with desires? Never do it again. While sitting in or for meditation no one should ask for any boon." When I heard it I was taken aback.

How strange! To meditate and not to pray for anything! Every one asks for some boon when he sees a god or a goddess. So I asked the Master, "Mother appears before us in meditation only. If we are not to ask boons at that time, then when can we?" "No, my boy," said the Master, "no, never ask for anything. If ever Mother insists on giving some boon then ask for devotion to Her only—never for wealth, power, servants, sensuous pleasures or anything like these. Ask only for devotion to Her lotus feet."

To see light during meditation is not the last word. The probationer's meditation (*dhyāna*) cannot be considered to have attained any depth (*samādhi*) unless, the light solidifies itself into the form of the Chosen Deity. Of course it is true only of those probationers who meditate on God with form. Lātu Maharaj, in later life, also used to say this. He would explain it thus: 'There are you and your Chosen Deity and none else—that is meditation.' When the probationer's meditation comes to this stage then he may be said to have control over his mind; then the fickleness of the mind loses its power over him; before the mind tries to think of anything other than the object of meditation the probationer comes to know of it and prevents it from doing that. All the workings and tendencies of the mind are revealed to him before they could assume any power to distract him from the contemplation of his Chosen Deity. Attachment or attraction to objects of enjoyment, aversion to desirable spiritual things, annoyance towards practices that may lead to spiritual enlightenment, etc. melt away before taking any form. All evil tendencies, such as doing harm to any one, telling lies, disappear before producing any physical change in his body. His nature is transformed. His body is transfigured. His eyes, face, his movements, his words—all indicate his meditative nature. A truly meditative man has different looks, different gaits, different respiration. During meditation his respiration stops, a deep calmness pervades his personality; he loses the consciousness of his body.

The Master would say, 'How to know that a man has advanced in meditation? Birds will settle on his head taking him to be something inert.' . . . 'A snake will glide over his body from side to side and he will not know it.' . . . 'His meditation will continue unbroken in all circumstances — with eyes shut or open, while talking or walking or engaged in any work.'

Below are some testimonies to show that Lātu Maharaj's condition was like this at this time. Swami Advaitananda says, 'One day Lātu was meditating on the bank of the Ganges. Lātu used to take his seat at a place where water did not rise during the flood tide. But that day it came up to where he was sitting in meditation. Water was still rising and Lātu was unaware of it. I observed it and in anxiety reported the matter to the Master. He came hurriedly and saw Lātu was surrounded by water. He crossed the water and brought back Lātu from his meditation to normal consciousness.'

The next is also from Senior Gopalda: 'One day Lātu was meditating, he lost consciousness of his body and fell down and started rubbing his face against the ground. An indistinct sound of pain was coming out of his throat. I got afraid and called the Master there. When he saw Lātu in that condition he laid Lātu down on his back in an instant and went on forcibly rubbing his chest with his knees. After some time Lātu slowly came to his normal condition. Then the Master asked him, "Did you not see Mother Kali today? Keep quiet. Don't shout, otherwise people will assemble here in numbers." Hearing the Master's words Lātu kept quiet, all right, but since that day whenever Lātu would meditate his eyes, face, and chest would turn blood-red. It lingered on for some time long after his meditation was over.'

The third incident is from Lātu Maharaj's own lips. At Balaram Babu's residence one devotee asked Lātu Maharaj if it is good to see *devas* and *devis* other than one's Chosen Deity. To this Lātu Maharaj replied, 'To see visions of gods and goddesses is always good.

The same Chosen Deity assumes various forms. It is His sport to manifest Himself as many gods and goddesses. Everything is in that One, so why should people make distinction in showing respect to them?'

The devotee's doubts were not solved, so he took up the matter over again. Said he, 'Maharaj, our scriptures have described these deities differently. There (in the scriptures), for meditation purpose, these deities have been given different forms, their method of worship is different. Their *mula-mantra* (root formula), the *mantra* for bowing down to them are all different. Still in meditating on one, other deities also appear. Is it not strange? So I ask if such visions are conducive to our spiritual progress.'

Lātu Maharaj: 'You fellows are full of differentiation, cannot give up differences. Well, would you concede that all these deities are but one in essence? They are different in forms, that is all. What does it matter if in essence they are but one? Take for example you yourself. You are a man. When you are angry your appearance changes, you assume a terrible form. Again when you laugh do you have the same terrible form? When you cry you assume a third form. With the sway of emotions altered, your appearances undergo corresponding changes. Would you say you have yourself changed for all that? Whatever might be your moods if somebody calls you by name do you not respond? It is exactly the same with the various forms of the deities. The Master used to say, "The chameleon changes its colours. It is sometimes red, sometimes green, sometimes yellow, brown, violet, blue, etc. All men do not see all its colours, so each attributes to it that colour which he has seen. But one who has seen it in all these colours at different times knows that the same creature assumes so many colours. Similarly, one who goes on meditating on his Chosen Deity and does not give up seeing Him in one form is blessed with other visions of Him and comes to understand that though names and forms differ his Chosen Deity is the same." (To be continued)

MEMOIRS OF SWAMI ADBHUTANANDA

(A free translation of the Bengali book, *Smritikatha*)

(Continued from the previous issue)

OUR PROBATIONER Lātu saw in meditation various *devas* and *devis*. We mention them all here together : Sri Rama, Hanuman, Viśwanātha, Mother Kali, Sri Krishna, Yogamāyā. He might have seen many others, but we do not know them.

Here we feel tempted to make a special mention of his vision of Yogamāyā. It took place at Dakshineswar. A part of the story we have heard from Rākhāl Maharaj and another part from Sri Biharilal Sarkar.

‘One night the Master woke us up at dead of night. He said, “Should you sleep away the night? Have you come here for that?” He woke all of us up, gave individual instructions and sent us away to different parts of the garden to meditate. That night he sent Lātu to meditate under the Bilwa tree. When Lātu returned from his meditation the Master said, “Tonight Leto has returned from the jaws of death.”’

This much we heard from Rākhāl Maharaj. Below is what we heard from Biharilal Babu. He said, ‘It is not a matter of joke to take seat on a *pancha muṇḍi āsana** for meditation — an *āsana*, sitting on which a *sādhaka* has realized the Deity. Nobody can do this unless his body and mind have been fully purified and he is fully established in Brahmacharya, the vow of absolute celibacy. Many gods and demigods appear in their subtle forms, send chilling terrors into the occupants of the seat, do not allow them to sit on it, sometimes throw them out of it. If the occupant has not conquered fears fully he cannot sit on it. It is for this reason that the Master would not send

anyone and everyone to meditate under the Bilwa tree. He had his select ones for that. One night such a strong-willed *sādhaka* as Lātu got frozen with fear. At the end of his meditation Lātu could not get up from his seat, such terrible figures had he seen during meditation that he had no strength left to move. At that moment the Master saved him. From a distance the Master called out, “Are you very much terrified, my boy? Why is this fear? From whom? Come away with me?” When Lātu heard the Master’s voice courage returned to him. It is not possible for all to sit on that seat. The Master had his realization of Mother sitting on that seat. Hence its great power.’

During this period the Master warned them repeatedly, ‘My boys, be extremely cautious, Yogamāyā is testing you all. If you pass these tests of Hers all the knots of Māyā will be untied one by one. Then you will see that there is no distinction between God with forms and the formless Lord.’ We hear that the Master said many things about Yogamāyā. But unfortunately nobody took notes of them. We asked Lātu Maharaj many times, about Her. But every time we met with the rebuff, ‘Of what avail is hearing about Her. Practise and know Her infinite powers and graces. Who is there who can speak about an infinitesimal part of Hers? Infinite are Her occult powers. If She but expresses just a few of them, Mother Earth, noted for Her patience, shakes in fright, what to speak of puny man.’

We would like to paint one more picture of Lātu’s meditation. This too occurred under the Bilwa tree. That night he was immersed in deep meditation. Consciousness of the external world including his own body was totally lost. He was then under the grip of

* *Panchamundi* literally means ‘of five heads or skulls’. It is an *āsana* prepared by the *tantrika sādhanas* under which are buried five heads : of a jackal, a snake, a dog and a bull, and in the middle that of a man ; or alternately five skulls, all of men.

what is called *yoga-nidra*, a sleep-like relaxation in meditation when the individual will-power is nil and when various visions and experiences come and go of themselves making the *sādhaka* a passive observer. During that time various divine figures appear. They are endowed with all kinds of powers and can give any boon to the *sādhaka*. In the *sādhakas* there remains at that time only a residuum of passive observance, otherwise everything is calm and quiet, motionless as figures on a canvas. Lātu was in that condition. He sat for meditation at midnight, now the dawn broke ; twilight spread her beauty on the eastern horizon ; Lātu was still sitting motionless. Not finding his boy to serve him at that hour, the Master came out in search of him. Coming near the Bilwa tree the Master saw two dogs keeping watch over Lātu at a distance. He did not proceed farther. In the meanwhile the day broke and the first rays of the morning sun lit up the horizon, some falling on the face of superconscious Lātu and brought him slowly to the conscious plane. He opened his eyes and was beside himself with joy when he saw his Master standing at a little distance watching his beloved disciple. He left his seat and prostrated himself at the feet of the Master. While both were returning to the Master's room, the Master said to Lātu, 'Do you know, my boy, (Universal) Mother sent two Bhairavas (Demigods of terrible powers and followers and associates of Śiva and Mother) in the guise of dogs to protect you?' This narrative also is from the lips of Biharilal Babu.

Thus at Dakshineswar Lātu used to remain immersed in meditation and *japa*. Even during the day whenever he found an opportunity he would sit down for meditation. In fact Dakshineswar at that time was converted into a ground of vast *yajñā*, sacrifice — that of *dhyāna*. On one side were the boy-disciples who would be all *sannyasins*, such as Naren, Rākhāl, Bāburam, Saśi, Sarat, Yogin, Kālī, Tārak, Lātu ; on the other side were the householder disciples like Rama, Manomohan, Girish, Balaram, Suresh, Master Mahashaya. The first one used to dive deep into the blue

ocean of spiritual practices at night ; the other would create a veritable flood of spiritual converse during the day. It was during this time that the Master said one day in praise of Lātu, 'Leto is always, throughout the day and night, in the grip of ecstasies, is going to be merged in Him.'

One day the Master sent Ramachandra Chatterji, the priest of the Vishnu Temple in search of Lātu ; it was noon. When he reached the spot where Lātu was meditating he found him immersed in deep meditation, motionless as the flame of a lamp in a windless corner. Rama called him repeatedly, came near him, touched and lightly pushed his body but could not make him body-conscious. Baffled, he returned to the Master and reported the matter. The Master asked Narendra to call Lātu. The latter accordingly went to the spot and found Lātu in the same condition as reported ; and in order to test the depth of his concentration started striking a nearby tree with a piece of wood. That sound brought the Master hurriedly to the scene. He interceded and said softly, 'Hold, hold, my boy, don't disturb him.' To that Naren replied, 'Whom to disturb ? Where is his mind ? He is absolutely unconscious.' The Master smiled and said, 'Ah ! Is it meditation if you cannot lose yourself so completely in Him ?' One may guess why it is that the Master sent Naren of all others to call Lātu that day. On other days it was Lātu who had to go in search of Narendra.

Anyway Lātu's tendency to lose consciousness of his own body and surroundings became so deep that with the slightest suggestion he used to be off himself. Below we give a quotation from an article in the Bengali monthly *Basumati* by Biharilal Sarkar :

'At the touch of the philosopher's stone, our Master, Lātu Maharaj became an adept in meditation. Some days it happened like this : During meditation he used to go so deep within himself that the Master had to bring him to the normal consciousness by pressing and rubbing his knees on Lātu's chest. One day Lātu

went to Jadu Mallick's garden to bring some plantain leaves ; instead he was seen standing all-abstracted. The Master went there, ap-

proached Lātu and pressed his feet hard with his own and brought him back to consciousness of the world.'

CHAPTER XIII

A RATHER queer event took place three days before the Master quitted Dakshineswar for good. Sri Durga Charan Banerji was a physician practising at the Taltala quarter of Calcutta. The Master took Lātu and Yogin Mā with him. Dr. Durgacharan examined the Master thoroughly but could not diagnose the disease. As many times the Master would ask him if the disease would be cured, so many times he said, 'Take this medicine and wait.' When the Master came to Shyāmpukur he said, 'He does not know if the disease would be cured, he simply says, "Take the medicine." I will not take it.' Lātu asked, 'Why did you then go to him at all?' To that the Master said, 'He came to Dakshineswar times without number. Should I not go to him but once? He never invited me ; should that be a reason for my not paying him a visit? He used to come sometimes as late as 10 p.m. and would call Hride by name, I would get up and ask Hride to open the door. He would enter the room and without speaking a word sit down for sometime and leave. At the time of departure he would ask Hride to come to his house next morning. The idea was he would give something to meet our expenses. He alone knows what he saw in me.'

The Master kept silent for some time as if reminiscent of something too deep, and then continued, 'During his last days at Dakshineswar Hride became a changed man, his behaviour towards me took a new turn characterized by extreme selfishness. He wanted to use me for pulling chestnuts for him. His ill-treatment of me became simply unbearable. He would often catch hold of some rich men and bringing them to me would say, "Uncle please mix with these men and leave those old fellows. You will see you will have plenty of palaces, gardens and what not." At last I begged Mother to remove him from Dakshineswar. When he was asked by Trailokya to

leave the garden, even then he said in a fit of pique, "Ah! uncle, if I could but get you I could have built another Kali temple as gorgeous as this! But alas you will not come." Hriday was very good, but his lust for property, houses, gardens etc. spoiled him thoroughly. He planned to take ten thousand rupees from Lakshminarayana, a Marwari merchant. She (Holy Mother) spoiled his game. After his being driven out of the temple, only once did he come to meet me. I met him at the garden of Jadu Mallick. There also he spoke in the same language — he could not give up his lust for wealth. That was the last time I met him.'

Rama, Balarama, Girish and other elderly disciples of the Master, as had been said before, wanted that the Master be taken to Calcutta and treated there. He agreed to their proposal and came to a house hired for the purpose. About this Lātu Maharaj said, 'The Master did not like the hired Baghbazar house. "The rooms", he said, "are too small ; I feel suffocated to stay here. You better find out some other house." Hearing this Balaram Babu brought him immediately to his own house. He stayed there for seven days. During that time Dānā Kali hired a house in their quarter of the town. . . . One day Brother Ramalal brought the Master's camp cot from Dakshineswar. The Master got very much annoyed at that and said, "Have you forgotten to observe astrological moments? Take the cot back to Dakshineswar. I will tell you when I would need it." Ramalal had to bring the cot back to Dakshineswar. Long after when Brother Yogin brought (Holy) Mother from Dakshineswar to the Shyāmpukur house she brought it with her in a carriage.

'At Shyampukur many doctors used to come to treat the Master ; among them there was one with a long beard. He gave the Master some medicine which heated his body

very much, and blood and pus came out from the throat in profuse quantity. Then Girish Babu suggested the name of Dr. Mahendralal Sarkar, who started treating him from that time. He used to come at first on professional visits, then, attracted by the Master's talks and behaviour, he used to stay on for hours together. At first he took him only as an unspoilt child of nature and would not accept his words; later, however, his occasional spontaneous outbursts of ecstasy, his discourses and the logic behind his arguments forced him to accept the Master as a man of outstanding spirituality.'

Here, at Shyampukur, there occurred an incident in which our Lātu Maharaj was involved. Dr. Sarkar was also present. The doctor was of opinion that these ecstasies etc. were produced by nervous debility, that they are but symptoms of a disease. He said so plainly to the Master and others. In order to cure him of this false notion the Master, one day, created an occasion for the demonstration of ecstasies. A devotee's fervent singing of a devotional song made the audience prone to ecstasy. I give below the scene as described by Master Mahashay in *Kathāmrita*.

'A wonderful scene after the song. It was a veritable bedlam. Everyone was being carried away in a surge of emotion. The scholar has forgotten his pride of scholarship and is singing, "Mother, take away my foolish arrogance of knowledge, lead me on to the sweet inebriation of faith." Vijayakrishna Goswami was first to leave his seat, stand up and lose his normal consciousness; next was Sri Ramakrishna, who had totally forgotten the excruciating pain of his throat disease. In front of him was the doctor, who also forgot himself and stood up. Neither the patient nor the physician had any sense of the world. Younger Naren was in trance, Lātu too was in a whirl of ecstasy. The doctor was a scientist, he was struck dumb at the scene. He examined and found that none of these people who were in ecstasy, had any

sense of their bodies or the world. All were still and inert. And when they were out of ecstasy, some were crying, some laughing — a veritable mad-house or a night scene in front of a grog shop.'

When this was over all resumed their seats. Sri Ramakrishna: (to the doctor) 'These trances and ecstasies that you have witnessed just now — what does your science say about them? Do you think they are all fake?' Doctor: 'When so many people are having them it is difficult to dismiss them as sham, they seem to be natural.'

The author of the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* has recorded another incident of the same type. That too took place at Shyāmpukur. That was the Kālīpūja day. Girish and Kalipāda — both were singing songs to the Master. Some two or three devotees went into ecstasy. Among them were Khoka (Manindra) and Lātu. Lātu was sitting by Niranjan. We narrate this incident as we have heard from the lips of Lātu Maharaj himself: 'The Master asked me to keep things like incense etc. ready. There were then a good number of devotees in the room. The Master asked all to meditate. All on a sudden Girish cried out "Victory to Mother, Victory to Mother", and placed a garland of flowers at the feet of the Master, who, by the time, was off in *samādhi*. While he was in that state all took handfuls of flowers and offered them at the Master's feet. I too did the same. After some time he asked all to go to Surenbabu's house. But I could not go. ... That night, do you know, he talked on many things to me! He started with meditation on God with forms and ended up with that on the formless God. He said, "Do you know, my boy, there are many kinds of meditation. For example, there is one in which man is to think himself as a fish and Brahman as an infinite ocean, and that in that ocean he is swimming with joy."

(To be continued)

MEMOIRS OF SWAMI ADBHUTANANDA

(A free translation of the Bengali book, *Smritikatha*)

(Continued from the previous issue)

“THERE IS another kind of meditation in which one is to think of his mind and intellect as vessels, full of water, in which is reflected the sun of Satchidananda. The Naked One (i.e. Totapuri) would tell me of another kind of meditation : ‘Water, water, everywhere, high above, low below, on all sides — one infinite expanse of deep water. In that there is a pot immersed — inside and outside there is only water.’ Again another : In that Brahman is imagined as infinite sky and the individual soul as a bird joyously flying and floating in it. These are meditations of jñānis. It is not easy to make these imaginations real.”

A devotee : ‘Maharaj, is there any difference between meditation of a jñāni and that of a devotee ?’

Lātu Maharaj : ‘Yes, of course. A devotee meditates on names and forms of the Lord ; and a jñāni on the relation between *jīva* and *Brahman*. But both reach the same goal ultimately. When meditation deepens the *sādhaka*, whether of the formless or of the form, loses sight of the relation as well as of the name and form. A sort of indefinable continuity of experience remains. But that experience, though vividly real, cannot be expressed in language ! One day he (the Master) explained to us, “When meditation reaches its ultimate depths one experiences the Integral Reality.”

The devotee : ‘What is meant by “experience of the Integral Reality” ?’

Lātu Maharaj : ‘Can it be expressed in words ? In that experience one loses the consciousness of one’s body ; all mentations cease ; egoism itself, the centre and source of all mentations, does not function. It is simply experience.’

At Shyāmpukur *sādhaka* Lātu had still another experience. That day he started tear-

ing his shirt in ecstasy. The Master saw it and ran up to him, unbuttoned the shirt and passed his hand over Lātu’s chest several times, when he came back to normal consciousness. This is from the report of Manindranath Gupta.

In the course of conversation Lātu heard the Master saying, ‘The world is just a house blackened with soot. However cautious and clever one might be he gets a little blackened.’ Hearing this Lātu felt a desire to leave the world. The Master understood his feeling, and said, ‘When Rama was seized with the spirit of renunciation Daśaratha got frightened and took counsel with Vasishtha. Vasishtha went to Rama and saw him in a mood of deep abstraction. Said the sage, “Rama, will you tell me why you think of renouncing the world ? Is He, the Lord, outside it so that you should go out of it in search of Him ? Just reason it out with me.” Rama saw that He is the source and sustenance of the world and had to keep quiet.’ ‘Then,’ continued the Master, ‘just touch the Granny first and then take part in the Divine sport. What fear is there for all of you ? Do you think you are ordinary men of the world ? First of all know the Source of the world and then be in it. You will remain spotless in it.

‘Do you know why I love these boys ? They are vessels of large content, they have intense desire to realize God, they are unsmelt flowers, untainted by the world. You know when the ladies parch rice, one or two grains jump out of the frying pan. They are white as fresh jasmynes ; others that remain in the pan for the full period of frying get a little pinkish colouring. These boys are as white as the jumped-up ones. They have not allowed any wastage of their minds.’ Of those boys Lātu was one.

Continues Lātu, 'The Master stayed at the Shyāmpukur house for about three months. We didn't experience any difficulty about our maintenance. Visiting devotees used to bring sweets and fruits and other eatables in quantities. The Master would often ask us to distribute these among the poor and the hungry. Then he himself could not take anything — only pulped rice in the morning and farina pudding in the evening. (Holy) Mother used to prepare all that.

'There was no change in the ailment as long as the Master stayed at Shyāmpukur. So Dr. Sarkar asked the devotees to take the Master to a place outside the city of Calcutta where he could have plenty of free open air. At that the devotees hired a garden-house at Cossipore and shifted him there. It was on the penultimate day of the month of Agra-hāyana (circa December 15).

'With the Master we also came there, Mother too. There Loren, Rākhāl, Sarot, Śaśi, Senior Gopal, Junior Gopal, Niranjana, Kali, Baburam, — all these brothers left home and staying there served the Master. And the householder brothers like Rama, Surendra, Master Mahashaya, Balarama, Girish, Kali bore the expenses. One day there was a talk of keeping accounts. Loren said, "Why there is so much fuss about keeping accounts? Has anyone come here to steal?" I said, "Still, to be on the safe side, it is better we keep accounts." Brother Rākhāl agreed with my suggestion. And Senior Gopal was asked to do the job.'

This remark of Lātu Maharaj appeared queer to a devotee. For Lātu Maharaj was all along against these petty things. So he asked out of curiosity, 'What did you say that day Maharaj?'

Lātu Maharaj: 'You silly one, what should I have said? Why, I said, "Look here, brothers, the Master never allows householders' money to be spent extravagantly. If by keeping accounts we can avoid future troubles, is it not advisable? How much time will it take for you to keep accounts? If, however, you do not, you invite criticism.'

Then turning towards the devotee Lātu Maharaj said 'Do you know how particular our Master was in these matters? One day he asked a devotee to light a lamp. He wasted four matches and still could not light it. At this the Master himself got down from his cot and lighted the lamp, and said, "You know, my boy, householders save something with great difficulty and serve *sādhus* with that money. That money should not be wasted in any way." Another day he asked me to prepare a *chilum* of tobacco. The moment I was about to strike a match he rebuked me rather severely and said, "Fellow, don't you know there is fire in the kitchen? Go and get fire from there." There are many such instances to show how zealously he used to guard the householders' money against wastage.

'From the very beginning of our Cossipore life (Holy) Mother used to prepare the Master's diet with her own hands. One day as she was coming up the staircase with a cup of milk for the Master she fell down. The milk was spilt and Mother sprained her foot. Brothers Baburam and Naren helped her come to her room. Her foot swelled very much. We were in difficulty as to who would prepare the Master's diet. Ramababu sent a cook. The cook prepared our food as well as the Master's. It was at that time that the Master told me, "Look here, my boy, you will bring all things except cooked rice for me and clean the bed-pan and the chamber pot." I agreed most gladly and said, "Kindly know me to be your sweeper, the moment you order me it is done." From that day to the last day of Master's earthly life, Lātu continued doing it.

Hearing this a devotee asked, 'Maharaj, so you served the Master day and night and did not pray or meditate?'

At this Lātu Maharaj got a little annoyed and said, 'What do you mean? Is not his service the best prayer? We haven't any other spiritual practice. To you spiritual practice is something very queer viz., one is to sit in a peculiar posture, breathe in a peculiar way, must have his face in a particular direction, must utter a *mantra* so many times. But know

for certain that they are not spiritual practices — no, not one of them or all put together. The genuine spiritual practice is service to Him. He (the Master) would say, “During spiritual practices you will have to think that, He (the Lord) is in front of you, you are washing His feet, you are bathing Him, you are feeding Him, you are placing Him in the core of your heart, you are decorating Him. You are offering flowers at His feet.” It was this that we actually used to do there.’

This boy, Lātu, was full of the spirit of service ; was, so to say, the personification of service. How nicely has the spirit been brought out in the above words ! The few youths who forsook everything in order to serve the Master with heart and soul were all inspired by this ideal.

A devotee, one day, asked Lātu Maharaj at Balarambabu’s house, ‘Maharaj, why should a “Knower of Brahman” like our Master, who was ever and anon immersed in *samādhi* suffer from such a terrible disease ?’

Lātu Maharaj : ‘What do I know of that ? I heard Master Mahashay say, “It is at the touch of sinners, immoral persons, that he suffered from terrible ailments.” Girish babu would say, “It is his sport, an excuse to relieve sufferings of man.” Ramababu said, “But for such sufferings who would have recognized him ? When one is hale and hearty one can very well call on God. But he is surely an Avatār who can every now and then go into *nirvikalpa samādhi*, trance of absolute identity with the Lord.” Brother Loren said : “Fellows, he wanted to get service from us, so he has brought about this disease. Don’t worry. Could we have got such a golden opportunity to serve him had he not had this illness ? Let us not miss this opportunity. Let us serve him in such a way that he would not have the heart to leave us.” Brother Rākhāl would say, “He is but testing us.” Sarot used to say, “We may or may not understand it, but a great purpose is being served by it.” Brother Śaśi whispered, “Sweet Jesus allowed himself to be crucified for humanity’s sake. our Master too is suffering excruciating pain

in order to remove man’s burden of sin.” And Kedar Babu ! Why ! He folded his hands before the Master and said, “My Lord, how long will you hoodwink us ?” Balaram Babu said, “Merciful Lord, it is too much for us ! We can no more hear people taunt us, ‘Your Lord is suffering from diseases, wonderful.’” Master’s only answer was, “Boys, forbear ; he who forbears wins ; he who does not loses, is lost.” Many people used to give many explanations, I do not remember them all.’

A devotee : ‘What do you think in the matter ?’

Lātu Maharaj : ‘Bah, it is a truism that whoever will have a body will have, one day, to part with it. The Master also did the same thing.’

Devotee : ‘He could have vanished in *samādhi*, like Lord Chaitanya (Gauranga).’

Lātu Maharaj : ‘Yes, he could have done that too. But it would have given greater sorrow to the devotees.’

Devotee : ‘What do you say, Maharaj ? Did you not feel sorrow at his pains ?’

Lātu Maharaj : ‘Did he have pains ? Did he not say, “Let body and its ailment come to terms, if they will, my mind, you be at ease” ? Never did I see him suffer. Sometimes he was so full of bliss that the hairs of his body used to stand on ends. I have seen, I have seen many times that his joy overflowed on all sides while the body was suffering terribly. When bodily pain would not allow him to speak, I have seen, even then he would not cease explaining spiritual matters by signs. How to describe, my boy, those wonderful scenes ! When some outsiders would come he would show how great was his suffering. That very moment if some of us would enter the room we would see him absolutely free from ailments. You just try to understand this : if he had real sufferings would it have been possible for him to infuse so much joy into us ? Some days he would ask us to sing *kirtan*. If we committed any mistakes he would correct them and improvise lines to enhance the beauty of the sentiments. He would often

remind us, "My boys, don't forget that Brahman is unimpressionable, not to be spoiled or soiled, not to be covered. He possesses *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*; but He is separate from them like air, which spreads odour but is different from and untouched by it." Some other days he would say, "Know it, my boys, Brahman is Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute; in It there is no sorrow, no pain, no old age, no death, no diminution, no expansion." Some other days again he would say, "I see, I see it, boys, that in this (i.e. this personality) is everything. He and the One inside this heart are one, inseparable, a homogeneous whole." Can you say that he had sufferings — he who could feel and say such things? Still you insist on saying, "Ah! what sufferings!" To you, householders, man is nothing but the body; therefore when the body suffers you say the man suffers. But it was altogether different with him. With him man was the personality within, not the body. Otherwise (i.e. had they not seen him full of bliss at all times) do you think brothers Loren, Kali, Tarak who loved him so dearly could leave him in that condition and go away to Gaya for performing austerities?'

Devotee: 'Where, Maharaj, where did they go?'

Lātu Maharaj: 'Don't you know? They went to Bodhgaya. There they meditated under the famous Bodhi tree. It is said that while in meditation, brother Loren sobbed and wept and embraced brother Tarak, who was meditating by his side. There, one day, Loren saw an effulgence enter brother Tarak's body. And brother Kali? He would sit there for hours together like a wooden image. Is that all? Even when they returned from Bodhgaya they used to go to Dakshineswar and pass whole nights in meditation. Sometimes they would spend seven or eight days there at a stretch. Would it have been ever possible for them, who used to understand the Master so much, used to love him so deeply — those brothers Loren, Rākhāl, Sarot, Kali, to live away from him if they had felt that the Master's sufferings were real?' After a short pause he con-

tinued, 'They say you have studied Vedanta. Is it true?'

Devotee: 'Just a little, Maharaj.'

Lātu Maharaj: 'What do the Upaniṣads say? "He who has known Brahman has become It." Is it not? The Master himself used to say, "At the touch of the philosopher's stone baser metals turn into gold." Still your doubts will not leave you!'

This talk continued for a long time and we have narrated another portion of it in the chapter, 'Lātu Maharaj at Balaram's House.'

Now we return to Cossipore. There Naren, Rākhāl, Bāburam and other co-disciples used to sing *kirtan* loudly. Lātu would join them. One day the Master called one of them and sarcastically said, 'Bravo! my boys, well done, one is dying here and you are enjoying Lord Hari's name there.' The devotees naturally looked small. The next moment, however, the Master said, explaining with love and joy, 'My boy, the correct tune of the song is this.' Saying thus he sang a few lines of the song. Again, 'There you forgot this line (he sang that line too); that should be sung there.' The boy returned and told other brothers. Instantly the fervour of the *kirtan* increased tenfold and they lost themselves in it. (The above is culled from *The Life of Swami Vivekananda* by Mahendranath Dutta.)

Lātu was indeed seen very often singing *kirtan* still he would keep his sentiments under control. We have it from the pen of Vaikunthanath Sanyal.

In writing the memoirs of ascetic Lātu, Mahendranath Dutta, brother of Swami Vivekananda, has given us a good pen-picture of the wonderful transformation in the personality of this illiterate boy of the district of Chapra, during this period. 'I observed that Lātu was sitting on the same carpet with others and was talking with them on equal terms. Formerly he used to add the honorific "babu" when calling Naren, Rākhāl, and others; now he was using the intimate "thou". I gave a start when I heard him uttering the word; and I went on eyeing him for some time. It took me no time to observe

his total transformation. His face had changed ; there was no sign of humility, hesitation or fear in it. The face was beaming with joy ; there was force and courage in his heart ; in his voice there was gravity. The old life was gone, gone for ever ; and a new life had sprung up in its stead ; and along with it had come a new fire in the eyes, a new mien, a new gait, in short a new and glorified personality. It spontaneously came out of my mouth, " Ah ! what a transformation ! " "

We hear that *samādhi* brings about a total transformation of personality. May it be that the Cossipore transformation of Lātu was due to this? So far as our information goes Lātu had the first taste of *samādhi* at Cossipore. It is this that brought about the outright change in his character and tendencies and made him transcend all limitations. Scriptures bear witness to *samādhi* doing this jugglery of transforming human life into life divine.

Spiritual practitioners get the seed of this divine life at the time of initiation. Through practice the seed germinates and grows into a plant ; *samādhi* is the fragrant flower of this plant. This fragrance fills the practitioner's personality with a unique joy day and night and makes him easily transcend all human limitations, its doubts and delusions. Freed

from them he attains the state of fearlessness and indifference to good or bad, high or low, vice or virtue, in fact to all worldly concerns. It is indeed in this *samādhi* that they understand what real knowledge, truth, bliss are ; what their relation is. For there they exist in their pristine glory. There consciousness is revealed not as or in modes but as it is in itself, apart from or divested of the duality of the knower and the known. Rising above *Māyā*, the relative world, they exist in their own selves, which, because of their transcendence of limitations, are but one self. The Master said, ' The world of *samādhi* is altogether different from ours. The news of that world cannot be conveyed to others in words. One who attains this knowledge of Brahman is unable to communicate it to others.' To illustrate this he would tell a story. ' Four friends went out for a long walk and saw a place surrounded by high walls. They were curious to know what was inside it. With some difficulty one clambered on to the top. He was charmed with what he saw inside ; and beside himself with joy he jumped in, crying " Ah ! Ah ! " He could bring no news of it. The second and the third did the same " Ah ! Ah ! " and dropped down. None gave the news of the place of bliss.'

(To be continued)

PANCADAŚI — (Continued from page 366)

of actions ; *sañcaye*, enormous store ; *samūlonmūlite*, plucked out with its roots ; *vākyam*, the dictums ; *apratibaddham sat*, being unhindered ; *prāk*, previously ; *parokṣa*, imperceptibly ; *avabhāsīte*, understood ; (*tattve*, in Reality) ; *karāmalakavat*, like the fruit of emblic myrobalan in the palm of one's hand ; *aparokṣam*, immediate ; *bodham*, knowledge ; *prasūyate*, is produced.

61-62. By this (*samādhi*) when the heaps of propensities (which have gathered round a person during the long practice of varied actions in the world) are entirely destroyed, when the enormous store of *karma*, called merit and demerit, is plucked out with its roots (i.e. annihilated along with its cause, *avidyā*), then the meaning of the dictums, such as *tat twam asi*, being unhindered (by the propensities created by ignorance), is produced the immediate knowledge (realization) — like that of a fruit in the palm of one's hand — of the Reality, Brahman, previously imperceptibly understood.

MEMOIRS OF SWAMI ADBHUTANANDA

(A free translation of the Bengali book, *Smritikatha*)

(Continued from the previous issue)

ONE DAY at Banaras one devotee asked Lātu Maharaj, 'Maharaj, what is the difference between *bhāva* and *samādhi*?'

In reply to this Lātu Maharaj said, 'In trances and ecstasies the practitioner witnesses the interplay of *ānanda*, bliss; there the *sādhaka* is the taster and bliss is the object of taste. In *samādhi* the *sādhaka* becomes bliss, there remains no one to taste it.'

It was a long talk on many spiritual matters, major portion of which will be narrated later. Here we quote only the relevant part of it.

'Do you know, *sādhakas* see light etc., hear wonderful sounds . . . ? But they should not be made much of. They are only to strengthen the *sādhaka's* faith. When the body-consciousness is lost, heart becomes pure, then only one understands that beyond "light" there is another world, whose news reason and ratiocination cannot bring, and which, when experienced, cannot be expressed in words. One day I was passing my hand gently over Master's head when, all of a sudden, opened the gate of that world. What I saw there, eyes could not grasp, what I tasted, palate could not taste, and yet these were experiences.'

Devotee : 'Did you get, Maharaj, the news of this world before that?'

Lātu Maharaj : 'No, not before that.'

Devotee : 'But you had seen images, light, etc. before that. Was this experience different in kind from all those?'

Lātu Maharaj : 'These questions are not to be asked, nor should the seer divulge the secret. If you really have a hankering to know of that world, start practising *japa*, prayer, meditation etc. A day will come when, through your guru's grace you will experience *samādhi*. Then you will understand yourself, you need not come to me to know it.'

We have one incident of this period of

Lātu's life from the lips of Śaśi Maharaj. Most probably it refers to the one just mentioned. 'One day Lātu was gently stroking Master's head. A few moments after I saw his hand stop, his whole body become stiff; he was in deep *samādhi*. I called him four or five times, there was no reply. I touched his body, there was no sensation. Then the Master said, "Don't disturb him now. His mind, do you think, is in this world?" I desisted at that. I took my seat just by his side, and started stroking Master's head.'

We give below another conversation that took place in Balaram Babu's house. There Lātu Maharaj dwelt on various kinds of *samādhi*.

A devotee : 'Maharaj, what is meant by *jaḍa samādhi*?'

Lātu Maharaj : 'He (the Master) said, "*Jaḍa samādhi*" is that in which the "I-consciousness" is completely effaced; it is what the *jñānins* experience. There is another kind of *samādhi* in which the *sādhaka* has the consciousness that he is the servant of the Lord, who is his Master and he is serving Him devotedly. There in that state the *sādhaka* is the experiencer — experiencer of the love and sweetness, beauty and benignity of the Lord. This is known as *chetana samādhi*. In this the Lord is the experienced and the *sādhaka* is the experiencer; the Lord is sweetness and *sādhaka* is the taster thereof; the Lord is the object of enjoyment and the *sādhaka* is the enjoyer. In *chetana samādhi*, the *sādhaka* does not get an idea of absolute consciousness.''

Devotee : 'What is it like, Maharaj, — this absolute consciousness?'

Lātu Maharaj : 'What a babe ! Can *Nirvikalpa jñāna*, absolute consciousness, be expressed in words that I will explain it to you? That is inexpressible. In *Nirvikalpa*

samādhi a man can stay continuously only for twenty-one days ; if he continues, his body will drop off. Return from that state is a rare case. It is only the *avatāras* and their inner circle of devotees who can, for humanity's sake, return therefrom. Once at Cossipore brother Loren entered into that *samādhi*. Brother Niranjan saw him in that state and reported to the Master, "Naren is dead. His body is ice-cold." The Master laughed at those words of Niranjan. When Loren slowly came back to normal consciousness he, at first, could not find out his body. He asked one who was sitting in front, "Where's my body?" Then he pressed Loren's body and said, "Here it is". Then Loren's disincarnate soul got back to its body. (Holy) Mother had a similar experience at Vrindavan. She also could not find out her body. At last everything became normal.'

From the above descriptions and from what we heard later from him we can confidently say that this Cossipore experience of Lātu Maharaj was a *chetana samādhi*.

When a *sādhaka* returns from *samādhi*, whether *jaḍa* or *chetana*, he is endowed with some supernatural powers, such as prophecy, knowing the inner thoughts of others before they are formulated within. We have evidence that Lātu had, during this time, some of these powers.

One day at Cossipore garden Lātu Maharaj said to Narendra, 'Believe me, brother Loren, Keshav babu delivered lectures in the Town Hall ; you will also deliver speeches, and I, like Keshav Babu's followers, will sit by you with a jugful of water.' These prophetic words came true. In a letter from America wrote Swami Vivekananda, 'I am indeed lecturing here, as if to fulfil the Master's wishes. But the pity is Lātu is not present here.' But during the Swami's lecture in Calcutta his forecast came true to the syllable.

At Cossipore garden, one day, Gopaldā had a desire to distribute clothes dyed with ochre and garlands of *rudrakshas* to *sādhus*. Hearing this the Master said, 'Where will you get *sādhus* like these boy-disciples who are serving me here? Everyone of them is a host of

sādhus in himself. Distribute the things to them.' Gopaldā followed the Master's advice ; and the Master himself distributed a piece of such cloth and a garland of *rudrakshas* to each one of the *sevaks* present there. Lātu was one of the blessed ones who got them from the Master's own hand. This report is from Vaikunṭhanath Sanyal.

We cull below the following that we gathered from Lātu Maharaj's conversation later. They are incidents of Cossipore days.

'During this time we celebrated the Master's birthday in a simple way. That day Loren sang, Suren Babu brought a thick garland and put it round the Master's neck. Balaram Babu and Master Mahashaya offered him a piece of dhoti and a towel ; some one brought a pair of slippers, which was subsequently stolen. Another pair was purchased. It is this pair that is worshipped at Belur Math.

'How strange ! One day the Master saw a photo of his and said, "Look here ! This is a photo of a great Yogi, I see. I will worship it, bring flowers." Bhavanath gave a few flowers in his hand ; and he worshipped his own photo. (This occurred at Dakshineswar, but Lātu Maharaj narrated it in the context of Cossipore incidents.) Another day he (the Master) showed a photo of his to (Holy) Mother and said, "This will be worshipped daily in millions of houses." Now we see his words coming literally true.'

'One day he came down with brother Ramalal ; and walked in the garden. At that time there were on the ground floor Girish, Rama and Atul Babus, teacher Akshay, brother Harish and others. Brother Sarat and myself busied ourselves upstairs in sunning the Master's bedding. I have heard, that the Master touched all present and blessed them saying, "May you be all spiritually awakened." Yogodyan at Kankurgachi commemorates this occasion by an annual celebration on the 1st of January every year.'

A devotee inquired, 'How is it you did not come down then? I am told the Master was full of the Holy Ghost then and gave all whatever they wanted.' Lātu Maharaj : 'What

more were we to ask? Had he not filled us to the brim with his grace? . . . On the day of the Swing Festival we sprinkled *āvīr* or *fâg* (red powder) at his feet and he blessed us. That day he told brother Loren (Naren), "I will give you what you are crying for. First you will have to work for me. I have borne so much for you and will you not bear a fraction of that for these gurubhais of yours and for mankind? I have done hundred per cent; you do just one per cent. I will seat you on a cushion so soft and thick as that." In obedience to this did brother Loren organize this Math (Belur Math) for us . . .

'On the night dedicated to Śiva he sat up the whole night and heard us singing the songs of Śiva. That night Loren blazed a *dhuni* (fire) at the Cossipore garden and sat down to meditate. He and other brothers sat up the whole night there and worshipped and meditated on Śiva. That night the Master said, "Remember, my boys, Śiva is a great Yogi, a great *jñāni*, a great *premi* (divine lover) and a great ascetic, who has renounced everything of the world. Do you know why he is called the All-forgetting Great Lord? He drank but three palmfuls of water from the ocean of Sat-Chit-Ananda. That made him drunk and he forgot all about the universe of matter. Śukadeva is also a great *jñāni*, a great *premi*; he is the ideal *sannyāsi*, and he all but touched that water of the ocean of Sat-Chit-Ananda. And Narada, that prince of devotees! He saw from afar that shoreless ocean. And that made him the greatest devotee of the Lord. At the mere touch of the wind bearing its particles of water devotees get dissolved, lose their identity; guess what would happen if they see or touch the ocean. . . .

'From this Cossipore garden Holy Mother one day went to Tarakeswar to invoke that God's blessings on the Master, so that he might get cured. At the time of her departure Master indicated by the movement of his fingers that nothing would happen and nothing did happen. . . .

'It was here again at this Cossipore garden that one night brother Loren asked a gurubhâi

to touch him; and as he touched he felt some force entering his body. The Master was upstairs, he came to know what was happening below and called for Loren. When the latter came Master said, "What were you doing, my boy? First of all store up something, later you can spend out of it. Spending from an empty store! How absurd! Do store up first." . . .

'One day brother Kali asked him about Lord Buddha. Kali then had the impression that Lord Buddha was no believer in the existence of God. One day there was a heated discussion about it in the Master's presence. At the end Master said, "Lord Buddha was really not an atheist. He felt the reality within him — reality that cannot be expressed by such words as 'existence' and 'non-existence', being something in-between the two." . . .

'Ah! Cossipore of blessed memory! One day Ramababu wanted to see the Master. Brother Niranjana was keeping the door. He did not allow Ramababu to enter the room. So Ramababu gave some sweets and fruits to me to be offered to the Master and to be brought back for distribution among the devotees. I was cut to the quick seeing him talking in this way, and said to brother Niranjana, "Brother, do allow him to get in. He is after all one of us. Should we be so strict with him too?" But he did not pay any heed to my words. So I gave him a bit of my mind and said, "The other day you could allow Binodini, disguised as an Englishman who was brought by Dana Kali and today you are blocking the door against a brother like Ramababu?" Niranjana became pensive and let Ramababu go to the Master. A little later when I went to the Master he said, "My boy, look not at others' faults, see their merits only." I felt it very much, came back to brother Niranjana, begged pardon of him, saying "Brother, I am an illiterate fool, please do not take my words seriously; pardon me for the harsh words I used against you." . . .

'Another day Girish babu had come to the Cossipore garden. Master asked me to prepare a *chelum* of tobacco for him. That done he sent me to Phagu's shop to get prepared hot

kachauris for Girish babu. I brought and placed them in front of Girish babu ; and the Master, in that condition of his health, dragged his body to the water jug, filled a glass with water with his own hand and placed it before Girish ! . . . Girish had a great desire to serve the Master for one full year. And the Master accepted his services for exactly one year. Girish babu used to say, regretfully, "What shall I say ? The Master bestowed his grace on me in my old age ; had he done it in my youth I would have shown what real *sannyāsa* was." It was all right for him, who, according to the Master himself, had five hundred per cent faith. But if men like you and me say so it would smack of egotism. . .

'One day he (the Master) asked me how it was that Harish had not come for a long time. "What is the matter with him. Once go to his house and bring news about him. And on your way back go to Nityagopal, Tarak, and others." Tarak babu was then practising *tapa-sya* in the garden at Kankurgachi. . .

'Master asked Nityagopal to start giving spiritual instructions to people visiting him. He was, however, not agreeable to it out of fear. At this the Master said, "Don't you feel pain at my ministration in this condition of my health ? Constant talking is taking me to the grave. If you undertake to give instruction, will that not lessen my burden a little ? Don't be afraid. I am responsible if you incur any sin on that account." . . .

'Similar talks he had with Vijaya Goswami also. "You come of the family of Advaita Goswami ; if you take up ministration work, it will be quite proper for you." . . .

'One day Surendra babu felt piqued and told the Master "Why should they go to beg money of others to meet the expenses of this place ? They could have informed me." The Master consoled him saying, "Are you not giving enough already. You are our reserve stock." Surendra came downstairs. The Master sent Kedar babu after him with instructions to see that no altercation took place in the matter and to pacify him. . . . One day the Master caressed Śaśibhai very dearly and said, "My

boys, these selfless services of all of you have bound me down to you. If you permit me, I can go there (heaven) on a visit." This report was carried to Holy Mother's ears. She sent her orders through brother Yogin that, that day no outsider should be allowed to meet the Master. Accordingly no outsider was allowed to enter his room. But one cranky lady, who used to visit the Master in the company of Vijaya Goswami, and who, due to too much austerity developed craziness, created a scene by her insistence on meeting the Master. Niranjan would not allow her to go upstairs ; she was determined to go. When things were about to come to a head, news came that the Master wanted them to allow her to meet him. She was escorted upstairs by brother Śaśi. . . .

'One day brother Ramalal brought an expert exorcist. He examined the Master carefully and said, "Him to exorcise ! If he wills this moment he can cure himself." Ramalal insisted that he should do something for their (i.e. devotees') sake. But the moment he was to start applying his power of *mantra* the Master stopped him saying, "You should not waste your powers thus." . . .

'Once a man came from Jabalpure. He was a confirmed atheist. He had never prayed to God or any power. He would say "There is no God. Whom to pray to ?" The Master heard him patiently and said, "Well, do one thing. Pray like this, 'If there be One may He hear my prayer.' I don't think you will have any objection to pray like this." The person thought a little and said, "I don't think there can be any objection to that. I will follow your advice." Do you know what happened to this man later ? He became a staunch devotee of the Master. Whoever followed his advice turned out later to be a great devotee. . . .

'One day, it was at this Cossipore garden that brother Naren came to the Master and implored him to do something for him. Asked what he wanted he said, "Please do so that I may remain immersed in *samādhi*." Master said, "What a silly request !"

' . . . Here at Cossipore, one brother-disciple was angling at the pond. I asked him

politely, "Brother, you are a Vedantin ; which *Veda* or *Vedanta* instructs you to give pain to fish like this ?" He looked small, let go the fish and broke the rod. . . . One day the Master heard that brother Yogin had fallen ill. There was no end to his worries. He said, "Lest there should be any gap in your services to me you neglect your health. If you fall sick who will serve me ? You should consider this too. You should take your bath, meals, etc. at the proper time." Since that time he would take us to task if he found any one taking meals late. Many times he said to brother Śaśi, "My boy, you should take your bath, meals, etc. in time. I am now very well, I don't require any service now, just go and take your meal." Many times he snatched away the food from Śaśi's hand and gave it to me, so that he could go and take his meal. . . . Old brother Gopal used to administer medicine to the Master. One day the time fixed for taking medicine was past and Gopal was not to be seen. So the Master inquired about him. When he came to know that the latter was taking a nap, the Master was very pleased and said, "Don't wake him, let him sleep ; he kept awake the whole night. You better give me the medicine."

' . . . One day Pandit Śaśadhar came and in the course of conversation said to him, "If during *samādhi* you turn your attention to the disease it will be cured. Scriptures say so." The Master replied, "It is impossible — to take away the mind from God to disease !" ' In this connexion Lātu Maharaj narrated an incident that occurred at Dakshineswar. . . . ' One day revered brother Hridaya asked the Master to obtain some occult powers from Mother Divine. The Master, at that period of his life, was in a peculiar state of mind — whatever anyone would tell him he used to believe and act upon. So he went to Mother to pray accordingly. Mother gave him a vision in which he saw a thirty-year-old prostitute dirtying herself. Occult powers are as abominable as the faeces of an old prostitute. Disgust seized him, he could not ask for any occult powers of the Mother. He returned from the

temple and scolded Hriday for his suggestion. . . .

' One day brother Ramalal asked the priest of the Vishnu Temple to offer *tulsi* (basil) leaves to the Lord praying for Master's recovery. He (Ramalal) used to send these leaves and water sanctified by the touch of the Lord's toe everyday from Dakshineswar to Cossipore. When this was done for a fortnight the Master (evidently came to know of it and) sent word to Ramalal not to do it. He said "Hello, forbid Ramalal to offer *tulsi* leaves for my recovery. The Lord should not be approached for trivial things like this." . . .

' Once Naga Mahashaya of Deobhoga came to see the Master and heard that he expressed his desire to eat emblic myrobalan (*āmalaki*). He at once went in search of them. For three days he searched for them in all the markets and gardens in and near Calcutta without bath, food, even sleep and at last got just a few in a garden. That was not the season for these fruits. When they were presented to the Master he asked the attendant as to who had brought them. Naga Mahashaya kept mum. When the Master came to know that Naga Mahashaya had neither taken bath nor eaten anything for the past three days, he asked him to take his bath and have his food (specially rice). Rice was duly served him in a plate. But he would not take it, as that day happened to be the *ekādaśi* (eleventh day of the moon). He said 'I shall not take anything ; I would fast today and take rice tomorrow.' The Master heard him and asked for the plate of food. When it was brought to him he took one grain of rice out of it and sent the plate to Naga Mahashaya. "Ah ! it is his *prasada*," said Naga Mahashaya joyfully, and started eating, waiving off his observance of *ekādaśi*. So great was his regard for the Master. He worshipped the Master as God Himself. He would not sit too near the Master lest his leg might touch the Master's seat. Once he was given *prasada* on a leaf-plate ; he swallowed even the leaf, which to him, was too holy to be thrown away, because it had come in contact with the Master's *prasada*. . . . ' (To be continued)

The execution of the plan started in right earnest after Swami Vivekananda reached Calcutta. Calcutta, like Madras, was all afire with moving enthusiasm to receive the Swami. All classes of citizens rose as one man to acclaim the returning hero. Calcutta had a special reason to be proud, for it was one of its own citizens that was now coming home as the renowned Swami Vivekananda. After the public functions were over, the Swami settled down to the solid work of organizing the institutions that would produce the type of men he wanted. He spent much time talking to young men, many of whom became his devoted followers. His brother disciples were then living in the monastery which was located at Alam-bazar. The Swami succeeded in converting them to his way of thinking, viz., that they should sacrifice even their personal salvation for the general welfare of all people. He

impressed upon them that this was the core of their Master's teaching. They were now willing to implicitly obey the commands of their leader, go wherever he wanted them to go, and do whatever he asked them to do. To give but two examples, Swami Ramakrishnanda, who had never left the monastery for twelve years, i.e. ever since it came into existence immediately after the passing away of Sri Ramakrishna, went to Madras to organize a centre there. Swami Akhandananda went to the District of Murshidabad to take up the work of affording relief to the famine stricken people. Several young men responded to the call of Swami Vivekananda and took to the life of renunciation and service. Thus came into existence an organised order of monks dedicated to putting into effect the ideals of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda.

