

Baba Shri Mastram Ji:
A Biographical Sketch and Spiritual Principles

KANSHI RAM
NANI MA

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Kanshi Ram
Apartment No. 002
At Tower V GH-03
Hyde Park Sector 78, Noida
Gautam Budh Nagar, U. P.

© AUTHORS

Prologue

The Holistic Science Research Centre, Kamrej, Surat organized a National Seminar on Innovative Spirituality Revisiting The Life, Philosophy and Teachings of Saints of Modern India in collaboration with Indian Council of Philosophical Research, New Delhi. In the capacity as one of the organizers Professor Godabarish Mishra, Department of Philosophy, Madras University invited me to present a paper on Baba Shri Mastramji, a unique saint of modern India. I told Nani Ma about this. She also concurred that I should make use of this opportunity to throw some light on the life and philosophy of Babaji. I prepared a write-up and showed it to Nani Ma. She approved it and I presented this paper on Jivanmukta Baba Shri Mastramji on 13-03-2021. It is this event which inspired me to prepare a monograph which throws some light on the life and philosophy of Babaji.

Little opportunity arose which could serve as a catalyst to gain familiarity with the early life of Baba Śrī Mastramji, his parents or his native place. He himself rarely mentioned anything which could throw light on these circumstances, and therefore such details have, for the most part, remained hidden. However, from the replies given to the questions of visitors and from the hints dropped during conversations with the devotees a sketchy account has been attempted by both of us in the present monograph. Babaji's utter indifference to the things related to his physical life shows that Babaji was dispassion-incarnate.

It is worth mentioning that Nani Ma remained in the spiritual vicinity of Babaji from 1971 to 1987. During these sixteen years she was guided by Babaji in her spiritual journey. She witnessed many events which throw light on ways of living of a realised person. On the basis of her stay under Babaji's supervision several biographical anecdotes were written by Nani Ma which have been uploaded on the website designed by my grand-daughter to propagate the teachings of Babaji. These anecdotes have gone a long way in the preparation of this monograph.

We now humbly present this brief write-up which throws some light on his life and his spiritual principles which have been culled from the book entitled Śrīmadbhagavadgītā Mastabhāṣya (681 pages) in which daily discourses of Babaji from 9th December, 1965 to 28th March, 1967 are given.

Kanshiram and Nani Ma

Abbreviations

B. G. = Shrimadbhagavadgita
RC = Ramacharitamanasa
VR = Valmiki Ramayana

ॐ श्रीपरमात्मने नमः
सद्गुरवे बाबाश्रीमस्तरामाय नमः

Baba Shri Mastramji: A Biographical Sketch and Spiritual Principles

The place which Babaji chose to live out the last phase of his physical life was the beach of Gangaji where Hanumanshila is found. There is a Gufa (cave) near Hanumashila, which being favourable for meditation, etc. became Babaji's dwelling place before he made the present Gufa his abode. The beaches near Hanumanshila are covered with sand and in a few places strewn with pebbles. There are also many large rocks and boulders which provide shade in the summer and can also serve as niches for the dispassionate to sleep at night. The natural stream of Gangaji is unusual at this point. There is a straight westward flow of water in the river here but exactly opposite the Gufa there is also a reverse current which causes an invisible whirlpool-like effect. Consequently, the place can be unsafe for bathing if the person is unfamiliar with the currents. Philosophically, however, the reverse current could be taken as symbolising the arresting of the naturally outgoing flow of our sense organs and their consequent turning inward so as to dive deep into the space of the cave of the heart. That space is Brahman as explained by Śrī Śaṅkarācārya in his commentary of the Daharavidyā in the Chāndogya Upaniṣad, 8. 1. 1 "Now in this domain of Brahman, there is a dwelling place which is like a small lotus and within it a smaller space. That which is within that space should you seek, that should you desire to know" अथ यदिदमस्मिन्ब्रह्मपुरे दहरं पुण्डरीकं वेश्म दहरोऽस्मिन्नन्तराकाशस्तस्मिन्यदन्तस्तदन्वेष्टव्यं तद्वाव विजिज्ञासितव्यमिति. From the point of view of Bhakti (devotion) we can say that Gangaji turns back at this point to catch a glimpse of that rare and purifying phenomenon, a jīvanmukta (a sage who is realised while still living).

This scenic spot, where Babaji's ashram can be found, is located in the majestic foothills of the Himalayan Shivalik range about 800 meters up the stream from Ram Jhoola (Shivananda Jhoola) and almost the same distance down the stream from Lakshman Jhoola in Rishikesh. The ashram nestles on Gangaji's southern bank overlooked by the forested slopes of the nearby mountains. Gangaji's main stream flows serenely here, her deep yet limpid water resembling the unfathomable yet lucid expanse of Supreme Consciousness. The tranquil environment of the ashram is uplifting and ideal for spiritual practices.

We can begin our short account of the highly venerated Baba Śrī Mastramji by quoting one of his most sublime compositions, which succinctly describes his state of realisation and also symbolically the spiritual journey of a serious and devoted seeker.

अथ विरक्तगीतम्
 आदौ वसन्तात्शीतान्तकाले
 गावोऽपि यस्मिन्यान्ति प्रकम्पम्।
 अश्वत्थमूले रिक्तो विरक्तः
 जङ्घां हनुं च संयुज्य सम्यक् ॥ १ ॥
 सम्पूर्णरात्रौ संचिन्त्य किञ्चिद् गर्भस्थबालो यद्वद्धि तद्वत्।
 प्रातःप्रकाशं प्राचीं प्रतीक्ष्य
 गीतं समागात्स्वस्थस्तदित्थम् ॥ २
 याता त्रियामा जातं प्रभातम्
 भास्वान्प्रभूतः शीतं समाप्तं गीतं समाप्तम् ॥ ३ ॥
 इति विरक्तगीतम् ॥

The beginning of the vernal season (वसन्त) mentioned in the Song of Renunciation represents new birth into knowledge and the end of winter (शीतान्तकाले) symbolises the end of ajñāna. The cows which represent our sense organs shiver during the changing season. With their outward going propensities having been weakened by spiritual practices, the sense organs tremble as, weaned away from their sense objects, they become increasingly subtle and begin to merge into their origin. The root of the Aśvattha tree symbolises Brahman. Sitting under

it means remaining incessantly absorbed in contemplation on Brahman. The term *rikta* means empty. This could refer to the absence of any worldly possessions or that the mind has ceased to think and is totally devoid of any modifications. The word *virakta* indicates utter absence of expectation of anything worldly. The joining of the chin and knees represents the state of a baby in the womb which is about to be born, that is which is about to enter into another state of being. The process of thinking the whole night is speaking of unbroken attention on the Ultimate Reality, that is *nididhyāsana* which generally happens after *śravaṇa* and *manana* have been duly completed. The suffix *lyap* occurring in two verbal forms *samcintya* and *pratikṣya* actually denotes no time-gap between the annihilation of ignorance and the attainment of the summum bonum. 'A song arose (गीतं समागात्)' means that he was established in the Self (स्वस्थस्तदित्थम्). The night of ignorance has passed and the effulgent Sun (भास्वान्मभूतः) symbolizing the knowledge of Brahman has risen. The cold season representing *ajñāna* has come to an end (शीतं समाप्तं) and also the song of worldly appearances has ceased to exist (गीतं समाप्तम्).

In this context, it would be pertinent, to bring into focus a very important statement of Śrī Śaṅkarācārya, which throws light on the state of *brahmāvīrbhāva*, that is the state of liberation. The statement reads वाक्यार्थविचारणाध्यवसाननिर्वृत्ता हि ब्रह्मावगतिः, *Brahmasūtra*, 1. 1. 2, which means : The realization of Brahman is indeed accomplished when the inquiry into the Vedantic texts has reached consummation. Vācaspatimiśra explains this statement as : विचारस्याध्यवसानं सवासनाविद्याद्वयोच्छेदः। ततो हि ब्रह्मावगतेर्निर्वृत्तिराविर्भावः which means: The consummation of enquiry into the Vedantic text leads to the annihilation of the twofold *avidyā* along with the impressions and then *Brahmabhavana* (discovering oneself as Brahman) ensues. Though the explanation given by Vācaspatimiśra gives an impression that the realization is a consequence of the annihilation of the two-fold *avidyā*, there is actually no time-gap intended between the destruction of the twofold *avidyā*

and discovering oneself as Brahman lest liberation should become a product which as such is not eternal. This has been made clear by Madhusūdana Sarasvatī in his Advaitasiddhi, chapter 4, where he says that the final mental mode is nothing but the end of ignorance and the end of ignorance has been equated with the liberated state (वस्तुतस्तु अविद्यानिवृत्तेर्वृत्तिरूपतया न निवर्तकखण्डनावकाशः वृत्तिनिवृत्तेरात्मरूपतया न तज्जनकखण्डनावकाशोऽपीति सर्वमवदात्म). According to him the removal of avidyā is of the form of akhaṇḍākāravṛtti, which therefore does not require any explanation for its disposal. Similarly the cessation of akhaṇḍākāravṛtti is equated with the nature of the Self. So, there is no need to explain that brahmāvirbhāva follows the cessation of akhaṇḍākāravṛtti. Thus apparently the three final spiritual events are intended to happen concurrently. In other words, they ensue simultaneously.

Little opportunity arose which could serve as a catalyst to gain familiarity with the early life of Baba Śrī Mastramji, his parents or his native place. He himself rarely mentioned anything which could throw light on these circumstances, and therefore such details have, for the most part, remained hidden. We know little before he became known to the people in Rishikesh. What we know about him is that before he had moved, probably in early sixties, to Hanumanshila, midway between (Shivanand Bridge) Rama Jhoola and Lakṣmaṇa Jhoola, he used to sit under a banyan tree near the Vanaprastha ashram in Swargashram or on the ghat near Gita Bhavan. His arrival in the Hanumanshila region is inferable from the book entitled Śrīmadbhagavadgītā Mastabhāṣya (681 pages) in which daily discourses of Babaji from 9th December, 1965 to 28th March, 1967 are given, as these discourses were delivered at Hanumanshila. It is known from earlier devotees of Babaji that prior to 1968 he used to stay near Hanumanshila before the rains began and during the rainy season he used to go to Badrinath barefooted with a single cotton chadar on his person. From 1969 onwards he did not go to Badarinath but remained in the Hanumanshila region. In the summer afternoons he used to rest in the shade of Hanumanshila but

in winter he sat there on the beach in the sun. Babaji seemed to very much like to lie on the sand of the Ganga. The place where Babaji sat near the Hanumanshila is known as the Math, with Hanumanshila overlooking it. At night he slept under this or that boulder. In the beginning he stayed in a cave adjacent to the Hanumanshila but later he made the present cave his dwelling place. He ceased to stay there in the rainy season since it was inundated with water. At the approach of Navaratra, the cave was again renovated with earth and cowdung. There was a terrace at the entrance of the cave where in the evening, devotees used to sit in front of Babaji. At this Ashram there was also the Dharmashala, which was made with wooden sleepers and tarpaulins without the use of brick and cement. This Dharmashala acted as a hall for Satsang. In the mornings and late afternoons Babaji used to sit with visitors sitting on his right and left. Most of the time silence reigned in his presence. He occasionally spoke in response to questions of visitors and sometimes elaborated the points raised by them.

When told about Babaji by an acquaintance of mine, I made up my mind to pay a visit to him since I was always in search of such spiritually enlightened persons. I first had his darshana in June, 1981. I was overwhelmed by his presence and felt that this was the end of my search for enlightened persons. The impression was so profound that I could not resist my urge to visit him again in the autumn break of the University of Delhi, although I had injured my foot very badly. I came to Rishikesh to bathe in his benign and spiritually overwhelming presence, crying on the way due to intense pain in my foot.

This was my first experience of seeing a person who was free from identification with the body, which is possible only when one has realized the true nature of the Self. Also this happens only when one has practised extreme renunciation. Such an experience confers on one the capability to transcend the bodily limits. Otherwise, how could Babaji live in Badarinath with a single cotton chadar on his body. All the characteristics of a jīvanmukta or sthitaprajña were

discernible in him. I never saw him fear anything. It is said that fear arises from the cognition of duality (द्वितीयाद्वै भयं भवति, Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, 1. 4. 2). Absence of fear shows that the Reality is one and Babaji was not separate from It. Equanimity never deserted him whether he was praised and garlanded or somebody spoke ill of him. He never hated anyone. I also saw and heard about many extremely painful physical states which he underwent without seeking to be free from them. That is, he never took recourse to any formal treatment. This is possible in the case of a person who is an embodiment of Advaita. Here I want to narrate one incident which vouchsafes this state of Babaji.

Once when he was about to take bath in the Ganga near Benares, he had to wade through marshy water in order to reach the main stream of the river. At that time, he was stung by a poisonous fish, known in that area as Sakuchi. A group of villagers who were standing nearby understood that Babaji had been stung by the fish and told him that the fish is very poisonous. They explained that the sting is very painful and very difficult to cure. In fact the only way to heal the wound is to apply a red hot iron to the wound for three consecutive days. The villagers suggested that Babaji should stay there for three days so that they could treat the wound for him to avoid further complications. Babaji allowed them to heat an iron rod and apply it to the wound. As the flesh sizzled, Babaji felt glowing iron to be cool like sandalwood and he experienced relief from the pain of the sting. As Babaji refused to go to their village with them, the villagers then left him alone telling him that they would return in the morning to repeat the treatment. At that time Babaji followed a rule of not staying in one place for more than one night. So in the early morning he slipped away before the villagers arrived and continued on his wanderings. The wound did not heal and soon began to fester. In this condition Babaji continued on foot for about 800 miles but because of the septic wound he began to suffer from fever. One night while Babaji was sleeping on a beach, attracted by the smell of the wound, a jackal came near him

and bit into the festering flesh. Babaji made no attempt to drive it away although it ran off when it realized that Babaji was alive. The saliva of the animal seemed to have a healing effect and the wound began to dry up leaving a huge scar just above Babaji's ankle. We can understand from this event that since Babaji was an avadhoot sannyasin, he did not try to get the wound medically treated in a normal way in the village by staying in the village for three consecutive days as the villagers requested because if he had done so it would have gone against the observance of a sannyasin. Such a story helps us see that Babaji lived his life as an exemplary sannyasin who never wavered from his path of renunciation.

As told by Nani Ma Babaji was born in a cowshed in a purohit family and his mother breathed her last two or three days after his birth. His maternal grandmother became his foster mother. His schooling took place in a local pathashala as he could not get an opportunity to study in a modern English school as he broke his arm at the time when he could get admission in such a school. He never gave any hint about his native place except that there was a Hanuman temple on a hillock nearby. When he was about 16 years of age, he had a desire to go to a Kumbha Mela. Wearing Kurta and Pyjama and having some five rupees, he set out to visit the Kumbha Mela. After that he did not return home. When the spirit of renunciation overtook him, he just made up his mind to renounce and sent message to his father by writing 'athāto vairāgyam' on a postcard. Consequently, he decided to live like a sadhu. He made a sort of small bag by tying the corners of a cloth so that he could keep in it whatever he would get as bhiksha. When he was about to enter a village for bhiksha, he happened to meet a sannyasin who was returning from the village after collecting bhiksha. He asked Babaji whether he was going to the village to collect bhiksha. Babaji said 'Yes'. The sannyasin said that he got ample bhiksha and offered him to share it. Babaji took it as a hint from Providence and took a vow not to beg anymore. He lived on whatever came his way without begging. He mentioned once that there was

a period of 14 days when he did not get anything to eat. After 14 days he happened to come across a bael tree and ate bael to satiate his appetite. Babaji usually took shelter under a tree or in a veranda of some temple or dharmashala, he never took shelter in a constructed place besides the veranda of a temple or a dharmashala. During this phase, he had only one piece of cloth to cover his body and nothing else, not even some utensil to keep water as he thought that water is available at all places then what is the need of keeping something to store even water. He used to keep that piece of cloth under his armpit when it rained and remained without any cloth on his body. After the rains stopped, he again put on the same cloth.

Thus, he remained on the path of sādhanā and we can surmise that he reached a point where he thought that even sādhanā reinforced the sense of individuality. Then, he probably sought to be in a state where even the slightest movement of thought arising as result of his association of past life or some concern about the future was not there. This is a state where an indescribable extreme despair and extreme hope reign supreme. This state is the precursor of the state of realization of the true nature of one's Self. Babaji probably expressed his state of realization in the viraktagītam referred to above by me.

I now want to tell how I looked at Baba Shri Mastramji. He was an embodiment of Advaita. According to Advaita Vedanta, the Reality is one and everything else is just a phenomenon superimposed on It. Let us first take the dream analogy. After performing day-to-day activities in the waking state, when we go to sleep, we usually dream. In that state, our sense and motor organs, which were active during waking state, cease to function. We see another created world in that state. We see trees, buildings, oceans, elephants, lions, etc. and we interact with them and our reactions are more or less on a par with those in the waking state. In that state, the whole phenomenon is a projection of our mind (manaḥspandana), Māṇḍūkya Kārikā, 3. 29. This mental creation appears external to us due to sleep. In a similar manner, the phenomenon

in the waking state really exists within us but appears to be outside us because of the force of ajñāna (Māyā). In this illustration ajñāna could be compared with sleep. Just as sleep is responsible for the projections of the mind appearing external to us, in the same way the waking phenomena which really exist in us appear to be outside us due to ajñāna. The mind along with its projections is superimposed on the Self. The rope-snake illustration also helps us to understand the concept of adhyāsa. At the dawn of the knowledge of Brahman, the illusory world ceases to exist. Only Brahman, i.e. only the Self remains just as at the disappearance of the snake, only the rope remains. The creation may be compared to the illusory snake and Brahman to the rope. When the removal of ajñāna takes place by virtue of the dawn of knowledge, the whole world ceases to exist outside the Self. The realized person sees himself everywhere. The following mantra endorses this fact convincingly:

यस्तु सर्वाणि भूतान्यात्मन्येवानुपश्यति।
सर्वभूतेषु चात्मानं ततो न विजुगुप्सते ॥ Īśa Up. 6

“He who sees all beings in the Self and the Self in all beings, ceases to hate anybody as a result of that. Babaji’s śloka in his Ātmacintanam also hints at that state of the realized person since it describes the state of a person before and after realization.”

अस्मिन्बृहति ब्रह्माण्डे लघुरूपोऽहमीदृशः।
आत्मतत्त्वे तु विज्ञाते लघुरूपोऽयमीदृशः ॥ Ātmacintanam, 21.

Not knowing the reality of the Self, one thinks, “In this vast universe I have such an insignificant form.” When the reality of the Self is known, then, “This vast universe has such an insignificant form.” That is to say, when the knowledge of the Self is gained, the universe, which is a fabrication of the mind, appears to be as no larger than a small fruit placed in the palm of one’s hand. In substance, this means that the universe is nothing but the Self just as the illusory snake is nothing but the rope.

To understand the concept of mutual superimposition, let us consider the popular expression 'The iron ball burns. In this illustration, the superimposition of the identity of iron ball with fire is mutual. Due to this, the circularity of the iron ball is superimposed on the fire and as such the fire appears to be round. Fire's capacity to burn is superimposed on the iron ball because of which we use the expression 'the iron ball burns' although, in fact, the iron ball does not have the capacity to burn. In a similar way, the mind and consciousness are mutually superimposed on each other. As a consequence, the mind appears to be conscious despite the fact that it is inert being a product of ajñāna and consciousness, even being devoid of any activity, appears to be assuming the agency of the acts of seeing, touching, etc. The superimposition of consciousness percolates to the body through mind and senses. Consequently mind, sense organs, body, etc. appear to be conscious and conversely the consciousness appears to be thinking, perceiving and doing various activities.

Last days

When the Kumbha Mela was held in Haridwar in April, 1986, many pilgrims visited Babaji and touched his feet in reverence. Babaji soon began to suffer from fever, which was a usual phenomenon for him after a Kumbha Mela. Whenever Babaji had fever he would not eat anything. Normally when the fever was over, he would start to take his usual meals. But this time Babaji did not begin taking food again in a normal manner. His food intake remained substantially reduced and as a consequence, his body began to be emaciated.

According to Rishipalji (an old devotee) Babaji almost gave up taking food after Govardhana Puja (Annkuta day) in 1986. On Hanuman Jayanti, 13 April, 1987, Babaji's body became so weak that he could not go to Hanumanshila as he usually did on this day. However, he was looking fairly okay, when I left for Delhi after my navarātri fast on Gangajal. Nani Ma told me that when the summer had properly set in, Babaji grew much weaker. In this situation it was difficult for him

to move in and out of the Gufa. Once when he was walking back from Dharmashala to the Gufa, he became exhausted and stopping near the small window of the Gufa rested his head on the stone above the Gufa. He said, "Babaji cannot go to the Dharmashala again."

When because of his deteriorating physical state, it became difficult for Babaji to climb in and out of the Gufa for normal physical functions, a grass hut was made at the place which at present is known as the Samadhi. The hut had two parts. A larger room where Babaji slept and gave darshan to his devotees and a smaller room which was used by Babaji to attend the calls of nature. As long as possible Babaji, would slowly come out of his hut and sit in front of it so that a larger number of devotees could have his darshan. Aarti was also held there in front of the hut. Although Babaji did not feel like eating, the devotees would try to coax him to eat something. Gradually, he was only taking liquids and later only water of tender coconuts which a devotee regularly sent from Delhi. Occasionally towards the end of his life Babaji would vomit saliva. Afraid of causing Babaji any discomfort while cleaning his beard and moustache, the devotees requested him that he might have a shave so that caring for him would not be troublesome for him. He gave his consent. Babaji was always very delicate. I myself felt the tenderness of his calves whenever I fortunately got the opportunity to massage his legs. Now because of his extreme weakness and delicacy, he was shaved while his head was kept in Nani Ma's lap.

Two or three weeks before he gave up his physical form, he took only fresh coconut water. Afterwards, Babaji gave up even the coconut water and only took Gangajal. Devotees were broken-hearted about the state of his health and tried to help him in their own way. Babaji, in his compassion for their feelings, allowed them to do whatever they wanted to do. At this point some devotees gave him allopathic medicines as well as a variety of traditional medicines and therapies and one day one devotee even administered a glucose drip. Another called a doctor who examined Babaji and said that there was

some lump in the abdomen, which could be a tumour or an entanglement of intestines due to absence of food and liquid intake. After examining Babaji, he said that the body was not likely to remain for more than 72 hours.

On the afternoon before Babaji entered Mahasamadhi, he asked someone to help him sit up. When he was in a sitting posture, he surprisingly performed a haṭhayoga kriyā known as Nauli. Later in the evening of the same day while inside the hut he told Nani Ma that there were two Vaiṣṇava babas outside who should be fed and given somewhere to sleep. It was these two Mahātmās who efficiently took charge of serving the grieving devotees in the days to come. On the last day of Babaji's life on earth, the devotees sat around Babaji chanting Bhagwan's name and filling their eyes and hearts with his divine darśana even as their hearts quaked with the thought that this might be the last time they would ever be so fortunate. In pursuance of Babaji's indication he was taken out of the hut and laid on the sand in front of the door. At the request of some of the devotees, Nani Ma rushed to the Kothi to bring malas of rudraksh and tulsi. She brought them and put them around Babaji's neck. His breathing became very slow. At 4.00 in the afternoon of Yogini Ekadashi, Babaji breathed in and he did not breathe out. In the Upaniṣads, it is mentioned that the prāṇas of the liberated Self do not depart. Being Brahman, he goes to Brahman, that is becomes identified with Brahman and the prāṇas are absorbed here itself.

Babaji's body looked like a skeleton but still shone with its usual radiance. There was a wooden Simhasana of deodar which had been made by Premji from a huge tree that had come down from the mountains in the flooded Gangaji during the previous monsoon. Babaji's body was seated on this Simhasana. In this posture he was worshipped at the samadhi. Throughout the night people from the nearby ashrams, villages and towns came for his last darshan. The next morning, the Simhasana was brought to the Dharmashala where Babaji usually sat surrounded by devotees. Here also a puja was again performed. Then the Simhasana was taken to the Gufa and placed on the

chabutara. After further puja everyone approached him one by one to make their last praṇāmas. The male devotees and babas washed his body in Gangaji and he was seated on the stones placed in wooden box made of sleepers cut from the same deodar tree which was brought by the flood waters of Ganga in the rainy season of 1986.

After due worship, the box was taken by a boat to the middle of the Gangaji opposite the ashram. Everybody was intently looking at the box which was filled with flowers and clothes from the puja. When the box was finally immersed in Gangaji among cries of 'Babaji Maharaj ki jai', a single flower mālā rose to the surface as the box sank out of sight. Two of the babas in the boat jumped into the water to retrieve that last prasāda. Three boats sent by local ashrams and filled with devotees eager to show their last respects circumambulated the place of immersion in reverence.

After the immersion ceremony, the Hanumanshila region appeared to be enveloped by gloom. As everyone took their bath in silence their tears mingled with Gangaji's clear water. The cries of "Babaji, Babaji" could be heard emanating from the Gufa where a young devotee sobbed her heart out echoing the deepest feelings of the devotees as they walked slowly away from the river.

The place which had been sanctified by Babaji's presence now looked deserted. Even the cows did not seem interested in eating and one beautiful red cow whom Babaji had fondly named Gita sat at the entrance of the Gufa for several days with tears running down her face. It took time before the devotees could overcome their grief enough to feel the ever living presence of Babaji in the Gufa on the Ganga beach and in their own inner cave of the heart.