MEMOIRS OF SWAMI ADBHUTANANDA

(A free translation of the Bengali book, *Smritikatha*)

(Continued from the previous issue)

'ONE DAY the Master desired to take rose-apple (*jāmruḷ*). It was the fag-end of winter when rose-apples could not be had. The devotees searched all the markets of Calcutta but they were not available. Just see how Divine will acts! One day someone saw in a garden flowers of rose-apple and brought it to the notice of brother Śaśi. Śaśi went to that garden and procured a few rose-apples. The Master looked at them with surprise and said, "How could you get these in this season!" But the Master could not eat them....

'Once Ramababu brought the Principal of the Medical college. He examined the Master thoroughly and at last said, "It is the clergyman's throat. It is incurable."...

'At times the Master could not take anything. Then (Holy) Mother used to clean the sore with a piece of cloth made pointed by rolling. One day as she was cleaning the sore

her fingers jerked and the cloth thrust into it. At this Mother herself started, but the Master simply said, "You are cleaning it, continue."... Mother knew, the Master was going to disincarnate. The Master had given her indications of this. He had told Mother, "When you would see anybody and everybody touching this body and see me taking food touched by one and all, then know it for certain that my time for disincarnation is not far off." Much later Mother told me an incident in which the Master and his elder brother were concerned: "His (the Master's) brother, who was then at Kamarpukur, had high fever and was delirious. Following the village custom, and in his own interest Master did not allow his brother to take water even when he was thirsty. At this his elder brother cursed him, 'You have not allowed me to take water when my throat is parched; you will see, that

no water shall go down your throat at the time of your death.' He did not allow his elder brother's words to become false." Mother in this connection also narrated the other story about the Master's encounter with his cousin, Haladhari. "One day elder cousin, Haladhari, cursed him at Dakshineswar, 'Blood shall gush out of your throat.' I have heard that some time after blood actually gushed out of his throat, its colour was deep green like the juice of kidney-bean leaves. I have seen that he never allowed the words of his relatives to be untrue even if it entailed suffering. It happens like that if one sticks to truth in all circumstances." . . . I have never seen such an intelligent woman as the Mother. When we despaired of continuing our services to him (Master) Mother would come to know of it. She would send word through brother Yogin, "Let him (an attendant) not despair. He (Master) is now a little better. The sore has opened up." Thus did Mother put courage into our hearts. . . . One day the Master called his young disciples together and said, "Look here, my boys, don't form groups. If you all remain together life will be enjoyable; if you form blocks you will come to grief." That day there were altercations, hot disputes. The Master was always in favour of debates, they sharpen intellect; but he was avowedly against wrangles producing heat and ill-feeling and ultimately parties.

'There was a terrific sound like that of a thunder the day previous to the Master's entering into *Mahāsamādhi*. Mother and Sister Lakshmi came to the Master's room when they heard the sound. Sister was evidently disturbed. At this the Master said, "You know I don't like a sad face." At that Sister Lakshmi smiled.'

Now we present to the readers Lātu Maharaj's description of the Master's *Mahāsamādhi* (passing away). 'Immediately before going to bed the Master used to say, "Hari Om Tat Sat". That night (the last night) also Master did the same. I was fanning him. At about 11 p.m. he heaved a deep sigh. After that he appeared to have entered *sama-*

dhi. At that brother Naren asked all of us to sing "Hari Om Tat Sat". We started doing it; at about 1 a.m. he came out of *samādhi*, and took a little farina pudding. Brother Śaśi fed him with his own hand. Immediately after he again entered into *samādhi*. Brother Naren apprehended something. He sent for old Gopaldā. When the latter came he requested him to bring brother Rāmalāl from Dakshineswar. Gopaldā and I started at once for Dakshineswar. Rāmalāldā came with us and touching the Master's crown of the head said, "Still it is warm. You better send word to the Captain (Viśwanāth Upādhyāya). Early morning Dr. Mahindar (Mahendra Sarkar) was brought. He examined the Master's body carefully and declared life extinct. Then Upādhyāya, who was very much attached to the Master, came and asked us to rub *ghee* (butter oil) to the Master's head and the entire body. Brother Śaśi rubbed *ghee* on the trunk of his (Master's) body, and Vaikuṅṭha Sannyal on his legs. But there was no change. Then Mother, a picture of disconsolation, entered the room and cried out, "Ah, Mother Kali, for what fault of mine hast Thou left me." There was no end to that crying. Seeing Mother in that condition, Baburam and Brother Yogin entered the room and with the help of mother Golap, brought Mother back to her room. Meantime the news spread among the devotees of Calcutta. I have heard that teacher Akshaya and Gopal (whom the Master nicknamed "Hutko", i. e., suddenly appearing) brought the news to the devotees at Calcutta. They started coming one by one. A group photo, with the Master's lifeless body in front was taken. All these consumed enough time. And it was late in the afternoon that the Master's body on the cot, decorated with flowers, was brought to the cremation ground accompanied with singing of Lord Hari's name. . . . Ramababu asked me to stay back at the garden and come to the cremation ground when Akshay babu had come. I stayed on. Mother cried but that once. Nobody heard her voice again. Oh! Her patience! I have

never seen such patience in any woman. . . . At night I went to the cremation ground. I saw many sitting on the bank of the Ganga, silent and motionless. Brother Śaśi, with a fan in hand, was sitting near the pyre. By his side was brother Sarot (Sarat). I took him (Śaśi) by the hand and made him stand; Sarat and Naren went on consoling him. But he spoke not a word, not a limb of his moved. . . . Do you know, brother Śaśi collected his (Master's) bones and ashes in an earthen jar and brought it on his shoulders to the Cossipore garden. Brother Śaśi placed the jar exactly on the spot where the Master's cot had been. . . . Next day Mother Golap brought the news that Master had appeared to (Holy) Mother and consoled her saying, "Why are you so disconsolate? What has happened to me? My leaving that body is as good as going from one room to another. Here am I exactly as I was." Hearing these words of Mother Golap the doubters among us ceased sorrowing. Then all unanimously voted for continuing the Master's service as when he had been in flesh. That day brothers Niranjana, Śaśi, Old Gopal and Tārak stayed there at the garden. Myself and brother Yogin, following Mother's instruction, went to Calcutta to make proper arrangement for food offerings to the Master. At noon cooked food was offered to him; and they sang Lord's name and glory in that room. At night farina-porridge was offered and *Rama-nama* was sung. After that they all returned to their respective homes. Myself, old brother Gopal and Tārakdā stayed on there. . . . Three or four days after, Mother followed by myself, mother Golap and Sister Lakshmi, once went to Dakshineswar, and returned to the Cossipore garden before dusk. That afternoon, I heard, Ramababu and Sureshbabu came to the garden. At noon brothers Śaśi, Niranjana, Loren (Naren), Rākhāl and Bāburam also had come. Ramababu, it is said, wanted to close down the Ashrama, (i.e. disciples' residence at the garden) and asked the young disciples to go back to their homes. At this brothers Śaśi and Niranjana were extremely

hurt. Their intention was to continue the Master's service there as before. That night brother Niranjana went to Balarambabu's residence. Next day Balarambabu came himself to the garden to take Mother to his house. With Mother were sent Master's clothes and other belongings to Balarambabu's house. . . . Mother went to Balarambabu's house. Myself, brothers old Gopal and Tārak continued to stay at the garden. All used to come at noon and go away in the evening. Ramababu cherished a great desire to bury the Master's urn at the Kankurgachi garden and build a Math (monastery) there. Brothers Śaśi and Niranjana did not agree to that and said "We will not part with the jar containing Master's remains." Brother Loren tried his best to make them understand the desirability of yielding to Ramababu's proposal. Said he, "Look here, brothers, should we quarrel over the jar. There is no knowing where the morrow will find us. Ramababu is willing to make a gift of the garden in the name of the Master. Should we not agree to that? We may worship Master there. To me it appears more important to mould our lives according to his ideal than to quarrel over his ashes." . . . The day before Sri Krishna's birthday I went to Ramababu's house, from there to the Kankurgachi garden. Next day we started early morning singing Hari's name from Ramababu's house to the garden at Kankurgachi. Brother Śaśi himself carried the jar on his shoulders to Kankurgachi. When the jar was being buried and they were putting earth over it brother Śaśi cried out, "Oh! Oh! it is hurting the Master." These words drew tears from the eyes of all present. . . . When all were returning from the cremation ground [sic] Open Babu (Upendra Babu of the Basumati fame) was bitten by a snake. Nityagopal Babu (later Jnanananda Avadhuta) got that part (the bitten spot) scorched with a red-hot iron. That sore was not healed then, still he went singing *kirtan* to the Kankurgachi garden. He was very fond of keeping company with Sadhus. Carrying books under his arm for sale he used to go on foot to

Dakshineswar garden and also to Cossipore. At this the Master used to remark serio-comically, "You kill two birds with one stone — you will have the profit by selling books and also the merit of keeping company with Sadhus". . . .

'After the celebrations at Kankurgachi were over brother Ramalal arranged for a feast (in memory of the Master) at the Dakshineswar temple. The singing of Hari's name also formed a part of the programme. Brother Ramalal wanted to take Mother there on that occasion; but Mother did not go. I, however, joined in the celebration. . . .

'After the Master's passing away, although I was physically there at Cossipore it appeared all empty and desolate to me. Every now and then I would go to Ramababu's house. There also it appeared the same to me. I would go to brother Loren's house; Loren would speak many things to console me. I would say, "Brother Loren, I tell you the truth, he used to love you so much that he would not be able to live without you." Hearing this he would laugh out and say, "It is equally true in the case of all

of you. Neither would he be able to live without you. You cannot guess how deep his love was for you, Śaśi, Rakhal and others. It is you people who served him really. What have I done to him? Pretty nothing." Just see his humility! One day a fellow disciple was sorrowing before me and said "He has thus left us in the lurch!" I could not bear it and said, "For the unbelievers he is dead, for the believers, however, he is as living as ever. Have you not heard he appeared and talked to Mother? If you had that amount of faith he would appear to you also.'

' . . . I heard that Balarambabu was sending Mother and Sister Lakshmi on a pilgrimage. Brothers Yogin and Kali were accompanying them. Hearing this I also felt a desire to go on a pilgrimage. Mother understood it and included me also in the company. Master Mahaśay (the author of the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*) sent his wife along with Mother, and mother Golap would not leave Mother. So through Mother's grace all of us could go on a pilgrimage. With such love she has bound us down eternally to her.'

CHAPTER XIV

In a month of the Master's passing away Mother, as narrated before, went on a pilgrimage. She was accompanied by Sister Lakshmi, Nikunja Devi (Master Mahaśay's wife), mother Golap (Mother's companion) Yogin Maharaj and Kali Maharaj, as also Latu Maharaj. The party broke their journey at Deoghar. Having seen Lord Vaidyanath (Śiva) and offered worship to Him they proceeded towards Kāśi (Vārānasi). There they stayed for three days only. They worshipped Lord Viśwanāth and Mother Annapurna, then started seeing all other temples and holy places and meeting and listening to the *sadhus* residing there. One day they went to the Ashrama of Swami Bhaskarananda, a renowned scholar-sādhu. Latu Maharaj had a long talk with him :

'Said Swami Bhaskarananda, "Don't waste

your time in mere roaming about. Sit down at a place, and call on him, you are sure to get the Lord's grace. While young, I visited many holy places and kept company with many *sādhus*. On foot I went to the four important places of pilgrimage, viz., Kedar-Badari, Jagannath (Puri), Dwaraka, and Rameswara. Then there were no railways, you can well imagine what pains one had to undergo. Despite all that I got precious nothing. Ignorance and sorrow remained as dense and deep as ever. Then did I sit down here in this garden and took a vow 'May God be realized or the body drop off.' Now, you see, I have got a little of abiding Bliss." He was walking with a stick in hand and talking with me. Then his image was being worshipped in the temple. He asked, "Tell me what is going on there." I replied, "You are Nara-

yana (the Lord), you are being worshipped there." He ejaculated like an innocent child, "Grand" !

'One evening we went to attend the evening prayer at the Viśwanath temple. While returning, Mother started walking very fast and with a heavy tread, so fast that we found it difficult to keep pace with her. Immediately after reaching the residence she lay herself down on her cot and would not talk. It is heard that she got up at midnight and sat down to meditate. In the morning mother Golap called her again and again, yet her meditation continued undisturbed.

'We stayed three days at Varanasi and then went to Ayodhya. There the party stayed for one day only and then started for Vrindavan. There Kalababu's Kunja (grove) was reserved for the party. While getting down from the train I forgot to take something which Mother observed and asked someone to take it down. At Kalababu's Kunja Mother met mother Yogin for the first time after Master's disincarnation, her pent-up grief welled up and in embrace they shed bitter tears.'

A few events of Sri Vrindavan residence that we have heard from Lātu Maharaj's own lips we narrate below :

One day mother Golap, accompanied by us visited the Madhava temple. Someone's child had dirtied the courtyard. Without the slightest hesitation mother Golap tore a portion of the saree she was wearing and cleansed the spot with water. Just see, how eager she was to keep the temple clean and pure. While she was residing with Mother (at Baghbazar?) she used to keep equally clean Mother's room, which to her, was more than a temple. This Golap Ma, before coming to the Master, was a touch-me-notist ; all that vanished gradually at the Master's touch.

'At Vrindavan Mother, in the company of Sister Lakshmi, would retire to the bank of the Yamuna. Sometimes she would take brother Yogin and sometimes me also with her. Then brother Kali was on circumambulation of Vrindavan. On its completion,

he, accompanied by Nikunja Devi, returned to Calcutta.

'Master ordered Mother in a dream to initiate brother Yogin with a *mantra*. Before that Mother had not initiated anyone nor was she willing to do it then. But at the Master's insistence she initiated brother Yogin. . . . At Vrindavan Mother used to worship Master's photo ceremonially with flowers etc. Mother used to carry throughout this pilgrimage (and later also) a tiny round casket containing a bit of Master's remains. After worshipping his photo she used to touch this casket to her forehead and keep it back most reverentially. One day she placed it on our heads also. . . . She was very fond of hearing *Kirtan*. Accompanied by myself and Sister Lakshmi, she would, now and then, go to Bhagavanji's *ashrama* to hear the singing of Lord's name. (This Bhagavanji stayed at Ganga Mayee's *ashrama* for some time.) . . . Balarambabu's uncle also used to stay in that "grove" and would serve Vaishnavas in various ways. He used to take good care of us and would bring *prasad* for us from different temples on different days.'

The following is from the pen of Swami Siddhananda : 'At Vrindavan there was no fixed time for Lātu's meals. Moreover, he used to feed the monkeys of Vrindavan with his share of food and would come at odd hours to Mother or her companions and ask for food. This naturally annoyed them and they scolded him for that. But Mother was never annoyed with this childlike nature of his ; on the other hand she would ask sister Lakshmi and mother Golap not to chide him. She would herself sit by his side and affectionately serve him food to his satisfaction. Mother knew her favourite child very well — that he was easily piqued. He did not care for others' scolding — his importunities were with Mother only. She had asked her companions to keep Lātu's meals well-covered at a fixed place so that he might come at any time and take his meals unhampered by circumstances and that his boyish nature might not suffer inhibition.'

(To be continued)

MEMOIRS OF SWAMI ADBHUTANANDA

(A free translation of the Bengali book, *Smritikatha*)

(Continued from the previous issue)

WE HEARD the following account from Yogin Maharaj. We are not certain that it occurred at Vrindavan. But from the nature of the event it appears to us that it must have happened there only. 'One day it so happened that he (Lātu) simply vanished from our midst; he could not be traced for days. Mother's anxiety knew no bounds. After three days equally suddenly he reappeared. When asked "Where had you been these days?" there was no reply; he simply smiled. When Mother asked, he said, "On the bank

of the Yamuna," and then, like a child, said, "I am extremely hungry. Give me something to eat." Mother quickly brought some food. He took it and immediately after disappeared without telling anyone anything. Mother remarked, "Lātu is queer all over".'

In January or February 1887, a daughter of Ramachandra Datta died of fire burns. The news reached Holy Mother. So she sent her favourite attendant Lātu to the bereaved parents in Calcutta for consolation.

CHAPTER XV

Reaching Calcutta, Lātu Maharaj went straight to Ramababu's house, where he stayed for three or four days. While he was staying there one day he went to Narendranath's house. There he had a talk with Narendra's mother, in the course of which he said, 'Look here, mother, brother Loren's mind is as pliant as a wheat-flour dough; whatever shape one wants to give it, it takes easily. In him a great power is surging. In whatever direction he applies his mind there it shines brilliantly.'

From Ramababu's residence he shifted to Baranagore Math. There Narendra (then Swami Vividishananda) told him one day, 'We have all taken Sannyasa after formally going through the *Viraja Homa*. I would like you also to do the same.' Lātu Maharaj readily agreed to Narendra's suggestion. It is customary to perform *śrāddha* ceremony for the forefathers, and even for oneself, before performing the *Viraja Homa*. While doing it Lātu Maharaj behaved rather strangely. Without uttering Sanskrit mantras according to the scriptures he plainly invoked the manes in his native *patois* and offered the articles, saying "Father dear, do come here, take your seat;

accept my worship; take this food, this drink." (Though it appears so queer to us, even now people of the Chapra district offer *pinda* in the simple way. Lātu Maharaj might have followed that custom.) Having offered worship, food and drink to the manes in this simple way he sat down to perform the *Viraja*. "From his early boyhood strange was Lātu's character, strange his moods, strange his manners, stranger still were his love of God and his austerities for realizing Him. Remembering all these Swamiji (Narendra) gave him the name, Adbhutananda." (Abridged from the Introduction to *Satkatha* by Swami Saradananda).

After his Sannyasa Lātu Maharaj resided at the Baranagore Math for a year and a half without a break. He was then engaged in hard austerities along with his fellow disciples. We will dwell on his sadhana of this period in a later chapter; here we will recall a few facts about the Baranagore Math.

When the house was hired Lātu Maharaj was at Vrindavan. Yet we come across, in almost every published description of the Math, statements to the effect, 'After the discarnation of the Master when the young devo-

tees were thinking whether they would return home and finish their studies first or they would immediately plunge into hard spiritual disciplines, the Baranagore Math house was hired for Lātu, Tārak and old brother Gopal who had already left their hearth and home and had no place to lay their heads on.'

One day Lātu Maharaj was asked at the house of Balaram babu about the origin of the Baranagore Math. In reply he said, 'I do not bother about all that. One day I heard it from brother Naren who said, "This Math and all that you see have their origin with Suresh Mitra." One day, it is heard, Suren babu requested brother Loren to have a place where Master's children could meet occasionally. Loren replied, "Why go for that? There are some among us who have no place to stand on. Can you do something for them? If need be, we also can go there for spiritual practices." At this Suren babu asked brother Loren how much that would cost. Loren said, "Whatever you used to give for the Cossipore Garden house would be sufficient for this purpose." Surendra babu agreed to pay something every month. Bhavanath was asked to find a suitable house. He engaged the haunted house of the Munśis on a monthly rental of Rs. 10/-. It was Bhavanath and the "suddenly appearing" Gopal who swept the house clean and made it habitable. Then he called brother Loren there and in three or four months the Math was started.' . . .

One day at Balaram babu's residence Lātu said with much regret, 'Stealing is such a bad habit that man loses the power to discriminate between good and evil. He goes to the length of stealing ornaments from temples, so callous he becomes! One day we received a letter at Vrindavan to the effect that from Balaram babu's house clothes used by the Master have been stolen. Hearing this Mother sent a reply saying, "Things stolen will not be recovered, it is evident. But please see what are left may not be lost." On receipt of this letter they sent all the things still with them to the Math.

'To make the Math popular Junior Gopal ("suddenly appearing") tried his best. He

would meet all the devotees of Calcutta. It was he, in a way, who forced Loren to come to the Math and thus made it known to the public. Loren, on his part, would say, "Brothers, did he (Master) love you to be householders after all that?" In this way it was attraction for Loren that dragged others to the Math one by one. Had Loren been not there the Math would not have been popular, why, would not have lasted long.'

Let us narrate here a few reminiscences of Lātu Maharaj of this period :

'We were engaged in spiritual talks. If during that time Suresh babu, with whose money the Math was being maintained, appeared at the Math, Loren would instantly leave the talk and hide himself on the roof. At this Suresh babu would say, "Why do you look small and avoid me? It is Master's grace that forces me to give towards your expenses just a few trifling pies. Otherwise who am I to get the privilege of serving you?" Just mark Suresh babu's grand attitude — he (Master) makes him give, so he gives! Such an attitude is indeed rare. . . . Another day when Swamiji saw him coming he asked us to go to the roof, and said, "who will engage himself in useless gossips with him for a long time?" Accordingly all went up. Surendra babu came and found no one there. He could not restrain his tears, and cried out, "Seated by worldly worries, I come running just for a while to get the healing touch of your company, but if you treat me thus where shall I go?" Just feel his heart. He bore all the expenses of the Math. He could have forced his presence on us — he had every right thereto. Instead he only expressed how wounded he was at our behaviour. . . . At first Loren did not stay at the Math; brothers Sarot (Sarat), Śaśi, Niranjana, Baburam — all used to come and go. When they returned from Āntpur and took formal *Sannyasa*, it is heard, they stayed on at the Math. I have heard brother Loren was hard pressed during those days on account of a law-suit involving the family residence; so he could not live at the Math. When (in May 1887) Loren came to

the Math to reside permanently there, after having settled the troubles at home, other brothers started coming and residing at the Math; and this is why their guardians used to blame brother Loren, saying, "This young man is at the root of all evils. Our boys had settled down at home after the passing away of the Paramahansa. This rogue of a Naren unsettled their minds and brought them all here to the Math. That fellow is their ring-leader." Some guardians used to come to the Math and heap abuses on brother Loren. He would say, "Why blame me! Here are your boys, you take them away. I have not kept them imprisoned here." The Master had spoken to the guardian of brother Sarada in the same vein. Brother Rakhal, I have heard, spoke directly to his father, "Please don't come here again, I am quite happy here." Brother Śaśi would leave the Math premises when he heard somebody from his house had come there. He would not meet them. Brother Sarada was also in the same mood. He went one step further — turned a wandering monk. . . . When brother Yogin returned from pilgrimage a tangible spiritual atmosphere was created in the Math. Then Balarama babu also started helping the Math. Master Mahāśaya also followed suit. We used to do *Madhukari Bhiksha* then i.e. beg little morsels of cooked food from house to house.'

A funny but a true picture of the Baranagore Math of this period has been drawn by Sri Mahendranath Datta. This we present here to the readers: 'The Math house is very old and dilapidated. The rooms of the ground floor have sunk down, in some places even below the ground level, and were the abode of snakes and jackals. The steps of the staircase to the first floor are mostly half gone. The surface of the floor of the rooms of the second storey is one yard visible here and one yard vanished there, exposing the rubble below. The shutters of the doors and windows are in major parts absent. The rafters of the roof have mostly fallen, the bricks being supported by split-bamboos. On all sides there are bramble bushes. It is truly a haunted house

— the reality tallying exactly with the rumour. Approaching the first floor by the stair-case you find to the right a comparatively big room — it is known as the Kali Vedantin's room. Then climbing two more steps you find a small door which is the entrance to other rooms. Proceeding a little farther, in front is a small room which is the shrine, in front of which there is a closed portico, to the west of which is a big hall (which is what they call the demons' hall). Coming through the hall, to the northwest of it, is one small room where they store drinking water and where they take their meals. To still farther northwest of this room is the lavatory. To the east of the dining room is the kitchen. The articles used by the Master in the Cossipore garden house are all kept in the shrine. All the inmates sleep on the floor, the luxury of having a cot is unthinkable. Some two or three mat-like things — too coarse to be called mats — sewn together are the carpet that covers the floor of the "demons' hall". In a corner of this hall is rolled up a *durri* that could be entrusted to even a thief with confidence. Its warp is at one place and the woof at another, perhaps nodding to each other — in short, like a fisherman's net for catching big fish at sea. And the pillows? Why, Calcutta bricks, soft as stone, covered over with that mat-like thing that carpeted the "demons' hall". These are their rooms and their furniture.'

In this Math Lātu Maharaj occupied a seat in the "demons' hall".

One day a man of the Chapra District (might be that uncle of Lātu Maharaj who brought him to Calcutta) came and asked him to visit his native village once. Thus requested he gave a reply that was typical of him: "You do your duty, I know my path". With such force did he utter these words that the man left the Math compound with a heavy heart. When he went away some of the fellow disciples asked if he was really his uncle; at which he said, "Uncles of a monk are all dead".

After taking formal *sannyāsa* Lātu Maharaj, with shaven head and wearing ochre-dyed cloth, went to Sri Ramachandra Datta's house.

There was a private talk between Ramababu and Swami Abhedananda regarding spiritual disciplines. This was exaggerated in reports by many persons, as a result of which Kali Tapaswi (Abhedananda), became a target of criticism by many persons. To such a householder devotee Lātu Maharaj one day said, "What is wrong with brother Kali? Whatever the Master has made him understand he is bound to give expression to. Brother Kali has said what he understood. Why do you impute pride and egotism to him?" On another occasion hearing a fellow disciple of his unjustly criticizing Ramababu, he said, "What has happened to most of you? The moment you disagree on any point with him you start blaming him. That is not desirable I had been with him for a long time, I have never heard him speak like that, or anything which is contrary to Master's advice. Did he not, that day, express his mental attitude by singing that song, "The six philosophies could not fathom the Reality that is He". And this song was also sung by Master many a time. Isn't it?"

'At Baranagore Math there was an exchange of hot words among the brother-disciples in connexion with the shrine. That day a householder devotee said, "You rogues, what else will you do but act as priests to the photo of the Master, burning incense and waving lights before it, just as the orthodox priests do to the stone of Śītala?" At these words of the householder disciple brother Śaśi became extremely agitated and said, "The money of such a householder should not be touched with a barge-pole; it is an anathema to us." Brother Loren used to be amused when he saw brother Śaśi in anger. So he said smiling, "Go you rogue, beg and feed your Master." When brother Śaśi heard Loren of all say this there was no limit to his sorrow. Said he, "Very well, I would not touch a farthing of your money. I will beg and feed my Master." Still smiling Loren said, "And I suppose you will offer *luchi* to him by begging." Undaunted, replied Śaśi, "Yes, yes, I will offer *luchi* to him; moreover those offered *luchis* I will serve you to gulp." Then brother Loren, as if terribly

excited, said, "No, by no means, will I allow this offering of *luchi* to him, while we have nothing to eat. I will throw away such Master of yours. If you cannot do it yourself, here I am going to throw him personally." Saying this he sprang up and started going towards the shrine. Brother Śaśi said something in English and with a bound ran after him. When I saw this development out of a trifling remark I was cut to the quick and tried to intercede saying, "Why, brother, are you opposed to Śaśi's desire? Let him go his own way and you yours." At this Loren said, "Hold your tongue, fool." A harsh retort was about to come out of my mouth when brother Loren laughed such a laugh that brother Śaśi too was covered with laughter. In two minutes all sat together to make arrangements for the worship of the Master.'

'One day an elderly devotee came to the Math and went on talking big and bossing over the young resident devotees and criticizing them for their leading the monastic life. Everyone respected him because of his age, so none gave him any retort. When, however, he came to Lātu Maharaj and addressed him as a beggar monk he gave him a bit of his mind by reminding him of a story Master had told Keshav babu (the noted Brahma leader). Lātu Maharaj was then in a peculiar mood. The moment the gentleman said, "Hello, beggar of a monk", Lātu Maharaj retorted "Do you remember, Sir, the story Master narrated to Keshav babu of a fisher-woman feeling uneasy at the fragrance of flowers and not being able to sleep on that account and only then when her fish-basket sprinkled with water was given her could she sleep soundly, at the smell of fish? Your case, I see, is exactly like hers. Without yourself treading the path of dispassion and renunciation what will you understand of it that you dare to criticize us? You flippantly talked of the saint-king Janaka; but how many can be a Janaka?" This gave the critic a thorough jolt and he kept quiet.' (Narrated by Sri Haramohan Mitra).

(To be continued)

of Him. He is Nagabhushana ; He wears snakes as His ornaments. He is the dweller on far-away Kailas. He is the Inhabitant of the burning ghat. He besmears Himself with ashes. He is Sthānu, the Immobile ; but He is also the cosmic dancer, Nataraja. He is Paśu-pathi, the Lord of Beings, and Viśwanātha, the Master of the Universe. He is Kālakāla, the destroyer of Time, and Amaranatha, the Lord of Immortality. He is Tyāgarāja, the King of renouncers, and Āśutoṣa, He who is quickly pleased.

This Śiva is India's national God, and the ideals which He embodies, viz. Renunciation

and Service are, as Swami Vivekananda was never tired of pointing out, India's national ideals. In fact we in India are all of Śiva's family and our national faith is contained in the declaration :

माता च पार्वतीदेवी पिता देवो महेश्वरः ।

बान्धवाः शिव भक्ताश्च स्वदेशो भुवनत्रयम् ।

' Goddess Parvati is our mother, the great God Śiva is our father, Śiva's devotees are our relations, the three worlds are our homeland.'

Thus fathered and mothered by the Supreme Divine, Indian nationalism expands into a universe-embracing Homeland of Śiva, Mahadeva.

MEMOIRS OF SWAMI ADBHUTANANDA

(A free translation of the Bengali book, *Smritikatha*)

(Continued from the previous issue)

IN LATER days Lātu Maharaj narrated to us many incidents of the Baranagore Math at different times and in many places. We collect all that here and present them to the readers :

' At Baranagore Math brother Śaśi's performing *aratrika* was something worth seeing. Everybody felt the presence of the Master palpably. Śaśi, at the end, would cry out " Victory to the Revered Guru, victory to the Revered Guru ", and brother Kāli would chant a Sanskrit hymn. In a few days, brother Kāli composed the *mantras* for the Master's worship, since then it is with these *mantras* that the worship is being conducted. . . . We had almost nothing to eat, but we would offer costly fruits to the Master and distribute them to those who were present. At this people used to say, ' These fellows must have got a treasure trove. Otherwise, how could they offer such nice things to their Guru in the shrine? Brother Śaśi had but one thought, day and night, how the worship could be conducted in the best possible manner and the best things offered to the Master. He himself used to do all the works connected with the *pūja*. He

would say to us, " Don't worry about anything but devote yourselves to meditation and prayer and counting beads. Through the Master's grace all necessities shall be supplied to us." . . .

. . . ' One day having returned from *Madhu-kari*, brother Yogin narrated a very funny story, mimicking a lady. Said he, " The hag had nothing but a thatched dilapidated hut and two torn-to-tatters *kanthas* (mattresses-like things made of torn unusable clothes, with lines of criss-cross sewing) and a small copper waterpot. And she to tell me that I had gone there to pilfer her property!" . . . Once someone asked Rakhāl to do some work, at which brother Loren issued an order that none should ask Rakhāl to do any work. Do you know, we all obeyed that order. . . .

' Baburam sometimes used to go out of the Math and stay with his relatives. At this some of us criticized him saying, " He has turned a *sādhu* ; he is to live on alms, instead he lives in luxury in his relatives' house." When I heard it I said : " Brother, you are a *sādhu*, you should devote your time to meditation,

prayer and counting beads. Why do you waste your time in observing what others are doing ; where they have gone, so on and so forth ? ” It had a stinging effect on him. Then seeing him depressed, I said, “ Look here, brother, Baburam has not entered the order only to maintain himself by idle begging, but to realize God. If by going to his relatives he does not while away his time but pass his days in meditation and prayer, which he is doing, why should he be blamed ? Do you think everybody can be like Rūp, Sanātana, Raghunatha (the three prominent Sannyasin disciples of Sri Chaitanya) ? Does not brother Baburam know that relatives are temporary friends ; today they are friendly, tomorrow they may turn inimical ? What more do you want to tell him ? ” . . .

‘ During those (Baranagore) days we loved each other so dearly that, if perchance somebody got angry with another that anger did not last long. If someone would get by begging some good thing it would at once be offered to the Master and distributed as *prasāda* to all. . . . Very often our topic of conversation used to be the transcendent love of the Master. If somebody would say, “ He used to love me most ”, another would at once contradict and say, “ No, me he loved most ”. And then there would be comic arguments about that ; an outsider would take these discussions to be serious wrangles. Master loved all of us so dearly that everybody thought that he was the most beloved of all. One day when such a discussion was going on I told them, “ Master did not leave any property behind and still your wrangles seem unending. Lord alone knows if you would not have gone to courts had he left any property.” There was a burst of laughter at my remark. . . . I observed that brother Kāli did not join in all these. He was busy with his scriptural and other studies. At rare leisure he used to argue with brother Loren. Loren used to silence him too easily. But one day he cornered Loren to such an extent that he could not give any reply. Then Loren said, “ Let us stop, here today. Tomorrow we shall start from this point.” Brother Kāli was very happy

that day. But the next day Loren started giving new arguments in refutation of Kāli’s ; that day Kāli had to admit defeat. Then he said a little regretfully “ Not a day could I defeat Loren ! ” Hearing his words I said, “ Brother, it is bound to be so. Brother Loren is our ‘ leader ’. How can you surpass him ? ” . . .

‘ One day, brother Loren started “ firing ” (infusing spirit with fiery words) me for some time. When he finished I asked him, “ Brother, from where have you learnt this kind of ‘ firing ’ ? ” Loren replied, “ Ah ! Do you call it ‘ firing ’ ? What do I know of it ! It was Master who knew how to ‘ fire ’. Don’t you see, so many of us have left their hearth and home, their parents and relatives, their luxuries and soft life at his instance, at his ‘ firing ’ ? That is real ‘ firing ’. ” . . .

‘ You know when many live together there is bound to be difference of opinions leading, not unoften, to strained relations. But, strange to say, that never happened with us. Not that we did not criticize each other. That we used to do, rather too often and too frankly. But the next moment love used to conquer all ill feelings. Sometimes criticisms were too bitter, would make one’s blood boil. But everyone was so self-possessed, due to constant meditation and prayer, that the bitter words left no impression on our minds. Brother Sarot (Sarat) topped us all in patience, so much so that Loren said, “ That fellow, Sarat, has the blood of a *bélé* fish, will it, can it, ever get hot ? ” . . . Among us elder brother Tārak was full of fun and mimics. He would say sometimes, “ Brothers, don’t take it amiss, if I sometimes cut jokes at your expense.” But I did not like all that and said, “ Have you left home for cutting jokes like that ? ” Brother Rakhāl retorted, “ Ah ! What we are doing is not even a hundredth part of what Master used to do. There were many occasions when he would make us reel with laughter. Very often tears would come out of our eyes and we had to press our sides to prevent their splitting. How often we asked him to stop saying, ‘ Enough, enough, we can bear it no more.’ ”

Hearing these words of brother Rakhali I too remembered those scenes and kept quiet. . . .

'Ganges (Gangadhar Maharaj, Swami Akhandananda) was the smartest of us all. Once he turned a wandering monk and went to Tibet, in search of Mahatmas. But great saints are not to be seen in bunches and rarely do they appear before anybody and everybody. Without their grace falling on favoured ones nobody can see them. . . . One day Daksha Maharaj came to the Math and started a heated discussion, at which Brother Loren said, "Don't argue like a fool. Arguing is an art, it is to be learnt; one is to read logic. Have you read it? You are talking of Vedanta, have you read that too?" Hearing his words Daksha kept quiet, but he did talk Vedanta. . . . At Āntpur they wanted to take *Sannyāsa* in front of a blazing *dhuni*.* There, when Sarada went for a bath in a tank he was drowned. Brother Niranjana saved him then. In all such works of hazard brother Niranjana was always seen in the forefront. Dangers roused him to activity. Once brother Śaśi left the Math. On his way he had an attack of fever. Niranjana heard the news and brought him back. Another time when he heard that brother Yogin was lying ill at Allahabad he at once started for it. Whenever anyone of us fell ill, it was brother Niranjana who would take up all the works that would require running about and meeting people and making arrangements for diet and medicine; and brother Sarot (Sarat) would sit by the side of the patient and nurse him. . . .

'At the Math I observed everyone studying hard. So one day I asked brother Sarot, "Hullo! how is it that you read heaps of books. You have left schools and colleges, still you study so hard! Are you to appear at an examination?" Brother Sarot replied, "Brother, without serious studies how are we to understand these subtle matters of reli-

gion?" I rejoined, "But Master talked so much on these subtle matters, but I never saw him reading books." Brother Sarot said, "His case is altogether different. (Universal) Mother used to 'push' (as he himself said) heaps of knowledge towards him. Have we reached that stage or ever hope to reach? We shall have to wade, through study of books, to acquire knowledge." I did not leave the matter there and replied, "But he said we get one conception of the Truth by study of books and get quite another by spiritual experience." Then Sarot said, "But did he not say those who would be Acharyas or teachers shall have to study scriptures as well?" Then I understood that man's understandings differ according to their mental constitution and the Master used to teach everyone according to his constitution and kept quiet. . . .

'In those days there used to be long ardent congregational singing of devotional songs at the Math. These *kirtanas* were simply marvellous. Brother Yogin brought the holy earth of Vrindavana for putting marks on the forehead. One day they, in a way, forced brother Loren to yield to their decorating him with this earth. At this he was in ecstasy. That day the *kirtana* created such an atmosphere that it attracted a large crowd. Some days they used to sing devotional songs singly; so fervent was the singing that crowds would gather in and around the Math. Sometimes brother Baburam and Ganges (Swami Akhandananda) would dance. And their hilarity and shoutings would reach such a pitch that at times I used to get annoyed. . . . After Balaram's return from Cuttack he used to visit the Math often. He used to get the news of our requirements from Baburam. At times he would feel depressed and say, "I have attained nothing". Once he took brother Rakhali along with him to Puri. . . .

'One day brother Loren expressed his desire to worship Mother Kāli. Immediately did Surendra make all arrangements for the worship. . . . In those days we used to perform Master's birthday worship at the Math itself and hold the public function at the Dakshi-

* A consecrated blazing log of wood looked upon as an emblem of fire god or the Supreme Brahman. It is customary with the *Sannyasins* of the Naga type (to which Sri Tota Puri, Sri Ramakrishna's Vedantic teacher belonged) to maintain a *dhuni* ablaze all the 24 hours of the day.

neswar Kāli temple garden. Haramohan babu tirelessly worked for these functions. All of us would go to the Kāli temple and spend the day talking about the Master. . . . On one such occasion brother Loren sat for worship of the Master and spent four or five hours at a stretch. Brother Śaśi was amazed at this. I heard that day brother Loren went into deep meditation and performed worship of the Master.'

We have mentioned before that Lātu Maharaj stayed at a stretch, at the Baranagore Math, for a year and a half. During this period (probably in the winter of 1888) he had an attack of pneumonia. Sarat Maharaj and Niranjan Maharaj nursed him to recovery. Even while sick Lātu Maharaj was as queer as ever; he would not obey the doctor's injunctions. One incident of this period we have already described, in the chapter on Lātu's probationership; another incident we mention here: According to the doctor's instruction they kept a fire in Lātu Maharaj's room; at this he shouted out, "Ah me! They are going to kill me. Somehow my life was returning to the body; but these fellows are chasing it away. Can I bear so much heat? I will now hear nobody. I will straightaway go to the roof this moment." 'Saying thus piteously, Lātu left his bed and actually went up to the roof. Seeing him uncomfortable, I opened all the doors and windows of the room,' says Sarat Maharaj, 'and asked Niranjan to take away the fire from the room. Then I led him slowly to the room and he lay down on the bed. When I was stroking his head gently, he imploringly said to me, "Don't, brother, don't close the doors and windows again. If you do I shall die". What surprised us most was that his condition took a turn for the better, since then.'

Our information is that just after his recovery, Lātu Maharaj left the Math and went to Ramababu's residence and stayed there for about three months. There under the care and supervision of Ramababu's wife (whom he used to call mother) he soon got back his usual robust health. The following incident of this period we narrate as reported by Śivarama

of Yogodyana, who very often used to visit Ramababu's house. "During that time a sort of lustre used to emanate from Lātu Maharaj's body; and his eyes used to be half-closed all the time. The lips were always moving slightly. Very rarely did he talk with anyone. He used to sit with his taut neck bent a little to the left, the very sight of which would indicate that he was giving fight to someone. His body was, day and night, covered with a thick piece of cloth or blanket. The whole noon he used to sit in the sun and count his beads."

In the month of Phalgun (Feb-March) 1888 news reached Baranagore Math that Yogin Maharaj was laid up at Allahabad with an attack of small-pox. At once all, except Śaśi Maharaj and Adwaitananda, decided to go there and serve him. It was apprehended there would not be enough men to carry on the daily works of the Math. So Lātu Maharaj was asked by a brother of the Math to come there, which Lātu Maharaj immediately complied with. He remained there for three or four months. When (Holy) Mother returned from her pilgrimage to Gaya, and there was lack of accommodation at the Math, Lātu Maharaj came to reside at Belur in Nilambar babu's house which was taken on rent for Mother.

One day at this house Mother asked Lātu Maharaj to go for marketing. Lātu Maharaj refused pointblank and said, "I would rather call brother Yogin for it. I am not in a mood to go on chares. I don't like all that." Mother did not misunderstand me and immediately replied, "Yes, rather call Yogin." There was no end of such annoyances I gave Mother but never for once did she take offence. Oh! her power of endurance? It is for this reason I do not like to talk of her anywhere and everywhere — people will not understand her.'

When Mother went to Puri Lātu Maharaj was back at the Math, where this time he stayed for four or five months. We give below two incidents of this period. One that was heard direct from Lātu Maharaj's lips is: 'One day brother Śaśi asked "the old Swami" (Swami

Sachchidananda) to keep a fresh twig of a tree cleaned of leaves etc. in the shrine early in the morning to serve the purpose of a tooth-brush for the Master. "The old Swami" did not know that the one end of the twig was gently beaten to soft fibres to make it brush-like. So he kept a whole twig as is usually supplied to people. At the time of offering breakfast to the Master, Śaśi saw what "the old Swami" had done and scolded him bitterly and rushed at him saying, "You rogue, you have drawn blood from the Master's gums today, I will not keep you alive". I cried out to "the old Swami", "What are you looking at, dear brother? Run away from him." So he fled and the situation calmed down immediately. Śaśi kept another twig properly beaten to soft fibres and threw away the previous one. Just look at brother Śaśi's attitude of service to the Master.'

The other incident was told by Swami Chandreswarananda. 'Once there was a great fun. In the morning when Śaśi Maharaj went to prepare *halwa* for the Master he found the vessel dirty. At night Lātu Maharaj boiled gram in it and left it unclean. Now if Śaśi Maharaj is to clean the vessel and prepare *halwa* after that, it will naturally be late for offering breakfast to the Master. So Śaśi Maharaj went on abusing him; it was usual with him to flare up in impatience if anything went wrong in the service of the Lord. Lātu Maharaj patiently bore the brunt of the attack for some time and then blurted out, "What is all that? I am going to write to (Holy) Mother. Are your father and mother different from mine?"'

Spending about five months at the Math Lātu Maharaj started on a pilgrimage again with Holy Mother. Returning from Puri Mother spent a few days at Āntpur with Baburam Maharaj's mother. That time many Swamis of the Math, such as Vivekananda, Yogananda, Saradananda, Nirmalananda and householder disciples like Master Mahaśay,

Vaikunṭhababu, went with Holy Mother. All these people returned to Calcutta from Āntpur, whereas Lātu Maharaj, Kāli Maharaj, and a few others accompanied Mother to Jayarāmbati *via* Tārakeswar. There Lātu Maharaj and Kāli Maharaj spent a week and started for Kamarpukur, Master's birth-place. There they together visited all the important spots connected with Master's life. They met Master's first attendant Hridayaram Mukhopadhyaya and returned to Calcutta.

Now the fateful year of 1890 slipped in. Two important supporters of the Baranagore Math passed away. First, influenza carried away Balarambabu and then dropsy took away Surenbabu. When these two supporters and well-wishers of the Math, were carried away there naturally was some flutter in the dovecot of the Baranagore Math. A few incidents of this time we have lately heard from Lātu Maharaj's lips. We present them here to the readers.

'When Balarambabu fell ill, I used to visit him very often. Sometimes I used to stay on for four or five days there. Often times I would take (Holy) Mother from the Kambuliatola house of Master Mahaśay to Balarambabu's residence. At that time Mahapurush Maharaj, brother Niranjana, and Gupta Maharaj (Swami Sadananda) served him whole-heartedly. During his illness Ramababu, Girishbabu, Sureshbabu, Master Mahaśay, Manomohanbabu — all would visit him frequently. The day he passed away, he went on talking incessantly only of the Master. Mark, he talked of nothing else.

'Hearing about Sureshbabu's illness brother Śaśi took me in a carriage and went to see him. When Sureshbabu saw Śaśi he said, "Brother, here is Rs. 500/-, with this money please build a small shrine for the Master." At this brother Śaśi said, "What nonsense are you talking. Get round first, then after your recovery give the money. I will not take the money now." Sureshbabu went on insisting but brother Śaśi did not accept the money.'

(To be continued)

MEMOIRS OF SWAMI ADBHUTANANDA

(A free translation of the Bengali book, *Smritikatha*)

(Continued from the previous issue)

“SURESHBABU NEVER recovered from this illness. It was heard that he deposited the money that he offered to Śaśi — when the latter had visited him during this illness, but which Śaśi had not accepted then — with someone. When the Belur Math was established marble slabs were purchased with this money and the shrine was floored with them. Mark Sureshbabu's heart. Even on the death-bed he thought of the Master and his children.

“Brother Loren took Mother's permission and left the Math, remained unheard of for seven or eight years returning as the famous Vivekananda. Meantime he travelled and preached extensively in Europe and America. In company or alone, many, left the Math and adopted the wandering monk's life. Brother Śaśi, sometimes all alone, remained in the dovecot. I went away to Ghushudi to stay with (Holy) Mother.”

After the passing away of Balarambabu Holy Mother resided in a hired house at Ghushudi for some time. There she fell ill and the devotees brought her to another hired house at Baranagore. Lātu Maharaj, it is rather strange, did not go to serve Mother there, but stayed on at the Math.

From the conversation of Haripada Maharaj (Swami Bodhananda) we come to know of the following. ‘It was during the fag end of 1890 that I came, for the first time, in contact with Lātu Maharaj. That day he appeared to be unwell. Around him were sitting two or three householder devotees. One of them seemed to be a *Kavirāj*. I have forgotten his name. But this much I remember that Lātu Maharaj had faith in the treatment of this doctor, and so the devotees brought him to treat Lātu Maharaj. The *Kavirāj*

examined him and prescribed medicine. Lātu Maharaj, during the time of examination, did not answer any of the doctor's questions. He was then, I was told, in a peculiar mood and did not talk with anyone. A *sannyasin* brought a cup of soup to him. And Lātu Maharaj gulped it so quickly that a portion of the soup fell on the cloth he was wearing, and some stuck on all sides of his mouth. To me it appeared quite loathsome but he was quite indifferent to it. It raised a problem in my mind, which remained unsolved for a long time. I took leave of him for the day. Our next meeting was long after in Ramababu's house at Madhu Ray Lane, Calcutta.’

Another incident, narrated by Swami Turiyananda, of this period : ‘The monks of the Baranagore Math left for *tapasya* one by one. I too felt the urge of meeting *sadhus* in holy places. As I was revolving this in my mind somebody spoke out from within, “Fellow, where will you get such a *sadhu* as he”. Startled I turned my eyes, and in front of me I saw Lātu Maharaj, covered all over with a thick cloth lying in deep meditation. Immediately the thought came to me, “Where indeed, will I see a *sadhu* like him?” The very same moment Lātu Maharaj spoke out, “Where will you go? Better engage yourself in *tapasya* here”. That time I stayed on at the Math.’

Speaking about another incident Swami Turiyananda said : ‘One day in the course of a spiritual talk I remarked, “The Lord is free from defects like partiality, cruelty, etc.” Lātu Maharaj kept quiet, did not say anything. When the gentleman, I was talking to, went away Lātu Maharaj said, “What a nice statement you made then! You meant to say, ‘The Lord is just an unthinking kid and

you, like a mother, go on protecting Him against dangers and blemishes ! ” I tried to defend myself and said, “ If He does whatever comes to His mind He would be a capricious despot. Is He one like the Czar of Russia ? He is just, kind and benevolent.” Lātu Maharaj blinked and said, “ Very good and kind of you that you are saving your Lord from blemishes ! But will you not admit that even the despotic Czars are led by the nose by Him ? ” Just mark the wonderful light he threw on the problem. His words remained with me like those cut in a rock.’

The following incident narrated by Sarat Maharaj was published by Mahendranath Dutta : ‘ One day the witty Swami Śivananda was cutting jokes at the expense of another brother of the Math. Lātu Maharaj heard just a few words and remarked, “ Look here, Sarot, did I not tell you before that they are all birds of the same feather ? ” Lātu Maharaj who was not a Bengali, intended to use a Bengali proverb, which literally translated would stand as “ They are all thieves and knaves — cousins of the same profession.” But he actually said “ Professions of the same cousin ”. This was followed by an uproarious laughter from all sides. Now and then some brother or other would come to him and say, “ What is that, brother Lātu, ‘ professions of the same cousin ’ ? ” This joke continued for some days.’

In the month of Jyeṣṭha (May-June) 1891 Ramachandra Datta had a severe attack of various ailments — he was in the jaws of death. In fifteen days Lātu Maharaj came to Ramababu’s house and stayed there upto the *Dusserah* and beyond. Now and then he would

leave the house just for a few days, but would invariably return there.

Here, at Ramababu’s house, Lātu Maharaj, quoted a couplet one day almost to himself, “ If the mental make-up (of persons) is same many may live together ; if the hearts agree a disciple may be taken ; but the best thing will be to live all alone.” At that moment old Kiśoribabu (whom Swami Vivekananda used to call ‘ Abdul ’) arrived. He had lost his wife just then ; so he used to come to Ramababu’s house and spend some time in spiritual talks. Kiśoribabu was a believer in *Lord’s lilā*, so was Ramababu. Both looked upon the Master as an Incarnation of God. When Kiśoribabu heard the above words from the lips of Lātu Maharaj he asked him directly, “ Is it possible to live alone in the world ? ” In reply Lātu Maharaj said, “ It is difficult for the householders, but it is obligatory for the monks.”

Haripada Maharaj writes : “ In the middle of the year 1891, I met Lātu Maharaj for the second time. He was lying on a cot in a room on the ground floor in Ramababu’s house. I had brought a blanket for him ; he was very much pleased at it. I had a long spiritual talk with him that day. I was simply charmed with his simplicity and words pregnant with *jñāna* (knowledge) and *bhakti* (love of God). I wanted to take leave of him several times, but every time he requested me with great earnestness to stay on for some time more, I — why I, anyone else — would not have had the heart to say ‘ no ’ to him. That day I spent with him about four hours, at the end of which he treated me with light refreshments and then gave me permission to leave.”

CHAPTER XVI

The Math was shifted to Alambazar in 1892. At Alambazar Lātu Maharaj did not reside for any long time ; he used to come and go. Swami Śuddhananda writes, ‘ As far as I remember he (Lātu Maharaj) stayed at Alam-bazar Math and, after Swamiji’s (Swami Vivekananda’s) return from the West, at Belur Math also. But every now and then he

would go away, nobody knew where, and would reappear after some days.’ It would be nice to get an idea of the house where the Alambazar Math was situated.

‘ It was a house with thick pillars. Entering through the main gate, one would come to two small porticos. In front there was a courtyard, at the back of which was a hall, for special

pujas, with three openings. On one side of the court-yard one would find a spiral staircase to come to the first floor, which was flanked on the east and south by two verandahs. At the back of the eastern verandah there was a big hall, to the west of which there was a small room. Through the southern verandah one could enter three rooms. The room to the left was the shrine by whose side ran a staircase which led to the ground floor. The room on the eastern corner was used as a store-room. The other room was the common bed room. In addition to these rooms there were three more on the western side of the building. In one of these Śaśi Maharaj stayed, and the other two rooms were occupied by Kāli Maharaj and Tulasi Maharaj. On the ground floor was the kitchen, in front of which there was a lane, beyond it was a tank with a pucca ghat. To the east there was another pond. When Lātu Maharaj would come to the Math he would stay in the big hall on the first floor.' (Described by Sri Mahendranath Datta.)

From 1891 to 1897 there was no fixed residence for Lātu Maharaj. During this time he stayed with the families of several devotees of Calcutta, sometimes even going out of the city. Or, to be a little precise, during this period his residence was the eastern bank of the Ganges. For some time he used to take his food with just a few devotee families. Sometimes he would stay on at the Math for a week or ten days at a stretch. He would visit, off and on, straw-merchant Kedar's house at Baghbazar, Girish's or Balaram's, Ramababu's at Simla, or Haramohan's at Darjipara, and rarely Khagen Chatterji's at Pataldanga. The other houses he used to visit were Navagopal Ghosh's, Upenbabu's at Ahiritola. Sometimes he would stay at the Basumati Press on Beadon Street. It is impossible to give a chronicle of his life except in a few detached incidents, which, of course, tell a tale of the intense spiritual life he was leading at that time. The incidents are so few and far between that only one day's event out of three hundred and sixty five days' is available.

In the winter of 1892 on the Sivarātri night

Lātu Maharaj was at the Alambazar Math. This we have heard from Kāli Maharaj, who said to one of the devotees, 'Look at Lātu, he indeed kept the vigil last night.' The same year when Kāli Maharaj (Swami Abhedananda) was suffering from the thread worm trouble Lātu Maharaj served him devotedly. Writes the Swami, 'Lātu's love for his co-disciples was equally great. When I fell ill at Alambazar how whole-heartedly did he nurse me! Doctors declared that the disease was dangerous in the sense that the worms might enter the bodies of people who would nurse and serve me. But in spite of that Lātu Maharaj along with Sarat, used to wash my sores every day.'

'During this time Lātu Maharaj would come in the morning every day and having spent the whole day there would leave it in the evening for performing austerities elsewhere.' We heard this from Tulasi Maharaj.

Another incident of 1893: One day a devotee, accompanied by N. C. Datta, came to the house of Kedarchandra Das, a straw merchant, to invite Lātu Maharaj to his house on some holy occasion. When he entered the room he saw Lātu Maharaj sitting up, covered all over with a thick *chaddar*. Sri N. C. Datta called him over and over again without getting any reply. Both had to wait for about an hour to get any response to their calls. Meditation over, when he came to normal consciousness, he was invited to come to the devotee's house. Lātu Maharaj said, 'Why invite me? Go to Alambazar and invite the *sadhus* of the Math. If brother Śaśi goes it is as good as the Master's visit.' We heard about this incident direct from Sri N. C. Datta.

The same year, during the rains (Holy) Mother came again to Nilambarbabu's house, rented for her. Lātu Maharaj went and stayed there. He told us about this period, 'Look here, it was here that Mother practised that hard austerity known as *Panchatapa*. It was for teaching man that without austerities nothing (spiritual) could be gained. Don't forget it.'

In 1893, as we have said before, Lātu Maharaj came to know of Swami Viveka-

nanda's departure for America. He said later, 'I heard it from the lips of (Holy) Mother that brother Loren left for America. I felt a great longing to hear about him. After the passing away of the Master everyone used to say, "What lunacy has he (Master) committed (by predicting such a bright future, for Narendra)!" But I never believed in their words. I would tell them to their faces, "When the Master has pronounced it, you will see, it will all come true to the syllable — he would one day surpass us all. You will live to see it. Did he not say, 'He would initiate great movements, he will work wonders.' And you of little faith are doubting his words! Can his words ever be anything but true?" . . . Then at long last when Swamiji's activities in America were published in papers, Oh! how could I describe my joy!'

We have heard of one incident of this period from Girishbabu: 'Lātu would often come here and hear with unsurpassed avidity every word of the triumphant activities of the Swami in America. His attitude was then like that of a child, full of ardent faith and enthusiasm. When I informed him that the Swami's speech had been considered the best, Lātu laughed out in great glee like a boy and said, "It is bound to be so. Did not Master say that in him were working the eighteen excellent powers and qualities in their supreme plenitude? It cannot but be so. Master's prediction — can it be false? Where will these powers go but find proper expression at the proper time?" One day he was so much beside himself with joy that he cried out, "Please write to him, 'Fear not, the Lord is your protector.'" To another he said, "Can he be under a bushel — he, whom the Lord wants to shed light?"'

For some days in 1893 Lātu Maharaj stayed at Haramohanbabu's house. He would take some gram or flattened rice at noon and leave the house for an unknown destination, perhaps somewhere on the eastern bank of the Ganges.

Our information is that from 1891 to 1894 Lātu Maharaj generally took his night meal in Kedar Chandra Ghosh's house. And during

the day he subsisted on fried gram etc. purchased with money that came unasked. Some days he would come to Ramababu's house and take his noon-day meal there. On some such occasions he got ochre-coloured *dhoti* from his mother (i.e. Ramababu's wife). Whenever he needed a blanket he would beg one from Girishbabu. Sometimes he would appear at Navagopalbabu's house, where Navagopalbabu's wife would give him a right royal lunch with many tasteful side dishes.

We have heard from a reliable source, and in fact from Lātu Maharaj's own lips, that a grocer used to bring food for him for some months. Some thought that this gentleman was none other than his uncle. But we have inquired into the matter and come to know that it is not a fact. He was not only not his uncle but did not even belong to the Chapra District. There, in the north-western parts of India, is a class of grocers who perform the *Viraja homa* but devote themselves to the service of the *sadhus*, by offering uncooked food, out of the profit they get by their trade. Even now there are such grocers. This gentleman was a grocer of this category. He used to provide Lātu Maharaj with cooked food — a departure from the usual practice. In later days Lātu Maharaj himself said, 'Do you know during this time, for seven or eight months, a grocer used to bring, now and then hot *chapātis*, *dāl* and curries for me under the Baghbazar bridge? After that he stopped it'.

Upenbabu (Upendranath Mukherji) said, 'I started keeping company with Lātu Maharaj when Swami Yogananda went on a pilgrimage with Holy Mother, an event that took place in January 1894. At that time Lātu Maharaj did not like to take meals in a householder's residence, for when I invited him one day for lunch at my house Lātu Maharaj had replied: "Why go to your house? Is it not a fact that I buy food from the bazar with your money? Is it not the same as taking food at your house? Please don't press."'

(To be continued)

MEMOIRS OF SWAMI ADBHUTANANDA

(A free translation of the Bengali book *Smritikatha*)

(Continued from the previous issue)

THE same year Lātu Maharaj once came to see Rākhāl Maharaj at Alambazar Math. Rākhāl Maharaj, however, was not there then. We have heard it from Śaśi Maharaj that he requested him to stay at the Math. Śaśi Maharaj said, 'Why, brother, are you going about here and there? Why not stay here with us?' Śaśi Maharaj had said this when he saw Lātu Maharaj going away immediately he heard that Rākhāl Maharaj was not there. 'In answer to my request,' said Śaśi Maharaj, 'he laughed and said, "Not today, I will come some other day," and departed. When I said in a loud voice, "Please try to attend Master's birthday celebrations at Dakshineswar," he simply nodded and vanished.'

Lātu Maharaj did join the celebration that year and sang *kirtan* and danced along with Sri Vijay Krishna Goswami. Ramababu also attended it — so we have heard from Ramababu.

On September 5, 1894 the public of Calcutta held a mammoth meeting in the town hall to express their gratitude to Swami Vivekananda on his wonderful success in the Parliament of Religions at Chicago. It was presided over by Raja Piyari Mohan Mukhopadhyaya; Narendranath Sen, Editor, the *Indian Mirror* and N. N. Ghosh, Editor, the *Indian Nation* spoke on the occasion. Lātu Maharaj attended the meeting along with Upen Babu.

Swami Bodhananda (Haripada Maharaj) said, 'During this time Lātu Maharaj used to come very often to Khagendranath Chatterji's house. There "Suddenly appearing" Gopal (Gopal Chandra Ghosh) of Gadpara would also come, and there used to be lively exchanges of banter between the two.'

Sometime in 1895-96 Lātu Maharaj went to Puri by boat. Balarambabu's nephew, Nitai Charan Bose is on record to have said :

'I was then ten or eleven, and was a school student. One day I saw a Sannyasin and another gentleman come in a carriage and get down at our house, Śaśi Niketan at Puri. The elder brother of my father was then at Puri, he was very glad to have Lātu Maharaj in our midst. Then and there he called our head clerk and asked him to make arrangements for his stay, food, and showing him round all the holy places of the town. I remember, he (Lātu Maharaj) went to Bhuvaneswar and returning from there he started for Cuttack, where he stayed for a long time. From Cuttack he returned to Calcutta by boat again.' Upenbabu too told us that Lātu Maharaj went to Puri by boat and that he bore the expenses.

Once again he had been to Puri. This was in 1903. This was on the occasion of the Swing Festival and it was Nanibabu, nephew of Dr Śaśi, who took him there. This time he went by train.

There are two incidents, narrated by Lātu Maharaj himself in connection with his first visit to Puri. They were narrated later at Balarambabu's house. 'Would you believe, at Puri the Deity Jagannath is a living presence in the form of a wooden Image. He reveals Himself to man according to his individual spiritual mood and attainments. I prayed to Him to kindly reveal to me that beauty of His which made Sri Chaitanya shed profuse tears day-in and day-out for many, many years. I said, "What does this fool know of You. Kindly be gracious to me and reveal Yourself in the way which spread a charm on the Great Lord, Sri Chaitanya". And He answered my prayer for a day.

'When taking leave of Him, I asked two boons of Him: "See that (1) I may not have to wander far and wide (i.e. settle me at one place so that I may plunge myself there in meditation on the Lord); (2) what-

ever I would eat would be digested (i.e. I may not suffer from stomach trouble, which is a great hindrance to spiritual practices).”’ A devotee asked the reason for the strange second boon and got the answer : ‘Don’t you understand this ? A *sādhu* would get by alms all kinds of things and at odd hours. By that he is to maintain his body. If his digestive organ is not all right his health will break down and his spiritual practices will suffer a setback. To prevent this I asked for the boon which appeared to you so queer.’

Much later he said to us of Sri Sri Jagannatha Deva : ‘Where will you get such a place of pilgrimage as that ? All are equal there — there are no distinctions of class, caste or sect there. Is it a small matter ? And what advantages do you not get there ! You can give just a few paise and you get cooked food for yourself and for all your guests and friends. You will not have to bother for a cook or cooking. And if you pay a little more they will send the *prasada* right to your residence. You are left completely free to devote yourself to your spiritual practices. The temple is so big, you can have quite a quiet corner for yourself anywhere inside it. No one will care or dare to disturb you. If you want a quieter place that also you can get plenty — there is the vast beach. There are *sadhus* of all sects and denominations practising silently their own *sadhanas*. Oh the holiness of the place !’

We think the following narration refers to this period — 1895-97 : ‘At Calcutta when on some days I could not get any *bhuksha* (alms) I would go to Upenbabu, beg a few coins of him and purchase from a shop *puris* and potato curry and eat them. Through His grace there was no trouble about digestion. Nor had one to be present at a fixed time to get his food from a co-disciple’s or devotee’s house. If you don’t go at that time the members of the house get annoyed. Seeing all this I gave up taking food in any house and started purchasing food from the shops, of course with the devotee’s money ; but that did not impair my independence. I was free with my own time and was full of bliss.’

We have it from Sri Akshay Kumar Sen,

author of the *Ramakrishna Punthi* that the year he first gave the recital of his *Punthi* at the Dakshineswar Temple Lātu Maharaj was present and attentively heard the recital. It was in 1895. The author told us that Lātu Maharaj was mightily pleased with the recital and enthusiastically said, ‘Akshay Babu, you have conferred a great boon on the public, especially on the masses. You have narrated the incidents of the Master’s life so simply and so beautifully that even the illiterate masses, and their womenfolk too, will understand them fully.’

In 1896 Lātu Maharaj was found for eight months at a stretch in Mirbahar or Prasanna Kumar Thakur’s ghat at Baghbazar. Our reporter was Gaju Bhattacharya. He was known among the devotees of our Master by this name because he came from the village of Gaja. At first he could not recognize Lātu Maharaj inasmuch as he had grown long hairs and beard bristling straight out. He narrated it thus to us : ‘I found a Sannyasin in the Mirbahar Ghat hearing scriptural recitals very attentively. I used to bow down to him every day at the end of the recitals. He never talked with anybody but sat quietly in a corner. He never asked anything of anyone, nor did he give instruction to any one. One day I told my friend Patal Babu, in the course of a conversation about this peculiar Sannyasin. So he came, not so much to hear the recital, as to see the *sādhu* at Prasanna Kumar Thakur’s ghat. The moment he saw the Sannyasin a doubt arose in his mind : ‘May he not be our Lātu Maharaj ?’ Recital over we went straight to the *sādhu* and Patal Babu recognized him immediately and asked him : ‘Why are you here Maharaj ? Come with us. Don’t you know Swamiji is coming very soon to Calcutta ?’ ‘When, when is he coming ?’ was Lātu Maharaj’s query. We did not know the exact date, so we kept quiet. Observing our silence he muttered something to himself and said, ‘Well, let us go’. We gladly took him to our house in Nandaram Sen Lane. Next day we called a barber and got him shaved. He stayed with us for three or four days and then shifted to Balaram Babu’s house.”

(To be continued)

MEMOIRS OF SWAMI ADBHUTANANDA

(A free translation of the Bengali book, *Smritikatha*)

(Continued from the previous issue)

WE have heard it from Lātu Maharaj himself that Śantiram Babu pressed him very much to stay at Balaram Babu's house : 'When I used to stay on the bank of the Ganges and subsisted on *puri* and potato curry or fried gram, one day Śantiram Babu pressed me hard and said, "Why Maharaj, should you not stay with us? You should." I told him patiently, "You know, Śanti Babu, I have no fixed time for anything — bath, food, etc. Why should you court so much inconvenience for me unnecessarily? I am quite happy with my *puri* and curry purchased from the bazar." Do you know what reply he gave? He said : "Ours is such a big family, we incur such heavy expenditure. If out of this the cost of one *pav* of rice and one *pav* of wheat flour is wasted, would it be too much? You need not bother about all that. They will keep your food, noon and night, in your room. You will take it at your convenience. There will be no difficulty on either side." I had not the heart to say "no" to him after all that. Śantiram Babu showed real fraternal love towards me. It was this love of his that tied me down to him.'

Lātu Maharaj's stay at Balaram Babu's house at the end of 1896 is further proved by the fact that it was from here that he went to the Calcutta port to give a hearty send-off to Swami Abhedananda, who, at the call of Swami Vivekananda, was proceeding to London. They took a group photo of all the Sannyasins present there and Lātu Maharaj was one of them. We heard from his own mouth that from the port he returned to Balaram Babu's house.

Swami Vivekananda returned to Calcutta on February 18, 1897. The same day he went, at noon, to Paśupati Babu's house. There his *gurubhais* and others went to meet him, but Lātu Maharaj did not go. So Swamiji asked his *gurubhais* where Lātu Maharaj was.

Learning that he was in the crowd the Swami tried to find him out. Vibhuti Babu heard about what followed next from Lātu Maharaj himself. We quote it below : 'When Swāmiji returned from the West there were some Western disciples of his in his company. Thinking the Swami might have developed some sort of egotism at having some Westerners as his disciples I did not go to meet him. But Swamiji searched me out and talked with me. He asked, "All the others came, why did you not come?" I replied, "Now you have Western disciples, men and women; would you have remembered me, I thought". Hearing this he caught hold of my hand and said, "Lātu dear, you are my same old brother Lātu and I am your same old Loren". Then I fully realized that he remembered us even in the same way as before; fame and position had not made any dent in his love for us. He invited me to lunch and said "Let us go to lunch, you will sit by my side". At that I sat down next to him and took our meal. But what talks they had! All rubbish. They, quite a good number, went on inquiring about the manners of the Western people. Did any one ask about that power through whose magic all those things, (his wonderful speeches and the success of his mission) had happened? None. Swamiji also said the same thing when we were alone : "Did you observe how shallow novelty-hunters all these people were? Not even one asked about the power which made all these possible. Everybody thinks that it was I who did these. Little do they know, but for His grace and power not an iota of all that would have happened." I was left with no doubt that Swamiji's mind was unsullied by pride. Moreover, I noticed that he discarded, soon after his arrival at Calcutta, the costly Western dress and started donning a two-rupee worth chaddar and two rupees-and-a-half worth shoes as before. He threw away to

the four winds his great name and fame, as if they never came to him.'

The same evening Swamiji came to Gopal Lal Seal's garden-house at Cossipore. He took Goodwin and the Saviers with him, and having made all arrangement for their stay there, he himself returned to Balaram Babu's house.

'About ten days (February 28, 1897) after Swamiji's arrival at Calcutta they organized a very big meeting in the courtyard of the palace of the Raja of Sobhabazar. That was the first time I heard Swamiji's lecture. I found that his power to enthuse people with noble sentiments and rouse them to philanthropic activities had increased enormously. For I actually saw that the audience was electrified as he spoke,' said Lātu Maharaj.

On the occasion of Sri Ramakrishna's birthday celebration that year Lātu Maharaj was present at Dakshineswar. He himself narrated what he saw that day. 'Hearing that Swamiji had returned from the West quite a large number of people came to see him. On the celebration day the concourse of people was so great that the big courtyard and the gardens were literally packed to the full. There we saw Girish Babu sitting at the Panchavati. The moment Swamiji saw him he prostrated before him, his Western disciples gazing on the scene. Girish Babu also bowed down to Swamiji. Pointing to Girish Babu he said something in English to his Western disciples. When Swamiji left the place someone from the audience passed a remark on him, which annoyed Girish Babu bitterly. Said he, "These rōgues will not be great themselves, nor will they allow others to rise. Do you think they have any future? Master used to say, 'They (i.e. Naren and other boy disciples of his) are the fresh yellow butter churned before sunrise, totally untouched by the sun's rays'. Even if my eyes see them doing any wrong thing, I would rather disbelieve my eyes than blame them. They are the lump of butter that will never mix with water though kept long in it. I am ready to pluck out my eyes that are audacious to see faults in them."

Just see what an amount of faith Girish Babu had in brother Loren.'

'Many of the brother disciples were, one day, sitting and talking in the Alambazar Math when all on a sudden brother Loren turned to brother Śaśi and asked him, "Śaśi, how deep is your love for me?" "Very, very deep indeed." "Can you do whatever I would ask you to?" "Yes, of course." "Then do one thing. From the crowded junction of the Fowzdari Balakhana at Chitpur purchase a fresh soft loaf of bread for me." The Swami wanted to test brother Śaśi. Śaśi was born in an orthodox Brahmin family, and was himself noted for his orthodoxy. Swamiji wanted to see if he suffered from any inhibition. Śaśi undoubtedly was a scrupulous follower of scriptural injunctions, but that did not make him look down upon anyone. So brother Śaśi, with smiles playing on his lips, went and purchased bread from a Muslim shop at 5 p.m. when there was a record crowd on the streets and handed it over to Swamiji. Brother Vivekananda was highly pleased when he saw Śaśi handing over the bread to him. He caressed him a little and then said, "Brother, you will have to go to Madras and establish a centre there". Without uttering a word Śaśi left for Madras — Śaśi, a *sadhu*, who did not even want to pay a visit to the holy city of Benares! So great was his love for brother Loren.

'When brother Śaśi left for Madras brother Baburam took up the duty of worshipping the Master at the Ālambazar Math and Tulsi of going to Calcutta for purchases, collection of money etc. At that time Mahāpurush Maharaj also went somewhere, I don't know where, at the request of brother Loren.'

Lātu Maharaj returned to Balaram Babu's house the day Swami Vivekananda left Gopal Seal's garden house for Darjeeling. Lātu Maharaj occupied the room which Ramdayal Babu had been using. But Lātu Maharaj was not present there when Swami Vivekananda after his return from Darjeeling convened a meeting of the devotees of Sri Ramakrishna in which he explained his idea about esta-

blishing the Ramakrishna Mission. We heard this from Lātu Maharaj himself. But he heard all that had happened that day afterwards. One day while discussing the ideas and ideals of the Mission he told us the following :

‘One day brother Yogin told brother Loren, “To hold meetings, to deliver lectures, to do good to people — these are Western ideas that lead to egotism. I don’t think it is what we learnt from the Master.” Hearing this the Swamiji grew grave and said, “How do you know these are not the Master’s ideas? Infinite are the ideas of our great Master. Do you want to keep him limited within your narrow intellect? I will not allow that. I will break all limitations and broadcast his liberal ideas to the world. He never asked me to preach worshipping his photo. Meditation, prayer and realizing the high, noble, life-giving ideas of his in our own life are what he taught us and also to broadcast these ideas to the wide world. You, perhaps are thinking, I am going to found a new sect — not at all. Blessed are we that we got shelter at his holy feet! We are born to scatter these wonderful ideas of his to all alike without any reservation. Look here, brother, indications of his grace in abundance I have felt times without number; I have felt too intensely that it is he who, standing at my back, has been forcing me to do all these. In those days, when stricken with hunger, I fell unconscious on a narrow bridle path in the Himalayas, when I had not had a rag to cover my loins, when without a pie in my pocket I planned to go to the West—in all these circumstances I felt an abundant shower of his grace; again, when, to have just a look at me, this Vivekananda, the wide streets of America could not contain the milling crowds, then equally did he shower his grace on me and I could keep my head cool under the maddening impact of honour and respect bordering on worship. It is through his grace that success followed me everywhere. Now I want to do something for this country. Give up doubting, gird up your loins and help me in this great task; through his grace it will produce a wonderful crop of

commonweal”. Hearing this brother said, “All along we have been following you; but, truth to tell, doubts assail us now and then. We have seen the Master following a different method and we are afraid if we are deviating from his path. What I told you are only words of caution”. The Swami said in reply, “Our Master is not so little as you think of him. Wonderful is his life, infinite are his ideas. Who can say he has understood him? He is *non pareil*. Nothing finite can contain the infinite and he was infinite in every respect. If he but wills he can create millions of Vivekanandas in the twinkling of the eye. Do you think I shall be allowed to rest, if I say I won’t work? He wants this body and mind to be his instruments; he likes to work through them. What can I do but yield and obey?” This talk of Swamiji with brother Yogin opened our eyes. We came to understand, “True indeed is what brother Loren says. Infinite are his facets, infinite are the approaches. What do we know of him? What can we understand? Brother Vivekananda has understood him through his grace; so it is that he is making us understand him. Is it not said by him that this brother Vivekananda will make his ideas understandable to the world? Did he not say ‘I brought him down to earth for this purpose?’” As I was revolving all these in my mind one day, the following words of the Master flashed upon me: “Look here, others are like dim lamps, some bright lamps, at the most one or two are like a twinkling star; but my Naren is the dazzling sun. Before him all grow dim...” Still one day I told him, “Brother, why bring in all these troubles? Will they (these works) not interfere with our meditation and prayer?” Do you know what he said with an indulgent smile? “What would you understand why I am introducing all these? You are a fool; as the Master, so the disciple. At the sight of ‘Ka’, (the first consonant) you shed profuse tears like Prahlada.*

* When at school Prahlada, a son of the emperor of the demons, Hiranyakasipu, was introduced to the first consonant ‘Ka’, he was at once reminded of Krishna, the Lord of the universe and he started shedding profuse tears in ecstasy.

You are all a gang of devotees, what will you understand of this? You are meant for crying like babes. And you think you would attain salvation through this (crying)? On the last day the Master will come to take you to Vaikuntha, do you think so? And there you will enjoy to your heart's content, is it? And those who are followers of *jñāna* here, who are educating people in the path of righteousness, who are serving the diseased and the distressed here will all go to hell; this is the precious idea, isn't it? Because all these are Maya! To go to bring succour to the people is to interfere with divine justice? All these are troubles, impediments in the path of *bhakti*! This is what you mean to say, isn't it? As if, my dear Leto, to walk the path of God is so easy as that. You call on God and He comes, a few sound vibrations and the Lord of the universe comes running, you keep a picture of God, imaginary or so-called real, throw a few flowers besmeared with sandal paste and worship Him and He becomes your slave! This is your religion, bah!" It was a stunning blow. The thoughts were so new and so terribly right. A *gurubhai* lisped just a few syllables in continuation of my thought and got a cutting snub. Continued the Swami, "Aha! What you call *bhakti* is a huge hoax, folly of the first magnitude! That has only one utility — making a weak man weaker. I don't care for that kind of *bhakti*. The *bhakti* that makes man so self-centred as to be busy with his personal salvation, which does not make his heart bleed for others — that *bhakti* I have no need of. To make man of a man I am ready to go to hell a hundred times, still I would not like to go to your heaven through the door of such *bhakti* as yours. I would not give a copper for such *bhakti*. If your Ramakrishna teaches such a doctrine I am not prepared to hear him, make a note of this. One day I foolishly asked for this kind of *bhakti* and he rebuked me and

To shed tears in remembrance of the Lord is an achievement, according to the Vaishnava tradition. The Swami is pooh-poohing the idea in jest, rather half in jest; for the Swami wanted to introduce bones into the jelly-fish sentimentalism that strutted as religion in India.

called me selfish and of little intellect. Am I going to be duped by your words? I would work as he has made me understand. He who is ready to cast away the very idea of personal salvation and would work for other's good, know it for certain, I am his bond slave". Saying this brother Vivekananda burst into tears and left the room. Then we felt very sorry. "Why did I go to tell all these to him? The Master has made him our leader. Our duty is to follow him. I will never again argue with him,"—I took this vow. Next day when I found him alone I told him, "Brother, I am a fool. Please don't take my words to heart." At that do you know what brother Loren told me? He said, "You wanted to know why I am introducing so many sources of worries and troubles into the lives of monks. Hear then. It is not for you and me but for the future generations of monks. You know very well what troubles we had to undergo — many of them quite unnecessarily. By establishing an organization of monks with service to humanity as a main plank, I make their life a little easy. They will get their bread by working for the good of others; and thus freed from the bother of finding food, they will be able to utilize their leisure in meditation and prayer and in cultivating good thoughts and sentiments as well as noble works. Through the Master's grace all these ideas will be realized, you will see it." Now I see his ideas actually realized — so many Math and Mission centres have been founded and a number of monks and Brahmacharins are carrying out brother Loren's ideas.' [From the conversation with a devotee at Balaram Babu's house in 1907.]

In 1897 Swamiji went on a tour of Northern India. He took Lātu Maharaj with him. They visited Almora, Ambala, Amritsar, Kashmir, Lahore, Dehra-Dun, Delhi, Alwar, Khetri and Jaipur. We have heard of various incidents of this period from a number of devotees. We cull them here, as far as possible, chronologically.

When the Swami was wandering in the Himalayas as an unknown monk, once he came to Almora. He was so weak with hunger

that he fell unconscious on a road. Then a Muslim fakir saved his life by feeding him with a *kaukri*, a cucumber-like fruit. When the Swami came to Almora after his first journey to the West he happened to meet the same fakir there. In the course of a talk one day Lātu Maharaj referred to this incident : ' You know, if anybody did the Swami just a small turn he would magnify it as a great service, would never forget it. At Almora when we were putting up at Badri Shah's house, I saw the Swami breaking up the conversation and running to the street and thrusting Rs. 2/- into the palm of a fakir. I asked him in surprise " Why did you give money to him ? " He said, " Shall I not ? This fakir once saved my life. When I lay unconscious with hunger on a street of this town it was he who fed me with a cucumber-like fruit and brought me back to consciousness. What do you think Lātu ? Can I repay that debt by giving him a few coins ? A turn in time is indeed invaluable " .'

Lātu Maharaj must have accompanied Swamiji to Ambala and Amritsar, for he said he saw, the Saviers coming down from Simla to meet the Swami—a meeting which happened at Ambala. Again he said that the top of the Amritsar temple, like that of Viswanath at Benares, was covered with gold and that formerly people had wealth and they knew how to spend it well too.

Here are three incidents that took place in Kashmir. Swamiji hired a house-boat there. The owner lived with his whole family in one corner of the boat. These people had no other house. Lātu Maharaj got into the boat first. But the moment he saw a woman there he jumped out of it. Swamiji understood the situation and started persuading him to get in ; but Lātu Maharaj insisted that he must not share a boat with a woman. When at last the Swami said, ' I am here with you, what fear is there ? Nothing will happen to you,' he agreed and got in. (Narrated by G. C. Ghosh).

The second incident : One day the Swami asked Lātu Maharaj to purchase cooked rice and meat for himself. Lātu Maharaj had by

that time given up taking meat. Lest the Swami should press him to take meat he said, ' I will surely buy rice and meat for you but mind you, I will not take it myself '. At that the Swami said, ' Ah ! You need not purchase then '. But Lātu Maharaj did not hear him. He went and purchased the two articles for the Swami.

The third incident : Once Swamiji had gone out to see an old Hindu temple ; returning he said in the course of his conversation that the temple would be about three thousand years old. At this Lātu Maharaj asked him how he knew it. The Swami said, ' It would not be possible for me to explain it to you. Had you had some education it would have been possible '. This jolly carp was met by a home thrust. Lātu Maharaj replied, ' I have understood it, eh ! — the depth of your scholarship. It is so deep as not to be able to explain this phenomena to a confirmed fool like me ! ' It set all people roll in laughter.

While the Swamis were at Lahore, ' a class friend of Swami Vivekananda one day came to him and not knowing how to address him frankly asked him, " How should I address you now ? " At this the Swami laughed and said, " Old fellow, have you run mad ? Have I grown into a god or a demon ? I am the same Naren and you are the same Mati." The distance vanished in a trice. He started talking familiarly and took us to his circus one night,' says Lātu Maharaj.

They spent about a fortnight at Dehra Dun, from where they (?) went to Khetri. Then they came to Delhi. Here he became the guest of a poor Bengali gentleman. ' One day a gentleman came to the Swami and asked him why he did not see any light though he prayed hard according to the injunctions of the scriptures. The Swami replied " You go on parrot-like reciting verses and hymns in Sanskrit, whose meaning you do not know. Give up praying in a language not known to you, use your mother tongue and feelingly call on Him." The gentleman followed his advice and got light.'

(To be continued)

MEMOIRS OF SWAMI ADBHUTANANDA

(A free translation of the Bengali book, *Smritikatha*)

(Continued from the previous issue)

'AT ĀLWAR railway station a large gathering of aristocrats was waiting to receive him. But Swamiji without paying much attention to them quietly moved on to a corner of the platform where an ordinary man was looking eagerly at him. Swamiji, of course, went with the "bigs" but did not stay with any one of them. . . . One day an invitation came from a nobleman's house ; that day an old woman also came to invite him. He accepted the latter's request and told the gentleman that he would accept his invitation some other day. He told the old lady to prepare thick *chapatis* as she had done during his previous visit to the town (i.e. during his *parivrajaka* days). This old lady had given him food and shelter lovingly and reverently at that time. It was when he was residing at this old lady's place that the Raja of Ālwar came to know of the Swami and took him to his palace. This time also Swamiji remembered her goodness and gave her invitation preference over all others.'

At Khetri, in Rajputana, Lātu Maharaj talked with His Highness with such intelligence that the Raja could not understand that Lātu Maharaj was illiterate. On the other hand he was so much pleased with Lātu Maharaj's talks, that he praised him in his conversation with Swamiji. We heard about the incident from Krishnalal Maharaj in some detail which we give here : 'One day His Highness brought a globe and started showing various countries on it to Lātu Maharaj. Before this Lātu Maharaj had never seen a globe. His Highness was talking extensively about the globe. Noticing this Swamiji came to his co-disciple's help and gave such a turn to the conversation that the prince could not understand that Lātu Maharaj had no schooling.'

What is strange, however, is that although Lātu Maharaj was staying as an honoured guest in the palace, he, following the ancient custom of monks, never, even for a day, ate anything there. He said : 'Master used to say, "monks should not take meals in palaces." So I used to silently slip away and take my meals elsewhere.'

Lātu Maharaj had many such ideas which did not match well with those of his other *gurubhais*. That is why he could not stay at any centre of the Organisation ; he spent his whole life independently outside it.

From Khetri the party came to Jaipur, and from there Lātu Maharaj, accompanied by some of his *gurubhais*, returned to Calcutta.

CHAPTER XVII

Of the twelve years of Lātu Maharaj's life, after the passing away of the Master upto 1897, very few incidents are known to us. But those few are sufficient to give us an indication of the tremendous austerities he performed during the period. This is admitted by all his *gurubhais*. Swami Vivekananda said in later days : 'If we compare the surroundings out of which Lātu came with ours and his spiritual achievements, again, with ours we should have to admit that he is far superior to us. We are all born in noble families, are well educated and came to the Master with sharpened intellect ; Lātu was completely illiterate, joined first Ramababu and then the Master as a boy-servant. When meditation and prayer seemed monotonous we could remove our ennui by studies ; Lātu had no such alternative. He has had but one support throughout his life. The fact that he could keep his head in spite of all these adverse circumstances and had the supreme spiritual realization shows the inner

strength of his personality and the infinite grace of the Master on him.'

In fact Lātu Maharaj had no other support except Sri Ramakrishna. Depending on him alone he passed his whole life. Ah ! Sri Ramakrishna was his all-in-all—not in words, but in deed, in inspiration, in aspiration, in the fulfilment of his life. So long as the Master was physically present Lātu followed his wishes implicitly. After his passing away also there was no change in his attitude. The Master remained the same lodestar of his life ; he could never accept anyone else as his guide even for a moment. How he understood the Master's guidance after his passing away is beyond our understanding, but he himself has told us many a time that it is he alone who has been guiding him, 'Else is it possible for an ignoramus like myself to undergo those hard austere practices during this period of my life ? What do I know of practices ? It is he who is taking me by the hand through all these *sādhanas*.' This absolute reliance on the Master is at the root of his wonderful success in life.

From what we have heard we can emphatically say that Lātu Maharaj's faith and reliance on Master's guidance was really 'absolute' in the fullest sense of the term. The very next day after the Master's passing away he appeared to Holy Mother and said, "Where have I gone ? Here I am standing before you. It is just like going from one room to another." Every syllable of the above was to Lātu Maharaj the very truth embodied. Whenever he faced a problem he looked to the Master and would never take a step except when the command was received from him. He would wait long—it seemed the whole life, if need be—bearing all hardship and sufferings, rather than take a decision himself or from others. It so happened sometimes that a whole year passed by and the problem remained unsolved. Once at Balarambabu's house, he said to us : 'You talk of dependence on the Lord ! If you call on Him for two consecutive days and do not get an answer you follow your own whims on the third day—so wise you think of yourselves !

What's the meaning of depending on Him ? It means to go by His orders. If you don't get any express order from Him you must desist from doing anything ; you must face all for that. If you can do that then only, it may be said that you have depended on Him, not otherwise. Brother Vivekananda used to say : "If I don't get Ram should I go to Shyam ? That is bad indeed. If our life is to go in vain let it be for Him." Just see the depth of his dedication to Him. He was ready to give away his life for his sake for nothing. One should hold on to Him like that. Then only will He show you the correct path.'

The devotee to whom Lātu Maharaj was narrating this said, "Why does not such a spirit of dedication come to us, Maharaj ?"

'It is because you place your intellect and egoism above Him. You are not prepared to wait for his orders. You lose patience in a minute,' replied Lātu Maharaj.

The above talk shows clearly with what patience Lātu Maharaj himself waited for the Master's commands.

We have narrated before that it was at the Cossipore garden that the world of *samādhi* opened up to Lātu Maharaj. It is a common belief that *sādhanas*, spiritual practices, culminate in *samādhi*. It is not the language of the *sādhakas*. It is true undoubtedly that every *sādhaka* aspires after entering into *samādhi* and every one stakes all for that. We have heard from Lātu Maharaj : 'Is *samādhi* a trifling thing ? After very great attempts at meditation, prayer, and all that, the human mind just gets a taste for Him. Then with harder endeavours people get a glimpse of His moods and splendour. Infinite are His moods, infinite are His splendours. But one has to transcend all that. In our attempts, to know the moods and splendours of the Lord, millions of births would pass yet nothing about Him could be understood. Still the Lord Himself is beyond all these. These moods and splendours are, so to say, His garments and ornaments ; He is far, far beyond all of them. And is it a matter of joke to go beyond them ; so sweet and wonderful are they that it is almost impossible

for human beings to rise above them and pray for the revelation of His nature. If only His grace descends on man, if He so wills that he should see Him as He is in Himself, then He helps him in the dissolution of his mind and intellect, the two great obstacles in the path of the free play of intuition ; otherwise individual efforts to dissolve them are worse than useless. Effort indeed there should be, but only upto a certain stage ; beyond that divine grace is the only hope and support. When mind and intellect cease to play their parts the fortunate soul enters into *samādhi*, remember this. !'

At this one of his hearers was struck dumb and cried out, 'What do you say, Maharaj ? We have heard that by dint of self-effort alone, through meditation and concentration of mind does a man reach *samādhi*.'

'What you have heard is not incorrect ; but that *samādhi* which is attained by concentration of mind is what Master used to call *chetana samādhi*. There the interplay of Divine moods and splendours occupies the field. He (Master) used to talk of another kind of *samādhi*, where mind is dissolved, egoity vanishes completely. I give you the truth ; that *samādhi* nobody can ever attain except by Divine grace.'

The devotee : 'Everybody says, Maharaj, practise and attain the goal.'

Lātu Maharaj : 'Yes, goal is attained. But what do they know of *the* goal ? Most people take the experience of Divine moods and splendours as the goal ; and who would say that they are not. But they are not the last word. There is a "beyond" even of them, wondrous though they are. The second kind of *samādhi* is exactly that land beyond. These experiences of power and splendour endow the *sādhaka* with powers etc., and they themselves become the wonder of the people at large. But there they are stuck up—in splendour only ; the *jaḍa samādhi* brings the Lord Himself to him without meditation on anything. The coming of Lord Himself is a complete transformation of the *sādhaka*—the individuality is lost. That *samādhi*, the experience, cannot be

expressed in words, not even a distant hint could be given. The Lord's powers, His splendours can be expressed in a way. But He Himself is not exhausted in them. Even these powers and splendours are infinite, they know no limitation. And yet all of them, even in their infinity, cannot express Him. In everything, He transcends all. Just as you have many qualities, you have many powers, you can hide them, you can express them if you like ; but you are surely not exhausted in them, your nature is not revealed in them ; your nature threads through them all and yet it is nowhere in them. It is possible for a *sādhaka* to understand a little of His powers and splendours but not an iota of Him, His nature. But when He Himself looks gracious on a *sādhaka* he knows Him mutely. Did not our Master say, "If a man, somehow or other, knows the master he can know his assets and properties too — the master reveals them to him" ? But is it easy to meet the master, to be acquainted with him ? First of all the door-keeper is to be pleased, then the servants and the butler, and perchance an intimate friend, who introduces him to the lord. The lord may grant him his prayer through his officers ; may call him to his presence ; may himself come out to meet him. Similar is the behaviour of the Overlord ; similar, therefore, should be our approach to Him. The Lord, if He is so gracious may come to the *sādhaka* Himself ; or He may call him to his presence ; may himself come out to meet expression, to the Vaishnava varieties of emancipation, viz., living in the same heaven with the Lord Himself, living in His Court etc. ?] Or He may send His officers (angels etc.) to him. All these depend upon His 'whims'. In all these matters what value do you set on your personal efforts ! Prayers to His servants and officers, this much only. Thus far do your spiritual *sādhana*s lead you, not a geometrical point beyond that. Then you will have to depend entirely on His grace—His grace alone. And this period in a *sādhaka's* life is extremely painful.'

The devotee : 'Why do you say, Maharaj, it is so painful ? When officers are pleased that

means the prayer is granted—at least to some extent.’

Lātu Maharaj : ‘There you are : “To some extent.” That does not satisfy the *sādhaka*. The goal is not reached. Despair seizes the mind.’

The devotee : ‘What do you say, Maharaj ? After such Herculean efforts if peace is not attained, that is depressing enough. All hopes are gone. We are undone ! Hopes dissolve before they rise in the heart.’

Lātu Maharaj : ‘Please remember one thing, contentment, satisfaction is a great obstacle in the path of the spiritual practican. Its coming bars further progress. Can there be a limit to experiences in and of the Infinite ?’

Another devotee : ‘That may be true, Maharaj ; but is it not a fact that all these hard and austere practices are for the attainment of peace ? And you say, that peace is a hindrance to further progress !’

Lātu Maharaj : ‘True, all practices are for getting peace. (Stops a little and then resumes.) But peace is contentment which appears when all desires are gone ; and without desires what urges will lead us to further experiences ?’

The devotee : ‘So, you mean to say, that there are experiences beyond peace ?’

Lātu Maharaj : ‘Exactly. There are countless things beyond peace. But to have them, peace should be attained first. Do you know the nature of this peace ? A sense of plenitude, fullness in himself. Troubles, tribulations, worries will not affect the mind—that stage is peace. But when the door to higher spiritual experiences is flung open another kind of discontent fills the heart. This discontent is of a different type altogether, which I cannot explain to you. There the *sādhaka* cannot remain idle, yet he fully realizes the futility of personal efforts.’

One devotee : ‘It is all an enigma, Maharaj, our understanding is crippled. Please explain it in our language.’ Lātu Maharaj : ‘To understand it, my boy, requires a little *sādhana*. Without austerities, deep contemplation, these things remain enigmatic. Your practices are little ; hence if I explain them

a thousand times they will still remain to you as puzzling as ever.’

From the above conversation this much is clear to us that this *samādhi*, *jada samādhi*, does not depend on personal efforts and yet without them also it remains unattainable—the language is enigmatic, but the content is clear.

From this conversation we also get a key to unlock the mystery i.e. why Lātu Maharaj engaged himself in severe austerities after attaining *samādhi* at the Cossipore garden. But what he actually did, remains mostly unknown to us. Just a few glimpses are given below :

We have heard from the lips of Śaśi Maharaj : ‘We had to call Lātu again and again back to normal consciousness and in a way force some food into his mouth. Many such days passed when all of us took our food, having called him again and again, but having got no response we placed his food in his room and came away; noon passed, evening came and went, at night when we entered the room, to call him for the night meal, we saw the day-meal remaining there as it was placed, only stale and stiff ; and Lātu lying down in the same straight posture as before, covered all over with a thick cotton chaddar. To force a little food down his throat we had to take recourse to many devices.’

Sarat Maharaj (Swami Saradananda) once spoke to Mahendranath Datta : ‘At night the rogue Leto does not sleep at all. Do you know, Mahim, during the first part of the night he simulates sleep, even snoring, and he keeps his rosary hidden with him. When others sleep he sits up and starts counting beads. One night I heard the ticking of beads and thought a mouse might have entered the room. When I gave a rap it stopped. A little after the ticks began again. It happened many times. A doubt, arose in my mind—it may not be a mouse. Next night I remained awake and watchful. The moment I heard the first tick I struck a match and found the rogue Leto sitting up and counting beads; then I said with a laugh, “You rogue, you mean to cheat us:

we shall be sleeping and you will be counting beads. That won't do. . . .”

The above two incidents occurred at Baranagore. At Ālambazar it was not different either. Here is Sudhir Maharaj's (Swami Śudhananda's) testimony : ‘That was my first visit to Ālambazar (Math). I saw one lying straight covering his whole body, from head to foot, with a cotton sheet, and two others were pulling him hard. That being my first visit, I was taken aback. I did not care to inquire into its reason. Long after I asked him one day the reason for the strange behaviour. He said, “I thought, I would stop feeding the rogue of a body ; so I was lying like that”.’

The above three incidents are typical of his attitude towards his life. For six long years he did not give up this attitude. Forgetting food and sleep he performed austerities. It is not merely the foregoing of physical essentials that made his spiritual practices more austere and severe — they are but negative virtues — but their positive aspect viz., meditation and japam without any break, which were really astounding. Mahendrababu (Datta) is on record : ‘Then Lātu Maharaj's attitude was : “Total wiping himself off or reaching out to fullest plenitude” ; nothing in between would satisfy him. From his eyes, from his bearing, from every part of his body was blazing forth this determination. . . . There was a sort of spiritual competition among these co-disciples.’

In later days Lātu Maharaj himself admitted, ‘Once it came to me that I must be as great as brother Vivekananda. Little did I then understand how far ahead of me he was. But I concentrated all my energy to the realization of this end. What did I see ? The more I approached him the farther ahead he

appeared to be. Once it seemed I had almost overtaken him. But there also it proved to be a delusion. He was going ahead at full speed. Of what avail were my paltry efforts ? Was it a matter of personal efforts ? It was the region of the Lord's grace ! I can no more double my endeavour, I have employed my full speed. Brother Vivekananda was not to stop like the hare of the story. How can the question of overtaking come ?’

Hearing this a devotee naively said, ‘But, Maharaj, at the end of *sādhana* all become equal, reaching as they do the same goal ?’

Lātu Maharaj : ‘How foolish ! That can never be.’

The devotee : ‘Why not, Maharaj ? There's the goal, the end of the race. When you reach it, the achievement there is the same for all.’

Lātu Maharaj : ‘What a naivety ; Is there an end to *sādhana*? or to powers or splendours? or a limitation to Atman ? It is all a race in infinity ! Because of this unending process nobody can say “Brahman is this or even like this”.’

One day at Balarambabu's house Bihari-babu asked him, ‘You repeat it often : there is no end to *sādhana* nor to powers and splendours, or to experiences ; or limitations to Ātman. But the scriptures talk of *mukti*. What is that then ?’

What Lātu Maharaj said in answer to this we extensively quote below : ‘To you *mukti* means freedom from bondage. But in *sādhana* it means becoming, merging. Just as the waters of a river merge themselves in those of the ocean, so the individual *ātman* merges itself in the ocean of the Paramātman. Or in other words the *sādhaka* loses himself completely in the latter. But do you think there the matter ends ?’

(To be continued)

MEMOIRS OF SWAMI ADBHUTANANDA

(A free translation of the Bengali book, *Smitikatha*)

(Continued from the previous issue)

LĀTU MAHARAJ continued : ‘The Lord’s sports are so wondrous that there is no release even in losing oneself. After losing, there is a start for refinding — refinding in an ampler space with plenitude in and around, plenitude of power and sweetness, of splendour and beauty. Take, for example the waters of the river : Does their cycle come to an end with their merging in the ocean ? Are they not transformed into vapour by the sun’s heat, do they not climb up again into the sky, and again come down to the earth ? The beauty of *sādhana* is also like that. Once the *sādhaka* loses himself in the Lord ; the Lord then, if He so pleases, finds him out and puts him on the way to refind himself transformed—this game of losing and refinding is — may be — never-ending. It never gets stale, it never tires the *sādhaka* ; newer, sweeter, grander experiences urge him on and on. *Sādhana* thus is unending, the powers that urge one on are infinite. But whose *sādhana* ? Whose are the powers ? Of the Ātman, of course, which is infinite in more ways than we can conceive of.’ Biharibabu, who was all concentration, asked him, ‘Maharaj, if this be the mystery of *sādhana*, what is the use of losing oneself and again of finding oneself out ?’

Lātu Maharaj : ‘It is the Divine sport. It goes on like that. There is no logical “why” in that. The sportive Lord plays His game. In the game of hide-and-peek touching the granny completes one game for the player. But he can play again when the granny winks him on. The peculiarity of this game of *sādhana* is that it is the granny, the Lord Himself, who has become the players as well as the granny. He Himself is playing these parts — He is undergoing spiritual *sādhana*s,

He tastes the release from bondages and again does He accept bondages anew ; and in these self-imposed bondages He shows paths to freedom to others. Simply inconceivable are His sports ! Nobody can understand an iota of this, if He Himself does not will it. Here His grace is all in all, from beginning to end.’

From the above we can surmise Lātu Maharaj’s way of *sādhana* clearly. He did not like merely to remain immersed in the Ocean of Brahman but wanted to join in the Divine sports as well. This explains his double mood during this period. Sometimes he was seen inert as a log of wood — altogether lost to the outer world and to himself. At other times he was a merry minion, joy jetting out of him in all directions. In one mood he was experiencing that, ‘Brahman alone is real, everything else is unreal’. In another mood he was feeling palpably, ‘He has become all these’. We find, scattered throughout his talks, statements bearing out both the moods.

Mahendranath Datta writes in his pamphlet on “Lātu the Anchorite” : ‘For some time Lātu Maharaj was really in that state where a man could say he was in the world but not of it. He could not mix with anyone as before. He was, throughout the good portion of the day, found sitting quite absent-minded. His mind would not function in the normal way. At that time in all matters ‘yea’ and ‘nay’ were both the same to him. For none had he hatred, slight or contempt, or attachment, love or affection ; for none had he a curse or blessing ; there was neither welcome to nor rejection of anything of the world. At that time the world was to him a revolving wheel through whose holes things were seen hazily unattended by the mind. He was in a state of “stupor”, so to say.’

Below is what Navagopal Ghosh states about Lātu Maharaj: 'At one time Lātu Maharaj used to come to our house. A look at him would give this idea to anyone that all his transactions with the world were over. He had no personal desires nor any duty to anyone. He had no relish for food when it would come, nor did he feel any want or suffering when it would not. A glance at him would convince anyone of his absolute desirelessness.

In 1893 Girishbabu said to one devotee, 'If you want to see a monk as described in the *Gītā* go and see Lātu'. He did not know what 'a monk as described in the *Gītā*' meant. So he asked what that meant, to which Girishbabu replied, 'You have not read, I see, the second chapter of the *Gītā*, where it describes the state of one whose intellect is fixed (on the Reality). The full description of the *Gītā* you can see demonstrated in his personality.' Saying this he explained all those verses of the *Gītā* to him. (Narrated by Avinash Chandra Ganguly.)

In 1893-94 what a devotee saw of Lātu Maharaj has been described in the pages of the *Udbodhan* by Swami Siddhananda. Bihari-babu echoed it in the pages of the *Basumati*. Siddhananda writes: 'A devotee, an eye-witness said, "At that time he (Lātu Maharaj) would tie some dry gram in the corner of his towel and keep it dipped in the waters of the Ganga — the idea being that he could take the grains when they, soaked in water, would become soft. One day he had put the gram as was his wont tied in a piece of cloth and placed on it a piece of brick. It was ebb-tide then. Sometime after the flood-tide set in. Absorbed in his meditation, he was unaware of it. When he came to his normal consciousness he found the river in full flood-tide. His gram! There was no knowing if the towel was swept away. He sat still. What else could he do? When the tide was gone he found his piece of cloth and gram exactly where he had kept it. He picked it up and started eating".'

The following incident is from his own lips: 'One day I was sitting absent minded on a boat loaded with straw. The crew did not notice me. When the boat weighed anchor I did not know. When it crossed Dakshineswar I became aware of the situation. At my request the crew helped me and I got down. When returning, I went to the temple garden and brother Ramalal fed me sumptuously.'

There is another incident of this period, similar to the above. He narrated it to a devotee. 'I used to pass the whole of the noon at a bathing place near the Snareswara and nights at Prasanna Kumar Tagore's. At 11 p.m. or so I would climb the terrace of the *chāndni* and meditate and count beads.'

The devotee asked: 'What did you do when it rained, Maharaj?'

Lātu Maharaj: 'Why, near the *ghat* there used to be many empty railway wagons; I would get into one. When the rain would stop I would get down. Once it so happened that I got into one wagon and did not know when it was dragged away by the engine. Next day a number of porters were asking me to leave the wagon. I asked them where I was. They said, "At Chitpore". What to do? I had to walk up to the Baghbazar *ghat*. Since then I left entering a wagon. When it rained I would get down from the terrace and take to a corner of the *chāndni*. The constables at the *chāndni* knew me and would not trouble me.'

Mahendrababu writes: 'This state of non-chalance of Lātu Maharaj lasted for two years and a half. After that he attained abiding peacefulness. Serene gravity and sweetness became a permanent feature of his personality. In broken Bengali interlarded with his Chapra *patois*, he used to give out new thoughts and sentiments. They were rich in their depth and variety.'

It appears that seven or eight years after the passing away of the Master Lātu Maharaj had his *nirvikalpa samādhi* a second time. From his own words we are led to guess it. He once said to a devotee: 'Don't think if a *sādhaka* experiences *nirvikalpa samādhi* he can have it

any number of times or whenever he wants it. There are many *sādhakas* who have tasted it but once. There are many more who could not reach it even once in the whole span of life. His grace on me is unending. So after making me labour for it for eight years only He graciously lifted me up to that state again. One day I was seated on the bank of the Ganga, when I saw an effulgence coming out of the waters of the river. It went on growing in size till at last it filled the sky, the earth, and the intervening space. Inside that infinite effulgence there were numberless other effulgences. As I was looking on I lost myself completely. I did not know what happened next. When, however, I returned from that

wondrous region I remained in an infinite ecstatic joy. O the joy ! It cannot be expressed in words. The heaviness of heart that I used to feel continuously after the passing away of the Master vanished into thin air, never to return again. Everything seemed to be soaked to saturation in *ānanda*.'

After this experience he left the bank of the Ganga and came to Puri. Scriptures enjoin travels after *samādhi*. Returning from there he again used to live on the bank of the Ganga. It was during this time we found him listening attentively to the Puranic recitals describing Divine sports, which continued for eight months without a break.

CHAPTER XVIII

By the end of December, 1897 Lātu Maharaj returned from Jaipur to Baghazar, Calcutta and stayed at Balarambabu's house. Swamiji (Swami Vivekananda) asked him to come over to Nilambarbabu's house where the Math was situated, but he did not agree. He said, 'I am comfortably lodged here. Yours is but a small house and so many people are already there'.