Some Biographical Events

I looked upon Babaji as an embodiment of Advaita. The place where Babaji lived his last phase of life was imbued with serenity and spiritual ambience. I will now present some biographical events of Babaji's life so that the reader may

have a glimpse of his spiritual radiance: These biographical descriptions are prepared by Nani Ma. The first descriptive note to this effect reads as follows:

Many cows came to eat daily at Babaji's ashram. Some of them belonged to the local villagers, some to ashrams and some were strays. It was not unusual for cows to give birth at the ashram especially in the winter months when they would lie in the sun and sometimes being heavily pregnant, they could not bring themselves to return home. When this happened, the babas would help with the birth and send a message to the cow's owner to come and fetch the cow and the new born calf.

One winter's day an elderly and sick looking pregnant cow slowly made her way up from Babaji's ashram and entered the garden of the house where Babaji's devotees stayed. As she went into labour the babas helped her but soon after she had given birth to a little female calf, she left her body.

When the situation was reported to Babaji, he told Nani to look after the new born calf that night. The calf cried plaintively all night while Nani tried to keep her warm and feed her with a bottle. In the morning Nani took the tiny calf down to Babaji's cave where Babaji nursed her and gave her milk to drink from a bottle. Babaji also dipped his fingers in milk and the little calf licked and nuzzled his fingers. Showing his characteristic compassion Babaji nursed her during the day time and at night sent her to sleep with Nani. Babaji called her Bahin, which means little sister.

As Bahin grew up she became healthy and utterly devoted to Babaji. When Nani brought her down to the cave in the morning, she would run across the clay platform and jump from the doorway of Babaji's cave onto his lap. Babaji always gave her a loving welcome even when she started to get bigger and her morning leap into the cave was not as easy for everyone as it had been when she was smaller. When Babaji walked around the ashram Bahin would follow him everywhere and she would dance around him in delight.

When Babaji would go to the Math in the afternoons she would follow him there and play or sleep in the sand near him. One day in the summer, Gangaji's waters had risen while Babaji was sitting with devotees over on the Math and in order to get back across to the mainland the babas put a plank between two rocks over the rising stream flowing around the side of the Math. Babaji's human devotees walked across it to the other side. Babaji also walked across the plank. Bahin tried to follow but she couldn't navigate the plank because it was too narrow. She was frantic as she saw Babaji reaching the other side while she was still on the Math. Before anyone could stop her, she jumped into the stream and tried to swim towards Babaji. The current, however, was too strong and she started to get swept away into the main stream of Gangaji. Seeing this Babaji ran over the rocks calling her name and started to wade into the river towards her. Hearing his voice, she gained strength and courage and swam towards him until they met in a loving embrace and came out of the water together, each as happy as the other. This incident shows the unique love of Babaji for Bahin and throws light on the view that the realized soul sees all beings as expressions of the same Reality.

Another description by Nani Ma describes the divinity of the place. The extra-terrestrial nature of the place was evinced by the presence of various individual souls in animal forms. Noble souls who have been born as animals because of some aberrations inadvertently committed in their life come to live in the vicinity of realized and enlightened saints as was true in the case of Maharshi Ramana:

When Nani Ma first came to Babaji there was a dog there called Kani as she only had one eye. She loved Babaji very much and whenever he went for a walk around the ashram, she would follow him or walk along by his side and sometimes he would play with her. Kani was very different from other dogs. She seemed to be very aware of what was correct for her to do and what was not correct. She never disturbed anyone in the ashram in any way. When Babaji came back from his walk

as soon as he entered the dharmashala she would lie down quietly on one side of the steps never giving anyone any reason to chase her away. She would wait patiently until Babaji came outside and then she would happily run after him again.

Another strange thing about Kani was that she always did the Ekadashi fast. On that day she would only eat phalahara and not the ordinary grains that were served on other days. If anyone fed her phalahari food, she would eat it but if anyone gave her ordinary roti or rice, she would sniff it and then leave it where it was.

One day Kani disappeared and was never seen again. Babaji said that she had gone to die quietly somewhere in the rocks where she would not bother anyone. He said that sometimes devotees have to be born in an animal body because of something they did wrong but then they will live in an ashram or in the company of saints so that they retain a good samskara for when they next receive a human body and they can continue with their sadhana.

Here are two incidents described by Nani Ma which show how Babaji guided individual beings who approached him and inquired about spiritual matters by answering their queries:

1. One day when I was sitting with Babaji in the Dharmashala a very simply dressed man came in and sat down quietly. After a while he asked Babaji a question. He asked, "In the scriptures it is said that we should surrender our mind and intellect to Bhagwan. If we did not use our mind and intellect, would we not be insane?" Babaji gently replied, "No, if we surrendered our mind and intellect, we would be swastha (Healthy or situated in the Self). The others who do not surrender the mind and intellect are insane." The man sat silently for a while and then getting up and bowing to Babaji he left.

I was very interested in the question and answer and later on when walking on the sand with Babaji, I asked him, "Babaji, how would it be possible to completely give up the mind and intellect?" Babaji replied, "They can be surrendered to Bhagwan and to reach the end of the path, they must be given

up and we must live with complete surrender to Bhagwan. It can be practiced slowly until it is achieved.”

2. One day I was sitting on the Math with Babaji when a large group of foreigners came. They asked Babaji many questions and I translated them to Babaji and translated his answers back to them. The questions were mostly good ones and Babaji answered them very clearly for a long time. Then suddenly he turned to me and said, “These people think Babaji is an answering machine. If they had listened to Babaji’s answers and truly taken up any one of the answers in their lives there would be no need to ask any more questions.”

Babaji’s answer taught me then that each priceless answer of his and each teaching of the scriptures was for practising and not just for idle accumulation of knowledge.

Another episode which Nani Ma composed to be uploaded on the website dwells on the deeply philosophical and spiritual state in which Babaji always remained. Even though he was always resting in his natural state, he was also always aware of the norms of the empirical plane. He told Nani Ma that one should follow the rules and regulations on the empirical level but should always distinguish between the relative and absolute realities:

When I first came to Babaji, he was very careful that I should learn all the rules and customs that were followed in traditional Indian society. This kindness allowed me to be more easily accepted in the group of devotees who lived with Babaji and for the most part followed traditional purity rules. I had tried hard to learn everything so as not to be offensive to the people that I lived with and for the most part lived strictly by the purity rules which I had been taught including the first Golden Rule that Babaji had taught me “Don’t touch anything unless asked to.”

One day when I was walking with Babaji on the Math and he had just washed his hands in Ganga ji he spoke about a purity rule in a way that very much surprised me and I replied, “But Babaji, that is impure.” His answer surprised me even more. He said, “Nothing is impure, everything is the All-Pervading

Consciousness. How could anything be impure?" I said, "But Babaji, everyone has been teaching me all the purity rules, you have also encouraged me to follow them." Babaji replied, "Yes and you should follow them. They are very important for purifying the antahkaraṇa but you should never believe them as being absolute truths. They are empirical truths not absolute truths. Some people are not able to rise above them and for those people they are very important agents to become pure but you should be able to practise them and understand at the same time that they are not true in the absolute sense."

Babaji laid emphasis on the need of a guru in one's life for spiritual upliftment. This becomes crystal clear from the following narration by Nani Ma:

Babaji said that the guru has two hands, one to slap and the other to support. Babaji used both of these hands to teach and guide us away from our worldly egos towards a better understanding and towards Bhagwan.

When I had been with Babaji for about one year a family who had been there when I first arrived came to visit Babaji. I felt very important that I had been a whole year with Babaji and inside me the ugly inclination to show my importance raised itself.

I thought I had found an ideal opportunity in the evening when one of Babaji's sadhvi disciples brought a cup of milk to him. Before giving him the milk, she would usually give him some chyavanprash, an ayurvedic tonic. As I was sitting near to the place where the jar of chyavanprash was kept and as the little cave was full of devotees, she asked me to pass it to her. Instead of doing so as I usually would, I quickly opened the jar and took out a small amount of the tonic and rolled it into a ball as I had seen Ganga Mai do. Leaning forward I put the ball near Babaji's mouth for him to eat. However, much to my chagrin, instead of leaning forward and eating the tonic from my outstretched hand as I had expected him to do, Babaji leant backwards with an expression of absolute disgust on his face and asked, "Should I eat from her hand?" "Of course not," everyone chorused and the jar was quickly taken out of my hand leaving me holding the sticky lump of rejected chyavanprash.

I was seething with anger. Far from my making the impression that I had hoped for, it seemed to me that Babaji had deliberately humiliated me in front of everyone. My mind was furious, saying "How dare he do this to me!" and without understanding my own mistake, I left the cave as soon as I got a chance. I was so angry I could not sleep at night and decided that I would not speak to Babaji the next day. I tried to be outwardly polite to everyone in the morning but also tried to indicate to Babaji how angry I was.

My anger, however, was gradually turning into misery and like a child who tries to be cross with its mother, by afternoon I was really missing Babaji. After lunch Babaji went over to the math and sat on the beach. Although there was no one else there, I sat a little way away from him still trying to show my anger. Babaji sat quietly not looking at me. Although I was trying to pretend that I did not want to sit by him, I kept wishing he would call me but he didn't.

After a while a visitor came and, placing a small bag near Babaji as an offering, he sat down and spoke with Babaji for a while before he left. When he had gone Babaji gently called me, "Naniji." I rushed over to him and sat down, my eyes brimming with tears. Babaji asked me "What's in the bag?" I looked and replied, "Oranges, Babaji." Babaji said ever so gently, "Peel one and feed it to me." "But you don't eat from my hands," I burst out, with tears running down my face and filled with the pain of stupidity. Babaji looked at me with his big compassionate eyes and said "I can't eat (something offered) from pride, but I can eat (something offered) from love".

This incident shows that because of our identification with the psycho-physical organism, we remain under the sway of our dispositional traits and behave accordingly. We feel good when we hear our praise and feel offended when we are disregarded and censured. Our mind is disturbed and we are weakened in our spiritual growth. It is our guru who helps us overcome the traits which are detrimental to spiritual progress. Babaji had the capacity to identify the weaknesses of his disciples and seize the right opportunity to help the

disciple be free from those attitudes and traits which hinder spiritual progress. This fact has been beautifully illustrated by the anecdote presented by Nani Ma.

Indeed, without the guru one cannot identify and overcome one's defects and weak points. The following incident described by Nani Ma describes the spiritual state of Babaji showing that he had transcended the mind or that he has reached the state of amanībhāva (अमनीभाव) which has been expounded in Māṇḍūkya Kārikā Advaita Prakaraṇa, 31.

An American man once came into the Dharmashala and asked if I could translate for him. After looking around and asking me a few questions, he requested me to ask Babaji what Babaji thought of him. I translated the question and waited for the answer. There was a long, very silent silence in which Babaji leant gracefully against a rock staring into the distance. After some time, the American became impatient and asked me to repeat the question to Babaji. When I did, Babaji slowly turned his beautiful head and looked at me with his large unfathomable gaze and said, "Babaji doesn't think anything."

The American took Babaji's answer to be the personal answer to his question but I understood it to mean that Babaji no longer had any movements (vrittis) in his mind or rather that he lived in the mindless state. How I longed for that State. Babaji's teachings were often gentle and explanatory but sometimes when we failed to understand the first time then his teaching sometimes became short and pithy and as such really struck home.

An example of these two ways of teaching can be seen in the following story told by Nani Ma.

I was sitting in the cave with Babaji one day and I started to complain about one of the other female devotees that lived at the ashram. The lady was not supported by her husband and she sometimes felt the lack of material possessions that she would have liked to have. Under these circumstances she would ask fellow devotees for the things that she felt she needed. Instead of feeling compassion for her plight, I took it into my head to complain about her to Babaji.

Babaji explained to me kindly that she has taken refuge in Babaji and as such should not be criticised. She could have resorted to bad actions to get the things that she wanted. She could have stolen them or approached unworthy people to fulfil her needs but instead of that she has come to Babaji and so was worthy of respect. Babaji quoted Gitaji chapter 7 verses 16 and 18 to help me to understand.

चतुर्विधा भजन्ति मां जनाः सुकृतिनोर्जुन।
आर्ता जिज्ञासुरर्थार्थी ज्ञानी च भरतर्षभ।।
उदाराः सर्व एवैते ज्ञानी त्वात्मैव मे मतम्।
आस्थितः स हि युक्तात्मा मामेवानुत्तमां गतिम्।।

The verses tell us that four kinds of people come to Bhagwan, those who are suffering, those who desire worldly things, those who are looking for knowledge and those who are men of knowledge. Bhagwan Sri Krishna says that these are all noble people as they have taken refuge in Bhagwan. Babaji pointed out to me that as this was Bhagwan's opinion on the matter, that was the understanding that I should also cultivate.

However, in my foolishness, later on, I again took up the subject with Babaji and once again started to complain to him about the same devotee. I said, "Babaji, she is asking people for things all the time, she has not come here for spirituality but only for worldly things." "Oh", replied Babaji, "And does she get the things that she has come here for?" "Yes", I replied quickly, "People are always giving her things." Babaji replied with a gentle but piercing question that went straight to the core of my being, never to be forgotten, "And have you got what you came here for?"

Babaji knew that we generally do not try to understand other people's problems, compulsions, etc. or why they conduct themselves in a particular way and as such tend to be intolerant of their behaviour. The event that Nani Ma has recounted here shows her moral courage as she has described here her own weakness in order to drive home the message the event so clearly conveys. Her main purpose is to tell us how skillfully and lovingly Babaji taught erring persons whenever he came

across such aberrations. This incident shows the necessity of cultivating the habit of reflection and introspection to become familiar with our own psychological weaknesses and try to be free from them as we follow the spiritual path.

In this context I am reminded of the yoga-sutra 1.33 मैत्रीकरुणामुदितोपेक्षाणां सुखदुःखपुण्यापुण्यविषयाणां भावनातः चित्तप्रसादनम्। which says that we should cultivate friendliness towards those who are happy, compassion towards those who are in distress, joy towards those who are meritorious and detachment towards those who are evil-minded so that we may succeed in steadying our mind. The second point in the sutra that we should be compassionate towards those persons who are in pain is relevant to this episode. If we remember this, we would be able to understand other people's problems in a sympathetic manner.

The next incident told by Nani Ma throws light on the supernatural powers (siddhis) of a realized saint, which he uses at certain times when he deems fit. These powers are byproducts of self-realisation:

One day I was sitting with Babaji on the Math. It was a very hot summer's day and Babaji and I were sitting in a tiny piece of shade on a rocky outcrop near the cave where I did my sadhana. Babaji was being gracious enough to answer some of my sadhana queries when four or five men came towards us. They were poor men and from their dress they appeared to be manual workers who carried luggage and other such weights in order to make a living. As there was no room on the ledge where Babaji and I were sitting or perhaps out of respect, they squatted on the sand below and sat quietly and unmoving even though the blazing sun was unbearably hot and the sand scorched the soles of one's feet. After a few minutes Babaji politely asked them where they had come from and what they wanted. Joining his palms together above his head one of them replied, "You know, Governor."

After another few minutes of silence Ganga Mai, one of Babaji's sadhvi disciples, came running towards us, out of breath from her exertion. She shouted at the men, 'Get it out

of here, get it out of here.' Babaji calmly asked what she was talking about and she replied in very agitated tones that the men had brought a corpse into the ashram and had laid it down on the path to the Math. She then turned again to the men squatting in the ground and repeated that they should move the corpse immediately. The men did not move an inch and continued to look imploringly at Babaji.

Babaji got up from the shade and led the way back to the main beach with the men following silently. Ganga Mai and I accompanied Babaji across the Math beach and onto the narrow path in front of Hanuman Shila which led to the tiny wooden plank acting as a bridge to the main part of the ashram. On the path lay a motionless young woman on a simple bamboo bier. She looked very much like a corpse. As Babaji drew level with her, he stopped and looked at her compassionately. 'She has little children, Governor,' said one of the labourers.

As we stood looking at her a strange thing happened. Suddenly a cow appeared and came and stood in between Babaji and the young woman's body. Even though there were cows at Babaji's ashram, it was very unusual that a cow should have been going to the Math along that path. The cows did not usually go to the Math at all and certainly not along this path. However, there was a cow appearing to be walking towards the beach of the Math and she stopped between Babaji and the body. Babaji took her tail and passed it three times over the woman's body from her head to her feet. The cow walked on and to our utter amazement the woman sat up on her bier.

Looking as if she had just woken up from sleep, she looked around and then said, "I'm hungry." The men fell on their knees bowing to Babaji and shedding tears of joy. Ganga Mai and I were staring at the scene dumbfounded. Babaji was absolutely calm as usual and said to Ganga Mai, "Didn't you hear her, she is hungry. Bring her some food." Babaji continued to stand there while Ganga Mai hurried over to the dharmashala and brought her some puris. The young lady sat and ate them hungrily.

As she was eating Babaji started to walk towards the bridge. The men bowed to Babaji again and again and asked what they could do to repay him. Babaji replied that it was the grace of Gaumata (the cow) and of Hanuman ji (as we were standing at the base of Hanuman Shila). He said that the young woman should cook a rota and bring it for Hanumanji and for the cow the next day. He also cautioned them all not to tell anyone what had happened.

The young woman stood up and walked away with the men who were carrying her empty bier. Very soon after they had left many people rushed down to the ashram speaking of the miracle that had just happened but Babaji looked most disinterested in the matter and made no comment.

Supernatural powers are a byproduct of self-realisation and the realised saint makes only judicious use of them at appropriate times. It was Babaji's inconceivable leela. But what is important to mention here is that Babaji remained absolutely unruffled. This incident shows Babaji's unbounded compassion for people who are really in distress but also gives a clear message that our possessions or abilities should not go to our heads.

Devotees

Shri Satya Narayan Agarwal was a great devotee of Baba Mastramji. He followed the path of Nimbarka sect and Shri Radha and Shri Krishna were deities who he desired to attain. He was a house holder but Babaji called him Bairagi Baba because of his dispassionate attitude towards worldly life. He had a strong desire for the realisation of Bhagwan.

One day, after completing chanting the Ramacharitamanasa 108 times in 108 days, he placed a request before Babaji that he wanted to see Bhagwan in living form. Babaji told him that it would be difficult and he should be ready to sacrifice everything if he wanted to see Bhagwan. Satya Narayan was ready for this and as advised by Babaji he took a vow that he would live only on Ganga water until he had darshana of his Radha and Krishna. He began his fast on the fifth day

of the bright half of the month of Margashirsha in samvat 2025 (24/11/1968). The tiffin that was sent to him from Gita Bhavan was given to the cows in the afternoon.

After some twenty days his son Sudarshan was told by Babaji that his father was living only on Gangajal and it was likely that his state of health might deteriorate. Besides being an old man, Bairagi Baba was an asthma patient, so fasting on only water was a really difficult penance for him. During his tapasya he recited Ramacharitamanasa many times. On the tenth day of the dark half of the month of Magha (13/01/1969) when the Sun transited to Capricorn), he had darshana of Lord Krishna in the person of Baba Shri Mastramji. He was not fully satisfied and cried out "Where is Kishoriji?" as he wanted to have the darshana of both Radha and Shri Krishna and consequently, to achieve this, he gave up even Ganga water. The next day was Ekadashi. He had darshana of both Kishoriji and Shri Krishna in Babaji's cave. After this, as Babaji got up to leave the cave, Bairagi Baba held onto Babaji's feet and said "Now I know who you are..."

On the following day, that is the twelfth day of the dark half of the month of Magha, he again had darshana of Shri Radha and Krishna while he was worshipping Shri Baba Mastramji. With that he felt redeemed and soon after he left his physical body. On the night when Bairagi Baba left his body Ganga Mai had a dream that she saw him ascending the celestial regions and passing by the gates of the higher worlds until he reached the gate of Goloka where he entered inside. On Mauni Amavasya of the month of Magha (18/01/1969), Bairagi Baba left his body through the Brahmastrandhra. A hairline split and a few drops of blood were observed in the region of cerebral plexus.

2. Mr. Vishvanath Rajgarhiya was a great devotee of Baba Mastramji. Babaji called him Vakil Saheb because he was an advocate by profession. He was a resident of Bari Bazar in Munghyr, Bihar. His family all held Babaji in high esteem and he often visited with his wife Triveni Mai and his elder sister whom Babaji called Buaji. Since Vakil Saheb was spiritually

oriented, he used to visit the ashram at Hanuman Shila in order to increase his devotion to his favourite forms of Bhagwan, which were Lord Rama and Sītāji, to imbibe Babaji's teaching and to gain strength to tread the spiritual path. Once when he came to have darshan of Babaji, he stayed at the kothi near to the ashram and sought Babaji's permission to observe a fast on Gangajal so that he could be blessed with his grace and have darshan of his desired deities Shri Rama and Sītāji.

Babaji gave him permission and Vakil Saheb started his fast on Gangajal remembering his desired deities and continuously contemplating on them. When, by the grace of Babaji, he was blessed with the darshan of Shri Rama and Sītāji, feeling fulfilled Vakil Saheb gave up his body. At the time of his demise, only his wife and sister were at the ashram with him. They were inconsolably grieved but Babaji's presence gave them immeasurable strength and after meeting him alone in his cave they found the presence of mind to go forward with the necessary last rites. Babaji himself oversaw the proceedings from the top of Hanuman Shila. Men & babas who were present at the ashram took Vakil Saheb's body near Hanuman Shila for cremation. However, despite all efforts the pyre could not be lit. At the suggestion of Babaji, an earthen lamp was then prepared by Dineshji and taken to the top of Hanuman Shila where Babaji was sitting watching the proceedings. Babaji himself lit the lamp and with the help of that lamp the pyre was ignited. Vakil Mai, as Babaji called Triveni Mai, performed the kapal kriya. Immediately after the rites had been performed, Vakil Mai and her sister-in-law rushed to their home town because of compulsions relating to the obsequies. What is worth reiterating here is that it was Babaji who helped light the pyre and oversaw the performance of the last rites, which was very unusual for Babaji and showed his abounding compassion and care for his beloved devotee Vakil Saheb.

3. Nani Ma recounts from her experience the moving story of Eric Cameron Smith, an American citizen, who came from Los Angeles. When he paid a visit to Baba Shri

Mastramji, he was completely overpowered by the spiritual aura of Babaji that he wholeheartedly and totally surrendered himself to him. He never wanted to leave Babaji's spiritual vicinity despite the fact that being a foreigner he could not live in India beyond the stipulated period on his visa. After many difficulties and eventually returning to America, he repeatedly came back to Babaji's Ashram and finally breathed his last at Babaji's feet looking intently at his face and calling out, "Bhagwan! Bhagwan!"

4. A young lady of twenty-two years came from England to India in search of a Sadguru who could help her realise the Truth. She was helped by a Panditji from Kankhal to pay a visit to Baba Shri Mastramji in 1971. After seeing Babaji, she did not feel like being away from his presence and with the permission of Babaji she stayed at the Hanuman Shila ashram for the next sixteen years.

In the beginning she was addressed as Gomati, a name that had been given to her in a temple at Bageshwara. Later Babaji gave her the name 'Nani'. Since then, until now she is known as Nani Mai. When she was 29 years old she suffered from Tropical Sprue in the month of Shravana (August, 1977). The disease was so debilitating that she was reduced to a skeleton. With the whole body covered with wrinkles, she looked about ninety years old. A doctor visiting the ashram saw her in that state and proposed that she should be hospitalised for the treatment of the disease. Naniji flatly refused to be removed from the benign presence of Babaji. Her refusal to be hospitalised in such a precarious state of health shows her spiritual predilection and indifference to worldly affairs. One day Naniji told Babaji that she had dreamt that she had been given milk in a golden bowl to drink. Upon this Babaji said that she would be cured of the disease by taking only fresh milk of a cow. By taking the fresh milk of a cow she was cured of the disease by Holi, falling on 24th March, 1978. When she was free from Tropical Sprue, she again devoted herself wholeheartedly to contemplation on the nature of Self under the guidance of Babaji. Babaji used to help her whenever

she encountered any problem relating to spiritual practices. In 1986 Babaji asked Naniji to translate *Atmacintanam* (Contemplation on the Self) into English. While translating *Atmacintanam*, she asked Babaji about difficult expressions occurring in it. Babaji explained the knotty points of the philosophy of Advaita Vedanta. In this way her translation, with notes, proved to be a great help in understanding the purport of *Atmacintanam*.

When Babaji left his physical form and attained Nirvana, Naniji had to leave the Ashram because of adverse circumstances. She then went to Gangotri and after sometime she moved from there to Uttarakashi. After devastating floods had washed away the Ashram in 2013, she came to Rishikesh and settled in Gauhari Maphi village where she devoted herself to the construction of a Hospice for the care of terminally ill cancer patients. This was a huge project for public welfare in which she was selflessly engaged.

कर्मणैव हि संसिद्धिमास्थिता जनकादयः।

लोकसंग्रहमेवापि सम्पश्यन्कर्तुमर्हसि।। B. G., 3.20 (see Śaṅkara on it).

In an interview with the speaking tree, she explains how Babaji guided her: “When I came to him, I was a clean book. First there was seva or service. I was already reading the *Bhagavadgita*. Along with that, he gave me the *Tulsi Ramayana* in English, and I loved it. He saw I liked to read and gave me spiritual books to read. After one or two years, I was asking him why it says this in one book and another thing in another. He said, ‘You’ll have to learn Sanskrit. Only if you read the original will you know what is said’, which I did.”

At first he gave me bhakti scriptures. Later, he gave me *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa* which is jñāna-based. He then took me into the *Upaniṣads* and Śaṅkarācārya. I studied these for quite some years. Then he said, ‘Close the books and meditate.’ The rest of my years, I meditated a lot. I would read a little, especially *Yogavāsiṣṭha* and the *Gita*. But I mostly meditated.”

To conclude this brief biographical account of Baba Śrī Mastramji, I want to mention a very important reply of Babaji to the query of Nani Ma. The query relates to the intricate parable of Cuḍālā and Śikhidhvaja in Yogavāsiṣṭha. The reply given by Baba Śrī Mastramji is a sublime spiritual instruction meant for advanced and serious spiritual seekers. I am reproducing it almost verbatim as narrated by Nani Ma in an interview:

Once I was trying to figure out, if the Self is the Self, how could anyone become realized? The mind was thinking that because also in the scriptures, in the Upaniṣads, it is said “He who says he knows, knows not” because you can’t objectify the knowledge. When I was reading Yogavāsiṣṭha, I said to Babaji, “Babaji, queen Cuḍālā knew the time of King Śikhidhvaja’s realization, it was 18 years after he worked really hard. He did tapasyā, meditation, but she knew beforehand that he would be realized after 18 years. If he did those things or not, he would be realized anyway, so what does our sādhanā have to do with this final realization?” Babaji said, “Nothing, it’s not the cause, but it’s the characteristic of one who walks the spiritual path; it’s a sign that he’s going to reach, it’s not the cause.” Babaji said that realization is nothing other than just being yourself and the mind recognizes that it is separate and the Self is separate. It’s nothing but standing aside from oneself. This was one of Babaji’s strong teachings and the understanding of that split was a big step for me. He said it’s like a ripe coconut. When the coconut is ripe, it separates from the shell. That was a big step forward in my understanding of the total separation, because before that I worked as a seeker towards something and I wasn’t aware of that huge separation between me and my Self. That was a big step that he made me understand and then I could work from there. That was a crucial point. In the beginning I thought I was seeking something far away, after that I wasn’t thinking I was seeking far away, but I hadn’t disengaged. Consciousness flows through us, we are conscious beings, our body-mind appears to be conscious, and we connect with our body mind

and seekers seek within themselves, which of course they have to. But they don't seek for themselves, they seek for something else. That was one of the first times that I could understand the separation. It's like Maharshi Ramana said, "All that is needed is that you give up your realisation of the not-true as true." (David Godman (1992) *Be As You are*, p. 11).

Babaji's Spiritual Principles

Now let us take up the spiritual principles which Babaji taught either by responding to the queries of visitors in the Dharmashala or by giving discourses on Shrimad Bhagavadgita at Hanumanshila. It has been gathered from different sources that Babaji came to this place a little before 1965 in which he started giving discourses on Gitaji mainly on the second and third chapters. When he began giving discourses on Gitaji, he dwelt at length on the plight of Arjuna in the battlefield of Mahabharata. Arjuna was mentally depressed because he thought of the consequences of war. He told Krishna that he was not comfortable with the idea of killing the grandfather Bhishma Pitamaha and the preceptor Dronacharya whom he held in high esteem. Moreover, it was repugnant to kill his own relations in the battle because these are the persons with whom he would have shared the joys of victory, if he had won. So, it would be better instead if the Kauravas kill him. Another disaster that the war would bring about was that the women would be widowed and as a consequence there would be promiscuity of relations and the progeny would not remain pure, which would be a kind of cultural calamity.

All these thoughts troubled Arjuna. It was the loss of relations that made him depressed. But these relations were due to his identification with his own physical body. This wrong identification is a common phenomenon in the world and it is the cause of all worldly problems. It is this infatuation which is produced by the superimposition of this psychophysical organism on our real nature and which does not let the individual being turn towards his inner self. This was the

predicament of Arjuna in the battle-field when he asked Lord Krishna to bring the chariot in the middle of both the armies.

Lord Krishna says that the Self, in reality, is eternal and whatever is produced by the contact of senses with objects is not eternal. So why should one run after pleasure and pain? Babaji seized this topic so seriously that he spoke at length about this point. Though there seemed apparent repetition, yet it is of great advantage as ordinary people are so engrossed in worldliness that recurrent awakening statements are needed to arouse them from the irresistible slumber that has been produced by ignorance. Lord Krishna knew the mental state of Arjuna, which represents the mental state of worldly men and consequently he impressed upon Arjuna that since everything except the self is fleeting, he should not neglect what is right according to cultural norms. The first and foremost duty of a man is to act according to the scriptures and cultural principles so that his act becomes a model for others to follow and he does not feel a sense of guilt that he has violated the scriptures.

The knowledge of yoga which Lord Krishna was going to confer on Arjuna was transmitted to the Sun who bequeathed this knowledge to his son Manu. Manu handed down this yoga to king Ikshavaku. After this, this yoga disappeared. Now the same Yoga was going to be told to Arjuna by Shri Krishna in the middle of the battle-field of Mahabharata. The background has been explained in detail by Babaji as to why it became essential to explain this yoga to Arjuna. Actually it is the state of mind of Arjuna which became clear when he explained the grounds as to why he did not want to fight this war even when every other way out had been tried by Shri Krishna to avoid war. But it was the greed and conceit of Duryodhana that the efforts of Shri Krishna were not crowned with success.

Arjuna's apprehension was that fighting in a battle would result in the death of his relatives with whom he would celebrate the victory. Consequently he sank into depression

so much that he could not keep standing and catching hold of his Gandiva bow. This is exactly how the commencement of Shrimadbhagavadgita throws light on the psychological state of man, which becomes the greatest hurdle in choosing the way of life which is conducive to spiritual orientation without which man remains far away from knowing his real nature. It is crystal clear that it is the strong attachment that derails us from the path leading to the attainment of Brahman. When attachment makes us swerve from the righteous way of life, we instantaneously come under the grip of depression. Babaji says the kind of depression Arjuna fell into was of sattvic nature. When Bhishma Pitamaha fell in the battle of Mahabharata on the tenth day, Dhritarashtra also felt depressed. His depression was due to the fear of the defeat of Duryodhana. It was rajasic. The depression of Duryodhana which was visible when he approached Dronacharya and instigated him saying that his disciple Dhrishtadyumna had arrayed the army of the Pandavas in an immaculate manner and that he was set to kill him. He also harboured a grudge that Bhishma Pitamaha had a soft corner for the Pandavas. He even issued a command that all the commanders should protect him. Because of extreme greed for kingdom, his depression may be termed as having arisen out of tamas.

Babaji compared the depression of Arjuna with mud out of which the lotus of knowledge and dispassion bloomed. At another place he compared Arjuna's depression with the smoke of the fire of knowledge. The sacrifice generates clouds which have the water of discrimination. When the clouds pour this water of discrimination on the mud, it then becomes the source of the lotus of dispassion.

This state of Sattvic depression is comparable to the rubbing of pieces of arañi wood. As it is definite that the fire would be generated by rubbing arañis, so the lotus of dispassion and knowledge will surely come into existence. When the smoke arises at the rubbing of arañis, there is happiness that the fire will come into existence (35). In this context Babaji narrated the story given in Saptasatī. King Suratha and the business

man Samadhi were forsaken and driven away by their own relatives after depriving them of their possessions. Though everything was snatched by their near and dear ones, yet they felt concerned about them. They went to a seer and asked him why they still felt concerned about their own near and dear ones who had driven them away. The seer replied that it was Ma Bhagavati who forcibly transports the mind of even the knowledgeable to delusion (infatuation):

ज्ञानिनामपि चेतांसि देवी भगवती हि सा।

बलादाकृष्य मोहाय महामाया प्रयच्छति॥ Saptasati, 1, 55 cd, 56 ab

The seer exhorted both the king Suratha and the businessman Samadhi to do penance to get over their difficulties. On the other hand Lord Krishna asks Arjuna to forsake his hesitation which cropped on account of his ignorance and stand up to fight against the evil design of Duryodhana. In both the cases the situations are different and accordingly there were different messages conveyed by the seer in Saptasati and Lord Krishna in the Bhagavadgita. Lord Krishna teaches Arjuna to pay attention to the execution of his duty as a warrior whereas both king Suratha and Samadhi were told by the seer to do tapasya in order to achieve what they wanted. The person who has a sense of discrimination deserves the instruction to follow the path of knowledge. But he who has faith is fit to follow the path of devotion (33). For in devotion when the person has surrendered himself to Bhagwan, he is transported to the state of childlike innocence. In this the state of emotion predominates. On the other hand when the seeker remains satisfied with himself, he is eligible to tread the path of knowledge.

Loss of one's possessions or bereavement of a near and dear one causes mental agony. Arjuna found himself in this predicament as he was going to kill his teacher Dronacharya and his grandfather Bhishma Pitamaha in the battle and as such he was overtaken by the idea of not fighting the battle at all. However for a Kshatriya the idea of escaping a fight is more painful. As such he was at a loss whether to fight or not. But thinking of Dharma according to his understanding he

was seized of the idea of escaping the fight because the war would bring about disastrous consequences. Keeping in view the mental state of Arjuna, Shri Krishna first told him about the eternal nature of the soul and the fleeting nature of everything else other than the Self. Through Arjuna Shri Krishna tells man that he should understand the true nature of Dharma and should not shun his duty. However, being habituated to the nature of time as we experience it, we feel bewildered how Shri Krishna taught the whole Shrimadbhagavadgita on the battle in such a short period.

Babaji narrated a story in this context. Once Shri Krishna and Arjuna went to bathe in a river while Draupadi was about to cook the meal. Arjuna implored Krishna to show him his Maya. Shri Krishna asked Arjuna to take a quick dip in the river and said that if he came out early he would not win. During this short period when Arjuna dived he saw that he was in a country, he got married and his wife died. Arjuna was being forcibly carried to the crematorium to make him commit sati with his dead wife. At this juncture he gained sense and came out of the river. Krishna said that he was defeated as he came out of the river early. Arjuna confessed and submitted to Krishna that he always remained defeated before his Maya. When both of them reached home, Draupadi said that they had come early. So nothing is impossible under the spell of Maya. In this spirit this should be understood that Shri Krishna could teach the whole of Shrimadbhagavadgita in such a short time on the battlefield.

Shri Krishna forbids Arjuna to take the path trodden by unworthy human-beings. Desire, anger, avarice, fear, etc. are such emotions as are nurtured by the evil-minded worldly people. Contentment, forbearance, tranquility, etc. are the indicators of paradise (43). Good reputation is another name of heaven and a bad name is that of hell. Shri Krishna told Arjuna that it was not becoming him to behave in this way. It was not proper for him to desist from fighting in the righteous battle. How can that Arjuna who defeated Lord Shiva in fight

and got the Pashupata weapon as a reward escape fighting a righteous battle and behave like a coward?

Explaining the nomenclature of Shrimadbhagavadgita, Babaji said that Shri Krishna told Arjuna that the Vedas emanated from the breath of Bhagwan but Shrimadbhagavadgita emerged from the mouth of Bhagwan. Referring to the term Gita (song) he said that rhythm, rhyme and timbre are hidden in Gitaji. Action is rhyme, devotion is rhythm and knowledge is timbre. In this way the nomenclature of Shrimadbhagavadgita stands justified. The ancient seers also called it Shrimadbhagavadgita. In the Puranas also it is referred to as such. As it represents the three direct means to realization, viz., hearing, reasoning and continuous contemplation, it is called Shrimadbhagavadgita.

When Arjuna was in confusion and decided to withdraw from the battle-field and was talking of renunciation, dharma and cultural upheaval, Shri Krishna said, "He was a sinless person. Whence did this undesirable emotional predicament befall him?" It is obvious that this mental state had arisen because of ignorance or infatuation, which is not worthy of a noble person. Babaji made mention of the sadness or sorrow of seer Valmiki when he saw one of the crane-pair being killed by a hunter. This sorrow outflowed in poetic expression:

मा निषाद प्रतिष्ठां त्वमगमः शाश्वतीः समाः।

यत्कौञ्चमिथुनादेकमवधीः काममोहितम्॥ VR, Bālakāṇḍa 2. 15

'O Nishada, you will not attain respite for unending years as you killed one of the pair of crane-birds when they were in love.'

This is said to be the first verse of Sanskrit language. To clarify further Babaji also referred to the grief of Tara before Rama showed his grace towards her: तारा बिकल देख रघुराया। दीन्ह ज्ञान हर लीनी माया॥ (RM, Kishkindhakanda, 2nd chopai after couplet 10).

Shri Krishna brought around Arjuna to the fact that one's own duty is above all acts and as such one should not shirk

when whatever scripturally ordained comes one's way. In this situation, man should give up mental frailty and should choose what is righteous: क्षुद्रं हृदयदीर्घबल्यं त्यक्तवोत्तिष्ठ परंतप।

When engaged in experiencing the objects of senses, man forgets his own true nature. Consequently he is likely to take a wrong decision under the influence of ignorance and is overpowered by grief. So he should try to see through the fleeting nature of worldly objects and thus gain strength to be able to realise that he is alienated from his true nature and as such it is worthwhile to strive hard to gain insight into his real nature, which is possible only when he becomes alert and strong by contemplating that everything else other than the soul is perishable.

Babaji reminds us that Gitaji is a song of enthusiasm and that it is meant for all whereas the Veda is meant only for Brahmins. He also clarifies that it is a sin to kill one's preceptor but it was not against propriety to kill him with a well thought out strategy when he is engaged in an act which is against Dharma (67). The same was the case with Karna. To kill him by a well-thought out plan was to honour his valour. So far as Dronacharya was concerned, he was a brahmin. So it was not proper to kill him on the battle-field. Consequently he was made to abandon the battle-field and got killed by Dhrishtadyumna (68).

Babaji beautifully described the emergence of Gitaji when he says that noticing the depression of Arjuna Shri Krishna who is knowledge itself began to flow like melting ice. Therefore Shrimadbhagavadgita began with the discourse on knowledge and assumed great dimension with the addition of karmayoga, bhaktiyoga, etc. (69). It became extraordinarily voluminous with the commentarial works on it. Really speaking love for the self and detachment from the world is, in reality, the teaching of Gitaji (72). Love as love is without parallel whereas love for the worldly objects is termed as desire. This is why it is said that desireless action is yoga. Love is the foundation of Bhaktiyoga. However knowledge is Shri

Krishna himself. To say it slightly differently, desirelessness is Existence, love is Consciousness and Knowledge is bliss (73).

The term 'tvam=thou' in the Mahāvākya 'tat tvam asi' signifies the individual self which is the result of the process of individuation. By doing desireless action the seeker can overcome the sense of ego and is enabled to advance on the path of knowing his true nature. Devotion issues forth from love of the entity towards which devotion is directed. This helps the seeker realize the true nature of the Ultimate Reality, which is indicated by the term 'tat=that'. The term 'asi' symbolizes the identity of both the individual self and Brahman.

Explaining the Gayatri Mantra, Babaji says that the wisdom which is expounded in Gitaji is also encapsuled in this Mantra. The first quarter touches upon the desireless act which should be practiced by the seeker who wants to know his real nature. This is indicated by the word 'वरेण्यम्' which signifies 'what is worth choosing'. Obviously it is the most desirable and also achievable state of the individual self when he transcends the sense of ego which is the biggest hurdle in the way of realization. The second quarter symbolizes devotion by practicing which man gains strength to advance on the spiritual path. Really speaking when the seeker rises above the sense of ego he is awakened to the mental state which helps him to whole-heartedly devote himself to solve the mystery of the universe. To put it in nutshell what Babaji means by the Gayatri Mantra is as follows: The first quarter symbolizes desirelessness. Devotion is indicated by the second quarter of the Gayatri Mantra. The third quarter points towards knowledge, which is nothing but unwavering devotion. This ensues upon the realization of the identity of the individual self and Brahman.

When Arjuna has finished explaining the *raison d'être* of his reluctance to fight the battle, Shri Krishna began giving discourse on the ephemeral nature of the visible phenomena including his mind, body and senses. What he means to say is

that there is no need to attach importance to the entities which engage our attention when we are under the spell of Maya. Whatever was said by Arjuna on the battle-field was the result of his thought that he was going to fight his own relations, which were consequent upon his identification with the body. That is why Shri Krishna initiates his discourse by explaining the fleeting nature of what he experiences with sense organs. It is the sense organs which give him pleasure or pain but these are not eternal as they come and go. He says that whatever comes and goes away is not real. For example, the experience of the objects of senses, pleasure and pain, etc. are temporary and changing. Whatever gives pleasure at this moment may be painful at another time. So because of their inconstant nature they should not be given much importance but rather should be endured and we should try to find out what is the basis of such experiences. When we direct our attention to the real nature of the soul, we would come to know that it is the desireless mind which helps us to transcend our identification with the body, senses and mind. Moreover, to put up with the pain or pleasure brought about by sense contacts is possible only when man becomes convinced of the unreal nature of the visible phenomena. This is the reason why Shri Krishna defines the non-eternality of the worldly phenomena including one's body and all that ensues on account of the relation with the body. But so far as one's duty is concerned, one should not shirk it since not doing anything is not possible as it is not possible even for a second to remain without doing anything. So if it is our destiny to do something or the other, then one must choose the right thing to do with the spirit of equanimity and egolessness. When he attains success in doing action in a desireless manner, he develops love for Bhagwan and tends to remember him without any break. This mental state of the seeker is indicated by the term धीमहि occurring in the second quarter of the Gayatri mantra. Knowledge is indicated by the third quarter in which it is prayed that the effulgent light of the Sun inspire our mental energies onto the right path. In this way Shrimadbhagavadgita has been compared with the Gayatri mantra (73-74).

Babaji said that Shri Krishna began to melt in the form of Gitaji on observing the pitiable plight of Arjuna when he was in depression. Babaji said love for worldly objects is desire whereas love for Bhagwan is love par excellence. He further explains that desirelessness is existence, love is consciousness and knowledge is bliss. The wise men say that by doing desireless acts man is enabled to know the import of 'thou'. By devotion, the import of the term 'that' becomes comprehensible. The term 'asi' indicates the identity of the individual self and Brahman.

Babaji narrates a parable here: There was a sadhu who was thronged by flies. Somebody saw him and asked him to keep them away as they, he thought, could be troubling him. The sadhu said that the flies are not so troublesome as the desires are. The flies will go away but the desires do not come to an end and will continue to trouble. The persons who give up desires are rare as by relinquishing desires they gain capacity to know the truth (78).

When sound, touch, form, taste and smell appear to be favourable, they produce pleasure and when they are felt to be repugnant, they give rise to pain since they function externally. When the mind turns inwards, senses also stop functioning externally and the individual self experiences the state of spiritual awareness (79). When the mind is focussed in the heart region, it experiences bliss as Bhagwan resides there as is said in the Gitaji: ईश्वरः सर्वभूतानां हृद्देशेऽर्जुन तिष्ठति.

Those who are not sensitive to gain and loss remain in a state of bliss. If a person is attached to pleasure, he is destined to experience pain. The objects of senses cease to have any significance when the seeker is focussed internally and on knowing the Reality he experiences bliss which knows no limit (80). Those who are not tormented by pleasure and pain but on the other hand endure them become internally oriented and remain in a state of self-awareness and treat pleasure and pain at par. He who does not forsake equanimity when pleasure and pain are experienced is considered to be steady-minded.

In Vedantic philosophy the import of the Upaniṣadic proposition 'tat tvam asi=that thou art' occurring in Chāndogya Upaniṣad is obtained or arrived at in the following manner: The denotations of the terms tat and tvam respectively are: Omniscient (सर्वज्ञ) Ishwara and the individual self with limited knowledge (अल्पज्ञ). Thus there is a contradiction between these two connotations. Consequently they cannot make sense with co-locative case-endings. Because of this contradiction, the faculty of implication (लक्षणा) comes into play. This is popularly known as bhāgatyāgalakṣaṇā (भागत्यागलक्षणा). We set aside the contradictory characteristics of denotative meanings of the terms tat and tvam. When the contradictory meanings, that is omniscience and limited knowledge, are given up, the significations of the terms tat and tvam are rendered identical as after shedding contradictory significations the individual self ceases to be different from the Supreme Being. This meaning of the Upaniṣadic proposition which is arrived at by following this linguistic device has been simplified by Babaji Mastramji so that a lay man may understand the desired sense of the Upaniṣadic proposition (महावाक्य).

In the beginning Shri Krishna tells Arjuna that the ephemeral objects of senses impart pleasure and pain. It is desirable that whatever we experience with the help of sense organs should be endured, i.e. we should not be carried away by them. Practice of enduring pleasure and pain bestows steadfastness or steadiness. Steadiness confers equanimity when the seeker is faced with undesirable situations. Babaji clarifies that those who are not qualified should follow the instructions of the noble-minded so that they may slowly and steadily acquire fitness for the attainment of knowledge. Steady-minded persons deserve knowledge (82). Others are advised to practice desireless actions.

In order to be able to do desireless actions, the seeker ought to know the real nature of the world as told by the knowers of truth. In this context Babaji explains the famous verse of Gitaji: नासतो विद्यते भावो नाभावो विद्यते सतः । Unreality does not exist and

there is no absence of Reality. If there were absence of reality, unreality would cease to be thought about. In case unreality becomes reality, then it loses its own nature. The knowers of these two co-ordinates *sat* and *asat* have arrived at the essence of both of these co-ordinates. Unreality ends in unreality and reality culminates in experience. It does not merely exist in words. Just as the experience of Veda is Vedanta. In the same way the experience of unreality is a visible world. However existence or apparent reality is being experienced by the intellect. Unreality is ephemeral. It appears to come into being and it ends. It changes continuously. The cognition of a snake in the rope is not considered to be valid. The world which is said to be *asat* was created by Bhagwan (Consciousness). That Reality willed to be many and this visible world was created. The creator becomes the creation as that which brings effect into existence is not different from the source. So the world which sprang forth from Brahman is Brahman itself. From the ultimate points of view birth and death do not exist. The person who does not enjoy steadiness does not possess knowledge of the Truth. So one should strive to purify one's mind in order to know the truth.

He whose mind is not affected by the advent of pleasure does not get impacted by pain also. The seeker whose mind is riveted on finding the truth does not seek pleasure in worldly objects. He loves to remain in solitude. The issue worth considering is that the unreal in the world seems to be real and the real to be unreal. The body, wealth, fame are all unreal as they are ephemeral i.e. fleeting. The body constantly undergoes changes. Relations, sisters, brothers, etc. all appear to be real and we are engrossed in them. The Self remains hidden.

Whatever is delimited by time is not eternal. This verse cautions those who take the world to be real and appreciate those who are in search of the truth. If we take *sat* to be the cause and *asat* to be the effect, then Bhagwan is beyond *sat* and *asat*. In reality, the apparent objects of the world and the world itself are non-existent. The Truth which is real is hidden

on account of the separation caused by the mind. Those who pursue unreal things become unreal and those who are devoted to finding the Truth realize the Truth and are freed from bondage. This verse of Gitaji requires perusal so that we may be convinced of what is presented in it. Commenting on it Shri Shankaracharya says that that which suffers deviation is unreal and should be considered non-existent while that which does not suffer deviation is real.

The unreal (non-existence) is that which is spatially, temporarily and objectively limited. That which continues to be existing in those elements which are mutually exclusive is real. Whatever is anuvṛtta (अनुवृत्त) is real and whatever is vyāvṛtta (व्यावृत्त) is superimposed on the real. It helps us understand the teaching of Shri Krishna that we should not be swayed by pleasure and pain arising out of our sense contacts with the external objects but make effort to endure them by gaining awareness about the fleeting and inconstant nature of pleasure and pain just like that of hot and cold. In the same way we come to know that the unreal appears to be real since the reality is hidden in the camouflage of empirical events.

This is the reason why it is required to be theoretically clear about the nature of real and unreal, existence and non-existence as it has been clarified in the foregoing. Everything that is external to the body is for the sake of the body. When the body itself is not real, all that is meant for the body is unreal as the real has no body as is described in the eighth mantra of Īśa Upaniṣad. All the visible beings did not exist prior to their birth and they will cease to exist after they perish. So during the period between birth and death, they should also be considered as unreal/non-existent. Their being present in-between indicates the existence of the Self.

To explain, there is no illusory water without the rays of the Sun. Similarly in the absence of the rope there is no illusion of the snake. The apparently visible universe (phenomena) in the same manner is superimposed on the Self. Their apparent existence is derived from the existence of the Self. In this verse

Shri Krishna says that Bhagwan is real and hence eternal. We will never cease to be. So, being unreal, the body, senses, mind, etc. cannot escape their annihilation. Knowledge as intellectual possession is considered to be preferable to wealth and other worldly possessions as it is subtler than other possessions. Dharma is superior to intellectual possession as it accompanies the being naturally. The knowledge of the Self is much superior to Dharma because the seeker who has realized the Self becomes Brahman. Consequently, Shri Krishna tells Arjuna to contemplate on the nature of Reality. Forgetting Bhagwan if man thinks of the objects which are ephemeral, then he becomes like worldly objects (91). The knowers of Reality have discovered Sat to be eternal and the unreal world to be ephemeral. The main teaching expounded in the present verse is that we should not be entrapped in taking the unreal to be real. So the sum and substance is that everything other than the Self is unreal and hence should be treated as such (89). The meaning of this verse is further explained in the following verses of Gitaguhyam:

नैव नाशो निवासो वा कस्यचित् इति निश्चितम् ॥1cd॥

अत्रियमाणं हि को रक्षेत् कोऽवध्यं हन्तुमर्हति।

असदसद्भि सत्सच्च जन्म मृत्युर्न तत्त्वतः ॥2॥

Whatever is *asat* cannot be protected and whatever is *sat* cannot be destroyed. Keeping in view the nature of *sat* and *asat* it can be understood that in reality there is no birth and death. Virtually this comes close to the theory of non-origination (*ajātivāda*) expounded in *Māṇḍūkyakārikā*. The message that emanates from the study of the verses of *Gitaguhyam* is that it is obligatory to perform one's duty without any hesitation even if such a situation arises in which one has to fight against one's own relations.