We have heard Lātu Maharaj say that when Swamiji returned from the West he was invited by Navagopal Babu to perform the worship of Sri Ramakrishna in connexion with the inauguration ceremony of his newly built house. There, after the *pūja*, the Swami composed off-hand a Sanskrit couplet which had since been adopted as Sri Ramakrishna's *praṇāma-mantra*, the *mantra* for prostrating at the Master's holy feet ('*Sthāpakaya*' etc.).

'That year Master's birthday celebration was performed at two places : (a) At Dakshineswar, organized by Kishori babu ; Haramohan collected money for this ; (b) at Dans' big courtyard in front of the Rāsa temple of Sri Krishna ; it was organized by brother Yogin and old Gopaldā. Yogin worked so hard that after the celebration he fell ill.

'When, I heard Yogin was ill I went to see him. He raised his eyes and told me,

"You see, Lātu, this illness will not be cured. But do you know what diet the doctors prescribe ? They say, 'You must take pomegranate juice, the fine well-fried portion of *luchi*, soup of *māgur* fish, etc.' Just look at their intelligence and sense of suitability ! These are meant for the *bhogis*, men given to sense enjoyment. They have money, they have men to prepare these things. We are *sādhus*, we have none except the Lord. We are to maintain ourselves by begging. Is it becoming of us to take such things ? What do you say ?"

'To that I said, "Look, how you talk. When one falls sick special diet is necessary. For you, they are diet, not articles of enjoyment. Is it wrong to take diet, as recommended by doctors ?"

Yogin : 'I know all that. But who will supply ?'

Lātu Maharaj : 'Why do you say so ? What are we for ? We will do all that for you.'

Yogin : 'It needs no mention. But — I tell you a secret. (Holy) Mother wants that my wife should come and prepare all these for me. What is your opinion regarding this ? I am a Sannyasin. Should I take the services of my wife now ? I am unable to accept the

proposal, coming though it is from Holy Mother herself. My mind rebels.'

Lātu Maharaj : 'When Mother herself says this where is the occasion for doubt? You should not entertain it. It would not involve transgression.'

Yogin Maharaj : 'No, no. You have not caught the point. If I agree people will say, "Strange are the ways of the disciples of Ramakrishna. They are *sādhus* and yet take the services of their former wives!" We must not give them occasion to speak like that.'

Lātu Maharaj : '(Excitedly) Throw such stuff to the waste-paper basket. Do they desist from such talks even when our behaviour is correct to minutest things? Throw their words to the winds. If we do not transgress righteousness what do their words matter, their howlings? Who will believe them? You, brother,—I entreat you—obey Mother's orders implicitly.'

'Still Yogin hesitated and said "Whomsoever I ask I get the same reply. Even you did not prove an exception! Nobody places himself in my position and answers it. What more have I to say? I know it definitely, this disease will not be cured, however much people may serve and nurse me. And yet to yield —!"

'I told him, "Don't utter such inauspicious words. Why do you repeat 'It will not get cured'. His will can do everything. If he (Master) wants to take you to him all our efforts will be of no avail; and if he wants you here for his work your will to the contrary will be useless. Why then should you think all that and hesitate to obey Holy Mother?" Do you know what he said in answer to this? "You are right, brother, who am I, a non-entity, to oppose? Let his will be done."

'When Yogin's wife came to serve him I came away from that place. His disease actually went on worsening. Brother Vivekananda returned from the West and made special

arrangement for his treatment. But nothing availed. He wanted to take him away from Calcutta for a change. Yogin did not yield. At last it was arranged that morning and evening he would be taken out in a boat on the Ganga. Sometimes I used to accompany him on the boat. Oh, the conversation! One day brother Vivekananda showed him from the boat the Math premises and the building.'

So far as our information goes Lātu Maharaj returned to the Yogadyana at Kankurgachi by the end of October, 1898. One day Swami Vivekananda went to see ailing Ramachandra Datta. The latter then occupied the room on the first floor. Lātu Maharaj said, 'Both talked long over many matters pleasantly. Then Ramababu felt like going out for a couple of minutes. The Swami took Ramababu's slippers up in his hands and placed them near the latter's feet. At that Ramababu cried out, "O Bilé, Bilé, what are you doing, what have you done? You are a Sannyasin. For you to do this!" In reply Swamiji said, "Ramadā, am I not that old Bilé of yours? Have I forgotten what you have done for me (referring obviously to Ramababu's advice to him to meet Sri Ramakrishna if he really wanted to know what religion was)?"

In November, the same year, Lātu Maharaj was seen on the Kali-puja night at the Math at Nilambar Babu's house. That day Holy Mother sanctified the new Math ground with the dust of her feet. Referring to this event, Lātu Maharaj spoke to a devotee, 'That day Mother visited the Math ground and worshipped Master herself. That day they (the apostles) took the dust of her feet individually and collected and kept it in a casket. This is worshipped even to day at the Math (?). Mother, was very pleased with the Math ground. Observing that the pinnacles of the Kali temple at Dakshineswar could be seen from there, she remarked, "How nice! people coming here will see them and will be reminded of (what happened) there".'

(To be continued)

MEMOIRS OF SWAMI ADBHUTANANDA

(A free translation of the Bengali book, *Smritikatha*)

(Continued from the previous issue)

BRAHMACHARI HARI PARVAT records : 'I saw Lātu Maharaj a few days here (at Nilambur Babu's or Belur Math?). Sarat Maharaj by then, had returned from the West and was staying at the Math. He looked smart and kept everything tip top and in its proper place. Lātu Maharaj used to enter his room often and leave everything pell-mell — taking a book from the table he would leave it on the bed, or the inkpot from the centre of the table to a corner hidden in papers. It became a regular routine, so to say, with him. Sarat Maharaj's bed sheet was milk white. Lātu Maharaj would deliberately drag his feet laden with dust on it and would roll on it and laugh. At this Sarat Maharaj would ask him quite understandingly, 'What are you doing, brother Lātu?' Lātu Maharaj would laugh and say, 'Nothing, only testing if you remember those days and ways.' 'What ways?' Sarat Maharaj would ask. Lātu Maharaj : 'You have forgotten them so quickly!' Sarat Maharaj would press him to speak out, and Lātu Maharaj would simply say, 'I am testing how much Westernized you have become.' At this Sarat Maharaj would also laugh.

'I distinctly remember an incident of another day. They were invited to go somewhere from the Math by boat. All were in it except Swamiji and Sarat Maharaj. Swamiji was seen coming down from his room on the first floor and Sarat Maharaj was not to be seen. So Nityananda Maharaj cried out from the boat, "The Bada Sahib is seen up there but the Chota Sahib is not to be seen yet. We are waiting for his august appearance". Lātu Maharaj passed a cute remark which was heard by Swamiji, who sent a rejoinder from the bank "What are you talking, you rogues? Bada or Chota Sahib — whatever we might appear to be, know it for certain we have not

forgotten that our proper place is under the shade of a jungle tree." The rejoinder made Lātu Maharaj look small.'

Lātu Maharaj was at Belur Math on the day of its consecration. Much later he said to a devotee, 'You know, one who is to be an *ācharya*, a (spiritual) teacher, must have the power to recognize the peculiar traits of people's character. No Ashrama can move smoothly if the head fails to get things done by proper persons. Brother Vivekananda had this power in good measure. Just see he called away brother Hariprasanna from Allahabad to the Math and entrusted him with the construction work. In eight months on the low ground which used to be under water during the high tide, new structures reared their heads up. On the consecration day we were all present. Brother Vivekananda carried the casket containing Master's relics on his own shoulders to the Math shrine. He sat down to do the puja. When the puja was over he addressed a few words to all assembled there, "Today the Master is installed here. Brothers, please look to this that you may be guided by him. Make yourselves fit for this, place yourselves absolutely, unreservedly, under his guidance. He wants only three things from us — purity, sincerity, broadmindedness. Please keep on, as long as you live, paying highest regard to these. Here all faiths, all sects must be respected, harmonized. No one should be subordinated to another." Words put by the Swami's biographers into his mouth seem to differ but the underlying idea is the same. We have faithfully recorded above what came out of the lips of Lātu Maharaj.

About the middle of December, 1898 Lātu Maharaj was staying at Ramababu's house. This news was learnt from the second daughter

of Ramababu. She gave us the following additional information also. 'Elder brother Lātu, how devotedly did he serve father for the last twenty-four days — 17 days at our house and seven days at Yogodyana ! Father had no sleep at nights and his illness would aggravate ten times then. Mother could not bear to see it. So brother Lātu would not allow mother to serve father at night. Sometimes he would even scold mother and force her to go to some other rooms. And he would serve father the whole night, almost alone. Father required fanning for twenty-four hours of the day, all those days. A minute's discontinuance would make him restless. So days and nights some one or other had to fan him. At nights brother Lātu, with a fan in hand used to sit up all the time ; rarely did he hand over the fan to Swami Yogavinode (brother Kali). The day father decided to move to Yogodyan brother Lātu remonstrated with him for a long time ; but father would hear none. Mother started crying. And brother Lātu consoled her in various ways. Father moved to Yogodyana on the 28th Paus and he passed away on the 4th Magha (19 January, 1899). The day previous to his passing away Rākhāl Maharaj (Swami Brahmananda) came to see father. Many days after Swamiji (Swami Vivekananda) also come to our house. Brother Lātu continued staying at our Madhu Rao Lane house in Simla for some days after the passing away of father. On the 5th Phalgun there was father's *bhandara* (feeding of people in memory of the dead) at Yogodyan ; that day brother Lātu was present there and worked very hard. The same day he left us and the Yogodyan and was not heard of for about four months.'

Lātu Maharaj told us that brother Yogin shuffled off his mortal coil within two months of Ramababu's passing away (28 March, 1899). He said, 'During his last days brother Yogin wanted *nirvāṇa*, complete liberation. When Girish Babu was apprised of this he came to Yogin and said, "Look here, Yoga ; don't ask for such things of the Master. Give up all those ideas and you will find all your physical troubles will come to an end." Yogin-

bhai had great regard for Girish Babu. So he said, "Very well, G. C. but tell me what shall I ask of him." Mark what G. C. said in reply, "Brother, you are all his children. He will never give you *nirvāṇa*. He simply cannot. If he gives *nirvāṇa* to all of you how will his *līla*, sport, continue ? As many times he will come so many times you too will have to come. Are you not one of his inner-circle-people ? Therefore I say, give up all such ideas and say, 'I want Ramakrishna and Ramakrishna alone'." Yogin repeated the last sentence as many times as it was uttered by Girish Babu. At that moment somebody asked, "What do you see, brother ?" Yogin said something. Swamiji was annoyed at that and said, "You are all strange people. Will you not give him peace ? Why can't you, like G. C., repeat Lord's name to his hearing ?" Then all started singing Lord's name and brother Yogin gave up his body. Then Swamiji tied a pugree, turban, round brother Yogin's head with his own hand, and started singing devotional songs to him.'

After Yogin Maharaj's passing away, Lātu Maharaj came to Belur Math and stayed there for a month and a half. And he saw there the great devotee, Nag Mahaśay. 'Nag Mahaśay came to see the new Math. When he saw Swamiji he said, "Today do I see Śiva incarnate." Swamiji said to us, "Mark, he is a householder, but in renunciation, in dispassion, in control over passions he is far superior to many Sannyasins. Just look at his peculiar attitude towards the world. He is unconscious of its existence, so absorbed he is in the Lord's remembrance." Once again did I see him (Nag Mahaśay). He came to see Mother at the Sarkarwadi lane house. That day also he was in the very same mood. Such modesty, such humility, such meekness of heart are rarely to be seen in man, said Lātu Maharaj.

'When brother Vivekananda left the Math I did not feel like staying there, I too came away. I came to Open (Upen) Babu's press. He requested me to be there as long as I liked and I stayed there.'

Somebody asked, 'Why of all places, Maharaj, you selected a press as your dwelling place?'

He replied, 'Why, what harm is there? I felt very comfortable at night. I used to spread my blanket on the big wooden boxes containing paper and lay down comfortably.'

'But there must have been noise, Maharaj.'

'Oh! yes, a little; but that did not disturb my meditation. A few employees used to respect and serve me well, and Open Babu loved me dearly. So I stayed there.'

'It is because you used to mix with the pressmen that decent people did not come to you. I have heard from Mr So-and-so, who said they were all rogues.'

'Yes, I did mix with them but how did he know they were rogues?'

'I shall explain to you, Maharaj. They were all bad characters, addicts to drink, gamblers; and so they were known as rogues. Isn't it? Why did you mix with such people?'

'But they were not double-dealers.'

Hearing this a gentleman was taken aback and has written a long note on this in his diary. From the note we take out the following:

'Lātu Maharaj would divide mankind into the categories: frank and sincere, and double-dealing. He loved and had all sympathy for the first group and would keep the other group at a long distance from him.'

While Lātu Maharaj stayed at the Basumati Press the following incident took place: One day at midnight — he was heard shouting at the top of his voice, 'Shut up, devil; you to threaten me, who am a child of Sri Ramakrishna; all your tricks and threats would be of no avail. Know it for certain.' Hearing him roaring like that, those of the press people who were sleeping and working in the adjacent rooms ran up to his room and saw Lātu Maharaj sitting up in "the heroic posture" with his eyes fixed in front and blazing like fire-balls. Seeing him in such a terrible mood they did not know what to say or do. At last one of them mustered courage to ask him, "Maharaj, whom are you shouting at at this

dead of night. We see nobody around." Lātu Maharaj did not reply.'

Hearing this a man who knew passed the following remark: 'Do you know, such events are common in the lives of *sādhakas*? When Lord Buddha was engaged in austere practices for gaining illumination Mara tempted him in various ways. But Buddha remained unmoved. Those *sādhakas* who remain steadfast during the period of temptations gain the final illumination. Just look to our Purānic stories. How many times the celestial nymphs like Urvasi, Menaka, Rambha, Ghritachi tried their tricks on practising saints and sages! Whenever they were defeated Indra had hearty laughs at their cost. And when they remained unmoved and unmovable Indra used to shake in his shoes.'

Lātu Maharaj used to feed these employees of the press. He used to prepare with his own hands and feed them with boiled gram, boiled sweet potatoes, tea, halwa, etc. He used to purchase the raw materials out of the money he got unasked. Sometimes he would purchase *kachauri* seasoned with asafoetida. During the day he used to be on the bank of the Ganges; what would come to him during that time he would maintain himself with that. His usual daily ration was two or three cups of tea and boiled gram. When pressed hard, but very rarely, he would take one or two *kachauris* seasoned with asafoetida. Later he would not take them at all. He used to say, 'They are not for *sādhus* but for men of the senses'. Some of us used to cut jokes with him rather freely. He would never talk to us about morality or religion. When asked about these things his usual reply was: "First earn sufficient money, maintain your parents, let them have smiles on their face, then come to talk about religion or morality. In this Iron Age to serve one's parents is the greatest religion." He would say: "One should not come to practise religion by wounding one's parents' hearts. One must secure their permission first. Here are the examples of great souls. Śankaracharya took his mother's permission and then took Sannyasa. Lord Gauranga went so far as to marry in order to satisfy his mother."

One day one of us pressed for being initiated by him. He said, "That is the work of an *ācharya*, I am not one. You may go to Swamiji. If he thinks you fit he may accept you." Thus did he by-pass such requests. The above is what we heard from Patalbabu, manager of the Basumati Press.

At the end of 1899 the Basumati Press was shifted from the east of the Beadon Garden to Gray Street. We know from reliable sources that Lātu Maharaj did not go there.

From what we have been able to gather we can say Lātu Maharaj used to join the weekly session of the Ramakrishna Mission. One day Sri Sarat Chandra Chakravarthi came to Balam Babu's house to speak on the Vedas. Lātu Maharaj told him, 'Sarat Babu, you will have many occasions to speak on the Veda but if such a great soul as Nag Mahaśay passes away you will have your life's remorse. So better start for Deobhog even today. He is dangerously ill, go and serve him to your heart's content.' Sarat Babu started for Deobhog that very night. Nag Mahaśay passed away within a month after this. Sarat Babu used to say, 'Lātu Maharaj had the power to know the future. He knew Nag Mahaśay would pass away soon; so he insisted on my going there immediately.'

In November, 1900, Haripada Maharaj records: Lātu Maharaj went to a village called Baganda. There he stayed for three or four days. He became very intimate with the village children. Throughout the day a train of tiny tots would be around him. He too joined freely in their shouts and frolics. Sometimes he would assume terrifying postures and the boys would be afraid; sometimes he would chase them and they would understand the mock nature of it but would enjoy flying away from him; sometimes he would play hide-and-seek; sometimes he would talk nonsense as one of them. The little ones were immensely happy in his company and would always be with him and give him no rest. They took him, in three or four days, to be so much their own that they would not hesitate to take all kinds of liberty with him — they would

climb on his back and shoulders and pluck at his hair.'

In December he was at the Math, Belur. Haripada Maharaj says: 'When Swamiji left for the West for the second time, Lātu Maharaj used to mix with Sarat Maharaj very intimately. Sarat Maharaj would take him whenever he would go to Calcutta to deliver speeches. One day in one such meeting Sarat Maharaj spoke for two hours and got tired but the audience would not leave him; they went on putting questions to him to clear their doubts. Seeing this, Lātu Maharaj cried out, "Sarat, enough, enough. Stop it all now". A few in the audience did not like this interference and passed some uncharitable remarks. Undaunted, Lātu Maharaj met them and said, "I admit you love the speaker and want to hear more. But after two hours' continuous speaking when he would tomorrow have a bad throat, would you, dear ones, go to serve him at the Math?" He spoke these words with so much of sympathy and feeling that all had to admit that it was really wrong on their part to put so many questions on one day.

On ninth December, 1900 Swamiji all on a sudden burst into Belur Math. A householder devotee, who happened then to be at the Math, gave the following description of the funny incident:

'At night when some inmates of the Math had finished their meals and others were still at it, their gardener came and said, "Babu, an Englishman has come." Asking Bāburam Maharaj to go and welcome the gentleman others started guessing who that gentleman might be, coming at this unearthly hour. After a good deal of speculation it was decided that he must be some Western disciple of Swamiji. In the meantime Swamiji climbed over the gate and was already in the courtyard. When Bāburam Maharaj and his companion were halfway to the gate they met the strange guest. After an exchange of a few sentences in English the Sahib started talking in Bengali when Bāburam Maharaj complained smilingly, "What is this, Swamiji? What would you have lost if you had sent a cable earlier?" Anyway all ran up to meet the

Swami. Lātu Maharaj was near the ghat (the landing place on the Ganges inside the Math). The householder devotee who had accompanied Bāburam Maharaj to welcome the Sahib ran up to Lātu Maharaj and conveyed the news. He expected Lātu Maharaj would also run to meet the Swami, but was surprised to see that not only did he show no sign of haste but he asked him to sit down there, 'at such a nice hour', to meditate — "Why show such urgency? Sit, sit down here. Look at the calm atmosphere and the calm Ganges. Meditate," said he. We can well imagine the plight of the devotee. He could not possibly disobey Lātu Maharaj, and his eagerness to hear Swamiji's talk was too great. Meanwhile Swamiji finished his spare meal and came to the ghat to meet Lātu Maharaj. Then they were found locked up in a deep embrace. After the exchange of a few words, Swamiji asked Lātu Maharaj: "Leto, what's the matter? All came to meet me and we chatted long and you did not turn up? Are you in a pique?" "Why, in a pique? My mind wanted to be here and I was here."

Swamiji said in answer, "Well, I heard you did not stay at the Math. Strange were your ways. There was no fixed place for your stay. How did you maintain yourself?" "Why, Open Mukherji helped me. On a day when food would not come unasked I used to stand near his shop. He would at once understand it and give me a four-anna or two-anna piece."

The moment Swamiji heard it he looked towards heaven and prayed, "My Lord, bless Upen, bless him." It is now in everybody's knowledge how this prayer was answered.

The moon was shining above. The Swami said, "Look at the silvery waves of the Ganges. The waves of the Nile in Egypt bear resemblance to these." Spending some time in such talks, Swamiji went upstairs to retire. Lātu

Maharaj remained sitting there, soon absorbed in meditation. Next day at 4 a.m. when the householder devotee, with a letter from Rakhali Maharaj, was about to start for Balaram Babu's house and came to the ghat for a boat he found Lātu Maharaj still meditating in the same posture, on the same spot.

On February 6, 1901 when Belur Math was registered Swamiji wanted Lātu Maharaj also to be a Trustee; but Lātu Maharaj said, "Brother, I don't like all these. Don't entangle me in all these." Still Swamiji insisted, and said, "Do be in it; you will not have to be worried on this account. Please don't object, I put your name in the deed." I have heard Rakhali Maharaj also requested him. But with his characteristic firmness he resisted and said, "I will never be involved in all these affairs".

We narrate below a few incidents of this period. Swami Śuddhananda says, 'Though Lātu Maharaj could not himself read scriptures he evinced great interest in hearing them. He would ask others to read to him those books. The incident of one day I remember clearly. Then we used to sleep in the same room. At dead of night he got up and said "Sudhir, Sudhir, read the Gita". And I read it to him that night.'

Another incident narrated by Sarat Maharaj: 'A monk of the Math was reading the *Kāthopaniṣad* to Lātu Maharaj. When the reader came to the couplet "*anguşṭha mātra*" etc. and pronounced "*pravṛhen-muñjādivēṣikām dhairyēṇa*" [i.e. with deep patience the soul should be taken out of (discriminated from) the body like the taking out of the soft innermost fibre from the rest of the *muñja* grass], Lātu Maharaj cried out, "Exactly exactly". He must have reached that state; otherwise he could not have understood the Sanskrit passage before it was rendered into Bengali.'

(To be continued)

MEMOIRS OF SWAMI ADBHUTANANDA

(A free translation of the Bengali book, *Smritikatha*)

(Continued from the previous issue)

WHILE at Belur Math, Lātu Maharaj used to bow down to the sun morning and evening and that for a long time, which, one day, attracted the notice of one of his co-disciples, who said tauntingly, 'What, O Sadhu, what are you doing?' Lātu Maharaj understood the hidden taunt and said, with great emphasis, 'Why, I am bowing down to this palpably existing manifestation of God, Narayana'. The gurbhai said, 'Which one is your "palpably existing manifestation of God"? I do not feel His presence'. Undaunted, Lātu Maharaj said: 'Why, don't you see the sun, shining before your eyes? How is it you don't feel the presence? Where will you get a more dazzling presence than this? I revere him the most as the Lord most palpably felt.'¹ Since then whenever that *gurbhai* would meet Lātu Maharaj he would ask, 'What news about your "palpably existing god"?'

Once they made a rule that the inmates of the Math must get up at 4 a.m. and having a quick wash sit down to meditate in the shrine. Next day a bell was rung and everyone had to get up. Lātu Maharaj said, 'I did not like the rule. So without telling anybody anything I wanted to quit the Math quietly. The following day as I was going away with my cloth and towel I was observed by Swamiji who asked me where I was going. I said, "to Calcutta". "Why?" Then I said to him, "You have recently returned from the West and are promulgating new rules and regulations. It will not be easy for me to abide by them.

¹ Reader might remember that Sri Ramakrishna once told Lātu Maharaj (who had just returned from *madhukari* and narrated to the Master how a widow blessed him, looking at the sun), that there was relationship between the Sun-god and himself. Apparently Lātu Maharaj was surely not bowing down to the orb of the sun.

I have not reached that degree of control over my mind, that when a bell is rung it will quiet down to meditation. I don't know when it will have the requisite absorption. I have not reached that stage; if you have reached, well and good". Then Swamiji said after a pause, "Very well; then go". But when I had hardly reached the gate he called me back and said, "Well, you need not observe this rule. You may follow your own whims. These rules are not meant for you. They are meant for the neophytes". I said, "Say that". (The above is taken from Sri Vibhutibhushan Maitra's notes.)

Once, there was a talk of asking a Sadhu of a Calcutta branch of our Math to leave the organization. He heard it and came to Lātu Maharaj and went on speaking against the head of that branch. Lātu Maharaj was annoyed and scolded him, and narrated the following incident to him:

'One day brother Baburam could not get up in time. When it was reported to Swamiji, he asked someone 'Go and ring the bell near his ears'. He did as he was ordered to do. Still brother Baburam did not stir. Then Swamiji himself went and woke him up. At tea time Swamiji told brother Baburam, 'Look here, you are all organizers of the Math. If you do not observe a rule how would others do it? You will have to follow the rules more strictly than others. You must scrupulously observe them; this will encourage others to do the same'. Brother Baburam heard it quietly and said, 'Today I would not get up in time, and this has caused inconvenience to others. I understand it. So brother, do one thing; set a punishment for breaking any rule'. Hearing this Swamiji became grave and said, 'Baburam, could you think of it? I to punish

you !' Seeing tears in Swamiji's eyes brother Baburam's eyes also glistened with tears. The news reached Rakhai Maharaj. He became anxious and immediately reached the place and intervened : ' Why all this fuss — shedding tears etc.? Do we not have it that anyone who would fail to get up in time will not get his meals that day at the Math, he will have to do *madhukari* ? ' Brother Baburam was very glad and said : ' Raja is perfectly right. To-day I will beg my food from outside.' Just see the depth of their love for one another. One broke a rule and asked for punishment ; another burst into tears at the thought that anyone could think of being punished by another ; a third meted out a punishment, and, the breaker of the law was glad to receive the punishment. If such love were not there no Math could be run. Where is that kind of love among you ? Does one who breaks a law ask to be punished ? Or when so punished does he feel happy at it ? Now I see it so common among you — when there is a talk of punishment one leaves the Math in a huff. This is very bad indeed. If you stay at the Math you must observe its rules and regulations. But no, you will be there and you will not follow its routine. This attitude is dangerous. This breaks the organization.'

Hearing the story the person understood his own fault, went back to the person-in-charge of that branch, begged pardon of him, and asked for punishment. Needless to say they were happily reconciled.

Lātu Maharaj once, at Varanasi, said : ' Swamiji wanted to see the new recruits strong and active. So he made a rule that every one should take physical exercise with dumb-bells. I was then at the Math. I went to him and said, " Brother, what is this ? We are to take physical exercise at this age ? It is impossible for me ". Swamiji went on laughing and did not say anything.'

One day Swamiji was dilating, before his co-disciples, on various kinds of worship prevalent in different times in different countries. All on a sudden Lātu Maharaj asked Swamiji : ' Well, brother, you have travelled far and wide

and have seen and heard many things. Will you tell me if you have seen people in any country worshipping the earth ? '

Swamiji was a little surprised and asked him, ' Why do you ask ? '

Lātu Maharaj : ' It is for this reason : Whatever we see around us has come out of the womb of 'this earth. All our wealth and prosperity, glory and splendour — all have been taken out incising her heart. All that we eat, wear, and enjoy, all that we treasure in our houses and on account of which we think ourselves superior to others, all have come out of her. So I ask, " Do people worship her from whom they get all that they crave for and enjoy " ? '

By Swamiji's side was seated Sarat Maharaj. Turning to him Swamiji said, " See how wisely our Plato talks ". Then addressing Lātu Maharaj he said, " Brother, no other country except ours worships the earth ". To this Lātu Maharaj added, " If that is so how is it that other countries have risen so high and ours, despite worshipping the earth, has remained fallen ? What can be the reason ? "

Swamiji : ' True, we worship the earth. It is only formal. Where is that love for and feeling of intimacy with her ? We offer flowers and basil leaves no doubt, but we cherish no love and reverence for her. They in the West do not perform any formal puja but love her so dearly that they are ever ready to sacrifice their lives for her sake. How many in our country are prepared to do that ? This is why they are so high and we are so low, they have gone so far ahead of us.'

Lātu Maharaj kept quiet and Sarat Maharaj put a number of questions on this subject to the Swami.

During the Durga Puja of 1901 Lātu Maharaj was at the Math. That was the first occasion that the Puja was performed in the image there. Formerly it used to be done in a picture or a pitcher. Lātu Maharaj spoke to a devotee later on thus : ' Look here, brother Vivekananda did not have any regard for gods and goddesses. The same brother, before his passing away,

had the Durga puja performed in the image at the Math. Do you think performance of worship in the image is useless? Not so. In images also Reality manifests; and man can and does progress spiritually with this aid. It is with this end in view that brother Vivekananda introduced image worship at the Math... Do you know, when this image-worship was introduced at the Math Swamiji invited (Holy) Mother to the Math. She was lodged in the adjacent garden-house. Mother's intervention prevented sacrifice of goats during the puja. Mother used to come everyday during the time of worship, and when it was over she would go back to the garden-house. Sarot's uncle performed the puja that year. The worship, that year, was performed with great *eclat*; and a large number of people took the consecrated food.'

During the Śivaratri of 1902 Lātu Maharaj was at the Math. Lātu Maharaj went to worship Śiva at Kalyaneswar along with this author,* Mokshada Samadhyāyi and Nibaran Datta. There he looked at one of them and said, 'Fasting is weighing you down, I feel; take a little food'.

The devotee said, 'No, I will not take anything before performing the puja'.

Lātu Maharaj: 'This is waywardness. It is not good. The mind should be fixed on Śiva. If fasting takes your mind away from Him, of what avail is it?'

The devotee: 'Why, Maharaj?'

Lātu Maharaj: 'This sort of waywardness, my boy is no good. Rather have the caprice of performing the puja with devotion. Don't place fasting above it. This is perversity and of no benefit. If your mind dwells on food how can you perform worship with love and devotion? If the mind is disturbed you cannot have devotion.'

In this connection there is one more incident. Once Lātu Maharaj went to Nakuleś-wartala for worshipping Śiva. There he found one of his fellow passengers was about to faint away due to fasting. Lātu Maharaj said, 'What is this queer idea of religion? Do you

think you get merit by setting your teeth on teeth and applying all your will power to keep the body and soul together, and thus being forced to take the mind away from the thought of God? It is not religion. Religion is a matter of joy. If you don't get joy (in thinking of the Lord) fasting is worse than useless. If by fast your body becomes inert and your mind dull how will you worship? If you eat too much, physical energy is spent in digesting and naturally the mind becomes dull; so the sages have asked worshippers to take easily digestible food in small quantity on such occasions, so that the mind remains calm and can be applied to worship. But from your behaviour it appears you have misunderstood their injunction. You think that giving trouble to the body and mind is by itself a great act of merit. He (Master) used to say, "Better take a little food and then sit down to worship".'

The same year Swamiji told Lātu Maharaj: 'You will understand much later (long after my passing away) what I have done. This is just the beginning. The peoples of Europe and America are just trying to understand the greatness of our Master and are coming to India by twos or threes. You will see they will come by hundreds. Then will you understand what this demon of a Vivekananda has done.'

Lātu Maharaj heard these words and then quietly said to Swamiji: 'Brother, what novel things have you done? You have simply gone over the track made by previous *acharyas*, e.g. Buddha, Śankara and others. Have you done anything new?'

Hearing this Swamiji said: 'Lātu, my dear Plato, you are perfectly right, eh! I have but followed their footprints, exactly.' Saying this Swamiji looked up and folded his palms and bowed down to the ancient *acharyas*.

One day Swamiji told Baburam Maharaj: 'Baburam, please don't give initiation to any one. That may result in quarrels among the disciples. They would say "My guru is superior" etc. From today I also will not initiate people. It would be the special privilege of our Raja (Rākhāl Maharaj).' Lātu Maharaj

* Sri Chandrasekhar Chattopadhyaya.

was present on the spot when this conversation took place. May it be that it is for this reason that Lātu Maharaj never made any *chela*?

When Swamiji was touring Kashmir he gave a precious beautiful Kashmiri *shawl* to Lātu Maharaj. Putting it on Lātu Maharaj, one day, went to Sarat Chandra Chakravarti's house on Beadon Street. Looking at the shawl Saratbabu praised it. At once Lātu Maharaj took it off his body and gave it to Saratbabu, saying: 'Would you like to use it, Sarot? Very good, take it. These costly things are not meant for *sādhus*. I used it for only one day since it is a gift of love from Swamiji. It would give me great pleasure if you accept it.' At this Sarotbabu looked small and said: 'Maharaj, excuse me. It is a gift to you by my *guru*, how can I accept it? It does not look well.' Saying this he returned it to Lātu Maharaj. This news reached Swamiji's ears. When Sarotbabu came to the Swami a few days after, Swamiji told him: 'You would have done well had you accepted the shawl. You know, Lātu is queer. He would give it away to anyone indiscriminately. Had you taken it from him it would have been well preserved.'

On July 4, 1902 Swamiji passed away. That night Lātu Maharaj was at Balarambabu's house. When he heard the news he at once left the place and instead of coming to the Math went away straight to Haramohan's house on Naran Chand Dutt street at Darjipara. We do not know the reason of this strange behaviour. For we know definitely that he had paid more than one visit to Belur Math to see the ailing Swami. When the news of his passing away became public all the other *gurubhais* in and around Calcutta came to the Math, why he alone did not come remained a mystery. So a few days later a devotee asked him: 'Maharaj, every one went to the Math, you alone were absent. They are talking about it.'

Lātu Maharaj: 'Let them talk as they will. Talks cannot aggravate the wound of my heart. How deep was brother Vivekananda's love for me is beyond the comprehension of

the critics. I have lost this Elysian love of his. After Master nobody loved me as he did. That brother also has left us.' He spoke these words with so much pathos that the eyes of the listeners filled with tears.

Lātu Maharaj spent the whole winter at Haramohan's house. Between them there were discussions on the ideas and ideals of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission.

One day in the course of conversation there turned up the topic of how to preach religion. Besides Lātu Maharaj and Haramohanbabu,² two other devotees were present — Biharibabu and Girinbabu. The following is taken from the notes of Biharibabu. 'The talk started between Girinbabu and Haramohanbabu. Both were of the opinion that religion should be propagated by lectures, publication of books, pamphlets, etc. When they waxed eloquent on this Lātu Maharaj intervened and said: 'What are you talking Girinbabu? To preach religion by blowing trumpets? Is religion something extraneous to us that one will speak and another will accept? It is a matter of experience, of organic growth; in show and sham, in noise and bustle this experience cannot come to one. Those things make our minds more and more externalized. Unless the whole of the mind is taken inward religion cannot be understood, far less experienced. Just remember. Ten to twenty years back *there* was upsurge of religion in this city of Calcutta. Don't you remember? Preachers of the Salvation Army were found preaching religion on almost every road junction. The Brahma preachers in their Samaj houses, and the Hindu speakers in their open-air meetings in every quarter of the city were to be seen. Just recall all those meetings — one day Kishub (Kesab) Babu in the Beadon Square, next day Rev. Kali Krishna Banerji, third day

² Haramohan Babu was charitably disposed, so much so that even if a dog or a cat would follow him on the street he would purchase something and feed it. And his enthusiasm for preaching the Master's life and teachings was really wonderful. He would compile books and sell them at a cut price, nay he would mostly distribute them free. As a result of all this, the last days of his life were unhappy — he suffered from financial difficulties.

Krishnananda Swami. People would gather round them and listen. One preacher abused Hinduism, another defended it nicely, extolled it; the people under the leadership of Pundit Śaśadhar started giving scientific explanations of the Hindu rites and customs. The tide of religious preaching rose so high as that. But what is the result of all that? Where are they now? Those who lectured and wrote and published articles — could they augment the number of their followers? Just look at the other side of the picture. There were people who renounced the world for the sake of the Lord, devoted their time in meditation and prayer and bent all their energy towards realization of the Lord. What do you actually see? Do you not see people in multitude gathering round this last group of people? All the other groups melted away, so to say, in the thin air. Did you not find then everybody, man, woman or child, was arguing about religion, rather fiercely? Where have they all gone? Know it for certain that, if there is no substance behind, empty words carry no conviction. There must be renunciation, dispassion, and genuine love for God, then people will believe your words. Lord's wheel moves in this peculiar way. Look at this phenomenon, working before your very eyes. Swamiji — what tremendous austerities did he not perform for years, what burning all-consuming search for the Lord did he not carry on? And when at the end of that he felt Him in and out of himself and got his true commission to preach, people accepted his words. One lecture of Swamiji, only one, drew people to him by hundreds. Before that he was but an unknown wandering monk. And after that lecture the wheel of *dharma* turned. What took place after it was beyond the wildest imagination of the peoples of the world.

On another day the same topic came up for discussion. That day Haramohanbabu, Dr Nitai Haldar, and devotee Suresh Chandra

Datta were present. That day Lātu Maharaj said: 'Much more solid work is done by the study of scriptures than by hearing lectures. For in lectures there is established a temporary connexion between the speaker and the audience, whereas in the study of scriptures the relation between the two is much deeper and abiding. Master used to say, 'To study scriptures is as good as keeping the company of sadhus''. The above is from Sureshbabu's diary.

Much later what Lātu Maharaj opined on the same topic we reproduce here. At Balarambabu's house, addressing a young Sannyasin, Lātu Maharaj said: 'What do I see now? Without knowing the Reality or realizing God yourself you start preaching religion. Who will accept such talks? Can you get a glimpse of religion simply by reading books? Religion is realization. First of all know the Truth yourself then if you get the Lord's command you may preach. Without being commissioned by Him if you preach nobody will hear you. Master told us a story. "Some people used to answer nature's call on the banks of the Haldarpukur. Others tried their best to prevent such abuse but failed. At last they lodged a complaint with the Government. The Magistrate sent a peon with a notice 'Whoever will commit nuisance here will be prosecuted'. That put an end to the whole matter." Moreover, he (Master) used to say, "Preaching! Why, it is a sign of egoism. Man, a puny creature, he to preach about the Infinite Lord! He, the Lord, will preach His glory Himself. What? He who has created the sun, moon and planets, this vast bewildering universe — can He not preach His glory? Is preaching a common affair? When the Lord illumines anyone's heart, with that comes also the power to preach Him. If He enthrones Himself in your heart whatever you will speak will have a compelling force; people will have to accept your words. Know it for certain".'

MEMOIRS OF SWAMI ADBHUTANANDA

(A free translation of the Bengali book, *Smrutikatha*)

(Continued from the previous issue)

ON another occasion Lātu Maharaj spoke at Banaras on the same subject : 'First of all build your own character. Attracted by your character let people come to you. Then start preaching. Now, your own interest is forcing you to preach. So they would not accept your words, which, as they know, are prompted by self-interest. But when they would know that you have no axe of your own to grind, that it is purely for their good that you are speaking, they will accept and follow you. Then your preaching will be really beneficent. Master used to say, "If you light a lamp you are not to send an invitation to moths ; they come of themselves. The loadstone does not send a formal invitation to pieces of iron — it is not needed. They come running of themselves. It is like that"'.

Lātu Maharaj spent, at a stretch, five or six months at Haramohanbabu's house and then, all of a sudden he appeared at Ramababu's house and saw mother (Ramababu's wife) suffering from fatal illness. He stayed there for a month and a half. Ramababu's second daughter said, 'Lātuda served mother as devotedly as he had served father. With Swami Yogavinode, he served mother the whole night without a wink of sleep and would send us away to other rooms, saying, "Go, take rest ; if you wake up the whole night you will yourselves fall sick. Who will then serve mother and you together?"'. . . . After mother's death he would come to our house very rarely. And we five of us went away to five different places. After mother's death he set the *mynā* bird free'.

Round this *mynā* there is a story. Once, during Ramababu's lifetime this bird flew away. Brother Lātu did not know of this

incident. One day while he was passing through Kansaripara the bird cried out from a verandah, 'Brother Lātu, O brother Lātu'. From this call Lātu Maharaj understood that the bird must have flown away from Ramababu's house. Lātu Maharaj tried to argue with the owner of that house that the bird was theirs. But the gentleman would not hear. When he brought the matter to Ramababu the latter came there and re-purchased the bird for Rupees five.

About 1903 Lātu Maharaj returned to Balarambabu's house. Spending a few months there he came to Puri along with Dr Saśibhushan Ghose's nephew Nanibabu to witness the Swing festival (Jhulan) of Sri Krishna. There he stayed, this time, for a month.

After the Durga Puja of 1903 Lātu Maharaj again went on a pilgrimage. This time he had as his companions Nivarana Datta, Nandalal Brahmachari, Purna Chandra Mukhopadhyay (Patalbabu) and Rajkumar Banerjee. The last two gentlemen bore all his expenses. This time they visited Kaśi, Prayag, Mathura, Vrindavana, etc. By the first week of December they returned to Calcutta. Once when he saw a Brahmachari of the Mission giving way to anger he said, 'You are a Brahmachari, my boy ; you should not be angry. You have taken the vow of Brahmacharya, which is meant for controlling, lust, anger and greed. And you are giving free vent to anger and cursing others. That is very bad. You are, instead of wishing well to all, cursing people ! He who does not invoke blessings for all can never succeed in spiritual life'.

Returning from Vrindavana at the end of 1903 Lātu Maharaj came to Balarambabu's

house and stayed there without a break for about nine years. In October, 1912 he went to Kaśi. In these nine years he suffered from slight illness three times. Once he suffered from serious insomnia. During this illness Girishbabu beguiled him with stories. Lātu Maharaj himself said, 'When for four or five days I had no sleep I would repair to Girishbabu's house to hear stories. In the course of the recital of the stories I would fall asleep. Then Girishbabu would go out for a walk'.

In 1906-7 he had a severe attack of rheumatism. During that time he used to take bitter gourd and juice of two or three lemons. His co-disciples used to cut jokes about his taking bitter gourd. It is current in

Bengal that bitter gourd produces cataract. Who knows if the saying has any grain of truth in it, for Lātu Maharaj actually developed cataract. In 1909-10 both the eyes of Lātu Maharaj were operated upon one after another. Raja Maharaj took special care of Lātu Maharaj during these days.

In 1903 a compositor of the Basumati Press named Prakash had the good fortune of serving him devotedly. Everyday, both morning and evening, this young man used to prepare his food — tea, boiled gram, burnt potato, boiled bitter gourd, etc. Later this duty devolved on Paśupati, another young man. It is this latter young man who served Lātu Maharaj at Kaśi untiringly till his last days.

CHAPTER XIX

WE have mentioned before that Lātu Maharaj lived at Balarambabu's house for nine years without a break. How he spent his time, what contacts he had during this time, etc. have been recorded by Biharibabu in brief. 'Scriptures have it that monks should live in solitude and avoid company. Whether we live in the Himalayas or in crowded Calcutta depends on our own minds. If breathing the Himalayan air we go on dwelling in our minds on our families and friends, on the pleasant familiar household scenes we are surely not enjoying the Himalayan solitude. If we go to Varanasi and keep our minds on our children in Calcutta we are not on a pilgrimage to Varanasi, on the other hand we are living in Calcutta itself. Staying in this crowded city of Calcutta Lātu Maharaj was really living in the Himalayas. What would you call it otherwise than living in solitude — sitting alone on the bank of the Ganges at Go-ghat (near Kashi Mitra's ghat), or on a bench in the Beadon garden quite absent-minded, or on a packing case in the *Basumati* Press absorbed in meditation, while others around him were revelling and rioting? And these, not for days or months but years! But why did he prefer to be in Calcutta at all? It is because Calcutta

is within the scriptural five-mile radius of the temple of Dakshineswar, the dwelling place of his Guru, the Paramahansa. Why did Lātu Maharaj use to call it the "sacred five-mile area" is borne out by his description of the Dakshineswar temple: "There live Mother Kali, Vishnu, the twelve Śivas and Mother Ganges. And he, our Master — how many years did he perform hard austere spiritual practices there; how many all-renouncing monks and saints spent their days in spiritual practices, forgetting the world; how many devotees mingled their tears of agonizing separation from the Lord with the sacred waters of the Ganges! What would you call such a place but one of pilgrimage?" What wonder is there that a man who looks upon Dakshineswar with such an eye would spend his years there as devotees do in Varanasi, Gaya, or Ayodhya, in meditation, prayer, counting beads, in the company of holy persons and in holy converse?'

When he was at Balarambabu's residence most of the time he was alone. Only for some little time in the morning and evening he would allow just a few devotees to come in, and he would spend the time in sacred talks and discussions. And during such times he appeared

to be a different person, eloquent and enthusiastic, allowing little opportunity to others to speak. But on days he would like to be quiet, all importunities and persuasions would be vain to draw him out. People who saw him during such times would come out with the idea that he (Lātu Maharaj) was too dull and grave a personality ; but those who had the good fortune of meeting him on other occasions would say they never met a man so kind and sympathetic, open-hearted and generous as he. But what was required was to pierce through his armour of gravity, once that was done they were sure to be fed to satisfaction with ' the milk of human kindness ' — his love and mercy flowed in torrents.

Brahmachari Nandalal one day came to him and said, ' Maharaj, a great soul like you should not keep such company '. Pop came the retort, ' Who is the rogue whom you call the " great soul " ? You rogues are all flatterers. Who is your " great soul " here ? It is still a far-off cry for me. Do you know, you vagrant, who is called a great soul ? ' The Brahmachari smiled and said, ' Yes, Maharaj, I know. He is indeed a great soul who is a friend of the poor '. Lātu Maharaj asked in the same rough tone, ' Who can become a friend of the poor ? The Lord alone is their friend. Nobody else can ever be. He alone really understands their difficulties '. The Brahmachari was insistent, he said : ' No, Maharaj, there are others also — *sadhus* and devotees of the Lord also understand it, for example, Swamiji, Sri Ramakrishna, Buddha, Jesus ' and then smilingly looking at Lātu Maharaj, ' even you, Maharaj '.

Lātu Maharaj : ' Get out, you rogue. Come here to flatter me ? '

When that day the friendly-quarrel ended, Lātu Maharaj came out with the following. ' You know none but one who is himself poor can love the poor truly. It is impossible for one who regards himself rich to love the poor. One has first to go through the depressing conditions of poverty to enter into the hearts of

the poor people. It is for this reason that brother Vivekananda told brother Hari : " Look here, brother, after taking *sannyasa* I do not know if I have really gained anything. But one thing is certain (then showing his heart) this has expanded enormously ". But one who is rich himself can enter into the hearts of the poor if the grace of the Lord is there on him ; and in that case he has also understood what poverty really is. It is this which forces, him, so to say, to spend money for them. The Lord tests people with money. It is easy to pass tests devised by men ; but divine tests are very hard. You can cheat man. But you can do neither with God ; you can neither pass His tests nor cheat Him ; to pass His tests is very difficult for the rich. For example you do come across people who are very rich, but the Lord's Maya has covered their hearts with such a thick coating of selfishness that throughout their long life they do not feel the urge for any kind of charity. Again you see people who are quite ready to give to the poor, to help them, but they have no money. Blessed indeed are they who are rich and feel for the poor, to help them. Know, there is Lord's grace on such people. It is indeed a rare phenomenon. You know it well that riches increases man's vanity. And the more vain a man the farther away he is from the Lord ; and the farther away, one is from God the more pitiable is his condition. Never measure a man's poverty by the wealth he possesses ; the real measure is to know how far off he is from God. Nearer the Lord, richer the man ; more forgetful of Him poorer and unhappier is he.'

The author,* who was attentively hearing to the above, said : ' Maharaj, to be rich or poor being in the proximity of or at a distance from the Lord is all right, and to disregard the worth of wealth is very easy to say ; but those who have to carry the heavy burden of maintaining a big family can't do without money. We who suffer on this count feel every day that it is money alone that matters, that it is

* Sri Chandrasekhar Chattopadhyaya

the source of all our weal and lack of it, of all our woes. Our experience is, a family that has no money has neither peace nor happiness, it has only a burden of miseries on its shoulders, it is more dead than alive ; and a family that has money to go by has everything, enjoyment, peace and contentment, righteousness, and even an assured heaven'.

In answer to this Lātu Maharaj said, 'What you say, my boy, is apparently so. Had your presumption been true all the rich men in Calcutta would have secured righteousness, happiness, peace and everything good, at least they would have enjoyed a little contentment. But tell me yourself if their discontent and unhappiness is not greater than that of the poor. Yes, it is true, money brings houses, land and property, servants and assistants, women and the attendant pleasures ; but not peace and contentment and righteousness which are altogether different from all the other things mentioned above. These three are not extraneous things or possessions. These belong to a different plane. They are of the heart and mind, internal. No amount of external possessions can ever remove or lessen that internal want or deficiency. There the Lord comes in, it is He alone who can do away with this innate sense of poverty. It is for this reason that we are forced to admit that there is an inviolate connexion between the Lord and these three, whether in our spiritual blindness we see it or not'.

Another day a devotee said in a tone of complaint : 'Maharaj, whatever you get by begging you spend on us and don't keep anything for yourself. It is our duty to give to saints and monks, we are doing just the reverse. Not only that, we are positively incurring sin by partaking of that which people give to saints and monks. Do stop involving us in this kind of sin'.

Lātu Maharaj : 'Come out with your suggestion, my boy.'

The devotee : 'Please cease going for alms, this is our earnest request.'

Lātu Maharaj : 'Do you not know, it is a monk's *dharma* to go for alms? Why are you preventing me from following my *dharma*?'

The devotee : 'We feel it so sore, Maharaj.'

Lātu Maharaj : 'Why so, why do you feel it?'

The devotee : 'You want to know our pain, Maharaj? (His eyes glistened.) We are grievously pained. The other day you went out to beg and you had to hear very harsh words — and all this only for our sake. This is simply unbearable to us.'

Lātu Maharaj : 'Why? What happened? Who used harsh words against me?'

The devotee : 'Where did you go for alms yesterday, Maharaj? All those words you had to hear for our sake only. Isn't it?'

Lātu Maharaj : 'Who told you all these?'

The devotee : 'We have heard from Maharaj (Swami Brahmananda) the whole story. That devil of a shop-keeper abused you right and left. And for our sake you had to swallow all that. Now we have decided among ourselves. We would never allow you to go for alms. We would meet all your expenses from subscriptions raised from ourselves.'

Lātu Maharaj : 'Will that not amount to begging?' This remark hit the devotee on the head. Lātu Maharaj noticed it, but continued : 'A Sannyasin has to observe some rules. Will you not allow me to observe them? Simply because the observance will wound somebody's feelings a Sannyasin will have to desist from it! What kind of request is this?'

The devotee : 'To beg alms, Maharaj — is that the only duty of a Sannyasin?'

Lātu Maharaj : 'No, but it is an important duty of a Sannyasin to depend on the Lord and also to maintain his devotees. And a *Sadhu* does not feel it painful to beg alms to maintain or serve his guru and his devotees.'

The devotee : ‘ Maharaj, it seems to me to be very queer that a *sadhu* will have to beg alms for the maintenance of his devotees even by pocketing insults and abuses. And what kind of devotees? Those who earn money, which, however, may not be sufficient. I can’t understand the logic of it.’

Lātu Maharaj : ‘ He (Master) used to say, a *sadhu* must live on alms and when he goes for begging some will give money; many, abuses; but a *sadhu* must accept both. That is his duty.’

The devotee : ‘ That fellow said so many things to you, and still you calmly begged alms of him! How did you do it, Maharaj?’

Lātu Maharaj : ‘ I told him, “ Brother, whatever you have said is all true, I don’t question that. We do not have matted locks on our head, nor rosaries of *rudraksha* round our necks, nor do we besmear our bodies with ashes or carry large pairs of tongs in our hands. We cannot cure diseases, read your hands or give amulets to protect you against bad planetary influences. But we never wish ill of anyone, on the contrary we pray for the welfare of all”. I said something more “ Please remember we never come out for alms depending on charity of people like yourself. If it is our *guru’s* wish, we shall have all our wants met. If he does not desire it your hearts will not open for giving charity. You are not the givers, the real giver is He, the Lord.” When the shop-keeper heard all this his heart opened and he gave me alms.’

The devotee : (*Excitedly*) ‘ Whatever it be, Maharaj, we have decided. We are not going to allow you to go for alms. We do not want

to hear anything from you. You must yield to our request. You cannot throw away your devotees’ earnest request.’

Lātu Maharaj : ‘ You should not put forth such a request to a Sannyasin. He begs to follow the injunction of the scriptures. One should not stand in his way. I will go by the scriptural injunction.’

The devotee : ‘ And it is the duty of the devotee to serve *sadhus*. That duty we too are determined to follow.’

At this Lātu Maharaj laughed and said, ‘ Will you frankly tell me who taught you all this?’

The devotee : ‘ One of your *gurubhais*, (co-disciples), Maharaj.’ [It was Raja Maharaj (Swami Brahmananda)].

Lātu Maharaj : ‘ Now I understand, where your force was coming from. I yield. Let his word stand. I will accept your money. Raja has to keep his eyes on so many things. He is to maintain the good name of the Math (Belur Math). So it is his request through you. I must keep his request. Shall I not?’

Since that day Lātu Maharaj started taking money from the devotees, but never a farthing more than what was needed to meet his primary necessities. He used to say ‘ A genuine *sadhu* has no pockets in his shirts’. A devotee did not follow it and asked its meaning. Lātu Maharaj said, ‘ If you have a pocket you will have the tendency to keep something in it, if not a few pence, at least some small chips of betel-nuts. That is prohibited for a Sannyasin’.

(*To be continued*)

We often mistake mere prattle for religious truth, mere intellectual perorations for great spiritual realization, and then comes sectarianism, then comes fight. If we once understand that this realization is the only religion, we shall look into our own hearts and find how far we are towards realizing the truths of religion. Then we shall understand that we ourselves are groping in darkness, and are leading others to grope in the same darkness, then we shall cease from sectarianism, quarrel and fight.

— SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

MEMOIRS OF SWAMI ADBHUTANANDA

(A free translation of the Bengali book, *Smrtikatha*)

(Continued from the previous issue)

How strict Lātu Maharaj was in matters of accepting charity from anyone is well illustrated by the following incident : One day he went to Entally (in Calcutta) to beg something of a devotee there. But when the devotee offered money, Lātu Maharaj felt some scruples in accepting the amount. Patal Babu noticed it, and when alone, put this question to him, 'You came to beg, Maharaj, how is it you returned the money?'

Lātu Maharaj : 'Did you not notice that he was tipsy? When a man is drunk and not in his normal consciousness one should not accept any gift from him.'

Patal Babu : 'Why, Maharaj?'

Lātu Maharaj : 'Now he is not in his senses. When he will return to his senses he might say, "The rogue has cheated me of the money when I was not myself". So one should be careful about it.'

Patal Babu : 'Maharaj, you think so much before accepting charity from anyone.'

Lātu Maharaj : 'You know, it is like this : If a gift comes along with love and reverence then only is it acceptable, then only can I take it. A Sannyasin should not accept anything that comes out of unwillingness or pride. In such cases both the parties, one who gives as also one who receives, are blameworthy and incur demerit.'

Another incident regarding this topic : One day the present writer (Sri Chandrasekhar Chattopadhyaya) placed a few coins near Lātu Maharaj's feet and bowed down to him. 'Hardly had I got up when Lātu Maharaj said, "You see, I have no need of money at present. You better keep those coins with you, they may come to be of use to you". I said, "No Maharaj, I won't take them

back". Lātu Maharaj insisted and said, "You will need this money in a couple of days. I say, you take this money back". To my surprise I found I needed the money'. In three days the writer was involved in a matter in such a way that he had to use the same money.

Yet another incident : It indicates Lātu Maharaj's qualities of forgiveness and protection to those who had taken refuge in him. At that time a building for the use of Lātu Maharaj was under construction at Varanasi and for that purpose a sum of Rs. 500/- was kept in Lātu Maharaj's room, and this money was one day stolen. Lātu Maharaj knew who had stolen the money but he said nothing. A devotee from Calcutta came to know of this and pressed Lātu Maharaj to hand over the man to the police. But Lātu Maharaj said, 'It is true he could not resist the temptation and stole the money ; but I have taken him under my protection ; will it look well if I now hand him over to the police?'

Another illustration of his forgiveness we give below : This incident took place at Balaram Babu's house. One day a man, dead drunk, came and started abusing a devotee, at which the latter's friends got annoyed and were about to beat the man. Lātu Maharaj intervened and said, 'Just mark the difference : he is drunk and he abuses ; and you are not drunk and you abuse. Tell me who are to be punished. You want to beat him, is it not? Drunkenness has already given him a severe beating. What more can you add to that? Drunkenness has taken away his consciousness and conscience. What greater harm can befall that man? Is physical punishment greater than that? Is he really alive, that poor man?'

Whether before Sannyasa or after, Lātu Maharaj used to avoid women as far as possible. While at Balarambabu's house, he did not like talking with women devotees. One day a lady devotee came to him and expressed her earnest desire of hearing about the incidents from the Master's life. This lady was an attendant to Holy Mother and a Master's disciple. Lātu Maharaj told her, 'Why, the Holy Mother is there in this house. Please go in and hear direct from her mouth'. At this she said, 'Today I have come to hear of the Master from your lips, Maharaj. Please don't disappoint me'. Lātu Maharaj repeated, 'Go to Mother, she will fulfil your desire'. Still the lady disciple did not appear like leaving the place. Lātu Maharaj became very grave and gave her the third warning : 'What sort of a devotee are you ? I am telling you again and again to go to Mother and you are still sitting here !' At this the lady said, 'Sarat Maharaj has sent me here to hear about the Master from your lips and therefore am I imploring you. Still you are so inexorable as that. Am I so mean, such an object of hatred ?' What Lātu Maharaj's reaction to it was we do not know. But he said to the lady, 'I do not know why Sarat has sent you to me. I will bring this matter to Raja. If he orders I will narrate. If I don't get his orders, even if the heavens fall I will not speak to you'.

Then turning to the writer who was seated nearby he said, 'Let us now go to Rakhal, let her remain sitting here'. And we came to Raja Maharaj. The moment Raja Maharaj saw him he cried out, as if in surprise. 'How is it, brother Lātu, you have come without invitation ? Other days we don't get any response even after repeated calls !'.

Lātu Maharaj : 'Just see, that lady (mentioning her name) is creating trouble there. I told her again and again to go to (Holy) Mother, but she would not hear. So I came away to you.'

By that time the lady too came there. Seeing her Raja Maharaj said smilingly, 'Why

did you go to his room ? Perhaps Sarat sent you there. Whatever it be don't annoy Lātu Maharaj in that way. Harm will befall you'.

Since that day the lady never came to Lātu Maharaj in Balarambabu's house. After this event some used to call Lātu Maharaj a woman-hater, which in reality he was never. For ladies he had great regard, though he did not like to be in their company, for long. Once he told Mrs. Chatterji of Baghbazar, 'You are all favoured of God. He has given you ladies infinite patience — there is no limit to your patience. You bear with all indignities and inequities. How grand is that !' The present writer heard it with his own ears.

On another occasion Lātu Maharaj told some devotees, 'You see, some people beat women. Never raise your hands against them. You do not know how much they bear — they are forbearance itself. If in spite of that you beat them where will they go ? They are parts of Mother Universal. If the Mother is insulted Lord is displeased. Your progress and prosperity lie in pleasing them. Their tears will bring ruin on you, as Sita's did to the whole race of Ravana'.

One day Lātu Maharaj told Patal Babu, in the course of a walk, 'Don't think women are weak. They are not as you take them to be. They are parts of Mahamaya. How will you be able to cope with them ? Just look there at the betel-shop. That lean and thin stick of a woman has kept three wrestler-like men pinned to the ground, as if by a spell'.

Lātu Maharaj would caution men, specially monks to be wary of women. He would say, 'Monk, beware of them. Attraction for women is the most dangerous obstacle in the spiritual path. If once you fall a prey to this, you cannot make any spiritual progress ; you are stuck up in the quagmire of worldliness. Wherever they are, there all troubles raise their heads. . . . Beware, if they once cast their snares you are done for, for the whole life. In fact men willingly walk into their traps. . . . So *sādhus* must be careful not even to look at them'.

The above instruction of Lātu Maharaj was meant more for the *sādhus* than for the householders. When he found a *sādhu* going to a lady's house, though noted for her devotion to God, Lātu Maharaj warned him with the following words : ' I know the lady. She is very good. Still you must not forget that you are a *sādhu*. There are several instances of fall of *sādhus* by keeping company even of good women. Their devotion to God and *sādhus*, later on turns into something too bad for *sādhus*. Having crossed the seven oceans and thirteen great rivers (as they say it in Bengali, i.e. far more dangerous obstacles) *sādhus* are drowned in mere mud-puddles. A monk should not mix with women too much even if they are good devotees. . . . The Master used to say, " When a man sees a serpent he prays, ' Mother Manasa, do hide your head and show your tail (i.e. keep away from my path); ' so the moment a *sādhu* sees a woman he should not look up to her face but down to her toes and call her mother. If you do that you are safe. That is the saving mantra against all your passions ". You know the story of Lakshmana. Though he lived with Rama and Sita for so many years he never looked at her face but always at her feet '.

These are indeed invaluable instructions to all, especially to monks and *brahmacharins*. But this does not prove that he was a woman-hater. These are words of warning for the good of both men and women. Without hating women, he wanted good of both, men and women.

One day a householder devotee raised the above topic and said, ' Maharaj, we have often heard you talking about not looking at the face of a woman. How is it possible for the householders like ourselves ? Are we then done for ? How can we go on without women ? ' At this Lātu Maharaj replied, ' Why are you mixing up the two ways of life together — that of a Sannyasin and of a householder ? There is no harm for the latter to mix with women. But the monk's way of life is much harder. " For a monk ", Master used to say, " to think of woman and

money is as bad as the foul smell of the body of a beautiful woman. Just as that smell obliterates her grace and beauty, so those desires of a *sādhu* wipe out all his noble qualities."

The devotee : ' Your words send a shock through our spine. We have married and are rearing a family. Is there no hope for our salvation ? Are we fallen for ever ? '

Lātu Maharaj : ' Why so ? You are householders. Perform the duties of a householder and you reach the goal of that life. Has not the Master asked you to live the God-ward life of a householder ? If you do so, you are sure to reach the goal, i.e., realize God, even if you live with women in the manner he recommended.'

The devotee : ' What is meant by a God-ward life of a householder ? '

Lātu Maharaj : ' Ah ! That is the God-ward life of a householder, where every member of the family, men, women and children, try to see God in this life. Hē (Master) used to say, " In this world there are ' *vidyā-stris* ' and ' *avidyā-stris* '. ' *Vidyā-stris* ' are those women who lead men Godward and ' *avidyā-stris* ' are they who take them away from Him ".'

The devotee : ' How are we to know a " *vidyā-stri* " from an " *avidyā-stri* " ? '

Lātu Maharaj : ' That is not very difficult. A *vidyā-stri* has less anger, and other passions ; she sleeps less, eats less, her passions are under her control. She is loving and devotional, she is bashful and modest. She serves all in the family, as if she is the mother of all. And she prays to God to bestow on her husband (and other members of the family) His grace. She does it without letting others know of it. She is extremely frugal of expenditure, so that her husband will not have to work harder for more money, and that he can devote more time to prayer, meditation, etc. You will see, a *vidyā-stri* arranges everything in time for her husband's prayer, meditation, for service to deities and saints ; and secretly makes charity so that the husband may get dessert therefrom.'

The devotee : 'That is a luck, Maharaj, very few are favoured with.'

Lātu Maharaj : 'That is true. Those alone who did enough works of merit in previous births get such wives ; others have to suffer with *avidyā-stris*. What else can they expect?'

The devotee : 'What you say, Maharaj, is quite true, but very depressing. What are they to do who have *avidyā-stris* ?'

Lātu Maharaj : 'There is a way out — to pray earnestly to the Lord every day, "Lord, give us good understanding, save us from your world-bewitching *Māyā*, vouchsafe unto us your grace ; may we work heart and soul to reach out to you".'

When Lātu Maharaj was residing in Varanasi, one day a gentleman came from Calcutta. The moment he arrived Lātu Maharaj took him severely to task. He said, 'Your wife is such a good lady, and what an unmitigated scoundrel you are ! Leaving her alone and worrying you have come away here. What prevented you from telling her that you meant to come here ? She would not have, I am quite sure, forbidden you to come here. Write a letter to her just now that you are here'. The gentleman was taken aback and understood that Lātu Maharaj could read one's hidden thoughts.

One day Rajkumar Banerji of Ahiritola came and told Lātu Maharaj with much contrition and humility, 'Maharaj, we are worms, being crushed by worldliness. Can we not be saved ? Is there no way out for these unfortunates ? Are we destined to be drowned in the filthy waters of this well of worldliness ? Be a little gracious on us, lift us up from this well'.

Lātu Maharaj calmly heard these words and softly said, 'You see, man cannot help man. There are two, only two, who can do it — Satchidananda — God in the shape of Guru and Satchidananda God Himself. You have already got a true *guru* ; why are you worrying then for your future ? When you have got such a *guru*, you have secured a safe haven ; your life's boat will surely come to it

in proper time. Realization of God is only a question of time. Have patience'.

Rajkumar Babu : 'It will come in time — this faith I have. But I doubt if it will come in this life itself.'

Lātu Maharaj : 'Don't allow such doubts to assail your mind. Doubts and misgivings are the deadliest enemies in the spiritual path. They loosen the foundation of faith.'

Rajkumar Babu : 'It is not for nothing that doubts are assailing me ; even the words of the Guru I fail to carry out, I have become so mean, debased, and despicable. It seems this life of mine is blasted. This body serves me no purpose.'

Lātu Maharaj : 'What makes you so hopeless as that ? Have you understood the entire purpose of this life ? In this imperial court of the Lord no injustice can ever be done anywhere ; no life can ever go in vain. Once Śaṣibhai (Swami Ramakrishnananda) gave a very apt reply to one like you. That gentleman spoke almost in the same language as you. Brother Śaṣi said, "Suppose you are going somewhere ; on the way you come across a small open drain. You come back eleven or twelve steps, then run forward and jump over the drain. Tell me if the few steps backward were necessary for his forward progress or not. It is like that". Perhaps in one life a man has to take some backward steps, to play his role well in the eternal life. In the next life he will have to run with much greater speed. No life can ever go in vain. But remember one thing well — you must live the life fixing your eyes ever on the Lord. He will then lead you as He likes. Whatever is really necessary at any time will be supplied in exact quantity. He knows man's past, present and future. So the best thing a man can do is to resign himself unreservedly unto Him.'

Thus did Lātu Maharaj put courage into the despaired hearts of his devotees. How many times did we hear him repeat these words : 'Whether you catch hold of the Lord's hand or not, He has caught yours, there is not the slightest doubt about it — so great is His grace

and mercy for all'. He never allowed his devotees to get hopeless. To put hope and cheer into the hearts of the depressed was his very breath of life. He would say, 'If you feel it difficult for you to catch hold of the Lord's feet because you have not seen Him, then do one thing, catch hold of one of his devotees. That is as good as holding fast to Him. Their prayer the Lord never rejects... You have seen the Master, you have seen Swamiji; you know the ideal lived and preached by them. Keep it bright before your eyes and live the life'.

Biharibabu said one day, 'Maharaj, can the Master and Swamiji be ideals for all?'

Lātu Maharaj: 'What do you say? The Master is the ideal for all. He is an ideal *Sannyasin* and an ideal householder; an ideal Guru and an ideal disciple. He is the ideal

for all faiths, all sects. He is the ideal for the followers of *tantras*; He practised and reached the culmination in all the *sādhanas* laid down in all the important Tantric books. He is an ideal *Vaishnava*: Such devotion for Sri Hari cannot be found anywhere and he realized Hari. He is an ideal *Saiva*: He realized Śiva too. He is the ideal of the devotees of Sri Rama: He realized Sri Rama and Sri Sita. He is the ideal for the Vedantins as well: He reached the culmination of the Vedantic *sādhana*, the Nirvikalpa samadhi, in one day. He is the ideal for the Christians and Mussalmans also: He had the vision of Christ and the Prophet. He is the ideal for all, for he is the only one who practised the *sādhanas* of all faiths and reached the ideal preached by each.'

(To be continued)

HOLY MOTHER SRI SARADA DEVI

K. P. SAROJINI

WHILE paying our humble tributes to the hallowed memory of Sri Sarada Devi it would be of immense benefit to all of us, to recall to our minds the many incidents in her life demonstrative of her greatness and her divine nature. The meaning which her life has for us cannot be over estimated. Aptly described as Sri Ramakrishna's final word on the ideal of Indian womanhood, her immaculate life was a unique synthesis of all that is pure and noble in womanhood of all times, everywhere. At a time when we had lost faith in our great traditions and culture owing to the impact of an alien civilization, her appearance on the Indian scene heralded the dawn of a new era for Hindu womanhood.

Before passing on to her life and teachings it would be in order, to pause for a while, and think as to why her message seems so important today than at any other time. To a careful observer the reasons are not far to seek.

A distressing feature of our present life is the failure of parents and our modern system of education, to impart to young minds the necessity of living upto certain fundamental values in life. As a result, there are no standards left in the younger generation either to mould their thinking, or discipline their actions or even to instil some purpose into their lives. Religious feeling is rudely shaken by the growth of technology and industry. The values of life are interpreted solely in terms of material considerations. Even the large majority of people who are conventionally religious, are carried away more by mere forms and not the essence.

The modern notion is that religion and God are not real needs, and that it is only the unsophisticated, who look forward to having a spiritual side to life. People who tend to think this way and who have little roots in our culture, would be surprised to learn the findings from clinical experiments of a new school of

MEMOIRS OF SWAMI ADBHUTANANDA

(A free translation of the Bengali book, *Smritikatha*)

(Continued from the previous issue)

IN Balarambabu's house as also in Varanasi Lātu Maharaj incessantly preached the glories of the Master, but never for a moment did he show any sign of bigotry. He held very liberal views about all faiths and religions. He paid great respect even for the rituals of all faiths. We have seen him offering bread and meat to Jesus Christ on Christmas Day and garland on the Good Friday; on the Id and Mohurram days he used to send offerings to the *durgas* of some Pirs. On the birthday of the Prophet he paid his special reverence to him. We have also seen him sending offerings to the temples of the depressed classes on the occasions of their special ceremonies, and sharing the *prasada* brought from those places with the devotees, with great joy. That he himself worshipped Śiva has been mentioned. On the occasion of the Diwali we have seen him making arrangements through a priest, for the worship of Mother Lakshmi in the image. To whatever temple he went he invariably offered some money. Although so liberal he held his life wholly dedicated to the Master and his chosen deity (who to him, were one).

Once some one complained to Lātu Maharaj about some communal incidents that took place at Gaya and said that all this was done to injure Hinduism. We give below a short description of the dialogue that took place then.

Lātu Maharaj: 'My boy, who can harm another's religion? Is faith or religion a matter of externals that others can harm it? All troubles emanate from this wrong notion that religion is rituals, external formalities.'

The devotee: 'Can you discard rituals, Maharaj, altogether from religion? If they are not parts of religion what about the Vedic sacrifices — modern systems of worship in

temples, churches etc. and ceremonials and festivals in all religions? If some people oppose these would you still say that they have not laid hands on our religion?'

Lātu Maharaj: 'I don't exactly say that. But as long as you regard faith as consisting of external ceremonies these riots, and killings will continue. Know it for certain and admit it that you have forgotten your real religion, you have lost sight of the kernel and are quarrelling over the husk of religion. Sri Chaitanya introduced the congregational *sankirtana*. What a nice thing it was? Morning and evening — only two times — he asked you to sing Lord's name all together. How many do it? You have given it up. Who teaches a Hindu boy to do anything about his religion? Only some Brahmin boys are taught something. That practice is also waning. What about other Hindu children? You have taken religion as something for the old age. But real religion is not meant for that age. It is impossible to practise religion in old age. In old age your mind is scattered over a hundred and one things; it is then impossible to collect the forces of the mind and get them concentrated on the Lord. It is not the case in childhood and adolescence; your mind is not scattered, it is yet soft and pliant, you can give it any shape you like. Dhruva was five when he saw God. But now no child is taught to take the name of Rama even once a day. You can see for yourself what a dense ignorance has covered our society.'

The following incident is taken from the diary of Bibhutibhushan Maitra; and the event took place at the Sonarpur house in Vārāṇasi.

'One evening Dr. De Mello, who had spent some time at our Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati

came to Lātu Maharaj. When he came to see Lātu Maharaj the latter was heard saying to himself, "Lord, of course, is without form ; but He is with forms too". Strangely enough, that was the thought uppermost in the visitor's mind. So he asked Lātu Maharaj, "If He is with forms, we can surely see Him?"

Lātu Maharaj : 'Yes, certainly. I am not lying. The Master has said it. Not only that. You can talk with Him.'

Bibhutibabu told us that Lātu Maharaj spoke these words with such great emphasis that they startled all those who were present.

That day the conversation drifted to the topic of meditation. The Doctor said, 'Maharaj, when I was at Mayavati I used to keep a picture of Jesus Christ on my table and meditate on him. One day I saw the picture, moving, it came to life, so to say. All on a sudden that form vanished, and in its stead I saw Sri Ramakrishna, which also disappeared giving place to Sri Buddha, and then Swamiji (Swami Vivekananda). He too disappeared when came a bearded form. Whose it is I do not know as yet. Are these the imaginations of a heated brain or anything like that?'

Lātu Maharaj heard him calmly and said, 'Why imaginations of the brain? They are all true. You are on the right track. Don't give it up. Stick to it. One who has seen one great soul may see many others. Our Master used to have innumerable visions of Rishis, sages, prophets, devas, devis, etc.'

The Doctor : 'Sometimes I am confused, Maharaj. On whom to meditate?'

Lātu Maharaj : 'Whom do you love most?'

The Doctor : 'I love Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna equally dearly.'

Lātu Maharaj : 'Whom have you been loving all along, i.e. before you came to know of Sri Ramakrishna?'

At this the doctor described a little the history of his family, that for the last four generations they have been Christians. Hearing this Lātu Maharaj advised him to meditate on Christ without the least hesitation.

The Doctor went on laying bear his heart to Lātu Maharaj for some time.

Below we give another instance of Lātu Maharaj's catholicity. 'One day two English women came to Lātu Maharaj at Balarambabu's residence. It is said they were atheists. But they were believers in doing good to humanity. Might be they were positivists. They heard of the humanitarian activities of the newly started Ramakrishna Mission. Then the Mission's meetings used to be held at Balarambabu's house. The author played the interpreter that day. The elder one of the English women asked Lātu Maharaj, "To do good to humanity is the ideal of human life. We are one with you regarding this point. But you give a higher place to God, there we differ ; we do not like that idea. We hold, God is invisible something ; it is doubtful whether He exists at all. What we do not understand of your Mission is, why you preach that people should first have faith in such an unknown and unknowable entity and then do good to humanity."

Lātu Maharaj : 'Those who do not believe in God and try to serve humanity cannot carry on for a long time. Sometime after, this question naturally crops up in their minds : "What benefit do we derive from these so-called humanitarian activities?" And when they reach this stage these activities appear stale to them, they lose interest in their works. And this change is bound to come, it is but natural ; for all philanthropic activities entail personal sacrifice. Those who are no believers in God do not find any reason or meaning in such sacrifices.' Hearing this the two ladies laughed out and the younger one said, 'That is no argument, that is no argument'.

Lātu Maharaj : (without turning a hair) 'Will you tell me why do you engage yourselves in these activities?'

The younger lady : 'For the good of others, of course.'

Lātu Maharaj : 'How am I benefited therefrom? Why should I slave for others? What for?'

The elder lady : 'We live in this society. As such we have some duties towards it. Our

religion is to serve this society. As long as we live in this society we should mutually try to mitigate our sufferings and enlarge the sphere of happiness. That should be the end of our lives.'

Lātu Maharaj : 'There is a higher ideal than what you have said just now. It is (to know and) to fulfil the ideal of our own life. To realize God is the one grand end of human life. He really is wise who has done it or at least tries to do it. To do good to others is after all a social matter. It has no necessary connexion with that highest aim of human life. Moreover, look at it from another point of view. Benefit accrues to those for whom you work. What about yourselves? How do they benefit you? Can you explain to me how working for others is profitable to you?'

At this the ladies blushed and kept mum. Lātu Maharaj went on : 'So you see, there is a loop-hole in your argument, a fallacy. In all arguments, that want to base humanitarian activities on social benefits and leave aside God, you will invariably find some fallacy or other. But once you bring in God the distinction between you and others vanishes, then others become a component part of my self. Though outwardly, i.e., with relation to body, others appear different from me, inwardly, i.e., as *Satchidananda* we are all one; we don't find any difficulty in understanding and feeling that we are one in God. Then nobody helps another, one that is different from himself, but serves his own self, the abiding part of himself, the better and truer self of himself. Our attitude is plainly this : we go out to serve others, not because there are others who are suffering but because we want to obliterate, blot out, the false distinction that exists between others and myself — and this seeing others as distinct from myself is the root cause of all the evils in society. So to us, to do good to others really means to do good to ourselves — not others but myself. And who is there who would not do good to himself? Hence if you leave out God, and try to do good to others you may lose your zest for such activities after some time.'

The elder lady : 'One thing in your argument I do not still understand — how can five others become part of me?'

Lātu Maharaj : 'It is not a mere argument — it is a fact. That the multitude, not five or ten, but millions over millions, are parts of one Satchidananda is a fact. The difference lies in names and forms only; just as one earth is transformed into cups, saucers, and all kinds of earthenwares. Now it is everywhere the same earth, the difference lies in name and form and their use. Their being used in one way or other is immaterial to the thing itself; and the names and forms, also do not enter into the substance of the things. Similarly you, I, or they are different in our names and forms, in our material bodies, which change every moment we use them; but the substance is the same and abiding. In this true sense we are all one — one God sporting as many.'

The elder Lady : 'Have you got any proof of this?'

Lātu Maharaj : 'Of course. But this proof is not something to be demonstrated to others. It is something which everyone should feel for himself or herself. Take for example the phenomenon of love. Can anybody really demonstrate it to another? He who loves understands it, and whom he loves understands it too. Do others understand what that attraction is? Similar is the case with God. The Lord Himself and to whomsoever He shows His favour, alone understand it. Others may not, cannot.'

The elder lady : 'Very nice argument.'

The younger lady : 'Still the question remains unsolved. Take for example the case of one who does not believe in God but does good to others — what about him, will he not get merits out of these?'

Lātu Maharaj : 'You know, every action produces effects — good acts good effects. But these relate to society only. Yes, society is improved. Still man suffers from his false ego, identifies himself with the body. So it does not bring him spiritual progress. When ego is there even meritorious acts bring in bondage, the sense that he is the body does not go. For

them to do good to others means giving them more creature comforts, necessarily his own good means the same thing, hence bondage. So that kind of philanthropic activity cannot take him away from the wheel of *karma*. Unless our works become absolutely devoid of all motives, our sense of ego will not go, we would continue thinking ourselves as personalities in the midst of other personalities — hence bondage continues. All motives vanish when we and others are rounded up in one vast substance, the Satchidananda, then comes salvation.'

The younger lady: 'I don't understand what you mean by "unmotivated activity". I am yet to see one who does such work. All are actuated by motives — of course, the motive is a noble one in case of philanthropists. But it is surely not an "unmotivated" one.'

Lātu Maharaj: 'We don't go so far as that. When you go to work for others there must be some motive. What we do say is: let the motive be orientated towards God. All

cannot see Him; let them have faith in Him — this is necessary. This faith is the cue that will lead you to Him. With this faith in Him let us love His children, work for them. For example, you do some outstanding good work for society. It reaches the Emperor's ears. He calls you and thanks you; you see him. Similarly through the loving service of the Lord's children you get the Lord's grace, you see Him — men are His children.'

What they understood we do not know. Lātu Maharaj purchased Rs. 2/- worth of good mangoes and presented these to them. They accepted them, highly pleased. But from the letter they wrote from Rome, on their way home, it was evident that Lātu Maharaj's words had made a deep impression on their minds.

When those ladies took leave of Lātu Maharaj the present author asked him, 'Perhaps they are satisfied with your argument. But there is one point yet to be discussed: if inside there is one why are there differences outside?'

(To be continued)

RAJA YOGA — RESTATED

(Continued from the previous issue)

BRAJ BIHARI NIGAM

HOW RAJA YOGA INVOLVES THE ELEMENTS OF THE OTHER YOGAS

Does *rāja* yoga exclude the essential elements of the other three yogas, namely, *jñāna*, *bhakti* and *karma*? *Rāja* yoga considers possible the inhibition of the modifications of the mind and thereby attain *kaivalya*, where *prakṛti* and its modifications no more bind the *puruṣa*. The yoga system treats *saṁsāra* as the creation of mind and if the mind is controlled, we can control the *saṁsāra*. Therefore to become the master of *saṁsāra* is to become free. But there should be no attachment even to this mastery, otherwise, it cannot be *parā-*

vairāgya (*guṇavitrāṣṇā*) as demanded by Patañjali.

Practice of *rāja* yoga involves the science of discrimination, that is, *jñāna* yoga. We have to inhibit the modifications of our mind to attain the discrimination between *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*. It is because of the modifications of *citta* that a man is bound to this world. The world has been created both for providing enjoyment of the fruits of his actions and salvation to the *puruṣa* (Y.S. II. 18). Though *citta* creates bondage, yet, it also provides suitable experience for his liberation. *Citta* which is the cause of attachment is also the

MEMOIRS OF SWAMI ADBHUTANANDA

(A free translation of the Bengali book, *Smritikatha*)

(Continued from the previous issue)

QUESTION : ‘If inside there is one Reality why are there differences outside?’

Lātu Maharaj : ‘Here lies hidden the solution of all problems. Here all intellects admit defeat. Unless our heart and mind are purified fully this problem of all problems remains unsolved ; to attain this purification one is to work hard, perform spiritual *sādhana*. When this *sādhana* brings in Lord’s grace the Reality as it is in itself is revealed. Then understanding comes, but even when that comes it cannot be expressed in language. This is Lord’s Māyā. How can you express Him? He is one, not many, and our language is born of many, duality. How can it express non-duality? Leave aside Śuddha Brahman, even Kāraṇa-Brahman, the Creator-God, cannot be understood. Suppose you try to explain the Creator-God. You will have to start it at a particular time. So much of creation and therefore of the Creator existing before that time is left out. The Creator is beginningless ; you begin in time, so description is impossible. Again you will have to stop somewhere otherwise people will not understand it ; they might think there still remains much unsaid. Now if you stop, so much of future remains. This side also the description is inadequate. You might say “Knowing one thing we might know all.” Is that not based on “uniformity of nature”? How are you to prove this uniformity when vast domains of nature remain unexplored, and necessarily unexpressed? So we are forced to say that, how the one has become the many, how the creation and His entry into it have taken place, is simply inexpressible and unthinkable. His grace alone makes it possible. One can intuit it but can neither think it nor express it. Those who have achieved this impossible feat are unanimous in saying, “It is His grace alone.”’

The author : ‘Maharaj, if you say He is dwelling in everything then you will have to say He is the cause as well as the effect. So we are to establish a relation between the two — the cause and the effect. Are they one or are they different?’

Lātu Maharaj : ‘In creation there are of course both cause and effect. Master used to say, effect is the *vikāra* of the cause. Apart from understanding the true meaning of *vikāra*, let us understand how was the Reality before creation : when the effects were not born where was the difference? Not in the Lord who is non-dual. And Lord is the one reality, there is nothing else beside or inside. So one will have to say there was no difference. Whence is it now?’

The author : ‘Yes, Maharaj, whence is the difference? Differences between cause and effect?’

Lātu Maharaj : ‘How it came about nobody could tell. There is no reply to why it came. But it is there, an undeniable fact. This irrational improbability is the work of what they call the power of Māyā. It is this Māyā that has brought about the peculiar indescribable difference between the cause and the effect. And this Māyā is the Lord’s will. It is this will-power that has converted (if that is the word) the Śuddha-Brahman into the cause of the Universe, made Him the Lord of the world, its controller ; and the effect of the cause, the universe, its dependant. These are to be known as Puruṣa and Prakṛti (not according to the Sāṅkhyas). How to reconcile this? What is the difference between Puruṣa and Prakṛti? It is like this. It is like the distinction between stopping and moving — the thing is the same, now at rest and now in motion. When at rest it is Puruṣa, when in motion Prakṛti. So in reality they are not

two. When in motion there is no change in the substance of the thing, the change is in and of Māyā. You may ask "Why this change even in Māyā?" This is Māyā, its nature is inexplicable; everything in and of it is vague, indistinct, irrational, inexplicable. This is why philosophy has been forced to call it Māyā. Space and time are its creation. In them are creatures born, live and die. There the interplay of works goes on. As long as one cannot transcend the limits of this Karma one cannot go out of the clutches of Māyā. Even when a *jīva* transcends the limits there still remains some distinction between him and Īswara. This peculiar distinction our Master used to describe as one between fire and its spark. This distinction (between fire and its spark) is regarding the power (of Māyā); it is not in the substance, not in the Reality that is Brahman. This distinction remains between *jīva* and Īswara even in that state. *Jīva*, in this state has not risen above Māyā. Master used to say, "Brahman is neither cause nor effect. He is beyond both. You cannot say 'He is' nor can you say 'He is not' — He is in between the two. He is neither one nor two, He is non-dual, in between".

The author: 'Maharaj, make it a little easy; we could not follow you.'

Lātu Maharaj: 'Fellow, enough, enough; you have understood enough. You will not do anything. Without *sādhana* these things are not understandable. You are only tiring a *sādhu's* organ of speech.' Saying this he became silent.

One peculiar trait of Lātu Maharaj, we have observed, was that he would visit anyone's house who came to him without any formality of invitation. Even unnoticed by the devotees he would come and see their houses. Once Kālidāna was ill. One day he came to his house and told him, 'You see, you need not spend on my account any more. Just see, what you have done for me — you have made me use scented linseed oil, made me take milk. I am after all a *Sannyasi*, should I indulge in such luxuries?' (He used the English word pronouncing it as 'lushkari'.)

Kālidāna heard it and said, 'Brother, through the Master's grace I have no wants. He has given me enough and to spare. I spend just a fraction of it on his children. If you deprive me of this little service Master will be angry with me — will he not? Do continue to accept the little service of mine.' Lātu Maharaj yielded. As long as Kālidāna lived he used to send his usual monthly contribution to Lātu Maharaj. It was upto June, 1905.

On 9th May, 1905 Niranjan Maharaj (Swami Niranjanananda) passed away at Hardwar. The news reached Lātu Maharaj the same day at Balarambabu's house. He talked about him the whole day. We give below some of the things he said about Niranjan Maharaj: 'When brother Niranjan came to Master for the first time Master told him, "Look here, my boy, if one does 99 good turns to man and one bad turn, man remembers the one bad turn and forgets the other 99; and if he does 99 bad turns to God and does one good turn, the Lord remembers that one and forgets all the other 99. This is the distinction between God and man. Remember it."

'One day Master touched brother Niranjan and for three days and three nights after that Niranjan did not get a wink of sleep. He had the continuous vision of a mysterious light and went on taking the Lord's name. These three days his tongue could not stop. . . . Before coming to the Master he had joined the spiritualists, who used him as a medium for the descent of ghosts. So the Master told him one day "Now, my boy, another ghost, the Holy Ghost, is on you. However much you may try you cannot throw Him out, He will not leave you. He is not an ordinary ghost." And the Master laughed.'

Biharibabu asked Lātu Maharaj on one occasion, 'Well Maharaj, we read in scriptures that God is the guide of man. Getting Sat-chidananda as the guide how is it that *jīva* suffers so much. The Guide is eternally pure, sinless, spotless, still man wallows in sins and suffers! How is that?'

Lātu Maharaj : ‘ You have answered your own question. The *jīva*, by nature, is eternally pure, how can vice and virtue ever touch him ? ’

Biharibabu : ‘ I can’t follow. Do you mean to say that the *jīva* is endowed with a double nature : one vicious and sinful and the other untouched by sin and vice ? Or is there no such thing as virtue or vice ? ’

Lātu Maharaj : ‘ Look here, Master used to say, “ There are virtue and vice, and also they are not. As long as He permits the ego of the *jīva* to remain till then He allows in the *jīva* this sense of difference, of vice and virtue ; and when He permits the blotting out of this ego the sense of difference is also obliterated, and with that of virtue and vice too. As long as the *jīva* thinks he has work to do, he has duties, he is an agent, so long there is virtue as well as vice. But when through His grace this sense of agency goes, go with it also his vice and virtue. Because vice and virtue are the results of his *karma*, not anything different. As one’s actions so one’s deserts. He, the Lord, has willed it so. This is again for the benefit of the world as well as of the *jīvas*. It is His will that has given the sense of free will to man and its resultant *karma*. It is left to man to work as he wills. If he chooses such activities as have less of joy and more of miseries he is to welcome their results also. So the responsibility devolves on the *jīva*, not on the Lord.’

Biharibabu : ‘ Scriptures say He is our Guide ; so the responsibility is His, not ours.’

Lātu Maharaj : ‘ Yes, scriptures are right. But tell me who guides the *jīva* bound by Māyā ? Is it not Māyā itself ? Do you know one funny peculiarity of Māyā ? It wants that the play should continue, the hypnotism is sustained. It finds a peculiar joy in rise and fall, in pleasure and pain, in breaking and making ; it likes to dance on the crests of waves, it abhors a calm sea. And the *jīva* who does not want to be bound down to Māyā is guided by the Lord Himself. And the peculiarity of this guidance is just the opposite of those rises and falls — there is but one current of

peace and happiness, of bliss unbroken. There no waves ever rise, it is the deep unfathomable, undisturbed even by slightest ripples.’

Biharibabu : ‘ Yes, Maharaj, I know the scriptures have compared Māyā with the waves and the Lord with the deep ocean. But what difference is there between the two when both are water ? So Māyā’s work is also the Lord’s : Māyā’s guidance is the Lord’s guidance. Why not ? ’

Lātu Maharaj : ‘ Yes from one angle of vision it is so ; but there is another angle too. Master said, “ The waves are of the ocean, nobody says the ocean is of the waves.” Similarly Māyā belongs to the Lord, Māyā is Lord’s, not the Lord Māyā’s. So Māyā’s guidance cannot be called Lord’s guidance. Still know it for certain that the ultimate aim of Māyā’s guidance is to take the *jīva* to God.’

Biharibabu : ‘ But all say, Māyā hypnotizes man and leads him astray.’

Lātu Maharaj : ‘ She likes to play, she likes its continuance. It is against her wish that the play should stop. In this play man cannot see the end of play. So man comes to the wrong conception that there is no end to this play, she is taking them along a wrong path to a wrong destination. My good fellow, what is wrong, where is the wrong path and false destination ? Is it not all He ? Is not Māyā born out of His will ? How can it go against His purpose, she is there to serve His purpose.’

Biharibabu (in surprise) : ‘ She is working, Maharaj, to subserve His purpose ! ’

Lātu Maharaj : ‘ Yes, otherwise why will she work at all ? There must be a purpose for her as well.’

Biharibabu : ‘ Scriptures say her work is to make possible all the impossibles. She is a mere illusion, a delusion and a hoax. Her only work is to delude man and keep him in eternal delusion.’

Lātu Maharaj : ‘ Do you know why they say so ? It is because Māyā has made Nirvikalpa savikalpa, Nirviśeṣa saviśeṣa, the attributeless absolute the relative with attributes, that the scriptures have to use harsh words

against us — harsh but true in a way. They have spoken of Māyā as a delusion, that too is correct. But in which sense? The Nirguna Brahman, the Absolute is the only reality, the eternally immutable. Tell me what else can be true? Things that change, today they are one, of one sort. tomorrow they are another, of another sort — how can you call them true? Compared to this immutable reality, the Nirguna Brahman, Māyā must be called something other than reality. And what name will you give to one that is not reality, will you not call it Māyā, delusion? How can you call a thing that is less than reality even by the least, a reality? It must be an imitation of reality. And imitations are fakes, frauds. But though with relation to the Nirguna Brahman it is delusion it is not so with relation to *jīvas*; it is not only delusion but a reality too palpably real to be ignored. The best term that can be used is *avidyā*, not truly real, neither absolutely false. But the whole truth is not stated even by calling it *avidyā*, for it is not a fact that it keeps *jīvas* permanently under delusion or ignorance. Just on one side it deludes, on another it awakens the *jīvas* to the ultimate Reality. It keeps a fine balance between reality and non-reality, between dark ignorance and dazzling brilliance in which creation melts away. And finally, how unselfishly, she does her work! (One is constrained to describe this wonderful power as a person.) It has kept balance in another way also: between pain and pleasure, between vice and virtue. Why so? It is to teach the great lesson to the *jīva*. Had it been its idea to keep man in eternal bondage it could have kept the worse side of those duals. Because it has kept the opposites, it provides man with his choice; and in that way it deludes and deludes not at the same time. But one thing is true. Hers is not the straight way to the realization of the life's goal. It takes man round and round the truth and at last, all on a sudden, throws him into it and flees. It takes longer time to reach the truth with Māyā's aid. Truth man shall reach, but with much waiting, and through tears as well as smiles. One is cheated

many times, many hopes are raised and dashed to the ground. Thus cheated and chafing and groaning, when man understands the nature of Māyā it ceases deluding, it can no more cheat. Then with the aid of her benign power it sets you free. Out of the twilight unreality it creates, wonderful, beautiful treacherous world of enjoyment, goes on duping man and opening his eyes again and again and at last when the eyes are open wide and remain piercing the whole thing vanishes, as if it never existed at all. This is why she is called one "making impossibles possible".

Biharibabu: 'What, Maharaj, are you talking? Has Māyā a "benign aspect" also?'

Lātu Maharaj: 'Oh yes; after all it is His (the Lord's) power; can it be inauspicious?'

Biharibabu: 'As you are interpreting her, she must be called great.'

Lātu Maharaj: 'Yes, great she is. And great is God. When properly understood they are one. That day a *sādhu* nicely explained the various types of Vaishnavite salvation. Said he, "People say they are to reach out to God. What reaching out? Is He not already realized? Are they not living in His *loka*? Where is He not? So *sālokya mukti* (living in the same region with the Lord) is already there for them. They have already had the *swārūpya mukti*, for without having His *swarūpa*, essence, how can they exist? (Here a sort of pun has done this trick. Though the explanation and the word actually used here are all right, the Vaishnavas use a different word: their word is *sārūpya*, not *swārūpya*. Their Lord has a peculiar *rūpa* form; and their *sārūpya* means the state of having the same peculiar form of the Lord, and not *swārūpya*, of having the essence of the Lord. However the explanation as it stands, is faultless, correct.) Similarly they are already enjoying the *sāmīpya mukti*, the one of living in His proximity, for what place is there that is away from Him? Only the *sāyujya mukti* they do not enjoy. There lies the difference".

Biharibabu: 'Let their words go. These are only clever ways of explaining texts. They

have no practical value. Some say "Jivas are already free"; some, "The world does not exist at all—in past, present and future"; some again, "Brahman himself weeps and cries being encased in the five elements". Let them philosophize. Now tell me, if somebody does not want to wait such a long time for salvation and tries to get salvation in this very

present life can your Māyā make any arrangement for that?'

Lātu Maharaj: 'Why ask this of me? I know whoever will want Him will get Him, whether he wants Him now, today, in this life, or five or ten lives after. But in one life he will have to stake his all, his very life, then only will he get Him.'

(To be continued.)

KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

SWAMI GNANESWARANANDA

THAT one, cosmic, Divine Intelligence rules supreme behind every manifestation of nature is a truth which is brought home to us vividly if we study nature in all its different varieties. What a lesson we can learn by looking at a little plant! When the budding twig stretches its delicate limbs, as it were, to expand itself to reach more light and air, to unfold its inner power, it ought to be enough to convince any thinking person that there is a cosmic power behind even that little manifestation of the sprouting of a small plant. That the seasons follow one another in exact sequence is a patent fact, and it makes us feel that there must be an intelligence which controls the advancement of time with all its ramifications. Some things may seem to happen by chance, but chance never follows any exact sequence. When we find what exact sequence is followed in the workings of cosmic nature we feel convinced that there must be *one* Divine Intelligence which controls every manifestation. It is not only true regarding the evolution of phenomenal nature. If we study the workings of the human mind and the law of advancement that it follows, we will be convinced that in the region of the mind also there is one divine principle, intelligence-Absolute, which is urging the growth and expression of our inner being. Frankly, I do not understand how, knowing nature or knowing the workings of the inner being of

man, anyone could still think that there is no Spirit, no intelligent Divine Principle behind every thought, feeling, and act—even behind the falling of every leaf. You may call that by the name of God, Divine Intelligence, or Cosmic Law. It makes no difference. But we must know that it is not unintelligent. It is an intelligent Principle.

Lately, I have been interested in studying the history of the development of modern scientific investigation. In the first place, it seems to me that unknown to us, a Divine Intelligence has already planned the procedure this investigation would follow. It is something like the blooming of a flower. The flower does not realize that a Cosmic Intelligence is guiding and assisting its progress towards full bloom. Likewise, we human beings, individually and collectively, do not realize that there is a Divine Intelligence which furnishes the urge behind all our actions. If you analyze the course of your own development you will find that it follows a definite line; it does not happen fatuously. You will find that your life progresses with a certain method. Briefly, what impressed me in my study of modern scientific progress is this: That man is progressing from the knowledge of the gross to the knowledge of the subtle. As an illustration we might say that it is something like a child who at first learns to sense visible, tangible and colourful objects

MEMOIRS OF SWAMI ADBHUTANANDA

(A free translation of the Bengali book, *Smritikatha*)

(Continued from the previous issue)

BIHARIBABU : 'I have another question to ask. Scriptures say, "Inside the *jīva* sits the Lord". What does it mean?'

Lātu Maharaj : 'You know, it is just a sort of expression. Really there is no language to express His existence anywhere. The fact that He is not non-existence is somehow to be brought to man's mind. So various improvisations in language have been made, but what is beyond thought cannot be expressed in language. Hence all this inevitable vagueness is there.'

'Now, for instance, it is admitted by all that He is omnipresent. If this is a fact how can you talk of inside and outside, of up and down, of east and west? He is everywhere, He saturates everything, you cannot put your finger anywhere and say He is not there. He is covering everything but does not accept any limitation. He is not exhausted anywhere. When you use the word "Brahman" you will have to use it in this sense. And yet it is not properly explained. (For, two things cannot occupy at the same time even one point what to speak of covering the entire universe, manifest and unmanifest. If He is one thing and all these things of the world are other things it comes to two things occupying the same space at the same time, which is impossible.) And yet we are to say something of Him. So we say He covers everything and He transcends them all too. Master used to say this. He would say this too : "All things have been polluted, having come out of the mouth (by way of expression); Brahman alone has not been sullied, for It could not be expressed in words or signs".'

Biharibabu : 'You are all wonderful people, Maharaj. You would not say anything positive and keep most things vague — with

the aid of formidable negatives you would not cease expressing Brahman.'

The author : 'Leave aside other's expressions. What you have yourselves understood — we want to know that. Surely you have understood something, otherwise why would you be saying so many things?'

Lātu Maharaj : 'You know, one may understand Brahman but one cannot give expression to one's feeling. To express one's feeling one is to take recourse to language, but language fails to express Him. So far human language has been found to be inadequate to express Him. Master ruefully said, "My boys, I try my best to reveal everything to you; but Mother presses my lips down and would not allow me to express It". Well, you speak words every day by thousands. Have you thought from where they arise?'

The author : 'Why, from mind.'

Lātu Maharaj : 'Where in mind? How they are there? And where is the mind itself?'

Biharibabu : 'There is a nervous connexion between the brain and the tongue. The mind then must be there.'

Lātu Maharaj : 'How is the mind residing there, Biharibabu?'

Biharibabu : 'In the form of vibrations.'

Lātu Maharaj : 'Let us take it for granted. Tell me if that vibration is everlasting or it stops and starts again.'

Biharibabu : (*A little surprised*) 'I have not thought over the matter, Maharaj.'

Lātu Maharaj : 'Please think over it.'

Biharibabu : 'Perhaps it stops and restarts again. It excites the brain through the nerve and brings out the reply.'

Lātu Maharaj : 'If you say it stops then how does the second vibration rise, when nothing from the external world acts on it?'

Biharibabu : 'No, Maharaj, we have not thought over the matter.'

Lātu Maharaj : 'So you see you can express upto a point ; beyond that you cannot.'

Biharibabu then told the present author, 'What else can we ask beyond this ?' So both of us bowed down to Maharaj and took leave of him. Standing in front of his carriage, Biharibabu said, 'I have not heard such words before. This illiterate *sādhu* has thought over even such things, solved even such problems. Really, how strange is this ! We take pride in our education. But in his presence that pride has to vanish. In reality he is more educated than we are. Who can question it ?'

One day in the middle of 1905 Lātu Maharaj took it into his head to go to a devotee's house. So he took Nivāran along with him. It was raining very heavily. There was more than knee-deep water on the streets. Lātu Maharaj had to pull up his wearing cloth upto his thighs. Wading through the waters on the street and thoroughly drenched he reached the house ; and with the dripping clothes on he went to the temple where the host used to worship and bowed down to the Lord there. Then only did he change his cloth. When all were seated comfortably a devotee asked, 'Why, Maharaj, have you taken so much trouble to come here today ? You could have done it any other day'.

Lātu Maharaj : 'You know, Master used to say, "In this *Kali yuga* to observe truthfulness is the austerity. One who is not truthful cannot tread the path of piety." One day he casually said, he would not take *luchi*. That day the main item was *luchi*. He had to allay his hunger with sweets only.'

The devotee : 'Does truthfulness consist in keeping one's expressed words ?'

Lātu Maharaj : 'Of course not. To observe truthfulness means so many things. Don't think to act up to one's expressed words is all of truthfulness. It really means keeping one's resolve. That resolve, may be expressed in words, may be kept in mind ; and it may as well find expression in work leading ultimately to the fulfilment of the resolve but never expressed in words.'

The devotee : 'What is resolve, again, Maharaj ?'

Lātu Maharaj : 'Wish or desire ; what else ? A little intense.'

The devotee : 'There are good and bad desires. Are we supposed to carry out into action our bad desires too ? Will that amount to observing truthfulness ?'

Lātu Maharaj : 'You do not know your minds, boys, as yet. What you are calling desires are not desires but whims. Do you know what is the real desire of a *jīva* ? To get bliss-abiding. That can be had by realizing *satchidānanda*, which is not an easy matter. To realize this desire for the real Truth is what we call truthfulness. They say, while in the mother's womb the *jīva* prays hard to get free of that stage and promises to call on Him when he sees the light of day. But after being born he forgets the promise — this is to be regretted. Of all kinds of power will-power is the greatest. When this power becomes active one grows to be a tremendous worker. Nobody can stand against that. So don't mistake a whim for will. Man, of course, does work under the influence of whims. But such works have no abiding value ; and one who is moved by whims makes no spiritual progress. To follow such whims is not observance of truth.'

The devotee : 'I fail to understand one thing. When all our day-to-day activities are born of our will, why trace their genesis to whims ?'

Lātu Maharaj : 'Look here, if you change your life's aim from hour to hour what would you call that ? You know that parable of our Master. A man wanted to dig a well. He started at one place. He met with some obstruction. He left that place and started digging at another place. There was obstacle. He left that place too. In that way he went on changing places — no well was dug. Similar is the case with most of our lives. But the person who, in spite of all obstacles and obstructions, stuck to one place and went on digging, got water. Similarly when a man sticks to one ideal and works for it he gets tremendous will-power and realizes the ideal.'

One who continually changes his ideal is led by temporary whims, his ideals are not real and not properly thought about. Therefore it is that he loses interest in them after some time. These ideals are false. Have an understanding of the real ideal and having known it stick to it under all circumstances and work for its realization. This is what is known as observance of truth, not merely keeping one's words. This Truth is God's power, God Himself. In that power, man, whether he knows it or not, abides. He who knows it and follows it will get it. This is the only path to the realization of Truth that is God.'

The devotee : 'Why so, Maharaj? There are so many other paths, e.g., those of *jñāna*, *yoga*, and *bhakti* — knowledge or discrimination, mysticism, and devotion. And you say to follow truth is the only path. What is this?'

Lātu Maharaj : 'The paths that you just mentioned are for realizing the truth. If you deviate from truth and follow any or all the paths will you get at truth? You will not make any progress, far less reach the truth.'

After such talks for a long time he took *prasada* in the temple. Having tasted it Lātu Maharaj told the devotee : 'The Deity's eyes must have fallen on this food, it is really consecrated. Otherwise it could not have been so tasty, which it wonderfully is. Just see there is no salt, no spices and we do not like such food, our taste has become so perverted. But this food, without salt and spices, is surprisingly delicious. It cannot but be due to the deity's graciously casting His eyes on it. (The Hindu deities, it is said, do not partake of food as we mortals do. A ray of light comes from their eyes and falls on the food and drink placed for offering. That is how they accept the offerings.) This shows that the image of the deity here is no longer a material image. Lord's grace has descended on it ; it is living. And He has actually accepted the food offered, hence it is so tasty'.