कर्तव्यश्चेद्धि कर्तव्यः संग्रामः स्वजनैरपि।

निष्पक्षो निर्ममो भूत्वा न्यायाधीशासनस्थवत् ॥3॥

When the eye is pressed with a finger or has some disease, the single moon appears double. Similarly the unreal appears

to be real and stable due to nescience. In reality, wealth, other objects, etc. which have beginning and end give rise to different kinds of pleasure but are a source of pain resultantly. The wise do not rejoice experiencing them.

ये हि संस्पर्शजा भोगा दुःखयोनय एव ते।

आद्यन्तवन्तः कौन्तेय न तेषु रमते बुधः ॥ B. G., 5.22

Babaji clarifies saying that the pleasure which does not turn into pain is in reality actual happiness. But on the other hand pleasure which seems to be enjoyable due to delusion in the mind does end in pain. That which only appears to be existing necessarily comes to an end. That which is beyond perception does not end. In the following two verses of Shrimadbhagavadgita this becomes crystal clear: O Arjuna! Know that to be indestructible by which the whole is pervaded and because of which the whole universe appears to be real. The bodies with which we have identified ourselves are perishable. The Self that resides in them is real and eternal:

अविनाशि तु तद्विद्धि येन सर्वमिदं ततम्। B. G., 2.17 a,b

अन्तवन्त इमे देहा नित्यस्योक्ताः शरीरिणः। B. G., 2.18 a,b

Since our bodies are not eternal we should not grieve over the death of these bodies. However, there is an order of indestructibility. For example, water is more stable than earth. Akasha is more eternal than air. The soul is the subtlest and hence it is absolutely eternal. Hence fight the Kauravas without any worry. One must understand the difference between the advice that Shri Krishna gave to Duryodhana not to create conditions for war and the instruction that is being given to Arjuna to fight for a legitimate cause. So the seeker should contemplate on the Self so that he may attain the Summum bonum, i.e. eternal bliss and should not give up this for the sake of sense pleasure. He should be careful about it (94, 95).

Here Babaji very rightly remarks that we tend to learn in old age, and not before that, that this body is not eternal so that we may pay attention to the eternal soul by which this body

is animated. The Self does not need any proof for its existence as the Sun does not need any proof for its existence. But right comprehension of the nature of the Self is a prerequisite to advance on the spiritual path leading to the attainment of our goal. We should not misinterpret the verse “नायं हन्ति न हन्यते = Neither does it kill nor is it killed.” If somebody kills a buffalo and quotes the verse of the Gita, 2.19: “य एनं वेत्ति हन्तारं यश्चैनं मन्यते हतम्। उभौ तौ न विजानीतो नायं हन्ति न हन्यते।। He who knows it to be a killer, etc.”, then he is misinterpreting the spirit of such verses as throw light on the nature of the soul. To buttress the eternality of the soul, Shri Krishna says, “न जायते म्रियते वा कदाचिन्नायं भूत्वा भविता वा न भूयः।” By throwing light on the nature of the soul, which is meant to dispel the ignorance of Arjuna, the scripture conveys the message that man ought to do what the scripture says.

In other words Arjuna is being told by Lord Krishna not to escape his duty of fighting the Kauravas in order to win back what has been wrongfully appropriated by Duryodhana. Again and again Shri Krishna brings to the focus the topic of the nature of the soul. Explaining the above quoted verse he says that the six types of modifications which have been described by Yaska in his Nirukta do not touch the Self. In this context Babaji interprets the word Purana and says that it means that which remains new in all the three periods of time. The soul does not perish with the death of the body like a pot-space which is not destroyed when the pot is destroyed. The Self is complete in all respects and hence it is called अव्यय. One who knows the soul becomes the soul. The world does not exist for the realized person. The knowers of the Self say that there is no world, neither birth nor death. Only Self exists.

The world dries up for the realized person. The soul is related to the body in the manner the latter is related to the apparel. When the body is not fit for life, the soul changes it. The realized person says that the old cloth is gone. Let it go and I do not need the new one. When Arjuna said that killing a person by arrows would incur sin, Shri Krishna makes Arjuna

understand that if killing others is according to the scriptural norms, it does not incur sin (100). Babaji continues to explain that the demons used to torture the Mother with their nails. Still Ma Bhagavati killed them in the battle so that they might be freed from their tamasic bodies and also that they would go to heaven as the scripture says that those who are killed in the battle-field do go to heaven. This was the motive of Ma Bhagavati for those who tortured her (100). One should keep the body for the sake of religion and give it up for the sake of religion (101). This is the spiritual message conveyed by the verse:

वासांसि जीर्णानि यथा विहाय नवानि गृह्णाति नरोऽपराणि।

तथा शरीराणि विहाय जीर्णान्यन्यानि संयाति नवानि देही ॥ B. G., 2.22

Sipping water at the time of death drapes the Prāṇas as has been said in the Upaniṣads. There is difference of opinion regarding the soul taking birth after death whether it takes birth immediately after death or after some five or six months in the process as it journeyed through smoke, food, man and womb (101-2). However, this is a proven fact that the soul is different from the body. Even then one may wonder whether there is any change in the soul due to changes in the body. This doubt is cleared in the coming verse

नैनं छिन्दन्ति शस्त्राणि नैनं दहति पावकः।

न चैनं क्लेदयन्त्यापो न शोषयति मारुतः ॥ B. G., 2.23

“The weapons cannot cut the soul, the fire cannot burn it. And the water cannot wet it nor can the wind dry it up.” The earth, water, fire, air, etc. cannot bring about any change in the soul. Moreover, the wound in the body does not heal until the body is ensouled.

Differences and varieties of religion are meant for seekers of different persuasions. Babaji talks of different bodies that become adjuncts of the Self. So some of the characteristics of the subtle body are common with those of the Self. It is expressed in the form of possessive affection (I-ness or mineness). The causal body is much more unmanifest but

the soul is beyond thought (अचिन्त्य). It does not undergo any modification (अविकार्य), the word unmanifest (अव्यक्त) has been interpreted by Babaji as signifying the pervasive entity, that is free from the characteristic of individuality. These several entities are unmanifest but at the same time they can be thought about. There are other entities which are beyond thinking but undergo modification but the soul is not so (106). The interpretation by Babaji of the word आश्चर्यवत् occurring in Gitaji is as follows:

The behaviour or conduct of a realized person generates amazement in serious seekers (108). When the seeker listens to the description of the soul given in the scriptures he marvels at its eternality as he sees and compares entities. When a pot is made, it becomes manifest. It was not there before it was made and it will cease to exist when it is destroyed. Similarly the body which is apparently inhabited by the soul appears now, which means it is manifest at present. However as it will meet the same fate as the pot, one should not worry about it (106).

The three guṇas cover the Self and the different mental states due to the preponderance of one guṇa or the other do not let the soul reveal itself. A person who is sensitive to this predicament in the world and comes to understand the eternal nature of the soul is amazed. When such amazement is created in the seeker he embarks on the path leading to the attainment of the nature of Reality. The knower of Brahman is hard to find but when due to his previous impressions a seeker gets an opportunity to meet a realized person, he is bound to be wonderstruck. This kind of wonderment fills him with sattva guṇa and he devotes himself whole-heartedly to incessant contemplation on the Self. Thus he gains requisite capability to know the true nature of the Self.

Sattva guṇa helps one develop dispassion towards worldly possessions. It should be kept in mind that sattva guṇa only takes us closer to the state of realization and that this also has to be transcended in order to realize the Self (107). A teacher like Shri Krishna and a seeker like Arjuna are very rare and

whenever we come across such persons it is a matter of wonderment. The grace of Bhagwan is capable of making a person realize his true Self. When he blessed Dhruva with His vision, Dhruva asked Him for proof that He was Bhagwan. Bhagwan touched his cheek with the conch and he was endowed with knowledge instantaneously and began to chant Vedic mantras in praise of the Almighty (108). Babaji gives the illustration of Hanuman. When there was the issue of crossing over the ocean to reach Lanka, Hanuman sat keeping silent. When Jambavanta extolled him that his incarnation was to carry out the work of Shri Rama, Hanuman at once assumed a huge form. It was a wonder.

The second illustration that Babaji gave was that of controlling the mind. When Arjuna asked Shri Krishna how to control the mind which is as uncontrollable as the wind. Shri Krishna told him that the mind can be controlled by practicing contemplation on the Self with dispassion. The third example of a wonder that Babaji gave was related to his life. Once he was sitting in a forest at a place where the story of Ramacharitamanasa was being told. The pundit closed the commentary and asked Babaji to explain a particular passage of Ramacharitamanasa. Babaji then explained the meaning of the passage. Seeing that someone who seemed to be an ordinary sadhu in the eyes of the questioner could explain such a difficult passage so clearly and easily, everybody sitting there was wonderstruck (109). But Babaji clearly maintains that the real wonder is the control of the mind and constant remembrance of Bhagwan at all times.

The illustration of the seer Raikva and Jaḍa Bharata were also told to explain the phenomenon of wonder (109). The disease of the body gives pain in this birth but the disease of the mind is the cause of pain in innumerable births. Intelligent seekers do not pay much attention to the disease of the body as they are concerned about the ailment of the mind. They give up the crookedness of the mind and devote themselves to the worship and devotion of Bhagwan and look for His

grace. Paying respect and offering praise, etc. are the cause of external happiness. Seekers consider pleasure arising out of sense experience as pain. Devotees like Tukaram, etc. were not educated but they were straightforward and desireless. It is also a wonder if a person feels concerned that he is not able to devote his time in search of Bhagwan and suddenly becomes determined after he is cautioned about the quick passage of time (111).

Straightforwardness and desirelessness help one cross over the cycle of birth and death. If a seeker is ripe after the annihilation of his past sins, he immediately seizes the opportunity which cautions him about the fleeting nature of time. The soul does not have any sense or motor organs : बिनुपद चलइ सुनइ बिनु काना। कर बिनु करम करहि बिधि नाना ॥ RC, Balakanda, 3rd quatrain verse ab (chopai) after couplet 117. Hence it arouses a sense of wonder. This is also a wonder that the creator of this universe is not comprehensible. He has everything but remains unknown until the mind is purified by sādhanā and tapasyā (112). One who dives into the ocean of bliss becomes bliss. Though scientific discoveries and inventions arouse wonder, is there a wonder greater than the wonder of Bhagwan? The power by virtue of which our body and sense organs operate is a wonder:

केनेषितं पतति प्रेषितं मनः। चक्षुःश्रोत्रं क उ देवो युनक्ति ॥ केनोपनिषद्, 1.

Here Babaji gives an example of a parrot which has been taught to say, "The hunter will come, spread the net, scatter the grains. But do not get ensnared." The parrot continued to repeat the words and taught other parrots to say the same. The hunter came, spread the net and grains and caught the parrots in the net. The parrots still continued to say what had been taught to them. Such is the plight of the persons who read scriptures but do not comprehend their essential teachings. To search for happiness externally is futile. Happiness exists internally. So believing Bhagwan to be real and remaining disenchanted with the illusory world, we should try to find out the truth of Bhagwan (114).

In the context of wonder relating to different aspects of the Self, Babaji narrates an anecdote which throws light on the attitude of a realized person. A king was coming to see him. Some shepherds were also there. The realised person gave his quilt to them to pick out lice from it. When the king reached there, they exclaimed that the king had arrived but the realised person hearing their exclamation asked them if they found any lice. The moral of this narration (115, 484) is that the realised person took the visit of the king at par with the act of finding lice in his old quilt. Such great souls are a wonder to find.

Here the actions of Shri Ram can be remembered. He remained unruffled when he heard that he was to go to the forest for fourteen years. Also he did not express any happiness when he was told that he was going to be coronated. This unequivocally unperturbed mental attitude in both the situations shows the greatness of a realised soul. If one is equipped with such dispassion, he is sure to realise his true nature.

At one place a sadhu given to making miracles narrated how to produce wheat from earth. He was given stale pudding to eat. He ate with happiness and said that it was tasty. Such contentment is more wonderful than producing wheat from earth.

An incident about gopis narrated by Babaji describes the nature of the love of gopis towards Shri Krishna. Once the gopis were searching for something. Some sadhu asked them what they were searching for. The gopis replied that they were searching for Shri Krishna. The sadhu said that they should search internally by practicing yoga after giving up cosmetics, having their hair-cut, smearing ashes on their bodies and then doing penance and meditating. The gopis said that they would not do anything of the sort as Shri Krishna would feel pained by seeing them shaven and without cosmetics. Therefore they should keep their cosmetics on so that their beloved would feel good seeing them in make-up. Saying this gopis experience thrills of love. Babaji said that such a state of

thrill is a wonder that one should feel thrilled by describing the nature of Bhagwan.

Some devotees hearing the singing of Bhagwan's name run to such a place. Such love for Bhagwan is also a wonder. Love is prominent in devotion. Though Meera was a queen, she was so overwhelmed by her love for Shri Krishna that she danced ignoring shyness which would have been natural at the thought she was being watched by others (117).

Man is mostly engrossed in his fantasies but one who pierces through every desire relating to possessions: wealth, property, fame, etc. is a wonder. The seeker who realises his true nature does not care a fig for this visible phenomenon. The seeker who has realised his true nature is a wonder. In this context Babaji relates a story of a Brahmin and his wife who got a diamond in alms along with foodgrains. They threw away the diamond and ate the meal after cooking foodgrain. Lust, anger and greed are like obstructions which do not let Bhagwan be seen. One who crosses over these obstructions by yoga, devotion and discrimination is a rare phenomenon. The intense longing to see Bhagwan is also a rare event (121).

Attachment is the cause of pain. If we are attached to wealth, then the loss of wealth causes pain. If we have no attachment to wealth, then there is no pain when it is lost. Similarly when we remain attached to this body and think that we are this body, then whatever happens to this body is experienced as happening to ourselves. There is only one soul. It is due to illusion that we appear to be separate. It is important to understand and become convinced that we are separate from our bodies. The soul and the body are different. The former cannot become the latter and vice versa like light and darkness. In a humorous tone Babaji tells us about a conversation between a sadhu and a householder. The householder called the sadhu a renunciate. The sadhu said that the householder was a greater renunciate. The householder asked "How?" The sadhu said that he who renounces the greater thing is greater. The sadhu then asked "Which is greater? World or

Bhagwan". The householder said that Bhagwan is greater than the world. The sadhu explained that he had called the householder greater as he had renounced a greater entity. Hearing this the householder was awakened and started following the spiritual path. Babaji here made a comparison between Dhritarashtra and Arjuna and this comparison is appropriate so far as the anecdote is concerned. Dhritarashtra is a great renunciate as he had given up Dharma. He was greedy. Although Sanjaya addressed him as Bharata, he did not deserve this appellation since he was greedy. This kind of address was proper for Arjuna since he was following the path of righteousness. He who knows that the Self is eternal, pure, knowledge, always liberated, etc. does not kill anybody since all beings are equal in his view.

An incident narrated by Nani Ma shows that the enlightened person treated all beings as equal. At Babaji's ashram the straw for feeding the cows (gausewa) used to be kept on top of the dharmashala and inevitably some straw and even insects used to fall down into the dharmashala from the gaps between the sleepers which formed the dharmashala roof. One day Geli Mai, an elderly sadhvi disciple of Babaji's came slowly into the dharmashala leaning on a long sturdy staff. With difficulty she knelt down and bowed to Babaji and sat down close to him putting the staff on the ground between them. After a few minutes a caterpillar-like insect crawled up onto her white sari. Pulling a face signifying her disgust for the creature, she picked up a long straw and placing one end under the insect she flicked it away from her. Babaji immediately picked up her staff and, wrinkling his face up to mimic her look of disgust, placed the end of the staff under her knee and pretended to flick her away from him. Everyone in the dharmashala burst into laughter at Babaji's play but the deep lesson of equality of all beings was not lost to some of those present. Nani Ma said, "The sober lesson stayed with me all my life as did each of his teachings that he gave with every word and action that he graced us with."

One who is free from desire and the sense of doership does not incur any sin while engaged even in the act of fighting. Desireless action is pardonable (124). A five-year old boy who does something wrong is not subject to punishment. Even the Lord of death does not punish him. This is corroborated by scriptures. Ignorance is unmanifest in a child. How does a realised person who is sinless, desireless, free from ego commit any error? Babaji says that to keep alive the desire to know Brahman, the seeker should bring into practice conduct which is appropriate to a knower of Brahman (125). Brahman is realised with an alert and subtle mind in a scientific way (दृश्यते त्वग्र्या बुद्ध्या, कठोपनिषद्, 1.3.12). Just as mercury is handled in a scientific way. One who is realised is unlikely to do anything which is against scriptures (125). At first Arjuna desisted from doing his rightful karma. Now Shri Krishna would tell Arjuna that a person who has reached the acme of knowledge does not deviate from the path of Dharma.

The soul is called embodied because it has a body which is under its control (125). The body is an adjunct of the soul. Under the spell of ignorance, the embodied soul identifies itself with the body. The body is of three types: gross, subtle and causal. The body which has the seed of ignorance is called the causal body. The subtle body has five sense organs, five motor organs and four kinds of internal sense organs (अन्तःकरण). The subtle and causal bodies are not mutually intermingled. The third body is the visible body which is called gross. The fool consider this body to be the embodied soul, which is view of the Chārvāka philosophers. Those who are wiser take the subtle body to be their essence. But this subtle body is also subject to modification. The modifications of the subtle body are imprinted on the causal body, which is cause of transmigration. It is external orientation which is responsible for different births. Those who are attracted to the objects of pleasure are like vultures and swine. The results of good and bad actions are stored in the subtle body. Discrimination between being and non-being or good and bad also exists in this body. To be inclined towards the objects of

senses is the work of rajas. Indolence, ignorance, laziness are the effects of tamas. The subtle body is subject to destruction like the physical body (126). The irresistible Maya subjugates even influential beings. So ordinary persons come under its influence very easily. However sometimes Maya subjugates a dispassionate being but departs after awakening him and destroying his egoism (126). Here Babaji has told the story of Narada Rishi.

There is only one soul in all living bodies. He who has realised that the soul is eternal, pure knowledge and always liberated is not looked upon as a killer even if he kills somebody in a war. This means that he who is desireless and without ego does not incur any sin. Desireless action is pardonable (124). The experiential knowledge of the soul enables one to transcend all scriptural exhortations although he naturally does not do anything that is against the scriptural moral code. We should not follow our mind but the norms established by our spiritual and religious scriptures. This brings about order in our society. Arjuna is to decide between house-hold duties and the war thrust upon the Pandavas. Shri Krishna tells him that if the motive of the battle is moral, then the battle is treated as Dharmayuddha. Arjun does not harbour any greed like Duryodhana. So he should fight considering it as his obligation. It is the duty of a Kshatriya to protect Dharma by vanquishing the enemy. Arjuna asks about killing his grandfather Bhishma Pitamaha and his preceptor Dronacharya. Shri Krishna clarifies that it is their desire to die in a battle. Being old they are here to fight. Why do you shirk? They have granted him permission to fight and also blessed him for victory in war as Duryodhana was not inclined to give Pandavas even five villages. So it is right to fight against Duryodhana in battle. When there is infectious abscess, it is proper to operate upon it. In the same way Duryodhana should be taught a lesson. Moreover, being a kshatriya it is the duty of Arjuna to fight against injustice. Consequently it is not proper to avoid fighting after accepting the challenge or picking up the gauntlet (129).

To say that I am Brahman does not mean that I have become Brahman. To realise Brahman is possible only when ego, infatuation, desire, etc. have become extinct and when the mind has become free from impurities, which is possible by practicing contemplation on the Absolute Reality. In the quartet dharma, artha, kama and moksha, Dharma is at the head of the quartet. So wealth should be earned following Dharma or in accordance with Dharma and should be for such purposes which conform to Dharma. Dharma is inclined towards the soul even though wealth represents the transmigratory world. The logic behind placing wealth and desire between Dharma and Salvation (मोक्ष) is that the use of wealth and effort to fulfil desire should be guided by the principles that are based on Dharma and that render our journey conducive to liberation. Shri Krishna says, "O Arjuna! Such an opportunity to fight is an open door to heaven. If you decide not to fight, then you lose your dharma and reputation." Moreover, not to fight is to disobey your elders. To think that begging alms is preferable to fight and by giving up fight to sit in a secluded place for devotion to Bhagwan does not behove you as your preceptor Dronacharya looks upon you to be a great warrior. For your sake, he asked Ekalavya to give his thumb to him. Even Lord Shiva was impressed by your valour. In such a situation, the decision not to fight would bring a bad name to your mother Kunti (132) and also attract censure from people. After all it is a sin not to obey the elders. Therefore you should follow the righteous path and win back your misappropriated royal share.

Shri Krishna continues to ingrain a sense of duty in Arjuna, "you have made me stand ahead of you and now it is not right that you yourself are running away." It is the first and foremost duty of a Kshatriya to fight in the same manner as dispassion and renunciation are the first and foremost duty of a renunciate. Likewise the first and foremost duty of a householder is to act according to Vedic principles. Similarly the most important duty of a celibate is to study the Veda and serve the preceptor. When there is war based on the

principles of Veda and Dharma, it is not proper to take into consideration relations and escape it. The sum and substance is that a fortunate Kshatriya gets such an opportunity to fight such a righteous battle because it is an open door to heaven. If you do not fight, then you would invite censure which is said to surpass even death for a person who commands respect in society.

Babaji terms the dialogue between Shri Krishna and Arjuna a kind of debate in order to decide whether not to fight is preferable to fighting a just battle. Shri Krishna says that if Arjuna does not want to fight for the sake of happiness and prosperity, then he should shun pain also as a person who considers pleasure and pain equal does not incur any sin. A sinner is he who performs an act under the impact of senses. To be free means to keep under control the mind and senses. King Shibi, the seer Dadhichi offered their bodies for the sake of a good cause. They did not feel any pain because they were doing this for the sake of Dharma, which can be compared with Bhagwan. He who attaches value to religion does not experience any pain when he does something for the preservation of Dharma. An ignorant person who lives in the forest fears but he who has knowledge does not fear anything. This is the difference between the two. Taking everything to be of Bhagwan one should not worry about loss in business. However one should perform one's duty carefully with dedication and serve the elders and the respectable selflessly.

The verse of Gitaji सुखदुःखे समे कृत्वा लाभालाभौ जयाजयौ has influenced many people. Many of them turn towards Gitaji because of this verse. Shri Krishna says that the Kshatriya is also allowed to renounce but when he turns 75 years (143), and not before that. But a brahmin can take to renunciation naturally. Babaji here mentions the spirit of renunciation of a brahmin named Kaiyata of Kashmir who wrote a great work on the Mahabhashya. This book was praised by the scholars of Kashi. They came to Kashmir to pay a visit to him. They saw that he was living in a house made of earth. He had a

mat and a pot for water. This was the whole possession of the brahmin. His wife used to bring something from the forest and with that they used to make both ends meet. When the scholars of Kashi saw this state of affairs, they expressed their anger over the king of Kashmir not honouring such a great scholar. They said to the king that he gives them so much. Why did he not pay attention to giving necessities of life to Kaiyata? The king said he tried to give everything necessary to the scholar but he never accepted anything. When the king offered some villages to the scholar, he left the kingdom saying that he would not live there because by offering villages, the king was trying to make him greedy and he would not like to live in the kingdom of such a king. The scholars of Kashi requested him not to leave the place. Babaji said that this is an appropriate illustration of the verse सुखदुःखे समे कृत्वा लाभालाभौ जयाजयौ।

In this context Babaji gives another illustration to show the significance of this verse. Once a king's son got married. The wife of a Pandit in Navadvipa went to the king's palace to bless the newly married wife of the prince. She came back without asking anything. The queen thought that the wife of the Pandit did not ask for anything. The following day the king went to the Pandit's place on his elephant and asked him if the couple required anything. The Pandit said that he was to compose a verse to complete his book, which he had now accomplished. If the king wanted to know about the house, then he should ask the lady of the house. When the king asked the lady, she said that she had bangles on her hands and hence she did not need anything else. We have all that we need, she said. Such was the contentment of the Pandit couple. Many Ascetics relinquished precious stones. When some Mahatma wanted to give a Philosopher's stone to Ravidas, he asked the Mahatma to insert it in thatched roof.

Those who do not feel elated when pleasure comes can also endure pain. In the triad desire, anger and greed, greed is gross and it happens for the sake of inanimate objects. If it

is not satisfied, it gives rise to anger. Desire is the subtlest of the three. Greed and anger take root when there is desire. If desire is put to an end, then the other two also depart. Shri Krishna says that if Arjuna fights to serve his interest, he is liable to sin. But if he fights for the sake of Dharma, then sin would not accrue to him. Duryodhana is fighting for his own gain, so he would incur sin. The noble give up their life for the sake of Dharma and they also forsake pleasure for a noble cause. Consequently treating gain and loss equally, one should perform one's duty.