Three devotees who used to mix with Lātu Maharaj, rather intimately, passed away in 1905. Nivāran Chandra Datta was one of them. Lātu Maharaj was extremely free with Nivāranbabu. When Lātu Maharaj left Alam-

bazar Math and lived outside without any fixed place for his stay, it was Nivāranbabu who knew his whereabouts ; even Raja Maharaj would get news of Lātu Maharaj through him only. And when his *gurubhais* were to send any news to him it was done through this Nivāranbabu alone. Lātu Maharaj loved him so much that he used to be invariably present in all the celebrations in Nivāranbabu's house. Nivāran used to compose songs on the Master and others and go to the Math and sing them before the *sādhus*. One day Lātu Maharaj asked him not to compose such songs, which, he said, would bring poverty to him. So, for some time, he did not compose songs. When Raja Maharaj heard it he did not like the imposition of restriction on Nivāran. It is said that when one day Raja Maharaj met Lātu Maharaj he asked him, "Is it a fact that you have prohibited Nivāran from composing songs on our Master and others? He was preaching the Master's ideas to the public through these songs. Is it right to forbid him to do so?" Lātu Maharaj relented and withdrew his prohibition not for his own satisfaction but to please Raja Maharaj. So Nivāran restarted composing songs which gladdened the hearts of the Math *sādhus*.

Nivāranbabu passed away in September, 1905. The same year Haramohan also passed away. This gave Lātu Maharaj a little shock. He said in grief, 'All the other devotees of the Master who were poor have seen better days since the passing away of the Master. Haramohan remained the only exception. He has passed away in poverty but I say his children will not remain poor. Lakshmi will smile on them.' It turned out to be a fact.

Within a month of Haramohan's death Dānakāli, a devotee of the Master, passed away. In this connexion Lātu Maharaj once told the present author, 'One day Master told Dāna, "Express your heart's desire, it shall be fulfilled". He did not ask for anything. At Master's insistence he said, "Then kindly do this : On the last day (of my life) you will come yourself and take me to the destination by hand."' When Dāna passed away Lātu Maharaj was not present there ; but he heard

it from Baburam Maharaj who was present in person. Baburam Maharaj said, “Really it happened. Master did come at the last moment, caught hold of Dāna’s hand and led him away.” Brother Baburam saw it with his eyes wide open. Whatever Master said about anyone is all coming out to be true.’

1906. One day a devotee turned extremely cheeky to Lātu Maharaj. What happened to him that day we do not know. At that Lātu Maharaj told him, ‘Look here, boy, you should not show disrespect to a *sādhu*, you must be gentle and modest to him.’ Still the young man persisted in his effrontery, and said, ‘Swamiji, (Swami Vivekananda) used to say “I feel like whipping one who always repeats to himself ‘I am a slave’, ‘I am a non-entity’; for a slave, a non-entity he does become. I cannot stand this attitude. And the rogue who makes no distinction of superiority or inferiority and mixes with me on equal terms I call him a man, I feel like embracing him”.’ Lātu Maharaj said again, ‘Give up this cheekiness. I know, how much vigour, and fire you have.’ The gentleman still persisted in his wrong way and said, “What do you say, Maharaj? We have no fire in us! We are children of Immortality; wind cannot move us, fire cannot burn us, water cannot drench us,” He went on thus. Lātu Maharaj became serious and said, ‘This sort of cheekiness we cannot bear with at all times.’ The next moment when the devotee was about to speak in the same strain Lātu Maharaj cried out, ‘Stop this nonsense,’ and started in his wonted way muttering almost inaudibly. At this the devotee laughed out loudly and said, ‘Maharaj, whom are you scolding?’ Lātu Maharaj: ‘With so much scolding you are still laughing! I have never seen a shameless fellow like you.’

The young man: ‘You have not scolded me, you have taken yourself to task. Who will not laugh at that?’

Lātu Maharaj: ‘Donning ochre-coloured cloth, you fool, you think yourself to be a great *sādhu*. You cannot bear with a little harsh word; in anger you hiss like a snake even now. O the greatness of a *sādhu*!

Wearing this red cloth, you think you have made others your bond slaves—is it? A *sādhu* scolding a man! Just look at the enormity of it.’ Thus he muttered almost within himself.

The young man: ‘So you are punishing yourself.’

Lātu Maharaj did not give any reply to it. We have seen it many times in his life—this taking himself to task, so that no trace of egoism can ever come to him. It was not only observed on occasions like this, but even when he gave instructions, earnestly sought by any one, he was seen to use similar expressions of reproach on himself. He was heard upbraiding himself thus: ‘Fool, what greatness have you attained yourself that you go out to instruct others? You vagabond, you to instruct them! They are far superior to you, far more educated than you. How dare you speak with them?’ With such words he would try to keep his mind absolutely unsullied by egotism.

One day as he was carrying on in this strain the present author asked him, ‘Why is it, Maharaj, you are often seen to mutter like this?’ At this he said, ‘You don’t know, this human mind is a rogue of the first magnitude. It is always prone to get twisted in the wrong way. So it needs hard counter-twisting every now and then.’ And he showed with his hands how to counter-twist a rope.

The author: ‘To feed the mind with the opposites of whatever rise in it—is that the path of discrimination?’

Lātu Maharaj: ‘Yes, that is one path of discrimination—to go on revolving in mind the opposite of what comes into it. When one is well practised in this his mind reaches a stage when this opposite-thinking becomes natural and automatic—when anger comes its opposite forgiveness supplants it; greed is supplanted by charity, sex urge by love of God, cruelty by non-injury. If you can continue this practice for some time your mind calms down of itself.’

It was perhaps in the same year (1906) that one day Lātu Maharaj went with Swami Śuddhananda to the Arya Mission, to hear the peculiar interpretation of the *Gita* by its

founder. He used to explain the *Gītā* as an allegory. Hearing his interpretation, Lātu Maharaj said to Śuddhananda, 'His interpretation is emblematic.' A disciple of Sri (Pañchānan) Bhattāchayra heard it and looking at Lātu Maharaj's dress, his manner of talking, etc. remarked, "cracked". Lātu Maharaj did not know the meaning of the English word but he guessed it. When he and Śuddhananda were on the road he asked, "Well, Sudhir, what is the meaning of the word 'cracked'? It means a mad-cap—isn't it?"

At this time Lātu Maharaj really appeared queer — his dress, talks, behaviour, all indicated an extremely whimsical, bizarre nature. It is difficult to find reasons for this. Master used to say, 'When a man knows

Brahman he appears to others in four ways : like a child, like an inert thing, like a mad-cap, and like an unclean hobgoblin. Sometimes he is like a five-year old child having no attachment for anything, no sense of shame, propriety etc. Sometimes he behaves like a mad man. Sometimes he remains inert like a log of wood. In this stage he cannot undertake any work. All activities cease for him.' It has been mentioned before that for about two years and a half Lātu Maharaj remained inert and dazed; and then sometime as a child, playing and cutting jokes with children. The bad name of being whimsical stuck to him throughout his life. But we have never seen him unclean like a demon at any time.

(To be continued)

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

SWAMI MADHAVANANDA

Q. How can we intensify our spiritual life even when we are engaged in work?

Ans. By intense longing for God. If you want God seriously, you must have intense yearning. Sometimes we profess that we love God, but actually we do not. In that case also we may pray to God. If we pray with intense desire for realization, God Himself will fulfil it. If you are sincere, God must hear it. Sri Ramakrishna said, 'You must also pray and pray sincerely.' Devotion must be sincere. If you are really sincere, God must listen to you.

Q. When I go to a holy place or am in the company of holy men, I find a kind of religious fervour. But after that it vanishes, and I feel I become worldly.

Ans. The atmosphere you feel here at a holy place should be with you wherever you go. Our mind must be filled with devotion. Some

part of it must be devoted to the thought of God. That intense longing for God must be there. The trouble with us is that we occupy the whole of our mind with worldly things. You can keep the vision of God if you really love God sincerely. We must inwardly feel that we are devotees of God. We must keep the idea of God-vision bright before us. We must devote part of our mind to the contemplation of God. Then everything will become easy. We do not have the vision of God because our allegiance to that ideal is not very deep. We are like ordinary mirrors, catching the reflection but not retaining it. It comes through intense longing for God and earnest endeavour for realization. Because you are a devotee you should also prove by your action that you are a devotee. Sri Ramakrishna once told M. about spiritual truth. In reply M. said, 'Yes, I know'. Sri Ramakrishna said, 'No, you must assimilate it so that your life may become transformed'.

MEMOIRS OF SWAMI ADBHUTANANDA

(A free translation of the Bengali book, *Smritikatha*)

(Continued from the previous issue)

WE do not exactly remember whether it was in 1906 or 1907 that Lātu Maharaj came to Kankurgachi along with the author (of this book) and Patalbabu to join in the celebration of Master's birthday. The nice little temple was just then completed. That day he came walking the whole distance from Balarambabu's house. Patalbabu insisted on hiring a carriage. Lātu Maharaj said, 'Why hire a carriage? It is just a short distance, let us walk and take Master's name. You will see we shall reach Kankurgachi in no time.' That day he had a long talk with Nityagopal Avadhut at Kankurgachi. While returning he said to the author of this work, 'Why are you pained when you see somebody not recognizing our Master? Let people have faith in anyone. In the beginning there are differences of opinion. At the end, of course, all sing the same tune, all differences vanish.'

In 1907 Girishbabu invited (Holy) Mother to Calcutta during the Durga Puja. She stayed at his house during the Puja days and then shifted to Balarambabu's house, where she stayed for a month. Vaikuntha Sanyal, a householder disciple of the Master writes: 'Entering through the main gate, when Holy Mother saw her pet son Lātu sitting in a room to the right side of the gate, she, out of affection, accosted him saying, "How do you do, my boy, Lātu?" at which Lātu Maharaj replied, almost as a reflex action, "You are a lady of rank, how are you addressing me, a man, near the main gate? Please enter the zenana at once. I am your servant eternally, you could have called me to the zenana; I would have presented myself there immediately. I would not talk to you here." Mother smiled, went upstairs and entered the zenana.'

As long as Mother stayed at Balarambabu's house she used to send her *prasada* to Lātu Maharaj. One day Lātu Maharaj said to a devotee, 'You see, Mother used to come and stay at Balarambabu's house. I used to be in that room near the gate at the outer courtyard. Many people would ask me often, "How is it, Maharaj, Mother is here and you never go to see her?" I would tell them, "What of that?" Very few would understand my sentiment. Many would be angry at those words and would use harsh words, even to my hearing. One day I snubbed them sharply, "These rogues will not do anything, will not practise *sādhana* in order to understand what Mother is, but will only go on saying, 'Holy Mother', 'Holy Mother', and make an exhibition of it. These fools try to make Mother a show-piece. I have nothing to do, rogues, with such Mother of yours.'" Devotees naturally got hurt at these words. But when, later on, they came to know what it was to know and revere Mother they understood the situation. Lātu Maharaj later added, "To understand what (Holy) Mother is and to show proper respect to her is not a matter of joke. Just try to understand this one point in her life. Master, a Divine Incarnation, worshipped her and she could stand it and accept it. How many have the adequate *sādhana* to understand this unprecedented phenomenon? What Mother is was understood by Master himself and, to a certain extent, by Swamiji (Vivekananda). To speak the least of her, she is Lakshmi herself. Tremendous spiritual practice is necessary to understand what she really is"'. (From the notes of Bibhutibhusan Maitra.)

When Mother was leaving Balarambabu's house for Jairambati the scene centering round

Lātu Maharaj has been described beautifully by Sri Sannyal : ‘ Even then Lātu was absent-minded. One by one, all bowed down to the holy feet of the Mother. But Lātu was seen pacing up and down in his own room and saying to himself, “ Sannyasin, to a Sannyasin who is mother, who is father? He is above Māyā.” When Mother was on the staircase near Lātu’s room and came too close, Lātu was still heard loudly repeating those words. Standing near the door of Lātu Maharaj’s room, the moment Mother said, “ Lātu dear, you need not recognize me ”, up jumped Lātu Maharaj and fell at her feet and bowed down to her, and rubbed his head at her feet bursting into tears. Seeing her favourite boy Lātu in tears, Mother too, could not restrain hers. Then with his upper garment in hand, Lātu Maharaj wiped her tears and in a choked voice said, “ Don’t, Mother, don’t ; don’t shed tears, you are going to your father’s house ; you should not cry. Sharot (Saradananda) will bring you back here very soon, don’t cry Mother, don’t. While going to one’s (father’s) home one should not shed tears.” These words, surcharged with such endearing emotion, overwhelmed us all. We remained fixed to the ground for some time.’

* * * *

In 1908 Kamapal Misra, a gentleman from Orissa came to Calcutta to appear for the B.L. Examination ; he was staying at Balarambabu’s house. He took philosophy as one of his subjects for B.A. and in discussion he was given to quoting from Herbert Spencer, Kant, Hegel, and others. One day there was a heated discussion between him and Balarambabu’s son, Ramakrishna ; both of them came downstairs to Lātu Maharaj for the solution of their problem. With the help of a couple of commonplace examples Lātu Maharaj gave a clear solution to the problem. This appealed to Sri Misra so much that he remained a devotee of Lātu Maharaj throughout his life.

To young collegians his usual advice was to look at the life of the saint-philosophers in order to arrive at a correct understanding of their philosophies. He would cite Śankara-

charya as an example to the point. He would say, ‘ Look here. Śri Śankara founded his theory of Māyā ; but nobody can understand properly what he meant by Māyā being *mīthyā* unless he studies Śankara’s life thoroughly. Had Māyā been really non-existent, as many pundits seem to say, and had this world been Māyā’s creation then how are we to explain Śankara’s conduct towards it — his writing so many hymns addressed to so many *devas* and *devis*, worshipping Viśwanatha and Annapurna, discovering the four great tirthas and establishing his four important Maths there. What he understood by Māyā remained unexpressed in language ; but his conduct gave eloquent expression to it.’ How did this illiterate *sādhu* come to this conclusion ?

About Lord Buddha he would say : ‘ People say Buddha was an atheist. Why should he be so ? One day a pundit came to him and started saying many things about God. Lord Buddha maintained silence all along. This gentleman interpreted his silence as his assent to atheism. This got currency. What he really meant by his silence is that neither of the two terms, “ existence ” and “ non-existence ”, is adequate to a proper understanding of what we call God. And who can deny it ? ’

Talking of renunciation he would invariably cite Lord Buddha’s example and say, ‘ You talk of renunciation ? What have you given up ? What did you have and what have you renounced that you take pride in it ? Look at Lord Buddha. He was a real *tyāgin*, man of true renunciation. He was a prince, all kinds of enjoyment were his, unasked ; but he gave them all up and came out — for what ? Only to know the Truth. People by thousands die for titbits of happiness. He threw them all overboard, the best of them in abundance. Try to fathom this. The Devas came to him, with all kinds of temptation, when he was practising austerities. But he remained above all temptations. Do you know what he told his tempters, “ Even before practising austerities I had kingship and kingdom. Am I to get these through austerities over again ? I

have not come away to practise austerities for kingdom and worldly pleasures, I have come away to know the Truth and Truth alone, and nothing else." And he got the Truth, the real God, so quickly.

'Lord Buddha had many occult powers; but he never used them for ordinary purposes. Had he but wished he could have revived the dead child brought to him by the bereaved mother. But no, he asked her to bring some sesame seeds from a house which had not known any bereavement. In vain did the poor mother walk from door to door to get the thing, she was sure enough would have brought her child back to life. Slowly did the truth (of the inevitability of death) dawn on her and she returned to the Buddha a calm and collected lady. Thus did he make people understand the truths indelibly; and never did he apply the supernatural powers he acquired through his great *tapasya*.'

* * * *

In January 1908 he came to know of a devotee's sudden fall and called him to his side. When he came to him at Balarambabu's house he said, 'Look here, my boy, if you have committed one or two mistakes in life you should not give up your spiritual practices and brood over the mistakes and be hopeless. Mistakes every one commits. Call on Him. He will give you power to overcome weakness. He will break the charm you are under. He is mercy itself; however great your sins might be His mercy cannot be permanently withdrawn from you. How little is your sin, and this has brought about so much depression in you! Just think of Ajāmila, Valmiki; compared to theirs your sin is not worth the name. Do you know what brother Vivekananda used to say? He said, "What is this stain of an ink-pot of sin? In His infinite ocean of mercy if one bathes the stain of such hundred ink-pots of sin would be washed away beyond recognition!" So I say, "Grieve not but redouble your *sādhana*, and don't be depressed." Do you remember that song of the Brāhmo-samaj: "Take away, Lord, my evil desires, fill me with good

ones"? Pray to Him day and night, then this evil tendency of yours will soon be a thing of the past.'

The devotee was so ashamed of his conduct that he could not raise his head. Seeing this Lātu Maharaj said, "Before committing sin man's conscience fills him with shame, but man brushes aside that shame. But such is the Divine Law that after committing the sin it is the same shame that overwhelms him, he cannot raise his head before others." Even these words could not shake him off his shame. Lātu Maharaj continued, "Whom are you ashamed of, my boy? Whatever you have done has all been seen by the Lord, from Him you could not hide anything. When it is all known to Him why should you be so pensive over it any more? Rather engage yourself in harder *sādhana*, keep company of *sādhus*, and come here off and on." Hearing all this the devotee's strength revived and he engaged himself in *sādhana*. Thus Lātu Maharaj would instil hope and courage into drooping hearts and inspire them to greater *sādhana*.

* * * *

How deep was his feeling for the good of the householder devotees is best illustrated by the following incident. It took place in the house of a relative of Patalbabu. No one of the house, not even the master knew anything of Lātu Maharaj. He was known only to the mistress of the house. So, when on invitation Lātu Maharaj had gone to the house, people looked askance at him. Seeing his ochre cloth they took him to be an ordinary *sādhu* and did not allow him to sit in the same line with them but allotted a seat in a corner. They took no notice of whether all the dishes were served to him or not. Unmindful of all this, Lātu Maharaj took his meal gladly. When the lunch was almost over the mistress of the house came by chance to that place, and, seeing Lātu Maharaj seated in a neglected corner and naturally not served with the best dishes, was seized with great remorse. She started in the Bengali lady's fashion, 'Ah me! I am undone. What kind of a woman am I? I have invited my father to a lunch here and

could not come and see for myself if he was properly received and served! Father must be angry with me and must not have taken his fill here.' Lātu Maharaj tried to console her. But more he tried, greater was her remorse. Lātu Maharaj said, 'No, mother, no. I was well served and I have taken my full meal and I am fully pleased.' But the lady's remorse was so great that she could not pardon herself. She continued, 'What a great transgression have I committed today? Inviting a *sādhu* to our house I have failed to attend to him properly. Ah, my transgression! Ah, my sin!' so on and so forth. Lātu Maharaj tried to comfort her, 'Why, mother, are you disturbed? You have not committed any sin. I have not taken it seriously. I tell you, nothing, no misfortune, will befall you or the family. I am perfectly satisfied with your conduct. Do not have any misgiving about it.' 'No, father, my conscience does not give me any peace,' said the lady, 'you do something, father, so that no evil will visit the family for this unpardonable transgression.' Then Lātu Maharaj washed his hands and sitting on the same spot he did *japa* for some four or five minutes for the good of the family. Then only was the mistress of the house rid of all misgivings. The incident is simple, but it shows the natural unassumingness of Lātu Maharaj and utter inability to see faults in others.

Another incident of his lack of egotism we shall narrate here. Once accompanied by a few devotees Lātu Maharaj went from Gaya to Varanasi. The abbot of Gaya showed great respect to him and requested him several times to accept their hospitality for a few days more; but Lātu Maharaj did not stay there for more than three days. When he reached Advaita Ashrama at Varanasi with seven or eight devotees he found that there was no room for so many — the building was not completed. Seeing so many persons come without notice the then President of the Advaita Ashrama found himself in a little embarrassing situation. Lātu Maharaj noticed it and did not allow the situation to deteriorate. He asked some of his devotees to make arrangement for

cooking at a particular spot — he showed them the spot; asked some others to go to the Ganges to take bath, visit the temples of Viswanath and Annapurna and then to purchase raw food stuff and come as early as possible; and himself started preparing tea for the party. Then he sent another devotee to Bansi Datta's house to convey to the inmates the news of their arrival at the Advaita Ashrama. In the afternoon all shifted to Bansi Datta's house. The party did not give any cause for the slightest inconvenience to the inmates of the Ashrama.

A few of these devotees expressed that their welcome at the Advaita Ashrama lacked warmth. But Lātu Maharaj remarked, 'You see, you have come with a Sannyasin, and you should expect a Sannyasin's welcome. You cannot expect there the honour and respect shown to householders. Their code of conduct is different from that of Sannyasins. If a dozen people come to your house unexpectedly you feel embarrassed. Not so the *sādhus*. Why? *Sādhu* guests are accustomed to stay and sleep under the shade of trees; and they beg their food. So the question of inconvenience does not arise at all. It is the duty of the *sādhu* guests to see that they do not create any inconvenience to the inmates of the Math. The moment you understand that there might be some feeling of uneasiness you should come away at once. When you come to a Math or Ashrama your first look out should be not to disturb the even tenor of the place.'

* * * *

Lātu Maharaj had returned to Calcutta and was staying in his familiar room at Balarambabu's house. One day a gentleman (on inquiry found to be a Deputy Magistrate) came and asked Lātu Maharaj, 'How does a *sādhaka* "catch" (know) Brahman?' Lātu Maharaj: 'You have heard music. You must have noticed how a violinist cleverly catches a song in the strings of his instrument. To "catch" Brahman is like that.'

In 1908 the present author was at Belur Math on the occasion of the annual birthday celebration of Sri Ramakrishna. Some friends accompanied him there. When they came to

Lātu Maharaj he asked, 'How much did you pay when you bowed down to the Master in the shrine?' The author told what he had paid. Next Lātu Maharaj asked 'What about your friends? How much did they pay?' When he heard that they had not paid anything he said with a smile, 'Oh! they send their mails by "bearing post".' The author did not quite understand the remark. When Lātu Maharaj explained it to him that it meant 'Practising piety without spending money,' there was laughter. In the course of reporting the celebration the author said that about five thousand people were fed that day. 'Just see,' said Lātu Maharaj, 'so many people were fed and most people did not pay anything. Without paying anything one should not partake of *prasada*. This is one of the reasons that you suffer. You commit a sin when you don't pay anything when visiting a temple or shrine. Note, so many people took *prasada*; if each had paid a four-anna piece or even a two-anna piece it would have amounted to a thousand rupees. This money the Sannyasins would have spent on consecrated food and again would have come back to devotees. How much of it would have been eaten by the few Sannyasins? Most of it would have been ploughed back to the devotees, to be sure. It is for this reason Master used to say "One must pay something when one visits a holy place". A peasant, one day, asked for a smoke of the Master and had it. When he took leave and went a few steps it was found that there was a pice left on the spot the man was sitting. When his attention was drawn to this he humbly said, "Sir, I have purposely left it there. Here so many *sādhus* and other people come and many are fed free. This pice, this humble contribution of mine, may be utilized for the purpose. Should I take a smoke here free and would not contribute anything to the noble cause?" Just see there are such people also in our country. At Brindavana I have seen that men of the locality as well as those from Punjab used to keep aside one or two *chapatis* from those prepared for their own use and take

them to places where *sādhus* lived. *Sādhus* used to take these *chapatis* and devote their time to meditation, *japa* and other spiritual practices. Swamiji once said with regret, "People of this part of the country (i.e. Bengal) come only to talk and make *sādhus* talk. They never think that *sādhus* also need food to talk to them. This never strikes these people. They have lost all faith in *sādhus* and gods and goddesses". Outwardly they show great respect for *sādhus*; but they are not prepared to sacrifice anything for them. They build small temples and dedicate them to some gods or goddesses. But that is to save money. They will not have to pay taxes to Government. Is it a matter of joke to install gods or goddesses in temples? If *sādhus* and the poor do not get food and other necessaries what purpose does it serve to establish temples? Love and charity are most important factors of service to the Lord. When these are lacking it is no Divine service at all.'

One day Śāśadhar Ganguli, a teacher of Maldah, came and asked Lātu Maharaj, 'Is Ātman an object of knowledge? Can it be known?' Lātu Maharaj: 'An object is a thing which cannot be known without the help of another. But Ātman is self-revealing. It is for this reason we cannot call Ātman an *object* of knowledge.'

The teacher: 'Then why do we want to know Ātman?'

Lātu Maharaj: 'Because it is our very being.'

The teacher: 'If Ātman is our very nature how can we be bereft of it?'

Lātu Maharaj: 'That is impossible, how can one be devoid of one's nature. If it is something other than our being, say a possession of ours, then that thing can be taken out of us, we can be dispossessed of it. But one's nature cannot be separated from one. But nature can be covered up by some dirt; and this dirt can cover it in such a way that it may *appear* as something else. But it cannot really change the nature — appearance is not necessarily the reality.'

(To be continued)

From that day two ravens figure in the coat of arms of the Benedictine monastery of Einsiedeln. The heart and viscera of the saint were buried on Mount Etzel where he had spent seven years in intense spiritual practices, but his body was interned at Reichenau where it was allowed to rest for the next 178 years. During this period Meinrad's little hut and chapel developed into the monastery of Our Lady of Hermits.

In 1039 Meinrad's body was transported to Einsiedeln where it has been venerated for centuries. His skull still bears the mark of the treacherous blow with which his love was requited, and is kept, as has been said, in the Chapel of Our Lady in a tabernacle at the foot of her carved figure. It is exposed every year during the octave of the feast of the saint for the veneration of the pilgrims and all those who love him.

Although in his life-time Meinrad had been a kindly and experienced devotee for the many souls who eagerly sought his assistance and counsel, after his passing away he became the

guide who having trodden the road to the Divine himself was able to show it to other souls who had need of a director and friend. The memory of his life spent in intense self-denial and austere practices has ever remained a powerful inspiration which draws the hearts to him and to the goal of his life and all true human endeavour.

As one quietly and reverently passes before the Chapel and is enveloped by the golden radiance of the candles on the altar, strong spiritual influences seem to penetrate one's heart and to call one to that Life which fulfils and yet transcends ordinary human life for ever.

Standing before the beautiful carved figure of Our Lady of Hermits one is reminded of the words of Thomas a Kempis :—' Gather some profit to thy soul wheresoever thou art ; so that if thou seest or hearest of any good examples, thou stir up thyself to the imitation thereof '.

The present-day world stands sorely in need of such imitation.

MEMOIRS OF SWAMI ADBHUTANANDA

(A free translation of the Bengali book, *Smritikatha*)

(Continued from the previous Issue)

THE TEACHER : ' Please explain it a little more clearly. I could not grasp it properly.'

Lātu Maharaj : ' Look here. Suppose there is a brass pot and it is fully covered with clay. From outside would you recognize it as a brass pot ? Or would you call it an earthen pot ? But because you take it to be earthen pot, will it be really so ? Brass remains the same brass whatever we might take it to be. You are mistaken, the pot has not shed off its brazen nature.'

The teacher : ' But, Maharaj, here the case is dissimilar. There in that case brass does not think that it has become clay, it has given up its brazen nature. But here we men think we are not Ātman, but something else.'

Lātu Maharaj : ' Not so, my boy, Man does not think that he is something else. For example, he says, " my body ", " my mind ", " my intellect " ; he always uses " my " ; he does not say " I am body ", " I am mind ", etc. And he knows that whatever he calls " his " is not " he ". This I-consciousness of man never leaves him, it is always there with him ; nobody can deprive him of that. But one thing, he cannot fully understand it, express it. I put it to you, you feel hungry, sleepy ; but tell me who you are.'

The teacher : ' That I do not know, Maharaj. But I do feel hungry, sleepy. That

(Continued on page 90)

their merits and defects in the light of the Upaniṣadic teaching.

Reflecting on the Nature of the Supreme Brahman in B.S. III. 2. 22, Bādarāyaṇa points out with significant emphasis that 'The Clause "Not This, Not This" negatives the two forms, limited and unlimited, of Brahman and not Brahman Itself; the basic śruti, "tasya haiteṣya puruṣasya rūpaṃ" in the first instance mentions the Puruṣa or the Cosmic Being having the two forms and also accents the Supra-Cosmic Absolute (śatyasya śatyam) in the ultimate analysis. This view seems to be of a piece with Sri Ramakrishna's famous declaration of his own experience that 'God has both Form and no Form'.

The *Bhagavad Gītā* further fathoms the unfathomed depths of Brahma Vidyā and tells us in unmistakable terms that Brahman as such can be neither called *sat* nor *asat* — but in Its aspect as Īśvara. It has hands, feet and eyes everywhere and watches and controls the whole cosmic process.

'na sat tan nāsad ucyaṭe'
sarvataḥ pāṇipādaṃ tat
sarvato 'kṣi śiro mukhaṃ.

What is more, the *Gītā* propounds a profounder and more living philosophy and brings home to the reader the perennial significance of Īśvara coming down in human form and playing the role of a friend, teacher and saviour in man's moments of trial and crisis.

This view of Divine Incarnation is also in perfect accord with the Upaniṣadic teaching :

ajāyamāno bahudhā vijāyate
tasva dhīraḥ pariḷānanti yonim.

which gives a peep into the secret of avatara-hood explained in Chapter 4 of the Song Celestial in the memorable words :

sambhavāmi ātma māyavā
sambhavāmi vuge-yuge.

MEMOIRS OF SWAMI ADBHUTANANDA

(Continued from page 67)

is quite clear. I feel it. But how that "I" is, I do not know.'

Lātu Maharaj : 'That is what I say, you know it, you feel it ; but that knowledge is so vague, so covered up, mixed up, with lots of other things that it almost amounts to ignorance, it is not "blossoming up" to your satisfaction. A vagueness, an uneasy overcasting, is always around it.'

The teacher : 'Why so? Why is this "blossoming forth" not taking place?'

Lātu Maharaj : 'Why? Because of this accumulated dirt that has covered it. Have you not seen it in some shops at Mechuvabazar? There are glass jars filled with various coloured liquids. What the workers there do is like this : They take a pot, full of dirt, and dip it in one of the jars and give it a rub, it is clean and glossy. They dip it in another

jar and it takes the colour of silver or of gold. Similarly the dirt that has covered up our knowledge of "I" is to be cleared first ; then the knowledge will shine forth ; all uneasiness, all misunderstanding will vanish for ever.'

The teacher : 'How to clean it, Maharaj?'

Lātu Maharaj : 'Dip it, dip your mind in the jar of Lord's name. Then all dirt will fall off. Then dip it in the jar of Lord's grace. You will see how beautifully your nature will shine forth. Now the dirt has accumulated in the mind, unless it is cleared how will your "I" be mirrored on it. And do one thing. In this world, in your dealings with it think yourself as gold and not any base metal, as the genuine thing and not an imitation ; you will have less of worries and troubles and more of peace and bliss. The more you think

yourself as the genuine thing the less will you be troubled with things that pertain to imitations. The more your mind will dwell on the genuine knowledge of the "I" the greater bliss will come to you. And this genuine knowledge will clear off all dirt-coatings over it. For this "I" is the Ātman.'

The teacher : 'But Ātman is all-pervading, whereas "I" is limited.'

Lātu Maharaj : 'Yes, true. But that does not matter much. You will see that the "I" which is now appearing as small is not really so. For the present, however, think of this. Jasmin is such a small flower. In the morning you see a dew drop deposited on it. How does it catch (the reflection of) the sky that is infinite? Even so though the "I" (as it appears) is so limited, still because of the dew-drop of Lord's grace on it, it can catch the reflection of the infinite Ātman. (And when the reflection is understood as such the genuine Ātman flashes forth.)'

The teacher : 'How can the Lord's grace fall on us, Maharaj?'

Lātu Maharaj : 'Control the two things, tongue and sex, and meditate on the Lord and be charitable, you will get His grace quicker than you think.'

In these few words, the mystery of all spiritual practices is clearly expressed. The idea expressed is the whole of spiritual *sādhana*.

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By the end of 1908 the Udbodhan Office was shifted to its newly built house. Lātu Maharaj did not attend the celebration there. This conduct of Lātu Maharaj became a matter of talk among the devotees of the Master. Many asked him point blank : 'Maharaj, you were invited there, how is it you did not go there?' Lātu Maharaj generally did not give any reply to this question. One special day the same question came up again, but in a slightly different form. A devotee asked him, 'Maharaj, (Holy) Mother is living there at "Udbodhan". Why do you not stay there?' Lātu Maharaj replied, 'Do you think Mother is living only there. Is she not here? Wherever I will sit and call her she will reveal herself there. Because I have not gone there,

will Mother cease to be mine for that?'

When Lātu Maharaj was living at Balarambabu's house he would often go to Girishbabu's house for a walk. Many sadhus, Rakhal Maharaj, Baburam Maharaj, Sarat Maharaj and others would be present there. There would usually be jokes and banter. A few householder devotees also used to come and join in the merriment. This particular day the present author also happened to be there. A few random quotations will give us an inkling into Lātu Maharaj's humour.

Rākhāl Maharaj : 'When one is incarnated, takes up a body, one is to suffer. These sufferings are the taxes, so to say, one has to pay for being allowed to live in the body.' Immediately after, a wasp came and stung Rākhāl Maharaj below the left ear. Girishbabu applied lime paste on the spot, which lessened the pain to a certain extent.

Lātu Maharaj quipped in, 'Too quick a payment of the tax, I see.'

Sarat Maharaj, many times, used to cut jokes with Lātu Maharaj and say, 'Sādhu, will you repeat that *mantra* of yours "Money is virtue, money is action, money is the greatest austerity. In a house where there is no money there is nothing, all empty sound, all empty sound"?' Lātu Maharaj used to say, 'Really, for a householder to earn money is his primary duty. Being a householder if one fails to acquire wealth what virtue would he practise? A poor householder is almost a contradiction in terms.' One day Sarat Maharaj said to Girishbabu that he had run into debts on account of the construction of the new building for the Mother. 'If even the interest is not paid in time I should fail in keeping my word. This has become a real worry to me.' Lātu Maharaj chuckled and said, 'Just see, Sarat, the power of my *mantra*; it has caused even a *sādhu* like you to worry. Now say if you would admit the truth of my oft-stated *mantra*.' Sarat Maharaj said in jest, 'Would you say I would get money if I admit your *mantra* to be true?' Lātu Maharaj : 'First you admit, money will come later.'

Sarat Maharaj : 'See to it, Sādhu, that your words do not come untrue.' Lātu Maha-

raj : 'No, Sarot, never ; you will see it.'

Then Sarat Maharaj turned to Girishbābu and said, 'You have heard what our Sādhu has said. You are a witness to this.' Girishbābu smiled and said, 'Why this fuss of witness and all that. Let me make this Sādhu's word come true now and here.' Saying this he brought out some money from the fold of his waist cloth and handed it over to Sarat Maharaj. There was general laughter.

One day two pandits came to Girishbābu's house and there was a discussion about truthfulness. Now one of them had the bad habit of using the Bengali word *salā* very often. The word literally means a brother-in-law ; but it is generally used in the sense of the English word 'rogue' which, in spite of its bad meaning, is a term of endearment, and sometimes it means nothing. So this pandit, in the course of the discussion, said, 'Sālā, if one cannot keep his word, how could he stick to truth?' Lātu Maharaj knew the pandit and his habit. He laughed and said, 'Now, sir, you have called him a *sālā* you must marry his sister and keep your truth'. The room resounded with uproarious laughter.

Another day Girishbābu said something and Lātu Maharaj supported him by quoting a rhymed proverb : 'Have control over your mind, tie the rogue tightly, never relent in the least. Leave future to the future ; brother remain wide awake in the present'. Girishbābu said, with a smile 'What ! Sādhu, you are talking in riddles'.

Lātu Maharaj : 'Yes, how else will (your drama) *Kālāpāhād* be complete in all aspects (and attract people)?' (The reference is to Girishbābu's depiction of Lātu Maharaj, as one of his characters in the play by that name. This had reached Lātu Maharaj's ears ; and the above remark is in answer to that.)

A few more instances of his wit and humour we give below :

A gentleman had an inordinate desire and habit of instructing others about spiritual matters, but himself was leading an ordinary householder's life. On one such occasion when he was waxing eloquent on the topic of *bhakti* Lātu Maharaj cited the following

couplet : 'O Tulsi, how can you get *bhakti* in this world? Three things are desperately standing against it — copper coin, skin (desire for enjoyment) and the belly (hunger)'.¹

A few doctors used to come often to Lātu Maharaj while he was at Balarambābu's house. One day three of them came at the same time. At this Lātu Maharaj said with a smile, 'How is it that three doctors have come here together? I suppose Chitragupta² has taken a long holiday'.

Dr. Kanjilal : 'It is a good season for health in Calcutta now. There are few cases of illness.'

Lātu Maharaj (*still smiling*) : 'So three of you have come to me to get our good wishes ; but I will not wish that.'

Dr. Kanjilal : 'No, Maharaj, we have not come here to ask for evils to society. Do you take us to be so base as to wish such evils to society, simply because we are practising physicians?'

Lātu Maharaj : 'No, no, it is not like that. Who can detest your profession? What blessings you bring to your patients! From what pain do you relieve them! Master used to recommend the modern doctors' treatment. He would say, "Now it is not *dasa-mulpanchan* (Ayurvedic medicine), but allopathic treatment, such as fever mixture". So how can we speak ill of your profession?'

Dr. Chunilal Basu : 'But he also used to say that doctors' money comes of handling filth. And we have heard that he could not accept their money.'

Lātu Maharaj : 'Look here. Why he said that and on what occasion should be taken into account to come to a correct understanding of the above remark. When young, Rāma-bābu (Ramachandra Dutta) was extremely miserly, he did not like to spend a farthing on good causes. In order to make him liberal

¹ तुलसी इह ससार मे कहां से भक्ति भेट ।

तीन बात से लटपट है, दमडि, चामडि, पेट ॥

² Chitragupta, according to Hindu mythology is the clerk who keeps record of the human births and deaths on earth in Yamaloka, the God of Death's court and sends emissaries to bring people immediately after their death to Yama's court to stand trial.

with his money Master said that. Hearing those words, Rāmabābu thought, "If my money does not come of any use to my *guru* for what am I saving money?" Then he came to Master and asked him what he was to do with his money. Master replied, "Apply this money to the service of the devotees. It will amount to doing service to me." Moreover, he used to accept his money and also food brought by him. Could he do it if he really considered his money as filth-money? Master wanted to remove his miserliness, his attraction for wealth; so he said those words. He did not use them to show his hatred for any profession, but to remove the lucre-limpet attitude from the minds of his devotees. Did you see hatred of any kind in him?"

All who were present, doctors and others, were astonished to hear the above explanation with reference to the context and said they had never thought over the matter so deeply and that it was good that a misconception had thus been removed that day through Lātu Maharaj's mouth. At that moment a messenger came from Girishbābu to tell Dr. Kanjilal that Girishbābu's pain which had subsided, thanks to the doctor's medicine, had increased again. And Kanjilal bowed down to Lātu Maharaj and hastened to Girishbābu's house.

One day a thought (was it a whim?) came to Lātu Maharaj, and he asked this author to write a letter to Swami Abhedananda in New York to send him some money—he was to undergo an operation of the eye for cataract. The Swami in America did not send any money, but an American devotee of his sent some. On a previous occasion he asked for a watch from Swami Abhedananda, who sent him a tail of a rattle snake instead. This tail when shaken, gives a rattling sound like a toy in a child's hand. Lātu Maharaj enjoyed the joke with a grunt, and wrote back to him, feigning pique, 'What, I wanted a watch; and you rogue, has sent me that tail of a rattle snake. Well, well, I will see to it'.

* * *

In 1910 Balarambābu's priest, Ramadaya Chakravarti, got disgusted with the unruly

behaviour of his sons and complained the conduct of one of them to Lātu Maharaj. He heard patiently and said, 'Now feel how hard a parent is hit by the wrong conduct of his son. The Lord of the universe, our common father should feel likewise if we, His children, tread a wrong path, as we often do, and do not heed his warning. But though He feels sorry for all that He is the source of mercy, kindness. He pardons us all, and that too times without number. We also, in our turn, should forgive the transgressions of our sons'. Ramadayaalbābu kept quiet.

One day Lātu Maharaj was speaking on the great efficacy of keeping company of *sādhus* to the same Ramadayaalbābu in Varanasi. Said he, 'Pingala was a prostitute. A momentary company of sage Aṣṭāvakra changed the course of her life outright. One night the sage noticed that this woman was coming out of door every moment with expectant eyes and going back disappointed. He took pity on her and wished, "If she could direct this attention of hers on God what results she could have attained". This wish of mercy of the sage completely changed her life, and she became a great devotee of the Lord. So we say, "Nobody knows through which casual work, thought, wish, or remark of a sage a man's life can get revolutionized, can realize God." Keeping company of saints supplies one with an abundance of such opportunities. Hence man should keep such company by all means. A little bit of grace coming from saints removes great obstacles from one's spiritual path'.

Yes, Lātu Maharaj had whims. But they rose and fell as quickly. One day he had the idea of brass-plating the Master's cot at Dakshineswar. He told a devotee about it and he readily agreed. A few days after when the devotee came to get his final order he had changed his mind and said, 'You know our Master could not touch metal, if the cot is brass-plated it would not look well. Let us drop the matter'.

(To be continued)

MEMOIRS OF SWAMI ADBHUTANANDA

(A free translation of the Bengali book, *Smritikatha*)

(Continued from the previous Issue)

THE day Ramakrishna Mission was registered under the Societies' Act (on 28th Dec. 1909) the senior Gopaldā (Swami Adavitānanda) passed away. The whole day Lātu Maharaj talked on nothing else but him. 'But for him, do you know, the Sādhus and Brahmacharins of the Math would not have any side dishes with rice. It was he who, with infinite patience and surmounting all opposition, laid vegetable gardens at the Math... How many people can stick to doing *japa* so tenaciously as he. These youngsters count beads for a few days, and if they do not get any result quickly they give it up. But our Gopaldā went on doing *japa* up to the last day of his life, never got tired or bored with it. His patience is ideal. This is the opinion of Rākhāl Maharaj also.'

When Śāśi Maharaj was brought to Calcutta from Madras Lātu Maharaj used to visit him almost every day. When he could not go personally he would send somebody to enquire about his health. Talking of him Lātu Maharaj used to get excited very often. One day he could not check himself and blurted out, 'Anyone who will serve him will get the benefit of serving Master personally'. On Aug. 21, 1911, when Śāśi Maharaj joined Master in his eternal abode, he went on talking quite excitedly about him and said, among other things, 'Do you know, in the service of Rākhāl Maharaj, Śāśi never stinted, he would spend money lavishly. I have heard it from Rākhāl Maharaj himself that Śāśi and the devotees of Madras Math became all attention to pay him the highest honour, to arrange for his greatest comforts. Throughout his travels they reserved a first class compartment for his party. Brother Rākhāl would protest against this "unnecessary expenditure" but Śāśi would not pay any heed to that and would say, "You are our

Rājā and you will have to accept royal treatment from us, you will have to". Śāśi's respect for Rākhāl was only next to that for Swamiji.'

After the passing away of Śāśi Maharaj, Lātu Maharaj would very often talk of going to Varanasi and settling there for the rest of his life. One day he expressed his desire to Girishbabu also. At that Girishbabu said, 'O Sādhu, you are going to flee Calcutta? Who will let you go?' As a matter of fact the proposal was dropped. It was revived after Girishbabu's demise in 1912.

During Girishbabu's illness Lātu Maharaj would not go to see him. Even when Girishbabu himself would send some one and request Lātu Maharaj through him to come, he would not go. This led to talks as usual. Unable to bear it, one day a devotee asked him the reason for his queer behaviour, Lātu Maharaj replied, 'I cannot bear to see his intense suffering'. What deep love he had for Girishbabu was felt by everybody who was present there. Twice daily he would have information about his illness. The day Girishbabu would pass away Lātu Maharaj observed silence from morning, nobody could draw him out. The whole of the next day he talked incessantly on him. A few of the incidents mentioned by Lātu Maharaj on this day are given below :

'One day, when Girishbabu had started coming to Master but had not developed much regard for him, Master asked him to massage his feet. Girishbabu naturally did not do it. When later on he developed that intense desire he did not get a second opportunity, for by that time the Master had passed away. So Girishbabu felt extremely sorry about it. Some thought came to him and he went to Kamar-pukur and spent seven months there. In the

room where Master used to sleep he would spend some time every evening, would not go anywhere, in the hope Master would ask him to massage his legs. After seven months he returned to Calcutta. . . . One day Master had told Girish, "If anyone comes to the bank of the Ganges and confesses his sins they are pardoned". Girishbabu somehow had firm faith in this. And since that day he used to confess his transgressions daily to the Ganges. If perchance he could not go he would turn his face to the Ganges and confess. That made him so pure and holy later. . . Master would never prohibit Girish from doing anything. One day somebody told Master, "If you say he will obey you surely". Master replied, "No, no, you do not know. I am not to tell anything to him. He will transcend all his defects and be whole and pure" . . . One day Brahmachari Nandalal in the course of his talk with Girishbabu, said, "The Master has taken full responsibility of your life and of none else". Girishbabu cut him short and said, "Don't, don't say like that, he has undertaken the 'power of attorney' not only of one Girish but of a large number of Girishes. He can give salvation in a moment to lakhs of Girishes".

One day when he was at Varanasi, Lātu Maharaj told a devotee, 'You see, it is very difficult to understand Girishbabu. People do not fathom his mind. Master used to say that Girish had more than a hundred and twenty-five per cent of faith in him. Let people have such faith in him; and let us see if they will not progress spiritually as Girish did'.

After Girish passed away one day Lātu Maharaj told a devotee: 'Don't go to the theatre so often now. I don't say you cannot learn anything from it, but that your mind is not so prepared as to take the good things and leave the evils off. You are not powerful enough to fight your evil tendencies with temptations inviting you. You know human mind is such a rogue that however much you may tutor it the moment it finds temptations it forgets everything else and jumps into them. You are now in your youth, keep yourself as far away from temptations as possible'.

To another he said at Balarambabu's house, 'Look here. Now you have money and you enjoy good health. So you do not care for God. But when your health will go and money will fly off, have you thought of those days? Now in your youth you consider yourself to be God in person, so you hear nobody's advice. Mind you, you will have to cry and beat your breast later'.

To a rich man he said once, 'You see, if you can pass your youth well you can do good to the poor and the needy too. But if you take to evil ways you will not only be debarred from doing good to them, you will bring evil on yourself. If you cast your eyes on evil things, enjoyment and luxury will increase. And such is the nature of enjoyment that the more you enjoy the more you covet to enjoy. And ultimately you find yourself engulfed in the quagmire of ennui. The great Lord Gauranga used to say, "Hear me well, brother Nitai, the householders have no means to salvation". Because in that life there are temptations at every turn. To fight one's way through them to God requires a hero of rare calibre. The Vaishnavas have it, "A jīva may get the grace of *guru*, Krishna (God) and the Vaishnavas (the devotees of the Lord); but if the fourth be not gracious he will be ruined". The fourth is one's mind. If the mind turns again and again towards temptations it will not be able to grasp Lord's grace, hence the ruin'.

One day a devotee came to Lātu Maharaj at Balarambabu's house, thoroughly drenched with rain. The moment he came, Lātu Maharaj asked him to take some dry clothes from a certain place in the room and change his clothes. The devotee looked around and found that all the clothes were dyed with ochre, naturally he hesitated. Lātu Maharaj seeing him hesitating got up from his seat, took one of the clothes and handing it over to the devotee asked him to wear the dry cloth. The devotee still hesitated; at that Lātu Maharaj said, 'You serve in an English mercantile firm, if you fall ill you will not be able to attend office and you will lose your pay. You will suffer, and when you would

actually require more money you will be getting less. You should consider all these and have no scruple about wearing the ochre cloth at my request'. Still the devotee could not get over his scruples. Then Lātu Maharaj said, 'Today you are not accepting the offer of love, one day you will have to rue it'. After this the devotee had no other alternative but to yield. He put on the ochre cloth that day.

If somebody had committed some wrong and came to Lātu Maharaj he would at once know it. But without scolding he would ask him to desist from committing the wrong in the future, he would give him instruction how to rise above it. And this he would do with so much love and sympathy that the person concerned would feel much strengthened and would generally overcome the weakness. Very often he was heard repeating, 'Work puts a coating of defilement on man, man is not really defiled by work'.

A drunkard used to come to him at 11 at night and would insist on his consecrating the meal purchased from the market by touching it and offering it to the Divine Mother. Lātu Maharaj would ask him to place the pot in front of him and sing some songs in praise of the Mother Divine. One favourite song of the drunkard was : 'World see how I am plying my boat of gold. Do you know who is there inside the boat? It is Rama, the scion of the Raghus?' In his drunken state he would sing it and then ask Lātu Maharaj, 'Father, has it been consecrated?' Lātu Maharaj would say, 'Yes, it is ; now you take it away'. With great joy the man would take the pot and romp along. One day a devotee asked Lātu Maharaj why he was giving him so much indulgence. His reply was : 'Ah, the poor man wants a little sympathy. Derided by society, he wants a little bit of it. Should we deny it to him? But we must see to it that he does not transcend the limit'.

In April 1912 Rishi the only son of Raimakrishna (Balarambabu's grandson) passed away. Lātu Maharaj was not informed of it. So he went on complaining regretfully. 'I was not even informed, nobody gave me a slightest hint about it'. One day he expressed it to

Bāburam Maharaj with great regret, 'The boy was suffering so much, nobody cared to bring it to my notice ; and the boy passed away. Before our very eyes the living and kicking boy vanished ; and we could not do anything. We hear, giving food to *sādhus* brings in blessings to the family. Brother, what blessings we are bringing to this family ! So many have passed away in this short time and we, who have been feeding ourselves fat on their food, remain only impotent witnesses to all that !'

Bāburam Maharaj : 'How are you to blame, Sādhu ?'

Lātu Maharaj : 'No brother, I cannot hold myself free of this responsibility. Every now and then it comes to me "Let me leave this place and go to Viswanatha's place (Varanasi)".'

Bāburam Maharaj : 'No, no ; don't go anywhere now. Be here at least for some time'.

Lātu Maharaj : 'I have decided to leave this place after the Durga Puja'.

Bāburam Maharaj : 'It is yet six months for the Puja to come. Then we shall discuss the matter. Don't leave this place now, don't, please'.

Six months later, on the Daśami day (October) 1912 Lātu Maharaj left Balarambabu's house for Varanasi for good. Before leaving he looked intently at the building and said thrice, 'Māyā, Māyā, Māyā', and then bowed down to it and got into the carriage, which drove off to the railway station. That night they missed the train. Having passed the night at the *Basumati* office they left for Varanasi the next day.

At the station he found that a devotee was extremely depressed at his imminent departure. To him he gave the following advice, 'Look here, my boy, don't feel depressed at my departure. Yonder flows mother Ganga who saves the souls of the fallen and the depressed, sit on her bank as often as leisure will permit you to. They say company of *sādhus* purifies one's mind. Similarly does mother Ganga purifies man. Sit down there and meditate, pray and count your beads.

You will see your body and mind getting purified. Whenever depression will assail you, sit quietly there and you will see, your heart and mind have calmed down. Looking at

the waves of mother Ganga, you will not even know when the waves of your mind have been stilled'.

(To be continued)

RELIGION AND ITS CHANGING PATTERNS

K. SESHADRI

RELIGION flows from the perennial springs of inward experience. In its early, rudimentary forms it is just a vague 'sense of the sacred' felt in the depths of one's own being and projected upon some external object, chosen as worthy of worship. At higher levels it is a distinct experience of a Divine Presence, leading to some kind of constant companionship and communion with the Divine Being. Brother Lawrence speaks of 'the *practice* of the presence of God', which shows that religion implies discipline. The discipline refines and perfects the experience, and secures it as a permanent possession. Through the discipline man renders himself fit for that final state of absorption in Divinity, which marks the consummation of all religious life.

Even at the lower levels the individual is aware, though dimly, of his own inadequacy, incompleteness and 'creaturely' character against the vast background of Nature and super-nature, of the presence of a Power and the operation of a Will, independent of his own, overwhelming and inexplicable. All 'primitive' prayer is based on this awareness that man is not self-sufficient and self-explanatory, and that he *must* reckon with an 'Other', learn to act in conformity with the superior will of the 'Other' and to please and propitiate this 'Other' through sacrifice and ceremony, before launching on any adventure or undertaking. 'Help me, Oh God', says an ancient fisherman's prayer, 'my boat is so small, and *Thy* ocean so wide'. This sense of contrast is, perhaps, the beginning of religious consciousness.

From the dichotomy between 'I' and 'Thou' man gradually evolves into a con-

sciousness of kinship with the Other. The kinship may take a variety of forms, shaped and strengthened through several stages, but the most significant is that which transforms the crippling sense of inadequacy into a free sharing in a limitless abundance of love and joy. It is the awareness of an intimate, irrevocable relation between man and God, of the soul's organic dependence on the Over-Soul, —which is not a condition of bondage but an accession and an enrichment. It is the realization of the nature of the finite individual as a spiritual entity, as an integral part of the whole to which he belongs in essence and from which he draws his life and sustenance. To the extent to which man identifies himself with it, gets absorbed in it, ceases to live, move, or have his being apart from it, man himself grows and 'becomes' whole. All true religious discipline is designed for this 'becoming' of man.