Non-remembrance of Bhagwan is the greatest pain for the devotee. A person who is not given to greed, can gain knowledge of the Almighty. A seeker who is engrossed in loving Bhagwan and disenchanted with the world does not care for worldly objects. Shri Krishna further says that he has told Arjuna the knowledge of the soul, that is Samkhya-yoga, which consists in knowing the true nature of the Self. He who has known his Self has known all, since the soul is all. He has risen above inertness and has attained the state of eternal awareness, which is consciousness. One who does not have the knowledge of the soul is inert and remains without happiness. The statement सकल पदार्थ हैं जगमाही करमहीन नर पावत नाहि is given by Babaji in the case of a person who is not aware that he is really the Conscious Self (150). To consider an inanimate object as a source of pleasure is ignorance as it is the cause of pain. The pairs of pleasure and pain, attachment and aversion, gain and loss, victory and defeat, etc. are all causes of love and hate. So they should be treated as being the same as each other. For these come and go and so they are subject to destruction. In order to realise the true nature of the Self, they should be endured as told by Shri Krishna in Gitaji:

मात्रास्पर्शास्तु कौन्तेय शीतोष्णसुखदुःखदाः।

आगमापायिनोऽनित्यास्तांस्तितिक्षस्व भारत ॥ B. G., 2.14

There is a great difference between the empirical reality and spiritual truth. Babaji here gives an illustration of Bharata coming to Shri Rama when Lakṣmaṇa told Shri Rama that

he was apprehensive because Bharat was accompanied by an army. Lakṣmaṇa said that after defeating Bharara in battle we will crown you king. At this Shri Rama asked Lakṣmaṇa if the position for which he wanted to fight Bharata was eternal or fleeting. Hearing this Lakṣmaṇa became silent. What Shri Rama meant was one should always try to remain in one's natural state and that there is no use making efforts for perishable things (150). The verse above is relevant to the paths of knowledge, action and devotion.

Shri Krishna was now going to tell Arjuna about the path of action. No action is prescribed for a person who has taken to the life of renunciation because he should only make an effort to be established in his real nature. There is a possibility of love and hate in doing action. Consequently this verse is of use when the path of action is being followed. A mind riveted to the soul is superior. Other mental attitudes are auxiliary. To explain, a woman has a husband and sons. The husband stands for the path of knowledge as there is an opportunity on it to practise surrender. The son represents the path of action. As the husband is born as the son, so the path of action is the result of the path of knowledge. In this way the path of knowledge is the main path and the path of action is its natural corollary. At the culmination of the path of action, the mind transcends the bondage of action and gets established in the true nature of the Self (151-2). Babaji says that the paths of devotion, action and knowledge should be treated as being the same. Devotion is the mother of knowledge and dispassion. Similarly the path of action should not be treated as being something different from the path of knowledge as when the path of action has been practiced with dedication, it makes man eligible for knowledge. In this way both can be understood as being part of each other.

Whatever is a source of happiness for great souls (Mahātmās) is a source of pain for householders. Renunciation and penance, etc. are a source of happiness for renunciates but are considered to be a source of pain and distress for

worldly people. A mother gives up pleasure for the sake of her child. Whatever she does for the comfort of her child is not considered to be a source of pain but a source of joy. Similarly physical distress that she undergoes in keeping the house in order is treated as a source of satisfaction (154). The noble soul goes out in the sun to bring water for the thirsty. He enjoys doing this since it will alleviate the pain of the thirsty. A person who has desires is destined to feel pleasure and pain but a desireless person gains the knowledge of the Self. This means that the existence of desire binds man to karmas. A person who has desires but does not do anything to earn livelihood is a lazy person. He gets neither salvation nor food.

Bhagwan says that if a man, being introspective, does acts without thinking of the fruit, he will get neither pleasure nor pain. Absence of worry for gain and loss does not produce pleasure and pain. The mind which is not externally oriented belongs to the path of knowledge. Babaji here gives an example to clarify this point. A maid puts on the robes of a princess when both were invited to a palace. When they reached the palace, the princess entered without bothering about anything while the maid who was dressed like princess was concerned about where to take off her shoes, etc. and was therefore identified as not being a real princess. Like the princess, in Samkhya the mind remains without unnecessary care and worry. A king brought a sadhu to his palace which was decorated and scented. The king asked the sadhu how he felt in the palace and the sadhu said it was giving out a bad odor. What the sadhu meant was that whatever is a cause of bondage is bad. The objects of enjoyment are the cause of bondage and therefore they are to be shunned.

The world consists of the phenomena of birth and death. Death is a great cause of fear. To be free from this fear is salvation. To follow the path laid down by the scriptures leads to freedom from fear. Desire is a burden. The poor have few desires and consequently they encounter few problems. The wealthy have many desires and so they have to face many

difficulties. Absence of desires frees man from fear of insult, loss, sorrow, etc. Desireless action removes all obstacles. Desireless action is aimed at gaining the knowledge of the Self. The verse of Shrimadbhagavadgita, 2. 40 नेहाभिक्रमनाशोऽस्ति प्रत्यवायो न विद्यते। स्वल्पमप्यस्य धर्मस्य त्रायते महतो भयात्॥ shows that those who are busy doing their work selflessly with a view to attaining the knowledge of the soul are destined to reach the goal. Those who, even if they have not done great acts have done their duty selflessly do realise Bhagwan. Any effort to keep the mind free from crookedness, even if it is just a little, does not go to waste but confers freedom from the cycle of transmigration since straightforwardness not only enables the seeker to reach his goal without much difficulty but also frees him from every kind of fear. It is a difficult task to identify all our desires as there are subtle wishes and desires. It requires tireless effort to search out our desires including the subtle ones, so that they can be given up. One cannot banish all desires if one has not put in effort to know one's deep-rooted desires and expectations. To identify desires and banish them is a form of penance. Desires and egoity are the greatest obstructions on the path to liberation. Similarly anger and greed are also to be relinquished because they are also great obstacles on the spiritual path.

Babaji compares Shri Krishna to the path of knowledge and Arjuna to that of desireless action. When man contemplates he finds that it is the most difficult task to renounce all desires and expectations. It is certain that one will attain the summum bonum of life if one is free from all desires and expectations. Consequently it is the highest penance to gain freedom from desires. Desirelessness is the condition for eligibility to tread the path of spirituality. Just as a bitter medicine is capable of curing a disease; so does the state of desirelessness enable a seeker to reach the goal of Liberation, which is possible only by virtue of renunciation.

Those who are attached to the enjoyment of objects of pleasure cannot have a stable and steady mind. This is the

reason why Shri Krishna teaches Arjuna to give up the desire to enjoy worldly pleasures and embark on the path of karmayoga where even the slightest effort does not go to waste. Desireless action always meets with success whereas an act done with desire is always the cause of fear and bondage. For example, if a man does work with the desire of fame, then he would fear the opposite, that is, calumny. There is renunciation in Dharma but where there is desire, there is infatuation (167). Since having desires makes one unstable, Shri Krishna asks Arjuna to give up all desires and expectations so that he may attain stability of mind and ability to adopt the path of righteousness. Persons with impure mind are attached to the body and senses. This verse 2. 44 of Gitaji: भोगैश्वर्यप्रसक्तानां तयापहृतचेतसाम्। व्यवसायात्मिका बुद्धिः समाधौ न विधीयते॥ explains this mental state clearly. Only those who are blessed with a steady and stable mind achieve success in meditation and attain samadhi. Ravana pleased Lord Shiva but wished for worldly enjoyments. Similarly Bhasmasura pleased Shankara and asked for Parvati. Desirelessness leads to a steady mind but he who has desires never attains steadiness.

Dharma is subtle and frees man from fear. Similarly knowledge destroys the fear generated by doing karmas (172). Relinquishing karma in a superficial way does not uproot that fear. When we give up the desire for fruit, it is really annihilated. It is like uprooting a tree from the roots. It is in this context that Babaji does not speak highly of scientific inventions and discoveries. Though it looks like an outmoded thought, yet it has a very significant message. The inventions and discoveries fulfil our desires and provide ease and convenience in life. This in turn increases our desire for more ease and pleasure in life, and is detrimental to spiritual growth.

Babaji preaches the Non-dualist philosophy :

निराकारोऽपरिच्छिन्नः शून्यत्वे नैव सारता।

चिद्धनो निर्गुणो गूढ आत्माऽद्वैतो निरञ्जनः॥ Ātmacintanam, 12

“The soul is non-dual, formless, limitless, concealed, Consciousness and has no qualities since there is no essence in

void." That is why it is no use having desire for things which are other than the soul. For this very reason man should not perform sacrifices for the fulfilment of desires of having a son, wealth, etc. but should, instead, perform acts prescribed by the scriptures without any desire for the fruits of those acts. Then one will be able to find peace. One who wants peace has to rise above the three guṇas. The scope of the Vedas is limited to the three guṇas but Shri Krishna exhorts Arjuna to rise above the three guṇas: त्रैगुण्यविषया वेदा निस्त्रैगुण्यो भवाजुन (B. G. 2. 45). In other words, the sacrifices which are prescribed in the Vedic karmakāṇḍa should not interest a seeker. One should give up all desires and do acts without any desire for their fruits. The three paths karma, upāsana and knowledge are expounded in the Vedas. If the acts prescribed by the scriptures are done selflessly, the actions help a seeker to become eligible for the attainment of knowledge. Similarly upāsana purifies the mind of the seeker and makes him eligible for the attainment of knowledge. Just as mother gives money to her son to entice him to take medicine. Similarly Śruti Mātā entices man to do good work by promising him good fruit of his actions.

Śruti uses the three guṇas to liberate those who are tied to three guṇas just as to extricate someone from mud, one has to enter mud (178). In this context Babaji narrates an incident from Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad 5.2.1-3.

This reference from Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad relates to the three classes of the children of Prajāpati: Gods, humans and demons. They had once lived a life of brahmachari with their father, Prajāpati, the Lord of creation. When the gods asked him for teaching, he said only one syllable 'da'. When he asked the gods if they have understood, they said that they understood by the syllable "Restrain yourselves." Prajāpati said that they had understood the meaning of his teaching. The same syllable was taught to humans and when they were asked whether they understood the teaching. They said that they had understood by the syllable 'datta, give'. Prajāpati okayed this also. When the demons also asked Prajāpati, "Pray, teach us", he said the

syllable 'da' to them as well and asked them if they understood the teaching i.e. the syllable. They replied that they understood "Dayadhvam, sympathise." Prajāpati said 'yes' they had understood. Now the question arises why Prajāpati taught the same syllable to gods, humans and demons when they sought separate instructions from him. How could they understand what he intended to impart to each group through the same syllable 'da'. Babaji is using this example to show that everyone considers themselves to have faults. Gods considered themselves that they suffered from lack of restraint. So they understood from the syllable "Damyata= Restrain yourselves." The humans understood "Datta, Giva" as they suffered from greed. The demons apprehended their weakness and hence understood from the same syllable "Dayadhvam, sympathise." Prajāpati knew his disciples and also knew that each class would understand the syllable Da as being directed toward their own weaknesses. The letter Da symbolised the correctives of their respective faults and the three classes could comprehend which instruction was likely for them. One does not require much by way of instruction when one is conscious of one's own faults. One endowed with these three qualities becomes competent for meditation, which is a means to the realisation of Brahman (181 and 496).

There are four characteristics of a person who can establish himself in the true state of the Self: निर्द्वन्दो नित्यसत्त्वस्थो निर्योगक्षेम आत्मवान्। (B. G. 2. 45 cd). He should be free from attachment, aversion, love and hate, etc., his attention should always be riveted on Bhagwan, he should have no concerns about attaining anything which is not already with him and should always be intensely aware of his Self. Having gained such a state of mind, he has only as much interest in the Vedas as one might have in a small water reservoir when one has a water source which is completely full of water on all sides, as is described in this verse :

यावानर्थं उदपाने सर्वतः संसृतोदके।

तावानेव सर्वेषु वेदेषु ब्राह्मणस्य विजानतः।। B. G., 2. 46

This means that a person who has given up worldly possessions and has developed dispassion does not need to collect things unnecessarily. He needs only the amount which is required to sustain life. When one is blessed with the ocean of bliss, does he need the pleasures of the world? This is what is conveyed by the above quoted verse of Gitaji. Desire binds and absence of desire releases.

Mīmāṃsā prescribes acts for man and motivates him to perform the prescribed acts but is not meant to confer Liberation on him. He is obliged to perform acts only and is free to desire the fruit of these acts or relinquish the fruit. If he desires fruit, he invites bondage and if he gives up fruit, then he purifies his mind, which is essential to know the true nature of his Self.

Babaji says we should determine which act is to be done and which is not to be done. For this he says that there are three determining factors: The scriptural injunction, one's own internal sense organ (antaḥkaraṇa) and the acts which our forefathers had done. So far as the scriptures are concerned, it is possible that their meaning may not be comprehended. One's mind may be impure and cannot decide the viability of a particular act but in this context the path shown by our forefathers is easy to adopt in deciding which act is to be done. This has been indicated by the statement:

यद्यदाचरति श्रेष्ठस्तत्तदेवेतरो जनः ।

स यत्प्रमाणं कुरुते लोकस्तदनुवर्तते ॥ B. G., 3.21.

The outer space is full of worry and pain whereas the inner space is full of bliss. If man has tasted the bliss of the inner space, then what is the need to wander in the outer space. In order to enter the inner space one has to practice control over the mind and senses. To control sense organs on a single day is to observe fast but if the seeker has gained for good control over the mind and senses, his observance is called Mahāvratā, which is practising such control without being tied down to time and space limitations. On the day that one observes a fast, one should simultaneously practice truth, non-violence, celibacy and renunciation, etc. Then only the observance of a

fast becomes successful. Moreover, this observance should be done to please Bhagwan, and not for any other purpose.

In this context Babaji shows the importance of internal feeling. If a lowcaste man worships Śiva with a good affect, then He is pleased with his worship. There was temple in a forest where a Brahmin used to worship Śiva. A forester saw him worshipping and wanted to do the same. He did not have any utensil for water. So he would fill his mouth with water and then empty his mouth onto the Śivaliᅅga. He worshipped Śiva with the flesh of deer. One night he was worshipping Śiva when he offered his eye to the Śivaliᅅga. A supernatural voice said that there was no fault in this offering. This does not mean that meat is worth offering to Bhagwan. This incident shows the significance of inner feeling. Inner feeling matters most in worship and makes the act of worship meaningful. Ravana also worshipped by offering his heads to Śiva (208-9).

Babaji narrated one more incident to show the importance of inner feeling in the act of worship. Once a thief went to steal the temple bell. When he climbed onto the Śivaliᅅga to steal the bell, Śiva took this act as if the thief had offered himself to Him and He revealed Himself to him (209). On Śivarātri Swami Dayananda was awakened but he was a child at that time. He did not know at that time that Bhagwan Śiva also gives shelter to those who beg for protection from Him. The question arose in Dayananda's mind that the snake which encircled the neck of Śiva should have eaten the mouse. But the mouse was looking at Dayananda. The mouse symbolises bad reasoning, which gets offered to Śiva. It nibbles at books like Gitaji, Ramayana, etc. as it is ignorant of the rules and regulations in this context. A snake symbolises doubt संसय सर्प ग्रसेड मोहि ताता (RC, Uttarakāᅇᅇa, 3rd chopai c after the couplet 92). It occurs in the Ramayana that even though Garuda eats snakes, the snake of doubt bit him. The snake of doubt also bit Satiji. Now it is the age of Kaliyuga. Bad reasoning is also offered to Bhagwan (209). The commentaries written by Dayananda are based on reason and logic. He asked his

mother for bread and ate it. He did not observe the fast at night. So people who follow Aryasamaj do not observe fast on Śivarātri. Swami Dayananda had observed the fast during the day with the result that he saw the Śivaliᅅga and went out in search of Bhagwan (210).

One has the right to work and not to the fruits of actions. Sometimes man is under compulsion to do work. A man who has been imprisoned has to do work and is not free like a man outside the jail. It is because of some crime that a man has to go to jail but in jail his work has been determined by the Jail code of conduct. He is not free in jail to do any work (211). One who is desirous of Liberation is free to do action but he should not do any work to attain any fruit. It is Bhagwan who gives fruit of actions. All desires are not fulfilled. Even a king cannot have all his desires fulfilled. Bhagwan is pleased when work has been done with a noble idea and with straightforwardness.

Immoral acts and those done with a sense of ego do not please Bhagwan. There is a story of Sutikᅅᅅa in Ramayana. He was chanting the name of Śrirāma while dancing and after sometime he sat meditating. Rama was watching this from behind a tree. He substituted the form of Viᅅᅅu within Sutikᅅᅅa's heart. Sutikᅅᅅa was perturbed and stood up opening his eyes and then he saw Rama in person standing in front of him. The moral is this that even highly elevated great souls do not always know what is good for them, not to speak of ordinary men. So it is beneficial to leave the fruit of actions to Bhagwan. It is only Bhagwan who knows what is beneficial to the seeker. Babaji gives an illustration. Seer Utunga was doing penance in a forest and he himself used to fetch kandamula. His disciples implored him that they would fetch kandamula for him. Although the seer did not like this, he allowed them and sat in the cave where he entered samadhi. Even Indra feared him and wished to break his samadhi but could not. Bhagwan came there and asked him to request a boon. Utunga prided himself on his attainment of samadhi

so he asked Bhagwan to give him only the fruit that he has earned by his penance. Bhagwan asked him to stay buried under the earth holding it on his head and without light for the length of time that he had done penance and said this was the fruit that his penance had earned as the performance of his sadhana had been done sitting on the earth and in the light of the Sun, neither of which belonged to him. Therefore there is no use priding oneself on the penance one is doing. The moral of the story is that the fruit should be left to Bhagwan as He knows what is good for the seeker (213). Babaji here refers to five factors which are the bases of action:

अधिष्ठानं तथा कर्ता करणं च पृथग्विधम्।

विविधाश्च पृथक् चेष्टा देवं चैवात्र पञ्चमम्॥ B. G., 18.14

Locus, agent, means, various efforts and impressions (fate) are five causes of karma (actions). If these five causes are removed, then there is only ego that remains with the Self. If this ego is taken to belong to Bhagwan, then karmayoga results (213). If anyone is attached to non-activity, which is a result of tamas, he becomes a slave to laziness, dereliction and slumber. He becomes a cause for worry. Those who unknowingly become inactive are doomed to darkness. Shri Krishna told Arjuna that karmayoga is the foundation stone of Liberation. This is the first step towards Emancipation. The path of karma begins with action done but leads gradually to desireless acts. It is similar to weaning a child from play and introducing him to reading. After starting to read and write, the child moves on to gain learning. For this parents entice the child towards studies. Slowly and slowly he will get an education. When a person completely gives up worldly desires and does acts without any desire, he becomes eligible for Liberation. Desireless action is for those who long for release from transmigration. To do natural action without desire and attachment may be called karmayoga. When a bee is trapped inside a lotus at night it does not nibble away at the petals because of attachment, even though it can perforate even wood. It makes no attempt to escape and becomes a

prey to whosoever may eat the lotus. Similarly a man who is entangled in attachment cannot think of relinquishing his possessions. He irresistibly gathers worldly things and considers such collection easy but finds it difficult to give up even the smallest thing.

Bhagwan is the innermost. So one should do acts with inner awareness. One should protect the essence of Dharma which exists inside every being. It does not matter much if external objects are destroyed. Babaji here narrates a tale occurring in Raghuvamśa. King Dilip went to sage Vaśiṣṭha, who told him that he would be blessed with a son by serving Surabhi cow. King Dilip served Surabhi day and night. After twenty-one days Surabhi created a lion to test the sincerity of King Dilip. The lion attacked Surabhi. The king wanted to kill the lion but he found that his hands were paralysed. The lion said that he had been sent by Śaṁkara so the king cannot do any harm to him. Then Dilip said to the lion that he could eat him instead of the cow. The lion asked him why he wanted to sacrifice his beautiful body to which the king replied that he could not afford to forsake Dharma and the body is anyway perishable. If Dharma is protected, everything stands protected. Kings like Dilip save Dharma by sacrificing their life. Shri Krishna said to Arjuna if Dharma is protected everything else remains protected. Dharma has the form of Bhagwan. It also has the form of action, power and knowledge (238).

It is also important to keep in mind that man cannot practice karmayoga until he has controlled his mind and senses because only if the senses are controlled, can the mind relinquish desires. When a mind is turned towards Bhagwan with love, it is said to be following the path of devotion. One should remember Bhagwan when one is about to perform one's duties, to take one's meals, or when one is going to do some important work.

There are two vidyas: parā vidyā and aparā vidyā. The latter is a little superior to avidyā. Aparā vidyā consists in learning scriptures and studying books relating to other disciplines

that help a man do worldly errands without much physical toil and to be able to earn a livelihood (244). If this learning is used in the fulfilment of desires, it is called inferior karma (avara karma) in Gitaji दूरेण ह्यवरं कर्म बुद्धियोगाद्धनञ्जय (B. G. 2. 49 ab). People earn money and purchase different amenities of life, which they consider to be of value but in reality Bhagwan is the real wealth. That is why Shri Krishna is telling Arjuna that the work which a man does to get various commodities in order to live with ease is inferior karma (avara karma). Here Babaji compares this kind of action to the action of animals because whatever is done to fulfil desires is inferior karma. But the acts of Raidas, Kabirdas and the butcher Sadan were considered to be of superior quality as those devotees were always intoxicated with the love of Bhagwan. Also the work done by the learned with proper knowledge is understood to be desireless (246).

A high status in society is considered to be low from spiritual point of view. The application of mind is needed in both kinds of learning whether it is to gain knowledge about worldly amenities or about a way of life which is conducive to spiritual growth. Yājñavalkya told Gārgī that an individual having got a human body lives only to fulfil desires and does not try to know the Self and in the end dies without realising for what he is born. The acts of those who are afflicted with desires and are not free from egoity are called inferior karmas. Where Prakṛti rules over man, there is enjoyment. Where Puruṣa rules over Prakṛti there is Bhagwan (249).

The difference between an ordinary man and a man who treads the path of knowledge is like that between a man and an animal. A natural act belongs to karmayoga but inferior karma is an ordinary karma which is done without the use of proper knowledge. Babaji says that karmayoga is the reflection of ज्ञानयोग (the path of knowledge) as the individual self is a part of Brahman. As such karmayoga is a part of ज्ञानयोग and hence the former is not an obstruction to the attainment of knowledge (250). This is why acts which are prescribed by

the scriptures for the fulfilment of various worldly desires are called inferior karmas. Babaji here refers to his own life when he gave up carrying even a pot, which sadhus generally keep for holding water saying that when there is water everywhere there is no need of keeping a utensil to preserve water. Such a life of renunciation is a wonder to see.

People take the sense of equality differently. A sadhu was smoking marijuana at the beach of Gangaji. Babaji asked him why he was doing so and he asked if Babaji had read Gitaji where it talks of the yoga of equanimity. Babaji said that we should act in accordance with the scriptures, which do not allow us to smoke marijuana. It is not equality that whatever we lay our hand on, should be consumed by us. There can be equanimity in emotions but there is not equality so far as edible articles are concerned. Everything should not be eaten. Of course, everything can be eaten with the help of supernatural powers but it is advisable that ordinary people should just observe equanimity in matters of success and failure.

A devotee said that as the listener and the narrator of Gitaji were both householders, therefore Gitaji is meant for householders only. Babaji replied that the discourser of Gitaji was a renunciate in the previous incarnation. His incarnation as Nara and Narayana and afterwards as Buddha showed that Bhagwan had been a renunciate and tapasvi; however the chronicler Vyasa was a householder. Even so, Śukadeva, his son was an ideal even for renunciates and Vyasa himself was the knower of Reality. The narrator and listener of Gitaji both belonged to Kshatriya class but that does not mean that we should think that Gitaji is not meant for brahmins. Bhagwan can also teach renunciates. The purpose of Gitaji is to lead people from ordinary acts towards specific ones so that the seeker who follows the path described in Gitaji is liberated.

The Śrīmadbhagavadgītā is meant for all (270-71). One who follows the path of knowledge gives up both good and bad deeds, which means that he does actions which come to

him naturally whether it be an act of worshipping or making shoes (271). In this context Babaji narrates an incident relating to Guru Ramdas whose guru was Amardas. Guru Ramdas asked two of his disciples to construct a terrace. When the terrace was ready in the evening, Guru Ramdas said that it was not done properly and they should make it again. Also on the second day he was not satisfied. When he did not approve on the third day, one disciple got annoyed and said that the terrace would never be constructed. Guru Ramdas asked him to do another job instead but the second disciple continued to improve upon the quality of the terrace even though each day Ramdas continued to point out some deficiency in the construction. Guru Ramdas was pleased with the second disciple's attitude. He said a person who executes an act with a spirit of self-surrender is released from the bondage produced by karma. Ultimately, however, any act, in itself, does not become the cause of liberation as it is the grace of Bhagwan only that allows the seeker to realise Bhagwan. The disciple who obeys his preceptor is said to follow the path of knowledge (272).

In society a man with dirty clothes is not allowed to enter a place but to reach Bhagwan it is purity of the mind that makes him eligible. This means that if one wants to reach Bhagwan one should be without desires. Therefore the seeker who has embarked on the path of knowledge should not worry about the bad or good nature of actions but should focus on the purity of his mind (274).

Shri Rama said to the vulture, "You have attained a good spiritual state (gati) by virtue of your acts but acts do not confer mukti." Here gati does not mean liberation. It is sārūpya mukti, and not kaivalya mukti. Desire is the chariot and actions are the reins. Those who are bound by these two factors are worldly but those who are free from desire and actions are said to be endowed with a good mind (knowledge). The seeker who gives up the fruit of actions and does actions in a natural way is said to be following the path

of knowledge. The dexterity in performing actions consists in not being bound by their fruit.

Babaji makes a distinction between faith and discrimination. Faith may be blind as where there is faith there is lack of discrimination. One who is equipped with discrimination seldom has faith. When the person with faith starts to have an attitude of love, he gains strength in pursuing the path of salvation. If the curiosity of a person with discrimination is satisfied, his discrimination gets substantiated. He may take the stand that direction (disha) does not exist as he reaches the Himalaya, the north direction gets farther away. This shows the direction does not really exist (284). Reason is alright but bad reasoning is not advisable. Logic and reasoning should be exercised to get at the truth. Power and policy are a pair and it is good if they mutually blend to reach the goal. Similarly wealth and desire and Dharma and Moksha are paired. Hence they should be pursued in consonance with each other. Just as knowledge and liberation are paired so are dharma and desire and dharma and moksha. They should be pursued in harmony.

One who is full of love and without desire is said to be equipped with a balanced mind, known as buddhiyoga. Gitaji teaches us to tread the path of yoga in every walk of life. Babaji gives a very touching example of Gangaji. Everybody pays respect to Gangaji when it is moving towards the ocean but nobody pays respect to a canal taken from the main stream. This means that when Gangaji's main stream directs itself towards the ocean (Bhagwan) it commands respect. When a canal takes water from Gangaji, even if it has more water, it is not given respect as it is not going to the Bhagwan like ocean but to some other place (286).

Bhagwan is the only Dharma of a renunciate and a renunciate has never been asked to forsake it. Yoga and knowledge that do not help the seeker reach Bhagwan are not the proper yoga and knowledge. Any means to realise one's true nature should only be considered a true means if it helps the seeker desirous of emancipation to advance on the path of spirituality. When

Bhagwan asks the devotee to give up all duties and surrender himself to Him, devote his mind to Him and pay obeisance to Him, this does not mean that the devotee should necessarily give up all other cultural and social obligations. The seeker whose mind is riveted on Bhagwan as the mind of a good wife is devoted to her husband should be considered to be truly devoted to Bhagwan.

We should not devalue an article through deceit. Here Babaji gives an example of this. A farmer came by a diamond and he did not know its value. He tied it to the front portion of the plough so that it would shine. A jeweler saw it and purchased it for four rupees and kept it very carefully in a golden case. The diamond broke within that golden case. Then a heavenly voice was heard saying that the jeweler had not appreciated the value of the diamond and had deliberately devalued it by purchasing it for four rupees and because of this its heart had broken. So devaluing anything does not serve well. The true fruit of action is to obtain the love of Bhagwan. The grace of Jagannathaji is invaluable. Lord Badarinatha is sponged with a piece of cloth, which is given as prasāda. Even the most valuable worldly article cannot match its value because it has been used in sponging the idol of Lord Badarinatha.

Man attains peace by dispassion and renunciation. Kaṇāda, Kapila, Vaśiṣṭha, etc. had different philosophical positions but they all agreed on one point and that is dispassion and renunciation purify the mind and when the mind is purified it mirrors the Reality and the seeker comes to know the Truth just as one could know a gooseberry placed on the palm of one's hand (304). One who listens carefully to a discourse relating to Bhagwan and acts according to what has been prescribed by Bhagwan becomes free from attachment. When attachment is gone, his mind becomes pure and enlightenment ensues. He becomes desirous of remaining internally oriented. Babaji here interprets the word nirveda (304) as freedom from external orientation of the mind:

यदा ते मोहकलिलं बुद्धिर्व्यतितरिष्यति।

तदा गन्तासि निर्वेदं श्रोतव्यस्य श्रुतस्य च ॥ B. G., 2.52

If a state of depression gives rise to a sense of dispassion, then it is considered to be wholesome. But the experience of truth does not take place as long as the mind is given to infatuation and attachment. Even tasty gruel of milk cannot be relished if the throat is infected. Babaji here narrates an incident: Once he had gone to Gwalior where a woman had wanted to feed him but he did not relish the food and said that it was chilly which was hurting him. The woman said that she had not used chilly in the food. But Babaji could not eat it with ease as his tongue had a sore on it. The moral of the narration is that worldly enjoyment does not feel good if one is afflicted by an emotion such as a state of fear. Once a man asked King Janaka if he was not attached to enjoyments because of his knowledge. King Janaka replied that if a sword is hanging over the head of a person he cannot relish a tasty meal. He further said that he remembered death always hence he did not feel attached to royal enjoyments. In order to shun worldly enjoyments, one should keep oneself conscious of the phenomenon of death. As Bhagwan is Truth, compassion and beauty, he cast a shadow of depression over Arjuna. This curtain of depression was cast for the sake of welfare and beauty from which Gitaji sprang (306). Shri Krishna was speaking to Arjuna and Sanjaya was narrating to Dhṛtarāṣṭra. Without the depression it would not have been proper to point out the sin of infatuation to Arjuna but it was however appropriate to be said to Dhṛtarāṣṭra.

Babaji referred to a scholar although he did not name him. The scholar's father now and then called him a fool. Hearing this the scholar got angry and got entangled in the sin of antipathy. He made up his mind to stealthily kill his parents at night. His parents were worried as to how they could help their son escape the mud of egoity and the son heard them discussing this. When the scholar heard this he became free from the sense of contempt against his parents. He fell at the

feet of his father and begged pardon from him. His parents sent him to his in-law's house for twelve years to repent. There he lived the life of penance and became a sadhu and wrote a famous work. Liberation indeed is freedom from infatuation (attachment) and this state ensues when one's mind becomes pure (307). Sometimes penance and renunciation generate arrogance. I want to quote a verse from Babaji's बदरीशस्तवनम् which is relevant in the present context:

कर्मादिदोषदहनो दुरिताय चाग्निः
 अन्तःप्रमादप्रभवे तमसेऽस्ति सूर्यः ।
 ज्ञानोष्णताप्रशमनः परमो हिमांशुः
 सोऽसौ प्रकाशयतु वै हृदयेऽस्मदीये ।। Badarīśastavanam, 8.

“He is the fire for (burning) sin, he burns impurities in the devotee which arise from action; He is the Sun for the internal darkness that arises from dereliction of obligations; He is the supreme Moon to cool the heat arising from the acquisition of knowledge; May he (Lord Badarinatha) enlighten our heart.” When arrogance departs from our mind it is purified. To desire some fruit after doing a little penance is also a kind of turpitude (depravity). When one comes to know this secret through the company of noble persons, one is blessed with the spirit of dispassion and moves on the path of spiritual enlightenment and attains absolute absence of desires (307). Learning alone does not help. One should practice what one learns. In other words the gap between knowing and doing ought to be gradually minimized.

We should not sit idle. Instead we should always perform good deeds otherwise we would be afflicted with tamas. The seeker should perform his duty for the sake of duty. This is called karmayoga. Composed persons give up the fruit generated by actions since they are the cause of bondage. Education is a good thing from a worldly point of view but a mind which is free from the sin of infatuation is superior. When the individual self attains the Supreme Consciousness, he is said to have followed the path with sincerity and dedication.

Babaji says that the Vedas prescribe sacrifices for the fulfilment of desires in order to entice people in the manner that a child is lured into learning by promising it an attractive prize. This means that prescribed acts performed in accordance with the scriptures may attract people to the spiritual principles expounded in Upanishads, Gitaji, Bhagavata, etc.

Babaji used to say that learning without practice is a burden. Thirst is quenched only when water is drunk. In a similar way, if a principle learnt from scriptures is practiced it confers contentment on the person who has practiced it. The books are not of much help if the reader does not have a discriminating intellect (यस्य नास्ति स्वयंप्रज्ञा शास्त्रं किं करिष्यति). If a person accepts what is written in books without giving a thought to what he has read, how can he adopt a path that leads to truth. If Babaji interprets Gitaji in a novel manner in order to stress a spiritual point and somebody raises an objection that it has not been given in Gitaji, then the objector has not used his mind to comprehend the significance of the interpretation by a realised person and thereby he misses the important message of the scripture. It is a general fact that people consider something untrue if it has not been properly comprehended (311).

Babaji told the story of Gopichand in order to point out the futility of attachment to this body. Once women were bathing Gopichand and applying perfume to his body. His mother (representing the intellect) was watching the body being bathed and smeared with perfume. She began to shed tears thinking that the body which is being treated with soap and scent so carefully will be consigned to flames when it is dead. This is a story as well as an illustration. Similarly the Ramayana is a history as well as an illustration. Seeing the mind entangled in attachment to the body, the intellect-mother was weeping. When the mind-Gopichand asked the mother-intellect, the latter told him whatever is being done is meant for him (i.e. the body). The body which is being bathed and perfumed will be consigned to flames one day.

Hearing this Gopichand developed dispassion for the body and whatever is related to it.

In order to emphasize the practice of spiritual learning, Babaji narrated a story from Chāndogya Upaniṣad. Śvetaketu was a brahmin boy. He did not have good character. His father sent him to a preceptor to study the scriptures. He studied the Veda and Vedanta and became conceited. His father asked him: What have you read that you have become so conceited. Do you know that by which everything else is known. There is an entity knowing which everything else is known. Śvetaketu said that perhaps his preceptor might not know that entity. Parā vidyā is superior to aparā vidyā. Aparā vidyā includes the Vedas, Vedanta, etc. To read Gitaji also comes under aparā vidyā but if whatever is written in Gitaji is seriously practiced, then reading Gitaji leads to parā vidyā. Scriptures should be both studied and practiced. Study and practice form a pair which should be done in harmony with each other.

Now Babaji discourses on the state of the seeker whose mind has become steady (स्थितप्रज्ञ) i.e. he whose mind has become stilled. There is a natural curiosity about the realised person. How does he sit? How does he walk? How does he speak? Addressing Arjuna as Pārtha, Shri Krishna starts explaining the state and conduct of the person whose mind has become pure and desireless. Babaji explains the significance of the word "Pārtha." Prithā was the childhood name of Kunti. The state of childhood symbolises innocence and straightforwardness. The child is extremely simple, desireless and without any greed. By addressing Arjuna as Pārtha he conveys to him that he should be desireless, straightforward and innocent like a child. Although desires remain dormant in childhood, they become active in youth. Here Babaji draws a distinction between a child and a realised person. Those who remain unperturbed after gaining knowledge are of steady mind (स्थितप्रज्ञ) while those who remain unperturbed (composed) in ignorance are like children. He who remains content in himself and does not stand in need of external

things to derive satisfaction has a stable intellect. He does not require fame, praise, etc. to be satisfied as he is content in himself. It is said in Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad that wealth is dear not for itself but for the self since when calamity befalls us we throw away the wealth. This shows that the self is the most dear. When someone is hungry he is satisfied when he has had food because one is satisfied when one's desires are fulfilled. If he is content in himself without requiring anything external, then he is said to have attained bliss. Happiness comes from the satisfaction of desires but bliss is natural and it does not need anything external.

A person who is of steady mind is without greed. King Raghu won the world and brought back much wealth, which seems to indicate that King Raghu was greedy. But that was not the case since he performed the Viśvajit sacrifice and returned the kingdoms to their respective kings and saw them off with greater wealth than before. Shri Rama also fought a battle, which seems to indicate greed but he did not accept the kingdom of Lanka. King Raghu and Shri Rama fought because it was their duty. King Raghu, Shri Rama and Janak all gave up everything at the end. In the same way the house holder should give up all desires so that he may attain the state of steadied mind (स्थितप्रज्ञ). The first characteristic of स्थितप्रज्ञ is that he relinquishes all desires and is content in himself. This means that a person may attain samadhi but if he is not without desires, he cannot be called स्थितप्रज्ञ as desire is the seed of infatuation.

Babaji compares desires with flies and says that desires trouble a person more than the flies because flies sleep during night but the desires do not. The mind with formidable desires is more troublesome than an enemy. Desires are like burning fire that consumes everything. All worldly pleasures cannot give as much peace to man as a peaceful mind.

One should remain satisfied with whatever comes one's way without asking. We should earn our livelihood in accordance with ethical principles. There are three kinds of people :

1. Those who do but do not speak of it. They are karmayogis and observe moral principles. 2. Those who do but also speak about it. They harbour desires and they are inferior to karmayogis. 3. Those who do not do what they speak of doing. They are tricksters. Those who conceal wealth from others harbour desires. Those who use money which is left after it has been made use of by others are karmayogis. Such persons are rare and remain content in themselves. The mind of such persons does not get perturbed. He who has been blessed with the bliss of the Self does not need worldly objects for his satisfaction or contentment. He has limitless peace in himself. He revels in the ocean of peace and bliss. He who has experienced bliss of the Self would never want to enjoy worldly objects. The contentment that is experienced by such a person cannot be described just as the sweetness of jaggery cannot be described by a dumb man. In a similar manner the bliss of the self that one experiences beggars description.

Desires relate to things external. If a person sees a beautiful thing, he desires to see it again. This applies to all objects of senses. One can live one's life with bare bread, rice, pulse, vegetables, etc. but pickle, etc. are needed to make the food more tasty because of the desire of the tongue. If one gives up all desires and makes an effort to be happy in oneself, then one is treading the spiritual path. Babaji here gives an example of the daughter of Maharana Pratap. She got a loaf of bread. She gave half of the bread to one brother the second half to another brother. This is called self-contentment. It might have been due to attachment but if it had been given to a guest, then it would definitely have been a case of real self-contentment. The kind of joy one feels when one feeds another being is extraterrestrial.

We should not long for objects of senses if they come our way (369) because we shall feel distressed if we do not get them. He who ponders over this fact is a muni. He who is busy doing desireless work and contemplates on ओम् तत् सत् is a muni. He who understands the state of being steady-minded

and who attempts to obtain it is a muni. He who endures a situation that could potentially cause mental disturbance and does not want anything is a muni (369). Shri Rama did not feel perturbed when he heard that he was to go to the forest instead of being crowned. He was not beside himself with joy when he heard that he was going to be coronated. He was thinking that it was not proper that he alone was chosen to be coronated and not his brothers. Wealth goes to a person who does not long for it. Everything in this world goes to the great soul who does not feel elated when honoured and does not feel perturbed when he has to suffer pain. Wealth in this world is such that it goes to a person who does not long for it.

If there is a little water in a river, it can be crossed over. Similarly he whose mind does not have many desires can cross over the ocean of transmigration. If there is no desire, there is no mind. When there is no mind, man stays in his natural state : स्वभावोऽध्यात्ममुच्यते (B. G. 8. 3b). Desire is the knot between consciousness and inert entity. Bhagwan has prescribed karmayoga in order to help us subjugate desires or in order to help us be free from desires. To be content in the Self means to devote one's mind to Bhagwan, to be dependent on oneself and not on the objects of the senses. The pleasure that we derive from sense objects is limited and hence ends in pain. To take shelter in that which is eternal bestows real bliss. It is a desire when someone wants to have something but when he is restless and bent upon having something, it is called sprhā.

Babaji says that if something with a bad odour is kept in a pot, the bad odour leaves its impression even when the pot has been emptied. However if the pot is heated in fire, the bad odour goes away. Similarly when the seeker realises Bhagwan, the impressions left by desires are also destroyed. Babaji compares the man of steady mind to the round pebble of Gangaji. This round pebble remains the same whether it is worshipped, whether it is used to grind cannabis, or whether it is being defiled (373).

These four verses of the second chapter of Gitaji:

प्रजहाति यदा कामान् सर्वान् पार्थ मनोगतान्।
आत्मन्येवात्मना तुष्टः स्थितप्रज्ञस्तदोच्यते ॥ 55
दुःखेष्वनुद्विग्नमनाः सुखेषु विगतस्पृहः।
वीतरागभयक्रोधः स्थितधीर्मुनिरुच्यते ॥ 56
यः सर्वत्रानभिस्नेहस्तत्तत्राप्य शुभाशुभम्।
नाभिनन्दति न द्वेष्टि तस्य प्रज्ञा प्रतिष्ठिता ॥ 57
यदा संहरते चायं कूर्मोऽङ्गानीव सर्वशः।
इन्द्रियाणीन्द्रियार्थेभ्यस्तस्य प्रज्ञा प्रतिष्ठिता ॥ 58

describe the characteristics of the person whose mind has become steady. When he relinquishes all desires of the mind, he has a steady mind (स्थितप्रज्ञ). This does not mean that a person who is sleeping is of stable mind because during the state of sleep desires are dormant. Only he who is content in himself and by himself is steady-minded. He is happy but he does not long for happiness. He remains unperturbed when he experiences pain and undergoes suffering. In deep sleep man remains unperturbed in pain and he has no desire for pleasure. Whether he is lying on thorns or on flowers does not make much difference to him. Longing, fear, anger, etc. do not exist in that state. He is not attracted to anything. One who treats the waking state like the dream is realised, that is one must see the world as if it were a dream.

The tortoise spreads its limbs when it is in need of food but when it sees danger it withdraws its limbs. The seeker experiences the sense objects in a natural manner but when he confronts a situation in which there is an apprehension of attachment, infatuation, etc. he withdraws himself from the external world.

The person who internally ponders on what is right and wrong from the point of view of his own and the world's welfare is called manava (मानव). He who has controlled desires is free and he who has not subdued desires is in bondage. He who longs for wealth acquires it by dint of hard work but he

who does not have any desire for it gets it easily and naturally, just as the ocean does not need and want the rivers to go to it but they do naturally. The rivers do not go to the desert even if they are wanted there. Babaji makes an important distinction here by saying that if pleasure comes it can be renounced but if pain befalls, because of destiny, it cannot be given up. It has to be experienced. He who does not relish it when he is felicitated and does not grieve when censured is a man of steady mind. The statement इन्द्रियाणीन्द्रियार्थेभ्यः indicates control of senses. This part of the verse दुःखेष्वनुद्विग्नमनाः points towards control of the mind. The statement प्रजहाति यदा कामान् is indicative of the control of the intellect and आत्मन्येवात्मना तुष्टः shows the control of the self (382).

It should be carefully observed that the satisfaction derived from the fulfilment of a particular desire is temporary but the real happiness ensues when freedom from desires is achieved. Babaji says that the Indian principle is attainment of the soul after relinquishing everything else (383). Just as one cannot scowl and laugh simultaneously, in the same way one cannot realise the self and be inclined towards the objects of senses at the same time.

It is the duty of a human being to control the mind and senses. To act in consonance with the mind is to act like an animal. It is man who changes knowledge into ignorance. Man purchases wine by selling milk. He makes wine out of jaggery. A man who leads his life in a scripturally ordained way, excels even the gods. If one gives up desires and expectations, one becomes venerable even to gods. There is a possibility that even renunciation can generate a sense of egoity but giving up possessions without a sense of ego is to be established in the self.

Babaji gives an example of a farmer who regarded rains as good in every respect. Once it rained heavily and as a result he lost the crop, his bullocks and also his brother. The villagers asked him sarcastically whether the rains are good. The farmer replied in the affirmative and that which was to happen took

place. There is nothing bad which can be attributed to the rains. In the same way Dharma is good to follow. If one has to undergo some suffering because of Dharma, one should not discount Dharma. If someone says that rains are not good because we have lost so much due to the rains, then he is far from being fair.

There was a sadhu who gave up wearing clothes for three years. This is renunciation. Renunciation should not be given up even when the renunciate has to undergo undesirable consequences. But after three years he again began to wear clothes and said that he had seen the result of renunciation, it is not worth practising. In reality, however, renunciation is good and should not be shunned even when anything untoward happens. When our mind is riveted on sense objects, we develop a longing for them. When our desires are fulfilled, we develop avarice and we get angry when our desires are not fulfilled.

Dharma and Bhagwan can test us but we should not make an attempt to examine them. It is good if we keep Dharma in mind while discharging our duties. Our senses are inclined towards their objects. We can think of Bhagwan only when our mind is pure. When the mind is in contact with the senses, it thinks of the objects but when the senses are in contact with the pure mind, Bhagwan becomes the object of meditation (425). When anger is aroused, delusion comes into play because of attachment. Attachment makes our mind forget who we are, where we are and what we should do? This leads to the absence of discrimination and the seeker is led astray from the desirable path of self-examination. We should not always think about sense objects because it is the constant connection of the senses with their objects that causes the seeker to leave the spiritual path.

In the verse विषया विनिवर्तन्ते (B. G. 2. 59) two messages are conveyed. One is concerning internal renunciation and the other concerning external renunciation. The internal renunciation is that mental renunciation which takes place

when Paramātmā has been realised (परं दृष्ट्वा निवर्त्तते). The people who are egoistic miss this subtle teaching. Those renunciates who are still under the influence of ego are instructed about the inner state of mind lest they should lose the eligibility for renunciation (425-26). External renunciation has been taught to Sadhus so that they don't become egoistical. The verse यततो ह्यपि कौन्तेय pairs with तानि सर्वाणि and the verse ध्यायतो विषयान्मुंसः pairs with क्रोधाद्भवति सम्मोहः। The former verse तानि सर्वाणि describes the external renunciation and the verse ध्यायतो विषयान्मुंसः cautions against the internal brooding on sense objects. Although the learned may say that they are capable of controlling the mind and senses and as such cannot be harmed by them, Bhagwan cautions them. Discerning seekers understand that the senses are powerful and can influence man and his mind.

We should cease to have concern about the world only when we have acquired the natural strength to renounce worldly life, and not because we have been tormented by worldly relations. If we have left worldly life but we have not given up attachment to worldly objects, then attachment to sense objects will continue even when we are in the forest and we will continue to think of worldly things. Babaji here quotes Kabir and impresses upon seekers that even if desire has somehow entered the mind, let it be there without trying to fulfil it. This is very succinctly expressed in the lines of Kabir when he says मन जाय तो जाने दो, मत जाने दो शरीर (426)। This means that if a desire wells up in the mind of a man, let it be so but one should avoid indulging in it. However, desire is harmful and also has to be given up as it is the cause of disaster. Its relinquishment should not be postponed. If it remains in existence and if there is some hindrance in its fulfilment, then anger results. Anger impacts the practice of attaining spiritual growth. Anger leads to confusion or illusion which in turn destroys the awareness of being a seeker of the Self.

When the Self has been forgotten, man becomes inclined towards sense objects. Absence of awareness of the soul, destroys the right approach of the mind. Scientists study

objects which provide pleasure, satisfaction, etc. and have contributed to the production of objects which give satisfaction to man. In this process the instruments of destruction have also been produced. When wisdom is gone, then the atom bombs are used to destroy mankind. Although the scientists have sharp intellect but discriminatory wisdom becomes extinct at the end since the intellects are used in the pursuit of enjoyment of sense objects. All amenities of life have made humans externally oriented, which is detrimental to spiritual progress. If the knowledge which is used in creating objects of pleasure and satisfaction is used in gaining inwardness, then the realisation can be attained. Babaji says that our seers knew all this and so they did not give importance to the production of amenities of life because this approach is not advisable. The existence of objects of satisfaction and pleasure generates desire. If desires are awakened then it is difficult to control them. This is why the seers want to get rid of desires while they are still dormant.

If we feel a sense of success in controlling the tendencies of the sense organs, then there arises a subtle egoistic feeling. This destroys the tranquility of mind. If however we avoid this feeling of gaining success in controlling senses, then peace results. Attraction towards the sense objects can only be prevented if we put in effort. Babaji narrates an anecdote in this context. There was a businessman whose cart sank in mud. He began to recite Hanuman Chalisa and was also checking whether the cart was coming out of the mud or not. Then he had an idea that he should make an effort along with the recitation of Hanuman Chalisa. While reciting Hanuman Chalisa he also made an attempt to extricate the cart from the mud. This should be followed in all situations.

The verse रागद्वेषवियुक्तैस्तु (B. G. 2. 64) can be interpreted to mean that sense objects can be enjoyed freely if there is no attachment or aversion involved. This is easy as well as difficult. In this context some scholars say that when there is no attachment and no aversion, there is no need to give

up sense objects. This may be the case when one wants both enjoyment of sense objects and also spiritual growth but this verse cautions that sense objects should not be enjoyed freely because senses are powerful and can carry away a person's mind as the wind carries away a boat on the river. House holders should only enjoy those objects which are allowed by the scriptures.

When somebody is praising us, we are generally not conscious but as soon as somebody speaks ill of us we feel perturbed. It is said that we should not feel attracted towards the sense objects which we have renounced. If we continue to think of objects that we have renounced, then at one time or another we will be overpowered by the desire for them and we would start enjoying them again.

In Gitaji we rarely find the subject of earning money by business. Mainly Gitaji discourses on how to acquire Dharma by performing our duties. Businessmen should take this into consideration while earning their livelihood. Sadhus also take care that they should not feel happy when they get good bhiksha. One should consider that sadhu to be of inferior category if he is perturbed when he gets bad bhiksha. This is what is meant by the verse रागद्वेषवियुक्तैस्तु। It sometimes happens that a sadhu begs for a sweetmeat in order to hide his renunciation but if he shows this act before others then he is exhibiting his state of renunciation and this is not therefore a characteristic of a good sadhu. Now-a-days the greatness of a sadhu is assessed by the kind of Ashrama he has and not by the degree of his renunciation (431). Sadhus can get natural things in the forest to sustain life and can use such objects without attachment and aversion. This is the real meaning of the verse रागद्वेषवियुक्तैस्तु। Babaji continues to discourse on this verse as this is a very significant verse for spiritual growth. To have food without attachment and aversion and to make use of sense objects only to sustain life in a natural way helps the seeker to have control over his mind and gain mental serenity. In genuine happiness there is no perturbation.

Whatever is given by Bhagwan is his grace (प्रसाद). He asks his devotees not to leave what they come by naturally and not to long for anything else but to accept with gratitude whatever is available without asking.

रागद्वेषवियुक्तैस्तु विषयानिन्द्रियैश्चरन्।

आत्मवश्यैर्विधेयात्मा प्रसादमधिगच्छति।। B. G., 2. 64

प्रसादे सर्वदुःखानां हानिरस्योपजायते।

प्रसन्नचेतसो ह्याशु बुद्धिः पर्यवतिष्ठते।। B. G., 2. 65

नास्ति बुद्धिरयुक्तस्य न चायुक्तस्य भावना।

न चाभावयतः शान्तिरशान्तस्य कुतः सुखम्।। B. G., 2. 66

Babaji takes up these three verses of the second chapter of Gitaji together to explain how a seeker attains bliss. These verses mean:

The man, who has disciplined his mind, perceiving the objects with the controlled senses which are free from attachment and aversion, attains serenity.