The deeper significance of religion is in its dynamism, for religion implies as much effort as awareness. Man may at first become vaguely aware of a world beyond the reach of his senses and feel the unaccountable impact of a hidden order on his everyday life; but he does not rest in peace under this feeling. He soon sees in it the promise of a wider and fuller life, experiences an urge to share in it, and strives for its attainment.

The dynamism of religion has a social as well as a personal aspect. The "becoming of man" is reflected in the making and remaking of society, in creating, sustaining and perfecting social relationships. The individual lives and grows in society. He belongs to the community. In the most individualist of all reli-

its meaning, and also its strength and weakness. Thus it has been possible for modern scientific philosophy to see and acknowledge the facts

‘. . . that by its inherent nature and fundamental definitions, it is but an abstraction, and that with all its great and ever-growing power, it can never represent the whole of existence. Science may transcend its own natural sphere and usefully criticize some other modes of contemporary thought and some of the dogmas in which theologians have expressed their beliefs. But to see life steadily and see it whole, we need not only science but ethics, art and philosophy, we need the apprehension of a sacred mystery, the sense of communion with a Divine Power, that constitutes the ultimate basis of religion.’⁴⁰

This statement, coming from a trained academician, proves that a new realization is coming to prevail with an ever-growing num-

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. xxiii.

ber of scientists who now realize that,

‘the whole of existence is too great a thing to yield its secrets when studied in one aspect only.’⁴¹

Insofar as our search in regard to the possibility of being scientific and yet spiritual is concerned, this augurs well.

To be true to principles of science, it may be re-emphasized, the scientist cannot close his mind to facts or data coming from any quarter in relation to a particular branch of study, or in regard to fundamental facts of existence itself, to which, in the ultimate analysis, everything will be related. Therefore, if from the camp of religion certain data come forth, science has to respectfully examine them, if it is to be true to itself.

(To be continued)

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, Introduction, p. xvii.

MEMOIRS OF SWAMI ADBHUTANANDA

(A free translation of the Bengali book, *Smritikatha*)

(Continued from the previous issue)

CHAPTER XX

WE have already related that Lātu Maharaj left Balarambabu's house in Calcutta for good and came to Varanasi. He broke his journey at Deoghar-Vaidyanath and proceeded from there direct to Varanasi. He was accompanied by four persons—householder disciples, Patalbabu and Chattulal, Paśupati, and Prakāśa. All of them came to Advaita Ashrama, Varanasi. After a week Chattulal, Patalbabu and Prakāśa returned to Calcutta; Paśupati stayed at Varanasi to serve Lātu Maharaj; and the two lived in the Advaita Ashrama, leaving it just before Kali Puja. Chandra Baba, who was then the President of the Advaita Ashrama took special care of Lātu Maharaj as long as he stayed there; every day he would read the *Gītā* to Lātu

Maharaj. Chandra Baba got a letter that Swami Śivananda and Swami Turiyananda would be coming to the Advaita Ashrama in November. Hearing this and thinking there would not be room at the Advaita Ashrama for so many people, Lātu Maharaj left the Ashrama a few days before the arrival of the two Swamis and came away and settled down at Sri Kundu's house at Tedineem in Godhuliya. In this house Lātu Maharaj arranged for Lakshmi Puja on the occasion of the Dipavali. Seeing a Sannyasin arranging for Lakshmi Puja a devotee of Varanasi was surprised. When it was known, Lātu Maharaj simply remarked, ‘Mother Lakshmi is the *śakti* of Narayana, and everybody is entitled to worship *śakti*’.

When Lātu Maharaj was living at Tedi-neem Holy Mother came on a pilgrimage to Varanasi. Khokā Maharaj (Swami Subodhananda), Master Mahāśaya ('M'), Ganen Brahmachari were with her. They were all putting up at Kiranbabu's *Lakshmvilasa* house. The house where Lātu Maharaj was staying was not very far from where Mother and her party were putting up; so they used to meet often. One day all were invited to a lunch at Advaita Ashrama. During the meal time Khokā Maharaj and Master Mahāśaya were talking on various matters. In the course of conversation they came to the topic of *samādhi*. Lātu Maharaj said, 'Samadhi, you see, is a thing which has not been polluted by being expressed in words of mouth. Should you talk of it while eating? Master used to say, "During the time of eating you are to take your mind down; or else you will have indigestion".' Then the talk turned to other topics.

Bibhutibabu kept Lātu Maharaj's company at Varanasi for seven years at a stretch. He used to take notes of his conversation with Lātu Maharaj. There, in his notes, he writes at one place: 'One day Lātu Maharaj said, "Go, go, I do not recognize your (Holy) Mother". It was shocking not only to me but to all who were present. For nobody could believe that for her whom he served so devoutly for so many years he would not have any respect. It is a proposition which is simply unbelievable. And later on it was discovered to be so. But Lātu Maharaj wanted to keep his wonderful regard for Holy Mother secret. One day he started with flowers, *bilva* leaves, etc., to worship Viswanatha (the name of the Deity at Varanasi). Reaching the main street, he changed his mind and said. "Let us go to Mother first". What were we to do? All turned to Kiranbabu's house. Lātu Maharaj went direct upstairs and appeared before Mother's room. There he became a changed man; shaking all over his body, he placed all the things he brought for worshipping Viswanatha at Mother's feet and silently started shedding profuse tears. All the while Mother was seen passing her right palm gently over the

head of her dear boy. What a soul-enthraling scene it was! Then having taken leave of Holy Mother, he went to Viswanatha.'

The devotee with whom Lātu Maharaj stayed in Godhuliya had to come away to Calcutta in three weeks. So, Lātu Maharaj was constrained to leave that house and come away to Bansi Datta's house at Sonarpura. Here Lātu Maharaj was to get highest regard from the owners of the house. One day Lātu Maharaj expressed it openly to others: 'The old manager is a perfect gentleman. He shows high honour to monks and holy persons. He would sit down near me as long as I would take my meal, to see personally that I was properly looked after. After my meals were over, then only would he sit down to eat himself. He would not give me the slightest cause for irritation. He would show great respect even for persons who would come to visit me'. The devotee: 'Why did you then leave that house, Maharaj?'

Lātu Maharaj: 'Five persons were to come there; they were all the house-owner's relatives. So unasked, I came away.'

From there Lātu Maharaj came to a hired house at 68, Pande Hauli. There during the Christmas holidays many devotees came from various places outside Varanasi to see Maharaj settled in the new house. The author also went there during this time. One devotee from Madras used to bear the house rent by himself. He gave six month's rent in advance. This was a great relief to Lātu Maharaj. For about four years he stayed in this house. Afterwards there was some difference of opinion regarding the rent, so Lātu Maharaj left that house and came away to the rented house at 96, Hadar Bag.

At Pande Hauli house also Lātu Maharaj was so much absorbed in meditation etc., that he had no fixed time for his meals. The following description is from the pages of the Bengali monthly *Basumati* and from the pen of Biharibabu: 'In his life there was such a current of irregularity and anomaly that one cannot say whether he was living in a city or in a forest. If today he took his meal at 10 p.m. tomorrow it was at 12 midnight

and day after it was at 3 a.m. Taking meals, sitting, standing, sleeping—in nothing there was any fixed time. His attendant was to keep himself ever alert as to the time when he would get up from his meditation and would give orders for preparing meals. Then perhaps at 1 a.m., all on a sudden, he would start abusing, and abusing without reason, and abusing no one in particular or general. But those who had passed some years intimately with him knew it well that all this fuss was directed against none else but his own mind, which would not like to come down from the heights of meditation and was thus causing inconvenience to others around him or serving him'.

When a devotee saw him again engaged in tremendous *sādhana* at Varanasi he asked him one day, 'Maharaj, you have seen the Master, you have served him so long and so well, and you have yourself done so much *sādhana* in Calcutta on the bank of the Ganges for so many years. Why should you again do such *tapasya* in this old age?'

Lātu Maharaj : 'You know, mere seeing him and serving him is not sufficient for the attainment of the Highest. It is not so easy as that. Mere seeing and serving will not do, spiritual practices are necessary; and through His grace then one will get at the Truth. Without practices you cannot receive grace. For a drop of grace you will have to work so hard. For the holding and preserving of grace one is to practise hard, otherwise, grace, though there will not be effective. And do you think that grace is one, or of one sort, that the moment you get it you are full and overflowing, and your labour has come to an end? Infinite are His graces. In how many ways He may show His grace no one knows.'

The devotee : 'It is for this you are labouring so hard even now!'

Lātu Maharaj : 'My boy, how vain is your talk! You talk of our *sādhana*? What *sādhana* have we done? Look at that robber Ratnakara turned saint. He saw that prince of saints, Narada, not only him, but our grand-sire Brahmā himself, whose mere sight gives salvation to people. Even after seeing

them and receiving their ample grace, Ratnakara performed austerities for sixty thousand years. And what kind of austerities? So engrossed was he in the meditation of Rama that he forgot altogether, during this long period, that he had a body. So much so ant-hills formed around it. Just understand what spiritual *sādhana* is. Why did he do that? It is to understand what truly grace meant. Their grace changed the current of Ratnakara's mind. But who else but he himself was to wipe off his mind and brain? So he had to practise such tremendous *sādhana*. These mental impressions, my boy, are as indelible as the deep marks chiselled into a granite piece.'

The devotee : 'Oh! it is so depressing! Sixty thousand years! We are then simply undone. The very idea dries up our life's current.'

Lātu Maharaj : 'Yes, you may say so. But without infinite patience who has ever known the Lord? You are terrified at hearing this period of sixty thousand years. Have you not read in the *Bhagavata* the story of a devotee who danced in joy when he was told he would have to practise for a lakh of years more to receive the Lord's grace, and said, "Compared to infinite time a lakh of years is just a few days". Moreover he thought, "When the Lord's vision is assured this petty period of a lakh of years will not be spent in vain also". With each year he will have become purer (to receive His grace). This is the reason of his dance in joy. . . . The blessings of great souls do not go in vain. They produce sure results. In an intense life ten years' work is done in ten days. Intensity is a great thing.' When Maharaj was thus speaking his whole body was blazing in excitement.

In this Pande Hauli's house Lātu Maharaj gave permission to a young man to stay with him. The young man though poor was intelligent. He was suffering from an incurable disease (suspected to be pthisis) due to which his relatives had scruples to allow him to mix with them freely. Lātu Maharaj kept him there without the least hesitation and in six months the young man was completely cured of the fell disease. The young man is still

alive and is an M.A., and a professor in some college.¹ We have heard from this gentleman that Lātu Maharaj asked him to bathe daily in the Ganges early morning and take Viswanatha's 'tirtham'² together with offered *bilwa* leaves, which instructions he scrupulously followed. He took no other medicine except that.

Many other youths, when they came to know of the miraculous cure of this gentleman, requested Lātu Maharaj to treat them also in the same way. All got the same reply from him — 'There is the real physician, Viswanatha, there; have faith in Him and follow what the other young man has done; you also will get cured.'

Once a brother of a devotee got out of wits. He was so violent that doctors and physicians refused to treat him. The devotee wrote a letter to Lātu Maharaj stating his hopeless plight. Lātu Maharaj simply wrote back, 'Through the grace of Viswanatha the boy will get cured'. In fact since then the patient started improving. The patient could not have a wink of sleep for twenty days. How could he have such a deep unbroken sleep throughout the day and night, after they received the reply, nobody could give any rational explanation of. He did not undergo any treatment, took no medicine. The devotee has the firm faith that it is Maharaj's blessings that cured the patient.

A young man of U.P. used to come to Lātu Maharaj at Pande Hauli's house. He took his M.A. degree, and was humble and devoted. Every one called him *bhakatji* (the devoted one). He would often read the *Ramayana* of Tulsidas to Lātu Maharaj. One day Lātu Maharaj got a letter from this

¹ These 'Memoirs' were first compiled and written in the year 1940 and so the person referred to here may have by now retired from service.

² The sacred water, in which the Deity is bathed and thus sanctified, is called *tirtham*.

Bhakatji's wife. She had complaints against her husband. Bhakatji was then not at the Ashrama. He had gone to his office. Lātu Maharaj said, 'Just see how things have changed. Bhakatji is looking after the lady all right, sending her money regularly, is meeting all her needs whenever they are brought to his notice; what else should he do? should he convert himself into her slave, only because he has married her? The modern demand is, just after marriage the wife should always be by the side of the husband. How many days those ideal women of olden days, Sita, Savitri, Damayanti, could be together with their husbands? Still they loved their husbands so dearly. And these ladies think that unless they live with their husbands they are neglected. Those manners are fast changing; and the inevitable results are not slow to raise their ugly heads — there are quarrels and worries everywhere'.

During the Durga Puja in 1914 there was a big get-together of devotees at Pande Hauli's house. Biharibabu and Saratbabu came to Varanasi that year. On the Mahāṣṭami day both of them were discussing, on the terrace, the topics of the Upaniṣads — one was supporting dualism, another non-dualism, as the conclusion of the Upaniṣads. At last they came to the conclusion that through renunciation, dispassion, and spiritual practices one must have direct experience of truth first then one can understand the Upaniṣads properly; else it is mere dry logic-chopping. Hearing this, Lātu Maharaj said, 'You have spoken the truth. Now-a-days people have neither renunciation nor spiritual practice to their credit, yet how prompt are they to find fault with the conclusions of the Rishis! Little do they understand that ratiocination may bring in fame as a scholar, but cannot reveal Truth, which can only be had through hard spiritual practices'.

(To be continued)

MEMOIRS OF SWAMI ADBHUTANANDA

(A free translation of the Bengali book *Smritikatha*)

(Continued from the previous issue)

SARATBABU (SARAT CHAKRAVARTI) writes, 'Lātu Maharaj gave spiritual advice to many no doubt ; but he never "initiated" any one, as the word technically means. Though he never gave *mantra* to anyone, there are a large number of devotees who revere him as their guru. Lātu Maharaj himself used to say, "Do you think that a man whispers a *mantra* into another's ears and he becomes his *guru* and the other fellow his *chela*? And the *chela* attains salvation immediately? Is it so very easy as that? The *guru* may give instructions to the disciple, but salvation is a matter in the hand of the Lord. Just as an advocate pleads hard in a court of law in favour of his client and then at last says, to the client, 'Now it depends on the court'. It is like that with the *guru*'.'

Swami Siddhananda in his book *Sat-Katha* has put it in the mouth of Lātu Maharaj : 'Do you think a *sādhu* is your sweeper that he would go on sweeping your mind day after day. Once he may clean your mind ; after that it is your duty to keep it clean. If you fail in your duty, would not do anything to keep it clean, what can a *sādhu* do? Is it possible for any *sādhu* to scrap out the deep impressions of your *samskāras*? Or do you think a *sādhu* will carry you on his shoulders to the Lord? A *sādhu* will show you the path but you will have to tread it yourself ; if you do, you reach God, if you don't you remain where you are'.

On the Dwādaśī day after the Durga Puja a Gujarati professor came to meet Lātu Maharaj, who was then sitting on the first floor and was busy conversing with the devotees. The gentleman waited long at the gate and could not get anyone to announce his arrival to Maharaj. In the course of his conversation. Lātu Maharaj suddenly stopped talking and

asked Paśupati 'to bring upstairs the gentleman waiting at the gate'. It was a little surprising to many : how could he know that a man was waiting at the gate! But to those who knew him a little more intimately it was a familiar affair.

One day a devotee, while leaving Varanasi, remembered Lātu Maharaj in the train and saluted him from there. Lātu Maharaj told the devotees who were present there : 'Just see so-and-so salutes me from the train, would not come to me lest I should ask him to stay at Varanasi and engage himself in spiritual practices. Now he is going on a sight-seeing tour. How foolish! What will he get, roaming about from place to place. One is to settle down at a place and with controlled mind go on practising meditation etc., then one can get something. Where would he get a holy place like this. Viśwanatha is personally present here. O the glory of the place! Whoever dies here gets salvation. Master saw with his own eyes, at the Manikarnika Ghat, Lord Viśwanatha bestowing salvation forthwith by conveying the name of the Lord into the ears of the persons lying on the pyres and the Mother Universal Herself untying the bonds of the *jīvas*'. The author (of these Memoirs) was present when Lātu Maharaj said this.

About the glories of Varanasi and Viśwanatha he waxed eloquent so often. 'Viśwanatha is indeed a "living" God, God who makes his presence felt in various ways. Crores of people come here to worship Him.' Hearing this one devotee said, 'Maharaj, the real (symbol of) Viśwanatha is lying in the Jñānavāpi (a well) ; and where He is worshipped is not the genuine symbol'.

Lātu Maharaj said in reply, 'Viśwanatha is a natural symbol. Aurangzeb fanatically broke the symbol, but could not remove it altogether.

The symbol has gone deep down into the earth, it is irremovable.'

Even after this the devotee said, 'But in the temple they worship the symbol they have installed.'

Lātu Maharaj: 'Yes, Aurangzeb broke that portion of the symbol which was above the earth's surface. Then the worshippers were inconvenienced. Having come to worship they could not see anything visible to the naked eye. So to remove this inconvenience if somebody has installed a visible symbol on that place he has surely done a commendable act. This has removed the heart's want of thousands of people. Worship is done at the same place; the real thing, viz., the natural symbol, is still there; why should you still make a distinction between the genuine symbol and an imitation one? Lord Viśwanatha is Lord Viśwanatha eternally, can there be an imitation of Him? You should worship Him there, pour out your heart's devotion to Him there; that will bring you whatever is good and beneficial.'

Bibhuti Babu writes: 'One day in the course of my talk with my aunt I referred to Viśwanatha as a piece of stone. That very day when I went to meet Lātu Maharaj I heard him saying aloud from the room on the first-floor, "Rogue, what more but a piece of stone can you find in the temple of Viśwanatha. What spiritual practices have you undergone that Viśwanatha will reveal to you His real form." Terribly afraid, I bowed down to him. Smilingly he asked me the reason of my coming to him so early as that. I replied, "Maharaj, tomorrow I shall leave for Calcutta so I have come to bow down to you and take leave of you." He said, "Very good, but before you leave Varanasi go to the temple of Viśwanatha and worship Him, and take a few offered bilwa leaves with you and eat a bit of them every day".'

It was usual with Lātu Maharaj to ask the devotees to eat daily some thing offered to a deity. And when a devotee was to leave Varanasi he would invariably give some *prasāda* of Viśwanatha or Annapūrṇā to him. He

would say 'Taking *prasāda* increases the purity of the mind'.

Although Lātu Maharaj lived at Varanasi for seven or eight years he went to see Mother Annapūrṇā only once. Looking at the golden image of Annapūrṇā he went into a trance. Observing that, the Mohanta of the temple took him away from the crowd to a comparatively open space. Since then the Mohanta felt especially attracted towards him, and used often to send, special *prasāda* to the Pande Hauli house. He continued sending *prasāda* to Hadar Bag house also when Maharaj shifted to that place. Lātu Maharaj would dry this *prasāda* in the sun and send bits of it to distant devotees by post parcel. He said, 'Annapūrṇā's *prasāda* makes man see better days. It improves the material condition of man'.

It was at the Pande Hauli house that a householder devotee of Rākhāl Maharaj called Lātu Maharaj a liberated soul. When it reached Lātu Maharaj's ears he said, 'Rogues talk of liberated souls (*muktapurūṣas*), as if they are the connoisseurs of them. Yes, "mukta". But what kind of "mukta", the genuine ones or the imitation ones of the Bombay market?'

[Here the pun is on the Bengali word *mukta* (pronounced by Bengalis as 'mookto') which means both 'liberated' and 'pearls'.]

The devotee who passed that remark on Lātu Maharaj was also present when Lātu Maharaj gave that retort. Not to be defeated, he said, 'Maharaj, imitations are there by lakhs, genuine ones are very rare indeed, e.g., those like you'.

Lātu Maharaj: 'Yes, yes two hundred per cent genuine, my Lord! What have I done, my Master, that I should be considered fit for the bestowal of your grace of liberation? (This was an aside. Then turning to the devotee,) My dear fellow, liberation is a matter of grace, it is in the palm of his hand. If the Master does not will, these comings and goings on this earth will continue. Hence I pray again and again to Master, "Let me come here again and again if I shall have to; but may you be my Guru and let me have 'Loren' as my *Guru-*

bhai". Or else to be incarnated is a trial and torture.'

One day a devotee brought a relative of his to Lātu Maharaj and asked him to bow down to him. By way of introduction, so to say, he said, 'Bow down to him. He is Śiva personified. All your sins will be washed off'. Lātu Maharaj cried out in rage and agony, 'These rogues are a batch of flatterers. They see Śiva in all, as if Śivas are born or produced by scores. Śiva is that One, Eternal without a second. These rogues are all fawning flatterers. They have come to praise a sādhu on his face. They have heard so much, read so much; still they do not remember what Sri Krishna said to Arjuna. To hear one's praise with one's own ears increases one's vanity. And should a devotee do anything to increase a sādhu's egoism?' Thus he went on taking the devotee to task up to night-fall that day. The devotee sat still, understanding his own mistake.

One day a U.P. devotee asked him what a householder should do. The talk was in Hindi. We give below a few points culled from it : 'If you want to live a happy and contented life cease criticizing others, never find fault with others; it is far better to sleep away that time. If you find such talks are going on somewhere keep yourself away from it... Try to find good qualities in others; if your eyes are fixed on their good qualities they will not find occasions to look into their faults... As you feel your own pains and griefs, try to feel for others' also in the same way... As far as lies in your power try to help and protect others, never harm anyone... If any one has done you a good turn remember it gratefully. Never fail to give food to your hungry relatives however great their faults might be... But never run into debts, they create worries. Try to live in this world as pure a life as possible; always engage yourself in discriminating between good and evil... And never do whatever your conscience will stigmatize as low and mean; keep your conscience always clean... Never forget God but act depending on His approval and grace; and morning and evening take His name for some time, and if

possible at night also by curtailing your period of sleep a little.'

One day a devotee came and reported to him that X. had become a great devotee that he devoted his whole time to meditation, prayer, *Puja*, and other spiritual practices. Hearing this Lātu Maharaj said, 'That is very good. You also do the same thing. Who prevents you from doing all that? If you but will, you can also be like him'. Then he muttered something we could not hear. Then he openly said, 'As long as wicked people like you are there, there is no future for our society. He has become a devotee, why should that cause jealousy in you? Why should you give it out to so many people here? That inan is calling upon the Lord secretly, in solitude; and you are making it public. In a short time people will gather round him. Have you thought over the matter how much distressed he will feel? Nobody should inform friends and relatives of a devotee about his spiritual practices. It pains and spoils him.'

During the holidays of Good Friday of 1915 a devotee went to Varanasi. There he had talks with a man who was very much worried about getting his daughter married. This news reached Lātu Maharaj's ears somehow. When the devotee came to Lātu Maharaj the latter said, 'You see many people will tempt you with big dowry for your son's marriage. Some will say he would give Rs. 500/-; another Rs. 1,000/-. And you thus tempted, will fall into their trap. But have you ever thought about the future of your son and your family? Your son is too young to be married, and he is not educated, he is not yet able to earn much; and the condition of your family also is far from satisfactory. If under such circumstances you get your son married, a couple of years later he will have children whom he will not be able to support. Then this very son will lay the fault of getting him married so early as that on your shoulders. If that happens you should not regret, for the fault will be really yours. Let your son earn something, let him make provision for the maintenance of his family, let him stand on his own legs. Then you may

get him married. Before that never talk of his marriage. That is my considered opinion.'

* * *

News reached Lātu Maharaj from Calcutta that a madcap threw a bomb on Sarada Maharaj (Swami Trigunatitananda) and that he was killed. He became grave and remained so for two or three days. Then he talked about many incidents of his life. A few are given below : 'He was fond of visiting haunted houses. Once he saw such a terrific figure (in fact a shocking malignant eye) that he was seized with fright and was shaking all over. Just then Master appeared there and he became normal. Master brought him out of the house and told him never to indulge in such foolhardiness again. Since then he gave up passing nights in haunted houses. . . Brother Sarada was wonderful in many respects. Nobody could beat him in doing *japa* ; again nobody could work half so hard as he. Whatever work was allotted to him he would invariably see it through, he never shirked any work however arduous it might be. He was, so to say, Swamiji's right hand. But for him the magazine, *Udbodhan*, might not have seen the light. He used to implicitly obey Swamiji, except on one thing — he would not consent to go to America. After Swamiji's passing away he was forced to go there, he had no other alternative but to yield. . . . He was a voracious eater but then he could fast equally well. When his body was in good condition he would work like a giant ; but if it was slightly indisposed he would at once take to bed. . . . At first he had not much regard for (Holy) Mother ; but later he became very much devoted to her. Brother Rākhāl asked him to take up the duty of looking after Mother and her party. When brother Yogin was absent Sarada used to take mother to and from Jairambati and Calcutta. Once when Mother was going to Jairambati in a bullock cart he found there was a big hole on the track ; and thinking that when the cart wheel would fall into it Mother would have have a hard jolt, he lay down there with his back up so that

the wheel of the cart may pass over his body and Mother will not be hurt. But Mother saw him doing this from a distance and got down from the cart and scolded him for this.'

In Pande Hauli house a sannyasin of our Math came to pay his respects to Lātu Maharaj, who told him, 'It is good that you have taken *sannyasa*. But never forget the ideal for which you have donned the ochre cloth. If you do you may get a little honour. If you go for this honour you are sure to lose sight of the grand purpose of your life, you will not get the only thing worth attaining, the Truth. Go to a solitary place and plunge yourself in spiritual practices, you will see how rapidly you progress towards the goal. And beware of gossiping, that is a great obstacle to spiritual practices.'

To another *sādhu* he said, 'Don't think the mere donning of ochre cloth will make you a sannyasin. It is not so easy to be a *sannyasin*. They alone whose hearts are crying out for the Lord unceasingly can become *sādhus*. A real *sādhu's* mind is wholly absorbed in the thought of the Lord ; they never think of the hardship of their bodies'. When asked about the characteristics of a true *sādhu* Lātu Maharaj, said, 'A real *sādhu* never sees other's defects, he will not have any attachment or aversion for anything or any person, he would ensure safety to all creatures, he will have love and good will for all. A good *sādhu* should always be ready to do good to others ; if he is unable to do it he should give him good counsel so that he might give battles to circumstances and overcome them. A genuine *sādhu* is not given to much discussion. He does not look at man's birth but at his acts. Like the Lord, a true *sādhu* has no caste. He does not lay by any thing, nor covet anything. Lord alone he craves for. He is above all fear, he has nothing to hide. He is childlike in his behaviour. Such people are as ready to work as to leave it. They never have the arrogance to think that they are indispensable for any work.'

(To be continued)

MEMOIRS OF SWAMI ADBHUTANANDA

(A free translation of the Bengali book *Smritikatha*)

(Continued from the previous issue)

A BRAHMACHARIN, once asked Lātu Maharaj about the utility of donning the peculiar dresses of *sādhus* and brahmacharins. He said : ‘ These dresses remind a man of renunciation, they create an impression in their minds that they are to lead a hard austere life, that they are not to indulge in luxuries. If after taking such a dress their minds seek to do anything wrong the dress reminds them that they are *sādhus* and that they should not do such acts. To him who is sincere and pure this dress is a constant reminder that he should always keep up purity and godliness under all circumstances. And this is a great gain to him. But one who has no scruples, who has taken up such a dress only for show, cheats people and himself. It is worse than useless for him. For it is the mind which makes a *sādhu* or a cheat not dress. If inwardly one is a *sādhu*, even if he does not dress himself as such, he *is* a *sādhu* ; it is immaterial for him whatever he may cover his body with. But having donned a *sādhu’s* dress one should keep up its sanctity, one should keep oneself far away from undesirable thoughts and actions. One should know that one has taken the robe for realizing God and not for any other purpose. If he becomes self-willed, he loses both enjoyment and salvation, he has no place here and hereafter’. Once earlier, when he was staying at Balarambābu’s house he had said, ‘ No man can keep his inside hidden for a long time ; superimposed attitudes unmask themselves at odd hours. Before true people their borrowed feathers drop off of themselves, they are exposed. One day a naked *sādhu* came to Dakshineswar. Master saw him and remarked, “ Yes, he has thrown off his cloth but he has not got the divine bliss which precedes that stage. Simply by being naked a *sādhu* does not become a Trilinga Swami”. “ Trilinga Swami,” Master used to say, “ is

beyond all conventional rules and regulations. He has the body of a man but his works are superhuman. Coming to Kāśī if one sees Trilinga Swami one gets the benefit of seeing the Lord Viśwanātha Himself”.’

Seeing a devotee donning an ochre cloth Lātu Maharaj remarked, ‘ Please remember, Sir, one is to pay dearly for donning the ochre robe. Let nobody take the ochre cloth without getting special power and grace of the Lord. Don’t think you can purchase one piece worth of ochre and dye and don the cloth. “ Ochre ” means so much in India. They don gerua to keep their mind free from thoughts of doing harm to others, of the sense of prestige and attachment. Of what use is it if you wear *gerua* cloth and show yourself off as a *sādhu* ? One day the mask will fall off and you will be exposed. So I say be true to yourself. You may cheat others by imitating a *sādhu’s* dress and manners but you cannot cheat yourself and God’.

One day during the Durgā Pūja holidays Biharibabu and Mahendranath Mukherji had the following talk with Lātu Maharaj, who was asked why there were so many falls and rises in a householder’s mind. Lātu Maharaj replied, ‘ Householders have great attraction for money and property and for their families. So, though through prayer, worship and meditation their mind rises to some heights, it comes down again. Master used to say, “ In those villages mischievous fellows sometimes tie a piece of stone or half-a-brick to the tail of a mongoose. As many times these poor creatures try to climb up a wall so many times do they fall down”. Similarly the natural tendencies of the mind of householders drag it down even if, with considerable spiritual practices, they succeed in taking it a little higher. To keep the mind ever on God is a very hard *tapasya*. He who succeeds in doing

so will have succeeded in stopping the gyrations of the mind for ever. Just as you cannot pass a thread with fibres spread in different directions through the eye of a needle, so a mind, scattered over things and persons, cannot be made to settle on God. When a man's mind gets fully concentrated on God he enjoys the bliss of Ātman which is very, very difficult in a householder's life. Diseases, sorrows, enjoyments, desires—all these are constant companions of a householder ; over and above these there are physical lethargy and mental disturbances. If disbelief in God joins this formidable gang then that man's case really becomes hopeless, there is no hope of getting salvation. You will often find householders living a life, amidst their children and relations, quite forgetful of God. When the mind is so low, so deeply involved in these petty things of the flesh, how can you expect it to dwell at a high altitude ?

Hearing this Biharibabu asked, 'Then should we give up the family life and concentrate our energy on the realization of God ?'

Lātu Maharaj : 'Why should you give up the family life ? You are to call on Him whose family it really is. You must be there and call on Him. Where will you go out of it ? Where is it really existing ? It is in your mind. Wherever you will go with such a mind you will create new families. If your mind wants enjoyment, going to forest you will still be searching for those things. And if that desire for enjoyment is not there in your mind you will not crave for those things even if you are living a householder's life. Whether you live in a house or in a forest what you should do is to call on Him ; everything else is immaterial. Haribhai quotes : "A man who went to take bath in the sea thought 'when all waves will subside I will take bath' ". Do you think the fellow will ever have his bath ? A sea can never be waveless, consequently he will never have his bath. So I say wherever you may be and in whatever manner you may live, whatever thoughts might come to your mind you will have to go on calling on the Lord, and try to merge yourself completely in Him. Whoever will suc-

ceed in this will have Him ; whoever will think it impossible to fix his mind on Him in the midst of so many distractions will never realize Him. For as long as you have a body and a family you are subjected to disease and distractions. But if you want to go beyond these you will have to call on God ; there is no other way but this. All torments and distractions cease when one gets the bliss of Satchidananda, the Lord.'

In the course of this talk the question of the nature of Brahmananda naturally came up.

Lātu Maharaj : 'You see that Ānanda, bliss, is simply incomparable. There is nothing on earth which can even be most distantly compared to that. The bliss that we enjoy is magic. These three states of waking, dream and deep sleep are all within the domain of Māyā, products of Māyā. Beyond these three states there is another, what they call "the fourth". To reach that state is not a matter of joke. That bliss of "the fourth" state is absolutely free from Māyā. You all know how sweet is this joy in Māyā. Creatures are kept enchanted by this delight. They never think this simple thought—"How much immensely sweeter He must be whose Māyā is so sweet as that".'

Another casual question was also asked that day : 'Maharaj, why are you calling this so-called bliss of Māyā sweet ? It is full of poison. It is all torment from beginning to end.'

Lātu Maharaj : 'Don't you understand it ? Even this bitter poison appears so sweet to people, otherwise why should they continue to be wallowing in it like pigs and buffaloes in the mire ?'

Once Lātu Maharaj told the author, 'In this world nothing has any intrinsic value. Bliss is the only exception. Do you know why people want wealth, wife, children, houses ? From them he gets physical comforts and mental happiness. To get these man works so hard, day and night. But the labour they undergo for these does not bring the desired good ; had they directed their efforts towards God they would have got not

this false bliss, but the genuine one of Satchidananda.'

Lātu Maharaj once said to Swami Siddhananda, 'You see, in this world people want but one thing—bliss. But is bliss a sweet in the hand of a child that you can get it by singing a lullaby. You cannot coax anything out of Him (the Lord). He wants the Jīva to pass through hard tests. He has made the road to Him so difficult. The entire road is full of difficult obstacles and charming temptations. One is to remain ever alert until one reaches the destination. It is like the bridle path to Badrinarayan, a moment's carelessness will take you to a steep ravine a thousand feet deep, with little chance of return, sometimes of survival. With every forward step you will have to call on the Saviour, will have to resign yourself entirely to his mercy. With such one-pointed resignation if one can walk the path, then only he may be relieved from the clutches of temptations so wily and blandishing. Failing in this ever watchfulness and absolute resignation no one can ever make himself free from passions and desires. The portals of Heaven are wide open for him who is free of desires—dancing in glee he enters Heaven. It is for this that Vaishnavas say "He alone is really clever who takes refuge in Krishna (the Lord)." True it is. Those who want to be really clever, who want to have a peaceful life here and bliss hereafter should make the Lord the centre of their life. And the obverse is, fools will forget the Lord and go on jumping and beating their hearts in rage, despair and bitterness. Caught in the whirlpool of worldliness they will now sink and now rise, drinking saline water and ultimately going down to the bottom.'

Once earlier in the house of Haramohanbabu the same topic had come up : The Lord is a great Taskmaster ; He makes people labour very hard and then bestows His grace. To that Lātu Maharaj had replied, 'You see, Biharibabu, now you are drawing a salary of Rs. 250 per month. Tell me how many years you had to work hard to get it. From the age of five you went on studying, you passed

so many examinations, you had to dance attendance on so many people to procure the job and then work hard in it, to draw the attention of your superiors to get promotions one after another. Now to get this paltry sum of Rs. 250 you had to slave yourself so long and so hard. Look at the other picture : there are so many other people who did not work so hard, did not pass B.A., M.A., etc., could they get such a job, could they hoard money ? You wanted to earn money and you put forth hard work, so you have got it. The others failed to work hard and failed as well to get wealth. Similarly those who really want the Lord should work hard even from their fifth year, then only they will get Him. Tell me how can one get Him who does not feel a genuine attraction for Him.'

He told Śāśadharbabu, the teacher from Malda, 'Can you tell me, Śāśadharbabu, what is that thing aiming at which the entire animal kingdom, from insects to man, is working so incessantly ? It is for getting bliss. To get just a sprinkling of it, not even of the genuine but of an imitation one, all are ready to walk into the trap of Māyā, Avidyā. They drink the dirty waters of a hundred germ-filled ponds and suffer and cry and weep, yet the awakening is not coming. For the sake of just a drop of happiness they burn throughout their life ; in some cases torments come in torrents, yet they do not want to give up the world and worldliness.'

* * *

In 1916 Lātu Maharaj asked a devotee to stay at Pande Howli house with him on the first floor. It was summer, no one could sleep inside the rooms. And it was usual with Lātu Maharaj to wake up all who would sleep on the terrace at midnight and ask them to meditate. This devotee was also included in that group. His mind was then very unsteady. So Lātu Maharaj would say to him, 'Why do you allow your mind to think of so many things during meditation ? Can you not take it to task for that ?' The devotee writes in his notes : 'I tried hard to control the mind but failed. And then in disgust I would leave meditation and get up. Lātu Maharaj obser-

ved it and told me, "Even when a man cannot meditate and get irritated at his failures he should not give up meditation and get up immediately. If you get up with an irritated mind the result will be that this irritation will haunt you throughout the day and you will feel like beating one person, scolding another, using harsh words to a third. Master used to advise us, 'You know, my boys, you should not immediately get up from your seat after meditation. You should sing, say, for ten or fifteen minutes, devotional songs; or think of some scenes from the lives of saints and prophets. Then you will enjoy a calm throughout the day!'"

In the course of conversation one day the topic of the existence of hell, heaven, etc., came up and Lātu Maharaj replied, 'Don't doubt about the existence of the hereafter. Just as there is time for you after death, so there is also space after death. If you exist in a state without this gross body then that body must live in a time and at a place.' Somebody expressed doubts at this and said, 'Where are heavens and hells? Here, in this world itself, there are enough of them?' Lātu Maharaj replied, 'Yes, it is true there are hells and heavens in the sense you just mentioned. But really there are such *lokas*, regions after death. Have faith in the words of the scriptures. If you do not have faith in a hereafter you will not have firm faith in the kingdom of righteousness here. These heavens and hells are not things to be demonstrated; we can only have faith in our scriptures. They are however realities and not fictions.'

1917: To a householder devotee Lātu Maharaj said, 'You know, there are three ideal characters in our Hindu mythology—Bhīshma, Lakshmana, and Hanumān. If you can follow them you can come out of this house of soot (the world) untainted, unsoiled. You can as well take Swamiji as the ideal. . . . Don't try to practise Madhura-bhāva. The practice of Madhurabāva is very difficult and dangerous. The great Lord Gaurāṅga succeeded; that does not prove that ordinary *jīvas* also would succeed. People subject to sex urge should not tread this path.

Even the great Vyāsa had the idea of the distinction of sex. Only his son Śuka, the ideal *sannyasin*, had no such idea. When the naked Śuka passed by the tank where celestial nymphs were bathing, the latter felt no scruples; but when Vyāsa clad and old, passed by, the nymphs adjusted their clothes. Hearing the *Bhāgavatam* from the mouth of the perfect monk, Śuka, the king Parīkshit transcended Māyā and embraced death with a smile.'

A devotee of Lātu Maharaj, now a *sādhu* of the Ramakrishna Order had quarrelled with a *sevaka* of Lātu Maharaj and went to Sarat Maharaj at the Udbodhan Office. Sarat Maharaj pacified him and sent him back to Lātu Maharaj. When he came back Lātu Maharaj accepted him gladly and narrated the following story to him: 'A man unable to cope with the multifarious duties of the world left it. As he was going he met a *sādhu* on the road and said, "Maharaj, I would like to be your disciple. Kindly accept me." The *sannyasin* told him, "My child, a disciple has to do many works. He is, for example, to draw water, hew wood, beg alms, cook food, cleanse vessels, and over and above all these he is to wake up at night and meditate. Do you think you will be able to do so much work? If you are able then be a disciple." This set the man thinking and he found he would have to do much more work as a *chela* than in the world as a householder with all his duties. So he returned home.' On another occasion Lātu Maharaj said, 'To be a disciple is not a matter of joke. Brother Vivekananda told a Sannyasin *chela* of his, "Now if I sell you as a coolie in a tea-garden in Assam, you have to yield without a murmur. Know this well". Master used to say, "There are gurus by millions, but *chelas* are rare indeed". About Sannyasin *chelas* Master used to say, "He alone is fit to take sannyasa who can throw himself, at the behest of his guru, headlong from the top of a palmyra tree, with his hands and feet outstretched. Such a man alone has developed a true dependence on Guru and God."'

(To be continued)

MEMOIRS OF SWAMI ADBHUTANANDA

(A free translation of the Bengali book *Smritikatha*)

(Continued from the previous issue)

A LADY, who quarrelled with her husband, induced by some friends came on a pilgrimage to Varanasi. She came to Lātu Maharaj one day. How Lātu Maharaj came to know of the quarrel we are not aware of. But he said to her, 'You see, women must have love and respect for their husbands ; those who do not can never have a peaceful life'. . . . In that group of lady devotees there were two widows, who, while bowing down to Maharaj, placed some coins at his feet. Seeing the coins Lātu Maharaj said, 'Am I your *guru* that you have placed these coins here and bowed down to me ? I will not accept that money. Master instructed us not to take money from the poor and the widows. Please take away that money'. He did not accept the money despite their repeated requests.

One day an unemployed man came to him for some help. Maharaj gave him something. The next day he came again to Maharaj and said, 'Maharaj tell me of something that may remove my poverty permanently'. Lātu Maharaj replied, 'You will not like what I would tell you. You want alchemy, to turn baser metals to gold, which I do not know. I am a *sādhu*, I live here only with my *guru*'s name on my lips. I can give you good counsel, which will not satisfy you. You want occult powers. But occult powers don't come of themselves ; one has to labour hard to acquire them. Are you ready to work hard for them ? If you can do a lakh of japa of God's name, you are welcome'. Hearing this recipe the young man went away. After he left the place, Maharaj told the devotees, 'Is it for nothing that Master used to say, "Even when a man has none to call his own he will rather keep a cat to engage himself than spend the time in taking Lord's name." Unemployed,

the young man goes from door to door. He was to do the *japa* and he would have got his food. But he did not like it. He will rather beg from persons than have faith in his own powers. This is Lord's *Māyā*'.

To a devotee who was married two or three years and had already two children Lātu Maharaj gave the following instruction : 'Begetting children is not the main thing ; what is more important is to feed them and educate them properly. Just see what a poor salary you get. If you sire a number of children wherewith will you feed them ? Master used to say, "When two or three children are born wife and husband should live as sister and brother." With a few children you will be able to feed them and also give them a few good dresses ; but if their number goes on increasing you will have no end of troubles and worries — how to find food and dress for them, how to send them to schools and colleges, how to find money for various social ceremonies that you will have to perform as they grow up. And if they are not well-trained and educated they are sure to increase your troubles ten times by their unruly conduct. So is it not far better that you learn to control yourself from now and avoid all these terrible complications in future ? Swamiji said, "Parents are themselves undisciplined ; what discipline can they teach their children ?" If the parents have the due sense of responsibility, children will learn it automatically'.

This year the winter was rather severe. A *sādhu*, who had established a Math near Calcutta, stayed with Lātu Maharaj for a few days. If someone would ask him about the Math he would answer gravely "If it is Lord's will it shall be done". One day Lātu

Maharaj asked him smilingly, 'Is it Lord's will or your will?' With his characteristic gravity he said, 'I am but an instrument in His hands!' Still smiling Maharaj asked him, 'How do you know you are an instrument in His hands?' Increasing his gravity, the *sādhu* said, 'It is His inspiration that came to me in the shape of establishing a Math there; so it has materialized. Otherwise, what powers do I wield that I can venture on it?' After this Lātu Maharaj only said, 'Master used to say "Don't increase work unnecessarily. If you do, your work will replace God. In the pressure of work you will forget God. For example you have gone to Kalighat to see Mother Kali there. But you start giving money to the beggars, whose number swells. The day is spent in doing charity and you could not see Mother Kali for which purpose you had gone there". . . . Wherever a real *sādhu* goes he hears the call of God. But if there is alloy in his character he mistakes the call of the world as the call of the Lord — enjoyment is mistaken for renunciation'.

In 1918 there was Kumbha Mela at Hardwar. In that connection a large number of devotees gathered at Lātu Maharaj's Ashrama. The author of this book was also there. There was a strong rumour at Kāśi that a great soul would come to the Fair that year. In order to know Lātu Maharaj's opinion about it the author asked him if that was a fact. Lātu Maharaj said, 'You see Mahāpurushas, great souls, are already there at many places. But who can recognize them? Take for example our Master. How many people came to know him? Now we see many devotees. But during his days he was known as "the mad Brahmin of Dakshineswar". When he made himself known just to a few they understood what he was. People of the locality where the Lord is born do not know Him. He alone knows Him on whom His grace descends. Master used to say "There is darkness under the hanging lantern". The people in whose midst He lives as a man can never take themselves to believe that the Lord of the universe

is moving about them in flesh and blood. Take for example the case of Sri Krishna. He was moving among the people as a son, a friend, a cowherd and in so many roles. How many understood Him? Neither Yaśodā His mother, nor the cowherds or even many of the Gopis. Rādhika understood Him and she was mad after Him. Even Rishis and Munis could not recognize Him. Only Garga did. Such is Lord's Māyā'.

The author said, 'If His purpose to come down on earth is to give salvation to man why should there be so much secrecy about revealing Himself to him?'

Lātu Maharaj: 'He does not play any hide-and-peek; it is man who fails to recognize Him. You have not the eye to see Him. He is not to blame. Suppose two unknown persons are sleeping before you; one is as good as Yudhiṣṭhira, another as bad as Duryodhana. Will you be able to recognize who is Yudhiṣṭhira, and who is Duryodhana? They are present in front of you; but as long as they are not introduced to you by somebody you cannot know who is who. Even so when the Lord is there just in front, you do not recognize Him so long as another does not reveal His identity to you. But if through your *tapasya*, that spiritual eye of yours opens, you will of course, know Him without anybody's introduction. It becomes easy enough.'

A boy named Bimal, aged eight or nine lived at the Ashrama for a few days. The boy appeared to be a little out of his mind. But he would show great eagerness to read to Lātu Maharaj the *Rāmāyaṇa* by Kṛitvāsa (in Bengali). While reading the book the boy used to get excited, and not unoften tears would roll down his cheeks. One day Lātu Maharaj asked the boy why he shed tears while reading the *Rāmāyaṇa*. The boy laughed and said, 'Don't you know, Maharaj, I was present there during that war between Rama and Ravana.' Lātu Maharaj asked with great affection, 'Who were you then, my child?'

The boy: 'I was on the side of Rama. Just see I have a tail.'

Sureśhbabu, who was sitting by his side,

exclaimed, 'Impressions of previous births'. Lātu Maharaj smiled.

Biharibabu noticed that when the boy used to pass his hands lightly over Lātu Maharaj's feet, a privilege denied to most devotees, the boy's face, chest, and eyes used to get red with emotion. Lātu Maharaj was indulgent with many of his blandishments. He would bring some eatables at odd hours for Lātu Maharaj and Lātu Maharaj who was very strict in matters of food, used to take a little of them and give the rest to him. The boy used to take it with great reverence.

Many *sādhus* returned to Kāśī from the Kumbha Fair at Hardwar. Devotees would go to these *sādhus* and bring information about them to Lātu Maharaj. Some developed a peculiar superstition of visiting all kinds of *sādhus*. As a warning Lātu Maharaj said to one, 'You see, matted hair and ochre cloth do not make a *sādhu*. One has to move heaven and earth to become one. It is not an easy affair to be a *sādhu*. How much renunciation and dispassion, how much meditation, prayer, and austerities are necessary just to become an ordinary *sādhu*'. The remark was, however, not liked by the devotee. So one day Lātu Maharaj told him, 'These *sādhus* have returned from the holy Kumbha Fair. Just do one thing. Why not, one day, give them a feast?' He took up the suggestion. One day the feast was arranged, and a good number of *sādhus* were invited and fed sumptuously. At the behaviour of the *sādhus* during the feast the gentleman was shocked; and the idea that he had been cherishing about them almost from his childhood was thoroughly changed.

That day when this gentleman and his friends came to Lātu Maharaj they expressed their disgust at the conduct of the *sādhus* during the feast. And Lātu Maharaj had to prevent them from going to the other extreme. Said he, 'The *sādhus* behaved that way since they have not got the Truth yet. But that is no reason that you should hate them. After all they have given up the world and they are still on the way to Truth. They

are searching for It. And you? Then again there are some bad people among them, should you, for that, condemn all *sādhus*? There are bad people among householders too, do you condemn householders as a class? That would be wrong. The ochre cloth also has a value. You are to honour that too . . .'

To another gentleman of the group he said, 'When you are in a jovial mood in the company of intimate friends do you not take away certain things from another's plate and a third snatch away things from yours? This is an expression of conviviality. Those *sādhus*' behaviour should be taken in this light. One must not be too serious about that. Jokes sometimes overstep conventional rules, etiquette.'

One day a letter was read out to Lātu Maharaj. The writer, as usual, sent his respects to Maharaj, who smiled and said, 'He has sent love through a letter. My dear fellow, is love such a thing as to be sent per post? To be able to acquire love and convey it to others one has to undergo tremendous labour. To love is for the Divine not for the human. He alone knows how to love; and to convey this love is the prerogative of great souls, dedicated to Him. For ordinary human beings to love? It is beyond their power. Love comes as the final result of great austerities.'

On another occasion he said, 'Your love? It is a mere magic attraction, a nervous titillation. Have you seen dogs? How lovingly they play! Throw a piece of flesh. They would run at one another's throat! Your love is almost like that. How nicely you talk and promise! What exchanges of greetings! But all this exuberance of love immediately vanishes the moment one, even inadvertently, treads on another's corn. Sweet words turn into blows. Don't show such love.'

* * *

At Varanasi there was once a talk on how to worship God. Swami Siddhananda has published it in *Satkatha*, which we quote here. 'Do you know what *pūja* is? Everything that you offer is already His. What then can

you do? Master used to say, "A rich man has come to his garden and is sitting in his parlour. Gardeners are all busy with their work. The gate keeper came to the *bābu* and placing a ripe papaya said to him with due humility, 'This is from your garden, master. I have plucked it and kept it for you. I had watched it nicely against birds and squirrels and when it ripened on the tree itself I plucked it for you. Please accept it.' The master knows that the garden, the tree, the fruits are all his. But the love and reverence that the gate keeper showed was his. Will not the *bābu* take that into consideration?" Puja is like that.'

Bibhutibabu writes : 'Once during Durga Puja I asked Paśupatibabu to purchase a four-yard long *sāri* for Mother Durga. When Lātu Maharaj saw the *sari* he asked Paśupati to throw it away. "Why have you purchased a four-yard *sari* for Mother?" Then he turned on me and said, "Should you give such a short *sari* to Mother? If you are to offer anything, offer the best to Her. You should offer to Mother the sort of *sari* that you would give to your daughter or daughter-in-law; at least such quality, if not better than that. Is not Mother your own that you wanted to offer such a thing to Her? If you have not the means you tell Her with tearful eyes that you could not offer Her anything.'"

At Balarambabu's house also he had said to one devotee, 'What is this? All the worst things of the market you have collected to offer to Mother. Man offers best things as gifts during the Puja. Cloth you have purchased is short and is so widely woven that it looks more like a net than a cloth. Fruits, worst in the market; sweets, rotten and smelling. What kind of *pūja* is this, my boy? If you think you are going to offer to Mother, why, offer nice things. Things which you loathe to take yourself you want to offer to Her? If you are really hard up, if you cannot purchase many things, then give only such things which you would like to use yourself, and you may do it in less quantity also. It is far better not to offer anything to Mother than

to offer such bad things. You are offering Her things to Her and in that you are so miserly! Lord alone knows what you would give, were you to offer your things. Consider yourself to be blessed if you can give things that are Hers with a joyous heart full of gratitude. Do you think anything is accepted that is not given with love and humility? On special occasions you should offer the best things you can procure. You should remember it carefully. For the sake of money never allow your heart to be mean and narrow. You are spending money for such a good cause as service to the Lord and you think and calculate so much?'

In Varanasi he said once, 'You see before you actually worship you are to take a firm resolve with humility and prayer for the best performance of it. You know *mantras* are not so essential as the proper attitude of the mind. Do you think you utter the *mantras* and the Devi comes down obediently to you? It is not like that. She accepts the heart. Where there is love, reverence, humility there is Her acceptance assured; and where these are lacking and *mantras* are bandied about, the Devi's benign eyes do not fall there.'

A devotee : 'The worshipper and the priest — of these two persons, whose attitude does Mother accept?'