When serenity is attained, all of his sufferings come to an end. The intellect of the man with peaceful mind soon settles down perfectly.

He who has not disciplined himself is without wisdom. An undisciplined person has no yearning for self-realisation. When he has no yearning for Truth, how can he have peace? How can a person without peace enjoy happiness?

Babaji says whatever objects we perceive and experience are the result of our destiny. Karma and its fruit are two entities. This means that when we use objects without attachment and aversion, we should also keep in mind that we have to be free from attachment and aversion when we perform acts. It is not only the matter of eating and drinking but of doing acts also. When we are at peace with ourselves and have a controlled mind, we can use objects and perform acts without attachment and aversion. In this way we can steadily advance on the path of spirituality and attain serenity of mind.

Babaji explains here what constitutes the sublime quality in literature and poetry. When poetry is straightforward, natural and relishable, it is said to possess sublime quality (प्रसादगुण). Similarly when there is no egoity involved in doing action, straightforwardness ensues. In reality, objects of senses are the products of ignorance. When they are used in a straightforward way without attachment and aversion, they lose their binding tendency. Any act done without ego, without the sense of agency, cannot cause bondage. This type of action introduces purity, softness and serenity into the mind and the Self becomes capable of attaining its natural and pristine form. According to Babaji the sentence प्रसादमधिगच्छति means 'attains the natural state.' The literal meaning is 'gains serenity of mind.'

The acts and objects of perception of a great soul are different from those of the house holder. Internal strength rectifies inner faults just as external authority sets right the external defects. In old age one should build a cottage near the beach of Gangaji and should lead a life of renunciation, doing acts without attachment or aversion. Such a life will lead to the destruction of all suffering. Renunciation grows out of internal purity and serenity. Withdrawal or renunciation does not take birth. Nonetheless it may be understood like this: When bamboos grow flowers, fire is produced by friction when they rub against each other. This fire destroys the forest of bamboos. In the same way when the fire of sublimity is generated in a pure mind, the forest of suffering is burnt (441-42). Control of mind leads to the steadiness of intellect. The sentence नास्ति बुद्धिरयुक्तस्य (अयुक्त means one who does not have a pure mind or whose senses are not controlled. However the mind is controlled by incessant practice of detachment). The section of Gitaji beginning from विषया विनिवर्तन्ते up to न चाभावयतः शान्तिरशान्तस्य कुतः सुखम् concludes the topic under discussion.

The meaning of the word युक्त has been explained by Babaji in detail. One who remains steady in all situations is युक्त। One who is desireless is युक्त। One who is equipped with sense

control and the control of mind is युक्त। One who avoids enjoying sense objects and who knows the art of gaining freedom from bondage is युक्त। One who has a steady and peaceful mind is युक्त। One who renounces for the sake of Dharma and justice and who considers gold and earth equal is युक्त। The snakes on the body of Shiva indicate that the person who has renunciation does not feel perturbed in difficult times.

Let us now see how Babaji interprets the verse या निशा सर्वभूतानां तस्यां जागर्ति संयमी। The mention of the seeker of steady mind and of the worldly person is to show that they are opposite like day and night. What is day for one is night for the other. The sense objects which have been relinquished by a pure-hearted seeker appear very attractive to a fool. A dog relishes the vomit of humans and swine relish excreta. In the same manner the steady-minded consider that people indulging in sense objects are going downwards. That which ordinary people consider as day i.e. indulgence in sense objects is considered by the seeker with a pure mind to be night. The wise seeker keeps awake in that which is night for ordinary people. The seekers who have controlled their mind and senses are awake during the night whereas the worldly people sleep during the night of attachment. There is no fear where there is light and Self-control is like light. Just as an owl cannot see in the light of the day, so the worldly people do not see the light of the bliss of Self. He who cannot comprehend the light of the Self is like an owl. Love of Paramātmā exists in one who has a pure mind. This is light but it is not visible to one who cannot see on account of his desires and attachment. That in which beings keep awake is night for the sage. In other words enjoyment of sense objects is considered as night by the spiritually disciplined man. The swan does not eat fish and lets them swim away but the crane takes this to be an act of folly. This example can be applied to the worldly and the steady-minded seeker. People whose minds are unsteady consider the steady-minded to be fools as they smear themselves with ashes after taking a bath. But they do not understand the bliss experienced by the steady-minded.

Worldly people remain awake to the things they like but those who exercise self-control are not inclined towards those things which are pleasant to ordinary people. Worldly people know that *sat* is good but they turn a blind eye to it and are desirous of honour, wealth, etc. but the seeker with self-control does not pay any attention to these mundane adjuncts. The mention of the word *muni* in the second line shows that one who has relinquished sense objects after due consideration will not be inclined to those objects which attract worldly people. The sage understands that only the Self deserves attention and nothing else, he knows that the Self is of the nature of consciousness and bliss. Consequently, he does not long for the happiness which is produced by external objects. Worldly people do not know that there is blissful soul beyond the body and senses because they are oriented externally. A meditative person thinks that the soul is eternal and visible things are not eternal and therefore develops dispassion or detachment for the visible world. Babaji here gives a pertinent illustration. A child does not pay any attention to the diamond that is lying before him as he does not know its value. On the other hand, a sage knows the value of a diamond from the worldly point of view but does not accept it because he considers it to be of no real value.

Babaji continues to explain the verse:

या निशा सर्वभूतानां तस्यां जागर्ति संयमी।
 यस्यां जाग्रति भूतानि सा निशा पश्यतो मुनेः॥ B. G., 2. 69

He says that a self-controlled seeker keeps awake during the night of ordinary people. The night during which the sage keeps awake is their time to sleep. Both are opposite to each other. Which is better of the two? This is like a fight between a crow and a cuckoo. The crow says that the note of the cuckoo is harsh and the latter says that the crow is dirty. Now we have to decide which is better. Both are black. If there is a cuckoo, its note will delight all but the crow does not have that quality. The choice is obvious. The sage has been compared to the moon which dispels darkness though it is only one whereas innumerable stars cannot remove the darkness. That

by which darkness is removed is superior. A sage equipped with self-control is preferable to many other people who have not controlled their mind and senses. Then Babaji recounted that once Arjuna and Duryodhana went to Shri Krishna, who asked them to choose between him and his army (Narayani). Arjuna chose Shri Krishna. Duryodhana was happy to have the Narayani army. Bhagwan was one and similarly the sage is one but he is superior to many (460). On behalf of ordinary people Arjuna presents a problem before Shri Krishna:

चञ्चलं हि मनः कृष्ण प्रमाथि बलवद् दृढम्।

तस्याहं निग्रहं मन्ये वायोरिव सुदुष्करम्।। B. G., 34

The mind is unsteady. The senses are inclined to move outward as they see darkness inside (461). How can we restrain them?

Shri Krishna says that the mind can be restrained by continuously practicing detachment. Coming back to the previously quoted verse, Babaji says that those who are self-controlled consider things which ordinary people think to be full of essence to be devoid of essence. Contrarily that which the sage considers to be full of essence appears essenceless to the ordinary man. Worldly people do not know the value of karmayoga and desirelessness and as such they are oblivious of them but so far as desires and expectations are concerned, they are conscious of them and are driven by them. But the sage does not cognise them. If a scholar says that he is knowledgeable and sense objects cannot harm him, then Shri Krishna cautions saying that even if he is making an effort, he should be very careful since giving up external objects does not suffice, internal relinquishment is also essential. Both internal and external restraint is necessary.

A greedy man does not attain peace. A deer seeing a mirage thinks that the deer going ahead might be diving in water. In a similar manner a greedy man thinks that those who have cars, buildings, etc. are happy. Such persons who are greedy for wealth are not at peace. Bhartrihari also said that only those who are satisfied have peace and those who

have desires do not have contentment (468). Concluding the portion describing the person of steady mind, Shri Krishna says :

आपूर्यमाणमचलप्रतिष्ठं समुद्रमापः प्रविशन्ति यद्वत्।
तद्वत्कामा यं प्रविशन्ति सर्वे स शान्तिमाप्नोति न कामकामी।। B. G., 2. 70

The behaviour of the ocean is restrained. It is full in itself and although storms and cyclones hit it, it remains intact. Its activity does not transgress its limits even if it rains or rivers merge into it. The ocean says that it is because of its own self that clouds are formed and rain water onto the ocean (469). In the same way everything originates from Paramātmā. All happiness exists in Paramātmā. Those who search happiness outside are under the influence of illusion. Whatever happiness we get from sense objects is derived from the bliss aspect of Paramātmā. Sense objects come in abundance to the person who does not want them. A small-hearted person feels elated if he gets a little wealth just as a small river rages if it gets a little water. Tulsidass says: छुद्र नदी भरी चली तोराई। जस थोरेहुँ धन खल इतराई।। The ocean knows that the clouds are formed from its own water so when it rains on the ocean, it does not become arrogant. The rivers fall into the ocean and become ocean and they do not add to the dimensions of the ocean. The ocean symbolises the state of desirelessness. The rivers flow to the ocean even though the ocean has no desire for them. One who is desireless is like the ocean. The ocean swells when the moon is full. This indicates love.

It is desire that gives rise to enjoyment, anger, greed, infatuation, conceit, envy, attachment and the sense of ego. Consequently, when one gives up all desires these also disappear. After the disappearance of the feeling of mineness and the sense of ego one attains peace. If a person experiences bliss without enjoying any sense object, that bliss is called peace (472-73).

At the conclusion of the topic of स्थितप्रज्ञ, Babaji says that Shri Krishna first touches upon karmayoga so that the path of knowledge may be comprehended. Karmayoga is defined as

that which frees one from karma. People are bound by karma, but karma is transcended by karmayoga (473).

In this context Babaji compares the way of living of an ordinary man to that of a fish and that of the knower of truth to that of tortoise, which keeps its limbs in response mode when needed but which withdraws them when faced with danger. Both live in water. For the knower, knowledge is his shield. The illustration of the tortoise lays emphasis on the need to withdraw the senses from their objects. Babaji is cautioning the knower that he should not let his senses enjoy objects without restraint.

Regarding renunciation Babaji tells a very useful tale of Vrindavana. There lived a sadhu in Vrindavana. He begged for flour only. He did not even beg for salt. He had no desire in his mind. Bhagwan was pleased with him. The sadhu used to recite the name of the Lord of Vrindavana. Once Bhagwan wanted to test him. The Lord of Vrindavana is a little playful. He appeared to the sadhu in a dream saying that he was hidden in the earth near his cottage and asked him to dig him out and worship him. The sadhu dug out the idol and began to worship it by offering only bread. Bhagwan then told him in a dream that the offering of bread alone is not right. The following day the sadhu begged for salt also. Then Bhagwan asked him to offer pulse and vegetables. Bhagwan thought that his devotee was a renunciate. Lest he should hesitate to beg, Bhagwan arranged big offerings. A great amount of wealth came as an offering. Daily rich dishes were cooked and offered. The sadhu mused that Bhagwan has done this in order to examine or test him and if Bhagwan can show his opulence, a sadhu can also renounce it. The sadhu asked his disciples to make the proper offerings to Bhagwan and he himself left the place. If the sadhu had wanted all that, he could have said that it all came in the form of offering and came by the grace of the Lord. But he did not do so. He gave it up in a very appropriate manner. Freedom lies in renunciation. Where there is desire there is bondage. If there is conceit and

exhibitionism in adopting renunciation, then it is better to act upon the instructions of Bhagwan but renunciation without ego is superior and very helpful in realising the true nature of the self.

The five verses beginning with कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते up to पदं गच्छन्त्यनामयम् (B. G. 2. 47-51) describe the nature of karmayoga and also the significance of renunciation as karma remains incomplete if it is not done with the spirit of renunciation (499). This means that one has the right to work but not to the fruit of action. Inactivity also is not a choice as nobody can remain without any activity. So why should one not do one's duty without any desire for the result. Someone who does good work is free to accept or reject the fruit. But anyone who does bad acts is not free to choose but bound to reap the fruit of bad actions. Babaji explains this by giving an example. He says that if somebody gives him huge wealth, he is free to accept or reject the same as desirelessness has freedom whereas one who has desires is not free. People are bound by desires. If a preceptor asks his disciple to do a particular act for the sake of fruit and he does it desiring the fruit, it would not be proper as the preceptor has done it only to test the mental attitude of the disciple. Babaji referred to the story of the sadhu who received ample offerings by Bhagwan's grace but after ensuring good offerings were made to Bhagwan by asking his disciples to do so, he left the place as he thought that Bhagwan was testing his intentions. The sadhu did not have any desire and so he left the place when there was a flood of rich and valuable offerings. In the same way when a preceptor asks his disciples to do acts for the sake of fruit, the disciples should perform those act without having any desire for the fruit (result).

One should have the same attitude whether one is happy or in pain, whether honoured or insulted, and whether one gains or loses something. When karma is done desirelessly it becomes karmayoga and terminates the bondage brought about by karma.

Voluntary relinquishment gives happiness. Suppose a purse has fallen somewhere and someone picks it up and hands it over to the owner then everybody feels happy that he is honest. Had he given it to somebody in charity, then the person who receives it would be happy. Happiness given brings happiness. To give is great karma. The self does not get nourished without renunciation.

Babaji says that name and form are one because speech and eyes are the product of the element of fire. The name enters the heart and in a similar manner form can also be grasped by the heart. If we recite the name of Bhagwan with feeling and emotion, we are benefited. Babaji here narrates the tale of Panditaraja Jagannatha who said that if queens who have smeared their bodies with musk, take bath in Gangaji, then the deer whose musk they had applied to their bodies are absolved of bondage. Pandit Jagannatha prayed to Gangaji for redemption. At the recitation of a single verse Gangaji rose one step. When he had recited one hundred and one verses in praise of Gangaji, she had risen and taken him away with her. Babaji says that Bhagwan has assumed the melted form of Gangaji so that great souls might bathe in her waters and seekers may worship her (506).

मन्मना भव मद्भक्तो मद्याजी मां नमस्कुरु।

मामेवैष्यसि सत्यं ते प्रतिजाने प्रियोऽसि मे ॥ B. G., 18. 65

सर्वधर्मान्परित्यज्य मामेकं शरणं व्रज।

अहं त्वा सर्वपापेभ्यो मोक्षयिष्यामि मा शुचः ॥ B. G., 18. 66

Keep your mind devoted to me, be my devotee, worship me and pay obeisance to me. In this way you will definitely come to me. Truly do I promise this since you are dear to me.

Renouncing all religious acts, seek refuge in Me alone; I shall liberate you from all sins; don't grieve.

These are almost the concluding verses of Gitaji. After this the criteria for those who deserve to listen to these teachings, given by Shri Krishna to Arjuna, are mentioned along with other concluding observations. The listener should be like

Arjuna. Shri Krishna assures Arjuna that he should leave everything to him and take refuge in him. It is he alone who will free him from fruits of all kinds of acts that he has done in his innumerable incarnations, so he should not worry about his salvation which has been pledged by Bhagwan but he should absolutely devote his mind to Bhagwan, he should worship him and bow down to him i.e. be aware of his presence with a spirit of total surrender. It is clear that if the seeker remains constantly aware of the presence of the Supreme Consciousness with a spirit of absolute surrender, his attention stays riveted on him and he is sure to realise him. Becoming a devotee of Bhagwan means that he should not be attached to anything other than Bhagwan as Narada says that devotion consists in loving Bhagwan absolutely. The first quarter of verse 65 (Chapter 18) speaks of the inner attitude of a seeker and the second quarter lays emphasis on outer conduct. The first quarter of verse 66 teaches that the seeker should not worry about any form of religious duties but should always remember Paramātmā.

The Vedas prescribe acts which give us fruits in the form of heaven, etc. These are desire-oriented acts but if they are performed according to the scheme laid down there, then one can gain the capacity to do acts without desire. This may be understood by the example of a child in whom interest to study is created by first giving him sweets or prizes, etc. then later he can be directed to learn other things without being motivated by desire for objects.

Babaji narrates the story of Hakikatrai who was an ideal Hindu boy of 12 years of age in order to show how firmly he stuck to the principles of the family in which he was born. His firm faith in religion could be due to the way he was brought up by his parents or due to the impressions of a past life. Once the teacher went out of the classroom on some job and the other boys, who were Muslim, began to create a nuisance. Hakikatrai sat in a corner and remained silent. The other boys began to mock him, asking why he had a tuft of hair on his

head. They asked him to join them but he did not as he thought that his duty as a student was to study. He counter questioned them as to why men in their community keep beards like that of a goat. He again said "I swear by Bhagwan and the Divine Mother that I will not play with you." Still the Muslim boys continued to make faces and tease him. Hakikatrai said if they did not behave then they would violate their religious book. They took him to a Mullah, who was very much impressed by his perseverance and allegiance to his religion. He gave many assurances of a good life. He asked Hakikatrai to convert to the Muslim religion by promising him that he would get him married to a Muslim girl but Hakikatrai remained adamant and asked if Muslims would not die. He said that if they also die then what is the purpose of forsaking one's own religion for the sake of this ephemeral body. He did not adopt the Muslim religion on any condition. Upon his staunch adherence to his religion, he was handcuffed and put in prison. This kind of conduct is an indication that the boy was steady-minded. He belonged to a rich business family. His parents also asked him to change his religion, otherwise he would be killed. Nevertheless, he remained firm and did not mind undergoing severe punishment. When he did not give up his stand of not converting to the Muslim religion, he was handed over to the executioner, who seeing the lustre of honesty on his face desisted from killing him. When the executioner did not kill Hakikatrai, he was also put in prison. Hakikatrai was then killed by someone else. The news of the boy who had sacrificed his life for the sake of his religion spread like the fragrance of invisible flowers.

The purpose of telling this story is to teach that we should not attach much value to this body which is nevertheless a great means to find out the nature of Reality. We should always be ready to relinquish sense objects that give pleasure in order to dive deep into our being so that Consciousness reveals itself. It is clear from the life of great souls that we can reach the Ultimate goal only when we attach utmost importance and significance to the Self and remain steadfast

while we are following spiritual sadhana. Shri Ramkrishna Paramahansa was given the vision of Mother Kali when he had got ready to kill himself for her vision. No sooner did he pick up the sword than Mother Kali appeared before him. The case with Swami Ramtirtha was similar. When he did not see Shri Krishna, he threw himself into the river Narmada and it is said that he was saved by Shri Krishna Himself. When we entirely give up the sense of identification with the body, then only we can progress on the spiritual path. This is what Shri Krishna said to Arjuna when he was depressed and was reluctant to fight in battle. Bhagwan told Arjun that whatever one experiences with the sense organs is not eternal. These sense experiences that give pleasure and pain come and go and as such they are to be endured, if this is done then the identification of the self with the body is easy to transcend.

मात्रास्पर्शास्तु कौन्तेय शीतोष्णसुखदुःखदाः।

आगमापायिनोऽनित्यास्तांस्तितिक्षस्व भारत।। B. G., 2.14

When Arjuna did not want to fight, Shri Krishna began to give a discourse to him in order to impress upon him that the soul is eternal and everything else other than the soul is temporary; to explain that he should not worry about those who were going to be killed in the battle of Mahabharata. If identification with the body was loosened, then concern and worry about the killing of his preceptor Dronacharya, of Pitamaha Bhishma and other family relations who were there to fight could be overcome and Arjun could perform his duty in accordance with the principles laid down by the scriptures.

Babaji says that worldly people go to bed late at night and get up late in the morning whereas yogis sleep in a timely manner and get up very early to meditate on the Supreme Reality. He told of an incident in his own life. He said that once he was sitting on the steps of a temple where somebody was giving money (paise) to sadhus. He also wanted to give some money to Babaji, who refused to take it. Then he tried to give more money to Babaji but even then Babaji did not accept it. Seeing this, one of the sadhus said to the person

who was giving the money, "Why are you insisting upon giving money to this sadhu. He has gone mad so that he is not accepting it even when he is being given one ana i.e. four paise." There was a difference in the approach of the donor and that sadhu. The donor was thinking that he was helping the sadhus but Babaji was in a state of renunciation in which matters relating to money had no significance because he was fully and incessantly in a state of intense awareness of the Self. He had already given up begging alms as he was absolutely dependent on Prarabdha. He felt that that which is required is to reach the state where one experiences "वासुदेवः सर्वम्।" He ate only that which came to him without asking and remained without food if nothing presented itself of its own accord. He also used to say that desire, ego and lust or longing for possession (कामना, अहंकार तथा स्पृहा) constitute a strong bondage when they come together. It is very difficult to be free from them (630). He who is free from these three strands of bondage attains to Brahmanhood. If this state of Brahmanhood is retained till death, then man is liberated (631).

There is a little difference between desire and longing (greed). After being satiated, if one still wants to have more, then it is greed (स्पृहा). If we cannot part with a thing which is of no use for us, it is possessive longing (ममतामयी लालसा). One who is free from ego is also free from conceit and exhibitionism. He has attained the state of Brahmanhood. Just as it does not make any difference to the ocean, whether rivers fall into it or not, so one who has realised the Ultimate Truth, remains unperturbed by desires. He does not grieve nor does he feel elated when something unpleasurable or pleasurable approaches him.

However only controlling the sense organs does not lead one to realisation. A seeker must be wholeheartedly devoted to Bhagwan. In other words, he must not think of any other entity than the Supreme Being. If he stops thinking about Bhagwan, it is possible that he may start thinking of worldly

objects. Then it is possible that he may go astray from the spiritual path. The seed of ignorance is uprooted only when absolute desirelessness is attained. A realised person has transcended the sense of body. It is just a play for him to appear to be doing something or the other in the world. Even if a steady-minded person uses objects, he does not revel in them. Perceiving or experiencing worldly objects is just a sport for him.

Babaji tells about the five debts a humanbeing has to pay: 1. Debt to the gods 2. Debt to human beings 3. Debt to the seers 4. Debt to the manes and 5. Debt to beings. The question, "When have we taken this debt?" is not applicable. The sun and moon provide light. Fire gives us heat and helps us to bake bread, etc. Indra gives us water in the form of rain. We live on the earth, which gives us things to sustain life. If these do not provide essentialities, it would be impossible for us to live. These entities are gods and we are indebted to these gods. If we offer water to the sun, perform sacrifices and offer incense to Indra and other gods, they are pleased and we are freed from the debt we owe to them. By offering oblations we repay the debt we owe to the manes. By paying obeisance to the preceptor, father, mother and elders, we become free from the debt to human beings. By studying Gita, Ramayana and other scriptures we pay our debt to the seers. We are freed from the debt to other beings by feeding the cow, the crow and ants, etc. A person who takes food only after giving what is due to others, worships Bhagwan. His mind is purified and he becomes capable of pursuing his sadhana in a smooth way.

Shri Krishna says that knowledge of the self cannot be attained by not doing actions. Nobody obtains success by merely renouncing. It is therefore preferable to also do actions. If somebody asks which is superior karma or knowledge? Babaji says that karma appears to be superior to knowledge as nobody can remain without doing something or the other. There is no time when karma is not being done. If you do not move, then to sit is an act. If you do not eat, then to remain

hungry is an act. If there is no physical activity, then whatever happens in the mind constitutes an act. Consequently, if somebody does an act without desiring the fruit then he is definitely better than those who try to avoid doing any acts.

Babaji describes three kinds of night: कालरात्रि, महारात्रि and मोहरात्रि and the fourth is शिवरात्रि।

कालरात्रि is eternal, महारात्रि is the night of dissolution and शिवरात्रि, the fourth, indicates the state of samadhi, which is as difficult to attain as to find sky-flowers. This night cannot be extolled much as even Brahmā is not capable of singing the praises of this night. On शिवरात्रि the marriage of Lord Shiva and Parvati took place. The former represents Brahman and the latter, Prakriti, which becomes conscious after uniting with Shiva, who is Consciousness. Prakriti is inanimate and only assumes consciousness when it enters into union with Shiva. One who is not enticed by women and gold is not other than Shiva. The Divine Mother is also desireless. To keep awake on Shivaratri points to the fact that we can attain Shiva only when we remain absolutely alert in attending to the worship of Shiva. Devotion is very necessary and intense love for Bhagwan is called bhakti. Intense love means to be always attentive to him without any break. It is intense love which brings about the direct perception of Paramātmā. This kind of intense love cannot but be knowledge.

We do not want to commit a crime but there is some entity that forces us to commit one. Sri Krishna says that it is passion that propels us towards committing sin. This passion or desire is a product of rajas. Desire, anger and greed force us to do wrong deeds. If desire remains unfulfilled, then anger arises and if it is fulfilled, then greed takes birth. Our knowledge is covered by desire just as fire is hidden by smoke, a mirror is covered by dirt or the fetus is covered by placenta. Desire is a fire which cannot be satiated and it is the eternal enemy of knowledge. One may feel that satiating desire makes one happy, but in fact, it is as if an enemy is poisoning one with poisoned sweets. Just as fire increases with ghee being poured

on it, so desire is never really satiated. Renunciation is the best way to be free from desire.

It is clear from the life of Babaji that he was absolutely free from desires since he was established in his real nature. He was a Jīvanmukta. It is pertinent here to know what Jīvanmukti is. The concept of Jīvanmukti is controversial. Maṇḍanamiśra, the author of Brahmasiddhi does not accept the phenomenon of Jīvanmukti. According to him Liberation takes place only when one gives up one's body after realization. However, Vācaspatimiśra, who followed Maṇḍanamiśra in other Advaitic concepts and philosophical deliberations, does not agree in the context of Jīvanmukti. Those who follow Maṇḍanamiśra's view generally invoke the statement: तस्य तावदेव चिरं यावद् विमोक्षये अथ संपत्स्ये (छान्दोग्यउपनिषद् 6. 14. 2). This means "There is delay for him only until he is freed from the shackles of the body. That will be the moment when he will merge in Being." Śaṅkara seems to subscribe to the view that a person who has realized the Self continues to live until the exhaustion of his prārabdha karma. Commenting on the above Upaniṣadic statement, he says: अतो ब्रह्मविदो जीवनप्रयोजनाभावेऽपि प्रवृत्तफलानां कर्मणामवश्यमेव फलोपभोगः स्यादिति मुक्तेषुवत्, "Though a knower of Brahman has nothing to do with life and all that goes with it. Still, he must taste the fruit of actions that have already started to fructify. These he cannot avoid, until they have spent themselves like the momentum of the arrow." The statement विमुक्तश्चविमुच्यते (कठोपनिषद् 5.1) clearly mentions that the liberated being is again liberated when he gives up this body, thereby accepting the phenomenon of Jīvanmukti.

In this context, it would be appropriate to quote the verse 4.14 of the Shrimadbhagavadgītā:

तद्विद्धि प्रणिपातेन परिप्रश्नेन सेवया।

उपदेक्ष्यन्ति ते ज्ञानं ज्ञानिनः तत्त्वदर्शिनः ॥

which refers to तत्त्वदर्शिनः who should be approached to seek knowledge. How can a knower of the Ultimate Reality give instruction on Knowledge unless he has the psychophysical organism? The Shrimadbhagavadgītā thus clearly endorses

the view that the phenomenon of Jīvanmukti exists and it is meant for the protection and propagation of knowledge.

What is Jīvanmukti? According to Yogavāsīṣṭha: A Jīvanmukta is one who has transcended the sense of ego and whose intellect does not get involved and entangled in the actions he performs:

यस्य नाहंकृतो भावो बुद्धिर्यस्य न लिप्यते।

कुर्वतोऽकुर्वतो वापि स जीवन्मुक्त उच्यते।। Yogavāsīṣṭha, 3. 9. 9

A person though having mind conducts himself as if having no mind, that is, when he has subdued his mind completely. In other words when he has reached the state of amanībhāva he is called a Jīvanmukta: यः सचित्तोऽपि निश्चितः स जीवन्मुक्त उच्यते। Ibid., 3. 9.12

Such a person considers the waking phenomena created by Māyā to be existing inside himself as the dream phenomena created by the mind exist inside although the latter appear to be existing outside due to the force of sleep. Here sleep could be compared with Māyā :

यथास्वप्नप्रपञ्चोऽयं मयि मायाविजृम्भितः॥ Sūtasamhitā, mk, 5. 29 c.d.

तथा जाग्रत्प्रपञ्चोऽपि मयि मायाविजृम्भितः। Ibid., 5. 30 a.b.

After the justification of the phenomenon of Jīvanmukti, the problem to justify life after realization crops up. The author of Citsukhī says that if ajñāna has been destroyed by Self-realization, how can a person live with the same psychophysical organism which is held to be a product of ajñāna. Following his preceptor Jñānottama, the author of Citsukhī holds that avidyā in some degree does remain after Self-realization. It is this remnant of avidyā that provides justification for life after Self-realization and this remnant of avidyā remains until the prārabdha karma exhausts itself. But Madhusūdana Sarasvatī has a different view-point. He says that it is not at all warranted to postulate the continuation of some remnant of avidyā to justify life after the attainment of Brahman. He clearly says that there is no avidyā in the liberated person and whatever continues after liberation is

only an appearance: जीवन्मुक्तश्च तत्त्वज्ञानेन निवृत्ताविद्योऽप्यनुवृत्तदेहादि-
 प्रतिभासः। न च तत्त्वज्ञानादविद्यानाशे सद्यःशरीरपातापत्तिः। निवृत्तसर्पभ्रमस्यापि
 संस्कारात्भयकम्पानुवृत्तिवत् दण्डसंयोगनाशेऽपि चक्रभ्रमणवच्चसंस्कारानुवृत्तेरविद्या-
 निवृत्तावपि तत्कार्यानुवृत्तिसंभवात्। He clearly says that the annihilation
 of ignorance does not necessarily warrant the cessation of
 bodily existence. To support his contention, he gives the
 illustration of the continuance of fear and trembling after the
 illusory snake has ceased to exist. The other illustration is
 of the rotation of a wheel even after the contact of the stick
 with the wheel has finished. Actually speaking there is no
 activity from the point of view of the liberated being, that is,
 whatever he does appears empirically valid to the common
 man but not for him. This was clear from the biographical
 events of Baba Śrī Mastramji. Babaji gave importance only to
 the present moment which is a characteristic of a jīvanmukta
 who is also defined by Śrī Śaṅkarācārya in Vivekacūḍāmaṇi
 in the following verse (433):

अतीताननुसंधानं भविष्यदविचारणम्।
 औदासीन्यमपि प्राप्ते जीवन्मुक्तस्य लक्षणम्॥

“He who does not reminisce about the past, does not think
 about the future and does not feel concerned about what
 befalls him at the present moment is said to be liberated while
 living.”

Babaji’s Discourse on Shri Rama

Babaji gave discourses on the life of Shri Rama for nine days
 during Navaratri and presented the symbolic interpretation
 of the characters in the Ramayana in order to emphasise the
 spiritual aspect so that devotees can derive inspiration and
 advance on their spiritual journey. The story of Shri Rama
 is meant for those who seek knowledge. The incarnation of
 Shri Rama took place through a sacrifice. King Daśaratha
 performed पुत्रेष्टियज्ञ (putreṣṭiyajña) in order to attain a son. It is
 said in the context of the birth of Shri Rama that the formless
 Fire assumed the form of यज्ञपुरुष and happily gave a bowl of
 milk gruel (पायस). We can say that whatever originates from fire
 is like fire and in Shri Rama it symbolises enlightenment, the

fire of knowledge. There are three fires, āhavanīya, gārhapatya and dakṣiṇāgni (आहवनीय, गार्हपत्य, दक्षिणाग्नि) and all the fires together handed over a bowl of milk gruel to Daśaratha. That is why there is an abundance of knowledge in the Ramayana. Where devotion is given, it is also in abundance. Sacrificial acts are also mentioned in the Ramayana as fire burns impurities and also illuminates. The consonant 'r' in Rama represents fire and burns all sins. Vedic fire confers heaven and fire in general gives food, etc. to all. The internal fire burns all impurities. The fire of the Sun destroys ignorance and pain. Fire exists in both pleasure derived from the experience of sense objects and bliss in contemplation on the Self. The fire of the Sun annihilates ignorance and pain that are experienced on account of ignorance. Therefore those who remember and contemplate on Rama are freed from sins and sufferings. The vowel 'a' symbolises the Sun and is the seed of knowledge. The consonant 'm' confers bliss. Seekers know the strength that exists in the word 'Rama'. The word 'Rama' has helped many great souls cross over the cycle of transmigration. There is no difference between the word 'Rama' and Rama himself.

Knowledge, devotion and karma are beautifully blended in the Ramayana. It is not possible to doubt that the Ramayana is only symbolic. This is the topic that Satī asked Śiva, Bhāradvāja asked Yājñavalkya and Garuḍa asked Kākabhuṣuṇḍī. Bhagwan manifested both in history and as a metaphor. Being free Bhagwan manifested Himself for the welfare of His devotees. The kind of bliss that wells up in the hearts of devotees when Shri Rama is perceived is the same bliss that was seen in Daśaratha's palace when Shri Rama manifested. Devotion and knowledge do not differ. There is no contradiction between Rama and knowledge. Shri Rama represented knowledge alone. There are ten main manifestations of Bhagwan. Shri Rama was one of them and he manifested himself to establish knowledge, devotion and karma. The four manifestations of Bhagwan at this time represented oneness of Bhagwan, just as praṇava has four

quarters. Shri Rama represented the fourth mora (turīya). Bharata was the manifestation of Vishnu and Lakṣmaṇa was that of Śeṣa. Śatrughna was considered to be the manifestation of Brahmā whereas Jambvanta was the partial manifestation of Brahmā. Kubjā said to Kaikeyi that if she was wrong then let Vidhi punish her. It was Śatrughna who beat Kubjā (340). Daśaratha means ten forms. The chariot of ten sense organs includes both the gross and subtle bodies. It is given in the Upaniṣads that the senses are horses and the reins represent the mind. The trained horses draw the chariot on the right path so the controlled senses behave properly. If the reins in the form of mind are not applied rightly, the sense-horses go astray. Daśaratha also represents Dharma. When Bhagwan took a human form, Daśaratha was happy and he gave away his external wealth generously because he had gained internal wealth.

When the gods were tormented by demons, they prayed to Bhagwan and Daśaratha also performed a sacrifice to obtain sons. As a result the Almighty appeared before Kauśalyā with four hands holding a conch, a discus, etc. on the ninth day after amāvasyā in the month of Chaitra. Kauśalyā said that this form was not the boon she had prayed for and she asked him to take the form of a child, which he then did. Bhagwan could not have been carried in the womb like an ordinary being but he responded to the feelings of His devotees and hence He began to cry like a child.

Daśaratha had four sons as if four mātrās of praṇava had manifested themselves. Once when Rama was playing with other children, Daśaratha called him but he did not come. However when Kauśalyā called him, he came. Babaji interpreted this incident saying that the father represents knowledge and the mother represents devotion. Bhagwan does not pay as much attention to knowledge as he does to devotion

Viśvāmitra came to Daśaratha and requested him to send Shri Rama with him to protect his yajña. He refused but after his

guru Vaśiṣṭha persuaded him, he allowed Rama to accompany Viśvāmitra along with Lakṣmaṇa, who always stayed with Rama as dispassion is always found with knowledge. On the way they met with the demoness Tāḍakā. Rama hesitated to kill Tāḍakā since it was not considered correct for a kṣatriya to kill a woman. But Viśvāmitra said that she was Kālarātri and had killed many people. So with the permission of his preceptor he killed Tāḍakā even as a seeker destroys attachment. Rama and Lakṣmaṇa protected the yajña just as knowledge and dispassion guard the spiritual seeker. There was an invitation from Janakapura to attend a Dhanuṣayajña and they happily accepted it. On the way they saw Ahalyā who was lying there in the form of a rock. Shri Rama touched it with his foot at the instance of Viśvāmitra and it turned into a living woman. When Viśvāmitra reached Janakapura with the two brothers, King Janaka became oblivious of his knowledge and forgetting his own individuality he became one with Shri Rama as the individual soul becomes one with Bhagwan. After the yajña bow was broken by Shri Rama, Paraśurāma came there and a dialogue ensued between Paraśurāma, Rama and Lakṣmaṇa. Paraśurāma expressed his doubt about the identity of Shri Rama and as a test he was about to hand his own bow to Rama but the bow itself went to Shri Rama and Paraśurāma became convinced that Shri Rama was an incarnation of Lord Vishnu. Shri Rama then strung the bow and destroyed Parasurama's power with an arrow. Sītā was thrilled to see the lotus face of Shri Rama. Bharata, Lakṣmaṇa and Śatrughna were also married to Māṇḍavī, Urmilā and Śrutakīrti.

Babaji said that Kaikeyī was a jīvanmukta and she carried out an action which was responsible for the composition of Ramayana. The blot that was wrongly put on Bharata in the end added to his resplendence and he became an exemplar of knowledge, devotion and karma. Rama was banished to the forest. Babaji said that when Rama was in Ayodhyā, people could see him but when he went to the forest, people began to look for him internally (343). When Bharata came to know

that Rama went to the forest, he went on foot to see him and it appeared as if devotion were going to meet knowledge. The seer Bhāradvāja wondered at the Bharata's love for Rama. Shri Rama went to the forest to fulfil his duty as a son but Bharata was going to the forest on his own. Ayodhyā symbolises pravṛtti and forest, nivṛtti. When Shri Rama went to the forest, there was peace. But when Bharata was going, there was a sense of separation. Śatrughna was following Bharata as if devotion were being followed by emotion. Seers who were full of dispassion praised Bharata. Bhāradvāja said that the sight of Shri Rama was the result of practicing sādhanā whereas Bharata was seen as a result of seeing Shri Rama. The absolute devotional surrender of Bharata is a wonder. Shri Rama was at first happy that Bharata was coming but later he became sad since he foresaw that Bharata was going to be submerged in the mire of love and dharma (345). Bharata was the incarnation of Rama's love and Lakṣmaṇa was the incarnation of dispassion. The latter could not understand the motive of the former as if dispassion could not comprehend love, which is the natural opponent of dispassion (345). Devotees think of their faults and also think at the same time that Bhagwan being omniscient would accept them after forgiving them. The devotee Niṣāda showed Bharata the cottage of Shri Rama from a distance. When Bharata reached there, Rama was conversing with seers. Bharata fell at the feet of Rama like a log saying "Forgive me, forgive me." Lakṣmaṇa could not greet his brother as he was keeping in view that his duty was to attend on Shri Rama. Rama caught hold of Bharata, picked him up and embraced him. This was a moving rendezvous at the sight of which even stones would melt. Conscious beings like Vaśiṣṭha were stupefied and the foresters began to weep. This moving sight was as if the appearance of love-devotion had taken place after churning the ocean-like Bharata. Such a unique illustration of love can be seen only in the Ramayana which is the essence of all scriptures. Devotion, knowledge and karma are all depicted in the Ramayana with crystal clarity as everything is seen clearly in a clean mirror. The

love relationship between brothers, father and son, husband and wife and the ruler and the ruled is ideally depicted in the Ramayana.

After a long moving session of discussion about what to do, Bharata, with the permission of Rama, returned to Ayodhya to take care of the administration carrying Shri Rama's wooden sandals as his representative.

Lakṣmaṇa chopped off the demoness Śūrpaṇakhā's ears and nose showing that those who are against the Vedas should be considered as if their ears and nose have been chopped off. This incident made Khara and Dūṣaṇa fight with Shri Rama who finished off their army in no time. The demon Mārīca, at the instance of Rāvaṇa assumed the form of a golden deer. Seeing the deer of gold, Sītā developed a desire to have the hide of that deer and requested Rama to bring it. It was as if Prakriti had enticed Sītā who was symbolising Brahmavritti. A deer of gold is not possible. Shri Rama made this incident happen to elucidate the point that greed causes immense pain. Greed of wealth steals away peace of mind, that is Sītā. The vulture Jaṭāyu tried to stop Rāvaṇa as if good thoughts tried to suppress an evil emotion. He sacrificed his life to save Sītā and Rama blessed him with a spiritually elevated state (सद्गति). When knowledge departs, dispassion accompanies it so when Rama went to bring the deer hide, Lakṣmaṇa followed at the request of Sītā. The egoity in the form of Rāvaṇa stole Brahmavritti in the form of Sītā. As Rama searched for Sītā he met Shabari and happily ate the jujube fruit kept by her after tasting them. Lakṣmaṇa did not eat them. When Rama advanced further and reached the place where Sugriva was living. Sugriva sent Hanuman to find out everything about Shri Rama. Hanuman recognised Shri Rama and brought him and Lakṣmaṇa on his shoulders to meet Sugriva. Hanuman made Sugriva befriend Shri Rama. Hanuman, being desireless and straightforward, was a great devotee. Bhagwan is naturally inclined to such devotees. Sugriva tested Shri Rama and became convinced that he was Bhagwan. Rama sent Sugriva

to fight with Bali while he hid himself behind a tree to kill Bali because the latter was blessed with a boon that half of the strength of whoever comes before him would accrue to him. It was not improper to kill Bali in this way as his boon had to be recognised. Moreover, Bali kept Sugriva's wife forcibly so he was killed because of his sins. Later Sugriva also kept Bali's wife Tārā with him but with her consent. So Bali was killed because of his sins. When Rāvaṇa was flying away kidnapping Sītā, she dropped her ornaments near Sugriva. Lakṣmaṇa could only recognise her anklets, which he had seen when he daily paid obeisance at her feet but he had never seen any of the ornaments from other parts of her body. This was due to his extreme detachment. Hanuman and other monkeys went southwards to search for Sītā. He met Sampāti who told him where she was. Hanumanji the incarnation of viveka flew towards Lanka which was a place where desires and lust not only exist but increase incessantly. Hanuman searched for Sītā the whole night but could not trace her, then in the morning he heard Vibhīṣaṇa repeating 'Rama, Rama' and wondered how this noble vritti had been existing among inauspicious thoughts. Hanuman reached the Ashoka garden with the help of Vibhīṣaṇa. Finding a suitable moment Hanuman presented Sītā with the ring which had been given to him by Rama. At first Sītā began to doubt him but after their conversation her doubts disappeared. Hanumanji felt hungry after seeing mother Sītā even though he had refused to eat when the Mainaka mountain had earlier asked him to eat some fruits. With the permission of Sītāji he destroyed the Ashoka garden. Rāvaṇa sent Akshaya to fight Hanuman who killed the former with a slap. When Meghanatha came, Hanuman allowed himself to be ensnared by the Brahmastra in order to see Rāvaṇa although he had a boon that the Brahmastra would not have any effect on him. He spoke clearly in front of Rāvaṇa and then the demons wrapped the tail of Hanuman with cloths soaked in ghee and oil and set it alight. Hanumanji took on a huge form and burnt Lanka down. He then assumed a small form. There are two ways

to achieve freedom. One is to become small i.e. through the path of devotion. The other is to be free instantaneously by knowledge. Though Hanumanji had knowledge, he preferred devotion. The fire spread by Hanumanji did not burn the place where the devotee Vibhīṣaṇa lived. Hanumanji then took the blessings of Sītāji as well as an ornament from her hair which she gave him to give to Shri Rama. Hanumanji then came back to Shri Rama.

When Rama's army reached the ocean, the demons were frightened thinking that if a single monkey could burn down Lanka what would happen when so many monkeys had come. Vibhīṣaṇa tried to urge Rāvaṇa not to fight as if a good thought was trying to overcome a bad thought. He said to Rāvaṇa that he should give Sītāji back to Shri Rama but Rāvaṇa did not pay any heed to what he said. Instead he kicked him. Along with four ministers Vibhīṣaṇa went to Shri Rama who gave him refuge and promised to make him the king of Lanka. Shri Rama asked Vibhīṣaṇa how to cross over the ocean to reach Lanka and requested the ocean to give him passage. However after three days passed and the ocean had still not responded, Shri Rama asked for his bow at which the ocean got frightened. The building of the bridge to Lanka began as Nala and Neel dropped stones into the ocean after writing Shri Rama's name on them which made them float. When the bridge was completed, the army reached Lanka. Angada went to the court of Rāvaṇa and tried to convince him to give Sītāji back to Shri Rama but he did not agree. Angad then put his foot on the ground and said if anyone from Rāvaṇa's side could move his foot he would not ask for Sītāji but nobody could move it. The battle ensued. When Lakṣmaṇa was felled by a Shakti (spear). Hanumanji brought the Samjivani herb and Lakṣmaṇa regained consciousness. A fight between Meghanatha and Lakṣmaṇa took place in which the former was killed. Kumbhakarna was also killed and at last Rāvaṇa was killed by Sri Rama. He died with the name of Shri Rama on his lips. Shri Rama then came back to Ayodhya in the Pushpaka viman. Hanumanji first went

to Bharataji to inform him of the imminent arrival of Shri Rama.

Prompted by Shri Rama Hanumanji went to Bharataji just as discrimination arrives before the attainment of Bhagwan and as twilight appears before the Sun-rise. Hanumanji saw that Bharataji was emaciated, but his face was full of radiance as if renunciation shone along with penance (357). Bharata was in meditation. When Hanumanji said 'Jaya Shri Rama! Shri Rama is coming by the Pushpaka viman.' Bharataji was beside himself with happiness. The news spread at once as if light had spread everywhere. Everybody was elated at the sight of the Pushpaka viman. Shri Rama alighted first followed by Sitāji, Lakṣmaṇa and others . Bharataji washed the feet of Shri Rama with his tears so that the water kept for washing feet was not needed. Tears of joy flowed everywhere. Everybody was beside himself with joy. The relation of Rama with Bharata was like that of renunciation and love and yet renunciation and love are one. If somebody loves another person, he sacrifices everything for the person he loves. Rama and Bharata met as if the distance between renunciation and love had ended. There was pindrop silence at the meeting of Shri Rama and Bharata and then Shri Rama met everyone simultaneously. Anyone who has such love and such a spirit of sacrifice deserves to attain Bhagwan.

After the coronation of Shri Rama by Vaśiṣṭha, Bharata asked Shri Rama the characteristics of the noble-hearted and the evil-hearted (सन्त और असन्त). Shri Rama explained by giving the example of an axe and sandal wood. The axe cuts the sandalwood. Even then the sandal transmits its perfume to the axe. This is the reason that sandal is offered to the gods whereas the axe is heated in the fire and then hammered. Shri Rama also described other characteristics of both the noble-minded and the evil-minded. There are many other such teachings in the Ramayana which are significant from a spiritual point of view. After getting this human body we are attracted towards the enjoyment of objects of senses,

which is not at all desirable. That is why it is taught in the Ramayana that cleansing our mind by following spiritual discipline helps us to attain emancipation. It is told that this human body is for the sake of service, relinquishment and love. Those who, having attained this human body, are given to objects of senses are the killers of the self even as one who accepts a coral bead in exchange for a diamond is a fool. It is as if he sells nectar to purchase poison. In this way the Ramayana teaches knowledge and detachment. If we are slated to experience sense objects, then we should do so in a desireless and selfless manner.

Hanumanji has been compared to discrimination (wisdom) which helps find peace in the form of Sītāji, and which protects knowledge and detachment (Rama and Lakṣmaṇa) from doubt in the form of Ahirāvaṇa.

A spy named Bhadraka informed Shri Rama that a washerman was chastising his wife saying that he was not Rama who kept Sītāji even after she had lived in Lanka for one year. Although there was no fault in Rama and Sītā as the latter had gone through a fire test to prove her chastity. Having pondered over the statement of the washerman, Shri Rama asked Lakṣmaṇa to escort Sītā to the forest as she had expressed her desire to see the seers. Sītāji was pregnant. Lakṣmaṇa left Sītā near the ashrama of Rishi Valmiki, which was near the present Kanpur. Sītāji, understanding she had been abandoned, began to curse her fate although she did not say anything against Shri Rama. When the sage Valmiki asked her who she was, she said that she had been abandoned by Shri Rama. Valmiki said that he did not like this as he knew that she had already passed through the fire to prove her purity and innocence. He took her to his ashrama where the wives of the seers welcomed her and offered her the soft hide of deers to sit on. Later when Shri Rama performed a horse-sacrifice, a golden image of Sītā was seated beside him. Hearing about this, Sītāji felt that Shri Rama still loved her. When the sacrificial horse came near the ashrama, Sītā's

sons Lava and Kusha caught it. Lakṣmaṇa was protecting the horse but Lava and Kusha defeated him as well as Bharata and Shatrughna. They tied Hanuman up with his tail and took him to Sītāji who recognised him. Babaji says in this context that those who are on the side of injustice deserve punishment. Shri Rama could not fight because he was on the side of injustice. Valmiki made Lava and Kusha learn the Ramayana by rote and sent them to the horse sacrifice where they recited it. They did not accept anything in return. Rishi Valmiki asked Shri Rama to accept Sītāji but Shri Rama said that he was expected to accord credence to public censure. He then asked Sītā to prove her purity once again. Sītāji said that if she had never forsaken the feet of Shri Rama, then mother earth would grant her refuge. Then relinquishing her royal prosperity she merged into the earth. Shri Rama got angry with the earth and said that he would destroy her but on the advice of the seers he did not do it. At the end of ten thousand years, the messengers of Brahmā came to him and reminded him that the end of his time on earth had come. Shri Rama had already forsaken Lakṣmaṇa because of Rishi Durvāsā. When detachment had gone, knowledge (Rama) was also about to leave. He asked all the inhabitants of Ayodhya to go to the Saryu river if they wanted to accompany him. All went and Ayodhya became a deserted place.

The sum and substance of this presentation is that man should achieve the state of desirelessness since it is desire that constitutes mind as is clear from what Baba Mastramji says, “If there is no desire, there is no mind” (p. 82). Mind is the cause of the phenomenon of duality as is expounded in Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad, 3. 31:

मनोदृश्यमिदं द्वैतं यत्किञ्चित्सचराचरम्।
मनसो ह्यमनीभावे द्वैतं नैवोपलभ्यते॥३१॥

“All these dual objects, comprising everything that is movable and immovable, perceived by the mind (are mind alone). For, duality is never experienced when the mind ceases to act.” That is why it appears plausible to submit that

the main message of Baba Mastramji is to sincerely inculcate dispassion (वैराग्य) by constantly reminding ourselves of the phenomenon of death, which helps us gain insight into the nature of our ephemeral relationship with the world. Man is mostly engrossed in his fantasies but one who pierces through every desire relating to possessions: wealth, property, fame, etc. is on the right path. To achieve this, we should direct our attention to the real nature of the soul. Then slowly we will be able to know that it is the desireless mind which helps us transcend the identification with the body, senses and mind. But to achieve the state of desirelessness, it is of utmost importance to identify our desires however subtle they may be. When all desires have been identified, we should conscientiously try to be free from them. The triad of desire, anger and greed has been described as the greatest enemy of the seeker of Reality and desire is the most subtle of the three. If desire has been identified and uprooted, then anger and greed also disappear. When we have freed ourselves of this triad, the root identification of Self with the internal sense organ (antaḥkaraṇa) also disappears, that is we become free from ahaṁkāraḍhyāsa and get established in our true nature.