Lātu Maharaj : 'Mother observes the attitudes of both, where both the attitudes are good there you get the best result. Else *pūja* remains incomplete. Assemblage of all kinds of things is a matter of money — that is display. Master used to say, "Worship is of three types, *sāttvik*, *rājasik*, and *tāmasik*. One can worship in any way, according to one's taste and ability. In the *sāttvik* variety devotion, discrimination, dispassion, etc., are necessary. In the *rājasik* type pomp and display predominate over devotion and reverence. There all kinds of drums and pipes, concourse of people, sixteen varieties of articles, etc., are necessary. And in the *tāmasik* *pūja* diabolical things, like killing one's enemies, infecting one with a fell disease, spoiling one's suit in a court of law form a part and purpose of it.

In this variety of *pūja* the worshipper does not get peace and happiness because it stems from hatred and cruelty." . . . When you sit for prayer or worship you should not think of anything else but the Lord. Pomp and show does not elevate a man's character. Double-dealing should not enter there. Your mind wants one thing and you show to people some

thing else — can this ever improve you? Even meditation, prayer, repetition of *Gayatri* — all these will be of no avail if your mind rests on something else. It is like rowing a boat all night without weighing anchor. Master would say, "One must hunger for the Lord, then alone His grace comes".'

(To be continued)

ACHARYA SANKARA

(Continued from the previous issue)

SWAMI APURVANANDA

THOSE were days of early betrothals and like every fond mother Viśiṣṭā Devi was looking about for a nice little girl in the neighbourhood to be wedded to her only son. On Śankara's return from the preceptor's home she told him she had selected a bride for him. There was abundant scriptural sanction behind her resolve to have her son wedded. The scriptures enjoined matrimony on a youth immediately after his return from the preceptor's home. Life had its four stages and a man had at any time to keep himself linked to one or the other in the right order of succession. No break or interval was permitted. Śankara had completed with all ardour and zeal the first stage of Brahmacharya and his duty now was to enter upon the second stage, Gārhastya, and tend the home fires and worship the gods and perform the rituals prescribed. Nothing would have given the mother greater joy than to see her son wedded, for the continuance of the family line was a sacred trust and had to be ensured. But Śankara was an exceptionally endowed fish and was not to be so easily caught in the net of matrimony. He stubbornly refused to marry under any circumstance. Viśiṣṭā like a true mother tried many ways of persuasion and shed many a tear and put forth many a weighty reason to make him yield to her wishes. All the lonely widow's hopes of future happiness lay in Śankara's be-

coming a householder in the true orthodox way, and she felt it was a cherished privilege of the mother to become the mother-in-law and the grandmother and all that, in due course. But his deep love and regard for his mother notwithstanding, Śankara remained firm and unmoved in his resolve not to enter the married state. His resolution quite overwhelmed Viśiṣṭā Devi. She hardly knew that her son was not born to tread the beaten track and pass out as an insignificant individual but was born for great purposes, far and high above the pettiness of a humdrum householder's life. She hoped that events would so happen that Śankara would relent and agree to marry.

Though he could not bring himself down to gratify his mother's desire in respect of marrying, Śankara by every word and deed tried to please the mother in every way. Serving her and ministering to her daily needs became to him his foremost duty and he carried out that duty with pious fervour. He nursed her, helped her in her chores, and ensured her comfort in all possible ways. While thus he won for himself all the tender affection his mother was capable of, he was no less a darling outside home than within it. He carried out to excellence the twin duties of learning and expounding, and his deep learning and his remarkable powers of instruct-

MEMOIRS OF SWAMI ADBHUTANANDA

(A free translation of the Bengali book *Smritikatha*)

(Continued from the previous issue)

ABOUT spiritual practices in modern times Lātu Maharaj once said to Biharibābu, 'You see in the scriptures many things are written. Very hard practices are there ; but people in modern times are weak and short-lived, it is not possible for them to observe all that. So Master used to advise his devotees, "You leave off the head and the tail and take the main body — leave the unessentials and perform the essentials". One should adopt things suitable to the age. The elaborate rituals of the ancient days modern man cannot follow today ; for him is the path of *bhakti*, devotion. He is too weak to fast, too short-lived and too full of diseases to continue the long drawn elaborate rituals. The coins of Akbar's times are no longer a legal tender today, during the British Raj. Know it for certain the ideal of this age is Master and Swamiji. You cannot but follow them. Those who will, will achieve salvation. The intelligent understand whither the wind blows. Sri Krishna showed his cosmic form to both Arjuna and Duryodhana (at different times). Arjuna believed in it and was saved, Duryodhana took it to be a trick of black magic and perished. The hint is there, it is for man to take it or to reject it.'

Swami Siddhananda writes : 'One day dilating on the spiritual attitudes Lātu Maharaj said, "You know, man is rewarded according to his attitude. You can look at a thing from different angles of vision — attitudes are angles of vision. None of them is wrong or incorrect. But your mind takes the photograph from where it stands — every mind must have its own standpoint. Some devotees take this world as a hoax, and a hoax they find it. Others think it as a place

of enjoyment, and enjoyment they find everywhere. Some others take this world as the Cosmic Body of the Lord, and they see it as such. All these attitudes are quite rewarding. But do you know when the troubles start? It is when we forget the Lord, forget to connect the creation with the Creator. There we commit the mistake and court troubles. You may ask, 'Why is this mistake?' It is because we all live in the domain of the Mahāmāyā who allures us to enjoy the beauty of creation cut off from that of the Creator. Her (Mahāmāyā's) only concern is to keep creation going and like her infinite Lord she has infinite guiles to beguile us to eternity. These are her toys she throws to men, her children, to play with and not to disturb her in her business of infinite changes, formations and transformations. Playing with these attractive toys for long, when some children get a disgust for this humdrum of play and cry out for the truth they at once see the path, and the yonder Mansion, their goal. But the path is up-hill and the door is guarded by ferocious dogs ; whereas the path, at the rear, is down-grade and there is no door, no guard, all is open. Those who are in earnest for the truth and are ready for staking all for its sake, make bold to proceed forward ; and louder the dogs at the gate bark louder still the devotees call on the Lord, who, attracted by their humility and earnestness, comes out Himself and takes them into the Mansion. And when the dogs see that they are Lord's children, they start licking their limbs. Lord wants to see earnestness in His devotees, their earnest efforts to reach Him, then His mercy descends in torrents. Do you know what are these dogs? They are our own passions and

desires. When the Lord sees that we are really in earnest He silences these dogs and makes it easy for us to see Him. And when we see Him once the entire scene changes at once ; what appeared to be matter and conglomeration of matter and beauties and graces thereof, now appear to be of the spirit, beatific and bewitching. We see Him everywhere and in everything — the entire creation, every particle of it, is saturated with the awareness, being and bliss of the Lord. We feel, it is the Lord who is playing all these multitudinous parts — those of a thief, a saint, a libertine, a drunkard ; of the rich and the poor, of the tyrant and the tyrannized over, of the kind and their acts of kindness. He has become all these and at the same time, He, as the indwelling Controller and Guide, is making 'all these' dance to His tunes. Whom to blame, whom to praise — He is there as and in every thing, person, and act. How is it possible for the unregenerate *jīvā* to understand this deep mystery ? They think they are the actors, they are the enjoyers ; just as the brinjals, potatoes, beans in the boiling pot think they are jumping and diving of their own sweet will, little knowing that the fire below is making them do all that. Carried away by this gigantic maternal mischief of Mahāmāyā, some are hoaxed and see hoax everywhere ; some are full of bliss and see bliss everywhere. But one thing is certain, unless a person sees the Lord this riddle of the world will remain as baffling as ever. When he knows Him he will also at the same time, know that He is a mountain of sugar and he himself is but an ant, whose knowledge of Him is like the ant's knowledge of the tiny crystal of sugar he is carrying in his tinier mouth. But this one bit of sugar is more than enough for him, for sweetening his life and everything around him." "

In March, 1918 Lātu Maharaj shifted to Hadar Bag House. Here he passed the few remaining years of his life. Here, in this house, people came to notice increasingly one peculiar power of Lātu Maharaj — to know

the workings of others' minds, far and near. We have already given a few stray instances before. They surprised, but did not convince us that he possessed any such power. Here, in this house, the manifestation of this power became a matter of almost daily occurrence. If there arose a bad thought in any one's mind in the house or anybody did anything wrong he used to know it, and muttering half-audibly would go on scolding him. Some people, we have mentioned before, used to pass their nights there with him. If they dreamt a good or a bad dream he would know it, and in case of a bad dream he would wake up the dreamer and break the bad thought. During this time he used to lay greatest emphasis on purity. Every now and then he would say, 'Be pure, be pure, be pure. Without purity you would never know Him. Be holy, without holiness you cannot understand the holy, your own holy nature, the Holy Lord sitting within and guiding you'. In this house again the novelist Sarat Chatterji, saw in his face the impress of Sri Ramakrishna. It was again while he was living in this house that Biharibābu had a wonderful vision of Lātu Maharaj, which, being too personal, is not mentioned here. It was here again he remarked that 'man's mind has become an unchaste woman, it must be taught chastity, to love the Lord of the universe, the Spouse eternal'.

On 30 July 1918, Baburam Maharaj passed away. Lātu Maharaj did not talk with any one for three days. One day a devotee sang to him songs on Sri Krishna's sports as a cowherd, when his gravity abated a little and gradually he started talking to people in the normal way.

Lātu Maharaj was heard muttering now and then 'I throw away your *māyā*'. One day a devotee got curious about the meaning of the sentence. So he asked Maharaj, who said, 'Don't you understand this ? Should I go on thinking of those rogues throughout the day ? So when I say like that I cease thinking about them that day'. People might think, 'Why should a saint

think of other people and not of God'. It is not remembering that we are used to. It is a holy wish for the well-being of the devotees, that they may see God and be blessed. But why should he then give up such holy current of thought for the good of God's children? The devotees are after all toddlers in the path. Passions prejudices, impurities of diverse kinds are there in their hearts, where a saint's mind gets suffocated to dwell long, it longs to be with his God, his Lord. Moreover whatever good wishes he has already wished are sufficient for them for the day. Some have talked of this act of Maharaj as a great feat of *pratyāhāra*, withdrawal of the mind. Of course it was. But it had long become quite natural to him, not to make much of. What is to be noted here is his boundless love for the Lord's toddlers. For Girishbabu it was undoubtedly a great thing when after taking part in a drama in his theatre he would say, 'Away with theatre now', and it actually used to be 'away' and he could sleep peacefully the rest of the night.

One day somebody remarked, 'The world is too cruel. Just see, the sparrow is chased by the crow, the crow by the kite, the kite by man, man by the tiger, the bear, etc. So there are chasings and killings — cruelty all round'. Lātu Maharaj's reply was, 'Yes, that is one side of the picture; but there is another side to it. If you care to see, you will find mercy and kindness at every turn; and there is no end to that. Whatever you want to see you see. Remember, you see what you are. If you are good and kind, you will see goodness and kindness; if you are yourself evil, evil you will see around. The world's a mirror'.

In this Hadar Bag house he generally suffered from diarrhoea. So Hari Maharaj (Swami Turiyananda) invited him to come to Almora; he wrote, 'Śiva and Pārvati are eternally living in this Himalaya'. Lātu Maharaj wrote back, 'Śiva and Pārvati, worried at the sufferings of *jīvās*, are eternally living here in Kaśī; leaving this, it will not be possible for me to go elsewhere'.

A year before he gave up his body, there was a boil on one of his legs. He took no care of it; it developed into a gangrene. A devotee brought a surgeon from Calcutta, got it operated, stayed on with him and served him for some time. This service unfortunately, engendered pride in him. Lātu Maharaj warned him, 'You see don't develop egotism on account of this service. You should consider it to be a great privilege that you have got this opportunity to serve a *sādhu*. It is with great humility and reverence that one should serve God, one's *guru* and a *sādhu*. Never forget this'.

On another occasion the same devotee used unworthy language to a disciple of Sri Ramakrishna. Lātu Maharaj heard it and excitedly said, 'The rogue who will not have due respect for the Master will be ruined; I say, will be ruined. Let him go and beg pardon of the man he abused. There is still time for correction'. When these words reached the gentleman's ears he immediately went to that disciple of the Master and apologized.

In April 1919 a gentleman named Sauji (Sahaji) served Lātu Maharaj for six or seven months continually. He used to keep awake the major part of the night. At last one day, he said in all humbleness, 'Maharaj, I can't carry on any longer'. Maharaj replied, 'It would have been better if you could have. You would have got the Lord's grace. Anyway, when you could not, engage yourself in taking the Lord's name. That will serve the purpose'.

In this Hadar Bag house Hari Maharaj would come to meet Lātu Maharaj. He would bow down to Lātu Maharaj and without a word would sit near him looking intently on his face, absorbed in meditation. After an hour or so he would bow down and take his leave. One day the author asked Hari Maharaj, 'How is it, Maharaj, you come and go away without exchanging a word with Lātu Maharaj?' In reply Hari Maharaj said, 'His mind, don't you see, is

always indrawn. Who will talk? So I don't disturb him; come and go silently'.

During his last illness Sarat Maharaj came to this house. He asked, 'How do you do, Sādhu?' Lātu Maharaj replied, 'To have a body is to suffer'. A *sādhu* of the Advaita Āshrama, Vārāṇasi asked him, 'He is your *gurubhai*, a fellow disciple, why do you bow down to him?' Sarat Maharaj replied, 'Sadhu was the first among us, to go to Guru Maharaj. Hence he is our elder brother. What do you say? Shall I not bow down to him?' Sarat Maharaj always used to call Lātu Maharaj 'Sādhu'.

Brother Bhupati came from Calcutta and stayed at Vārāṇasi. He would come to Lātu Maharaj very often during these days. Whenever he would come Lātu Maharaj would ask him to sing a few songs. Two of his favourite songs were: (1) 'Who is a greater ferryman than Lord Sri Hari? He ferries us across this ocean of worldliness on His boat — the boat made up of His two lotus-red feet'; (2) 'Mother, (In your incarnation as Sri Krishna you loved to stand in your usual three-bent posture on the Rāsa platform.) do make this heart of mine that platform and graciously stand there in your favourite posture'. Lātu Maharaj would turn to the devotees and say, 'You are living in this holy Vārāṇasi and brother Bhupati is also doing the same. But what a great difference!' Some used to say that brother Bhupati was a little crazy. To that Lātu Maharaj's reply was, 'Is it not far better to run mad in the name of God than on account of this filthy world?'

During his last illness Lātu Maharaj said once, 'Of the three attitudes, "God is mine",

'I am God's', and 'I am God', "I am God's" is the best. There is no place for egotism in it. Gopis had pure unselfish love for Sri Krishna. They regarded Sri Krishna as theirs — there was no tinge of selfishness in their love. But Srimati's, Sri Radhika's, love was still higher. She considered herself to be wholly and solely Sri Krishna's and of none else. The great Lord, Chaitanya, also

had this attitude. Those great souls who become perfect in these attitudes remain themselves, through the grace of the Lord, immersed in divine bliss and make others also, who come in contact with them, full of bliss. Master used to speak of such great souls as "big logs of wood" that not only float down the stream themselves but carry many beings also on them. Depending on them, taking refuge in them, hundreds of devotees reach God. To take refuge in them is as good as taking refuge in God. For these personages are veritable limbs of the Lord. To touch them is to touch the Lord. Just as to touch the river Ganga one is not to touch the entire length and breadth and depth of Ganga from the Himalayas to the Bay of Bengal but any portion of it, even so to touch these great ones is to come in contact with the infinite Lord, they being His organic parts. They are like a railway engine that drags itself as well as a host of wagons to the destination'.

During this period he would often talk of Mahāvīra. One day he said, 'You see Lord Rama had many devotees, but none could approach Mahāvīra in devotion or in any other matter. One day Ramachandra wanted to test his favourite devotee and asked, while he was holding his royal court, "Mahāvīra, child, how do you look on me?" Mahāvīra, said, "Dear Master, when my mind gets identified with the body I look upon you as my master and myself as your servant; when this identification goes (and the mind knows itself to be mind) I find you are the whole and I am a part thereof; again that stage also is transcended, and mind and intellect merge into Ātman, then I find I am you and you are me — all distinctions vanish".'

One day a disciple of Raja Maharaj came and asked Lātu Maharaj, 'Maharaj, you have all seen God; now tell us what you have understood about this world'.

Lātu Maharaj: 'You know if you keep a jug of water away from a pond or a river the water of the jug dries up; but if it is kept

dipped in the tank or the river the water inside the jug remains as full as ever. Similarly if we can keep our mind ever dipped in the blissful Lord the wind of worldliness cannot dry our mind of its bliss, it remains ever full of bliss.'

The devotee's second question was : 'Does the world now appear to you to be a burden, Maharaj ?'

Lātu Maharaj : 'When you take a dip in the Ganges, over your head there is such a heavy load of water ; but do you feel it ? Similarly in this world of the Lord if you take a dip in Him you will not feel the weight of the world — the world gets divinized, it

becomes His, saturated by Him to the core. Now the burden appears heavy because it is cut off from the Lord, it is pure matter. But then it is spiritualized ; hence loses its weight. Please remember one couplet of Tulsidasji : "One who takes refuge in another is protected by him. (Look at the impossible situation.) A minnow goes swimming against the current of Ganga, whereas the great elephant of Indra was washed away". Another point. "As you look upon Rama, so Rama looks upon you. If you go to the right to the right He appears ; if you go to the left, to the left he appears." (As you are so is the world and so is your God.)

(To be continued)



THE SPIRITUAL BASIS OF WORLD PEACE AND BROTHERHOOD OF MAN

SWAMI GNANESWARANANDA

It seems almost ridiculous to talk about peace and brotherhood while the whole world — at least the political leaders of all the countries in the world — is, either openly indulging in some kind of warfare, or secretly preparing for the next great war. Nevertheless, it is exactly the time when the peace-loving civilian population of all nations should organize all its forces against such a disaster as war.

Why does so-called civilized man kill his brother with more ferociousness than that of wild beasts ? How can this barbarous propensity of man be abolished ? These questions have been discussed elaborately by expert diplomats and political economists, but the solution has not been far-reaching enough to touch the soul of man. No doubt the various international arbitration assemblies, commissions, and committees, have been working, seemingly, to establish peace on our earth, yet a conscientious thinker cannot help asking the question : "But with what intentions and results ?" It does not take very deep deliberation to find out why such

diplomatic attempts to establish peace are bound to end in magnificent failures. Diplomats and politicians do not want peace because they *love their fellow men*, or at least believe that others have the same right to enjoy life as much as they have. They want peace because they are afraid that whatever they have already acquired by aggression might be taken away from them by war. It goes without saying that any attempt by such leaders to establish peace can only fan the smouldering fire of fear and mistrust into the sudden blaze of war.

I am reminded of a humorous folk tale of India. The wolves and tigers of the huge forest of Sundarban were once holding a mammoth meeting to consider about the reign of peace and love in their forest world. It was a gigantic affair, and for a time it seemed that everything concerning the welfare of the forest kingdom depended upon the outcome of that big peace conference. Nothing was wanting to make the affair an unprecedented success. There were big

Nay, even the other *mahāvākyas*, प्रज्ञानं ब्रह्म and अयं आत्मा ब्रह्म are more or less explicitly apparent in the last line. The परमकं ज्योतिः, when located in भवान्, answers to प्रज्ञानं ब्रह्म. The entire brunt of the teaching is, of course अयं आत्मा ब्रह्म. Thus, this

Ekaślokī is the quintessence of all the Vedas and the Upaniṣads.¹

¹ In the *Sataślokī*, too, Ācārya Śaṅkara has given us a verse very much like the *Ekaślokī*. See verse 95 of *Sataślokī*.

MEMOIRS OF SWAMI ADBHUTANANDA

(A free translation of the Bengali book *Smritikatha*)

(Continued from the previous issue)

THE last days of Lātu Maharaj have been very beautifully described by Hari Maharaj in his letter dated 25-4-1920. 'You must have got the wire informing you about the passing away of Lātu Maharaj. Such a final exit from the world is rarely met with. Of late he was generally indrawn. Since the beginning of the disease he was found always in meditation, his eyes fixed on the junction of the brows, completely withdrawn from everything of the external world, fully alert and conscious, yet entirely oblivious of the world outside. One day when the doctor was dressing the wound he asked me, "What is the disease? What do the doctors say?" I replied, "Nothing serious, only general weakness. Taking no food you have wasted your body. Now you cannot move. If you start taking food, you will regain strength, and the disease will vanish". He said, "It is good that the body goes". I said, "You should not say that. Let Master's will be done". "I know that, but you are all suffering so much for this body." After that he did not talk much.

'Now and then he used to call Paśupati to his side. He took food from his hands. When sometimes he would not like to take food, Paśupati would say he also would not. Then he would take a little. But the night previous to his passing away he refused to take anything. When Paśupati said he also would not eat. Out came the reply "Don't take" — a

reply that indicated that the last loose knot of Māyā had also been cut asunder.

'Next morning when I visited, I saw his temperature high. I felt the pulse. There were no beats. The physician came and examined the heart, but could not get any sound. Temperature 102.6. But there was no change in his consciousness though there were no external movements. There was one motion early morning — the stool was healthy. Other days he used to sit, today he could not. After a good deal of persuasion he took a few drops of pomegranate juice and water. When milk was offered he showed his displeasure. When Lord Viśwanātha's *charaṇāmṛta* was offered he took it with great pleasure. On his head and forehead ice and Eau-de-Cologne were being applied. I took my leave at 10 a.m. and promised to come at 4 p.m. When I finished my bath and meal and was about to take a little rest news reached me of his passing away at 12.10 p.m. Immediately I asked the Sevashrama people to send wire to you and Sarat and started for the Hadar Bag house.

'Going there I saw him lying on his right side with the left hand resting on the side pillow, as if he was sleeping. When I touched his body I found it as hot as when the fever was on. Who will say that he was sleeping the eternal sleep — his face was bright, and calmer than ever. Most people of the two

Ashramas were present, loud fervent singing of the Lord's name was started and it continued for three hours. At 4.30 p.m. his body was seated in a squatting posture and after performing *puja* and *āratika* was brought downstairs.

'When he was seated up and puja etc., were being performed the expression on his face was so beautiful that I cannot express it. I have never seen his eyes so full of peace, mercy and bliss as they were then. His eyes were generally half-closed. But now they were wide open; and what love, joy, and what equanimity and fraternity were beaming out of his eyes beggars all description. Whoever saw them were simply bewitched. The beams of bliss coming out of the eyes appeared to be blessing all in a gladsome farewell. The scene was wonderful, charming,—touching one's heart to the core. The Lord, it appears, has shown us this scene in order to fulfil the true significance of his name, Adbhutananda (one of unprecedented bliss). When his body and bed were covered with new sheets of cloth and the body decorated with garland and sandal-paste the entire scene and atmosphere assumed such a sublime beauty that whoever saw it were filled with amazement and cried out automatically "Blessed, blessed is the soul indeed". Unique and unprecedented was this death-conquering march of Lātu Maharaj. A clear manifestation, a bright example of the infinite glory of the Master! All who gathered there, neighbours and others, Hindus and Mussalmans, had their satisfaction of seeing him for the last time. Then the Sannyasin devotees

of the Master bore him on their shoulders to the Kedarghat; from there, by boat, he was taken to the Manikarnika ghat. There the last puja etc., were duly performed and then the body was taken to mid-Ganga where it was immersed with due reverence. Those who have seen the body of Lātu Maharaj beaming forth supreme bliss all around on this last occasion were deeply impressed with the reality of the spiritual world. Blessed is Guru Maharaj, blessed is his disciple, our Lātu Maharaj. . . .'

Swami Abhedananda wrote, 'In San Francisco I was meditating when all on a sudden, I heard someone calling me "Kali, Kali, Kali". And with this sound a face appeared indistinctly. The face and the voice seemed to be known yet I failed to recognize. (Was there some perceptible transformation in his body during his last days?) Next day I got a cable from Swami Saradananda that Lātu Maharaj gave up his body in *samādhi* the previous day. Then I was sure that the voice I had heard yesterday during the meditation and the face I saw were Lātu Maharaj's. Immediately I cabled \$ 100 to Saradananda for his *bhandara*.

' . . . Lātu Maharaj was indeed the greatest miracle performed by Sri Ramakrishna. Swami Vivekananda once said, "Each disciple of Sri Ramakrishna is original or nothing." How far these words of the great Swami were true is well borne out by Lātu Maharaj. We take pride in our having such a gurubhai.'

Hari Om Tat Sat

APPENDIX

There seems to be something unique or peculiar in the make of a great soul's character. In the case of the great austere *sādhaka*, that Lātu Maharaj undoubtedly was, there was an overdose of this peculiarity. It would not be an exaggeration to say that everything in and around him was peculiar, odd—he was a summation of a large number of oddities. In some respects he was

harder than granite, in others softer than a rose-petal. It is not easy to find out the principle, standard or ideal, referring to which one can say with any degree of certainty that he would be hard in this case or soft in that. To come in contact with Swami Adbhutananda is to live in a wonderland. But this does not mean that there was no principle behind that life. Whatever he said and did had such a

beauty and grace of setting that the individual acts can never be called whimsical or unprincipled. Our inability or difficulty in finding out the thread running through the beautiful flowers of the garland, stems from the fact that his mind ever dwelt on such an Elysian height and ours on this low level of the muddy earth that we don't find anything common between his principles and ours, or even if we do we pass it by as something unbelievable. His was a perfectly unified life, whose heart beat in unison with the Cosmic Heart. Ours, torn by hundred and one desires, are multiple spirit-personalities, not at ease with ourselves, not to speak of being so with others. How is it possible for us to find out that universal unified formula governing his wishes and acts? Still this attempt of ours to analyse the incidents of his life with a view to understanding their basic principles is rewarding to a degree, is self-purifying, self-transcending.

One day at Dakshineswar, when the mind of the Master was just returning from the *samādhi* state to the normal consciousness, but still was far above it, he declared 'Leto, my child, there will come a day when from your (illiterate) mouth will gush out the truths embedded in the Vedas and the Vedanta'. That prophecy from the transcendental sphere shall have to come true — it did become historic. From his lips used to come out life-giving truths which were from none else but the Master's — truths that used to satiate the thirst of persons seeking the ultimate Truth. Atulbābu, brother of Girish Ghosh, used to say, 'If you want to see the greatest miracle of our Master, Sri Ramakrishna, look at Lātu Maharaj'. Every one who knows Lātu Maharaj or tries to understand this wonderful life will bear out the words of Atulbābu fully.

The great Pandit Vishnu Tarkaratna once said, 'I derive very great joy and satisfaction to hear great spiritual truths being explained so simply and lucidly by this illiterate *sādhu*, Lātu Maharaj. And with it also we come to understand the glory of our Master, Sri Ramakrishna'. This is because his understanding of the spiritual truths was not born of wide

scholarship, of studies of scriptures, commentaries, etc., but of direct apprehension of those truths through deep thinking and meditation based on *brahmacharya* and austere discipline. We lived with this great soul for a long time, tried our best to understand him, analysed his actions and sayings in the light of modern thoughts; yet he remained a mystery to us, a power and blessing unfathomed and unfathomable, despite his challenging frankness and open heart. Some really used to think, 'Who is this man, dazzling with the glory and splendour of Sri Ramakrishna? Is he really that shepherd and cow-boy, Rākhturām of Bihar, transformed by the grace of Sri Ramakrishna into Adbhutananda? Is it ever possible?'

Whether in Kaśī or in Calcutta, whenever a complex religious or spiritual problem was raised Lātu Maharaj used to make it clear as crystal in his simple half-*patois* language. Sometimes such words and expressions would come out of his mouth, which in their verbal beauty, cadence and import, would startle us; his face and body will be aglow with enthusiasm that used to keep the audience spell-bound. What was still more striking was his flow of thought that appeared unending. Garbed in simple language would come out thoughts that were the combined result of deep thinking, wide experience, and direct realization — a rare combination of heaven and earth. Whatever he said had the impress of power and wisdom, running through which there would always be found a deep universal love and endeavour for taking each and all towards the only goal of human life, God-realization. As we would hear him, our minds, unbeknown to ourselves, would soar higher to an unknown region of peace and bliss, far above the trials and tribulations of this mortal world of ours. The glow of smile that used to illumine his face during those talks is still a loving treasure to us. In his unshakable faith in the *guru*, in his deep devotion to and reverence for God, in his unlimited love for humanity, in his austere sacrifice and renunciation, this seraphic soul has been and will ever be our beacon-light in this too erring life of ours.

Even the little things of his life used to bring to us news of immortal region, bringing peace to disquiet, hopes to drooping hearts. This silent and quiet anchorite was in reality a dynamo of tremendous activity all directed towards the spiritual uplift of mankind. Hiding his deep spiritual knowledge under the guise of illiteracy — knowledge born of the grace of his divine *guru* and worked up by his own tireless austerities to the end of his life — he used to give fullest satisfaction to seekers of Truth and devotion to God. Himself suffused with a seraphic love, he used to mellow our lives with its nectar.

Fault-finding was foreign to him. He wore a peculiar magnifying glass to look at another's virtue — a drop appeared to him as an ocean. He could not bear any talk about another's defects; to criticize others within his hearing was impossible. 'One who speaks ill of his *guru* and God is extremely impure in heart. Such people are farthest away from God, they can never be spiritual', he used to say. One day, seeing this fault in the character of the present author, he said, 'It is only the impure people who see faults and impurities in others. To the pure ones others' virtues appear in glowing colours. You people have not the eyes to see virtues in others. You have learnt only one lesson in life — to find others' faults. This jealousy is retarding the spiritual progress of yours. Inside there is jealousy, malice, outside you have the religious mark on your forehead and you hold a rosary in your hand. Of what help will it be to you?' One may observe in the above remark his strong whip-hand. But how much love and sympathy and good will was hidden there ordinary people did not know — only those who tasted the strength of the whip-hand had the luck of tasting the love that moved the hand. One day I made bold to speak out to him, 'Now, Maharaj, I am in the charge of an expert coachman. You know well how to break a rebel horse. Unless it is well broken it will not be fit to be harnessed to your vehicle'. He turned the table on me and said, 'You know, Śiva rides a bull and Śiva is supreme knowledge personified. Can a beast be

a carrier of knowledge? Knowledge and ignorance cannot live together. Though in appearance Śiva's bull is an animal, blessed indeed is he'.

People would often see Lātu Maharaj muttering something to himself. One day I concentrated my attention to grasp what he was saying; he was chiding himself: 'To call oneself a *sādhu* as long as the last vestige of egoism is not wiped off! All cannot attain the stage of Nityananda (who found in him nothing but Gauranga and seemed to have egoism, which in reality was not his but Sri Gauranga's). Does one become a *sādhu* by donning the ochre cloth alone? It is useless for a *sādhu* to dye his cloth if his mind is not dyed with the colour, of dispassion and renunciation, of God Himself. Has this wearing of red cloth given me the power and prerogative of extorting obedience of others that I claim to give instruction to them?' This was all to himself, and, then when he saw me straining my ears to hear him, he said, 'You see, if somebody criticizes a *sādhu* at once the hood of egotism is unfurled automatically. To give up other things is comparatively easy for a *sādhu*; but this egotism of being a *sādhu* is very difficult to renounce. There a *sādhu's* progress suffers shipwreck. You might have observed that on the surface of the Ganga float by garlands of flowers as well as rotten animal carcasses; Ganga allows all to flow on, herself remaining as pure and holy as ever. A *sādhu's* mind should be like this Ganga-water, unsullied by praise or censure. They say "If the mind is ever alert and attuned to the Lord even a mud-puddle is Ganga". This is the mind of an ideal *sādhu*. How many of the *sādhus* have attained the state of Śuka and Jadabharata that if people scoff at or abuse, if they throw mud and dust, they will remain calm and unperturbed? A real *sādhu* is one into whose serenity praise or censure makes no dent'.

Observing a devotee's excessive attachment towards worldly enjoyment, Lātu Maharaj once said, 'You see, when your minds are warped, and acts are crooked, I

suffer great pain. Had your love for me been genuine could you have inflicted such pain on me? Your love for the *sādhu* is only lip-deep, otherwise how is it that you do not follow one of his instructions? You have not married and yet you cannot give up your desire to see the dance performances of bad characters in the theatres. You know, those who prepare themselves for leading a monk's life should be so strict in their external behaviour as not to look at a doll or pictures of women far less of one in a bad posture. If your self-restraint in the beginning goes so far as that, then only you will be able to lead a pure life and enjoy the blessedness of it. When you are ascending a staircase your eyes should always be at a higher level than where your feet are and you should, now and then, look up to the goal, to prevent deviation, long before a wrong step is actually taken. Similarly you should bestow your full attention on ensuring that each step you take is in the right direction, fixing your mind on the Lord and on the process of enthroning Him in your heart. If you look down, look on woman and wealth, you will slip and have a fall'.

Lātu Maharaj had two ways of imparting instructions, indirectly through jokes and gibes and directly through mild scolding. Indiscriminate imitation of others (which he used to say 'copy' others), idling away one's time, harming others — against all these he used his direct method. His pointed forceful words (where did they gush out from at such

times we do not know) acted on our hearts like bayonet jabs; but instead of drooping, our spirit used to rouse our latent powers and enable us to overcome the defects — we were roused to a new consciousness, determined to lead a nobler life. But all these sharp reproofs had but one aim, our spiritual uplift, therefore they were so sweet and loving. One day I could not resist the temptation of expressing my gratitude to him in the following way: 'Maharaj, your sharp scoldings are chocolates in the shape of bayonets, they are so sweet, so loving. Parents also scold for the good of the children; but your chidings are sweeter still; parents cannot bestow so much love on us. Where will they get such overwhelming good will for the flowering of our spiritual life?' You have girded up your loins to make men of us, all your actions and utterances are directed towards that one end. It is for this reason that they appeal to our hearts so irresistibly. Cynics and atheists like ourselves are awakened with a rude shock and the journey is resumed afresh. Please know your words of criticism never pain us. The mercy that you bestow on us is simply unspeakable. Girishbabu once said, "In this deep dark world of ours, great souls alone are our guiding stars". To travellers like ourselves, faint of heart and waylaid, mad and intoxicated, the bright steady light of yours is our only hope and guide. We are sure, under your guidance we will surely be men'.

(To be concluded)

Freedom is the first condition of growth. What you do not make free, will never grow. The idea that you can make others grow, and help their growth, that you can direct and guide them, always retaining for yourself the freedom of the teacher, is nonsense, a dangerous lie, which has retarded the growth of millions and millions of human beings in this world. Let man have the light of liberty. That is the only condition of growth. . . . Through freedom the sciences were huilt.

* * * *

All human knowledge proceeds out of experience; we cannot know anything except by experience. All our reasoning is based upon generalized experience, all our knowledge is but harmonized experience.

— SWAMI VIVEKANANDA.

are there who can meditate and practise Japa all the time? At first they earnestly practise these disciplines, but their brains become heated in the long run by sitting constantly on their prayer rugs. They become very vain. They also suffer from mental worries by reflecting on different things. It is much better to work than to allow the mind to roam at large. For when the mind gets a free scope to wander, it creates much confusion. My Naren (Swami Vivekananda) thought of these things and wisely founded institutions where people would do disinterested work'.⁵

On another occasion when a disciple was passing through a difficult time in his spiritual endeavour and was finding it impossible to continue his meditation, it was she who prescribed the right remedy and cured him of the tension he was experiencing. Instances can be multiplied to show how simple and effective were her ways of dealing with spiritual problems. Could one who is not oneself a knower of God direct another correctly to his goal?

⁵ *Sri Sarada Devi, The Holy Mother.* Pub. Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras-4. p. 526. Third Edition, 1958.

It is an impossibility. Even in the mundane world one cannot teach a subject of which he has himself no knowledge. What then to speak of the knowledge of the inner life!

Thus we see that we fail to recognize, an incarnation, a divine being, due to a want in our own perspectives. We have a tendency to overlook whatever is easily accessible. And this has arisen from the fact that we look for gorgeous and glorious things that are perceived by our senses. In other words we are bound by our senses and inhibitions. But spirituality is what transcends the senses; how then is it possible for man to know it through them? Then what is the way? The way is to go beyond the senses i.e., to acquire purity of mind, to empty the mind of all desires and passions. How can it be done? To say it briefly, it can be done only through filling the mind with God, by the thought of God, His contemplation. The more we fill our mind with God the more empty it becomes of the other impressions, and the more we are able to do this the better will we be able to contact the divine beings, even though they may not be present in the physical frame.

MEMOIRS OF SWAMI ADBHUTANANDA

(A free translation of the Bengali book *Smritikatha*)

(Continued from the previous issue)

THERE were people who passed off as devotees but whose lack of self-restraint — camouflaged in devotional tears and performance of social duties — should class them with others. These could not hide their real self from Lātu Maharaj's observing eyes. But he would not expose them before others. Instead, he would try to rectify their defects by holding before them the glorious picture of a life of renunciation and dispassion and encouraging them to imitate such lives. He was not blind to their social excellences or to their aspirations of being devotees

of God but he would like to point out to them that without self-control, God cannot be realized; that shedding tears at the mention of God's name is not enough and that social virtues are not the be-all and end-all of human life; that self-analysis and self-restraint are the very spine of human character. He would pointedly say, 'My child, just analyze your mind and see for yourself how many terrible complexes are there, what sharks and crocodiles are swimming about in it ever seeking their prey. With such dangers lurking about how can you have peace of mind? Go on

candidly reciting the word "holiness", saturate your mind with its content, let the whole personality be soaked in it. When you are thus made pure and holy then you will understand our holy Lord, then only will you understand your relation with Him'. Such exhortations, prompted by divine love, cannot go waste.

Once Maharaj started talking to a devotee in this wise : ' You are going to the (Belur) Math, mixing with the people there. How is it that the craving in your mind for base enjoyments has not ceased? They are as strong and wayward as ever. They are all crawling and creeping within your mind like serpents. Why can't you keep to the straight way? You do evil things stealthily. By that you may hoodwink others, but how can you cheat yourself and God? You may throw dust into others' eyes but how can you evade His eyes? If you go on transgressing the dietary rules of the mind in this way, how can your mental disease be cured? If you want to be saved give up this double-dealing. One who obeys the commands of his *sādhu-guru* will be saved from going to pieces. Even gods cannot harm one who has a stout faith in his *guru*, and follows his instructions to the letter and in spirit. Remember this well'.

In the course of a conversation Lātu Maharaj one day said, ' Just look at the peculiarity of your Bengal and compare it with that of U. P. In the latter State, in days of yore Sri Rama was born and the people are adhering to him even today ; whereas in Bengal so many incarnations of God, prophets and saints were born and they delivered their messages and by the turn of a century the distortations of their messages have started. Here nothing survives in its purity. Centering round each such personality hundreds of sects arise, have their heydays and are gone off the surface of the land. The pest of woman and gold blights everything. The kernel has vanished and they carry on interminable wrangles over the husks. All this is the play of Mahāmāyā ! What else can it be? Master used to sing that old song : " Such is the magic of my Mother, the Great Magician, that all (including the *devas* and

devīs) are under its spell, stupified and bewildered. Blind-folding all, She has let them loose to play hide-and-seek in this world. The magic wand She has kept in her hand." The thickness of dark egoism is so great that they do not know themselves ; how would they know the Lord of the universe? But whoever has got the grace of a real *guru* is disillusioned and is saved. Blessed indeed are such people'.

Seeing a devotee extremely dejected at the worries of a householder's life, Lātu Maharaj encouraged him with the following words : ' You want, my boy, to enjoy the good things of the world only. And whenever sufferings come you would like to throw them on the shoulders of a *sādhu*, and be free. Is it not? Don't you know that once you walk into the trap of *avidyā* you will have to accept sufferings also? And there are more sufferings in the world than enjoyments. How can you expect peace here, not to speak of bliss? Remember, enjoyment is the source of troubles ; and renunciation, of peace and happiness. But renunciation does not necessarily mean giving up this householder's life and taking up *sannyasa*. True renunciation is in one's mind. The entire universe is Māyā's domain, all, *sādhus* and householders, are under Her jurisdiction. Only a mind that has succeeded in giving up desires for enjoyment has gone out of Her reach. And it is such minds that can know and realize God. To know God and to enjoy the good things of the world can never go together ; they are as contradictory as light and darkness. The more a mind is attached to enjoyments, the more it slides down into the pit of worldliness and goes farther away from God. Enjoyment softens and weakens the mind ; renunciation fortifies and strengthens it. God's power works through renunciation, that holds us up to Him. Renunciation makes a man divine. The man who is treading the path of renunciation knows how much peace, how much bliss, is there?'

People who were branded as bad and despised were especial objects of his love and affection. He would go out of his way to

befriend them, he would walk publicly placing his hand round their necks, would caress them fondly. Having himself cut off all connexions with the world, he carried so much love for the worldlings that they often found themselves literally bathed in tears of joy and gratitude. And yet in this love of his there was no touch of Māyā. When the holy divine love percolates to suffering humanity through pure and earnest hearts of realized souls it transforms the sorrowing, suffering world into a celestial garden of peace and happiness. Whoever came in contact with this childlike holy soul have felt a unique attraction for being his, in every sense of the phrase. This pure love of his, so freely administered, made it easy for many souls who, otherwise, would never have dared to climb, to undertake the ascent to God, all roughs and risks of the road having been smoothened and cleared by his encouragement.

Attracted by the lure of 'woman and gold' if some unfortunate soul had a fall he was not deprived of the love and affection of this friend of the fallen and the drunken. He could understand that the man is repentant, and he tried in various ways to bring him back to the path of righteousness, to reinstate him to his lost manliness. In a tone mellowed with mercy he would say, 'Why should you convert this invaluable human life into that of a beast? Of all attractions there is nothing more ruinous for human life than the one for women. Sex-indulgence, pleasurable in the beginning, leaves one, washed off of all strength and intelligence, in remorse and contrition only'. Thus bathed in the stream of this great soul's mercy and kindness, fallen man's fire of indulgence in sense-pleasures would extinguish; he would forget the evil path and return to the royal road of normal life; some would go farther and live a nobler virtuous life. Whenever Lātu Maharaj's topic would come up a friend of mine could not restrain his emotion and in choked voice would express his gratitude to him. Once he said, 'You speak of his mercy? What instances of his kindness do you know? I, then a fallen,

despised worm, bear witness to his limitless mercy. His love won me back to him; still I considered myself weak to resist the temptation if I walked the street alone from Lātu Maharaj's room to my house. Oh! How many nights did he come with me all the way to the door of my house — only to save me! His mercy knew no bounds, no distinction between the fallen and the virtuous and was regardless of public criticism'. And he would burst into sobs and tears for some minutes. Who will not under such circumstances? Such all-absorbing love is possible only in such hearts where there is a never-ceasing flow of love for humanity. It is this love for humanity which used to drag this soul, ever absorbed in meditation, out of its depth and forced him to indulge in such wonderful charity. And it is this alone which made it possible for people like us, poor in every respect, to establish some sort of relationship with him, whose mind mostly dwelt in a region which was beyond our reach, even in several life-times. When he used to talk of renunciation and when we observed his many acts of mercy we were sometimes led to believe that to him renunciation meant love, indiscriminate distribution of unending love.

The fact that he was illiterate and plebeian was a great asset to the poor and the neglected, even to the riffraffs, for all these classes had easier access to him than others — they used to regard him as their own, and he also never failed to reciprocate their feeling. We definitely know of some people who were poor, illiterate, and given to bad ways, who, having come in contact with him and keeping his company, learnt to keep under control their evil tendencies; were raised above all fear and suspicion, became devoted to his service, and would be living in an atmosphere of peculiar joy they did not understand. He loved them all as his especial people; taught them with infinite patience how to protect themselves from temptations and to discharge their duties; encouraged them to take to the path of righteousness, and hearing the tales of their daily woes mingled his tears with theirs. The

shower of his mercy was more soothing and comforting than that of any parents. It is through the hundred and one trivial acts of their daily life which did not attract anyone's attention that this great soul's mercy used to flow to these people, healing their wounds and scars, inflicted by a cruel arrogant world. These, it appears to us, are the best instances of the greatness of this too simple saint of our time.

Once Bāburam Maharaj (Swami Premananda) encouraged us and said, 'Cast all your fears to the four winds ; when Lātu Maharaj who is kindness itself has bestowed his mercy on you, you need have no fear. Such a loving *sādhu* is rarely seen. By simply breathing in the air blowing from his direction you will all be purified, blessed'.

Swami Vivekananda one day encouraged a devotee of Lātu Maharaj in these words, 'Youngman, it is not for all to give up the world and become a *sādhu*. That idea does not possess everyone like a ghost. Why bother about that? Don't you see the great change that has come over you by keeping Lātu's company? Formerly you passed hours at night in drains, used to eat poisonous sweets of filth ; and now you get real sweets, *sandeshes*. You have the direct experience of what keeping a *sādhu's* company means.'

Swami Brahmananda said : 'Why are you afraid to go to Lātu Maharaj? How many such *sādhus* can you find—so austere, so strict in observing the guiding principles of a *sādhu's* life? Yes, he has kept up a rough exterior, that is to avoid a crowd ; but inside him it is all mercy and kindness. If you mix with him just a few days you will find him free of egoism, even that of a *sādhu*. It is due to great merits in previous births that a man gets the company of such a *sādhu*. Again mark this : You were born at a place and I at another. It is the pull of our Master's love for us that has made us come together. We are his children, Lātu is equally so. This relationship of ours, in and through our Master, is our greatest tie. You also come here, thanks to this relation. The results of

keeping company of *sādhus* you will surely experience one day, it will not go in vain. Or do you think it is a question of shopping — you give money and immediately you get the thing? It is, of course, not so easy and quick in coming. The company you keep now, the words you hear ; they leave an impression on your mind. In course of time you will find how these impressions will have been working in the sub-conscious and what momentous changes will have been brought about in your life. *Sādhus'* company creates a new mould for one's life and the casting and dying take a little time. You know insects in association with flowers come to the feet of deities ; association with *sādhus* takes one to a higher region than that of deities, in fact to the feet of the Supreme Lord Himself'.

The intrepid devotee Girishbabu says about Lātu Maharaj : 'People speak of moonlight as stainless and soothing. There might be stain in a moon-beam, but our Lātu is absolutely stainless. Such spotless *sādhu* I have never seen. Air blowing from his direction purifies everything it touches. His blessings are unailing in their effects, are productive of highest good—*sādhus* will find their ideal, householders will learn to tread the path of self-restraint'.

Mahendranath Datta praising him unreservedly said, 'In the personality of Lātu there dwelt a super-abundance of power acquired through hard spiritual practices. It is this power which manifested itself, in various ways, in lucid explanation of deepest spiritual truths. The seekers of Truth were simply charmed at this. Philosophers and scholars bowed their heads down to this power. We observed his gradual development into love-personified. He could no longer discriminate between the high and the low, between the deserving and the undeserving. Even to well-known wicked persons Lātu used to bestow his love equally, would pour down his sympathy unreservedly. I noticed it minutely, that outwardly he remained the same old Lātu, but inwardly he changed into a great saint full of peace and

bliss and bathing all in pure love of transcendent beauty'.

Rai Bahadur Biharilal writes, 'Coming in contact with great spiritual personalities it is but usual that people are greatly benefited. So whoever had the good fortune of coming in contact with Lātu Maharaj, a rare personality perhaps in heaven also, were immensely benefited. To keep his company was really something unearthly. Among lakhs of *sādhus* to find one who was dedicated to God alone, whose mind was never crossed by any other idea, and whose body and mind was made holy and pure to the atom, by an unbroken series of practices of renunciation and austerities, was indeed a rare privilege in life. And Lātu Maharaj was such a soul, and his company was such a privilege. In the great epic enacted by Sri Ramakrishna in modern times Lātu Maharaj plays the same all-purifying role as was played by Mahavira in the great epic, *Ramayana*, depicting Sri Rama's life in the Treta Yuga.

'Lātu Maharaj is our great friend and eternal refuge — Lātu Maharaj, who used to send, day and night, currents of good will for us and who never spared any pains to alleviate our spiritual difficulties and improve our lives in all possible ways. In this arduous travels of our lives he has caught hold of our hands and never has loosened the hold a little, though we, incorrigible extroverts as we are, could never understand and appreciate his real greatness. For our welfare here and blessedness hereafter, he has unsparingly given away the great merits he accumulated by his hard life — long austerities. Unselfishness of such magnitude is not human; it is possible in such loving *sādhus* alone whose life is not only guided by the motto of 'self-realization' but of 'general welfare of all'. Each one of Sri Ramakrishna's Sannyasin disciples is noted for his great heart; Lātu Maharaj's greatness lies here — in his all-embracing loving heart.

'Good counsels there are many to give — and they do give a little more frequently than asked for — but the sample of a spotless life lived strictly in accordance with them is rarely

met with. What renunciation and dispassion he practised, what hard spine-breaking austerities he underwent do not come to our view so much as the transcendent beautiful personality, the end-result of all these practices. We are bewitched by the grace and beauty of this life, but are not tempted, lazy and earth-bound as we are, to undergo a little of that *sādhana* that brought about such greatness in the object of our admiration. We forget again and again what he taught us times without number, that the Truth was not a thing that could be acquired by begging of others, was not, as he used to say, a chocolate in a child's hand that one could cajole it out of him; but a thing that could be earned by tremendous self-exertion, which, however, was by itself not enough but which led to Guru's grace, which immediately brought to fruition all endeavours in life. Lātu Maharaj would very often say, "Lord undoubtedly is the giver; but He does not give to one who would not put up hard work. Begging does not remove our wants, does not satiate our soul's hunger".

'This austere soul, born with perfect dispassion to everything of the world, used to mix freely with house-holders of all sorts; but never, did a feather of this unique swan get wet with the dirty water of the world; never did he establish any worldly relation with anyone of his numerous devotees. His helping hand was ever stretched to drag out people from the stinking ditches of the world, but the stink never touched his nostrils. Himself remaining high above the reach of the spoiling hand of the world, he was beaming out universal love and friendship all around — this was the peculiarity of our Lātu Maharaj.'

Whoever was lucky to come in contact with this uncommon ever blissful *mahātma*, whoever got a bit of his irresistible love would like to talk about him and get a peculiar joy in such talks. Those devotees who would be overawed by the gravity of some of the senior *sādhus* of the (Belur) Math and would exchange just a few words with them, with great reverence and would fain come away, would be seen engaged in free talks for

hours with him ; their hearts fully opened out to this ever jolly soul of infinite love. He too, would mix with them as freely, and sometimes, like a child, would show anger and sometimes would abandon himself to hilarity, being just one of them — drowning his greatness completely in the mirth, and making others forget it simply to join in the fun. His talks on serious matters were interspersed with much fun and merriment. He would give them such a long rope, that each devotee, everyone in the audience, was forced to accept him as really one of them ; and in this merry abandon was created an atmosphere of joy and happiness which was qualitatively different from that which the worldlings knew of and wanted to enjoy. Here

was the especial trait of Lātu Maharaj's character. Our hungry heart wanted food, he would give us a high dose of love ; our frayed spirits wanted a healing balm, he would not only give us consolation but would rock us in mirth and laughter. He fulfilled our needs in abundance in the way we wanted. This is why he has become a part of our being, he is enshrined in our heart permanently. To become organically connected with the sorrowing, suffering, despised and neglected humanity is the peculiar greatness of this seraph. Recollection of a word or phrase of his, of his smile or pose, of his rebuke and affection is and will ever remain our greatest treasure in life.

(Concluded)

TWO FAVOURITE SONGS OF LATU MAHARAJ

भज मन रामचरण दिनराति ।
 श्री रामचरण कर रे ध्यान मे
 होयेगा दुःख निपाति
 जब यम आवेगा तलब लगावेगा
 चडके बैठेगा छाति ।
 मातापिता कुटुम्बका बोले ना
 कोई होयेगा साथी ।

I

रामचरण बिना को नेको भैया
 ए भवसागरपार,
 (अरे)ए भवसागरपार ।
 ए दुनियामे कोई नहीं अपना—
 रामचरण सुखसार
 (अरे)रामचरण सुखसार ।
 जगकि पालन सो हि भगवान्
 सो हि जगतको प्राण—
 भज दिनरयना तांको चरण
 रामप्रभुजी हमार
 (अरे) श्री रामप्रभुजी हमार ।

II

Worship, O mind the two lotus-feet of Sri Rama day and night, O mind, day and night ; and meditate on them, and meditate on them. All your troubles will be over. When Yama, the god of death, will come and call you to his abode and ride on your chest, your parents and relatives will not speak a word in your favour, nobody will befriend you. Rama alone will be your friend, so worship, O mind the lotus-feet of Sri Rama.

There is nobody, brother, nothing, on earth except the two lotus-red feet of Sri Rama to take you across the ocean of worldliness. No one is on earth yours ; Rama's feet, the quintessence of nectar are alone your sole possession. Rama is the Lord of the Universe, its soul, its maintainer ; so day and night worship Him devotedly. He is my Lord, my life, my all, my all.